

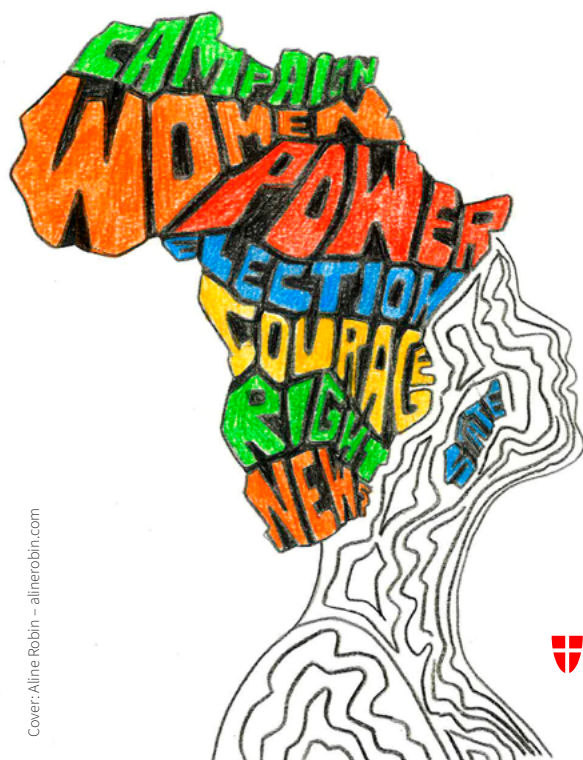


universität
wien

Women and the history of state building in Africa

6 – 7 June 2024

University of Vienna, Austria



International
conference

Further information
hawpp.univie.ac.at/conference



Thursday, 6 June 2024

Location: “Marietta-Blau-Saal” lecture hall

Main Building of the University of Vienna, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Vienna

8:45 Welcoming of all participants

9:00 – 9:30 Introductory words

Anaïs Angelo (University of Vienna)

Anaïs Angelo is the organizer of this conference. She is a Postdoctoral Researcher, Elise Richter Fellow at the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna. Her work deals with African postcolonial political history with a focus on biography writing, the history of African presidential powers and African women’s political history. She is the author of *Power and the Presidency in Kenya: The Jomo Kenyatta Years* (Cambridge University Press, 2019, 2020). She is currently working on the history of African women and parliamentary powers in the 1960s and 1970s.

9:30 – 10:30 Breaking in powerful institutions: critical reflections

Of Cabinets, Shadow Cabinets and a Woman’s Place: Gendering Cabinet Positions and the Impact on Kenyan Women’s Political Careers 1960-2010

Phoebe Musandu (Georgetown University in Qatar)

Over the years, a lot of research has been conducted on the powerful role gender plays in defining an individual’s privileges, rights, hurdles or challenges and generally moderating the manner in which they manoeuvre through society in conjunction with other identities. This presentation focuses on Kenyan women politicians in elective positions and the manner in which their gender as women impacted their political careers specifically, the extent to which they were or were not able to expand their power vis-à-vis appointments to the executive arm of government. It therefore covers an era when it was possible for the president of the Republic of Kenya to appoint cabinet officials from the country’s legislature (Members of Parliament or M.P.s). These appointees would then retain their parliamentary seats while also serving as ministers and assistant ministers. In addition, it examines the formulation of shadow cabinets by opposition leaders following the reinstatement of multiparty politics in the 1990s. This is because patterns evident in government cabinet appointments, were replicated in shadow cabinet appointments. The pattern that emerges is the gendering of cabinet positions in a manner that greatly limited not only the numbers of eligible women M.P.s that could make it into cabinets and shadow cabinets, but also

limited those who made it into various dockets to specific positions, often the least influential in the executive arm of government.

Phoebe Musandu is a scholar of African history, with a research focus on the East African region and an Associate Professor at Georgetown University in Qatar's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. She has research interests in African politics, mass media and women's history. Her research interests on the latter focus on women as politicians or women in general with regards to the politico-economic environments they inhabit. Her last major research project resulted in a book titled *Pressing Interests: The Agenda and Influence of a Colonial East African Newspaper Sector* (McGill - Queen's University Press, 2018).

Brooks, Cissé, and Jiagge: The United Nations as a Site of Feminist Pan-Africanism

Yusra Abdullahi (University of Leiden)

This paper reflects on the overlooked contribution of (West) African women diplomats, particularly Angie Brooks from Liberia, Jeanne Martin Cissé from Guinea, and Annie Jiagge from Ghana, to the development of the United Nations. These elite diplomats assumed leadership roles inside the UN, with Brooks becoming the first African woman to serve as President of the United Nations General Assembly and Cissé becoming the first woman to ever preside over the Security Council. They passionately advocated for the interconnected causes of women's empowerment, liberation struggles, and human rights while espousing Pan-African values at the core of their activities within the UN system. The paper breaks from the "great men" narrative by examining how Brooks guided the international body's engagement with South Africa's apartheid policy, Cissé pioneered sanctions intended to end apartheid, and Jiagge drafted a document that would later become known as the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Pursuing a Pan-African agenda at the UN, however, was not an easy feat as these diplomats navigated patriarchal and racialised institutions. By situating the possibilities and limitations of African activism within the context of Western-dominated political structures, the changes set forth by Brooks, Cissé, and Jiagge between 1956 and 1996 that can be felt to this day in both UN and international legal frameworks will be revealed, exemplifying African women's contributions to diminishing racial and gender inequality while dealing with ostracisation themselves.

Yusra Abdullahi is a Humanitarian Advisor with work experience in Ethiopia, Uganda, Somalia, and Kenya. She has used her regional expertise to advise international NGOs, UN agencies, and think tanks in the intersecting realms of conflict transformation, gender, and migration. Yusra graduated from SOAS with a BA in Politics before pursuing an MA in African Studies at Leiden University. As a Ph.D. Candidate, she is working on the project African Activism at the UN, which investigates the development of self-determination and the

role the United Nations played in promoting this principle between 1957 and 1980 on the African continent.

Moderator: Lucile Dreidemy (University of Vienna)

Lucile Dreidemy is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna. Her latest academic works include “International Politics without Governmental Actors? The Vienna Institute for Development and the Social Democratic North-South Networks in the Global Cold War”, Habilitation Thesis in Contemporary History (2024), and “Collective Colonialism for European Integration. The Rise of Richard Coudenhove Kalergi’s Paneuropean Movement in Post-Imperial Austria” (with Eric Burton). In *Integration and Collaborative Imperialism in Modern Europe: At the Margins of Empire 1800–1950*, ed. Bernhard Schär and Mikko Toivanen (London: Bloomsbury, 2024).

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 –12:30 Keynote

Women and Nation-Building in Post-Colonial Africa

Olufunke Adeboye (University of Lagos)

The task of characterizing women’s imprint on nation building is not always a straightforward one. There is the popular tendency to always classify women as the oppressed within various operational spaces and identifying men as the sole facilitators of the systems and structures of such oppression while absolving other women of similar acts. There is also the opposite approach of focusing exclusively on only the few women that have earned their positions as visible gladiators in various spheres – political, economic, social, cultural, religious, etc. However, in between these two extremes are other active women that are contributing to African states in various parts of the continent in great measures. This paper examines a few First Ladies, female activists, female preachers, female teachers and female entrepreneurs as a way of teasing out their strategies, challenges and impact on the post-colonial state in Africa. What models can we generate on their activities and agency? How best can their contributions be summarized? An immediate observation is that women’s imprint on the continent is not just in black or white but it comes in various hues and shades, very variegated and are creatively attuned to the numerous challenges of post-colonial Africa.

Olufunke Adeboye is a Professor of social history and the immediate past Dean (2019-2023) of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. She was a Visiting Research Associate at the Harriet Tubman Institute, York University, Toronto, Canada in 2006 and has held Visiting Research

Fellowships at the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, UK (2004), the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Amherst College, USA (2006) and at the Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge, UK (2009/2010). Her research interests include: pentecostalism in West Africa, gender in Africa, pre-colonial and colonial Nigerian history, nineteenth and twentieth century Yoruba society and African historiography. In 2013, she won the Gerti Hesselring Prize awarded by AEGIS (Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies) for the best journal article published in a European African Studies journal by an African scholar. Her latest publication on women (co-edited with Bolanle Awe) is *Nigerian Women in Politics: Essays in Honour of Nina Emma Mba* (Lagos, 2022). She is a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters.

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch break

13:30 – 14:30 Rethinking women's political participation

Married the Chimurenga: Rethinking the Histories of the Wives of Zimbabwe's Nationalist Leaders

Tracey Muradzikwa (University of the Witwatersrand)

The wives of Zimbabwe's nationalist leaders played a significant role in the country's fight for independence and the subsequent governance of the nation, yet it remains an understudied aspect of women's history. The wives of Zimbabwe's nationalist leaders (WZNL) played roles as significant as their spouses. The paper argues that examining the struggles of WZNL and the general female guerrillas can be biased as the struggles and experiences of both categories are distinct. WZNL were more exposed to the tyranny of Rhodesian fighters not only because they were spouses of nationalist leaders but they were also freedom fighters in their own right. This they did, by becoming activists who formed women's movements that mobilized more women in the fight against colonial rule. Using an intersectional lens, the paper attempts to capture the lost gendered voices and histories of the WZNLs in Zimbabwe and highlighting methodological challenges faced in retrieving these histories. The challenges include dearth of sources of women's history and unwillingness of these women to divulge information. These challenges have created a document gap that has made the history of WZNL appear as anthologies. This study draws its findings from secondary and digital sources of the 11 wives of nationalist leaders who were also freedom fighters. This is a timely research as it contributes to existing literature on the gendered experiences of wives of nationalist and methodological challenges and ways to address these challenges.

Tracey Chipo Muradzikwa is a Doctoral Candidate at the School of Social Sciences, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa with research interests in gender studies in the Global South, histories of African women, traditional

leaders and politics in Africa, indigenous knowledge systems and intersectionalities. Tracey is a 2020-2023 recipient of the NextGen Africa. In 2022, she was awarded the Erasmus+ Mobility (Madrid) and Global Minds Fellow (Belgium). She is also a recipient of the University of Witwatersrand Postgraduate Merit Award.

From Ticklish Women to Women Leaders: Female Mobilization and Transmission of a Repertoire of Action Between Illegalism and Conformation to Gender Norms

Mamaye Idriss (University Centre of Mayotte)

August 2023. Women of a certain age occupy the entrance to Mayotte prefecture to prevent access to the buildings by foreign nationals - mainly Comorians - wishing to apply for a residence permit. They argue that the migrants are the only responsible of insecurity and violence, which is why they disagree of their reconduction and wish them to be sent back home. This constellation of women, some of them former activists for the separation of Mayotte from the Comoros archipelago, work with other, younger women who belong to the first generation of qualified women. Their repertory of action oscillates between interventions with state authorities, street action, ritual practices and protest mobilisation (boycotts, occupations). A study of their modes of action shows the generational transmissions, and their anchorage in different spaces: local and national, as well as their difficulty in accessing the international scene. It invites reflection on the norms of political action in post-colonial situation. How does their mobilisation move between legalism and illegalism without being sanctioned by the French authorities? Finally, we look at the link between women's protest action and the situation of lawlessness and exceptionality in the French overseas territories, where the management of political and social events is very different with that in France.

Mamaye Idriss is a Lecturer in history and history didactics at the University Centre of Mayotte. She is a member of VIDOM research team, whose ANR project focuses on gender-based violence in French overseas territories. Her work focuses on gender recompositions in the Indian Ocean and intimate effects (conjugal, sexuality, affect) of educational, professional, socio-political and migratory dynamics, using a biographical approach and a regional perspective. She has articles on these subjects in collective works and in peer review journals such as *Le Mouvement Social* and *Afrique Contemporaine*.

Moderator: Daniela Atanasova (University of Vienna)

Daniela Atanasova is a Ph.D. candidate in African Studies and a member of the Research Platform Mobile Cultures and Societies at the University of Vienna. Her research interests include women's history, gender relations, mobilities and migration, and social inequality, in Zambia and more broadly. She is the

co-editor of “Across Landscapes of Hierarchy and Belonging - Social Meanings of Spatial Im/Mobility”, a special issue of *Stichproben – Vienna Journal of African Studies* (No. 44, 2023), and of the collected volume *Entangled Future Im/mobilities: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Mobility Studies* (2024).

14:30 – 15:00 Coffee break

15:00 – 16:00 Shaping political imagination

The Woman Question in the Thinking of a Sudanese Feminist

Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf (Georgetown University in Qatar)

For Fatima Ahmed Ibrahim, a fervent women's rights activist in Sudan, the woman's question is a complicated one. In her voluminous writings and powerful community events, she articulates this complexity within a textured understanding of the constellation of forces that affects the status of women, well before "intersectionality" came into vogue. In this presentation, I shall explain why Ibrahim's voice may be considered as the most significant in Sudanese human rights activism. Several accounts from her texts will be highlighted in order to bring her work to others interested in the enduring gender-based violence across environments and cultures. As Sudan disintegrates since the eruption of war in April 2023, we see rising incidents of rape and suppression of women. Ibrahim's voice is as relevant today as it has always been for those touched by her activism and efforts since the founding of the Sudanese Women's Union in 1952.

Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf is Professor of Anthropology at Georgetown University, Qatar. She writes on culture and politics, anthropology of gender, human rights, migration and diaspora issues in Sudan, the Gulf, Oman and Zanzibar and the Indian Ocean. She was a recipient of Postdoctoral and Senior fellowships at Durham University in the U.K., Brown and Harvard. Her work was supported by Guggenheim Foundation, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Sir William Luce Memorial Fellowship, Andrew Mellon and MIT Center for International Studies and Rockefeller Bellagio Study Center. She is the author of *Darfur Allegory* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), *Transforming Displaced Women in Sudan: Politics and the Body in a Squatter Settlement* (U. of Chicago Press 2009) and *Wanderings* (Cornell University Press 2002).

Danger of a Single-Narrative regarding Female Characters in „Memories we Lost and Other Stories“

Arthur K. Muhia (University of Pecs)

Human productions such as literature, film, music, art, science, technology, and architecture among others are outgrowths of human experiences and therefore reflect human desires, conflicts, and potentials. Therefore, critical interpretation of those

production is vital in understanding something about human beings who make sense of the world through telling and listening to stories; which shape their worldview. *Memories we Lost and Other Stories* is an anthology of fourteen short stories written by fourteen authors from thirteen different countries. From year 2018 to 2021, this anthology was recommended by the ministry of education in Kenya to be studied by Kenyan secondary school students; at least 2,931,394 teenagers, who were preparing for their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) national exam in English literature. A critical reading against the grain of this anthology however shows how these stories depict a general negative single narrative of female characters. This presentation will question how young minds, especially female, may internalize their position as future women leaders in Kenya after interacting with the short stories. Additionally, it will propose possible solutions to the established challenge that is likely to hinder maturing of sustainable women leadership.

Arthur Muhia is a Ph.D. Candidate in Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Pécs, Hungary. He is a seasoned scholar in Kiswahili and African Studies, with a Master of Arts in Kiswahili Studies. He is also a research associate in the Africa Research Centre, University of Pécs and acts as a national examiner in Kiswahili studies in Kenya. His research interest is in contemporary literary representation of African and Afro-American women, giving special focus to globalization, ontological and transnational turns in literary studies. He has published widely in the field of in Kiswahili literature.

Moderator: Martina Kopf (University of Vienna)

Martina Kopf is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna. She teaches in the fields of African literatures (East and West Africa), feminist and gender studies, and development theory and critique in Sub-Saharan Africa. Her areas of research are concepts of development in Kenyan literature, African feminist theory and issues of literary witnessing. She is editor of a special issue on "African Cultural Imaginaries and (Post-)Development Thought", *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 34 (3), 2022, and the book *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in 20th Century Colonialism* (with J.M.Hodge and Gerald Hödl, Manchester University Press, 2014).

Friday, 7 June 2024

Location: Department of African Studies - Seminar Room 1

Spitalgasse 2, Campus of the University of Vienna, Court 5, 1090 Vienna

8:45 Welcoming of all participants

9:00 – 10:00 Politicising welfare: why the 1950s were crucial years

Nurses' Leadership and Political Participation in Sudan (1956 to 1970s)

Mariam Sharif (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales)

Nursing has been one of the important pathways to political participation for women in Sudan before the country even achieved political independence in 1956. My research addresses the relationship between nurses' agency and the structural conditions of their political participation and leadership. I discuss their political participation in its different forms and issues, such as in trade unions, women's unions, political parties, and associations. I scrutinize nurses' leadership in work problems, womanism, and/ or feminism issues, especially in relation to the debate of emancipation from colonialism and state-building. I use intersectional analysis of race, gender, and social class of nurses who vied for positions of power: how did they demonstrate leadership, and for which issues/priorities? What were their achievements? What challenges did they face? What impacts did they have in state building and beyond geographically and chronologically? In addressing these questions, I rely on archival data combined with the traces of nurses' biographies in rural and urban areas in Sudan from 1956 to the 1970s.

Mariam Sharif is a Doctoral Researcher at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris, France), at the the school of gender and sexuality studies. She is also affiliated with the African Worlds Institute (IMAF) and the Centre Maurice Halbwachs. Her current research is about the history of nursing: education, practices, and political participation in Sudan from 1899 to the 1970s. She is a fellow of the Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform (SSHAP) and a member of the Reproductive Health Working Group (RHWG) in the Middle East region. Her main research interests are in health as a profession, health governance, the History of medicine, and epidemics/endemics. Her latest publication is "Midwifery in the Nuba Mountains/South Kordofan as Vocation, Education, and Practice (1970s–2011)" in *Ordinary Sudan, 1504–2019: From Social History to Politics from Below* edited by Elena Vezzadini et alii. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), 505-532.

Ethiopian Observer's Perspectives: Women's Involvement in the Post-Occupation State-Building Project of Modern Ethiopia

Silvia Bruzzi (University of Turin)

Narratives of women's political engagement in modern Ethiopia often emphasize the powerful diplomatic roles of queens and princesses throughout the country's long history. This narrative call back to ancient Ethiopia, featuring figures such as the Queen of Sheba, Makeda, and Belqis, and extends to the heroic resistance against colonial occupation, with figures like Empress Taytu Betul during the first Italo-Ethiopian war (1895-1896). It also includes the charity and diplomatic activities of Queen Menen and Princesses Tsahi and Tenague during the Italian Fascist occupation (1936-1941). After the adoption of the 1955 constitution, which granted Ethiopian women the right to vote in parliamentary elections through adult suffrage, the independent journal "The Ethiopian Observer" dedicated its third issue to Ethiopian women. It highlighted that Ethiopian woman, unlike their European counterparts, obtained the parliamentary vote without struggle or agitation (April 1957). Their political rights were portrayed, again, as a natural outcome of Ethiopian imperial history, but also as a well-deserved recognition of women's involvement in the resistance against Italian occupation (1936-1941) through the formation of the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Work Association. By analyzing feminist independent journals and reports from international organizations, this paper will demonstrate how Ethiopian women's (re)productive labour, rather than well-established narratives on exceptional women's political leaders, became central to the state-building project and the modernization process, with a remarkable continuity from the late 1950s to the post-1974 Revolution. As we will see, during this period, the construction of a modern economy was conceived in terms of women's political involvement in the welfare state.

Silvia Bruzzi is a Researcher in African history at the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, University of Turin (Italy). She is interested in social history, women and gender perspectives in modern Northeast African history (Ethiopia, Eritrea and Libya). She has carried out research and taught history of Africa at the University of Bologna, the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, Paris), IMAf/CNRS and the University of Padua. She is the author of *Islam and Gender in Colonial Northeast Africa. Sittī 'Alawiyya, the Uncrowned Queen* (Leiden, Brill, 2018).

Moderator: Kirsten Rüter (University of Vienna)

Kirsten Rüter is Full Professor of African History and Societies at the Department of African Studies at the University of Vienna and currently acting as Head of Department. She also heads a Division of the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies called Global Entanglements and their Narratives. Specialised in social and cultural history, she pursues topics of mission, colonialism and religious interaction in Southern Africa. She has

also headed a project on late colonial housing in Zambia (Kirsten R  ther et alii, eds., *The Politics of Housing in (Post)Colonial Africa: Accommodating Workers and Urban Residents* (Berlin: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020) and worked on transregional family history (Kirsten R  ther & Peter Delius, “The King, The Missionary, and the Missionary's Daughter,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013), 597–614). More recently she has developed an interest in working with photographs in the context of empire, religion and radio.

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee break

10:30 – 12:00 Neoliberalism and the politics of gender

Marriage, Motherhood and Means. Kenya's Gender Debates in the Age of Neoliberalism and Women's Rights

Kara Moskowitz (University of Missouri)

In 1985, Nairobi hosted the World Conference on Women, which assessed the achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women. While the UN hoped to showcase women's progress at the conference, during the preceding decade, the global order had transformed, with vast ramifications for Kenyan women. Oil price hikes led to increased unemployment and rising food prices, alongside soaring debt and inflation. Though this economic decline was borne from unpredictable global commodity markets and the neoliberal conditionalities of structural adjustment lending, Kenyan women were often blamed. Women had carved new paths, taking up managerial positions in governmental, nongovernmental, and business sectors in the previous decades and, with greater financial independence, they increasingly disavowed marriage. At the same time, international policymakers obsessed over the economic impact of Kenya's population growth rates. New discourses emerged which accused single, employed women of taking men's jobs, while suggesting women's promiscuity had triggered the demographic explosion. Drawing on love advice columns in Kenya's Daily Nation – alongside documents from the Kenya National Archives, the UN, the IMF, and the Ford Foundation – this paper reveals that the emergence of transnational gender equality discourse coincided with intense debates over gender roles in Kenya. Anxiety over declining marriage and growing divorce rates centered on the high cost of bride price, wives' infidelity, or women's economic independence. While such anxieties mobilized legislative backlash to proposed protections for women, national and international nongovernmental organizations – headed by women – sought to defend and expand their advancements.

Kara Moskowitz is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, specializing in modern Africa, international development, and gender, with a focus on Kenya. Her research weaves together local, national, and global histories, with particular attention to how underexamined historical actors shaped the global political and economic order. She is the

author of *Seeing Like a Citizen: Decolonization, Development, and the Making of Kenya* (New African Histories series, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019).

Women, Politics and Television Archives in Liberia (1981-1989)

Eddiong C. Ibanga (University of Bayreuth)

Debates have recently intensified on the sources of knowledge, focusing on archives and their capacities and potential as knowledge sources. A site of multiple contestations, collective memories, and imaginations, archives constitute a space for numerous mediations and a continuous negotiation of identities at various levels. Archives are also sites where power is constructed, and silences are reinforced or diminished. Liberia's unique history, beginning with its creation by the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1822, is fraught with contestations and a continuous push toward state-building. However, its historiography and narratives of agency and participation in history are nationalistic at best and patriarchal at worst. Moreover, 'conventional' historical sources make little reference to women and their participation in politics and state-building. Against this backdrop and stemming from an ongoing digitization project with the television archives of the Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS), this paper acknowledges the role of the media as an unconventional source of public knowledge and the digital archives as another way of knowing. The aim is to understand how the media as a public space produces knowledge about women, how women's participation in Liberian politics is mediated through the television archives, and how these mediations reflect the Liberian society of the time. These archives feature the period from 1981-1990, a crucial time in Liberian history after the coup of 1980 and before the civil war that began later in 1989. I argue that historiography that excludes or silences is incomplete in itself.

Eddiong Ibanga is a Ph.D. Researcher in the Junior Research Group African Knowledges and the History Public*ation since the 1970s, at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence - University of Bayreuth, Germany. At the intersection of Gender, African Media Studies, and History, her current research focuses on the history of women in Liberian news media in the 80s, using digital (television) archives as a primary source. Her research interests include knowledge sources and (co)production processes, Gender and Women's Studies, African Feminism(s), Social History, Media, and Intersectionality.

Between Recognition and Cooptation: Institutionalizing Nigerian Women's Agenda under Military Rule (1984-1993)

Sara Panata (French National Center for Scientific Research)

"Last week's inauguration of the National Commission of Women is a dream come true for Nigerian women", one can read on 28 June 1990 flipping through the Daily Times, one of the major Nigerian newspapers. These words introduced the brand new

National Commission for Women. This body was sponsored by General Babangida and his military regime following pressure from several female activists and the National Council of Women's Societies, the largest women's organization in Nigeria at the time. The National Commission for Women's main goal was to facilitate dialogue between various women's organizations, the Nigerian military administration, and international agencies focused on women's development in Nigeria. This paper analyses the history of this commission and other governmental bodies created to push women's agenda inside the state during the Babangida regime (Mama 1995; Abdullah 1995). It reflects on the various ways women expressed themselves in this complex web of governmental bodies for women, despite facing political silencing and constant control over their actions. Although the commission was created in response to activists' requests, this institutionalization was carried out in the military regime's terms and followed General Babangida's politics of institutionalization of several social movements (Diamond, Kirk-Greene, et Oyediran 1997). How did women activists navigate this web of governmental bodies for women during the Babangida regime? What were the effects of this institutionalization on women's activism? Based on written (pamphlets, newspapers, women's movements archives) and oral sources this paper seeks to contribute to the conference's reflections on women's modes of action in elite politics and on the politics of silencing and cooptation.

Sara Panata is a Permanent Researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research. Her current research focuses on the history of suffrage in West Africa in the 20th century. At the intersection of African history, global history and historical sociology of the vote, this research would provide an in-depth study of universal suffrage in Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria over sixty years (1920-1970) to be conducted using a comparative and transnational approach. Sara is currently working on the publication of her PhD dissertation, which examined the trajectories of eleven feminist movements in Nigeria over half a century of socio-political action.

Moderator: Eva-Maria Muschik (University of Vienna)

Eva-Maria Muschik is Historian and Assistant Professor at the Department of Development Studies at the University of Vienna. She is the author of *Building States: The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization, 1945–1965* (Columbia University Press, 2022). More recently, she has been interested in the global history of structural adjustment of the long 1980s.

12:00 – 13:30 Sharing ideas and food

Extended lunch moderated by Derek R. Roberts (artist and teacher)

Derek Roberts is an African-American multimedia artist and educator based in Vienna with a practice that spans over two decades of poetry, photography, music and painting. Having studied history, politics, economics and the fine

arts has helped to shape his meandering path across continents and fields of work, building upon a rich body of theory and praxis. Most recently, Roberts has created vibrant, intricately-woven and layered works on paper that deftly merge abstraction and figuration. At the core of his complex, and often mysterious paintings, is an understanding and investigation of the African diaspora - unearthing, unpacking and recasting the Black experience. He is also a member of the AEWTASS project (Advancing Equality Withing the Austrian School System).

13:30 – 15:00 Gendering military histories

Women, Gender and Military Coups in Africa

Miles Tendi (University of Oxford)

Independent Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced the highest incidences of successful and unsuccessful military coups d'état globally. Between 1956 and 2001 there were 80 successful coups d'état, 108 failed coup attempts and 139 reported coup plots across Sub-Saharan Africa. From 2001 to 2019 approximately a dozen successful coups occurred, indicating decreased coup frequency. However, 2021 saw the rise of 4 military governments following successful coups d'état. The 2021 uptick in coups and coup born military governments is the highest in Africa in a single year for over two decades. Consequently, coups and varieties of coup born military government are central themes in the study of Africa's postcolonial politics and history. This paper criticises the coup and coup born military governments literature's general neglect of women's and gender studies. The paper demonstrates why women's and gender studies should be front and centre when scholars investigate, cogitate, and write about coups and coup born military governments. The paper visibilises the functions and agency of women in coup contexts, it conducts gender analysis of some influential politics literature about coups, and it cautions coup scholars against patriarchal bias and the reproduction of popular sexist tropes about women in politics. While the paper draws on a range of cases from Africa's political history to illustrate its arguments, it makes great play of the role and agency of Zimbabwe's former First Lady Grace Mugabe in Zimbabwe's 2017 military coup.

Miles Tendi is Associate Professor in the Politics of Africa in University of Oxford's Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) and African Studies Centre (ASC). He has research interests in Military Coups D'état and militarism, gender and politics, intellectuals and politics, biographical research, the existence and Uses of 'Evil' in politics and southern African politics (especially Botswana, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Eswatini, Lesotho). He is the author of *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and the Media* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010) and *The Army and Politics in Zimbabwe: Mujuru, the Liberation Fighter and Kingmaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

The Archives of Mama Bachu: A Portrait of a Congolese Leader and Her Political Struggles in Congo-Kinshasa

Maria Bacilio (Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris)

Despite gaining independence in 1960 the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not stopped going through different wars, resulting in a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the eastern part of the country. In Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu in the east, I had the privilege of interviewing Mama Bachu, a woman who has played a pivotal role in advocating for women's rights and challenging patriarchy in Congo. Throughout her life, Mama Bachu has held various governmental and non- governmental positions which gave her the opportunity to create a feminist agenda which would let her influence the relation of Congolese women with politics, maternity, marriage and society. For example, during Mobutu's dictatorship, she served as the president of the Office of Working Women. This role allowed her to travel to Israel to learn from NA'AMAT, a significant Israeli union of women workers. Subsequently, she assumed the responsibility for *condition féminine*, a ministry focused on providing political representation for Congolese women. Mama Bachu attended the first International Conference of Women in 1975 in Mexico. She played a crucial role in negotiating with Kabila's rebels to bring peace to the country. She organized protests such as naked strikes and the "International Women's Day without Women". Currently she is in charge of the activity program of City of Joy, one of the most important NGOs which fights against sexual violence in Congo. Regardless of such a life career nothing has been written about this extraordinary woman. It might be the moment to bring this heroine out of the shadows.

María Bacilio is a Ph.D. Candidate in philosophy and Lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure de Paris (ENS). Her current research deals with what she calls anarchic justice, which is a paradigm of justice that emerges when victims organize autonomously to confront extreme violence and impunity. To show this, she draws on two cases: mass rape of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo resulting from illegal mining, and enforced disappearance in Mexico resulting from drug trafficking.

Women Merchants and the Gendered Optics of State Power in Togo

Marius Kothor (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

How do you navigate a political landscape increasingly characterized by instability? This was the question that preoccupied Togo's most powerful women merchants, the Nana Benz, after Gnassingbé Eyadéma staged the country's second military coup in 1967. Immediately after the coup, the merchants orchestrated the election of Togo's first woman mayor, Marie Sivomey, to help them navigate the turbulent political transition that Eyadéma initiated. In this paper, I situate Marie Sivomey and the Nana Benz at the center of the early years of the Eyadéma regime (1967–1974) to reveal how the women developed a fraught political partnership with the military leader in

order to put into practice a theory of decolonization which proposed that political stability was the key to economic sovereignty and women's *nkɔyiyi* (progress). While historians have argued that African women were largely sidelined from power or co-opted into collaborating with post-independence African states, my work reveals how the Nana Benz devised dynamic modes of working with the military regime that went beyond political marginalization or co-option.

Marius Kothor is currently the Anna Julia Cooper Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is an incoming Assistant Professor of Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Harvard University. A historian of twentieth-century West Africa, her work examines the transnational, political, and economic lives of a group of Togolese women merchants known collectively as the Nana Benz. She has published widely in academic and popular outlets including: *The American Historical Review*, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African History*, *The New York Times*, *Africa is a Country*, and *Black Perspectives*.

Moderator: Chenai Murata (University of Vienna)

Chenai Murata is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of African Studies at the University of Vienna. He is transdisciplinary academic who holds an Honours History, an MPhil and a PhD Environmental Science, all from South African universities. His research work focuses on Indigenous Knowledge System, particularly its two branches of traditional ecological knowledge which concerns itself with conservation and wise use of natural resources, and customary land tenure which is about administration of and rights in land. Chenai has been involved in a number of commissioned research projects in South Africa over the past 15 years. His latest publication is Chenai Murata, Lonias Ndlovu, Lloyd Ganyani & Nelson Odume, "Demystifying customary land tenure in legally plural sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Law, Society and Development* 9 (2022): 1- 17.

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee break

15:30 – 16:30 So where do we go now?

General discussion with all presenters

Moderators: Derek R. Roberts & Anaïs Angelo