

Shifting Identity: A Historical Evolution of the Nubi Indigenous Ethnic Community in Uganda¹

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Abstract

The article examines how the Nubi who arrived in Uganda in the 1890s as a British colonial regiment of hired Sudanese soldiers, evolved into an indigenous community of Uganda by 1995. The article attempts to answer a key question: What caused the ever-changing Nubi identity during different historical situations in Uganda? Using oral narratives and information from different archival documents, the article argues that by the time the Nubi were recognized as one of Uganda's indigenous communities, various factors under different historical contexts, accounted for their ever-changing identity.

Keywords: Identity, Nubi, community, shifting, ethnicity, British colonialism

Introduction

The Nubi have had a trail of names at different times in their history, reflecting their changing identity in Uganda since their arrival in the 1890s. For instance, at one time, they were referred to as “slave soldiers”, “Sudanese mercenaries”, “British colonial soldiers” “Anyanya mercenaries”, and finally as the Nubi.” The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, categorizes the Nubi as one of Uganda's indigenous ethnic

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communities and are mentioned among the fifty-six officially recognized ethnic groups in Uganda.

The 2014 Uganda census puts the Nubi population at a total of 28,772 out of the 34,142,417 Ugandans. (Uganda Bureau of Statistics Census Report 2014). Many Nubi are live in Uganda's central region, they have communities in Bombo, Entebbe, and Kampala; in the western region they are in Toro and Mbarara; and they are also in Arua in the West Nile region among many other areas. Unlike most of other ethnic groups that are attached to specific territories which are considered ancestral homelands.

The Nubi have thus had no territorial claim to any specific part in Uganda, ever since their arrival in the early 1890s. The identity of the Nubi in Uganda has been changing across the board on a historical time continuum and situations until they were formally recognised among Uganda's indigenous ethnic communities in 1995.

The term indigenous in the context of this particular article is used to refer to members of ethnic societies that were settled in Uganda by the first day of February 1926 according to the Uganda constitution. The term "ethnic" as used in this article, relates to the Nubi as a community of people whose identity is based on a combination of shared historical experience, values, cultural traits, beliefs and a way of life (Byarugaba 1997).

The study is based on constructivism theory of ethnicity, which argues that ethnicity is not embedded within individuals, but always constructed on the basis of the intended objective of the agent behind its invention. Mamdani (2018) argues that through the hegemonic agency of those competing for positions of advantage in the modern state, societies end up being constructed based on their ethnic inclinations. In this case, ethnicity is used as a tool for a particular group or individuals in pursuit for either political positions or economic interests, such as jobs.

Within the African context, Leroy (1989) argues that ethnicity is a result of uneven development within Africa's colonial territories where some Africans were able to benefit from colonial education and employment opportunities that colonial capitalism presented. According to Hobsbawm and Terence (2012), the "petty bourgeoisie" together with European missionaries and colonial officials or "cultural brokers" were the key actors behind the invention of traditions and mobilizing Africans along ethnic lines in order to continue maximizing their opportunities. The evolution of Uganda's Nubi indigenous community, is well explained as a 'construction' of a social ethnic category majorly due to the Turko-Egyptian imperialism in Sudan during the nineteenth century.

The Nubi as Slave Soldiers

The “Egyptian Nubians” trace their origin to Upper Egypt in the Nuba Mountains (Hilliard 1998). This category of Egyptian-Nubians is associated with the great Egyptian civilisation, which later championed the world’s social, political and economic trends, not only of nations and states, but ethnicities as well. This area was a Christian kingdom, but was later influenced by the advent of Islam. Whereas Egyptian-Nubians are ethnically different from the Ugandan Nubi, both groups have a common historical connection in the Turko-Egyptian imperialism, which was instituted through trade and Islam. Through the Anglo - Egyptian expeditions in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Egyptians annexed Sudan extending further south into Uganda. Egypt’s imperial expansionism further south into Sudan led to what Mahmood Mamdani (2012) terms as Arabization (the spread of Arabic culture and identity).

With the need to expand further south for majorly economic reasons, Egypt sought to expand its army to protect its trade interests especially in gold, slaves, and ivory in the south. This resulted into raids on some ethnic communities, from which many people especially from southern Sudan were captured by the Turko-Egyptian army and eventually were trained as slave soldiers. According to Owens (1985), the Khedive of Egypt Muhammad Ali, in the 1830s

had interests in extending Egyptian influence southwards to Gondokoro, in order to access tradable items he desired. Owen’s argument is in line with a Nubi elder interviewed in 2018, who narrated:

Khedive Muhammad sent his Nubian commanders from Egypt and caused havoc, they torched people’s huts and settlements taking Africans as slaves, the male youths were mainly recruited as slave soldiers purposely to capture more slaves in order to carry ivory and search for gold. They were forced to become Nubians because they could not trace their ethnic origin.²

The above assertion is augmented by Amone (2013) who argues that the Sudanese Nubi were more known as slave military soldiers who gave birth to the rise of the Ugandan Nubi since the Egyptian influence reached northern Uganda in 1840s. The recruitment exercise saw Africans from different ethnic communities in Sudan put in settlements known as Zariba. People who settled in Zaribas lost connections with their former ethnic communities and instead adopted the Islamic culture due to their association with Arab traders.

Trade and military activities by the Turko-Egyptian Arabs and the Egyptian-Nubians in 1830s in southern Sudan contributed significantly to the rise of the slave soldiers who evolved into southern Sudan-Nubians. Emin Pasha, the governor of the Egyptian province

² Personal interview conducted on 29 August 2018.

of Equatorial, later used the southern Sudan-Nubians in 1870s as Sudanese-Egyptian mercenaries with the aim of expanding Egyptian imperial influence further south into present-day Uganda and stopping slave trade.

From Sudanese Mercenaries to British Colonial Soldiers

The Nubi of Uganda are a conglomeration of many ethnic communities who are descendants of the armed forces of Emin Pasha that lost all connections with their former ethnic groups from which they originally sprang (Formal Announcement on the Nubi Matter 1939).³ According to Labidi (2017), after the Egyptian government abandoned its imperial advance into Sudan in 1884, Emin Pasha was obliged to give up several of his military stations to face off the Mahdist advance and with his troops they had to retire to Rajaf in southern Sudan and later Wadalei. Labidi (2017), further asserts that in 1885 Emin Pasha and his men were surrounded by hostile African forces; Mahdist to the north and Bunyoro Kingdom to the south. Emin Pasha together with some of his Sudanese soldiers stayed at Wadelai located in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda until the Welsh-American adventurer, Henry Morton Stanley rescued him.

Emin Pasha left behind two groups of Nubian troops, one under the command of Fadl al Mulah stationed at Dufle, northern Uganda, and another group commanded by Selim Bay in Kavali, near the southwestern corner of Lake Albert (Labidi, 2017). In a report presented to both houses of the British parliament (1893), Lugard notes that after negotiating and reaching an agreement with the Nubians through their leader Salim Bay, on 5 October 1893, he left Kavali with about half of the Sudanese, their families (slaves, women and children). They moved by canoes on the waters of Lake Albert until reached Bunyoro. These included 932 men with arms, 1,153 men without arms, 3,065 women, 1,484 girls, 1,358 boys, 14 people from different ethnic groups, total 8006.⁴

One of the major tasks of the British colonial authority in Uganda in the early 1890s was to restore peace due to insecurity partly caused by warring religious factions notably the Catholics, Protestants, and the Muslims in 1880s. Mutibwa (2018) asserts that the circumstances Lugard found in Uganda as the agent of the Imperial British East African Company obliged him to intervene in the affairs of the distracted religious factions, which were bringing utter ruin by their civil wars. Lugard's main task was to enforce and restore

³ A formal announcement on the Nubi matter on 2 February 1939 in a letter to the Honourable, the Chief Secretary from the District Officer, Entebbe c.1923. V, Uganda National Records Centre and Archives.

⁴ Report from Captain Lugard presented to both houses of parliament by command of her Majesty, in Africa No.2 (1893). Further Papers relating to Uganda (c-6848). Africana, Makerere University Main Library.

peace by maintaining law and order, especially in Buganda.

In that context, Lugard decided to seek for the assistance of Nubian soldiers or ‘Sudanese mercenaries’ in order to fulfil the company’s colonial objective of maintaining peace in Uganda. In his report to the Earl of Rosebery (1893), Gerald Portal notes that even after Lugard left Uganda for England in 1892, further recruitment of the Nubi continued at the hands of Sir Henry Edward Colville the acting British commissioner in 1893 for the Bunyoro expedition.⁵

The recruitment of more “Sudanese mercenaries” as they were identified was mainly to back up the numbers of British soldiers who were by then fewer than was required for imperial expansion. The military might of the British with their Sudanese mercenaries saw Bunyoro become part of the protectorate government. This was a major military achievement on the side of the British since King Kabalega of Bunyoro had rejected and opposed the British colonial authority, accusing the British of plotting to take away Bunyoro’s independence (Mutibwa, 2018).

The military assault on Bunyoro by the British culminated in Kabalega fleeing the wrath of the British and seeking refuge in Acholi under the protection of Chief Awich Abok of Payira (Amone 2014). The

involvement of Nubi soldiers in the colonial project led by Lugard confirms that the Nubi soldiers came as a result of a military vacuum that existed within the British colonial government.

According to Amone (2014), Lugard considered the Sudanese soldiers to be the best material of soldiery. The reason behind the consideration of the Nubi as “British mercenaries” was because the British had no plans of recognising the Nubi as an ethnic community after extending colonial authority over Uganda and other parts of East Africa. The British believed that after accomplishing their military role, the Nubi would return to their cradleland in Sudan. In the eyes of the British, the Nubi were men of good skills and conduct, but neither the British nor native ethnic communities regarded them as one of Uganda’s indigenous communities.

Some Nubi, descendants of the former British soldiers, however, dismisses the view that their predecessors were British mercenaries. A Nubi elder asserts: “Nubians came voluntarily; they did not come as mercenaries but as soldiers of the British army.”⁶ The elder narrative in denying that the Nubi were not British colonial mercenaries is to deny the fact that it was the British, through Lugard, who needed them for the colonial project. What the elder seems not to appreciate was the fact that the Nubi

⁵ An extract from Sir G. Portal’s report presented to the Most Honorable the Earl of Rosebery. (Received 27 June 1893)

⁶ Personal interview conducted on 1 October 2018.

were not British soldiers but rather men hired and trained purposely to help them achieve a British project, which had nothing to do with the Nubi.

According to the notes on the Nubi (1947), the view that Nubi were not mercenaries, but rather colonial soldiers is contrary to what the British thought of them. To the British, the Nubi were perceived as their old mercenaries whom they used in the fight against other ethnic groups that opposed their rule.⁷ According to the online Oxford Dictionary, a mercenary is defined as a professional soldier hired to serve a foreign army. The Nubi were first of all former fighters in the Egyptian army known for their profession as soldiers of the Khedive. Given that they were paid by the Egyptian government to fight on its behalf, then, it is right to regard them as “mercenaries.”

Secondly, the Nubi agreed to join the British on specific terms, including payment of their wages among other conditions. Lastly, Nubi were to serve as part of a British foreign army just as the case was when they served in the Egyptian army which again justifies the label: mercenary. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1897 sections of Nubi mutinied against the British because some terms agreed upon with the British army had not been met. The argument presented above shows how the British colonial

authorities were influential in identifying the Nubi as both their old British colonial mercenaries as well as their British colonial soldiers serving as part of the King African Rifles (KAR).

Changing Nubi Identity in Post-Independence Settings

In post-independence Uganda, ethnic identity became central to constructing Uganda’s future local, regional, and national level political dispensation (Stonehouse 2013). The army, for instance, was one of the new government’s institutions where loyalty was determined by a shared ethnic allegiance with the leader in the highest political office. Following Uganda’s independence, some Nubi continued serving as soldiers in the Uganda Army. However, using ethnicity, and drawing on the British tradition of divide-and-rule, the post-independence government, especially the army and the civil service were filled with members inclined to the ethnicity of the sitting head of government.

Olum (2011) observes that the Langi ethnic group of northern Uganda was inclined to fellow Langi Milton Obote, who was then the Executive Prime Minister-designate of Uganda. Although the army was composed of majority northerners (especially the Langi and the Acholi), the Nubi were considered to be more experienced in comparison due to past colonial military history.

⁷ Notes on the Nubis: Letter from the District Officer to the Chief Secretary; Entebbe 1947, c.22/25, Uganda National Records Centre and Archives.

In this respect, several Nubi recount the difficulties they endured from the Acholi in military barracks after independence; they openly discriminated against the Nubi and called them “foreigners” who had come to take up their positions in the army.

The threat of violence against the Nubi went beyond soldiers to include even their wives and children. On their way to pick weekly rations and fetching water from the designated water points in the military barracks, Nubi women and their children were always insulted and warned of repatriation back to their country of origin, they were not considered as citizens (Lumumba 2015). The Nubi’s only recourse was silence. Obote’s post-independence government remained silent as the members of other ethnic groups especially the Lani and the Acholi continued to subject those from other ethnic groups specifically the Nubi to different forms of injustices even when they exercised the highest form of patience amidst open and injustice confrontations. In this respect, Lumumba (2015:1) adds that “Obote’s mistake was to go after an ethnic group that was in the army, well-armed and militarily trained.” This forced some of the Nubi in the army to start attacking the colleagues from other ethnic group, hence causing chaos and insecurity in the army.

The situation in the military was not so much different from the rest of the Nubi who were not in

military uniforms. By 1962, the Nubi were not recognized as indigenous Ugandans and hence their citizenship was a subject of contestation since they were perceived to be foreigners from Sudan. Some Nubi could not guarantee their own survival since they were a targeted of those who regarded them as “foreigners.” Therefore, they opted to join the army even when they knew of the mistreatment and abuse that their relatives in the army faced. Those that could not join the military ended up working as security guards, drivers, shop attendants, while the elderly spent most of their time in mosques either reciting the Quran or teaching youngsters Islam.

Mistaken Identity and the Anyanya Mercenaries

To become a Nubi, required one to become a Muslim and adopting Nubi traditional customs and language. Amin’s regime (1971-1979) saw the “Nubianization” process at its peak. Many Lugbara, Madi, Kakwa and the Alur from West Nile became Nubi especially through embracing Islam and speaking the Nubi language. Nelson Kasfir (1976:220) observes: “An unusually large proportion of them were born into other ethnic units. They became Nubians by adopting Islam, learning to speak Nubi (an Africanized form of Arabic), and adopting certain Nubi customs.” Amin himself mobilized and encouraged members of other ethnic communities to become Nubi.

Amin's effort to consolidate the Nubi ethnic group, made him recruit from a Sudanese militant group, the Anyanya, from southern Sudan, into Uganda's army in the early 1970s. A former Office Assistant at Uganda's High Commissions in Sudan and Ethiopia during the Amin's regime, noted:

Anyanya was a southern Sudanese separatist movement formed in 1960s from a conglomeration of southern Sudan ethnic communities for example the Dinka, Zande, Bari and many others. The main objective the movement was to put up a strong military resistance against the Sudanese government which they accused of extending Islamic influence to the south. Amin later relied on the Anyanya mercenaries and other Nubi within Uganda to form a core of the Uganda Army with the intention to eliminate those that were against his regime. By the time Idi Amin was ousted from power in 1979, by the Uganda Nation Liberation Front, many people categorized the Nubi as Anyanya.⁸

Classifying the Uganda Nubi as Anyanya was an error because by the time Amin recruited the Anyanya into the Uganda Army in 1971, the Nubi had long before settled into Uganda. This was an injustice committed against the Nubi who then literally traced their ancestral birth rights and subsequent origin in Uganda, the Nubi claimed the right to be recognised as an indigenous ethnic community in the submission they

made to the Uganda Constitutional Commission in 1989.

With ever changing identity, the Nubi, One of the greatest achievements of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) after capturing power in 1986, was the attempt to solve the identity question for different communities in Uganda through the making and promulgation of a new Uganda constitution in 1995. The Nubi are among the people who were, for the first time, recognized as Uganda's indigenous community.

The constitution-making process started when the interim government of the National Resistance Movement established a Constitutional Commission that was mandated to carry out wide consultations, both within and outside Uganda (Kanyihamba 2010). In March 1989, the Constitutional Commission was duly constituted and mandated with the task of collecting proposals from members of the general public for the enactment of a new national constitution (Kanyeihamba 2010). The Constitutional Commission would then draft a report and make recommendation on the basis of findings from the consultations and then present a draft constitution to the Constituent Assembly for debate, which would in turn develop a new constitution for promulgation.

The commission had twenty-one members chaired by Justice Benjamin Odoki and John Mary Waliggo was its secretary. The members were: Dan Mudoola, Wenkere Kitembo, Medi

⁸ Personal interview conducted on 4 October 2018.

Kaggwa, Azizi Kasujja, Jonathan Kateera, Miria Matembe, Serwanga Lwanga, Jotham Tumwesigye, Kale Kaihura, Justin Okot, Andrew Atim, Kiddu Makubuya, Mary Maitum, Constantine Rwaheru, Sam Kirya Gole, George Ufoyuru, Edward Ssempebwa, and Joseph Obwangor. Kanyeihamba (2010) asserts that the commission carried out its mandate by travelling the length and breadth of the country canvassing people's views on a wide range of constitutional subjects administered under the "new constitution." Membership of the commission represented different political interests, spiritual affiliation and special interest groups, such as women, the armed forces, academicians, and other categories.

In April 1989, at a meeting attended by members of the public at Bombo, the Nubi both old and young, were among the people who attended the consultative meeting to express their views on identity and citizenship. Both the Nubi elders and the youth demanded to be recognized as one of Uganda's indigenous ethnic communities. One of the participants, who attended that meeting, now an elder, interviewed in Bombo in 2018, recalls that all people from his community were united under one identity "Nubi", in the Nubi language he said:

Ina Je Nubi kan ina ma-aju
kede azoli yoyote wonusu fogo
wanasa Je ina fi Sudanisi, ina

kulu ja rudu kena kun ma fikira
wayi Je ina Nubi te Uganda.⁹

Translation

We as Nubi never wished anyone among us to claim that we were Sudanese. We all maintained that we are Nubi of Uganda.

The assertion above suggests that some Nubi had identified themselves as Sudanese from Sudan and if they were to continue identifying themselves as such then, it would prove rather difficult to be recognised as one of Uganda's indigenous communities. They hence, agreed among themselves that they are Ugandan Nubi and not Nubi from Sudan. As political entrepreneurs in Africa worked towards manipulating, harmonizing and inventing people's history, some political actors in Uganda similarly were instrumental in pushing for the recognition of the Nubi as an indigenous ethnic community as a means to further their personal political ambitions. Some Nubi social actors, both young and old, who knew only Uganda as their ancestral home pushed for their recognition as indigenes in order to access government services, which were easily accessible to citizens.

The Nubi strategy may be compared to that of the Masai pastoralists of Tanzania who agitated for indigeneity in order to claim recognition and resources from the state (Peterson 2012), the Nubi too seemed to have understood the need to be recognized as Ugandan indigenes in order to

⁹ Personal interview conducted on 29 August 2018.

equitably compete for state resources like other indigenous communities. They demonstrated unity amongst themselves by exhibiting solidarity between those that considered themselves “elders” or the “Jidi” for elderly Nubi men and the “Abuba” for elderly Nubi women with the young Nubi generations.

In the attempt to foster unity among all Nubi, the Nubian Consultative Forum (NCF) was formed in 2001 with the aim of meeting and discussing the challenges affecting their people throughout Uganda and how they could try to mitigate them. On 18 January 2002 the association was registered as a limited company under the name Uganda Nubian Consultative Forum Limited (UNCFL) with branches in different parts of the country. People’s views, about indigenous ethnic communities in Uganda to be recognised as such from all over Uganda, were collected by the members of the Constitutional Commission.

Although some members of the general public, were in support of the recognition of the Nubi as one of Uganda’s indigenous ethnic communities, some were against the idea, arguing that Nubi were Sudanese African Muslims who did not constitute a Ugandan ethnic community. The reason they advanced was that the Nubi came as British colonial mercenaries who were supposed to return to their home country, Sudan, after fulfilling their colonial mission or if not, they

had to accept to be integrated and take up other ethnic identities. A key respondent recalls an incident when one lady (not a Nubi), while meeting members of the Constitutional Commission at Bombo Secondary School, observed:

Abo abeyitta mbu Banubi si gwanga nga bwolaba amawanga nga Abaganda, Abatoro oba Abasoga. Kimanyikidwa nti bba Sudani abakoleranga Abangereza aba matwale. Naye olwokubula awokulagga nga Abangereza bagenze basalawo besenze na mawanga gakasangwawo¹⁰

Translation

Those who call themselves the Nubi are not an ethnic group just like you see Baganda, Batoro or Basoga. It is known that they are Sudanese who worked for the British colonialists and settled among other indigenous communities after the British finally left because they had nowhere to go.

The tough facial look and the tone of the high-pitched voice of the Nubi elder while commenting on the woman’s view of the Nubi, demonstrated how the Nubi were not willing to lose their ethnic identity to other indigenous communities. During that meeting the Nubi realised that some section of the public contested the Nubi claim to indigeneity, which greatly impacted on their citizenship rights. However, the Nubi advent in 1890s as British colonial soldiers from Sudan, made their ethnic identity and citizenship

¹⁰ Personal interview conducted on 29 August 2018.

contestable. The sentiments against the consideration of Nubi as an indigenous ethnic community, as expressed in the meeting, however, did not stop the members of the Constitutional Commission from recommending that the Nubi be included in the new constitution as one of Uganda's indigenous ethnic minority.

The presentation of a draft constitution for debate by the Constituent Assembly (CA) led to the promulgation of Uganda's new constitution on 22 September 1995. In its third schedule, Article 10 (a) the Nubi finally were considered as one of the indigenous communities to have settled in Uganda as by the first day of February 1926. With the inclusion of Nubi in the constitution, they became Ugandan citizens by descent upon providing evidence that their parents were born in Uganda and that their grandparents had settled in Uganda by the first day of February 1926.

Chapter Three on citizenship, specifically Article 10 (a) states that

... every person born in Uganda, one of whose grandparents is or was a member of any of the indigenous communities existing and residing within the borders of Uganda as at the first day of February, 1926, as set out in the Third Schedule to this Constitution shall be a citizen of Uganda by birth.

The inclusion of Nubi in the Uganda constitution of 1995 as one of the indigenous communities with citizenship rights was good news to

many Nubi whose identity has been shifting for so many years without an official recognition.

According to a Nubi elder and a key participant, the recognition of the Nubi as one of Uganda's indigenous ethnic communities brought happiness and joy to many Nubi and attributed the achievement specifically to the NRM government. He asserts:

We as Nubi are proud of who we are and we are never ashamed of who we are any more. Thanks to the visionary government of 'Mzee' (Museveni), we can now hold Uganda Passports and National Identification Cards.¹¹

Whereas the process of recognition of the Nubi could not be attributed to a single person or a political system as the respondent alleges, some people believed that the recognition of the Nubi as an indigenous ethnic community of Uganda, was a political move of appeasement intended to garner support of the NRM government as one respondent summarized:

All Museveni wanted in the 1990s was popularity and support for his government from all corners of Uganda including those that for so long had been considered minorities like the Nubians.¹²

The 1995 constitution also empowered the Nubi to promote and preserve their cultural values and practices that enhance the dignity and

¹¹ Personal interview conducted on 4 October 2018.

¹² Personal interview conducted on 21 September 2019.

the well-being of the people under Section XXIV.

Since the Nubi were classified as one of the indigenous ethnic communities and their citizenship was no longer in question, the Nubi enjoy their traditional customs ranging from cultural music and dance ‘Dholuka’ to craftworks and Nubi foods. All these traditions gave a sense of cultural belonging to the Nubi as an ethnic minority that the people could not freely enjoy under all earlier governments under which the people had no citizenship.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the ever changing Nubi identity, since their advent into Uganda in the 1890s, manifests in how different political actors have defined the identity of the Nubi during different historical contexts. It is also related to how the interests of a few groups with political authority have attempted to use the Nubi to further their political ambitions. During the colonial period for instance, the Nubi were more identified as Sudanese mercenaries by the colonial masters – the British because they were hired to restore order in the East African British colonial empire. During the post-independence period, the

identity of the Nubians kept shifting from time to time. From 1962 to 1971, the Nubi were commonly identified as Sudanese foreigners or “Anyanya” even when their settlement in Uganda from 1890s was not in dispute. Some political actors that perceived the Nubi as Sudanese foreigners felt threatened by their presence due to their military lifestyle which could make it easy for the Nubi to challenge any political authority. With a continuing shift in identity, the Nubi felt victimized by the groups that considered them foreigners. The Nubi henceforth agitated for recognition as one of Uganda’s indigenous communities.

In 1995, the National Resistance Movement government (NRM) officially recognized the Nubi as a Ugandan indigenous community by placing them in the Uganda constitution. Whereas the recognition of the Nubi was premised on the fact that they had settled in Uganda prior to the colonially demarcated boundaries of what came to be called Uganda in 1926, the NRM government wanted to consolidate support from among ethnic minorities in Uganda with the aim of garnering overwhelming support in the then impending 1996 general elections.

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