



## PDF CULTURE

### La'bi variant Uri

In the Kakwa language, the exact word for culture is **la'bi** or **uri** (*masculine*). Hence, **la'bi lo Kakwa** translates as culture of the Kakwa or Kakwa culture.

### Kakwa Child Naming Ceremonies

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

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

### Kakwa Mourning Customs and Rites

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

may also have their own way of shrieking which is referred to as **gbililiza** (*feminine*).

### **Kakwa Burial Rites**

When death occurs, the dead person becomes known as **opu** (*masculine*) and the burial process is known as **nuga** (*feminine*) or more fully, **nuka na n̄utu** (*feminine*) (that is, "burying of a person"), and this normally occurs in the evenings for ordinary people. However, for people known as **Bura** or **Mata-ki** 'Chiefs', the burial ritual is complex and it occurs at dawn. Before that, the dawn time, the Chief's body is nursed in a ritual known as **muyu na mata** (*feminine*). The burial procedure is always the work of the men who dig **gulo** (*feminine, plural gulo-mo*) (the grave) to a depth of at least two meter and breadth of a meter and a half, in a chosen location. A special hole (some kind of a mini-grave), the size of the actual body, is then dug 180 degrees inside the deepest end of the grave where the body will be placed.

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

### **Traditional Kakwa Concept of Religion**

The Kakwa people have no temples for worship nor any written doctrines such as the *Bible* or the *Qur'an* (Koran), or the *Geeta* (the Hindu Holy Book), nor full-time preachers, nor organized religion. However, they do have shrines or oracles that are collectively called **uriya** (*masculine*) and these symbolize the spirits of the dead. These **uriya** are usually symbolized either by distinctive stones known as **robojo** (*masculine*) or by fig trees known as **laru** (*masculine*) where periodic sacrifices are made. The ritual of appeasing the dead through the stones or the fig tree is known as **i-ila na robojo** (*feminine*) or **i-ila na laru** (*feminine*) respectively.

The overall concept of religion, as expressed by the **uriya** (*masculine*), is that the dead or ancestors can communicate with the living. Accordingly, if these ancestors "notice" anything going astray among their living kin, they have the obligation to react by bringing signs that warn of eminent disaster and even punish them and that something should be done to avoid the event of further punishment. The spirits of the ancestors also act like angels that follow and guide a living person at all times and places. Therefore, such a spirit can and should rescue one from a potential or a real problem.

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

### **Temezi**

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

### **Authority and Respect in Kakwa Society**

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

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

### **Kakwa Rain Predictors**

In Ko'buko District, the Kakwa clans of **Bura**, **Ranju**, **Okube** etc, are renown for being rain-predictors. These people also fall in the category of '**buni** or mentalist, shaman, traditional healer, traditional doctor, witchdoctor, magician, psychic, exorcist, **yakanye** (*feminine*) spirit, medicine-men etc. As such they are both revered and respected in Kakwa society.

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

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

### **Kakwa Settlement Patterns**

The name for a house in Kakwa is **kadi** (*feminine*, plural **kadi-zi**). The name for home is '**ba** (*masculine*, plural, '**beni**) or **gbiliŋe** (*feminine*).

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

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

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

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

Other structures typically found in a Kakwa homestead are:

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

A Kakwa homestead is also always located near a large evergreen tree that serves as **parine** (*feminine*) under which family members can enjoy **tilimo** (*feminine*) or shade. In the evenings, family members spend their time around the communal open fire which is known as **pudo** (*feminine*) where the elders tell stories to the younger group and where the day's activities are discussed and future plans and specific assignments are made. Another very important consideration in locating human dwellings is proximity to a clean, permanent and fairly close well in addition to consideration of the distance to a communal grinding rock surface or to the major farms.

### **From a Kakwa Family to Kakwa Society**

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

### **Kakwa Art**

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

### **Kakwa Music, Song, and Dance**

The general name for dancing in Kakwa is **gboja** (or **gboza**) (*feminine, plural gboja-zi*) or **yali** (*masculine*). Singing is termed as **welo** (*feminine*), and the songs themselves are known as **wiri-to** or **wiri-ta** (*singular, masculine wiri*).

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

- bringing prosperity (in harvesting and hunting);
- celebrating a wedding;
- celebrating a triumphant hunting or defensive/offensive expedition;

- averting a calamity (famine, war, disease epidemic, locusts);
- honouring **Mulete** or God;
- passing the time, especially when engaging in such routine activities as digging, building, weeding, grinding grains etc;
- honouring an ancestor
- honouring a first harvest
- honouring a dead Mata lo ka (Rain-chief)
- recreation.

### Kakwa Dancing Drums

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

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

### Kakwa Men's Costumes

- **lo'bu** (*feminine, plural lo'bu-wa*) is the name given to animal skin which traditionally is worn only by the men;
- **bolo** (*feminine, plural buluzi* or **bolo-zika**) is the quiver which is used both for dancing and for storing arrows. A typical Kakwa dancing bolo is made out of the hairy skin of the he-goat. This hairiness is known **as punda**;
- **keye** (*masculine*) is a kind of jazz which consists of a dried gourd which is then filled with seeds or stones and shaken to enhance the rhythm of the drums and songs;
- **diyeri** (*feminine*) is a costume made out of an animal tail;
- **agbarala** (*masculine*) and **ngbirila** (*masculine*) are similar, and they are metallic dancing costumes worn at the ankles.

### Kakwa Women's Costumes

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

- **nyoori** (*feminine*) collectively, refers to traditional beads worn by the women.
- **ḡaliya** (*masculine*) the 'modern' beads worn by the women
- **riye** (*feminine*) various kinds of metallic rings worn around the arms and legs.
- **meze** (*feminine*) variant **meje**, is the solution of iron oxide smeared to protect the body against the elements and to maintain beauty.

### Kakwa Ornaments

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

- **ḡaliya** (*masculine, singular ḡalita*) or are beads worn around the waists, ankles, wrists and necks.

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

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

### Kakwa Traditional Games and Sports

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

### Concussion Rattle

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

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

Uganda-Sudan border, in **Yei County** and in **Amadi County**.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Golo** (*masculine*) is the name for soccer or football as it is popularly known locally. Various wild and exotic

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

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

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

'**Bito na pane** (*feminine*) is an interesting sport like cricket or baseball but the details of how it is played are sketchy.

The term '**dana** (*feminine*) means "to hide" or hiding, and so, hide and seek activity is a sport of mainly the children. It is done in the bushes, grasses, houses and in the fields of crops by all sexes. Hiding and seeking activity is particularly common among the cattle-keeping boys and girls looking for mushrooms, firewood, and wild vegetables.

The excellent Kakwa woodlands and forests are dotted with certain very lowly-branched, cool and leafy trees or shrubs whose immediate surrounding is usually bare and clean. Boys and girls gather the stems of some creeping plants and tie these above a certain height from the ground onto tree branches to enable them to swing. This pendulum-like technique of using a string or a rope for swinging is known as **kiyo-kiyo** (*masculine*).

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

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

Learning ethnohistory, learning songs, fables, and learning relationships (through marriage or by decent), are very strongly emphasized and encouraged as a part of the growing and learning process.

# The Kakwa Language

The name of the Kakwa language is also called **Kakwa** — named after its people. A language in Kakwa is called **lokuliye** (*masculine*) or **kutu** (*feminine*). Hence, **Lokuliye lo Kakwa** means the same thing as **Kutu na kakwa**—Kakwa language.

## Kakwa's Etymological Roots

The etymological roots of the Kakwa words usually consist of two or three consonants. The roots themselves may be monosyllabic (in that most words in their simplest form consist of one syllable i.e. a consonant combination and a vowel as in **le** (*feminine*) 'milk' since there are no *codas* in Kakwa. When you know a word, you know both its **pronunciation** and its **meaning**—and, of course, also its **writing** or **spelling**. If you hear someone utter the sounds represented by the string of letters and don't know that it means **sukuri** (*feminine*) 'a chicken' in Kakwa, you don't know that word. Synonyms like **si'de** (*feminine*) and **gbi'dikiye** (*feminine*) are two words because their identical meanings 'a chair' or 'a seat' are represented by two different strings of sounds. On the other hand, two words with different sounds may have same string of letters (homograph) as in the personal pronoun **na** 'me' or 'I', and in the intimate genitive (possessive) particle **na** 'of' (*feminine, singular*).

Each word is a **sound-meaning unit**. Each word listed in your *mental* dictionary must include other information as well, such as whether it is a **noun**, a **pronoun**, a **verb**, an **adjective**, an **adverb**, a **preposition**, a **conjunction**, etc. This phenomenon is called **grammatical category** or **syntactic class** or **parts of speech**.

Kakwa language is not superior to any other language in a linguistic sense. Every grammar is equally complex and logical and capable of producing an infinite set of sentences to express any thought. If something can be expressed in one language or dialect, it can be equally expressed in any other language or dialect. It might involve **different** means and **different** words, but it can be expressed. No grammar, therefore, no language is either *superior* or *inferior* to any other!

## The Kakwa Writing System

Kakwa has no indigenous writing system of its own but bases its writing system on the Roman alphabet. All Kakwa forms cited in this book appear in standard orthography. The language is **Niloto-Hamitic** indicating that it has elements of the *Nilotic* and *Hamitic* languages. But what exactly is meant by *Nilotic*? Westermann and others have advanced criteria by which certain Sudanic languages are to be regarded as *Nilotic*, and this Nilotic element in the Kakwa language is to be found almost solely in *word stems*, and very little in sentence construction. In **Kakwa Grammar**, the term *Nilotic* relates to the languages of **Dinka**, **Shiluk**, **Nuer**, **Acholi**, **Alur** etc, and all languages and dialects closely related to any of these languages, and its presence in Kakwa is evidenced by the surprising number of *monosyllabic* word stems, both *nouns* and *verbs*, common to Kakwa and to the neighbouring **Nilotic** languages.

## The Kakwa Orthography

**Orthography** is the set of conventions for representing language in written form. Kakwa employs the English alphabetical orthography in which symbols are used to represent individual vowel segments rather than syllables or words. A **syllable** is a single letter or a group of letters that form one sound.

Until the advent of the missionaries and the colonialists, the Kakwa had no way for putting their thoughts into writing in the same understanding we have today. These foreigners introduced the Roman alphabet, with some few characters borrowed from Greek or German, and the result was fairly satisfactory for producing the first **Bari Bible** and Christian songs in **Bari**. Later, the version of the Bari Bible translated into Kakwa was called **Likilimba** or **Bayibulu ku Kutu na Kakwa** i.e. 'Bible in the Kakwa Language.'

The first **Bari** alphabet was revised and slightly changed at the **Rejaff Language Conference of 1928**. The resultant code, through open to criticism, seems to fulfill the necessary conditions for practical orthography for **Bari speakers**, including the Kakwa people. Elements of this **Rejaff Language Conference** alphabet are used in **Kakwa Grammar** with additions in order to enable foreigners to get a better understanding of Kakwa pronunciation.

### **Authentic Kakwa Language Academy (AKLA)**

In 1998, the author organized a group called *Authentic Kakwa Language Academy (AKLA)* consisting of enthusiastic youth and elders in **Ko'buko District** which aimed to:

- come up with 'true' Kakwa which permits a non-Kakwa speaker not only to pronounce Kakwa words correctly, but it also permits a Kakwa speaker to learn to read and write as soon as he or she has learned the letters. How he or she should spell a word is seldom in doubt, because the writing is done largely as he or she speaks.
- be like France's 40 member *Académie Française*, which guards the integrity of the French language and acts as a Kakwa linguistic mandate;
- document Kakwa traditional rites and rituals;
- energize and stimulate interest in the Kakwa language and traditional culture.

Consequently, **AKLA** adopted the following principles:

- Each consonant represents only one sound, and there is a symbol for each contrasting sound in Kakwa;
- With a few exceptions, all the letters are used for writing as in English;
- Kakwa words are spelt as they are pronounced in slow, careful speech;
- The dropping of the **dr** in many words, and the subsequent replacement of this simply by **d** as in **doba** ('to bewitch') instead of **droba**;
- The dropping of the **tr** in all words, and the subsequent replacement of this simply by **t** as in **tagu** ('to fold') instead of **tragu**;
- The use of **ɲmn** as in **ɲmnagu** ('to clutch/grasp') instead of **mgbagu**;
- The consistent use of **ɲ** instead of **ng** as in **ɲutu** ('person'), not **ngutu** or **'ngutu**; **Nyaɲiliya** and not **Nyangiliya** or **Nya'ngilia**;
- Allowance for substituting the use of **z** for **j** (for example, in the word **za'be** instead of **ja'be** (the name for the wet season));

## Standard Kakwa Alphabet

The standard Kakwa alphabet contains **25** letters and **11** letter-combinations for a total of **36** as follows:

**a, b, 'b, d, 'd, e, g, gb, h, i, j, k, kp, l, m, mb, ɲ, ɲmn, n, nd, ndr, ng, ngb, nj, nz, ny, o, p, r, s, t, u, w, y, 'y, z.**

with capitals:

**A, B, 'B, D, 'D, E, G, GB, H, I, J, K, KP, L, M, MB, ɲ, ɲMN, N, ND, NDR, NG, NGB, NJ, NZ, NY, O, P, R, S, T, U, W, Y, 'Y, Z.**

in italics:

***A, B, 'B, D, 'D, E, G, GB, H, I, J, K, KP, L, M, MB, ɲ, ɲMN, N, ND, NDR, NG, NGB, NJ, NZ, NY, O, P, R, S, T, U, W, Y, 'Y, Z.***

## The Sound System in Kakwa

The most basic division among sounds is into two classes: **vowels** and **consonants**. Another class of sounds known as **glides**, shares properties of both vowels and consonants. Vowels, consonants and glides can be distinguished on the basis of differences in articulation, or in their acoustic properties.

The general **Sound System in Kakwa** can be represented as follows:

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Explanation	p kp b	t d		k g	
Glottal	'b	'b	'y		
Affricate			j		
Fricative	s z				h
Nasal	m mb ɲnm ngb	n nd ndr	ny nj nz	ɲ ng	
Liquid	l r				
Glide	w		y		

## Vowel System in Kakwa

Languages of the world are often classified according to the size and pattern of their vowel systems. The most common vowel system has five phonemes—two high vowels **i**, and **u**; two mid-level vowels **e** and **o**; and one low-level vowel **a**. The front vowels **i** and **e** are unrounded and the back vowels **o** and **u** are rounded; the low vowel **a**, is not rounded.

The most common vowel system is usually represented as follows:

i                      u  
e                      o  
                         a

	Front of mouth	Back of mouth
High	i	u
Mid	e	o (with lips rounded)
Low	a	

## The Laryngealized or Glottalized Sounds

A glottal stop, also known as laryngealization, is the sound (or to be more exact, the lack of sound) that occurs when the vocal cords are held tightly together. The principal feature about **'b**, **'d** and **'y** is the sudden closing of the vocal cords just before the sound is articulated. Where a glottal consonant occurs in the middle of a word, this <catch> in the breath clips off the preceding vowel in a marked manner. The most common *glottalized* sounds used in standard Kakwa orthography are **'b**, **'d**, **'y** and they accompany the normal articulations of **b**, **d**, **y** respectively. These sounds cannot be represented by the Roman alphabet.

Examples:

- **'bida** 'to fish'
- **'dadu** 'to insult/belittle'
- **yo'yu** 'to ponder/think'

## Multilingualism and Contexts of Use

Multilingualism is extremely rampant among members of the Kakwa ethnic group as a whole. Languages of the neighbouring ethnic groups—especially the Sudanic groups of **Lugbara**, **Logo**, **Avukaya**, **Moru**, **Keliko**, **Ma'di**, as well as those of **English**, **Arabic** and **French** are also spoken—mainly by those who have attended formal education or by those who have travelled outside the region. However, Kakwa is used in virtually all spheres of activity by all members of the group: in open air markets, in funerals, in dances, in communal feasts, in communal work activities, in politics, in prayers etc. **Bangala**, **Lingala**, **Kiswahili**, and local **Arabic** (or **Arabi Junub**) and **Kinubi** are also widely spoken and understood.

## Viability of the Kakwa Language

Many children born in **Ko'buko District**, **Kakwa County** or in the **Yei County** learn Kakwa as a first language, and receive all of their—especially **3rd Grade** education, in **English**, **French** or **Arabic** depending on the country of residence of their parents. Therefore, we can safely assert that Kakwa is not in imminent danger of extinction.