

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Maxwell K. Owusu, Ph.D., professor of anthropology in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on December 31, 2021.

Maxwell Owusu attended the London School of Economics and Political Science where he earned a B.Sc. Hons. degree (sociology, economics) in 1963. A graduate fellow at Harvard University from 1963-64, he then attended the University of Chicago, earning his M.A. degree in social science in 1966 and his Ph.D. degree in anthropology in 1968. His dissertation theorized the intersection of grassroots and national politics in Ghana, pioneering anthropological research on nationalism. It won Outstanding Dissertation and was subsequently published as *Uses and Abuses of Political Power: A Case Study of Continuity and Change in the Politics in Ghana* (University of Chicago Press, 1970). Professor Owusu joined the University of Michigan's Department of Anthropology as an associate professor in 1973 and was promoted to the rank of professor in 1979.

Professor Owusu's research focuses on comparative politics in late twentieth century Africa. He has written extensively on the importance of culture and economics for understanding political processes in Ghana and Africa, including constitutionalism, democratization, nationalism, party politics, liberalization, populism, traditionalism, colonialism, coups/rebellion/revolution, and civil (dis)order. Highly cited articles include "Tradition and Transformation: Democracy and the Politics of Popular Power in Ghana" (*Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1996), where he argues that African politics cannot be understood without attention to local concerns and institutions (e.g., family, clan, chieftaincies). In "Domesticating Democracy: Culture, Civil Society, and Constitutionalism in Africa" (*Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1997) he analyzes how democracy comes to be established, and in the process "domesticated," in African contexts. And in "Ethnography of Africa: The Usefulness of the Useless" (*American Anthropologist*, 1978), he identifies and critiques bias in key canonical ethnographic texts on Africa and argues for more careful comparative cross-cultural research. Professor Owusu taught courses in African cultures, anthropology of law, and Caribbean societies and cultures for both the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, served on departmental and dissertation committees, and on numerous editorial boards for national and international journals.

The Regents now salute this distinguished researcher and teacher by naming **Maxwell K. Owusu, professor emeritus of anthropology**.

Requested by:



Sally J. Churchill, J.D.
Vice President and Secretary of the University

February 2022