

Archiving Dis:connected Cultural Heritages in Africa: Prospects, Processes and Challenges (CfP)

Workshop at the Käthe Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, LMU Munich, 24 - 25 April 2025.

Archives are global sources of information, cultural transmission and identity formation as well as serving the preservation of cultural heritage. They constitute one of the most valuable national assets and, according to Canadian archivist Arthur Doughty, are the gifts of one generation to another. Despite their value, many archives and collections, especially in the Global South, are exposed to destruction by natural or man-made disasters. Many others are poorly stored and need to be conserved, restored or converted into new formats to remain accessible. Even more fragile are what Lowry (2023) refers to as disputed and displaced archives, a term that could broadly encompass contested or disconnected histories and cultural heritage - including indigenous knowledge systems, traditional practices and performative heritage - of marginalized cultures, such as those of the Black/African cultural renaissance.

The history of the Black/African cultural renaissance consists largely of pan-African ideas, movements, actors and transnational events organized to focus on the struggles of the continent and its diaspora against empire. Embedded in the network of these transnational events, cultural festivals such as FESMAN 1966, PANAF 1969, Zaire 1974 and FESTAC 1977 functioned as global arenas for the celebration of African unity, the exhibition of Black/African cultural heritage and collaboration between Black/ African artists, scholars, cultural administrators and governments. In addition, they served as sites of protest for geopolitical exclusions, socio-cultural hegemony, politically motivated absence and the silencing of dissidents, including artists and scholars, and highlighted different paths of development on the continent.

Given the global framing of Black/African heritage in these events and the transnational aims of their conceptualization, organization, promotion, participation and remembrance, the workshop aims to explore the often-overlooked tensions, absences and dis:connections within the conceptual, organizational and participatory frameworks of pan-African postcolonial festivals from a broad perspective. It will also examine how these festivals and the collections and narratives they produced both represented and obscured aspects of Africa's cultural heritage. Most importantly, it will look at the challenges associated with archiving, preserving and digitizing the material remains of these festivals and the wider implications for understanding postcolonial African identity, cultural heritage and historiography. The workshop aims to synthesize different perspectives on how dis:connected cultural heritage - fragmented by colonial histories, geopolitical tensions and institutional constraints - are remembered, archived or lost. It addresses the following research questions:

- i) How have the conceptual, organizational and participatory frameworks of pan-African postcolonial festivals such as FESMAN, PANAF, FESTAC '77 and PANAFEST shaped the development discourse in Africa?
- ii) In what ways have these festivals connected and/or disconnected Black/African cultural heritage across different regions, historical contexts and diasporas?

- iii) What are the current challenges and opportunities for archiving, digitizing and making accessible the legacies of Pan-African festivals and their associated collections?
- iv) Do paucity of archival materials impact the construction of African cultural narratives? If so, what strategies can be employed to address the issues?
- v) To what extent can the digitization of collections associated with Pan-African postcolonial festivals contribute to discourses on black identity, heritage preservation and African renaissance?

Sub-Themes

We welcome multidisciplinary contributions from scholars, archivists, curators, cultural practitioners and digital professionals delving into, but not limited to, the following sub-themes:

- African post-colonial festivals and development discourse
- Contexts of material preservation and futures of cultural collections - FESTAC '77 materials and Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) Collection
- Cultural policies, diplomacy and the legacy of pan-African postcolonial festivals
- Preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of African cultural heritage
- Archival silences and disconnected heritages
- Methodological approaches to archiving cultural heritage in Africa
- Archives and the dis:connective infrastructures of global knowledge production and circulation
- Archival collections in the postcolonial African discourse
- Archives as cultural institutions and infrastructures
- Challenges in the archiving and digitization of African cultural productions
- The processes and politics of digitizing archives in Africa
- Evolving technologies, technical and ethical issues in the digitization of African archives
- Performative memory, representation and heritage in colonial archives

Guidelines for Submissions

Interested participants are invited to submit tentative titles and abstracts of maximum 300 words together with a short biography (150 words), and full contact details in a single pdf file to gideon.morison@lmu.de and balme@lmu.de (cc: andreakifyasi@yahoo.com) by 15 January 2025.

N/B - The workshop will take place on site at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect at the LMU Munich. Accommodation in Munich and catering during the workshop will be provided; some support for travel is possible.

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For enquiries or further information, please contact: gideon.morison@lmu.de; andreakifyasi@yahoo.com