

# 2007

## NEWSLETTER & YEAR BOOK



**AFRICAN STUDIES CENTRE**  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



# AFRICAN STUDIES

## NEWSLETTER

This inaugural issue of our African Studies Newsletter is being put together as our second intake of MSc students come to the end of their exams. The growth of African Studies in the University of Oxford over the two years since we began the MSc has been something of a phenomenon. In the first year of the MSc we recruited an international cohort of 24 students – more than double the number we had planned on. In our second year the level of applications increased further, and we welcomed 30 students in October 2006. For next year the growth is set to be even more spectacular, as we anticipate 40 students will join us for the start of Michaelmas term, these being selected from nearly 200 applications. The quality of the students on the programme has been outstanding from the very start, and this shows no signs of changing.

To keep pace with our enlarged programme, we have recruited new staff. Professor William Beinart and I were joined by Dr David Pratten in January 2006, and in October by a new departmental lecturer, Dr Helene Neveu-Kringelbach. Dr Nicholas Cheeseman, whom some of you may remember as a graduate student at Nuffield College, will join us as university lecturer in African politics from October 2007. We will be interviewing candidates for another departmental lectureship for the coming academic year.

We will be moving into a new African Studies Centre building, on the Woodstock Road, in time for the start of next Michaelmas Term. This splendid late-Victorian house sits in its own grounds, and offers a good sized seminar room, a large and airy reading room, social space for student use, and offices for all our faculty and our seven research staff, as well as those international visitors who will be attached to the Centre next year.

As we come to the end of our second year our alumni already number 54, at least some of whom we hope you may find the opportunity to visit us over the next year. And for those who are not able to visit, this newsletter, in combination with the Centre's web site, provides a means to keep in touch. We greatly value the links with our alumni – after all, you are our ambassadors for African Studies at Oxford.

As director, I am hoping for a quieter year ahead, but somehow I feel that there may be more excitement to come. Whatever happens next, we'll be sure to tell you about it in future issues of the African Studies Newsletter.



Professor David Anderson  
*Director, African Studies Centre*



## Professor William Beinart, Rhodes Chair of Race Relations

Over the last academic year I have been chair of the School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies, of which African Studies is part. SIAS, one of the fastest-growing departments in the university, is providing a framework for the future of Area Studies Centres, and also for the launch of new Centres and degrees. African Studies, established as a University Centre in 2004, is now one of the most successful in the department.

Although I have had little time for research and writing, Lotte Hughes and I have been putting the finishing touches to our book, *Environment and Empire*, which is to be published in September 2007 by Oxford University Press. This is an overview of the environmental impact of imperial expansion, covering 400 years and much of the British Empire. It also discusses the rise of conservation, environmental sciences, conflict over natural resources and, in a post-imperial age, the reassertion of rights by indigenous people over resources. A number of lectures, as well as an optional course offered from 2003 to 2005, were based on chapters from the book.



Along with Luvuyo Wotshela of the University of Fort Hare in South Africa, I have also been pursuing a long-standing interest in the social history of an invasive but very useful plant, the prickly pear, in South Africa. The fruit of this cactus became of great importance to poor African communities, especially but not only in the Eastern Cape. It was also the most important resource for home-brewed alcohol over a long period. We have been working with a group of women brewers and have fascinating material from interviews on the wide range of uses found for this exotic (Mexican) plant. We hope to finish a book on the plant during the next academic year.

I have an interesting and talented group of doctoral students working on recent political history in South Africa. Many of them presented papers at a workshop in November 2006 on popular politics and protest before and after 1994. We hope to develop an edited collection from the workshop: it will include a wide range of topics, from violence and non-violence, to the recent politics of HIV/AIDS.

I am also continuing to explore veterinary history in southern Africa. Livestock has been central to both white and black societies, and veterinary medicine has been important both as a scientific discipline and as a sphere of local and hybrid knowledge. Karen Brown and I have a grant from the ESRC to pursue this over the next few years. Thus far, I have been accumulating material on the links between transhumance, or trekking, and disease incidence, and finding that the two are very closely related.

My involvement in the African Studies MSc degree has been more limited this year, although I have supervised a few students and taught two options. I had a particularly big group studying the transition in South Africa.

An interesting diversion has been acting as script adviser for a Discovery channel film on South Africa. It has taught me a good deal about the limits and opportunities for working in this medium, especially when film is intended not as political documentary but as – in a sense – an introductory text for a mass market.



## Seminars and Workshops

At the core of our weekly schedule are three established seminar series: the *African History and Politics Seminar* on Mondays, the *Africa Research Seminar* on Tuesdays, and the *African Studies Seminar* on Thursday. Beyond these three, more than half a dozen other seminar series across the university touch upon African issues – so many in fact that it's not only possible to go to a seminar every day but also, on some days, to have to juggle two or three seminars in one afternoon.

Occasional day-long or weekend workshops focus on specific aspects of African Studies: in November 2006, for example, we met to discuss *South African Popular Politics and Resistance Movements* while, in January 2007, *Climate Change and Development in Africa* was on the agenda and, in May 2007, *Youth in Colonial Africa* took the spotlight. Many of our occasional workshops are organised by graduate students studying Africa: the 8th Annual *Research Africa Day* was organised by Stacey Hynd and Marcelle Dawson, doctoral students in history and politics. Stacey also organised another workshop on *Violence and the Body in Africa* in May, bringing together researchers from the United States, Europe and South Africa.

Each year, too, we have our annual African Studies lecture. In 2006 Francis Nyamnjoh spoke to us about *Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*, while in 2007 Carolyn Brown spoke on *The Colonial State, Slavery and the Contradictions of 'Free Labour' Policy* in South Eastern Nigeria in the last century.

The busy schedule gives us a chance to meet regularly and relax in each other's company. Every Thursday, for example, lecturers, researchers, students and visitors gather around a table at the back of the seminar room and have a glass or two of wine after the talk, before moving to a regular group dinner in St Antony's College.

## Academic Visitors

The history and politics of land in South African has been a particular theme among our visitors this year, with several visitors spending time in and around the Centre: from Rhodes University, **Rosalie Kingwill** has been working on land tenure in South Africa while **Mvusy Songelwa**, of the University of the Witwatersrand, spent a term continuing her work on land reform in contemporary South Africa. Meanwhile, the Oppenheimer Trust has enabled us to welcome back **Luvuyo Wotshela**, once a doctoral student here and now at the University of Fort Hare, for several months, as he worked on completing a manuscript on South African rural history.

**Richard Waller**, of Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, has been our North American Visiting Fellow in African Studies this last year, succeeding Charles Ambler, of the University of Texas at El Paso. Although both were here primarily to continue their own work, they have both been generous with their time, taking part in our MSc seminars, sharing with our students both their experiences of and their enthusiasm for Africa.

**John Githongo**, former Ethics and Governance permanent secretary in Kenya, has been much in the news this year. Despite these distractions, he has been more than willing to spend time with us, from his base in St Antony's College, and to share the fruits of his ongoing work on governance and corruption in Africa.



## Student Scholarships and Awards

In the 2005-06 academic year the following prizes were awarded to students completing the MSc in African Studies:

- Kirk-Greene Prize: **Richard Stanley**
- Terence Ranger Prize: **Kim Chakanetsa**
- African Studies Prize: **Kelly Rosenthal**
- Most Innovative Dissertation Prize: **Claire O'Brien**

Since the end of their MSc programme, **Claire O'Brien** and **Michelle Osborn** have been awarded travel grants from the African Studies Centre to conduct fieldwork in Kenya. **Maja Bovcon** was awarded a scholarship from Merton College to embark on her doctoral work at Oxford.

**Donald Goodson** and **Richard Stanley** have been given Fulbright Awards to conduct further research in South Africa and Sierra Leone, respectively.

**Kelly Rosenthal** has been awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to begin doctoral work in Anthropology at the London School of Economics.

## ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow Research Report - Chris Low

Over the last year I have carried out the majority of the fieldwork associated with my postdoctoral research which concerns the changing relationships between southern African Bushmen, animals and Bushman medicine. The research moves from early relationships with animals to current relationships which have been dictated largely by the exclusion of Bushmen from 'traditional' game-rich resources. Earlier research on Bushmen emphasised how their day-to-day and ideational world was informed and shaped by their relationships with animals. Hunting has 'traditionally' provided Bushmen with food, clothing, skins, bones and sinews for a host of implements, tasks and functions. At the same time, animals assumed a profound importance in the realm of Bushman ideas. By taking a starting point in medicine, my investigation goes to the heart of the shifting role animals play and have played in Bushman cosmology, epistemology and ontology.



English speaking Ju/'hoansi "Small Boy" and Grandmother

The research involves comparative work across Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. This demands organisation and flexibility as distances are considerable, –I travelled more than 11,000 km in two months – roads often very poor or virtually non-existent and it is very hard to predetermine how long one might need to stay in a specific area. A particular difficulty of the work lies in balancing people's requests for help – visiting clinics, buying food, taking children to school – with the requirements of the research. The most challenging and common question is, "so what good will all these questions be to us?" It is a very reasonable question and one that should not be easily shrugged off.

## Research Becomes Reality - Robtel Neajai Pailey

When I received a phone call in May informing me that Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf wanted me to work alongside her, I was simultaneously shocked, thrilled, terrified and humbled beyond measure. Having written my dissertation for the African Studies MSc on the political, economic, and social implications of professional Liberians from the diaspora who are resettling in the country during its post-conflict reconstruction era, I've become a reflection of my own research.

(cont.)



Through the Scott Family Liberia Fellowship, created as a means of building capacity by placing six young professionals in government ministries, I've been appointed deputy chief of staff to President Sirleaf for a year, beginning in July. I had no clue what a deputy chief of staff does, but my father mitigated my fears by reassuring me that though it will mean long hours and rock-solid diplomacy, the president wouldn't have chosen me if she didn't think I could handle it.

I imagine that the challenges of moving back home will be monumental, but I know that my purpose is more critical than the sum of those challenges. I think academics have an obligation to nurture research that has some residual effects, so that it personifies how we think the world should function.

*Robtel Neajai Pailey completed the MSc African Studies at Oxford in 2007.*

## **African Studies Dinner**

Had the sleepless nights spent finishing dissertations started to take their toll? It was a bemused group of African Studies students who stumbled into Radcliffe Square on the first sunny evening of the summer – the dreaming spires seemed a long way from the Oxford Africanist triangle of Bevington Road, Rhodes House and the Social Science Library. So The Vaults, a 13th century hall adjacent to the University Church, provided a happy, Harry Potteresque, change of scenery for the African Studies dinner organised by Lizzi Milligan, David Freeman and Wanja Knighton on 1 June 2007. Lest we get too transported in time and space, Neil Carrier brought us back to earth, and onto the dancefloor, spinning the best of his African music collection.



## **Strange encounters in the Kalahari - Donald Goodson**

Bouncing in the passenger seat of a U.S. Embassy Range Rover along the sandy dirty roads of the Kalahari Desert near Ghanzi in Botswana, I am staring off into the distance as we slow down and come within inches of another SUV, which is entering the San Dance Festival that we are leaving. I realize the female passenger of the other SUV is making a bizarre hand gesture – hands clenched, moving up and down in a circular fashion. I look at the woman and see she is now pointing at me and wanting me to roll down my window. As I stick my head out of the window she yells, “I have that jacket!” The jacket she is referring to is nothing other than my St. Antony's College Boat Club splashtop and, sure enough, this woman is an alumna of the College and crew.

This is one of the more unusual encounters I had during my stay in Botswana, where I spent the Oxford summer – or Botswana winter – as an intern in the Political/Economic section of the U.S. Embassy in Gaborone, working as a junior Foreign Service Officer. In addition to the San Dance Festival, I was also able to travel to Palapye for an agriculture conference and to Selebi-Phikwe to celebrate the Voice of America's 25th Anniversary in Botswana. Aside from these short trips, my principal project assignment entailed drafting reports on the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which was a direct continuation of my MSc dissertation on regional integration in southern Africa.

*Donald Goodson completed the MSc African Studies at Oxford in 2006.*



## From the Cherwell to the Congo - John James

Twelve months ago I was preparing for my exams, now I'm the acting BBC correspondent for the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although my life has changed a lot, Oxford feels like yesterday, which means I don't feel like the right person to be telling anyone about this country, or indeed about my usual base: Congo-Brazzaville. I left Oxford with almost nothing in my diary, and only a fortnight's work experience at the World Service Africa section. This went well, and a few weeks later the people at the BBC called to ask if I wanted to be their stringer in Congo-Brazzaville. After chatting with my tutors and realising things had changed since the Bazenguissa-Ganga massacre in 1999, I said yes.

Being a stringer means I get a small retainer fee, have a contract describing me as the BBC correspondent, and get paid per story. I'm my own boss and it's a great challenge introducing the world to the lesser-known Congo. It's a good excuse to be nosy, and since I'm the only foreign journalist there are plenty of opportunities to chew the cud with government folks, diplomats, aid workers, opposition politicians and ordinary Congolese.

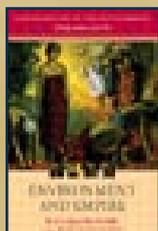


John James on assignment for the BBC World Service in Congo-Brazzaville.

My studies in Oxford are an important foundation to my work here. For instance, I'm currently covering the DRC for a month and relying heavily on what I learnt on the masters course. Recently I had to sum up why Mobutu fell from power and what happened in the decade since – all in the space of 150 words.

*John James completed the MSc African Studies at Oxford in 2006.*

## Recent publications by African Studies Centre staff



**William Beinart and Lotte Hughes**

*Environment and Empire*

Oxford University Press, 2007

*Environment and Empire* illustrates diverse environmental themes in the history of the British Empire. It concentrates on the material factors that shaped empire and environmental change, and explores the comparative experience of colonized people, the history of environmentally related diseases, environmental sciences, visual representations of nature, and the environmental footprint of colonial cities.



**David Pratten**

*The Man-Leopard Murders: History and Society in Colonial Nigeria*

Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2007

This book is an account of murder and politics in Africa, and an historical ethnography of southern Annang communities during the colonial period. Its narrative leads to events between 1945 and 1948 when the imperial gaze of police, press and politicians was focused on a series of mysterious deaths in south-eastern Nigeria attributed to the 'man-leopard society'.



**David Anderson, Susan Beckerleg, Degol Hailu and Axel Klein**

*The Khat Controversy: Stimulating the Debate on Drugs*

Berg, 2007

Khat. A harmless natural stimulant or a lethal epidemic sweeping through the international drugs trade? The first study of this contested drug, *The Khat Controversy* provides a concise introduction to the issues surrounding khat usage and suggests how policymakers should address them.



## MSc Students,

# 2005-2006



**Maja Bovcon, Slovenia**  
MA Lit/World Studies (Ljubljana)  
Maja has remained in Oxford, and  
has started a DPhil in Politics.



**Carl Bredberg, Sweden**  
BA (Malmö)  
Carl is continuing his studies.



**Kim Chakanetsa,  
Zimbabwe**  
BA (USIA Paris)  
Kim moved to London to begin work.



**Lillian Cherotich, Kenya**  
LLB (Nairobi)  
Lillian has remained in Oxford, and  
is working on a DPhil in Politics.



**Tope Folarin, USA**  
MSc Comp. Social Policy (Oxford)  
Tope moved to London, where he  
works in Google's main office.



**Donald Goodson, USA**  
BA Int. Affairs  
(George Washington)  
Don is still in Oxford, completing  
his second MSc degree.



**Graham Harvey, UK**  
BA Geog. (UCL)  
Graham is working in private  
banking in London.



**Jeri Hilt, USA**  
BA (Howard)  
Jeri left Oxford for a period of  
humanitarian work in Sudan.



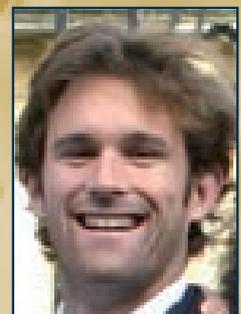
**John James, UK**  
BA Hist. (Nottingham)  
John is currently a BBC stringer in  
Congo-Brazzaville.



**Wakana Kanikawa, Japan**  
MSc Dev. Studies (LSE)  
Wakana is working for the Japanese  
Embassy in Thailand.



**Arisa Kishigami, Japan**  
BA Policy Management (Keio Uni)  
Arisa is working in London and  
Japan.



**Anthony Knox,  
South Africa**  
MSc Environmental Change  
(Oxford)  
Anthony moved to London, where  
he works for Standard Bank.





**Alexander Matthews, UK**  
BA Geog. (Oxford)  
Alex moved to London.



**Giulia Muir, Italy**  
BSc Journalism (Boston)  
Giulia moved to Rome, where she's working as a journalist.



**Clare O'Brien, USA**  
BA Int. Relations (USIU, Nairobi)  
Clare remained in Oxford, where she is working on a DPhil in Social Policy.



**Michelle Osborn, USA**  
MA Anthropology, MPH Public Health (Case Western)  
Michelle is still in Oxford, now working on a DPhil in Anthropology.



**Sarah Rubin, USA**  
MA Medical Anthropology (Case Western)  
Sarah has returned to the United States, where she has begun a PhD.



**Richard Stanley, USA**  
BA Politics (California)  
Rich has remained in Oxford, and is working on a DPhil in Politics.



**Ra Tiederman-Nkabinda, UK**  
BA (SOAS)



**Meghan Treleven, USA**  
MSc Education (Oxford)  
Meghan is continuing her studies.



**Siddarth Verma, UK**  
BA (York)  
Siddarth is working in financial journalism.



**Andrew Weston, UK**  
BA History (York)  
Andrew is teaching English in Russia.



**Radoslav Yordanov, Bulgaria**  
MA Int. Relations (Manchester)  
Rudi returned to Bulgaria, where he is preparing to continue his studies.



**Kelly Rosenthal, South Africa**  
BA Social Anthropology (UCT)  
Kelly has spent a year in law school, and will be returning to the UK to start a PhD

## MSc Students,

# 2006-2007



**Nils Baumann, Germany**  
BA Modern History (Oxford)  
Marico Revisited: analysing historical developments in the South African Bushveld through the short stories of Herman Charles Bosman



**Ariana Berengaut, USA**  
BA Hons. Politics and History  
Living in Margins of History: Political Memory and contemporary Society in the Abayudaya Community in Eastern Uganda



**Stephanie Brown, UK**  
BA Geography (Durham)  
Red Pepper: What a Whopper! The tabloid comes to town



**Charlotte Cross, UK**  
BA History and Politics (Oxford)  
A 'Human Wrong': Denial of a Right to Be Homosexual in Zambia



**Marissa Doran, USA**  
BA History (Williams College)  
Reconstructing Mchape'95: AIDS, Billy Chisupe and the politics of persuasion



**Jonathan Fisher, UK**  
BA History (UCL)  
'Foreign Aid and the Transition to Democracy in Malawi and Kenya'



**David Freeman, UK**  
BA Archaeology and Anthropology (Oxford) - The Significance of Conceptions of the Ancient Past in legitimising the Ethiopian Imperial State, from 1880s until the Italian Occupation



**Mathieu Gasparini, Switzerland**  
MA Development (IUED, Geneva)  
Politics of decentralisation in Ghana, 1981 - 1993



**Soo-ji Kim, South Korea**  
BA Political Science (Seoul National University)  
The Political Implications of Nigeria's Expulsion from the Commonwealth



**Madeleine Kingston, UK**  
BA History (Warwick)  
Truth Justice and ubuntu: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and African interpretations of reconciliation



**Oluwabukola Kpotie, Nigeria/UK**  
BA African Studies (SOAS)  
Reading Soyinka



**Michiel le Roux, South Africa**  
BComm Hons. (Stellenbosch)  
After the digital divide Internet users in Cape Town's townships



**Christopher Mahony, New Zealand**  
LLB (Otago)  
The Special Court for Sierra Leone: Justice for whom?



**Adam Malcolm, UK**  
MA International Relations (St Andrews)  
A crisis of identity? Ethnicity, democratisation and youth violence in the Niger Delta





**Cynthia Mbaru, Kenya**  
MSc Economics (Warwick)  
A Review of Monetary Policy in  
Kenya from 1966-2006



**Kathleen McKeown, USA**  
BA Art Theory (Northwestern)  
Studio Photo Jacques - Documenting  
Lives and Making History in Rural  
Southwestern Cameroon



**Jacob McKnight, UK**  
BEng Hons. (Strathclyde)  
Understanding African  
Pharmaceutical Supply Chains: A  
Gambian Case Study



**Elizabeth Milligan, UK**  
BA History (Oxford)  
The Advent of populism? An  
analysis of the Bataka Party,  
1947-1949



**Simon Morrison, Jamaica**  
MSt English (Oxford)  
South African Literature? The  
publication, marketing, and  
reception of South African Writing  
During Apartheid



**Peter Ntephe, Nigeria**  
LLM (SOAS)  
How to Shoot Yourself in the Foot:  
Football as National Metaphor in  
Nigeria



**Salman Alibhai, Canada**  
MA Islamic Studies  
(Institute of Ismaili Studies)  
Asian Politics and Nationalism in  
Kenya: A Case Study of the Ismaili  
Muslims



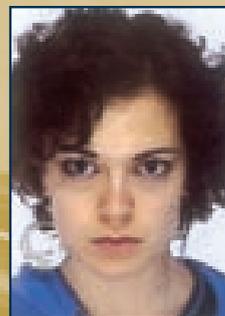
**Robtel Pailey, Liberia**  
BA African Studies (Howard)  
"Back to Africa Movement"  
Revisited: The Impact of Diaspora  
Resettlement on the Post Conflict  
Reconstruction of Liberia



**Justin Pearce, South Africa**  
BA Hons (UCT)  
Winning the war, winning the  
peace: The politics of Angola's 2002  
settlement



**Kate Pointer, UK**  
BA Archaeology (Oxford)  
Sexual Violence and Conflict in  
Africa: The Quest for Identity



**Allison Sanders, USA**  
The Mourides Go To Town: Inter-  
brotherhood Convention in Urban  
Senegal



**Brennan Scott, USA**  
BA History (Virginia)  
The oral contraceptive pill and  
family planning within the South  
African context, 1960 to 1985



**Melissa Skorka, USA**  
BA Economics (UC Davis)  
Twenty-First Century U.S. Energy  
Policy in Nigeria's Niger Delta: The  
Costs and Benefits of Violence



**Carolyn Vine, USA**  
BA English and Comparative  
Literature (Columbia)  
Voices from Afar: West African  
Writers of the Diaspora



**Douglas Abbot, UK**  
BA Hons. (Ford)  
Historical Turning point?  
Reappraising the 1945 5th  
Pan-African Congress at  
Manchester



**Chelsea Payne, USA**  
MPhil Law (Oxford)  
The Liberian Civil war and  
transitional justice



### **The African Studies Centre is Moving!**

From 1 August 2007 the African Studies Centre is relocating to

**92 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 7ND.**

Please note our new telephone number: **01865 613900** and our new Fax Number: **01865 613906.**

### **Alumni Contact Details**

Call Wanja Knighton on 01865 613900

or email: [alumni@africa.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@africa.ox.ac.uk)



Students from the 2005-2006 MSc class: Front, left to right: Arisa Kishigami, Lillian Cherotich, Michelle Osborn; middle, left to right: Maja Bovcon, Sarah Rubin, Jeri Hilt; back: Carl Bredberg

Photo Credit: Julie Taylor

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