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***Bongo Media Worlds. Producing and Consuming Popular Culture in Dar es Salaam* (Mainzer Beiträge zur Afrikaforschung, 34). Ed. by Matthias Krings and Uta Reuster-Jahn. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2014, 286 pp, softcover, size 17 x 24 cm, ISBN 978-3-89645-834-6.**

The processes of liberalization and privatization, which shaped Tanzania in the last two decades, have had a profound impact on the country's media sector as well as on practices of popular culture more generally. New genres such as Bongo Flava music or Bongo Movies have emerged; global media formats such as beauty pageants or televangelism have become part of Tanzanian media worlds. Changes have been – and still are – happening rapidly and research on popular culture in Tanzania has become a field which is as fascinating as challenging.

In *Bongo Media Worlds*, the focus is put on the actors in Tanzania's contemporary media worlds: the producers whose entrepreneurial spirit is highlighted, as well as the consumers – although it is shown that in some cases no sharp distinction between the two categories can be made. The volume presents ten case studies based on detailed empirical field research on how people produce and consume different genres of popular culture in Tanzania's metropolis, Dar es Salaam. Three chapters deal with Bongo Flava music and video clips (Reuster-Jahn & Hacke, Reuster-Jahn, Hacke), while another focuses on Bongo movie production and the issue of celebrity and star-cult that has arisen during the last fifteen years (Böhme). The chapter on the practice of video narration (Krings) explores the re-telling of movies from Holly-, Bolly- or Nollywood (in English) in Swahili. Further, the volume includes contributions on political satire shows on television (Brüggeman), beauty contests (Rohrbach) and printed comics and cartoons (Späth). The case study on televangelism (Tromp) focuses on the mediation of charisma, while practices of reception are in the focus of a chapter on a Mexican telenovela (Ratering). As the editors note in their introduction (p. 10), practices relating to the Internet are not included in the volume as Internet access was still quite limited for most Tanzanians at the time of research.

The volume is the outcome of a research project on the negotiation of culture through popular media which was headed by Matthias Krings at the University of Mainz in Germany from 2009-2011. Besides contributions by the key researchers involved in the project (Reuster-Jahn, Böhme, Hacke), it also features chapters which were written by Master students who participated in one of two associated Master student research programs which involved guided fieldwork. As a consequence, due to the close cooperation of all authors throughout the whole process from preparation over fieldwork to writing up, the volume is much more coherent than many other edited collections.

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This is certainly also due to the common methodological approach which all chapters share. All the researches presented in the book are based on an ethnographic approach, which involved at least a certain/some degree of participant observation. In several cases the researchers even been involved themselves and took over crucial roles in their field of analysis, such as Gabriel Hacke who worked as a cameraman in Bongo Flava video productions, Claudia Böhme who acted in various Bongo movie productions, or Tanja Rohrbach who became the ‘matron’ of the young women who participated in the Miss Tanzania pageant in 2009. Their reflections on the advantages and drawbacks which close involvement in one’s field of research brings with it are interesting and important parts of their respective chapters. Besides the strong emphasis on qualitative methods, research for most case studies involved also some quantitative element. Several authors made convincingly use of questionnaires to provide for additional data on the context or on the reception of media productions. The quantitative component definitively adds to the full pictures provided by the authors. Further, most chapters situate the contemporary case studies within a historical background of the genre under exploration.

Reading the chapters consecutively, the reader occasionally notes similarities of phenomena between the various genres, an aspect which remains unexplored in the volume, as cross-reference between the chapters is only rarely made. For example, Jörn Ratering notes in his chapter on the reception of a Mexican telenovela, that “live analysis” of telenovelas by those in a group of viewers who understand the foreign language best (p. 155) is an important practice. Surprisingly though, he does not make reference to the practice of video narration of movies which is analyzed in the chapter by Matthias Krings (and vice versa). While the comparative perspective could have been strengthened in the individual chapters, it is certainly contained in the introduction written by the two editors, which is very worth reading and situates the phenomena at stake in their political and economic as well as historical and social context, drawing on existing literature and the case studies contained in the volume.

What all the genres discussed in *Bongo Media Worlds* have in common, is their translocal character. The formats themselves, as well as strategies of realization which reach Tanzania as part of global media flows, are being appropriated and clearly localized in Tanzania (p. 100). They are, thus, turned into specifically Tanzanian media products – a process in which both producers and consumers alike can be involved. While this localization makes up an important part of the appeal of a product, the ability of the format to provide the Tanzanian audience with experiences from abroad is equally important. Indeed, the very success of a cultural product depends on it being “similar but different” as Jörn Ratering points out in his analysis of the success of the Mexican telenovela “Don’t Mess with an Angel” in Tanzania. His interlocutors related the appeal of the series to the cultural similarities between Mexico and Tanzania, which make the audience identifying with the characters, while providing them with insights into people’s lives in another

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country. Also the actors themselves need to master the challenge to be on the one hand perceived by their audience as Tanzanian and on the other hand as representative of a global format, as Tanja Rohrbach (p. 212) shows with the example of the girls who participate in the Miss Tanzania beauty pageant shows' participants. Another vivid example is the fate of Steven Kanumba, Tanzania's first movie star, who was heavily criticized and mocked for not being able to speak good English when he was invited to the "Big Brother"-TV-Show in South Africa which is broadcast all over Anglophone Africa (Böhme p. 185 ff.).

The entangled relationship between producers and consumers of a genre is an issue in all chapters. Another complex and often highly ambivalent relationship in Tanzania's media worlds exists between artists and the state as Marie Luise Brüggeman (p. 120 ff.) demonstrates in her work on the comedians of Orijino Komedi who gained fame for their political satire on television. However, this did not prevent them from performing during election campaign rallies of the ruling party *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) which offered good money.

The difficult working conditions for actors in the creative industries which are heavily affected by corruption are another issue that is dealt with in several of the chapters, most notably in Uta Reuster-Jahn's detailed account of the so-called Antivirus-revolt. This revolt was led by a group of Bongo Flava artists who embarked on a campaign to challenge the corrupted practices prevalent in the country's media industry (in particular the monopolistic behaviour of one dominant media-and-entertainment empire).

A reader not familiar with the Tanzanian media culture may find some chapters too detailed. Yet, in some cases, it would have been interesting to get more conclusions about a certain medium or practice in the specific Tanzanian context than about it per se. Nevertheless, the in-depth case-studies presented in this volume take the reader on a fascinating journey into contemporary Bongo media worlds, whose dynamics can only fully be understood by looking at the diverse genres and phenomena in interplay. This new volume is therefore highly recommended reading for anyone interested in popular culture in (Eastern) Africa and in Swahili studies more generally.

A final remark: The very appealing book contains numerous black and white illustrations as well as a photographic essay by Gabriel Hacke featuring colour photos of living rooms taken in various quarters of Dar es Salaam. These visual glimpses into spaces where some of Bongo's media worlds are being consumed nicely concludes the volume and makes me thinking that it would be great to have some of the media (songs, videos, films, etc.) discussed in *Bongo Media Worlds* also accessible on an accompanying website. Perhaps this is something to be realized in a follow-up edition to the volume – which, given the dynamic developments of Tanzania's media worlds, will certainly be required in some time to come.

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