

Winter Semester 2022/2023

# SDAC Guest Lecture Series

## Diasporic Uncertainties: Decolonization, Decision-Making, and Choice in East African Indian Writing

Peter Simatei  
Moi University, Kenya

Monday  
16.01.23  
18-20:00 c.t.  
Online

\*The lecture will be held via Zoom



Peter Simatei is a Professor of Comparative Literature. He teaches African literature, African Drama, Diaspora Studies and African Cinema in the Department of Literature, Theatre & Film Studies at Moi University, Kenya. He has a PhD from the University of Bayreuth, Germany. He has been a German Research Council (DFG) Post-doctoral Fellow (Postcolonial Studies Program) at the University of Munich and a fellow of the Five College African Scholars program at the University of Massachusetts, the USA. He is also an alumnus of Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung, Germany and the author of "The Novel and the Politics of Nation-Building in East Africa" (Bayreuth African Studies, 2001).

A certain ambiguity, even uncertainty, defines the East African Asian diaspora's relationship to the colonial and postcolonial histories of East Africa. The Asian diaspora in East Africa is profiled in fiction as a community whose in-between existence as neither the colonizer nor the colonized (though aspiring to the privileged position of the former) and its essentialist and regressive self-portrayal as a guest community valuing myth of cultural purity, homeland, and return complicates its entry into the emerging postcolonial nation. African independence creates uncertainty for ordinary Asians and complicates the decision on national belonging. The collapse of the ambivalent position of relative privilege occupied by East African Asians in the colonial setup and that of colonial authority, itself long projected as absolute and inviolable, creates panic that leads to the first wave of departures from East Africa. Brought to believe in the superiority of the colonizer and the powerlessness of the colonized, they cannot fathom the inversion of authority in the colony beyond a mere replication of the imperial narrative of history and its strategy of racial stereotyping. The event of national independence shocks because it overturns an immutable colonial order, and while it may present possibilities of release from the colonial nightmare for the erstwhile African servant, it signals to the Asian a dissolution of their privileged world, a world that is not only precariously embedded in the colonial one – and that therefore falls with it – but is also poised against the African. This talk looks at the uncertainties facing the East African Asian diaspora and the choices it has to make as it negotiates between the diaspora and the nation.

Please contact Prof. Dr. Viola Thimm  
to register:

[viola.thimm@fau.de](mailto:viola.thimm@fau.de)