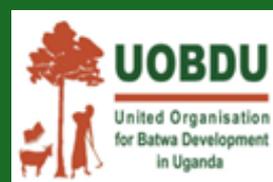
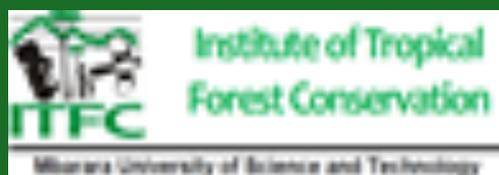




Batwa cultural values in Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks, Uganda

A report of a cultural assessment

October 2013



Acronyms

BCVCP	Batwa Cultural Values and Conservation Project
FFI	Fauna & Flora International
ITFC	Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
UOBDU	United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
BINP	Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
MGNP	Mgahinga Gorilla National Park
BMCA	Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area

Citation

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In partnership with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and the United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU), the Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC) carried out a cultural values assessment to document what Batwa value about Bwindi and Mgahinga forests. The assessment was to provide a platform for interpreting the perceptions, beliefs and norms that define the relationship between Batwa and their environment and was carried out under the Darwin funded project, Integrating Batwa Cultural Values into national Park management in Uganda, Grant Number 19-019, implemented by Fauna & Flora International (FFI).

The information contained in this report was generated from interviews, group discussions and field visits among Batwa communities in Rushaga, Kitahurira, Sanuriro, Rukeri and Musasa. The Batwa warmly welcomed the research team to their communities and allowed us to camp near their homes. The views, values and knowledge they shared with us are greatly appreciated.

Thanks are also due to the field team which endured the difficult terrain of Bwindi and Mgahinga especially during the inspection of Batwa cultural sites in and around Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks. The field team included Charlotte Ninshaba, Florence Mugisha and Alice Nyamihanda from UOBDU, Benjamin Byamugisha, Joseph Tibiringirwa, Manfred Kabarangira and John Tumwesigire from UWA, Fredrick Ssali, Marion Birungi, Jemimah Orishaba and Edson Nzabarinda from ITFC. We are grateful to Douglas Sheil, Miriam van Heist, Robert Bitariho, Medard Twinamatsiko, Peninah Zaninkah, Mark Infield, Chris Kidd, Arthur Mugisha, Pamela Wairagala and the leadership of UWA for the technical, administrative and logistical support rendered to this cultural values assessment.

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Executive summary

This report presents findings of a cultural values assessment which was carried out to better understand how Batwa relate to Bwindi and Mgahinga forests and to serve as a baseline for the implementation of the Batwa Cultural Values and Conservation Project (BCVCP). The Batwa people lived in Bwindi and Mgahinga forests for centuries before their forced removal on the creation of the Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks. Their culture is deeply rooted in the forest. It is hoped that this report will contribute to the integration of Batwa cultural values and institutions into Park governance structures, policies, plans, processes and day-to-day management actions.

We used a participatory approach to identify the values in nature and location deemed culturally significant to Batwa. Batwa members led the field team to their cultural sites and participated actively in interviews and group discussions. Interviews and discussions focused on what Batwa would want their grandchildren and other people to know and value about the Bwindi and Mgahinga forests. Batwa included traditional practices and belief systems, plants and animals linked to their livelihood, forest activities of hunting and gathering, as well as their history, locations of cultural or historical importance, and their perceptions on how their cultural values can be integrated into the conservation and management of the tropical forests of Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks.

The survey reveals a rich history of Batwa interactions with the forests, indigenous knowledge, and a deeply rooted culture of forest dependence. Batwa traditional practices and belief systems are linked to forest plants, animals and sites. Although Batwa no longer live inside the forest, they attach cultural importance to the forest's resources which sustained the lives of their forebears. As such, they consider forest plants and animals including tubers, herbs, vines, fruit trees, duikers, flying squirrels, bushbucks and cane rats as part of their natural world and culture. In addition, Batwa attach considerable cultural importance to forest sites including caves, hot springs, swamps, rivers, hills, big stones and pits. Many of these sites have spiritual values which they believe helped their ancestors to live for many years. An elaborate account of forest myths, taboos, totems and folklore narrated by Batwa is presented in this report.

Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks should be managed and protected as cultural heritage as well as natural sites, with full respect and understanding of Batwa cultural values. Negotiations for integrating these values into management of the Parks should involve Batwa as partners.

This should lead Park managers to find ways to meet the requests of Batwa to access cultural sites and resources of the forest.

Furthermore, Batwa should be involved in Park management including by hiring them for jobs suited to their unique skills and engaging them in the development of protection protocols and management plans. In doing so, Park managers will be able to benefit from the Batwa's rich indigenous knowledge of the forests for better management of the Parks.

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1. Context of the project

Batwa attach significant value to the forests of Bwindi and Mgahinga which could support forest conservation and management of the Parks, but currently there is insufficient engagement with the Parks' management to make a meaningful contribution. The project will thus promote recognition of Batwa values and institutions, strengthen engagement in park governance, and help retain values, institutions and ethnic identity, all of which make important contributions to the wellbeing of the Batwa, and would support valuable ethical conservation outcomes.

Batwa are indigenous forest dwelling pygmy people who lived in the forests of Bwindi and Mgahinga before the creation of protected areas (Nzita, 1992; Kabanankye and Wily, 1996; Namara, 2007; Kidd, 2008). They are believed to be remnants of an early race of man which peopled Africa when most of the continent was covered with forest (Nzita, 1992). They were evicted from the forests of Bwindi and Mgahinga by the colonial administration in the 1930s in order to create conservation areas (Namara, 2007). The Batwa moved to the fringes of the forests but continued gathering forest resources especially fruits, game meat and wild honey (Namara, Gray and McNeilage, 2000). However, these activities were declared illegal in 1991 when Bwindi and Mgahinga became national Parks. Batwa lost access to most of the forest and the resources they used for their economic, social and cultural sustenance (Kamugisha, Ogutu and Stahl, 1997). They had to depend on the patronage of their neighbours, the Bakiga and Bafumbira, mainly for food, shelter and casual employment. Today, the Batwa are an extremely marginalized minority in Uganda living outside the forests of Bwindi and Mgahinga in small settlements, either on land that is held in trust for them by non-governmental organizations or as squatters on their neighbours' land (Namara 2007; Kidd 2008). The dominant ethnic groups in the region, the Bakiga and Bafumbira, perceive them as uncivilized because of their former hunter-gatherer lifestyle which has led to discrimination and marginalisation of the Batwa from political, economic and social institutions and opportunities (Kidd, 2008). Notwithstanding the numerous problems faced by Batwa, they continue to value their forest based social system, culture, and traditional practices as an important part of their self-identification (Namara 2007; Kidd, 2008).

We carried out a cultural values assessment to better understand how Batwa relate to the forests and to serve as a baseline for the implementation of the Batwa Cultural Values and Conservation Project (BCVCP). Cultural values are widely recognized to be of importance to the well-being of both indigenous and non-indigenous communities and for the delivery of

conservation objectives; for instance by UNESCO's World Heritage Commission and Convention on Intangible Heritage, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the programmes of work of UNEP, WWF and IUCN, notable of which is the World Commission of Protected Areas' Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas Specialist Group. More specifically, cultural values, by connecting people to nature, provide a range of opportunities to build support for conservation objectives (Infield & Mugisha, 2010). Numerous sacred natural sites including sacred groves and springs, sites of worship, rituals and offerings, burial sites, and locations associated with spirits or deities exist around the world and many are managed to support both conservation objectives and spiritual functions (Wild and McLeod 2008 in Infield & Mugisha, 2010). For instance, recognition and respect for cultural values which relate to the natural environment can benefit conservation by utilizing place names and the many expressions and words which have evolved over generations of oral traditions (Verschuuren, 2006). In addition, conservation managers can take advantage of the cultural values approach to mitigate conflicts and enhance positive relationships with local communities. Ultimately, this can help avert loss of ecologically and culturally significant values by promoting a win-win situation for a people-park co-existence which will contribute to forest conservation and management of protected areas.

2. Methods

Fieldwork for assessing cultural values with Batwa communities was carried out between July and September 2012 in five localities around Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks: Rushaga, Kitahurira, and Sanuriro for Bwindi and Rukeri and Musasa for Mgahinga (Fig 1 & 2). We camped in each community for the duration of the surveys to closely interact with the people. Each community selected a small group of men and women (three or four of each usually) to represent their views in the cultural values survey. The democratic selection of respondents yielded a good mix of young and old respondents with most of them, including those who were not elders, having spent a good amount of time in the forest, at least up to 1991 when the Parks were gazetted.

The respondents participated actively in informal group discussions and one-on-one interviews. These were either held in the Batwa settlements or sometimes inside the forest, during field visits. We focused on what Batwa would want their grandchildren and other people to know and value about the Bwindi and Mgahinga forests. The respondents included traditional practices and belief systems, plants and animals linked to their livelihood forest activities of hunting and gathering as well as their history, locations of cultural or historical importance, and also their

perceptions on how their cultural values can be integrated into the conservation and management of the tropical forests of Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks (see appendix for the questions which guided our discussions and interviews).

In addition to group discussions and interviews, we carried out field visits to places deemed culturally significant to Batwa. In a preliminary study to prepare for this survey, we used 3-Dimensional maps which show Batwa cultural sites in Bwindi and Mgahinga to get an overview of these sites and their approximate locations. During field visits, Batwa members led a field team which included the staff of UWA, UOBDU and ITFC to the preferred cultural sites. These important cultural sites include caves, hot springs, fishing sites and forest trails. For each site, we recorded GPS coordinates, dominant vegetation, animal signs and ease or difficulty of access to the site. We also asked the Batwa members about uses of each cultural site and the proximity of other similar sites.



Plate 1. Marion Birungi interviews Lydia Natukunda from Rushaga inside Bwindi forest



Plate 2. Jemimah Orishaba and Charlotte Ninshaba take notes as Batwa talk about their cultural values along Buniga Forest trail

3. Findings

Importance of forests and forest resources in Batwa culture

This survey sought, as much as possible, to document what Batwa value about Bwindi and Mgahinga forests to provide a platform for interpreting the perceptions, beliefs and norms that define the relationship between Batwa and their environment.

Generally, Batwa consider themselves one group with the same history, culture and contemporary socio-economic challenges. The respondents mentioned traditional practices which define their ethnic group as a forest people and these include hunting and gathering forest resources, eating uncooked food, worshipping gods in the forest, sleeping in caves, guiding forest researchers and tourists, dressing in leaves and animal skins, making fire using dry sticks and speaking Rutwa language. On the other hand, there were noticeable differences in the historical accounts narrated by the Batwa groups of Mgahinga and Bwindi. While the Batwa of Mgahinga (i.e. those in Rukeri and Musasa) consistently identified the king of the Batwa as *Buuki*, the Bwindi groups (i.e. Rushaga, Kitahurira and Sanuriro) said that they did not know about the king of the Batwa. The latter groups only knew about Bakiga and Batutsi kings

and said that Batwa were guided by their gods in the forest. Another difference was observed in their responses regarding Batwa clans and totems where different totems were mentioned for certain clans and vice versa across communities. Such differences may be attributed to cultural dilution driven by interactions of Batwa with their dominant Bakiga or Bafumbira neighbours. However, a plausible explanation for differences across communities could be that the Batwa of Mgahinga have separate origins from the Bwindi groups (Muchemi and Kidd, 2011).

The cultural values identified in this survey show that Batwa deeply value Bwindi and Mgahinga forests as their cultural heritage. They attach considerable cultural importance to forest resources including caves, hot springs, rivers, hills, plants and animals. To Batwa the forests are a source of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Before the forests were gazetted as national parks, Batwa depended on forest resources for food, medicine, basketry, firewood, marketable items, house construction, tools, rituals, hunting and recreation. During the assessment they frequently requested to be allowed access to their cultural sites and items to save their culture from extinction and for improving their wellbeing.

Biographic data and socio-economic status of the respondents

Two out of thirty-two respondents who participated in this survey were born inside the forest and those aged 30 and above were twenty-eight. All the respondents, including those who were born outside the forest, had a good memory of their forest-based cultural norms, beliefs and practices. They belonged to different faith groups including the Anglican, Catholic and Pentecostal churches. On average each respondent had 6 children (range = 1-14 children), all born outside the forest. Twelve respondents had some formal education in primary school while only one had some secondary school education (Table 1).

The respondents said that being a Mutwa is associated with being a despised, dirty and lazy person. One respondent in Sanuriro complained saying that Batwa are often despised by the non-Batwa. In petty squabbles they used derogatory statements like “*Rutwa we*” meaning “you bad Mutwa” and “*Katwa we*” meaning “you powerless Mutwa”. Group members in Kitahurira pointed out that being a Mutwa is synonymous with being unable to provide for one’s family which is manifested by malnourished Batwa children with old and torn clothes. The respondents in Rukeri and Musasa complained about being neglected by society which has made them live as beggars on other people’s land with no proper houses, clothes and food. In addition, the Rushaga group said that Batwa people are segregated from society because of their past

activities and habits in the forest such as smearing their bodies with wild honey and not bathing regularly.

Table 1. Biographic data of the Batwa respondents who participated in the surveys

Gender	Place of birth	Age	Formal Education	Number of children	Contemporary spiritual affiliation
Rushaga					
Female	Outside	38	No	3	Catholic
Female	Outside	39	No	2	Anglican
Female	Inside	66	No	6	Pentecostal
Male	Outside	44	P.3	6	Pentecostal
Male	Outside	35	No	4	Anglican
Male	Outside	47	No	5	Catholic
Kitahurira					
Female	Outside	45	No	8	Anglican
Female	Outside	42	No	8	Anglican
Female	Outside	40	No	6	Anglican
Male	Outside	51	P.2	14	Anglican
Male	Outside	43	No	8	Anglican
Male	Outside	45	P.1	5	Anglican
Sanuriro					
Female	Outside	33	No	3	Timely message
Female	Outside	35	No	4	Adventist
Female	Outside	40-50	No	7	Timely message
Male	Outside	50	No	8	Timely message
Male	Outside	50	No	5	Timely message
Male	Outside	40-50	No	10	Timely message
Rukeri					
Female	Outside	42	P.1	4	Messianic
Female	Outside	30	P.1	5	Pentecostal
Female	Outside	40	No	5	Anglican
Male	Outside	45	P.3	7	Pentecostal
Male	Outside	28	P.2	3	Messianic
Male	Inside	65	P.2	4	Messianic
Musasa					
Female	Outside	28	P.1	2	Anglican
Female	Outside	18	No	1	Anglican
Female	Outside	40	No	6	Anglican
Female	Outside	50	No	6	Anglican
Male	Outside	39	No	2	Adventist
Male	Outside	37	P.1	7	Anglican
Male	Outside	27	P.1	3	Anglican
Male	Outside	42	S.3	11	Anglican

Aged above sixty, the two forest-born respondents spoke passionately about their lives in the forest where they grew up escorting their parents and grandparents for hunting and gathering forest resources. Similarly, those aged below sixty had fond memories of the forest based on

their direct or indirect forest-related knowledge (Table 2). Below are selected quotes representing the respondents' varied forest experiences.

Jovanisi Nyinakayanje, the oldest female respondent, had this to say:

"I was born in the forest of Bwindi and spent there about ten years. My father used to go hunting and leave us with our mother who would go with us to collect fire wood (*udukwi*) and food (*ibyokurya*). Outside our home, we had a small hut for worshipping (*uguterekerera*) which was mainly done by our father who would sacrifice to the gods before and after hunting. When they chased us from the forest, we started living here in Rushaga. We would go back to the forest to look for meat, honey, wild yams, firewood, weaving materials and medicinal plants. But later, we were told to stop going back to the forest. Many of our people died. We tried hard to survive in the challenging village conditions by begging for food from Bakiga."

George Wilson Mpakasihe, the oldest male respondent, pointed out how Batwa lived and survived in the forest by hunting wild animals saying:

"I was born and raised in the forest of Mgahinga. I started going to the forest with my father and other men for hunting when I was still young. I helped in carrying spears (*amacumu*), arrows (*ubuta*), bows (*imiheto*) and small locally woven bags (i.e. *ubukocho*). I enjoyed hunting black-fronted duikers (*ifumbiri*), buffaloes (*imbogo*), bush pigs (*ingurube*) and bush bucks (*impongo*). I miss the days when we would return from hunting with a lot of meat which we would share with other families."

Justus Kamara, born outside the forest and now aged 51, described how Batwa forebears lived in the forest and how they were evicted from the forest:

"When I went to the forest, I saw how my grandparents had lived. I found that they had permanent houses in form of caves. They also had temporary houses in form of fallen trees where they occasionally slept. They made fire by rubbing sticks which helped them keep warm. They had a variety of food including meat, honey, mudfish and wild yams. They had hot springs which served as their hospitals. They had special sites for worship especially in *Murugyezi* swamp. They were engaged in extracting gold and timber business. They indeed lived a happy life. I became unhappy when my parents told me that we should return to the village because the government officials did not want to see us in our forest. Worse still, they chased us with guns without any compensation."

Beatrice Kimpaye, aged 18, pointed out the values current Batwa attach to the forest of Mgahinga:

"On the few occasions I have been to the forest, I had gone there for firewood, weaving materials and dancing for tourists. I love the forest very much because it has abundant food unlike the village. As Batwa living in the village, we miss forest food especially honey from stingless bees, meat, mushrooms, vegetables and the berries of *Rubus* sp."

Kabeni Niyonsenga, aged 27, stated that he had limited forest experience but still saw value in the forest:

“I have limited experience about the forest. I remember going with my mother to look for weaving materials, bamboo and honey. When we brought them to the village, we exchanged them with the Bahutu who gave us food i.e. beans, peas and wheat.”

Steven Serutoke, who was also a guide on the Garama Batwa trail in Mgahinga, aged 45, shared his childhood memories of the forest values saying:

“When I was a little child, I used to see my parents going to the forest. They used to tell us nice stories about the forest. They told us how they used to eat honey and meat from the forest. They also told us that they used to shift to many places including Rwanda, Burundi and Congo especially when they had conflicts and when food became scarce.”

Table 2. Traditional forest activities of Batwa mentioned during interviews and group discussions

Forest activity	Number	Selected quotes from respondents
Collecting firewood	7	“I used to go with my mother to the forest to collect firewood with Park officials telling us not to take too much firewood out of the forest.” <i>Gloria Kyobahareire</i>
Collecting food	19	“I grew up seeing my mother and other women going to the forest to collect vegetables. As young girls, we would escort our mother to the forest. We enjoyed eating the berries of <i>incheri</i> (<i>Rubus</i> sp.). When our father came back from hunting, he would bring us meat. We liked eating duiker meat because it was very delicious.” <i>Vanisi Nyinahabimana</i>
Collecting medicine	7	“I was born at a time when we were still allowed to collect what we wanted from the forest. We would go back to the forest to look for traditional medicine which we would exchange with <i>Bahutu</i> [non-Batwa] for <i>utwokurya</i> (some food) including sorghum, peas, beans and wheat.” <i>Sipera Nyinamahane</i>
Collecting basketry materials	12	“We used to go to the forest to collect <i>Imise</i> (<i>Urera</i> sp.) for making baskets. We used to sell the baskets or directly exchange them for food, mainly beans and potatoes.” <i>Molley Bavuga</i>
Hunting	5	“When I was a young boy, I would go the forest with my father and other Batwa men for hunting. We would mainly hunt buffaloes, bush bucks and duikers. The day before we went out hunting, we would clean spears, arrows and bows and put rattles round the necks of our dogs. We would set off very early in the morning and head for the forest. When we reached the forest, the men went about hunting while we their younger sons were stationed in trees to help in reporting and spearing animals which would evade the dogs. We would also help in carrying home meat and honey.” <i>Dundu Nsabimana</i>
Collecting construction materials	6	“I used to go with my mother to the forest to look for grass to thatch our hut. In the forest, I used to fear buffaloes very much because I had heard that buffaloes kill people.” <i>Godansi Nyinasafari</i>
Mining and pit-sawing	3	“I used to go with my father to the forest and learnt many things like harvesting honey, weaving winnowing trays and repairing broken pots. I also took part in harvesting wild yams, medicinal plants and ripe fruits as well as pit sawing and mining gold.” <i>Erick Sabande</i>

Singing and dancing	8	"We used to depend on the forest for meat, honey, medicinal plants, wild yams, weaving materials and vegetables. We would sleep in caves and under fallen trees singing and dancing with flutes made from stems of <i>entonvi (Lobelia sp.)</i> ." <i>Margaret Ntegyereize</i>
Visiting relatives and cultural sites	8	"I was Born and raised in the village but kept longing for an opportunity to go to the forest to see my grandfather who lived in the forest. I was curious to know what he would do there, what he ate and where he slept. One day, he came home and I asked to go with him in the forest. He took me with him to a hill inside the forest where he lived. On arrival, he brought some food for me to eat. He had a lot of food which was stored in bamboo culms broken at the nodes into short pieces with one end open. He gave me honey and roast meat of buffaloes and duikers. I enjoyed the food very much. After a few days, I returned to the village." <i>Steven Barahirwa</i>

Legends, language and traditional practices

Hunting and gathering forest resources is clearly of paramount importance in Batwa culture and defines how they see themselves. As such, Batwa culture encompasses hunting, harvesting honey, collecting herbs, singing, dancing, weaving baskets, paying dowry and offering sacrifices to bless the hunting.

Many Batwa who were growing up before Bwindi and Mgahinga became national parks in 1991 learnt about the way their forebears lived in the forest from parents and grandparents, who used to take them hunting, collecting firewood and fetching water and would tell their children stories about the forest. This is reflected in responses from a group discussion in Kitahurira:

"Our parents used to go with us to the forest where they would teach us names of plants, hills, valleys and swamps. That's why even today, though we live outside the forest, we still know much about our forest, plants and animals. While in the forest, we were taught how to track bees (*okutara enjoki n'obuhura*) in search for honey. We were also shown how our forefathers used to live in caves and to worship the gods especially after hunting. We were taught how to make fire by rubbing sticks together. Back home in the village, boys would sit around the fire place with their father and listen to him as he narrated about the names of plants, animals and places especially those he had been to for hunting. Likewise, the girls would be with their mothers learning how to cook and to prepare traditional medicine. Boys and girls were taught how to weave mats, baskets, winnowing trays and to mould and repair clay pots. We also got to learn from our parents about the legends, tongue twisters, poems, riddles, folklore, songs and dances. We were taught to respect elders especially our grandparents and we would be punished heavily if we insulted an elder by being asked to bring roast meat and local beer to ask for forgiveness. Before marriage, a boy would first be taken and shown to his uncles and aunts and told about their clan. It was forbidden for one to marry from among their clan mates."

Batwa legends

The best known Batwa legend told in all communities we visited and one that really exemplifies the acceptance of status of different ethnic groups begins with their forefather, *Kihanga*. He had

three sons named *Katutsi*, *Kahutu* and *Katwa*. One day he called his three sons and gave each of them a gourd full of milk. Early morning of the next day, he asked his three sons to give him back the gourds and placed them inside a worshipping place. *Katutsi* brought back his gourd when it was still full of milk while *Kahutu's* was only half-full. *Katwa* brought back a completely empty gourd, for he had drunk all the milk in the night. Their father then blessed each of his three sons based on how responsible they had been with the gourds of milk. *Katutsi* was blessed with all his father's cows which would help him and his children to prosper for generations. *Kahutu* was blessed with a hoe and seeds which would help him to grow food in his lifetime and for generations to come after him. *Katwa* was given the forest and all that was in it. He was to survive by hunting and gathering.

Many generations passed and their descendants multiplied. The descendants of *Katutsi* and *Kahutu* became so many that they could no longer be satisfied with what they had and ended up encroaching on *Katwa's* forest. In the end, they chased *Katwa's* descendants from the forest and made them live as beggars and landless people.

Another legend was narrated in one of the five Batwa communities. It is about the creator organising a lottery of sorts during a gathering for all races and tribes. The Batwa had been the very first group to be created (in the local language of Rukiga, a Mutwa would be referred to as *mushangwa-butaka* or *kashangirwe*, meaning 'the person who was found in existence by other people'). The creator used a match box, gourd of milk, flattened drum, pointed drum (i.e. *engarabi* in Rukiga) and rubbing sticks. The purpose of the 'lottery' was to allot to his children land where they would best survive. A white man picked a match box, a Mututsi picked a gourd of milk, a Mukiga picked a flattened drum, a Muganda picked a pointed drum and a Mutwa picked rubbing sticks for making fire in the forest. The creator blessed the Mutwa saying, "go and use the forest. Eat the fruits, leaves, roots, honey and meat in the forest". The Mutwa then ran into the forest and lived there with his descendants for many generations.

The Batwa language

The respondents observed that their language is dying out because Batwa are a minority in a community dominated by Bakiga and Bafumbira. They suggested that the Batwa language can be revived by instructing Batwa children in Rutwa when they are in school. In addition, Batwa language instructors should take Batwa children to the forest and teach them through songs, drama and naming of plants and animals. Another proposal is that NGOs should equip Batwa

elders with teaching skills and aids so that Batwa themselves can organise language classes for their children.

Traditional practices

The following is a list of practices identified by the Batwa as of importance to them as a people and to their identity:

- i. Batwa are known for being good hunters, traditional healers, rainmakers and can make fire by rubbing small sticks together. They used to carry forest products in small bags called *obukokyo* which were made from animal skins.
- ii. Batwa men and women used leaves and skins of animals especially duikers and bush bucks for dressing. The children would dress in small skins of young animals strapping them on the shoulders. Women also used the skins for beautification and carrying their children in their back. Batwa would weave cords from *emise* (*Urera* sp.) and use them to tie the skins round their waists. They would pound seeds of *omuruguya* (*Carapa procera*) to obtain an oily liquid which they would smear on the skins to make them soft.
- iii. Traditionally, Batwa had three main types of houses i.e. caves, *omuririmbo* and *ichuro*. The caves and *omuririmbo* were the main houses where Batwa lived. *Ichuro* was used for resting and storing food including meat, honey, beans and sorghum.
- iv. Batwa had a special way of worshipping and offering sacrifices especially for thanking the gods after hunting successfully. Worshipping was mainly done in sacred huts by elders who would be anointed by the grandparents. Young people were neither allowed to go to the sacred places nor to ask about what the elders did and how they communicated with the gods. They would only see the elders reciting prayers before hunting and offering meat to the gods in the forest after hunting. In addition, when Batwa slaughtered an animal and found that it had a strange organ, say it had a tiny heart, they would worship such an organ as their god.
- v. Batwa had a special way of burying the dead. When a Mutwa died, he or she would be buried in a hut after digging a small hole and wrapping the corpse in grass. The burial ceremony involved cleansing the corpse with herbs e.g. *omuhanga* (*Maesa lanceolata*), *enkyerere/incheri* (*Rubus* sp.) and *omufumba* (*Rhumex* sp.). Batwa elders would lead the burial ceremony and encourage all the family members to drink herbal extracts as a way of preventing death from claiming more people from that family. After burial, they would migrate to a far off place and never come back to that place.

- vi. After hunting successfully, a Mutwa would celebrate the achievement by naming his children after the animal or location in the forest. Batwa names are derived from names of animals or locations in the forest include *Kafumbiri* for *efumbiri* – the black-fronted duiker, *Bikyezi* for *inkyezi* – cane rats, *Kagote* for an area with *emigote* – trees of *Syzygium* sp. and *Kanyeihamba* for one born in *eihamba* – the forest.
- vii. Batwa had a ritual of cutting their skins and applying concoctions which they believed would protect them against witchcraft.
- viii. Elderly Batwa would be smeared with animal dung to prevent their skins from sun burns
- ix. According to Batwa customs, a Mutwa would not marry a non-Mutwa and getting pregnant before marriage was forbidden. Marriage was arranged by the parents. The parents of a Mutwa boy would admire qualities in a certain Mutwa girl and decide that she was the right partner for their son. They would then visit the girl's family carrying gifts which included pots of honey from stingless bees, beer brewed with honey and roast meat. During the visit, they would negotiate the dowry to be paid to the girl's family and the date for the 'give-away' ceremony. On the day of 'giving away' the girl, the groom would bring many gifts for the bride and her family. Such gifts included beads, new and well-oiled animal skins, roast meat, elephant tusks, honey from stingless bees, beer brewed with honey and sometimes hunting dogs. The groom would take the bride to his home and they live together receiving advice from the groom's parents. The young family would later migrate to a distant place to establish their new and independent home. When the woman became pregnant, she would be fed on meat, honey and vegetables and would drink many kinds of herbs for boosting her health and that of the unborn baby. At the time of giving birth, she would be helped by other women who would use pieces of bamboo to cut the umbilical cord. The baby would be wrapped in clean animal skins and brought near a fire place for warmth.

Batwa institutions

King of the Batwa

Respondents living near Bwindi did not know much about their king and some said that Batwa had no king:

“We had a king but we have forgotten his name” by the group discussion in Kitahurira.

“We did not have a king. Our god *Rutindangyezi* would take care of us in the forest” (Gloria Kyobahareire).

“We had no king nor did we live in communities like we do today. We lived in family units where the father was the head of the family. We believed that the gods were taking care of us. The father would be responsible for bringing us meat and organizing our movements from one part of the forest to another” (Jovanisi Nyinakayanje).

However, the respondents living near Mgahinga said that Batwa had a king and his name was *Buuki*. His wife was called *Nyinamanyegamo*. His seat was Garama cave which is located inside Mgahinga National Park. He was never seen by his subjects and would communicate with them through messengers. He had guards who would offer him protection. The guards were not allowed to disclose any information about the king. *Buuki* confided in selected Batwa elders who were his medicine men, advisors and foretellers. When he invited his subjects for meetings, they would converge inside Garama cave where fire was ever burning to provide light and warmth.

Although Batwa had meetings with *Buuki*, he remained mysterious to them because he would change his appearance by putting on different skins of animals. As such, Batwa never recognized who *Buuki* was and how he looked like. When Batwa were evicted from the forest, *Buuki* disappeared and his whereabouts remain unknown. The respondents said that their king helped in uniting Batwa. He would organise Batwa for festivals where Batwa would make merry with drums, flutes and harps while singing, dancing and feasting on honey and meat. The king was also instrumental in regulating the use of forest resources, by leading Batwa as they shifted from one part of the forest to another. In addition, he did not allow killing of primates especially gorillas and chimpanzees. Furthermore, he defended the forest against encroachment by non-Batwa communities before conservation laws came into force.

Clans and totems

Batwa clans are based on totems which are mainly wild animals and a few plants. Across the Batwa communities which participated in the survey, respondents mentioned different totems for the same clans and different clans for the same totem. They did not know the totems for two clans (Table 3). Clan affiliations appeared to have less prominence among the current Batwa as many respondents needed help from older Batwa when each person was asked to mention his or her clan.

Table 3. Batwa clans and totems referred to by different Batwa communities

Clan name	Totem	Batwa communities
Ababanda	<i>Inyabaraza/omwanana</i> (Hadada ibis)	Rukeri
Abagara	<i>Embeba</i> (rats)	Kitahurira

Abagara	<i>Ensenene</i> (grasshoppers)	Rushaga
Abagara	<i>Ebiko</i> (<i>Erythrina abyssinica</i> trees)	Sanuriro
Abagesera	<i>Inyamanza/enyamunyu</i> (Pied wagtail)	Rukeri, Musasa, Rushaga
Abagiri	<i>Amajuta g'ente</i> (Cow ghee)	Rushaga
Abagiri/ Abakimbiri	<i>Ekikona</i> (Pied crow)	Kitahurira, Sanuriro
Abahesi	<i>Engabi</i> (Bushbuck)	Rushaga
Abangwe	<i>Engwe</i> (Leopard)	Sanuriro
Abarengye	<i>Enkanda</i> (Yellow-backed duiker)	Rushaga, Sanuriro, Kitahurira
Abasigi	<i>Ekisigi/igisiiga</i> (Kite)	Sanuriro, Rukeri, Musasa
Abasigi/ Abarihira	<i>Ente ngoobe</i> (Cow with black and white patches)	Rushaga, Kitahurira,
Abasinga	<i>Inzovu</i> (Elephant)	Musasa
Abasinga	<i>Ikizu</i> (Crowned eagle)	Rukeri
Abasinga	<i>Omusinga</i> (<i>Hibiscus fuscus</i>)	Sanuriro
Abasogo	<i>Impoma</i> (Bush viper)	Musasa
Abasogo	<i>Ikizu</i> (Crowned eagle)	Rushaga
Abatambara	<i>Enkanda</i> (Yellow-backed duiker)	Rushaga
Abazigaba	<i>Ingwe</i> (Leopard)	Musasa
Abazigaba	<i>Igishwi</i> (Sparrow)	Rukeri
Abazigaba	<i>Enkombe</i> (Dove)	Rushaga
Abazigaba/ Bamungwe	<i>Enkyakara</i> (Guinea fowl)	Kitahurira
Abungura	<i>Ifundi</i> (Wax bill)	Rukeri, Musasa
Abungura	<i>Omukole</i> (<i>Dombeya torrida</i>)	Rushaga
Abungura/ Abasasira	<i>Enjojo</i> (Elephant)	Kitahurira
Abatimbo	Unknown	Kitahurira
Abayundo	Unknown	Kitahurira

The respondents narrated how certain animals came to be totems for Batwa clans:

Kagundu Christopher

"I belong to the *Bagiri-Babakimbiri* clan. My totem is *ekikoona* (a pied crow). The *Bagiri* clan is made up of two sub-clans namely the *Bagiri-Babakimbiri* and *Bagiri-Babagara*. The crow came to be our totem because it is good at gathering food and other materials. Long time ago, a crow heaped many things near a cave of our great ancestor. The entire family of our great ancestor was surprised to see many things heaped near their home. One day, they saw a crow landing near their cave with many things in its beak. They then decided to befriend the crow and declared it their totem. Since then, all their offspring have respected this bird as their totem. When we see crows we tell each other, "Look, our fellow *Mugiri* is looking for what to carry for her young ones". We throw excess food in the banana plantation so that our fellow *Mugiri* can have what to take for her chicks."

Domitiri Nyirahanzi

"The totem of the Barengye clan is *enkanda* (yellow-backed duiker). The duiker came to be their totem after they suffered from skin lesions when they ate hooves of duikers. Even today, members of the Barengye clan do not like to have any contact with yellow-

backed duikers. If a yellow-backed duiker walks through a garden of a member of the Barengye clan, they believe that their crops will not do well because of being cursed by the duiker.”

Kagote Ephraim

“My clan is called *Abangwe*. My totem is *engwe* (leopard). The leopard came to be our totem because it was associated with misfortune. When a member of the *Bangwe* clan saw a dead leopard, he or she would suffer from skin lesions like a leper.”

Bikyezi Benon

“My clan is *Omusigi*. My totem is *ekisigi* (kite). We like this bird because it is good at chasing common bulbuls which destroy our crops especially bean seedlings. Our parents told us never to kill this bird because it is very helpful. When one killed this bird, he or she was given a heavy punishment such as bringing the meat of a buffalo. Hunting buffaloes was very risky because buffaloes would sometimes kill hunters.”

Beliefs

The follow is a list of beliefs, myths, stories and superstitions reported by respondents.

- i. Foretellers and witchdoctors were believed to prevent death because they provided a warning system that would help predict misfortunes which would be averted by taking precautions like drinking herbal extracts
- ii. Meeting chimpanzees, golden cats or foxes or even smelling mongooses on a hunting expedition would signify bad luck and the hunter would return to his family without game meat
- iii. Meeting gorillas or talking about them the night before going for hunting would bring the bad luck of returning home without meat no matter what effort the hunter used
- iv. Bleating by duikers when a Mutwa had just entered the forest would be a signal that the hunter would be returning home without game meat
- v. Batwa believed that small stones inside the rumen of duikers brought special blessings. The good luck stones would be taken to a shrine i.e. *endaaro* and used in appeasing the gods for additional blessings. It is believed that after finding such a stone, the Mutwa would go on to become a successful hunter.
- vi. Knocking the right foot against a stone on their way to hunting would signify blessings for a Mutwa hunter
- vii. Killing a duiker when a Mutwa had just entered the forest would increase chances of returning home with plenty of meat

- viii. Owls and foxes were believed to announce the death of people when they sang near people's homes
- ix. If an expectant woman killed a chameleon, she would bear a tiny child who would crawl for much of his/her childhood
- x. If an expectant woman killed a frog, she would bear a child with a pot belly
- xi. If an expectant woman killed a snail, her child would crawl for much of the childhood
- xii. If one killed a spider, the skin would swell and feel itchy all over
- xiii. If one killed a crested crane, their children would cry like crested cranes
- xiv. If one hunted gorillas, their children would resemble gorillas
- xv. If one saw a civet, he or she would develop deep lesions on the skin
- xvi. Killing lizards would cause cracking of the skin
- xvii. The scent of *omuna* (*Sericostachys* sp.) and *omurangara* (*Croton macrostachyus*) in flower was believed to cause miscarriages
- xviii. Black-fronted duiker meat was believed to prevent miscarriages
- xix. When pregnant Batwa women looked at civets, their children would be affected by bad omens
- xx. Killing or seeing pottos (*efumbatwa*) was believed to cause one's children to cry like pottos, crawl like pottos and resemble pottos in appearance
- xxi. Generally, inedible animals were believed to have bad omens especially if one saw their corpses. These animals include gorillas, dogs, elephants, monkeys, baboons, foxes, porcupines, jackals, lions, leopards, hyenas and golden cats
- xxii. The extreme ends where the rainbow appears to touch the earth's surface were believed to be places of big snakes and sheep drinking water from the earth. Batwa avoided going near a rainbow for fear that they would be killed by the giant snakes
- xxiii. The sun was believed to be a source of blessings especially for hunting
- xxiv. Lightning and thunder were used in witchcraft especially to punish thieves
- xxv. *Omumanurankuba* (botanical name not identified): This tree is believed to have supernatural powers which can prevent lightning and thunder from striking people. Batwa avoided harvesting from this tree because they believed that doing so would annoy the gods who would send down heavy rainfall accompanied with deadly lightning and thunder
- xxvi. The volcanoes of Muhabura, Mgahinga and Sabinyo are believed to grant blessings for long life since they have persisted for many generations.

Culturally significant items and places in Bwindi and Mgahinga

Women and men were asked separately to list forest plants and animals which matter in their culture based on 10 use and value categories - food, medicine, basketry, tools, firewood, house construction, marketable items, recreation, hunting and ceremonies. For each category, the members were asked to list the 10 most important forest plants and animals and to rate them according to their relative importance. Respondents were given 100 bean seeds to divide amongst cards which had drawings of each named forest plant or animal. This approach of scoring relative preferences in forest landscapes is fully described by Sheil *et al.*, (2002).

Results of the scoring exercises show that forest plants and animals are important to Batwa in many ways. 7 out of 10 plant species and 10 out of 10 animal species which have 4 and more values in the Batwa culture are considered important for rituals. This finding points to a strong dependence of Batwa on forest resources for non-economic cultural purposes. See Tables 4a and 4b for a summary of the most preferred forest plants and animals and the values attached to them.

Table 4a. Forest plant species which have four and more values in Batwa culture

Local name	plant	Botanical name	Food	Medicine	Basketry/cordage	Firewood	Tools	House construction	Marketable products	Rituals/tradition	Recreation	Hunting place/ tools
Engongwe		<i>Cassipourea</i> sp.		x		x		x			x	
Ekiko/Igiko		<i>Erythrina abyssinica</i>				x	x			x	x	
Enembwe		<i>Maytenus acuminata</i>										
Omugote		<i>Syzygium</i> sp.	x			x				x		x
Omumba		<i>Prunus africana</i>		x		x	x		x			x
Omuruguya		<i>Carapa procera</i>				x	x	x		x		
Umugyesi		<i>Hagenia abyssinica</i>				x		x		x	x	
Omuhanga		<i>Maesa lanceolata</i>		x		x	x	x	x	x		x
Umukindikwa		<i>Pyncostachys</i> sp.		x		x		x				x
Omukole		<i>Dombeya torrida</i>			x	x	x	x	x	x		
Umunanira		<i>Rhamnus prinoides</i>		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Umushunguru		<i>Hypericum rivolutum</i>				x	x	x	x		x	x

Table 4b. Forest animal species which have four and more values in Batwa culture

Local name	Common name	Food	Medicine	Basketry/cordage	Tools	Marketable products	Rituals/tradition	Recreation	Hunting function/ tools
Efumbiri	Black-fronted duiker	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ekinyabuyugi	Brush-tailed porcupine	x	x		x	x	x		
Empunu	Bush pig	x	x			x	x	x	x
Enkanda	Yellow-backed duiker	x			x	x	x	x	x
Esenzi/Inkyezi	Cane rat	x	x	x			x		
Enzoki	Honey bees	x	x			x	x		
Embogo	Buffalo	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Engabi/Impongo	Bushbuck	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Enkima	L'Hoest's monkey	x			x	x	x	x	
Enzozo/inzovu	Elephant		x		x		x	x	
Obuhura	Stingless bees	x	x			x	x	x	x

While scoring the relative importance of forest species, the respondents further explained why they value certain plants and animals. They also mentioned names of places inside the forests which are special in their culture (tables 5a & 5b). Similar names and value categories of culturally significant species and places are indicated on the 3-Dimensional maps for Batwa cultural and natural landscape in Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks (Muchemi and Kidd, 2011).

Table 5a. Special Batwa food, medicinal, basketry, ceremonial items and why they matter

Valued items	Cultural significance
Honey from stingless bees and honey bees	Important in preparing the beer used in offerings and sacrifices to appease the spirits of their ancestors
Animals including duikers, bushbucks, buffaloes, bush pigs, flying squirrels, cane rats, francolins and mudfish	Meat was a staple food for Batwa and was also used in worship. Animal skins were used as clothes and storage bags. Flying squirrels were used as dowry.
Plants including wild yams, mushrooms, fruits like <i>Myrianthus</i> sp. and vegetables like <i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Important food items
<i>Rytigynia kigeziensis</i> , <i>Piper guinensis</i> , <i>Ocotea usambarensis</i> , <i>Toddalia</i> sp. and <i>Prunus Africana</i>	Important medicinal plants
<i>Ficus</i> sp. and <i>Erythrina abyssinica</i>	Important in acts of worship
<i>Maesa lanceolata</i> , <i>Gouania longistipicata</i> ,	Used for self-cleansing from witchcraft and during

<i>Zanthoxylum gilletii</i> , <i>Policies fava</i> , <i>Droplets sp.</i> and <i>Leptonychia mildbraedii</i>	burial ceremonies
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Table 5b. Culturally significant locations in Bwindi and Mgahinga mentioned by the respondents

Sites in Bwindi	Importance
Hakisharara swamp	Source of weaving materials
Mubwindi swamp	Place for worshipping
Murugyezi swamp	Place for Batwa gatherings and worshipping
Hamasoho valley	Fishing site especially for mudfish
Iguugu valley	Had hot springs for curing diseases
Ihizozo river	Important for fishing and mining
Ishasha river	Important for fishing
Itaama river	Respected as a place of spirits
Ivi river	Important for fishing
Kahororo valley	It was frequented by gorillas associated with bad omens
Karingaringa valley	Fishing site especially for mudfish
Kasinga valley	It has a cave where Batwa used to converge for dancing and singing
Kihungye valley	Source of weaving materials
Ntengyeri river	Fishing site especially for mudfish
Rushabo valley	Fishing site especially for mudfish
Rushuura valley	Fishing site especially for mudfish
Hakamatunda hill	It was a resting place and had many fruits of <i>Cyphomandra sp.</i>
Hamuhingo hill	It was a meeting place for parties, singing and dancing
Ibaare hill	It was a meeting place for Batwa of Nteko and Kayonza
Kagote hill	Had abundant honey, many trees of <i>Syzygium sp.</i> and was liked by chimpanzees
Kanyabweru hill	Had stingless bees and was used as a resting place and for sighting foot paths
Kaseresere hill	It was frequented by elephants
Kasiru hill	Source of rivers, stingless bees, duikers, bush pigs, weaving materials and gold
Katendegyeri hill	Had stingless bees, honey bees and yellow-backed duikers
Kishegura hill	Had many trees of <i>Agauria salicifolia</i> good for firewood
Kitobere hill	Had stingless bees, honey bees and a big cave where Batwa lived
Kumbagara hill	Had wild yams
Mariburira hill	It was frequented by gorillas
Mubare hill	Had wild yams, honey, walking sticks and weaving materials
Mubiko hill	It had many trees of <i>Erythrina abyssinica</i> . Batwa lived here and built small huts
Mubitooma hill	It was important for worshipping
Mukebigunzu hill	It had many tree ferns of <i>Cyanthea manniana</i> and was frequented by gorillas
Mukibaraga hill	Had stingless bees
Mukisha hill	It was good for hunting buffaloes
Munteza hill	It was good for hunting many animals
Murwendanda hill	It was a good hunting area
Muryeshengye hill	It was a good hunting ground for giant forest hogs
Nkuringo hill	Had stingless bees, honey bees and many trees of <i>Alangium chinense</i>
Nteko hill	Had <i>Ficus</i> trees used as worshipping sites
Ntendure hill	Had many medicinal plants especially <i>Rytyginia kigeziensis</i>
Ntungamo hill	Had a lot of wild yams
Nturo hill	It was a good resting place
Nyabubare hill	It was frequented by gorillas
Nyamiyaga hill	Had a conducive atmosphere
Nyiguru hill	Source of iron ore used for producing spears and arrows for hunting

Ruherere hill	The place of stingless bees which produced delicious honey
Rukubira hill	Had the greatest abundance of wild yams in the whole of Bwindi
Rungo hill	It was a good hunting area
Rutonde hill	Had wild yams
Mgahinga sites	
Mt Muhabura	Important for direction especially in areas with tall and thick vegetation
Mt Mgahinga	Source of water, weaving materials, honey and herbal medicine
Mt Sabinyo	Source of water and honey
Buhuye hill	Good hunting ground
Kuhanika hill	It was a resting place for Batwa children when their parents went hunting
Kumufuregye hill	It is where Batwa used to fetch water
Kunyamuzimu hill	Had a well where Batwa used to fetch water
Kuzuru hill	Path to and from hunting in Rutegamasunzu
Manyenya hill	Path to and from Garama cave
Mumutiba hill	It is where Batwa used to harvest honey
Murunyinya hill	It is where Batwa used to harvest vegetables
Muryabagoro hill	Pathway for Batwa when they started hunting near Garama cave
Rutegamasunzu hill	Good hunting ground for duikers and buffaloes
Rwabikomere hill	Path for fetching water
Nyagisenyi swamp	Respected as a place of spirits
Ntebeko river	Frequented by elephants and buffaloes
Nyabiremu river	Source of water for domestic use
Nkanda river	Respected as a place of spirits
Nyinagongo river	Respected as a place of spirits
Nyagisenyi river	Respected as a place of spirits
Gahindu river	Respected as a place of spirits
Nyabyiyoni river	Respected as a place of spirits
Nkanda river	Respected as a place of spirits
Kyamahano river	Respected as a place of spirits

Ritualism and forest conservation

Forests have played such a dominant role in Batwa's lives that if one were to spend time with a Mutwa living near Bwindi and Mgahinga, the conversation would soon touch upon the forest (Rudd, 2004). During this survey, Batwa members often referred to the forest as "*ihamba ryetu*" or "*ishamba ryachu*" meaning "our forest". Even their songs were about forests and forest resources. When asked to describe how they used to live with wild animals and plants in the forest, the following traditional practices and rituals which promote forest conservation emerged:

1. Batwa feared leopards and avoided them as much as possible. When they would see leopards at a distance, they would ask a member of the *Bazigaba* clan, whose totem is a leopard, to perform a ritual beseeching the leopards not to harm them. Such a ritual involved beating a tree trunk with a hand and uttering words pleading for clemency from the dangerous animals.

2. Batwa avoided running into elephants by screaming at them from a distant using a set of repeated words e.g. *“Iruka, iruka wanjojo we. Nyabura wasya akagobora”* translated as *“run, run away you elephant. Your trunk is about to be set on fire.”* The elephants would run away in response to the screaming sound of the Batwa. The Batwa would then continue with their journey without being hurt by elephants.
3. Batwa had restrictions to minimize impacts of their activities on the forest. For instance, they would not just use any stick for walking and would repeatedly use the same trail. They avoided whistling in the forest except when they were sending out key information such as announcing the finding of scarce delicacies like stingless bees or encountering dangerous animals. They punished those who whistled without good cause by stabbing them with a spear but would later treat the wounds using their traditional medicine.
4. Batwa were efficient hunters. Their art of hunting was perfected through a life-long hunting experience and hands-on training of young people by their elders. Young Batwa were trained how to use spears, arrows and bows in hunting. If one kept missing the prey, he would be punished severely including by being speared to death.
5. Batwa discouraged the killing of inedible animals like frogs, chameleons and snails. If a Mutwa killed a frog, he or she would be considered to be cursed by that frog. They believed such a person would bear children with scaly skins just like frogs. If one accidentally killed a frog, he or she would dip another frog in water and drink that water to wash away the curse.
6. Batwa never hunted gorillas or chimpanzees. Generally, Batwa considered primates to be their close relatives and thus did not hunt them.
7. Batwa utilized the forest sustainably because of their nomadic life. They did not have to build permanent houses since they used existing caves and fallen trees for shelter. Even where they harvested plants for medicine or weaving materials their nomadic life would allow the plants to coppice before being harvested again. In addition, Batwa had totems which forbade the killing of certain animals and this too promoted conservation.

Observations from visits to cultural sites

A total of twenty two cultural sites were visited from the five Batwa settlements we focused on in this survey. This represents a small fraction of the Batwa cultural sites which virtually cover all places in and around Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks (see Batwa 3-Dimensional maps in Muchemi and Kidd, 2011). A preliminary survey of the 3-Dimensional maps and the available literature indicated that hot springs, worshipping sites and caves were among key cultural sites

for Batwa in Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks. However, this information had not been cross-checked in the forest and thus the physical existence and characteristics of the cultural sites were unknown.

We extracted information from the 3-Dimensional maps of Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks and developed simpler maps for guiding the informants in selecting key cultural sites for this survey (Figures 1 & 2). The informants were asked to name important cultural sites near their settlement including those that were not indicated on the maps. After a series of interviews and discussions in each Batwa settlement, the informants led a team of researchers from UWA, UOBDU and ITFC to places considered important by Batwa. These included caves, hot springs, fishing sites and forest trails (see Figures 3 & 4). We recorded site characteristics including GPS coordinates, dominant vegetation, animal signs and ease of access. We also asked Batwa about the importance and uses of the sites and the proximity of other similar sites. See Table 6 for a summary of the importance Batwa attach to hot springs and caves.

Table 6. The importance of hot springs and caves in Batwa culture

Importance of hot springs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Body massaging - Softening and stretching animal skins worn by women and men - Remedy for polio, fractures, haemorrhage and high blood pressure - Asking for blessings to bear children - Isolating night dancers and sorcerers - Settling disputes whereby wrongdoers were exposed by their skins getting burnt - Detecting unwanted pregnancies among girls - Offering sacrifices for a successful hunting day - Worshipping under big <i>Erythrina abyssinica</i> trees located nearby - General washing including the face, legs and whole body - Washing honey off their hands and lips
Importance of caves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main houses where they lived - Kitchen and store for cooking and storing food - Recreation room where parties, songs and dances were performed - Worshipping especially before they left for hunting - Protecting children from dangerous animals especially when the parents went hunting

conservation is not new to them since they were the first to practice conservation using traditional practices and restrictions to minimize impacts of their activities on the forest. For instance, they would not just use any stick for walking and would repeatedly use the same trail. Their nomadic life which involved shifting after the death of a family member, and sleeping in caves instead of building permanent houses also helped in conserving the forest. They cited their vast knowledge of the forests including the knowledge of location and sensitivity of forest plant and animal species as an asset for conservation (Table 7). They also suggested that they want to see the forest managed with full respect for all Batwa based on their traditional beliefs and practices.

Table 7. What Batwa can contribute to forest conservation and how they want to see the forest managed

Questions and answers	Responses*
<i>If UWA invited you to manage the forest as a partner, what knowledge or skills would you contribute, based on your traditional or cultural beliefs and practices?</i>	
- We know the forest very well. We know the plants, animals, trails, hills, valleys and swamps in the forest.	5
-We can guide tourists and show them how we used to make fire, harvest honey and prepare traditional medicine	3
-We can help in finding snares set by poachers	2
-We can help with guiding UWA patrol teams along the easier paths	2
-We can help in tracking and arresting poachers	2
-We are used to the local terrain and thus can manage patrols	2
-We can detect those planning to poach since we live in the village	2
-We can sensitize local people about the value of conserving forests	2
-We can readily mobilize people to put out forest fires	2
-We can help with monitoring and reporting illegal activities	2
<i>How do you want to see this forest managed with full respect for Batwa?</i>	
-Allow us access to bamboo, firewood, medicinal and basketry materials	4
-Employ us in managing the Park since it is our cultural heritage	4
-Allow us to take our children to the forest for learning our culture	3
-Give us a bigger share of the Park revenues	3
-Promote our culture far and wide to attract more tourists	2
-Develop more caves for tourism	2
-Allow us to visit our cultural sites in the forest	2
-Allow us to take tourists to our cultural sites in the forest	2
-Allow us to harvest honey from stingless bees	1
-Build for us permanent houses since we left our caves in the forest	1

-Buy for us land since our land was gazetted as national park	1
-Buy for us domestic animals since we can no longer hunt wild animals	1

**Number of answers from the five communities which took part in the survey*

Buniga forest trail

During our conversations with the respondents, they lamented the lack of forest access which they felt was threatening Batwa culture with extinction. They hoped that a new trail in Buniga Forest Reserve, which was opened in July 2012, would go a long way in helping to resurrect their culture. They led us to this trail and demonstrated how they used to depend on the forest for food, medicine, shelter and spiritual nourishment.

Local knowledge of conservation threats and how to address them

Poaching and fire setting ranked highest among the human activities identified by Batwa to be most disturbing for the forests. Other threats identified include pit-sawing, malicious killing of wild animals, bee-keeping inside the Park and over-harvesting of Park resources. The respondents also identified a number of ways to address the problem of illegal activities in Bwindi and Mgahinga. These include administering stern punishments for arrested poachers, sensitizing local people about conservation values, Park officials responding quickly when wild animals invade people's gardens as well as employing Batwa as Park staff to boost management efforts. Furthermore, they mentioned their biggest concerns if the forests were to disappear; these include prolonged unfavourable seasons for agriculture, loss of tangible benefits from the Park and the loss of their cultural symbols i.e. caves, hot springs and totemic plants and animals (Table 8).

Table 8. Batwa views of forest conservation and threats to forests

Questions and answers	Responses*
<i>According to you which human activities are most disturbing for the forest?</i>	
- Setting forest fires	5
- Poaching	5
- Cutting forest trees for timber	4
- Illegal collection of firewood from the forest	3
- Malicious killing of wild animals especially gorillas	2
- Illegal cutting of forest poles for bean stakes	2
- Cutting forest trees for beer boats	2
- Bee-keeping inside the Park	2
- Over-harvesting grass from the Park	2
- Mining gold inside the Park	1
- Using pesticides near the Park	1
- Illegal harvesting of wild honey	1

- Cutting forest trees for charcoal burning	1
- Over-harvesting bamboo from the forest	1
- Over-harvesting weaving materials	1
- Harvesting indigenous trees while pretending to be removing exotic trees	1
- Civil wars	1
<i>What would you advise UWA to do to address such disturbances?</i>	
- Give sterner punishments for arrested poachers	4
-Employ us to work as Park officials	4
-Sensitize people about conservation values	2
-Respond quickly when wild animals invade people's gardens	2
-Stop mistreating us	1
-Engage us in Park activities like meetings	1
-Involve us in sensitisation campaigns against illegal resource access	1
- Ban bee-keeping in the forest because it encourages illegal activities	1
- Motivate Park neighbours better using revenues from tourism	1
- Increase patrols to curb poaching	1
- Involve local people in Park activities	1
<i>If the forest was to disappear, what would be your biggest concern or worry?</i>	
-Harsh weather would persist	5
- Our caves, hot springs, animals and plants would be no more	5
- We would lose money which we now get from tourism	5
- We would lose jobs and the fame we now have because of the forest	2
- We would no longer get bamboo, firewood and weaving materials	2
- We would have no other opportunity of seeing wild animals	2
- We would lose potential jobs from UWA	1
- We would lose school fees for our children	1
- Insecurity would become frequent	1

**Number of answers from the five communities which took part in the survey*

4. Challenges faced during the survey

The challenges listed below should be borne in mind in relation to the information presented and the conclusions drawn from it.

1. Interviewing people about a life that is no longer actively lived: That few Batwa are old enough to have a good memory of the forest was challenging. This problem has mainly come about due to the low life expectancy of Batwa, estimated to be 28 years (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11601101>). Young Batwa have little or no forest experience. We thus asked all members in each settlement to select members whom they thought understood Batwa cultural values and could narrate them adequately to the researchers.
2. Batwa concerns and aspirations: Just like any marginalized group, many Batwa lack basic needs including land, housing and food. As such, our interviews and discussions

often digressed from the Batwa culture as respondents desperately sought to tell us about the hardships they face in their communities.

3. Complaints about participating in many projects without benefiting much: During casual conversations, Batwa repeatedly complained to the researchers about participating in many projects with little or no help to improve the difficult conditions in which they live. They wondered whether the Batwa Cultural Values Project will be their ultimate saviour.
4. Cultural sites located in the forest interior: We were unable to visit cultural sites that lie deep in the forest. The Batwa were willing to lead us there and camp with us in the forest, but we were constrained by time and budget restrictions.
5. Batwa language: Although Rutwa has been diluted by other languages (especially Rukiga and Rufumbira), some Batwa words were difficult for the non-Batwa researchers to understand. This was especially true for the names of plants, animals and places. We managed to overcome the language barrier by seeking clarification from Edson Nzabarinda (the Mutwa ITFC field assistant) and by collecting plant specimens.

5. Conclusion

The Batwa people lived in Bwindi and Mgahinga forests for centuries. Their culture is deeply rooted in forests where they were evicted when Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks were created. Batwa still regard Bwindi and Mgahinga forests as their cultural heritage which defines them as a people. They value the forests for physical, emotional and spiritual satisfaction. More specifically, the forests are important in Batwa culture as places where their cultural resources including traditional food, medicine, weaving materials, caves, hot springs and worshipping sites are located. As cultural heritage sites, Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks should be managed with a deeper understanding and respect for what they mean to Batwa people whose ancestral homes are in the forests. To achieve this, Batwa should be involved in Park management including employing them as Park staff and engaging them in the development of protection protocols and management plans.

6. Specific recommendations

Integrating Batwa cultural values in the conservation and management of Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks will require specific attention and management actions and these include:

- Under the Multiple Use Programme, Park management should consider allowing and regulating access to cultural sites and other forest resources which are important to Batwa's culture. To this end, there is need to have separate MUP Memoranda of Understanding for the Batwa different from the Bakiga and Bafumbira since Batwa feel they have been marginalised by the existing Multiple Use Programme (Bitariho, 2013). The Memoranda of Understanding should aim to empower Batwa to apply their former customary rules in managing their cultural sites and the harvesting of forest resources such as wild honey and wild yam collections.
- The existing 3-Dimensional maps for Batwa cultural and natural landscape in Bwindi and Mgahinga National Parks which guided the inspection of cultural sites during this survey should be used in the negotiations to access cultural sites and resources which matter to the Batwa. The negotiations should also address the longstanding issues including land tenure, land rights and Batwa's involvement in illegal activities. The Batwa should be made to appreciate that entering the forest to visit their cultural sites and for authorised harvesting of forest resources is not an excuse for setting snares and that penalties will apply to those who do so.
- The findings of this survey, such as the narrative about how Bwindi and Mgahinga forests were given to Batwa by the father of Katwa, Kahutu and Katutsi, should be used in improving the interpretive themes when with tourists. In addition, the General Management Plan for BMCA should be enriched with information contained in this report including the narratives about Mubwindi swamp, Itaama, caves, hot springs and Batwa ancestry, institutions, taboos and totems.
- The visitor information centre at the Park headquarters of MGNP and the one planned for BINP should have displays on Batwa's history and traditional ecological knowledge and skills including hunting, making fire, caves, hot springs and medicinal plants. In addition, the visitor information centres should be made accessible to Batwa for their cultural practices including language revitalisation programs and cultural exhibitions which would help them to maintain their responsibilities to their ancestors and future generations. Furthermore, there is need to develop cultural educational materials in form of videos, books and audio records for the benefit of the young and future generations.
- These findings can also be used for developing tourism products based on Batwa culture. This would not only help in diversifying the existing tourism package for Bwindi

and Mgahinga National Parks but would also benefit the Batwa by improving their incomes when they guide tourists to their cultural sites, sell handicrafts and dance for tourists. However, there is need to guard against abuse of Batwa culture especially as a result of undue pressure from the demanding tourism industry. This can be achieved by empowering Batwa to participate effectively in formulating the Parks' tourism plan so as to manage and maintain their values in a way they deem culturally appropriate.

- There is need to share the findings of this survey with all relevant stakeholders, develop them and use them in more democratic decision making processes where Batwa cultural needs are addressed to support conservation. For instance, Batwa folklore can benefit from professional cultural performers such as the Ndere Troupe and Kigezi Actors to produce conservation messages and drama shows at local, national and international forums.
- There is need for flexible and transparent park management, allowing the Batwa to be equal partners in managing the process, degree, and pace of the integration. In addition, the intellectual and cultural property rights, as well as the land and other resource rights of the Batwa in their former ancestral territories, should be recognized and accommodated in conservation decisions. Furthermore, Park activities that are carried out in the cultural sites of the Batwa more so in the sacred areas should recognize and make themselves compatible with the Batwa people's integral concepts of culture.
- Finally, there is need for a long term monitoring and evaluation protocol including exchange visits, workshops, conferences and research for assessing the positive and negative impacts of the activities implemented under the cultural values program. It is also important to keep in mind the limitations of the cultural values approach especially regarding the fact that traditional knowledge techniques have limits as do the modern or scientific ones. As argued by Kleymeyer (1994), no single approach will be a panacea for all the conservation challenges. Therefore, in integrating cultural and scientific approaches of conservation, each should be allowed to find its appropriate role and then facilitated to thrive in it.

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Annex 1. Details of sites visited

Batwa cultural sites visited from Rushaga

Nshongi Hot Spring

It is located inside Bwindi near the parish of Nyamasindi in Kirundo sub-county. Walking from the parish to the hot spring took us about 12 minutes. If approximated to a rectangle, the hot spring measures about 10m x 3m. Elephants frequent the hot spring as evidenced by the many footmarks seen nearby. According to the Batwa members of the team who had been here before, the hot spring was deteriorating and getting filled with mud, probably because of elephants. Other animals which range in this area include the black-fronted duiker, yellow-backed duiker, bush pigs, gorillas and monkeys. Batwa members of the team told us that the water was much warmer when they last used the hot spring (which was roughly in the late 1980s or even in 1991 just before Bwindi became a national park). The dominant vegetation around the hot spring is forest characterised by *Hallea rubrostipulata*, *Myrianthus holstii*, *Tabernaemontana holstii*, *Alangium chinense*, *Erythrina abyssinica*, and *Neoboutonia macrocalyx*.

The Batwa members were very happy to visit the hot spring. While there, they used the hot water to massage their legs and arms. They likened the feeling to that of the olden days when their parents used to bring them here before the forest was made a national park. However, they were concerned with the deteriorating state of the hot spring saying that it felt less hot compared to what they remember from the past.



Plate 3. Rushaga Batwa pointing out important plants along a forest trail



Plate 4. Charles Afirika, also from Rushaga, washing his head and legs in the Nshongi hot spring

Hagurofa Cave

Hagurofa cave is located inside Bwindi on the slopes of a gently rising hill near the boundary between the Park and Byabitungu parish. The forest edge is marked by a fast-flowing river which has two waterfalls that can be seen from the vantage position of the cave raised like a storeyed house. To get to the cave, we walked for about three hours from the Batwa settlement in Rushaga. We had to climb many steep hills along the way and a very steep cliff near Hagurofa cave, which is the easier option compared to climbing the imposing hill that conceals Hagurofa from intruders on the village side. Vegetation is dominated by *Alangium chinense*, *Maesa lanceolata*, *Vernonia urcilifera*, *Dombeya torrida* and *Polyscias fulva*. Animals which were known to frequent this place include yellow-backed duikers, black-fronted duikers, bush pigs, monkeys and moles.

Today they have no access to this cave. They would want permission to access the cave for their traditional practices including dancing, singing and worshipping and for transmitting Batwa cultural values to their children who have been exposed to Bakiga culture. They would also want to bring tourists who have already shown interest in seeing how Batwa lived in the forest to Hagurofa cave because of its amazing structure and location. Two other caves known to the respondents were said to be located inside the forest at Kibisha and Mumezimeru.

Rwabatahi Cave

It is located outside the Park. Batwa told us that the present day community land was also part of the forest. Rwabatahi cave was important to Batwa as a home. Today they would want to use this cave for singing, dancing and instilling Batwa cultural values into their children.

Hakengwe Cave

It is located near the Batwa settlement of Rushaga and lies outside the Park. It took us about five minutes to reach Hakengwe cave from the Batwa settlement. The respondents expressed their desire to be at the forefront of guiding tourists who have already started visiting Hakengwe cave guided by non-Batwa.

Batwa cultural sites visited from Kitahurira

Iguugu Hot Springs

These are two hot springs located inside the forest on opposite banks of the Iguugu River near the meeting point of rivers Iguugu and Ihihizo. To reach the hot springs, we walked along the Butandara-Kibingo road in Mpungu sub-county for about 1 hour and spent another hour walking inside the forest. The vegetation near the hot springs was dominated by *Neoboutonia macrocalyx*, *Acanthus* sp., *Asplenium* sp., *Impatiens* sp., *Ficus sur* and *Urera* sp. Animals which were said to frequent the area are monkeys, black-fronted duikers, yellow-backed duikers, baboons and brush-tailed porcupines.

The respondents told us that one of the hot springs was used exclusively by men and the other by women. The women-only hot spring is well sheltered from intruders and has protruding stones that look like breasts. According to the cultural norms of Batwa, speaking many words at the hot springs is forbidden. The users of the hot spring are required to put money, beads or safety pins on the side of the hot spring before bathing to obtain blessings from ancestors for healing of sicknesses.

Kasinga Cave

The cave is located in the southern direction from Kitahurira Batwa settlement and lies inside the forest with many trees of *Carapa procera*, *Acacia brevispica*, *Rawsonia lucida*, *Chrysophyllum* sp. and *Cassipourea* sp. in its neighbourhood. The animals ranging nearby include gorillas, monkeys, chimpanzees, black-fronted duikers, yellow-backed duikers, giant rats and bushbucks.

Walking to the cave involved crossing the winding river Ihihizo three times and climbing many steep hills. Going and coming from the site took about three hours. The respondents said that Kasinga cave is remembered as the place where they lived, made fire, skinned many animals after hunting and roasted meat. It derives its name from *okusingata* i.e. making fire using dry sticks.



Plate 5. Batwa respondents from Kitahurira resting inside Kasinga cave



Plate 6. Margaret Ntegyeize, one of the respondents from Kitahurira, bathing at the female-only Iguugu hot spring

Ntamazo Cave

It is located in the southern direction of Kitahurira Batwa settlement and lies inside the forest near the boundary. It took us less than an hour (about 45 minutes) walking from Kitahurira settlement to reach this cave. Most of the time was spent walking in the community area. While inside the forest, we crossed River Ihihizo only once and walked along a gentle ridge before reaching Ntamazo cave. The vegetation near the cave comprised *Myrianthus holstii*, *Asplenium* sp., *Malantochloa* sp. and *Cyphomandra* sp. Animal signs for monkeys, baboons, and bush pigs were also seen.

A small stream with water runs near the cave. Apparently, the water had plenty of mudfish. The Batwa demonstrated to us how they used to catch mudfish easily using their hands. They blocked the running water using rocks from the cave and created a pool of stagnant water. The pool was searched for mudfish while whistling. When the fish appeared, they dipped their hands into the stagnant water and grabbed the fish which they showed to us and told us how they used to roast and enjoy mudfish at Ntamazo cave. Ntamazo cave was also used by Batwa as their home especially after hunting. It was also an important hideout for Batwa when they quarrelled with their landlords who were Bakiga. They would hide at this cave and return to the village later when the anger of their landlords had subsided.

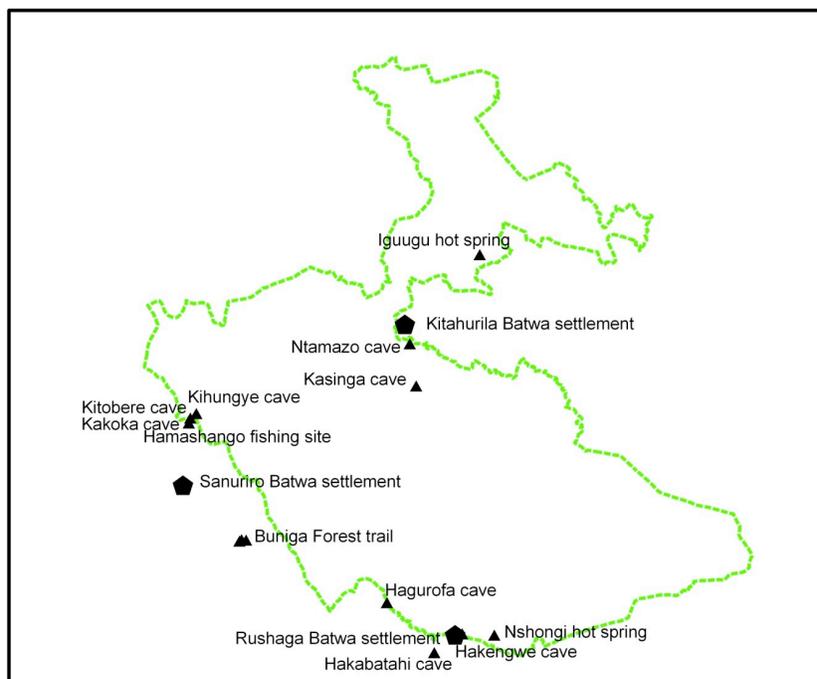


Figure 3. Batwa cultural sites visited in and around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park led by members from Rushaga, Kitahurira and Sanuriro settlements

Batwa cultural sites visited from Sanuriro

Kitobere Cave

It is located inside the forest some 6 km walking distance from the Batwa settlement of Sanuriro. Walking from Sanuriro to Kitobere cave involved going downhill for most of the time. The return journey involved climbing steep hills and was considerably tiresome. In addition to being a home for Batwa, the respondents pointed out that Kitobere cave is remembered for the abundant honey they enjoyed as children growing up in the forest. Long ago, leopards and lions are said to have been in this area. Presently, L'hoesti Monkeys and black-fronted duikers frequent the area.

Kihungye Cave

Also located inside Bwindi and near Kitobere cave (about 700 m uphill), Kihungye cave is more spacious and better covered. It has many smaller side 'caves' that were used by Batwa for storage and cooking purposes. There were many trees of *Strombosia scheffleri*, *Syzygium guinense* and *Drypetes gerrardii* in the nearby forest. During our interviews, L'hoesti monkeys were seen licking rocks inside one of the side caves. Additionally, many duiker footmarks and droppings were seen near Kihungye cave.

Hamashango fishing site

It is located inside Bwindi at the meeting point of rivers Ivi, Kihungye and Kashasha. Batwa value this site as a source of fish including mudfish, silverfish and tilapia. Fish was valued by Batwa because it gave them a good break from eating meat all the time.

Kakoka Cave

Kakoka is a relatively small cave compared to Kitobere and Kihungye caves. It is located near Hamashango fishing site. It was used by Batwa for smoking fish caught in rivers Ivi, Kihungye and Kashasha. The vegetation nearby was dominated by *Raffia falinifera*, *Carapa procera* and *Macaranga kilimandscharica*. Common animals which use the nearby forest include bush pigs, duikers and monkeys.



Plate 7. Gladys Nyamihanda, Domitiri Nyirahanzi and Priscilla Nyakwezi (the three Batwa women from Sanuriro who participated in the survey) resting along the Buniga forest trail



Plate 8. Benon Bikyezi (one of the Batwa men from Sanuriro who participated in the survey) demonstrating how Batwa used to set traps when they still lived in the forest

Batwa cultural sites visited from Rukeri

Karubomboza Caves

Located inside Mgahinga NP, the caves which are of varying sizes were important for gatherings, mainly to share meat after hunting. The caves also offered shelter to Batwa running away from the neighbouring non-Batwa after raiding gardens in the village for food. The biggest cave at Karubomboza is semi-circular in shape with a diameter of about 8 m and the vertical height inside measures about 3m. Animals which used to frequent the area include hyenas, lions, gorillas, serval cats and baboons. Presently, animals which use the area as evidenced by their fresh signs include duikers, porcupines, bush bucks, bats and swallows. Common plants seen include *Rhumex* sp., *Crassocephalum* sp., *Vernonia* sp. and *Agauria salcifolia*.

Nyabyiyoni Cave

The cave is located along the Nyabyiyoni trail inside Mgahinga. Nyabyiyoni cave is a horizontal underground tunnel running several meters below the ground. It is spacious inside but has a narrow entrance which conceals it from intruders. It was used for shelter especially after a heavy down pour. Batwa also used the cave to store food after raiding the gardens of Bahutu in the village. Batwa believe that the cave had mythical powers which would confuse the non-Batwa pursuing them after raiding community gardens. The area is mainly frequented by gorillas.

Muntebe ya Rusunzu

This area on the elevated slopes of Muhavura lies inside the Park. It was a settlement area for Batwa and non-Batwa just before Mgahinga became a national park. The significance of this area to Batwa is that it reminds them of the days when their hunter-gatherer way of life sadly came to an end. The area is now vigorously regenerating with *Hypericum* sp. dominating the vegetation.

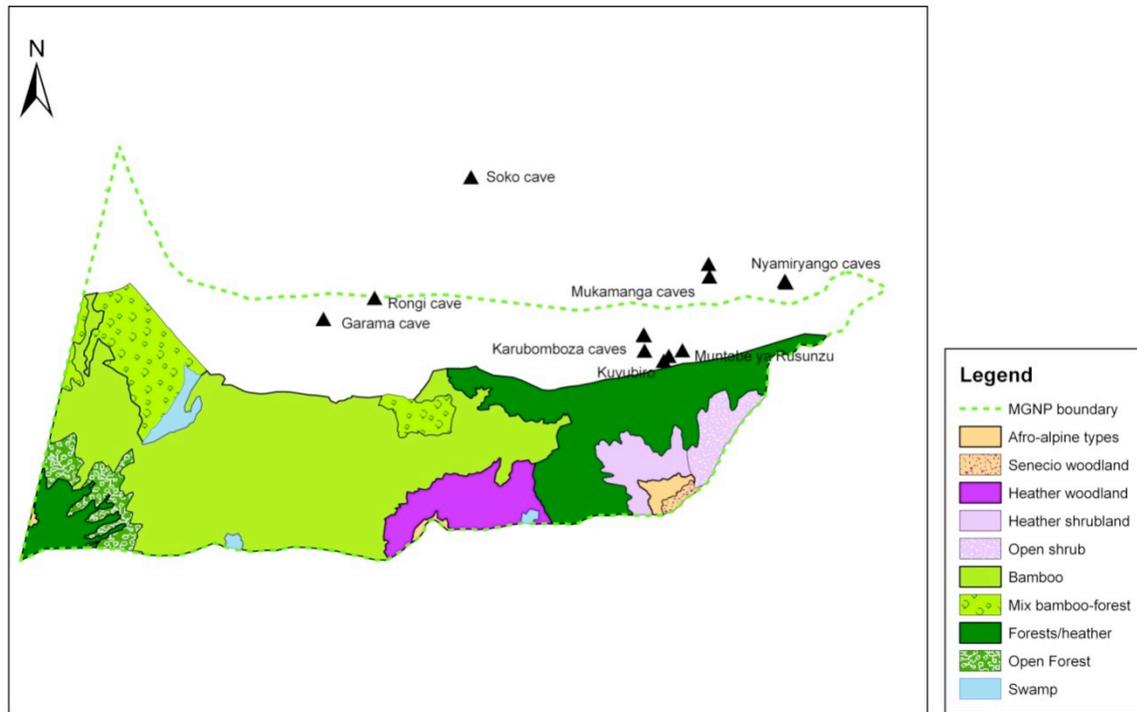


Figure 4. Batwa cultural sites visited in and around Mgahinga Gorilla National Park led by Batwa members from the communities of Rukeri and Musasa

Kuvubiro worshipping site

Kuvubiro is located near Muntebe ya Rusunzu. Batwa used go to Kuvubiro to ask their gods for rain, especially when there was a prolonged dry spell. Presently, Kuvubiro is covered with soil resulting from a recent landslide. A trickle of water flows downhill. We were told that much more water used to drain out of Kuvubiro and feed the seasonal streams which serve communities outside the Park. Many trees of *Dombeya torrida* surround the worshipping site.



Plate 9. Joseph Ntibiringirwa, the Community Conservation Ranger of Mgahinga, unwinding a snare discovered by Batwa respondents of Rukeri on the way to Kuvubiro worshipping site



Plate 10. Batwa respondents of Rukeri and the researchers at the boundary of Mgahinga on their way back from visiting cultural sites

Mukamanga Caves

There are about 8 caves in Mukamanga village located outside Mgahinga NP near the Batwa community of Rukeri. The caves are on private land owned by non-Batwa although Batwa feel that they should be the true owners of the land. The current land owners are utilizing the caves for bee-keeping. Many years ago, one of the Batwa clan leaders named *Kizera* lived in these caves. The current Batwa have only used Mukamanga caves for refuge during the Rwanda genocide.

Nyamiryango Twin Caves

Located at the foot of Mt. Muhabura near the boundary of Mgahinga NP on community land, the Nyamiryango caves can be reached by walking for about an hour from the Rukeri Batwa settlement along a gentle community path. The caves have wide tunnels which run several meters below the ground with big pillars at the entrance. The inside is characterised by intimidating darkness and repeated echoes when you make a sound suggesting that they are spacious.

The respondents told us that Nyamiryango caves are famous because they were used by the king of Batwa *Buuki* and his wife *Nyinamanyegamo* on their way from Rwanda to Garama cave. The caves were also used for storing food for Batwa on their journey to and from Rwanda. Presently, Batwa do not have access to the caves since the land is owned by non-Batwa. They would want the land to be bought for them and the caves developed for tourism and their cultural programmes. They reasoned that it would be good for instilling cultural values into their children and generating income to help them get out of the biting poverty they are facing today.

Muremure Cave

It is located to the extreme east of Mgahinga NP near the Uganda-Rwanda border. It is a dangerous spot that runs many meters into the ground. Muremure is a forbidden area for Batwa because it is believed to be the place where Batwa and non-Batwa have been killed and dumped by unknown people. The respondents told us that many Batwa have mysteriously disappeared since they started living in the community and they believe the missing Batwa were dumped in Muremure.

Batwa cultural sites visited from Musasa

Rongi Cave

It is located near the Park boundary and lies inside Mgahinga NP. The cave has many skulls of dogs and of Batwa who suffered from mysterious diseases like leprosy as well as the girls who carried unwanted pregnancies. Animals which range near the cave include buffaloes, elephants, bush bucks and duikers. Presently, Batwa told us that they do not like going to Rongi cave because it is associated with spirits of the dead. This was also shown by the respondents who appeared moody and kept spitting on the ground when we came near the cave. The respondents suggested that UWA should allow the vegetation near Rongi to grow and cover the cave for the souls of the dead Batwa to rest in peace. They also requested UWA to buy for Batwa land in the community so that they can bury the dead more decently.

Garama Cave

Garama cave is located inside Mgahinga national Park and has been developed for tourism. Batwa like to associate with this cave because it was the seat of their king. It was also their meeting place for ceremonies and jubilation.

Sooko Cave

Sooko is located outside Mgahinga national Park in the neighbouring village of Musasa in Rukongi parish. It is very spacious inside and can be compared to Garama cave in many respects. Batwa have used it as their home especially considering that they have not owned land since their eviction from the forest. They told us that even today when they live as squatters on the land of non-Batwa, they seek shelter in this cave on the days their hosts chase them without prior warning. The cave is also an important source of water for domestic use. Batwa said they would like to see the cave developed for their cultural performances especially for singing, dancing and drama which are highly demanded by tourists.



Plate 11. Batwa respondents from Musasa dancing and rejoicing inside Sooko cave



Plate 12. Steven Barahirwa, one of the respondents from Musasa, holding buffalo horns inside the forest of Mgahinga



Plate 13. Beatrice Kimpaye, one of the respondents from Musasa, picking ripe berries of *Rubus* sp. inside the forest of Mgahinga

Taboo sites and associated myths

In addition to the cultural sites visited from Rushaga, Kitahurira and Sanuriro, Batwa members of the field team talked about beliefs and practices that are associated with sacred sites in the forests which could not be visited due to the taboos surrounding them. Some taboo sites in Bwindi and how to respect them are described below.

The mystery men at Murugyezi swamp

“We have a story about one old man – a Mutwa – who went out hunting but ended up joining a party of mysterious people at Murugyezi swamp. Before leaving his home, the old man first asked for blessings from the ancestors. As he wandered about in the forest hunting, he came to a place where strange people were having a party. From a distance he saw them dancing and singing around a fire place. Their songs sounded similar to the ones used by his fellow Batwa. He then decided to join them thinking that his fellow Batwa had forgotten to invite him and his

family to a Batwa festival. When he drew near, he realised that he could not identify anybody at the party and decided to run away from the mystery men. However, their leader invited him to join them. He reluctantly accepted the invitation and joined in the singing, dancing and eating meat and honey. He enjoyed the party for a while and then requested to go back to his home. As he left, he was warned never to go back to the swamp and never to tell anybody about the mysterious party he had attended. He promised to heed their warning and quickly went home.

The old man kept his promise for a long time until he got drunk and unknowingly told the story to his friends. He made matters worse when he stubbornly said that he was narrating the story to test the powers of the mystery men he had met at Murugyezi swamp. His friends, including his wives, warned him to stop joking with the gods of Bwindi but he would not relent. The gods were annoyed with him for breaking the promise and punished him as he succumbed to a mysterious death. Since then, Batwa fear going to Murugyezi swamp which they believe harbours spirits that killed one of their grandfathers.”

The Mutwa girl and an old lady at Mubwindi swamp

“Once upon a time, a Mutwa girl from Rushaga went to visit her relatives in Kayonza. When she reached Mubwindi, she was afraid of crossing the boggy swamp on her own. She looked around for help but could not see anybody. Suddenly, she saw an old lady sitting on the shore of the swamp. She approached the old lady and asked for help to cross the swamp. The old lady said to her, “my daughter, here is some food. First eat and I will help you to cross this swamp”. When she finished eating, the old lady helped her to cross the swamp. While seeing the girl off to visit her relatives in Kayonza, the old lady asked her not to tell anyone that she had seen the old lady at Mubwindi swamp.

But when the girl reached Kayonza, she broke her promise with the old lady and told her relatives how the old lady had helped her to cross the swamp. On her return journey from Kayonza to Rushaga, the old lady asked the girl if she had faithfully kept the promise which she had earlier made. The girl said, “Yes, I kept the promise”. The old lady said, “Well then my daughter, you can pass safely and go to your home in Rushaga”. The girl started walking through the swamp but when she reached the middle of the swamp, she sank and is believed to have been taken by the old lady’s spirits. Up to today, the girl has never returned to Rushaga. The swamp came to be feared because of the spirits which took away the girl.”

The forbidden area of Itaama

“We do not mention the name of a forbidden place called *Itaama*. We use the alternative name of *Kasirani* especially when inside the forest to avoid the curses associated with mentioning *Itaama*. This place came to be associated with spirits because our forefathers who lived in the forest used to hear mysterious people singing, dancing, walking and herding sheep near this area at the night. In the morning, the mysterious people or their signs would not be seen. If one saw them, he or she would die. In addition, if one mentioned the name *Itaama*, heavy rain would suddenly fall and cause river volumes to swell and we would fail to cross the overflowing rivers and get trapped in that intimidating place of spirits”

Ways to respect taboo sites

To respect Batwa sacred sites in the forest, one should:

- Keep conversations about forest spirits and sacred sites out of the forest
- Never mention names of sacred places including ‘Itaama’ and ‘Bwindi-bwa-nyinamukari’ especially when inside the forest
- Never point with a finger or by moving lips in the direction of sacred sites
- Never mention Batwa clan names especially for members of the Barengye clan when crossing Mubwindi swamp

Annex 2. Guided interview instrument and questions

Preamble

The CVC project seeks to integrate the cultural values of Batwa into national park management in Uganda. The project is working with Batwa communities and the management of Bwindi Impenetrable, Mgahinga Gorilla and Semliki National Parks. The project will promote recognition and integration of the institutions and practices that connect the Batwa to the forests, strengthen engagement of the Batwa communities in park management and help Batwa conserve their unique cultural values and ethnic identity.

You have been identified as one of the respondents to give information regarding Batwa and how they relate to the forest.

About the Respondent

Name of village.....

Parish

Sub-county

District

Data entered by

Data checked by

Socio-demographic status of the respondent

Gender: 1= female [], 2 = male []

What is your age?

Education level: 1 = never been to school [] 2 = [] primary 3 = [] secondary

Marital status: 1 = single [] 2 = married [] 3 = divorced/ separated [] 4 = widowed []

Number of children if any []

Religious affiliation:

Forest experience

Where were you born? 1 = inside the forest [] 2 = outside the forest []

If inside the forest; a) How much of your childhood was spent in the forest? 1 = Much [] 2 = not much [] 3 = not at all []

If you have children, how many of your children were born in; 1 = inside the forest [] 2 = outside the forest []

If you were born outside the forest, what experience about the forest do you have and would be willing to share with us?

If you were evicted from the forest, how did you derive your livelihood? 1 = by cultivating for non-Batwa [] 2 = occasionally returned to the forest for hunting and gathering [] 3= begged from non-Batwa [] 4 = by cultivating, sneaking into the forest and begging []

Do you know any special traditional or cultural practices or beliefs that are typical of Batwa people that you can share with me? [Probe]

How did you learn about such beliefs/practices? 1= hearing stories from parents/other Batwa [] 2 = teaching by example from parents/other Batwa elders [] 3 = I do not know much about Batwa culture []

Cultural beliefs, spiritual, ritual and Batwa linkage to cultural sites in the forest

Are there places/ sites or items (trees, food, rivers or hills etc.) in the forest that are special and are culturally significant to the Batwa people that you know? [Probe]

Tell me about practices and beliefs that are associated with these sites in the forest. When are these practices undertaken, by who etc. [probe]

Which of the practices at the sites had connection with worshipping God?

How did they thank their God for good fortune?

What did Batwa traditionally do with bodies of dead people?

How do Batwa stay in touch with their deceased ancestors?

Which of your traditional/cultural practices are you still practicing?

Are there practices that you have stopped but would want to resume if given an opportunity? [Probe to identify which ones are connected to the forests and why they had stopped]

Traditional Institutional set up

- a) Tell me how the Batwa people used to be or are organised; [probe – clan heads? Elders? kings]
- b) Please tell me about any taboos, restrictions, beliefs, or traditional norms used, especially those concerning management of plants, animals and other forest products [Probe for how these worked and were enforced]

Batwa Culture and Conservation of the Forests

- a) Since the Batwa were evicted from the forest, the forest is a) better managed; b) worse off than when the Batwa were there; c) the same. Probe to find reasons for the given answer
- b) If UWA invited you to manage the forest as a partner, what knowledge or skills would you contribute, based on your traditional or cultural beliefs and practices?
- c) Describe to me how you want to see this forest managed with full respect for the Batwa

Dangers/threats of human activities to forest

- a) According to you which human activities are most disturbing for the forest?
- b) What would advise UWA to do to address such disturbances.....

c) If the forest was to disappear what would be your biggest concern or worry?

Questions for site characterisation

1. Name of location
2. Photograph number
3. Description of location
 - a) Local term for the cultural site
 - b) Dominant vegetation
 - c) What did Batwa use this cultural site for?
 - d) Where can one find many similar sites around?
 - e) How is this site reached? (e.g. walking from Byumba, difficulty of terrain and the time taken)
 - f) What taboos or traditional rules apply here? Why?.....
 - g) Which animals would you easily encounter here?
 - h) How useful is this site for other cultural values?

**IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS OR WOULD
LIKE MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT FFI'S CULTURAL
VALUES AND
CONSERVATION
PROGRAMME, PLEASE
CONTACT**

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