



MINISTRY OF
TOURISM, WILDLIFE
AND ANTIQUITIES
THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

13th Edition

MISS TOURISM UGANDA 2025

I am My Culture.



Introducing
**MAN OF TOURISM
INTERNATIONAL**

QUEEN ATINO LUCKY BIANKA
MISS TOURISM UGANDA 2024/25





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Foreword

I am my culture



MRS. MARIANNE MUTAGAMBA-E
Board Chair | Miss Tourism Uganda

WOn behalf of the Board of Miss Tourism Uganda, it is my distinct honor to welcome you to this year's Annual Magazine, presented under the theme "I Am My Culture."

This theme is both timely and profound. Uganda's culture is not only a source of national pride but also a strategic asset for tourism development, investment, and international visibility. Our traditions, heritage, and values represent the foundation upon which we can position Uganda as a globally competitive and culturally vibrant destination.

Miss Tourism Uganda is committed to aligning with the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, the Uganda Tourism Board, and our valued partners in ensuring that culture remains central to tourism promotion. By empowering young women to serve as ambassadors of heritage, we not only promote sustainable tourism but also foster inclusive growth, innovation, and opportunities for the youth and women of this country.

Through Miss Tourism Uganda, we see young women step forward as proud

custodians of this heritage. They showcase not only their beauty and intelligence but also their courage to represent their communities and carry Uganda's story to the world. They remind us that culture is alive, vibrant, and relevant today.

This platform has grown to become more than a pageant—it is a family, a training ground, and a movement that empowers youth, uplifts women, and inspires pride in our shared identity. Because culture in Africa is about Ubuntu, all inclusive, we are proud to introduce Man of Tourism International, which moving forward will be an independent venture to help young men find purpose and responsibility through the tourism competition. Every contestant, partner, and supporter is part of this journey of transformation.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to our government institutions, corporate sponsors, civil society, parents, Kingdoms, service providers, tourism fraternity and local communities for their unwavering support. It is through these partnerships that Miss Tourism Uganda continues to grow into a sustainable, impactful brand.

As we reflect on "I Am My Culture," let us reaffirm our shared responsibility to protect, promote, and profit from Uganda's cultural and tourism wealth. Together, we can build a legacy where culture drives not only identity but also economic transformation.

As you flip through these pages, may you be inspired to celebrate your roots, embrace your heritage, and boldly say with us: "I Am My Culture."

Editorial



Steven Odeke
Award-winning Tourism,
Conservation and Travel
multi-media journalist.
Chief Editor

Uganda's rich cultural heritage is a vibrant mosaic of traditions, languages, and practices that not only shape the nation's identity but also contribute significantly to its economic development. The theme "I am My Culture" adopted this year by Miss Tourism Uganda (MTU) highlights the importance of embracing and celebrating Uganda's diverse cultural landscape.

Culture here is still perceived as primitive, a hindrance to development, and irrelevant to the current context. This is something still narrowly defined in terms of traditional rituals and practices.

That is why this year's edition had the girls and boys (Man Of Tourism) put on a display that was enticing. They were good on stage in all the regional places we went to, displaying cultural outfits, poetry and dance forms among other things.

Culture is today increasingly measured in terms of its contribution to economic product.

May the best girl and gentleman win.

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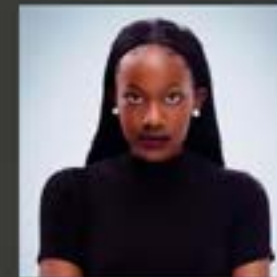
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· Queen Atino Lucky Bianca ·
Miss Tourism Uganda 2024-2025

Queen's Questions and Answers

• Queen Atino Lucky Bianca •

1. Who is Bianca Lucky Atino?

I am a 23-year-old passionate Ugandan woman who loves to sing, dance, and farm. I believe joy comes from making a difference, even in the smallest ways, and I'm committed to empowering young people while learning through my own experiences. I studied at Lira University and later at Kobi's Aviation College. Beyond all that, I'm deeply passionate about music, community, and growth. Today, I proudly serve as Miss Tourism Uganda 2024.

2. Why Miss Tourism Uganda?

Because Miss Tourism Uganda stood for everything I already believed in — promoting tourism, preserving culture, and giving young women a platform to grow. It aligned perfectly with my dream of becoming the best version of myself while creating opportunities for others. Seeing how many young women have transformed through this platform inspired me to walk the same journey, and I can confidently say it has shaped me in remarkable ways.

3. How will you handle the media?

I see media as a bridge, not a burden. It has already given me a chance to share my story and connect with people on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Many people now say, "I first knew you from TikTok," and that shows me the power of communication. Whether it's good or bad stories, I believe media allows you to define your narrative. Even after my reign, I know media will remain an important part of how I communicate who I am and what I stand for.

4. Who were you before the crown?

Before Miss Tourism Uganda, I was a student at Lira University pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Information and Communication Technology. I helped out at my mother's school, Noble Aim Nursery School, and I was actively involved in ICT innovations with companies like Akebe Technologies. I was also deeply engaged in community projects, farm work, and activities that promoted growth in society. So I was already shaping myself to be useful in different spaces before stepping into this crown.

5. Besides Miss Tourism Uganda, what else occupied you?

School was my main focus, but I also balanced helping at Noble Aim Nursery School, being involved in community activities, and supporting my family's farm. Those experiences gave me a sense of responsibility and grounded me in real life beyond the pageant world.

6. Have you ever heard any criticism about you, both negative and positive?

Yes, I've had both. Many people love my short natural hair, my English, and the hard work I put in. Others felt their contestant deserved the crown or didn't like my look—but I love myself and I know I worked hard for this. I've even faced a bit of cyberbullying, but the love and support I receive always outweighs the negativity.

7. Who do you attribute your win to?

First to God, because I believe this was destiny. Then to my mom, who taught me purpose, discipline, and self-belief. My family, mentors, and friends also played a huge role in supporting me throughout the journey.

8. Take us through your queen journey.

It has been nothing short of amazing. One moment I was a student in Lira, and the next I was crowned on a national stage. Suddenly, I was meeting dignitaries, inspiring people, and even representing Uganda in Malaysia. There were tears, challenges, and moments of doubt, but also so much growth, joy, and unforgettable memories.

9. What was your most trying time?

Balancing school, personal life, and queenly duties was very tough. There were days I had to show up strong while feeling drained inside. But every time I pushed through, I came out stronger and more resilient.

10. As Miss Tourism Uganda, how have you used your position to improve the tourism industry?

I've inspired young people, especially in regions like Northern Uganda, to start appreciating tourism. Many now reach out wanting to visit parks and explore Uganda. I've also promoted culture and heritage by embracing identity and conservation, showing that tourism is not only about wildlife but also about culture, sanitation, through let the Pearl shine campaign and the environment. Through these activities, I've created awareness and encouraged people to see tourism more broadly.

11. Which people do you credit for support and success?

First, my mom and my family—they've been my strongest support system. My friends have also stood by me, and I'm forever grateful for them. And of course, my mentors in Miss Tourism Uganda, who have guided me throughout this journey.

12. What challenges have you faced during your reign?

Limited resources, criticism, and the pressure of expectations have been real challenges. Balancing my queenly duties with school was especially tough, but it shaped me into a stronger person.

13. Tell us about your educational background.

I studied at Hillside Annex Primary School, then Hilton in Mukono, followed by St. Katherine's Secondary School in Northern Uganda. I later joined Hillside Namirembe in Wakiso, before moving to Lira University. Currently, I'm a student at Kubis Aviation College.

14. What next after your reign?

I believe my journey has only just begun. I want to continue with tourism projects, especially debates and youth engagement, and I'm grateful to the companies already partnering with me. I see myself staying in the tourism space, learning, and growing while contributing to Uganda's tourism goals.

15. Your final words for the youth who adore you?

To the young people, always seize opportunities and believe in yourselves. Love yourself first, because when you know who you are, criticism won't shake you. You'll walk into rooms with confidence. For those who are believers, keep praying and trusting God. And no matter what, keep pushing—don't give up. Your moment will come if you stay true to yourself.



Outgoing Queen Atino performing her cultural duties during her tourism works at Kasubi Royal Tombs



The Banyankole's majestic long-horned cattle are more than just animals but a symbol of wealth

Ankole Kingdom with unique traditional rites

For their striking long, large-diameter horns, this cattle breed gave the Banyankole their signature identity. While the Banyankole, who hail from the Buhweju, Bushenyi, Ibanda, Isingiro, Kazo, Kiruhura, Mbarara, Mbarara City, Mitooma, Ntungamo, Rubirizi, Rwampara and Sheema districts of western Uganda are also renowned agriculturalists, it is their indignant majestic long-horned cattle breed that has given them the age-old identity to the world today.

Among the Banyankole, who are also popular today in Uganda for giving the country their son, Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who is the longest serving President of Uganda, cattle is status. Just like many other ethnic groups, the Ankole people have their own oral traditions and myths about their origins. Like many ancient peoples, their myths and legends speak of legendary figures and heroic deeds, stories that may not be rooted in historical fact but serve to reinforce the bonds of community and the sense of belonging.

The Ankole kingdom, also known as Nkore, stands as one of the oldest traditional dynasties, its roots stretching back to the 15th century. The word Nkore is said to have been adopted during the 17th century following the devastating invasion of Kaaro-Karungi by Chawaali, the then Omukama of Bunyoro-Kitara (Bunyoro-Kitara was one of the most powerful kingdoms in East Africa from the 16th to the 19th century). Even today, the land itself in the aforementioned districts of western Uganda is beautiful, a testament to the enduring spirit of

people who have lived and thrived here for centuries.

Theories abound about the origins of the Ankole people, some suggesting a migration from West Africa, others proposing a movement driven by the search for grazing lands for their cattle. Whatever the truth may be, one thing is certain: cattle have played a central role in Ankole culture and economy, the longhorn breed a symbol of the people's resilience and adaptability. The age-old story has been that, traditionally, the Ankole society was once divided into two castes, the Bahima and the Bairu, nobility and pastoralists on one hand, agriculturalists and peasants on the other. Yet, despite these divisions, the two groups lived together in harmony, each dependent on the other for survival. The kingdom was ruled by the Omugabe, a king from the Bahima clan, assisted by local chiefs and a prime minister, a system of governance that ensured stability and prosperity.

Today, the Ankole people number over 3.6 million, their culture and traditions still thriving despite the challenges of modernity. Their story is one of resilience and adaptation, a testament to the enduring power of community and tradition. It's important to note that the precise origins of the Ankole people are still a subject of ongoing research and debate, and the truth likely involves a complex interplay of

multiple factors, including migration, cultural exchange, and adaptation over time. Additionally, oral traditions and historical records may be limited, making it challenging to establish a definitive origin story.

Meet the Majestic Inyambo: More than Just Cattle

In the rolling hills of Ankole, the inyambo, the long-horned cattle of the Banyankole people are more than just animals; these cattle were woven into the very fabric of society, their sweeping horns like curved sabers against the sky a symbol of wealth, prestige, and a connection to the ancient rhythms of the land. The history of the inyambo can be traced back centuries to nomadic pastoralists who brought them from the north about 500 and 700 years ago, descendants of the ancient Sanga breeds of Africa, which themselves are



a result of a cross between the indigenous Egyptian Longhorn and the Zebu cattle that arrived from Asia. Their lineage was a story of migration, of adaptation, and of a bond between man and beast that went beyond mere utility.

And just like today, to own Inyambo was to hold power and status in Ankole society. The size of a man's herd spoke of his standing in the community, and the beauty of those great horns was like a badge of honor.

They were currency in the negotiations of marriage, the engyenda or bride wealth, where the number of cattle given spoke of the value and respect between families. And in times of friendship or reconciliation, Inyambo were gifts of great worth, symbols of bonds stronger than blood. But the Inyambo were more than symbols of wealth; they held a spiritual resonance for the Banyankole. While their horns seemed to touch the sky, a connection to the divine, their well-being was tied to the fortune of their owners. In rituals and in legend, these cattle played a part, a testament to their place in the traditional beliefs of the people.

The Inyambo are creatures of the harsh and beautiful land, they adapt to the sun and the sparse grazing of the tropical climate. Their striking horns assist their blood circulation and help keep them cool during hot temperatures. They are renowned for their hardiness, which allows them to forage on poor quality vegetation and live off limited amounts of water. They gave milk rich in butterfat, used to make ghee and yogurt, and on rare occasions, their meat was a feast for ceremonial days. In the songs and stories of the Banyankole, the Inyambo were celebrated, their elegance and power a part of the cultural heartbeat. The daily care of these animals shaped the language and the relationships of the people, a living tradition passed down through generations.

Even now, as the world changes and new breeds come to the land, the Inyambo remain an icon of Ankole's heritage. Efforts to conserve these cattle speak of their importance, a recognition of their unique history and their place in the culture. And for those who come as tourists to see the 'land of long horns,' the Inyambo are a window into a rich and enduring tradition.

The Inyambo were more than cattle; they were a testament to the bond between the Banyankole and their land, their past, and their identity. In their majestic forms, with horns like outstretched arms to the sky, the people saw themselves and their story, a story etched in the landscape like the paths of ancient migrations."

The role of aunts in Ankole Marriage

With the embracement of modernization, certain traditional norms are waning or were even non-existent in the first place. For instance, in the past, while it was important among the Banyankole for the maternal auntie to have sexual intercourse with their niece's groom-to-be to assess his sexual prowess, some scholars believe those were few incidences and in modern times such practices are non-existent. It is said, the role of an aunt, as today, is linked with that of the mother, which is meant to love and guide her niece by being her confidant especially with things she's unable to share with her mother as an aunt appears to be a lesser mother. However, for the Banyankole tribe of Uganda, the duty of an aunt was beyond merely giving advice or being a confidant.

But in modern times, Banyankole's marriage traditions are still spectacular and worth following. Their Giveaway ceremonies known as Kushingira remain a spectacle. While there are some variations in the performance of Okushingira from one area to another, as a result of borrowing from other cultures, modern influences on the traditional customs and the place where the performance was carried out that such as towns as opposed to the villages and hotels as opposed to the homes of the performers of the Okushingira, the central aspects of the okushingira ceremony remain the same.

The movements and the structures of the ceremony as ritual are the same and some symbolic performance tools such as the omugamba, the place and significance of the bride and the serving of entachweeka are all significant in the okushingira.

At this ceremony, the relatives and friends of the bride present her with gifts such as cows and other items such as foods to be taken to her matrimonial home. Ten days later, a ritual known as Okukoza Omunuro, which involves the bride lighting her first fire in her new kitchen, is performed.

The wedding day is always resplendent with festivities at the bride's home where the bride's father slaughters a bull for the guests before the groom returns the favour at his home to consummate the marriage. Drinks such as Tonto are customary presented on cultural weddings and introduction parties in traditional Ankole kingdom as well as other prominent traditions in Uganda. Baganda called it "Omwenge" while Batooro called it "Amaarwa". In the past, virginity being the marriage standard for the maidens of the Banyankole tribe, had to be tested

Traditionally by the time girls turned eight or nine, particularly among the Bahima, preparation for marriage began led by their paternal aunts. These young girls were no longer free to run and play without some form of control. Girls were mostly kept indoors, where they ate beef and millet porridge and were forced to drink milk in large quantity so that they would become fat. In contrast to contemporary beauty ideals, slender women were considered unsuitable for marriage in traditional Ankole culture. As a result, Bahima girls were encouraged to consume a diet rich in beef and milk, leading to a heavier physique.

Furthermore, abstinence from sexual activity before marriage was strictly enforced, with severe consequences, including societal ostracism and even death threats. The underlying belief was that brides were unaware of sexual matters and how to please their husbands due to their innocence.



A banyankole cultural troupe dancing Ekitaguriro



Preparation for Okuhingira

The preparation for Okuhingira always started with the involvement of a highly respected person to do the go-between in the negotiations of the marriage of the love birds. This person is locally called "katerarume" which means (the person who clears the path, by clearing the dew)

The Katerarume is responsible for facing the bride's family, presenting the interests of the groom and also making sure that the request is accepted. Once the request is accepted, still he will be responsible for getting back the information to the groom's side.

A social distinction between the Bahima and the Bairu was established by prohibiting intermarriage between them. The Bahima would find it repugnant to marry a Mwiru. Moreover, it was illegal for a Muhima to give cattle to a Mwiru. A Mwiru would have no cattle for bride wealth for a Muhima wife since all he had was unproductive cows and bull calves. Cattle were essential not only for the legitimacy of marriage but also for the legitimacy of the children born out of a marital relationship.

Monogamy was the standard practice, though polygamy was not prohibited. Both the Mugabe and wealthy Banyankole practiced polygamy. Today monogamy remains the predominant

form of marriage, influenced by Westernization, Christianity, education, and the traditional Banyankole model.

Ekitaguriro Dance

This is a dance performed by the Banyankore. This dance is performed by both men and women who use it to tell stories, communicate vital cultural information, good harvests as well as to celebrate fundamental life changes like birth and marriage but mostly to show appreciation for their cows.

The men step from one leg to another imitating the back-and-forth movement the cows make when walking and the women spread their hands across and above their heads in the representation of the long-horned cattle and majestically sway from side to side in unison.

The dance is performed whilst wearing the Banyankore traditional dancewear known as 'Bitambi' or 'lessu' (wrapper) which is tied tightly around their waist and another lighter cloth around the shoulders complemented by several African-themed jewellery for the women. The men add shackle-like beads to their ensemble whose basic role is to draw attention to the foot movements and compliment the sounds of the 'Kitaguriro dance'.

Cultural sites to visit in Ankole

Nkokojeru tombs: these are the resting places of the Ankole's last two kings: Mugabe Edward Solomon Kahaya II buried in 1944 and Omugabe sir Charles Godfrey Rutahaba Gasyonga II, who ruled from 1944, and who died in 1982.

Igongo cultural center: this is for the preservation of Ankole's rich and diverse culture, and is located where Mugabe's palace once stood.

Itaaba Kyabanyoro: this is Ankole's most significant cultural site for it is where the last king of the Bachwezi crafted the sacred Ankole royal drum called the Bagyendanwa. Itaaba Kyabanyoro is the birthplace of the founder of the Ankole kingdom.

It is found in Kitagata Hot spring, whose hot springs are believed by many to have healing powers. One of the springs known as the Ekitangata ky'omugabe: it is very significant for it is believed to be the only spring which was used by the omugabe of Ankole.

Sanga cultural village: this cultural centre is known as the great Ankole culture and customs centre. It lies around Lake Mburu National Park and is inhabited by the Hima community of Bahima people, the Ankole cattle pastoralists.

The Karegyeya Rock: known locally as Eibare rya Karegyeya, can be found just over a mile outside of Ntungamo in Karegyeya village. The legend of the rock encompasses local traditions of the ancient Bachwezi; semi-gods who took on human appearance but did not die and simply disappeared into the underworld.



Banyankole carrying Omugamba during the Okuhingira (Giveaway) ceremony

Ankole Region Delegates



Ahebwomugisha Anna | Age: 24
District: Sheema
Title: Miss Tourism Uganda 2025 Finalist
Education: Graduate (Literature and German at Makerere)
Hobbies: Reading, Traveling and Music
Role Model: Businge Vanitah
Advocacy: To advocate for conservation and mental health awareness in secondary schools



Ainembabazi Patience Age: 22
District: Mbarara
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Certificate in Tourism and Hospitality Management
-Diploma in Airline cabin crew
Hobbies: Traveling and Reading Novels



Natasha Mitchel Age: 22
District: Ntungamo
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Diploma in tourism and hospitality
Hobbies: Watching movies and traveling
Role model: Kirono Pauline



Shallon Bakira
Cluster Coordinator
Ankole Region
Miss Tourism Uganda.



Enock Rutaaza
Cluster Head
Ankole Region
Miss Tourism Uganda.

Buganda Region:

As a way of diversifying Uganda's offerings, for years on now, Uganda's tourism narrative has centered on safaris and wildlife. While important, this has overshadowed the country's rich cultural, culinary, and sports tourism opportunities.

That is why Uganda's Tourism led by the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities is working with various stakeholders such as Uganda Tourism Board, Uganda Wildlife Authority and Miss Tourism Uganda among others in the industry to broaden the country's offerings, supporting the rise of gastronomy tourism and heritage travel experience.

This was witnessed during this year's Miss Tourism Buganda Kingdom auditions that was held at Hotel Africana, Kampala, in May. One thing was evident on the night, the Kingdom has big potential to push for Rural Tourism and Best Tourism Initiatives (BTVI), what with their rich traditions, historical sites and villages where tourism preserves natural and cultural heritage, promotes community-based tourism and traditional lifestyles. The fun-filled pageant attracted 54 contestants on the evening graced by officials from the Buganda Kingdom, government and tourism circles.

At the show, girls put Buganda fashion statements on display during the creative wear session where most contestants had to maneuver around the bark cloth and Kitengi fabric. At some point on the evening we saw a

contestant dragging a replica of the Buganda monument on stage as a fashion statement, drawing loud cheers from the crowd. The move bordered on hilarity to say the least. Right from the start, (the event starting at 4:00pm precise because the elderly Buganda officials wanted to return home earlier) to the end in the wee hours of Sunday morning, guests, mostly dressed in cultural outfit such as Kanzus for gentlemen and Kitengi and Gomesi for the females, who came in bigger numbers were lively.

The girls, riding on this year's Miss Tourism Uganda's theme "I am My Culture" also expressed their rich and varied cultural traditions through other art forms like music, dance, drama, visual arts and poetry on stage, while also proudly representing their clans and Masaza (counties), much to the audience's joy. As is the case in other parts of the country, Uganda is one of the 65 constitutionally recognized ethnic groups with a long history of centralized political institution headed by a monarch, who today is Kabaka Ronald Muwenda II.

It seemingly turned out to be a competition for the MTU crown as well as for their Masaza. The fun-filled evening's winner was Joan Nambaziira from Bululi County. Nambaziira was followed by Mercy Nabukanya from Kabula county and Leticia Vanisha Navuubya from Busujju county in first and second runner up respectively.

Nambaziira won herself a car on the evening and, alongside the other two



A Buganda contestant models in a dazzling billowing dress styled from barkcloth during the Miss Tourism Uganda auditions.

runner up girls, joined the other finalists from other regions to compete for the Miss Tourism Uganda (MTU) crown slated for September 5, Kampala Serena Hotel. This year's Miss Tourism Uganda theme "I am My Culture" worked well for the Buganda region, as the oldest and biggest traditional kingdom on the night.

Buganda Kingdom:
The melting pot of age-old traditional norms that have stood the test of time

As we all know by now, Buganda is the largest of the medieval kingdoms in present-day Uganda, and became an important and powerful state during the 19th century. Established around the 13th century along the shore of Lake Victoria, it is believed to have been founded by Kabaka Kintu, who is believed to have come from heaven with his wife, Nambi, according to Buganda mythology. Kintu defeated the then leader, Bbamba Musota, and called a Grand Council at Nnono in Busujju County, present day Mityana District, where the norms of Baganda's way of life were agreed upon.

While some attribute the crystallization of the kingdom's pillars to Kabaka Kintu, others argue it was Kabaka Kimera, the 3rd King of Buganda, who played this role. The argument is based on the fact that during coronations, the phrase "Ggwe Kimera Ddala" (you are the true grandson of Kimera) is pronounced, signifying Kimera's importance in Buganda's dynasty.

However, others point to the fact that 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 II who is the 36th Kabaka of Buganda. The major participants at the Grand Council organized by Kabaka Kintu were the clan heads.

Origin of Clan heads

As mentioned earlier, Baganda today are proud of their heritage even in modern times. That can be seen during events such as Amatikirira ga Kabaka (anniversary coronation day events) Buganda Kingdom Masaza Cup competitions, Ekisaakate kya Nabagereka, Bika Bya Buganda sports events and Miss Tourism Uganda beauty pageants among others. The Kingdom 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. However, it is only the Kabaka who belongs to his mother's clan rather than the royal clan. Other

princes and princesses belong to the royal clan, Abalangira. Kintu's reign introduced new clans and these, together with the original five, sat at Nnono and agreed on how Buganda would be governed, from then onwards. At that aforementioned 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 "Abazukulu" 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 deined 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. Below as the clans as listed:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Abalangira | 14. Kasimba |
| 2. Babiito- Kooki | 15. Kayozi |
| 3. Babiito-Kiziba | 16. Kibe |
| 4. Babiito-Kibulala | 17. Kibuba |
| 5. Butiko | 18. Kinyomo |
| 6. Ffumbe | 19. Kiwere |
| 7. kasanke | 20. kobel |
| 8. kasimba | 21. lugave |
| 9. kayozi | 22. lukato |
| 10. kibe | 23. mazzigakisasi |
| 11. nkeje | 24. Mbogo |
| 12. kinyomo | 25. mbuzi |
| 13. Kasanke | 26. mbwa |

Cultural Significance of Katikkiro

Among the Baganda, The Katikkiro is not merely a political figure; he is a cultural custodian and moral compass for the Kingdom. The current Katikkiro, Charles Peter Mayiga is known for his visionary leadership, innovation, and the "Ettifaali" development campaign. The respect for this office is so deep that Baganda proverbs and idioms often invoke the Katikkiro as a symbol of trust, judgment, and leadership. The Butikkiro, too, remains a symbol of national service, self-sacrifice, and stability. The Katikkiro-ship and the Butikkiro represent the continuity of Buganda's governance, right from periods of colonialism, political upheaval, and restoration. They are lasting pillars of the Kingdom's resilience, identity, and collective vision for prosperity. As Buganda advances into the 21st century, the institution of the Katikkiro continues to adapt, lead, and preserve what is uniquely Kiganda.

Masazza (Counties)

At its founding, the Kingdom of Buganda had only a small territory consisting of the counties of Busiro, Busujju, Kyaddondo and Mawokota; as well as small portions of Ssinga and Bulemeezi counties. Most of the surrounding territory was the dominion of the kings of Bunyoro. There was considerable rivalry between Buganda and neighbors, and constant fighting over territory expansion. Gradually, Buganda was able to expand its territory at the expense of its neighbors until it grew to twenty counties that constituted Buganda at its pinnacle. However, as we speak now, the

Buganda Region Delegates



Namuleme Rhonah Treasure |
Age: 20
District: Wakiso
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Vaccist
Hobbies: Dancing, Watching movies, Netball
Role model: Queen Sydney



Nambaziira Joan | Age:
District: Nakasongola
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Tribe: Muluji
Hobbies: Novels, Writing, Journaling, Travelling, Chess, Acting role and poetry
Role model: Nabagereka



Ms. Masitula
Cluster Head
Miss Tourism Buganda Region



The Katikkiro (Prime Minister) Charles Mayiga of Buganda Kingdom engages Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II (Seated) at a Buganda cultural ceremony.

Kingdom consists of 18 counties after losing Buyaga and Bugangazi. The islands of Ssebe were autonomous within Buganda right from its founding, being reserved as the islands of the gods. They were not directly governed by the Kings of Buganda until after the 1900 agreement.

Cultural sites

The Royal Tombs of Buganda - Sacred Grounds of Kings and Ancestral Spirit

The Royal Tombs of Buganda are sacred burial sites for the Kabakas (Kings) of Buganda and revered members of the royal family. These tombs are not merely final resting places—they are spiritual and cultural sanctuaries, symbolising the continuity of the Kingdom, the living memory of past rulers, and the sacred relationship between the living and the departed. The most prominent of these is the Kasubi Royal Tombs, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, considered the spiritual heart of Buganda. Located on Kasubi Hill in Kampala, the Kasubi Tombs house the remains of four Kabakas:

Kabaka Muteesa I (1837-1884) – the first to be buried at Kasubi and credited with introducing formal structures of state and opening Buganda to foreign influence.

Kabaka Mwanga II (1868-1903) – known for his resistance to colonial rule and role during the Uganda Martyrs' era.

Kabaka Daudi Chwa II (1896-1939) – the first Kabaka to receive a western education and modern leadership training.

Kabaka Sir Edward Muteesa II (1924-1969) – the first President of Independent Uganda and father to the current Kabaka.

The central building at the site is known as Muzibu Azaala Mpanga, constructed using traditional materials—wood, reeds, thatch,



and woven panels—is the architectural and spiritual centre of the site. Despite a tragic fire in March 2010, the Kingdom of Buganda, together with UNESCO and the Government of Uganda, has been engaged in restoring the site to its original glory.

Other Royal Tomb Sites

Wamala Tombs – resting place of Kabaka Suuna II, located in Wakiso District. It is believed to be the only tomb where a Kabaka was buried with his regalia and 58 wives.



Bamunanika Tombs – in Luweero District, significant for its historical associations and ceremonies.

Nabulagala and Masaja Sites – contain tombs of other royals, princesses, and historically important members of the royal family.

Preservation and Tourism

As sacred sites, the tombs are open to respectful visitors interested in learning about Buganda's rich heritage. However, strict rules are observed:

- Modest dress and silence in sacred areas
- Photography restrictions in certain inner sanctuaries
- Guided visits led by trained custodians to preserve the sanctity and convey accurate history
- Tourism supports heritage conservation, youth education, and international awareness of Buganda's enduring legacy.



Kasubi Royal Tombs, a UNESCO Heritage Site, is where the four kings of Buganda are buried.



Some of the royal regalia and symbolic items found in Kasubi Royal Tombs have since become tourism magnet



SPORTS TOURISM SPOTLIGHT

Running Through Heritage: THE KABAKA'S 70TH BIRTHDAY RUN AND UGANDA'S SPORT TOURISM BOOM*



Under the 2025 Miss Tourism Uganda theme, "I Am My Culture," we celebrate not only our heritage in language, dress, food and tradition but also in movement. Few events in Uganda capture this cultural identity in motion quite like the Kabaka's Birthday Run, an annual celebration of royalty, unity, health, and cultural pride.

Held on the 6th April 2025 in honor of His Majesty Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II's birthday, this year's run attracted tens of thousands of participants from across the country and beyond. What began as a health awareness campaign has now become a major event in Uganda's sport tourism calendar, drawing international attention and providing a platform to promote Buganda Kingdom's cultural richness, community mobilization, and physical wellness.

This year's theme, aligned with efforts to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS, added a powerful message of social responsibility to an already vibrant cultural celebration. Runners adorned in the official Kabaka Run kits, stamped with the Buganda crest, created a sea of unity that flowed through Kampala's iconic roads—blending tradition with modern movement.



A family takes part in the Kabaka's Run

Sports tourism, as witnessed in the Kabaka's Birthday Run, is a growing concept in Uganda's tourism industry. Events like these:

- * Attract both local and international tourists who engage not just in competition, but in cultural immersion.
- * Support local businesses, hospitality, and transport sectors during the event period.
- * Promote health, peace and unity while fostering positive national identity and pride.

The "I Am My Culture" theme encourages us to recognize that culture is dynamic—it evolves. And when cultural heritage is celebrated through sports, especially on such a unifying scale, we don't just promote tourism; we live our culture in real time.

As Miss Tourism Uganda continues to celebrate and promote Uganda's tourism diversity, the Kabaka's Birthday Run stands as a shining example of how culture, tradition, health and tourism can intersect to create experiences that are memorable, meaningful, and deeply Ugandan. So whether you're a runner, a supporter, or a cultural enthusiast, remember—in every step, we carry our culture forward.

BUNYORO:

The Legacy of Omukama Kabalega

A Lasting Impact on Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom

In the heart of Bunyoro land, the name Kabalega echoes through the ages, a testament to the enduring legacy of a king who ruled with vision and strength. Omukama Kabalega, who reigned from 1870 to 1899, left an indelible mark on the kingdom, shaping its history and culture in ways that continue to inspire and educate generations.

Today, the legacy of Omukama Kabalega lives on in Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom through various institutions, installations, and individuals named in his honor.

The reigning King of Bunyoro, Dr. Solomon Gafabusa Iguru I, is a grandson of Omukama Kabalega, ensuring that his great-grandfather's legacy remains a vital part of the kingdom's identity. His 31st coronation anniversary was held on June 11 at the Karuzika Palace in Hoima, graced by



The great leader of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom Omukama Kabalega.



The Mparo Royal Tombs in Bunyoro

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, kingdom officials, government officials and thousands of jubilant subjects. Addressing the gathering, Museveni congratulated the Banyoro upon reaching this significant milestone and commended the kingdom for its role in the development of both Bunyoro and Uganda at large. At the same function, the President urged cultural institutions to focus on preservation of indigenous languages, promotion of traditional foods, safeguarding rational customs and supporting socio-economic transformation.

During the regional search of the Miss Tourism Uganda beauty pageant in Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom that was held at HB Hotel in Hoima, the girls put on a fantastic show showcasing their different cultures through dance, traditional wear, creative wear and talents.

The evening's winner was Anisha Kyomugisha, 21, from Hoima district followed by Shana Asaba, 21, from Masindi and Shivan Namugerwa, 21, from Masindi in the first and second runner up positions respectively. The three girls join contestants from the other regions for the national crown grand finale set for September, 5, at Kampala Serena Hotel. This year's Miss Tourism Uganda pageant is riding on the theme "I am My Culture". That is why during their bootcamp, the contestants visited Mparo Royal Tombs, Karuzika Palace, Kazikwire Heritage Site in Hoima and Murchison Falls National Park to acquaint themselves with the Bunyoro culture. Socially, the Banyoro people are organised in strong clans with the royal clan of the Kings, princes and princesses. So, the contestants had to engage the cheerful audience a lot about their clans and all to bring that cultural aspect to the fore. The evening's winner Kyomugisha from the Nyabaswazima clan said the reason she took part in the contest was to promote Bunyoro's cultural heritage,



The reigning Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara, Dr Solomon Gafabusa Rukirabasajja Agutamba Iguru I

natural endowments and also to foster cross-cultural understandings and exchange as a cultural ambassador. The fun-filled evening was graced Princess Daphine kabatalesya Adyeri, next in line to the Queen of Bunyoro Kitara kingdom who appreciated the great work from the MTU organisers and promised that the kingdom will always support Miss Tourism Bunyoro. She also contributed sh500, 000 as support towards the event.

The kingdom has also compiled a comprehensive book about Omukama Kabalega's life and reign, which was launched in April 2022 during the centennial commemoration of his demise. This literary tribute is a fitting testament to the king's impact on Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom. Omukama Kabalega's reign was marked by significant achievements, including the development of the kingdom through trade and the strengthening of its military. He expanded the kingdom's territories through conquest and strategic alliances, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to shape the kingdom's identity.

Despite his exile to the Seychelles for 24 years, Omukama Kabalega's spirit remained unbroken, and his legacy

continues to inspire the people of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom. The kingdom's efforts to commemorate his centennial anniversary, including memorial lectures, documentaries, and touring areas where Omukama Kabalega had footprints, demonstrate the deep respect and admiration for this great king.

As the kingdom continues to thrive, the legacy of Omukama Kabalega serves as a reminder of the importance of strong leadership, resilience, and determination. His story is a testament to the enduring power of tradition and culture, and his impact on Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom will be felt for generations to come.

In 1923, Kabalega was released from prison to return to Bunyoro but died in Jinja on April 6, 1923. The site where he died has remains a sacred site in Busoga.

In 1972, President Idi Amin renamed Murchison Falls, located within Murchison Falls National Park, Kabalega Falls after the Omukama. And on June 8, 2009 Omukama Kabalega was declared a national hero of Uganda by President Museveni. UPDF renovated Mparo Royal tombs in his Honour.

The Epic Saga of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom: A Journey through Time

The earliest history of Bunyoro is not known. It is shrouded in mystery, but one thing is certain - the kingdom's rich cultural heritage is a testament to the resilience and determination of its people.

Legend has it that the kingdom's founding dynasty, the Abatembozi, were a pastoral people who established the earliest state-system in the Interlacustrine Region. Though their activities are dimly remembered, their legacy lives on in the traditions and customs of the Banyoro people. It is claimed that they exercised dominion over agricultural communities who earlier had displaced the region's hunter-gatherers to whom archaeologists attribute the origins of the Sangoan and Lupemban industries of the Middle Stone Age, as well as the Wilton industries of the Late Stone Age. The Abachwezi dynasty, which displaced the Abatembozi, about 14th and 15th centuries are said to have turned the Abatembozi state into a loosely organized and amorphous empire called Kitara. These supernatural rulers, credited with performing extraordinary feats, were elevated to a cult status after their defeat. Their reign may have been short, but their impact on the kingdom's culture and traditions is still felt today.

The Ababiito dynasty, founded by the Luo people during the 16th century has been reigning in Bunyoro for centuries. Despite facing numerous challenges by the 18th century, including pressure from neighboring kingdoms such as the Baganda and Banyankole who had been expanding from their nuclear areas and the British colonial rule, the Ababiito have managed to maintain their influence and cultural identity. One of the most famous Ababiito rulers, Kabarega, is remembered in Ugandan annals as having fought tirelessly to resist British colonialism and protect the kingdom's interests. His efforts, though ultimately unsuccessful, have become legendary in Bunyoro's history.

During the early years of the 20th century the Banyoro formed the bulwark of resistance against British colonialism. They blamed the British

for restoring the Tooro kingdom which Kabarega had reconquered; for allowing Buganda and Ankole to expand at their expense; and, most painful of all, for the indignity of being ruled by Baganda chiefs appointed by the colonial government.

The kingdom's struggles against colonial rule continued, culminating in the infamous Nyangire Revolt of 1907. Though the revolt was suppressed, it marked a turning point in the kingdom's history, paving the way for the eventual recognition of Bunyoro-Kitara as a kingdom.

Today, the Banyoro people are engaged in a rebirth of their kingdom, working tirelessly to preserve their cultural heritage and traditions. The coronation of Prince Solomon Gafabusa Iguru as the 27th Omukama of Bunyoro-Kitara in 1994 marked a new era for the kingdom, one that promises to be filled with hope, resilience, and determination.

As the kingdom looks to the future, its people remain committed to their cultural identity and traditions.

Who are the Banyoro?

Unyoro is a corruption of Banyoro. The most popular usages, however, are: Banyoro (the people), Bunyoro (the region), and Bunyoro-Kitara (the kingdom). In the past, the name Kitara was commonly used to denote Greater Bunyoro.

Etymologically, Unyoro was the name that 19th century Arab interpreters gave to those enemies whom the Baganda derisively called Banyoro, meaning inferior foreigners. In Bunyoro, however, a chief was called Omunyoro (pl. ABANYORO). Gradually, the name became an honorific title used in addressing individuals of some significance. The Banyoro live largely in western Uganda, east of Lake Mobutu. The region comprises the districts of Hoima, Masindi, Buliisa, Hoima City, Kagadi, Kakumiro, Kibaale, Kikuube and Kiyandongo in western Uganda. The sub-region is part of the western Rift Valley complex.

And even though most of Bunyoro is well watered and fertile, population density remains the lowest in western Uganda with a Population distribution of about 3,316, 255 as of the 2024 national population census.

They speak Runyoro (Nyoro), which belongs to the Central Bantu division of the great family of Bantu languages. It is spoken essentially in the Bunyoro districts and to a limited extent is understood in Tooro districts and to a lesser extent in Ankole and Buganda. Runyoro is more closely related to Runyankore than Luganda, however.

Cultural rites Economy Subsistence

The preindustrial economy was essentially a subsistence economy: people mostly produced food and other goods for their own use. Agriculture formed the basis of this economy. The ancestors of the Banyoro were both farmers and pastoralists, but the majority of them were and have remained sedentary farmers (ABAIRU). Their products included millet, root crops, bananas, coffee and barkcloth. Their implements were primarily hoes and knives. The pastoralists (ABAHUMA) operated mainly in the grassland areas. Although in those days it was rare to find someone who was both a farmer and a rancher, the two occupations were scrupulously distinct. Knowledge of metal working greatly enhanced agricultural activities (see Industrial Arts). Animal foods included goats, sheep, chickens and a variety of animals that were hunted.

Division of Labour

Generally, women performed most of the basic agricultural tasks and the bulk of the domestic chores, but those functions requiring physical strength were left to the men. A clear example today is Salt Mining in Kibiro salt mines in Hoima mostly done by women, while men engage in selling the products to the market.

Entogoro: A Vibrant Courtship Dance with a Rich History

In Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom, a captivating courtship dance has been a part of the culture for generations. Entogoro, a dynamic and energetic dance, has a fascinating history that dates back to a time when suitors would compete for the hand of their beloved.

According to legend, a group of men vying for the same beautiful Munyoro girl's attention were asked to showcase their stamina and worth through dance. The suitor who impressed the girl's elders with his impressive moves and endurance would win her hand in marriage. Although the dance is no longer used as a means to determine a suitor's eligibility, Entogoro remains an integral part of Nyoro weddings and cultural celebrations.

The dance is characterized by the distinctive sound of pod rattles, known as ebinyege and entogoro, tied around the legs of the performers. These rattles produce percussive rhythms that blend harmoniously with the song and drumbeat, creating a lively and infectious atmosphere.

Visitors to Bunyoro can experience the thrill of Entogoro firsthand by participating in cultural tours and joining local groups of men and women in this traditional dance. Entogoro is a testament to the power of dance to bring people together and celebrate love, community, and tradition.

Meanings of Empaako

Empaako is a praise name or a name of respect used among the Banyoro, Batooro, Batagwenda, Batuku, Basongora and Banyabindi of western Uganda.

Empaako are not indigenous Runyoro words; they were borrowed from Luo following the Biito (a Luo clan) conquest of the Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom around the 14th or 15th century. "Pako" means "praise".

The Banyoro have 12 known empaako. Out of these, 10 begin with letter A and only one starts with letter O, and one with letter B. The eight are believed to have Luo origins with four claimed to be an indigenous Kinyoro one. And that is Akiiki, Apuuli, Araali and Atwoki. It is important to note that there is no mpaako exclusively reserved for women, while four - Araali, Apuuli, Acaali and Abbala are exclusively for men. The rest are unisex, save for Okali which is only for kings.

Traditionally, this ceremony is done when there is a newly born baby in a family. It is normally conducted after three days for a baby girl and four days for a baby boy after birth, the four and three days respectively are to help the mother to heal and boys tend to be more troublesome during delivery. It is also conducted when someone crosses from another culture to Bunyoro culture and this is done as hospitality or when a munyoro son or daughter marries from another tribe.

Bunyoro Region Delegates



KYOMUGISA ANISHA | Age: 21
District: Hoima
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelor of land Surveying and geomatics engineering.
Hobbies: Adventuring
Role model: Mrs. Nambooze Florence



Asaba Shana | Age: 21
District: Masindi
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelors degree in commerce.
Hobbies: Adventuring and watching Movies
Role model: Vanessa Nakate



Namugerwa Shivan Jane | Age: 21
District: Masindi
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelors of science in Marketing
Hobbies: Touring, Exploring and dancing
Role model: My sister



Jane Marungi
Cluster Head
Miss Tourism Bunyoro Region

KIBOKO

PROFECTIV.
Mega Growth



NEW LOOK

GOODBYE
**HAIR
BREAKAGE!**



CoU abolishes wreaths for tree-planting at burials in environmental protection drive

The Church of Uganda has abolished the practice of laying wreaths on caskets during burials. The Church of Uganda has abolished the practice of laying wreaths on caskets during burials in favor of planting trees, as a strategic intervention to promote the protection of the environment.

In a new Strategic Planning Framework for 2026-2030, approved during a joint session of the Provincial Council and the House of Bishops, the Church of Uganda undertook to increase awareness and adaptation of practices that promote environmental protection and mitigate the evident impacts of climate change.

The framework is instructive to all the 39 dioceses of the Church of Uganda, to step up responses towards environmental conservation, climate change adaptation and developing church-tailored preparedness and responses to disasters.

As part of the strategic responses, the Church resolved to abolish the use of wreaths in burials and instead encourage the priests to substitute it with the planting of trees, as a modern ideal practice for honoring the dead; a practice that will be promoted across

the province.

Similarly, all priests are instructed to regularly integrate environmental conservation and climate change messages in their sermons, and sensitize Christians on the dangers of polythene bags to the soil and environment.

Each diocese is also required to institute an Environmental Protection Coordination Taskforce and appoint focal persons at the diocese and each parish, promote the use of renewable energy and other alternative sources of cooking, to cut down on the use of firewood for cooking.

Part of the obligations of the task force include ensuring that all the idle Church land, institutions and individuals are planted with a mix of fruit trees and other indigenous varieties for food and carbon generation.

Reverend Canon William Ongeng, the Church of Uganda Provincial Secretary, indicates that the new strategic planning framework was developed to guide responses to the emerging challenges that communities are facing, due to habits of environmental destruction.

"This framework was informed by the end-line evaluation of the strategic plan for 2016-2025, the process involved wide consultations with all Bishops, the staff and leaders of key ministries of government," he says.

The other interventions include using the Church structures to train farmers on climate-smart agriculture practices such as conservation farming, agroforestry, integrated pest management, promoting the use of simple irrigation technologies and disease management right from household levels.

On the other hand, the Dioceses are also required to link and strengthen farmers' organizations and cooperatives, as key drivers for supporting climate-smart agriculture adoption, and endeavour to strengthen extension services to provide farmers with regular support and guidance.

While launching the new strategic planning framework, Doctor Stephen Kazimba Mugalu, the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, expressed hope that if well implemented, it will enable the dioceses to adapt to the dynamic changing environment and promptly address emerging issues.

He urged the Bishops to collaborate with government ministries and departments, civil society actors, nongovernment organizations and church structures to achieve the intended strategic objectives. To actualize the developed planning framework, the Church instituted a 24-member steering committee to oversee its effective implementation across all dioceses.

According to Archbishop Kazimba, they have also developed a monitoring and evaluation tool and templates that will guide the performance assessment in each diocese.

The other areas of focus in the approved strategic planning framework include mission and evangelism to bring salvation and spiritual transformation, promoting socio-economic development, focusing on institutional development and community engagement. They are carried forward from the expiring 2016-2026 strategic plan.

Kasese Shines on World Tourism Day Celebrating Culture, Conservation, and Community

Kasese, Western Uganda – Nestled at the foot of the majestic Rwenzori Mountains and bordered by Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kasese District proudly took center stage as Uganda marked World Tourism Day with color, culture, and community-led celebrations.

Under the global theme "Tourism and Green Investments", this year's event focused on sustainable tourism, environmental conservation, and economic empowerment through nature and culture-based tourism ventures.

A Cultural and Ecological Showcase

From the early morning, the streets of Kasese bustled with excitement as local residents, dignitaries, tourism stakeholders, and international guests gathered for the grand procession and festival. Traditional dancers in colorful regalia led the parade, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the Bakonzo people.

At the main event grounds, exhibitions featured local handicrafts, organic produce, tourism enterprises, conservation projects, and youth-led innovations in eco-tourism. Visitors

also enjoyed storytelling, drumming, and traditional Rwenzori cuisine.

Voices from the Mountains and the Wild

In his keynote speech, Hon. Tom Butime, Uganda's Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, highlighted Kasese as a model for community-driven tourism, praising local efforts to conserve biodiversity and develop cultural tourism products.

He emphasized the importance of green investments in tourism infrastructure, especially in regions like Kasese, which serve as gateways to Rwenzori Mountains National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, and several crater lakes.

Youth and Women Take the Lead

World Tourism Day in Kasese also put the spotlight on young people and women entrepreneurs making an impact in the tourism sector.

* The Miss Tourism Uganda delegates organized a youth forum on sustainable tourism and climate change, while

* Local women's groups showcased

community-run lodges, tour guiding services, and handmade crafts.

"It's empowering to see women leading conservation and tourism businesses that uplift families and preserve our environment," said Immaculate, a Miss Tourism representative.

Conservation with a Human Touch

Environmental NGOs and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) used the day to engage visitors in tree-planting activities, clean-up campaigns, and wildlife awareness sessions focused on human-wildlife coexistence in areas surrounding Queen Elizabeth National Park. Park rangers offered free guided walks along the park's edge and provided school children with educational materials about protecting wildlife and Uganda's tourism heritage.

Looking Forward

Kasese's World Tourism Day celebration ended with a call to action: to invest in inclusive, green, and locally driven tourism solutions that create jobs, protect ecosystems, and celebrate the unique identity of each region. For Kasese, the day was not just about celebration—but a reminder of the district's potential to be a leading eco-tourism destination in East Africa.

"Tourism is not just about travel. It's about people, places, and purpose," said the District Tourism Officer in closing remarks. "And Kasese has all three."



Miss Tourism Uganda queens join State Minister for Tourism Hon. Martin Mugarra Bahinduka at a tourism event.



Men of Tourism International

Men of tourism International is a new position in that recognizes men and appreciate how much they have done and their love for culture and tourism within their regions



Otule John Kokas | Age: 22
Tribe: Etesot
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Masters of Arts in Literature
Hobbies: Reading
Role model: Okot P'bitek



Brave Jacob Nshabohurira | Age: 27
Tribe: Mukiga
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelor of Environmental Science Technology and Management
Hobbies: Traveling, Adventure, Reading, Volunteering and Conserving the Environment



Asimwe Emmanuel | Age: 25
Tribe: Mukiga
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: A-level (Campus)
Hobbies: Dancing, Reading and Traveling
Role model: Allan Elvis



Katumba Huzalifah | Age: 22
Tribe: Muganda
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelors of travel and Tourism management
Hobbies: Traveling, Fashion and Swimming
Role model: Derrick Ssenyonyi



Amuriat Isaac | Age: 27
Tribe: Etesot
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Pursuing Bachelor of Business Computing majoring in Systems and network Administration
Hobbies: Technology, Fashion, Adventure, Athletic
Role model: Uncle Okot Emmanuel Emagarait



Siwako Prince | Age: 23
Tribe: Mukhonzo
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: 1. Certificate in Film production, Directing and scriptwriting
2. Pursuing Degree of Dental Surgery
Hobbies: Acting, Storytelling, traveling and innovation
Role model: Most Rev. Francis



Aimat Francis | Age: 22
Tribe: Karamojong
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelors in business administration
Hobbies: Basketball, Taikwondo, swimming
Role model: The president of



Mpanga Reagan | Age: 21
Tribe: Muganda
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Pursuing a bachelors degree in architecture
Hobbies: Traveling and Reading
Role model: Alino Lucky Blanka



Acere Mathias Ochen | Age: 25
Tribe: Acholi
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Diploma in Tourism management
Hobbies: Traveling, Content Creation, Marketing
Role model: Mr. Amos Wekesa



Amanya Cohen | Age: 23
Tribe: Munyankole
Title: Men of Tourism International 2025 finalist
Education: Diploma in Sign Language and Interpretation
Hobbies: Traveling, Fashion and Swimming
Role model: H.E President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda



Olobo Ivan | Age: 25
Tribe: Lango
Title: UACE
Education: Bachelors of travel and Tourism management
Hobbies: Cooking
Role model: Kampala Harris / Rebecca Kadaga



ELIJAH A. REAGAN YUNIK
Trainer for Man of tourism

The exciting and rising Coffee Safari in Uganda

The phrase "Let's meet over a cup of coffee" has become a popular way to initiate relaxed meetings, especially among the country's elite. It sounds elite. It sounds cool, doesn't it? Coffee, often referred to as "liquid gold," has been an integral part of global culture for centuries, and Uganda is no exception.

Uganda's coffee culture is a treasure trove of experiences waiting to be explored. Visitors can visit small coffee farms, participate in coffee cupping sessions, and learn about sustainable farming practices. By engaging with local coffee communities, tourists can contribute positively to the environment and local economies. If it is your drink of choice, consider traveling to the source. Coffee tourism takes travelers to regions like Colombia's Zona Cafetera or the coffee-growing mountains of Ethiopia. In Uganda, you can visit small coffee farms, participate in coffee cupping sessions, and even learn about sustainable farming practices. By engaging directly with the growers, travelers can help support fair wages and environmental practices in the coffee industry.

Miss Tourism Uganda is celebrating culture this year, celebrating Uganda's coffee culture is vital. When you explore the culture, you will not only witness the process of making coffee from bean to cup, but you will also assist in conserving the forests that cultivate exceptional coffee beans. In 2025, it is clear that travelers are looking for more than just TikTok and Instagram-worthy destinations. They want experiences that are meaningful, eco-friendly, and beneficial to the places they visit. Whether it is soaking in hot springs of Amuru in Northern Uganda, helping with beekeeping in the Rwenzori region, or walking the Royal Mile in Budongo forest, a straight forest road historically used by Omukama Kabalega to train his elite standing army—the Abarusuura, in Hoima, these unique forms of sustainable travel offer not only a chance to explore new cultures but also an

helping with beekeeping in the Rwenzori region, or walking the Royal Mile in Budongo forest, a straight forest road historically used by Omukama Kabalega to train his elite standing army—the Abarusuura, in Hoima, these unique forms of sustainable travel offer not only a chance to explore new cultures but also an opportunity to contribute positively to local communities and the environment.

In recent years, Uganda has experienced a surge in coffee consumption, driven by a growing number of coffee shops and increasing demand in both rural and urban areas. The Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) has played a significant role in promoting coffee consumption, contributing to the rising popularity of coffee in the country. Local coffee shops like Café Javas, Endiro Coffee, and Coffee At Last have become hubs for coffee enthusiasts.

In fact, as for 2024/25 the forecast was to grow by 152%, reaching approximately 330,000 bags, driven by a growing coffee culture. The report notes that the number of coffee shops in Uganda is rising as well as an increasing trend of coffee consumption in households in both rural and urban areas. The coffee market in Uganda is completely liberalised, with a few statutory checks on product quality and safety. The Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) actively promotes coffee consumption, contributing to the rising popularity of coffee in the country, the report states.

Whilst the economy as a whole has expanded and improved in recent years, coffee remains of vital importance, earning on average just short of 60% of annual export revenues during the period 1996 to 2000. It is estimated that as much as 20% of the entire population earn all or a large part of their cash income from coffee. And coffee growing being part of agritourism, it needs developing in Uganda. Agritourism has been around since the 1980s, offering travelers the opportunity to stay on farms and experience rural life. It is a fantastic way to support farmers and help preserve the environment.

Opting for an agritourism experience enables travelers to sustain small farms while enjoying a more authentic and environmentally friendly holiday. Even the UK offers agritourism where farmers manage their land to promote nature conservation.

In Uganda, following decades of total state control of the coffee sector, the industry was fully liberalised between 1991 and 1992 and is currently entirely in private hands.

Production averaged almost 3.3 million bags in the six years from 1996 to 2001, with a peak of 4.2 million bags in 1996/7 (a total last seen in 1972) and a low of 2.0 million in 2005/6. The proportion of Arabica coffee fluctuates from around 8 to 10% of the total local consumption is limited at around 3% of production. Today, Uganda's coffee export earnings almost doubled to \$2.22 billion in the year to June, official data showed. The results were bolstered by global coffee prices hitting record highs this year, as major producers Brazil and Vietnam suffered low crop yields on account of drought.

It is good weather and high investment in the industry that has pushed Uganda to become Africa's number one coffee exporter in June. "Uganda's recent coffee success is the result of long-term investments in replanting, farmer training, and value-chain development," David Ortega, professor of food economics and policy at Michigan State University, told Semafor, with Kampala having launched a major coffee investment project in 2017.

Coffee is consumed in Uganda in various ways but the most common ones include steaming dry coffee cherries (the rounded fruit of the coffee plant), sometimes with salt and a pinch of chili pepper, then dried again and wrapped in fibers and eaten as a snack, both at home and while travelling. This method is used in addition to the one in which ground beans are roasted on a broken clay pot and drunk with hot water as a beverage.

Amidst all the current commercialization of coffee and campaigns by the government to increase export volumes, coffee remains a central pillar in the cultural values and traditions of many Ugandans in different traditional coffee-growing regions, mainly in its central plains, and eastern and western highlands.

While it has its roots in the ancient coffee forests of Ethiopia, it has since spread across the world, finding a unique home in Uganda. Coffee is one of the major crops predominantly grown by small-scale producers in Uganda. Almost 95% of Uganda's recorded coffee production is exported and the rest is consumed locally in different ways.

Coffee Regions and Flavors in Uganda

Uganda's diverse regions offer unique flavor profiles, from the fruity and floral notes of Arabica beans grown in the highlands of Mount Elgon and the Rwenzori Mountains to the bold and earthy flavors of Robusta beans from the lowland areas. The country's coffee-growing regions include:

- Mount Elgon: Known for its Arabica beans with rich, wine, and fruit notes.
- Rwenzori Mountains: Produces Arabica coffee with spicy and sweet notes.
- Lake Victoria Crescent: Robusta coffee is a way of life for many inhabitants, with flavors shaped by the region's semi-equatorial climate.
- Western Savannah Grasslands: Robusta coffee benefits from inter-cropping and shade trees, with a fruitier cup profile in elevated districts like Kibale and Hoima.

LENS CAPTURED

The camera couldn't miss these moments all around the events, outreaches and projects that have been happening all year round.



A jubilant Queen Atino Lucky Bianca gets crowned by Queen Rukoya and the journey started on.



New Equator Monument Unveiled in Kasese:

A Symbol of Balance, Tourism, and Opportunity

Kasese District, Uganda – With drums beating and flags waving, the people of Kasese gathered to witness a landmark moment: the official unveiling of the new Equator Monument along the Kasese-Kikorongo Road. The striking installation, now a prominent landmark, marks the exact latitude where the equator line crosses through this scenic part of western Uganda.

The monument not only celebrates geographical wonder, but also positions Kasese as a rising tourism hub, offering travelers a memorable stopover point between Queen Elizabeth National Park, the Rwenzori Mountains, and surrounding crater lakes.

A Symbol of National Pride and Local Growth

The Equator Monument, commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities in collaboration with the Kasese District Local Government, is part of Uganda's broader effort to diversify and enhance tourism attractions across the country.

"The equator belongs to every Ugandan. This monument is a celebration of our natural positioning,

our people, and the power of tourism to transform communities," said Hon. Martin Mugarra, Minister of State for Tourism, during the launch.

Design and Features

The modern, artful structure features:

- A circular globe-like center piece engraved with "0° Latitude"
- Markers showing the northern and southern hemispheres
- Informative signage explaining the science and significance of the equator
- A mini amphitheater for cultural performances and photo opportunities

The site also includes paved walkways, solar lighting, and stalls for local artisans to sell crafts, snacks, and souvenirs offering both education and economic opportunity.



Boosting Community Tourism

Local leaders and tourism stakeholders in Kasese are optimistic about the monument's potential to attract domestic and international visitors, especially those en route to or from Queen Elizabeth National Park.

"We've always had the equator pass through our district, but now we've turned that natural feature into an asset," said Jane Bwambale, a local tour operator. "It's a game changer for small businesses, youth, and the entire tourism value chain."

Involving the Community

The unveiling event featured performances from local dance troupes, a cultural showcase organized by Ankole and Rwenzururu heritage groups, and speeches from district officials and community youth leaders. The Miss Tourism Uganda Foundation also played a role in promoting the site through media coverage and influencer outreach.

As part of the launch, students from nearby schools participated in a geography quiz and eco-tour, blending education and engagement.

A New Chapter for Kasese

With improved road access, security, and increasing interest in off-the-beaten-path travel, Kasese is poised to benefit greatly from the Equator Monument's presence.

Officials confirmed plans to add a visitor center, café, and interactive digital features in future phases of development, with support from the Uganda Tourism Board and private investors. "This monument is more than a marker. It's a message to the world Kasese is open for tourism, culture, and investment," said the Kasese District Chairperson.



Eastern Region: A region of the wise people

In the eastern reaches of Uganda, tradition and culture are woven into the fabric of everyday life. The people are warm and welcoming, their hospitality legendary. If you ever find yourself in this beautiful region, you will undoubtedly be struck by the richness and diversity of the "Wise people from the East" who cross the Nile from Jinja City onwards.

As of the last population census, the number to 11,403,222 people with the least coming from Sabiny area. In this year's Miss Tourism Uganda beauty pageant riding on the theme "I am My Culture," the region will be represented by Rhoda Phiona Amali, an Adhola from Tororo District who was crowned as Miss Tourism Uganda Eastern region queen 2025/26 at Majik Resort Beach in Busia District on July 19.

The 21-year old queen is a dedicated student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture and Crop Science. Amali was followed by Mary Khaitsa, (23) a proud Mugwere from Sironko District and Maka Asha, (20) a proud Mugwere from Budaka district in first and second runner up positions respectively. Miss Tourism Uganda, a prestigious national beauty that celebrates cultural heritage, natural beauty and tourism potential of Uganda will crown their queen on September 5 at Kampala Serena Hotel. Below are some of the ethnic groups of the culturally rich Eastern Uganda.

The Bagwere

Not much is known about the Bagwere other than being excellent rice farmers and brilliant in the education sector. However, about 800 years ago, oral traditions have it that the ancestors of the Bagwere people broke off from a clan of rainmakers (royal priests) tasked with reading the sky and predicting the present or absence of rain. Some stayed in Namibia and others moved upwards in the Nguni/Ngoni migration and assimilated with the people in the Shenzu great lakes regions (land of lakes like Lake Victoria, Tanganyika, Kyoga, Albert) now called Eastern Africa. The Bagwere people originally migrated from Western Uganda along Lake Kyoga, finally settling along the Mpologoma River in Uganda. They consist of about 86 clans that are headed by a tribal chief called Ikumbania wa Bagwere. The last recognisable Ikumbania was John Wayabire who passed away in 2021, and since then there has been friction to elect another cultural leader. Their traditions say that Bagwere moved from Bunyoro following the disintegration that accompanied the arrival of the Luo and the collapse of the Bachwezi dynasty. Their language and their supposed connection with Bunyoro presuppose that the Bagwere are a Bantu group. Their area of origin may thus be Katanga region of Central Africa like other Bantu.



Today they are located in eastern part of Uganda covering districts of Budaka, Kibuku, Pallisa, Butebo and parts of Mbale. They current pitch camp around the swamps of Lake Kyoga in modern day Uganda. The Bugwere Cultural Union headquarter is called "Embuga" located in Budaka Town Council, but with branches in Pallisa, Kibuku and Butebo counties as and when required.

Isimoola is the parliament of BCU and its members are called "Bakwenda. The emblem is represented by a set of "Namadu" drums which is an instrument of identity and a symbol of cultural heritage. It should be observed that unlike for Buganda, Toro, Bunyoro and Ankole, with heritable kings; the BCU leader is elected among the heads of the clans.

Clan structure

The Bagwere people organize themselves into clans and adopt names that identify them as part of their clan. Each clan also is identified by a particular animal or plant totem. These classifications help prevent intermarriage within the clan, which is prohibited

under Bantu law.

The main economic activity of the Bagwere is subsistence crop agriculture and animal husbandry. To a lesser extent, fishing, fish farming and bee keeping are increasingly practiced in Pallisa District. The major crops include: Cassava, Millet, Sorghum, Maize, Groundnuts, Beans, Peas, Sweet potatoes, Rice, Cotton, Sunflower, Soybeans, Bananas, Matooke.

Cattle, goats, sheep, poultry, pigs, are some of the animals raised in the district. The district is further blessed with nine (9) minor lakes that comprise part of the Lake Kyoga system.

The following are the nine lakes: Lake Lemwa, Lake Kawi, Lake Nakwa, Lake Meito, Lake Geme, Lake Omunuo, Lake Nyanzala, Lake Nyaguo.

There are nine (9) stocked fish farms in the district. Fish farming offers a big



potential to increase the supply of fish for the population and hence improve on the nutrition of the population.

Bagwere culture

Bagwere culture is built around traditions that mark the celebration of births, marriages and deaths.

The Bagwere marriage ceremonies are celebrated traditionally with music played on traditional instruments made out of natural substances—an entongli, or lute-like instrument, made from a gourd and animal skin, or



lukeme (thumb piano) made from clay. Singing and dancing also are part of the festivities.

After giving birth, a new Mugwere mother sleeps on banana leaves and eats bananas cooked in their skin.

Music

Their traditional music is called Tongoli, a five stringed hand held instrument, modeled along a one string instrument elsewhere in Africa known as the Kora. The Bagwere are also identified with namadu, a set of seven drums as one of the famous traditional musical instruments.

The Samia

In Ugandan societies, Samia speaking people are known to be very clever people due to frequent consumption of fresh fish. In fact non-Samia speaking people often refer to them as "Obusuma ne'Ngoni Bicha speed" meaning brown stiff porridge and fish roll down the throat very fast.

These people live in Western Kenya and Eastern Uganda, predominantly in Busia district. They are composed of several clans and their ancient economic activities include fishing in Lake Victoria and other rivers such as River Slo, crop farming (obulimi), and animal farming (obutuki).

The Samia speaking people, as widely known by other tribes, speak a dialect similar to the Luhya tribe in Kenya.

However, on the Ugandan side there is a slight variation in the dialect spoken by the Samia of Southern Busia on the fringe of Lake Victoria and those of North Busia district closer to Tororo District. The former speak Olusamia

while the latter speak Olugwe. The two dialects are difficult to differentiate by non-Samia speaking people but easily discernible by the natives.

Culture and Music

Samia speaking people love music which is played in their various ceremonies, which include marriage (Obugole/ Obweya), funeral (amasika), veneration of ancestors (ebikuda mukutu and Enga'nyo), and wrestling (amalengo). Their musical instruments include: (a) A large violin-like wooden instrument called Adungu (b) A drum called Engalabe, covered at one end with the skin of a monitor lizard (c) A flute called Erete and (d) An instrument called Sikudi. The major traditional dances are owaro, ekworo, ebloodi and esikudi. The ebloodi and ekworo are love dances. Owaro and esikudi are performed when people are happy.

Clans

Samia speaking people have a number of clans, each person belongs to the father's clan. You cannot marry from your clan or your mother's clan.

History

Years before modern government, Samia people used to live in villages called Engongo which are separated by valleys and within Engongo they had Engoba.

The daily lives of Samia people are dictated by customs and traditions. For instance, a woman who loses her husband should be remarried to a brother of the deceased so that should this widow wish to bear more children, they should resemble their kin.

Their diet consists of cassava bread made of sorghum or millet, often mixed with fermented cassava also called obusuma. Sometimes white stiff porridge made out of maize flour added. The food is eaten with vegetables, meat, or chicken.

The Samia also largely consume gruel, rice and bananas.

Traditional Marriage among the basamia-bagwe

In the Basamia-Bagwe tradition, marriage is not just a union between two individuals but a bond between families. The rituals of courtship and marriage are steeped in ancient customs. A young man's pursuit of a maiden begins with seduction, a delicate dance of words and gestures that may or may not yield a positive response. If the girl's interest is piqued, the suitor will

Eastern Region Delegates



Khaitsa Mary | Age: -
District: Sironko
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Certificate in Tour Guideing & Driving
Hobbies: Football, Netball, Dancing, and traveling
Rolemodel: Amos Wekesa



Maka Asha | Age: 20
District: Bukedea
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Form six vacist
Hobbies: Dancing and playing netball
Role model: My Mother



Among Janet | Age: 23
District: Bukedea
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelor's of Science in Banking and finance
Hobbies: Traveling, reading and writing
Role model: Among Annet Anita



Cinderella Damba
Cluster Head
Miss Tourism Eastern



plant a spear outside her mother's hut, a symbolic declaration of his intentions. Should the girl accept, she will retrieve the spear and take it to her mother's hut, setting in motion the intricate process of bride wealth negotiations. The Basamia-Bagwe do not fix a uniform bride price for every girl. Instead, the cost is determined by the groom's status, wealth, and titles. The bride wealth typically consists of four to eight cows, accompanied by an assortment of goats, each with its own specific role in the marriage ritual. Once the bride wealth is paid, arrangements are made to take the girl to her husband's home.

Traditional religion and taboos

The Basamia-Bagwe had an idea of a Supreme Being called "Were" or Nsaye. Were said to dwell in heaven and to be responsible for creating the earth and heavenly bodies. They also believed in ancestral spirits. Ancestral spirits were believed to intervene in human affairs and were known to cause harm, death and misfortune if not properly attended to.

The society was patrilineal and women took up the clans and taboos of their husbands. This was a taboo for a parent to sleep in the same hut as his son-in-law and once children had grown to a certain age, roughly ten years, they would not sleep in the same hut as their parents.

Women were not supposed to eat chicken, pork and lung fish. The Basamia-Bagwe also believed in witch craft and curses.

Political set up

They did not have chieftainships. Every village was under the jurisdiction of an elder called the Nalundiho. Besides being a political figure, the Nalundiho was also a rain maker.

Samia's Cultural Sites

Budimo tree The tale of a tree and Bishop Hannington's remains.

In the village of Budimo, a tale of a tree and a bishop's remains has been woven into the fabric of local legend. The Omutaabi tree, a thicket that once served as a fortress for the Badimo people, stands as a testament to the region's rich history. The Badimo, forced to flee their homes due to sleeping sickness in the 1870s, left behind a legacy that would be passed down through generations. Some moved to Kenya and settled at present day Kadimo, while others migrated to

present day Namayingo District.

The fortress, surrounded by a moat and with separate entrances for each clan, was a place of safety and defense. The Balyali and Banyudetli people, who co-occupied the fortress, lived in a time of great change and upheaval. It was here that two men, Ochola and Osore, arrived with the remains of Bishop James Hannington, an Anglican missionary who had been killed in a neighboring district of Kyando (present day Mayuge District) on their way to the coast. According to local tradition, the body of a foreigner could not be allowed into the fortress. Instead, Ochola and Osore were permitted to stay outside, where they rested and received food and water. They placed the bishop's body, wrapped in banana fibers, in the branches of the Omutaabi tree to protect it from wild animals. For four days, they tended to the body, keeping a bonfire burning at night to ward off the darkness.

Years later, in 1998, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, declared the site a shrine. Since then, annual services have been held at the Omutaabi tree, now known as the Hannington tree in Budimo village, Busia District. For Duncan Wandera Egondi, a 71-year-old grandson of the Banyudetli, the shrine is a source of pride. He reflects on his ancestors' actions, feeling a deep sense of connection to the land and its history.

A Legacy Endures

The story of the Omutaabi tree and Bishop Hannington's remains serves as a reminder of the region's rich cultural heritage. The annual services held at the shrine bring together people from far and wide, celebrating the legacy of the bishop and the traditions of the local community. As the years pass, the tale of the tree and the bishop's remains will continue to be told and retold, a testament to the enduring power of history and tradition.

Butaleja: Abanyoli their love for mushrooms is unmatched

Known as "Abalya Lwooba," or mushroom eaters, the Banyole have a deep appreciation for the natural world and the bounty it provides in the rolling grasslands of eastern Uganda. They live primarily in the Butaleja District, where they engage in subsistence agriculture, growing crops such as finger millet, sorghum, maize, cassava, and sweet potato. The region is densely populated, with papyrus swamps and rolling grasslands that support a thriving agricultural economy. Rice, cotton, and coffee are grown for cash, providing a vital source of income for the community.

The Banyole are a Bantu people, with a language and customs that are closely related to the Bagwe and Basoga. They speak the Nyole language and are mostly polygamous divided into many clans, each with its own leader, known as the Omutuusa, who wears skins as a symbol of recognition. The Banyole have a complex system of divination, with lamuli, or diviners, who practice invocation as a means of communicating with the spirit world.

A History of Migration

According to tradition, the Banyole people originated from near the point where the Yala River enters Lake Victoria. They were forced to migrate east due to pressure from Nilotic people, eventually settling in their current location. This history is reflected in their language, customs, and cultural practices, which show a strong connection to the Bagwe and Basoga.

A Growing Community

Today, the Banyole population numbers around 300,000, with a growing presence in districts such as Budaka, Mbale, Tororo, Bugiri, Namutumba, and Pallisa. In 2019, the clan leaders of the Banyole elected their first cultural head, marking an important milestone in the community's development. Despite some controversy surrounding the election, the event represents a significant step forward for the Banyole people.

A Diverse Faith

The Banyole people practice a range of faiths, including Christianity and Islam, with a smaller percentage adhering to traditional beliefs. Their spiritual practices are an integral part of their cultural identity, with divination and invocation playing a significant role in their daily lives.

The Jopadhola: A Land of Mist and Rock

The Tororo District, home to the Jopadhola people, is a land of striking natural beauty. The gigantic dormant volcanic rock that stands at an elevation of 1,483 metres, dominates the district landscape has given the town its name, derived from the Adhola words "Tor" (mist) and "Oro" (year).

The mist that forms around the rock at certain times of the year is a reminder of the region's unique geography and the Jopadhola people's deep connection to the land.

Notably, the rock ranks as the second

tallest volcanic plug across the entire African continent, with the first located in Nigeria and the third in South Africa.

This majestic rock that captures the eye of a first-time visitor has since become the symbol of Tororo town's identity, contributing a lot to tourism development in the district found on the border with Kenya. This is the home of the Jopadhola.

A Luo Heritage

The Jopadhola are a subgroup of the Luo people, a Nilotic tribe that has maintained its language and cultural identity despite centuries of interaction with neighboring Bantu and Ateker communities. Their language, Dhopadhola, is a Western Nilotic language, closely related to the Acholi and Alur languages of Uganda and the Dholuo language of Kenya. Also known as Badama (the name given by the Baganda invaders), they

comprise about eight percent of the country's total population.

The name "Jopadhola" is derived from their founding father, Adhola, and their land is known as Padhola, a testament to their deep connection to the region.

A History of Migration

According to legend, the Jopadhola people originated from a Luo prince named Adhola, who fled his kingdom in Pajao after his stepbrother Olumu seized power. Adhola and his brothers journeyed south, settling in the forested areas of present-day Tororo District. This self-imposed isolation allowed them to preserve their language and culture, setting them apart from other Luo tribes.

A Semi-Centralized Society

The Jopadhola social structure is semi-centralized, with over 52 clans, each with its own cultural practices, common ancestry, and distinct lineage.

The clan leaders refer to themselves as brothers, tracing their genealogy back to Adhola, the founding father. This monolithic view of history has fostered a strong sense of identity and community among the Jopadhola people.

A People of Tradition

The Jopadhola people are primarily pastoralists, with a strong emphasis on tradition and cultural heritage. Their history and customs are woven into the fabric of everyday life, and their language and culture continue to thrive in the face of modernization and change. As a people, they remain deeply rooted in their ancestral lands, proud of their heritage and committed to preserving their unique identity.

Marriage and traditions of the Japadhola

What happened in Padhola was that all marriages were arranged and young men were not expected to go hunting for future spouses. Instead what happened was that as soon as a father got a baby boy it was incumbent upon him to begin looking for a parent with a baby girl. If he found one the two parents would make friends and begin visiting each other.

When the boy grew up to the age of say 18 and the girl was 16 or over the boy was informed by his father about the bride who had been selected or arranged for him. The boy was thereafter expected to go and bring the girl home. This was usually a very tricky and hazardous operation as it was always a matter of force.

The pattern was like this; the boy would assemble a small army of friends to help him. They would sometimes for many days go "preying" on the girl at a well or when she went collecting firewood.

When considered safe, the boy and his friends would way-lay the girl on the way from the well or collecting fire wood when the girl would be captured and dragged by force to the boy's house. Should there be a miscalculation and the girls brothers intercept, severe fights always broke out.

Religion

Like the Acholi, the Lugbara and the Langi, the Japadhola people conceived of jok as a supreme being. However, they did not take it as far as the Acholi and the Langi did.

Among the Japadhola people, the concept of jok was later merged into the Bantu belief in Were, a supreme being whose chief services to mankind were mainly connected with fertility. Japadhola people traditions assert that they have always believed in one Supreme Being called Were.



Bugisu sub-region: where age-old cultures still rule.

Other than Imbalu, Kadodi and Malewa delicacy known for Bagisu in most of Ugandan societies, the Bagisu are known for their fiery spirit, quick to anger and brawl, but this stems from their cultural upbringing, where men are expected to stand up for their rights. This assertiveness is woven into their fabric, influencing their daily lives and interactions. A notable aspect of Bagisu culture is the Imbalu circumcision ritual, a rite of passage held every two years in August, marking a boy's transition to manhood.

Nestled in the eastern highlands of Uganda, the Bagisu people also known as the Gisu or Bamasaba thrive, their culture deeply rooted in tradition. Their land itself is breathtaking, with Mount Elgon's towering presence in the districts of Mbale City, Bududa, Bulambuli, Manafwa, Mbale, Namisindwa and Sironko in Eastern Uganda, with fertile soils making it an agricultural haven. Rivers like Manafwa, Soronko, and Lwakhakha flow through the hills, caves, and gorges, providing a lifeline for the community. These rivers have countless tributaries where Imbalu candidates perform the ritual of washing their penises before proceeding for pen surgery. Bagisu are closely related to the Bukusu people of Kenya.

They speak Lugisu, sometimes called Lumasaba which belongs to Niger-Congo language family. Like other Bantu languages, Lugisu, a dialect of Lumasaba, is spoken by the Bagisu, with variations depending on their location. While Ludadiri is a Lugisu dialect spoken by the Bagisu from the north, Lubuuya is the Lugisu dialect spoken in south Bugisu. Further, the Bagisu who live near the Babukusu of western Kenya have the influence of Lubukusu, the language of Babukusu. And yet, the Bagisu who live

in Central Bugisu speak a Lugisu dialect influenced by languages including Luganda, Lusoga, Lusamia and Lunyoli. The name "Bagisu" is thought to have originated from Maswahaba's son, Mwambu, nicknamed Nkisu by his Maasai uncles, which Maswahaba pronounced as Mugisu. Nkisu means a bull in Maasai language and had stolen Mwambu's bull.

History and Cultural relations

Traditionally the Bagisu believe they are the descendants of Muntu (Mundu) the first man to live on Mount Elgon. He is said to have come out of a hole in the ground at the top of the mountain, but other traditions have him coming from Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

The general belief of the Bagisu is that originally they lived at the top of Mount Elgon but as the population increased they moved down to the lower regions, although some say that it was the eruption of Mount Elgon, then an active volcano, that forced them to move.

Cultural Practices:

Imbalu Circumcision: A coming-of-age ritual for boys, signifying their transition to manhood. Those who evade this rite are often forcibly circumcised, a testament to the community's unwavering commitment to tradition.

Female Scarification: Girls, typically between 10 to 12 years old, undergo facial scarring, cutting their skin and rubbing ash into the wounds to create intricate keloids. This practice is a prerequisite for marriage, underscoring its significance in Bamasaba culture.

Malewa Delicacy: A Cultural Staple

Bamboo shoots are not only a food source but also hold spiritual

significance. The Bamasaba ancestors believed that these shoots had medicinal properties, and they continue to be an essential part of their diet and traditions.

In this land, where tradition and nature intertwine, the Bamasaba people find strength in their cultural practices, passed down through generations. Their stories, woven around the Imbalu



ceremony and bamboo shoots, are a testament to the enduring power of tradition.

Ancestor

The Bamasaba ancestor, Maswahaba migrated from the Ethiopian Mountains traveling via Lake Turkana to Sironko and settled around Bududa where he fell in love with a Maasai girl who was known as Nabarwa. The family of Nabarwa demanded that in order for Maswahaba to marry their daughter he had to undergo their rite of circumcision. He agreed to do so.

Arts

Artistic expression among the Bagisu is primarily confined to singing, dancing, and the playing of musical instruments. The instruments include a seven-stringed lyre, played by professional males, a single or double-stringed musical bow played with a gourd resonator, a man's instrument, and a reed zither played by women. Drums are played by both men and women.

On the plains area of Bagisu, a four-holed flute of bamboo is played with the instrument held vertically. Whistles of hard-bodied fruits are made by herd-boys. At one time side-blown horns were common, but these have generally dropped out of use in the twentieth century.

Religious belief

The Bagisu worship a supreme God called wele lunya- also known as wele Namanga/Weri Kubumba.

Sebei people: A traditional region of world champions

The Sebei people are renowned today for producing world-class athletes who have put Uganda on the global map. Names like Joshua Cheptegei, Jacob Kiplimo, Stephen Kiprotich, and Peruth Chemutai are synonymous with excellence in long-distance running and steeplechase events. Their achievements have brought pride and recognition to the Sebei community and the country at large.

These people found in the rugged terrain of eastern Uganda, thrive with their culture and traditions shaped by the majestic Mount Elgon. They are a Southern Nilotic ethnic group of the Kalerin stock inhabiting eastern Uganda on the north slope of Mount Elgon in the districts of Bukwo, Kween and Kapchorwa. They can also be found in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya. They speak Kupsabiny and are about three-quarters of the population who live on the escarpment, an area that was originally characterised by thick forests, fast flowing rivers, including the well-known Sipi River with its three falls.

They traditionally engage in subsistence farming and cattle rearing. They cultivate crops like maize, beans, wheat, and potatoes, and sell their produce in local markets. However, poor road infrastructure in some areas hinders their ability to transport crops to market. Cattle rearing is also challenging due to limited land and constant raids from neighboring tribes.

Much of the land has now been cleared for agricultural production, resulting in a change in rainfall pattern and warmer temperatures than was previously the case.

History of the Sebei or Sabiny people

In language and culture, the Sebei are closely affiliated to the people on the southern slopes of Elgon; indeed, modern politics largely severed these close ties, though a good deal of intermarriage and movement between the territories and some psychological identity remain.

Clan and Lineage

Each Sebei belongs to a clan (aret, arosyek, pl.), a patrilineal, strictly exogamous, named social entity. Aret membership is the most important affiliation in a man's life, it is the first thing a person wants to know about a stranger. A man cannot change clan affiliation, except as clans may split apart. Clans have a strong spiritual hold on their members and are even seen as having a kind of genetic inheritance of traits.

There are some two hundred separate clans among the Sebei, though a definitive list cannot be made. Each clan is composed of the descendants of a single founder, and usually its name is formed by prefixing the syllable kap (descendants of) to the founder's name. Some, however, have names derived from mythic accounts or some habit or practice attributed to the founder.

Busoga Kingdom:

A land of the Source of the mighty Nile and warm people

Known for their Chapatti making skill, in the heart of Uganda, where the mighty Nile River flows, lies the land of the Basoga, a tribe steeped in history and culture. The soil is fertile, the climate is pleasant, and the people are warm and welcoming. The Basoga are one of Uganda's largest ethnic groups, residing between the majestic Lake Victoria and Lake Kyoga. These people speak Lusoga, a Bantu language related to Luganda, the Buganda

language. Lusoga has numerous dialects that differ from principality to principality. They also use English and Swahili as lingua francas, particularly in cities and schools.

Origins and History

The Basoga trace their genealogy back to Mukama, a legendary hunter who came from the east and resided in the area in the 14th century. This 14th-century figure is said to have settled in the area, leaving behind a legacy that would shape the destiny of his descendants. Mukama's sons established 11 principalities, each with its own distinct character and chief, chosen from one of Basoga's five royal clans. These include: Bugabula, Bukono, Bukooli, Bulamogi, Bunha, Batembe, Kigulu, Luuka, Mawogola, Nkono, and Zibondo. And the five clans include: Ngobi, Nkima, Nkono, Tabingwa, or Waguma. The chiefs in turn pay tribute to the Kyabazinga, acknowledging his authority and spiritual guidance.

The Basoga people have a deep connection with their neighbors, the Baganda, sharing a common language and culture. This bond has led to frequent alliances and interactions, with some Basoga individuals rising to influential positions within the Buganda kingdom. However, the Basoga have also faced numerous challenges, including invasions and attacks from neighboring kingdoms such as Bunyoro, Ankole and Kagarwa. Despite these obstacles, they have preserved their independence and identities, showcasing their resilience and determination.

Cultural and Historical Significance

The Basoga people have a deep connection with their neighbors, the Baganda, sharing a common language and culture. This bond has led to frequent alliances and interactions, with some Basoga individuals rising to influential positions within the Buganda kingdom. However, the Basoga have also faced numerous challenges, including invasions and attacks from neighboring kingdoms. Despite these obstacles, they have preserved their independence and identities, showcasing their resilience and determination.

The Monarchy's Legacy

The Basoga monarchy has experienced periods of abolition and restoration, with William Gabula Nadiopo IV currently reigning as the 10th Kyabazinga of Basoga. This leader continues to play a vital role in preserving the kingdom's traditions and cultural heritage, ensuring the Basoga people's history and identity remain vibrant and relevant.

Spiritual Beliefs

The Basoga people worship a supreme god named Lubaale, as well as ancestor spirits and nature deities. This spiritual framework provides a sense of connection to their heritage and the natural world, guiding their actions and decisions.

In the midst of change and challenge, the Basoga people remain committed to their traditions, preserving the essence of their kingdom and cultural identity. Their story is a testament to the enduring power of heritage and community.

Culture and Lifestyle

The Basoga people have a rich and

diversified culture that is reflected in their language, music, dance, art, cuisine, and traditions. They are well-known for their music and dance, which serve as entertainment, education, and rituals. They use a variety of musical instruments, including drums, flutes, lyres, harps, xylophones, and rattles. Some of the most prominent Basoga dances include the Tamenhaibunga, which celebrates love and unity; the Irongo, which honors the Kyabazinga and the chiefs; and the Nalufuka, which is performed by women during weddings. Bigwala dance is performed during royal celebrations such as coronations and funerals and, in recent decades, on social occasions. Bigwala plays a significant role in contributing to unity among the Basoga people. The lyrics of the songs narrate the history of the Basoga, focusing in particular on their king, thus symbolically reconfirming their identity and links with their past. Bigwala also addresses issues such as leadership, marriage problems and acceptable social norms and practices.

Dress Code: Gomesi/Busuti is the traditional dress for Baganda and Basoga women. It is believed that this dress existed way back before missionaries and Indians arrived in Uganda. The first Gomesi was made of bark cloth however today they come in materials such as silk, cotton and other fabrics. It is a long dress that sweeps the ground with pointed outstanding triangular-shoulder pads and square neck. Attractions and historic sites.

Kagulu Rock

This was the first settlement area for the Bunyoro Basoga, led by Mukama. Although Kagulu's cultural influence is widespread, its visible landmark is Kagulu Rock. The rock is between two roads which fork at its foot, leading to Gwaya and Iyingo. The rock has a clear view of almost all Basoga, with steps making it easier for visitors to reach the top. Kagulu Rock has been for a long time a major adventure and tourist attraction in Eastern Uganda. Previously, it had caught the curious eyes of the foreign NGO workers in the area, but with the advent of the local initiative to promote the site, Kagulu Rock is now a big attraction to all. Kagulu Rock, is a rocky prominence that rises 10,000 feet (3,048 m), above sea level.

Budhumbula shrine and palace

Two kilometers from Kamuli on the Kamuli-Jinja road, the site includes a shrine and the residence of former Kyabazinga William Wilberforce Kadhumbula Nadiopo (who died in 1976). The marble-covered shrine contains the graves of other members of the royal family, including Nadiopo's father and mother (Yosia Nadiopo and Nasikombi). Other graves in the shrine are those of his son, former Uganda government minister Wilson Nadiopo (who died in 1991), and his mother, Yuliya Babiye Nadiopo (who died in 2004). The main palace residence is a legacy of the British colonial government, which donated it in 1914.

Others include

- Source of the Nile
- Bujiagali Fall
- Lake Victoria - Southern Basoga is bordered by Lake Victoria, whose coastline runs from Jinja east to the Kenyan border.
- Bishop James Hannington Shrine
- The place where Bishop James Hannington and 48 of his helpers are believed to have been murdered in 1885.

Teso Region Delegates



Amusolo Pauline Leizet | Age: 22
District: Tororo
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Student of food processing and technology
Hobbies: Watching Movies & Socializing
Role model: My Mother



Amali Phiona Rhoda | Age: 21
District: Tororo
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelors in Agriculture and crop sciences
Hobbies: Singing and Dancing
Role model: Queen Zakia Lucky



Aanyu Catrionah | Age: 21
District: Kumi
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Tribe: Iteso
Hobbies: socializing, listening to music, travelling, eating
Role model: The Women in my family



Mr & Mrs Oguena
Cluster Coordinator
Miss Tourism Teso Region

Karamojong:

Resilient warriors

Today, as you visit North Eastern Uganda and the sun beats down on its dusty plains, you are bound to find tall, graceful people who move with a quiet dignity, their bodies adorned with the symbols of their heritage; these are the Karamojong.

They are an ethnic community that presently inhabits Abim, Amudat, Kaabong, Karenga, Kotido, Moroto, Nabilatuk, Nakapiripirit and the Napak districts of North Eastern Ugandan.

The Karamojong are a proud pastoral people who are resistant to the tides of westernisation that has swept across Uganda. While to the outside, they are known as fierce warriors, stubborn and quick to violence, for them, life is centred around the sacred cattle that roams the plains. From their fashion to foods and norms, it's easy to tell how much of their life is about their cattle. They are the royalty; the measure of a man's worth, his status, and his influence.

A man's value is gauged by the number of cattle he possesses, and he will stop at nothing to ensure their well-being, including finding them the lushest

pastures and the purest water. It is a never-ending quest, a struggle against the harsh realities of this semi-arid land.

The Karamojong are believed to have descended from the Nyangatom of Ethiopia, a nomadic people who migrated south around 1600AD driven by the ancient quest for grazing lands and water for their livestock. As they migrated south, their paths diverged, some settling in Kenya, others in South Sudan. The Turkana, a kindred people, emerged from this journey, their identity shaped by the harsh beauty of the Lake Turkana shores. They intermarried with the earlier inhabitants of the area and their offsprings became the Kalenjin and the Maasai.

The Karamojong, cousins to the Jie, continued their southward trek and the story goes that the young men of the Jie tribe, restless and driven by the call of the open range, pushed southward in search of greener pastures. Their elders, weary of the constant movement, settled in the shadow of Mount Moroto. The young men, with a mix of scorn and affection, called out to their elders, "Ekar imojong" - the old men are tired. And so, the name stuck, a badge of

honor for a people who would forge their own path. Through intermarriage with the indigenous tribes, the Karamojong identity took shape as a blend of cultures and traditions.

The Iteso, another people born of this ancient migration, share a common ancestry with the Karamojong. Believed to be the core of the Karamoja culture and tradition, the Bokora who live in Napak district are one of the ethnic groups that inhabit Karamoja sub region in Eastern Uganda. The other ethnic groups in the region are the Jie in Kotido district, Dodoth in Kaabong district, Matheniko in Moroto district, the Tepeth, Pian and Pokot, among others.

The Pokot who live in Amudat do not share close kinship relationships with other regional ethnic groups. Instead, they hold closer ties to other Pokot groups in parts of Kenya. Through their interactions with the Pokot in Kenya, the Karamoja Pokot became the first camel herders in Uganda and they are the only ethnic group in Karamoja that consistently consume camel milk.

Karamojong region, which is one - and - a half times the size of Wales but with a population of only 1, 149,317, as of the 2024 population census, is semi-arid in nature. That is why, over the years, they have wandered the Great Plains in search of water and grass, driven by the primal urge to survive.

For them, their cattle are not just a source of sustenance, but the very fabric of their culture. To defend their herds, to increase their numbers, and to protect their pasture,

they fight and steal, adhering to a code that has been passed down through the ages.

This has been the primary cause of Karamoja cluster conflicts over the years. The 'Karamoja cluster' also known as the 'cattle corridor,' is inhabited by several border pastoralist communities from the Turkana and Pokot of Kenya to the Karamojong of Uganda among others.

The cross-border region located at the periphery of each country's capital, is drought prone and has the lowest social development indicators. This has led to conflicts such as cattle rustling and sexual/gender-based violence. As noted earlier, cattle denotes a male Karamojong's value to the community, including in negotiating in dowry. Because of these reasons, cattle rustling is one way for restocking cattle, wealth distribution / accumulation and marriage purpose.

Traditionally, cattle raids were endorsed by the community and targeted livestock from outside the community as a means of survival and distribution of wealth. In fact, pastoralists believe that without livestock especially cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, and camel there is no life. Moreover, livestock ownership as an expression of wealth, prestige and societal status symbol is more dependent on herd size possessed.

Also, among the Karamojong cluster, livestock especially cows and goats are used traditionally as a means of exchange for paying bride price. Structurally, women and girls are seen as subordinate to the male counterparts and are viewed as a resources or men's property/possessions and beasts of burden, which is partly informed by and reinforced through the bride price system. Men's value and reputation are linked to how many resources (cattle) they possess and based on their ability to pay a good dowry, which in Karamoja cluster is directly denotes to cattle ownership.

And Because Karamoja is a patriarchal society where most men marry several wives, even when they cannot look after them well. Amongst the Karamoja cluster, sexual and physical abuse of women and girls remains culturally acceptable. FGDs with women and men revealed that marriage and payment of bride price serves as a key factor exposing women and girls to GBV. Once brideprice has been paid for a Karamojong bride, even when they are beaten and tortured, women are not easily allowed to return to their parents'. When a husband dies, his relatives take all his family property irrespective of whether the woman has children. Widow inheritance is widespread among all Karamojong



Karamojong Region Delegates



Nachap Kezia Cindy | Age: 22
District: Kotido
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Form six vacist
Student of Tourism and hospitality management
Hobbies: Traveling, swimming, Dancing and Adventure
Role model: Rainne Bateeze



Iriama shamim Kassim | Age: -
District: Moroto
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Tribe: Karamojong
Hobbies: Reading
Role model: Rainne Bateeze



Assumpta Ojao
Cluster Head
Miss Tourism Karamoja

easily allowed to return to their parents'. When a husband dies, his relatives take all his family property irrespective of whether the woman has children. Widow inheritance is widespread among all Karamojong ethnic groups without exception. The shifting dynamics in socioeconomic circumstances have specific gendered impacts as gender norms are challenged. Men often find they are unable to fulfil their traditional role as providers for their family and community, and these frustrations result in an increase in GBV as they seek to exert control in the private sphere.

Fashion Dressing

Traditionally, every woman in the Manyatta had to be involved in dress-making. The same fashion of skirt was made all over Karamoja with just small difference among some tribes and the girl's skirt was made differently from that of a woman. The Elou was mainly made from sheep and goat skin, the preparation did not involve as many processes as those found in making "abwo" women's skirt. Organic dressing has been replaced with "Suuka" that first came in use in the 1970s.

The young Karamojong men wrap a sheet around their waist, pairing it with a vest known as "Eplan" in any colour. The older men, however, tie the sheet across their bodies and over their shoulders. The bed sheets originate from Kenya among the Masaai, since both have some similarities in their traditions. The Karamojong dress code is usually not complete without a stick known as "Ebela" and a stool known as "Ekicholong". Sticks are carried around by Karamojong to signify their identity as pastoralists, stool is used for resting when one gets tired from grazing on the fields. The shoes or sandals are made from car tires known as "Ngetangai".

The women dress is usually made from bed sheets that is then hand sewn into skirts. It is sewn with folded pleats or hides and it is then decorated with beads to make it attractive. The skirt is referred to as "Abwo". The skirt that is made from hides is the more commonly worn by Karamojong women as traditional attire.

Among the men, the hairpiece was and still is a thing of beauty, a testament to their age, their clan, and their place in the world. They spent hours crafting their headpieces, intricate designs that spoke of their status and their identity. For the young boys, the journey began with a small press of hair on the back of the head, a tiny declaration of their belonging. As they grew older, the hairstyle would evolve, expanding to cover more of the head, until finally, the entire scalp was adorned with a majestic helmet of human hair, perhaps even decorated with the proud plumes of an ostrich.

The women shave their heads in patterns that told the story of their clan and their heritage. Some wore a narrow strip of hair down the center, while others sported one or two braids

on the side, or a small circle on the right, or even little tufts that seemed to dance in the breeze.

Each style was a badge of honor, a symbol of their place in the community. The beads worn by ladies belong to the clans they married into while the animal skins show love for her babies.

In Karamoja, fashion was not just a matter of aesthetics; it was a language, a way of communicating identity, status, and belonging. Every hairstyle, every adornment, told a story of the wearer, and the people of Karamoja wore their heritage with pride.

Cultural powers

Last year, the Karamoja Elders Council officially transferred cultural powers from the Ngimoru clan, locally known as the Mountains, to the Gazelles clan, known as Ngigetei, in Moroto district. Among the Karimojong community, three major clans—Bokora from Napak district, Pian in Nakapiripirit and Nabilatuk, and Matheniko from Moroto district—prevail.

Other clans like Dodoth of Kaabong, Jie from Kotido, Ethur from Abim, and Pokot of Amudat are categorized as Visitors.

For the last 60 years, the Ngimoru sub-clan under the Bokora Clan held power and is now passing it on to the next generation within the Gazelles clan. The transfer, expected 19 years ago, faced delays due to regional instabilities. The ritualistic transfer of power occurred at Akiriket, one of the largest shrines in Lotisan Sub County. It involved the sacrificial offering of a black bull, symbolising the transition from darkness to light within the community.

Ngigetei became the first sub-clan to inherit the cycle of cultural administration in the Matheniko clan, with the powers slated for transfer to another sub-clan after fifty years.

Papaa Angasuban Peter Adei, the Karimojong cultural leader overseeing the ritual, observed that the Bokora and Pian clans had already completed their traditional initiation, leaving only the Matheniko.

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Marriage

In Karamoja, daughters are cherished like precious jewels, for they hold the key to the family's prosperity. When a girl comes of age, her family can expect a bounty of cattle from the suitor who seeks to claim her hand in marriage. It is a transaction that underscores the value placed on women, and the intricate web of relationships that binds the community together. The payment of cattle as bride wealth is a sacred tradition, a necessary step in the arrangement of marriage. A man's

children are not truly his own unless he has paid the bride wealth, transferring the cattle to the family of his wife. But marriage is not just a matter of exchange; it's a rite of passage too, a test of strength and courage.

Traditionally, a young Karamojong man had to prove his worth by wrestling the girl he desires to marry, a ritual that sets the stage for a lifetime of love and commitment. If he is successful in the wrestling match, he is considered man enough and permitted to marry the girl of his choice. It ensured that the man was strong enough to care for and protect his wife.

After the wrestling match, the dowry negotiations were allowed to commence. And in this polygamous society, a man's wealth and status are measured by the number of wives he can afford to marry, limited only by the burden of bride wealth obligations. When the bride arrives at the home of his husband, she is taken through the Kraal entrance and led to her house. The wedding ceremony itself is a spectacle of colour and sound, as the groom, resplendent in his leopard skin cloak and zebra tail, dances around the village, his bells jingling with every step. It's a moment of great joy, a celebration of love and community, as the villagers gather in the cattle kraal to feast and make merry.

But polygamy is a cultural norm here, and a bride price is paid to women's families upon marriage using cattle as currency. In keeping with other areas where women are seen largely as the property of men, violence against women is prevalent among these populations. Domestic violence is perpetrated as women have unequal access to household resources because men maintain exclusive ownership over cattle, children, land, and any other property in the households. The root cause of the violence against women and girls in Karamoja is the power imbalance between men and women, alcoholism, and bad cultural practices like widow inheritance, early marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and that a girl who has gone to school never makes a good housewife or will never fetch good bride price; and may become a prostitute.

The Manyattas

The Manyattas, those sprawling homesteads, are the heart of Karamojong life. Protected by thorny fences and wooden palisades, they are a sanctuary from the dangers that lurk outside, a place where families can live and thrive. At the center of each Manyatta is the livestock kraal, where men gather to keep watch and tend to the animals that are the lifeblood of the community. It's a place of learning, where skills are passed down from generation to generation, and where the rhythms of life are dictated by the needs of the cattle and the land."

Foods

• The Karamojong's food is simple, hearty, and tied to the earth. They live on the milk of their cattle, raw and rich, straight from the animal.

• They smoke the meat to preserve it, to make it last through the long dry spells.

• They curdle the milk into yoghurt, and they render the fat into ghee, a golden oil that's both nourishment and medicine.

• They even eat the greens from the trees, a bitter flavor that's a reminder of the harsh beauty of the land.

• And when it is the right time, they feast on fresh beef, a rare treat that's both a celebration and a necessity.

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KIGEZI SUB-REGION: SOUTHWESTERN REGION

Characterized by their notable physical strength and unwavering spirit, the Bakiga today are known as assertive and straight-talkers who take no prisoners. They are known to communicate through the expressive Rukiga language, a proud member of the Bantu linguistic family.

That could be because, historically, Bakiga were known for their fiercely independent and often warlike nature. They notably resisted incursions from neighboring groups such as the Batutsi and Bahima, defending their territorial integrity and cultural autonomy.

As a politically segmented society, they did not maintain a standing army in peacetime. However, in the event of invasion or conflict, they would rally under the leadership of formidable warlords, men who had demonstrated exceptional bravery and military success, having killed numerous enemies in past wars without suffering significant losses of their own men or weapons. Culturally, every able-bodied male was

obligated to be a soldier, ready to defend their community when necessary, highlighting a strong tradition of self-reliance and collective defense. They come from Kigezi region that encompasses the districts of Kabale, Kanungu, Kisoro, Rubanda, Rukiga and Rukungiri in the southwestern region. The region has a population distribution of about 1,787, 231 as of the last Population Census. Today while Kigezi region is famous in the tourism circles for harboring half the world's population of the Mountain Gorillas in the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park /Mgahinga National Park and having the second deepest lake in Africa, Lake Bunyonyi, there's more to the region than Mountain Gorillas.

From a two-district sub-region to the creation of others, including Kisoro, Kanungu, Rubanda and Rukiga, Kigezi holds immense potential in the tourism and hospitality industries. From the rich cultures of Bakiga, Batwa, Bafumbira, Banyabutumbi and Bahororo communities, Kigezi could emerge as the country's tourism crown jewel.

That is why recently, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni committed to the construction of an international airport in Kanungu, the northern part of Kigezi to tap into tourism potential of the area.

The Bakiga: Living with the tenacious tribe of Greater Kigezi

These tenacious and spirited highlanders perched in the breathtaking highlands of Greater Kigezi, encompassing the present-day districts of Kabale, Kanungu, and Rukungiri, dwell the Bakiga are known as people of resilience and strong cultural identity.

Their ancestral lands primarily span the counties of Ndurwa, Rubanda, and Rukiga in Kabale, alongside parts of Kinkizi and Rubabo in Rukungiri. Driven by the pressures of a growing population, the industrious Bakiga have also established vibrant



communities in various other regions of Uganda.

Traditionally, Bakiga society was structured around a robust clan system, with the Basiga clan holding prominence as the largest. Each clan comprised numerous lineages, and each lineage was headed by a respected elder, known as the Omukuru w'omuryango. A fundamental cultural tenet strictly prohibited marriage within one's own clan, reinforcing exogamy and fostering wider social connections. Many of these leaders were not only skilled in oratory, capable of persuasive public speaking, but also possessed notable military prowess, able to mobilize and lead their communities in times of conflict. They were expected to administer justice impartially, upholding the customs and laws of their people. Certain leaders, such as Basubi, rose to prominence due to their perceived mystical abilities, often believed to be rainmakers, holding significant spiritual influence. Others, known as Bagirwa, served as the revered mediums of the powerful Nyabingi cult, wielding considerable spiritual and social authority.

Upholding Justice: Judicial Systems
Bakiga society held a deep abhorrence

for anti-social behaviors, and anyone found engaging in such activities faced severe consequences. These prohibited acts included stealing, obstructing pathways, murder, sorcery, and the clandestine practice of night dancing, which was often associated with malevolent intentions. In cases of murder, for example, a brutal form of retribution was sometimes practiced: the murderer would be buried alive in the same grave as their victim, emphasizing the sanctity of life and the severity of taking it.

Times have evolved with modernization but Virginity before marriage was highly esteemed among the Bakiga, and for an unmarried girl to become pregnant was considered a grave offense, bringing significant shame upon her and her family. If an unmarried girl became pregnant, she could face dire punishments, ranging from being abandoned in a forest to being tied to a tree and thrown over a cliff. Tragically, many pregnant unmarried girls among the Bakiga were taken to the Kisizi Falls in Ndurwa and thrown down the steep cliffs, resulting in their drowning. Those who were spared this horrific fate were often subjected to severe curses and disowned by their families and communities, highlighting the

immense social stigma associated with premarital pregnancy. The Bakiga were primarily an agricultural society, their livelihoods deeply rooted in cultivating the fertile highlands. Their staple crops included sorghum, peas, millet, and beans, forming the foundation of their diet. Renowned for their craftsmanship, the Bakiga included skilled iron-smiths who produced essential tools such as hoes, knives, and spears, vital for both agriculture and defense. They were also known as strong and capable porters, facilitating trade and movement across the region. Their artistic talents extended to pottery, where they crafted a wide array of functional household items. Additionally, they were skilled in carpentry, creating various wooden objects, as well as the intricate art of basket and mat making. Apiculture, the rearing of bees for honey production, also played a role in their diverse economy.

Batwa: Living with the Batwa locals through community-based tourism.

Until they were expelled from their ancestral territory (several parks in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi), the Batwa tribe has an uncertain future. Many Batwa live poorly near the forests where their grandparents were born, without being able to access the food and natural medicines that the forest provided. This situation of helplessness has increased cases of alcoholism among the oldest tribe in Central Africa.

A type of respectful tourism, which even allows them to be compensated by the government with some area of forest to collect and hunt, is one of the few ways that the Batwa tribe has to survive this century. Community tourism offers a solution to this. There are locally run organizations around the Batwa that give travelers the opportunity to fully experience their culture and connect with locals.

The Batwa, often referred to as the "Keepers of the Forest," possess no oral traditions of migrating from distant lands. Instead, they are believed to be among the earliest inhabitants of East Africa, their history intertwined with the Bambuti of the Rwenzori Mountains and the Ndurwa of Kenya, ancient hunter-gatherer communities who have long called these lands

home. Even today, many Batwa communities maintain a semi-nomadic lifestyle, their deep connection to the forest shaping their traditions. The Batwa were, and continue to be, skilled artisans in basketry and pottery, their crafts providing another means of exchange or sustenance. What to expect when you visit them Just like the people and cultures you will come across in your travels, it is valuable to look into the customs and traditions of the Batwa communities before arriving so that you have a basic understanding of appropriate greetings, food etiquette and clothing can both prepare you for the experience and avoid any accidental offense.

Below is how the Batwa used their natural environment

- 1. Ekitoma (Rukiga)-Sacred tree**
Until 1935, this Fig tree found in the areas of Buhoma and Kanungu districts was used as a place of worship by the Batwa and neighbouring communities. According to Batwa oral traditions, animal sacrifices were laid at the foot of this tree and a large snake would come and consume them Source:
- 2. Orutare (Rukiga)-Rock shelter and food gathering center**
The shelter found in Buhoma was used to store wild meat and other types of food (wild yams and honey). Food is roasted over a fire to preserve it. This shelter also serves as a place for blacksmithing and making of cloths from the bark of the fig trees and animal skins.
- 3. Omugogo (Rukiga)-Deadwood shelter**
The Batwa often used fallen trees as temporary shelter. Ferns were used as cushions at night and a fire was lit to keep warm and ward off wild animals.
- 4. Okusinga omuriro (Rukiga) – Fire making skills**
The Batwa use friction to make fire by rubbing two dry sticks together. They keep their sticks dry and ready for use whenever necessary. The Batwa use fire to protect themselves from dangerous animals, to warm themselves and to roast food.
- 5. Okuhakura Obwoki (Rukiga) – Honey harvesting skills**
On your visit to this community especially in Buhoma, a Mutwa (singular for Batwa) will likely demonstrate for you how they used to harvest honey. Honey is part of the diet



of the Batwa. They collected and used hollowed deadwood as beehives. Once the honey was ready for harvest, they constructed a ladder made from forest vines to climb up to the hive where they would smoke the bees out. The Batwa used honey as food and medicine to treat simple ailments such as cough, but only after offering libation to their god Nyabingi.

6. Oruziika Batwa (Rukiga) - Grass for burying the dead.

The Batwa used to wrap a dead body in a special type of grass, oruziika Batwa. They would hide the wrapped body in a shrub facing up to prevent the spirit from following other members of the family to haunt them. They believed that if a dead person was placed facing upwards his/her spirit would be busy looking for honey instead of haunting them. After losing a family member, they would abandon the 'house' and settle in a new area.

7. Emibazi y'enzarwa (Rukiga) - Herbal garden

A number of medicinal plants can be found along the heritage trail of the Batwa Cultural Experience. Medicinal plants include: Kamariranya, to cure constipation; Omurisano- to treat people who are allergic to meat; Enchenanchene - to treat ailments of newly born babies including treating their umbilical cords; Ekihomoro- to cure wounds and Omugiti- to enhance production of breast milk. Some of the plants are believed to have spiritual qualities for instance Omugiti- used to protect a new born child in case the mother dies, while Omubuzza- is used to confuse the Magistrate in case one commits a crime and is taken to court! Source: as above

8. Enzina ya Batwa (Rukiga) - Dance skills

The ekyembe (thumb piano) and drums are musical instruments commonly used by the Batwa. They wear costumes made of bark-cloth and grass when performing traditional songs and dances. The Batwa may sing and dance in jubilation after a successful hunt; in thanksgiving to Nyabingi (their god) after a satisfying meal; in times of mourning for a fellow Mutwa and during marriage ceremonies. The Batwa also sing to communicate messages to their neighbours or enemies, and to signal warning.

9. Omuririmbo (Rukiga) - Batwa Homestead (Grass-thatched hut)

The omuririmbo is a homestead for a large Batwa family of 10-15 people. It is composed of different types of houses for different members of the family. Notable among these houses is the Kyamutwara bushiya (meaning the lion picked him in the wee hours of the night), the house of the person supposed to watch over the family.

10. Mwamba (Rutwa) - Tree house (Tree house with grass and twigs)

The Batwa would identify trees with three or more branches at a single node and weave a nest in the middle of these branches. This type of house was specifically for children who would be protected from wild animals while their parents were away hunting. Children were often left in the tree houses during the night and brought down during the day. Parents would also stay by the doorway and light a fire around the tree to protect their children from tree climbing and dangerous carnivores such as leopards and lions. Source: as above

11. Okuruka (Rukiga) - Weaving skills

Weaving was the main activity for the Batwa women especially when their husbands were away hunting. They would weave baskets and bags to carry and preserve food stuffs and mats to sit and lie on. During weaving, women cover their heads with grass to protect themselves from the sun. Source: as above

12. Endaro ya Nyabingi (Rukiga) - (Shrine for Nyabingi God)

The Batwa worship Nyabingi, their god, from this sacred place. Before going hunting the Batwa consult Nyabingi to seek protection against wild animals, and ask for blessings for big catches.

On their return from hunting they would offer a portion of their catch as a sacrifice. The Batwa would also consult Nyabingi and seek protection against strange diseases. Newly wedded women and new born children were also taken to the shrine to be presented to the god for blessings and protection.

13. Nyabingi (Rukiga) - Medium of the Batwa Deity

According to the Batwa oral traditions, Nyabingi, a female god visited them if she wanted something or if she was unhappy. If the Batwa wanted to see Nyabingi, they would sing to invite her for blessings and protection especially during difficult times (such as wars, famine and strange diseases). In case of death, the Batwa believed their god was annoyed so they would offer sacrifices and sing to appease. Nyabingi could get annoyed if one harvested honey and did not offer libation. The Batwa tried / try to keep Nyabingi happy to avert any calamities.

14. Okutega (Rukiga) - trapping wild animals skills with sisal strings, twigs and logs. The Batwa used to survive entirely on wild meat and other forest resources, and this sharpened their knowledge and skills to trap wild animals for food. This snare would be placed in the path of animals such as wild pigs and duikers. Once trapped, a log would be released from above to crush the trapped animal. In case of unsuccessful hunting expeditions, the Batwa would consult Nyabingi about their failure. Women were not allowed to leave their houses or to tell anyone that the men were out setting snares until they returned, for fear of misfortunes.

The Vibrant World of the Bafumbira: A Cultural Mosaic

In the picturesque landscapes of southwestern Uganda, near the Rwandan border, lies the homeland of the Bafumbira people. This minority ethnic group, known for their rich cultural heritage and unique traditions, resides primarily in the southwestern region near the Rwandan border. They lie near the two parks, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park.

The Bafumbira are a sorghum society, leveraging the fertile volcanic slopes of the Mufumbiro Mountains to cultivate this staple crop, which plays a central role in their cuisine and way of life.

The Bafumbira's history is intricately woven with that of their kin in Rwanda, sharing a common language and heritage that binds them together. Their society is divided into clans, each with its own distinct identity and totem, often linked to the hills they occupy. This unique system of identification sets the Bafumbira apart from other African societies.

The fabric of Bafumbira society is a blend of the Bahuutu, Batutsi, and Batwa, each contributing their distinct cultural practices and traditions. The Bahuutu, the numerically dominant group, are known for their skill in brewing sorghum beer, a staple drink in Bafumbira culture. This local brew went by various names such as Umuramba, Wutunda, Nyirakabisi, and Amarwa, each potentially indicating a different type or strength. If honey was added to the brew, it was referred to as



inturire, a special drink reserved for elders and chiefs, highlighting social distinctions in consumption. Women were traditionally not permitted to drink beer in public, their share often being the dregs, reflecting gendered social norms around alcohol consumption. Elders smoked pipes filled with unprocessed tobacco, a common practice for social interaction and relaxation. The Batwa, on the other hand, have their own unique customs and practices, including the use of psychoactive substances.

Music and dance are essential components of Bafumbira culture, bringing people together in celebration and community. Traditional dances like Kanyanchu and Kizomba are performed during weddings, funerals, and public festivities, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of drums, harps, and flutes. The Bafumbira's love of music and dance is a testament to their vibrant spirit and their deep connection to their cultural heritage.

Hunting and sports are also an integral part of Bafumbira culture, with activities like wrestling, jumping, and the mweso board game providing entertainment and social bonding. The Batutsi, in particular, are known for their skill in the strategic game of igisoro, a variant of mweso.

The Bafumbira's cultural identity is shaped by their history, traditions, and environment. Their unique blend of customs, language, and practices makes them an essential part of Uganda's cultural mosaic. As a community, they continue to preserve and pass down their cultural values, ensuring the rich heritage of the Bafumbira endures for generations to come.

The Banyabutumbe: A Community Bound to the Waters of Lake Edward

The Banyabutumbe community, residing along the shores of Lake Edward, has a deep connection with the water and a rich cultural heritage. Traditionally fisher folks, they rely on the lake for their livelihood and have developed a unique relationship with the aquatic environment. Their diet is predominantly fish-based, and they share a strong bond with the Bakingwe community, with whom they coexist harmoniously.

The Banyabutumbe and Bakingwe communities have a shared spiritual belief in the god of the water, known as Nyabiringo and Endyoka, respectively. When faced with water storms or low fish catches, the communities would gather to perform rituals to appease their deity and restore balance to the waters. These rituals, performed at the mouth of River Ntungwa, involved the use of animals and seeds, and were preceded by a warning to the community to refrain from fishing or using the water as a means of transport.

The rituals were believed to bring about a bounty of fish and calm the waters, showcasing the community's dependence on the lake and their respect for its power. The shared ancestry and history of the Banyabutumbe and Bakingwe communities, tracing back to the Democratic Republic of Congo, have contributed to their cultural similarities and strong bond.

Cassava is a staple food in both communities, often served with fish as a sauce. In contrast to the agriculturalist Abahoro and Bakonzo communities, the Banyabutumbe and Bakingwe have a distinct identity as traditional fishermen, shaped by their relationship with the lake and its resources. Their way of life is a testament to the importance of preserving cultural heritage and respecting the natural environment.

Southwest Region Delegates



Asimwe Lent | Age: 21
District: Kabale
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education:achelor of Travel and Tourism Management at Makerere University Business School in my Year 2
Hobbies: Dancing, playing traditional instruments.
Role model: Zakia Lucky



Dushime Silia | Age: 22
District: Kisoro
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelors in Business Administration
Hobbies: Travel, Adventure and Socializing
Role model: Myself



Karungi Bridget | Age: 23
District: Kisoro
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Bachelor's degree in land surveying and geomatics.
Hobbies: watching movies, travelling and singing.
Role model: Nambooze Florence Bbale



Immac Shantel
Cluster Coordinator
Miss Tourism South Western

Northern Region:

A MARTIAL RACE THAT HAS WEATHERED ALL STORMS

For generations, the Acholi people who are part of Luo-speaking Nilotic people of East Africa, became the most dominant ethnic community in Uganda's military during the colonial and most of the post-colonial period. So strong was their martial spirit that in 1986 when the Acholi dominated-government of General Tito Okello was toppled, several armed rebellions emerged in the northern half of the country that ravaged the region. And during that time, the war-torn Acholi land lost much of their age-old customs, which are our main focus in this year's edition of Miss Tourism Uganda's beauty pageant. Miss Tourism Uganda this year is premised on the theme of "I am My Culture" in a bid to promote Uganda's diverse cultural identities and the thrilling northern region's edition was held at Lira Hotel in Lira City. The evening's winner was Kitgum's Vanessa Aber Carmichel (25) who was followed by Lira City's Rita Angwek and Kitgum's Gabriella M. Akere (23). Aber, a Network Operations Center Engineer is from Onyiro clan and vows to win the challenge for the Miss Tourism Uganda national crown come September 5 at Kampala Serena Hotel.

Today, while the Acholi's Larakaraka and Obwole dance-forms are some of the favourite traditional dances on a national scale, the Acholi people are still seen as fearless, brave, soldierly and quick to anger. So, what exactly lies beneath this narrative of Acholi people's military prowess? The truth is, the British, with their notion of 'martial races,' saw something in the Acholi that resonated with their own ideals of strength and bravery. They nurtured this perception, and the Acholi, in turn, embraced it as their own truth. While it was a tale of colonial manipulation, even today the people of Acholi from northern region appear strong and

muscular, seemingly fit for soldiering. These labels, these perceptions, have a way of shaping reality, don't they? The Northern Uganda region though, is not for only the Acholi, as it also is predominantly occupied by the Langi among others.

Who are The Lango?

The Lango are a Southern Nilotic ethnic group of "highly individualistic and independent" people, traditionally governed through decentralised clan structures, alongside the central and local governments of Uganda. Numbering about 2.13 million peoples as of the 2024 population census, they inhabit the area immediately bordering the River Nile, around the lakes Kwana and Kyoga. Presently, they are mainly found in the districts of Lira, Apac, Kwana, Kole, Ouke, Dokolo, Alebtong, Amolatar and Oyam.

Like their Acholi cousins, Langis were also described by British colonial civil servants who lived and worked in Lango in the early part of the 20th Century as "brave, loyal, courteous and hospitable." Their original language was closer to those spoken in Karamoja and Teso, but today has only negligible differences with Luo because of the intermarriages and interactions with their Acholi neighbours, where Luo prevails. Among the Acholi mythology, legend asserts that Luo was the first man. He had no human parents. He is said to have sprung from the ground. It is taken that his father was Jok (God) and that his mother was Earth. The legend adds that Luo's son Jipiti, whose mother is unknown, had a daughter called Kilak. Kilak is believed to have conceived a son, Lubongo, whose father was said to be the devil, Lubanga. Lubongo was the first in the line of Rwot - the chiefs of Payera, the dominant Acholi clan. However, many scholars also assert that the Luo, as part of the River-Lake Nilotics, are related to the Nuer and the Dinka in the Sudan. Their original homeland is said to have been at Rumbek in southern Sudan. During the 15th century, they were faced with many calamities which forced them to move away in search of new areas for settlement. The major group is said to have moved from Rumbek southwards along the Nile, and settled at Pubungu

near Pakwach. This group is said to have been under the leadership of Olum. Remember him in your Primary school SST studies?

It is Olum that had the famous three sons namely: Gapiir (Nyapir), Labongo (Kyebambi) and Tiful. It is said that at Pubungu, Gapiir and Labongo conflicted over the infamous royal spear which was their symbol of power. Thereafter they separated. Gapiir leading a group of people, crossed the Nile and went to the land of the Lendu and Okebu in present West Nile. His people intermarried with the Lendu and Okebu and produced the Alur. As for Labongo, he moved north-eastwards from Pubungu towards present Acholi. By the beginning of the 18th Century, they were firmly settled in Acholi where they encountered the Langi who had been living there for about 200 years. Soon conflicts developed between the Acholi and the Langi and this forced the Langi to move southwards to the Lake Kioga region. The Acholi continued to interact and intermarry with the Langi. In the process, the Langi lost their Ateker language and began to speak Luo. They also lost their pastoral element and became settled agriculturists because the area around L. Kioga was not conducive to pastoralism.

The northern region population numbers to 9,955,990 as of the 2024 Population Census, occupying districts of Agago, Amuru, Gulu, Gulu City, Kitgum, Lamiwo, Nwoya, Omoro, Pader, Adjumani, Moyo and Obongi. Others districts include Lira, Apac, Kwana, Kole, Ouke, Dokolo, Alebtong, Amolatar and Oyam



Cultural beliefs of Acholi and Lango Dance forms

Dance is the pulse of the Acholi people, a rhythm that beats through every moment of their lives. They dance in joy and in sorrow, their bodies moving to the rhythm of life itself. The Acholi word for dance is myel. Although the Acholi have about 23 traditional dances, the Bwola and Larakaraka are regarded by many as the two most important and popular dances of this Ugandan ethnic group. But there are specific occasions when the dances of Bwola and Larakaraka are performed,



and it is in these moments that the true essence of Acholi culture is revealed.

Bwola Dance

This is a dance of royalty and reverence, is a performance reserved for special occasions and not always performed for entertainment as Larakaraka so often is. In the past, it was a dance performed to honour the ruler, a way of acknowledging their power and authority. The royal drum would beat, and the dancers would move in perfect synchrony, their bodies weaving a story of devotion and loyalty. But Bwola was more than just a dance; it was a ritual, a sacred act that invoked the gods to bring forth the rains that would nourish the land. In modern times, Bwola has evolved, its performance expanded to include occasions that honor not just the ruler, but also other important figures in the community. It is danced at weddings, at funerals, and at cultural galas such as

Ker Kai Kwaro, a way of preserving and propagating Acholi history and culture. The dance is a celebration of life, a sendoff for the departed, and a way of connecting with the past. The end of the Lord's Resistance Army war marked a new era for the Acholi people, a time of rebirth and renewal. Efforts to reaffirm and recuperate Acholi culture have been underway, and Bwola has played a significant role in this process.

Larakaraka

Larakaraka, on the other hand, appears to be more secular and as such is more flexible and adaptable to occasions when it can be performed. Unlike the more formal and ritualistic Bwola, Larakaraka is a dance that can be performed on almost any occasion; its flexibility and adaptability making it a staple of Acholi celebrations. It's a dance for the young, full of life and exuberance, and its performances can stretch late into the night, fueled by the infectious energy of the dancers. And yet, despite its secular nature, Larakaraka is no less a part of Acholi culture, a reflection of the community's values and traditions. The young men gathered in a semi-circle, their legs interlocked as they sang short, repetitive songs that seemed to pulse with the rhythm of the land. On their heads, they wore ostrich or cock feathers, a symbol of their vitality and strength, while their left hands grasped calabashes that rattled out a primal beat. The air vibrated with energy as the men danced, their movements choreographed to perfection. Across from them, the young women danced in silence, their eyes locked on the men with a quiet intensity. It is a mesmerising spectacle, the way the two groups seemed to weave a spell of attraction and possibility. As the dance reached its climax, the moko stage, the women took on a more active role, each one identifying her preferred partner and pushing him out of the circle with a playful urgency. The men's headgear is a striking feature of the dance, a pair of white animal hair bristles that jutted out from the back of their heads like small, animated appendages. As they move, the bristles bob and vibrate, creating a hypnotic rhythm that seems to always draw the spectators in. The symmetry of the men's movements, combined with the fluttering hair, always presents a visually stunning image that is both captivating and beautiful. Each male dancer-musician holds a calabash in one hand and a playing stick in the other, the instruments of their art.

Northern Region Delegates



Laloyo Chloe Kamukama | Age: -
District: Gulu
Education: Form Six Vacation
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Hobbies: Reading, travelling and singing
Role model: My mum



Akere M Gabriella | Age: 23
District: Kitgum
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: A bachelor of laws
Hobbies: Painting, designing and writing
Role model: Zakia Lucky



Angwek Rita | Age: 23
District: Lira
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Diploma in Airline Ticketing and Reservation
Hobbies: Photography, Adventure, Singing, Dancing, Community engagement
Role model: Michelle Obama



Gloria Alele
Cluster Coordinator
Miss Tourism Northern

Ker Kai Kwaro institution

The Acholi today are governed by the the Ker Kwaro Acholi cultural institution, one representing the chiefdoms in Acholi. This Institution comprises 54 traditional leaders who are heads of clans (Rwodi singular Rwot or chiefs) of the Acholi people, each clan in the Acholi region represents chiefdom. His Royal Highness Rwot Onen David Achana II, is the current Paramount Chief of the Acholi people.

Acholi and Langi were and still a patriarchal agrarian society organised along social, political and spiritual dimensions.

In the pre-colonial and colonial eras, the Acholi maintained cultural beliefs about the spirit world and their social order based on co-existence at three levels: the past (which consisted of the deceased), the present (the living), and the future (those to come).

For the Langi, the social structure of the Lango centers on the clan system. Each clan has a leader who heads a collection of lineages united through paternal kinship and which includes wives married into that clan. The clan leader carries the title of Awitong (literally meaning spear-head of the clan) because he was traditionally selected for his military prowess and would lead until the end of battle, after which everyone in the community remained equal to one another and looked up to the elders for guidance because of their wisdom and experience.

Today, Lango's cultural leadership is organised both geographically and by kinship, still according to clan relations.

Women's roles in both their cultural leadership

In the heart of Acholi society during pre-colonial and colonial times, women were the pillars of strength. They were the guardians of tradition, the nurturers of culture, and the bridges between past and future generations. Their reproductive and productive roles were not just vital, but sacred, for it was through them that the lineage was continued and the heritage of the Acholi was preserved.

The Acholi knew that without women, the connection to the past and the hope for the future would be lost.

In a society that was patriarchal in nature, the Acholi still recognized that women were the ones who passed on the traditions, customs, and values to the next generation.

Rwot Latim of Pawel for instance explained: "In Acholi, we looked at women as chief advisors. Acholi protects women's rights and we give due respect to them because a home is not a home until there is a wife; the character of a home is largely defined by the women in that home."

Civil strife

The Lord's Resistance Army war that ravaged Acholi from 1986 to 2006 had a profound impact on the culture and social fabric of its people. There was mass displacement into concentrated internally displaced people's camps as protected villages were set up, exacerbating physical and emotional abuse experienced by women and children. The social order was sapped and idleness deepened poverty.

And today, with the evolving times, transitioning from tradition to modernity has seen the once revered position of Acholi women in society challenged since Independence, with men taking over previously pre-dominant women's responsibilities and entitlements.

We have issues like land that used to be referred to by the woman's name in the past now changed to men's names, who have assumed greater control over it. The family decision-making powers that women wielded have also been somewhat eroded today.

Women's position as family 'bankers' and planners was overtaken by the desire to earn cash. Men abandoned their social support roles in food production and in nurturing their families. Women resorted to hard labour chores, such as opening up land, a task previously undertaken by men, in an effort to ensure family sustainability.

Marital rights

In the past, women largely had the right to choose their husbands and marriage was seen as sacred and consensual. The Acholi were often polygamous.

Clan members were obliged to support their sons to marry by way of contributing to dowry payment, but this only applied to the first marriage and was seen as a commitment by the young man and his clan to protect the bride.

Men used to pay dowry using the wealth brought in by a sister's dowry, giving her a greater say in the brother's marriage than all the other siblings. Her role was to ensure the stability of her brother's marriage.

In marriage, all wives had the right to be provided for separately within a polygamous setting. Each wife had a right to privacy, to a separate piece of land, granary and other resources necessary for family survival.

The consent of a first wife for a man to marry another woman was mandatory.

A wife had the right to withhold such consent for good reasons, such as the husband's failure to provide for her and the children.

Young girls had to be protected by their brothers and the community in general, especially while in public spaces or community ceremonies, such as at Raka-Raka dances.

Domestic violence was strongly condemned and attracted community action from elders, clan leaders, mothers and fathers in-law against the perpetrators, especially by the culprit's father in case of wife beating. A woman's cry resulting from violence or social injustice should never be heard and if this happened, "Elders would come very early in the morning one by one and sit outside the house. The Ladit Paco or Ladit Dogola (family head) would invite them in, but they would refuse. You can imagine how threatening this was.

Uganda's Natural Wonders Go Public

National Parks Celebrate Open Park Day

East-West-South-North with the beat of the African drums echoing through the open air, families picnicking under shady trees and children laughing as they run across open fields, that's what we would call a family day in the wild!

Queen Elizabeth, Murchison Falls, Bwindi, Kidepo, and more – Uganda's most treasured natural landscapes opened their gates in celebration of Open Park Day, a national initiative designed to promote local tourism, conservation awareness and inclusive access to the country's spectacular biodiversity.

Held under the theme "Nature for All: Connect, Explore, Conserve," Open Park Day was a collaboration between the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities and key partners including Miss Tourism Uganda, local governments, and community-based tourism groups.

A New Chapter for Local Tourism

For two days, Ugandan citizens received free or discounted entry into selected national parks, with tailored experiences that included guided game drives, birding walks, conservation talks, nature photography workshops, and cultural performances from surrounding communities. "We want Ugandans to understand that these parks are theirs," said John Makombo, Director of Conservation at UWA. "Open Park Day is about creating a bond between the people and the wild treasures of our land." The initiative is part of a broader strategy to boost domestic tourism, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of relying on international travelers.

Education Meets Adventure

From spotting elephants in Murchison Falls National Park, to learning about mountain gorilla conservation in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Open Park Day blended fun with education.

Young people, especially students, were a key focus, with interactive conservation clinics held at park headquarters and ranger posts. Children learned about wildlife protection, climate change, and human-wildlife conflict management. "I've lived in Kasese all my life but had never entered Queen Elizabeth National Park," said Anita, a 19 year old student. "Today changed everything. I want to be a ranger!"

Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism

Inclusivity was a highlight of the day, with special efforts made to accommodate persons with disabilities (PWDs), women, and rural youth. Miss Tourism Uganda, a partner in the campaign, mobilized youth ambassadors and pageant contestants to raise awareness about sustainable tourism, climate action, and environmental responsibility, using storytelling and traditional music to bring conservation to life.

Economic Boost for Park-Adjacent Communities

Open Park Day also created a mini-economic boom for communities bordering national parks. Local artisans, food vendors, tour guides and cultural troupes benefited from the increased footfall and visibility. Community members were engaged through cultural exhibitions, craft fairs,

and community-led nature walks, highlighting how conservation and livelihoods can go hand-in-hand.

A Vision for the Future

The Ministry of Tourism announced plans to institutionalize Open Park Day as an annual event, with goals to integrate it into school calendars, local government budgets and national tourism campaigns.

"Uganda is gifted by nature—but we must nurture that gift by ensuring every Ugandan is gifted by nature—but we must nurture that gift by ensuring every Ugandan has the opportunity to experience and protect it," said Hon. Martin Mugarra, Minister for Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities.

Open Park Day proved more than just a visit to the wild; it was a celebration of identity, stewardship, and unity. By opening the gates of its national parks, Uganda opened minds and hearts—reminding citizens that the wilderness is not far away, nor is it reserved for tourists alone. It belongs to every Ugandan. And on Open Park Day, it finally felt that way.





Tooro Region:

BATOORO INSTILLED WITH DEEP RESPECT AND INHERENT HOSPITALITY

There is a reason Fort Portal is officially declared the Tourism Capital of Uganda, a title it achieved in 2020. Nestled at the foot of the majestic Rwenzori Mountains, this charming town has earned its reputation as Uganda's cleanest town, and its natural beauty is only matched by its rich cultural heritage. From the towering mountains to the lush green tea plantations, Fort Portal is a haven for nature lovers and culture enthusiasts alike.

The town's proximity to Queen Elizabeth National Park and Semuliki National Park makes it an ideal base for wildlife enthusiasts and adventure seekers. Beyond its natural beauty, Fort Portal is steeped in rich cultural heritage. The enigmatic stalagmites and Nyakasura waterfalls are not only breathtaking natural wonders but also hold deep cultural significance. The Chwezi culture, with its intricate traditions and customs, is a fascinating aspect of the region's history. Visitors can immerse themselves in the local culture by exploring the town's vibrant markets, interacting with the friendly locals, and learning about the region's unique customs.

The people of Tooro, known as the Batooro found in the breathtaking landscapes of western Uganda are known in Uganda as some of the most proud people of their culture wherever they go. Numbering approximately 2 million people, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics census 2024, these people have been known to be a culturally rich community that is not shy to show off their heritage right from their pet names (Empaako) through to even their decorum of speech.

This was evident at this year's

fun-filled Miss Tourism Uganda Tooro search that happened at the breathtaking Mountains of The Moon Hotel in Fort Portal on June 7, when the eight queens that competed for the crown showcased Tooro in its entirety through their dance styles, fashion statements and poise on stage.

Because this year's Miss Tourism Uganda (MTU) is premised on the theme "I am My Culture," as a way of highlighting the importance of cultural identity and heritage in promoting tourism, the chilly evening organised by MTU in conjunction with the cluster head... began with an impressive display of traditional dances and music, immersing the energetic attendees that came in good numbers in everything Tooro culture. The crown was won by Lydia Abwoli Nyakake, 19, from Kabarole and followed by Evelyn Kahunde, 19, and Janet Adah Kobusinge, 22 from Kyenjojo, in the first and second runner up positions respectively. The eight contestants were exciting when they took to stage, representing different districts within Tooro; they took to the stage to share their personal stories and cultural backgrounds.

Their narratives emphasized the significance of embracing one's roots and the role culture plays in shaping individual identities, drawing wild cheers from the sizeable crowd that came over. The pageant that has since become a must-attend each year featured several segments, including traditional attire, creative wear, and talent show, all designed to showcase the contestants' connection to their culture. The organisers tasked each participant to express how their heritage influenced their lives, with many emphasizing the need to preserve and promote their traditions. Evelyn

Kahunde who finished runner up said "I believe that understanding who we are is the first step in promoting our beautiful region."

So, besides these Batooro queens joining contestants from other regions to compete for the MTU national crown at the grand finale slated for September 5 at Kampala Serena Hotel, Nyakake will now serve as an ambassador for cultural tourism, promoting the Tooro's attractions while advocating for the preservation of its rich heritage. She said soon after the crowning, "I am proud of my culture, and I will use this platform to share our stories with the world."

Who are the Batooro?

Anyone knows King Oyo? He is the famous King who made it in the World Guinness Book of Records in 1995 when he ascended to the throne of the Tooro Kingdom as the youngest Monarch on earth. And today, Rukirabasaija Omukama Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV, 32, has remained a young and vibrant custodian of Tooro's rich heritage.

Nestled amidst the breathtaking landscapes of western Uganda, his kingdom of Tooro encompasses the present-day districts of Bunyangabu, Fort Portal City, Kabarole, Kamwenge, Kitagwenda, Kyegegwa and Kyenjojo. The origins of the Batooro are woven with intriguing legends, each offering a unique perspective on their ancestry. One tradition posits that the Batooro are the very first people of Tooro, their lineage stretching back to the mythical Batembuzi and the Bagabu, believed to be the primordial inhabitants and rulers of the earth. Other narratives suggest a close kinship with the revered Bachwezi and the esteemed Babito dynasty, figures of immense historical and spiritual significance in the region. While these legends hold cultural weight, the most widely accepted understanding, grounded in linguistic and historical evidence, places the Batooro's origins within the broader Bantu migrations that originated in the Congo region, a

shared ancestry with numerous other communities across Africa. Batooro cherish a vibrant heritage of oral traditions, deeply ingrained tribal customs, exquisite indigenous handicrafts, a strong sense of patriotism, and a profound self-esteem.

Ruled by the Babiito dynasty, the kingdom proudly traces its lineage to the ancient and powerful empire of Kitara. Its establishment arose from the ambition and strategic prowess of Prince Kaboyo, the firstborn son of Omukama Kyebambe III of Bunyoro-Kitara.

As witnessed at various Empango Ha Kyooto ceremonies over the years and as will be witnessed at the four-day fanfare that will take place on September 10-13th in Fort Portal, Batooro as always are proud to be Batooro. This year will be the 30th Empango Coronation Anniversary Ceremony of His Majesty King Oyo Rukidi IV. The event is expected to be a vibrant mix of culture, music, and community spirit, marking a significant milestone for the Kingdom and its monarch. King Oyo has championed initiatives to promote education, health, and tourism, ensuring the preservation of the Tooro Kingdom's rich cultural heritage. In keeping with African traditions, Batooro children are instilled with a deep respect and high regard for their elders, recognising their wisdom and experience. This inherent pride in being a mutooro is a fundamental value, diligently nurtured in every child from their earliest years.

Consequently, certain behaviors, manners of speech, and personal conduct are considered unbecoming of a self-respecting mutooro. According to Kitararcc.com, "Traditionally, for instance, a Mutooro was expected to speak with a certain decorum, avoiding words or utterances that would distort the mouth and detract from one's dignified appearance. Interestingly, this adherence to tradition inadvertently posed a challenge for many Batooro when attempting to pronounce certain foreign words effectively! A conscious effort was required to break with this deeply ingrained norm in order to articulate some foreign expressions that ended with an open mouth or an uncharacteristic facial contortion."



Batooro gave the world a creamy culinary gem in Firinda

The modern day Mutooro is likely to eat any Ugandan cuisine on the menu as, with today's times, society has gradually influenced traditional cuisines. That is why non-Batooro have found Firinda (peeled bean paste) quite a delicacy, whenever they taste it. Gastronomy tourism is one of the fast-growing key drivers in social and economic development. At events such as Empango Ha Kyooto, they celebrate the region's culinary richness and a strong step towards stronger cooperation among tourism and gastronomy stakeholders – producers, chefs, entrepreneurs, tour operators and ministries of tourism.

Among the Batooro, traditionally Firinda is reserved for weddings, important ceremonies, and special family gatherings, it is also enjoyed by a few households as an everyday delicacy. It is celebrated not only for its delicious, comforting taste but also for the cultural pride it embodies. Firinda is a rich, creamy bean soup whose distinct flavor has captivated palates far beyond its native Tooro region in Western Uganda. More than just a dish, it is a cherished culinary heritage deeply woven into the fabric of Tooro's culture and traditions. But be warned, this finger-licking meal is not for the impatient. Batooro eat Oburo, (millet flour mixed with boiling water), with Firinda. Ekitoobe is another meal that the Batooro eat; it is made of bananas (Matooke), meat and vegetables, similar to Katogo that the Baganda eat. Omukaro is smoked beef that can be eaten along with Obutuzi (mushrooms).

They drink Tonto, a banana wine made from ripe bananas. Ensande, a non-alcoholic drink also made from bananas. Haragia is a type of whiskey made by heating up tonto until it turns into steam and then condensing it. However, even today, one might encounter older Batooro women who steadfastly refuse to allow chicken, fish, or pork to be cooked within their kitchens, a testament to the enduring power of cultural norms.

Preparing Firinda demands passion, time, and unwavering attention. The journey begins the night before, as dry



beans are soaked in water to soften their tough outer skins. By morning, the task of patiently peeling each bean by hand to reveal the soft, creamy cotyledon requires both time and skill. Once peeled, the beans are gently boiled for 30 to 45 minutes. Meanwhile, tomatoes, onions, garlic, and optionally eggplants are chopped and set aside, ready to infuse the soup with depth and aroma.

After boiling, the beans are mashed into a thick, velvety consistency using a wooden ladle, pestle, or potato masher. This creamy base is then simmered with the chopped vegetables, a touch of water, and a generous spoonful of ghee, which gives Firinda its rich and distinctive taste. Firinda is more than a meal; it is a celebration of heritage, hospitality, and hard work.

Tooro Region Delegates



Kansime Edith | Age: 22 years
District: Kabale
Education: Certificate in Hotel Operations
Title: Miss Tourism Uganda 2025 finalist
Hobbies: Travelling, Cooking, Reading Novels
Role model: Hon. Alex Nsubunda



Kahunde Khasifa
Cluster Coordinator
Miss Tourism Tooro Region

The Fading Voice of Runyoro-Rutoro

UNESCO SOUNDS THE ALARM

The Runyoro-Rutoro language, spoken by the people of Bunyoro and Tooro in western Uganda, is facing an existential threat. According to UNESCO, this rich of Uganda's cultural heritage but also silence the voices of the Banyoro - Batooro people.

"The disappearance of a language is not just the loss of a means of communication, but also the erosion of a community's identity, culture, and history," warns UNESCO. "Language is a vital component of a community's cultural heritage, and its loss can have devastating consequences for the community's social, economic, and cultural well-being."

Runyoro-Rutoro is listed as a "definitely endangered" language on UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. This classification is based on factors such as the number of fluent speakers, the language's use in everyday life, and the presence of language documentation and education programs.

"The use of Runyoro-Rutoro has declined significantly, especially among young people, who prefer to speak more widely spoken languages like English, Swahili, or Luganda," notes UNESCO.

"This shift away from the traditional language has contributed to its decline and has made it increasingly vulnerable to disappearing."

Efforts are needed to revitalize and document Runyoro-Rutoro, including language education programs, cultural events, and community engagement initiatives. By working together, we can help preserve this vital part of Uganda's cultural heritage and ensure that the voices of the Bunyoro people continue to be heard.

Sources:

- UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger
- UNESCO's Language Endangerment Criteria
- UNESCO's Language Preservation and Promotion Programs

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Address: _____ E-mail: _____
Birth place: _____ Birth Date: _____
Age: _____ Citizenship: _____ Education: _____ Employment: _____
Marital Status: _____ Religion: _____
Personal Social Media Handles: _____

Having no previous photo, use full length photo and submit with original your passport.

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Upload to Address: _____
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Upload to Employment: _____
Upload to Marital Status: _____
Upload to Religion: _____
Upload to Personal Social Media Handles: _____

Have you ever participated in any beauty contest? _____
If yes, mention the contest: _____ What? _____
Did you win any title? _____ If so, please state: _____
Are you under any contract? _____ To whom? _____
List down the contracts you are currently contracted to: _____

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List down the contracts you are currently contracted to: _____

West Nile Region:

Crossroads of Cultures Born of Colonial Shadows

When you find people dancing to the 'Gaze' dance, a dance form influenced by the Congo, which pulsates with energy, as men play trumpets while women dance with abandon, just know you have landed in the world of Lugbara, who hail from the West Nile in Uganda.

The West Nile sub-region borders the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west and the Republic of South Sudan to the north. Its people presently inhabit the districts of Arua, Arua City, Koboko, Madi-Okollo, Maracha, Nebbi, Pakwach, Terego, Yumbe and Zombo. This strategic location offers unique opportunities to access untapped markets and unique trade opportunities across borders. The Lugbara's rich cultural heritage is a testament to this region's diversity.

It is the one region in Uganda that has had to also deal with the influx of refugees from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who represent nearly 777,751 (51%) of the total refugee population in Uganda. This has brought new opportunities to the region as well as challenges like increased pressure on resources such as land and water for agriculture. The vast land, once fertile and generous, producing staples such as Cassava, sorghum, beans, Sim sim and sweet potatoes that sustained them, now bears the scars of degradation and climate change. But while the West Nile today is synonymous with the Lugbara and Madi, there also exists invisible ethnic minorities who were the first inhabitants of the region.

The Ndrukpa is an invisible ethnic minority community located in the north-western corner of Zombo District, yet according to oral tradition, the Ndrukpa people were the original inhabitants of the West Nile region. Today they are among those appealing to the current government to access their historical ancestral land and cultural sites. Maybe they will be visible again, as witnessed during the Miss Tourism Uganda (MTU) beauty pageant, held at LE confidantiale in Arua. The Queen who hails from ADJUMANI, SHE DID SHOWCASE HER TRUE TRADITIONAL OUTFIT FROM. She will join other contestants from the other regions to contest for the national crown on September 5, at Kampala Serena Hotel. The last time we had a girl from West Nile was Elidad Odongkara. She was from Arua. She did so much such as to introduce Ugandans to West Nile dance by introducing media people to West

Nilers cultural dances. Dances like Akogo and Akebe took centre stage. As of 2024 national population census, the people of West Nile number 3,302,800 and growing rapidly at an annual rate of 3%.

The people of West Nile are known in Uganda to be resilient and resourceful, especially their women. Today, they have adapted and shifted towards high-value crops like onions, cabbages, spinach, kale and tomatoes. And with their rich cultural heritage and deep understanding of the natural world, these people offer us a lesson in the power of gradual, persistent effort.

The Lugbara people

The Lugbara can be found in the districts of Arua, Koboko, Moyo, Nebbi, Terego, Madi Okollo, Obongi, Zombo, and Maracha on your tours. They are one of the largest tribes in the West Nile sub-region. These people, born of divine spirits, whisper tales of ancient traditions and mystique. They say they are descendants of the first beings created by a divine spirit. They speak a language categorised as being eastern Sudanic language, related and very close to the Madi, the Keliko, the Logo, the Moru and the Awukaya. They are divided into many dialects which are easily understandable to each other. These include: Ayivu, Maracha, Terego, Vurra and Aringa. Tribes related to the Lugbara in dialect include Madi and Kakwa. The Lugbara believe in the existence of a supreme being – God but they also entertain the concept of spirits particularly that some people transform into other animals on death. The Lugbara recognize a single deity, Adroa (also known as Adro), who created the world and its inhabitants. Two Heroes then formed Lugbara society itself. Beneath Adroa are two categories of spiritual beings: the spirits and the ancestors. Spirits are known as adro, who refer to a source of power. Aside from the Gaze dance, Agwara is also another dance from the Lugbara which got its name from the Agwaras, the local trumpets. The men play these horns as the women dance. "Duluka" which means dance in Nubian Language, is considered another Lugbara Dance.

The Madi Heritage

Today, the Madi people inhabit the districts of Adjumani, Obongi, Madi Okollo, and Moyo, bordering Sudan. With their Sudanic roots, they are a riverine communities. They reveal a history as complex as the River Nile itself. Their economic activities include farming, cattle keeping and of course, fishing being that they love living around water bodies. The Madi mostly practice small-scale agriculture with crops such as millet, sorghum, maize, cassava, ground nuts and beans as their main



food crops. Traditionally, the Madi are perceived as a warrior community and this is reflected in their style of dancing. Their traditional dances, 'Kore,' 'Mure,' and 'Vuli,' each hold a special significance, a window into the soul of Madi society. They have unique cultural customs such as the naming ceremony where family members prepare and serve a traditional dish known as as ledrupbwe. In their community, there are three distinct categories of chiefs, each bearing the revered title of 'Opi'. The overall chief guides the community with wisdom and foresight, while the nail chiefs attend to specific duties. But it is the rainmakers, those spiritual leaders tasked with ensuring the timely arrival of the rains, who hold a special place in the hearts of the Madi people. Armed with the mystical 'eyikwe', a set of white stones believed to have fallen from the sky with the rain itself. In other narratives, it is said these stones originated from Bari in South Sudan considered to be the most powerful and supernatural land. Culturally, the Madi are trained to be excellent time-keepers, that is why they chose a white cock known as Aulogo lofu ("lofu is the mist") as their emblem, because of its accuracy in time management and cleanliness.

The Alur People

The West Nile Region is home to the Alur people, who reside in the districts of

Nebbi, Zombo, and Pakwach. Unlike their Sudanic neighbors, the Alur belong to the Luo language group, similar to the Acholi. Experience the captivating "Otwenge" Dance, that weaves a tale of elegance and refinement or the rhythmic "Agwara" dance where the graceful movement of elbows take center stage, accompanied by the haunting sounds of the Adungu instrument. This dance is a transport for us to a world of beauty and wonder, it is a favorite among young boys and girls, a testament to the Alur's rich cultural heritage.

The Nubi Legacy

The Nubi people, born of the Lado enclave encompassing West Nile, Southern Sudan, and Eastern Congo, tell a story of resilience and adaptation. Without a myth of origin, they have forged a distinct culture, language, and faith, a beacon of hope in a region shaped by diversity. In the 1820s, some members of the Shilluk, Dinka, Bari, Lotuko, Madi, Lugbara and Alur ethnic groups coalesced into a community of people known as "Sudanese-Nubians". They practised Islamic culture and spoke a creolized form of Arabic. The Sudanese

Nubians developed as a distinct group as a result of Egypt's military expansion south into Sudan in the first half of the 19th century. Among Sudanese Nubians were professional mercenaries who were used by both Africans and Europeans to capture slaves, ivory and minerals from Gondokoro (southern Sudan) during the 19th century. In the process, Africans adapted to the Arabic culture. The Uganda Nubians, with their rich cultural heritage, stand as a testament to the complex dynamics of identity, culture, and power. Their story serves as a reminder that cultures are not static, but rather dynamic and adaptive, shaped by the interactions of people and the forces of history. In the midst of change and upheaval, the Uganda Nubians found a way to preserve their distinct identity, one that continues to shape their lives and experiences to this day.

The Kakwa Connection

The Kakwa people, with their Hamite origins, share a history that spans borders. Natives of Koboko in the Northwestern Uganda, share borders with South Sudan and the Northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their distinct language and customs are a testament to the region's intricate cultural landscape. They are sedentary agro-pastoralists and people of the Karo ethnic sub-group. Their language is called Kutuk na Kakwa, Eastern Nilotic language. They are known to the world by their historic son, General Idi Amin Dada (1925-2003) former president of Uganda (1971-1979).

Today, it is estimated the Kakwains number 500,000 people in this group and in Uganda they are less than 1% of the total population. The Kakwa socioeconomic system is based on small kinship groups living in village clusters. Councils of male elders hold most of the power. They preserve the linkage to their traditional basis of clans, which are still led by traditional chiefs. They hold an inside division of lower and upper class, while the landowners are the upper class. Their economy consists of cultivating corn, millet, potatoes, cassava, and cattle.

The Ndrukpa/Lendu

The Ndrukpa are the original inhabitants of the West Nile region, their roots tracing back to the ancient migrations from the Sudan-Ethiopia region. Today, they are unknown by the majority yet they are the oldest kingdoms in the West Nile region. They belong to the five indigenous Ethnic Minority groups in the west Nile sub region who are often discriminated against and in some societies marginalized socially, economically, and politically, sometimes victims of

West Nile Region Delegates



Letaru Catherine Jovia | Age: 24
District: Moyo
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Graduate (Human Resource Management)
Hobbies: Traveling, Photography, Community work, Playing Table Tennis.
Role Model: My Aunt, Okua Jane



Lekuru Eron | Age: 20
District: Arua
Title: Miss tourism uganda 2025 finalist
Education: Student Form Six
Hobbies: Dancing, Public Speaking, dinging
Role Model: Uche Montana



Sam Akuaku
Cluster Head
Miss Tourism WestNile



severe human rights violations. This group with the population of over 147,800 include The Kebu and Lendu in Zombo district, the Nubi in Arua district, the Gimara and Reli in Obongi district. According to oral tradition, The Ndrukpa were already settled in the land when the Alur, a segment of the Luo migrants, arrived in Uganda in 1125 AD.

The Ndrukpa kingdom's lineage traces back to their hero-ancestor, Ndru, who reigned in ancient Egypt. The kingdom has seen the rise and fall of leaders, the impact of the Alur conquest, the ravages of the Arab slave trade, and the shadow of European colonialism. Yet, it is in the face of these challenges that the Ndrukpa people have preserved their identity, their language, and their traditions. The revival of the Ndrukpa kingdom in 1998, under the reign of King Manase Rapia II, marked a new chapter in their story. There are about 23,000 Ndrukpa people in Uganda (but many more in the Congo).

You can find many of them in and around the Lendu Forest in Zombo where they mainly cultivate millet, maize, cassava, beans and sweet potatoes. They mostly eat cassava bread mixed with millet and beans. They are said to have been overpowered by the Alur in the 19th century under the reign of their first recognized king called Rapia I who surrendered his people to be managed by the Alur. Culturally, the Ndrukpa have clans which include, Ajusi, Andhosi, Urusi, Andrasi, Asisi, Ambusi, Ugusi, Alisi, Abesi, Alosi, Awuhwe, Alusi, Ayisi, Akosi, Arisi, Akisi. They are known for producing beautiful baskets. They pride themselves in being the first people to cross River Nile and to settle on the western side of the Nile. Most of the names given to the places on the western Nile were by the Ndrukpa.

Traditional dances by the west of the Nile

The Mure dance is a vibrant celebration of life and triumph among the Madi people. With sticks in hand, the male dancers burst onto the scene, welcomed by the gentle touch of flour sprinkled by the female dancers. The air is alive with the rhythmic beat of drums, the Ture, Pewere, Oliko, and Oluru, each instrument adding its unique voice to the symphony. The Kengere, the longest drum, is reserved for the women, a testament to their important role in the music and culture of the Madi. The men play the other drums, their hands moving in perfect syncopation. Together, they create a dance that is both energetic and elegant. The Mure dance is more than just a performance - it's a way of life. It's a celebration of war victories, the birth of a new chief, and the closing of ceremonies. It's a time for the community to come together, to rejoice and to honor their traditions. For tourists, the Mure dance is an experience not to be missed. Whether you are a seasoned traveler or just looking for a unique experience, the Mure dance is sure to leave a lasting impression.

Cultural sites in West Nile

While in the rugged landscape of the Madi community, two mountains stand tall, their peaks reaching for the sky like giant sentinels. Mount Otze found in Moyo District, also known as Tokulu, rises majestically to a height of 1,563 meters above sea level, its slopes covered in a verdant cloak of forest and bamboo. The views from its summit are breathtaking, with the River Nile snaking its way through the landscape like a shimmering serpent as it flows into South Sudan. For the Madi people, Mount Otze is more than just a geographical feature - it's a cultural icon. The forest reserve that surrounds the mountain provides

them with the materials they need to build their traditional grass-thatched huts, known as Tokulu. The caves within the mountain were also a place of refuge for the Madi people during the dark days of the slave trade, a testament to their resilience and determination to survive.

Kotelu sacred forest

In Madi visitors can also visit Kotelu Sacred Forest, a sacred forest which acts as a burial ground for the Madi chiefs from the Rendike chiefdom. Rendike chiefs have been buried in this forest. According to the Madi, it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors reside in this forest and tree cutting in the forest is prohibited. Madi chiefs are never laid to rest like their subjects. Instead, they are made to sit on their chairs in a cylindrical grave as opposed to a rectangular grave. This is to show that they are still in charge of their chiefdoms even after their death.

Mount Ilingwa

Mount Ilingwa, located in Dufile, Moyo District, near the South Sudan-Uganda border, holds a special place in the history of the Madi people. According to legend, it was here that the Madi of Atiak settled in Amuru District before crossing over to their current home in Atiak. The story goes that they were drawn to Atiak by the sight of white flowers that they mistook for a herd of cattle, and after being disappointed, they decided to stay. Today, the Acholi community of Atiak still speaks both Acholi and Madi, a testament to the complex history of the region. Both mountains offer visitors to the region stunning views of the surrounding landscape, with the River Nile and Nimule National Park in South Sudan providing a breathtaking backdrop. For the Madi people, these mountains are not just natural features - they are a connection to their past, their culture, and their identity. They stand as a



reminder of the rich history and traditions of this proud community, and the resilience and determination of its people.

The Museum

The museum is located in Metu along Moyo - Laropi -Adjumani Road. It is home to Madi artifacts. It was established in 2015 to collect, display, and exhibit and interpret Madi's cultural heritage.

Amuru Hot-spring

The hot spring is located in Pakele sub-county, Paluga village in Adjumani district. It is a natural shallow spring that discharges warm water. Members of the community bathe from the springs with the belief that they will get healed of different diseases including wounds and other skin infections. Members of the community bathe from the springs with the belief that they will get healed of different diseases including wounds and other skin infections.

Ayipe-Metu Caves

Ayipe cave is found in the rocks of Ayipe inside the Ayipe forest reserve in Erepi parish, Metu sub-county, Moyo district. The word "Ayipe" is an Acholi word that was embraced as a result of a tribal war between the Madi and Acholi. "Ayi ayi ayi!!!" means crying out loud for help in Acholi and "pe" means not granted or not given. It is in Ayipe where the Acholi people faced the strongest resistance from the Madi. Among the Madi, blacksmith was one of the economic activities. Blacksmith was a traditional craft-making activity, where metal was extracted from the rocks using "Chudi" a long metallic-like spear structure, and "Lori" (hammer), later processed through smelting where the rocks are separated from the iron. The residue from the iron is known as "ebu zee". This activity has lasted for more than 500 years. From the 1980s to date, it has been practiced in the areas of Metu, Pajakiri, and Gwere on a small scale.

Traditional herbs

Culturally the Madi also had several healthy medicinal roots and plants which were used to treat different diseases. With the influence of modernity, the use of traditional medicine has reduced due to the increased preference for modern medicine. Some of these herbs include the following:

Guru

Guru, a herbal medicine for the Madi



Thousands of years ago guru - a root/tube had its origin for treating diseases such as malaria, abdominal pain, stomach ache, and headache.

Rokati

This is native to Madi and was first used as medicine to treat malaria and joint pain. It is extracted from the bark of the trees.

Erra Pot

This is extracted from a special type of rock which is brown in colour. It is used to treat chronic wounds and at times mixed with shea butter known as "awa adu" in Madi. This was used to smear mothers who had just given birth to stop their husbands from sleeping with them and this later worked as another form of family planning. Once a man attempts to touch a woman a mark is left and a man is reported and punished for that.

West Nile sub-region indigenous foods

- Atiriko Lobi (Corchorus olitorius) Jute,
- Nvolo (Annona senegalensis (syn. A. chrysophylla), Iti (Tamarindus indica),
- Logba (Egyptian Myrobalan), Komoro (Shea-butter tree) Balanites aegyptica
- Desert date (tree) Desert date (dried fruit),
- Egyptian Myrobalan (unripe fruit) Alur: Thoo Madi: Logba
- Vitex doniana Black plum Madi: Ledo/ Ledu
- Diospyros mespiliformis, African ebony, Lugbara: Kumi
- Borassus aethiopicum, Borassus Palm, African fan palm Lugbara: Itu, Utu Madi: Itu
- Ximenia Americana, Sour plum, Wild plum, Madi: Icu, Itzo, Ichu
- Parinari curatellifolia Kakwa: Andzili, Madi: Andzili/ Angili Lugbara: Angili, Ang giligio
- Ziziphus abyssinica Madi: Liria

Ganpati Festival:

INDIA'S GRAND CELEBRATION OF LORD GANESHA

BY MALABIKA DHARA

India is a country where every festival tells a story. Among its most colorful celebration is the Ganapati Festival, also known as Ganesh Chaturthi. It holds a special place in the heart of millions. In Uganda, the Indian community and their invited Ugandan counterparts celebrated this energetic festival (that ended on September 6) at places like the Indian Association of Uganda in Nakasero, Kampala, Arya Samaj School, Kampala, Lohana Academy and Shree Sahajand School Ntinda.

Who is Lord Ganesha?

The festival honors Lord Ganesha, instantly recognized by his elephant-headed deity and widely loved as the remover of obstacles, the god of wisdom, prosperity, and new beginnings, according to Indian mythology.

Did you know?

✓ Lord Ganesha's favorite sweet is the Modak, a dumpling filled with jiggery and coconut.

✓ He is the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, two of the most revered Hindu deities.

When and how is Ganpati Festival Celebrated?

The Celebration usually takes place between August and September, beginning of the fourth day of the Hindu lunar month Bhadrapada. It lasts from one and a half to 11 days, depending on family and community tradition.

Families install clay idols of Ganesha in their homes. Public celebrations feature elaborate pandals (decorated pavilions) with large idols, lights and cultural performances.

Devotees offer prayers, flowers, and sweets while chanting traditional hymns.

The Spirit of the festival

Ganpati festival is not just about rituals – it is about community and joy. Streets come alive with music, traditional drumming, and dance. Artists showcase

their creativity through beautifully crafted idols, lights and cultural performances. Devotees offer prayers, flowers, and sweets while chanting traditional hymns. The Spirit of the festival

Ganpati festival is not just about rituals – it is about community and joy. Streets come alive with music, traditional drumming, and dance. Artists showcase their creativity through beautifully crafted idols, while cultural programs highlight storytelling, drama and music.

Also to note is that beyond religion, the festival represents unity. Neighbors and strangers celebrate together, creating bonds that transcend social and cultural barriers.

The Immersion Ceremony:

On the final Day, the idols are taken in a grand procession with music, dance, and chants of "Ganpati Bappa Morya!" before being immersed in rivers, lakes, or the sea.

This act symbolizes:

- Lord Ganesha's return to his celestial abode.
- The idea of letting go of difficulties and welcoming fresh beginnings.

Why Indians celebrate Ganapati Festival?

For Indians, Ganpati Festival carries deep culture meaning:

- It celebrates faith and devotion.
- It promotes togetherness and community spirit.
- It inspires people to face challenges with hope and courage.

Best cities to visit and celebrate Ganpati

- Mumbai – Famous for its grand community celebrations and sea-side idol immersions at Girgaon Chowpatty
- Pune – Known for traditional processions and

cultural performances.

- Hyderabad – Hosts some of the largest Ganesh idols in the country.

When to go

- Late August to September (dates vary each year based on the lunar calendar). But once you go, a traveler should immerse himself in the experience that the festival brings and even taste the Modaks.



SILENT CAFÉ: WHERE FLAVOR SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS

BY MALABIKA DHARA

In the heart of Kampala, tucked away on a peaceful street, there is a little café making a big impact – Silent Café. Step inside, and you will notice something unique: the friendly staff greets you with warm smiles and graceful hand movements instead of words. Here the conversation happens without a single spoken word. Run entirely by six staff members who communicate through sign language, the café, found on Plot 52, Bukoto Street, Kampala, offers a dining experience that is as inclusive as it is delicious. Leading this remarkable team is Ssenyondo Nasser, the visionary owner who can speak but cannot hear. His leadership bridges the hearing and non-hearing worlds, creating a space where everyone feels welcome.

The story of the Silent café's gained national attention when, on International Labor Day – 1st May 2025 – in Nakapiripirit district, Nasser Ssenyondo was awarded the

National Independence Diamond Jubilee medal by H.E. the President of the republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. This honor recognized Mr. Ssenyondo's outstanding contribution to promoting inclusion, creating job for the deaf community, and inspiring many across the nation.

Silent café is run by six extraordinary staff members all of whom communicate entirely through sign language. The moment you walk in, you are greeted with warm smiles, friendly gestures, and an atmosphere that makes you instantly feel at home.

What makes the Silent Café truly special is not just its inspiring story, but also its unbeatable menu. Whether you're here for a quick bite or a leisurely meal, the menu offers something for every palate: hearty breakfasts, wholesome lunches, the signature Silent Hot burger, pizza, sandwiches, creamy milkshakes, and, of course, expertly brewed coffee and tea. They serve rich, aromatic coffee that could rival the finest in the city, soothing cups of tea for those who prefer a gentle brew and their famous chips with avocado – a crispy, creamy delight that has already won over many regulars.

Ordering here is a joyful experience. Customers are encouraged to use simple sign language or point to the menu. And if you are new to signing, don't worry – the staff are patient and happy to guide you. Every order feels personal, every cup made with care. Silent café is more than a place to eat and drink. It's a space that celebrates inclusion, breaks down communication barriers, and shows that great service comes from the heart, not just the voice. For coffee lovers in Kampala, it's a chance to enjoy

your favorite drink while supporting a business that empowers the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. If you are looking for the perfect spot to relax, have a quite conversation, or simply sip on an excellent cup of coffee, make your way to the Silent café. In this special place, silence is not empty – it's full of flavor, connection, and meaning. Easy Payments: to make things even more convenient, Silent Café accepts Pesapal payments, ensuring a smooth and secure experience for both locals and travelers. But beyond the coffee, food, and friendly service, Silent café is a symbol of what Kampala stands for – resilience, creativity, and community. For coffee lovers and visitors seeking a truly unique Ugandan experience, this Silent Café proves that silence can be full of warmth, meaning, and unforgettable flavor. Silent Café – Kampala's hidden Gem! No words, just smiles and amazing flavors! The café's owner Nasser Ssenyondo – invites you to experience food that speaks to the heart. Visit and taste the silence!

Open at 7:30 am to at 8:00 pm
Contact number 0769820630

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