
The book contains 26 articles, most of which are based on papers presented at the 8th International Jahnheinz Jahn Symposium on African Literatures at the University of Meinz, 17th-20th November 2004. Jahnheinz Jahn (1918-1973) symposia, inaugurated in the year of the library’s foundation based on his personal collection in 1975, are meant to provide a platform for international scholars of African literatures and to enhance dialogue between them. The 8th International Jahnheinz Jahn Symposium in 2004 was dealing with the production, mediation and reception of creative writing in African languages. Some 40 scholars from 20 countries in Africa, Europe and USA discussed the problems connected with the literature in more than 20 African languages.

The Symposium was able to acknowledge that the creative writing in African languages is by no means a marginal phenomenon. According to Anja Oed, the author of an introduction (pp. 9-32), it is time to recognise that the literature in African languages „[…] forms an integral, vital and exciting part of African literatures and, accordingly, deserves a much informed critical attention as literary texts written in English, French, or Portuguese“ (p. 11). In 1982, 40% of all literary titles in the Jahnheinz Jahn Library were written in one of 31 African languages. In 2008, the Library was holding literary works in 69 African languages.

This collection of papers has been divided into five sections: literary production, publishing, mediation, readership, and readings. All those phenomena are briefly discussed in the introduction. The distribution of the articles between the five sections is quite arbitrary as they are rather heterogeneous in character.

The section dealing with the „Literary production“ contains six articles. Christine Glanz in „The production, mediation and reception of creative writing in Luganda: a challenging endeavour“ (pp. 25-32) deals with about 130 years writing in Luganda, which for decades had much better status than any other Ugandan indigenous
language but its position was weakened by the political changes after independence. It is only since the beginning of the 1990s that professional writing in Luganda and the book industry started to recover. Crispin Maalu-Bungi in his contribution titled „Written literature in Congolese languages” (pp. 33-40) is concerned with the origin and principal genres of written literature in Kiluba, Kikoongo and Lingala. He admits that the written literature in French is today more developed and better known by the speakers of some 212 native languages in Congo. In „Kimbundu literature: origins and continuity” (pp. 41-51) Kiba-Mwenyu aims at elucidation of the origin of the Kimbundu native literature, which is the only literary language in Angola. Farouk Topan, the well-known Tanzanian playwright and scholar, in his essay titled „The expanding world of the Swahili writer” (pp. 53-59) attempts to explore some aspects of mediation in relation to the Swahili writer and his world. Problems of the Swahili literature are also raised by Mikhail D. Gromov in his article titled „The Swahili novel on the turn of the centuries: recent trends and perspectives” (pp. 61-66). The author claims that the pulse of creative writing in Swahili seems to have shifted to Kenya. Nowadays even the majority of Tanzanian books are printed by Kenyan publishing houses. Young novelists represent an experimental trend: their point of anxiety is the future of the entire humankind. Thomas Geider in „A survey of world literature translated into Swahili” (pp. 67-84) aims at drawing attention to works regarded as „world literature”, which were translated into Swahili. Apart from Shakespeare the geopolitical constellation brought into Tanzania the translations of Russian humanist classics. Translations of the growing number of African literary texts into Swahili are also taken into account.

In the „Publishing” section five contributions have been inserted. Walter Bgoya in his article titled „The endeavour of publishing: its limits of success with Swahili readers” (pp. 87-94) admits that over the last decade publishing in East Africa has made considerable progress. However, financial returns from the Kiswahili language book trade are not, except for the text books, big enough to guarantee vitality of the industry. According to the author, reading Kiswahili creative works has been dwarfed by promotion of English
to the detriment of the native language. „Publishing and market for African-language books in the diaspora” (pp. 95-103) by B. Akin-
tunde Oyetade is a short account of the author’s personal experience
in writing, publishing and marketing African languages and litera-
tures books in London. The paper by Uta Reuster-Jahn titled „The
choice of new generation: Swahili entertainment literature from
Ndanda Mission Press 1990-2005” (pp. 105-117) is based on the
reading of books that had been published within an entertainment
programme of the Ndanda Mission Press (a publishing unit of the
Benedictine Abbey in Mtwara Region) as well as on information
obtained in interviews. During 1990 some 160 titles were published
but the high output of the Swahili literature books was not matched
by sales figures. Jeff Oppland in his sketch „The newspaper as em-
powering medium of Xhosa literature” (pp. 119-129) points out that
the creative literature written in Xhosa by adults for adult readers, in
genres and on subjects of their own choosing, first emerged from
mission presses in 1837. Xhosa authors could express themselves
more freely in newspapers than in books. One of them was an out-
standing poetess Nontsizi Mgqwetho. Her literary output numbers
over 90 poems that are briefly presented in the contribution. „Crea-
tive writing in Kinyarwanda” (pp. 131-142) is discussed by Jean
Chrysostome Nkejabahizi who draws readers’ attention to three
points: why the major part of Rwandan literature is written in Kin-
yarwanda, why creative writing in Kinyarwanda is relatively little
known, and why creative writing in Kinyarwanda is not taught at
schools.

The third section of the book is named „Mediation”, which
„[...] is concerned with introducing and attracting readerships (as
well as book buyers) to creative writing in African languages in
various ways and for different reasons” (p. 17). It opens with an
article by Alain Ricard titled „Creative writing in African languages:
writers, scholars, translators” (pp. 145-151), which was presented at
the beginning of the 8th Jahnheinz Jahn Symposium. He insists on
creation of the literary milieu in African languages, and on opening
up the languages to the rest of the world literature. In „Attitudes
towards African languages and African-language literatures in edu-
cation: the case of Malawi” (pp. 153-162) Francis Moto critically examines views and reactions of parents, teachers, educationists, Ministry of Education officials and the Malawian society at large regarding the question of African-language literature in education. He shows that the views and reactions of educational stakeholders towards Malawian languages and Malawian literatures written in indigenous languages are largely negative. Among strategies to promote African-language literature he suggests translation of the internationally acclaimed works into local languages. The title of an article by Dinah K. Itumelang is self-explanatory: „Teaching Setswana literature in post colonial-Botswana: past, present and future” (pp. 163-170). The author realises that because emphasis has always been on Setswana as a communication language, the newly written literary texts tend to be of low quality. Akinwumi Ṣọlọ in his article „A key to Africa’s own ‘bank of images’” (pp. 171-178) discusses the problems faced by the African-language literature, giving the example of Nigeria. He concludes: „What writers in African languages need now is a holistic approach to the problem of Africa’s endangered cultural heritage” (p. 178). His creative writing is discussed by Anja Oed in her article „Expanding readerships: Akinwumi Ṣọlọ novel OLe Ku and its video film adaptation” (pp. 179-188). She is concerned with video film adaptations as a strategy to expand the audience of creative writing in Yoruba.

The section of „Readership” contains five articles. The first one by Euphraise Kezilahabi, the well-known Tanzanian novelist and poet, is titled „The house of everydayness: Swahili poetry in Tanzanian newspapers” (pp. 191-199). The author points out that one basic characteristic of Swahili poetry is its quotidian nature that connects it to the daily lives of the people. To prove it he selects a poem „Maji ya Kifuu” (Water in coconut shell) composed by a poet bearing Mimi (Me) pseudonym. Alina N. Rinkanya in her article „Sheng in Kenya: an alternative medium for indigenous creative writing” (pp. 201-208) casts a look at the attempts to create literary works in Sheng and Engsh – two versions of an urban tongue, which have existed in the major cities of Kenya for a few decades. In the late 1980s attempts were made to write full-length literary pieces in
Sheng. In „Breaking out, speaking out: youth, Islam and the production of indigenous Hausa literature in northern Nigeria” (pp. 209-217) Abdalla Uba Adamu tries to analyse the development of Hausa literature as part of global media flows. He distinguishes four generations of creative writing in Hausa and then concentrates on the fourth one focusing on love stories. Memory Chirere in his essay „Ignatius Mabasa’s Mapenzi and innovation in the Shona novel: the Zimbabwean response” (pp. 221-225) sets out to explore the innovativeness of a recent piece of the Shona literature. It strays across various genres – prose, poetry, epistle, dream, song – as it unfolds. „African-language writing comes of age: the dawning of an era” (pp. 227-232) by Daniel P. Kunene shows the political turbulence in South Africa after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990. It was captured by Nhlanhla Maake who has taken bold steps to turn the Sesotho literature into modern settings, both geographically and politically.

At the beginning of the last section titled „Readings” an article by Ernest N. Emenyonu has been placed: „The dynamics of creativity and reception: the Igbo language novel from Pita Nwana to Toni Ubesie” (pp. 235-241. The article focuses on various stimulating dynamics of creativity in the Igbo-language novel in 1933 by the legendary Pita Nwana (father of the Igbo-language novel) to the present. An analysis of the well-known Shona novel is proposed by Maurice Taonezvi and Flora Veit-Wild in their paper titled „Rereading Feso: the first Shona novel as a nation builder” (pp. 241-251). The novel by Solomon Mutswairo is part of the national memory of Zimbabwe. Together with some other Shona literary works it is mentioned once more in the next paper by Maurice Taonezvi Vambe titled „Shona literature and the creation of an alternative reading ‘public’ in Zimbabwe” (pp. 253-261). A survey and analysis of Shona literature reveals the richness and diversity of the themes treated. In „The horns of my thoughts are fastened together in a knot: transformations of ‘humanity’ in Swahili and Shona literature” (pp. 263-274) Alena Rettová shows how the concept of ‘humanity’ has been reflected in contemporary written literature in those two African languages. The volume closes with an article by Lutz
Diegner titled „Answers to ‘glocalisation’ in Swahili fiction: Chachage’s Makuadwa Soko Huria and Wamitila’s Bina-Adamu!” (pp. 275-282).

In an appendix the reader will find the programme of the 8th International Jahnheinz Jahn Symposium. At the end of the book there are short notes on contributors. It is visible from them that the authors from Africa are very well represented: articles of seventeen Africans have been published in the book. Works cited by them enlarge our knowledge of trends in the literary study in Africa. It is only a pity that the contributions of scholars from outside Africa are rather scarcely taken into account and quoted by the African contributors to the volume.

Stanislaw Piłaszewicz


Lyang lu, the first words of the book in the Mushere language might be rendered in English by „Poetic speech of the house”. Mushere has been classified in the Sura-Gerka or Angas-Sura group of the West Chadic languages. Both Sura from Panyam and Angas from Pankshin region were the first Chadic languages which began to be studied by Prof. H. Jungraithmayr as early as in 1962. The Mushere people, some 37,000 souls in number, inhabit today eleven villages in a hilly area some 30 km north-west of Pankshin, which is the capital of the Pankshin Local Government in the Plateau State of Nigeria.

In his further research activities H. Jungraithmayr made an effort to collect data on Chadic languages of the Republic of Chad, and it was only in 1996, after a long passage of time that he returned to Pankshin. In this town he made the acquaintance with Mr. Philibus Diyakal, a native speaker of Mushere, who was „[...] fully aware of the importance and necessity of documenting and preserving his mother tongue in which he clearly recognizes embodied the historical, cultural and spiritual heritage of his people” (p. 13). Mr. Diyakal