

# African Studies Centre

2021 Newsletter



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD



## Director's Report

The 2020-21 academic year at Oxford will be recalled as probably the most memorable of our lifetimes. The superlatives of 'extraordinary' and 'exceptional' are overused, no doubt, but how else will we remember this pandemic year?

The teaching programme for the MSc in African Studies that we host at the Centre was, of course, our primary concern, and was seriously affected by the series of lockdowns during the year. The face-to-face teaching that was possible was frustratingly limited to a few weeks in Michaelmas term, and the default teaching mode subsequently was online. The stresses and strains this caused for students, faculty and administration alike were profound. Some of them are included in articles by our students in this newsletter. We did, however, get into a routine, the courses were first class, and our cohort were not only resilient to the challenges, but excelled in their coursework and assignments. We must salute them for their patience and fortitude.

I would also like to thank my colleagues who worked tirelessly to deliver this excellent 'Oxford' experience despite the difficulties. The teaching staff this year included Wale Adebawo, Miles Tendi, Miles Larmer, Peter Brooke, Liz Fouksman, Zoe Cormack, Julia Viebach, Abigail Branford and Danielle del Vicario. As recent alumnae of our MSc and now DPhil students, we are enormously proud of Abigail and Danielle for stepping up to support the programme by taking additional classes during the year. We also drew on the generous expertise of the research associates of the centre to offer additional teaching this year, and should thank Jonny Steinberg, William Beinart, Carli Coetzee and Tiziana Morosetti for their wonderful papers on South African history, popular culture, and African literature.

We were ably assisted during the year by Jonathan James, Paola Quevedo Garzon, and Brenda McCollum. While our administrative office has been physically closed for much of the year, Jon, Paola and Brenda have patiently and diligently kept the programme moving. One upside of the virtual seminars that we run on Thursdays has been that the online environment has facilitated participation from across the world, and we have been thrilled to host seminars 'beamed' from universities on the African continent to audiences in the hundreds throughout the year. Professor Alcinda Honwana's 2021 annual lecture in June on New Youth Politics in Africa, was a particular highlight.

Not only has this year been one of logistical challenges, it has also been one of significant change. We are extremely sad that Wale Adebawo, our chair and most recent Director of the Centre, left us at the end of the year to take up a position at the University of Pennsylvania. We must acknowledge the significant contribution that Wale has made to the Centre in his four years with us. He has overseen a renewal of the strategic vision of the centre, a strong research programme, and has inaugurated the International Advisory Board to redouble our fundraising activities. We are enormously grateful for the energy and commitment that Wale has invested and the intellectual rigour, generosity and humour which he has brought to the Centre. There are further tributes to Wale's contribution in the pages of this newsletter, and we wish him and his family the very best in Philadelphia.

There are a number of further farewells to announce. Julia Viebach has been with us at the Centre since October 2018 and has made significant contributions to our teaching on violence and transitional justice. She is leaving us for a senior lectureship at Bristol University where we know she will excel. Liz Fouksman has taken up a lectureship in Social Justice at King's College London having undertaken her Leverhulme early career fellowship with us researching policies on work and income in South Africa. And Zoe Cormack, also concluded a highly successful Leverhulme early career fellow working on art, death and memory in South Sudan. We are also looking forward to welcoming Dr Rebekah Lee next year as Associate Professor in African Studies, and Dr Doris Okenwa who will be taking up the Evans-Pritchard Fellowship in African Anthropology. And Dr Rachel Taylor, who has been working on the 'Comparing the Copperbelt' project, will be re-joining us as a Leverhulme early career fellow.

This newsletter can only capture a fraction of the publications, projects and posts recorded by our faculty, alumni and visitors this year. Nevertheless, while this academic year has been extraordinary and exceptional for all the obvious reasons, I hope that these pages also offer an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the achievements of everyone associated with the African Studies Centre during 2020-21.

**David Pratten,**  
Director, African Studies Centre.

## I rarely see anyone on my travels who looks like me

Vivienne Dovi

Have you ever felt the need to change your hairstyle before you travel because you are afraid of how you may be perceived in a foreign country? I have. Before a trip to Poland, I covered my afro with straight extensions to avoid potential touching and unpleasant comments. There are many other things that black women factor in before booking a ticket, such as googling a country's attitude towards racism. I am 26 years old and have travelled solo for the past six years. My mother instilled wanderlust into me when I was young, whisking us off to destinations such as Dubai, Egypt and Hawaii. Watching her barter in the markets of Sharm el Sheikh was inspiring. So, while studying Political Economy at King's College London I jumped at the opportunity to study abroad at the University of California, Santa Barbara. During spring break, when other students flew to warmer locations, I travelled east to New York. As I stood in Los Angeles airport and waited to board, I was paralysed by fear. I had always travelled with family or university classmates, but this time I was embarking on this journey alone. I overcame my fear and New York now holds a special place in my heart because it sparked my love for solo travel. Less than two weeks after I submitted

my dissertation, I was indulging in Korean barbecue in Seoul, beginning a six-week backpacking adventure from South Korea to Singapore. My time in Asia is filled with brilliant memories, but I noticed that certain issues, such as hair touching, were not relatable to many I met along the way and some racist comments were even made by other travellers. For most, travel is an enjoyable break from reality; we seek to reset our mood from periods of stress in our lives. We go through similar motions with each destination: booking accommodation, researching attractions and anticipating a pleasant getaway. However, as a black woman, seeking an experience abroad can be just as stressful as the routine I am trying to escape. Everyone opens themselves up to the unknown when going abroad, but the reality of not always being accepted has added risk. Why is black womanhood so unique? Race and gender are tied together and equally impact our experience in the world.

This intersectionality affected me in New Delhi before I had even set off. Discussions on women travelling around India alone are not new, but during my pre-travel search



I couldn't see or find advice from anyone who looked like me. Reading about the experiences of women with blonde hair and blue eyes rendered my dark skin negligible, while reading tales from black men overlooked the impact my womanhood would have on my safety. I took the plunge and went anyway. While the cities were beautiful and etched with vibrancy and culture, I stood out at all times; I was laughed at, had my space encroached and felt dehumanised by being followed. While I queued up to take pictures at tourist attractions, such as the Taj Mahal or India Gate, visitors queued to take photos of me. When I refused, my words were disregarded and though possibly not maliciously intended, cameras shoved in my face. My battle between exasperation and staying calm highlighted the cold truth: I feel obliged to represent black women at all times, and while I don't want the next traveller to suffer the consequences of my actions, smiling through each incident is tiresome and isolating. Other races may be gawked at abroad, but the intentions are different. Whiteness is defined as the standard of beauty worldwide, whereas dark skin is often associated with ugliness and poverty. I rarely see anyone who looks like me and just gets it, so the joy I feel when I see another black woman on my escapades is indescribable; we bond instantly because we know that for us being abroad is a defiant act in itself. When I travel with others, the level of respect I receive is often dependent on who I am with. Hanging out with white travellers or locals tends to result in fewer race-related issues. In contrast, exploring the streets of Hanoi with another black woman resulted in us being ridiculed in the streets. In another, shocking experience, I was mistaken for a prostitute, simply because I was a black woman walking the streets alone.

Hearing "how much do you charge?" in a new city is not unusual for me.

Yet despite these situations, there is joy in travelling as a black woman. I actively seek to learn about the African diaspora in addition to tourist attractions. In Cuba that meant going to the city of Trinidad to learn about Afro-Cuban culture and it quickly became my favourite city. Since people do not always believe I am British or a tourist, I have often been welcomed into the homes of locals who trust me to respect the details of their culture. In fact, I felt so accepted in Dakar that I extended my four-week trip to three months. People now often think I'm Senegalese because of how highly I speak of the country, but my unparalleled experience had everything to do with being a black woman visiting a majority-black country. Are things looking up for black women who want to travel? I think so. We have come a long way from the days of The Negro Motorist Green Book guiding black Americans to safe areas and the time when black South Africans were required to travel with Pass documents during the apartheid era. But we are not there yet. That is why, in 2017, I set up Melanin Travel, a platform creating events, guides and content for the African diaspora so we could see ourselves reflected in travel content and make informed decisions. Hopefully, there will be a day where black women can confidently travel without gender or race having an impact on our experiences. That is when I will know we are where we need to be



## Using Commercial Advertising to Research Gender, Race and Public Morality in 1970s Malaŵi

Peter Brooke

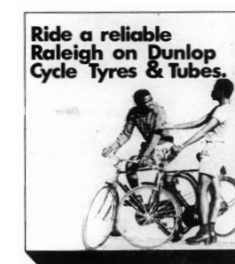


Conversations with colleagues over the past year have been dominated by the difficulties of teaching remote classes over glitchy internet connections or the surreal experience of giving lectures from the spare bedroom. Occasionally we would guardedly ask each other the taboo question: 'so...are you managing to do any research at the moment?'. Although all historians have had to put up with the closure of archives and libraries, the effects of the pandemic have been felt particularly keenly by those of us who rely on foreign travel to do much of our research. Like many colleagues and most of the MSc cohort that were about to depart for dissertation fieldwork, I had no choice but to postpone all my travel plans in March 2020.

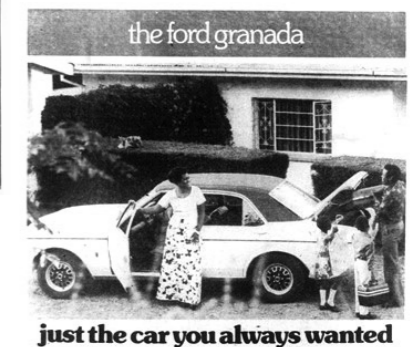
However, there have been silver linings to lock-down and the last year has ended up being fairly productive, thanks to an unexpected discovery. As it became clear that I wouldn't be able to get to Zambia any time soon, I began to dig around to see what resources could be found online or in British archives and libraries. My research area is the history of mass media in southern Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. In particular I was looking for copies of newspapers from that period but, aside from South African publications, the online cupboard was bare and the collection at the British Library has been locked down for most of the last year. However, a real game-changer came in the form of a low-tech but unparalleled resource. The Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP) was founded in 1963 and holds a vast collection of microfilms. It is run by the Centre for Research Libraries in Chicago. CAMP has nearly every edition of the majority of newspapers published on the continent since the 1960s (and earlier ones as well) and, although it was conceived long before the internet, it is available to researchers anywhere in the world. The unfailingly-helpful staff at CAMP run a postal lending-service to any university library and they have kept it going throughout the pandemic. For anyone interested in working on recent African history I can't recommend the service enough (although I would offer a mild health warning to anyone using microfilm as it gives you motion sickness if you scroll through the reels too fast).

To give you a snapshot of some of the material that I've been able to access, here is a collection of advertisements from the Daily Times (Malaŵi) from 1976. My work on these adverts is part of a larger comparative project on the cultural impact of advertising in postcolonial Malaŵi and Zambia, which I hope to publish later this year.

The Daily Times generally makes for drab reading in this period. After independence in 1964 the newspaper was subjected to heavy-handed state control and became little more than a government newsletter. By the 1970s it was dominated by dutiful accounts of Hastings Banda's speeches and reports of ministerial visits to development projects. However, although the paper was state-owned, it was heavily reliant on commercial advertising revenue. These adverts were far more eye-catching than any of the headlines or photos, partially because of their colourful aesthetic, but also because they offered a vibrant and sometimes glamorous vision of luxury and global fashions, offsetting the parochial earnestness of the political



1 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 28th May 1976



2 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 21st April 1976



3 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 9th April 1976





4 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 7th May 1976



5 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 4th June 1976



6 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 9th April 1976: Cescos Ltd, Caterpillar Dealer



7 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 4th June 1976

reporting that dominated the column inches. As I spooled through the Chicago microfilms I found that the Malaŵian press was the site of a fascinating contest between the state and commercial influence, both aesthetically and financially.

One area in which government and commercial agendas overlapped was gender norms. In the 1970s many African governments passed legislation to encourage 'traditional' values. In Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda famously mandated that 90% of music played on state radio should be Zambian. In Malaŵi, the most prominent ruling was a ban on miniskirts and legislation that demanded women should wear the more modest chitenge to cover their legs. The restrictions on women's dress reflected a broadly conservative view of the role of women in society, as wives and mothers. Commercial advertising generally reinforced this agenda, as it sometimes still does today. In adverts for transport – especially for cars – women were always the passengers and never the drivers (figs. 1–5). Women were often pictured in family scenes, taking a supportive role behind their husbands, occasionally with groups of men (fig. 8), or on their own (figs. 9, 10). It was marked that women were almost never shown socialising with other women, reinforcing the message that they should only leave the home in the company of men. By contrast, men were often seen socialising with other men, though without a hint of homosexuality (fig. 1). Technical or professional work was presented by advertisers as the preserve of men (figs. 5, 6, 11, 12), while women were limited to doing housework (fig. 10) or beautifying themselves with cosmetics and hair-products (fig. 9).



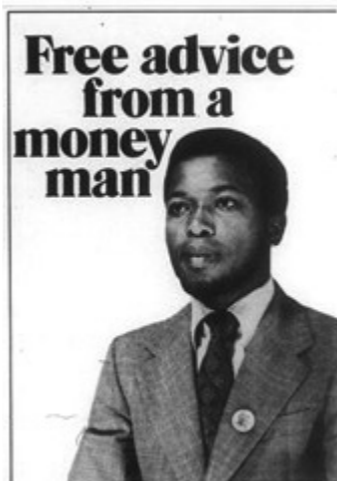
8 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 9th February 1976



9 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 18th March 1976



10 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 14th May 1976



11 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 7th May 1976: National Bank of Malaŵi



12 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 2nd April 1976



15 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 17th May 1976



16 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 17th June 1976

It is important not to judge the 1970s from the viewpoint of the 2020s but, even by the standards of the time, the doggedly conservative messaging on women's place in society was unusual for commercial advertising. When it came to gender relations, it seems that in the 1970s the government censor had a firm grip on what could be printed in the Daily Times.

However I was struck that the message of Malaŵian adverts did not always sit comfortably with the government's policies, particularly in relation to race. News reporting in the Daily Times was infused with an anti-colonial nationalist agenda, and readers were often told that Banda's independent government had achieved more in a decade than half a century of British colonialism. But the adverts carried by the Daily Times regularly gave the impression that little had changed since the colonial era, at least not for white settlers. According to the idealised world of advertising, white settlers rarely did much work. If they did, it was specialist work, using technical skills or managing and training lesser-qualified Malaŵians (figs. 6, 12). More commonly though, Europeans were depicted indulging in the same racy life of wealth and luxury that they had enjoyed in the colonial days. Holidays and air travel were for whites only (figs. 12, 13, 14). In the same way, alcohol was only drunk by Europeans (figs. 14, 17), while black Malaŵians were only offered soft drinks like Coca Cola instead (fig. 8).

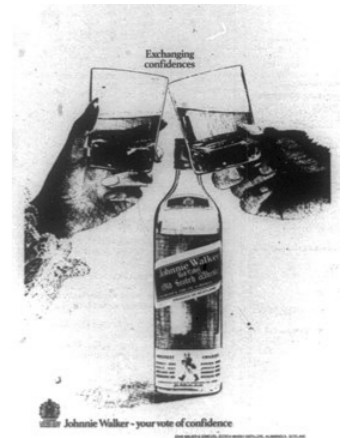
Overt romance was also reserved for Europeans, reinforcing the old colonial trope that settlers were more 'adult' than supposedly childlike-Africans (figs. 4, 12, 13), who were rarely shown in romantic couples. An unusual exception



13 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 13th February 1976



14 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 20th February 1976



16 Daily Times (Malaŵi), 13th August 1976

was an advert for radio sets that included a black couple dancing together (at a safe distance), but a comparison with another radio advert from the same company reveals another throw-back to colonial values: while the radio makes Africans want to dance spontaneously to its sensuous rhythms, a white settler calmly sits and listens in a cerebral aspect of repose (figs. 15, 16). White women were presented as far more liberated than black women, gambling and drinking on a jolly to Victoria Falls for instance (fig. 14), and never doing housework, which was presumably still the preserve of black staff. There was only one area of overlap in the Daily Times' messaging on race and gender: women should not be encouraged to drive cars, even if they were white (fig. 4). On that, at least, commerce and government chose to agree. The messages found in commercial advertising sometimes reinforced and sometimes seem to have subverted Malaŵian government rhetoric. In other words, state control over the press was limited in the face of long-entrenched commercial interests, many of which were South African, British or Rhodesian-owned companies that had the financial clout to buy up much of Malaŵi's advertising space. The significance of this awkward dissonance between nationalist journalism and 'neo-colonial' commercial advertising in the Daily Mail gives us an invaluable window onto Malaŵian media culture. But it also sheds light on the politics of the era. The commercial influence of South Africa in Malaŵi was a public symptom of the private friendship with Pretoria that Banda worked so hard to maintain from the 1960s to the 1980s.



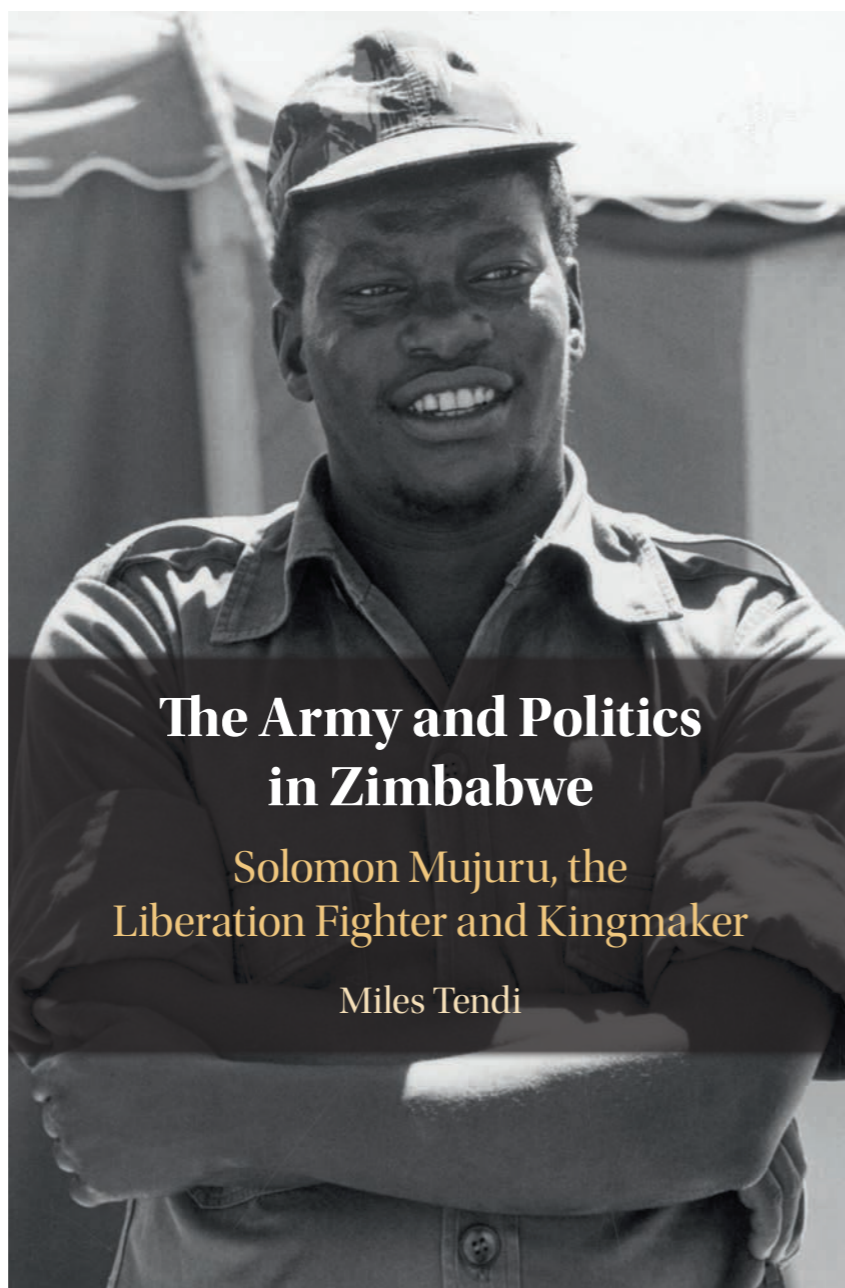
## A Testing Year in the African Studies Centre

Miles Tendi



I was course director on the MSc African Studies in the 2020-21 academic year. Faculty strives to deliver an excellent learning experience. Consequently, we were exceedingly frustrated by constraints the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic placed on our students' standard intellectual and social experiences on the MSc African Studies. We made it out the other end of the academic year owing to the commitment and imagination of teaching staff and our extremely bright students' endurance, maturity and active support for each other. I cannot thank everyone enough for their fortitude.

My book, *The Army and Politics in Zimbabwe*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2020. I am delighted to say scholarly reviews of the book have thus far been mostly positive and it has influenced public debates in Zimbabwe about civil-military relations. Related research on Zimbabwe's 2017 military coup has been equally impactful. For example, in May 2021, my article 'The Motivations and Dynamics of Zimbabwe's 2017 Military Coup' (2020) was included in a collection of highly cited papers published in *African Affairs*, the top ranked journal in African Studies. The article is an output from a larger research project on the gendered nature of coups, which is under contract with Oxford University Press. However, as a scholar who engages in long periods of intensive fieldwork, my progress in this project was significantly hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made travel for research impossible. It has truly been a testing year for both faculty and students.



**The Army and Politics  
in Zimbabwe**  
**Solomon Mujuru, the  
Liberation Fighter and Kingmaker**  
Miles Tendi

## New book on South Sudanese heritage in museum collections (and beyond)

Zoe Cormack



The past year has seen the completion of several publications drawing on my Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellowship. Among these is a book, *Pieces of a Nation: South Sudanese Heritage and Museum Collections*, co-edited with Cherry Leonardi (Durham University). It will be published in late August 2021. This book explores the importance of material heritage from South Sudan that is currently housed in museums collections across the world.

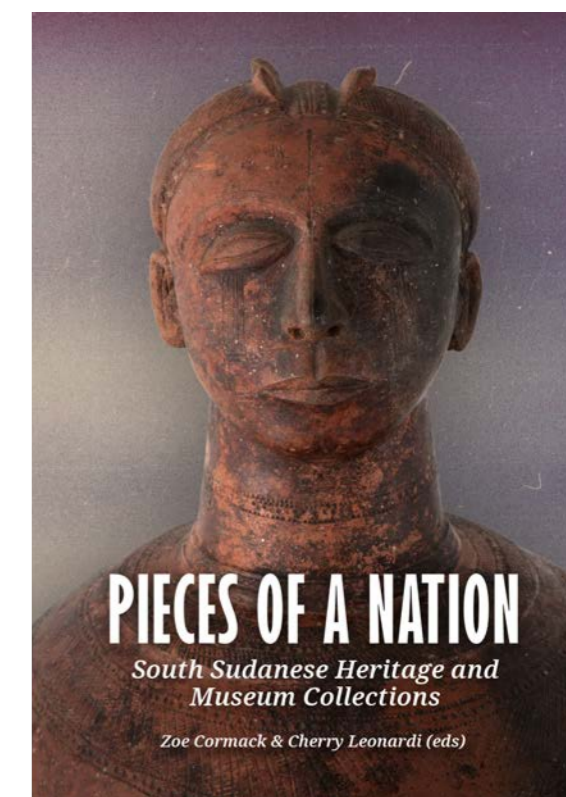
The Independence of South Sudan in 2011 prompted discussions about South Sudanese identity and shared history, in which material objects and cultural heritage featured as vitally important resources. However, the long-term effects of colonialism and conflict had largely precluded any concerted attempts to preserve material culture within the country; museums remained in Khartoum, the capital of the formally united Sudan. Furthermore, tens of thousands of objects had been removed from what is now South Sudan during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to museum and private collections around the world. Up to now there have been few attempts to reconnect the history of these South Sudanese museum collections with people in or from South Sudan. *Pieces of a Nation* is the first extended study of South Sudanese material cultural heritage in museum collections and beyond.

The book discusses a range of different objects and practices – from museum objects taken in the context of enslavement and colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to efforts by South Sudanese to preserve their country's cultural heritage during recent conflicts. At a time of widespread, prominent debates over the provenance of museum collections from Africa and calls for restitution, this book provides an in-depth empirical study of the circumstances and practices that led to South Sudanese objects entering foreign museum collections and the importance of these objects in South Sudan and around the world today.

I'm very proud to have brought together essays by 32 contributors (curators, academics, heritage professionals and artists) in Europe, South Sudan, Uganda and Australia. I have co-written the introduction and contributed a chapter about a commemorative sculpture made by an unnamed Bongo artist in South Sudan in the British Museum. My chapter uses the object in the British Museum to explore how Bongo material and funerary culture has been extracted and circulated in the European art market and museums since the mid nineteenth century. Among the contributors are many people whose work I admire and people with whom I have been collaborating closely for many years. For example, the Likikiri Collective – a heritage NGO in Juba, run by El-Fatih

Atem and Rebecca Lorrins – have contributed to two chapters, one on the Zande gugu (slit drum) and another which explores why refusal and resistance are important concepts for understanding museum collections (based on Atem's experience working on a 'Travelling Exhibition' with UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture in South Sudan).

This book has been made possible by the support of many people and organisations, including the Leverhulme Trust, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (who funded the research network through which the contributors to the book connected in a series of workshops in 2017 and 2018) and the British Institute in Eastern Africa and British School at Rome (who supported me with research fellowships that were crucial to pieces together dispersed collections of South Sudanese heritage in museums in Europe and Russia). I could not have asked for a more supportive and formative environment than the African Studies Centre for writing and editing the book. Not least, teaching several cohorts of CC1 students has helped to refine and develop my understanding of how to approach and write about African objects in European museums. I'm very excited about sharing and discussing it with the Oxford African Studies community.



## The marriage of Nelson and Winnie Mandela

Jonny Steinberg



I have spent my time working on a book on the marriage of Nelson and Winnie Mandela. The central attraction of the project is this: During the decolonisation of Europe's old empires, an enormously variable process, one thing held steady throughout the decolonising world. Whether in Ghana or in Senegal, in India or in Malaysia, the former colonial subjects who came to exercise sovereign national power were men. And, for all the political and cultural variety among them, all of them described themselves, each after his own fashion, as patriarchs, their wives to a greater or lesser degree in the background, part of a hinterland that was largely private, its innards sheltered from view.

The Mandelas stand out starkly in this regard, for what the ANC and various of its international allies chose – quite self-consciously – to symbolise the struggle, was not a man, but a marriage. The implications of the placement of a marriage, of a man and a woman in romantic attachment, as the presiding image of a struggle for freedom, are far-reaching and not yet properly explored. The purpose of the book is to explore some of these implications.

One consequence is the escape of questions of romantic love and of female sexuality from their customary place on the margins of the political mainstream into the heartland of politics. What are the allowable boundaries of a woman's place in political life? What sort of romantic life is permissible for a woman who waits decades for her husband's return? These questions, uncomfortable, usually deflected, were drawn into the centre of South African politics by the very public marriage of Winnie and Nelson Mandela.

Beyond the novelty of having a marriage in the heartland of politics, this particular marriage brought forth especially acute political questions. Nelson and Winnie Mandela became estranged during the last quarter of a century of Nelson Mandela's life, and with their gathering estrangement, each began offering opposing answers to urgent questions. Should the old order end violently or through peaceful compromise? What is sacrificed by compromise and what is destroyed when the transition from the old order is violent? What do colonisers owe to the colonised? Above all, what does one do about the past? Does one forgive the injustices committed by those who have wronged one? If so, on what terms? The relationship between the Mandelas was a very public drama animated by these fundamental questions. A book on their lives offers the opportunity to explore such questions, not through abstract theory, but via the ways in which two unusual people grappled with them.

## Epistemologies, geographies and networks

Carli Coetzee



During this past academic year I continued with research work on my project on Campus Forms, and completed an article on Oxford campus forms and ways of provincialising Oxford. The myth of Oxford, which echoes and replicates the ideology of an unchanging world of privileged white youth, is familiar from many films and literary works. This version is however overlaid and underlaid with counter-traditions that decentre Oxford and instead insert Oxford upside down into other epistemologies, geographies and networks. While some attempts at transformation of elite institutions like Oxford inadvertently again centre these institutions, I argue, a decolonial cultural studies approach relativises the University within global networks of different and relativising temporalities, provincialising Oxford as other locations and scholarly traditions are simultaneously deprovincialised.

This work comes out of a continuing group project, which is part of the Lagos Studies Association's work. Recurring themes in the Nigerian Campus Forms discussions have included sanitation and living conditions on campus (Omotayo); sexual conduct and misconduct such as the events related to #SexforGrades (Akande; Ugah 2021); literary representations of campus life (Kofoworola) alongside analyses of films and television shows set on campuses such as Funke Akindele's ongoing serial *Jenifa* (Ogunoye; Okunlola); and discussions about the alternative forms of self-making available to young people (Olofinlua; Ugah) for whom higher education all too often is simply another form of what Alcinda Honwana has memorably termed "waithood". Nigerian campus forms, this ongoing project has made evident, are characterised by genres of complaint and dissent, and are informed by questions about the value of university experience and the cost (financial and otherwise) of higher education. The socially engaged research conducted by this network of scholars is notable for the strong social justice agendas, a feature also of many of the campus novels and films and campus ethnographies discussed in the sessions at the annual conference.

I was involved in a research network which led to a special issue of a journal, with the topic "Thinking China from Africa: Encounter with the Other Other", following the protocols developed for the Journal Work Academy, and taking the young guest editors through all steps of preparing a special issue. The topic of this issue was designed in response to a workshop held at SOAS just before Covid-19 reconfigured our lives, and was called "Chinese Positionality: A reflective Discussion on Conducting Research in Africa". For more on this innovative workshop see:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/china-institute/events/17jan2020-chinese-positionality-a-reflective-discussion-on-conducting-research-in-africa.html>

Together with Weidi Zheng, who was just completing the revisions for her SOAS PhD, and Ying Cheng, who graduated from SOAS a few years ago and whose PhD won the Best Thesis Prize at the Lagos Studies Association, we convened a network of scholars based in locations across Asia, Africa and the US. Through discussions on Zoom and WeChat, we discussed readings, debated the meanings of terms and weighed up the legacies of African studies in China, and China studies across Africa. The short pieces were all translated by a group of early career scholars at PKU in Beijing. The journal issue appeared in English and Mandarin. It was very meaningful labour to perform, as many of our contributors were either separated from families or living for periods in lonely quarantine conditions. The community created through



"The Scholar," University of Lagos Campus, by Ugochukwu Ephraim Kelechi.

the work was, for many of us, something that sustained us in these isolated times.

Here is a link to the special issue:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/CJAC/current/>

In my role as Vice President of the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) I started a network called ASAUK NextGeneration2020+, aimed at younger members, graduate students and early career scholars. The ASAUK is a rapidly ageing association, and we do not have a clear strategy for building the next generation membership. In order to do this, we need to consider that early career scholars' lived experiences within precarious academic employment might be very different from those of previous generations. The clear career paths that opened up as recently as 10 years ago no longer exist. Younger scholars are more likely to be thinking in terms of flexible careers, and to be more engaged with various forms of activism and in occupations where they apply their knowledge in practical ways. The network have so far hosted two events. The first was a gallery tour by Professor Joseph Oduro-Frimpong, founder and director of the Centre for African Popular Cultural Studies at Ashesi University in Ghana who discussed his private collection of barber shop signs and hand painted movie posters. These were exhibited at the Nubuke Foundation in Accra. Watch the video he made for us on the ASAUK YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/XDMyixYTwnc>.

The second event was a conversation around representations of workers in popular culture and the media. The conversation took place online on 1 May, International Workers' Day and was attended by participants from a range of locations including Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and China. On this day in many locations globally workers gather to celebrate their labour unions and labour organisations, often wearing uniforms identifying their trades or occupations. Recently scholarship on labour has prominently featured ideas around boredom, waithood, and lack of opportunities to enter the labour market. In this session we invited participants to discuss projects that aim to celebrate (or complicate) and document labour and labourers, across media and modes.

A final collaborative research project in which I have been involved this year was on fakery in Africa, and ways in which notions of the fake often stand in for something else – in particular for intellectual property disputes. My own contribution to this inter-disciplinary conversation was about academic fakes. The work of this collective is forthcoming as a special issue of a journal.

# Only fools rush the greetings

Portia Roelofs



What can Nigerian political experience teach us about good governance? This is the question I explore in my book manuscript, taking inspiration from public discourses around “accessibility” and popular ideas of transparency which run counter to the anonymous, technocratic norms of international ‘best practice’. I argue that Nigerian voters and politicians are adept at articulating alternative, but remarkably universal, notions of “socially-embedded” good governance. These ideas provide a provocative counter-point to mainstream conceptions of good governance which tend to assume that public office is occupied by either a stripped down homo economicus or a stylised parody of the African ‘Big Man’.

I arrived at these conclusions after 6 months in-depth qualitative research in Ibadan, capital of Oyo State, southwest Nigeria. In the course of conducting over 150 interviews and focus groups, my fieldwork took me to ancient family compounds deep in the traditional heart of the city, to the top of Africa’s oldest tower block, Cocoa House building 1965. I was driven by a desire to understand the apparent fairy tale transformation, whereby in a few short years after the lection of Abiola Ajimobi in 2011, Ibadan had gone from a city famed for lethal street fighting, to an investors’ paradise.

As such, I figured that I needed only the briefest schooling in the more historical dimensions of Ibadan’s development. Before I set off I had a quick skim of Ruth Watson’s 2003 *Civil Disorder is the Disease of Ibadan*, but to be honest I either lost my notes or never took them in the first place. The one thing I remembered – and saved in an un-named file on my computer – is the oriki praise-poem with which Watson opens the book:

Ibadan, greetings  
Ibadan, ask before you enter it  
Ibadan Mesiogo is the home of Oluyole  
Where the thieves get the better of the property-owners  
Ibadan never blesses the natives as much as strangers  
No one comes to earth without some disease  
Civil disorder is the disease of Ibadan

I submitted my manuscript to the publisher in August and got the reviews back in early January. After some generous comments about the theoretical argument, the reviewers pointed out my historical chapter was somewhat breezy, and I needed to dig back much further back into the city’s origins. In order to retrospectively fill this gap I have spent the last few months immersed in the work of Yorubaland’s great home-grown historians: Samuel Johnson, J. F. Ade Ajayi, Bolanle Awe, Toyin Falola and Olufemi Vaughan. I have studied afresh Ibadan’s evolution from refugee camp in 1829 to military hegemon in the mid-19th century, its colonial era exclusion from power and eventual triumph as the southwest’s premier administrative and commercial centre through the 20th and 21st century.

As I worked on the revisions, I recalled the first two lines of the poem: “Ibadan, greetings / Ibadan, ask before you enter it.” The first time I knocked on the door of the city I had been in a hurry, missed out key greetings. Soon I will submit my revised manuscript. As I knock on the door a second time, penitent for my earlier arrogance, I hope the gate-keepers will let me in.

## Research and Productivity in Oxford under COVID-19

Rui Verde



This text starts as a kind of propaganda act. This year was for me the year of results from the work and research of the previous times in Oxford. A kind of reaching the goal. In fact, this year I published a book with I.B.Tauris on the last years of Angola. The book is called “Angola at the Crossroads. Between Kelpocracy and Development”. It is a book that I am proud of because it covers an area of knowledge not dealt with anywhere else and was all produced in Oxford. At the same time, I wrote a report, also subject to peer-review, just like the book, for an ambitious project in collaboration with the University of Johannesburg. It is entitled “Words and actions: A realistic inquiry into digital surveillance in contemporary Angola”. Finally, a chapter in an academic book on international justice is also in press.

This level of production, always subject to peer-review, was only possible because of being at the University of Oxford. This is the place where we are invited to study with concentration, tranquillity and focus. The environment created allows us to simultaneously study alone and establish a network of contacts and collaborations unimaginable in other contexts. This is the great wealth of this institution: the dialectic between concentration and openness, between focus and collaboration. And these seem like simple words, but it is difficult to achieve in other institutions. Therefore, it is with great satisfaction that I assess this year in Oxford, which despite Covid-19, did not let time be wasted and ensured that encouraging results were achieved.

I must end on a note of hope. This note is in the sense of waiting for the face-to-face times to return to Oxford and to be able to resume research activities in full. Despite all the technology, progress is very human and can only be achieved with empathic interaction between everyone.

## Postdoctorals in Oxford: My AfOx and Urban Studies Foundation Fellowships Experience

Tunde Decker



African researchers like me long for postdoctoral experience to advance our researches and to have access to resources that aren’t available in many institutions on the African continent. This is because living in Africa is a challenge in itself let alone the scholarship that is meant to be produced under such circumstances. Despite this, the notion that the African scholar living in Africa can be ‘excused’ from sound scholarship is untenable and given the activities of centres such as the African Studies Centre in Oxford, I, like many others, owe it to those we mentor and teach in Africa to promote the ideals that these experiences have taught us.

For an early career scholar like myself to utilise the unrivalled resources of Oxford University for scholarship with global impact, it is a big deal. Having utilised two postdoctoral fellowships – the Africa-Oxford Initiative and the Urban Studies Foundation – at the Centre, I have advanced in my career in significant ways. This is substantial for an African scholar who had longed for such opportunity.

In the last two years, I have submitted papers for publication consideration. My article “**Handwritten in Lagos: Selfhood and Textuality in Colonial Petitions**” (written during my Urban Studies Foundation fellowship) is at the completion stage for the 2021 edition of *History in Africa Journal of Method Debates and Source Analysis* published by Cambridge University Press. I have signed the necessary publishing agreements with the Press House and I am waiting for the alert of the publication. Another article entitled “**The Colonial Lagos Boy in the Ibadan Archives: A Review of the Structural Context**” is published in *Vestiges: Traces of Record Vol 6* (2020) ISSN: 2058-1963 <http://www.vestiges-journal.info/>. Others are under review for publication.

Additionally, the resources I retrieved through my fellowships in Oxford enlarged my digital library enough to advance research on my forthcoming book for which I am preparing to utilise yet another postdoctoral fellowship – the 2021 American Council for Learned Societies (ACLS) African Humanities Programme (AHP) postdoctoral fellowship which I have just been awarded.

## Postdoctorals in Oxford: My AfOx and Urban Studies Foundation Fellowships Experience

Dr Sam Ashman



I visited the ASC in 2020 just as cases of Covid-19 were beginning to rise and lockdown was soon introduced. I must have been the most invisible visitor the Centre ever had! Fortunately, my research fared well. The same could not be said for the South African economy, on which I was writing a monograph.

Covid-19 has had huge costs, including a 50% drop in industrial production in 2020 and a dramatic increase in unemployment. Some 1.4 million jobs were lost over the course of 2020, more than as a consequence of the global financial crisis.

Many in civil society have called for the R350 special emergency Covid relief grant (or the SRD, Social Relief of Distress grant), introduced last year, to be extended. Nevertheless, it ended at the end of April, meaning more hardship and distress for the nearly 7 million beneficiaries. Calls to extend the grant also renewed debate over the introduction of a universal basic income grant. This was endorsed by the government, but there is no sign yet of its implementation. There is also a crisis in vaccinations – which, at time of writing in early May – have completely ground to halt, just as fears of a third wave of the virus increase.

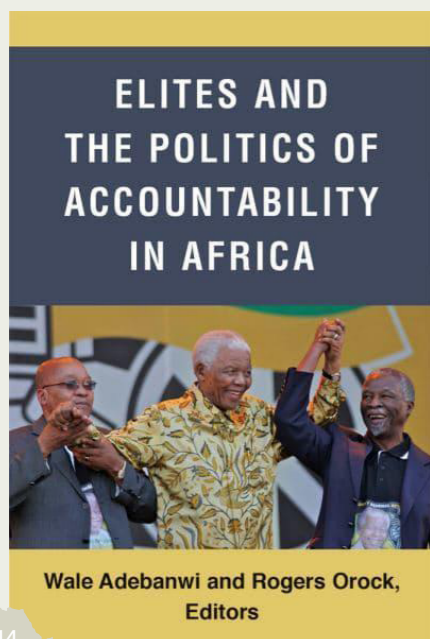
Yet Covid-19 has only heightened an already deep socio-economic crisis. Inequality, unemployment, poverty, violence – including that against women – levels of HIV/AIDS infection and TB, diabetes, hunger and obesity, all stand amongst the highest in the world. So too are carbon emissions as a consequence of a coal dominated energy system. And so too are social protests. None of these phenomena are unique to South Africa, of course, but the South African path of development has meant they take particularly acute and extreme forms.

The monograph explores these remarkable economic, social, and environmental extremes and how, despite social progress towards reversing the racist practices which pervaded all aspects of life before 1994, South Africa is profoundly marred by its past, many features of which continue to be reproduced in the present.

The legacy of past development bequeathed the ANC in 1994 a skewed economic structure, and high levels of racially based poverty and unemployment in a low wage economy. The neoliberal course taken since 1994 has intensified many of the features of apartheid era political economy, with growing financialization contributing to rising inequality, jobless growth, low wages and precarity for those in work, debt driven consumption, and reliance on fossil fuel accumulation. Low investment, low employment, low wages, and low productivity combine with high profits in key sectors, and a crisis of public provision and corruption in the State. Yet fiscal contraction and austerity are the policy order of the day, risking another ‘lost decade’ and a possible downward structural shift in the economy, deepening the crisis of development, and the crisis of the state.

## Announcing the publication of *Elites and the Politics of Accountability in Africa* edited by Wale Adebawo and Rogers Orock

*Elites and the Politics of Accountability in Africa* examines the ways that accountability offers an effective interpretive lens to the social, cultural, and institutional struggles of both the elites and ordinary citizens in Africa. Each chapter investigates questions of power, its public deliberation, and its negotiation in Africa by studying elites through the framework of accountability. The book enters conversations about political subjectivity and agency, especially from ongoing struggles around identities and belonging, as well as representation and legitimacy. Who speaks to whom? And on whose behalf do they speak? The contributors to this volume offer careful analyses of how such concerns are embedded in wider forms of cultural, social, and institutional discussions about transparency, collective responsibility, community, and public decision-making processes. These concerns affect prospects for democratic oversight, as well as questions of alienation, exclusivity, privilege and democratic deficit. The book situates our understanding of the emergence, meaning, and conceptual relevance of elite accountability, to study political practices in Africa. It then juxtaposes this contextualization of accountability in relation to the practices of African elites. *Elites and the Politics of Accountability in Africa* offers fresh, dynamic, and multifarious accounts of elites and their practices of accountability and locally plausible self-legitimation, as well as illuminating accounts of contemporary African elites in relation to their socially and historically situated outcomes of contingency, composition, negotiation, and compromise.



### Staff Articles

## Oxford University China Africa Network (OUCAN)

Nicolas Lippolis



Like most other organizations, OUCAN had to shift its activities to a virtual format for this year. With the support of the African Studies Centre, we have been able to organise four OUCAN online seminars since January. Our seminars have dealt with some of the most pressing topics in current China-Africa relations, including railway construction, economic cooperation, and racialization in Africa-China encounters. These included speakers based in the US, Europe, and China (mainland and Hong Kong). The seminars were well-attended, helping disseminate knowledge of OUCAN among a broader public.

Our flagship annual conference was held on the 20th and 21st May under the theme "Dealing with a new Cold War? Great Power Competition in Times of Covid". The conference included open panels on the parallels between current Great Power Competition and the Cold War period, and on the impacts of Great Power Politics on health competition. The first panel, the keynote, involved a conversation between Profs Christopher Clapham and Odd Arne Westad, which was widely followed in specialized fora. The second panel, moderated by Oxford's Prof Simukai Chigudu, brought together a multidisciplinary group of researchers based in the USA and in Africa to discuss the health aspects of contemporary geopolitics. One of the outcomes of the panel was the formation of new links between invited researchers, with the potential to lead to a collaboration in a special journal issue.

Finally, the conference involved a roundtable on Africa's debt negotiations, attended by speakers from international financial institutions, African governments, the private sector, and academia. The event was a resounding success, allowing us to tackle various dimensions of Africa's debt and debt negotiations, with a focus on the role of China, and again leading to the formation of links between researchers and practitioners. We expect these conversations to develop over the coming months, as OUCAN fills its mandate as a venue for high-level, pluralistic discussions on China-Africa relations.

## Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx)

Avni Gupta



The Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx) is a cross-university platform based at the University of Oxford with the aim of facilitating equitable and sustainable collaborations between researchers based at the University of Oxford and African universities, as well as increasing the number of African students pursuing postgraduate degrees in Oxford. We strive to provide an enabling environment for researchers and students that is conducive for entrepreneurship, innovation and research leadership.

Against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are proud to have launched the AfOx Graduate Scholarship Programme and continued to support colleagues based at the University of Oxford and African universities to advance their research.

### Supporting African graduate students in Oxford

Launched in partnership with the Standard Bank of Africa Chairman's Scholarship and the Oppenheimer Fund, the AfOx Graduate Scholarships supports six African graduates to undertake a fully funded Master's degree at the University of Oxford. Going beyond providing course fees and living costs to the scholars, the scholarships aim to deliver tailor-made training programmes and networking opportunities to support students during and after their time at Oxford.

### Accelerating progress towards the SDGs

In 2020, we awarded 8 AfOx Research Development Awards to provide previous AfOx grant holders the opportunity to build on ideas developed during their initial interactions. Each project has a lead researcher from an African institution and a University of Oxford collaborator. From developing new antibacterial compounds to combat antibiotic resistance to exploring the origins of humankind, 16 AfOx Research Development awardees are researching to create a more sustainable future for all.

The Senior AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme supports the University of Oxford's international research agenda by bringing together leading researchers in African institutions and Oxford to address pressing issues facing us today. Six researchers from Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia and Liberia have been awarded the inaugural Senior AfOx Visiting Fellowship. Their expertise includes research ethics, astrophysics, social policy and neuroscience.

The AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme is designed to provide exceptional African researchers an opportunity to build international networks and focus on a project of their choice, away from teaching and administrative duties at their home institutions. In 2020, 21 distinguished African

researchers from 14 countries were selected for the AfOx Visiting Fellowship Programme, our largest Fellowship cohort to date.

### Connecting Research to industry

The past year has highlighted the importance of health systems in ensuring a sustainable future for all. With support from the Oxford-Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund, we launched the Africa Oxford Health Innovation Platform to accelerate solutions to Africa's health challenges. Led by AfOx and supported by key researchers across African institutions and Oxford, the Africa Oxford Health Innovation Platform connects research to industry to solve intractable societal challenges.

### A digital space to share ideas

Over the last year, we had to pivot to the virtual world for many of our events, including our flagship *insakas*. The monthly AfOx *insakas* feature two speakers from diverse disciplines who shared their Africa-focused research with our audience. More than 2000 people from over 15 countries have joined us so far. Explore our past *insakas* here: <https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/past-afox-insakas>.

In the wake of global debates on the restitution of African cultural heritage, we have partnered with institutions across the world to explore how archaeology can be reinvented to provide models of alternative knowledge that could advance sustainable development goals. Every month, we host globinars on the Future of Archeology in Africa and in the Diaspora. The Globinars are going beyond virtual events and are being studied by postgraduate students at StonyBrooks University, Kenya and at Rice University, Texas, USA. Find out more on our website: <https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/afox-events>.

Find out more about AfOx on our [website](#) and sign up to our mailing list here: <https://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/afox-mailing-list>.



# Comparing the Copperbelt Project

Miles Larmer



The Comparing the Copperbelt project, funded by the European Research Council and run by a team of Oxford researchers based at the African Studies Centre and the Faculty of History, came to its conclusion in summer 2021. It has provided new insights into the social history of the Central African Copperbelt, the mine towns of the DR Congo and Zambia, since the 1950s. The project will by the time of its completion have published two books and around eight journal articles, covering different aspects of the region's social, cultural, environmental and intellectual history, all of which are or will be available Open Access.

The project, building on generations of ethnographic, historical and social scientific research in this region, has made the following major contributions:

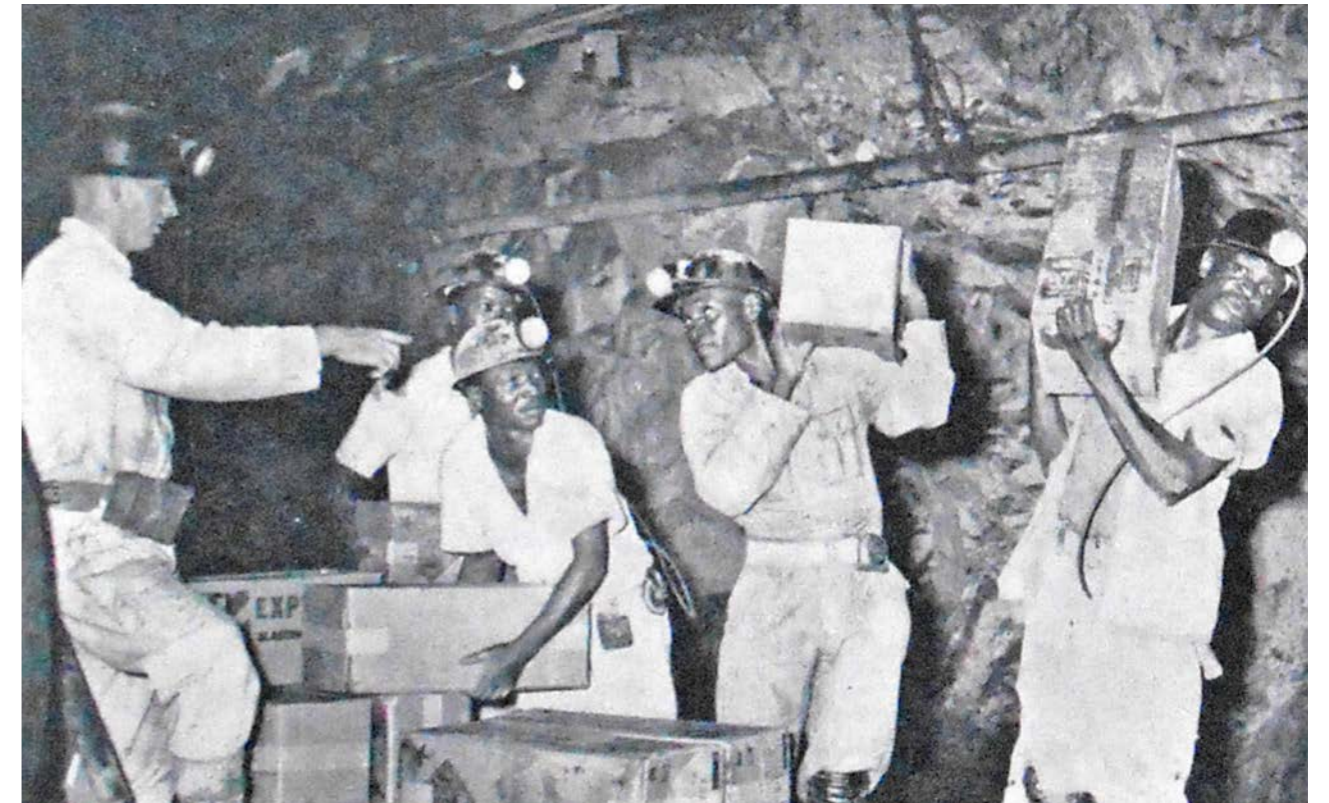
- It provides a single historical analysis (from c. 1950 to c. 2000) of urban social change in the cross-border Central African Copperbelt, which has normally been understood within the national histories of Zambia and the DRC. By comparing both similar and contrasting aspects of their historical development, it enables understanding of what has led to the contrasting sense of urban identity in the Zambian Copperbelt – marked by a strong sense of cosmopolitan labour militancy – and Haut-Katanga – where social progress is associated with mine company patronage and strong ethnic associational identity.
- It shifts the focus away from the political economy of mining – the study of capital and labour, formal workplaces, parties and unions – and towards the wider analysis of Copperbelt society, encompassing urban agriculture, cultural expression from comic books to painting to music, shared beliefs related to faith and romance, informal economies and illegal settlements, and the environmental effects of industrial mining. This is particularly well reflected in our edited book

*Across the Copperbelt: Urban and Social Change in Central Africa's Borderland Communities*, published by James Currey.

- The study in general and the monograph *Living for the City* in particular provides an original analysis of the relationship between knowledge production and social history. While Africanist historians and social scientists, most notably James Ferguson in *Expectations of Modernity* (1999) have stressed the problematic construction of modernist characterisations of Copperbelt society, *Living for the City* argues that the production of knowledge, in both official/academic and popular forms, about the supposedly novel and modern nature of Copperbelt society, was central to the meanings made and claims advanced about it by both external observers and by its residents, individually and in associational forms.

*Living for the City* then traces the interlinked history of the region's social change and knowledge production about it, encompassing economic development, political change, spatial history, gendered identities and relations, national independence and the Africanisation of knowledge production, cultural outputs, the region's linked economic and political crises (linked to declining mineral prices) of the late 1980s and 1990s and the impact of mine privatisation, and the impact of environmental pollution. Throughout this history, generations of academic researchers and external institutions (including national governments, development thinktanks, international finance institutions and environmental analysts) produced new studies of the Copperbelt: once characterised as a hyper-modern capitalist enclave in an otherwise 'backward' rural Africa, it was by the 1990s seen as an industrial dinosaur in need of neo-liberal reform. The documentation produced by companies, states, academic researchers and institutions provided

Music group, mine township church, Zambian Copperbelt, early 1960s (credit: Barbara Hall)



African mineworkers under European supervision, Zambian Copperbelt, early 1960s (credit: Barbara Hall)

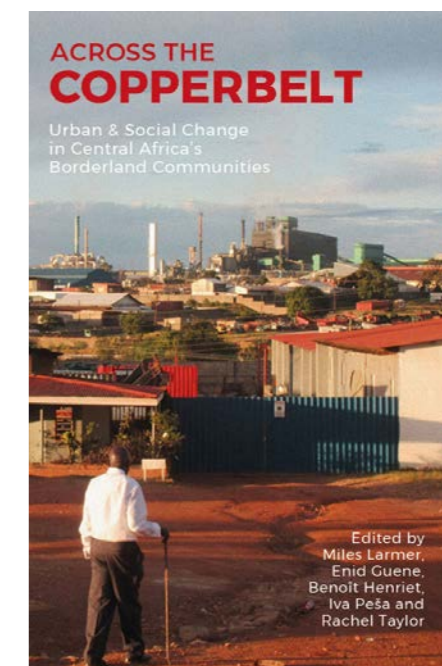
vital sources of information for the project, but these were equally historicised as a central aspect of the region's history of knowledge production: likewise, prominent academic analysts are treated as active participants in the history of the Copperbelt.

Copperbelt residents were themselves equally energetic (if politically less powerful) producers of knowledge about their own society. New arrivals to mining towns were advised by older relatives and kinship networks on how to manage (and to evade) state and company controls, to engage in a cash economy and cosmopolitan culture, and more generally how to live well in town. Labour unions, ethnic associations, and self-consciously elite 'cercles' provided new ways to belong and to advance one's position and that of one's family and community. These organisations published and circulated documents that, in representing the interests of their members and followers, expressed grievances and advanced claims in ways that amounted to an assertion of an urban 'citizenship', and which have provided, for our research, an exceptionally valuable set of sources.

If Copperbelt Africans did not always operate within the framework of modernist thinking, they generally recognised differences between village and town life, and they produced, sought out, and circulated information about these differences. Young men and women sought advice from newspaper advice columns about how to reconcile romantic relationships with their families' understanding of a 'good' marriage. Popular songs, with rural melodies now adapted and played on 'western' instruments such as the guitar, were an ideal vehicle to explore the dissonance between the opportunities provided by a new life in town and the loss of one's established (rural) identity. In Congo in particular, theatrical performances and popular painting provided, both for performers and audiences, ways to understand the nature of 'modern' Copperbelt society and its relationship to both the past and to the 'rural', characterisations of which were often problematically conflated. The project's publications treat

such sources as equally significant characterisations of the Copperbelt's social history as more conventional secondary and primary written sources, and they form a central part of our analysis.

Following in the footsteps of our predecessor researchers, oral historical research was central to the project. As well as dozens of interviews with specific actors in Copperbelt society, from social welfare officers to musicians and visual artists, in 2018 we conducted c. 110 extended interviews with long-term residents of the Copperbelt towns of Mufulira (in Zambia) and Likasi (in DRC). The majority of these, conducted in a combination of Kiswahili, CiBemba, French, English and other languages, made use of a fixed set of open-ended questions to elucidate interviewees' understanding of their



'Across the Copperbelt' book, published 2021. (photo credit: Stephanie Lämmert)

## Comparing the Copperbelt cont.

Rachel Taylor

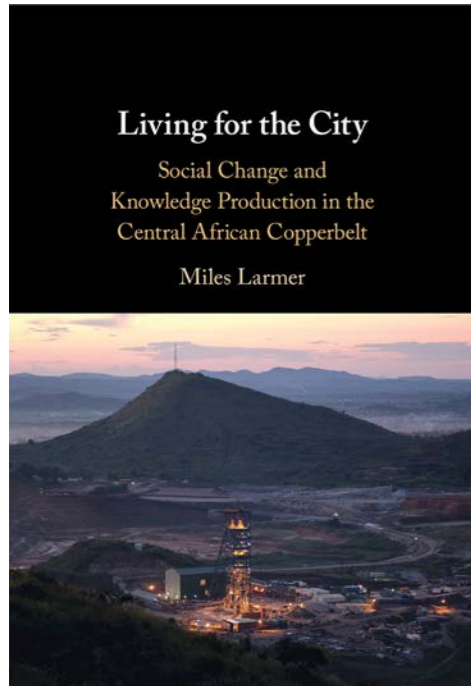


In 2019 I visited Katanga for the first time to conduct oral historical research into women's paid labour in mining communities. Union Minière, the major mining company in the Belgian Congo, and its post-independence successor Gécamines, were pronatalist, paternalistic companies par excellence. They trained boys to become workers and heads of families, and girls to be wives and mothers. This social engineering, including efforts to train women as housewives, rested on the labour of female employees, such as nurses, teachers, instructors in women's centres. These women workers had been largely left out of historical and sociological writing on the Copperbelt.

One surprise of my interviews with these women, for me, was that – in contrast to Western media and societal discussions about the difficulty women workers faced in balancing domestic and workplace demands, – they did not describe a struggle “balancing” formal labour and motherhood. Indeed, many women had what would, in Britain today, seem large families – five, six, seven birth children, plus wards from their broader family – while simultaneously reaching senior positions at work. From my interviews and broader research, it became clear that company pronatalism facilitated female employees’ efforts to combine paid work with motherhood, including single motherhood. Gécamines required mothers of young children – for instance to bring them for weighing and vaccination at company hospitals – but also provided female employees with leave so that they could fulfil such requirements, in addition to paid maternity leave before and after birth. Meanwhile, company creches (and schools) provided convenient childcare, and female workers, like their male counterparts, were paid more for each recognised dependent.

COVID made a further research trip impossible, so I turned instead to old issues of *Mwana Shaba*, the *Union Minière/Gécamines* newspaper. Its representations of women are generally domestic, shown as doting mothers or caring housewives. The late 1950s and early 1960s brought a small rush of articles encouraging young girls to get educated and work as nurses or teachers, corroborating and contextualising what my interviewees had said of their own work trajectories. But these newspaper reports paid little to no attention to working women in their own homes, as mothers, and as wives, or divorcees. It is only through interviews with women themselves that we can see beyond official representations, to how they organised their own families.

Rachel Taylor and Iva Pesa with interviewee, DR Congo



'Living for the City' book, published 2021

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 2020 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.

## Comparing the Copperbelt cont.

Rachel Taylor



Banner advertisement for Karindula band, DR Congo

Historical research is often associated with paper archives. Yet working in regions in which, or on topics about which, “traditional” archives are scarce, one has to find creative ways to shed light on the past. This can be done by looking for archives in original places or using alternative forms of source materials. My research into the cultural and artistic history of the Copperbelt has examined songs, artworks, and comics. But the heart of my research has been talking to Copperbelt residents themselves.

In the summers of 2018 and 2019, I had long conversations with about 100 people in Congo and Zambia – mostly musicians, painters, actors, and cartoon artists. This has made it possible to ‘retrace’ the footsteps of artists, who passed away long before I first set foot in the region but left traces behind outside of any formal archive: art pieces preserved in galleries or private homes, influences on local forms of artmaking, and memories of those who knew them. This allowed me to gather information about little-studied waves of southwards migration, which gained momentum as Congo experienced increasing economic and political difficulties in the later twentieth century.

These conversations also provided evocative images; snapshots of a life spent in the Copperbelt. Some evoked the ambiance of “Zamrock” music shows they attended by the Mindolo Dam, where music was to be enjoyed accompanied

by the sizzling sound of meat being grilled on barbecues and the sight of the sun setting over the dam. Some described building their own guitars and learning to play new music styles by reproducing the sounds they heard on the radio, while others preferred Karindula, a giant banjo with four strings typical of the region. Others recalled cutting out comics out of magazines, sharing them with friends at school and keeping scrapbooks. Through such vignettes, the world of central African mining towns in the second half of the twentieth century becomes alive and is given texture beyond labour statistics. They provide the chance of gleaning small glimpses of things that would otherwise fade out of human memory and that physical archives often cannot capture or preserve.

## Damilola Adepeju-Fashina



When my master's degree commenced in October 2020 in the middle of the pandemic, I had hoped that the situation would get better. Thankfully, things started on a good note with a mix of in-person and online classes. But the situation quickly deteriorated with a second lockdown in England and then a third in January 2021. At the beginning of the degree, I was not quite sure about how I would like online classes and looked forward to when in-person classes would safely resume – but they never did for the remainder of the degree. Suffice it to say that I had my entire master's degree online, though I was also in Oxford throughout. To be candid, I never thought I would get to love taking online classes. Certainly, I prefer in-person classes to online classes, but I equally appreciate the online lectures and classes I took during my degree because they allowed me to manage my time better, which meant more productive study time. But such mode of study also has its downsides, part of which is 'Zoom fatigue', fewer class interactions, and lack of physical contact, which sometimes can make learning difficult.

Pursuing a master's degree during a pandemic did not just mean switching from in-person to online classes. For me, and perhaps, for a number of people in my cohort, it also meant the readiness to constantly make changes to our dissertations. I had to change the focus of my dissertation when I realised that I would not be able to interview the people needed to participate in my study, partly because of the pandemic. But starting all over was not a lot of hassle because the African Studies Centre had informed us at the beginning of the degree to take the pandemic into consideration when planning our dissertations. There was also support from the Centre and the University in the best way possible.

For me, the effort to make the best of the degree, despite the pandemic, was not just about classes and dissertations but also social experience and interaction, which the pandemic made difficult. Nevertheless and thanks to my cohort that occasionally organised online social meetings, which made a difference. Also, I had the opportunity to be part of a global leadership community – The Oxford Global Leadership Initiative – within The Oxford Character Project, which has positively influenced my life, especially through the global leadership discussions that I have been part of and the opportunity of a mentorship programme.

Indeed, I was uncertain about how doing a master's degree in a pandemic would feel like but, the experience has just reinforced my belief that regardless of the situation, with the right environment and support, things would fall into place – and they did.

## Ebba Holmström



When I applied to the MSc in African Studies, I had no clue what the "Oxford experience" was all about. Now, in Trinity term 2021, I still do not know a lot about that experience. In March-April 2020, I remember I felt sorry for how last year's cohort got affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. The start of Michaelmas term felt distant, and I was convinced we would get back to normal until then. In short, my perspectives have changed by now. As a European citizen, I have realised that I chose the ultimate worst year to move to the UK, but it has for sure been very eventful. Covid also helped us to forget about Brexit for a while.

Throughout the year, however, I decided not to feel sorry for myself. Even though it sometimes happens, I continuously realise that choosing to be in Oxford this year, albeit everything, was a great decision. During the year when the whole world paused, I was able to travel, to meet (some) new people from different parts of the world, and I have learnt a lot of interesting stuff together with an amazing cohort. Despite being disconnected physically, we have gone through a lot together.

To summarise the year, I would say that I really enjoyed Michaelmas term, suffered throughout Hilary term, and have a good feeling about Trinity term. At the beginning of MT, we were still allowed to meet up to some extent, and I had around five in-person classes in total. I went home to Sweden for Christmas and left my plants in my window, knowing I would be back in three weeks. Three weeks turned into three months, and yes, most of the plants died. I enjoyed being at home, and (once again) I will not feel sorry for myself as I did not even stay in the UK during the third lockdown. However, the workload in HT was extreme, and it was stressful not having access to all the readings. On the other hand, I might have written MSc in African Studies history as I went on a cross-country skiing trip directly after submitting the CC1 essay in January?

I got back to Oxford at the end of March, and TT has been lovely so far. I have also become a rower – one of the few sports allowed to resume. Sadly, we have not been able to go on fieldwork. I am, however, looking forward to connecting with people from our cohort (and maybe previous/future cohorts?) in various African countries in the future.

It might not have been the "Oxford experience" alumni usually refer to, but it has definitely been a very unique experience! I hope that Oxford will welcome us back with open arms – as soon as we are allowed to hug each other again.

## Edward Armitage



I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the African Studies Centre at Oxford University. Not only was I afforded the opportunity to meet a plethora of wonderful and fiercely intelligent course mates, but I have had the chance to study some truly fascinating topics, taught by leading academics. Rather tentatively, I came into this course with a legal and philosophical background, but I have finished feeling well equipped in range of different disciplines including history, politics, and economics. My research centred on how complex political victimhood is addressed within international criminal justice, taking a deeper analysis into the case of Dominic Ongwen before the ICC. What I found most exciting was the opportunity to interview participants for my thesis, which is something I have not had the chance to do previously.

The rigors of the MSc have really pushed my academic and personal development, allowing me to explore different areas of interest that were not previously available. Whilst the course was very intensive, it has been an extremely rewarding process, helped by the staff and students who have truly made my time on the MSc special. Through the Oxford career service, I obtained a paid internship to work for an NGO in Sierra Leone as a research and campaigns assistant, which I am very excited to utilise the knowledge and skills I have gained during my time at the African Studies Centre. In September, I will be pursuing the LL.M in Bar Vocational Studies at the City Law School on a part-funded scholarship, in the hope to become a criminal and human rights barrister.

As a member of Exeter college, it would be inappropriate not to end with a Tolkien quote. Thus, when I have pondered extensively how best to spend the time that has been given to me, I take great comfort in my decision to spend my time at the African Studies Centre. For without making such a decision, I would have truly missed out on a life changing year.

## Ndidi Akahara



The past academic year has certainly been an interesting one for me. I started my studies at the African Studies Centre virtually in Dallas, Texas due to the pandemic and I have very slowly made my way to Oxford over the past nine months. Like something of an African Studies pilgrim, at the beginning of Hilary term I made my journey from the United States to London where I was met with strict lockdown restrictions. After another six months of seminars, options courses, discussions, vaccinations across the UK, and Microsoft Teams meetings, I found myself moving (with much anticipation) to Oxford, the almost paradisaal town of my academic fancies. Virtually all of my MSc degree has been online and although it would have been wonderful to attend seminars and lectures in person, it has still been an incredibly engaging nine months. Despite the year we have all had, I have benefitted greatly from a tightly knit cohort, supportive professors and intellectually stimulating classes. My thesis writing process has taught me a lot and I have become a more confident academic writer and scholar. Although virtual learning was a different experience for me, it also afforded me the opportunity to expand the scope of my thesis, as video calls transcended geographical (and travel) restrictions. In all this, I have appreciated the ways we have sought to connect with each other, as a cohort and a department. The MSc has prepared me for real engagement with the African Continent and the globe at large. It has been a challenging but very rewarding year and I am thankful for all the experiences I have gained thus far.



## Student Tributes for Professor Wale Adebaniwi

Iyone Agboraw



Gayatri Sahgal



Professor Adebaniwi while hosting the President of Mauritius

### Iyone Agboraw

My second supervision with Wale is my favourite story to tell others when describing my supervisor. After a brief conversation, he walked up to the bookshelves lining his office and started pulling up books. I scribbled down the titles of the books as he explained to me that I should read them before our next supervision. While the sheer number of books he had pulled off his shelves (around 20) was daunting – I was nevertheless giddy with excitement.

Upon returning home, I anxiously began the task of locating each book and article that he had suggested. As I read, I furiously scribbled questions and notes in one of the many notebooks that have accompanied me during this PhD journey.

After reading everything, I sat down and proudly wrote what is probably the most convoluted writing of my PhD career.

Upon reading it, Wale had but one question 'why?'. I quietly mumbled that I thought that had been the task. I had assumed that he wanted to see the books reflected in the pages I gave him.

He shook his head and told me in what was to be the first of his many gentle but frank talks with me that he wanted me to broaden my horizons. He had wanted me to understand the academic landscape beyond my topic. He had wanted to foster my intellectual growth beyond my speciality.

As you go through education, it becomes about mastery over an increasingly narrow scope of topics. We go from 8 learning everything under the sun to 26 and solely focused on one research question within one field. In my anxiety to master my research questions, I had forgotten about growing beyond it.

Growth is what Wale always reminds me to remember. When the pandemic first began, and I was again anxious about how I would conquer my PhD within the confines of lockdown – he once again redirected me to growth.

He encouraged me to read the early canon of American poetry. To immerse myself in the words of Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson. To be inspired by their writing. To seek comfort within the writing and to somewhere in their words grow.

I am grateful to have Wale as my supervisor. I am grateful for his frank but gentle chats, His jokes and political opinions. But most importantly, I am grateful that he has encouraged me to grow beyond my research questions, beyond my scope of interest, beyond my discipline.

### Gayatri Sahgal

Over the past year and a half, I've had the pleasure of being supervised by Professor Adebaniwi. Anyone who has read Professor Adebaniwi's work or attended his classes knows him to be an exceptional academic. As a novice in the field, I can do limited justice in articulating the many dimensions of his intellectual acumen and understanding of African politics and political philosophy. However, the one thing that I can provide an exhaustive testimony of is the level of support and guidance that he offers to his students.

Despite the many demands on his time, Professor Adebaniwi always made an effort to hear my many vexations and fears. He took the pains to untie my academic jumbles (which assumed ungainly proportions), and somehow always offered the critical piece of advice that unscrambled my mental clutter and shrunk it down to size.

But perhaps what I will miss the most is the dry wit that Professor Adebaniwi always brought to every conversation. It is the type of humour, which chaffs through the many layers of jargon and offers up that elusive kernel of truth.

You will be very missed, Professor Adebaniwi, and we are all highly envious of your future students, who will now have the privilege to be taught by you.

Professor Wale Adebaniwi

## Coralie Lolliot



Since I graduated from the MSc in African Studies, I was able to become a consultant in the Futures of Learning and Innovation team at UNESCO. Here, I played a major role in facilitating the work of the UNESCO International Commission on the Futures of Education and on the implementation and design of the Building Evidence in Education (BE2) meeting. I was also able to use my knowledge of African affairs in designing a report on post-basic education provisions in sub-Saharan Africa.

I'm now the Network Manager of Call A Lawyer, one of the top Legal Tech in the Francophone sphere. Here, I'm managing a network of +1300 Lawyers across France in order to democratize access to law. Just as important, I'm the Program Director for the Collective For The Renewal of Africa (CORA). It is a Pan-African collective of over 100 social and natural scientists, historians, writers, medical doctors and artists from across Africa and the diaspora.

We are trying to promote African knowledge and innovative thinking through the production of quality research and influencing positive change within African nations and in service of African societies.

## Jono Jackson



I am happy to share the online publication of my latest article ahead of print publication in the *Journal of Eastern African Studies*.

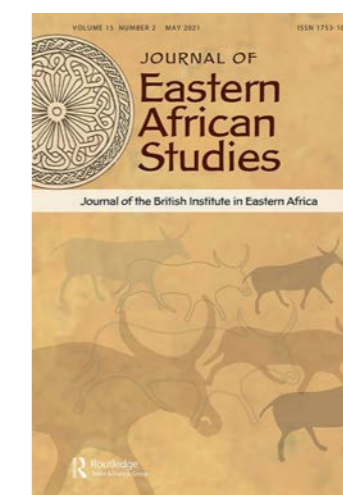
Titled: '[Off to Sugar Valley: the Kilombero Settlement Scheme and 'Nyerere's People', 1959–69](#)

It is published Open Access, so please share the download link widely to anyone that might also be interested.

The article traces the history of one of Tanganyika's first settlement schemes linked to Julius Nyerere and TANU, and which served as an important model in Tanzania's programme of social development for understanding the challenges of rural transformation.

I also draw from transcribed TANU songs of liberation and archival interview footage with Nyerere to convey the spirit of nationalism before Independence, and which was woven into the scheme's beginnings.

The songs can be downloaded via the link.



## Mary Hill Brooks



My name is Mary Hill Brooks and I graduated from the MSc in African Studies program in 2020. I wrote my dissertation on the professional knowledge and capabilities of teachers in northern Nigeria, using multivariate logistic regression analyses. Since my time at Oxford, I worked two part-time jobs and recently started a full-time job. Following my time at Oxford, I continued working for the geopolitical consulting firm, Oxford Analytica, from North Carolina where I resided throughout the pandemic. Additionally, I worked as a Data and Public Policy Forecaster for Georgetown's Center for Security and Emerging Technology. In this role, I presented statistical predictions on various policy questions regarding immigration, technology, and US-China relations through regression analysis of published research data. In December 2020, I began working for a women-led impact investing firm in New York City. I have thoroughly enjoyed being able to apply what I learned at Oxford and St Andrews (my undergrad) to the investment world in an impactful way while also learning an immense amount about finance. My time in impact investing has taught me the ways in which investing can not only exclude companies with negative social and environmental impacts but also support ones that positively contribute to communities and the environment.

## Arshan Barzani

A little over a year after rushing to leave Oxford amid the early panic of the pandemic, I came back to town. It was a reluctant choice. My year doing the MSc African Studies had been so pleasant that thought I should better stay away. Was there a point in letting a different Oxford – rid of its people, events and charming bustle – override the cherished memories in my mind?

Only once outdoor dining re-opened on April 12th did the town get some of its mojo back. No statistic can capture the unnatural quiet of Cornmarket Street, and I was very glad to see it go. As friends emerged from their cocoons, I realized that I was unreservedly glad to be back in town too.

I had spent much of the past year in Arizona. My family lives there, and my military service with the US Army coincidentally took place there. Until February, I lived on post, first working on a covid detail, then taking a long professional-development course. When a tsunami of covid cases hit Arizona, the work went on.

After a gap year – involuntary, limited by world events, full of work, but still a gap year of sorts – I'll go to law school in August. From there, it may be full speed ahead for years, and I may learn to miss the quiet of quarantine Oxford.



## Marcia Schenk



It is with great pleasure that I announce that the edited volume *Navigating Socialist Encounters. Moorings and (Dis)Entanglements between Africa and East Germany during the Cold War* has been published (open access):

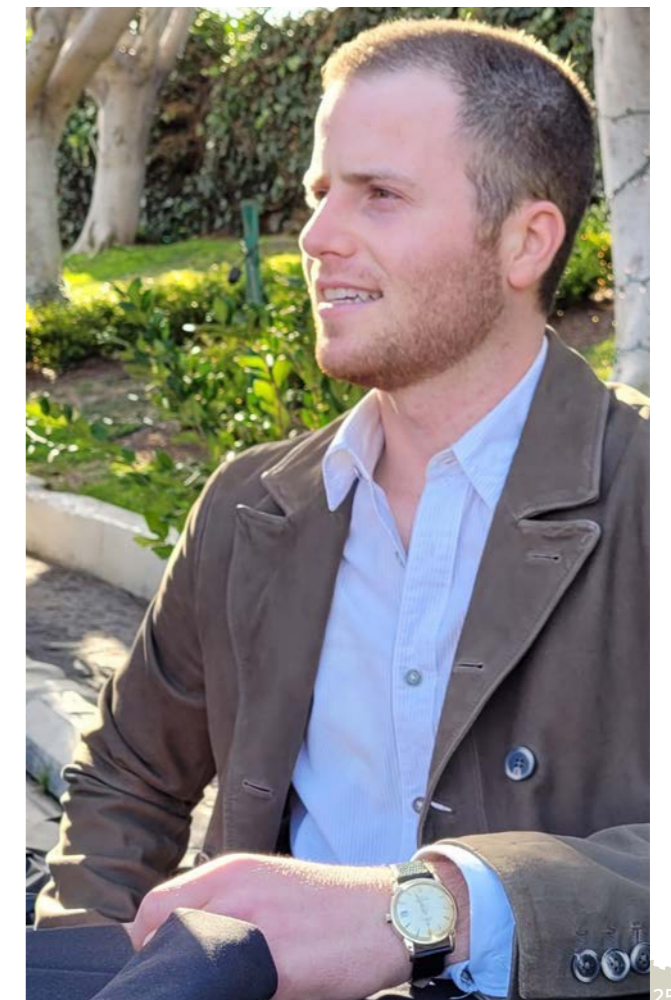
<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110623543/html?lang=en>

This anthology, edited by Eric Burton, Anne Dietrich, Immanuel Harisch, and myself, firmly anchors African history in global history by illuminating the connections between African and East German actors and institutions during the Cold War. With a particular focus on agency and African influences on the GDR (and vice versa), the volume illuminates personal and institutional agency, reciprocal cultural transfers, migration, development, and solidarity.

The case studies range from German courses at the Herder and Goethe Institutes in Cairo, Kenyan students in the GDR and Yugoslavia, African trade unionists at a trade union college, Mozambican contract workers, and Zanzibari literati, to East German journalists, friendship brigadists, and development experts. The introduction, written collectively by the editors, provides an introduction to the historiography and an overview of the diverse relationships of African personal actors, institutions, parties, and liberation movements with the GDR during the Cold War.

## Jordan Cassel

Jordan graduated from the MSc program in 2019. It provided him with a fountain of knowledge on Africa which he now applies in tech and entertainment. He began his career at Netflix as an Intelligence Analyst, before becoming a Risk & Intelligence Specialist, and is now the Specialist for Security Operations for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In his different roles, his work has cut across various aspects of the business, from employees, events, and productions' safety and security to public policy research. One of the most rewarding aspects of Jordan's current role has been the transition to managing and helping build his team's scope of responsibilities. He is looking forward to travelling once more within the three regions he covers post-vaccine, helping Netflix lean into risk and tell more local stories for the world.



## Nomtha Gray

Deciding to take on a MSc was a decision that I didn't quite expect to happen, but my husband and I wanted to emigrate from the UK to South Africa. However, having spent close to my entire life in the UK, I didn't feel that I had the right simply to turn up with no idea of the continent's history, culture or current challenges. Although, having grown up around the anti-apartheid movement with parents in the ANC, I wasn't starting my education entirely from scratch, I didn't feel anywhere near prepared enough. African Studies MSc was suggested by an uncle of mine as a good starting point for this. It was an amazing experience and, being a very short intense course, meant that I had a huge amount to learn in a very short time. Selecting a dissertation subject based in part on my career allowed me to focus on a very relevant area for South Africa – corruption and procurement's role in its prevention. We went out to South Africa as soon as I finished the course and decided on an extended stay from November 2019 while I assessed job opportunities. While the options are there, unfortunately the pandemic struck towards the end of our tourist visa extension and we decided not to return to the UK but take advantage of the various automatic extensions offered by the government. However, work options remained limited by not having a work visa.

I initially thought that I would spend the lockdown time writing, reading and researching, but to my surprise, I have been more restless and inclined towards physical activity, which involved taking up running and intensifying my training regime. I am a qualified rugby referee, so much of my WhatsApp group chatter was around maintaining fitness and what law adaptations might look like in the community game. Oh – and my baking has taken on another level. I have become far more experimental, adapting recipes to see if I can make tasty cakes a little healthier by using less processed sugar and incorporating more fruit and veg.

There has been a certain calm to having so many options taken out of one's hands by something as unexpected as a pandemic. I was able to relax into the changes knowing that there were simply very few other options and as things started to open up, I am now looking into taking my dissertation research into a doctorate based in South Africa. I have had a paper accepted for publication despite being an independent scholar. It has been a slow process, but very satisfying to get the feedback and eventual affirmation of a peer review.

As an Oxford resident (even if it'll only be part-time in future), I will never quite leave and as I write this now, I am sitting looking out of the window at a grey, ominous sky heavy with clouds so low I'm sure I keep bumping my

head against them. But this is not quite home any more – the dust of Africa has settled in my soul and I cannot wait to get back there and continue what I started in Oxford.



## Written under the Skin by Carl Coetzee

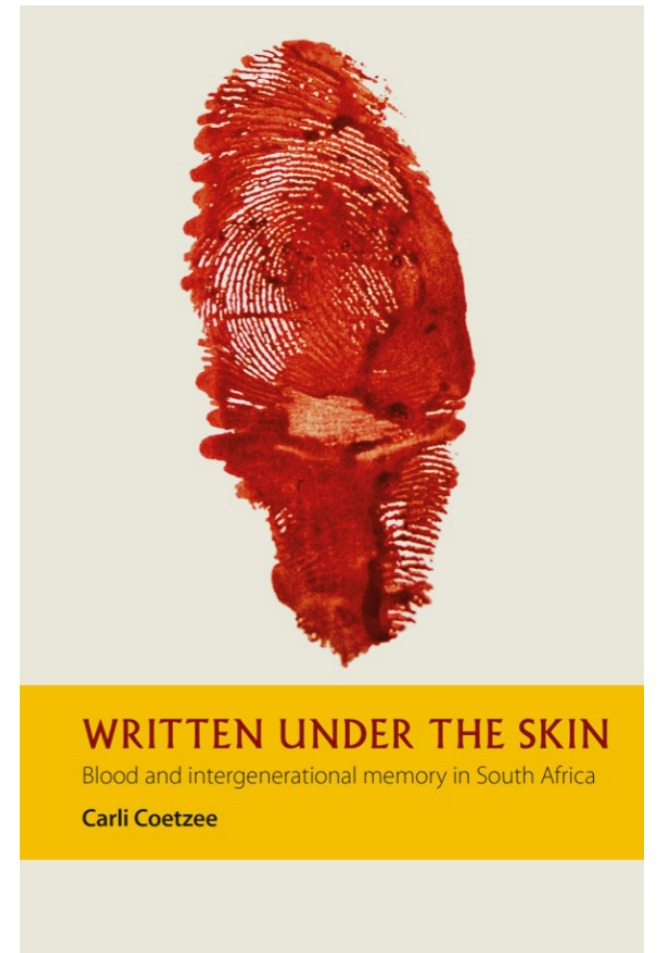
Carli Coetzee's book *Written under the Skin: Blood and Intergenerational Memory in South Africa*, has been selected as the winner of the 2021 African Literature Association's Scholarly Book of the Year Award. The book's argument is that a younger generation of South Africans is disputing and debating the terms through which to understand contemporary South Africa, as well as for interpreting the legacies of the past that remain under the visible layer of skin. The emphasis on blood as trope challenges the privileged status skin has had as explanatory category in thinking about identity, and instead seeks to understand blood's other temporalities to understand debates about intergenerational transfer and ambiguous continuity.

The book has appeared in two editions, in the African Articulations series From James Currey/Boydell & Brewer and a South African edition from Wits University Press.

Carli Coetzee has made a name for herself by showing – not telling – her readers what reconciliation after apartheid should mean. It should mean nudging South Africans away from the dangerous assumptions that negotiating the past means leaving unchallenged old patterns of privilege, that the work of translation should always benefit English and its primary speakers, and, in her latest book, that skin-deep is sufficient depth for reckoning with the past. *Written under the Skin* is about blood and South Africa's bloody past. It is also about the transfusion of memory across generations. The book challenges the discourse of newness that has marked South Africa since the formal end of apartheid in 1994, by showing the violence done and masked by such a discourse. *Written under the Skin* calls for new ways of reading South African history. It proposes protocols of care – cautious, ethical, vigilant – to guide these new ways of reading. There is in this book a moral urgency and an ethical injunction that demand our attention. We dare not ignore this book. – Jacob S. T. Dlamini, Assistant Professor of History, Princeton University

Coetzee presents, pulls in different directions and pulses her critical analyses of varying kinds of blood and bloodlines while ploughing through numerous South African texts towards some understanding. Reading the quintessentially cryptic blood requires piercing the skin. Blood reveals more than skin ever will. Coetzee suggests we read in depth the complex politics of blood and bloodlines in order to understand humanity and to heal. – Makhosazana Xaba, poet and author of *Running and Other Stories*

This could be the book that weans us from our smug assertion that bodies speak to us, that we can read histories and anxieties from torso and limbs. Coetzee insists that we read what is within the body – what's beneath the skin



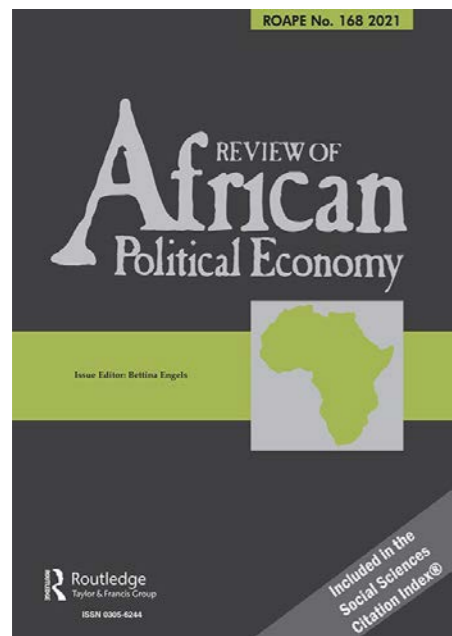
and what flows through it – to understand the complexities of post-apartheid South Africa. Blood and faeces and the whereabouts of corpses do not speak to us either, but in Coetzee's skillful reckoning they speak to each other not to construct anything so simple as a body politic but the frayed and fraught relationships that constitute how we learn about the world. – Luise White, Professor of History, University of Florida

# Nomtha Gray

## Publication Announcement

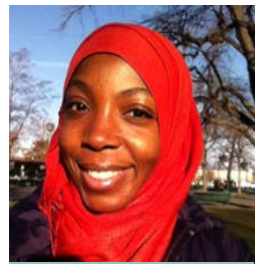
Two years after completing my MSc African Studies, I have been published in the Review of African Political Economy as "When anti-corruption fails: the dynamics of procurement in contemporary South Africa". The original research was undertaken for the MSc dissertation, but I didn't undertake it expecting to publish. Still, having been asked by a few different people if I intended to publish and thanks to the pandemic, I found myself with very little else to do for several months. To my surprise, the paper was accepted with just minor amendments and clarifications from the reviewers. One of the comments was particularly positive, for which I am grateful. I'm very happy with the final result and I've since been asked to contribute to a book. My next project will hopefully be a series of case studies looking at procurement in South African state-owned entities.

Link to article: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03056244.2021.1932789>



# African Studies

## Class of 2020–21



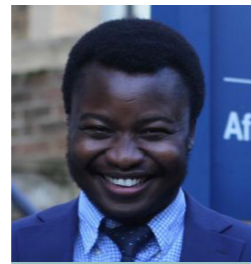
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The Farmer–Herder Conflict in Nigeria: The Role of the Media



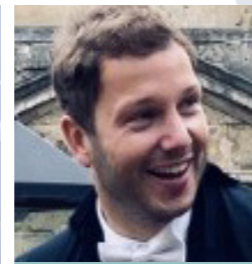
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**Jacob Alhassan**  
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*Les Évolués*: Eurocentrism and the Black 'elites' in the Belgian Congo.



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The Politicization of Self-determination through Social Media: A Netnography of the Homeland Study Group Foundation.



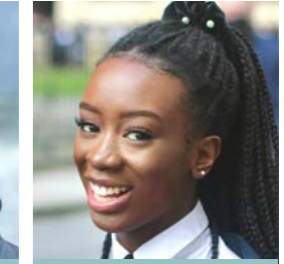
**Charl Linde**  
South Africa

What comes after racist science? Investigating institutional and researcher responses to two race-related research controversies in South Africa



**Jorich Johann Loubser**  
South African

An Historical Account of Aspiring African Development States: Investigating Claim-making in the State-Capital Nexus of Botswana and South Africa's Mining Sectors



**Eva Meghan Mills-Amissah**  
British-Ghanaian

Cultural Identity, Resistance and Cartoons in Post-Colonial Ghana: The Case of Ananse the Spider



**Ian Caistor-Parker**  
British

Dissertation title: Imperial Prisons, tensions and 'reform': the significance of Alexander Paterson's visits to Africa c.1938–1946.



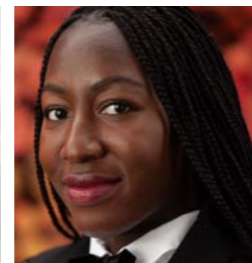
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Somalia

From the Nation's Capital to a Contested City: Questioning the status of Mogadishu in federal Somalia



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Jacob Alhassan

**African Studies prize**  
Jorich Loubser





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