

Kongamano la Kiswahili la 38
38th Swahili Colloquium

**Sauti za
Maana**
Voices/Sounds
of Meaning

15.5. - 17.5.2026

Iwalewahaus

Bayreuth University

Literaturen in afrik. Sprachen | Universität Bayreuth
swahili@uni-bayreuth.de | www.afrikanistik.uni-bayreuth.de

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YALIYOMO

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PROGRAMME/RATIBA

Thursday, 14th May 2026

19:00	<i>Get together in the Thai restaurant 'Hua Hin' (located in Ludwigstr. 30)</i>
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Friday, 15th May 2026

8:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:30	Welcome Address (Clarissa Vierke, Stefan Ouma, Serena Talento)
09:30-11:00	Text–Sound Relationships in Swahili Cultural/Digital Production <i>Chair: Clarissa Vierke</i>
09:30-10:00	Rose Anyango O. Ongati (Maseno University): Text-melody relationships: The setting of Kiswahili text to music
10:00-10:30	Shani Omari (University of Dar es Salaam): Sauti ya ‘Utani wa Makabila’ katika Muziki wa Singeli: Dhima na Mwelekeo
10:30-11:00	Annachiara Raia (Leiden University): TiaSauti@Lab: Engaging with Texts and Voices, Live and Digitally
11:00-11:15	<i>Tea Break</i>
11:15-13:00	Swahili Sonic Worlds: Music, Politics, and Society <i>Chair: Hezekiel Gikambi</i>
11:15-11:45	Roberto Gaudio (University of Naples “L’Orientale”): Poem as Song, Song as Poem: Poetics Beyond the Media Paradigm
11:45-12:15	KD Thompson (University of Wisconsin–Madison): Sauti za Wanawake kwenye Redio ya Kiislamu: Negotiating ‘Awrah and Authority at Radio Nuur FM, Tanga
12:15-12:45	Ria Huijgen-Koolen (University of Leiden): Usawa wa wanawake. A Song about the Abuse of Women
12:45-13:45	<i>Lunch Break</i>

13:45-15:30	Panel: Reassessing a Colonial Collection: Swahili Manuscripts at SOAS, University of London (organised by Angelica Baschiera and Florian Balbiani) <i>Chair: Annachiara Raia</i>
13:45-14:15	Ross Melvin (SOAS Library, University of London): Swahili Material at SOAS: A Crucial Record of Collecting Practices
14:15-14:45	Florian Balbiani (University of Erfurt): Collecting, Editing, and Publishing Swahili Literature in the 1930s: Between Christian Mission, Nationalism, and Academia
14:45-15:15	Angelica Baschiera (SOAS University of London): The Life and Work of the late Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar
15:15-15:30	Comment by Annmarie S. Drury (City University of New York)
15:30-15:45	<i>Tea Break</i>
15:45-17:15	Popular Music and Social Discourse in Contemporary Swahili Contexts <i>Chair: Shani Omari</i>
15:45-16:15	Devet Goodness (University of Dar es Salaam): Discourse and stylistic analysis of Roma Mkatoliki selected songs
16:15-16:45	Swaleh, Kadara (ZMO Berlin): The Bububu Railway and the Socio-Economic Sounds of Colonial Zanzibar, 1905–1930
16:45-17:15	Asha Ally Mustapha (University of Dar es Salaam): Uradidi Sauti katika Muziki wa Bongo Flewa: Uchunguzi Kifani Miziki ya Diamond Platnumz
17:15-17:30	<i>Tea Break</i>
17:30-18:00	<i>Uzinduzi wa vitabu wa Kithaka wa Mberia</i> <i>Discussants: Rayya Timamy (University of Nairobi), Roberto Gaudio (University of Naples “L’Orientale”) and Hezekiel Gikambi (Kenyatta University)</i>
18:00-18:30	<i>Launch: Kai Kresse and William Mkufya: Haki na Mamlaka: Kadhia za Waislamu wa Kenya Baada ya Ukoloni (Mkuki na Nyota, 2026)– tafsiri ya Swahili Muslim Publics and Postcolonial Experience (Indiana University Press, 2018). Discussants: Mohamed Aidarus Noor (FU-Berlin); Irene Brunotti (Leipzig); Farouk Topan (Aga Khan University)</i>
18:30-20:00	<i>Reception/Kiburudisho and Celebrating Abdilatif Abdalla’s 80th Birthday</i>

20:00-20:50	<p><i>Screening: Philosophical Journeys: DRC (Safari za Kifalsafa: Jamhuri ya Kidemokrasia ya Kongo) by Prof. Alena Rettova (University of Bayreuth)</i></p>
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Saturday, 16th May 2026

09:00-10:30	Performing Voice and Power: Satire, Authority, and Oral Traditions Chair: <i>Serena Talento</i>	
09:00-09:30	Peter A. O. Wasamba (University of Nairobi): Sauti za Kaya: Voice, Performance, and Epistemic Sovereignty in Digo Oral Literature	
09:30-10:00	Okoa Simile (University of Dar es Salaam): Voice Imitation as Political Satire and Moral Positioning in Mrisho Mpoti's <i>Nikipata Nauli</i>	
10:00-10:30	Hezekiel Gikambi (Kenyatta University): Sauti za Ukosoaji za Mrisho Mpoti na Dorphanage: Uchambuzi wa Kongoo kwa Kutumia Akili-Unde katika Mashairi ya Maongezi	
10:30-10:45	<i>Tea Break</i>	
10:45-12:15	Memory, archives, and belonging Chair: <i>Xavier Garnier</i>	Meaning-Making Across Music, Politics, and Narrative Chair: <i>Devet Goodness</i>
10:45-11:15	Ida Hadjivayanis (SOAS University of London): Voicing the Archipelago: Memory, Belonging, and Littoral Life in <i>Salama binti Rubeya</i>	Nathan Oyori Ogechi (Kisii University) and Emily K. Bosire-Ogechi (Moi University): Viswahili katika siasa na demokrasia nchini Kenya
11:15-11:45	Kai Kresse (ZMO, Berlin): The archive of Malenga wa Mvita: Ustadh Ahmad Nassir's literary heritage to the world	Caroline Asimwe (East African Kiswahili Commission): Gendered Voices, Mobility, and Regional Belonging: Narrative Multiplicity in <i>Dunia Yao</i> by Said Ahmed Mohamed
11:45-12:15	Rachel Muchira (Leipzig University): Sauti za wanyonge: Paradise and Afterlives as writing-back at the German and Kiswahili archive	

12:15-13:30	<i>Lunch Break</i>
13:30-15:30	Musical and Religious Expression in Swahili Contexts <i>Chair: Okoa Simile</i>
13:30-14:00	Mohamed Aidarus Noor (Freie Universität Berlin): Mwendelezo au Mabadiliko: Matumizi ya Vitabu vya Sharia ya Kiislamu na Mchango wa Wanavyuoni wa Mwambao wa Afrika ya Mashariki
14:00-14:30	Dorcas Mwasunda (University of Dar es Salaam): Fasihi, Utambulisho na Sauti za Maana: Uchambuzi wa Nyimbo za Mazishi ya Kikristo katika Kanisa la Umoja la Hospitali ya Taifa Muhimbili
14:30-15:00	Rayya Timammy (University of Nairobi): Sauti za maana: Sauti ya Alwy Izudin na maana zake
15:00-15:30	Nancy K. Ayodi (Maasai Mara University): Meaning, Content and Prosody in Israel Mbonyi's Top 2025 Swahili Gospel Music
15:30-15:45	<i>Tea Break</i>
15:45-17:15	Narratives of Power, Translation, and Embodied Knowledge <i>Chair: Ida Hadjivayanis</i>
15:45-16:15	Emiliano Minerba (LLACAN, Paris): Usimulizi wa uwezo wa kisiasa katika tamthilia ya <i>Siri</i>
16:15-16:45	Annmarie Drury (City University of New York): Voice and Collaborative Translation Practice
16:45-17:15	Xavier Garnier (Sorbonne Nouvelle University): When Words Stick to Bodies. An Analysis of Some Nursery Rhymes from Zanzibar.
17:15-18:00	<i>Film screening:</i> <i>Screening of Hijja Toto by Najeeb A. Nassir</i>
18:00-19:15	<i>Reception/Kiburudisho</i>
19:15-20:00	Andrew Eisenberg (NYU Abu Dhabi) and Clarissa Vierke (University of Bayreuth), with Kaustuv Kanti Ganguli (NYU Abu Dhabi), Nandini Roy Choudhury (NYU Abu Dhabi), Mbarak Ali Haji Msuo and Mwanate Kibwana Shamauya (Mombasa): Sonic Entanglements
	<i>Jam session</i>

Sunday, 17th May 2026

09:30-10:00	<i>Book launch and reading: I Have a Home, There's a We: Voice of a Stranger in a Strange Land, Mohammed Khelef Ghassani, translated by Meg Arenberg (Nebraska, 2026)</i>
10:00-10:30	<i>Book launch: A Biography of the Indian Ocean: Imagined, Embodied and Experiential Cartographies (Routledge, 2026) by Jacky Kosgei (University of Tübingen). Discussant: Grace Musila</i>
10:30-11:00	Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor and Mshai Mwangola: Fabrics of Being and Becoming. A Performance Lecture on Leso Textiles
11:00-11:15	<i>Tea Break</i>
11:15-13:15	Swahili Language, Orature and Performance <i>Chair: Peter Wasamba</i>
11:15-11:45	Andrew Harvey (University of Bayreuth): Riddles and riddling: from the Swahili coast to the traditions of the Rift
11:45-12:15	Maud Devos (Ghent University), Rasmus Bernander (Gothenburg University) & Gilles-Maurice de Schryver (Ghent University): Isije ikawa pendekezo hili ni la kiisimu! - Pseudo-coordination in Kiswahili and the development of epistemic possibility markers: the case of 'lest'
12:15-12:45	Li Kunruonan (Communication University of China): Sauti ni Msimbo: Cultivating Understanding of Oral Literature through Reading Aloud and Listening
12:45-13:15	Zawadi Limbe Daniel (University of Dar es Salaam): From kanga to Social Media: The Transformation of Women's Voices in Swahili Literature
13:15-13:30	<i>Concluding the Conference</i>

**Panel: *Reassessing a Colonial Collection: Swahili Manuscripts at SOAS,*
*University of London***
(organised by Angelica Baschiera and Florian Balbiani)

The Swahili Manuscript Collections held at SOAS are among the most comprehensive repositories of Swahili literature in the world. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, missionaries, colonial officials, and SOAS scholars collected manuscripts of Islamic Swahili poetry on the East African coast and brought them to London. These manuscripts formed the basis for key editions of Swahili poetry, thus helping to establish a canon of classical Swahili literature. In this panel, we will examine the history of the collections and the practices of collecting, editing and publishing Swahili manuscripts, as well as recent projects to reorder and decolonise knowledge production.

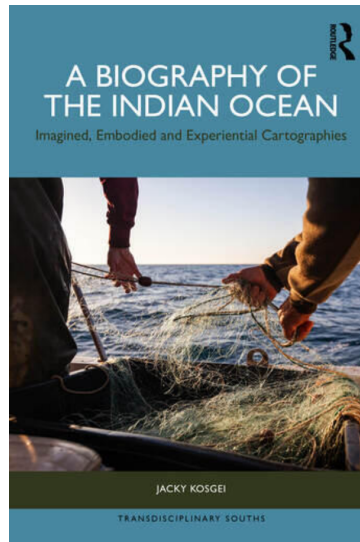
Presenters:

- 1. Ross Melvin (SOAS Library, University of London): Swahili Material at SOAS: A Crucial Record of Collecting Practices**
- 2. Florian Balbiani (University of Erfurt): Collecting, Editing, and Publishing in Swahili Literature in the 1930s: Between Christian Mission, Nationalism, and Academia**
- 3. Angelica Baschiera (SOAS University of London): The Life and Work of the late Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar**
- 4. Annmarie Drury (City University of New York): Comment**

Book launch:

***A Biography of the Indian Ocean:
Imagined, Embodied and Experiential Cartographies***

(Routledge, 2026)



Jacky Kosgei (University of Tübingen)

This book, with a focus on the East African coast and especially on the Kenyan coast, puts into conversation cross-generic texts – the historical novel, the Indian Ocean novel, oral history, oral testimony, and oral poetry – in two main languages – English and Kiswahili – with the aim of challenging, expanding and complementing the existing knowledge archive on Indian Ocean histories and its ideations on the Kenyan coast. It especially pays attention to the local forms of expression that articulate the Indian Ocean world from personal, local, and intimate perspectives. The intimate, personal, and local maps of the sea that emerge from this set of texts are derived from local articulations of the sea, informed by musings by seafarers who include divers, sailors, fishers, and beach operators.

Book launch:

Haki na Mamlaka: Kadhia za Waislamu wa Kenya Baada ya Ukoloni

tafsiri ya Swahili Muslim Publics and Postcolonial Experience

(Indiana University Press, 2018)

Discussants: Mohamed Aidarus Noor (Freie Universität Berlin), Farouk Topan (Aga Khan University)

This book launch discussion, switching between English and Swahili in presentation and discussion, focuses on questions of academic translation of research publications in the humanities and social sciences into Swahili, in an adequate and sufficiently accessible form. This book and the whole translation project, which included many challenges for the translator, having to coin new words or press for new connotations in Swahili when conveying the meanings of academic English terms for which there are no established Swahili equivalents, and for whose conceptual connotations resonant terms, or a resonant field of Swahili wordings, had to be built up in the translation process. The translator as well as the author will provide comments and entry-points for discussion from their respective side, while the (requested) discussants are in charge to steer the discussion in the ways they see fit.

Book launch:

I Have a Home, There Is a We: Voice of a Stranger in a Strange Land

Mohammed Khelef Ghassani, translated by Meg Arenberg

(Nebraska, 2026)



I Have a Home, There Is a We, whose original Swahili edition was in 2015 the first book of poetry to win the Safal-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature, brings the acclaimed verse of prolific Zanzibari poet, journalist, and cultural changemaker Mohammed Khelef Ghassani to English-language readers for the first time. The book explores the poet’s life as a migrant in Germany: linguistic and cultural alienation, nostalgia, and longing for his homeland on the island of Pemba. These poems form a catalog of sorrow and love addressed to the family he left behind, to the children whose roots “he tore forcefully from the ground” in hopes of offering them a better life, and above all to the country he calls home, using the deeply resonant Swahili term “kwetu”—our place—named over and over again as Zanzibar.

Utilizing the structured verse forms of traditional Swahili prosody, the collection is modern, unique, and innovative, speaking to a global diasporic experience even as it draws deeply on an idiom specific to the poet’s tiny island home. A ripple of political defiance suffuses the poems as Ghassani positions himself against layered forms of oppression and marginalization both at home and abroad in this synthesis of love song, lamentation, and freedom declaration.

**Book launch:
Uzinduzi wa vitabu wa Kithaka wa Mberia**



Rayya Timamy (University of Nairobi), Roberto Gaudio (University of Naples “L’Orientale”) na Hezekiel Gikambi (Kenyatta University)

Rangi Ughaibuni

Kitabu hiki ni mkusanyiko wa mashairi kuhusu tajriba ya mwandishi nje ya Kenya kutokana na ziara zake akihudhuria makongamano na tamasha za sanaa. Isitoshe, mbali na kuishi Afrika, amefundisha na kuishi katika mabara mengine matatu, yaani, Marekani Kaskazini (Virginia state University – Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence), Ulaya (University of Warsaw – Modern European University Visting Professor), na Asia (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (South Korea) – Visiting Professor).

Asubuhi na Baadaye

Diwani iliyo na shairi la kitawasifu kuhusu changamoto alizozipata mwandishi katika ujana wake na namna zilivyotatuliwa. Aidha yapo mashairi mengine kuhusu siasa za uroho na ubazazi na namna watu wanavyoteseka baada ya matapeli kuwazuga wakati wa uchaguzi. Pia, kuna mashairi ya kumulika maeneo mbalimbali nchini Kenya.

Karibu, Mfalme Mpendwa

Diwani ya kimajaribio ambamo mashairi yametungwa kwa kutumia tashtiti na ucheshi ili kuwachekelea na labda kuwahamasisha wapiga kura ambao wanatapeliwa miaka nenda miaka rudi na wanasiasa wanaowatupia makombo na kuwanyunyizia ahadi hewa. Watu hupiga kura kwa misingi ya kikabila, kikijiji, kiukoo na kwa kufuata ukarimu ghushi wa wagombeaji viti na baadaye huishi maisha ya kusaga meno.

Rafiki wa jiji

Vita juu ya Msitu wa Karura nchini Kenya alivyopigana Prof. Wangari Maathai na serikali ya Rais Moi. Kama “mapafu” ya Nairobi, Msitu wa Karura ni rafiki mkubwa wa Jiji la Nairobi. Kwa kupigana ili kuzuia “mapafu” hayo yasiharibiwe, Prof. Maathai pia alikuwa rafiki wa Jiji hadi akafikia kupata .

Jeneza Kutoka Saurabia

Mchezo unamulika madhila makubwa wanayopata wasichana kutoka Kenya na kutoka nchi nyingine za Kiafrika wanapokwenda kufuatilia ajira Uarabuni. Madhila hayo ni pamoja na kudharauliwa na kutishwa, kuteswa kingono, kupigwa, kulazimika kula mabaki ya chalula kilicholiwa na waajiri na hata kuawa. Mara kadhaa, hawarudi nyumbani wakiwa hai; wanarudi wakiwa katika majeneza.

Mbuyu Ng’ambo ya Thagana

Mbuyu Ng’ambo ya Thagana ni mkusanyiko wa michezo minne mifupi ya onyesho moja kila mchezo. Kila mchezo una maudhui tofauti na michezo mingine. Kichwa cha kitabu kimetokana na mchezo kuhusu mbuyu ambao, katika fasihi simulizi ya Watharaka, mwanamke akiuzunguka mara saba, anabadilika na kuwa mwanamume. Vivyo hivyo, mwanamume akiuzunguka mara saba, anabadilika na kuwa mwanamke.

ABSTRACTS/IKISIRI

1. Mohamed Aidarus Noor (Freie Universität Berlin)

Mwendelezo au Mabadiliko: Matumizi ya Vitabu vya Sharia ya Kiislamu na Mchango wa Wanavyuoni wa Mwambao wa Afrika ya Mashariki

Minhāj al-tālibīn wa-‘umdat al-muftīn ni kitabu muhimu cha *fiqh* kulichoandikwa na mwanchuoni wa Syria wa ki-Shāfi‘ī Zakariyyā’ Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (631/1233-676/1277). Katika Pwani ya Afrika Mashariki kitabu cha *Minhāj* kimetumika kwa muda mrefu kama nyenzo muhimu ya kufundishia katika *madrasa* (shule za Kiislamu) na kama marejeleo katika mahakama za *kadhi* (mahakama za Kiislamu) katika miji ya Barawa, Lamu, Mombasa, na Zanzibar. Matumizi ya muda mrefu ya kitabu cha *Minhāj* katika muktadha wa ufunzaji na mahakama yanaonyesha kwamba kilikuwa ni kitabu chenye mamlaka ambayo yalichukua jukumu muhimu katika kuunda mitazamo ya sheria za Kiislamu. Matokeo yake, kitabu cha *Minhāj* kinaweza kuchukuliwa kuwa kitabu muhimu zaidi katika karne ya kumi na tisa na mwanzoni mwa karne ya ishirini, kipindi ambacho kimeangaziwa kuwa cha mabadiliko muhimu ya kijamii, kisiasa, kielimu, na kiteknolojia. Makala haya yamelenga kutambua na kuchunguza mawakala na michakato iliyowezesha kukuza matumizi ya kitabu cha *Minhāj* katika kipindi kilicho kumbwa na mabadiliko makubwa. Kwa kutumia uchambuzi wa vitabu, mahusiano ya jamii, na mamlaka kama vipengele muhimu, utafiti huu unachunguza maswali ya uteuzi na uthibitishaji wa vitabu vya kisheria, wadau na washiriki wanaohusika ili kukisi nadharia ya kuwa kanuni na sheria za dini huhifadhika au hubadilika kupitia matumizi ya vitabu maalumu wakati wa mabadiliko na mgawanyiko.

2. Asha Ally Mustapha (Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam)

Uradidi Suati katika Muziki wa Bongo Flewa: Uchunguzi Kifani Mizikiy a Diamond Platnumz

Makala haya yamechunguza dhima za uradidi sauti katika muziki wa Bongo Flewa kwa kurejelea muziki wa Diamond Platnumz. Data za Makala hii zimekusanywa kwa njia ya maktabani kwa kutumia mbinu ya usikilizaji makini wa muziki pia kusoma vitabu mbalimbali vihusuyo mada ya Makala haya na mbinu ya usaili. Kutokana na kwamba kila sauti huwa na maana pale mzungumzaji anapoirudiarudia katika uimbaji wake. Hivyo, ipo haja ya kuchunguza ni kwa namna gani sauti zinavyojirudiarudia huibua dhima fulani katika muziki wa bongo flewa. Muziki ni njia mojawapo ambayo wanajamii hutumia kuwasiliana kuhusu masuala toofauti kama vile mapenzi siasa kifo na dini. Baadhi ya majukumu yanayotekelezwa na muziki ni kama vile kupanua ujuzi wa kijamii kukuza ushirikiano katika jamii kukuza ubunifu na kuwasilisha hisia za wanajamii (Okal2020). Matokeo ya utafiti huu yanaonesha kuwa sauti inaweza kubeba dhima ya maana katika kupata maana ya wimbo Fulani. Pia, sauti inapojirudiarudia huimarisha mawasilino kwa kuibua hisia fulani kwa wasikilizaji. Vilevile, sauti radidi hutengeneza ridhimu na melodia ya kuvutia usikivu kwa wasikilizaji. Nadharia ya fonolojia mizani iliyoasisiwa na Liberman (1975) imetumika katika uchambuzi wa data za utafiti huu. Matokeo ya utafiti huu yanatija kwa wanazuoni hasa wanafunzi wa isimu, pia wanaojifunza lugha ya Kiswahili kama lugha ya pili kama sehemu ya kupata maarifa yahasuyo lugha hii.

Vocal repetition in Bongo Flewa Music: A Case Study of Diamond Platnumz's Music

This article has examined the role of vocal repetition in Bongo Flewa music with reference to the music of Diamond Platnumz. The data for this article have been collected through the library using the method of careful listening to music as well as reading various books related to the topic of this article and the interview method. Given that each sound has meaning when the speaker repeats it in his singing. Therefore, there is a need to examine how sounds play a role in Bongo Flewa music. Music is one of the ways in which manners of society communicate about various issues such as love, politics, death and religion. Some of the functions performed by music are to expand social skills, promote cooperation in society, promote creativity and convey the feelings of members of society (Okal, 2020). The results of this study show that sound can play an important role in obtaining the meaning of a song. Also, when sound is repeated, it strengthens communication by evoking certain feelings of listeners. The metrical phonology theory established by Liberman (1975) has been used in the analysis of the data of this article. The results of this study are useful for scholars, especially linguistics students, also those who learn the Swahili language as second language as a part of gaining knowledge about this language.

3. Caroline Asimwe (East African Kiswahili Commission)

Gendered Voices, Mobility, and Regional Belonging: Narrative Multiplicity in *Dunia Yao* by Said Ahmed Mohamed

This article examines how *Dunia Yao* by Said Ahmed Mohamed articulates gendered voices as sites of meaning-making within the context of globalization and regional transformation. Focusing on the narrative perspectives of female characters such as Mtima and Yungi, the study analyzes how voice mediates experiences of mobility, migration, and transnational encounter, highlighting the interplay between individual agency and structural constraint. The novel's first-person narrator, Ndi, provides a fragmented and unreliable perspective that frames national allegory and reflects the disempowerment of the postcolonial African nation-state. In contrast, female voices through both presence and absence perform epistemic work, articulating alternative knowledges about gendered experiences of globalization, technology, and socio-cultural transformation. Situating the novel within the broader context of East African regional integration, the article argues that Swahili fiction constructs layered meanings about identity, belonging, and resistance that challenge hegemonic narratives and expand understandings of postcolonial African experiences within a globalized world. The study shows that the different voices in the novel are key spaces where characters explore what it means to belong to a region and how women express their agency and identity.

Keywords: Swahili literature, gender, voice, globalization, mobility, East Africa, regional integration, narrative theory

4. Nancy Ayodi (Maasai Mara University)

Meaning, Content and Prosody in Israel Mbonyi's Top 2025 Swahili Gospel Music

This study seeks to analyze meaning, content and prosody in Israel Mbonyi's Top 2025 Swahili Gospel Music. Israel is a renowned Rwandan Gospel singer, songwriter and minister known for his Kinyarwanda and Swahili music, blending spiritual depth with modern African sounds. Israel Mbonyi's songs are popular in East Africa due to high-quality production, relatable gospel messages of faith and listening to God, and his strategic use of the widely spoken Swahili language. Against this backdrop, the study aims to analyze meaning, content and prosody in Mbonyi's top 2025 Swahili Gospel Hits. These songs are 'Nina Siri' (I have a Secret), 'Nitaamini' (I will believe), 'Kaa Nami' (God, stay with me), 'Malengo ya Mungu' (God's Plans) and 'Sikiliza' (Listen) among others. The analysis of the songs will benefit future researchers in the genre of gospel music, song writers, singers and video producers. The research highlights how gospel music facilitates spiritual edification, skill acquisition in music writing and production as well as entertainment, not only in individual contexts but also within the broader social and communal settings. The central theological foundation for understanding the spiritual potency of gospel music is derived from Acts 16:25-25, where the Apostle Paul and Silas, bound in prison, sing hymns and pray, leading to their miraculous liberation. The findings of this research offer invaluable lessons for prospective gospel music writers, singers and video producers.

Keywords: Prosody, gospel music, lyrical content, spiritual edification, modern African sounds

5. Florian Balbiani (University of Erfurt)

Collecting, Editing, and Publishing Swahili Literature in the 1930s: Between Christian Mission, Nationalism, and Academia

This paper critically examines the practices of collecting, editing, and publishing Swahili manuscripts within the broader context of Protestant evangelisation, German and British colonial rule, and the establishment of African Studies at institutions such as SOAS. My focus lies on three collectors and their editorial work in the 1930s: Alice Werner, Ernst Dammann and William Hichens, as well as their African collaborators, Muhamadi Kijuma and Mbarak al-Hinawy.

Drawing on archival documents from SOAS Special Collections and other archives, I explore how these individuals cooperated and competed in the early twentieth century to acquire and publish Swahili manuscripts – negotiating between academic ambition, missionary agendas, national rivalries, economic interests, and the political utility of colonial science.

6. Angelica Baschiera (SOAS University of London)

The Life and Work of the late Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar

In this paper, I will explore the life and work of the late Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar (1924–2008), who was one of the greatest Swahili scholars, and at the same time one of the most overlooked within academic writing. Sh. Yahya was an expert in Swahili language and culture and provided incredible support in the development of Swahili studies by helping scholars in Europe, US and Russia to conduct their research and publish their books, without much recognition for his invaluable contributions.

Sh. Yahya's life history is an example of decolonising knowledge production while it unveils the systemic racism within academia that existed since the first encounters between European scholars of African history and culture and local experts. Without the knowledge of local scholars like Sh. Yahya, Western academics would have never been able to conduct their research nor develop their academic careers, however this was never fully recognised.

Towards the end of his life (2000–2004), he was asked to contribute to a catalogue project of the SOAS Swahili Manuscripts Collections funded by the Leverhulme Trust, a project that could not have been done without Sh. Yahya's expertise. Thanks to the project, we were able to create the Yahya Ali Omar Collection, the first Swahili collector from East Africa, as part of the SOAS Special collections. The Yahya Ali Omar Collection can be viewed here: <https://digital.soas.ac.uk/yaoc>.

The Yahya Ali Omar collection is a very important collection for the study of Swahili language and culture. Sh. Yahya collected many literary poems and as well as historical documents, especially about the period at the end of colonialism and the establishment of the nation state of Kenya at the expense (his words) of the coastal Swahili area that ceased to be a separate Protectorate. The collection reflects Yahya Ali Omar's interest in Swahili literature in Arabic scripts as well as the history and politics of the coastal area, which Sh. Yahya always referred to as 'Swahililand'.

7. Zawadi Limbe Daniel (Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam)

From Kanga to Social Media: The transformation of Women's Voices in Swahili Literature

This article investigates the transformation of women's voices in Swahili literature by comparing the role of kanga in traditional Swahili societies with the use of social media in the digital era. Historically, the kanga functioned not merely as decorative attire but as a medium of literary and feminist expression, enabling women to communicate through satire, proverbs, and concise statements such as "Mwenye Subira huvuta heri" or "Sijambo moyoni nina mengi". In contexts where women were denied public platforms, the kanga served as an alternative voice for expressing opinions, grievances, resistance, and social counsel. The study demonstrates that although the use of the kanga as a literary instrument has declined, its expressive logic has migrated to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. Through short quotations, images, expressive videos, spoken-word poetry, proverbs, and hashtags, Swahili women continue to articulate themselves in nuanced, emotive, and performative ways reminiscent of traditional kanga literature. For example, TikTok videos featuring love poetry or critiques of marriage, alongside philosophically framed images, function analogously to kanga texts: communicating to specific audiences while conveying broader social meanings. Drawing on narrative literary theory, voice studies, and feminist frameworks, the article argues that understanding women's voices on social media requires attention to the interplay between sound and image, rather than text alone. Ultimately, it contends that social media serves as a contemporary digital kanga, offering women new avenues to create, assert, and disseminate meaning within modern Swahili literature.

**8. Maud Devos (Ghent University), Rasmus Bernander
(Gothenburg University) and Gilles-Maurice De Schryver
(Ghent University)**

**Isije ikawa pendekezo hili ni la kiisimu! – Pseudo-coordination in
Kiswahili and the development of epistemic possibility markers:
the case of ‘lest’**

Kiswahili has two well-known types of multi-word verbal constructions: complex verbal constructions consisting of two fully inflected verb forms of which the first typically is the verb *wa* ‘be’ and compound verbal constructions consisting of an auxiliary and an infinitival form of the verb (Schadeberg 1992).

A third construction type has received little to no attention in Swahili grammars and teaching materials. It consists of an auxiliary out of a restricted set of verbs that are also used in compound verbal constructions followed, not by an infinitive, but rather by a subsecutive verb form (marked by the prefix *ka-*), sharing subject specifications with the auxiliary. Examples with the auxiliaries *weza* ‘can, be able’, *enda* ‘go (to)’ and *ja* ‘come’ are given in (1)-(3).

- (1) **inaweza ikawa ni la kiisimu** ‘it might be on linguistics’
- (2) **huenda ikawa ni la kiisimu** ‘it’s probably on linguistics’
- (3) **isije ikawa ni la kiisimu** ‘it might well be on linguistics (but the speaker hopes it isn’t)’

In this talk we discuss this third multi-word verbal construction type in the light of research on a cross-linguistically recurrent construction referred to as ‘pseudo-coordination’ (Stefanowitch 1999; Gisuti et al. 2022) or ‘hendiadys’ (Hopper 2001), known e.g., from English examples like ‘*You went and gave a linguistic talk*’. More specifically, we trace the origin and development of the construction involving a negative subjunctive of the verb *ja* followed by a subsecutive verb form (3), typically expressing negative goal or ‘lest’, in a newly established historical corpus of Swahili and argue that it is formally akin to better-known instances of pseudo-coordination but semantically particular.

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9. Annmarie Drury (City University of New York)

Voice and Collaborative Translation Practice

Many definitions of literary voice, varied though they are, have in common an implication that literary translation entails a layering or merging of voices: of the author, the translator, and potentially again, of those authors active in the perception of the working translator. How might exploration of such layering or merging bring about aesthetic understanding? What can collaborative translation and the translation of oral literature contribute to our ideas about voice? To what extent is voice inseparable from aspects of poetic form? This paper takes up these questions, moving through a few brief discussions centered in the practice of Swahili-English poetic translation, including 1) collaborative translation being undertaken by the Zahidi Mngumi Working Group and 2) beti 74 and 75 of Shaaban Robert's Swahili translation of Edward FitzGerald's English translation of Omar Khayyám's Persian Rubáiyát. It argues in part for the value of understanding literary translation and literary creation as listening practices.

**10. Andrew Eisenberg (NYU Abu Dhabi), Clarissa Vierke
(University of Bayreuth), Kaustuv Kanti Ganguli (Zayed
University Abu Dhabi), Nandini Roy Choudhury, Mbaraka Ali
Haji and Mwanate Kibwana**

Sonic Entanglements

Our separate research on coastal Swahili poetry and music over the past two decades has converged on a shared insight: in urban centers of the Swahili coast, poets and musicians have historically used vocalized language—language in its sonorous-material form—to make sensible the boundaries between ethnolinguistic communities and thereby enable reflection on complex questions of identity and belonging that pervade daily life along the coast.

Over the past year, we have developed our shared insight into an experimental research project aimed at tracing the dynamic sonic and linguistic engagements—and ongoing entanglements—within the musical and poetic practices of the Swahili coast. The project involves an array of collaborators, including five musicians whose Indian Ocean musical cultures have long formed part of the social fabric of the Swahili coast: Hindustani classical singers Kaustuv Kanti Ganguli and Nandini Roy Choudhury, Mombasan taarab musicians Mbaraka Ali Haji and Mwanate Kibwana, and Kuwaiti musician and ethnomusicologist Ghazi Faisal Al-Mulaifi. In addition to being highly experienced singers, all of these musicians have a great facility with language. In February 2025, we undertook a creative workshop with our musician collaborators to create a richly contextualized corpus of recorded vocal performances featuring multiple languages that have historically resounded on the Swahili coast. Over the course of four intensive days in a music recording studio, we worked with recording engineer Juan Sierra to record vocal tracks for several versions of three songs—a Bollywood song, a traditional Swahili song, and a Kuwaiti song—sung in different languages and combinations of languages. The Bollywood song and the Kuwaiti song had already been sung in Swahili by taarab musicians. We challenged the musicians to compose new poems, so that each song would have versions in at least two languages, plus a third version combining languages. In parallel, we collectively translated all the poems to support both analysis and composition.

In this presentation, we offer preliminary findings and reflections on the mechanisms by which artists play with language and vocalization to render audible the complex terrain of cultural identity and difference in the Swahili context. Four of our musician collaborators—Kaustuv Kanti Ganguli, Nandini Roy Choudhury, Mbaraka Ali Haji and Mwanate Kibwana—present their own reflections in music.

11. Roberto Gaudioso (University of Naples “L’Orientale“)

Poem as song, song as poem: Poetics beyond the media paradigm

This contribution questions the analytical usefulness of media-centred approaches in the study of verbal arts. Drawing on case studies from the Kerewe singer-songwriter Muganga Golita, the Swahili musician Remmy Ongala, and the Swahili poet Euphrase Kezilahabi, it examines whether such categories adequately reflect the praxis of textual traditions and their artistic composition.

It further argues that the transformation, or transmediation, of poems and novels into songs is not only possible - thus crossing media boundaries - but also constitutes a mode of understanding. On this basis, the contribution proposes to re-centre poetics, as a discipline within aesthetics - understood as an inquiry grounded in sensuous cognition -, in the analysis of verbal arts, and to propose it as a necessary framework for the study of verbal arts beyond the media paradigm, where the focus shifts from medium to text as an aesthetic object.

12. Xavier Garnier (Sorbonne Nouvelle University)

When Words Stick to Bodies: An Analysis of Some Nursery Rhymes from Zanzibar

I would like to present some nursery rhymes that I recorded in Zanzibar City during the summer of 1990. These songs, always accompanied by playful gestures, are connected to the bodies by the voices and the rhythms that propel them. Caught between the sounds of the words and the movements of the bodies, enigmatic sociopolitical messages rise from these lively songs.

13. Hezekiel Gikambi (Kenyatta University)

Sauti za Ukosoaji za Mrisho Mpotu na Dorphanage: Uchambuzi wa Kongoo kwa Kutumia Akili-Unde katika Mashairi ya Maongezi

Utafiti huu unachunguza sauti za ukosoaji na mabadiliko ya kijamii zinazojitokeza katika mashairi ya maongezi ya msanii Mrisho Mpotu (Tanzania) na kundi la vijana la Dorphanage (Kenya) kupitia mbinu ya kiisimu-kongoo inayoendeshwa na Akili-Unde (AI). Ukiongozwa na dhana ya "Sauti za Maana," utafiti unahoji jinsi sanaa hii inavyotumika kama jukwaa la kidijitali la kisiasa, kifalsafa, na kijamii linaloibua masuala ya utambulisho, upinzani dhidi ya mifumo kandamizi, na ujenzi wa maarifa mbadala katika mazingira ya kidijitali ya Kiswahili.

Mbinu mseto imetumika kwa kuunda kongoo ya matini kutoka maonyesho teule ya YouTube, ambapo zana za Akili-Unde (NLP) na usanifishaji wa maandishi zimetumika kufanya unukuzi, uchambuzi wa masafa ya msamiati, na mwelekeo wa hisia. Uchambuzi unajikita katika vipengele vya kimtindo kama sitiari na ishara, pamoja na mbinu za kimatendo ikiwemo uradidi, midundo, na mwingiliano na hadhira. Aidha, Nadharia ya Uchambuzi Diskosi Tunduizi (CDA) imetumika kubainisha namna washairi hawa wanavyounda simulizi mbadala zinazogusia masuala ya utawala bora, utambulisho wa vijana, haki za kijamii, na mwamko wa kitamaduni.

Matokeo yanabainisha kuwa maonyesho ya Mpotu na Dorphanage ni "hazina ya kidijitali ya fasihi simulizi" na chombo cha ushiriki wa kiraia. Mpotu anatumia lugha ya mafumbo ya kiasili kama ngao ya ukosoaji, huku Dorphanage wakitumia msimbo wa Sheng na kuchanganya ndimi (code switching) kuunda utambulisho wa vijana unaopinga ubeberu wa mfumo. Utafiti huu unahitimisha kuwa kuunganishwa kwa teknolojia ya lugha na isimu-tunduizi kunatoa mbinu mpya na thabiti ya kuhifadhi, kuchambua, na kuimarisha tafiti shirikishi kati ya fasihi tendaji na utamaduni wa Kiafrika katika enzi ya kidijitali.

14. Devet Goodness (Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam)

Discourse and stylistic analysis of Roma Mkatoliki selected songs

This qualitative study used discourse analysis method to analyse the stylistic devices employed in Roman Mkatoliki selected songs to represent different themes. The study used a sample of three songs which were purposely selected from YouTube. The purpose of the study was to examine how different stylistic features are used to convey the intended message. The study focused on semantics, the choice of words, phrases and certain expressions to convey the intended message. The study also investigated how figurative language is used effectively to communicate the composer's message. The results of the study have revealed the use of the following literary devices: repetition, personification, metaphor, biblical allusions, parallelism and symbolism. The study has also revealed the narrative style within a song, the use of command, and the use of third person. These linguistic and stylistic devices have been used to convey messages such as corruption, brutality of leaders, oppression, lack of the rule of law and irresponsibility of the government institutions. Other prosodic features such as tempo, loudness and stress have contributed to the effective communication because they attract listeners. Generally the selected songs have mostly used indirect strategies to communicate the intended message to the Tanzanian community and other African countries in general.

15. Ida Hadjivayanis (SOAS University of London)

Voicing the Archipelago: Memory, Belonging, and Littoral Life in *Salama binti Rubeya*

This presentation examines *Salama binti Rubeya, Memories from the Swahili Littoral* as a mode of archipelagic historiography in which voice, memory, and embodied experience generate alternative forms of historical knowledge along the Swahili coast. The collaboratively constructed life history foregrounds women's domestic experience as central historical sources for the Swahili coast, hence history is conveyed through everyday practices—cooking, prayer, storytelling, childrearing.

Drawing on Édouard Glissant's theory of the archipelago, the presentation argues that Salama's oral narratives which are recorded through family conversations and everyday observation, enact a relational history that resists linear, origin-centred, and state-oriented accounts of the region's past. Domestic storytelling, foodways, lullabies and Sufi ritual practices are read as mnemonic forms that sustain history beyond official archives. Rather than presenting memory as a unified or totalising archive, this presentation foregrounds spoken recollection as islanded yet interconnected.

Focusing on Salama's movements between Kilwa and Zanzibar, the presentation shows how belonging is produced through lateral networks of kinship, sisterhood, religion, and domestic practice rather than territorial fixity or ethnic purity. Women's voices, often confined to the interior spaces of the home, emerge as central to the preservation of Swahili cultural memory.

Global events such as colonialism, World War I, and the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution enter Salama's memory obliquely and are recounted through bodily vulnerability, and familial loss rather than political abstraction. Such recollections privilege lived consequence over historical mastery, offering a minor-key history attentive to care, and resilience.

Ultimately, *Salama binti Rubeya* is presented as a vital contribution to Indian Ocean studies historiography, demonstrating how archipelagic thinking illuminates Swahili memory-making as plural, embodied, and relational, and that women's oral histories animate forms of belonging that challenge uniform narratives of the African Indian Ocean world.

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16. Andrew Harvey (University of Bayreuth)

Riddles and riddling: from the Swahili coast to the traditions of the Rift

The oral tradition of Swahili *vitendawili* has been long celebrated for its literary richness. Little work, however, has been done to place this verbal art as part of a larger (most probably continent-wide) tradition of riddles and riddling. Using ongoing work (Mitchell et al., forthcoming) as a theoretical basis, this talk compares Swahili *vitendawili* (Maeda 2021, Raia 2020) with riddles and riddling traditions from language communities of central Tanzania's Rift, including the Southern Cushitic language Gorwaa (Heepe 1930, Harvey 2017) and the Bantu language Ihanzu (Damka 2015, Harvey 2019). In addition to providing some basic demonstration of the ways in which riddles may be compared across different traditions, this talk contextualises Swahili riddles as one instantiation of a diverse and widespread genre.

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17. Ria Huijgen-Koolen (Leiden University)

Usawa wa wanawake: A song about the abuse of women

This is a song about the abuse of women.

A performance group in north-west Tanzania aims to raise awareness of AIDS risks through its own songs, *nyimbo*. The inhabitants of the region complain about overt prostitution and blame fishermen, truck drivers in the fishing industry and bar girls for spreading Aids. Although people in the area complain about the poor treatment of women in everyday life, this is not openly discussed.

Most of the songs contain messages warning women not to seduce men. Women are blamed for their behaviour, with no mention of the behaviour of men. However, the song '*Usawa wa Wanawake*' (Equity of Women) offers a different sound. In this song, men are urged not to treat their women so badly.

Although the performers deliver the song in a manner familiar to the audience, the lyrics are surprisingly direct. Men are urged not to beat their wives or treat them like animals, but to care for them as they would a banana plant. The song describes men's behaviour and provides insight into gender relations in the area.

The combination of the well-known performance style and the firm, clear lyricism ensures that the message reaches the low-literate audience effectively. The women in the audience react with joy to the song.

Although the song was performed in 2008, the issue remains relevant.

I will present the song using words and video images.

18. Kai Kresse (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)

The archive of *Malenga wa Mvita*: Ustadh Ahmad Nassir's literary heritage to the world

This presentation provides an overview and selected perspectives and topical discussions of the literary work of the renowned Mombasan poet Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo (1936-2019), known as *Malenga wa Mvita* (The Master-Poet of Mombasa). Admired widely as a genius of Swahili language and verbal artistry, and also known as an artist, healer, and local historian, his language use drew distinctly and in innovative original ways not only from old and rare vocabulary of different Swahili dialects, he also played with the integration of related languages into songs and poems, especially for taarab lyrics compositions. He was a true, original, and morally committed critical thinker, embedded in Swahili society where he was also a respected local elder (*mzee wa mtaa*) in his neighbourhood, Kuze. The presentation will provide an overview of the (poetic) writings and manuscripts that he left behind when passing away in 2019; they are currently in the process of being digitized and prepared for research access at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO). We will focus in on selected poems that illustrate aspects of his verbal artistic creativity as well as his philosophical insights and discussions.

19. Kunruonan Li (Communication University of China)

Sauti ni Msimbo: Cultivating Understanding of Oral Literature through Reading Aloud and Listening

This presentation explores the transformative role of voice “SAUTI” as a key to unlocking meaning in Swahili oral literature within the classroom context. Grounded in the theme of the 38th Swahili Colloquium, “Sauti za Maana”, this paper argues that reading aloud and active listening are not merely pedagogical tools, but essential epistemic practices through which students engage with the aesthetic, cultural, and philosophical dimensions of Swahili verbal art.

In formal education, written texts often dominate, marginalizing the rich heritage of orality that defines much of Swahili literary tradition such as folktales, epics, myths and proverbs. Yet, as this presentation demonstrates, it is through the act of voicing – the rhythm, intonation, pause and emotion embedded in performance – that deeper layers of meaning emerge. Drawing on classroom experiences from tertiary levels, I illustrate how structured activities such as choral reading, call-and-response narration, audio recording, and intergenerational storytelling sessions enable learners to move beyond literal comprehension toward embodied understanding.

By treating SAUTI as a msimbo – a code or key – educators can bridge the artificial divide between written and spoken texts, allowing students to hear the wisdom of ancestors in a proverb’s cadence or feel the moral weight of a folktale. This approach not only revitalizes traditional forms but positions them as living, dynamic knowledge systems. Ultimately, this paper calls for a pedagogy of the ear as much as the eye – one where speaking and listening become central to literacy in Swahili.

20. Ross Melvin (SOAS Library, University of London)

Swahili Material at SOAS: A Crucial Record of Collecting Practices

This paper examines the SOAS Special Collections holdings of Swahili manuscripts as crucial records of collecting practices and aesthetic networks. Drawing on an ongoing project to consolidate institutional knowledge around this material, I argue for preserving these collections as complex assemblages rather than treating them as discrete individual manuscripts.

The physical complexity of SOAS's Swahili holdings—their layered bindings, marginal annotations, mixed provenances, and material traces—documents the colonial knowledge networks through which they were formed. Using material held at SOAS, I untangle how European collectors' dependence on networks of local intermediaries and their incorporation of earlier collections created tangled assemblages in which manuscript material was folded into larger ensembles. Evidence such as Bombay-printed notebooks, lending records, and provenance notes reveals these manuscripts' circulation within Indian Ocean networks before and during their collection.

As well as documenting collecting practices, attention to materiality connects SOAS's holdings to other Swahili Coast material dispersed across the world. Examination of illumination and decorative programmes reveals aesthetic links between manuscripts in London and Los Angeles, as well as to architectural decoration and woodcarving on the Swahili Coast itself. These visual correspondences suggest a world of collaboration, pattern transmission, and aesthetic networks that remain obscure when manuscripts are approached solely as linguistic texts.

21. Emiliano Minerba (LLACAN, Paris)

Usimulizi wa uwezo wa kisiasa katika tamthilia ya *Siri*

Kulingana na *Mfalme Juha* na *Aliyeonja Pepo*, tamthilia ya *Siri* haijachambuliwa kwa kina na wataalamu wa fasihi ya Kiswahili. Hali hii ya kudharauliwa inashangaza kweli, maana hata uchambuzi wa juujuu wa tamthilia hii kwa mkabala wa maingiliano matini unaonyesha idadi kubwa ya mahusiano kati yake na kazi nyingine za Pr. Farouk Topan. Kama mwandishi mwenyewe anavyoeleza katika dibaji ya kazi yake, maada ya tamthilia hii ni *siri* na athari zake katika maisha ya binadamu. Katika wasilisho hili nitajaribu kuonyesha kwamba yale tuliyojifunza katika tamthilia hii kuhusu uwezo wa *siri* yanatusaidia sana kuelewa kwa kina zaidi tamthilia ya *Mfalme Juha* pia. Mmojawapo wa wahusika wakuu wa *Siri* ni Mwinyi, mfalme atakaye kumiliki nchi yake kwa kudanganya, lakini hudanganyika kila siku na raia yake: ufanani na *Mfalme Juha* ni wazi. Lakini tunaweza kupiga hatua mbele zaidi katika ulinganisho huo. Tamthilia hizi mbili zinaweza kulinganishwa kwa kutazama wahusika, lakini pia kwa kuangalia tabia na namna ya ucheshi zinaomletea mpokeaji. Ucheshi wa aina hiyo aliwahi kuainiwa na Pirandello kama *Umorismo*; kwa ufupi, inawezekana kusema kwamba hiyo ni aina ya ucheshi inayotueleweshwa pia mtazamo wa mtu mwenye kuchekwa. Kwa hivyo, *Umorismo* unatuchesha na kutuhuzunisha wakati uleule. Katika wasilisho langu nitaeleza kwamba dhana *Umorismo* inaweza kutuonyesha wazi mahusiano ya kina yanayofungamanisha *Siri* na *Mfalme Juha*: mahusiano hayo yakieleweka, basi kila moja wa tamthilia hizi mbili itakuwa ufunguo wa kuchambulia tamthilia nyingineyo.

22. Rachel Muchira (University of Leipzig)

Sauti za wanyonge: *Paradise and Afterlives* as writing-back at the German and Kiswahili archive

Reading Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise and Afterlives* through the lenses of James C. Scott's *Hidden Transcripts* (1990) and Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* (2007) renders visible subaltern East African perspectives marginalized in both the German colonial archive and Swahili elite writings.

Since Scott published his work in 1990, a wealth of publications about the German colonial period have focused on recovering and moving center stage the voices and actions of formerly colonized peoples. The Kiswahili-language archive has been made accessible through translations of texts composed during the colonial period, while East African historians have deepened our understanding of the history of the region. But many gaps remain, especially in terms of perspectives from socioeconomically vulnerable members of East African society, including those dominated by the Swahili elite. Literary fiction provides a specific tool for recovering such voices, not only by drawing on historical sources but also by practicing what Saidiya Hartman calls "critical fabulation," a writing practice that is grounded in a critical reading of the archive and uses story telling and speculative narration to correct, complement, and complete its account.

With the two-pronged reading approach, I show how Gurnah amplifies voices that are missing from available historical material, including both the German colonial archive and texts that were written in Kiswahili and reflected, for the most part, the vantage point of the Swahili elite.

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23. Dorcas Mwasunda (Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam)

Fasihi, Utambulisho na Sauti za Maana: Uchambuzi wa Nyimbo za Mazishi ya Kikristo katika Kanisa la Umoja la Hospitali ya Taifa Muhimbili

Utafiti huu ulilenga kuchunguza nyimbo za mazishi ya Kikristo zinazotumika katika ibada za mazishi na misa za kumbukumbu katika Kanisa la Umoja lililopo ndani ya Hospitali ya Taifa Muhimbili, Tanzania. Nyimbo kama *Ndugu Buriani Ndugu*, *Uwape Ee Bwana*, *Farijianeni katika Kristu*, na *Hapa Wee Msafiri* zilijitokeza kama sauti za maana zinazobeba hisia, imani na utambulisho wa kijamii. Maneno ya nyimbo yalitoa tafakuri juu ya kifo, imani ya Kikristo na matumaini ya ufufuo, huku muziki na uimbaji wa pamoja ukigeuza huzuni kuwa ibada ya matumaini na mshikamano wa kiroho. Aidha, nyimbo hizi ziliendeleza kumbukumbu za imani na utamaduni wa Kikristo, zikihusisha jamii na urithi wa fasihi simulizi ya Kiswahili.

Mbinu za utafiti zilihusisha ukusanyaji wa maandiko, uchunguzi wa moja kwa moja katika ibada, na mahojiano ya kina na waimbaji wa kwaya, viongozi wa ibada na waumini. Data zilikusanywa kutoka vitabu vya nyimbo za ibada, makabrasha ya parokia na kumbukumbu za Kanisa la Umoja.

Utafiti ulitumia Nadharia ya Utendi kuonyesha kwamba nyimbo hazikuwa na maana tu katika maandishi bali pia katika tendo la kuimbwa na kushirikisha hadhira. Utendi ulifafanua nyimbo kama matukio ya kijamii na kiroho yanayojenga mshikamano wa waombolezaji na kugeuza huzuni kuwa ibada ya matumaini. Vilevile, utafiti ulitumia Nadharia ya Ufasiri wa Kidini na Kitamaduni kufasiri maneno na sauti za nyimbo kwa muktadha wa kiroho na kiutamaduni. Hermeneutics ilionyesha kwamba nyimbo hizi si maneno ya kawaida bali ni tafsiri za imani za Kikristo na urithi wa fasihi simulizi ya Kiswahili, zikitoa maana pana juu ya maisha, kifo na mshikamano wa kijamii.

Matokeo ya utafiti yalionyesha kuwa nyimbo za mazishi ziliibua sauti tatu kuu: (i) sauti kama maandishi na ujumbe wa imani na faraja, (ii) sauti kama hisia na utendaji unaoshirikisha waombolezaji, na (iii) sauti kama utambulisho na kumbukumbu ya kijamii na kiimani. Nyimbo kama *Sisi Tulikupenda Sana* na *Waumini Marehemu Wapate Rehema kwa Mungu* zilionyesha mshikamano wa kijamii na imani ya pamoja, huku nyimbo kama *Hapa Wee Msafiri* zikitoa tafakuri ya falsafa ya maisha na kifo.

Hitimisho la utafiti ni kwamba nyimbo za mazishi katika Kanisa la Umoja la Muhimbili hazikujitokeza tu kama ibada ya kidini, bali pia kama fasihi ya mdomo na sauti za maana zinazojenga mshikamano, kumbukumbu na tafsiri za maisha na kifo katika jamii ya Kiswahili.

24. Nathan Oyori Ogechi (Kisii University) and Emily K. Bosire-Ogechi (Moi University)

“Viswahili” katika siasa na demokrasia nchini Kenya

Uhuru wa kisiasa nchini Kenya, hususan uhuru wa kuongea, umeimarika tangu mwongo wa tisi kufuatia juhudi zawapiganiaji wa “ukombozi wa pili” na utekelezi wa Katiba ya Kenya 2010. Licha ya changamoto kadhaa, hali yademokrasia inaendelea kuimarika kila uchao.

Wanasiasa, wahamisishaji, viongozi wa dini pamoja na vyama vyawanafunzi wamechangia uimarikaji wa demokrasia kupitia hotuba, nyimbo na densi huku wakitumia ladha mbalimbaliza Kiswahili. Wakati uo huo, wasioenzi demokrasia na uhuru zaidi wa kisiasa wamejaribu kuhifadhi hali iliyopo kwahotuba, nyimbo na densi vile vile. Makala iliyopendekezwa itajaribu kufichua maana na uamilifu wa hotuba na nyimboza wahusika hao. Fokasi itawekwa katika maana na hatimaye mchango wa Kiswahili kilichotumika huku tukitambuakwamba kuna “Viswahili” kadhaa vinavyojitokeza katika maongezi nchini Kenya.

25. Rose Anyango Ongati (Maseno University)

Text-Melody Relationships: The Setting of Kiswahili Text to Music

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between text and melody in the setting of Kiswahili text to music, with particular focus on how linguistic features influence vocal composition and performance in various contexts. The study is grounded in the understanding that in many African musical traditions, language is not merely a carrier of meaning “Voices/Sounds of Meaning” but a structural determinant of musical form, shaping melodic contour, rhythmic flow, and expressive articulation constructing “Meaningful Voices/Sounds”. Within Kiswahili vocal music, the interaction between linguistic prosody and musical elements presents both creative opportunities and compositional challenges that require systematic investigation.

The objectives of the study were to analyse how phonological and prosodic features of Kiswahili—specifically syllable structure, vowel stability, stress patterns, and speech rhythm— influence melodic construction; to examine compositional strategies employed in setting Kiswahili text to music; and to determine how alignment between linguistic prosody and musical emphasis affects textual intelligibility, singability, and expressive meaning/ Communication (Sauti) in various contexts.

The study was premised on theoretical perspectives drawn from ethnomusicology and linguistics, which emphasize the interdependence of language and music in vocal traditions. The study adopted a qualitative research design employing analytical and descriptive methods. Data were drawn from selected examples of Swahili musical genres and choral repertoire from traditional and contemporary compositions. These works were analysed to identify patterns in text setting, melodic construction, and performance interpretation.

The findings reveal that effective setting of Kiswahili text to music requires careful alignment of melodic contour with the natural prosody of the language in order to preserve meaning and enhance musical expression. However, composers employ varied and context-dependent strategies in text setting, influenced by both linguistic constraints and creative intentions to enhance textual clarity and expressive depth. Hence, inconsistencies between linguistic prosody and musical stress may only compromise intelligibility and affect performance outcomes depending on the context, purpose of composition and intentions of the composer.

Keywords: Kiswahili, text–melody relationship, vocal music, prosody, African music, language and music

26. Shani Omari Mchepange (Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam)

Sauti ya ‘Utani wa Makabila’ katika Muziki wa Singeli: Dhima na Mwelekeo

Singeli ni muziki wa Kiswahili unaofanywa hasa na vijana ulioshamiri nchini Tanzania kuanzia miaka ya 2000. Ni muziki maarufu na wenye mchango na athari kubwa kwa jamii kutokana na mbinu zake za kisanaa, maudhui na utendaji wake. Wasanii wake, kama walivyo wa aina nyingine za muziki, huimba kuhusu mambo mbalimbali katika jamii. Miongoni mwa mambo au sauti zinazojitokeza katika baadhi ya nyimbo za wasanii hao ni kuhusu utani wa makabila (utani wa kijamii). Utani ni kipera cha fasihi simulizi na isimu anthropolojia ambapo mahusiano baina ya watu/makundi mawili kidehuri yanaruhusiwa kutaniana au kufanyiana mzaha bila kipingamizi chochote. Lengo la makala hii ni kujadili sauti ya utani wa makabila inavyojitokeza kupitia nyimbo za singeli. Kwa umahususi wimbo wa ‘Makabila’ wa msanii Abdallah Ahmed Mzee, maarufu kama Dulla Makabila, ndio unaoangaziwa. Data za makala ya utafiti huu zimekusanywa kwa kuusikiliza wimbo huo kwa kuzingatia lugha na maudhui yake ili kubaini dhima ya wimbo huo na mwelekeo wa utani kwa sasa. Uchambuzi wa data umebaini kwamba wimbo husika umewasilisha masuala mbalimbali yenye kuakisi utani wa makabila (kifani na kimaudhui) na kubeba dhima kadhaa na kutoa mwelekeo mpya kuhusu uwasilishaji wa utani katika wakati wa sasa.

27. Annchiara Raia (Leiden University)

TiaSauti@Lab: Engaging with Texts and Voices, Live and Digitally

“Tungo bila sauti haina uhai, haisomeki.” This insight captures a neglected yet central dimension of Swahili literary culture: its performative life. TiaSauti@Lab (GiveVoice@Lab) is an experimental lab exploring Swahili orature through digital media, building on longstanding shared and sensorial reading practices. Its main initiative is a vodcast series revisiting twentieth-century Swahili pamphlet literature as an inspirational lens on contemporary Muslim cultural life. By giving voice to Swahili religious pocket poetry—a largely overlooked yet affordable genre—the project demonstrates that performative engagement, through reading aloud and bringing texts to life, is key to sustaining this textual heritage. Initially funded for one year, the lab has continued to grow, involving more participants and evolving into a form of walking audio archiving without a permanent studio or venue. Both the creative experimentation and the formats of reading aloud lend themselves to portability, allowing the project to resonate across contexts. During auditions and recordings in Dar es Salaam and Lamu, fifteen voice actors experimented with posture, melody, and narrative voice. The project has attracted requests from the community to give voice to texts, hinting at the potential for a future space where people can read out loud while recording on the spot and engage with texts and voices. In other reading cultures, reading aloud has been linked to well-being. Inspired by this, TiaSauti@Lab offers a model for revitalizing literary traditions through collaborative engagement and community building.

28. Okoa Simile (Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam)

Voice Imitation as Political Satire and Moral Positioning in Mrisho Mpoto's *Nikipata Nauli*

Voice in oral performance serves as a primary medium for meaning-making, extending beyond mere lexical content to include prosody, timbre, and embodied enactment (Otiono, 2020; Bauman, 1977). In East African Swahili oral traditions, vocal performance (including song, poetry, and comedic discourse) acts as a vehicle for social critique, moral commentary, and identity negotiation (Ong, 1982; Otiono, 2020). Despite extensive textual analyses of Swahili songs, the performative aspect of voice imitation remains underexplored (Royallite, 2022). This study examines how Mrisho Mpoto's *Nikipata Nauli* utilises voice imitation to convey political satire and moral positioning within contemporary Tanzanian socio-political discourse. The study was guided by three questions: (i) what types of voices are imitated, (ii) how do prosodic and vocal variations function as devices of critique, and (iii) what socio-political meanings emerge. The study employs a performance-oriented discourse analysis integrated with Bakhtin's (1981) theory of heteroglossia. The song was transcribed with multi-layered annotations to capture shifts in voice, pitch, rhythm, and paralinguistic features. The analysis identifies four primary voice categories: the choral collective voice "*Iye, mjomba, iye*", authoritative political slogans "*Migodi sita!*", "*Yote kwangu!*", the didactic voice of *mjomba*, and mocked or parodied voices. The findings reveal that Mpoto's alternation between these voices, along with prosodic modulation, creates a dialogic space that satirises political authority, amplifies communal moral sensibilities, and highlights the performative nature of social discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Otiono, 2020). The study concludes that voice imitation in *Nikipata Nauli* is not merely aesthetic but a strategic, meaning-generating practice, illustrating how vocal performance shapes ideological, ethical, and communal interpretations (Bauman, 1977; Ong, 1982). This paper contributes to scholarship on Swahili oral performance, music, and discourse, emphasising the centrality of *sauti* in meaning-making beyond written text.

Keywords: Voice imitation, Swahili performance poetry, political satire, orality and aurality, heteroglossia, prosody, meaning-making

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29. Kadara Swaleh (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)

The Bububu Railway and the Socio-Economic Sounds of Colonial Zanzibar, 1905-1930

This presentation examines the Bububu Railway (1905–1930) as an early technological and sonic intervention in the social and economic life of Zanzibar. Constructed in 1905 by an American entrepreneur, Arnold Cheyney, the approximately 11-kilometre railway connected Stone Town with the northern village of Bububu. Although modest in scale, the railway played a significant role in facilitating the movement of passengers, goods, and tourists, while simultaneously introducing new infrastructures such as electric power lines that enabled street lighting in Stone Town by 1906.

Framed within the theme *Sauti za Maana* (Meaningful voices), the study explores how the railway generated new “soundscapes of modernity” in colonial Zanzibar. The rhythmic chugging of the steam locomotive often described locally as “bu-bu-bu”, not only shaped popular explanations for the name Bububu but also became an audible marker of technological change. These mechanical sounds intersected with everyday urban and rural life, signaling mobility, economic exchange, and colonial modernization.

The presentation situates the Bububu Railway within broader East African railway developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while highlighting its uniquely local impact on Zanzibar’s socio-economic and cultural environment. By focusing on the auditory dimensions of infrastructure, steam engines, movement, and the accompanying transformations of space and labour, the study argues that the Bububu Railway produced meaningful sonic experiences that reflected wider processes of colonial modernity, urban transformation, and technological encounter.

Ultimately, the presentation demonstrates how sound can serve as a valuable analytical lens for understanding the historical relationship between infrastructure, society, and meaning in the Swahili-speaking world.

30. KD Thompson (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Sauti za Wanawake Kwenye Redio ya Kiislamu: Negotiating ‘Awrah and Authority at Radio Nuur FM, Tanga

My paper examines how Muslim women in Tanga, Tanzania, navigate theological and social constraints on the female voice through participation in Islamic radio. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at Radio Nuur, a nondenominational Islamic station, I analyze how women engage with the contested notion of the female voice as *‘awrah*—a source of both modesty and moral risk. The Swahili word *sauti* encompasses multiple meanings central to this analysis: voice as acoustic sound, voice as individual characteristic, voice as perspective, and voice as representation. Through on-air participation, behind-the-scenes production work, and listener engagement, women at Radio Nuur negotiate religious authority, gendered expectations, and public audibility in ways that both reinforce and reconfigure gender norms.

The colloquium theme “Sauti za Maana” resonates with Radio Nuur’s mediation of meaningful voices across denominational lines (Shafi, Answari, Ibadhi). Women’s vocal presence on Islamic radio constitutes a form of religious agency situated within evolving moral and institutional frameworks. While some interpret women’s voices as *‘awrah* requiring restriction, Radio Nuur staff and listeners reinterpret these norms, distinguishing between appropriate professional voices and inappropriate seductive ones. This paper contributes to broader debates on gender, authority, and media in Muslim societies by showing how Islamic radio serves as a site where restrictive norms are simultaneously maintained and transformed, creating new possibilities for women’s religious and social participation in contemporary East Africa.

31. Rayya Timammy (University of Nairobi)

Sauti za Maana: Sauti ya Alwy Izudin na maana zake

Makala hii inalenga kuchunguza matumizi ya lugha katika darsa anazotoa Alwy Mohamed Din (Izudin) miskitini na katika mitandao kama nyenzo ya kupitisha ujumbe na kuwavutia wasikilizaji wake. Lengo kuu la utafiti ni kubainisha mikakati ya lugha anayoitumia mhubiri huyu katika kuwasilisha hoja zake kwa ufanisi, pamoja na jinsi lugha hiyo inavyochangia katika kuimarisha maana ya ujumbe unaotolewa. Utafiti huu utaangazia kama kuna matumizi ya mifano na kuchunguza ikiwa anatumia mifano ya maisha ya kila siku, visa vya kidini na simulizi za kijamii kama mbinu ya kusisitiza hoja na kuifanya hadhira iweze kuelewa na kuhusiana kwa urahisi na ujumbe unaotolewa. Makala hii itachukua mkabala wa uchambuzi wa kimaelezo na kimaudhui, kwa kutumia sampuli za darsa teule ya Alwy Izudin zililizorekodiwa katika mitandao. Uchambuzi utaangazia vipengele vya lugha kama vile uchaguzi wa msamiati, matumizi ya tamathali za semi, urudiaji wa maneno, maswali ya balagha, na mabadiliko ya mtindo kulingana na mada inayojadiliwa. Aidha, utafiti huu utaonyesha namna mifano inavyotumika si tu kama mapambo ya lugha bali kama chombo muhimu cha kufafanua dhana tata, kuamsha hisia za wasikilizaji, na kuimarisha ushawishi wa mafunzo. Kwa ujumla, makala hii inatarajiwa kuchangia katika taaluma ya isimu-jamii na uchambuzi wa hotuba kwa kuonyesha nafasi ya lugha katika mawaidha ya kidini kama nyenzo ya mawasiliano, kuelimisha, kuonyesha maovu na upungufu katika jamii. Matokeo ya utafiti yanaweza pia kuwa rejea muhimu kwa watafiti wa lugha, wahubiri, na wanahabari wanaovutiwa na matumizi ya lugha katika mawasiliano ya umma.

32. Peter Wasamba (University of Nairobi)

Sauti za Kaya: Voice, Performance, and Epistemic Sovereignty in Digo Oral Literature

This paper examines how Digo oral performance constitutes a living epistemological system in which philosophy, law, and historical memory are articulated through voice. Responding to the colloquium theme *Sauti za Maana*, it asks: How does Digo verbal art function as a mode of knowledge production, social regulation, and historical transmission? What methodological frameworks allow scholars to analyze oral traditions without reproducing colonial hierarchies that privilege written texts? The study combines performance studies, linguistic ecology, and decolonial epistemology to conceptualize *sauti* (voice) as both analytic lens and epistemic practice. It argues that Digo oral expression—ritual speech, praise poetry, narrative, and proverb performance—operates as a performative archive in which knowledge is enacted rather than merely represented. Central to this system is the *kaya*, sacred forest settlements that function as moral and cosmological landscapes where ancestral authority (*mizimu*), ecological ethics, and communal identity intersect. Drawing on collaborative ethnographic fieldwork, residential immersion, and intergenerational apprenticeship, the paper analyzes the linguistic ecology of Chidigo within the multilingual Swahili coast. Code-switching between Chidigo, Kiswahili, and English is interpreted as a strategic negotiation between local epistemic authenticity and wider communicability. Proverbs such as *Mdigo ni Mzigo* (A Digo is a burden) are examined as condensed ethical arguments and quasi-judicial precedents that challenge the binary between oral and written knowledge. The paper concludes by reflecting on digital and AI-assisted documentation of oral traditions, highlighting both the risks of decontextualization and the potential for community-governed archives. By centering Digo categories of knowledge such as *utu* (personhood), *heshima* (respect), and *ushirikiano* (cooperation), the work contributes to ongoing conversations on epistemic justice, decolonial methodologies, and the vitality of Swahili-coastal expressive cultures.

Keywords: Voice; performance; epistemology; decoloniality; Digo cosmology