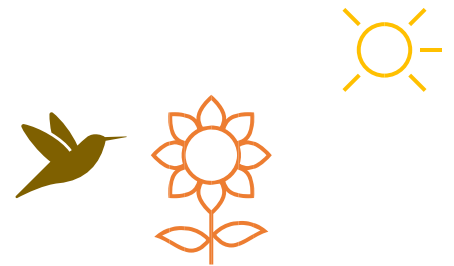


# BIGSAS Junior Fellow Representatives' Newsletter, Winter 2022/2023



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## Acknowledgments

We want to send our sincere gratitude to all BIGSAS staff for their continuous support and efforts in providing a conducive atmosphere for the Junior Fellows to carry out their research. Firstly, thanks to the Dean of BIGSAS, Andrea Behrends for her generous support to us. We also want to thank the BIGSAS coordinator, Michelle Heese for her openness and readiness to address the Junior Fellows' concerns. We are also grateful BIGSAS secretaries, Ms Wagner and Ms Volk for their explanations and guidance to us Junior Fellows while going through the BIGSAS formalities. By the way, we thank the election committee, Percy and Darja, for sacrificing their time to organize the election for our new representatives. Finally, we thank all the Junior Fellows for their participation, cooperation, and support.

## Activities

- **Hang-out Room**

We began the semester with the social event of the official opening of the JF hang-out room which took place in November 2022. It was a lively event attended by many Junior Fellows. Also in attendance were the Dean of BIGSAS, Adrea Behrends, and Early Career Coordinator, Christine Scherer. The following pictures are of the Junior Fellow Representatives cutting the ribbon for the hang-out room on the right and the group picture on the left.



- **Empowerment Workshop in Berlin**

In December 2022, the second two-day Empowerment workshop took place in Berlin. Ten Junior Fellows attended this workshop and had the chance to learn more about each other. The picture on the right was taken at the bus-station in Bayreuth before the travel while the group picture on the left was taken at the venue for the workshop in Berlin.



- **New Building Foundation**

On March 24, 2023, the laying of the foundation stone for the "Research Center for Society, Technology and Ecology in Africa - Challenges of the 21st Century" (FZA) took place. The ceremony has been attended by distinguished guests, first of all by the Bavarian Minister of Science Markus Blume. In addition, the Junior Fellows of the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS) were also well represented by the Junior Fellows representative Ange Dorine Irakoze.

The building is expected to be a high-tech center for African research studies that will bring together the Institute of African Studies (IAS) and its units, the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies (BIGSAS), and the Iwalewahaus, to put it correctly, a home for primarily talented, creative, and innovative researchers from Africa, Europe, and around the world.



- **BIGSAS Party**

On 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, we had a party at BIGSAS in which we were able to share some African dishes. It was a lively event with more than thirty (30) people in attendance. The following are some pictures taken during the party.



## Contributions

### A Promise I couldn't Fulfill by Dikko Muhammad

I was already informed of the dilemma of taking the last train of the day to Bayreuth from Nuremberg. I was told by a BIGSAS Alumni that there are many coaches going to different destinations on the 11:01 train. So I had to make sure I take the right one going to Bayreuth.

"Asked if you're not sure. Talk to the train inspector on duty," he said. When I arrived at the train station, it was a bit deserted. I looked around to see if I could ask anyone for this information. I asked an old man who was passing, how I could get to the platform on which I can take a train to Bayreuth. He stopped an old couple who were about to take the elevator. He told them in English that I was going to Bayreuth. They were also going there. So I squeezed myself and my two luggage into the elevator, greeting the couple in the process. I confided in them of my fears of going to the wrong destination, having been forewarned of that possibility adequately. They laughed and told me that I was right to have asked. Once, their son who lived elsewhere in Germany, found himself in Hof, when he was visiting them in Bayreuth, they said.

During the journey to Bayreuth, they asked me what I was to study in Bayreuth. I told them I was joining BIGSAS for a Ph.D. in African Literature. The wife was more proficient in English than her husband. She told me they learned English from school which was a long time ago. We spoke about Nigeria, with the wife mostly translating the information to her husband, who was the one asking the questions mostly.

Before we arrived at Bayreuth Hauptbahnhof, the husband took his hand luggage and brought out a book. He gave it to me, "This is a poetry collection of Goethe. He is one of the finest German poets. Try to learn some German to read his poetry". I gratefully took the book, thanked him, and looked at it briefly. The little German I learned before leaving Nigeria was of course untraceable on the book cover. I promised them I would learn German and devour the poems. This was a promise I wasn't able to fulfill as I was determined to submit my thesis in three years. If I have any regrets, this is it! But this is a promise I'm still determined to fulfill.

### The Culture of Male Circumcision by Monika Rohmer

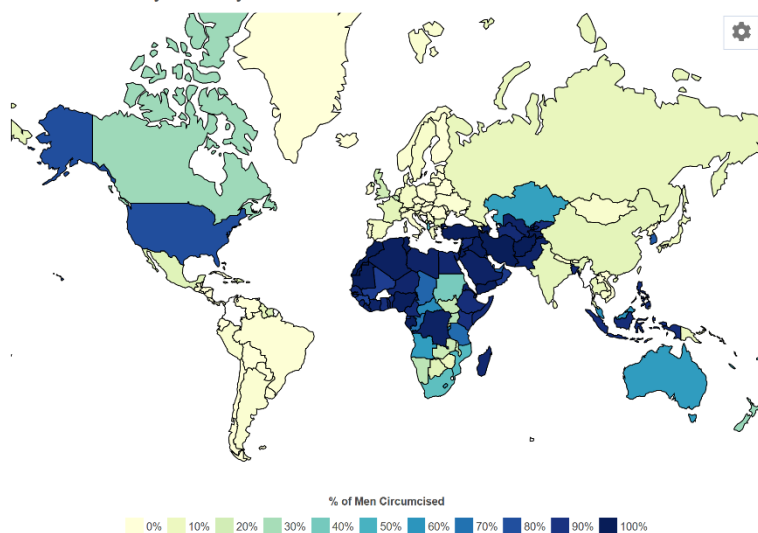
At the beginning of March, I called my colleague and friend to ask a personal question. I asked him if male circumcision was practiced in Northern Nigeria and asked about why. We had a very enriching talk in which we exchanged about male circumcision practices and attitudes in Northern Benin, Northern Nigeria, Senegal, and Germany. In this conversation, he uttered a sentence that is very telling. Before you asked me, he said, I would not know that you could live without being circumcised. And that is a crucial point. Whereas in Nigeria, where he was originally from and doing his research, as well as in Benin and Senegal, the two African countries I lived in, have friends and family, more than 90 percent of men are circumcised. In comparison, in Germany, it is about 10 percent.<sup>1</sup> And this difference in numbers translates into a difference in attitudes, discourses, customs, etc. (and of course vice versa). I think Junior Fellows should know and be aware of the situation when coming to Germany because it is a cultural difference that might not only lead to misunderstandings but also to accusations and

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<sup>1</sup> I consulted the following statistics available online: <https://pophealthmetrics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12963-016-0073-5/tables/1>; <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/circumcision-by-country>.

strong emotions. And here I want to briefly sketch the legal situation and different positions on the often-heated debate about male circumcision in Germany.

Circumcision by Country 2023



§ 1631d of the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch<sup>2</sup> allows the parents to consent to the circumcision of their male child even when it is not medically necessary. In the first six months after the birth of the child, persons designated by a religious community may perform circumcision, later on, it has to be carried out „nach den Regeln der ärztlichen Kunst“ [following the rules of the art of medicine]. In practice, boys older than six months are circumcised under general anesthetic. The costs for such an operation are

estimated at 300 Euros. While this legal text guarantees the right to perform circumcision for religious reasons it is nonetheless contested.

While the legal framework is in place since 2012, medical practitioners fiercely criticize the legal situation and practice repeatedly.<sup>3</sup> Critiques speak of „rituelle Verstümmelung“ (ritual mutilations), „Körperverletzung“ (bodily harm/injury), interventions in „Unversehrtheit“ (integrity), and „sexual self-determination“ of boy children. Further, some German men circumcised in their youth, also for medical reasons, voice criticism and evoke long-term negative effects.<sup>4</sup> There is a rising number of YouTube videos, chats, and blog articles criticizing male circumcision and the number of medical circumcision of boys is slowly decreasing.<sup>5</sup>

I am writing all of this down, to show that in Germany male circumcision is not a ‘normality’. And as unfamiliar it is for my friends in Nigeria, Benin, and Senegal, and others from countries with high rates of male circumcision, to be confronted with non-circumcision of boy children, as unfamiliar it is for many Germans to be confronted with the circumcision of boy children. I find it personally extremely difficult to take any position. I am hoping to contribute with these few lines to intercultural dialogue and a debate beyond stereotypes.

<sup>2</sup> I used this online available text in German and translated/paraphrased it to English myself <https://dejure.org/gesetze/BGB/1631d.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Criticism in 2017: <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/nachrichten/sw/Beschneidung%20von%20Jungen?s=&p=1&n=1&nid=86976>; Criticism in 2014: <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/nachrichten/sw/Beschneidung%20von%20Jungen?s=&p=1&n=1&nid=60079>.

<sup>4</sup> I watched this: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0q4QjadK\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0q4QjadK_A)

<sup>5</sup> On medical male circumcision: <https://www.swr.de/swr2/wissen/medizinische-beschneidung-von-jungen-muss-die-vorhaut-wirklich-weg-swr2-wissen-2022-12-12-100.html>

## Congratulations for Defences

- ✓ **Tafor Paul Ateh** defended his thesis titled *Audience Response to Cameroonian Films: The Case of NINAH'S DOWRY and JUNGLE OF HEIRS*, on 27.10.2022
- ✓ **Gbeognin Mickael Hougbedji** defended his thesis titled *„Lehrjahre sind keine Herrenjahre“: Die handwerkliche Ausbildung und der Umgang mit lokalen sozialen Normen und Kinderrechten in Benin*, on 16.12.2022
- ✓ **Catheline Bosibori Nyabwengi** defended her thesis titled *“A History of Women, Anti-state Fighters in Kenya; 1952 – 2019”*, on 02.02.2023
- ✓ **Mbaye Seye** defended his thesis titled *“Musik und Narration in Moussa Söne Absas Filmen”* on 13.03.2023
- ✓ **Claudia Serwah Prempeh** defended her thesis titled *“Powering Ghana? „Dumsor“, a study of electricity and its absence”*, on 23.03.2023

## Welcome to our new Junior Fellows

For everyone's information are here the newly admitted BIGSAS JFs:

- **Sophia ERTLMAIER** ([sophia.ertlmaier@gmx.de](mailto:sophia.ertlmaier@gmx.de)); Dissertation topic: Education - Work - Having Children: Family Planning of Middle Class Women in Lagos, Nigeria
- **Yusra SBAlHI** ([yousra1749@gmail.com](mailto:yousra1749@gmail.com)); Dissertation topic: The Cultural and Social Hermeneutics of Death in Morocco (NOTE: Cotutelle dissertation)
- **BüSra ÜNER** ([Buesra.Uener@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:Buesra.Uener@uni-bayreuth.de)); Dissertation topic: The Creation of Environmental Movements with FeministAlliances: Survival Mechanism of Rural Women
- **Julião ALAR** ([Juliao.Alar@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:Juliao.Alar@uni-bayreuth.de)); Dissertation topic: Managing party loyalty in violent elections: Comparing the municipalities of Beira, Quelimane, and Tete in
- **Edidiong Charles IBANGA** ([Edidiong.C.Ibanga@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:Edidiong.C.Ibanga@uni-bayreuth.de)); Dissertation topic: Mediating Womanhood in Liberia. History, memories and representations
- **Samba ACLASSATO** ([papflorent@yahoo.fr](mailto:papflorent@yahoo.fr)); Dissertation topic: Analyse des enjeux et perspectives d'une politique d'immigration choisie au Canada. L'exemple du Québec «Immigrés subsahariens francophones – Quelles mobilités
- **Malaika MAHLATSI** ([malaikawaazania@gmail.com](mailto:malaikawaazania@gmail.com)); Dissertation topic: Women on the margins of African cities: An analysis of gendered geographies of gentrification in South Africa
- **Maryanne WAMAHIU** ([Maryanne.Wamahu@uni-bayreuth.de](mailto:Maryanne.Wamahu@uni-bayreuth.de)); Dissertation topic: The Politics of Infant Formula Regulation: Kenya in Comparative Perspective

## About the Reps

The work of a JF Rep. comprises among others:

- ✓ Receive requests & complaints from JFs and follow them up in close communication with BIGSAS management and administration
- ✓ Keep the mailing list up to date to circulate information and requests, but also to get feedback from JFs concerning BIGSAS activities
- ✓ Represent the junior fellows in the Steering Committee meetings (SC) of BIGSAS and other meetings
- ✓ Read all applications and participate in the interviews for JFs admission to ensure a fair procedure
- ✓ Organize semester meetings and other events
- ✓ Providing orientation for new junior fellows