KRONOS
southern african histories

MAY 2026 VOLUME 52 http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-9585/2026/v52a5

Turning 'a Pool of Stagnant Water' into a 'Living Museum': The Story of the Uganda Museum

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Abstract

This article examines the institutional history and changing identity of the Uganda Museum, and its historical and longstanding relationship with Makerere University. It maps the shifting motives behind the establishment of the museum and the colonial collections which were initially guided by the Botanical, Forestry and Scientific Department, and shows that the early museum collections were informed by economic subjugation and the exploitation of agriculture and raw materials for the British Empire. However, following the hardships of the 1930s and the subsequent appointment of Margaret Trowell as curator, the museum shifted focus away from nature to ethnology through the notion of 'tribe'. Trowell not only fused art with the institution, but also initiated the twinning of the museum with Makerere College, later Makerere University. Curators after her further strengthened the museum's relationship with Makerere.

By tracing the museum's trajectory from its inception in 1908 to the post-independence period and examining the iterative changes made by each curator, we argue that although imperial interests, particularly the expansion of the British Empire, guided the establishment of the museum and early knowledge production, this eventually shifted to foster African scholarly agency. Designed to categorise and control a colonised people, the Uganda Museum inadvertently laid the academic scaffolding for their eventual intellectual emancipation. It provided an avenue that

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fostered the introduction and development of academic disciplines such as ethnology, ethnomusicology and archaeology that were later taught at Makerere University. Although these disciplines may have begun as part of the colonial governance of Ugandan people, they later came under pressure to emphasise African initiative and agency. Although the Uganda Museum faced multiple challenges over the course of the twentieth century, it did not disband, thanks to a cadre of dedicated individuals.

Keywords

Uganda Museum, ethnology, ethnomusicology, archaeology, Makerere University, Margaret Trowell

Introduction

In 1937, the Provincial Commissioner of Buganda observed that 'twenty-seven years after its inception, the Museum was exactly the same'. He wondered whether the government still wanted a museum in Uganda or not.[1] Additionally, the director of the Land and Survey Department, Harold Beken Thomas, also observed that 'the present so-called Museum is a thing to be avoided by all serious minded folk who, after a visit come away with a strong sense of ridiculous'.[2] Thomas underscored the importance of having a proper museum and called upon the government to take action. In 1938, the Governor of the Uganda Protectorate, Sir Philip Mitchell, appointed a committee to consider a museum policy. Among other things, the committee was asked to survey museum needs and make recommendations. Part of the committee report published in 1939 read: 'The whole enterprise has been enveloped in a cloud of despair and discouragement and it is no exaggeration to say that the Kampala Museum is now moribund, although 30 years before there had been real desire'. The report continued: 'it would seem that once the Museum was erected and the exhibits then collected were housed in it, no plan of progressive development was made – it lost its vitality and quickly fell into decay'.[3]

In spite of the scepticism, the museum lived on. How did the museum become moribund? What challenges did it face? How did they manifest? And how was the museum able to survive amidst the challenges? Drawing on the contributions of different curators and professionals who worked in and with the museum over the course of the twentieth century, on online archives, as well as 1981 and 1984 UNESCO reports, this article traces the institutional history and shifting identity of the Uganda Museum. It argues that although imperial interests guided early knowledge production, this eventually shifted to foster African scholarly agency. Initially, ethnological knowledge was made to serve the British interests of promoting Empire and enabling colonial rule in Uganda through the study and classification of different cultures.

The Beginnings

The history of the Uganda Museum dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century and was closely linked to the activities of the Botanical, Forestry and Scientific Department, one of the first departments to be established in Uganda by the colonial authorities. The initial effort to establish a museum was spearheaded by Harry Johnston, who had arrived in Uganda in 1899 as special commissioner to the newly created Uganda Protectorate. A year before his arrival, in 1898, the colonial authorities had established the National Botanical Gardens of Uganda (later Botanical Gardens Entebbe) as a research unit. Ernest James Berkeley, then commissioner and

1 Quoted by L.M. Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', *Uganda Museum Occasional Paper* (Kampala, 1966), 5.
2 Ibid., 5.
3 Ibid., 6.

consul general of the British Protectorate, presided over the official opening of the research unit in October 1898. Berkeley was succeeded by Johnston in 1899.[4] The Botanical Gardens were the first agricultural research centre in Uganda, established for the purpose of researching and developing Uganda's agricultural resources. The study of crops and experimentation with agriculture at the Botanical Gardens were geared towards harnessing Uganda's natural resources for the benefit of Britain.

A botanist by training, Johnston gave instructions in 1901 to district commissioners across Uganda to submit curios and items of local interest from their areas of jurisdiction to the government offices in Entebbe. The aim of acquiring these possessions was to create an ethnological collection of objects that would become a resource of vital information for colonial officials across the British Protectorate of Uganda. Accordingly, as Valerie Vowles noted: 'Ethnological material was collected in duplicate, documented, stored – and lost'.[5] After Johnston's departure in 1902, the artefacts and records from these collections were never seen again at Entebbe.[6]

The colonial initiative to establish a museum became tangible in 1907, following the appointment of Henry Hesketh Bell as commissioner and later governor of the Uganda Protectorate. Bell, who arrived in Uganda in 1905, was interested in promoting and protecting the economic concerns of Britain. He sought to curtail the farming activities of European planters while improving the agricultural methods of the local farmers who serviced the economic interests of Britain in Uganda through cash crop production. In Bell's view, the role of the government 'was to provide leadership, set standards, and bear the cost of agricultural experiments as well as to provide scientific advice, particularly in relation to the development of cash crops'.[7] To achieve these ends, the Gardens became a scientific section in 1906 and the site for gathering information for the protectorate government on managing the agricultural economy. Experiments conducted at the Botanical Gardens led to the introduction of new crop varieties such as cocoa from West Africa, coffee and cotton. When the British Colonial Office reported that for the years 1907/1908, the value of cotton exports amounted to £147,028, they decided to establish a Department of Agriculture to boost the economy based on Uganda's agricultural potential.[8] In addition, the high revenue from cotton prompted Bell to introduce the 1908 Uganda Cotton Ordinance, which gave the governor unlimited powers to control the quality of cotton produced.[9]

In 1907, Bell instructed his deputy special commissioner, George Wilson, to write to provincial administrators, soldiers, medical staff, missionary groups, and researchers in different parts of Uganda, asking them to collect items from the various

4 F. Mugabe, 'A Journey through Entebbe Botanical Gardens' 120 Years', *Monitor*, 27 October 2018, updated 9 January 2021, https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/magazines/people-power/a-journey-through-entebbe-botanical-gardens-120-years-1786146.
5 V. Vowles, 'Uganda in the Fifties', *Newsletter* (Museum Ethnographers Group), 112 (Oct. 1981), 1, https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40037384.
6 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 2.
7 British Empire, 'Sir Henry Hesketh Joudou Bell', www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/uganda/henrybell.htm#google_vignette.
8 British Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 'Natural Resources, 1903–1961. Uganda under colonial rule', BOA, website, britishonlinearchives.com/collections/64/volumes/422/natural-resources-1903-1961.
9 British Empire, 'Sir Henry Hesketh Joudou Bell'.

local communities and have these deposited at the office of colonial administration in Entebbe. The items to be collected included 'articles of historical, ethnological and industrial interest'. They comprised cultural artefacts of 'local interest, specimens of native weapons and manufactures and local products, vegetable and mineral'.[10] The items were incorporated and stored within the Botanical, Forestry and Scientific Department at Entebbe. The department was tasked with the safe-keeping of the collections, with the chief forestry officer put in charge. Thus, the initial phase of museum formation involved assembling belongings from local communities and describing them as ethnological collections that were used as scientific artefacts. These artefacts, now turned into collections, were marshalled in the study of different ethnic groups, allowing colonial administrators to effectively control, govern, and manage the divided segments of society based on the knowledge they had acquired.

The intention of establishing a museum at Entebbe was to gather information on exploiting Uganda's natural resources. Johnston and Bell, in particular, were key in this process. However, plans to establish a museum came with multiple challenges. Notably, Entebbe lacked a suitable facility for displaying cultural artefacts to members of the public, including those who were colonial subjects. In an effort to address this need, Governor Bell allocated £200 for the construction of a Museum of the Uganda Protectorate in Kampala. When the construction of the museum was completed in 1910 at Fort Lugard in Old Kampala after eighteen months, the artefacts were transferred there from the Entebbe administrative offices, after being temporarily housed in the Coronation Hall in Kampala.[11]

From Entebbe to Kampala and London: Museum and Empire

The Botanical, Forestry and Scientific Department remained responsible for the custody of specimens even after the collections were transferred to Kampala. It was not until April 1914 that it grudgingly handed over the museum to the Agricultural Department, mainly because it was located in Kampala, and it could more easily render supervision.[12] The Agriculture Department was interested in using the museum specimens to further the colonial project. Deming explained that 'it was hoped that an economic entomology would be featured and planters as well as District Agricultural Officers would use this to identify insect pests'.[13] The government entomologist was put in charge of the museum.

In 1923, the supervision of the museum was transferred from the government entomologist to the government botanist in the Agricultural Department.[14] Concerns about a leaking flat roof were addressed with a new sloping roof completed in January

10 Vowles, 'Uganda in the Fifties', 1.
11 Uganda Protectorate, *Report of the Uganda Museum Committee* (Entebbe: The Government Printer, 1939); Merrick Posnansky, 'The Uganda Museum, Kampala: The Programme and the Organization', *Museum International*, 16, 3 (1963), 149; J.W.F. Marriott, 'The Kampala Museum', *The Uganda Journal*, 2, 1 (July 1934), 79–82.
12 Marriott, 'The Kampala Museum', 80.
13 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 2.
14 Uganda Protectorate, *Report of the Uganda Museum Committee*.

1923. During the repairs, exhibits were stored in a nearby house that had been loaned. Thereafter the collections were 'in an awful muddle', with 'labels torn off and so forth'. To make matters worse, in March 1923, the museum catalogue was stolen in a burglary at the museum, making it difficult to correlate lists in old files with the contents.[15]

Thereafter, the Uganda Agricultural Department showcased its natural resources at Britain's first and second colonial or 'Empire' exhibitions at Wembley Park in London from 23 April to 1 November 1924 and 9 May to 31 October 1925, respectively. The primary aim of the exhibition was to celebrate the British Empire and its economic achievements and potential. As the promotional booklet of the 1925 exhibition stated: 'It will be in effect an Imperial stocktaking and a vast window display'. The booklet went on to state that 'those who doubt the Empire's potentialities, and those who simply do not consider them, will be confronted with a clear sight of what this great community of free nations can produce'.[16] Through their displays, both exhibitions served to promote the British Empire and its industries. And, on both occasions, Uganda showcased raw materials, including 'cotton, rubber, coffee, tea, grain and oil-seeds, timber, hides and minerals'.[17]

At both exhibitions, Uganda showcased handcrafts as well. At the 1924 exhibition Uganda displayed pottery, baskets, and bark cloth from Buganda and, in 1925, it added more artefacts, including 'wooden guitars and milk pots from Ankole, buffalo hide shields and wooden drinking cups from Eastern Uganda and head dresses of human hair and ostrich feathers from the North'.[18] Including crafts was part of the colonial policy through which material displays were exhibited as part of a comparison of the supposed progress in the development of European and Asian products, when placed alongside those of Africans.[19] This was the framework for formulating knowledge about 'tribal crafts' from a supposed primitive society. The 1925 exhibition was the final time that the Agricultural Department participated directly in the affairs of the Protectorate Museum.

In November 1926, the Director of Agriculture expressed his desire to hand over the museum to the Provincial Administration which was represented in every district and was 'more in direct touch with Native governments'.[20] The Agricultural Department was building its own museum that would be more specialised and focused. It did not have the expertise to run the diverse Protectorate Museum. From the moment of its establishment in 1908 to the beginning of 1927, the Protectorate Museum had been managed by professionals in the natural science disciplines such as forestry, agriculture, and botany. At the time, the colonial officials were interested in

15 Marriott, 'The Kampala Museum', 79–81.
16 London Museum, description of printed ephemera (object ID 95.166), '1925 Wembley', 2010, www.londonmuseum.org.uk/collections/v/object-72223/1925-wembley/.
17 Vowles, 'Uganda in the Fifties', 1.
18 Ibid.
19 J. Bruner, 'What is a European Hospital but a Pagan Shrine? Missionaries, Progress, and the Problem of Materiality in Colonial Uganda', *Material Religion*, 14, 3 (2018), 314–338.
20 Marriott, 'The Kampala Museum', 80.

the economic exploitation of Uganda's natural resources and they prioritised research that aligned with their agenda. Research on the peoples and cultures of Uganda was not given much attention.

It is therefore not surprising that when they moved the museum from Entebbe to Kampala, they did not pay attention to how they would display the collections to the public in a meaningful manner. Nonetheless, one of the main purposes of the gathering of the collection was expressed as preservation. It was claimed that these would be 'the only record kept, or even attempted, to which the native has access, of many objects once common in Uganda, which are now rapidly disappearing'.[21] The newly constructed museum in Kampala was small and the roof leaked. Therefore, the collections were crammed into an inadequate area that lacked proper facilities for organisation and display. Deming observed that 'the collection was jammed into a tiny floor space and it was physically impossible to arrange it in any orderly manner'.[22] From 1920, no further 'specimens' were collected because 'there is no space left in which to put them'.[23]

The congestion did not promote any sense of the museum being a site of public display even within the strictures of colonialism. The inability of the public to view what was held in the museum for alleged purposes of preservation led to the growth of suspicion. Based upon their own beliefs and ideas about intangible living vitality, local African people, including the Baganda, came to refer to the museum as '*Enyumba ya Mayembe*' or the 'House of Spirits', or even the House of Charms or Fetishes. They referred to the curator as '*Omukulu wa Mayembe*' or the person in charge of the fetishes. Associating the museum with fetishes revealed the perception of Ugandan people about the institution and its belongings-turned-objects or fetishes.[24] This 'frightened many Ugandans away from it'.[25] In their own world view, houses of spirits were not sites for the public. Instead, they were shrines of sorts. Moreover, the African audience was dissatisfied with the way in which the Europeans held and displayed their possessions, which they labelled as objects or artefacts of witchcraft or as fetish objects. In their view, such belongings should never have been assembled for display to the public.

Suspicious of government interest in the 'objects', the people concluded that 'the fetishes gave strength to the government'.[26] They did not know how to conduct themselves when they visited the museum. 'Visitors generally asked if it were permitted to greet the attendants, or to walk side by side in the Museum with persons of the opposite sex', observed Deming.[27] These anxieties must have derived from their belief systems, particularly pertaining to the code of conduct that people were expected to observe when they visited shrines in their own settings.

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21 Ibid., 81.
22 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 2.
23 Marriott, 'The Kampala Museum', 81.
24 N. Abiti, 'The Uganda Museum's Tribal Representation: Colonial Repositories and Community Reconciliation in Uganda', *Zeitschrift* für *Kulturwissenschaften*, 15, 2 (2021), 29–46. See Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 2.
25 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 2.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.

Visitors to the museum talked about the fetishes. 'Glimpses of acute anxiety were not uncommon', observed Deming, 'and it seemed clearly urgent that the museum should set up an exhibit showing the growth and nature of religion, depicting the fetishes in their wider context'. The museum visitors had their own understanding and interpretation of the collections, which was different from the colonial intentions of collecting the cultural objects. The museum and colonial authorities could not totally ignore the concerns of the local population, and these reactions subsequently influenced the development of the museum.[28]

'Do we want a museum in Uganda or not?': Years of Uncertainty

1927 marked a shift in the management of the museum. Questions about its role and purpose were posed. In January 1927, the government appointed a committee, chaired by the Provincial Commissioner of Buganda, to administer the museum. Other committee members included the director of agriculture, the director of education, a representative of the Buganda kingdom appointed by the Kabaka (the king of Buganda), as well as a secretary who was a staff member of Makerere College, nominated by its principal.[29] The committee membership was diverse, bringing on board other agencies of the protectorate government, including an African representative from the Buganda kingdom, although other provinces were not represented.

From the outset, the committee faced challenges that affected its performance. It appealed for specimens to be added to the collection amidst the shortage of storage space. At the end of 1930, the committee was given the task of justifying the existence of the museum. During 1933, attempts to construct a new wing for the museum failed because no funds were available. An appeal for funds was made to the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1934, but this was rejected, in part because the museum had no curator.[30]

Frustrated by the committee's non-performance, in November 1936 the secretary, J.W.F. Marriott, resigned after ten years of service, giving reasons why the committee had not been functioning. Among other things, the committee had held its last meeting in 1931. Marriot advised that the committee should be composed of persons with time, commitment, and real interest and skills in developing different sections of the museum. He further recommended that the committee be placed under a single department with an advisory council consisting of representatives from the agricultural and education departments.[31] Up to that point, the agricultural department had remained a participant in the life of the museum.

By 1937, the affairs of the museum had declined to their lowest point since its establishment and the future seemed bleak. In the circumstances, the provincial commissioner of Buganda wondered: 'Do we want a museum in Uganda or not?' He

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 5.
31 Ibid.

was concerned that twenty-seven years since its establishment, the museum had not registered much progress. Certainly, World War I, economic depression, as well as the lack of a curator and related museum professionals had contributed to this state of affairs.[32] It was likely that the museum would disband.

Against that backdrop, in 1938, the governor of the Uganda Protectorate, Sir Philip Mitchell, appointed a committee to consider the development of a museum policy. Members of the committee included, among others, Klaus Wachsmann, a German refugee and donor of musical instruments, who had arrived in Uganda in 1937, and H.B. Thomas, who strongly objected to the existing state of the museum. Thomas asserted that it was essential to have a proper museum 'from the historical and educational point of view'. To these ends, he proposed the establishment of a 'Cultural Centre that would include a museum, an art gallery, library, classroom and even a school of art and technology'.[33]

Published in 1939, the committee report confirmed the dilapidated state of the museum, which had 'lost its vitality and quickly fell into decay'.[34] The museum had administrative problems. Though located in Kampala, it was administered by a department in Entebbe. In spite of the museum's sorrowful state, the committee was hopeful that it could be turned into an important space for educating the public about the country's past. In its report, the committee noted: 'A well-equipped Museum provides a meeting ground of the past and the present, where the natural desire, sometimes already awakened, but often only dormant, of all individuals to learn the history of their country, manner of life their forebears, can most effectively be stimulated and satisfied.'[35]

The committee highlighted that 'the satisfaction of human curiosity constitutes education in the widest sense, and in a country such as Uganda, which is scarcely yet midway in the passage to sophistication, the clamour for education is loud and incessant'. The committee members argued that an efficient and well-organised museum was one of the most effective ways of 'meeting the educational demands of people who are so rapidly changing their outlook and mode of life'. They further asserted: 'As a means of education […] a Museum has merits which serve to press its claims for consideration in preference to many other educational facilities.'[36] The committee underscored the need for the museum, as an educational space, to reach a wide audience, including different sections of society. 'Its appeal is wide-spread; its influence touches the highest and lowest intellects; it caters for all grades of society and every race; its intrinsic worth increases with the year; its cultural value is incalculable.'[37] They regarded the museum as a space that would bring together different categories of people in spite of racial, educational, ethnic, and religious differences.

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 6.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.

The report further highlighted the importance of the museum in promoting research. 'A Museum is an instrument of research and education. It provides the research worker with a store of reference material so that he can compare materials found in one site with those from another.'[38] The idea of research here expanded much beyond the original focus on exploiting Uganda's natural resources, as had been the case in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Moreover, the report added: 'The Museum is also expected to play its part in the economic and technical development of the country and must demonstrate the relationship of man and his enlarging environment.'[39]

For effective administration, the committee members recommended the appointment of a curator. They thought that such a person needed to be knowledgeable and well equipped to 'be able to establish Museum sections of Historical, Ethnological and Natural History material'.[40] They noted that a young professional, in particular, would be able to encourage cooperation between the different sections of the community. They rejected the proposal of Victor Van Someren (of Nairobi's Coryndon Museum) of concentrating biological and zoological exhibits at Nairobi and ethnological exhibits at Dar es Salaam, while leaving to Uganda 'nothing but Wayland's flints'.[41] They did not want to limit the museum in Uganda to a specific kind of collection. Rather, they underscored the importance of having the historical, ethnological, and natural history all in one place.

The committee thought that there was 'little point' in showing African collections of local weapons, agricultural tools, and household implements, as these could be seen by people 'in their homes every day of their lives'. Instead, the report called for consideration of 'the differences of the tribes' that were resident in the protectorate, with a focus on their varied and diverse 'ancestry, stage of development, mode of life, means of subsistence, customs and religions'.[42]

The committee members wanted a museum that would serve a diverse community, so they recommended that the board should be multi-racial with a fair geographical representation. If implemented, such a committee would have been more diverse than the one that had been constituted earlier in 1927 with only one African representative. The committee envisioned the museum as a large unit that would include a reference library, lecture hall, art gallery and classroom. These would serve the public, including school-goers, for whom there needed to be a teacher on the staff 'to explain exhibits'.

Unfortunately, World War II broke out in 1939, before the government could implement the committee's recommendations. At the time, the display cases in the museum had increased from nine in 1914 to 'only fifteen', and yet the collections had grown 'from three hundred specimens to seven hundred, many of which were exhibits

38 Ibid., 7.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 8.
41 Ibid., 7. Wayland had worked in Uganda as the government geologist from 1919 to 1939, and during his tenure he had collected lots of rock pieces and other geological materials.
42 Ibid., 7.

of charms and witchcraft'.[43] The war caused economic strain and financial shortages, impacting on the funding of the British Protectorate government in Uganda.[44] The priorities of the government changed. Consequently, the ethnological objects that had been collected and stored at the museum had been damaged because there was no qualified staff to take care of the materials.

Margaret Trowell and the Preservation of Material Culture

In 1941, on the recommendation of the museum committee, Margaret Trowell was nominated as an honorary curator of the museum.[45] A British visual artist with a passion for teaching fine art, Trowell had, before her involvement at the museum, turned her house and garden in Kampala into an art school. In 1937, the school was moved to the Makerere Art Gallery, where the Makerere School of Fine Art was established. Trowell was central in establishing the Makerere School of Fine Art, of which she also came to be the head. She advocated for creativity in art education and incorporated African art works into the Fine Art curriculum at Makerere. She designed a curriculum that focused on both contemporary art and 'historical' African art styles. She referred to historical or indigenous works of art as 'tribal crafts', and categorised them as 'expressions of primitive skills'.[46]

Members of the museum committee nominated Trowell because she was passionate about the museum and its immediate future. In her first report as curator, Trowell described the state of the museum in the following terms: 'To enter the Kampala Museum on old Kampala Hill gives one the feeling of entering a pool of stagnant water'. She further observed that 'nothing seems to have disturbed its quiet for many years; even the exhibits in their cases seem to have been thrown upon the edge of the pool by some long gone stirring of the watershed, then left.'[47] Abandoned and neglected, the museum was in a dire state. There were hardly any visitors and the caretaker did not appreciate the purpose of the museum and its relationship with the public. The caretaker's attitude bothered Trowell. She lamented that it had become 'a rare occasion for anyone to visit the Museum' and that when an African teacher had shown 'keen interest in the collection', he was arrested 'in the belief that he was insane'.[48]

Trowell believed that a museum 'is like a living organism; it requires continual and tender care. It must grow or it will perish'.[49] She set out to bring the museum to life. Taking the view that arts and artefacts from different cultures of Uganda were disappearing, Trowell proposed that each museum in East Africa should represent the culture of its region. In her opinion, the museum had the responsibility of

43 Ibid., 8.
44 See Gardner Thompson, 'Colonialism in Crisis: Uganda Disturbances of 1945', *African Affairs*, 91, 365 (1992), 605–624.
45 Uganda Protectorate, *Report of the Uganda Museum Committee*.
46 See N.A. Abiti, 'Transforming the Uganda National Museum: From Tribal Craft and Ethnic Cultures to Representing Histories and Traumatic Memory in Collections and Exhibitions' (PhD dissertation, University of the Western Cape, forthcoming).
47 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 8.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 9.

collecting and presenting the art and material culture of the different groups of people in its region. Emphasis on cultural representation was a further shift away from the focus on agricultural research. Trowell expanded the museum collections to include objects from all over the country. She drew upon the assistance of Makerere students and police recruits. She also ensured proper labelling and numbering, and accurate matching in the card index.[50]

She also recommended 'a tie-up of the Uganda Museum with Makerere College'.[51] This was no coincidence, considering that Makerere had introduced Social Anthropology as a subject taught in the Department of Social Studies in 1939.[52] As already mentioned, in 1942, Trowell relocated the museum and its ethnological artefacts from Old Kampala Hill to the Art School at Makerere College, where she created space for an art studio as well as the ethnographic materials.[53] The museum at Makerere was officially opened by the governor of the Uganda Protectorate, Sir Charles Dundas, in July 1942.[54] Both the director of education and the principal of Makerere were appointed trustees.

Trowell then focused on the indexing and sorting of the collections, as well as protecting the artefacts from insect infestation. One hundred and eighty five more artefacts were acquired, and 151 were donated by colonial administrators, missionaries, medical doctors, and the appointed native chiefs.[55] In her annual report of 1943, Trowell recorded progress in cataloguing, writing, speaking, making contacts with schools, and developing the museum's general relations with the public. Her experience as curator and her role in sorting and exhibiting collections shaped the teaching of fine art at Makerere College, where the emphasis was not merely on ethnographic study but on craft-making skills. In this way, the museum and the School of Fine Art complemented each other.

Trowell also worked with the musicologist Klaus Wachsmann to create a catalogue for the ethnologic materials. Developed from the descriptive work of the colonial administrative officers, the police and the judiciary services, the catalogue was produced and later published as *Tribal Crafts of Uganda*.[56] Young Ugandans recruited as policemen were invited to prepare object descriptions as part of their training. As museum informants, they provided information on artefacts, according to their local knowledge.[57] The catalogue provided a structure and layout for the classification and arrangement of the exhibitions as well as the setup of an African gallery at the Uganda Museum. In organising and presenting the materials in the museum, Trowell prioritised the material cultures of Uganda.[58]

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50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 P. Atekyereza and S. Aguto Odongoh, 'Tracing Peaks and Troughs of Social Anthropology at Makerere University' in J. Ahikire, L. Mugumya, E.F. Nabutanyi and P. Atekyereza (eds), *Historicising the Humanities at Makerere: Trends, Patterns and Prospects* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2022), 273–306.
53 M. Trowell, *African Tapestry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).
54 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 9.
55 M. Trowell, 'Accession 1943', *Uganda Museum Occasional Paper* (Kampala, 1943), 6.
56 M. Trowell and K.P. Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts of Uganda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 3.
57 Trowell, *African Tapestry*.
58 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 9.

Trowell emphasised material culture because she wanted colonial administrators to understand pre-colonial Ugandan societies and to appreciate African cultural heritage as a mode of understanding people in the society.[59] She was concerned about European 'advancement' and its impact on African people and their cultures. In Trowell's work in art education, she sought to concentrate on 'the study of native craftsmanship with all its social and technical ramifications', as well as 'practical experiments in encouraging the new African's innate sense of art to flow along new channels'. What was needed was to consider 'the visual world through African eyes' and to appreciate their own 'spiritual and social attitudes towards their own works'.[60] This might have been a desire for some untainted African, indigenous artistic expression, but her approach was also one that mirrored the colonial policy.

She cautioned the colonial authorities against the European mode of education that only worked towards the creation of white-collar jobs for the African elite, without sufficient emphasis on supporting craft skills, which would support the Africans in their villages. She thought that crafts needed to be taught 'in the traditional, apprentice style', in order to promote 'the spirit and workmanship found in the village'.[61] For her, rural skills and crafts needed to be promoted, in order to make self-labour possible for agricultural production. Such appreciation for craftsmanship favoured a 'true' tradition of African art, thus enabling the 'progressive development' of African cultures. To avoid the danger of imitating 'European visual expression', Trowell asserted that just as 'a man must use his own tongue', the 'native African', like an 'unspoilt English child', should 'produce [works] for his own pleasure', and that Africans should be 'guided and restrained by [that] which they have inherited'.[62] This search for indigenous expression was couched in evolutionary terms.

By 1945, Trowell relinquished her curatorial responsibilities because she wanted to devote herself fully to expanding the Art School at Makerere. She left a mixed legacy of seeking an integrity of African arts through the idea of craft, while mirroring colonial frames of evolutionism and indirect rule. Her departure left the museum in a precarious situation as it had to depend on part-time staff. Ailsa Nicol Smith assumed responsibility for the museum for a few months. Smith had been curator of the Zanzibar Museum from 1935 to 1942, and was interested in anthropology and education.[63] At the Uganda Museum, Smith emphasised the 'need for research of an archaeological and anthropological nature to be carried on under the auspices of museum'.[64]

Smith was replaced in August 1945 by John Warner, who worked as part-time curator of the museum. Warner recommended that the museum cooperate with the

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59 M. Trowell, 'From Negro Sculpture to Modern Painting', *Uganda Journal*, 6, 41 (1939), 175.
60 Trowell, *African Tapestry*, 28.
61 E.J. Court, 'Margaret Trowell and the Development of Art Education in East Africa', *Art Education*, 38 (1985), 39.
62 Court, 'Margaret Trowell and the Development of Art Education', 39; Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, 'Margaret Trowell's School of Art: A Case Study in Colonial Subject Formation' in Susanne Stemler (ed.), *Wahrnehmung, Erfahrung, Experiment* (Berlin: Diaphanes Verlag, 2014).
63 S. Longair, 'The Experience of a "Lady Curator": Negotiating Curatorial Challenges in Zanzibar Museum' in S. Longair and J. McAleer (eds), *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 122–144.
64 Deming, 'The History of Uganda Museum', 10.

Department of Social Studies at Makerere College.[65] While Anthropology was not highly developed at Makerere College at that time, there was an assumption that the framework of ethnography was already being fully developed at the museum. In his progress report of August to December 1945, Warner proposed that the museum maintain a staff consisting of a curator, a technician, a research assistant, and a secretary.[66] He resigned shortly after that.

In 1946, the Worthington Report on 'A Development Plan for Uganda', published in the United Kingdom, recommended that 'the Museum should be developed with government assistance as a Cultural Centre for the Protectorate'. The report recommended two branches, namely, 'ethnology with display and research on lines already started' and 'the future life of the African, with all departments of public service cooperating'.[67] The report also stressed the need to train staff for public services as well as general education. With the short tenures of Smith and Warner, it became clear that the system of having a curator on an interim or honorary basis was not sustainable. A.M. Cox acted as honorary curator for almost two years before the arrival of Klaus Wachsmann.

Klaus Wachsmann and Ethnomusicology

Wachsmann was appointed curator of the museum in February 1948. He had studied ethnomusicology in London before relocating to Uganda under the Church Missionary Society. Prior to his appointment, he had donated musical instruments to the museum, served as a member of the committee that produced the 1939 report, and had also worked with Margaret Trowell. Equipped with training in musicology and with knowledge of museum display methods, Wachsmann developed the ethnomusicological section of the museum, making it one of the finest on the continent. His pioneering work on the ethnomusicology of Uganda gained widespread interest, leading to increased collections at the museum. Under his administration, in 1948, the museum also recorded an annual attendance of 12,500 visitors.[68]

Wachsmann popularised Ugandan music beyond Uganda. In 1949, he visited Nairobi to attend the Annual Conversazione at the Coryndon Museum, where he exhibited several musical instruments, including the Kiganda xylophone, the bowl-lyre (*endongo*) and the bow-harp (*enanga*). The predominantly non-African visitors at the exhibition were particularly struck by 'the xylophone, which differs in many respects from those in other parts of Bantu Africa'.[69] Commenting on Wachsmann's exhibition, R.R. Scott observed: 'There can be no doubt that interest in African music and instruments has been greatly stimulated by Wachsmann's exhibit and demonstrations, as shown by the attendance of over three thousand persons

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 11.
68 Ibid.
69 R.R. Scott, 'Kenya Exhibition of Musical Instruments from Uganda and Demonstration of Uganda Music', *Newsletter (African Music Society)* 1, 2 (1949), 22.

mostly non-Africans, during the three days'. In appreciating Wachsmann's efforts, Scott added: 'we owe him and his Baganda demonstrators a debt of gratitude for the painstaking work entailed in the preparation of the material and the constantly repeated talks and demonstrations which the exhibit demanded of them.'[70]

Wachsmann placed emphasis on education and engagement with the public. Museum visitor attendance in 1949 rose by 2,000, largely because of Wachsmann's close relationship with schools and as a result of his musical research throughout Uganda.[71] The annual reports of 1950 and 1951 revealed 'the shift of emphasis away from a collection of historical value to educational display to benefit the public, and the resultant response from various sections of the Kampala community'. Apart from the schools, 'there was the immigrant labour force who came to the Museum to search out various articles from their own districts because of a deeply felt need'.[72] Many Africans also visited the museum for education. Vowles observed that 'great interest was taken in line drawings showing tribal dress and in the magico-religious specimens. A comment frequently made was that people should be interested in the museum because it showed the ways of the past.'[73] In contrast to the 1920s and early 1930s, when members of the public, affected by Christian missioning, feared the museum because of its association with 'fetishes and charms', the Ugandan public in the 1950s had become aware of the educational value of the museum, albeit when this was geared towards reinforcing a colonial order.

Wachsmann curated the assembled musical instruments and organised them into groups such as drums, xylophones, lyres, and trumpets, with appropriate ethnic labelling that laid the groundwork for a particular kind of appreciation of music in the museum. Of the 3,000 items, sometimes thought of as 'specimens', 300 were musical instruments.[74] Those who came after him always expressed their appreciation for his efforts. Merrick Posnansky, who replaced him as curator, observed that 'the museum is noted for its comprehensive collection of musical instruments largely the work of Klaus Wachsmann who was curator 1947 to 1957'. Wachsmann also went out to the communities, where he made over 1,500 recordings.[75]

To enrich the museum visitors' experience, Wachsmann reserved a room for those who wanted to play the instruments. As a result, visitors enjoyed a new and exciting museum experience. The remarkable revival of music enabled 'the museum to encourage the presentation of other items of Uganda's culture heritage'.[76] Both African attendants and visitors played 'traditional' music inside the gallery, creating a particular kind of ethnographic performative encounter. It is no wonder, as Vowles observed, that 'the most popular exhibitions were the musical instruments, which visitors were allowed to play'.[77] Wachsmann also established a music studio dedicated

70 Scott, 'Kenya Exhibition of Musical Instruments', 26.
71 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 12.
72 Ibid.
73 V. Vowles, 'The Uganda Museum in Kampala: The Public', *Museum*, XVI, 3, 19 (1963), 153.
74 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 12.
75 M. Posnansky, 'The Uganda Museum, Kampala', 150.
76 Ibid.
77 Vowles, 'The Uganda Museum in Kampala: The Public', 153.

to recording indigenous Ugandan dances and songs, which were geared towards showing the ethnic structures of Ugandan society, thought of in the language of tribe. His work also turned the Uganda Museum into a hub for visiting scholars, who came to engage with the dancers and musicians. He created a disciplinary platform as well as a public space for engagement with local forms of cultural expression and with instruments as museum objects. The popularisation of African music also provided a glimmer of appreciation for indigenous cultural expression, albeit through its own ethnological categories.

The temporary closure of the museum at Makerere in June 1952 did not disrupt Wachsmann's popularisation of African music. In 1953, when construction of a new home for the museum at Kitante was underway, Wachsmann presented a paper on 'Musicology in Uganda' at the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. There he discussed the history of some musical instruments among the different ethnic groups of Uganda. In an article published following his presentation, he observed: 'In Bantu Uganda trumpet sets seem to have spread along two routes, one leading from Nyoro into Gwere and Soga and thence to Ganda, and another from Nyoro to Kooki and thence to Nkole'. He noted that although individual names appeared like Bantu words, they were most likely '"Bantuized" Nilotic cattle names or praise-names'. He concluded that 'their uniformity suggests a common origin'.[78] Earlier, in 1953, Wachsmann also attended the first conference on African history and archaeology held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) where he also shared his ethnomusicological research.

Wachsmann thought that changes in the music could explain interactions among different ethnic groups in Uganda. 'Contacts between tribes, in peace and in war, must always have brought about changes', he stated. 'In Uganda, it is sometimes possible to trace the routes along which changes have travelled, although the changes themselves can be defined musically in only a few cases'.[79] In his view, the Basoga probably acquired the bowl-lyre from the Bagwe about eight generations ago. His analysis and interpretation of the music instruments was influenced by the colonial 'tribal' identities, but there was also a glimmer of history with a focus on social change. Drawing on the xylophone, Wachsmann highlighted changes in the music instruments:

> In Gwere the xylophone *miruli* is almost completely superseded by the set of tuned drums *namaddu*. The melodious trumpet sets have hardly enough players today in Ganda but the drumming style of *baakisimba* is found all over the country and has even spread to neighbouring tribes. The xylophones of the most eastern part of Soga have now disappeared.[80]

78 K. Wachsmann, 'Musicology in Uganda', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 83, 1 (1953), 53.
79 Ibid., 56.
80 Ibid.

By focusing on a single music instrument, he was able to relate the past and the present of the different Ugandan local communities, named as 'tribes'.

In yet another paper read at the First Annual Meeting of the Society of Ethnomusicologists held in Philadelphia, USA in September 1956, Wachsmann pointed out: 'The study of indigenous music in Uganda is based upon the facilities of the Uganda Museum, and is approached both through field research and work in the Museum itself'. He explained that fieldwork had been conducted over a period of five years, and 'a systematic survey on disc and tape has been made, and there are now some 1,500 recorded items in the archives of the Museum'.[81] Under his curatorship, the museum organised music collections on a regional basis, and worked with local communities to name the collections according to 'tribe'. They also took note of the social functions of the pieces, how they had been made, and how they had changed over time.

This documentation through Wachsmann's research, especially in 1949, 1950, and 1954, resulted in a large archive of recordings in Ugandan ethnomusicology. This collection was later removed from Uganda and deposited at the British Library in London, where it became part of the division of World and Traditional Music. The Ugandan recordings were later digitised and made available online, but only to education institutions that had signed a licence.

This placement of the recordings into the collections at the British Library was perhaps an indication of Wachsmann's participation in colonial appropriation, through the disempowerment of communities, by having important recordings of their music taken away.[82] As Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza observed, Wachsmann's work was undoubtedly part of the colonisation of Ugandan indigenous music because his work was 'double edged'. While it has been possible for the collection to be used in 'defining' indigenous music 'of the past', these recordings also have significance in potentially 'redefining Uganda's music of the present into the future'.[83]

It should be noted that the Ugandan audio collection – digitised and upgraded into late twentieth century and early twenty-first century digital modes of keeping, preserving, playing, and listening – was digitally repatriated to Uganda in 2009, but the original recordings in their original formatting were retained by the British Library. The returned digital copies provided the founding collection for the Makerere University Klaus Wachsmann Audio Visual Archive (MAKWAA) in 2009. MAKWAA was created as a 'multi-media archive and resource centre for traditional, popular and art music, recited word, dances and stories and recollections of musicians and dancers of Uganda'. It also acquired other Ugandan collections of recordings, such as the Peter Cook Collection, also from the UK, the Andrew Tracey Collection from

81 K. Wachsmann, 'A Study of Norms in the Tribal Music of Uganda', *Ethnomusicology*, 1, 11 (1957), 9.

82 S. Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 'Written Documentation of the Klaus Wachsmann Music Collection: Repatriating the Past to Present Indigenous Users in Uganda' in Thomas Solomon (ed.), *African Musics in Context: Institutions, Culture, Identity* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2015), 33–34.

83 S. Nannyonga-Tamusuza, 'Klaus Wachsmann Audio Collection at Makerere University: Colonizing the Past and Decolonizing the Future', Online Lecture, Global Archiving and Instrument Curation Series and Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy Colloquium Series, UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and Department of Ethnomusicology, 29 April 2021, https://archive.org/details/calauem_200201_omvf0000206.

Makhanda in South Africa, and other collections from researchers in Italy and the USA. The Wachsmann Collection and other collections and projects in MAKWAA have regularly been reported on, as part of Uganda's ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions.[84]

The Wachmann Collection and its accompanying assemblages have the potential to enable a way of decolonising music. This is especially the case with MAKWAA's community repatriation project, which has undertaken to return recordings to communities of origin, 'since not all users are able to come' to the university.[85] Such work will be significant in enabling the Wachsmann Collection to be the subject of repatriation, albeit a digital one, and to participate in programmes of restitution work and social restoration.

Through MAKWAA, Wachsmann's music collections and research, and his education work, have contributed to the field of Musicology as an academic discipline at Makerere. As curator of the Uganda Museum, he was understood to have created the first 'living' museum in Africa. He employed local musicians as museum attendants, and their daily musical performances continued to entertain visitors long after he left Uganda.[86] He also hired Ugandan music performers as research assistants for himself and to assist other scholars who visited the museum during his time there, and even after he left. Wachsmann returned to England because of illness. His collections and research continue to be felt both at the Uganda Museum and Makerere University. Through his approaches, Ugandan people were accorded a sense of history and social change. With the instruments at the museum and copies of the recordings now in MAKWAA at Makerere, there is much scope for work to be done on this collecting and recording legacy, outside the terms of colonialism.

Uganda Museum as a Centre of Archaeological Research

In 1952, Sir Andrew Cohen arrived in Uganda as governor of the Uganda protectorate, a position he held until 1957. The museum benefited from Cohen's dynamism and interest in the museum. With government support, construction of a new building began in April 1952, and the museum was officially opened to the public in July 1954. The new museum building had two halls, one devoted to temporary exhibitions on subjects of public interest and another to exhibitions illustrating the history of Uganda from the Stone Age to recent times, including a music gallery, with display cases showing musical instruments. In 1955, Trowell put up a display of ethnographic material under the theme: 'the way of life of the agricultural Bantu and the cattle-keeping Hima'.[87] In its curatorial approach, the Uganda Museum framed Ugandan society through ethnology or cultural anthropology, and through an exhibitionary architecture of 'tribal people'. Inside the museum, this was shown through a specially

84 UNESCO, 'Makerere University Klaus Wachsmann Audio-Visual Archive', https://www.unesco.org/creativity/en/policy-monitoring-platform/makerere-university-klaus-wachsmann-audio-visual-archive.
85 Ibid.
86 S.C. De Vale, '"Intrusions": A Remembrance of Klaus Wachsmann (1907–1984)', *Ethnomusicology*, 29, 2 (1985), 276.
87 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 15.

made map of the people and landscape of Uganda, distinctively identifying separated people, fixed in space by fixed and unchanging locations.[88]

At about the same time, the Geological Survey Department handed over to the museum some of its material relating to the neolithic and proto-historic period. Earlier, in May 1952, the government had appointed an archaeologist who was placed under the Geological Survey Department. In addition to the neolithic and proto-historic materials, the department also granted the museum access to its files. This material was valuable to the museum and part of it was later shown in an exhibition of 'prehistoric' pottery in a room allocated to the Stone Ages of Uganda. In 1956, the government appointed a director of Antiquities, Peter Shinnie, to take charge of the materials. The 'pre-historic' pottery display had the effect of bringing Uganda's distant past to life.

Unfortunately, in 1957, the museum experienced a serious setback. The main exhibition hall that housed the displays on the history of Uganda from the Stone Age was closed because of a faulty roof. To make matters worse, the government cut its grants. The Director of Antiquities resigned and took up a professorship in Archaeology at the University of Ghana. In addition, as already mentioned, the curator himself left. It was Margaret Trowell, once more, who stepped in to save the situation. She directed the museum once again until 1958, when Merrick Posnansky arrived to take the position of curator.

A pioneering Africanist archaeologist with a PhD in Archaeology from the University of Nottingham, Posnansky took up the curatorship of the museum a year after the second conference on African History and Archaeology held at SOAS in 1957. This conference had brought together more than one hundred professionals, including historians, archaeologists, archivists, and museum curators working on or interested in African subjects and themes. Participants came from the University of London and other British universities, as well as from the United States of America.[89] They agreed that African history needed to be African-centred and to highlight African agency and historicity. These emerging debates in the fields of history and archaeology were set to influence Posnansky's work at the Uganda Museum.

Under his leadership, the museum staff mounted 'numerous' temporary exhibitions and arranged lectures. Posnansky introduced new ideas and developments in archaeological research and exhibits.[90] In 1958, the museum launched the Uganda Iron Age project and also developed a section on the Stone Age to show the evolution of man from hunter-gathering. In 1959 UNESCO and the British Academy awarded the museum grants to conduct research at a time when it was otherwise under financial pressure.

With Posnansky's guidance, the museum systematically collected ethnographic materials, especially in those areas which were not yet well represented. This

88 N. Abiti, 'The Uganda Museum's Tribal Representation', 35.
89 R. Oliver, *In the Realms of Gold: Pioneering in African History* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 165.
90 M. Posnansky, *Africa and Archaeology: Empowering an Expatriate Life* (London: The Radcliffe Press, 2009), 12; D. Peterson and N. Abiti, 'Collecting Obsolete Things at the Uganda Museum' in R. Silverman, G. Abungu, and P. Probst (eds), *National Museums in Africa: Identity, History and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 96.

initiative led to a collection of 'two hundred and thirty-three new ethnographic specimens', which included items such as 'clothing, birth-traps and agricultural implements'. Additionally, 'three hundred and twenty-five accessions in Archaeology and Palaeontology section were made'.[91] The new collections, together with the archaeology artefacts gathered in the intervening years, were used to illustrate the story of man in Uganda.[92] Ethnology or ethnography was retained as the 'guiding principle' of classification. Objects were labelled and arranged 'on a tribal basis' in the museum basement. However, Posnansky thought that exhibiting objects along ethnic lines would be 'rather sterile'.[93] A museum census conducted in 1959 revealed that 'the most popular exhibit was a representation of a shrine, designed and executed by the African artist […]. Most people liked to see things from their own tribe'.[94]

In the early 1960s, the heightened wave of nationalism created an increasing demand for new museums and rising educational standards. Kenneth Ingham, professor and chair of the Department of History at Makerere University, who authored the 1960 annual report of the museum, was gratified at the 'steadily increasing interest of the general public in the work of the Uganda Museum'. He also noted that 'the growth of its archaeological work, using the assistance of Makerere students was impressive'.[95] In 1961, Posnansky introduced Archaeology as a discipline in the Department of History at Makerere University. He taught a course on 'African Prehistory and Archaeology'. Posnansky's students included Matia Semakula Kiwanuka and Phares Mutibwa, who both went on to become prominent historians.[96]

Delegates from East and Central Africa and from Ghana, meeting at a conference of museum curators held in Kampala in 1960, formed the Museum Association of Middle Africa. At its first meeting in Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, in 1961, the delegates declared: 'Among the main purposes of the museum […] was to provide for training in Africa of Museum Assistants; to prepare films and film strips to promote pride in local tribal institutions, and to show the broad community of people in Africa as expressed in their material culture'.[97] Accordingly, as revealed in the 1961 annual report, trustees of the Uganda Museum expressed their desire to train Africans to occupy senior posts in the museum.

Museum ethnographers also understood that the heightened nationalism at this time aroused a popular demand among Africans for the preservation of the rapidly disappearing artefacts.[98] It was no wonder that, in 1962, as part of a renewed assertiveness for independence from the colonial British administration, Abubakar Mayanja, a Muganda, and trained lawyer at the University of Cambridge, saw an opportunity for the return of the Kibuuka ritual objects from Britain. After the

91 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 20.
92 Vowles, 'The Uganda Museum', 153.
93 Peterson and Abiti, 'Collecting Obsolete Things', 96–97.
94 Vowles, 'The Uganda Museum', 154.
95 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 20.
96 R. Bridges and Merrick Posnansky, 'African History at Makerere in the 1960s: A Future Perspective', *History in Africa*, 31, 2004, 479–482.
97 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 19.
98 Ibid.

Uganda Independence Conference held at Marlborough House in London in June 1962, Mayanja spent some time processing the legal requirements for returning the Kibuuka objects. The University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology then deaccessioned the Kibuuka cultural belongings to be sent on long-term loan to the Uganda Museum in 1962.

In April 1962, Posnansky relinquished the curatorship of the museum to become assistant director of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa. In the subsequent years, the museum, the institute and Makerere's Department of History worked quite closely in research. Following the departure of Posnansky, Vowles served as curator and developed the ethnography section, before the appointment of Wilson Bishop as curator in July 1962. Emphasis continued to be placed on the museum as a space of education and storehouse of national cultural treasures.

By 1963, the museum was receiving many visitors, particularly schoolchildren and local residents. The permanent display comprised 'ethnology, Africa music, archaeology and a little palaeontology, history and numismatics'. There were 'dioramas depicting the more important events in Uganda's Iron age and more attractive archaeological exhibits, namely the few terra-cottas, one or two whole pots, several ritual objects and a certain amount of ironware'.[99] Additionally, a large map in the main exhibition hall showed the major 'tribes' in Uganda and included a section on the peopling of Uganda.

As Posnansky later observed: 'Exhibits from the different tribes are mixed together to present a general picture, though every object has a label or is marked on a key to show tribal basis for the more serious students to use for study purposes'.[100] The discipline of archaeology at the museum concentrated on the history of the 'Bantu', as evidenced by archaeological findings such as pottery sherds and iron slags from 'Bantu' settlements around Lake Victoria. This narrow focus in presenting archaeological discoveries may have stemmed from the colonial politics of knowledge, wherein scholarly authority was used to control both the artefacts and the local population.[101]

It is noteworthy that many artefacts from these archaeological findings were removed as representations of scientific discovery and were not returned to Uganda. For instance, over 1,000 archaeological artefacts were housed in the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.[102] This raises an important question: how many Ugandans have had the opportunity to study these materials, compared to their former colonial counterparts? This disparity underscores the lack of a comprehensive archaeological narrative and display at the Uganda Museum, contributing to a situation of epistemic injustice. Archaeology as a discipline has not

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99 Posnansky, 'The Uganda Museum, Kampala', 149.

100 Ibid., 150.

101 C. Rassool, 'Remaking the Museum after Colonialism' in Leonhard Emmerling, and Latika Gupta, Luiza Proença, and Memory Biwa (eds), *Museum Futures* (Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2021), 339–354.

102 Item No. 1924.1361, named Tool – 22. Heavy duty tools were archaeological materials collected from Misozi in Kyebe, Kakuuto County, Buganda kingdom and two tools from Kigarama Uganda; Lusozi; Kigarama Hill; Masindi district, Bunyoro kitara kingdom. These items were collected by Edward James Wayland and donated to the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA). See Online catalogue accession on MAA, https://collections.maa.cam.ac.uk/objects/?query==1924.1361.

only engaged in ethnographically framing the artefacts of dominant tribal displays, but has also reinforced a colonial epistemic framework and politics of knowledge.

Nevertheless, the museum continued to engage with the public. Fine Art students from Makerere University College worked with museum staff during their vacations and put up exhibitions and temporary displays. The museum staff also visited secondary schools to give lectures. They also maintained close collaboration with the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at Makerere University College. The lectures aroused interest in several districts, where people started folk museum societies that began collecting materials and eventually opened small museums. As Posnansky pointed out, one such museum was opened in the district of Teso in 1959.[103] The concept of a folk museum in Teso was conceived by members of the Teso Museum Association, among whom were colonial administrators and educated members of local communities in the region.

The Museum under African Curatorship

In 1963, Charles M. Sekintu, who had worked with the museum as artist and technician for twelve years, was appointed as trainee curator, becoming the first Ugandan to take on this role. Sekintu obtained his apprenticeship at the British Museum, where he had modelled the map of Uganda showing the 'Peopling of Uganda'. With funds from the Rockefeller Foundation, Sekintu was sent to the United States for advanced study in museology. On his return, he became the first African curator of the Uganda Museum in 1965. He replaced Bishop, who had moved on to take up a post at the University of London. Reflecting on Sekintu's tenure as curator, Deming observed: 'His direction bodes well for the future of the Museum. It is a viable, prospering, dynamic organization, permanently "on its feet", with an important contribution to make to its community through pleasurable instructions, display and performance'.[104]

Sekintu acquired seemingly ordinary items, including pots, a grinding stone, wooden spoons, and baskets, among others. Nonetheless, his strategy was informed by the 'sincere sense that historical preservation was necessary at a time when changes of vast consequence were in the air'.[105] In 1974, when President Idi Amin signed a decree officially banning the wearing of wigs by women in Uganda, the Uganda Museum initiated a comprehensive collection project in which they sought to collect Afro-styled wigs, among other artefacts. Amin argued that artificial hair made African women look un-African, and therefore regarded the ban as advancing his anti-colonial project. But the curator thought that wigs were an important part of the material culture that was worth preserving.

In the 1970s, the curatorial team operated under stringent government directives that precluded the installation of exhibitions and restricted public engagement activities in the museum. The interplay between cultural preservation and state

103 Posnansky, 'The Uganda Museum, Kampala', 151.
104 Deming, 'The History of the Uganda Museum', 22.
105 Peterson and Abiti, 'Collecting Obsolete Things', 102.

control affected the functioning of the museum. In 1975, Sekintu, like many other Ugandans holding public offices then, fled the country amid political turmoil. In 1976, the museum came under the purview of a government department; the autonomy of its board of trustees was revoked and it was amalgamated with the Department of Antiquities in the Ministry of Culture and Community Development. Thereafter, a series of acting curators, responsible to the Conservator of Antiquities, were responsible for the museum. The cultural objects collected by Sekintu and others in the 1970s were never put on display and the ethnographic showcases laid out in the 1950s and 1960s remained largely unchanged. The 1970s political situation affected the visitor numbers to the museum, with numbers declining from 139,000 in 1972 to 67,000 in 1978, and as low as 40,000 in 1979.[106]

In spite of these challenges, the museum endured and the existing staff, though not well trained, kept it alive. Alexandra Trone, who was tasked by UNESCO to assess the priorities and conservation needs of the museum in 1980, observed: 'Considering the general conditions in Uganda in the recent past and the shortages of all materials and tools needed for conservation […] it is little short of miraculous how little the collections have suffered'.[107] She was surprised that the collections had not suffered as much as had been feared. Although the museum had been broken into several times, the thieves had only taken saleable items, including carpenters' tools, typewriters, film projectors, and other equipment.[108] Trone applauded the museum staff for their effort: 'it is a tribute to the staff that the museum has survived the hazards of the last decade as well as it has'.[109] Trone recommended that museum staff go abroad for further training in conservation techniques. She also reported that the biggest problem facing the displays was leakage through the roof and rainwater, as well as dust that came through the windows and affected displays, particularly the musical instrument showcases. Trone reported that 'the difficulty is in obtaining money and materials to do the necessary work'. She was aware that 'the Museum is not high on the present list of priorities in Uganda'.[110]

In December 1983, UNESCO sent yet another consultant, Rene Rivard, to the Uganda Museum to advise on the best way of re-organising the ethnographic exhibitions and preserving collections. In his report, Revard noted that the museum was struggling to keep its status in adverse conditions. He observed that:

> any report, no matter how good in content, and no matter how much interest momentarily kindled, will remain dead if there is no firm will on the part of higher authorities to support the reported recommendations and to give necessary tools, leadership, funds, etc so that implementation keeps a steady pace.[111]

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106 R. Revard, 'The Uganda Museum: Priorities for Improvement and Developments' (Paris: UNESCO Paris, 1984).
107 A. Trone, 'The Uganda Museum: Priorities for Conservation', Report prepared for the Government of Uganda by UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO, 1981), 19.
108 Ibid., 2.
109 Ibid., 3.
110 Ibid.
111 Revard, 'The Uganda Museum', 5.

Revard emphasised the urgent need for conservation and improvement of the museum's operational capacity and integrity.

From the 1980s through to the 2020s, the museum engaged in different activities, especially temporary exhibitions that appealed to the public. Temporary exhibitions in 1983/1984 focused on different themes, including basketry, money, the 1969 visit by the Pope to Uganda and the invention of X-rays.[112] In the late 1990s, there was an exhibition on the history of alcohol in Uganda. In 2017, in collaboration with the Ethnographic Museum of Zurich and Igongo Cultural Centre, the Uganda Museum staged the 'Drink Deeply! Milk Exhibition', which featured milk both as cultural heritage and business.[113] Drawing on a partnership in archives and collections conservation between the museum, Makerere University and the University of Michigan, two temporary history exhibitions were developed in the museum. In 2021, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin' featured photographs, film, and sound from the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation.[114] And, in 2022, the museum showed the Uganda@60 national history exhibition that commemorated Uganda's sixtieth independence anniversary.[115] This exhibition was officially launched by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the president of the Republic of Uganda.

The ethnographic displays of the 1950s and 1960s remained the same, and the problems of roof leakage, water spills, and dust raised by Revard in 1984 were never adequately addressed. However, the temporary exhibitions installed in the 2020s instilled more life into the museum by attracting a wider public and giving them a sense of history. Another important milestone was the return of thirty-nine cultural belongings to Uganda in June 2024 from the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. This occurred with assistance from the Mellon Foundation-funded project, 'Repositioning the Uganda Museum', based at the University of Michigan. Although framed as a loan, there is no doubt that this return will be transformed into a restitution, with the potential for more returns from the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford University.[116]

In addition, there is more hope. On 1 August 2024, the museum closed temporarily for extensive renovations. The refurbishment aimed to preserve and enhance the museum's rich historical, cultural and natural heritage for all generations. It was expected that the revamp would last for ten months but, as of September 2026, the work is still ongoing. Ugandans are very hopeful and look forward to a refurbished museum, one that is not only a renewed building, but also a renewed concept of museum.

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112 See Revard, 'The Uganda Museum'.

113 'Uganda launches first milk exhibition', *Daily Monitor*, 19 September 2017, https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/commodities/uganda-launches-first-milk-exhibition-1718838.

114 D. Peterson, R. Vokes, N. Abiti, and E. Taylor, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 63, 1 (2021), 5–40.

115 Uganda @60 national history exhibitions, 5 October 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tANLAeXLB7U&t=24s.

116 Abiti, 'Transforming the Uganda National Museum', 238–265.

Conclusion

This article has traced the institutional history of the Uganda Museum from the time of its formation to the post-independence period. Initially established with the intention of gathering information on exploiting Uganda's natural resources, the Uganda Museum was managed by professionals in forestry, agriculture, and botany before it transitioned to a site of ethnology along tribal lines.

In its first three decades, the museum faced many challenges, including the lack of a curator, insufficient funding, inadequate space, and a leaking roof. By the late 1930s, the situation had got out of hand and it was feared that the museum would disband. However, a committee constituted to look into the affairs of the museum in 1938 was optimistic that the museum could be turned into a site for research and educating the public about Uganda's past. This was realised when Margaret Trowell was nominated curator. She instilled life in the museum because of her passion for, and focus on, collecting, and presenting the art and material culture of the different groups of Ugandan people. The emphasis on cultural representation was a significant shift from the original intention of establishing the museum.

Trowell also initiated the linking of the Uganda Museum with Makerere College. When ethnomusicologist Wachsmann was appointed curator in 1948, he followed in the footsteps of Trowell. He developed the ethnomusicological section of the museum, making it one of the finest on the continent. Like his predecessor, Wachsmann emphasised education and public engagement with local forms of cultural expression. In so doing, he turned the Uganda Museum into the first 'living' museum in Africa, and shaped the development of ethnomusicology as a discipline at Makerere University. Later, the archaeologist Posnansky took up the position of curator and introduced new ideas that promoted the collection of ethnographic materials and the eventual introduction of archaeology as a subject at Makerere University.

Through the development of Makerere University, first as a college linked to the University of London, then as part of the University of East Africa, and later as a university in an independent African nation, the different disciplines came to underscore African initiative and agency, and to take account of African historicity, not only emphasising forces that came from outside. Since then, these disciplinary developments have also occurred in the name of heritage and restitution as a means of transforming colonial legacies of collecting and research into Ugandan legacies.