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EDITORIAL

African Studies in Australasia: Views on China and New Zealand

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The publication of this second issue of the 38th volume of the *Australasian Review of African Studies* coincides with the 40th Annual AFSAAP Conference, held in Adelaide, South Australia November 23-24, 2017. This milestone is an achievement for AFSAAP, which has operated on a shoestring and the goodwill of members and volunteers since 1978. The annual conference is an essential event in the Australasian calendar, especially for those scholars and academics, researchers and students, who continue to be interested in the African continent. Their interest prevails despite Africa continually sliding off the international map of relevance in Australia and New Zealand. You have read this lament previously in these editorial pages (Lyons, 2017), yet it is continuously noteworthy in this particular forum. Indeed, the latest AFSAAP audit of African Studies topics available in Australian and New Zealand universities reveals the rather depressing demise of African issues from the tertiary curriculum. Therefore, it is worth going over in brief the remarkable survival story and history of African Studies in this region despite this trend.

To begin, I will briefly update the research I began with Elizabeth Dimock back in 2003, for the AFSAAP Conference held in Adelaide, at Flinders University (Lyons and Dimock, 2003; Lyons and Dimock 2007). It was not until 2014 that I was able to update this 2003 data with my colleague Aime Saba (Lyons and Saba, 2015) for the AFSAAP Conference held in Dunedin, New Zealand. That particular paper was also able to include data, for the first time from New Zealand University course availabilities, thanks to AFSAAP supporting this data-collection by

conducting a three yearly survey of African Studies scholars, academics, and topics or courses available in Australian and New Zealand Universities (see AFSAAP, 2011; 2014; 2017).¹

In 2003, Lyons and Dimock concluded that “African studies exists in Australian universities because of the dedication of a core group of enthusiastic scholars who have had the opportunity to deliver topics on Africa, and develop research in specific fields of interest in their respective university departments” (Lyons and Dimock, 2003, 2007). Lyons and Saba (2015) then demonstrated “that knowledge about Africa in Australia remains limited” and not much had changed in the preceding decade. That was “despite the rapid increases in scholarships offered to Africans; and despite the ‘new engagement’ with Africa espoused by the former Labor government”. The budget cuts to international aid directed towards Africa by the current Liberal-Coalition government, has clearly not helped this appeal. Now in 2017, with the assistance of Wanda Warlik (who collected the data for AFSAAP across Australia and New Zealand), we can again confirm this trend. Not much has changed in the university and knowledge sectors, and the handful of African Studies topics available in Australian Universities appears to come down to a dedicated and small group of academics, who are able to teach either one or two undergraduate or postgraduate topics on Africa.

Yet, what this 2017 survey reveals is there are many more academics (approximately 58) who have an interest in Africa, and may indeed conduct research in Africa or on issues that affect Africans. However, these academics work in isolation from other Africanists (perhaps because of the generic attacks within the academy on ‘area studies’, which are not recognised as a ‘Field of Research’ (FoR), unlike Political Science or History for example, and therefore do not attract funding or workload points). It is noteworthy, that the majority of these scholars revealed through the AFSAAP (2017) survey of Africanists, are not members of AFSAAP, and are thus unlikely to be reading this editorial. Ignored at their own risk! Further research is needed, to ascertain why these interesting yet disparate scholars with an interest in African issues are not connected and networked through this region’s only academic association of scholars interested in African Studies. However interesting such speculation could be, instead, let us now turn to the number and types of topics that are

¹ This editorial is based upon Tanya Lyons, ‘Trends in African Studies in Australia and New Zealand’, paper presented at the 40th Annual AFSAAP Conference, *Researching Africa in Australasia – The Way Forward*, South Australia, November 23-24, 2017.

available within the university sector for students to learn more about Africa in Australia and New Zealand (See Table 1).

Table 1: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Specific African Studies topics in Australian and New Zealand Universities 2003, 2011, 2014 and 2017

University	2017
Adelaide	0
Australian National	0
Curtin	0
Flinders	Africa on a Global Stage. Africa: International Interventions. African Politics Global Issues.
La Trobe	Amanzi Springs Palaeolithic Site (Feb annually), South Africa. Australian-South African Geoarchaeological and Paleoanthropological Field School at the Drimolen hominin site (June annually, not offered in 2017).
Macquarie	0
Melbourne	Africa: Environment, Development, People. African Music and Dance. African Music and Dance Ensemble 1. African Music and Dance Ensemble 2. Politics and Contested Development: Africa.
UNSW (Canberra)	0
RMIT	0
Sydney	0
Victoria	Contemporary Africa and Social Change.
UWA	The International Politics of Africa. Peace and Security in Africa. Introduction to African History.
Wollongong	0
Monash (South Africa Campus)	0
AUS-TOTAL	13
Otago, NZ	Transformations in Developing Countries. Sustaining Rural Livelihoods in Developing Countries.
NZ- TOTAL	2
REGION TOTAL	15

Note: Universities listed with a score of 0 are included as they previously offered African Studies Topics – Refer to Lyons and Dimock (2003). Sources: Lyons and Dimock (2003); Lyons (2013); Lyons and Saba (2015); AFSAAP 2014; AFSAAP 2017

African Studies Topics

In 2017, according to the AFSAAP data collection project (AFSAAP, 2017) there were nine academic staff teaching 15 undergraduate or postgraduate topics with a pure focus on Africa in Australia and New Zealand universities (See Table 1). All of the academic staff that appeared in this audit, were contacted via email by this author to confirm the availability of their topics in 2017. From this survey it was determined that Victoria is the place to study African issues, with a total of five academic staff involved in teaching seven topics overall (which in 2017 included one field trip to Africa, and one field trip to an African-Australian community in Victoria).

With at least three academics involved in teaching five topics overall, the University of Melbourne has the most African Studies staff, and the most topics available to choose from (3 Music, 1 Geography, 1 Development Studies). Graeme Counsel has taught *African Music and Dance*, *African Music and Dance Ensemble 1*, and *African Music and Dance Ensemble 2* since 2014, and these have been offered since mid-2000 by other teaching staff. According to Counsel, “They are the only subjects devoted to the study of African music offered in Australia” (Counsel, 2017, *personal correspondence*). Simon Batterbury has taught *Africa: Environment, Development, People* at The University of Melbourne “continuously since 2005” (Batterbury, 2017, *personal correspondence*), however since 2017 it is now being taught by Peter Boateng (who is officially the newest African Studies academic now teaching in Australia). According to Boateng his topic has been popular, with between 130-170 enrolments (so it’s not as if students are uninterested in Africa, given the choice). The topic examines current issues on the African continent. Boateng “organised a seminal fieldtrip to an area where many African migrants have settled [in Victoria]. We had a panel discussion with invited speakers from various demographic and cultural groups of Africans, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, and other relevant organisations” (Boateng 2017, *Personal Correspondence*). Furthermore, at The University of Melbourne, at the postgraduate level, there is one topic offered entitled *Politics and Contested Development: Africa*. In 2017 the convener was Rachel Diprose.

La Trobe University offered a topic called *African Archeology* in alternate years, but according to the current topic convener Nicola Stern, it has not been offered since 2015 (Stern, 2017, *Personal Correspondence*). Nonetheless, her colleague Andy Herries has been able to offer two unique field trip experiences to South Africa as part of the Archaeology course at La Trobe University. *Australian-South African Geoarchaeological and*

Paleoanthropological Field School at the Drimolen hominin site, has been available since 2013, although it was not offered in 2017, it will return in 2018. “It has the equivalent of a full 12 week teaching load specifically on the Human Evolution and Archaeology of South Africa” (Herries, 2017, *Personal Correspondence*). The opportunity to attend a field trip to the *Amanzi Springs Palaeolithic Site, South Africa* “ran in May 2017 and we are there again in November 2017 with both Australian and South African students” (Herries, 2017, *Personal Correspondence*). 2017 was the first year that Herries taught this.

Victoria University offers just one topic *Contemporary Africa and Social Change*, taught by Charles Mphande, and this has been available (according to their website) at least since the AFSAAP data collection began in 2011.

However, the Victorians aren't all perfect! RMIT has previously offered one topic entitled *Contemporary Africa*, which was last taught between 2011 and 2014 by Jonathan Makuwira. However, it has not been offered since he left the university to take up a post as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Malawi University of Science and Technology. There are plans to offer it in the future, so it has remained on RMIT's books, however, for the purpose of this audit it was not available.

The University of Western Australia, closest of all universities in this region to Africa, and home to the Africa Research Cluster (http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/research/clusters/Africa_Research), boasts only two academic staff teaching between them only three topics. An *Introduction to African Politics* is taught by Jeremy Martens in History, and two Politics topics are taught by David Mickler - *The International Politics of Africa*, at third year undergraduate level; and at Masters level, *Peace and Security in Africa*. Indeed, the UWA's Masters in International Development promotes “Africa-related content and experts”, and yet out of the topics required in this degree, only 2 are specifically related to Africa, and they appear to only be elective choices among many (see <https://study.uwa.edu.au/courses/master-of-international-development>). There is another topic available within the ‘Mining’ course entitled *Ore Deposit Field Excursion* (South Africa). However, this is a technical topic, related only to Africa by the location of the excursion, and will thus not be included statistically in this study.

South Australia, home to the 2017 AFSAAP Executive, offers three topics on African Politics and International Relations at Flinders University. Taught by this author, at second year undergraduate level, *Africa on a Global Stage*; at third year undergraduate level, *Africa: International Interventions* (now a core topic in the Bachelor of International Relations,

rather than a usual elective choice); and *African Politics: Global Issues*, taught at the Masters Level. These have been on offer for over a decade.

At the Australian National University, there is only one topic available directly related to Africa and that is *Law and Governance in Africa*, taught by Jolyon Ford, but is offered only every two years due to low demand. It was not offered in 2017.

Macquarie University in New South Wales, once boasted a great topic on *Africa and Globalisation* taught by Geoffrey Hawker (former AFSAAP President). However, this topic was last offered in 2014. Hawker is now an Honorary Researcher at Macquarie and enjoying his retirement. This was the only topic offered across NSW related to African Studies directly, despite NSW being the birth-centre of the Australia-Africa University Network (AAUN).

New Zealand offers less opportunity to study Africa, however, at least there are two topics offered at the University of Otago on geography and development in Africa. Taught by Tony Binns, he focusses on the 54 African nations in *Transformations in Developing Countries*, and 60 percent of his topic *Sustaining Rural Livelihoods in Developing Countries* is based on African issues (Tony Binns, 2017, *Personal Correspondence*).

Views on China and New Zealand

Given this dearth of African Studies opportunities in Australia and New Zealand, it remains remarkable that this journal is able to publish such high quality and original research on Africa and the African Diaspora in Australia and New Zealand. This issue of *ARAS* explores two unique perspectives on the role and influence of China across the African continent, and two fascinating studies on the issues facing members of the African community in New Zealand.

Firstly, Theo Neethling in his article *China's Evolving Role and Approach to International Peacekeeping: The Cases of Mali and South Sudan*, argues that China is not planning to re-colonise Africa – a general misconception construed from their intense activities across the continent – but rather is exercising strategic investment and interventions to ensure its own economic and diplomatic interests, and as Neethling states, to “exercise its global presence”. China’s most obvious interventions have been in its support for United Nations peacekeeping operations, which Neethling examines in relation to Mali and South Sudan. While historically non-interventionist, in the case of South Sudan, as Neethling argues below, “China has had to soften or forfeit its historical arm’s-length approach in view of the need to facilitate a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan and to secure its strategic interests”.

Secondly, in their article *China's Baby Steps in Africa: A Historical Reckoning of Chinese Relations with Mozambique and Sudan until 2011*, David Robinson and Benjamin Hale examine the involvement of China in both Sudan and Mozambique, to argue that while the critics of Chinese involvement in Africa may be right, it is only to some extent, because there are positive relationships being developed between African nations and China. These authors argue that it is not just 'extraction', but 'mutual exchange'. They demonstrate that authoritarianism and corruption in African states are not Chinese inventions, and while China may not overtly oppose these systems, neither do many western countries in their relations across Africa. Robinson and Hale argue that the Beijing consensus has simply provided an alternative to the Washington consensus, allowing agency for African states; and while China's military arms sales to the continent are "shameful", so too has the US built up its military interventions on the continent. Therefore, it is an exaggeration to suggest that China is taking any more steps across Africa than have already been taken by the West.

The third article presented in these pages below comes from a fascinating study conducted in New Zealand. Louise Humpage and Jay Marlowe explore the technique of "Photovoice" in their article '*Remembering' Absent and Recent Pasts Through Photographs: Young Eritrean Women in New Zealand*. In this study, Humpage and Marlowe examine the African diaspora in New Zealand, in particular focusing on five young Eritrean women and how they negotiate their individual and collective identities. The authors argue that the women's identities are mediated by 'post-memories' and 'autobiographical memories', which enables them to critically reflect on their Eritrean origins and past, and enables them to positively engage with their future in New Zealand.

The fourth and final article is entitled *African Mother's Experiences of Raising 'Afro-Kiwi Kids' in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. The authors Helene Connor, Irene Ayallo and Susan Elliot have reported on their findings from a wider research project, exploring the themes of "integration, language, connections with Maori culture, cultural reproduction and mothering practices". This research fills a blatant gap in the literature, and importantly demonstrates the opportunities and challenges for resettlement in New Zealand.

Finally, we are pleased in this issue of ARAS to be able to publish some great book reviews, which will provide our readers with a fascinating account of recent books in African Studies, half of which have been written by our esteemed colleagues in the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific.

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