



Our May 2022 UDSM Alumna

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.

Saïda YAHYA-OTHMAN



Year of matriculation: 1969

Year of graduation: 1972

Degree: B.A (First Division Hons), University of Dar es Salaam (1972).

More info:

- **M.A (University of Dar es Salaam, 1976);**
- **M.A (University of York, UK, 1976);**
- **Ph.D (University of Dar es Salaam, 1986)**

Saïda Yahya-Othman [née Saleh Yahya] is the University of Dar es Salaam’s ‘alumna of the month’ for May 2022 - a member of the graduating class of 1972. She was born on the 18th of June 1949 in Zanzibar. She attended the primary and secondary phases of her education in Zanzibar: at Town Primary School (from 1955 to 1961), Seyyida Maatuka Girls’ Secondary School, renamed later Ben Bella (from 1962 to 1965 for ‘O’-level) and Lumumba College (from 1966 to 1967 for ‘A’-level study). With a clear record of principal passes and credits in the examination results at the advanced secondary level, she was admitted to the University of Dar es Salaam in 1969, taking language and linguistics courses of study in the-then Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Saida was a high-level performer, and she completed her degree programme in record time, earning a B.A degree with the First Class honours.

Upon earning her degree, she was engaged for three months (April-June 1972) as a graduate teacher at Forodhani Secondary School in Dar es Salaam, after which she was taken on by the University of Dar es Salaam in a staff-development position of Tutorial Assistant while working on a masters’ degree in languages and linguistics (July 1972 to June 1974). In 1974, she left for another two-year masters’ programme at the University of York, U.K, which she completed in 1976. At York, Saida had had an extra advantage of a job within the University’s postgraduate-research setting as a Tutor of Kiswahili for almost the entire duration of her postgraduate study (1974–75), which offered her an opportunity of practising and testing language use in various contexts. After return from the UK in 1976, Saïda took on a number of responsibilities in her Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, including teaching courses across classes, researching as well as writing. She undertook her doctoral research programme with UDSM, which she successfully completed in 1986. Within the service with the University, she grew within academic ranks from Tutorial Assistant (1972–1974), to Assistant Lecturer (1974–1978), to Lecturer (1978–1990), to Senior Lecturer (1990–1998) and Associate Professor (1998–2013). Management responsibilities included headship of the Department (July 1988-June 1994), Associate Deanship (Academic) of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (December 1997–June 2000), Chairing of the Research and Publications Committee of the Political Science Department’s ‘Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania’ project [REDET] (1999–2012). Professor Yahya-Othman formally retired from the University in June 2013, after a period of over 40 years of dedicated service.

Quite apart from her normal academic tasks of teaching and research, she made a big contribution to the management and administrative sector of the University’s mission. More specifically, she served first as Director of Postgraduate Studies for one year (from 2000 to 2001), and then as Director of Research for 2½ years (Jan 2007–Jun 2009). But she has also, over time, rendered voluntary service for a number of intellectual causes and organisations, such as to the Language Association of Tanzania (1974–78); the Editorial Committee of the *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education* (1988–October 1994 and 2001–June 2009); the African Linguistics Association of Southern Africa, ALASA (July 1995–2003); the Advisory Editorial Board of *Discourse and Society* (November 1995–2013); the Editorial Board of *Mulika* (1999–2013); Vice-Chairperson of the University of Dar es Salaam Academic Staff Assembly, UDASA (April 2003–November 2006); the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), a feminist organisation dedicated to building a vibrant transformative feminist movement against patriarchy, gender inequality and neo-liberalism, to which she has served as a board member from April 2004 to date; Zanzibar Stone Town Heritage Society (2010 to-date); the Nyerere Resource Centre (established at COSTECH in 2015); and the Advisory Board of the National Archives

(January 2017–Jan 2020).

Saïda remains one of few ardent scholars in language and linguistics, as well as a prolific writer and trainer in discourse. She has published widely and is credited with quite a few publications, including five principal ones:

- *Uanazuoni wa Mwalimu Nyerere* (with Bashiru Ally). Kavazi la Mwalimu Nyerere [Nyerere Resource Centre], Dar es Salaam (2015);
- *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere. Book One: The Making of a Philosopher Ruler* (with Issa Shivji and Ng’wanza Kamata. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers (2020);
- *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere. Book Two: Becoming Nationalist* (with Issa Shivji and Ng’wanza Kamata. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers (2020);
- *Development as Rebellion: A Biography of Julius Nyerere: Book Three: Rebellion without Rebels* (with Issa Shivji and Ng’wanza Kamata. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers (2020);
- *Yes, In My Lifetime. Selected works of Haroub Othman* (as Editor), published by Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, Dar es Salaam (2013).

Six research/development projects are worth mentioning in which Saida had a very influential role, namely: Women Writing Africa – International, Feminist Press (1999-2007); Religion and Politics Project – Tanzania (2001-6); Empowerment Project, REDET (2007-to date); Kenya Constitutional Reforms, Kituo cha Katiba, Kampala (2008); Philanthropy project (2010); and Mwalimu Nyerere Biography Project (2012–2017).



June, 2013. Professor Saïda Yahya-Othman welcoming guests into Nkrumah Hall for a “Farewell” public lecture delivered by the first Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere Professorial Chair [or ‘Nyagodawa kwanza wa Kigoda cha Kitaaluma cha Mwalimu Nyerere’], Professor Issa Shivji (Chair 2008–2013) at Nkrumah Hall, UDSM.



A three-part pack of Julius Nyerere Biography in Three Volumes, by Issa Shivji, Ng’wanza Kamata & Saïda Yahya-Othman, published by Mkuki & Nyota (2020)

Saïda YAHYA-OTHMAN is Our May 2022 Alumna, and her great stories begin here!

Get in touch with us through

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