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## Makerere's Myths, Makerere's History: A Retrospect

Carol Sicherman\*

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### Abstract

Stemming from the author's experience of writing a history of Makerere, this paper examines how the myths that have grown up around the university in the eighty-five years since its founding have obscured a clear view of the evolving institution, which the paper defines as 'a university in Africa' rather than 'an African university'. The first myth, of an egalitarian paradise enjoyed by fully-funded students, was questioned even during its heyday by intellectuals disillusioned by the failure during the 1960s to fulfil the late-colonial dream. In the aftermath of the tormented 1970s and 1980s, a variant myth declared that new funding formulas made Makerere even more egalitarian. Proponents of this myth claimed that anyone who qualified for admission could attend; however, since government scholarships went to increasingly smaller proportions of the student body, only those who could raise the necessary funds themselves could take advantage of the supposedly widened access. After questioning the meaning of 'African' in a socio-political context still strongly flavoured by foreign influence, the paper moves to consider the challenges that researchers may encounter in writing about universities in Africa: challenges that differ according to whether the researcher is an insider or outsider. The paper ends by asking what African academics can do to rid Makerere of the diseases threatening its institutional health.

### Résumé

Issu de l'expérience de l'auteur de relater le cas de Makerere, ce document examine la façon dont les mythes qui se sont développés autour de l'université au cours des quatre-vingt cinq ans depuis sa fondation ont embrouillé une vision claire de l'institution en évolution. C'est ce que le document définit comme « une université en Afrique » plutôt qu'« une université africaine ». Le premier mythe,

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\* Carol Sicherman is Professor Emerita of English, Lehman College, City University of New York, USA.

d'un paradis égalitaire dont bénéficient les étudiants entièrement pris en charge, est remis en question, même à l'époque de son apogée, par les intellectuels des années 1960 désillusionnés par l'échec de réaliser le défunt rêve colonial. A la suite de la tourmente des années 1970–1980, un mythe variant a déclaré que les nouvelles de financement ont rendu Makerere plus égalitaire. Les adeptes de ce mythe déclaraient que quiconque ayant les qualités requises pour l'admission pouvaient s'inscrire; cependant, étant donné que les bourses du gouvernement étaient allouées à des proportions d'étudiants de plus en plus réduites, seuls ceux qui se procuraient des ressources pouvaient bénéficier de l'accès théoriquement élargi. Après avoir remis en question la signification du qualificatif « Africain » dans un contexte sociopolitique encore fortement parfumé par l'influence étrangère, le document propose de considérer les défis que pourraient rencontrer les chercheurs qui écrivent sur les universités africaines : défis qui varient selon que le chercheur est autochtone ou étranger. Le document se termine sur la question de savoir ce que les universitaires Africains peuvent faire pour débarrasser Makerere des maux qui menacent sa santé institutionnelle.

### Introduction

In this essay I draw some lessons for scholars of higher education in Africa from my experience researching and writing *Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922–2000*. I reflect on certain problems that I encountered: how to evaluate the myths that had attached to the idea of Makerere, how to understand the phrases 'educated Africans' and 'African university', and how to access sources. Hoping to encourage African scholars to write about other universities in Africa and to encourage funding agencies to supply backing,<sup>1</sup> I also discuss the advantages that they may bring to such a task as compared with a Westerner like myself, as well as the challenges that would face them. I conclude with some thoughts on recent analyses of contemporary Makerere by intellectuals in Uganda, and what the implications of certain analyses are for improvement.

Any book about Makerere, I thought when I began, must be either the work of a Ugandan or a co-production with a Ugandan. When a Ugandan colleague agreed to collaborate once he had completed his doctorate, I began the research. By the time he finished his PhD, however, he found himself unable to contribute. Since I had already made considerable progress, he encouraged me to proceed without him on the grounds that an outsider's perspective could be sufficiently valuable to outweigh the absence of an insider's views. I revised the plan for the book, for an outsider could not discuss such sensitive topics as ethnic discrimination and corruption. The first section of the book, a survey of Makerere's history from its inception to the year 2000, grew to half of the text; this section was followed by five case studies and three thematically organized chapters.<sup>2</sup> Co-publication in Uganda partly achieved my goal of local participation.

### The Background

Makerere University, among the best known of the older sub-Saharan African universities, began in Kampala in 1922 as a small technical school to train African carpenters, construction workers, and mechanics. It was reconceived within a year or two on a broader base, with courses to train medical, engineering, and agricultural assistants; surveyors; and primary-school teachers. Its explicit purpose was to supply inexpensive support staff for a variety of institutions run by the colonial government and its missionary allies; at the same time, there was an implicit purpose: controlling education to forestall the dangers of independent thought (Sicherman 2001/02:93–94). Admitting talented products of missionary schools, Makerere served all of East Africa, with a few students coming from as far away as Malawi or Zambia. Over the next decade and a half, the level of instruction rose steadily, so that by the late 1930s, a report commissioned by the Colonial Office envisioned a further transformation from the status it had by then achieved, that of a British-style public (secondary) school, to the next stage of education, becoming a university college.

World War II delayed further development. Then, in 1950, Makerere was refounded as a university-level institution whose degrees were granted by the University of London. It was one of the 'Asquith colleges', so named after a report issued in 1945 by a commission headed by Lord Cyril Asquith. Charged with making recommendations for the development of higher education in the colonies, the Asquith commission proposed that colonial colleges, a few of which, like Makerere, existed in some form already, be developed in a 'Special Relationship' with the University of London. This arrangement, presented as a means of guaranteeing world-class quality, ensured continued British influence once the colonies ceased to exist as such. Asquith colleges came into being in Sudan, the Gold Coast, Nigeria (at Ibadan), Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and the West Indies (in Jamaica). New colleges in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi were briefly part of the scheme as well.

Once in the Special Relationship, Makerere began a dazzlingly fast expansion while continuing until the early 1960s to serve the entire region. Upon the achievement of independence in East Africa, Makerere was reconfigured yet again (in 1963) as one of three colleges constituting the University of East Africa, joining its young sister colleges in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in a loose federation that ended in 1970. At the time of its rebirth as an autonomous national university in 1970, Makerere was at the height of its international fame. The political horrors that ensued afflicted Makerere along with the rest of Uganda. Institutional reconstruction, of the very idea of the university, as well as of the physical fabric, began in the late 1980s and resulted in a Makerere very different from the earlier version.

### The First Myth and Its Dissolution

Two variant myths have accompanied Makerere during its evolution. The first, arising soon after its founding, held that Makerere was an egalitarian paradise where a precious small group of students learned universal knowledge and values while honing their intellectual skills to serve their societies. This conception lasted well into the 1960s and even into the terrible years of tyranny, when it had powerful preservative effects. The second myth, which developed in the 1990s along with recovery from the bad times, features a pragmatism often couched in commercial terms (students are ‘clients’ of an increasingly corporate university). By incorporating the first myth, the successor version claims greater inclusiveness and, therefore, greater egalitarianism. But the second myth is more a matter of administration cheerleading than something felt by a fractious staff and a dissatisfied student body.

In the cruelly selective colonial examination system, only a few Africans reached the top of the educational pinnacle. In the late colonial period, Makerereans were, to quote the title of a novel by a Kenyan Makerere graduate, ‘the future leaders’ (Ruheni 1978). In another novel by a Makerere graduate set in the 1950s, a narrator named Duncan Ngusa declares that staff and students together constituted ‘a community of people of all ages who had gathered together to extend the frontiers of knowledge which knows no boundary’ (Mwambungu 1975:119). But the author destroys this fantasy of classless harmony by making Duncan supply the formal declaration that all students had to sign: ‘I promise to seek the truth and study diligently; to obey the principal and all to whom obedience is due, and to keep the principles of the College.’<sup>3</sup> “Duncan,” says his interlocutor, “your Education was really colonial” (Mwambungu 1975:136). In the words of a leading Tanzanian historian, colonial education was designed to create a ‘backward intellectual robot’ subservient to neo-colonial interests long after the formal end of colonial power (Swai 1980:48).

Timothy Wangusa, one of the first African members of Makerere’s Department of Literature, conveys Makerere’s mythical inaccessibility in the title of his novel, *Upon This Mountain*. At school in the 1940s, Wangusa’s young hero dreams: ‘Oh, he would read all the books and finish them at Makerere.’ (1989:23). Merely getting to the actual mountain, Makerere Hill, might require days or weeks of difficult travel; stories were told of aspiring students who walked a thousand miles to Makerere. They found a multiethnic society in which everyone, literally, at least, sang in harmony. Erasto Mang’anya, a Tanganyikan who studied at Makerere in 1935–37, describes a moment during his final day there (1984:1-2). Taking the required morning shower, he started singing ‘Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching On to War’ Soon he was joined by another Tanganyikan (singing tenor), a

Kenyan (singing alto), and a Ugandan (voice unspecified). Their 'beautiful and melodious' singing was interrupted by the Principal, Douglas G. Tomblings, who had taken a violent dislike to Mang'anya because he had led a group of Tanganyikan students in a protest over poor 'food, uniforms, and transport'. Angry at what he deemed their 'horrible noise', Tomblings threatened to submit a 'special report' on Mang'anya to the Director of Education in Tanganyika; then he walked away, 'whistling the tune "Rule Britannia"!'

One might suppose from this anecdote that Mang'anya would have been immune to the Makerere myth. On the contrary, he remembered fondly most of the staff, whether white or African. Makerere 'left an indelible mark on my life', and 'somewhere in one corner of my heart there is the name 'Makerere College' written in letters of gold' (2-3). On his return to Tanganyika, where Tomblings luckily had not made an impression, he was posted to teach in a far-away government school. To get to the nearest train station, he had to walk twenty-one kilometres from his family home. It was unthinkable that 'a man with Makerere education, should ... carry luggage', even a single light bag, because 'doing so would be lowering his prestige' (47). Some twenty years later, students in another Tanganyikan school gasped when a Makerere chaplain pronounced the single word 'Makerere', which they knew signified 'the place where education, power, wealth, emancipation could be achieved' (Foster 1961:69).

Once Makerere reached university status, the variety of the student body grew much greater. No longer restricted to black African men, it was a college for *all* Africans, no matter what their gender, ethnic origin, or skin colour. Previously there had been no Asians; now they began coming. And in 1945 a tiny trickle of women began seeping in; ten years later, the number of women had risen to thirty, or 5.5 percent of the student body (*Annual Report* for 1955:1). One of the common denominators amid this heterogeneity was the colonial language, a feature that persists to this day even though African languages are finally part of the curriculum. Proud to receive London degrees, proof that they were as good as British students, the students insisted that Makerere University College was *theirs* – *their* paradise on a hill. They were the wa-Makerere, a super-tribe.

This first Makerere myth was powerful. One of the early women graduates, Sarah Ntiro, reacted in dismay to the suggestion that this egalitarian, multi-ethnic, and multiracial paradise was a myth: 'It was real; it was real!' Colonial institutions were *not* perfect meritocracies, however: chiefs' sons (and occasionally daughters) received preferential access to the lower levels of the educational ladder, from which they moved more easily than other strivers to the middle levels and thence to the very top (Sicherman 2001/02:104-05). One supposed remedy to inequities of access, affirmative action, has been used in a variety of

ways at Makerere since about 1990. But instead of levelling the playing field, it does no more than smooth a bump or two. In an incisive analysis of impediments to equal access at Makerere, Joy C. Kwesiga and Josephine Ahikire remark that 'it stands at the very end of the tunnel only to tap those whose privileged position in society enables them to come out. It largely leaves the structure of the tunnel intact' (2006: 32). Nonetheless, the myth *was* partly based on reality: a poor peasant's bright son, someone like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, could reach the heights by studying hard. He got to Makerere.

Myth and fact are intertwined in the only significant twentieth-century book about Makerere as an institution, Margaret Macpherson's *They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere University College, 1922–1962* (1964).<sup>4</sup> One reviewer disparaged Macpherson as a mythographer more than the chronicler she modestly claimed to be. In her cheerful pages he heard, to his annoyance, 'the jolly voices of the builders chanting ... the college's motto, *Pro future aedificamus*', which she took as her title (Stuart 1965). Although the criticism is sound, to condemn Macpherson and her book as no more than relics of patronizing colonialism is to ignore a complex situation. It is true that Macpherson propagated and was part of the myth, but she was more. The longest-serving staff member in her day, she stuck it out in the English (later Literature) Department through the Amin years and into the Obote II period.<sup>5</sup> She won lasting gratitude from many members of the Makerere community. In September 1997, four Old Makerereans who were then their countries' ambassadors to the United Nations pooled their meagre resources to buy her a round-trip ticket to New York from her retirement home in England. Her host was David Rubadiri, who had taught literature at Makerere at various times after graduating. He and his colleagues invited some twenty-five Old Makerereans then living in the New York to a luncheon in her honour in a private dining room at the UN.<sup>6</sup> When they were undergraduates, she had been a warm maternal presence; now she was a cherished icon of a long-gone and happily remembered period.

Macpherson exemplified Makerere's faith in itself. Something more than a myth was operating when Makerere stubbornly kept going during the torments of the Amin and Obote II regimes. The intellectual capital accumulated during the Glory Years of the 1950s–60s sustained it in the most difficult circumstances. The few outsiders still in contact during the years of tyranny marvelled at Makerere's persistence despite the deprivation of human and material resources, and despite considerable corrosion of the spirit. When that period ended, so did the old Makerere – so full of privilege, so lavishly supported by colonial and postcolonial largesse. The university that evolved in the 1990s – growing exponentially as the market demanded *more* enrolment, *more* courses – was radically different from the still-intimate Makerere of the Glory Years. And it

was no longer the only player in Ugandan higher education. A dozen or so new universities (three public, the rest private) emerged as rivals, albeit rivals of lower standing. Radical cuts in government funding signalled the definitive death of the first myth. With self-funded students an increasingly dominant proportion of the total enrolment at Makerere, its claim to be an egalitarian institution welcoming every brilliant student became unbelievable.

The first myth had begun weakening much earlier, thanks to the 'creeping spirit of disillusion' that overcame so many African intellectuals in the 1960s (Serumaga 1969:4). The phrase comes from Robert Serumaga's novel *Return to the Shadows*, one of a spate of African 'novels of disillusionment' that appeared in the 1960s. The hero, Joe, an idealistic economist like the author, flees one of the many coups to afflict his country, expecting refuge in his mother's rural home. (This scenario had not yet come to Uganda, the model for the fictional country.) Joe finds his mother, just raped, gazing expressionlessly at the dead bodies of young girls in her care; despite (or because of) the sound of gunfire, no neighbour has come to their aid. If 'the old spirit of "neighbourly brotherhood"' is dying even in the villages, Joe reflects, it is dead for good (1969:59). A mini-essay ensues giving an interpretation typical of the 1960s:

As for the educated, that spirit had died a long time ago and the severe individualism of Europe had taken over. However, the sense of insecurity among the *élite* and their eagerness for fast material progress had produced a brand of young men, who though *in a sense quite educated*, lacked any intellectual commitment to causes (56; emphasis mine).

It was intellectuals like Serumaga (born in 1939), with their 'intellectual commitment to causes', who, having helped defeat the colonial powers with intellectual weapons purloined from the colonial storehouse, claimed to be 'agents for social change and progress' In Serumaga's view the succeeding elite, although just a few years younger, were only 'in a sense quite educated' Lacking commitment to anything beyond their own welfare, they felt 'insecure' in their sudden achievement of power and considered 'any change to the *status quo* ... a threat' (56).

A year before Serumaga published his novel, Okello Oculi, a Makerere graduate en route to a career as a political scientist, pointed out that few in their generation of educated Africans were free of colonial-induced prejudices (Oculi 1968:26-28).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Oculi argued, Makerereans expected to 'join this new "tribe" of educated men and women' and lead lives just like those of the former colonial masters. In the same vein, a young Ugandan social scientist wrote scornfully that Africans struggling up the education pyramid were sustained by

the hope of getting a white-collar job, ... of joining the class of the educated, ...of sitting in beer shops drinking bottled beer in large glasses, ... of smoking State Express, ... of having a telephone ... [and] running water in the house, ... of going to night clubs regularly, ... of owning a T.V. and a car, and above all, ... of being regarded as educated and 'feared' and respected ... (Mushanga 1970:41)

Serumaga attacked the 'apparent futility' of such aspirations (56-57). He himself confronted both the Obote I and Amin governments through his plays. His plays, however, were too abstract and obscure even for many in the target audience of intellectuals, let alone the politicians at whom he aimed (Mbowa 1996:90-92). Thus Serumaga's career ironically illustrated the futility that he attacked in the novel. He was, perhaps, *too* educated.

#### **'Educated' Africans**

In his inaugural address as Makerere's first African Professor of Education, Asavia Wandira declared that higher education was producing 'a select community of selfish and greedy giants', giants who, if overburdened by the demands of their community, might well become dwarfs (1970:7). I distinguish three generations of people labelled 'educated' in colonial or formerly colonial countries. The first generation at Makerere, loosely conceived as those attending up to 1950, was educated through secondary level. Their immediate successors, arriving in the 1950s, reached university level, earning bachelor's degrees; some proceeded to postgraduate studies. Then, with a greater (if still very limited) diffusion of education, another generation appeared, ostensibly educated to or beyond the same level as the preceding generation but actually representing a greater range of accomplishment because standards had begun loosening. The first two generations, which coexisted briefly at Makerere, are represented by Simon Musoke and his daughter Theresa. Simon's studies at Makerere in 1929-30 gave him an 'old style ... education' that he vastly improved over several decades through his work as an official in the Buganda and central colonial governments; in the 1950s, his knowledge of Buganda history and culture was invaluable to the researchers (almost all European) at the East African Institute of Social Research (Sicherman 2005/06:307). Europeans thought he was 'old-style' because of two limitations; Makerere's as a quasi-public school and his own as someone without experience beyond Uganda Theresa, in contrast, studied and lived outside Uganda for considerable periods. A star of the Art School, she did further studies in London at the Royal College of Art; returned to teach at Makerere and execute numerous commissions; and took a Master's in Fine Art at the University of Pennsylvania (Prah 1989:5; LaDuke 1991:72-74). When



the bad times worsened, she lived in Nairobi and prospered as an artist. Having found sanctuary and success abroad, she returned to Kampala some years after peace was restored.

The second generation of African intellectuals came to maturity as colonialism was ending. They and their age mates all over Africa were not the 'selfish and greedy giants' of whom Wandira spoke. Rather, they were giants of the intellect who, having conquered the colonial ogre, would lead their countrymen to the promised land, meanwhile bringing riches to their families and clans. Events such as the 1966 military coup that ousted Nkrumah and Amin's 1971 coup overthrowing Obote proved the promised land to be a mirage. In Uganda, the erstwhile giants, along with the third generation, now faced another choice: flee from the current tyranny to save their lives, or challenge it and very possibly lose their lives. Many fled.

### **Writing a History of an 'African University'**

A history of an African university seems impossible without a definition of 'African university', but a satisfying definition is hard to find. The conventional development model sees an African university as one run by Africans, centrally (but not exclusively) devoted to increasing knowledge of all aspects of Africa, and graduating high-level personnel to staff local institutions. That vague description suits the University of East Africa (UEA), yet – as an American participant remarked at a 1962 UEA planning conference – "the African University", like the African Personality, is a fiction'.<sup>8</sup> At Makerere, the elusive meaning of 'African' was an implicit theme of many articles during the 1960s in the lively student newspaper, the *Makererean*. After all, aside from the students, nearly everything at Makerere was a British import – even the specimens for dissection in Biology classes. In 1962 the *Makererean* appealed (fruitlessly) for 'a revision of the present examination system', which otherwise 'would cling to the new African university like the musty black crepe of an outworn Victorian fashion' (19 Feb. 1962: 2). The examination system underwent minor changes in the late 1960s, but these amounted to little more than exchanging one foreigner for another; a British for an American model. Undergraduates understood the situation. Until Africans 'face[d] the wide scope of inefficiency, tribalism and corruption that have come hand in hand' with supposed Africanization (Kunguru 1969), and unless new African staff were 'mentally decolonised', the mere shibboleth of Africanization would not satisfy students in a 'revolutionary mood and . . . impatient with those replicas of colonialism' (Okello 1966). In a preview of convulsions during the late 1980s and early 1990s, an undergraduate predicted that an African administration would be 'obstructionist and suspicious

of student views' and would lead the student body to 'develop sinister attitudes' (Okello 1966).

To become African in a meaningful way, a university would have to transform itself from 'a pale reflection of alien universities' into 'a living concrete symbol of all that is African'.<sup>9</sup> The difficulty of such a transformation is suggested by the thirty-two photographs chosen by Fountain Publishers for the Ugandan edition of my book (2006). Until the mid-1960s, the only Africans to be seen are students. Then, much faster than the teaching staff, the administration became African, as shown in photographs of Makerere's first two African leaders: Yusufu Lule (Principal, 1964-70) and Frank Kalimuzo (Vice-Chancellor, 1970-72). But what kind of African was Lule? While Principal of Makerere, he showed his colonial background when, visiting the women's hall of residence on a 'swelteringly hot guest evening', he was horrified by the students' breach of decorum: in the interest of comfort, they had doffed their academic gowns (Sicherman 2005:40). Academic gowns, Oxbridge in origin,<sup>10</sup> form a leitmotif in the photographs of Makerere's inauguration as a national university in 1970. Obote, now Makerere's Chancellor, ordered Parliament to pass a new University Act that made the university subservient to him as President, and he replaced Lule with Kalimuzo, his trusted aide; in short, he fulfilled the prediction of the student commentators quoted in the previous paragraph. The four African presidents who graced the inauguration – Obote, Kenneth Kaunda, Jomo Kenyatta, and Julius Nyerere (himself a Makerere graduate) – wore academic robes combining European academic styles with African motifs. Their photograph gives inadvertently apt proof that Makerere had a considerable distance to go before becoming 'a living concrete symbol of all that is African'

A snapshot taken a year later speaks volumes. It is captioned 'Idi Amin, Chancellor of Makerere & President of Uganda, with Vice Chancellor Frank Kalimuzo at the first graduation ceremony of the university in 1971'. Over their European suits the two men wear similar hybridized robes, decorated with the crested crane (Uganda's national symbol), and topped by European-style berets; each holds the text of his speech. Their body language is even more important than the symbolism of their attire. Amin looks off to his left, indifferent both to his ghost-written speech and to Kalimuzo. Resting his forearms on his knees, Vice-Chancellor Kalimuzo studies his self-written speech. A year later, he was dead, one of Amin's early victims. When the knock on the door came, he walked to the waiting car in full knowledge that he would be killed.

### Questions for a Historical Inquiry

Kalimuzo's abduction on 8 October 1972 took place as the exodus of European expatriates was gathering speed. Because there were too few Ugandans ready to

take over at Makerere, Amin ordered the administration to recruit staff from countries with large Muslim populations; some came from the Indian subcontinent and others from Egypt and a few other countries. Exchanging white expatriates for other foreigners did not make Makerere any more 'African'. The governing question of my book was therefore not whether Makerere *was* an African university but whether it was in the process of *becoming* one. I gave every interviewee a brief statement headed 'Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922–2000'. One person responded irritably: 'Why *should* it be an African university?' Everyone else nodded in recognition, confirming my choice of title. A university like Makerere that retains Western academic structures and Western criteria for assessment of students and staff is simply a university in Africa. In the Glory Years, when the measure of excellence for a university in Africa was how closely it resembled a British university, Makerere proudly bore the soubriquet 'the Oxford of Africa'. Many graduates of Oxford and Cambridge taught then at Makerere; people like Kenneth Ingham, who came in 1950 with a just-earned Oxford DPhil to resuscitate the Department of History. The halls of residence built in the 1950s were designed to conform 'as closely as local conditions will allow with the pattern of an Oxford or Cambridge college quadrangle' (*Annual Report* for 1955:3). Makerere's attempt at kindly intimacy, which echoed the architecture, dissipated as the student body rose from about 237 in 1950 to 2,729 in 1970, and the staff from about 50 in 1950 to 350 in 1970.<sup>11</sup> Today, with most of the 40,000 students living off campus, the intimacy is a distant memory – if that.

Besides the overarching dilemma of defining 'African', other questions presented themselves early in the research. I had wondered how Makerere's development compared to that of other Asquith colleges. A.M.H. Kirk-Greene, the Oxford historian of the British Empire, discouraged me from asking the question, for he thought that comparative analysis required, first of all, comprehensive histories of other Asquith colleges in Africa. Comparison with non-Asquith colleges in the former British Empire or with colleges that grew up in other colonial African empires would present even greater challenges. While there have been many studies of certain periods or aspects of quite a few African universities (Sicherman 2005:xx-xxi), the only attempt at a long-term view is Daniel J. Paracka's study of Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone, which arose in the latter nineteenth century in a special relationship with the University of Durham (2003). The awful particularities of Fourah Bay's story hint at the difficulties of comparisons.

Another broad question concerned foreign influence: how could one determine when something foreign had become indigenized? And is foreign influence *ipso facto* a bad thing, especially in a country bent on 'modernization'? After

all, to take one example, Makerere's affirmative action policies for women and people with disabilities have largely succeeded in removing gender and disability as causes of unequal access (Kwesiga and Ahikire 2006:22-26, 28). It is doubtful that progress in women's education would have been made without a powerful push by donors at the 1987 conference planning Makerere's rebirth (Sicherman 2005: 227). Makerere has been redefining 'foreign' by looking elsewhere in Africa for models, rather than further afield. When the staff have struck for higher salaries in recent years, as they did in November 2006, they have claimed to be underpaid not by comparison with universities in the West but by comparison with other universities in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Another question to be asked by future scholars concerns historical continuity. To what extent do the two seemingly different Makerere universities – that operating in 1950–70 and that operating in the era dominated by Yoweri Museveni – share the same ethos? Or are both of the myths dead, continuity broken, as suggested by the history of strikes, deaths on campus, and closures during the Museveni era? A partial answer may come from a Presidential Visitation Committee for Public Universities. With six scant months allotted for its work and a mandate requiring a survey of all four public universities, it submitted its report to President Museveni after the supposed deadline, but this hardly mattered as Museveni did not release it to the public.<sup>13</sup> According to a newspaper report, the visitation committee alleged that 'unless the institutions' capacity for research is improved, they risk appearing no different from secondary schools' (Muhumuza 2007b). Meanwhile, another report condemned Makerere for financial mismanagement and alleged that the administration was 'bedevilled by cliques and may possibly be involved in fraud'; the report attracted considerable public attention and a pained defence by the administration (Muhumuza 2007a; Gumisiriza 2007). Mahmood Mamdani's just-published book documents Makerere's failure at quality control in damning detail.

### **Materials for the Historian: The paradoxes of access**

Why have Africans not written comprehensive studies of their own universities? It is easy to call for locally written histories, but then reality intrudes. Anyone based in Africa who is writing on topics extending back into the colonial period faces problems in accessing primary and secondary materials. Some materials are in foreign countries, and those in the researcher's own country may be badly catalogued or housed in poorly maintained archives – or lost. Although the details vary from university to university, studying any of the former Asquith colleges presents challenges similar to those confronting Makerere's historian. Secondary sources, including those published in Africa, are more easily available in the West. A Ugandan friend once asked me to photocopy a short colonial-era

book published in Uganda and written in a Ugandan language by a foreign priest; the only copy of which my friend was aware was in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, part of the New York Public Library. Makerere has never placed sufficient value on cultivating the University Library, a mistake in priorities that has been greatly enlarged during periods of disorder when no books or journals were acquired.<sup>14</sup> Conditions of preservation in the present overcrowded library are poor, and materials for institutional history are scattered in various repositories around campus.

In the case of Makerere, the richest collections of earlier primary written materials (outside of department files) exist not in Uganda but in Britain and the United States. For published material, including rare periodicals, the best sources are in New York and London: the Schomburg Center and, even better, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, part of London University). For unpublished and locally published materials, five foreign archives are exceptionally rich. These are, in Britain, the Public Record Office (PRO) in London and the Oxford Development Records Project (ODRP) at Rhodes House in Oxford; and, in the United States, the archives of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation (all in or near New York City). Most of the material in the PRO and the ODRP is unavailable anywhere else. The PRO contains the files of the Inter-University Council, which not only fostered development in the Asquith colleges in the 1950s–60s but maintained contact in the first few years of the Amin regime. Other records also found their way to the PRO, such as papers documenting the early years of the Makerere Art School. The Oxford Development Records Project, conducted in the early 1980s, gathered memories and papers of those who helped shape the universities that came into being in Africa in the late colonial period. Makerere is the best documented of these institutions: ‘of all the Commonwealth Universities, there is none that has inspired the same degree of affection among those who have worked in her as has Makerere’<sup>15</sup> That devotion helps explain how Makerere kept going in the most awful circumstances, sustained by the African staff and administrators who inherited the task from the British founders. Even as staff fled or were murdered and every essential supply vanished, Makerere increased its enrolment and somehow taught the increasing numbers.

Perhaps I am wrong that foreign repositories are richer than what remains at Makerere. Perhaps Makerere-originated documents lie forgotten and mouldering in some dusty cabinet there. Once, permitted against regulations to roam around the supposedly locked Africana collection in the University Library, I rummaged in the back of a filing cabinet and found a worm-eaten handwritten notebook kept by missionary educators in the early twentieth century. Donated by a British researcher, the notebook had not been catalogued; it might as well

not have existed. I suspected that many of the documents generated at Makerere that I read in the American archives mentioned above had vanished from Makerere, but I had no incentive to check because the archives were within easy commuting distance. Some losses, though, are final: in colonial days and again in the Amin and Obote II eras, Makerere documents were used to wrap produce in local markets.

When unique documents that originated in Africa exist in archives in the West, one would suppose that scholarly ethics would demand that copies be sent to the country of origin. In a bitter irony, however, the copyright law (Title 17, U.S. code) that governs American archives permits researchers to use materials for 'private study, scholarship, or research' but forbids them to share photocopies with anyone else. Bound by this rule, I could not include any such sources in the personal archive that I donated to Makerere.<sup>16</sup> I did once persuade a British librarian to abrogate a similar rule in the United Kingdom. Rhodes House permitted me to make a copy of an unpublished paper by Hugh Dinwiddy, who had lost the original. Dinwiddy, in turn, authorized me to give a copy to Makerere.

Africa-based scholars face other problems. Any researcher needs time to do the work and sufficient funds to travel to research repositories. Younger researchers are typically burdened by extremely heavy work. As I was revising this article, a friend at Makerere who was not yet burdened because he had just returned from doctoral studies abroad emailed news of a mutual friend: 'She said she is buried in students' scripts, thanks to Makerere's huge numbers'. Of course, research funding is in pitifully short supply in Africa. Even though I taught most of my career at the City University of New York (CUNY), a public institution with (in American terms) relatively poor research support, CUNY Research Foundation grants for travel to Africa and Britain sufficed as long as I abjured anything smacking even faintly of luxury. At home, at minimal cost to myself, I could reach archives holding primary documents. The enterprising Interlibrary Loan librarian at my college fulfilled nearly all my requests, no matter how obscure, usually at no cost to me. In London, I stayed with a friend and went by public transport to the PRO, SOAS, and other libraries within the University of London. In Oxford and in East Africa I stayed in cheap lodging. Few Africa-based scholars outside of hot fields like AIDS research have sufficient financial support to carry out work such as mine.

One would suppose that being on the ground would give local researchers great advantages. Researchers in Uganda have better access to recent unpublished or locally published materials, in particular reports and statistics compiled by academic officials. Mahmood Mamdani's recent indictment of Makerere (2007) is immune to reasoned refutation precisely because he used his status as an insider-outsider to obtain the hundreds of documents (mostly minutes of meet-

ings) on which he bases his analysis. His many advantages included his years on the staff at Makerere, from which he derived his 'old boys' network'; his experience in 1988 as a founding member of the private Centre for Basic Research, through which he came to know the major local social scientists, and which housed the project that resulted in this book; and his two decades of activities in the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), with a particular focus on higher education (xiv-xvii). All this made it possible for him to mobilize a study group consisting of exceptionally able Makerere staff members and to present their draft findings at a conference attended by sixty to seventy high-level members of the Makerere staff and administration, whose comments enabled him to refine the draft further (2007:xvi). Finally and crucially, he had access to research funding: his employment at Columbia University in New York gave him a well-paid sabbatical leave, and the project was supported by Swedish government agencies and a Unesco agency. Thus he was able to hire a research assistant, a recent Makerere graduate who was familiar with Makerere in its current incarnation. Most researchers, whether in the 'developed' or developing world, do not enjoy such access or support, and we must be grateful that Mamdani made such excellent use of his advantages. Even so, Mamdani was again and again forced to acknowledge the sheer muddle of so-called 'information' available at Makerere, which manages its own data very poorly (Nakao-Ssewanyana 1999).

Another seeming advantage of local researchers, better access to interviewees with otherwise undocumented knowledge, is not always as great as one might suppose, for two reasons. First of all, wars, coups, and other incentives to departure have driven some potential interview subjects to live abroad. In the case of four recent books concerned with Makerere, the authors of three – myself, Mamdani, and Byaruhanga (2006) – were based abroad, although both Mamdani and Byaruhanga had insider-outsider status that gave them a lift in Uganda. The fourth book was by two local researchers who significantly muted the force of their analysis when preparing their internal report for publication (Musisi and Muwanga 2000, 2003); thus they reduced the power of the knowledge they derived from local authorities and unpublished material. The long drip of the brain drain, along with better travel funding, can give scholars based abroad easier access to interview subjects living abroad. I conducted valuable interviews with Ugandans and non-Ugandan ex-Makerereans in Nairobi, Cape Town, London and nine other British cities, New York City and State, California, and Iowa City (Sicherman 2005:343-45).

Furthermore, the lingering effects of colonial racism may give white foreigners easier entree than local researchers. A Ugandan friend commented, with no

resentment but maybe a touch of envy, that as a white person I got more done in a week than she could accomplish in a month; not because I worked harder but because many of the people I wanted to talk to readily dropped whatever they were doing and made themselves available (of course, I hoped that this generosity was courtesy rather than racial deference). I rarely made appointments in advance, as I would have done at home, because there were few posted office hours and phones worked erratically; rather, I practiced the ambush method. Anyone who said, "Come in" when I knocked on a door became a resource. Learning that the Dean of the Medical School was out of the country, I knocked on the door of the Director of the Institute of Public Health He said, "Come in," talked in a focused and useful way, loaned pertinent documents, arranged for me to talk with several other members of his staff, and invited me to return with any questions. As a consequence, the Institute of Public Health is featured in my chapter on the Medical School. Foreign-based researchers who have limited time to spend in Africa must find ways to compensate for their disadvantages. Many, like me, must be grateful for the kindness of strangers.<sup>17</sup>

### **Outsider vs. Insider Scholars**

An insider whose vision has been enlarged by experience abroad and has returned home brings that experience to an analysis of topics regarding higher education in Africa. Two Ugandan scholars, Joy C. Kwesiga and Josephine Ahikire, illustrate this point in a recent article in this journal (Kwesiga and Ahikire 2006).<sup>18</sup> Until she left to become Vice-Chancellor of a new university in Western Uganda, Kwesiga had worked at Makerere her entire career and had exceptional knowledge of its working and its evolution. Ahikire came up through the ranks of the Department of Women and Gender Studies, itself one of Makerere's most significant curricular innovations, and had rich scholarly experience in the social sciences. Their joint article about Makerere, based on detailed statistical analysis and enriched by personal experience as staff members, demonstrates that writing from the inside in no way hampers researchers from challenging received opinion despite overwhelming pressure to conform; pressure that is often applied with particular force on women.

As mentioned earlier, as an outsider I had to shun anything connected with finances, corruption, or ethnic favouritism. Mamdani confronted finances head-on and implicitly addressed corruption, but never mentioned ethnic favouritism. His immersion during his sabbatical year in the current scene saved him from what I now see was my own occasional credulity.<sup>19</sup> In my case, my friends, hinting at corruption and unreliability, told me that I must avoid the Academic Registrar, Mukwanason Hyuha. Indeed, not long after this warning, Hyuha was fired for corruption and abuse of office (Sicherman 2005:132). My erstwhile



collaborator, having moved to the United States for doctoral studies, had achieved distance, literal and figurative. While in Uganda, he had argued that his wide reading made him a citizen of the world; in the United States, he concluded: 'We are all mentally incarcerated there'.

However exaggerated his statement, it reflects a journey of self-discovery made by many other Makerereans. Ngugi wa Thiong'o learned his socialist ideas not as a Makerere undergraduate but as a postgraduate student at Leeds University in the mid-1960s. Peter Nazareth, Ngugi's contemporary at both Makerere and Leeds, gave Leeds ironic credit for exposing the colonial lie (Nazareth 1990). He recalled Ngugi at Leeds giving a revisionary reinterpretation of David Cook, a member of the Makerere English Department who had warmly supported undergraduate creative writers. 'Cook is destroying creative writing at Makerere', Ngugi had told Nazareth, 'making people run before they can walk, building them up, and they can't live up to this'. Cook, who spent the rest of his career teaching in Africa, attempted to return to Makerere thirty years after young Ngugi's critique, on condition that his salary be 'topped off', in the manner of expatriate salaries in the old days. Telling me this story in 1995, the Acting Chair of the department remarked wryly that he would like *his* salary to be topped off. Cook was out of luck; his Makerere was long since gone. With students now termed 'consumers' or 'clients' and Makerere an 'enterprise',<sup>20</sup> the paradise on the hill no longer existed.

### The Second Myth

Another myth, incorporating a reduced version of its predecessor, emerged after Museveni took power in 1986. For Makerere to survive in the new politico-economic climate, its leaders 'had to break the mould' and abandon 'convoluted pride in the old exclusive image of the ivory tower' (Tusubire 2005:87). Avoiding the sticky question of quality,<sup>21</sup> the current myth depicts Makerere as a phoenix risen from the ashes and superior to the previous model. In a variant of the old egalitarian fantasy, the myth now supposes that Makerere, instead of serving the fortunate few, welcomes the best of the masses. Driven by an official policy of Universal Primary (and now Secondary) Education, the 'massification' of higher education is presented as proof that Makerere 'has become inclusive rather than exclusive' (Tusubire 2005:88; Fehnel 2003). In fact, though, it is those who can pay who are most included; at any rate, as long as they can scratch together the funds. Inability to continue paying is the likely cause of the alarmingly high drop-out rates among private (self-sponsored) students (Kwesiga and Ahikire 2006:40-41). Ironically, since government funding goes to the highest achievers in examinations, and since those from well-off families go to the best schools, a considerable number of those on scholarships can afford to pay the fees.

This phoenix myth, complete with the fantasy of inclusion, pervades commentary from both inside and outside Makerere. An insider celebrates it as 'a shining example of institutional transformation' (Tusubire 2005:88). Outside celebrants, naturally enough, tend to be donors. Gordon Conway, president of a faithful foreign supporter, the Rockefeller Foundation, pronounced: 'Your Ivory Tower has been smashed. It's gone'.<sup>22</sup> Conway said that Makerere ('a star') was 'the best performing university' that Rockefeller had ever funded. In a similar vein, an article in the American journal *Chronicle of Higher Education* begins: 'In the bleak landscape of African higher education, a handful of institutions have been able to renew themselves' (Kigotho and Bollag 2002). This 'handful' consists of three universities – Makerere, the University of Dar es Salaam, and Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique – that have been singled out for assistance by the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, a consortium of four American foundations. Although the *Chronicle* authors report that social inequity increased as a result of the reforms undertaken by the three universities, their tone echoes the headline: 'A Tale of Rebirth: Makerere U. Survived a Dictator's Reign and Is Thriving Again'. Agreeing that 'the transformations at Makerere University were swift, impressive, and fundamental', a Makerere scholar asked pointedly what the purpose was (Musisi 2003:611). A noted authority on African higher education questioned whether 'the Makerere Story' was a 'Miracle or [a] Cautionary Tale' and concluded that Makerere's reforms constitute 'a decisive move toward the privatization of a public institution' (Sawyer 2004:45, 50). That privatization, Mamdani argues, has turned into commercialization that features money-making vocational courses better taught at community colleges (2007:237).

Whereas the first myth, of a 'land of milk and honey', grew out of love, the motivation for recent defences is different. One can often detect an element of special pleading, born of a wish to make Makerere seem better than the writer or speaker actually believes it is (one never knows which donor or government official might be listening). As mentioned above, two Ugandan researchers who minced no words in writing an internal assessment of Makerere's current condition toned down their adverse comments when revising the report for publication (Musisi and Muwanga 2000, 2003). The expatriate author of a report highly favourable to Makerere confessed to me that he had omitted his private reservations, apparently out of affection born during his long-ago student days at Makerere (the heyday of the first myth) and his more recent work for international donors (the period of the second myth).

### Challenges for Local Researchers

Makerere's current policy of requiring all full-timers to earn PhDs has exposed many staff members to universities in the West and elsewhere in Africa.<sup>23</sup> When they return, however, the academic conditions are so different that their exposure begins to fade in importance. Making good use of Makerere's and Uganda's intellectual capital depends on political capital, which regulates government funding. This becomes obvious on the many occasions when Museveni himself is called upon to intervene in disputes.<sup>24</sup> One example of intellectual capital is A.B.K. Kasozi, a historian who is the current head of the National Commission on Higher Education. With patient determination, he and his staff are creating a set of regulations intended to banish the anarchic lack of locally relevant standards. In a locally published book, Kasozi proposed reforms that would obliterate the remaining vestiges of colonialism, prioritize the sciences, and produce a university that is at once African and global; one whose graduates 'can operate everywhere in the world' as well as at home (Kasozi 2003:151). The Uganda government has endorsed the idea of prioritizing the sciences but has failed to provide the support for science teaching in the schools that is essential for improvement at higher levels. The science-based faculties have been losers in the struggle for financial support, but winners in that, unlike many colleagues in other faculties, the scientists have not lost their academic integrity (Mamdani 2007, 86-96). Persuading top scientists to remain at Makerere is difficult given the lack of institutional support. Salary differentials have been proposed, to expectable roars of protests from non-scientists, many of whom have benefited from commercialization.

While aspiring to be a global university, Makerere remains largely in a situation of intellectual dependency described by the Sri Lankan scholar A. Suresh Canagarajah in his *Geopolitics of Academic Writing*. Canagarajah analyzes academic cultures in developing and Western countries, which may differ radically not only in material support and facilities but in the epistemological assumptions that underlie research. One might suppose that because Canagarajah's main examples come from the University of Jaffna in a time of civil war, they would be inapplicable to East Africa in a time of relative peace. Yet there are likenesses. A veneer of Western epistemology covers East African research because local systems of knowledge did not (or so it seems) survive the colonial imposition in the way that Tamil systems survived in northern Sri Lanka. Scholars in Uganda are now exploring some of the knowledge systems of their cultures (for example, Beyaraza 2000), but for the time being East Africans must make do with a system of thought originating elsewhere. Imposed ideas and practices can be like an imperfectly glued veneer vulnerable to splintering at pressure points. Francis Nnaggenda's magnificent wood sculpture 'War Victim', on display in

Makerere's Main Library, offers another apt metaphor (Sicherman 2005:189). Carved from a mukebu tree on campus that had been destroyed by one of Nnaggenda's colleagues, the sculpture transcends destruction to convey resilience and beauty. If Nnaggenda had not returned from exile – and if he had not been aesthetically and intellectually enriched by time abroad – the sculpture would not exist. In yet another irony, a small plaque states that the creation of 'War Victim' was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Integration into the global university depends on the absorption of some key assumptions of, let's be frank, Western academic practice. A Kenyan enrolled in a PhD programme at a Kenyan university, on whose dissertation committee I serve, inadvertently made this point clear to me. When he applied for a six-month research fellowship at Cambridge University, he asked me to vet his application essay. I had been impressed with his sophisticated and well informed dissertation proposal, which would have passed muster anywhere. I was therefore surprised that his essay ignored the clear instructions on the website of the Cambridge African Studies Centre. When I pointed out the implications of the instructions, he immediately wrote an appropriate essay; he got the grant. Even though he was highly accomplished within a British-style environment, certain aspects of the academic culture taken for granted at Cambridge were foreign to him. On a larger scale, African universities are hobbled by the unthinking endorsement of Western academic customs. Makerere continues to impose criteria for promotion that were formulated in the West, even though the circumstances of academics in Uganda are so different as to make their relevance highly questionable.

These criteria are all the more inappropriate because of another expectation given new life by AIDS. It is the long-standing assumption that academics in Africa will assist in a wide variety of off-campus activities, from serving on boards of outside institutions to helping their own families. Returning recently to Uganda with a brand-new PhD from Leeds, a lecturer in the Literature Department found herself besieged by requests that she felt unable to refuse despite the exceptionally heavy teaching load weighing on all younger staff. The pressure of family responsibilities appears in a hastily scribbled note from Rose Mbowa, one of Makerere's most esteemed and creative staff members. Apologizing for missing an appointment with me, she wrote: 'I came back last night from the funeral of my niece. I now with my brother carry the burden of the "extended family"' so could not tear myself away.... This is how all my programmes get disorganised by family problems' Three years later, I met the niece's two children, AIDS orphans whom Rose was raising. The next year Rose herself was dead of a brain aneurysm. Was it brought on by overwork? No one could say, but Makerere – and all of Uganda – had lost yet another inspirational

figure. An African university must take account of the realities of the lives of all those who constitute its community.

### **What Can African Academics Do?**

Makerere's problems have been evident for some time: enrolments soaring beyond either previous conceptions or present capacity, grossly inadequate infrastructure to support these huge numbers, salaries calculated to drive staff away, an apparent absence of thought-through planning, and other very serious difficulties. Universities in other African countries face similar challenges, made worse by the emigration of leading intellectuals.<sup>25</sup> A Nigerian computer scientist working in the United States points out that, given the brain drain, the 'African education budget is nothing but a supplement to the American education budget' (Philip Emeagwali, qtd. Madamombe 2006:12). The United States and other non-African countries reap most of the benefits of education conducted in Africa because so many African academics carry on their careers outside Africa. African governments bear some responsibility for universities; so do the donors who partly control universities through their funding; and so do African intellectuals at home and abroad.

What are East African intellectuals doing to address the problems facing Makerere and other universities in the region, and where are they doing it? Those who do not emigrate, the majority, respond in a wide variety of ways, including withdrawal. Commenting that 'Makerere has gone to the dogs', a friend wrote recently: 'I survive on cynicism: I get what I can at Makerere and maximise my opportunities for private research funding'. Kwesiga and Ahikire, both of whom participated in Mamdani's study group, engage directly with Makerere. In their view, Musinguzi and Muwanga's published book about Makerere represents 'the dominant discourse on Makerere reforms', a discourse of celebration 'masking... the contradictions and deepening the inequities engendered by the reforms' (2007: 34). Kwesiga and Ahikire rip off the mask. The implication of scholars like Mamdani, Kwesiga, Ahikire, and Kasozi is that 'reform' has led to the piecemeal dismantling of the old Makerere without creating a coherent alternative; Makerere is now a 'fractured institution' (Kwesiga and Ahikire 2006:35). They prescribe revolution, not reform. In 2003, Kwesiga was 'among the contenders in the hot race for the coveted job of Makerere University Vice-Chancellor' (Businge and Mugisa 2003). But Makerere did not want anyone who might upset the apple cart. She had been at Makerere since 1964 as student, administrator, and professor. No one was more of an insider: an insider who dared to hang out Makerere's dirty laundry for all to see.

Virtually all African intellectuals living abroad assist in private ways, but fewer make major commitments on an institutional level aside from helping

creating linkages. Ali Mazrui – the most famous Kenyan intellectual of the founding generation, who taught at Makerere until forced out by Amin – teaches at Binghamton University in New York State; from time to time, he makes headlines in Kenya as Chancellor of Jomo Kenyatta University of Science and Technology, an honorary position that gives him a bully pulpit. His younger Ugandan counterpart, Mahmood Mamdani, although based in New York, has maintained a closer relationship with his former employer in East Africa, most recently manifested in his new book dissecting Makerere during its ‘phoenix’ period. The depth of Mamdani’s continuing connection with Makerere distinguishes him from most other African scholars who teach abroad. That connection, and the intellectual vigour with which he capitalizes on it, account for the force of his critique.

Mamdani publicly presented the thesis of his book in Kampala in August 2006; publication followed in December. Not surprisingly, his attack on the myth of the happy phoenix provoked a defensive firestorm. The myth had been questioned before, of course: in an internal report (Musisi and Muwanga 2000), in Kasozi’s imaginative and hard-hitting analysis (2003), in my book, and, many times, in the Ugandan press. But because of Mamdani’s position as the best known Ugandan academic in the world, his critique felt like a stingray-like blow to Makerere’s heart. Nakanyike Musisi, who had co-authored the aforementioned internal report, was assigned the task of rebutting Mamdani at the launch of the book in Kampala. In her remarks, she described the author as ‘an émigré-insider who uses the luxury of distance, comfort of a less hustled intellectual environment at Columbia University as well as sharp surgical tools and focused lens to lay open the higher education belly with intent to remove a sprouting cancer’ (Natabaalo 2006).<sup>26</sup> Once an ‘émigré-insider’ herself, Musisi chose to return to Uganda from her position teaching history at the University of Toronto. Having thrown her lot in with Makerere, she was in the strange position of defending her university from charges with which she agreed. Her integrity made this an impossibility.

Mamdani accuses Makerere of ‘commercialisation’, an abandonment of planning based on national need and academic competence in favour of short-term responses to a crudely defined ‘market’ (2007:108-09). Augustus Nuwagaba, the Chairperson of the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), argued that the ultimate cause of the chaos is ‘poor remuneration’ (Nuwagaba 2006). As noted above, not long after Mamdani’s attack became public, the staff struck for higher salaries, and Museveni ordered Makerere closed. The fundamental problem identified by Mamdani, however, is not low salaries: it is abandonment of all academic principle in a frenzied expansion heedless of the availability of competent staff and the constraints of space. Each academic

unit created by the powerfully centrifugal tendencies of decentralization now seeks one goal: income to perpetuate itself. Because new teaching programs have sprouted regardless of the availability of staff, 'informal and extra-legal' recruitment of people from outside the university has brought in many teachers who do not meet Makerere's own criteria (Mamdani 2007:112). The sole formal qualification of many external staff in the Faculty of Arts, for example, was a Lower Second bachelor's degree, even though a much-trumpeted Makerere report requires an Upper Second Honours degree to reach the lowliest rung on the academic ladder (Mamdani 2007:116-17; Sicherman 2005:140-41).

Makerere is like a carriage careening along a road made a mere blur because of excessive speed. Instead of tightening their hold on the reins, Makerere's leaders have loosened them almost beyond control. Interviewed in July 2007, Vice-Chancellor Livingstone Luboobi observed that the sober title of Mamdani's book was an incitement to read – as if a catchy title were somehow illegitimate – and said vaguely that 'many things [pointed out by Mamdani] will soon be corrected' He offered no details of the corrections aside from a 10 percent reduction in the intake of private students and several new buildings (Wanambwa 2007). A 10 percent reduction is too small, and the new buildings are too few. 'Makerere is still prime in the region', Luboobi declared, but an unsupported allegation is no match for a recent spate of bad news that caused donors to threaten to withdraw support (Ahimbisibwe 2007; Kibuuka 2007).<sup>27</sup>

The Vice-Chancellor and University Council now face the formidable task of taking up Mamdani's challenges (1) to adhere to the university's own regulations governing staff qualifications, (2) to prune its offerings according to a reasoned plan, and (3) to restore badly eroded academic standards.<sup>28</sup> If the powers that be support radical surgery, Makerere may recover its health. It is not (yet) sick unto death. Good work continues to be done, particularly in the science-based faculties, which still stand 'for a research-based academic tradition' recognized as 'central to the pursuit of excellence' (Mamdani 2007:208). The Faculty of Technology, for example, contributes practical inventions that are immediately disseminated to ordinary Ugandans. Researchers in the Faculty of Technology have come up with two inventions that may have considerable impact on the lives of ordinary Ugandans. In one district of Uganda, 700 families benefit from rainwater collected in tanks constructed from blocks of stabilized soil (Juma and Bell 2006); this invention can be applied elsewhere. Schoolgirls improve their attendance because they can afford a new type of sanitary pad manufactured cheaply of local materials (Musinguzi 2006); given the close correlation between female education and development, this low-tech product could have far-reaching social benefits. Such concrete success stories, however, cannot disguise the urgent need for revolution at Makerere. The burden of improvement rests on local

intellectuals with vision, who thus far have lacked the political support without which nothing gets done in Uganda. One can hope that a greater understanding of Makerere's history since 1950 will enable the present leadership to stop – finally – repeating the errors of the past and entrenching the mistaken choices of the present.

### Notes

1. Byaruhanga observes that in Uganda 'higher education has not been fully recognized as a field of study in its own right, and has, therefore, not been considered a crucial target for government research funding' (2005:xviii).
2. I chose five representative departments, faculties, or schools for the case studies: the Department of Women and Gender Studies; the Faculty of Agriculture; and the Medical, Art, and Library schools. The three thematic chapters discuss relationships with governments, staff development, and outreach beyond the campus.
3. This declaration stemmed from a notable 'food strike' in 1952, on which see Sicherman (2005:30-34); on the declaration (known as a 'matriculation promise') given in Mwambungu's novel, see Sicherman 2005:38n38).
4. Goldthorpe (1965) is a study of Makerere students, not of the college as such.
5. Apolo Milton Obote's first government ran from independence in 1962 to Amin's coup on 25 January 1971. Amin ruled until April 1979. Obote's second regime ran from May 1980 to July 1985; because the brief governments before and after Obote II were inconsequential, 'Obote II' represents the period from Amin's overthrow to the victory in January 1986 of the National Resistance Army led by Yoweri Museveni.
6. The sole non-Makererean in attendance, I had the good fortune to meet several interview subjects on this occasion.
7. Oculi, who spent 1964-65 as an exchange student at Stanford University, graduated from Makerere in 1967; when he wrote the article from which I quote, he was a Tutorial Fellow in Political Science at Makerere, the first step toward a doctorate ([www-sul.stanford.edu/afroca/okellooculi.html](http://www-sul.stanford.edu/afroca/okellooculi.html)).
8. I quote here from pp. 4-5 of Robert W. July's detailed summary of the conference in folder 11, box 2, series 475, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, North Tarrytown, New York. July was a Rockefeller official.
9. Secretary-General of the East African Common Services Organization, introducing the bill establishing the University of East Africa (qtd. Court 1975:196).
10. On academic gowns and other Oxbridge imports, see Sicherman (2005:39-43).
11. Precise figures are sometimes hard to come by and, when given, are occasionally discrepant. I deduce 'about 50' from Macpherson's statement that staffing 'had risen' to 59 in 1952 (1964:77); the figure of 350 appears in the *Annual*



- Report* for 1970/71, p. 2, which is also the source of the enrolment figure for 1970. The enrolment figure for 1950 is from Macpherson (1964:78).
12. See, for example, Nyanzi 2005. In contrast, when the public universities in Kenya went on strike on 23 October 2006, they demanded the equivalent of salaries in Australia, Canada, and the UK (Siringi 2006). In response to the most recent strike at Makerere, the government ordered it shut, initiating the longest closure in its history. The staff 'laid down their tools' on 3 November, demanding that Museveni honour the pledge of a pay rise that he had made in April 2004. Ordering Makerere closed on 13 November 2006, the government rubbed salt in the wound the next day by denying staff access to all Makerere facilities, including the internet (Izama, Lirri, and Kibuuka 2006). On 7 December, government forces stifled a student demonstration in support of the strike. See the chronology in Lirri 2006. The staff capitulated on 20 December, their unity cleverly destroyed by government manipulation (Muhumuza and Kibuuka 2006), and Makerere reopened on 6 January 2007.
  13. See Muyita 2006, who reports that the Visitation Committee was appointed in March 2006, began work in July, and completed its inquiry at the end of October. It was supposed to deliver its report to Museveni in December 2006 but did not do so until May 2007 (Muhumuza 2007b).
  14. Mamdani does not address the failure to develop the library other than noting its replacement as a source of books by departmental book banks; about the library he says merely, and correctly, that it has become 'simply a reading space for a bulging populations' (2007:142-45). As such, it is grotesquely small. The book banks are at best a version of reserve collections in American libraries; at their worst, they are a useless jumble.
  15. Ian Maxwell, qtd. Dinwiddy (1980:17). Maxwell headed the Inter-University Council, which recruited most of the staff of the Asquith colleges. See Maxwell 1980.
  16. Aware of poor conditions and understaffing in the University Library, I could only hope that my donation would be catalogued and made available to future researchers.
  17. I received copies of essential recent documents through two people based in the United States: Frederick Byaruhanga, a Ugandan who was then writing a dissertation about Makerere for the University of California at Los Angeles; and David Szanton, who as co-author (with Sarah Manyika) of a Rockefeller-funded study of postgraduate studies in the social sciences in African university had collected a good many recent internal documents.
  18. Kwesiga, who served Makerere (among other roles) as Dean of Social Sciences and director of the Gender Mainstreaming Division, benefited from study in England and the United States. Her Master's and doctoral degrees, both from Makerere, concerned aspects of the university. In 2005 she became the Vice-Chancellor of Kabale University, a new institution in the area where she grew up ('Kwesiga, First Woman Vice-Chancellor.' *New Vision*, 15 Mar. 2005

- [online edition]). Ahikire, who like Kwesiga holds a Bachelor's degree from Makerere, took her Master's at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and her PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.
19. For example, I fell too readily for the proposed 'reform' that would have created a College of Humanities (Sicherman 2005:317), which Mamdani exposes as nothing more than a half-baked power play exhibiting the 'vocalisation of Education in the Humanities-based faculties' (2007:218). I might defend myself as less credulous than David Court, whose much quoted 1999 World Bank report Mamdani characterizes as an 'over-the-top celebration' of Makerere (2007:180).
  20. For example, Tsubire 2005 uses these terms repeatedly.
  21. '[E]rosion of the quality of education at all levels' is a widely accepted truism in Uganda today (Musisi 2003:613).
  22. Eremu 2004, reporting that Rockefeller gave Makerere \$7 million in 1998-2003.
  23. It is important to note that, as documented by Mamdani, fully qualified staff members constitute a minority of those teaching at Makerere.
  24. For one example of many, see Mutaizibwa 2006.
  25. See the issue of the *African Studies Review* (47.1, 2004) devoted to higher education in Africa that includes two long Rockefeller-sponsored reports (one by Akilagpa Sawyerr, the other by Joel Samoff and Bidemi Carrol) and commentaries on each of them (by, respectively, William Saint and David Court). See also Musisi 2003, 620-22; and Teferra and Altbach 2003, *passim*.
  26. Using a similar metaphor, Kasozi (2003:xiv) calls for a 'surgical intervention' to reassign resources to science-based faculties. But Museveni's call for greater production of scientists is negated by his government's failure to fund science teaching at the primary and secondary level.
  27. Ahimbisibwe (2007) reports that Makerere dropped in one year from 23rd to 54th in a ranking of the 100 best universities in Africa.
  28. Another 'cancer' is the epidemic of cheating and bribery at Makerere. Early in 2007, the Inspector General of Government (IGG) detailed 'multiple examination malpractices and bribery' uncovered in January-June 2006 (Kasasira 2007). Students hired mercenaries to write their examinations and dissertations, and they bribed administrators in the transcript department to sign off on graduation when students had not completed coursework. Some staff received 'more than two salaries, which is against public service standing orders'. These types of major cheating began in the 1970s-80s, when there was the excuse of hard times, which is inapplicable today.

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