

SOKOINE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE



ORATION

By

Prof. Kallunde Pilly Sibuga, PhD

**On the Occasion of Conferring an Honorary Degree on
PROF. GEOFFREY RAPHAEL VEHAELI MMARI**

**29th November, 2013
Morogoro, Tanzania.**



PROF. GEOFFREY RAPHAEL VEHAELI MMARI (Dip. Edu. BA, MA, PhD)

The Chancellor of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA),
The Chairman of the SUA Council,
The Vice Chancellor,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Prof. Mmari's Education Profile

Prof Mmari was Born in Moshi, Kilimanjaro region. He took his primary school education from 1940 to 1946 at Ilembula, Njombe which was followed by two years of secondary school education (1949 – 1950) at Ilboru secondary School Arusha. During 1951 – 1952, Prof Mmari was a student at Tabora Secondary School and in 1953, he joined Makerere University College of East Africa, Kampala, Uganda for the Diploma in Education course which he successfully completed in 1956.

In 1962, Prof Mmari went to the University of Northern Iowa at Cedar Falls in the United States of America (USA) where he obtained his BA and subsequently his MA in 1964. Upon return to Tanzania, he embarked on his PhD studies at the University of Dar es Salaam from 1968 to 1974. Subsequent to attaining the PhD, Prof Mmari attended various short courses locally and abroad in Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the USA

Distinguished Service to Education in Tanzania

Professor Geoffrey R.V. Mmari is a renowned educator and visionary who has spent his professional life making important contributions to the educational sector in Tanzania and the world at large. He started his career as a teacher of mathematics as well as Kiswahili at Kahororo Secondary School, Bukoba in 1957, and later on moved to teach mathematics, physics, geography and Kiswahili at Ilboru Secondary School, Arusha from 1958 to 1962. In 1965, Prof. Mmari joined Tabora Secondary School where he taught Mathematics. In 1966 he moved to Shinyanga Secondary School as Headmaster as well as teacher of mathematics and general knowledge, positions he held up to 1969.

From 1970 Prof. Mmari joined tertiary level teaching when he was appointed Lecturer, Institute of Education of University College Dar es Salaam (1970 – 1973).

He quickly moved on into administration at tertiary level education while at the same time being involved in teaching. Between 1973 and 1974, Prof. Mmari was the Director of the Institute of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam and later on became the Head of the Department of Education (1974 – 1977). He went on to become the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (1977 – 1982) and later on rose to the position of Chief Academic Officer of the University of Dar es Salaam (1982 – 1984). During this upward movement, he continued to be involved in teaching and improvement of teaching of mathematics at secondary and tertiary levels of education in the country. In fact, Prof. Mmari has contributed immensely to improvement of the teaching of mathematics in Tanzania and he has been inspirational in that field throughout his career as an active teacher and as an administrator.

Publications

Prof Mmari is the author of many journal publications. He is also the co-editor (with Colin Legum) of the famous book titled “Mwalimu: the Influence of Nyerere” published by James Currey in London 1995. Prof Mmari has also edited a number of books in mathematics for secondary schools

Prof Mmari as Vice-Chancellor of three public Universities

Prof. Mmari has held the position of Vice Chancellor at three public universities. He was the first Vice-Chancellor of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) from 1984 – 1988 and subsequently held similar positions at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) from 1988 to 1991 and at the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) from 1993 to 2005. He has also served as the Provost of Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College, (TUDARCo), a constituent college of Tumaini University from 2005 to 2013, from where he recently retired. Throughout his tenure in these institutions, Prof Mmari made positive contributions which can still be recalled and seen as improvements in the running of the institutions of higher learning.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is pertinent to detail some of the ways in which Professor Mmari distinguished himself academically and administratively as the top leader of some of the of institutions he has led.

Prof. Mmari's distinguished Service at SUA as its Founding Vice-Chancellor

Prof. Mmari occupies an important part of the history of Sokoine University of Agriculture as he, in his capacity as SUA's first Vice-Chancellor (1984 – 1988), was instrumental in laying the foundation for the success associated with SUA as a well-respected brand name in academics both nationally and internationally. While a Vice-Chancellor of SUA, he distinguished himself as a very thorough administrator and a role model in public service. He always endeavoured to dig into the full background of any issue brought to his attention and this was very helpful in running the university while fully informed. He also made sure that all staff (from the lowest to the highest cadre of employees) could seek and obtain his audience without any bureaucratic hurdles. However anyone who brought any issue to him soon found out that he detested half-truths and lies.

A unique attribute of Prof. Mmari was exhibited by his efforts to physically visit different sections/areas of the university to see for himself the real situation on the ground. There are reports that he walked the whole length of SUA land boundary to determine what should be done to prevent squatter encroachments leading to the reinforcement of borders and demarcation of SUA land using permanent live landmarks including sisal and trees.

Contribution of Professor Mmari as Vice Chancellor of UDSM

Professor Mmari's appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the UDSM in 1988, his former University where he held the position of Chief Academic Officer before moving to SUA, was welcomed as home-coming and many were happy that for the first time in the history of the University, a career academic, was appointed Vice-Chancellor. His tenure at UDSM no doubt contributed to maintaining the academic excellence and world fame the UDSM is reknown for. Cases in point include the ability of Prof Mmari to diffuse potentially explosive situations involving aggrieved students or staff, when and if they occurred.

Prof. G.R.V. Mmari's Contribution as Vice-Chancellor of OUT

In his tenure as Vice-Chancellor of OUT, Prof. Mmari greatly contributed to moving OUT to its current successful position at the forefront of open and distance learning in Tanzania and in the East African region. This, he achieved through collaboration with existing distance education institutions as well as conventional Universities,

including SUA, which contributed through practical training and writing of training materials including books. At the same time, he greatly advanced the development of OUT staff capacity which consequently raised the profile of the Open University of Tanzania as we know it today.

Prof. G.R.V. Mmari as a Provost of TUDARCo

His recent past position is that of Provost of Tumaini University Dare es Salaam College (TUDARCo), a position he held from 2005 to 2013. As the leader of this institution, he contributed to the growth and expansion of Tumaini University, as a whole, as evidenced by some of the colleges of the university becoming autonomous universities.

Prof G.R.V. Mmari's Distinguished Service to Society in other Sectors

Professor Mmari has had positive impact in many other institutions and/or sectors through active involvement as Chairman/member of the respective boards. These include the Higher Education Accreditation Council, the National Examinations Council, the Tanzania Family Planning Association, the National Board of Auditors and Accountants (NBAA), Tanzania Posts Corporation (POSTA) and Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA). At different times he has also been a member of the Councils of different universities in Tanzania namely SUA, UDSM, State University of Zanzibar (SUZA), OUT and Tumaini University. He is a prominent member of the Mathematical Society of Tanzania in which he has also served as Chairman. Prof. Mmari also distinguished himself in the news media in Tanzania where he is a former President of the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the same organization.

Other recognition

Ladies and gentlemen, in 2003, Prof. Mmari was the recipient of the **Dr. Martin Luther King Drum Major for Justice** Award which is presented in commemoration of Dr. King's birthday on January 15th. This is an annual award, by the US Ambassador, honoring Tanzanians who have embodied the indomitable spirit of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Junior and his lifelong peaceful effort to achieve justice for all people.

CONCLUSION

The degree of **Doctor *Honoris causa*** is the name of the honorary degree offered by Sokoine University of Agriculture. An honorary degree is an academic degree for which a University has waived the usual requirements such as study and the passing of examinations. It is usually conferred as a way of honoring a distinguished person's contribution to a specific field or society in general.

The SUA honorary degree is conferred upon recommendation by the Senate and approval by Council of Sokoine University of Agriculture to a person who, in the opinion of Senate and Council, has rendered distinguished service in the advancement of any branch of learning or has otherwise rendered himself/herself worthy of such a degree through other engagements for the improvement of society.

In the 29 years since the establishment of SUA as a fully-fledged University in 1984, the degree has only been conferred once. The **first recipient, in 1997, was Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere**, first President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the first Chancellor of Sokoine University of Agriculture. Today, Prof. **Geoffrey Raphael Vehaeli Mmari becomes the second recipient of the honorary degree *Honoris causa* of Sokoine University of Agriculture.**

The Chancellor of Sokoine University of Agriculture,
The Chairman of the SUA Council,
The Vice Chancellor,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now have the honor and privilege to present to you, the distinguished Prof Geoffrey Raphael Vehaeli Mmari for the award of the degree of Doctor *Honoris causa* of Sokoine University of Agriculture.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Kallunde Pilly Sibuga, PhD