

**SPACES FOR PLURALISM IN ‘ETHNICALLY SENSITIVE’  
COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA**

**The Case of Kibaale District**

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

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SPACES FOR PLURALISM IN 'ETHNICALLY SENSITIVE'  
COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA. The Case of Kibaale District

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SPACES FOR PLURALISM IN 'ETHNICALLY SENSITIVE'  
COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA: The Case of Kibaale District

RUIMTE VOOR PLURALISME IN 'ETNISCH-GEVOELIGE'  
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(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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**Table 1: Glossary of ethnic groups referred to in the thesis; their languages; and titles of their cultural leaders**

Ethnic group		Language	Title of top cultural leader/ King
Plural	Singular		
<b>Banyoro</b>	Munyoro	Runyoro	Omukama
<b>Baganda</b>	Muganda	Luganda	Kabaka
<b>Bakiga</b>	Mukiga	Rukiga	(No king)
<b>Bafumbira</b>	Mufumbira	Kifumbira	(No king)
<b>Banyankore</b>	Munyankore	Runyankore	Omugabe
<b>Bakonjo/ Bakonzo</b>	Mkonjo	Rukonjo	Omusinga
<b>Alur</b>	Alur	Alur	(No king)
<b>Bamba</b>	Mwamba	Rwamba	Omusinga

## **Prologue and Acknowledgements**

This work is a study on ‘spaces for pluralism in ethnically sensitive communities’ with a particular focus on the case of Kibaale District in Uganda. In this prologue, I explain how I came to research pluralism (a very rare concept in Uganda) within an ethnic context, and with a particular focus on Kibaale District. I also highlight and express gratitude to some of the individuals and institutions that have been instrumental towards the completion of this work.

### **‘Getting into’ Pluralism**

Sometime in 2010, I became involved in a study initiated by the Pluralism Knowledge Programme (PKP) in Uganda. The PKP was part of the Humanistic Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS) Knowledge Programmes network which involved an international collaboration of academics and development practitioners in Indonesia, India, Uganda and the Netherlands. It was internationally coordinated by the Kosmopolis Institute of the University of Humanistic Studies and, in Uganda, by the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU).

My involvement in the study came about as Uganda Martyrs University, where I work, was one of collaborating academic institutions. Our task (with colleagues: Maximiano Ngabirano, Alice Wabule and Esibo Omaada) was to carry out an exploratory study on perceptions of diversity, marginalisation, and pluralism in selected sites in Mpigi and Kibaale districts of Uganda. I found this study interesting but cumbersome. I should say that, if greater, the research team’s understanding of the research theme was only slightly above that of the respondents. In private, we often ‘laughed’ about our weird situation of researching on something that we ourselves hardly understood. In May 2009, I had attended a Conference on *Pluralism and Secularism* at the University of Humanistic Studies in Holland. But, since the presenters took the participants’ understanding of the basics of pluralism for granted, I had gathered very little insight to be of any more help to the research team. For even at the conference I was more of a spectator! Thus, as a team, we spent much time arguing over the meaning of pluralism and about the correct translation of the concept into the local languages that we used in the study. And often we ended up with a consensus that was only slightly clearer than where we had started from.

At one point we agreed to find an alternative concept to pluralism – after many occasions of realising that there was so much explanation to give every time we used the word pluralism. For many people, pluralism was conceived as synonymous with plurality/ diversity. After listening to our foreign literature-based explanations, some peers suggested that the concept of ‘unity in diversity’ which was more familiar in Ugandan discourse on diversity would be more helpful. Although some of us were not really convinced that the suggested concept was a suitable alternative, we nevertheless found it more meaningful for the Ugandan audience.

Despite our lack of conceptual clarity, we were all agreed that the theme (pluralism) was very important for the Ugandan context. At both personal and group levels we all had challenging experiences in the face of diversity that helped us to appreciate the idea of pluralism. The

concept itself progressively became clearer to us in the course of the study and we further appreciated the research theme basing on the accounts from the field. This was more vivid in Kibaale District. I found some of the historical narratives of inter-ethnic relations in Kibaale particularly horrifying.

### **Focusing on Ethnicity and on Kibaale District in Particular**

I belong to the Baganda ethnic group which, with 17% of the total population of the country, is the largest ethnic group in Uganda (Republic of Uganda 2002). Growing up in Buganda (Central region - where Baganda come from), I had noticed in earlier interactions with people that most Baganda proverbs and labels about the Banyoro people ('indigenous' to Kibaale) and what came from them were negative. For example, among the Baganda, *akabuzi akanyoro* (literally translated as 'a small goat from Bunyoro') means a poor quality goat! The same applies to poor quality chicken and blankets. However, I had never been keen to find out the roots of such animosity. I was later to find out in Kibaale (Western Uganda) as we tried to understand the conflicts between the Banyoro and the immigrants!

After a focus group discussion with youths in Kibaale, which was conducted in both English and Luganda (the language of the Baganda), we tried to distribute CCFU brochures as requested by the organisation. We distributed the Luganda version, which we were left with. The Banyoro youths sternly rejected them saying although they could read and understand Luganda they would only accept either English or Runyoro versions because they were not about to accept to be subdued again by the Baganda. Such observations not only made me more curious about the history of Baganda-Banyoro relations but also about how the people in Kibaale were living with ethnic difference with the backdrop of their painful history.

Around the same time, a PhD position in the PKP was advertised by CCFU. When I considered applying for it, the general theme I wanted to research about in the context of Uganda was clearly that of ethnicity – living together in ethnic difference. But I had competing ideas on what to specifically focus on. In Buganda region (central Uganda) we had just gone through a disastrous clash between the Central Government and the Kingdom of Buganda – one of the several cultural institutions in Uganda. The King of Buganda wanted to visit an area constitutionally stipulated as part of his kingdom but Central Government resisted the idea arguing that the sub-ethnic group in the area he wanted to visit had not endorsed the visit. This led to a huge three-day demonstration in various parts of Buganda and, in the ensuing chaos, over thirty people died while some others from western Uganda (where the President comes from) were tortured and bullied (Juvonen 2014). It was such an ugly scene. Sentiments of inter-ethnic hatred and claims of ethnic marginalisation were quite widespread and sometimes openly expressed.

After much personal reflection, discussion with my promoters (Prof. Gerty Mulders Lensvelt, Prof. Peter Kanyandago, and Dr Caroline Suransky), and interaction with other PhD students, I settled for studying Kibaale. I found the Kibaale case more interesting as it raised critical questions about pluralism. Looking at the brief history of the Banyoro, Baganda and the British colonialists that I had learnt about in the PKP research and the narratives of

subsequent tension between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro in the area, the case came across as curious with regard to how the people of the area imagine and negotiate living together with their ethnic differences. The study was envisaged to contribute to the discourse on pluralism in contexts of conflictual ethnic differences and to understanding the dynamics of inter-ethnic conflict and trajectories for co-existence.

Using constructivist ontology, this qualitative study is mainly based on the perceptions of the residents of the district since it is here contended that ethnicity and ethnic relations are socially constructed through meaning-making processes of people in particular contexts. It is thus important to understand ethnic realities like history, conflict, and co-existence starting from the meanings of the studied community. From these meanings we proceed to make theoretical interpretations and inferences. The study is theoretically grounded on a synthesis of primordialism and constructivism where it is argued with the illustration of findings that although social realities like ethnic relations are socially constructed, in some regards they are also shaped by primordial emotional attachments. However, the emotional ethnic attachments are here argued to be born and shaped by people's meaning-making processes, not givens. Through analysing people's perceptions of their history the study established that the perceptions inform inter-ethnic relations in the area through perpetuating a sense of victimhood among the Banyoro that leads to xenophobic tendencies. The problematic history was found to be further complicated by an array of multilayered factors including the politics in the creation of Kibaale District paving way for the intensification of identity politics, the rapid increase in the number of non-Banyoro, the rise (re-birth) and activism of ethnic pressure groups, the emergence of radio transmission in the area, and cultural contestations. It is this interplay that facilitated ethnic identity transformation in the area and, subsequently, leading to the outbreak of inter-ethnic violence in the district.

It was established that a number of pluralism initiatives have been applied to curb inter-ethnic conflict in the area. The initiatives are at individual, community, and government levels. There is indication that the initiatives point in two directions: assimilation and pluralism. Assimilative tendencies were especially noted in intermarriage. Other initiatives include inter-ethnic friendships, learning each other's languages (especially the predominant ethnic groups), community peace dialogues facilitated by religious bodies and other CSOs, sensitisation by CSOs and Government through mass media, political cooperation across ethnic lines, representation of both Banyoro and non-Banyoro in appointment for district positions, splitting of political constituencies to cater for both Banyoro and non-Banyoro, and creating a ministry in charge of Banyoro (region) affairs. It was found out that the different initiatives synergistically reinforce each other in improving inter-ethnic relations. However, the sustainability of initiatives like splitting constituencies remains unclear since there is a possibility that, contrary to the intended goal, it could instead serve to aggravate identity politics by providing incentive for ethno-territorial claims and contestations of belonging.

## **Debts of Gratitude**

By the time one gets to the end of such a project they have certainly incurred several debts of gratitude. At some points the research journey can seem overwhelmingly lonely, but the accompaniment I had from various people lightened the weight. I certainly cannot exhaust the list, but I will only mention a few while equally thanking all that are not named.

I deeply thank Hivos for generously funding this programme for over three years. Your support for knowledge generation and other development-related work is greatly appreciated. I also greatly thank the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda through which the funds were channelled, and for always involving me in their inspirational pluralism activities. In the same way, I wholeheartedly thank the University of Humanistic Studies and my promoters for generously carrying on with me for one more year after Hivos' funding.

I cannot thank my promoters enough for their dedication to guiding me and for their constant encouragement. Prof. Gerty Mulders Lensvelt, Prof. Peter Kanyandago, and Dr Caroline Suransky, I have learnt a lot from you and I am so grateful. Sometimes I would share your comments on my work with other PhD students and many often envied me for having promoters that were 'deeply involved' in my work. Prof. Peter, I cannot forget the care expressed in your constant reminders for me to apply for the PhD, neither can I forget how you encouraged me to 'get it out of the way' every time we met. Dr Caroline, I can see your fingerprints all over this work. For all those thorough comments, summer school engagements, literature, compliments and spirit-raising, I sincerely appreciate. We used to talk behind your back with other PhD students on the programme that you were 'more of a mother than a promoter'. Prof. Gerty, my lead promoter, I have always admired your balance of critical comments and compliments. You would always make things seem fine and never stopped encouraging me to write on. For providing me with all that support despite your busy schedules I sincerely appreciate.

Many times when I met Dr Caroline, she was in the company of Prof. Henk Manschot, Prof. Sitharamam Kakarala, and Dr Zainal Abidin Bagir whose helpful insights and references I deeply appreciate. I also thank Anne Helms for guiding me on how to use Atlas-ti, a skill without which data analysis would have been very challenging.

We were four PhD students in PKP: Khalid Anis Ansari from India, Elizabeth Thomas from India, Mustaghfiroh Rahayu from Indonesia and me. We often shared our challenges and anxieties amongst ourselves, advised, and encouraged each other. Your occasional company made this journey less lonely. I also thank all friends that took time off to read my work and provide critical comments, especially Dr Hans Schoemaker from Groningen and Henni Alava from the University of Helsinki.

One of the exercises I was so uncertain about in this study was data collection. The task of accessing my targeted respondents, especially as a Muganda researching in a place some of whose historical woes my ethnic group is collectively held responsible for, seemed potentially daunting. I therefore must thank Anthony Lwanga for being such a good

gatekeeper. Through your rich network it became easy for me to reach virtually everyone I wished to talk to. I should as well express my appreciation here to all my respondents for willingly offering your time to share your knowledge with me without expecting anything in return. In the same vein, I am extremely grateful for the committed support of my research assistant, Tom Aliinde.

I also wish to thank Uganda Martyrs University, my employer, for unconditionally allowing me some time off to write my thesis at a time when my services were really needed at the university. At the university, I also particularly thank my colleague Brother Aloysius Byaruhanga for generously allowing me to use his rich collection of literature on Kibaale District. I do not think I would be able to find a better one-stop resource center on the subject of my research. And to all my colleagues and friends, thanks for the constant encouragement and good wishes.

Because I had to dedicate much of my time to accomplishing this study, over time I became less and less available to my young family. I often had to return home very late but my wife (Dianah Nampijja) and two little girls (Bakhita Mirembe Nassali and Rosa Parks Nantongo) had to bear with it. When I tried to work from home, Nassali would often grudgingly ask what it was that I was writing endlessly instead of playing with her. I hope she grows up to read and appreciate the product of my 'endless' writing.



## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Considering that living with ethnic difference is one of the major challenges to pluralism in a number of African countries (Omotola 2008; Annan 2013) and in Uganda in particular, this study interrogates spaces for pluralism within ‘ethnically sensitive’ contexts with specific reference to the case of Kibaale District – which is one of the communities in Uganda with complex ethnic relations. By ‘ethnically sensitive’ I mean communities that, for reasons such as history, elite manipulation, divisive administrative structures, are prone to ethnically aligned conflict – especially of a violent nature. Based on constructivist ontology, this qualitative study is mainly grounded on the perceptions of the residents of the district since it is here that ethnicity and ethnic relations are socially constructed through meaning-making processes of people in particular contexts. It is thus important to understand the meanings that the studied community itself gives to ethnic realities like history, conflict, and co-existence. From these meanings the study proceeds to make theoretical interpretations and inferences.

#### 1.1.1 Outline of the Dissertation

**Chapter One** entails the context of this study and explains the observations and reflections that make this study relevant both at the local level of Kibaale and beyond. The chapter also defines and situates two of the main concepts in the study, namely: pluralism and ethnic sensitivity. The definitions are situated within a theoretical framework where I explain primordialism and social constructivism, the two most dominant theoretical frameworks which social scientists have used to understand and explain the existence and dynamics in and between ethnic groups (Hale 2008). In a synthetic approach, I will illustrate that the two theories are not necessarily opposed to each other but rather can speak to and reinforce each other’s explanatory power in some aspects. I also explain how these theories help to highlight important matters in the case of Kibaale and how they can help us to make sense of its complexity. This chapter also discusses the research problem and introduces its main and subsidiary research questions. A version of this chapter has been published as a book chapter in *Managing Diversity: Uganda’s Experience* (CCFU 2014).

**Chapter Two** particularly discusses the research methodology and data gathering methods of the study. The chapter indicates how I approached the research questions in a scientific way enabling the reader to appreciate the subsequent findings and analysis. Here, I explain the philosophical foundations (social constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology) of the study and, on the basis of the above, the qualitative methods that were used to gain entry, sampling, collecting data, and data analysis. The chapter also provides a comprehensive account of how I went about the ethical issues raised by the study. After Chapter Two, chapters three, four, and five each address a particular subsidiary research question. This is done to ensure that each of the questions (which together constitute the key research question) is given sufficient analytical attention.

**Chapter Three** addresses the first subsidiary research question of the study, that is: *‘How are the significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale District perceived by the residents?’* It is acknowledged in this chapter that collective memory is crucial in shaping social relations. By tracing the significant historical developments, I contextualise and discuss the realities within the narratives as told by respondents of different ethnicities and in secondary sources. On the basis of the explanatory linkages revealed by the findings, I indicate how a number of historical events, and how they are remembered in the community, serve to explain consequent ethnic relations. This chapter is not a complete historical narrative *per se*, rather it is a process-tracing focused account of ethnic relations which are generally considered to be important when making sense of ethnic relations and mediation initiatives in the history of Kibaale. The analysis is also a vital starting point for appreciating the possibilities for pluralism imagined by the people of Kibaale.

**Chapter Four** discusses the findings in answer to the second subsidiary research question, that is: *How do different local ethnic groups in Kibaale currently perceive ethnic conflict in their district?* I sought to understand this because I believe that people’s imaginations about the possibilities for pluralism in the area are largely rooted in their feelings about the causes and dynamics of ethnic conflict among them. Based on the constructivist consideration that the ‘content’ of any particular ethnicity tends to be historically contingent (Lentz 2006; Geschiere and Jackson 2006), Chapter Four continues from where Chapter Three ends to explain and interrogate a subsequent period, starting from the 1990s, that saw the emergence of tension and later violence between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro. By departing from the local people’s own views, the chapter explains what led to the changes in relations and what dynamics were involved. By mainly using theoretical insights from Geschiere’s *The Perils of Belonging* (2009), the chapter provides a detailed discussion of shifts in the politics of identity and belonging in Kibaale District. The analysis helps us understand how and why relations between people of different ethnic groups came to be exclusive and violent, and how the causes of the conflict are multilayered and interlocked. It also lays the ground for appreciating the pluralism initiatives in the area, which are explained in Chapter Five.

**Chapter Five** addresses the third subsidiary question of the study, namely: *How are the different scientific theories on pluralism brought into action by the various initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale and how do the people of the district value these initiatives?* The above question is addressed through focussing on: i) the most important features of the different initiatives in Kibaale in light of the discussed pluralism theories; ii) the longterm implications of these initiatives; and iii) the relation between people’s appreciation of initiatives and the validity of the different theories.

The chapter proceeds through a systematic presentation and explanation of the initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale District at individual/community, civil society, and government levels and the interactions between the initiatives at different levels. By discussing the pluralism initiatives in Kibaale, I both try to show what is being done and its theoretical implications – thus demonstrating the explanatory relevance/power of available theories and how this study enhances theoretical insights.

**Chapter Six** entails conclusive reflections on the study. Specifically, the reflections are on: i) general conclusions from the empirical findings in the case of Kibaale; ii) the broader theoretical implications of these empirical findings and, iii) suggestions for further study.

## 1.2 Context of the Study

Humanity is grappling with many social issues that have seemed to elude solutions up to today. One of these key problems facing contemporary society is that of co-existing with the various forms of difference that characterise it. “Difference animates key conflicts of our time. Claims about difference breathe life into cultural, ethnic, religious, and values conflict” (Brigg 2008, p.6). Among the key developments on account of which such tensions and conflicts are becoming more pronounced today, are the increased global and national contacts and interactions, and in particular extensive migrations, which have placed diverse practices of different cultures next to each other (Smith 2001; Sen 2006; Boas and Dunn 2013). “Increased mobility and migration have increased the number of multicultural societies, and thus the number of individuals with multiple categories of social identity” (Smith 2001, p.36). Coming together with these developments are increasing questions and anxiety about belonging – involving the transformation of boundaries to determine who belongs where, who belongs less, and who does not belong (Dunn 2009; Geschiere 2009; Geschiere 2010). Indeed, as observed by Kofi Annan in a lecture at the Global Centre for Pluralism (May 23, 2013), pluralism is one of the key challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The above developments raise serious concerns on how to live together with differences, how to negotiate the emerging contestations of belonging so as to foreclose social exclusion and violent conflict.

The diversity which gives rise to tension emerges in different societies would certainly be admitted as a permanent feature of all human societies, manifested in different forms and dynamics over time. According to An-na‘im (2008), this is what makes diversity a very important aspect for consideration in human relations, especially in view of how people negotiate their differences for sustainable pluralism. As An-na‘im connotes, pluralism is “... an ideology and system that accepts diversity as a positive value and facilitates constant negotiations and adjustments among varieties of difference without seeking or expecting to terminate any or all of them permanently” (2008, p.225). The way and extent to which this ideal is practically possible within a context of ethnic diversity with strained relations in an ethnically sensitive society is the main focus of this investigation.

Among the most notably sensitive differences in the African context is ethnicity, which has led to social tension, conflict, and exclusion of some groups from their full rights as citizens (Tusabe 2002; Ratcliffe 2004; Omotola 2008). In most African countries, there has developed a tendency towards closure in social formations that in the past tended to be open and intent on including ‘strangers’ (Boas and Dunn 2013). The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, where about a tenth of the population were exterminated, was largely a result of ethnic strife and suspicion between the Hutu and Tutsi (Mamdani 2001; Rukooko 2002; Guest 2004). According to Guest, “ethnic or religious differences have been the pretext for violence in Sudan, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia,

Eritrea, both Congos – the list goes on” (Guest 2004, p.110). One of the most recent large-scale ethnic clashes in Africa happened in Kenya in December 2007 and in South Sudan in 2013-2014. In Kenya, after disputed presidential elections, forty eight ethnic groups coalesced into pro-Kikuyu<sup>1</sup> and anti-Kikuyu alliances leading to the death of about one thousand five hundred people (Collier 2009; Yieke 2010). In South Sudan, the civil war that was mainly between the Nuer and Dinka led to loss of thousands of lives and many people were displaced (Human Rights Watch 2014). What we should read into the various cases of ethnic conflict is that when engagement with ethnic difference goes wrong, the implications could be severe and, therefore, that it is important to understand how conditions under which pluralism can flourish could be developed.

However, the many cases of ethnic conflict that feature in the African story should not be interpreted to indicate that ethnic diversity in itself is problematic and/or bound by necessity to result into conflict and violence. When relations ensue in multiethnic encounters, this should be viewed as a function of the nature of engagement between communities. As Varshney (2002) observes, it is worthwhile to remember that ethnic conflicts are not always violent. “And despite having strong ethnic identities, groups can coexist peacefully with others by negotiating and resolving differences in a nonviolent or institutionalized way. To move from ethnic identities to ethnic conflict or to ethnic violence [as a necessary consequence] is to make an inadmissible analytic leap” (Varshney 2002, p.25). What is important is to understand the circumstances under which ethnic conflict may ensue or may lead to pluralism.

To illustrate the significance of this study in the context of Uganda, let us now turn to the ethnic landscape in the country in general and then Kibaale, the site of study, in particular. In its *Vision 2025*<sup>2</sup>, where it commits itself to the task of carefully managing ethnic diversity in the country, the Uganda Government acknowledges that though very beautiful in almost all ways, “Uganda has been, regrettably, really rotten from within in terms of ethnic conflicts” (Republic of Uganda 1998, p.303). To substantiate the above strong statement, among others, it highlights the following violent ethnic confrontations in Uganda’s history:

The uprising of the Bamba and Bakonzo against the Batooro and the Central Government in 1962; the 1966 confrontation between the Baganda ethnic group and the Central Government [in which the latter deposed the former’s king by military force] which was deemed to be Northern [in inclination]; the wanton and brutal massacres of members of the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups during the Amin regime; the equally wanton and brutal retribution by these latter groups against ethnic groups from the West Nile region – Idi Amin’s home region – after the fall of Idi Amin; the war in the Luwero Triangle; and ... the ... civil war in the north – 1986-2006 (Republic of Uganda 1998, p.303).

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<sup>1</sup> The Kikuyu are the biggest ethnic group in Kenya. Although the violent conflict was sparked by the disputed presidential elections, the tension between the Kikuyu and some other Kenyan ethnic groups (such as the Luo) had been building over time.

<sup>2</sup> With the theme ‘Prosperous people, harmonious nation and beautiful country’, *Vision 2025* is Government of Uganda strategic document that reflects the country’s history, core values and aspirations in terms of objectives and goals.

Though based on broader ideological reasons, the war that brought President Museveni into power in 1986 was to an extent perceived as a war of the Southerners against the Northerners who were known by the derogatory term ‘Anyanya’. The twenty-year Northern war that followed Museveni’s ascent to power also bore an ethnic twist as a response of the Northerners to perceived deliberate marginalisation by the ‘Southerner Government’.

With over sixty five ethnic groups (Kabanankye and Kwagala 2007), Uganda is one of the ethnically very diverse African countries. Most of the people are Bantu<sup>3</sup>-speaking and the majority of the population lives in the south of the country. Bantu-speaking people constitute about 70 per cent of Uganda’s population while Nilotic groups make up about 25 per cent. The Nilotics are mainly composed of the Acholi, the Langi and the Alur ethnic groups (about 15 per cent) from the north; and the Iteso and Karamojong (about 10 per cent) from the north-eastern part of the country (Mwakikagile 2009). Of these, the Baganda in Buganda Kingdom are the largest with 17 per cent of the country’s population.

The 2002 Uganda National Population and Housing Census report (the most recent Census) places other ethnic groups as follows: Banyankore (9.8 per cent), Basoga (8.6 per cent), Bakiga (7.0 per cent), Iteso (6.6 per cent), Langi (6.2 per cent), Acholi (4.8 per cent), Bagisu (4.7 per cent), Lugbara (4.3 per cent), and other Ugandans from smaller ethnic groups are put at 30.7 per cent. In Kibaale District, the Banyoro are the ‘indigenous’ ethnic community. The 2002 Census Report indicates that there are 24 main ‘tribes’<sup>4</sup> living in Kibaale. They are distributed as indicated in Table 1 below:

**Table 2: Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Kibaale District - 2002**

<b>Tribe</b>	Banyoro	Bakiga	Alur	Bagungu	Acholi	Lugbara	Bafumbira	Chope
<b>Population</b>	193,555	126,312	3,240	373	326	574	32,241	3,240
<b>Tribe</b>								
<b>Tribe</b>	Baruli	Bakhonzo	Batoro	Banyankore	Banyarwanda	Kebu	Bagisu	Langi
<b>Population</b>	78	11,742	8,352	9,256	3,331	62	422	119
<b>Tribe</b>								
<b>Tribe</b>	Iteso	Lendu	Baamba	Basoga	Bahororo	Banyore	Baganda	Bagwere
<b>Population</b>	192	85	2,261	637	634	223	4,475	252

**Source: Republic of Uganda (2005)**

<sup>3</sup> The Bantu-speaking people are a group of people who speak related languages and have relatively similar social characteristics. They occupy a large part of Zaire and southern as well as eastern Africa and are said to have originated from somewhere in the Congo region of central Africa and spread rapidly to the Southern and eastern Africa. Today, more than one half of the population of Uganda are Bantu-speaking (<http://www.ugandatragelguide.com/bantu-people.html> accessed on 24th July 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Although the word tribe is being abandoned today in anthropological and sociological circles, largely due to its demeaning colonial roots, in several parts of Africa, and in Uganda in particular, it has been sanitised and is still widely used to denote ‘ethnic group’ in a non-derogatory sense. However, for this study to fit into wider discourse on ethnicity, the word tribe is avoided except where cited from elsewhere.

The total population of immigrants (including what the Census labels as ‘small tribes’) is at 212,327 while the Banyoro are 193,555. It thus indicates the immigrants group to be larger than the native group, which phenomenon, as will be later discussed, also informs the tension in the district. However, as shall be shown in this study, the numeric factor is only one among others.

According to an Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues Report (Republic of Uganda 2006), Kibaale also accommodates 3,900 people from other small tribes including: the Babukusu, Bagwe, Bahehe, Bakenyi, Banyara, Basamia, Jopadhola, Kumam, Sabiny, Dodoth, Ethur, Teuso, Jie, Jonam, Kakwa, Karimojong, Kuku, Madi, Mening, Mvumba, Napore, Nubi, Nyangia, Pokot, Tepeth, Vonoma, Babwisi, Banyabindi, Basongora, Batagwenda, Batuku, and Batwa. The report indicates that, as of 2002, Kibaale’s total population was 405,882, with a high growth rate of 5.2 compared to the national rate of 3.3. The next sub-section, I explain the genesis of the above demographic phenomenon and its implications to pluralism in Kibaale District.

### **1.2.1 The Genesis of Ethnic Tension in the Kibaale Context**

Kibaale District, which is part of Bunyoro Kingdom<sup>5</sup>, located in western Uganda, has been one of the vivid hotspots of ethnic tension at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Uganda. However, like with most forms of socio-political organisation and relations in Africa (Mamdani 2001a, Mamdani 2004), the roots of this tension can be traced back to colonial times, and this helps us to both contextualise its complexity and meaningfully interrogate the possibilities of pluralism in light of all dimensions of the case.

In the 1890s, the British colonialists faced much resistance in establishing their rule in Bunyoro Kingdom. Hence, they resorted to collaborating with Buganda Kingdom (which had pre-colonial rivalry with the Banyoro over territory and might) to fight the Banyoro. This move marked the defeat of Bunyoro towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and, in appreciation for the support from Buganda and/or for strategic reasons, the British ‘donated’ a big and very culturally significant<sup>6</sup> fraction of Bunyoro land (six counties<sup>7</sup> – later to be known as the ‘lost counties’) to Buganda (Schelnberger 2005; Espeland 2006). Kiwanuka (1968) contends that it was more for strategic reasons than for appreciating Buganda’s wartime alliance that the counties were annexed to the latter. He argues that, the British appreciated the administrative structure of Buganda. They wanted to take advantage of it in Bunyoro as well through indirect rule, thereby helping to curb further resistance to their rule and reducing administrative costs.

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<sup>5</sup> Bunyoro kingdom is one among many ‘kingdoms’ in Uganda. These kingdoms are constitutionally viewed as cultural institutions and are not allowed to participate in political affairs.

<sup>6</sup> The cultural significance of the counties extended to Buganda are discussed further in Chapter Three.

<sup>7</sup> The number of counties actually given by the British to Buganda is still contested. Contrary to the popular account of six (or seven) counties, Kiwanuka (1968) and (Lwanga 2007) argue that only two counties (Buyaga and Bugangaizi) were extended to Buganda, the rest had already been conquered by Buganda. This study does not intend as part of its scope to verify what the true account is, but what is important to draw from this is that there was significant territorial lost by Bunyoro.

It should be observed that the territory curved off from Bunyoro was geographically larger than the original size of Buganda, too large to be ignored by Bunyoro. In humiliation of the Banyoro, through the authority of the British colonisers, Buganda effectively sent her chiefs to administrate and embark on ‘Bugandanising’ Bunyoro through entrenching Kiganda<sup>8</sup> language and culture and thereby deculturating the Banyoro (Kihumuro 1994). By force of law, Runyoro (the language of the Banyoro) was effectively banned from official communication and all the Banyoro had to adopt Baganda names. Up to today many Banyoro elders bear Baganda names. This psychological trauma still plays into the dynamics of current ethnic relations with the effect of triggering sporadic moments of xenophobia in fear of being dominated again. In some cases, it is simply used as a mobilisation scapegoat by opportunistic politicians to win favour on grounds of ethnicity and autochthony (Geschiere 2009).

In 1964 (after Uganda’s independence from British rule in 1962), as had been recommended by the colonialists at their departure, a referendum was held in two of the six ‘lost counties’ – Buyaga and Bugangaizi - that had been given to Buganda and the vote was in favour of returning the territories to Bunyoro. Consequently, Schelnberger (2005) reports that the Baganda chiefs and their agents were chased from Bunyoro with spears and machetes. But they left without giving up their legal ownership of the land and kept their official land titles for over 2,995 square miles (Republic of Uganda 2006). These land owners are locally known as ‘absentee landlords’. This situation left the Banyoro effectively as ‘squatters in their native land’ (Mirima 1999), who had to pay feudal dues to the absentee Baganda landlords. This caused bitterness fueling negative memories of domination.

Even though a Land Fund was established by force of the Land Act (1998) to, among other functions, buy out the absentee landlords from the area, much land still remains in the latter’s hands. The implementation of the Land Fund is complicated by the requirement of the same Act that “... any compulsory acquisition of land ... shall be at a fair market valuation assessed on a willing seller willing buyer basis”. Some absentee landlords are just not willing to sell their land.

In addition to the above described historic presence of the Baganda and the Banyoro people in Kibaale District, a number of other ethnic groups have been settling in this area over time. Some have settled through official state resettlement schemes. Most of these settlers are from western Uganda (mainly the Bakiga). The Government of Uganda *Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues* report (2006) indicates that about 300 Bakiga families were resettled in Ruteete – Kagadi in 1965 by the Government under an arrangement initiated by Kigezi region leaders in consultation with the Omukama<sup>9</sup> (King) of Bunyoro (Sir Tito Winyi). Another official resettlement scheme was the Bugangaizi resettlement scheme of 3,600 families in Nalweyo – Kisiita in 1993. The resettled group was of Bakiga who were previously evicted from Mpokya Forest Reserve in a bid to protect it from destruction.

<sup>8</sup> Adjective in reference to something ‘of the Baganda culture’.

<sup>9</sup> Refer to the Glossary of terms and referents before this chapter.

Due to the above resettlement schemes and other factors, such as voluntary immigration and high fertility rates, the largest population of the Bakiga (126,312) in Bunyoro Kingdom is found in Kibaale District (Republic of Uganda 2006, p.38). The resettlements together with other voluntary migrations into the area effectively tipped the demographic figures with the migrants out-numbering the indigenous group. This in itself may not have sparked off tension between the Banyoro and the migrants, as shall be later explained here. Rather it took the 'ethnicisation' of local politics amidst a numerical disadvantage on the side of the Banyoro to set the scene for conflict.

In observation of these series of resettlements, the Mubende Banyoro Committee, an ethnic pressure group formed in 1918 to 'fight' for Banyoro rights, felt that, by resettling groups of people there, Government turned their region into "a dumping ground of refugees and migrants" (Mubende Banyoro Committee Memorandum – MBC - 2005, in Republic of Uganda 2006, p.213). The MBC's Memorandum also indicates that this feeling is not helped by the claim that the Banyoro did not consent to Government's resettlement schemes.

Some of these new settlers were invited by the native Banyoro and were given land along forests in order to shield the Banyoro's gardens against vermin and wild animals (Nsamba-Gayiiya 2003). Some were given land by local chiefs for token payments while others bought it from the native Banyoro. Many more people have migrated to the area in search for land or/and following their relatives. Bunyoro has been a convenient place to resettle other Ugandans who were overpopulated in specific areas (especially Kabale and Kisoro districts) because the war between the British government and the kingdom from 1893 to 1899 and the diseases that broke out thereafter left the area severely depopulated (Kihumuro 1994; Republic of Uganda 2006).

Initially, the settlers were quite well received in the then sparsely populated area and they mainly served as labourers for the indigenous Banyoro. But with the increase in numbers of settlers, financial strength, and the attendant cut-throat competition for resources and power, inter-ethnic conflicts started to emerge in the wake of the 21st century (Green 2006). It should be noted that the migrants are not mere temporary residents. They are permanent resident citizens and, as such, have clear stakes in the political process. This complicates the ensuing ethnic bargains through ethno-political competition.

Large scale open violence took place between February and May 2002 when a Mukiga was elected as the District Chairman<sup>10</sup>. The sitting Muniyoro refused to hand over power to someone they considered to be a 'foreigner' and clashes ensued between Banyoro and settlers in some places. The Banyoro started to claim back land from non-Banyoro. Violence again emerged in April 2003 when news spread that land that belonged to Bakiga was being

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<sup>10</sup> This is the highest position at District level within Uganda's decentralised framework. It is also referred to as Local Council Five (LC 5) as the highest of the five local government councils. LC 4 is the County, LC 3 the Sub-county, LC 2 the Parish while LC 1 is the village.



allocated to the Banyoro by the District Land Board (Espeland 2007). The violence that followed left three people dead, several others injured, huts burnt, and livestock killed (Schelnberger 2005). In 2005, Schelnberger observed that the situation was calm but the conflict remained at a stage of high intensity where it could easily break out into open violence again. And the violence surely emerged before the elections of 2006 (Mugerwa May 30, 2015).

With a tendency of peaking during elections, the tension remains up to today. In the analysis of the Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues Committee, “the Banyoro think that they are being re-colonised while the other tribes think that their survival in the region will be guaranteed only if they are in charge” (2006, p.45). Such feelings seem to put the two sides on oppositional directions. To further complicate the case, sometimes Government intervention has only served to aggravate the tension. This is partly because it is viewed in terms of the side it would be taking in the Banyoro – *Bafuruki*<sup>11</sup> polar equation. After the *Mufuruki* (immigrant) LC 5 Chairman had been forced by Government to step down for a compromise replacement in 2002, Government felt that there was need to come up with a policy to prevent such a scenario from re-occurring. In a letter titled *Guidance on the Banyoro/Bafuruki Question* (July 2009), the President<sup>12</sup> - suggestively justifying the Banyoro’s rejection of non-indigenous leaders - asks:

- i) If the Bafuruki dominate political space in the area to which they migrated, where do the indigenous people of the area find another political space?
- ii) If the Bafuruki were more nationalistic, why could they not find some persons among the indigenous people and vote for them?
- iii) Can some people from indigenous groups successfully compete, politically in the areas of origin of the Bafuruki? If not, is this not an unequal relationship?
- iv) Suppose we were to infuse 100,000 Bafuruki into Acholi or Karamoja [other Ugandan ethnic communities], what would be the reaction? If the Acholis and Karamajongs were to react violently, would it mean that they are not Ugandan enough or would it be that the policy was wrong?

In an apparent condemnation of the migration of the Bakiga [the dominant immigrant group] into Kibaale, ‘an already enfeebled population [of the indigenous Banyoro] on account of history’, he argued that “horizontal rural migration by peasants after they have exhausted land in one area is not a progressive way of creating national integration. The more correct way is vertical migration, from the farm to the factory”. On account of the above contentions, as one of the possible solutions, in the same letter, the President proposed a 20-year affirmative action:

1. Ring-fencing the LC V [5] positions in the whole of Bunyoro region for the indigenous people; and also ring-fencing the sub-county leadership except for the sub-counties around the Kisiita and Luteete areas [the resettlement schemes].

<sup>11</sup> A local label for non-Banyoro that came into widespread use when the Banyoro – non-Banyoro conflict began. It literally means ‘immigrant’. The circumstances and implications of its origin and instrumentalisation are discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>12</sup> Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

2. Ring-fencing the positions of Members of Parliament in the whole of Bunyoro region for the indigenous people, except for the special constituencies created around Lutete [*sic*] and Kisiita resettlement schemes.

The President's suggestion was considerably lauded by the Banyoro. In a response written by Ford Mirima (September 3, 2009) on behalf of the Banyoro elders, they say:

"The Banyoro, understandably, fully support the president's position. They say that they have been victims of colonial suppression for generations, a marginalized minority, purposely kept backward to satisfy colonialists' policies, which policies [*sic*, policies] were unfortunately inherited by independent Uganda successive Governments even after the country attained independence. ... Banyoro's prayer is that these proposals reach cabinet, then go to parliament and are given the force of law so that they can be implemented."

However, some Banyoro, represented by the LC 5 Chairman of Masindi District (also within Bunyoro), felt that the suggested affirmative action was an insufficient concession. Instead, they suggested that: "For anybody to contest for any leadership position from Parish level to Member of Parliament, that person's paternal grandparent should have lived in Bunyoro by 1926" (Gyezaho 2009)<sup>13</sup>. This requirement would certainly disqualify most of the Bafuruki.

On the other hand, the President's suggestion was met with resistance and contempt from a wide section of the non-Banyoro within and outside Bunyoro. At the center of the reactions was a fundamental concern that such a measure was inconsistent with the procedural rules that constitute democracy. Commenting on the President's proposal in the *Abu Mayanja Memorial Lecture – August 7, 2009*, Mamdani felt that in such a suggestion:

The real shift is in the definition of citizenship. Nationalists defined citizenship as Ugandan, regardless of origin; Amin defined it as black Ugandan. But, today, it is proposed that the core rights of citizenship - the right to political representation - be defined on a tribal basis. The NRM<sup>14</sup> is the first government in the history of independent Uganda to propose a dilution of national citizenship in favor of a tribal citizenship. My argument is that if we adopt this proposal, we shall be returning to an arrangement resembling colonial rule<sup>15</sup>.

In a re-emphasis of his view of the relationship between contemporary African politics and colonial legacy (Mamdani 2004), Mamdani interprets the President's proposal as the usual reference to the colonial book in 'times of crisis'. Mamdani's view should be appreciated from the implication of the President's suggestion that indigenous groups are entitled to a wider set of rights than legitimate migrant groups/ individuals. Such a view goes contrary to a fundamental tenet of the Ugandan constitutional provision that "... all persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law" (Section 21, Art. 1).

<sup>13</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/200909180968.html> Viewed on August 25, 2011

<sup>14</sup> National Resistance Movement, which is the ruling party.

<sup>15</sup> [http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog\\_id=13](http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog_id=13) Viewed on August 25, 2011.

But on the other hand, the President's suggestion ought to also be assessed from the angle of a response to ethnic bargains based on historical marginalization despite 'indigenouness'. Viewed as affirmative action, if it is indeed true that the Banyoro are marginalised, the President's suggestion passes as just/ fair in a remedial sense. But this measure calls for delicate handling, not to give the impression that rights and privileges are extended to some sections of society by the state on the sheer basis of ethnicity.

In another move to resolve the tension, in 2010 the president passed a directive to the Attorney General and Minister of Local Government to create two new counties/constituencies. He said, "we need to split Buyaga with a new constituency centred around the former Lutete [Ruteete] refugee camp to cater for the Bafuruki, and also to split Bugangaizi, to create a county/constituency around Kisiita [resettlement scheme] to cater for the Bafuruki there" (Lumu 2010). Though the move was rejected by Bunyoro Kingdom, it was ultimately implemented. The idea seems to have been that of making sure that each group gets representation by their own at parliamentary and other local government levels<sup>16</sup>. Whether this can help to bring about short- and long-term harmony remains a lingering question. The subsequent 2011 elections were generally peaceful, but ethnic calculations were not completely out of the picture. There were strategic alliances on ethnic lines and, in some cases, deliberate moves to share constituency representation in parliament by ethnicity. The sustainability of such an arrangement is questionable.

Still in a bid to sort out Bunyoro's issues and in display of their significance, the Ministry for Bunyoro Affairs was created in 2011. The minister appointed to head the above ministry (Saleh Kamba) was neither from the area nor a Munyoro. In response to this development, the Prime Minister of Bunyoro Kingdom (Yabeezi Kiiza) said: "We thank the President for creating a ministry for us but the appointment of a minister who is not a Munyoro is a big concern for us. We have several people from Bunyoro who qualify to head it [the ministry]<sup>17</sup>". Eventually a Munyoro was appointed Minister in November 2012.

Even in appreciation of the Banyoro's history of marginalisation, the above response to the appointment of a non-Munyoro minister for Bunyoro Affairs together with the rejection of a non-Munyoro LC5 Chairman in Kibaale in 2002 seem to point to a nativist feeling among the Banyoro that issues of Bunyoro ought to be, first and foremost, their business to determine. But this is contested by some non-Banyoro and it raises questions about its implications to wider society if, after official endorsement, it spills into other areas in Uganda such as Karamoja and Luwero which have special ministries on grounds of affirmative action. Should they also ask for ministers from their areas? That could play against the spirit of national integration. It was also particularly curious that shortly after the President's letter in which he proposed ring-fencing was published, the Buganda Kingdom announced that they

<sup>16</sup> The creation of a constituency goes with creation of other sub-units there under such as LC III. Leadership of these is also through elections.

<sup>17</sup> <http://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/-/691252/1172156/-/format/xhtml/-/mg7veb/-/index.html> Viewd on August 11, 2011

were planning to count all their people and their origins<sup>18</sup>. More importantly, these contestations raised questions about the possibilities of pluralism amidst the ethnic differences in Kibaale.

An earlier study in the Pluralism Knowledge Program in Kibaale (2010) indicates that the Banyoro were not happy with what they call the arrogance of the Bakiga and their refusal to adopt Banyoro culture, respect their king (Omukama) and learn their language (Runyoro). The MBC also claimed that “due to arrogance the settlers have failed to be assimilated or learn the ways of the people who hosted them” (Republic of Uganda 2006, p.192). It is not well-received among a wide section of the Banyoro that a number of Bakiga still practice their own culture and speak their own languages and that they have even renamed some of the places in Kibaale giving them Rukiga<sup>19</sup> names.

On the other hand, in an open memo to the president from 36 ‘Leaders from the Non-Banyoro Community living in Kibaale District’, they argue that “We believe that non-Banyoro living in Bunyoro do not have to deny their culture and identity in order to be considered respectful. We also believe that respect for one community’s culture cannot be a one way street” (*The Observer*, 10 August 2009). In the same communiqué, the immigrants also express their conviction that it is their constitutional right to stand for any electoral position in the area, practice their culture, and legally settle where they wish.

The sentiments and line of events highlighted above serve to demonstrate the historically rooted complexity of the current ethnic sensitivity of Kibaale and call for inquiry into the possibility of pluralism in the area through the residents’ own perceptions. As the above account indicates, Kibaale was specifically selected for this study on account of the fact that it has been one of the predominant spots of ethnic tension/conflict in contemporary Uganda (Espeland 2007 and Nkurunziza 2011). Boulding’s classical definition of conflict as “a struggle over values, claims to scarce status, power and resources” (cited in Jeong 2008) is clearly exemplified by the Kibaale case. It further becomes a case for academic curiosity due to its complexity and entanglement in ethnic, historic, economic, cultural and political factors.

One would say that what we see here is a failure to acknowledge and negotiate differences. However, as argued by An-na‘im (2008), such failure does not have to be final or conclusive. “Since every failure holds a new possibility of success in the future, the question should always be what people can do to achieve the transformation of the permanent realities of difference into sustainable pluralism” (An-na‘im 2008, p.225). This is also in consideration of a very important observation that the people of Kibaale have co-existed peacefully from the 1960s to 2000. “Together they built community structures such as health centres, they sent their children to the same schools, worshipped at the same churches and they also

<sup>18</sup> See Gyezaho and Mwanje (05 August 2009). ‘Bafuruki hit back at President Museveni, Mengo to issue IDs to all Baganda’ From <http://www.mail-archive.com/ugandanet@kym.net/msg26575.html> Viewed on 13th march 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Rukiga is the language for the Bakiga.

intermarried” (Schelnberger 2005, p.30). Although Schelnberger’s observation does not necessarily imply that earlier interethnic relations were pluralist in nature, it points to the possibility that the people of Kibaale could imagine - based on their past and present experiences – how ethnic pluralism could be framed in their community. The rationale for a focus on people’s own perceptions in the Kibaale complexity is explained further in this chapter.

### **1.3 Primordialism and Constructivism as Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict**

The two most dominant theoretical frameworks which social scientists have used to understand and explain the existence and dynamics in and between ethnic groups are primordialism and constructivism (Hale 2008; Bayar 2009). This study is largely inclined towards a constructivist approach but, there are aspects of the primordialist theory, which will be brought into consideration. It is rightly observed by Hale (2004) that neither of the two theories is fully accurate and that they have great potential for cross-fertilisation. As such, the conceptual frames of both theories will be explored in this study by taking a synthetic outlook where, through a critique of each of the two theoretical lenses, a synthesis is developed which deems to offer a stronger account of how and why some ethnic conflicts persist and the circumstances under which pluralism is made possible in a multi-ethnic context.

#### **1.3.1 Primordialism**

The key argument of the primordialists (Shils 1957; Geertz 1963; Huntington 1996) is that extended kinship relations are the critical elements that hold ethnic groups together and provides them with their emotive power (Hale 2004). It is also held under the theory that ethnic conflicts are renewals of age-old antagonisms and hatreds.

Primordial conceptions of ethnicity focus on shared qualities such as: a common language, a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history and allegedly inherited physical or/and behavioural characteristics common to members of the group (Narrol cited in Poluha 1998). These are assumed by many primordialists to be ‘givens’. In this line, Geertz specifically defines primordial attachment as:

One that stems from the ‘givens’ of existence or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed givens of social existence; immediate contiguity and live connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These continuities of blood, speech, custom and so on are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one’s kinsman, one’s neighbour, one’s fellow believer *ipso facto* as the result not merely of personal attraction, tactical necessity, common interest or incurred moral obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself (cited in Rex 2002, p.90).

As Hale (2004) observes, primordialists have been generally misunderstood by many scholars to say that all elements of ethnicity are ‘actual givens’. Hale indicates that this view is

misleading as only Van den Berghe (1981) can be cited to have actually posited a biological basis for primordialism by arguing that humans have evolved a nepotism instinct that bases on any physical differences between people to produce group formation. But, as indicated in the Shils' (1957) seminal work on primordialism and the above widely cited piece from Geertz, primordialists tend to refer to 'assumed givens' rather than 'actual givens' of life. This is meant to highlight the critical element of perception – the idea that ethnic group members perceive themselves as held together by kinship ties (common blood histories), to be of common descent, and to hold similar customs. The factual value of these beliefs is another thing. What is important here for primordialists is that the perceptions inform group action/behaviour both in relation to each other within the group and to 'others'.

The other primordial idea related to that of givens is that "ethnic communities are persistent, resilient, robust, and capable of eliciting deep loyalty, intense attachment and strong motivation, and, in consequence, are particularly resistant to change" (Harowitz cited in Coetzee 2009). Contemporary ethnic conflicts are thus viewed as the renewal of age-old antagonisms (Roe 2005) – ones that antedate the formation of nation states. It is argued that ethnic identity systems take centuries to crystallise, but once they have been formed, they are difficult to change – they tend to strongly endure (Van Evera 2001; Bayar 2009). However, this is not to summarily deny the porosity of ethnic boundaries and possibility for change. In 'Primordialism Lives', Van Evera (2001, p.20), a self-avowed primordialist, enounces that "ethnic identities are not stamped on our genes" and admits that "ethnic identities are socially constructed".

Primordialists do not claim that members of ethnic groups inherit their mother tongue and other cultural elements genetically; rather they internalise these elements through socialisation by their families and wider society. "What is learned is so deeply entrenched within the society that recourse to certain ways of behaviour seems almost automatic: in otherwords they are seen as being in the group's nature" (Roe 2005, p.26). But this socialisation/ nurturing process is primordially determined because individuals may not be able to choose their parents or reconstruct another language as mother tongue later in their lives (Bayar 2009). It has been observed by Kasfir (1979), for example, that even where new ethnic groups were seen to emerge in sub-Saharan Africa, they did not emerge arbitrarily; they were constructed on the basis of assumed kinship, language, geography and other real and perceived commonalities. Van den Berghe (1981) and Horowitz (1985) have thus argued that political entrepreneurs cannot create an instant ethnic group or bring an ethnic identity into play by creating a myth, since a myth has to be rooted in history (or perceived to be so). Thus Smith (2000) concludes that symbols unifying ethnic groups can be ancient and enduring even though groups can invoke them in new ways and for new purposes at different points in time.

The other important aspect of primordialism to explain here is what brings about strong emotional attachment to one's ethnic group/ between members of an ethnic group. This would also help us understand why political mobilisation along ethnic identity tends to be

rather easy and often successful. It is important for this study to understand why ethnicity is capable of eliciting such deep loyalty. This is the part of primordialism that this study integrates with constructivist considerations.

Seminal primordialists like Shils (1957) and Geertz (1963) talk of 'primordial affinities' and 'personal attachments' that are sometimes referred to as 'intense' but they do not explain the root of such ethnic affect and why it tends to be stronger than other forms of social identity such as class. However, subsequent primordialists and other scholars who do not exclusively identify with this school of thought have dwelt on the descriptive premises of Shils and Geertz in particular to explain the phenomenon, especially by drawing from psychological theory.

To be able to explain ethnic emotional attachment, it is crucial to start by highlighting the meaning of an 'ethnic group'. Weber (1978) famously defined an ethnic group as a set of people who have common points of reference including perceptions of common descent, history, fate, and culture, which usually indicates some mix of language, physical appearance, and the ritual regulation of life (cited in Hale 2004). It is argued by primordialists that it is mainly because of the deep entrenchment of the elements constituting ethnicity in society that people tend to strongly (Roe 2005). They are attributes that people are socialised into from early childhood thus making them seem obvious and unchangeable; things which when threatened one would feel that an important aspect of their being is touched.

Hale (2004) indicates that, more than many other distinctions among people (identities), ethnic markers tend to be readily accessible in and to fit well with situations that are directly relevant to people's well-being. Sharing language, for example, removes barriers to communication. Due to the importance of communication in social life, the presence of a communication barrier with another group makes it relatively easier to relate/bond with members of one's own ethnic group. Hale also observes that the communication barrier makes it easier to believe 'distorted' explanations for unexpected behaviour of the 'other' group's members. And thirdly, where a group's ethnic markers involve visible physical differences, they also reinforce ethnic attachment/ affect. They tend to be powerfully situationally accessible, especially where, for historical reasons, they correspond plausibly to important political, economic, or/and social divides.

Evolutionary psychology has particularly added explanatory significance to the primordialist idea of perceptions of kinship ties within ethnic groups (Harvey 2000). It has been suggested by social identity theorists that humans have a tendency to differentiate into groups to provide order and meaning to situations (Birnir 2007). Taking this deeper, in his 'ethnic nepotism theory', Van den Berghe suggests that, in group dynamics, humans have an evolutionary predisposition to favour kin over non-kin and closer kin over distant kin (cited in Bayar 2009). In his article 'Reconsidering Primordialism', Bayar (2009) contends that the above psychological inclination is reinforced by social factors in boosting the significance of assumed kinship because: a) common language, geography, and culture facilitate cooperation

among co-ethnics and b) the above similarities (real and assumed) bring additional advantages for survival because they provide group members with relative certainty about each other's behaviour. It is the factors above individually or in various combinations that explain why people would be so strongly attached to their ethnic groups thus making ethnic identity relatively easier to mobilise compared to other social identities.

Primordialism could partially serve to analyse ethnic conflict and exclusion in Uganda especially in relation to emotional ethnic ties and allegiance to perceived common ancestry, which exists among most ethnic groups in Uganda. Among the Baganda, for example, one way of expressing one's Baganda identity is by reciting ancestry (a list of ancestors). It is also used as a means of identifying (and sometimes excluding) non-Baganda. And, in emphasis of common ancestry, the Baganda also identify themselves as *bazzukulu ba Kintu* (grand children of Kintu – the mythical first Muganda). It should however be noted that, just as many other ethnic groups in Uganda, the Baganda group has over time assimilated several other peoples into its fold, who are now also identified as Baganda. Therefore, although there could be some ethnic groups that actually have common ancestry, in some cases the primordial explanation of ethnicity by common ancestry should be understood as perceived. Such ancestral accounts often contradict the known biological and social history of an ethnic community. I would rather argue that although ethnic groups themselves tend to endure, around some primordial attributes, the boundaries of ethnicity tend to shift, narrowing or broadening in accordance with specific needs of political mobilisation at different times. It is for this reason that descent as an ethnic marker is often selectively cited or may matter on some occasions and sometimes not.

In his famous article and later a book, *The Clash of Civilisations* (1993, 1996), Huntington, an influential primordialist, views different ethnic and religious groups as civilisations which are defined by their cultural differences. He identifies differences in language, ethnicity, family, nation, religion, common traditions and history, which he says are “not only real; they are basic” (p.22). Conflict between different civilisations is thus mainly based on cultural differences, which he considers less mutable and therefore less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones. In prediction of the ‘return of traditional rivalries’, he argues that new waves of conflict across the globe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be a direct result of competing cultural, as in civilizational, identities.

Without considering the arguably influential factors of economic competition and political manipulation which are often entangled within ethnic tension, Huntington argues that the differences of language, ethnicity, culture, and history do not merely exacerbate conflict, but they are the underlying cause. He predicts that with the world becoming a smaller place, increased interaction, will “intensify civilization consciousness” and enhance group “awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.” The civilisation consciousness in turn invigorates differences and animosities, which (are thought to) stretch back deep into history. Some of his observations have been analytically important in making sense of ‘terrorism’ in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.



Huntington seems to have aimed at explaining large-scale conflicts but, in so doing, he comes up with very big brush strokes that fail to cater for some particular details within his civilisational categories. The major civilisations that Huntington picks out include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and ‘possibly’ African civilization. His explanation of the ‘African civilisation’ is crowded in ambiguity and false analysis. He puts all attention on religious identity (Christian and Islam) as the actual and potential cause of conflict on the continent and selectively cites examples (Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, etc) that serve his thesis while ignoring conflicts along other identity lines that have occurred in countries like Rwanda and Uganda.

Casting doubt on Huntington’s primordial analysis, Roe remarks that “while Huntington’s thesis seeks to propound a systematic explanation for violence and war, his conclusions appear every bit as deterministic as those who proffer ancient hatred explanations” (2005, p.27). And its weakness precisely lies in its deterministic reductionism in explaining conflicts some of which may not be rooted in histories of hatred. Reinforcing Roe’s criticism, Sen adds that within Huntington’s determinism:

Modern conflicts, which cannot be adequately analysed without going into contemporary events and machinations, are then interpreted as ancient feuds which allegedly place today’s players in preordained roles in an allegedly ancestral play. As a result, the ‘civilisational’ approach to contemporary conflicts (in grander or lesser versions) serves as a major intellectual barrier to focusing more fully on prevailing politics and to investigating the processes and dynamics of contemporary incitements to violence (Sen 2006, p.43).

Moreover, to add to Roe and Sen’s critique, as shall be seen later, whereas the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale, for example, plays a role in contemporary tension in the area, that may not lead us to the reductionist conclusion that elevates it at the under-consideration of contemporary political manoeuvres/manipulations and other relevant explanations.

In *The Clash within Civilisations*, Senghaas further criticises Huntington’s thesis as being essentialist. “... he [Huntington] regards civilizations as not adaptable and changeable over centuries. Deep down, they remain constant, and they tend to process external influences so as to guarantee continuity” (Sen 2002, p.73). Moreover, in his monistic identification of cultures as singular civilisations, Huntington does not pay sufficient attention to the plurality of identities ‘within’ (Sen 2006) and, by extension, the clashes within. He underestimates the extent of the internal diversities<sup>20</sup> within his civilisational categories and the interactional porosity of the civilisational borders that he presents as though they were rigid boxes frozen in time.

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<sup>20</sup> Sen (2006) highlights divisions between the rich and the poor, between members of different classes and occupations, between people of different politics (political affiliation), and between language groups. Divisions of religion, gender, and age group could be added to Sen’s list.

Senghaas argues that “holistic statements have never been analytically useful and cannot be justified today in the face of growing cultural conflicts within civilisations” (p.74). In the same line of critique, in her study entitled *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence and India’s Future*, Nussbaum argues that “thinking in terms of a ‘clash of civilisations’ ... leads us to ignore both the heterogeneity of all known civilisations and the inter-penetration and mutual influence among cultures that is a fact of human history” (Nussbaum 2007, p.7). In studying ethnicity we should not ignore both ‘internal diversity’ and ‘cultural borrowing’.

On the whole, while helpful in explaining ethnic attachment, affect and the endurance of ethnic groups, primordialist theories would not adequately explain all aspects of Uganda’s ethnic rivalries. For example, primordialism does not account for the ethnic conflicts in Uganda that originate from political manipulation of the ‘ethnic card’ (Kigongo 1995; Muhereza and Otim 1998; Storey 2002; Mamdani 2004; Nsamba et al. 2007). This is in reference to ethnic conflicts that are fuelled by politicians as they pit ethnic groups against each other for political scores. Guest observes that:

Most of Africa’s ethnic strife has its roots in the manipulation of tribal loyalties by the colonial authorities [and some post-independence African leaders]. And most of today’s conflicts owe their persistence to modern politics, not primordial passions (Guest 2004, p.111).

Citing the example of Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, Guest argues that a primordial ‘ancient hatreds’ explanation of the violence cannot suffice. Just as Mamdani (2001a), he admits that it is true the Hutus always hated the Tutsis and vice versa but that:

“Hutus and Tutsis have only thrown themselves at each other’s throats since their political leaders started urging them to. The genocide was carefully planned by a small clique of criminals, to maintain their grip on power. They were not forced to carry it out by passions beyond their control, or by the irresistible tide of history (Mamdani 2001a pp. 112-113).”

The history of the Hutu-Tutsi relations, especially in light of colonial favouritism for the Tutsi (Mamdani 2001a), was of course connected to the genocide but not a sufficient reason for it. Besides, even history is constructed through socio-political dynamics, not a ‘given’.

Primordialism also fails to explain the conflicts emerging from perceived and actual discrimination, especially in the distribution of power and other resources (Smith 1994). Moreover, as remarked by Okuku (2002), some primordial conceptions look at ethnicity from a static and negative stance with a tacit suggestion that ethnic rivalries can never be addressed, as though ethnic pluralism is an impossibility. But ethnicity is never static since new forms or characteristics are perpetually created because also what is considered to be significant changes over time (Bacova 1998, Paloha 1998, and Gunaratman 2003). “This flexibility makes it possible for members of ethnic groups to communicate their ethnicity in different ways” (Poluha 1998, p.33). In Gunaratman’s view, ethnicity is not an objective, stable, homogenous category but is produced and animated by changing, complicated and uneven interactions between social processes and individual experience, and thus better

addressed using constructivist theory. Indeed, as explained earlier, some contemporary primordialists (Van Evera 2001; Bayar 2002) have outrightly conceded to the constructedness of some aspects of ethnicity.

More importantly for this study, an *exclusive* primordialist account also fails to explain why in some cases there are long periods of peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups, or why these waves of ethnic consciousness and tension take place at particular times (Coetzee 2009). It also fails to explain why ethnic groups seemingly appear, disappear, and sometimes re-appear throughout history. A constructivist outlook critically addresses some of primordialism's presuppositions. However, as earlier explained, the primordial explanation of affect/ strong attachment within ethnic groups is considered important in this study. I synthesise that part of primordialism with constructivism, especially in explaining why 'elites' looking for advantage often choose to mobilise masses along ethnic identity.

### ***1.3.2 Constructivism***

The constructivist point of departure is in the generic view that social reality is not given to us and that meaning is always constructed. In an interview with Carpentier and Cammaerts (2006, p.4), Mouffe argues that "there is no meaning that is just essentially given to us; there is no essence of the social, it is always constructed. The social is always the result of a hegemonic articulation; every type of social order is the product of a hegemony as a specific political articulation". Because every social order is a hegemonic order, no social order is final for it can always be challenged by a counter-hegemonic move (Mouffe in an interview with Hansen and Sonnichsen 2014). The construction of social order is viewed as political because it is established through the exclusion of other possibilities and as an expression of a particular structure of power relations (Mouffe 2014).

Constructivists emphasise that, just like ethnicity itself, ethnic conflicts are socially constructed through the hegemonic agency of those competing for positions of advantage in the modern state (Mamdani 2004). The competition could be for jobs, political positions, and economic interests. As such, it is the competitive threats (real or imagined) that bring people together (Weber 1922, Barth 1969, Smith 1994 and Coetzee 2009). In the social constructivist thesis, it is the level of threat from the 'out-group/s' and nature of political mobilisation that will determine the emergence or non-emergence of inter-ethnic conflict.

Scholars such as Epstein (1958) and Gluckman (1960) noted that in some situations, such as in labour relations, appeals to class solidarity dominate appeals to ethnic identity; in other settings, such as during elections, appeals to ethnic interests dominate those to class solidarity. These findings were later confirmed in studies by Wolpe (1970) and Melson (1971) and gave rise to the notion of 'situational selection'. By this notion is implied the idea that ethnicity is invoked according to circumstances; it is context-related (Forster et al. 2000; Smith 2001; Omotola 2008). They provided a point of entry for rational choice theory to approach the study of cultural and identity politics.

Rational choice theories hold that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them (Scott 2000; Brittain 2006). Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Coleman 1973; Heath 1976: 3; Carling 1992: 27). As such, “a particular set of preferences within a fixed array of possible choices shapes the expectations of actors about the outcome in a search for the greatest benefits” (Jeong 2008, pp.66-67). In Hempel’s view, “individuals will consciously self-identify on the basis of ethnicity when ethnic membership to one or another group is perceived to be instrumental in accessing valued goods” (cited in Coetzee 2009). Choices of ethnic affiliation are based on rational awareness, not closeness, but the need for protection of common (and sometimes selfish) interests.

As such, it is the competitive threat that brings people together. Such threats could be real or imagined/perceived. In some cases, “it is not the reality of competition that counts; it is a perception that the out-group wishes to increase its share of valued resources and statuses at the expense of the in-group” (Bobo and Hatchings cited in Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007, p.80). The competition around which calculations are made could be about jobs, political positions, and economic interests. It is important to look out for and examine these dynamics in the context of Kibaale, especially because there is indication that the tension rotates around political positions, socio-economic status, and land. But it is also important to interrogate the significance of emotions as people’s actions may not always be guided by clearly thought out reasons as the rational choice theory suggests.

Through the lenses of rational choice theory, an individual understands the community as an instrument for achieving his/her goals. These bonds of an individual to a community are characterized as cool-headed, formal, intentional, purposeful, requiring conscious loyalty and formed on the basis of choice, but also as vague, temporary, intermittent and routine (Bacova 1998, p.33).

Thus, with regard to ethnicity, ethnic identification could be based on the perceived benefits and costs. This manifests ethnicity as a resource to be mobilised, or an instrument to be used, by particular groups and individuals in pursuit of political and economic ends (Smith 1994; Coetzee 2009). As in the social contract theory, members of an ethnic group tacitly consent to belong to the group in anticipation of some benefit. These benefits are weighed against life outside the group. In such an arrangement, allegiance to an ethnic group would be on condition that the reasons for belonging to the group are respected. Short of that, the membership loses meaning and a different sort of organisation would have to be sought.

Through ‘situational selection’, people organise their perceptions and choices depending on how an issue is framed. Ethnic identities are not eroded but rather retained; supplemented with new identities, such as that of a worker; and, in some settings, activated (Posner 2004). When class solidarity is valuable, ethnic differences may be set aside; when competing for the spoils of office, they could be re-affirmed. Viewed from this perspective, ethnicity can be

seen as a choice or a strategy (Smith 1994), the instrumental value of which varies with the situation.

In this situational context of ethnicity, it is important to note the behaviour of leaders/elites who seek to mobilise collective action or support. As Posner (2004) demonstrates, such leaders tend to choose purposefully, assessing the relative advantages of ethnic mobilisation against other means of recruiting political support. Such Machiavellian<sup>21</sup> elites sometimes manipulate otherwise peaceful, cooperative populations into ‘ethnic frenzies’ or less intense forms of ethnic conflict when they have the desire and the opportunity to do so (Hale 2008). In such cases, as observed by Mamdani (2001a) and Guest (2004) in the case of the Rwanda genocide, ethnic tension cannot be said to be caused by ethnic passions per se. Rather, ethnicity is simply “a discourse that guilty elites invoke to obscure the real, venal causes of violence that they incite” (Brass cited in Hale 2008, p.25). In studying ethnic tension therefore, it is important to pay keen attention to the role of elites in shaping ethnic relations, especially in the political dynamics of the context being studied.

Hale observes that the ‘elite manipulation’ argument begs some very important questions. The first is: “*If ethnicity has no inherent meaning for individuals, why do followers follow the elites’ calls to ethnic battle?*” (Hale 2008, p.25). To this he points out explanations that have been put forward by various scholars. Citing Snyder’s *From Voting to Violence* (2000), one of the possible explanations he gives is that because elites tend to control/dominate mass media, they would very easily control how people think. It is also possible that, in the event of inter-ethnic violence, the masses expect to benefit somehow. This could be through opportunities to loot, revenge on a neighbour who happens to fall in the category of the enemy, exercise greater power personally or/ and to reap material or political benefits through massive ethnic patronage networks led by the elite.

The second question is: “*Since the ways people can be categorized are nearly infinite, why is it that elites so often invoke ethnic themes as their way of rallying or coordinating the masses?*” (*Ibid.* p.27). Why would ethnicity be the ‘master narrative’ amidst several possible others? This question suggests that there could be something emotive about ethnic identity or that there could be some sort of utility that people derive from merely belonging to an ethnic group. However, as argued by Mamdani (2001a), the significance of ethnicity is historically constructed and, often, legally and institutionally reproduced as opposed to being instantly available for manipulation. Hale is also not right in insinuating that elites ‘more often’ invoke ethnic themes as their way of rallying the masses. We note that the identity along which to mobilise is often situationally selected. In India, for example, it is more along the lines of religion and caste (Nussbaum 2007), and in other contexts it could be on economic class lines – depending on the circumstances and what has been historically or at the moment shaped to be the important social identity.

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<sup>21</sup> For Machiavellians, the end justifies the means used to achieve it.

However, social constructivism, and thus the rational choice approach, bears one important weakness that this study is keen to isolate from its constructivist foundation. It underrates the role of the affective element in ethnic ties. As explained under primordialism earlier, some people identify with and pay strong allegiance to their ethnic groups even when there are no political or/and economic benefits in sight. “Choice cannot be reduced summarily to maximising utility, but may be influenced by habit, custom, a sense of duty, emotional attachment, etc” (Brittain 2006, p. 158). It can still be argued that such disinterested ethnic attachment is socially constructed but not necessarily around calculated interests.

In extension and reinforcement of the social constructivist theory, this study widely draws from Shoup’s (2008) *theory of conflict and cooperation in counterbalanced states* which more specifically engages with the concepts and relations that we focus on. Although his explanation mainly attempts to explain inter-ethnic power relations at state level, I also find it instrumental in understanding local levels such as Kibaale. I tailor Shoup’s theory with Mamdani’s analysis of post-colonial ethnic dynamics in *Citizen and Subject* (2004) and in *When Victims Become Killers* (2001) where he explains ethnic conflict in the context of the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Shoup defines a *counterbalanced society* as one where one ethnic community demands political priority on the basis of ethnic myths of indigeneness while another ethnic group that is ‘not indigenous’ controls the majority of the economic assets. Myths signify beliefs held in common and often regurgitated as truisms (Mamdani 2001a) by a large group of people that can give action and events a particular meaning. These would therefore also include real historical events that have capacity to generate a particular effect on the practices and worldview of individuals. Benvenisti further explains that:

Myths are not illusions, they are a jumble of real and legendary events ... the minute they are absorbed, they become truer than reality itself . . . to force people to confront objective truth cannot succeed because it amounts to an attack on the collective self-identity. It is therefore met with anger (Benvenisti 1995, p.200).

In the context of Kibaale, the Banyoro would constitute the indigenous category while the immigrants (*Bafuruki*) represent the economic group that have strongly established themselves in business and trade. But this is not to claim that all immigrants are expected to be in an economically stronger position than all the Banyoro. Rather, it is only to generically indicate the comparative economic salience of the immigrants as a group in relation to the Banyoro. This categorisation forms the springboard for operationally positioning the two groups on which the study is centred but without assuming that there is uniformity of perception, motivation and action within each of the groups. Although conflict with other groups increases solidarity and unity within the group (Coser cited in Oberschall 2007, p.29), collective identity tends to essentialise identity and impose on the relevant groups a unity of views and experiences they do not, and cannot, have (Parekh 2008). The possibility of intra-group diversity is acknowledged.

Shoup argues that the state of counterbalance harbours opportunities for political extremists and/or opportunists to exploit both the economic gap between the groups and, perhaps more importantly, possible fears of ethnic domination in order to achieve their political objectives. As argued by the rational choice theorists above, such political exploitation presents serious risks of ethnic conflict, even violence. But, is political manipulation always bound to succeed in clashing ethnic groups for political scores?

I here forward that ethnic conflict is "... a function of both the latent social dissatisfaction necessary to influence individuals to ethnically mobilise and the institutional incentives that are sufficient to allow ethnic extremists to exploit such mobilisation" (Shoup 2008, p.15). Mobilisation along ethnic lines finds fertile grounds in the presence of a shared sense of anger or indignity brought about by differences in group status. In the tension that might ensue, individual people rally behind the identity of the group whose interests they identify with hence increasing ethnic consciousness (Soeters 2005). This reactive cohesion within the group tends to be in direct relation to the growing sense of animosity between the groups in tension. However, as Mamdani (2001a) argues, the connection between threats to group interests/ constraints and conflict is not a necessary one. The choice people make in response is rather mediated through how they understand and explain these constraints and the resources they can garner to change them. This therefore calls for a careful analysis in approaching explanations for conflict based on competition for resources. It is imperative to dig into the intricate circumstances and dynamics in competition that determine the nature of outcome in inter-group relations.

The indigenous group will most likely seek political control as a way to maintain both a sense of group dignity and ethnic survival. In *The Perils of Belonging* (2009), Geschiere argues that such dynamics that often play out in a dichotomisation of autochthons ('sons of the soil' [and daughters]) and strangers are propelled by changes in administrative structures<sup>22</sup> that in turn trigger obsession with belonging. Autochthony is often appealed to because it is seen to offer a self-evident rationale for inclusion (and exclusion) and demand for more citizenship rights. This is even much more likely in a post-colonial setting characterised by a colonial legacy of politicising indigeneity as a basis for rights and a mode of citizenship that denies full citizenship to residents it brands as ethnic strangers (Mamdani 2001a). Shoup (2008) and Geschiere (2009) indicate that conflict is bound to result when such political control sought by the indigenous group is either put or perceived by the indigenous community to be at risk of being usurped by the immigrant group ('ethnic strangers'). More importantly, whatever the threat, it does not have to be real or pressing, what is significant is how it is perceived. Thus the researcher is reminded to pay special attention to perceptions within the local community in this study.

The immigrants on the other hand are bound to seek to protect their property rights and other entitlements from being violated by the indigenous group. To this effect, in the event of a 'threat' (real or imagined), they will also seek to solve their problems through political

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<sup>22</sup> In Uganda this is vividly exemplified by the dynamics following the decentralised system of governance in the 1990s. These dynamics are extensively discussed in Chapter Four.

mobilisation so as to acquire sufficient political strength to address the threat. But this will come with the effect of equipping the indigenous group (or factions of them) with ‘evidence’ that their fears of being dominated are justified and, probably, result into conflict. Soeters (2005), Geschiere (2009, 2010) predict that in such a situation, group binding becomes stronger on either side and implies an explicit antithesis between ‘us’ and ‘them’, often with attendant stereotypes being solidified and given more social significance. Autostereotypes (about a group as seen by themselves) tend to put the group in a self-serving positive light while heterostereotypes (about the other group) will contain negative connotations, even when the behaviour is the same.

The foregoing theoretical explanations suggest the need to make keen interrogation of the history of the ethnic relations in the context of Kibaale. In this, we need to gain more understanding of the dynamics that in the past have both led to co-existence and to conflict; the claims and counter-claims in the narratives of both groups; and the different players and how their agency shapes the ethnic relations. The perceptions of the people themselves in their actual local context and the instrumentalisation of these perceptions, significantly affect how these ethnic relations are shaped. Therefore this study will start by accessing these local perceptions as important building blocks to further analysis.

One important question remains unexplained by the above projections. That is, what then enhances favourable conditions for inter-ethnic co-existence and cooperation? The case of Kibaale indicates that there are periods when the different groups have peacefully co-existed (Schelnberger 2005). What circumstances enable this phenomenon? In this study I frame the question broadly as an investigation into the circumstances and processes that make pluralism possible in sensitive multi-ethnic settings akin to what Shoup refers to as counterbalanced multi-ethnic communities. Shoup uses the concept of cooperation to describe co-existence, which falls within the understanding of pluralism adopted in this study. That is, the active [but sometimes spontaneous] seeking of understanding across lines of difference<sup>23</sup>. It is an attempt to dialogically come to terms with the angularities of diversity in ways that create spaces for co-existence. Clearly then, pluralism is based on an admission that social relations are subject to construction through people’s choices and actions.

In some ways, both the indigenous and the immigrant groups need each other. Shoup argues that this utilitarian consideration offers some minimal incentives for cooperation. The indigenous group will claim political dominance, which necessitate the immigrant group to take a politically subordinate role but with a free rein in the economy. In such a setting, the immigrant group will count on protection of their property rights and a conducive environment for prosperity. On their side, the indigenous group will realise an area development boost, increased tax revenues, and welfare benefits produced by a well-functioning economy. For such relations to hold, there should be no threats, which would equip and send either side (especially their extremists) into mobilising along ethnic lines.

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<sup>23</sup> [http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010



However, the above circumstances for cooperation seem very delicate, especially within a democratic arrangement where there is commitment to ensuring equal right to political participation. The assumption that the immigrant group will accept to stay out of politics once they get assurance for protection of their economic interests is apparently overstretched/ asking too much and requires more investigation. There is also a possibility that the indigenous group could use its political position to marginalise the immigrants despite the economic gains they provide. Nevertheless, by investigating the possibilities for pluralism in Kibaale, I focus on viability of the above suggested arrangement. It is indicated in the context of the study that immigrants are already active in the politics of Kibaale and that this has resulted into bouts of tension and violence. It thus seems relevant to study how immigrant groups motivate their pursuit of political positions. Is it simply out of an urge to participate in the administration of the area like others, or/and a move to counter perceived and/or real threats to their well-being as a group? And, whatever their motivation, it is also important to establish how the immigrants' entry into politics is perceived by the indigenous group, the influence of such perceptions on inter-ethnic relations, and, if in any way, how the two groups engage with such realities for co-existence. These dynamics are discussed in Chapter Five.

Shoup argues that, to reinforce and sustain cooperation, there should be both state and non-state mechanisms to prevent problems associated with opportunism. Among the non-state mechanisms, intergroup cooperation would be enhanced by the expectation/ assumption that guilty parties will be punished by members of their own ethnicity. Fearon and Laitin (1996) refer to this as 'in-group policing'. In such an arrangement, through their social networks, groups are supposed to monitor and sanction their own members. This suggests that, to ascertain spaces for pluralism, it would also be essential to investigate the presence or absence of in-group policing mechanisms, the circumstances under which they arise or not, and their effectiveness for co-existence.

However, in-group policing ought to go together with inter-group engagement for conflict to be avoided. Varshney argues that "... if communities are organised only along intra-ethnic lines and the interconnections with other communities are very weak or even non-existent, then ethnic violence is quite likely" (Varshney 2001, p.363). There has to be inter-ethnic civic engagement both in *associational forms* and *everyday forms*. Associational forms include business associations, religious clubs, NGOs, sports clubs, trade unions, professional organisations, and cadre-based political parties while everyday forms consist of simple, routine interactions of life such as families of different ethnic groups visiting each other, eating together, and children being allowed to play together in the neighbourhood.

Varshney views associational forms to be of greater influence than everyday forms (although the latter are often crucial for the emergence of the former), especially in facing up to political manipulation of ethnicity. It makes it hard for politicians to polarise ethnicity. Such forms of organisation are vital in policing neighbourhoods, killing rumours, providing information to local administration, and facilitating communication between communities in times of tension. In this study I therefore also focus on the role of civic life (in both

associational and everyday forms) in Kibaale in facilitating inter-ethnic engagement for co-existence. Civic life is investigated in the family, religious, political, business, and education spheres which are identified as key aspects in the social life of the people of Kibaale.

At state level of conflict prevention, political institutions that insulate the political authority of the indigenous group without fully alienating the economically dominant group, tend to produce more stable long term outcomes than institutions that allow the economically dominant group to ‘encroach’ on the political sphere (Shoup 2008). This would indeed be a difficult balance to strike, especially because it goes counter to the democratic ideals on which Uganda’s political system is based. In Shoup’s suggestion there is an implication that the rules of democracy are insufficient to enforce the norms which underlie inter-ethnic bargains. Mamdani puts it even more categorically that “by itself, majority rule provides no guarantee for [numerical] minorities that fear majority domination ... Majority rule can be turned into a bedrock for the domination over fragile minorities ... – a democratic despotism ” (Mamdani 2001, p.281). Shoup, as seen above, thus emphasises the need for affirmative action policies for the indigenous group to minimise the utility of ethnic manipulation by extremists. Such policies would include: expansion of higher education opportunities, language policies that favour the language of the indigenous group, economic incentives that promote economic ventures by indigenous group, openings for government jobs and state economic enterprises.

Even though Uganda operates under a decentralised political structure, it would be very challenging to grant differential citizenship rights to different groups in different areas of the country. Whereas the above suggestions could be of significance to pluralism and this study aims to establish their value through the case of Kibaale, at face value they raise questions as to whether they may not spark other imbalances/ injustices with the effect of narrowing spaces for pluralism. The assumption that the numerically dominant economic/immigrant group will simply look on as the indigenous group is given unconstitutional favours, seems unlikely. The immigrant group is bound to feel that they are discriminated, and this will most likely breed tension and limit negotiation possibilities. One of the suggested ways of going about the challenges of Shoup’s ‘undemocratic suggestions’ is Lijphart’s (1969) idea of *consociational democracy* that emphasises cooperation and coalition in ‘divided societies’. Admitting that consociational arrangements of sharing power are not necessarily successful, Lijphart lays down four key requirements for their effectiveness:

- i) That the elites have the ability to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of the subcultures.
- ii) This requires that they have the ability to transcend cleavages and to join in a common effort with the elites of rival subcultures.
- iii) This in turn depends on their commitment to the maintenance of the system and to the improvement of its cohesion and stability.
- iv) Finally, all the above requirements are based on the assumption that the elites understand the perils of political fragmentation (Lijphart 1969, p.216).

The practicality and value to pluralism of Lijphart's consociational democracy in the context of Kibaale will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

In summary, the above accounts and assumptions provide an insightful starting point to interrogate the dynamics of cooperation/pluralism and conflict in an ethnic context, especially in view of the players, processes, and possibilities in Kibaale. A number of these claims will be further examined in this study on the basis of empirical data from Kibaale District.

#### 1.4 Clarification of Concepts

From the theoretical framework emerges that I understand the key concepts in this study – pluralism and 'ethnically sensitive' – to be socially constructed. My orientation towards these two notions in this study is thus positioned within a constructivist frame. Drawing from Eck's definition, *pluralism* is understood as the "active [but sometimes spontaneous] seeking of understanding across lines of difference"<sup>24</sup>. She argues that pluralism stands higher than tolerance with which it is commonly conflated. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but, unlike pluralism, it does not require people of different ethnic<sup>25</sup> groups to know anything about one another. It is thus seen as too thin a foundation for a world of ethnic difference and proximity. As Eck argues, tolerance does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the costly stereotype, the half-truth, and the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence.

To further contrast pluralism with tolerance, Connolly (2005) and Mouffe (2005) argue that pluralism is not 'absolute tolerance' - which Connolly relates to relativism. Although the two differ on the level of tolerance that should be allowed in democratic society (Mouffe 2014), they both argue that pluralism sets limits to tolerance. Connolly contends that pluralists are not relativists because "... our image of culture encourages us to embrace certain things in this particular place, to be indifferent to some, to be wary of others, and fight militantly against the continuation of yet others" (Connolly 2005 p.42). He grants that pluralism tries not to set limits to diversity but allows a wide diversity of religious faiths, sensual habits, ethnic traditions, gender practices, and several other forms of diversity. However, Connolly observes that a 'democratic pluralist' will not allow the state to torture prisoners; parents to deprive their children of education; society to oppress women; wealthy citizens to evade taxes; or narrow utilitarians to get into positions of public authority. In further illustration of the limit of pluralism, Mouffe (in an interview with Hansen and Sonnichsen 2014) contends that a declared Nazi party or an extreme Muslim party which wants to abolish the liberal system and establish a theocracy should not be allowed because it is very clear that they are 'enemies' who do not tolerate others' legitimate expressions.

In this sense, a pluralistic culture is one "... in which pluralistic virtues of public accountability, self-discipline, receptive listening, gritted-teeth tolerance of some things you hate, and a commitment to justice are widespread" (Connolly 2005, p.43). Connolly therefore

<sup>24</sup> [http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010.

<sup>25</sup> The term ethnic is used here as an operational category. The researcher acknowledges that it is contested by some writers but does not intend to enter into that debate in this study.

believes that pluralism ought to operate within the bounds of civic virtues. Among such values, but not limited to, Parekh (2000) highlights recognition of human worth and dignity, promotion of human well-being or of fundamental human interests, and equality. Mouffe (2000; 2005; 2006; 2014) has also emphasised the importance of having a common allegiance to the ‘ethico-political’ values/principles of liberty and equality. But enlisting and abiding by these civic virtues does not necessarily resolve issues of value conflict. For instance, the interpretation of the above principles may differ and conflict will always remain a permanent feature of human society. It is the tension between consensus on the above principles and dissensus about their interpretation that constitutes the dynamics of pluralist democracy (Mouffe 2005). Parekh also admits that such values/ principles deal with the most basic aspects of human life about which there is generally little serious disagreement and fail to guide us once we go beyond such aspects. Because conflict is a permanent (and important<sup>26</sup>) feature of human society, the task of democratic pluralism is “how to conceive democracy in a way that allows in its midst a confrontation between conflicting hegemonic projects” (Mouffe 2014, p.154). In an interview with Carpentier and Cammaerts (2006), Mouffe admits that we need some kind of pacification but that this should only mean attempts to impede conflict from taking on an antagonistic form where those with different imaginations of social order are seen as enemies. In her view, pacification should not be pursued by repressing conflict but by giving conflict the possibility to take shape in a legitimate way.

Unlike absolute tolerance<sup>27</sup>, pluralism invites diverse people to come as they are and be themselves, with all their differences and angularities, pledged only to the common civic demands of citizenship highlighted by Parekh and Mouffe above. An-na’im provides a definition that comprehensively brings together all the above views to conceptualise pluralism as “... an ideology and [or] system that accepts diversity as a positive value and facilitates constant negotiations and adjustments among varieties of difference without seeking or expecting to terminate any or all of them permanently” (An-na’im 2008, p.225). Pluralism is therefore essentially a process of constructing ethnic relations through constant negotiations of power relations towards co-existence and whose direction is largely determined by the context of the engagement (Global Centre for Pluralism 2012). It is in this constructivist sense that the concept pluralism is used in this study. Because power is a constitutive element of the social, Mouffe (1990; 2005; 2006; 2014) contends that pluralism is a hegemonic exercise that should always involve acknowledging the existence of relations of power and the need to transform them. In her view, concern should not be on the elimination of power relations, rather it should be on how to constitute forms of power that are more compatible with democratic values. But this is not to suggest that there can be a moment of closure. Considering that the process of establishing any kind of social order involves a political hegemonic articulation of ‘the people’ through a particular regime of inclusion-exclusion, the outcome is always contingent and temporary -with the possibility of

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<sup>26</sup> The importance of conflict in society is explained under the next section on the concept of ethnic sensitivity.

<sup>27</sup> This refers to the sort of tolerance where everything passes in the name of ‘appreciating difference’.

counter-hegemonic reconstruction (Mouffe 2014). This way room is left for different forms of political expression.

The researcher's appreciation for pluralism values originates from two fronts. The first is participation in workshops, research, and the Pluralism and Development Winter School which I attended at the University of the Free State (South Africa) in 2012. This school organised by the Kosmopolis Institute of the University of Humanistic Studies in cooperation with the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos), the University of the Free State and several other academic - and NGO partners, as part of the Pluralism Knowledge Programme. By participating in this event, the researcher got closer and more concerned about engaging with issues of living with difference, especially in light of the observation that it is often because of failure to critically think about ways of co-existing with the other, that we witness the growth of different forms of fundamentalism (religious, racial, ethnic, ideological, and so on) in the world. My co-promoter Caroline Suransky's role in demonstrating the social significance of the values of democratic pluralism in dealing with identity issues was particularly inspirational. The second origin of my interest in pluralism is the experience of living in an ethnically diverse country, characterised with instances of inter-ethnic tension/violence but also goes through times of harmoniously living with difference that call for rigorous interrogation of the values which drive co-existence. Both interfaces have led me into critical review the pluralism literature to deepen my understanding and appreciation of the ideals and their practical viability.

*'Ethnically sensitive'* appears in inverted commas in the title in order to indicate that the researcher does not imply a primordialist position that holds that ethnicity in itself is the root of the sensitivity. Rather it indicates that in the particular forms of sensitivity which are studied, ethnicity stands out as the main social identity from which seemingly tension, conflict and violence emerge. It is acknowledged that the actual issues that construct conflict could be other than ethnicity, but ethnicity is the explicit rallying point in the construction of social relations in the district. The shape that ethnic relations take is mediated by the way ethnic differences are engaged with/ constructed in the context in question.

By 'ethnically sensitive' communities I mean communities in which ethnic identity is a susceptible point of exclusive convergence for polarising groups of people into conflict and violence. It should be noted that there are very many communities in the world that are ethnically diverse, but their response to the same triggers/events are often different (Varshney 2002). Some may not even look at ethnicity as an issue, some may find it an issue but without resulting into conflict, others will find ethnicity an issue and respond by tension or/and conflict.

The last category of communities where, for various reasons, ethnicity is socially, economically, and politically given much significance with an inter-ethnic conflictual possibility/reality is in this study referred to as 'ethnically sensitive'. I acknowledge that when there are different ethnic groups which are free to organize, there are bound to be

conflicts over resources, identity, patronage, and policies (Varshney 2001; 2002), but the kind of ethnic conflict that is of concern in this study is that which culminates into violent forms. In the same vein, even when I refer to co-existence as a mark of pluralism, it does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict, but rather an absence of violence and the kind of tension that leads to it. The approach to conflict in pluralism that this study adopts is well explained by Mouffe's (2005; 2006; 2014) idea of *agonistic pluralism*. She argues that there are always bound to be political and other value differences, some of which may neither be dealt with by consensus-oriented liberal democracy nor need to be addressed. But such conflicts do not automatically have to be antagonistic – and that this is not necessarily achievable through seeking consensus.

While consensus is no doubt necessary, it must be accompanied by dissent. Consensus is needed on the institutions that are constitutive of liberal democracy and on the ethico-political values that should inform political association. But there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning of those values and the way they should be implemented. This consensus will therefore always be a 'conflictual consensus'. In a pluralist democracy, disagreements about how to interpret the shared ethico-political principles are not only legitimate but also necessary. They allow for different forms of citizenship identification and are the stuff of democratic politics (Mouffe 2006, p.8).

Mouffe (2014) observes that we live in a world where a multiplicity of perspectives and values coexist and that it is empirically impossible to either adopt them all or reconcile them. As explained earlier, although there will be one hegemonic social order at a time, it should leave room for the expression and possible emergence of counter-hegemonic order. "Every hegemony can be challenged. I do not think that one should see hegemony as some kind of fatality" (Mouffe in an interview with Carpentier and Cammaerts 2006, p.5). According to Mouffe, allowing room for disagreements creates outlets for passions thus foreclosing politics articulated around essentialist identities such as ethnicity. This way, the various interests that are indicated by the rational choice theory as the driver of ethnic politics are given room for expression so long as they are not formulated around essentialist considerations.

An antagonistic dispensation is characterised by a setting where those who hold opinions which differ from those of other groups are not viewed as enemies who should be destroyed. As enemies, they are not allowed to articulate their positions and this gives way to the emergence of antagonistic forms of conflict, which are dangerous to democracy. In contrast, agonistic democracy envisages a pluralist framework where those with different views are taken as 'adversaries' with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of liberty and equality for all while differing in the interpretation of those principles. Unlike antagonistic democracy, an agonistic dispensation requires that the legitimacy of the 'other's' right to defend their interpretation is respected but without degenerating into violence. Thus, whereas an adversary is still some sort of enemy, they are now perceived as a *legitimate* enemy (Jones 2014). Jones illustrates this relationship with an illuminative analogy of the chess game:

... whilst two chess players may possess radically different philosophies on how to play chess (traditional, modern or hyper-modern openings, for instance), they agree on the pre-set rules of the game. Despite their differing philosophies, they both accept how certain pieces can and cannot be moved, and how the game itself is won or lost. Certain openings or styles of play may be accepted as better than others *only* under specific conditions (Jones 2014, p.21).

Accordingly, whereas antagonism would involve a struggle between enemies who wish to eradicate or silence each other, agonism refers to a struggle between adversaries who accept pre-set principles of equality and liberty. Such a configuration would help to foreclose violent conflict. Violence/confrontation emerges when values between different groups are framed as non-negotiable or as essentialist forms of identification.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

Contemporary Uganda is embroiled in a number of inter-ethnic challenges of varying degrees of intensity and complexity. Kibaale presents a case that is so mired in a complex history of pre-colonial inter-ethnic rivalry; colonial ethnic manipulation; a colonial legacy of strained ethnic relations and contemporary trends of immigrant-phobia catalysed by memories of foreign domination/ humiliation and political manipulation. In 2002, ethnic tensions in the area peaked with the outright rejection by the Banyoro of an ‘outsider’ (immigrant) who had been elected to District chairmanship (Espeland 2007). While the Banyoro feel threatened by the rising number and influence of immigrants in their area, the immigrants are also insecure about their future in the area without a political power base.

In such a situation, there are questions about the possibility of pluralism. Given the painful memories (history) of the Banyoro in relation to domination by the ethnic other, do possibilities remain for living with ethnic difference even when the ‘other’ becomes politically or/and economically influential? Questions such as these make me as researcher curious about how the different ethnic groups in the area feel and what they make of the situation.

This curiosity is further raised by the observation in Kibaale that, despite the tension, people of different ethnic groups intermarry, go to the same schools, places of worship/prayer, markets and social functions and have harmoniously co-existed at some points of their history (1960s – 1990s). Whereas, at face value this may not be interpreted as a signifier of pluralism, it is a domain relevant for pluralism and its value can be understood through an interrogation based on people’s perceptions and experiences. This study is also motivated by the need to determine how the complex case of Kibaale can inform theory on ethnic tension and pluralism – on understanding the dynamics of ethnic inclusion and exclusion; understanding the processes of identity politics and ethnic boundary transformation; explaining approaches to pluralism and considerations for their effectiveness.

Grounding the empirical part of this study on people’s perceptions is done with the ‘intent to prevent imposing alien meanings upon the actions of the subjects’ (Vidich cited in Norris and

Walker 2005, p. 132). It is a profound respect to the character of the empirical world. Basing on interpretivist epistemology and constructionist ontology<sup>28</sup>, the researcher contends that people's actions are often guided by their own perceptions and experiences and rarely upon an outsider's interpretation. To understand human behaviour, a researcher must first understand the meanings that people have of the world around them, because these meanings tend to govern their action (Henn *et al.* 2006). In the same way, any conflict epistemology would best start from the people's perceptions and experiences so as to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the related phenomena. As argued by Becker;

“... to understand an individual's behaviour, we must know how he [she] perceives the situation, the obstacles he [she] believed he [she] had to face, the alternatives he [she] saw opening up to him [her]. We cannot understand the effects of the range of possibilities ... social norms and other explanations of behaviour which are commonly invoked, unless we consider them from the actor's point of view (Cited in Gerring 2007, p.71).”

It is as well the researcher's point of departure that, though with some universalisable values (such as the stand against murder – Plaw 2005), formulations of pluralism are largely contextual (Global Centre for Pluralism 2012). Experiences of people are context-bound. They cannot be free from time and location nor the mind of the human agents. Pluralism can therefore be best approached by focussing on people's own experiences and conceptualisations.

### **1.6 Statement of the Research Problem**

The phenomenon of ethnic tension in Kibaale District is an intricate one. It is entangled within a conglomeration of ethnically polarised histories, the agency of both painful and victorious collective/individual memories, politicised ethnicity, and ethnicised politics. It is further complicated by a drastic immigrant population growth plus their rise in economic and political might amidst a native population still nursing memories and other effects of subjugation by 'foreigners' (the British and the Baganda). The possibility of pluralism within such an environment remains a big question. It is a question of a complexity which stretches beyond the possibility of a single study on pluralism. The spirit of the research is based upon the acknowledgement that pluralism itself, though with some universal benchmarks (Plaw 2005), is contextual in its expressions.

It is important to note that, in previous times, in spite of their differences, the Banyoro and the immigrants have lived together for over a century in relative peace and harmony. As stated before: “Together they built community structures such as health centres, they sent their children to the same schools, worshipped at the same churches and they also intermarried” (Schelnberger 2005, p.30). What makes it possible to co-exist sometimes and what causes conflict at other times? Notwithstanding the instances of violence that have occurred in the last ten years, a small scale pilot study carried out in the Pluralism Knowledge Program (2010) indicates that local people still see possibilities to establish pluralism in their

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<sup>28</sup> Explained and justified in detail under the Research Methodology chapter.



district. For instance, some people felt that it is the politicians who create/escalate tensions for selfish scores and that the problem is not ethnicity as such. But it is also worth noting that the people's formulations of social cohesion are not without inherent problems. For instance, assimilation into native culture and intermarriage, which were widely raised in Kibaale as solutions, could in themselves be marks of intolerance and lack of 'cultural freedom' (Sen 2006). It should also be noted that the above observation connects to a bigger problem for interrogation within the pluralism idea:

If, for example, pluralism encourages the recognition and celebration of the irreducibly diverse ethical values, political systems, cultural traditions and religious convictions that characterise the world today, what does it recommend be done when they clash, and especially when, as it recognises is possible, the conflict proves irreconcilable or tragic (Plaw 2005, pp.xv-xvi)?

It is however still viable that, because of pluralism's considerably contextual nature, its possibilities ought to be first sought from (but not limited to) people's own experiences; their self-positioning in history; their impressions (and memories) of living with the ethnic 'other'; and from their formulations of value. From that standpoint therefore, through an in-depth study of local practices and perceptions, this case study seeks to explore the spaces for pluralism that may exist in Kibaale and thus, with its findings, contribute to the development of theory on pluralism and engagement with difference and ethnic conflict.

## **1.7 Key Research Question**

The key research question of this study is:

How do the residents of Kibaale District perceive ethnic conflict and the possibilities for pluralism in their region and how do the findings of this case study contribute to the development of the different theories on ethnic conflict and pluralism?

### **1.7.1 Subsidiary Research Questions**

To address the key question of this study, I distinguish three subsidiary questions which are largely drawn from the theoretical framework of this study. The general assumption is that social realities, including ethnic relations, are socially constructed and that the three questions seek to understand people's own perspectives and meanings which are assumed to mediate the shaping of ethnic relations and engagement therewith in their area. The first question aims to explore 'significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale'. The data that emerged from this question aims to discuss the historical context to ethnic relations in the area and to understand the key aspects of the current situation that could be rooted in the area's/people's past and/or memory as represented in their narratives. As indicated by the Global Centre for Pluralism (2012) in *Defining Pluralism*, history always matters in approaching pluralism. Often a community's pluralism choices emerge from, among other

things, its historical dynamics and how they are perceived by the people living in that community. Since this study employs an interpretivist epistemological approach by which it is contended that “people socially interact and respond based as much, if not more, on what they believe to be real than what is objectively real” (Neuman, 2007 p.43), the second research question seeks to establish the perceptions of local people of different ethnic groups about ethnic conflict in the area. The ensuing data informs the analysis of the conflict, its trends and implications for pluralism.

Building on the data from the first and second subsidiary questions, the third question interrogates how the different scientific theories on pluralism are brought into action by the various initiatives for peaceful co-existence in Kibaale and how the people of the district value these initiatives. The idea is to discern whether, given the historical accounts and the people’s perception of the tension in the area, they believe that spaces still exist for pluralism and (if so) how such pluralism is envisioned and/or practiced. King *et al.* (1994) argue that the best qualitative research design is where, if we begin our study with a real world problem, we also ask how that problem can be studied scientifically so that it contributes to the stock of social science explanations. Accordingly, the fourth and last subsidiary question extends the academic significance of the study from the generation of factual knowledge to the furtherance of existing theories on ethnic conflict and pluralism. Such theoretical expansion is vital for understanding ethnic tension and pluralism beyond the Kibaale case.

The subsidiary research questions are:

- i) How are the significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale District perceived by the residents?
- ii) How do different local ethnic groups in Kibaale currently perceive ethnic conflict in their district?
- iii) How are the different scientific theories on pluralism brought into action by the various initiatives for peaceful co-existence in Kibaale and how do the people of the district value these initiatives?
- iv) How do the findings of this research project/compare to existing theories on ethnic conflict and pluralism?

The second chapter will discuss the methodology, the methods that the study employed to collect data in response to the research questions and data analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains and provides the necessary justifications for the strategies that were used by the researcher to obtain the data required to answer the research questions. The research design, which includes the conceptual framework through which the study is approached, gives context to its methodological orientation. I also introduce the actual region in which the study is conducted and provide relevant information about its population. The chapter as well explains and accounts for the process through which respondents (of different categories) were identified and how data was generated. Due consideration is given to ethical issues and how the researcher addressed these issues.

#### 2.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Grounds

As argued by Jones and Somekh (2005), how the researcher understands ‘being in the world’ (ontology) and ‘the nature of knowledge / knowing’ (epistemology) fundamentally shapes the methodology that is adopted in the study. Put more broadly, our worldview, “... values, biases play an important role in determining (1) what questions we ask or do not ask, (2) what type of data we collect, and (3) the type of method, analysis, and interpretation that shapes our understanding of the research problem” (Hesse-Biber 2010, p.30). This observation underpins the need for me as a researcher to indicate and explain the ontological and epistemological grounds for this study.

This study is placed in the realm of social ontology. Social ontology concerns the nature of social entities. Bryman indicates that:

... the central point of orientation here is the question of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors. These positions are frequently referred to respectively as *objectivism* and *constructionism* (Bryman 2008, p.18).

This study is largely based on **constructionist**<sup>29</sup> ontology where it is asserted that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of making and revision / construction and reconstruction (Bryman *ibid.*). In an interview by Carpentier and Cammaerts (2006), Mouffe indicates that there is no essence of the social. She argues that the social is always the result of a hegemonic articulation – it is a construct of power relations since power is constitutive of it. The above assertion is antithetical to the objectivist position that phenomena and categories are pre-given and therefore are faced by social actors as external realities that they have no role in shaping. In this sense then in reference to culture, which often goes together with ethnicity/ ethnic

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<sup>29</sup> Also known as constructivist (Creswell 2003).

relations, I would argue that people create culture continuously in response to realities of the time.

Ethnicity is not taken as something static, or as frozen but as a phenomenon that is in a state of flux as it is continuously acted upon (Owolabi 2003; Omotola 2008). The practices and possibilities for pluralism in Kibaale that are investigated in this study are approached in this constructivist frame with the idea that people of different ethnicities can and do engage with their differences and in the process construct and reconstruct their relations. This assumption serves as the basis for the *ethnomethodological qualitative approach* used in this study. How and why people construct and reconstruct their relations is a question of the study, but that there is an engagement of sorts that leads to framing and/or re-framing reality was presupposed. In that regard therefore, the presupposition “that people actively collaborate in the *construction* and maintenance of the cultural meanings which inform their actions; and that researchers therefore need to find ways of engaging with those meanings and the processes through which they are constructed” (Goldbart and Hustler 2005, p.16) forms the ontological basis of this study.

However, it is not totally dismissed within a constructionist ontology that culture (which is at the heart of ethnicity) has a reality that informs people’s perspectives. The idea is that culture is not an inert objective reality. It may act as a point of reference but is itself in a constant process of being formed and reformed. The active role of individuals in the social construction of social reality is therefore fundamentally emphasised. People make subjective meanings of their experiences with objects or things. The meanings that they make are varied and multiple. This implies that as a researcher I acknowledge and accommodate the complexity of views rather than starting with narrowing ideas into a few categories. As argued by Creswell (2003), looking into the complexity of views also involves situating them, because people’s subjective meanings are often negotiated socially and historically. That is, they are not simply imprinted onto individuals, but are formed through interactions with others (hence social constructionism) and through historical factors and norms that operate in individuals’ lives. Emphasis on specific contexts in which people live and interact (as is done with the people of Kibaale) is crucial so as to understand the processes which are involved in meaning-making and, in this case, in actively engaging with ethnic difference.

Griffiths (1998) insists that any piece of research, however small, cannot help but have an epistemology that influences its methodology. The biggest reason for the impossibility is because epistemology is the theory of knowledge, and research is, at least partly, about getting knowledge. Epistemology poses a couple of questions and issues about knowledge: “What it is, how we get it, how we recognise it, how it relates to truth, how it is entangled with power” (Griffiths 1998, p.35). Methodology is precisely an offshoot of this set of questions since it refers to the theory of getting knowledge in research contexts.

Grounding on the constructionist ontology on which this study is framed, an **interpretivist** epistemological stance is adopted. Here the central endeavour is to understand the subjective

world of human experiences. We arrive at the meanings of actions only in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences (Cohen *et al.* 2007). Within the interpretivist paradigm, theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations. It does not precede research but follow it. This is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call being ‘grounded’. The approach helps to avoid the counterproductive temptation of forcing findings to fit within theoretical explanations that may have preceded a study. It is through an interpretive inductive process that the fourth subsidiary question of this study - *How do the findings of this research project/compare to existing theories on ethnic conflict and pluralism?* - is to be answered.

One of the key gaps which I identified in the review of related literature is that whereas there have been a number of suggestions (especially in Government reports) on co-existence within ethnic difference in Kibaale, there has been no comprehensive study which grounds its findings on local people’s own experiences and meaning-making. Such comprehensive account of these experiences would ideally be the starting point for any analysis of the conflict, pluralism initiatives and projection on the possibilities of pluralism in the area. This argument adds to the justification of the interpretivist approach and its qualitative extensions explained under the Research Design.

Emphasising people’s experience as the major point of reference does not mean that the researcher is only an instrument with no interpretive input. “Given up-close interaction of the researcher with persons in the field, given a constructionist orientation to knowledge, given the attention to participant intentionality and sense of self, however descriptive the report, the researcher ultimately comes to put forward a personal interpretation” (Stake 2010, p.55). This implies that the study goes beyond mere description to complicate the findings, drawing upon conceptual relationships. Interpretation not only comes in at the end of the research process, but throughout the planning, data gathering, analysis, and write-up of the study. At the stage of planning, interpretation takes the form of reflection on the research questions with the help of preliminary knowledge to think out relevant methodological strategies. During data collection, there is continuous reflection on the data gathered in light of the emerging themes and directions for further data collection. As shall be further explained in the Data Analysis section in this chapter, analysis is therefore not postponed to the end of the data collection process but features along the whole process for the sake of progressive focussing and comprehensiveness.

Interpretivist researchers should also be conscious of the fact that, to some extent, their own background shapes the interpretation (Creswell 2003; Hesse-Biber 2010) and thus the need to position oneself in the research and acknowledge how the personal interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. Certainly, however much our efforts as researchers may be at being ‘neutral’, in a study on identity, we may not “... disguise the troublesome condition that every statement made about identity is itself conditioned by the identity of its maker” (Urban 1998, p.120). Reflexivity is therefore very important. Part of this reflexivity/positionality is accounted for in the above explanation of the researcher’s

worldview and is further explained under the Research Site, Field Entry and Data Collection Strategies sections and in the analysis of findings.

## **2.2 Research Design**

This study adopts a single-site case study approach with specific focus on Kibaale District (choice justified under section 4.3 – Research Site). The design involved a detailed and intensive analysis of a single-site case (Bryman 2008; Gerring 2007). The researcher initially considered use of a multi-case study design where a number of ethnically sensitive communities would be selected and studied in view of identifying and analysing convergences and divergences in engaging with ethnic differences. But considering the time available for the study (four years for the whole process), my own workplace demands, and the aim to develop an indepth analysis, a single-site case study was found most suitable. Under such a design, it would be possible to engage with and report the complexity of social activity in an ethnic setting in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to the setting and manufacture in it (Stark and Torrance 2005).

The key research question calls for an experiential and explorative study based on the people's perceptions of ethnic conflict and the possibilities for pluralism in their region, and it was felt that these could best be reliably established through focusing on a single site. Understanding people's experiences requires taking ample time to observe and interview them, and this comes with time demands that could not be accommodated in more than a single case. It is through a single-site study therefore that it is the objective of this study to achieve a deep account, which opens the way to understand and interpret people's multiple lived experiences.

It may be argued that a single-site case design is weak on account of the impossibility to generalise statistically from one case to other related cases or to the general population. However, though its sample may not be statistically representative and may therefore not provide an idiosyncratic account, a single-site case study can be illuminative of general issues. Good single-site case studies can appeal to the capacity of the reader for 'naturalistic generalisation' where readers recognise aspects of their own experience in the case and intuitively generalise from it (Stake 2005).

To illustrate the incongruity of generalisation from a case study, if we carry out research on an organisation, be it a voluntary association or a financial institution, it would clearly be unwise to assume that all voluntary associations or all financial institutions, or to be even more extreme all organisations, must exhibit the same characteristics or behave in the same way (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000). Although the findings from a single-site case study may give insights into other related cases, the research was not specifically aimed at generalising its findings to ethnically sensitive communities elsewhere. In the same way, from the study of spaces for pluralism within the ethnic tension of Kibaale, it would be unjustified to jump to a conclusion where the findings are summarily projected to all other cases of ethnic tension where contextual specifics are different.

Overseeing this, there remains a fundamental epistemological question about single-site case studies, that is: “What can be learned about the single case” (Stake 2005, p.443)? This being a qualitative study, the aim was at ‘typicality rather than generalisability’ (Henn *et al.* 2006). However, as contended by Bechhofer and Paterson (2000) and Henn *et al.*, whereas representativeness and generalisability may not be key concerns in qualitative studies, the typicality of the selected cases can allow for some degree of analytic generalization/ wider resonance. Analytically, the findings from this study may be generalisable to other communities of ethnic tension, which, theoretically, may behave in a similar way. But where attempted, such inference should be done in observance of the value of human subjectivity and keenness to experiences and contexts within which they occur. This is why in chapter 6 an attempt will be made to extend current theories on pluralism on the basis of the Kibaale case study.

Grounded on my interpretivist epistemology and constructionist ontology, the research approach is qualitative because of the assumed value of the specific local context and in order to foreground local people’s own lived experiences (Marshall and Rossman 1995) with regard to ethnic tension and pluralism. In a study on the human experience, it is essential to know how people define and explain their situations and give meaning to their daily lives (Berg, 2001). A qualitative approach is selected because, I consider individuals to be “‘meaning makers’ of the world they reside in; it is their lived reality that [I] ... seek to understand” (Hesse-Biber 2010, p.63). Accordingly, a situational ethnomethodological perspective is specifically adopted here. Situational ethnomethodology studies a wide range of social activity “... to understand the ways in which people negotiate the social contexts in which they find themselves” (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p.24), specifically in this case, how they negotiate a context of ethnic tension. Only such an approach would allow the researcher to study subjective human perceptions, understanding, and practices in order to arrive at a contextualised analysis, which forms the basis for a contribution to the development of theory<sup>30</sup> on the subject.

I used a combination of qualitative data collection methods (this triangulation is discussed in more detail later in this chapter) to be able to crosscheck findings from different sources enabling me to gain deep cumulative insights.

### **2.3 Research Site**

The task of deciding exactly what the research issues are and arriving at a suitably focused and sharp set of research questions, is not independent of the task to decide where the study will be carried out and which groups or individuals will be involved (Bechhofer and Patterson, 2000).

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<sup>30</sup> Here ‘theory is used in reference to sets of meanings that yield insight and understanding of people’s behaviour. Though to some extent contextually limited, the analysis of the Kibaale case can be a basis for comparison with what goes on in other related places and times.

Kibaale was chosen as the site of research for a number of reasons. In identifying a case, the researcher ought to look for a locale where the phenomena/ processes in which they are interested are expected to be particularly salient (Bechhofer and Paterson 2000) and where there are accessible opportunities for learning (Stake 2005). With regard to ethnic tension in Uganda, there are certainly more cases than Kibaale District (Nabudere 2009). However, Kibaale bears a number of particularly suiting/interesting characteristics for this study over and above other cases. First, as highlighted in the Context of the Study in Chapter One, ethnic tension and conflicts entangled in a mix of factors continue to exist in the area (Schelnberger 2005; Green 2006; Nkurunziza 2011). Given that the study particularly focuses on ethnically sensitive communities, the above observation about Kibaale is its first suiting factor.

It was also a matter of curiosity that despite the tension experienced from 2000 peaking in 2001 and witnessed today, people co-existed before with their ethnic differences (Schelnberger 2008). In reinforcement of the above considerations, because of my experience from an earlier PKP study in the area and the rapport that was created with relevant ‘gate keepers’,<sup>31</sup> the prior knowledge and assured strategies for access rendered Kibaale an accessible case.

Kibaale District is located in western Uganda (extending to the shores of Lake Albert), approximately 215 Kms from Kampala. It is part of Bunyoro kingdom, which is one of the traditional monarchies in Uganda. Note needs to be taken here that the researcher is from the central part of Uganda, specifically from the Baganda ethnic group. This raises questions about field/ respondent access and reflexivity.

Reflexivity recognises that researchers “... bring their own biographies to the research situation and participants behave in particular ways in their presence” and that they “should acknowledge and disclose their own selves in the research, seeking to understand their part in, or influence on, the research” (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p.171). The researcher was not blind about his position not only as an outsider but also as a Muganda<sup>32</sup> and the ‘obstructive identification’<sup>33</sup>, it could generate. In fact, while recounting the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale, one Munyoro respondent bluntly said: “When the Baganda came and they were trying to fight to make sure they rule us, they also did not spare our forefathers [they killed them]. I know they must be your grandfathers”. While it has been argued that reflexivity can result into ‘navel-gazing’<sup>34</sup>, (Sultana 2007), proper reflexivity allows researchers to realise

<sup>31</sup>Explained in more detail later in the Chapter.

<sup>32</sup> This is not to singularly limit my identity to being a Muganda (ethnic identity) but to indicate the identity/ position deemed to have important implications in the context of this study. As seen in the Context of the Study and in the literature review on the history of Kibaale, the Baganda and Banyoro have a history of rivalry with the former being identified as an oppressor/ sub-coloniser of the latter.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Obstructive identification’ is a term used by Dalton (cited in Shenton and Hayton 2004) to explain the likelihood of the researcher being continually seen as an extension of some identity of theirs within the setting despite their denials to the contrary. In this case, it signifies the possibility that I would be continually seen as an extension of the Baganda oppressors and sub-colonialists and, perhaps, sidelined/ rejected.

<sup>34</sup> Navel gazing is defined by Kamberelis and Dimitriadis as “the danger of looking inward as a way of avoiding the ethical responsibility of acting in the world” (2005, p.904). It could also mean excessive self-consciousness at the expense of being able to accordingly look out to what we are studying.



and address the grids of power relations in which they find/place themselves and how that influences methods, interpretation and knowledge production. And, as Salzman (2002) points out, reflexivity is crucial in serving the reader of the research report with the necessary information to assess its validity. A detailed explanation and justification about how access was negotiated in consideration of the researcher's positionality is given under the section on Field Entry and Data Collection Strategies later in this chapter.

In Uganda's decentralised system of governance, Kibaale constitutes five counties – Buyaga East, Buyaga West, Bugangaizi East, Bugangaizi West, and Buyanja. For reasons highlighted in the Context of the Study (Chapter One) and discussed in Chapter Five, Buyaga and Bugangaizi were each split into East and West in 2010 on a presidential directive. The District has a total of 29 sub-counties and Two Town Councils namely Kibaale and Kagadi town council, 124 administrative parishes, and 1230 villages<sup>35</sup>. In total geographical size, Kibaale District is approximately 4,400 sq. Km.

The district was carved out of Hoima district in 1991 "... in order to improve service delivery in the area and because the inhabitants of Kibaale had felt neglected by the local ruling elite in Hoima District" (Schelnberger 2008, p.195) and because they felt they needed a special status on account of their unique history as former lost counties (Buyaga<sup>36</sup> and Bugangaizi). The study focused on Buyaga and Bugangaizi since these are the counties about which ethnic tension has mainly been reported.

## 2.4 Study Population

The indigenous inhabitants of Kibaale District are the Banyoro "... but [largely due to immigration] approximately half of the population today are Bakiga, Alur, Banyarwanda, Lugbara, Basoga, Bagisu and Baganda" (*Ibid.*, p.195). Others also include Bafumbira, Bakonjo, Banyankore and Barundi.

The sections of the population in Kibaale from which data was collected include ordinary people<sup>37</sup>, local leaders, leaders of local ethnic pressure groups, elders who have lived in the area for over 20 years, religious leaders, students from primary and secondary schools, managers/leaders of some relevant civil society organisations and youths from various ethnic groups. The category of ordinary people constitutes middle age men and women not falling in any of the other categories indicated above. It was deemed that studying a cross-section of all the above categories would give a comprehensive picture of the perceptions of the people of Kibaale. The preliminary study in the area and literature review had indicated the above categories as key players in the ethnic tension and / or pluralism in the area.

<sup>35</sup> See the official website for Kibaale District: <http://www.kibaale.go.ug/news.php?nid=5> Viewed on 27th January 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Buyanja was split from Buyaga in 1975. Thus all the current counties of Kibaale originated from the former Lost Counties of Buyaga and Bugangaizi.

<sup>37</sup> Perhaps I should have found a better name for this category, but I could not find a better expression. Ordinary people here include Kibaale residents that are neither religious leaders, pressure group leaders, local government leaders, civil society organisation leaders, elders, youths, nor in any political position.

Since this is a qualitative study with an emphasis on people's experiences, it is acknowledged that people tend to give different meanings to phenomena (Creswell 2003). "Experiential research usually does not seek simplicity or the best explanation but a collection of interpretations" (Stake 2010, p.63). Soliciting for data from a wide range of people categories (as in this study) therefore captures the multiple realities in the field thereby coming up with a deeper/ richer account or, part of what is meant by Geertz's famous concept, 'thick description' (Geertz, cited in Ponterotto 2006). By extension, such a rich account leads to a rich interpretation. In line with the dictates of the interpretive paradigm, the thick description emerging from a diversity of people categories includes vivid detailed portrayals of people's experiences, perceptions, feelings and meanings of their actions. As explained by Ponterotto (2006) in his 'Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept "Thick Description"' (2006), thick descriptions are meant to allow the readers of my work to gauge for themselves the credibility of my interpretations by providing the context under which they were made.

## **2.5 Sample Size and Sample Selection**

Considering that this study took on a qualitative approach, the sample size was not arrived at under considerations of numerical representativeness but rather on prospects for indepth information. Here, "the range and completeness of experience studied is not as important as picking experiences that can be said to be insightful revelations, a good contribution to personal understanding" (Stake 2010, p.57). The focus is on depth of information from the cross-section of categories covered by the study to provide a rich account of people's views/perceptions on the research subject.

The researcher did not set out with a predetermined total number of respondents (sample size), the sample size was cumulatively arrived at. Predetermining the sample size is not possible where, though the researcher has a picture of some of the people that may be included in the study, there is a possibility that other people with relevant/important information can be identified in the process of data collection. This is especially the case where indepth data is sought and where data collected points to other interesting directions not initially thought about. Some respondents would, for example, refer me to someone else thought to be more knowledgeable on certain issues.

But, as indicated in the preceding sub-section, relevant categories of the population had been identified and it is from these that samples were drawn. Some key informants (such as pressure group leaders and some elders) were targeted beforehand, but most of the respondents were identified through the study's main gatekeeper (discussed in the next section) and other respondents. The sampling techniques used include snowball, convenience/accidental and purposive/judgemental sampling. The respondents on which the techniques were used, why, and how is all explained in this section (after Table 1).

As there was no predetermined sample size, respondents were added until the point when the researcher started getting similar responses. This stage in data collection could be likened to

what Glaser and Strauss refer to as the ‘saturation point’. According to them, the saturation point is “that time of ... research when you really do think that everything is complete and that you are not obtaining any new information by continuing” (cited in Dawson 2009, pp.54-55). And although there is no certain assurance that no new information will emerge, we followed Glaser and Strauss in their advice to stop adding more respondents.

Table 3 below indicates how the samples from the different respondent categories were represented in the study. Thus, the total number of respondents is 70.

**Table 3: Sample Distribution**

Respondent Category	Sample
Ordinary people (middle age)	-Banyoro – 10 (6 men, 5 women) - Immigrants 10 (5 men,7 women) <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">23</span>
Local leaders	6 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">6</span>
Leaders of local ethnic pressure groups	-MBC – 3 -Bafuruki Committee – 3 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">6</span>
Elders who have lived in the area for over 20 years	- Banyoro- 4 - Immigrants- 4 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">8</span>
Religious leaders	-Catholic-1 -Protestant- 1 - Moslem – 1 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">3</span>
Youths	-Bakiga – 2 -Banyoro – 2 -Other tribes – 2 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">6</span>
Civil society organisations	-Uganda Rural Development and Training Programme/ African Rural University - 1 - Kibaale District Civil Society Organisations - 1 -Kagadi Community Radio – Political talkshow moderator – 1 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">3</span>
Schools	- Primary School - 5 - Kagadi Secondary School – 10 <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">15</span>
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

Within these categories, purposive, snowball and convenience sampling strategies were used. Convenience sampling was used to identify ordinary residents for ad hoc interviews when possibilities for interviews and conversations occurred (Bryman 2008, p.183). In such cases ad hoc interviews were preferred because no prior planning had been made and often people were in a hurry to attend to other business (which the research had to respect since no interview appointments had been fixed). Such opportunities specifically showed during the

Peace Dialogue at Bwanswa (19<sup>th</sup> September 2011) and the Peace Day celebrations at Birembo War Memorial Institute (20<sup>th</sup> September 2011). I was informed about the Peace Dialogue by Jacqueline Akello<sup>38</sup>, one of my purposively identified respondents, who happened to be one of the organizers of the event. Respondents were identified from among the participants relevant to the study.

At the Peace Dialogue, I was unexpectedly given the opportunity to interview the Chairman<sup>39</sup> of Mubende Banyoro Committee (MBC) and a youth who had participated in the 2002 ethnic violence. I learnt about the youth's role in the ethnic violence when I stumbled into an argument between the MBC Chairman and this youth. The former accused the latter of sidelining youths in their (MBC) activities and only 'using' them during conflicts. It is in this argument that he mentioned his participation in the 2002 ethnic violence. I later persuaded him to grant me an interview in consideration of the information he had expressed during the argument with the Chairman and in anticipation that he had more relevant information. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also conveniently organized with some of the Peace Day celebrations attendants from various ethnic backgrounds. The FGD participants were identified with the assistance of a local leader who was introduced to the researcher by the main gatekeeper. The key selection consideration suggested to her was ethnic diversity. This criterion in participant selection is justified later under the sub-section explaining how and why the FGD method was used.

For the selection of local leaders, elders, religious leaders, and leaders of ethnic pressure groups, purposive sampling was used in order to identify people who have indepth knowledge by virtue of their position and/or experience (Henn *et al.* 2006; Cohen *et al.* 2007). These respondents were considered to have relevant information, a conclusion, which was drawn on the basis of insights from the earlier PKP study and the literature review. As Berg argues, "the logical place to begin considering community groups is in published sources" (2001, p.235). On top of the various reviewed sources, Mirima's *Ebyafayo bya Kibaale [A History of Kibaale]* (1999) was particularly helpful in identifying key informants as it highlights most of the key players in the area's history.

By chain/ snowball sampling, purposively selected respondents and the gatekeeper helped to identify other potential key informants. It was common for respondents to suggest (even before being asked) that 'I think even so and so would give you good information for your study'. The researcher would then ask for more details about the suggested person in order to assess their suitability for inclusion. Where found suitable (on account of their relevant experiences and social position – class, politics, gender, occupation, and so on) their contacts were established and they were subsequently reached/ included.

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<sup>38</sup> Jacqueline Akello is University Secretary for the African Rural University for Women which is based in Kibaale. She was purposively identified for the study on the basis of her role in peace initiatives in the area, which I learnt about through my gatekeeper. As is the case here, where names are mentioned in this work, it is on the permission of the respondent.

<sup>39</sup> Mzee Katta Musoke, the Chairman of Mubende Banyoro Committee, was one of the purposively targeted respondents but the researcher had not managed to get him as his phone was off. He was conveniently chanced upon at the Peace Dialogue.

## 2.6 Field Entry and Data Collection Strategies

A researcher's success in gaining access will have a significant effect on the nature and quality of the data collected, on the insight into the studied community and its members that the investigator is able to gain, and, ultimately, on the trustworthiness of the findings (Shenton and Hayter, 2004). This section accordingly highlights the measures taken by the researcher to gain access to the field of research and respondents. It also indicates the strategies that were used to effectively collect the data, especially in going about linguistic, cultural and geographical challenges.

Henn *et al.* recount an intriguing experience by Punch in a study on Patrol Policemen where while chatting over a beer after some period of interactions, two policemen asked the researcher (Punch): "How much do you think you found out when you were with us? You wrote somewhere that you thought we were open-hearted. Well, we only let you see what we wanted you to see. You only saw about fifty per cent. We showed you only half of the story" (cited in Henn *et al.* 2006, p.154). The above account reiterates the importance of building trust between the researcher and the researched. It also indicates the danger of carrying out an investigation without rapport with the studied group/ individuals. Though the triangulation of data collection methods used in this study would be helpful in checking on the authenticity of the collected data, it may not be enough without the creation of an environment where the researched individuals/group feel free and safe to divulge information to the researcher.

Morse and Field (cited in MacLean 2010) emphasise that gaining entry into a community and establishing trust are vital components of cross-cultural and ethnographic research, and that gatekeepers are important in this process. It is of great research value "... to find a person already a part of the site at which you will be studying to brief you on how people there think things work, the ways things are done there, and who will be good sources of information and interpretation" (Stake 2010, p.68). Accordingly, in the earlier mentioned PKP study in 2010, the researcher identified a gatekeeper (Anthony Lwanga<sup>40</sup>) who was not only well-versed with the area but also of vast social connections.

Lwanga was my best student in 'Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration' at Uganda Martyrs University in 2008 and that must have influenced his willingness to assist as gatekeeper. This however could imply that the power relations between me and him were skewed in my favour, putting him in a disadvantaged position where he had no option but to work with me. We discussed the issue beforehand and he said that the assistance he was going to offer me was in a way a token of appreciation for my earlier support to him and that all he needed was facilitation for mobile phone Airtime to reach the respondents (which I offered).

Lwanga works as Manager of the Uganda Rural Development Training Programme (URDT)<sup>41</sup>, an initiative popular in the area due to its transformative educational work. But

<sup>40</sup> Anthony consented to being named and explained in my report.

<sup>41</sup> URDT is "a non-profit organization that provides education and training for rural development in the very poor Kibaale

Lwanga's vast social network is mainly due to his involvement in the management of the most popular radio in Kibaale District – Kibaale Kagadi Community Radio (KKCR FM) - which is also part of URDT. This puts him in a privileged position to access people from high and low places within Kibaale's complex diversity. Of key significance to this study is that his connections cut across ethnic, class, gender, age, and religious lines. He could literally access anyone the researcher wanted to include in the study and with suggestions of other worthwhile individuals such as civil society leaders, radio journalists and secondary school students.

As a gatekeeper, Lwanga also helped in vouching for my credibility (Bloor and Wood 2006) and trust among the research subjects. This is very critical in accessing a research field because without it few or no people would be ready to take part in the study. They needed to know who I was (name), where I worked, and what the purpose of my inquiry was. Perhaps due to my workplace's perceived reputation in the area, Lwanga always started by informing them that I worked with Uganda Martyrs University. And that was always followed by an acquiescent nod. He would go ahead and explain that, at that occasion, I was there as a student to learn from them and that there was nothing to fear. It was apparent from several respondents' reactions after being told that I was there to learn from them that they felt placed in a special knowledgeable position and that this psychological benefit facilitated their willingness to participate in the study.

I always added my own self-introduction after Lwanga had left, often in response to respondents' questions about me. We would sometimes spend up to twenty minutes to get to know each other better. Time consuming as it was, I always patiently went through this exercise because it often set the mood of the interaction, especially in bolstering comfort and openness. It was deemed necessary as a way to diminish any sense of threat/insecurity that perhaps accompanied my presence.

However, for purposes of avoiding getting trapped into Lwanga's subjectivity in respondent identification, data were triangulated by identifying other respondents after people had started getting used to us. I also engaged a research assistant, Tom Alinde<sup>42</sup> (a Munyoro) – one of my best students hailing from Kibaale. The fact that he was a 'son of the soil' and that a number of the respondents could identify his family, made us welcome to the former and created the trust that Stake (2010) emphasises for community access. His involvement helped to contain linguistic challenges due to his fluency in Runyoro, Rukiga, Luganda and English, basically covering all the languages that most targeted respondents could speak. I had a limitation with Runyoro and Rukiga as I could follow/listen<sup>43</sup> to most of what was being said, but could not speak the languages. But in some cases - where I noticed that Alinde's presence

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District of Uganda". Their initiatives include a Girls' Secondary School, Vocational Training Institute, the African Rural University for Women, a Community Radio Station, a Microcredit Fund and village extension programmes. URDT also offers accommodation services and it is these that were used by the researcher and his assistant thus being able to access their resource center and radio station for relevant documentation/ records.

<sup>42</sup> Tom also consented to being named and explained in my report.

<sup>43</sup> Runyoro, Rukiga and Luganda are all Bantu languages and therefore have a lot in common. I have also lived with speakers of all the languages before and can therefore follow their dialect though not yet able to speak it.

would influence respondents' responses (especially with the non-Banyoro respondents) - I would conduct the interviews by asking the questions in Luganda while allowing the respondents to respond in Runyoro or Rukiga. Where respondents were comfortable with English, we opted for that. With Alinde, it was easier to be accepted without suspicion. He would also help to identify respondents within and beyond my target and guided me to specific places, which were beyond Lwanga's reach.

## **2.7 Ethical Considerations**

When we talk about ethics in social research, we address those issues that concern our behaviour as social researchers and the consequences that our research brings to the people that we study (Henn *et al.* 2006). As highlighted by Cohen *et al.*, "a major ethical dilemma in research is that which requires researchers to strike a balance between the demand placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research" (2007, p.51). The researcher therefore endeavoured to seek informed consent of all respondents. They were informed about the nature and motivations of the study so that they could knowledgeably make up their mind whether to participate or not. All respondents were asked whether they were comfortable about their names appearing in the report and none of them minded. Though they did not opt for anonymity, they knew that the option was available.

I made all efforts possible to avoid any sort of psychological and physical harm to the respondents. This involved avoiding careless reference to offensive ethnic stereotypes, assumptions and other statements hurtful to the respondents. For example, it featured commonly in interactions with the Banyoro that the Bakiga were considered dirty and that the latter did not want to be told so since to them it was an insult. In interviews with the Bakiga therefore, reference to this stereotype was avoided except where it came from the interviewee. On the other hand, the Banyoro are undesirably stereotyped by some non-Banyoro as malicious and witchy. Similarly this stereotype was only probed into among the Banyoro when they themselves raised it. This prevented the researcher from appearing to be negatively and harmfully biased against any of the groups.

Shenton and Hayton (2004) present 'reciprocity' as one of the possible strategies to gain access. This is where participants in a study are promised some form of benefit from the study. These benefits can take the form of the researcher agreeing to share a copy of his findings with the participants or give feedback through a workshop. However, from my experience in Kibaale, the effectiveness of this approach is contingent upon people's previous experiences with researchers. In ten cases, when I promised to go back to disseminate the findings, respondents were not moved and were quick to inform me that many researchers had come before me with the same promises, but never appeared again after getting what they wanted. As such, promised reciprocity was a limited measure for access hence I needed to depend more on the trust which was created by my gatekeeper, the research assistant and familiarity with our presence due to frequent interactions.

Though all respondents sacrificed their precious time to participate in this study, special consideration was given to the ‘ordinary’ respondents, students, and elders. This was on account of their relative financial. Note should also be taken that, in most Ugandan cultures, we often give tokens (however small) of appreciation to express gratitude for something done for us. Research ethics should be conceptualised within the context of study. From her research experience in Northern Uganda, Angucia also observes that “knowledge of the society might be a starting point for an appropriate ethical point of view” (2010, p.103). Basing on cultural considerations, we therefore found it ethical to give the participants of the above categories half a bar of soap each. Shenton and Haytor warn that tokens pose a danger where “...in order to fulfil their part of the “bargain”, the informants feel obliged to tell the researcher what they believe he or she wishes to hear” (2004, p.229). To avoid such bias, tokens were given after the exercise and were neither announced nor showed before the data collection interaction.

## 2.8 Data Collection Methods and Tools

The table below shows the methods that were used with each of the categories in the research sample.

**Table 4: Schematic overview of data gathering strategies per sample category**

Method	Ordinary people	Local leaders	Ethnic pressure group leaders	Elders	Religious leaders	Youths	Students
Semi structured interviews and Ad hoc interviews							
Focus group interviews							
Observation							
Life history							
Document analysis							

In view of the methodological requirements of the study I mainly used ethnographic methods. As qualitative research in general and ethnography in particular draw on a family of methods (Henn *et al.* 2006; Goldbart and Hustler 2005; O’Reilly 2009), data collection was through indepth interviews, adhoc/informal interviews, life histories, participant and non-participant observation (both overt and covert), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and documentary analysis, which are accounted for later in this section.

Ethnography literally means ‘writing about people’ (Goldbart and Hustler 2005). It is characterised by notions of people as meaning-makers, around an emphasis on how people



interpret<sup>44</sup> their worlds, and the need to understand the particular cultural worlds in which people live and which they both construct<sup>45</sup> and utilise.

The ethnographic methods of this study involved the immersion of the researcher in the social setting for two months (September and October 2011) in order to observe and listen with a view to appreciate/understand the social practices/events under study (Willis and Trondman 2000; Bryman 2008). Ethnography was deemed to have the strength of resulting in “richly written accounts that respect the irreducibility of human experience..., acknowledges the ‘role of theory..., as well as the researcher’s own role..., and views humans as part object/part subject” (O’Reilly 2009, p.3). Because this study is based on constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, I found such a design most suitable to study perceptions and understand people’s construction and interpretation of occurrences/phenomena.

As mentioned earlier, the suitability of the above-described approach is gauged upon the demands of the research questions of this study. What I searched for was an understanding of the spaces for pluralism within the ethnic tension of Kibaale and I therefore started from the people’s own lived experiences and imaginations. The rationale for this approach has been discussed in the Justification of the Study (in Chapter One); in the epistemological grounds of this research; and in my arguments for a qualitative strategy.

With the exception of the fourth research question<sup>46</sup>, each of the methods was used to collect data on all the other three research questions. In order to avoid a distorted picture (Cohen *et al.* 2007), none of the research questions were answered on the basis of an exclusive use of any one of the methods. This methodological triangulation was aimed at cross-checking, enhancing credibility (Hesse-Biber 2010), and verifying the data collected through various methods. In Berg’s (2004) supportive view, “by combining several lines of sight [data collection methods], researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements” (2001, p.4). By using a number of data collection methods for each of the research questions therefore, the research was able to counteract threats to its validity that would come with the exclusive use of one method.

### 2.8.1 One-to-One Indepth Interviews

Indepth semi-structured interviews were mainly conducted with key informants who were deemed to have privileged or extensive knowledge of the issues under research. Among these key informants were purposively identified elders (from different ethnic groups) who have lived in the area for over thirty years, ordinary people; leaders of ethnic pressure groups (Mubende Banyoro Committee and the Bafuruki Committee); local leaders (Members of

<sup>44</sup> Recall the interpretivist epistemological stance adopted by the researcher.

<sup>45</sup> Based on the constructionist ontology earlier explained at the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>46</sup> iv) How do the findings of this research project/compare to existing theories on ethnic conflict and pluralism?

The above two subsidiary questions were answered by use of all other methods except observation because nothing of what they sought could be directly observed in the field.

Parliament, Local Council leaders – LC3, LC5); leaders of peace-related civil society organisations (Uganda Rural Development Training Programme and Kibaale Civil Society Organisation) and religious leaders (Catholic, Muslim, Anglican).

Interviews (indepth, adhoc, and Focus Group) are generally preferred because of their strength in accessing in-depth information (Marshall and Rossman 1995). “They provide qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference. In so doing, the method enables the interviewer to maximise her or his understanding of the respondent’s point of view” (Henn *et al.* 2006, p.161). A semi-structured design was aimed to enable me to probe deeper into relevant issues that emerged during the interviews. This included issues that the researcher had little/no knowledge about or had not yet thought about. This yielded new ideas other than those already catered for in the instrument and allowed me to ask follow-up questions and/or for clarifications. The method also helped to verify that the interviewee and I came to a shared understanding of meaning. Not a shared meaning in the sense that we held the same view about things, but that I precisely understood the meaning of the interviewee.

Interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview schedule. This was designed in view of soliciting all the information that was deemed necessary to answer the research questions. Some interview questions were informed by the literature review where it served to highlight some areas of contention, knowledge gaps and important themes on ethnicity and pluralism. Before I proceeded with the actual data collection, the research instrument was critiqued and improved by my PhD supervisors through suggestions for necessary adjustments and additions<sup>47</sup>.

Before the interviews took place, I ensured that I had created rapport with the respondents (Henn *et al.*, 2006, p. 163). The strategies for creating rapport were determined by the context at hand. They included starting with an adequately detailed self-introduction and casual talk about social issues, which made the interviewees realise that there was nothing complicated about the interview and made them feel comfortable to talk freely. For the Banyoro respondents, the *empaako* (pet name), which visitors are often given as part of an assimilation process, means a lot in terms of accepting, recognising and respecting their culture. I accordingly adopted *Akiiki*, which would make my respondents more receptive. We also accorded each respondent the freedom to speak in Runyoro, Luganda, Rukiga, and English. No respondent was made to use a language they were uncomfortable with because it was considered that this would limit the depth of the information given.

### **2.8.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

FGDs were used to enable us acquire a wide variety of information across a large number of subjects in a short period (Dawson 2009) and to achieve the psychologically-oriented advantages of group settings. Such advantages included assisted remembrance; stimulation

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<sup>47</sup> This procedure was applied to all the instruments (one-to-one interview guides, life history guides, Focus Group Discussion checklists and the observation guide).

by other participants' answers and creation of a sense of collective security that would make people contribute freely. And, though in an artificial setting, or what Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) refer to as 'staged conversations', FGDs induce social interactions akin to those that occur in everyday life but with greater focus. By this, unlike in individual interviews, I was able to access social interactional dynamics that produce particular positions among different ethnic groups. This was particularly with regard to stereotypes, their origins and how they influence (and are influenced by) ethnic relations in the area.

As an interpretivist approach centers on the researched group's meanings, FGDs were important spaces to allow for the proliferation of multiple meanings and perspectives as well as for interactions between them (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis *ibid*). On the basis of the multiple perspectives observed through FGDs, and with regard to the possibilities for pluralism in Kibaale, the researcher was able to confirm that both the interpretations of individuals and the norms and rules of groups are inherently situated, provisional and changeable. As submitted by constructivist ontology, social realities like ethnicity are seen through these FGDs to be constructed through the multiple perspectives brought on table by individual members.

However, though every FGD started with an extensive introductory session, explanation of the study, discussion of the rules and procedures<sup>48</sup>, and a casual chat for creating rapport, it sometimes occurred that some participants would be seen to feel uneasy talking in a group setting. There was an event during a FGD with men where there was one particular participant who simply just listened to what others contributed, only occasionally laughing with the rest and murmuring to participants sitting next to him. Whenever prompted if he had something to say he gesticulated to the negative. In cases like this, I would follow up the quiet participants after the discussions and often found that they had interesting things to say but did not feel comfortable enough to express them in a group. Others would simply say that their views had been pre-empted by the other participants. These people could only be encouraged to say something but could not be pushed because that would be considered impolite of the researcher. There was another challenge with some participants who tended to dominate the discussions; however this would be handled by polite interventions by the researcher. I would, for instance, with caution not to offend, remind the dominating participants to allow others to contribute or/and ask others what they had to say about what other participants had contributed.

Three FGDs were held; one with 'ordinary men', another with 'ordinary women'<sup>49</sup> from the age categories of 25 and above, and the third FGD was conducted with secondary school students (of mixed school class, gender and race). The ten participants in the 'ordinary men'

<sup>48</sup> This was about how the discussion was to be conducted, what was expected of each party, and encouragement for everyone to be open in contribution. The guidelines/principles on conduct and participation were arrived at together with the participants, not simply dictated to them. These were: mutual respect, active participation, avoidance of offensive language, and freedom to agree and disagree with each other. It was important for the people to know what they were going into so that they make informed decisions on whether to participate or not and to allow for a smooth flow of the interaction.

<sup>49</sup> Each of these were in their own Focus group to allow for free participation. For cultural reasons, women in traditional settings tend to be less participative in the presence of men.

FGD were selected on the criteria that they did not fit into any of the other research population categories and they were from different ethnic groups. Considering that Focus group size ought to be within a small number in the range of five to ten people, which allows for each member to meaningfully participate (Berg 2004 and Cohen *et al.* 2007), not all ethnic groups could be represented. Instead, the emphasis was to ensure that, among others, ethnic groups that had featured in the one-to-one interviews as key players in the tension were represented. The participants were thus from Banyoro, Bafumbira, Bakiga, Banyankore ethnic identities. This diversity enriched the discussion with a variety of experiences and perceptions.

The ethnic mix was also meant to check if the views that emerged from one-to-one interviews would be the same in an ethnically diverse group. I also further aimed to observe (though with limitations emerging from the artificiality of the setting) how members acted/behaved in each other's presence and the way they would react to ethnically stereotypical and accusatory submissions<sup>50</sup>, recommendations for co-existence, and other issues of possible ethnic divergence. As shall be seen in the presentation and analysis of findings, significant variations and convergencies were observed.

Participants in the men's category were selected with the aid of a local leader (with whom the criteria had been discussed) who had been identified by my gatekeeper at the earlier mentioned Peace Dialogue at Birembo War Memorial Institute. This meeting was attended by several people from different parts of Kibaale. Going through a local leader was a strategy for acceptance by the people. They would thus be confident that their leader could not drive them into a risky encounter, especially a leader who would want their votes at election time. Everyone contacted was thus willing to participate.

For the student FGD, ten students were selected by a teacher<sup>51</sup> from different classes (S1 – S6) at Kagadi Secondary School, which was purposively identified by my gatekeeper on account of the ethnic diversity of its students and easy access (since some of the teachers were his friends). The aim of integrating the students in the study sample was to check if they also had the same (or different) accounts of the narratives in the wider community and to establish the source of their accounts (especially on ethnic stereotypes, blame, and scape-goating). I also sought to establish their views as a generation on the possibilities for pluralism in the area. Due to changing realities both nationally and locally, and different experiences in engaging with diversity, I assumed that there could be important variations in perception across generations. For example, the literature reviewed had suggested that some of the young people look at/face ethnic realities in their times as they come, whereas elders tend to bring in historical considerations (Republic of Uganda 2006).

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<sup>50</sup> I was also keen to observe if these negative aspects were raised at all and, if so, to compare the manner in which these were brought up in comparison to what transpired during the one-to-one interviews. These dynamics were considered vital in further informing the analysis about the inter-ethnic relations in the area.

<sup>51</sup> It was assumed that students would not doubt the safety and importance of an exercise that their teacher had encouraged them to participate in, moreover in the school premises. As such, the teacher was a good entry point for gaining access and acceptance.

Including students from different classes was meant to bring on board diverse experiences from various levels of interaction. As with other FGD categories and for similar reasons, it was also ensured that there was ethnic diversity among the participants. Students were specifically subjected to a group interview because they were far too shy to say anything other than 'yes' or 'no' to an adult (and stranger) in a one-on-one formal situation (see Fife 2005). They were more comfortable/ secure in a group setting.

The 'ordinary women' FGD was held at URDT and was constituted of five participants from Banyoro, Banyarwanda, Bakiga and Alur ethnic groups. These were purposively identified by my gatekeeper on the criterion of ethnic diversity. Two of the participants were specifically included because they facilitate a radio programme that discusses women issues. These were very helpful in making the discussion lively and in broadening perspectives of the discussed issues, thus opening up new lines of discussion.

The decision to subject women to an FGD without mixing them with men was based on cultural considerations. In a number of rural settings in Uganda, women tend to keep quiet in the presence of men in public. I attended two village meetings (in Ruteete and in Kagadi - Kibaale) and observed that most of the women attendants were quiet most of the time. The meetings were largely dominated by the men and, even when a few women contributed, it was apparent that they did so with fear. I had experienced this challenge earlier during my MA research in Masaka District (Buganda) when, in a mixed sex FGD, three of the four women participants could hardly say a thing without being implored. Therefore, in order to allow women to talk freely, I had to group them together in an all-women FGD.

The fact that both my assistant and I were male did not appear to have posed an impediment as all the participants seemed to talk freely without showing any signs of restraint. I assume this was because of our outsider status and the related imagination on the women's side that there was no possibility of the information going back to 'their men'. However, having the two radio women in the group was also of great help in creating an atmosphere of openness. They were used to open public talk and their contributions stimulated others to open up too.

### **2.8.3 Life Histories**

Life histories were employed to draw rich data based on life experiences of a few selected elderly respondents from different ethnic groups. These elderly respondents were specifically subjected to this method because of their assumed experiences that would serve to provide historical information on the development of ethnic relations in the area as sought for in the first subsidiary research question. The aim was, to use Ferrarotti's phrase (cited in Fielding 2006), to access 'history from below'. Yes, there are several texts with historical accounts of ethnic tension in Kibaale (e.g. Mirima 1999 and Schelnberger 2005). But it was important to establish how they compare to the narratives in the community and to fill in missing details, especially with regard to the dynamics of engaging with ethnic difference along time.

Triangularly combined with other data collection methods, life histories led the researcher to integral data.

The interviews were guided by a life history guide, which contained a set of themes around which life experiences were sought. The themes were developed with the guidance of the reviewed literature on the history of the area. However, in order to allow for emerging information, the interviews were not restricted to the pre-drawn themes. Probing was accordingly done where interviewees brought up informative events and life experiences.

All interviewees (in all types of interviews conducted) granted the researcher permission to tape-record the proceedings after due explanation and request. Tape-recording was considered for a number of reasons. First, it was meant to permit the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee without the distraction of trying to write down every said word. Patton supportively observes that "... the interactive nature of in-depth interviewing can be seriously affected by the attempt to take verbatim notes during the interview" (1990, p.348). Secondly, Patton (*ibid*) and Henn *et al.* (2006) recommend that tape-recording enables the researcher to capture a full transcript of the interview which is considerably more difficult when exclusively reliant on note-taking.

I had to choose between full transcription of every utterance and a partial transcription of selected passages (Jones and Somekh 2005) and I chose the former. Partial/selective transcription would be pre-emptive and potentially distorting because transcription was done before analysis. Selecting what to note and what to leave out at this point could lead to the omission of otherwise important data. And, as shall be explained in more detail later in this chapter, to an extent, data analysis is done narratively in an attempt to allow for the earlier mentioned thick descriptions. This would require keeping the respondents' narratives intact for the possibility of extensive verbatim reporting. Full transcripts were needed in order to be fed into Atlas-ti<sup>52</sup> for easy management in display, coding, and quotation identification and extraction. Besides, full transcripts were thought to be helpful for later reference and cross-checking during report writing and thereafter.

Having the proceedings recorded enabled the researcher to have an opportunity to reflect further on the interview proceedings during and before the transcription exercise. The recordings were also expected to further serve not only as evidence of the interviews having been carried out, but also for those who would want to cross-check the accuracy of the findings in the report and ethical considerations within the primary accounts. However, note-taking was also used in order to locate important quotations from the tape, formulate new questions based on what was said, capture relevant non-verbal data such as body language, and other events that occurred during the course of the interview which had a bearing on how the data was to be contextualised and understood.

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<sup>52</sup> Atlas-ti is a computer software programme that helps in the management and, to an extent, in the analysis of qualitative data. As shall be explained later, it is here used in analysis but to a limited extent since the researcher had to learn its use during the course of the study amidst time limitations. Manual (non-software) analysis was mostly relied on.

### 2.8.4 Observation

To a limited extent, participant observation was used by, as opportunity showed, attending religious services/functions, radio talk shows, market days and community meetings – Peace Dialogue at Bwanswa (19<sup>th</sup> September 2011), Peace Day (20<sup>th</sup> September 2011), and in recording how people reacted to questions. Some writers on ethnography argue that participant observation should be the center of ethnographic research (Corbetta 2003). I would however go with Goldbart and Hustler’s view that ethnography relates with a range of methods “not all of which make extensive or even any use of participant observation in the strong sense of the term” (2005, p.16). I would argue that whether to extensively use participant observation or not depends on the subject of study and the value that participant observation as a method would bring to the setting. Therefore, that participant observation was used to a limited extent, does not make this study any less ethnographic if we take into account the other methods (as explained above) through which people’s experiences and imaginations were accessed from their own point of view.

With a flexible observation guide<sup>53</sup>, the aim was to observe relations between people of different ethnic groups, randomly follow the subject of their conversations where possible, capture the emotions displayed by the subject/s and enlist accounts that may not be accessed through the other methods. These observations were recorded as field notes.

As earlier indicated in justifying methodological triangulation, observation was also meant to cross-check the information which was gathered through interviews and document analysis. While interviews enabled the researcher to access the respondents’ descriptions, rationalisations and reflections about their behaviour, observational data made it possible to tap into the more chaotic, non-rational behaviour that was not disclosed in interviews (McKeganey *et al.*, cited in Bloor and Wood 2006). For example, even the best interviewee explanations could not shed enough light into interactive relations at places of worship, bars and in markets; the languages used, casual interactions and other details. Observation thus enabled the researcher to access what people do in addition to what they say they do. By methodological triangulation, the weaknesses of each separate methods were countered and the internal validity was enhanced.

As observed by Jones and Somekh, “observers always have some kind of impact on those they are observing who, at worst, may become tense and have a strong sense of performing, even of being inspected” (2005, p.40). This scenario, technically known as the Hawthorne Effect (Berg 2004), is highly probable, especially where the observed group is not yet comfortable with or used to the researcher. In addition to cross-checking the observations through other data collection methods, context-specific measures which are explained below were undertaken to minimise the above negative effects.

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<sup>53</sup> The guide was flexible in the sense that it contained items that guided observation but the exercise was not limited to the pre-determined items. Nevertheless, in line with counsel, going with a guide helped ensure that the right data was collected to explore the specified research questions.

When I attended radio talk shows, I revealed my status as researcher and explained to the host how my data was to be treated (publication). The host passed on this information to the guests (on one occasion the guest was the area Member of Parliament and in another it was religious leaders) and assured them that I was a ‘harmless guest’. This helped avoid the anxiety, which one may naturally feel when they meet an unannounced stranger who keenly listens in to what one is saying without making any contribution. On other occasions, such as at the market, church and bars, the researcher did not announce his status but tried hard to be ‘invisible<sup>54</sup>’ by clothing accordingly and acting familiar to the environment. By this, suspicion was contained and acceptance facilitated. The ethical issues which emerge from such covert observation have been discussed under Ethical Considerations in this Chapter, specifically, under the principle of avoiding any kind of foreseeable harm to the subjects.

Walliman (2011) and Henn *et al.* (2006) indicate that participant observation often takes long periods of time to be able to follow and understand the studied behaviour/ events. This long period they suggest, includes time to negotiate entry, which often takes a while. To this they add that since the researcher has to immerse themselves into the study setting so as to capture people’s meanings, it can only be done by spending a long period in the field.

However, I would argue that the length of the period that qualitative researchers spend in the field is also determined by their prior experience with the field (which partly determines the time spent to gain access), the nature of the subject of observation and the available time. As such, since my observation was event specific and with limited time spans, it did not require prolonged time. Moreover, I had already developed some conversance with the field during the earlier mentioned PKP exploratory study on diversity, marginalization and pluralism. The two months (September and October) which I had initially spent in the field, allowed for ample observation of relevant events. It made me conversant with some of the cultural aspects of the Banyoro – such as *empaako* (pet names), greetings, language (listening in and a bit of spoken) – and therefore at this stage, two weeks were enough to settle into the field and conversationally build trust among the people. The ease and openness with which the people talked to me in these two weeks convinced me that I had built the necessary trust to start collecting data, more specifically to start the observation.

Records of the observations were taken through field notes, which were often immediately after the observed event. Where observation was not of an open nature and without the people’s consent, caution was taken not to openly take notes because this would attract the suspicion of the people. The realisation that one is observing you and taking notes about an unknown issue is naturally bound to produce anxiety and, for that matter, might even be a risk to the life of the researcher. Similarly, in such occasions, audio-recording was avoided.

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<sup>54</sup> Invisibility denotes the ability of the researcher to be present in the setting, to see what is going on without being observed, and consequently, to capture the essence of the setting and participants without informing them (Stoddart, cited in Berg 2004).



### **2.8.5 Audio and Documentary Analysis**

Documentary analysis mainly entailed critical examination of existing relevant documentary sources (such as reports on/from the district) and radio recordings (especially of talk shows around times prior and/or after violence) for unobtrusive data. It also involved analysis of memoranda from pressure groups (Mubende Banyoro Committee and Bafuruki Committee) to the President and to commissions of inquiry about Bunyoro/Kibaale issues.

Identification of the relevance of the documents was guided by the research questions. Some of the documents were specifically analysed because they had been referred to in the reviewed literature. It was deemed important to access them and seek out for more details and, in some cases, to guide the interviews with the concerned persons through probing into context, motives and meanings. This was especially the case with the Memoranda of MBC and BC about which clarification was sought from the interviewees from the respective pressure groups.

Many Bafuruki respondents mentioned the name of the late Mzee Kazairwe - who was the leader of MBC at the peak of the tension (2001 – 2003) - as having been key in threatening the former with eviction from the area through Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio. I therefore found it needful to access the recordings of his talk shows to verify the allegations and understand his arguments. However, I only managed to get a few of the recordings since most of them had been removed from the records shelves after the President had threatened to close the radio station for ‘inciting violence’. Analysis of the documents involved identifying emerging themes and checking how they compare to other findings or/and what relevant lines of inquiry they implied. The suggested relevant lines of inquiry were accordingly pursued in interviews with relevant individuals.

### **2.9 Methods of Data Analysis**

This section entails an explanation of how the collected data was interpreted and analysed. Data interpretation and analysis involve making sense out of what people have said and what has been observed, by identifying patterns, putting together what is said on one occasion with what is said in another, and integrating what different people have said (Patton 1990 and Berg 2004). As commended by Stake (2005), having used a case study design within an interpretivist paradigm, the analysis is meant to encapsulate complex meanings within a finite report, while endeavouring to describe the studied case in sufficient descriptive narrative to enable the readers to experience the researched happenings vicariously, assess my interpretations and draw their own conclusions.

As indicated earlier under the data collection methods, the tape-recordings of all interviews were fully transcribed. Full transcription was done in lieu of the analytical aim to provide rich descriptive accounts (thick description) on the basis of which rich interpretations would be made which would allow the reader to follow my line of interpretations and conclusions. However, important as this attempt was, the generated volumes of transcripts posed a challenge for the researcher to make sense of the data, reduce it, identify significant patterns,

and construct a framework to communicate the essence of what the data reveals (Patton 1990). Indeed, as described by Miles, qualitative data can be "... an 'attractive nuisance' because of the attractiveness of its richness but the difficulty of finding analytic paths through that richness" (cited in Bryman 2008, p.538). Below is how the transcripts and field notes were handled.

The first step in addressing the above challenge was coding. Coding involves pulling together a wealth of material into some manageable order and structure by ascription of category labels to pieces of data (Cohen *et al.* 2007). It was done both manually<sup>55</sup> and with the use of the Atlas-ti qualitative data analysis software. The first stage in the process consisted of open coding through reading the data to identify common themes and label them with specific words such as: intermarriage, District creation, ethnic politics, stereotyping, and so on. These themes were to drive further analysis through establishing their connections, disconnections, and consider alternative interpretations.

Also, it should be noted that some preliminary coding of the data was done during the data collection process as a way to draw out important cues for further data collection. For example, it is through such preliminary analysis that I realized the need to collect more information on the ethnic calculations in the proposed splitting of Kibaale District into three districts. The issue came up in an interview with an area MP and one of the Bafuruki Committee founders and I decided to follow it up in the consequent interviews. Preliminary coding was also aimed to alleviate the feeling of being overwhelmed by the bulk of collected data in case the exercise would have been completely deferred to the end of the data collection period (Bryman 2008). However, all the data was re-coded after the data collection exercise as new and finer codes emerged with more insights by the end of data gathering. It was also a way to ensure consistency.

The open codes which were generated were grouped into nodes/families<sup>56</sup>. Nodes/families here signify categories that draw codes together into a categorical framework, making connections between coded segments and concepts. The generation of nodes was guided by the research questions for which the coded data served as part of the answer put forth for interpretation. Within and between nodes, axial coding was done to interpretively establish relationships and linkages between different codes.

ATLAS-ti was also used to manage quotations. This was by way of identifying and marking sections from the transcripts that were to be quoted verbatim in the presentation of research findings. The sections considered for direct quotation were selected on account of the assumed strength they added to the narrative. It was earlier noted that, this being a qualitative study with emphasis on depth, verbatim quotations are used in order to, as much as possible, avoid distorting people's accounts. Such quotations are helpful in "... revealing respondents'

<sup>55</sup> Manual coding was done before I got some knowledge on how to use ATLAS-ti. It was also used on the field notes that were not typed out to be fed into the programme.

<sup>56</sup> EXAMPLE: Open Codes: intermarriage and affiliation; intermarriage and separation in conflict; intermarriage and ethnic stereotypes; intermarriage critiqued. Node/ family: Intermarriage.

depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and their basic perceptions” (Patton 1990, p.24).

Some data is, of course, paraphrased but verbatim quotations served as the central binding and authenticating thread. Such narratives were further enriched with observational data from field notes and with data from documentary analysis. The narrative within which the direct quotations, observational data and documentary analysis was fitted was thematically arranged, guided by the research questions. The chapters which are derived from the subsidiary research questions provide a frame to ensure both that the researcher remains within the scope of the study and that the data is used to answer the questions systematically.

Where necessary, I employed discourse analysis to try to understand and explain how norms which operate in ethnic relations and engagement are perpetuated. In this, I also analyse how the choice of words such as ‘Bafuruki’, ‘we the Banyoro’, ‘Kabarega leega’, and so on, are used to evoke psychological responses that inform how the people of Kibaale engage, should engage, or may engage with their ethnic differences. The importance of discourse analysis in this work follows Woods’ argument in *Describing Discourse* (2006) that language leads us to act and behave in certain ways and that it is a powerful shaping force in how we think about and relate to the world in which we live.

It is partly through language that we negotiate and renegotiate our position with others as we construct meanings and relations. It should be noted again here that this study is premised on constructivist ontology with the assumption that meaning is constructed/ negotiated. This suggests that it would not be enough to know the words/language used in a given setting but to appreciate the entanglement of language and context as a site of meaning-making (Chomsky 1979). It is assumed that the people of Kibaale bring certain contexts with them in their use of language. This context includes their experiences, assumptions, and expectations as they construct and negotiate their relations with each other in their ethnic diversity.

The next chapters (three, four, five) discuss the findings on the subsidiary research questions one, two, and three, respectively. The fourth research question, which addresses the contribution of this study to existing theory on conflict and pluralism, is simultaneously addressed through a discussion of each of the first three questions and in a comprehensive account in Chapter Six.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HOW THE RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF ETHNIC RELATIONS IN KIBAALE DISTRICT INFLUENCE CURRENT POSSIBILITIES FOR PLURALISM

#### 3.1 Introduction

In order to contextualise ethnic relations in Kibaale District, in this chapter I analytically trace historic developments and events. This chapter addresses the first subsidiary research question of the study, that is: 'How are the significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale District perceived by the residents?'

By tracing the significant historical developments, I contextualise and discuss the realities within the narratives as told by respondents of different ethnicities and in secondary sources. On the basis of the explanatory linkages revealed by the findings, I also indicate how some historical events serve to explain consequent ethnic relations. This chapter is not a complete historical narrative *per se*, rather it is a process-tracing focussed account of ethnic relations which are generally considered to be important in making sense of ethnic relations and mediation initiatives in the history of Kibaale. The accuracy of the memory reflected in the respondents' accounts is less of a concern here. This is because, although often grounded on real historical events, memory itself is socially constructed. The same event may not be remembered/ memorised the same way by different communities. Nevertheless, it is argued that "the primary factors in the development and persistence of an ethnopolitical identity are group members' collective memories and interpretations of ethnopolitical events" (Dutter 1990, p.318). Whatever the form of its representation, it is the role that a particular memory plays in ethnic relations that is important to understand so as to appreciate the possibilities of pluralism in the area.

Process tracing historic events is considered to be a vital starting point to appreciate the possibilities for pluralism as imagined by the people of the area and also provides a basis to comprehend subsequent contemporary inter-ethnic relations. This is because in approaching pluralism, history always matters (Global Centre for Pluralism 2012). I emphasise people's *subjective* accounts, their own interpretation of events and instrumentalisation of history since I acknowledge that "the history of a group of people may consist of certain historical 'facts' such as wars and migrations, but the understanding of those events may change. The way in which they are interpreted, and used to interpret the contemporary world, may alter a number of times" (Oliver 2003, p.98). And, as Cairns and Roe (2003) argue "...if ethnic conflict is to be brought under control, it is necessary to understand the role of the collective past in the collective present. This role is communicated via memories of the past ..." (Cairns and Roe 2003, p.5). From a constructivist perspective, it is imperative to explore and engage with

different angles from which ethnic relations in Kibaale are constructed – and one of the most instructive angles is historical.

During a Peace Dialogue which was attended by the researcher at Bwanswa Sub-County in Kibaale, one Munyoro Member of the Parliament of Uganda re-echoed the above as follows:

I heard there is some PHD student here, this is your homework: when you go to a community ... you must know the area; you must know the people; you must know the history; after knowing then you understand. It is not only enough to know, you must understand and after understanding you appreciate. Now if you do three things: you know, you understand, and appreciate, you go a long way<sup>57</sup>.

Kibaale's history cannot be understood without placing it within the wider history of Uganda as a country, especially from the colonial epoch where the most important twists emerged. This chapter will be sub-sectioned into three parts. The first section addresses ethnic tension as a colonial legacy in Uganda; the second is about the relations of the Banyoro and the Baganda - Subjugation and resistance in the 'Lost Counties'; the third specifically explains the emergence of the Mubende Banyoro Committee ethnic pressure group which is quite significant in shaping Banyoro identity politics; and the fourth focuses on the relations between the Banyoro and migrant ethnic groups in the area from the 1964 Referendum to the 1990s when conflict with immigrants started (the period of the conflict and perceptions on its causes is addressed in Chapter Four). In the conclusion of the chapter, a graphical presentation that summarises the chronology of the above set of events is provided. The content of the chapter includes empirical findings from the field, data from documentary sources and the researcher's interpretation and analysis.

### **3.2 Ethnic Tension as a Colonial Legacy in Uganda**

Ethnic tensions in the African context in general and in Uganda in particular are deeply entrenched in a complex blend of factors such as myth, history, colonial distortions and post-colonial political manipulation (Adesina 2002). I agree with Chukwu (2002) that to lay the entire blame for ethnic conflicts on colonisation may be erroneous and could be tantamount to a pretext aimed to avoid responsibility for our [Africans'] own actions.

However, though it is certainly not the only factor for the ethnic tensions which are prevalent in African countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and others, there is a wide range of literature which points to colonial manipulations as one of the key factors (Kigongo 1995; Mamdani 1997; Byarugaba 1998; Mamdani 2001a, Mamdani 2001b; Mamdani 2004; Nsamba *et al.* 2009; Nabudere 2009; Atkinson 2010). For example, it is indicated that colonial administrative divisions not only contributed to the crystallisation of ethnic identities, but also led to the accentuation of the differences between ethnic groups (Mamdani 2004; Nsamba *et al.* 2009; Atkinson 2010). It can thus be argued that "... colonial institutions did shape the agency of the colonised" (Mamdani 2001b, p.652). As shall be presented and discussed in greater detail

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<sup>57</sup> Key note address at a Peace Dialogue at Bwanswa Sub-County on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011).

later in this chapter, the colonial accentuation of ethnic divisions is well exemplified in the case of Bunyoro Kingdom of which Kibaale is part.

Before the dawn of colonialism, some of the ethnic groups in present day Uganda lived in a monarchical social organisation. This included Kingdoms such as Bunyoro, Buganda, Ankore, and Toro. The Bunyoro Kingdom, which is a much smaller part of the previous greater ancient Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom, occasionally fought with Buganda even before colonialism. As Kihumuro puts it, “the Kings of Bunyoro-Kitara had constant feuds with Ankole and Buganda and displayed remarkable appetite for quarreling among themselves” (1994, p.57). As such, however powerful the colonial experience was to exacerbate ethnic differences and exclusion, it did not occur in a historical vacuum (Atkinson 2010). The pre-colonial conflicts between Bunyoro and Buganda were taken advantage of and aggravated by the British colonisers. For instance, in appreciation of Buganda’s collaboration with the British to fight Bunyoro’s resistance against colonial rule and/or for British strategic reasons, parts of Bunyoro were excised and given to Buganda by the British (Kiwauka 1968; Kihumuro 1994; Byarugaba 1998; Republic of Uganda 2005; Samwiri 2007). Until today this problematic situation has not been resolved. Only two counties (Buyaga and Bugangaizi – forming present day Kibaale District) were returned to Bunyoro in 1964. Buhekura, Buruli, Bulemezi, and part of Singo counties, which some historians say were part of Bunyoro before British intrusion, still remain part of Buganda.

Accordingly, empirical data from this study indicates that many current land wrangles in Kibaale District are partly rooted in the fact that a number of title deeds of the land are still owned by so-called absentee Baganda landlords who retained them even after they left Kibaale in 1964. For example, in a focus group discussion with Banyoro and non-Banyoro men, one of the Banyoro participants said, “as Banyoro, some of us do not have land. Yet some absentee [Baganda] landlords in Kampala can claim ownership of land here!”<sup>58</sup> In another interview, a member of the Bunyoro Kingdom *Rukurato* (Council) reiterated the same position with pain: “We still have absentee landlords. We are on this land of the Baganda!”<sup>59</sup> This thorny issue is a colonial relic that has, due to both its complexity and inadequate commitment by post-independence governments, evaded a satisfactory solution to date.

Mamdani, one of the scholars who are deeply engaged in the study of colonialism and its legacies, advises that “... key to understanding the state in Africa is the historical fact that it was forged in the course of a colonial occupation” (2004, p.62). In his authoritative work, *Citizen and Subject*, he makes a deep analysis of how contemporary African politics is by and large a product of the administrative approach that was used by the late colonial systems in their colonies. The major concern and dilemma of the colonial establishment was how to administratively respond to the ‘native question’. That is: “How can a tiny and foreign minority rule over an indigenous majority” (p.16)? The response to this question was

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<sup>58</sup> FGD held on September 9, 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Interview held on September 9, 2011.

established in two systems: Direct and Indirect rule. Direct rule (which Mamdani refers to as *centralised despotism*) was used where the colonialists themselves had settled, while indirect rule (*decentralised despotism*) was preferred where, colonisers were less in numbers on the ground, and where there was need to contain cultural resistance. Eventually, indirect rule became the dominant approach in most British colonies and Uganda was no exception. It was this approach that was used in Uganda where colonialists predominantly worked through indigenous administrative structures, such as local Kingdoms and Chiefdoms. In stateless communities,

... colonial imposition could not resonate with any aspect of tradition. Often *tribes were created* [emphasis mine] on the basis of territorial integrity as villages were brought together under a single administrative authority. Chiefship was similarly manufactured and chiefs were imposed. If marginal men who shifted alliances at the sight of a more powerful invader could not be found, others were brought in from the outside (Mamdani, 2004, p.41).

For colonial administrative convenience, the people of Uganda were as such oversimplified categorized into superficial neat-looking, watertight ethnic identities (Gaju 2005). The transformation of existing ethnic groups and the creation of new tribal entities and identities was often accompanied by sharp and hard boundaries, and by divisions, rivalries, and attitudes of exclusiveness either not present before or stronger than earlier expressions (Atkinson 2010). In his *Abu Mayanja Annual Lecture – August 7, 2009*, Mamdani reiterated his *Citizen and Subject* thesis with the observation that:

Before colonialism, the tribal identity was open and inclusive. You could become a Muganda or a Munyoro over time. But, under colonialism, the law defined tribal identity as biological rather than cultural. This meant that [as by primordialism] the law considered tribal identity as permanent, passed over from father to son to grandson. As a result, identities that were previously fuzzy and permeable were made permanent. Open and inclusive cultural systems gave rise to closed and discriminatory political systems<sup>60</sup>.

In *Saviors and Survivors*, Mamdani indicates that the crystallisation of ethnic identity “... sometimes involved a benign acknowledgement of existing identities, but at other times, it involved a wholesale re-identification of peoples. Never entirely arbitrary, the re-identification often involved exalting older, narrower identities as historically legitimate” (2009, p.145). Instructive of Mamdani’s view, Gaju cites the Acholi, Karamojong, Banyankore, and Bakiga ethnic categories in Uganda as colonially constructed through conglomerating and freezing several groups. The Karamojong:

... consisted of Matheniko, Bokora, Jie, Dodoth, and other groups who even today see themselves as separate and distinct identities... the people that we call Bakiga today had clan rather than ethnic identities, for example, Basigi and Bainika, Bamungwe and Bakiyagi. The Banyankore as we know them today are an

<sup>60</sup> [http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog\\_id=13](http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog_id=13) Viewed on August 25, 2011.

amalgam of Banyankore (Bairu and Bahima), Bahororo, Baharuguru, Bahweju, Batagwenda, Banyamobo and other groups (Gaju 2005, p. 4).

With such amalgamations, tension was not only created between emergent ethnic groups but even within. In some cases the sub-groups' identities were neutralised through the homogenising effect of the majority ethnic group. In Buganda, for example, though some sub-ethnic groups like the Bakooki, still maintain their (dynamic) cultural identity, which leads to tension as was seen in the case of the Banyara of Kayunga's resistance to the visit of the Kabaka of Buganda in 2009. Whereas it could be argued that this case was catalysed by government forces on account of their misunderstandings with the Buganda kingdom, such catalysm and magnification is based on a real issue – the issue of homogenised sub-ethnic groups. It should be noted that to be considered Baganda, in most cases newcomers are required to assimilate and integrate. And, as cited by Gaju (2005) and Kihumuro (2005), in cases such as the Lost Counties which were attached to Buganda from Bunyoro, the assimilation was forcefully executed. The findings presented in the next sub-section illustrate this trend with accounts of Banyoro respondents who lived through the cultural alienation.

Since the ethnic groups which were solidified or created by colonialism had to be distinctly bounded geographically and culturally, they were respectively categorized and often stereotypically labeled. Ochieng (1995), for example, observes that there were several forms of tribal stereotyping which were used to inform job seekers in colonial Africa, stereotypes which survive until today. Some tribes were specifically employed by colonialists as clerks or foremen. People from certain other tribes could not become servants because they were known to be 'genetically dishonest'. Ochieng gives an example of Carey Francis (1897-1966), a renowned mathematician in the Kenya colony, who kept a Luo as a houseboy and kept a Kikuyu on his *shamba* (farm).

In the same vein, and to illustrate how colonial stereotypes are still prevalent in contemporary Uganda, Kabanankye (2004) cites an example of a Kampala friend who owns a foreign exchange bureau. According to this friend it is better to employ a Mukiga or an Alur as an accountant than to employ a Muganda. The rationale behind this is that the Kikuyu and Baganda have been stereotyped as cunning thieves while the Luo, Batooro, Bakiga, and Luhya were portrayed as good and trustworthy servants. The Baganda stereotype as a cunning lot could as well be traced to Buganda's strategic collaboration with the British colonisers and a feeling that they greatly contributed to Uganda's colonisation. "And largely because [through indirect rule] the British were in the background, and the Baganda were the ones not only immediately prosecuting the war [in Bunyoro, Mbale, Busoga and elsewhere] but also meting out what the people regarded as gross injustice, the brunt of resentment ended being targeted at the Baganda" (Adhola 2006). In Bunyoro, it was the policy of the British colonialists to employ Nilotic labourers in their various tobacco estates because the native Banyoro were considered to be innately lazy (Kabwegyere 1995). This is a stereotype that still reigns large in Kibaale as it was raised or, at least, insinuated by several non-Banyoro as



well as some Banyoro respondents. In further illustration of the divisive character of colonial stereotypes, Mamdani observes:

Every institution touched by the hand of the colonial state was given a pronounced regional or nationality character. It became a truism [in Uganda] t a soldier must be a northerner, a civil servant a southerner and a merchant an Asian (1983, p.10).

The myth of northerners<sup>61</sup> as a ‘martial race’ (Kasozi 1994) thus became concretised through colonial divide and rule. Note should be taken that in comparison to the southerners (mainly the Baganda), the northerners were economically and politically impoverished and thus found solace in joining the military (Mutibwa 2008). This is how the military became a vehicle for economic opportunity (Angucia 2010). To tip the scales in their favour, post-independence leaders such as Obote and Amin who themselves were from the North, later consolidated this colonial legacy by recruiting more Northerners into the army. Mazrui (cited in Finnstrom 2003) would thus label the Acholi a ‘militarised ethnicity’. On the other hand, the southerners, especially the Baganda, dominated civil service mainly because they enjoyed most of the benefits of colonial missionary education. Most schools were built around Buganda which also accommodated the capital city of Uganda. It should be noted here that Western formal education was a trusted passport to civil service (Kasozi 1999). In Kasozi’s statistically supported view:

Because of their head start in education, Baganda, not surprisingly, became over represented in the higher echelons of the civil service. Representing 16.3 percent of Uganda’s population of about six million in 1959, Baganda held 40.7 percent of senior civil service positions in 1959, 46.9 percent in 1961, 38.1 percent in 1963, 37.3 percent in 1965, and 35.6 percent in 1967 (1999, p.4).

Uganda gained her independence from Britain in 1962. The decline in Baganda representation in the senior civil service after independence was a result of attempts by the post-independence government to correct ethnic imbalances. The disproportionately high numbers of Baganda in public service was perceived by other tribes as favoritism by the colonial establishment towards the Baganda at the expense of other ‘Ugandans’. Kabwegyere (1995, p.103) argues that “the Baganda were not preferred because they were more educated or more experienced; it was simply because they were Baganda”. Although Buganda’s initial head start could be explained by the fact that both Catholic and Protestant missionaries and the British colonialists began their work in Buganda (Adhola 2006), Kabwegyere’s view is rendered credence by the assertion of Captain Lugard<sup>62</sup> that:

... subordinate officials for the administration of Uganda [Uganda meaning Buganda] may be supplied by the country itself, but in the future we may even draw from thence educated and reliable men to assist in the government of neighboring countries [meaning the rest of Uganda] (1893, p.650).

<sup>61</sup> These include ethnic groups such as the Langi, Acholi, Lugbara, Alur and others.

<sup>62</sup> Captain Frederick Lugard (1858–1945) was the head of the Imperial British East African Company in Uganda. The company was in charge of the administration of British East Africa (Britain’s colonies in East Africa). Lugard was one of the key architects of the ‘indirect rule’ and ‘divide and rule’ policies (see *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* by Frederick Lugard - 1922).

The polarisation and differentiation amongst the colonised subjects explained above inevitably led to the crystallization of ethnic consciousness. People came to identify themselves as fundamentally different from others, and this also came to influence the relationship between the different ethnic groups. For instance, “the privileged access of Baganda (especially the elite) to social, economic, and political opportunities, and the very real material inequalities that ensued, helped create far greater differences and a greater awareness of difference than had ever existed before” (Atkinson 2010, p.4). Adhola (2006) insists that the colonial games in strategic favour of Buganda, led to the dichotomisation of the politics of Uganda, with Buganda on one side and the rest of the country on the other. On account of this historic dichotomy, the current situation in Uganda shows that there is still, on one hand, some level of resentment and suspicion towards the Baganda from other ethnic groups, and, on the other hand, a feeling by the Northerners that they are resented by the Southerners. Kabwegyere (*Ibid.*) also notices that feelings of superiority among some ethnic groups, stemming from the preferential treatment they received from the Europeans, still exist in many parts of Africa and in Uganda in particular.

The above phenomenon is largely a legacy of a colonial governance system whereby the British created tribal hierarchies where they had not existed previously (Mamdani 2004). Through ethnic affiliations, ‘purer’ and clearer tribal identities were created as the basis for establishing tribal authorities. In cases such as between the Baganda and the Banyoro, existing differences between ethnic groups were exploited for colonial interests through ideologies that promoted the politics of exclusion. This system was used by colonisers with even worse outcomes elsewhere in Africa. The Hutu – Tutsi (of Rwanda) differences serve as a good example here. Mamdani (2001a) and Branco (2005) recount that the feudal Tutsi minority domination of the Hutu Majority was a construct of the Belgian colonisers. They established the Tutsi as a noble elite which dominated in the pre-independence administration at the expense and frustration of the Hutus.

Another important observation is that for the ease of administration, colonialists arbitrarily divided ethnic groups at the borders which they had determined themselves. Examples here are the Samia in Kenya and Uganda; Lugbara in Uganda and DRC; Bakonjo in Uganda and DRC; Banyarwanda in Uganda and Rwanda. This in itself may not be problematic because cultural and political boundaries do not necessarily have to coincide (Mamdani 2001b). What is more important to observe is that within countries, especially in Uganda, districts were drawn along ethnic lines where possible and practical in order to achieve colonial objectives (Karugire 1980). This creation of sub-districts along ethnic lines is a trend which continues in Uganda to date, often with the solidification of intra-district ethnic exclusion and claims of special citizenship rights based on autochthony (Geschiere 2009).

Consequent of colonial ethnic distortions, by 1960, tribal royalties were deeply rooted in Uganda. The notion of Uganda as a nation existed primarily in the minds of Europeans, not the ‘Ugandans’ themselves. It is in this context that Kabanukye thinks that:

Although the republican rhetoric continued to dominate official government propaganda, the concept of Uganda as a republic continued to make little sense to the citizenry as people simply identified with their ethnic groupings based on linguistic, socio-cultural and economic identities” (Kabanankye 2004, p.262).

Thus Nsamba *et al.* (2009) argue that the colonial state not only set up, but left in place an institutional apparatus that promotes exclusionary ethnic identities. This construct of citizenship and ethnic relations was inevitable with the colonial political arrangement that put emphasis on territorial citizenship and rights so as to suppress nationwide resistance to state power. In Nabudere’s (2009) view, the manner in which the ‘divide and rule’<sup>63</sup> policy was used by colonialists was so intense that it was mainstreamed into the consciousness of the Ugandan political elite who later became the rulers of the post-colonial state. He believes that it is for this reason that ethnic manipulation has become an important tool of political power, political control and political management in contemporary Africa, more specifically in the Ugandan context.

Basing on the above explanations, it is imperative to agree with Mutibwa that “... the deep wounds that were curved into Uganda society during colonial time would take many years to heal, and would leave ugly scars” (2008, p.48). Indeed, many of the particular peculiar manifestations referred to as ‘tribalism’ in ‘independent’ Uganda and many other African countries are most of all a colonial legacy (Mamdani 2004; Atkinson 2010).

After exploring how colonialism set a conflictual inter-ethnic foundation for the Ugandan ‘nation’, let us now look at subsequent inter-ethnic relations with specific focus on Kibaale and how they are perceived by the residents. It should once again be noted that, although we argue that colonialism significantly contributed to (set a path for) post-independence troublesome (?) inter-ethnic relations, as the next section explains, there are also other reinforcing factors.

### **3.3. The Banyoro and the Baganda: A Tale of Subjugation and Resistance**

The history of relations between the Banyoro and Baganda became apparent in the study largely as a painful memory to the Banyoro. And it is a narrative that almost every Munyoro respondent was well versed with, even secondary school children with whom it was discussed in a focus group. This history dates back to precolonial times, enduring and catalysed in colonial times and still important after 1964. In the narrative, *Omukama* (King) Kabaleega (1853-1923) carries the revered heroic image of a patriotic Munyoro King who tried with his last strength to protect the Bunyoro Kingdom against colonial subjugation. Because of this role, he is a very important figure in Bunyoro patriotism until today. We shall see in Chapter Four how his name was instrumentalised in the violence of 2001.

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<sup>63</sup> Divide and Rule was an administrative strategy used by the British colonialists to prevent resistance to their rule by creating and/or encouraging divisions, distrust and rivalry among subject communities which would in effect pre-empt the possibility of meaningful alliances against the former’s rule.

After a protracted war of over five years (1894-1899), Kabaleega was in the end defeated and exiled to the Seychelles Islands by the British with the help of the Baganda. Both Kabaleega's brave resistance in protection of his kingdom and his eventual humiliating defeat plus exile with one hand amputated play a crucial instrumental role in the agency of Banyoro memory. The resistance is used to remind present day Banyoro to emulate the determination of their forefathers in fighting against domination and suppression. On the other hand, the defeat still evokes pain which in turn appeals to action against the possibility of its re-occurrence in sub-sequent interface with ethnic others. As argued by Dunn, "one often finds a violent cycle of memory and counter-memory, where one remembered atrocity justifies another or, in some cases, a pre-emptive attack to thwart an expected atrocity built on the remembrance of past wrong doings" (*Ibid.* P.123). This causal mechanism is facilitated by the catalytic agency of political mobilisation packaged around the memories. This process will be later illustrated more vividly in the set of events that led to violence in Kibaale in 2002 and 2003.

Both during its course and in its aftermath, Kabaleega's war with the British came at a very high price for Bunyoro. There is consensus in all accounts on Bunyoro that the kingdom and its people suffered big losses (Dunbar 1965; Kiwanuka 1968; Kabwegyere 1972; Doyle 2006; and Kahangi 2006). In Doyle's view, "nowhere else did conquest involve so many soldiers, require so many engagements, or *proceed with such destruction*" [emphasis added] (2000, p.440). In broad terms the loss was in form of people who died, economic prowess, territory, glory, and in the restriction of cultural freedom. According to Doyle (2006), the defeat marked the acceleration of the marginalisation of the Banyoro for their past *misdeeds* of resistance and perceived ingrained disloyalty. In effect, the marginalisation would breed a feeling of bitterness among the Banyoro with far-reaching implications in their subsequent political life and inter-ethnic relations.

The British took charge of Bunyoro affairs to the extent of 'appointing' kings that suited their purposes. They installed Kitahimbwa in 1898 as the new *Omukama* (Dunbar 1965) - effectively as their puppet. What dramatically captures the British spirit of suppression at the time is that before Kitahimbwa was installed – and before Kabaleega's capture, they had earlier suggested the installation of a ten year old son of Kabaleega. In a letter by George Wilson, Her Majesty of England's Acting Commissioner and Consul-General to the Marquess of Salisbury (dated March 16, 1898), he writes:

In view of the almost universally accepted fact that these countries [kingdoms] are more easily managed when governed in the name of a representative of the local Royal House, and feeling assured that the presence of such a personage would prove a center of attraction, where the politics have been for so long a time of a chaotic character, I have taken this opportunity to appoint a young son [Karukala] of Kabarega to succeed to the kingdom. It appeared to me that any delay would give occasion for the disaffected faction to appoint as successor to Kabarega another son, who is known to be strongly antagonistic to progress (cited in Dunbar 1965).

Furthermore, on the defeat of Kabaleega, seven of the counties of Bunyoro (Bunyara, Buruli, Bulemeezi, Buyaga, Buwekula and Bugangaizi) effectively fell as war spoils into the hands of the Baganda through the authority of the British. Whereas Banyoro find this very unfair to them, some Baganda scholars argue that it is justifiable by the rules of the time of the annexation. Lwanga (2007), for example, argues that Bunyoro recognised land rights derived from conquest and that she actually also conquered land from her weak neighbours. He cites examples of Bunyoro kings Winyi I and Olimi I who seized most of Buganda's territory in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the same way, he relates, when Bunyoro was conquered in 1894, "... to the British and their Baganda allies the annexation of some provinces of Bunyoro was a legitimate gift of war" (2007, p.96). By the merits of Lwanga's argument, Bunyoro's claim seems untenable. However, even though his argument is logically sound, it avoids the question of ethnic relations that ensue from the injustice which is perceived by the Banyoro – especially considering that territorial annexation was followed by humiliating subjugation by the Baganda. As seen below, this feeling of humiliation was emphasized in the life history interviews held with elders in Kibaale.

"Baganda came and enforced slavery onto the Banyoro, and my father was also a slave to one Lwasa Mayinja. He could cook, cultivate and even carry Mayinja to Kiryanga to attend mass [church service] everyday"<sup>64</sup>. With his voice getting sterner and the pain audible in his speech, he continued: "the Banyoro would collect food and drinks for the Baganda... Speaking Runyoro was prohibited in places like schools and other public places. This practice was widespread in all the seven counties". Bearing in mind that "... questions of language are basically questions of power" (Chomsky 1979, p.191) and that this was a way of exercising authority over the vanquished Banyoro, Luganda had now become the official language (Doyle 2009). Whoever did not speak Luganda was arrested by the Baganda Chiefs. Indeed all the elderly Banyoro respondents spoke perfect Luganda, at some points even ridiculing the Muganda researcher that his Luganda was wanting.

The implementation of Banyoro deculturation (or ethnic re-identification – Doyle 2009) was possible because, according to one of the interviewed Munyoro elders who is also a retired Reverend in the Church of Uganda, "... all positions – policemen, sub-county chief, county chief, secretary – were occupied by the Baganda. For us we used to pay tax, trim the [their] compound... The Baganda did not include the Banyoro in their leadership. Even studying was a hassle for us"<sup>65</sup>. When asked how he managed to get an education, he paused for a moment then sighed: "phew! It was by some luck, but again I did not study much". Going through his school experience, he said: "... we used to study Luganda at school like from Primary One to Primary Three!" This account is corroborated by Mirima's narrative below:

They [Baganda] marginalised the Banyoro a lot in education. When a Munyoro finished primary four ... he/she was not allowed to continue to secondary level without dropping their Kinyoro name to a Kiganda one. This led to the adoption of

<sup>64</sup> Munyoro elder, interviewed on February 1, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Interview held on October 18, 2011.

Kiganda names by most Banyoro in order to get a chance to continue with their education. That is why you find many Banyoro in Kibaale District going by Kiganda names like Mukiibi, Mukasa, Ssekitooleko, and others (1999, p.79).

In another life history interview with a Munyoro elder and veteran teacher, he narrated that “Yes [I studied]. But with stigma! We studied with some Baganda. But even if the teacher was a Munyoro, he was not allowed to use Runyoro in class. He/ she had to use Luganda”<sup>66</sup>. As Mirima notes in the above quotation, the cultural disorientation also extended to the introduction of Kiganda names, which are still born by most Banyoro elders as a conspicuous legacy of the Baganda’s role in Banyoro deculturation process. Doyle (2011) explains that names were usually changed when individuals came into contact with the state. In some cases, maternity centre administrators insisted on recording a Baganda name to a child born to Banyoro parents. If they survived getting Baganda names at this point, then they would be renamed at school, when they registered to pay tax, or when they wanted to buy or inherit land.

While giving a key note speech at a Peace Dialogue at Bwanswa Sub-county headquarters (September 19, 2011), a Munyoro Member of Parliament embodied the memory and pain that his name represents in these emotional words:

“I am called Kasirivu<sup>67</sup>. Kasirivu is a Kiganda name, but I am a Munyoro! Then why am I called Kasirivu! This is because [by the rules of] the then administrators, when you produced a child, you [would] go to the sub-county to register the birth. And the sub-county chief who was a Muganda – because all administrators were Baganda – would say: ‘What is your clan<sup>68</sup>?’ Then you say: ‘The name is this’. So the sub-county chief would give the [Kiganda] name. And for me, when I was born on May 18, 1958 [before Uganda’s independence]... the Sub-county chief called Kalanzi told my father that that boy will be called Kasirivu.”

In other instances, “... they would say ‘that child is ours, don’t even give him/her a Kinyoro name’. A Muganda would ask: ‘What is your name?’ You respond: ‘Kagwahabi’. ‘What is your clan?’ ‘Antelope’”. Then the Muganda would say, “Oh, in our place those are Matovus. So, Matovu and Lubega, what do you choose?” The subdued Munyoro would then pick, “Sir, I want Matovu.” This was followed by a warning: “Do not use Kagwahabi again”<sup>69</sup>. Then you were recorded as Matovu. To contextualise the Banyoro submissiveness of the time, he used the aid of the proverb “someone stronger than you will even beat you with your own stick”. The Baganda had the British backing them in all they were doing to the Banyoro.

Because of the loss of self-esteem among some Banyoro, and in a strategic move to tap ‘privileges’ from the Baganda, the Banyoro would also give each other Kiganda names. “The Banyoro were not only misled into shunning their names, they also started denying that they

<sup>66</sup> Interview held on October 15, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> The name is not made anonymous because the speech was made at a public gathering in the presence of both Banyoro and non-Banyoro.

<sup>68</sup> Baganda and Banyoro identify their clans by use of totems, most of which are shared between them. For example, the antelope clan occurs in both Banyoro and Buganda but with different names for the clan members. Baganda would use this entry point to give Banyoro the former’s names basing on the clans of the latter.

<sup>69</sup> Munyoro elder, Interview held on October 15, 2011.

were Banyoro ... and being ashamed of Banyoro ethnic identity” Mirima (1999, p.75). When the researcher expressed surprise over one elder’s confession that he was given his Kiganda name by his brother, the elder explained:

Being called a Muganda in those days was like being called a British today. A Munyoro could not eat with a Muganda. But the Baganda were hospitable, so they would give them food to eat from outside – on the veranda, and on a banana leaf. But if one had a Luganda name, they would easily be taken in<sup>70</sup>.

The ‘hospitality’ of the Baganda as in the above account was expressed by giving the Banyoro some food, but not in treating them as equals. As an incentive, they would also give jobs to those who accepted to be assimilated into Baganda culture and pay allegiance to them. It was a relationship of inferior to superior. The observation that some Banyoro gave up their ‘Banyoro’ ethnic identity to identify themselves as Baganda for job opportunities and self esteem brings to mind two important theoretical points about ethnic identity. The first is that the observation seems to support an instrumentalist view that “ethnics derive benefits from group membership. Ethnic identities, solidarities, and boundaries persist because they supply a steady stream of benefits to group members... There are benefits, not just emotional well-being, from such commonalities in transacting with others” (Oberschall 2007, p.4). Consequently, if the benefits of membership are reduced, ethnic allegiance and belonging are likely to shift accordingly. However, I note that the instrumentalist view only offers a partial explanation since it does not account for the resistance against the incentives for deculturation among other Banyoro as we shall see later in this chapter. The second point which is raised by the observation of some Banyoro who identify themselves as Baganda is the idea that ethnic boundaries are not as rigid/ impermeable as presented in primordialist theory. They have propensities to change and take new forms, depending on reactions to the various questions always generated when ‘self’ confronts the ‘others’ (Omotola 2009). This observation echoes Owolobi’s definition of ethnicity as “a fluid process of composition, decomposition and recomposition” (2003, p.10).

The subjugation of the Banyoro of Kibaale also meant that the King of Buganda set up a palace at a place called Ndaiga in Kibaale so as to effectively control the area. At some point when the Banyoro tried to resist paying taxes to the Baganda, *Kabaka* (King) Muteesa of Buganda went to Ndaiga to enforce payment of the taxes. According to one Munyoro elder who covered the event as a journalist at the time, “he [Fredrick Muteesa] went with a gun to calm down the situation and in this particular event, he shot nine Banyoro. He had told them to vacate the market and when they refused, they were shot. Nothing was done to him”<sup>71</sup>. This impunity was partly rendered possible by the fact that by then Muteesa was president of the newly independent Uganda. The irony is that he was both King of the Baganda ethnic group as well as President of Uganda which was made up of a collection of different ethnic groups. His primary loyalty however, remained with his own kingdom.

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<sup>70</sup> Munyoro elder, Interview held on October 15, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Munyoro elder interviewed on February 1, 2012.

However, although some Banyoro virtually denounced their then undignified Banyoro identity in order to win the favour of the Baganda and be able to access privileges, in a move that reinforces the idea that ethnic attachment is not entirely about access to tangible group privileges (Young cited in Shamdasani 2009), some others took the path of claiming their space through various forms of resistance.

### 3.3.1 Banyoro Resistance to Subjugation and the Emergence of Mubende Banyoro Committee

The first form of resistance was what became commonly known as the *Nyangire* rebellion of 1907. *Nyangire* literally means ‘I have refused’. This resistance (‘refusal’) was in response to a new British order to boost Baganda authority in Bunyoro. In this imposed order, “the *Bazungu* [whites] proclaimed that the Bunyoro *Katikkiro* [kingdom prime minister] should be a Muganda and all the chiefs Baganda”<sup>72</sup>. A Muganda called James Miti was invited by the British to Bunyoro to ‘teach the Banyoro chiefs how to rule’. According to Doyle (2006), Miti was given the responsibility of appointing Bunyoro’s chiefs, giving them Ganda [Baganda] titles and dividing the country into *gombolola* (sub-counties) and *miruka* (parishes). Steinhart corroborates the empirical findings of this study with a more detailed account of the state of affairs at the time:

In his [Miti’s] wake had come an influx of Baganda into the country [Bunyoro], who as friends and followers of Miti had found themselves comfortable and often lucrative positions in the conquered province. They came as petty traders, evangelists, and eventually as minor chiefs and headmen, bringing with them a cultural arrogance, commercial and religious attitudes, and a desire for authority which was not calculated to win friends among the Nyoro [Banyoro] population (1993, pp. 350-351).

The Banyoro refused to comply and chased the *Katikkiro* called Kaggo, who had been sent by the Kabaka, and burnt some huts of Baganda chiefs. Although this rebellion was later quelled through harsh reprimands to the rebellious Banyoro from the British, it marked a turning point in the shaping of Banyoro patriotism and resistance to suppression. One of the significant consequences of the *Nyangire* rebellion was the formation of the Mubende Banyoro Committee (MBC) – a Banyoro pressure group that has been very important in influencing ethnic relations and identity politics in Kibaale – in 1918. Although in different ways and with different levels of success at different points in time, this group continues to influence ethnic relations in Kibaale until today. As we shall see in the next chapter, MBC was central in the tension and violence of 2001 – 2003. In an interview with the current Chairman of the MBC, a vibrant man in his 70s, he highlighted the following as the objectives that led to the formation of the group:

- i) Lobbying Government for the return of ‘Kingdomship’
- ii) To return Kabalega from exile
- iii) Restitution of land [lost counties] to indigenous Banyoro
- iv) To return people who had been taken to Buganda as slaves<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Munyoro elder, Interview held on October 15, 2011

<sup>73</sup> MBC Chairman, Interview held on September 19, 2011.



Although started in 1918, the MBC group became more active in 1921. ‘But what did it achieve at the time?’ we asked the Chairman. At this time his facial expression and tone changed. With his greyish eyes wide open and his voice more emphatic, he said; “very little, nothing! Our people died there, the land was not returned, and the *Omukama* [Kabalega] died in exile without even being tried [in a court of law] and no death certificate! That is why we are still agitating”. According to another narrative in the area, Kabalega died somewhere in Uganda in 1923 while being returned by the British to Bunyoro. I asked the Chairman for his opinion on this matter. He did not even wait for the question to be completed and interjected rather angrily: “who saw him there on his return? All we received was a dead body!” After a short silence, he then turned to his apparently old bag and pulled out an old brownish book. Showing it to me, he said: “I move with my things. This is the 1900 Buganda Agreement. It is a big part of our problem of land that is not yet resolved. But I will not say much on that because the case is in court. We sued the Queen and the British Government and the results will determine our next course of action”. In his account, there was so much emphasis on the pain which was associated with all these events. Where there were more versions of the story, he often went for the extreme and connected it to its relevance today and current activism of the group. I could not easily establish what the basis of his seemingly extremist inclination was or if his opinions were expressed for the sake of justifying the group’s continual agitation.

In the 1950s, partly due to the failure of other peaceful methods, the MBC adopted a militant approach. This was especially propelled by Joseph Kazairwe (1917-2003), a Second World War veteran and very charismatic instrumental figure in the profile of the group. His name features centrally in MBC activities of the 1950s, 60s and again in 2001. One of the things he agitated for was that, now that their counties were part of Buganda, at least the Banyoro from the Lost Counties should have representation in the Buganda *Lukiiko* [Parliament]. This was hesitantly granted by Buganda, but all the deliberations in the *Lukiiko* were conducted in Luganda which was a gesture of disregard to the Banyoro representatives. The Banyoro representatives who included Joseph Kazairwe, Yakobo Mukasa, and Anderea Kalibeera Lubega<sup>74</sup> therefore insisted on speaking Runyoro in the *Lukiiko* in 1956 and were therefore effectively expelled. They however contested the expulsion, prosecuted Buganda Government in the Uganda High Court, won the case and were reinstated. This and other events heightened the tension between the Baganda and the Banyoro, and a number of Baganda in the Lost Counties were killed by the Banyoro.

Around this time (late 1950s – early 1960s), negotiations for Uganda’s independence were underway. The Chairman of the MBC recalls: “We went to Britain to discuss Uganda’s independence. After that it was agreed that Uganda would become independent but that a referendum was to be held after two years”. The Referendum was for the people in the Lost Counties to vote whether they wanted to stay under Buganda or return to the Bunyoro Kingdom. In 1964, under the consideration that Banyoro were more numerous in Buyaga and

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<sup>74</sup> I could not establish the dates when Anderea and Yakobo lived.

Bugangaizi counties (present day Kibaale District), the Referendum was only held in those two regions.

The MBC aggressively campaigned to vote in favour of return to Bunyoro. Buganda also tried up to the last minute, first to stop the referendum, and then to influence the vote in her favour. According to one female Munyoro elder, “the Baganda brought men from Buganda called *Kawonawo* [World War Two veterans] to also vote, so that Buganda would win. The *Kawonawo* were placed at Mhororo, Mabaale side<sup>75</sup>”. However, despite all these manoeuvres, “we had the referendum and 84.2% wanted to return to Bunyoro” (MBC Chairman, interview held on September 19, 2011). This marked the end of administrative control by the Baganda. After the Referendum, not only the Baganda were persecuted but also the Banyoro who voted for or were suspected to have voted in favour of Buganda. “They were hated. My brother who follows me, voted for Buganda. [Because of this] he was hated by the Banyoro and he had to flee from his place. He died from Bugerere<sup>76</sup>”, recounted a Munyoro elder. The Banyoro, headed by the MBC, chased the Baganda with spears and machetes (Schelnberger 2008). One Munyoro respondents estimated that over one hundred Baganda were killed in the ensuing battles, especially the *Kawonawo* who had been brought into the area by the King of Buganda to vote.

The Bunyoro Prime Minister declared that ‘the settlers were not welcome to stay’ (Lwanga 2007, p.110) and the *Kabaka* was as well unceremoniously asked to remove his property from Kibaale. I visited Ndaiga and found the ruins of the palace structure in the bush. There are still some Baganda living around the area – which still bears the Luganda name Kyaterekera -, but these are the ones who “abandoned the wars and cooperated with the Banyoro” (Muganda respondent interviewed on September 18, 2011). For those who stayed, a Munyoro respondent observed that “... the friendship resumed gradually” (Interview held on October 15, 2011). To co-exist with the Banyoro, the Muganda respondent explained:

We all tried learning Runyoro and we use it where possible. You can stay with your culture but it cannot be complete. We now use both. We maintained our dress-code and Introduction [traditional marriage] norms. When we meet, we all dress according to our ways. They [Banyoro] have no problem with that.

As such, co-existence required respect for Banyoro culture, and some degree of assimilation which could facilitate interaction between the two groups. All superiority tendencies had to be abandoned by the Baganda. When the Baganda who stayed in Bunyoro abandoned their master attitude and started showing respect to Banyoro, relations changed. Banyoro also stopped resenting the Baganda. A number of Banyoro actually also learnt Luganda and would speak it when they pleased. On our way to the interviewee’s place (Kyaterekera), we met a group of children playing soccer, using Luganda in their communication to each other. The Muganda respondent told us that actually the children may not necessarily be Baganda because they know each other’s languages. This observation illustrates that over the years co-existence was rendered possible by mutual respect and gestures of appreciation for each other.

<sup>75</sup> Female Munyoro elder, Interview held on September 17, 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Interview held on October 15, 2011.

However, it was not on absolutely equal terms. Because of the sensitivity of the previous relations with the Banyoro, the Baganda were careful not to express every detail of their culture and therefore exercised a certain level of cultural self-censorship. Although the 1964 Referendum was a great achievement for the Banyoro, it left some issues unresolved. The major one is the issue of land ownership. The MBC Chairman talked with visible anger and dissatisfaction about it. Explaining why their struggle is not yet over, he said: "... the Referendum Act, the third amendment which was returning those counties to Bunyoro effective from 1st January 1965, was not honoured! ... We were and are still prisoners". The land titles remained in the hands of the Baganda, who had now become 'absentee landlords'. Pointing at the land outside the school where we were conducting the interview, a Munyoro youth representative to the Bunyoro Kingdom *Rukurato* (Parliament) said: "All that land you see, it [sic] is for absentees. The landlords are in Buganda, they are in the UK". This account was rendered credence when a Muganda colleague shared with me that her grandfather who has since passed away had land in Kibaale and a big house whose land title got lost but the family is still trying to follow up. The absentee landlord issue remains thorny until today and, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, still partly contributes to tension and conflict in the area.

The historical account of relations between the Baganda and Banyoro needs to be put into perspective with regard to the legacy for subsequent relations between Banyoro and other migrant peoples in the area. As Gottschalk advises, "... narratives regarding the past offer a particularly useful tool of examination because by their very nature they often include important ingredients for identity [and identity relations]: references to the present community in time and space" (2000, p.69). Shoup (2008) observes that, under certain circumstances, such history has the potency of giving present action and events a particular meaning. From the narratives I would ask: Considering that there are many peoples in other parts of the world who neither know nor care to know their history, why would the Banyoro be well-versed with theirs? Does the memory of relations with Baganda have any influence on the framing, interpretation and understanding of ways and actions of other ethnic groups the Banyoro currently live with? Answering these questions would contribute to our understanding of the significance of perceptions of Kibaale's history to inter-ethnic relations in the area.

We may not entirely be in position to answer the above questions even with the analysis in the next section on the ethnic relations with other immigrants after 1964. However, what I can draw from the above narrative as points of keen observation for later analysis are the following observations: The first is that the relations with Baganda were mainly painful for the Banyoro and that even the memories they evoke are painful. They are memories of subjugation, marginalisation, and cultural disorientation. The loss of self-esteem that ensues from such treatment could have a dual effect. It may draw the marginalised group into an inferiority complex and xenophobia by which they become suspicious of actions of 'ethnic strangers/others'. We shall later see in this chapter and Chapter Four how this happened in Kibaale District. On the other hand, the loss of self-esteem could lead to loss of ethnic pride and disassociation with the victim's ethnic identity in a move that illustrates the fluidity of

ethnic boundaries. The second important observation is that the resistant agency and activism of some Banyoro actors in the history is narrated with pride and has a hint of reciprocal obligation for other generations to stand up against suppression (Soeters 2005; Dunn 2009). This is vividly manifested in narratives of Kabaleega's heroism and the MBC's patriotic determination. In fact, in writing the biography of his father (Joseph Kazairwe), Mirima states it explicitly that:

If today's youths can emulate Kazairwe and love their country as he did, there will be no doubt the future will be good... Kazairwe was proud of the resistance Omukama Kabaleega put up against superior precision British Maxim guns. He said the young generation must learn this history so that they can be proud of their grandfathers' performance at the battle front (2003, pp.98-100).

In contrast with the celebration and valorisation of heroes seen above, and in apparent deterrence, the wrath towards suppressors and their collaborators is presented as harsh. In the event of another subsequent group being perceived as actual or potential detractors, the history could be instrumentalised with the painful memories working out to draw fear against the re-occurrence of the gruesome past and the heroic part of the history appealing to patriotic action. I will analyse these dynamics in the next section on the basis of the research findings on the relations between the Banyoro and other immigrant ethnic groups after the 1964 Referendum that saw the exit of most Baganda from the area.

### **3.4 Banyoro Relations with Immigrants after the 1964 Referendum**

To explain how Kibaale came to host so many immigrants and to be able to understand the ensuing relations, we need to examine its demographic landscape before the mass immigration of people from other parts of Uganda.

A combination of heavy casualties from the war (1894 – 1899) with the British and the Baganda, epidemics and famine that hit the area after the war, desperation, and marginalisation by the Baganda left Buyaga and Bugangaizi (Kibaale) severely depopulated. In some cases, significant sections of villages were cleared in punitive action for their resistance (Doyle 2000). Doyle further indicates that the concentrated settlements into which the war pushed the Banyoro were ideal transmission centers for small pox, sleeping sickness, venereal diseases and other infections which thrive among unsettled yet dense populations. Cases of rape by Sudanese British mercenary soldiers were also high enough to facilitate the spread of diseases. The famine was mainly a result of people being prevented from cultivating their land because of the war, together with the coincidence of poor rains in 1894, 1896, 1898, and 1899 (Colvile cited in Doyle 2000). Yet still, within this scarcity, the Banyoro had a dual role of feeding both the British-Baganda-Sudanese army and Kabarega's soldiers. Recounting the scene of Bunyoro at the time, Doyle quotes the missionary Fisher saying: "poverty and starvation met us on all sides as we passed through the thinly populated villages" (p.440). In this missionary's account, he mentioned that one could 'scarcely enter any house of rich or poor without finding at least one sick or suffering inmate'. He described the Banyoro as 'a very weak, sickly race, especially the women, who are always ailing'.

While many Banyoro died of epidemics, Doyle reports that numerous families permanently left Bunyoro to settle elsewhere so as to escape the scourge. At the same time, more than anywhere else, colonial game protection policies (1890 – 1962) in Bunyoro were strict and harsh. The severity of the punishments for transgression was to the level of expulsion of chiefs and burning villages. These measures encouraged the multiplication of game and its attendant destructiveness which did not favour human settlement as the farming on which they primarily relied for livelihood was rendered impossible. One of the Banyoro elders recalled that “in 1967 most of this place was a bush full of wild animals. I used to teach in Muhooro but would hear wild animals cry” (Interview held on October 15, 2011). As such, the area gradually became extremely depopulated due to (among other factors) the fear of wild animals that were both an immediate threat to human life and to agricultural activities. As I will illustrate later, in the face of this ‘demographic crisis’ (Doyle 2006), Kibaale was to become an ideal place to re-settle people who lived in areas which were densely populated and/or suffered other problems after independence. The other widely held view as to why Banyoro needed people to come and settle is even more utilitarian. It was vividly expressed in the words of a Munyoro Member of Parliament: “We the indigenous were welcoming them because they were helping us to chase away these wild animals that were scaring us in the bushes. So we had no problem”. The animals (vermin) that had rendered agriculture very difficult for the Banyoro were thus to be shielded off by the immigrants who settled along the bushes and forests.

Among the first *groups*<sup>77</sup> to migrate to Kibaale in the 1960s were the Bakonjo and Bamba who fled from the war between the Bakonzo-Bamba and the Batooro in the Rwenzori region in Western Uganda. These people largely came to work as porters and garden labourers for the Banyoro. “They were our labourers. We also treated them the way we were treated by the Baganda. A Mukonjo had to eat from outside [not with the rest of the family in the house]” (Munyoro elder, interview held on October 15, 2011). Asked why they never ate together with the Bakonjo, the elderly man bent forward a little towards the researcher as though to whisper and then said in a lowered voice: “because where they come from, they eat dogs, snakes and rats”. This stereotype featured in many interviews with the Banyoro, but it never emerged in focus group discussions in which the Bakonjo participated. It seemed that there were conspicuous attempts not to offend the Bakonjo in their presence. It was observed that few of the Bakonjo permanently settled in Kibaale. They would come and work and then go back to Kasese in Western Uganda. Their numbers only grew much later when they got used to living in the area. It is evident from most accounts that the coming of the Bakonjo was not perceived as a threat, on the contrary, they were welcomed. However, the area remained sparsely populated. This situation made room for the coming of the Bakiga. “In 1965, when the *Omukama* [of Bunyoro] was touring the place, he found vacant places with wild animals and decided that people were to be brought. And that is when the Bakiga were sent to Kibaale by Ngorogoza<sup>78</sup>” (Bunyoro Kingdom Spokesperson, interviewed on February 1, 2012). In the

<sup>77</sup> The italics are meant to make it clear that there are other people of different ethnic groups who had already settled in the area but not coming as groups.

<sup>78</sup> Paul Ngorogoza was the Secretary General (Administrative head) of Kabale District at the time. Kabale District is part of

words of another Bunyoro Kingdom official, Matayo Bamwogeza (cited in The New Vision newspaper March 27, 2002), “the King [Sir Tito Winyi] consulted with the royal council, which agreed to welcome the Bakiga and they were given land at Ruteete – about 100 square kilometers – and this later became the Ruteete Resettlement Scheme. This was the first mass settlement of the Bakiga. It was officially opened by [President] Idi Amin in 1972”.

A Mukiga Member of Parliament explained that most Banyoro in the area were not going to school due to limited facilities and poverty, and social services were not available at all. Mirima, a retired Munyoro journalist and spokesperson of the Bunyoro Kingdom, gives a vivid picture of the infrastructural status of Bunyoro at the time following the referendum of 1964.

The wellbeing of ordinary people and the state of education were so backward. There were two secondary schools in the area: St. Edward Bukuumi and Nyaigana Junior Secondary. The primary schools in those counties did not perform as well as those in other places... There were only two small dispensaries; Kibaale and Kakumiro. When one suffered an illness that required the attention of a doctor, he/she would be referred to Mubende [a neighbouring district several kilometers away]. But this was impossible because there was no in ambulance to take them there... The people’s wellbeing was behind that of the rest of Uganda. Most the houses there were of mud and wattle and were grass-thatched. Even the shops were of mud. None was built with sand and cement... It was known all over Uganda that Banyoro were poor, did not want to work, and were only drinking alcohol (2003, p.153).

To the Mukiga Member of Parliament therefore the decision by the *Omukama* to invite Bakiga was ‘very progressive’ because if more people occupied the area, then the Government would be forced to put a social infrastructure in place for its people. According to a Mufumbira working with Kibaale District Civil Society Organisations Network (KCSO), “they agreed to re-settle the people from Kigezi to this place. And then there was a process of registering who wanted to go. So you could find our fathers say ‘we don’t have enough land here, let us get free land by the Government in...?’ And that is how it happened” (Interview held on September 16, 2011).

So many of the Bakiga were resettled in Ruteete and Kyakabadiima in Rugashari Sub-County in the early 1970s. Where they were resettled it “was land for hunting that was free. It was not occupied by people ... there was no Munyoro there” (Munyoro elder, September 09, 2011). A Mukiga respondent who migrated to the area in 1973 recounts that “the Government had constructed some houses and every immigrant was given ten acres of land by the Government. I applied and the Government gave me 10 acres and my children have grown up there. So I have a big piece of land” (interview held on September 16, 2011).

Although not entirely on equal terms, the initial relations between the Banyoro and other immigrant groups were generally reported as having been cordial. Talk about this period

(1960s – late 1990s) by both Banyoro and non-Banyoro during interviews and FGDs was always characterised by explicit nostalgia. All the non-Banyoro respondents said Banyoro were very welcoming. The Banyoro would even give immigrants food and land for free. For example, a Mukiga Member of Parliament said: “my father was given land by a Munyoro chief called Mutabaazi. He actually bought more land from him. So they would sell land to each other”. Some immigrants who did not have shelter on arrival, were provided accommodation by Banyoro. A female Munyoro respondent expressed the Banyoro spirit of the time in the following words:

By the time they came, I was a teenager. And, in the situation they arrived in, the Banyoro noticed that they were different but accepted them. We could even give them food like potatoes, cassava, bananas, since we had plenty. The situation was not good for them at first. Sometimes their children would fall sick, and they also died a lot. But as Banyoro we could help<sup>79</sup>.

Even at the social level, non-Banyoro respondents recalled that they shared a lot. They would attend each other’s parties and funerals, trade with each other and drink together in bars. In an interview with an elderly Mukiga who runs a local brew bar, he explained that:

Bars also brought us together where Banyoro used to sell local brew. And since the Bakiga had money<sup>80</sup>, they could drink! Later, the Bakiga started brewing *Muramba* [Bakiga local brew], as the Banyoro brewed *tonto* [Banyoro local Brew]. So we would drink from bar to bar, relate and make friends<sup>81</sup>.

Actually in an account of one of the Bakiga (female) who settled at Ruteete before the Ruteete Settlement Scheme of 1973, “... it is them [the Banyoro] who came to us requesting friendship. Even after the resettled group arrived, the Banyoro came telling us that since we had been friends we could continue with our friendship”. Some Banyoro would even invite them on ‘big’ days like Easter and they would celebrate together. One other such big day is the *Empango*. This is an annual celebration in commemoration of the Bunyoro King’s coronation. It is culturally very significant in the Bunyoro tradition. Although the Bakiga came from a non-monarchical society, in a sign of paying allegiance to the Bunyoro King and respect to Bunyoro culture, they would also participate in the function. This is illustrated by the account from a Mukiga respondent below:

We the Bakiga had our songs and we could also sing and dance for the *Omukama* at the palace in Karuzika during the *Empango*. During these ceremonies, various tribes would entertain guests. These included the Batooro, Alur, Bakonjo... and after we would eat and drink together. The Omukama at that time was Sir Tito Winyi<sup>82</sup>.

Both Banyoro and non-Banyoro respondents reported these practices to have helped much in bonding people in the area.

<sup>79</sup> Interview held on September 17, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> This applies to those who had sold their land back home at higher value to come and acquire cheaper fertile land in Kibaale.

<sup>81</sup> Interview held on September 16, 2011.

<sup>82</sup> interview with Mukiga elder, held on September 16, 2011.

In trade, although initially the non-Banyoro relied on their hosts for hand-outs and food in exchange for labour, they later produced a lot of food that they would sell to the Banyoro. According to one Mukiga Member of Parliament who was born and raised in the area, "... they [the non-Banyoro] were helping the Banyoro to get cheap food and to prosper their businesses. We were producing a lot of groundnuts which could be sold to the Banyoro at low prices". Meanwhile, the Banyoro who were involved in trade would mainly sell non-food items like paraffin and clothes. Mutual relations had improved as a result of this trade. This observation corroborates Robert Putnam's view in *Making Democracy Work* (1993) where he argues that links and ties created by intergroup transactions are important for bonding the groups. This is through making vivid how each group needs the other.

Even in schools, it was indicated that the relations between Banyoro and non-Banyoro were generally cordial. The elderly respondents said that their children did not find any problem while in school. Besides, they built the schools together. One Mufumbira politician who grew up in the area narrated that:

... actually in those schools where I studied, no one knew that I was a *Mufuruki* [immigrant]. Even I think that some of the students whom I studied with, if they would hear that I am actually a Mufumbira, they would not actually believe it, because nobody beats me in speaking Runyoro<sup>83</sup>.

The last sentence of the above quotation reveals that one of the practices which made it possible to co-exist is learning about, respecting and, sometimes, even adopting each other's culture. This process was mutual, but to a large extent in favour of Banyoro culture. From all accounts, the impression is given that the assimilation process was voluntary. No one mentioned that he or she was directly coerced to adopt another's culture. But in some cases it was advantageous to learn so as to be able to socialise and get involved in other kinds of transactions. By and large, assimilation did not involve the abandonment of one's own culture altogether. In some cases, a person or a group of people would choose to adopt one practice but not the other. In other cases they would switch between cultural practices depending on the environment; such as speaking Runyoro in the presence of Banyoro and their own language when on their own. Below are some of the practices which were adopted from the Banyoro.

Most of the non-Banyoro learnt to speak Runyoro in order to ease communication with their Banyoro hosts. Indeed all the non-Banyoro whom I spoke to who had been in the area for more than 15 years, could speak Runyoro. In addition, there also were Baganda who stayed in the region who were able to speak Runyoro. A Mukonjo respondent recalled: "The situation was okay. We stayed in harmony and we used Runyoro as our means of communication. We also knew our own language (Rukonjo), but when interacting with others, Runyoro was the language". Runyoro came across as the language of wider communication in the area at the time. But all non-Banyoro respondents said they only used Runyoro when they were in the company of people who were not of their own ethnicity.

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<sup>83</sup> Interview held on September 16, 2011.



The non-Banyoro retained several aspects of their own cultures. More specifically here, they retained their languages and spoke them in the company of each other. This applies to several other cultural elements, which were not wholesomely abandoned in the adoption of Banyoro culture. For instance, a Mukonjo respondent noted: “Everyone knew their culture. For the Bakonjo for example, we practice circumcision which is compulsory for all men. But we could [did] not force others to practice it”. Based on the non-Banyoro’s calculation on whether a practice would be acceptable to their hosts, some practices were only done among their own ethnic group, while other practices were conducted and even celebrated together with the Banyoro. Examples of the latter are the Bakiga dance, drinking their local brew (*Omuramba*), and their marriage ceremonies.

As indicated earlier, the non-Banyoro would dance for the Bunyoro King at the *Empango* ceremony. The Bakiga and Bafumbira are also reported to have had a very strong dedication to work, which the Banyoro appreciated and progressively adjusted to. To some extent, the cultural exchange was two-way, although largely in the direction of Banyoro culture. Some Banyoro also learnt some of the languages of the non-Banyoro, especially Rukiga which is closely related to their own language. The Banyoro have a culture of using what they call *empaako* (pet names). These names are important in showing love, respect, greeting elders and social bonding. Each of the names carries a contextual, circumstantial or relational meaning. So important are the *empaako* that one would rather miss another’s surname or first name but not their pet-name. Greetings usually start by asking *empaako yawe* (what is your pet name)? “The *empaako* is also the salutation when the Banyoro greet each other. Instead of the Western ‘Good morning, John?’ the Banyoro substitute the *empaako* for John”<sup>84</sup>. To accept someone as one of them, the Banyoro give them a pet name. It is expected of an ‘incoming’ person to express respect and appreciation for the Banyoro hosts by adopting, accepting and taking pride in a pet-name. Accordingly, most non-Banyoro adopted pet names. In fact, with the exception of the school children, all the non-Banyoro I talked to had pet-names such as Apuuli, Abwooli, Araali, Akiiki, Adyeeri, Atwooki, Acaali, Abooki, Bbala, Amooti, and Ateenyi<sup>85</sup>. For the primary school children not to have pet names is a reflection of the changes in ethnic relations over time. They were born at a time when for some non-Banyoro it was no longer necessary to adopt Banyoro cultural practices. Chapter Four will illustrate how and why this came about, plus its implications on ethnic relations in the area.

It should also be observed that some non-Banyoro reported to have been forced to adopt pet names. When I asked one non-Munyoro in his forties how they got pet names, he said: “... they were given. They could say ‘*empaako yawe* [your pet name] is so and so’. I remember

<sup>84</sup> [www.bunyoro-kitara.org/53.html](http://www.bunyoro-kitara.org/53.html) [viewed on May 2, 2014]. This is the official website of the Bunyoro Kingdom cultural institution.

<sup>85</sup> “Contrary to the general rule that kinyoro [of the Banyoro] names have a meaning, the *empaako* names do not have a kinyoro meaning; because they are not, really, words in the Runyoro-Rutooro language. They are words (or corruptions of words) in the Luo language, the original language of the Babiito, who invaded and colonised Bunyoro from the North. The Banyoro and Batooro have, however, assimilated these Luo names into their language, and even attempted to append some meaning to them” (*Ibid.*)

my father was forced to become Amooti ... So all of us now the new children – children who would grow up here – we were given those pet names. We were forced by the way and you must have it”. This could explain why some non-Banyoro never really appreciated their pet names and dropped them when opportunity showed. On the other hand, it also carries a lesson with regard to pluralism that appreciation of others’ cultural practices among different people who live together is more sustainable when not coerced.

It was evident that the older non-Banyoro who confessed to have wilfully adopted pet names and through appropriate traditional Banyoro rituals expressed no explicit resentment to their pet names. They indicated that their possession of pet names helped them so much to cement their relations with the Banyoro. But perhaps because these names are largely for purposes of co-existence with Banyoro through appeasement or an indication of appreciation, they were not mentioned by the non-Banyoro respondents as among their names, except when specifically asked or in the presence of Banyoro. Although, as some Banyoro respondents claimed, this could as well be because some non-Banyoro have decided to drop their pet-names and other Banyoro cultural practices today because of the deterioration of ethnic relations in the region, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

One other aspect that characterised the initial positive relations between Banyoro and non-Banyoro is intermarriage. In the first years after arrival (1960s – 1970s), there were only a few cases. “This is hardly surprising, given the language and cultural barriers that many immigrants encounter upon arrival” (Song 2009, p.334). However, with time and progressive mutual appreciation, intermarriage set in from both directions – Banyoro marrying non-Banyoro and vice versa. This was quite remarkable, because in the first years of contact (in the 1960s and 1970s) the Banyoro despised the immigrants (mainly those who were poor) and some of their practices which were considered unbecoming by Banyoro cultural standards. On the basis of selective observations by the Banyoro, stereotypes which were not permissive of intermarriage were constructed. One male Munyoro elder painted a rather negative image of the Bakiga women in comparison to Banyoro women:

You know Banyoro women had learnt Baganda culture. They were humble, gentle, and collected<sup>86</sup>. But this Mukiga woman would stand up anyhow without care. And she was dirty! From head to foot! The Bakiga women would not wash their private parts. It was believed that they would be washing away a birth prospect. Even if they bathed, they would only clean other parts. So, wherever they went, they were followed by that bad smell. That is why Banyoro men took long to start marrying them. That started around 1980s and 1990s. But no one would do that before. If you spent a night there, everyone would know, except if you had to first take a thorough shower. Even my friend who had married one later failed after three years and chased her away<sup>87</sup>.

The stereotype of the ‘early’ Bakiga being dirty was widely held by Banyoro respondents, and in some cases confirmed by the Bakiga. But where the Bakiga confirmed it, their explanation

<sup>86</sup> In several aspects, the study indicated that Kibaale society is patriarchal. As reflected here, an ideal woman comes across as someone who is humble and submissive to the views of her husband and men in general.

<sup>87</sup> Life history interview held on September 15, 2011.

gravitated around their social status at the time. Because many of them were poor, they had few clothes for changing. The situation was not helped by their practice of spending most of their time working in the garden.

However, those who were relatively well off, were different. As such, the stereotype did not wholly bar Banyoro from marrying Bakiga. For example, one non-Munyoro Member of Parliament recalled that his elder sister got married in 1975 to a Munyoro who had invited and given their father land in Kibaale. When I asked him to substantiate the claim that intermarriages were very limited at the time, he said that “those who would refuse intermarriage were the extremists”. By extremists he meant those Banyoro that took a radical exclusivist stance with regard to intermarriage, those who insisted that it was a disgrace for Banyoro to marry Bakiga. This exclusionist stance was conveniently justified and reinforced by the stereotypes explained above.

It is interesting that some Bakiga respondents admitted that Banyoro women compared favourably to Bakiga women. Their explanation for this was that Banyoro women ‘knew how to handle men with care’. Banyoro women were said to be more submissive than the Bakiga who would sometimes stand up to their husbands’ word. The patriarchal urge for male dominance therefore served as an explanation for their preference. The other important thing to note from the above approach to intermarriage, is that it involves calculation of costs and benefits which can be considered characteristic within a constructivist rational choice theory. Here we see that ethnicity as such was not an issue, but rather the perceived benefits which are derived from the relation/s between members of different ethnic groups. This observation counters a primordialist view that ethnic identity per se would be the issue and the factor for practices of inclusion and exclusion. In this line of thinking, some Banyoro said that there were Banyoro who married Bakiga women largely in admiration of their work ethic. They were known to be very hard-working (especially in agriculture) and, as such, by marrying them, would hopefully bring about economic prosperity and food security to a home.

The other question to ask here is whether intermarriage necessarily resulted into co-existence and mutual appreciation. To some extent intermarriages can be said to have led to more knowledge and appreciation of each other. Sociology and Anthropology literature indicates that there is a link between intermarriage and enhancement of social cohesion/ reduction of intergroup distance (Levi-Strauss 1967; Monden and Smits 2005; Song 2009). In Kibaale, intermarriage is said to have facilitated learning about each other’s cultures and the deconstruction of some of the negative stereotypes. One such stereotype was that of Banyoro as cannibals. A number of non-Banyoro confessed that when they had just come into the area, they were told by other non-Banyoro that Banyoro people eat human flesh. Living and intermarrying with them cleared this label.

It is however crucial to note that, the inclination of all subcultures in Kibaale is to be patriarchal, in inter-ethnic relationships and that therefore the culture of the man would often be given more prominence. As women spend more time with the children, many would make

them learn their own home language and made it the main medium of communication at home. But the names and ethnic affiliations were more often on the side of the man's culture. Nevertheless, such dynamics brought forth culturally bridging hybrids which facilitated coexistence.

In the area of leadership, non-Banyoro progressively increased their participation in local politics. Initially this did not bother the Banyoro. A male Munyoro elder said that "they would also become chiefs and start distributing land to their friends". Their numbers continued growing as they drew in more friends and relatives and as other people voluntarily migrated into the area. Even when Kibaale formally became a district in 1991, non-Banyoro took part in the political representation of the administrative units that emerged.

According to a Munyoro Member of Parliament:

... the first District Councilor for this sub-county – which was called Kagadi then – was a *Mufuruki*<sup>88</sup> [a non-Munyoro/migrant] called Mbamanya Edward. Mbamanya Edward was a teacher, but people saw in him abilities to lead them. At the time [in the late 1980s] the *Bafuruki* were only about 10% of the population in the region, but in spite of this, Mbamanya Edward was made their District Councilor<sup>89</sup>.

This Member of Parliament argued that although some people thought that the Banyoro voted for him because he was married to a Munyoro, this was not the case and nobody had thought about that. To emphasize this point, he cited another example of a Mukiga who would later be at the center of the Banyoro-*Bafuruki* conflict in 2002:

When I joined the District Council of Kibaale, we had a Councilor of here, Rulemera [Fred]. Fred was voted by the people when people knew he was a Mukiga. But they voted him when they are majorly Banyoro. In my own Sub-County, Kiryanga, we have been more Banyoro than *Bafuruki*. But we have never had a Munyoro LC3<sup>90</sup> Chairman! Because, you know, someone comes up and you compare him. You say [he] is our son, but this Nkurunziza [a *Bafuruki* name] is better than [him]. So people did not have that [exclusionary] thinking.

Muhooro Sub-County was also pointed out as another case where the late Benon Tushabomwe, a Mukiga, was elected as LC 3 Chairman in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Several respondents indicated that the elections were mainly done on merit without explicit ethnic considerations. According to them, what made this possible was mutual respect. This mutual respect, they claimed, was founded on the fact that both the Banyoro and non-Banyoro had never really perceived each other as threats. As Chapter Four will illustrate, the rise of mutual suspicion and fear together with the emergence of politics based on ethnic manipulation are the key factors that later led to conflictual relations.

<sup>88</sup> The word *Mufuruki* (singular)/ *Bafuruki* (plural) was not in use until the 1990s when tension started building. The instrumental value of the neologism is discussed in Chapter Four.

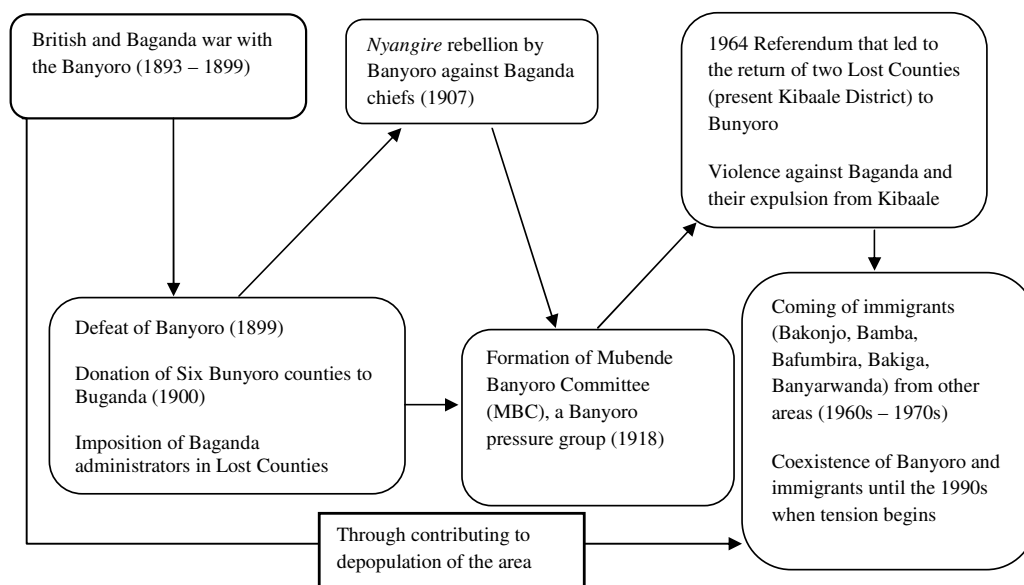
<sup>89</sup> Interview held on September 17, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> In Uganda's decentralisation system, a district local government unit is composed of five 'Local Councils'. These are: Local Council 5 (District – LC 5); Local Council 4 (County – LC 4); Local Council 3 (Sub-County – LC 3); Local Council 2 (Parish – LC 2); and Local Council 1 (Village – LC 1). Each Local Council as a geographical unit has a representative at the District. The head of each Local Council is called a Chairperson.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced and explained the moments and events in the history of Kibaale that are important in contextualising and understanding contemporary ethnic relations in the area. These moments and events have been traced from the colonial times and their antagonistic legacy, the period that immediately followed Uganda's independence in 1962 (the Baganda–Banyoro tension), the 1964 referendum and its ramifications, to the late 1960s when other ethnic groups started migrating into Kibaale. The events explained above are summarised in the figure below.

**Figure 1: Summary timeline of significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale District**



Given the Banyoro's collective memory of suppression by the Baganda, the possibilities in subsequent encounter with ethnic 'others' would include suspicion, paranoia, fear and mistrust. But although it would be plausible to assume that the memory and pain would be quite instructive against the possibilities for pluralism, ethnic exclusivity and conflict would not be a necessary consequence either. It would only arise under circumstances that would not only awaken the painful memories and re-energize old fears, but also provide a conducive environment for the instrumentalisation or manipulation of the past, for instance by opportunists for whatever sort of calculated gain (Cairns & Roe 2003 and Shoup 2008).

This became evident in the perceptions of the people and the circumstances which led to violent conflict in Kibaale in 2002 and in 2006, after a period of more or less peaceful co-existence of over forty years. The moments and events explained in this chapter shall later be seen to play a vital role in the subsequent ethnic relations in the area. As such, this chapter

provides a foundation for a rich interpretation of the relations that followed after 1990 and the possibilities of pluralism in Kibaale.

As was indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the history which I portrayed is not just a chronology of events, rather it is systematic process tracing which serves to understand the present situation through engaging with the dynamics that currently inform and shape it. Chapter Four, which follows here, will explore the perceptions of the people of Kibaale of what they believed instigated new ethnic conflicts in the period between the late 1990s through to the early 2000s.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS ON ETHNIC CONFLICT IN KIBAALÉ DISTRICT

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings in answer to the second subsidiary research question, that is: *How do different local ethnic groups in Kibaale currently perceive ethnic conflict in their district?*

As argued in Chapter Two, this study employs an interpretivist epistemological approach and contends that people's social interaction and response to situations is much more based on what they believe/perceive to be real than what is objectively real (Neuman, 2007). The study therefore starts from contextually understanding the respondents' perceptions. The ensuing data then more meaningfully informs the analysis of the conflict, its trends and implications for pluralism.

By tracing and discussing the significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale, Chapter Three ends with the folding of the period (1960s – early 1990s) during which the people of Kibaale lived relatively easily with differences in their community. Furthermore, based on the constructivist consideration that the 'content' of any particular ethnicity tends to be historically contingent (Lentz 2006; Geschiere and Jackson 2006)), this chapter continues from where Chapter Three ends to explain and interrogate a subsequent period, starting from the 1990s, that saw the emergence of tension and later violence between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro. By departing from the local people's own views, the research aims to understand what led to the changes in relations and what dynamics were involved. I seek to understand this because I believe that people's imaginations about the possibilities for pluralism in the area are largely rooted in their feelings about the causes and dynamics of ethnic conflict among them. For what they identify as impediments to co-existence, they have to find solutions, otherwise if the impediments remain, then living together remains elusive.

The order in which the different explanatory factors are presented is not in consideration of relative explanatory significance, neither is it supposed to be linear. According to constructivist epistemology, the meanings people give to phenomena are complex and experienced in various ways depending on a number of personal and, sometimes, collective considerations none of which may be considered to be more incendiary than the other (Newman, 1991). Therefore, the explanation of the interface between the various factors at play in the Kibaale conflict follows the logic of intersectionality by which the different factors are considered to be complex, intertwined, interlocking, multilayered, and mutually reinforcing (Burkner 2012 and Mattsson 2014).

The Chapter is sub-sectioned into: The Politics of Kibaale District's creation and its implications to subsequent local politics; politics and the emergence of conflict in Kibaale

District; population dynamics, politics and conflict in Kibaale District; from non-Banyoro to *Bafuruki*: The ‘othering’ of Non-Banyoro; the re-emergence of Mubende Banyoro Committee and the acceleration of ethnic tension; the formation of Bafuruki Committee and its significance to ethnic relations; the elections of 2002 and conflict in Kibaale District; and, lastly, some concluding reflections.

#### **4.2 The Politics of Kibaale District’s Creation and its Implications to Subsequent Local Politics**

Conflict in Kibaale followed after it was granted district status – which, building on other historical factors discussed in Chapter Three, was significant in transforming the politics of identity and belonging in the area. It is therefore important to reflect on the dynamics and significance of Kibaale’s acquisition of district status to pluralism in the area.

Kibaale was cut off from Hoima District in 1991 (Mirima 1999). In Uganda, it has been a popular assumption that decentralisation of decision-making powers and the management of resources to smaller units would enhance service delivery. But the potential of decentralisation to realise the above ideal turned out to be conditional upon the context, especially - in this case - its political ramifications. One potential source of conflict flowing from a decentralised set up is in the concentration of power over resources at district level, which renders district political positions very attractive, and hence sharpen the competition for them (Nsamba *et al.* 2009; Geschiere 2009; Baligira 2011; Mitchell 2012). In accentuating competition for resources (especially in contexts like Uganda where districts are mainly created along ethnic lines), similar to colonialism, decentralisation has “the paradoxical effect of triggering an obsession with belonging” (Geschiere 2009, p.6) often creating a conflictual dichotomy of those who belong and those who belong less. In his book entitled *The Perils of Belonging*<sup>91</sup>, Geschiere explains that in such a dichotomy, the ‘sons of the soil’/ autochthons tend to make special claims on the district that are taken to be self-evident while at the same time they construct boundaries of belonging in a way that alienates others. The setting “... inevitably raises the by now familiar issues of belonging: who is to profit from the new-style development projects [under decentralisation]? And, even more urgently, who can be excluded from them?” (*Ibid.* P.25). Paradoxically, in this politics of belonging, even people who have unquestionably lived in the area for a long time, become vulnerable to social and political exclusion in the emergent general affirmation of roots and origins as the basic criteria of citizenship and belonging (Geschiere and Jackson 2006; Dunn 2009; and Boas and Dunn 2013). Later we shall see how this was evidently played out in Kibaale in a manner that led to socio-political exclusion and ethnic violence.

In a study on Decentralisation and Conflict in Kibaale, it is argued by Schelnberger (2008) that the introduction of local units of government and the way their borders are drawn can upset the balance of minorities and majorities and, in effect, upset the relations in an area. The balance can be upset in two ways: a former minority could turn into a majority, and a

<sup>91</sup> *The Perils of Belonging* is very insightful in understanding the politics of autochthony and indigeneity and its implications for social cohesion. Geschiere’s analysis is grounded on cases from Africa (Cameroon, DRC, and Rwanda) and from Europe (Netherlands).



former majority could find itself in the position of minority. Both possibilities could set in motion new dynamics in competition for resources and political positions.

Accordingly, as we shall see here, one of the factors that changed the relations and direction of politics in Kibaale was that in the new district entity, the Banyoro progressively obtained a minority status, both numerically and in terms of political power (Mirima 1999). While they were still part of Hoima District, they were also part of the wider Banyoro community that stretches beyond Kibaale District and were the majority. Decentralisation meant that in Kibaale District - as a political entity of its own with competitive political positions - their numbers compared less favourably, reinforced by the dynamics of the 'ethnicisation' of politics.

To be able to understand the identity politics that followed the acquisition of district status in Kibaale, it is important to establish why the people of the area sought to break away from Hoima District in the first place. One of the elders I interviewed used to hold the position of Councillor, representing one of Sub-counties of Buyaga County on the council of Hoima District. He was the pioneer of the campaign for Kibaale to gain district status. He said that one of the key reasons for the decision to break away was marginalisation by the 'Banyoro of Hoima'<sup>92</sup>. With a frowned face and a display of disappointment in his tone, he reminisced: "When we freed ourselves from mistreatment by the Baganda, we thought we were now going to be happy as part of Bunyoro once again. But our fellow Banyoro of Hoima marginalised us until we could no longer bear it. It all appeared like we still held an inferior status to them"<sup>93</sup>. He went on to explain that they were despised, and often reminded that their culture and language were diluted by Baganda.

In *Ebyafaayo bya Kibaale Distrikti* (The History of Kibaale District), Mirima (1999) explains that the relations between the Banyoro from Kibaale and the Banyoro of Hoima were complicated by religious and political factors. It is important to note that in giving the six counties to Buganda in 1900, the British divided them among Protestants and Catholics. Buyaga, Bugangaizi and Buheekura were put under the administration of Catholics. As such, Kibaale (Buyaga and Bugangaizi) as a district was deemed to be Catholic territory. Considering that the first political parties in Uganda were built along ethnic and religious lines<sup>94</sup> (Karugire 1980), most Catholics subscribed to the Democratic Party (DP). According to Mirima, in Hoima the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) was the dominant party and most of the councillors at the district were Protestant. Thus the Banyoro of Kibaale were sidelined on two collective identity accounts: Being DP and Catholic.

According to Mirima (1999), the promised land of milk and honey which the Bagangaizi [Banyoro of Kibaale] had hoped to receive from Bunyoro was not to be. They did not notice

<sup>92</sup> It should be recalled that Bunyoro Kingdom (of the Banyoro people) covers three out of the 132 districts of Uganda, namely: Hoima, Masindi, and Kibaale.

<sup>93</sup> Munyoro elder, Interview held on October 15, 2011.

<sup>94</sup> The dominant political parties at independence were Democratic Party (DP), Uganda People's Congress (UPC), and Kabaka Yekka (KY). DP was mainly Catholic while UPC was largely Protestant (Anglican). Kabaka Yekka's (Only the King) influence was mainly around Buganda since it was a party for loyalists (or/and those who presented themselves as so) to the Buganda Kingdom. UPC was the first party to take power (1962-1971) after independence from Britain in 1962. The party regained power from 1980-1984. DP has been in opposition since independence.

any plans of developing their counties from squalor. With the lack of such plans, it seemed that their share from the Central Government was also being taken from them to Hoima. Secondly, it was realized that the Bunyoro leaders from Hoima had stereotyped all the Bagangaizi as DP supporters. This stereotype had created a lot of isolation to the Bagangaizi. These things are what opened the eyes of the Bagangaizi and made them feel that they had jumped ‘from the frying pan into the fire’.

Once the Bagangaizi got to know the truth, they sought to find a way in which to develop their area. They realized if they did not do this quickly, their area would remain backward... The money being put into projects like roads ... and schools mostly remained in Hoima. Schools and hospitals stayed the same condition as they were during the time the Baganda were in control, apart from a few that had been renovated. The area got only one hospital in Kagadi, but this also could not be enough for all the people from the two counties. On the whole, Buyaga and Bugangaizi seemed forgotten. They considered it was useless to return to Bunyoro (Mirima 1999, pp.165-166).

The above quotation indicates that the people of Kibaale started with high expectations of a better life by returning to Bunyoro, which would allow them to deal with the wounds of the years of marginalisation by the Baganda. When they returned to Bunyoro, the Banyoro of Kibaale realised that their status and identity as Banyoro was no longer the same as that of the rest of the Banyoro. They were now ‘the Banyoro that were once under Buganda’ – *Bagangaizi*, as contrasted with the ‘Banyoro who were not under Buganda’. They realised that in order to improve their situation they had to run their own affairs in their own administrative entity and that they had to take the political driver’s seat to effectively shape their development. This kind of mindset with which the Banyoro entered the new district together with the politics of indigeneity, entrenched in Uganda’s decentralised units, significantly influenced the local political dynamics.

It is important to note that the creation of districts in Uganda is done largely along ethnic lines (Nsamba *et al.* 2009) and, as such, there is a wide perception that these districts are primarily owned by ‘natives’/ ‘indigenes’. It is clear that the creation of new smaller districts reduced the ethnic heterogeneity of the previous larger districts, and thus produced entities “populated by only one or two major ethnic groups, a state of affairs identified as potentially dangerous” (Green 2008, p.15). Consequently, as illustrated in Kibaale and noted by Green (2008), Nsamba *et al.* (2009) and Baligira (2011), the creation of districts along ethnic lines has – just as the colonial regime did - politicised ethnicity in the country. The politics of decentralisation encouraged people in many new smaller districts to consider themselves (each other) as either natives/indigenes/autochthons or migrants/foreigners/strangers with different sets of entitlements and expectations. I therefore conclude from this section that decentralisation set in motion a system of identity transformation and social positioning that encouraged the reaffirmation of fuzzy identities and a process of boundary construction by which some were included and ‘others’ positioned outside along essentialist lines. Mouffe (2000; 20006; 2014) rightly observes that politics in such a context is bound to be framed as a competition between ‘enemies’, and as such result into violent conflict since the ‘other’ is not allowed political outlet for their passions. By extension, as the discussion in the next section

shows, building on other historical factors, decentralisation prepared a fertile ground for identity politics in Kibaale District.

### **4.3 Politics and the Emergence of Conflict in Kibaale District**

With the creation of Kibaale District, there were openings for political positions in local government that had to be competed for through elective politics. The most important positions included Member of Parliament for the constituent counties of the district, the Chairperson of the district, and the chairpersons of the sub-counties. The first elections after gaining district status were held in 1994 - that is three years after the creation of the district. These were the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections when delegates from different parts of Uganda were being elected to represent their areas in the making of a new constitution for the country.

It is in the context of these CA elections that an important figure emerges in the narrative of identity politics and conflict in Kibaale District – Toterebuka Bamwenda, a member of the Banyoro ethnic group. With the knowledge that people in Kibaale considered language to be important for choosing who was ‘their own’/ who to identify with (even if ethnically different), Bamwenda is believed by both Banyoro and non-Banyoro I interviewed to have played the ‘language card’ so tactfully to see himself win the elections. He was fluent in many of the languages of the people in the area, and this effectively worked in his favour. In an interview<sup>95</sup>, one non-Munyoro Member of Parliament who worked as Bamwenda’s campaign agent in these elections recalled the latter’s political agency this way:

Politics is a bit complicated. Before, in the CA, there was a man called Toterebuka Bamwenda. He was a Munyoro fluent in Rukiga. I was his campaign agent. But I didn’t care whether he spoke Rukiga or Runyoro. So people mistook him [because of language], they would say ‘he is one of us’. When he would go to the area dominated by Bafuruki [migrants], he would speak Rukiga, the same to the Banyoro<sup>96</sup>.

A female respondent who currently holds a senior management position at the Kibaale-based African Rural University, believes that through appeasing people by speaking their languages, Bamwenda was able to hide some of his deficiencies – especially that he lacked the appropriate merits for the position he was vying for. But, whether his situational application of languages was an innocent act for effective communication or not, the fact that his strategy worked was instrumental in giving ethnic shape to the politics of the area. The appeal of language in particular and cultural affiliation had been vividly manifested in Bamwenda’s political victory.

Theoretically, this observation indicates that there is more to ethnicity than calculation for economic benefits as rational choice theory would suggest. There appears to be an emotional attachment to one’s ethnic identity even when there are no such benefits in sight. Geschiere

<sup>95</sup> Munyoro Member of Parliament, interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

accordingly argues that political manipulation can work “... only because the very idea of local [ethnic] belonging strikes such a deep emotional chord with the population in general” (2009, p.18). Rational choice theorists would argue that maybe people would anticipate better services if they were represented by someone from their own ethnic community. However, the accounts from Kibaale with reference to voting for Bamwenda seem to indicate a voting trend largely (perhaps not exclusively) informed by linguistic identification with the candidate (not so much for his programmes) and therefore preferring him as one of ‘our own’. This can be explained in rational choice terms, only if we also look at the linguistic cultural satisfaction which is manifested in voting for Bamwenda as for utility reasons.

In the following parliamentary elections of 1996, the politics of the area was characterised by more ethnic calculation and manipulation. Most accounts from the field indicate that this time the non-Banyoro initiated it, especially after they realised that their numbers were now significant enough to make their candidate win if each ethnic group would vote for their “own”. A name that features prominently in the narratives of these elections is that of the late Robert Kakooza, a Mukiga who until then worked as a teacher at Nyakasura Secondary School. Let us see how Kakooza comes into the picture and how he consolidated ethnic identity politics in the area.

According to one Mufumbira respondent<sup>97</sup> working with Kibaale District Civil Society Network (KICSON), there was ethnic politics involved in deciding the location of the headquarters of the newly created Kibaale District. The Bakiga opinion leaders wanted the headquarters to be located at Kagadi where they dominated, while the Banyoro opinion leaders wanted it at a place called Kibaale. When the Banyoro’s desire triumphed, the Bakiga realised that in order to establish their decision making power, they would need to be politically represented by someone from their own ethnic group. The ‘we’ – ‘them’ dichotomy was taking distinct shape.

Of course in elections people often vote their ‘own’/ interests (Birbir 2009), but the commonness that matters is situationally selected. “We humans ... have the capacity and the tendency to regard now this, now that component of our complex identities as the one that is the most important” (Smith 2001, P. 39). In some cases it is ‘our ideological own’, in others ‘our religious own’, ‘our ethnic own’, ‘our caring own’ – or a combination of these. As argued by Omotola, “... identities are subject to manipulations, depending on the prevailing social, political, economic, and cultural realities” (2008, p.77). In view of the empirical data from Kibaale, this serves to demonstrate that no particular identity is essentially antagonistic; rather it is the circumstances that determine its form and performance. Accordingly, the Mufumbira respondent cited above said: “When you get the history, now these Bakiga (the opinion leaders) said: ‘now do you know why we are losing the district? Now Kagadi has gone to Kibaale! It is because we do not have someone to support us. This time we should get our son’. It should be noted that belief in the viability of this strategy of getting ‘our own’ elected was also facilitated by the Bamwenda precedent.

<sup>97</sup> Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Respondents narrated that the Bakiga opinion leaders actually had to go and convince Robert Kakooza to stand for the position of Member of Parliament for Buyaga County. They are reported to have said: “We have come to you, we want you to go to parliament for us because enough is enough<sup>98</sup>”. Kakooza consented to the appeal and became the only non-Munyoro candidate who stood for the position. Many Banyoro and non-Banyoro respondents thought that the Banyoro did not realise the implications of this ethnic scheme of the Bakiga. To illustrate this, they observed that there were over seven Banyoro who stood for office and hence divided their ethnic vote. However, one of the interviewed Bakiga opinion leaders insisted that “... we voted Kakooza innocently, we were looking at ability<sup>99</sup>”. After the elections, Kakooza’s victory was widely perceived by the Banyoro as a product of ethnic voting by non-Banyoro and as an attempt by the latter to make inroads into positions of power in the area. Moreover, the Bakiga’s entry into politics not only marked the reinforcement of ethnic voting, it also had a significant polarising effect. This is also acknowledged by some of the non-Banyoro. One Mukiga elder who settled in the area before the settlement schemes thus observed: “Before the Bafuruki [migrants] came, we lived harmoniously. Problems came during elections where the Bafuruki were also vying for political positions which did not go down well with the Banyoro. Otherwise, earlier on, we were living peacefully<sup>100</sup>”.

In a life history interview<sup>101</sup>, one female Munyoro elder gave an account which brings another important insight to the narrative of the changing relations:

At first they [Bakiga] were not involved in politics because they knew the problems that brought them but later, they picked interest. Because they were many, they would stand for political positions. They would stage one candidate and every Mukiga would vote for a fellow Mukiga even though he/she was not competent. [Remember that...] the Banyoro felt oppressed and wanted to know why the area is backward and felt the problem would be addressed through politics. But because of failure in politics, the Banyoro became angry and that is where the problem came from.

In addition to the idea that the Banyoro viewed politics as an important avenue for the betterment of their situation – hence their discontent with the Bakiga’s entry into big political positions, the above elder’s account also brings a new important aspect into perspective. She introduced a focus on the population of the Bakiga and how this became an important factor in the political dynamics of Kibaale District.

#### **4.3.1 Population Dynamics, Politics and Conflict in Kibaale District**

In Chapter Three, I wrote that one of the major reasons as to why the Banyoro welcomed new migrants from different areas was because the former’s population had been significantly

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>101</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

reduced after being severed by war, famine, migration, and disease (Doyle 2006). The Banyoro needed company and also wanted their agricultural sites to be shielded from vermin by the non-Banyoro. The availability of vast fertile land in Kibaale attracted many migrant groups and individuals. The population was also increased by Government resettlement schemes. This gradually changed the demography of the area and eventually became a factor in the identity politics of the area – more specifically through ethnic voting.

Both Banyoro and non-Banyoro respondents indicated that the population of migrants had increased significantly over time, due to their uncontrolled influx into the area followed by high fertility. The fertility factor is corroborated by Government's report from the *Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues* (2006). At the time of the elections of 1996, the population of the non-Banyoro was almost surpassing that of the Banyoro. All Banyoro respondents in this study claimed that the realisation by the non-Banyoro that their numbers had become big enough to give them a political victory, and their improved economic status were two key factors which changed their behaviour. The Bakiga were particularly singled out in the Banyoro's responses not only because they were the numerical majority among non-Bnyoro but also because they were more politically active than other groups. This therefore positions the exclusion to be more as a response to a threat rather than utter dislike of the ethnic 'other' (Omotola 2008). The Bakiga were referred to as the 'ringleaders'. In a number of Banyoro's responses, by claiming that the Bakiga were the most politically active ethnic group among the non-Banyoro, it seemed that both ethnic groups (Bakiga and Bafumbira) together with the Banyankore were bundled together and singly referred to as Bakiga. Let us now look at the numbers of the non-Banyoro, the dynamics of their growth, and its implications to identity transformation in the area.

In Ruteete Settlement Scheme (1970s) alone, "... a total number of 3,975 families have been resettled ..., giving a total population of 19,231 people" (Nsamba-Gayiiya 2003, p.8). The majority of the settlers in the scheme were from south-western Uganda. The families were each given 10 acres of land (Baligira 2011). Again, in 1992, 3,500 families (the Majority of whom were Bakiga) were evicted from Mpokya game reserve in Kabarole District (south-western Uganda). All these were resettled in four sub-counties<sup>102</sup> in Kibaale District on approximately 100 square miles to form the Bugangaizi Resettlement Scheme. Although official records of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (1994) indicate that 3,500 families were resettled in Kibaale, respondents from both sides said that the resettled families were in the region of 5,000 and above because the resettled families brought in more people. Each resettled family was given 5 hectares of land.

It is important to observe here that no deliberate measures by Government for social cohesion accompanied these resettlements and that this factor, combined with a preferential package given to migrants, made the relations between the migrants and the Banyoro potentially conflictual. More specifically, it sparked off jealousies and feelings of being discriminated against from the Banyoro. It also reinforced the fear of being dominated by 'foreigners' as

<sup>102</sup> These sub-counties are: Kisiita, Nkooko, Nalweyo, and Kasambya (Nsamba-Gayiiya 2003).

had been done by the Baganda before. In her analysis of the relationship between migration and violent conflicts, Anantha (2006) explains that an influx of migrants into a local population is bound to result into social and economic jealousies, often accompanied by a perception among the locals that the migrants will eventually wipe them out or overpower them politically and economically. “When a rapid numerical increase of subordinate groups relative to the size of the dominant group occurs, it is framed as a threat to its favored position and way of life” (Oberschall 2007, p.14). In addition, the flow of migrants is potentially conflictual due to its exacerbation of pressure on land claims (Dunn 2009). As I will show, this is what eventually happened in Kibaale. To make matters even more complex, the resettlements were done in an ad hoc manner because there were no policy guidelines which could be followed (Nsamba-Gayiiya 2003). As observed by the Government’s Commission of Inquiry on Political Developments in Kibaale District, the lack of policy guidelines also leads to a “... lack of attention to complications that could have been predicted and avoided” (Republic of Uganda 2002, p.18).

The resettled groups, together with those who came in individually, are said to have kept on inviting others from densely populated areas ‘back home’. They informed the people of the areas they came from that there was cheap (and even some free) land in Kibaale, which led to rapid population growth. All respondents testified that until today the influx of migrants into the area continues. I asked a Mufumbira respondent<sup>103</sup> about the claim that there are busses, which ferry in people from Western Uganda. He responded:

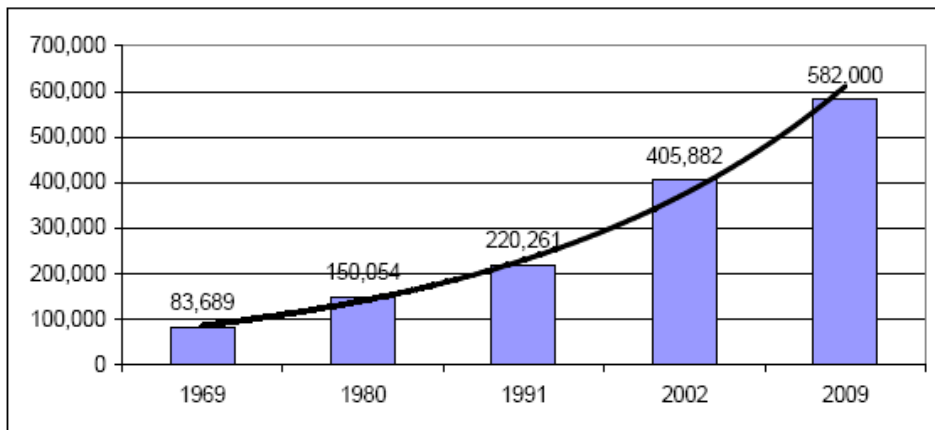
Yeah, we have two buses daily and people are coming in the names of visiting their relatives... Daily! They come, they go, they come, they go... They also take people out. But comparing the people who come in and those who go out, the majority are the people who come in because I myself have used those busses going to Mbarara [District] and I see how they travel.

Because the resettlement schemes had not been properly regulated by Central Government, the beneficiaries were able to sub-divide their land and sell it to other in-comers and extending outside the resettlement area. Some respondents actually said that they bought land from Banyoro. One Munyoro elder confessed, “... actually we the Banyoro sell them [non-Banyoro] some of the land. Some sold it to them back then when those people were still okay, others still sell it to them secretly<sup>104</sup>”.

Based on heavy migration and high fertility rates (Republic of Uganda 2006), Kibaale’s population growth significantly differs from the national trend. The 2002 *Uganda Population and Housing Census* indicates that whereas the national average population growth rate was at 3.3, the one of Kibaale was at 5.2. Most of the Banyoro respondents described this growth rate as ‘unnatural’ and mainly attributed it to uncontrolled migration into the area. The figure below summarises the population growth trends in Kibaale between 1969 and 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>104</sup> Interview held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.

**Figure 2: Kibaale District Population Growth Trends between 1969-2009**

**Source:** Kibaale District (2009) – *Higher Local Government Statistical Abstract*

Despite the fact that there are also many non-Banyoro who were born in Kibaale, the 2002 census indicated that 103,129 (25%) out of the total population of 405,761 were born elsewhere. Whereas the census of 1991 indicates the Bakiga to have been about 25,000 in Kibaale, the 2002 census puts them at 126,312 – meaning that in a space of 11 years their population had multiplied by five.

These figures indicate how high the population of the non-Banyoro is and how rapidly it is growing. To substantiate the point that the fertility rates of the Bafuruki (specifically the Bakiga) are high, one Mufumbira respondent explained: “...the issue of family planning is not an issue for the Bafuruki. They say let us produce until they are over [until they exhaust their reproduction potential]”<sup>105</sup>. Some respondents interpreted this as a deliberate attempt by (especially) the Bakiga to outnumber and thus dominate the Banyoro. It is therefore no surprise that when voting became based on ethnic lines, the non-Banyoro were able to win. However, although important, the numbers alone do not sufficiently explain the success of the ethnic strategy. Another question which still remains is: Why would other non-Banyoro groups buy into the strategy and vote in favour of non-Banyoro candidates? Why would they turn against their hosts?

A Munyoro Member of Parliament traced the source of ethnically driven politics in the nature of the resettlement schemes in Kibaale. In addition to the fact that no social cohesion initiatives were taken in the context of the resettlement schemes, he argued that it was not wise to bring people of one tribe and put them together in one place.

That is where actually the problems we have here started. Because the moment they came as one group, one; we had to create new administrative units for them. They

<sup>105</sup> Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.



got sub-counties, they got villages, they got parishes. And even now, they have a county. That means they see themselves as an ethnic group. That is why we are finding it difficult to have the Ugandan thinking in this country. Because you have brought one ethnic group and put in the middle of another ethnic group, so the struggle for particular interests begins from there. Because they now say: 'if I am now chairman LC 3, how many sub counties are we? We are three; two, how many sub counties are in this county? They are so many. Don't you think we can now also be MP? Let us look at our numbers'<sup>106</sup>.

The collective identity consciousness of the resettled groups solidified and it became very easy for them to mobilise along their identity as migrants. The above respondent said that he argued against it in the District Council when he was still a Councillor but was not listened to. In his view, as a way of fostering integration, it would have been prudent to distribute the resettled people to different parts of the district.

To explain how and why ethnic politics came about, I will consider the role of politicians and the feelings of the non-Banyoro at the time. I will also critically trace the sources of the local non-Banyoro's perceptions. I start with what the non-Banyoro thought the Banyoro felt about them, and compare that with what the Banyoro said they actually felt about the non-Banyoro.

#### **4.4 Banyoro Reactions to Perceived and Real Changes among the Non-Banyoro**

The increasing political and economic influence of the non-Banyoro and the attendant change (both actual and perceived) in their behaviour appears to be a key factor that led to the change in Banyoro perceptions about them. Non-Banyoro progressively transformed their identity from the low and humble socio-political status that had characterised them in earlier years in the area, to a status of citizenship which was equal to the Banyoro. Both the actual and perceived behavioural changes in the competitive environment are analytically useful because "it is not the reality of competition that counts; it is a perception that the out-group wishes to increase its share of valued resources and statuses at the expense of the in-group" (Bobo and Hatchings cited in Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007, p.80). The empirical findings of this study do not indicate that the Banyoro are particularly intolerant of other ethnic groups. The eventual intolerance emerged over time and was contextualized in a complex set of events.

When the Banyoro's perceptions and attitudes towards the non-Banyoro started to change in the 1990s, especially after Kakooza's victory, things that previously did not matter, suddenly became significant. Now viewed as a threat, most of the non-Banyoro's actions were then interpreted with suspicion and considered to be sinister. This observation corroborates Omotola's view that "... one pertinent factor and perhaps the single most significant influence on the strength of identity is the perceived existence of an external threat to that identity" (2008, p.77). When others are perceived as a threat to a group's identity and existence, the 'us/them' relation is likely to become one of friend/enemy (Mouffe 2006; Mouffe 2014). Using examples from the relationship between ethnic groups in Nigeria, Omotola (*Ibid.*)

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<sup>106</sup> Muniyoro Member of Parliament, interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

explains that threats (real or imagined) often generate a reaction from the affected/victim to ward off the threat. Such a reactionary move often takes the form of identity transformation - explained as a “continuous process, which suggests the changing role of identities and the heightening and increasing magnitude and consequences of identity politics” (Jega 2000, p.6). This explanation not only helps us to understand the dynamics of identity politics in Kibaale but also manifests that ethnic identity is neither static nor immutable (Owolabi 2003; Parekh 2008). It illustrates how ethnic identity – a collective identity – is constantly being constructed in interface with the people’s environment/ circumstances. Ethnicity thus appears to be an ongoing process of composition, followed by decomposition and then again recomposition (Owolabi 2003, p.10). As I will explain later, in the process of identity transformation in Kibaale, the Banyoro politicians would take the above explained behaviour changes (real and perceived) of the non-Banyoro as a basis of political capital to further strain the relations by constructing exclusive boundaries.

To illustrate their dual victimhood (from non-Banyoro and Central Government) and counter the stereotype that they were lazy, the Banyoro said that Central Government treated the migrants preferentially hence raising their status above the indigenous Banyoro. What particularly concerned the Banyoro was that the resettled migrant families were given vast chunks of land and other resettlement benefits. The package also included:

...enlistment of assistance of donor agencies and donors in the resettlement programme; supply of free food to the settlers for a year; provision of boreholes for the settlers; supply of household goods and farm implements: blankets, jerry cans, used clothes, hoes, pangas, seeds; provision of extra health facilities for the settlers; and grading of 130 kilometres of road to the resettlement scheme (Republic of Uganda 2006, p.125).

Most of the benefits in the package concerned things that the Banyoro of Kibaale also lacked but were never given despite their constant demand for these measures. For example, it is said that on average a Munyoro owned only 2-5 acres of land, which actually belonged to Baganda absentee landlords (Baligira 2011) – yet the immigrants were given 10 – 12 acres! Hence, in a 2005 Memorandum of the people of Bugangaizi County (where the Bugangaizi Resettlement Scheme is located) to the Government Commission of Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues, they told the Central Government that “you seem to have special interest in the settlers to the detriment of the traditional Banyoro. On this ground, we wish to warn Government against dividing the Banyoro and the Bakiga ... treating them differently by giving settlers ... properties which are denied to the Banyoro” (in Republic of Uganda 2006). This feeling of deliberate marginalisation by the Government was reinforced by the belief among the Banyoro that the Bakiga have ‘godfathers’ in Government who facilitated their migration into the area and participation in politics. Some names of prominent Bakiga in Central Government were mentioned to illustrate this point.

Let us now look at a text from Mirima (1999). This citation is rather long, but it has many components that will help us unravel the dynamics of Banyoro discontent and their

consequent feelings. It should also be remembered that Mirima is a Munyoro ethnic entrepreneur<sup>107</sup>, which gives the text its own voice. The timing of his book and its linguistic accessibility (written in Runyoro) was vital in instrumentally reinforcing and reproducing the Banyoro painful history within the collective memory of the Banyoro as a reference point to appreciate the phenomenon of migration. This warrants the longer citation.

The Bagangaizi [Banyoro of Kibaale] were further angered when the migrants from Mpokya in Kabarole were given twelve million [12,000,000 Uganda Shillings], land titles and other things to attract them to settle in Kibaale. Government's preferential treatment towards the Bafuruki that was not given to the Banyoro who own the land annoyed the Banyoro so much.

On top of the above factors, the migrants also boasted while on Radio Kagadi announcing that they are rich and have land titles unlike Banyoro. They scolded the Banyoro that they were poor and did not have money to buy land titles.

What annoyed the Banyoro of Kibaale most was seeing that their own children no longer had land where to build houses and cultivate after the land had been taken by the migrants. The people of Kibaale started asking themselves that now that their land had been finished by the refugees, were they then to become refugees and start to seek refuge in Gulu and Karamoja [districts]?

The Banyoro of Kibaale asked themselves that if the leadership of Kibaale District and the land have been taken by the migrants, then what did their fathers and grandfathers fight for in redeeming themselves from Baganda slavery? What did the Mubende Banyoro Committee fighters die for? (1999, pp.281-282).

First, the above quotation brings to attention Dunn's (2009) observation that, in the politics of identity, stories told of the 'Self' and 'Other' are often cast not just as autochthon versus alien but also as victim versus aggressor. According to Dunn, such narratives of victimisation as that of the Banyoro portrayed by Mirima are instrumental to justify exclusionary tendencies and violence. "One often finds a violent cycle of memory and counter-memory, where one remembered atrocity justifies another or, in some cases, a pre-emptive attack to thwart an expected atrocity built on the remembrance of past wrong doings" (*Ibid.* P.123). In several places in his book, Mirima relates the Banyoro's views of the migrants with the former's painful memory of mistreatment by the Baganda.

Secondly, it should be remembered that "... the primary factors in the development and persistence of an ethnopolitical identity are group members' collective memories and interpretations of ethnopolitical events" (Dutter 1990, p.318). When subjective perceptions and past experiences interact with 'political memory', new categories of identification emerge. These new 'socially constructed' categories form the 'basis of a consciousness that in some instances can prove very destructive' (Rothchild cited in Kaye and Beland 2009,

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<sup>107</sup> The concept 'ethnic/identity entrepreneur' refers to elites and politicians that mobilise to achieve their interests (sometimes their groups' interests) through appealing to ethnic/identity differences.

p.179). Thus the quotation from Mirima demonstrates a feeling of resentment towards the migrants and their characterisation as a new brand of oppressors. And, to give this feeling more emotional force, the history of relations between Banyoro and Baganda is invoked. As explained by Dunn (2009), the reference to Baganda slavery evokes the memory of pains that should not be allowed to re-occur. In another life history interview with a female elder<sup>108</sup>, she asked with a facial expression of pain: “from Baganda oppression to Bakiga oppression, where is the independence we got in 1962?”

And thirdly, the reminder of MBC’s earlier sacrifices as discussed by Mirima provides a heroic historical example in the context of newly emerging threats. Most non-Banyoro responses indicated that Banyoro politicians rode on this history and used the prevailing anxieties to create the impression that if they did not rise up to defend themselves, the Banyoro would lose their land, culture and dignity, which would betray the resistant spirit of Kabalega and Mubende Banyoro Committee fighters and activists. This observation exemplifies Varshney’s observation that a primordial explanation of ethnicity as a revival of age-old conflict can go together with rational choice explanations. “Ethnicity can easily combine the two impulses—old animosities can be resurrected—and it can also be a convenient mask for deeper motives” (2002, p.28). Therefore, the dichotomous argument that only one of the two theoretical explanations can be correct is analytically misleading.

Rallying on the characterisation of migrants as the new oppressors (based on real and imagined threats), Banyoro politicians magnified the level of threat that was posed by the migrants. Unlike in Brass’ observation that ethnicity is simply a discourse that guilty elites invoke to obscure the real, venal causes/triggers of violence that they incite (cited in Hale 2008), the politicians I interviewed openly admitted their polarising role. For instance, when I asked a Munyoro Member of Parliament whether there was a real threat at the time, he smiled and said: “... it [the threat] could have been there, it could have been real, it could have been assumed. But you know with us (me inclusive) the politicians - we said this is an opportunity for us to organize again<sup>109</sup>”. For the politicians this was capital to win ethnic popularity and votes.

As Posner (2004) and Soeters (2009) demonstrate, politicians chose purposefully, assessing the relative advantages of ethnic mobilisation against other means of soliciting political support. They calculate the size of the network that they can activate to support their mission by appealing to a particular identity. In Kibaale, this ethnic spinning by politicians happened on both sides, hence the polarisation was deepened. Although there were differences between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro, these may not have resulted into violent conflict if it was not for the antagonistic role of opportunistic politicians frowning on attempts to stress commonalities, exaggerating minor differences, and even engineering conflicts where none exist (Parekh 2008). “In many cases, rivals for power make use of ethnic differences as a political resource, but the differences are not responsible for war [violence]” (Turton cited in

<sup>108</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>109</sup> Munyoro Member of Parliament, interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Omotola 2008, p.78). This vividly illustrates again that the idea that ethnic difference in itself is not the problem; rather, the problem is how it is exploited in a particular setting.

The intensifying voices of Banyoro who express their wish to ‘emancipate’ themselves from the non-Banyoro and save their land in effect created fear among the non-Banyoro and led to a reactionary call to resist eviction/ expulsion from the area. All the events above happened in the period between the creation of the district in 1991 and the year 2000. There is an indication that around the same time both sides were increasingly mobilised. Before 2000, this mobilisation happened informally through conversations, meetings and political rallies. In August 2000, the Uganda Rural Development Training Center (URDT) opened the Kibaale Kagadi Community Radio (KKCR) which reached most parts of the district. This was a landmark development because the exchanges between both sides could now reach many people in the area. Strangely, although media is said to be a potential propeller of conflict (Bau 2010; Soeters 2005; Kalyango 2012), the significance of KKCR in shaping ethnic relations has been given very little attention in the existing literature on Kibaale. I believe that its influence was significant and an important factor to understand and analyse the dynamics of ethnic relations in the area.

According to Mirima (1999) and my own respondents from both sides, the radio station gave unbiased airtime to both sides. For many of the non-Banyoro who claimed that they were threatened with expulsion from Kibaale, when asked where they heard these threats, they would say: ‘we would hear them on KKCR’. I therefore accessed some of the recordings of the radio programmes where I heard statements like: ‘... they [Bafuruki] should go back to where they came from’, ‘... if Banyoro remain poor because they don’t work hard then they should not blame it on us’, ‘we [Bafuruki] will not be threatened, we are not going anywhere’, ‘we [Banyoro] shall not tolerate the arrogance of the Bakiga, we shall chase them as we chased the Baganda’.

Generally, an analysis of the radio recordings yields a picture of relations going bad. Because the radio messages had a wide reach, its mobilisation effect was strong. It is of little surprise that the peak of the tension happened around the same time that the radio broadcasts started. I interviewed one of the radio presenters who worked at the station at the time and he contended that there were indeed some ‘hot talks’ which were hard to regulate. “People were so heated up that it was hard to predict what they were capable of saying. Before you knew it, someone had already thrown in a controversial statement. Even when we tried to caution them before the show, they would promise but not heed<sup>110</sup>”. Around this time, and largely through radio influence, the word *Bafuruki* became widely used among the Banyoro as an ‘othering’ tool. The dynamics around its meaning and instrumentalisation are explained in the next sub-section.

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<sup>110</sup> Interview held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

#### 4.4.1 From Non-Banyoro to Bafuruki: The ‘Othering’ of Non-Banyoro

It is between 1991 and 2000 that the neologism *Bafuruki* (*Mufuruki* is the singular) came into prominence in Kibaale. One Mufumbira respondent who was born in the area and active in local politics said: “I went to their [Banyoro’s] primary schools. There is no single day I was ever referred to as a Mufuruki until around 1997- 1998”<sup>111</sup>. The circumstances of the emergence of the label and its use are important to understand the relations between Banyoro and non-Banyoro. As argued by discourse analysts, images, statements, and ways of talking can produce/construct a particular version of events (Woods 2006). The language/labels used often effectively construct a host of expectations, entitlements and obligations. Such construction of social reality through discourse is seen in the agency of the Bafuruki tag as explained below.

Because there are linguistic commonalities between Runyoro and Rukiga, it is not easy to exclusively establish from which of the two languages the word *Bafuruki* originates – especially because both sides ascribe meaning (which are related but do not exactly mean the same) to it. However, what is more important here is the way it emerged and how it was used. This is because, as explained below, the context of the emergence of the label and the dynamics of its usage also played a role in influencing ethnic relations through transforming identities in a conflictual manner.

According to a Munyoro LC3 Chairperson I interviewed:

... the word *mufuruki* means someone who is not in his/her home area. And in terms of settlers, it has a period of time. It does not go beyond six months. You can be a Mufuruki for six or less than six months. When you come to my place and we host you, if you grow your food like groundnuts, beans, sweet potatoes, up to harvest, that word *mufuruki* goes off from you<sup>112</sup>.

The above explanation indicates that the label is temporary and, specifically, that one can only shed it once someone becomes self-sustaining. As such, it is said to be an innocent word. In a focus group discussion with women of various ethnic groups<sup>113</sup>, a Munyoro woman indicated that one needed to be socially accepted by the hosts in order to cease being referred to as a Mufuruki.

When a person came in and we found that he/she was well-behaved and seen to have no problem, then they became our own. Being a Mufuruki took a short time and that person became part of the community. The person then became a native like those already in the area. This is because he/she probably has dropped the home elements and adopted new ways. Therefore whoever acts forcefully fails being accepted as a refugee. This includes being bad-behaved. That is why today you see many people saying the Bafuruki... But all in all if they come and they are well behaved, we appreciate them, but if not then the tag Bafuruki will not end.

<sup>111</sup> Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>112</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>113</sup> FGD with women held 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

In the same vein, another Munyoro elder urged that “...let them learn the language of the area and we stop calling them Bafuruki”<sup>114</sup>. The above accounts imply that the increased use of the word Mufuruki/ Bafuruki was partly due to the changing behaviour of the migrants (some) in the direction of not being ‘well-behaved’; not behaving as they were required by their hosts. One of the forms of ‘bad behaviour’ which was of much concern to the Banyoro was the move by non-Banyoro to take up political positions, giving Rukiga names to places in Kibaale, and the ‘arrogance’ of alleged assertive boastfulness. This will be explained in more detail later in this chapter.

It appears that one of the socio-political functions of the label was to influence or even compel assimilation and/or submission of non-Banyoro to the wishes of the host community or else be ‘othered’. It also alludes to a sense that one of the reasons as to why the initial relations were good was because the migrants kept a low profile and largely lived by the terms of the Banyoro, a situation which was changing in the 1990s. We can thus conclude that the fact that the initial relations between the two groups were not conflictual is not in itself an indicator that the relations were pluralist. Pluralism would entail active dialogical space in which the different groups/ individuals would have room to express themselves on mutually negotiated terms, not mere toleration of a group/person because they accept the ‘others’ terms (Connolly 2005; Parekh 2008; Eck<sup>115</sup>). At the time, the migrants had limited freedom to express their difference and preferences in their own terms because they were literally at the mercy of their hosts. Even where there was a semblance of negotiating difference, it was more on the terms of the host.

Together with the factors discussed above, a number of non-Banyoro attributed the emergence of the Bafuruki label to a renewed activism of members of Mubende Banyoro Committee (MBC), especially Joseph Kazairwe. It should be remembered here that, as explained in Chapter Three, Kazairwe was cited as the MBC leader who introduced a militant approach in the dynamics of activism by the ethnic pressure group against Baganda sub-imperialism. After the 1964 Referendum, the group had gone silent but, with the growing concern over the ‘Bakiga’ among the Banyoro, its members started rising up again albeit at individual level.

In tracing the roots of the Bafuruki label, one Mukiga Member of Parliament said: “This man called Kazairwe is the one who said ‘these are Bafuruki’, meaning immigrants. That was around 1998 when they said that the immigrants had become too many. The MBC was repositioning itself”<sup>116</sup>. Many non-Banyoro respondents said that Kazairwe would use the word on radio to emphasise the ‘othering’ point that land in Kibaale primarily belonged to the Banyoro and that non-Banyoro were Bafuruki (migrants/ settlers) who should forget their status. The label thus became a vital instrument to not only distinguish between Banyoro and non-Banyoro by emphasising the foreigner status of the former, which was a hitherto

<sup>114</sup> Life history interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>115</sup> [http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010.

<sup>116</sup> Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

irrelevant fact (Soeters 2005), but also to differentiate between respective entitlements. The Bafuruki had to be grateful enough that they were hosted by the Banyoro. Taking up political positions was seen to demonstrate a lack of appreciation, disrespect, and arrogance. Accordingly several non-Banyoro respondents recalled being often reminded of this point with the Runyoro slur: *'mukaija kulima, mutaije kulema'* (you came to dig, not to lead).

The above discourse which surrounded the activism of Kazairwe to entrench the 'Bafuruki' label for exclusionary purposes resonates well with Dunn (2009), Geschiere (2009) and Mitchell's (2012) explanation of the politics of autochthony in discourses of belonging. In *Sons of the Soil and Contemporary State Making*, Dunn argues that claims for privilege based on appeals to original inhabitancy (autochthony) are often employed in search for certainty and security in a context of insecurity. These appeals seek to address uncertainties in terms of access to power and resources in changing competitive environments such as the Kibaale decentralised context. "Autochthony discourses are an attractive response ... to the ontological uncertainty of the postmodern/postcolonial condition ... [because they] appear to provide a sense of primal security and certainty" (Dunn 2009, p.114-115). As indicated by primordialist theory, the autochthony discourse is imagined to be effective in providing primal security because it seems to come across as self-evident, almost natural (Hale 2004) – hence giving it considerable mobilisation impact (Geschiere 2009). Here the need for reconstructing identity boundaries becomes vital for redefining citizenship and entitlement.

Establishing oneself as a 'son of the soil' provides strategic leverage against 'dubious' citizens who migrated from elsewhere. In other words, migrants are made to remain visitors to the area as their claims to autochthony must be traced back to where they emerged from the soil (Mitchell 2009). "This is ultimately the principal agenda of autochthony movements – to exclude 'strangers' and unmask 'fake autochthons' who are often citizens of the same nation-states as 'real' autochthons" (Ceuppens and Geschiere cited in Mitchell 2012, p.272). In this process, answers to the questions: 'Who can vote where? Who can run for office? And where can they run?' (Bayart, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh cited in Mitchell 2012) are reconstituted by the application of autochthony standards. Thus we may impute that the narrative of Bafuruki as 'foreigners' versus the Banyoro as 'sons of the soil' exemplifies political manipulation of exclusionary notions of citizenship. This is spearheaded by elites and adopted by their group to provide more cultural and political space/ leverage for themselves (the native Banyoro) in the midst of fears of being dominated by 'others'.

Earlier in this chapter I indicated that it would be important to ask: Why would other non-Banyoro groups buy into the strategy and vote in favour of non-Banyoro candidates? Why would they 'turn against their hosts'? By addressing these questions, I have explained basing on literature and empirical findings (interviews, observation, and focusgroups), how; (1) the Bakiga's increased in number, (2) perceived and real preferential treatment from Central Government, and (3) competition for power were perceived negatively by the indigenous Banyoro. I have also explained how the Banyoro reacted with reservations and suspicion. It is critical to note at this point that the situation that ensued was one of mutual fear and that fear



itself resulted into ethnically-oriented solidarity of a virtually exclusive nature. The fear of being dominated once again (as the Baganda did) and rendered landless by the Bakiga, came with a binding reactionary force for the Banyoro, while the fear of being chased away from Kibaale (real or perceived) brought the non-Banyoro together in their resistance and struggle to stay. The perceived reasons (being rendered landless, being chased away) corroborate social constructivism, and specifically Rational Choice Theory, but the relative ease with which such processes work are maybe better explained by primordialism theories.

The above observation demonstrates the fluidity of ethnic identity and how such forms of collective identity work to flatten other kinds of difference, thus obscuring other forms of political hierarchies (Dunn 2009). Both the Banyoro and the Bafuruki are certainly internally diverse groups in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, religion and other identities, but in the Banyoro versus Bafuruki dichotomy each side becomes essentialised to “... impose on the relevant groups a [situationally instrumental] unity of views and experiences they do not, and cannot have” (Parekh 2008, p.35). Dutter (1990) further observes that hostile contacts with out-groups or others can stimulate not only the development of a ‘we-them’ perception, but also a perceived need for collective action by the group to both defend itself and preserve its identity. Thus a hierarchy of values emerges in which individuals believe that group loyalty and political action directed toward group preservation should take precedent over all potential or real competing loyalties such as social class, which may cut across the group boundaries. This process is facilitated by the role of “identity entrepreneurs” who tend to strategically mobilise only along those identities that are deemed to be instrumental in achieving the interest at hand.

The responses to the Bafuruki label among the non-Banyoro point to another interesting finding. As observed by Parekh (2008) that collective identities tend to submerge other identities within or across their categories and manifest a unity that may not actually exist, one of the internal diversities frozen by the Bafuruki collective identity, was that the non-Banyoro also started to distinguish among themselves between those who were born in the area or not, and if not, then to consider when they arrived in the area. They actually used four loose categories:

- i) original non-Banyoro but not Bafuruki – those who came to Kibaale before the resettlement schemes.
- ii) non-Banyoro born in the area – they did not migrate into the Kibaale
- iii) early Bafuruki – those who came in the first resettlement scheme of Ruteete in the 1970s
- iv) new comers – those who came to the area from the 1990s until recently (including those who came in the Bugangaizi Resettlement Scheme of 1992)

In resentment of the label Mufuruki, for example, a Mukiga who settled in the area before the Ruteete Resettlement Scheme said:

Yes, they call us Bafuruki. But we don't agree with that because given the time we have stayed we are almost Banyoro. People that can be called Bafuruki are the

Bakiga that came in 1975 in Amin's<sup>117</sup> era and settled in the Ruteete Scheme. There are also those who have come later and bought land. But how can you call a person who was born here a Mufuruki?<sup>118</sup>

Another Munyankore respondent wondered:

In my understanding of Mufuruki, all of us are Bafuruki - even the Banyoro who are saying they are indigenous [for they must have come from somewhere at a certain point as well]. Because a Mufuruki is that person who migrated. But you cannot say I am a Mufuruki or my son is a Mufuruki. My first born is now 27, he studied in Kibaale, he studied in Bunyoro, he was born in Bunyoro, he is working in Bunyoro, he married a mukazi [woman] in Bunyoro, he produced children in Bunyoro. Now how can you say that that one is a Mufuruki, apart from the language?<sup>119</sup>

In a similar tone, a Mukonjo respondent dismissed the label:

It is not a good term. To us [non-Banyoro], Mufuruki means someone who has just arrived recently like less than a month and has no residence. This person is being helped by government. This is the person supposed to be referred to as a Mufuruki. But if you are born here, grown up here and done business here, have land and a house, there is no need of being referred to as a mufuruki. A mufuruki is the one with nothing and toiling for a living<sup>120</sup>.

However, despite this differentiation, a big section of the non-Banyoro seem to have been driven by fear to identify themselves as one group and respond as such. A unifying factor was the perceived threat of being chased away collectively on account of their relational collective identity as non-Banyoro. In the face of this threat, what is particularly interesting is that although many non-Banyoro had personal misgivings towards the Bafuruki label, they used it in response to the threat of eviction.

When I asked a Mufumbira politician how the label Bafuruki came about, he responded: "Bafuruki was started by the Banyoro. They would say: 'The Bafuruki came and found us here, they grabbed our land and now they want to take our political power'. And eventually even us (because I am a leader of Bafuruki myself ...) bought it [the label]<sup>121</sup>". Strategically, this was because "... the problem was politics and in politics you look for a suitable story or word that you will use so that you can get the minds of the people. If these people [Bafuruki] had not used the word Mufuruki, (*itwe Bafuruki* - we the Bafuruki) they wouldn't have got that power"<sup>122</sup>. Therefore the label was not 'owned' by the non-Banyoro because they accepted it, but rather for strategic 'bloc mobilisation' (Oberschall 2007) for the common

<sup>117</sup> Idi Amin Dada was president of Uganda from 1971 to 1979.

<sup>118</sup> Life history interview held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>119</sup> Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>120</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>121</sup> Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with a Munyoro LC 3 Chairperson held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

cause of the non-Banyoro. This way, particular ethnicities of the non-Banyoro were strategically muted under the more inclusive collective identity of Bafuruki.

We shall later notice that, when the non-Banyoro found the need to form an association to respond to threats from Banyoro, they named it the *Bafuruki Committee*. But since the formation of the Bafuruki ethnic pressure group was directly in response to the threats and activism of Mubende Banyoro Committee (MBC) which had become active again, let me first explain the circumstances of the re-emergence of MBC and how this is perceived by the respondents / people of Kibaale to have shaped ethnic relations in the area.

#### **4.5 The Re-emergence of Mubende Banyoro Committee and the Acceleration of Ethnic Tension**

In his discussion of the *phases of ethnopolitical activity*, Dutter (1990) explains that the primary factors in the development and persistence of an ethnopolitical identity are group members' collective memories and interpretations of ethnopolitical events. He notes that ethnopolitical leaders are not only the carriers/ key bearers, but also the principal articulators and interpreters of these memories and events. As such, the first phase (and the one I particularly find relevant in explaining MBCs role) of ethnopolitical activity is the appearance of ethnopolitical 'entrepreneurs who engage in "... defining ethnopolitical goals; presenting these to regime incumbents, or as policy alternatives, if regime incumbents are already drawn from their group; and mobilizing and recruiting ethnic followers into organisations for political action in their pursuit..." (Ibid p.318).

The process explained by Dunn above is reflected in the activities of the MBC both at its inception, as explained in Chapter Three, and at its re-emergence explained below. The role of the MBC in shaping ethnic relations in Kibaale is of much significance considering that "in ethnically divided societies, members of each ethnic group trust their separate authorities ..., look for guidance to their own community, and admire heroes who sacrificed themselves for their group" (Oberschall 2007, p.23). Accordingly, the historical contribution of the MBC to the liberation of Banyoro from Baganda rule appears to have raised their credibility and authority among the Banyoro. Although we note here that the views of MBC are more radical than those of other Banyoro, there is indication that MBC perspectives largely informed those of other Banyoro. This was partly evidenced by the common justificatory references to MBC activities and activities of individual members by many Banyoro interviewees.

In Chapter Three, I showed that, after the partial triumph of the 1964 Referendum that returned the counties Buyaga and Bugangaizi (which constitute present day Kibaale District) to Bunyoro, the MBC pressure group is said to have become inactive. However, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2001, the group reconstituted under the chairmanship of Joseph Kazairwe who was mentioned in Chapter Three as the MBC member who introduced a militant approach to the group's activism. The minutes of the resumption meeting present the objectives and rationale for resuming the activities as follows:

**Minute 4:** They [members] explained that the 1964 Referendum results have never been implemented fully. Those concerned don't bother to implement the results, that is why Mubende Banyoro Committee has resumed its activities with the following objectives:

- a) To ensure that the results of the 1964 Buyaga-Bugangaizi Referendum are fully implemented;
- b) To ensure that the achievements of the 1964 Buyaga-Bugangaizi Referendum are not lost to Bakiga illegal migrants who have the same ill intentions like those of the Baganda and the British;
- c) To ensure that the achievements of the 1964 Referendum in the Lost Counties are consolidated. These are:
  - Indigenous people to hold all political positions;
  - Runyoro-Rutooro to be the language used in Kibaale District;
  - Banyoro to retain their culture, customs, and cultural traditions in the Kinyoro way;
  - Banyoro to retain, regain their land and [their] customary rights be respected;
  - Banyoro to take major decisions affecting their area;
  - To rid our district of those who ridicule Banyoro, those who deprive them of land, language and make Banyoro live in an insecure way in many ways;
  - Banyoro to take control of their destiny;
- d) To ensure that Banyoro in Kibaale retain their political, economic and social power and authority in the affairs of Kibaale and that that position is recognised and respected by non-indigenous people.

The above resolutions which were to guide the new activities of MBC, raise a number of issues that deserve particular attention and analysis here. The first observation is that the history of the Banyoro of Kibaale is instrumentally brought to life and intricately weaved into the discourse of autochthony (Geschiere 2009 and Dunn 2009) to reinforce the appeal against the new 'threat' – the Bafuruki. The Bafuruki are likened to the Baganda and the British oppressors – a memory that would naturally arouse negative emotions from the Banyoro towards the projected 'new oppressor' (Soeters 2005). In fact, in their *Memorandum from Mubende Banyoro Committee Submitted to the Bunyoro Commission of Inquiry into Land Issues and Inter-Tribal Relations, December 2005*, the MBC categorically states that: "The *illegal* [emphasis is mine] migrant communities are exactly a replica of the Baganda and colonialists we bitterly opposed, and we are determined to oppose them thru every means available" (2005, p.13, in Republic of Uganda 2006).

In MBC's framing, the non-Banyoro acted contrary to the Banyoro's desires were illegitimated as 'illegal migrants' and as such positioned as a people with no claim to make. Although their status had earlier been unquestioned, they had now been turned into strangers who deserved no rights and guarantees (Mitchell 2012). Following this development and alongside other developments which were presented in Chapter Three indicating that the Ruteete Settlement Scheme was negotiated between a Government representative (Paul Ngorogoza) and the King of Bunyoro (Sir Tito Owiny), I asked a member of the MBC why

they would turn around and consider the Bafuruki ‘illegal migrants’. He bent forward and asked me in a raised voice: “Where did the Omukama [King] sign to allow them to come here? Besides, even if he signed, he did not have the mandate of the people at that time since Kingship had been banned<sup>123</sup> by President Obote in 1967<sup>124</sup>”. The intent at rendering the now unwanted non-Banyoro illegitimate is vividly reflected in the above quotation.

However, this opinion was not shared by other members of the MBC. Although kingship had been outlawed at the time of the resettlement, the King still had de facto maintained his authority based on the wide loyalty he commanded from the Banyoro. What the three members of MBC I interviewed shared, was the view that the settlements were illegal, in some cases substantiated by the claim that there had been no consultation with local leadership. However, this particular claim was later refuted by a revelation of a Member of Parliament who was on the District Council when the Bugangaizi Settlement Scheme proposal was tabled and discussed. There were indications that the MBC simply sought to find excuses to frame the undesired Bafuruki as illegitimate so as to validate their cause to deal with a perceived threat and to invalidate their citizenship claims.

History again comes in with reference to the 1964 referendum. It comes in to show the Banyoro that their triumphant feelings after the referendum had become meaningless, especially because the Bafuruki now emerged as the new oppressors and the land was not yet redeemed from the Baganda absentee landlords. This signaled that another ‘battle’ had to be fought. Soeters (2005) indicates that such appeals to painful collective memory are often quite instrumental and are frequently used by ethnic entrepreneurs who emotively summon members of the victim group to action. Once again this re-echoes Dunn’s observation that such employment of historical narratives of victimization introduce “...a violent cycle of memory and counter-memory, where one remembered atrocity justifies another or, in some cases, a pre-emptive attack to thwart an expected atrocity built on the remembrance of past wrong-doings” (Dunn 2009, p.123). This is further illustrated by the response I got when I asked the current Chairman of MBC why the fruits of the Referendum were questioned in the re-emergence of MBC. He said:

... the Referendum Act, the third amendment which was returning those [Buyaga and Bugangaizi] counties to Bunyoro effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1965, was not honoured.

As we talk, nothing has been done except returning political administration to Hoima! They did not return the land to us, every other thing remained the same. Instead what they did was to bring Bakiga here, bringing Banyarwanda [Rwandese] and Barundi [Burundians] here. So the conflict is: We chased Baganda, now they are bringing Bafuruki ... They brought the Bakiga and gave them land, even in forest reserves!<sup>125</sup> Date interview

<sup>123</sup> Following a misunderstanding between the Central Government and Buganda Kingdom in 1966, the then Prime Minister of Uganda (Milton Obote) exiled the King Fredrick Muteesa of Buganda who was the ceremonial President of Uganda. Thereafter in 1967, Obote abrogated the Constitution of Uganda, became President with executive powers and abolished all Kingdoms in the country. They were only revived in 1993.

<sup>124</sup> Life history interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>125</sup> Interview held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

The above factors were reinforced by cultural considerations, specifically the feelings and claims that the Bafuruki eroded the culture of the Banyoro. This was in terms of language, changing place names and social practices. One of the MBC members I interviewed<sup>126</sup> expressed anger that the Bafuruki renamed certain places in Kibaale where they were numerically dominant in their own language. He gave examples of Tweriire, Rugashari, Kanyegaramire, Kyakabadiima, and Ruteete. He said that some of these names were not only foreign, but also had undesirable provocative meanings. “*Tweriire* means ‘let us eat Banyoro things’ ... Kanyegaramire means ‘let us stretch and sleep’. They should stretch and sleep because they are now at peace and in control. Although these are related to the literal meanings of the names, it was not easy to establish whether the negative interpretations given by this MBC member had actually informed the naming. In some accounts, it was claimed that some migrants came with the names of their places of origin and planted them in Kibaale. For example, A Munyaoro LC3 Chairman said:

... and for the Bakiga and Banyankore, when they came here they did not like to acquire the names of the villages where they settled. They would come with the names of the villages where they came from. I would set [give] an example like the village Ruteete. If you go to Bushenyi [one of the districts of Bafuruki origin] you will find that village Ruteete is there<sup>127</sup>.

Most of the Bafuruki I interviewed said that the place names were innocent. They said that the places they named were uninhabited before their settlement and had no names before. It was therefore upon the migrants to name them. According to one of the Bafuruki elders, “... where names were given to places, they were not found with names. There were only bushes. So in some cases they [the migrants] came with names. But the problem was politics. Now they [the Banyoro] no longer talk about those issues since they were voted<sup>128</sup>”. A Mufumbira politician further argued, “... you know there are some people who use [the names] as a scapegoat. There is no place that they can tell you that it was originally called a different name and later changed [by the Bafuruki]”<sup>129</sup>.

A number of non-Banyoro argued that the factor of place names was a trivial issue that was blown out of proportion by MBC and Banyoro politicians in order to pursue other interests. Although it is often the case that “ethnic elites contend for power by manipulating ethnic divisions and blowing them out of proportion with fear and hate propaganda” (Oberschall 2007, p.11), I conclude that the factor of place names should not be dismissed. It may be of little significance when considered on its own, but amidst other factors and considering the intersectionality involved in the causal factors for the tension in Kibaale, its symbolic value had the capacity to gain in significance. In illustrating this point, Monmonier argues that “... place-names, or *toponyms*, not only make anonymous locations significant elements of the cultural landscape but also offer strong suggestions about a region’s character and ethnic

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>128</sup> Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>129</sup> Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

allegiance” (cited in Chriosti 2003, p.114). This is especially significant in the politics of belonging that hinges on autochthony (Geschiere 2009). Accordingly, Jackson notes that:

... the naming and renaming of places is a crucial aspect of geographical ‘discovery’, establishing proprietorial claims through linguistic association with the colonising [dominating] power. The same logic applies in every episode of ‘spatial history’ ... Spatial history ‘begins and ends in language’; by the act of naming, space is symbolically transformed into place, a space with a history (cited in Chriosti 2003, p.118).

In emphasis of the relationship between place name and identity, Ngugi has also argued that “it is in the naming of the landscape that we can so clearly see the layering of one memory over another, a previous native memory of place buried under another, a foreign alluvium becoming the new visible identity of a place” (Ngugi 2005, p.157). In his view, to name a place is to plant a group’s memory over it. As such, place names can serve as a legitimising element and enhance a group’s geographical claims. Therefore, the suspicions of the Banyoro with regard to place-naming by non-Banyoro could be understood in light of the above connotations. But even if it did not have much more significance on its own, it has to be viewed in light of other trigger concerns such as ethnic voting, power struggles, and painful historic memories. When these factors are put together, coupled with the magnification effect of political manipulation and rumour (Espeland 2006; Oberschall 2007), they are big enough to cause collective concern. What appeared minor before then has the potential to gather social prominence to conflictual levels (Soeters 2005). One other such factor that was also raised in the MBC concerns is that of cultural threat.

Based on a feeling that the Bakiga became reluctant to learn and speak Runyoro and embrace Banyoro culture, the MBC wished Runyoro-Rutooro<sup>130</sup> to be the preferred language used in Kibaale District; and that the Banyoro were to retain their “culture, customs, cultural traditions, in the Kinyoro way” (Republic of Uganda 2006). In illustration of the MBC’s concern about language, an interviewed Munyoro LC3 Chairman said “the Bafuruki, mostly the Bakiga and Banyankore did not want to learn Runyoro, to speak Runyoro. In one way or the other, one Mukiga or one Muganda in a group of Banyoro could not talk Runyoro. So, that was one of the major problems<sup>131</sup>”. This was (and still is) interpreted by many Banyoro as arrogance and disrespect to them as hosts of the non-Banyoro. An MBC member further expressed his discontent thus:

Now they even speak their language openly. In those days when the Baganda chiefs gave you some authority, you had to speak their Luganda. But these Bakiga speak Rukiga throughout. They don’t mind about you because they are in power, you are powerless. They rule at LC 1, LC2, LC3 up to MP! You greet them in Runyoro and

<sup>130</sup> Runyoro (the language of the Banyoro) and Rutooro (of the Batooro) have a lot in common. The name Runyoro-Rutooro is used to refer to a lingual hybrid that accommodates the two languages. We should also note that whereas the official language of Uganda is English, it only applies to official business - not social interaction.

<sup>131</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

they respond in Rukiga. When he/she has a programme on radio, they put it in Rukiga! And they will ask you: ‘Haven’t you understood?’<sup>132</sup>

I then asked him, ‘do the Banyoro learn and speak Rukiga?’ While giving an impression that this question seemed ridiculous, he responded: “It is not necessary and very few Banyoro try it. So when they speak in Rukiga you respond in Runyoro”. This observation strengthens the impression that it is largely or exclusively incumbent upon the migrants to learn the host’s language. As the autochthons, the Banyoro’s cultural precepts were assumed to take precedence over any other. In other words, the migrants were expected to use the Runyoro language in the process of assimilation. The implications of this assimilative approach to pluralism in the area will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

I inquired about the Bafuruki’s view about the accusation from MBC members and some other Banyoro, that non-Banyoro were unwilling to learn and speak Runyoro. They felt that it was unfair of the Banyoro to expect them to abandon their languages and that some non-Banyoro actually did not know Runyoro, especially the ‘new comers’ and those who grew up in environments which did not allow them to learn Runyoro. One Mufumbira interviewee said:

They were saying that every Bafuruki should now learn the language of the Banyoro and start speaking Runyoro even when they are talking to a fellow Mufuruki. For me it was easy because I talk Runyoro fluently, because I even learnt it in school. But it was very unfair to say that even they force somebody who doesn’t know Runyoro to learn it. And subjecting somebody to talk Runyoro even when they are communicating to a friend or their spouse, no! At my home, we use Runyoro because I married a Mukonjo and my children all were born from Kagadi where they were all Banyoro. And because I was renting in Kagadi town and even where I am where I built my small house I am in the middle of Banyoro, and my children stay with Banyoro, all my neighbours are Banyoro and the house-girls we normally use are Banyoro so our language of communication is Runyoro. For us it is easy. But for some people who are outside the Banyoro it is not as easy as for us. Even my children don’t know my language! Yes. They know Runyoro. That is why sometimes when it is time for holidays I normally take them to my late dad’s place for two weeks to learn something. But they only know how to greet<sup>133</sup>.

An Acholi respondent working with African Rural University in Kibaale wondered how pluralist such a requirement is:

They say one of the conditions these people gave was; ‘if you want us to accept you why don’t you learn our language?’ They also accuse me of that, that ‘why have you refused to learn our language?’ But I say: ‘but what will I do with my language also?’ ... The question is: are the Banyoro interested in assimilating other tribes or they are interested in living in diversity. If they can try to harness the diversity, without

<sup>132</sup> Life history interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>133</sup> Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.



necessarily trying to assimilate them - that you have to be, look like us, talk like us, behave like us, respect our culture - that would be okay. Because even the other people have their systems<sup>134</sup>.

Indeed the demand that the Bafuruki speak Runyoro was not only an assimilative move which did not enhance cultural freedom (Sen 2006) and accommodate diversity, but was in itself indicative of relations going bad. It should be remembered here that this language requirement came up around this time (from the 1990s) and was not an issue before. In the initial relations, as discussed in Chapter Three, there was some degree of freedom for the migrants to use their own languages and retain several aspects of their culture. It is compelling to feel towards the non-Banyoro respondents who argued that the language threat was secondary to political reasons. In strategic identity transformation (Soeters 2005; Geschiere 2009), it seems to have been constructed along the fears of losing political power to the Bafuruki and as a product of an urge to express the magnitude of the Bafuruki problem in call for Banyoro defensive reaction.

The findings from Kibaale raise questions about Horowitz (1985) and Huntington's (1993) primordialist argument that conflict between different civilisations/cultural groups is mainly based on cultural differences, which they consider less mutable and therefore less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones. The findings of this study seem to indicate that cultural differences often become an issue of concern following political and economic considerations. In other words, their significance appears to be situationally selected and mobilized, and not the main underlying cause of conflict. In some cases, cultural differences even appear to be more of a scapegoat. Accordingly, "... the 'civilisational' approach to contemporary conflicts (in grander or lesser versions) serves as a major intellectual barrier to focusing more fully on prevailing politics and to investigating the processes and dynamics of contemporary incitements to violence (Sen 2006, p.43). Nevertheless, the importance of cultural reasons needs to be still appreciated within the context of the other Banyoro fears and rise of suspicion. That is in the sense that they can easily be mobilised, while seeking for justifications for conflict which may primarily be about other issues such as political power and economic resources.

The above issues and feelings were not first raised by the MBC – they were held by a couple of other Banyoro. But it is important to mark that the MBC gave them more prominence and social significance through widespread radio - and social activism. Given that the MBC commanded the respect of the Banyoro due to its historical contributions to the emancipation of Kibaale, their voice was very important in shaping events at this time. Dutter (1990) and Soeters (2005) explain the importance of authorisation by those who are known as superiors in a particular context where they note that an order from a superior provides enough excuse for the reprehensibility of people's acts (as is also thoroughly shown in psychological experiments by Stanley Milgram (1963) on obedience). This helps us to understand why the

<sup>134</sup> Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

MBC would have the capacity to influence Banyoro action against the non-Banyoro (especially the Bakiga who were most politically active).

The force with which the MBC was revived and the magnitude of the threats that emerged from the group's activism led to another influential development, that is, the reactionary organisation and convergence of non-Banyoro to form a group that would counter the MBC's activities and provide a common voice for non-Banyoro. The label Bafuruki became a uniting feature, hence the name of the group being Bafuruki Committee (BC). It is interesting to observe here that in response to the threat of expulsion from Kibaale, the non-Banyoro did not appeal to their respective specific ethnic identities. Rather, they rallied around their acquired relational identity of being non-indigenous to attract a bigger network. This serves to demonstrate that collective identities are not static or immutable (Omotola 2009). Individuals have multiple identities that they can call on in different situations (Smith 2001). Such identities often have inherent propensities to take new forms depending on reactions to the various questions when confronted by 'others'.

#### **4.6 The Formation of Bafuruki Committee and its Significance to Ethnic Relations**

As early as at its revival, the MBC acquired the status of being the voice of the Banyoro, so much so that even district leaders took its counsel and used it for political mobilisation. For instance, it was said that under the influence of the MBC the District Council banned migration into Kibaale with immediate effect from August 15, 2001.

Around the same time, one of the founders of the Bafuruki Committee said that the then District Chairman (Sebastian Ssekitooleko) "... used the MBC to mobilise against the election of non-Banyoro leaders". But what indicated that things were getting out of hand for the non-Banyoro was that Banyoro district leaders "... invited some Bafuruki leaders to the district - and I was one of them - and they told us not to participate in politics and that we should stop people from coming [to Kibaale]. When we told fellow Bafuruki, that is when the Bafuruki Committee started"<sup>135</sup>. Threats accumulated at this time. The Non-Banyoro were also threatened to be chased away from Kibaale. Recounting the anxiety and tension of the times, one of the interviewed BC founders said:

... the Banyoro leaders began to make their voice louder through the media, through any other gathering and they made their point very clear that if you are not a Munyoro and you have come to Kibaale or to Bunyoro, you have purposely come to till the land and make agricultural projects and that is all. They went on to say that even if you go to school and even make it to the university, don't expect to come back to serve in any high post in Bunyoro. So they even went to the Radio and made such statements. These ideas were being added on and on and were growing from bad to worse, whereby at one time they threatened to chase away all the non-Banyoro and, there was real tension. Everybody now was alert and cautious and people were fearing ... Then I captured a vision. I imagined that if time comes and people are forcefully chased away from this area, they were going to go in disarray. Others may decide to go to Zaire, others to Mubende [District], and other places. So every person

<sup>135</sup> Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

would have to go without plan. So my vision was that let me gather these people, organize them, so that if the Government agrees and approves what the Banyoro were saying then we should not go away in disarray, we should go together so that all people move at the same time in one direction. It is when we would be heard, it is when we would be considered. If we were to perish, then let us perish as a people. If we succeeded let us succeed as a group. So that was my vision - to face everything as a group<sup>136</sup>.

As explained towards the end of the foregoing section, the perceived need for a common voice for non-Banyoro was also because:

... when these people [Banyoro] were threatening, they were using the voice of the Mubende Banyoro Committee. Be it a minister, be it a Member of Parliament, be it a chairman LC5, they would just say that ‘MBC says ...’ They would be quoting MBC. Others were members of MBC. So we said we as non-Banyoro also had to create one voice<sup>137</sup>.

However, in broader terms, the MBC intended to address a number of issues that the non-Banyoro perceived to be faced with. Among these:

We did not want to be deprived of our rights as Ugandans. Contrary to the Ugandan Constitution, they [Banyoro] did not want us to participate in politics! They were not employing our people at the district. We wanted jobs to be given on merit... They would sit by themselves - because they were the only ones at the district - and decide to give themselves jobs<sup>138</sup>.

In reinforcement of the above narrative, a Munyoro Member of Parliament told me that the Bafuruki had reason to mobilize themselves too and fight for political space. “The Bafuruki were struggling to get in. Because they were seeing that when they are not in, the benefits that accrue from services that are being rendered by an institution like government might not reach them because they are not in a place that takes decisions”<sup>139</sup>. Using their now stronger voice, the Bafuruki responded to the Banyoro by letting them know that they were also part of Kibaale and, by no means, should they be looked upon as ‘visitors’ – they had come to stay.

For some Banyoro, this assertive tone of the Bafuruki exemplified a level of arrogance which was not to be tolerated. Thus, in a claim appealing to autochthony, in their memorandum to the *Commission of Inquiry on Bunyoro Issues*, the MBC writes:

There is no reason as to why “Bafuruki Committee” should exist in Kibaale district. Its activities are similar to those of Captain Lugard, Col. Colville, Maj. Cunningham, Captain Thruston, Gerald Portal, Sir Hurry Johnston<sup>140</sup>, King Muteesa I, Idi Amin, and the Baganda prior to 1964. While the purpose of

<sup>136</sup> Interview held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>139</sup> Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>140</sup> These are British colonial officials.

Mubende Banyoro Committee is openly known, i.e to resist domination and to seek redress against past and present injustice, the activities of Bafuruki Committee are provocative to the indigenous people of Kibaale and to Bunyoro Region as a whole (2005, p12).

Several Banyoro respondents expressed their irritation with the Bafuruki phrase '*tukaija tukaija*' ('we came, we came' – meaning; we came to stay) – a stubborn reminder that they were not leaving. Recollections of the migrants' earlier socio-economic status and how they were received into the area made some Banyoro to perceive the migrants as ungrateful and forgetful. How could they turn against their hosts? However, many of the non-Banyoro felt that the Banyoro themselves were very selfish and envious of the economic and political achievements of the former. Why would they want to restrict non-Banyoro to tilling the land and exclude them from politics and district jobs? These questions are perceived to have aggravated the polarisation of the two sides in Kibaale. This polarisation most vividly manifested itself at the time of the local government elections of 2002.

#### **4.7 The Elections of 2002 and Conflict in Kibaale District**

The divisive politics were perceived by the people of Kibaale to have greatly contributed to conflict in the area. It also negatively influenced ethnic relations. However, the height of politically motivated ethnic conflict and violence in the area was in 2002.

As noted earlier, in 2001 some Banyoro politicians had asked non-Banyoro to stay out of politics – a suggestion that the latter out-rightly rejected. In fact, they say that they realised that they now had more reason to vie for political positions so as to avert the threat of being chased away and to enjoy other rights that they were denied. In the local elections of 2002 therefore, they not only vied for LC3 Chairperson and Member of Parliament positions but also for District chairmanship. According to one of the founders of the Bafuruki Committee:

... originally no one had stood for that position. They [immigrants] were just becoming councilors. But when matters became worse then they said ok, let us call a spade a spade. So, initially it was not the intention of the non-Banyoro but when they were tickled and ticked then they said ok. I don't know if you have it in Luganda but the Bakiga say *kwojuma omukuru omuherebura* - when you abuse an elder then abuse him seriously - because even if you do not abuse him enough in any case you will be punished. They [non-Banyoro] said now if this is the case then let us fight for the big thing. But initially that is not the way it was<sup>141</sup>.

It should be noted here that in Uganda's decentralised system, the District Chairperson is the head of the district. It is the most influential position in the district and this position became the main focus of contestation in 2002. At the beginning of this chapter, I explained the potential of decentralisation to turn around local politics through accelerating competition for power and resources (Nsamba *et al.* 2009; Geschiere 2009; Baligira 2011; Mitchell 2012) thereby accentuating division and conflict. This projection clearly manifests itself in the dynamics that surrounded the competition for the strategic position of LC V Chairperson.

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<sup>141</sup> Interview held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

According to one of the accounts of the conflict in Kibaale, tension had also built up in the District Council over power and resources. A non-Munyoro Member of Parliament reminisced that at one point Henry Ford Mirima, a son of Joseph Kazairwe and member of MBC wrote a book about the history of Kibaale (Mirima 1999, cited earlier in this study) where he argued that if the Banyoro did not ‘wake up’ they were going to be swallowed by the immigrants. “He tried to influence the District Council to buy it [the book] in large quantities. They refused it<sup>142</sup>”. It is indicated that it was mainly resisted by the non-Banyoro members and, in the anger that ensued, the MBC became more aggressive in its campaigns against immigrants. At this time the District Councillor for Muhooro Sub-county, Fred Rulemera - an immigrant - , had developed sharp differences with the Chairman of the District, Sebastian Ssekitooleko – a Munyoro. In one heated exchange witnessed by the above non-Munyoro Member of Parliament, Rulemera told the Chairman:

‘You, you! You are going back to Kakumiro [the Chairman’s place of origin in Kibaale] to eat dust. I am going to stand against you’. I witnessed this! Then the chairman said: ‘you a Mufuruki who has just<sup>143</sup> come here! How can you rule here? You will never be a leader here’.

These sharp differences defined the political environment of the 2002 elections, with each side campaigning to its own ends. More importantly, the campaigns are said to have been largely conducted along ethnic lines. To a large extent, the elections became “... an ethnic census and a public demonstration of numerical strength” (Oberschall 2007, p.15). However, since religion is also an important factor in Kibaale’s politics, some people considered religious affiliations. I explained in Chapter Three that the British colonialists divided the Lost Counties along religious administrative lines – with Buyaga and Bugangaizi (Kibaale) given to the Catholics. Because the immigrants are predominantly Protestant (Anglican), the contest happened along two identity fronts – ethnicity and religion. Some Banyoro Anglicans found their religious identity more important and they supported the non-Munyoro Anglican candidate and vice versa (Mirima, 2003). This finding further renders credence to the idea that identities which are mobilised and rallied around are situationally selected, based on what the people in question consider more important or/and instrumental at the time (Smith 2001). This becomes even more apparent in the most recent elections (2011) where, after the ethnic card became less attractive, religion took centre stage. I will come back to the analysis of this observation later in this chapter.

The tension peaked into violence between February and May 2002 following Fred Rulemera’s – a Mukiga – election as Chairman of the District with 56 percent of the votes (Espeland 2007; Schelnberger 2008). Not ready to handover office to a ‘foreigner’, the incumbent and loser of the election – Sebastian Sekitoleko -, a Munyoro, refused to step down from the post. The conflict was catalysed by the MBC, with agitation for Fred Rulemera to step down and increased threats to chase away the Bafuruki. One of the MBC

<sup>142</sup> Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

<sup>143</sup> At this time, Fred Rulemera had stayed in Kibaale for over forty (40) years. His parents migrated to Kibaale when he was about 4 years old. At the time of the elections he was 45.

leaders interviewed argued that it was unacceptable that "... the Bafuruki ganged together and voted Rulemeera as the District Chairperson". But in the view of a non-Munyoro politician, the cause of this tribal voting is found in the behaviour of some Banyoro:

Actually what escalated the whole issue of tribalism was, there were some Banyoro extremists who would come here under Mubende Banyoro Committee. They would say: 'no no, no, we do not want any Mufuruki. They should go, we are going to kill them ...' And when they would make such pronouncements even the [Bafuruki] sympathisers of Banyoro would start finding their way/level and associate with fellow Bafuruki. So eventually, and given that the Bafuruki numbers were very high in this place, that was how Fred Rulemera stood and won<sup>144</sup>.

Following the victory of the non-Munyoro, houses of migrants were burnt down and five of them killed. In an interview with one of the youth who actively participated in the violence, he emphasised that the MBC was at the center of it:

They came in organizing the youth who didn't know anything about the [Mubende] Banyoro Committee that we should block those people who have come into our district - that they are going to take our land. So they come in with an idea that they are protecting the things of Bunyoro and what they are feeding the youth is the past - that in the past they used to cut people's property, to kill people, to burn their houses. So such funny funny things. So they would come with money, vehicles and they park in a town/ trading centre. You see in the town there are people who don't have money. When they go there, they just give them money and they begin organizing<sup>145</sup>.

The mention of money in the youth's account brings into picture 'poverty' as a factor in the conflict. Some of the respondents were of the view that widespread poverty among the Banyoro in Kibaale, in comparison with the generally relatively well-off non-Banyoro, also played a catalyst role in the conflict. "When you look at why they are fighting, sometimes it is poverty! Because the person who is getting a panga to go and cut [the other], when you look at that person, he looks like a person who is really poor"<sup>146</sup>. It is easy to manipulate people who have very little or nothing to lose in the consequences of violence. Besides, it also becomes opportune and strategic for ethnic *scape-goating* – to blame the poverty on the 'other' (Storey 2002) – especially by the politicians seeking advantage. Storey indicates that "... during periods of socio-economic crisis that threaten the rule of elite groups, one may expect those elites to channel popular anger towards groups that are already (albeit in a latent way) seen as different and threatening" (2002, p.86). As such, poverty may be a considerable factor in the Kibaale conflict, especially if it is simultaneously viewed in consideration of the complaint by some Banyoro that the non-Banyoro were given a head start by Government through preferential provisions like free land and money. In a reflection on the testimony of the youth above, especially the revelation that many youths were given money to carry out violent acts, youths seem particularly vulnerable to political manipulation. This is also

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Interview held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Mufumbira civil society activist held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

because they are often the first (most important) victims of socioeconomic crises (Dunn 2009, p.119). A combination of their desperation and energy makes them an attractive category to execute the violent roles of the elites who ride on differences for political advantage.

The Central Government responded to the conflict by instituting a ‘Committee of Inquiry into the Political Developments in Kibaale District’ (2002) which subsequently recommended that a neutral person should be considered for the contested post (Republic of Uganda 2002). The president accordingly persuaded Fred Rulemera to step down after being officially sworn in.

Although the push for the democratically elected non-Munyoro to step down was eventually assented to by non-Banyoro opinion leaders, some degree of dissatisfaction can still be felt. For example, a non-Munyoro Member of Parliament said in an interview:

Rulemera was pushed out of politics but the State made a mistake. By then I was studying for masters and had asked for a study leave from my employer (Tororo Local Government). Around this time I was mobilising both Banyoro and Bafuruki to resist this thing. The state refused! They said, ‘for us to have harmony in this area this Mufuruki should leave’. They forced him out. They took him to study, promised him a job, paid him some money and that marked the end<sup>147</sup>.

The possible implications of this intervention by the Central Government for pluralism in the area shall be discussed in Chapter Five. Let us now explore the selection of the compromise candidate for Chairperson as per Government’s suggestion.

On the basis of the Central Government’s suggestion to quell the violence, the compromise candidate to be selected had to be a Munyoro. According to the President, it had to be a Munyoro because the Banyoro’s history had made them:

... weak, sensitive, and suspicious. What they least need, at this time, is symbolic domination by [a] Mufuruki taking over the supreme position in one of their remaining districts: Kibaale ... Remember that Kibaale district was created as a result of the Bagangaizi feeling of being marginalised by even their kinsmen in Hoima. How will they feel when now they will be managed from Kabale [where the Bakiga originate from] as they keep saying? (Presidential Communique 15<sup>th</sup> April 2002, p.4-5)

But in order to put the Bafuruki’s interests into consideration as well, it was up to them (the Bafuruki) to suggest an actual person. After complex mutual engagement between Banyoro and non-Banyoro, George Namyaka<sup>148</sup> was agreed upon. It is interesting to highlight the ‘attributes’ of this compromise Chairperson. He was “a Munyoro Protestant<sup>149</sup> whose late wife was a Mukiga [Munyankore, not Mukiga] and whose daughter is also married to a Makiga” (Schelnberger 2008, p.203). His candidacy was agreed upon both by the Bafuruki Committee and the MBC.

<sup>147</sup> Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

<sup>148</sup> George Namyaka is still the District Chairperson up to today. He has been re-elected twice since his selection in 2002. This in itself raises questions about what will ensue when time comes to replace him.

<sup>149</sup> As indicated earlier in the chapter, the significance of religion here should be noted.

According to one of the Bafuruki Committee founders, “they [Bafuruki] were asked to look for a compromise Munyoro. We saw he [Namyaka] was an old/ mature man and he was educated. His wife was a Munyankore, but that was a minor issue. I married from his family (his daughter), but the issue is that we found him mature”<sup>150</sup>. Apparently, his willingness to marry a non-Munyoro and to allow his daughter to marry a Mukiga indicated that he was able to accommodate ethnic others. Besides, as an in-law, he had a personal interest in the protection of the Bafuruki. It is therefore understandable why intermarriage was mentioned several times among the viable pluralism initiatives as shall be discussed in Chapter Five. We should also recall here that there were two collective identities which needed to be balanced: ethnic and religious. As I noted earlier, the majority of Banyoro in Kibaale were Catholic, while most non-Banyoro were Protestant (Anglican). Therefore by selecting a Munyoro Anglican who was married to a Munyankore, they had chosen a person who carried a number of identities which drew him closer to the Bafuruki.

As a way to cater for interests on both sides, Namyaka ensured that there was almost equal representation by Banyoro and Bafuruki at the District Executive Council. Of the seven secretaries, the Banyoro only outnumbered the non-Banyoro by one. As such, the non-Banyoro were somehow compensated for the loss of the chairmanship and the situation was stabilized. However, violence re-emerged in April 2003, triggered by reports that the District Land Board was distributing Bakiga Land to Banyoro. Scenes of ethnic violence were also reported in Kiryanga Sub-county of Kibaale following the elections of 2006 (Mugerwa may 30 2015). In the period between 2007-2014, there had been no reports of violent ethnic-based conflicts in the district. I showed and explained earlier that tension and violence tend to build up during election time. However, although there is still some tension, expressions of ethnic distrust, and sectarianism, in the local elections of 2011, there is evidence that the ethnic card was used less or/ and became reduced in political significance. The reasons given by the people to explain this trend shall be discussed in Chapter Five which focuses on how different ethnic groups in Kibaale perceive the possibilities for pluralism in their district

#### **4.8 Concluding Thoughts**

This chapter set out to address the subsidiary research question: *How do different local ethnic groups in Kibaale currently perceive ethnic conflict in their district?* The findings presented and discussed indicate that an intersectional approach (Newman 1991; Burkner 2012; Mattsson 2014) would be helpful to understand the conflict in Kibaale. It emerged from the empirical findings that factors such as unsettled perceived historical injustices, painful memories which are prone to sensationalism, rapid population growth in migrant communities, perceived favouritism to the advantage of the migrants, perceived arrogance of migrants (such as in their assertiveness, use of their languages, and (re)naming places in the area), widespread poverty among the Banyoro, expanded communication after the opening of Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio, plus the role of elites and ethnic pressure groups interfaced/interacted in complex ways to contribute to the conflict. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the multilayered nature of the conflict, most people perceive political

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<sup>150</sup> Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.



opportunism and manipulation to be the key factor behind the ethnic conflict in Kibaale. Varshney's question comes to mind here: "... why do politicians polarise communities in some places but build bridges in others, even if it can be shown that polarisation will serve their interests?" (2002, p.11).

Findings from Kibaale show that the manipulability of ethnicity by political actors is made possible by a number of other factors (such as those highlighted above) which are considered to be instrumental for identity politics. These factors created possibilities for politicians and (re)emergent ethnic pressure groups to opportunistically work on their pursuit of political advantage and gain. The eventual election of a non-Munyoro as District Chairman in 2002 can be seen as not only a climax trigger of violence but also as a product of conflictual relations between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro, since his electoral victory was largely reactively brought about in an environment of fear of ethnic expulsion from Kibaale.

What stands out from the narratives of the people is that despite the fact that various factors were identified as contributing factors in the conflict, there was a semblance of consensus on the centrality of active identity politics which significantly contributed to the polarisation between the Banyoro and the non-Banyoro. This convergence in thought was widely attributed to massive sensitisation initiatives by civil society organisations and religious bodies aimed at promoting co-existence in the area.

Theoretically, the findings come with a number of explanatory implications. With the explanations in Chapter Three and Four, I address the question as to why communities that had lived in considerable peace with each other for over thirty years would come to fight. The findings provide insight into pre-conditions for co-existence and conflict. In view of the processes of identity transformation and the fluidity of ethnic identity revealed by the empirical findings, the argument of the primordialists that ethnic groups tend to fight on the basis of difference itself and age-old grievances (Geertz 1963; Huntington 1993) can only partly explain the Kibaale conflict.

If ethnic difference and 'ancient hatreds' (Huntington 1993) per se were the decisive issues, then there would be no moments of peace, except if we were to argue that the peace is always coerced – a position not defensible on the basis of empirical evidence from Kibaale. It is true that the moments of peace are brokered on complex 'give and take' negotiations, including some compromises which were largely in favour of the host/indigenous group, but these, although with questionable pluralist value, are not necessarily coercive. One of the easily identifiable compromises in Kibaale in times of peace (1960s – 1990) is a limited involvement of migrants in local politics – which later became one of the key triggers to conflict. This in itself does not imply that peaceful relations are premised on an exclusion of migrants (on account of ethnic difference) from politics. Rather, it calls to attention the significance of the mode and circumstances of migrants' entry into local politics as an object of further study.

The non-Banyoro's claim for political space in itself may not be problematic, rather the way their claim was perceived in the specific circumstances. The fact that the district had newly been created to redress the dual victimhood of the Banyoro (to the Baganda and later to the Banyoro of Hoima) – can be identified as the most problematic issue. An analysis of the politics of belonging, set in motion by the creation of districts on ethnic lines – a reinforcement of autochthony-based citizenship - confirms this. This factor is seen to have yielded to violent conflict, largely due to perceived exaggeration and instrumentalisation by the elites and politicians – an observation that renders credence to constructivist theory in general and, to some extent, the rational choice theory in particular. The whole complex process leading to the tension and violence illustrates that the ensuing relations were a construct of the interplay between various factors through the agency of the actors involved.

However, whereas I argue that primordialism's ethnic essentialism and explanations from historical determinism fall short when explaining the realities of co-existence and conflict in Kibaale, it is not to mean that this theory is devoid of credible analytical input. The role of history and its attendant sense of common fate in shaping ethnic relations and engagement (Hale 2004) in Kibaale cannot simply be explained away. I agree with the primordialist view that experiences of ethnic roots need to be given analytical consideration, but I would argue that its influence is not necessarily deterministic. Moreover, even where a primordialist notion of ethnicity may be relevant, its directions remain open to various possibilities which hinge upon the way it is socially constructed and politically handled. Generally, I find constructivist explanations more helpful to explain ethnic relations in Kibaale because all the narratives from Kibaale indicate that relations are under continuous (re)construction by different agents.

Further, the widely cited influential role of political actors in the construction of conflict in Kibaale draws attention to the analytic significance of constructivism, particularly rational choice theory. The revelation that elites (politicians and ethnic pressure groups) were at the centre of exaggerating and exploiting inter-ethnic sensitivities, spreading hate messages and mobilising ethnic groups against each other, corroborates Hempel's rational choice position. He maintains that "individuals will consciously self-identify on the basis of ethnicity when ethnic membership to one or another group is perceived to be instrumental in accessing valued goods" (Hempel cited in Coetzee, 2009). Oberschall also observes that ethnic identities, solidarities, and boundaries persist because they benefit group members (Oberschall 2007). In the circumstances of the 1990s and early 2000 in Kibaale, the ethnic card was deemed effective as a tool to garner political support, but its effectiveness is not automatic as primordialists would argue.

Whereas the manipulative elites tend to capitalise on the real and/or perceived threats of their ethnic groups (Soeters 2005; Oberschall 2007; Dunn 2009), their success in utilising these threats is contingent upon other factors. As argued by Mamdani (2001), the choice people make in response is mediated through how they understand and explain these constraints and threats and the resources they can garner to change them. In Kibaale, widespread poverty

among the Banyoro, relatively lower levels of education, and unresolved perceived historical injustices and pain played a significant role in shaping the gullibility of the Banyoro to elite manipulation. On the other hand, the non-Banyoro's fear of being chased away from the area was successfully instrumentalised because the threat was grave enough in itself to attract a defensive reaction. This observation renders credence to the idea that ethnic conflict is "... a function of both the latent social dissatisfaction necessary to influence individuals to ethnically mobilise and the institutional incentives that are sufficient to allow ethnic extremists to exploit such mobilisation" (Shoup 2008, p.15). And, whereas politicians tend to exaggerate differences and that the differences themselves may not be sufficient to cause violent conflict, they should not be underestimated. As argued by Omotola, "... there must be an object that informs and at which the ethnic appeals are targeted" (Omotola 2009, p.78). Political appeals can hardly be successful in the absence of differences which people consider to be of some level of importance.

However, the empirical findings of this study also show that ethnic expressions are not always exclusively instrumentalist. Some respondents express a strong affective attachment to their ethnic groups without any discernable interest in sight. This finding alludes to the essentialist postulation of ethnicity by primordialists as an age-old affiliation. "Primordialism ... helps make comprehensible the emotionality latent in ethnic conflict, its disposition to arouse deep-seated anxieties, fears, and insecurities, or to trigger a degree of aggressiveness not explicable in purely material interest terms" (Young cited in Shamdasani 2009, p.547). But whereas this may illustrate some limitation of social constructivism (in particular Rational Choice Theory) in explaining ethnic attachment and motivations for conflict, constructivist theory still offers a valuable conceptual framework. In other words, if there is ethnic affiliation without resources/privileges being targeted, rational choice theory may not be of exclusive explanatory value. But a constructivist approach would more broadly serve to explain that such attachment is developed, but not determined, through social processes. That is, that affective ethnic attachment is shaped/constructed and solidified over time through multi-layered and complex socialisation processes and other experiences. These experiences play an important role in the construction of ethnic attachment and the particular circumstances in which people live (such as threats, history, fears, politics, legal/policy environment ...) in turn have a significant impact on the shape/form that ethnic attachment and inter-ethnic relations take.

After engaging with perceptions of the people of Kibaale on ethnic conflict in their area, the next chapter entails a presentation and analysis of empirical data which was gathered to respond to the third subsidiary research question, namely: *How are the different scientific theories on pluralism brought into action by the various initiatives for peaceful co-existence in Kibaale and how do the people of the district value these initiatives?* The logic behind the sequence is that it was important to first establish the significant historical developments in the area which would help understand why co-existence was possible at some point and then focus on conflict as it emerged by interrogating people's imaginations and the meanings they attribute to these developments, as well as their visions for the possibilities for pluralism.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PLURALISM INITIATIVES IN KIBAALE

#### 5.1 Introduction

*It is evening and people are seated in small groups sipping 'malwa', a local beer at Kiryanga Trading Centre in Kibaale District. A group of about 10 people are sharing the local brew, which is made from millet and is normally served with hot water in a pot.*

*Mr Asuman Tibeita, an indigenous Munyoro, shares the beer with members of the diverse settler communities locally known as Bafuruki. "These are our brothers. I deal with them irrespective of their ethnicity," Tibeita says (Mugerwa May 30, 2015).*

Following the several episodes of ethnic violence in Kibaale, over time residents have come to realise/ understand that they have to learn to live with ethnic differences. Accordingly, they are working in various ways to form a more plural community. This chapter therefore addresses the third subsidiary question of the study, namely: How are the different scientific theories on pluralism brought into action by the various initiatives for peaceful co-existence in Kibaale and how do the people of the district value these initiatives?

To address the above question, we shall simultaneously address the following questions: What are the most important features of the pluralism initiatives in Kibaale District? How do the theoretical perspectives on pluralism help us to understand the initiatives for peaceful co-existence in Kibaale District? How do the people of Kibaale value the initiatives? How do the initiatives used in Kibaale inform pluralism theory? How sustainable are the initiatives?

The initiatives are categorised into individual, communal, civil society, and Government (Local and Central) for purposes of being systematic and to break down the complex and multi-layered range of pluralism processes which take place in the district. Although this categorisation allows for a systematic overview, as idealised in the above theoretical perspectives, I acknowledge and show that a number of initiatives at different levels frequently overlap and feed into each other. The power of the interactions between the initiatives at the various levels demonstrates the importance of simultaneously promoting pluralism at different levels, given the complexity of negotiating difference and the need for strategic communication to reinforce the possibility of making pluralism flourish. At each level, the initiatives are analysed to determine whether they tend towards assimilation or pluralism.

#### 5.2 Initiatives for Pluralism in Kibaale District

The empirical findings of this study indicate that there are variations and different levels of anxiety in how local people view the practices and possibilities of pluralism. Although the account of what happened between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro (especially the Bakiga)

between 1991 and 2003 is grim, the respondents' largely positive answer to the question about 'whether they thought it was possible to live together' and the degree of compromise, indicate that the political climate in the area is changing. For example, in a tone indicative of an acceptance of living together, a Munyoro LC 3 Chairman said:

... we know none of us is going to leave this Kibaale. The Bafuruki came [to stay]. All the tribes we have here, they are here [to stay]. Others are even older than our fathers here, although they call themselves Bafuruki. We have married them and they have also married in our tribes. We have same businesses, churches and whatever<sup>151</sup>.

The above quotation signals a vivid contrast between the language reflected in the memoranda of different Banyoro groups (MBC, Bunyoro Kingdom, etc) to the Government commissions of inquiry (in 2002 and 2006) and the language which is commonly used by respondents in this study conducted in 2011-2013. Unlike what is captured in the above memoranda, in this particular empirical research only one respondent (from MBC) said that non-Banyoro have to leave. All other respondents spoke in terms of finding ways to live together peacefully. This new attitude towards ethnic difference in the community seems to be related to the acquisition of new knowledge in the community – knowledge that disarmed a number of the polarising forces, which were discussed in Chapter Four, and reinforced by a number of pro-pluralism initiatives which will be discussed in this chapter.

With the exception of a member of the MBC, all respondents said that pluralism (viewed as living together with differences) was a possibility that was actually already evident in a number of existing practices and attitudes among people in the area. The MBC member who differed, believed that: "They [Bakiga and Bafumbira] are naturally rigid ... People from South-western Uganda are very difficult to deal with. They are all the same. And everyone has their culture. When you come together you lose your cultural values"<sup>152</sup>. However, although a number of Banyoro respondents apparently shared this attitude towards the Bakiga (as arrogant people), many other respondents dismissed the view that it was impossible to find ways to live peacefully with them. The majority feeling was that it is possible and was already taking shape; although some expressed uncertainty about the sustainability of a number of measures which have been introduced in the area.

Community members have devised several means to enhance the possibilities for pluralism. Some of these community initiatives are informal in the sense that they are not institutionally streamlined or monitored; rather they are spontaneous in character and sometimes not even deliberately aimed to bring about pluralistic relations. Such measures include: intermarriage; socialisation and cooperation in everyday activities (such as business, religious practices, cultural practices, etc); learning from each other's practices; and situational adoption of the 'others'' cultural tenets. In agreement with Varshney (2001), this study will show that such initiatives are very important since they provide the co-operative foundation for the viability of other measures, taken by civil society and Government.

<sup>151</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>152</sup>Interview held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

In Chapter Four, I discussed how local elites and politicians took advantage of the differences among the people of Kibaale to play polarising identity politics to their own advantage. Accordingly, a very significant impact on the possibilities for pluralism in the area emerged when the local residents realised that the MBC and local politicians behaved opportunistically when they fuelled anxieties and divisions amongst different ethnic groups in Kibaale. This insight played an important role in changing the relational dynamics in the area. It is these practices and the possibilities for pluralism on which they are grounded that the following section presents and discusses.

## **5.2.1 Community Initiatives for Co-existence**

### **5.2.1.1 Intermarriage**

One of the most commonly cited ideas and practices for co-existence in Kibaale District at community level is intermarriage. This corroborates Sociology and Anthropology literature that indicates that there is a link between intermarriage and the reduction of violent conflict between groups that otherwise view themselves as different (Levi-Strauss 1967; Van den Berghe; Blau and Schwartz 1984; Monden and Smits 2005; Song 2009). “The existence of many marriages between the members of immigrant groups and members of groups that live already for several generations in a country [area] has rather generally been considered to be an indication of integration and assimilation” (Smits 2010, p.420). Indeed, as Smits shows, the findings from Kibaale indicate that intermarriage manifests both tenets of pluralism and assimilation.

#### ***Intermarriage as a means to increase inter-ethnic understanding***

In Chapter Four I explained that the significance of intermarriage as a factor for pluralism in Kibaale is exemplified in the considerations for selecting George Namyaka as a compromise District Chairman in 2002 and his electoral victory in the two subsequent elections. Namyaka is a Munyoro whose late wife was a Munyankore and some of his daughters are married to Bakiga. For the people of Kibaale, the intermarriage in his family exemplified his acceptance of ethnic ‘others’ and thus ‘neutrality’. It is true that ethnic tensions in the district have been significantly reduced during his twelve-year leadership. This is also reflected in his victory at every election he participated in, with wide support of both Banyoro and non-Banyoro. Of course his popularity is also due to other factors such as his attempts to distribute power to both sides, but it can be observed that his kinship ties on either side make it possible for local people to view him as relatively neutral and thus concerned about the well-being of both groups.

Intermarriage is increasingly viewed as a promising avenue for ethnic bonding today because, in addition to its imagined advantages such as bonding people across ethnic lines (Song 2009; Smits 2010), it has also become more feasible over time for it to occur. Since some of the ethnically exclusive stereotypes have been eroded, the mutual appreciation of some of each other’s practices has grown, and, partly as a result, class differences linked to ethnic

background have become less sharp. These dynamics can be illustrated in the two quotations below from two non-Banyoro respondents:

... the practice [intermarriage] started a bit late because earlier on, they used to fear the Banyoro who were believed to be cannibals, could eat elephants, and that the Bakonjo could eat monkeys, squirrels, etc and yet us the Bakiga, we could not eat any of these<sup>153</sup>.

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They [Banyoro] were weak and loose. That is why it was very difficult for the Bafuruki to marry Banyoro... the Bafuruki girls would get their first sex from their husbands. And actually for them [Banyoro] they do not look at that but for me that is the major factor why it was not easy for the Bafuruki to marry indigenous people. Actually for us we knew, even in primary school you would hear a Munyoro girl that has played sex with someone yet it was very difficult for a Mufuruki. That is why there were less intermarriages. But as per now those differences are no more, our sexual practices are more or less the same<sup>154</sup>.

There is widespread belief that intermarriage offers a viable mechanism to reduce ‘social distance’ (Song 2009, Smits 2010), and promotes bonding between different ethnic groups in the area, which in turn serves to reduce ethnic conflict and violence. This effect is further strengthened because in many traditional African settings, the marriage contract not only brings together two individuals but two families/societies (Kyalo 2012). In this social philosophy, “... marriage is a contract between two societies, represented by two individuals” (Lajul 2014, p.109). Accordingly, in Kibaale intermarriage is reported to have contributed to tone down images of ‘otherness’ and demystify some of the ethnic boundaries and differences.

Asked about his views on the significance of intermarriage for ethnic relations in the area, a non-Munyoro (Munyankore) respondent who works for the Uganda Rural Development Training Center’s Land Office, recalled:

I remember in the middle of the conflict people were saying: ‘now if I have married a Munyoro woman and we have produced children, if they are chasing me away as a Mufuruki, shall I live these children behind or I will go with them? What about my wife? So if intermarriage somehow takes root, that can somehow solve the problem<sup>155</sup>.

This respondent’s, and many others’ support for intermarriage is largely based on the knowledge that there is much respect for in-laws in the cultures of most of the ethnic groups in Kibaale. The Banyoro are particularly singled out by respondents of all other ethnic groups to be very respectful to their *bako* (in-laws). To emphasise this observation, a Mufumbira interviewee said:

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<sup>153</sup>Life history interview with a Mukiga elder held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>154</sup>Interview held with a Mufumbira local politician on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>155</sup>Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

... the Banyoro ... respect us more than we respect them. You know traditionally for us the Bafumbira we do not give goats or chicken to people who visit but for Banyoro, they give a lot! And that is why some of our boys like to marry Banyoro. They like that kind of respect<sup>156</sup>.

In line with Smits' (2010) projection, on the basis of the respect and the bond that is expected to come with intermarriage, many respondents expressed a strategic expectation that ethnic others would not be in position to harm or exclude their in-laws.

When a Mukiga marries a Munyoro or a Munyoro marries a Mukonjo, when it comes to these tribal wars, I think you cannot get a knife or a panga and you cut your wife. Though it may happen in other tribes, the Banyoro cannot do it. You have a Muganda grandson, how will you slaughter that grandson of yours being brought to you by your daughter or son? So intermarriage has also brought some cool in tribal conflict<sup>157</sup>.

Besides minimising exclusive tendencies on account of kinship and blood relations as explained above, intermarriage was also reported to be effective in demystifying and neutralising negative ethnic stereotypes. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, such stereotypes often play a significant role in identity politics when lines are drawn between ethnic groups and serve as justifications for excluding or/and hating those labelled in unacceptable ways (Soeters 2005; Shoup 2009). Such stereotypes "... become activated for aggression at the onset of ethnic conflict, and resonate with ordinary folk" (Obserchall 2007, p.12).

Some respondents explained that when you closely live with someone from another tribe/ethnic group for a while, you get experiential exposure, which makes you discover that some of the things you imagined or were told about them are not true. For example, it was reported that there used to be a widespread belief among non-Banyoro that Banyoro were cannibals and witches, but these beliefs are slowly dying out, partly due to the effect of intermarriage. The same is said about stereotypes concerning eating habits of the Bakonjo (they presumably ate monkeys and squirrels). Many stereotypes, exaggerated and/or abused in times of conflict, have been found to be wrong. Many respondents said that these stereotypes had earlier played a major role in preventing intermarriage. Interestingly, eventually, it would take the occurrence of intermarriage to partly scale down the significance in inter-ethnic relations of the hitherto preventive stereotypes. As such intermarriage was both a result of reduced significance of ethnic stereotypes and a factor which further reduced the stereotypes.

In Chapter Three, I explained that in some cases intermarriage was based on an appreciation for the value of ethnic 'others'. For example, some Banyoro men were attracted to Bakiga women because of their good work ethic – they were known to be very hard working. On the other hand, some non-Banyoro said that they fell for Banyoro women due to their assumed

<sup>156</sup> Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with a Munyoro LC 3 Chairperson held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.



humility and submissiveness. Intermarriage facilitated more knowledge of the ‘other’ and an appreciation of some of their practices and behaviour which were hitherto misinterpreted or/and not understood. Considering that a lack of knowledge or assumptions based on stereotypes about the ‘other’ can be very influential in creating conflictual grounds in human relations (Sen 2006; Oberschall 2007), intermarriage should be considered as significant to pluralism. The practice lays permissive grounds to negotiate difference and helps to create possibilities for cooperation.

In an FGD with women of different ethnic groups, one of the Banyoro participants illustrated how intermarriage in her family impacted on her relations with the Bakiga:

My brothers have intermarried with the Bakiga. We have now three Bakiga wives in my family... This also means we have to be careful with the language we use, especially about statements like: ‘you are behaving like the Bakiga’<sup>158</sup> yet you already have children with a Mukiga wife and she is the one cooking for you. As you are about to make such a statement, you realise and stop<sup>159</sup>.

It was evident in this woman’s account that intermarriage in her family came with a regulatory effect on forms of behaviour that were potentially antagonistic. It appears to be important to promote pluralism by preventing conflict-provoking behaviour. But this seems to be dependent on one’s calculations of the implications of their behaviour. Therefore, where intermarriage comes with restraint in using divisive language, it is good for ethnic relations, but such restraint does not come automatically. We may still argue that comparative chances of using such divisive language without self-censorship are higher in the absence of intermarriages (Smits 2010). But even when we keep this consideration in mind, intermarriage still seems significant in occasioning a positively self-regulating ethnic environment in the case of Kibaale.

### *Intermarriage as a means to decrease the risk of inter-ethnic violence*

To gain deeper insight into the lived experiences of the potential pluralism value of intermarriage, I questioned how these expectations worked out for people who had actually intermarried themselves. The findings in this study show that their opinions varied; some being positive while others remained ambivalent about its value for co-existence.

One of the Bakiga interviewees was a polygamist and an opinion leader of high repute among the *Bafuruki*. It was interesting to learn that all his three wives are Banyoro. When I asked him if being married to Banyoro had helped him in any way in his relations with Banyoro, he smiled and retorted: “Because I have three Banyoro wives, if anyone wants to do something wrong, I will definitely know. And all the children will no longer be called Bafuruki, they will be Banyoro”<sup>160</sup>. Another elderly non-Munyoro male respondent recalled how the fact that his children intermarried influenced him to be ‘lenient’ to the Banyoro in the ethnic conflicts in the early 2000s:

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<sup>158</sup>Among the Banyoro of Kibaale, this is a derogatory remark meaning that one is behaving in an irrational way.

<sup>159</sup>FGD with women held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>160</sup>Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

Family wise, my children are getting married to the Banyoro. I was lenient with the Banyoro in the conflicts before because their children, grandchildren all eat at my place. I always tell my family to be calm because we married and are marrying the Banyoro and they too are marrying from us. So, the Banyoro and us the Bakiga, are inseparable. My grandchildren are with them and their grandchildren are with me<sup>161</sup>.

We need to keep in mind that intermarriage appears to be a binding force during times of peace but not necessarily reliable in conflict (Mamdani 2001). I was therefore keen to establish how the factor of intermarriage featured in conflictual times. The above testimony indicates that ties of intermarriage positively informed what some people could do or not do in relating to ethnic 'others'. They were now not simply Banyoro, but kin. A civil society activist who is involved in peace initiatives in the area shared his firsthand account of a related interesting dynamic that transpired during the conflict of 2002:

So these people [the Bakiga] went to hide in Banyoro homes where they had their in-laws like Panchwa. They hide you [They hid them]. Like this side Kicucula, - they were Banyoro - they hide you! So that also worked very well. This shows that if they didn't have the in-laws there, they would be captured and killed, likewise for the Banyoro! So the intermarriages have helped people!<sup>162</sup>

That mixed families would be looked at as safe, is an indicator that intermarriage to some extent succeeds to soften and re-define ethnic boundaries and, as such, arguably creates space to negotiate difference even in times of conflict. As indicated earlier, "if there are many marital ties between the members of different groups, there must be other social contacts – like friendships – between them. Furthermore, the children of different groups must have the opportunity to meet each other – at school, in the neighbourhood, or during leisure activities" (Smits 2010, p.421). However, despite the advantages, mixed feelings still remain whether intermarriage yields sustainable co-existence, as will be discussed in the section below.

In a number of instances, as respondents expressed their belief in the pluralism potential of intermarriage, questions kept lingering in my mind as to why these people held such strong hopes despite the fact that in some cases intermarriage has terribly failed to bridge ethnic divides. In fact, one of the vivid examples I had in mind, was raised by a retired Munyoro Anglican Reverend during an interview. In arguing that intermarriage came with its own doubts, he wondered:

Even in Rwanda, assimilation was tried, intermarriages done, but conflicts started in homes! Children could side with either the mother or father and then they started killing each other. Killings started in families and were not done by outsiders<sup>163</sup>.

The case of Rwanda has raised questions about the effectiveness of intermarriage in bonding people of different ethnic groups, more specifically, in foreclosing conflict. Hintjens indicates that "in the Rwanda genocide, intermarriage between Hutu and Tutsi was redefined as a

<sup>161</sup>Life history interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>162</sup>Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>163</sup>Life history interview held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

crime for either sex, and could result in death. In crossing over ‘race’ [ethnic] boundaries, Hutu women and men became more vulnerable to attack” (Hintjens 2001, p.44). If we are to argue that this was particular to the case of Rwanda and that it is not applicable in Kibaale, then it is imperative to explore the differences between the two cases which would result in a different outcome. Through my research into the relations in mixed families during the conflict of 2002, I learnt that some families stayed together when they faced challenges while others broke up. A civil society activist<sup>164</sup> observed:

It [the effectiveness of intermarriage] is two ways. There are demonstrated families. There are Banyoro who have married Bakiga and there are Bakiga who have married Banyoro. But during the other serious conflict those women who married the Banyoro were chased away. There was a human rights office here ... I did my research here on peace and I could come here where I would be told: ‘this is a Munyoro who married a Mukiga and the husband chased them away’! And remember they have children, the mother is a Mukiga! It was very challenging!

Such accounts signal that it is imperative to conclude that although intermarriage may be helpful in a number of ways to improve inter-ethnic relations, its effectiveness is not automatic. Although this study gave no exclusive answers to conditions under which it may work or not, it did become apparent that intermarriage’s effectiveness is partly contingent upon the level of tension and conflict in the region. Whereas non-violent tension may be neutralised by the ties created by intermarriage, more violent conflict may have the capacity to re-constitute the boundaries hitherto thinned by intermarriage (Hintjens 2001; Mamdani 2001). Smits (2010) indicates that it is crucial to consider the number of intermarriages - for a reduction of the probability of violent conflicts among ethnic groups to be an outcome, the number of mixed marriages should be large. However, he admits that it is difficult to say how large (what percentage) the number should be to be ‘safe’.

Intermarriage, when looked upon as a pluralism initiative raises two additional important concerns. One concern has to do with the implications of its gender dynamics and, on the basis of these dynamics, the second concern is with regard to its embedded assimilative tendencies.

### ***Intermarriage as a form of assimilation versus pluralism***

Judging from the accounts of people from different ethnic groups in Kibaale, with a few variations, virtually all ethnic groups are patrilineal and patriarchal. These groups are widely characterised by a form of male domination, which is based on the powerful role of the father as head of the household who has control over the woman/women and the management of gender relations (Tamale 1999; Reshma *et al.* 2008). In such settings, the values and traditions of the husbands and fathers tend to be dominant. Even in a mixed marriage, the ethnicity of the offspring is automatically that of the father. An elder male Munyoro respondent accordingly explained that “in our culture, if a Munyoro man marries a Mukiga, the children are Banyoro. If a Mukiga marries a Munyoro lady, the children are Bakiga... And

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<sup>164</sup>Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

this is the culture in Africa"<sup>165</sup>. This means that wives are often assimilated into the husband's culture and, therefore, that such intermarriage is not characterised by appreciation and accommodation of difference as democratic pluralism would demand (Connolly 2005). However, I observed that the patriarchal arrangement in a number of ethnic groups allows for some degree of cultural fusion. It is rightly noted by Tamale in *When Hens Begin to Crow* that "patriarchy in Uganda is not entirely constraining ... it has some element that women can exploit to improve their standing" (Tamale 1999, p195). In some mixed families in Kibaale, for example, children spoke their mothers' languages because they interacted with them more than with their fathers. As such, even if the children's names were from the father's ethnic group and they largely took on the father's culture, the mother's cultural background also had some influence on the children. What needs to be emphasised here is that this cultural interface allows for some degree of mutual cultural appreciation and knowledge of the 'other'.

However, in cases where intermarriage is directed towards assimilating the 'other' and completely dissolving their identity, it can be a mark of intolerance (Sen 2006; Parekh 2008). This practice was highlighted in an FGD with women where one Munyoro participant explained that "... whoever comes [we marry], we must carry out the name-giving ritual"<sup>166</sup>. For not being voluntary on the side of the one who has to be assimilated, such a practice could be a powerful indicator that the 'other's' ethnic identity is not given space. In view of such assimilation practices, pluralism scholars such as Prato (2009) have argued that the distinctiveness of groups ought to be preserved. In the same line of thought, Parekh argues that, in dealing with others in a pluri-cultural setting, we:

... neither assimilate them to our conception of human nature and deny their particularity, nor place them in a closed world of their own and deny the universality they share with us. By acknowledging their universality and particularity, we acknowledge the obligation to respect both their shared humanity and cultural differences (Parekh 2000, p.124).

Whereas it is important to argue for space for the willed distinctiveness of groups which is often suffocated by the dynamics of assimilation, it should not be assumed that ethnic identity is static and in need to be kept in some pristine form (Sen 2006; Owolabi 2003; Parekh 2008; Omotola 2009). As held by social constructivist theory, ethnic identity as a social reality is dynamic (Horton 2003). It is constantly shaped in social engagement and may take on new forms through continued engagement. Apart from assuming that cultures are not open to change, essentialising ethnic identity forecloses the individual's freedom to choose not to belong to the culture they are born into. For that matter, as Sen (2006) argues, it is a hindrance to cultural freedom and may not be meaningfully pluralist. Intermarriage may not promote pluralism co-existence if it operates through absorbing the other. To be an instrument for pluralism, intermarriage should foster active engagement and appreciation of the other. This

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<sup>165</sup>Life history interview held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011. However, although not the focus of this study, the view that all African societies are patrilineal is questionable. There are communities such as the Chewa of Zambia who are matrilineal. We may only say that the majority of communities in Africa are patrilineal.

<sup>166</sup>FGD with women held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

can be seen in Kibaale, when the practice leaves freedom for the parties to choose the cultural tenets which they want to keep, to abandon, and to adopt.

It should be generally noted that "...intermarriage is only one among many factors that may play a role in any ethnic conflict" (Smits 2010, p.429). Therefore, we may not assess its merits in isolation since its effectiveness in fostering co-existence is contingent upon other factors which are at play in the situation. In Kibaale, intermarriage needs to be appreciated in light of other initiatives for co-existence at various levels that may serve to either reinforce or weaken its contribution. The next pluralist 'initiative' which will be discussed is that of association and friendship with ethnic 'others' as a way of bonding and to reduce social distance.

### **5.2.1.2 Association and Friendship with the 'Others'**

Next to the informal associations by intermarriage, the people of Kibaale are also informally associating with each other in building friendships. This is akin to what Varshney (2001) calls *everyday engagement*. Such interactions are seen to cut across gender and age. In one of the primary schools (URDT Girls School), I carried out an exercise of conversationally asking fifteen (15) pupils for the names of their best friends. Nine of them gave names of friends that were not from their own ethnic group. Such friendships have a potential to create lifelong attachments and, like intermarriage, demystify ethnic stereotypes. In such a setting, "... conflict intentions can also be reduced when people experience cognitive dissonance between current positive interaction and previous negative attitudes and stereotypes; their stereotypes become more positive" (Miller and Brewer cited in Korostelina 2007, p.201). Multiethnic societies that lack connections across ethnic boundaries become more vulnerable to ethnic violence (Varshney 2001, p.380). Varshney observes that such forms of association would also be effective in nipping dangerous rumours in the bud, making it harder for politicians to manipulate people, and leading to higher forms of organisation which can be very helpful in promoting peace. Such ties help groups to go beyond 'mere tolerance' and promote knowing the other as encouraged by Eck<sup>167</sup>.

On market days, I closely observed how people interacted. I took a keen interest in the Ruteete market since it is located in a Resettlement Scheme which is mainly inhabited by Bakiga, but also used by many Banyoro. By just observing, I was not able to tell who was a Munyoro and who was a Mukiga or of any other ethnicity, but I did observe that a number of people spoke different languages to different people. This was particularly common in greeting. One would meet one person and greet them in Runyoro and then meet another and greet them in Rukiga followed by a chat. This suggested that efforts were made to learn about the other, to learn their language (or a bit of it) and that there was some sort of affinity across ethnic lines.

In bars and after church services, I observed similar kinds of interactions. I visited three bars and observed in all three that there was interaction across ethnic lines. People would often

<sup>167</sup>[http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010.

switch from one language to the other. In a conversation with a Mutooro middle-age man in the bar, I asked him about the current state of ethnic relations and he illustratively explained:

Today people relate well, a Mukiga will find a Munyoro and ask them: ‘hey, buy me some kasande [banana juice, liked by the Banyoro]’, another time a Munyoro will tell a Mukiga: ‘please buy me kashera [a traditional drink prepared and loved by the Bakiga]’. When we also go to their markets, we speak Rukiga<sup>168</sup>.

This example illustrates that there is some level of appreciation of cultural diversity, rather than attempts to homogenize cultural practices. A Mukonjo who has stayed in Kibaale for over thirty years narrated that:

The Bakiga’s and Bakonjo’s practice of their culture does not anger the Banyoro so long as they (Banyoro) are not interrupted. We the Bakonjo and our kingdom (the *Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu*) have just gained peace recently. In 2009, the Omusinga [King of the Bakonjo] was marrying. A delegation with our L.C V Chairman [a Munyoro] attended the celebrations. We also went with our friends who are Banyoro and Bakiga. Also during the installation of the Omusinga, our Banyoro friends accompanied us<sup>169</sup>.

Such cooperation is said to have contributed positively to foster peace and co-existence in the area and many respondents felt that if it was deepened, it would help a lot in preventing future inter-ethnic conflict. A Munyoro Member of Parliament who had earlier admitted that politicians like him were the biggest contributors to ethnic conflict, also emphasised the significance of interethnic social bonds by ironing out weaknesses that are often exploited by politicians. He observed:

I was at a function over the weekend. There, women and men have five classes. In these five classes you would find that one instructor is a Munyoro, the other instructor is a Mufuruki. But they are living harmoniously. When they came to dance I saw Bakiga dancing *runyege*<sup>170</sup> and I said: ‘eh, great!’ I was actually impressed! I have visited other places where you find Banyoro and they are dancing, jumping the Kifumbira dance. *Once there is that integration, once we could use our other civic, legal and whatever approaches to ensure how we make these bonds stronger, next time nobody is going to look for the weaknesses* [emphasis is mine]<sup>171</sup>.

The above respondent’s idea that diverse civic and legal means can strengthen the bonds that are already taking shape also illustrates the complementarities between individual, community, and Government initiatives – and how, if well synchronized, they can make pluralism more viable.

<sup>168</sup>Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>169</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>170</sup>*Runyege* is a traditional dance for Bakiga.

<sup>171</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

In line with the above findings, Putnam (1993) argues that if a society has a healthy amount of social capital<sup>172</sup>, then cooperation increases because the creation of social networks, trust, and norms reduce conflict (Putnam 1993, p.176). He argues that if a society relies only on the state to solve political, economic, social, and security problems, then it will be too costly because it will be difficult for the state to resolve all types of conflicts efficiently. Putnam believes that through trust, norms, and networks, social capital "lubricates" cooperation because these factors allow common citizens to resolve a minutia of problems that governments cannot and should not be expected to solve. This argument provides more reason to approach the pluralism initiatives at diverse levels as envisaged in this chapter. This study shows that individual/community, civil society, as well as Government pluralism initiatives often complement/reinforce each other.

However, what about some Banyoro who insist that co-existence will only happen if the Bakiga learn their [Banyoro] language? For instance, one Munyoro elder insisted that:

What is standing in the future of our harmonious co-existence is the refusal by Bakiga to speak Runyoro. They know it but do not allow. Because they are in power they can't speak it. They think if they speak it we shall be equals yet they want to show us that they are 'super'<sup>173</sup>.

It is crucial to observe here that, although on the surface sentiments like those above may signify an assimilative drive grounded on intolerance, there may be another message behind them. I noticed that some Banyoro feel that the Bakiga do not respect them as their hosts. This disrespect and 'arrogance' is perceived to emanate from their rise in status due to a better financial position and increased political power. It is characterised as disrespect because it is said that some Bakiga know Runyoro, but simply refuse to speak it: even when talking to Banyoro – they insist on using Rukiga. Considering that the politics of autochthony (Geschiere 2009) and the narrative of historical subservience to Buganda and its possible re-emergence are still socially functional discourses, it would be reasonable to expect that the Banyoro are very keen on being respected. To contextualise the above quotation, we need to question why it is specifically the Bakiga who are mentioned in such accounts.

As discussed in Chapter Four, it should be remembered that it is mainly the Bakiga who are involved in politics among the different non-Banyoro ethnic groups. This is often interpreted as disrespect towards the indigenous Banyoro. Geschiere (2009; 2010) explains that in discourses which are informed by considerations of autochthony, it is held by the autochthons (the indigenes) that they have greater citizenship claims than the 'foreigners' (migrants) and deserve more respect from 'outsiders' who happen to stay with them. This claim is perceived to be self-evident to those who employ it, hence its presentation in non-negotiable terms (Dunn 2009). In this vein, the demand that the Bakiga, who are considered the main threat, speak Runyoro is a demand for respect which flows from observations of Bakiga behaviour that is interpreted as disrespectful assertion of equal cultural and citizenship claims. This

<sup>172</sup> According to Putnam, Social Capital "... refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (1993, p.167).

<sup>173</sup> Life history interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

should also be viewed in consideration that "... questions of language are basically questions of power" (Chomsky 1979, p.191). Another reason for the above interpretation is that such demands were not reported to have been made by Banyoro before the non-Banyoro started to claim their own political space.

It should be noted, however, that it does not have to be a mark of intolerance when people are expected to learn each other's languages when they live together. Learning the 'other's' language could be a sign of appreciation and respect. In addition, when different social groups share an environment, linguistic adaptation of some form is a necessary prerequisite for communication (Stevens 1985, p.74). But findings from Kibaale indicate that however important it would be to learn another or each other's language/s, forceful assimilative measures may not be helpful in its achievement. Many non-Banyoro respondents revealed that they were learning Runyoro before the conflict started and could sometimes speak it, but that when some Banyoro (especially through the influence of the MBC) started to coercively demand that they speak it, they stopped learning and speaking it. Parekh (2008) is right in asserting that when collective identities become conflictual due to exaggerated differences, boundaries are hardened with closure effects that frown on cohesive moves. It would thus seem ideal that learning each other's language should happen spontaneously and voluntarily, which is most likely to occur in a mutually respectful environment and where language is not politicised by political opportunists as was the case in Kibaale. One possible cite for such learning is in schools.

It is debatable whether one has the freedom not to learn the majority language or the language of their territorial hosts. From a libertarian point of view, it would be acceptable. One should have the liberty to choose the culture to associate with. However, such an ideal needs to be put into perspective. Pluralism requires compromises by all ethnic groups in trying to accommodate the values and interests of others (Bellamy 2001, p. 93). Staying with people for a long time without expressing an interest in learning and speaking their language, may give them an impression that one does not appreciate them.

I observed in Kibaale that there was some level of cordiality and joy on both sides when people of different ethnic groups met at the market, in bars, and FGDs and spoke or greeted in each other's language. Even where just a few words were used by someone in the 'other's' language it was evident that each person in the conversation seemed happy. Based on this observation, I would argue that even though it would be defensible for people to retain their personal freedom to learn the 'other's' language or not, it is in favour of co-existence that they do. Steven's (1985) projected communicational value makes learning each other's language even more important since communication gaps may also be instrumental in breeding conflicts.



Another interesting observation of learning from each other was at Kyaterekera, a place in Kibaale where some Baganda still live<sup>174</sup>. Here I observed a group of over twenty children playing soccer while speaking Luganda. When I asked a Muganda interviewee from a nearby home whether all these children were Baganda, he laughed and said: “obviously not, we learn and use each other’s language<sup>175</sup>”. Staying together and associating with each other has facilitated learning from each other and led to behavioural changes that facilitate co-existence. A Munyankore respondent explained that this behavioral change happens because:

... if I came to your house and you gave refuge to me and my group, may be because we had a problem. But then at some point there develops a conflict and you have demonstrated that you no longer need us probably because of our behaviour or any other thing. Can’t we realise that may be what we have been doing was bad, let us stop and change our behaviour? Probably can’t we say that let us begin greeting people if we have not been doing it<sup>176</sup>?

The above reflection highlights that there are deliberate attempts at soul-searching, to interrogate sources of conflict and how to engage with those sources to enhance co-existence. This is seen to be happening on both sides – of the Banyoro and the non-Banyoro.

Many non-Banyoro respondents who have lived in the area since the 1970s, said that Banyoro were initially known to be lazy<sup>177</sup> but over time they learnt from the Bakiga to work hard. A Mukiga elder from Ruteete observed: “When the Bakiga came, they were determined to dig. And when the Banyoro realised that there is wealth in digging, they also started digging and now there are Banyoro who dig more than the Bakiga. They (Banyoro) have changed a lot”<sup>178</sup>. It was interesting to find out that an MBC member who has hitherto been regarded as one of the radical Banyoro shared this view. By emphasising that a change of perceptions takes time, he said: “It (attitudinal change) takes its time by nature. You cannot give it a time table. For example, in 2002 we rejected a Mukiga Chairman. But in 2012, only 10 years later, I am saying that it was a blessing for the Bakiga to come<sup>179</sup>”. He went on to explain that there has been a lot of change in attitudes over time in Kibaale and that these developments are mainly based on learning more about others and mutual appreciation.

The changes in attitudes among the people of Kibaale towards each other cannot be reduced to any single explanatory factor. What is happening in Kibaale at different levels is multi-layered (individual, communal, Local Government, and National) and intertwined whereby in one way or the other, the various factors at play impact on people’s perceptions and understanding of their social reality. Therefore, following the analytic insight of intersectionality (Burkner 2012 and Mattsson 2014), it is not possible to draw out a clear causal path; rather we have to trace different factors that could be interactively indicative

<sup>174</sup>This place is near Ndaiga, which is where the Kabaka of Buganda (Edward Muteesa) had set up a camp for administering the area. I explained this in more detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>175</sup>Interview held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>176</sup>Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>177</sup>Perhaps it is better to say that they had a different work ethic that was constructed over time by their circumstances including a history of frustration and desperation.

<sup>178</sup>Life history interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>179</sup>Interview held on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.

for the trends and changes in the area. Therefore the next community initiatives for co-existence that will be discussed are those of a political nature.

### **5.2.1.3 Political Community Initiatives for Pluralism**

As discussed in Chapter Four, it should be recalled that politics – especially political manipulation – contributed a lot to polarising the people of Kibaale along ethnic lines and that many people have realised the divisive role that politics played in the violence of 2002 and 2006. A number of politicians themselves acknowledged that they were the biggest part of the problem. They acknowledged that access to political power and the privileges it comes with, was what all politicians fought for. They needed each other to achieve these objectives and, therefore, they subsequently negotiated means at community level to share this power.

The political innovations in Kibaale were found to be akin to Lijphart's idea of consociational democracy that emphasises cooperation and coalition in 'divided societies'. Admitting that consociational arrangements of sharing power are not necessarily successful, Lijphart lays down four key requirements for their effectiveness:

- i) That the elites have the ability to accommodate the divergent interests and demands of the subcultures.
- ii) This requires that they have the ability to transcend cleavages and to join in a common effort with the elites of rival subcultures.
- iii) This in turn depends on their commitment to the maintenance of the system and to the improvement of its cohesion and stability.
- iv) Finally, all the above requirements are based on the assumption that the elites understand the perils of political fragmentation (*Ibid.* p.216).

The responses from the politicians/ elites interviewed in this study indicate that politicians 'understand the perils of political fragmentation' (Lijphart's fourth requirement) but that this is not the key determinant of their political choices. It appears that what matters first is to take power, regardless of the consequences of their means. As such, explanations of the choice of local politicians to cooperate across ethnic lines need to take into account other factors like knowledge and attitudinal changes among the electorate. As Oberschall reminds us, "... the success and failure of power sharing democratic governance depends on many variables" (2007, p.200).

#### ***Kibaale politics and the first and second prerequisites of Lijphart***

In an approach reflective of Lijphart's first and second prerequisites for 'stable democracy', one of the political means that local politicians devised was *to make alliances across ethnic lines* with the hope (promise) that when 'their' candidate was elected, they would have to share power through political appointments at district level. As such, you would find in the elections of 2011 that a Munyoro had a Mukiga/Mufumbira as their chief campaigner and vice-versa. The Vice Chairman LC V of Kibaale District attested to this ethnic coalition in the following words:

You know politically why the Bafuruki were also fighting for political power. It was to also have a share on the political cake. I was the chief campaigner of the current Chairman [LC V], so when we won, he made me his Vice. When I was rewarded, the Bafuruki are also happy. It is only those who hated the current chairmen as a person that are unhappy (those who have grudges with him). It has helped bridge the gap generally<sup>180</sup>.

This appointment did not come up as an after-thought reward. It was revealed in an interview with a Mukiga Member of Parliament that it had earlier been agreed upon during the political campaigns. He said:

At LC V we agreed that for ‘Chairman<sup>181</sup>, we are going to support you, but the Vice Chairman must be a Mufuruki’. And he did well by having the Vice Chairman as a Mufuruki, and at least the Secretary in his cabinet. At least that has pushed us far<sup>182</sup>.

When I asked a Munyoro Member of Parliament how the conflict in the district could be solved, he emphasised that it was by working out ways to share political power amongst the contending ethnic groups in the area. He imagined that it would be vital for co-existence for Banyoro and non-Banyoro to conventionally agree on ‘who takes what position’ in elections.

We could sit down and say: ‘now in this constituency, for purposes of harmony, Bafuruki please don’t [touch this], Banyoro here don’t touch for purposes of harmony. It might not be a law but an understanding, like it is in Tanzania. You have a president from the mainland, the vice president must come from Zanzibar. Isn’t that simple? Nigeria is the same thing. Once the president is a Moslem, the vice president must be Christian. Isn’t that the case in Nigeria? It is not written but they have understood each other that way and they move on<sup>183</sup>.

Many respondents emphasised that such strategic political sharing and collaboration accounts for a big percentage of the relative peace which is currently experienced in the area. Some used this observation to argue in line with rational choice theory. They argued that the issue is not land as is often claimed (Nsamba-Gayiiya 2003), but rather a struggle for political power and its associated privileges. For instance, a Munyoro MP who had earlier lost his constituency but managed to win again in 2011 observed:

... because they [politicians] wanted to see how to coin it [the reason for fighting ‘others’], they brought in land. But the whole thing was politics. Now I am MP, has the land problem been solved? Why are people living so happily? People are Chairman LC 5, LC3 ... You go around. People are Councillors! Now everybody is inside (as they say these days). Everybody is in the *kintu* [thing]. The Banyoro are there, the Bafuruki are there<sup>184</sup>.

<sup>180</sup>Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>181</sup>Mr George Namyaka is here referred to as Chairman because he was the incumbent during the elections of 2011.

<sup>182</sup>Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

<sup>183</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>184</sup>Member of Parliament Kasirivu Atooki’s key note address at the Peace Day dialogue at Bwansa Sub-County headquarters on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

As theorised by Lijphart (*Ibid.*), the acceptance by both Banyoro and non-Banyoro to work together politically and to allow space for political participation for people of different ethnic groups is a big milestone for pluralism in Kibaale District. This should be appreciated in contrast to the atmosphere of the 1990s and early 2000s, when many Banyoro seemed to have the view that for non-Banyoro to take political positions in the area was a mark of ungratefulness and disrespect, whereas the non-Banyoro were also adamant on taking all political positions they wanted by use of their numbers. Their collaboration also signifies a positive shift from the dangerous politics of ethnic numbers which was bound to exacerbate conflict (Oberschall 2007) because of the way it disadvantaged the indigenous Banyoro who were being overtaken numerically, as explained in Chapter Four.

However, it is crucial here to interrogate the sustainability of the division of power and/or its wider implications for pluralism. It has been unofficially agreed that the LC V position be occupied by a Munyoro. George Namyaka, who is Munyoro, has been in this position for eleven (11) years (2003-2014). Remember that he was selected as a compromise candidate after the Banyoro rejected a Mukiga candidate who had been duly elected for the position as explained in Chapter Four. Namyaka has since been elected and re-elected for the position (2006, 2011). Many respondents observed however that he is ageing and will certainly not be on the political scene much longer. Is Kibaale ready for a different leader? Shall the top leader continue to be a Munyoro? Will the non-Banyoro continue 'not to touch' that position? If a non-Munyoro becomes a candidate, then what will be its implications for co-existence? All these are crucial questions, which are not easy to answer and the interviewees expressed some reasons for anxiety on this topic. When I asked two Bafuruki opinion leaders (a Mukiga and a Mufumbira) if they will forever not contest the LC V position, I noticed reluctance and restriction in their responses. One said:

You know, from the meetings we have held with his Excellency [the President of Uganda] and from other relevant offices, unless otherwise we had agreed that we leave the chair of LC 5 (it is not written anywhere), we leave it for the Banyoro.

Then I probed: 'Until when? Permanently?'

No, not permanently. Uum, I don't want to divulge this information. But we had agreed<sup>185</sup>.

The other opinion leader guardedly said that they (Bafuruki) have a plan which they think will materialise once, as requested, Kibaale will be split to create three districts. This issue will be further elaborated on in a discussion on the subject of Government's ethnic ring-fencing and its implications for living together with ethnic differences. The next sub-section discusses civil society initiatives for co-existence in Kibaale District. It should once again be noted that whereas analytically dichotomised, as explained in each sub-section, the initiatives at the different levels overlap in various ways and influence each other.

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<sup>185</sup>Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

### 5.2.2 Civil Society Initiatives for Co-existence

Acknowledging that ‘civil society’ is an intensely contested concept (Chandhoke 2007), it is here used to mean:

... the set of institutions, organizations, and behaviours situated between the state, the business world, and the family. Specifically, this would include voluntary and non-profit organizations of many different kinds, philanthropic institutions, social and political movements, forms of social participation and engagement, the public sphere and the values and cultural patterns associated with them (Anheier, cited in Kumar 2008, p.18).

This study limits its scope of civil society to the role of religious groups (although in Uganda these groups insist that they do not belong to civil society), cultural institutions, and non-government organisations, as they appear in the literature on Kibaale and with regard to their assumed role in fostering co-existence in the area.

It is largely Varshney’s (2001; 2002) work on the relationship between ethnic conflict and civic life that made me consider investigating the role of civil society in fostering pluralism in Kibaale. He argues that “... if communities are organised only along intra-ethnic lines and the interconnections with other communities are very weak or even non-existent, then ethnic violence is quite likely” (Varshney 2001, p.363). As explained under the theoretical perspectives of this study, there has to be inter-ethnic civic engagement both in *associational forms* and *everyday forms*. Varshney’s typology renders that the community initiatives as discussed in the foregoing section, would fall under *everyday forms*, while this section addresses *associational forms* of civic engagement. He argues that, although associational forms are more important in fostering cooperation, it is the everyday forms of engagement that lead to associational forms. I found this interesting on account of his explanation of how such inter-ethnic civic engagement may nip conflict (especially violent conflict) in the bud and the implications of its absence. It could explain “... why “long-run” animosities do not embitter relations between the same ethnic groups everywhere ...” and “...why, even though political elites may try to use ethnicity for political purposes and wish to cleave societies along ethnic lines, they are unable to do so everywhere” (Varshney 2002, p.39). However, going beyond his scope, this study went further to also study the interface between civil society initiatives and Government interventions for peace.

In interviews, FGDs, and conversations with people, I was repeatedly told that the reason why many people seemed to have changed their views about ethnic ‘others’ is because there has been a lot of sensitisation and awareness raising in the area by different players – especially from civil society organisations. More particularly, they mentioned Kibaale Kagadi Community Radio (KKCR) talk-shows and its sensitisation messages, Kibaale District Civil Society Organisation Network’s (KISCON) activities, the work of religious leaders, and the role of the Bunyoro Kingdom as a cultural institution. In an interview, an Anglican priest who also works with a Christian umbrella organisation (Uganda Joint Christian Council) explained the extent of work done by civil society thus:

There is a lot which has been done right from 2005. So many dialogue meetings have taken place. So many people have really sacrificed their time to share with others; individuals, groups, families on this. We have KICSON! KICSON has played a very big role on this peace initiative. URDT itself has also played a very big role, meeting different stake holders. We as Uganda Joint Christian Council have also done a lot<sup>186</sup>.

### 5.2.2.1 Peace Dialogues

KSCON initiated and coordinated ‘peace dialogues’ in the area where they would address and clear some of the myths and stereotypes that bring about ethnic tension in the area. This initiative is said to have widened space for friendship, cooperation, and, perhaps, intermarriage. On the basis of this information, I interviewed the Chairperson of KSCON about their specific role and the modalities of the peace dialogues. He explained:

... we had dialogue meetings targeting the opinion leaders [of both Banyoro and non-Banyoro]. But then the organizers could go to the radio and say we have a dialogue meeting of leaders representing you people ... so you could find instead of the 50- 45 people we were targeting 100 have turned up. Now in the meeting we would discuss about the Kibaale District we want<sup>187</sup>.

In these meetings, they would brainstorm and discuss the state of ethnic relations in their area and how to go about improving it. But for this kind of dialogue to happen, they first had to create an environment of trust and an attachment with their audience. The Chairperson explained that one effective way of doing this was by carefully constituting the facilitating team:

I remember we went in a meeting where someone asked me: ‘But you are here teaching us to have peace yet for us we are against the Bafuruki. The Bafuruki have taken away our land! They have taken away our life! They also want to rule us! You are a Mufuruki and you are also coming here! Why don’t you allow a Munyoro to be part of or head that organization?’ Someone mentioned it!

I said: ‘Okay, that question is challenging but I have my friend here who is a Munyoro, let him answer’. You know I could move with my Coordinator, a Munyoro, a strong Munyoro also related to the Chairman of MBC. Then you can also see that linkage now. When he introduces himself, the Banyoro will be happy. He stood up and said: ‘Banyoro *banange* [fellow Banyoro], you know for us at the civil society [KCSO] all is to make sure the people are working together and those are the things we have weighed in. The chairman is a Mufuruki, me I am the Coordinator and I am a Munyoro. You see we also want you to be like us’. That kind of thing changes their thinking.

<sup>186</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>187</sup>Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

I attended one of such dialogues at Bwanswa<sup>188</sup>. The participants came from different ethnic groups. Among the presenters were Banyoro, Batooro, Acholi, and Bakiga. The dialogue started with the singing of both the National Anthem and anthem of Bunyoro Kingdom. When I asked a Mukiga participant why only the Bunyoro anthem was sung while the participants came from various ethnic groups, he told me that it was a sign of respect for their hosts. “Remember we are in Bunyoro”, he said. The environment of the debate was calm and during the breaks I observed people of different ethnic groups chatting and laughing.

The above observation by itself may not say much about ethnic relations in the area but, corroborated with other similar observations in bars, churches, and markets, it is an indication of a more plural society. At the Bwanswa peace dialogue, when the Chairman of MBC stood up to make a comment and started by sloganeering ‘*Kabaleega leega*’ (Kabaleega aim to spear), the accompanying response (*leega*) from the audience was lukewarm. Even during the break, he did not appear to have as much public attention as MBC leaders were said to have enjoyed during the tension of 2002. Curious about this observation, I asked a youth Munyoro participant for an explanation. With a frown, while looking at the MBC Chairman who was now seated on a log in the Bwanswa Sub-County Headquarters compound, he said:

... they only call us when there is a conflict. After the conflict has ended, it ends there... We hear rumours that they get money to silence them... I hear it is from Government and from different organizations. But they do not come to disclose such information to us. So you hear them quiet until when politics comes. They are very selfish, we now know their style<sup>189</sup>.

When I probed the young man about the source of their ‘disillusionment’ with the MBC, he said there has been a lot of awareness raising in the area by various stakeholders in the area through radio programmes and meetings. Through these initiatives they have come to learn about the strategies and ambitions of ethnic manipulators. Confessing that he took part in the violence of 2003, he regretted that he just acted on the instructions of the MBC without clearly knowing what he was doing, but that now he could not be ‘used’ again. Considering that this kind of political manipulation mainly thrives on the gullibility of the target group (Soeters 2005; Sen (2006); Shoup 2008; Oberschall 2007), providing knowledge about the dynamics of political manipulation in identity politics as illustrated by the youth above comes across as significant in attempts to disarm manipulators.

The Chairperson of KICSON indicated that the civil society umbrella organisation was formed in 2003, during a time when ethnic tension was still at its peak in Kibaale. They have been involved in training sessions specifically targeted at opinion leaders who were asked to form peace committees that were to operate at parish level and thus reach out to more people in their respective areas. One Munyoro member of such a committee explained how they operated and how they helped to clear myths of chasing Bafuruki and the word ‘Bafuruki’ itself:

<sup>188</sup>It was held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>189</sup> Interview held on 19th September 2015.

We have meetings of lower local governments like LCs [Local Councils<sup>190</sup>]. We have meetings whereby we invite the villages, meetings where we invite church leaders (the catechists and the rest), then we have radio programmes here whereby a group of people will come and tell the people here that: ‘if you are saying you are a Mufuruki. In 1996 we had elections, you were saying you are Bafuruki and when the Bafuruki are not elected into power the Banyoro will send you away. Were you sent away? No. In 2001 we have the same story, were you sent away? No. In 2006 we had elections, were you sent away? No. In 2011 we had elections, were you sent away? No. Now, is the word ‘Bafuruki’ still politically viable to you other than being used to disturb you in the village there? After elections, the local person’s cows are cut, houses are burnt, food stuff are destroyed... So that word Bafuruki is now being wiped out, it is no longer news<sup>191</sup>.

As the above testimony indicates, among other things, radio (KKCR<sup>192</sup>) has played a vital infrastructural role in supporting civil society peace initiatives. This is in contrast with the conflictual role that it was said to have played in the violent conflict of 2002. Most of the groups and individuals involved in initiatives for co-existence said they use the radio to reach out to people. Similarly, many people reported to have heard peace-related messages and discussions on the radio. Given that the radio enjoys the widest coverage in the district, it enjoys a privileged position in shaping people’s opinions. “The fact that so many leaders, activists, and citizens monitor such public debates [on radio] increases their significance” (Wolfsfeld 2004, p.12). Radio is thus a crucial player in pluralism in Kibaale. Indeed, as argued by Wolfsfeld 2004, Bau 2010, Soeters 2005, and Kalyango 2012, the effectiveness of the media in fostering co-existence is a matter of how it is used. It can be both divisive and cohesive.

### 5.2.2.2 Influence of Religion

The Executive Director of Buyaga Elderly Development Association (BEDA), which was also mentioned among the civil society organisations that have had an influence in the area, said that the association uses radio for most of its peace-related work. They run a weekly radio program known as *Ezemerwa Abakulu* (loosely translated as ‘where older persons are, the cattle cannot break the kraal’ - where older persons are, things should not go wrong). Here they use their respectable social position as elders to give their views on how people should relate to one another. Such views promote and reinforce community practices of friendship, cooperation and friendship across ethnic lines. I interviewed him at the radio station about the work of his organisation after listening to his programme. He explained:

... we have that program which features every Tuesday at 9pm [on KKCR] run by this organization BEDA whereby we try to sensitise the masses that a peaceful co-existence is prerequisite. We need each other no matter how many tribes you are living with. Nobody made a choice to belong to a certain tribe but we are all God’s creation. So we need to find a way how we can live together harmoniously. So that

<sup>190</sup>Villages are the lowest Local Council (Local Council I) in district as a decentralised unit. Immediately above the village is the parish (Local Council II), then the sub-county (Local Council III), the county (Local Council IV), and at the top of the district is the District Council (Local Council V).

<sup>191</sup>Interview held on 16<sup>th</sup> September with a non-Munyoro who works with URDT’s Land Rights Office.

<sup>192</sup>KKCR Fm which is the main media in Kibaale is owned by URDT, the biggest CBO in Kibaale.



is the only message we are carrying on that is the only message which is going to help us let these people come to live together peacefully and to forget what has always happened in the past<sup>193</sup>.

The Executive Director of BEDA, who is an Anglican priest, is also the District Coordinator of the inter-religious organisation called Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC). They also run a radio programme, called *Peace and Development*. This initiative plays an important role in the attempts by religious groups to shape ethnic relations in the area. The programme has been on air since 2005 and runs every Wednesday from 10:00 am to 10:45am. I interviewed him about the objectives, content and structure of the programme. Religious leaders from different denominations feature on the programme to address various thematic issues of pluralism.

Judging by the incoming phone calls from listeners during two such programmes I listened to, it was evident that these radio programmes are followed by a substantial number of people in the area. People would call and ask questions or share their views on the themes of the discussion. Many people actually called in to express their appreciation for the programme. I was told by the priest that the members of UJCC have resolved to live an exemplary life in order to inspire people to believe in them and follow their example and to take the peace messages to their places of worship.

Ngala (2005) observed that the nature of religion imbues it with facilities and methodologies that, if used well, can have a great impact on the conscience of men and women in society and transform them into peacemakers in their everyday life. He argues that this can be achieved on two conditions:

First, it has to make an individual or a group identify with its [religion's] contents, that is, its traditions and values. The second condition is that the construction of this content should be based on rational doctrines and positive values that mitigate all threats to human survival, while promoting respect for human rights and dignity (2005, p.154).

Like Ngala (*Ibid.*) suggests, we may only be able to assess identification of people with their religion's content from their practice. This study was not able to exclusively study this relationship, but I will explain some few interesting related observations in this realm. At St Mary's Catholic Church, although Runyoro hymns dominated, some of the hymns were in Rukiga and Runyankore. But while singing, it appeared like everyone knew all the hymns regardless of the differences in language. They sang together and greeted each other in different languages after the service. I observed the same practice at St Luke Anglican Church, at the Christian Fellowship Church of the Evangelicals, and at the Church of Unity of *Owobushobozi Ruhanga* which is a locally strong break-away cult from the Catholic Church. All the religious leaders whom I interviewed reported that co-existence is high on their agenda, and this was often confirmed by other people I spoke to.

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<sup>193</sup>Interview held on 17th September 2011.

### 5.2.2.3 *The influence of Bunyoro Kingdom as a Cultural institution*

The Bunyoro Kingdom authorities were also reported to have contributed to the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in Kibaale. MBC respondents informed me that they had the backing of the Kingdom, a claim that was confirmed by two Kingdom officials I talked to. However, one of the Kingdom officials who is a member of the *Rukurato* (Kingdom Parliament) was quick to add that they no longer approve of violence and radical moves, such as chasing the non-Bunyoro away. “All people in Kibaale are the King’s people and he loves them if they do not disturb peace in the area. In fact some time back the King said we should call them *Bunyoro abashaka* (new Bunyoro), not Bafuruki”<sup>194</sup>. As the name suggests, some degree of assimilation is expected - for if they are ‘new Bunyoro’, they will also have to adopt some of the cultural practices of the Bunyoro. However, the Kingdom official clarified that what they expect from non-Bunyoro is respect for them, their culture, and their King – without them having to change into Bunyoro. The name New Bunyoro is only meant to make them part of the community, and remove the foreigner/ Bafuruki tag.

As a gesture of acceptance and for purposes of co-existence, Bunyoro Kingdom has included non-Bunyoro in its Council. By naming Ben Rubirwantale and Mwalimu Musheshe, the Kingdom official explained that Bafuruki have at least two or three seats in the *Rukurato*. To further cement ethnic relations, the King also appointed Mabel Bakeine, a Mukiga Member of Parliament for Bugangaizi East, as one of his advisors. “And these Bafuruki have been bringing gifts and whatever to the kingdom to honor the king”, he added. During Kingdom functions at the palace, non- Bunyoro are also invited to be there and to stage performances. This works both ways, because the Bakonjo who have a King back in Kaseese District, are also often accompanied by Bunyoro friends when they go for their traditional functions. In illustrating the significance of local authorities in peace initiatives, Obserschall informs us that “we [people tend to] believe trusted authorities and experts, and do not expect them to mislead us” (2007, p22). As such, the Kingdom initiatives should be considered significant since the King is widely revered by Bunyoro in the area and therefore his voice is important in shaping people’s perceptions and practices.

### 5.2.2.4 *Initiatives to address Poverty as a source of Conflict*

As explained in Chapter Four, some respondents argued that one of the often ignored causes of conflict in Kibaale is the high level of poverty and low levels of development in general. It was observed by two civil society actors that for pluralism to thrive in the area the poverty issues is one of those that need urgent attention. In a situation of widespread poverty, people tend to look for scapegoats to blame, and their state of despair can very easily be manipulated by opportunistic politicians (Storey 2002). “Bunyoro has remained one of the most underdeveloped areas in Uganda despite its rich natural resources, which lately includes even oil reserves. The road network in the area is among the worst in the country. Its general social infrastructure such as schools and health care facilities are appalling, yet the government is

<sup>194</sup>Interview held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

silent about this” (Matsiko Wa Mucoori, *The Independent*, September 1, 2009). From my own observation around the district, I can confirm that indeed the area is generally underdeveloped. At the time of this study, there was no single tarmac road in the whole district! And, even in their unpaved status, most of the roads are riddled with ditches and potholes. On my way to Kagadi Town for interviews and meetings, our car got stuck in mud thrice and at one point it had to be towed by a lorry! The condition of the roads has raised a common feeling among the Banyoro that their area has been abandoned by all successive governments in Uganda (Mirima 1999). This kind of frustration and bitterness provides a fertile ground for anger which could in turn easily be vented/ displaced on anyone deemed to be part of the problem.

The health centers in the area are understaffed, with poor infrastructure, and insufficient medicines. According to the District’s *Statistical Abstract* of 2009 (p.x), “the Doctor to population ratio was 1:42,000; the midwife to population ratio was 1:12,000; and the nurse to population ratio was 1:11,800”! Whereas life expectancy in Uganda is as low as 58 years<sup>195</sup>, the document indicates life expectancy in Kibaale at 49.1 years! The *Census* of 2002 reveals that when you move away from the towns, most houses are built with mud and tree poles, they have no electricity and many people only survive on subsistence farming and petty trade. The Banyoro are said to be comparatively poorer than the Bakiga and Bafumbira, thus a situation is created of what Shoup (2008) refers to as a counterbalanced society. That is, where one ethnic community demands political priority on the basis of ethnic ‘myths’ of indigenes, while other ethnic groups who are ‘not indigenous’ control the majority of the economic assets. It means that the Banyoro are at times compelled by their difficult situation to sell off their land to migrants, only to complain later that these migrants take all the land in the area (see also Chapter Four).

Guided by the above observation, some community based organisations, especially the URDT, decided to focus on development initiatives as, among other reasons, a way of fostering co-existence. In a conversation with the founder of URDT, he said that he believed that the conflict in Kibaale is mostly a class struggle, although shielded in ethnic tones. As such, the URDT has embarked on initiatives for economic empowerment through setting up a primary school, a university for girls (considering the gender imbalances in the area), a polytechnic training in carpentry, mechanical engineering, brick-laying, building, and model farming. Reflecting on their interventions, the University Secretary thinks that:

... if we have quality education, even with the programs we have with this university, it will help. I think so because we have a lot of field-based practice where we hardly ever bother with the tribal part. We go with the belief that people can transcend those things. In most of the projects we have people from different tribes. They agree on what they want to do and they put together a team which is multi-tribal to manage their projects. So those tribal things will go<sup>196</sup>.

<sup>195</sup> [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_statistics.html) Accessed on July 13, 2014.

<sup>196</sup> Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Although a causal link between poverty/deprivation and ethnic conflict is not easy to exclusively establish, the argument that poverty leads to bitterness and ethnic scape-goating (Storey 2002) - especially where the ethnic other is better off - sounds plausible. It has been argued that “while the causes of violence are complex, it is clear that violence, poverty and inequality are linked. Socio-economic deprivation and intense competition over scarce resources intensify political rivalry and deepen racial and ethnic antagonism” (Baker, cited in Ikejiaku 2012, p.129). Such rational choice correlation is also cited by Dreze and Sen (1995); Sen (2006); Storey 2002; and Atwood (2005). Storey argues that poverty is a form of structural violence, especially if it is a product of discrimination and injustices such as those that are said to have kept Kibaale behind. Such circumstances by extension provoke “... frustration, hopelessness, cynicism, and considerable anger. These, in turn, provoke a desire for scape-goating because the identification and persecution of a scapegoat ... help to combat low self-esteem, and provide some sense of hope and direction” (*Ibid.* P.111). It is therefore assumed that with better education and less economic misery, it will not be easy to manipulate people. I indicated earlier that a youth who participated in some of the violent acts in 2002 confirmed that most of the youths who participated in violence at that time were unemployed and that they were enticed by elites and politicians with the promise of some money when they would cause havoc. Perhaps if they were employed the situation would have been different. The fact that the URDT currently trains many youths in its polytechnic, is thus an important undertaking with considerable potential to foster co-existence.

The above examples show that civil society-based organisations have undertaken much to broaden space for pluralist co-existence in Kibaale. Reinforced by individual - and community initiatives, civil society work aims to reduce inter-ethnic distance, demystify stereotypes, facilitate cohesive dialogues, and foster economic empowerment hence challenging the polarizing instrumentalisation of ethnicity by politicians. It is imperative to note here that the effectiveness of these individual, community, and civil society initiatives is to a large extent determined by the space for pluralism which is facilitated by government structures. In fact the three input levels (individual/community, civil society and government) are symbiotic in the sense that each needs the other (Varshney 2001; Oberschall 2007). The next section therefore presents and discusses the pluralism initiatives that were initiated and facilitated by the Government of Uganda, how these initiatives are perceived by the people of Kibaale, and how sustainable they are. I will also discuss the synergy that is there, or absent, between the three levels and how this impacts on co-existence in the area.

## **5.2.3 Uganda Government Initiatives for Pluralist Co-existence and People’s Perceptions of these initiatives**

### ***5.2.3.1 Ethnic Distribution of District positions***

One of the most frequently cited causes of conflict in Kibaale is the struggle for political power and resources. The research findings of this study show that the struggle for political

power in Kibaale was largely motivated by the desire to control district resources and service provision. This resonates with the theoretical observations of Soeters (2005), Oberschall (2007), and Shoup (2008). The Banyoro wanted to ensure that the privileges which they collectively enjoyed in the distribution of resources were not taken away, while the non-Banyoro tried to access these resources too. There were claims that it was very hard for non-Banyoro to get government paid assignments at district level - even if they were better qualified. Most of the District tenders were awarded by the Banyoro to themselves. In the *Bafuruki Memo to Museveni* [the President] in 2009, the Bafuruki cited marginalisation in different sectors and provided the following examples:

Exclusion from Civil service jobs: Out of the 20 Sub-county chief positions in the district there is no single position occupied by a member of the Non-Banyoro Community in spite of the availability of a number of people from this community that are properly qualified and able to perform in these positions. This discrimination has been institutionalized by the current district leadership.

Exclusion from Education sector jobs: Using the example of Bugangaizi County, out of 82 Head Teacher positions in the County's Government-aided primary schools only 5 are non-Banyoro, in spite of the fact that there are quite a number of teachers that are qualified and able to occupy these positions (10<sup>th</sup> August 2009, p.2).

This situation meant that a redistribution of privileges and resources at district level was important to foster pluralist co-existence. In fact, such redistribution had earlier been agreed upon after the Mukiga who had been elected to the position of District Chairperson in 2002 stepped down in favour of a compromise candidate.

The key conditions included ... that in the interest of harmony and in pursuance of the compromise that led to the stepping down of the popularly elected Chairman, the principle of power sharing and representation would be followed in all appointments to the District Executive Committee, the Commissions, Boards and other Committees at the District level (*Ibid.*, p.6).

Let us see how redistribution of power and privilege was addressed at District level. Taking note of the fact that the current Chairman of LC V had been helped by non-Banyoro in his campaigns, he reciprocated (as agreed) by including them in his administration and by sharing strategic positions. In a tone of contentment, the current LCV Vice Chairperson, a Mufumbira, explained the new balance in sharing thus:

We have shared the political cake because now we are two Bafuruki on the [District] Executive Committee<sup>197</sup>. Me, I am the Vice Chairperson and the other is the Secretary for Finance. Also on these boards and commissions we have a representable [sic] number as Bafuruki. Also, [we get]some of these small small tenders at the district. But the problem is that Bafuruki do not have the firms to take the contracts<sup>198</sup>.

<sup>197</sup>The District Executive Committee is the body in charge of managing district affairs.

<sup>198</sup>Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

Many respondents in this study argued that when one of ‘their own’ was appointed in the district administration and control, the chances were higher that their voice would be heard responsively, and lead to improved service provision. Ethnicity-based representation meant not simply cosmetic representation, but yielded real results and if elected representatives would not deliver on their promises, then they will not be voted back – even by ‘their own’. This suggests that ethnic attachment is still strong and that the ‘we’ – ‘them’ dichotomy is still alive in Kibaale. However, the dynamics of the relationships between the different ethnic groups seem to be changing. The differences (real and perceived) are currently negotiated in ways that aim to create space for everyone – hence some compromises. The Banyoro compromised by allowing non-Banyoro into the management of the District, while non-Banyoro compromised (at least for now) by not contesting for the LC V Chairpersonship for the sake of living together peacefully. There is an important pluralism message in this, which is, that the practice of pluralism is different from cultural relativism (Connolly 2005; Eck<sup>199</sup>). Pluralism would not stop at inviting people to live together as they are, with all their angularities. Pluralists’ “... image of culture encourages us to embrace certain things in this particular place, to be indifferent to some, to be wary of others, and fight militantly against the continuation of yet others” (Connolly 2005, p.42). The engagement that ensues may in some cases necessitate give and take trade-offs, without which co-existence may be rendered conflictual. This approach is also vividly noticeable (and in some cases problematically so) in the Central Government initiatives, which will be discussed below.

Following the violent conflicts of 2002-2003, the Central Government decided to intervene by setting up a commission of inquiry that had to establish the causes of ethnic tension and violence in the area. Having noticed the complexity of the issues involved in the conflict, the first commission<sup>200</sup> first came up with a few interim interventions, and subsequently recommended that a wider inquiry be done. A new committee was constituted which executed its tasks in 2006 under the leadership of Prof. Ruth Mukama. Basing on views from different stakeholders, the Committee gave recommendations, some of which the Central Government subsequently gradually implemented, together with suggestions which emerged from several meetings between the President of Uganda and Banyoro and non-Banyoro representatives. However, as will be explained below, while some of these interventions helped to improve relations in the short term, some turned out to be problematic in their long-term implications.

### ***5.2.3.2 Ring-fencing top District positions***

In 2002, when a Munyoro LC V Chairperson refused to hand over office to a Mukiga who had won the elections, the Central Government followed the recommendation of the Kiyonga Commission to “... come up with a workable strategy to convince the Chairman-elect to decline swearing-in and taking over the leadership of the district on the 18<sup>th</sup> April...” (The Republic of Uganda April 2002, p.3). This intervention helped to calm down the Banyoro who

<sup>199</sup>[http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010.

<sup>200</sup>Popularly known as the Kiyonga Commission – after its Chairperson, Dr Crispus Kiyonga.

were up in arms, detesting what they termed as re-domination – against the historic background of Baganda imperialism. The Government’s intervention of forcing the winner to step down and thereafter suggesting to ring-fence the position of LC V Chairperson was subsequently criticised by many Bafuruki as unconstitutional and discriminatory. In an interview, one of the non-Banyoro Members of Parliament furiously recalled:

Rulemera was pushed out of politics but the state made a mistake... Around this time I was mobilising both Banyoro and Bafuruki to resist this thing. The state refused! They said, ‘for us to have harmony in this area this Mufuruki should leave’. They forced him out! They took him to study, promised him a job, paid him some money and that marked the end... But I do not think it was fair to us<sup>201</sup>.

Similarly, in a *Bafuruki Memo to the President*, a number of Bafuruki complained that Central Government was unconstitutionally biased against non-Banyoro in its interventions. A memorandum with 36 signatories said:

One of the major factors aggravating tensions in the District is the lack of impartiality on the part of Government agents... There has been a tendency to ignore complaints by members of the non-Banyoro Community regarding harassment and deprivation of rights all of which has created the impression in the minds of the extremists that Non Banyoro are second rate citizens (10<sup>th</sup> August 2009, pp.6-7).

However, in defence of ring-fencing in favour of the Banyoro, the President responded in a letter with the subject: *Guidance on the Banyoro/Bafuruki Question*. He argues that:

The vulgarized version of integration goes like this: “we are Ugandans and we all have equal inherent rights in all parts of Uganda”-rights to property or political rights such as competing for political offices. That is correct as long as you ensure that in exercise of those inherent rights, you do not fundamentally damage the legitimate inherent rights of others- especially of those indigenous to the area. If that happens, the Central Government must come in to regulate the enjoyment of the inherent rights of the respective groups so that a disequilibrium does not develop or become entrenched (August 5, 2009).

The President justified his intervention as affirmative action based on historical injustices to the Banyoro. He appealed to the principle of autochthony (Geschiere 2009) by arguing that even though popularly elected, it was unfair for the Bafuruki to dominate political positions in a place where they were not native. In the President’s view, “... the most important issue is the symbolism of a Mufuruki [sic] taking over the leadership of a recuperating district with such a strong, ancient and wounded tribal psychology” (Presidential Statement, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2002). Supposedly then - apart from the historical considerations - in the President’s view, meaningful ‘integration’ embraces the idea that indigenous people have a greater claim to citizenship rights than migrants.

How should we understand this controversy? Whereas scholars such as Mamdani, Owolabi (2003), and Geschiere (2009) argue that ring-fencing is a “dilution of national citizenship in

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<sup>201</sup>Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

favour of a tribal citizenship”<sup>202</sup> akin to colonial rule, with Varshney (2002) and Shoup (2008), this study suggests that rules of national democracy are insufficient to enforce the norms which underlie inter-ethnic bargains. “Ethnic pluralism, it is argued, requires political institutions—forms and rules of power-sharing, types of constituencies, varieties of voting systems, party systems—different from those that are appropriate for ethnically homogeneous, or at any rate ethnically undivided, societies” (Varshney 2002, p.36). Shoup observes that political institutions that insulate the political authority of the indigenous group without fully alienating the economically dominant group (Bafuruki) tend to produce more stable long term outcomes than institutions that allow the economically dominant group to ‘encroach’ on the political sphere. How such a balance should be struck is a dictate of context. What may work in one place may be disastrous in another (Oberschall 2007). In Kibaale there are indications that (at least for now) shielding the Banyoro’s political space at the top of the district has contributed to peace in the area. However, notwithstanding its effectiveness hitherto, it remains unclear whether ring-fencing the position of LC V Chairperson for Banyoro is a sustainable measure. Citing constitutional provisions on citizenship, some non-Banyoro still argue that they are equally entitled to the top position.

### *5.2.3.3 Creating more Constituencies*

When Central Government realised that, apart from the other contentious issues in Kibaale, there were some key political personalities fuelling the ethnic conflict and that they all had some social backing, the second intervention that she implemented was to split the existing constituencies in order to create more political space for the competing politicians. This way, as suggested by Lijphart (1969), the positions would be ‘distributed’ among Banyoro and non-Banyoro. Thus in 2010 Uganda’s president (Museveni) passed a directive to the Attorney General and the Minister of Local Government to create two new counties/constituencies. In his words: “we need to split Buyaga with a new constituency centred around the former Lutete [Ruteete] refugee camp to cater for the Bafuruki, and also to split Bugangaizi, to create a county/constituency around Kisiita [resettlement scheme] to cater for the Bafuruki there” (Lumu 2010). This intervention was effected, and, albeit with some anxieties, it was viewed by most of the respondents in this study as having fundamentally contributed to the peacefulness of the 2011 elections and after.

In an FGD with women, a Munyoro woman explained the positive outcomes of splitting the area by saying:

... the creation of new administrative units has brought about relative peace. Now in Buyaga West [constituency] there is a Mukiga. Everyone has their own area of jurisdiction. Formerly Besisira<sup>203</sup> and Barnabas were always at loggerheads, [but now] the situation has changed with the separation of the two. These days if the Bakiga are conflicting, it is amongst themselves, the same thing with the Banyoro<sup>204</sup>.

Similarly, another male Munyoro respondent observed that:

Now the Banyoro are represented by Buyaga East Constituency and the Bafuruki by Buyaga West. And the same story with Bugangaizi, Bugangaizi East has a

<sup>202</sup>Mahmood Mamdani’s presentation at the Abu Mayanja Memorial Lecture. From [http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog\\_id=13](http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog_id=13) Viewed on August 25, 2011.

<sup>203</sup>Ignatius Besisira is one of the Banyoro MPs while Barnabas Tinkasiimire is a Mukiga MP.

<sup>204</sup>FGD with women held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.



Munyoro and Bugangaizi West has a Mufuruki. And with the District leadership, we agreed, the Chairman is indigenous and members of the executive should be shared. Like the posts of Vice Chairman and Secretary Finance are Bafuruki and the rest too are Banyoro. So we are now sharing the political leadership in the District so as to calm down the minds of people who are thinking of grabbing power<sup>205</sup>.

What is significant in the splitting of the district is that the constituencies were explicitly divided along ethnic lines. Both Banyoro and non-Banyoro opinion leaders expressed the view that this division worked well to reduce inter-ethnic tensions because it meant that each side was busy fighting amongst themselves and thus had no time and space to contest issues along ethnic lines. As such, at least as witnessed in the 2011 elections, it meant that the problem of 'the ethnic other' did not take centre stage.

It should be noted that, de facto, splitting constituencies meant that the ethnic-based constituencies were divided between particular politicians. This point is made as follows by a Mukiga MP:

We agreed informally to having a Munyoro represent one part of Buyaga and another part to be represented by a Mufuruki [the same in Bugangaizi]... that we shall work towards that as leaders, and it has happened. We actually made sure that what we had agreed worked. I stood with a Munyoro, I defeated him. The other side Besisira stood with some Mufuruki, he defeated him. We mobilised the Bafuruki [there] consciously to vote for Besisira. This side, Mable's<sup>206</sup> area, there was no Munyoro who stood against her and she stood with Bafuruki and won. This side, Kasiririvu stood with Banyoro only and won the election<sup>207</sup>.

Although in principal anyone (regardless of ethnicity) was free to stand for office anywhere as stipulated in the Constitution of Uganda (1995), the logic of splitting the district on an ethnic basis made it rather obvious who would win and who was wasting their time by standing for a particular position in a particular area.

The case in point, where splitting constituencies was implicitly meant to satisfy particular politicians (reminiscent of colonial divide and rule), raises questions about the sustainability of this pluralism measure. For instance, a Munyoro MP argued that if it takes his win to have peace in the area, then why not? At face value, this appears to be a simple attractive idea and a pragmatic response, but it is important to consider its wider implications. One such implication is the solidification of ethnic politics and the attendant 'ethno-territorial' idea that particular areas belong to particular individuals and their ethnic groups. In the long run this may take the area back to the original problem of exclusive claims based on ethnicity. For instance, there is now a balance in parliamentary ethnic representation with two Banyoro and two non-Banyoro MPs. But what would happen if in future a non-Munyoro won in an area that is de facto known to be for Banyoro (and vice versa)? The above anxiety is well articulated in the following reflection of a Banyoro Kingdom official:

<sup>205</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>206</sup>Mable Bakeine, a Mukiga, is Member of Parliament representing Bugangaizi East while Kasiririvu Atwooki, a Munyoro, is a Member of Parliament for Bugangaizi West.

<sup>207</sup>Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

There is peace [now]. Although it [splitting] is artificial, it has brought about some peace. But how long is it going to remain that this is for Bakiga, this is for Banyoro? One day you might find what you call for Bakiga the Banyoro have gone there, or vice versa. But for the time being it has worked<sup>208</sup>.

It is worthwhile to consider if splitting constituencies to give each ‘people’ their ‘own’ area would enhance pluralism and an appreciation of ethnic difference and not merely facilitate tolerance – which is good for pluralism but not helpful in deepening it by fostering/ allowing knowledge and acceptance of the other. Many respondents from different ethnic groups in this study appreciated the mere fact that this initiative brought about peace. Keeping in mind that the differences between Banyoro and non-Banyoro were more about power-sharing, the respondents imagined that other kinds of difference would be sorted if political representation is addressed as by measures such as constituency splitting and other forms of power-sharing.

However, there was a different opinion from an MBC member who said: “Museveni [the President] gave them [the Bafuruki] their constituencies through ring-fencing, which means he separated them because they are different people. He saw that they [Bafuruki] are not workable”<sup>209</sup>. For this respondent, the separation of constituencies manifests the impossibility of living together due to irreconcilable differences. In an angry tone, he emphasised: “We differ in culture. Our cultural differences do not allow us to stay together. And they are arrogant”. As reflected in the radical view of the above respondent, the separation of constituencies may counterproductively facilitate the idea that it is not possible to mend fences through engaging with the real and perceived differences between Banyoro and non-Banyoro.

In most cases, my questions about the sustainability of splitting the district into more constituencies as a measure to promote pluralist co-existence were met with mixed feelings. Nevertheless, although many respondents were not sure about how long this measure would be effective, they were happy enough that it had brought about some peace – even if temporary. For instance, I was told by a Mufumbira respondent that:

... for now for us we are looking at anything that will bring peace in our district. And as long as it comes and there is peace then we have no problem with it. What will come in future is not an issue now, so long as there is relative peace. If the national cake is shared by a Munyoro and a Mufuruki, if there is no fighting, no killing one another, that is what we are looking for<sup>210</sup>.

The current peace, if well utilised, was said to have the potential to buy time and create new openings for more sustainable pluralism measures. As Oberschall puts it, some temporary measures can be significant but they are also “... incomplete roadmaps on how to reach the promised land” (2007, p.200). According to a Munyoro MP, “this [peace] should actually

<sup>208</sup>Interview held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.

<sup>209</sup>Interview held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>210</sup>Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

give us an opportunity to ask that: ‘now [that] we are in this situation, how do we continue to live [together]?’<sup>211</sup>

#### 5.2.3.4 *Splitting the District into Smaller Districts*

Based on the apparent success of splitting constituencies, one of the other measures for co-existence which is currently pursued is a further splitting of Kibaale District to create three smaller districts (Kibaale, Kakumiro, and Kagadi). Many express the hope that this measure, which Government has already endorsed and is awaiting implementation, would go a long way in solving issues of political representation.

In Chapter Four, the official reason behind district creation is explained to be the enhancement of development by taking services closer to people. However, an unofficial yet deeply entrenched logic is the separation of conflicting ethnic groups, so that each group is able to run its own affairs in their own districts (Mirima 1999; Green 2008; Schelnberger2008). In turn, such a form of decentralisation contributes to the entrenchment of the idea that in particular districts some ethnic groups (especially the autochthons/ indigenes) have greater claim over the affairs and privileges of the district than others (Geschiere 2009; Dunn 2009). Accordingly, the University Secretary for the African Rural University in Kibaale cited the polarising effect in Uganda’s district creation thus: “... some of these district things have escalated sectarianism in this country. Much as we say that we are trying to build a nation, we build and spilt it. We build it and spilt it, creating conditions for not having unity”<sup>212</sup>. This process of building and splitting has vividly played out in Kibaale District over time. This history should be kept in mind in order to understand the demand to create new smaller districts in Kibaale, especially because the new suggested boundaries are largely based on ethnic numerical considerations.

When I asked one of the founders of the Bafuruki Committee (BC) why he was optimistic about the creation of new districts as a solution to ethnic conflicts in the area, he explained:

... the people who have been at the forefront in this struggle to stop non-Banyoro from taking part in leadership are from one part of Kibaale. So, if you partition, these people will remain in one place, in Kibaale [what will remain after the splitting]. These other districts wouldn’t have a problem. So, I am trying to say that surely Kagadi doesn’t have people who would give Government hard time and trouble. Those who are advocating for ethnicity are just in Kibaale<sup>213</sup>.

Then I went ahead to probe: *How about the non-Banyoro who will remain in the new Kibaale District?* He laughed hard and, after about a minute’s pause, he responded: “I don’t know. I don’t know”<sup>214</sup>.

Apparently, it seems impossible for non-Banyoro to take the top position (LC V Chairperson) in Kibaale as one district. It is thus calculated that with the District split, new openings will be

<sup>211</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>212</sup>Interview held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>213</sup>There is an area in Kibaale District that is called Kibaale. This would be the headquarters of the new Kibaale District.

<sup>214</sup>Interview held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

created for them to compete for the position in the new districts. After some hesitation, and saying that I was making him reveal some of ‘our secrets’, one of the non-Banyoro opinion leaders and original BC member revealed that: “We hope in 2012 Kagadi will become a district [this has not happened yet] and automatically the majority will be Bafuruki. We will leave the Banyoro to lead it for the first five years and there after we shall all compete for it. The problem is mainly on that top seat”<sup>215</sup>.

The move to create new districts and split existing ones indicates that the key issue which is at stake is the division of power. But dividing the district to create automatic ethnic majorities which would take charge of their respective new districts leaves a lot to be desired in terms of sustainable pluralism. Snyder argues that such ‘ethno-federalism’ with “territorial subunits within the state whose boundaries are designed to coincide with ethno-linguistic concentrations” has “a terrible track record . . . [It] is frequently a recipe for subsequent partition” (2000, pp.327–8). It would be unrealistic to assume that boundaries (and sub-boundaries) of collective identity are not going to continue to be reconstituted in ways that would call for further partition. Owolabi (2003) and Parekh (2008) remind us that assumed collective identities are often continuously constructed and reconstructed in response to the circumstances at hand. This observation raises critical questions about the effectiveness of the measure to split districts: If voting in the new districts again becomes ethnically oriented, how about the ethnic minorities there? This question becomes even more compelling when on the grounds that “no group wants to end up a minority in a territory if it can become a majority by redrawing boundaries or by expelling other groups” (Oberschall 2007, p.15). And considering that migration still continues in the area, what will happen if the ethnic numbers are once again tipped in favour of some group other than the one designated for the district?

### ***5.2.3.5 On Land Ownership***

Another interesting issue in Kibaale is what is being done with regard to land ownership, which is a frequently cited source of conflict. This study found that Banyoro were worried about their land being taken by the Bafuruki who migrated into the area in large numbers. On the other hand the Bafuruki feared that they were going to be evicted by Banyoro. Some Banyoro expressed fear about their own vulnerability because many of them are squatters on land which is owned by absentee Baganda landlords. By 2006, it was estimated that about 3,636 landlords in Kibaale were absent (Republic of Uganda 2006). A Land Fund had been suggested by Government in 1998. This was operationalised in 2003 with the aim to buy land from absentee landlords and then find a way to return the land to the local people (without specific indication in terms of ethnicity). Some land was indeed duly bought back, but it was just a small portion of the total land (Republic of Uganda 2013). “Of the over 4,000 land titles held by absentee landlords at the institution of the Land Fund, only about 600 have been submitted to the Banyoro. The absentee landlords do not want to return the land titles because they believe the compensation is low”<sup>216</sup>. The Uganda Land Policy (2013) also acknowledges

<sup>215</sup>Interview held on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

<sup>216</sup>Interview with a Member of MBC held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012.

that the budgetary allocations to this effect have been limited. This initiative is further complicated by one of the provisions in the Land Act (1998 Cap 227) which stipulates that transactions had to be based on the principle of 'willing buyer – willing seller'. This provision made it practically hard to implement the initiative, and gave much weight to the Government's will to respect property rights of absentee landlords, despite the fact that the acquisition of this land was considered problematic.

The complexity of this issue notwithstanding, an important question that comes to mind here is why there is currently peace in the area, despite the fact that one of the 'major conflictual issues (land ownership)' has not been addressed? Two prominent local politicians, one a Munyoro another a Mukiga, provided me with an interesting answer to this question. A Mukiga MP explained: "You hear the issue of land? There is no Munyoro down there who is complaining that so and so is entering [encroaching on] my land. It is only the politicians! When they want to cause havoc, they buy some people, go into somebody's land and cut it to bring in havoc. The problem has been politics"<sup>217</sup>. In emphasis of the same point, a Munyoro MP insisted:

These Banyoro should not deceive you... I am in leadership here. There is nothing that will happen in this land that I will not know of. Nobody has come to claim [land]. These men [Baganda] went. These uncles of yours [the researcher is a Muganda], they went... The people had a misunderstanding! But because they wanted to see how to coin it, they brought in land. But the whole thing was politics. Now I am MP, has the land problem been solved? Why are people living so happily? People are chairman LC5, LC3... You go around. People are councilors! Now everybody is inside (as they say these days). Everybody is in the *kintu* [thing]. The Banyoro are there, the Bafuruki are there<sup>218</sup>.

The above revelation re-echoes the significance of political/elite manipulation in shaping ethnic relations and corroborates Lijphart's (1969) argument for consociational democracy focusing on the agency of elites. The revelation as well serves to further illustrate the analytic relevance of rational choice theory in ethnic relations (Hale 2008). However, this does not mean that land is not a crucial factor in Kibaale. In fact, land ownership and the division of land is actively rallied upon for ethnic manipulation and this suggests that it is important to address it as a factor in pluralism issues in the district. "Political mobilization of ethnic groups does not start from scratch" (Oberschall 2007, p.6), it capitalises on real issues and instrumentally exaggerates them. In a setting of ethnic tension like Kibaale, every such loophole matters and it is very important that such issues are resolved so that manipulating forces are denied of any possible instruments for manipulation. Some Banyoro indicated that the land issue remains a matter of concern – for example for the Banyoro who said that they could not use their land as collateral to access loans. This indicates that there is a sense of ethnic-based vulnerability in a plural context and that someone could take advantage of this situation. It therefore remains important to follow up what is happening with the execution of the Land Fund initiative.

<sup>217</sup>Interview held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

<sup>218</sup>Interview held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

### 5.2.3.6 Affirmative Action

Many people in Kibaale advance the idea that, considering its peculiar and troublesome history, the situation in Kibaale District requires affirmative action through special development programmes. It requires more attention and deliberate positive discriminative measures for development in order to catch up with the pace of other districts. The above suggestion is based on the earlier discussed observation that poverty and underdevelopment among the Banyoro contribute to conflict in the area. Pluralism would thus also require that measures are put in place to develop the area. When people refer to the need for development, they particularly refer to infrastructural development, economic boosting, and education – as matters which the people in Kibaale consider to be under-facilitated by the Central Government. The need for improvement is also recognized in the Government reports on Kibaale (*Report of the Inquiry Committee on Political Developments in Kibaale District April 2002*; *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues 2006*).

Partly in response to the demand for affirmative action, the Government decided to create the Ministry for Bunyoro Affairs – in 2011. As had been the case with other regions which were allocated ministries on account of their special circumstances, the first minister who initially was to be appointed was not a Munyoro. This decision was contested by the Banyoro, and the President subsequently heeded their call by appointing a Munyoro as Minister for Bunyoro Affairs. The expectation that Banyoro issues can best be understood and addressed by a Munyoro indicates that ethnic sensitivity and consciousness remain strong in the area. Although it would not be problematic in itself to have a Munyoro as Bunyoro Minister, the unwillingness of Banyoro to be led by non-Banyoro in top positions poses questions about the acceptance of ‘others’. The contestation of this Ministerial position seemed to echo the deadlock of 2002 when the Banyoro rejected an elected Mukiga LC V Chairman and to suggest that more attitudinal change was still necessary.

As demonstrated by the other positive shifts that have taken place in Kibaale, my view is that such attitudinal changes require time to occur. This view is also based on the observation that, although sometimes instrumentally exaggerated, the Banyoro still nurse a historically wounded collective identity (by effect of their suppression by the British and the Baganda and its persistent effects) that seems in need of time and interventions to heal (Mirima 1999). Empirical research of this study shows that attitudes have progressively changed over time. For example, the idea that non-Banyoro should leave Kibaale or avoid all electoral positions is fading out. Rather, people are currently much more focused on how to live together. Even though it might be hard to precisely predict what will ensue, as the account in this chapter demonstrates, the current bottlenecks to plural co-existence in the area are being multi-dimensionally dealt with.

### 5.3 Concluding Theoretical Inferences

This chapter addresses the question: How are scientific theories on pluralism brought into action by the different initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale and how do the people of the district value these initiatives? In explaining the initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale, I sought to illustrate how relevant theories help us understand the initiatives and *what the findings from Kibaale add to the theoretical perspectives on pluralism*. The key highlights of the above interplay are summarised below.

It is implied in Shoup's (2008) explanation of the necessary trade-offs in ethnically 'counterbalanced' communities that it takes time for co-existence to occur. However, in pluralism literature the 'time' element is not given particular prominence, even though it is considered an important factor. This study demonstrates that it requires time for people to be able to co-exist because living together necessitates gaining knowledge about the other in detail, enough to deal with the conflictual stereotypes that are often used by opportunistic politicians (Eck *Ibid.*; Soeters 2005; Sen 2006). The amount of time that is needed cannot be categorically spelt out, as this would vary from one context to another. I observed in Kibaale that, together with other factors, progressively learning more about each other through the various mechanisms (friendships, intermarriage, political cooperation, sensitization, and others) in place has greatly enhanced mutual appreciation and acceptance over time.

Rational choice theorists/ instrumentalists may argue that measures to enhance knowledge about the ethnic 'other' may not be very significant in boosting ethnic relations because what matters more are the benefits/ privileges being competed/ strategized for (Smith 1994; Carling 1992; Coetzee 2009). In the rational choice explanatory framework, ethnically different people do not fight because they do not understand each other; rather, they fight in competition for resources and opportunities (Hale 2008). The empirical findings from Kibaale in this study confirm that access to resources and power plays a significant role in determining ethnic relations. In fact, adjustments in the distribution of resources and political power have created some degree of pacifying satisfaction and enhanced feelings of inclusion. At the same time, this study found that one of the key causes of the violent conflicts of 2002 was the manipulative role of elites and politicians. This manipulation was greatly made possible by the existence of stereotypes and rumours, which were largely based on limited knowledge of the 'other' among the people. Not to exclude other multilayered and interconnected factors, for the pluralism discourse, the above explanation again illustrates the strategic importance of increasing knowledge about each other in a multi-ethnic setting. With such knowledge in the community, the manipulative elites/politicians are disarmed of their most lethal implements. But; considering the multifaceted nature of ethnic relations; and considering that co-existence in a multi-ethnic setting is determined by a confluence of intricate factors; it is crucial that local people's perceptions on (1) the distribution of resources, (2) the ethnic 'other' and their motives, (3) their recognition/ respect by 'others', and (4) imaginations for living together are all given analytic attention when enhancing spaces for pluralism.

I observed in the discussion above that the social conditions for plural co-existence in Kibaale before and after 2002 changed over time. From the 1960s up to the 80s, 'co-existence' was primarily based on the circumstantial readiness of the non-Banyoro to live by the often assimilative terms set by their hosts – they had to adopt the *empaako* (pet-names), learn Runyoro, and only take on leadership positions as and when allowed by the Banyoro. This 'arrangement' was later overturned when the economic and social status of many of the non-Banyoro improved and they started to assertively claim political space on their own terms. After the violent conflict of 2002, the negotiations on how to accommodate difference are seen to take a different shape. As argued by Connolly (2005), Shoup (2008), and Parekh (2008), the negotiations manifest a process of 'give and take' with compromises on both sides. However, while the process suggests that pluralism often requires recognition for the citizenship aspirations of each other, in some cases it is inferable that the principles of democracy granting equal rights to all may not be appropriate for addressing tension characterised by historical injustices. Some groups may require special consideration to curb their exclusive/intolerant actions borne of wounds from past experiences.

The pluralism initiatives in Kibaale also embody another important pluralism message, that is, that the practice of pluralism is related but also differs from relativism (Connolly 2005; Eck<sup>219</sup>). Pluralism would not end at inviting people as they are with all their angularities to live together. The engagement that ensues may in some cases necessitate give and take trade-offs without which co-existence may be rendered impossible/conflictual. But it is crucial that the compromises that ensue come about voluntarily, not as a product of force as is indicated in some assimilative moves that tend to attract resentment and resistance. It serves pluralism for people to learn from each other or/and appreciate each other's legitimate differences, but this works well if happens freely. It is also suggested from this study that some degree of assimilation (voluntary) is necessary for a plural society. This is not to mean that everyone should become like the majority but that growing in each other's direction in some issues - for example learning/ adopting each other's language to facilitate easy communication and social bonding.

Considering the power of interactions that is reflected in the mutual enforcement between the initiatives at individual/community, civil society, and Government levels, it is evident that pluralism requires multilevel measures that speak to each other. Neither of the three studied levels was found to be sufficient on its own, rather, where positive, each boosted the strength of the other. But also negative initiatives at any of the levels (especially the government level) are likely to undo gains at others. And, whereas the findings indicated that it is crucial to consider the long term implications of the initiatives, they also demonstrate some short term gains that may seem unsustainable are vital for consolidating grounds and buying time to work out more long lasting measures.

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<sup>219</sup>[http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This study sought to establish ‘how the residents of Kibaale District perceive ethnic conflict and the possibilities for pluralism in their region and how the findings of this case study contribute to theory development on ethnic conflict and pluralism’. To achieve the above broad objectives, the main research question was divided into four subsidiary questions:

- i) How are the significant developments in the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale District perceived by the residents?
- ii) How do different local ethnic groups in Kibaale currently perceive ethnic conflict in their district?
- iii) How are the different scientific theories on pluralism brought into action by the various initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale and how do the people of the district value these initiatives?
- iv) How do the findings of this research project/compare to existing theories on ethnic conflict and pluralism?

One of the major strengths of this study is that it comes up with rich qualitative empirical data that not only helps to provide evidential backup to existing theories, but also to improve them and explain their explanatory interface. The empirical findings on question one were discussed in Chapter Three, question two in Chapter Four, and question three in Chapter Five. The answer to question four was discussed throughout chapter three, four, five, and all results are brought together in this final chapter.

Chapter Six offers concluding reflections and discusses the theoretical implications of the empirical findings with a special focus on (1) the role of history and memory in the ethnic mobilizations in Kibaale, which will be analysed with the help of both primordial and constructivist theories and (2) an exploration of spaces for pluralism in Kibaale which first highlights some assimilative and democratic pluralism practices and then explores the value of Mouffe’s theory of democratic (or agonistic) pluralism to understand the situation in Kibaale. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

#### **6.2 History and Memory as Fuel for Ethnic Mobilisation**

There are complex multi-layered and multidirectional factors at play in plural contexts which may reinforce each other in the emergence and persistence of conflict. This study shows that it is important to acknowledge that such divergent factors are operative and that they need to be analysed in order to be addressed at a local level. In Kibaale, such significant factors include unsettled perceived historical injustices, painful memories which are prone to sensationalism, rapid population growth in migrant communities, perceived favouritism to the

advantage of the migrants, perceived arrogance of migrants (such as in their assertiveness, use of their languages, and (re)naming places in the area), widespread poverty among the indigenous people (Banyoro) especially when compared to immigrants, expanded communication after the opening of Kagadi Kibaale Community Radio, plus a manipulative role of political elites and ethnic pressure groups. The empirical findings of this study show that all these factors interface and interact in complex ways to contribute to the ways in which local residents perceive past conflicts and the current situation and give space to initiatives which enhance pluralism.

While acknowledging the multi-layered and dynamic nature of the conflict, this study also indicates that local people perceive political opportunism and manipulation to be a key factor behind the conflict in Kibaale, and thus presents a hindrance to create opportunities for pluralism in the area. An important factor in the dynamics of political opportunism and the mobilization of the conflict, is the role of history and memory. In the historic context of Kibaale, ethnicity is a very important social identity because of the divisive privilege it was given by colonialists, which was thereafter adopted in various forms by post-independence governments and socialised in a number of ways into people's perceptions.

All the people who were interviewed in this study knew particular aspects of the area's history. They were especially aware of the most painful experiences and the moments of triumph. The area's heroes were also known by all respondents. In a way, for these people, their history explains, especially in ethnic terms, why their situation as a group is the way it currently is. Hale (2004) depicts that history can serve to make members of a group to believe that they share a common fate – and this is what the political mobilisers emphasise. An experienced shared fate can make it meaningful to act as a group. While this study does not support an exclusive and strong deterministic primordialist idea that current conflicts are a renewal of 'age-old' conflicts, there are reasons to argue that a sense of shared history is an important element in inter-ethnic relations.

This finding confirms Dutter's (1990) claim that one of the primary factors in the development and persistence of ethno-political identities, concerns group members' memories and interpretations of ethno-political events. Similarly, Cairns and Roe state in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict* that "...if ethnic conflict is to be brought under control, it is necessary to understand the role of the collective past in the collective present. This role is communicated via memories of the past ..." (Cairns and Roe 2003, p.5). In addition, as indicated by the Global Centre for Pluralism (2012), approaches to pluralism often emerge within particular historical dynamics.

The history of Kibaale shows that ethnic relations in the area have been politically manipulated in various ways throughout different eras. Colonial times left a significantly antagonistic legacy, whose seeds were manifest in the period that immediately followed Uganda's independence in 1962 (the Baganda–Banyoro tension), followed by the 1964

referendum and its ramifications, to the late 1960s when other ethnic groups started migrating into Kibaale.

Many of the Banyoro residents of Kibaale bear a collective painful memory of suppression by both the British and the Baganda. They lost part of their territory to Buganda, they were forced to abandon their language and names, many of their people were killed in the war with the Baganda-British alliance, and their king (Kabaleega) was captured and exiled. Cairns and Roe (2003) find that groups which harbor feelings of being wronged in the past, are often left with a sense of victimhood that stems from unacknowledged and unreconciled historic losses which in turn create new senses of wrong and injustice thus creating the potential for future conflict. Halbwachs (1992), a sociologist, explains that such collective memory is fluid in the sense that it is socially constructed and reconstructed over time and is intimately linked to people's sense of identity in the present context.

With painful memories as those borne by the Banyoro of Kibaale, one of the possibilities in subsequent encounter with ethnic 'others' in a plural context would be suspicion, paranoia, fear and mistrust. But although it would be plausible to assume that memory and pain would be quite instructive against pluralism, this study reveals that ethnic exclusivity and conflict would not be a necessary consequence either. Exclusive tendencies, such as negative stereotypes, exclusion from political participation, and threats of expulsion are seen to arise under certain circumstances, such as perception of others as threats, ethnic decentralisation, widespread poverty, that would not only awaken the painful memories and re-energize fear, but also provide a conducive environment for the instrumentalisation or manipulation of the past by opportunists for whatever sort of calculated gain (Hempel 2006; Cairns & Roe 2003; and Shoup 2008). Once again, we see that, even where ethnic conflict has occurred before, it is not a given, rather it is a construct of a confluence of several factors

In the social construction of ethnic relations, politicians play a key role in the 'othering' processes where autochthony is emphasised and positioned to their advantage (Geschiere 2005, 2009, 2010; Boas and Dunn 2013). In Kibaale, this process was found to be facilitated by decentralisation that renders political positions more attractive due to increased access to local resources. Geschiere observes that the appeal to autochthony is used as a tool to construct belonging and citizenship rights. This way, the autochthons/'sons of the soil' are attributed higher citizenship entitlements, which are framed as obvious and that the 'others' are projected as foreigners whose right to stand for political positions, to share on resources in a decentralised setting, and to vote are questioned.

The identification of political opportunism and manipulation as a key factor in conflict in plural communities, like Kibaale, still leaves us with the question: "... why do politicians polarize communities in some places but build bridges in others, even if it can be shown that polarisation will serve their interests?" (Varshney 2002, p.11). This question is important in order to understand both the dynamics of politically-driven conflict and why pluralism initiatives may succeed in some contexts and fail in others. Part of the answer is offered by

Geschiere's observation that "... political manipulations [of belonging]... play a role ... but they can only work because the very idea of local belonging strikes such a deep emotional chord with the population in general (2010, p.54). As such, the deep ethnic emotional attachment, articulated by many, especially older, respondents provides the first site for the possibility (not the necessity) of political manipulation. This observation renders credibility to primordialist theory for paying special analytic attention to emotional attachment in explaining ethnicity.

The idea that ethnic conflicts are renewals of age old antagonisms and hatreds based on cultural differences forms the core of the primordialist argument (Shils 1957; Geertz 1963; Huntington 1996). They argue that ethnic communities are persistent, resilient, and capable of eliciting deep loyalty, intense emotional attachment and strong motivation, and, in consequence, are particularly resistant to change. As such, there is a tendency in primordialism to essentialise ethnicity – as a social identity that is built around attributes such as perceived common descent, common language, and norms which are difficult to change. Primordialists argue that the internally bonding belief in common descent within ethnic groups is responsible for a division of humanity into 'us' and 'them' (Connor 1994) – the conception of some as 'insiders' and others as 'outsiders'. Conflict emerges when such boundaries which are associated with deep emotional attachment are threatened by 'others'.

One of the perennial questions in studies of ethnic conflict is why ethnicity tends to attract deep loyalty and affect among group members that makes it an easy identity to mobilise (Geertz 1967; Hale 2004, 2008). In an analysis of the case of Kibaale, it is interesting to find out why, out of all the various social identities (religion, class, gender, etc.) it is ethnic identity that was found most effective to mobilise. It is a question of much importance in pluralism discourse because we may not be able to reconfigure strained ethnic relations into pluralist forms without first understanding what motivates the forging of such relations in the first place. Mouffe (2014, p.157) states that "a counter-hegemonic politics necessitates the creation of a different regime of desires and affects so as to bring about a collective will sustained by common affects able to challenge the existing order". But how do such affects come about? It is in this regard that this study finds theories of primordialism to be of some explanatory value which could complement constructivist interpretations of group allegiance in plural contexts.

In Kibaale, emotional attachments to ethnic groups were observed among people even when there were no immediate or future benefits in their affiliation. Some respondents who participated in the violence of 2002 said they only found a need to protect their 'tribe' from 'foreign' domination – that theirs was a 'patriotic' reaction. However, political manipulation was seen to work mainly because the very idea of local/ethnic belonging strikes such a deep emotional chord with the population in general (Geschiere 2009). Indeed, as argued by Brittain "choice cannot be reduced summarily to maximising utility, but may be influenced by habit, custom, a sense of duty, emotional attachment, etc." (Brittain 2006, p.158).

Primordialist theories offer relevant insights into the persistence of group allegiance. This study shows that many of the Banyoro have a deep sense of allegiance to their ethnic group which is informed, among other things, by a sense of common fate and a historical bond (in excruciation and triumphs) and concretised through shared language, cultural norms, and territorial claims. This primordial sense of affinity is further reinforced by the monarchical arrangement under a king, which solidifies the 'we' sense in distinction from others. Ethnic identity is also rooted in biological parentage, which attracts a bonding sense of kin and a character of 'unchangeability'. Primordialists have argued that it is for the above reasons that ethnic identities tend to persist more than other social identities (Bayar 2009).

All the above attributes indeed seem to bond the Banyoro residents and provide a rationale for the defence of the 'we' in the face of any real or perceived threat from the 'other', as presented by political mobilisers. These dynamics can also be observed in the Buganda Kingdom where I come from. There are many Baganda who are happy enough with the idea of being Baganda, even if they gain nothing from the affiliation in economic or political terms. It was thus easy to mobilise them into riots when the Kingdom Prime Minister was stopped by Central Government from visiting some controversial part of the Kingdom (Human Rights Network – Uganda 2010). There was no immediate or tangible benefit in sight for the masses that poured on the streets of various towns in the Central region of Uganda! It was clear at the time that, as in Kibaale, there was an emotional attachment to the Baganda identity, an attachment which primordialist theories can help us to understand.

Whereas primordialism can be helpful to explain ethnic attachment/affect and the significance of history in inter-ethnic relations, it also leaves some aspects unexplained. Such aspects include how ethnicity is mobilised and how such mobilisation contributes to the solidification of ethnic passions and the 'othering' of 'foreigners'. An exclusive focus on primordial explanations of ethnic attachment does not offer the necessary analytical tools to understand the role of conflict in plural communities because they do not help us to understand the dynamics that lead to the intensification of ethnic passions. Primordial theories are also ambiguous about the complex dynamics of ethnic inclusion and exclusion that inform the continuous transformation of ethnic boundaries. There are some primordialists who have acknowledged that ethnic identities are also socially constructed (Van Vera 2001; Bayar 2009) but, apart from granting a role to the socialisation process, they do not provide a comprehensive account of how such construction happens.

Constructivist theories can help us to understand that whilst ethnic attachment may be rooted in attributes that are 'difficult to change', the affect itself is constructed over time and is contingent upon the circumstances surrounding the group. Group members learn to love their groups through socialisation from family level to wider society. "What is learned is so deeply entrenched within the society that recourse to certain ways of behaviour seems almost automatic: in other words they are seen as being in the group's nature" (Roe 2005, p.26). I observed among the Banyoro in Kibaale that they seem to be more attached to their ethnic identity than the Banyoro from other places. This phenomenon is better explained through an

analysis of their specific history as this study did than by reference to common decent or kinship. The Banyoro of Kibaale have gone through very painful experiences that have 'taught' them to rally together as a group in response to threats. Collective memories of these experiences are also seen to play a role in influencing how they perceive and relate with 'others'. This study shows that this outcome has been partly facilitated by interventions of the Mubende Banyoro Committee ethnic pressure group and other politicians in the area.

Another example in this study which shows that ethnic affect can be understood in constructivist terms, concerns the reactionary emergence and consolidation of the *Bafuruki* category which brought together a number of ethnic groups. Although their mobilisation was on ethnic lines, the identity they collectively fronted was that of being 'foreigners' – which is not rooted in kinship. Why were they able to attract emotional attachment from people of different ethnic groups? The answer to the above question is found in the perception of a common threat. If this perception was able to result into the adjustment/transformation of ethnic boundaries to form a superstructure, then surely emotional ethnic attachment can also be a social construct. This would explain why the levels and forms of attachment tend to vary from one context to another.

The above account thus shows that in order to understand people's meanings and processes of meaning-making it is very helpful to explain why certain ethnic relations ensue in particular communities at different points in time. Constructivists contend that ethnicity and all kinds of inter-ethnic relations are social constructs brought about through multi-layered processes of meaning-making (Smith 1994; Mamdani 2001, 2004; Hempel 2006; Hale 2008; Shoup 2008). They argue that it is the level of threat from the 'out-group/s' (real or imagined) and nature of political mobilisation that will determine the emergence or non-emergence of inter-ethnic conflict.

Rational choice theory, which is a subcategory of constructivism, specifically draws attention to opportunistic calculations of group members for benefit/advantage, as the main force behind the shaping of intra - and inter-ethnic consciousness and relations. Ethnicity is seen as a force which is used to mobilise people and/or as a means to gain support for and justify conflict with 'others', but not in itself the cause of conflict. The underlying causes of most violent conflicts are the political and economic factors, with politicians often being the actors behind the scene who emphasize these factors. The rhetoric of politicians is frequently accompanied with (promises of) material incentives such as access to valued resources. For this reason, it is postulated that the political manipulation of ethnicity is more likely to succeed under conditions of poverty, inequality, landlessness, and lack of political representation (Coetzee 2009). This study found all the above conditions manifested in Kibaale in various forms.

It seems likely that an affective attachment to ethnic groups is cultivated prior to, but in conjunction with, forging economic or political benefits, and these attachments are strengthened through political manipulation. This manipulation builds on such attachment by

either creating or amplifying fear of ‘others’ as a threat in order to attract certain responses that would advantage the politicians/elites. This study of Kibaale indicates that configurations of ethnic relations are to a high degree socially constructed through the above process in addition to historical factors. Political actors are evidently seen to be at manipulative play in the period before the violence of 2002, each side trumpeting the threat in ‘others’ as reason for standing up in unity against them. For the Banyoro, the threat is that of being (re)dominated by the non-Banyoro (now Bafuruki) while for the non-Banyoro it is that of being chased away from the area by the Banyoro. Thus the ‘we’-‘they’ dichotomy and exclusive ethnicity are consolidated.

The above dynamics support the view that primary ethnic affiliation is not a given. Rather, as other collective identities, ethnicity is an identity in flux – taking different forms depending on the direction/s of a wide array of factors at play (Bacova 1998; Owolabi 2003; Omotola 2009). Bacova’s observation below strongly captures this idea:

Ethnic identity is not given to an individual in advance and forever, it is not primordial, but is constructed during one’s development and can undergo changes during one’s life... its importance to an individual in different situations, at different times, in different cultures and communities can vary (Bacova 1998, p.37).

An example of this occurred after the Referendum of 1964 when the Banyoro of Kibaale emerged as different from other Banyoro and became accordingly identified by other fellow Banyoro as Bagangaizi. This development would not be possible if ethnic identity was a frozen attribute. It makes it clear that the demarcation of a ‘they’ is the very condition of possibility for the ‘we’ in collective identity (Hale 2004; Mouffe 2006), and that the ‘we’ in collective identity is shaped by continuous processes of boundary construction – often informed by the particular circumstances at the time. In line with rational choice theory, the empirical findings from Kibaale show that when ‘others’ are perceived as a threat to a certain group’s identity and existential needs, the boundaries become less porous and potentially antagonistic. According to Mouffe (2006:5) this happens “when others, who up to now were considered as simply different, start to be perceived as putting into question *our* identity and threaten *our* existence”

In Kibaale this ‘othering’ process was characterised by appeals to autochthony (Geschiere 2005; 2009) by the Banyoro who wanted to justify that they ‘belonged to the district (soil) more’ than the migrants who were now vividly labelled/ referred to by using the neologism *Bafuruki* (foreigners). This way, a conflictual dichotomy of those who presumably belonged and those who presumably belonged less was created. Geschiere explains that in such a dichotomy, the ‘sons of the soil’/ autochthons tend to make special claims that are taken to be self-evident, while at the same time constructing boundaries of belonging in a way that alienates others. In competition for resources, the setting “... inevitably raises the by now familiar issues of belonging: who is to profit from the new-style development projects [under decentralisation]? And, even more urgently, who can be excluded from them?” (*Ibid.*, P.25).

It also raises questions on who is eligible to stand for political positions and who is not, who should be voted and who should not be voted.

The ensuing socio-political establishment is characterised by Mamdani (2001a) as *ethnic citizenship* – where claims to resources are presented as customary rather than civic rights. The right to land, for example, is a customary one for ethnic citizens – those considered indigenous. Many Banyoro respondents referred to land as their collective ‘ancestral’ property while non-Banyoro only talked about having acquired it from someone through ‘constitutionally legitimate’ means. Mamdani (*Ibid.*) further observes that those who qualify to be indigenous are until today defined with colonial reference, as those who were resident on the territory at the time of colonisation. Paradoxically, in this politics of belonging, even people who have unquestionably lived in the area for a long time, become vulnerable to social and political exclusion in the emergent general affirmation of roots and origins as the basic criteria of citizenship and belonging (Geschiere and Jackson 2006; Dunn 2009; and Boas and Dunn 2013). Many non-Banyoro had lived in Kibaale since 1960s-70s without being called Bafuruki. It is until the 1990s that the ‘us’-‘them’ dichotomy was solidified in response to real and perceived threats. When a number of these threats are removed/ demystified after 2003, we see relations becoming more pluralist and the ‘us’-‘them’ categorisation going under.

The empirical findings on Kibaale in this study show that the manipulability of ethnicity by political actors occurs when identity politics is practiced. Identity politics create possibilities for politicians and (re)emergent ethnic pressure groups to opportunistically work on the pursuit of their own political advantage and gain. An example of this which flows from this study, is the eventual election of a non-Munyoro as District Chairman in 2002, which not only presented a climax trigger of violence, but can also be seen as a product of conflictual relations between the Banyoro and non-Banyoro, since his electoral victory was largely reactively brought about in an environment of fear of expulsion from Kibaale among the non-Banyoro. As a climax to the (re)construction of the boundaries of belonging through mutual othering, the 2002 elections were inevitably characterised by ethnic voting thus, by extension, deepening otherness and animosity between the two sides. But in all this, politicians and elites in ethnic pressure groups are seen to be the primary drivers of the ethnic reconfiguration through instrumentalisation or real threats that they amplify and creating other threats.

In the narratives of the people of Kibaale on the sources of conflict in their area, despite the acknowledgement that various factors are at play in the conflict, there is a semblance of consensus on the centrality of active identity politics. Identity politics by both Banyoro and non-Banyoro politicians and members of ethnic pressure groups significantly contributed to the polarisation between the Banyoro and the non-Banyoro. This convergence in thought explaining causes of the conflict was widely attributed to massive sensitisation initiatives by civil society organisations and religious bodies aimed at promoting conflict and peace-related awareness and co-existence in the area.



The empirical findings of this study on history, memory, and ethnic relations in Kibaale invite us to reconsider the sharp contrast that is often made in the literature between theories on primordialism and social reconstructionism. Many approaches to the two theories are bent on arguing for either of the two<sup>220</sup>, thus creating a dichotomy that misses out the important convergences and synergies discussed in this study. This study actually suggests that both theoretical frames have their value in research on ethnic conflict in plural communities. This confirms Hale's (2004) idea that neither primordialism nor constructivism by themselves can provide a satisfactory conceptual frame, but that they have great potential for cross-fertilisation to reinforce each other. One of the contributions of this study on Kibaale is that it provides empirical data which confirms Hale's theory that elements of both theories can indeed be brought together in an effort to understand the conflict as well as the possibilities for pluralism.

### 6.3 Pluralism in Kibaale and Theory

Various scholars (Parekh 2000; Connolly 2005; Mouffe 2005; Mouffe 2006; Eck; Parekh 2008; Shoup 2008; Mouffe 2014) have discussed conditions and interventions for pluralism to thrive in diverse societies. Their explanations often also entail a critique of approaches to co-existence that are deemed to be problematic. The main normative theories on co-existence which are in tension are **pluralism** on the one hand and **assimilation** on the other. Understanding these two perspectives is important in order to analyse the initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale and thereby assessing both the value of the theories and the pluralism value of the initiatives themselves. The initiatives for pluralism in Kibaale which have been discussed in this study, take place at three principal levels: individual/community, civil society, and government.

Assimilative approaches require of 'others' to adopt the culture of their hosts in order to live together – sometimes with an attendant expectation that the former drop their own culture (Forster *et al.* 2000). In other words, the challenges which are associated with difference are dealt with by homogenisation.

Forster *et al.* (2000) make a clear distinction between pluralism and **assimilation**. To them, assimilation involves the merging of minority and majority groups into one, with a common culture and identity. Much power is wielded by the numerically majority group especially in the presence of immigrant minority groups with less or no power to determine the terms of their living. This scenario could as well occur in favour of a minority group that has the advantage of force, such as in colonial encounters. In both cases, for its survival, the minority group has almost no option but to adopt the norms and traditions of the dominant group. Assimilation is thus seen as an ethnocentric, superiority-oriented and patronising imposition on minority peoples who struggle to retain their cultural and ethnic integrity (Alba and Nee 2003). It inconsiderably narrows room for difference by projecting the majority culture as the ideal whose adoption is the gate-pass to acceptability.

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<sup>220</sup>See Huntington (1997), Horowitz (2001), Hempel (2006), and Hale (2004; 2008).

Parekh (2000) suggests that assimilation may be acceptable if it comes as a deliberate choice of minorities, but that it should not be a necessary precondition for citizenship. Minorities may also claim the right to retain and promote/transmit their ways of life. To deny them this right would not only be morally and politically unjust but could also lead to resistance/tension. However, whereas forced assimilation is morally and politically unjust, we can also note that refusal to assimilate can lead to violence and exclusion. In Kibaale, it was revealed that one of the reasons for the Banyoro's resentment of the *Bafuruki* was their alleged gradual refusal to speak Runyoro and adopt/ use *empaako* (petnames) – which the Banyoro interpreted as arrogance. Exclusion and violence in the event of non-assimilation is especially possible given the strength of the majority or those who, for some reason, have the capacity to control others.

The central goal that drives assimilation is to force a sense of social harmony or integration by wiping out socio-cultural and political difference. While it is indeed important to bridge social distance to realise pluralism, such a process can be approached differently, namely in a manner that respects cultural diversity and freedom. It is important that the initiatives which are taken to bridge social gaps are chosen by those involved themselves, and not imposed upon them. This study also shows that when people accept to assimilate, they do so in order to fit in to avoid being excluded. But often when conditions can allow, people may revert to their preferred cultural practices. This is more reason for assimilation to be voluntary in respect for cultural freedom.

Accordingly, Varshney (2001), Putnam (1993), and Smits (2010) argue that one of the most important ways to negotiate difference for pluralism is to bridge social gaps/distance through measures like friendship, intermarriage, and different *forms of association* across ethnic lines. Over time such social connections reduce the possibility for ethnic violence to emerge. Varshney (2001) makes a distinction between 'everyday forms' and 'associational forms' of engagement. Associational forms include business associations, religious clubs, NGOs, sports clubs, trade unions, professional organisations, and cadre-based political parties while everyday forms consist of simple, routine interactions of life such as families of different ethnic groups visiting each other, eating together, and children being allowed to play together in the neighbourhood. He argues that associational forms are especially very important to counter manipulation by opportunistic elites and politicians. This is because such connections help people to bond, deconstruct divisive ethnic stereotypes, and pre-empt conflictual rumours.

**Assimilative initiatives** were mainly observed among individual/community practices such as: intermarriage, language adoption, friendship, and naming. However, this study shows that there is complex interaction between different initiatives both within and between levels, such that even assimilative practices may contribute to processes of democratic pluralism. For example, whereas ethnic intermarriages were observed to follow a patrilineal order – with the children adopting the ethnic identity of their fathers, this study suggests that

intermarriages can bring about ethnic hybridity which draws on cultural elements from both sides of the parents and can thus promote inter-cultural appreciation.

Intermarriage can take both the form of assimilation to dissolve the ‘other’ and that of democratic pluralism depending on the nature of its particular dynamics. Assimilation to dissolve the other happens where in intermarriages one group (often majority) subsumes the ‘other’ into its identity in a non-negotiable manner. This indicates lack of appreciation of difference – the ‘other’ is only acceptable when they become like ‘us’. On the other hand, intermarriage can be a powerful force in the direction of pluralism through reducing inter-ethnic distance, demystifying divisive ethnic stereotypes, and creating organic ethnic hybrids that help in thinning inter-ethnic boundaries. For example, some respondents explained that in the violence of 2002 some Banyoro families would hide Bakiga in their homes from being attacked because they viewed them as their in-laws, and vice versa. This kind of bonding is mainly seen to occur where there is cultural freedom within intermarriages. Generally, the study indicates that adoption of others’ cultural practices only occurs without problems where it is voluntary – where the recipient’s autonomy is respected, as already predicted by Sen (2006). A group may shun an otherwise acceptable practice, simply because of a feeling of being coerced to adopt it – the feeling that others are trying to express power over them. Indeed we can safely conclude that whereas some forms of assimilation (such as intermarriage) reinforce pluralism, overtime, pluralism can as well facilitate the occurrence of some forms of assimilation where cultural groups learn and freely adopt aspects from each thus constructing stable societies.

**Democratic pluralism** actively engages with difference by working out democratic ways to co-exist in diversity, and where need be, to compromise on conflictual elements through negotiation. One of the key pluralism theorists of recent times whose work extensively informs and is informed by this study is the political philosopher Chantal Mouffe. Her work is particularly important in framing the politics of difference – a vital element in understanding the dynamics of difference in Kibaale. The empirical findings of this study help to substantiate her theoretical literature and engage with emerging debates both from her work and that of other pluralism theorists such as Connolly (2005), Shoup (2008), Mamdani (2001a, 2001b, 2004), and Parekh (2008).

In Mouffe’s pluralism approach, difference does not necessarily translate into antagonism by which ‘others’ are looked upon as enemies to be destroyed, rather than “... adversaries<sup>221</sup> whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not questioned” (Mouffe 2006, p.7). The differences in ideas and cultural-political aspects can be negotiated to achieve common aspirations within a democratic framework. In what she refers to as *agonistic pluralism*, Mouffe cautions that pluralism does not mean that there should always be consensus. In her view, consensus must always be accompanied by dissent. In other words, it is ‘conflictual consensus’. What is required in efforts to promote pluralism, is to collectively work out a framework where dissent does not lead to violent conflict. Violent

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<sup>221</sup>Where adversary means “... the opponent with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of ‘liberty and equality for all’, while disagreeing about their interpretation” (Mouffe 2006, p.7).

conflict, she argues, results from failure to give democratic outlets for people's passions, thus leading to political articulation of essentialist identities (ethnicity in the case of Kibaale) and to confrontations over non-negotiable moral values.

As argued by Connolly (2005), Shoup (2008), Parekh (2008), and the Global Centre for Pluralism (2012), pluralist negotiations manifest a process of 'give and take' with compromises on both sides. This reinforces the views of Connolly (*ibid.*) and Eck that pluralism does not mean relativism. While the process of democratic pluralism suggests that pluralism often requires recognition for citizenship aspirations of each other, in some cases it is inferable that the principles of democracy which grant equal rights to all, may not always be appropriate to address tensions which are characterised by historical injustices (Mamdani 2001). Some groups (such as the Banyoro) may require special consideration such as affirmative action to curb their exclusive/intolerant actions borne of wounds from past experiences. But such special considerations ought to be handled very carefully not to seem to be sheer preferential treatment for an ethnic group – for that is bound to bring about resentment from the group/s that feel/s discriminated against.

In comparison of assimilation and democratic pluralism, the case of Kibaale shows that when assimilative (involuntary) approaches became dominant, they were found to breed conflict in the area through contributing to escalating resentment and stifling mutual appreciation. By contrast, democratic pluralism was seen to expand spaces for cultural diversity/ living with difference.

Another important conclusion of this study relates to the interface between individual/community, civil society, and government initiatives for pluralism. Considering the power of interactions that is reflected in the mutual reinforcement between the initiatives at the three levels, it is evident that pluralism requires multilevel measures that speak to each other (Varshney 2001). Neither of the levels was found to be sufficient on their own. Rather, where positive, each boosted the strength of the other. At the same time, negative initiatives which are initiated at any of the levels are likely to undo gains at other levels. For example, this study showed that the Government's measure to create new districts in order to 'separate' groups in tension, could create further divisions and undermine other cohesive measures through causing further divisions and reinforcing identity politics which are built around the notion of autochthony. By providing fertile ground for opportunistic political manipulation, creating new districts following ethnic logic could reverse the cohesion so far achieved through other initiatives.

On the other hand, whereas the findings indicate that it is crucial to consider the long term implications of pluralism initiatives, they also demonstrate that short term gains, which, if considered separately, may seem unsustainable, can actually be vital to consolidate and buy time to work out more long lasting measures. This is strongly exemplified by the co-existential gains of splitting political constituencies to cater for representation of the key parties amidst ethno-political tensions - although this measure raises questions about what might happen when new lines of difference emerge (considering that ethnicity is an identity

in flux) in the constituencies which were created to satisfy particular ethnic agitation. This study shows that, despite its fragile nature, the peace brought about by splitting political constituencies has created an environment that allows for sensitisation, creation of friendship across ethnic lines, and soul-searching to occur. Thus it is important to look into the pluralism significance of measures in the short term before dismissing them for their long-term implications.

Connolly (2005) argues that pluralism is not ‘absolute tolerance’ which he relates to relativism. In his view, pluralism sets limits to tolerance. He contends that pluralists are not relativists because “... our image of culture encourages us to embrace certain things in this particular place, to be indifferent to some, to be wary of others, and fight militantly against the continuation of yet others” (Connolly 2005, p.42). He grants that pluralism tries not to set limits to diversity. It will allow a wide diversity of religious faiths, sensual habits, ethnic traditions, gender practices, and several other forms of diversity. However, a ‘democratic pluralist’ will not allow the state to torture prisoners; parents to deprive their children of education; or society to oppress women. This view concurs with Mouffe (in an interview with Hansen and Sonnichsen 2014) who indicates that, although democratic pluralism should allow as many forms of political expression as possible, pluralists will not allow Nazi parties to take power or Muslim extremists to establish a theocratic state because these do not tolerate others’ also and evenly legitimate expressions.

In this sense, Connolly views a pluralistic culture as one “... in which pluralistic virtues of public accountability, self-discipline, receptive listening, gritted-teeth tolerance of some things you hate [dislike], and a commitment to justice are widespread” (Connolly 2005 p.43). He therefore believes that pluralism ought to operate within the bounds of civic virtues – which are the hallmark of a democratic dispensation. Among such values, but not limited to, Parekh (2000) highlights recognition of human worth and dignity, promotion of human well-being or of fundamental human interests, and equality. Mouffe (2005; 2006; 2014) further reduces the values of democratic pluralism to equality and liberty. But enlisting and abiding by these civic virtues does not necessarily resolve issues of value conflict. Parekh himself admits that such values deal with the most basic aspects of human life about which there is generally little serious disagreement and fail to guide us once we go beyond such aspects.

In addressing the contention about the role of conflict in pluralistic democratic societies, Mouffe (2005; 2006; 2014) suggests what she calls ‘agonistic democracy’. She argues that there are always bound to be political and other value differences some of which may neither be dealt with by consensus-oriented liberal democracy nor need to be addressed. In fact, she argues that conflict is important so as to allow other views and counter-hegemonies to emerge. What is ideal is to ensure that such conflicts are not antagonistic – and this is not necessarily through seeking consensus.

While consensus is no doubt necessary, it must be accompanied by dissent. Consensus is needed on the institutions that are constitutive of liberal democracy

and on the ethico-political values that should inform political association. But there will always be disagreement concerning the meaning of those values and the way they should be implemented. This consensus will therefore always be a 'conflictual consensus'. In a pluralist democracy, disagreements about how to interpret the shared ethico-political principles are not only legitimate but also necessary. They allow for different forms of citizenship identification and are the stuff of democratic politics (Mouffe 2006, p.8).

Mouffe observes that allowing room for disagreements creates outlets for passions thus foreclosing politics articulated around essentialist identities such as ethnicity. By passions, Mouffe (2014) means common affects which are mobilised in the political domain in the formation of the we/they forms of identification. She considers affect to be important in pluralism discourse because it plays a vital role in shaping collective forms of identification that often characterise political expression. In contrast to primordialist theory, Mouffe considers affect to be constructed and to be part of what any counter-hegemonic politics needs to change before any change in social order can occur. "A counter-hegemonic politics necessitates the creation of a different regime of desires and affects so as to bring about a collective will sustained by common affects able to challenge the existing order" (Mouffe 2014, p.157). She argues that agonistic pluralism should allow for such passions to be formed and pursued and that, if this is allowed, it will limit chances of essentialist antagonism.

An antagonistic dispensation is characterised by a setting where those who hold opinions different from those of another group are viewed as enemies that should be destroyed. By contrast, agonistic democracy envisages a pluralist framework where those with different views are taken as 'adversaries' with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of liberty and equality for all while differing in the interpretation of those principles. In contrast with antagonistic democracy, an agonistic dispensation requires that the legitimacy of the 'other's' right to defend their interpretation is respected but without degenerating into violence. Violent confrontations often emerge when values between different groups are framed as non-negotiable. Mouffe's configuration of pluralism is inconsonance with Connolly's (2005) view that unlike absolute tolerance<sup>222</sup>, pluralism invites diverse people to come with all their differences and angularities, while they share common civic demands of citizenship. However, this invitation is not open-ended. The civic demands of citizenship, including respect for liberty and equality (Mouffe 2006), dictate against expressions of one's/ a group's desires in ways that unreasonably stand in the way of the desires of others.

We can compare the above notion with Rawls' (1973) libertarian principle of justice which suggests that we ought to allow individuals and groups as much freedom as is compatible with an equal amount of freedom for all. Both Mouffe and Rawls refer to principles of liberty and equality. However, Mouffe (2005) faults Rawls for not acknowledging the hegemonic dimensions of politics. Rawls' failure is to insist on rational consensus, thereby foreclosing the possibility of legitimate dissent. This, Mouffe argues, could well be a recipe for local

<sup>222</sup>This refers to the sort of tolerance where everything passes in the name of 'appreciating difference'.

conflict and resistance. “We have to acknowledge the pluralist character of the world – the fact that, contrary to what many liberals postulate, the world is a ‘pluriverse’, not a universe” (Mouffe 2005, p.231). In Mouffe’s view (in an interview with Carpentier and Cammaerts 2006), every social order is a hegemony in the sense that it is a result of a specific political articulation as an expression of a particular structure of power relations. ‘Adversaries’ who have different interpretations of shared principles will fight for their interpretations to become hegemonic. By implication, no social order can ever be final for it can always be challenged by a counter-hegemonic move. Thus Mouffe considers ‘conflictual consensus’ to be healthy for the politics of democratic pluralism.

Mouffe’s notion of agonistic pluralism is quite instructive to understand why violent conflict emerged in Kibaale. The identity politics in Kibaale which climaxed to violence was characterised by antagonistic political mobilisation around collective identities that either delegitimised or excluded the ‘other’. The Banyoro claimed that *Bafuruki* were not welcome to compete for certain political positions, implying that the political rights of the latter in the area were less than those of the former. The argument in favour of Banyoro political privilege was based on ‘indigeneity’ and, by extension, they claimed that there was a need for affirmative action to prevent domination by ‘foreigners’. The demand for affirmative action was justified on the basis of historical injustices which severely disadvantaged the Banyoro. On the other hand, the *Bafuruki* rallied around their ‘foreigner’ status to claim their political space as an avenue to access other socio-economic goods from which they felt they were being excluded by their Banyoro ‘hosts’.

To a large extent, the views of the Kibaale residents show that the agitations of both camps were positioned on essentialised poles which resulted from a failure to find alternative democratic outlets for political expression. The Banyoro did not support claims for equality nor of liberty for all. The *Bafuruki* could only engage in political expression in ways that the Banyoro allowed them to. As such, the Banyoro seemed to push for a hegemony with no space for a counter-hegemony. In response, the *Bafuruki* pushed for change, but also on ethnic lines through bloc voting. The violent attacks of 2002 were reported to have been initiated by the Banyoro in protest of the electoral victory of a *Mufuruki* who was part of the now enemy group (non-Banyoro/ foreigners). The violent confrontation between the two groups can be seen as a result of suffocated passions for political expression or/and fears of such a move. This example also concurs with Mouffe’s (2005; 2006; 2014) view that every social order is hegemonic order, although hegemonies may differ in kind.

However, Mouffe’s theory is rather generic and as such does not explain the circumstances under which groups would come to perceive each other as ‘enemies’ or ‘adversaries’. She indicates the need to further study the role of affect in politics – how group affects develop and how they can be shaped in an ‘adversarial’ direction (Mouffe 2014). This knowledge gap can be presented as an area for further research (Jones 2014). This empirical study on Kibaale suggests that Mouffe’s ideas on agonistic pluralism could be enriched by insights from both primordialism and constructivism. As illustrated earlier, primordialism provides useful

insights on the roots of ethnic emotional attachment/ affect and constructivism adds to this by explaining the dynamics through which affects are created and consolidated in ‘othering’ processes.

Varshney’s (2001) explanation of forms of cross-ethnic engagement sheds light on how bonding/ attachment occurs and how it happens even between groups. His distinction of everyday forms of engagement and associational forms was reflected in the pluralism initiatives in Kibaale where I observed that friendships, playing together, and intermarriage are playing an important role in bonding people and that such interaction facilitates and is facilitated by higher forms of association in churches and civil society organisations. The above observation partly helps to answer Mouffe’s (2014) question on how adversarial affects can be shaped. Geschiere’s (2009) explanation of the politics of belonging, which involve processes of inclusion and exclusion is also useful to account for the transformation of ethnic affinities and boundaries. The rich qualitative data from this study demonstrates the above processes/ dynamics more vividly to offer more solid ground for appreciating and furthering pluralism theories.

The other observation about Mouffe’s theory is that she does not sufficiently explain why, in practice, we would expect people to agree on equality and liberty for all. “What of those individuals or groups who do not accept these twin principles?” (Jones 2014, p.27). In Kibaale, for example, some members of MBC remain adamant that non-Banyoro should never take the position of LC5 Chairperson. How does agonistic pluralism help us to address such cases? Whereas the principles of liberty and equality are generally very important for pluralism, there are circumstances where violence can possibly only be averted through unequal treatment – at least in the short run. For instance, if the Ugandan Government did not intervene in 2002 by asking a legitimately elected LC5 Chairperson to step down, violence was bound to escalate in Kibaale. Yet this intervention violated both the principle of equality and liberty. In the political reality of Kibaale there were circumstances which temporarily overrode principles of equality and liberty in order to prevent violent confrontation. ‘Temporarily’ because the case of Kibaale shows that, for people coming from moments of sharp divisions, it can take time to appreciate Mouffe’s two principles. This observation re-echoes my earlier observation that the pluralism value of some ‘controversial’ short term pluralism initiatives has to be appreciated in light of their transitional significance, even when they seem contrary to democratic principles of equality and liberty.

Putnam (1993) indicates that associational formations across ethnic lines are ‘social capital’<sup>223</sup>, that has the potential to build trust and provide a good foundation for other initiatives for co-existence to work. This social capital helps offset certain dynamics such as hatred and suspicion in the community that the state may not be able to effectively address. Nevertheless, both Varshney and Putnam acknowledge the need for community level forms

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<sup>223</sup>According to Putnam, Social Capital “... refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (1993, p.167).



of cooperation (civic engagement) to go together with state interventions for pluralism. In his *theory of conflict and cooperation in counterbalanced states*, Shoup (2008) argues that the interaction between community and state level initiatives should be in such a way that the two levels speak to and reinforce each other. In a ‘counter-balanced’<sup>224</sup> multi-ethnic setting like Kibaale, Shoup holds that at the state level of promoting cooperation and preventing violent conflict, political institutions that insulate the political authority of the indigenous group without fully alienating the economically dominant group tend to produce more stable long term outcomes than institutions that allow the economically dominant group to ‘encroach’ on the political sphere. This study shows that the above measure would indeed be a difficult balance to strike in Uganda, especially because it goes counter to the republican democratic ideals which are enshrined in Uganda’s Constitution.

Shoup implies that the rules of democracy are insufficient to enforce the norms which underlie inter-ethnic bargains. Shoup thus emphasises the need for affirmative action policies for the indigenous group in order to minimise the utility of ethnic manipulation by extremists. Such policies would include: expansion of higher education opportunities, language policies that favour the language of the indigenous group, economic incentives that promote economic ventures by the indigenous group, openings for government jobs and state economic enterprises. Mamdani puts it even more categorically, and states that “by itself, majority rule provides no guarantee for [numerical] minorities that fear majority domination ... Majority rule can be turned into a bedrock for the domination over fragile minorities ... – a democratic despotism” (2001, p.281). However, the insulation/ affirmative action should not simply be on the grounds that a group is indigenous. This would create categories of citizens who belong less and those who belong more. Affirmative action ought to be aimed at addressing injustices, especially historic injustices in the case of Kibaale and other societies with such problematic historical experiences.

Because local politics is one of the important arenas in which ethnic divisions are played out, it is interesting to consider the political philosopher Arend Lijphart’s (1969) classic work on *Consociational Democracy* in engaging with sharp ethnic divisions at a political level to address loopholes of democracy. Lijphart argues that ‘deeply divided societies’ require a different kind of democratic arrangement to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy. To this end, the emphasis is on cooperation and coalition. As encouraged by Varshney and Putnam, the aim of consociational democratic practices “is to encourage inter-group trust by instilling a culture of co-operation which originates with political elites and ‘trickles down’ to the community level” (Yakinthou 2009, p.11). Such cooperative measures would be effective in upholding a sense of inclusion among the various camps, thus preventing antagonistic politics.

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<sup>224</sup>Shoup defines a counterbalanced society as one where one ethnic community demands political priority on the basis of ethnic myths of indigenesness while another ethnic group that is ‘not indigenous’ controls the majority of the economic assets. Such a socio-political structure can be seen in the relationship between the Banyoro (the indigenous group) and the Bafuruki who are viewed as economically dominant.

In Kibaale, this study showed that political cooperation across ethnic lines as theorised by Lijphart has significantly impacted on politics and ethnic relations in the district. In politics, it made it difficult for any politician to mobilise along ethnic lines since many candidates had campaigners from both sides of the ethnic divide. This strategy helped to address fears of essentialised exclusion if a particular candidate was elected. There is some theoretical convergence between Lijphart's consociational democracy and Mouffe's agonistic democracy to be observed here. Mouffe observes that pluralist democracy is "endangered by the growing marginalisation of entire groups whose status as an 'underclass' practically puts them outside the political community" (Mouffe 2006, p.6). This study shows that feelings of exclusion/ marginalisation are a recipe for conflict and violence. The political coalitions transform political competition from a setting of competing with an enemy to that of adversaries with each acknowledging the legitimacy of the other's interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality. When one side wins, there is certainly some exclusion involved, but not along essentialised identities that would attract violent reactions due to feelings of being marginalised for their identity. The failure of a particular camp's political articulation to become hegemonic does not foreclose the possibility of its later counter-hegemonic emergence.

However, even within the cooperation, it still remains apparent in Kibaale that expressions of liberty and equality are within limits. The non-Banyoro cannot as yet compete for the highest district position of Chairperson LC5. Some non-Banyoro opinion leaders said that considering the many other changes that have occurred in the area, they still hope that this situation will change. This observation reinforces my earlier argument that some changes for pluralism in societies follow moments of violent conflicts and sharp divisions which may be deeply entangled in history and may take time to occur. It may not be possible to immediately switch to a totally pluralist arrangement. In between, there is need for temporary/ transitory compromises and consensus to be made.

The explanations of the people of Kibaale on how they try to live together in difference and prevent the re-emergence of violent conflict, such as that of 2002, further serve to illustrate that ethnic relations are to a large extent socially constructed. Just as inter-ethnic conflict is not merely a revival of 'age-old hatred' but a product of inter-ethnic interpretations and engagements, inter-ethnic peace/ co-existence is neither a given nor an accident. The findings indicate that the improved relations in Kibaale between 2003 and 2014 result from a number of initiatives which involved compromises, mutual understanding, and restraint among the people of Kibaale together with Government interventions.

Through the lenses of rational choice theory, it can be argued that negotiations of difference and the efforts to agree on compromises are still informed by people's calculations of benefit/ advantage. The calculations succeed to bring about a different effect (co-existence, not violent conflict) because this time round, as suggested by Sen (2006) and Mouffe (2006), they try to accommodate others' interests and are informed by the realisation by each side that catering

for the others' interests is important to meet its own interests. Here the notion of interdependence plays an important role.

The other important contribution of this study to the pluralism discourse is the illustration of the complexities which are involved in people's engagement with difference and the dynamics that contribute to co-existence in Kibaale, which may speak to other relevant cases. One of the pervasive questions about Kibaale that this study addresses is 'why people who had lived together with their ethnic differences for over forty years had to later fight each other' (Schelnberger 2005; Republic of Uganda 2006). This question is based on an imagination that the prior period of co-existence is an indicator of the possibility of co-existence even after the subsequent conflictual period (1991-2002). However, this study established that it does not follow that the absence of inter-ethnic conflict in a multi-ethnic community (as is said of Kibaale 1960s – 1980s) necessarily indicates pluralism. Indeed, as argued by Galtung (1996), pluralism is not simply reflected by the absence of violent conflict. According to Galtung (1996), there may be no physical violence yet there exist social structures that harbour other forms of structural violence. He refers to this as 'negative peace'.

This study shows that there are indications that co-existence in Kibaale before and after 2002 was grounded on different sets of conditions that are significant in the pluralism discourse. From the 1960s up to the 80s, 'co-existence' was based on the circumstantial readiness of the non-Banyoro to live by the terms of their hosts – to adopt the *empaako* (pet-names), learn Runyoro, and only take on leadership positions as and when allowed by the Banyoro. This set of affairs tends towards *assimilation*.

As argued earlier, whereas I note the distinction between pluralism and assimilation, I acknowledge that there is sometimes need for some level of assimilation to be able to live with a majority group that is privileged with more power to exercise control over 'others'. And, indeed, there would be a need for the socio-economically disadvantaged group to communicate with the powerful 'others' (read hosts) – hence the need for language assimilation. This partly explains why non-Banyoro had to assimilate in an earlier stage. But this might also mean that the weaker group accepts to adopt some practices which they may not have accepted if they had more power. On the basis of this observation I think it would be too hasty to say that there was a solid base for co-existence in the period from the 1960s to the 80s. The relational terms are later overturned when the economic and social status of many of the non-Banyoro changed and then they start to assertively claim citizenship space on their own terms. At this point, we notice that the Banyoro explicitly articulated their hitherto subtly asserted higher citizenship entitlements through an active appeal to claims of autochthony which was partly informed by their consciousness of historical marginalisation.

After the violent conflict of 2002, the ways in which difference is negotiated is seen to transform into a more inclusive trajectory. As argued by Connolly (2005), Shoup (2008), Parekh (2008), and the Global Centre for Pluralism (2012), the period is characterised by a process of 'give and take' with compromises on both sides. Ensuing from interfacing

multilevel (individual/community, civil society, and Government) initiatives, even though differences still remain, there is mutual recognition for the authenticity and citizenship aspirations of each other. This approach echoes Mouffe's (2006) agonistic pluralism, especially in view of respecting the legitimacy of the 'other's' right to defend their interpretation/ aspirations. Expression of difference is allowed an outlet but within a framework of some degree of common allegiance to liberty and equality.

The pluralism initiatives in Kibaale also support the view that the practice of pluralism is different from relativism (Connolly 2005; Eck<sup>225</sup>). Pluralism would not end at inviting people as they are with all their angularities to live together. As framed by Mouffe (*Ibid.*), offering such an open invitation would be sheer romanticisation of difference. The engagement that ensues may in some cases necessitate give and take trade-offs without which co-existence may be rendered impossible. In further indication that pluralism does not connote relativism, as explained by Connolly (*ibid.*), pluralism would even necessitate resisting expressions of difference that lead to an unjustified marginalisation or exclusion of 'others'. In Kibaale, we notice a move away from (and both in-group and out-group resistance to) radical expressions of ethnic desires by ethnic pressure groups – such as through threatening to chase away *Bafuruki* (foreigners). This study shows that such a move results after complex interactions over time, which indicates the multi-layered nature of pluralism.

In Kibaale we see that pluralism initiatives at different levels (individual/community, civil society, and Government) frequently overlap and reinforce each other. It is not helpful to rank them in order of significance. Whereas, for example, many people reported that Government initiatives of splitting constituencies have significantly contributed to improve inter-ethnic relations, this has partly succeeded because local politicians were willing to cooperate and many local people had been sensitised by various players about the dangers of ethnic politics and the value of cooperation. The power of the interactions between the initiatives at the various levels demonstrates the importance of simultaneously promoting pluralism at different levels for each initiative to reinforce the other. Given the complexity of negotiating difference, on their own, each of the levels of pluralism initiatives is insufficient in bringing about the possibility to make pluralism flourish. More importantly, the initiatives should be able to speak to each other (strategically communicate) for synergy, not moving in counter/ opposed directions.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for further Research**

This study raises pointers for further research that is deemed important to enrich the pluralism discourse. These include:

- i) Studying other cases of ethnic conflict in Uganda, Africa and beyond to ascertain the external validity of the findings from this study based on Kibaale District. We are reminded by Plaw (2005) and the Global Centre for Pluralism (2012) that when it comes to pluralism, there is no one size that fits all. As such, there is always a need to be sensitive to context. It can be observed that some of the pluralism initiatives used

<sup>225</sup>[http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what\\_is\\_pluralism.php](http://pluralism.org/pluralism/what_is_pluralism.php) viewed 3rd March 2010.

in Kibaale have also been tried elsewhere. These include intermarriage, friendship across ethnic lines, peace dialogues, division of political power, sensitisation, and so on. To strengthen the value of these initiatives and to understand their conditions for effectiveness in enhancing pluralism, it would be helpful to study them in other social contexts.

- ii) Analysing ethnic attachment and - relations with the help of new affect theories beyond primordialism. This study showed that primordialism can be helpful to understand emotional attachment to ethnic identity, but I believe that the growing body of literature on what has been called the ‘affective turn’ (Mouffe, 2014) would provide deeper insights. For instance, Mouffe (2014) has pointed to possible insights from Freudian group psychology and from the philosopher Spinoza on how affect is constructed. The reason why affect is an important subject in pluralism discourse is because, to be able to imagine more pluralist social relations/ engagement, we have to understand why people hold certain affects and whether/how they can be re-constituted where there is need for a different social order.
- iii) Analysing other cases to further understand the intersections and complementarities between social constructivism and primordialism. One of the theoretical contributions of this study was to show that the two theories can speak to each other in some respects. This observation puts into question the dichotomisation of the two theories as though they were mutually exclusive – which does not help to explain ethnic conflict and pluralism. The dominant assumption of a dichotomy needs further engagement, based on analysis of more cases.
- iv) Further interrogation of the relationship between political decentralisation and pluralism. The Kibaale case shows that the way in which decentralisation was executed is conflictual but also instrumental in responding to varied, diverse interests. In order to understand the dynamics of pluralism, it would be interesting to explore the conditions under which decentralisation can achieve the goal of extending services close to the people without triggering ethnic conflicts over local resources and violent identity politics.
- v) From the study of the dynamics of conflict and pluralism in Kibaale District, we notice that there are key players such as ethnic pressure groups’ leaders, politicians, civil society agents and religious leaders. The study shows that these are very important in shaping the character of social relations. Towards the end of this study, I learnt about the methodology of Social Network Analysis (SNA) through training from the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR). I believe that this approach would be useful for a more detailed study of the power relations between the different players (Borgatti et al. 2013) hence providing a richer understanding of the relations that ensue.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

**Jimmy Spire Ssentongo** was born on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1979 in Kampala, Uganda. He received a Diploma in Philosophy from the Philosophicum of the Apostles of Jesus in Nairobi and a Bachelors of Philosophy from Urbaniana University in Italy. He later acquired a MA in Ethics and Public Management from Makerere University in 2007 and a Master of Science in Education for Sustainability from London South Bank University in 2011 on a Common Wealth Scholarship. He won the Dean's Prize for overall outstanding achievement on the programme from London South Bank University. He started his PhD research at the University of Humanistic Studies in 2010 on a Humanistic Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (HIVOS) scholarship under the International Pluralism Knowledge Programme.

Jimmy has taught Ethics and Research at Uganda Martyrs University, a Catholic-founded private university in Uganda, since 2007. Here he has deputised the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for three years (2012-2015) and currently heads the Center for African Studies. He also taught ethics at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (Uganda) and at Makerere University (Uganda) on part time basis.

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## SAMENVATTING

Vertaling: Caroline Suransky en Sigrid Dekker

### De onderzoekscontext

Een van de grootste uitdagingen voor mensen is te leven met alle verschillen in de samenleving. De geschiedenis getuigt van vele gewelddadige conflicten en vormen van onderdrukking als gevolg van intolerantie ten opzichte van verschillen in ras, mening, religie, ideologie, etniciteit enzovoorts. In Afrika spelen etnische verschillen een belangrijke rol in dergelijke sociale conflicten. Hieraan liggen diverse redenen ten grondslag. Etniciteit wordt gezien als een belangrijk identiteitskenmerk. Dit kan deels verklaard worden door de historische ‘verdeel en heers-privileges’ die de kolonisten toekenden aan verschillende bevolkingsgroepen, welke in verschillende vormen werden overgenomen en voortgezet door postkoloniale overheden, waardoor de onderlinge verschillen zich verder verankerden.

Duidelijke voorbeelden hiervan zijn: de etnische conflicten in 1994 tussen Hutu’s en Tutsi’s in Rwanda, waarin meer dan een miljoen mensen omkwamen; de massale gewelddadigheden na de verkiezingen in Kenya in 2007 en het voortdurend conflict tussen de Nuer en de Dinka in Zuid Soedan. Deze situaties maken duidelijk dat het belangrijk is dergelijke conflicten te onderzoeken – en ook de mogelijkheden die pluralisme bieden in deze complexe contexten.

Ook in Oeganda, het land waar ik vandaan kom, spelen etnische conflicten en spanningen een rol. Eén van de regio’s die gebukt gaat onder problemen die deze gespannen complexe etnische verhoudingen met zich meebrengen, is het Kibaale district in het westen van het land. Dit conflict, dat dateert uit de periode waarin Oeganda zich losmaakte van de Britse overheersing in 1962, was al complex vanwege een koloniale nalatenschap van antagonisme, en werd in het postkoloniale tijdperk verder gevoed door manipulerende politici en leden van de plaatselijke elitebevolking. In het koloniale tijdperk coöpteerde de Britse overheersers de Baganda bevolkingsgroep in hun gevecht tegen de Banyoro bevolking (de oorspronkelijke bewoners van Kibaale). Na een lange en verwoestende oorlog waarin de Banyoro in 1899 werden verslagen, verbanden de Britten de koning van de Banyoro en schonken zij een deel van het grondgebied van de Banyoro (inclusief Kibaale) aan de Baganda. Er werd een vorm van sub-imperialistische onderdrukking van de Banyoro geïntroduceerd, ondersteund door een beleid van ‘deculturalisatie’. Dit duurde voort tot 1964.

Tot op de dag van vandaag ervaren veel Banyoro in Kibaale de collectieve en pijnlijke herinneringen aan hun onderdrukking door zowel de Britse- als de Baganda-overheersers. Een gevoel van slachtofferschap speelt nog altijd een belangrijke rol in de onderlinge verhoudingen tussen de Banyoro en de ‘anderen’ die in de loop der tijd in dit gebied zijn komen wonen (lokaal aangeduid als *Bafuruki* – hetgeen letterlijk ‘buitenlanders’ betekent). De historische gebeurtenissen hebben ertoe geleid dat de Banyoro zeer op hun hoede zijn. Zo ontstond in 1990 onder hen de angst voor een nieuwe periode van onderdrukking, toen het aantal migranten in de Kibaale-regio ineens sterk toenam en zij ook politieke functies gingen bekleden. Op hun beurt vreesden de nieuwe migranten dat zij, op basis van hun etnische

achtergrond, uitgezet zouden worden. In deze context groeide aan beide zijden een gevoel van etnisch bewustzijn, wat leidde tot etnisch gebaseerd politiek stemgedrag en uiteindelijk in 2002 ook tot etnisch geweld, nadat iemand die niet behoorde tot de Banyoro werd gekozen tot districtshoofd. Hoewel sinds die tijd de spanningen weer wat zijn afgenomen, spelen deze moeizame verhoudingen op de achtergrond nog steeds een rol. In deze omstandigheden rijst de vraag wat de mogelijkheden zijn voor pluralisme in Kibaale.

### **Focus van het onderzoek**

Dit onderzoek beoogt meer inzicht te genereren in *hoe de inwoners van het Kibaale-district zelf het slepende etnische conflict in hun samenleving ervaren; hoe zij de mogelijkheden die pluralisme zou kunnen bieden zelf inschatten, en hoe deze casus kan bijdragen aan kennisontwikkeling over etnische conflicten en pluralisme*. Deze onderstaande subvragen sturen het onderzoek:

- i) Hoe worden de belangrijke historische ontwikkelingen in de geschiedenis van etnische relaties in het Kibaale district geduid door de inwoners van het gebied?
- ii) Hoe ervaren lokale etnische bevolkingsgroepen in Kibaale de huidige conflicten in hun district?
- iii) Hoe manifesteren de verschillende wetenschappelijke theorieën over pluralisme zich in de concrete initiatieven die genomen worden ter bevordering van vreedzaam samenleven in Kibaale en hoe waarderen de inwoners van het district deze initiatieven?
- iv) Hoe verhouden de onderzoeksresultaten van deze studie zich tot bestaande theorieën over etnische conflicten en pluralisme?

### **De theoretische en methodologische basis van het onderzoek**

Onderzoek naar etniciteit wordt in het algemeen gedomineerd door enerzijds constructivistische en anderzijds primordialistische theoretische perspectieven. Tegenwoordig blijkt een voorkeur te bestaan voor constructivisme en is de belangstelling voor primordialisme afgenomen. Dit onderzoek laat echter zien dat, hoewel op zich constructivisme inhoudelijk meer overtuigt, de twee theoretische perspectieven elkaar niet persé uitsluiten.

Het constructivisme gaat er vanuit dat de sociale werkelijkheid niet gegeven is, maar altijd geconstrueerd. Dit wordt bijvoorbeeld duidelijk in het werk van Mouffe en Mamdani. Constructivisten benadrukken dat etnische conflicten - net als etniciteit zelf - sociaal geconstrueerd worden in een politieke context van hegemonie, waarin gestreden wordt voor het eigen voordeel in de moderne staat. Dit betekent dat als we onderlinge etnische verhoudingen beter willen begrijpen, we ons moeten richten op processen van (de)constructie en in het bijzonder op de actieve rol die *'social agents'* hierin spelen.

Voorstanders van primordialisme beweren dat *'extended'* familieverbanden van doorslaggevende betekenis zijn in de cohesie van etnische groepen. De leden van deze groepen putten emotionele kracht uit deze familierelaties. Ook benadrukken theorieën van primordialisme dat etnisch geladen conflicten bijzonder hardnekkig zijn en diepgeworteld in



eeuwenoude antagonismen en haatgevoelens. In tegenstelling tot wat vaak beweerd wordt, geven voorstanders van primordialisme toe dat etnische identiteiten inderdaad sociaal geconstrueerd worden. Zij gaan er echter vanuit dat etnische groepsrelaties stevig zijn ingebed in veronderstelde of daadwerkelijke familieverbanden en nog meer verstevigd worden door het onderhouden van culturele banden. Deze banden zijn sterk affectief geladen en moeilijk te veranderen. De leden van etnische groeperingen ervaren hun lidmaatschap van de groep dikwijls als een natuurlijk gegeven. De uitleg die primordialisme geeft over de sterke emotionele lading die mensen ervaren ten aanzien van hun verwantschap met de eigen etnische groep, biedt een waardevol inzicht. Ondanks het feit dat etnische relaties dikwijls aantoonbaar door de elitebevolking worden geconstrueerd en gemobiliseerd in hun eigen voordeel, blijft de vraag bestaan waarom etniciteit als sociale identiteit zo gemakkelijk te manipuleren is. Het gaat zelfs zo ver dat mensen reageren op veronderstelde en daadwerkelijke dreigingen terwijl ze er persoonlijk niets bij te winnen hebben.

Dit onderzoek poogt de twee theorieën met elkaar in gesprek te brengen. Beide theorieën bieden namelijk waardevolle inzichten in een onderzoek naar pluralisme. Een aanwijzing daarvoor vinden we bijvoorbeeld in Mouffe's ideeën over 'agonistisch pluralisme', dat zich richt op een voortdurende reconstructie van machtsverhoudingen die zich goed verhouden tot democratische waarden. Dat wil zeggen: tot vrijheid en gelijkheid. Maar om de mogelijkheden voor het realiseren van pluralisme te midden van gespannen etnische verhoudingen te verkennen, is het eerst nodig beter te begrijpen wat mensen motiveert de banden met de eigen etnische groep te verstevigen. In deze context stelt Mouffe dat, in het aangaan van dergelijke relaties, 'affect' en 'verlangen' een belangrijke rol spelen. Dit is de reden waarom inzichten op basis van primordialisme gezien kunnen worden als een aanvulling op het constructivisme.

De onderzoeksmethodologie, die wordt besproken in hoofdstuk 2, gaat uit van een constructivistisch ontologisch perspectief en een '*interpretivist*' epistemologische benadering. Hierin wordt verondersteld dat mensen eerder sociaal interacteren en reageren op wat zij *geloven* dat 'echt' is, dan op wat objectief als 'echt' beschouwd kan worden. Om die reden besteedt het onderzoek speciale aandacht aan de subjectieve percepties en betekenisgeving door respondenten, door middel van kwalitatieve onderzoeksbenaderingen. De kracht van het onderzoek ligt in de hoge kwaliteit van de gegenereerde empirische data van en over uiteenlopende 'stakeholders'. Deze onderzoeksresultaten kunnen elementen van bestaande theorieën zowel bevestigen als verdiepen.

### **Onderzoeksresultaten**

In hoofdstuk 3 staan de onderzoeksresultaten centraal met betrekking tot de betekenis die de bewoners van Kibaale zelf toekennen aan belangrijke historische ontwikkelingen in de onderlinge etnische relaties. De bevindingen laten zien dat er sprake is van een collectief geheugen van onderdrukking van de Banyoro door de Baganda. Deze perceptie zorgt voor gespannen verhoudingen met etnische 'anderen', in een sfeer van verdachtmaking, paranoia, angst en wantrouwen.

Het zou aannemelijk zijn dat dit ‘collectief geheugen’ en de pijn die daarmee geassocieerd wordt, het moeilijk zou maken pluralisme te bewerkstelligen. Toch blijkt dat we ook niet zonder meer kunnen concluderen dat etnische exclusiviteit en conflict onvermijdelijk zijn. Wat wel duidelijk wordt, is dat dit sluimerende conflict kan opspelen in omstandigheden waarin pijnlijke herinneringen worden opgeroepen en waarin oude angsten opleven. Bijvoorbeeld als deze gecultiveerd worden door opportunisten die de herinneringen aan het verleden manipuleren om er zelf beter van te worden. Een dergelijke situatie ontstond in 2002 en wederom in 2006 toen, na veertig jaar van min of meer vreedzame onderlinge verhoudingen, gewelddadige conflicten weer de kop opstaken in Kibaale.

De betekenis die de bewoners van Kibaale geven aan etnische conflicten in hun gebied wordt besproken in hoofdstuk 4. Belangrijke factoren die deze conflicten aanwakkeren en in stand houden betreffen volgens hen: slepende historische onrechtvaardigheden, pijnlijke herinneringen die gemakkelijk uitvergroete vormen aannemen, de explosieve bevolkingsgroei onder migranten, de veronderstelde bevoorrechtiging van migranten, de veronderstelde arrogantie van migranten (die zichtbaar wordt in hun assertiviteit, taalgebruik, nieuwe benamingen voor locaties in het gebied), de wijdverspreide armoede onder de Banyoro, de rol die de Kagadi Kibaale Community radiozender speelde in de communicatie, de rol van de elitebevolking en de etnische belangengroepen. De onderzoeksresultaten laten zien dat politieke actoren etnisch geladen conflicten manipuleren door middel van ‘*identity politics*’. Verschillende factoren maakten het mogelijk dat zij opportunistisch te werk konden gaan in hun streven naar politieke winst en eigenbelang. Uiteindelijk werd in 2002 een kandidaat die niet tot de Banyoro-bevolkingsgroep behoorde tot districtshoofd verkozen. Deze gebeurtenis kan niet alleen gezien worden als de aanleiding voor hoogoplopend geweld, maar ook als de uitkomst van langlopende conflictueuze verhoudingen tussen de Banyoro en de niet-Banyoro. De gestoorde verhoudingen zorgden ervoor dat de verkiezingsoverwinning tot stand kwam in een klimaat waarin mensen bang waren vanwege hun etnische achtergrond te worden uitgezet uit Kibaale. Ondanks het feit dat er meerdere belangrijke factoren gelijktijdig in het spel waren, is de algemene consensus dat actieve ‘*identity politics*’ een centrale rol speelde in het proces van de polarisatie tussen de Banyoro en de niet-Banyoro.

Het feit dat het Kibaale District in 1991 gecreëerd werd, in een poging aandacht te schenken aan de grieven van de Banyoro, wordt gezien als de meest problematische ontwikkeling. Na de oprichting van het district ontstond een ‘*politics of belonging*’. Een analyse hiervan maakte duidelijk dat dit voor een politiek klimaat zorgde waarin autochtoon burgerschap een bevoorrechte plaats innam. De strijd die zich vervolgens ontwikkelde omtrent politieke benoemingen en privileges in het district werd gekenmerkt door claims van eerste- en tweederangs burgerschap, waarin sommigen meer en anderen minder morele aanspraken zouden kunnen maken. In deze situatie ontstond veel geweld, vooral aangewakkerd door leden van de elitebevolking en lokale politici. Deze conclusie bevestigt constructivistische theorieën en - tot op zekere hoogte - ook de ‘*rational choice theory*’.

In het complexe proces waarin spanningen en geweld hoogtij vierden werd duidelijk dat de onderlinge verhoudingen sociaal geconstrueerd werden in een complex samenspel van factoren en door de directe invloed van persoonlijk belanghebbenden. De betekenis die primordialisme toekent aan de latente aanwezigheid van de emotioneel geladen betekenis die mensen ervaren ten aanzien van etnische verwantschap, kan helpen verklaren waarom etniciteit een relatief eenvoudige factor is om politiek te mobiliseren. Een politiek appèl op onderlinge verschillen die mensen niet zo belangrijk vinden, zou immers weinig succesvol zijn. Tegelijkertijd laat het gegeven dat de etniciteitsfactor verschillende vormen aannam in verschillende historische periodes zien dat etnische verhoudingen doorlopend gereconstrueerd worden.

Hoofdstuk 5 bespreekt de initiatieven die in Kibaale zijn genomen om pluralisme te bevorderen. Om de complexe en meerlagige vormen van pluralisme bevorderende processen in kaart te brengen zijn deze initiatieven in dit onderzoek in drie categorieën verdeeld: individueel/gemeenschap, *'civil society'* en de overheid. Deze drie niveaus interacteren op een complexe manier: ze versterken elkaar of werpen juist barrières op in de bevordering van pluralisme. Gezien de complexiteit van de onderlinge sociale verschillen en het belang van strategische communicatie, blijkt het belangrijk te zijn pluralisme tegelijkertijd op zowel verschillende manieren als -niveaus te versterken. In dit hoofdstuk worden de initiatieven op twee manieren geduid: democratisch pluralisme en assimilatie. Hoewel assimilerende initiatieven in de literatuur meestal gepresenteerd worden als tegenovergesteld aan de principes van vrijheid en gelijkheid, van democratisch pluralisme, constateert dit onderzoek dat een aantal assimilerende maatregelen wel degelijk kunnen bijdragen aan het floreren van democratisch pluralisme. Dit onderzoek laat bijvoorbeeld zien dat, ondanks dat interetnische huwelijken een patriarchale lijn volgen waarin de kinderen automatisch de etnische identiteit van de vader aannemen, interetnische huwelijken een etnische hybriditeit kunnen versterken. Er kan hierin worden voortgebouwd op elementen van de culturele achtergrond van beide ouders, hetgeen interculturele waardering bevordert.

### **Conclusies**

De Kibaalecasus laat zien dat initiatieven die pluralisme bevorderen op verschillende niveaus plaatsvinden en dat ze elkaar frequent overlappen en verstevigen. Zo schiep een initiatief van de overheid om kiesdistricten te spitsen een klimaat waarin vrede mogelijk werd. Gedeeltelijk omdat lokale politici bereid waren samen te gaan werken en gedeeltelijk omdat de lokale bevolking goed geïnformeerd werd over het gevaar van etnische politiek en over het belang van samenwerking. De kracht die uitgaat van een onderlinge versterking van pluralisme-initiatieven laat zien dat het belangrijk is verschillende initiatieven tegelijkertijd én op verschillende niveaus te nemen. Enkelvoudige initiatieven op het terrein van pluralisme zijn ontoereikend om pluralisme tot bloei te laten komen, gezien de complexiteit van de onderlinge verschillen.

De empirische onderzoeksresultaten helpen om theorieën te substantiëren en in gesprek te gaan met emergente debatten waarin pluralismetheoretici als Mouffe, Connolly, Shoup, en

Mamdani participeren. Door zich te richten op zowel processen van assimilatie als van democratisch pluralisme, laat de Kibaalecasus zien dat wanneer assimilerende (onvrijwillige) benaderingen gaan domineren, conflicten aangewakkerd worden, spanningen toenemen en mogelijkheden tot wederzijdse waardering de kop ingedrukt worden. Democratisch pluralisme wordt daarentegen gewaardeerd vanwege de mogelijkheden die het creëert om culturele diversiteit en samenleven met onderlinge verschillen te bevorderen. Mouffe stelt dat gewelddadige conflicten dikwijls ontstaan in situaties waarin mensen in onvoldoende mate op democratische wijze uiting kunnen geven aan hun passies. Dit leidt volgens Mouffe tot politieke articulaties van essentialistische identiteiten en confrontaties over niet-onderhandelbare morele waarden.

Terwijl ik pluralisme en assimilatie duidelijk onderscheid, blijkt dat er in werkelijkheid soms behoefte is aan bepaalde vormen van assimilatie die het mogelijk maken met bevoorrechte en dominante meerderheidsgroepen samen te leven. De achtergestelde groep zal hoe dan ook moeten communiceren met de machtige 'anderen', en dit maakt bijvoorbeeld assimilatie met betrekking tot taal noodzakelijk. Het kan ook betekenen dat de 'zwakkere' groep een aantal gewoontes van de sterkere groep moet overnemen, wat ze niet gedaan zou hebben als ze meer macht had. Maar dergelijke besluiten zouden meer spontaan en vrijwillig moeten gebeuren.

De pluralisme-initiatieven in Kibaale laten zien dat pluralisme verschilt van relativisme. Voor pluralisme is de uitnodiging tot samenleven met behoud van alle verschillen niet aan de orde. Dat zou een romantisering van verschillen betekenen. De actieve sociale betrokkenheid die ontstaat in pluralisme kan leiden tot processen van 'geven en nemen', die samenleven mogelijk moeten maken. In dit opzicht is het in een pluralistische omgeving noodzakelijk je te verzetten tegen onrechtmatige marginalisering en uitsluiting van 'anderen'. Ten slotte laat de Kibaalecasus zien dat het tijd kost om pluralisme te bevorderen omdat het de uitkomst is van complexe interacties, die kennis en waardering voor 'de ander' cultiveren.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Location of Uganda in Africa



Source: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/ug.htm> [Viewed on 31st January 2012]



**Appendix 2: Location of Kibaale District in Uganda**



**NB:** Kibaale is marked by a dot

**Source:** <http://www.ugandatravelguide.com/uganda-map.html> Viewed on 31st January 2012

### Appendix 3: Kibaale District by Sub-counties

