



Media Kit for the Re-thatching Launch of the Reconstruction of Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga: *Architectural masterpiece of the Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi, Uganda* *World Heritage property in Danger*



About the Kasubi Tombs

The Kasubi site bears eloquent witness to the living cultural traditions of the Baganda. It houses the tombs of the four Kabakas (kings), and still today, the Kabaka and his representatives carry out important rituals related to Buganda culture. It is a major spiritual centre for the Baganda and is the most active religious place in the kingdom. The site represents as a place where communication links with the spiritual world are maintained.

Built in the finest traditions of Ganda architecture and palace design, it reflects technical achievements developed over many centuries. The built and natural elements of the tombs are charged with historical, traditional, and spiritual values. Such architectural structures and the traditional practices that are associated with the site are one of the exceptional representations of the African culture that depict a continuity of a living tradition. The site's main significance lies in its intangible values of beliefs, spirituality, continuity and identity of the Baganda people. The site serves as an important historical and cultural symbol for Uganda and the East Africa region.

A UNESCO World Heritage site since 2001

The Tombs of the Buganda Kings at Kasubi were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2001. After the destruction of a portion of the site by fire on 16 March 2010, the site was placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger by the World Heritage Committee in July 2010 in an attempt to raise awareness and funds for the conservation and rehabilitation of the site.

Criteria and World Heritage Values

Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi: (i),(iii), (iv), (vi)

- Criterion (i):** The Kasubi Tombs site is a master piece of human creativity both in its conception and its execution.
- Criterion (iii):** The Kasubi Tombs site bears eloquent witness to the living cultural traditions of the Baganda.
- Criterion (iv):** The spatial organization of the Kasubi Tombs site represents the best extant example of a Baganda palace/architectural ensemble. Built in the finest traditions of Ganda architecture and palace design, it reflects technical achievements developed over many centuries.
- Criterion (vi):** The built and natural elements of the Kasubi Tombs site are charged with historical, traditional, and spiritual values. It is a major spiritual centre for the Baganda and is the most active religious place in the kingdom.



Project Summary

Following the tragic fire in 2010 that completely destroyed the main building (*Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga*) and led to inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, UNESCO mobilized the international community to help safeguard the site. In addition to receiving emergency funds in International Assistance from the UNESCO World Heritage Fund, the site has also received a significant contribution from the Government of Japan through the Japanese Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO. The Government of Uganda as well as Buganda Kingdom has also taken initiatives to mobilize their own resources. These grants and formulation of partnerships have allowed the following safeguarding actions to be carried out:

April 2010: Primary assessment of the disaster

The UNESCO Director-General dispatched a first UNESCO mission from 7 to 9 April 2010 with the primary objective to assess the extent of the damage, and discuss the actions to be taken with the relevant authorities. The State Party of Uganda submitted a request for international assistance to the World Heritage Fund to permit them to implement emergency measures and develop a reconstruction strategy. This international assistance request was approved by UNESCO in July 2010, and provided funds to: 1) Draft a reconstruction strategy; 2) Erect a temporary shelter; 3) Draft a fire prevention plan; and 4) Sensitize the community about the reconstruction.

November 2010: Development of the reconstruction strategy

A joint [ICOMOS/ICCROM/WHC](#) reactive monitoring mission was undertaken from 8 to 11 November 2010. Its objective was to assess the proposed reconstruction strategy and to ensure that all conditions are met for the revitalization of the Outstanding Universal Value by identifying measures for a desired state of conservation for the World Heritage property.

August 2011: Institutional framework and management structure

A UNESCO-WHC advisory mission was undertaken from 21 to 26 August 2011. Its objectives were to assess the required preparation of the reconstruction and to identify collaborative areas with the National Government and the Buganda Kingdom, which the Japanese Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO could support. As a result, two technical committees (Buganda Technical Committee and National Technical Committee) the administrative and financial mechanisms were formed.

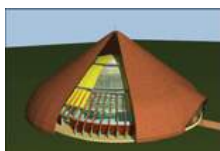
October 2011: Guidance on the disaster risk management and disaster mitigation

A Japan-UNESCO Technical Advisory Mission was undertaken from 18 to 22 October 2011. An investigation of structural elements of the *Muzibu Azaala Mpanga* architecture was carried-out (in consideration of thatched roofs, and disaster prevention and mitigation planning) as well as to deepen the understanding of the 6 traditional construction methods of the Muzibu Azaala Mpanga and its characteristics. As a result, the following recommendations were made:

- Creation of a research programme for the Kasubi tombs thatching roof conservation, based on the observation that thatching roof methods were also in danger and if not researched properly, will endanger the whole culture of the Buganda Kingdom;
- Construction of an architectural model as a pedagogical tool to guide the reconstruction process, also as a hub for disaster risk management for cultural heritage.

March 2013: Implementation of the disaster risk management and disaster mitigation strategy

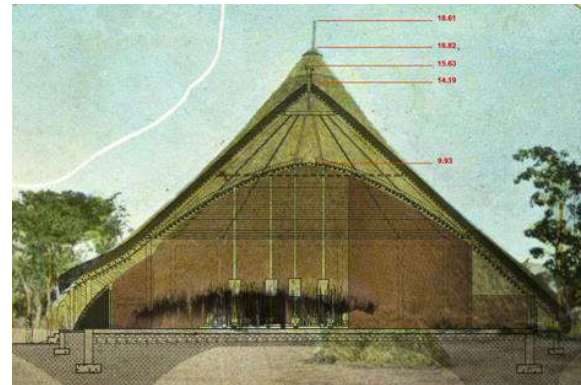
A disaster risk prevention scheme and its related equipment needed to support the reconstruction (of the destroyed roof) were installed.





Outstanding Universal Value of the Kasubi Tombs

The World Heritage site is the major spiritual centre for the Baganda where traditional and cultural practices have been preserved. The Kasubi Tombs are the most active religious place in the kingdom, where rituals are frequently performed. Its place as the burial ground for the previous four kings (Kabakas) qualifies it as a religious centre for the royal family, a place where the Kabaka and his representatives carry out important rituals related to Buganda culture. The site represents a place where communication links with the spiritual world are maintained.



Its spatial organization, starting from the border of the site marked with the traditional bark cloth trees, leading through the gatehouse, the main courtyard, and culminating in the large thatched building, housing the tombs of the four Kabakas, represents the best existing example of a Buganda palace/burial site.

At its core on the hilltop is the main tomb building, locally referred to as the “*Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga*” which is a masterpiece of architecture. A tomb building has been in existence since the 13th century. The latest building was the former palace of the *Kabakas* of Buganda, built in 1882 and converted into the royal burial ground in 1884. Four royal tombs now lie within the *Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga*.

The main tomb building, which is circular and surmounted by a dome, is a major example of an architectural achievement that was raised using vegetal materials only: wooden poles, spear grass, reeds and wattle. Its unusual scale and outstanding details bear witness to the creative genius of the Baganda and as a masterpiece of form and craftsmanship, is an exceptional surviving example of an architectural style developed by the powerful Buganda Kingdom since the 13th Century.

The built and natural elements of the Kasubi Tombs site are charged with historical, traditional, and spiritual values. The site is the most active religious place in the kingdom. The structures and the traditional practices that are associated with the site are one of the exceptional representations of the African culture that depict a continuity of a living tradition. The site main significance lies in its intangible values of beliefs, spirituality, continuity and identity of the Baganda. The site serves as an important historical and cultural symbol for Uganda and East Africa as a whole. “

“The authenticity of the Tombs of the Kings of Buganda at Kasubi is reflected in the continuity of the traditional and cultural practices that are associated with the site. The original burial system of the *Kabakas* of Buganda is still being maintained. The placement of *Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga* in the middle of other buildings around the large central courtyard (*Olugya*), with a forecourt containing the drum house and entry gatehouse, is a typical ensemble of the *Buganda* Kingdom palace. The practice of using grass thatched roof resting on structural rings of palm tree fronds is still being maintained as well as the internal elements and finishing materials such as the long wooden poles wrapped in bark cloth decoration. Although the authenticity of the site has been weakened by the loss to the fire of the main tomb structure, the traditional architectural craftsmanship and the required skills are still available to allow it to be recreated. This factor, coupled with the extensive documentation of the building, will allow an authentic renewal of attributes. “





Timeline

Year	Category	Title
2000		Boundary of nominated property and buffer zone
2001	Advisory Body Evaluation	Advisory Body Evaluation
2001	Decision	Report of the 25th Session of the Committee
2001	Decision	CONF 208 XA - Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda)
2010	SOC Reports	SOC Report 2010
2010	Decision	34 COM 7B.53 - Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda) (C 1022)
2010	Decision	34 COM 8C.1 - Establishment of the World Heritage List in Danger (Inscribed Properties)
2010	Decision	34 COM 8E - Adoption of retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value
2011	SOC Reports	SOC Report 2011
2011	Decision	35 COM 7A.17 - Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda) (C 1022)
2011	Decision	35 COM 8C.2 - Establishment of the World Heritage List in Danger (Retained Properties)
2012	Mission Report	Report on the Joint ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring Mission Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda)2 – 5 April 2012 (Katri Lisitzin (ICCROM); Karel Bakker (ICOMOS))
2012	Mission Report	Report on the Joint ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring Mission Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda), 2 – 5 April 2012 (Katri Lisitzin (ICCROM); Karel Bakker (ICOMOS))
2012	SOC Reports	SOC Report 2012
2012	Decision	36 COM 7A.18 - Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda) (C 1022)
2012	Decision	36 COM 8C.2 - Establishment of the World Heritage List in Danger (Maintained Properties)
2013	SOC Reports	SOC Report 2013
2013	Decision	37 COM 7A.21 - Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda) (C 1022)
2013	Decision	37 COM 8C.2 - Update of the List of World Heritage in Danger (retained properties)
2014	SOC Report by State Party	Summary of the State of conservation report by the State Party

Resources

- Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi Project Website at UNESCO
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1022/>
- State of Conservation (SoC) of Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/233>
- UNESCO document center on Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1022/documents/>
- Report of the decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee as its 34th Session (Brasilia, 2010)
<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2010/whc10-34com-20e.pdf>
- Report on joint WHC/ICOMOS/ ICCROM reactive monitoring mission (Brasilia, 2010)
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/36COM>.

About UNESCO World Heritage Programme

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called *the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.

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Map of the Kasubi Tombs (reconstruction site)

