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Editorial

In June 2019, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) at Makerere University received funding from The Mellon Foundation of New York to support a research project titled, *Historicising the Humanities at Makerere University since 1922*. The project, which sought to rethink and reshape the role of humanities in Uganda, re-examined the basis and significance of humanities and humanistic social sciences at Makerere University from a historical perspective. The research resulted into a publication of an edited volume titled, *Historicising the Humanities at Makerere: Trends, Patterns and Prospects*[1]. The book provides an insight into the intellectual history and trends of the humanities and humanistic social sciences disciplines at Makerere University and raises questions about the basis of their existence and reflects on their trajectories, roles and positions within the changing higher institution education in the region and beyond.

In Part I of this special issue of Mawazo, we further present work arising from the same research project. The authors delve into how some of the scholars in the humanities and humanistic scholarship have shaped teaching, learning and research as well as public life over time at Makerere University and beyond. They demonstrate how the major historical, political, economic and ideological forces shaped the humanities teaching, funding research and publication at the University. They also highlight the question of decolonisation and its bearing on the curriculum, and how the humanities at Makerere University ought to respond and engage in this debate. Thus, the authors interrogate who has been involved in the research, teaching and publication, why and how they have been doing it. By examining the humanities and humanistic social sciences curriculum and pedagogy, they identify the challenges that institutions have encountered in trying to decolonise knowledge. The authors advocate the need to

[1] The book was published by Fountain Publishers Limited in 2022.

integrate local indigenous content into our curricula, including the integration of African philosophies and epistemologies, methodologies and practices in teaching, learning and research.

In the first article, the authors explore the public and critical reception of creative publications and contributions to the literary critical scholarship of the continent of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Timothy Wangusa, Mary Karooro Okurut, Dominica Dipio, Susan Kiguli and Evelyn Cindy Magara. They explore how these Makerere University-trained writers/critics have contributed quantitively and qualitatively to literary creativity and activism, poetry and oral literature, and drama and cinema; thus, offering insights into national and regional debates on literary creativity and literary criticism. Similarly, the following article examines John Samuel Mbiti's legacy in teaching, research and publication in African Traditional Religion (ATR) at Makerere University. The authors demonstrate his engagement with the public and promote the philosophy of taking the university to the community. They equally highlight Mbiti's contribution to the study of traditional African religion and philosophy and how he advocated the inclusion of these perspectives on the curriculum of religion and philosophy at Makerere University.

In the third article, *On Decolonising Feminist Studies: Makerere University in Perspective*, the authors interrogate how African feminists respond to the challenge of decolonisation and the extent to which the decolonisation agenda has influenced the teaching and research in gender studies at Makerere University. They extend the debate on feminist pedagogy and how it ought to respond to the impulse around decolonisation beyond political sloganeering. Examining the reading materials provided for graduate students and research projects in the School of Women and Gender Studies, the authors examine how the graduate courses utilise literature with decolonial content and how such content translates into research by students. They argue that feminist studies at Makerere University are context-specific and need to strengthen the ongoing efforts to critically analyse neo-coloniality to enable a feminist classroom in Makerere University and elsewhere to engage with critical reading materials. In the same vein, in the article, *Navigating the DUO Mandate of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University: Achievements and Pitfalls* contends with how the School of Women and Gender Studies has realised the mandate of supporting the women's movement and policymakers. The article explores insights from different stakeholders to understand how the unit has been able to perform outreach activities that serve the women's movement in the civil society and policy makers. Although the outreach mandate is still operational, its vitality has waned because of the changing

roles of academics in the school and the challenges encountered by civil society.

Exploring the colonial aspects of African archaeology, which include how national archaeology institutions operate, how archaeological research is funded, how archaeological knowledge is produced and disseminated, and who is involved in the praxis of archaeology, the authors of the fourth article examine who and what determines the archaeological research agenda in Uganda. They interrogate the archaeological research agenda in the last century and examine how it has directed the nature of archaeological research. They further analyse the role of Ugandan institutions and scholars have played in archaeological research. They contend that funding sources continue to dictate the patterns and trends of archaeological research agenda and the impact of practitioners and institutions. Whereas local institutions are managed by local practitioners who are engaged in fieldwork research as research assistants and curators at museums, knowledge production is largely dominated by scholars from the Western world.

In the last article, *The Funding History for Anthropological Research in Uganda since the Colonial Period: Implications for Decolonisation of the Discipline*, the authors equally inquire whether anthropology has been or can be decolonised under the financial control of the powers that set the methodological and theoretical traditions, which aimed at controlling Africa and other previous colonies. Tracing research and teaching of anthropology in Uganda from the 1930s, the authors demonstrate how anthropological research has been based on external funding from the Global North, thus focusing on the agenda of the funders. They contend that if this dominance goes on unabated without research support from African countries aimed at solving critical social challenges, it will continue to render the decolonisation agenda problematic.

In Part II, we present four regular articles that, by category, focus on identity, gender and environment. In the first article on *Who is an African? Rethinking the Identity in View of Changing Realities,* the author interrogates the taken-for-granted concept of an African and exposes the contradictions with serious implications reflected in demographic and political changes that have taken place in Africa over time. The author uses the constructivist identity theory to explain the difficult dialectical processes in the construction of Africanness and the implication of its forms for usage across different contexts. He concludes that it is very difficult to come up with a substantive definition of who is African since the understanding of the concept of African as an identity must be de-racialised and contextualised for more

meaningful understanding. Hence, the concept of African identity needs to be used and applied with caution.

In the second article *on Representation, Voice and Empowerment: Towards gender outcomes in Uganda's Local Governance Decision-Making Processes,* the authors explain how many countries including Uganda have enacted laws to liberate women from historically and culturally rooted social injustices. They, however, note that beyond the enactment of laws, implementation of policies and programmes to meaningfully address gender-based injustices have faced numerous challenges. The authors argue that whereas Uganda enacted a law in 1997 in which one-third of every local government council is reserved for female representatives and this has subsequently resulted in more elected female representatives in the Local Government councils, deliberations and decision-making processes and outcomes have remained largely gender-neutral. They conclude that beyond numbers, there is more need for deliberate actions to enable the representatives to understand their mandate to improve gender inclusiveness, empowerment and voice.

The author of the third article on *Oral History and Gendered Terrain of Anti-Colonial Struggles among the Banyakigezi*, describes and explains the significance of the culture-specific items and tools used in the anti-colonial struggle by the followers of the Nyabingi movement. She explains how the household items, tools and equipment as well as the fashion, dress code and body ornaments body had cultural symbolisms and a strong connection to the Nyabingi spiritual powers. It is these powers that were believed to heal the causalities of the struggle, the sick and old people who would be transported to healers while singing incantations to the Nyabingi spirit using whistles, horns and drums. They used caves and huts as sleeping and hiding places during the war in which spears, arrows and shields were the weapons. The anti-colonial struggles collapsed when the colonial powers linked to superstition most of the items used by indigenous groups through the enactment of the 1912 witchcraft ordinance in Uganda. The author concludes, by arguing from the decolonial theory, that post-colonial governments need to divest themselves from the colonial mentality that suffocated indigenous ways of life through criminalisation and instead protect indigenous knowledge and ideologies.

In the fourth article titled *Environmental Security, Intrastate and Inter-State Wars: A Prospective Analysis,* the authors argue that physical wars remain part of human existence even though various frameworks have been made to prevent them. They argue that the main causes of wars derive from the environmental threats that are causing human security concerns hence fuelling intrastate and interstate

wars. They categorise environmental threats as resources (their scarcity, abundance and sharing) and climate change and subsequent environmental insecurity which is conceptualised as the interplay between environment, human security and state security and the likelihood of environmental factors in creating conflicts that result in wars. They argue that although resource abundance is necessary for stable socio-economic development, poor governance frameworks, poor human resources, and inability to diversify revenue sources and contain underlying ethnic tensions are likely to result in conflicts that escalate into wars. Climate change aggravates the scarcity and quality of resources available to meet human needs and climate change effects directly affect people's livelihood assets. Hence, this further undermines the capacity of the state to act in ways that promote meaningful human security and peace.

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