



African Studies Centre

2022 Newsletter

African Studies Newsletter 2021-22

Director's Report



The 2021-22 academic year has, after the devastating effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, happily seen a return to face-to-face contact and, as a result, a re-flourishing of the African studies community in Oxford. It was a particular delight, as the incoming Director of the African Studies Centre, to welcome in person the new cohort of the MSc in African Studies at the start of Michaelmas Term. Although significant Covid-related restrictions remained in place for much of the year – social distancing, mask wearing and restrictions on physical attendance at some events – our faculty, staff and students navigated this still challenging environment enthusiastically and responsibly. I was particularly pleased that MSc students were once again able to conduct in-country research for their dissertation projects, something which has not been possible for the past two years.

I would like to thank my colleagues who worked tirelessly to deliver a characteristically outstanding teaching experience: the MSc Course Director Peter Brooke, Zoe Cormack, Doris Okenwa, Miles Tendi, Rebekah Lee and Rachel Taylor, as well as those teachers who delivered option courses. I am particularly appreciative of the efforts of David Pratten, my predecessor as Director, who guided the Centre so ably through the pandemic and who, having taken up his current position as the Head of the School of Anthropology and Museum Anthropology, bequeathed to me an exceptionally well organized and intellectually vibrant space.

Outstanding assistance has been provided this year by Aimee Crane, who despite only arriving at the Centre in September, has provided outstanding administrative support, giving the impression she has been around for many years! Aimee was ably assisted with colleagues in the wider Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, of which the Centre is an important part. The first of what we hope will be many Africanists in the DPhil in Area Studies graduated this year: Dr David Damtar has taken up a position as a Junior Research Fellow in Black History elsewhere at the university.

Our research events have this year mainly been delivered in 'hybrid' form, with the able technical support of Iyone Agboraw. This has helped our wonderful speakers to address an appreciative Oxford audience, while also reaching the wider audience, globally but especially in Africa, that resulted from moving online during the height of Covid-19. This has also enabled us to engage more effectively with ongoing debates about decoloniality and the

production of knowledge 'with' and 'about' Africa, that are at the heart of African Studies as a rapidly evolving field of study. As part of our commitment to place African perspectives and knowledge production at the heart of everything we do, we have welcomed increasing numbers of visiting African scholars to the Centre, including our first cohort of Senior Academic Visitors.

As well as the core Research Seminars organized by the centre, we are grateful for the efforts of the Africa-centred discussion groups, societies and networks, to whose activities the Centre makes a modest financial contribution. While our research events programme was, as usual, too large and varied to fully describe here, a few key events stand out. Onyeka Nwelwue, having initiated the James Currey Society in 2021, enabled Stephen Embleton to become the inaugural James Currey Fellow. Stephen, a leading writer of Afro-futurist South African fiction, ran a well-received workshop series on African writing and, alongside James Currey himself, delivered an exciting keynote address on 'The African Writers Series and the Future of African Writing'. In Hilary Term we delivered an innovative seminar series, in collaboration with Oxford's Centre of South Asian Studies, on 'Activism and Researching Activism'. This series, bringing together academic and activist speakers to address key Global South issues – including the environment, LGBTQI liberation, gender-based violence and corruption – enabled fruitful exchange between African and South Asian activists in situ and in Oxford. Finally, an outstanding annual lecture was delivered in June by the prominent award-winning novelist Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, on the topic 'Daring to Decentre Western Readerships'.

This academic year was a time of new arrivals at the Centre. Dr Doris Okenwa joined the ASC as the Evans-Pritchard Fellow in African Anthropology. Dr Rachel Taylor commenced work on a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship for her project 'Sewing the City'. And Dr Rebekah Lee took up her position as Associate Professor in African Studies in January. Each has made an immediate and positive influence on the Centre, its teaching and activities, and you can read more about much of this activity elsewhere in the newsletter.

As always, this annual publication can only reveal a small part of the wider picture of activities carried out by students, visitors, associates, faculty and alumni of the Centre. As we look forward to 2022-23, it is my hope that the new academic year, and the continued easing of pandemic restrictions, will bring a continuing expansion in our research and outreach activities.

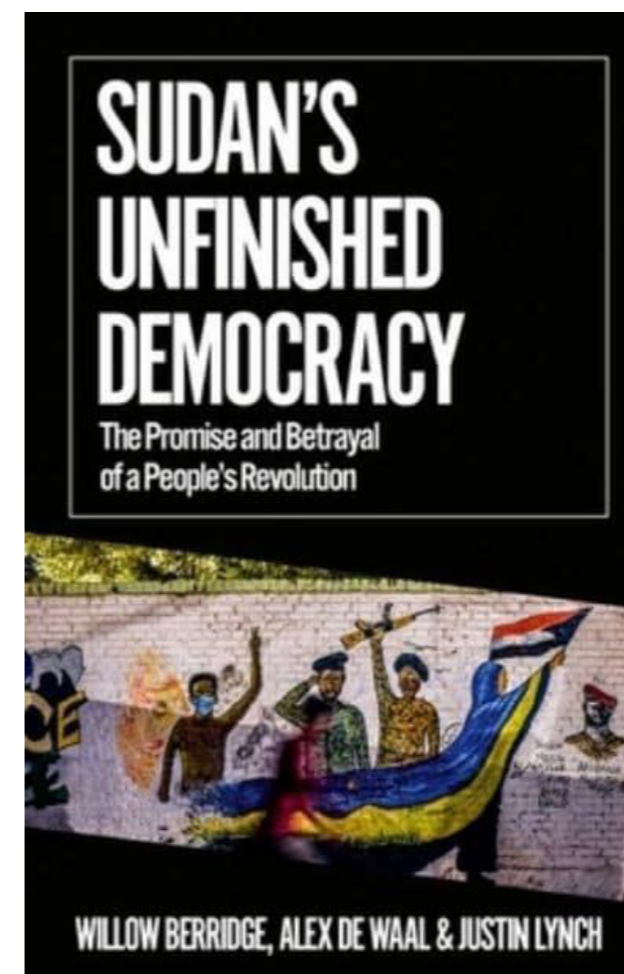
Miles Larmer
Director, African Studies Centre.

Northeast Africa Forum

Jason Mosley

The Northeast Africa Forum brings together students and scholars interested in examining the region from a multidisciplinary and comparative perspective. Our remit runs from the Great Lakes, through East Africa to the Horn of Africa. By hosting lectures given by experienced researchers alongside post-graduates, and by mixing academic and policy research, we hope to come to a shared, factually informed and politically relevant understanding of trends in the region.

During 2021-22, the Forum continued to be convened online, amid uncertainty over the trajectory of the pandemic. However, the seminar series finished on 21 June with its first in-person (hybrid) event since 2019: a book launch and discussion on *Sudan's Unfinished Democracy: The Promise and Betrayal of a People's Revolution* with co-authors Willow Berridge (Newcastle), Raga Makawi (African Arguments) & Alex de Waal (World Peace Foundation), and discussants Magdi El Gizouli (Rift Valley Institute) & Sharath Srinivasan (Cambridge).



We have had presentations from Faduma Abukar Mursal (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology), who spoke on the role of committees in the governance of marketplaces of Mogadishu, Somalia; Danielle del Vicario (Oxford), who presented findings from her doctoral research, focused on radio battles in Sudan's second civil war; Rebecca Glade (Columbia), who discussed petitions, round tables and the limits of political space in Sudan during the late 1960s; Mehdi Labzaé (CEDEJ Egypte), who discussed nationalism in the Amhara region and the 'Wolqayt question' in the Ethiopian civil war; as well as Aisha Ahmad and Tanya Bandula-Irwin (University of Toronto), who addressed questions of governance and state versus jihadist political order in Somalia, with Gayatri Sahgal (Oxford) serving as discussant.

The Forum hosted a virtual roundtable discussion on "The role & impact of research in informing US foreign policy in Northeast Africa" with Michael Woldemariam (Boston University) and Lauren Ploch Blanchard (Congressional Research Service) during Michaelmas. We also hosted a book launch & discussion with the editors and contributors to the edited volume, *Land, Investment and Politics: Reconfiguring Eastern Africa's Pastoral Drylands* with Jeremy Lind (IDS), Doris Okenwa (Oxford) & Ian Scoones (IDS).

The Northeast Africa Forum was convened by Jason Mosley, Doris Okenwa, Biruk Terrefe, Zoe Cormack, Miriam Driessen and Hallelujah Lulie.



Effects of Management Consultants on Governance

Dr Portia Roelofs

I spent the first six months of the 2021-22 academic year on parental leave. Having returned in April, I am excited to start a new project in collaboration with Prof Ricardo Soares de Oliveira and support from the John Fell Fund. The project takes as its starting point, the recent high profile scandals involving international management consultant and professional services firms. In South Africa, McKinsey was implicated in the \$700m Eksom affair. Just a few weeks ago it was announced that PwC was under investigation by the UK's Financial Reporting Council over suspected irregularities in its audits of two of the country's biggest construction contractors. Whilst this stream of scandals has drawn attention to the 'dark side' of the world of public sector consultancy, my project seeks to uncover the more quotidian effects of management consultants on governance. Indeed, there has been a quiet, but steady growth of management consultants in the heart of government. In 2017, \$7.5bn of the global revenues of the Big Four - Ernst and Young (EY), PriceWaterhouseCooper (PwC), KPMG and Deloitte - came from public contracts. In the UK, government spending on consultants more than doubled in the first year of the pandemic. Given the scale of their engagement with governments around the world, and the dilemmas posed by that engagement, management consultants have been surprisingly neglected by political scientists.

The need to understand the effects of management consultants on governance is all the more urgent when it comes to African countries like Nigeria, which serves as the focus on my project. Commentators from both within and without have long identified poor governance as an obstacle to the country's ability to fulfil the promise of its rich human capital. In this context of long-standing concerns about pervasive corruption, the idea of importing fresh, professionally minded consultants, trained in international 'best-practice', into African state agencies is attractive. However, whilst consultants are typically brought in to fill gaps in expertise and capacity, a reliance on externally hired consultants further infantilises the state, reducing internal capacity. Indeed, management consultants are ambivalent figures when it comes to the recurrent concerns about the erosion of civil service norms by private profit-seeking actors. Against a backdrop of infamously blurred public-private boundaries, management consultants present a puzzle: where they act as state agents they could be seen as occupying public office, but are still compelled to advance the private interests of their employer and contribute to a 'revolving door' between the state and business. Similarly, management consultants promise to eliminate leakages, yet governments including in the UK, have struggled to quantify the added value of management consultants. Thus, with their infusion

of world-class expertise, management consultants simultaneously promise improvements in good governance whilst ushering in governance arrangements which could ironically be seen as echoing pre-existing forms of corruption. I'd be very happy to talk to any students, members or alumni of the African Studies Centre who might be able to share insights into this new frontier of governance.



Showcasing Mass Media Research in Africa

Peter Brooke



The mass media and its impact on the continent is becoming an increasingly well-established theme in Africanist research. During Trinity Term 2022, the Centre hosted two exciting research events to showcase the work of some of the leading scholars in this field. It was my privilege to convene both events.

Dr Joanna Lipper is a Research Associate at the Centre and an Academic Visitor at St. Antony's College. Dr. Lipper is a filmmaker, writer, photographer and lecturer, and she previously taught at Harvard where she lectured on the 'Using Film For Social Change' course.

On 5th May, in an event held at St. Antony's College, Dr. Lipper delivered a highly engaging multi-media presentation exploring film and music-making in contemporary Nigeria. In her keynote lecture 'Awake in The Place Where Women Die: Reflections on Representations of Emotional and Physical Violence', Dr. Lipper shared her insights and unique perspective on the assassination of Nigerian pro-democracy and human rights activist, Kudirat Abiola (pictured above), as represented in her award-winning documentary *The Supreme Price*. She then presented the works of other filmmakers, photographers and artists from Africa and around the world, looking back at representations of emotional and physical violence against women historically as well as in the present day.

The centre-piece of Dr. Lipper's presentation was a discussion of her current work with Nigerian collaborators on the representation of gender and violence in the development of a musical film adaptation of the internationally acclaimed Nigerian novel, *Stay With Me*, by Ayobami Adebayo. The event attracted a large audience of MSc students, faculty, researchers and interested members of the public. In a lively discussion led by film curator Nadia Denton, the positions and points of view of victims, perpetrators, activists and bystanders were addressed. Other topics included the capacity of artists and visual storytellers to inspire attitudinal, societal, behavioural and policy changes through the use of a range of multimedia techniques and narrative strategies.



Dr Joanna Lipper in conversation with Nadia Denton



Kudirat Abiola - Human Rights and Pro-Democracy Activist - Nigeria, 1996



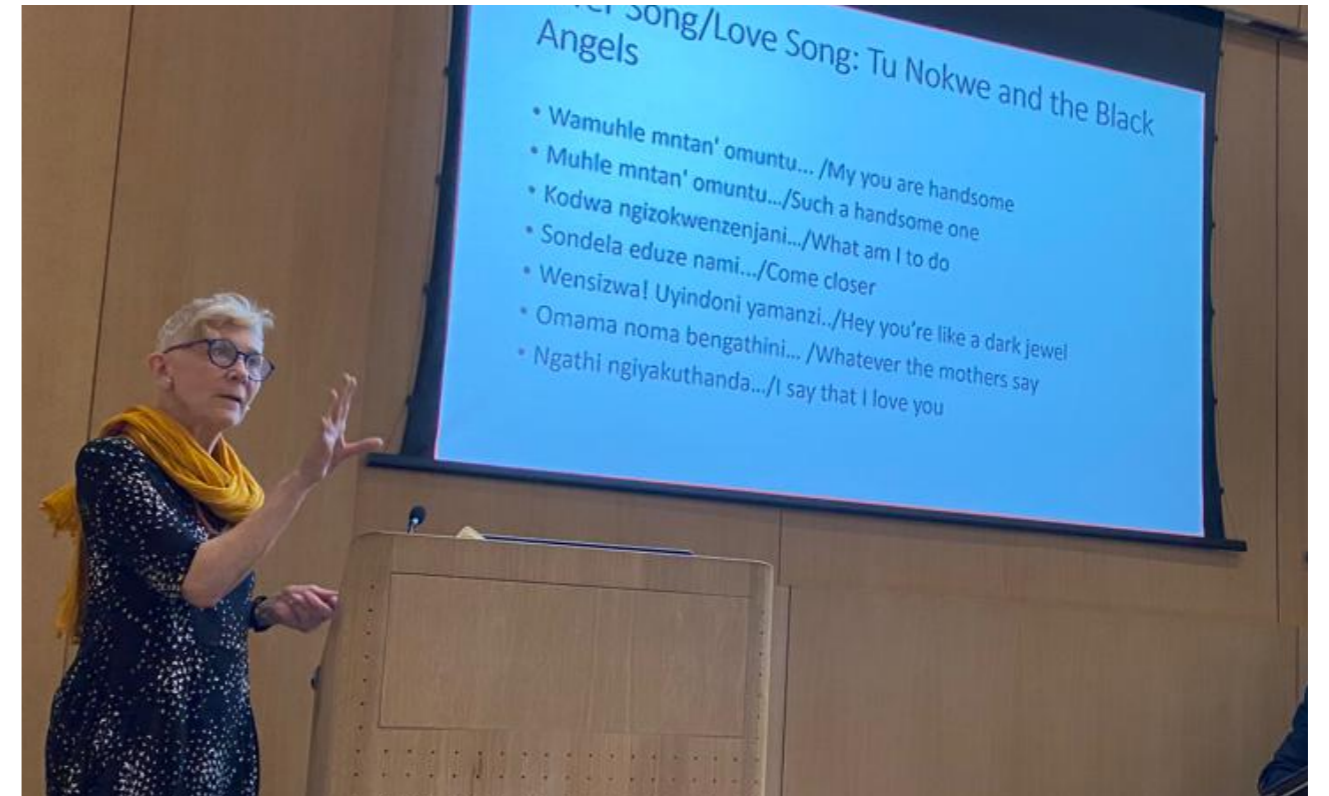
MSc students

The second media-themed event was a one-day conference on 'Radio in Southern Africa: Past and Present', convened by myself and held on 12th May in collaboration with the Department of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Johannesburg. The day brought together eight speakers from South Africa, Portugal and the UK, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by a hybrid online / in-person format. Miles Larmer and Rebekah Lee kindly chaired the panels and we were joined by a large audience in Oxford and online from Johannesburg and beyond.

The morning panel on 'Radio Past' featured three historians and considered radio broadcasting as an arena of contestation between colonial control and national liberation. Sekiba Lekgoathi (University of Witwatersrand) spoke on the ANC's Radio Freedom and its complex relationship with the Zambian government during the two decades that RF was hosted in Lusaka. I then presented an overview of audience and listenership across the region in the period c. 1960-1990. This argued that the culture of radio listening in this period was inherently cosmopolitan, extroverted and sometimes even subversive. Catarina Valdigem (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon) completed the panel with a discussion of her research into music broadcasting in late-colonial Mozambique, specifically the listening habits of members of the Goan community and their complex relationship with Portuguese colonialism.



Winnie Mahlangu (Radio Zulu)



Prof. Liz Gunner (University of Johannesburg)



© Children's Radio Foundation (South Africa)/2012/Lerato Maduna

The afternoon opened with a cross-disciplinary panel on 'Radio Present'. Tanya Bosch (University of Cape Town), a leading scholar in the field of contemporary South African media and a sometime in radio broadcaster, argued that local and commercial radio stations play a crucial role in the creation of Habermasian publics and counter-publics. Alastair Fraser (SOAS) developed this theme in a Zambian context by presenting research on the call-in show 'Let's Be Responsible Citizens'. The show is paid for by Lusaka City Council and is intended to promote the values of what Alastair termed 'neo-liberal governmentality', but many listeners who phone-in take advantage of the platform to lambast the Council. Winston Mano (University of Westminster) presented a conceptual position-piece which argued for a radical decolonisation of radio broadcasting by invoking an Afrokological lens. Echoing the themes of the previous two papers, Winston explored the sense of disconnect between local listeners and radio stations that trace their structural origins to the colonial period. Tinashe Mushakavanhu (Oxford), Research Associate of the Centre and a Junior Research Fellow in African and Comparative Literature, presented a personal reflection on his family's experience of listening to radio during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The aggressive politics of government propaganda during Ian Smith's regime casts a long shadow over popular memories of the period and has its afterlife in an enduring suspicion of government influence on the media in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The conference culminated in a keynote lecture entitled 'Beyond the Static: Woman, Voice and Radio Zulu in the 1980s' by Prof. Liz Gunner (University of Johannesburg). Prof. Gunner is the foremost historian of South African radio broadcasting during and after apartheid and recently published her book *Radio Soundings: South Africa and the Black Modern* with Cambridge University Press (2019). Liz presented an entrancing lecture that wove together reflections on the past and the present of Zulu radio and showcased Zulu music from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Although the radio set is a quintessential symbol of modernity, Liz demonstrated that the success of Zulu-language broadcasting is rooted in its mobilisation of historic music and pre-colonial cultural references, both in the constrained atmosphere of the apartheid state's Radio Bantu / Zulu and more recently in the post-apartheid context of Ukhozi FM.

The Centre would like to thank the IT staff at St Antony's College and our in-house technical assistant Iyone Agboraw, without whom the event would not have been possible.

China in Angola (and Africa?): Beyond the myths.

Rui Verde



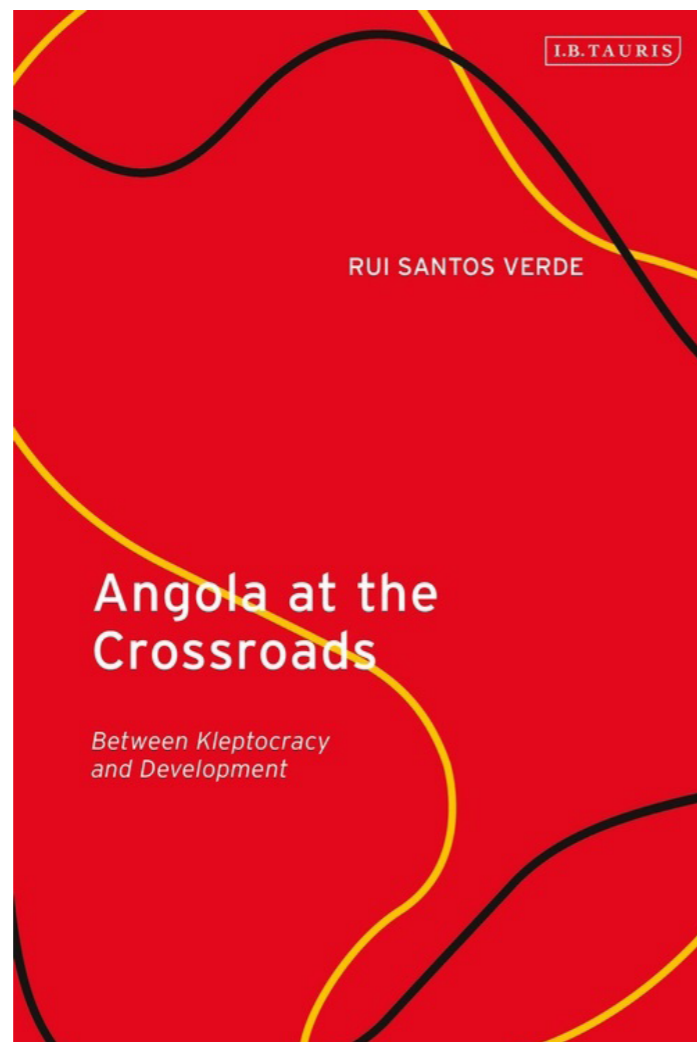
There are some things that are taken for granted as true but, that later turn out to be only comfortable myths. Checking whether this is the case in relation to the association of China and Angola is the main aim of my new book. This idea came to me after I published my previous book, *Angola at the Crossroads: Between Kleptocracy and Development*, in 2021. I became suspicious of the narrative about China in Angola. The accepted narrative is that China entered Angola because the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had forced then Angolan President dos Santos to seek new international financing, at a time when China was developing a global foreign strategy: the “going out (zouchuqu)” outlined by Jiang Zemin. There was even talk that China used its “Angola model,” which was the basis of its activities in Angola, to set up small replicas throughout Africa. A second line of investigation that I pursue in my new book on the China-Angola relations concerns the corruption or state capture that such relations allowed. My research does not so much confront myths, as uncover details of the unprecedented corruption made possible by the lack of transparency and the authoritarian arrangements in force in both countries.

Several months of research and conversations with Angolan direct actors in the events of 2002 and 2003 and with several Chinese officials and businessmen gave a different narrative about China’s presence in Angola. The framework that is being designed is one of practical solutions that are consolidated and adapted over time. Moreover, what has served Angola is not what has been done in other African countries. The Chinese

perspective is essentially pragmatic and does not seem to follow any global plan or organisation, but the seizing of opportunities after the zouchuqu decision. In turn, the Angolan option towards China did not result from any refusal by the IMF but from a resolve of the Angolan President dos Santos not to be dependent. It should be noted that a few years later, in 2009, the IMF rushed to rescue Angola and, until then, the Western world had various business transactions with Angola.

Therefore, a wealth of information is emerging that is forming a new and stimulating vision of China in Angola and the rest of Africa.

Obviously, being in Oxford University has given me access to knowledge that is unimaginable under other circumstances, so it is never too much for me to thank the African Studies Centre for the opportunity to carry out such fruitful research.



Intrigue in the literary afterlives

Tinashe Mushakavanhu

My interest in archives and literary afterlives started with two enigmatic, shape-shifting and controversial figures who had Oxford pasts: Percy Bysshe Shelley and Dambudzo Marechera. Both were expelled for disruptive behaviour 165 years apart and yet went on to become important writers among their own generations. Drawing upon a variety of literary and cultural texts, alongside significant archival research, my research during doctoral and postdoctoral experiences has attempted to establish dialogues between modernist and contemporary works, to animate issues of historical pertinence and pressing contemporary relevance. I look at literary figures as vital sources in the compromised and contradictory terrain of world literature.

In order to do this archival work, one needs access to materials. Unfortunately, most archives on African writers are elsewhere other than the continent, and that poses many challenges. Part of the work I see myself engaged in more and more is creating virtual maps, creating traces of cities and countries where these maps are located. I am not just interested in research as output, but also research as infrastructure building. Archives are important in how we study literature. Though the African Writers Series is often seen as the bedrock of early African literature from the 1950s, the archives of this important collection are scattered in Europe and North America, meaning that a generation of African scholars will only rely on the interpretation of others on how their literary ancestors came to be.

As a graduate student, I was not taught why the investment to locate archives is part of the work. It is also about locating the process of understanding how authorial reputations are forged, how networks are formed, and how publishing is not neutral ground. The impressive details amassed in the archives provide much needed insights on how perceptions of authorship shift and evolve over time, or how writers define their own practice, process and method.

However, the real work for me is not what I am doing. The real work that needs to be done is to build the necessary infrastructure so that we keep and maintain our own archives and systems on the continent. Most archives of African writers are dispersed around the globe, hidden in basements, or kept in storage facilities, where they remain inaccessible to generations of African scholars. Most often, they are not even digitised because the power in owning them, or hoarding them, is in their invisibility.

Thus the central theme of my research is the role of literary culture in documentation, historical knowledge, and political power. I am interested in the aesthetics and materiality of writing. As a result my work manifests in interdisciplinary modalities. It blurs creative and critical methods, and writing genres, in order to imaginatively reconfigure the strictures that conventionally separate the poetic and the theoretical.



Peasants

Maryam Aslany

Earlier this year I signed a contract with Bloomsbury (UK) and Knopf (USA) to write a major new book on the political economy of the global countryside entitled *Peasants*, to be published in 2026. *Peasants* will place at the heart of the global story, the agriculturalists who produce some of the world's most valuable and conspicuous commodities: rice, cocoa, palm oil, silk and cocaine. All these commodities are mainly produced by smallholders in the global south, and then aggregated by large conglomerates and cartels.

During the course of this project, I will conduct empirical research in farming communities in India, China, Colombia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ivory Coast and Ghana. My aim is to come up with an empirically based account of the political economy of the global countryside in the neoliberal era.

Some of the themes of this account include the role of debt in contemporary smallholder agriculture; the relationship of state actors (lawmakers, police, military, etc) to agricultural production; the role of large corporations in the global countryside (agribusiness and mining companies especially); the importance of criminal networks in agricultural production; the reality and perception of environmental degradation, and the adaptive tactics adopted by farmers; farmers' description of their activity, and its place in the contemporary world, whether political, economic or environmental.

I have been planning this book ever since writing my PhD thesis on rural India, and my subsequent work on climate change adaptation and migration has only made the project seem more pressing. My recent research in Fiji and West Africa has confirmed the scale of the threat to global agriculture. However, most influential journalists and commentators are based in cities and have little first-hand experience of the political and environmental assault that is currently being unleashed on the global countryside. The negative overtone of the word "peasants" speaks eloquently of their actual status in the world system. We forget that the global economy is still built on the peasantry: the nearly four billion people who do not live in cities, generate the essential conditions for the nearly four billion who do. Exploited by the global supply chain, manipulated by criminal gangs and middlemen, deprived of state protection, and vulnerable to immense environmental degradation, the world's peasants find themselves in a state of existential terror. But this is everyone's crisis. If the countryside ever becomes empty, so will the cities. With my book, I hope to change the global conversation: the struggle of peasants to hold onto their vital place and role is a struggle for our species.



Onyeka Nwelu

Academic Visitor



James Currey, Onyeka Nwelu, Miles Larmer and Stephen Embleton

When I joined the African Studies Centre as an Academic Visitor, I was sure that on this platform, I would actualise a lot of things. I had so many dreams, while living in Johannesburg, where I have a bookshop, and whittled out my academic imprints as a Research Associate at the University of Johannesburg.

It was in that spacious office of mine, pervaded with ideas grand and germane to Africa, that I had that Zoom call with Professor James Currey. It lasted about 30 minutes. I told him I needed his blessing to set up the James Currey Prize for African Literature, the James Currey Fellowship, the James Currey Writing and Publishing Workshop, the James Currey Lecture Series and the James Currey Literary Festival.

He was excited, and at the same time, astonished. He was happy to connect me to Professor Wale Adebani, who in turn, introduced me to Professor David Pratten, who then, handed me over to Professor Miles Larmer. The rest, as we like to say, is history.

When I arrived at Oxford, one of the first things I did was to set up the James Currey Society, after which I rented a building off Oxford Road, where we now house the James Currey Fellows. Beyond a bare flattering kick, however, the James Currey Project, is a very personal one.

When I met James Currey in 2015 in Accra, Ghana, he told me a funny story of how, when Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* was published, Flora had written to him and said: "I will like us to LAUNCH the book." Today, under the auspices of my London-based Abibiman Publishing, I publish books under the imprint of African Writers Series, which was co-founded by Chinua Achebe and James Currey.

Flora Nwapa is my mother's cousin. She was the first woman to be published under the African Writers' Series. What I did, in April of 2022, was to invite my mother's sibling, Professor Leslye Obiora, who spent enormous time with Flora Nwapa, to deliver the inaugural James Currey Lecture at St. Antony's

College. She was enraptured to meet Mr. Currey.

James Currey was once described by Emmanuel Ngara, as the 'Godfather of African Literature,' and later, the epithet was taken up by many others. But I choose to call him a proleptic groundbreaker, because James Currey is a man whose prescient doggedness augmented the catalysis of manifold voices, which reconstructed the cognitive, pedagogic and cultural paradigm of a then beleaguered African continent, only just emerging from a colonial world.

At the James Currey Society, we recognize the importance of institutions to the sustenance of culture and artistic expressions, and with our workshops, conferences, prizes and residencies, we intend to foster understanding across cultures, by providing a common ground for aspiring and established publishers to come together with writers and other creatives within the publishing industry.

Founding the James Currey Society, and situating it in a city as expensive as Oxford is for a threefold reason. Firstly, to honour Mr. James Currey, the eminent and celebrated publisher of the African Writers' Series. Secondly, to contribute to developing African politics, studies, cultures and languages by mainstreaming African Literature. And lastly, to create projects that will keep the legacy of Mr. James Currey alive.

We also became a partner and sponsor of the FT Weekend Oxford Literary Festival, so we can curate programmes, in the spirit of James Currey, at the festival.

In all the years to follow, under the auspices of the James Currey Society, we will honour culture and at the same time honour Mr. James Currey, through whom culture has found special wings.

There is magic in African Literature

Stephen Embleton

After running the 4-week James Currey Society Writing & Publishing Workshop at the African Studies Centre, my time culminated in a lecture event on 14 February 2022. Opened by Onyeka Nwelue, who led a Q&A with James Currey on his life and legacy with the African Writers Series. Professor Miles Larmer proceeded to introduce me for my lecture. Questions had already been raised by those in attendance relating to publishing, genres and themes within African literature and the AWS.

As a teenager in 1980s South Africa, I was not aware of the African Writers Series, nor its impact around the world, due to censorship, and therefore came late to many of the writers, and the rich stories from the Continent, in the 1990s. I discovered the writers who had reached the status of household names, in particular Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Nadine Gordimer.

I became actively involved in writing in the early 2000s, and was a charter member of the African Speculative Fiction Society. In many of our discussions amongst us writers on the Continent, there was talk of this entity *The African Writers Series*. I had no context for what this body of work was, but realised the significance of those works being part of school curricula, and the effort the publishers made to produce them globally. Clearly, a major impact of the African Writers Series was bringing African stories to Africans.

Of special note was James Currey's contribution. His tenure was one of the most prolific of the AWS. Heinemann went from around thirty books published, to over two hundred titles added during James Currey's time from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s. Having the opportunity to meet and talk with the man himself, one key element stood out in terms of how the AWS successfully operated: there was no single veto right from any team member in a work submitted for publication. If a team member believed in it, it had value to the whole. This made for a broad range of literary work.

My research has revealed a wealth of themes and genres which, at first glance, tackle social issues like colonialism, racism, and traditional beliefs versus Western religions. But it became clear to me there was a lot more to it.

The AWS gave voice to writers on the Continent, in troubling times, and it gave those writers a voice. It put their cultures on the map, and represented them with dignity, because they were being written about by them. It dispelled the West's notion of what Africa was. In that, from my perspective, traditional beliefs really came to the fore. Not just in novel cultural rites and rituals: it dispelled the myths of what those rituals might

be. Words like superstition, witchcraft and black magic no longer had a place.

Attending a virtual panel at WorldCon in 2021, one of my fellow panellists remarked on a common sentiment felt by African writers of genre fiction (e.g., speculative fiction): we are not considered writers of literature. We are on the fringes of publishing, and are not considered literary contributors. I took that opportunity to highlight some of my findings.

I had combed through the first 101 titles of the African Writers Series and found forty-five of these contained very clear genres and themes of traditional beliefs, magic, fantasy, speculative fiction and magical realism. In the broad theme of traditional beliefs, these were not offhand inclusions of a culture's beliefs in day-to-day life, but remarkably going a step further in bringing magic and fantasy into the narrative. These included the likes of spells, spirit realms, afterlives; along with the speculative: alternate realities and fictional African countries. From my perspective, as a science fiction and fantasy writer, these genres are very much explicit, and not in the background of these forty-five titles. They are integral to the stories.

Re-read the 300 plus works in a new light: recognise the traditional beliefs, the storytelling, and how proverbs and magic are weaved into the narratives, seamlessly. They cover all depths and breadths of what I consider to be speculative fiction.

This all informed my approach to the James Currey Society Writing & Publishing Workshop.

With participants coming in from all over the world, it was both daunting and surreal having Mr Currey attend the workshop. During the history of the AWS session, it was rewarding having James enlighten everyone on various aspects of his journey. Fascinated by my take on certain elements of the AWS, he would probe my insights on the selected works, making for a most rewarding and cherished experience. The final session was particularly lively with discussions on the future of African publishing, and looking to the African Writers Series as an example of the true possibilities.

The variety of methods of telling their stories, the melding of genres in single works, the steadfast reluctance to be bullied or thwarted from their goals of representing their cultures on paper for the world to witness, means generations see themselves on paper. With dignity. Our jobs as existing writers and publishers from the Continent is to ensure mechanisms are in place to facilitate the next

generations. Break down myopic views. We need to know what it really was that these writers and publishers did, and how they did it, to pave the way.

As an African, I believe in magic. I hope you do too.



Jonathan Jackson

Academic Visitor



I joined the African Studies Centre as an Academic Visitor in March 2022. Or perhaps I should say that I re-joined – as I was previously a student on the MSc African Studies, 2011–12. It is hardly surprising that, one decade on, most of the faculty who taught me have since moved on or retired. That there are many new faces at 13 Bevington Road speaks both to the dynamism of the Centre and its longstanding service as an ever-renewing conduit for a great number and wide variety of students, scholars, ECRs, Academic Visitors, and Research Associates.

But sometimes the historic role that the ASC has played in current scholarship is not always obvious. For example, two of the articles published in the latest issue of *The Journal of African History* (63:1, June 2022) were written by MSc African Studies alumni: myself and Laura Helen Phillips, who is now at the University of the Witwatersrand. By happy coincidence, we were, in fact, contemporaries on the course all those years ago.

I did not pursue a PhD immediately after the MSc, completed as it was off the back of a four-year undergraduate degree in History and Swahili. This was partly influenced, no doubt, by the fact that the structure and design of the MSc African Studies is not so narrow as to serve as a singular springboard into an academic career alone. I was inspired to imagine various career routes that would make use of the few skills I felt I possessed, together with my limited experience, and my interests. Over the next few years, however, I made sure to return to Oxford to attend as many ASC events as I could – whether an Annual Lecture, Researching Africa Day, or the odd seminar. Each time, I was struck by the warmth of welcome, sense of community, spirit of debate and discussion, and enthusiasm for the continuous pursuit of greater understanding.

When I did ultimately ‘return’ to academia, beginning my PhD in 2018, it was thanks to the support and encouragement of previous ASC faculty. Now, having completed my doctorate at the University of Cologne, I find myself in Oxford again for a period as a postdoctoral researcher. Cologne remains my home institution, but I am grateful to be able to benefit from formal affiliation with the Centre. Writing this in June 2022, at a time when student footfall is relatively low in Oxford and events are dwindling, I am very much looking forward to the beginning of the next academic year, when a new cohort of MSc students will arrive, and a new seminar and events programme will renew the life of the Centre once again.

Re-thinking road safety in Africa

Rebekah Lee



The United Nations has signalled a renewed commitment to global road safety, as seen with their recent proclamation of the (second) Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 alongside an ambitious goal of preventing 50 per cent of road traffic fatalities and injuries by the end of the decade. Although the issue of road safety is highly relevant to the African continent’s public health and development ambitions, research on the topic is uneven and tends to be siloed within specialist subject and disciplinary areas.

In June of this year, I hosted a two-day workshop under the auspices of the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, in an effort to reach across these disparate fields and to re-think the concepts, categories and approaches through which road safety in the African context has been addressed. This ‘Exploratory Seminar’ on road safety in Africa brought together ten participants working on road safety-related topics in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ghana, Namibia, Tanzania and Kenya. A wide range of disciplinary backgrounds were represented, including academics in the fields of public health and epidemiology, history, anthropology, health economics, ethics, comparative literature and statistics. Road safety practitioners, including policy advisors and activists were represented. Invited artist/curators brought useful and provocative insights from literary and visual domains.

Workshop participants discussed how ‘road safety’ was understood and practised on a day-to-day level, and the extent to which these coincided with global health approaches to the topic. One key point of agreement was that road safety research tended to ignore how ‘ordinary’ road users (whether pedestrian or vehicular) experienced road accidents and associated trauma. Similarly, we acknowledged how African communities have themselves attempted to mitigate against heightened risks ‘on the road’ and have fashioned their own road safety mechanisms from the ground up, and these everyday forms of road safety are likely to escape the attention of both public health and road safety authorities.

The experimental format of the workshop was highly generative of new ideas and potential avenues for future collaborative, interdisciplinary and multi-sited research. I am hopeful the workshop marks the beginning of an important conversation on global road safety that puts the experiences and perspectives of African road users firmly at its centre.

Sewing the City: Dressmakers in Postcolonial Lubumbashi

Rachel Taylor

Lubumbashi is a mining city. The second largest city in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it was founded early in the twentieth century as a support for *L’Étoile du Congo* copper mine. Its landscape is dominated by a hill made from dumped soil and waste excavated from the mine, and by the railways that run through the centre, which transported workers to the mines, and copper, coltan, and uranium to southern Africa and to the Atlantic Ocean. Even today, when *Gécamines*, the state-owned mining company no longer employs so many workers, or provides services for their families and the broader community, copper and mining are still central to citizens’ identity.

But for all the physical signs of mining and copper, what struck me most on my pre-Covid research trip to Lubumbashi were people’s, particularly women’s, clothes. The ‘look’ of the city was defined not so much by the hill of mining waste, or the railway, but by families gathering to celebrate life events in carefully co-ordinated, specially made outfits. In academic literature and in the popular imagination, Kinshasa, not Lubumbashi, is the elegant, stylish, Congolese city, but all around me I saw evidence of dressmakers’ skill and creativity, styling their customers and the city itself. In the interviews my colleagues and I conducted, interviewees recalled about the past by thinking about clothing – remembering attractive uniforms, new imported cloths, and associating political and cultural changes with the new styles they brought. At the same time, it was clear that my female interviewees considered sewing to be not a domestic art, as Belgian colonial and company officials had assumed, but a money-making skill. Mothers sought to get their daughters trained in machine sewing to allow them to become dressmakers, and to earn a living. Those daughters in turn helped to support both their birth families and their husbands and children, while also crafting the styles that fashioned the city. If as researchers we focus too much on the role of mining, and of men’s formal labour, we miss the other ways that people have made a home for themselves in the city, and have shaped what it means to be an urban citizen. Lubumbashi is a mining city, but what it means to be Lushois – of Lubumbashi – and what being modern means to its citizens, is shaped as much by dressmakers as by miners.

My current research seeks to follow these threads to explore how dressmakers have shaped postcolonial Lubumbashi. It asks how, in the decades following independence, Lubumbashi seamstresses crafted themselves and their customers as modern urban citizens and as “authentically Zairean”, embedded in evolving international networks of production, commerce and taste. I investigate how dressmakers incorporated or adjusted styles from Kinshasa, Zambia and beyond, and how they became recognised experts, building reputations for their skill, creativity and taste. I also consider the economics of dressmaking, particularly in the context of government promotion of locally-made clothing and styles. How did women’s dressmaking help them and their families

find a space in the city? Finally, I turn to clothing as a way of narrating history, considering how former dressmakers in Lubumbashi use clothing creation and collection to narrate their lives, and their place in the city. lived experiences and of the historical changes they had witnessed. Interviews were not treated as providing self-evident truths about the nature of Copperbelt social history: interviewees are assumed to be influenced by the historical context in which they have lived and the forms of knowledge about it to which they had access and which indirectly framed their experience. They are therefore regarded as performative events in which our interviewees – like their predecessors over sixty years of such research – articulated their understanding of the region’s history in relation to their personal experience, their understanding of interviewers’ intentions and background, and the potential of the interview process to advance their own circumstances.

As I wrote in the 2021 ASC newsletter, this approach necessarily raises challenging questions about conducting research in a community that has been seeking to explain and represent itself to the wider world for many decades. Participants occasionally liken academic research to the exploitative model of mining companies, extracting the region’s valuable social history and leaving nothing behind. We have sought, via our partnerships with the region’s universities, and our close cooperation with researchers born and brought up in the Copperbelt, to learn from their expertise and share our ideas and findings throughout the period of research. We hope the fact that all our project publications will be freely available online will enable local communities to read, engage with and criticise our works in a way that has not generally been the case historically. While the project makes no claim to providing a definitive history of a complex region of Africa, linked as it has always been to local and global dynamics and processes of change, we hope it enables current and future generations of Copperbelt residents and researchers with access to a written version of their history, even as they criticise and develop new and better understandings of it.



Miles Tendi



My current research focuses on the drivers and effects of the recent uptick in successful military coups in Africa. Africa has recorded the highest number of 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. Militaries that seized power mainly presided over increased state corruption, economic decline and political instability, despite their initial reformist claims. From 2001 to 2020, 15 successful coups occurred, indicating decreased coup frequency and minimisation of the detrimental effects of military rule, compared with past decades. This decline in coup frequency originally commenced during Africa's 1990s 'third wave of democratisation' and it resulted in a range of scholars arguing that coups were 'increasingly rare in contemporary politics', that Africa had entered 'a new phase of constitutionalism' in which coups are outlawed, and that reduced coup occurrence reflected the positioning of Africa's continental body, the African Union (AU) as an 'anti-coup norm entrepreneur'. Interest in the scholarly study of coups and military rule even waned from the 1990s onward, because as many African countries democratised, studies of Africa's democracy experiments began to take precedence.

However, 2021 saw the rise of four military governments following successful coups d'état in Sudan, Mali, Guinea and Chad. Moreover, there were two failed coups in 2021. In the years leading up to 2021, a series of successful or failed coups occurred in Zimbabwe (2017), Equatorial Guinea (2017), Gabon (2019), Sudan (2019) and Mali (2020). The 2021 uptick in coups and military governments is the highest in Africa in a single year for over two decades, leading United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres to declare 'an epidemic of coups d'état' requiring an effective international response. I am on sabbatical leave in the 2022-23 academic year and will spend most of my time researching this so called 'epidemic of coups'.



October 2021 Sudanese coup d'état, wikicommons

Introducing the Oxford Black Alumni Network (OxBAN)

Lulu Jemimah



Oxford Black Alumni Network (OxBAN)

When I was invited to interview for the Mst. in Creative writing at the University of Oxford, I was terrified. I did not know what to expect and spent days on the Internet looking for anyone to ease my anxiety. Writer, poet and storyteller JC Niala, who had just completed the same course a year before, responded to my Facebook message and offered to chat. This despite the fact that (thanks to autocorrect) I had addressed her as Abigail and not Niala.

When I contacted JC Niala back in 2017, my decision was solely based on the fact that she was a Kenyan. As a Ugandan, I was convinced that she would understand the challenges of someone like me accessing an Oxbridge education. Later that year in October 2017, the Oxford Black Alumni Network was launched in London. Its members are determined to connect former students of Black African and Caribbean heritage while also providing support for Black aspiring Oxbridge applicants.

She was the first person I also contacted when, after admission, my UK visa application was rejected twice. One of the reasons given by the immigration officer was that, "I must also be satisfied that you genuinely intend to undertake these studies and have sufficient funds to do so." In order to secure my place at Oxford, I had publicly and unapologetically crowdfunded for my entire tuition and attached the proof of funds with my visa application. The second rejection letter stated that, "This office has contacted Oxford University by telephone or email to ascertain whether it would be possible for you to attend this course at a later date [...] however the University was unable to give any information by telephone and they have not replied to the email which was sent." I called Niala crying and she was the one who convinced me to apply a third time.

One of the founding members Naomi Kellman set up Target Oxbridge in 2012 to help students of Black African and Caribbean heritage secure offers from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The programme has helped over 350 Black students gain Oxbridge offers, with 20% of the Black UK domiciled students starting at Oxford in 2021 being Target Oxbridge alumni.

The historical reality of low admissions rates for Black and Caribbean students and the unique challenges they face means that we all need to come together to draw on our extensive networks and shared influence. There's still a lot of work to be done and anyone who fits the profile can join OxBAN and follow or contribute to future outreach programs.

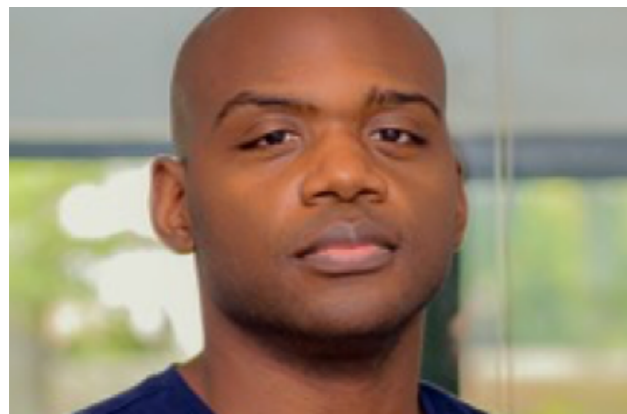
A friend recently sent me an [article](#) which claimed that, "Society should stop obsessing about "rags to riches" stories of poor students getting into Oxbridge." That friend is Dumisa Senda, the president of the Oxford Black Alumni Network (OxBAN). According to Senda, "At a time when efforts to build racial equity into institutions such as Oxford are eliciting resistance from people that view inclusion as "tilting the system too far", networks such as OxBAN play a critical role in sustaining the push for meaningful change. It is said you cannot become what you cannot see; our network of Black Oxford graduates enables people of similar backgrounds to believe they too can get into Oxford and not only succeed, but also enable others coming behind them."



Lulu Jemimah

A DPhil experience in African (Area Studies)

Guy Futi, DPhil Candidate



The University of Oxford's DPhil in Area Studies has been an incredibly challenging academic pursuit - in the best way possible. Oxford has given me the freedom and flexibility to dive as deep as I can into the research. This can be daunting, but it is also fulfilling and rewarding.

Once I got over the fear of "am I learning the right thing?", "am I spending too much time on this topic?", I realized that Oxford trusts me to become a subject matter expert. I am given a degree of academic discretion and latitude that I've never experienced.

The toolkit of skills I've acquired at Oxford has already had real world impact. I was selected by the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Africa to draft a report on the Impact of Covid-19 on Africa's e-commerce sector. The report was published in March of 2021. I have since presented my findings to various UN agencies and conferences, including a landmark event attended by the Finance Ministers of African countries.

My research also intersects with my entrepreneurial aspirations. During my DPhil, I began building Orda, a cloud-based point of sale software built for African food business owners. The skills I acquired after my Training Needs Analysis, from ethnography to data analysis, strengthened my ability to build an effective product-led software.

Orda has received great support from the Oxford community, including investment from the Oxford Seed Fund at the Said Business School. Orda has since gone on to raise millions of dollars in funding and is now live in Nigeria and Kenya.

A DPhil at the University of Oxford is truly a great privilege.

United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Africa



Jacob Alhassan



My name is Jacob Alhassan and I graduated from the MSc in African Studies program in 2021. My dissertation focused on structural drivers of opioid (tramadol) use among Ghanaian youth and involved interviews with health system stakeholders and youth currently using tramadol and other drugs. Following completion of my degree I took up a role as the Academic Co-Lead for University of Saskatchewan's Global Health Certificate, where I work with a wonderful team to train medical and physiotherapy students on the structural causes of health inequities. The certificate program also offers experiential and service-learning opportunities to students.

In December of 2021 I went back to Ghana and created a new NGO, the Ad Astra Foundation - in collaboration with colleagues in Ghana, Canada and the USA. Informed by principles of social justice, we are working together with the community of Nwodua (a 25-minute drive outside of the northern regional capital, Tamale) to create a community library and learning centre. The initiative will provide books to children in rural communities and has already started a mobile library. The learning centre will feature a carefully selected collection of books that explore key issues such as climate change, social justice, gender equity etc. Through this project we hope to respond to urgent community needs, since many children in rural northern Ghana have insufficient access to educational opportunities. The learning centre will also enable patrons with advocacy organizations such as the Ghana Youth Environmental Movement to offer mentorship to young students and to support them in implementing advocacy projects in response to the ideas they acquire at the learning center. You can read more about the NGO and our initiatives at www.adastrafoundationgh.org. You can also support our work by donating or volunteering with the NGO. Please feel free to email us at info@adastrafoundationgh.org

Drew Calcagno



After publishing on the United States' Cold War meddling and researching out of several embassies on the African continent during our 2016-2017 tenure, I went on to serve my duties as a US naval officer, deploying to the Black Sea by Ukraine and Russia. Thereafter, I pivoted my skillset in econometrics and policy analysis to write artificial intelligence strategy for the US Navy, at the Pentagon, and then, at the White House (each as non-political appointments, might I add for what it's worth).

After concluding my time serving the government of the United States, I turned to private institutions. For the past two years, I have supported Google's executives as they develop and scale artificial intelligence around the world. As of this year, now on the R&D team, I craft the organization's narratives around early stage innovation to build novel technology in ways that serve everyone, not just a privileged subset of humanity. With our Oxford teachings in mind to battle the tide of neocolonialism in its present day forms, I try to write with all folks in mind - those living on the African continent especially - as we change the way technology is researched, designed, made, and used in a more inclusive way.

Also over the past couple years, I began my efforts in philanthropy through partnerships with those of a military background who exhibit leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion. This year I awarded the second annual Calcagno Scholarship to a student headed to Yale who focuses their work on gender inclusion in foreign policy making. Last year's winner, a first generation college graduate from my alma mater, is headed to Cambridge for computer science. I'm eager for future winners to head to Oxford!

Fernanda Carneiro

I am a senior monitoring and evaluation consultant at Oxford Policy Management (OPM), supporting development projects to achieve a greater impact. While before joining the African Studies Centre, I used to support development projects in the field; the MSc in African Studies has opened doors for me to work at a policy level, and today I have obtained a global perspective that I previously did not have. Since the end of my master's, about five years ago, I have been working with OPM on various areas, but the focus of my work is on reducing CO₂ emissions in light of the Paris agreements and action to reduce vulnerability to disasters and risks. In this context, I am currently supporting two projects in South Africa on mitigation action.

Previously, I supported OPM's project proposal for Building Resilience in Ethiopia, and I have also carried out research supporting project design in Mozambique, including a project created to assist green livelihoods and female economic empowerment in four national parks. Between 2018 and 2021, I was the MEL lead of the Centre for Disaster Protection, a global entity aiming to support countries in developing plans and systems to improve preparedness for disasters and risks. I designed a MEL system for the Action on Climate Today project that tracked over US \$1.5 billion leveraged for climate adaptation in South Asia.

Francois Xavier Ada Affana

Since graduating from Oxford, I have embarked on a career in the humanitarian and development sector with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). After 2.5 years at IOM's Regional Office for West and Central Africa in Dakar supporting communications and awareness raising initiatives, I now lead the Organization's communications and policy portfolio in Chad. My job allows me to connect with amazing people and share their stories with the world. I'm also privileged to provide technical advice and support to Governments on governance, including migration and labour mobility.

Upile Chisala

Since Oxford, life has taken me to live in three different countries (the USA, South Africa and Malawi) and to publish three collections of poetry ('soft magic', 'nectar', and 'a fire like you'). I have been a mentor (for the Khala Series and the 'Woven with Brown Thread' cohort), an exhibiting artist (BKHz Gallery), a writer of things of the heart, things for research and things for commercial spaces. I have been a narrator and a business person, a loving member of many friendships and all kinds of family. I have been a student (at The Centre of the Less Good Idea) and a contributor. And there have been accolades and joys for which I am grateful but there has also been deep sorrows. As I have journeyed through, I continue to hold Oxford and my time at St Antony's with a great big fondness, it is where I learned to be brave enough to face my gifts.

Bright Gyamfi

Having studied the MSc in African Studies, I am now a history Ph.D. candidate and a Presidential Fellow at Northwestern University. My doctoral dissertation builds on my Master's thesis, which focused on the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. I examine Ghanaian intellectuals who worked to transform and radicalize the study of Africa in academic and intellectual centres around the Atlantic. In early 2020, I conducted three months of research at the University of Oxford. While there, I got the opportunity again to work with Professor Miles Larmer, who generously provided me with great feedback and comments on my dissertation. The Oxford African Studies community has and continues to help and welcome me. These are one of the many benefits of the program. I am currently a Fulbright scholar in Ghana.

Yotam Gidron

After graduating from the MSc in African Studies in 2017, I started a PhD in Durham University's Department of History, where I was supervised by Professor Cherry Leonardi and Dr Jacob Wiebel. My PhD thesis was an ethnographic history of the evolution of Evangelical Zionism and Messianic Judaism among Nuer communities living in Ethiopia's Gambella region, along the border with South Sudan. I have no doubt that the MSc programme, with its strong focus on African history and anthropology, was instrumental in preparing me for this research project.

There are other ways in which my experience at the African Studies Centre continued to inform my work since I left Oxford. Partly building on my MSc dissertation, which dealt with Israel's covert involvement in Sudan's first civil war, I produced a monograph. *Israel in Africa: Security, Migration, Interstate Politics* was published in the African Arguments book series in 2020. The book traces the evolution of Israel's involvement in Africa in recent decades and examines how this involvement has been shaped by a range of political dynamics and forces traversing Africa and the Middle East.

In 2021, I moved to Uganda, and joined the Refugee Law Project of Makerere University's School of Law as a Visiting Research Fellow. In recent years, I also worked as a consultant with several international and local organisations in East Africa, conducting research on refugee issues. Though I continue to spend much of my time in Uganda, in March 2022 I re-joined the University of Oxford. I am now a postdoctoral researcher in the Refugee Studies Centre, where I work on a research project on refugee livelihoods and mobility in borderland areas in East Africa.

Edmilson Angelo

Since I completed the MSc in African Studies, I have gone on to pursue an executive course in Public Policy at the University of Harvard, currently finishing my Doctorate degree on International Development at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex. Moreover, I am a lecturer on Responsible Business and Politics outside the west in two universities in London and I have become a non-permanent Political Analyst on BBC Africa while running Change 1's Life, an international non-profit organisation developing practicable, applicable and sustainable solutions to combat poverty, and protect the environment in Africa with a major focus on Angola.

Trevor Kibet Langat

In a couple of weeks, it will be four years since I graduated from the MSc in African Studies program at the University of Oxford. It still feels surreal reading that previous sentence out loud. As with most things, it is with the benefit of hindsight one can really reflect on the lasting effect or benefits of an experience.

I am currently back in my hometown of Nairobi, Kenya, where I work as a political risk analyst for an organisation called Control Risks, where I cover Eastern and Southern Africa. I am particularly excited to be here in this period around the general elections in August where I can follow developments first hand and perform my civic duty of voting, having been away for a couple of years. Following my graduation from the program, I worked for various not for profit organisations both in Kenya and South Africa before joining Control Risks.

I am eternally grateful for the skills I was able to gain through the exceptionally rigorous African Studies program – skills such as critical thinking, qualitative research and being able to present my ideas in a succinct yet powerful way. I have particularly fond memories of my field research where I got to look into the indigenous language education policy of Mali. All of these experiences have helped me a great deal in my career progression so far.

I could do a better job of staying in touch – however I am glad that I still do have lasting friendships and connections that I still cherish from the program. If ever you are in Nairobi, please don't hesitate to reach out, I would love to hear more about people's experiences in the program and support in any way.



David Damtar

Reflections on My Doctoral Journey and After

Starting my doctoral studies as the ORISHA DPhil scholar at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) in 2018 seemed like a journey that would never end. This notion was further reinforced when I joined OSGA's first DPhil cohorts in Hilary Term instead of Michaelmas as a result of delayed travel arrangements. I felt that I was in limbo. I remember struggling with anxiety at the beginning and having the irresistible desire to catch up with my mates. Some assurance from my impressive supervisor, Prof Miles Larmer, boosted my confidence to work according to my scheduled timelines. Progressing gradually through various milestones, I came to terms with the fact that the DPhil journey was personal, and I, therefore, endeavoured to shape and live every experience of the way and to make the most meaningful impact out of them.

As I reflect on the highs and lows of the doctoral journey, I recall moments when I felt it was all about 'myself and my computer'. However, the sense of community I had proved very beneficial. In addition to good supervision from Prof Larmer at the African Studies Centre, people like Prof Wale Adebani were available to talk about my project and progress. The entire Ghanaian and African communities were also great spaces to enjoy some communal culture.

Like many other students, the Covid-19 pandemic affected my research, but luckily, I returned from fieldwork in Ghana just before the UK government announced a national lockdown. The year 2020, which I spent writing my dissertation, appears to be the most compressed and least interactive year in my life, as working under lockdown gave me minimal in-person interactions and a sense of community. Memories of the year echo flashes of pandemic updates, protests, news of institutional retrenchments, rising unemployment and the so-called 'new normal' of innovative ways to accomplish job tasks, of which working from home was paramount. In line with Klaus Schwab and Thierry Malleret's characterisation of the Covid pandemic as the 'great reset', I could see the resulting changes in our global political and economic situations by the time I was about to finish my thesis and started thinking about what lies ahead. On a personal level, I envisaged that this 'reset' could shape my life after the DPhil, as the pandemic was already taking a toll on the academic job market. Hence, I needed to kick-start job applications as early as possible.

Before submitting my thesis in mid-2021, I was already in the job application zone, exploring postdoctoral fellowships and other academic positions. A positive outcome from the very few applications I submitted while finishing my thesis was the award of a Junior Research Fellowship in History at Oriel College. But leaving OSGA to join the History Faculty is not the only new experience. I also

find myself in a new college environment within Oxford. After graduating from St Cross, one of Oxford's youngest colleges, I joined Oriel, a college with a comparatively long history.

As a postdoctoral fellow, I have been working on a book project from my thesis on the social and cultural history of gold mining in Ghana and leading tutorials for undergraduate History students. I am also working with a team at the Oxford University Africa Society to organise a series of exhibitions entitled 'A History of Ordinary People in Africa (HOPIA)'—which highlights the voices of marginalised communities and spotlights their socio-cultural, political, and economic experiences. I find the project exciting because it resonates with my unending quest to centre marginalised voices in historical production.

At the end of the DPhil journey, the phrase in pidgin English 'time no dey' (lit. 'there is no time') summarises the various stages I went through. These reflect the time-boundedness of many things we do in life and, more personally, the idea that the start of my studies provided some hope for its completion. Sandwiched between the beginning and the end are several memories of highs and lows, sorrows and joys. Nevertheless, what matters most is the feeling that the struggle was worth it.



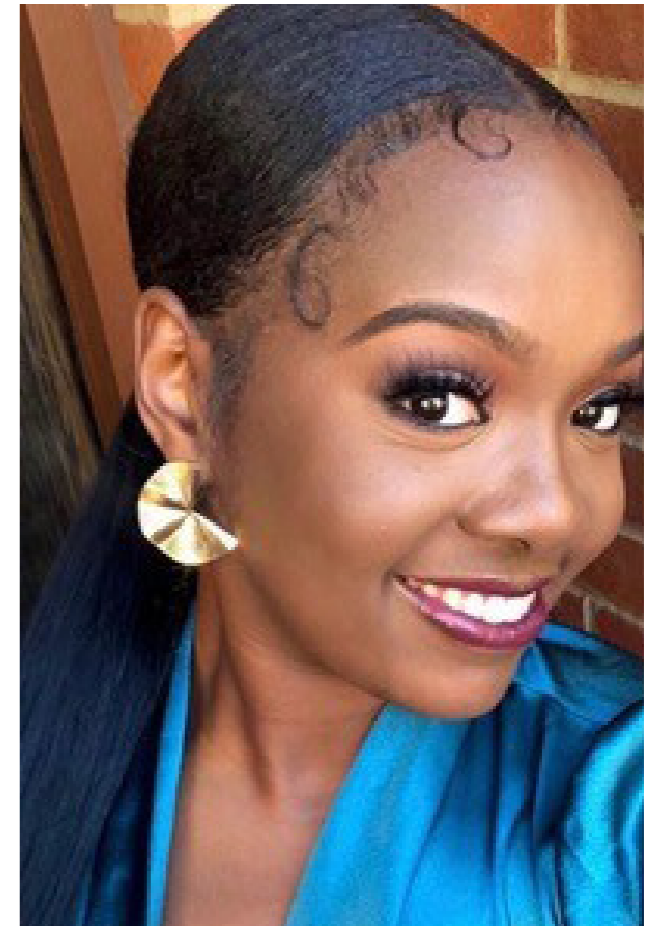
Yolanda Kisenyi

After graduating from the University of Oxford with a master's in African Studies, although I knew that I loved History as a subject, I was uncertain about what that meant for me career wise. All I was sure of is that I wanted a role which would enable me to harness cultural exchange and shape global policy. I decided that the Civil Service would be the perfect fit for me, specifically, the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS). I now had an idea of where I wanted to work, I just needed to build on my experiences.

At the time I graduated, I was an executive member of the Patchwork Foundation, an organisation aimed at promoting the integration of minority communities into British political society through masterclasses led by politicians in the UK. During my time there, I delivered a presentation to David Cameron, the former UK Prime Minister, on the importance of social mobility. I was then selected as a delegate for the International Visitors Leadership Programme (IVLP) which is a diplomacy scheme for future leaders sponsored by the U.S Embassy. I travelled to the U.S across four states where my fellow delegates and I were able to lead on sessions aimed at improving intercultural understanding whilst sharing our learnings from the UK with U.S policymakers, museum curators and students.

After my return from the U.S I was working at upReach as a Programme Leader for the promotion of the social mobility charity's leading programme aimed at helping students from underrepresented backgrounds to secure top graduate jobs. Although I enjoyed the positive social impact of my role, I knew that I still wanted a career which would enable me to have more of a global impact.

Two years at upReach flew by and I finally received an offer from DCMS for a position in their international data transfers team as an international strategy data policy advisor. My role is focused on reducing barriers to data flowing into the UK by securing data transfer agreements with the UK's global partners. I never thought my master's in African Studies would lead me to a role centred on data but I am glad that it did as I am now in a position whereby I am leading on decisions which underpin the future of our global community.





African Studies Class of 2021–22



Amelia Twitchen
UK

Aridity, multilateralism, and post-colonialism: representations of French counterterrorist intervention in the Western Sahel post-9/11



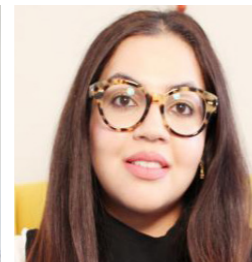
Anna Chewter
USA

Ugandan intermediaries and faith-based NGOs in Jinja: communication, networks, and agency



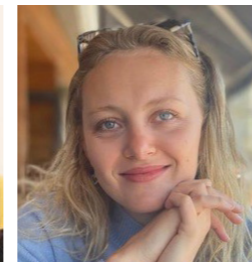
Anouk Moll
Netherlands

Inside Africa's fastest growing tech hub: challenges and opportunities for Nigerian start-ups



Anushka Sehmi
Kenya

Legacies of colonial violence in contemporary justice at the International Criminal Court: Memories of the Mau Mau in Kenya and the case of the



Christobelle Grierson-Ryrie
New Zealand/UK

Fifteen years on: Urban Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in post conflict Kenya



Luigi Muci
Italy

From decolonisation to nation-building: the case of Sierra Leone's National Dance Troupe, 1963-2022



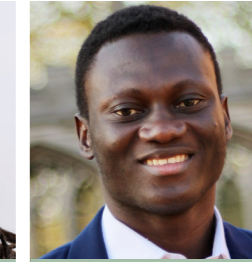
Michaelah Mapotaringa
Zimbabwe

Yellow Bones in contemporary Zimbabwe: Women's experience of colorism and liminality



Modesola Ososami
Nigeria/UK

Proudly Made in Nigeria? Exploring Production Processes in Nigeria's Textile and Fashion Industry



Muhammed Alakitan
Nigeria

Making a 'Relevant' Livelihood: Practices of 'Influential' Entrepreneurship on Nigerian Social Media



Olivia Tienin
Burkina Faso

Strategic Investment in CSR Practices: The Case of Education Provision by Mining Companies in Ghana and Burkina Faso



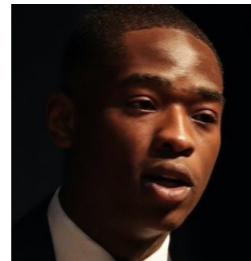
Dorothy Chirwa
UK

Power and Patriarchy: A Gendered Perspective of Zanu PF Divorces



Eilia Yazdanian
Iran/Canada

From the Local to Global: Social Value Credit Networks and Financial Services in Kenya



Elikem Logan
Ghana

Decolonising Visions of Culture: Legacies of Sankofa in Ghanaian Contemporary Art



Florence 'Cuppy' Otedola
UK/Nigeria

Women in Politics: The Conditions for Emergence and Elective Positions in Nigeria



Gabriel Locke
UK

A New Era of Electrification in Zambia: Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Concerns



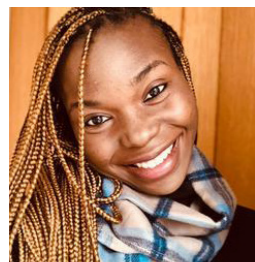
Ruth Fredrick Shoo
Tanzania

Chako ni Chako tu: Language and the Creation of Chagga Lutheran Communities (1890 - 1970)



Sylvester Andam
Ghana

The Politics of Democratic Civilian Control in Ghana (1993-2000)



Iyanuloluwa Akinsanya
Nigeria

Childhood and Agency in Colonial Lagos



Jeffrey Fasegha
Canada/Nigeria

The cultural ethos of digital entrepreneurship in Lagos



Katy Landles
UK

Occupying the void: defining the centre (and periphery) of Ghana's contemporary art network(s)



Loubna Marfouk
France/Morocco

The Illusion of Change: Monarchy, Democratisation, and Education Reforms in Morocco post-Arab Spring



Luan Staphorst
South Africa

Decolonising the death of |xam: tracking the origins of the language of folklore in the Karoo

PRIZE WINNERS

Kirk-Greene prize
Luan Staphorst

Terence Ranger prize
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