

**Monumentalizing Africa's Momentous Decade: Building  
Monuments and a Nation in Uganda**

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## Monumentalizing Africa's Momentous Decade: Building a Nation and Monuments in Uganda

In 1962, the year Ugandans won freedom from British colonial rule, Gregory Maloba memorialized the momentous political accomplishment, and arguably also challenge, in Independence Monument and Independence Arch in downtown Kampala. I examine the history and aesthetics of Maloba's monuments in order to understand what he intended them to convey, and what Ugandans have interpreted and appropriated them to mean. Explicating the evolving meanings of Maloba's monuments provides a revealing lens to explore how Ugandans have struggled to give meaning to their own independence.

The first Chapter reviews relevant scholarly literature on the significance of architecture in shaping identities and conceptions of power in emergent nations. Short sketches of the independence-era architecture projects in Ghana and Tanzania introduce general issues that the following chapters examine in greater detail for Uganda.

Chapters II and III contextualize how Ugandans understood independence in the context of how the British had ruled Uganda through the kabaka (king) of Buganda, one of the historic polities in the colony, and argue that British pressure resulted in Ganda thinking of their kabaka's monumental thatched "palaces" as symbols of dominant power instead of places to experience the reciprocal relations that had underlain the historic kingdom. Chapter III then traces Maloba's artistic development as student and professor at Makerere University in Kampala, where he experimented freely for the time period and distanced himself from the movement to "Africanize" art in the colony, perhaps in distaste for British perversions of a dynamic medium of participation to a sterile "tradition." Chapters II and III also set the political tensions as Uganda prepared for independence, in which the politician who negotiated an alliance that promised to govern independent Uganda, Milton Obote, came to power at the head of a deeply divided coalition that shared no unified conception of nationalism beyond a short-term grab for power.

Chapter IV argues that Maloba intended Independence Monument to invite reflection on Uganda's ambiguous past, present, and political future, offering hope for independence if his countrymen and –women could find a unifying bond while still respecting multiculturalism and progress. Obote employed Maloba to create a second monument, Independence Arch, to represent Obote's personal desire to become the paternalistic, controlling, father figure around whom Ugandans could unite. The Arch symbolizes Obote's sheltering ambitions by offering a shaded area outside of the National Assembly for Ugandans to mingle, under a medallion of Obote's profile. Neglect of Independence Monument's message of the ambiguities of nationhood in the present and popular misinterpretations Independence Arch as a threatening symbol of Obote's despotic political ambitions explain why Uganda spiraled into twenty years of ethnic conflict and militaristic misrule under Idi Amin after independence.

The troubled legacies of Maloba's monuments form the subject of Chapter V. Current President Museveni (since 1986) ended the neglect of Independence Monument by appropriating it as a symbol of his regime in attempts to convince prospective international donors that Uganda had fulfilled the hopes of unity and balanced prosperity that Maloba had expressed in the monument. Museveni's government has given the Monument increased recognition, but skeptical Ugandan

media have interpreted it as a symbol of Museveni's reliance on outside sponsors and thus as a symbol of the failures of independence and the continued grip of neo-colonialism.

The Conclusion highlights the particulars of Uganda's monuments in comparison to the monuments of Ghana and Tanzania, such as the competition that resulted in an artist designing an ambiguous, reflective monument. Next the conclusion accounts for Africa's tragic monumentalized militarization – the failure of African independence to full its promises – by considering the lack of means available to African nations, which were once available for Europeans to forge the nationalism required of modern states. The conclusion then considers the talented contemporary artist community in Uganda, people who keep alive Maloba's hopes for a country engaged with the careful contemplation of artists. Finally the thesis concludes with a reminder that all monuments include the humanistic dynamics of art, which can motivate people who create their own varied meanings for the monuments, far beyond the sterile theoretical categories of architectural critics.

This thesis has grown out of a fascination of pondering Uganda's strikingly imaginative Independence Monument. However the prevailing theory on monuments concentrates unimaginatively on what monuments can reveal about sociological political theories of power and control. This introductory chapter reviews that literature, extrapolating what it can from for the purposes of this thesis that seeks to recount the detailed history of Uganda's aesthetically rich monuments and grasp their evolving meanings in connection to the Ugandan peoples' struggles to fulfill their independence aspirations. Uganda's semicentennial celebrations of independence offer a moment to assess the first fifty years of Uganda's independence history through its independence monuments.

Building national identity was among the most challenging tasks for Africans at independence, because their new nations – formed within arbitrary colonial boundaries – lacked a unifying sense of nationalism around which they could create effective political stability. Monuments are a common – and sometimes effectual – means of consolidating national identity. Therefore, the nexus of political and architectural theory reveals that decoding the symbols and signs chiseled and welded into African independence monuments is a productive exercise in examining the national identities and power aspirations of the regimes that created them. But as this thesis will demonstrate, monuments can reveal many more rich insights into nations and their peoples. This thesis confronts the challenge of building independence monuments in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the historical representations of political unity were decidedly not

monumental but rather were places of functionality and experiential communal interactions. This introductory chapter explicates the evolving meanings of monumental representations with the examples of the extravagant Hellenistic monuments that Kwame Nkrumah built in Ghana and the “non-monumental” monuments that Julius Nyerere attempted to build in Tanzania.

### *Nations in a Day*

The modern nations of Europe had centuries to quarrel over and determine their borders, but they arrived at their current (although still shifting) boundaries only after centuries of annexation, secession, warfare, and treaties. Yet the leaders of European nations still had to conduct massive ideological campaigns to establish a sense of belonging that made citizenship appealing to the varied peoples assembled within the modern national boundaries. Benedict Anderson’s iconic work, *Imagined Communities*, supports this claim by arguing that European nations are imagined communities that governments had to construct through sustained propaganda campaigns because they are not actual communities where everyday face-to-face interaction existed between all the members.<sup>1</sup> As the Age of Enlightenment and political revolutions eroded the legitimacy of political communities constructed around religions and divinely ordained monarchs, the leaders of participatory political systems found themselves needing to instill a distinct sense of national pride in their voting citizens, often standardizing “national” languages and, as the historian Eric Hobsbawm describes, “inventing traditions.” Politicians propagated monuments such as the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin (1891), a hallmark of Bismark’s (and the Kaiser’s) Germany, and the Eiffel Tower (1889) in Paris as patriotic symbols of national identity. Imperialism helped solidify national cultures further as European citizens

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<sup>1</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

cheered on their nation's competitive efforts to "civilize" the rest of the world by spreading their "superior" national culture to peoples they considered "primitive."

After carving territories out of Africa by a fireside in Germany, these new European nations ruthlessly exploited their colonies for economic gain, ruling them by categorizing Africans into rigid ethnicities and then giving educations and civil service positions to favored ethnicities while allocating privileges of serving in the colonial armies to other groups. When Europeans decided it was in their best interest to decolonize, as pressures for self-determination mounted around the globe, they lowered their colors, raised African flags over their colonies and quickly departed. African nations gained their independence overnight, but the arbitrary colonial borders of the new nations enclosed numerous communities that Europeans had manipulated into rigid, and often hostile, ethnic groups. The ethnic groups that colonialism left behind often were wary of one another, bitter from years of Europeans favoring certain ethnicities over others. Building functioning nations from these divided communities was a monumental [if not impossible] task for the African leaders left in charge. But the leaders had every incentive to try – the very legitimacy of their political positions rested on it. In the buildup to independence, African politicians had managed to build a limited sense of unity at the level of the colony because the collective struggle for independence and self-determination united most people in the colonies. But after independence, the parties that came to power were in the ironic position in which "the foil against which unity was forged [was] after independence itself the main vehicle in the hands of the nationalist elite for the fulfillment of the mission [of building a nation]."<sup>2</sup> That turning of the tables made the forging of national identities an even more difficult mission for the new

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 45.

governments. One method they had for constructing a unifying national identity was through manifesting the still-imagined national unity through imposing state architecture.

### *The Fountainhead of Political Discourse*

The political scientist Murray Edelman asserts that “Art is the fountainhead from which political discourse, beliefs about politics, and consequent actions ultimately spring.”<sup>3</sup> He rejects notions of art as an abstraction divorced from human society, along with notions of art as merely passively reflective of the societies that produce it. For Edelman, art—ranging from paintings to memorable jokes—is cardinal in the process of imagining our worlds and constructing who we are in them. Similarly, the artistically expressive Yoruba people of Nigeria say that the mind’s eye is made up of *iran* (mental images) derived from artwork that the individual has experienced. For Yoruba people, these *iran* are an individual’s fundamental worldview. Architecture, as part of “the art you cannot avoid” – the built environment – makes up the backdrop to daily life, thus constantly providing the inner eye with the formative materials of *iran*.<sup>4</sup> People interpret the *iran* they encounter through the other *iran* already in their minds and then share their interpretations with the people around them – a chain of cultural consensus that Edelman and philosophers such as Martin Heidegger see as the process through which communities develop shared senses of identity – the essential prerequisites for stable political communities.

So while the independence monuments built in Africa in the 1960s might have seemed conventionally appropriate for new nations, the politicians at the helms of the newly independent

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<sup>3</sup> Murray J. Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Allison Arieff, “Why Don’t We Read About Architecture?” *The New York Times*, March 2, 2012, Accessed March 2, 2012, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/02/why-dont-we-read-about-architecture/>.

nations saw much more at stake in their designs. Through the construction of public monuments, these would-be leaders hoped to alter the physical backdrop to the lives of their people in ways that publicized their own visions for national identity, thus presenting their citizens with the formative context for how they might come to think about themselves and their country.

### *Monumental Ironies of Building Monuments in Africa*

While speeches, flags, songs, parades, and numerous other art forms were summoned to cultivate national identities, architecture presented a particularly challenging opportunity for African leaders because African cultures offered few precedents for monumental architecture from which leaders and artists could draw. How African leaders addressed this architectural dilemma reveals more about how they chose to address the legacy of colonialism than other state sponsored art because designing a monument that had the potential to create collective national identity and was not an obvious remnant of colonialism or a reference to a specific group of people in the nation required thoughtful sensitivity and creativity.

The word monument comes from the Latin verb *monere*, meaning to recall, and Latin *mens/mentis* for mind. Monuments call to mind collective memories of the past to create a sense of belonging, or in more modern terms, national identity. Those in positions of power have also tended to use monuments to project their authority, reminding those who might otherwise challenge their imposing strength. Traditionally, rulers have ordered the creation of monuments meant to evoke specific memories carefully chosen to facilitate construction of national identities around projections of power that legitimize their positions of power. Nietzsche called monumental historians those who construe history in an ideological manner that “serves life [in

the present] and is directed by its end.” Reinforcing power is precisely what traditional monuments are intended to do.<sup>5</sup> Because leaders typically assign meanings to their monuments a priori, they carefully protect and preserve their buildings and monuments to give the illusion that the ideologies they symbolize are timeless.

The paradoxical contrasting purposes of monuments – both to provide a reassuring sense of belonging and to express threatening power – explains why elites tend to construct monuments that are magnificent in size and grandeur. Seemingly permanent imposing structures represent daunting power to potential internal and external foes and assurances of security for those who are invited to belong to the identity found in the monument. These vast forms in which leaders often have constructed monuments explain how the word “monumental” acquired its modern meaning of “great size and scope.”<sup>6</sup>

Scholars have, accordingly, seemed to celebrate the size and permanence of monuments as markers of a society’s civilization and progress. More recent thinkers have challenged this conventional emphasis on monumental “civilizations” as the story of the world’s history, arguing that monumental architecture was not a preferred choice for most societies but rather a strategy utilized by leaders who had united people against external threats and then had to maintain centralized power after the threats had abated. These “civilized” societies have tended to pass on the monumental costs of pyramids and palaces to their subjects in the form of slavery and taxes. In Sub-Saharan Africa, where rulers did not often manage to impose strategies of hierarchical centralization and pervasive militarization, communities did not need to monumentalize their architecture to symbolize rigid hierarchy-supporting ideologies or impose homogeneous identities

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<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, translated by Adrian Collins, Wikisource, Accessed December 18, 2011, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/On\\_the\\_Use\\_and\\_Abuse\\_of\\_History\\_for\\_Life](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/On_the_Use_and_Abuse_of_History_for_Life).

<sup>6</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary, Accessed April 1, 2012, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=monumental>.

on diverse people. Africans instead tended to value diversity and flexibility in their strategies, creating “cities without citadels” and without coercive centralized authority.<sup>7</sup> What might be considered African monuments, such as pillars to Yoruba homes that artisans carved with animals and human figures, were much different from their European counterparts in that they were evocative objects of veneration that brought people together face-to-face to pass the meanings attributed to them on through the generations of the families living with them.

Only a few recent western monuments convey meanings in the experiential manner of precolonial African architecture, such as the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, which invites visitors to stroll into a sunken pathway and touch or make rubbings of the names of the American soldiers fallen in the service of the nation. Maya Lin, the designer, said that she intended the monument to invite thoughtful reflection, and scholars have seen such monuments as the Vietnam Memorial as so radically different from imposing traditional monuments that they have labeled them “anti-monuments.”<sup>8</sup>

When the people of the European colonies in Africa became nations overnight, leaders found they that they needed to move quickly to construct nations in order to govern of millions of people who did not know each other by representing abstract and imagined ideologies of homogeneous identities. As no one had experience of the abstract national identities they invented, they had to resort to didactic monuments that were meant to be seen or displayed in images, on currencies and elsewhere, but not interacted with. The strategy had significant paradoxes in it, because abstract monuments were symbols of the similarly imposing imperial powers from which Africans were celebrating their release. This issue of appropriate African roots

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<sup>7</sup> John Reader, and Michael Lewis, *Africa: A Biography of a Continent* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2001), 226.

<sup>8</sup> James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

for an essentially alien political system structured the artistic and political debates of the African independence epoch and therefore underlies much of this thesis. The editors of the *Encyclopedia of Africa* describe how the discussion over a fitting African culture was split “between those who saw Africa’s future as ultimately multicultural and those who insisted on an African return to Black authenticity.”<sup>9</sup>

Those who favored a return to Black authenticity looked in two directions for an appropriate African historical referent. Some searched for examples in Africa’s past of European-style art and architecture in an attempt to claim a similarly glorious monumental history. Others idealized African cultures as a utopian “merrie Africa” of prosperity and peace, which required a search for appropriate African anti-monuments in the independence era. Both of these characterizations of Africa’s history seemed potential seeds of unifying national identities for nascent African nations, but neither related to the actual historical experiences to which most people in Africa were heirs. Even when public authorities in one town or region agreed on what what culture they would present as “authentic”, the other communities in the same nations had other ideas about what was truly “African.” As difficult as were these searches for regional cultural “authenticity,” it was even more difficult to imagine “authenticity” as the larger scale of national cultures, much less to impose it.

Consequently many African leaders, faced with the non-existent aspirations of the entire nation, often appealed in the name of the nation as a whole to particular segments of the population, such as populous politically significant regions or the leaders’ own regions of origin. Leaders also resorted to personality cults, removing the focus from collective culture to individual

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<sup>9</sup> John Middleton and Joseph Calder Miller, *New Encyclopedia of Africa* (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2008), xliii.

power – a strategy even more domineering than using threats of military or economic repercussions for people or regions who resisted the nation-building process.

### *Imperial Monuments of African Personality*

Ghana and Tanzania provide controlled comparisons with Uganda because all three nations were former British colonies, whose independence-era leaders built strikingly different monuments. In Ghana, the first president of the nation, Kwame Nkrumah, constructed Romanesque Monuments while preaching a national identity of an African personality centered around himself. In Tanzania, founding president Julius Nyerere sought to construct anti-monuments in a new de-centralized capital city of Dodoma.

Ghana's monuments have the most accessible (English) scholarly work written on them among Africa's independence-era monuments,. They are complex, even perplexing, because their Hellenistic stylization refers to cultural antecedents of the British colonizers of the Gold Coast and thus seems to contradict Nkrumah's rhetoric of cultivating an "African personality."

Ghana was the first African nation to win independence from colonialism, in 1957. As such, Nkrumah faced the challenging ideological burden of plotting the course that would lead other colonies in Africa to establish themselves as nation-states. Nkrumah established his political hegemony by commissioning architectural projects all aimed at promoting a personalized "Nkrumah-centered culture."<sup>10</sup> Nkrumah's cultivation of his cult of personality as the national identity of Ghana set the father-of-the-nation model that leader after leader throughout Africa

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<sup>10</sup> Janet Berry Hess, "Imagining Architecture: The Structure of Nationalism in Accra, Ghana," *Africa Today*, 47 (2000): 35, accessed September 26, 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4187331>

would turn to in order to address the difficulty of formulating a unifying national culture among their multicultural citizens.

Nkrumah was also one a leading figure of Pan-Africanism, which was the movement to unify Africa's many peoples and cultivate an "African personality," placing "emphasis on the dignity of the African person, culture, and traditional values" and in theory seeking "to liberate Africa from the harm done by colonialism and apartheid, to remove the final vestiges of imperialism, and to guard the African people against what [Nkrumah] termed 'neocolonialism.'"<sup>11</sup> To fulfill his Pan-African intentions, Nkrumah's Arts Council sought to preserve and advance Ghana's traditional arts while simultaneously (and paradoxically) unifying Ghana's diverse cultures into a single national culture. This policy of consolidation, coupled with Nkrumah's desire for a "Nkrumah-centered culture," resulted in the Arts Council's promotion of traditional arts that were overwhelmingly Akan, Nkrumah's own ethnic background and the largest ethnic group in Ghana. By thus elevating Akan culture Nkrumah also was appeasing the largest political community in the nation – a group fighting for recognition of their own historic Asante state – despite an Asante (Nkrumah) being responsible at the national level. Nkrumah strictly imposed his national identity policy, even going so far as to enact laws barring the display of regional emblems and outlawing the establishment of regional museums.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Puplampu, "The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch."

<sup>12</sup> Hess, "Imagining Architecture," 40.



*Fig. 1.1* – Nkrumah’s monumental Independence Arch still standing in downtown Accra

Diverging from the African thrust of his national identity policy, when searching for inspiration for monuments, Nkrumah looked to the ancient Mediterranean. He insisted that Ghana’s Public Works Department build an Independence Arch in the form of a Roman Triumphal Arch.<sup>13</sup> Completed in 1957, the “immense white concrete [Independence Arch], clad by sandstone and marble” stood as the backdrop to the independence celebrations in Ghana.<sup>14</sup> Inscribed in the Arch are the words “Freedom and Justice”—the rights that Nkrumah promised independence would bring to Africans. However from the perspective of an architectural historian, the Roman Triumphal Arch is associated with military conquest and therefore “the object or idea [the referent] used to prompt the notion of freedom [the Triumphal Arch] is in actual fact a symbol most often associated with imperialist ideology.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to the Arch, Nkrumah commissioned Italian-made bronze statues of himself in the likeness of a Roman emperor. What explains this apparent disparity between the ideology of “African personality” that

<sup>13</sup> Puplambu, “The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch.”

<sup>14</sup> Puplambu, “The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch.”

<sup>15</sup> Puplambu, “The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch.”

Nkrumah proclaimed and the militarization and conquest represented by the Roman Arch and statues?

The black star that crowns the Arch offers one possible explanation. “Black Star” was a pseudonym for Nkrumah and was the name of the shipping line that Marcus Garvey had founded in 1919 to ferry African-Americans back to Africa. In her 2008 master’s thesis on Ghana’s Independence Arch, Aditei Puplampu makes the case that Nkrumah attached the star to the top of the Arch in order to personalize the monument to project the immense power he felt he exerted not just over Ghana but over Africa and eventually much of the world. She implies that Nkrumah was not ignorant of the triumphal symbolism of the arch, which “from its inception in Rome ... was ‘used as a means of propaganda to announce the presence of Rome, its laws, and its culture, elsewhere, and thereby strengthening the power of the emperor.’”<sup>16</sup> She concludes that the “decision to imitate the ancient but recognizable form of the triumphal arch afforded Nkrumah with the perfect vehicle with which he (the socialist-styled prime minister and president), selfishly exercised his personal ambitions and goals.”<sup>17</sup> Within a few years of Ghana’s independence Nkrumah would declare himself “president for life,” displaying his “[shamelessly obvious] ambition to become a supreme authority in Africa.”<sup>18</sup>

Another interpretation of Nkrumah’s Black Star is that he intended it as a reference to Garveyism, a movement predicated on its founder’s faith that “whatsoever things common to man that man has done, man can do.” Nkrumah could have realized that no precedents for an independence monument could be found in Ghana and therefore, following in the inspired confidence of Garveyism, built a monument representing the aspiration of an African nation to

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<sup>16</sup> Puplampu, “The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch.”

<sup>17</sup> Puplampu, “The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch.”

<sup>18</sup> Puplampu, “The Independence/Freedom and Justice Arch.”

become as great as what many consider the height of power and civilization—The Roman Empire. This mindset follows the name, Ghana, that Nkrumah gave the former Gold Coast, which referred to the “great empire” of medieval western Sudan. Nkrumah’s comparison of Akan art with the European classical traditions supports this interpretation of Independence Arch. In Ghana’s National Museum, which was constructed under Nkrumah, curators placed the collection of the arts of the Akan alongside Greek and North African antiquities. Nkrumah seems to have wanted to present Akan art as equivalent to Hellenistic arts. Thus, when no Akan precedent existed for public monuments, then Hellenistic art could be substituted because the Akan people could have built structures just as artistically “great.”

Towards the end of Nkrumah’s reign, the people of Ghana began to resist the Nkrumah-centered iconography of their nation. The Asante political party, the National Liberation Movement (NLM), began resisting Nkrumah’s attempts to associate Asante iconography with Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP) but they detested even more the Hellenistic representations of Nkrumah himself. In response to the erection of a statue of Nkrumah in front of Parliament, the NLM charged Nkrumah with “building an environment of ‘sycophantic [sic] adulteration and idolatry.’”<sup>19</sup>

In 1966, Ghana’s armed forces forcefully removed Nkrumah from power. Within 17 hours, the new military government “passed a law prohibiting the speaking or writing of Nkrumah’s name and making the display of Nkrumah’s ‘effigy’ an offense, and new coins and currency were created which did not bear his image.”<sup>20</sup> Angry Asante demonstrators dismembered the life-size statue of Nkrumah that had stood in front of the Asante Regional Secretariat of the

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<sup>19</sup> Hess, “Imagining Architecture,” 45.

<sup>20</sup> Hess, “Imagining Architecture,” 45.

CPP, and the monumental statue of Nkrumah in Accra. The Arch survived Nkrumah's ousting only because of its size and durability and because its personal connection to Nkrumah was less direct.



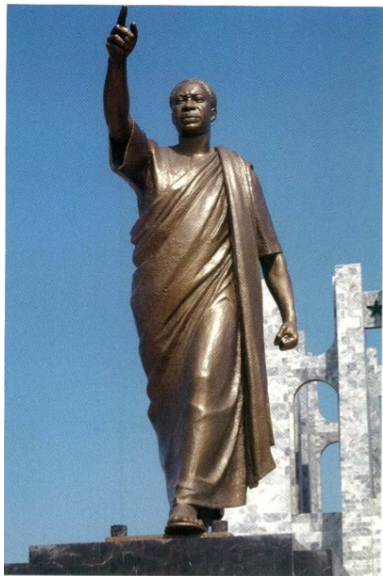
*Fig. 1.2* – A decapitated statue of Nkrumah, symbolic of the nation without Nkrumah

Over time the Arch, its imperial connotations notwithstanding, has become a prominent symbol in Ghanaian popular culture. A reason for this transformation might be the restoration of Nkrumah that was orchestrated by Ghana's third President (1972-76), Kutu Acheampong, who brought Nkrumah's body back from Guinea, where he had died in exile, to Ghana for a state funeral in 1972. The ceremonies included creation of a modest mausoleum for Nkrumah in Accra. J. J. Rawlings, Ghana's President from 1981 to 2000, continued Nkrumah's rehabilitation as a symbol of Pan-Africanism and stated that it was "necessary to keep alive Nkrumah's gift of vision and [the] inspiration of his leadership."<sup>21</sup> In 1985, Rawlings oversaw the completion of the architecturally modern W. E. B. Du Bois Memorial Center for African Culture, which lauded both

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<sup>21</sup> Hess, "Imagining Architecture," 45.

Dubois and Nkrumah. In the Presidential and Parliamentary election year of 1992, Rawlings dedicated the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Complex in downtown Accra, which included a triumphantly striding classically styled statue of Nkrumah – a statue of which he would have surely approved. The restoration of Nkrumah’s legacy was a restoration of his independence hopes for all of Africa.



*Fig. 1.3* – A Romanesque statue of Nkrumah in front of his mausoleum

In light of the veneration of Nkrumah’s image after his shameful exile, it is no wonder that the arch is a favorite symbol of Ghanaians even considering its Roman (imperial) architectural inspiration, as it is one of the few standing monuments that date from the moment Ghanaians trail blazed independence for the continent of Africa.

*African Anti-Monuments*

Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, shared Nkrumah's "vision for a free and unified Africa."<sup>22</sup> However, he approached monuments to the Tanzanian nation in a dramatically less personalistic and imposing fashion. A decade after Tanzania's official independence in 1964, Nyerere proposed moving the national capital from the coastal city of Dar es Salaam to the more-central inland location of Dodoma, and 70% of Tanzanians approved of the move in a national referendum.<sup>23</sup> Nyerere's 1967 Arusha Declaration, in which he laid out the tenets of his ideology of Ujamaa ("socialism" or "brotherhood"), was reprinted on the master plan for Dodoma and guided the construction of the objectives for the city and its monuments. Ujamaa was based on three ideas: "the elimination of exploitation, the control of the means of production by the peasants and workers, and the philosophies of democracy and socialism."<sup>24</sup>

Nyerere intended Dodoma to be an abstract representation of Ujamaa national unity, physically distanced from the ideological residue of German and British colonialism associated with the colonial capital at Dar es Salaam. Dodoma was a critique of the capital cities in other new African nations, all deriving from colonial-era orientations toward global markets and was "nothing less than the first non-monumental capital city," and "ambitious in its very modesty."<sup>25</sup> Nyerere's "human-scale" city was constructed by local workers and from local materials and is comprised of clusters of Ujamaa villages each intended to house 28,000 people. Nyerere planned to lay the villages in "cells" paralleling (if not modeled on) West African indigenous cities (Yoruba in particular), compounds comprising of ten houses, including a communal area and a shared

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<sup>22</sup> Janet Berry Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2006), 114.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 148.

<sup>24</sup> Hess, *Art and Architecture*, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Vale, *Architecture, Power*, 151.

agricultural plot within the city to cultivate food. The dispersed clusters present a clear African alternative to the highly centralized colonial plan around a core monument.



*Fig 1.4* – Dodoma’s location in central Tanzania, a capital city accessible to the entire nation

*Fig 1.5* – A map of Dodoma, a city comprised of clusters of *Ujamaa* villages

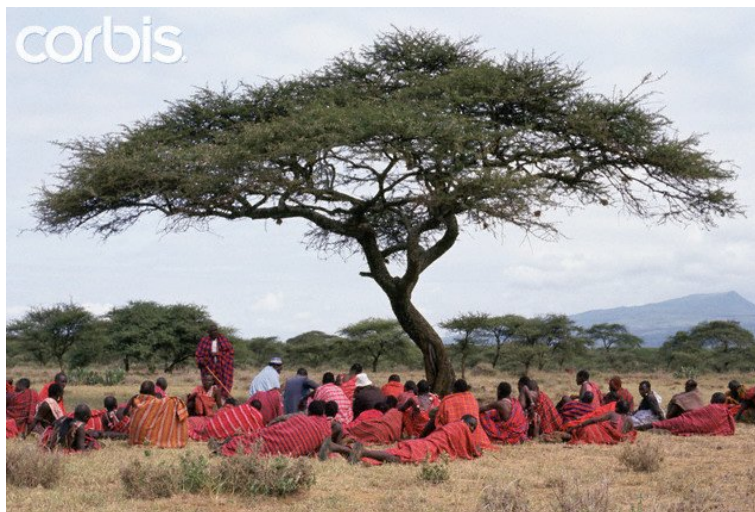


Nyerere built monuments in Dodoma, although the city was not centered on them. Like the city, they did not celebrate hierarchical power and did not “herocize” Tanzanian leaders because Tanzanian national identity was not built around a personality cult like Nkrumah’s Ghana. A monument of an acacia tree, which represents the traditional shaded meeting spot for the residents of rural villager, marks Ujamaa Square. Nyerere designed the square to be an open plaza for public participation and education, full of pedestrian paths and museums, including the

Museum of Social and Political History, the National Library, and the Museum of Science and Industry. The acacia tree's symbolism of rural life and public participation symbolized Nyerere's vision of Tanzania being a nation of dispersed village communities.



*Fig. 1.6* – The abstract monument of an acacia tree in Dodoma's *Ujamaa* Square



*Fig. 1.7* – A meeting of Maasai people under an acacia tree

By 1981 the growing city of Dodoma was going off the planned track and “Dar es Salaam’s colonial, residential, and institutional development patterns [were] being repeated.”<sup>26</sup> These failures were the consequence of wealthy investors who did not keep with the “socialist spirit.” Politicians constructed Parliament and the Party National Headquarters on top of a hill looking down on the city rather than in one of the accessible clusters, thereby replicating the political hierarchies that Nyerere had wished to avoid. A mile away from Ujamaa Square, the elevated government complex is isolated from the people. Although much of Nyerere’s visions for Dodoma are unrealized, his plans for the city and its acacia tree monument represent a method of monumentalizing power and national identity in Africa that while imposing an abstract ideology of national identity, created a monument that was meant to be lived in and to bring people together. The primacy of national loyalty in Tanzania, at least in part, can be attributed to Nyerere’s vision for popular Ujamaa, “pulling together,” as expressed through the open, compound plan of Dodoma, even if party elites have corroded Nyerere’s ideal with their elevated government complex.

The next chapter travels back to precolonial and colonial Uganda to examine architectural precedents for Uganda’s approach to monumentalizing independence.

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<sup>26</sup> Vale, *Architecture, Power*, 153.

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### Architectural Precedents for Ugandan Independence: “Indigenous” and Colonial Monumentality

In 1922 Gregory Maloba was born in the British colony of Kenya. Forty years later, after training as a sculptor in British Uganda, Maloba would design the state-sponsored monument to commemorate Uganda’s liberation from colonial rule. The resulting steel-reinforced concrete Independence Monument, depicting a mother thrusting her child into the sky of downtown Kampala, was Maloba’s interpretation of Uganda’s hopes for independence. The Ugandan mother’s stocky legs stand sturdily on the ground of Uganda’s pre-colonial history, while the binding cloth of colonialism nearly mummifies her lower body. The mother’s outstretched arms link the child to the solid ground of the past, and yet she lifts newborn Uganda above into the open sky above. Although Maloba’s monument has had a history of its own since its conception, yet the context of the monument itself sprang from the history of Uganda’s peoples leading up to 1962.

This chapter and the next contextualize the conceptualization of Uganda’s Independence Monument in the relevant history prior to 1962. This chapter examines the nineteenth-century and colonial-era nexus of the politically significant architecture of the Baganda people, who lived in the southern part of the area that became Uganda prior to colonialism, and whose prime architectural expression the British preserved as they ruled the Uganda colony through them. The state architecture of British colonialism also loomed in the immediate background of the independence that Maloba commemorated. These politically motivated structures and the authoritarian ideologies that they expressed influenced the political elites who contributed to memorializing Uganda’s independence and to the artists they engaged to execute the project. Just as importantly,



The British, extended well beyond their financial resources, attempted to control the area through the defeated Buganda military regime (for which the British named Uganda) –home of Luganda-speaking people they called Baganda, but who appear here under the modern form of reference as “Ganda.” By the middle of the nineteenth century, Buganda armies had consolidated the largest and most powerful military regime northwest of Lake Nyanza (modern-day Lake Victoria), thanks to its control of the lucrative exchange of ivory and slaves for Asian textiles and other products from the Swahili Coast, such as guns and mirrors, and New England cotton cloth.<sup>2</sup> Muteesa I (1854-84), the kabaka (king) of Buganda, received the British explorers John Hannington Speke and Henry Morton Stanley in his towering thatched grass “palace” in his capital city of Mengo – which became the British administrative center of Kampala. Kampala, with this ongoing tradition of Buganda architecture, was where both Maloba and Obote studied at the British colonial Makerere University. While Maloba was from Kenya and Obote was from the Lango region in the northern region of the colony, their formative years of education were conducted in the shadow of the largest and most politically important ethnic group in Uganda – the Ganda.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-colonial Buganda: Economy, Society & Welfare in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 150.



*Fig. 2.2* – Muteesa I receives the British explorers John Hannington Speke (1827-64) and James Grant (1827-92) at his palace in 1862, which is now called Kasubi Tombs.

The aspects of the complex and disputed history of Buganda relevant to understanding Uganda’s independence monuments center on what Maloba, Obote, and other Ugandans considered Buganda royal architecture to express. As Buganda architecture was their immediate “indigenous” architectural legacy, it informed how they understood Uganda’s independence monuments.



*Fig. 2.3* – The dark red highlights Buganda, the kingdom wrapping around the vital transportation hub of Lake Victoria.

When Buganda armies had mobilized to plunder rival neighbors, they elected clan chiefs as their field marshals. During the first half of the fourteenth century, one commander, known as Kintu, refused to relinquish power in the wake of a particularly successful offensive, establishing the line of kabaka who have ruled Buganda ever since.<sup>3</sup> Upon accession each kabaka built a new capital city on a fresh site, which by the time of Muteesa I comprised 40,000 buildings, with a 4-km long fence surrounding the palace complex alone, where the kabaka lived in a compound with over 400 buildings and held his court of appeals.<sup>4</sup> The kabaka constructed their palace complexes on hills in the new capitals – further exposing their towering domed roofs to view. At the entrance of the kabaka’s court burned the royal fire (gombolola), which was extinguished only when the kabaka died. Looking up at the pitched ceiling of the central court from within would have been like

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<sup>3</sup> A. B. K. Kasozi, Nakanyike Musisi and James Mukooza Sejjengo, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Denyer, *African Traditional Architecture* (Teaneck: Holmes & Meier Pub, 1978), 38.

looking at a road map of nineteenth century Buganda – the straight rows of elephant grass all converged at the pinnacle of the roof, just as all the roads in Buganda led to the kabaka’s palace.<sup>5</sup> Construction of the palaces literally performed this converging of the components of the polity. First, builders rested three wooden concentric rings on top of temporary supports and then began attaching a reed frame over them, building out more rings as needed to create the frame of the roof. After extending the web-like skeleton, which looks like an upside down woven basket, to its full 30-meter diameter, with 52 concentric rings representing the 52 clans of Buganda, workers lifted it onto permanent timber poles – the supports of structure. Next the workers thatched the roof with thick bundles of elephant grass (in some places up to a meter in thickness), beginning from where the roof touched the ground and moving upwards towards the 8-meter high pinnacle. The floor of the interior was padded with many layers of woven mats. The kabaka considered the construction of his palace so vital that he exempted the highly skilled carpenters who built it from taxes.<sup>6</sup>



*Fig. 2.4* – Two visitors remove their shoes to enter Kasubi Tombs in 2010

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<sup>5</sup> Holly Elisabeth Hanson, *Landed Obligation: the Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), 26.

<sup>6</sup> Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 26.



*Fig. 2.5 – Looking up at the concentric circles off the roof inside of Kasubi Tombs (author’s photograph)*

During the decades leading up to independence, the 35-hectare Buganda palace complex in Kampala (after the onset of colonialism none of the kabaka moved Muteesa’s Buganda capital from Mengo, where Muteesa I had received Speke and Burton) was a prominent site perched atop Kasubi Hill. Challenged to conserve the completely plant-based material of the buildings, The British modernized Muteesa I’s court palace in 1938 by rebuilding it on a concrete slab, with steel supports for the elephant-grass roof, thus removing the palace from the people who had previously contributed to its rebuilding and continuing maintenance, renewing the roots of the polity in the Ganda clans, and anchoring it in the shadow of British authority.<sup>7</sup> The four most-recent past kabaka were buried in the back of the rebuilt structure, separated from the reception room by

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<sup>7</sup> Kyeyune, “Art in Uganda.”

curtains made out of soft Buganda bark cloth, an ancient Ganda fabric made from the fibers of fig trees. They used the pliable bark cloth for many purposes, including wrapping their dead to keep them warm in the afterlife – a strong symbol of the ongoing connection between the dead and the living that Maloba recognized when he swathed the mother in the Independence Monument with a concrete representation of bark cloth.

Today, Muteesa I’s courthouse is a popular tourist destination known as the Kasubi Tombs. The Ganda people cherish Kasubi Tombs as their most important architectural symbol of the Buganda “nation,” the modern ethnic identity to which many Ganda feel greater allegiance than the independent Uganda nation.<sup>8</sup> The continued prominence of Buganda and neighboring kingdoms as semi-autonomous domains within Uganda can be traced back to the agreement between Buganda and the British that set up indirect rule in the Uganda Protectorate and has been a source of political turmoil ever since. When the British arrived, Buganda was in the midst of a war with neighboring Bunyoro over control of the profitable trade with the Muslim Swahili Coast and eagerly welcomed the British, whom Muteesa I viewed as possible allies. Muteesa I allowed Stanley (who saw Buganda as a perfect base from which to spread Christianity throughout the Great Lakes Region) to invite British missionaries to Buganda. With the arrival of Church

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<sup>8</sup> Ganda were distraught when the tombs burnt down in 2010 due to suspected arson. Fig. 2.6 and 2.7 illustrate the collective horror as Ganda witnessed their heritage go up in flames



Missionary Society and numerous other competing missionaries, Buganda split between Muslims, Anglicans, Catholics, and other who remained dedicated to earlier local communities. Amid growing religious factionalism along the lines of these imported religious distinctions, Muteesa I died in 1884, and his eighteen-year-old son, Mwanga, assumed power. Mwanga attempted to reunify the realm by suppressing all of the foreign religions. After the British declared Buganda a protectorate in 1894, Mwanga rebelled, but the British defeated his forces and exiled him to the Seychelles.<sup>9</sup>

In 1900, the guardian of Mwanga's infant son, Chwa II, signed a treaty known as the Buganda Agreement, which preserved Buganda but signed over the kabaka's power to collect tributes to the British and transformed the rulers of Buganda into paid agents of the British. The British later extended these terms to similar agreements with the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Ankole, and Toro to the west. The British sent Ganda chiefs to administer their colonial programs, mainly to collect taxes, in the northern parts of the Uganda Protectorate, instigating widespread popular resentment against the privileged Baganda outsiders. The hostility that colonial governance fanned among all the ethnic groups of Uganda, other than the Ganda themselves, is vital to understanding the challenge of integrating a unified nation through an independence monument in Uganda, because independence-era leaders had to transcend the colonial heritage of ethnic animosity to symbolize the unity of the new nation. Maloba faced the same challenge in creating a single monument based on the shared identities and aspirations of Ugandans at the time of independence. Ugandans had no Africanist/indigenous precedents for union on which Maloba could draw.

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<sup>9</sup> Katherine Janssen, "Cultivating a Colony: Science and Social History at the Botanic Gardens, Entebbe, Uganda, in the 20th Century," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008).

Nonetheless, the colonial politics of African authenticity, which the British denigrated, left Ugandans seeking an “indigenous” precedent for a public monument to a unified future at the time of independence, and they had only the thatched palaces of Buganda to turn to. The northern nomadic people did not build permanent structures considered “monumental” by the international standards of nation-state grandiosity. While other kingdoms in Uganda had palaces similar to Buganda’s, the urbane political circles of Kampala were mostly Ganda and most familiar with the court of the kabaka towering above Kampala.

But Buganda political organization, and, the symbolism of its architecture were ambiguous on the critical contrast between a participatory parliamentary government and authoritarian rule. Conventional narratives of Buganda political organization suggest that the kabaka was a tyrannical dictator with immense power, including the sole authority to make war and peace.<sup>10</sup> A. B. K. Kasozi argues in his account of *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, that the first kabaka had been *primus inter pares*, first among equals, but that over time their successors usurped others’ privileges, gaining, as early as the fourteenth century, the right to execute their subjects on a whim.<sup>11</sup> According to this interpretation, the royal palaces represent bastions of rigid authority. Similarly, Richard Reid, the author of the often-cited *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda*, suggests that the remarkably straight, Roman-like roads of Buganda, such as “the King’s highway” and “the Royal highway,” which “disregard[ed] hills, valleys, swamps, and forest” to converge uniformly at the kabaka’s palace, were testaments to the kabaka’s “predilection for social order and control.”<sup>12</sup> However, Reid suggests that the kabaka might not have begun coercing the immense labor required to build these roads until the 1840s, when the long-distance trades in slaves and

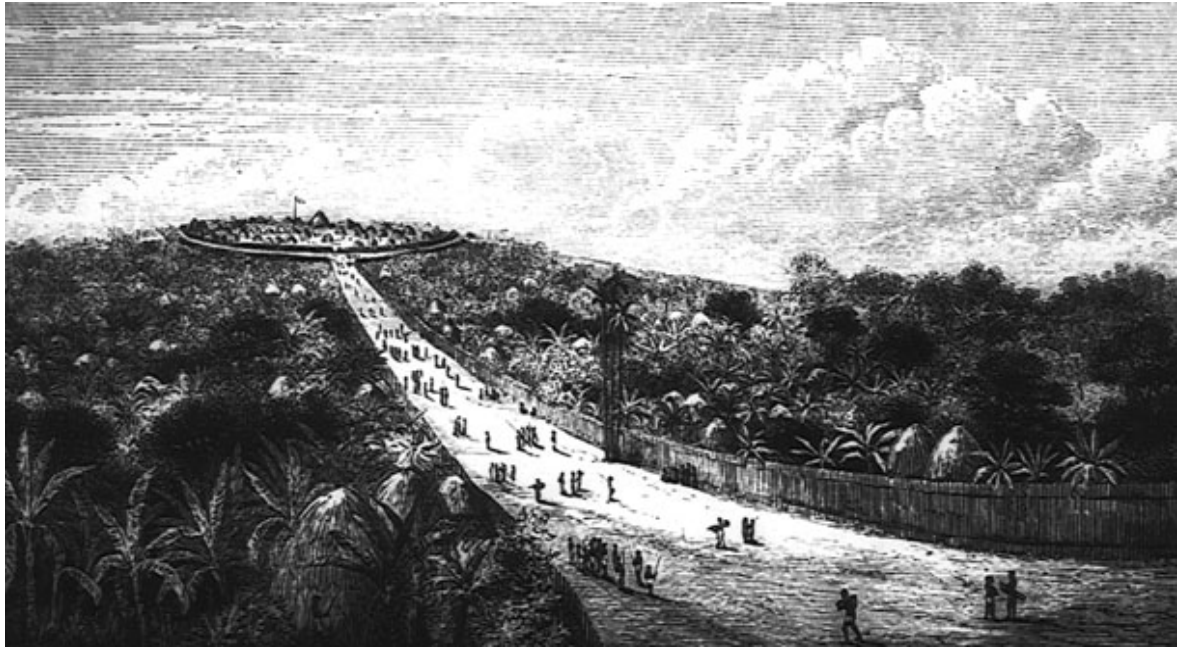
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<sup>10</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-colonial Buganda*, 108.

ivory with Swahili merchants intensified, requiring roads for trade routes and for mobilization and deployment of the military.<sup>13</sup>



*Fig. 2.8* – Muteesa’s palace complex on Mengo Hill.

Buganda historians, led by Holly Hanson, who wrote *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda*, make the case that this escalation of trade and the accompanying wars over controlling trade-routes, and clustering of components of the Buganda polity around the religions of their respective foreign allies, created a series of political crises that Muteesa I, Mwanga, and Daudi Chwa developed their frantic strategy of exercising ruthless power to contain, including inventing physical traditions to justify their extreme measures. The underlying components of the Buganda polity were fundamentally reciprocal and diffuse and therefore the royal palaces, which artisans from multiple clans joined to build as an expression of the diversity of the compound polity, should be seen as representing a Buganda “with an essential and obvious center, but hundreds of connections in the structure gave it strength, and thousands and thousands of

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-colonial Buganda*, 110.

elements, held together tightly, gave it substance."<sup>14</sup> These dispersed and semi-autonomous components of the compound might suggest that the palace complexes were built on hills for defensive purposes and to avoid the flooding lowlands, not to symbolize elevated power. Other rituals also make Hanson's case for the effort required to centralize, such as how Ganda chiefs would ceremoniously alter the physical landscape by planting bark-cloth-producing fig trees on the plots of land they gave to their clients, who then pounded and stretched the tree bark into cloth to present to the chief in an act of loyal generosity reciprocal to his obligation to protect.<sup>15</sup>

At the time British explorers arrived, reciprocity still underlay much of Buganda even as the kabaka tried to consolidate power. The Ganda welcomed the British with lavish ceremonies of respect expected respect and generosity in return saying "it is not good for us to be poor and people to laugh at us saying 'look at those who call themselves friends of the Queen being short of money.'"<sup>16</sup> Hanson argues that the British Buganda Agreement undercut these balanced reciprocities by taking away the kabaka's power to collect and redistribute tributes, effectively turning him into an agent of British colonial extraction.

Thus, Obote, Maloba, and other Ugandans living in Kampala under British colonialism, would have understood Kasubi Tombs as an expression of the immense power that the British had imposed. If any harbored memories of the reciprocal structures of Buganda, colonialists had done their best to erase them.

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<sup>14</sup> Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Hanson, Holly Elisabeth, "When the Miles Came: Land and Social Order in Buganda, 1850-1928" (PhD. Diss., University of Florida, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 130.

*“Modernizing Despotism”: Colonial Confirmation of Buganda Architecture of Authority*

British colonialism supported interpretation of the kabaka’s palace as a symbol of vast power, since they depended on the kabaka and the Ganda to govern the colony. In order to rule indirectly, the British had to accept “that some Africans could become members of the governing class of colonial Africa.”<sup>17</sup> They considered Buganda to be a kingdom of “modernizing despotism,” and the Ganda as “ultimately salvageable” and even as agents of imperialism over other Africans in Uganda with “training under the firm guidance of the [white, middle-class] race which was more fortunate than themselves.”<sup>18</sup> The colonizers based their confidence in Buganda on the theory of social Darwinism that was conveniently popular at the time. According to British “scientific” evaluations, the Ganda were a more inherently civilized “race,” who they thought was still part of humanity (unlike “Negroid Africans”) but had had the misfortune of descending from Ham – the accursed son of the Biblical Noah.<sup>19</sup> The British based their conception of despotic Buganda power structures on their late nineteenth century experiences with the desperate and despotic kabaka of that era, such as Muteesa I who had gruesomely executed his subjects.<sup>20</sup> The British did not probe into Buganda’s deep-seated reciprocal structures of political integration, as they believed, like Hegel, that Africa was a stagnant continent devoid of meaningful historical accomplishment. They also had practical incentives to consider the kabaka a despot: as such he would collect taxes over the rest of Uganda with despotic arbitrariness. They exaggerated and

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<sup>17</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm & T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 220.

<sup>18</sup> Angelo Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda: A Nexus between Art and Politics,” (PhD. Diss., The University of Witwatersrand, 2008.)

<sup>19</sup> M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001.), 81.

<sup>20</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 21.

codified the kabaka's power, increasing his ceremonial role and adding him to the British payroll.<sup>21</sup> As Kasozi notes, "kingship as an institution was the link that bound all Baganda into a 'nation'."<sup>22</sup> However, unlike what Kasozi's attribution of authoritarian rule to the past, the British were the ones who institutionalized the kingship "institution."

The British understood power in a more hierarchical fashion and made sure that Ganda knew that the British were in charge. Therefore the Ganda, who wanted to maintain their favored position with the British, had every incentive to maintain the despotic practices that Muteesa I and his royal offspring had turned to in the critical times that had brought British intervention, in order to show the British they could exercise British-like authority over the rest of the colony in forms of evidence to their patrons. This Ganda exploitation of British dependence on them would lead to Buganda celebrating their "Africanness" by likening their monuments and power structures to the "great civilizations" of Europe in the debate over African authenticity that framed the politics of Uganda's independence era.

At the same time that British policy worked through neo-African symbols centered on Buganda, teachers in the "bush schools" that the British set up to train a Ganda bureaucracy demonized Ganda art and forced Christian converts to burn Ganda artifacts that had been used to pass meanings of families and clans down through generations.<sup>23</sup> These teachers, along with Catholic missionaries, distributed liturgical prints and statuettes to the Ganda.<sup>24</sup> Prior to the coming of Europeans, the Ganda had feared figurative representations, and in the early 1960s Uganda had no strong tradition of plastic arts on which national monument-builders could draw.

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<sup>21</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 223.

<sup>22</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>24</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

This suspicion of likenesses of power quickly changed, as colonial-era Ganda eagerly accepted statuettes and images of Queen Victoria and her royal successors as embodiments of Europeans’ invisible unilinear power, which they sought to capture for themselves.<sup>25</sup> The Kabaka Chwa II (1897-1939) and Muteesa II (1939-1966) adopted the British figurative representation of monarchical (arbitrary) power by commissioning Europeans to paint their portraits. They also commissioned Gregory Maloba to sculpt busts of them and distributed photographs of themselves dressed in regal attire sitting on British-like thrones to transmit a Europeanized version of their power and authority throughout the colony, and eventually the independent nation. This visual propaganda expressed Ganda individualized power, focused on the “kabaka alone.” In the 1950s, the Buganda government made it clear that no criticisms of the kabaka would be tolerated.<sup>26</sup> And in the early 1960s the Ganda political party formed to contest electoral power – Kabaka Yekka (meaning “kabaka alone”) – individuated the man in the position, unlike his predecessors who had embodied the authority derived from chiefs who supported him and from the line of former kabaka who were buried in Kasubi Tombs. The representation of the kabaka that Maloba and Obote knew was of individualized, personalized, and Europeanized arbitrary power. Kasubi Tombs had lost its roots in the historic reciprocities and respect of African political theory and, through the despotic responses to the political competition of the nineteenth century and British appropriation of these novel tendencies to authoritarian rule, exploited by Ganda agents of colonial rule.

*British Colonial Architecture: Monuments of Modernity and Superiority*

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<sup>25</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>26</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 21.

British colonial architecture systematically reminded Ugandans that the British, the greatest race on earth, were in charge. In Uganda, colonial architecture was an “instrument of social oppression and urban segregation.”<sup>27</sup> In almost every bush school, the British built drill squares, where every Ugandan pupil marched obediently to instill subordination.<sup>28</sup> The pedagogy was one of monologic and teacher-learner hierarchies.<sup>29</sup> In order for the Ganda to remain the favored Ugandans, they had to demonstrate “unquestioning loyalty” to the Protectorate administration.<sup>30</sup>

Going back to the founding of colonial Kampala, Captain Lugard, the first governor of the protectorate (and author of the theory of “indirect rule”) believed that “[Africans have] ... a natural inclination to submit to a higher authority,” and in 1896 built a fort on Old Kampala Hill and raised a British flag over the fort. Lugard thus symbolically elevated the authority of the British over the Buganda capital city of Mengo. The imposing fort served as the colonial administrative headquarters until 1905 when the administrative center was moved south to Entebbe on Lake Victoria. The brick fort on the hill expressed the solid and rigid power of the British in comparison to the kabaka’s decomposing palace of thatch.

The British also used urban design and monumental infrastructure to stress their superiority. The colonialists wrote the organic communal districts of Kampala into law, segregating Europeans, Asians, and Africans into separate residential areas.<sup>31</sup> The African section was concentrated around Kasubi Hill, where the Kabaka’s palace was located. That area, known as

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<sup>27</sup> Nnamdi Elleh, *Architecture and power in Africa* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002), 16.

<sup>28</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 228.

<sup>29</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>30</sup> Curthberth Adyanga Onek, “Modes of British imperial control of Africa: A case study of Uganda, circa 1890–1990” (PhD. Diss., University of Connecticut, 2009.)

<sup>31</sup> N Dudwick, *From Farm to Firm: Rural-urban Transition in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C: World Bank, 2011), 91.

Kibuga, was exempt from municipal taxes and therefore affordable for Africans. However, this section of the city was also left without the municipal services (roads, mosquito control, sanitation, water, electricity) that served Kampala's European and Asian sections. Electricity was distributed from a hydroelectric dam that the British built about 70 km from Kampala, across the Nile at the town of Jinja.

In 1947 Sir Charles Redvers Westlake, the head of the Uganda Electricity Board, began construction of a massive dam at Owen Falls, which was to span the White Nile. Owen Falls Dam is perhaps the most significant monument to themselves that the British built in Uganda, as it was the most modern architectural structure in the colony and clearly represented who controlled the most power, electric and political. The British had tamed the mighty Nile and, through complex feats of engineering, had harnessed its legendary power to illuminate the homes of the British and Asians living in Kampala – beacons of the superiority that Ugandans were meant to see from their dark homes at night, when they looked across illuminated Kampala.

**Half-Century Dream Comes True...**

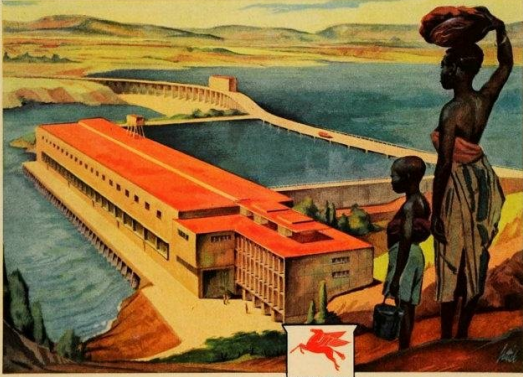
**HEADWATERS  
OF THE NILE  
HARNESSED**

IN 1862 John Hanning Speke discovered the Ripon Falls on Lake Victoria, chief source of the 3,473-mile River Nile. It was on this spot in 1907 that Winston Churchill first dreamed of harnessing these headwaters to generate electricity. Today, the Owen Falls hydro-electric development, two miles below the lake, brings to life this half-century-old dream.

Started in 1950 by the Uganda Electricity Board, Owen Falls consists of a main dam—2,725 feet long, 85 feet high—and a powerhouse with ten 15,000-KW generating units. Due to go on the line shortly, it will provide electricity for the future development of Uganda and parts of Kenya.

Owen Falls, like so many of the world's giant power projects, will use a famous Socony-Vacuum turbine oil in its generating units—will be protected by a program of Correct Lubrication. You can obtain this same kind of unsurpassed protection for your plant, mine or mill. Why accept anything else?

**Uganda power project gets world's greatest lubrication knowledge**



**SOCONY-VACUUM** *Correct Lubrication*

SOCONY-VACUUM OIL COMPANY, INC., and AFFILIATES; MAGNOLIA PETROLEUM COMPANY; GENERAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION

*Fig. 2.9* – An advertisement depicting “primitive” Africans next to the modern dam that harnessed the Nile

Whenever repairs blocked water from getting through the dam, many Ugandans would travel to the site to see the exposed bed of the river below the dam, witnessing the British colonialist’s power to dry up the source of life for so many Ugandans. It is easy to imagine how powerless the fisherman with his reed pole must have felt, standing below to the colossal concrete barrier in Figure 2.10.



*Fig. 2.10* – A Ugandan fisherman juxtaposed to Owen Falls dam.

*Mournful Remembrance of the Fallen: The World War Memorial Monument*

The World War II Memorial Monument is the only British colonial example of a public monument in Kampala and may have been the first monument in Uganda meant for political

purposes in Uganda.<sup>32</sup> Built in 1945, the simple rectangular white-stone obelisk is a cenotaph for the Ugandans who died in World Wars I and II. The number of Uganda soldiers who died in those wars is unknown, but at least 51,000 East Africans died fighting for the British during the World Wars, many of whom would have been Ugandans.<sup>33</sup> The stark monument has an inscription that reads “In Memory of Our [Ugandan] Glorious Dead.”<sup>34</sup>



*Fig 2.11* – The drab World War Memorial Monument

The World War Memorial Monument was the only precedent in Uganda for how to honor the past in the form of a monument, something Maloba would do in creating Independence Monument. However, it was meant to honor a sacrifice for a worthy cause– the loss of Ugandan life

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<sup>32</sup> “Mysteries behind Kampala’s Key Monuments,” *Sunrise*, January 13, 2011, accessed March, 2012, <http://www.sunrise.ug/features/features/1816-mysteries-behind-kampalas-key-monuments.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Luganda, “Uganda: Where Nation’s Heroes of the World Wars Lie,” *The New Vision in AllAfrica*, November 30, 2001, accessed March, 2012. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200111300145.html>.

<sup>34</sup> “Works of Public Art: Monuments,” Makerere University, accessed March, 2012, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://tech.mak.ac.ug/oldsite/heritage/public.php>.

in two world wars fought for the ideal of national independence. For Ugandans beyond Buganda, who approached independence wary of its burdens, the War Memorial would have been a reminder of how to memorialize that reflective, cautious sentiment. For the Ganda, who were elated at the prospect of inheriting their colonial prominence in independent Uganda, the appropriate aesthetics of an independence monument would have expressed very divergent sentiments than the reflective sentiments of the World War Memorial Monument.

### *The Shadows Cast from Colonial Era Monuments[ality] on Uganda's Independence*

#### *Monuments*

The colonial experience in Uganda changed the way Ugandans engaged in politics and experienced monuments. The British introduced the concept of abstract representations, as structures to be seen rather than experienced, to symbolize dominant power rather than participation. The Ganda had incentive to understand and portray Kasubi Tombs as a symbol of British-like dominant power in order to retain their favored position in the Protectorate, even though the kabaka's palaces had originally been emotive expressions of diverse and reciprocal bonds in the Buganda composite, constructed with the help of all the clans in Buganda. The British monuments such as the enormous Owen Falls dam, demonstrated to Ugandans how expression sentiments of superiority and modernity. On the other hand, the British made World War Memorial Monument was a somber, reflective reminder of the sacrifices of the past, but as such was politically useless for the British purposes of authoritarian domination. Maloba designed Uganda's Independence Monument and Independence Arch in the shadow of these monuments to the imposing ideology of colonial power, but before he did, he studied and trained in Kampala with

Margaret Trowell during the years when Obote was negotiating his way to prominence in the lead up to independence.

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### The Trailblazing Teacher, the Critical Artist, the Negotiating Politician, and the Coming of Independence

When newly elected president of the republic of Uganda, Milton Obote, pulled the cord in 1962 to unveil Maloba's Independence Monument, he revealed the work of the most renowned sculptor in East Africa. Margaret Trowell, long-time animator of the school of design at Makerere University, was the person who had made the poignant monument possible. In this chapter I look at the people who were involved in the creation of Uganda's independence monuments, beginning with the pivotal story of Margaret Trowell and her founding of the Makerere art school where Maloba became a master of sculpture. Trowell was a British colonialist who believed in her students' abilities to make art to develop a personal Christian faith by drawing on their "African" heritage. Maloba was initially interested in creating woodcarvings that revealed the sufferings of his destitute fellow Ugandans, but, as his work evolved in the fifties into a focus on clay and concrete mediums, he distanced himself from politically symbolic art as he did not think he could create something distinctly "African" – the aspiration towards which Ugandan politics and art were directed at the time. This chapter also weaves in the tensions in Uganda's politics as the British prepared the Ganda-dominated colony for broader national political participation and independence. Milton Obote was a prominent political figure in those delicate circumstances and eventually ordered the creation of Uganda's Independence Arch – a representation of his personal power. I sketch the marginality of his personal background to the politics of Kampala and his carefully strategized emergence as negotiator and leader of the ruling Uganda People's Congress (UPC) at independence – insecure positions that he would be challenged to solidify after

independence but would attempt to maintain by creating a personality cult symbolized strongly in his own independence monument.

*Margaret Trowell: Religious Expression of Self through Local Heritage*

Prior to the 1920s, the British had squashed local art traditions in Uganda, hoping to rid Uganda of the demonism with which they associated African cultures. While the Ganda were eager to add British modernism to their lives, they resented the “wholesale foreignization” of their heritage that modernity meant to the British and attempted to maintain their own artistic traditions in weaving, basketry, and pottery.<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s, the colonial government realized that they could exploit Ugandans’ artistic skills for colonial profit as mass produced industrial products and as exotica appealing to tourists and markets at home in the UK.<sup>2</sup> This patronizing and uncomprehending exploitation of African culture accompanied a shift from missionary bush schools dedicated to wholesale conversion to colonial schools used to train Ugandans for the “lower echelons of civil society,” with recognition of African cultures, which was a necessity after the death toll WWI took on British manpower.<sup>3</sup> The British made sure to alienate the Ugandan artistic skills from the social fabric of which they were apart and sterilized their personal vitality into factories of mass production for anonymous buyers.<sup>4</sup> Trowell rejected this commoditization of African artistic talents and encouraged Africans to express themselves through their local heritages, not to maintain the social fabric of Uganda, but to find a personal expression of Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup> Angelo Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda: A Nexus between Art and Politics” (PhD. Diss., The University of Witwatersrand, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>3</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>4</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

Trowell, who was born in 1904 in London, developed her interest in visual arts and Africa as a young girl studying maps in her father's map shop in London. While a student at the prestigious Slade School of Art in London, she was fascinated by the arts of "primitive people" and was influenced by "The Child Art Movement [that] emphasized self-expression as opposed to the exact and intelligent observation of the drawings of great masters."<sup>5</sup> In 1935 her husband, Hugh Trowell, a medical doctor, was deployed to Mulago Hospital, the largest hospital in Kampala and attached to Makerere University – Uganda's [and East Africa's] premier secondary school, founded in 1922 as a vocational school for African civil servants. Two years after her arrival in Uganda, Trowell began instructing a few of her Makerere students in art on the back veranda of her house, and even though she recognized that Ugandans did not have a strong tradition of plastic arts, she "had faith in the ability of East Africans to create art."<sup>6</sup>

Deeply religious, Trowell encouraged her students to paint scenes from the rural village life that they knew but in ways that expressed ideals of Christian devotion – she thought "art was absolutely necessary to religion" and believed that Africans would be better Christians if they "scrap the traditional English Church ornament and symbolism and allow the African to find his own ... anything else is artificial for him ... for the people's art is, and always will be, in the vernacular."<sup>7</sup> Her teaching method of encouraging expression of individual faith through local heritage was "radical, Africanist and (arguably) anti-imperialist."<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless her model was well received by the colonial government due to her tact in garnering the support of the elite colonial circles of the colony and her emphasis on saving the individual souls of Ugandans. After several

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<sup>5</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>6</sup> George Kyeyune, "Art in Uganda in the 20th Century" (PhD. Diss., School of Oriental and African studies University of London, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Sunanda K Sanyal, "Imaging Art, Making History: Two Generations of Makerere Artists" (PhD. Thesis, Emory University, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

popular exhibitions of her students' work in Kampala, her classes were integrated into Makerere in 1939. Nineteen years later in 1958, in her honor the art school was named The Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art.<sup>9</sup>



*Fig. 3.1* – Trowell making a suggestion to one of her students.

*Gregory Maloba: “When the Word Tradition Is Used, Then One Wonders!*

In 1940 Gregory Maloba came to Kamala to study under Trowell from his home in western Kenya. Maloba had been born in 1922, near Lake Victoria. While a student at the prominent Yala Missionary secondary school, run by Catholic Mill Hill fathers, Maloba secretly carved small statuettes (including one of the Virgin Mary, for protection), drawing inspiration from the plaster casts of Saints that Yala displayed.<sup>10</sup> One day the Yala headmaster, Brother Morris, found Maloba's stash of carvings, but instead of punishing him for making them, he admonished young Maloba for concealing his talents and encouraged him to continue sculpturing. Through colonial connections, Morris soon had Maloba sent to Kampala to train with Trowell – whose acclaim was spreading through the colonial grapevine.

Trowell provided Maloba with a studio in her backyard and left him largely in peace to

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<sup>9</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>10</sup> Kyeyune, “Art in Uganda.”

create, offering advice only from time to time. However soon after arriving at Makerere, Maloba grew “uneasy about Trowell as an individual.”<sup>11</sup> Although she provided him ample freedom to work, she steered him away from painting modern scenes in Kampala by criticizing them and telling him that he had no knowledge of the architectural rudiments necessary to draw buildings. While Trowell was progressive in allowing her students to explore their personal heritages, she could be extremely patronizing and commonly referred to Africans as “children,” demonstrating her belief in social Darwinism and the colonial ideology of civilizing “natives”.<sup>12</sup> While Maloba may have harbored some annoyance with Trowell, he knew how to keep his head down and submit to the colonial authority, such as signing his letters to Trowell “Your Negro Son.”<sup>13</sup>

In the year of Uganda’s independence Maloba reminisced on another instance when he appeased Europeans:

“A number of times we have had visitors to the Makerere School of Fine Art, and heard, ‘This is very much like European moderns isn’t it?’ or ‘Look at that - have your students seen some Picassos or Henry Moores?’ Of course if I want to please this sort of visitor, I would answer, no, they see only examples of West African Art and Congolese art; a lie of course” (Maloba 1962, 34).<sup>14</sup>

Maloba’s ability to gratify Trowell and other Europeans helped him become her first teaching assistant in 1942, making him Makerere’s first African instructor.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kyeyune, “Art in Uganda.”

<sup>12</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>13</sup> Sanyal, “Imaging Art.”

<sup>14</sup> Kyeyune, “Art in Uganda.”

<sup>15</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”



*Fig 3.2* – Maloba (front) critiquing his students' sculptures of African women

Death was one of Maloba's first woodcarvings and a critical precedent for his Independence Monument. The three-foot-tall piece depicted a squat, horned troll-like-figure compacting a smaller emancipated man into the ground. The dying man seems to be howling or pleading as he is crushed by tremendous force. The satanic-figure has a weary expression, as if he does not enjoy killing the man, but cannot help himself. Trowell was thrilled with the piece, writing in 1960, "I still believe it [Death] is his best work."<sup>16</sup> She liked the piece because she found it a product of Maloba's search for his "inner self in the way she advocated," which was drawing on local heritage (in this case, Maloba said he was inspired by "native" funeral dances) to nurture Christian values. She found a man martyring himself literally in trying to stand up to the devil to symbolize, as Maloba wrote, that "Death is very powerful, more powerful than humans, but not more than God."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kyeyune, "Art in Uganda."

<sup>17</sup> Kyeyune, "Art in Uganda."



*Fig 3.3 – Death,*  
Maloba's agonizing  
sculpture



*Fig 3.4 – Epstein's Day and*  
*Night,* part of the  
inspiration for *Death*

However Maloba also drew inspiration from the modern British sculptor Jacob Epstein whose illustrated biography Maloba had found in Trowell's home. When Trowell found Maloba looking at the book, he burst out "At last here is a European whose work I can understand."<sup>18</sup> Maloba wrote that one piece in particular impressed him: "I found photographs of his [Epstein's] work, very powerful, very expressive ... his Day and Night ... seemed to me very powerful, the emotion was there and the sculpture was there."<sup>19</sup> In *Death*, Maloba clearly adapted the positioning and form of the two figures in *Day and Night* in order to express his musings on death. In *Independence Monument*, Maloba would also adopt Epstein's modern cement medium in *Day and Night*.

Two woodcarvings of significance in tracing Maloba's pre-independence political sentiments are *The Beggar* and *Primitive Man*. Maloba cut *The Beggar* with his adze in 1944 – a period when Uganda's colonial economy was failing to employ the surplus of African laborers (or provide sufficient wages for those with jobs), a crisis exacerbated by the return of Ugandan soldiers from World War II. In *The Beggar*, Maloba expressed his empathy for the destitution of his fellow Africans by creating a sunken man with an expression of vacant desperation begging with cupped hands. The man is a Ganda, as Kakande points out, based on the traditional bark-cloth wrap he is wearing.<sup>20</sup> In interview with Kyeyune, Maloba explained that he was friends with many Baganda – the people he lived amongst in Kampala.<sup>21</sup> Kakande, who has written extensively on the nexus of art and politics in Uganda, makes the case that *The Beggar* is "an early attempt to define issues of

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<sup>18</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>19</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>20</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>21</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

collective identity [in Uganda]” by expressing how middle-class Ugandans shared a sense of destituteness.<sup>22</sup>



*Fig. 3.5 – The Beggar, Maloba’s early iterations of a Ugandan collective identity*

The 1940s beggarliness with which many Ugandans lived helped unite them politically, although it was a unity born out of the single-minded goal of ousting the British, not the pervasive, inherent unity presumed by nationalism. This was the decade when the “wind of decolonization” began to swirl.<sup>23</sup> In 1944 the African Cultural Society (ASC), which was inclusive of Ugandans from throughout the colony, formed to give a voice to the Ugandan middle class, by “champion[ing] calls for the political and cultural emancipation of Africans.”<sup>24</sup> In 1952, Ignatius Musaaizi founded Uganda’s first national[ist] political party – the Uganda National Congress (UNC), which began agitating for independence.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>23</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>24</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>25</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

The inclusive fraternal principles of the ACS and UNC were soon disrupted by the Buganda crisis of 1953-55. The British had proposed combining Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda into a larger East African federation like the one they had formed in Central Africa to submerge African nationalist agitation in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia in the strong white settler population of Southern Rhodesia. The East African scheme, with its overtones of defending the white settlers in Kenya, then under threat from the alleged Mau Mau rebellion, threatened the semi-autonomous and privileged position of the Ganda in Uganda, who then rallied around the idea of breaking away from the rest of the colony and forming a nation of their own. As Buganda became more difficult for the British to control, the governor of Uganda signed a declaration revoking recognition of kabaka Muteesa II as delegated authority in Buganda and exiled him to London. This transparent maneuver to deflect the growing Ganda political agitation provoked a crisis as Ganda rioted and demanded the return of their king. The British relented, and in 1955 Muteesa II returned triumphantly. But by that point the Ganda had distanced themselves from the pan-colonial political parties forming elsewhere in Uganda and had organized independently around their identity as subjects of the kabaka. As Kasozi puts it, the powerful educated and wealthy Ganda were “exploiting the peasants’ emotional attachment to the monarchy,” which the visual propaganda of the kabaka, discussed in the previous chapter, had nurtured.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>A. B. K. Kasozi, Nakanyike Musisi and James Mukooza Sejjengo, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 66.



*Fig. 3.6* – Maloba’s not so primitive *Primitive Man*

By 1950 Maloba had become East Africa’s leading sculptor but had withdrawn himself from the nationalist/anti-colonial politics sweeping Uganda.<sup>27</sup> In 1950 Maloba carved *Primitive Man*; a smooth, abstract organic piece very stylistically different from the chiseled edges of *Death and The Beggar*. The anatomically sophisticated and expertly carved sculpture of a man deep in thought, staring up at the heavens, suggests that the title was biting irony. Yet even though Maloba rejected the colonial tale of a primitive African past, he criticized artists and politicians who sought to “Africanize” back to the past by erasing European influence in art and politics from Africa, calling his colleague, Elimo Njau – who advocated that artists should participate actively in the emancipation of their societies by trying to dispel all European influence – someone who, in Maloba’s words, practiced “racism in reverse.”<sup>28</sup> The politically engaged socialist Njau fired back

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<sup>27</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>28</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

that Maloba and his purist like should come down from their elitist “ivory towers” and join the struggle to emancipate their country.<sup>29</sup>

Maloba declined the invitation to descend from the “ivory tower” of academic irony, not wishing to participate in the “African mentality” brand of politics and art that was sweeping Uganda, and Africa more generally, as this was the period when Nkrumah was pushing the cultivation of a uniquely “African personality” in Ghana. Maloba saw the impossibility of sentimental revivalism of a bygone past, in images that were more inventions of colonialists than legacies of earlier time, in the artistic process. As he stated in an interview “if during my moments of high artistic practice I said to myself ‘Now I am going to produce something African’ I would just come to a standstill.”<sup>30</sup> On another occasion, Maloba criticized nationalist politicians calling them people who “make up stories,” presumably about an idealized past from which to construct a unified nationalism transcending contemporary ethnicized divisions.<sup>31</sup>

In the late 1940s, Maloba had gone to the Bath Academy in England, for further training and upon returning strongly dismissed the search for an “African” tradition:

“...when the word tradition is used, then one wonders! Many of us East Africans, born and grown on East African soil, feel fully qualified to state frankly that this clamour after a traditional East African culture could do much more harm than good; for the simple reason that it is a clamour which is superficial, it is a clamour which disrupts and confuses ... Are coffee trees and the radio not existing happily side by side with matoke [boiled green bananas – the Ganda traditional food staple] just now!”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>30</sup> Gregory Maloba, Joanthan Kingdon, and Rajat Neogy,

“Gregory Maloba Talks About His Childhood and His Growth as a Sculptor,” *Transition*, No. 11 (1973), 20-22.

<sup>31</sup> Kyeyune, “Art in Uganda.”

<sup>32</sup> Sanyal, “Imaging Art.”

The quote reflects Maloba's acceptance of, and even preference for, multiculturalism, yet he would not express this ecumenical feeling explicitly in his sculptures until he created the Independence Monument. During the volatile era of the 1950s, Maloba switched from his previous medium of wood to clay/cement, which he thought was a better fit for his talent of rendering detailed human expressions. Refining his technical skills, he preferred sculpting portraits for commissions such as the bust of Shelly Harris in Figure 3.7. Maloba's sculpted portraits were a way to supplement his income and were not political statements like *The Beggar* had been, as he chose to lay low and distance himself from the "Africanizing" tilt in pre-independence politics and intellectual conversations had taken.



*Fig. 3.7* – Maloba refining his skills and avoiding political statements

*Apolo Milton Obote: An Uncanny Negotiator of Narrow Vision*

While Maloba was distancing himself from the revivalist direction of Ugandan political discourse, Apolo Milton Obote was guiding the national political scene as a negotiator between the numerous and growing factions. Like Nkrumah in Ghana, Obote is synonymous with independence era politics in Uganda. Born 1925 in Lango, in the north, two miles from the Nile, Obote grew up with his grandfather making him promise never to accept British rule.<sup>33</sup> Seven years after Maloba arrived at Makerere in 1940, Obote began studying there in English and “general studies,” because at that point the school did not offer law, Obote’s preferred course of study.<sup>34</sup> Obote dropped out after only two years at Makerere and found employment with the costing department of a construction company called Mowlen, in Jinja adjacent to the site of the Owen Fall Dam where he would surely have witnessed its construction between 1951 and 1954. He may well have been involved in its construction, as Mowlen was building another dam in Kenya and transferred Obote there in 1953.

While still in Jinja, Obote became a member of the UNC but was frustrated by his minor role, as Jinja’s UNC office was only an hour from party headquarters in Kampala. When the Mowlen sent Obote to Kenya, he involved himself in Kenyan politics, where political activity was more advanced than in Uganda. He assisted the Mau Mau movement by supplying cooking utensils but did not support them when their tactics turned to violence to oust the British from Kenya. In 1957 after Obote was arrested for his connections with the Mau Mau and then released, he returned to Uganda.

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<sup>33</sup> K. Ingham, *Obote: A Political Biography* (London: Routledge, 1994), 20.

<sup>34</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political Biography*, 30.

In next five years, Obote would catapult his way to the forefront of Uganda's politics. He did so through his preeminent skill of negotiating. He did not possess a character prone to dogmatic ideologies but instead worked pragmatically with anyone to build alliances in pursuit of creating a coalition that could put sufficient pressure on the British for independence. By 1960, Obote had become leader of the UNC and facilitated a merger with the All Ugandan People's Union to form the Uganda People's Congress (UPC). The UPC was a mish-mash of would-be politicians with various goals, with Obote acting as the negotiator among the various factions. Everyone in the UPC had their eyes set on independence, a phenomenon Obote commented on: "No single issue has Africa ever been so solidly united as on the question of apartheid and colonialism."<sup>35</sup> Obote maneuvered the various factions in the UPC around their shared goal of independence, but, along with everyone else, his vision of independence did not extend far beyond gaining it and did not provide much of a plan for what he and the UPC might do with the political power they sought.

Muteesa II, whom the British had temporarily exiled, was the kabaka at the time of independence in 1962 and does not appear to have been politically adept. Muteesa II faced the internal challenge of the DP (Democratic Party), which a political party that Catholic Gandans (and other Catholics) formed in 1956, believing that Protestant Muteesa II was not looking out for them. The DP sought equal distribution of official positions between Protestants and Catholics and democratization of Buganda's political institutions.<sup>36</sup> This anti-kabaka Catholic mobilization challenged Muteesa's "Protestant oligarchy," leading him to agree to an "unholy marriage" with

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<sup>35</sup> O. R. Anguria, *Apollo Milton Obote: What Others Say* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2006), 32.

<sup>36</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 67.

Obote's UPC.<sup>37</sup> Looking to assure his immediate political prospects and a slice of the post-independence power, Muteesa II "invited an outsider, Apolo Milton Obote, to save them from the internal political force represented by the DP, despite Obote's perceived republican and anti-Bagandan sentiments."<sup>38</sup> Obote, also eager to defeat the increasingly powerful DP, was able to convince the kabaka that an alliance between his KY party (Kabaka-Yekka, meaning Kabaka Alone) and Obote's UPC would guarantee the demise of the DP and that after independence the Buganda substate would enjoy a special federal relationship to Uganda, in which the kabaka could directly appoint Buganda's representatives to the National Assembly. The alliance successfully wrote both of those promises into the Independence Constitution.



*Fig. 3.8* – Obote (center)  
the negotiator

Great Britain, after stalling for years, finally agreed to allow Ugandan independence in 1962. The pre-independence elections produced a National Assembly made up of forty-three UPC members, twenty-four KY members, and twenty-four members of the DP. The UPC-KY coalition ushered independence into Uganda in October 1962, with their parliamentary majority voting

<sup>37</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>38</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 68.

Obote into the position of prime minister. Obote then, in turn, appointed the kabaka to the ceremonial role of President of Uganda, a gesture symbolically important to Baganda.

### *The Pedestal for Uganda's Independence Monuments*

The design of Uganda's independence monuments, described in the next chapter, stood on the three characters in this chapter. Trowell's influence in colonial circles had paved the way for the competition to design Uganda's independence monument held by Uganda's transitional government, and she had personally trained the artist who would win it, Maloba. She had instilled an appreciation for personal religious self-expression in him that drew from a vision of African local heritage. Maloba had initially participated in the search for a homogenously national culture in Uganda by depicting the destitution and suffering of Ugandans, around which the first generation of Ugandan politicians had begun to organize in the 1940s, before the Ganda distanced had themselves from the other factions of the time. In the 1950s Maloba had refrained from making further political commentary through his sculptures, as he scorned Ugandan artists who vainly tried to infer or feel their way back to an entirely imaginary pure East African culture. When independence became a reality and Uganda desperately needed a sense of Ugandanness, Maloba was prepared to contribute his Christian inspiration and his appreciation for multiculturalism and thoughtful reflection. In pragmatic political circles far removed from these "ivory tower" reflections, Obote had led Uganda to freedom from colonial bondage, but his position was tenuous. His initial objectives as prime minister therefore featured improving his stature in Uganda, even at the cost of betraying the strategy that had given him his position as

fatherly negotiator among the country's many political factions. Obote would turn to Maloba to design a second monument to independence, this one personally connected to himself.

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**The Monumental Ambiguity of Uganda's Independence**

*Fig. 4.1 – Obote unveils Maloba's Independence Monument. 1962.*

On October 5, 1962, four days prior to Uganda's independence, Obote revealed Maloba's **Independence Monument** at a well-attended ceremony, stating that that the monument was "of great significance to Uganda," as "a permanent embodiment of the 'nation's aspirations,'" and argued that "in symbolic form, it portrays the past, present and future of the human race."<sup>1</sup> The unveiling kicked off the ceremonies to celebrate the beginning of self-rule in Uganda. At midnight on October 8, 1962, a representative of the Queen of England lowered the Union Jack and raised the

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<sup>1</sup> Angelo Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda: A Nexus between Art and Politics," (PhD. Diss., The University of Witwatersrand, 2008).

red, yellow, and black bars of the flag of Uganda, officially ushering in independence for new nation. The next day was filled with joyous festivities as the Duke and Duchess of Kent attended the swearing in of Prime Minister Obote in Kampala's Kololo Stadium, where the small Ugandan air force completed a fly over. Men, women, and children from throughout the nation lined the streets waving paper flags of Uganda – the red of the flag representing the brotherhood of men, the black Africa, and the yellow sunshine. A new era in Uganda's history had begun – though it did not turn out to be the one envisioned on Independence Day.



*Fig. 4.2* – The peaceful independence celebrations in downtown Kampala

What about Uganda's past, present, and future did Maloba's **Independence Monument** express? Additionally, what did Obote intend the 1963 **Independence Arch** – on which construction began on the same day as he unveiled **Independence Monument** – to express? This chapter tells the stories of the creations of these monuments and attempts to explicate their intended meanings. Finally it considers what the monuments reveal about Obote's regime and his evolving reliance on personal power and a personalized national identity as he began to manage the political independence to which he had previously given so little thought.

*The Competition to Sculpt Independence*

Uganda's independence monument was the product of an open design competition.<sup>2</sup> At a public exhibition, Maloba and several other artists displayed small clay versions of their proposals for the monument, and a panel made up of the Kampala town council and mayor, the British governor of the protectorate, the legislature, and probably the premier Benedict Kiwanuka selected Maloba's design.<sup>3</sup> Even though the British protectorate or the new Ugandan government paid Maloba's commission (he later claimed not to remember which government paid him), Maloba had complete artistic license to design and create the work.<sup>4</sup> Such artistic freedom to create a public monument was extremely unusual for Africa at the time. I am unaware of any other competitions that allowed artists complete license to construct their designs. Not only was the monument to represent the momentous occasion of independence, but it was also, as Kyeyune points out, the "first public art in Uganda of political significance, paid for by the [Ugandan] state."<sup>5</sup> The new government had a tremendous amount at stake in funding a monument to encapsulate the aspirations of independent Ugandans in terms of developing a national identity, yet the combination of colonial and aspiring national leaders permitted an artist to design the monument as he saw fit.

So why was the transitional regime, already in office, not more directly involved in stimulating the design of the monument? Firstly, it is very unlikely that a design competition could have been held without Makerere's Art School. Trowell had started and transformed her veranda lessons into East Africa's leading art institution. Several Makerere graduates were masters

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<sup>2</sup> Kakande investigated the origins of Maloba's monument and found out in an interview with another Ugandan artist from that era, Charles Ssekintu, that in 1961 a competition was held to design Uganda's independence monument.

<sup>3</sup> Angelo Kakande, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Angelo Kakande, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Marion I. Arnold, *Art in Eastern Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2008), 136.

of sculpture and living in Kampala at the time, and all would presumably have been pleased to design the monument. An uproar would likely have ensued had there not been an open competition. The competition was also a chance for the departing colonialists to showcase the talents of Makerere's art school, which they were fond of due to Trowell's popularity in colonial circles and her well-attended exhibitions of Makerere artwork. The panel of colonial officers and Ugandans likely respected Trowell and her school and hesitated to interfere with the artistic freedom of Maloba, her prized pupil. The transitional government was unlikely to interfere with Maloba's design additionally because the British were eager to leave Uganda on amicable terms, and the Ugandans on the panel were not of political statures high enough to presume to dictate the national culture. The artistically unfettered process of selecting Maloba's design for the monument left the artist free to make a bold statement of political freedom in Uganda. Fittingly, **Independent Monument** was originally named **Freedom Statue**.

*Independence Monument: An Ambiguous Forward-Looking Symbol of Freedom and Reflection*



*Fig. 4.3 – The weary mother and ambiguous child of Independence Monument*

**Independence Monument** is widely considered to be Maloba's best work, the artistic culmination of his career.<sup>6</sup> But what exactly did Maloba want to convey through the monument? He had stepped back from making artistic political statements since the mid 1940s since he had thought that the early popular movement to expel European influence from Ugandan art and politics was naive. To come back fifteen years later and make the first state-funded piece of

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<sup>6</sup> Arnold, *Art in Eastern Africa*, 136.

artwork for independent Uganda was a major reversal. Maloba may have thought an appropriate time to express his feelings had finally arrived, and/or he saw an opportunity to rectify the “Africanizing” direction of art and politics from which he had distanced himself in the 50s. Whatever the motives, Maloba’s monumentally, although not overwhelmingly, scaled representation of his forward-looking and multicultural preferences suggests that he found the moment of independence an appropriate time to express political feelings that he had harbored as a bystander to both politics and culture in Uganda.

Maloba expressed his intentions in every aspect of the monument, its overall form, its subject matter, the material, its aesthetics, and its symbolism. The overall triangular scheme of the monument lifts the viewer’s eye upward, towards the focal point of the newborn infant – the newly independent nation of Uganda. The apex of the monument strains toward the wide-open sky of Uganda’s future. Cecil Todd, who had taken over from Trowell as the head of the Art School, and who was one of the first people to whom Maloba showed his design, commented that it showed Uganda’s “political progress and advancement.”<sup>7</sup> The mother lifting her child above her head is the antithesis to the satanic downward force crushing the writhing man in Maloba’s earlier carving **Death**, suggesting that **Independence Monument** celebrates hope and life as opposed to **Death**’s conveyance of “the grim fact of mortality.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

<sup>8</sup> Sunanda K Sanyal, “Imaging Art, Making History: Two Generations of Makerere Artists,” (PhD. Thesis, Emory University, 2000).



*Fig 4.4 and 4.5 – Independence Monument, the antithesis of Death*

The monument rises towards the future from a sturdy base in the strength of mother Uganda – Uganda's origins. This symbolism expresses Maloba's more balanced view (compared to the authenticity movement that he criticized in the 50s) that, while Uganda "should embrace the imperatives of modern living and grow to new heights, it should do so while still rooted in the past."<sup>9</sup> The A-frame structure of the mother's astride legs technically provides support for the soaring monument but also symbolically demonstrates that its pinnacle – the future – is built firmly upon the past.<sup>10</sup> Cecil Todd said the "the female of the Independence Monument grows like a tree," and indeed it does, with the future sprouting out of the single trunk of a collective past

<sup>9</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>10</sup> George Kyeyune, "Art in Uganda in the 20th Century" (PhD. Diss., School of Oriental and African studies University of London, 2003).

maintaining “a continuous flow of life across generations.”<sup>11</sup> An African mother – a common symbol in Ugandan art – represents the past, as Ugandan artists commonly employ women as the pillars of their communities. However, this mother is in bondage – perhaps the bondage of colonialism, but perhaps also the bondage of the misguided search for an “authentic” past African culture that Maloba felt had been restraining other artists. He could thus have referenced the responsibilities of women in Uganda, charged with preserving cultural “traditions.”<sup>12</sup> The material wrapping the mother’s lower body is concretized Ganda bark cloth, acknowledging Buganda’s prominence in Uganda’s past but also possibly representing how Buganda’s prominence had restrained the people of the rest of the colony. Even more pointedly historical, the bark cloth bonds might represent how the British colonialists had wrapped their power in mother Uganda in the proxy of Buganda.

The future seems to shed these bonds. The indistinguishability of the British and Buganda lends an air of ambiguity to what – or who – the independent nation of Uganda might soar beyond. However that the baby grows out of a single source symbolizes a collective struggle evocative of Maloba’s earlier emphasis on shared suffering in **The Beggar**. Whatever the bondage represents, the mother’s emergence from it has clearly exhausted her. Her heavy eyelids are shut, and she is possibly even dying as the bark cloth that encases her is also the material that the Ganda also used to swathe their dead. The past represented in the monument has been difficult and restricting for the strong Ugandan mother, yet by including it, Maloba’s statue suggests that Ugandans’ collective struggles should not be forgotten.

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<sup>11</sup> Sanyal, “Imaging Art, Making History.”

<sup>12</sup> See **Gender, Politics, and Constitution Making in Uganda** in which Miria Matembe, a Ugandan MP, argues that men in Uganda have stressed the importance of holding on to cultural “traditions” but have charged the women with actually preserving and being bound by the “traditions.”

However, according to the monument, Uganda's future is not limited by the burdens of the past. Instead independent Uganda is a naked newborn raising its hands towards the sky, which for Uganda is the limit. The unclothed, unsexed baby is not bound by the "customs" and "traditions" of Buganda or colonial manners and modes, and the clothes it will one day wear will be of its choosing. As the stylization of Maloba's statue is foreign to Uganda's traditional arts, it suggests that the future should/will be multicultural. Because Uganda had no strong tradition of human representations in plastic arts, Maloba's design of Uganda's independence monument around two human figures incorporates influences beyond Uganda's own cultures. The facial features of the mother – such as the emotionally proportioned, angular eyes, which are telling of her exhaustion – Maloba borrowed from a famed West African aesthetic tradition, that of the Dogon of Mali, on which Maloba had written a book and had often drawn from. Maloba once remarked that artists "ought to look at work by artists of every race and generation"; in **Independence Monument** he expressed his conviction that after independence all influential Ugandans, not just artists, would draw fruitfully on one another's cultures.<sup>13</sup> The concrete medium, reinforced by steel rods, implies that the future of independent Uganda, which began with the unveiling of the statue, would be a modern one, not be limited nostalgically to the deteriorating wood and grass of Kasubi Tombs but instead fabricated from the enduring material modernity, as the Owen Falls dam and the tall buildings of downtown Kampala.

The modern, progressive future that Maloba imagined was not without its tribulations. Other scholars have seen the baby with its hands raised as ecstatically and triumphantly ululating, a shrill Ugandan trilling vocalization, equivalent of a celebratory whistle. However the baby could

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<sup>13</sup> T. Doering, *African Cultures, Visual Arts, and the Museum: Sights/Sites of Creativity and Conflict* (Amsterdam: Ropodi, 2002), 141.

just as easily be wailing, fearful of the heights of expectations to which it has been lifted. Maloba had a particular skill in crafting the facial expressions in his pieces, so ambiguity in the expression of the baby – the most important sculpture he ever made – might well have been intentional. Maloba planned originally to sculpt two African horn-blowers of the same material to accompany the central figures of the monument but later eliminated them from the composition.<sup>14</sup> One interpretation for this decision could be that he decided the trumpeters would make the monument too overtly celebratory for the muted tone otherwise evident. Eliminating them would maintain an ambiguity of the exciting thrill of possibility mixed with the anxiety of the unknown.

The tapered mother in **Independence Monument** resembles an obelisk-like cenotaph, a commemoration of dead lost elsewhere, similar in form to Kampala's World War Memorial and drab coloring, adding a possible somber reference to Ugandans who had lost their lives to, and for, colonialism, but here with new hope sprouting out of their deaths. The major interpreter of Maloba's works has depicted him as similarly shortsighted to Obote and other politicians who did not look beyond independence, criticizing the **Independence Monument** for being naively devoid of appreciation for the difficulties awaiting Uganda after October 9, 1962. However, if the tone is ambiguous, it is more likely that Maloba, who had spent the past decade shaking his head at the naïveté of Ugandan politics, was astute in perceiving the potential for the trouble that Uganda would face.

Maloba seems to have invoked his Christian faith by implying that baby Uganda would need plenty of prayers for its future. The mother and baby evoke the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, and knowing Maloba's religious devotion that Trowell extolled him to express individualistically,

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<sup>14</sup> Ben Okiror, "Is It a Sign of Independence?," **The New Vision**, October 9, 2009, accessed March, 2012, [http://enteruganda.com/brochures/indep2009/xindep2009\\_2.html](http://enteruganda.com/brochures/indep2009/xindep2009_2.html)

the reference to core symbols of Christianity was likely purposeful. The mother is holding her baby up with whatever strength she has left, with her arms and hands held under her chin in the Christian gesture of prayer. Like the overall positioning of the mother and baby, the Christian symbolism of the mother's hands and face place the monument in implicit contrast with its predecessor, **Death**, but the mother's praying face shows weary hope instead of the satanic-figure's face of weary hopelessness. The implication is that the people of independent Uganda were God's children, which offered them a potential unifying bond despite their many "ethnicities." The sectarianism in Ugandan politics between regions and Anglicans and Catholics that troubled the path to independence may have moved Maloba to propose that Ugandan's Christian brotherhood proclaim the need at the time for a homogenizing (British-model) national culture, rather than stoking the diversity of the composite of Uganda. Uganda's government did not disavow state symbols referring to religion, as evidenced by the country's motto coined at independence: "For God and My Country," and Maloba seems to have been suggesting that Ugandans rally around the true, uniting purpose of Christianity, working together "For God" as away to work for "My Country." The monument is a poignant embodiment of the Christian imagery in the first verse of Uganda's national anthem:

Uganda  
Oh Uganda, may God uphold thy,  
We lay our future in your hand.  
United, free  
For Liberty  
We'll always stand."

The park setting of Independence Monument is also important to noted. The shaded park housed the tall, but not colossal, monument providing a location where people could freely experience the monument as the backdrop to their breaks from the bustling, hot cosmopolitan city. The open, peaceful setting invited Ugandans to thoughtfully study the monument and even interact with it like earlier African monuments of functionality and experience by sitting at its base and by using it as a backdrop of photographs.

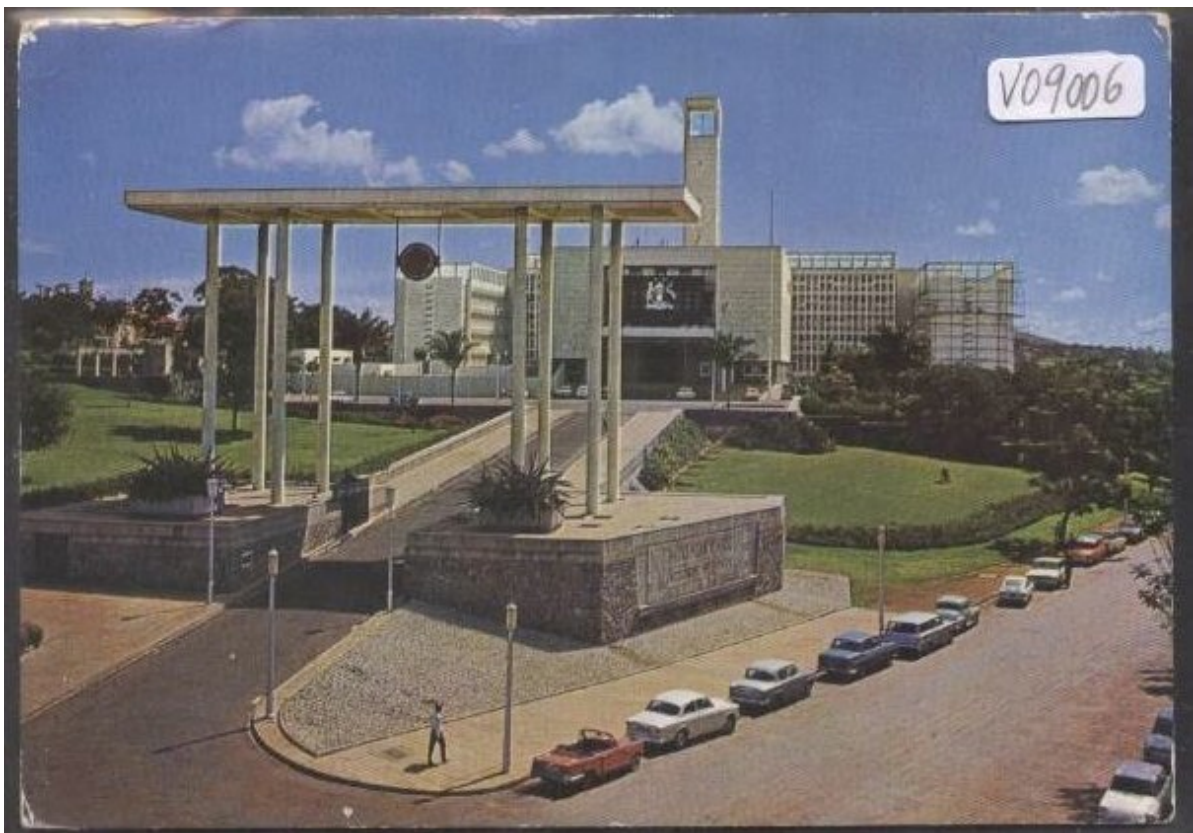


*Fig. 4.6 – A child, the hope of the future, has his photo taken in front of the park that held Independence Monument*

Maloba's monument is dense with local, foreign, past, and contemporary aesthetics and references. While we can only speculate on much of what the monument might symbolize, that we can do so seems to make it likely that Maloba intended the monument, with its multiple layers and many ambiguities, to provoke free contemplation of Uganda's past, present, and future. Obote

recognized as much when he said the monument “portrays the past, present and future of the human race.”<sup>15</sup> However at the time of that comment, Obote, who had been left off the panel to choose the independence monument, already had plans for a more personal symbol of independence in Uganda, his **Independence Arch**.

*Obote's Arch: Personalized Aspirations for Independence*



*Fig. 4.7 – Postcard of Obote's Independence Arch, the entrance to Uganda's National Assembly*

Following the independence day festivities, which have been the only peaceful transition of power in Uganda's history to date, Obote faced the reality of governing a nation divided among thirty ethnicized and politicized groups and presiding over a political party lacking a unifying

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<sup>15</sup> Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda.”

ideology and built on a precarious marriage of convenience with **kabaka** Muteesa II. Like leaders of other nascent nations, Obote confronted a pressing necessity to create a homogeneous sense of “Ugandanness” in order to construct a functioning and peaceful nation-state made up of the **Ugandan** citizens who found themselves together within the arbitrary British-made borders of Uganda. However, Great Britain, the principal foil against which Obote had negotiated a temporary feeling of nationalism amongst the UPC and KY had disappeared with independence, weakening Obote's ability to maintain the UPC-KY coalition.

Obote was governing through another major obstacle to building national unity. The Independence Constitution catered to Uganda's pluralism and internal differentiation by creating a federal structure of national government, providing a high degree of autonomy for Buganda and the other historic kingdoms. Obote immediately betrayed his collaborations with the Ganda, quickly reducing the percentage of civil society jobs that Ganda held from 49% at independence to 36%.<sup>16</sup> But Muteesa II and his Buganda sub-nation were still thorns in Obote's side as he attempted to construct a sense of homogeneous nationalism. Muteesa II showed no greater respect for the spirit of the agreement, acting “as if he had the same arbitrary authority in Uganda as he enjoyed within his own kingdom,” commonly using funds not allotted to him to hold extravagant functions for Ganda elites.<sup>17</sup>

Out of these challenges, Obote turned to the strategy to which leader after leader in the other new nations of Africa also turned, personalizing the political culture of the country and the UPC. The new UPC party slogan, in Swahili, the language of British indirect rule and not a language native to the country, reflected Obote's plans: “UPC na Obote,” meaning “UPC and

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<sup>16</sup> A. B. K. Kasozi, Nakanyike Musisi and James Mukooza Sejjengo, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 66.

<sup>17</sup> K. Ingham, *Obote: A Political Biography* (London: Routledge, 1994), 20.

Obote.”<sup>18</sup> As a practical, Obote realized it was a fantasy to try to unite Uganda around Christianity, as Maloba seemed to propose in **Independence Monument**. The country was already bitterly split between Catholics and Anglicans and another 12% of the nation's citizens were Muslim.

Obote spent his 1963 marital honeymoon in Ghana, prominently observing Africa's model leader's method of cultivating his own cult of personality. Personalization of power was not a new tactic in Uganda. Muteesa I and other nineteenth-century **kabaka** had resorted to personalizing their power in Buganda when they wanted to solidify their positions as the trade wars crisis grew and then as Daudi Chwa emulated British authoritarianism to attain a favored position under the Protectorate. Part of the methods of British-emulation of Muteesa I and subsequent **kabaka** had been to broadcast their personal power by distributing images of themselves dressed in regal garments. Obote followed in the **kabaka** and British tradition, forcing businesses to display his official portrait or risk closure.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>19</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."



*Fig. 4.8 - Independence Arch with Obote Medallion hanging from the center. Early 1963.*

Having worked for a construction company, Obote likely realized the power of symbolic architecture to broadcast messages to a large audience. On the same day that he unveiled the **Independence Monument**, he also laid the cornerstone for Uganda's second national monument – the **Independence Arch**. While Obote had praised Maloba's monument, he had no connection with it, and it was therefore politically useless for Obote's strategy of personalizing politics. **Independence Arch** still stands as the gateway to Uganda's National Assembly complex, which the British built in 1958 as a parting gift, representing that the future government of Uganda would be housed in physical surroundings suitable to the parliamentary political legacy of the British, who perceived themselves as the "race" who had "civilized" Ugandans. Although the new arch may be seen to recall the grand form of Roman triumphal arches, Obote's monument seems quite "Africanized,"

at least compared to Nkrumah's gaudy Hellenistic Independence Arch in Accra.<sup>20</sup> The smooth cylindrical columns of Uganda's arch are more reminiscent of the thin, functional pylons that brace the Kasubi Tombs than the massive columns of classical victory arches. The roof of the arch is simple and more functional than symbolic, offering shade for politicians to mingle in the fresh air, as Nyeere's Dodoma centered on a concrete acacia tree to represent the shady village meeting place. Obote claimed the Arch symbolized "the determination of [Ugandans] to strengthen anew the bonds of nationhood, and freedom and justice for all mankind."<sup>21</sup>

A medal medallion depicting the side profile of Obote's face hung from the center of the arch. In Obote's vision for Uganda, the bonds of nationhood would be strengthened under himself. Cast in 1963, the medallion was the beginning of Obote's attempts to personalize Ugandan state art. On the medallion, Obote's head was more Roman than the arch itself, resembling Julius Caesar's profile on a Roman silver Denarius coin. Obote's image was meant to be the currency of Uganda's national culture. By adorning the Arch with his image, Obote was offering himself as the father figure who could rise above the petty factionalism and around whom the diverse citizens of Uganda could rally. He was asserting that he was the father of baby Uganda missing in Maloba's Monument.

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<sup>20</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."

<sup>21</sup> Kakande, "Contemporary Art in Uganda."



*Fig. 4.9 and 4.10 – Obote Medallion and Julius Caesar on a Roman Denarius, tyrants or strong leaders?*

Although Obote chose Maloba to design the arch and to cast the **Obote Medallion**, but their partnership may not have been an easy one.<sup>22</sup> In 2002, when an interviewer asked Maloba about his dealings with Obote many years before, he declined to comment, likely a discreet indication that they had not been pleasant.<sup>23</sup> Obote, bent on personalizing power, was unlikely to have been supportive of the artistic freedom to which Maloba was accustomed in creating the **Independence Monument**. However Maloba does not seem to have smuggled any cynicism into the monument, so perhaps at the time he thought Obote was a Hobbesian unifying figure for Christian Uganda.

Obote wanted control over the image Maloba created of him because it would be the image Ugandans and politicians saw as they entered the National Assembly, preceding in prominence the rather romantic national crest of Uganda, which centered around a distinctly Ganda shield,

<sup>22</sup> George Kyeyune, e-mail correspondence, March 23, 2012

<sup>23</sup> Angelo Kakande, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2011.

attached to the front of the building itself, which Cecil Todd – the British head of the Makerere Art School – had designed.



*Fig. 4.11 – Todd's romantic crest of Uganda*

Anyone who approached Uganda's Parliament had to pass under Obote's watching visage, symbolizing that the parliamentary building was Obote's personal domain. Obote's image overlooking Uganda's legislative heart symbolized his disregard for the separation of powers in Uganda's Independence Constitution. He acted on this implied promise in 1966 when he demolished the constitution when Buganda threatened his position as patron, ushering in an era without the "freedom and justice for all mankind" for which Obote had originally asserted that the Arch stood.

After Obote's Ugandan state funeral in 2005, some Ugandans remembered Obote as a national hero while others objected to a state funeral for a man they considered to be a "villain."<sup>24</sup> Both sides had legitimate arguments, and Obote is probably best understood as a "mixed bag."

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<sup>24</sup> O. R. Anguria, *Apollo Milton Obote: What Others Say* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2006), 32.

Those who mourned Obote saw him as a nationalist idealist who was willing to separate and sacrifice himself as the single person around whom Ugandans could rally, demonstrating a common African strategy of plucking a solitary authority out of composite societies to interact with outsiders, external to the polity. In this positive characterization of Obote, the **Independence Arch** symbolized the many pillars of a pluralistic Uganda united under Obote – the medallion hanging centrally amongst the pillars of the arch. Those who villainized Obote argued that he was a power-hungry despot who exploited the people's search for a homogeneous nationalism for personal profit. These critics point to the fact that Obote, like most members of the UPC, were [un]professional politicians from modest backgrounds without roots in commerce, industry, or agriculture. As a result, they claim, Obote and his cronies played politics for personal enrichment.<sup>25</sup> In this characterization, the **Obote Medallion** was a symbol of Caesar-like imperial authority dominating the rest of country and reminding all who walked under it to whom they owed tribute. As Chapter 1 stressed, Ugandans would have understood the precedents of British and Ganda monuments as symbolizing despotic/absolute authority and would have been likely to have interpreted Obote's Arch warily in the same way. The "mixed-bag" Obote seems to have been idealistic but dependent on political patronage and demonstrations of force to remain in his precarious position of responsibility for the nation.

Obote's attempts at unifying Uganda around himself seemed clumsy owing to was his lack of stature within Uganda at independence, compared to more charismatic leaders of other African nations.<sup>26</sup> Nyerere, Nkrumah, Kenyatta in Kenya, and Houphouet Boigny in the Côte d'Ivoire were undisputed father of their respective nations, while Obote was the "overall leader of Uganda

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<sup>25</sup> Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political Biography*, 78.

only after tenuous negotiations,” and was the man chosen by the UPC elites and not by the people of Uganda.<sup>27</sup> Buganda and other Ugandan kingdoms, which continued to exist under the federalism of the Independence Constitution, were still more loyal to their own rulers. Obote's attempts to mobilize Ugandan nationalism under his cult of personality failed to generate the same enthusiasm in Ugandans for Obote as Nkrumah's monuments in Ghana did for Nkrumah. Perhaps Obote should have built more monuments and added his image to Uganda's actual currency at independence, as Idi Amin did in the 1970s, and as Obote did during his return to power in the early 80s.

Obote's main strength was the loyalty of the colonial army, which the British had filled with Langi and Acholi soldiers from Obote's northern homeland. After independence Obote had carefully maintained the loyalty of the army to himself alone, as Uganda's history has demonstrated that whoever controls the strongest military force maintains political power. He raised soldiers' salaries in 1964 after a near-mutiny and routinely replaced officers he regarded as “disloyal” with seemingly incompetent supporters, such as Idi Amin. Obote thus loomed as the person who guaranteed the army's privileges, and it was therefore in their interest to remain loyal to him. Obote also enlarged and modernized his military, as he was fearful that Ganda were importing arms to challenge him.<sup>28</sup>

In 1966 the KY (Ganda) members of Parliament and several of Obote's former followers in the UPC voted to censure Obote, who they alleged had been involved in a scheme to smuggle gold and ivory from Zaire. Obote was incensed and decided to end Buganda's continued undermining of his executive power. He arrested the MPs who had voted against him and surrounded the

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<sup>27</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political Biography*, 78.

<sup>28</sup> Anguria, *Apollo Milton Obote*, 16.

National Assembly with the army troops while asking [forcing] the remaining MPs to approve a new Constitution that gave him total executive powers along with the power to appoint MPs, and stripped Buganda and the other heirs to the former kingdoms of all power at the federal level. The army, under the command of a colonel, one Idi Amin, helped Obote carry out the coup, killing thousands of Ganda, attacking the Kasubi Tombs, Muteesa II's symbolic center of power, and exiling Muteesa II to the United Kingdom.<sup>29</sup> Under the new 1966 constitution, Obote sought to transform Uganda into a unitary state with himself as its definitive fatherly authority. Finally backed into a corner by Parliament, Obote had resorted to utilizing the only remaining leverage he had - the army. In doing so, Obote unleashed the monster he created - the Ugandan army - a privileged force he would not be able to control for long.

### *Maloba's Monument Ambiguous No Longer: Wailing Uganda*

Maloba's Independence Monument was prophetic in its subtle suggestion that independent Uganda could be wailing just as easily as it could be ululating to welcome the unified nationalism that had driven out the colonial bondage around mother Uganda. Obote sought to become that unifying force of nationalism, the father of the child Uganda. Obote's strategy to present himself as the father-of the nation was to create a personality cult with the **Independence Arch** as its prime symbol, in which he offered himself as the medallion under which the various peoples of Uganda could rally. But regardless of the meaning of the Arch Obote intended, the **kabaka** and members of KY, understood politics and monuments in the authoritarian manner of their British instructors, and interpreted **Independence Arch** as a symbol of despotic individualized

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<sup>29</sup> A. Kigongo and R. Reid, "Local Communities, Politics and the Management of the Kasubi Tombs, Uganda," **World Archaeology** 39 (2007).

power. They similarly perceived Obote's personalization of power as a tyrannical threat to the personalized power of their **kabaka**. Ironically, the Ganda's suspicions of Obote's Arch and their subsequent attempts to undermine Obote resulted in him seizing absolute power definitively in 1966 and the ensuing violent militarization of Ugandan politics. By then the adolescent Uganda that had grown out of in Maloba's **Independence Monument** was wailing, as provincial politicians had neglected the child by failing to reflect on the meaning of the actual concrete child itself. The next chapter recounts the stories of how Ugandans reacted to and utilized the independence monuments and altered their meanings over time in the dark days that followed 1966 and when stability returned to Uganda in 1986.

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The Legacy: Neglect and NRM [Mis]appropriation of Maloba's Independence Monument

Today Maloba's Independence Monument still stands in its original location on the edge of the lush gardens of Kampala's Sheraton Hotel, just off the bustling roundabout along Speke Road. The monument has been one of the few constants in Kampala during Uganda's chaotic fifty years of independence. It has endured, at least in part, because it was ignored during the violent postcolonial years of Obote, Amin, and Obote's return in 1986. But the current Uganda regime – the National Resistance Movement (NRM) headed by Yoweri Museveni – has restored the monument's prominence in Ugandan politics in an attempt to appropriate it as a symbolizing that the NRM has fulfilled the values of freedom, Christian Brotherhood, and thoughtful reflection found in the monument. Now, finally attached to a government dedicated to realizing the hopes of a youthful nation, Maloba's monument is becoming a recognized symbol of Ugandan national dedication, drawing critical reviews from Ugandan media commentators.

*Guns as Monuments in 1970s and 1980s Uganda*

Following Obote's decision to expel the kabaka and to rule Uganda as a dictator, along with a later disastrous effort to "Africanize" the economy by turning foreign run businesses into state-owned enterprises, Obote's popularity decreased steadily. Finally Major General Idi Amin Dada, Obote's onetime loyal henchman, seized control of Uganda in a 1971 military coup d'état. Obote had been planning to arrest Amin for misappropriating funds because Amin was becoming increasingly popular within the military, Obote's primary power-base, by recruiting soldiers from

his home region of the West Nile. When Obote was in Singapore for a Commonwealth Summit, Amin seized power with the troops loyal to him and a week later declared himself President of Uganda. At the time, there was widespread relief to see Obote ousted, but for the next nine years Amin ruled Uganda brutally as a military dictator, unleashing violence in an increasingly paranoid assault on whoever seemed threatened his absolute rule.

An illiterate career soldier, Amin was initially less politically sophisticated than the Makerere-educated Obote, and he controlled the guns. He did not concern himself with constructing monuments. The barrel of the gun waved menacingly, and all too often used to slaughter opponents, throughout Uganda during his reign was the effective symbol of power in the country. Amin's regime removed the Obote Medallion from the Independence Arch, but he did not capitalize on the symbolism of removing of Obote's image by publicly destroying it – a common symbolic act to culminate coups, nor did Amin replace it with an image of himself. Amin later (1977) ordered a Makerere Art School graduate, Fabian Mpagi, to produce paintings of Ian Smith (prime minister of Rhodesia) and Pik Botha (minister of foreign affairs in the Republic of South Africa), the symbols of white racial oppression of the times, and then he “riddled them with bullets in front of cheering crowds to demonstrate that he could overrun the colonial and Apartheid regimes in Southern Africa.”<sup>1</sup> In this case, art helped Amin express the point that he characteristically drove home with bullets. The subtleties of Uganda's Independence Monument were not often considered during the 1970s when bullets were shattering the only artworks commissioned by the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Angelo Kakande, “Contemporary Art in Uganda: A Nexus between Art and Politics,” (PhD. Diss., The University of Witwatersrand, 2008).

Obote had fled following Amin's coup to Tanzania, where Nyerere had sheltered him. Amin was annoyed and nervous that Nyerere was harboring Obote, and in 1979 sent his army to invade western Tanzania. Immediately Nyerere retaliated with the help of a rebel force loyal to Obote and began a successful military campaign to oust Amin, known in Uganda as the Liberation War. After several interim executives, Obote returned to power in 1981 by winning a highly contested, and ultimately challenged by runner up Yoweri Museveni, presidential election. Obote's second chance at governing Uganda renewed and intensified the arbitrary violence of the later months of his first term, effectively continuing Amin's nine years of fascism. No records that I have been able to access describe the state of Maloba's Independence Monument during these years of government by gunfire, but it was not used as background for documented important speeches or parades, and its obscurity suggests that Amin and Obote continued to ignore it. It served no political purpose for dictators who were fulfilling the warnings implied in Maloba's calculated ambiguity.

*The NRM and The Return of Stability: An Embodiment of Maloba's Monument?*



*Fig. 5.1 – Uganda's Independence Monument as it stands today*

After losing the 1981 election, Museveni went to the bush to organize an armed resistance movement, the National Resistance Army (NRA), charging Obote with grossly rigging the elections. Over the next four years, Museveni and his NRA would fight what is remembered as the Ugandan Bush War. His resistance was centered in the rural Buganda area surrounding Kampala, which is why many people in the country perceived the war as one between the north (Obote's homeland) and the south (Buganda), even though Museveni himself came from western Uganda.<sup>2</sup> Obote's forces unleashed terror on the region where Museveni's forces were based, which became

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<sup>2</sup> A. M. Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid Regime* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 49.





*Fig. 5.3* – A memorial to the humans who died in Luwero

Finally Museveni fought his way to power with his National Resistance Army that then became the Ugandan army, the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UDPF), even though it was Museveni's personal army. Museveni promised to "to seek a broad national coalition of democratic, political, and social forces to unite the country and obtain a national consensus."<sup>4</sup> To implement his intentions, Museveni introduced a no-party political system called the Movement, believing that parties were the breeding grounds of sectarianism and vehicles for political elites to control the nation. Candidates instead ran on personal merit. Museveni initially distributed government positions more equitably among regions and religions, winning the support of many Ugandans, even though in the north some fifteen armed rebel groups continued to operate. The NRM enacted a 1995 constitution that was a lengthy model of liberal democracy, clearly defining the rights of Ugandan citizens and separating the powers of Uganda's executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government. The 1995 constitution also decentralized delivery of Uganda government services, giving more initiative to grassroots-level planning.

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<sup>4</sup> Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda*, 48.

After ending most of the violence that had plagued Uganda since independence and introducing these numerous reforms, Museveni has entrenched himself in power, where for the past 26 years he has increasingly returned to authoritarian methods to retain power. While he began as an idealist in the same way that Obote had, the political culture of violence that he inherited from Amin and Obote left the NRM no alternative to using patronage and violence to retain the power to enact their democratizing reforms. The political leaders who engaged in those “illegal” activities inevitably grew fearful of leaving power and being prosecuted or having state violence turned against them, so they have intensified their use of violence and corruption, creating a deteriorating cycle of violence and high-level government corruption.<sup>5</sup> The NRM has increasingly distributed what Museveni calls “a piece of the national cake,” to western Ugandans, appointing westerners to numerous jobs in the ballooning civil service as a calculated benefit of sprawling decentralization, and to top posts in the UDPF.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile in order to appease foreign donors, who supply as much as 80% of Uganda's budget, the NRM has passed calculated liberalizing legislation. Instances of strategic liberalization occurred in 2006, when the NRM allowed multiparty presidential elections, in the year leading up to the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) – the biennial meeting of the heads of all the nations in the British Commonwealth – where Museveni wanted to be able to impress donor nations with his liberalization efforts. However Museveni openly bribed Parliament to remove the constitution's term limits so that he could run for a third presidential term in 2006. During the 2006 election cycle when the runner up from the 2001 election, Kizza Besigye, Museveni's doctor during the Bush War, was looking like a legitimate threat to win, Museveni had

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<sup>5</sup> (The International Criminal Court (ICC) has indicted 26 people since its inception in 2002 – all have been African – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_people\\_indicted\\_in\\_the\\_International\\_Criminal\\_Court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_indicted_in_the_International_Criminal_Court))

<sup>6</sup> Tripp, Museveni's Uganda, 39.

Besigye arrested for treason and rape. When the courts upheld Besigye's constitutional right to bail, Museveni surrounded the court building with his notorious Black Mamba paramilitary unit until Besigye, fearing for his life, agreed to remain in prison until his trial. Eventually the courts exonerated Besigye of all wrongdoing, but the stain on his image and the campaigning time he missed resulted in him losing the 2006 elections.

To amplify the effects of these fleeting moments of superficial liberalization the NRM has produced propaganda portraying themselves as Uganda's liberalizing saviors. Their publicity has been directed largely at external donors and not at average Ugandan citizens, whom the regime controls more directly with intimidation and patronage than with artistic symbolism. The regime rarely puts the international aid that it gains from its maneuvering into development projects and more often diverts it to fund patronage and to upgrade the military. But the NRM have also attempted to paint themselves as the regime finally fulfilling the freedom and unity aspirations of the Monument staging state ceremonies with the monument as the backdrop. They also appropriated the Independence Monument and circulated an image of it on Ugandan currency. In 2002, the Treasury added an image of Uganda's Independence Monument to 50,000-shilling bank notes, the largest notes produced. The NRM made the Independence Monument and the square where it is located a symbol of the good governance of the party in preparation for hosting the 2007 CHOGM. In 2010 they included the Independence Monument on the right side of every denomination of currency notes.



*Fig. 5.4 – The Independence Monument on the largest Ugandan banknote*



*Fig. 5.5 – In 2010 the NRM added the Independence Monument to every Ugandan banknote*

Prior to the planning for CHOGM, Independence Monument had anguished in neglect, politically useless for Uganda's various regimes. In 2007 the NRM restored the Independence Monument and contracted Robert Ssewanyana to paint a mural of Uganda's history as a backdrop in preparation for Uganda's hosting of CHOGM. Kakande described a video to me that he took of the monument just prior to the preparations for CHOGM:

“On the video I captured used condoms and human stool which were littering the monument by the time it got what I call a CHOGM FACELIFT. At the end of the clip a man walked into the frame and urinated just there in front of the camera ... I wish you saw this clip because it allows you

to look beyond the CHOGM facade and see how poor service delivery, bad governance and neglect had shaped, and continues to shape, the Independence Monument.”<sup>7</sup>

The NRM hastily restored the monument, but within four years the paint was already coming off of the pedestal. The monument had to look good only long enough for CHOGM, to demonstrate to the nations of the British Commonwealth that Uganda was a nation living up to the lofty ideals of its Independence Monument and therefore worthy of investment and continued aid. If the meaning behind showcasing the cleaned-up Independence Monument was not clear enough, the mural behind the Monument spelled out the NRM's intentions.

The NRM mural depicts its own revised version of Uganda's history since 1900. Instead of being an ambiguous history inviting reflection like Maloba's Monument, the mural's "realist style allows it to portray a propaganda message in which the NRM, and not any other government in Uganda's pre-colonial and postcolonial history, has contributed to the development of the country.”<sup>8</sup> The mural begins with an image of a kabaka beside Kasubi Tombs, along with a pyramid capped by a cross, suggesting that Uganda at the time of the British arrival in 1900 was a Christian kingdom with monumental architecture. The reality, of course, was that Buganda was deeply divided between Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and many crosscutting local communal ideologies; it had no pyramids like the one in the painting. The next image, skipping the decades of colonial exploitation is independence, implying an African authenticity – albeit in purely European terms – of the sort that Maloba doubted, and for the very reasons realized here in grotesque proportions. The Ugandan signing the papers with the British is Muteesa II, not Prime Minister Obote, as no other president of Uganda is displayed in the mural except for Museveni.

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<sup>7</sup> Angelo Kakande, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Angelo Kakande, e-mail message to author, October 24, 2011.

The NRM's message is that Museveni is the only president to have done anything good for Uganda. The prominence of Ganda may be part of Museveni's attempts to patch his rocky relationship with Buganda, as he has unleashed deadly military force on Ganda several times when they rioted because the NRM blocked the kabaka from traveling.



*Fig. 5.6 – 5.7* – The mural the NRM had painted portraying Ugandan “history”

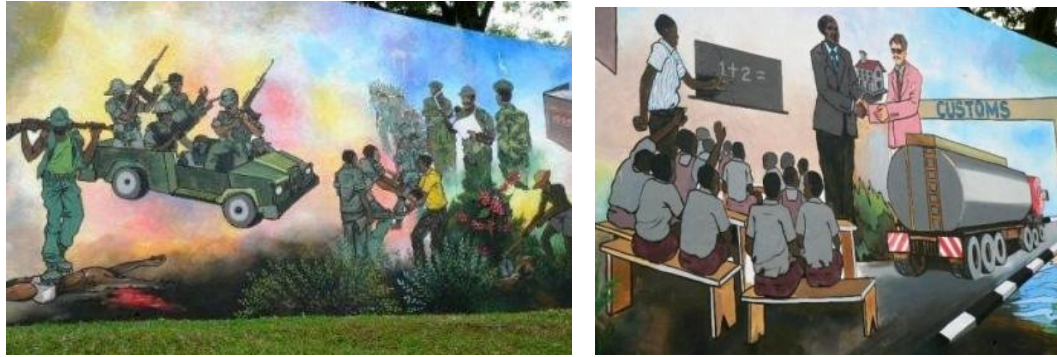
Following independence, the soldiers of the world are seen lining up in front of a large image of Stalin with Ugandan soldiers rushing in to join them. The image bizarrely insinuates that communism destroyed Ugandan multiparty governance after independence; no reference is made to the federal system of government or the internal tensions between Obote and Buganda. The next image is of the Independence Monument and the National Assembly, but it strategically omits Obote's Independence Arch in front of the building, surely because the arch was Obote's key symbol of his personal power. The panel of the National Assembly and Independence Monument are oddly out of chronological order in the mural, suggesting that the National Assembly and Independence

Monument were created subsequently to celebrate what the NRM considers Uganda's "true" independence, beginning in the next panel with a depiction of Museveni's Bush War.



*Fig. 5.8 and 5.9 – Communism ruining Uganda before the “real” independence introduced by the NRM*

The mural then seems to come into sharp focus on the providential role of Museveni's military, portraying the Bush War as the true liberation of Uganda from the evil leaders who killed unarmed (and undressed) men and step on their bodies, the bodies of Luwero Triangle and a reminder to the troublesome Ganda who their liberator was. Following victory in the Bush War, the mural depicts Museveni giving a speech, while those around him help one another up and begin cultivating lush bountiful gardens. Education ensues, which leads to western-style houses and big business deals with a white man in a pink sports jacket and oil being exported from Uganda. The exportation of oil from the recently found reserves in the north is yet to being and Ugandan citizens are very wary about the curse of finding oil in Africa that usually leads to bloodshed.



*Fig. 5.10 and 5.11 – The Bush War and the ensuing cultivation of education and profitable trade*

Finally, in the second to last panel of the mural, Ugandans enjoy jubilant celebrations around a seemingly authentic hut, beating drums and dancing. Maloba would have cringed at this caricature of the inauthenticity that he criticized a half century ago. The implication of the mural is that the NRM and Museveni brought the Independence Monument values of freedom and unity to Uganda and made the child in Independence Monument ululate. However in trying to convey this message, the NRM altered the meaning of the monument into a symbol of NRM glory or hypocrisy. Now intimidating armed guards patrol the park where the mural and monument stand to guard the NRM's appropriated symbol of propaganda, because they now have an interest in standardizing and preserving its meaning, which defeats its intended meaning of inviting reflection.



*Fig. 5.12 – Ululation at last!*

### *Contemporary Understandings of Uganda's Independence Monument*

In the wake of NRM appropriation of Independence Monument and the subsequent circulation and prominence of images of it, the Uganda media have taken an interest in the Monument. Now Independence Monument is becoming a more well known symbol of Ugandan popular culture and was even chosen as the Google doodle to recognize Uganda's 49<sup>th</sup> independence day in 2011 (fig. 5.13).



*Fig. 5.13 – Google recognizes Uganda's Independence Monument*

Every article on the Independence Monument in online Ugandan newspapers archives that go back to 2001 has dated from after the “CHOGM facelift” of 2007. Uganda’s press is robust, even though it commonly faces government charges of sedition, and its brave reporters live in constant fear for their wellbeing. They have written at least partially critical pieces on Uganda’s Independence Monument. Their negative attitudes towards the monument are products of the NRM branding of the monument, in a generation that does not remember colonialism or the hopes raised in the 1950s by anticipations of its end. Many contemporary Ugandans consider NRM government mismanagement to be enabled by the neo-colonialism of the donor nations it courts so flagrantly.

Dickens Nsubuga does not mince words when describing the Independence Monument in his article “Independence Monument Shows Neo-Colonialism.”<sup>9</sup> Nsubuga acknowledges that Independence Monument is an “accomplished work technically and aesthetically,” but – in a striking reversal of Maloba’s intentions – he sees the woman in the Monument as representing the “monstrous grip” colonialism. His understanding is that the Protectorate Government slyly and maliciously designed the monument and paid Maloba to create it as they dictated. To him, the woman symbolizes the British Protectorate (a point a few other media essays allude to when they incorrectly describe the woman as a colonial male) and that the wrappings are “gimmicks of one pretending to be inactive in our [Ugandan] political affairs after independence.”<sup>10</sup> He sees the independence represented in the Monument as false, as the “British” woman does not let Uganda walk on solid ground and instead still holds the infant Uganda helplessly aloft. He perceives British mockery in the fact that Uganda is represented as a child, pointing out that parents (the British in his interpretation) do

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<sup>9</sup> Dickens Nsubuga, “Independence Monument Shows Neo-Colonialism,” *The New Vision*, October 23, 2007, accessed March, 2012, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200710240015.html>

<sup>10</sup> Nsubuga, “Independence Monument Shows Neo-Colonialism.”

not let their children have real independence. He concludes that the monument foretold the future, as Uganda remains reliant on donor funds a half century later. For those like Nsubuga, the Independence Monument has come to refer to a continued colonial grip, as the NRM government runs on donor funds and has no reliance on the approval of the citizens of the nation. Nsubuga has cynically, but not inaptly, interpreted the Monument in the context of current day Uganda, the virtual inverse of what Maloba intended.

Other journalists such as Ben Okiror more accurately praise the monument as an outstanding relic of the failed aspirations of independent Uganda, but they thus question whether the monument matters at all in the current context of military authoritarianism, bluntly asking, "who cares?" He makes the case that the hope expressed in the "Monument is still an abstract concept in the minds of Ugandans ... that has not yet found a place in people's consciousness."<sup>11</sup> In other words, the alien, imposing architectural form of the Monument is not a medium of representation to which the average Ugandan is accustomed or cares about. The Monument is not a piece of the architectural environment of Kampala or the nation with which Ugandans interact and live with daily. The shaded grove in which it sits is now littered with intimidating soldiers; the Independence Arch is now a similarly heavily militarized checkpoint blocking entrance to the National Assembly, not a shaded area for citizens and politicians to mingle. The Independence Monument is a imposing immovable presence, a frightening abstract intrusion in Ugandan's fluid capital city. One Ugandan blogger wrote about nightmares in which the monument chased him through the streets of the city. The vast majority of Ugandans seem to not recognize the monument, which does not matter to the NRM, since they have found another use for it in

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<sup>11</sup> Ben Okiror, "Is It a Sign of Independence?" *The New Vision*, October 9, 2009, accessed March, 2012, [http://enteruganda.com/brochures/indep2009/xindep2009\\_2.html](http://enteruganda.com/brochures/indep2009/xindep2009_2.html)

showing off to foreign donor governments. This outcome of NRM calculated appropriation of the monument was surely not Maloba's aspirations for independence when he created it. The process of nation building in Uganda has not been successful in the half century of its independence.

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### Monumental Creativity: Artists, Politicians, and Popular Participation

African countries at independence faced the overwhelming challenge of building modern nation-states from the diverse communities within their borders. Their predecessors, the former colonial powers, had left strong precedents in building monuments to assist in overcoming similar challenges, though with far greater resources of political experience and coherence. Different African nations adopted different approaches to solving this fundamental dilemma of nascent nationhood. Africa's pioneering president, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, directly confronted the irony of building colossal commanding monuments in a continent without a parallel tradition of monumental architecture, erecting a Romanesque Triumphal Arch and towering statues celebrating himself as the father of Africa and the capacity of Africans to build grandiose architectural creations rivaling those of their former conquerors. In Tanzania, President Julius Nyerere urged his fellow citizens to think of themselves primarily as citizens of a unified nation who respected one another's differences and could come to a consensus, united by their appreciation for "African" socialism, under the nation's parliament building in the newly constructed capital city of Dodoma. He planned to embody this aspiration in a national monument of an acacia tree, the traditional village meeting place for making decisions by participatory consensus.

Uganda's independence era monuments had aspects of both Nkrumah's imperial grandeur and Nyerere's modest popular participation and shelter. The Obote Medallion hanging from Independence Arch recalled the protective father-of-the-nation intended in Ghana's triumphal arch,

although in a more modest, arguably African, functional aesthetic. The Independence Monument, set in an open park, preceded Tanzania's monuments of communal reflection and unity rooted in a sturdy past, while also straining toward a hopeful modern future. However as the historical background of Uganda's monuments demonstrates, Uganda's monuments had distinctive characteristics of their own, such as the a-political open competition to design a relatively human-scaled Independence Monument. As a result, an artist designed it with strong elements of ambiguity about both the divided politics of the new nation and the dubious prospects for a united future.

Prime Minister Milton Obote, in no small irony, chose the same sculptor to design a second monument of transcending proportions, effectively barring access to the new nation's representative assembly, with a strikingly different message, imposing Obote as the fatherly authority and personal unifier of the nation. Independence Monument had rejected the idea of an authentic unified background Ugandan culture, a projection of the shape of the British colony that artists and politicians were trying to imagine, and instead faced the challenges of the truly authentic plurality of Uganda's political communities at the time. The artist, out of his realization of the difficulty of creating a single Ugandan national identity, resorted to Christian prayer, suggesting in the mother-and-child motif of the monument that a monotheistic God was the bond of spiritual brotherhood, beyond the mundane world of politics that the majority of Ugandans could join under. Obote ignored, or had no sense for, the subtleties of Independence Monument and had the designer build Independence Arch to legitimize his earthly position as the figure around whom Ugandans could rally to find their salvation as a nation.

During Uganda's half century of independence, 1962-2012, successive regimes under and against Obote neglected the independence monuments except as they could utilize them

strategically to bolster their power, increasingly more with reference to outsiders than to the people to whom both were originally directed. As a result, neither monument has become part of Ugandans' national consciousness, with Independence Arch being completely inconsequential and Independence Monument being viewed skeptically as a haunting witch of Uganda's neo-colonial protection of militarized and corrupt rule. Uganda's nation-building project has not approached the aspirations that politicians used the prospect of independence to promise. Ugandans have political experiences as violent and harrowing as any on the continent, with a paradigmatically brutal military regime under Idi Amin, civil war, political profiteering, government failure to protect its citizens from local warlords and foreign militias.

The nation-state model was bequeathed to Africans by the departing European colonial powers that had built their own more integrated nations only at the expense of the rest of the world, with their leaders making the prospect of citizenship alluring to the voters within their borders with the promise of infrastructure and national services paid for by the wealth extracted from their colonies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Later Europeans joining the race to national consolidation, such as Germany and Italy, consolidated numerous local jurisdictions within their boundaries through fascist mobilization, in the name of "national socialism," and violent militarized expansion abroad, fueled by mythical versions of transcending racialized unity. The Soviet Union appropriated the similarly universalizing ideology of Marxist socialism to attempt, with similar ruthlessness, to unify half of Asia,

The enormity and bulk of the monumental architecture of these models of national integration expressed both the inherent violence of the politics of nationalism and anticipated the failure of the democratic ideals of the last to arrive at the starting line of imagining the modern

nation-state. In a post-World War II world enclosed entirely within political boundaries, colonial and national, new African nations lacked access to the external resources that had sustained European national services or massive propaganda campaigns. The international community of nations, assembled as the United Nations (1948) and in Africa as the Organization of African Unity (1963), prevented wars of expansion within Africa, although new African nations lacked the resources to embark on imperial campaigns until the massive arming of military dictatorships as the Cold War permeated the continent in the later 1960s. The best that these African regimes could do was colonize regions of their own states, often areas resented for their privileged positions under colonial rule, and to create a semblance of services for the favored components of the nation. Most of the states' resources came from foreign sponsors, and increasingly in the form of military aid for military regimes.

Meanwhile in the arguably more integrated western nations (plus the odd outlier elsewhere in the world, such as Japan) that had created a stable sense of nationalism centered on monumental symbols now beyond appropriation by any momentary regime in power, the trend has been to reject monuments to domination in favor of monuments of participatory experience and reflection that western intellectuals have categorized as anti-monuments. An example is the Monument Against Fascism, an originally towering structure in Vienna that descended into the ground whenever people signed its sides as high as they could reach, until it was covered with 75,000 signatures and buried, hopefully dead and gone, in 1993.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> International Center for Transitional Justice, "Memory and Justice," accessed March, 2012, <http://memoryandjustice.org/site/monument-against-fascism/>



*Fig. 6.1 – The Monument Against Fascism partially sunk into the ground*

In a tragic irony, since the decade of African independence, formerly colonial rulers have become supportive of this participatory style of architecture, while their former colonies in Africa are largely dominated by regimes of monumental authoritarianism that recognize few monuments other than ones that project and protect their rule. As Europeans learned the horrific way in two world wars, these regimes of arbitrary violence and unfair distribution of services are weak and therefore inherently dangerous, especially for minorities who are singled out xenophobically as threatening outsiders in order to unite “insiders” out of fear rather than fulfillment. Yet self-interested and haphazard neo-colonial distribution of aid to these African regimes, predominately from Europe, insulates the African regimes from responsibility to their increasingly aware and sophisticated citizens.

In Uganda, a new generation of citizens, linked to the rest of the world through the Internet and through increasingly smart phones, are painfully aware and disapproving of the militarized monumentality of the current regime, entrenched for a quarter of a century and

increasingly reliant on foreign sponsors. Yet Ugandans struggle to enact change, and men and women like Dr. Besigye are literally willing to give their lives for a better Uganda. The crushing reality in of authoritarian rule in Uganda is frighteningly reminiscent of Gregory Maloba's carving of the pressures of colonial rule in his early and iconic *Death*. The National Resistance Movement resembles the satanic-figure with an expression of weary regret driving the people of Uganda who stand up to them into the ground, not because the NRM is composed of sadistic killers, but because the NRM uses state violence to remain in their position of power, fearful of state violence being turned against them or eventual arrest by the International Criminal Court (that their current European patrons have created) for war crimes if they ever relinquish power.

Among the growing community of Ugandans agitating for democracy is a vibrant, talented, welcoming, and tight-knit group of Ugandan artists. Many are educated at the much-expanded Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art at Makerere, now the national university, graduating nearly 200 students a year, and also from other art schools, and still other self-taught street artists. These artists create extremely political expressions openly, although at times subtly, critical of the NRM and of the international politics that sustain them. One of their greatest efforts is sponsoring programs to educate and train Ugandan youth through arts of all kinds, including dance, hip-hop, painting, and sculpting. Located primarily in Kampala, but spreading into the rest of the country, they are creating public art like the *Statue of Pride*. This piece is located on the grounds of an artist community called Weaverbird Arts Camp that is dedicated to using "art to transform Ndegeya, a village outside of Masaka Town, into a prosperous township for the arts i.e. the Community for The Arts in Uganda."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Weaverbird Arts Camp facebook profile: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002092368169&sk=info>



*Fig 6.2 – A group of artists work together to create the many textures of *Statue of Pride**



*Fig. 6.3 – A tour group at the foot of *Statue of Pride*, preparing to camp around it*

The Statue of Pride is a monument created in honor of the men and women who, like Gregory Maloba, influenced the arts in Uganda. The statue is capped with an ambiguous abstract head that could be male or female – any artist in Uganda. Supporting the head are blocks of various textures, the various textures of people who make up a diverse Uganda, yet all united under the artist, suggesting that Ugandans might find the unity they desire in works, like Independence Monument, that bring all Uganda's many textures together. The artist's head stands above the fray

of divisive politics of ethnicity, gender, religion, and hierarchies of power represented by the ambiguous shapes of the blocks themselves, offering a way forward. Perhaps one-day Ugandan artists and citizens will honor Maloba and his vision by reappropriating Independence Monument from its current appropriation, even theft, by the NRM as a rallying place for reflection on the 50 years of betrayals of the original promise of independence. Armed with the social media that Ugandan artists utilize so effectively, they may give birth to a new generation of promise to transform Uganda along lines parallel to the Arab Spring, a political rebirth in the Muslim Mediterranean free of decades of military repression.



*Fig. 6.4 – Young artists showing off their “stand-tall” t-shirts that they made at a workshop*



*Fig 6.5* – My friend and guide, Szanie Elvis (center) smiling with two friends at their communal art studio, Bavukua, in Kampala

The academic theory of monuments reviewed in the introduction to this thesis tends to sterilize their vitality, their vibrant living dynamics, down to abstract symbols of power and national identity dictated by the regimes that create them. The current literature focuses narrowly on the cold architectural aspects of structures, the non-italicized titles they bear, instead of the italicized titles of expressive pieces of creative art that even the most propagandistic-monuments often are as well. Where there are monuments, there are meanings open to interpretation, because symbols are always ambiguous in the abstract, but unambiguously clear in the minds of the people who react to them. The human mind remains a free place. The authors of the books on monuments neglect the ability of even the slightest ambiguity in art to spark the power and magic of motivated human commitment. A desiccated rationalization of monuments' intended meanings may yield insight into the calculations of the regimes that commissioned them, but a full appreciation includes the humanistic dynamics of how the arts motivate people who create their own varied meanings, far beyond the theoretical categories of architectural critics.

### *Afterword*

Like any African creation, this thesis is the product of a great diversity peoples' thoughts and influences. I owe all those people many thanks, but cannot possibly acknowledge them all here. I will do my best to recognize a few of them.

My thanks go first to my thesis advisor and mentor, Joseph C. Miller, for introducing me to the subject of African history, a history that was blank in my mind prior to taking Early African History. His courses have completely altered the lens through which I see the world. In advising this thesis, Dr. Miller has been extremely patient and encouraging even when I was so slow to actually get a comprehensible iteration of it off the ground. His appreciation for ambiguity in art but not in my writing has enriched this thesis greatly.

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To the benefactors of UVA's Harrison Grant, thank you for the opportunity to return to Uganda this past summer to spend a month exploring the world of Ugandan artists, one of the greatest experiences of my life.

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To my friends and family in Uganda, thank you for you hospitality. A special thanks to Frank Nabwiso for introducing me the world of Ugandan politics, to the Kitaras, my Ugandan family, for making me a part of their home and welcoming me back this past summer, my brother Szanie Elvis who brought me into the community of Ugandan artists and gave so generously of his time, to Ronex for reminding me of the magic of the subconsciousness, and Andrea Stultiens for access to her fantastic photographic archive project, History in Progress in Uganda, to Angelo Kakande and George Kyeyune for their detailed email responses to my questions and the use of their dissertations on Ugandan art, without which I could not have written this thesis.

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And lastly recognition of my sisters, Laura and Emily, for their love and friendship and for constantly reminding me I'm a ocd BD!

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