

PREFACE

This edition focuses on the songs that - according to the Swahili tradition - are attributed to Fumo Liyongo, the legendary hero and bard. The idea of producing a critical edition arose at the University of Bayreuth during a course on Swahili text analysis in summer 2002. When working on these songs, it soon became obvious that many passages of these old poems would always remain obscure, even though most of them have been published and annotated several times by different editors. Thus, the idea was conceived of bringing together experts on traditional Swahili poetry in order to save this famous poetic heritage for future generations. At about the same time, the Swahili Manuscripts project at SOAS in London was started and its first working report was presented at the annual Bayreuth Swahili Colloquium. In his paper, Sheikh Yahya emphasized the need to preserve the old poetic traditions. A research grant from the German Research Council (DFG) made it possible to invite experts and scholars from Kenya, London and Germany for two three-week workshops on Liyongo songs. Later on, we found that Werner and Hichens had apparently also planned to produce a critical edition including the Liyongo poems which, unfortunately, was never published.

The workshops took place in Bayreuth in June/July 2003 and March/April 2004. The objective of these workshops was to go through and analyse the published and unpublished versions of the songs attributed to Fumo Liyongo with the aim of preparing an edition that caters for practical as well as scientific needs. To that end, it was found necessary to examine and reconstruct the currently available versions of the Liyongo corpus. For this reason, the Liyongo Working Group was formed consisting of the following members: Bi. Zeina Mahmoud Fadhil Al-Bakary (London), Sheikh Yahya Ali Omar (London), Sheikh Ahmed Nabahany (Mombasa), Mohamed H. Abdulaziz (Nairobi), Sheikh Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo (Mombasa), Farouk Topan (London), Angelica Baschiera (London), Abdilatif Abdalla (Leipzig), Gudrun Mische (Bayreuth), Said Khamis (Bayreuth) and Clarissa Ditemer (Bayreuth). Unfortunately, Sheikh Yahya could not travel to Bayreuth as originally planned. Abdilatif Abdalla was only present during the first workshop. Both have followed the outcome and have critically contributed to the issues raised. Bi. Zeina Al-Bakary joined the second meeting in 2004.

In preparation for the first workshop in 2003, the Bayreuth team sent a list of all songs that have been attributed to Liyongo to the participants of the

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workshop and asked them for further versions. In addition, synopses of all available published songs were prepared in order to facilitate comparison of the sources. The participants from Mombasa and London (SOAS) contributed with manuscripts in Arabic and Roman characters; Abdilatif Abdalla brought a tape recorded by the radio station 'Sauti ya Mvita' in 1952, containing a rare musical interpretation and recitation of the *Ujumbuzo wa Dhiki*. In between the two workshops, a checklist of open questions was answered in London (Sheikh Yahya) and in Lamu and Zanzibar (Sheikh Nabahany). We are very grateful to Ruth Schubert who translated into English Meinhof's version of the Takhamisi text and the comments on it by Meinhof and Mische, and also read through the English parts of this book. Kerstin Winkelmann accompanied the whole project from the very beginning and in particular she contributed by doing the layout. We thank Thomas Geider for bibliographic advice.

During both workshops some colleagues were present as guests. We are especially grateful to Gerlind Scheckenbach (2003 and 2004), Ridder Samsom (2003) and Thilo Schadeberg (2004) for their active participation in our discussions. Jasmin Mahazi and Sebastian Müller helped to create a nice atmosphere.

We also have to express our gratitude to the following institutions which provided us with the manuscripts used in the workshops: SOAS Archives London, Library of the Institute of Asian and African Studies ('Asien-Afrika-Institut, Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik') of the University of Hamburg, State Library in Berlin ('Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin'), and State and University Library in Hamburg ('Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg').

In particular, we owe special thanks to the German Research Council (DFG) for generously funding the workshops even in these times of small budgets.

The pleasant and friendly atmosphere of the workshops, and the willingness of every participant to give his or her best and to go 'the extra mile' will remain in our memory as a wonderful experience of mutual exchange between experts of local traditions and academics.

Bayreuth, July 2004

The Liyongo Working Group

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