



University of Dar es Salaam

Our March 2021 UDSM Alumnus

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Fikeni E.M.K. SENKORO



Year of Matriculation: 1972

Year of Graduation: 1975

Award: BA (Hons), The University of Dar es Salaam

More info:

- **M.A in Kiswahili (1977), University of Dar es Salaam;**
- **M.A in Comparative Literature (1978/79), University of Alberta, Canada;**
- **PhD in Kiswahili, University of Dar es Salaam**

Born on the 06 November 1951, in a village Gonja in what was called Pare [now Same] district, Fikeni Senkoro is our ‘Alumnus of the Month’ for March 2021. He attended primary school in his home district at Mtii Extended Primary School (1959-1965), while for secondary education he went outside his home district to Tabora Boys’ Secondary School (for ordinary-level classes, 1966-1969) and Mkwawa High School (for advanced-level classes of Form V-VI in 1970-71).

Upon passing the advanced-level subjects with flying colours, Fikeni secured admission for university studies at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1972 where he majored in languages and linguistics and successfully completed his B.A. programme in 1975, valiantly with first-class honours. Not surprisingly, he was retained by the Kiswahili Department as a tutorial assistant (1975–1977) while he undertook postgraduate studies as a transitional stage towards permanent recruitment. He became Assistant lecturer upon completing a master’s degree programme at UDSM in 1977. He subsequently got an opportunity to study further in the related area of Comparative Literature at the University of Alberta in Canada, where he earned a Master of Arts in comparative literature, after which he formally registered for a PhD at the University of Dar es Salaam and completed without a hitch. He has grown and progressed within the academic ranks from Tutorial Assistant (April 1975 to June 1977) to Assistant Lecturer (July 1977 to June 1980), to Lecturer (July 1980 - June 1983), Senior Lecturer (July 1983 to June 1997), and Associate Professor (July 1997 to November 2011).

From November 2011, he took up an appointment with Saint Augustine University of Tanzania as (full) Professor, working there for one year until November 2012, when he earned a one-year Visiting Professorship with Princeton University in USA in 2013. From May 2014 to July 2018, he had a four-year invitation by the University of Namibia’s Language Centre to serve as a Professor of Kiswahili and double up as Head of Kiswahili for Foreigners. There, he was instrumental in teaching Kiswahili to students and to various University-affiliated groups. He also had an opportunity of reaching out to higher-level academic, governmental and diplomatic officials in connection with the significance and utility of Kiswahili as a language of the larger eastern-southern African region and beyond. Previous to his appointment at UNAM in Namibia, Senkoro had been coordinator of the Centre for Literature and African Oral Traditions at UDSM’s Institute of Kiswahili Studies; head of the Kiswahili Department and Associate Dean for Research and Publications at the-then Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (now College of Humanities). He also had enjoyed a two-term membership of CODESRIA’s Executive Committee. He had received invitations as guest scholar at various universities including Wisconsin-Madison, Boston, Harvard and Princeton.

Professor Senkoro has a visibly high and creative publishing record. He has, to his credit, not less than 112 written works. They include 58 books and journal articles as well as 64 papers retrievable from published conference and symposium proceedings. Let us list only a few of his creative titles—solely written or co-authored, in poetic style or in prose:

- “The Proverb-Story in Written Kiswahili Literature,” (1981);
- *The Prostitute in African Literature* (1982);
- “In Memoriam: Shaaban Robert, 1909-1962 (1984);
- *Ushairi: Nadharia na Tahakiki [Poetry: Theory and Criticism]* (1988);
- *Jamila Mpenzi* (An anthology of short stories);
- “Mediocrity and Creativity in Tanzania’s Literature,” (1990);
- “Viewing Gender Through Tanzanian Lullabies” (1996);
- “The Structural and Social significance of the Journey in Children’s Folktales from Zanzibar” (1996);

- ‘A Rejoinder to Alice Mwihaki’s Article, “Phonetics and the Stylistic Appreciation of a Poetic Text: Focus on the Rhythm of Kiswahili Verse” (1998);
- *Adila* [a novel] (2002);
- “The Role of Language in Education and Poverty Alleviation: Tool for Access and Empowerment”;
- *Tuseme Kiswahili: A Multidimensional Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Swahili as a Foreign Language* [Elementary level] (2003; 2004);
- “Understanding Gender Through Genre: Oral Literature as a Vehicle for Gender Studies in East Africa” (2006);
- “Implications of Changing the Language of Instruction in Secondary and Tertiary Education in Tanzania” (2006);
- “Rethinking Popular Culture and Identity for the Youth in 21st-Century East Africa”;
- “In the Eyes of the Male Beholder: Language Use as Male Inscription of the Female Body in Film, Literature and Facebook” (2016);
- “Theoretical Configurations and Considerations on African Popular Culture” (2017);
- “The Use of Mother Tongue in Public Services in Namibia: A Short Thinking Piece” (2017);
- “Kiswahili Afrika: Jana, Leo na Kesho” (2018);
- “Tusife na kiu kando ya mto: Umuhimu wa ubidhaishaji wa Kiswahili” [*Literally* “Let us not die thirsty beside the river: The significance of marketing Kiswahili”] (2021).

But Professor Senkoro has also fully participated in and contributed to many public-domain as well as several private-institutional forums of critical decision-making or else of advice-offering importance, including CODESRIA Executive Committee; Association of Global Development of Kiswahili (CHAUKIDU); Academy of African Languages (ACALAN); Association of University Teachers of Kiswahili in East Africa (CHAWAKAMA); African Literature Association; African Studies Association; and Society for Children’s Literature. His alma mater, UDSM, has always felt happy in following up his academic and professional pursuits.



In discussion with colleagues and fellow specialists in the discipline of Kiswahili, on various issues affecting the growth, spread and impact of Kiswahili not only in Tanzania but also in East Africa and the global world of science, technology and regional integration.



After delivery of a paper at the seminar commemorating the Kiswahili Day in Dodoma (2021)

Fikeni E.M.K. SENKORO is Our March 2021 Alumnus, and his great stories begin here!

Get in touch with us through

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