

Justice and Leadership in the Buganda kingdom, Entebbe Za Mugula, Time Travel, 1860 in Kigungu village

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 12th 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. The first Mugula had six children, 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, leopard skin, hyena skin and 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.

Mugula would often 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 village court

The Buganda kingdom had a **justice system on three levels**: family-extended family/ village-clan leader/ Mugula. In the village the chief took the decisions after consulting the elders and listening to the villagers. The chief could refer a case to Za Mugula. Some very serious cases could even be referred to the king. 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.

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, Justice and leadership in Kigungu 1860

There have been challenges and problems in the village of Kigungu the past couple of years - thefts, rapes and assault, also within the families. Parents say that the children do not listen and obey anymore. Some of the girls even dress in an improper way, they say. The children do not agree. Is all of this a sign of a new time coming, in families and in the community?

Today the villagers in Kigungu, young and old, have gathered to discuss and decide on three serious cases. The chief takes the decisions. But he will first listen to the arguments of the villagers and consult the elderly. And the chief also has the possibility to refer a case to the Mugula, the clan leader.

One of the cases is about a boy of six that has been abused by the family. The parents say that he is not listening, not obeying their orders, so they hit him, sometimes easily 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 but is now referred to the next level of justice.

Another case is about a girl who was raped by her uncle. 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. The girl said that the uncle hold her very hard but the uncle does not agree at all. The girl is now afraid to walk alone. Other young men are picking on her.

The third case is about a burglary in a house in the 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. In the fight the thief was beaten quite badly. The first level of justice has not been able to solve the case and who is going to be sentenced most.

The villagers discuss the three cases, argue in various directions. What is right and what is wrong? There are also witnesses that will share more light.

There are changes in the family norms and in the community. Arab traders have become more frequent; there are rumours of European explorers. Will even the mighty Buganda kingdom be challenged?

The groups have a chance to present their opinions of the cases to the chief and the affect on the community. The chief will finally declare his judgements.

While discussing the villagers do their ordinary chores, mending bark clothes, weaving, making ropes, prepare some food and playing games.

Roles

The pupils are children from Kigungu village. Adults are adults in the village.

Chief of the village. Assistant chief, two elders

Everybody keep their age and gender.

Key Questions

Justice and leadership

- What is justice in the court cases? Why? Argue
- How do the crimes and sentences affect the family and the community? How to avoid the crimes in the future?
- Who are the best leaders for the future, women/men, girls/ boys, elders/ young people?
What is good leadership?

Activities

- Weaving baskets, mats with palm leaves
- Make ropes and balls of banana fibres
- Try hunting weapons, make bark clothes

Extra: Make medicine (herbs), Roast fish

Informal: singing, dancing, games

Time Plan

08.00 Set up the site

09.00 Welcome the pupils. Background, scenario, roles, rules, names

09.30 Initiation, drums, (offering in the baskets, white stones/ shells)

The assistant chief gives instructions

Divide into three groups, discussion of one court case in each group, activities (one elder in each group)

10.15 The chief arrives. Representatives from each group present their case, their arguments and an idea of sentence. The chief gives his judgement.

10.45 Ending ceremony

Reflection

11.30 End

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Mustafa Sentongo, Kigungu Primary School

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar county museum

Based on a scenario from 2012 by Entebbe Time Travel group, Entebbe Municipality

Ebbe Westergren, Anna Greta Larsson and Linda Liljeberg, Kalmar, Sweden