

# LUGANDA

## LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Today, Uganda is made up of almost 40 different ethnic groups with the Baganda being the largest group at a little less than 20% of the total population. The Baganda refer to their customs as the *Kiganda* customs. Sometimes the generic term '*Ganda*' is used for all of the above.

Oral history has maintained that there are 52 clans in Buganda with lineage being passed down along patrilineal lines. The clan forms a large extended family and all members of a given clan regard each other as brothers and sisters regardless of how far removed from one another in terms of actual blood ties. The Baganda took great care to trace their ancestry through this clan structure. A formal introduction of a *muganda* includes one's own names, the names of one's father and paternal grandfather, as well as a description of the family's lineage within the clan that one belongs to. The clan has a hierarchical structure with the clan leader at the top (*owakasolya* or *Omukulu we kika*), followed by successive subdivisions called the *ssiga*, *mutuba*, *lunyiriri* and finally at the bottom the individual family unit (*enju*). Clans are not known by the names of the respective clan founders but by totems (a symbol to represent the clan) adopted by each clan. Each clan has a main totem (*omuziro*) and a secondary totem (*akabbiro*). The clans are usually known by the main totem. Also each clan has its own distinct drum beat tune called *Omugala* which is played during clan meetings. The royal clan (*Abalangira*) is a unique exception in that it has no totems whatsoever. During colonial rule the Buganda Kingdom thrived but after independence the kingdoms were abolished by the new government of Milton Obote only to be revived again by the current government of Yoweri Museveni.

The Buganda's songs are passed on from generation to generation. Some of the instruments used include *ndigindi* (lyre), *etongoli* (harp), and *ngoma* (Drum).

As for food, *Matooke* (Bananas) are the Buganda's staple food. Other popular dishes include *ugali* (corn flour cake), and *mkate mayai* (bread eggs).

## STUDYING LUGANDA IN THE U.S.

Below is a partial list of some universities in the United States that currently offer Luganda. For more information, please contact the National African Language Resource Center, or check the NALRC website located at <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu/>

Michigan State University



NATIONAL AFRICAN  
LANGUAGE RESOURCE  
CENTER (NALRC)

701 Eigenmann Hall, 1900 East 10th Street  
Bloomington, IN 47406 USA  
Telephone: (812) 856-4199, Fax: 8128564189  
Email: [nalrc@indiana.edu](mailto:nalrc@indiana.edu)  
Website: <http://www.nalrc.indiana.edu>



BUGANDA DANCERS

NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE  
RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC)



# WHY STUDY LUGANDA

Buganda is located in the south central region of the country known today as Uganda (Swahili for 'Land of the Ganda') which lies right in the heart of Africa, astride the equator and at the source of the great river Nile. The people of the Buganda are referred to as the *Baganda* and they speak the *Luganda* language. There are approximately 5 million Luganda speakers making it the most widely spoken language in Uganda after English and Kiswahili.

Uganda has always been known as the "Pearl of Africa." For tourists, Uganda is an alluringly beautiful land. In particular, Buganda hosts the Nation's capital, the UN office, and the Kabaka's Palace. Academic scholars of African History would find it fascinating to visit the Kabakas trail and the famous Kasubi tombs to discover the secret history of the kingdom and the Kabakas of Buganda. This trail offers a unique journey through Buganda's rich heritage shaped by the regions' Kings and their descendants. Language, anthropology, and sociology scholars; tourists, and Peace Corps volunteers can experience an authentic traditional culture with dance, music, craft-making, spiritual healing and story-telling in the Buganda Kingdom.

# WHO SPEAKS LUGANDA?

## PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The Buganda Kingdom is the largest of the four kingdoms in the Southern region of Uganda. Different oral myth versions of how the Kingdom of Buganda was established have it that the first ruling dynasty of kings was established sometime in the mid-14th century AD with Kato Kintu as the first acknowledged King. Kato Kintu is alleged to have come from the Nile region. Although stated to be the founder of the ruling dynasty, it now appears that his male line descendants died out or were driven from their patrimony during the second half of the fourteenth century. The true founder of the dynasty was King Kimera, claimed to be a grandson of Kabaka Kintu.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many of the themes to be found in the history of Buganda recur throughout the history of the world. This is because in these momentous years, Buganda was first confronted by the challenge of two world religions, Islam and Christianity, and by the advance of both Islamic and Western civilization. It was a fluid time in Buganda during which there appeared many kings, heroes, cruelty, mercy, loyalty, martyrs, missionary devotion, and the humiliation and triumphs of great rulers. These events ultimately cost Buganda its independence when it was colonized by the British. Buganda was incorporated into the larger colony of Uganda albeit with a large degree of autonomy. Buganda's subsequent history is dominated by the desire to retain some identity within this larger setting.

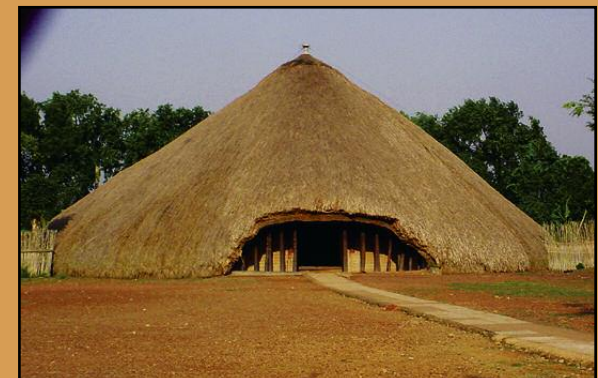
All in all, there have been a total of 36 kings from Kintu's time to the current king, Mutebi II.



Buganda students and their teachers entertain guests at a school function in Buganda.



Drummers at a Kabaka coronation.



Kasubi tomb.