

**STUDIES  
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OF AFRICAN  
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## **STUDIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

**NUMBER 47**

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## FROM THE EDITORS

The journal is a forum for the presentation of the latest research carried out by the faculty members of the Department of African Languages and Cultures, University of Warsaw. All other scholars working in various fields of African Studies (linguistics, literature, history, education and others) are also cordially invited to submit the results of their original work. The journal's contents cover articles and monographs, as well as bibliographies, lexicographic studies and other source materials. Some issues are devoted to specialized topics or events.

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## **The Year of Africa Remembered: Horizons of Change in African Studies 50 years after the Year of Africa<sup>2</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The year 2010 marked the passage of 50 years since the Year of Africa in 1960. For the world, and especially for Africans, 2010 became the year of soccer, the year of the Cup. Africanists taking a look back at the 50 years of African Studies can take heart in the healthy dynamics of African Studies in the United States, but in the year when African Studies Association discusses the theme of African Diaspora, in the year of massive budget cuts resulting in elimination of whole departments of foreign languages in the United States, they cannot be altogether happy with the state of academic African studies. The retrospective may be pleasantly nostalgic, but the vibrancy of today's African studies has come from

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<sup>2</sup> A presentation based on early research, for this paper was delivered at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on History: From Ancient to Modern (August 2011, Athens, Greece).

unanticipated sources and the movement has not been linear or carefully programmed. /

The wave of independence that rose across Africa since the late 1950s created a worldwide anticipation of great things to follow the wonderful start. The closely related development of African studies as an academic field ensued. Among the factors unanticipated by the experts of the day was the impact of the Cold War on the postcolonial development of African studies in the United States, in Europe, and in the Soviet Union. The author is a participant in the field of African historical studies both in the United States and in Russia. These two perspectives and selected stops along the way will guide a personalized discussion of the crucial events and significant trends in African studies as observed from the Soviet and American academic circles.

*Keywords:* African studies, Year of Africa, Cold War historiography, intellectual history, Soviet Union - intellectual life

Great events generate great memories. The year 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the 'Year of Africa' 1960. The United Nations declared 1960 as the Year of Africa. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December, 1960. Celebrations and commemorations for what has been called "the most important year in African history" took place in 2010 around the globe, following the African diaspora and promoted by Africanists. Ironically, for many Africans on the ground, the political jubilee may have been overshadowed on the ground by international sports events taking place in Africa. The year 2010 became the year of soccer, the year of the Cup. The African Cup of Nations ended January 11, 2010 in Angola. The FIFA World Cup was played in South Africa in June and July 2010. The African Studies Association (of North America) waited to celebrate the anniversary: the theme of the 2010 Annual Meeting was African Diaspora. The annual theme chosen for the November 2011 ASA meeting in Washington, DC, was '50 Years of African Liberation.' This was the 54<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association, which started in 1956. Then small in numbers, this small group of forward-looking academics was

inspired by the transition to independence of the first African countries. They held the first annual meeting of the Association in 1957.

Also in 1957, the International Youth Festival convened in Moscow, USSR. In then still novel atmosphere of opening to the world after the 1953 death of Stalin, Moscow and especially young Moscovites were fascinated and entranced by the arrival of thousands of young people from around the world. The Soviet leadership of the Khrushchev era was motivated, less than by the Cold War framework of the day, by the independence of Asian countries and emergence of the Bandung group from the 1955 conference and resulting in the formal proclamation of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961. By 1960, the decolonization process was well under way, and in Moscow, the Central Committee of the Communist Party announced, in 1959, the creation of a research Institute for African Studies (known for many years as the Africa Institute) and in early 1960 of the first international university, to be known as the University of the Friendship of the Peoples. Additionally named for Patrice Lumumba soon after the Congo crisis, the university opened its doors in the academic year 1960-1961 and quickly became a center for students from newly-independent and developing countries of Africa<sup>3</sup>, Asia, and Latin America (Cuba, of course), helping expand international enrollment in Soviet institutions of higher education and educating many future leaders in politics, academia, and the professions. Whatever the needs of Soviet foreign policy, most of these students (or their parents) were motivated not by Marxism, but by gaining access to free, quality higher education; over the years, some chose to remain in the Soviet Union. In English, the school became known as the Friendship University, but in Russian, the common abbreviation was either simply 'Lumumba' or '[of] Friendship of the Peoples', the phrase being part of political vocabulary of the times. In 1961, the United States, whose universities of course had been open to international students all

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<sup>3</sup> See S.V. Mazov (1999) for a nostalgic post-Soviet analysis of those early educational steps.

along (though not always free), established the Peace Corps for service abroad in 'interested countries' with the stated purpose 'to promote world peace and friendship.' The youth thus were thrust into the forefront of global competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for Third World influence, and much of the action was to involve Africa and African Studies.

In this paper, I propose to highlight a few particular aspects and trends in the development of African studies in the United States and Russia, on two sides of the Cold War front that determined much of the scholarship during the half-century that ensued since the Year of Africa and coincidentally involved me personally – and that, too, on both sides of the dividing line. Prior to independence from colonialism, Africa did not figure prominently in academic fields neither in Russia (and/or Soviet Union) nor in America. Nor was it generally perceived as being important to foreign policy or political science and foreign affairs studies in either country. Isolated periods of interaction did not materially impact government or academic priorities, being the Barbary Wars and the foundation of Liberia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century or World War II operations in North Africa for the United States, or the Russian volunteer involvement in Ethiopia or South Africa at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. Independence changed the politics, policies and academic foci for research and teaching. African studies became a continuing, though not always flourishing, academic field in both Russia and the United States. Universities created centers and programs of African studies, and significant publication programs ensued. The history of their development is yet to be written. From the vast pool of relevant dates, facts, names, and titles, I will focus below on selected periods and events chosen for their public and personal, professional aspects relevant to the development of African studies. The resulting synthesis of biographical with academic history echoes the recent trend in American historical writing yet weakly developed in

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example A.B. Davidson & I. Filatova (1998) and F. Lambert (2005).

Africanist historiography<sup>5</sup>; it has been more strongly represented in the US Middle Eastern historical studies. A differently configured thread in Russian Africanist publications has developed much more recently<sup>6</sup>. These highlighted stops along the timeline arc from the Year of Africa 1960 to 1991 when the USSR was dissolved and finally approach the most recent anniversaries. In following this route, the goal is not to create a broad canvas but to identify and compare significant developments and mark some differences between the priorities and emphases in African studies in the United States and Russia.

### **It was the year 1960...**

I had just graduated from high school and was planning to attend Leningrad University. Now renamed St. Petersburg State University, it is second in Russia only to Moscow State University and one of the very few in the USSR where Oriental studies were taught. Until the Friendship University foundation, there was only one university in any given Soviet city; the other higher-education establishments were called “institutes” and trained students in professional fields. One was allowed to apply to only one institution, to one specialty, once a year. Entrance requirements were changed that year, and my Gold Medal high school diploma, which previously guaranteed university admission (and free choice of specialty) without entrance examinations, no longer carried the privilege. Moreover, during the admissions’ interview in the Oriental Faculty (another recent innovation for the “medalists”), I was informed that no women were to be admitted to my intended field of Arabic philology. And indeed, I was not admitted that year. The USSR was then actively building contacts with Arab countries and, as I soon learned, the new academic directive from the Ministry of Higher Education was to train military interpreters, making male applicants alone eligible for logistical and cultural reasons (on both the Soviet

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<sup>5</sup> A precedent, however, has been set by J. Vansina (1994).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, A.B. Davidson (2003) for a personalized account of the field and M. V. Right (2008) for a rare attempt at Africanist autobiography.

and Arab sides). What to do? 1960 was also the year when the former Dean of the Oriental Faculty, Academician Iosif Orbeli, whom I knew since childhood, had stepped down, and I could only petition the new dean (Bogoliubov) to allow me auditing privileges, and only because my father, the botanist A.I. Tolmachev, was also a University professor. A fateful change of tack occurred: because the “philologist” class admitted was twice as large as usual, faculty resources were strained, and I was allowed to join the class majoring in the History of Arab Countries, thus fortuitously determining forever my future as historian.

The second step was to ask advice from the widow of the leading Russian Arabist I.Iu. Krachkovskii. Vera Aleksandrovna Krachkovskaia lived in the same building on the Neva embankment where I grew up and that belonged, until 2010, to the Russian Academy of Sciences (the famous “*akademicheskii dom*”). She suggested that I visit the Institute of Ethnography, located in the former *Kunstkamera* building on the University embankment. There, in the Africa department (“sector”), a multi-volume project of editing and translating medieval Arabic sources on Africa was just beginning, and because of my interest in Arabic and knowledge of English and French, I was hired as a junior assistant. Another fateful step that opened doors for me into the world of Africa, just as the African Studies was receiving a powerful boost. The initiator of the project was the leading Soviet Africanist Dmitri Olderogge (1903-1987)<sup>7</sup>: In 1960 he just became the Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences; he was also Chair of the Department of African Studies in the Oriental Faculty at the University. His students formed the majority of Africa Sector employees in Leningrad: some of them recently or subsequently moved to Moscow to help build the programs in African Languages. The Arabic Sources on Africa project was led by V.V. Matveev and L.E. Kubbel, my senior

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<sup>7</sup> About D. Olderogge see, for example, N.B. Kochakova (2002), S.B. Chernetsov (2003), A.D. Savateev (2006); in English see D.M. Bondarenko & V.A. Popov (2005), E. Gellner (1988).

colleagues for many years<sup>8</sup>. They were later joined by V.A. Velgus working on Chinese sources, O.S. Tomanovskaia for Portuguese sources, Iu.K. Poplinsky for the Greek, and S.B. Chernetsov for Ethiopian sources. This undertaking inspired the *Fontes Historiae Africanae* proposal to UNESCO by Dr. Ivan Hrbek, who visited Leningrad from Prague to consult with Olderogge in 1964 (inevitably for those Cold War years, the approved project was domiciled in the West and for many years shepherded by John O. Hunwick<sup>9</sup>).

### **The Language Barriers**

Focus on African language study and linguistics research was typical of Olderogge who insisted that “afrikanistika” must begin with the fundamentals of language, literature, and culture (including social anthropology as well as material culture). Russian scholarship of Africa faced multiple barriers: the USSR had limited prior access to African countries, and Soviet scholars faced the double political barrier of rarely being allowed to travel abroad and also rarely being admitted to African countries. Until the 1960s, Olderogge was the only Soviet Africanist from Leningrad allowed to travel abroad (Africa was classified with the West for exit visa purposes, and Leningrad scholars were more tightly controlled by academic authorities than Moscovites); none had done field work in Africa until 1963. Bridging the African Studies Department at the University and the Africa Sector at the Institute of Ethnography (the latter was part of the USSR Academy of Sciences), Olderogge set his own graduates to work on the first modern Russian-African-language dictionaries<sup>10</sup>. Very few native speakers of African languages had visited USSR prior to 1960, and even then, with independence and

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<sup>8</sup> The Arabic series included Arabic text as well as Russian translation and academic commentary, and therefore had a relatively broad international outreach for the times. See L.E. Kubbel & V.V. Matveev (1960-2002).

<sup>9</sup> Under the umbrella of this series, sponsored by the International Academic Union, J.O. Hunwick published the *Fontes Historiae Africanae Information Bulletin* in the 1970s and 80s.

<sup>10</sup> See E.N. Miachina (1961) and I.A. Osnitskaia (1963).

the Friendship University enrollments bringing African students to Moscow, few were qualified to teach their native language to Russian students as a foreign language. Finally, few Russian scholars at the time were fluent in the dominant languages of official Africa and African studies, English and French. As a result of decades of Soviet isolation from even European countries, communication skills taught in Soviet schools and colleges did not result in fluency. Even the academic professionals who read and translated from the foreign languages were rarely fluent speakers or correspondents; this limited their opportunities not only for field work, but also for intellectual engagement and exchange at international meetings or through correspondence. In addition, political censorship and intellectual property policy severely limited opportunities to publish abroad. Somewhat paradoxically, in the post-World War II cultural environment, German was the only “Western” language that opened doors to international audiences – often through translations published in East Germany<sup>11</sup>.

Needless to say (but only fair to remember), no comparable effort was required for US scholars who had not exit (and rarely entry) visa problems, were (usually) native English speakers, and had funding (albeit on a competitive basis) to carry out field work in Africa, research projects in Europe or at home, means to use interpreters in their field work and ready access to English-language African dictionaries compiled by (mostly) British scholars and missionaries. Sometimes translation was not required at all, as most former British possessions chose English as their official national language. Opportunities for joining professional associations, participating in international conferences, publishing in leading professional journals (and being familiar with the conventions of

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the volume *Narody Afriki* (Peoples of Africa), published in Russian in 1954, was translated and published in East Germany in 1961. See D.A. Olderogge & I.I. Potekhin (1961). Somewhat later, the Prague publisher Artia issued the Czech, English and German editions of the D.A. Olderogge presentation of African art collections from the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, co-located and co-administered with the Institute of Ethnography. See D.A. Olderogge & W. Forman (1969).



academic writing and peer review process) were both accessible and expected. Needless to say, these differences were not unique to the field of African studies, but their impact on the prioritization of Africanist concerns in the United States and the Soviet Union was great and to an extent has continued, though diminished, in the post-Soviet period.

### **Freedom of Association, Academic Freedom**

The American tradition of forming voluntary professional associations, together with greater freedom of academic and intellectual life in the West and supported by greater resources, facilitated fast growth of Africanist research and publications, as well as African Studies Programs, in the United States. The American tradition of concentrating academic research at universities to this day differs considerably from the European tradition, emulated in Russia since the days of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, to separate full-time researchers at the Academy institutes from full-time professors at universities. Thus, there has been much closer coordination in the US between the development of research on Africa and the teaching of African studies, including African languages. In addition, American decentralization of higher education instantly led to the emergence of several centers for African studies dispersed in the East-coast, Midwest, and California institutions. Supported by regional centers as well as the African Studies Association, journals dedicated to various aspects of African research soon appeared and multiplied, with the first issues of *African Historical Studies* (later the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*), the *African Studies Bulletin* (later the *African Studies Review*), and *Research in African Literatures* appearing in 1958, 1968, and 1970, respectively. The *Journal of African Studies* began publication in 1974 and *History in Africa: A Journal of Method*, in 1975. Typical of the variable American tradition of institutional support for such academic professional associations as ASA, the organization headquarters and editorial operation have

been since domiciled at several large universities with Africanist interests<sup>12</sup>.

American grant support for Africanist projects was channeled through competitive programs, both public and private. The Ford Foundation became the dominant player in shaping the area studies program in the United States<sup>13</sup>. In 1950, the foundation established the prestigious Foreign Area Fellowship Program (FAFP), the first large-scale national competition in support of area studies training in the United States. From 1953 to 1966, it contributed \$270 million to 34 universities for area and language studies. Also during this period, it poured millions of dollars into the committees run jointly by the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies for field development workshops, conferences, and publication programs<sup>14</sup>. On the public side, the National Defense Education Act of 1957, renamed in 1965 the Higher Education Act, allocated funding for some 125 university-based area studies units known as National Resource Centers at universities across the U.S. In addition, and often associated with the Centers, the Act funded Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for graduate students that included foreign language study. Despite the name change, the support of the teaching of African languages in the United States continued to be funded and prioritized according to the perceived priorities of the defense policy. In some fields, this has raised greater concerns than in others about the independence and integrity of American academics, especially those conducting research abroad, including Africa. Many, both in Africa and in America, alleged that because area studies were connected to the Cold War agendas of the CIA, the FBI, and other intelligence and military agencies, participating in such programs was tantamount to serving as an agent of the state. Even though faculty argued that, once they were established on university campuses, area studies

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<sup>12</sup> Currently, the African Studies Association is headquartered at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

<sup>13</sup> See E.C. Lagemann (1992)

<sup>14</sup> D.L. Szanton (2004).

agendas were not controlled by or subservient to government agencies, the independence, indeed achieved, came at a price, resulting in the loss of early influence that prominent Africanists in America had with politicians and national governing bodies<sup>15</sup> suspicions were directed even at the Peace Corps youth and undergraduate exchange students. African Studies Association addressed such concerns as a body and made two important decisions: the membership agreed on a policy of disclosure of non-academic sources of support and government agency association. In this, ASA followed conflict-of-interest disclosure policies adopted by other area-studies associations, such as the Middle East Studies Association of North America. Unlike MESA, however, ASA also agreed to open its annual meeting programs to debate and discussion of current African politics; it has since been a consistent champion of human rights on behalf of African intellectuals. ASA dedicated one of its three periodical Association publications (*Issue: a Journal of Opinion*, published 1971-1999) to topical multilateral fora on issues of concern to Africa and ASA. Importantly, the Association consistently addressed and assessed the state of African studies in the United States in terms of academic strength, federal support, professional involvement, evolving trends and international outreach<sup>16</sup>. By almost any measure these invasions had impressive results: between 1957 and the mid-1970s hundreds of new students of Africa were dispatched to Africa, received advanced degrees in North America, and found employment at leading universities. The number of full fellows of the ASA increased from 35 in 1957 to 291 fellows and 866 total members in 1960, to 1400 members in 1970, while major African Studies programs in the U.S. by that time numbered well over thirty (while the membership continued to expand, the latter number has fluctuated with the level of federal support). The proliferation of programs and centers<sup>17</sup> and a desire to

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<sup>15</sup> See D. Robinson (1994).

<sup>16</sup> For example, vol. 23, no. 1 (1995) of the *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, dedicated the state of African studies.

<sup>17</sup> For program data see *African Studies* (1976).

coordinate efforts in curriculum development, increased faculty cooperation, and develop and maintain teaching standards and lobbying for scholarship support, academic units created an Association of African Studies Programs (AASP) and later the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA).

It was probably inevitable that the Cold-War era competition between the USA and the USSR for influence in Africa resulted in determining the focus of many research projects of the 1960s. The tone was set early on by *Time* magazine declaring: 'Africa: Red Weeds Grow in New Soil'<sup>18</sup>. In monographs and edited books on Soviet policies vis-a-vis Africa published from the 1960s through most of the 1980s, American analysts urged watchful alertness against Soviet "designs" in Africa<sup>19</sup> and were preoccupied with African socialism and even African Communism<sup>20</sup>. There was no comparable academic effort to analyze American policy toward Africa. Soviet analysis of the same subjects was much more circumspect and acknowledged, at that stage, only the possibility of a choice of socialist route toward development in selected African countries and emphasized instead the themes of national liberation<sup>21</sup>. There was also American interest in the development of African studies in the USSR<sup>22</sup>. Again, the same subject in Russia was aired only infrequently, and more often in terms of research presented to an international audience rather than teaching<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> *Time*, 12 October 1960.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Z. Brzezinski (1963), H. Desfosses (1972), C. Stevens (1976), M. Rothenberg (1980), D.C. Heldman (1981), D.E. Albright (1983), R.C. Nation & M.V. Kauppi (1984), M. Clough (1986).

<sup>20</sup> For early examples, see W.H. Friedland & C. G. Rosberg (1964), A.J. Klinghoffer (1968) and (1969); for later assessment, C.G. Rosberg & T.M. Callaghy (1979), P. Vanneman (1990). For African communism, see M. Ottaway (1981) and (1986).

<sup>21</sup> See an articulation of this different official focus on aid and mutual friendship in E.A. Tarabrin (1980), *The USSR and Africa*. (1983), V. Lopatov (1987).

<sup>22</sup> See R. Desai (1968), P. Paricsy (1972).

<sup>23</sup> See V.G. Solodovnikov (1966) and (1974). Solodovnikov was the second director of the Africa Institute (see below).

The Gorbachev era brought about some changes, both in Africa-directed policies and in the American scholars' perspective on Soviet policies and activities toward Africa. If in 1987, a special edition of the *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* was focused on 'Africa and the Communism'<sup>24</sup>, a more balanced approach was evident in the 1988 issue (vol. 17/1) with a selection of invited contributions by American and Russian academics on 'U.S. and U.S.S.R. perspectives on African policy'. In particular, the perceived changes in Soviet tactics in Africa made it possible for the United States to gradually reduce its support of the apartheid regime in South Africa, eventually imposing sanctions and extending a degree of recognition to the African National Congress (ANC), previously classified as a Communist and terrorist organization. For the ASA membership, some of these new US positions were only catching up with the academic perspectives on Southern Africa and US policies in the region. The academics were concerned about the level of support for African Studies and the changing American government priorities, as regularly voiced by the presidents of the African Studies Association and especially by African language programs<sup>25</sup>.

The Russian academics' acknowledgement and analysis of Soviet policies toward Africa in the post-independence era for the most part had to wait for the document access and lapse of political censorship and other restrictions in the post-Soviet period. Any Soviet interest in US involvement in Africa never received a similar level of academic attention, nor did Soviet Africanists monitor the progress of African studies development in the United States as a field, though they eagerly sought access to American, European and African research publications and collections and became adept at productively using whatever (then quite limited and sporadic) opportunities that were becoming available. There were then only two loci of African studies: Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). In Leningrad, the person of Olderogge bridged the small University cluster of African linguists with the historians and

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<sup>24</sup> H. Desfosses (1987), M. Ottaway (1987);

<sup>25</sup> A detailed case is presented in Wiley & Dwyer (1980).

anthropologists at the Academy. In Moscow, the comparatively vast resources and established administrative structures more clearly separated the 'Africa research' in the Academy institutes from the 'African studies' at the Moscow State University (in MGU's downtown Institute for Asian and African Studies; in 1956-1972 it carried the name Institute of Oriental Languages). African languages were also taught at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of Foreign Relations. In time, additional African-research clusters developed in the Academy of Sciences research establishments, such as the Institute of General History, the Moscow branch of the Institute of Ethnography, the Oriental Studies Institute (for North Africa), and the Institute of World Literature. The research institutes all have graduate programs with very limited enrollment and implement their own publication programs, including periodicals, through the publishing house of the USSR Academy of Sciences, later "Nauka" Publishers. In 1961-1990 the Institute was known as the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, and its lead publication *Narody Azii i Afriki* (formerly titled *Problemy vostokovedeniia* and *Sovetskoe vostokovedenie*), remained the lead academic periodical for Africanist publications as well. The Geographical Society introduced a productive series *Strany i narody Vostoka*, where African-subject studies appeared (Olderogge was chair of the Society's Oriental Commission). The Leningrad Institute of Ethnography opened an *Africana* series of irregular periodical volumes *Afrikanskii etnograficheskii sbornik*.

The Africa Institute (*Institut Afriki*, now translated as the Institute for African Studies) went through several iterations determined by the policy considerations of the day. Under the first Director, I.I. Potekhin (1959-1967)<sup>26</sup>, it included departments for economic and political research as well as culture and history. After his death, there was an explicit turn toward making the institute into a government think-tank and a home for retired Soviet diplomats. In

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<sup>26</sup> About him see I.I. Potekhin (1963), I.I. Potekhin (1964) and A.B. Davidson (1974). About the early years of the Africa Institute see S.V. Mazov (1998).

1966, the Scientific Council for the Problems of Africa was founded within the network of the Academy of Sciences to bridge the needs of policy makers with qualified researchers. The Africa Institute is the host for the Council, and the Director of the Institute serves as the chairman of the Council. At some point, the Institute was moved from the Social Sciences Division of the Academy of Sciences to the Division of Economic Sciences; the Council functions under the Division of Social Sciences.

In the face of such decisive changes in research priorities of the Africa Institute, a new Centre for African Studies was founded in 1971 at the Academy of Sciences Institute of General History, headed by the historian of South Africa and Russian-African relations Apollon Davidson. This center was destined to become the leading Soviet (now Russian) academic entity for African historical studies.

### **It was the year 1991...**

By American reckoning, the Cold War ended that year. The Warsaw Pact was disbanded in July, the Communist party was banned in September, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December. But in the special issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs* (vol. 71/1) themed 'America and the world 1991/92,' Strobe Talbot's contribution was titled 'Post-victory blues' and dealt with the first Iraq war<sup>27</sup>. Another article, on 'Collapsing Cuba' by Susan Kaufman Purcell, does mention the end of the Cold War, but still dwells on Iraq (despite Cuba's active participation in Africa at the time). An urgent reminder of Africa's needs sounds in the piece by M. Chege<sup>28</sup> in the same issue. Not until much later in the decade, ASA dedicated another edition of the *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* to the topic of 'The Clinton Administration and Africa (1993-1999)'<sup>29</sup>.

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, American historians of Africa were engaged in assessing the state of the discipline and

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<sup>27</sup> S. Talbott (1992).

<sup>28</sup> M. Chege (1992).

<sup>29</sup> Most recently see H. Walton et al. (2007).

debating the directions and methodologies in the discipline. The June 1987 issue of the *African Studies Review* (vol. 30/2) was dedicated to 'African history research trends and perspectives on the future'. The December 1989 issue offered an overview of African historical studies<sup>30</sup>. In the ensuing years much attention went to Africa's social and economic problems, while being geographically focused largely on Southern Africa, where apartheid came to an end in 1994. The 1994 ASA presidential address was titled 'Africa reconfigured'<sup>31</sup>. If Africa was looking for new ways and patterns, so was the Africanist field. The past president of ASA Edward A. Alpers asked: 'Is there as African studies establishment in the United States?' And although he answered himself 'Of course there is,' he concluded that there was 'no simple answer to this issue, no single correct way ahead'<sup>32</sup>. Among historians, in particular, there was debates and rifts<sup>33</sup>, perceived by some as the changing of the guard and explained by others in terms of a tension between African and African-American studies. The 1995 ASA Presidential address was titled 'African Studies in the mid-1990s: Between Afro-pessimism and Amero-Skepticism'<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, this was also the time of the Internet explosion, e-mail and scanner development, immeasurably enriching academic opportunities, not least for the digital preservation of African manuscripts. Despite continuing political, economic and social frustrations and academic and budget problems, the spirit of optimism prevailed in the field. Approaching the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the African Studies Association, ASA President Joseph C. Miller titled his address to the 2006 meeting 'Life beings at fifty: African studies enters its age of awareness'<sup>35</sup>.

While in the United States the 1990s signaled a decline of area studies, in post-Soviet Russia there was a sharp decline in the support of higher education, academic institutions, and academic publishing.

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<sup>30</sup> B. Jewsiewicki (1989).

<sup>31</sup> E.A. Alpers (1995).

<sup>32</sup> E.A. Alpers (1995a).

<sup>33</sup> P. Curtin (1995).

<sup>34</sup> G. Hyden (1996).

<sup>35</sup> J.C. Miller (2007).



The Yeltsin period of government administration (1991-1999) was marked overall by a significant economic decline and reduced industrial productivity, from which Russia has not fully recovered even today. Scholarship suffered through the loss of researchers and teaching faculty as well as reduced opportunities for fieldwork and publication, acquisition of foreign books and journal subscriptions. There was noticeable feminization of the academe (men left for better-paying jobs), lack of computer facilities, lack of funds for equipment and supplies, etc., etc. Administrative chaos ensued and involved the Academy of Sciences (it was now *Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk*, RAN). The Institute of the Peoples of Asia returned to its former name, the Oriental Institute (or the Institute of Oriental Studies, *Institut Vostokovedeniia*). Not only was Leningrad returned its former name of St. Petersburg in 1991, but in 1992 the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Ethnography separated from the Moscow institution and became Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (*Kunstkamera*). The Moscow branch changed its name to Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. More recently (2007), the St.Petersburg branch of the Oriental Institute gained administrative independence from Moscow and is now the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (*Institut vostochnykh rukopisei*).

On the positive side, the doors and borders opened, and contacts with international colleagues and institutions became less controlled; e-mail brought information and people within reach, and academic exchanges and travel abroad quickly expanded. Many African countries that formerly restricted access to the former “communists” now opened visas and access for Russian scholars to universities and archives. The University of Cape Town for a number of years supported a Center for Russian Studies, led by A.B. Davidson. Davidson also revived academic interest in Russian historical contacts with Africa. A series of publications themed ‘Africa in Russia/Russia in Africa’ ensued<sup>36</sup>, generating even a cooperative international project in the United States<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> R.R. Viatkina et al. (1999), A.B. Davidson (2003), I.V. Sledzevskii (2003). These more recent publications revive and continue the tradition

Regular conferences now bring to Russia international participants from Africa, Europe, and the United States. The Olderogge Readings convene regularly in spring in St. Petersburg<sup>38</sup>. While for US scholars of greatest interest seem to have been the newly accessible documents on the Comintern<sup>39</sup>, Russian scholars have recently delved into the subject of the Cold War<sup>40</sup>. As in the earlier decades, publication of the primary sources continues to be a priority: but now these are modern documents<sup>41</sup>, and the translation is often made from the Russian into English. Russian Africanists are reaching out not only to Africa, but to America and worldwide. The most recent (12<sup>th</sup>) conference organized by the Institute for African Studies, took place in May 2011 and had the theme of 'Africa in the changing paradigm of world development.' Next, the biennial conference organized by the Institute of General History jointly with the Moscow University met in November 2011 with a broad theme of 'African studies in Russia and abroad: stages, trends, and prospects.' The Year of Africa 1960 was unforgettable. Anniversaries and jubilees provide the timeline and the highlights. Fifty years later, no longer confined by the borders, and inspired by a small group of dedicated and persistent scholars, the work of African studies continues as a global enterprise.

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established in the Soviet period: see A.B. Davidson et al. (1966), Iu.M. Kobishchanov et al. (1974).

<sup>37</sup> M. Matusevich (2006).

<sup>38</sup> 'Chteniiia pamiati Ol'derogge,' for example the I.V. Sledzevskii (2003) volume.

<sup>39</sup> See A.B. Davidson et al. (2003a), V.P. Gorodnov (2003), S. Johns (2007).

<sup>40</sup> See S.V. Mazov (2010) and V.G. Shubin (2008).

<sup>41</sup> A.B. Davidson (2005-2007).

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## **‘Muscular Christianity’<sup>1</sup>: the Role of the Ethiopian YMCA Sports in Shaping ‘Modern’ Masculinities (1950s-1970s)**

### **Abstract**

The work of the Ethiopian Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), which commenced in Addis Ababa in the early 1950s and spread to eighteen Ethiopian cities until the early 1970s, revolved around the development of a ‘balanced manhood’ through social, recreational, spiritual and educational activities among boys and young men. Similar to the UK and American templates, it combined inward-looking character development and outward-looking religiosity with the idea of a ‘muscular Christianity’. In the 1930s, the American YMCA linked these aspects with concepts of the ‘modern’ YMCA member as a leader with specific character traits. This approach met with the post-World War II needs for ‘progressive’ citizens and leaders in Ethiopia. Incorporating sports as a morally positive activity became a powerful strategy for the creation of a distinct life style and a legitimate form of self-improving leisure for educated males in Ethiopian cities, notably Addis Ababa.

The following paper discusses the establishment of the Ethiopian YMCA and its contribution to the production of the ‘modern man’ along three lines. The first part places the emergence of the YMCA sports culture within broader developments of physical education in inter-war and post-war urban Ethiopia. In the second part I will look at concrete activities which attempted to channel the energy of young males for the good of the

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘Muscular Christianity’ was coined by T.C. Sanders in 1857. For its use as an analytical tool in the social sciences see Ikoe Abe (2006: 714ff.).

nation. The conclusion will discuss the question in how far these activities built on religious arguments which supported or opposed existing notions of acceptable bodies and perceptions of useful self-improving leisure.

*Keywords:* YMCA, Ethiopia, modernity, physical education

## **Physical education and the emergence of the Ethiopian YMCA**

At the personal request of the Emperor, who later became its patron, preparations to establish an Ethiopian YMCA started in 1947. In February 1951, the *Negarit Gazeta*, the government publication of official announcements, gave the YMCA complete corporate rights<sup>2</sup>. In 1953, the first branch opened in the Arat Kilo quarter in Addis Ababa<sup>3</sup>. Ethiopian officials had approached the YMCA World Alliance at a time when the organization had almost completed a substantial shift in its overall objectives as a result of a crisis in the American YMCA missionary movement<sup>4</sup>. One aspect of this change was the emphasis on character-building. Whereas it had formerly taken place in forums such as Sunday Schools, the new approach was heavily informed by educational and psychological theories. The focus on building moral character through religious education was shifted to the building of “specific traits through specific training that then allow for moral behaviour”<sup>5</sup>. Group activity experiences in the YMCA were proposed as the key element for the creation of the ‘modern’ personality. The training to become a ‘modern’ man applied in the first instance to future leaders from the US as well as from the countries in which the movement had established itself. The ‘modernity’, the American officials had in mind, was of course the

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<sup>2</sup> *Wewakema*, T’ik’imt 2002 (E.C. = 2010), 6.

<sup>3</sup> From its beginnings in Addis Ababa, the YMCA spread to twenty-three centers in eighteen cities between 1955 and 1968. For further information, see [www.africaymca.org/30.0.html](http://www.africaymca.org/30.0.html) (accessed 28 December 2012) and [www.special.lib.umn.edu...yusa0035.phtml](http://www.special.lib.umn.edu...yusa0035.phtml) (accessed 16 February 2013).

<sup>4</sup> J.T. Davidann 1998.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

‘Western’ type. Everything else was described “suffering from cultural lag”<sup>6</sup>.

In how far the modern Christian, i.e. Protestant, concept of the YMCA stood in stark contrast to the established Ethiopian Orthodox notion of Christianity can be studied in various ways. As this article deals with modern sports and physical education as part of a modernising project in urban centres, it is necessary to note right from the beginning that well established traditional games, such as *Genna*, never became part of the institution’s sports program. If this was explicitly done because these sport practices were linked to Orthodox festivals or because they were perceived as rural and, thus, backward is a matter of debate. As I have argued elsewhere, traditional games never entered the physical education curricula of modern schools, armed forces training institutions, universities or any other formal educational context as well<sup>7</sup>. We might, thus, assume that perceptions of modern sports in the first part of the twentieth century also informed (positive) attitudes towards these bodily practices at the YMCA. In its attempts to ‘modernize’ the world, the YMCA met with an ongoing trend to modernize Ethiopia, which had started in the mid-nineteenth century, but gained full swing in the twentieth century – most notably in the interwar period and after World War II. It was an element in seeing Addis Ababa and other Ethiopian cities as promoters and motors of progress in times of global social optimism which targeted primarily the urban educated strata while mostly ignoring the majority of the population who lived in rural areas. According to the Central Statistical Office in Addis Ababa, only 8.5 per cent of the Ethiopian population lived in urban centres in 1967; most of them in the capital<sup>8</sup>.

The fact that the Emperor Haile Selassie personally requested the establishment of the institution, despite of the overwhelming power of the Orthodox Church, might indicate that its function within the society were not so much the spread of the gospel, but the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>7</sup> K. Bromber 2013a, 88.

<sup>8</sup> M. Rafiq, A. Hailemariam 1987, 86.

production of mentally and physically strong ‘progressive’ citizens and ‘modern’ leaders. In this endeavour, the emergence of the Ethiopian YMCA has to be studied in relation to other modernizing institutions such as modern schools, military academies or the Scout Movement. Such institutions were perfect sites to exercise what Michel Foucault called the “micro-physics of power”, i.e. specific disciplinary techniques directed at the body to produce subjects and shape their conduct. The “docile body” geared by an “indefinite discipline” worked through a system of surveillance and “did not need arms, physical violence, and material constraints”<sup>9</sup>. Educating citizens to become committed servants of the Imperial progressive visions likewise implied the systematic introduction of modern sports through compulsory physical education classes in schools and military institutions<sup>10</sup>. The secondary schools in Addis Ababa were ideal sites to inscribe compliant perceptions of the body into the future elite – the “pioneers of change”<sup>11</sup> or the ‘transmission belts’ of Ethiopian modernity in the post-war period. In Addis Ababa, physical education was taught by French and Egyptian teachers at Menelik II School as early as 1907<sup>12</sup>. A closer look at mission schools which operated throughout the Empire might prove that physical education as a subject might have started already in the nineteenth century. Studies on the role of cultural sports practices such as *tigil* (wrestling) within the framework of Orthodox religious training, especially in rural settings<sup>13</sup>, would not only enlarge our

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<sup>9</sup> M. Foucault 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Similar to military institutions elsewhere, Ethiopian cadet schools and military academies were a vital component of the educational sector along with government and mission schools.

<sup>11</sup> Bahru Zewde’s term refers to the first generation of ‘modern’ intellectuals (Bahru Zewde 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Since the following data focus on Addis Ababa only, it is not representative for Ethiopia as a whole. Further research, especially about mission schools, might shift the introduction of physical education to an earlier period.

<sup>13</sup> Resedebrī Gebreaninya Gebremedhin, a 78 years old inhabitant from Maryam P’ap’aseytī Village, revealed that he started wrestling in the religious school in Ch’ala (place near Hawzēn) in the 1960s. During the breaks the priests suggested to practice wrestling. One of the priests was acting as

knowledge about religion and physical exercises in a much longer historical perspective but give due importance to “variation-centred models of social transformation”<sup>14</sup>. The designation of sport as a compulsory subject in schools did not emerge until the late 1920s and was for the most part restricted to institutions of higher learning<sup>15</sup>. Although little is known about the actual content of the classes, photographs from 1935 suggest gymnastics<sup>16</sup>.

The post-war period saw a strengthening of physical education on a broader basis. A Department of Physical Education was established within the Ministry of Education and sport was introduced to the primary school curriculum (Grade 1-6). The Ethiopian Inter-School Athletic Association, which had been founded in 1950, organized annual competitions. In the annual intra- and inter-school sport meets young athletes could gain credit points for their schools, which translated into moral and material rewards<sup>17</sup>. Roughly at the same period, university colleges designated sport a compulsory extra-curricular activity and created the necessary facilities. According to the *Journal of the University College Sports Day* of 1956, students could choose from volleyball, softball, soccer, lawn tennis, badminton, hockey, archery, fencing, boxing, weight-lifting, and track and field<sup>18</sup>. A daily time slot from five to six-fifteen

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the referee (*danya*). Resedebrī Gebreaninya, who himself gives religious instruction to a small group of boys, continues with this practice (Interview with Alemnesh Gessesew and Resedebrī Gebreaninya Gebremedhin, Mar-yam P’ap’aseytī Village 18 July 2012). Social aspects of wrestling in Ethiopia are specifically dealt with in K. Bromber 2013c.

<sup>14</sup> J. G., Ferguson 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Lakew Yigistu, 1988, “Ye-Ītyop’ya sport wididdir”, *Ethiopian Interschool Sports Competition Magazine*, 28, dated the introduction of physical education at Entoto Vocational and Technical School at 1925, Empress Menen School at around 1930, and at the Kokebe Ts’ibah Haile Selassie I School at approx. 1931 (cited in Negussē Alemu, 11). For the introduction of sports at Menelik II School, see Bahru Zewde, 2002, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Anon. 1935, 35. The photographs show gymnastic performances on the occasion of the Swedish monarch’s visit to Ethiopia in 1935.

<sup>17</sup> *Journal of the Ethiopian Inter-School Athletic Association*, 1952, 11.

<sup>18</sup> “Sport”, *Journal of the University College of Addis Ababa Sports Day*, 16 March 1956.

p.m. was reserved for sports. University officials used the *mens sana in corpore sano* argument from the 1950s onwards, which would become an important element in the YMCA rhetoric of the early 1970s. The establishment of a YMCA university branch suggests the exchange of knowledge and expertise in the field of sport activities as well as in the ideas about acceptable ‘modern’ bodies.

Educating sport teachers became a goal in the early 1960s and was followed by the offer of a diploma course in physical education at the Haile Selassie I University in 1965. Since the subject clearly lacked appeal, the training of sport teachers was conducted in summer courses. Despite the financial incentives – successful participation resulted in a salary increase of 50 Birr<sup>19</sup> – the project petered out after three years. The main reason might be the negative attitude sport teachers faced in their work places. The body-builder, PE teacher, and sport official Girma Cheru commented on this fact that “[a] sports teacher had the reputation of someone with no qualification. Since he only spends his time with children, he neither needs promotion nor additional courses... In practice, pressure was put on him”<sup>20</sup>. Although Girma Cheru did not reveal what exactly he meant by pressure, former PE teachers explained in an interview that if classes were cancelled, the PE teacher had to include the affected pupils in his own classes, which were already overcrowded. This situation made systematic physical education and the training of technical disciplines nearly impossible<sup>21</sup>. A fundamental change first occurred in 1970, when the Addis Ababa College of Teacher Education (renamed Kotebe College of Teacher Education in 1976) offered a diploma course in Health and Physical Education<sup>22</sup>. Links

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<sup>19</sup> “Ye-and amet yejīmnastīk memhīran kors,” *Journal of the Inter-School Athletic Association*, 1958/59, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Wendimu Negash Desta, “Girma Cheru - g<sup>w</sup>elmassawī sportenya”, *Yekatit*, 1974 Tahsas (AM), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Shifferaw Agonafer (former head of the Sports Department Addis Abeba University), Alemu Mitiku (head of the Ethiopian Boy Scout Association), Zora Yersu (athletics coach, former member of the Ethiopian Olympic Committee), T’ilahun Woldehana (sports teacher) in Addis Ababa, 18 June 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Gebreyaw Teshager 1997.

between physical education at university level and the YMCA were formalized in competition, (i.e. inviting the YMCA basketball team to the University Sports Day), personnel (PE students and teachers were members of the YMCA) and the joint use of facilities<sup>23</sup>.

An important movement that targeted at the behaviour of young males was the Scout Movement. It was first introduced in Ethiopia around 1933, and opened a school in Addis Ababa the next year<sup>24</sup>. After having been forced to end its activities during the Italian occupation, the association was revived in Ethiopia in 1948. Scout activities gained a foothold in the schools of Ethiopia<sup>25</sup>. As Allen Warren has shown, the movement aimed explicitly at developing a “manly character” along the line of Victorian ideas of manliness which combined religion to ideas of the body<sup>26</sup>. Fik’ru Kīdane’s memoirs describe the implementation of these ideas in Addis Ababa schools after World War II<sup>27</sup>. Sport, outdoor activities as well synchronized movement (marching) in uniforms served the overall aim to produce young males who are alert, follow orders “like a soldier” and develop a group identity that cross-cut social class and ethnic background. In how far the Scout Movement and YMCA activities overlapped in sport and out-door activities in terms of access to facilities or specialized personnel is still an open question. Interviews with retired sport instructors revealed that the same people were active in both institutions<sup>28</sup>. In contrast to the ‘soldier’-like personality to be created by the Scout Movement, the YMCA attempted to produce ‘gentlemen’, and above all ‘leaders’.

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<sup>23</sup> The first YMCA branch was built vis-à-vis the Technical College (Addis Ababa University College) in Arat Kilo quarter, where the university sports ground was located.

<sup>24</sup> R. Pankhurst, 1968, 682 and 714.

<sup>25</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia\\_Scout\\_Association#cite\\_note-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia_Scout_Association#cite_note-0) (accessed 3 September 2012).

<sup>26</sup> A. Warren, 1987.

<sup>27</sup> Fik’ru Kīdane, 2009, 44-45.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews with Ato Shifferaw Agonafer, Ato Alemu Mitiku (Head of the Ethiopian Boy Scout Association), Zora Yersu, T’ilahun Woldehana (Addis Ababa, 18 June 2011).

Similar to schools and universities, YMCA sport oscillated between compulsory activity and leisure at least in the way it was conceptualized in reports and advertised in the newspapers. It intertwined and dialogued in an interesting way with an emerging urban 'leisure culture' which also revolved around concepts of 'modern' bodies.

### **YMCA, urban leisure culture and the image of physical self-improvement**

In the first annual report I could get hold of, and which dates from 1962, we can read that "[t]he YMCA is a part of a worldwide movement whose purpose it is to develop leadership, build strong healthy bodies, give opportunities for mental growth and to guide its participants to mental maturity"<sup>29</sup>. By the 1970s, this theme had been more and more geared towards leadership, 'modern' citizenship, communal spirit, and service to the nation on a voluntary basis<sup>30</sup>. Recreation, and especially sport, was communicated as a means to achieve this goal.

The aim to build strong and healthy bodies resulted in programs and facilities that gave physical development through modern sport a high priority. As the following table shows, the Addis Ababa YMCA dedicated a large part of its annual budget to physical education (for earlier periods and later years the precise data are not given in the reports):

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<sup>29</sup> YMCA Annual Report 1962, 6.

<sup>30</sup> "Meriyachin maselt'an tegbar", YMCA Annual Report 1967, 4.



### Addis Ababa YMCA budget for physical education:

Year	Overall budget in Ethiopia in Ethiopian \$ <sup>31</sup>	Budget for physical education in Ethiopian \$
1963	103,775,82	8,133,19
1965	133,015,00	10,630,00
1966	144,446,50	11,718,00
1967	314,556,00	11,560,00

Apart from the investment into facilities, the magnetism of sport events becomes apparent in the fact that in 1965, for example, no less than 15,151 boys and young men participated in 296 events. If compared to the 7,505 persons who took part in the 41 religious program events for the same year, we might conclude that it was sport what the YMCA stood for. The pivotal role of sports is further substantiated by the fact that the Physical Education Secretary of the Addis Ababa YMCA was replaced by a Physical Education Committee in 1967, which consisted of eight members (two foreigners) and was led by Hon. Col. Dawit Gebru<sup>32</sup>.

The importance of sports for shaping the 'modern' Ethiopian man was communicated by linking visual material to bodily function. Pictures were published with subtitles or headlines that specified the function which should be associated with the activity. A photograph about gymnastics, for example, was subtitled with a "[f]ew stunts among those that help to discipline the physical condition of the body<sup>33</sup>." Jumping on the trampoline was specified as a help for "the mind and the body [to] work harmoniously<sup>34</sup>." Through volleyball, which seems to have been as important as basketball, the young men

<sup>31</sup> Ethiopian \$ = Ethiopian Birr

<sup>32</sup> YMCA Annual Report, 1967, 8.

<sup>33</sup> "Sewinnetin lemegrat kemmīyazut yemegelebabbet timhirtoch t'ik'itochu", YMCA Annual Report 1970, 5.

<sup>34</sup> "Up! Not to the moon, but to help the mind and the body work harmoniously." ("wedelay ... aydellem wede ch'erek'a! ...gin haylin ksewinnet k'ilt'ifinna gar lemastebabber"), YMCA Annual Report 1969, 6.

should not only support the development of “precision, teamwork and physical skill”, but also to become “the complete man” and, above all, “a good citizen in his community”<sup>35</sup>.

Citing Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), an American poet, philosopher, and reformer, that “[e]very man is the builder of a temple called ... his BODY”, the annual report of 1970-71 explained the general aims that the Ethiopian YMCA targeted at with Physical Education:

Physical education in the YMCA is organized to help the young boy meet the demanding requirements of manhood. Learning to play in accordance to rules of good sportsmanship in preparation for the future man to meet successfully the expectations of larger society.

Developing individual skill, team cooperation, an imaginative sense of competition, and qualities of good character are effectively revealed through various organized programs through YMCA Physical Education.

The YMCA continues to operate the Volleyball and Basketball Federations, the games being first invented by the YMCA during its early history around the world. In some communities around the nation the YMCA also organizes city-wide competition in other sports such as football, ping-pong and badminton. The YMCA Tennis Team has been a consistent winner in local tournaments<sup>36</sup>.

Apart from games and team sports, it was body building which became very fashionable among young men who trained at the YMCA<sup>37</sup>. Thus, every report contains pictures about body building in various branches throughout the country. Historical photographs from Mekelle YMCA indicate that it was this kind of physical exercise which linked YMCA athletes to a vibrant urban leisure culture and a general trend to display muscular bodies. The biography of the legendary heavy weight champion Seifu Mekonnen, who was part of the YMCA bodybuilding team in the late 1960s, comments on this issue:

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<sup>35</sup> YMCA Annual Report 1967, 13.

<sup>36</sup> YMCA Annual Report 1970-71, 7.

<sup>37</sup> The 1970-71 YMCA Annual Report explicitly mentioned that “[y]outh are interested in body building”.

Relatively speaking, in a short period of time, he became a star. With a celebrity like status he used to be invited to all private parties and clubs in the city. His stature and strong persona gave every social gathering the mantel of peacefulness and no invitee ever dared to disrupt a party when Tibo was present. Although Seifu enjoyed going out to parties often he was also conscious of his health and his well-being. He never abused substances and avoided drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and taking drugs<sup>38</sup>.

The expanding media scene supported the body building trend. Magazines such as the monthly *Menen* published photographs of YMCA bodybuilders along with news of the Ethiopian victory in the African Cup of Nations in 1962<sup>39</sup>. From 1968 on, the Amharic daily *Addis Zemen* regularly reported on body building itself, including visuals. The newspaper discourse also reveals that ‘body work’ of this period was an umbrella term for other, however related forms of sport, i.e. boxing, wrestling and weightlifting. Respective articles used body building as a synonym for weightlifting. When the Nigerian body builder Jeseme Hanson, ‘the Samson of Africa’, came to Addis Ababa in 1971 and boasted that there are no equal competitors, the local media published several articles in which weightlifters, including those training in the YMCA, who publicly challenged the Nigerian for open competition<sup>40</sup>. Arguably, the occasion also served to portray ‘muscle work’ as something admirable and brought weightlifting to the limelight.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to body building and modern media, Girma Cheru, who trained numerous young men in Addis Ababa schools, at the Military Academy in Harar, and at the YMCA is a very interesting personality. Apart from his appearance in the print media, he began to feature as the “sports teacher of the nation” through regular sports programs on the radio and, what is more important, on Ethiopian TV which was established in 1964<sup>42</sup>. Today people

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.seifutibo.org/Biography.html> (accessed 28 December 2011).

<sup>39</sup> *Menen*, January 1963, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Especially his comment that he would be able to lift 500 kg seemed raised serious doubts.

<sup>41</sup> K. Bromber, 2013b.

<sup>42</sup> The initial purpose for establishing the ETV was to highlight the founding meeting of the Organization of African Union (OAU), which took place that

remember Girma Cheru for his instructions during the children's program *Yelijoch Gīzē* ('Children's Time'), when they "used to follow his instructions [...] while doing the exercises on the living room carpet. Let us unleash our bodies! Dub, Dub, one, to three, four!"<sup>43</sup> He not only became a living example for a well-built body, but also an inspiration for many to start body building. Teshome Tesfaye, who won the Ethiopian bodybuilding title five times, called Gima Cheru a source of inspiration as important as Arnold Schwarzenegger<sup>44</sup>. During the opening ceremony of the annual sports festival of the Ethiopian Sports Federation in North America in 2009, Girma Cheru was received by "the whole stadium jumping up and down with his trademark "*Dub, dub! Dub dub!*"<sup>45</sup>

In contrast to the overall positive media display, body builders such as Girma Cheru also met with difficulties. In an interview with the weekly *Yekatit* in 1982, Girma Cheru narrated: "Landlords expelled us from the training sites [because they thought] that [I] would break through the wall, [I] would gather dodgers. Hence, they expelled me from six places"<sup>46</sup>. To counter this negative public attitude, he organized shows. In the vicinity of churches right after religious services, groups of young athletes demonstrated weight lifting and acrobatics and, thus, presented their "beautiful bodies"<sup>47</sup> to the audience. Later he also included musical performances and shifted the shows from open-air sites to the Hager Fikir Theater, the Cinema Ras, and other halls. In how far the YMCA as an institution

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year. (Gebremedhin Simon Gebrets'adik, Ethiopia AMDI research report 2006; <http://www.bbc.co.uk> [...] [amdi\\_ethiopia.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/health/2006/07/060712_ethiopia.shtml) (accessed 12 July 2011)).

<sup>43</sup> "*Sewinnetachinin innafiata, dub dub and, hulett, sost, arat.*" Dub, dub stands for the sound made while marching or jumping ([http://www.bernos.com/blog\[...\]girma](http://www.bernos.com/blog[...]girma) (accessed 11 July 2011)).

<sup>44</sup> Alemayehu Seife-Selassie, "Flexing one's way into uncharted territory", *The Subsaharian Informer: The Pan-African Newspaper*, ([http://www.ssinformer.com\[...\]spotlight/2009/july/31/eth\\_a&e\\_31\\_07\\_09\\_001.html](http://www.ssinformer.com[...]spotlight/2009/july/31/eth_a&e_31_07_09_001.html) (accessed 11 July 2012)).

<sup>45</sup> [www.horizonethiopia.com\[...\]Itemid=20](http://www.horizonethiopia.com[...]Itemid=20) (accessed 11 July 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Wendimu Negash Desta, "Girma Cheru – g'elmassawī sportenya", *Yekati* 1974 Hidar (E.C.).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

was involved in these shows or even used them for their own ends is still a matter to be researched. What we know from images is that roughly at the same time the famous heavy athlete Alemayehu Feyisa from Mekelle YMCA participated in sport shows at Baloni Stadium<sup>48</sup>. Young YMCA sportsmen of the Abebe Bikila Bodybuilding Club in Addis Ababa performed bodybuilding and weightlifting in smaller settlements while en route to the town of Nazrēt. In doing so they did not only raise the funds for their travel, but ‘educated’ the rural population ‘muscular male beauty’<sup>49</sup>. It is also an open question in how far the YMCA secretary Michel Yowasef, who came from Egypt, took an active role in promoting body building within the organization. The way in which Egyptian ideas about human perfectibility through sports, especially bodybuilding and weight lifting, might have influenced developments in Ethiopia would be a suitable site to study Egyptian-Ethiopian knowledge transfer in the field of popular culture<sup>50</sup>.

### **Concluding remarks on the religious character of the YMCA’S sports discourse**

As the reading of the YMCA Annual Reports from 1962-72 and newspaper articles suggests, there was no argumentative link between sport as a means to build healthy ‘muscular’ bodies and religion. Instead, sport was conceptualized within a broader discourse about progress in Ethiopia and ‘modern’ citizenship. The display of scantily clad muscular male bodies could also be found on the cover of annual publications such as the *Inter-School Athletic Association*, the *Armed Forces Sports Day* or the *University Sports*

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<sup>48</sup> I am very grateful to Surafiel Photo Studio in Mekelle and Mekelle YMCA Branch for giving me access to their photo-collections. I thank the sport scientist Mulugeta Hagos from Addis Ababa University who identified the persons and discussed with me their involvement in the YMCA and Mekelle’s leisure culture.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Benazarēt. 30 wet’atoch yekibdet mansat tir’īt asayyu’, *Addis Zemen* meskerem 17, 1963 E.C. (September 27, 1970), 4.

<sup>50</sup> For the role of sports in forming ideas of progress in Egypt and the ‘bodies’ necessary for relevant projects to implement them, see Jacob 2011.

Day. Similar to institutions of higher education, the YMCA discourse on sport went beyond the rhetoric of *mens sana in corpore sano*. It was linked to the nation through an emphasis on leadership qualities that embraced the need for moral and bodily control. In doing so, it served the Emperor's vision that "[h]e who would be a leader must pay the price of self-discipline and moral restraint. This contains the correction and improvement of personal character, the checking of passions and desires, and the exemplary control of one's bodily needs and drives."<sup>51</sup>

Since the YMCA had successfully established itself in urban areas, activities linked up with general trends of urban youth culture which also focused on progressive visions of a strong muscular male body. YMCA's physical education programs served the promoting of modern sports as a useful pastime and as a means to produce strong, and what is more, disciplined future citizens. Since sport appeals to most children, it could be successfully instrumentalized in programs such as the *operation better boys* which became the first street worker program in Africa and operated in the Arat Kilo, Piasa, Maych'ew Square and Aware areas<sup>52</sup>. Not only the facilities, but also the successful participation of the YMCA teams in competitions must have been attractive to the boys. Hence, individual and communal crises was turned into a chance for both, future leaders, who worked as volunteers, and the street boys. Despite these and other activities, which aimed at the disadvantaged strata amongst young males in Addis Ababa, the main target of the YMCA remained the educated urban male class and not the uneducated migrants from the country side who poured into the city. These might have been more involved in the emerging informal soccer scene of the capital.

The healthy, mentally and spiritually strong 'gentlemen' who voluntarily served the nation through a religious institution, might be seen as the counter-model to a politically informed vision of progress, which expressed itself through student bodies wearing bell-

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<sup>51</sup> Haile Selassie, 1967, 15.

<sup>52</sup> *Young Men's Christian Association of Ethiopia, Operation Better Boys* (not dated, no page) (IES Library 267.3 YOU).

bottoms and Afro hairstyles, and who marched in protest just next to the YMCA headquarter in the Addis Ababa of the 1960s and 1970s. In this respect it would be interesting to know if sport became a space for an exchange of ideas or a battle ground for ideologies. As the memoirs of activists in the Ethiopian student movement suggest, the YMCA also served as one of their training sites for both ideological and physical preparation – Marxist-Leninist reading circles and courses in Far Eastern martial arts – to overthrow the Empire.<sup>53</sup> Most presumably both revolutionary student bodies and muscular YMCA (Christian) bodies might have clashed with diverse local forms of acceptable bodies which did not have vanished that easily through urbanization and the opening up to foreign influences.

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<sup>53</sup> Bahru Zewde, 2010.

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## **Some Remarks Regarding Contemporary South African Art in the Context of Political Changes and Stability of Artistic Principles**

### **Resumé**

L'article présente un aperçu général des changements qui sont intervenus dans le domaine des beaux-arts dans la République de l'Afrique du Sud, après l'abolition de l'apartheid en 1994. Plus de détails a été présenté dans l'affabulation concernant l'utilisation par les créateurs modernes des chefs-d'œuvre de l'art européen ancien (par exemple Rubens et Michel-Ange). Les oeuvres naissants à ce cours montrent des rapports clairs à une nouvelle et compliqué réalité de l'Afrique du Sud au cours des dernières décennies. Cette problème entreprend les artistes du XXIe siècle tels que Johannes Phokela, Wim Botha, Andrew Putter.

*Keywords:* South Africa, contemporary art, apartheid, aesthetic, historical contexts

Motto:

*It is for the poet and the artist to tell us about the real Africa*  
Herman Charles Bosman<sup>1</sup>

The history of South Africa is unusually colourful as a result of various strong influences provided by different and conflicting cultures. These opposing cultures come into direct contact and collision with each other, fighting for supremacy and domination. This problem of collision concerns mainly the traditional African

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Charles Bosman (1905-1951) – South African short story writer.

cultures – the Bantu culture of the black majority of population and the Khoisan minority versus the white foreign culture of the Boer population and the culture of the economically dominant English community. Additionally, the political history of South Africa is also characterized by domestic violence (Curtin et al. 2003; Thompson 2001; Saunders 1994). Similarly complicated situation exists in South African art which has adopted varied forms in distinct historical contexts.

While many of the international trends broadly apply in the South African context, the visual arts system in South Africa largely evolved around the interests and aspirations of a minority of the population. As is the case in most other parts of the society and economy, the institutions, discourse, commercial activity and attendant networks of the visual arts zone have historically been dominated and shaped by the white population, with black artists and organizations being consigned to a largely marginal role in the development of the sector. During the apartheid period, black artists were accorded a secondary status in relation to mainstream practice, and – in the case of those artists that pursued an overtly politicized practice – actively suppressed and persecuted. The mainstream of creative practice was shaped by an aspiring white culture which sought to follow trends in Europe and North America, usually with a significant time lag (Berman 1983: 1-15). The visual arts nevertheless also served as an important domain for critical and dissident voices among both black and white artists, and while much of this work received some exposure internationally, the economic dimensions of the visual arts remained largely undeveloped domestically.

Until the mid –1980s the South African art world was largely divided along political lines (Williamson 2004, Peffer 2009). Government-funded institutions and organizations avoided production and exhibitions of overtly politically critical artworks that would antagonize these institutions' relationship with the apartheid government. State funded museums focused on the works of white artists, often within the modernist idiom. Artists and organizations which aligned themselves with the democratic struggle defined the

artist as a cultural worker, and focused on art treated as “a cultural weapon” (Peffer 2009: 73-98). The African National Congress and the United Democratic Front successfully lobbied for an international boycott of South African art not supportive of the struggle, and for funding of struggle artists and organisations. One of the major hurdles and handicaps for ambitious young black artists was the inaccessibility of university training. As a result several arts centres, like the Polly Street Center, Community Art Workshop, Johannesburg Art Foundation, Katlehong Art Centre and the Community Arts Project opened new avenues for the training of upcoming African artists, or a location for revolutionary production. Several organisations and projects evolved around the empowerment of black artists, e.g. the Thupelo International Artists’ Workshops and the Federated Union of Black Artists (Peffer 2009: 129-171). During the latter part of the 1980s, a number of exhibition projects and publications were developed which sought to produce a richer picture of creative production in the country. Many black artists, including several rurally based ones, such as Jackson Hlungwane and Noria Mabasa, were included in the 1985 Tributaries Exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, curated by Ricky Burnett, while the 1988/1989 exhibition and publication *The Neglected Tradition*, curated by Steven Sack, represented the first significant attempt to document the history of black artists production and reflected a dynamic arts world which sought to transcend boundaries of race and politics (Sack 1988). Albie Sachs’s influential paper *Preparing Ourselves for Freedom* (1989), sought to redraw the role of creative production in South African society in anticipation of political change (Sachs 1990). Although many cultural workers objected to Sachs’s seeming dissolution of the link between art and politics, the views in this paper sought to establish a new and independent ground for creative work in a post-apartheid context. In 1994 the international boycott was lifted and many artists in exile returned to South Africa, or cooperated in exhibitions that included their works<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> During the apartheid era many South African visual artists such as Gerard Sekoto, Ernest Mancoba, Madi Phala, Durant Sihlali, Louis Maqhubela,

Since 1995 a significant event was instigated in South Africa: the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)<sup>3</sup>, which was constituted to investigate human rights violations committed during the apartheid era (1948-1994). While some parts of South African society supported the process (including, most notably, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu), sceptics from various quarters of the South African society dismissed the commission as simply a witch hunt against the former adversaries or merely a show of pomp that would accomplish none of its objectives.

In this period, many South African artists, such as Minnette Vári, William Kentridge, Sue Williamson, Judith Mason and Kendell Geers, have devised productive ways to deal with South Africa's traumatic past. The focus falls specifically on works that were

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Gavin Jantjes, George Hallett, Peter Magubane, Manfred Zylla or Thamsanqa "Thami" Myele decided to emigrate. Similar situation concerns popular South African musicians such as the acclaimed Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masakela, Abdullah Ibrahim and Vusi Mahlasela, who became internationally recognized after they emigrated from South Africa. Also many writers who chronicled or satirized state-enforced racism and explored the possibilities of resistance, emigrated from South Africa. The most celebrated South Africa's writers on exile are: Dennis Brutus, Lewis Nkosi, Breyten Breytenbach, Athol Fugard, Es'kia Mphahlele and Albie Sachs.

In the 1960s, the international movement of solidarity with the struggle for freedom in South Africa (The Anti-Apartheid Movements) began to campaign for cultural boycotts of apartheid South Africa. Many British American and French artists were requested not to present or let their works be hosted in South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid. The conflict during this period resulted in violence and human rights abuses from all sides. The TRC was set up in terms of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995, and was based in Cape Town. The hearings started in 1996 and ended in 2001. The TRC's emphasis on reconciliation is in sharp contrast to the approach taken by the Nuremberg Trials after World War II and other de-Nazification measures. The TRC took an approach based on concepts of restorative justice (in hopes of achieving reconciliation), while the Nuremberg trials were based on the approach of retributive justice (based on the idea of the necessity of introducing punishment for committed crimes). This was the main difference (Doxtader et al. 2007).

produced in the mid to late 1990s, in the aftermath of apartheid, when white South Africa was forced in various ways to face up to the country it had partly created. Some artists of the younger generation (e.g. Minnette Vári, Kendell Geers, Lisa Brice, Jodi Bieber) having grown up during the final years of apartheid, and have created works that represent an act of witnessing as well as a performative response to the traumatic events that mark South Africa's history. Their creative output was performed in a climate where the horrors of apartheid were revealed and analysed on a daily basis by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Many of these white artists found various ways to respond to these traumatic times in a productive manner trying actively to articulate and negotiate white responsibility in a new dispensation. In 1997, the second year of the TRC hearings, Minnette Vári produced a small sculpture of a rubber tire, moulded in white porcelain. In South Africa rubber tires have become almost emblematic of the struggle against apartheid in their immediate reference to both protest and the practice of so-called necklacing murders, a notorious method employed in the black townships in the 1980s to kill blacks suspected of being police informers. A tire soaked in fuel was placed around the presumed traitor's body or neck and then put on fire. In the piece, entitled *Firestone*, Vári's employment of the name of a popular brand of rubber tires becomes piercingly ironic in the South African context<sup>4</sup>. But it is her decision

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<sup>4</sup> In the 1980s in South Africa there was a quite famous and common method of punishment for blacks suspected of being informers collaborating with the "white" police and it consisted of putting on fire a tire soaked in fuel and placed around the presumed traitor's neck. What is so ironic about this piece? First of all she deliberately chose the name *Firestone* as the title of her work, which directly implies how these tires were used in the apartheid era - they were placed around the necks of the victims and put on "fire". For this reason the name of a well-known tire brand which consists of two words: "Fire" and "Stone" seems perfect and obviously a much better choice than other names of well-known tire brands, such as: *Pirelli*, *Michelin*, *Continental* or especially "*Goodyear*" – which could bring to mind much better and happier days. Other ironic moments of this art piece concern the color and the material which was used for its production. Vári decided to use white porcelain to mold the tire, whereas usually tires are made of rubber and almost always in black color. Connotations and allusions implied by

to mould the tire in white porcelain that makes this work conceptually so compelling. In a South African context, the radical revisualizing of this everyday object by using the white colour becomes an icon resonating with racial allusions and implications. According to Liese Van Der Watt, a South African art historian: “Vári has quite literally ‘made whiteness strange’ and the image speaks succinctly of white complicity in what was regarded and publicized as black-on-black violence in the black townships (Van Der Watt 2005: 30).”

In the post-apartheid period, South African contemporary artists have increasingly participated in an international and continental arena for presentation and debate, fuelled by a global interest in the complex history and contemporary realities of the country. The contemporary art scene in the country has positioned itself increasingly as a leader rather than a follower in the international contemporary discourse on the visual arts, supported by the proliferation of a number of print and on-line art critical platforms that explore the philosophical and political complexities of contemporary art practice in a postcolonial and post-apartheid context. A significant number of major exhibitions and catalogues have been concerned with challenging and breaking down preconceptions about South African people and art, exploring the ambiguities, diversity and dynamics of this context, both in their form and content. In 1993, South Africa, after decades of cultural isolation, was invited to the Venice Biennale. This was followed by the first Johannesburg Biennale in 1995, which gave an overview of current trends of both South African and international art. As it was quoted in the letter of Biennale invitation, “(… ) it will celebrate Africa’s long overdue re-entry into the international visual art arena” (Danto 1995: 24). In addition, many South African art works have started to be acquired by collectors abroad (Williamson 2009: 16-20), such as works done by Jodi Bieber, David Goldblatt, William Kentridge, Thabiso Sekgala and Sue Williamson, all of them featured

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this white, porcelain tire are quite obvious to most South Africans, both black and white.

in the exhibition *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life* at the International Centre of Photography in New York<sup>5</sup>.

Within South Africa, exhibitions and conferences have also offered opportunities for reassessing almost two decades of renewal and assertion within the African context. For example, the Sessions eKapa project of the Cape Africa Platform brought galleries, artists, academics and writers together around a range of issues in contemporary African art practice (Gurney 2006). However, the latter event also demonstrated the persistence of the legacy of apartheid, and included heated debate on the slowness of transformation in the art world and the wider society (Gurney 2006). The post-apartheid period has also seen a new generation of largely university-trained young black artists such as my favourite Mary Sibande (born 1982), who questions the traditional role of black women in South Africa and other countries with a history of black servitude<sup>6</sup>.

Although many South African artists are certainly followed by aesthetic considerations, the understanding of art seems to be heavily influenced by social and political concerns. Or in other words the notion of art for art's sake has a lesser tradition in South Africa.

In my article I have decided to present some of the more important contemporary South African artists who are devoted to making links between modern and classical art and who employ various means to make use of recognizable Western visual art. Their borrowings present viewers with the opportunity to reconsider, question, and revisit both the original works and their South African

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<sup>5</sup> Curated by Okwui Enwezor with Rory Bester, September 14, 2012 – January 6, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Sibande is a South African artist based in Johannesburg. Her most interesting and ambitious series *Long Live the Dead Queen* was featured within Johannesburg on the side of buildings and other structures as large, photographic murals of black women depicted wearing extravagant Victorian dresses in vivid colors. <http://www.africandigitalart.com/2010/11/mary-sibande/> (11.07.2013)

re-creations. These artists utilize the familiarity and visual power of the Western original images, while at the same time altering artistically these images in order to serve their own means, sometimes with regards to the political situation. Such intentions could be traced in the works of Wim Botha (born 1977), Andrew Putter (born 1965), Johannes Phokela (born 1966), Minette Vári (born 1968) and many others.

In the postmodern and post-apartheid era some South African artists have utilized the Western canon of art history as a central theme in their work. These artists have borrowed a great deal of imagery from recognizable Western works, appropriating certain elements in order to serve their own critical purposes. Some of them re-fashion essential parts, others parody canonical works. Other artists create simulacra, others combine elements to create montage, while still others borrow recognizable styles while infusing works with contemporary resonances. By changing certain aspects of the original works, the reimagined works' diverse meanings become quite clear.

My exploration of contemporary African artists who use some elements of the Western canon seeks to document the stability of artistic principles guiding them and simultaneously to discern the diverse motivations for cultural exchanges between the West and Africa via the visual arts. Through close analysis, I would like to show how this selection of works of today's South African artists critique contemporary and historical understandings of the global relations, the art world, and show particular histories that reverberate and echo still today.

Personally for me one of the most intriguing of the 21st century South African artists is Wim Botha, a Johannesburg-based artist – I will analyse a selection of his works, which skilfully re-fashion well-known Renaissance religious sculptures. In a seminal and influential postliberation South African work, entitled *Commune: Suspension of Disbelief* (2001), Botha carved a cross-less, crucified Christ from stacks of Bibles bolted together with a threaded bar. The Bibles are printed in the eleven South African official languages (Brodie 2004). Despite the work's obvious iconoclasm, it in fact had



deeper layers of meaning. Catholicism distinguishes itself from other strains of Christianity chiefly through its insistence on transubstantiation, the central belief that the wafer and wine in the Eucharist ceremony actually become the Body and Blood of Christ. In religion, as for creative endeavours, the notion of transubstantiation holds far more compelling possibilities than mere symbolism ever could.

Considering the notion of transubstantiation, Botha's *Commune* becomes an aesthetic paraphrase to the Biblical sentence 'the Word made flesh'. Language is present yet muted in this work; the medium through which the Christian message is communicated, the printed Bible page, becomes the base unit for the sculpture. One form of existence gives way for another, as a very real transmutation takes place. Botha takes this idea a step further by setting up closed-circuit television cameras directed on the sculpture, progressively defocusing and cropping the images. In their now visually abstract state and thus drained of content, these images are shown on monitors elsewhere in the available space at the art venue. The subversion of the Christian imperative of 'the Word made flesh' is evident.

In a similar way, Botha's work *Mieliepap Pietà*<sup>7</sup> from 2004 switches the very essence of Michelangelo's original, hallowed marble, for a typical African maize meal mixed with epoxy resin. Maize is a staple food for much of South Africa's lower working class, and in Botha's work, the *Pietà* embodies the agony of deprivation and poverty in the wake of decades of social and political inequality. By choosing a material such as mieliepap, Botha also draws parallels to complex South African history. By changing the sculpture's medium, the artist accomplishes several things. First, Botha has replaced a durable, expensive, historical artistic medium with a cheap, local food source. In doing this, Botha has called for a reinterpretation of the artwork's meaning. Botha states: 'I was drawn

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<sup>7</sup> Wim Botha uses the symbol of the Madonna also in the works entitled *Carbon Copy (Madonna del parto col bambino)* from 2001 and *Apocalumbilicus* from 2006.

to the material for its rich implications, and was pleasantly surprised at its effectiveness in simulating marble, for one, and the conceptual implications of using a staple food to simulate an expensive, elite material, of using something of essential value to simulate a medium that is largely useless apart from its decorative functions' (Moon 2008: 53). Maize meal is very cheap to purchase but incredibly valuable, as it meets the basic dietary needs of millions of people every day. Marble, on the other hand, is expensive but quite frivolous in that its only use is superfluous decoration. And because marble occurs only in natural quarries, it is often only available at a great cost. Historically, this valuable stone has been reserved for elite patrons or projects, due to its expense. As far as meeting the everyday needs of the masses, marble is quite trivial. Maize meal, on the other hand, is inherently precious as a useful commodity, as it can physically nurture.

Although Botha conceived the work *Mieliepap Pietà* already in 1999, the sculpture was not realized until 2003. It was first displayed in the exhibition *Personal Affects: Power and Poetics in Contemporary South African Art* (Enwezor, Farrell, Perryer 2004)<sup>8</sup>. This exhibition was organized by the Museum for African Art and covered two venues: the Museum's gallery space and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Botha chose to exhibit *Mieliepap Pietà* at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in order to demonstrate their similarities. First, the status of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine as the world's largest Gothic cathedral rivals St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, where Michelangelo's *Pietà* resides. Both *Pietàs* were housed in alcoves to the right of the entrance. Botha's

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<sup>8</sup> The exhibition's curators brought together the following artists: Jane Alexander, Wim Botha, Steven Cohen, Churchill Madikida, Mustafa Maluka, Thando Mama, Samson Mudzunga, Jay Father, Johannes Phokela, Robin Rhode, Claudette Schreuders, Berni Searle, Doreen Southwood, Clive van den Berg, Minette Vari, Diane Victor, and Sandile Zulu. Utilizing a variety of media, including drawing, video, sculpture, dance, and installation, these seventeen artists investigate subtle intricacies of identity and agency in a post-apartheid world.

simulacrum parallels the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in that they are both ‘colossal fraud[s]’ (Enwezor, Farrell, Perryer, 2004: 12). Botha simulates a canonical Renaissance work of art and the Cathedral appropriates a style of architecture, Gothic, that derived several hundred years before the Cathedral’s construction. Both the cathedral and Botha’s *Pietà* are imperfect and unfinished and even possess scaffolding. In Botha’s comparison, ‘In some ways my *Pietà* perfectly aligns with the cathedral, both being imitations that have a more universal function, where St. Johns is multi-denominational in approach (...)’<sup>9</sup> (Botha 2010). The relation between Botha’s *Mieliepap Pietà* and its original exhibition location, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, can effectively be read in order to expose their mutual similarities.

In Michelangelo’s *Pietà*, Mary is holding the lifeless body of her son, Jesus, after crucifixion. This imagery echoes the iconic South African photograph of Hector Pieterse being carried away during the Soweto uprising. When considered in light of one another, *Mieliepap Pietà* begins to shed its specific religious context and becomes instead a universal icon for tragic human experiences. Mary’s son’s death represents a far greater cause, as did Hector Pieterse’s. These tragic and unjust deaths were both motivators in spurring change. It is thought that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and as a result, we have eternal life. After Hector Pieterse’s death in 1976, the apartheid system was finally dismantled in 1994. The image of his death is forever a symbol of what the brutal violence of the apartheid system can cause.

Significantly, Botha’s *Pietà* is not a direct copy of the original but a precise mirror image, a reversed reflection. Presented as it was at St. John’s Cathedral in New York for the 2004 *Contemporary South African Art* exhibition, it became a strange order of doppelganger or a paranormal double. The work represents a quietly

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<sup>9</sup>[https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?original\\_referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emptyingdom.com%2Ffeatured%2Fwimbotha%2F&text=Wim%20Botha%20%7C%20EMPTY%20KINGDOM&tw\\_p=tweetbutton&url=http%3A](https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?original_referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.emptyingdom.com%2Ffeatured%2Fwimbotha%2F&text=Wim%20Botha%20%7C%20EMPTY%20KINGDOM&tw_p=tweetbutton&url=http%3A) (23. 01. 2010)

anarchic achievement, a subtly yet crucially altered version of one of Catholicism's most revered works.

In his recent works Botha also reinterprets other Renaissance works to fit a local context. Botticelli's *Portrait of Dante* (1495) re-emerges as the *Generic Self-Portrait as an Exile* (2008), reflecting upon Dante's thwarted desire to return gloriously from political exile. Again, books – this time, learners' dictionaries in four local languages (a nod to the *Self-Portrait* in the title) – have been bolted together to make a carving block from which Dante's beaky face and a laurel wreath emerge in sharply cut planes. The incised pages preclude any attempt at linguistic cross-pollination. South African art historian Liese Van Der Watt commented on the artist's work in general: 'It is this constant scrambling of givens, this interrogation of conventions that finally marks Botha's practice as extraordinary' (Williamson 2009:196).

Another artist who, like Botha, employed the Virgin Mary/Madonna to engage with such diverse issues as personal identity, sexuality, patriarchal idealism is Conrad Botes (born 1969). Botes explains that he uses religious imagery and the Western canon of art because it is so easy to appropriate and manipulate. His interest is mostly in creating political allegories, and he notes that from his earliest memories politics and religion were intertwined due to his Calvinistic Afrikaans upbringing. This framework of patriarchal conservatism and religious morality gave him an appreciation for the ability of certain images to cause disruption and shock. As Botes says: 'I definitely want to confront people, and combining certain things with religious imagery does that. That is why religious imagery is so powerful [although] I am not making a direct comment on religion' (Von Veh 2011: 132).

In 2007, Botes also parodies Michelangelo's *Pietà*, by replacing the Madonna with a gorilla in his *Pietà*. The *Pietà* group is centrally set against painted curved blue lines that create a framework for irregularly placed and sized painted glass roundels, like vignettes or stained glass windows, that can be related in some way to the sorrowing 'mother' and her son. The gorilla/Madonna is both humorous and darkly satirical as it could evoke the early

colonial categorisation of the African as the missing link between primates and human beings.

One of the most celebrated black South African artists, Johannes Phokela was born in Soweto in 1966 and studied art at the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) in Johannesburg during the turbulent 1980's. Phokela completed his studies at the Royal College of Art in London and lived there for many years, returning to Johannesburg in 2007. Much like a satirist looking for material, Phokela consumes political and cultural imagery and iconography from a variety of sources and, though he replicates these signs and symbols, he places them within reconfigured contexts that destabilize their meaning. It is always a subtle subversion, one that can only be gleaned from a close study of his paintings and the art canon – said to be his favourite source. Until now, local art critics have associated his aesthetic with the traditional Dutch genre of painting. He appropriates scenes from the Baroque masterpieces of Pieter Breugel, Peter Paul Rubens, Jacob Jordeans, Jacob de Gheyn<sup>10</sup>. He pares down their palettes to that of an under painting or inserts black figures or African masks into scenes. By doing so, he is more than thumbing his nose at the colonial master: Phokela often adds the very geometrical grid that underlies Cartesian logic and modernist notions of autonomy, precisely so as to undermine its imposition of order onto experience. In 2002 the influential art magazine – *Absolute Arts*, wrote on his art: "Phokela links these re-interpretations of Dutch Golden Age painting...with the colonisation of the African continent. Whilst Phokela's work weaves a personal history into the canon of Dutch and Flemish old master painting (masterpieces), his practice stands as an examination of the violent actions of the Dutch in South Africa, as much as an inquiry into the history of painting' (*Absolute Arts* 2008).

In a conversation with Bruce Haines the artist stated:

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<sup>10</sup> One could easily find a similar approach in the works of Andrew Putter entitled *Hottentots Holland: Flora Capensis* 2008/9 and *African Hospitality* 2009/10.

I grew up thinking that the so-called Old Masters only existed as religious or iconic knick-knack prints, particularly those by the likes of Leonardo da Vinci or William Blake. They were or still are very popular and are often used domestically in Soweto. I have always been curious about what these prints were actually made for, apart from making money. Besides their religious or popular value, what possible effect can they have on those who own them? As for Dutch genre painting, they portrayed a certain European lifestyle coinciding with a period in history that saw the arrival of Europeans in South Africa. This was the only visual reference available, utopian in many ways, the harsh realities of war and famine left out. The subsequent cultural collusion is significant and becomes an essential source for my ideas. (Haines 2003)

The most recognized of Phokela's painting, *Apotheosis* of 2004, is based on the style of Peter Paul Rubens, is characterized by voluptuous bodies, heightened emotion, dynamic compositions and dramatic colour schemes. However, Phokela's alterations charge this seemingly generic Rubenesque painting with contemporary allusions such as portraying a Rubenesque female nude with a G-string tan-line. In *Apotheosis* instead of Christ presiding over the frenzied scene, Phokela has depicted a male figure suspended in a glass box. Although rays of light radiate from the box, it does not overtly appear to be a figure of Christ. Instead, Phokela has identified the glass box as a contemporary allusion to the controversial American magician, David Blaine. In some ways, the ambiguous figure can be read in multiple ways, in light of many different situations. It can speak to society's tendency to idolize people, holding a person up in great esteem, even for trivial reasons. It might speak to the perceived lack of any authentic saviour. In Phokela's words (Murinik 2004: 120), 'When you look at my work, there's no straightforward answer.'

The composition of Phokela's *Apotheosis* resembles Rubens's *The Last Judgment*<sup>11</sup> rather than Rubens's *Apotheosis* (*Apotheosis of Henry IV*, *The Apotheosis of James I*, *The Apotheosis of the Duke of*

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<sup>11</sup> Another painting by Phokela that directly utilizes the theme of the *Last Judgment* is *Fall of the Damned* (1993).

*Buckingham*) or Rubens's *Assumption of the Virgin*. Phokela depicts a myriad of souls as if in a *Last Judgment* scene. Some are falling to their fate of an eternity in hell, while others are rescued by winged angels. The mass of painterly human forms falls away from the Christ-like figure, suspended at the top centre of the composition, enclosed in a glass box. Rays of light radiate from this male figure, who raises his arms and surveys the scene before him.

Phokela has inserted an Italian inscription along the bottom of the canvas, which reads: 'Tyrannidi Benevolae de Grata Clientela Triumphus'. This phrase can roughly be translated as: 'Due to grateful patronage, there is a triumph for the benevolent tyrant'. However, if the phrase is loosely translated into modern English, then the phrase seems to describe an ironic occurrence, where the oxymoronic 'benevolent tyrant' succeeds because of his indebted supporters. This peculiar phrase could describe the difficult political situations involving tyrant-like leaders, which occur in some parts of Africa.

Aside from the artist's style, unlike many modern artists, Phokela employs a traditional Western artistic medium: oil on canvas. Moreover Phokela's *Apotheosis* is arched at the top, a shape that resembles some altarpieces. For example, Rubens's *Assumption of the Virgin* altarpiece from Antwerp's Cathedral of Our Lady also has an arched top. The painting itself is also quite large, measuring 270 x 241 cm. Both the size and shape of Phokela's work echo conventions of 17th century Flemish and Dutch altarpieces. But unlike finished monumental Baroque paintings, Phokela's *Apotheosis* resembles preparatory sketches or the style of Delft tiles.

Phokela's works are represented not only in the South African National Gallery and the Smithsonian National Museum for African Art (USA), but also at the South African High Commission in London, among other collections.

Through their works contemporary South African artists such as Minnette Vari or Yuill Damaso often shock the public. Some artists re-motivate these images to refute Eurocentric fictions, while others complicate conventional notions and ideologies. The young design team from Johannesburg – *Strangelove* (Carlo Gibson and

Ziemek Pater) employs a particularly widespread image of a well-known Western work, such as Michelangelo's *David*, to challenge viewers to rethink the original work in light of this contemporary re-imagining. Some artists borrow elements, styles, narratives, or images from canonical works of Western art. This 'borrowing' can be understood in terms of pastiche.

The most scandalizing artist, Yuill Damaso (born 1968) in his painting dating from 2010 decided to shock the viewer by showing a figure of a half-naked dead Nelson Mandela (the beloved leader and former president of South Africa), lying on an autopsy table. Mandela's body on a the table is surrounded by famous contemporaries, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, President Jacob Zuma, former presidents F.W. de Klerk, Thabo Mbeki and politicians Trevor Manuel and Helen Zille, all wearing 17th century costumes. South Africa's youngest AIDS activist, 12-year-old Nkosi Johnson who died in 2001, uses a scalpel to tear into the icon's lifeless body. This controversial picture is a direct quotation and reference to the Rembrandt masterpiece – *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp*. Damaso's choice of the subject matter is considered a taboo in South Africa, where depicting the death of a living person is considered disrespectful at best, and possibly even as an act of witchcraft. The ruling party, the African National Congress, said in a statement: 'In African society it is an act of *ubuthakathi* (witchcraft)<sup>12</sup> to kill a living person...This so-called work of art...is also racist. It goes further by violating (Mandela's) dignity by stripping him naked in the glare of curious onlookers' (Daily News 2010). However Damaso stated in a BBC interview that he is trying to make people confront death. 'Nelson Mandela is a great man, but he's just a man. The eventual passing of Mr Mandela is something that we will have to face, as individuals, as a nation'(Daily News 2010).

Some of the modern South African artists re-fashion essential parts, others parody canonical works; yet others create simulacra, while some combine elements to create montage. Still other artists borrow well-known styles infusing their works with contemporary

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<sup>12</sup> See Berglund 1976.



resonances. In the wake of the Johannesburg Biennales, a new generation of contemporary South African artists has emerged, and many of these artists have shifted both their aesthetic criteria and artistic strategies from those prevalent during the early years of the post-apartheid system, when it seemed that the Mandela-inspired rainbow nation would become a bottomless mine from which to extract the ore that would ornament the various organs of the multiracial and multicultural worlds of contemporary South African culture. Today that model is in tatters, and the evident simplification that attended the reception of post-apartheid art has shifted to the scepticism of a new century. Younger artists, like Moshekwa Langa (born 1975), Robin Rhode (born 1975), and Mikhael Subotzky (born 1982) – all three of whom have achieved in a relatively short time remarkable international visibility – are extracting a different sort of material from the debased mine that served to inoculate the mind with the empty pieties of the rainbow nation. Diane Victor (born 1964) comments on this situation in a series of 16 small drawings called *Disasters of Peace*. She presents every horrendous perversion of South Africa: taxi violence, poverty, drought, street kids, woman abuse, AIDS, government, court and prison corruption, family murders, hijacking, incestuous child abuse and baby rape (Matthews 2003). There is no rainbow here because today South Africa is riven by an internal struggle against both an emerging totalitarian democracy and a debilitating amnesia that seeks to return the country back to the comforts of segregated lives.

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## **In Pursuit of Freedom and Dignity Through Creative Writing A Personal Account<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

My areas in creative writing are poetry and drama. To date, I have published four anthologies of poetry and three plays. The plays are *Natala* (1997), *Kifo Kisimani* (2001) and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi* (2004). The four anthologies of poetry are *Mchezo wa Karata* (1997), *Bara Jingine* (2002), *Redio na Mwezi* (2005) and *Msimu wa Tisa* (2007). A fifth book of poetry, whose title has not been yet established, is expected to be published.

*Keywords:* Africa, dignity, freedom, poetry and drama

Let me take you through my journey and experience as a creative writer beginning at the furthest end.

I was born in Tharaka in the Republic of Kenya in 1955 (or maybe 1956). My parents, both long departed, were ordinary peasant farmers. At a young age, I would accompany my mother, and sometimes my mother and my father, to the family farm. At the time, Tharaka community practiced shifting cultivation and farms for some of the families were a long distance away from the homes. That was the case with our farm. When I was slightly older, I would look after the family cows and goats as my parents attended to other chores.

In 1963, I was enrolled in the nearest school, Karethani Primary School, five or six kilometres away from home. I would

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<sup>1</sup> Paper was originally presented at the Africa Days at the University of Warsaw, May 8, 2013.

walk to the school in the morning and walk back home after the lessons, that ended at one o'clock. The school, which was run by the District Education Board, worshipped the Protestant way while other members of my family were Catholics. After only three years at Karethani Primary School, I transferred to Gatunga Full Primary School which was under a Consolata Catholic Mission. I stayed in the school for four years at the end of which I sat and passed Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.

I was admitted to Form One at the Chuka High School in 1970. During my first or second year in the school, one of the English teachers – I believe she was called Miss Morris – invited students interested in creative writing to attend a meeting one evening in one of the classrooms. The meeting was intended to start a students' creative writing club. Among other issues, it discussed how our creative works would be availed to the school. It was agreed that we start a school magazine for that purpose. I pleasantly recall that I am the one who proposed the name for the magazine. Since the school is at the foot of Mt. Kenya, I suggested that we call the magazine "The Mountain's Voice". The name was accepted with a modification. Miss Morris recommended that the magazine be called "The Voice of the Mountain". We started writing short stories, poems and probably some journalistic pieces too. The works were published in the first issue of the magazine.

My earliest attempts at creative writing were in the form of poems. A number of them appeared in the different issues of "The Voice of the Mountain". The content and the titles of most of what I wrote and published have long receded from my memory. However, I still remember the title of one of the poems and what inspired me to write it. The poem was titled "The Bell". In it, I looked at the power of the school bell. In those days, due to the excellent body metabolism of our youthful bodies, food digestion was extremely efficient. The result of the efficient digestion was biting hunger between meals.

During lunch, we would get crowded in front of the door to the school's dining hall. Sometimes, we would jostle and push each other as we tried to be as close as possible to the door. The hunger would

be so intense that one felt as though you had not eaten for days. And no matter how vicious the biting fangs of the hunger become, the door to the dining hall would not open until the bell rang. We would go through the ordeal all over again as we waited for supper.

Our breakfast consisted of bread, tea and maize flour porridge. The porridge was served in plates – the same plates that we used for lunch and for supper. It was adequate and, sometimes, we go for a second helping which would be a half plate or sometimes a full plate. We would then go for morning lessons. Because of the rapid digestion of the porridge, by the second lesson, our bladders would be so full that, quite often, the mental focus would be the wish to go for a short call rather than to understand what the teacher was teaching. That wish would not materialise until the bell for the break rang. Of course, it was possible to ask for permission to go to answer the call of nature as the lesson was going on. But to do so often would not only have been detrimental to learning but also embarrassing, not to mention the teacher becoming fed up with the requests if they became a habit. That is how “The Bell” was born. Unfortunately, neither do I have a copy of the poem nor have I seen it for last forty or so years!

I had a very strong ambition, maybe an obsession, of going to the university. To go to the university, one had first to go through Form Five and Form Six. To join Form Five, one had to get very good grades in Form Four. I did not want to take a risk of not getting admission to Form Five. So, sometimes in Form Three, I disengaged myself from creative writing to concentrate on my academic work. My hard work in Form Three and Form Four paid off. I passed my Form Four examinations very well and got admitted to Form Five at the Alliance High School. After one year in Form Five, I proceeded to Form Six, did the examination, and passed. The following year, my most precious dream became a reality: I was admitted to the University of Nairobi.

At the University of Nairobi, I pursued Bachelor of Arts and then Master of Arts in linguistics, graduating in 1979 and 1981 respectively. Besides my formal studies, I watched plays at the University and at other venues within Nairobi. Many of the plays I

watched were serious social commentaries, mostly by African playwrights. Besides interacting with the very informative theatre, I also read outside linguistics, attended public lectures and regularly watched news on the television and listened to the radio. That lifestyle, together with the general atmosphere at the university, substantially raised my awareness from that of a high school student to that of a person with a fairly clear picture of what was happening in Kenya, the rest of Africa and, indeed, in the cold war world.

I resumed my creative writing in 1982, a year after I graduated with an M.A. in linguistics. It was not merely resumption, but resumption with a difference. Whereas in my earlier attempts at creative writing I dealt with themes such as the power of the bell in the school system, my increased political and social awareness led me to interrogate themes of a more political nature. For instance, I had become acutely aware of the disparities that characterized (and still characterize) Kenyan society. Distribution of wealth in the country was skewed. There were those who were captives of want; those enslaved by hunger and indecent dwellings; those humiliated by the inability to feed and properly clothe themselves and their children. But in the same society, there were men and women who were swimming in wealth and wallowing in luxury; those who had so much to eat and drink that one of their major preoccupations was how to constantly and regularly restrain their bellies from bulging and their cheeks from surging. For some of them, how to control hangover, was an enduring challenge!

The disparity between the haves and the have-nots could not be explained by claiming that the poor were lazy and that the rich were hard-working. It could not be wished away by attributing it to God being benevolent to some and mean to others. Something was wrong with the way society had been configured after independence or, rather, the way we had failed to reconfigure society and instead carried over the colonial mode of production and distribution of wealth. People's dreams of freedom and dignity had been betrayed. As a writer, I decried that betrayal in several poems. I castigated the social imbalances as unacceptable. An example of a poem that I

wrote in that frame of mind in the early 1980's is titled *Ndoto* ('A dream')<sup>2</sup>.

By the time of my resuming creative writing in 1982, not only had President Moi ascended to power in Kenya, he had already become a dictator. Needless to say, dictatorship curtails people's freedom to enjoy rights and liberties. It can bring about economic misery, social disorder, and sometimes, total collapse of the state. Any of the above scenarios results in people losing their dignity. Whereas in Kenya, the state remained intact and the economy surprisingly resilient until towards the end of the 80's, Kenyans' freedoms were so restricted that even writing a letter to a friend, having a conversation in a pub, or calling from a public telephone booth could not be taken for granted. The political situation in the country was so bad that talking about politics even with a friend did not necessarily feel secure.

Progressive people in the mass media, at universities, in non-governmental organisations and in the National Assembly were protesting. Moi's government responded with brutal force. People were thrown into jails, others were fired from their jobs, and yet others were put in detention without trial. A clandestine movement called Mwakenya was started in the country. Their members were met with all the brutality of a dictatorship. Some of its members would be taken to the law courts in the evening after working hours and quietly sentenced to jail. Some were tortured so much before being taken to court that they "admitted" to committing crimes for which they knew nothing about. They preferred to go to jail than to continue being tortured by the state security agents. I remained hopeful. The fall of dictators such as Anastasio Somoza Debayle in Nicaragua and Mohamad Reza Shah Pahlavi in Iran reinforced that hope. I expressed that hope in poems such as *Dagaa na Papa* ('The sardines and the shark') in which through unity, sardines overpower a notorious shark!

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<sup>2</sup> The poem was published in the anthology titled „Mchezo wa Karata“ ('A game of cards').

On July 31, 1982, I had a poetry reading in my residence in Nairobi. Artists, especially those who patronized the Kenya National Theatre bar, were in attendance. I read my poems and people responded to them. A lot of the time was taken up discussing a poem titled *Mkia Hupinda Mbele na Pembe Hurudi Nyuma* ('The tail swings ahead and the horns take the back position'). The poetry session ended at about 6.30 and, whereas other participants decided to go to the Kenya National Theatre bar for the evening, I chose not to go there since it was late. The following morning, as I was going to buy a newspaper, I noticed that the environment outside was rather unusual. I asked a guard next to my residence what was happening. He curtly said: *Serikali imeenda!*, which is Kiswahili for "the government has been taken !" (lit. 'the government has gone').

It turned out that early that morning, the soldiers of the Kenya Air Force had launched a military coup. The information had been announced from the studios of the Voice of Kenya, the government-owned and by then the only radio and television broadcasting station in the country. As the day was breaking, the Kenya Army crashed the Kenya Air Force's attempt. Later that day, in the evening, President Moi was escorted back to Nairobi from his rural home by heavily armed contingent of the Kenya Army. I could see the convoy of the military vehicles from my kitchen.

In the meantime, there had been a lot of looting in the central business district of Nairobi. Shops, especially those dealing in electronic goods, had been stripped empty by the residents of the capital city. Many people had been killed by the Kenya Army personnel and several women had been violated.

Such is the result of bad governance and dictatorship. People lose their dignity through curtailment of liberties; through harassing by state security agents; through incarceration in jails, remand to prisons and detentions; and through other forms of humiliation. Ironically, in the process of trying to redress the situation or purporting to so, further atrocities such as loss of lives, violation of women, and destruction of property take place.

The coup did not succeed. However, something akin to what I had contemplated in the poem I recited in my residence on July 31,



1982, almost came to pass. Whether the take-over by the military would have ensured that “the horns” were overtaken by “the tail” is, of course, a matter of conjecture. I was craving for a change in Kenya and Africa but not a change that comes with the smell of gunpowder. The turn of events after the coups by Mobutu in Congo, Bokassa in the Central Africa, Amin in Uganda, and Doe in Liberia, had left an impression in my mind that coups were not the answer to Africa’s political and economic problems. Thus after the attempted military take-over in Kenya, I wrote a poem titled *Jumapili ya Damu* (‘Bloody Sunday’). In the poem, I painted a grim picture of what had taken place in Nairobi and made a case for civilian governments.

Bad governance has been a feature of many African countries. The consequences for the continent have been dire. The first fifty years of the continent’s independence, to a large extent, went to the drain. In many countries, misrule and economic mismanagement were the order of the day. The result was suffering of the ordinary people as the ruling elites amassed wealth and lived like kings and princes. The frustration brought about by this state of affairs triggered many military coups, attempted coups and counter coups. West Africa was particularly afflicted by the overthrow of governments in the sixties and the seventies. Consequently, bad governance has been a major target of creative writing on the continent. I have not been an exception regarding that trend.

In my play titled *Kifo Kisimani*, Bokono, the villain, is a feared despot who robs it over the people of Butangi. He uses security agents to intimidate people and maintain silence in Butangi. Mwelusi, the hero, takes him head on. Bokono’s agents unleash violence on him to no avail. The despot’s henchmen try to entice him with a title and property without success. It takes the greed and selfishness of Mwelusi’s brother, Gege, to kill Mwelusi. Gege is promised a hand in marriage to Bokono’s daughter if he gets rid of his brother. He kills Mwelusi but, to his chagrin, the marriage to Bokono’s daughter does not materialize. The promise of marriage was merely a trick to get Gege eliminate his brother. Meanwhile, Atega, a young woman who had worked hand in hand with Mwelusi, leads the over-charged crowds to over-run Bokono’s palace. Bokono

and his court poets are arrested without bloodshed after his agents join the agitated crowds. The people of Butangi reclaim their freedom from the misrule of Bokono.

The phenomenon of rulers trying to retain power at all cost has been a known fact throughout the ages and all over the world. Africa is no exception to this reality. The tendency towards clinging to power by hook or crook was the bane of many an African country over the last several decades since the continent emerged from European colonialism. Some presidents have been in power for more than thirty years. Where the clinging to power has been accompanied by poor economic policies, or the looting of the economy or both, citizens have remained deprived and in dire need of appropriate and adequate services. Such is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where Mobutu Sese Seko ruled for decades. In spite of Congo having more known minerals than any other country in the world and in spite of its having the mighty River Congo which has the capacity to generate enough electricity for the whole of Africa and beyond, the Congolese still wallow in poverty.

In Kenya, Moi ruled for twenty four years in spite of being very unpopular among Kenyans. He used intimidation and all manner of tricks to sustain himself in power. The trickery included changing the National Constitution in 1982 to shift Kenya from a multi-party country to one-party state. With the help of intra-party dictatorship, he remained unchallenged at the elections. That was the situation from early eighties to July 1990 when Kenyans rose up and held massive demonstrations which were met with deadly force by the state security machinery. However, the fire that was ignited in 1990 eventually bore fruits in 1992 when multi-party democracy was re-established in the country.

With the coming back of multi-parties, Moi's political system devised new strategies to remain in power. In the general elections of 1992, for the first time, the country witnessed what came to be known as "tribal clashes" whereby, in some areas of the country the ethnic group in majority rose up in arms and attacked Kenyans from other ethnic groups, if they were perceived not to be supporting candidates favoured by the ruling party. The attackers looted and

burnt down property; they killed and maimed people; and they caused thousands of people to flee their homes and businesses. The result was massive suffering of innocent Kenyans. Some of the evictees ended up in camps for displaced persons. The dwellings in these camps consisted of structures made of polythene paper. There were no proper amenities such as appropriate toilets, running water or electricity. With their properties looted, burnt down or left behind, many parents were unable to pay school fees for their children. Many of the children dropped from school. Driven by want, some of the boys become petty criminals whereas some of the girls drifted into prostitution.

“Tribal clashes” as a method of retaining political power become an enduring feature of general elections under Moi’s rule. The madness of 1992 and which overflowed into 1993 was repeated during the general elections of 1997 and 2002.

I have tried to expose this evil practice for what it really is. The blood-letting during election years is anything but tribal. Anybody who calls the madness tribal should explain why it only occurs during general elections. Does Kenya have different ethnic groups only during elections? Of course, the answer is no. So then, if indeed, the blood-letting is caused by ethnic hatred and animosity, why does it not occur in-between the elections? The madness is not “ethnic clashes” as it is called; the violent incidences are political clashes. That is the message in my play titled *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*. In the play, political agents – not ethnic groups – organize, arm and train the murderous gangs who drive thousands of people away from their homes and into indecent dwellings. That is how thousands of Kenyans are denied decent meals; pushed into desperation; and caused untold humiliation. In a nutshell, that is how innocent Kenyans are deprived of human dignity.

It is important to point out that not everything negative about Africa’s politics or its economies is of the continent’s making. Much of Africa’s suffering results from sinister and sometimes outright criminal intrigues of America and Europe. Let us, for illustration, return to the Democratic Republic of Congo. For the last sixty years the citizens of that country have had very little to celebrate. For

many years, the country was under the misrule of Mobutu Sese Seko. Under his watch, the country saw little economic development. Instead of developing, the country witnessed massive looting of its mineral wealth by Europe, America, and the local political elites, especially Mobutu himself. Even after Mobutu's ouster, the country continues to suffer. His misrule created so much discontent, anger and mistrust that subsequent governments have found it extremely difficult to pacify the people. Rebellion and armed conflict have become the order of the day.

The sad story of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to a very extent, has its genesis in the Congo crisis of 1960/1961. To prevent Patrice Lumumba and his progressive political movement from ascending to power at the time of the country's independence, Belgium and America went into over-drive. They tried all manner of intrigues including America sending poisoner to Congo to assassinate Lumumba. The plot did not succeed. Patrice Lumumba was finally elected the first Prime Minister of the country. Still, he did not survive the machinations of his enemies. With the use of stooges such as Tshombe, Kasavubu and Mobutu, Belgium succeeded in installing a puppet government in Congo. First, through Tshombe, they engineered a rebellion and declaration of independence in Congo's Katanga Province. Patrice Lumumba's appeal to the United Nations Organisation bore no fruits. Although the United Nations Organisation dispatched troops to Congo, their mission must have been anything but putting down the illegal and foreign-inspired declaration of independence in Katanga.

The rebellion and declaration of independence in Katanga Province was not the end of Lumumba's headache. The Belgium head of the Congolese military incited the soldiers to mutiny against Lumumba. The mutiny gave an excuse to Mobutu to move in and overthrow the Prime Minister and his democratically elected government. As if dislodging him from power was not enough, his enemies had him physically eliminated. Those who killed him went further than just getting rid of him. Investigations have shown that, after being killed, he was chopped into pieces and dissolved in sulphuric acid.

After the murder of Lumumba and the scuttling of authentic independence in the Congo, America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) went after other progressive African leaders, in particular Kwame Nkrumah, who happened to have been an ally of Patrice Lumumba. The easiest way for America and Europe to exploit Africa is for the continent to remain disunited. Kwame Nkrumah talked passionately about the need for African countries to unite. He tried to sell the idea of Pan-africanism as a means towards economic and political growth. After Lumumba's elimination, Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown. Many observers of African political scene are of the view that the CIA was behind his overthrow.

The overthrow and killing of Nkrumah was felt across West Africa and, indeed, the rest of the continent. The military coup that overthrew him became a model for several other coups in West and Central Africa. True, some of the presidents were despots. However, there is no gain saying that the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah gave a very bad example to the military in the emerging nations of Africa.

There was genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The incidence is used by some people to defend their prejudiced argument that Africans are incapable managing their affairs including politics. They forget or do not know that whereas, indeed, Rwandese killed each other in hundreds of thousands, the seed of the hatred that blew up like a massive bomb was nurtured by Belgians during the colonial days. To be fair to the Belgians, they did not create the original prejudices between the Tutsi and the Hutu. But their rule over Rwanda-Urundi, and the preferential treatment they accorded the Tutsi, certainly aggravated the problem. The Tutsi saw the preferential treatment they were given by the Belgians as confirmation of their perceived superiority over the Hutu. In turn, the "we-are-better-than-you" mind-set of the Tutsi created more resentment among the Hutu. It is this mistrust and resentment that informed the first coup in the region in 1959 and continued to spark other coups thereafter. That hatred which had been heating for generations in a super-pot eventually boiled over in 1994.

Another reason African countries have failed badly economically are current trade arrangements between the continent

on the one hand and Europe, America and some Asian countries on the other hand. The arrangements are highly exploitative of Africa. It is important that Africans learn how those trade arrangements contribute to their unhealthy political and economic situation. One channel through which to avail this information to them is through creative writing. Some of my poems in *Mchezo wa Karata* and *Bara Jingine* address these issues.

In many societies, both in Africa and elsewhere, women suffer not only from bad governance but also from patriarchy. In Kenya, there are societal practices that are harmful to girls and to women in general. Girl circumcision is one of them. Whereas there is medical evidence showing that male circumcision has certain medical benefits, nobody has as yet scientifically shown any benefits of female circumcision. On the contrary, it is disadvantageous to women. And yet, culturally, some communities have continued to defend the practice and carry it out on their daughters. The practice is one of those that I have fought through my poetry. It is the thematic concern of *Mbiu ya Mgambo* ('The clarion')<sup>3</sup>.

Another practice that undermines the independence and the dignity of women is the so-called widow inheritance. It entails a woman being taken over by a brother-in-law after losing her husband. Some people have defended it by saying that it provides support for the widow and her children. If, indeed, the widow has voluntarily consented to the arrangement, one might find it difficult to argue against it. Unfortunately, sometimes the widow is under cultural pressure to accept the arrangement against her good judgment and taste.

In my play titled *Natala* and which has been translated into English under the same title, Natala's husband is presumed dead. Her nightmare begins at the mortuary as she tries to retrieve her late husband's body. The mortuary attendant is not cooperative at all. He wants Natala to bribe him so as to assist her retrieve her husband's body which is among many others in a badly managed mortuary. Failing to get monetary bribe from her, the attendant suggests, in a

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<sup>3</sup> The poem was published in the anthology *Bara Jingine*.

subtle way, that he would not mind sexual favour. Natala will hear none of it.

After the mortuary experience, bigger challenges await Natala. After the burial of what are presumed to be her husband's remains, culture demands that she become her brother-in-law's wife. She refuses the demand. She is threatened with losing her property and being deprived of her two children if she refuses to "co-operate". Indeed, Wakene, the brother-in-law, takes away the title deed to her land. Not even going to a government officer helps her reclaim the deed. Fortunately, she is not the kind of a person to give up easily. Through immense courage and sheer intelligence, she manages to take back the deed from her brother-in-law. The play ends with the return of her husband. The body that she had buried was not his. As she was going through thick and thin, her husband was in prison for some minor offence.

Environment is another theme that interacts with the notions of freedom and dignity. Degradation of the environment can deprive people of food thereby compromising their freedom from hunger. Quite often, unhealthy environment brings about poverty. In turn, poor people further degrade the environment. They do this either through ignorance or for lack of alternative ways of sustaining themselves. A vicious circle sets in. Needless to say, such a poor community is deprived of their dignity. Imagine of a people who do not have enough to eat; do not dress well because they cannot afford it; do not have decent accommodation because they do not have the money to construct or buy good dwellings; a people who have to engage in all manner of vices to merely survive. Such community cannot be free and dignified. To prevent such a scenario, we must jealously guard against environmental degradation. We must cultivate a good relationship between ourselves and the environment. When we respect environment, the environment reciprocates by sustaining us. Several poems in *Bara Jingine* are in defence of healthy environment.

One issue that has pained me a lot over the last eight years or so is the horrendous suffering of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The armed conflicts that have been raging there have seen

women suffer to levels that are beyond imagination. The women are violated by both the militias and regular soldiers. The violations involve so many women and have gone on for such a long time that the thought of it is itself a harrowing experience. To make a bad situation worse, the United Nations forces sent to the country as a buffer between the country's combatants have also joined in the orgy. I have shed tears for the Congolese women in a poem titled *Wendawazimu Kongo* ('Madness in Congo')<sup>4</sup>.

As a creative writer, I am not always in a fighting mood. Contrary to how European and American mass media portray Africa, the continent is not all about negative happenings. There is a lot on the continent that is attractive. The all-negative African that oozes from certain non-African media is a product of the ignorance of Africa coupled with the fertile imagination of prejudiced minds. It is sheer wishful thinking. Thus, since there is plenty that is beautiful in Africa, as a creative writer I do not always lament, lambaste, cajole and admonish undesirable elements, bad leadership, embarrassing occurrences and under-performing institutions. I also celebrate. I celebrate what is attractive.

In some African countries such as Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria, we have larger pools of skilled human-power than in many countries outside the continent. Some of the professionals are outstanding in their areas. The world's first heart transplant was performed in South Africa by Christian Barnard. In Kenya, carrying out complicated medical operation, such as open heart surgery, kidney transplant and in-vitro fertilization are the order of the day. Banks and other financial institutions are run professionally; five-star hotels are as meticulously run as any other in the world; and some of the research institutions are renowned in their fields of operation. To name a few such institutions in Kenya: The International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and The Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), are globally recognised as centres of excellence.

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<sup>4</sup> The poem was published in the book *Msimu wa Tisa*.



Kenya is the first country in the world to use mobile telephones for money transfers. It takes a few minutes for someone in one part of the country to send money to someone else in another part of the country. Today, billions of Kenya shillings circulate in the economy through the technology. The technology has been so successful that the Harvard School of Business found it necessary to disperse a team of professors to the country to study how the system works.

Africa has produced some excellent leaders. Many of us are probably aware that Africa has won the Nobel Prize several times. Africans have won in the Peace and Literature categories. The winners of the Peace Prize have been: Walter Sisulu (1960), archbishop Desmond Tutu (1984), Kofi Annan (2001), Nelson Mandela and Frederic de Klerk (2003) and Wangari Maathai (2004). Those who have won the Literature Prize are: Wole Soyinka (1986), Naguib Mahfouz (1988), Nadine Gordimer (1991) and John Coetzee (2003).

Africa has produced some of the best athletes in the world. Kenya and Ethiopian are the undisputed leaders of the world in the long distance running. Although I am a great fan of athletics and I keep a keen eye on games such as the Olympics and the World Athletics, I have a problem keeping in memory Kenyans who have won gold medals in their respective events. Those who have accomplished the feat are just too many. The same is true for Ethiopian long distance athletes. My guess is that over the last thirty years, Kenya and Ethiopia have won more gold medals for Africa in the long distance races than the rest of the continents combined.

In sports Africa has shone brightly. Some of the finest footballers in Europe today are Africans. And they are not few. Back in Africa, we have world class football outfits. Some of the teams that come to mind are: Bafanabafana of South Africa, Indomitable Lions of Cameroon, Black Stars of Ghana and Chipolopolo of Zambia. In rugby, Springboks of South Africa are a world side. So is Kenya's Sevens Rugby Team.

In politics, Africa has produced acclaimed leaders. Whereas Tanzania's Ujamaa policy did not succeed and, indeed, kept Tanzania

poor for many years, the late President Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was a very good leader. He was willing to put his brains to work for the good of his country. Ujamaa policy did not succeed in bringing economic development and social progress to Tanzanians. However, in coming up with the policy and investing so much energy in it, Mwalimu Nyerere had the best intentions for Tanzania. Yes, Ujamaa did not succeed, but owing to Mwalimu Nyerere honest, thoughtful and impartial leadership, he managed to create a united and patriotic nation out of more than a hundred and twenty ethnic groups in the country. Today, thanks to the foundation put in place by Mwalimu Nyerere, Tanzanians do not perceive themselves as Chagas, Sukumas, Nyamwezis, Pares or Makondes; they consider themselves, think and behave Tanzanian. Mwalimu Nyerere assisted his countrymen and countrywomen to achieve the dignity that comes with nationhood. I celebrate him as a leader in a poem titled *Mwashi* ('The builder').

Let us go back to Rwanda but, this time, on a positive note. The country, which barely twenty years ago went through one the worst bloodletting in recent times, has a booming economy, thanks to the meticulous leadership of President Paul Kagame. With a growth rate of more than seven per cent per annum, it is not only East Africa's fastest growing economy but it has also a much higher growth rate than most countries of the world. It has embraced information technology with much enthusiasm. Today, the country can claim to be in the forefront in the utilization of the technology for the transformation of the economy and for bringing about social progress. In terms of gender equity, the country is once again among world leaders. Its ratio of women to men in political leadership is higher than in most countries of the world. Furthermore, women in Rwanda do not merely occupy minor portfolios in the government. They run some of the most important ministries in the country.

The Rwandese are freeing themselves from the pain of economic scarcity; from the fog of ignorance; from being technological backwater; and from patriarchal mentality. They are cruising from being a relatively underdeveloped country into a modern society. Writing a poem, a play, a short story or a novel on

this kind of success story is a most worthwhile exercise. Such a piece of art can inspire a young woman or man to become another Paul Kagame. In such an eventuality, the young woman's or man's country will be the better for it in terms of creating a dignified society.

In the southern part of the continent, Nelson Mandela and South Africa have done Africa proud. After the white South Africans agreed to cede power to the black majority and after the holding of the first multi-party elections, the world waited with abated breath. People were not sure whether the black majority would not try to take revenge. If they did, of course, the white South Africans would not have taken it lying down; they would have defended themselves. The results would probably have been another bloodbath in Africa after the Rwanda nightmare. Fortunately, under the brilliant stewardship of Nelson Mandela, a man who for twenty seven years had been incarcerated by the apartheid leadership, South African never shed a single drop of blood. His leadership was simply exceptional. Today, he is seen not merely as an exemplary leader, but as a living legend. He features in one of my anthologies as a wonderful example worth emulating in creating tolerant and better societies.

I am attracted towards some aspects of African history. Some of these aspects have consciously or unconsciously been suppressed. We do not know whether or not that history will be availed to African children and youth through schools' curricula. As we wait, we should disseminate the important information through creative writing.

In school we were taught how Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas. It is claimed that he was the first person from outside the two Americas to see the twin continents. However, based on extensive research by scholars such as Ivan van Sentima in his book "They Came before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America", it has been shown that Africans from the Guinea region had sailed to the Americas long before Christopher Columbus. Van Sentima quotes that Christopher Columbus reported that there was evidence of fleets of ships with massive loads of gold having sailed to the Americas from the Gulf of Guinea.

Writers such as Martin Bernal in “Black Athena: The Afro-asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization” have credited Africa with a much more glorious past than many people are willing to accept. Moreover, egyptologists and especially the formidable Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop, have revealed the great achievements of Africa before the Modern Era. They have, for instance, shown that the Greco-Roman foundation on which the modern European civilization is based was largely influenced by the knowledge and civilization of the Nile valley and ancient Egypt. Availing this information on Africa’s glorious past through creative writing can contribute towards strengthening the self-esteem and confidence of the African thereby making him or her more innovative and productive.

Let me turn to the subject of language in creative writing in Africa. As the main medium through which culture is carried, the role of language in culture and society cannot be over-emphasized. If you are Polish, and you tell people that you are a writer, they will not ask you in which language you write. They will assume that you write in Polish. If you are an American, a Briton or an Australian, it will be assumed that you write in English. In countries that have multiple national/official languages such as Canada and Switzerland, the question will be asked to find out in which of the national/official languages you write.

In Africa, a continent that has very complex multilingualism, when people learn that you are a writer, they will assume that you write in the language of your country’s former colonial power. When you volunteer the information that you write in an African language, people look at you in a manner to suggest that they are probably putting into question your intelligence. This situation obtains in Africa because through colonial indoctrination – indoctrination that still continues to be nurtured today. Educated Africans were made to believe that creative writing is synonymous with writing in “a civilised language”; that is, in a European language. Thus, in the Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries of Africa, it is considered natural for a writer to write in English, French and Portuguese respectively. That is why when you write in an African

language, irrespective how big the language is in terms of the number of speakers and its geographical spread, you are considered unusual.

In the upside down scheme of things in Africa, I am an unusual writer. I do the “unnatural”. I write not in English but in Kiswahili. But I continue to do it and to do it consciously. Since the “natural way” of doing things in creative writing in Kenya is to write in English, works in Kiswahili do not sell as much as those written in English. Still, I continue to write in Kiswahili.

I write in an African language because my heart desires Africa that is free from hunger; Africa that is free from massive slums; Africa that is free from controllable diseases; Africa that can complete meaningfully with other continents. In other words, my heart desires Africa characterized by economic development and social progress. In a nutshell, I desire Africa that has freedom and dignity.

What has writing in an African language, we may ask, got to do with economic development and social progress on the continent? The answer is: “A lot!” In my view, one impediment to Africa’s development is the low self-esteem and lack of confidence among some Africans. Without the two, creativity and innovativeness suffer. And yet, creativity and innovativeness are crucial in getting new ideas, trying out old ones and turning others on their head. The low self-esteem and lack of confidence among some Africans are products of the battery of the African mind and culture by the missionaries and the colonialists. These two groups described and treated African way of life as primitive. African dances, songs, rituals, material culture, medicine, shrines, entire belief systems, rites of passage, courtship and marriage, mythologies and legends, attire, and languages were dismissed by the two groups as attributes of an uncivilized people. Whereas the attitude of the missionaries and colonialists were vigorously opposed by Africans at the beginning, within decades of Christianity and colonialism many Africans came to believe and embrace in the Anti-African worldview.

Writing in an African language is an attempt to negate the view that African languages are not serious speech systems worth of disseminating worthwhile thought. It is a way of telling people: African culture, including languages, is worth our respect and promotion. In other words, writing in an African language is a way of urging people to be proud of things African and, by extension, themselves. If as Africans we respect what is African and are proud to be Africans, our self-esteem and confidence will be reinforced thereby making us more innovative and courageous as we pursue our destiny.

There is a second reason why I write my drama and poetry in an African language. Currently, much of the knowledge from African universities and other research institutions is looked up in English, French and Portuguese. It is rarely available in the appropriate form and in adequate quantity in the languages spoken by the majority of the ordinary Africans. Since the level of education of the ordinary people does not allow them to read and understand information in a European language, they are denied the power that comes with information and knowledge. African economies and societies are the worse for it. Promoting African languages through creative writing sends home the message that the languages should be taken seriously as media of modern communication. That way, the researchers and other experts on the one hand and the general population on the other hand will pull together for the benefit of all.

I have faith in Africa. The continent has a bright future. My guess is that, excepting something out of the ordinary, Africa will be a very fine continent in which to live in thirty or so years to come. But for that to happen, Africans and their well-wishers must persistently and devotedly work towards that possibility. Each of us, all of us in Africa, should strive to contribute towards the new continent. My little contribution comes in the form of rebuking what is negative; encouraging what is positive; and, where possible, making suggestions. One of those suggestions is a poem titled *Bara Jingine* ('Another continent'). In it, I propose a route to New Africa: Africa that is free from poverty; Africa that cherishes human rights;

Africa that is at peace with itself – in other words, a continent with the highest level of freedom and human dignity.

### **Another Continent**

I

My dream  
Is sweet  
Like honey,  
Green  
Like the leaves of a cucumber,  
Bright  
Like the morning sun,  
Lovely  
Like a garden of roses,  
A dream  
Of a new continent  
A continent where  
Parliament  
Shall not be a hall  
Of a swarm of locusts,  
An acacia tree  
For the clattering of weaverbirds,  
A platform  
For formless sycophants  
A continent where  
'National security'  
Will not be the hard skin  
Guarding state house crocodiles;  
A walking stick  
Sustaining gods of the potter's clay;  
A continent where  
Detentions and prisons  
Will not be mortars  
For pounding humanity,

A door  
For entering to the grave,  
A continent where  
Precious brains  
Shall not get startled  
And drop their tools  
To hurriedly get to the border  
For home  
Has become a wilderness  
Where the buffalo  
Has been engulfed by fury,  
Where wild dogs  
Are roasted by rabies,  
And the spitting cobra  
Has its neck puffed up.  
A continent where  
Greed  
And corruption  
Shall not rain from the top  
Like poison  
From a helicopter  
Being sprayed,  
Official lies  
Shall not rise in the air  
And attack the nose  
Like the stench of a skunk,  
Tribal prejudice  
Shall not be a mist  
To attack eyes  
Like tear gas:  
A continent where  
In state houses  
There won't be black mambas coiled  
But humans beings seated –  
People with blood  
And conscience



## II

Like a sunbird  
On a flower,  
Like a heart  
Under the canopy of love,  
My dream  
Has perched and stilled  
On the new continent  
A continent where  
Information technology  
Will not remain up in the sky  
Far from our hand  
But will be a spotlight in the palm  
For lighting our road,  
Sparks of science  
Shall be fanned  
Till they be an inferno,  
The seedling of technology  
Will be nurtured  
Till it becomes a giant tree,  
A continent where  
Our researches  
Our discoveries  
Will be grenades  
Against malaria and measles  
Tanks  
Against rinderpest and blight;  
A continent where  
Farmers  
Will sing songs,  
Poets  
Recite poems,  
In unabashed praise  
Not only of tea and cocoa

Not only of coffee and tobacco  
But potatoes  
Bigger than hunger,  
Pigeon peas  
Growing without sulking,  
Vegetables and fruits  
Which deride enemies in the farm  
Lovely glittering  
Jewel of bio-technology;  
A continent where  
Theory and practice  
Brains and hands  
Blend fast  
With the sun and rivers  
And with sweet melodies  
Sing a unique song  
A song of electricity  
For running machines  
And dreams,  
For lighting houses  
And hearts

### III

Oh, New Continent  
Twinkling star  
In the darkly season,  
Glinting star  
Like life throbbing,  
Through this mist  
Of vapour of tears,  
Through this smoke  
Of the fire of poverty,  
Through this cloud  
Of the poison of disunity,  
With a steadfast voice

I call upon you  
Come, oh, New Continent  
Continent of tranquility  
Continent of harmony  
Continent of collaboration  
And of hope,  
Come, oh, New Continent  
A continent where  
Instead of the odour of suspicion  
As Cameroon and Nigeria  
Throw stomach gases at each other,  
Instead of groaning  
As Kenya and Tanzania  
Gnaw at each other's nerves,  
Instead of wailings  
As Ethiopia and Eritrea  
Fry each other in the desert,  
Roads and rails  
Shall cross borders  
Like blood vessels  
Leaving one organ  
And entering the next,  
Letters and telephone calls  
Shall reach neighboring villages  
Without passing through London  
Without going via Paris,  
Currency notes  
Will not become worthless paper  
After crossing Lwakhakha  
Or Rufiji,  
A continent where,  
The jewels of research  
With African colours,  
Factory goods  
With African emblems,  
Will bypass each other

Like pistons  
Running a machine

#### IV

I cry for you, oh, New Continent  
A continent where  
In the mind's eye  
The black skin  
Shall be gold,  
In our ears  
African languages  
Shall be nightingale's songs,  
African art  
Shall be the compass  
In the boat of culture,  
A continent where  
The core business  
Shall not be strategizing  
On how to tighten the knot  
In the dangerous noose  
Of Breton Woods  
But fabricating the file  
With which to cut the chains  
Which bind our legs  
On the life's highway

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## **The Polysemy of Body Part Terms in Hausa within the Frame of Image Schemas**

### **Abstract**

Body part-terms have been identified as a productive source of figurative lexical meanings as well as grammatical meanings (Heine, et al. 1991). The paper adopts descriptive lexical semantics as a model of approach. This paves the way to examine the relationships that exist between different interpretations of words. Virtually, every language exhibits rich set of semantic extensions of body part-terms, highlighting the importance of the human body for lexical and grammatical structure (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Most meaning extensions of body part-terms can be shown to have a clear motivation through either metaphor or metonymy, as has been argued in many studies before (Allan, 1995). The paper provides a rich inventory of body part-terms in Hausa and interprets the variety of their meanings in terms of conceptualization patterns.

*Keywords:* body part, compositional polysemy, semantic extension, metonymy, Hausa

### **1. Introduction**

The body part terminology has attracted the attention of researchers from different domains as it has an enormous potentiality for semantic extensions into other semantic domains and functions as a source for the development of other grammatical forms. Body part terms in Hausa are no exceptions, because they offer a good, varied and rich laboratory for the study of polysemy and conceptualization (Bilkova, 2000).

In Hausa, the general term for 'body' is *jiki* which refers to the physical body. Following Oladipo (1992: 15) it is "a collective term for all the material components of a person". Gbadegesin (2003: 175) defines body as "the physico-material part of the human being". As such, it includes both external parts (*goshi* 'forehead', *kai* 'head', *ido* 'eye' etc.) and internal components (*zuciya* 'heart', *ciki* 'stomach', *rai* 'soul' etc.).

In this paper, the focus will be on one body part *kai* 'head' with its sub-parts i.e. *ido* 'eye', *kunne* 'ear', *hanci* 'nose', *baki* 'mouth', *fuska* 'face', and *goshi* 'forehead'. This body part and its sub-parts, apart from being very common, show a great variety of meanings.

In Hausa, similarly to other languages, terms for physical body and its parts are often used to talk about other things than body. The explanation usually advocated for this is an intuitive interpretation of the surrounding world through bodily experience (Lakoff, Johnson 1980) . With this argumentation, a number of words for body parts are used with metaphorical meanings in which the target domain differs from its source (body) domain. The question is to which extent the polysemy of body part terms is determined by the factors common to many different languages and whether the metaphorical use of body part names is motivated by similar ways of conceptualization.

## **2. The concept of polysemy**

A polysemy is a word or phrase with multiple, related meanings. Polysemy can be understood as a variation in the construal of a word on different occasions of use (Croft & Cruise 2004:109). Polysemy can also be seen as the phenomenon when a single word has two or more meanings, no matter how meaning is defined in a given approach (Petho 1999:1). This is a pivotal concept within social sciences, such as media studies and linguistics, because applying pre-existing words to new situations is a natural process of language change.

Filmore & Atkins (2000) stipulate three elements in their attempt to describe polysemy: the various senses of polysemous

words have a common origin, the links between these senses form a network and understanding of how the 'inner' one contributes to understanding of the 'outer' one.

### **3. Theoretical framework of the study**

Before establishing the analysis of *kai* 'head' and its sub-parts, it is important to introduce the theoretical framework employed for the analysis. This frame is what Ibarretxe (1999) has called compositional polysemy. The basic idea of compositional polysemy is that different semantic extensions of a lexical item are obtained through the interaction of the semantic content of both the lexical item itself and its different co-occurring elements. The weight of the semantics of these elements in the creation of polysemy is not always the same; it varies according to the degree of semantic influence of these elements in the overall meaning.

In compositional polysemy which forms a theoretical background for cognitive analysis, a word is understood as if all its multiple meanings were systematically related. With this attitude, one of the most important objectives is to show that the multiple semantic extensions of a lexical item are related not in an arbitrary but in a systematic and natural way by means of several cognitive mechanisms such as image schemas, metaphor and metonymy. Numerous studies within this framework have shown that this is a strong hypothesis (Behrens 1999; Lakoff 1987).

An interaction between a lexeme denoting body part and co-occurring elements leads to the emergence of numerous senses that are different from the notion of body. Semantic extensions of body part terms in Hausa and the postulated mechanisms responsible for their development are presented below.

The method chosen for this research was multi-dimensional. Thus, participant observation, arm chair technique were employed and also literature materials were investigated for collecting the data. Every piece of data was evaluated and assessed from the native speaker's perspective. Hausa dictionaries were also used to confirm words attributed to standard Hausa and those seen as dialectal, borrowed, innovated or created.

#### 4. Data presentation and analysis

Looking at the semantic content of the words that accompany the body part-term lexemes, I now proceed to analysing and discussing the polysemous nature of some Hausa body part-terms. In carrying out the analysis and discussion, I pay attention to the body-part lexemes and the co-occurring elements in the sentences that will help in construing their meanings.

##### 4.1. *Kai* ‘head’

*Kai* ‘head’ is the upper part of the body in humans, joined to the trunk by the neck, containing brain, eye, ear, nose, mouth etc. The basic reference of the notion ‘head’ is body part, but frequently head expressions are used to refer to the presumed content of the head, that is the brain, the mind, human ratio, intelligence. This is because the mind, rationality, and intelligence has been presumed to be located in the head (Niemeier, 2000). Therefore, location is common motivation for the use of the word head in the metonymic expressions denoting rational thoughts, as it is manifested in the expressions given below:

- 1 a. *Ya d'aure min kai*  
‘He makes me silly shy’ (lit. ‘He tied my head’)
- b. *Ya yi batan kai*  
‘He lost direction’ (lit. ‘He lost head’)
- c. *Yana da duhun kai*  
‘He is not very intelligent’ (lit. ‘He has dark head’)
- d. *Ya yi d'anyen kai*  
‘He acts senselessly’ (lit. ‘He did unripe head’)

All these expressions refer to general human gift of reasoning or its absence. However, they are differently related to what Dirven





- h. *Ya shawo kansa*  
 ‘He prevails over him’ (lit. ‘He drank his head’)

The meaning ‘self’ is grounded in the conceptual experience that head represents ‘individual thought, selfishness’. In Hausa, reflexives are regularly formed with the noun *kai* and possessive pronouns, i.e. *kaina* ‘myself’ (not \*my head).

From this entry, we realized that the expressions for *kai* ‘head’ conceptualize the notion of rational thought through making reference to the head’s presumed content, that is the brain, the mind and the human intelligence. The examples refer to the general human gift of reasoning, but motivation for the use of the term *kai* for many different meanings is common idea that the brain is located in the head. It finds the ground for further extensions that reasoning is one of the brain’s functions and also a balanced mind is required as a condition for reasoning.

#### 4.2 *Baki* ‘mouth’

*Baki* ‘mouth’ is the opening through which an animal or human takes in food. Mouth is cross-linguistically associated with language (Radden 2001). Also in Hausa, the meaning ‘mouth’ is extended to ‘speech’ and different ‘speech acts’. This could be seen in the examples below:

- 3 a. *Ya iya bakinsa*  
 ‘He is reserved’ (lit. ‘He guards his mouth’)
- b. *Shi dan baka ne*  
 ‘He is talkative’ (lit. ‘He is son of mouth’)
- c. *Ya fiata bakinsa*  
 ‘He talks nonsense’ (lit. ‘He spoiled his mouth’)

- d. *Ya saki baki*  
 'He speaks too much' (lit. 'He released mouth')
- e. *Yana da nauyin baki*  
 'He is an introvert' (lit. 'He has heavy mouth')
- f. *Ya yi zakin baki*  
 'He presented a convincing speech' (lit. 'He did sweet mouth')

Here, more than one conceptual shift is considered to account for the meanings derived from 'mouth'. The examples signify individual speech character i.e. being 'introvert' in (3), 'reserved' in (3a) or 'talkative' in (3b). What they have in common is conceptualization of the idea of speaking through INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. The relationship between speech in general and the speech act in particular is captured by the MEANS FOR ACTION metonymy (Radden & Kövecses, 1999: 37) or INSTRUMENT FOR EFFECT which is chained as *baki* 'mouth' → *magana* 'speech' → *yanayin magana* 'nature of speech'. In Hausa, this cognitive mechanism is responsible for secondary target of various speech acts, such as gossip, exaggeration, fear, etc.

Many examples are to show that *baki* 'mouth' is extended to the lexical concept 'speech' through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. This metonymy has a strong experiential motivation, but it does not cover all aspects of the subsequent semantic shift. Because speech is the means to accomplish a wide range of social activities, *baki* is used in expressions that locate the 'speech act' in social environment. It motivates various senses such as 'appeasing' in (4b), 'arbitrating' in (4d), 'pleasing' in (4g) etc., as follows:

- 4 a. *Ya nemi baki*  
 'He tried to pick a quarrel' (lit. 'He searched for mouth')

- b. *An ba shi baki*  
 ‘He was appeased’ (lit. ‘He was given mouth’)
- c. *Ya tsoma baki*  
 ‘He gets involved’ (lit. ‘He plunged in mouth’)
- d. *Ya sa baki*  
 ‘He arbitrated’ (lit. ‘He put mouth’)
- e. *Ya yi min ciwon baki*  
 ‘He grumbled to me’ (lit. ‘He did to me itching  
 mouth’)
- f. *Na ari bakinsa*  
 ‘I spoke on his behalf’ (lit. ‘I borrowed his mouth’)
- g. *Na ba shi baki*  
 ‘I pleased him’ (lit. ‘I gave him mouth’)
- h. *Sun sayi baki*  
 ‘They gave a present to the  
 bride to win her speech’ (lit. ‘They bought mouth’)
- i. *Ya yi mata d’aurin baki*  
 ‘He prevented her to notify’ (lit. ‘He did to her tying of  
 mouth’)
- j. *Ya yi baki biyu*  
 ‘He is inconsistent in speech’ (lit. ‘He did two mouths’)
- k. *Ya yi subul da baka*  
 ‘He had a slip of tongue’ (lit. ‘He did slip with mouth’)

The examples in (5a-c) clearly show that the body part *baki* ‘mouth’ can be used in an expression to indicate absence of speech.

INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy has its negative application in this case:

- 5 a. *Ya kame bakinsa*  
‘He kept silent’ (lit. ‘He cached his mouth’)
- b. *Baki alaikum ya fita*  
‘He walked out silently’ (lit. ‘Mouth to you he left’)
- c. *Ya ja bakinsa*  
‘He kept mute’ (lit. ‘He pulled his mouth’)

The body part term *baki* ‘mouth’ with some qualitative expressions functions not only as the means to conceptualize the speech, but also to depict the effect of being emotionally aroused. This can be self-stimulation as in (6a) or inspiring someone else as in (6b) and (6d):

- 6 a. *Yana da dadin baki*  
‘He is given to flattering’ (lit. ‘He has sweet mouth’)
- b. *Ya yi masa dadin baki*  
‘He placates him’ (lit. ‘He did to him sweet mouth’)
- c. *Ya yi mugun baki*  
‘He used smutty language’ (lit. ‘He did bad mouth’)
- d. *Ya yi masa romon baka*  
‘He is pacified’ (lit. ‘He did to him soup of mouth’)
- e. *Jan baki ne da shi*  
‘He is used to ridiculing’ (lit. ‘He is used to pulling mouth’)

The presented examples indicate that *baki* ‘mouth’ represents the notion for speech in Hausa. The basic mechanism responsible for this semantic shift is INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. However, *baki* ‘mouth’ is involved in conceptualization of social relations. Therefore, the speech organ *baki* ‘mouth’ stands for the act of conniving between two individuals:

7. *Sun hada baki*

‘They connived’

(lit. ‘They joined mouth’)

### 4.3 *Ido* ‘eye’

*Ido* ‘eye’ is an organ of sight which is responsible for converting light into impulses that are transmitted to the brain for interpretation. An eye is an opening for information to reach into the heart. Raw information received has to be processed by the heart before it can turn into knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, eyes are windows into the mind and can be a source of polysemy when used in various expressions.

In Hausa body part term ‘eye(s)’ is associated with ‘vision’ through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. This mechanism is responsible for different notions (goals) and their further derivations. The eye stands metonymically for knowing and understanding, like in the examples (8 a-f) below.

8 a. *Ya yi ido*

‘He became acquainted’

(lit. ‘He did eye’)

b. *Ya yi ido rufe*

‘He did it without hesitation’

(lit. ‘He did eyes closed’)

c. *Ya ba ni ladan ganin ido*

‘He gave me a token share’

(lit. ‘He gave me share of seeing eyes’)

- d. *An yi masa wankin ido*  
 ‘He was tricked’ (lit. ‘They washed his eyes’)
- e. *Mun zuba masa ido*  
 ‘We look earnestly at him’ (lit. ‘We pour him eyes’)
- f. *Ya sa masa ido*  
 ‘He let him do it’ (lit. ‘He puts him eyes’)

In the above examples, *ido* ‘eye’ stands metonymically for vision and vision being the most consistent human gift of perception is further metaphorically mapped onto understanding. The visual perception may be also mapped onto ‘attention’, e.g.:

- 9 a. *Ya yi don ganin ido*  
 ‘He did it for the attention of others’  
 (lit. ‘He did for the sake of seeing eyes’)
- b. *Yana daukar ido*  
 ‘It’s throwing a dazzling reflection’  
 (lit. ‘He is taking eyes’)

In (10a-c) the body part *ido* ‘eye’ is associated with vision and is further metonymically replaced by noticing something under the attention and scrutiny of an individual or public:

- 10 a. *A kan idona ya zo*  
 ‘He came in my presence’ (lit. ‘It is on my eyes he came’)
- b. *Ya zama mai ido da kwalli*  
 ‘He became a tycoon’  
 (lit. ‘He becomes an owner of eyes with antimony’)
- c. *Ya yi ta ruwan ido*  
 ‘He persistently is unable to choose’

(lit. ‘He tirelessly did water of eyes’)

The metonymic extension of *ido* ‘eye’ is visible where the activity of seeing is mapped onto expecting, as observed in (11a and 11 b) below:

- 11 a. *Ya zura masa ido*  
‘He gave up’ (lit. ‘He puts eyes on him’)
- b. *Ya yi zuru da ido*  
‘He looked intently [at him]’ (lit. ‘He gazed with eyes’)

This is another group that constitutes those examples in which the lexeme *ido* ‘eye’ stands for warning (in 12 a-b) and fearing (in 12 c):

- 12 a. *Ya yi jan ido*  
‘He prevented others/strives hard’  
(lit. ‘He did red eyes’)
- b. *Ya zare masa ido*  
‘He warned him/frighten’  
(lit. ‘He stared at him with his eyes’)
- c. *Ya cika min ido*  
‘I feared him’ (lit. ‘He filled my eyes’)

In a group of examples *ido* ‘eye’ expresses the notion for ‘self’. The mechanism responsible for this shift is PART FOR WHOLE metonymy. Therefore, the perceptual organ eye stands for the person possessing the organ. The idea is exemplified in (13a-d):

- 13 a. *Ya hana ido barci*  
‘He had a sleepless night/He worked hard’  
(lit. ‘He prevented eyes to sleep’)



- b. *Mun hadu ido da ido*  
 ‘We met in person’ (lit. ‘We met eye to eye’)
- c. *Ido na ganin ido*  
 ‘Publicly, in the sight of people’  
 (lit. ‘Eyes seeing eyes’)
- d. *Idonsa ya raina fata*  
 ‘He feels sorry’ (lit. ‘His eyes look down at skin’)

#### 4.4 *Kunne* ‘ear’

Human being gathers information about the external world through the functioning of this sense organ which is one of the five perceptual senses. In Hausa, the meaning of phraseological expressions involving the word *kunne* refer to ‘listening’ or ‘hearing’, as in the following examples:

- 14 a. *Ban aron kunnuwanka*  
 ‘Let me report to you/listen to me’  
 (lit. ‘Borrow me your ears’)
- b. *Kunnensa ya yi laushi*  
 ‘He capitulated’ (lit. ‘His ear did soft’)
- c. *Ya kasa kunne*  
 ‘He pays attention’ (lit. ‘He spread ears’)
- d. *Ya ja masa kunne*  
 ‘He cautioned him’ (lit. ‘He pulled his ears’)
- e. *Ya yi mata romon kunne*  
 ‘He played deceit on her’  
 (lit. ‘He did her soup of ears’)
- f. *Kunnenka nawa*  
 ‘I have a story to tell’ (lit. ‘How many ears do you have’)

Regarding the pattern of conceptualization, ear is mapped onto ‘hearing’ through the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. In some phrases, ear stands for the concept of ‘attention’ as in (14c) which is more specific than hearing since it involves deliberate action on the part of the perceiver. This points to a metonymically-structured polysemy is founded in the semantic shift from the concrete domain of the body to the more abstract realm of the intellect. Another metaphorical association points at ears as a receptacle for knowledge that enables expressing the concept of ‘hearing’ from the speaker’s perspective. The examples (14d-14f) are to demonstrate it, see also (Pawlak 2005).

#### 4.5 *Fuska* ‘face’

*Fuska* ‘face’ is that part of the head from the forehead to the chin. The figurative extensions of the senses of face in Hausa reflects the metonymic and/or metaphoric understanding of the face as “highlight of appearance and look, indicator of emotion and character, focus of interaction and relationship and locus of dignity and prestige as indicated by the expression: *labarin zuciya a tambayi fuska*, ‘face depicts what is in the mind’. Yu (2001) believes that the face is the most distinctive part, on the interactive side, the front of a person, which displays emotion, suggests character and conveys intention.

The face being one of the external parts that is the most suggestive or expressive of one’s inner world, is the locus where one’s feelings can be all “written”. For instance we smile when happy and cry when sad. The reactions to emotion and feelings all are shown on our faces. Examples are as follows:

- 15 a. *Ya saki fuska*  
‘He looks pleasant’ (lit. ‘He let face released’)
- b. *Ya yi shimfidar fuska*  
‘He welcomed people’ (lit. ‘He did spread face’)
- c. *Ya ga fuska*

‘He has seen the chances’ (lit. ‘He saw face’)

d. *Ya hade fuska*  
‘He looks scowling’ (lit. ‘He joined face’)

e. *Ya daure fuska*  
‘He has an angry look’ (lit. ‘He tied face’)

f. *Ya yi fuska biyu*  
‘He commits hypocrisy’ (lit. ‘He did two faces’)

In the studies of metaphors (Lakoff, Johnson 1999), ‘face’ is seen as a container which contains the facial expression. On our experienced basis, *fuska* stands for the person to indicate human nature, character, and emotional state. Therefore, the conceptual schema in which the body part ‘face’ functions, is PART FOR THE WHOLE metonymy and this is clearly manifested in (16) below:

16. *Ya ci min fuska*  
‘He humiliated me’ (lit. ‘He ate my face’)

#### 4.6 *Hanci* ‘nose’

Nose is seen as that part of the face that sticks out above the mouth, used for breathing and smelling things. It represents the perceptual organ of smelling. The location and shape of the nose rather than its function determine the use of the word *hanci* in figurative expressions, as in the following examples:

17 a. *Yana hura hanci*  
‘He is so snobbish’ (lit. ‘He is blowing nose’)

b. *Yana daga hanci*  
‘He is putting on airs (egotism)’ (lit. ‘He raises nose’)

- c. *An turmuza hancinsa*  
‘He was let down’ (lit. ‘His nose was stuck’)
- d. *Ya shigar min hanci*  
‘He disturbs me’ (lit. ‘He entered my nose’)
- e. *Ya ci hanci*  
‘He collects bribe’ (lit. ‘He ate nose’)

However, in expressions nose has predominantly negative connotation, probably because of the bad smells or the association with snoring and the excretion of mucus. The perceptual domain motivates the ACTION FOR EVALUATION metonymy which directs attention to the negative meanings.

#### 4.7 *Goshi* ‘forehead’

Forehead *goshi* is that part of the face above the eye brows and below the hair. The front position it occupies on the face signifies the meaning of the expressions. The phrases in which *goshi* is used have positive evaluation, as in the following examples:

- 18 a. *Amarya tana da goshi*  
‘The bride is a bringer of good luck’  
(lit. ‘The bride has forehead’)
- b. *Komai ya zo gaban goshi*  
‘Everything has come to its eve’  
(lit. ‘Everything has reached forehead’)
- c. *Dan gaban goshi ne shi*  
‘He is the most loved one’  
(lit. ‘He is the son of forehead’)
- d. *Goshin magariya ya zo*  
‘He came just prior to sunset prayer’  
(lit. ‘At the forehead of sunset prayer he came’)

The body part term *goshi* ‘forehead’ is extended to mean ‘front’ or ‘before’ (as in 18d) with reference to space and time. Metaphoric extensions further apply the PART FOR ORIENTATION metonymy which also covers a good evaluation.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper addresses the more general question of polysemy and highlights that it includes a system of rules (of mostly metonymic and metaphoric motivation) that are applied in everyday use of language as part of an active interpretative process.

In terms of image schemas, the body part *kai* ‘head’ and its sub-parts which function in numerous expressions represent the following kinds of metonymies:

PART FOR WHOLE (*kai* ‘head’, *fuska* ‘face’)

INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION (*baki* ‘mouth’, *ido* ‘eye’,  
*kunne* ‘ear’)

ACTION FOR EVALUATION (*hanci* ‘nose’)

PART FOR ORIENTATION (*goshi* ‘forehead’).

Particular meanings are differentiated in perceptual domain. Most of the figurative uses of the body part terms examined play an important role and help in conceptualizing different aspects of feelings or social interaction.

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## Reviews

**Henry Tournoux (ed.), *Topics in Chadic Linguistics VII*, „Chadic Linguistics / Linguistique Tchadic / Tschadistik“, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2013, 243 pp.**

The volume contains thirteen papers from the 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial International Colloquium on the Chadic Languages which was held in Villejuif (near Paris) on 24-25 September, 2011. The participants came from Germany, Cameroon, France, Italy, Russia, Chad and Czech Republic: in sum sixteen papers were presented. Those published here have been arranged in the alphabetical order of their authors' names.

In „Arabic loans in Bole-Tangale languages” (pp. 9-25) Sergio Baldi traces Arabic loans in all dictionaries by Russell Schuh (Bole, Ngamo, Karekare, Bade, ‘Duwai and Ngizim languages) which are available on the Internet. The author observed that the highest concentration of Arabic loans is in Bole, and the lowest – in Karekare: most of them have arrived via Kanuri, and others via Hausa. The loanwords have been arranged thematically: religion; works, employment, tools and material (including cloth); community, education, family and marriage; wealth and values; time and space; sky, earth, fauna and flora; health and illness; interjections and particles; and miscellaneous.

Gian Claudio Batic in his paper entitled „The Bure language: an overview” (pp. 27-42) provides up-to-date assessment of vitality of this endangered language, along with a basic sketch of the grammar and English-Bure-Hausa wordlist. When documenting the language, the author undertook fieldwork in the Bure village (March-June 2011).

In the study entitled „Kujarge wordlist with Chadic (Afroasiatic) cognates” (pp. 43-52) Václav Blážík compares the lexical data of Kujarge (collected and published by Doornbos) with the

words of well described East Chadic languages, and occasionally with other Chadic or Afroasiatic tongues. He inclines towards the hypothesis that Kujarge can be a Chadic variety influenced by other languages, and probably represents an independent group of the East Chadic branch, „(...) perhaps with a closer relation, genetic or areal, to the Dangla-Mubi super-group” (p. 43).

According to Roger Blench one of the most distinctive features of African languages are the abundance of ideophones, it is words that describe sensory experiences. In his contribution entitled „Mwaghavul expressives” (pp. 53-75) he sketches history of the discovery of this class of words in African languages and then indicates their unusual features in Mwaghavul, a relatively large West Chadic language. According to him „Mwaghavul has an elaborate array of expressive terms, both covering the standard of ideophones and also including odour and colour terms, as well as body epithets” (p. 74).

The paper entitled „Tonal inversion in Geji and Pelu” (pp. 77-85) by Bernard Caron offers a unified account of the tonal inversion observed between two dialects of Geji (Geji and Pelu), a Chadic South Bauchi language. This type of tone variation has been documented in other Chadic languages: Kotoko and Ngamo. The author notices the need for research on distinctive language features among close neighbours of Geji as a source for the development of dialects. One is astonished to see heading „The tone system of Mawa” instead of „Tonal inversion...” (pp. 79-85)! This misinformation continues in further part of the book (pp. 87-129).

Richard Gravina in his paper entitled „The history of vowels and prosodies in Central Chadic” (pp. 87-99) proposes a reconstruction of the vowel-prosody system of proto-Central Chadic, and describes the reflexes of the vowels and prosody in different groups of Central Chadic. He realises that diverse systems of surface vowels of the Central Chadic languages have developed from a reasonable concise system in Proto-Central Chadic.

In „Observations concerning the metrical systems of three Chadic languages” (pp. 101-113) Mary Pearce investigates a similar metrical structure of three Chadic languages – Kera, Kwong and

Zime – spoken in Southern Chad. She observes that „These three languages have a similar underlying structure of CCV for a number of words, and all three languages have surface forms for this structure which suggest iambic feet” (p. 101).

„The tone system of Mawa” (pp. 115-125) has been analysed by James Roberts. Mawa is a language of the Guera group of the Eastern Chadic branch. The author examines the behaviour of tone in Mawa, „(...) whose system shows some characteristics that are common in tone languages, and other phenomena which are not characteristic of tone behaviour at all” (p. 115).

The study of Olga Stolbova entitled „Postvelars in Chadic. Internal reconstruction and external parallels” (pp. 132-138) includes the list of Chadic roots with initial laryngeal *h*- and their cognates in Semitic, Egyptian and Cushitic languages. In conclusion she states that due to specific reflexes ( $\emptyset$ /*w/y*) in West and East branches, most of Chadic roots with initial \**h*- show limited distribution within the family.

Alessandro Suzzi and Jules Jacques Coly in their contribution entitled „The Maaka language: First insights” (pp. 139-151) provide a short introduction concerning a historical overview on Maaka language which is spoken by some 4000 people in southern Yobe State of Nigeria. Then they present a phonetic description, give some remarks on grammatical aspects of the language, and insert lexical list taken from a basic and cultural vocabulary gathered in 1993 by Herrmann Jungraithmayr and Khalil Alio.

The paper entitled „Musgu and Masa *h*- vs. *h*- and Afro-Asiatic” (pp. 153-184) by Gábor Takács arose from author’s research primarily focusing on possible Afro-Asiatic reflection of Semitic *ghayn*. He concludes that Stolbova’s hypothesis on Musgu and Masa *h*- <AA\**γ*- has been verified as correct by some half of a dozen new etymologies.

„Les noms de poissons en kotoko commun” (pp. 185-201) is the only paper in French submitted by Henry Tourneux. Kotoko live on borderland of Cameroon, Nigeria and Chad Republic, and they are called „people of water”: their main economic activity has been fishery. The proximity of the Kotoko with aquatic environment in-

clined the author towards the comparison of their ichthyology vocabulary with the hope of finding the common fish vocabulary.

H. Ekkehard Wolff opens his paper entitled „On the diachronics of Chadic tone systems: From pitch to tone in Lamang-Hdi” (pp. 204-228) with a sad statement that little is known, even less is written on the typology and history of Chadic tone systems. In this contribution he looks at diachronic changes affecting to closely related Central Chadic languages: Lamang and Hdi.

The volume ends with an article by Ulrike Zoch entitled „Perfectives in the Bole-Tangale languages” (pp. 229-243). He takes a closer look at perfectives in selected Bole-Tangale languages, paying special attention to forms with the marker KO. The author states that „A comparative morphological analysis of perfectives with and without perfective marker (PM) in Bole-Tangale languages has led to conclusion that the PMs originated on the right fringe of the verb phrase and gradually moved towards the verb base”.

*Stanisław Pilaszewicz*

**Tove Rosendal, *Linguistic Landshapes. A comparison of the official and non-official language management in Rwanda and Uganda, focusing on the position of African languages*, Köln, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2011, 327 pp.**

The author's doctoral dissertation has been published in „Language Contact in Africa – Sprachkontakt in Afrika“ series edited by Hans-Jürgen Sasse and Rainer Voßen. The main objective of the work is to describe the present status, function and use of languages in two countries, respectively Rwanda and Uganda. The author carried a macro-sociolinguistic study on language status and language use in these two countries in theory with totally different linguistic situation.

Rwanda is a rare example of an African country with a national language (being also an official one), i.e. Rwanda, spoken by a majority of its citizens (app. 99%) as a mother tongue, while Uganda is known for its multilingual composition. In Rwanda, due to its historical implications, French was a medium of official communication together with Rwanda, and English was introduced

recently (after 1994) as a third official language. On the contrary Ugandan language policy has been exoglossic with English as the only official language since Independence, but it changed to a mixed one in 2005 when Swahili was added as the second official language.

The author proposes an investigation in the new field of linguistic landscapes, that covers linguistic, man-created environment in a social and political system, as opposed to wider investigated linguistic landscapes, that limit the reference to messages and signs in urban settings.

In her study the author investigates the present status, function and use of languages within the main formal domains in society, both official and non-official, and focuses on official languages, while taking also other languages under consideration. The author deals with language policy, but also with language management, both by authorities and citizens.

The study is of particular interest for its theoretical approach. The strong point of the book is an exhaustive overview of the literature. In depth it addresses theoretical assumptions and terminological issues. Moreover the author developed a new model for analysis, i.e. *Multilingual Management Model* (MMM), that allows to compare the same domains and units of analysis in several countries.

The study disposes of believes and myths, as e.g. both the army and the police forces in Rwanda use Swahili for communication, or the neutrality of English as a means of creating national unity. It gives quantitative analysis of the present situation of language use in different domains, such as official domains, education, state media, trade and commerce, religion and private media. Reveals an interesting unequal employment of official languages within the different domains, despite their equal official status. Clearly presents a strong position of Rwanda both in official domains and in everyday life, compared to French and English in Rwanda. And a dominant position of English over Swahili in Uganda. The study proves that language asymmetry exists and shows which languages are assigned which specific roles in a society, taking under consideration not only official languages but

other African languages, e.g. Ganda in Uganda, as well.

The work can be used as a strong and reliable reference on languages of Rwanda and Uganda. It in-depth describes a multilingual situation in Rwanda and Uganda and shows the complex situation of language status and use and aspects in which it differs in these two countries. The author not only presented a well researched, unique macro-sociolinguistic study that compares language situation in two countries, but also proposed a new approach to the comparative research in sociolinguistics.

*Beata Wójtowicz*

**Herrmann Jungraithmayr, *La langue mubi (République du Tchad). Précis de grammaire. Textes. Lexique*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2013, 226 pp.**

This outline of the Mubi grammar was published by Dietrich Reimer Verlag as the 27<sup>th</sup> volume of the valuable and renowned series „Sprache und Oralität in Afrika“. The publication is a crowning achievement of Professor H. Jungraithmayr in his long lasting research on that remarkable language, which is believed to preserve the most archaic grammar in the whole Chadic branch of the Afroasiatic family. Inspired by the data collected in 1933 by Johannes Lucas in Maiduguri, the Author started his work aimed at deepening the knowledge of that language. As a result of this initial research he published an article entitled „The Hamitosemitic present-habitative verb stem in Ron and Mubi“ (1968), in which he compared two languages spoken on the peripheries of the Chadic language area: Ron (Nigeria) and Mubi (Chad Republic). In 1971 the Scholar renewed his interest in Mubi. During his third research sojourn in Chad (1975/76) he came to know Isa Ramadan Na'im who became his principal informant and collaborator. During his latest stay on the Mubi territory in 2001 he spent few hours in Mangalmé supplementing his source materials.

The book under review has been dedicated „*Aux Monjul, les locuteurs de la langue mubi et préservateurs de la grammaire la plus archaïque en tchadique*“. One has to keep it in mind that the speakers of the language call themselves (as well as their tongue) Monjul, whereas among their neighbours they are known as Mubi.

In scientific literature the language is referred to exclusively under the name Mubi. The Mubi people live in the central and eastern part of the Chad Republic, to the east of the Abu Telfan mountains. Their principal town is Mangalme, situated 80 kilometres to the east of Mongo. According to the former sultan of Mangalme, the Mubi (Monjul) inhabit 136 villages, names of which have been enumerated in the introductory section of the book (pp. 19-21).

The book is composed of four parts: an outline of the Mubi grammar, small collection of Mubi texts, Mubi-French vocabulary, and French-Mubi index. Inquiries into the language proved to be extremely difficult because the knowledge of the mother tongue among the learned people (fluent in French or Arabic) was rather limited, and many of them have just forgotten their parents' speech. Therefore the collection of words and grammatical features had to be acquired through the mediation of Arabic, and in collaboration with Isa Ramadan Na'im and his mother.

When pointing to the structural character of the Mubi language, H. Jungraithmayr notices that it is a language very rich in ways concerning the apophony, which is often accompanied by the consonantal gemination and which applies both to the domain of noun and verb. Mubi is probably the language with the most developed apophonic system in the entire Chadic branch (p. 34). It has also many ways of the plural noun formation like suffixation, gemination, and internal vocalic alternation. In comparison with the importance of the segmental phonology, the domain of tone plays rather secondary role. The syntax of Mubi is distinguished by an astounding freedom. From the further reading of the volume one can notice a great number of pronominal forms (e.g. inclusive, exclusive and dual pronouns) which is rather rare in the Chadic languages. It is typical of the Ron language spoken in the extreme west of this language branch.

Mubi displays many other peculiarities which enlarge our knowledge of the Chadic languages. They have been carefully described and scrupulously analysed. This outline of the Mubi grammar deserves a special attention as an exemplary piece of the scientific publication by outstanding linguist and expert in African culture.

*Stanisław Pilaszewicz*

**Gabriele Sommer and Clarissa Vierke (eds.), *Speech Acts and Speech Events in African Languages* (Topics in Interdisciplinary African Studies, Volume 23). Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2011, 170 pp.**

The volume, as the editors inform, “is the result of an international workshop held at Bayreuth University in 2010”. The workshop was organized by Gabrielle Sommer and Clarissa Vierke from Bayreuth University and aimed at intensifying pragmatically oriented research on Africa, especially with regard to Niger-Congo languages as well as introducing research projects, reviewing current trends in pragmatic research, considering methodological and theoretical issues and developing agendas for future research (p. 7). Some of the papers presented during the workshop were later submitted for publication and included in the volume edited by the organizers of the workshop.

Apart from a short preface (p. 7-10), where the editors explain their reasons to start a debate on pragmatic research oriented in Africa and speech events in African languages, the book contains five articles discussing both methodological issues and case studies concerning speech acts in particular languages or areas. The first two articles focus on discussing and criticizing some theoretical aspects of the pragmatic theory. The authors support their claims with examples taken from several African languages. The other three articles are case studies based on particular African languages.

The first paper (p. 11-40) written by Gabriele Sommer and Clarissa Vierke consists of two parts. In the first one, the authors discuss the theoretical framework of speech acts and its nonapplicability to African languages. In the second they come back to the issue touched upon in the preface – genesis and importance of organ-



izing the workshop and they present the outline of the proceedings, i.e. they give summary of the following four articles inserted in the volume.

The main purpose of the paper is to show that various aspects of speech theory that seems to be universal have been worked out mainly on English and thus do not always apply to other, especially non-European languages. Authors of the article show this nonapplicability on the basis of the concept of politeness that "regards the speaker as a member of a society who continuously has to bargain over recognition and acceptance from others, trying to safeguard and construct his or her 'face', i.e. his or her 'public self-image'" (p. 18). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the authors of the theory, one of linguistic strategies used to minimize coercion imposed on the addressee is through indirectness. Sommer and Vierke give a counterexample of this assumption referring to Zulu language where direct requests are associated with high degree of politeness. Superimposing universality of certain strategies of politeness often leads to cross-cultural misunderstanding like in South Africa, where speakers of English regarded Zulu English being 'less polite' because of direct forms. Sommer and Vierke draw also attention to the fact that the individualist notion of 'face' does not apply to collective societies and is hardly "reconcilable with African notions of identity" (p. 16). Similarly in hierarchical societies "the volitional, goal-oriented aspect ascribed to speech act may be questioned" (p. 16). The authors claim that applying English-oriented theory may lead to neglecting culturally and linguistically distant phenomena. Again, they illustrate their claim with an example from the Zulu culture where the concept of 'hlonipha' is well known. It is interpreted as respect behavior and it implies, among others, the use of avoidance language among the Zulu. The young married woman who talks to her parents-in-law "cannot use any syllable that occurs in or resembles her husband's family's names" (p. 18). Thus, the name bears a person's inner being in Zulu-specific understanding of the self.

In the second paper (p. 41-65) "Face, Politeness, and Speech Acts: Reflecting on Intercultural Interaction in African Languages and Varieties of English" Luanga A. Kasanga discusses the dynam-

ics of interaction through analyzing three types of speech acts: requesting, apologizing and greeting. At the beginning of the paper the author defines two terms crucial for the article: “linguistic politeness” and “face”. He also introduces the notion of face-threatening act (request, compliment, criticism), i.e. the act that could damage the hearer’s face. Politeness as a universal strategy to reduce the possibility of damaging one’s face is questioned by referring to the societies like the Igbo living in Nigeria where imperative-like strategies lacking the overt politeness markers are preferred. Similarly, the data from Black South African English show that explicit performatives (e.g. “I am asking for a pen”) outranks all other requesting strategies. The speakers of Sesotho consider this strategy the most polite way of making a request.

When it comes to the notion of face in African context, Kanga confirms the observations made by Sommer and Vierke. He shows that unlike in theoretical frameworks based on Anglocentric way of thinking where the emphasis is imposed on the individual’s creative role (p. 46) ‘face’ is more a notion of a group than a burden of an individual.

Van Olmen and Devos in their paper “An Explanation of the Prohibitive in Hunde, Havu and Shi” analyze a speech act from a different perspective. Unlike other contributors of the volume they do not focus on pragmatic but rather on diachronic side of the language. They argue that there is a link between prohibition and narration by comparing the prohibitive construction in Hunde and Havu to the similar construction existing in closely related language of Shi (all belonging to the Central Narrow Bantu Group J 50) which apart from prohibitive function has also narrative reading. Due to lack of diachronic data the authors cannot prove the existence of a relation between prohibitive in Hunde and Havu and narrative in Shi, but they show that such a possibility cannot be excluded. The authors point out that the process of derivation from narrative to prohibitive is not found in typological literature, but the instances of the opposite scenario, from prohibition to narration, is found in the languages. For example in Russian “the imperative is used to signal a rupture in the expected course of events”.

Much of the discussion presented in article (p. 83-108) by Roland Kießling, Britta Neumann and Doreen Schröter about requesting, complaining and apologizing in two languages of the Cameroonian Grassfields refers to the speech acts in two communities, Isu and Men. The first part of the article “comprises the elicitation of vocabulary pertaining to the domain of speech, along with Wierzbicka’s study of English speech acts verbs (1987), combining with the exploration of contrastive usages in syntactic contexts for delimiting semantic ranges” (p. 86). Questioning the definition of ‘complaint’ proposed by Trosborg (1995: 311) which says that a complaint is directly addressed to the complaine (the person who is held responsible), the authors show that in the Grassfield cultures there exists a mediation of complaints. The addressee is usually not the causer of the complainable but a third-party mediator such as a chief, a quaterhead, or one of the elders. Thus, for the complaine it is much more important to find a proper person to lay complaint to rather than to find proper form of the complaint. In such situation the complaint is not an act considered as highly threatening to the social relationship as it is often presented in the literature of the subject, but rather as a speech act that “upgrades the social importance and authority of the addressee” (p. 96).

The second part of the paper is an analysis of a “natural piece of a discourse taken from a public hearing” (p. 96). It is the elder’s complaint presented at the inauguration ceremony of the Fon, i.e. the chief of Isu. The presentation of macrostructure of the event, i.e. the occasion, the setting and its participants is followed by the discussion on the microstructure, i.e. the single speech acts and communicative moves of the speakers showing the steps of lying and reacting to a complaint. The exact record of the complaint furnished with interlinear glossing and translation is included in the appendix (p. 109-143) that follows the paper. The appendix contains also a microstructure overview of an old man’s complaint and a lexico-semantic analysis of the speech act.

The last article (p. 145-168) by Anne-Maria Fehn “Ts’ixa Gesture Inventories” focuses on nonverbal part of the utterance. It is a result of a research carried out in Botswana in Mababe village

(Eatsern Ngamiland) where Ts`ixa is spoken. As indicated in the paper the number of Ts`ixa speakers is less than 200, thus the data presented by Fehn is a valuable contribution towards preserving the facts about an endangered language. The decreasing number of speakers goes along with the loss of gestures, which are no longer in use because the model of life changes. Fehn presents several types of gestures illustrating their shape with pictures. One type referred to as 'special purpose gestures' comprise iconic gestures denoting animals. This type is used almost exclusively by hunters in the bush. By using the gestures hunters can communicate without making any noise that would scare animals. Another type of gestures mentioned in the article is called 'obligatory pointing gestures'. They are called obligatory "because they have no equivalents in the speech lexicon" (p. 157). Fehn describes several subclasses belonging to this type of gesture, such as deictic gestures, gestures indicating the time of the day, gestures expressing age and size, and gestures denoting action. What is particularly interesting in this type of gestures is the fact that temporal or special concepts can be expressed very precisely. For example, the deictic gestures encode the salient features of the reference point, such as degree of proximity and visibility. The gestures indicating time almost precise the hour of the day.

Although the book is not pioneering in the subject of speech acts in African context, the topic has not been extensively studied so far. There are a few studies that contrasted speech acts in English and other African languages. Most of them concern South African English, Zulu and Xhosa. The value of the book lies in paying attention to some aspects of pragmatic theory that have been presented as universal, but can be easily contradicted by particular examples taken from the languages of Africa. Another important contribution of the book is to present detailed case studies of speech acts, that could be interesting not only for those making research in African studies, but also for linguists dealing with pragmatic theory.

*Izabela Will*

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**Angelika Mietzner and Ulrike Claudi (eds.), *Directionality in Grammar and Discourse: Case Studies from Africa*, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2012, pp. 232.**

This interesting volume edited by Angelika Mietzner and Ulrike Claudi, two prominent researchers associated with the Institut für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie at the University of Cologne, presents thirteen articles devoted to the expression of a broad concept of *directionality* in African languages. The papers are the output of a workshop held at the University of Cologne in June 2010 and are all consistent as to their aims and methodological assumptions. The linguistic material provides samples of all four African language phyla. Niger-Congo languages dominate and are represented by several linguistic groups which include: Bantu, of which well known languages, such as Otjiherero (Namibia) and Lingala (Democratic Republic of Congo) are described, but also new material of smaller languages of Bantu A zone in Cameroon is presented, viz. a case study of Isu and a comparative study of Barombi, Isubu, Mokpe, and Oroko; Eastern Sudanic is exemplified by Tima, a small language in the Nuba Mountains; the Ubangi group by Zande (Uganda and Central African Republic), Jukunoid by Mbembe (Cameroon), and the Gur languages by Syer (Senufo, Burkina Faso). The Nilo-Saharan phylum is represented by Nilotic languages: we find a case study of Dinka (South Sudan) and a comparative study based on many other languages. The investigation within the Afroasiatic phylum includes research on Somali, a Northern Cushitic language, and a comparative study of several Berber languages. The Khoisan languages are represented by N!ng, an endangered language spoken by less than ten persons in the Northern Cape Province in the Republic of South Africa.

As evidenced by all the sample material discussed in the book, African languages use various grammatical means to provide precise

location or motion towards or away from a deictic center. However, the authors go far beyond in their investigations and demonstrate how metaphor and pragmatic strengthening transfer the expressions primarily associated with spatial concepts onto many other cognitive domains, including: vision, orientation, social interactions, and highly abstract grammaticalized domains. Hence, *directionality* appears as a very broad concept covering various functions of language specific *grams* (lexical expressions, particles, morphemes) used in a number of different pragmatic contexts. In addition, many authors provide a diachronic aspect of analysis and trace directional grams to their etymological sources, which include, among others, verbs of motion and body part terms. It would be impossible to present a detail review of all issues included in each of these very well written and appealing papers, but I will attempt at least to point out some of the eye-catching points. The articles are arranged in the alphabetical order of the authors' names and the same arrangement will be used in the following presentation.

The first contribution is authored by Suzan Alamin, Gertrud Schneider-Blum and Gerrit J. Dimmendaal and is entitled "Finding your way in Tima" (pp. 9-33). The authors demonstrate a rich repertoire of lexical and grammatical means used in conceptualization of space, focusing on verbal markers of various specific functions. Particularly remarkable are the uses of ventive markers with verbs denoting other actions than motion (e.g. 'drink', 'build') which refer to complex events involving an action and a subsequent motion towards a location (the phenomenon called *alloying*).

In the following article "Verbal directionality and argument alternation in Dinka" (pp. 35-53), Torben Andersen discusses derived (by means of root alternations) verbs which express a distinction between direction towards a deictic center (centripetal) as opposed to direction away from a deictic center (centrifugal). Furthermore, some of such directional verbs code additional functions of their arguments, such as, instrument, goal, and many others.

The next contribution by Gratien G. Atindogbé entitled "On the typology of directional verbs in Bantu A (Barombi, Isubu, Mokpe, and Oroko)" (pp. 55-76) provides a comparative perspective

to the expression of directionality among the mentioned closely related Cameroonian languages. In all four languages, orientation is coded either by the motion verb alone or by a verb accompanied by a preposition. The same structures extend to a number of contexts in which no motion is present, but other, more abstract notions, such as a distance between two objects or an orientation of one object with respect to another.

Ulrike Claudi in the article "Who moves, and why? Somali deictic particles" (pp. 77-89) focuses on the ventive particle *soo* and its itive counterpart *sii* paying a particular attention to various contexts of usage which code other than their basic functions. For example, *soo* may point to a complex "round trip" event, implying 'going' and subsequent 'coming', and *sii* may imply an absence of a speaker during the event expressed by the verb.

Klaudia Dombrowsky-Hahn in "Grammaticalization of the deictic verbs 'come' and 'go' in Syer" (pp. 91-114) discusses an impressive number of functions carried by the morphemes *pa(a)* and *ka(a)* which have developed from the original verbs of motion in serial constructions and their subsequent use in the ventive and itive function, respectively. Apart from that, their ongoing process of grammaticalization (accompanied by different degrees of phonological reduction and prosodic dependence) extends their usage to discourse connectors of various functions, as well as to tense/aspect markers.

The same basic verbs of motion, but in a Khoisan language, are investigated by Martina Ernszt in the article "On the different uses of the deictic directional verbs 'go' and 'come' in Nlɪŋ" (pp. 115-126). Using a 90.000-word corpus of data the author points out that these two verbs appear as the most frequent verbs in the language and, consequently, are associated with various functions reflecting different degrees of grammaticalization: from full lexical verbs to various partly grammaticalized stages in serial verb constructions, in which, however, some semantic component of motion is typically preserved and has not been completely bleached as in similar cases in other languages.

Axel Fleisch in “Directionality in Berber: Orientational clitics in Tashelhit and related varieties” (pp. 127-146) provides a comprehensive discussion of the clitics *d(d)* and *nn*, out of which the former basically codes proximate, ventive and centripetal functions, while the latter is associated with distal, itive and centrifugal notions. The author draws attention to the higher frequency of the former clitic which correlates with its higher degree of grammaticalization (e.g. into aspect markers), and investigates usage patterns of both clitics in different domains, as well as constraints imposed on their usage (e.g. with stative verbs); he also speculates on a non-obvious issue of possible paths of the diachronic development of these formatives.

The following article by Roland Kiessling “Extensive is up, intensive is down: the vertical directional background of the adverbials *ká* vs. *tsá* in Isu” (pp. 147-164) brings us back to one of the Cameroonian languages. The author hypothesizes that the adverbials originate in the verbs ‘ascend’ and ‘descend’, respectively, which, in addition to extending towards the notions ‘up’ and ‘down’ along a grammaticalization path well attested cross-linguistically, have undergone a cognitively motivated, but typologically less common development into markers of event *extension* and *intension*, which constitute cover terms for organized networks of highly abstract interrelated meanings in non-spatial domains.

Angelika Mietzner in the following contribution “Spatial orientation in Nilotic languages and the forces of innovation” (pp. 165-175) provides examples of geographical and cultural motivation behind the development of spatial concepts, as well as changes induced by language contact. She also focuses on innovative uses of ventive and itive morphemes in their extension beyond their basic functions.

Wilhelm J.G. Möhlig in the paper entitled “Directionality as a basic principle in Otjiherero verb constructions” (pp. 177-188) distinguishes two types of the concept of directionality. One, referred to as *semantic directionality*, relates to the argument structure of the verb (including derivatives, such as e.g. the applicative extension) and syntactic patterns associated with it, typical also of many other Bantu languages. The other type, called *perspective directionality*,



serves the author to analyze the system of verbal inflection as dependent on speaker's perspective "towards the speaking source" defined as either *approaching* or *departing*.

The next contribution, by Nico Nassenstein on "Directionality in Lingala" (pp. 189-203) also explores a Bantu language, but focuses on directionality understood in a more narrow sense as the expression of motion, direction or manner. Among various grammatical means coding these concepts, special attention is drawn to many uses of the locative element *na*, emphatic *directionality* of the applicative extension, as well as to certain cultural and language contact issues (e.g. mental "maps", 'right'/'left' concepts, influence of Lingala applicatives on Congo French).

Helma Pasch's contribution entitled "Two multifunctional locative and directional prepositions in Zande" (pp. 205-218) provides a detailed study of the prepositions *ku* and *be*. The former primarily indicates motion towards a location, but it may also be used to express the metaphorical trajectory of vision, as well as interpersonal attitudes (e.g. opposing someone, benefactivity). The latter is traced to the body part 'hand' which subsequently developed into a marker of possession, but is also associated with coding a concept of 'source' or 'origin', as well as 'cause' of negative sensations and effects.

The final paper by Doris Richter gen. Kemmermann is devoted to "Directional verbs in Mbembe" (pp. 219-232). The author discusses verbs coding the movement towards/away the deictic center, upwards/downwards, and into/out of a container. But the most fascinating are serial verb constructions which seem not to have a limit as to a number of their components (the longest example given counts as many as six verbs in one construction) and combinations reflecting speakers' creativity. Directional verbs occur in them either as *major* verbs or more grammaticalized *minor* verbs.

To conclude, the volume provides a lot of valuable linguistic material and analyses and can be recommended to all interested in African languages and typological studies.

*Iwona Kraska-Szlenk*

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Holliday A., 1999, "Small Cultures", *Applied Linguistics* 20/2, 237-264.



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