

Editorial commentary for 2009 32nd Annual Conference Papers

The theme for the 32nd AFSAAP conference held at the University of Queensland was “Africa in a restructuring world”. The Penguin English Dictionary defines restructuring as: to change the make-up, organisation, or pattern of (something, e.g. an institution or business). Change is a key word in this definition hence conception of ‘Africa in a restructuring world’ implies discussion of Africa in the context of a changing world. Africa is changing and understanding this change may be achieved through the study of themes which include/or are located in—Pre-colonial era, Slavery, Colonialism, Imperialism, Postcolonial era, Globalisation and Corporate Multinational; African Diasporas, Migration, Identity and Culture; Health, Poverty, Food and Water security; Environmental Protection and Land Management. The papers submitted are diverse and do resonate with some of the sub themes mentioned above. Leeman’s paper, for example, which is located in a pre-colonial era of Africa, explores the religious and material culture that developed as a result of the contacts between the Ethiopians and the Jewish people, during the early centuries. Leeman’s paper provides Ethiopian evidence to support the premise that until the Babylonian destruction Judah in 586B.C.E. the events of the Old Testament occurred not in Palestine but in Western Arabia and to a lesser extent on the Ethiopian/Eritrean Plateau.

Three papers are located in the colonial era. Dimock’s paper explores Queen Victoria’s personal links with issues around the slave trade and slavery. Dimock examines how the anti-slavery movement focused on the young monarch, and discusses three former slaves who had personal contact with the Queen at different times. Scott’s paper drawing upon original archival and obscure secondary sources examines the intersection between the public and private life of a forgotten governor of Uganda, Sir William Gowers. O’Callaghan through the travels of two Australian women Jessie Webb and Dr Georgina Sweet from Cape to Cairo her paper provides a brief introduction and possible explanation for the journey, then a commentary on one particular aspect, that of the *colonial cocoon*.

Shurkian’s paper, centering on the Nuba people, extends from the pre-colonial to the present. He has written a detailed account about the political and socio-cultural history of the Nuba people. The central thesis in Shurkian’s paper is the ‘historic marginalisation and injustices’ of the Nuba people by the Turco-Egyptian colonial

regime; incursion by Arab Islamic *Jihadists* and the current oppressive relations with the Khartoum regime.

Next category of papers relates to contemporary issues of Africa, namely corporate multinationalism and migration. Lyons paper explores an important subject of what she has termed 'Pharmaceutical Colonialism'. Developing countries particularly Africa are being targeted by pharmaceutical companies to conduct drug trials on vulnerable people; people who are not well informed about the research trials and their rights. She argues that the ethical protocols in place to guide clinical trials are sometimes overlooked or poorly implemented particularly as ethics committees, where they do exist, are marred by corruption and inefficiency.

Next two papers examine issues relating to African migrants in Australia. Saffu's paper is part of an ongoing research project. It explores the role of Adult Education in building the community capacity of African-Australian women in the Northern Territory. Willsmore's paper is based on a research project among young African refugees in South Australia which aims at exploring experiences of both violence and non-violence; focusing on young people's experiences in South Australia, rather than prior to arrival. African migrant research based papers are a welcome addition to the increasing scope of AFSAAP publication.

This is a diverse and informative collection of well written papers which reflect the intellectual commitment of AFSAAP 'to promote research and teaching of African Studies in Australia and The Pacific; to facilitate contact among scholars and students in the field of African Studies through conferences, regional meetings and publications'. Outcomes of this key objective of the AFSAAP are self evident in the papers you are about to read. On behalf of the AFSAAP executive and the conference organisers I do wish to express my appreciation to the authors who submitted their papers.

By Peter Mbago Wakholi
Secretary AFSAAP