

Interreligious Council of Uganda & Veneration of African Ancestors: Ritualized Fundraising Drive towards Financial Sustainability of Christian and Muslim-Founded Universities

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Abstract

The paper tussles with the question: In what ways can the “Interreligious Council of Uganda” occasionally honour and celebrate the historical legacy of African ancestors to generate money towards the financial sustainability of Christian and Muslim founded Universities? Two methods: literary and historical analysis were used to respond to the research question. Results show that the government of Uganda allocates externally sourced aid to lower-line education institutions, but the impact of such support is minimal. Poor infrastructure and demotivated employees are miserable displays on the ground. To make matters worse, the privately established religious universities are facing it tough to run academic programmes, meet the workforce’s remuneration needs, and expand infrastructure to meet the growing demand for education. Some universities are on the brink of extinction, while others have raised their voices in surrender. Interestingly, in Uganda, a common hierarchical cultural system cuts across all tribes, but Christian and Muslim religious leaders have not ventured into venerating African ancestors who have played significant roles in promoting literacy education. The pioneering work of Ugandan ancestors in education, health, and spiritual nurture is visible across the country. However, their success stories are silent. It is such stories that need to be constructed, and memories celebrated. Young generations need to be made aware that there existed African ancestors, who sacrificed their time and resources to build a better future that they are swimming in today. If religious leaders venture into the arena of honouring African ancestors and tag such celebrations as raising funds to support academic institutions, then religiously founded universities would move towards the financial sustainability of academic programme delivery. Certainly, the admirable initiatives of Uganda Christian University Sunday can serve as a cata-

lyst to influence interfaith fundraising drives across the country.

Keywords

University, Fundraising, Veneration, Christianity, Islam

1. Introduction

Monetary resource mobilisation to champion the common good of society has been a phenomenon since ancient times. Before paper and metal money were invented, barter trade was the medium of exchange for goods and services. The first form of currency, called the shekel, was created by the Mesopotamians 5000 years ago. Gold and silver coins were introduced in the Mediterranean world between 650 and 600 BCE. Bronze and copper coins were invented in China in 1000 BCE. In the years 700 - 800 CE, China pioneered the use of paper money, which facilitated business ventures in parts of Africa (Hanson, 2024).

During pre-colonial Uganda, a variety of currencies were used in business transactions, including beads, ivory discs, and cowrie shells. In colonial Uganda, Europeans introduced rupees (Pallaver, 2016). Over the past decade, electronic money has taken centre stage, alongside metal and paper money. Business transactions are faster and borderless. Nevertheless, raising monetary resources to guarantee the financial sustainability of religiously founded academic institutions in Uganda is a dilemma that has handcuffed religious leaders. The government of Uganda provides financial aid to lower-line educational institutions, but the impact of such support is minimal. Poor academic performance, infrastructure breakdowns, learner dropouts, and demotivated employees are the miserable bombardments on the ground (Ochwa-Echel, 2016).

To make matters worse, the privately established religious universities are facing it tough to run academic programmes, meet the workforce's remuneration needs, and build progressive infrastructure to cater to the growing demand for quality education. Some universities are at the brink of extinction while others have raised their voices in surrender (Nangayi, 2023). This study, then, has wrestled with the puzzle: In what ways can the "Interreligious Council of Uganda" honour and celebrate the historical legacy of African ancestors to generate money towards the financial sustainability of religiously founded universities?

To solve the equation, two methods: literary and historical approaches were relied on. Literary interpretation that focuses on the plain meaning of a text to shed light on the current trends was used to reflect on sacred texts, the Bible and the Quran (Grace Theological Seminary, 2022). On the other hand, the historical method that centres on understanding literary works as human voices from the past, in an effort to spur dialogue and understanding, was integrated with the literary approach to investigate scholarly historical records (Palmer, 1969: pp. 7-10, 60-63).

Accordingly, the financial health of religiously founded universities in Uganda was studied; missionary archives were examined to bring to light pioneer African Christian ancestors; European Christianity, Arabian Islam, and African fundraising practices were analysed; the interfaith mediating mandate of the Interreligious Council of Uganda was evaluated; and success stories of the fundraising events of the Church of Uganda were highlighted. To minimise linguistic errors, the AI Grammar checker was used.

2. Religious-Founded Universities in Uganda and Financial Sustainability

The Ugandan population practices European Christianity, followed by Muslims, whose religious expression is dressed in Arabian Islamic culture. Next, small groups of Ugandans have embraced Judaism and indigenous African religions. However, the kind of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism practiced in Uganda is not an incarnate display of African religiosity. In addition to the Abrahamic religions, there is Hinduism. Although Hinduism has existed since pre-colonial Uganda, the religious faith is practiced only by Indian immigrants (Kabahizi & Mwesigwa, 2022: pp. 2-4).

Foreign religions, especially Christianity and Islam, that had a foothold on Ugandan soil and amalgamated their cultures with the indigenous communities, replaced informal knowledge transfer with European-tailored formal education in the country. From the pre-colonial era of Uganda through the colonial and post-colonial periods, religious denominations established educational institutions. At the end of 2015, religious-founded education institutions were recorded as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Religion-founded education institutions in Uganda.

	Catholic	Protestant	Muslim	Seventh-day Adventists
Primary schools	4678	5351	1127	303
Secondary schools	493	481	126	40
Vocational and Health Training Institutions	57	51	6	3
Universities	1	3	2	1

Source: Musoke (2017); *List of Private and Government Institutions* (2016); Mugabi (2008: pp. 6-7).

As illustrated in the table above, although the academic institutions are religiously founded, the government of Uganda provides grants to public primary schools, secondary schools, and vocational institutions to cover costs associated with infrastructure development, administration, teaching aids, and remuneration for teaching and non-teaching staff. However, government support is insuf-

ficient. The assistance does not extend to supporting the programme needs of religiously established universities or meeting the growing intellectual cravings of Ugandans seeking quality education in privately owned academic institutions (Nangayi, 2023).

Visibly, religiously founded universities are struggling financially to motivate academic staff and to meet the costs associated with infrastructural development. Religious Universities derive revenue from tuition and donor support. Nonetheless, such money-hunting sources are shaky. Such sources cannot be relied on in the current digital age, characterized by business competition and the ever-changing priorities of external donors, making it difficult to guarantee the long-term financial sustainability of an academic institution (Turkan Wild Life Safaris, 2024). Yet, religious leaders, armed with sacred instructional knowledge, command respect among the followers, but such rich revenue-generating sources have not been adequately contextualised into indigenous African cultural systems to generate monetary resources to support the educational needs of Ugandans.

3. Veneration and Celebration of African Ancestors

In the African universe, to ensure that emerging generations do not stray from their ancestors' traditions, tribal and clan founders, community role models, and household elders are honoured and celebrated. Their stories are told from generation to generation. People spend time at the veneration spots. While at historical sites, people dive into the mental horizons of their ancestors to reflect on their past lives, thereby energising their visualised works. Accordingly, they package the past to address present needs. The new knowledge acquired inspires the living to do greater good in society and to walk towards attaining a place in the afterlife assembly of ancestors (Makwa, 2022).

In Uganda, even when there are multiple tribal and clan orality worldviews that describe how humanity and the universe came into existence, all Africans agree that behind the creative forces are hierarchical beings responsible for maintaining harmony, order, and morality. Morals are passed on through African myths, folktales, proverbs, songs, dances, vestments, rituals, and ceremonies. No one is coerced to convert to another culture nor to proselyte. Cultural values are transmitted, with particular emphasis on lived practices in the present life and after earthly life, within the community of the living dead (Olupona, 2014).

In contrast to Christian and Islamic worldviews, the paradise abode of the living dead in the African worldview is in the present life. Likewise, hell in the African sense is in the present life. Individuals either suffer because of their inability to respect societal taboos or because their ancestors were involved in criminal activities that disrupted societal harmony. Ant-social people, when they die, are punished in the domain of the dead. When their torturous afflictions are revealed in the dreams of the immediate family members and through community epidemics, their shortcomings are atoned for, after which they are resettled among the living.

The soul of the dead lives on, manifested in the mental domain, thus, in orality works, literary sources, and among the legacy activities of the earthly close associates (Olupona, 2014).

The living dead occupy the spiritual domain of ancestors. They are historical beings, and through their works, the living understand themselves not through self-examination but through the living experiences that spring from the deep imaginations of the deceased. Historical colourings of ancestors inform living humans of their ancestral roots, what they are, and what they will be (Mbiti, 2011: pp. 15-25).

In the African worldview, Humans are not static objects; when plugged into the spiritual abode of ancestors, they become inquisitive and creative. Self-knowledge, awareness, and endless conscious navigation enable Africans to form linguistic expressions, thus signs, symbols, taboos, legends, stories, proverbs, rituals, and speeches that constitute their heritage. The totality of human existence is historical. History is the restless progression in which the present constantly becomes the past and the future the present. The present is filled with lived realities that contrast with ideas of the future, such as wishes, expectations, hopes, fears, and strivings. Ideas, through which human beings know the past and the future, exist only for those who are alive in the present and the moment the future becomes the present, it sinks into the past until images are lost in the darkness of the horizon (Mbiti, 2011: pp. 15-25).

In essence, African morals, historical encounters, and spiritual dimensions encompass human self-consciousness, and these lived experiences lie behind the history of every African society. However, with the introduction of Islam and Christianity in Uganda, African cultural practices were regarded as demonic, and up-to-date Arabized Muslims and Europeanised Christians view cultural leaders as agents of Satan. To be associated with indigenous cultural practices and yet be a professing Christian or Muslim is regarded as syncretic (Mbiti, 2011: pp. 15-25).

On a sad note, during government public functions, cultural leaders are never allowed to share the podium with Christian and Muslim religious leaders to call on God in reflection of the success stories of African ancestors to grace the occasion. Instead, it is the success stories of the ancestors in the Abrahamic genealogy that the Africans invoke. Of course, such invocations are praiseworthy for maintaining the moral good delivered to Africans by the missionaries, but the living Africans abide in the genes of their ancestors, who are at work in the invisible mental domains that inspire African minds to innovate. The positive attributes African ancestors moulded and the vibrating legacies constructed while in the physical world inform the intellectual outputs of the present generation. It is such legacies that are worthy of being echoed and celebrated in every African household (Mbiti, 2011: pp. 15-25).

Ugandan society is growing intellectually because there were ancestors who embraced Christianity and Islamic intellectual traditions. They had a passion to see their people walk out of economic poverty. Their biographies are preserved in the

archives of people's minds and public libraries. For instance, in 1900s, Benjamani Nkalubo (**Figure 1**), a Church Missionary Society-trained evangelist, hailing from Buganda, spent a great deal of time among the indigenous people of Budaka, in Eastern Uganda. He introduced Western education besides Christianity. Other notable ancestors, such as Apolo Kivebulaya, Angus Sira Dongo, and Yohana Kitagana laid the foundations of education in Northern Uganda, Western Uganda, and Eastern Congo (Crichton, 2024).



Source: Landon: Church Mission Society Archives, ACC 611/F2 A.

Figure 1. Benjamani Nkalubo.

The pioneer works of Ugandan ancestors in the areas of education, health, economic development, and spiritual nurture are visible in the entire country. However, their success stories and that of the subsequent generations, are silent. It is such pioneer figures and their successors that need to be iconized, honoured, and celebrated at: religious worship centres, community social functions, and households. Poems and indigenous songs need to be composed to inform the young generations, the price African ancestors paid to support education initiatives in their households and the wide community. Young generations need to be made aware on annual basis that there existed African ancestors, who sacrificed their time and resources to build a better future they are swimming in today.

In Jewish traditions, patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, priests, and angels are commemorated. Jewish events such as Passover, birthdays, and Pentecost are celebrated. European Christianity which is an offshoot of Jewish traditions brings to display: apostles, church fathers, saints, and Christianised traditions that radiate sense to Europeans. Songs, poems, literary works are at exhibition in honour of

European heroes and historical events (King, 2023).

Legends wrapped in Hebraic-European culture are repackaged every generation to influence the mind-sets of Eurocentric young generations to hold onto their culture and to work towards socioeconomic transformation of their communities. Likewise, in Arabian Islamic culture, celebratory events, prophets, the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad, the birthdays of prominent figures, Muslim martyrs and heroes, angels, noble Caliphs, Muslim scholars, and virtuous Muslim women are commemorated. Such celebrations are not one-day events; communal reflections are held over designated annual events that span weeks. Rituals, tagged to past memories, inspire the present, to better the future (King, 2023).

While European Christianity and Arabian Islamic practices are practiced in Uganda, Africanising the religious beliefs and practices of the two is regarded by some people as syncretism. Syncretism is defined by some theologians as the amalgamation of the diverse cultural traditions, ideologies, concepts, and practices with Hebraic-Greece-Roman biblical and Arabian Qur'anic standards to come up with new forms of religious practices. To such scholars, religious practices that are not copy paste of the inspired Word of God recorded in the Bible and the Quran; are unacceptable before God. To them, Christianity or Islamic contextualised practices are regarded as paganism (Lacobucci, 2025; *The Intersection*, 2024).

Of course, some blended Christian and Islamic practices are barbaric. Some religious practices expose people to diseases epidemics, economic poverty, exploitation, and crimes against humanity (Bessenecker, 2020). Such practices ought to be condemned and that is why biblical and Qur'anic standards need to be carefully crafted and incarnated into the host cultural practices. But then, to assume that God's divine fingerprint is not visible among the diverse earthly cultures, it means that such a theologian is caged in the mental universe of religious exclusivism. There is no earthly culture that is perfect. All earthly cultures are in friction and evolve every day. If there existed a utopian religion, then perfect moral standards would have been derived from such a religious community and relied on to silence injustices and life-robbing challenges in the world, once and for all.

Certainly syncretism tendencies that divert humanity from worshipping the creator of the universe manifested in Biblical and Qur'anic texts, must be resisted. However, Christianity and Islamic practices and beliefs need to be aligned with indigenous people's language expressions, customs, symbols, arts, and social traditions in honouring and celebrating African ancestors that have a hard social-economic impact on Ugandan society (Bessenecker, 2020).

Like European and Arabian cultures, African culture is coloured with events that connect people to their black culture mental domain. The daily emotional bond that Africans have with their departed ancestors is irrefutable. Few Africans are senseless about the impact ancestors have on their business adventures and the stability of their households. Ancestors abode in the intellectual mental domain. They are regarded as intercessors, guardians, protectors, and bestow bless-

ings upon the line family members, the clan, tribe, and the community at large. Their influence on society is manifested in the career successes of family members and those named after them. Africans influenced by the voices of ancestors preserved in songs, traditions, totems, taboos, stories, poems, legends, rituals, literary works, and sacred spaces; dive into the invisible mental domains to innovate products that make life better and inspire the living to productively utilise their space in society (Mbiti, 2011: pp. 15-25).

Nevertheless, African knowledge mining has been castigated by Europeanised Christians and Arabized Muslims as primitive. Even when foreign cultures have had residence in Uganda for generations, the imported cultural practices have yielded minimal impact in influencing Africans to manipulate their cultural heritages to move towards economic sufficiency. Doled-out projects and ideologies, time and again, have come to extinction as soon as the inflow of foreign aid ceases. It is then incumbent for the African intellectual thinkers to dive into the mental domain of African ancestors, have them iconized, honoured, celebrated, and raise communal collective funds to support the educational needs of the religiously founded universities.

4. Fundraising in Christianity and Islam

Christian and Muslim Ritualised Fundraising Events: Christianity and Islam are coloured with celebration events that speak the languages of European and Arabian communities. The festivities speak to their culture and they utilise them to raise funds to solve the critical needs of their communities. The major celebrative events in Eurocentric Christianity are Easter and Christmas while for Arabized Islam is Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.

Easter, a festival rooted in Anglo-Saxon and Jewish Passover traditions, is a day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Andersen, 2022). In Latin and Greek, the feast is called “Pascha” (Hillerbrand, 2022).

Easter began much earlier before the advent of Christianity in the Northern Hemisphere, where people held celebrations to welcome equinoxes and solstices sacred times that signalled the changing seasons on earth and life opportunity renewals (Travers, 2017).

Spring festivals with the theme of new life and relief from oppressive forces associated with cold winter became connected explicitly to the Passover feast celebrated by the Jews having been delivered from oppressive slavery in Egypt. The Passover feast was mirrored by the Passion Week which commemorated the commissioning of: the Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday, the Crucifixion of Jesus on the Roman Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave (Travers, 2017). Such moments connected households, clans, and tribes to reflect on their painful history. Celebrations were reminders of the bad and good times that were experienced by their ancestors. They reflected on the roles their ancestors played to aid their present survival. It was a time for the society to recommit themselves to the preservation of their cultural identity, to avoid past mistakes,

and to work towards a better tomorrow. From the onset of the second century, Passover, Equinox, and Solstice celebrations were Christian European contextualized to fit into life resurrection opportunities incarnated in the ever-present redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The Easter celebrative events boasted the mercantile economy, moral and cultural values were passed on to the young generation, and funds raised were channelled to support the development needs of society (Hillerbrand, 2022).

In Uganda, Easter is regarded as a day for Christians to appear before God to give thanks for having given them His Son Jesus Christ to redeem them from demonic forces, cravings of the flesh, and worldly destructive forces; and for allowing the Holy Spirit to progressively vaccinate them against life-killer lifestyles. It is a day when Christians reflect on several opportunities that Jesus resurrected in their career pursuits, among their social contacts, in their ministry obligations to support the critical needs of society. Jesus is upheld as the source of life who holds the key to life opportunity resurrections (John 11: 25). Among some Christian sects, the season is associated with sharing of life empowerment resources to dust the misery of needy neighbours in commemoration of Jesus's washing of His disciple's feet (John 13: 1-17).

The Christian event that comes after Easter is Christmas. Several theories advanced by scholars place 25th December as the birth date of Jesus Christ. The day coincided with the then-pagan celebrations. Christmas, then, commemorating the birthday of Jesus Christ, was first celebrated on 25th December, 336, during the reign of the first Christian Roman emperor Constantine. Birthday celebrations honouring family members, friends, prominent community figures, ancestors, and gods are cultural mandates in European societies that have endured for centuries. Worldwide Christmas celebrations, spearheaded by St. Augustine of Canterbury, circulated during the 6th century (Cooper, 2022).

In December, the period between sunrise and sunset was very short in the Northern Hemisphere. In the ancient world, the changing of the time marked the beginning of seasons. As such, pre-Christian celebrations were held on 25th December to commemorate the birthday of the unconquered sun, which won the painful challenges of the darkness of winter. It was a time for household elders and community opinion leaders to share life experiences with the young generation and to project a productive, inspiring future. Gifts were extended to individuals affected by winter catastrophes. During the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine, Christians were encouraged to hold Christmas celebrations alongside pagan celebrations (Cooper, 2022). As the years rolled by, the Mosaic-like rod swallowed the Egyptian-like pagan snakes (Exodus 7: 8-13). Pagan customs such as carols, family and community gatherings, feasts, and gift-giving were Christianised and given European Christian meanings. Christmas festivity outputs contributed greatly to the European mercantile economy. Constructive moral values were passed on to younger generations, financial gifts were wired to support the development needs of society, and charitable organisations came to be displayed

(Ahmed, 2009).

In the current decade, the Christmas festival season is a reminder for Christians to fact-check their past successes, screen their present, and, dressed in the apron of worship, offer their best gifts on God's altar and donate resources to empower the struggling poor in society (Ahmed, 2009). However, in Ugandan society, the impact of Christmas offerings is not felt in responding to the biting needs of educational institutions; instead, the merchant society harvests plenty.

Similar to Christian Easter, the Islamic holiday Eid al-Fitr is a festive occasion, which in Arabic means "feast of breaking the fast." It is the day that brings the fasting season to a climax during the Holy month of Ramadan. On this day, Muslims offer gifts to the needy in society as a sign of faith and appreciation for Allah's life-providing grace (Al-Hussein, 2023).

The next major Islamic celebratory event after Eid al-Fitr is Eid al-Adha, Arabic for "feast of sacrifices." It is the day that brings the annual Mecca pilgrimage, the Hajj, to a climax (Brandeis University, 2024). The annual tradition is a reminder for all Muslims to renew their spiritual strength, focus on their earthly life visions, and those who are financially stable to joyfully share sacrificial resources with family members, friends, neighbours, poor households, the homeless, and to engage in jihad missions to add value to community poverty alleviation programmes (Sakeik, 2022; History.Com Editors, 2023).

Scanning through the celebrative events of the two Abrahamic religions, it is evident that social support extended to vulnerable groups is a cross-cutting Christian-Muslim religious ethical conviction. Adherents not only atone for their human failures through sacrificial giving, but they also fulfil their godly rewarding obligations of identifying with the needs of the vulnerable groups of society.

Given the fact that Christian and Muslim celebrative events are dressed in European and Arabian genetic attire, their impact on the African ancestry is less felt. It is hard to come across Christian and Muslim organisations in Uganda that bring to display the impact, locally generated monetary proceeds of such celebrative events have had on indigenous communities. However, African society has diversified ceremonies that need Christian and Islamic colouring.

In reality, the European and Arabian construction of religious festivities did not erase the Jewish religious reflections and celebrations. Each culture maintained its identity but approached similar events from its milk-suckled language perspectives. However, in Uganda, Christian and Islamic religious festivities are dressed in foreign cultural garments. There are no African stories that are shared across diverse tribes to inspire younger generations to celebrate and reflect on their cultural heritage.

Of course, missionaries offloaded for Africans the beauty wrapped in Abrahamic religious celebrations, but then, the painful and success stories of African pioneer recipients of Christianity and Islam are rarely brought to display. Yet African ancestors played a significant role as guides, translators, hosts, teachers, manual workers and donors of much-needed material goods needed to advance

missionary work. Before the advent of Christianity and Islam in Uganda, Africans were in the business of passing on innovative knowledge to their households and the wider society.

I'm here today because of my ancestors. I suckled their genes. I'm a product of their genes. It is hard for me to proselyte to another African culture, but I'm in a respectful existential relationship with the diverse African cultures. Parents instilled cultural language concepts in me that cannot be unwrapped. Their inspirational words are sources of my strength. Though some are dead, I still hear them speak. When I dive into their past work, I gain innovative insights. It is such memories that need to be reflected on and celebrated; and if Christian and Muslim religious leaders in Uganda organize a one-week event to celebrate African ancestors, then such events can serve as rich grounds for raising funds to support the development needs of religiously founded universities.

The eventful week would also help ensure that African families stay connected in the current digital age, where people are often separated by work. Certainly, there are those who may not have time to commune with their relatives due to the cost of travel, but technology has made life easier. People can still meet virtually to share their family history. What is important is to have a special day or week when every African reflects on their family tree and practices ancestral social traditions.

It is such memories that ought to be Africanized and celebrated, not only at the household level but at all African cultural levels. The aim is to reflect on the sacrifices that African ancestors have made and the impact of their contributions to society. Immersed in African cultural heritage, the younger generations would then ponder the contributions they can make to improve the present, avoid regrettable mistakes of the past, and forge the best practices for future generations.

Money matters in Sacred Texts: On the pages of sacred texts, the Bible and the Qur'an: tales are recorded of how money is supposed to be used to enhance relationships, the life traumas that servants of God encountered due to their inability to handle money are documented, and there are several instructions laid out on how to transact money transparently in any given locality.

In every earthly locality, the poor and the rich exist to fulfil specific duties in society (Deuteronomy 15:11 and Acts 17: 26). Christians and Muslims are guided by sacred scriptures on how to raise and use money to build a vibrant society. The first biblical mention of monetary resources is in Genesis 2:11-12. The Garden of Eden is recounted to have been endowed with plenteous gold, aromatic resin, and onyx. Gold was entrusted to man to use it and engage in business transactions that would cement human relationships and make life joyous. Subsequently, Abraham is mentioned as a wealthy man who had plenty of livestock, amassed silver, had admirable sums of gold, and gave alms to support the priestly work of Melchizedek (Genesis 13: 2; 14: 20).

Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Islam put emphasis on alms giving to solve critical life basic needs of vulnerable groups, set up infrastructures, and

equip people with skills towards holistic self-sufficiency (Scalisi, 2018). A tenth of a Christian's income, free will offerings, and first fruit harvests are supposed to be channelled to solve socioeconomic needs of widows, orphans, strangers, economically poor people, and the monetary needs of religious workers (Genesis 4: 4, 14; 18-20, 35: 14; Leviticus 27: 30; Deuteronomy 8: 18, 14: 28, 16: 16-17, 26: 2-4; Psalm 96: 8; Proverbs 3: 9-10, 11: 24, 22: 9; Nehemiah 10: 35; Ezekiel 44: 30; Malachi 3: 8-10; Mathew 10: 12; Mark 12: 41-44; Luke 3: 11, 6: 38, 12: 15, 33-34; Acts 4: 34-35, 20: 35; 1 Corinthians 9: 13-14, 10: 18; Galatians 6: 9; Philippians 4: 18; 1 Timothy 6: 18-19; and James 2: 15-16). People who gave their resources to meet the critical needs of impoverished people are documented to have attained earthly monetary providences beyond measure (Proverbs 11: 24-25; Luke 6: 38; 2 Corinthians 9: 8-11).

Just like in Christianity, in Islam, alms giving quantified at 2.5 percent of a believer's resources is obligatory for every resourceful Muslim to support the physical needs of parents, relatives, orphans, and the poor (Q. 2: 215). The collections are also used to cater for charity organization administrative costs, support the needs of converts, settle refugees, support stranded travellers, clear debts incurred by Muslims, and pay stipends for religious leaders and missionaries (Q. 9:60; Dawam et al., 2021: p. 128). Muslims who share their resources with vulnerable groups of society purify and sanctify their souls from greed (Q. 9:103). As poor people are supported to come out of economic poverty, the giver's wealth becomes purified and multiplied. The giver draws near to God in worship and becomes stronger in the grace of giving in increasing measure (Sambidge, 2022; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2023).

Almsgiving in Christianity and Islam is practiced to address the basic necessities of human life. Even when the strategies that can be relied on to verify that a believer's wealth is purified and the unique yardsticks that ring fence income increases are hard to glean from the pages of sacred books, it is probable that people who give portions of their resources in increasing measure to support the development needs of society, walk out of the cage of greed and selfishness. To the contrary, if people who manage finances lack financial management skills, it becomes difficult to inspire them to continue dishing out their hard-earned money to support the communicated development needs.

Scanning through Christianity and Islam money management principles, dissimilarity in alms raising among the two religions is observable in the sense that while in Christianity giving is without compulsion (Exodus 25: 1-8; 2 Corinthians 9: 7); in Islam, extending financial support towards socioeconomic empowerment of society is the third belief pillar that must be consistently reflected in a believer's worship life (Mufti, 2025).

However, the similarity concepts of giving embedded in the two Abrahamic religions are innate religious mandates of Hebraic-Greek-Roman societies and the Islamic-Arabian world. The money-raising principles are wrapped up in their cultural identities, compared with Ugandan culture, which cherishes the communal

sharing of resources to meet everyone's needs. Resources such as agricultural harvests, grazing land for livestock, land for communal institutional infrastructure development, and water points are for the common good of everyone. Cultural leaders emphasize the communal responsiveness of everyone, raising resources to support the needs of vulnerable people. African giving is not tagged to percentages. Once a noble development need surfaces, people are mobilised to inject their monetary and technical support (Mbiti, 2011: pp. 15-25).

Accordingly, if Christianity and Islamic money management principles are contextualised in the language expressions of African money raising and management communal responsiveness, then religious education institutions can be supported to move towards financial sustainability. Of course, joint raising of money to solve the critical needs of society involves intellectual gymnastics, and without coexistence binding memorandums, Christian and Muslim leaders remain wall-fenced in their religious homes. Even when locked in their religious environments, it is a challenge to come across religious leaders in Uganda who have well-developed resource development plans aimed at attracting funds from the indigenous people. Without a clear money mobilisation plan, it becomes difficult to attract funds from the local populace.

Developing a clear money mobilisation plan requires a great deal of intellectual energy. The process involves creating, fostering, and maintaining healthy relationships. It is a process in which religious leaders share enough about their common vision, mission, and well-documented plans that community members can consider whether it is viable to get involved. Fundraising is about creating opportunities for people to reflect on their cultural, religious, and professional obligations to support society's cross-cutting critical needs. Martin and Overstreet (2003: pp. 43-50) theorized methodologies that can be relied upon to motivate people to provide financial, material, and technical support. The approaches are:

a) Resource Development Plan. The vision, mission, core values, goals, and action steps to achieve each goal are the initial tasks that religious leadership must clearly define to display their strategic direction towards the development of an inclusive community. The next step is to come up with a money soliciting strategy. In order to develop a fundraising plan, a local religious body needs to: i) Assess internal resources, what abilities, skills, contacts, and tools are available in the community that can help to advance specific aspects of God's mission? ii) Examine external resources, external resources like education institutions, civil society organizations, business companies, and cultural institutions, can they be of help in supporting certain aspects of the programmes? iii) Scrutinize historical resources, is it possible to refresh friendship with people and organizations that supported community development programmes in the past technically and financially? iv) Write a resource development plan, whatever is discovered in during a feasibility study, a simple way of beginning to do each of the suggested ideas is laid out.

A resource development plan is a yardstick that can be relied on to implement

Christian-Muslim coexistence programmes that generate funds locally while minimizing interreligious conflicts. However, clear plans can only be developed by religious leaders who are equipped with business management skills. True, religious leaders are divinely chosen and guided by sacred texts to offer services to society, but intellectual competencies in business management abilities are necessary, not only as guides to motivate people to give money, but also the skills position leaders at the cutting edge to engage in profitable business ventures that generate surplus funds. Without essential intellectual abilities in business management, religious leaders with only one-line training in theology face a challenge in steering local communities in the right direction toward owning and supporting their academic institutions.

b) Money Raising Communication Process. Although religious leaders are trained to communicate biblical and Qur'anic messages to people, it is unclear whether the process of raising money is part of the theological training curriculum. Communication is so critical to raising money because it is the means through which religious leaders establish long-term relationships that enable giving. In order to initiate, develop, and maintain relationships, lots of different steps in the communication process, as theorized by [Martin and Overstreet \(2003: pp. 43-50\)](#), are necessary, and these are:

i) Meeting. Initially, people willing to share their resources must be met at the individual level and build a rapport; ii) telling. When convinced that friendship is well established, critical needs of society are hinted at, what is being done to solve the current needs, available resources, the impact felt in the previous years, and the gaps being encountered are communicated orally, through print media, and electronically; iii) asking. Through patient interaction with people, the opportunity spontaneously arises to ask for financial help. At this point, rapport is well developed, and people have become interested in what religious leaders are doing. It is at this stage that people open up to get involved in supporting joint interfaith programmes. People will always give their money if they trust that it will be spent wisely and as intended, and that their contributions will make a difference, as communicated. iv) thanking. One of the easiest and at times the hardest part of raising local support is saying thank you! Gratitude is always welcomed, always appreciated, and always important. While it is one of the easiest things to do, it is also one of the most critical. To say thank you well, religious leadership must be timely, specific, and as personal as possible. Generalizations should be avoided. Each local donor must be acknowledged in a group setting and at an individual level. Face-to-face visits, social media messages, and written reports containing financial transactions must reflect each individual's contributions. v) meeting others. Before recruiting new donors, the local programme activities, converted into a one-page leaflet, must be displayed on social media platforms, pinned on notice boards, and distributed at churches, Mosques, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and businesses for people to read. At the end of the leaflet, contact address and new opportunities that prompt members to continue supporting pro-

grammes and invite others to join are persuasively highlighted; vi) prayer. At the centre of every step taken is prayer. It is important for religious leaders to immerse themselves in fervent prayer to invite God to speak to people's hearts and to provide financial resources. God's guidance regarding whom He is calling to support the programmes, and His enabling discernment grace about when to ask for their involvement and what to ask for, is very necessary.

Above all, communication process to yield results, religious leadership needs to have intellectual abilities in corporate culture and policy development that position them to develop strong financial management values and principles in a given cultural context. Without understanding a local context worldviews, it becomes difficult to convince indigenous people to finance local programmes. In most cases, intellectual donors do not entrust their financial resources to religious leaders who do not have well-developed finance management systems, such as finance utilisation policy, reporting policy, finance control measures, and public access mechanisms to understand the way finances are utilised (*Management Study Guide, 2008*).

Raising money to support programme interfaith activities is both a gift and a skill that must be acquired intellectually. Soliciting money requires religious leaders to take on servant leadership virtues without which, it becomes hard to transparently utilise funds to advance God's mission. In a self-seeking Ugandan society, acting like a servant is not a popular concept. 'Touch not my anointed one' (Psalm 105: 15) is a popular concept that Christian leaders wrap themselves in to avoid being held accountable for financial misconduct. To the Muslim community, criticising divinely chosen leaders is blasphemy and invites God's wrath (Q. 33: 58-59).

Accordingly, the misinterpretation of sacred texts and the masses' theological ignorance pave the way for religious leaders to manipulate their way to power, material possessions, and social prestige (*Agiresaasi, 2019*). Jesus, however, measured greatness in terms of service, not status (Luke 22: 24-27). God chooses and anoints humble people to offer leadership to society and to give charity to organized social groups (Q.2: 246-247, 21: 73).

Finance management ethics and servant leadership mind-sets, then, are virtues that, if well indoctrinated and inculcated by Christian and Muslim religious leaders, will most likely yield a progressive, vibrant university education that positively impacts society and builds strong, conflict-free interreligious communities.

5. Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU)

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) was established in 2001 with the major aim of bringing together Christian and Muslim religious groups to address cross-cutting social concerns. The organisation runs several programmes. The key ones include: advocacy for interfaith and inter-political dialogues to foster reconciliations; and mobilisation of masses towards community social transformation (*Kitakule, 2023*).

IRCU is composed of ten religious groups. Nine of them are Christian denominations, and the Muslim organisation, Uganda Muslim Supreme Council occupies one slot. National resource envelope is distributed equally among the ten groups and channelled through religious structures to solve the critical needs of religious followers at the grassroots (Kitakule, 2022).

Astonishingly, a screen short at IRCU, at the bottom societal levels, the national leadership framework is not mirrored. Religious bodies work independently, but even then, if IRCU leadership were to be hierarchically mirrored, the national resource envelope benefits Christians (90%) more as compared to the Muslim community (10%). Given the fact that the Muslim population in Uganda is 14 percent as compared to 82 percent Christians and in view that the Muslim population is not evenly distributed in Ugandan localities (U.S. Department of State, 2022); IRCU resource distribution ratio would be commendable, but the sharing formula seem not to be a realistic yardstick to build conflict free and equitable Christian and Muslim development programmes.

Religious conflicts in Uganda occur because one group tends to have a monopoly of the economy. For instance, the literacy gap between Muslims and Christians is wide (Musoke, 2017). In Teso and Karamoja sub-regions, the illiteracy level of Muslims stands at 97.3% (The Independent, 2023). The Muslim community is disgruntled at the education system business transactions in Uganda that since colonial days, have benefited Christians mostly. Many of the education institutions in Uganda are Christian founded and the available Islamic academic institutions do not produce excellent grades that would position Muslim students to benefit from competitive government and international education scholarships. Christian and Muslim economic imbalances have fuelled religious tensions in Uganda (Musisi & Kiggundu, 2018: pp. 88-89, 95).

Of course, IRCU would attract multiple resources to bridge Christian and Muslim economic imbalances, but the organisation attracts resources mainly from the government and external donor agencies after which, community development programmes trickle to the grassroots religious entities (Kitakule, 2021). Over-reliance on external support is dangerous; should funders withdraw, IRCU programmes are most likely to become extinct. However, the extent local people are involved in the thinking process on issues that fuel religious tensions and are empowered to manipulate their environmental resources to build synergy towards interreligious conflict-free communities; are pertinent area of concern.

Therefore, for Ugandan religious leaders to manipulate their divine universe, there is a need for IRCU leadership to build Christian-Muslim interfaith hierarchical governance structures from the grassroots to the national level. The grassroots interfaith committees would then identify educational pioneers from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds in their local committees. In addition, a team of specialists at district local government levels needs to be identified to resolve interfaith conflicts that might pop up as a result of disagreements on the yardsticks to be followed to identify community education icons to be venerated. Another

team of specialists needs to examine and document the history of formal education among the diverse tribes in Uganda and bring to display the Christian and Muslim ancestors who played significant roles.

The successes and painful stories of Ugandan Christian and Muslim ancestors, coloured with constructive tales of elders in the arena of education development, need to be: incorporated in the religious foundation courses taught in the universities and projected in public lecture series. Such arrangements are most likely to build interfaith synergy, minimise interreligious conflicts, and influence young people to look forward to offering voluntary and monetary support towards the educational programmes in Uganda.

Next, a special timeline, once every year, needs to be gazetted so that Ugandans take time to honour and celebrate the memories of educational ancestors at household levels and at the local community gatherings. Literate households exist because there existed ancestors who laid the foundation of education in their lives. It is such mindful reconnections that if African Christianity and Islam are well-constructed, then religious communities can be influenced to contribute monetary resources to support the programme needs of religiously founded universities that play significant roles in empowering humanity with intellectually innovative skills. Finally, it is the duty of IRCU to construct Ubuntu financial resource distribution formula that ensures that locally generated revenues are equitably directed to support the development needs of Christian and Muslim Universities.

6. Success Fundraising Story of Church of Uganda

To boast the academic programmes of Uganda Christian University, in 2017, Church of Uganda Provincial Assembly ritualized a fundraising drive code-named UCU Sunday. The event takes place every last Sunday of September. Since its inception, the drive has generated funds from the Church of Uganda Christian congregations displayed in **Table 2** (Nyapendi, 2024).

Table 2. Fundraising trends of Church of Uganda.

Year	Amount (Uganda Shillings)	Year	Amount (Uganda Shillings)
2017	67,256,250	2021	35,740,200
2018	243,262,336	2022	240,203,260
2019	257,133,805	2023	297,224,648
2020	25,078,854		

Out of the finances realised every year, 65 percent is used for infrastructural development programmes of the university, 20 percent is channelled to cater for the scholarship support of the daughters and sons of clergy, and 15 percent is spent on clergy capacity building (Nyapendi, 2024).

In support, other Church of Uganda-founded academic institutions that are

scattered all over the country are yet to be brought on board to partake of UCU Sunday collections. But given the fact that the needs of academic institutions are overwhelming, relying on one day in a year, may not yield substantial funds quickly to trickle down to the tributary lower-level academic institutions. This then means that there is a need to rethink how best the money hunting strategy can be constructed to speak to the African ritualistic mental universe.

Generally, the local money mobilization drive, pioneered by Church of Uganda, although, the ritualistic display on ground, is not tagged to reflecting on the works of African ancestors in the arena of the advancement of education in Uganda, it is a worthy strategy to be Christian and Islam Africanised by the Interreligious Council of Uganda and adopted by all religious groups in Uganda. Raising money locally is one way of involving faith adherents to own their academic institutions, reduce overdependence on external funding, and in the long run, to ensure provision of affordable quality education services to society.

7. Conclusion

Raising monetary resources to support the common good of society is an art and a science. It is an art in the sense that it involves mingling with natives relationally to extract funds from them, and it is a science because leaders must showcase the realised funds. However, the art of raising money to support the infrastructural and administrative needs of religiously funded universities is minimal among Christian and Muslim religious leaders in Uganda. As such, poor academic performance, infrastructural breakdowns, and demotivated employees are the outcomes. Nonetheless, if ritualised fundraising drives are brought to the limelight, are well-crafted, and are jointly owned by Christian and Muslim religious leaders, then monetary resources can be raised locally through the veneration and celebration of African ancestors to support the programme growth of religiously founded universities in Uganda.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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