

Swahili Forum in its 10th year – now online

Thomas Geider (Cologne, 2004)

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The steady growth of research, teaching and publishing over the last twenty years on all continents has made Swahilistics a well established and much differentiated sub-discipline within African studies. Its object is the study of the language, literature, society, culture and history of the Swahili-speaking populations in East Africa and the diaspora and the usage of the language in transnational institutions and the internet.

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The "scholar's republic" of Swahilists was formed in the early 1980s so as to communicate on teaching methods, work results, publications, projects, congresses, research journeys and scholarly work conditions. A first organ for correspondence was the newsletter **Swahili Language and Society: Notes and News (SLS)**,¹ which appeared in 1984-93 at the University of Vienna. Larger articles in the field of Swahili linguistics were published in the series **Working Papers in Kiswahili**, which was issued at the University of Gent in 1987-93. Both media ceased publication in 1993.

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To meet the needs of Swahilists for further specialized communication the **Swahili Forum** was initiated in 1994. The Forum was annually published as a thematic issue of the academic quarterly **Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere (AAP)**, which was issued at the Institut für Afrikanistik of the University of Cologne. Until 2002, nine annual numbers released 144 articles, text editions, project reports, bibliographies and reviews of Swahili linguistics, literary studies, historiography, archaeology and ethnography. These were written in either English (104 contributions), Swahili (31), German (6) or French (3) according to the linguistic preference of the authors. The editors were Rose-Marie Beck, Thomas Geider and Werner Graebner, finally also Lutz Diegner. For the acquisition of contributions the Swahili Forum particularly profited from the annual Swahili Colloquium, which Gudrun Mieke started to organize in 1987 in Frankfurt and which moved with her to Bayreuth in 1993, where it has been cared for by Said A.M. Khamis since 2004. Yet many contributions also reached the editors directly from East Africa and elsewhere in the world.

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New editorial and disciplinary orientations changed the Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere into the journal **Annual Publication in African Linguistics (APAL)**,² which meant the end of Swahili Forum in printed form. The high producing costs on the non-academic market and the fact that the use of the internet has widely embraced institutions in Africa led to the decision to make Swahili Forum accessible online. The hosting institution is now the Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien (**I/EAS**) of the University of Mainz.

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As the first online issue **Swahili Forum No 10/2003** was put onto the web in June 2004. It provides a Swahili bibliography of more than 100 pages which ought to supplement previous bibliographies and serve as a contribution to a General Swahili Bibliography still to be

planned. From No. 11/2004 onwards the Forum will again render articles, which will be realized in pdf-format. Institutions still facing difficulties in accessing the web will be supplied with CD-copies, which allow for easily printing the articles on paper. The website of the Swahili Forum relates the contents of the print issues Nos. 1-9, a link list to Swahili-related sites and further editorial information. The new editors are Rose Marie Beck, Lutz Diegner, Thomas Geider and Uta Reuster-Jahn. Swahili Forum is available online under www.uni-mainz.de/~ifeas/SwaFo/.

¹ See <http://www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/017158.pdf>, p. 162

² http://www.koeppe.de/html/d_aap.htm