

THE VICE CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS AT CELEBRATING WANGUSA @80
EVENT AT YUSUF LULE CENTRAL TEACHING FACILITY (AUDITORIUM)
FRIDAY 8th JULY, 2022.

The Guest of Honour, Prof Timothy Wangusa
The Principal, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Deans and Directors,
Our Visiting Scholars,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of staff,
Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are privileged once again to be present at an event that honours and acknowledges Makerere's rich heritage and the people who have worked resolutely to build its indomitable strength in its century of existence. This year's celebrations and events are performing an extraordinary feat in the life of this university by reclaiming and privileging Makerere's birthright, stories and culture. I must state that this is a phenomenal time to be present here and I hope and believe that the marking of a hundred years has shone a bright light on Makerere's rich history, vibrant present and dazzling future.

I am very pleased that we are here this afternoon to recognize and celebrate Prof. Timothy Wangusa, one of Makerere's treasured literary sons. Timothy Wangusa came to us in 1964 and has never looked back. Makerere University has watched and nurtured Wangusa and also seen Wangusa give back to Makerere and to the wider community in amazing ways.

In his remarkable and arresting academic journey, Wangusa became the first Ph.D in the Department of Literature in 1975 since Makerere became an independent University in 1970. Wangusa is a person of many firsts but this one stands out in Makerere's memory because Wangusa made this history in turbulent times. He is one of the academics who never left and knows the history of those troubled times very well but fortunately for us he also recounts Makerere's outstanding achievements with fervor. He is part and parcel of the face of resilience of this beloved place and boasts of knowing it in intimate detail. In his doctoral study he argued that the future of African poetry lay in the realization that orality was key in Africa's literary practice, an argument that resonates with the foundational work by Pio Zirimu and Austin Bukenya on the idea of Orature. The term Orature is closely associated with the Department of Literature and Makerere University and is widely used in scholarship across different continents. In fact during his visit in 2013, another of Makerere's illustrious sons, Ngugi wa Thiong'o called upon Makerere to patent the term as one of its notable achievements in nurturing Uganda and Africa's intangible heritage. This, for us, is a step in the right direction.

Wangusa is a decorated figure in many circles but the one which has made Makerere's name resound in many quarters and corners of the globe is his writing. He stands as one

of Uganda's most prolific writers whose poetic prowess is unbeatable. He boasts of over 14 titles to his name and half of them are poetry collections some of which have poems that have become signature quotations such as The State is my Shepherd: Psalm 23 Part II with its opening line : The state is my shepherd , I shall not want. The social commentary in his work particularly in his poems appeals to the most ordinary of us and of course the humour keeps readers and listeners going.

We are proud at Makerere to host you today as you perform a homecoming at 80 years young we would say. We appreciate your amplifying ideas to make them speak across generations and communities. We are proud that Makerere is your nest and that you continue to demonstrate the importance of research and writing, a culture that we at Makerere want to continue to entrench in our society because a research led university can claim ownership of ideas and can flag off philosophies and anchor its communities in innovation and progress. We welcome you and wish you many more years as

We build for the future.

In this vein, I declare this event open.