

THE EMANDWA CULT IN WESTERN UGANDA AND RWANDA

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The *Emandwa* cult is mainly associated with the pastoralists in western and south-western Uganda; its emergence dates from their incursion into this region, from about the seventeenth century. The *Emandwa* is popularly associated with the Bacwezi rulers of the former empire of Bunyoro-Kitara, though it was worshipped throughout the whole of the interlacustrine region down to Rwanda and the Unyamwezi region. In terms of historical developments there must have been a tremendous interaction among the various ethnic groups in this region for this religious complex to cover such a vast area. No individual society lived as an isolated group, especially as inter-marriage between the ruling families in this area was the order of the day. The *Emandwa* were more powerful than other earlier religious mediums in the area. In some areas, where *Emandwa* were very much entrenched, the *Bazimu* (ancestral spirits) went underground completely. The people of the area called upon the *Emandwa* to quieten the rage of the living-dead. In Rwanda, Ryangombe, the king of the *Emandwa* was raised almost to the status of a king. In a society which was wracked by ethnic divisions — Tutsi, Hutu and Twa, in descending order — the ruling family had to devise something to hold society together. The *Emandwa* fulfilled this goal since it was worshipped by everyone. In essence, it was a religion of the ruling "clan" although the Bahutu are supposed to have worshipped it before the arrival of the Nyiginya ruling family in Rwanda. The Bahutu, who are analogous to the Bakiga, had to find a mobilizing force around which they could rally their efforts to resist Rwandan domination. It was under the banner of unity against such domination that the individual Mukiga found refuge in the Nyabingi cult. Nyabingi, too, was much more powerful than the family mediums through whom the people communicated with God. Nyabingi was regarded as an end in itself. The unity created in Rwanda by the worship of *Emanawa* tended to fall apart with the emergence of Nyabingi, mostly in the nineteenth century, since Nyabingi, associated with the earlier rulers of the kingdom of Mpororo, opposed Rwandan expansionism. In this context, Nyabingi was as much a unitary force among the Bakiga as it was a divisive one *vis-à-vis* the relationship between the Bakiga and Rwanda.

The purpose of paper, therefore, is to delineate how these religious deities revolutionized the 'social' and 'political' set-up in the interlacustrine region

including Rwanda. The *Emandwa* were spread by the mediums in their endeavour to create religious and political empires. This was a departure from the earlier religions based on individual family spirits. The former could be worshipped on a family and a "clan" level.

Definition

The *Emandwa* derives from the word *kubandwa*, the process of deification in which society supplicates to the spirits that are distinct from those of one's ancestors; *Emandwa* are the deities themselves. Further, when people are performing the *kubandwa* rite, those involved are called *Emandwa*. There was a special type of *Emandwa* called Nyabingi which differed from other *Emandwa* in that it was supposed to be subversive and unitary, more authoritarian than the others which tended to be conservative and hence respectable. In most respects, the Batutsi of Rwanda tended to prefer *Emandwa* to Nyabingi, but it should be indicated that Muhumaza, a widow of king Rwabugiri (d. 1895), a mututsi, in her bid to install her son on the kingdom of Rwanda, used Nyabingi against the Batutsi of Rwanda and later against the British in Southern Kigezi in early 1900s. Oral tradition among the Bakiga stipulates that the main differences between the two cults is that *Emandwa* could be made in the form of Runyegye (rattle), and hence could be purchased from someone else. It was not so with Nyabingi which chose its own personality and spoke through its medium. The person so chosen would be called the *mugirwa* (medium) of Nyabingi, while in the case of *Emandwa*, the person so possessed tended to become the *Emandwa* itself. It was not unusual for the spirit to speak through a certain personality by "sitting on his head". Since the element of centralisation was relatively lacking in so far as the *Emandwa* were worshipped, there tended to be many of them compared to the Nyabingi *bagirwa* among the Bakiga. In the final analysis, the absence of initiation into the Nyabingi cult was the main difference between Nyabingi, and *Emandwa* since the latter involved initiation rites.

Some sources indicate that there were two types of *Emandwa* worshipped by the Bakiga — the first was referred to as *Emandwa za bakazi* (the *Emandwa* of women), the second as *Esiriba* (represented by snakes), based on individual magical powers, while the former entailed "an actual cult or cults in which group initiation ceremonies and secret rites were practised."¹ Under this classification, *Esiriba* was the only *Emandwa* that could be possessed and worshipped on an individual basis while I contend that there were very many more *Emandwa* that fulfilled the same role as that of *Esiriba*. In fact, while *Esiriba* was dominant among the Basigi of Kagalama in Southern Kigezi, it was relegated to a lesser position among the Bajara in Kinkiizi where *Rukiika* was very dominant. In addition, it was not only the *Emandwa za bakazi* that involved group initiation ceremonies, there were also occasions when group ceremonies were the norm, especially on a "clan" level.

The historical origin of Emandwa

The historical evidence pertaining to the origin of *Emandwa* is not very clear. Iris Berger indicates that it was the pastoralists mainly from Ankole who spread the *Emandwa* cult into Kigezi, possibly between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.² This is possible, since, geographically speaking, the western part of Ankole is very similar to some parts of northern Kigezi which was also inhabited by pastoralists. She enhances her argument by pointing out that Rwandan influence was much more concentrated in Bufumbira, but even this was a development of the nineteenth century. In this context, Ryangombe, king of the *Emandwa* in Rwanda (Ruhumba for the Bagahe, and Ruhumbura for the Basigi) took root among the people in the nineteenth century since this was the time when they were reaching southern Kigezi.

However, Father F. Geraud argues that before the arrival of the Bashambo into southern Kigezi, the above-mentioned *Emandwa* were worshipped by the "clans" concerned, an indication that they must have been worshipping them before their emigration from northern Rwanda.³ Since there is no concrete evidence that there was a dominant Ankole influence in Rwanda, we can rest assured that those *Emandwa* must have come from Rwanda. Moreover, the cult of Ryangombe is dated as far back as the reign of Ruganzu II Ndori, king of Rwanda in the seventeenth century.

Berger further states that the *Emandwa* which appear in Ankole also occur in Kigezi.⁴ These are Muhima, Rutwe, Itwara, the last two appearing only in Rukiga and Ankole, while Muhima is widely worshipped in Rukiga, Rwanda, Buhunde (near Zaire), Bushi and Bukonjo. At this point, Berger fails to pinpoint the exact location of the *Emandwa* and simply leaves the matter hanging in mid-air by indicating that it could have been Rwanda or Ankole that served as the original home of these *Emandwa*. According to further evidence, she tends to rely on Ankole much more than on Rwanda, simply because of linguistic connections, namely that the terminology for the *Emandwa* in Ankole is similar to that found in Kigezi. One could also argue here, that since, linguistically speaking, Kigezi and Ankole are similar, in fact that the *Emandwa* could also have been adopted from Kigezi, taking into account that with the expansion of Rwanda, most people moved northwards from southern Kigezi, especially the Bashambo and Bashengera towards Mpororo and some parts of western Ankole. These people could have carried their *Emandwa* with them. But it has already been asserted that the Bakiga venerated certain *Emandwa* before the arrival of the Bashambo into southern Kigezi. Therefore, Berger's argument that the *Emandwa* might have spread from Ankole does not carry much weight.

By arguing that the *Emandwa* took root in Kigezi "as the forces of the Becwezi cults diminished in potency,"⁵ Berger implies that before the adoption of *Emandwa*, the Bacwezi cult must have been dominant among the Bakiga.

While it is true that the Bakiga were not unaware of the Bacwezi, the memory of the latter is generally weak. Moreover, oral tradition asserts that the Bacwezi had no dominance over the Bakiga, so there is no reason to believe that the Bakiga ever worshipped the Bacwezi cults. In this contention lies Berger's failure to understand the impact of the Bacwezi cult over the area concerned. Moreover, the names of a few Bacwezi, such as Mugasha, Murindwa, and Ndahura, were known to have been brought in by the Bahima, although it is possible that even these were confined to the Bahima themselves.

If Berger's argument⁶ is correct in saying that *kubandwa* (the cult of the *Emandwa*) became widespread after the disappearance of the Bacwezi in Bunyoro, Ankole and Karagwe in the fifteenth century, then *kubandwa* was itself initiated by the Bacwezi, and it must have been the Bacwezi pastoralists who were responsible for its dissemination throughout the rest of the inter-lacustrine region, including Rwanda, reaching there between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The absence of the Bacwezi cults in Rwanda is attributed to the anti-Bahinda (hence anti-Bacwezi) sentiment, whose explanation is beyond our present knowledge.

Thus, it was during these migratory movements that *kubandwa* reached Kigezi and the Bakiga. This would be in line with the argument advanced by Luc de Heusch⁷ that the origin of *kubandwa* should be sought in the oldest civilizations of Bunyoro-Kitara, via Karagwe and finally Rwanda. It is associated with the disappearance of the Bacwezi from Bunyoro, establishing their dynasties in Ankole and further south to Karagwe. As Vansina tells us, King Cyilima II-Rujugira (mid-eighteenth century) was the first to designate the first king of the *Emandwa* charged with the task of bringing the sovereign under the protection of the *Emandwa*. Father Alexis Kagame attributes the creation of this post to a former king, Mutara I Semugeshi (first half of the seventeenth century, according to Vansina's chronology). How the Bahutu adopted it is not clear, but we know that the Batutsi found the Bahutu already worshipping it in the sixteenth century so that its connection with the Bacwezi might sound plausible, since this was after their departure from Bunyoro as a result of the invasion of the Lwo people.⁸

Ryangombe, king of the *Emandwa* in Rwanda is reputed to have been the brother of the last Mucwezi king Wamara. Their separation took place in Karagwe, with Ryangombe heading for Rwanda where he was later fatally gored by a water buffalo while hunting. While Ryangombe was anti-pastoralist and anti-cattle culture, his cult was worshipped by both the Batutsi and the Bahutu, as well as the Batwa, contrary to Nyabingi which was persecuted by the Batutsi and worshipped by the Bahutu.

The story of Ryangombe is shrouded in myth. One day, his mother Babinga dreamt that Ryangombe would go hunting. In the process Ryangombe would meet two people, chimepenebere, and Nyakitindi, whom she should greet. He would cross a river flowing upwards, and then kill a hare without

a tail. Later, he would meet a black buffalo which he should also kill. Afterwards the story begins to unfold before Ryangombe as he proceeds on his hunting expedition.

Ryangombe, takes two men with him; they cross the river flowing upwards, and they kill a hare without a tail. They meet Chimepenebere and Nyakitindi, who are carrying a naked child. They seize Nyakitindi but Chimepenebere bewitches Ryangombe. Chimepenebere asks Ryangombe to produce a skin for dressing the child. Acting promptly, Ryangombe kills a water buck and secures the skin for the child, but Chimepenebere complains that the skin is too small for the child. As Ryangombe tries to look for another skin he encounters a black buffalo which gores him with one of its horns. Of course, Chimepenebere and Nyakitindi are jubilant at the death of Ryangombe. Before he dies, he calls upon his child Binego to avenge his death. Binego arrives in time with a sceptre made of iron, and slaughters both Chimepenebere and Nyakitindi. Thereafter he inherits his father's kingdom, after burying his father under an erythrina tree.

Ryangombe today is one of the "heroes" of *Emandwa*. According to legend, his father was already in possession of the *Emandwa's* kingship, but the other heroes are not specified; At the death of his father, after defeating another contestor to the throne, with the help of his son, Ryangombe became the king of the *Emandwa*. At his death Ryangombe announced his empire on the spirits of the dead. He established his residence on the top of the highest volcano among the Mufumbiro range. He appeared to one of the kings of Rwanda Ruganzu II and transmitted his spiritual testament to him. Thereafter, all the inhabitants of Rwanda had to honour him in the form of *Emandwa* cult. The cult of the *Emandwa* today carries the name of Ryangombe.

The doctrine of the cult makes a distinction between the fate of those who are initiated into the cult and those who are profane. The spirits of the former dwell in one of the extinct Mufumbiro volcanoes, Karisimbi, regarded as paradise while in the latter case the spirits will be tormented by the fire of Nyiragongo, an active volcano in the same range. The spirits of the initiates have a happy future in contrast to those of the non-initiated that are destined to a gloomy existence.

The power of Ryangombe is twofold. Not only is he the king of the "heroes" but also of ancestral spirits (zabimu) whom he commands to refrain from harming the living. On the other hand, the spirits of the dead can ask their descendants to honour certain specific *Emandwa* that they themselves did invoke during their earthly existence, and who should continue being protectors of their home. Refusal of this request tantamounts to calamities befalling on the entire family. In this way the spirits of the dead and the *Emandwa* cults are closely linked. The fear of one inspires the cult of the others. To honour the *Emandwa* among the Bakiga is one way of protecting themselves against the malice of the spirits of the dead.

Names and Functions of the Emandwa

There were various names for the *Emandwa*, each being more recognized and venerated by one "clan" than by another. The *Emandwa* took on the names of their own functions. But there were cases in which their duties would overlap, though this did not imply that either of the *Emandwa* concerned would necessarily have two names. For instance, *Mugasha-Rweibebe* who was responsible for the protection of food crops while they were still in the ground occasionally interfered with *Kasente* as the latter was responsible for riches and property around the home. However, the end result was favourable, as this overlapping produced some competition between the *Emandwa*, implying that greater efficiency was thus achieved than would have otherwise been the case. This process also worked in favour of the people as it enabled them to offer sacrifices of the same kind to both the *Emandwa* concerned. In certain instances, some people have assumed the names of the *Emandwa*, an indication that those *Emandwa* must have worked efficiently. The names *Rukiika*, *Mugasha*, and *Kasente* are reminders of such *Emandwa*.

There was a marked hierarchy of gods among the *Bakiga*, but whereas *Bukiika* was supreme among the *Bajara*, *Bazigaaba*, *Baitira* and the *Bazira*, *Bihara* was the supreme *Emandwa* of the *Bazobiki*, just as the *Esiriba* was supreme among the *Basigi*. The case in point is that of the *Bajara*:

1. *Kazooa Nyamuhanga* — Supreme Being.
 2. *Rukiika-Rwamuhangi*.
 3. *Mugasha-Rweibebe*; *Nyakyasa*, *Kasente*, *Muhima*.
 4. *Businde*, *Ebinyegye*, *Esiriba*, *Nyinakyoma*, *Karisimbi-Karonda*.⁹
- The difference between the lowest rank of *Emandwa* and those of a higher order was that the former could be purchased from another "clan" or adopted from elsewhere, whereas that was not the case with those of higher rank.

Rukiika-Rwamuhangi

Among the *Bajara* in *Kinkiizi*, *Rukiika-Rwamuhangi* was the head. According to its second name ("the creator"), it was believed that it had more authority than any other divinity in protecting the family or "clan" of the *Bajara*. *Rukiika* acted as a prime minister compared to the lesser gods. But instead of the *Bajara* presenting their problem first to the lesser *Emandwa* who would then forward them to *Rukiika*, it was, in fact, *Rukiika* who was consulted directly. For instance, if a family lacked internal discipline, *Rukiika* was consulted first, then his subordinate *Nyakyasa* who was specifically responsible for discipline in families. By the nature of this work, *Rukiika* was supposed to stay out of the shrines; his place of abode was usually located by the gateway so as to prevent any magic or charms from entering the family compound.

The process of divination was composed of two stages: (1) stating the cause, and (2) dealing with solutions to the particular problem. The *Emandwa* were usually consulted in the latter case. The problem could be overcome often times by giving medicine by making small incisions on the chest or forehead into which was rubbed some medicinal powder made from herbs. In the process, Rukiika was called upon in order to make the medicine more effective, with the following words (which, unfortunately, are practically impossible to render into English).

1. Kaitweme Rukiika-Rwamuhangi
 Tokahangwa burogo
 Tokahangwa muzimu
 Tokahangwa mwangi
 Tokahangwa mutambiriko
 Tokahangwa enjoka
 Tokahangwa mugyenzi
 Nakugyera ninkugyererura
 Hakura omubiri
 Hi! Ha! Nakubyarira akati
 Otarirengwa
 Nakubyarira akoma, otarirengwa
2. Tokangwa ncurazara
 Tokangwa muzeire
 Nakuheereza akooma kaasebateera
 Otarirengwa akati katambikirwe
 Otarirengwa murabyo
 Otarirengwa burogo
3. Mbinga emizimu, mbinga enkuba
 Mbinga oburogo, mbinga Emandwa
 Orikuroga ayangwe akaso kawee.

In this ceremony, the *omufumu we mandwa* (medicinemán) uttered words designed to safeguard his client against sorcery, poison, evil spirits, and divinities, all enemies that might be put in his way.

During the second part of this ceremony, the *omufumu* told his client how he was now safeguarded against thunder and lightning, and against curses called down upon him by his enemies. He then recounted his own capabilities for casting out spirits, averting thunder and lightning, and sending away sorcerers and malevolent *mandwa*.

Lastly, he concluded by telling his client that whosoever hated him should also be hated by others, which, for the client must have proved the most reassuring and effective means of identifying his tormentors.

Nyakyasa operated on a family level, being concerned with family discipline.¹⁰ In this case, the young were supposed to respect the elders inasmuch

as the elders were expected to respect Nyakyasa. Should the *omufumu* we *mandwa* fail to render appropriate offerings and sacrifices to the *Emandwa*, he would of necessity be visited by calamities.

As the name implies, Nyakyasa derives from *okwasa* ("to split"). In this respect, someone troubled by Nyakyasa suffered from constant splitting headaches. As for *Rukiika*, the word derives from the verb *kukiika* ("to lay across"), implying that *Rukiika* attacked the chest as though strapping it with bands of iron, causing difficulty in breathing and speaking. *Rukiika* could also manifest itself in the form of snakes that appeared in the compound. Also, red ants running across the compound, or butter or ghee falling from the sky were signs of *Rukiika* coming back from his mission (or perhaps of someone with a strong throwing arm!)

Mugasha-Rweibebe and other Emandwa

Mugasha derives from the verb *kugasha* ("to satisfy").¹¹ In this respect, *Mugasha* satisfied the *Bakiga* by protecting their food crops. For instance, when someone had stolen food from someone else's garden, *Mugasha* attacked him unless he made restitution. The thief would suffer from stomachache for so many sleepless nights that he would eventually die.

Kasente derives from the noun *esente* ("money").¹² Apart from engaging in money matters, he also protected food that had been harvested from the gardens. Whenever anyone came to consult *Kasente*, he was supposed to bring money and nothing else. Should someone unauthorized misappropriate such money, he would in most respects fall sick and could be cured only by appeasing *Kasente*.

Muhima, as the name suggests, was concerned with those people who kept cattle. His function was to look after the welfare of domestic livestock and to ensure that they were fertile and that they remained untouched by thieves.¹³ Unlike other gods, *Muhima* did not stay in a house or shrine, but instead somewhere near the gate. As his speciality lay in the protection of domestic animals, he was naturally given meat to eat. In this respect, it was almost impossible for someone to possess *Muhima* since he would not otherwise be able to feed him; in any case, there would be little point in doing so as *Muhima* would then have no duty to perform.

The origin of *Karonda* — *Businde* and *Mpangi* lies somewhere in *Kayanza*, and they were mainly connected with hunting.

Karisimbi is alleged to have come from Congo; it was adopted by hunters in much the same manner as were *Karonda*—*Buside* and *Mpangi*.

The origins of *Esiriba* and *Ebinyegye* are not clear although they may also have come from Rwanda or the Congo. The characteristic of *Ebinyegye* was that they stayed in horns and spoke the language of their masters. They were used by an *omufumu* in the process of *kuragura* and were designed to protect that family as were the *Esiriba*. In addition, the *Ebinyegye* were

concerned with discipline in the family. They normally manifested themselves in the form of lizards and snakes. The *Esiriba* were highly regarded and feared among the *Basigi* at Kagalama.

Nyinakyoma was an *Emandwa* adopted by the *Bajara*.¹⁴ Its origin was associated with a *Munyarwanda* woman named *Burora* who died while visiting a *Mujara* (individual of the *Bajara* lineage). Her spirit was venerated and in her capacity as visitor, the *Emandwa* was not supposed to be harmful to families. It functioned only when its owner was administering medicine to someone so as to make the medicine more effective.

Kariisa, like *Muhima*, was an *Emandwa* for herdsmen. In this respect, the *Bakiga* prayed to *Kariisa* to increase their herds of cattle, sheep, and goats.

Rutwa and *Nyarufunjo*, including *Kariisa*, were not as important as the others since the *Bakiga* were mainly agriculturalists rather than pastoralists.¹⁵ Consequently, they had no shrines. The distinction between these and those without shrines was that these "sat on the head" of the medium when the latter was possessed. Also, the *Emandwa* who lacked shrines only drank beer, while those with shrines consumed meat as well as beer. Therefore, in the ceremonies the sacrifices were those of meat for those *Emandwa* with shrines. Should someone offer something that was not perfectly satisfactory to the *Emandwa*, the latter would make a strong objection. One *Emandwa* is reputed to have rebuked Mrs. Nyakaboko of *Kihanda* thus:

I am a *Munyarwanda* woman and I do not eat hoofs of cows. you buy in the markets to deceive me; I eat real cows. Buy me a real cow or else I'll kill this patient.

Initiation into the Emandwa cult

Certain preparations had to be made before the actual night when someone was to be initiated. He had to make beer, obtain a cow for slaughter, build a shrine, and inform all the elders of the impending ceremony. The *omubandisa* (initiator) who performed the ceremony was, usually from the place of the *Emandwa*. In the absence of such a man, it was performed by one of the elders who was not supposed to reveal the secrets.

When the cow was slaughtered, special cuts had to be selected and roasted for *kushumbya*.¹⁶ The parts thus chosen were *ekishamba* (the stomach), *amara* (the intestines), *obwigura* (the oesophagus), *orwigara* (the diaphragm) and *ebihaha* (the lungs).

On the actual day, the "clan" elders embarked on a journey to the place of worship called *omuhambo* under a big *omurinzi* tree (*erythrina abyssinica*) on top of a hill. Those engaged in the ceremony changed their clothes, putting them back on inside-out. At this juncture, the details of what went on would not be revealed to the *omubandwa* (initiate). Nevertheless, the initiate was brought into the midst of the elders sitting in a circle. He was then asked to reveal all the wrong and distasteful things he might have done previously,

such as having sexual intercourse with an animal or committing theft. Otherwise, the elders could force him to confess by tormenting and even beating him. This was an indication that the *omubandwa* was purifying himself, ready to join the world of the *Emandwa* and forsake his former worldly life.

All this was but a prelude to the revelation by the initiator to the initiate of all the secrets of *kubandwa*. Since the latter had revealed and forsaken all wrongdoing, it was a sign that he could now become a "holy man" to be entrusted with the powers and secrets of *Emandwa*. He was then asked to strip naked, and to be sworn in as a member of the *Emandwa* cult with the injunction that he would never break any promise or betray any secret. To drive this point home, a white pebble was placed on the ground by the *omubandisa* to be picked up by the *omubandwa* with his tongue or mouth, a very trying exercise. This ceremony which was completed by swallowing the pebble was called *okumira eibanga* ("to swallow a vow"), while the act of betraying this vow was referred to as *Okwata eibanga*. Should the initiate do anything contrary to this oath, the *Emandwa* had the power and right to kill him.

In connection with the ceremonies, secret offerings were made and a feast was held, usually at harvest time when there was plenty of food, often as a fulfilment of a promise made during the year when the help of the *Emandwa* had previously been sought to avert some calamity. The night featured feasting and principally beer-drinking, but an eye had to be kept on the initiate to make sure he did not fall asleep. If he did so, he could be overcome by the *Emandwa* (*Emandwa ziramukyanya*).

The next morning, like a bride, the initiate was brought out of the seclusion he had entered the previous night, and was allowed to dress himself in a couple of skins. He was then taken to the top of a hill where someone had placed a low stool for him to sit on. He was now invested with the power of *Emandwa*, putting him in a position whereby he could supplicate his father's *Emandwa*. The idea of *Kubandwa* was generational, that is, one could inherit his father's *Emandwa*, but only after becoming initiated himself.

The whole group then departed for home after the swearing-in ceremony. However, the *omubandisa* and *omubandwa* stayed behind so that the latter could be introduced to the shrine of the *Emandwa* as he had now become their servant. The "old" *omubandwa* then fed the new *Emandwa* with meat and beer; this ended the main part of the ceremony.¹⁷

The return journey home was marked by the ritual of "begging" which gave rise to the expression *Nashega nkemandwa* ("He begs like *Emandwa*"). He could not leave anyone alone until he had been given something. The items of food thus collected were always shared among the whole group that accompanied the *omubandwa*. Only after passing through these ceremonies could one carry out the regular rites known as *kubandwa*: the initiate then "became" *Emandwa*.¹⁸

The functions of the Mugirwa we Mandwa

The *Omufumu we Siriba* was also known as a herbalist; using *Esiriba*, he punished evil-doers on someone's behalf as much as he used it to bring about cures. This dual role of a sorcerer was socially acceptable among the Bakiga since they justifiably detested wrong-doers. Cases of witchcraft and adultery were punishable in this manner.

The *Emandwa* of the herbalist and the *mugirwa we mandwa* was kept in a horn to facilitate carrying it during his travels. This horn was made in the following manner:

The horn in which these spirits live is a large sheep's horn whose wide end is covered by a bit of hide with a hole in the middle. This represents the mouth through which gruel and blood are fed to the spirits. There is a dried beetle inside the horn which rattles when the horn is shaken.¹⁹

In addition, the other paraphernalia of the sorcerer included bells, a gourd rattle, a string head-dress adorned with charms and sacred shells.²⁰

When the *omufumu we mandwa* wanted to find out, for example, who had stolen someone's property where no one had any knowledge of the thief, he employed the process known as *kusisya* (seance) which involved "sending horns" to the accused. These would either beat him or force him to confess his guilt and return the stolen goods. The process of seance has been described as follows:

When the magician arrives for the seance, he sits in the place of honour by the fireside and is feasted with beer and freshly butchered meat. Everyone is somewhat in a solemn mood—about midnight the sorcerer sets to work, setting the *Emandwa* in its own horn upright between his knees in the mortar of the door way. First he shakes the rattles, and then the *Emandwa* speaks in "a tiny chirping voice", asking "why are you beating me?" The sorcerer explains that its help is needed and then makes an offering. A sheep is butchered and the blood is allowed to spurt into the horn. . . . The tongue of the sheep is cut off and eaten raw. After this the sorcerer addresses the spirits again and explains what he wants them to do, to send sickness to some thief whose crime is known although his identity is not, or perhaps to cause green grass to grow on the pubes of a runaway wife whose whereabouts are unknown. The answer is expected in the voice of the person against whom the action of the spirit is directed, who is supposed to have been caught by the horn. He confesses to the crime and tells whether he is too well protected. In the latter case they desist and seek out another practitioner with more power. Otherwise the spirits set out at once on their errand.²¹

These spirits manifested themselves in the form of large snakes, especially at the graveside when the victim was being buried, or at the gateway.

The other duties of the *omufumu we mandwa* were to treat sick people and to use his *Emandwa* to render malignant forces harmless, as much as to

safeguard the people from witchcraft. The childless could be induced to bear children. For all these and many other services, the *omufumu* was highly regarded and well paid; otherwise, the *Emandwa* could and would kill the person who received those services without offering remuneration on some form.

The Worship of the Emandwa

The worship of *Emandwa* was known as *kubandwa*, the term referring both to the situation when sacrifices for the atonement were being made and also to the occasion when the Bakiga expressed their praises and thanks to the *Emandwa*. The process of *kubandwa* was almost synonymous to supplication (*kuterecereŋa*) although the latter referred specifically to atonement. In this section, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

The ritual of *kubandwa* was performed on two levels. In its narrower but more common context, it was resorted to on the family level; but in its wider but rarer form, it was practised on the "clan" level. *Kubandwa* on the family level was conducted by the head of the family who normally chose his successor before he died. The successor passed through a lengthy apprenticeship, but so long as the father lived, the son was not permitted to practise with the *Emandwa*. The father had the power and the right to render them powerless if the son insisted on using them without his father's permission. This process was known as *kukwatira*.²²

Thus, supplication on a family level was led by the head of the household or another *omubandisa* (the one who leads the ceremony) from outside the family but within the same "clan", and who was skilled in the powers of the *Emandwa*, using an *Emandwa* similar to that owned by the family concerned. Special food — meat, beer, or butter — was brought to the shrine for the *Emandwa*; then the whole family gathered around the shrine.

The ceremony was marked by the slaughter of a sheep to be offered to the *Emandwa*. Nine leaves were plucked from the *omurinsi* (protected tree and rubbed onto the back of the animal thus offered. The meat was then roasted and beer was poured into a special pot from the shrine of the *Emandwa*. The *omubandisa* dressed up in a special attire composed of the *ekisingo* (the skin of a lion's neck with the mane still attached, and adorned with bead embroidery around the bottom edge) and the *oruhu* (a skin with small pieces of metal attached to it all the way around except where it fastened; it was worn on the head). He then addressed the *Emandwa*, in a special language: not *Keije, buhooro huhooro gye*, but *Muyanda owandeebya owakasa bateera, akaasereire bwita, orikura akandeebya*,²³ implying that, ultimately, when the *Emandwa* reached maturity, it would be likely to betray him.

The *omubandisa*, still sitting beside the shrine, consumed some beer through a long tube. At this stage, the *omubandisa* became possessed by the

Emandwa (aided presumably by the receptivity induced by a warm beery glow!) and subsequently became the *Emandwa* itself than merely an *Emandwa* medium. The family then began praying to the *Emandwa* for its protection and blessing. The *runyegye* and *burengo* were rattled to the accompaniment of brisk dancing. As the dance approached its end, the *Emandwa* signalled this by raising his arm with the word "*Nacunga*": this was also the sign that *Emandwa* was dispossessing the *omubandisa*. Thereafter, the *omubandisa* removed the clothes that he had worn for the occasion. The food and beer left over after the family had departed had to be consumed by the *omubandisa*, and it was assumed that when he was thus satisfied, so too was the *Emandwa*. As for the *Emandwa* which do not ordinarily stay in shrines, eating was carried on outside.

The following words were uttered by the *omubandisa* when calling upon the *Emandwa*:

Hi! Ha! aa—! aa—!
 Kaitwe Rukiika-Rwamuhangi!
 Nyakyasa, Mugasha, Muhima, Kasente
 Karonda-Businde
 Akaseire engogoore
 Hi! Ha! aa—! aa—!
 Akasereire Bwita, Kyangwe Kyambiribiri
 Omugyendera seeri
 Hi! Ha! aa—! aa—!
 Kaitwe Rukiika-Rwamuhangi
 Omurinzi, Omugabi wa byona
 Abaana, obusingye, Amatungo, Emigisha
 Hi! Ha! aa—! aa—!
 Muhima, Nyakyasa, Kasente, Mugasha
 Hi! Ha! aa—! aa—!
 Kaitweme Rukiika-Rwamuhangi
 Emandwa Nkuru
 Kareeta busingye, obugaiga, Amatungo
 Hi! Ha! aa—! aa—!²⁴

With these words, the *omubandisa* called upon the various *Emandwa* by name: Rukiika-Rwamuhangi, who as senior *Emandwa* had the power to bestow all the blessings of life, be they children, peace, riches or good fortune, who had the power to protect such gifts, a power equal only to his power to take it all away, including the gift of life itself; other *Emandwa* addressed were Nyakyasa, Mugasha, Muhima, Kasente, Karonda and Businde in a veritable catalogue of divinities.

Supplication on the "clan" level

This was joint worship for the whole "clan", also held on a special hill — *Omuhambo*. The nature of the preparations was similar to those made on the family level. For the ceremony, each family prepared beer, bread,

milk, firewood, seeds, rattles, bells used for hunting, stools, spears, *Ebisingo* (crowns) skins (*Empu*); all these articles would find their way to the place of worship. Someone also secured a goat for slaughter. The mode of dress was the same as that used on the family level. The leader of the *babandisa* (plural of the singular *omubandisa*) then led the ceremony. As the *Emandwa* did not eat together, they were fed separately. The leader also put meat into a bowl for the ancestral spirits to eat. The meat for those *Emandwa* whose names he might have forgotten was also put aside.

After all this preparation the ceremony proper finally began. Since all the worshippers present were *babandisa*, there was no need to translate the special language of the *Emandwa*. The *Emandwa* would then be appraised of the problems facing the whole "clan" in general. In his address to the crowd, the *omubandisa* would say, "*Murye zabasigira*," (that the people should eat the food offered them by the *Emandwa*). Hearty feasting followed, accompanied by dancing to the tune of bells and rattles, including the *Ekinyegye*. When the leader of the ceremony felt satisfied that the *Emandwa* were pleased, he then announced: "*Naacunda*," implying that he had finished. Every morsel of food was consumed there and then, for no one was allowed to take home any food for the *Emandwa*, lest the "clan" *Emandwa* be bewitched or rendered powerless, depending upon the circumstances.²⁵

Reflections on Emandwa

Throughout the Great Salt Lakes Region *kubandwa* was a religion of initiates. As the cult was exercised within the lineage group, the priests and the people lived rigorously separated from one another. The religion of the *Emandwa* was ambivalent with respect to the ancestral spirits, fear of malevolent sorcerers (*barogi*), and the predominant role of the diviner charged with the task of neutralizing all of these influences. The ancestral spirits were generally hostile to their descendants and lived in an underworld, leading somewhat lack-lustre existence there. On the other hand, the spirits of the *Emandwa* did not join the other spirits on death; they had their own place of abode, such as the volcanic peaks of the Mufumbiro Mountains. They reigned powerfully in this new world, although how they reacted to all the other ordinary spirits who were not *Emandwa* still remains a mystery.

The importance of *kubandwa* lay in the fact that those who were initiated were protected by the *Emandwa*, as the initiate was projected into a new family, a sacred world which sheltered him from the profane world of the hostile *bazimu* and evil sorcerers. Thus, the *Emandwa* interposed between the living and the living-dead who were so greatly revered, filling a chasm that the traditional system had hollowed out between the one and the other.

The hierarchy of *kubandwa* was composed of two grades of initiates, each equally accessible to both men and women. The first rank of initiation, *kwatura*, entailed a "rebirth" into the cult of *Emandwa* in terms of being

ritually "put to death". This initiate was integrated into a new family after having symbolically renounced one of the fundamental rules regarding incest. The initiate was at once a child and a new bride of the *Emandwa* world. In the second state, the child had already become an adult, quite detached from the profane world. When he left the protection of the sacred erythrina tree at the initiation site and approached the family home, he was not, strictly speaking, "going home". Rather, he was symbolically joining another world by crossing an imaginary Rubicon. Hereafter, in this other world, he was in actuality *Emandwa*, while in this secular world, he enjoyed total immunity. He could henceforth incarnate the spirits of *kubandwa* in the course of the ceremonies. He had become the priest of the cult and its medium, much more powerful by dint of the talisman he had received under the sacred *Omurinzi* (erythrina) tree. The break with the secular world was symbolized by the ritual of "begging" as he returned home. In this endeavour he was congratulated by his peers, a sign that he was now their equal and hence ready to be introduced to the other *Emandwa*.

The significance of the language used by *Emandwa* lay in the fact that the world of the *Emandwa* regarded itself as being totally independent from the norms of the secular society which it called "profane". It should be noted that the British in their confused efforts to fight Nyabingi in the 1920s in south-west Uganda suggested that the worship of *Emandwa* be encouraged in order to uproot the worship of Nyabingi, the latter being regarded as far more inimical to colonial interests than the former. Nevertheless, all opposition notwithstanding, Nyabingi continued to flourish side by side with *Emandwa*.

FOOTNOTES

1. May M. Edel, *The Chiga of Western Uganda* (New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for African Affairs, 1957), p. 141.
2. Iris Berger, "The Emandwa Cult in Kigezi," in *The Impact of Rwanda on the History of Uganda*, ed. Donald J. Denoon (forthcoming).
3. Father F. Geraud, "Traditional Religion" in *A History of Kigezi* (Adult, Centre, Kampala), 1972, p. 164. ed. D. Denoon.
4. Berger, *Emandwa*, p. 16.
5. Ibid.
6. Berger, *Emandwa*, p. 16.
7. Luc de Heusch, "Mythe et société féodale: la culte de *kubandwa* dans le Rwanda traditionnel," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 9, 18 (1964), p. 143.
8. de Heusch, "Mythe," p. 134.
9. Interview with Yokana Murera, Bubale, November 1972.
10. Interview with Ngologoza, Kabale, 1972.
11. J. Basingwire, "African Traditional Divinities and Christianity in Nyakabungo Parish, Kigezi," MS, Bishop Tucker College, Mukono, 1960; interview with Murera.
12. Ibid.
13. Interview with Rwabikoha, Kagalama, November 1973.

14. Reverend Mr. Twesigye, "Death Among the Bakiga of Uganda," MS, Dept. of Religious Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, 1970.
15. Berger, *Emandwa*, p. 16.
16. *Kushumbya* means feeding the *Emandwa* during the process of supplication.
17. Edel, *Chiga*, p. 147.
18. Y. K. Bamunoba and F. B. Welbourne, "Emandwa Initiation in Ankole," *Uganda Journal*, 29, 1(1965), pp. 13-25.
19. Edel, *Chiga*, p. 141.
20. Ibid. The shells were collected from Rwanda. One could collect only as many as the number of children his mother bore, and no more, under penalty of death.
21. Edel, *Chiga*, p. 143.
22. Interview with Kacwagure, Butobere, June 1973.
23. Basingwire, "Divinities."
24. Basingwire, "Divinities," appendix 6.
25. Interviews with Rwehuha and Magambo, 1973.