

Swahili Forum call for papers
Special issue (2025)

Links are not chains: Comparative Literatures and Vi-Swahili verbal Art

Considered as an approach, as an analytic tool and as a domain of study, comparison is a concept and a praxis that has increasingly gained space in Swahili Studies (and in African Studies in general) in recent years. A comparative approach, **focusing integrally upon texts** (oral or written), by empirically and/or inductively comparing texts with each other, can illuminate the extent and nature of continuities and discontinuities within **African verbal arts** and between these works and non-African ones. Comparison is also a heuristic tool which helps us to unpack and analyse works from new and potentially radical points of view, stimulating valuable new observations, hypotheses and interpretations. Any work of art (including popular art), however immediately comprehensible it may seem to us (or to its local audience), disguises a potentiality of meanings that analysis cannot ignore. The context of a text is fundamental, but it would be a mistake to establish a direct causal relationship between art and context without considering the being in art of the text; that is, the constitutive reasons for an artistic text.

The focus of this special issue is on **theories and methodologies of comparison based on case studies**. We wish to collect as many visions as possible on **comparison as a textually grounded approach**; therefore, we invite contributions that engage with, and develop forward, any perspective, as far as it is centred on the text. Papers based on specific case studies are especially welcome.

We invite the contributors to explore these comparisons:

1. between texts from different African languages (both local and national languages);
2. between texts in an African language and texts in a non-African language;
3. between verbal art in more Swahili varieties, including the ones of DRC, etc.

Along these lines of comparative research, we encourage contributors to identify the textual aesthetics that shapes the reception and interpretation of the works under study. Comparative analysis around any genre of the verbal arts is welcome, whatever its medium, oral or written. The studies submitted **must** be, at least partially, focused upon Swahili textual and cultural universes, oral or written, in Viswahili (standard Swahili or any other variety of the language). We also warmly invite **other comparatists, non-Swahili specialists, who can use translated texts**, to participate in our special issue, because we strongly believe that **perspectives “outside” Swahili studies can expand the hermeneutic possibilities of these works and connect Swahili experiences to other textual art traditions and practices.**

We invite possible contributors to express their interest as soon as possible via email (roberto.gaudio@unior.it) and to send a first draft by 15th January in English or Swahili. The article should respect the guidelines indicated by Swahili Forum, available at this link: <https://www.gkr.uni-leipzig.de/en/swahili-forum/submit-paper>

We remain in any case ready and willing to answer any questions concerning the publication. The special issue is slated for publication at the end of 2025. We look forward to receiving your contributions!

Best regards,
the organisers.

Roberto Gaudio
Tenure-track assistant professor
University of Napoli L'Orientale

Emiliano Minerba
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
University of Bayreuth

Aaron Rosenberg,
Full Professor
Colegio de México

Swahili Forum published by University of Leipzig
<https://www.gkr.uni-leipzig.de/en/swahili-forum>

DOAJ since 2005
[ISSN 1614-2373](https://www.gkr.uni-leipzig.de/en/swahili-forum)