



APPROVED PROJECTS FROM THE MOI UNIVERSITY AFRICAN CLUSTER CENTRE (MOI-ACC), 2020

PROJECT I

Title: East African Asian Writing and the Emergence of a Diasporic Subjectivity

Research Section (or new thematic field): Arts and Aesthetics

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Project Summary

Although the history of Asian literary production and engagement in East Africa dates back to 1948, (Gregory 1981; Desai; 2012), it was not until the first decade of independence that emerged what might be described as East African diaspora literature written by authors of South Asian origins writing in English. The emergence of this literature was part and parcel of the literary developments that were taking place in East Africa in the 1960s and which in a way were associated both with the anxiety of independence. This research seeks to trace this emergence and read East African Indian writings as texts that are not only framed by the ambivalent and diasporic histories of Indians in imperial and postcolonial East Africa but also as writings that consciously construct ambivalent diasporic subjectivities as the basis of new forms of East African Indian identities. Such ambivalence reveals itself in the way the authors disavow dominant, nationalistic, even binaristic accounts of colonial relationships and create, instead, narratives that skirt the borderlines of both colonial and nationalist discourses. This constitutes a strategy of contesting both colonial history and the hi/stories of the postcolonial nation-state in East Africa.

The consequence of this strategy though, is that while histories of the Indian people in East Africa are uncovered as “scraps” of imperial history their narration tends, on the other hand, to silence those aspects of Asian experiences that align them to African anti-colonial resistance. This research will seek to answer how this irony is resolved by recasting Indian histories in East Africa in diasporic terms even as they indicate their uncertain affiliations to, and identifications with, nationalist narratives of resistance which are themselves already in competition. In this respect fictional works will be read against life history narratives, biographies, autobiographies and art works and thus meet one of the main objectives of the RS which seeks to understand how artists relate to other artists and artworks, for instance through appropriation or rejection of ideas, repertoires of imagery, sounds or other texts and narratives.

PROJECT II

Title: Mediated and Mediatization of Islamic Knowledge in Kenya: Educational Institutions,

Media Technologies and Performative Aesthetics

Research Section (or new thematic field): RS Learning, with connections to RS Art & Aesthetic, and RS Knowledge

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Project Summary

The project will explore the production and transmission of Islamic knowledge as well as the religious artifacts and institutions involved in these processes in Africa, with a focus on the case study of Kenya. Coming from the disciplinary and methodological angles of Islamic Studies and social anthropology methods, we propose to analyze the ways in which Islamic knowledge gains significance for Kenyan Muslims through various means of transmission, including established educational institutions (madrassas and Islamic-integrated schools), poetry, works of art, and various media technologies. Our aim is to shed new light on the dynamics and workings of Islam in Africa, by studying the changing means of knowledge production, transmission and shifting epistemologies as represented in the appropriation of the various available spaces as means of religious learning in selected locations in Kenya.

The study proposes to investigate two aspects related to the production and transmission of Islamic knowledge and learning. Firstly, we will examine the competing madrassa (religious schools) and Islamic-integrated schools (semi-secular or semi-religious) in the production and transmission of Islamic knowledge, focusing on the standardization and consistency in curriculum delivery in the two systems of education. The second strand elongates our study of mediated and mediatized Islamic knowledge to certain forms of performative aesthetic and media technologies, along with their appropriation among Kenyan Muslims as evident in the production of religious CDs/DVDs, radio religious programmes and spiritual poems. Consequently, a field study among key informants and institutions to analyze the influence of established educational institutions, performing art and technologies of knowledge transmission on the negotiation of religious meaning. Therefore, the two strands have the potential to generate a new understanding of the nexus of Islamic learning and religious authority in African Muslim communities, and promise to shed new light on the adaptation and creativity in the transmission of Islamic knowledge among Kenyan Muslims.

PROJECT III

Title: Framing Identities from Human Agency Mobility on the Kenya-Uganda Highway

Research Section (or new thematic field): Mobilities

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Research Team: Wegesa, Busolo; Literature; Moi University; Kisémbé, Lynn; Linguistics; Moi University; Masita, Edna; Anthropology; Moi University; Okaka, Fredrick; Geography; Moi University; Attoh, Franca; Sociology; ACC-University of Lagos (cooperation partner); Honke, Jana; Sociology; AMCE-University of Bayreuth (cooperation partner).

Project Summary

This project aims at conducting a formative research and disseminating its findings over eighteen (18) months. Findings from the formative research will be used to design a three years research to understand re-configured human identities that result from human (im)mobility in East Africa. The formative research will focus on human agency in mobility, to study using mixed methods, three human and materials mobility spots along the Kenya-Uganda highway. The study assumes that human mobility in East Africa is increasingly agentive and no longer collective, passive and forced. The study further assumes that newer forms of mobility in East Africa are changing people's identities. The region is witnessing multiples of agentive mobility and immobility. Human agency will be studied in this stated respect, centring on its influence on mobility choices, processes and outcomes. The central research question is how newer identities form as a result of human mobility and immobility. A mixed methods design and methodology will apply to research and report mobility and immobility. From six multi-disciplines, Moi University researchers joined by one ACC and one AMCE collaborator (*as a result of ongoing match-making*), will develop formative research protocols on mobility, immobility and identity in three sites: urban Eldoret, Bungoma County both along the Kenya-Uganda highway and in Malaba; a border town of Kenya-Uganda, along the same highway. Researchers will collect formative data in 2020-2021, aimed at four distinct outputs: first, data bases for the Knowledge Lab; second, research findings for dissemination through scheduled workshops and conferences in 2021; third, two co-publications, and; fourth, results, lessons and recommendations for use in 2021-2022 to design a three years Mobilities Project: *"Human Agentive Mobility for Livelihoods and emerging Identities in East Africa"*, that will test human agency in mobilities that frame identities, using livelihoods, education, health and climate as mobility variables.