

Celebrating Paul Msemwa, November 10, 2009

Prize ceremony Foundation Hans Mannebys Mermorial Fund for Museum Development, Uddevalla Sweden, 2009 11 10, President of the Foundation, Anita Theorell.

The time has come to celebrate the Prize winner of 2009, Paul Msemwa, from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania where he currently is Director of the Museum and House of Culture.

Let me introduce Paul Msemwa and I will talk **to** you, Paul, rather than about you.

My theory is that your talent for and familiarity with culture and dynamic nurturing has its roots in Igagala, the village where you were born and grew up, in the Njombe district, in Sothern Highlands of Tanzania, one of the most important agricultural areas of the country.

Already after grade 4 at the village school you started moving around in your own country and you were thus exposed to the culture and history of others. Your first high school years were spent in Mbeya, not so far from home, but then you moved to Tanga, by the coast, up north. After school you came to Arusha to do military service. In Songea you were back down south to work as an economist at the local government, before you started your university studies in Dar es Salaam. That is where you got your Bachelor of Science - in Geology, after which you worked in Dodoma, drilling for water. Your search and eagerness for more education, however, brought you to Brown University in the US where you got a PhD in Anthropology. Ever since, your multidisciplinary travelling life has continued and has inspired you and formed your way of looking at life and the world as the global village.

Since 1983 you work within the museum sector. Your archeological and ethnological research on history, culture and environment led you to go for the participatory approach you have always practiced in your museum work, opening up the museum by engaging and involving the community, the public, which is also one of the seasons why you are standing here today.

You have made remarkable achievements in this respect. Let me give one example from the time when you were the Director of the Village Museum in Dar es Salaam. In 1994 you introduced the project Ethnic Days. This was a time

when ethnicity was seen by the Government as a threat to the building of the nation that they were involved in so Ethnic Days started at a crucial time and, as it has turned out, contributed to a change of attitudes.

Once a year representatives of an ethnic group from somewhere in the country – plus their diaspora in Dar es Salaam, were invited to present and share their living culture by exposing their handicraft, oral literature and history, food, dance, music etc. The project grew in your mind during the time when The Village Museum was collaborating with Skansen in Stockholm, a collaboration that had started in 1989. Logically, in 97, you invited Skansen to organize Swedish Ethnic Days at the Village Museum. And I understand that the Ethnic Days are still going on and are nowadays much appreciated by the Government.

You have applied the participatory methods also when establishing site museums like the Kaole Site Museum in Bagamoyo, the restoration of the caravan serai in Bagamoyo and in setting up the exhibition on Slavery and Slave Trade there. Now, since some years you are restructuring the National Museum in Dar into the Museum and House of Culture, which is an ongoing project ready to be launched early 2010, I believe.

You have also given very important contributions in your work with regional and international museum net-works like SADCAM – for museums in southern Africa and Samp, the global museum net-work. In fact, Hans Manneby and you sat together on the first Executive Board of Samp.

Finally, Paul, we know you as being wise, serious, firm about your principles, independent, thorough, honest and thoughtful, professionally and privately.

On receiving the news about you being the prize winner of this year, your Swedish colleague Desiree Edmar, former Director of the Swedish Museum of Natural History, with whom you have also cooperated, sent a note to ask me to congratulate you - and us with these words

He is one of the most competent museum people I met during my years at the Museum of Natural History!

Indeed, Paul Msemwa, we, the board of the Foundation of HMMF for museum development know that we could not have had a better representative from the museum world as our first winner of this international museum prize and we congratulate you and wish you all the best and good luck for the future - for which we know you have plans.