



# BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF BUGANDA

Events Leading to its Abolition:  
Restoration and the Current Status



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# Contents

1.0	Background	2
2.0	Brief History	3
3.0	Events leading to the Abolition of the Kingdom	8
4.0	Restoration of the Kingdom	12
5.0	Current Status of the Kingdom	14
6.0.	Conclusion	15





## 1.0 Background

This write up intends to give an insight into the generational history of the Kingdom of Buganda to its current state.



***Twekobe (Kabaka's residence)***

## 2.0 Brief History

### 2.1 The Kingdom's Establishment

The Kingdom of Buganda is said to have been established around the 13th century. The establishment of the Kingdom seems to coincide with the disintegration of the Chwezi dynasty. By the middle of the 17th Century, Buganda had evolved into an efficient bureaucratic system that was regarded as one of the best in the interlacustine region. Buganda's rise could be attributed to the internal and external factors like the weakening of the neighbouring communities which enabled Buganda to extend her influence and became an independent entity. Geographically, the Kingdom is situated around the west and north west of Lake Victoria locally known as Nnalubaale.

At the very inception Buganda had its nucleus around the three counties of Busiro, Kyaddondo and Mawokota. These were raised to 20 over a period of hundreds of years largely through conquest, or at least through the ingenuity of the different Kings (Kabakas) who would, now and then, persuade different areas to join the Kingdom. Currently the counties are 18 after having conceded two to Bunyoro after the Referendum that was held in 1964.



## 2.2 Origin of the Clan System

The people (the Baganda) who piloted the founding and occupation of the Kingdom are at times described as part of the Bantu migrations who settled in the region at different times between 1200-1500 A.D. The earliest clans were the following: the *Lugave (Pangolin)*, *Ffumbe (Civet Cat)*, *Nnyonyi (Cordon-blue Finch)*, *Njaza (Reedbuck)*, *Mmamba (Lungfish)* and *Ngeye (Colobus)*.

The second and largest group of migrants consisted of about 13 clans which are claimed to have come with Kabaka Kintu who is the originator of the current dynasty of kings. This group represents the eastern or north eastern stream of immigrants into Buganda.

The third group came with Kimera, the prince from Bunyoro – Kitara Kingdom to end the interregnum which lasted nearly twenty years, following the death of his grandfather, Kabaka Chwa Nabakka, the second King of Buganda. These were 10 clans and formed the group of western or north western immigrants into Buganda.

The fourth group comprise clans which are said to have come from the Ssesse Islands probably during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The fifth and last group consisted of clans of Buddu. These were added to Buganda by Kabaka Jjunju's annexation of Buddu in the 18th century.

Therefore, what can be deduced from the above theories is that most of the people who came to Buganda, were of heterogeneous origins.

## 2.3 Dynasty of Kings

The originator of the current dynasty of kings, Kabaka Kintu, crystallized the pillars that sustain the Kingdom. Others attribute it to Kabaka Kimera, the 3<sup>rd</sup> King of Buganda. Their argument is based on the fact that at every coronation of a new king at Nnaggalabi the words “Ggwe Kimera Ddala” (you are the true grandson of Kimera) are pronounced signifying the role of Kimera in crystallizing the kingdom dynasty.

Nevertheless, Kabaka Kintu became King after fighting the then leader of what was called Muwawa, named Bbemba Musota. Some people say Bbemba Musota was Kintu’s brother whom he overthrew because of ruling people with an iron hand. According to Buganda’s mythology, Kabaka Kintu came from heaven with his wife, Nambi.

However, as pointed out earlier, the estimated time of the establishment of the Kingdom of Buganda seems to coincide with the disintegration of the Chwezi dynasty leading to the formation of relatively smaller Kingdoms, notably that of Buganda and of Bunyoro Kitara.

Whatever the case, Kintu is believed to be the founder of the dynasty currently headed by Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi 11 who is the 36<sup>th</sup> Kabaka of Buganda. After Kintu overthrew Bbemba he called a Grand Council at a place called Nnono in Busujju County, present day Mityana District, where the norms of Baganda’s way of life were agreed upon. The major participants at the Grand Council were the clan heads.

Buganda has a patriarchal clan system where each individual belongs to a given clan and where each clan is headed by a leader called “Omutaka”. As already noted, before Kintu’s reign, there were five clans in Buganda and each of the clan leaders (Omutaka) was some kind of king in his own right, superintending over his followers within the clan.

Kintu’s reign introduced new clans and these, together with the original 5, sat at Nnono and agreed on how Buganda would be governed, from then onwards.



## 2.4 The concept of the “Cooking Pot” and the “Three Cooking Stones”

At that Grand Council Buganda was conceptualised as a “cooking pot” sitting on “three cooking stones”. One stone is comprised by members of the Royal Family and its descendants. It is from these that Buganda identifies a prince who is named Kabaka, who then becomes the political, administrative and cultural head of Buganda.

The second cooking stone is comprised by the clan heads (Abataka). These are the custodians of the traditions and norms of the Baganda.

The third cooking stone is comprised by the entire population of Buganda, the members of the different clans, to which all of us belong. It is from these people, usually referred to as “Abazzukulu” from whom administrators of the Kingdom are appointed.

That is why in Buganda the Katikkiro can neither be a royal nor a clan head. The structures that govern the Kingdom were concretised at the Grand Council in Nnono.

- a) The Kabaka was defined as the head of the Kingdom of Buganda.
- b) From among the common people the Katikkiro was named to head the administration of the Kingdom, on behalf of the Kabaka.
- c) The clan heads were mandated to ensure that all the norms and traditions of the Baganda were observed and followed, and each clan was given jurisdiction over its followers and a role to play at the King’s court or in Buganda, generally.

At the Grand Council at Nnono the idea of the Buganda Lukiiko, or parliament, was born and the administrative structures of the counties

(Masaza), Subcounties (Magombolola), Miruka (Parishes) and villages (Abatongole) were either conceived or were imported to Buganda and were formalised.

Besides the Katikkiro and the key officials, who today we call the Ministers, there were County Chiefs below them and other layers of leaders all the way to the village and this has been sustained for at least, the last 800 years.

One of Kabaka Kintu's greatest innovations was to make the Kabaka the only person who follows a matrilineal clan system; a prince takes after his mother's clan immediately he is installed as Kabaka. And since intra clan marriages are prohibited, it means that the Kabaka marries from any other clan - other than the clan of his mother and the clan of the descendants of the Royal Family.

This means that every clan in Buganda, and every person in Buganda, has an attachment to the Kabaka because different clans produce different Kabakas. This eliminates the idea of a "special clan" or a "privileged clan" in Buganda. The fact that the Kabaka can take after his mother's clan means the Kabakaship, as such, is relatable to any clan and any Muganda. This is so because any given clan can get the chance of producing an heir to the throne.

Another innovation at Nnono was to make the administrators of the Kingdom non-hereditary. The Katikkiro and other officials are appointed - or terminated - by the Kabaka which, in a way, separates powers, but also gives anyone a chance to enjoy the cultural mores of the institution since elevation to high office is not hereditary except for the Kabaka and clan heads. Elevation to office is largely on merit in administrative structures of the Kingdom.

However, the Katikkiro is next to the Kabaka in the administrative hierarchy of the Kingdom. Hereditary leadership of the Kabaka and Abataka ensures continuity of the heritage of Buganda; yet the fact that the administrators are appointed from time to time, it maintains vibrancy in the institution.

## 3.0 Events leading to the Abolition of the Kingdom

Colonialism created Uganda as we see it today although the Kingdom of Buganda had a major role in its creation as a country.

Throughout the colonial period, Buganda had a semi-autonomous relationship with the colonial government. This was attributed to the British system of “Indirect Rule” which gave preference to established indigenous structures to administer colonies on Britain’s behalf.

In the case of the Uganda Protectorate, Buganda’s semi-autonomous relationship with the British was seen as some kind of “preferential treatment” for Buganda. This was to be exploited later by detractors to fan conflict.

The “special relationship” between the British and the Kingdom of Buganda is not surprising. In the first place, Buganda had existed as an independent Kingdom for nearly six hundred years before the arrival of the British. In addition, Buganda was the largest Kingdom in Uganda, the wealthiest, the most administratively advanced and strategically placed of all Ugandan regions. So the relationship served the colonialists interests.

### 3.1 Uganda’s Independence in 1962

At independence in 1962, the Kingdom sought to maintain that semi-autonomous relationship through a federal system of government. Hence the formation of a party named Kabaka Yekka (KY) on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1961 with the view to protecting the heritage of Buganda. KY together with other parties, namely, the Democratic Party (DP) and Uganda People’s Congress (UPC), participated in the general election leading to the independence of the country. UPC and KY formed an alliance that led to Apollo Milton Obote becoming the first Executive Prime Minister of Uganda with Kabaka Edward Muteesa II as President and Head-of-State.

### **3.2 Election of Muteesa as President**

For the purpose of continuity as the country attained independence, the temporary office of Governor General was created and filled by the outgoing British Governor, Sir Walter Coutts. The office was to last for only one year and thereafter was to be replaced with one of the traditional rulers from the kingdoms as a Head of State, elected by parliament for a term of five years.

In 1963 as the first independence anniversary approached, the question of who would replace the Governor General as Head of State was debated. The prospect of electing a head of state from the variety of traditional rulers such as kings and hereditary chiefs generated controversy between areas with hereditary leadership and those with none.

Kabaka Muteesa II was elected on the strength of the UPC/KY alliance to the discomfort on the non-kingdom areas, hence a potential source of conflict.

### **3.3 Collapse of the KY-UPC alliance**

The formation of the above alliance was a marriage of convenience, since Obote was a republican and was only interested in the alliance for purposes of becoming the first executive Prime Minister of Uganda. Indeed Obote and Kabaka Muteesa II worked together superficially as they continued to harbour ill feelings against each other.

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1964, Prime Minister Obote announced the termination of the 27-month-old Uganda People's Congress-Kabaka Yekka alliance which had largely made his becoming Prime Minister in 1962 possible. The termination of the UPC-KY alliance worsened the political situation in the country and had a negative impact on its political stability. Relations between the two parties were naturally strained and Buganda's opposition to Obote's rule intensified.

The Buganda Lukiiko took over the vacuum left in the weakened National Assembly and became the strongest opposing force to Obote's leadership. Also, the conservative



loyalists in Buganda, who had originally warned against the coalition in 1961, once again gained momentum and now steered Buganda further away from integrative national politics.

The renewed opposition of Buganda to his rule angered Obote and made it his direct political target. As soon as he had terminated the alliance, he rekindled the issue of the Lost Counties and all the animosity around it by introducing a Referendum Bill aimed at removing territory from Buganda. Furthermore, the National Assembly passed a law making it an offence for anyone to use a symbol connected with the name of a ruler or constitutional head in order to incite disaffection against such ruler or constitutional head. Of all the political parties, it had been only Kabaka Yekka that had insignia associated with kingship and it was thus clearly the object of the law.

### **3.4 The Lost Counties Referendum**

The Referendum was also a turning point in the relations between Obote and Kabaka Muteesa II (and by implication, the Kingdom of Buganda). The 1964 Referendum destroyed anything left in the personal relationship between the President (Kabaka Muteesa II) and Prime Minister (Obote). Whereas Obote had won much support in the Kingdom of Bunyoro, in Buganda he became the object of deep hatred where the Referendum was considered to be act of treason on the part of Obote who at that time was still a partner in the coalition government between the Uganda Peoples' Congress and Kabaka Yekka.

Obote's insistence on holding of the Referendum had not been on the account of his desire to follow the constitutional path but rather to

bring harm to the Kingdom of Buganda. The Referendum thus was a catalyst of the political turmoil that befell the country four years into independence. The enmity created between the Kingdom of Buganda and Obote drew the Kabaka and his Mengo Establishment to Obote's opponents in the Uganda People's Congress. This was a potential threat to Obote and the only way he could ensure his political survival was to dismantle the Kingdom of Buganda.

### **3.5 The Rise of the Military in the Politics of the Country**

For the sake of his political survival, Obote had to rely on the army as his own party had by 1965 become far too divided and heterogeneous. For Obote, the army was the only organization with the immediate power to impose an integrated political order and he used it to deliver a decisive blow to his opponents in the UPC and in Buganda.

In his reliance on the military, Obote was blessed by the history of the colonial era in which the British recruitment policy had been such that the army was largely filled by persons from the north, Obote's birthplace and political stronghold. The manipulation of the army along ethnic lines by recruiting heavily among Northerners and rapidly promoting officers from the region enabled Obote to create a reliable constituency based on ethnicity.

He consolidated his position in government and the Uganda People's Congress and the northern-dominated army became a basis of his political support. Under those circumstances, he confronted the Kingdom of Buganda in general and President Muteesa in particular - who was the obstacle to his long-term ambition of subjugating the Kingdom of Buganda and becoming the absolute ruler of Uganda. Indeed, it was the military factor that eventually saved him from losing his office as Prime Minister.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1966, the army under command of Idi Amin attacked the Kabaka's Palace. Kabaka Muteesa II died in exile in 1969.



## 4.0 Restoration of the Kingdom

Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin in 1971, and Idi Amin was in turn overthrown by Tanzanian forces and Ugandan exiles in 1979. A general election was held in 1980 and the then head of government, Paulo Muwanga, rigged the election in favour of Milton Obote. Yoweri Museveni (current President) then started a guerilla war in 1981 in Luweero which is in Buganda.

Many Baganda supported the guerilla war as a way of exacting revenge against Milton Obote, and in the hope of restoring the monarchy.

Museveni's forces overthrew the military junta government of General Tito Okello Lutwa in 1986, which had earlier overthrown Obote's second Government in 1985. The Kabaka returned from exile in August 1986 as a Prince although he had performed succession rituals at his father's funeral, first in 1969 in England, and 1971 in Buganda during the second and final funeral.

The Prince started assembling teams of advisors and formed different fora. Those engaged President Museveni and members of his government for a long period about the status of the monarchy in Buganda.

We should remember that the Baganda participated in the bush war, as earlier mentioned, and could be described as partners in the political dispensation of Uganda starting with Museveni's assumption of the presidency in 1986.

In 1993 the Constitution was amended and other laws were enacted leading to the rebirth of the Kingdom of Buganda. Presently the constitution recognizes the monarchy and it refers to the Kabaka as a Corporation Sole, which turns the institution of Kabakaship into a legal entity.

However, the Kingdom is restricted to cultural matters and the law does not allow its leaders political and administrative powers. The people of Buganda will continue to demand for a federal system of government until it's attained in Uganda.



## 5.0 Current Status of the Kingdom

Today the Kabaka has a government, but within the confines of the law, which I have briefly mentioned earlier.

It deals with cultural matters of Buganda; matters of education; health; land; agriculture; investments; and public interest issues like gender, environment, sports and many others.

The Kabaka has re-established the traditional administrative structures all the way from the village to the top leadership in Bulange, the Kingdom's administrative headquarters.

The Kabaka's government (in its current form) greatly depends on the good will of the Baganda and their friends, who make enormous financial contributions to the Kingdom.

Significant investments have also been made in a number of areas, and partnerships have been built with organizations and companies all of which make considerable contributions to the sustenance of the Kingdom.

The most profound factor is the good will of the people of Buganda and the love they have for the Kabaka and his Institution.

The Kabaka's government continues to engage with government over issues related to the federal system of government and also return of a number of properties that were confiscated by Obote's regime; and demands are made for compensation for all properties (money, shares in companies, etc) that were confiscated by the Government at the abolition of the monarchy.

The Kingdom also engages government on issues of human rights, the rule of law and good governance.

## 6.0. Conclusion

The formation of Uganda was based on the existence of the different nationalities whose history goes back centuries of years.

The Kingdom of Buganda promotes the unity of all citizens but that does not diminish her people's attachment to their heritage. So dialogue is viewed as the best option to resolve the unanswered questions, which will ultimately promote and sustain genuine national reconciliation and unity.

Ssaabasajja Kabaka Awangaale!



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KINGDOM OF BUGANDA

## Past Kings of Buganda

1	Kintu	1200 - 1230	18	Tebandeke	1690 - 1700
2	Ccwa Nabakka I	1230 - 1275	19	Ndawula	1689 - 1704
3	Kimera	1295 - 1330	20	Kagulu Tebuchwereke	1710 - 1720
4	Ttembo	1350 - 1360	21	Kikulwe	1720 - 1740
5	Kiggala	1360 - 1380	22	Mawanda	1740 - 1760
6	Kiyimba	1380 - 1400	23	Mwanga I	1760 - 1760
7	Kayima	1415 - 1440	24	Namugala	1760 - 1770
8	Nakibinge Mulwanyamuli	1440 - 1490	25	Kyabaggu Muwenda	1770 - 1780
9	Mulondo	1490 - 1510	26	Jjunju	1780 - 1797
10	Jjemba	1510 - 1530	27	Ssemakookiro	1797 - 1814
11	Ssuuna I	1530 - 1555	28	Kamaanya	1814 - 1832
12	Ssekamanya	1555 - 1590	29	Kalema Ssuuna II	1832 - 1856
13	Kimbugwe	1590 - 1610	30	Mukaabya Muteesa I	1856 - 1884
14	Kateregga	1610 - 1650	31	Danieri Basamula Mwanga II	1884 - 1897
15	Mutebi I	1650 - 1670	32	Kiweewa Mutebi	1888 - 1888
16	Jjuuko	1670 - 1682	33	Kalema Rashid	1888 - 1889
17	Kayemba	1682 - 1690	34	Daudi Ccwa II	1897 - 1939
			35	Edward Muteesa II	1939 - 1969





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