



EXPANDING HORIZONS  
IMANI SANGA

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I came to Berlin a few weeks before the official commencement of the fellowship year in order to complete school registration for our children and to attend an intensive German

course at Wiko. This early arrival also proved fruitful for me to experientially explore the area. With the aid of Google maps, my son and I walked to various places near Villa Walther, located at Koenigsallee 20, 14193 Berlin, from the nearest supermarket, the post office, and Wiko's main office on Wallotstraße to the Berlin International School. It turned out that studying Google maps before physically going to a new place would become my weekly ritual as I slowly, but surely, explored and expanded my Berlin geographical horizons to different markets, shops, hospitals, and football sports grounds, where I took my son for football training or games around Berlin.

The main project I set out to accomplish during my year at Wiko—"Sonic Letters, Decolonial Acts: Musical Figures, Swahili Literature and Anti-imperialist Struggles in Tanzania"—has been with me for almost a decade now. From the start, I decided to work on it piecemeal: writing and publishing one journal article (which would later be a chapter) at a time before moving on to another segment. On the one hand, this decision helped me meet the professional demands for regular publications while, at the same time, gradually adding draft chapters to my book project. On the other hand, however, as the project progressed, the theoretical foundations of these segments were also evolving. Thus, when I began to bring together these isolated pieces into the book manuscript, I realized that I needed to rethink afresh the theoretical framework for organizing the work. In short, my experience of trying to accomplish this monograph has meant expanding my theoretical horizons beyond the narrow frameworks I used in the articles.

This expansion of horizons was made possible and encouraged by many people, conditions, and encounters at Wiko. The first set of the enabling conditions and catalysts with regard to my research was the library services. Nearly all the requests I made, be it a book, an article, a music score, or a song recording, would be available for me within a day or two, except for a very few rare materials. At Wiko, I was able to obtain even those Tanzanian Swahili literary texts that have been out of print for years and that I was unable to obtain while in Tanzania. The librarians were so kind to do extra research beyond my many requests. They found and suggested to me a number of other texts that I found to be very useful for my work. Concerning this generosity, I recall one day I made a request for two song recordings. The next day, I was made aware of a free online archive through which I was able to access and listen to more than a hundred other equally useful and relevant 1950s song recordings of Hugh Tracey from Eastern Africa. For this, I am so grateful to all the Wiko library staff: surely, my work will never be the same again.

Another catalyst for the expansion of my horizons was my encounter and interactions with fellow Fellows and staff. From the very first days, nearly everyone seemed genuinely eager to know the details of my research. My attempt to summarize my response in a few sentences would lead to a series of follow-up questions: how, why, etc. This would happen spontaneously, even when you stop to greet someone in a corridor or during Wiko gatherings. The eagerness to know more about each other's work was more vivid during lunches, to the extent that I had to re-tune my cultural norms of eating (you may call them table manners if you grew up eating at tables) that I grew up learning to religiously respect. The curious questions asked during these meals made me suspect that people came to these lunches to eat not only food, but also knowledge that was served with it by those they happened to sit with on any particular day. I confess, my Wiko experiences were acts of expanding my cultural horizons beyond the intellectual menus served at lectures and workshops.

There were also a series of weekly Colloquium presentations where Fellows took turns to present their work in progress and benefit from the discussions by other Fellows and Wiko staff. In addition to the generous comments and thought-provoking questions I received during my own presentation, I also learnt greatly from the presentations of other Fellows, which I found to be well prepared, lucidly articulated, and interestingly diverse in terms of disciplinary orientations. All of these presentations, from the one dealing with the structure of beehives and the one dealing with neuroimaging techniques to those dealing with computational modelling for cardiovascular grafts, the paleontological study of the evolution of birds, women's role in the 1968 global movement, democratic/undemocratic elections, and questions concerning antisemitism and the genocide in Palestine, sounded as if they were addressed to a non-specialist like me. Although most of the details of these presentations have begun to wane with the passage of time, some concepts, arguments, and catchy phrases, such as "supra-organism," "comparison controversy," "assembly line," "marine microbes," "architecture of hiding places," and "egalitarian bi-nationalism," as well as the visual artistic presentations of the female body (or bodies) and the dramatic performance of new music compositions, still resound in my mind with the tones and articulations characteristic of their presenters. All of these together keep my memory of Wiko intellectual life alive.

My memories of life at Wiko are also furnished by the wonderful office, an Apple computer with Sibelius software that made my music writing exercises easier, Wi-Fi connection, and easy-to-use printers and photocopying machines. A spacious apartment in

the Villa Walther with all the facilities I could only dream of enticed me to continue working beyond my usual office hours. For all these things, I thank Wiko for giving me the opportunity to expand my horizons through its generous fellowship.