



University of Dar es Salaam

Our September 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.

ADOLFO CARIDADE MASCARENHAS



Year of matriculation: 1956 (Makerere College of East Africa)

Year of graduation: 1961; Degree: B.A (Hons. Univ. of London)

More: M.A, 1965; PhD, 1969 (University of California, Los Angeles)

Adolfo Mascarenhas was born in Mahenge (in Tanzania) on the 11th of February 1937 at the Kwiwo RC Mission Hospital, son of C. P. Mascarenhas who had in 1926 had joined the Tanganyikan section of the East African colonial military service the Kings African Rifles (KAR), the Tanganyikan part of the East African colonial military service located in Mahenge and was, under the Mandate of the League of Nations given the choice to administer Tanganyika Territory. Adolfo went to St Joseph Convent School (SJCS) in Dar es Salaam. In 1953 he sat for his Cambridge “O” levels and was awarded a First Class. His parents wanted to send him to UK. His father consulted a Father Walsh, who suggested that going to Makerere was a better option as it then offered a University of London degree.

In 1956 he went to Makerere the University College of East Africa, where the Dean of the Arts School was a Mathematician and he (Adolfo) wanted to study Physics, History and Geography but was advised against Physics as he had not studied the subject! So he eventually opted for English, History and Geography. Two years later he was the only student to have a ‘double honours’ degree from the University of London, in English and in Geography.

After his degree at Makerere in 1961, he immediately joined the Tanganyika Civil Service in the Town Planning Department but soon, with his East African diploma in education, he took up a teaching post at St Francis College Pugu (SFCP). At Pugu,

“I knew more about the physical Geography of Britain than they knew about Tanganyika or, for that matter, about East Africa. Yet I knew that the knowledge that all students had about their social and physical environment was far greater than all text book information, especially Dudley Stamp. I made it a point during Wednesdays and Saturdays to visit the various embassies and collect films or books. There were two other reasons for staying in Dar. I taught English at the Dar Technical College but spent most Saturday’s and Sundays collecting material on Dar es Salaam. The Manager of the Cathedral Book Store invited me to his house in Kurasini on the outskirts of the City. During dinner an American Professor asked me if I could do similar research work on Mombasa during the long vacation. I did and sent the report with original maps I drew. The response was immediate: a job as a Teaching Assistant (TA) at Pittsburg [University]. I declined and instead took the other offer to be a TA at University of California Los Angeles, UCLA, plus a Fellowship at the African Studies Centre. Armed with a Tanganyika passport and apparently as an expert on Africa, I had the option of a Green Card. My MA thesis [at UCLA] was on Dar. In the meanwhile, I gained all the credits towards the PhD in geography. ... One thing still I remember was really fun there in California was always being mistaken for a Mexican.”

It was a team of principal secretaries visiting America from East Africa that wanted to recruit him for a teaching position at any one of the East African University Colleges that made Adolfo change his mind about continuing to work in California. He preferred joining the latest college, the University College Dar es Salaam, first under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation, arriving in Dar in 1966, in the third term of the first year.

At Dar es Salaam, Professor Mascarenhas served in a number of capacities, not only in teaching his beloved subject of Geography but also assuming positions of leadership such as Director of BRALUP [*Bureau of Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning*], a strategically created ‘high-level unit’ for Government’s research and assessment of its land resources for better planning. He took after the departure of the founder expatriate director Prof. Leonard Berry. He also served as Director of Postgraduate Studies (1980s–1994). As an elected Honorary Treasurer of the Convocation in the 1990s until his formal retirement, Prof. Mascarenhas proposed and was allowed to invest part of the Convocation’s own money on the Bursar’s account into the Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange market/Treasury Bonds, which scooped millions more for the Convocation—an amusingly recalled ‘due intelligence’, something that could be tried again.

For a long part of his career, Professor Mascarenhas has concerned himself with issues of environment, use of the large and rich land resource in Tanzania, problems of its degradation because of human activity, and now the problems of climate change (longer dry seasons against shorter erratic rainy spells), and polluted mineral process wastes into rivers and lakes. These and many more, big and small, have sunk steeply into his heart—to the extent of planting a metal-post plaque labelled ‘ENVIRONMENT’ in the yard at his home.

Away from devotion to the masses of writings, he now has distilled free-flowing reflections, sometimes making him regret the still rather damaging human actions that are worsening climate change and sometimes make him point to some areas of mitigation and hope only if public education could intensify more. He knows that one cannot eat the cake and have it at the same time. Firmly believing in Darwin’s theory of ‘Survival of the Fittest’, he confesses publicly that Tanzania will survive only if public policy is firmly directed to lots of the damage that field research has made reference to. Listed by order of trend of his reflections are a few of latest works:

(2000). Gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems to strengthen agricultural and rural development: The Tanzanian context. FAO LinKS Report No. 2. Milan: FAO.

(2012). With Ben Wisner: Listening to change in Tanzania: Research climate, natural resources and livelihoods in the context of global and local knowledge and aspirations. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290332106>

(2015). With Elizabeth Wangui, Charles Bwenge, Eric Lovell, Daniel Weiner, Gaurav Sinha, Ben Wisner & Thomas Smucker: Differentiated livelihoods, local institutions and the adaptation imperative: Assessing climate change adaptation policy in Tanzania. *Geoforum*, pp. 39-50.

(2015). With Ben Wisner, Mark Pelling and David Simon: Small cities and towns in Africa: Insights into adaptation challenges and potentials (a monograph, 44 pp.). <https://www.urbanark.org/small-cities-and-towns-africa-insights-adaptation-challenges-and-potentials>

**ADOLFO CARIDADE MASCARENHAS is our September 2019 Alumnus
and his great Stories Begin Here**

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