

Busoga Kingdom

is a kingdom and one of four constitutional monarchies in present-day Uganda. The kingdom is a cultural institution which promotes popular participation and unity among the people of the region through development programs to improve their standard of living. Busoga strives for a united people who have economic, social and cultural prosperity and assists the Kyabazinga.

Busoga means "Land of the Soga", and is the kingdom of the 11 principalities of the Basoga or Soga (singular Musoga) people. Its capital is Bugembe, near Jinja (Uganda's second-largest city, after Kampala). Busoga comprises ten districts: Kamuli, Iganga, Bugiri, Mayuge, Jinja, Luuka, and the new districts of Bugweri, Buyende, Kaliro and Bugweri. Each district is headed by an elected chairperson or a Local Council Five, and municipalities are headed by an elected mayor. Jinja is the industrial and economic hub of Busoga.

The word 'Basoga', which refers to the inhabitants of the area of study, has been associated with many legendary stories. Bukyanagandi (1993:3) claims that originally the Basoga were not called so, but the term came after a reasonable period following several settlements in the area. The origin of the term, in this reading, is associated with Buganda's territorial conquest of the area. In the numerous wars of conquest that the Baganda engaged with the people in this area, the would-be Basoga had a spearing technique of facing the spear downward while mutilating their enemy, the Baganda. In Lusoga language this kind of spearing is called 'okusonga' but the Baganda rendered it as 'okusogga' in their language which is akin to Lusoga. The Baganda therefore called their opponents the 'abasogga'. In the long run, it developed into 'Basoga'.

Differently, some of the earliest writers about Busoga like Fallers Lyolld (1965), David William Cohen (1972) and Batala F.P Nayenga (1976), observe that the name Busoga originally used to refer to a hill located in the south-central part of the country and later it became identified with a state known as 'Busoga'. This state was in the south-west of Jinja and was ruled by the lineage of Ntembe, of the Reedbuck clan. The application of the term 'Busoga' to the whole region as we know it today began as late as the nineteenth century. By the time of Speke's arrival in Uganda in 1862, the small state of Ntembe had gained much fame. The entire island was called 'Usoga' the Swahilli word for Busoga. The unrivalled fame and influence of the small state of Ntembe was due to its attempts to subdue parts of Bunyoro and Buganda (Fallers, 1965:21; Cohen, 1972:1; Nayenga, 1976:2-3). Busoga was one of the centralized interlacustrine kingdoms that existed around Lake Victoria. Cohen (1972:1) observes that the creation of Busoga relates to the appearance of the immigrant families that reached this part of the region beginning with the 13 Cohen (1972:1) and Nayenga (1976, 2002:42) agree that the formation of Busoga was occasioned by two different groupings, that is the Bantu and Luo speakers, who came from the east and north respectively.

The Luo speakers were led by a legendary figure called Mukama, whereas the Bantu people were led by another legendary figure called Kintu. They established states within this area and then moved on to the other areas, with Mukama going as far as Bunyoro and Kintu crossing into Buganda.

Before the Kintu-Mukama migrations, the Basoga socio-economic and political society was dominated by various clans, which determine blood relationships (Nayenga, 2002:42). Cultural relationships were also forged through the indigenous religious institutions that brought

Busoga is ruled by the Isebantu Kyabazinga, who is currently William Kadhumbula Gabula Nadiope IV, the Gabula of Bugabula, and grandson to Wilberforce Kadhumbula Nadiope, former vice president and also Kyabazinga of Busoga Kingdom.

Water is an important resource in the healing traditions of the Basoga, as there is emphasis on bodily ritual cleansing which involves the sick and afflicted going to these areas of water to bathe wholesomely in order to rid themselves of sicknesses and social misfortunes. The water provides several healing articles and objects used by healers. The most important of these are the cowrie shells, also locally called 'amasonko', that are commonly and widely used as medicine. Cowrie shells are sewn on the garments of most of the traditional healers especially the diviners. They are also used in divination to investigate the causes of misfortunes.

Busoga has two geographical zones; southern and northern. Both in the north and south zones, Busoga has an even distribution of rainfall throughout the year, with much rain between March and May, and less rain in the months between August and December. This rainfall produces a luxuriant growth of vegetation, including herbal plants. In both seasons; crops are grown depending on the relative expectation of rain. There are also characteristic crops that may be grown in the respective seasons. The March to May and August to December seasons are called 'Matoigo' and 'Masambya' respectively. The northern zone has a few hills and rocky areas. Busoga also has friendly climatic conditions due to several rivers that run through it. The rivers include Naigombwa and Lumbuye, which flow through to Lake Kyoga. Because of the adequate rainfall that is experienced in the areas near Lake Victoria in the south and Lake Kyoga in the north, these areas are host to many herbs that are used to cure various ailments.

The indigenous Kisoga pattern of settlement consisted of randomly dispersed subsistence holdings that were in each omutala (a highland area between swamps). The omutala was subdivided into ekisoko (sub village), which had an appointed or hereditary headman who distributed land. Land was available to both relatives of the headman and non-clan members. As long as the land occupant paid the initial dues and fulfilled the customary obligations, the occupant had secure tenure (Nayenga, 2002:43). This pattern of settlement was aligned also to provision social services and amenities to be enjoyed by the people. Each Omutala had its water source, called 'ensulo'; a gathering ground for meetings as well as a traditional healer, who provided healthcare services to the people on that Omutala. It was very common to have a bone setter, Mulerwa, diviner and herbalist on each Omutala. Communal healing activities were organised by each Omutala whenever it was necessary

Dress Code

Gomesi/Busuuti

This 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's a long dress that sweeps the ground with pointed outstanding, triangular-shoulder pads and square neck. It has a large mass of clothing falling on one side around the hip area. A gomesi is not a single clothing but rather one that is accompanied with several garments to make it whole like the Kikoy which is an undergarment that is worn to add weight.

