



Swahili Colloquium
Bayreuth



UNIVERSITÄT
BAYREUTH

**Call for Papers for
THE 31st SWAHILI COLLOQUIUM
in Bayreuth from 11th to 13th May 2018**

Dear colleagues, dear friends and participants,

We are very pleased to cordially invite you to the 31st Swahili Colloquium in Bayreuth, which will take place in Bayreuth from 11th to 13th May 2018.

The Swahili Colloquium has become an established Swahili annual forum of the University of Bayreuth. Every year, a large international community of scholars and researchers from different disciplines, who work on various aspects of the language and the respective cultures in Eastern Africa and the diaspora plus those who are interested in the region come together. The multidisciplinary approach with a wide range of thematic areas ranging from linguistics, literary studies to anthropology, history and geography, particularly account for the appeal of the colloquium. This means, as always, we are looking forward to welcoming you back, but we are also excited to greet new participants to the next colloquium.

2018's thematic orientation

The special focus of the 31st Swahili Colloquium will be **mtandao** “network.” The network as a form of organising social life and linguistic realities has received increased interest across disciplines from the 1990s, since it puts an emphasis on interconnection and exchange. Furthermore, it has been explored to underline flexibility as well as multidirectionality. The network goes beyond conventional views of well-defined binary forms of relations or a hierarchical organisation around a common centre. Differently from a tree model, for instance, a network connects any node to any other.

We would like to take inspiration from recent thinking on networks and invite papers that consider transnational Swahili social connections, such as the communities in the diaspora, as well as the local entanglements. The focus encourages contributors to think about complex communication patterns in multilingual settings and languages as practices rather than seeing them as stable linguistic codes. The focus also makes us reflect upon Swahili literary writing: can the network be a model of alternatively conceptualising fragmented plot structures or the variability of oral literature? Which networks do Swahili authors and speakers explore for communication?

The chosen focus necessitates reflections on media, technology and their effect, such as the internet and the variety of social media. How do they create new global and transnational connections? How do they change patterns of communication? Do they provide alternative

spaces of expression or do they rather strengthen the “digital divide”? Besides this, contributions with a historical orientation are highly welcome, since networks are not a product of modernisation and globalisation: for instance, ships and manuscripts played an important role in connecting people across the Indian Ocean for centuries and later the print technology created new forms of communication. With this broader perspective on networks, we will be able to explore the characteristics of specific networks better.

Other topics

We recommend the above themes, as the common points of centring discussions, but remember that the Swahili colloquium in Bayreuth does not intend to restrict discussions and presentations thematically. We equally welcome presentations that deal with other topics related to Swahili. The spirit of the colloquium is to provide an open forum for broad interdisciplinary contributions.

Registration

We ask you to write and present your paper in either Swahili or English. Each presentation will take thirty minutes; that is, twenty minutes for the presentation and ten minutes for discussion. Please register via the email *swahili@uni-bayreuth.de* and send us a title (even provisional) of your presentation or a panel proposal until **30th December 2017** with your request for registration. If your presentation will be in Swahili, kindly send us an English summary. To enable good planning, please also register even if you intend to participate without presenting.

Location/time

The conference will take place from 11th May to 13th May 2018 in Iwalewahaus, the centre of African studies of the University of Bayreuth, which is located in Wölfelstraße 2.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. You reach us via the following email address: *swahili@uni-bayreuth.de* and please use this email for all communication concerning the Swahili Colloquium.

Karibuni nyote!

Sincerely yours,

The organising team

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