

# Entebbe Za Mugula, Time Travel 1860

## Justice and Leadership

### Goal

### Facts, Entebbe Za Mugula

Much of the facts are based on oral traditions in the Mamba clan of the Buganda kingdom. Ntebe za Mugula is located at the shores of Lake Victoria. It is the place where Chief Mugula Bukulu bwa Wada sat to preside over various judicial cases and village meetings as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, according to tradition. It is said that the first Mugula came to the site, then called Bulama because he was sent to take care of administrative issues that side of Busiro county. This earned him the name Mugula nziji, which means 'one who opens doors'. Later, it simply became Mugula and he bought a lot of land to add on the acres he had. Mugula is believed to have moulded and carved out the rocks into seats on which he would sit during judicial proceedings commonly known as olutuula. The Mugula stayed in Kigungu near the pier and this is where the Kabaka would meet him before addressing his subjects. He had a special boat he was travelling in dubbed Namialo, meaning a person that can access all landing sites. The first Mugula had six children, namely: Kagwe Nyango, Serugunda, Lubuzibwa, Ttaka Kayiba, Nakiwolo and Nankya who occupied the adjacent rocks.

After the first Mugula there has been a line of 32 Mugulas, all the way up to now. The Mugula is the leader of the Mamba clan and the representative of the Kabaka in this part of the kingdom. Because the Mugula was the only person with a chair it made him popular in Buganda and people started referring to the place as Entebbe za Mugula or Mugula's seats. Today the rock has been cut off by water, making it look like a small island.

The Mugula was a strong chief with all the power in his hands. He used to dress up with lion's skin on the right arm, leopard skin on the left hand, hyena skin on the chest and lower parts, a bark cloth on his shoulder and holding a short metallic spear named Mpima. He was a no-nonsense person and was said to have supernatural powers, often quick to punish or kill if anybody annoyed him or seemed unserious. People held Mugula in high esteem and came to listen to his high counsel and judgment. Sentences meted out by Mugula ranged from simple fines to banishment to Ssesse islands or even death. His chief executioner was Lusabaga and other junior officers to help him with the duties.

Mugula had a place called Zilya, where he executed people given the death sentence. Mugula would always scorn people by asking them "Ensega zilya?" (meaning "Are the birds eating?"). If one answered no, he would then order for the person to be killed to keep the birds feeding. If he got a positive response, he would thank the person or give him a small reward.

When the British took over administration of Buganda they failed to pronounce the word Entebbe za Mugula, and reduced it to Entebbe.

The Buganda kingdom had a justice system on three levels: family-extended family-clan leader/Mugula. Some very serious cases could be transferred to kabaka. The British came with a more formal system with institutions and courts

### Today

Za Mugula is now considered a spiritual site. Many people come here to call on the spirits, perform rituals and pray for good health, wealth and a long life as well as to thank the spirits. There are small baskets called Amakula, in which money, food or small white stones are placed in appreciation to the gods or to make requests. The believers say the spirits take a rest in the waters of Lake Victoria, and only come out when called out by those referred to as their grandchildren.

### Buganda kingdom

The Buganda kingdom expanded in the early 1800s and more than doubled its territory. It became the dominant political power in the region. Muteesa I was the reigning Kabaka 1856-1884. In the 1840s Arab traders came to the interior and reached the Buganda kingdom. This kicked off a trade where ivory and slaves from the Bugandas were exchanged for firearms, gunpowder, salt and cloth. In the 1860s the first European explorers reached the area. In 1862 John Speke came to the lake and named it Lake Victoria after the British queen.

## **Scenario, Judgement Day, Olutuula, at Entebbe Za Mugula**

People from the surrounding villages gather at Entebbe Za Mugula, the seat of Mugula. This is his court, where he executes his powers, takes decisions and announces his judgments. Today there are three court cases that are going to be handled, discussed and finally the verdict by Mugula.

The court cases are quite complicated and the outcomes are not clear even though the suspects are arrested.

In the small fishing village of Kigungu one child, a boy of six, has been abused by the family. The parents say that he is not listening, not obeying their orders, so they hit him, sometimes quite easy but sometimes hard. He has several bruises on his legs and arms and two months ago one of his arms was broken. After some time the boy has become passive and silent. The matter was first dealt within the family and then the extended family. But they have not come to a solution and now the case has been referred to Mugula.

Another case is about a girl who has been raped by her uncle in Myanzi village, a place mainly for hunters. The girl told her parents and they mentioned it to the uncle. He said that she dressed and acted in a provoking way, so she tempted him. He followed her to the river when she was fetching water and grabbed her. And I think she liked it, he also said. But the girl has another opinion and said that the uncle held her very hard even the hand over her mouth. The girl is now afraid to walk alone. Other young men are picking on her. Also this case is now referred to Mugula.

The third case is about a burglary in a house in Bukiberu, the farming village. A man broke into the house inhabited by a wealthy family, in the middle of the night to steal food. The family woke up and there was a fight and the thief was captured. He says that he was hungry and saw the abundance of food in the house. And by coincidence he got hold of a valuable pot. In the fight the thief was beaten quite badly. The first levels of justice have not been able to solve the case who is going to be sentenced most. Now the case is referred to the Mugula.

Today is the day of the final judgment. At the entrance of the site visitors put offerings in some baskets, amakula: shells, food or small white stones, to thank the gods and pray. Mugula's chief guard, the Lusalabaga, directs the arriving persons, women, men and children and makes them sit down. Each village stays together. The villagers discuss their case, argue in various directions. What is right and what is wrong? Some persons have seen or heard something that will give light to the case. They also discuss if the cases have been handled correctly on the first levels of the justice system, in the family and the extended family. How do we create justice and keep peace within the family, the clan, tribe and even other tribes? What is good leadership? The elders, who are presenting the cases to Mugula are asking and listening to the villagers.

But times might change in Entebbe. Arab traders have becoming more frequent. There are also rumours of European explorers in the region. Probably the first ones will soon arrive at the lake. What will happen then? Will even the mighty Buganda kingdom be challenged? Another kind of justice system? Is that better?

While waiting and discussing the fishermen prepare and mend their nets, the hunters look after their spears and roast the meat and the farmers weave mats and mend their clothes. And there is some music and singing and children playing.

Everybody is eagerly waiting for the Mugula to take his seat. It is said that he is dressed in skin from lion, leopard and hyena. The elders will present the cases and they will call the villagers for more information or to speak their mind. Even the culprits will have a say. The Mugula will sit and listen. What will be his verdict? There is tension and even some fear on the faces of the people. If the Mugula ask “Ensagga Zilya” it is best to keep quiet.

### **Roles, 60 persons**

The students are from three neighboring villages, one third are fishermen from Kigungu, one third are hunters from Mayanzi and one third are farmers from Bukiberu  
Chief guard (Lusalabaga), three elders, (three suspects), Mugula, soldiers (Abambowa)

### **Key Questions**

Justice and leadership

- How to show good leadership? All the power to the leader, listen to others?
- How to create justice in order to keep peace within the family, the clan, tribe and even other tribes? Does justice mean the same for all, men, women and children? What is the point of the sentence?

### **Activities**

- Fishermen: preparing and mending nets, making medicine (herbs), (smoking fish), boat?
- Hunters: try spears, catching net, make medicine (herbs), roast meat
- Farmers: Weaving of mats, make medicine (herbs), grain in mortar, make bark clothes?
- Prepare fruit; Games?

Informal: singing, dancing, wrestling

Discuss leadership and justice systems in all groups

### **Time Plan**

08.00 Set up the site

09.00 Students arrive

10.00 Initiation, drums, song, call the spirits, offering in the baskets (white stones/ shells)  
Lusalabaga gives instructions

Divided into three groups of activities and discussion of court cases (one elder in each group)

10.45 Mugula arrives with his soldiers. Drums and dance to call the crowd  
The elders present the three cases. The villagers argue, witnesses

11.15 Mugula withdraws to consider his verdicts, consult the elders/ spirits  
Some singing and dancing, fruit

11.30 Mugula announces his verdicts

11.40 Final dance to say farewell to the spirits

12.00 Ending ceremony (offerings of food)  
Reflection (meal)

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### **The three court cases**

Child abuse, neglect. Victim a child, perpetrator a relative

In the small fishing village of Kigungu one child, a boy of six, has been abused by the family. The parents say that he is not listening, not obeying their orders, so they hit him, sometimes quite easy but sometimes hard. He has several bruises on his legs and arms and two months ago one of his arms was broken. After some time the boy has become passive and silent. The matter was first dealt within the family and then the extended family. But they have not come to a solution and now the case has been referred to Mugula. People from the village come to Entebbe to discuss and listen to each other but most of all to Mugula's judgment.

Rape-incest. Victim a girl, perpetrator uncle

Another case is about a girl who has been raped by her uncle in Myanzi village, a place mainly for hunters. The girl told her parents and they mentioned it to the uncle. He said that she dressed and acted in a provoking way, so she tempted him. He followed her to the river when she was fetching water and grabbed her. And I think she liked it, he also said. But the girl has another opinion and said that the uncle held her very hard even the hand over her mouth. The girl is now afraid to walk alone. Other young men are picking on her. Also this case is now referred to Mugula. People from her village have come to Entebbe to find justice.

Theft

A third case is about a burglary in a house in Bukiberu, the farming village. A man broke into the house inhabited by a wealthy family, in the middle of the night to steal food. The family woke up and there was a fight and the thief was captured. He says that he was hungry and saw the abundance of food in the house. And by coincidence he got hold of a valuable pot. In the fight the thief was beaten quite badly. The first levels of justice have not been able to solve the case who is going to be sentenced most. Now the case is referred to the Mugula.