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 patrilinical 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 (owakatolya or Omukula we kika), followed by successive subdivisions called the siga, 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 (akabiro). 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), ongoli (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

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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 storytelling in the Buganda Kingdom.