



FAUNA/FLORA

The general name for fauna or animals in Kakwa is **kizakura** (*singular, kizaku*). There are no published works yet which comprehensively describe the Kakwa fauna (or aspects of it). For Kakwas, most interest centres on domestic animals: cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, and a few wild animals, such as reed rats, monkeys, pigs, guinea fowls, weaver birds, dikdiks (duiks), and others. Exotic or non-indigenous species of animals are known to have become naturalized in one or more areas. In the bilingual **Ko'dote** (Kakwa-English Dictionary), both the common name and the scientific name of the animal (if known), are entered as follows:

- **ló'ba** *noun* **ló'ba-ji** variant **lo'ba-zi** (*plural*) 'Jackson's Hartebeest (*Bubalis jackson*)'
- **a ló'ba** *adjective* 'connected with, or constituting Hartebeest (*Bubalis jackson*)'
- **a ló'ba** *adjective* 'developing, or growing into Hartebeest (*Bubalis jackson*)'
- **a ló'ba** *adjective* 'filled with, full of, or covered in Hartebeests (*Bubalis jackson*)'
- **ló'ba-ló'ba** *adjective* 'acting, behaving, smelling, tasting like, or resembling Hartebeest (*Bubalis jackson*)'
- **ló'ba-ló'ba** *adjective* 'kind of like Hartebeest (*Bubalis jackson*)'

Kakwa Livestock

All Nilo-Hamites, of which the Kakwa form an important component, were originally thought to suffer from *cattle complex* which caused them to "worship" cattle. Today, however, the keeping of large numbers of cattle has been relegated to only a few Nilo-Hamites, and in particular, the **Mundari** (in the Sudan), the **Karamojon** (in Uganda), the **Masai** (in Kenya and Tanzania) etc. Nevertheless, the humped type cattle or **zebu** are still available in almost every household of the Kakwa in addition to flocks of goats and sheep which normally graze separately.

Su is the collective name for cattle (*singular, kite*) in Kakwa. Although the Kakwa are essentially peasants today, historical accounts from oral tradition provided by the elders and from the literature, reveal that massive numbers of cattle were kept by the Kakwa in the past. For instance, while travelling in the Kakwa territories in November 1877, Junker (1971) witnessed some of the Kakwa prosperity in cattle. He commented: "... the [Kakwa sic] cattle tracks gave evidence of riches in stock such as I had seen in no other Negro land. In some places these trodden tracks were like our broad high roads, so that men could march abreast in broad ranks instead of in a single file. The whole scene was one of a peaceful African prosperity for which our predatory expedition [*gwazweh* sic] was out of place." The looted cattle and the ivory were deemed *bet el mir* or Egyptian Administrative Government property. The rest of the animals (including the goats, sheep, and poultry), as well as women, tobacco and hardware, belonged to the robbers and their dependants. Kakwa cattle form the major component of the **lunya** or pride-price payment by the bride-groom.

Lidi is the plural for goats (*singular, kine*) and most Kakwa homesteads possess some goats. During the Arab penetration of the Kakwa territories, there were numerous goats in the area but these, again, succumbed to the invaders. Junker (1971), has described the typical Kakwa goats that he came across as being small with short, smooth hair; their hides were all colours, the prevailing being mahogany, black and white, and drab with a dark stripe running along the back. Of course, most Kakwa goats today are of all these different colours.

In Kakwa traditional culture, goats are used for various purposes, including:

- **yanjandru** or sacrifices;
- **gbadu** or feast;
- **kine na sase** (literally 'the goat of the sister' or 'sister's goat'), is given to **sase** (a sister) as part of the **lunya** or bride-price payment process;
- **kine na waso** (literally 'the goat of the aunt' or 'aunt's goat'), is given to **waso** (the aunt) as part of the bride-price payment process;
- payment of a fine;
- performing the **rusugo** ritual;
- performing the **ajupe** or **lanja an kizi-to** or performing reconciliation ritual.

Kebili-zi is plural for sheep and its singular is **kebilito**. Sheep, like goats, form vital roles in sacrificial activities and for bride-price payment.

Flora (Plants)

There are no published works yet which comprehensively describe the Kakwa flora or plants (or aspects of it). Nevertheless, considerable care has gone into establishing and identifying some Kakwa flora by consulting appropriate published works and comparing them with received local wisdom, both in terms of scientific classification (with help from the author's backgrounds in Forestry, in the Environmental and Agricultural Sciences, and of folklore classification through the Kakwa elders. The author is also a keen peasant with strong interest in ecology and astronomy. In addition, several Kakwa elders and other experts have been consulted to survey plants and animals in the Kakwa landscape. For the Kakwa people, most interest centres on agricultural life, especially the cultivation of crops and in forestation activities. Nevertheless, plants considered of *economic* importance (wild or domesticated) have been given common names. Others have been merely described. Where known, such plants are covered in detail in **Ko'dote** (the bilingual Kakwa-English-dictionary). In order to advance knowledge of our indigenous plants, we need immediate preservation, restoration, protection and utmost care and enhancement of our flora.

The entries of the plant names in Kakwa's **Ko'dote**, shows the common names and scientific names of the plants (where available), the latter bracketed following their Kakwa and common names. Example:

- **leseri-ta** *noun, masculine* **leseri** variant **leseri-yo** (*plural*) 'maize/corn (*Zea maize*)'
- **a leseri** *adjective* 'connected with, or constituting maize/corn (*Zea maize*)'
- **a leseri** *adjective* 'developing, or growing into maize (*Zea maize*)'
- **a leseri** *adjective* 'filled with, full of, or covered in maize (*Zea maize*)'
- **leseri-leseri** *adjective* 'acting, behaving, smelling, tasting like, or resembling maize (*Zea maize*)'
- **leseri-leseri** *adjective* 'kind of like maize (*Zea maize*)'

Kakwa Vegetation Types

The general altitude, climate, and soil distribution of the Kakwa areas have blended together to manifest abundant and diverse vegetation patterns. This bushy nature of the landscape clearly distinguishes the Nilo-Hamitic area from the Sudanic Lugbara area to the east and south. For example, anyone who has ever travelled along the **Nyarilo-Arua** road can clearly notice the ecological differences between **Ko'buko District** and **Maracha County**. Indeed, nearly a century ago, *Bimbashi* (Major) **Chauncy Hugh Stigand**, travelling along the Congo-Nile divide near the present **Ko'buko District** and **Kakwa County** border areas, observed: "The frontier highland is well watered, giving birth to innumerable springs ... The difference between the water courses on the two sides of the border is here very marked, for, whereas the eastern or Nile tributaries start in a little swamp of grass or reed, or at most only a little undergrowth protecting them, those on Congo [Congo] side bring the rich tropical growths of

that region right up to their sources.”

Still today, the streams of the Congolese Kakwa contain the largest number and diversity of species of animals and plants ever found in the Kakwa lands. The most common plant species is the sedge, **lomi** (*Cyperus papyrus*) found in the rivers such as **Keri, Aka, A’bu** and **Kenya**. Nevertheless, only certain sections of these Kakwa County rivers are actually covered with the papyrus. It also is interesting to note that the Congolese rivers are the only ones of the Kakwa territories that contain papyrus while those streams in **Ko’buko District** and the **Yei River District** contain none. The papyrus plant plays a very important role in the everyday lives of the people—including use as a mat, in rope-making and as a traditional cooking salt, **kombo** when its dried stems are burnt and ashes distilled.

Rudu

The Kakwa word for forest is **rudu** (*plural rudu-wo*). How much of the Kakwa land was under forests in the distant past, is difficult to ascertain at the present. It is possible that the banks of most rivers have been extensively wooded. This, along with the forests still available, and some of the larger standing trees, shows how extensive forests might have been throughout the Kakwa territories. Moreover, the continued presence of chimpanzees, numerous numbers of other monkeys and tree-dwelling animals, especially along the Congo-Nile divide, attest to massive forestation of this region for a long time. Most importantly, the climatic and soil factors have been generally supportive of massive plant growth in the Kakwa territories. The predominant tree species present are the natural hardwoods (angiosperms). There are two types of forests in the Kakwa territories: forests made of indigenous tree species, and forests made of exotic or imported tree species.

Kakwa Indigenous Forests

Some of the best ever natural tree species in Africa are located in the Congolese river valleys of **A’bu, Kakanya, Keri, Kaliga, Kibi** and **Kenya**—all in **Kakwa County**. The majority of these trees grow on the average, 30 metres in height, with diameters breast height (dbh) exceeding 30 centimetres. Their largely branch-free and thick trunks, are normally covered with ferns, mosses and low herbs. The woody climbing plants of the species, **lianas**, cover the stems of the savannah trees and compete for sunlight. The common species of epiphytes are *Platyserium andinum* (the staghorn) and *Polypodium ulei*. These plants grow attached to the trunks and branches of the trees and have no contact with the soil. *Platyserium* and *Polypodium* look like giant bird nests and may hold snakes, monkeys and other small animals. Other spots in the forests may be covered by low palms, tree ferns, herbs and shrubs. In general, the forest canopy may be so intense as to cause the forest floor to be bare. It is always a great pleasure to walk in such bare areas where the air is cool and fresh.

Forests provide an excellent way of maintaining the delicate, but rich ecosystem (the fauna and flora). Their importance as providers of fuel in the form of firewood and charcoal, is well-appreciated. They also supply the local inhabitants with timber and other building materials. Areas adjacent to forests are often fertile and moist enough to support the growing of rice, sugarcanes, maize, bananas and various vegetables year round. Kakwa tradition also strongly emphasizes that certain special forests called **laru** not be entered into nor any of the trees, mushrooms, honey, or firewood, be removed from them, because they are under the custody of the **Bura** (the rain-predicting chiefs of the Kakwa). In order to gain access to such a forest, a special permission should be obtained from the **Bura** elders. For these and other reasons, the Government of Uganda has designated a tiny central Forest Reserve near **Mount Ke-i** in the Ko’buko District’s area of **Ludara**, and a small patch of trees around **Mount Liru** as “protected areas.” Another light natural forest is located at **Ozubu** near the **Kakwa-Aringa** border to the east, falls under the same “protected” category.

Kiriyo (*singular kiriti*) or *Bamboo* species, belongs to the grass family, Gramineae. They are generally characterized by a hollow stem but those found in the **Kakwa** territories, have solid stems. Botanists link the growth of bamboos in an area to good natural watering and a favourable temperature for growing. In **Ko’buko District**, a large natural softwood forest of bamboos is situated just east of **Nyarilo Town**, about six kilometres

along the road to **Nyayi**, **Yumbe** and **Moyo** near the **Anyupira**, **Payimi**, **Kaliwara** and **Ombasi** clan areas. A portion of this forest also extends into the **Lo'bijo** stream near **Nyayi Trading Centre**. In addition, bamboos cover the entire source of the **Katu River** in the **A'bele-Dimu-Ombaci** clan areas just southeast of **Nyarilo Town**. A tobacco leaf buying centre was built in the heart of this bamboo forest in the 1960s, and it has since come to be known as the *Senta* (or Centre) by the Kakwa of **Ko'buko District**.

Uses of Bamboos in Kakwa Society

Bamboos practically appear in every aspect of Kakwa culture ranging from building, weaving and crafts, to storage and conveyance of things. For example, mature bamboo plants can be used as poles, beams or reeds for building. The plants are also used in the making of the most popular Kakwa food storage facility, **gugu** (*plural gugu-wo*) the granary. Various types of baskets, among them, the popular **gupa** (*plural gupa-li*), are also made out of bamboo fibres. Another popular bamboo product is the container called **rege** (*plural rege-li*) that Kakwa women use for conveying harvests, such as cassava tubers or sweet potatoes from the field to the home or the nearby open air market. A number of grain and legume threshing devices are also made out of bamboo stems. Both women and men utilize the bamboos for different purposes. Perhaps the greatest usage of bamboos by men is in the making of traditional hunting bows. Bamboos offer special advantages in this regard for being easy to work upon, easy to obtain, being flexible (plastic), displaying resistance to termites, decay and the climatic elements. These various and flexible uses of the bamboo have found widespread acceptance throughout the **Kakwa** areas, and also among the tribes adjacent to them. Other bamboo uses include fencing and the making of special fishing sieves called **imbiliŋa** (*plural imbiliŋa-zi*).

Exotic Forests in the Kakwa Territories

The colonial regimes of both Britain and Belgium had introduced exotic tree species into the Kakwa land in the last one hundred or so years. Most of these trees were extensively planted in plantations. They include **Karatusi** variant **karitusi** or *Eucalyptus*, which belongs to a large genus of evergreen trees of the family Myrtaceae. In the 1960s, the British American Tobacco Company (BATC) introduced a large-scale cultivation of various eucalyptus species throughout the **West Nile Province**. These artificial forest plantations have since expanded in number, size and locations in **Ko'buko District**. In the 1970s, most such forests averaged hundreds of square hectares in size.

Among the existing major eucalyptus plantation forest sites in **Ko'buko District** have been:

- **Apa** (along the **Apa River**, just south of **Danya**)
- **Loŋjira** (in **Ludara County**, along the **Kochi River**)
- **Payimi** (along the road to **Yumbe** and near the bamboo forest, in the **Kaliwara** areas).
- **Metino** (along the **Apa River**)
- **Kimu** (along the **Atu River**)
- **Lima** (along the **Da'bara River**)
- **Miloko** (along the **Uya River**)
- **Danya** (along the **Apa River**)

Among the **Kakwa of the Congo**, eucalyptus trees are known as **kalapuru** or **kalipuru**. Unlike the clearly defined economic and ecological uses for which they were intended in Uganda, the colonizing Belgians introduced this tree species in the area without any clear commercial or ecological purpose. Nevertheless, today, **Moze** (also known as **Kumuro**), **Leyiko Rumi** and **A'di**, are enveloped by eucalyptus trees. Some residents of both **Ko'buko District** and the **Kakwa County**, have also grown their own eucalyptus trees for local use, especially in building houses.

Another principal exotic tree species found in the Kakwa territories is the strong, durable and yellowish brown **tika** (*Tectonia grandis*). This tree species was first introduced into the area by the Belgians at the turn of the 19th century. It is now extensively grown about two kilometres from the town of **Yei** on the way south to **Kaya**. Similar teak plantations are also found in and around **Yei** town. Some of the trees have been planted in lined and solitary stands to provide an aesthetic beauty to the town's character. The largest teak plantation is located at **Kegulu**

which is roughly eight kilometres west of **Yei** on the road to **Aba-Lasu-Keliko-Wotoka** areas. Another comparatively large teak plantation exists around the **Yei-Juba Road**, particularly at **Loka**. Everywhere in the **Yei County**, teak trees are commonly found on private lands and surrounding homesteads. The hard wood is highly valuable in comparison to the eucalyptus trees. Besides being durable, the plant is also beautiful. As such, it finds widespread usage in buildings, coffin-making, furniture-making etc.

Other exotic tree species include **sambiya** and **lira**, all of which are normally grown around homesteads and are used in building homes.

Savannah Grasslands

Generally-speaking, the word **doru** refers to 'grass' or 'vegetation'. Only very few of the Kakwa mountain and hill tops are ever devoid of any vegetation at any given season. Even then, the xerophytic plants, such as the locally known **legereme** (aloes) and various species of cactus, are usually found in abundance on certain moisture-laden spots of the mountains and hills, and in the rock crevices. Other mountain or hill side grasses like the **siye**, are perennially cut, bundled up and expertly made into brooms. Such brooms are traditionally used for sweeping various surfaces, including house floors, grinding stones, school yards and even offices. Other grass species include **tiya** (the popular spear grass) which is ideally used for thatching roofs of houses, granaries, **koko** (chicken houses), for lighting fire, as a mulch or as a mat, etc.

Kudi and **angalaa** are other grass species—of the Elephant grass variety—used primarily in house and granary roof thatching. Their mature and fresh stems known, as **indiripi**, are used by Kakwa boys as "training" arrows while the dried stems referred to as **galaka**, are usually gathered and burnt to attract white ants at the height of the **to'bu** or 'rain that brings forth the white ants.'

Savannah Woodlands

Savannah woodland trees are characterized by:

- shading their leaves during the dry season;
- containing very few lianas or epiphytes but plenty of shrubs and herbs underneath;
- being highly branched, with some like the acacias forming huge umbrellas as they attempt to capture as much sunlight as possible; and
- possessing thick and rough barks to withstand the annual fires, animals rubbing themselves upon them or attempting to debark them, and to conserve moisture during unfavourable times, such as the **meli** (the dry season).

Some of the most economic savannah tree species found in the Kakwa territories include:

Kumuro (*Butyrospermum paradoxum* also known as *Butyrospermum parkii*), is commonly referred to as Shea butter. This plant grows wild in much of the savannah woodlands of the Sudan-Sahellian region of Africa. It is particularly abundant in much of the Kakwa areas but the greatest concentration occurs at **Mi'digo** (near the Uganda-Congo and Sudan border). The fruits of this oil-producing tree are usually gathered after they have fallen off the branches in the spring or near the beginning of the rain season. Bats, insects, birds and humans eat the green flesh of the fruit leaving the smooth, hard and oval or chestnut-shaped protective coating of the seed or kernel, intact. Parties of women and children then collect the fallen nuts in the bush by searching the ground under the trees. When a large quantity has been gathered, the nuts are brought home in baskets where they are spread out on a clean, and smeared compound, or on a rock surface to dry in the sun. Next, the dried nuts are broken up, re-dried, roasted and finally, ground between stones by the women. The resulting black mass is crude and the oil is obtained by distilling it in warm water and then allowed to settle. Some of the European *explorers* in the Southern Sudan, obviously ignorant of the importance of the **wele na kumuro** or 'Shea Butter oil', in the African culture, described it as being "rancid" and "nauseous." Yet, it was a vital and highly prized scented ointment for the slave girls who oiled their heads and bodies to protect themselves against the burning rays of the sun that caused the skin to perch and crack. The Kakwa people also use **kumuro** oil for cooking in addition to medicinal and spiritual roles. It is in great application as domestic cooking oil, soap manufacture, and cosmetic

industry. *Bodyshop* (now *Este Laurier*), the main retailer of natural beauty products in the world, is already the main consumer of Africa's Shear butter.

Wuki (*plural, wuki-yo*) or *Borassus flabelliformis* is a tall and cylindrical plant whose fibrous stem is hollowed out by the Kakwa as a beehive which is then hung onto forked-tree branches to attract bees for honey-making. This soft-wooded plant also provides valuable poles and pillars for supporting large houses. The fruit of the **wuki** plant turn from green to reddish-brown when ripe. After falling off the stem, they are gathered and softened by pounding against a hard surface. This action yields a sugary paste-like substance which is chewed off the fibres and then swallowed. This was sometimes the main lunch for most schooling village and primary school children in Ko'buko District in the 1960s. In addition, Kakwa women use the parallel-veined leaves of the plant to weave **gupa-li** or baskets, and an assortment of other traditional crafts. **Mboyo** is the sprouting *Borassus* seedling, which is sometimes boiled and eaten as a snack.

Nyungbuli or *Kigiliae spathodae* has sausage-shaped fibrous fruits which hang from the branches. *Kigiliae* is peculiar to Africa and it plays an important part in Kakwa traditional culture.

Kúlúkú (*plural kuluku-wo*) (*Cucurbita maxim*) is a creeping plant which is frost and heat resistant. Its fruits may each weigh as much as 50 kilos. Its numerous and poisonous seeds are removed by first piercing the mouth of the fruit and then submerging the whole fruit in shallow water to soften and hence reduce the grip of the seeds on

the inside of the gourd. The resulting seed-free gourd is further cleaned, dried and even "perfumed". The gourd is a very old and important storage facility for seeds, fruits, oil, water and milk among the Kakwa. It is probably the most useful and versatile traditional cultural fruit known in Kakwa society.

Dúlù or *Ricinus communis*, has seeds which mature in capsules, and these can be freed of their valuable product known as **wele na dulu** or (castor oil) even though its seed coats are poisonous. Castor oil is used as a healing and soothing ointment.

Plants with Soap-Like Properties

Certain wild plants have been identified as having unique qualities for making soap and detergents. These include the leaves of the paw-paw, the roots of the plant known as **liwu-liwu** (and quite often also referred to as **yawa ti kuli-kuli**). The fibres of the special tree species, **teri-ya** have excellent shampooing qualities against head lice.

Exotic Fruits

Like the exotic forests in the Kakwa area, various kinds of exotic food crop species have been introduced into the **Kakwa** territories since the slave trade times. These are always grown in the **agobu** (*plural agobu-la*) or 'backyard gardens' close to homesteads. Imported plants have, of course, foreign names, mostly **Arabic**, **English** and **Kiswahili**. Examples: **piripiri** 'hot pepper', **manga** 'mangoes', **lomunu** 'general name for citrus fruits', **ananasi** 'pine apple', **payipayi** 'paw-paw', **ngolo-ngolo** 'guava', **bataya** 'water melon' etc.

Kakwa Medicinal Plants: Luga

Kakwa people refer to all herbal medicines as **luga** (*singular lugeyi*) and to both Western and traditional medicines as **wini** (*plural wini-ko*). To the native Kakwa people, **lugeyi** means far more than the drug to cure a disease; it means also the poison to kill an enemy, the charm carried to ensure a safe journey, or witchcraft and magic with their influences, both good and evil. Some of the healing properties ascribed to parts of trees have been proven, as it has been that others are poisonous to a greater or lesser extent. However, it is certain that much of the healing and many cures claimed are due to faith, either in the doctor or in the reputation of the 'medicine.' Even with the advance of Western medicine and the establishment of dispensaries and chemists in rural areas, many Kakwa herbalists and witch-doctors continue to flourish, having set themselves up in peaceful

opposition to their modern counterparts, or even in a complementary capacity, and drawing their custom from people impatient with the slow and costly treatment they receive in the hospitals.

Certain Kakwa medicinal plants are always grown in secret locations throughout the **agobu**. Others are found among the various bushes. Because of their importance, only expert herbalists know the specific names of these plants, descriptions and functions. In general, the proper Kakwa **luga** are perennial bulb-forming herbs that form the family Amaryllidaceae and commonly called daffodil. The most common amaryllis species are found under the genus *Narcissus*. Leaves of daffodils are long-bladed. Their flowers are large and yellow with white petals, and these are fused or united into a larger tube or trumpet. Most herbs may be administered by rubbing (massaging) or by inhaling, or by ingestion (swallowing). They perform everything from treating snakebites to inducement of more milk in lactating animals to warding off evils in the home. Other popular but wild **luga species** include: **zizingba, lokudu'ba, pilo-pilo, longarudu, walele, toli lo gboro**. Still, there are other herbs which are said to have love-portion qualities, or potential wealth-generating qualities. Others are believed to enhance child birth. These latter categories are collectively termed **a'diyo**. We need more understanding and protection of these very economical Kakwa plants.

Cryptogamae: Hymenomycetes (Fungi)

Ku'bulu are mushrooms (*singular ku'bulu-ta or ku'bulu-te*). They occur as a result of the favourable weather (especially temperature and humidity) and soil conditions. Over a dozen edible species of **ku'bulu** have been known to sprout in the Kakwa territories. Like the various types of insects, plants and animals, each mushroom species has been elaborately described and named by the Kakwa. Its size, name, smell, colour, taste, the nature of the anti-hill from which it sprouts, and economic importance are also identified. Among the most important species are:

- **maru**, the largest known mushroom species in the area, has a white cap and stalk; it can grow to over 30 cm in height. It is an edible kind of *Agaricus* usually growing in groups of three to over a dozen.
- **disu** is an edible mushroom species which possesses long stocks and deep roots. Its cap is brown in colour and it sprouts from tiny and almost invisible low-level anthills called **ji'ba**, and these which are scattered throughout the Kakwa plains.
- **karadi** is a whitish edible mushroom species with tiny stalks. It sprouts in large quantities from the **jiba**.
- **agbu** resembles **karadi** in many respects but when sprouting, it tends to cover a smaller area compared the latter. It is always accompanied by a characteristic sandy appearance when sprouting. It is edible and is relatively longer in size and whiter in colour compared to the **karadi** species.
- **mokolo-kuwe** mainly sprouts in arable lands and solitarily---it is edible
- **liyoro** sprouts in groups, and in areas previously under the occupation of cattle. It appears that cow-dung provides a very valuable natural environment for the mushroom species to grow. Kakwa women collect large quantities of the mushrooms for consumption.