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COMMENTARY

# Our motto, For God and My Country, has lost meaning

IN SUMMARY

Ugandans need to restore their pride, their rights and dignity; lost when the likes of Mungo Park came to the 'Dark Continent'.

When military dictator Field Marshal Idi Amin banned miniskirts in the early 1970s, Prof. Ali Mazrui, at the time chair of the department of Political Science and Public Administration at Makerere University, planned to deliver a public lecture at Makerere University on 'Military Theocracy...' But through the omnipresent State Research Bureau, the paper reached Amin before being delivered. Mazrui had to 'run away' to escape Amin's wrath.

Funny, because the phrase 'voting with one's feet' was often used by Mazrui, with tongue in cheek, in his lectures on 'Politics and Government in Africa'. One of Uganda's many paradoxes is that in spite of the fact that Uganda's motto is 'For God and my Country'; Godly purity has been conspicuous by its gradual desecration.

Amin, like some of his successors, allegedly quite freely flouted many of God's Commandments, among them the 5th, yet his pseudo-theocratic Fascist Regime pretended to pay meticulous attention to morals and culture!

Suffice to mention that on his return from the Second Journey of the exploration of the River Niger, the explorer Mungo Park referred to the Moors, a Saharan desert tribe, as 'a people who studied mischief as a Science' when after capturing him they "examined his hair and skin with contemptuous curiosity but seemed to consider him an inferior being to them"! They "shuddered at the whiteness of his skin" and his dress amused them.

Today, it is his descendants who are reeling with rictus laughter at images of Africans dying of jiggers and other more serious afflictions due to poverty partly created by corruption.

Unlike the proud and self-respecting natives whom Mungo Park met, today's Africans continue to be governed so badly that they have unwillingly lost their pride and self esteem. As a result, they have left no stone unturned in their attempt to emulate everything they see or hear about Western culture. The proud self-respecting, good-mannered and cultured Ugandans Mr Amanywa Mushega recently inferred in his invariably moving eulogy to his fallen comrade Eriya Kategaya have, sadly, become endangered species.

Pundits say Mushega is a tough person but as I read through his eulogy, I could not avoid the feeling that he must have been close to tears as he wrote the last sentence and I imagine many people -- including this writer -- who read it shared his agony.

Little of the good manners, dignity, authenticity, originality and common sense for which our ancestors and of course Kategaya were renowned still survive.

Western development models have brought about the onset of a global culture into which, Mazrui once said the 'New Africans' were trying to get acculturated. What was dear to the African of the yesteryears has been wiped out in the name of globalisation, modernity or some such other political contrivance.

The scars of humiliation, economic plunder and the political injustice meted out to Africans by their own home-bred leaders that followed the exploration and subsequent colonisation of Africa have resurfaced, and manifest themselves in the form of loss of self-esteem.

Ugandans need to restore their pride, their rights and dignity; lost when the likes of Mungo Park came to the 'Dark Continent'. Never mind that this 'Dark Continent' is home to Christianity's modern Martyrs and Saints, besides producing the raw materials that kept the textile factories working during the Industrial Revolution that laid the foundation to the frequently hyped development, modernisation and prosperity of the Western world whose culture Ugandans are trying, albeit clumsily, so hard to copy by initiating legislation that is bound to breed discord rather than harmony.

Paleontologists suggest that the Biblical Garden of Eden could have been right here in East Africa where the first human beings and perhaps civilisation are said to have originated. Stephen Decatur once said, "Our culture in its intercourse with other cultures, may it be in the right; but our culture right or wrong".

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