

# UNIMA Bulletin



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## Ending on a good note

Zomba is a city that owes much of its energy to the presence of University of Malawi students. Thanks to this historic institution, the city becomes alive when students arrive at the start of each semester. The markets and shops are filled, and the clubs thrive, thanks to students that seek to unwind from classes and assignments on the weekend.

As the year 2024 closed, UNIMA again did much to make Zomba a bustling space of activity. One of these events was the UNIMA Theatre Festival. This has become a moment that many in the country look forward to, as fledgling and professional drama, comedy and dance troupes flock to the Chirunga campus to showcase mesmerizing performances. The performances start right from the city, with a marching band, letting people know that insofar as we are talking arts in Malawi, UNIMA is the place to be.

Peering down upon all this colourful activity is the once beautiful Zomba Mountain whose natural vesture is being torn apart, fast losing its majesty.

We have nestled at the foot of the mountain for as long as we have made this city our

home. The mountain is fast becoming a sorry sight, thanks to human activity, as we wantonly cut down the trees on it. We must be a curious sight to the monkeys that populate the mountain. So curious that, every now and then, they come down to the campus to see if we indeed still teach Environmental Ethics, or if the university holds lectures highlighting the importance of ecological balance. On the mountain, the simian folk perch on the remaining trees, feasting on mulunguzi fruit, and watch the city's citizens haul log after log of pine trees down the mountain, muscles rippling in the effort. Months later, the apes marvel at the young scholars who hike up the mountain, sweating profusely, to plant seedling after seedling in the damp earth. The mountain owes much of its remaining greenery to the avid zeal of students and staff who – year after year – tirelessly engage in reforestation drives, only for the trees to be mercilessly mowed down as soon as they dare to become taller than you and me.

Most of us take pleasure in hiking up the mountain every now and then, to appreciate the flora and fauna that clothe its slopes. The mountain has inspired

many of Malawi's poets, a good number of whom have passed through the corridors of the campus. Verses have been penned of mythical subterranean serpents and of rainmakers who inhabited these slopes. Songs have been sung of love found and lost on the mountain.

What are we doing to ensure that this mountain will not just remain in poetry verses and in Throwback Thursday pictures to be displayed in the future?

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*Chinese Deputy Ambassador to Malawi, Mr. Wang Hao.*

## UNIMA and Chinese Delegation Discuss Opportunities for Collaboration

The University of Malawi (UNIMA) recently hosted the Chinese Deputy Ambassador to Malawi, Mr. Wang Hao, accompanied by other Chinese officials. The UNIMA delegation, led by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Samson Sajidu, also included the University Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu, various heads of departments, and other staff members. The meeting, held in the University office boardroom on 25th November 2024, focused on exploring potential areas of collaboration.

During the meeting, Professor Sajidu welcomed the Chinese officials and expressed gratitude for their visit. He began by introducing the University of Malawi, outlining its strategic objectives and existing partnerships with other international universities. He also highlighted some of the challenges currently facing the institution, along with potential areas for collaboration.

In his remarks, Mr Hao expressed enthusiasm for the visit, describing it as an exciting experience. Before the meeting, the Chinese officials toured the campus, and admired the beauty of the UNIMA. He further emphasised their interest in fostering a cordial relationship with the university, noting that the presentation by Prof. Sajidu provided a comprehensive overview of its operations and vision.

He continued by explaining China's foreign policy, whose main objective is to build a global community with a shared future. "To achieve this goal, the Chinese President has introduced three major initiatives: the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Global Development Initiative," he stated. He further outlined some of the action plans that form the foundation of China-Africa collaboration, including cultural exchange, a plan for trade prosperity, infrastructure collaboration, and other initiatives.

The discussions centered on potential collaborations. The UNIMA delegation proposed student and staff exchange programmes, enabling Chinese students

to spend a semester at UNIMA and vice versa. They also suggested that UNIMA students could benefit from opportunities to work in Chinese institutions, gaining insight into different governance systems. Additionally, the delegation mentioned that, as China is a leading producer of technological gadgets, partnerships with Chinese companies could benefit UNIMA. These agreements could enable the supply of essential devices, such as computers and phones, to support students' academic needs. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of UNIMA branded gifts to the Chinese officials, who in turn presented gifts to the UNIMA team.



*The two leaders engaged in talks.*





*Members of the Press appreciate some of UNIMA's innovations.*

## UNIMA's Media Open Day Unveils Innovations, Opportunities and Challenges

The University of Malawi (UNIMA) held a Media Open Day on 22nd November 2024 at the Library Quadrangle, providing a platform to showcase its achievements, address challenges, and outline its ambitious vision for growth and innovation. The event brought together representatives from various university departments and journalists from prominent media houses, including Zodiak Broadcasting Station, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Mibawa, Malawi Institute of Journalism, Times Group, Chanco Radio and TV, Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO), and Malawi News Agency (MANA). It was a celebration of UNIMA's commitment to transparency and public engagement.

The event was graced by UNIMA's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, and was attended by the University Registrar, Mr. Martin Matululu, the Deputy University Registrar, Mr. Alfred Iteta Banda, invited guests, and traditional chiefs from surrounding areas, including

T/A Chikowi, T/A Mwambo, T/A Mlumbé, and GVH Chikanda. The presence of the chiefs underscored UNIMA's strong community ties and collaborative approach to development.

Dr. Madise explained that the Media Open Day aimed to give journalists an opportunity to appreciate the university's teaching and learning and research activities and initiatives. "We are aware that the media requires a lot of information from the university. This event was organized to provide that information and to foster a better understanding of our operations," he said. He also highlighted some of the challenges UNIMA faces, such as inadequate hostel accommodation, which has become pressing as the university plans to grow its student population to 15,000 by 2026.

During his presentation, Dr. Madise outlined UNIMA's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, the university's five schools, and its international collaborations. Each

school showcased its unique programs and innovative student and staff projects, reflecting UNIMA's dedication to fostering creativity and practical problem-solving.

Journalists toured the campus, beginning with the university's inclusive library facilities, which feature specialized spaces to support students with special needs. They also visited state-of-the-art laboratories in Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Computer Science, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). These tours highlighted the university's commitment to providing a world-class learning environment while showcasing ongoing projects by students and staff.

The event concluded with an exhibition of student-led projects, affirming UNIMA's role as a hub for innovation and creativity. By engaging the media and local leaders, the university reaffirmed its dedication to shaping the future of higher education in Malawi.





*Attendees of the UNIMA Alumni Association meeting.*

## Relaunching the University of Malawi Alumni Association: Building Bridges to the Future

The University of Malawi (UNIMA) is proud to announce the relaunch of its Alumni Association, a significant milestone in reconnecting with its graduates and building a vibrant alumni community. This initiative marks a renewed commitment to strengthening ties between the university and its alumni, with the ultimate goal of mobilizing resources to achieve the institution's strategic goals.

One of the key steps leading up to the relaunch was the successful hosting of the Alumni Open Day. Held on November 23rd, 2024, this event brought together graduates from all walks of life for a day of networking, reminiscence, and inspiration. In his recorded welcoming remarks, Professor Samson Sajidu, UNIMA's Vice Chancellor, highlighted the university's remarkable progress in expanding its student body, academic programmes, and infrastructure. Professor Sajidu encouraged alumni to engage with resource mobilization initiatives

and contribute ideas to help realize the university's ambitions.

Most notably, an interim committee was the selected, entrusted with laying the foundation for the revitalized Alumni Association. Comprising graduates across generations and industries, the committee brings diverse expertise to its mission. The members are as follows: President: Limbani Nsapato; Vice President: Antony Faiti Malunga; General Secretary: Pempho Tan 90 Kampini; Vice General Secretary: Ester Halawa; Treasurer General: Roseby Makawa; Social Welfare Officer: Stella Fusani Gama; Regional Chapter Representatives: Northern Region: Chrispin Mphande, Central Region: Precious Msambiro, Eastern Region: Liviness Chiusiwa Misoya, Southern Region: Wilkins Mijiga.

Speaking about the relaunch, the General Secretary, Pempho Tan 90 Kampini, expressed the transformative role UNIMA

has played in shaping its graduates. "The University of Malawi has shaped many of us into the professionals we are today. I believe the Alumni Association provides an excellent opportunity for us to give back, reconnect, and inspire the next generation of students," he said. "I am honored to serve and look forward to working with fellow alumni to build a legacy of excellence and impact."

**A message from the Alumni Relations Office:** As we relaunch the UNIMA Alumni Association, we invite all graduates to join us in this exciting journey. Alumni can register on [alumni.unima.ac.mw](http://alumni.unima.ac.mw). Whether through mentorship, research support, or contributing to our fundraising efforts, your involvement will make a lasting impact. Together, let's celebrate our shared legacy and build bridges to an even brighter future for UNIMA.





*UNIMA students celebrate the announcement of the awards initiative.*

## UNIMA Students to Benefit from NBM Multi-Million Kwacha Scholarship Initiative

Students from the University of Malawi (UNIMA) and six other universities are set to benefit from the newly launched National Bank of Malawi (NBM) Scholarship and Best Performing Students Awards. This transformative initiative, launched on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2024, at the Great Hall, University of Malawi, will provide scholarships and awards to 10 students from each of the seven partner universities annually, supporting a total of 70 students in its inaugural year and an additional 70 students each year after that. The bank will support these students throughout their education.

The initiative, which combines financial aid, laptops, mentorship, and coaching for recipients, will see NBM spending a total of 270 million Malawi kwacha in the first year, and the budget will expand with an additional 270 million Malawi kwacha each year.

Dignitaries at the launch included Dr. Levis Eneya, Director of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, and Dr. Mangani Katundu, Secretary for Education. Representatives from NBM

and from partnering universities also graced the event, alongside other notable guests.

Speaking during the launch, NBM Chief Executive Officer Harold Jiya highlighted the importance of supporting students in the universities, noting that some students lack basic needs, which affects their performance. He emphasized that promoting the education for needy and deserving students has been at the heart of the bank.

UNIMA Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr. Sunduzwayo Madise, commended the bank for introducing the initiative and he thanked the bank for raising the bar in terms of its corporate social responsibility. He also acknowledged the longstanding relationship – spanning 40 years – that has existed between the bank and the University of Malawi.

The other six universities to benefit from the initiative include MUBAS, MUST, Mzuni, CUNIMA, LUANAR, and KUHeS.



*Mr. Harold Jiya, NBM Chief Executive Officer.*





*Mwayi Nyando (C), one of the first recipients of the scholarship, flanked by Prof. Samson Sajidu (R) and Prof. Michael Chasukwa (L).*

## Inspiring Generations: Richard Tambulasi Memorial Scholarship Unveiled

In a landmark move, the University of Malawi, through the Department of Political Science and Governance and the Department of Management and Leadership Studies, launched the *Richard Tambulasi Memorial Scholarship* on 5th December, 2024. The scholarship honours the late Professor Richard Tambulasi, a prominent academic and leader who passed on in February, 2021. At the time of his passing, Professor Tambulasi was the Principal of what was then Chancellor College.

At the launch event, the guest of honour, Professor Samson Sajidu, Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi, praised late Tambulasi's hard work and leadership, emphasizing his dedication to excellence in both academia and administration.

"As someone who had a privilege of working with him during my tenure as Vice Principal, I witnessed, first-hand, his tireless commitment to the success of the college and its students," he said.

Professor Sajidu also encouraged students from Ntaja Community Day Secondary School, who attended the launch, to draw inspiration from the late Tambulasi's example, urging them to aim high in their

education.

The scholarship, which is funded by the Department of Political Science and Governance and the Department of Management and Leadership Studies, and will benefit four Master's students each year. Each recipient will receive a tuition fee waiver and a research grant of MK400,000, among other benefits. The scholarship is only available to students who are pursuing the following Master's programmes: Master of Public Administration and Management, Master of Arts in Political Science, Master of Arts in Development Studies, and Master of Arts in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations. The candidates who are eligible for the scholarship are those who graduated within the past three years with a Bachelor's degree with a minimum GPA of 3.0.

During the ceremony, which took place at the Wandoda Lecture Theatre, the Tambulasi family, including his widow, children, and brother, were in attendance. Mr. Felix Tambulasi, the younger brother of the late Professor, expressed the family's gratitude to the university for honouring his brother's legacy with this scholarship initiative. He also thanked the university for inviting and providing transportation

to students from Ntaja, the home village of the late Professor Tambulasi, to attend the event.

In his remarks, Mr. Felix Tambulasi made a request for the university to consider naming one of the university buildings in honour of his late brother. The request was swiftly embraced by Professor Sajidu, who promised that one of the new buildings would be named in honour of Professor Tambulasi, ensuring that his memory and contributions to the university would continue to inspire future generations.

Professor Tambulasi's legacy at the University of Malawi dates back to 2002 when he joined the university as a staff associate in the Department of Political Science and Governance. Over the years, he distinguished himself as a visionary leader, and committed academic, who quickly rose to the rank of Professor within a space of 10 years.

The launch of the *Richard Tambulasi Memorial Scholarship* is a significant step in preserving the late Professor's legacy and provides an opportunity to students under the two departments to further their education at the university.





*A theatre performance in the Great Hall.*

## UNIMA Theatre Festival 2024: Celebrating the Arts

For a long time, the University of Malawi has been known as a site for nurturing artistic creativity in Malawi. This applies to many fields in the arts, but theatre particularly stands out. It is no surprise, therefore, that the institution once again hosted the UNIMA Theatre Festival, which brought together various art forms from different creatives across the country. The festival took place in the Great Hall from 22nd to 24th November 2024. During the festival, the Director of the event, Dr. Zindaba Chisiza, mentioned that the gathering reflected the university's strategic objective to move beyond mere outreach and embrace engagement.

"This shift underscores our commitment to fostering dynamic partnerships and creating meaningful impact in our communities," he said. "It is a vision rooted in the belief that education and creativity go hand in hand. This initiative also aims to revitalize theatre and culture in Malawi and establish a hands-on

learning platform for students specializing in theatre, creative arts, music, dance and fashion." He continued by stating that the university is not only nurturing talent but also preserving and advancing the nation's rich cultural heritage.

Dr. Chisiza also expressed gratitude to the sponsors of the event, emphasizing that their partnership ensured the event's success: "To our artists, staff, and students, thank you for your dedication, creativity, and hard work. This event would not have been possible without your collective effort and passion."

The event attracted over 200 attendees from both within and outside the university. During the festival, many activities took place, including games, competitions, poetry recitals, and dramatic performances in comedy and other genres. Attendees enjoyed the creativity showcased by the artists. Among the groups that participated were Ngwenyama Cultural Dance Troupe,

UNIMA Acting Class, Dzuwa Arts, and Mitundu Chisamba Dance Troupe, among others.

Standard Bank sponsored the event with MK15,000,000. A representative from Standard Bank, the Head of Brand and Marketing, Ms. Tamanda Ng'ombe, commended the university for the festival initiative, highlighting that it embodies the bank's commitment to nurturing the vibrant culture of the country. "We are actively promoting arts and culture, nurturing creativity, preserving heritage, and driving growth in Malawi," she said.

She further encouraged students, artists, and performers to use the opportunity to showcase their talent to the world. She added that the festival also provides a chance to network and meet individuals who can help advance their careers as they consider their future paths.





*A panel discussion on academic freedom, during the launch.*

## UNIMA Academic Staff Celebrate Academic Freedom Book Launch

As one arrives at the University of Malawi campus in Zomba, they are welcomed by a banner that proclaims the institution as “The Home of Academic Freedom”. It is therefore unsurprising that UNIMA staff have been key players in the writing of a book titled *Academic Freedom in Africa: The Struggle Rages On*, published by Routledge. The launch of the book was hosted by the Academic Staff Union of the University of Malawi on 20th December, 2024. This landmark event underscored the ongoing importance of academic freedom across the African continent. Held at the newly constructed Economics Building, the launch brought together academics from various institutions and other professionals from across Malawi. The event not only served to celebrate the publication of this important academic work but also provided a platform for addressing critical issues surrounding academic freedom in Africa today.

The day began with a symbolic solidarity march, setting a bold tone for the entire event. A large group of academics, dressed in red attire, marched from the University Office to the University of Malawi administration block. The march was a public demonstration of their commitment to defending and promoting academic freedom. Carrying placards with messages advocating for academic independence, the marchers emphasized the need for universities to remain free from external political pressures. This act of solidarity was not just a call to action but a visible reminder that the struggle for academic freedom is ongoing and requires a collective effort to protect the integrity of higher education.

Following the march, the event transitioned into the formal proceedings, with Professor Blessings Chinsinga delivering the keynote address. In his speech, Professor Chinsinga highlighted the vital role academic freedom

plays in shaping both higher education and society as a whole.

“Academic freedom is very important because it enables us to pursue knowledge without restraint. This is a unique attribute of universities as institutions of higher education. It allows us to challenge conventional wisdom, think outside the box, and propose solutions that are often transformative for the problems we face as a society,” he stated.

The event was further enriched by the official launch of the book, which comprises 17 chapters written by contributors from across the globe. It has been edited by Dr. Yamikani Ndasauka and Professor Garton Kamchedzera. The book offers a comprehensive examination of the challenges to academic freedom across Africa, exploring the political and social factors that have shaped the landscape of academic freedom on the continent.





*Stakeholders discussing ways of improving the new programme.*

## SLEG Engages Stakeholders on New Programme

The School of Law, Economics, and Government, through the Department of Politics and Government, conducted a stakeholder workshop in Blantyre at Moneymen on 20th December, 2024. The workshop was graced by the Dean of the School of LEG, Professor Happy Kayuni, and attended by staff members from the university as well as other stakeholders.

The workshop aimed to discuss and review a new programme being introduced by the school: the Master of Arts in Development Studies, with a specialisation in Political Economy Analysis.

In his remarks, Professor Kayuni expressed gratitude to all attendees and shared that the school had conducted a training needs survey. Based on this survey, it was evident that an overwhelming number of stakeholders identified a need for the programme to address specific gaps and challenges in Malawi. He emphasized that inviting key stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft programme structure was a crucial step in the development process.

He further explained that the programme

will have a duration of two years and will be offered in a blended mode, aligning with the University of Malawi's strategic goal of increasing student enrolment and expanding access to education.

During the workshop, a presentation was delivered to review the draft programme, focusing on entry requirements, strategies to enhance its appeal, ways to ensure the programme stands out among others.

The programme seeks to integrate two essential elements – economics and politics – while addressing development challenges. It is designed to bring together professionals with diverse backgrounds in these fields in a holistic manner. It also aims to ensure that practitioners and policymakers are well-versed in how politics influences the economy, how the economy impacts politics, and how these dynamics affect development.

The target audience includes policymakers, individuals working in international organizations and NGOs, stakeholders involved in development, decision-makers, advisors, and researchers in institutions focusing on development.

Ms. Fundi Kayamba-Phiri, a Strategic Learning Lead at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) under the Tikulane Project, commented that the programme is a valuable addition to the university's existing offerings. She noted that it would attract a wide range of professionals, including those in her field of international development.

She further acknowledged the significant gap in political economy analysis within Malawi's public sector, highlighting the importance of addressing critical national issues and understanding the political space and its role in development. She emphasized that having individuals trained as political economy analysts is essential for fostering meaningful changes in decision-making processes at both national and international levels.

"The interdisciplinary nature of the programme makes it a cross-cutting initiative, enabling students from diverse backgrounds in development studies to acquire skills that will allow them to contribute effectively in various public sectors," she said.





*Attendees during a moment of relaxation at the meeting.*

## PANGeA Partners Strengthen Commitment to Academic Excellence

Since 2010, the University of Malawi has been a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding that established the Partnership for Africa's Next Generation of Academics (PANGeA). This partnership involves University of Botswana, University of Ghana, Yaounde University I, University of Dar es Salaam, Makerere University, University of Malawi, University of Nairobi, and Stellenbosch University.

Between 25-26 November, 2024, UNIMA's Executive Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira, accompanied by the local PANGeA Coordinator, Prof. Ken Lipenga, attended the annual PANGeA Board meeting, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya. During the meeting, representatives of the partner universities strengthened their commitment to the training of Africa's next generation of academics. Members discussed ways of improving various skills of African academics, including increasing funds for the Doctoral programme, resuscitating the Early Career workshops and increasing support for staff and student mobility, among others.

Making a presentation on UNIMA's progress in terms of training needs, Dr. Ngwira highlighted the fact that 12 members of staff in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences have been trained through the PANGeA programme, and that all of them have held positions of leadership at the university and elsewhere, reflecting the success of the partnership. He also informed the gathering that all the Malawian students who had gone for studies graduated, representing a 100% completion rate. A good number of the graduates have been promoted to various ranks, and many others have also attained prestigious fellowships after graduating.

The executive dean highlighted that what was most pressing at the moment was increased sharing of knowledge and skills between universities in the PANGeA network, a point also raised by representatives of other universities. The meeting, therefore, proposed increased efforts in mobility of staff and students across the universities, as well as more research collaboration.

To this end, the meeting resolved to develop a database of research focus areas and their personnel at each of the member universities, to be shared amongst the universities.



*Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira receives a gift from the host, Prof. Peter Wasamba (University of Nairobi).*





*The poet reads from her publication.*

## Celebrating Poetry: Mtenje launches *Forms of Slaughter*

The University of Malawi has long been known as one of the main hubs for literary production and criticism. It holds a central place in Malawi's literary history, as many of the country's renowned creative writers have passed through its corridors. The latest writer to etch her name into this history is Dr. Asante Mtenje, an Associate Professor in the Department of Literary Studies who, with the launch of her poetry collection, *Forms of Slaughter and other poems*, firmly secures her place in this pantheon of versifiers.

On 22nd December, 2024, Mtenje launched the collection at African Heritage in Zomba. During the function, various poets and musicians supported the writer with performances of their own, adding beauty to what was an already thrilling event.

As a way of teasing out more information about the poetry and the poet, Dr. Timwa Lipenga, a work colleague and fellow writer, engaged Mtenje in a conversation around *Forms of Slaughter and other poems*. During this conversation, the poet confessed that the title of the book was a way of continuing a topic started

by the Nigerian poet, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu. It is a way of adding her voice to public opinions on women's dressing, a topic that is close to her heart and features quite a lot in the book. During the conversation, she also highlighted that the poems originate from both publicly known topics, as well as from experiences that are more private.

While making the compilation, the poet decided to place her poetry into four categories, based on the issues that are being addressed. Her style cannot be pinned down, as she sometimes displays the instapoet-trend of catching brief,

fleeting moments of poetry in a few lines, while other poems comprise of longer stanzas that build upon each other to capture broader experiences of humanity. In a similar fashion, some of the poems display a keen acknowledgement of her cultural context, injecting local linguistic and geographical references into the verse, whereas other poems have a more universal appeal.

*Forms of Slaughter and other poems* has been published by Pan African Publishers, and is currently available in most of the major bookstores in the country.



*Academics, writers, friends and family attended the launch.*



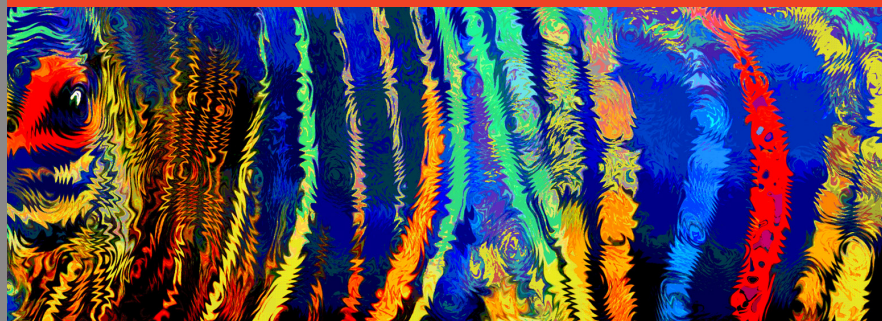
# New Book Explores Dynamics of African Traditional Religions

**43** BiAS - Bible in Africa Studies  
Exploring Religion in Africa 16

Louis W. Ndekha, Rhodian Munyenembe and Judith Bachmann (Eds.)

## AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS REVISITED Dynamics in Indigenous Religions in 21st Century Africa

Essays in Honour of  
Monsignor Professor Joseph Chaphadzika Chakanza



 University  
of Bamberg  
Press

*The front cover of the book.*

contains essays written by various people in honour of Monsignor Professor Joseph Chaphadzika Chakanza.

According to Ndekha, the book attempts to place African Traditional Religions (ATR) within the broader framework of social change in Africa. The actual idea for the book stems from a conference that he attended in Germany, where he met Judith Bachmann. "The Eurocentric perspectives that characterised the presentations in that symposium convinced me of the need to research contemporary developments from an African perspective," he said. The idea was shared with his two companions, who were equally excited with the concept. It has taken 24 months from the time the idea was conceived, to publication.

The book celebrates and continues the work of Professor Joseph Chakanza, who was once a staff member in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at UNIMA. At the heart of Chakanza's research was the enduring relationship between traditional religions and culture. With *African Traditional Religions Revisited*, the authors are presenting a break from conventional approaches to ATR, where the focus is on its perceived archaic nature, to considering it as a live religion that influences other religions at present. The majority of chapter contributions are from African authors, but the book also includes authors from outside the continent.

Ndekha points out that the book has already garnered a lot of interest, with various people inquiring how they can access it. Some institutions are also intending to place it on their ATR syllabi. The book has been published by the University of Bamberg Press, under the Exploring Religions in Africa Series (ERA). It is open access, and can therefore be accessed on <https://fis.uni-bamberg.de/handle/uniba/98087>. Hard copies are also in transit and will be accessible through the Kachere Series.

As the year closes, we celebrate yet another publication emerging from the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. The book, which has been edited by Louis Ndekha (University of Malawi),

Judith Bachmann (Heidelberg University) and Rhodian Munyenembe (Mzuzu University), is entitled *African Traditional Religions Revisited: Dynamics in Indigenous Religions in 21st Century Africa*. The book





*Mr Joel Chigalu is sworn in as UNIMASA Speaker of Parliament by Dr Emmanuel Ngwira.*

## A New Era Begins: UNIMA Swears in Student Representative Council

The University of Malawi marked a significant transition in student leadership as the newly elected Student Representative Council (SRC) members were officially sworn into office during a ceremonial event at the Mwambo Lecture Theatre on 8th November 2024. Over 50 students gathered in the lecture theatre to witness the swearing-in ceremony, presided over by the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Emmanuel Ngwira, who also served as the guest of honor.

The event was further graced by the Director of Student Affairs (DOSA), Dr. Jonas Mwatseteza, and continued with the swearing-in of President-elect Mr. Mendenge Chisi and all newly elected members, symbolizing the formal transfer of leadership from the outgoing president, Mr. Thanks Elia Mwalwanda.

In his remarks, Dr. Ngwira emphasized the responsibilities and expectations of student leadership, reminding the newly elected members that their role is to represent the voices of those who elected them

and to uphold the university's values and principles. Dr. Mwatseteza congratulated the newly selected SRC members, assuring them of his availability. "My office remains open to support your initiatives that promote student welfare and academic excellence," he said. "Let's work together to create an environment where every student can thrive."

In his farewell address, outgoing SRC President Mr. Thanks Elia Mwalwanda reflected on his tenure with a message centered on unity and collaborative leadership: "Success in student leadership is not about individual brilliance but the collective effort of a dedicated team," he said. The newly sworn-in SRC President Chisi also delivered a speech, outlining his vision for the student body, which he described as "a new era" in UNIMA's student governance.

The ceremony was attended by various university officials, including Ms. Roseby Makawa, the hostel warden, as well as outgoing student representatives and

members of the university community, all gathered to witness this important milestone.



*Mr Thanks Elia Mwalwanda (L) congratulates the new SRC President, Mr Mendenge Chisi.*





*Students pose for a picture at the recruitment drive.*

## Huawei Recruitment Drive Highlights Career Pathways for UNIMA Students

The University of Malawi hosted a team from Huawei Technologies on 16th November, 2024, for a campus recruitment drive with students. The event, held at Chikowi Lecture Theatre 2, attracted many students. The Huawei Technologies team, comprising employees from various departments, was led by their Vice Director, Mr. Cheng Yao. During the event, the guests were warmly welcomed by Dr. Kondwani Munthali, a Senior Lecturer from the School of Natural and Applied Sciences, who expressed gratitude for their visit.

The event also featured members of the Computing Society, a student organization uniting individuals from diverse computing-related programs. The society provides a platform for sharing ideas,

knowledge, and resources, and it fosters networking, discussions, and collaborative learning through tutorials, workshops, and events that promote the development of technical and professional skills.

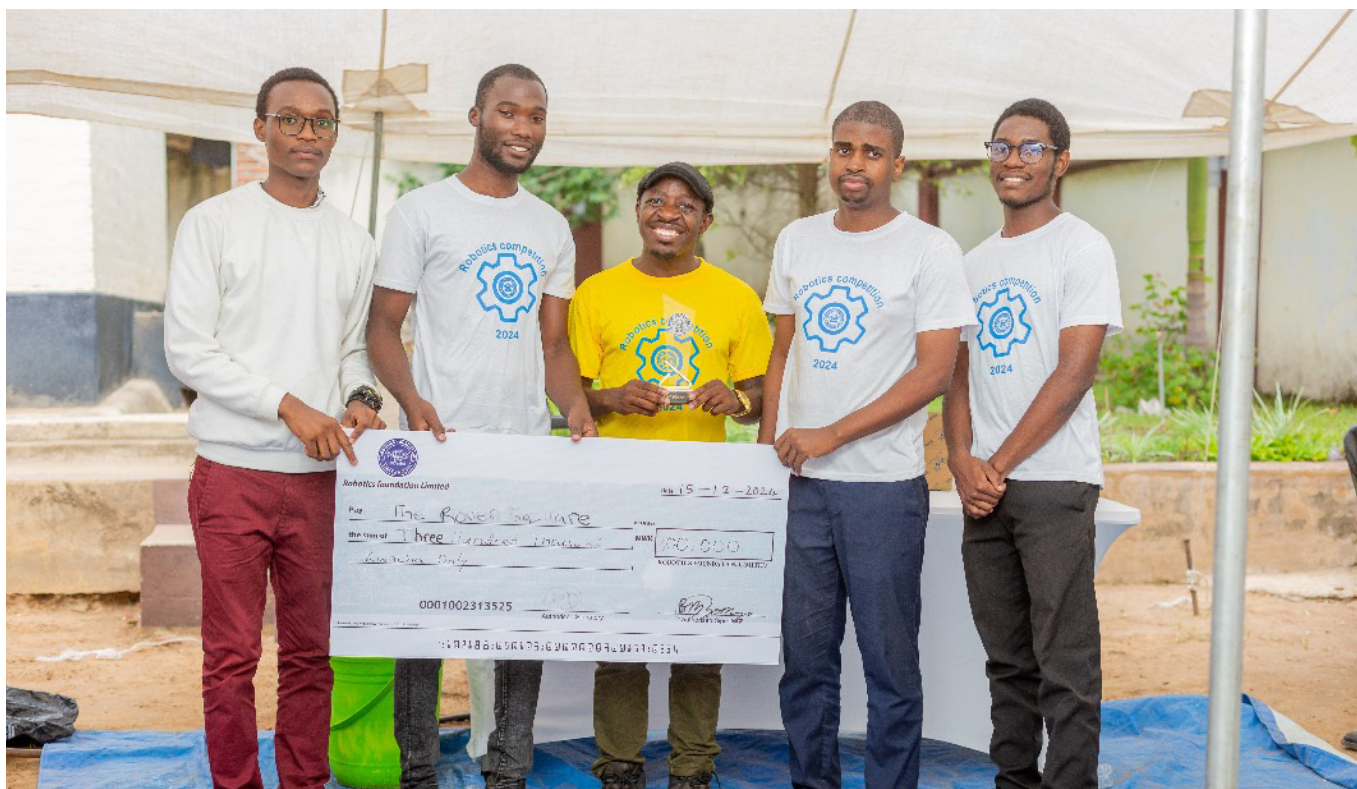
The visit aimed to inform students and recent graduates about the opportunities Huawei Technologies offers, including internships, job openings, and competitions. The team guided students on how to engage with Huawei and outlined the application process for these opportunities. They also shared personal success stories, highlighting how some team members secured their positions at Huawei through similar campus recruitment drives.

In his remarks, Cheng Yao expressed gratitude to the University of Malawi's

management for the opportunity to introduce the company to the students. He encouraged them to apply for the opportunities, giving examples of employees who were once students at UNIMA and are now part of Huawei Technologies' workforce. He also emphasized the importance of the partnership between Huawei Technologies and UNIMA, stating, "We need a lot of excellent talent in the form of fresh graduates to join us and work together hand in hand."

Students appreciated the team's visit, as the event provided valuable networking opportunities and useful information about career prospects. The event concluded with the distribution of branded Huawei items to the students.





*Proud winners display their dummy cheque.*

## UNIMA Students Win Robotics Innovation Competition

Students pursuing various programmes at UNIMA have emerged as winners of a competition organized by the Robotics Foundation Limited Malawi. The prize presentation ceremony took place on 15th December, 2024, at the Robotics Foundation Limited Malawi offices. The event attracted participants from various universities, including the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) and the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST). Additionally, innovative individuals from Blantyre and students from different technical colleges participated in the competition.

The competition focused on identifying the best 2024 artificial intelligence innovations and robotics projects that can be applied across different government sectors to achieve sustainable development goals.

The UNIMA team comprised 10 students pursuing Bachelor's degrees in Electronics, Computer Networking, Management, Information Technology, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Programming,

and related fields. They developed a machine called the Rover Square: a trolley designed to transport commodities without requiring physical labour. The students explained that the machine operates by following a user who possesses a coded electrical property material that enables the machine to track and move with them.

The students expressed gratitude to their course lecturers, Mr. Patrick Mzaza and Mr. Lumbani Loble, who accompanied them to the ceremony and provided support throughout the competition.

“For the students to participate, there were several motivating factors. Some of these included the opportunity to showcase their innovative ideas at the national level for the country's economic growth, to interact and share their innovative skills with students from different universities, and to gain recognition from the industrial sector once the competition is publicized, among others,” said Loble.

Considering how labour-intensive it is for people to transport items or commodities in hospitals, shops, construction companies, agricultural farms, and other sectors, the

students deemed it wise to implement the Rover Square to minimize labour and save time when transporting such items.

“The innovation aligns with the country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as SDG 2: Zero Hunger, as it can be used in agriculture to transport farm produce,” said Luwatiko Mlamba, a fourth-year student. He further stated that the innovation is environmentally friendly since it does not rely on fossil fuels.

Additionally, the innovation will contribute to improved public health by enabling doctors to attend to patients promptly with the necessary medical supplies. It will also boost industrial productivity by allowing workers who would otherwise be tasked with physically transporting commodities to focus on other essential roles within their institutions.

During the event, students showcased various innovations, and UNIMA students emerged as the overall winners. They were awarded a trophy, branded robotics T-shirts, medals, and a cash prize of MK300,000.





*Secondary school students on a tour of UNIMA.*

## UNIMA Education Society Inspires Next Generation of Scholars

In a bid to inspire future academics, the University of Malawi (UNIMA) Education Society hosted students from Nyambadwe Private Secondary School for an enlightening educational visit on Friday, November 1st, 2024. The visit, aimed at motivating prospective university students, provided the Blantyre-based secondary school learners with a comprehensive tour of UNIMA's prestigious campus. Students were guided through various academic facilities, including the School of Law, Economics and Government, the School of Education, and the School of Natural and Applied Sciences.

A highlight of the tour was the visit to the University's iconic Great Hall, which many students admitted they had neither seen

nor fully understood its significance before. Miss Tapiwa Sanga, an executive member of the Education Society, enlightened the visitors about the hall's prominence not only within the university but across Malawi. "The Great Hall stands as a testament to UNIMA's legacy of excellence," Sanga explained, citing notable events hosted in the venue. She particularly referenced the recent ceremony where the President of Mozambique received an honorary degree earlier this year, demonstrating the hall's significance in hosting prestigious academic and national events.

The tour left a lasting impression on the visiting students, who expressed their aspirations to one day join the ranks of UNIMA's student body, enrolled in the

institution's professional and specialized programmes. Their enthusiasm reflected the university's beloved motto of being "the university that God loves most."

This initiative by the UNIMA Education Society represents ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between secondary and tertiary education, inspiring the next generation of scholars to pursue higher education at one of Malawi's most esteemed institutions.

**CONTRIBUTOR:**  
Cosmos Sheha (Student Ambassador)



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



At UNIMA, we never tire of singing the praises of various individuals from our institution who are making a mark in the world. Their impact goes a long way towards proving our excellence, and the world's recognition of the same.

On this note, we therefore congratulate Dr. Jacob Mazalale as he joins the World Bank as Advisor to the World Bank's Executive Director for the Group 1 Constituency. Prior to this move, Dr. Mazalale was serving as Principal Secretary (Economic Affairs) in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. We wish him all the best as he continues to let our light shine.

We also welcome Mr. Tony Kanyumbu, as he reports for duties at UNIMA as Senior Assistant Registrar (Academic Support Services). We firmly believe the academic section is in good hands.

As a way of continuing to display commitment to all matters ethical, UNIMA has established an Institutional Integrity

Committee. The Chairperson is Dr. Samson MacJessie-Mbewe. Other members include Dr. Esthery Kunkwezu, Mr. Jimmy Kainja, Mr. Kumvenji Lamba, and Mr. Gilbert Nyong'onya. We wish them the best as they serve the institution.

As is the way of life, as we end the year, we have had our more tragic moments.

In November, the university lost Mr Cobbener Sungani, a Post Graduate Student pursuing Master of Arts in African Social and Economic History. May he rest in peace.

During this time, the wife of Mr Felix Mbendera, our Book Binding Technician, also passed away. We commit her soul to our Lord in heaven.

The daughter of Mr. Cryton Phapha, a carpenter in the Maintenance section, also passed away during this period. May she rest in peace.



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