

**Bayimba  
ArtVism  
British Council**

# emboozi teba nkadde



Written by: Juliet Kushaba  
Stories Researched by:  
Juliet Kushaba & Elizabeth Nandagire

**emboozi  
teba  
nkadde**

Bayimba / ArtVism / British Council

Emboози Teba Nkadde  
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Email: [info@bayimba.org](mailto:info@bayimba.org)  
[www.bayimba.org](http://www.bayimba.org)

Texts by: Juliet Kushaba  
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# FOREWORD

## **The Project: EMBOOZI TEBA NKADDE:**

**EMBOOZI TEBA NKADDE** which translates as ‘**a conversation is never old**’, is a research and development project initiated by Bayimba and implemented with the support of the British Council UK.

With the development of the Bayimba Center for Visual and Performing Arts on Lunkulu Island, learning the history and identifying further opportunities for the communities around the island is very important to the organisation.

These shared 9 stories come from our neighbouring individuals, families and employees – from the villages and farms we pass on the way to the island. They do not only help us unearth the mysteries of the surroundings but also offer alternative local tourism.

This first edition of the stories is a start of series of more in-depth research in story-telling.

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Story One



**i am now a  
born-again  
christian**

The church is about five metres wide by twelve metres long. It is made of mud and wattle and unlike most of the other mud and wattle structures that constitute this community, this church is neatly roofed. From the iron sheets, one can tell that the church hasn't lasted more than ten years. The church sits at the edge of the lake and overlooks more than forty homesteads that seem to be strung together by some mysterious code. My colleague and I are here to speak to Ronald.

Ronald is a 59-year-old fisherman who hails from Bugerere, Kayunga and currently lives in Namaziina on Kikuba Landing site. He started living here from 1996 after he was robbed from Kampala where he lived his life as a businessman. In Kampala, he used to sell cattle. Ronald would, together with other businessmen, hire a truck and travel far and wide into cattle-keeping communities in the countryside, especially in the western part of Uganda.

Often, they spent days and nights in these communities looking for cows and bargaining with herdsmen for good prices before eventually loading their buys onto the truck. They would together head back to Kampala through the nights often confronted with overcoming various logistical, safety, security and animal welfare in order to successfully sell the cows to other business people who slaughtered them and sold meat.

On one fateful day, Ronald entrusted his friends to take his cattle for sale after they had finished loading the vehicle. He needed to do something else and considering

how long he had worked with them, he thought that they would not cheat him. However, he was wrong!

His friends disappeared with both the money from sale of some cows and the cows that remained. When he returned to Kampala, he could not trace any of his friends. Their phones were off and the men were not even in the places where they usually met. Ronald was left with nothing of his capital yet he had a family to feed.

After much thought, he decided to request his father – who was already a fisherman based in Namaziina, to allow Ronald to join him there and try to forge a new life. Luckily for him, his father agreed. However, to his disappointment, his wife refused to move with him from Kampala. Owing to the fact that he had no money to start another business in Kampala, he made a painful decision to leave the wife there and join his father for a fresh start.

A few months after the ardent fisherman had settled at the landing site, he found love! He met a woman who swept him off his feet and this woman was later to become his second wife. At the time of writing this story, Ronald lives with this woman and their eight children.

When asked to share one experience on his job as a fisherman that he will never forget, Ronald had this to say;



*“I once went fishing while drunk and somewhere in the middle of the lake, I momentarily passed out and fell deep in the water...”*

He then narrated how he struggled out of the water. He would grab the boat, steady it and as he aimed to climb into it, it would flip and he would lose his grip on the boat. This happened severally and at some point, through this struggle, he sobered up and realised how close to death he was. Eventually, he managed to get into the boat and ride back home, extremely exhausted and afraid.

We got to understand that regular drowning incidences on Lake Victoria that pose grave danger to the fishermen are due to alcoholism that impairs judgement and coordination especially with the unpredictable weather conditions and additional hazards that lead boats stranded or capsized.

Ronald reflected on his experience day and night for the next couple of days and decided to give his life to Christ, adding

*“It was Him that saved my life that night. There was no other way I could have survived...the lake is hungry in the dark of the nights and is always looking for who to take. I could have gone that night”* he said.

We left Ronald in his church, wondering whether the community has other *Ronalds* and proceeded to another community.

Story Two



# **nature's healing powers**

This is a story of one Martin, a born of 1976 in Kibuba, Bulega village. Martin takes care of people's broken bones in a 'traditional' way – *Muyunzi*. Having done this trade since he was a young man, Martin shares that he learnt the trade from his late grandfather.

From as far as his memory can go, Martin always visited bushes with his grandfather. The old man would summon him and say in his hoarse voice, "*let's go and you learn a thing or two.*"

He would fondly pat him by the shoulders and push him forward to lead the way to the bushes. As they picked the herbs, his grandfather would tell him small stories. One that he remembers vividly is about a client who did not pay all that he owed his grandfather and his medicine did not work for him. He remembers that his grandfather was always telling him stories.

When Martin's grandfather passed on, he selected and passed on the trade to Martin. While this seemingly spiritual man had no siblings, it is fascinating to dig deep into his story and find out why his grandfather, did not pass this trade on to his own son, Martin's father.

Martin speaks of how intense his work is; having to search the bushes for herbs is not something that one would consider easy. He says that sometimes he has to be the one traveling to his patients' home if their bones are too broken for them to move. Amidst all this, like his grandfather had confided, some clients do not pay him some of his money for his toil. But, as he learnt

from his ‘teacher’, he does not bother them so much to demand for the pay because he believes that ‘God’ pays them back for their dishonesty.

Before Martin starts working on a client, he has to get the first instalment of the pay which in this trade is traditionally known as ‘*kikuba nsiko*’, that could literary be translated to mean, ‘*money that beats / hits the bush.*’

*“Without this initial payment, the medicine cannot work for the client,”* he adds.

Martin has four children and he confides that he would consider passing on the trade to one of his children when the times comes. It is interesting to hear him demystify some of the myths that people in his community hold around traditional treatment of broken bones. He indicates that some of the people in his village think that when one has broken bones and is undergoing such treatment as Martin gives, they are not supposed to eat fish.

*“Why would we tell people not to eat fish when we are treating them?! Fish is even good for them...it quickens the healing process,”* says Martin.

Martin’s healing powers are revered by many in his village. People come from near and far to get healing from him. He is respected so much by those who know what he can do for the sick.

Story Three



**a place  
that  
kills brides**

*This story unpacks the mystery surrounding a particular place known by locals as Katabagole, loosely translated to mean, a place that kills brides. This mysterious place resides in one of the communities around Lunkulu Island in Mukono district.*

*The story is told through the eyes of two people with each of their experiences having the ability to quench our thirst for mystery in unique ways.*

*First, through the eyes of a community member whose narrative was based on hearsay, as he had not been to this Katabagole place.*

*Second; through the eyes of the ‘care taker’ of the place – Katabagole, Mr Sseluwagi Jackson*



### **First story**

Long time ago, there were two villages; Lugonjo and Kibuba. The two villages faced each other like two antagonists ready for a challenge. They were connected by a mystical murrum road that lay silent between them. People from Lugonjo could marry from Kibuba but everybody in these communities and beyond knew that no brides were allowed to cross from either of the villages using this road.

They knew that brides had to go through some other rather winding, and even more ragged roads but this was the only acceptable and safe way to cross. Nobody

however quite understood what would happen if brides crossed using the forbidden road.

The narrator went ahead and told us about a set of brides that did not take the rule of the road seriously.

On the day of their marriage, they together with their entourage, got into their car and set off for the journey through the forbidden road.

*“The guests who were waiting for them on the other side have never seen them to-date!”* the narrator added.

He said that the brides, their entourage and their vehicles all turned into stones.

*“When you go to Katabagole, you will see these stones that I am telling you about,”*

he said while looking at me sternly before adding, *“they look exactly like brides, and one like the vehicle which the brides and the entourage used.”*

After listening to this narrative, our curiosity grew and took us to the place, Katabagole so we could see and speak to the caretaker too.



### **Second story:**

The narrative that was got from the caretaker, Mr Sseluwagi was that this was a spiritual place whose name is not *Katabagore* as the regular community people called it but *Kataanya Bagole*.

The new name *Kataanya Bagole* loosely translates to mean “*smearing brides with ghee*”. As the care taker spoke, he gave this practice of smearing of brides with ghee a spiritual connotation.

He associated ghee and cows with purity, power and spirituality. In a way, the place is powerful for him because it would bless the brides through the ghee-smearing process. It is not a place that kills people as locals seem to misinterpret the term, *kataanya bagole*.

Mr Sseluwagi shared that the place has *Misambwa* or spiritual powers – which is something that he said was common among the Baganda. He added that people come from near and far to pray and worship. His narration was suggestive of the fact that there were physical, ‘spiritual things’ that people who usually visit the place get to see.

While our curiosity was beginning to itch us, he cut it short by saying

*“Use of cameras and phones to take photos or videos is not allowed in this place. If you sneak in any of those and something happens to you, neither me nor the gods will be to blame.”*

After a long chat, we left Katabagole or Kataanya Bagole wondering what research is without this kind of evidence!



Story Four



**a legacy  
from 1940**

This community sits deep inside Buikwe district in central Uganda, and as one rides through the villages on a *boda-boda* – the famous motorcycle public transport means in Uganda, they get to see a lot of cocoa plantations. Some, by the roadside and others are a bit far off in the horizon. Some big and others rather small. Some with other crops grown within and others with only cocoa in the plantations.

The people all seem happy – striving for the same thing. In some of the homesteads, women and children can be seen tending to the cocoa that is drying in courtyards. Peter, one of the community members is keen to tell us his personal cocoa growing story.

Peter like many other cocoa farmers in the village, was inspired to start growing cocoa by a one Mr. Magulu. Although Peter never met Mr. Magulu, he was awestruck by the stories told about him and his plantation. All this fame got from a cocoa plantation made Peter want to venture into growing cocoa. Besides, he also needed to make ends meet to support his family as he was struggling financially.

The Late Mr. Magulu is said to have started cocoa growing in areas around Lunkulu Island around the 1940s. He owned a cocoa plantation of about 177 acres, stretching across villages in the area. At that time, on one else had cocoa or was growing it to this magnitude. He put food on tables of many people who he employed to work on his plantation.

Everyone respected him – the villagers and his workers alike. He was a man who spoke less and this made many people not only respect, but fear him too. Nonetheless, the villagers were always fascinated by Mr. Magulu’s plantation given that it was so big!

They had never seen any other farm like it and during times of harvest, the sight was even more spectacular with cocoa all over ready to be picked. Owing to this fact, some villagers couldn’t resist the temptation to go to the plantation and just wander about although it was forbidden. Some days, they were lucky and nobody found them, and other days they were not.

Peter shared an anecdote thus;

*‘Whenever a person was found on this plantation, whether stealing cocoa or just admiring it, they were made to stay and become a labourer on the plantation for as long as Mr. Magulu wished. If you tried to run, he would send his workers to chase after you and bring you to him. Then he would sit you down like a little baby and give you instructions...*

*...and because people knew he had a lot of money and could do anything that he wanted, they dared not to run away once they were caught on the plantation. They served their sentence to the satisfaction of the master!*

The Late Mr. Magulu’s story fascinated Peter and he wished he could have even just a fraction of that kind of power or even a small fraction of that farm.

While the story was in the past, Peter mulled over it and he wanted it to be his reality. He sought after his friends that were growing cocoa and asked him about the nitty-gritty of getting started. He did not wait to buy so much land or to have so much money on him before he could get started. He dived in with whatever he had.

He now shares that, he is happy to be paying fees and taking better care of his family from his humble cocoa farm – something that he would not have been able to do without the farm.

Story Five



**new  
horizons**

Patrick is a 40-year-old man with six children who hails from Kikwaayi. Patrick is a cocoa farmer who, owing to ICAM's training, knows how to take care of his farm using organic materials. He shared that an organisation called ICAM joined the people in this community and started teaching them things that they did not know before, which continue to enable them produce cocoa that easily gets buyers. He revealed that the organisation taught them how to make and use organic insecticides; he mixes cooking vegetable oil, black jack and chilli / pepper. This also gives him healthy yields for human consumption. ICAM is an Italian company whose headquarters are on Equatorial Mall.

Patrick delved into growing cocoa in 2019 and he said that the weather in their communities was good for the crop.

*“One thing that God has really blessed us with good weather. Our crops, not only cocoa, usually grow well.”*

He said, and then after a short pause, he adds;

*“Well, we are also blessed with beautiful hills such as Kyeitabya, Kasuku, and Kyekoona which all have their amazing traditions and myths.”*

The yields are usually high as a result. Additionally, this good weather makes the work of farmers relatively easy because they can harvest and dry their produce without a lot of struggle.

Covid-19 opened Patrick's eyes to new horizons and he hasn't looked back since. The challenges that came

with people being locked down without any sources of income that did not involve them to leave their homes yet with several mouths to feed was an encounter that made him to refocus and have a '*home-based income*' as he called it.

With this realisation, he looked around him and thought of his neighbour, Mugalu, who had a big Cocoa farm which he had started around World War II. He wondered why, with this example of how one could earn from working from home, he still hadn't gotten around to start yet he loved the idea of how long-lasting cocoa is. With Covid-19's experiences, he decided to get started on it. He now has 4 acres of cocoa and he puts other types of crops such as beans and maize, which are primarily for his household's consumption, on the same plantation.

*"That is the beauty of cocoa farming! It allows you that liberty to plant other crops on the same farm,"* he said.

It was interesting to learn the various ways through which cocoa growing could be self-sustaining. For example, the husks from cocoa are used as manure so they feed back into the farm.

*"I harvest about 50kgs of cocoa every week. A kilogram of dry cocoa is 7200 Ugx, and a kilogram of the fresh one from the garden is 2600. I want my children to also plant and grow cocoa because it is profitable,"*

he smiled before adding,

*"If you have land, plant cocoa. It is also a good tourist attraction here."*

Story Six



**vanilla for  
my five  
children**



Born in Lugonjo, Alex fathers five children. The land on which his beautiful house sits – perhaps one of the most beautiful houses in this village, was given to him by his father. His father lived in a village called Nalukolongo but had this land too as a young man.

Alex is a farmer and he grows both cocoa and vanilla. He started cocoa farming in 2010 and in 2015, he added vanilla to diversify his source of income but also because vanilla growing was becoming a thing. At the time he was making these decisions to diversify, a kilogram of vanilla was selling at 250,000Ugx and he thought why not? He did not think or even imagine that less than ten years later, things would have changed so drastically for a kilogram to now cost 45,000Ugx!

But the farmer is resilient. Children must continue going to school and everyday-needs must be met. He continues to grow both crops. Cocoa takes between 2–3 years for one to have the first harvest, and vanilla, about 4 years. His inspiration for cocoa growing stems from Mr. Mugalu’s farm; he did not want his children to be turned into labourers on another man’s farm while he was alive. Mr. Mugalu was a big-time farmer who would hold hostage anyone that went on his farm uninvited. They would be made to work as shamba boys or shamba men until he decided to release them.

He thought that growing his own cocoa would give his children not just money but some bit of freedom to explore it as their own.

Even when Alex does not know what is made out of the vanilla he grows and tenders it so well to get the best harvest. It is one of his greatest treasures because it has enabled him to pay school fees for his children, build himself a beautiful house, and initiate his two sons, John and Brian into farming.

ESCO Company buys his vanilla through agents in the village. Previously, the company bought the vanilla directly from the farmers. Alex doesn't know why this changed but he soldiers on.

Story Seven



**cocoa  
liquor!**

Acai Specioza's mother migrated to Lugonjo before Specioza was born. Her mother is 50 years old and a single parent after losing her husband some years back.

She pays fees for her three children and grandchildren single-handedly owing to her cocoa farm. It is not a big farm from the estimates she gives us – she thinks she has about 600 trees, but she keeps her family going. Yet, this is the only economic activity that she does.

She got motivated to venture into cocoa farming because her father was a cocoa farmer and she had seen how long-lasting cocoa trees were. She sells her cocoa to ICAM, and she says she is happy that son (Roger) is also taking after her and growing cocoa.

It was fascinating that, unlike all the other cocoa growers interviewed, she makes local alcohol, and juice from cocoa.

She also added that the white stuff in cocoa is used to cure malaria, an aspect that the other cocoa growers did not seem to know! Like Patrick, she uses the shells /husks as manure.

Acai's mother's mother still survives through cocoa growing – generations of cocoa farming!

Story Eight



**islands not  
for women**

Mugisha is a migrant worker from Wobulenzi who has settled on a landing site in the Eastern part of Uganda. He is 39 and has 12 children and two wives. He lived in Wobulenzi for ten years before relocating to this landing site. His wife was born in one of the villages around the landing site and that's where the two met.

He had a stable life as a business man in Wobulenzi but when Covid-19 happened, like for many other people, destabilised him. The times became harsher because business wasn't booming anymore. So, he decided to move here with his family where they hoped to get a cheaper and affordable life.

Mugisha has lived on the landing site for 3 years now and is now a fisherman who supplements his income from fishing by running a small bar in his home. The wife weaves baskets together with their first born child who is 16 years old. This enables them to afford the cost of living in this place where they live mostly like the migrants that they are; no land, no relatives to support them, among other challenges.

A fisherman's life is a life of exploration on the lake! As a fisherman, Mugisha has visited many places around the lake including tourist places such as Balume, Kisitu, Kaazi, Lawgi, and Mawangwe Islands, Nambu Tourist Camp and Pineapple Lodges. Nambu Tourist Camp has Chimpanzees that he gets to see each time he goes over. He has also ventured into riding on speed boats, and has taken nature walks in some of these places.

When Mugisha speaks, one is intrigued to check out these places.

*“How can someone come from Kampala and know places here when I don’t yet I live here!”*

he says as he continues to talk about his love for tourism.

*“There are other places such as Kalangala, Buyange, Ziri muto, Ziri Mukulu, and Nkese. All these are tourist places around here!”* he adds.

He further says that tourists enjoy all kinds of fish in most of these places.

One fascinatingly strange thing that the conversation with Mugisha illuminates however, is the fact (*also read as myth*) that there are islands where women are not allowed to go. It is believed that if a woman dares to go to these islands, something bad happens to her and she does not return to her community ever.

Story Nine



**the  
unknown  
prince**



Kajumba Samuel is a 48-year-old *Mulangila* (Prince), a descendant of King Kagulu Tebukweleke, and Kankulya. He is a son to Kajumba Israel, who was a surveyor and worked a bit with the Buganda Kingdom. They hail from Busiro.

Samuel shared a story of his great grandfather, who committed some offense (*to be unearthed during the second visit*), that went against the norms of kingship. His friend confided in him that he was going to be killed by his kingsmen. This was in accordance with the tradition of the time, in a bid to put an end to such offenses. So, he ran away from the palace in the night.

He came to Kumbu and disguised himself as someone from the Nkeje Clan, and even took on names of the clan. He made a family and started a new life in this new fisher community.

After a while of living in this new place with his family, Uganda got hit by a wave of sleeping sickness, Mongoota and this place was one of the most hit places in the country. A number of people lost their lives to the pandemic until the government called for evacuation of people from the area to safer areas. Kumba was quarantined off. Samuel's great grandfather was among those that left and went to Tunda. Many of those who did not leave died. When sleeping sickness ended, the government delayed to reopen the place for resettlement. Owing to the fact that he could not return to Busiro, Samuel's great grandfather needed to return to Kumbu and continue with his life. He went

to Entebbe and wrote to the government official there then to request that Kumbu is reopened. Around 1948, the government allowed people to come back to their homes. Him and his friend called Nyambo were the first people to return to Kumbu after the pandemic.

Much later, when his great grandfather died, he was buried in Kumbo, just near the landing site. To date, Samuel, a great grandson, lives here with his family; wife and seven children – six girls and one boy.

He fishes for silver fish and does small businesses to sustain himself and the family. He has only two girls who are still studying. Samuel will share what it feels like to be a prince in 'hiding', living a life of a common man.



