



CULTURE AND THE CONSERVATION OF THE GREAT APES IN UGANDA



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Batangyi clan members demonstrating unity and strength amongst their totem, the Chimpanzee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, the Arcus Foundation commissioned the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) to contribute to a desk research meant to identify opportunities for strengthening the conservation and social outcomes of its programmes by applying a “cultural values approach” to the conservation of the great apes. Limited literature on the subject of culture and conservation was however found on Uganda, with no specific resources on culture and conservation of the great apes.

It is against this background that, with support from the Arcus Foundation, CCFU has carried out action research to establish the extent to which culture can contribute to the conservation of the great apes in the country, so that any positive cultural resources may be harnessed to this end. Several outcomes are anticipated: an increased appreciation by development partners, of the possible synergy between the local communities’ culture and the conservation of the chimpanzees; a strengthened conservation function by cultural leaders to enhance such conservation and a better appreciation of the importance of the chimpanzees for their socio-cultural significance (rather than purely as objects of tourism and zoology). The report also highlights implications for national and international conservation policies and practice of State and non-state development partners.

Research involved consultative meetings with conservationists and conservation organisations, as well as field interviews with a total of 126 respondents, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Respondents included representatives of national and international conservation organisations, national and district authorities, as well as individual cultural resource persons, such as clan leaders and traditional medicine practitioners. Focus group discussions were held with youth, women, elders, and clan members from relevant communities.

Research was initially carried out in the Rwenzori, Kigezi, Tooro and Bunyoro regions. As it was found that none of the communities met claimed any cultural association with the mountain gorilla, the existence of a cultural association with chimpanzees subsequently

informed the selection of the research locations and communities. This report therefore focuses mainly on two cultural communities where such a cultural association was evident: the Bakonzo, who are mainly found in the Rwenzori region, and the Banyoro, one of the largest ethnic groups in Uganda, occupying forested areas in mid-western Uganda.

Research results indicate that the great apes’ habitat – land and natural resources more generally – are not only prized for their economic value, but also have cultural and spiritual significance providing the community with a sense of identity and belonging. Although today many of the large forests have been gazetted as forest reserves or national parks, neighbouring communities still express their attachment to these natural landscapes.

Many respondents perceived chimpanzees as “people who ran away from the community” or “wild people” or “relatives who should be respected” because they share human characteristics and therefore should not be hunted or eaten. Chimpanzees were also recognised as being intelligent, as illustrated by their ability to use tools and make their own bed every night.

The Batangyi (of the Bakonzo ethnic group) and Bayanja (of the Banyoro) claim the chimpanzee as their totem. The clan systems in both cultural communities proved to be vibrant, and in both communities children are taught at an early age to identify their totem and taboos associated with it. Adults teach children not to hurt or abuse the chimpanzee, which is referred to as “grandfather” or “owner of the forest” - but not called a chimpanzee. These existing cultural resources in the form of identity, as well as cultural values and structures, could therefore contribute to raising awareness about the importance of conserving the chimpanzee both within and outside clans that have the chimpanzee as a totem.

Some cultural practices and human activity however also impact negatively on the conservation of the chimpanzee. Traditional medicine practitioners admit to using its body parts for their healing practices (allegedly mainly due to the influence of Congolese migrants).

The skull of the chimpanzee is also used for spiritual healing purposes. Local communities in Uganda are not generally known to eat chimpanzees but, with the influx of people of diverse cultural backgrounds, they are beginning to succumb to the influence of those who are known eaters of baboons, and suspected to eat chimpanzees. In both research locations, other human activities have adversely affected the conservation of the chimpanzees: in Bunyoro, for instance, migrant communities and large scale investments have led to large-scale deforestation which has diminished the forest cover and chimpanzees' habitat.

While the erosion of culture, with the influence of religion, education and migrant communities, has weakened it in some respects, cultural identity remains an important aspect of both communities linked to their social organisation and relationships within and outside the clan. In both Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions, the cultural institutions have leaders specifically responsible for culture and nature. These have been instrumental in transmitting cultural values, information about clans and totems and the associated taboos, and relating these to contemporary challenges. It would therefore seem possible to use such cultural resources to strengthen positive conservation efforts and address harmful practices. The existence of cultural and other conservation institutions in the Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions provides a wide network for communication and community engagement which can be strengthened to conserve the chimpanzee, through for instance, collaboration between the cultural institutions, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the District Community Development Offices.

The existence of more than 500 private forest owners in Kagadi, Kakumiro, Hoima, Masindi and Kikuube

also indicates that there are individuals and families who may not necessarily be motivated by the need to preserve their totems, but due to their love for nature, spirituality, medicinal plants, and wildlife, they contribute to the preservation of chimpanzees and their habitat.

UWA, guided by the Wildlife Act (2000), has the mandate to protect wildlife in and outside protected areas. Respondents however noted policy gaps that need addressing to improve the conservation of the chimpanzee. Thus, while the chimpanzee is recognised as endangered, there are no specific guidelines on how it should be protected outside protected areas. Specifically, the following recommendations were made by different respondents regarding the Wildlife Act that guides UWA's conservation practice and which they felt should provide policy guidance on:

1. Engaging cultural institutions for conservation actions; the use of indigenous knowledge and skills in conservation and awareness raising activities at local levels.
2. Partnering with private forest owners to preserve forests and support the conservation of chimpanzees.
3. Ensuring that investors are held accountable for destroying natural and cultural heritage and contribute to their restoration to the extent possible.
4. Carrying out a census of chimpanzees in Uganda to monitor and assess the extent to which culture and other factors are impacting on their endangered status.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the mid-19th century, conservation ethic involved three core principles: that human activity damaged the environment, that there was a civic duty to maintain this environment for future generations, and that scientific, empirically-based methods should be applied to ensure this duty was carried out (Stebbing, 1922). These principles have shaped the conservation discourse of the past decades and reinforced the concept of a distinct divide between nature and culture, and of nature having to be untouched by humans to be of value (Grzimek in Adams & McShane, 1996; Thomas, 1983; Argyrou, 2005 cited in Bakels, et al. (2016) and Colchester, 2004). This understanding of conservation was embraced by post-independence governments and technocrats in Africa and other parts of the world, as evidenced in national and international conservation policies and instruments. As a result, colonial and post-colonial conservation management systems often alienated indigenous communities, their cultural values and association with nature from newly-created 'protected areas' and National Parks.

Other conservationists however contested this understanding, contending that, in Africa and Australia in particular, man had been an integral part of the landscape for millions of years, hence the absence of any truly 'wild' area. Through their presence and activities, indigenous people have contributed to environments that are favourable to the survival of 'wildlife species' and have shaped landscapes (Rose, 2007; Little, 1996; Krech III, 2000). Some authors also contend that the conceptual distinction and conflicting views on the relationship between nature, man and culture and definitions of "wilderness" are the root cause of conflicts in the management of protected areas (Infield, 2001 & Campbell, 2005; Blaser, 2007; Dowie, 2008 & Kidd, 2014 cited in Bakels et al. (2016)). Conservation thinking and practice has however for many decades remained mainly focused on economic analysis of resource use and access, and more lately on rights-based issues, although with no particular reference to cultural resources or cultural rights.

Such views have nevertheless fostered reviews of thinking and practice, especially at global level, resulting in the development of community-based

conservation approaches, emphasising sustainable resource use, the rights of indigenous peoples and participatory resource management.

It has meanwhile been observed that, in African traditions, the cultural and social value of land for past, present and future generations defines community perceptions and relations with nature, beyond its ability to sustain life or its economic value as a commodity (Shipton, 1994 & Gyasi, 1994 cited in Njoh, 2006). Forests are valued because of a spiritual association with ancestral gods and spirits, as places for cultural learning and initiation, traditional medicine and foods, as well as for cultural practices and rituals. Traditional systems and structures are established and knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. Literature also reveals that indigenous communities residing within forests, such as hunters and gatherers, relate to the forest as their 'father' and 'mother', 'sibling' and 'lover', describing themselves as 'children' and as 'people of the forest', demonstrating qualities of care, feeling, attention and deep attachment (Turnbull, 1962, 1983; Mosko 1987; Bird-David, 1990; and Ingold, 2000 cited in Kidd (2014)). Thus, besides the scientific and aesthetic value attached to nature, these sources highlight diverse connections between people and nature as a source of spiritual and religious value; education and ecological knowledge; cultural heritage, sense of place, identity; social and community relations; as well as healing and inspiration.

Within this context, the relationship between people and animals in the wild can be traced back many centuries, and in the case of the great apes, as far back as 300 BC when at different times, the Romans, Hindu, Japanese and Buddhists portrayed different perceptions of the great apes. Recent literature from Africa, Indonesia, Thailand and China where the bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas, gibbons and orang-utans are found, also reveals traditional mythologies, forest religious beliefs, and legends associated with love, wellbeing, poetry, philosophy and magic, protection of forest secrets, and reincarnated humans (Terashima, 2001; Hens, 2006; Saj et al. 2006; Charnley et al, 2007; Osemeobo, 2001 cited in Etiendem, et al ,2011; Inogwabini & Leader-Williams, 2012).

In Africa more specifically, the reviewed literature shows that communities have cultural associations with the apes as protectors (Liberia and Nigeria, Cameroon), reincarnated ancestors, holy animals, or with totemic relations (various parts of the continent). These communities often have regulated relationships guided by taboos against harming, hunting or eating the apes, enforced through traditional governance structures. The use of some body parts of the apes as traditional medicines for various ailments is however also evident in Africa and Asia and can present a most serious threat to their survival (Infield, 2011; Etiendem, et al, 2011; Critchley, 1968; Meder, 1999 cited in Leiman & Brend, undated).

Communities in Africa have a cultural attachment to nature and to the great apes in particular, however there are also several factors influencing - and in some cases eroding - cultural values, principles, and perceptions associated with nature and its conservation. Communities in Uganda nevertheless retain a cultural association with nature, especially with regard to cultural landscapes, sacred mountains, traditional beliefs and practices, as well as cultural identity associated with totemic animals (Mugisha & Infield, 2009). The extent to which communities actively engage in conservation and especially conservation of the great apes (gorillas and chimpanzees) is however not established. Exposure to diverse cultures through non-indigenous religions, increasingly multicultural communities, mobility and rural urban migration, have however impacted on the transmission of indigenous knowledge and consequently the number of people knowledgeable about the value of nature and its conservation from a cultural perspective. Cultural institutions - the custodians of cultural heritage - have also been affected by modern political, social and economic arrangements that have introduced new

power centres and agencies that share some of their roles and responsibilities, including the conservation of nature.

In 2014, the Arcus Foundation commissioned the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) to contribute to a desk research meant to identify opportunities for strengthening the conservation and social outcomes of its programme by applying a “cultural values approach” to the conservation of the great apes. This desk research confirmed the existence in Africa of traditional worldviews, beliefs, values and principles associated with the conservation of nature in general and associated with the great apes in particular. In Uganda, however, very limited literature on the subject of culture and conservation was found, with no sources specifically on culture and the conservation of the great apes. A few sample interviews were however held at the time with communities in south western Uganda which revealed a cultural association of communities with the chimpanzee, especially through totemic relationships.

It is against this background that this research has sought an in-depth examination of the linkage between culture and the conservation of the great apes. It has also sought to identify traditional practices that may contribute to or hinder the conservation of the great apes and to examine the extent to which traditional governance structures responsible for nature can support their conservation.

The subsequent chapters of this report provide an overview of the context of culture and conservation, and the research methodology and its limitations. The fourth chapter presents the field findings and the fifth and sixth, respectively outline conclusions and recommendations.

2. CULTURE AND CONSERVATION IN UGANDA

This chapter presents an overview of the cultural context and responsibility for conservation, the State's responsibility for conservation and some interventions that have influenced its conservation practice, as well as information on the great apes in Uganda.

The context of culture and conservation

Uganda is a multicultural society with 65 ethnic groups recognised by the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, each with their own traditional world view, values, beliefs, principles, traditional knowledge, skills, governance systems, language or dialect and other forms of expression and practices. Ethnic groups are traditionally governed by kings, chiefs, clan heads, or a council of elders. Almost all ethnic groups in Uganda are organised in clans, which are social units comprised of a number of families, of the same lineage or joined together by common traditional occupations. In some ethnic groups, a totem symbolises cultural identity, in the form of an animal, a plant or an object. In some instances, a clan may have more than one totem but several clans can also subscribe to the same one. Clan mates are taught from early childhood to identify and respect their totem - which they must not hunt, eat, harass or kill. Clan leaders are usually responsible for transmitting information about the clan and its totem, along with associated taboos, sanctions and penalties, which they enforce. Although many of the totemic animals are found in forest reserves or national parks, which limits to large extent community access to them, cultural leaders retain traditional responsibility for these resources.

As elsewhere on the continent, the great apes' habitat – and land and natural resources more generally – are not only prized for their economic value, but also have cultural and spiritual significance providing the community with a sense of identity and belonging. Among most ethnic groups, the responsibility to care for cultural landscapes, sacred spaces and shrines, forests and water bodies is essential for the communities' wellbeing and is often clearly defined. Although today

many of the large forests have been gazetted as forest reserves or national parks, neighbouring communities still express their attachment to these natural landscapes. This is evidenced by cultural leaders and custodians of natural resources in and outside the research locations who have been at the forefront of negotiating with State agencies, such as the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the National Forestry Authority (NFA), for access to their cultural heritage sites and resources found in these protected areas, which in some cases resulted in signing of Memoranda of Understanding to this effect.

Responsibility for conservation by the State and other conservation institutions

During the colonial era, the creation of protected areas was informed by the western notions of conservation described above. This resulted in an iron-fisted, fortress mentality, which barred communities from accessing natural resources in these areas. Uganda's post-colonial governments pursued the colonial approach to conservation, resulting in the continued alienation of indigenous people, their traditional knowledge and conservation mechanisms from protected areas, and in turn diminished any sense of traditional responsibility for conservation. Between 1970 and 1986, Uganda however experienced a breakdown in State structures and authority, which led to disregard for national regulations, neglect, and encroachment of many of the country's protected areas and nature reserves. This experience illustrated the danger of employing a single, militaristic approach to conservation, coupled with the lack of responsibility and ownership by communities.

With the return of political stability after 1986, the Constitution of Uganda obligated the State to protect important natural resources, including land, water, wetlands, minerals, oil, fauna and flora on behalf of the people of Uganda. In 1994, UWA (initially the National Parks and Game Department) was created to carry out this mandate. Unlike forest reserves under the NFA (established in 2003), which permitted

regulated community access to collect herbs, firewood, mushrooms, fruits and thereby enhanced community relations and their sense of ownership, UWA first maintained a militaristic approach to conservation. This resulted in continuous conflict with communities neighbouring the protected areas.

In the 1990s, Uganda (along with other African countries) adopted an integrated conservation and development approach (ICDP) which attempted to link the conservation of biological diversity within a protected area to social and economic development outside it. Recommendations arising from projects co-implemented by UWA and CARE International underscored the need for community access to natural resources in protected areas. UWA later adopted community conservation and a “multiple use approach” to mitigate conflicts between communities and Park management, which allowed communities to harvest plants used as medicines and for basket weaving and to place beehives in the forest. Local people were on the other hand held responsible for assisting park managers in the protection and maintenance of biodiversity, and reporting illegal activities encountered during permitted access. In 1996, UWA adopted a revenue sharing scheme which provides for 20% of the park gate collection to be given to neighbouring communities to fund development initiatives. Up to this point, there was however no specific attention paid to the relevance of culture in conservation thinking and practice.

In 2011, because of the limitations in the ICDP approach, Cultural Values and Conservation Projects (CVCPs) were initiated and implemented by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) in partnership with UWA. These projects aimed at integrating the cultural values of local communities in the management framework in selected protected areas, followed by other sites in the Lake Victoria basin. They also sought to influence conservation thinking and practice within UWA. The CVCPs revealed communities’ attachment to forests and natural landscapes for their cultural and spiritual value from which they derived a sense of belonging and identity. This cultural attachment was used to trigger reflection by the Park Management and communities on their respective responsibility for nature and related resources and to enhance their involvement in collaborative conservation. In addition, the CVCPs resulted in the involvement of cultural resource persons in forest monitoring, surveying, sensitising communities and disseminating conservation information, and provided communities evicted from forests a restored

sense of identity and pride, and improved relations with UWA.

Nationally, besides UWA, most interventions for the conservation of the chimpanzees are spearheaded by international organisations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Jane Goodall Institute, and FFI. With the exception of FFI and its “cultural values approach”, the other international conservation institutions operating in Uganda have not significantly utilised culture to inform their programming and their engagement with local communities where the chimpanzees are located.

IUCN has included the chimpanzee on its Red List as an endangered species. While the organisation does not have a project directly related to this animal, it provides technical guidance to its members (of which UWA is one) to recognise and prioritise cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge in the holistic assessment of natural resources. IUCN also encourages its members to adopt relevant international instruments, such as the Forest Stewardship Council International Standards, which recognise indigenous peoples’ rights as well as their traditional knowledge, attachment to cultural sites and forest resources. While this is a particularly useful instrument to guide an understanding of the relationship between culture and conservation, a number of respondents noted that some conservation institutions are rigid and changing their practice may take time, hence the still weak practical application of these principles.

The Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) has been actively involved in the conservation of chimpanzees since the 1990s, working in collaboration with UWA and the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre. The Institute’s approach to chimpanzee conservation has evolved over time and now incorporates the engagement of opinion leaders and ‘shamad’ (medicine men) in its conservation programmes. The Institute also works with the leadership of local communities to identify suitable indigenous trees that are appropriate for the restoration of forest cover in a particular area. The JGI recognises the potential contribution of private forest owners and farmers adjacent to protected forests to conservation and supports agro-forestry, and the regeneration of private forest cover by providing indigenous tree seedlings and training in beekeeping. Utilising the wisdom of traditional resources persons enhances their sense of responsibility and ownership of the conservation interventions.

Respondents from the WWF, IUCN and the JGI recognised the importance of understanding cultural knowledge and practices associated with conservation but recognised that they have not made a deliberate effort to examine the cultural context or cultural resources that may impact on their current conservation programmes, hence the lack of literature on this subject. At the international level, however, the recognition of the need for a holistic approach to conservation, including recognising the relevance of indigenous knowledge, indigenous communities and cultural values associated with conservation has been underscored in international instruments on conservation. It is therefore anticipated that, with time, conservationists will interpret conservation in a more holistic manner, taking into account social, cultural and spiritual values alongside scientific, environmental and economic considerations.

The great apes in Uganda

According to census data released by UWA in 2011, there were approximately 880 mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringeiberingei*) left in the world, of which about 400 live in Uganda, mainly in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The mountain gorilla has been listed as Critically Endangered, according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species released in 2016. This listing stipulates that the endangered species have protected status, guaranteed by national and international laws in all countries where they are found. It is therefore illegal to kill, capture or trade in live chimpanzees or their body parts.

Uganda also hosts the highest number of chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*, sub species *schweinfurthii*) in Africa,

most of which are found in Kibaale National Park, Hoima, Budongo forest and in the Rwenzori region. The chimpanzee is also included in the IUCN 2016 Red List as an endangered species. Unlike gorillas, chimpanzees are also found outside protected areas in privately owned forests. In locations where deforestation has been intense, loose groups can also be found living near and on community land.

Statistical information on chimpanzees in Uganda is not up to date. The available data is fragmented, mainly produced by development and research organisations which tend to be project specific. A number of studies on the ecology and behaviour of chimpanzees as well as human-animal conflicts have been carried out since the 1960s but none of these capture information on the cultural context or cultural values or practices that may impact on the conservation of the great apes. In 2001, a census in all main forests within the chimpanzee range estimated their population at 5,000 (Plumptre et al, 2010). Between 2003 and 2011, several studies indicated the presence of chimpanzees in fragmented forest blocks ranging from 560 to 260 chimpanzees in specific locations (of Budongo, Bugoma, Nsenyi, Katebwa and Bundibugyo among others). At the time of this research, UWA indicated that a census of the chimpanzee population in Uganda may be undertaken in 2019.

The Uganda Wildlife Act (2000) contains general provisions in Articles 2(d) and 19(c) which stipulate the protection of rare, endangered and endemic species of wild plants and animals. While Article 5(f) of the Act stipulates the establishment of management plans for wildlife conservation areas and for wildlife populations outside these areas, these provisions have not been elaborated in national policies, bye-laws or regulations.

3. THE RESEARCH

Research objectives and expected outcomes

CCFU carried out this action research with support from the Arcus Foundation with the overall aim of establishing the extent to which culture can contribute to the conservation of the great apes in Uganda, so that existing positive cultural resources may be harnessed to this end. In particular, this research aimed at:

- Establishing the linkage between culture and the conservation of the great apes
- Identifying traditional values, principles and practices that may contribute to or hinder the conservation of the great apes
- Examining the extent to which traditional governance structures responsible for nature can support the conservation of the great apes.
- Identifying implications for conservation policy and practice for the protection of the chimpanzee and its habitat

It is anticipated that this research will contribute to:

- An increased appreciation and debate on the possible synergy between culture and the conservation of the chimpanzees by local communities, and conservationists within and beyond Uganda
- Strengthening the conservation function of cultural leaders and indigenous knowledge systems to enhance their contribution to the conservation of the chimpanzee
- Heightening the importance of the chimpanzees for their socio-cultural significance (rather than purely as objects of tourism and zoology)
- Highlighting implications for national and international conservation policies and practice of State and non-state development partners

This research report targets a wide readership, including policy-makers and development partners at national and district levels, non-governmental and grassroots organisations, universities, as well as local communities and district authorities in and- outside

the research locations. It is also intended to stimulate reflection on conservation thinking and practice within international development organisations involved in culture and/or conservation, such as the Arcus Foundation, WWF, the African Wildlife Foundation, IUCN, JGI and FFI. Following a national dissemination event, this publication will be made available to relevant State and non-State actors in the research locations, national and international conservation organisations and will be made available on CCFU's website.

Research methodology

The research design, approach and methods as well as the development of tools and selection of respondents were informed by information generated from initial meetings in the field locations and from respondents in Kampala prior to the field research. A review of literature on the connection between culture and conservation revealed the limited scope of the literature on this subject in Uganda and prompted the collection of information from other countries. A scoping paper was produced, outlining issues pertinent to the understanding of culture and conservation, highlighting information gaps, and proposing a research methodology, research locations and topics to guide interview questions.

Consultative meetings with conservationists and conservation organisations (such as FFI, UWA, JGI, IUCN, WWF, and the Chimpanzee Wildlife Conservation Sanctuary Trust) were held to better understand the schools of thought that guide conservation interventions in Uganda. Discussions also focused on the evolution of conservation thinking and practice, especially with regard to enhancing community participation in the management and protection of natural resources, and the recognition of cultural heritage resources, often guided by international instruments.

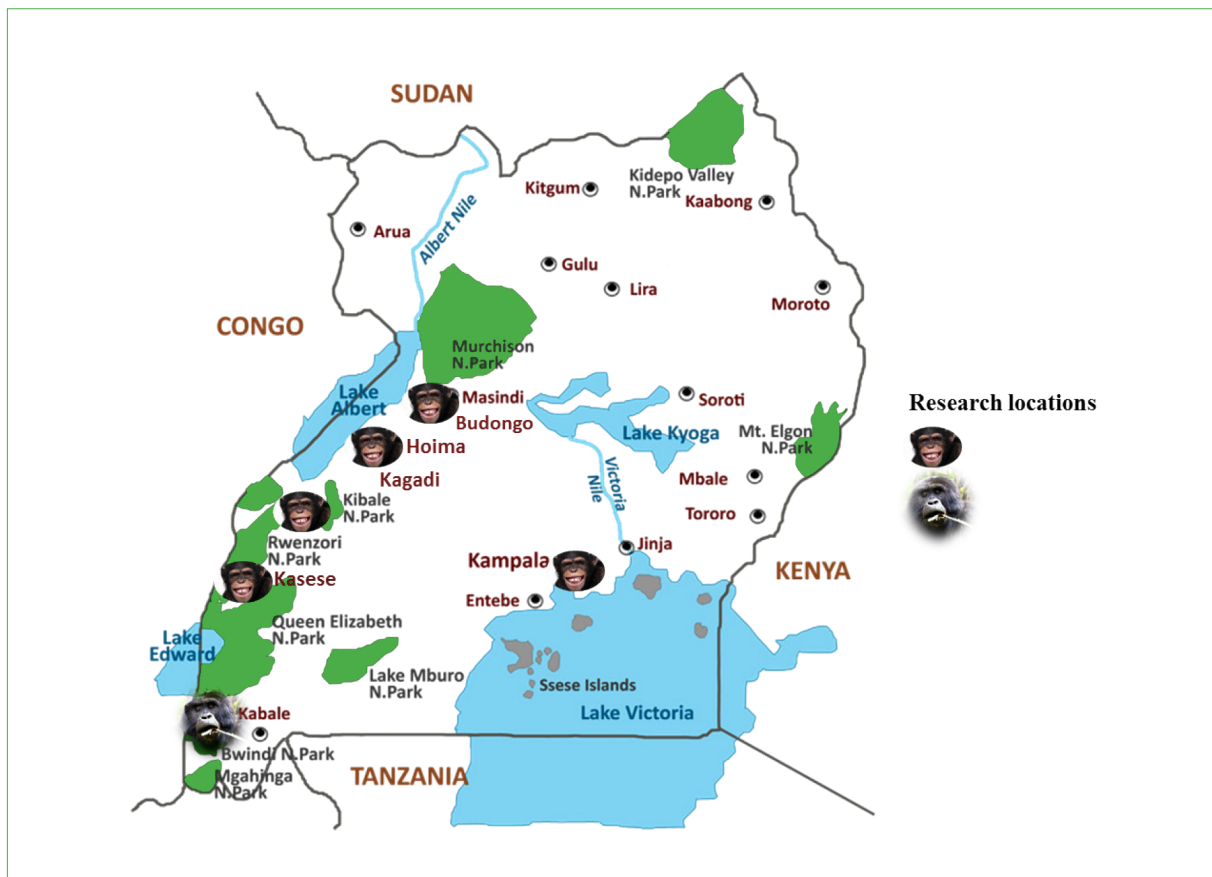
Initial visits to the proposed research locations provided opportunities to introduce the research to local organisations and institutions, to identify potential informants, to establish specific research locations,

to obtain advice on the appropriate approach to use when engaging communities and to collect site-specific reference materials.

A qualitative research approach was adopted and a total of 126 respondents were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Respondents included representatives of national and international conservation organisations, national and district state authorities, as well as individual cultural resource persons, such as clan leaders and traditional medicine practitioners (bonesetters, herbalists, and

healers) from whom in-depth information was sought and in some instances used as case studies. Focus group discussions were held with youth, women, elders, and clan members from relevant communities to obtain views and triangulate some of the information provided by other respondents. Two validation meetings were held in Kasese and Hoima towns during which representatives from the cultural institutions, State and non-State conservation and culture-focused organisations, as well as cultural resource persons, had the opportunity to corroborate and correct information collected, and to verify the conclusions drawn.

Research locations and ethnic groups associated with the great apes



The initial research locations consisted of Kabarole and Kanungu districts. Following preparatory visits to these locations in 2017, it was however found that in Kabarole, the Batooro (the main ethnic group) did not claim any cultural attachment to the gorilla but referred to the chimpanzees as their “brothers in the wild”. In

Kanungu, where some mountain gorillas are located, the predominant Bakiga and the Batwa ethnic groups do not claim any cultural attachment to them, although the Batwa who once resided in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest indicated that they co-existed with the gorillas in the forest by way of avoidance. It was also noted

that, with their eviction from the forest, the Batwa realise the tourism potential of the gorillas, which defines their current relationship with the great apes. More generally, none of the communities met in the course of this research in the Rwenzori, Kabarole and Bunyoro regions claimed any cultural association with the mountain gorilla. This was attributed to the fact that currently gorillas are not present in these locations and there are no historical records of such a presence. During the validation meetings held in Hoima and Kasese, respondents were uncertain as to whether there was a vernacular name for a gorilla and many were not sure of a gorilla's physical appearance. The existence of a cultural association with the chimpanzees thus informed the focus of this study and the purposive selection of the research locations and communities.

Respondents in the Rwenzori region (where the Bakonzo predominate) and in Bunyoro confirmed a cultural attachment to chimpanzees inside and outside protected areas. Two clans, the Batangyi (of the Bakonzo in the Rwenzori region) and the Bayanja (of the Banyoro) claimed the chimpanzee as their totem, and while other informants indicated that there are other cultural values attached to the chimpanzees in these areas. This research therefore focuses mainly on two cultural communities where the cultural association with the chimpanzee was evident. In addition, there are private forest owners who host chimpanzees in Bunyoro (Kagadi, Hoima, Masindi, Kikuube and Kakumiro). The Bakonzo, who are found mainly in the Rwenzori region, an ethnic group that straddle the border of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Banyoro, one of the largest ethnic groups in Uganda, occupying forested areas in mid-western Uganda including Kakumiro, Kibaale, Kagadi, Hoima, Kikuube, and Masindi districts, as indicated in the map above.

Limitations

A number of limitations emerged in the course of this research, starting with the narrow nature of the literature on people's social or cultural association with animals, which constrained corroboration and cross referencing. There was also limited literature on a cultural perspective and the traditional responsibility of the cultural leadership (such as clans, chiefdoms, and

custodians of heritage sites) for conservation. Although traditional hunting was consistently highlighted as detrimental to the conservation of the great apes in the existing literature, no source was found examining the worldviews, cultural values, principles and beliefs that informed this traditional occupation which was (and still is practised) in some parts of Uganda.

Various factors influenced the way respondents provided or withheld information. In cases where the research team was guided by UWA staff, for instance, some traditional medicine practitioners feared to disclose their use of animal parts or to refer to other potential respondents for fear of being apprehended. They however did confirm the existence of such practices in general. Some respondents, who claimed affiliation with Christian and other conventional religions, were reluctant to associate themselves with traditional religious beliefs or even attest to knowing or using traditional medicine, asserting to our research team that "they were not involved in witchcraft". Finally, civil unrest in 2016 resulted in the arrest of the head of the cultural institution in the Rwenzori region and this has since caused anxiety and censorship on matters related to culture and the role of the cultural institution in development or conservation.

In spite of these limitations, the research captures the views of a wide range of stakeholders representing conservation institutions, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, individual cultural resource persons (clan leaders, elders, ridge leaders, traditional medicine practitioners) and community members (youth, women, elders). The views of national and regional authorities from UWA, District Environment Officers and Community Development Officers were also captured. The selected respondents from the Rwenzori and Bunyoro regions, most of whom were identified as authorities on matters of culture and conservation, provided a fair representation of the communities' cultural association with conservation and their relationship with the chimpanzees.

Interactions with these informants made it possible to generate and triangulate the information gathered. Issues raised by individual resource persons were discussed and verified in focus group discussions in different locations and similarly issues raised in focused group discussions were verified in discussions with individual resource persons. All conclusions were also corroborated during the subsequent validation meetings held in Kasese and Hoima towns.

4. FIELD FINDINGS – CULTURE AND CONSERVATION OF THE CHIMPANZEES WITHIN COMMUNITIES

This chapter presents findings on the linkages between culture and conservation of the chimpanzees in the Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions. It highlights the traditional values, principles and practices that may hinder the conservation of the chimpanzee as well as the traditional governance and other structures that can support the conservation of the great apes. Interactions with respondents in the research locations indicated a shared understanding and cultural association with chimpanzees among the Banyoro and Bakonzo (while there was no significant cultural association among the Batooro in Kabarole, and none among the Bakiga in Kanungu district and in Kiyooro (in Hoima).

Linkages between culture and the conservation of the chimpanzees

The research revealed a positive perception of the chimpanzees among the Banyoro and the Bakonzo. Many respondents perceived chimpanzees as “people who ran away from the community” or “wild people” or “as brother or sister” or “relatives who should be respected” because they share human characteristics. According to respondents, all hunters have rules, which refrain them from hunting certain animals and the chimpanzee is one of these because of its likeness to humans. Respondents claimed that if hunters found a chimpanzee trapped in a snare set for smaller animals, they would open the trap and release it to walk away. Generally, Ugandans do not eat its flesh.

The Batangyi and Bayanja communities identify culturally with the chimpanzee as a totem and are guided by taboos and principles against harming it. In both communities, the chimpanzee is recognised as intelligent, as illustrated by its ability to use tools and make its own bed (nest) every night.

In both clans, parents and grandparents teach their children about culture (lineage, clan, totem, norms, taboos, how to greet clan-mates and conduct themselves). From as early as 6 years, a child learns to identify his/her totem (the chimpanzee), and taboos

associated with it. The Batangyi believe that if a child disobeys these taboos he/she will lose all his/her teeth while adult members will contract scabies or leprosy.

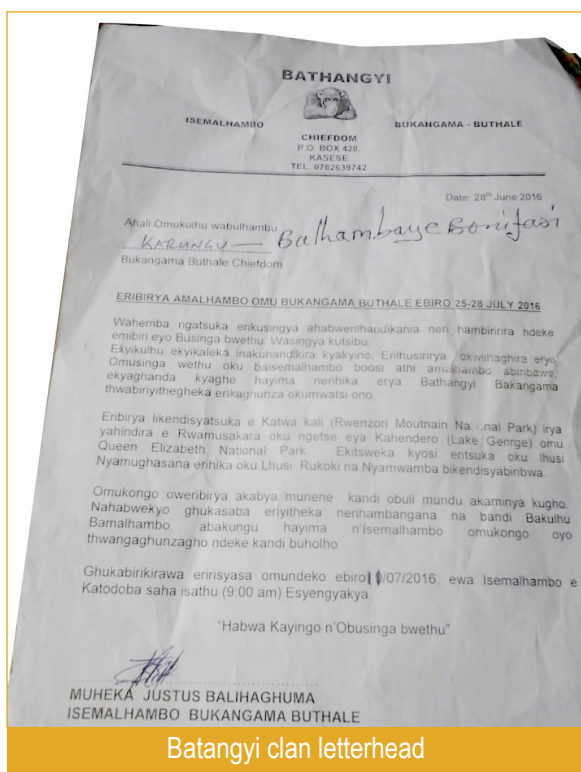
The Batangyi adults teach children not to hurt or abuse the chimpanzee, which is referred to as “grandfather” or “owner of the forest”- but not called a chimpanzee. A member of the clan (Mutangi) will not chase a chimpanzee away from his/her garden. If men go hunting and a Mutangi discovers that members of another clan intended to hunt a chimpanzee, he tries to stop them and, if he fails, he leaves the hunting team rather than witness the killing of his totem. It is believed that disregard of the taboo against killing a chimpanzee by a Mutangi will result in many deaths in the family or the person will have children that resemble and behave like chimpanzees, until the elders address this taboo.

These norms however do not apply to all community members. In Kinyampanika village in Bunyaruguru district, a chimpanzee was found crop raiding and was killed by the owner of the land. The Batangyi clan members came together, reported the person to the local authorities and he was fined a goat. One Mukonzo elder and clan head asserted that *“no matter how strong the forces of modernisation, totems - our cultural identity - will remain a very strong part of our culture and cannot be taken away from the people’s belief system.”*

While the Batangyi clan members hold meetings, during which clan mates and their spouses are warned against eating chimpanzee meat and instructed to guard their children against this abomination, they however also invite leaders from non-Batangyi clans to attend their meetings so that they can learn about and share information concerning their respective clans and totems in order to foster mutual respect.

Members of the Batangyi clan have also established the Kinyampanika Chimpanzee Conservation and Development Association, a community-based organisation that aims to protect and promote their totem – the chimpanzee. A museum has been opened to demonstrate the importance of the chimpanzee, to display artefacts (including hunting weapons and

snare) and to educate the public about the negative impact of illegal hunting. Some of the ex-hunters (“poachers”) who abandoned their trade have joined the organisation and are involved in promoting conservation by educating communities, and often serve as forest monitors. Benefits from the resource access and revenue sharing approaches adopted by UWA partly compensate for the loss of livelihood of these traditional hunters. The Association also organises inter-clan cultural football tournaments, clan games, traditional music and dance exhibitions and identification of totems. The prize for the football tournament is a Chimp Trophy. The organisation also shows films on wildlife and the chimpanzee, in particular during social events. The Batangyi clan in Kasese also use an image of the chimpanzee on their letterhead and clan identity cards as a way to identify with their totem and to publicise its importance to the clan.



Batangyi clan letterhead

Among the Bayanja clan in Bunyoro, children are also taught and observe their parents’ relationship with the chimpanzee. Although the chimpanzees live in the forest near the community, they are known to visit community gardens to eat jackfruit and sugarcane. Bayanja parents tell their children not to throw stones or beat chimpanzees because they are “grandmothers” and their mothers’ totem. The community claims to have a positive relationship with the chimpanzees, asserting that when met by elders at the stream the

apes move aside to let the elders collect water. The chimpanzees are also appreciated as time-keepers, making alarms at 6.00 am and at midday. The Bayanja said they felt privileged to see their totem and would like their children to have the same opportunity to see the chimpanzees.

In both regions, the representatives from the cultural institutions have been instrumental in transmitting cultural values, information about clans and totems and the associated taboos, and relating these to contemporary challenges. For the past 20 years, selected cultural leaders in Bunyoro have held local radio programmes to promote culture, educate the public and instil cultural values, mainly targeting the youth. These efforts are driven and initiated by the cultural institutions in response to the concern that cultural norms are at risk of disappearing in the face of different aspects of “modernity”. The radio talk shows also include discussions on traditional values associated with trees and forests for medicinal and climatic value. The youth in Bunyoro, cited Green Radio, Kagadi-Kibaale Community Radio and Hoima FM (hosting officials from the Bunyoro Kingdom) as very useful in stimulating dialogue on culture and providing explanations and the rationale for certain cultural practices. Similarly, in the Rwenzori region, the cultural institution has held seminars, social/cultural functions and talks in schools to discuss the relevance of totems and cultural norms, as well as football tournaments involving youth from the Congo (in the past few years trans-border collaboration has however been prohibited due to the civil unrest in the region).

Traditional beliefs and practices that may hinder the conservation of the chimpanzees

In all communities visited, culture was considered an important aspect of community life although there were variations in the communities’ knowledge and affiliation, depending on exposure to elements of modernity, religion and interaction with other cultures. In both Bunyoro and the Rwenzori regions, most community members and traditional healers also attested to beliefs associated with using the chimpanzee’s nest for witchcraft, mainly used to chase away a troublesome person. It is also believed that the branches of the nest can be used to reverse a court case in favour of the bearer, destabilise a family and cause divorce if a woman uses the branches for cooking. Death may

result if the sticks or branches fall to the ground when one is picking them from the nest. Among the Bakonzo and Banyoro, it is also believed that the residue from sugar cane chewed by a chimpanzee, along with other herbs, can cure dental and other oral ailments. These beliefs do not pose a direct threat to the body of the chimpanzee.

This research however revealed the existence of cultural practices associated with traditional medicine and healing, using chimpanzee body parts among the Bakonzo and Banyoro, including full bones used for bone-setting and crushed bones mixed with other herbs to cure diverse illnesses. Both Bakonzo and Banyoro believe that the chimpanzee is a strong and unique animal and traditional medicine derived from it can cure almost any disease. Traditional medicine practitioners in both communities however asserted that information about the specifics of traditional medicine using chimpanzee body parts and nests is kept confidential to avoid the abuse of traditional knowledge and the irresponsible use of traditional medicine. According to elders of diverse cultural backgrounds in Budongo (Bunyoro), the use of animal parts for traditional medicine is mainly due to the influence of Congolese migrants.

Irumba Musalizi, a traditional medicine practitioner

"I am 58 years old and became a traditional medicine practitioner in 1971 in Kitooke village, Kabwoya, providing herbal medicine to members of my community. Healers use animal parts for traditional medicine. Any bone of a chimpanzee may be used for traditional medicine. The chimpanzee bone is dried, burnt and crushed into ash and used to capture thieves. If a thief refuses to admit to the theft, he risks dying mysteriously".

In Kiyooro, Kabwoya and Kakumiro in Bunyoro traditional medicine practitioners confirmed that the bones and skull are dried, burnt, and crushed, and the smoke and the ashes are applied to incisions on a patient's body to cure various illnesses including epilepsy, taken orally for strength and also used as an aphrodisiac. The skull of the chimpanzee is used for spiritual healing purposes and to ward off evil spirits.

In Bunyoro and the Rwenzori region, bone-setters inherit traditional knowledge and skills to heal broken

bones using different methods depending on the cultural context. Some bonesetters use medicinal herbs, others use remote energy forces, other use their bare hands to massage broken bones while some bone-setters use chimpanzee bones. Along with other traditional medicines, the chimpanzee bone is wrapped on a broken bone until it heals. Once healed, the patient is expected to return the bone to the healer. Some of the bonesetters claimed that they inherited the chimpanzee bones from their parents while others purchased the bones from hunters.



A traditional healer with a chimpanzee's hand

Unsurprisingly perhaps, community members interviewed stated that it is rare to find the remains of a dead chimpanzee, although some believe that the chimpanzees bury their dead or that old and sick chimpanzees seek locations deep in the forest such as caves where they hide until they die. Some respondents reported instances when chimpanzees were killed accidentally, and by the time conservationists arrived at the scene, body parts such as the palms, feet and head of the chimpanzee were found missing. In Bunyaruguru, an elderly woman was found with parts of a chimpanzee (fingers, hands, brain, bones, feet and flesh) drying on a rack in her backyard in preparation for sale. When she was apprehended by the authorities, she admitted these parts were to be used for traditional medicine. One forest monitor also reported being

approached by witchdoctors who were in search of the body of a chimpanzee that had been accidentally knocked down by a vehicle and buried.

A Mutangi's experience –totemic protection and healing by a bonesetter, Claude Musima

"I am a Mutangi by clan. I am aware that bonesetters use the bones of chimpanzees to mend broken bones. In August 2017, my son had a broken leg and I went to a bonesetter for treatment. When I asked him what bone he was going to use to attach to my son's leg, he told me it was a chimpanzee's bone. I immediately refused this treatment because it is my totem and my child's totem. I decided to go to a bonesetter who uses a different method (herbs) for fear that other bonesetters would use the chimpanzee bone on my son, even if they claimed they would not do so."

During the validation meetings held in Hoima and Kasese, respondents admitted to the use of chimpanzee body parts for traditional medicine and bone-setting but indicated that this is not to a degree that can endanger the chimpanzee, because of the existence of alternative treatment for bone-setting (i.e. herbal methods and modern medical treatment), the re-use of bones, and the influence of some religions that has led to a reduced demand for traditional medicine.

According to long serving conservationists at national and local levels, historically local communities in Uganda are not known to eat chimpanzees for cultural and social reasons. With the influx of people of diverse cultural backgrounds, the Banyoro, Batooro and Bakiga are however beginning to succumb to the influence of the Bakonzo (from Congo) who are known to eat baboons, and suspected to eat chimpanzees. The Congolese in Budongo, who it is claimed eat chimpanzee meat as a delicacy, are also beginning to influence the Ugandans to eat baboons. In Kagadi (Bunyoro), there were also reports that near River Muzizi, community members (of Batooro and Bakiga) were apprehended by UWA for killing and roasting a chimpanzee. The spread of the Ebola virus disease is however said to have discouraged Ugandans and some Congolese and Bakonzo from eating primates.

Traditional and other structures that can support the conservation of the chimpanzees

The research revealed that there are various traditional governance structures that can support the conservation of the chimpanzees. Cultural institutions, headed by the Omukama wa Bunyoro Kitara and the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu (for the Bakonzo), provide cultural leadership and are perceived as the custodians of the cultural heritage of their respective communities. Each is supported by a cabinet that includes Ministers (specifically for culture and environment), as well as by traditional chiefs, council or associations of elders and clan leaders. The family acts as the smallest traditional unit through which cultural values, principles, knowledge and skills are transmitted.

Within the institution of the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu, 11 hereditary chieftaincies are responsible for decision making, natural resource use and the performance of rituals. A chieftaincy is responsible for 4-8 ridges in the Rwenzori mountain range, each headed by ridge leaders. The ridge leaders are responsible for periodic spiritual cleansing of the land. The Bakonzo also have 15 clans (one of which is the Batangyi) responsible for upholding and promoting cultural norms, values, practices, totems and identity, among other responsibilities. In Bunyoro Kitara, besides the traditional chiefs, Ministers, clan leaders and elders responsible for promoting cultural values, cultural identity, traditional norms and taboos, individuals are assigned specific duties as custodians of different aspects of heritage. Thus, the *omuramansi* is a custodian of sacred sites. His role is hereditary and he is responsible for protecting these against encroachment, for spiritual cleansing and for connecting people with ancestral spirits.

Through this hierarchy of leadership, cultural leaders are in position to influence other cultural institutions while inter-clan interactions provide opportunities to engage and influence clan leaders within and outside specific ethnic groups with regard to conservation, and specifically focus on the conservation of the chimpanzee as a totem and as a national endangered species. It was however noted that neither of the cultural institutions have a clearly defined conservation strategy to guide their role in conservation. The Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu nevertheless worked

in partnership with UWA and FFI to implement the Cultural Values Conservation Project (CVCP) and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UWA to access heritage resources. The CVCP also led to the formulation and approval of Park general management plans to integrate access to sites and resources of cultural value; community involvement in the day-to-day park management through joining Monitoring Units. As a result, the perceptions and engagement of communities (in the project area) in park management activities improved and conflicts between communities and park authorities reduced. According to a senior official at the Rwenzori Mountains National Park, UWA currently has 43 resource access agreements which permit community access to bamboo, honey, mushrooms, cultural and spiritual spaces for worship and cleansing of ridges. This type of collaboration

provides opportunities for future partnership and the application of both modern and traditional conservation knowledge to conserve the chimpanzee.

Private forest owners

There are over 500 private forest owners (PFOs) in Bunyoro (in Kagadi, Hoima, Masindi and Kikuube Districts) some of whom are registered under an umbrella association. In the Rwenzori region, PFOs also exist, but they are not organised under one body. In both cases, PFOs are known to host chimpanzees and by so doing contribute to their conservation. Many of the PFOs' initial motive to conserve their forests however stems from an appreciation of trees and nature, the

Culture, chimpanzees and private forests

Tridiba David, private forest owner (Kifumambogo clan)

"This forest covers about 2.5 acres. It was passed on to me by my parents. In the 1920's, the forest had many chimpanzees which would make signals at waking and sleeping times. When it was about to rain the chimpanzees would make continuous alarms. They are not destructive animals and do not damage crops – they only take what they need – one comb of maize each or a stick of sugar cane. They keep away vermin, such as baboons. They are also useful in propagating plants such as wild passion fruits and medicinal plants (which are only found in the forest). In the 1970s, during President Idi Amin's regime, when commodities such as soap were scarce, the chimpanzee was instrumental in propagating the seeds of the soap plant near communities. These days the chimpanzees come to my forest in search of water and wild fruits. I am motivated to maintain this forest because it has chimpanzees, diverse birds and animals. It also has a water catchment, medicinal and sacred trees. In my will I have not left the forest to one individual because I know he or she may be tempted to sell or cut down the entire forest. I have left the forest to the entire family."

Kyomya Julius (Head Teacher Kyabigambire Primary School and private forest owner)

"Currently the chimpanzees keep moving from one forest to another because their habitat has been disturbed. I have attempted to maintain a portion of my forest which is part of the natural chimpanzee corridor but my neighbours have cut down their trees. I worry that if government does not regenerate and protect the forests, the entire chimpanzee corridor will disappear."

Idi Mayanja, private forest owner and spiritualist (Muhooro, Kagadi)

"I am a fire worshipper and believe that fire is the source of life. This forest is a sacred place with sacred pits and therefore my family will not destroy it. For as long as I can remember, this forest has been home to chimpanzees. Sometimes they come very close to our home but they do not harm anyone. I often put fruits in certain locations in the forest to feed them - I believe that they are spiritual animals. One of my neighbours killed a chimpanzee and they were troubled with diseases, until they had to migrate from this location. I believe that the spirit of the dead chimpanzee haunted the family. There is no need to kill chimpanzees to acquire their spirits and strength, instead people should give them offerings. Some community members do not understand why the family hosts chimpanzees and complain that the chimpanzees are raiding their crops but I try to sensitise them about the importance of the chimpanzee and why we should protect it. My father owns this forest; he has left instructions in his will to ensure that no one touches it. I am sure that even if he is absent, my siblings will respect our father's will"

preservation of traditional medicinal plants, spirituality and hosting diverse wildlife, including chimpanzees. In most cases they are individuals or families who inherited forests from previous generations and are committed to passing on the responsibility to conserve these forests to their descendants. Although only one of the owners interviewed was from a clan that held the chimpanzee as a totem, all of them welcomed the presence of chimpanzees in their forests and they constitute potential partners in the conservation of chimpanzees' habitat.

The erosion of cultural values and knowledge associated with conservation

The erosion of cultural values associated with conservation is paradoxical. On the one hand erosion of cultural knowledge and values associated with the use of chimpanzee body parts may be perceived as welcome to reduce the threat they face. On the other, this erosion may also lead to the destruction of animals, cultural landscapes and natural heritage valued for their social, spiritual and medicinal worth.

Respondents in the Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions indicated that knowledge, values and principles associated with the clan and totem are disappearing because of education, the influence of modern religions and modernity. Although the youth interviewed expressed enthusiasm about accessing traditional knowledge over the radio, they also stressed that the pressure for survival and acquiring income is intense, resulting in some cases in cutting down trees for financial gain, including medicinal trees. Despite efforts to engage the youth through the family, clan meetings and radio programmes, the influence of urban lifestyles is adversely impacting on spaces for cultural education such as the family fireplace, which is being replaced by video shelters, social media and other forms of entertainment. Some of the urban youth interviewed admitted that they did not know their totems while



Chimpanzee bones

their rural counterparts were able to do so and to demonstrate their knowledge and value of medicinal trees and plants and the diseases they cure. The youth blamed some parents and cultural leaders for not practising what they preach – as they are involved in cutting trees themselves - and for not explaining the importance of conserving the forest or educating their children about their totems.

In both research locations, human activities indeed adversely affected the conservation of the chimpanzees and their habitat. In Bunyoro, for instance, rapid population growth and the influx of migrant communities, especially from the Bakiga from South Western Uganda who were offered “the bush” (forested land) indiscriminately cut trees, causing significant deforestation. Migrant communities were also said to influence the indigenous traditional ways of hunting, conservation, traditional medicine practices, and eating habits, as described above.



Idi Mayanja, private forest owner and spiritualist (Muhooro, Kagadi) explains his role in the conservation of the chimpanzee

In addition, respondents noted that large scale investments, in Budongo, Kiyooro and Kasongore (in Bunyoro region) where land was cleared for sugarcane and cocoa plantations resulted in severe deforestation which diminished the forest cover and habitat of the chimpanzees. A richly forested place, populated with chimpanzees named Rwebiteera (place of the chimpanzees) was for instance converted into a sugar cane plantation and the chimpanzees forced to migrate to other locations, exposing them to risks of human conflict, disease, and making them easy hunting targets. Medicinal trees, fruit trees and forest foods used by humans and chimpanzees alike only found in the forest were also destroyed in the process.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Establishing the linkage between culture and the conservation of the great apes– the importance of clans

This research revealed that among the Banyoro and the Bakonzo a link between culture and the great apes exists mainly for the chimpanzee, rather than the gorilla. The chimpanzee is a totem for two clans - the Batangyi (Bakonzo) and Bayanja (Banyoro). Both clans have a positive perception of their totem and have taboos against harming, killing or harassing the chimpanzee. The actions of the Batangyi clan in the Rwenzori region demonstrate that communities can be motivated by their cultural values and take practical steps to conserve the chimpanzee because of its cultural significance. It also shows that, without external legal enforcement, communities can actively protect and conserve the chimpanzee and work with existing State authorities in this respect.

The chimpanzee is thus an important aspect of cultural identity of the Batangyi (as shown by the clan letterhead and identity cards bearing the image of the ape); they have established a community-based organisation, the Kinyampanika Chimpanzee Conservation and Development Association, to promote their totem and engage other clans in appreciating its value. Co-opting members of this Association as forest monitors is a positive way through which the clan can contribute to the conservation of the chimpanzee. The Bayanja clan however have not taken any deliberate steps to do so, possibly as a result of weakening cultural identity due to the influx and influence of migrant communities in Bunyoro. Although this presents a hurdle, the chimpanzee is appreciated and there are various avenues through which the Bayanja may be encouraged to strengthen their responsibility towards conservation of the chimpanzee. Such efforts, though mainly limited to these clans, contribute to the conservation of the chimpanzee in the locations where these clans are found.

The clan system in both cultural communities is indeed vibrant. Clan meetings among the Batangyi (which

are documented) remains an important cultural space through which the importance of the chimpanzee and taboos regarding its conservation are transmitted, mainly in a non-confrontational manner. While the erosion of culture, with the influence of religion, education and migrant communities, has weakened it in some respects, cultural identity remains an important aspect of both communities linked to their social organisation and relationships within and outside the clan.

In both communities, information about the clans and totem (the chimpanzee) is transmitted to children at an early age, which ensures a generation of young people who respect and would be willing to collaborate with other actors to preserve and promote the chimpanzee. While the use of radio programmes, especially in Bunyoro, did not focus specifically on the chimpanzee, this proved to be an effective way of engaging the youth in appreciating their totems and clans in general.

In the Rwenzori region, the cultural institution's initiative to hold seminars, talks and engage school clubs is noted as a positive attempt to link culture and conservation. While engaging the youth in appreciating their cultural identity provides the necessary cultural grounding to promote and preserve their totems, the youth are nevertheless faced with social and economic challenges which, if not guided, may lead them into activities such as cutting trees which will destroy the habitat of their totem, the chimpanzee.

Identifying traditional beliefs and practices that may hinder the conservation of the chimpanzee

The research revealed that in both locations, migrant communities and community members who do not belong to the clans that hold the chimpanzee as a totem, have cultural practices that hinder their conservation. In both communities, traditional medicine practitioners use chimpanzee body as part of their traditional medicine prescriptions. In Bunyoro this practice was attributed to the influence of migrants. Respondents stated that

it is difficult to find a dead chimpanzee, and although they were reluctant to disclose the source of these parts, a few admitted that they obtained them through inheritance (from healers, especially bonesetters) and from hunters (illegally). The acquisition of chimpanzee bones for traditional medicine that involves burning and grinding could prove to be a significant threat to the chimpanzee.

While efforts have been made to transmit cultural knowledge in the respective communities in Rwenzori and Bunyoro, the influence of rapid population growth and the influx of migrant communities, is eroding valuable cultural knowledge and skills. The emerging practice of eating primates, although not culturally associated with indigenous communities, is another potential threat to the conservation of the chimpanzee. Given that this is a new practice among the local population, sensitisation on cultural and health-related issues may deter the continuation of this practice. Traditionally, indigenous hunters have rules and taboos restraining them from hunting chimpanzees but, if they are not from the indigenous communities, these restrictions may not be adhered to. Similarly, traditional respect for forests associated with medicinal plants and spiritual values is disregarded by large investors and migrant communities that do not share these values, resulting in deforestation outside protected areas, and shrinking the chimpanzees' habitat.

Traditional governance and other structures that can support the conservation of the great apes.

In both Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions, the cultural institutions have leaders specifically responsible for culture and nature. One of the responsibilities of clans is to transmit cultural knowledge concerning clans, totems and related taboos. The duty to promote a particular totem tends to fall on clan leaders and in the case of the Batangyi this was well illustrated, although the leadership of the Abayanji did not have concrete ways through which their totem was promoted (other than teaching their children). Depending on the size and influence of a clan, they may influence the conservation of their totem, for instance by working with local authorities to monitor and apprehend those

involved in killing chimpanzees, as demonstrated by the Batangyi in the Rwenzori region. While this provided a single example among the Bakonzo, it was a clear illustration of how the traditional governance can contribute to the conservation of the ape.

The existence of private forest owners in the Bunyoro and Rwenzori region showed that there are individuals and families, though not necessarily motivated by the need to preserve their totems, who love nature, value spirituality, medicinal plants, and a haven for wildlife, and who are contributing to the preservation of chimpanzees' habitat. Most of these private forest owners have indicated a desire to sustain their forests for generations to come, despite pressure from surrounding communities to cut down trees for economic purposes and in the hope that the chimpanzees will migrate and reduce crop raiding.

Implications for conservation policy and practice for the protection of the chimpanzee and its habitat

UWA, guided by the Wildlife Act, has the mandate to protect wildlife in and outside protected areas. Respondents however noted that there are some policy gaps that need addressing to improve the conservation of the chimpanzee. Thus, while the chimpanzee is recognised as endangered, there are no specific guidelines on how it should be protected outside protected areas. The absence of current information as a base line on chimpanzee numbers and habitat also makes it difficult to ascertain the extent to which the influx of migrants or any other factors may have reduced their numbers.

Large scale investors have contributed to the reduction of forest cover in Kiyooro, Kasongore and Budongo (in Bunyoro), significantly depleting the habitat of the chimpanzees and increasing the risk of human – animal conflict as they become exposed to communities and raid their gardens. While the private forest owners have taken the initiative to protect forests and host chimpanzees, there are no guidelines to support their contribution or for collaboration with UWA and NFA. None of the private forest owners interviewed had

considered wildlife ranches for cultural tourism - which would not only provide additional motivation but also reduce the pressure from communities who could then see the benefit of hosting chimpanzees in their midst.

In general therefore, this research reveals that cultural resources in the form of identity, as well as cultural values and structures, can contribute to raising awareness on the importance of conserving the chimpanzee,

both within and outside clans that have the ape as a totem. There are however cultural practices that impact negatively on its conservation, especially with regard to traditional medicine and related spiritual beliefs, and these need to be addressed. The existence of effective cultural leadership presents a cultural resource that could be strengthened to enhance positive cultural values and address the cultural practices that are not in keeping with current conservation demands.



Chimpanzee and people living in proximity. Photo credit: Jacqueline Rohen

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancing cultural identity associated with the chimpanzee

Clans and totems provide a good basis for linking culture to the conservation of the chimpanzee but the traditional cultural transmission mechanisms and communication channels need strengthening to enhance an appreciation of the animal, not only within the respective clans but also beyond. This could be done by the relevant cultural institutions by:

- Organising clan meetings to discuss the threats facing the chimpanzee and to devise specific ways through which clan members can contribute to its conservation.
- Sharing experiences between the clans whose totem is the chimpanzee through visits and other forms of exchanging information.
- Forging partnerships between clans and local authorities to sensitise the public about culture and the need to conserve the chimpanzee.
- Engaging women and youth of the Batangyi and Bayanja clan in creative cultural competitions to showcase the importance of the chimpanzee.

Transmission of cultural values and principles

The transmission of cultural values and principles associated with the conservation of the chimpanzee and nature also needs to be strengthened beyond the clan system. Using existing cultural structures, and working in collaboration with UWA and other conservation organisations, a series of activities could include:

- Organising radio talk shows that discuss the cultural significance of the chimpanzee, its endangered status and the need to conserve it.
- Organising inter-clan and cultural dialogues between the indigenous communities and migrant

communities, including local authorities, to raise concerns about the practice of eating primates, especially the chimpanzee.

- Engaging the youth in conservation activities to promote and protect the chimpanzee.

Working with the leadership of cultural institutions, UWA, local governments and private forest owners

The existence of cultural and other conservation institutions in Bunyoro and Rwenzori regions provides a wide network for communication and community engagement which can be strengthened to conserve the chimpanzee. This could be done by the leadership of the cultural institutions, UWA and the District Community Development Offices by:

- Engaging the apex cultural institutions to appreciate the endangered status of the chimpanzee in their cultural space.
- Developing a conservation agenda and plan to conserve the chimpanzee to be implemented by cultural institutions in Bunyoro, the Rwenzori region and UWA and including this in the districts' plans and budgets.
- Forging partnerships with all clan leaders to reflect on their role regarding conservation and specifically the conservation of endangered totemic animals, such as the chimpanzee.
- Supporting private forest owners to appreciate the cultural, natural and tourism value of chimpanzees and provide them with incentives to maintain and expand their forest using indigenous trees.
- Engaging private forest owners as forest monitors for the conservation of chimpanzees.
- Developing ordinances or byelaws to protect the chimpanzee and its habitat in the respective regions.

Use of chimpanzee body parts

The use of the chimpanzee's body parts for traditional medicine and food may be reduced through sensitisation and collaboration between cultural resource persons and the local authorities who can jointly work towards curbing practices that hinder the conservation of the chimpanzee by:

- Engaging traditional medicine practitioners through the clans and cultural resource persons in a dialogue on the endangered status of the chimpanzee and the legal implications of their practice.
- Sensitising migrant communities about the cultural and legal offence of eating chimpanzees and its repercussions.
- Mobilising the members of the Batangyi and Bayanja clans to monitor and report killing of chimpanzees.
- Engaging traditional hunters who are permitted to hunt outside the protected areas about their traditional principles and the potential dangers of snaring chimpanzees.

Policy guidance from UWA

The following recommendations were made by different respondents regarding the Wildlife Act that guides UWA's conservation practice and which they felt should provide policy guidance on:

- Engaging cultural institutions for conservation actions; the use of indigenous knowledge and skills in conservation and awareness raising activities at local levels.
- Partnering with private forest owners to preserve forests and support the conservation of chimpanzees, such as by establishing wildlife ranches for cultural tourism.
- Ensuring that investors are held accountable for destroying natural and cultural heritage and contribute to their restoration to the extent possible.
- Carrying out a census of the chimpanzees in Uganda to monitor and assess the extent to which culture and other factors are impacting on their endangered status.

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In this study, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, with the financial assistance from the Arcus Foundation, attempts to establish the extent to which culture can contribute to the conservation of the great apes in the country, especially the chimpanzees, so that positive cultural resources may be harnessed to this end.

This report is meant to increase the appreciation by development partners of the possible synergy between the culture of local communities and the conservation of the chimpanzees; to strengthen the conservation function by cultural leaders; to enhance appreciation of the importance of the chimpanzees for their socio-cultural significance and to highlight implications for national and international conservation policies and practice of State and non-state development partners.

This research revealed that among the Banyoro and the Bakonzo a link between culture and the great apes exists mainly for the chimpanzee, rather than the gorilla. The chimpanzee is a totem for two clans - the Batangyi (Bakonzo) and Bayanja (Banyoro). Both clans have a positive perception of their totem and have taboos against harming, killing or harassing the chimpanzee. The actions of the Batangyi clan in the Rwenzori region demonstrate that communities can be motivated by their cultural values and take practical steps to conserve the chimpanzee because of its cultural significance. It also shows that, without external legal enforcement, communities can actively protect and conserve the chimpanzee and work with existing State authorities in this respect.

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