

DRAFT:
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Notes for Acceptance Speech

**OCCUPYING THE ACADEMY:
A POSTCOLONIAL
INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Acceptance Address of the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Global South
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I am grateful to be so honoured on the eve of my 80th birthday in 2013.

It also happens to be the eve of the 50th anniversary of my publishing career which was launched with an Article in the *American Political Science Review* and other distinguished scholarly journals in 1963.

Because this is the eve of my 80th birthday and the eve of the 50th anniversary of my publishing career, I have been encouraged to be autobiographical in my reflections.

Long before the term “Occupy Wall Street” was coined, I lived through an African version of “Occupy the Academy.”

I started my career in a university in East Africa which was at the time an extension of the University of London. Our degrees were London degrees.

My first stage of “Occupy the African Academy” was to delink the East African institution [Makerere University] from the colonial parent, the University in Britain.

But almost all the professors of the East African University were at the time Europeans, mainly of British extraction.

I was privileged to be cast in the role of helping the decolonization of the Academy in Eastern Africa.

Occupying the Academy meant the rapid Africanization of the faculty. In the context of historical forces I became the first African full professor in the Humanities and Social Sciences in East Africa as a whole. A year later I became the first *African Dean of Social Sciences* in East Africa.

In pursuit of OCCUPYING THE AFRICAN ACADEMY I also briefly served as Dean of the new African Faculty of Law at Makerere in Uganda. I was charged with recruiting real lawyers to take over and replace me.

But Africanizing the faculty of African universities was only part of “Occupying the African Academy.” What about the content or what was taught in the classroom? How African relevant was the syllabus and curriculum?

We started experimenting with such courses as “African Political Thought” and “African Creative Literature” and “African History.”

But “Occupying the African Academy” did not necessarily mean disengaging from the *World Academy*. The Chancellor of the new university of East Africa was the Head of State of independent Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere.

How do we “Occupy Great Literature” without disengaging from the global heritage? Chancellor Nyerere set the President. We could make the global legacy more relevant for Africa.

So Julius K. Nyerere translated Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* into Kiswahili. This was the Swahilization of Shakespeare.

At about the same time I demonstrated how Edmund Burke, J-J Rousseau, and V. I. Lenin could be made more relevant for Africa. Burke is most famous for his criticism of the French Revolution of 1789. Burke’s essay was entitled “Reflections on the Revolution in France.”

Unlike Nyerere’s Shakespeare, I did not translate Burke into Kiswahili. Instead I applied Burke’s philosophy to an African situation. I published an article

on “Edmund Burke and Reflections on the Revolution *in the Congo*.” This was published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. The journal was then based at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

I also used in an African context J-J Rousseau’s philosophical distinction between the general will and the will of all as applied to a postcolonial society.

All these were efforts at “Occupying the Academy” without necessarily disengaging from the global heritage of ideas.

We were all influenced by Marx and Lenin without necessarily becoming Marxists or Leninists. Some Africans embraced Marxism as an ethic of distribution. Others believed in Marxism as an ideology for development. Most African intellectuals were also stimulated by Marxism as a paradigm of analysis.

Some African leaders spoke like Lenin but ruled like Czars. Hence my most controversial article about Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The article was entitled “NKRUMAH, THE LENINIST CZAR,” most recently republished in the Harvard-based magazine, *Transition*.

Mao Tse Tung of the People’s Republic of China had has admirers at the University of Dar es Salaam. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharal Nehru had admirers among early Black winners of the Nobel Prize for Peace — such as *Albert Luthuli* and *Desmond Tutu* of South Africa and *Martin Luther King, Jr.* of the United States.

But there is still a lot of work to be done in pursuit of “OCCUPYING THE GLOBAL ACADEMY.” Scholars of the Global South need to be better

represented in journals with international influence. We also need to be better represented in associations with global reach.

I am so glad you are honouring me on the eve of the 50th anniversary of my publishing in the following journals, all closely together:

American Political Science Review

World Politics (Princeton, USA)

International Affairs (London)

International Organizations (USA)

Political Studies (UK)

and *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (USA)

(all of them some 50 years ago).

I was well placed historically to have so much access. Have the doors been more widely opened since then? Or have influential journals become less accessible to scholars from the Global South?

What about international associations? Have they been responsive to the Global South? We are better off than we once were — but there is still a lot to be done.

We must also note the decline of intrinsic interest in Africa, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the Rise of Derivative interest in Africa and other regions:

— China and Africa

— India and Africa

- Arab World and Africa
- African Diaspora, especially since Obama's election to the Presidency of the USA
- Islam and Africa

We must also note James Mittleman's remark that my work has almost always included the study of comparative civilization.

I go to Oxford University almost every year. But nowadays I go to Oxford much more under the auspices of Islamic Studies than in my capacity as an Africanist. Interest in African Studies has declined; interest in Islamic Studies has expanded. But the South's struggle against being marginalized continues.