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BIGSAS

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His Excellency Henri Lopes, the famous writer and Ambassador of the Republic of Congo in France during his address at the Ceremonial Act of BIGSAS at the Margravia Operahouse in Bayreuth entitled „Quelques aspects du dialogue culturel entre l'Europe et l'Afrique“

The cultural exchange should be intensified

“Living Partnership” was the splendid highlight in 2009’s events of BIGSAS, the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (see p. 6; 14f). The ceremonial act took place in the Margravian Opera House where BIGSAS and its African partner universities had the honour to be addressed by His Excellency Henri Lopes, the famous writer and Ambassador of the Republic of Congo in France. Before his celebration speech, which was received enthusiastically by the audience, he gave the following interview to Christian Wissler MA, Research Marketing of the University of Bayreuth, and Dr Viviane Azarian, Post-doc at BIGSAS and at the Chair of Romance and Comparative Literature.

Christian Wissler: Your Excellency, dear Mr. Lopes, it is both an honour and a great pleasure for the University of Bayreuth to welcome you at “Living Partnership” – this year’s conference and ceremonial act which is devoted to the close cooperation between BIGSAS and its five African partner universities from different parts of the African continent. Professors, students, friends and partners of our university are anxiously looking forward to meeting you, and apparently they do so at least for two reasons. On the one hand, you are widely renowned as one of the most inspiring contemporary poets from Africa. Your writings reflect on fundamental issues of today’s culture and life in Africa, and they are at the same time universally received as entertaining and witty pieces of literature. The “Grand Prix littéraire de l’Afrique noire”

that was awarded to you by the Association of French Language Writers, and the “Grand Prix de la francophonie” of the Académie Française have contributed to your international reputation as an “Homme des Lettres”. On the other hand, it is also your outstanding career as an African politician and diplomat that attracts the interest of hosts, partners and friends in Bayreuth. For more than ten years you have been representing the Republic of Congo as Ambassador to France, where your responsibilities also encompass London, Madrid, Lisbon and the Holy See.

Now, when we look back to the 20th century, it does not seem entirely unusual that a politician and diplomat becomes an active member of the literary world. Paul Claudel and André Malraux in France, or Nobel-prize winner Giorgos Seferis

in Greece, are just a few examples of creative writers who happened to get involved in diplomacy and political life – or, should we rather refer to them as committed “Hommes de Politique” reaching out into the world of fiction? Before we get lost in such bewildering questions of identity, I would like to ask you, in which ways your writings have been influenced by your experience within the political sphere ...

Henri Lopes: First of all, I feel very honoured for having been invited to the conference and the ceremonial act of BIGSAS. In your question you raised a general point which has often been discussed, namely the apparent contradiction between literary creativity and politics. However, I belong to a country which has seen a wide number of new developments in its recent history, especially



an Interview with Henri Lopes

after it achieved its independence. Many of us – in particular the members of my gen-

entirely separate parts of my life. When writing, I tried not to forget completely that I

“Many of us were like men of the Italian Renaissance who were men of political action, humanists and creators all in one.”

eration – were like men of the Italian Renaissance who were men of political action, humanists and creators all in one. Therefore, I always felt my activities in these fields to be complementary and not

was a politician. By this I do not mean that my work, as a writer, was influenced in part by political views or commitments. Although I have been a politician, I tried not to be someone with political biases.

▲ *H.E. Henri Lopes during his celebration speech in the Margravia Opera House, Bayreuth (Photo: BIGSAS)*

I have always considered myself as someone in the service of my country.

Now, it is in this context that I drew from my political experience a basic lesson which since then has influenced my writings: When I started to have an interest in politics, I was a student, and the first objective of my fellow students, as well as mine, was to get the independence of our countries. We thought that once

independence was obtained, the rest would follow. However, it turned out that we had neglected the importance of culture – not in the sense of

practice. Back home, my fellows and myself realized that our people, the people to which we belonged, had a culture which was quite dif-

CW: A central issue in your writings is the way in which people are confronted with or react to concepts of identity – may it be within their own



▲ Reception in the Iwalewa House: H.E. Henri Lopes with Professor Ute Fendler and Dr Viviane Azarian (r. to l.). (Photo: IAS)

knowledge of fine arts, but in a much broader sense of the term: Culture is, to my mind, the way in which an individual, a community or a society perceives both itself and others. In this sense, a common culture or a cultural heritage is something very complex, and by this complexity it has a considerable impact on the way in which political ideas and concepts can be put into

ferent from what we acquired abroad. Therefore, we had to realize that we had been far too optimistic or naïve in our expectations about the ways in which our country will proceed once independence was gained. It was in that spirit that I wrote my first book, *Tribaliks*. These short stories give a survey of my society – to put it in a nutshell, we could say that these short stories underline the contradiction between the dream and the reality.

minds or in being connected to families, cultures or societies. As it seems, your recent writings express a basic message to all those who find themselves entrapped by those kinds of questions, a message that can perhaps be summed up as follows: Do not get too absorbed in searching for identities, for human life is a patchwork quilt anyway. Particularly in the age of globalization, it does not make sense to expect a society to be “pure” or “homogenous” in any respect. On the

contrary, it is the emergence of cultural diversity or even cultural hybrids that keeps a society robust and alive.

Given the perspective of a European intellectual, this sounds like a core statement of a 21st century enlightenment; like a welcome appeal to detach oneself from conceptual frameworks which have become obsolete in a world that is thoroughly formed by transnational processes of exchange. But what is the impact of this message in an African context? How does it fit with aspirations towards a common "African identity" that leaves behind the traumata of colonialism and helps Africa take a stand on its own?

"Each of us has not just one but several identities."

HL: Well, this is a complex question, and I would like to answer it by referring to a kind of theory which I have elaborated in *Ma grand-mère bantoue et mes ancêtres les Gaulois*. In this essay I explain that each of us has not just one but several identities. I do not know how many, but I have put them in three categories. The first one is my original identity. This is the identity which I received from my ancestors, from my society. It is an heritage, something I have not chosen. This way of looking at the

question of identity was a very important issue in the context of colonization and decolonization, for the process of colonization totally denied that Af-

rica has an identity of its own. Therefore, it was very important for us to state that we were not animals but human beings with our own history and culture. In this context we could, for example, take advantage of Leo Frobenius's studies, the German ethnologist who wrote quite a number of books on African civilizations.

But also the cultural and literary movement of "Négritude" which had a strong influence at that time, because colonization was not only a matter of domination, but also of racism. The concept of "Négritude" allowed us to effectively put forward the message that black men were human beings with their own identity.

Important as it is, original identity in this sense ought to be regarded as only the first step in a wider exploration of human identities. If you confine yourself to being attached to

your original identity, you can easily become a xenophobe, or a racist or a tribalist. It seems to me that the civil war in Rwanda is an extreme example

"This second category of identity makes me realize that I have brothers and friends all over the world."

of what might eventually happen if narrow-minded ways of thinking prevail in a society. In order to overcome this danger, you have to develop what I call an international identity. It is this second category of identity that makes me realize that I have brothers and friends all over the world. It also opens my eyes to transnational perspectives on great pieces of art and the achievements of civilization. So when reading a German poet, or a German thinker, I discover that it is for me that he has written this poem or elaborated his thoughts.

However, our inquiry into the concept of identity would be incomplete if we neglect the very fact that I am an individual being. There is therefore a third category: my personal identity which rests upon the fact that I am a human individual who differs from any other human being, even from a twin brother or a twin sister.

Viviane Azarian: These distinctions between different



▲ The famous singer Dobet Gnahoré (Paris and Côte d'Ivoire) during her performance. (Photo: Althof)

BIGSAS

An endeavour worthy of support



▲ I to r: Gerhard Liesegang (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane), Raphaël Darboux and Norbert Awanou (Université d'Abomey-Calavi), Richard Mibey (Moi University), Rüdiger Borman (University of Bayreuth), Johan Jacobs (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Ute Fendler (BIGSAS). (Photo: Althof)

Ceremonial act in the baroque Margravian Opera House

The Margravian Opera House is the oldest one of its kind still preserved in Europe. Built in 1748 by Joseph Saint-Pierre and furnished in the baroque style by Giuseppe and Carlo Galli-Bibiena, it hosted the Ceremonial Act of BIGSAS on October 22, 2009 within the framework of the conference 'Living Partnership' (see report "Evaluation and Celebration of a Living Partnership"). The President of the University of Bayreuth, Prof. Rüdiger Bormann, welcomed some 150 invited guests, well-known personalities from politics, economy, culture and academia. Greetings from the Bavarian Ministry for Science, Research and Arts were presented by the Head of Section, Dr. Hartmut Wurzbacher. The patron of the event, Lord Mayor Dr. Michael Hohl, extended a warm welcome to the guests from Africa and underlined the importance of BIGSAS for the city of Bayreuth as a veritable cultural enrichment. One of the most eminent writers of the Republic of Congo, Henry Lopes, well-known ambas-

sador of African culture in Europe and former UNESCO Deputy Director-General for Africa gave the commemorative speech. Mr. Lopes is a member of the Conseil Supérieur de la langue française and winner of the Grand prix littéraire d'Afrique noire awarded by the Association des écrivains de langue française. He argued in an impressive and moving way that the only possibility of reducing prejudices between cultures lies in open-minded intercultural exchange.

After a special reception by the Lord Mayor in the Town Hall, during which the invited guests engaged in enthusiastic discussions with the members of BIGSAS and of the Partner Universities, all participants went back to the Margravian Opera House where Dobet Gnahoré, a young singer from Côte d'Ivoire/France, and her band, impressed the audience.

At the end of this long evening it became obvious to everyone that all "voices" from Africa are indeed very welcome in Bayreuth. (Susanne Ott)

identities make me think about the way in which you would describe your own identity as a writer. Literature “exceeds the borders”, as it is often said; it transcends given categories. From this point of view, the evolution of literature seems to be a metaphor for our globalized world in which identities are complex, changing, moving. Imre Kertész, in *Un autre, chronique d'une métamorphose* (Actes sud, 1999), rejects any conceptions of a stable identity defined by external, objective elements. He writes: “Vous n’attendez quand même pas de moi que je conceptualise mon appartenance nationale, religieuse et raciale ? Vous ne voulez quand même pas que j’ai une identité.” And he concludes by saying: “Je n’ai qu’une seule identité, l’écriture.” In this context, Kertész speaks of an “identity that is writing itself”. Would you say that your writing practice shapes or even constitutes your identity? To what extent does your writing “define” you?

other identities. The process of writing changes me, transforms my readings.

VA: Patrice Nganang argues in his *Manifeste d'une nouvelle littérature africaine. Pour une écriture préemptive* (2007), that after the genocide in Rwanda it were not possible any longer to write in Africa in the same way as before. He says that it is necessary to question the idea of a “littérature engagée”, and also the notion of “the mission of the writer”. Do you think that some new African writings arise nowadays, that we can observe a renewal of writing practices ? Has the role and the place of literature changed under the experience of war and violence?

HL: Well, Africa is a complex continent, and I am not sure whether the horrible events in Rwanda have had indeed such a pervading impact on all aspects of life and culture, even on the style of writing. Generally speaking, I am rather inclined to question how far the

My style, for instance, is more influenced by the reading of writers of present and past than by the reality that surrounds me.

Therefore, I feel a bit reserved towards any concept of writing that wants to assign to pieces of literature a direct influence on current ongoing in politics or society. I am rather inclined to follow Romain Gary in his work *Pour Sganarelle* when he says clearly that no novel, no poem had ever changed the course of history immediately. Of course, there are exceptions like battle-songs, or songs of agitation which are part of political action. But apart from this, the writer is neither a leader nor a partisan in the sphere of politics. He does not give answers; he questions.

CW: And even when a piece of literature is far from being driven by any political intentions, it may unexpectedly gain – in the further course of history – an impact on political affairs. I think, for example, of the Liblice conference on Kafka in 1963, organized by Eduard Goldstücker near Prague. The fictitious world of Kafka’s writings like *The Trial* started to be perceived and understood in the light of communist state bureaucracies in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the writings of Kafka turned out to

“The process of writing changes me, transforms my readings.”

HL: It is one of my identities but not the only one. It is in the process of writing that it appears to me that there are

style of a writer depends on historical or current events. Style is an interaction, a dialogue with the literary world.

be an incentive of thoughts in the direction of democratic reforms, up to the Spring of Prague in 1968 ...

HL: Exactly, when Kafka wrote his novels and stories, he did so without any particular reference to communism – it already existed by that time but he was not very much aware of it. However, his later readers see the Stalinist bureaucracies in *Le Procès*. So it may happen indeed that a writer turns out to be a kind of prophet, without being aware of the impact of his work. This reveals the talent, or the genius, of an artist who influences the way in which later generations perceive their own reality. For example, when you watch a chair today, it may happen that you say: “It looks like a van Gogh’s chair”. Or you see a lady and say: “Oh, she is a Modigliani.” This means that you see the world through the reality which has been created by an artist. I do not hesitate to say that great art of this kind is a miracle.

CW: In the wake of globalization, and under the influence of more or less intelligent warnings of a “clash of cultures”, the call for “intercultural dialogues” has been spreading throughout many parts of the

world. In some cases, especially in public debates, one gets the impression that this demand is based on the unreflected view that cultures are a sort of fixed entities, determined by rather stable collective mind-sets and therefore endowed with their own specific identities. As a consequence, “intercultural

“It is of the utmost importance to start the dialogue by cultural exchanges, such as studies in African and European universities, or by translations of literary works and careful attempts to understand them.”

dialogues” – may it be in the field of politics, economics, or religion – are seen as encounters in which different cultural entities of that kind enter into a process of communication. This might happily lead to mutual acceptance and coexistence, but does not seriously change or break up the “identities” of the cultures involved. Now it is obvious that such a line of thought is far behind recent insights in the field of cultural studies, and it runs counter to your understanding of cross-cultural processes as expressed in your writings. So I would like to ask what is *your* concept of an intercultural dialogue, particularly with regard to the relationship between Af-

rica and Europe? What should its objectives be, and in which ways should these objectives be pursued?

HL: I think it is obvious that there is an increasing desire for a dialogue between Europe and Africa. Two years ago, in December 2007, a summit between heads of state and governments from the EU and Africa took place in Lisbon. The political conference was devoted to a “Joint EU-Africa Strategy”. To my mind, the results were very disappointing. For the dialogue

between the two continents has to be launched not on the highest political level, but at the grassroots level. More precisely, I think it is of the utmost importance to start the dialogue by cultural exchanges, such as studies in African and European universities, or by translations of literary works and careful attempts to understand them. African writers have already been translated into German, and I hope that this trend will be further enhanced.

However, we should not ignore the fact that the European-African dialogue cannot currently be conducted at an equally balanced level. Why? The production in arts, and in com-

BIGSAS in figures

To date, and two years after the approval of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, 38 Junior Fellows from African countries and 26 Junior Fellows of European origin have been admitted to the structures of BIGSAS.

It has become clear that the programme serves the needs of a young generation of scholars in Africa and it obviously fills an existing niche in the global landscape of higher education: 'Research on Africa with Africa'. This is not only a slogan but a reality at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies. In each application process the number of applicants from Africa has exceeded the number of Europeans. However, recently an application also reached BIGSAS from Kazakhstan, another came from Mexico.

Among the doctoral students, the so-called Junior Fellows, the percentage who are enrolled fully into the studies programme is currently 82%; 18% of the young academics have started with the 'preparatory phase'. This is a six to 12 months course which takes particular measures to prepare for the writing of a PhD in a German academic environment as well as generally.

The gender ratio is 31 male Junior Fellows to 33 females. Out of the 38 African Junior Fellows, 26 are male and 12 are female. This means that BIGSAS shows nearly a 50% overall gender ratio, but not in respect of the African Junior Fellows. As the "Gender Activity Plan" was specially developed for the female Junior Fellows in order to support them with their families and their research projects, a little still has to be done to balance the ratio.

As BIGSAS offers only a very limited number of scholarships, the funding of dissertation projects is also dependent on scholarship donors such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Volkswagen-Foundation, the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, the Bayerische Eliteförderung and other foundations.

The following Research Areas currently comprise the academic backbone of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies.

- A. Uncertainty, Innovation and the Quest for Order in Africa;
- B. Culture, Concepts and Communication in Africa: Approaches through Language, Literature and Media;
- C. Concepts and Conflicts in Development Cooperation with Africa;
- D. Coping with Environmental Criticality and Disasters in Africa.

The research areas combine the advantages of area studies with a disciplinary studies profile. Open to complex and theoretically demanding research problems they also allow specialised applied research on chosen thematic foci.

munication, is more important in Europe than in Africa. And the flow of information and of knowledge which is going from Europe to Africa is more important than the flow in the reverse direction. Even so, the cultural exchange between

the two continents should be extended and intensified, starting from below and not being organized as a political top-down process. The Lisbon conference in 2007 claimed to be a meeting with cultural parameters – but, as a matter of

fact, culture was neglected or at least not sufficiently taken into consideration.

I would like to add that the ability of self-reflection is an important factor that should not be underestimated, for it helps to prevent culture from

BIGSAS under examination by the Advisory Board

The second meeting of the Advisory Board of BIGSAS took place on November 23rd, 2009. The agenda of the four advisors (two external and two internal), seen as 'critical friends' by Vice-Dean Kurt Beck in his opening speech, was to evaluate the developments of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies in its second year of existence. The Advisory Board of BIGSAS consists of Prof. Jean Comaroff, Chicago, Prof. Wole Soyinka, who was not able to attend the meeting, Prof. Hans-Werner Schmidt, Vice-President, University of Bayreuth and Prof. Achim von Oppen, Vice-Director of the Institute of African Studies, Bayreuth. Provided with the yearly report and statistics, and by means of encounters with all the status groups in BIGSAS, the advisors developed their own picture of the status quo of the Graduate School.

The different groups, the Junior Fellows, Postdocs, Senior Fellows and administration awaited with anticipation the results of the one-day meeting. All participants were confirmed in their endeavours and were glad when they received the Advisory Board's congratulations for the progress achieved: "A major contribution to the development of the African Studies' world".

becoming a source of bias. Look at Europe in the 18th century. It was a world with a very elaborate culture. However, it had not developed an equally elaborate self-understanding. The strength of Europe, in my view, has been people like Montesquieu who felt this deficiency and undertook efforts to amend it. In his fictitious *Lettres Persanes*, for example, Montesquieu described various aspects of European culture from the viewpoint of two Persians. Thereby, he tried to open the eyes of his contemporaries to peculiar, or even quaint features of their own way of life. He put them in a position to question their cultures, their customs, themselves. It seems to me that this piece of European enlightenment, written in 1721, is an illuminative example of the

kind of self-reflection that should be an ingredient of any profound dialogue between different cultures.

CW: Let us have a brief look at the role of the sciences and the humanities within the African-European dialogue. "Research on Africa with Partners from Africa" is the commitment of the Bayreuth Graduate School of African Studies. More than 60 research projects and dissertations are in progress now at BIGSAS, and they relate to a wide range of topics within the field of cultural, literary, linguistic, ethnological and geographical studies. Do you have any personal recommendations or wishes with respect to the further development of BIGSAS?

HL: Well, I could not afford to give advice, because at this

point I am not familiar enough with the details of BIGSAS. However, I am really impressed with what I have seen and read so far. I have had the opportunity to visit quite a number of African departments in the United States, France and other parts of the world, and I may say that here, in Bayreuth, you have a concentration of very important programmes in African studies. Many of them have already been proved to be success stories, for they really go to the issues that have to be addressed. So I think that you are going in the right direction. It is especially important to continue the dialogue with different African countries and the African partner universities of BIGSAS. As I see it, Germany has a distinct advantage due to the fact that you speak

a language which is neither French nor English. This is a good starting-point to equally approach research projects with partners in all parts of Africa - in French-speaking, English-speaking, or Portuguese-speaking countries.

CW: When I prepared for this interview, using among others some hopefully reliable sources on the Internet, I came across an interview in which you expressed your sympathy for the idea of a “communauté francophone”. The concept of Francophony has had a long history of ambitions and aspirations, both in the political and the cultural sphere. One sometimes encounters the view that the French language – seen in the context of its impact in the francophone world – is not just a medium of communication among many others, but also serves to constitute a space of civilization which embodies and transports certain values and ideas. Do you share this view, and do you see a specific contrast to the role of the world-wide “communauté anglophone”?

HL: Not at all. From my point of view, neither the French nor the English language does embody a special virtue with respect to culture and civilization. It is nothing but a fact of history that I speak French.

This has become a part of my identity, and it has the advantage of being the medium in

“Speaking French has become a part of my identity, and it has the advantage of being the medium in which I can communicate with most people.”

which I can communicate with most people in my own country. The Republic of Congo has only three million citizens, but we have 43 languages. I cannot cope with 43 languages. The only opportunity I have to communicate with my fellow citizens is by speaking French. And by speaking French, I am also able to communicate with people in other African countries. In Cameroon, for example, there are more than 1000 languages or dialects spoken, and the only languages in this country which allow for nation-wide communication are French and English. However, I would never credit the French or the English language any idiosyncratic values or virtues. Such statements necessitate that you know all other languages of the world.

The asset of the French language lies in the fact that it is spoken by different people in more than 30 countries. Soon one francophone out of two will be an African. It is not the number of French-speaking people, but the world-wide dif-

fusion of the language which makes the importance of the “communauté francophone”.

In contrast there are other languages which are spoken by a larger number of people, but only in a specific part of the world. One billion people in the world speak Hindi, but almost all of them live in India.

CW: This year Germany looks back to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 which was one of the eminent mile-stones on the road to German reunification. On the occasion of this 20th anniversary, I feel tempted to ask you about your memories of the two Germanies, East and West, both of which maintained active political relations to your country. While you served as Education Minister, Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo in the years from 1969 to 1975, you probably had quite a number of encounters with politicians and representatives from both German states. Apart from the fact that diplomatic relations in those times were always stressed by the dispute about the diplomatic recognition of the GDR, are there any pecu-

liar experiences which formed your image of the Federal Republic, on the one hand, and the GDR on the other?

HL: It is true, the two German states at that time were two entirely different worlds. Personally, I think that it has been a good solution to enter the process of unification so that there is one Germany today. I had some strong impressions of the differences between East and West Germany during my work for UNESCO from 1981 to 1998. Here we were supposed to work as international civil servants on behalf of UNESCO, and we had to take an oath declaring that we shall receive orders from nobody, except from the international community. This meant that we were obliged to act independently from specific interests of individual member states and their governments. However, it happened that some colleagues from East Germany were persecuted at home and ended up in jail – just because they acted as international civil servants. The General Director of UNESCO stood firmly on this point and refused to accept any counter-arguments that were put forward by the East German government.

VA: Did you have also any encounters with the literary scenes in the two Germanies?

HL: Yes indeed, for one of my books – the novel *Sans tam-tam* – was translated first in West Germany where it was published under the title *Die strafversetzte Revolution*. The East German edition came out in the Verlag Volk und Welt in 1982, and its title *Revolution ohne tam-tam* was closer to

“One of the assets of Europe is its individualism, for it advances creativity in many parts of the society.”

the intentions of the French title. According to me, this latter translation was the best. The former was done by leftist West German people who were very fond of East Germany at that time. I still have two copies of the book and I keep them very precious because it is interesting to see how two cultures with the same language can differ in accordance with the political regime.

CW: From a European point of view, Africa is often perceived as a continent in need of help. Hunger, shortages of water, infectious diseases, natural disasters, violence and conflicts are part of everyday life in many regions of Africa. The media in Europe are apparently used to focusing on these sad and tragic aspects when they report on current ongoing in Africa. Governments,

NGOs, churches and private persons devote themselves to a wide variety of developmental projects. However, let us at least for the moment of this interview turn around the perspectives and have a look towards Europe from an African point of view. Do you believe that there are ways in which

life in Europe might benefit from Africa? When asking so, I do not just have in mind those exciting projects in the field of solar energy which might help one day to prevent the European continent from shortages in energy supply. Let us think beyond that: Are there aspects of European societies which could be improved and developed in the future under the influence of new impulses from Africa?

HL: Well, I think that – speaking on a very general level – one of the assets of Europe is its individualism, for it advances creativity in many parts of the society. If you want to bring about discoveries in science, if you want to be an artist, you have to isolate yourself. According to what I have read so far, the best pages which have been written on this is-

sue seem to me *The Letter to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke. However, everyday life in a thriving society also requires – at least to a certain extent – an active and reliable solidarity of its members. Unlike Europe, Africa has not achieved until now enough individuality, but it has developed solidarity in a very interesting manner. I only mention here the attitude vis à vis the elders or how we perceive the concept of family. Therefore it seems to me that Africa and Europe would highly benefit from each other, if both continents started a common attempt to connect the values of individualism and solidarity. Apart from that, Africa seems to have an influence on Europe and further parts of the world in a quite surprising way. Music is a striking example: If you go to a night club in Tokyo, New York or Berlin, you meet people who dance not like their ancestors, but are clapping and swinging like people dance in the village of my grandfather. Here we can unexpectedly observe processes of cultural influence and exchange which are far away from politically organized top-down processes.

VA: May I ask you what is currently happening in your “literary factory”; do you have new literary projects in progress?

HL: Oh yes, I always have new projects and ideas. At the moment, I am working on a piece of fiction which is going to touch upon three issues: It will reflect the ways in which my country has evolved since it gained its independence, and it is in this context that I want to address the destiny of an African métis. The third topic involved will be the life of a woman who is also the raconteur of the story. After all, this book is still in the process of being written, and so I do not dare to say anything about its title.

CW: Do you also think about writing an autobiography one day?

HL: Well, if I have the pos-

sibility to live - let's say - ten or twenty years more, then I think I will have to tell about my life and about the times I lived in. However, it will not be easy to present all this in a book which is not felt to be boring, but raises the interest of a future generation of readers. I will have to look back to the end of colonialism and to the beginning of an independent Africa, when I had the luck to be able to contribute to the development of my country and to enjoy a life of literary creativity.

CW: So we cordially hope that there are very many enjoyable years for you to come. Your Excellency, dear Mr. Lopes, thank you very much for giving us this interview.

Change of Leadership in BIGSAS

According to the statutes of BIGSAS, elections are held every two years. The most recent elections took place on December 3, 2009. All Senior Fellows decided to enlarge the executive committee with the appointment of a second Vice-Dean, in order to cope with the immense workload due to the large number of Junior Fellows and the growing day-to-day business. Therefore, the BIGSAS statutes have to be adjusted to the needs of the Graduate School. BIGSAS will now be led by Prof. Dymitr Ibrizimow and Vice-Dean Prof. Erdmute Alber. After the elections, the new Dean thanked the former Dean, Prof. Ute Fendler, and the former Vice-Dean, Prof. Kurt Beck, for their strong commitment and dedication during the set-up and establishment phase of BIGSAS.

Evaluation and Celebration of a Living Partnership



A lively partnership requires both a lot of respect and constructive discussion. Furthermore, it requires regular reflection on the direction of a common way of action.

The conference 'Living Partnership', organised by the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, BIGSAS, on 21st–23rd October 2009, encompassed all these aspects. High-ranking representatives from the five African Partner Universities from Kenya, Morocco, Benin, Mozambique and South Africa were invited to the University of Bayreuth. The Deans of BIGSAS, Prof Ute Fendler and Prof. Kurt Beck, were able to welcome Vice-Chancellor Prof. Richard Mibey and Prof. Naomi Shitemi of Moi University (Eldoret, Kenya); Rector Prof. Norbert Awanou and Vice-Rector Prof. Raphael Darboux from the University of Abomey-Calavi (Cotonou, Benin); Prof. Gerhard Liesegang, representing the Vice-

▲ I to r: Michael Hohl, Lord Mayor of Bayreuth; Rüdiger Bormann, President of Bayreuth University; Norbert Awanou, Rector of Université d'Abomey-Calavi. (Photo: BIGSAS)

Chancellor of the University Eduardo Mondlane (Maputo, Mozambique) and Prof. Johan Jacobs, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research of the University KwaZulu-Natal (Durban, South Africa).

As well as an intensive working meeting with the representatives of the Partner Universities, and a ceremonial act of confirming the partnership (see report "Ceremonial act"), BIGSAS offered an enthusiastically received public concert of the Ivorian singer Dobet Gnahoré, which was presented in the oldest preserved Opera House in the baroque style in Europe. In addition, an open conference entitled 'Junior Fellows in Dialogue' was organised by the doctoral students of the Graduate School.

This one-day conference was introduced and led by Prof. Kurt Beck, Vice-Dean of BIGSAS. Prof. John Morton from

Greenwich opened the dialogue with his presentation: *Pastoralists, Drought and Climate Change: a return to pessimism*, followed by Prof. Mamadou Diawara from Frankfurt with a paper entitled *The Hunt for the Pirates: Development and Normativities in the World of Music in Africa*; Prof. Dunja Hersak from Brussels spoke about *Virtual, partial and fabricated visions of Africa as represented through art and/or expressive culture* and Prof. Filip de Boeck from Leuven gave a lecture about his movie *Children of Disorder in a Cemetery State* which was subsequently shown to the public. Each presentation provided material for vibrant discussion in separate discussion groups and the invited scholars were impressed by the stimulating questions and critique of the young academics of BIGSAS. All participants gathered together for



the concluding words by the Vice-Dean, Prof. Beck, and a group photo will remind all participants of the event 'Living Partnership'.

Gerhard Liesegang, representative ► of the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane; Hartmut Wurzbacher, Bavarian State Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts. (Photo: BIGSAS)



▲ Pictures on top from l to r: Johan Jacobs, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal; Richard Mibey, Vice-Chancellor of Moi University, Dietrich Nelle, Federal Ministry of Education and Research. (Photo: BIGSAS)

▲ All participants gathered for the concluding words by the Vice-Dean, Kurt Beck (centre), for a group photo that will remind all participants of the event 'Living Partnership'. (Photo: BIGSAS)

PIGAPICHA!

A CENTURY OF PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY IN NAIROBI

OPENING 24 JULY 2009, 6.00 PM, ENTRY FREE
25 JULY 2009 – 24 JULY 2010, DAILY 9.30 AM TO 6.00 PM
NATIONAL GALLERY NAIROBI
MUSEUM ADMISSION CHARGES APPLY



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NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA



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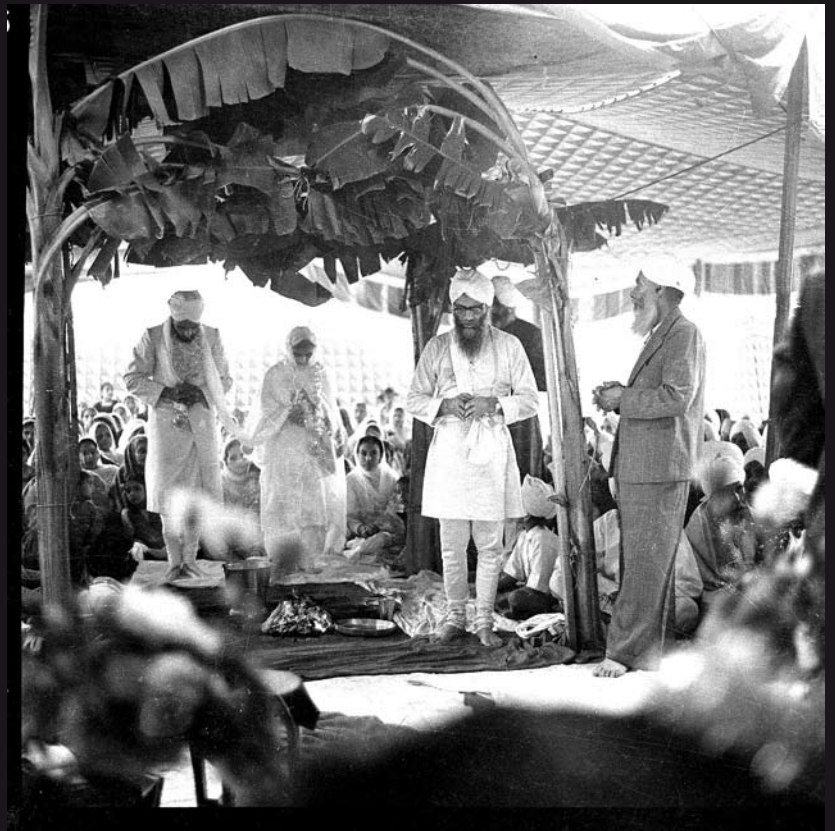


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NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KENYA

PigaPicha



▲ Ram Singh & Sons Photo Studio, Tom Mboya Street, Nairobi

An exhibition at Goethe-Institute, Kenya, in co-operation with Iwalewa-House and DEVA, University of Bayreuth, 25.07.2009 - 24.07.2010.

To be photographed was a part of day-to-day life in all societies in Kenya, whether it was in photo studios like **Studio One**, **Ramogi** and **Maridadi**, or with the street photographers in Uhuru Park or in front of the KICC. Everybody has had a portrait taken of themselves:

A Century of Studio Photography in Nairobi, Part II



▲ Photo studio Veena Art Studio, Grogan Road, Nairobi, 1955/56

families, couples, lovers, ma mboch na watu wa mtaa.

After two years of research in studios and archives, Goethe-Institut Nairobi, Iwalewa-House and DEVA, University of Bayreuth, and the National Museums of Kenya present a joint exhibition covering one

century of portrait photography – not of famous but of ordinary people. Approximately 300 photographs are being exhibited at the Nairobi Gallery next to Nyayo House, from outstanding aesthetic photography to the trashy passport photo, from finely-made stu-

dio photos with painted backgrounds to the street photo.

While the photos show how Kenyans themselves wanted to be seen, the exhibition is a portrayal of societal transformation from the 1910s till today. The exhibition tells the history of Kenya's society. (DEVA)



◀ *Joseph C. E. Adande*



◀ *Kossi Antoine Afeli*



◀ *Hippolyte Amouzouvi*



◀ *Augustine S. L. Bukenya*



◀ *Reuben Makayiko Chirambo*

Guests

Joseph C. E. Adande is Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin. He holds a PhD from Université de Paris I, Panthéon Sorbonne. Invited by Erdmute Alber (Social Anthropology), he spent two weeks at BIGSAS in November-December 2009, and delivered a lecture on 'Between Absence and Revelation: Artists of Benin and the Diaspora and their Interpretation of 9/11'. His current research focuses on 'Art as a display of the mental frame of African people through its symbolism and meaning', and he is interested in traditional as well as contemporary art, mainly from Africa.

Kossi Antoine Afeli, at present director of the Linguistics-Department at the Université de Lomé, stayed from August to October 2009 at the Chair of African Linguistics I (Gabriele Sommer) as a DAAD research fellow. His main research domains are in Ewe phonology, sociolinguistics and language planning. He has published on Ewe phonology and language planning in Togo. Since 1980 he has been a permanent member of the Comité de Langue Nationale Ewe (CLNE). At present he is

elaborating a concept for the orthographic reform of Ewe, and during his stay in Bayreuth he edited a paper on nasalized vowels in Gbe.

As Alexander von Humboldt fellow, hosted by Eckhard Bretinger, **Akintunde Akinyemi**, professor of African Languages and Literatures at the University of Florida, Gainesville, USA, visited Bayreuth from October – December 2009. During his stay, Akinyemi, who worked on Yoruba literature and language policies in Nigeria, discussed writing and performance in African languages, focussing on new media, video art, Nollywood and 'new orality'.

Invited by Erdmute Alber (Chair of Social Anthropology), **Hippolyte Amouzouvi**, Associate Director of the Sociology Department at the University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin, visited the Institute of African Studies from the 1st of November until 18th December 2009. During his stay he delivered lectures on 'Studying in an intercultural context' and on 'Women and violence in Benin'.

Augustine S. L. Bukenya of Makerere University, Kenya,

is one of the leading literary scholars in East Africa who has worked prodigiously on issues of English literature, and African literatures in English and African languages. Besides academic appointments at Makerere University, Kenya, University of Nairobi, University of Dar-es-salaam and University of Stirling, Bukenya is a notable poet, playwright, novelist and short story writer. As a well-known literary critic he has written on issues of oral literature, oral literature theory, oracy, the teaching of literature, East African poetry and female empowerment in Africa. Recently, he has been engaged in research on proverbs from a semiotic point of view. During his stay at the Institute of African Studies in Bayreuth in May and June 2009, he taught classes on African Languages, Literatures and Cultures as well as on fieldwork. He participated in the Swahili Colloquium, and delivered a public lecture on 'Proverbial Depth: A Semiotic Approach'.

As grantee of a Fellowship of the Mellon Foundation in Atlanta, **Reuben Makayiko Chirambo**, who teaches African literature and postcolo-

nial theory at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, spent two weeks at the Institute of African Studies, Bayreuth in January 2010. As guest lecturer he discussed changes in the public and political representation of the past regime in Malawi, and the installation of public remembrance in Southern Africa on different levels (literature, public memorial architecture, juridical).

During May and June 2009, **A. Idrissa Embaló**, Director of Research at INEP - National Institute for Studies and Research, Guinea-Bissau - visited the Institute of African Studies in Bayreuth at the invitation of Georg Klute (Cultural Anthropology of Africa). Apart from his role as Director of research at INEP he holds a chair in sociology at Amílcar Cabral University, and was among those who initiated the collaborative research project with Bayreuth University on "Local Strategies of Conflict Management in Guinea-Bissau". Currently, eleven investigators from Guinea-Bissau and Germany conduct research on this project, in which Embaló is one of two project coordina-

tors in Guinea-Bissau. During his stay in Bayreuth he taught a seminar about the theoretical and methodological aspects of research in legal anthropology.

Humboldt fellow **Bernard Mulo Farenkia**, associate professor at the Department of Languages and Letters, Cape Breton University (Sydney/Nova Scotia, Canada), stayed as a guest of the chair of Romance Languages and General Linguistics from May 1st to July 31st 2009. He gave lectures on 'Créativité lexicale, formes d'adresse et politesse au Cameroun' and on 'Émigration et reconstitution de l'ethos: la diaspora camerounaise au Canada'. During his stay he also taught a seminar on 'La politesse en Afrique francophone' (together with Martina Drescher).

Ayalew Gebre Cheru, assistant professor in the department of Social Anthropology of Addis Ababa University, visited Bayreuth University from October to December 2009, invited by Georg Klute, Cultural Anthropology of Africa, and financed by the DAAD. Ayalew Gebre, a former student of Prof. Mohammed Salih at The Insti-



◀ A. Idrissa
Embaló



◀ Ayalew
Gebre Cheru



◀ Sjaak van
der Geest



◀ WJean-
Benoît Tsofack
with D. Neubert
at the Welcome
Party of the
International
Club on 4-11-09.

tute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, the Netherlands, has worked extensively on the transformation of pastoralism/pastoralists in the Awash Valley region of Ethiopia. More recently he has developed an interest in the study of the social dimensions and local knowledge and perceptions of HIV/AIDS and other STDs. During his stay in Bayreuth, he gave a lecture entitled 'Understanding the Dynamics of Land Transaction Practices in Agro-Pastoral Neighbourhoods of the Karrayu in Eastern Ethiopia' and taught a seminar on 'Conflicts in the ethnic federal state of Ethiopia and modes of conflict resolution', together with Georg Klute.

Sjaak van der Geest is Professor Emeritus of Medical Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam, visiting professor at BRAC University in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Dean of the Amsterdam Master's in Medical Anthropology (AMMA). He has done fieldwork in Ghana and Cameroon on a variety of subjects, e.g. sexual relationships and birth control, and the use and distribution of medicines. He is founder and editor-in-chief of the journal *Medische Antro-*

pologie and assistant editor of several other journals in the field of medical anthropology. Invited by Erdmute Alber (social anthropology) he was guest lecturer at BIGSAS from 17th October until 13th December 2009, where he taught a seminar entitled 'Themes in Medical Anthropology' and a workshop on 'Brother- and sisterhood in changing in uncertain times'.

Munzhedi James Mafela of the department of African Languages, University of South Africa in Pretoria, stayed at Bayreuth University from July 25th – August 30th 2009 as a guest of Eckhard Breiting. He was engaged in research on 'Mission Theatre (Berlin Mission) in the Venda region', research sponsored by the South African National Research Council. In the past, Mafela has worked on Tshivenda praise poetry, the history of prose writing in Venda, and on the role of women in Tshivenda Writing.

In November 2009, **Jean-Benoît Tsofack** – senior lecturer in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at the University of Dschang, Cameroon since 1997, – visited Martina Drescher, chair of

Personalia

Romance Languages and General Linguistics. He initiated the new multi-disciplinary research cooperation between the Universities of Bayreuth and Dschang that started in spring 2009, which has now been institutionalised by an official memorandum of understanding. His main fields of research are discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. His current research focuses on urban sociolinguistics (language contact, plurilingualism, language and space) and health communication. During his stay he gave a lecture on 'Comment les murs (de)font-ils les langues dans l'espace public au Cameroun? Le cas de Dschang', and taught classes on 'Langues, cultures et identités au Cameroun: des pratiques complexes' and 'Publicités et discours de prévention contre le VIH/Sida au Cameroun'.

Invited by the Dean of the Faculty Kurt Beck gave a 10 days workshop "Methodology of the social sciences" for staff and senior students of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences of the University of Khartoum in February 2009.

Erdmute Alber holds the Chair of Social Anthropology at Bayreuth University since December 2009.

Dymitr Ibrizimow and *Erdmute Alber* are elected as new deans of Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIG-SAS) in December 2009.

Gerd Spittler has been invited to be a fellow at the International Research Center "Work and Human Life Cycle in Global History" at Humboldt University in Berlin. He will stay there from October 2009 to September 2010. During his stay Gerd Spittler plans to finish his book *Homo laborans. Grundlagen einer Anthropologie der Arbeit*.

In Brief

Eckhard Breitingner acted as visiting professor at Universidade de Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, School of Communication from September until November 2008.

He assisted with the establishing of a new course on Theatre and Performance Studies. In addition to that he gave an introductory course on Theatre History.

Pepetual Mforbe from Université de Yaoundé has been invited to Bayreuth University as post-doc fellow funded by Thyssen foundation from September 2008 to June 2009.

Naomi Nekela, University of Witwatersrand South Africa, enjoyed as a DAAD research fellow a visit at Bayreuth University in August 2009. She works on theatre in Cameroon.

On December 1st, 2009, **Valentin Feussi**, senior lecturer at the Department of Linguistics and African languages, Université de Doula (Cameroon), a guest of Martina Drescher, chair of Romance Languages and General Linguistics, delivered a lecture on 'Migrance, langues et spatialisation urbaine à Doula'.

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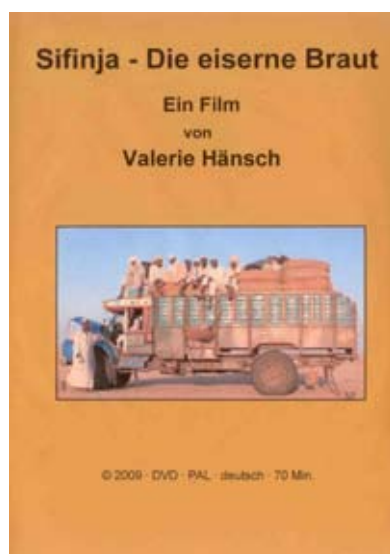
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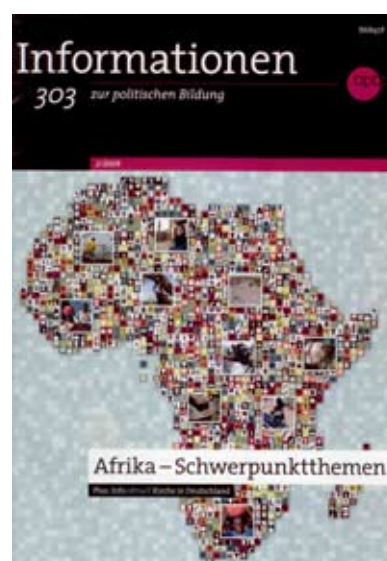
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Welcome Centre for international guests

Welcome Centre of Bayreuth University – new multilingual helpdesk and service offered to international guest scholars and their families

www.welcome-centre.uni-bayreuth.de
www.internationaler-club.uni-bayreuth.de



▲ Dr. Cornelia Nicodemus and her assistant Irina Turner support internationally-mobile researchers from before their arrival and right through the period of taking up their work, settling and integrating into the city and at the University of Bayreuth. (Photo: Kolb)

regular invitations to social events organized by either the Welcome Centre or the cooperating International Club of Bayreuth University.

The International Club, a committed women's volunteers' association, offers a range of social activities for the families of international scholars at Bayreuth, e.g. monthly guest

Since February 2009, incoming guest scholars have a central place to turn to with questions regarding administrative and practical issues: The Welcome Centre.

In cooperation with the hosting chairs, the Welcome Centre assists in the process of visa application and organizes accommodation, child care and all the other necessities of everyday life.

The Welcome Centre offers incoming scholars the possibility of registering on its bilingual homepage, which provides helpful information before their travel. This registration enables the Welcome Centre team to prepare for the arrival of the guest scholars and to contact them easily during their stay. It also facilitates academic networking between



the guest scholars at Bayreuth: international visitors receive a password and during their stay can research the scientific data of other scholars present at Bayreuth and contact them. Benefits from registration on the Welcome Centre's database are a welcome package, a library card for those scholars spending less than six months at Bayreuth University and

▲ Some of the international visiting scholars and doctoral fellows of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies at the welcome evening organized by the International Club.

meetings and weekly language classes for mothers with small children. At the beginning of every semester the Club's Welcome Party is highly appreciated by international guests. (C. Nicodemus, C. Ahr)

One year of TGCL

Ten years of the East African Community (EAC) –

One year of the Tanzanian-German Centre for Postgraduate Studies in Law (TGCL)

A legal conference in Dar es Salaam, held on 4th September 2009, reviewed the first ten years of the East African Community. The main speakers were Judge President Harold R. Nsekela, President of the joint East African Court of Justice in Arusha (Tanzania), and Dr. Nyamajeje C. Weggoro of the EAC Secretariat in Arusha. The German point of view was presented by Clemens Hach, the deputy German ambassador to Tanzania. The speakers outlined the areas of responsibility of the joint institutions and current challenges. A focal point of interest was the aim of creating an East African Union with a single economic area, a single currency, and community laws, based on the model of the European Union.

The conference was organized by the Tanzanian-German Centre for Postgraduate Studies in Law, which celebrated its first birthday on this day. The centre is based in the University of Dar es Salaam School of Law (Formerly Faculty of Law) and is run in cooperation with the Institute of African Studies and the Faculty of Law,



▲ TGCL scholarship holders from five East African countries. (Photo: Wanitzek)

Business Administration and Economics of the University of Bayreuth. It is financed by the DAAD and the German Foreign Office. The aim of the TGCL is to enable lawyers and law students to pursue advanced studies that will qualify them for national and international posts within the East African Community. For the academic year 2009/2010, further scholarships have been awarded to seven women and eight men, who have begun either a one-year Master's programme or a three-year Ph.D. programme at the centre. During the conference, they were presented

with their scholarship letters by Prof. Ulrike Wanitzek, the TGCL project leader, together with the Dean of the School of Law, Prof. Palamagamba J. Kabudi. The scholarship holders come from all member states of the East African Community – Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – and most of them have already had several years' practical experience. Around 140 applications were received for the five Ph.D. and ten Master's scholarships, and the successful candidates were chosen following a rigorous multi-stage selection procedure. (TGCL)

Fieldtrip to Ethiopia

12 Students of African Development Studies in Geography travelled to Ethiopia



▲ *The German students with Prof. Lohnert and their facilitators in Hayk, Tegabek Lika Megento (BIGSAS), Mengistu Mihrete (Organisation for Relief and Development in Amhara Region, ORDA), Daniel WoldeGiorgis (ORDA) and Ewnetu Mekonnen (Deutsche Welthungerhilfe). (Photo: NN)*

The fieldtrip to Ethiopia, from 23rd September to 13th October 2009, was organised by Prof. Dr. Beate Lohnert and Regina Fein. It provided insights into basic physical and human geographical processes, mainly focusing on developmental aspects. The round-trip took the group from the capital city, Addis Ababa, to Dessé, Lalibela, Bahir Dar, Debre Marcos, Ambo and Welkite. On the tour, problems and potentials of development cooperation as well as the tourism sector, urban development, housing programs, industry, agricul-

ture and agribusiness were discussed with international, national and local stakeholders (farmers, managers, entrepreneurs, scholars, civil servants, and representatives of the Ethio-German development cooperation). In addition, one week's practical training was included in the itinerary, which allowed the group to accomplish a small research project: Near Hayk, a small town north of Dessé, the students evaluated a project that had been implemented by Deutsche Welthungerhilfe and handed over to the community

in 2006. The multi-dimensional project was assessed with special regard to irrigation and water supply. Together with Mr. Ewnetu from Welthungerhilfe, and members of a community-based organisation, the students conducted interviews, tested water and surveyed the technical infrastructure. The results of the study were finally presented and discussed at Welthungerhilfe's main office in Addis Ababa, with the country director, Mr. Meier zu Biesen present. *(Regina Fein & Beate Lohnert)*

Alumni-Day of the BA/MA “GEFA”

First Alumni-Day of the BA/MA “African Development Studies in Geography”



▲ Discussion group to exchange experiences with Master programmes (Photo: Tylle)

On the 31st October 2009, the first Alumni-Day of the B.A. and M.A. “African Development Studies in Geography” (GEFA), took place in the “Glashaus” on the university campus. It was jointly organised by current and alumni students. The event was mainly initiated by students from the first year of the programme, who having completed their degrees in 2004, wanted to create a meeting-place to catch up, (re)connect and celebrate their 5th anniversary with other students and lecturers. Altogether about 25 alumni, and many of the current students, used this opportunity to intensify the net-

works among GEFA-students. Short presentations reminded everyone of the early days of this unique degree, illustrating its development and different reformations from the start in 2001 until today. The main programme was centred around two crucial topics: career entry and the critical evaluation of Master’s degrees in Germany as well as abroad. In short presentations and round-table discussions, alumni presented their experiences in different fields (Worldbank, GTZ, GfA, Malteser, atmosfair a.o.), and in a great variety of different post-graduate degrees, showing the many possibilities and paths

GEFA offers to its alumni. Furthermore, all participants emphasised the great relevance of the creation of an institutionalised alumni-network, building on the concept of the African studies online network developed by a GEFA-alumnus (AfrikawissenschaftlichesNetzwerk Bayreuth AWINB) and now being further elaborated and expanded by the Institute for African Studies (IAS). Overall, the first GEFA alumni-day made clear how important, enriching (and also how much fun) this kind of exchange is for all parties – alumni, students and lecturers – so that it will surely turn into a regular event. (*Julia Pfaff & Benjamin Reichpietsch*)

Strengthening Ties to Alumni

The IAS is establishing an interdisciplinary alumni-network.

The Institute of African Studies (IAS) is engaged in establishing an infrastructure for an interdisciplinary network including alumni as well as affiliated doctoral students, guest researchers and lecturers from all over the world who have been related in manifold ways with the Africa-related research and study programmes at the University of Bayreuth since the 1980s. Since taking up action in early Summer 2009, as the first stage Christina Ahr, academic coordinator of the

IAS, has been organizing the up-dating and gathering of alumni data with particular reference to "African academic presence" in Bayreuth. Communications from alumni or former guest lecturers about changes in their address or professional institution are most welcome, for the distribution of future information about our activities (contact: christina.ahr@uni-bayreuth.de). In June 2009, representatives of a diverse range of existing subject-related alumni-initiatives and social networks in the field of African Studies

participated in an interdisciplinary roundtable workshop to coordinate objectives and share resources.



In addition to this initiative, a joint application by IAS and the Department of Intercultural German Studies (G. U. Bauer) succeeded in getting funding from the DAAD Programme for Promoting Cooperation with Foreign Alumni (2009-2010). The activities in this programme focus on African alumni and returnees. The core elements of the project are two regional alumni conferences in West and East Africa organized in close cooperation with our partner universities in Buéa, Cameroon, and Eldoret, Kenya.

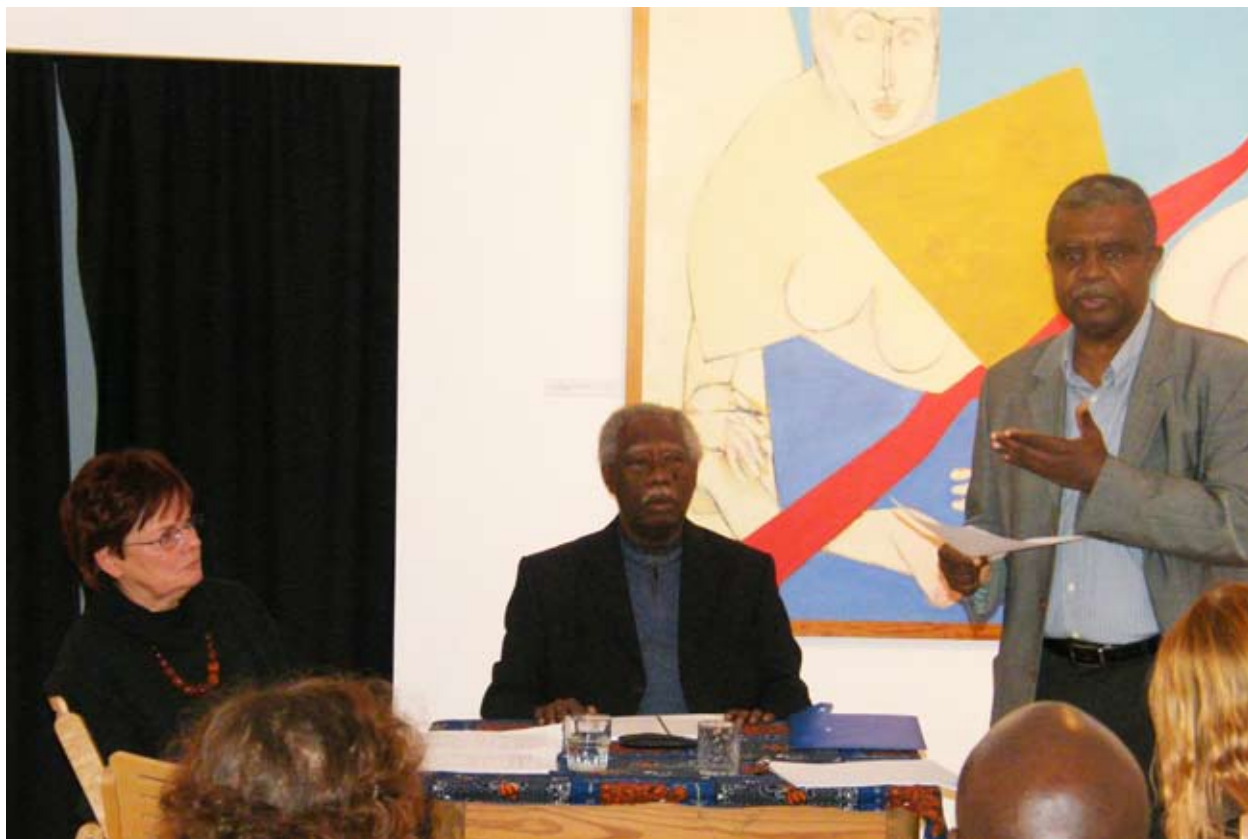
The first workshop was held in Buéa from 30th Nov to 4th Dec 2009 and was entitled "Career Opportunities in Education, Culture, and Media: Alumni Employability and German-African Academic Networks". One important topic was the issue of integrating professional qualifications and career orientation into academic training in the Humanities. In May 2010, a second regional conference will be hosted by Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya, focusing

on "Transfer of Africa-related Alumni Knowledge".

Both initiatives aim to strengthen the ties between the University of Bayreuth, its African partner universities, and alumni in various African countries - thereby laying a foundation for future cooperation; to support the building of local and interregional (interdisciplinary) networks for returnees and to initiate and facilitate an exchange of Alumni experience with respect to career development in relevant fields. *(Christina Ahr & Gerd Ulrich Bauer)*

Adam Shafi: “Vuta N’kuvute”

Adam Shafi reads from his novel “Vuta N’kuvute”



▲ Prof. Said Khamis (*Literatures in African Languages*) introducing the Zanzibarian author Adam Shafi, seated. (Photo: Tchokothe)

On 18th November 2009, the prolific Tanzanian author Adam Shafi came to Bayreuth to read from his Swahili novel “Vuta N’kuvute” (“To and fro”). Born on Zanzibar in 1940, Shafi, who now lives in Dar es Salaam, studied in the former GDR and China. Being a political activist and journalist in the 1960s and 1970s, he started early to transform his political experiences into literature. His first novel “Kasri ya Mwinyi Fuad”

was published in 1978 and a number of novels followed. At the moment, Adam Shafi is spending three months in Germany with a fellowship from the German Foreign ministry, working on a new novel but also presenting his literary work to audiences interested in Swahili literature. After readings in Berlin, Leipzig and Hamburg, Adam Shafi came to the Iwalewa-Haus to read passages from “Vuta N’kuvute”

that were also presented in German translation to a fascinated audience. Like many of his novels, “Vuta N’kuvute” sketches a realistic portrait of Zanzibarian society at the verge of independence and the anti-colonial movement, reflecting the author’s own political activism that recurrently caused him to be in trouble with the political authorities and finally drove him into exile. (Clarissa Vierke)

“Globalization and Mother Tongues in Africa”

Participation of BIGSAS at the Conference on “Globalization and Mother Tongues in Africa” organized by the Department of English of the University Mohammed V – Agdal in Rabat, June 19/20, 2008



▲ Conference opening: Yamina El Kirat, Said Bennis, and Abderrahim Benhadda (Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities) from the University Mohammed V- Agdal. (Photo: Roncador)

▲ Presentation of Baba Mai Bello: ,Baba Mai Bello (BIGSAS), Abderrahman El Aissati (Univ. of Tilburg), Mohammed Shtatou (UNESCO, Morocco), Viviane Azarian (BIGSAS). (Photo: Roncador)

◀ Participants of the conference. (Photo: Roncador)

In the context of “Building Partnership” BIGSAS participated in the conference on “Globalization and Mother Tongues in Africa” organized by the Department of English under the direction of Yamina el Kirat at the University Mohammed V – Agdal in Rabat. BIGSAS was able to send as delegates to the conference three participants from Bayreuth (Viviane Azarian, Baba

Mai Bello, and Manfred von Roncador), as well as representatives of its Partner Universities (Akanni Igue from the University of Abomey-Calvi, Benin; Naomi Shitemi from Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, and Rosemary Smith-Cromarty from University KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa). All BIGSAS delegates presented papers on different aspects of the role of mother

tongues in Africa. Among the questions addressed during the conference were “linguistic rights”, “speaker identity”, “language endangerment” and “literacy”. The numerous presentations of Moroccan participants centered on sometimes-heated debates about the role and perspectives of the spoken language of Morocco, mainly spoken Moroccan Arabic and Tiffinagh. (M. v. Roncador)

“Public Garden Day” at the ÖBG

“Public Garden Day” at the Botanical Garden (ÖBG) of the University of Bayreuth

The ‘Garden Day’ is the annual event of the Botanical Garden of the University of Bayreuth to which the wider public are invited. This year it took place on the 5th of July with a focus on “Useful Plants of Africa” and attracted hundreds of visitors. This offered a chance to students of the BA *African Languages, Literatures and Arts*, the MA *African Language Studies*, as well as of Magister *African Language Studies*, to present the results of a project-seminar on the topic to the interested visitors. The students produced poster exhibitions on different plant groups ranging from dye plants like henna, and fibre plants like papyrus, to food crops of the millet group and medical plants

including tea. Using the example of henna, Johanna Messerer and Lena Naumann illustrated the origin and use of dyeing plants. As a special attraction, at their stand they offered henna tattooing for children. The fabrication and importance of papyrus was presented by Alexandra Kuhnke and Sandra Kurz. Visitors to their stand had the opportunity to write their names in hieroglyphs on papyrus paper. Frank Fessler and Dr. Eva Rothmaler showed the remarkable variety of millets in Africa, including their economic and nutritional relevance. Different millet varieties, as grain and plant as well as products made of millet, complemented the stand of

this particular group. Some examples of medical plants, their origin and application, were shown by Edith Bwana and Jennifer Akosua Peters. A Senegalese tea ceremony, Attaya, was realised by Ina Bauer in an adjacent tent and visited by a number of interested visitors to the Garden Day. Finally, the East African Club (students) had a stand about the shrub *Jatropha curcas* and its use as a fuel plant.

Parallel to the exhibitions and other events of the Botanical Garden, the Institute of African Studies (IAS) offered a series of papers with a focus on plants in Africa, in the neighbouring lecture hall. (*Frank Fessler & Eva Rothmaler*)

Colloquium on the Chadic Languages (BICCL)

The 5th Biennial International Colloquium on the Chadic Languages took place at the University of Leipzig from June 10th – 14th, 2009.

About 30 participants from Austria, Cameroon, Czech Republic, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Korea, Nigeria, Russia, Sweden and the USA attended the conference. A number of scholars from Bayreuth University also attended the conference: Prof. Dimitr

Ibrizimow (Afrikanistik II), Prof. Jonathan Owens (Arabic linguistics), Dr. Mohammad Mu’azu (Afrikanistik II), the junior BIGSAS fellow Baba Mai Bello and the Master Student Maria Schubert. The book of the proceedings of the 4th BICCL which took place in Bay-

reuth in 2007, entitled *Topics in Chadic Linguistics V*, was launched at the second day of the conference by the editor Dr. Eva Rothmaler (Bayreuth). The representatives of the Permanent Committee of the International Colloquium on the Chadic Languages, agreed that the next BICCL will take place in Paris in 2011. (*Eva Rothmaler*)

Swahili Poetry in Performance

Workshop and Festival in Nairobi



Supported by the German and French foreign ministries, the Goethe Institute Nairobi and the Alliance Française, together with the Kenya Cultural Centre, organized a performance festival Jukwaani! (literally: On stage!) that took place in Nairobi from 17th to 20th September 2009. The festival presented the whole range of performative literature: from the distinguished Swahili poets to the slam poets, from Swahili free-style to the most prominent urban poets in Nairobi, from traditional story tellers to the rappers and hip hoppers. The festival did not only offer word artists a platform to perform but also to exchange ideas and have discussions that even extended onto websites and internet blogs

(see www.goethe.de/jukwaani). From Bayreuth University, Clarissa Vierke (Afrikanistik I) was involved in the curation of the festival. Furthermore, she also organized a workshop together with Prof. Alain Ricard (LLACAN, Paris) and Bernard Callas (IFRA, Nairobi) in conjunction with the festival. The workshop, "Swahili Poetry in Performance: Voice-overs and Counterpoints on Changes and Continuities in the Poetic Field", which took place at the British Institute of Eastern Africa, presented a forum of exchange on trends and changes in the field of poetry. Presentations on historical developments in the field of Swahili poetry, and concepts of 'Swahiliness' in relation to space, were given during the work-

▲ *Some participants of the Workshop „Swahili Poetry in Performance“ (Photo: U. Vierke)*

shop that mainly grew out of the French ANR research project "Dimension de l'objet Swahili: textes et terrain". In many ways, the workshop also functioned like a "voice-over" reflecting on recent trends that were also presented during the four-day festival. The workshop was not only attended by a number of poets but also by scholars from Kenya, like Robert Oduori (Eldoret), Ahmad Nassir (Mombasa) and Rayya Timamy (Nairobi), as well as by scholars from France (Xavier Garnier, Mathieu Roy, Paris), Austria (Brigit Englert, Vienna), Great-Britain (Alena Rettová, London) and Germany (Uta Reuster-Jahn, Mainz). (Clarissa Vierke)

World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL)



▲ Participants of BIGSAS - M. Bakpa, G. Sommer, L. Peem, O. Boukari, M. v. Roncador, M.-L. Kozi. (Photo: Peem)

The 6th *World Congress of African Linguistics* took place in Cologne from 17th to 21st August 2009. After conferences at Kwaluseni (Swaziland), Leipzig (Germany),

Lome (Togo), New Brunswick (USA), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and a special Conference at Sao Paulo (Brasil), the University of Cologne hosted almost 500 participants from

64 countries. All in all, 272 papers were given in 7 parallel sections dealing with various topics. As well as some BIGSAS students who took the opportunity to introduce the topics of their project and their work to the scientific public, the Bayreuth linguists Henrike Firsching, Eva Rothmaler and Gabriele Sommer also attended the conference. For the first time, this year's conference included a *Workshop on African Sign Languages* (AfSL). Other papers of interest were translated by members of the German association of sign languages. The next WOCAL, in 2012, is planned to take place in Cameroon. (Eva Rothmaler)

Announcement: Swahili Colloquium

23rd Swahili Colloquium at Iwalewa-Haus, May 14-16 2010

With a history of over two decades, the Swahili Colloquium has become a well-established forum in African Studies at Bayreuth University. Every year, scholars and researchers from different disciplines, who work on various aspects of the Swahili language and the respective culture(s), take part in this international colloquium which brings together researchers from all over the world. This year's thematic focus is on Swahili Popular Culture, with papers expected to reflect the variety of cultural expressions, covering the range from sociolects like youth/urban language to literary genres such as detective novels, and taking into account different media such as music, dress, film, comics, etc.

For further information and registration (deadline 2010-03-15), visit http://www.afrikanistik.uni-bayreuth.de/de/colloq/swahili_colloq1/index.html or write an email to swahili@uni-bayreuth.de.

Conflict resolution in Guinea-Bissau

Research on strategies of conflict resolution in Guinea-Bissau to continue until 2011

The Volkswagen Foundation will fund the two years' prolongation period of the collaborative research project "Local Strategies of Conflict Management in Guinea-Bissau" (1st November 2009 to 31st October 2011).

The project members, under the direction of Prof. Georg Klute, had applied for this extension in order to fully realize some of the central aims of the project. Four PhD candidates – three of them Bissau-Guinean and one German – all of whom are accepted BIGSAS students, will continue working on their doctoral theses, finalizing them in 2011, and one Master's candidate will submit his Master's thesis during the prolongation period. We will expand general theoretical reflection and hypotheses, and we will extend research to new thematic fields. Furthermore, 'Public Workshops' will be organized for various selected audiences in order to discuss research results and their possible application in the context of national political and legal institutions.

New thematic fields for research are a) trans-border conflicts, particularly at the

Bissau-Guinean/Senegalese border, where we will analyse trans-ethnic and trans-national modes of dispute settlement, b) the Bissau-Guinean military as a crucial factor in instability and violent conflict and c) modes of inter-ethnic conflict resolution. The general research issues as pursued in previous and current analyses will remain relevant. These are, among others: specificities of cases and institutional practice of dispute settlement in various regions of Guinea-Bissau, the identity of legal actors and the history of dispute settlement institutions, forms of articulation or parallel existence of state and non-state legal orders, reflection on the methodology to analyze concrete conflict cases and the particularities of multidisciplinary research.

During three 'Public Workshops', to be held in Bissau in 2010 and 2011, we will have discussions on the following issues:

- 1) aspects of statehood and rule of law in Guinea-Bissau: national, ethnic and regional identity and the phenomenon of the 'privatised state';
- 2) legal reality in Guinea-Bissau: reconciliation, the imposi-

Legal practice at the police in Gabú (Eastern Guinea-Bissau): first audience of two parties in conflict. (Photo: Anne-Kristin Borszik)



sition of legal norms and the tendency to hybrid conflict resolution in a context of heterarchical settings;

- 3) reflection on the conditions necessary to integrate local non-state forms of conflict resolution into the constitution of the state with regard to state legitimacy, the role of 'traditional' leaders and the ques-



tion of democracy in state/non-state dispute settlement;
 4) the future of political order and the state in Guinea-Bissau: entanglement, interlegality or the assertion of a particular political order;
 5) issues of practical implementation: professional qualifications of the police and judiciary, material equip-

ment and the infrastructure of legal institutions. We wish to discuss these issues with representatives from national legal institutions and ministries, representatives from development institutions (NGOs, UN organisations), international and local associations and traditional authorities. The additional two years

of the project “Local Strategies of Conflict Management in Guinea-Bissau” will allow us on the one hand to finalize research and publish project results, and on the other hand will give us the opportunity to make a step across the border of the academic world by holding the ‘Public Workshops’ in Bissau. *(Anne-Kristin Borszik)*

Dynamic worlds of imagination

Learning processes, knowledge and communication among young urban migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia

Located at the Chair of Anthropology, University of Bayreuth, this project is part of the Bavarian research network "Migration and Knowledge" (formig), funded by Bavarian State Ministry of Sciences, Research and the Arts (2009-2012).

After the collapse of the derg-regime in 1991, Eritrea and Ethiopia have again become countries of emigration ruled by authoritarian post-guerrilla governments. Young educated urbanites set off for migration – ready to put their lives and health at stake in a risky gamble for a new existence in Europe. Europe is imagined as the "other" of their home countries. They seek economic prosperity but also democratic participation and the rule of law.

Passing through different progressive stages and stations of migration, they become learners who have to cope with unfamiliar and precarious environments whilst already taking steps towards the next stage. In this environment of uncertainty and precariousness, predetermined life trajectories and routines become unreliable. Due to



▲ „Monaliza Net Café“ is one of Khartoum's numerous internet cafés run and mainly frequented by migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia, who seek to be in contact with relatives and friends, scattered along migration routes - from „back home“, via different stage of migration up to the diaspora in Western or Arab countries. But of course also latest movies and music clips are watched and discussed. (Photo: Treiber)

constant restrictions and exclusions this learning process includes growing disillusionment. Rumours and information from participation in migrants' fluid transnational communication milieus, and their own experiences along their migratory trajectory, feed and constantly transform their imaginations and their perceptions.

This is to say that a migrant's knowledge evolves along the passage to Europe. Methodologically speaking, migrants'

knowledge, their perceptions of the world and their habitual ways of dealing with the world have to be studied in the environment of their evolution, namely in the stages of migration. These dynamic worlds of imagination and knowledge will be studied among and in cooperation with younger migrants in relevant stages and stations of migration (among others Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Istanbul, Milan, Bavaria). (Kurt Beck, Magnus Treiber, Délia Nicoué)

Climate change and migration in the Sahel

On the linkages between environment and population movements



▲ *Migrants in northwestern Benin (Photo: Doevenspeck)*

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is funding a new interdisciplinary research project on the linkages between environmental change and migration in Mali and Senegal at Bayreuth University, under the direction of Martin Doevenspeck, Department of Geography. Project partners are the Institute for Social-Ecological Research (ISOE) in Frankfurt, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Laxenburg, Austria and the Department of Geography in Nuremberg-Erlangen.

Politicians and scientists increasingly emphasise climate change as one of the major threats to sustainable human livelihoods in Africa and predict massive population movements in response to a growing number of extreme events such as droughts, increasing water scarcity, a detrimental decrease of food production, changing disease patterns and loss of biodiversity. However, the environmental refugee concept is highly problematic due to geodeterministic stereotyping, terminological ambiguity and political instrumentalisation. Identifying

environmental change as the primary cause of these movements is extremely difficult. Therefore the new project faces the challenge of balancing the multiple factors causing migration in order to understand its internal logics and contextualise it theoretically. Furthermore, it aims at providing a basis for the formulation of appropriate analyses enabling us to predict future migrations in an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together political scientists, sociologists, demographers, geographers and natural scientists. (*M. Doevenspeck*)



▲ *Preparing togela, Niger 2006. Collection Spittler (Photo: Spittler)*

Announcement: DEVA databases now online

DEVA, the project for digitization, editing and networking in African Studies at the University of Bayreuth, has released the first part of its online databases. The launch took place on the occasion of the first international Open Access Week, from October 19th through 23rd, 2009. The information retrieval system of DEVA is still in its pilot phase, therefore we highly appreciate any comments and suggestions that would help us make the databases user-friendly.

At present, circa 8000 items are directly accessible without restrictions. They mainly consist of documented photographs, for example the research related photographs by the Bayreuth anthropologist Professor Gerd Spittler; the travel photographs from the africanist Ernst Dammann; and a collection of picture postcards on North Africa, stemming from early 20th century (Collection Popp).

By now approximately 7500 items are accessible within the University of Bayreuth.. Online research is possible only after personal registration. The quantity of items freely available in our online databases will be expanded continuously.

The aim of DEVA is to give access to a wide range of data for scientific inquiry, data which has been produced by various university disciplines which carry out research relating to Africa. Close connections to actual research projects offer new possibilities for documentation, dissemination and data storage. Collections and fonds [not sure what word is intended here] of partner institutions can also be made accessible via the DEVA information retrieval system. As far as possible, open access will be offered.

We are looking forward to your suggestions!

Contact:

deva@uni-bayreuth.de

How to get to the databases of DEVA:

<http://www.deva-research.uni-bayreuth.de/>

<http://www.deva.uni-bayreuth.de/de/databases/index.html>

Further information on the Open Access Week:

<http://www.openaccessweek.org/about-the-week/>

Berlin Declaration on Open Access:

<http://oa.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>

For more information we draw your attention to our web sites:

www.ias.uni-bayreuth.de/en and

www.bigsas.uni-bayreuth.de



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All correspondence to:
NAB@uni-bayreuth.de

Editorial Board

Manfred von Roncador
(editor-in-chief)
[manfred.vonroncador@
uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:manfred.vonroncador@uni-bayreuth.de)

Christine Scherer
christine.scherer@uni-bayreuth.de

Martin Doevenspeck
doevenspeck@uni-bayreuth.de

Magnus Echtler
magnus.echtler@uni-bayreuth.de

Franz Kogelmann
franz.kogelmann@uni-bayreuth.de

Ulf Vierke
ulf.vierke@uni-bayreuth.de

Ulrike Wanitzek
ulrike.wanitzek@uni-bayreuth.de

Layout

Yannick Tylle
tylle@uni-bayreuth.de

Photographs

Herold Althof, Anne-Kristin Borszik,
Martin Doevenspeck, Peter Kolb, L.
Peem, M. v. Roncador, Gerd Spittler,
R. Tchokothe, Magnus Treiber, Yannick
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