

## Culture

In the Kakuwâ language, the exact reference to culture is **la'bi** or **uri**. Hence, **la'bi lo Kakuwâ** translates as culture of the Kakuwâ or Kakuwâ culture.

### Kakuwâ Child Naming Ceremonies

Kakuwâ people do not usually name their children until the last piece of the remaining umbilical cord has fallen off through the natural process. The naming ceremony usually occurs after three days if the child is a girl, and after four days if the child is a boy. The naming ceremony requires first, the boiling of shelled **laputu** or Black-eyed peas in salt-free water and the traditional solution of the a local salt, **kombo**, mixed only in **kemo na konyu** or simsim paste (but not in) groundnut paste. Moreover, no frying whatsoever, is entertained while millet serves for the staple bread, **'dilo**.

The baby to be ceremoniously named is brought outside for the first time in the fresh, mild morning known as **a-igo**. The elders then formally receive the baby after each one of them has assembled a number of names that he or she has kept secret till the ceremonial time. Every name proposed is carefully weighed and discussed in the context of the circumstances surrounding the birth, the parents' marriage history, and what is happening in and around the village, Kakuwâ society, and son on, or when that child was born. Separate names are given for boys and girls each with a unique meaning. After choosing the appropriate name, one elder (usually the eldest elder man) then formally presents the child to **Mount Liru** by pointing him or her toward the legendary mountain with the pronouncement: **Liru, ŋiro lolu ilo!** (meaning "Liru, here is a child for you"--- if the baby is a boy), and **Liru, ŋiro nonu ina!** (meaning "Liru, here is a child for you" --- if the baby is a girl). Invoking the name of this famous Kakuwâ mountain serves three major purposes: (1) it formally reminds the child that he or she is a Kakuwâ, (2) it makes him or her strong, and (3) it enables the child to live as long as **Mount Liru**. After this ceremony, the infant is given back to his or biological mother. From this point onwards, he or she is called by the chosen name but other informal names (including nicknames) can still be used in reference to him or her.

### Kakuwâ Mourning Customs and Rites

The Kakuwâ people refer to bereavement as **gbiye** (literally, "crying"), and sometimes as **mutre** and **dreliya**. Until there is death of a close agnate or affine, Kakuwâ adults do not normally cry but do so profusely and instantaneously when that occurs. This process is exacerbated by the presence of certain individuals in the society and village who have distinguished themselves and shriek in very peculiar and mournful ways to announce that death has taken place in the village. Such a traditional shrieking sound is known as **sira (siira)** and is normally performed by an adult male. Adult women may also have their own way of shrieking which is referred to as **gbililiza**.

### Kakuwâ Burial Rites

When death occurs, the dead person becomes known as **opu** and the burial process is known as **nuga** or more fully, **nuka na ŋutu** (that is, 'burying of a person'), sometimes also called **'dana na ŋutu**, and this normally occurs in the evenings for ordinary people. However, for people known as **bura or mata-ki** 'Chiefs', the burial ritual is complex and it occurs at dawn. Before that, the body is nursed in a ritual known as **muyu na mata**. The burial procedure is always the work of the men who dig **gulo** (*plural*)

*gulo-mo*) (the grave) to a depth of at least two metres and breadth of a metre and a half. A special hole (some kind of a mini-grave), the size of the actual body, is then dug 180 degrees inside the deepest end of the grave where the body will be placed.

Usually three days after the burial, a special mourning feast called *abujo* or *adrosu* is organized. This feast involves the killing of an animal, usually a bull, ram or a he-goat, depending on the status of the deceased or and his or her family. The animal thus killed is cooked and distributed randomly without any special consideration being given to what part of the animal should be consumed by which clan or lineage. Prior to this feast, the relatives of the dead person and well-wishers continuously supply the people who turn up for the funeral with free food and drink.

### **Traditional Kakuwâ Concept of Religion**

The Kakuwâ people have no temples for worship nor any written doctrines such as the *Bible*, the *Qur'an (Koran)*, the *Geeta* (the Hindu Holy Book), or the *Torah* (Jewish holy book), nor full-time preachers, nor organized religion. However, they do have shrines or oracles that are collectively called *uriya* and these symbolize the spirits of the dead. These *uriya* are usually symbolized either by distinctive stones known as *roboyo* or by fig trees known as *laru* where periodic sacrifices are made. The ritual of appeasing the dead through the stones or the fig tree is known as *i-ila na roboyo* or *i-ila na laru* respectively. The overall concept of religion, as expressed by the *uriya* is that the dead or ancestors can communicate with the living. Accordingly, if these ancestors "notice" anything going astray among their living kin, they have the obligation to react by bringing signs that warn of eminent disaster and even punish them and that something should be done to avoid the event of further punishment. The spirits of the ancestors also act like angels that follow and guide a living person at all times and places. Therefore, such a spirit can and should rescue one from a potential or a real problem.

The Kakuwâ idea of a "supreme being" is what the people know or refer to as *Mulete* whom they see as being the ultimate source of all power and morale order. They conceive of him as having two aspects, one transcendent and the other immanent evil, an inversion. He is responsible for all forms of death for death cannot be avoided. His will is immutable .

### **Temezi**

An elderly man in Kakuwâ is known as *temezitiyo* or *nyutu logo*. He carries a very important and envious position of power, influence, responsibilities and wisdom. Every Kakuwâ *ketimi* or *gurube* or clan, is usually headed by an elder—usually the most senior person—in the clan by virtue of being the son of the most senior woman ever married into that clan and by virtue of his longevity. He does not automatically assume this title but, he must earn it by through active participation in clan activities. Such activities include looking after the affairs of marriage of the clan's daughters, expressing concerns in case these daughters or any of their children are ill, barren or facing very jealousy co-wives. It is usually also reserved to those men who by virtue of genealogical position in the lineage, have the custodianship of certain rites, such as: blessing hunters, blessing the first harvest, becoming *bura* (rain-predictor), negotiating tough issues, arriving at consensual agreements, etc. He also has another mark of office, the *aruwe-ta (masculine)*, the hereditary ceremonial stick that only the elders in his age bracket are supposed to handle.

### **Authority and Respect in Kakuwâ Society**

There is no universal authority over the way individuals should conduct themselves in the Kakuwâ society. Unfortunately, modern governments, through puppet chiefs and sub-chiefs, have meddled in their subjects' affairs. These chiefs are mainly concerned with collecting taxes, labour, and other services that were once outside the traditional everyday life for most Kakuwâ. Kakuwâ tradition holds that open violence is wrong between agnates and close uterine. Women should respect their husbands and children their parents. Disputes over rights of land, women and livestock occasionally occur at all levels of the lineage but are settled differently, beginning with the elder of each disputant. Inter-clan sexual relations, adultery and fighting an elder person are considered incest which may be punished by *nyoka* or endless torment and sanctions.

Where the relationship is a little distant, a show of overt force or violence may be necessitated but this will ultimately be settled peacefully because of the concept of *lemi* and agnatic relationships. For Kakuwâ, the essence of the exercise of authority, whether between agnates, cognates, affines or neighbours, is for the relationship to be one in which the junior obeys, fears or respects the senior. All these societal rules are contained in the general term *kuga* (or respect).

### **Kakuwâ Rain Predictors**

The Kakuwâ clans of **Bura, Ranju, Okube**, etc., are renown for being rain-predictors. These people also fall in the category of *'buni* or mentalist, shaman, traditional healer, traditional doctor, witchdoctor, magician, psychic, exorcist, *yakanye* spirit, medicinemen etc. As such they are both revered and respected in Kakuwâ society.

### **Adiyo: Ethnohistory or Events of the Past**

*Adiyo*, the events of the past, are fairly long, dictated genealogical discussions of relationship with others. The process of narrating these events is referred to as *'doto na adiyo* or *tayi na adiyo* or *kepo na adiyo*. It is also a ritual address, a loud recital of the main facts of different cases and genealogical and marriage relationships, and is conducted during funeral rites, marriage ceremonies and in communal feasts. It is made to both the living and the dead ancestors of the group. These ritual addresses are always much the same although each clan and lineage has its own details, and they all provide a focus for the solidarity of the assembled elders and youngsters. There is always truth in these addresses for any lies are quickly corrected by the assembled elders (who include both men and women).

### **The Kakuwâ Traditional Housing Patterns**

The name for a house in Kakuwâ is *kadi* (plural *kad-ji* variant *kadi-zi*). The name for a home is *'ba* (plural *'beni*). Kakuwâ's traditional patterns of housing vary with contrasts in terrain, ecology, climate, weather, slope of the land, kinships, descent, political stability, etc. The most prevalent pattern has been that of dispersed villages which, together with their extended families, are large enough for various indigenous participation but are rarely lasting because of the use of short-lived building materials and sometimes specifications for shifting cultivation and grazing. Until recently, each Kakuwâ family lived in a kind of community within a growing stockade known as *mari*. The stockade had a gate which could be closed by night or when there was danger from hyenas, lions or enemies. Today, however, families are clustered together thus constituting a different kind of homestead.

There are separate houses for humans and for animals. Human houses include:

- *koku* or 'the kitchen'
- *kadi-zi naga a totoye* 'houses for sleeping'; these are usually separate for teenagers, parents and grandparents.

In addition, there is a unique house known as **lomore** that is exclusively used as a guest house.

Other structures typically found in a Kakuwâ homestead are:

- **apa** (the food storage structure)
- **gugu** (granary)
- **kadi nati** (the name for pit latrine)
- **miŋe** (a special structure built to milk a cow so that the cow does not kick away the milk or the milker during the milking process).
- **koko** (chicken dwelling).
- **mari** (kraal)
- **kadi na lidi** (the goats' house)
- **kadi na kebilizi** (the sheep's house)
- **ayiyi** (a food storage facility).
- **salo** a low-walled house with a roof usually sited in the middle of the compound. It is used as a kind of "common living room", especially valued by the Kakuwâ of Congo.
- **robojo** (shrine stones)

A Kakuwâ homestead is also always located near a large evergreen tree that serves as *parine* under which family members can enjoy *tilimo* or shade. In the evenings, family members spend their time around the communal open fire which is known as *pudoo* where the elders tell stories to the younger group and where the day's activities are discussed and future plans and specific assignments are made.

### **From a Kakuwâ Family to Kakuwâ Society**

Each of the nearly two hundred or so different Kakuwâ clans, is built on a pyramidal model with the family as the lowest entity. Next in this social hierarchy is the extended family which forms another social organization known as *ketimi* (plural, *ketimi-to*) or *gurube*. A *ketimi* may comprise of one, two or a dozen related villages. The final organizational unit is the whole ethnic Kakuwâ group that the colonialists named a "tribe" but which is really an "ethnic" or a language group." Therefore, Kakuwâ the ethnic group is composed of different clans which, in turn, are composed of assorted sub-clans which, in turn, are composed of disparate villages and families, which in turn, are composed of a few dozen to hundreds of individuals.

### **Kakuwâ Art**

Art always represents something—communicates information—but this something is never represented in its literal shape, sound, colour, movement, or feeling. Among the Kakuwâ, designs, stories, and artifacts have definite use in day-to-day subsistence activities that are produced primarily for practical purposes or rarely for commercial use. These forms of art are produced and performed in complete harmony with utilitarian objectives. The Kakuwâ derive pleasure from playfully embellishing and transforming the contours and surfaces of pots, fabrics, wood and metal products. They also recognize that certain individuals are more skilled than are others in making utilitarian objects and in embellishing them with pleasurable designs. Therefore, skilled wood carvers, basket-makers, granary-makers, potters, singers, negotiators, weavers or arrow-makers are all artists.

### **Kakuwâ Music, Song, and Dance**

The general name for dancing in Kakuwâ is **gboja** (or **gboza**) (*plural gboja-ji* variant **gboza-zi**) as is commonly referred to among the Kakuwâ of Congo), and **yara**. Singing is termed **welo**, and the songs themselves are known as **wiri-to** or **wiri-ta** (*singular wiri*).

In Kakuwâ society, the social functions of music, song, and dance are viewed in ways such as

- bringing prosperity (in harvesting and hunting);
- celebrating a wedding
- celebrating a triumphant hunting or defensive/offensive expedition
- averting a calamity (famine, war, disease epidemic, locusts)
- honouring **Mulete** or God
- passing the time, especially when engaging in such routine activities as digging, building, weeding, grinding grains etc
- honouring an ancestor
- honouring a first harvest
- honouring a dead **Mata lo ka** (Rain-chief)
- recreation

### **Kakuwâ Dancing Drums**

The Kakuwâ names for their dancing drums include: **buli** or 'the bass drum', **liliru** or the drum with the highest pitch or the solo drum, and the **pipire** also known as the **pilipitimbi**. In addition to the drums, there is another Kakuwâ dancing instrument known as **yuge**. This wooden structure provides rhythm to the beat of the drums in any dance. It is the main wooden trumpet which is curved in one piece from a tree, and is about 140 cm in length and about 25 cm across the open lower end. Its tip is crowned by a knob in the shape of a truncated pyramid. The embourcement consists of a plain hole close to the tip but there is no stop in the tip.

When a Kakuwâ boy passes the laminal youth stage, he develops **sire** or **sira** (*plural, sire-si*) which is a possessed personal call which is really "a long falsetto whooping cry, the melody of which corresponds to the tonal pattern of a word phrase associated with the possessor. It is made in time of danger, in fighting, and on formal occasions to show the caller's identity. Men also call their **sire** when returning home drunk, lest they be mistaken for strangers and shot with arrows, and to show pride in themselves. It is always made only by the possessor at even at the times of death or danger. To call another man's **sira** is to insult and belittle him. Another form of personal identity is called **u'duta** which is possessed by both men and women. This is usually made during dances in which the individuals praise themselves, their parents, clan (lineage) or their grandparents and ancestors. In its simplest form, **u'duta** is a series of talks done in a funny and philosophical, controversial or proverbial way without being personally directed against anybody or offending anyone. During dances, women ulate at the tops of their voices but in a jovial excitement. This excitement is known as **gbililiza**.

### **Kakuwâ Men's Dancing Costumes**

- **Lo'bu** (*plural lo'bu-wa*) is the name given to animal skin which traditionally is worn only by the men
- The name **bolo** (*plural buluzi* or **bolo-zika**) is the quiver which is used both for dancing and for storing arrows; a typical bolo is made out of the hairy skin of the he-goat; this hairiness is known as **punda**;

- **keye** is a kind of jazz which consists of a dried gourd which is then filled with seeds or stones and shaken to enhance the rhythm of the drums and songs
- **driyeri** is a costume made out of an animal tail
- **agbarala** and **ngbirila** are similar and they are metallic dancing costumes worn at the ankles.

### **Kakuwâ Women's Costumes**

The word **koropo** (*singular kuruputi*) stands for leaves. Leaves are traditionally worn by women as clothing, usually around the waist and covering the front and back below the waist with the sides of the thighs virtually bare. Despite these uses of organic clothing (leaves and skins), the Kakuwâ people have been clean and sanitary in their habits and habitats.

- **nyoori** collectively, refers to the various beads worn by the women. Such beads are known as known locally as **ηaliya** or **konye-ku-muteru** (fruits of the *mutreru* tree)
- **riye** is the same for the men described above
- **meze** (variant **meje**) is the solution of iron oxide smeared to protect the body against the elements and to maintain beauty.

### **Kakuwâ Ornaments**

Most of the Kakuwâ people do not generally adore ornaments except those used by women to enhance their beauty. Girls perforate both lobes of their ears at a younger and tiny metals in the holes. Where there are no rings, they insert well-prepared grasses to keep the holes intact and to prevent infection. This process perforating the ear is known as **rumo na suwo** (literally, "piercing the ears"). In the olden days, women used also to insert small bracelets through the lower lip and had the cartilage of their noses pierced for a ring. However, the most common ornaments for women, have been the colourful and different **ηaliya** (*singular ηalita*) or beads worn around the waists, ankles, wrists and necks.

In addition to the beads, there were the following **riye** or rings, most of which were metallic ones worn on the ankles and wrists:

- **riye nakpe** is a collective name for 'white rings', such as silver ornaments which were considered of a higher quality and standard.
- **riye natroru** or 'red metals' include metals such as bronze, copper and gold, all of are rare in the Kakuwâ territories.

## **Kakuwâ Traditional Games and Sports**

There are different ways by which the Kakuwâ keep themselves fit, strong, healthy or entertained, including farming, dancing, hunting or tree-cutting. However, there are other common recreational activities which are also initiational processes to adult life.

### **Concussion Rattle**

A Kakuwâ concussion rattle consists of two tiny and round fruit shells filled with dry seeds and joined by a chain or a piece of twisted cloth of about 10 cm in length. One shell is placed in one palm of the hand and the other is allowed to hang down loosely between the thumb and forefinger or between the latter and the middle finger. The suspended shell is swung to make rapid rhythmical movement of the arm and hand and to strike against the fruit in the palm of the hand. The basic motion can be varied and the instrument becomes capable of expressing intricate rhythmical patterns. Only girls use the concussion rattle while in the open markets waiting for customers, or when on the journey to and from the market, or when going to draw water from the wells.

*Togodra* means hunting, and it involves special talents and skills. No distinct class of huntsmen exist among the Kakuwâ but there are usually individuals in every clan who distinguish themselves out as excellent hunters. In general, small game such as *alu* (bush rat), *muri* (dikdik), *kabo* (waterbuck), *nyamata* (a brown antelope) and other types of antelopes, are hunted for the sake of meat by any man who wishes to do so at any time of the year. However, a more general communal hunting area is usually designated: it is large, unsettled, ungrazed, and isolated. These areas are known as *menu* (plural *menu-wa*). Each *menu* is designated by name; in Ko'buko District, they include *Menu na Abundiri*, *Menu na Moroto*, and *Menu na Nyangbiri*, etc. These most popular ones are located at the remote corners of the Uganda-Sudan border, and the Yeyi River District and Amadi Districts.

*Mbiyu* or the sling is a boy's game made from strings obtainable out of the barks of certain special plants. These strings are then twisted into convenient lengths and roughly 5 mm in diameter. In the middle of the sling is left a slot large enough to take a given size of rock. In order to aim at a target which may be an animal or a distant spot, the boy climbs on top of a rock or hillside or on top of a raised and open ground. Then he brings both ends of the string together and spins the sling over and round his head with the stone, which acts as the bullet, located in its centre. The name *mbiyu* actually comes out of the whistling *mbiyuuuuu* sound that the bullet makes as it is released and travels in the air to its target. This is a very competitive sport for young boys, and this competition starts from making the *mbiyu* itself to practising with the targets.

*Turo* is the name given to the sport of distant shooting. In this sport, boys usually arm themselves with bows and arrows and, upon climbing a hill or an anthill, shoot these arrows as far as possible. The person whose arrow reaches the furthest is the winner.

There are also target practices whereby arrows are shot at the smallest stem of a shrub or a tree from a designated distance. The object is to see whose arrow reaches into, or closest to, the target or bull's eye. This target can always be proven by visual inspection or from some missing arrows which might have gone right through such a target. Sometimes, instead of the true arrows, the younger boys use *indiripi* which are arrows made from the stems of the Elephant grass. Other arrows known as *undurube* are made from the fresh stems of the sorghum plant.

**Kupe** (*unyaka*) is a reference to wrestling where Kakuwâ boys train to become fighters and to defend themselves. Such training is usually closely supervised and monitored by the older boys and no boxing is allowed. Also boys of roughly the same age, weight and height are allowed to wrestle among themselves. As the training progresses, one person from the lower age and weight bracket might be allowed to tackle a heavier and older individual in the other group. The object of wrestling is to hold each other chest to chest and to squeeze these chests until one individual becomes too weak to stand it any further. As soon as the weaker person falls to the ground, the victor might lie on the defeated person's chest and hold his hands to prevent him from ever rising again. If he does manoeuvre his way to get up again, the same procedure is performed and by luck, the person who fell down earlier might prevail in the subsequent chances. A tip to avoid being squeezed too hard is never to allow one's chest to be too near that of the opponent's, and to always, to stand with the legs well-spread out to secure some balance.

Another form of wrestling is the one called *unyaka* in which one person attempts to entangle the other's legs so that balance is difficult. Again, one can avoid this entanglement by having the legs stretched away from those of the opposite person. Some boys who feel too young and too light to wrestle their opponents in the normal fashion, sometimes attempt to charge at their opponents from behind and without warning. This is not usually accepted.

**Wowoki** is the general name for all types of competitive races or relays which can happen in sandy places, in wooded areas, in *nyamu-nyamu* (short, flat and fluffy grass), on the way to and from school, in school play grounds or inside water. To make the sport more vibrant and varied, youngsters may do the following:

- run backwards
- run on one leg
- run while holding a certain object (water, fruits or rocks) in their hands;
- run with their eyes closed

**Golo** is the name for soccer or football as it is popularly known locally. Various wild and exotic fruits serve for balls which are played bare foot and on any dry surface (usually the compound, school yards, roads, abandoned gardens, paths, on the *nyamu-nyamu*, and so on. One of the most popular balls is made out of the dried fibres of banana stems which are then twisted round and round in several layers inside a shallow and circular hole; this eventually forms a ball capable of rolling and being kicked about. However, the most popular but rare organic ball is *kulayi* (the bladder) which may be obtainable from a slaughtered cow, bull or even a goat or sheep. This organ is first carefully cut off without puncturing it, then it is rubbed on the ground with the feet to soften it. Finally, the *kulayi* is blown with the mouth until it reaches a certain pressure, shape, and size when its mouth is tightly closed with a strong string or a piece of plastic. This importance of *kulayi* has makes most Kakuwâ boys to always hang around a killed animal (such as during feasts) just so that they can gain access to the bladder which would otherwise be thrown to the dogs since it is not edible any way. Various fruits of plants also serve as balls: grape fruit, an orange, *ola* (**ula**),

**Tulala**—indeed, any roundish and kickable object.

**Puu** is a sport in which bundles of fresh leaves are obtained, then they are placed on a slanting rock surface. A person or a group of persons sits on the leaves and slide down the slanting rock surface. As the leaves wear down from the friction, more and more fresh ones are added to avoid being hurt or abraded during the sliding process.

*Bego* resembles field hockey, and it is where a round wild fruit is rolled on the ground and directed with sticks into the opponent's goal in order to score points.

The term '*dana*' means "to hide" or hiding; so, hide and seek activity is a sport of mainly the children. It is done in the bushes, grasses, houses and in the fields of crops by all sexes. Hiding and seeking activity is particularly common among the cattle-keeping boys and girls looking for mushrooms, firewood, and wild vegetables. The excellent Kakuwâ woodlands and forests are dotted with certain very lowly-branched, cool and leafy trees or shrubs whose immediate surrounding is usually bare and clean. Boys and girls gather the stems of some creeping plants and tie these above a certain height from the ground onto tree branches to enable them to swing. This pendulum-like technique of using a string or a rope for swinging is known as *kiyo-kiyo*.

Kakuwâ boys who aspire to become expert drummers in their adulthood, usually learn the art of drumming termed *woko na leri* by practising on dry, hollow and sonorous tree stems and branches using rocks. Except for the absence of drums and songs, the rhythms of these resonant objects or surfaces are the same as those of the true drums made of elephant skin, goat skin, sheep skin or cow hide.

Swimming, known as *muza* is important to learn. Except for the Congo and the Sudan Kakuwâ, there are few large, safe, and permanent water bodies of rivers prevalent in the Kakuwâ territories which could offer opportunities for swimming. The spots, and referred to as *ko'bulu*, are usually the deepest parts of the river, but these may be too dangerous for swimming. Furthermore, some of the few available rivers are either too rocky, too swift, or too remote to reach. Nevertheless, cattle-keeping boys have devised ways of swimming even in the shallowest and muddiest of the waters to cool themselves while the cattle rest nearby.

Learning ethnohistory, learning songs, fables, and learning relationships (through marriage or by decent), are very strongly emphasized and encouraged.