

CENTRAL AFRICAN BROADCASTING STATION

(Lusaka)

BANTU TRIBES.No 10GANDA

By

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The Baganda of Uganda Territory, have no written records and their early history is told in songs, legends and traditions. The legends tell us that the Baganda came from the area of Abyssinia and after crossing the Sudan settled in the Mount Elgon area. The two leaders who brought the tribes were Gishu and Kintu Ganda. Those under Gishu settled on the mountain slopes while those under Kintu Ganda settled on the lowlands. The people under Kintu Ganda soon worked out the land and began looking for new fertile land on which to live. Hearing about the rich country on the west of the Nile they decided to invade that country, which they did. Having conquered the people there, and having captured their king (Mpango), Kintu Ganda was proclaimed as King over all the area. Kintu Ganda installed his indunas as chiefs and proclaimed the whole countryside as the kingdom of the Baganda. Kintu Ganda's descendants still rule in Uganda to day.

The Baganda soon acquired a high standard of living and had a complicated system of rule and succession. Kintu's system of government was like a pyramid, with the chiefs at the base of the pyramid and the king at the top. The king was officially known as the "Kabaka" - a title still held to this day. The Kabaka's palace was surrounded by a fence of reeds, designed very intricately. The palace was very grandly equipped with much furniture and decoration. The

homes of the peasants were thatched with grass and furnished according to the owners riches. The main food of the Baganda was Matoke, an unripe plantain, steamed and kneaded into a hard substance. Other important foods were, and are, yams and sweet potatoes (Lumonde) as well as ground nuts, beans, peas and other vegetables. Beer, as among other tribes, constitutes an important food.

The Baganda were fond of games and their chief sport was wrestling, running and hunting. They also had many canoeing contests on the lakes, particularly Lake Victoria. The Baganda had a big navy of canoes and employed these in the old days when going out raiding neighbouring tribes. They carried on a great trade and in this found the great lake waterways of great advantage. Their chief trade was in bark cloth, salt and metal work. The Baganda, unlike many other tribes, had currency and made their coins themselves out of very small shells of snails (cowries) which are found in the lakes.

The young children were sent to the homes of chiefs to learn the Luganda customs. There were important chiefs among the Baganda who were recognised as being suitable chiefs to educate the young. From among the most intelligent pupils were selected a few who were later sent to the Kabaka for further training and who, if they showed promise might rise to be promoted to chieftainships.

By 1850, the Arab slave traders had reached Uganda and had introduced cotton clothes, guns and other things which they bartered for ivory and hides. The Arabs also introduced into the country their religion, the religion of Mahomet. Some people accepted the new religion while others continued worshipping their own priests (Balubale) and witch doctors (abalaguzi).

Polygamy was universal and a man married as many wives as his status in the tribe or his riches allowed. X Girls and men were married early, girls sometimes at fourteen and boys sometimes at sixteen or seventeen.

The clothes and beddings (until the arrival of the Arabs) were chiefly made out of bark tree. This was worn in various ways, according to the man or woman's position in the tribe and according to their age. It was possible to tell at a glance to which clan a man or woman belonged by their clothing, by their decorations and sometimes by the manner in which they were tattooed.

A new chapter in Uganda history opened with the reign of Mutesa I in about 1860. It was during his reign that the Europeans first appeared in Uganda. The explorers Speke and Grant arrived in Uganda to try and find the source of the river Nile. They followed the Nile from its source at Cairo until they reached Uganda. Here they were invited to stay at Mutesa's palace. These two explorers discovered the source of the river in 1862 and then returned, much impressed with the land of the Baganda and the hospitality of their king. Later the explorer Stanley arrived and he too was warmly welcomed by Mutesa who saw in the arrival of the Europeans a way of countering the evil influence of the Arabs. Stanley told Mutesa I much about the English people, explaining to him that the English were not in Uganda to exploit the country like the Arabs but to bring them christianity and better trade. The Kabaka, after meeting Stanley adopted the Christian religion as did many of his people. After Stanley's departure the Kabaka wrote to Queen Victoria and asked her to send out missionaries to come and teach his people to read and to teach them a better way of life. Queen Victoria agreed to his request and a volunteer party of missionaries arrived in Buganda in 1877. They were followed two years later by some catholic missionaries. The Arabs then began scheming to drive the missionaries out of Uganda. They tried to convince the Kabaka that the Europeans had come to deprive him of his kingdom and told him not to believe their teachings. The Kabaka would not listen to them but many of his subjects did and a great deal of warfare followed between those who were christians and those who were Mahomedans.

In 1881 Mutesa I sent a party of his people to go and see Queen Victoria, taking with them presents. The Queen received them warmly and sent presents in return. Shortly after this Mutesa I died and was succeeded by Basamula. (Known as Mwanga)

The Baganda now entered on a period of great unrest. One of the chief reasons for the unrest was the question of succession. Those who had been baptised christians began to disagree with the old Buganda system of succession and the Mahommedans likewise began disagreeing. Thus the country was split into three factions- those wishing to follow the old tribal customs - those who were Mahommedans and those who were christians. Mwanga was not a sufficiently strong man, nor had he enough power, to deal with this difficult situation. The Arabs began to convince him that his country was being ruined by Europeans and Mwanga, being weak, began to believe them, and began plotting against them. It was as a result of this that he committed what must be the worst crime in Buganda history. He killed the European Bishop, Bishop Harrington - or rather he had him killed through the Luba, the ruler of Busongora. In 1886 he began persecuting the christians. Later, filled with doubts, he began persecuting and killing all people, regardless of their religion or creed. A campaign then started among the Baganda to dethrone Mwanga and find another king. A group of men among the young princes of the royal house, dethroned Mwanga and he fled in 1888 to Sukuma. Further wars followed and various chiefs became rulers for a short while. Then, in 1889 Mwanga sent emissaries to say that he had repented of what he had done and wished to return to the paramountcy. This was agreed to and Mwanga returned. In 1890 a British Officer, Captain Lugard, arrived. With him came many missionaries and peace began to be established once again. Mwanga was succeeded by Chwa II, who was only a year old when he succeeded to the chieftainship. During his reign the country saw many changes and improvements. Uganda, which had for some time been administered by the British East

African Company came under the British Government. An agreement was entered into with the British Government and Uganda became a protectorate of Great Britain. The Kabaka ruled for over thirty years and did more than any one African in Uganda to help his country to go forward. When he died in 1939 he was greatly mourned, not only in Uganda, but in neighbouring countries as well. He was succeeded by Mutesa 2 - but there was a regency for some years while the new Kabaka studied first at Budo, then at Makerere and finally at Cambridge University.

During the war many of the Baganda served in the forces and fought in Europe, Africa and in the Far East. There has been some trouble in Uganda since the war, particularly industrial trouble and many troubles over wages. But generally speaking the country has made huge strides in the last ten years, the most noticeable feature being the raising of Makerere college to the status of a University college. There are signs, too, that the Baganda as a tribe are solidly behind the British Administration and that they are to day the most advanced of all tribes in Central Africa.

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