

# The Australasian Review of African Studies

African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific

Volume XXV Number 2

December 2003

## CONTENTS

<b>Note from the Editor</b>	4
<b>AFSAAP 2004</b>	6
<b>Articles</b>	
Women's Leadership Roles in the Early Protestant Church in Uganda: Continuity with the Old Order <i>Liz Dimock</i>	8
Gender, Power and Protest in African Farming: Recalcitrant Women and Usurping Men in Colonial Kenya, 1930-1950 <i>Clare Buswell</i>	23
Global Impulses/ Local Politics: Comparing Two Eras of Constitution Making in Kenya <i>Edith Miguda</i>	36
<b>Review Articles</b>	
Robert Mugabe and the Politics of Choice in Zimbabwe <i>Paul Nursey-Bray</i>	48
Two Perspectives on the Portrayal of Botswana in <i>The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency</i> From Botswana, <i>Khadija Mogami</i> From Western Australia, <i>Karen Miller</i>	55
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
Wahome Mutahi, <i>Three Days on the Cross; The Jail Bugs; How to Be a Kenyan; Doomsday; Mr. Canta; Hassan the Genie; Whispers and Camissassius; The Ghost of Garba Tula; Just Wait and See; The Miracle Merchant</i> <i>Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye</i>	62

Dag Henrichsen, Hubertus Graf zu Castell-Rüdenhausen (1909 – 1995) Personal Papers and Manuscripts on Namibia	68
Meredith McKittrick, <i>To Dwell Secure: Generation, Christianity, and Colonialism in Ovamboland</i>	
Marion Wallace, <i>Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915 – 1945</i> <i>Jan-Bart Gewald</i>	
Paul Nugent, <i>Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914</i> <i>David Brown</i>	73
Justin Willis, <i>Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa 1850-1999</i> <i>Jeremy Martens</i>	77
Bahru Zewde, <i>Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia</i> <i>Irma Taddia</i>	80
Martin R. Doornbos, <i>The Ankole Kingship Controversy: Regalia Galore Revisited</i> <i>Cherry Gertzel</i>	83
Douglas H. Johnson, <i>The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars</i> <i>Chaplain Kara Yokoju</i>	85
Late Note: <i>Biography of Jack Archer</i>	88
<b>Research Matters</b>	
Empowering Kenyan Women Through Participation in Dairy Micro-Enterprises: Reporting a Kenyan Research Project <i>Dolphine Odero-Wanga, Milcah Mulu-Mutuku and Adijah Aliu-Olubandwa</i>	90
<b>Notes</b>	
Forty Years of African Demography at the ANU <i>David Lucas</i>	96
Building Bridges Between Academics and Service Providers to Sudanese Refugees in Australia <i>Matthew Albert and Anna Grace</i>	99
Reflections on a Changing Tanzania <i>Colin Reed</i>	103

Australian Input into the African Virtual University <i>David Dorward</i>	106
A DFAT Trade and Investment Analysis of <i>African Renewal</i> <i>David Dorward</i>	108
Archbishop of Capetown on the Challenges of Living in a Global Village <i>Alison Preston and Greg Thompson</i>	109
African Studies Centre WA	111
Somalia Development Symposium at La Trobe	112
Brisbane Forum on Western Media Perceptions of Africa	112
Botswana Opens its High Commission in Canberra	113
New South African High Commissioner in Canberra	114
Conferences	114
<b>AfSAAAP News</b>	
AfSAAAP Postgraduate Essay Prize 2003	117
Minutes of the AGM, October 2003	117
AfSAAAP Constitution (as amended to 2003)	125
Guidelines for Post-Graduate Essay Prize	127
Note for Contributors	128

### **Mission Statement**

*The Australasian Review of African Studies* aims to contribute to a better understanding of Africa in Australasia and the western Pacific. It publishes both scholarly and generalist articles that provide authoritative, informed, critical material on Africa and African affairs that is interesting and readable and available to as broad an audience as possible, both academic and non-academic.

## Note from the Editor

Having indicated my intention to retire from the editorship of *ARAS* (see the minutes of the AFSAAP 2003 AGM p. 117) this seems an appropriate moment to reflect briefly about the journal itself and how it has evolved. Editorial policy today owes much to James Polhemus, the first editor of the then *African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific Newsletter*, whose broad and inclusive approach encouraged anyone who had something of interest to say about Africa to offer a contribution. A second, more recent influence was the closure in 1998 of the *Current Affairs Bulletin* (CAB) which made it all the more important to build up critical material on African affairs. The third influence has been the changes in terms of recognition of academics' research and published work in the academic world which led to the change of status to a peer-reviewed journal in line with (then) DETYA requirements; leading to what I still term the 'new look review' that began with Vol XXIII No 1, June 2001.

Prior to 2001 the journal had in fact steadily expanded in content and included some notable scholarly and much other interesting if variable material. In particular through the 1990s we saw the growth of a small but valuable book review section the quality of which has been recognised and which is at present the most established part of the journal. The challenge for *ARAS* as I have seen it in the last three years has therefore been to build up accessible scholarly and generalist material, including shorter notes, across a wide range of African studies, without losing the review's earlier spontaneity reflected in anecdotal accounts by individuals of their work and experience in Africa. The then editor of the CAB at the time of its closure wrote 'CAB readers expect information they can understand and think about, ideas they can argue about...' (*Current Affairs Bulletin* Vol. 75 No. 1 June/July 1998, p. 4). My own aim has been that *ARAS* as AFSAAP's professional journal should reach as wide an audience as possible; that it can share knowledge not only across disciplinary but also academic and non-academic boundaries; and encourage alternative views to today's mainstream approach to Africa. And with this in mind I draw the attention of those of us who are academics to take to heart the appeal from the organisers of SAIL, the Sudanese Australian Learning Integrated Program for better and more links between service providers (in this case to Sudanese refugees in Australia) and academics than exists at present (see p. 99).

All this is a challenge not easily won. Nevertheless over the past three years the 'new look' *ARAS* has again grown in size as well as its range of content and of

contributors including new contributors from Africa. This December issue reflects this growth. The contents range widely across disciplines, provide a 'mix' of history, politics and literature, and critical and relevant background to some of contemporary Africa's most reported conflicts. Paul Nursey-Bray's review article on John Moore's recently published book on Zimbabwe, Chaplain Kara Yokoku's review of Douglas Johnson's study of the long civil war in Sudan and David Brown's on Paul Nugent's study of the 'social construction' of ethnic and national identities along the Ghana-Togo borderlands are all highly relevant to our understanding of the contemporary conflicts that underlie many of the stereotypes of Africa. Brown for instance sees Paul Nugent's study as indicating the need to rethink our theoretical assumptions as to the nature of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. The theme of ethnicity recurs elsewhere in this issue, in Edith Miguda's essay on Kenya for example, which takes a different position.

Our understanding of the African condition is equally formed and influenced by popular literature (see *ARAS* December 2001, Gareth Griffiths; June 2002, Dianne Schwerdt [on African theatre]; and June 2003, Sue Kossew) and I draw attention to contributions in this issue from Marjorie Macgoye, Khadija Mogami and Karen Miller. Macgoye reviews the fictional writings of the late Kenyan writer and journalist Wahome Mutahi (see p. 62) which are equally commentaries as much of Kenyan political as well as social life over the period of the 1980s and 1990s. Here in Australia we are less familiar with Mutahi's works than Alexander McCall Smith's *The No. 1 Lady Detective Agency* which Mogami and Miller assess in terms of whether it is 'reality or utopia'. McCall Smith's book might not be seen as African or popular literature and its outsider's portrayal of African life raises a set of questions different from those addressed to Mutahi's work. But set side by side all three reviews provide insights into the relevance and utility of fictional writing for popular audiences for our understanding of Africa today.

Finally I very much regret the delay in the publication of this issue Also once again I must acknowledge my indebtedness to readers as well as contributors for their support and Karen Miller for her professional skills and integrity.

Cherry Gertzel  
Editor

**AFSAAP 2004**

## **African Renewal, African Renaissance: New Perspectives on Africa's Past and Africa's Present**

**Friday November 26 to Sunday November 28, 2004  
The University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia**

The 27th annual conference of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) will be held at the University of Western Australia (UWA), Perth, Western Australia, from 26-28 November 2004. The conference organiser is Dr Jeremy Martens, of the History Discipline, UWA. UWA last hosted the AFSAAP conference in 1999. Some four hundred people attended that meeting, and over two hundred papers were presented at eighty-eight panels. The organizers of the 2004 conference are eager to replicate this success, and invite proposals for papers on any aspect of Africa, as well as on comparative approaches. While the overall conference theme is broad, there is ample room for specialized contributions and papers reflecting the different disciplines and wide-ranging interests of academics, professionals, and postgraduates, as well as the wider diplomatic, government, aid/NGO, media, cultural, labour/business, and African communities.

It is anticipated that some of the major subjects to be discussed will include: 'State of the Nations': appraisals of the African Renaissance; The Rainbow Nation ten years on: critical perspectives on the New South Africa; 'Failed States, Rogue States and Dangerous States?': the state and conflict in Africa; Africa's War on Terror: new realities in the post 9-11 world; Disease, Health and Medicine in Africa: social, political and economic perspectives; Sexual violence in Africa, past and present.

Papers exploring other subjects relating to Africa, including African art, African history and historiography, missions and missionaries in Africa, African archaeology, cultural studies, demography, literature, the sciences in Africa, Information, Libraries, and Publishing in Africa; the media and communication, International Relations, Aid and Trade, Australasian-African Relations as well as other disciplines and topics, will also be welcome.

The Mediterranean climate of Perth, Western Australia in November is warm and sunny (similar to Cape Town or California). Perth is a single flight away from Africa. It is a modern city of one and a half million people situated on the picturesque Swan River and is renowned for its outdoor lifestyle, relaxed atmosphere and beautiful beaches. It is well served by efficient transport, telecommunication, and tourist facilities and is a useful starting point from which to begin a visit to Australia. For information on Perth and Western Australia please visit: <http://www.westernaustralia.net>

All expressions of interest, as well as requests for further information, should be directed to:

Dr Jeremy Martens, AFSAAP 2004 Organiser,  
History Discipline, University of Western Australia  
35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, Western Australia 6009  
AUSTRALIA  
Tel: 61-(0)8-9380-2154  
E-mail: [jmartens@arts.uwa.edu.au](mailto:jmartens@arts.uwa.edu.au)

# Women's Leadership Roles in the Early Protestant Church in Uganda: Continuity with the Old Order

Liz Dimock

### Introduction

This paper is concerned with the extent to which women leaders in the early Protestant church in Buganda reflected a continuity in women's leadership between pre-colonial and colonial society and for how long.<sup>1</sup> The arrival of Christianity in the 1870s with the introduction of mission teaching at the court of the *Kabaka* of Buganda was the start of a period of great change for many Baganda, opening the way for women as well as men to acquire a new range of skills, especially literacy, which became linked with upward social mobility. At the same time religious rivalries and shifting allegiances through the 1880s and early 1890s resulted in competing Protestant, Catholic and Muslim activities in an environment in which the ascendancy of the Protestant faction in Buganda corresponded with British Protectorate status in 1894. Leading Protestants were awarded chiefdoms and some of the highest offices in the land. Alfred Tucker, head of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Mission and Bishop of Uganda, encouraged chiefs in the Native Administration to hold leadership positions in the Church, consolidating religious and political elements.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In addition to archival material from CMS and Church of Uganda records, this paper has resulted from interviews conducted with older Christian women and men in 1991. The women interviewed had long experience of church activities, particularly the Mothers' Union, and many had had leadership roles in the past and were revered in the present. They included Christian women born in the first or second decade of the century whose memories, either their own or their mothers' reached back to the 1920s and 1930s. I am grateful to the CMS and to the Church of Uganda and to the many women interviewed for their assistance and support including: Eresi Muntukwonka, Eva Barbara, Geraldine Sabiiti, Marjorie Kabuzi, Florence Nekyon, Deborah Kiwanika, Lillian Mukwaya, Ruth Baddokwaya, Canon A.J. Binaisa, Ananias Murumba, and Mr. Eridade Mulira. The genealogical information indicated that many of those interviewed were descended from politically-significant families in the pre-colonial period. The interview material was part of research for my thesis, 'Women and the Church Missionary Society in Uganda, 1895-1935: gender relations in an imperial setting', Ph.D. La Trobe University, 1996. While this paper is concerned primarily with Buganda, similar patterns of development may be seen in Toro, Ankole and Eastern Uganda. Valuable comparative material for the Roman Catholic missions will be found in J. Waliggo, *The Catholic Church in Buddu Province in Buganda., 1879-1925*, PhD, Cambridge, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>See D.A. Low, *Religion and Society in Buganda, 1875-1900*, Kampala, East African Institute of Social Research, 1957; H.B. Hansen, *Mission, Church and State in a Colonial Setting: Uganda, 1890-*



Although the missionaries had noted the need for caution in teaching women in order to maintain the Kabaka's goodwill and for respect for Kiganda custom that women's affairs, and therefore women's teaching, should be separate from men's the missionary O'Flaherty started women's classes in 1882-3 and in 1896 twelve percent of evangelists, sixty-one, out of a total of 472, were women.<sup>3</sup> By 1895 when the Uganda Mission was already nearly twenty years old and the first five female missionaries recruited to do 'Women's Work'<sup>4</sup> arrived in Mengo, there was a thriving community of Christian men and women with more than 6000 baptised Christians associated with the Protestant mission alone, and more than 57,000 'readers', the term used to denote any man, woman or child able or learning to read. There was clearly an active interest on the part of Ugandan women in the expanding new religion. Missionary McKay noted the 'earnestness and diligence' of several of the women, and considered that more 'systematic effort' was required to teach them. 'Women's Work' drew large numbers of women together at evangelistic gatherings, and in smaller 'classes'.

Against this background we look in this paper at women who in three successive phases of the church's development ending with the 1930s became leaders in women's activities in the emerging Anglican Church and so acquired status in the new Christianising order. We begin with the royal women who in the first twenty years after the missionaries' arrival in pre-colonial Buganda straddled two ways of life while retaining their royal leadership roles; and at the ways in which those who were converted managed the change to a Christian life. Second we turn to the phase of the Church's 'Women's Work' which began with the arrival of female missionaries and which saw women from foremost Ganda political families emerge as leaders in the Church of Uganda. Finally a third phase between 1910 and the 1930s became a period of institutionalisation when the impact of education on generational change has to be taken into account. In each phase questions of why women became involved in the church have to be considered, raising questions concerning the nature of empowerment that accompanied conversion and the paper also attempts to address this issue.

### **Women straddling the 'old' and the 'new' orders in pre-colonial Buganda**

Pre-colonial Kiganda society was hierarchical. Ultimate power rested with the *Kabaka*, who made all appointments to chieftaincies and gave or withheld land,

---

1925, London, Heinemann, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Roscoe's statistics, in E. Stock, *A History of the Church Missionary Society*, London, CMS, 1899, Vol. III, p.743.

<sup>4</sup> The term was used both in the Home Department of the CMS in London and in the field to denote the evangelical work of female missionaries with indigenous women.

military honours and gifts. Thus any man could attain high status, although the clan system provided checks and balances to the power of the *Kabaka*. The links and alliances between the major clans were established through multiple marriages of the *Kabaka*, clan heads and chiefs. Related to wealth and power, polygyny was generally a feature of the upper parts of the social hierarchy, the payment of bride price a deterrent to poor men. Overall women occupied a subordinate place but this was relative to the position of a woman's father or her husband in society. A woman was always inferior to a man of her own social level, although superior to one of a lower rank.<sup>5</sup> A woman's status was dependent firstly on that of her father and later on that of her husband. A hierarchy prevailed however within households, wives deferring to their husband and junior women to their seniors, the senior wife, the *kaddulubale*, at the top. Within lineage and clan structures a woman's relations with her brother and his children had ritual significance, a feature repeated at all levels of society.

In this patriarchal hierarchy, anomalous high-status women included the female relations of the *Kabaka*, the royal women, along with those of clan heads and chiefs, the politically-important families. The royal women included the *Namasole* (Queen Mother), the *Lubuga* (Queen Sister), the royal wives, and princesses, descended from past or present *Kabakas* many of whom had their own estates, and in the case of the *Namasole* and the *Lubuga*, held their own courts, and had considerable power over their own people. Analysis of the role of the *Namasole* is instructive in understanding the complexity of pre-colonial structures and the impact of Christianity on Buganda society. The *Namasole* as did the *Lubuga*, appointed her own chiefs and managed a hierarchy similar to, though smaller than, the *Kabaka's*.<sup>6</sup> Like the *Lubuga*, her estates were not taxed and she received a portion of national taxes and war booty. Although she had no direct power over the *Kabaka's* chiefs, the *Lukiiko*, the *Namasole's* influence over the *Kabaka*, through the clan system, was significant. There was no royal clan, and the *Kabaka*, like his offspring and unlike other Baganda, belonged to the clan of his mother. All clans aspired to provide a wife for the *Kabaka*, in the hope that she might give birth to the next *Kabaka*, 'a rare honour which her clan could never forget'.<sup>7</sup> The ties with his mother's relatives were an important source of support for the *Kabaka*, a feature which gave the *Namasole* political leverage in the balance of power between different clans.

For Kabaka Mwanga's *Namasole* relations with Christianity were complex. During the persecutions in the 1880s she protested against Mwanga's excesses, refusing to

---

<sup>5</sup> I. Berger, 'Rebels or Status-Seekers? Women as Spirit Mediums in East Africa', in N. Hafkin and E. Bay (eds.), *Women in Africa*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1976, pp. 157-181.

<sup>6</sup> L. Schiller, 'The Royal Women of Buganda', *The International Journal of Historical Studies*, 23, 3, 1990, pp. 455-473.

<sup>7</sup> Roscoe, *The Baganda: an Account of their Native Customs*, London, Frank Cass, 1965, p. 187.

give her attendants up to be massacred by her son's executioners, thereby protecting Christians within her jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless shifting power relations put the *Namasole's* own high standing under threat especially from British political intervention, which did not see her role as having political significance. Within the Baganda polity, the increasing influence of the *Lukiiko* vis à vis the *Kabaka* and the diminishing importance of the clans and clan heads, the *Bataka*, had in part coincided with the Christian revolution even though many of the new chiefs in the *Lukiiko* came from those same families, having served as pages in the *Kabaka's* court in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>9</sup>

In 1895 the *Namasole* was unbaptised, though she maintained contact with the missionaries. It was in her interest to know what the Christians were talking about, and to meet the foreigners in order to assess them and she attended services from time to time in the church that was close to her palace. On such occasions the *Namasole* came to the church in traditional style, 'carried in on the shoulders of a man'.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless she held out against conversion to Christianity and remained involved with traditional political interests.<sup>11</sup> The *Namasole's* personal interests were altered in the colonial re-structuring of administrative and political systems, which took no account of women as political figures. She maintained her estates after the Land Agreement of 1900, but her political influence had gone. Where formerly she had given counsel to the *Kabaka*, whose political support was reliant on her clan, this became of less significance because of the more powerful *Lukiiko* in the Native Administration, and colonial over-rule.

All royal women were aware of the fluidity of the political framework and may have been actively concerned with their own positions vis à vis political change. Unlike the *Namasole* a number of them became Christians, or were enquiring about Christianity, even at an early period when the risks of crossing the *Kabaka's* instructions were dangerous: Rebecca Mugali, who joined a class of readers taught by the missionary O'Flaherty in 1883; Nahuika, who, along with other women, visited missionaries, during *Kabaka* Mwangi's period of persecutions in 1886, asking for baptism; an unnamed princess who angered Mwangi by throwing away her charms and burning her ancestral relics;<sup>12</sup> an un-named sister of *Kabaka* Mtesa, who approached Bishop

---

<sup>8</sup> R.P. Ashe, *Chronicles of Uganda*, p. 82, and *Two Kings of Uganda*, p.2 21; Miss Mackay, *A.M. Mackay*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1898, p. 365.

<sup>9</sup> Low, *Religion and Society*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>10</sup> Tucker to Stock, 17 October 1895, CMS Archives, Birmingham, G3 A5/O11-O12.

<sup>11</sup> The *Namasole* was eventually baptised, Stock, *op.cit.*, Vol IV, p.86. The *Namasole* supported traditional resistance to Protestant, Roman Catholic and Muslim religio-political factions in the first few years of British over-rule which simmered on for decades, M. Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age*, pp. 174-5.

<sup>12</sup> S. Stock, *The Story of Uganda*, pp. 116-123.

Tucker during his first visit to Uganda in 1890-1891, and received on request a copy of the New Testament, but who warned the Bishop of the need to make friends with Mwanga.<sup>13</sup> There were two princesses, sisters of Mwanga, who were 'eager readers'.<sup>14</sup> Already prior to the start of specific 'Women's Work', the governing body of the church, Mengo Church Council, had appointed six female elders in 1892, two of whom were princesses, Rudia and Kawa, cousins of *Kabaka* Mwanga.<sup>15</sup> Although it is not clear what role these women played, the participation of royal women as leaders in Church affairs is evident at this early time.

### **Women leaders in 'Women's Work' in the new Church order**

Much of the pre-colonial system was still in place when the first five female missionaries arrived in 1895. *Kabaka* Mwanga was living in the *lubire*, the royal palace, with a total of eighty-four wives, concubines and slaves. Mwanga himself was not a Christian, but his senior wife, Lois Rose, the *Kaddulubale*, was baptised, as were other women in the *Kabaka's* households, along with many of the chiefs' wives. Lois Rose attended a formal gathering of Christians on the afternoon of the arrival of the five women at Mengo, and in the ensuing days among the many visitors 'coming in all day long', according to Miss Furley, the senior female missionary, 'the king's head wife came and numbers of other women with her...'<sup>16</sup> A few days later, the missionaries were taken by Bishop Tucker and Archdeacon Walker to visit the *Kabaka*, and having fulfilled this formality, and with his permission, they then visited the *Kabaka's* wives, making for the *Kaddulubale's* residence, where they were greeted with a 'great uproar and rejoicing'. Many years later, long after Mwanga's death, this same Lois Rose would be a representative of the pastorate of Jungo at the Buganda Women's Conference in 1919, 1925 and 1930.<sup>17</sup>

Other women of rank established links with the newly arrived female missionaries at Mengo, some assuming a caring, motherly role for them in their new place of residence so far from home. Sarah Duta, married to Henry Wright Duta, a nephew of the *Kangao* of Bulemezi, was a Christian of long standing. One of the female elders appointed by Mengo Church Council in 1892 she had some knowledge of Swahili and assisted the missionaries with interpreting and learning Luganda.<sup>18</sup> Sarah herself was daughter of a chief and in her early Christian life had been put in stocks and threatened with death in Mwanga's persecutions.<sup>19</sup> The wife and sister of Samwili

---

<sup>13</sup> R.Ashe, *Chronicles of Uganda*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1894, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> R. Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda*, London, Frank Cass, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1970, p. 150.

<sup>15</sup> Baskerville Journals 12 May 1892.

<sup>16</sup> Miss Furley's Journal, Mengo, October 4-November, 1895, CMS Archives, Birmingham, G3 A5/O11-O12.

<sup>17</sup> Church of Uganda Archives, Women's Conference papers, Makerere University Library.

<sup>18</sup> Miss Furley's Journal. Miss Furley had worked in Mombasa and was a Swahili speaker.

<sup>19</sup> J.V.Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda*, London, SCM Press, 1958 pp. 34, 262, 270.

Mukasa, an eminent Muganda figure, also greeted the new arrivals and invited them a few weeks later for a meal and to attend the regular family evening service.<sup>20</sup>

Elizabeth Kangao, the wife of Zacharia Kizito, Kangao, or district chief of Bulemezi, and a prominent Christian was another visitor to the household. She had been a Christian for some time and was in 1895 an examiner of women candidates prior to their baptism;<sup>21</sup> she spoke some Swahili and served as interpreter to Miss Furley in her first days at Mengo, and was described as a 'great friend'. She also acted as guide on the first visit of female missionaries to a country area, accompanying them to Bulemezi, an area of rapidly expanding mission work at the time in the hands of male teachers. Advantaged as wife of the Kangao, it was Elizabeth who opened up 'Women's Work' there.<sup>22</sup> Another leader was Rebekah, wife of the Mukwenda, or district chief of Singo, who was involved in 'Women's Work' there. Although reference to these women is mainly from missionary texts, with their specific bias, a picture of active Ugandan Christian women, and women teachers, emerges.<sup>23</sup>

During this period the Uganda mission made a gradual transition from general evangelism towards broader teaching of women's roles in Christian families, with increasing emphasis on monogamous marriage and motherhood. From the outset CMS missionaries had stipulated that a convert seeking baptism should have one wife. This was a contentious issue for the Baganda, as the *Kabaka* in speaking with the missionary O'Flaherty implied, 'We cannot find it in our hearts to discard our women, and have but one wife.'<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, this social upheaval was set in place with many consequences, unforeseen by missionaries.

The teaching of women flourished not only in Buganda but in other districts to the west, south and east. As in Buganda, political leadership in Toro and Ankole was integrated with hierarchical social structures, the *Bahima*, cattle-owning people being the dominant political class. The *Bairu*, who were cultivators, constituted the rest of the population. The monarch was from one clan within the *Bahima* clans.<sup>25</sup> In these areas, as with Buganda, the arrival of Christianity was associated firstly with royal households and politically prominent clans and families. Agreements between the

---

<sup>20</sup> Samwili had been a page in the court of Mtesa, and then a special envoy to the British Consul in Zanzibar and in 1897 was appointed chief in Kisitala.

<sup>21</sup> Stock, *op.cit.* Vol. III, p.739.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Miss Chadwick, *CM Intelligencer*, May 1898, pp.350-2.

<sup>23</sup> Stock, *A History of ...*, Vol.III, p. 739; and Miss Furley's Journal, 16 March 1896.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from O'Flaherty to Wigram, CMS Secretary, London, 28 February 1883, quoted in D.A. Low, *The Mind of Buganda*, London, Heinemann, 1971.

<sup>25</sup> I have simplified this to maintain the flow of my narrative. For further details of the politics and economies of these kingdoms, see Steinhart, *Conflict and Collaboration: the Kingdoms of Western Uganda*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 5-27.

British and the kingdoms of Ankole and Toro were inter-woven with the coming of Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Royal women were at the forefront even before the arrival of women missionaries in Toro in 1901.<sup>27</sup> The baptism of the *Mukama*, Kasagama, had been followed soon after by that of his mother, his chosen wife for monogamous Christian marriage, Damali, and some of his former wives. The Queen Mother, like the *Namasole* in Buganda, was a woman of influence in her own right, providing counsel to the king and a supportive network from her clan. The Queen Mother became a leading Christian in Toro and established a church on her own estate. Damali was one of a group of women trained to become catechists while at a later date, the daughter of the *Mukama*, Ruth Komuntale, was a leading figure in establishing women's activities through the Mothers' Union in Toro, thus continuing royal leadership into the next generation.

Equally notable was the baptism of the *Mukama's* favoured spirit medium, Ana Kageye, also a *Muhima*. Kageye's conversion ensured her own continuing influence in the *Mukama's* court; yet, as one who had held a traditional cult leadership role, her story is interesting. After her baptism, she became one of the first group of licensed Batoro women catechists in 1902, volunteering to go to Ankole as a missionary at a time when Protestant teaching was commencing there.<sup>28</sup> As 'Women's Work' opened up in Toro, women teachers, including Kageye, became involved in the extension of the work. In Toro, forty-six women catechists were licensed between 1902 and 1909. Many of these were from the *Bahima* class. Of the first group of ten licensed female catechists, four were from the Royal court, six were Chiefs' wives, while fourteen were the wives of catechists or clergymen.<sup>29</sup> Kisémbó, a Mutoro historian, has indicated that Christian teachers in the early years were mainly *Bahima*,<sup>30</sup> an outcome of their greater wealth. *Bairu* found it difficult to be evangelists without regular income, whereas those of higher status had cattle and land to support themselves. Amongst the early generation of women teachers many were linked through their families with Christian political leaders.

Zipporah Kamuhigi, a *Muhima* woman, became a licensed catechist in 1902. Kamuhigi was the mother of Marjorie Kabuzi and Geraldine Sabiiti. Mrs Kabuzi described her mother as a leader during the early spread of the Mothers' Union in Toro, and each of her three daughters became Mothers' Union members after their

---

<sup>26</sup> This is a complex story, documented by E. Steinhart, *Conflict ...*

<sup>27</sup> Pirouet, *Black Evangelists*, London, Rex Collings, 1978, pp. 60-61.

<sup>28</sup> *Embandwa* cults gave numbers of women 'an unusual degree of authority in ritual situations'. For 'smaller numbers with long-term positions of high status' in the royal courts there were opportunities that enabled them to rise above the general status accorded them in traditional patriarchal society. See Berger, 'Rebels or Status-Seekers?'

<sup>29</sup> Pirouet, *Black Evangelists*, pp.73-5.

<sup>30</sup> B. Kisémbó, 'Kibubura: a Young Parish in Toro', *Dini Na Mila*, Vol. IV, No.2, May 1970.

marriages, and all undertook prominent positions as secretaries or chairpersons. Geraldine Sabiiti's husband, an ordained clergyman, became Bishop of Ruwenzori and then Archbishop of Uganda whereupon Geraldine's work took on diocesan and provincial dimensions.

In Ankole, where there was a similar differentiation between the royal house, the *Bahima* and *Bairu* classes, Kageye's story is paralleled by one involving women belonging to a line of female 'diviners' to the *Mugabe* (the Ankole monarch) who were also chiefs going back through six generations. The conversion of Kishokwe, diviner at the time of the *Mugabe's* conversion, and her acceptance of Christian catechists in her area suggest a woman who seriously considered the implications that the Christianizing of the ruling elite would have on her power, and of her own declining influence in the face of Christianity.<sup>31</sup> Louise Pirouet has suggested that Kishokwe waited to see if the *Mugabe* would accept missionary teaching before committing herself and her decision to build a church, following her earlier decision to read, curried favour with him. Kishokwe's successor to the chieftainship, her sister, Juliya Kibubura, a younger woman, 'had never, like Kishokwe, achieved power through divination'. Kibubura made the leap from diviner to baptized Christian within a few months handing over her divination instruments to the catechists before her baptism. Kibubura went on to become a teacher, thus ensuring her prestige in the new order of things. She travelled around Ankole, preaching and teaching, and is regarded as one of the founding leaders of Christianity in Ankole. Later, within more formal structures in the Church, she became a member of the Women's Conference, representing Ibanda in the Rural Deanery of Ankole.

Kageye in Toro and Kibubura in Ankole, women of high status in pre-colonial religious/political spheres, yet outside the royal families, demonstrate that for some women, as well as for men, there was continuity of status between the old and new systems. Other *Bahima* women in Ankole included Mariam Kakibara, converted and baptised during the missionary enterprise from Toro in 1902. She became a catechist, travelling around Ankole, organising the building of churches even after marriage and the birth of five children. Like Kibubura she represented her pastorate at the Ankole Women's Conferences held in Mbarara in the 1920s, and was a key Mothers' Union leader.

### **Boarding schools and generational change**

After the early phase of 'Women's Work' in Buganda and beyond, a gradual institutionalisation occurred. The establishment of Women's Conferences paralleled that of Mothers' Unions, although they had different functions. There was also a

---

<sup>31</sup> Louise Pirouet, *Black Evangelists*, p. 74, 128; J.M.Gray, 'A History of Ibanda, Saza of Mitoma, Ankole', *Uganda Journal*, Vol. XXIV, March 1960, pp.166-182.

generational shift between the women involved in 'Women's Work' in the years around the century's turn and those of the 1920s, as the pioneering evangelists, sometimes called Bible-women, were slowly replaced by a new, boarding school-educated generation of women, an elite group because they had acquired new skills from schooling.

The rationale behind the development of a girls' boarding school in 1905 was linked with the role of women as wives and mothers, a central tenet of Evangelical/middle class domestic sphere ideology in Britain. Bishop Tucker noted, 'If they are well taught, they will make good wives and good mothers'.<sup>32</sup> Such training was befitting for Baganda girls, whose primary role was to marry and produce children. Founding missionary principal, Miss A.L. Allen, developed a curriculum that incorporated cultivation, a direct concession to fears expressed by the chiefs that the traditional role of women should not be disturbed by Mission education. The recognition of the economic role of women and the requirements of Baganda society indicated a willingness by missionaries to adapt their own ideas towards a different interpretation of the domestic sphere. Gayaza boarding school was highly praised by Baganda chiefs, and much sought after for their daughters. In training young women as suitable wives for chiefs, the school fulfilled this mission most satisfactorily, the crowning match being that of Aerini Dolosira with the young Kabaka, Daudi Chwa, in 1914.<sup>33</sup>

Following the ratification of the Church Constitution in 1910, annual Women's Conferences gave Ugandan women Church representation, enabling elected women from pastorates, along with female missionaries, to discuss issues of significance to them.<sup>34</sup> These issues included the payment of women teachers, a recurring theme over many years, a range of concerns about marital matters, and adultery, inheritance issues and the social disruption caused by men leaving home to work in the towns. Some of the discussion may have been initiated by missionaries, but some was undoubtedly that of Baganda women and had bearing on their lives and experience and their religious and social needs in a time of rapid change.<sup>35</sup> Resolutions from their

---

<sup>32</sup> B.Tucker, 'A Word on Education addressed to Parents and Chiefs', in *Eighteen Years in Uganda*, Vol. II, pp. 205-8.

<sup>33</sup> 'A History of Church Missionary High Schools in Uganda, 1900-1924: the education of an elite', Ph.D. University of East Africa, 1968, pp. 174-175.

<sup>34</sup> Constitution of the Church of Uganda as adopted by the Mengo Church Council of September 14, 1900 and the Diocesan Synods of June 26-27, 1907 and July 13-15, 1910; See also Memorandum from the Secretaries of CMS on the Proposed Constitution of the Church of Buganda, February 1898, CMS archives, Birmingham, G3, A7/L1-L2.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes of Central Women's Conferences are in CMS Uganda Mission archives in Birmingham University library. Those of Buganda Women's Conferences are in Makerere University library.



annual gatherings were passed up through the Church hierarchy for further consideration and action by the District Councils or Diocesan Synod.

Women's Conferences had no executive power since patriarchal Church structures denied this. However, within the specificity of Uganda in 1910-1930, such representation may be regarded as 'a foot in the door'.<sup>36</sup> In terms of separate gendered spheres in Ugandan social structures, participation in Women's Conferences may well have been empowering. Female missionaries also had secondary status *vis à vis* their male counterparts. Women's Conferences provided 'sisterly' bonds between black and white women, a feature borne out by my informants.

Mothers' Unions were formed at pastorate level and from the start they had an educative role. An early reference relates to a Mothers' Union 'class' organized by Mrs Weatherhead, the wife of the Principal of Kings' College Budo in 1908.<sup>37</sup> The school at Budo was founded for the education of the sons of Buganda's ruling class, who, in this period, were frequently older men. While the 'boys' were boarders, some lived in nearby villages, to which Mrs Weatherhead walked to meet and teach their wives. Entitled 'The Duties of a Wife and Mother', the classes were concerned with 'domestic' matters, bound up conceptually with a broader framework about marriage and women's roles. Cleanliness, connected with purity, was of major importance, as in a class on 'cleanliness of Speech, of Body, and of House'.

These early classes are but an example of the way that 'Women's Work' was evolving, within British, class-oriented parameters. 'Mothering', marriage and the domestic sphere were associated with respectability and gentility, further features of middle-class womanhood.<sup>38</sup> Transferred to Uganda the Mothers' Union replicated many of its English origins. Although inspired originally by missionary women, Ugandan women were the organisers at local level, each group having its own secretary. In the early period these were often pastors' wives, but by the mid 1920s, the preferred leaders in Buganda were ex-Gayaza girls. Mrs Daniell, the President of

---

<sup>36</sup> A.M. Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, pp. 34-40. Tripp has described women's associations of the 1940s as 'a foot in the door' to political representation. She includes the Mothers' Union, the Catholic counterpart, the Catholic Women's Clubs of Uganda, the Girl Guides, National Women's League, Young Women's Christian Association, and later still the Uganda Council of Women.

<sup>37</sup> These letters are in the Mothers' Union Archives, in the Provincial Archives of the Church of Uganda at Namirembe.

<sup>38</sup> The three 'Central Objects' of the Mothers' Union were: 'to uphold the Sanctity of Marriage; to awaken in all Mothers a sense of their great responsibility in the training of their boys and girls - the Fathers and Mothers of the future; to organize in every place a band of Mothers who will unite in prayer, and seek by their own example to lead their families in purity and holiness of life.' *The Mothers' Union Golden Book*, 1924, p.4, Mothers' Union Headquarters Archives, Mary Sumner House Library, London.

the Mothers' Union in 1926, commented that the marriage of boarding school girls with men of boarding school background had a double chance of bearing mission-shaped attitudes. Such girls were seen as effective in self-disciplining their lives, in training children, holding meetings and running classes.<sup>39</sup> With these thoughts, an English woman transferred the defining role of class to the Mothers' Union in Uganda. The activities of Mothers' Union groups were assisted by *A Booklet on Mother Craft*, translated into Luganda by Naomi Binaisa (see below), and in use in 1926, which contained a mixture of practical, devotional and moralistic topics intended to meet the religious 'needs' of women and giving support to women in their mothering roles.

The meaning of the Wedding Ring was one topic of particular significance. Membership of the Mothers' Union in Uganda was limited to 'ring' wives, that is Christian women married in church. Some Christian women were in fact part of polygamous households, since baptism was not denied to them. The Mothers' Union was therefore an exclusive group in Uganda, keeping out categories other than 'ring' wives. The 'ring' wives were called *bakyara*, its literal meaning 'ladies', a term of honour that other women, former wives, did not have. Thus there were contentions, and accusations of arrogance by women excluded from membership. One informant indicated that the Mothers' Union 'looked after' 'ring' wives, another spoke of them giving gifts to members' children. Such strategies encouraged those women and fostered a corporate spirit, but also furthered exclusivity. Monogamous marriage, associated with Marriage Ordinances of 1902 and 1903, had further implications on inheritance, as the protest of Christian women in 1931 demonstrates (described below). These matters further added to social divisions both within church communities and between Christian women and the much larger non-Christian population.<sup>40</sup>

### **Protestant women leaders in the 1920s and 1930s**

The links between family background, school and Mothers' Union leadership among this new generation can be seen by examining specific women's lives. Deborah Kiwanika arriving at Gayaza school in 1919, was a daughter of Omulangira Nasaneyiri Ndaula Mulira, a prince of the royal house of Koki, a kingdom to the west of Buganda incorporated into Buganda in the nineteenth century. A Christian before 1900, he was trained for Christian leadership by the missionary Baskerville and made a Lay Reader, before returning to Koki. Married to Esteri Namberi, a Church teacher and daughter of a clan leader, their children were born into the ruling class, but also

---

<sup>39</sup> Mrs E.S. Daniell, 'The Work of the Mothers' Union in Uganda', *Uganda Church Review*, October 1926, pp. 116-9.

<sup>40</sup> The differences simmered during this period but became more strident only in the post-colonial period.

into a Christian family. Deborah did well at Gayaza, and later became a pupil teacher in the school.

More highly educated, in Western terms, than her parents, Deborah was introduced to the discipline of boarding school life and trained in duties that would make her a 'good', that is a Christian, wife and mother. Many married Gayaza girls became teachers. Marriage and motherhood did not mark the end of a teaching career. The nature of the extended family, especially the lineage significance of fathers' sisters ensured that there was always family help to look after small children, and many slightly older six and seven year-old girls assisted as nurse-maids. Kiwanika started a Day school at Kako, where she lived after she was married, and later she and her husband started a Teacher Training school there. She was a founder member of the Mothers' Union in Kako and represented Namirembe at the Buganda Women's Conference in 1939.<sup>41</sup>

Other members of the new generation of Protestant women leaders also had links with important political families of the late nineteenth century. Naomi Binaisa, a daughter of the protestant chief of Namutwe, Gabrieli Jamba, was a central figure in the Mothers' Union and Women's Conferences during these years. An 'Old Girl' of Gayaza school, she taught there and at Iganga girls' boarding school, where she was Headmistress. After her marriage Naomi became Secretary of the Mengo branch of the Mothers' Union and was one of the leaders in a 1931 protest by Christian women concerning inheritance issues. This was a complex matter in which this group of women demanded priority claims of heir-ship and inheritance for the Christian wife and children of a deceased man over former polygamous wives and their children. The episode was part of a continuing conflict in the twentieth century between tradition, as signified through customary law and Christian marriage and inheritance encompassed by English Common law.<sup>42</sup> A letter to the Provincial Commissioner of Buganda concerning the same issue was signed by sixty-one Mothers' Union members, of whom Dulusira Kisosonkole, wife of the *Katikiro*, was one.<sup>43</sup> Naomi Binaisa was a regular participant in Buganda Women's Conferences between 1923

---

<sup>41</sup> Buganda Women's Conference Minutes.

<sup>42</sup> E. Dimock. 'The Silence of African Women? A 1931 protest of Christian women in Uganda' in P. Ahluwalia and P. Nursey Bray, *The Postcolonial Condition*, New York, Nova, 1997. This and related matters became more prominent in later years and were taken up by the Uganda Council of Women in the 1950s and '60s. See W. Brown, *Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance: the Uganda Council of Women's Movement for Legislative Reform*, Cambridge, Cambridge African Monographs, 1988.

<sup>43</sup> Although I have a list of signatories, it has proved difficult identifying biographical details of other women. Two names appear in Gayaza school records, but the incompleteness of school records prevents a complete cross-reference.

and 1937, and was Secretary to the Women's Central Conference in 1933, the first Muganda woman to fill this position.<sup>44</sup>

Sala Mukasa was also a significant figure in the Mothers' Union during this period. Daughter of Yacobo Lule Musajjalumbwa Omwanika and Rebecca Kiweeweesi who was a daughter of a princess, she had married Ham Mukasa, who in early life moved between rival religious factions, but in the new colonial order became *Sekibobo*, the Provincial Chief of Kyagwe.<sup>45</sup> Sala Mukasa made a two-week tour of Mothers' Union branches in Mukono district in 1932. She visited seventeen branches, talking to women on the virtues of being good and obedient wives, of training children in good ways, and on monogamy and its virtues.<sup>46</sup> While some of her ideas extolled the subservience of women, it must be remembered that some of these 'virtues' were in keeping with Ganda norms. Monogamy was an exception.

Leading Christian women were adamant that monogamy was a superior form of marriage. In the protest of 1931, they had written to the Provincial Commissioner that the Baganda had 'definitely left behind altogether the marriage of our pagan forefathers with an unlimited number of wives ...[when they] voluntarily accepted the Christian religion'.<sup>47</sup> Even though their complaint at the time was related to inheritance issues, their commitment was to monogamy. How widespread this viewpoint was is unclear. Lucy Mair, working in rural Buganda between 1931 and 1934 commented 'Most monogamous wives rather envy the woman who is free to go visiting every other week'.<sup>48</sup> Mair also contested any suggestion that Christian women's views represented those of the general population and in part she was probably correct. Waliggo, writing of Catholic women found that for some monogamous marriage was enslaving.<sup>49</sup>

By 1926 there were eighty-eight Mothers' Union branches spread around the country. Leadership was primarily that of the elite group of women considered in this paper. The first generation of girls who attended Nabumale girls' boarding school in Mbale was the 'foundation group' of the Mothers' Union in Eastern Uganda in the 1920s. These women, like their Gayaza counterparts, were often the relatives of chiefs or clergy. The mother of Florence Nekyon was one of the first generation at Nabumale, and sister of a chief.

---

<sup>44</sup> Buganda Women's Conference Minutes.

<sup>45</sup> J. Taylor, *Growth of the Church in Buganda*, p. 268.

<sup>46</sup> Bishops' Files, Namirembe archives, Church of Uganda.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Mothers' Union members to Provincial Commissioner, 26 September 1931, Bishops Files.

<sup>48</sup> L. Mair, *An African People in the Twentieth Century*, New York, Russell and Russell, 1965, 1st published 1934, p.101.

<sup>49</sup> J. Waliggo, 'The Catholic Church ...', p.8.

Membership of the Mothers' Union extended beyond the elite women reaching out to women in the villages and opening up new possibilities and contact with ideas from the outside world. While there was emphasis on mother-craft and maintaining the good health of babies and children, classes were also held in cooking, sewing, knitting and bead-work, and over time an increasing range of subjects. Some of the handicrafts were made for sale, although the prime emphasis was for use in the home. Florence Nekyon's mother learnt how to make jams and learning to sew, bought herself a sewing machine. Ruth Baddokwaya indicated that through the Mothers' Union she had been able to attend courses that improved her formal education.

All of these activities gave some economic benefits<sup>50</sup> and a degree of empowerment. Part of the appeal was a range of new practices that furthered their roles as wives and mothers, central to their identity. This was paralleled by an emerging discourse in Colonial health, described in the 1970s and 1980s as a discourse of 'imperial motherhood'.<sup>51</sup> Both the Medical mission of CMS and the government health department were providing services to women and children in efforts to improve childbirth and child-rearing outcomes.<sup>52</sup> Mothers' Union activities that focused on motherhood and children were part of this larger framework of ideas.

In terms of the religious experience of women, before Christianity arrived in Uganda *embandwa* cults offered support and consolation in issues of great concern in their lives, for example fertility, childbirth and the hardships and sorrows in child-rearing.<sup>53</sup> Devotional aspects of Mothers' Union groups provided similar meanings, backed by practical aid, prophylactic and sustaining. The *embandwa*, widespread in this area of eastern Africa, were part of the cultural underpinnings of various Ugandan societies and, following Lamin Sanneh's analysis, they may have enabled the 'translation' of Christianity into these societies. While cults continued to be important throughout the colonial period and beyond, the new religion provided alternative activities favoured by those holding political power and attractive to a growing number of people.

---

<sup>50</sup> This is a topic that needs further research.

<sup>51</sup> See Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop*, Issue 5, Spring 1978, pp. 9-65; Sir Albert R. Cook, *Uganda Memories, 1897-1940*, Kampala, The Uganda Society, 1945, p. 326.

<sup>52</sup> For a critical analysis, see Carol Summers, "'Intimate Colonialism': the Imperial Production of Reproduction in Uganda, 1907-1925" *Signs*, Vol. XVI, No.41, pp.7 86-806. Women whom I interviewed spoke very warmly of this.

<sup>53</sup> Berger, 'Rebels or Status-Seekers?'; A. Southall, 'Spirit Possession and Mediumship among the Alur', in J. Beattie and J. Middleton, *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa*, New York, Africana Publishing, 1969, pp. 231-272; J. Beattie, 'Group Aspects of the Nyoro Spirit Mediumship Cult', *Human Problems in British Central Africa*, Vol. 30, 1961.

Leadership by the wives, sisters or daughters of influential men gave some *kudos* and the mark of approval in the development first of 'Women's Work' and then of the Mothers' Union. For these women there was empowerment in their new roles, despite the patriarchy of Church and Mission, and a continuity of their status in pre-colonial hierarchical structures into the later period. For many of these women their Christian faith was a central feature of their lives. The life histories of Ana Kageye and Juliya Kibubura indicate that they became women of strong Christian faith, affirming the suggestion that religious activity was important in women's lives and demonstrating the complex inter-relationship of religion and politics.<sup>54</sup> In an age when Christianity in the Western world is of diminishing importance to a large proportion of the population, it is relevant to remember that it continues to expand, rapidly in some areas, in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

Empowerment, it would seem, was there in various forms for women in traditional society. For those who held positions of influence, even of power, the new religion and the prestige associated with it may have been significant in their conversion and baptism. Aili Tripp has argued that women's organisations of the 1940s offer links with the increasing participation of women in the political process in the late colonial and post-colonial periods.<sup>55</sup> My paper suggests in addition that Protestant women's organisations, that is, Mothers' Unions and Women's Conferences, provided a link with pre-colonial structures and that there was some degree of continuity between pre-colonial and pre-Christian leadership roles and women's leadership in the evolving Protestant Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

---

<sup>54</sup> Beattie, 'Spirit Mediumship in Bunyoro', in J. Beattie and J. Middleton, *Spirit Mediumship...*, pp. 159-170; Berger, *Rebels or Status Seekers?*, p.164.

<sup>55</sup> A.M. Tripp, *Op cit*.

# Gender, Power and Protest in African Farming: Recalcitrant Women and Usurping Men in Colonial Kenya, 1930–1950

Clare Buswell\*

This paper looks critically at the impact of colonial agricultural development policy on Kenyan women's agricultural practices and land use for the period 1930–1950. Until the 1950s Kenyan agricultural policy was directed predominantly by the needs of a European/settler farming sector while racially determined land and labour policies had restricted African agriculturalists to their 'Native reserves'. In the post-depression period and through the Second World War up to the period of the Emergency 1952–59, European agriculture, in particular the estate and plantation sectors continued to dominate, so that 'at the end of the 1950s European farms were responsible for an estimated 80 per cent of agricultural output that reached the urban and export markets and which small African farms had been supplying quite successfully in the period before the first World War'.<sup>1</sup>

In the depression years of the 1930s however when the settler-dominated Kenyan economy was at the mercy of world economic events with the decline in coffee and maize prices the colonial administration embarked on a strong effort to diversify and commercialise African agricultural production (within the reserves).<sup>2</sup> This was at a time of declining wages for African labourers and the increasing insolvency of the settler community but also of increasing population pressures and declining access to land in what were then the African

---

\* Clare Buswell is based in the School of Politics and International Studies at the Flinders University of South Australia and is currently engaged in research into the changing role of women in Kenyan colonial societies which focuses on four of Kenya's agriculturalist peoples, the Kikuyu, Kipsigis, Luo and Nandi. This paper is an abridged version of her paper given to the 2002 AFSAAP Conference and awarded the postgraduate Prize for 2002. She is grateful to John Lonsdale for his helpful comments. (Ed).

<sup>1</sup> J. Heyer, 'Agricultural Development Policy in Kenya', in J. Heyer, P. Roberts and G. Williams (eds), *Rural Development in Tropical Africa*, London, MacMillan, 1986, pp. 93–94. See also C.P. Youé, 'Settler capital and the assault on the squatter peasantry in Kenya's Uashin Gishu District 1942–63', *African Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 348, July 1988, p. 395.

<sup>2</sup> In 1936 £3,000,000 was owing by the settler community and the colonial administration itself was in debt by around £17,000,000 most of which was owing on the Uganda railway. During the depression, exports dropped from £3.422 million to £1.909 million in 1934. At the same time the Kenyan administration was obliged to pay interest on its loans from Britain which amounted to 33% of recurrent expenditure. R. M. A van Zwanenberg, *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya 1919–1939*, 1975, pp. 1–2, 18–19.

reserves. The objective was to improve the resilience of African food supplies during times of drought and famine and to supply food for the wider market; that is, for labourers on plantations and the increasing number of town dwellers. The strategy was to 'improve' African farming techniques and to diversify crop production within the African land areas. .

African agricultural production systems in pre-colonial Kenya had produced a diversity of foods; but importantly they were underpinned by complex systems of labour relations and gender power structures.<sup>3</sup> The colonial interventions of the 1930s combined with earlier land alienations had significant negative implications for gender relations in relation especially to women's access to land and to the use of their labour leading women to protest their grievances in the public sphere in different forms of resistance in the 1940s. This paper looks in turn briefly first at women's agricultural practice and production systems amongst Nandi, Kikuyu, Kipsigis and Luo women in pre-colonial Kenya and second at the changes in agricultural practice introduced through these colonial years to establish clearly the changes that Kenyan farming women faced over those years and the resulting erosion of the basis of women's wealth creation and power that was at the heart of their grievances.

### **Pre-colonial gender relations and production systems**

Historically Nandi, Kipsigis, Kikuyu and Luo women were independent producers of the family food supply; they did so on land assigned to them by their husbands and fathers-in-law. Each wife had her own dwelling and land which was separate, often by some distance, from that of her co-wives. Women were household heads, farm managers, traders as well as autonomous producers of the family food supply. In all four groupings, women controlled the food supply in that they were responsible for the major part of its cultivation, processing, storage and distribution. In particular women monopolized grain production and its trade. The literature suggests that men respected these positions and generally made sure that their wives were provided with the land necessary to perform the task, as it was through this provisioning that a man gained in status within the community.<sup>4</sup> They became according to von Bulow a 'Big Man'.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> G. Kershaw, 'The Changing Roles of Women and Men in the Kikuyu Family by Socio-economic Strata', *Rural Africana*, Vol. 29, 1975, p. 179.

<sup>4</sup> Driberg writing in the 1930s views the relationship between men and women as one of respect with their spheres of production and influence being independent of the other. J.H. Driberg, 'The Status of Women Among the Nilotics and Nilo-Hamitics', *Africa*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1932, p. 405.

<sup>5</sup> Dorte von Bülow, 'Bigger Than Men? Gender Relations and their Changing Meaning in Society, Kenya', *Africa*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 1992, p. 539.



How women organised themselves and the production of crops seems to have been their affair, just as the men organised the production of cattle to ensure the maintenance of their families' status. Women's and men's productive systems were relatively independent of each other in that the loss of a husband or the absence of men would not leave women's production impoverished, as women drew on kin relationships or age mates to undertake collective work. Women's status as independent producers with control over grain production and supply formed a basis for their negotiation with men on issues concerning the household, marriage, inheritance and the timing of important ceremonies to coincide with abundant food supplies. In all four groups women used their age grade groups and women's councils to enforce a degree of solidarity among each other, acceptable types of behaviour of women with respect to their menfolk, and importantly to assert women's control over the fruits of their labour.

The then prevailing system of shifting cultivation which allowed expansion into some new land each year and long years of fallowing not only made use of the different soil and climatic types but, as an agricultural cycle, was an effective method of risk management in that it insulated the household against food shortages induced by natural conditions such as drought or plagues of pests. Further, this dispersion evened out the demand for labour by allowing for the staggering of cultivation tasks. In practice, a woman might cultivate many sections of land, making use of crops with different growing cycles and allowing for land to fallow.

This type of land use system not only provided a diversity of crops, but also contributed to the diversity of cultural structures and political relationships based on favours of patronage such as loans of land, cattle and food in times of need. The anthropological literature points to this conclusion in that the descriptions of land use show that land was not to be viewed as a single or static entity, as land was subject to different user rights.<sup>6</sup> Land was certainly not viewed as a single holding with one owner. Thus use rights to this land included grazing rights at certain times of the year or during the fallow cycle, hunting rights, fuel wood and water collection rights, building rights, inheritance rights, rental rights, and cultivation rights. In such a use rights

---

<sup>6</sup> G.W. Huntingford, *The Southern Nilo-Hamites*, London, Oxford University Press, 1965; H.H. Lambert, *Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions*, London, Oxford University Press, 1965; J.F. Munro, *Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands 1889-1939*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975; J.G. Peristiany, *The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964; I.Q. Orchardson, *The Kipsigis*, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau. Reprinted 1978; M. Whisson, *Change and Challenge: A Study of the Social and Economic Changes among the Kenya Luo*, Nairobi, Christian Council of Kenya, 1964.

system, we see that a piece of land is subject to claims by many individuals, at different times of the year or during the agricultural cycle. The Kikuyu land ownership system, for example, was based on relations between a group of 'patrilineally related men who owned land, known as the *mbari* and headed by a *muramati* who allocated land to each *mbari* member according to availability and need'.<sup>7</sup> Kershaw states that 'by jointly owning land, men were permanently bound together, and these ties were more permanent than those based on descent or marriage'.<sup>8</sup> In short, land was of social, political and ritual importance, and these cultural norms underpinned its economic importance for the individual. It is also clear that there would be times when these rights could cause conflict between the users.

### **Changing practices in crop production in colonial Kenya**

While most African farming prior to the 1930s remained of the shifting cultivation type, and the major implement for digging remained a wooden hoe or digging stick, changes were already taking place. The more densely populated areas of Kiambu in the Central Province were moving towards a continuous cultivation system. In the Luo and Kipsigis areas although the wooden hoe remained the most used cultivation tool, the increasing use of ox ploughs brought changes to cultivation. The majority of plough owners in the Kipsigis land unit was in areas close to the European tea plantations, as the Kipsigis had been able to supply the demand for maize to the plantation workers throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>9</sup> The increasing numbers of ploughs from 103 in 1927 to 275 in 1930<sup>10</sup> and the move into plough cultivation changed the nature of cropping, moving away from the inter-planting of crops to growing them as stand alone crops or in a monoculture system of production. This was particularly so in the Kipsigis land unit for maize as the plough had been predominantly used to cultivate the man's *imbaret ab soi*, and the produce grown there sold to pay taxes.

To promote these changes in agricultural practice, the colonial regime continued, as it had done for some years, to target male farmers via the supply

---

<sup>7</sup> G. Kershaw, *Op Cit.* p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p.175.

<sup>9</sup> R. Manners, 'Land Use, Trade and the Growth of the Market Economy in Kipsigis Country', in Paul Bohannon and George Dalton (eds), *Markets in Africa*, Northwestern University Press. 1965, p. 502. The price of maize paid to the producer during the 1920s was around one rupee per load. The tea estates did grow some maize but the majority of it was sold into the export market which brought a far higher return. This difference in price was due to the estate grain being of higher quality and because the Nyanza Province Marketing Board, dominated by the settlers, set the price of African grain so as to favour the settler product.

<sup>10</sup> KNA. AR/1272 Annual Report Nyanza District 1929. Dobbs C. N., p. 66.

of seed, extension workers and demonstration farms.<sup>11</sup> These seed farms were instrumental in improving production quantities and quality. The new maize varieties had a higher yield per unit of land than the indigenous yellow maize. The seed farms also developed a higher protein and drought resistant cassava.<sup>12</sup> The effect of these new higher yielding varieties can be seen in Kavirondo in 1937 where, as a result, the yield per acre had increased by forty percent for maize, sesame and beans and by about thirty percent for sorghum and eleusine.<sup>13</sup>

Coinciding in the 1930s with this move to diversify crops for food production, the administration made available to African farmers seeds to crops that had been the domain of European farmers. Thus planting of tea and coffee along with the further expansion of cotton and wattle production now increased the areas under cultivation. Although maize was the main crop exported out of Nyanza province, the 1930s saw a real growth of cotton production. Production of cotton lint in Nyanza increased from approximately two million pounds in 1930, to twenty-four million pounds within six years (1936–37).<sup>14</sup> Cotton was also introduced into Meru in 1934 with the planting of 150 acres, Fort Hall with 178 acres in 1935, and 1000 acres planted with the establishment of a ginnery in Embu in the same year.<sup>15</sup> By 1936, the area under cotton production in the Meru and Embu districts increased from 7,140 to 20,015 acres.<sup>16</sup> At the same time as cotton was introduced in Meru, cash crops such as coffee, ground nuts, rice, tobacco and some legumes were also planted.<sup>17</sup> Wattle, however,

---

<sup>11</sup> KNA. AR/95. *Central Province Annual Report*. 1936. La Fontaine S. H., p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1980, p. 102. La Fontaine, the District Commissioner for the Central Province, reports that from 1935–36, the area under cultivation for drought resistant crops increased from 14,093 acres to an estimated 54,450 acres due to changes in cultivation methods. KNA. AR/95 *Central Province Annual Report*. 1936. S.H. La Fontaine, p. 58. Interestingly, cotton is included in the list of famine resistant crops, all the others are food crops: cassava, legumes, millet, muratha-maize and sorghum.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> The cotton price had dropped from 30 cents per pound in 1923 to 10.5 cents per pound in 1932. H. Fearn, *An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903–1953*, London, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 75–76. In the Luo areas of Nyanza, cotton was introduced on communal plots of land in 1907. Cotton, by the 1920s, was grown mostly in the Kisumu area and North Nyanza close to the Uganda border. The Luo did not have communal land for the growing of crops, only for cattle grazing, as herding communally afforded greater protection from raids.

<sup>15</sup> KNA. AR/94 *Central Province Annual Report*. 1935. Vidal M. R. R., p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> KNA. AR/95 *Central Province Annual Report*. 1936. La Fontaine S. H., p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> KNA. AR/94 *Central Province Annual Report*. 1935. Vidal M. R. R., p. 45. Coffee was introduced to Embu, Meru in 1934, latter in Fort Hall and in north Nyanza in 1952. Coffee was first grown on appropriated Kikuyu land at Kiambu by a catholic mission in 1902. M. P. K Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1968. p. 265. Tea was grown by Africans in the Fort Hall district in 1946, and 1952 35 acres was planted in Nyeri. J. Heyer, 'The

was to become the major crop for the Kikuyu areas of the Central Province during the 1930s and 40s eclipsing maize which had predominated for much of the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> Wattle production amongst the African population, previous to 1920s, had been restricted to the holdings of chiefs, headman, clerks and teachers.<sup>19</sup> The collaboration of the Dept. of Agriculture and Forests saw the production of wattle expand in the Kikuyu areas in the central province from 20,859 acres in 1930 to 100,000 acres in 1935.<sup>20</sup> Wattle became, according to Kitching, the most cultivated crop as it required little labour time with its returns being higher than that of other crops:

[P]er unit of land, a ton of maize or beans might have fetched more for their producer in 1937 than a ton of wattle bark, but they would also have taken much more land on which to grow. The volume of output from an acre of wattle trees simply exceeded the volume of output from any available alternative crop by a margin which more than counterbalanced any difference in unit prices.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst Kitching may be correct in his argument that wattle had higher returns than other crops, I think that the story is a little more complex than that. Firstly it took eight years before a wattle tree could be harvested.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, the Kikuyu used trees to settle territorial disputes, as trees were used as boundary markers. As land allocation was men's responsibility; trees were viewed as male property in that they solidified territorial and therefore political relations between kin, tenants, *Mbari* members and different tribes. Tibberts states:

*Githaka* boundaries were usually marked out as land clearance and cultivation became widespread. Marking was often an outcome of disputes over the boundaries of sub-clan land but was

---

Origins of Regional Inequalities in Smallholder Agriculture in Kenya, 1920–73', *East African Journal of Rural Development*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1&2, 1975, p. 154. In the Kipsigis land unit tea was introduced in 1959 with 126 growers being allowed to plant a third of an acre each. R. Manners, *Op Cit.* p. 508.

<sup>18</sup> Maize from the Kikuyu reserve was worth £101,489 in 1932, whereas wattle production was in its infancy and was worth £15,780. R. Tignor, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Massai from 1900 to 1939*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 297.

<sup>19</sup> Production was expanded in the 1930s after major investments by Forestal (a UK multinational engaged in tannin production of leather). G. Kitching, *Op Cit.*, p. 65. Wattle was introduced in Kenya in 1903 to provide wood for the railways. The settlers grew it to export its bark (10 tons was exported in 1910). Wattle grew best in the Kikuyu areas at elevations of more than 7000 feet.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67. See also R. Tignor, *Op Cit.* p. 296.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> Both men and women took part in the cultivation of wattle, in that the men felled the trees and the women were responsible for the stripping of the bark. G. Kitching, *Op Cit.* p. 65.

also undertaken simply as a means of preventing further disputes. It was to be done in the presence of witnesses and of the representatives of the *mbari* which owned the land adjacent to the plot in question.<sup>23</sup>

It was this Kikuyu use of trees in their land use system, as Haugerud notes, that had serious consequences for some tree planting efforts of the government:

The tenurial implications of tree planting contributed to the failure of an attempt in the 1930s by the colonial government to encourage planting of trees by distributing seedlings free of charge. Embu farmers refused to plant the seedling because they believed that doing so would give the government a claim to their land.<sup>24</sup>

Trees as boundary markers indicated evidence of ownership of land. Here men were able to use an accepted method of claiming land at the expense of other landholders, their relationship with other members of the *Mbari* and their wives. Men simply used an established association with trees to maintain the status of the *Mbari* and its political ties. It is no coincidence that this expansion of wattle production occurred at a time when disputes about land were gaining prominence between the *ahoi* and members of *Mbari*.<sup>25</sup> Importantly, when land titling was finally undertaken in Kikuyu areas under the Swynnerton Plan giving surety of ownership, much of this wattle was cleared.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the planting of wattle can be seen as a way of maintaining land ownership by Kikuyu men rather than solely as a crop with lower labour requirements and good returns.

---

<sup>23</sup> Tibberts, 'Trees as Boundary Markers', *Africa Today*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1994, p. 222. Tibberts is quoting from L. S. B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu before 1903*, (Three volumes) London, Academic Press, 1907.

<sup>24</sup> A. Haugerud, 'Land Tenure and Agrarian Change in Kenya', *Africa*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 1989, p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country: A Study in Government Policy*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 39–41. The disputes over land between *ahoi*, kin and between members of the *mbari* often resulted in litigation in the local Native courts. At this level it was the chiefs, headmen, teachers and those with a mission education who could afford to pursue land ownership via the court process. Sorrenson argues that from this process a landed educated elite developed and it was this group that gained the most out of using the British law system over that of traditional customs. Sorrenson also notes that between 1949 to 1951 fees paid in African courts rose from £13,000 to £24,000 (pp. 78–79).

<sup>26</sup> Tibberts, *Op Cit*. Tibberts is quoting from M.P. Cowen, *Capital and Household Production: the case of wattle in Kenya's Central Province*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Cambridge University, 1978. See also Tibberts, footnote 30, page. 332.

### **Agricultural development and the decline of women's power**

These changes in agricultural practice and production and the move to commercialise African agriculture cut seriously across African women and men's labour and power bases with serious consequences for women's agricultural practices and land use through the 1930s and 1940s and therefore their capacity to accumulate. On the one hand women's access to land and the basis of their wealth was reduced: they lost access to land for their own crop production to the expansion of newly promoted crops; they lost control over their land access rights due to radical changes in the structures of land ownership and use brought about by the introduction of these new crops and changes in farming production systems; and their access was reduced by increased competition for land in the reserves at a time of rapid population growth.

The push to diversify African agriculture occurred at a time of expanding population growth combined, especially in the Kikuyu areas, with a push to move the squatters and their cattle out of European farms back to the Reserves which increased competition for and further reduced women's access to land.<sup>27</sup> In 1945 there were 122,000 Kikuyu squatters living in the Central Province who were removed into the Kikuyu Reserve. Thus by:

1945, in the Kikuyu populated Nyeri district, there were 542 persons per square mile leaving an average of only 3.34 acres of cultivatable land per family, while Fort Hall and Kiambu had 411 and 420 person per square mile respectively. The Agriculture Department estimated that 24 percent of the holdings in the Africans areas of the Central Province were smaller than the 2.5 acres it considered necessary for bare subsistence, with the proportion as high as 44.8 percent in Fort Hall.<sup>28</sup>

Contrast this with the eleven acres that had been the average amount of land used by a Kikuyu family around the turn of the century of which three to five acres was cultivated, the rest used as fallow and for grazing.<sup>29</sup> Similarly,

---

<sup>27</sup> The movement of squatters back to the reserves differed in different parts of Kenya. In Western Kenya, the Nandi were able to resist the forced repatriation into the Nandi reserve due to the reliance of the settler population on the Nandi for the procurement of cattle and labour. This resulted in the Nandi squatter numbers increasing from 13,346 in 1931 to 32,287 in 1948. C.P. Youé, 'Settler Capital and the Assault on the Squatter Peasantry in Kenya's Uasin Gishu District 1942-63', *African Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 348, July, 1998, p. 404.

<sup>28</sup> B. Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, London, James Currey, 1990, p. 275.

<sup>29</sup> J. Middleton and G. Kershaw, *The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya*, London, International African

women's allocation of land for private use on plantations was often no more than the government-allowed one acre of land on which to grow crops.<sup>30</sup> This became known as a 'kitchen garden'.<sup>31</sup> As the wattle example indicates, if tree crops were planted on land previously allocated to women for the production of their own crops, then women lost not only the land but any returns that may have come from it, as the men received payment for wattle bark. Similarly, any money received from the sale of crops grown as cash crops went to men and enabled them to buy labour and technology and attempt to maintain the basis of their wealth and political position. This was not the case for women. The pre-colonial division of labour, described earlier, did not change when the agricultural production system changed from shifting to intensive cultivation or with the change in crops cultivated. The men who learned about new crop varieties and were given the seed for these crops did not plant, weed or harvest them. As Kitching notes in areas of North Kavirondo in the mid thirties there were:

Two maize crops, two sorghum crops and one crop each of beans and sweet potatoes. In addition there were seven different periods of sowing or planting, four different harvests, three periods of weeding and two different periods of hoeing or turning over the land in preparation for planting. Women were responsible for all these tasks sharing only a small proportion of the planting duties and the harvesting duties with men.<sup>32</sup>

Wattle and other high value crops such as fruit, vegetables, tea or coffee drove women out of the rights of access to land for the growing of crops for their own wealth creation. It is here that the consolidation of men as cultivators of land can be located along with the increased impact of their decisions about land distribution, ownership, use and control of women's labour. In short there were increasing pressures placed on the gender relations with tensions between access and use rights to land and access and appropriation of women's labour and their wealth.

On the other hand women lost control over their labour via the co-option of their labour time into crops that were promoted by the administration to men.

---

Institute, 1972, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, *Op Cit.* p. 180. This allocation was part of the labour contracts that were drawn up by the government.

<sup>31</sup> D. Foeken and N. Tellengen, 'Proletarianisation, Land, Income and Living Conditions of Farm Labourers in Kenya', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4, July, 1997, p. 301.

<sup>32</sup> G. Kitching, *Op Cit.* p. 85.

Their deteriorating ability to control where their labour was used, and therefore the associated ability to maintain a basis to accumulate wealth and power, proletarianised women into a reserve pool of labour for both their husbands and settler farmers. In short, women lost real control over their land use rights, becoming labourers on land that men had appropriated to maintain their wealth and political status. The tensions between women and men concerning women's labour found expression in numerous protests and forms of resistance during these two decades. No longer were women content (and increasingly were unable) to subsidise men's wealth by selling surpluses of their crops as they had done in the first two decades of colonial rule; women now took their grievances into the public domain.

### **Women protesting their rights to women's labour**

In the 1940s three riots occurred in which women were the main instigators: firstly, in Iveti in 1940, some five hundred women rioted against the use of their labour to build terraces and to grass areas of eroded land. These women were sent out to do this work at the insistence of the chiefs. This constituted compulsory labour, something that women deeply resented because it required so much of their time. In 1947 the women again were at the centre of soil conservation disputes. This time Kenya African Union held a meeting in Fort Hall chaired by Jomo Kenyatta and attended by around 10,000 people. The result of the meeting was that women were no longer permitted to take part in the soil conservation methods of terracing and grass sowing. The commissioner writes:

This was unfortunate, since amongst the very considerable bands of persons who dug and conserved their soil, more than 50% were women. On Monday the 21st of July, no women came to work, and the men were left to carry on by themselves. It was obvious by the middle of August that not only did the men not wish to do so, but had generally decided that all world would stop.<sup>33</sup>

The only way the administration could get any conservation work done was to move away from communal work and on to individual plots. A carrot and stick method was used. Fines were imposed if land was not dug and £4330 was made available for the provision of tools, wages, strip cropping and demonstrations. It was however to no avail, and more unrest occurred in the Province with a second riot in 1948 at Meru and the third in 1949 back at Fort

---

<sup>33</sup> KNA. AR/369 Fort Hall/27. 1947. Coutts W. F. pp. 1-2.



Hall.<sup>34</sup> It is worth quoting in full the report of District Commissioner Walter Coutts:

At the beginning of the year only Chief Ndungu had managed to persuade his recalcitrant females to return. At a local Native Council meeting in March [the] Council by a large majority decided that women would return to soil conservation work. This decision had considerable repercussions. On the 14th April, 2,500 women arrived in the station from Chief Peterson's location and danced and sang and informed everyone that they would not take part in soil conservation measures mainly because they felt that they had quite enough to do at home. In this one sympathised, but the plea that the soil could not wait for a few men to terrace it and four hands were better than two and the work was only for two short mornings a week fell on deaf ears. I met their representatives at Chief Peterson's on the 17th and put forth my pleas without result. Early in May the women announced that they were not going to plant grass either. Now this was serious. ... Chief Peterson ... issued orders to certain women to plant grass on their own particular land and they refused. He promptly arrested them on May 4th and they were as quickly released by a large crowd of their own sex brandishing sticks and shouting Amazonian war-cries. I was in the area and served all the women with summons to appear before the Native Tribunal, Fort Hall on May 7th. The cases were heard on May 8th and despite the fact that the sympathisers had been warned not to come and create a disturbance in the station, nevertheless after a fine of Sh. 10/- had been imposed on each delinquent a large crowd of angry females descended on the offices.<sup>35</sup>

Women's resistance to the deteriorating conditions of their work and power basis was further expressed in the increasing numbers of women who ran away to the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa and to religious compounds to get away from the power and control of their husbands, the elders and chiefs and the enormous workload.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, so disturbing to the colonial administration was the movement of women away from their villages into the cities and towns that

---

<sup>34</sup> KNA. AR/99 Central Province Annual Report 1948. Windley E. H. p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> KNA. AR/370 Fort Hall/28. Jan. 1949. Coutts W. F. pp. 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> The African population of Nairobi in 1938 was estimated to be around 48,500 of which 15,000 were women. S. Stichter, 'Women and the Labour Force in Kenya. 1895-1964.' *Rural Africana*. Vol. 29, 1975-6, p. 56.

the government, with the consent of the elders and chiefs of the villages, prohibited women's movement, and if women were caught they were taken back to their villages. The government was aided by newly forming welfare and political organizations such as the Luo Union and Kikuyu General Union both of which made strenuous efforts to keep Luo women and Kikuyu women out of the townships and forcibly sent them home.<sup>37</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The decline of women's farming systems and their resulting inability to maintain their wealth and status within the community was a direct result of colonial policies. Colonial government policies facilitated the movement of African men into cash crop production by promoting to them crops of maize, wattle, coffee, cotton, fruit, vegetables and tea to be cultivated for sale. To grow these crops men appropriated women's access rights to land into men's access rights to the same land. Men were then able to appropriate women's labour away from their (women's) own crops, thereby restricting women's labour time for their own wealth creation. For African rural women the motives of the colonial administration to intensify African agricultural production which lay in the need for a wider tax base, or to minimize the affects of famines or due to the failures of settler production were immaterial. In this sense both parties were invisible to each other. However the direct impact of such policies brought them into outright opposition to what can be seen as a three-pronged attack on their rights: women lost access to land for their own crop production to the expansion to newly promoted crops for the market; they lost control over their labour via the co-option of their labour time into crops that were promoted to men by the Administration; and they lost control of their access to land rights as a result of radical changes in the structures of land ownership and changes in farm production systems.

There is no doubt that the basis of the unrest and protests by women concerned a power struggle over resources of which women's labour was the more important. It seemed that everybody wanted it: husbands so that they could grow crops for sale; the government to carry out soil conservation work; the settlers for weeding their coffee and tea crops. Most of all women themselves wanted to be able to use their labour so as to maintain their rights and fulfil their obligations within their communities. This, unlike their menfolk, they had been denied as a result of colonial policies and it set the groundwork for what we now find fifty years later in Kenya. Rural women now constitute eighty percent of the casual rural labour force, have little access to wealth creation via

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56.

land ownership or monetary accumulation and face the bulk of their workload under extreme economic conditions.

### **Short Bibliography**

Berman, B., *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, London, James Currey, 1990.

Foeken D. & Tellengen N., Proletarianisation, 'Land, Income and Living Conditions of Farm Labourers in Kenya', *Journal of Peasant Studies*. Vol. 24, No. 4, July 1997.

Hay M. J., *Economic Change In Luoland: Kowe 1890–1945*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972.

Kershaw G., 'The Changing Roles of Women and Men in the Kikuyu Family by Socio-economic Strata', *Rural Africana*, Vol. 29. 1975.

Kitching G., *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1980.

Kenya National Archives, District and Annual Reports from 1930 to 1950. Microfilm, Syracuse University.

Middleton J. & Kershaw G., *The Kikuyu and Kamba of Kenya*, London, International African Institute, 1972.

Oboler R. S., *Women, Power, and Economic Change*, Stanford, The Nandi of Kenya, Stanford University Press, 1985.

Orchardson I. Q., *The Kipsigis*, Nairobi, Kenya literature Bureau.

Stichter S., 'Women and the Labour Force in Kenya. 1895–1964', *Rural Africana*, Vol. 29, 1975–6.

Tibberts, 'Trees as Boundary Markers', *Africa Today*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1994.

von Bülow Dorthe, 'Bigger Than Men? Gender Relations and their Changing Meaning in Society, Kenya', *Africa*, Vol. 62, No. 4. 1992.

Whisson M., *Change and Challenge*, Nairobi, Christian Council of Kenya, 1964.

# Global Impulses / Local Politics: Comparing Two Eras of Constitution Making in Kenya

*Edith Miguda\**

## Introduction

Do current globalisation trends spell out an era of post ethnicity? This paper argues in the case of Kenya that, given Africa's location on the present global stage and current globalising trends, ethnicity as a central basis for cleavage formation in local politics is weakening as new forms of interaction between global forces and local events inspire alternative forms of coalitions and cleavages among citizens. In making this argument, I examine two eras of constitution making in Kenya associated with different manifestations of global trends: the independence constitution era that ended in 1963 and the constitutional review process that began in 2000 and which at the time of writing remains to be completed.<sup>1</sup> I argue first that global and local forces that led to constitutional changes associated with decolonisation in the 1960s ushered in forces that oriented Kenya to play her role in a global stage. Second, that currently global forces and local interactions that urge constitutional changes associated with democratisation impel Kenya to make global consensus work locally. In this regard there has been a shift in emphasis from globalising the local which was pre-eminent at decolonisation to that of localising the global. With this shift, ethnicity as the significant factor in cleavage formation has been weakened as newer global and local forces that urge a localising of the global call for, and provide newer bases of group and interest formation.

There are a number of significant parallels in the global and local interactions that propelled constitution making in Kenya in the two eras. From a global perspective, both constitution making periods have taken place within the context of major wars which produced global impulses that urged constitutional changes. In the first a war weary world in the post Second World War period sent impulses that urged decolonisation. In the second, current era of constitution making, the post Cold War period produced global impulses that urge democratisation. In a rather significant way, both the independence constitution and the current constitutional review process hold definite roles in positioning Kenya to function in a global system. On the one hand the constitutional arrangements through which Kenya became independent meant that

---

\* Edith Miguda is at present a post-graduate student in the Department of Social Inquiry (Gender Studies), Adelaide University, Adelaide, South Australia. This is a slightly abridged version of her paper presented to the AFSAAP Annual Conference, 2003, and awarded the AFSAAP Postgraduate prize for this year. (Ed)

<sup>1</sup> The processes that ushered in the current constitutional reform processes began earlier than 2000. However, it is in this year that commissioners were appointed and work on constitutional review currently under progress began.

Kenya would have the opportunity to perform among independent nations of the world. One of the immediate actions after independence was an application for membership to the United Nations through which Kenya became a Member of the United Nations 'just hours after attaining independence' in December 1963, making the occasion a giant step in the exercise of independence and sovereignty in the arena of community of nations.<sup>2</sup>

While reform of the independence constitution is the purpose of the current Kenyan constitution review, constitutional amendments during the presidencies of Kenyatta and Moi can be viewed as moulding the highways through which issues that currently plague the constitutional review process travelled, became modified and were transported into current constitutional debates. In the 1980s and early 1990s, a burgeoning vocal civil society became the agents that generated constitutional debates, while Human Rights discourse served as the frame around which constitutional issues were initiated and debated. This is markedly different from the colonial times when colonial administrative practices both invented and established ethnicity as the single most significant context of political interest.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Independence Constitution: issues, global impulses and persistent ethnic frames**

The independence constitution was negotiated within the context of global impulses and local demands in colonial Kenya that ultimately coupled constitution making and constitutional changes to ethnic demands. It was debated in a global era that demanded rights of peoples to choose the form of government that they deem right, and representative of their aspirations. With the formation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, Kenyan nationalists sought independence from British colonial rule within the global paradigm of the rights of people to choose. The nationalists' language of self-determination drew directly from international discourses on self-determination and peoples right to choose. Locally however, different groups, arranged along ethnic cleavages, became the basis for different standpoints to the proposed constitutional changes and in turn proposed competing alternative constitutions that made for much disagreements, bargains and negotiations in order to arrive at a final constitutional arrangement negotiated to accommodate the ethnic equation in Kenya.

The initial constitutional hitches in the early 1960s arose from parameters framed by racial questions and race relations of the day that pitched various racial groups in Kenya against each other. From its inception, colonial administration placed various racial groups in a hierarchy of racial privileges, rights, and status in politics, economy and in social life. Colin Leys for example describes how European settlers maintained a racial

---

<sup>2</sup> See 'Kenya and the United Nations', [http://www.un.int/kenya/kenya\\_un.htm](http://www.un.int/kenya/kenya_un.htm)

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion on ethnicity in Kenya see Bruce Berman, 'Ethnic Patronage and the Politics of Uncivil Nationalism', *African Affairs*, Vol. 97 Number 388, July 1998, pp. 305-342.

supremacy and racial advantages and privileges through a system of monopoly of high potential land, agricultural labour, government services and the most profitable crops. Africans at the opposite extreme in the racial divide lived under appalling conditions in poor and congested reserves, overcrowded urban centres, with poor or no government services, and were subjected to extremely poor working conditions.<sup>4</sup> Richard Joseph points out that under racial hierarchies, constitutional debates are often limited to demanding rights and privileges that the other race possesses, or to its corollary of removing constraints on lesser privileged racial groups.<sup>5</sup> Indeed as the constitutional debates raged in Kenya in the 1950s, racial tensions were drawn into the conflicts around the constitution that pitched European settlers, Africans, Asians and Arabs as racial groups in opposing and contentious positions with regard to their location in any constitutional arrangement.<sup>6</sup>

The settler's demands centred around continued European dominance in Kenya. This was part of an earlier and wider global enterprise at enforcing Anglo supremacy.<sup>7</sup> However the Kenyan variant of European supremacy had taken a local flavour since the European occupation as settlers became 'declassed' and assumed an overall racial privilege in Kenya. For example, a significant number of settlers who came to Kenya came from the lower classes. Frost<sup>8</sup> describes the composition of settlers as including blacksmiths, shoemakers, Afrikaners running from depression and hardship that arose due to the Anglo-Boer war as well as from the aristocracy with money and social position. In spite of the mix, the settlers took on privileges that they would not ordinarily enjoy in their own countries, but which acted as symbolic to a privileged status in Kenya. A memo by Sir Donald Cameron lamented thus:

---

<sup>4</sup> Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism*, University of California Press, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> R. Joseph, 'Democratisation in Africa after 1989: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 3, April 1997, pp. 363-382.

<sup>6</sup> These are the four categories of race used by the colonial government in its administrative policies. In addition to these is the category 'other' that appeared in population census. Somalis who did not fit in the four racial categories fall in this group although they were often also referred to as Somalis.

<sup>7</sup> Racial supremacy was encapsulated in the very ideas of a civilizing mission as one of the justifications of colonialism and in words of key personalities such as 'The white race ... is the guardian of values that are essential to the welfare of the black race as well as our own', J.H Oldham, quoted in Richard Frost, *Human Relations and Politics in Kenya Before Independence*, Transafrica Press, 2nd edition, 1997, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Where native labour is available, Europeans even of the domestic class refuse to perform for themselves the services which they were forced to discharge for themselves in their own country.<sup>9</sup>

Such symbolic assumption of supremacy was accompanied by demands for greater rights and privileges within the colony *viz a viz* African and other racial groups. By 1945, these rights were deeply entrenched and the settlers, through their party Electors Union, aimed at preserving these rights and privileges at all costs including the use of military force against any constitutional change that did not guarantee them such privileges.<sup>10</sup> A note from Mr. Hugh Fraser for example, described some Europeans as ‘once more carrying constitutions inside their pistol holsters.’<sup>11</sup> In addition to demands within Kenya, the Elector’s Union also mobilized opinion externally, drawing from global impulses and urging local inclinations into the global scene.<sup>12</sup>

In their search for European supremacy at all costs, the settlers were completely indifferent to African political aspirations and adopted an uncompromising racial attitude that brought white nationalism on a direct collision course with African nationalism.<sup>13</sup> The collision was to cause a local political split among Europeans during which race was translated into ethnicity as Europeans became ‘tribalised’ and joined local tribes in opposing or advocating specific constitutional arrangements.<sup>14</sup> Another impulse entrenching ethnicity as the central locus of cleavage during the constitutional debates was the colonial government that increasingly began to see tribes as the main cleavage for calculating any constitutional arrangement. The Colonial Office in particular began to view Kenya not just from the prism of Race, but also through the

---

<sup>9</sup> 9 P.R.O, CO822/4/19 Imperial Policy in East Africa, Revised memo by Sir Donald Cameron on Federation, 3/6/1927.

<sup>10</sup> In March 1944 the Europeans in Kenya formed a new party, the Electors’ Union with the express aim of forging and sustaining white unity in the turbulent years ahead.

<sup>11</sup> Hugh Fraser, The Kenya Constitutional Question: A Note. CO 822/599.

<sup>12</sup> The Electors Union for example had a ‘Foreign Affairs’ dept., which liaised with representatives in London, and the Joint East and Central African Board. They also developed contacts with influential individuals in Central and Southern Africa, became a member of United Central Africa Association in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

<sup>13</sup> Ogot, 2000, *Op Cit* p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> The European electorate had largely united against the colonial government, but now was faced with a growing African nationalism and militarism around Mau Mau. This led to a split in which six of the fourteen European Elected members joined with some Asian elected members to form a non-racial party – The New Kenya Group led by Michael Blundell, while eight remained on a policy based on maintenance of their racial superiority demanding racial segregation and racial supremacy. Wilfred B Havelock remarked that the Europeans had transformed themselves into a small tribe to gang up with other smaller tribes against domination and exploitation by larger and more powerful groups. Quoted in Macharia Munene, ‘The Manipulation of the Constitution of Kenya, 1963 – 1996: A Reflective Essay’, 2001.

prism of 'tribe', and ethnicity began to figure more prominently in imperial calculations.<sup>15</sup>

The Asians formed a separate racial group with neither the privileges of the white colonizers nor the under privileges of the Africans. Yet their constitutional politics, like those of the Europeans and of the Africans, had a global derivation as well as a local flavour. With their origins in India and the connection between India and Britain, Indians in Kenya held a rather precarious comparative racial position of a 'privileged/disadvantaged' group. They initially had nominated representation in the legislative council, but later were enfranchised to elect representatives to this council through a common communal roll. Through out the colonial period, settlers continuously resisted political concessions to Indians, and often the settlers got their way.<sup>16</sup>

When the constitutional debates began, European settlers drew from this legacy and locally expressed sentiments against concessions to Indians. The global implications of the local political rivalry between Indians and settlers became clear in the fears expressed by Sir. S. Wilson. He had earlier noted that any alteration of the existing constitution in Kenya, which would give greater representation to Europeans, and no proportional increase of representation to Indians would reopen the floodgates of the 1923 controversy that would be felt more in India than in Kenya. Indians on the other hand were also the envy of other racial groups, particularly the Arabs and the Somalis. The former sought equal treatment and status with the Indians while the latter sought racial identity parity with Indians.<sup>17</sup> Arabs stated that they represented the Arab immigrants from Arabia, demanded that they be distinguished from natives, and protested against criminal procedures, ordinances and other colonial statutes that included Arabs and Somalis as natives. Indeed the official definition of Native had a clause that excluded a Somali or a Swahili.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> R.M. Maxon 'The Colonial and Foreign Offices: Policy and Control' in B.A.,Ogot and W.R. Ocheng, *Op Cit*.

<sup>16</sup> For example, there were numerous meetings in the early 1920s among white settlers who resolved to resist by armed force if necessary any policy which they believed to involve dangerous concession to Indians. At that, time too, a deputation of settlers asked for unofficial majority so that among other things, full control would be given them over Indians. See Cameron 1927 PRO CO 822/4/19.

<sup>17</sup> See Wilson PRO CO 822/4/19.

<sup>18</sup> See Arab witness to the Joint select Committee, Afro-Asian Association petition: Status of Arabs PRO CO 533/425/20. Somalis had demanded that they be classified as Asiatic but this could not be granted. The colonial government argued that such a classification would cause an embarrassment to British administration in Somaliland and Northern Frontier Province of Kenya. In the end, Somali' s paid non-native poll tax at their own request in order to be distinguished from African natives.



The dominant Imperial vision from 1942 was to find people who could be bound to Britain in such a way that they would protect and maintain British economic and strategic interests in Kenya. Along these lines, and coupled with the increasing demands by Africans for greater representation and their calls for 'Africa for the Africans', the colonial government worked around initiatives on multiculturalism. Initially Africans and moderate European settlers used the multicultural proposals to stake out concessions. By the late 1950s, both Africans and radical Europeans vehemently opposed multiculturalism, as an option for Kenya, finally forcing the colonial government to adopt a policy aimed at scrapping multiculturalism and pursuing a rapid policy towards African majority rule<sup>19</sup> Once the colonial government abandoned multiculturalism as a constitutional option, ethnicity took centre stage as the locus of constitutional bargain and negotiations. I noted earlier that within Kenya Europeans became 'tribalised' while the Colonial Office convinced itself that tribalism and ethnicity were the factors to reckon with in Kenya's politics. Among the Africans ethnic divisions became glaring as ethnic interests emerged as a common feature of decolonisation<sup>20</sup> and demanded constitutional safeguards to the interests of 'minority' groups. Ethnicity and ethnic tensions held up constitutional talks at Lancaster as London watched to see its desire for rapid independence held up by ethnic disagreements. The disagreements pitched various ethnic groups against each other leading to both internal and interracial splits, coalitions and counter coalitions among groups with competing ethnic agendas and visions for constitutional changes and constitution making. With these ethnic tensions and conflicts in the 1960s the constitution was debated, negotiated and finally agreed upon within the framework of fear and desire to protect threatened ethnic group interests.

Ethnicity not only became the central identity divide but also the central locus of configuring interests. Consequently 'minority' ethnic groups who formed the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) bargained from the position of fear that the larger ethnic groups would dominate independent Kenya. Their desire was to have a

---

<sup>19</sup> In the 1950s, the paradigm of multiculturalism had served as a useful reassurance to the white settlers, imperial power, and Africans. Europeans needed support from Asians, Arabs, and at least some of the Africans in order to maintain continuing white leadership of the country. On the other hand, indigenous black Kenyans saw multi-racialism as an intermediate stage pending black majority rule. See A. A. Mazrui, 'Arab and Swahili Dreams and Fears 1939-1963' in Ogot and Ochieng, 2000, *Op Cit*. Both the Lyttelton constitution of 1954 and the Lennox Boyd Constitution of 1958 (named after the two secretaries of State who proposed them), proposed constitutional changes that aimed at providing greater African participation while maintaining the principle of multiculturalism. Mazrui points out however that for the Swahili, Asians and Arabs, multiculturalism was a 'genuine' political lifeline. Ethnic confusions that Swahilised Arabs and Arabised Swahili contributed to the coastal preferences for a multicultural rather than an Afrocentric Kenya.

<sup>20</sup> Kiraitu Murungi, 'Ethnicity and Multi-Partyism in Kenya', *Thoughts on Democracy* Series Issue 3, 1995.

constitution that would protect their interests as minority groups in Kenya. The settlers approached the constitution from fear that their dominant position would come to an end and wanted a constitution that would protect their interest as a minority. They joined forces with the smaller African ethnic groups on a commonality founded upon fear. The larger ethnic groups wanted 'independence now' to acquire the necessary power to rule Kenya. In the midst of these local politics global impulses flowing through US and USSR pressure also sent renewed pressure for decolonisation. When the 1961 elections greatly reduced European settler influence this only served to provide a wider glimpse of ethnic divisions among the African majority. In the final analysis, the Majimbo constitution<sup>21</sup> that ushered in independence in 1963 sealed ethnicity, as the central locus of political competition, and of cleavage formation into the political system of independent Kenya by passing Lower House constituencies and Upper House seats almost exclusively on ethnic lines. O.Ogendo concludes that political parties reached independence as mere federated ethnic loyalties grouped around individual personalities.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Constitutional Review process 2000-2004: decentring ethnicity.**

Speaking from hindsight and a clear picture of unfolding myriad constitutional amendments since independence a number of Kenyan scholars have pointed out that the independence constitution was for various reasons untenable. It was too complicated, according to the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC); it showed a remarkable distrust of power;<sup>23</sup> the constitution was alien to the history of government in Kenya and at variance with the authoritarian structure of the administrative set up inherited from the colonial period and the signatories had no faith in it anyway.<sup>24</sup> These sentiments are significant in understanding some of the modalities of interaction between global forces and local politics. Justifying the need for a comprehensive review of the constitution the CKRC stated that the attempt to accommodate everyone's interests in the 1963 constitution necessitated an approach that resulted in inherent instability.<sup>25</sup>

From the first anniversary of independence the average rate of one constitutional amendment per year became the practice. The frequent amendments to the constitution

---

<sup>21</sup> 'Majimbo' was the system of government introduced in Kenya by the Kenya Order in Council legal Notice no. 245 of April 18 1963. It provided for the sharing of executive, legislative and financial powers of the state between central and regional governments. Kiraitu Murungi 'Ethnicity and Multipartyism in Kenya'.

<sup>22</sup> O. Ogendo, 'The Politics of Constitutional Change in Kenya Since Independence, 1963-1969'

<sup>23</sup> Ghai and McAuslan, quoted in Ogendo 2001 *Op Cit*.

<sup>24</sup> M. Munene, 'The Manipulation of the Constitution of Kenya, 1963-1996, A Reflective Essay', 2001/

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed analysis of constitutional amendments in Kenya see J.B. Ojwang, *Op Cit*; also Okoth-Okendo, *Op Cit*.

resulted in extensive presidential powers that finally led to much abuse of power by the two presidents of Kenya.<sup>26</sup> The first group of amendments removed and finally wiped out regionalism as designed in the independence constitution creating instead a situation that KANU would have liked to see in 1963.<sup>27</sup> In 1964 KADU dissolved and members joined KANU, but without any clear crafting of alternative modes of cooperation on previous contentious issues that divided the two parties along ethnic lines. Consequently, while KADU joined KANU resolves and cleavages remained trapped in ethnic interpretations and meanings. The move transferred ethnic strife and competition from regions to parliament. With increased presidential power, the presidency turned into the epitome of patron client relationships now operating in Parliament. Ethnic rewards and privileges that are characteristic of patron/client relations inspired a need to defend the presidency and subsequently the president became jealously guarded along ethnic interests and the presidency became an object of ethnic defence at all cost. For example, when Odinga broke away from KANU in 1966 and formed an opposition party, Kenya People Union (KPU), the Kikuyus began to take an oath to defend the presidency. In the same vein, as Kenyatta's health failed a group referred to as the 'Kiambu Mafia' tried to change the constitution so that Moi would not automatically take over power from the President. In the Moi era, Adar and Munyae<sup>28</sup> point to a clear 'Kalenjinisation' of the Public service with a concomitant 'dekikuyuisation' of the same. This once again points to the ethnic trappings that continued to orient political outlook and options for resolving national issues.

Furthermore, in both the Kenyatta and Moi era, nation building and national unity were framed around ethnic thinking that viewed tribalism as the main threat to national unity. On the other hand, ethnic patronage remained the main lifeline of most political leaders. Ethnicity remained both seduced and rejected by political authorities. In the Moi era, ethnic associations such as Luo Union, GEMA, Abaluhya Union were all banned. In the late 1980s and early 1991 when citizens demanded multi party politics, the reason given as dangers of multi party politics was centred on ethnic understandings of the political implications of multiparty politics. Indeed in the first multi party elections in 1992 and the second one in 1997, ethnic conflicts flared up in a number of provinces.

---

<sup>26</sup> The constitutional amendments created a powerful presidency and presidential powers through constitutional changes that at the same time weakened the authority of parliament, restricted arena of political discourse and subordinated holders of constitutional offices to the whim and pleasure of the president (Constitutional Review Commission; 2002 p 20-21). For the Kenyatta era, see Okoth Ogendo, *Op Cit*, Oginga Odinga, *Op Cit* and for the Moi era, see K. Adar and M.Munyae, 'Human Rights Abuses in Kenya under Daniel Arap Moi, 1978-1001', *African Studies Quarterly*, Online *Journal for African Studies*, 5 (1), URL: <http://www/web.Africa.ufl.edu/asq/v5/v51al.htm>.2001.

<sup>27</sup> It took seven separate amendments, in three years to establish a single-chamber National Assembly, see J.B. Ojwang, *Constitutional Development in Kenya: Institutional Adaptation and Social Change*, Acts Press, 1990, p 115.

<sup>28</sup> *Op Cit*.

Yet even as local politics elicited trappings of ethnicity, the post independence period produced local contexts that interacted with newer global impulses that were both reframing issues, re-mapping boundaries of coalitions and cleavages, and laying groundwork for broader based thinking on events and national issues, creating new areas of tensions that motivated alternatives to ethnic based cleavages. Divisions among intellectuals and student politics marked by student riots at the university of Nairobi for example began in the early 1970s. Marxist ideologies brought Marxist scholars together around intellectual cleavages that produced other alternative bases of interests. The Decade for Women that culminated in an international meeting in Nairobi in 1985 brought new areas of tensions and cleavage around gender issues as womens' issues began to emerge more strongly as a global agenda. Clearly global and local initiatives and forces were beginning to interact in ways that unveiled diverse and alternative lines of cleavage around issues such as democracy, human rights, gender, justice, freedoms and opposition to authoritarian rule. With these a post-ethnicity era began to emerging more clearly, with possible alternative platforms in the formation of new alliances, coalitions and issues motivating consensus among interest groups that are not necessarily bound to ethnicity, nor framed around ethnicity as the central divide or the central locus of cleavage. Such newer lines of cleavages with other bases of motivation also point to fragmented ethnicities that are continually being fractured more openly by divided loyalties, interests and motivations that are beyond ethnic frames. This happened as newer alternative lines of cleavages were becoming more readily available to the general populace in the current constitutional review processes and which would not have been so obvious in the pre-independence era and the immediate period following independence.

The possibility of alternative lines of cleavages allows for experimenting with more diverse compositions of interest groups and alternative lines of cleavages. In the 1990s for example as the civil society questioned the human rights abuses associated with a powerful presidency various groups explored and experimented with newer options of coalition and cleavages, for engaging the state based on common interests and concerns outside the frames of ethnicity. Oginga Odinga and Anyona for example tried to register an opposition socialist party in 1982. There was a coalition around justice issues between the churches and Lawyers through the Justice and Peace Convention<sup>29</sup> chaired by Bishop Okullu with Paul Muite of Law Society of Kenya (LSK) as secretary. The Kenya Human Rights Commission was formed via motivations that derived from common interests around human and people's rights, for example a number of

---

<sup>29</sup> The Justice and Peace Convention aimed at bringing about 'peaceful changes in Kenya through a public dialogue and people's understanding of their rights and responsibilities as free citizens. See discussion in Galia Sabar Friedman 'Church and State in Kenya 1986-1992: the Churches' Involvement in the Game of Change' *African Affairs*, Vol. 96, Number 382, January 1997, pp 363-382.

women's organisations such as the League of Kenya Women Voters, National Committee on the Status of Women, and Women Political Caucus were formed along gender lines that made for alternative lines of cleavages. These new coalitions drew from internal forces as much as they were propelled by global impulses particularly those urging democratization but had clearly shifted away from the ethnicity as the motivating force of formation.

This does not mean that ethnicity has been erased, or that there are no further ethnic motivations even within the interest groups. Ethnicity indeed remains a glaring force. Multi party politics in Kenya in the first multi party elections in 1992 and again in 1997 suffered tremendously from the entrenched legacy of ethnicity and ethnic trappings in political outlook within the civil society even as alternative lines of cleavages emerged. The ethnic factor in the split among opposition parties was paramount, and the strong link between party politics and ethnic rivalries and cleavages coloured Kenya's multi party politics in the 1990s almost as extensively as it had coloured the splits and division in the constitutional debates around independence.

There are clear opportunities to move away from ethnic trappings that were not as readily available to constitution makers in the independence era. For example, the composition in the review process of women's representation draws directly from global efforts and local initiatives to have women represented in national decision-making bodies in Kenya. In its composition that is based on affirmative action, the Review Commission responded to pressure by Kenyan women who had also drawn alot from the international support based on demands for womens' involvement in national decision-making positions. Review itself was also a response to global impulses and local politics that led to demands for greater democratisation and called for a necessity to look at the constitutional issues that continue to deny rights to Kenyans. Joseph<sup>30</sup> explains how private Africans and non-African actors steadily increased their efforts on behalf of Human Rights, Civil Liberties and Pluralist democracy during the 1980s. External forces narrowed the options available to recalcitrant regimes in ways that weakened their ethnic patronage while at the same time bolstering insurgent groups.

The constitutional review itself is taking place at a time when there is a general critique of Africa and the globalisation process and what impact globalisation is having on Africa. Amidst all of this are suggestions on possible ways that Africa can manage globalisation which is seen to be inevitable and that is already present in Africa. There are calls by African intellectuals pointing to a need for Africa to define its place in the new globalising world by fashioning our own modernity.<sup>31</sup> There are fears that

---

<sup>30</sup> *Op Cit*, p. 369.

<sup>31</sup> Mazrui, *Op Cit*.

globalisation may eclipse Africa and her people or further marginalize Africa and her peoples making them unequal partners in a global village, or contrastingly hope that globalisation will usher Africa and her peoples into a new phase of development, peace and progress. Clear calls to counter the global power games and define African terms around which to engage globalisation.

The emergence of new divisions that cut across ethnicity in the new constitutional debates and tensions make for a rethinking of the strength of ethnicity as a cleavage factor in the globalisation era and Kenya in the globalisation era. The place of women, minorities and disability in the constitution make for expanded trajectories around which political tensions and conflicts can be centred and resolved. Furthermore with new global forces taking on currency, there are clear possibilities of that producing mitigating effects of ethnic differentials removing the so far restricted focus on power and privilege that derive from ethnic strength in politics. Indeed religious cleavages may make for other means of viewing contestants and providing for a variety of choices not necessarily locked in ethnicity. The civil society that was so vigorous at the height of multi party debates and democratisation has not settled back into a residual ethnic mould. On the contrary bases of unity from which to object to excesses, undemocratic practices and unlawful behaviour by leaders remain a potential area for crafting forms of democratic oriented cleavages and civil society groups that would keep a watchful eye on proceedings and political procedures. Yet, clearly, the inverse relationship to the global forces is evident. The Human Rights discourse around which constitutional demands have been made are a clear attempt to localise much of this global discourse on models of justice, freedoms and rule of law. In the lead-up to independence global and local forces interacted in directions that eclipsed much of such possibilities. The lead-up to the comprehensive constitutional reviews taking place have assembled many more alternative lines of interest formation that would enable Kenya to move forward. Stakeholders and those involved in the process of constitution making have the responsibility to draw from such alternative forms of cleavages.

### **Short Bibliography**

Adar, K. and Munyae, M., 'Human Rights Abuse in Kenya, under Daniel Arap Moi' 1978– 2001', *African Studies Quarterly*, Online Journal for African Studies, 5 (1), URL: <http://www/web.Africa.ufl.edu/asq/v5/v5ilal.htm>, 2001.

Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, 'The People' s Choice', The Main Report of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, Nairobi, 18th September 2002.<http://www.kenyaconstitution.org/docs/03d005.htm>

Friedman, G. S., 'Church and State in Kenya, 1986 – 1992: The Church' s Involvement in the "Game of Change"', *African Affairs*, vol. 96, Issue 382, January 1997, pp. 25–52.

Frost, R., *Race Against Time: Human relations and Politics in Kenya Before Independence*, Transafrica Press, 2nd edition, 1997.

- Leys, Colin, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neocolonialism, 1964 – 1971*, University of California Press, 1975.
- Maxon, R.M., 'The Colonial and Foreign Offices: Policy & Control', in B.A. Ogot & Ochieng W.R., (eds), *Kenya, The Making of a Nation: A Hundred years of Kenya's History, 1895-1995*, Institute of Research & Postgraduate Studies, Maseno University, Kenya.
- Munene, M., *The Manipulation of the Constitution of Kenya: 1963 – 1996, A Reflective essay, 2001*.
- Murungi, Kiraitu, 'Ethnicity and Multi-partism in Kenya', *Thoughts on Democracy Series, Issue 3*, 1995.
- O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru: The Autobiography of Oginga Odinga*, London, Heinemann, 1967.
- O. Ogendo, *The Politics of Constitutional Change in Kenya since Independence, 1963 – 1969*, 2001.
- Ogot, B.A., and Ochieng, W.R. (eds), *Kenya, The Making of a Nation: A Hundred Years of Kenya's History, 1895 – 1995*, Institute of Research & Postgraduate Studies, Maseno University, 2000.
- Ojwang, J.B., *Constitutional Development in Kenya: Institutional Adaptation and Social Change*, Nairobi, Acts Press, 1999.
- Joseph, R., 'Democratisation in Africa after 1989: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 29, No. 3/ April 1997, pp. 363–382

## Review Articles

# Robert Mugabe and the Politics of Choice in Zimbabwe

*Paul Nursey-Bray*

**John L. Moore, *Zimbabwe's Fight to the Finish. The Catalyst of the Free Market*, London, New York, Bahrain, Kegan Paul, 2003, pp. xvii + 345, inc Index, Maps and Tables. ISBN 0-7103-0872-8 (h/b).**

For political theorists and historians the question of political agency is crucial to judgements about the culpability of political actors in unravelling the skein of historical development. Do they have political, and therefore moral, choices, or are they merely the instruments of the implacable forces of historical necessity? These considerations bear to some extent on the situation in Zimbabwe and the debate about the actions of Robert Mugabe. Although the case is far less extreme than the experience of Stalinism, nonetheless a similar ideological debate has arisen. On the one side Mugabe is vilified and totally blamed for the situation in his country. On the other he is held to be the brave opponent of the forces of imperialism and the lonely champion of the land rights of the poor, whose actions and policy have been almost wholly constrained and shaped by Zimbabwe's colonial past and neo-imperial present. It is this view that is held by many of his fellow leaders in Southern Africa who have shared his experience of colonial oppression and liberation through struggle. It is also the view espoused by John L. Moore in his book *Zimbabwe's Fight to the Finish: The Catalyst of the Free Market*. Moore is concerned to challenge what he regards as the demonisation of Mugabe by Western liberal academics and commentators. He takes issue with critics like Robert Rotberg who put the blame for the catastrophic state of Zimbabwe's affairs on the kleptocratic and patrimonial leadership of Mugabe (p.1).

These questions are ones that loomed large in the Marxist tradition with its dependence on a materialist theory of history and Moore's analysis is, broadly speaking, situated within the Marxist canon. Marx's original formulation was one that *pace* his critics certainly allowed for, indeed arguably depended on, the reciprocal interaction between structure, especially economic forces, and political will as *praxis*. But political convenience all too often made a determinist interpretation the most attractive. It meant that leaders like Lenin



and Stalin were able to claim that the forces of history were on their side, and therefore victory inevitable. It also enabled apologists for their less savoury revolutionary actions to claim that their choices were constrained and their actions not open to the usual kind of moral judgement. The Left paid, and is still paying, a high price for such behaviour. None of this should be taken to deny revolutionary constraints, still less the goals that were the aim. But it is to assert that political leadership, despite the framework of constraint within which it operates, cannot deny the ownership of its actions nor avoid responsibility for them.

In this detailed study of Zimbabwe's economy and class system both before and after independence Moore argues that 'the roots of the development crisis ... derive from non-viable structures of class and production established under Rhodesian settler colonialism'(p. 3). The failure to deal with the land issue in the Lancaster House settlement denied full sovereignty over the land issue and thereby bequeathed to the new country an incubus that would continue to hamper its development. The domination of the white capitalist class, bound up with its hold on the land, meant that there was a failure to develop what Moore calls an 'anchor class' that could provide a bedrock for economic and political development. As he notes, 'Undemocratic political development reflected the absence of an autonomous 'anchor class', which ... could have served as the backbone of national wealth creation and liberal democratic governance' (p. 140). This distorted domestic development meant that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the liberalization measures that in 1990 followed the economic and climatic crises of the late 1980s created further distortions and problems. Economic liberalization 'accorded to the material interests of the white capitalist classes while notions of African emancipation through land distribution and state regulation remained fundamentally contrary' (p. 110).

The demand for good governance could not in these circumstances be fulfilled. It must, Moore argues, be a consequence not a preliminary to substantial reform of the distribution of land. Certainly the state-bourgeoisie continued to protect its privilege but the 'problem was not the desire of the state-bourgeoisie to accumulate wealth but the fact that the quest was structurally reduced to indigenizing a highly skewed economic order, which carried the concomitant of political repression' (p. 110). On this account Mugabe's decision to move on the land issue in 1997 represented a decision by the ZANU-PF to 'realign itself with the peasantry over the land issue...'(p. 258). Meanwhile 'white farmers and established business joined the urban civil alliance in a push for liberal democracy through constitutional reform', an alliance that politically took the

form of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The conclusion that follows deflects criticism from Mugabe, arguing that 'most aspects of the development crisis, whether political (authoritarianism, corruption) or economic (internal and external deficits, low investment, inflation, food insecurity), have derived from a non-dynamic domestic economy, which has been underpinned by an agrarian sector wherein only a privileged few could generate wealth' (p. 271).

There is much to be said in favour of Moore's account of the crisis in Zimbabwe. It is certainly true that most Western critics adopt a one-dimensional approach to the problems of the country, locating their causation solely in the actions of the leadership. The argument that we should take a broader view and examine the skewed nature of economic and social development that resulted from the country's colonial history and the realities of neo-imperialism is one that has real force. The debate mirrors in microcosm the continuing incomprehension with which Western and African commentators approach the same developmental problems, the former locating their roots in poor leadership decisions, if not corruption, the latter continuing to emphasise the effects of colonialism and economic domination by the capitalist Western world. Much of the corruption, nepotism and self-indulgence of African leaders are arguably bound up with the failure of development. Stripped of any possibility of adopting and implementing meaningful policies, given the place of African nations in the world economic order, African leaders have all too often retreated into a narrow concern for their own immediate interests and their own hold on power. This is not to excuse them of responsibility but to accept the point Moore makes about the link between economic development and a failure of political governance.

Moore's castigation of the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1990 is also to be applauded. Structural Adjustment Programmes have rarely been of benefit to African economies almost terminally weakened by debt and a lack of capital. In the case of Zimbabwe relief funds from donor countries made available as part of the package were not forthcoming until 1992, which proved too late to avoid a balance of payments crisis where the currency lost forty percent of its value. Coupled with a period of crippling droughts between 1992 and 1995 this meant that the government had to continue deficit financing to support grain imports. This in turn resulted in the suspension of IMF support and the beginning of a downward spiral of stagflation.

Finally, Moore is correct in placing the land issue centre stage in the debate over the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The issue of land, and more particularly the dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants by colonialism, lies at the heart of contested perceptions over the virtues and evils of colonialism. Settler colonialism, as in Rhodesia, was necessarily based on this dispossession. The political settlement represented by independence did not resolve this issue which remained, until Mugabe's recent actions, a matter of unfinished business. That it enjoys the same status in South Africa goes some way to explaining Thabo Mbeki's ambivalence towards Mugabe's illegalities

All that being said however, Moore's position is ultimately lacking in balance. In an effort to save Mugabe from his demonising enemies he has become an apologist for him, one who ignores, where he does not gloss over, the many bad policy decisions for which Mugabe must be held accountable. The identification with Mugabe's position is such that Morgan Tsvangirai and the MDC are characterised as agents of the liberalisation programme who will 'stabilise the economy within the confines of the SAP' while adopting a position on the land issue 'that will probably exclude majority need' (p. 265). This characterisation caricatures the democratic complexities of the country, while paying little respect to its developed civil society and the commitment and independence of a labour movement that was a key factor in the success of *Chimurenga*.

There are numerous examples of a glossing over of Mugabe's censurable policy decisions. For example, while there is a discussion of the relationship between the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) in the period prior to independence there is no account of the activities of the infamous 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade and its reign of terror in Matabeleland between 1982 and 1988 with rape and torture all too common.<sup>1</sup> This was the first serious excursion into extra-legal terrain by Mugabe and could be thought to be relevant. But it might be objected that this is not germane to the land question. So let us turn to Mugabe's policy on the land issue.

Three questions are clearly pertinent. Was Mugabe serious in his proclaimed intent to redistribute land to the poorer peasantry or was it, in the main, a rhetorical device aimed at securing political advantages? Secondly, as a policy

---

<sup>1</sup> See The Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice in Zimbabwe/The Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980 to 1988*, (Harare, CCJPZ/LRF, 1997).

did it in fact achieve a successful redistribution? Lastly, was it necessary to violate the rule of law and to engage in extensive acts of political violence?

The case for much of the proclaimed policy on land being mainly rhetorical can be made for much of the 1990s. On the one hand there were planning and policies that appeared to offer immediate succour to the landless and to communal farmers who make up seventy percent of the population, planning and policies accompanied by fierce rhetoric. In 1992 Mugabe declared that, 'If I see anyone with cold feet, I'll put hot irons under them.'<sup>2</sup> But there was a consistent failure of will when outside funding was not available. Arguably a pattern of populism emerges. Mugabe and the political elite around him, or the state-bourgeoisie in Moore's terminology, can be seen as assuring themselves of the rural vote, so crucial in armouring and maintaining their hegemonic position, with radical promises and fiery rhetoric, but without the means, or perhaps even the intention, of carrying out their promises. It was noticeable that the fury of the language reached peaks immediately preceding the 1995 and the 2000 elections. Moore implicitly accepts this proposition for the early 1990s, but argues that the ZANU-PF hierarchy realigned itself with the peasantry in 1997. But even in February 1999, while the Zimbabwe government was insisting that it would seize one million hectares a year for five years, it transpired that it had failed to meet the terms of its own Land Acquisitions Act and that over ninety percent of the farms designated for seizure were thereby rendered exempt. As the BBC Special Report on Zimbabwe noted, 'after the fiery rhetoric the government's plans for radical land reform lie in ruins'.<sup>3</sup> Clearly a case can be made that the populism and political opportunism that characterised the 1990s continued into the new century, with the significant difference of having moved beyond the rule of law. There is certainly no evidence of a rational policy of land redistribution that would provide agricultural training and infrastructural support to ensure the optimum outcome both for the new farmers and the consumers of farm products. Interestingly the *Zimbabwe Independent* recently reported that a survey conducted in Zimbabwe by the Mass Public Opinion Institute between August and November 2000 had found that respondents believed that the land reform programme was 'hurried and unplanned', and concluded that 'The majority of Zimbabweans have understood the intention of the government to use the land reform programme as a vote-buying gimmick ...'<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Your Land Will Be My Land', *The Economist*, 15 February 1992, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> BBC News, *Special Report on Zimbabwe*, 10 February 1999:  
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/africa>>

<sup>4</sup> Itai Dzamara, 'Land Reform Seen As a Vote-Buying Gimmick', *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), 19 December, 2003, <<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/2003112190457.html>>

As to the beneficiaries of land distribution, it has long been a rumour and a scandal that Mugabe's cronies have figured largely. Moore refers to this concern as a 'common view among the Western press, diplomatic and NGO community' but dismisses it as a charge 'that tends to be exaggerated ...' (p. 257). But ample evidence exists to support the allegation. In 1999 Margaret Dongo, then an independent Member of the Zimbabwe Parliament, asked a question requesting data on land allocations under the government's land reform programme. Rather surprisingly the government tabled a relevant list of allocations subsequently known as the Dongo List. What is clear from this list is that there is, among the beneficiaries, an enormous preponderance of people linked to the state or to ZANU-PF. There are two lists, the one dealing with the Commercial Farm Settlement Scheme, and the other with the Ordinary Tenant Farmer Scheme. Among the 244 beneficiaries on the first list are fifty members related to the broad government of Zimbabwe, including the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, the Attorney-General, the Minister of Mines, two High Court Judges, the Director-General of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, five senior members of the President's Office, and a number of Professors of the University of Zimbabwe. In addition, this first list included seventy-six public servants employed in Government departments or parastatals.<sup>5</sup> The second list follows the same lines. In the face of this it is hard to sustain the assertion that Mugabe's intention was to resolve the economic impasse by the creation of an 'anchor class'.

Finally, was the descent into illegality and the flouting of the rule of law absolutely necessary? Surely the answer is in the negative if the purpose was to resolve the land issue in a genuine and efficient way. There were mechanisms at hand for a legal, if forceful, resolution of the problem in the form of the Land Acquisitions Act of 1992 which sanctioned compulsory acquisition, and which, more importantly, allowed for compensatory payments to be made in local currency over five years. The economic costs of implementation would have been high, but no higher, surely, than those occasioned by the present programme of acquisition by forced and illegal occupation. But, of course, the political pyrotechnics of the War Veterans' activities would have been missing.

In short, it is very hard to take seriously Mugabe's land reform programme as a genuine attempt to resolve a real problem. Rather it appears as a series of measures geared to political opportunism and vote trafficking. Its ultimate

---

<sup>5</sup> A number of points of access are available on the web. See, for example, ZWNEWS.com, <<http://www.zwnews.com/dongolist.xls>>

failure in this regard simply projected Mugabe further down the never-ending path of illegality and violence. For all of this Mugabe and ZANU-PF must be held responsible, indeed culpable. Certainly, as Moore argues, the political leadership in Zimbabwe has been seriously constrained by the political and economic settlement that they inherited from colonialism, and further hampered and limited by the realities of the political economy of neo-imperialism. But, unless we are to deny agency to Africa's political leadership, we must hold Zimbabwe's leaders, in particular Robert Mugabe, responsible for the policies that were pursued and for the terrible consequences of violence, famine and chaos. The attitude take by Moore reminds one of the old adage that 'You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs'. But one is also reminded of the time-honoured rejoinder, that you can break any number of eggs, without achieving anything remotely edible, let alone an omelette.

*University of Adelaide  
Adelaide, South Australia*

# Two Perspectives on the Portrayal of Botswana in *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*\*

Alexander McCall Smith, *The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency*, Edinburgh, Polygon, 1998, reprinted 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, pp. 226. ISBN 0 7486 6252 9 (p/b).

## From Botswana: Khadija Mogami

There is something very simplistic about Alexander McCall Smith's Botswana in his first novel *The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency*. McCall's way of separating the book into vignettes, was likely not just for ease of reading but so that it could be incorporated into Botswana's literary market which has a primary focus on scholastic reading materials for junior and senior secondary schools and is starved for positive, independent, female characters. Luckily Mma Precious Ramotswe, proprietor of Botswana's first Ladies Detective Agency, homeowner, information gatherer extraordinaire now the subject of an entire series of books that include *Tears of the Giraffe*, *Morality for Beautiful Girls* and *Kalahari Typing School for Men*, is that independent woman to a 'T'.

The first vignette 'Daddy' seems the story of a girl with an almost perfect life, until her failed marriage with the seductive trumpet player Note Mokote that seems so sudden and chillingly tragic. In every wedding ceremony in Botswana, the man's family is urged to 'return her as you found her' if the daughter is no longer wanted rather than, as is sometimes the case, beating her into submission. This incident, as it takes Mma Ramotswe back home and cements her resolve to be independent, is the genesis of *The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency*.

---

\* Ed note. A brief background to the genesis of this rather unusual format for a review article might be in order. I read and enjoyed *The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency* last year, but wondered about the source of its great popularity not only in the USA but in Australia where it has been widely recommended for reading groups. When I discovered that Karen Miller had in fact read it with just such a group, I suggested she review it. It seemed worthwhile also to explore Botswana reactions and an email to Neil Parsons at the University of Botswana brought several offers to also review it; and from these we asked Khadija Mogami, who is a journalist and works in the University of Botswana's Department of Public Affairs, to do so. Unhappily her original and longer review was lost somewhere in cyberspace, and I am particularly grateful to her therefore for this shorter reconstruction. CJG.

As Mma Ramotswa and her detective agency begin to gain notoriety, McCall Smith describes places and important people that date his experience in Botswana. Many of his landmarks are now long gone in the wave of construction that has spilled across Botswana's national landscape. Just as McCall Smith says Mma Ramotswa is an amalgamation of a number of people he knew and socialized with during his time in Botswana throughout the last three decades, so his characters are also an amalgamation of important figures in Gaborone and surrounds. In a country of only 1.6 million people and a capital city of just over 300,000 it is difficult to retain wealth without everyone in town, at some point, having your name on their lips, making many of his characters - the wealthy and overbearing Mr. Patel or the kind, garage-owner Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, quite familiar. Smith tapped into the culture of communal assistance and communal information through Mma Ramotswa's interactions with clients who always seem to get the answers they ask for even if, like the woman whose husband was cheating and shown up by Mma Ramotswa in a most unconventional way, they don't really want the answer in the first place.

The core case in the book involves a boy who goes missing and his parents, humble teachers from a nearby village, have no clue as to his whereabouts. Where the coincidence employed to solve the case by connecting it to a mysterious 'third metacarpal' and ritual murder could seem to the voracious reader of mysteries a bit contrived, Botswana really is as small as the novel suggests and such a thing and its solving could really happen here where everyone - across race and nationality - knows everyone else.

And so this simplistic vision, though it may seem almost fairy tale from the outside reading in, nonetheless rings true on the ground here in Gaborone, just a *combi* ride away from main character Precious Ramotswa's Kgale Hill, because it highlights the extremes of Botswana which are said to be like the weather - very pleasant on one hand, yet at the most extreme moments, very sinister.

It is just as well, then, that a man named Alexander McCall Smith came and observed enough to accurately put it to word in such a way that the reader forgets this as an Englishman's conception of Botswana instead of that of a jolly, big-bodied Motswana woman with a firm love of her culture with the unique distinction of being Botswana's first female private detective who decided, one day, to sit down and tell her tale.

*University of Botswana  
Department of Public Affairs  
Gaborone*



## From Western Australia: Karen Miller

*The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency* is an entertaining and heart-warming novel set in Botswana which, together with the five books which follow in the series, is enjoying a large popularity in the west. The book, written in 1995, had a small readership until 2002 when it took off in America to become a bestseller. Subsequently it found itself on Australian bookshelves and a popular choice for book club discussions. It was through such a group that I was introduced to the novel, and had the opportunity to discuss it with others.<sup>1</sup>

The members of our group – mainly non-academic, professional West Australians - knew little about Africa; only one of the group of eight had visited the continent. Most of our knowledge was gained from the often stereotypical and negative media portrayals through documentaries and current events. Thus, we were struck by the very positive portrayal of Botswana that the novel presented. Inevitably, some of us asked the question: How realistic was this picture? Knowing little about the country, we were unable to answer this question adequately. However, most of us were aware that Botswana, like the rest of Africa, had its share of serious problems, the most confronting and tragic one being the high incidence of HIV/AIDS with over a third of the population HIV positive. It seemed to us that McCall Smith had consciously chosen not to focus on these problems highlighting instead the positive aspects of Botswana; and in so doing creating an idealistic, even utopian, vision of the country and its people. The group differed in their views concerning the implications of such a portrayal and the value of it as a means whereby western readers could develop a greater understanding of Africa.

The utopian aspects of the novel are evident in a number of ways, including the nature of the detective genre itself where typically the protagonist brings about resolution involving the restoration of justice and a re-establishment of the moral balance in society.<sup>2</sup> The novel's main character is an independent and intelligent woman with a penchant for moral philosophy, Mma Precious Ramotswe, Botswana's only female detective, who deals with a variety of situations such as missing and cheating husbands, wayward daughters, people committing fraud or assuming other identities, and on a more sinister note, a lost boy, possibly kidnapped and murdered. She deals with these situations by using great intuition, ingenuity and compassion, with the help of some good friends, including the

---

<sup>1</sup> The ideas discussed by the group form the basis of this review article. Thanks to Robin Beatty, Ian Coates, Jo Coates, Kevin Frost, Alice O'Connor, Dave Park, and Bruce Sawyer. My thanks also to the editor whose comments on a draft of this review article made a significant contribution.

<sup>2</sup> Ernst Bloch discusses the utopian aspects of the detective novel in Volume 1 of *The Principle of Hope*, 3 Vols, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986.

indispensable mechanic, Mr J.L.B. Matekoni. With seeming miraculous detecting abilities Mma Ramotswe successfully solves all her cases, resulting in satisfied clients, suitably chastened wrongdoers, the balm applied, and the world a slightly better place.

Undoubtedly Mma Ramotswe fits the classic literary image of the detective as described by W.H. Auden who wrote that ‘all classic detective fiction stems from our yearning for an Eden to which the detective can, as an agent of God, return us.’<sup>3</sup> She is an angel figure, a ‘fixer of lives’ as Matekoni describes her (p. 178), and sees herself as someone with a mission:

I love all the people whom God made, but I especially know how to love the people who live in this place. They are my people, my brothers and sisters. It is my duty to help them solve the mysteries in their lives. That is what I am called to do. (p. 2)

While McCall Smith has utilised some of the conventions of the detective novel his book is more a story about Botswana. He weaves a tapestry of fable-like tales that revolve around the cases Mma Ramotswe is called upon to solve, tales which chronicle, and in so doing pay tribute to, the lives of ordinary, decent Botswana folk. As one of the characters in the book says: ‘Who is there to write down the lives of ordinary people?’ (p.71). In the novel McCall Smith tells the story of Obed Ramotswe, a Motswana who leaves his country to work in a South African mine and who eventually returns to Botswana to raise cattle and care for his daughter. More centrally McCall Smith tells the story of Obed’s daughter, Precious Ramotswe, including her upbringing by a loving father and caring female cousin, her unhappy, violent marriage to a musician, and the sad death of her five-day old baby. He tells of how Mma Ramotswe cared for her father until his death and her subsequent inheritance of a valuable herd of cattle which she sells, enabling her to buy a house and set up her own business – a detective agency. In so doing the author paints a very positive, even idealistic portrayal of Botswana.

The book presents contemporary Botswana as a society of well educated, hardworking and caring people, as well as a place of good government, sound economy and low crime. It contrasts this picture with the past, showing Botswana to have changed dramatically for the better since gaining independence from Britain in 1966 to become ‘the best-run state in Africa, by far’, (p. 147) due largely to the efforts and inspiration of Botswana’s first President Sir Seretse Khama, who, according to the patriotic Mma Ramotswe, ‘was a good man, who invented

---

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Margaret Throsby, in a radio interview with Alexander McCall Smith, ABC-FM, 23/09/03.

Botswana and made it a good place' (pp. 32-33). Botswana's colonial past is depicted as stagnant when, as the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 'nothing at all happened' (p.18). During those years, poverty and lack of opportunity led many men to seek work in South African mines, which, as Obed Ramotswa tells, 'sucked our men in and left the old men and the children at home. We dug for gold and diamonds and made those white men rich'(pp. 17-18). In contrast independent Botswana is shown to have developed significantly; Gaborone, for example, changing gradually from a few shops, houses and government offices to the development of small businesses, an industrial site, a Legislative Assembly and House of Chiefs where 'people could say what they liked – and did' (p. 148). As Obed proudly claims:

There's no other country in Africa that can hold its head up as we can. We have no political prisoners, and never have had any. We have democracy. We have been careful. The Bank of Botswana is full of money, from our diamonds. We owe nothing. (p. 17)

The book does not present Botswana as not having any problems at all; in fact a number of them are central to the novel, including domestic violence, poverty and witchcraft practices involving murder. It shows many of these problems to stem from the apparent contradictions in that society, particularly that between traditional values and those held by modern, capitalist society. However, the novel portrays Botswana society as successfully dealing with these contradictions. It presents the position of women, for example, as having improved significantly; Mma Ramotswa herself is someone who, despite being a victim of domestic violence, has survived to become an independent, successful business-woman. The book shows Botswana to be advantaged by a universalised, class-based capitalist system while remaining enriched by its cultural uniqueness and the preservation of important traditional and spiritual values.

The tendency toward resolution of contradiction and conflict displayed in the novel is aided by the liberal sprinkling of moral philosophy espoused by the contemplative Mma Ramotswa who holds an ethical outlook on life based on fundamental, universal truths that transcend culturally-specific values. What is right and wrong, good and evil, while complex and replete with ethical dilemmas,<sup>4</sup> is unequivocal; for example, it 'was wrong to lie, to steal and kill other people'(p. 33). Mma Ramotswa also delivers a dose of home-spun materialism with such reflections as:

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, she questions whether it is okay to lie for a good cause, such as discovering a murderer (p. 179).

You could think and think and get nowhere, but you still had to eat your pumpkin. That brought you down to earth. That gave you a reason for going on. Pumpkin.’(p. 81)

Perhaps most importantly she presents a philosophy of life, stressing the importance of taking time to talk, to care, to drink tea, and to be still enough to contemplate things ‘which, in everyday life, may so easily be pushed to one side’(p. 2). While pondering how she would enjoy her retirement growing melons and sitting and talking with friends, Mma Ramotswe comments:

How sorry she felt for white people, who couldn’t do any of this, and who were always dashing around and worrying themselves over things that were going to happen anyway. What use was it having all that money if you could never sit still or just watch your cattle eating grass (p. 157).

This outlook contrasts radically with the western experience of time; and perhaps it is here that the reason for the book’s popularity among western readers can be found. The book contains a message for the west, a lesson to be learned. The novel seems to offer a spiritual solution to the malaise of the west by emphasising the need to be more intuitive in our response to life, and to change the quality of how we spend our time. In the west’s literary imagination Africa often represents soul, as well as the beginning of things, conveying the sense that somehow Africa is important for the west’s psychological and spiritual well-being.<sup>5</sup>

The book in this way creates a sense of connectedness between two societies which have often been divided. Mma Ramotswe comments that:

God put us on this earth. We were all Africans then, in the beginning, because man started in Kenya, as Dr Leakey and his Daddy have proved. So, if one thinks carefully about it, we are all brothers and sisters...’ (p. 32)

The novel thus diminishes cultural barriers by emphasising common values. While the situations Mma Ramotswe deals with, as well as the context in which these stories unfold, are specific to Botswana; the underlying principles upheld - of decency, honesty and compassion – are valued in all societies.

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, Western Australian author Robert Drewe writes of his main character while in Africa: ‘Even when he was silent his thoughts shone on his wet face, the open secret that as far as he was concerned here was the start of things .... here is the volatile spirit of life.’ (R. Drewe, *The Drowner*, Sydney, Picador, 1996, p. 156.)

In many ways this sense of a common humanity is a utopic vision, as are other elements of the novel already discussed, such as the portrayal of Botswana that downplays ‘all the pain of Africa’ (p. 202). Such an idealistic portrayal would be considered irresponsible if McCall Smith were an historian. Arguably however the prerogative to express utopian ideals belongs to the novelist. As Ernst Bloch taught us in *The Principle of Hope*, utopian writings play an important role in nurturing the health and well being of society and are required in order to imagine, will, and create the future. Ideals expressed through art and culture have a significant function in transforming society.

Not all utopian writing is effective however in this way. Indeed, utopian writing acts as a force of change only when it is used as an heuristic device, as a means of critiquing the present. *The No 1 Ladies Detective Agency* is not heuristic in this sense as it does not present a critique of aspects of life in Botswana, but rather celebrates it. Instead of encouraging readers like myself and my reading group to see the necessity for change the book makes us feel reassured that Africa is overcoming its problems, including those arising from the legacy of colonialism; thus absolving us of any responsibility to understand more fully the nature of that society. In short it helps the west to feel comfortable with its relationship with Africa.

It is not difficult to appreciate McCall Smith’s intention, by drawing attention to the affirmative aspects of Botswana life, to address the imbalance that exists in the western media of the predominantly negative portrayals of Africa as a place of tragedy and suffering.<sup>6</sup> It is also easy to understand why people enjoy the novel because it allows them to read about Africa without the need to confront difficult or painful issues. However while the novel undoubtedly reflects many aspects of Botswana life accurately our reading group agreed that it has limited value as a means of enhancing our understanding of the complex reality of Africa.

Scarborough  
Western Australia

---

<sup>6</sup> McCall Smith referred to this intention in the interview with Margaret Throsby, *op cit*.

### Wahome Mutahi and the Legacy of 'Whispers'

Wahome Mutahi, *Three Days on the Cross*, Nairobi, Heinemann, 1991, ISBN 9966-46-556-1; *The Jail Bugs*, Nairobi, Longman, ISBN 9966-49-827-3; *How To Be a Kenyan*, Nairobi, Kenway Publications, 1996, ISBN 9966-46-562-6; *Doomsday*, Nairobi, Focus Publications, 1999, ISBN 9966-852-37-5; *Mr. Canta (juvenile)*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 2000, ISBN 572939; *Hassan the Genie (juvenile)*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 2000, ISBN 5729366; *Whispers and Camisassius*, Nairobi, The Seed Magazine, 2002; *The Ghost of Garba Tula (juvenile)*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN 0-19-573047X; *Just Wait and See (juvenile)*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN 573209X; Wahome Mutahi and Wahome Karengo, *The Miracle Merchant*, Nairobi, Phoenix Publishers, 2003, ISBN 9966-47-085-9.

Wahome Mutahi, Kenyan humorist, activist, novelist and playwright greatly loved by Kenyans, died in Nairobi in July 2003. To use one of the expressions with which he enriched Kenyan English over the last twenty years, he became past tense. A wake was held for him at the National Theatre. In the weeks after his death tributes to him dominated the cultural pages of the newspapers. In December 2003 his widow received on his behalf the Journalism of the Year award for 2003 for lifetime achievement.

At a fund-raising in Nairobi University's Taifa Hall, when we were still hoping that he might be brought out of a coma induced by an anaesthetic that went wrong during a minor operation, Kenyans of all walks of life came together. Personal letters and generous cheques were received from the President and the Vice-President, the British High Commissioner was standing in the aisle, popular

---

\* (Ed.) Wahome Mutahi, 1952-2003, was an influential and outspoken Kenyan journalist, writer, novelist and playwright and activist. Although famous for his humorous touch he took his beliefs so seriously that during the 1980s he spent a year in prison for his outspokenness. As late as 2002 one of his Kikuyu language plays was banned in his home district of Nyeri. His work is reviewed here by Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye, a Kenyan poet and novelist. Born in England, Macgoye, the widow of a Kenyan clinical officer, has made her home in East Africa for fifty years. Her best known novel is *Coming To Birth*, which was awarded the Sinclair Prize for Fiction in 1986. (Heinemann Kenya, Nairobi, 1986, Feminist Press, New York, 2000, ISBN 1-55869-249-1). Some of her poems are collected in *Make it Sing* (EAEP, Nairobi 1998, ISBN 9966-46-647-9).

musicians and comedians offered free entertainment to the crowds, cabinet ministers and members of the Constitutional Review Commission waited for their turn to speak. Wahome's wife, mother and three children, whom we all knew by their nicknames in the Sunday *Whispers*<sup>1</sup> column – Thatcher, Appep, Whispers Junior, the Investment and the Pajero – were introduced to us in person. 'He won't only come out of the coma,' promised Whispers Junior, 'he'll write a funny book about it.' This hope was to be disappointed.

'We have been robbed of our culture by the colonialists,' thundered one of the well-known speakers, but I felt she was mistaken. This surely *is* our culture, that we come together to celebrate and assist someone who could make us laugh at ourselves, recording with deadly accuracy the accents and attitudes of different communities, even different faiths. Wahome could do this without causing offence because it was all (comparatively) clean fun and helped us to see ourselves as others see us.

Inevitably a weekly column spanning two decades repeats itself but it was always in the long run constructive. By reminding us what would happen if a carpenter and his heavily pregnant wife showed up at a sleazy 'boarding and lodging' on election day, or how we should receive a street preacher proclaiming himself messiah in the Laini Saba slum, Wahome made us think again about our faith, moral action and inevitably (this is Kenya!) politics.

His plays were mostly in the Kikuyu language and mostly presented in hotels and bar-rooms round the country, so though I have enjoyed a couple of them I cannot review them adequately. They were influential, though not alone, in promoting Kikuyu theatre and encouraging drama in other language groups. A new play, *Mararirira Kiara*, was in rehearsal when the dramatist died. Wahome had been involved in the University of Nairobi's Free Travelling Theatre when he was a student. After a brief stint in Public Administration he returned to study for a Master's degree, but soon found that journalism and theatre absorbed all his energies. His studies in Junior Seminary had ended at form four, when he transferred to a secular school. However these experiences had given him an insight into the lives of the District Officer and the parish priest, both important figures in rural communities. His work as a sub-editor and a serious columnist also gave him food for reflection. 'Kenyans will finally be saved,' he wrote in his *Where it Matters* column on 19 May 1994, 'by a non party political movement in which the prime motive is not to get to State House

---

<sup>1</sup> *Whispers* was a famous and popular *Sunday Nation* column that Mutahi began in 1982 and in which he wrote in the language of ordinary Kenyans about matters that otherwise they feared to mention 'except in whispers.' The column ended in March 2003 when he went into a coma in hospital.

but to create a democratic culture in Kenya.’ The image of the convivial Son of the Soil was sympathetic to many readers, but one could also meet Wahome collaborating in civic education programmes or giving advice to the trainee editor of a religious newspaper.

*Three Days on the Cross*, published in 1991, bears the usual disclaimer ‘this is purely a work of fiction’. However it is clearly related to Wahome’s own experiences. In a *Nation* article of the year 2000 he recalls ‘we boarded the prison van to serve prison sentences for offences that we had been induced to admit by 30 days of being stripped naked, beaten, starved, humiliated and threatened with death. A prison sentence looked a better prospect than a day longer in Nyayo House.’ The novel uses the device of giving the characters names from different parts of Africa, but the action clearly takes place in Nairobi, from the special (STD) clinic to the Game Park. To enforce the mood from the very beginning, the Prologue switches forward to the next to final scene where Chipota and Momodu are lying blindfolded in the back of a jeep then released and told to run. The situation is set up for them to be shot while trying to escape.

Chipota is an investigative journalist and Momodu works in a bank. They have been friends since student days when they faced police harassment together. Each separately has been duped into entering an unmarked police vehicle and taken for interrogation on the allegation that he belongs to the subversive July 10 movement. The beatings, water torture and fabrication of false evidence are described in detail. The wives and employer of the two men search for them without success. The situation is resolved when Corporal Wandie, revolted by his duties in the Special Police Department, takes the risk of revealing to Chipota’s editor where he is being held and what methods are used in the department. These are disclosed by the press without any reference to Chipota, and in the inter-departmental wrangling that ensues in government it is made clear that the July 10 movement has never been a serious threat. Wandie is part of the squad assigned to silence the two suspects and leave their bodies at the National park to be devoured by hyenas. Chipota is rescued and cared for in secret, but Momodu has already died.

The production of this book in 1991 was an act of great courage by both author and publisher. It won the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature. The novel conforms to the length and straightforward vocabulary of the paperback series in which it appeared, and this made it accessible to many readers which for the author this was of supreme importance. He was content for his more subtle



judgements on right conduct and the state of the nation to be read between the lines of his column.

*The Jail Bugs*, published the following year, has more to reveal about life in prison; specifically reflecting the author's experience at Kodiaga in 1987. His protagonist, Albert Kweyu, spends ten months in jail after accidentally killing a child in a traffic incident. He reports on the painful and insanitary conditions. The blurb stresses the 'humorous style' but the pain comes through in respect of both physical humiliation and miscarriage of justice. Typically however the author reminds us that for many 'street people' there are even worse places to be than in jail. Perhaps the novel would have had greater impact if it had not been preceded by the political revelations of *Three Days on the Cross*.

*How to be a Kenyan* is illustrated with cartoons. The blurb says 'It helps Kenyans reflect on the peculiarities of thought, manners and attitude which make us Kenyans while considerably lessening the culture shock for ... non Kenyans'. It is something like the Whispers column rewritten in more or less conventional English – 'woman' instead of 'skirt-wearer', 'boss' instead of 'mdosi', 'drink' instead of 'swallow'. This is for the consumption of the foreigners or those Kenyans who live behind closed doors. The idea of advising a newcomer how to behave like a Kenyan – for instance by standing near the door of a bus with luggage in both hands and a ticket clenched between his teeth – is not really sustained because the impetus to describe behaviour which no-one would imitate is strong. The result is amusing, but not so amusing as the original Whispers column for those who have enough local knowledge to interpret it. For instance here is part of the essay *Have you heard* from the book (p.55).

Kenya is the land of 'true' rumours and of fertile imagination. It is also a land where despite the arrival of the satellite, the bush telegraph sometimes works more effectively than the mass media.... By the time what started as a rumour is published, it will have been refurbished so many times that it will have no resemblance to what has been passed on by the rumour mills.

Compare this in the column of 11 January 1998.

Over the last month, Kenyans have become very economical with the truth.... They belong to the species of humankind (not mankind) called *Homo Rumapithecus* that peddles merchandise called rumours. One characteristic of *Homo Rumapithecus* is to

possess lips that tremble uncontrollably when he finds two or three Kenyans gathered. Of course you can be sure that when two or three Kenyans are gathered, the subject is not prayer. They are most likely talking Opposition politics.... This is what I heard such a *Homo Rumapithecus* say every morning in December. 'Don't say I told you this, but God is not a fool. Why else do you think he has sent the El Nino towards our direction if not to sweep Daniel from his seat in State House?'.... At that point he looks right and then left as if he is looking for Congo and then says; 'That cousin of my aunt's husband has come with the news that the man from Sacho will head for Congo to seek exile...

('Daniel' and 'the man from Sacho' are, of course, references to President Moi.)

From *How to be a Kenyan* the overseas reader would do well to proceed to *Whispers and Camisassius*, a supplement to *The Seed* magazine and an imaginative contribution to the centenary celebrations to the Consolata Missionaries' apostolate in Kenya. It has a preface by Bishop Colin Davies. Whispers, the 'former altar boy', has indeed internalized the teachings of 'the man from Milano':

It was at the local Jevanje Gardens where JC intended to be for the weekly Thursday evening prayers, Judas reported that he would appear there after he and his cabinet has supper at the local Burma market in a kiosk owned by the local Karanja. The police appeared on that Thursday evening and even as they were arresting JC Judas was still swearing that he was a Jesus *damu* man. Mr. Rock, though, had other ideas about loyalty to the master.... That is why when Mr. Rock cut off the ear of one of their members of the flying squad, they drew out their own *simis*, whips and even axes and set upon JC and his cabinet.

*Doomsday*, 1999, is a novel in response to the terrorist bombing of the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on 7 August 1998. In Nairobi, where the embassy was situated near the city centre and railway station there were many casualties. The thriller is fast-paced and convincing despite some proof-reading errors and verbal repetitions, no doubt due to haste in capturing an expectant market. The writing is workman-like and unambiguous, though a refrain appears when Makweru comes into

prominence: 'It was a tune that he hummed when he was happy; when he thought about blood flowing'.

The story is not a slavish reproduction of the actual event. A complicated political plot involving both a fictionalised Kenya (Anyisa) and a fictionalised Sudan (Zambuco) is alleged to assist the anti-American fervour of the Iraqi planner. The American missile attack on a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant is transferred to act as provocation before the bombing instead of a retaliation after it. There is no mention of the simultaneous event in Tanzania. In real life the attack convinced Kenyans that the source of the trouble was international, not related to local political turbulence. In the fiction the culprit is tracked down. The characters are well drawn, with credible personal fears and motivations, but the action is so tight-packed that we rarely see them in a domestic situation where their individuality could be more deeply explored. We should gladly trade some of the gun-battles for a more vibrant picture of Nairobi in the middle of the morning. The description of immediate panic and confusion following the detonation and the cooperative effort, generosity and medical dedication that restored order is the most compelling section of the book.

Two junior readers appeared in 2000 in the Oxford graded series, and a third in 2002, as listed above. Wahome never lost his sense of fun, and primary school children will find them both enjoyable and thought-provoking. The fourth, *Just Wait and See*, describes the national election of December 2002 from a villager's point of view, and may appeal to adult readers also.

The last novel, *The Miracle Merchant*, was launched while Wahome was in a coma. It was written in collaboration with Wahome Karengo, co-author of several of the plays. It is one of those thrillers which seem to pile one improbability upon another – until the reader recollects the improbabilities of the daily newspaper. It moves fast and fluently. The story opens at the Great Nairobi Convention led by Apostle Meshack Paul Mpevu. 'I can almost believe it myself,' laughs the apostle, watching his own performance on television. Next comes a children's clothing factory operated by girls who have been lured by promises of training to join 'The Chosen Few' and brain-washed so that they do not protest at their enslavement. There follow deals in heroin grown on a flower-farm and covered by corrupt police, gun-running, rapid changes of scene round East Africa and recruitment of ambitious operators from other churches. One pastor becomes suspicious and consults a private detective. Since this investigator is a former colleague of the Assistant Commissioner of Police, 'Operation Discipline' succeeds. The heroin farm is closed and the

apostle is shot by a guerrilla leader he has double-crossed. But the 'Chosen Few' remain brain-washed by hi-tech methods. The book ends with the question, 'Would the girls ever enjoy normal lives?'

It is too late to ask whether this sensationalism was necessary or whether it could have been contained more judiciously in a longer novel. There was, in fact, no time for second thoughts. Characteristically Wahome leaves us on a note of concern for those whose normal humanity is endangered.

*Marjorie Oludhe-Macgoye*  
*Nairobi, Kenya.*

## The Blossoming of Namibian Historiography

**Dag Henrichsen, *Hubertus Graf zu Castell-Rüdenhausen (1909 – 1995) Personal Papers and Manuscripts on Namibia*, Basler Afrika Bibliographien: Namibia Resource Centre and Southern Africa Library, Basel, 2002, ISBN 3-905141-77-9; Meredith McKittrick, *To Dwell Secure: Generation, Christianity, and Colonialism in Ovamboland*, Portsmouth NH, Heinemann, Oxford, James Currey, Cape Town, David Philip, 2002, ISBN 0-325-07039-3; Marion Wallace, *Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915 – 1945*, P. Schlettwein Publishing Switzerland, 2002, ISBN 3-908193-11-7.**

**I**n the decade and a bit following the independence of Namibia in southwestern Africa there have been tremendous developments historiographically in the study of Namibia and a blossoming in that country's written history. Gone, but for a few, are the pamphleteering works that praise the developmental achievements or the military prowess of the South Africans. What has remained is the myriad of guidebooks that continue to recycle the nostalgic histories of the past as well as the ever flourishing Namibiana which caters primarily for colonial nostalgics and tourists to the country. What is new is the gamut of PhDs written by the many young scholars who flocked to Namibia shortly before and after independence and which are now being published, sometimes after substantial revision, both in southern Africa and the rest of the world.

The Basel Africa Bibliography (BAB) in Switzerland has been central in the promotion of academic interest in Namibian history; indeed, two of the books under review here have been published under the auspices of BAB. Over the years BAB has amassed an enormous library and archive that has as its focus

southern Africa and Namibia in particular. Apart from subsidizing the publication of academic theses dealing with Namibia, BAB also retains, describes and archives a substantial collection of papers, manuscripts and archives relating to southern Africa including a collection of the personal papers and manuscripts of Count Hubertus of Castell-Rüdenhausen. The first of the three titles reviewed here is a catalogue, published by BAB, of the Castell-Rüdenhausen collection as it exists with BAB. Within the German speaking community of Namibia within which he was very active Castell-Rüdenhausen was regarded as an institution. Born in Germany he emigrated to Namibia in 1935 where he took up a career as farm manager, jackal hunter and 'house-warden' for the white administration. A vociferous hunter, Castell-Rüdenhausen acted as free-lance guide for trophy hunters. The archival collection as it exists in Basel consists manuscripts, autobiographical notes, and correspondence. In itself the collection will appeal to all those who seek to gain some insight into the colonial mind.

In writing history there are a number of ways of dealing with the thorny issue of theory. One can choose to seek to ignore theory and argue, when challenged, that it is of no relevance to one's work; or one can choose to admit that theory is of relevance and seek to include it either explicitly or implicitly in one's work. Unfortunately there are those who fail to realize that a failure to be explicit and as it were to nail one's theoretical colours to the mast, by implication dismisses the work as not having been informed by theory or as being non-academic. Indeed texts in which the author is well aware of the theory and the theoretical implications of their work, and where this awareness has been included implicitly throughout the text are a delight to read when compared to the pedestrian name dropping and footnoting of every paragraph in the hope of cementing the academic credentials of the text being written.

The two histories on review here are fine examples of the two ends of the spectrum in the writing of Namibian history in the present. Both books were researched and written by academics who entered the territory shortly after independence. Both historians received doctorates from distinguished universities for the historical work that they conducted in Namibia. Yet at the same time these two books form a marked contrast in the manner in which they seek to display the theoretical underpinnings of their work.

*To Dwell Secure* is destined to be a classic far beyond the field of African studies alone. It is a complex and multi-layered, yet beautifully written, work. Its style makes it accessible to all, both the cynically sated senior and the optimistically frisky junior. It is the product of an extensive revision and

rewriting of an already impressive PhD thesis awarded at Stanford University. Essentially the book deals with the manner in which within the course of a century Christianity came to thoroughly dominate all aspects of society in Ovamboland, in northern Namibia. To all those who would now wish to dismiss the work as being irrelevant, rest assured the book is not a mere history of European missionaries, dates, and compliant and submissive converts. Instead the book details in meticulous detail how through all manner of ways the people living within the societies that inhabited the Cuvelai floodplain in northern Namibia were placed under evermore strain. People came to be savaged by diseases, droughts, and raids initiated by their own and neighbouring kings. Sacred places and safe havens in society and the landscape ceased to exist or function in ways in which they were meant to. Thus though the body of a king had been considered a sacred site, and the touching of a king had granted one reprieve in the mid-nineteenth century (p. 35) by the 1890s the body of the king ceased to provide sanctuary. McKittrick illustrates this ending of sanctuary with the example of a woman accused of witchcraft who 'had succeeded in grasping the king's churning calabash - an act that was supposed to grant her clemency' (p. 78), but had her eyes cut out and her fingers amputated. Effectively, McKittrick argues that by the second half of the nineteenth century a situation had developed in Ovamboland whereby life had become insecure for all. Into this insecurity came Finnish missionaries, perceived of as famine victims and refugees by the Ovambo:

The new arrivals were young, had no nearby kin, and often lacked wives. None were polygamous. They had to buy grain to feed themselves. They built large but unfortified structures that had a tendency to collapse or burn to the ground (p. 90).

The manner in which the message of these men with 'their strange combination of poverty and power' was transferred and came to be incorporated into the cognitive world of Ovambo societies lies at the core of this book. In this transfer McKittrick reserves a central role for the youth of Ovamboland. Youths, 'children of the wagons', who were irresistibly attracted to all that the missionaries entailed, pieces of cloth, sweets, writing and much, much more, and who ran off to attend church services or illicit lessons in writing in the bush. Throughout her often humorous text McKittrick displays an acute and sensitive awareness to the issues of migration, gender, generation, and status. Central to the work are the issues of gender and generation. For McKittrick there is no single stereotypical Ovambo, let alone convert or pagan. Instead, having provided a very detailed reconstruction of Ovambo societies following 1850, the author is able to describe and analyse the ways in which individuals

became Christians and what this ever-increasing transformation meant for the societies and the institutions within which these individuals found themselves. The numerous interviews conducted by McKittrick and her field assistant Kamau Shingenge find their echo in the author's subtle and perceptive description of more than a century of Ovambo history. Unflinchingly the double-edged role of Christianity in Ovamboland is described. The cooperation of Christian chiefs with colonial forces, yet at the same time the sanctuary and assistance provided by the church to anti-colonial forces. In short McKittrick's work is an ever unfolding yet never boring history not of mission Christianity, but of the multitude of people and experiences that make up Ovambo societies over time.

*Health Power and Politics in Windhoek*, the seventh in a series of academic theses dealing primarily with aspects of Namibian history being made available to a wider audience by Schlettwein publishing, an affiliate of Basel Africa Bibliography is a solid piece of academic work based on extensive and detailed research. As with all books published by Schlettwein publishing the book has been attractively packaged and, for the first time in the series, a number of photographs have been included to liven up and illustrate the text.

Apart from being the most detailed available social history of the city of Windhoek between 1915 and 1945, *Health Power and Politics* is an extended expose of the manner in which health and the provision of health care were used as instruments of power and domination in Namibia. Throughout, the text is explicit in its theoretical underpinning. Consistently Wallace seeks to make explicit the theoretical implications of all that she has uncovered in the past and put down on paper. As a result the reader, after having mastered the introduction, proceeds through text which Wallace has at all stages sought to anchor and situate within the sea of contesting debate. Unfortunately there are times when the flow of the historical text is disrupted as the author establishes the theoretical credentials of the text.

For Wallace a history of health and medicine can be used as a 'lens' through which one can focus on the social and political forces that were operating in Windhoek and the territory as a whole at the time. Strictly speaking the book can be divided into four components, the introductory chapter and a further eleven chapters divided over three sections. The quality of the exceptionally detailed introductory chapter, consisting of a historiographical discussion of health and colonial power in general, is such that in and of itself it could be used as a more than adequate introductory reading for students seeking to explore the relationship between biomedicine and colonialism. The three

sections that follow the introduction all serve to underscore and clearly illustrate Wallace's argument that biomedicine was an integral 'component of the imperial project' (p. 6).

The first section of the work seeks to provide a situational history of Windhoek and its inhabitants between 1915 and 1945 which provides the necessary historical background for Wallace's work. As readers we learn about the socio-economic and political history of Windhoek that is the context within which the contested relationship between healthcare and power came to be played out. The second section deals with the contesting forms and views of medicine that existed in Namibia at the time. It is in this section of her work that the importance of the extensive historical interviews conducted by Wallace with informants in Windhoek comes to the fore. In this we gain an insight into what African inhabitants of Windhoek believed and felt with regard to health and healthcare, and how this contrasted with biomedical perceptions of the same. In particular the establishment by the colonial government of hospitals and clinics, staffed by doctors and nurses, as triumphant symbols of the success of biomedicine and by extension colonial power, came to be consistently contested by African perceptions of health. In this way African or, as Wallace puts it, indigenous healing continued to provide a powerful counterpoint to biomedicine and colonial authority. In this section we as readers are provided with an overview of the contesting perceptions of health and healthcare that existed within Windhoek at the time. Part three of the work seeks to explore the manner in which colonial perceptions of hygiene, health, and healthcare, were coupled to power and used to justify the most extreme forms of coercion. Wallace details the manner in which events developed in Windhoek whereby colonial authorities, with the support of Herero men, were able to enforce the compulsory internal examination of 'unmarried' African women in response to a largely imaginary gonorrhoea epidemic. The manner in which medical discourse was used to enforce colonial control is particularly shocking when one considers that:

The imposition of the examinations bore little relation to medical necessity. The tests had much more to do with attempt to exercise increased control over the urban black population in Namibia, particularly over women, whose status and 'morality' had become an increasing cause of concern to officials during the 1930s (p225).

Wallace's study will be essential to all those seeking to understand Namibia and Windhoek in the present. In addition the work will be of great help to all



those dealing with issues of trans-cultural health care in the present. Furthermore the book as a whole serves as a warning to all those who would seek to claim the alleged value-free objective nature of biomedicine. On a personal note, I was struck by Wallace's thoroughly competent and devastating critique of the work of Poewe. In minute and systematic detail Wallace illustrates that Poewe's 'use of the original sources is frequently inaccurate and misleading' (p. 240). In addition Wallace indicates that Poewe consistently misquotes original 'text in a number of apparently minor but persistent ways' (p. 241). With historians like Wallace around those who would seek to fudge their sources better beware.

*Jan-Bart Gewald  
African Studies Centre  
Leiden, The Netherlands*

## **Rethinking the Boundaries of Identity: The Interaction of Locality, Ethnicity and State in Ewe Communities in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands**

**Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914*, Athens, Ohio University Press; Oxford, James Currey; Legon, Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002, pp. xiv + 302. Maps, Photographs, Tables. ISBN 0-8214-1481-X cloth, 0-8214-1482 paper (Ohio); 0-85255-473-7 cloth 0-85255-472-9 paper (James Currey)**

This is a study of the impact of international boundaries on social, economic and political life in border-zone localities. The insights which it offers are derived from a careful and detailed study of how some predominantly Ewe-speaking communities in one small part of Ghana's Volta Region, have reacted to the imposition of colonial boundaries since 1890. It might seem a big jump from one rather idiosyncratic case study focused on locality level data, to the conceptual clarification of the relationship between borders, ethnicity, and national identities, but Paul Nugent achieves it effortlessly. This is a lovingly detailed study of the complex interplay between fundamental social forces and petty individual rivalries, and their impact in changing the relationship between the local and the national. Nugent knows his material and masters it so as to provide an illuminating account of how those affected by the border

manipulated it for economic and political purposes. In the process, Nugent provides a concrete explanation of how the 'social construction' of ethnic and national identities actually occurs.

Despite the efforts of various analysts the idea persists that the artificial state boundaries imposed by colonialism bifurcated ethnic communities, and thence gave rise to various ethnic secessionist, unification and irredentist movements. The Ghana-Togo border looks like a case in point. When this border divided the Ewe-speaking people the result was an Ewe ethnic unification movement. When on examination we find that this ethnic nationalist movement was weak and that affiliations to 'artificial' colonial states were stronger, we have two choices. Either we insist that the leaders of this particular ethnic nationalist movement must have displayed remarkable incompetence in squandering their chance and undermining their own support base; or we rethink our theoretical assumptions as to the nature of ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. Nugent contributes to such a rethinking.

The Ewe-speaking people have been divided by two colonial boundaries. In 1890, as part of the Heligoland Treaty, the boundary line was drawn between the German colony of Togoland, and the British colony of the Gold Coast. Then in 1920 the League of Nations divided German Togoland between Britain and France. The British segment was administered as part of the Gold Coast (under League of Nations Mandate, then United Nations Trusteeship), and the boundary between French and British Togolands subsequently became the international border between Ghana and Togo.

The focus of the study is on this latter boundary, and two aspects are examined. First, Nugent looks at the impact of the boundary line on the villages and farms it divided, and on the social and economic interactions it disrupted and generated. The main finding is that for many the boundary became a resource which they employed in the pursuit of local rivalries or in the pursuit of smuggling revenues or land claims. It is therefore no surprise to find that, when the chance finally came in the 1956 Plebiscite to vote to keep or to remove the border, many of the local communities which the border had split voted for the retention of this resource. After Independence, the border remained useful as a resource for smuggling revenues, but since smuggling depended on exploiting differences between two national zones, it cemented the differences in national identity so as to promote, rather than undermine, national loyalties.

Second, Nugent offers a reexamination of the politics of nationalism generated by the border during the later colonial period. Three constructions of

nationalism were on offer to the people of British Southern Togoland. The first was the vision of a reunited Togoland, the second was the vision of a united Eweland, and the third was the vision of British Togoland's integration into the Gold Coast/Ghanaian nation. Which proved to be most popular? By the time of the 1956 vote the party advocating an Ewe nation, the All Ewe Conference, had disappeared, partly because it was outmanoeuvred by the British and French administrations and by the other political parties, but mainly because Ewe nationalism had always had rather little support amongst the Ewe-speaking people of British Southern Togoland. A majority of them instead supported the party advocating Togoland reunification, the Togoland Congress. But when the British insisted that the Togoland vote be counted as a whole, so that the northern vote outweighed the votes of the predominantly Ewe-speaking south, it was Ghanaian nationalism which emerged as the 'winner'. Nugent cites Arden-Clarke, the last Gold Coast Governor, 'twitting' the CPP for promoting this 'Gold Coast imperialism' whilst opposing British imperialism. Why did the 'civic' nationalisms of Togoland and Ghana have more resonance than had Ewe ethnic nationalism, amongst the villages and towns of this border zone?

Nugent rejects primordialist and 'invented tradition' interpretations of ethnicity, and instead employs a 'constructivist' explanation of pan-Ewe ethnic identity as emerging after, not before, the imposition of the boundary. He explains its generation out of the impacts of Christianity, new migration flows, and the colonial administration's interventions in chieftaincy. His argument is that identities which had hitherto focused at locality and chieftaincy levels were modified in the course of a series of political rivalries, deriving from these three influences, in which ethnicity was employed by diverse political rivals as a contested legitimacy project. But this ethnic nationalism had, in many localities, lesser mobilising appeal than did Togoland and Gold Coast nationalisms, because the latter referred to processes of national integration which were engendered by the interaction networks into which those on each side of the border were socialised in the course of their trade and careers, and through the governmental processes in which their day to day lives were embedded.

Nugent offers a skilfull and vivid account of these linkages between local level politics and the politics of contending nationalisms. Nevertheless his argument could perhaps be tightened. Nugent's material reminds us that almost every village in this region was disrupted, during the period from the 1920s to the 1950s, by new rivalries between educated elites and traditional authorities, between Catholics and Protestants, between wealthy traders and poor farmers,

and between rival chiefs seeking autonomy from, or paramountcy over, other chiefs. Instead of decisively resolving such disputes, the administrative structures offered by the Gold Coast administration merely provided the channels for their manipulative escalation. It was surely this escalating disruption of local communities and authority structures which led dislocated elites and disrupted followers to seek refuge in the visions of past or future harmony offered by constructed communities of nation, both in their ethnic and civic variants. This link between the experience of disruption at locality level and the promise of harmony through nationalism is evident throughout the book, but deserves to be made analytically explicit.

Myths of the historic migration of diverse Ewe-speaking families from Noatsie to found rival chiefdoms, were now re-interpreted as a foundation myth of one unified Ewe ethnic nation, re-imagined as now predating the boundary, and then divided by it. Myths of 'law and order' under strict German rule, contrasting with the contemporary disruption, were now employed to construct a vision of a future restoration of harmony through the re-unification of Togoland; and visions of 'developmental optimism' in an integrated Ghana, contrasting with contemporary hardship, were fed by the judicious provision of new roads, post offices and sports stadiums, provided by the Ghanaian nationalist party.

Initially these three visions of Ewe, Togoland and Ghanaian nationalisms were ambiguously intertwined, since each party could portray itself as advocating a first step towards the removal of all borders, so as to unify both the Togolands and thence all the Ewes within an enlarged Gold Coast. When the British and the French ended this intertwining, by imposing a stark choice between retention or removal of the border between their two zones, the Ewe-speaking chiefdoms divided primarily on locality and factional lines. When those who had promised *Ablode* (freedom) through Togoland unification were defeated after 1956 and failed to deliver their vision it lost its appeal and they lost their political authority. Just as Ewe ethnic nationalism had not existed prior to the imposition of the colonial boundary, so too did Togoland nationalism cease to have appeal after its defeat in the decolonisation period. This was made clear by the weakness and brevity of its resurrection in the TOLIMO liberation movement of the 1970s. Constructed identities do not die, but they do get reconstituted in the process of new political interactions. Ewe ethnic identity persists, not now as an Ewe unification vision but rather as intertwined with a Volta Region identity, as a basis for ethno-regional politics within Ghana.

State Boundaries are crucial resources which are employed by border-zone communities, and in the process, distinctions between nation-state identities are cemented. Far from such national identities getting weaker in the border zones, they are, as Nugent argues, generated at the border zones. The Ghana-Togo border was contentious because it cut across a prior German state, not because it cut across an Ewe ethnic boundary. Ethnicity is, as Nugent succinctly says 'not a description of the world as it actually exist(s)', but rather a repeatedly contested, and therefore repeatedly reconstructed 'project'. It is not always easy, in contemporary studies of nationalisms and national identities, to get through the 'intellectual baggage' so as to locate the 'appropriate tools of analysis. This study makes it easier to do so.

*David Brown*  
*School of Politics and International Studies*  
*Murdoch University*

## **Alcohol and the Exercise of Power in East Africa**

**Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa 1850-1999*, Oxford, James Currey, 2002. ISBN 0-85255-470-2 (p/b) and 0-85255-471-0 (cloth).**

*Potent Brews* is a comprehensive and absorbing social history that seeks to uncover the connections between alcohol use and power in East African societies over the past 150 years. Drawing on voluminous research - Willis has mined archives in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and conducted over 250 interviews - this book argues convincingly that alcohol has played a central role in the exercise of power in East Africa, with three areas serving as case studies: Kajiado District in Kenya, the Rungwe and Kyela districts of Tanzania and Hoima District in Uganda. It begins with a useful but rather cursory theoretical description of the relationship between drink, power and authority. Echoing Emmanuel Akyeampong in his recent social history of alcohol in Ghana, he sees power as the perceived ability to 'transform, or coerce, or otherwise compel change' and authority as the ability to command others and control resources. The myriad forms of power on which authority rests in any society are unequally distributed but difficult to monopolise, and so the practices that demonstrate power are invariably contested and negotiated. The 'crucial issues' in understanding power and authority are therefore those 'which relate to the possibilities of change and contest in everyday discourse

and practice' (pp. 11-12). The everyday ritual of drinking is one such practice that makes and unmakes authority, 'for it leads the dominant as well as the subordinate out of the normal paths of behaviour' and 'undoes the assumptions of power' recreated in everyday speech and behaviour. In alcohol, 'the ambiguity of power is manifest' (p. 14).

After providing a fascinating description of the variety of alcoholic drinks that have been invented and consumed in East Africa between 1850 and the present, Willis divides the remainder of his study into four parts. Part One describes how the authority of elder men in pre-colonial East African societies was underpinned by their privileged access to alcoholic beverages. The drinking of alcohol by these men was associated with goodwill and amity: as one Maasai interviewee notes, 'If elders don't drink, they become unkind' (p. 69). In so far as women and young men were allowed access to alcohol, they were supposed to drink in ways that reinforced their subordinate position and, while women and younger men did on occasion challenge male elders by partaking in drink without permission, Willis notes that for much of the nineteenth century, the principle of elder men's power was largely accepted. However by the 1880s and 1890s the burgeoning caravan trade began to impact upon gender and generational disputes in East Africa, with women and younger men quick to see the advantages of exchanging alcohol for imported goods. This commodification of drink not only subverted the ritual uses of alcohol but also eroded the authority of elders.

Gender and generational conflicts centred on the production, consumption and sale of alcohol became more pronounced as Europeans began to extend their authority over East Africa, and Part Two examines how debates over drink highlighted the contradictions inherent within colonial states that were simultaneously committed to social change and to safeguarding 'tradition'. The market for alcohol expanded dramatically in the first decades of the twentieth century, and male elders repeatedly warned that the sale of drink was increasing the dangers of 'youthful defiance and female insubordination'. These concerns struck a chord with colonial officials who recognized that the success of indirect rule depended upon the maintenance of traditional patterns of authority and by the 1920s and 1930s their concerns about drinking echoed those of African elders: 'drunkenness was a problem of rural youths and urban women' (p. 126). Nevertheless most colonial governments in East Africa recognized the impossibility of prohibition and in an effort to regulate drinking, but also to profit from the sale of 'native liquor', they encouraged the establishment of rural clubs and urban beerhalls, run by African male entrepreneurs, which 'offered a place to drink which was regulated and

formalized and set aside; a place to drink, just as the hospital was a place to be ill and the court was a place to judge' (p. 156).

For the first half of the twentieth century, colonial governments in East Africa prohibited Africans from buying and consuming 'European liquor' including bottled beer and wine. In the immediate post war era, however, as colonial governments sought to implement ambitious development plans, these prohibitions were removed in an explicit attempt to encourage wealthy and educated Africans to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population. Part Three describes how after political independence the continuing emphasis on political and economic development in East Africa was reflected in new patterns of alcohol consumption and regulation. The pro-temperance governing elite suggested that the 'problems with development were the result of the drunkenness of a recalcitrant populace' and consumption of 'traditional liquor' was responsible for the laziness that threatened to derail nation building (p. 216). Such criticism signaled a wider conflict between the post-colonial state and male elders, for the drinking of traditional liquor 'came to be a very visible acknowledgement of the continued power of elder men to affect the well-being of others', power that the state sought to appropriate for itself (p. 212). Part Four of *Potent Brews* focuses on the 'drinking crises' of the 1990s that have emerged within the context of increasing poverty, inequality and the decline of the state in East Africa. Frustration at the state's inability to provide health and prosperity through development is reflected in the idealization of traditional drinking as a sign of an orderly and prosperous past, with the result that the 'evils' of commercial alcohol are increasingly being condemned.

While Willis ends his book rather abruptly (there is no conclusion), his observation in the final chapter that the 'practice and discourse of drinking have always revealed the ambiguities of power' in East Africa is amply demonstrated by this fine study (p. 265). *Potent Brews* is an impressive social history and is well worth reading.

*Jeremy Martens*  
*History Discipline*  
*University of Western Australia*  
*Nedlands, WA*

# An Intellectual History of Ethiopia

**Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia*, Oxford, James Currey, 2002, pp. xxviii-228. ISBN 0-85255-453-2(cloth) ISBN 0-85255-452-4 (paper)**

**T**wentieth Century Ethiopia is an extremely interesting historical period in many respects: a moment of intellectual reflection, of the preservation of independence and at the same time the encounter with Europe. An intellectual history of this period is therefore very welcome and the author fills this gap in modern Ethiopian scholarship. We have a lot of social history of twentieth century Ethiopia before and after the colonial impact, but the intellectual milieu in which Ethiopia preserved its political integrity in the context of colonial domination needs to be further considered. Independence must be analysed in the context of European influence both in political and intellectual sphere.

This book is an account of this interrelation: autonomy and interaction are equal themes of discussion, along with integrity and increasing European political control and concern for the historical events that affected and changed the country intellectual milieu. It seems an obligation to begin with a discussion of modernisation and the role of the educated elite in the country, the encounter between East and West as reflected in domestic society. The duty of intelligentsia was to open Ethiopia to the modern world, understanding the modern world in order to preserve independence and sovereignty. What is really clear is the increasing role of intellectuals in politics. Starting from the beginning of the twentieth century this is the main factor of change in Ethiopian society.

But which kind of intellectuals? In which context? The beginning of an independent way of thinking, independent from political power, was emerging in a period of political expansion and consolidation of the Ethiopian monarchy. A new type of literature emerges - a secular literature not linked to political power - this is the main characteristic of cultural change. The increasing role of intellectuals in the country means at the same time the development of a modern education. After a brief discussion of 'Ethiopian antecedents' pp. 13-20, chapter 2 discusses 'The expansion of modern education' in the world and its impact on Ethiopia in terms of imitation or adaptation of a foreign cultural thinking; education not in a strict sense but including culture and ideology. The greater part of the book is indeed concerned with the developments of modern European education and there is no more than a brief discussion of traditional education in the Islamic and Christian context.



A modern education started with the opening of Menilek School in 1908 and Tafari Makonnen in 1925 - the key years for intellectual country development - where the nobility and civil servants were traditionally educated. This was the beginning of a new form of public education and of just fifty years of religious and missionary education developments. First, modern education was developed in town, but before the Italian invasion was expanded to the provinces and in 1931 was considerably extended. Second, female schools were opened for the first time in the country. Chapter 3 deals with the first generation of educated elite – the generation of the Menilek period and "ras" Tafari - who for the first time obtained an increasing role in the government positions. The differences in the formative experience of these intellectuals is highlighted: an increasing number received education from abroad, others in the country under emperor control, others were self-educated or received education in public schools. The author quotes a great number of intellectuals that it is impossible to identify in this context (see pp.36-78). The second generation of intellectuals - after 1930 during the period of the Emperor Haile Sellase - which was the generation who perished during the fascist war with Italy, is widely described in chapter 4 (pp.79-98).

The book discusses the impact of these intellectuals and the difficulties they faced in society; the gap between new intellectuals and traditional milieu; the role of Western culture and European countries (the so called French educated, along with British and Italian, and their alienation from Ethiopian society is widely discussed). Bahru Zewde enumerates accurately a large number of students who received their education abroad and gives us many interesting details (see pp.82-95) of the developments of a new style of life and thinking. Mention of the pro-Italian intellectuals like the most famous Afäwarq Gäbrä Iyyäsus is balanced against the great number of intellectuals who preserved their autonomy.

The book is full of quotations, names, events, the circumstances of those who had a role in the transformation of domestic culture. More appropriate, in this context, is to emphasise their new intellectual perception of modern Ethiopia as the author does in chapter 5, one of the most interesting parts of the entire volume, 'Independence, Efficiency and Equity' pp. 99-137. The intelligentsia was divided between pro-Europe and pro-traditional society, but the division is not so distinct and we can probably speak about a mixture of feelings and different attitudes among the great bulk of Ethiopian intellectuals. The chapter discuss many topics amongst which I would mention especially the questions

of nationalities, gender issues, slavery and the condition of peasantry (see pp.120-137).

The author shows a considerable ability to manage a wide number of sources around these themes of historical evidence and does not treat any intellectual figure separately; in this sense the volume appears more thematic than systematic and this seems to be the main interest of the research. The last two chapters are devoted to the expansion of knowledge (pp.138-161) and the impact of intellectuals 'lives and ideas on Ethiopian society' (pp.162-207). Two points need to be mentioned here. Firstly, the great development of history and historiography among modern Ethiopian intellectuals and the new way of history writing - from chronicles to individual historiography - is a clear acquisition. Moreover, a critique of the government political decision appears openly, along with observations based on personal accounts and testimonies. It is difficult to assess the impact on Ethiopian society of this trend, but the role of Gäbrä Heywät Baykädañ, Aläqa Tayyä and Heruy Wäldä Sellasé must be emphasised as a new intellectual effort in a modern society, a stimulus to change and at the same time preserving an old intellectual tradition of thinking. These new reformists and their impact on the society were of considerable importance and their legacy was preserved in revolutionary Ethiopia. Bahru Zewde's book is thus an effort to establish a continuous intellectual link in twentieth century Ethiopia and the material it contains is a valid support for scholars in the country and abroad. This is an important volume, on a peculiar intellectually stimulating society, in a context of African historiography in which intellectual history usually remains a minor subject.

*Irma Taddia*  
*Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche*  
*University of Bologna*  
*Bologna, Italy*

# Kingship in Uganda: A Political Not a Cultural Issue

**Martin R. Doornbos, *The Ankole Kingship Controversy. Regalia Galore Revisited*, Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2001, pp xi +141. Appendices, Bibliography, Index. Distributed in Europe, North America and Australia by African Books Collective (ABC) The Jam Factory, 27 Park End St, Oxford OX1 1HU, United Kingdom. ISBN 9970 02 281 (p/b).**

**R***egalia Galore* was published in 1975 in the context of the abolition of all four of Uganda's 'traditional kingdoms' (of Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro and Ankole) and their traditional rulers when the 1967 Constitution turned Uganda into a unitary and republican state. This was a major watershed in Ugandan politics which historically had been dominated by the long struggle for political power at the centre between the State and Buganda and not all Ugandans welcomed the change. The campaign by Baganda monarchists for the restoration of the Kabaka and the recovery of the *Ebyaffe* or 'their things' which began at that time has continued to the present. In Ankole however there was no strong popular reaction to the end of the monarchy; indeed the mood was rather one of indifference. Doornbos' research, carried out in the 1960s, into the 'processes which caused the decline and eclipse of a once meaningful institution' (p. 1 of the original edition) is an attempt to understand why.

*The Ankole Kingship Controversy, Regalia Galore Revisited* combines Doornbos' earlier study with an examination of a new controversy about kingship that erupted in Ankole in 1993 when President Yoweri Musevi and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) government agreed to the revival ('if the people wish') of (ceremonial forms of) the monarchy in all four former kingdoms (Buganda, Bunyoro Toro and Ankole); which 'unbanning' was subsequently incorporated in the new 1995 constitution. As before the people of Ankole again reacted very differently from the other kingdoms. In Buganda, Bunyoro and Toro the reinstatement of the monarchy followed. In Ankole the restoration of the Omugabe (King) immediately 'became a highly contested issue' (p. v). Ten years later it remained part of 'the current political discourse'; and it seemed appropriate to both Doornbos and the Fountain Publishers to reflect on the institution of kingship itself (see the Preface, p. v).

The original text takes up the greater part of this small volume (of some 127 pages), tracing the evolution and growth of the pre-colonial Nkore kingdom and kingship as an institution as it was transformed by the colonial enlargement

of Ankole far beyond the boundaries of the original Nkore kingdom and changes in the role of the monarchy which made that office ultimately redundant. To this is added a new section in Ch 5, 'The Neo-Traditionalisation of Ankole Kingship' and two new chapters: Ch 7 co-authored with Frederick Mwesigye, 'The New Politics of Kingmaking' and a fresh *Epilogue* reflects on the potential and wider social and political implications for Uganda of the whole 'restoration issue' and ponders over a solution to the Ankole impasse.

As Doornbos points out in his introductory preface (p. vi) kingship involves issues of identity and it is not therefore surprising that the vigorous public debate amongst Banyankole for and against the restoration has been conducted around the relationship between kingship and culture (see p. vi, pp. 96-99) and hence what constitutes 'tradition' and 'traditional' in the context of Ankole after sixty years of colonial rule; on which the original study of *Regalia Galore* remains highly relevant and those opposed to the restoration have not been slow to point to the Ankole kingdom as 'a colonial creation'. In addition the association of Ankole monarchy historically with ethnic inequality had been fundamental to Banyankole and party politics in the 1950s as Uganda moved towards independence. Now, Doornbos concludes, nearly fifty years later, underlying the opposition to its restoration was the fear on the part of the Bairu majority of 'a return of the Bahima hegemony' where the monarchy was the 'pinnacle of an ethnically determined hierarchical status' (p. 101); that 'it was not surprising that representatives for the vast non-aristocratic majority of the former kingdom' would argue in ethnic terms. And he adds significantly:

it is not so much kingship as such but the historical legacy and memory (and hence the future) of Bahima-Bairu relations which appear to be the issue in Ankole, at least to this outside observer (p. 117)

suggesting that 'Many Banyankole fear that 'recognising the Ankole kingship would somehow imply recognising an idea of ethnic inequality with all the profound social and institutional consequences that this might imply.'

As Doornbos himself points out (p. 106) the climate within which the current debate has occurred as well as the issues themselves has changed so that perhaps we have to explain now the persistence of memory. The more recent past as well as the present comes into play. President Museveni is himself a Munyankole and Ankole is his home support base. There is a significant Bahima representation at the senior level in the Uganda armed forces including some who would support the restoration. Support for the restoration of the

monarchy has been largely among urban elites in contrast to strong opposition at the district level. Perhaps most important of all the tenacious pursuit by the Baganda monarchists for the return of their *Ebyaffe* makes quite clear that the restoration of the Kabaka was not simply about culture but about privileged access to resources and the influence of the Protestant Buganda elite; thus illustrating 'the potential power of culture in the political process' (p. 93) and making clear that 'restoration is a political not a cultural matter'.

Doornbos' 1960s' analysis of the evolution, decline and eclipse of the Ankole Kingdom remains one of the most enduring studies of Uganda's former Kingdoms to emerge from a period of very positive and productive research from what was then the East African Institute of Social Research at Makerere. For that reason alone its reissue in Uganda is to be welcomed. There is nevertheless a disjuncture between the core text and the discussion in Ch 7 of kingship in the 1990s. This suggests that the historical past cannot provide a sufficient understanding of the contemporary controversy. The real issue for Ankole as for the rest of Uganda is why the old social divisions persist in the very different environment of today and hopefully Doornbos will explore that question further in due course.

*Cherry Gertzel*  
*Curtin University of Technology*  
*Bentley, WA*

## **What Are The Sudanese People Fighting For?**

**Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*, Oxford, James Currey; Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press; Kampala, Fountain Publications, 2003, pp 234; bibliographical essay; appendix; index; maps. ISBN 0-85255-392-7 (James Currey Oxford) ISBN 0-253-21584-6 (Indiana University Press).**

**D**ouglas H. Johnson draws upon his extensive knowledge of the Sudan to seek a broad explanation of the root causes of what is described on the cover as 'one of Africa's longest and most intractable conflicts' and one which for some thirty years has threatened to break up this vast country of many racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, political and economic differences. He begins with the historical structure of North-South relations which relationship he argues in Chapter 1 has been misunderstood and its historical causes 'misrepresented'. States; Trade & Islam before 1820; the Egyptian conquest and the Mahadiyya and internal colonialisms are used to reject the claim that

Sudan's civil wars are the result of colonialism alone. Chapter 2 however stresses the impact of British overrule from 1899-1947: the pattern of the conquest and occupation, North & South and Southern policy were based on the concept of one country two systems, so that after the departure of the British in 1956 it was impossible to run the country as one country one system.

Chapter 3 deals with the period 1942-72, the rise of Nationalism leading to Independence; how, in the eyes of Southerners, the Northern rulers who took over from the British at independence were regarded as new colonialists; and the outbreak of the first civil war was a result of that Southern disappointment. Chapter 4 which deals with The Addis Ababa agreement and the regional governments 1972-83 underscores the significance of that agreement but the difficulties encountered in implementation process. Issues such as security; integration; political interference by Khartoum in the Southern region's affairs; economic confrontation between Khartoum and Juba; the borders problem with the North annexing parts of the South; the oil found in the South but exploited by the North; the North and Egypt dependent on water from the South; Dinka domination in the South; political fights in the North; and international pressures on Nimeiri. Nimeiri's unwillingness to address Southern grievances and his unilateral decision to abrogate the agreement in 1983 resulted in Southerners taking up arms to fight the government in the second civil war 1983-5 dealt with in Chapter 5 while the Northern parties' political decision to turn Sudan into an Islamic state increased the momentum of the fight for liberation in the South between 1986 to 1991, dealt with in Chapter 6, which shows how the SPLA position improved as more Southerners join in to fight.

From Chapter 7 the author then traces the internal conflicts that led on the one hand to factionalism in the SPLA and on the other the civil war within Islam and which have meant that '(t)he current civil war has intensified in complexity the longer it has been fought' (p. 127). The internal power struggle within the SPLA leading to the 1991 split into two factions (Torit and Nasir) of 1991. Chapter 8 discusses the Nuer civil war following the split of the SPLA in 1991. The Nasir faction, which became known as SPLA-United, has had its own internal power struggle between Riek Machar and Lam Akol. The Nuer civil war also saw the traditional Nuer-Dinka hatred intensified. The fighting left many killed on both sides.

Chapter 9 deals with multiple civil wars 1991. During this period 'a network of internal wars' were taking place in many parts of the country; for example, the civil war within Islam where Islamic factions in the North were fighting each other to install their own brand of political Islam in Sudan. The Islamic civil

war spread to the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, Eastern Sudan and Darfur. The SPLA became involved in the Islamic civil war in order to defend the non-Arab population in these areas. It was successful in the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile. Chapter 10 deals with the war economy and the politics of relief.

The author argues (see Chapter 10, *The War Economy & the Politics of Relief*) that 'the civil war has been fought on the ground as a resource war' (p. 151) and that civilians 'have often been treated as a resource to control'. Both sides in the war involve capturing labour and territory. The relief agencies were faced with a dilemma - were they to satisfy the demands of the Sudan government, the SPLA or the donor countries?

These ten, detailed chapters lead to the conclusion that 'no single factor can account for the profound divide now separating the main regions of the Sudan, nor for the ferocity of the multiple civil wars which pit different parts of Sudanese society against each other' (p.167).

In the final Chapter 11 the author therefore turns to the question of Sudanese ideas of peace and war and the attempts the Sudanese themselves have made to resolve the conflict; internally as well as through international intervention. The author points out that the internal peace attempts include Wunlit Dinka-Nuer conference of 1999 which paved the way for resolving not only the Dinka-Nuer conflict but other people to people conflicts in the South. This became a model for a grass roots 'peace movement' in the South based on the notion of a 'moral community'. While in the North, the Islamic 'moral community' is based on the principle of exclusion. Peace can only come with the exclusion of other Islamic and non-Islamic groups. The other internal peace attempt was the so called 'peace from within' 1996/97 in which Riek Machar signed an agreement with Khartoum which promised the South more powers to run its own affairs. However that proved to be a false promise and Riek Machar rejoined the SPLA to fight Khartoum. The international interventions to try to bring peace to Sudan include the Frankfurt Declaration of January 1992, Abuja 1 and 2 and IGAD (Inter-governmental Agency for Draught and Desertification) consisting of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Somalia and Sudan. Under IGAD these countries agreed to mediate a peaceful end to Sudan's civil war. The other peace initiative was the so-called Libyan-Egyptian peace plan of 1999. However, IGAD remains the only credible agency charged with the task of ending Sudan's war and bring peace to that country. It has done well so far in bringing the parties together and commits

them to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in which they agreed to negotiate until an agreement on all contentious issues is reached.

The author notes the pressure from the international community for the parties to reach an agreement by the end of 2003 but warns against a repeat of the 'shambles of independence, when international intervention circumvented the self-determination process' in which the people of the South were denied a vote through referendum to decide for their future. It is to be hoped that those who have been engaged in the on-going peace talks in Kenya that currently (late 2003) bring hopes for success have born this in mind. It was the deferment of the decision to allow Southerners to exercise their right of self-determination that resulted in the current civil war. No peace agreement should be imposed on the people of the South because of interest of foreign governments seeking access to and exploit its oil. A peace agreement that fail to address 'the root causes of Sudan's civil wars' will lead to a third wave of civil wars throughout the country the end of which will mean many Sudans.

In conclusion, I recommend this book to scholars of Sudanese Studies, Africanists, Diplomats, Relief and Human Rights workers and any one seeking to understand the root causes of Sudan's conflict.

*Chaplain Kara Yokoku  
School of Politics and International Studies  
Murdoch University, Perth WA*

## **Late Note: Biography of Jack Archer**

**Colin Baker, *A Fine Chest of Medals: The Life of Jack Archer*, Cardiff: Mpemba Books, 2003, pp.xiv+296. Maps, photographs, ISBN 0-9542020-1-5 (p/b).**

**T**his biography will be of interest to readers concerned with the British military and military campaigns across British colonial East and Central Africa as well as those with an interest in prison reform. Colin Baker, Professor Emeritus and Honorary Fellow in the University of Glamorgan specialises in the governmental and political history of Central Africa, primarily Nyasland-Malawi. Jack Archer (1871-1954) served with the Mounted Infantry in the Mashonaland Campaign 1896-7; was a member of Kitchener's Nile Expedition and fought at Omdurman in 1899; was in South Africa in 1899, at Ladysmith on the eve of the siege; and awarded the DCM for his action at the Battle of Surprise Hill. He also served in Egypt and the Sudan 1902-1905, in Nyasaland (seconded to the First Battalion of the King's African Rifles) and Somaliland. He joined the Nyasaland Civil Service after leaving the left army at the end of the first World War,



to become Superintendent of the Central Prison, Lunatic Asylum and Leprosarium which position he held for twenty years until retiring in 1939; and in the course of which time he was involved in progressive prison reforms recognised by the award of the MBE. At 68 he rejoined the KAR in 1939 and served in Nyasaland through the second World War.

Mpemba Books address is 55A Lon Y Deri, Cardiff, CF14 6jp, UK.

# Empowering Kenyan Women Through Participation in Dairy Micro-Enterprises: Reporting a Kenyan Research Project

*Dolphine Odero-Wanga, Milcah Mulu-Mutuku and Adijah Aliu-Olubandwa*

### Introduction

The notion of empowering women has become important in developing countries in the search for effective ways of improving the lives of women who compose the poorest and the least powerful segment of the population throughout the world. Sub-Saharan African women are especially disadvantaged because of their poverty and their relative powerlessness in the overall organization of African societies; and in their search for effective ways of supporting and enabling women to make changes in their lives development practitioners and grass-root activists have used the 'empowerment' approach as one available to gender planners.<sup>1</sup>

One strategy women have used to improve their status in society has been participation in the micro enterprise sector defined here as any enterprise employing less than ten persons.<sup>2</sup> This is true of Kenya where the micro enterprise sector provides an important entry point for women into a modern economy. Their organizational flexibility, low start up costs, basic technologies, low overheads, informal nature, reliance on family labor, and proximity to home sites make micro enterprises flexible vehicles for facilitating the economic participation of women.<sup>3</sup> Further the micro enterprise sector employs workers with limited formal education and training who learn on the job thus providing opportunities to a large sector of Kenyan women with limited education and training.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Batliwala 'Whose Interests? Problems in planning for women's practical needs', *World Development*, Vol. 21 (3), 1993, pp 367-77. See also C. Moser, 'Gender planning in the third world: Meeting practical and practical and strategic gender needs', *World Development*, Vol. 17 (11), 1989, pp. 1799-1825.

<sup>2</sup> B. Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, *The technology and institutions for private small and medium firms: The engineering industry in Nigeria*, ATPS working paper No 15, Nairobi, African Technology Policy studies, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Women Entrepreneurs in Africa*, Geneva, United Nations 2000.

<sup>4</sup> C. Robertson , 'Women in the urban economy', in M.J. Hay and S. Sticher (eds), *African Women South of the Sahara*, New York, Longman Group Limited, 1995.

Despite their problems Kenyan women have not passively accepted their position but have always sought survival strategies to empower themselves individually or collectively. This short paper reports a recent research project which examined the impact of participation in micro enterprises within the Kenyan dairy industry on the lives of Kenyan women and in particular the extent to which women have been empowered as a result of such participation. Our findings suggest the potential of the micro-enterprise sector to empower women but also the difficulties and the need for the Kenyan government to provide greater support for women's entrepreneurial activities.

### **The study area and participants**

We conducted interviews with 108 women entrepreneurs in micro enterprises within the dairy industry sampled from three districts, Nairobi, Kiambu, and Nakuru which have the highest concentration of micro enterprises in the dairy industry in the country and together constitute approximately ninety percent of all licensed micro enterprises processing dairy products.<sup>5</sup> Nairobi, the capital city, is also the largest in Kenya with a population of 2.1 million persons and provides the largest market for milk and milk products in the country; but is a milk deficient area with near zero milk production of its own. Kiambu district has a population of 742,000 persons. Small holder mixed farms practicing livestock production combined with food and cash crop production dominate the district, with dairy production being allocated forty-one percent of family land. Most of the milk produced in Kiambu is sold in Nairobi as such; there are few dairy micro dairy processing enterprises in the district. Nakuru district is located in the Kenyan Rift Valley has a population of 1,197,000 persons. The main activity in the district is farming, both small and large scale. Nakuru has the highest milk production in Kenya and a lot of dairy product processing is practiced in the district.

The sampling frame was compiled using information from the Kenya Dairy Board. We observed that several of the registered enterprises had closed down and others had been started. Although it is a requirement by the Kenyan law that any enterprise dealing with milk processing be registered with the Kenya Dairy Board for regulatory purposes, not all enterprises in the study registered with the board. Interviews and observations were used to collect data.

### **Findings**

The enterprises studied varied in a number of ways as did the women entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs reported four types of ownership. These were family-owned business (47%), sole proprietorship (44.3%), partnerships (6.1%) and co-operatives (2.6%). A further investigation revealed that most businesses in Nairobi district were family-owned while the majority in Kiambu were sole proprietorships. Partnerships were

---

<sup>5</sup> Information from the Kenya Dairy Board which regulates dairy activities in the country.

reported in Nakuru district only. The family owned enterprises were wholly managed by the women. Men played very little if any role in running the enterprises. The women used five sources of start up capital: personal or family savings, proceeds from existing property, friends and relatives, loans from micro financing institutions lending to micro enterprises, cooperative societies, and informal rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS). Information disclosed by 94.8% of the entrepreneurs indicated that 41.3% used savings to start their businesses while 26.6% used credit in the form of loans.

Several factors motivated the women to start dairy enterprises. A majority (62.3%) went into the business to earn a living either as the sole source or to supplement the family's income. Others had training in the dairy field and wanted to utilize the skill. Still others started the enterprises to create a market for raw milk. A few (1.8%) chose the dairy business because they could operate from home. Although the lack of formal education has often been cited as an important barrier to women's ability in developing countries to gain power over their lives in the household and in the economy<sup>6</sup> surprisingly in this group a majority (75%) who disclosed their level of education had secondary school education or above. Only a few (2%) had no formal education at all.

The products processed and sold included fresh milk, yoghurt, 'mala' (fermented milk), ice cream, ghee, butter, and cheese, the most frequently sold products being fresh milk (100%), 'mala' (88%), and yoghurt (36.1%). A majority of the entrepreneurs processed and sold a combination of the products. Only 12.8% dealt with one product only. Concerning the source of skills and knowledge the women used in processing the products they sold, a majority (60%) said they learnt the skills from social contacts such as friends and relatives; others from previous employment (16.5%), short courses (18%), and training in college (7.8%).

### **Perceived difficulties**

One might argue that this increase in the level of education would positively affect women's ability to understand, respond to, and to use and control technologies which would then translate into effective management of sustainable enterprises.<sup>7</sup> Most often, however, this has not been the case. Despite the increasing level of education and experience among women many within the business community still believe that women lack skills and know how to understand business and many feel that women businesses are primarily hobbies rather than serious investments. These misconceptions can seriously impede a woman's ability to obtain the necessary assistance needed to successfully run an

---

<sup>6</sup> F. Karani, 'Educational policies and women's education', in M. Mbeo and O. Ooko-Ombaka (eds), *Women and Law in Kenya*, Nairobi, Public Law Institute, 1989, pp. 23-28.

<sup>7</sup> C. W. Ngahu, *Technological innovations used to overcome the problem of resource scarcity in small-scale enterprises: Implications for policy*. ATPS working paper No 20, Nairobi, African Technology Policy Studies, 1999.

enterprise. In addition to one's level of education and the type of training, upgrading one's knowledge on the business plays a significant role in determining the success of an enterprise. Most women (71.5%) however experienced problems in their effort to upgrade their knowledge about their enterprises. The most frequently cited problems included lack of knowledge on the source of information needed (50%), and lack of time to look for this information (30%).

Although a majority of the women had formal education beyond primary level only 13.1% had been trained in the field related to their enterprises. Without this prior knowledge women are likely to start enterprises with little thought on major issues such as how factor inputs would be received, how the finished products would be transported or how the goods can be marketed. Thus these women are not likely to sustain their enterprises in the event of challenges.

It is widely documented that African women often combine running their enterprises with heavy responsibilities for care and provisioning in their households which often restricts their working hours and mobility in ways that affect their business practices. Gender role expectations make it even more difficult for women to relieve themselves of the family responsibilities. The consequence is that many women in Kenya are ignorant of new technologies or are unskilled in their use, and often unable to do research and gain the necessary training. This lack of knowledge and continued treatment of women as second class citizens keeps them in a continuous state of subordination.

Many of the enterprises studied were recently established, with 73.2% of them being three years old and younger. Further observations also indicated that many of the female entrepreneurs had closed down. High failures rates of these of women's projects could be attributed to the participants not having received the necessary training they need to manage and sustain the enterprises.

Although access to credit is essential for entrepreneurs to start, expand, or improve the productivity of their enterprises only a few of the women entrepreneurs made use of this important facility. Problems with credit acquisition included high interest rates and lack of collateral among the women. Further, a majority of the entrepreneurs seemed uncomfortable with assuming debt to establish their enterprises. Most were unsure of the enterprises doing well enough to repay back the debt. One of the women stated:

Taking loan can be disastrous to my business.... what if I am not able to pay back the loan?.... They will come and take everything I own..... no let me just do with whatever I have!

Such fears meant that most women were unlikely to seek outside financing to leverage their businesses. Furthermore women fearful of taking on outside financing may well limit themselves to enterprises that offer less growth potential and financial profit. This, in turn, affects the extent to which they are empowered as a result of participating in these enterprises.

Regardless however of the challenges and obstacles a majority of the women reported being empowered as a result of participating in the micro enterprise sector within the dairy industry. 94.8% of the entrepreneurs stated that their lives had improved in one way or another since they started the enterprises. 57.7% cited financial empowerment while 37.1% cited personal empowerment. Financial empowerment enabled these women to feed, cloth and educate their children as well as educating themselves (i.e. being able to go back to school or paying for some short courses) as stated by another woman:

Yes I have been able to benefit a lot, I can now buy food and clothes for my children... I can also pay their school fees... I used to have a lot of problems paying school fees... and Mzee(the husband)... he doesn't have a good job so this business has helped us a lot.

Some of the women were able to save the money from the enterprise which was used to expand the enterprise or to start another business although the percentage of women who were able to do this was small (4.1%).

One form of personal empowerment involved gaining independence. A number of women cited that since they started the enterprises they had improved their decision making power in their households. This woman stated:

Since I started this business I don't depend on anybody... I take care of myself and my children... I don't have to ask anybody for money, I don't have to ask for permission on what to do with my money... I can buy my children whatever I want... It feels good to own your own business!

Another one asserted:

I am self reliant since I started this business... I make my own decisions... I don't have to depend on anybody.

Other personal empowerment included gaining exposure to issues about the business and also meeting people they could not have met were they not running these enterprises. Through these exposures some were able to learn and upgrade their knowledge on skills which they used in their enterprises.

Although these women benefited and were able to improve their status from running the enterprises, quite a number (57.4%) felt they could benefit more and do more than just meeting the basic needs of their families. This, they felt could happen only if they got adequate profit from these enterprises. The lack of adequate profit resulted from low and irregular payment on their products, flooding of the market with similar products, and high levies paid to the local authorities and The Kenya Dairy Board.

These problems were further exacerbated by the fact that these women shoulder the double burden of domestic work and participation in the cash economy. Hence they can only manage small businesses that will allow them some time and energy to be devoted to taking care of domestic chores. These women were also disadvantaged when competing against their male counterparts because men can draw upon resources that are unavailable to them. Thus while these women found financial empowerment in micro enterprise sector, the majority still lived at subsistence level and remained economically vulnerable.

### **Conclusion**

Empowering women is a development issue since women who become empowered will be able to take a more active role not only in economic activity, but also in exerting political pressure for change in many ways. Participation in micro enterprises such as within the dairy industry earns personal income for many women that goes a long way in meeting household expenditures, school and health fees. Further such participation help in raising the women's sense of self-worth, making them even more eager to be productive members of the society.

Thus empowering women through participation in the micro enterprises should be seen as an active tool that if used thoughtfully can be used to achieve changes for women in Kenya. Though multiple challenges still exist, greater and continued support of women's entrepreneurial activities is needed to further improve the lives of these women and the condition of their communities.

This support requires that the Kenyan government remove barriers to women's entrepreneurial activities and make positive efforts to get resources to women, and to improve their education and technical skills. This will improve their techniques in management of their enterprises. Current lending policies of financial institutions should also be scrutinized and revised so that opportunities for capital are provided to deserving women. And above all attempts should be made at eliminating male bias and moving women out of the condition of subordination they still currently occupy. This will require cultural, social, economic, and political changes on the part of individuals, communities and the society as a whole.

## Notes

# Forty Years of African Demography at the ANU

The Demography Department in the Research School of Social Sciences at The Australian National University was formally founded in December, 1952, initially focussing on Australia and other parts of Oceania. There were no African specialists on the staff throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The first two African graduates were Patrick Ohadike and Charles Ejiogu, both from Nigeria, were awarded their PhDs in 1968. Both went to work for the United Nations. During the ten-year period 1959-1968, three other PhD graduates, Jack Caldwell, Ian Pool, and Mohan Srivastava, and went on to work in Africa, as did the Department's first MA, Kathleen Jupp who utilised her census expertise at the Economic Commission for Africa in Ethiopia in the 1960s. Initially, Pool worked on surveys in Ghana, Upper Volta and Niger. He returned to a chair in his home country of New Zealand in the mid-1970s but was often in Africa on behalf of UNFPA. Srivastava's career included chairs period at the University of Malawi and the University of Liberia.

An increased emphasis on Africa followed the appointment of Caldwell to a chair of Demography at the ANU in 1970, a year after the publication of his *African Rural-Urban Migration*. Caldwell had organised a large demographic research programme at the University of Ghana in the early 1960s, before becoming Professor of Demography at the University of Ife and Regional Director for Africa for the Population Council. Sam Gaisie from Ghana gained his PhD from the ANU in 1973 and worked with Caldwell as part of the editorial team of *Population Growth and Socioeconomic Change in West Africa* (1975). After a period at the United Nations Regional Institute at the University of Ghana, Gaisie developed Demography at the Universities of Zambia and Botswana.

In 1971/2, Jack and Pat Caldwell together with Helen Ware (appointed Research Fellow in 1971) ran the Changing African Family Project from the University of Ibadan. This Project was eventually to span twelve African countries with a focus on Nigeria. Orubuloye, who had been a graduate assistant in Ibadan, was to gain his PhD in 1978 together with Okore from the University of Nigeria and Sembajwe from Makerere. All three worked on Nigerian data since Sembajwe was unable to access data from his home



country, Uganda, and all three subsequently became Professors at African Universities. Others who used Changing African Family data for their graduate work include Gigi Santow, an Australian, and Joseph Richard, from India.

The flow of African graduate students was maintained with the creation of the MA in Demography program in 1976, initially funded by AIDAB. Two of the original three MA programme staff, Shail Jain and David Lucas, had previously undertaken research in West Africa. Chris McMurray, who joined the staff in 1982, subsequently completed her PhD thesis using African data.

Koni Bongoma from Zaire was the only African to complete a PhD in the 1980s, although Habtemariam Tesfaghiorghis's thesis on 'Fertility and Infertility in Ethiopia' was submitted in March, 1990. A revival in PhD numbers occurred in the 1990s, including more work on Ethiopia by Yohannes Kinfu which revealed low fertility in Addis Ababa.

At first AIDAB (now AusAID) did not expect MA graduates to go on to PhD, but later the policy was changed with Jacob Adetunji, Jacob Oni and Helen Avong, all from Nigeria, benefiting from this. All three went on to postdoctoral awards, Adetunji and Oni at Harvard, while Avong worked at the Population Council's Novrongo research site in Ghana. Yaw Ofusu from Ghana also worked on West African data and later took up a position with the International Labour Office.

Other doctoral research in the 1990s included Lawrence Ikamari (Kenya) and Tapiwa Jhamba (Zimbabwe) on mortality, Joseph Pitso (Botswana) on marriage, and Antonio Francisco (Mozambique) on 'Considerations for a two-sex demography'. They all returned to teach at their home Universities. Record Malungo who worked on HIV/AIDS in Zambia and gained his doctorate in 2002, won the Australian Population Association's Borrie Prize for a graduate essay and the Postgraduate Prize of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific. Arnaldo from the Eduardo Mondlane University, who studied fertility in Mozambique at the national and provincial levels, graduated in 2002.

As Australian (AUSAID) funding for population training in Africa has subsided, support has come from the United Nations, and as this waned, from the Wellcome Trust, for MA training for students from South Africa and Zambia. Subsequent to their MA training, Chibwe Lamba (Central Statistics Office, Lusaka) and Namuunda Mutombo (University of Zambia) were funded by Wellcome to undertake fieldwork in Zambia in 2002, their respective topics

being 'Household composition and Welfare' and 'Determinants of Male Reproductive and Sexual Behaviour'. Scholarships from their Government has meant that Batswana form the largest national group amongst the MA graduates over the years, but all countries in Anglophone Africa have sent at least one student for training.

Caldwell's African research, notably on the demographic transition, has spanned four decades. After formally retiring ten years ago he continued his research on HIV/AIDS, and has recently re-joined Demography from the ANU's Health Transition Centre. In the 1990s Caldwell was instrumental in arranging for two Americans working on Africa to come to the ANU as Postdoctoral Fellows to work on topics on the interface between demography and anthropology under a Mellon Foundation Program. Although only a part of Caldwell's wide-ranging research agenda now focuses on Africa, his 2002 article (with Thomas Schindlmayr) on 'Historical Population Estimates' includes a discussion of estimates of the population of Africa in the past. David Lucas, whose final contract specified special responsibility for African students, retired at the end of 2003 and is finishing up joint work with co-authors in South Africa.

By now, of course, many of the ANU's earlier graduates have also retired. In Botswana and Zambia in particular there is still a critical mass of ANU-trained working in planning and statistical offices, in Universities, and, in Zambia, in NGOs. Other graduates are working outside of their home country. For example, Adetunji is in Washington as Senior Technical Adviser in USAID's Population Leadership Program, while Tetteh Dugbaza from Ghana works for UNFPA in Lesotho. The ANU's Department of Demography is now the Demography and Sociology Program having recently absorbed the depleted Sociology Program. For 2004, the Program will have two Master's level students, one from Mozambique and one from Malawi. Yet when Zitha Mokomane from the University of Botswana completes her thesis on cohabitation in early 2004, there will be no doctoral research on African demography in progress at the ANU.

*David Lucas, Visiting Fellow,  
Demography and Sociology Program,  
ANU, (January-March 2004)*

# **Building Bridges Between Academics and Service Providers to Sudanese Refugees in Australia**

## **Introduction**

**T**he Sudanese community is the fastest growing ethnic community in Australia. While those in their troubled homeland progress with cautious hope through the latest round of peace talks Sudanese who have fled their homeland have now for many years been amongst the refugees arriving in the Australasian/Pacific region. The burgeoning Sudanese Diaspora provides a fertile source for research, not only into matters relating to Sudan's own long and complex history, but into the myriad of concerns that affect all refugee communities. Settlement issues, health and educational concerns, studies into resilience and trauma recovery, questions of culture and identity are confronted by the Sudanese community daily and, therefore, by the many service providers and agencies who work alongside the community as they re-adjust to life outside Sudan and the surrounding refugee camps. But we have noted with concern a lack of resources and information available to those who service the Sudanese community, and the resultant lack of understanding and sensitivity with which their needs are being (or, rather, not being) met. Increasingly we have been receiving enquiries from all over Australia, and in some cases the world, from people who come to us searching for information on Sudan and the Sudanese Diaspora. These inquiries have been varied: a translating service looking for interpreters, individuals and organizations researching educational and trauma-related issues, academics and journalists looking to research and publish research on Sudan and the Sudanese people in our region. While we are more than happy to provide support for these studies as best we can, it is of concern to us that the first place to which people are led when looking for information on Sudan is to us: volunteers, and undergraduate students of law and cinema studies respectively! It is our view that, at the present time academic circles could benefit from an increased awareness of the necessity and desire for research into resettling African communities across Australasia and the Pacific and from closer links with service providers, in this case those working with Sudanese refugees. We hope to encourage the building of bridges between academics and those who are working directly with these new and emerging communities, with a view to building awareness, increasing knowledge and articulating need.

## **In search of experts: the experience of the Sudanese Australian Learning Integrated Program (SAIL)**

The Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program is a non-profit, volunteer run, secular program that provides free English support and community services to the Sudanese refugee community in Melbourne. SAIL, which began work with five Sudanese students, today works with over 300 Sudanese participants and provides English tutoring, in-home support, extracurricular activities, excursions and camps, information sessions, and a student newspaper.

The Sudanese experience has been described as ‘the longest and most academically neglected of the continent’s postcolonial struggles’.<sup>1</sup> It is also one of the most complex, in which ‘religion, local perceptions of race and social status, economic exploitation and colonial and post-colonial interventions are all elements in the Sudan’s current civil war [and the experience of those who flee], but none, by itself, fully explains it.’<sup>2</sup> While Dr John Garang of the Sudanese Peoples’ Liberation Army has noted that ‘any struggle must be anchored in history’ Australia is slowly filling up with eyewitnesses to Sudan’s history who, in suburbs all over Australasia and the Pacific, are seeking compassionate and effective respite and repair from it. In this respect the paucity of academic material readily available to Australians working within the community is beginning to have an impact as it limits the ability of service providers to adequately and sensitively support them. People want and need the information but they do not know how or where to find it. From our vantage point as workers at the ‘coal face,’ we look to academic circles in the hope that their information and our practice can intersect.

How can research and the dissemination of information have a direct and positive impact on the resettling Sudanese community? The reality is that for anyone working with a refugee community, especially a new and emerging one, trying to get ones head around all the issues that come up is often akin to falling off a vertical learning curve. Because they have been granted offshore humanitarian status offshore, the very presence of the Sudanese in Australia means that their survival has been harrowing. Many Sudanese have walked for weeks or months to get out of Sudan and into the tenuous safety of surrounding nations. They have spent much of their lives at risk of disease, far from medical care, vulnerable to mercenary behaviour of militia and residents of host countries. In refugee camps, they faced over-crowding, lack of basic

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil War*, The International African Institute (2003), Great Britain xv, (and reviewed in this issue of ARAS, p. 85)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1-2.

necessities, poor education, danger, and sexual violence. We have heard of last-minute escapes from predatory animals, and perilous swims across rivers with babies tied to backs. Along the way, all families have lost relatives through fighting and illness and many have witnessed the violent deaths of loved ones. These experiences do come with a price. Presently most Sudanese in Australia, and probably most of the Diaspora, are struggling to shake-off the long-term effects of their trauma. We, and others working with the community, crave scholarship into the nuances of these experiences, their legacy and the countries that have delivered them, in the hope of better tailoring our services.

As a case study, we can consider the position of Sudanese students within their mainstream schools. The majority of young Sudanese students are struggling educationally. Most students have had disrupted education prior to arrival in Australia, particularly those who have spent years in refugee camps. Their parents may have low literacy levels in their first languages, which affects both their own and their children's ability to learn English. Long-term and repeated exposure to traumatic events have also affected the children's ability to learn in mainstream classrooms, and even children who have had consistent schooling are unfamiliar with the practices of our Western education system. These circumstances present major obstacles to the Sudanese students as they attempt to settle in Australia. While there may exist information and research that addresses issues such as these, it is evidently not being accessed by the institutions and individuals to whose work it pertains, and the result is frequent and significant misunderstandings, frustrations, impatience and disillusionment from all involved, including the students.

In an effort to address this problem the SAIL Program, in consultation with the Sudanese community, is currently putting together a simple 'fact sheet' on the experiences of African refugee school students. The purpose of this resource is to give teachers in mainstream Australian schools a 'crash course' to understanding some of the issues that make Sudanese students different from others in their schools. As well as basic country information and general descriptions of the life experiences of Sudanese people in Australia, it offers outlines of modern Sudanese history and politics, and strategies for dealing with the unusual problems and situations that these students find themselves in.

Ideally, SAIL would like to be able to provide a similar bank of information to those working with Sudanese in other areas of the community: lawyers, police, housing and healthcare providers and employment agencies. On this project, as on many others, there is terrific potential for academic knowledge and

guidance. The time commitment for a project such as this is small. The real world impact is potentially very great.

### **The Sudanese Online Research Association (SORA)**

Such an ambitious wish list calls for an ambitious response. Our response has been in the form of a website and online library. The Sudanese Online Research Association, or SORA was launched at the 2003 annual conference of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific in October this year. SORA is designed as a borderless home for the study of issues pertaining to the ongoing growth of the Sudanese Diaspora. The grander purpose of the site is to represent not the Sudanese people, but those who service them with a view to providing a one-stop-shop for all aspects of Sudan-related research. Designed for those whose time is limited it aims to promote and encourage students of all disciplines and of all ages (there is even a 'kids' section for this purpose) to engage in the issues that are affecting Sudanese people living outside of Sudan. In its short life, the e-response to SORA has been overwhelming. From across the globe there are queries and submissions surfing in. At present, there are two Masters Theses, a major research paper and numerous University essays published exclusively on SORA. Our hope is that this will one day seem to have been a humble beginning. We encourage readers to introduce their colleagues, associates and students to this forum with a view to making people in academia work for people in need.

The opportunity to make a difference by conducting research is real. We know this from our own experiences as 'default experts' on a nation that we have never set foot in nor studied in depth. While the need to support those in Africa is great, the need to support the lucky few who survive the continent's most brutal conflicts, such as that in Sudan, is perhaps just as dire. While the information that academics can provide may not be as abstract and stimulating as academic papers, the impact it will have will be great. SORA is an avenue for exactly this to happen.

*Matthew Albert and Anna Grace\**

---

\* Matthew Albert and Anna Grace Hopkins have been working with the Sudanese community in Melbourne since 2000 when they co-founded SAIL. SORA was launched at the 2003 Annual AFSAAP conference in Adelaide. The Sudanese Online Research Association can be found at [sora.akm.net.au](http://sora.akm.net.au). For more information on the Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning Program (SAIL), visit [www.SAILProgram.cjb.net](http://www.SAILProgram.cjb.net).

## Reflections on a Changing Tanzania

A few years ago I had a meal in the rooftop restaurant at *The Kilimanjaro* in Dar es Salaam. The hotel, a 1960s concrete and glass block, was shabby, run down, the food basic. Last week I walked past *The Kilimanjaro*. It has been gutted, stripped back to its concrete skeleton, in preparation for being completely renovated. In Dar es Salaam old buildings are being restored, new tower blocks are rising. Just out of Iringa, where I live, there is a college built in the 1960s with overseas aid money, to teach rural development. We had a seminar there a couple of years ago. The walls were cracked, the ceilings sagging, the gardens overgrown. Now the college is looking smart, the grounds neat, and the buildings are being extended.

These pictures may serve as metaphors for what is happening in Tanzania. There is generally an air of optimism, of a new era of growth. Much of this development is fuelled, of course, by the dismantling of the socialist state. Privatisation, here as everywhere, is the new way. The state's National Bank of Commerce (NBC) was taken over by a South African consortium – the Amalgamated Bank of South Africa (ABSA), which is the major shareholder and manages the NBC, though the Tanzanian Government retains some shares. The state electricity supplier (TANESCO), and the telephone system (TTCL), have been privatised. Some people express fears of a South African financial hegemony as a number of companies and organisations come under control from the south. When the first letter from the new owners to users of the telephone system arrived signed by a Dutch CEO the general belief was that South Africans had bought that too. But in fact it was a combined Dutch/German concern. There have been over three hundred parastatals up for sale, from farms to factories. The South African gold giant Anglo Gold in tandem with the Ghanaian Ashanti Gold are mining the considerable deposits which the Government had not in the past allowed to be tapped. (And Ashanti Gold is now facing a take-over). Even the railway system is up for tender.

The Government is keen to encourage foreign investment and seems to be succeeding. However, among ordinary educated Tanzanians, there is a fear that this new capitalism will destroy some things of value that the socialist era inculcated, such as the sense of equality, of community, of mutual respect. There is fear that a new wealthy class may emerge and a harsher environment develop in which ordinary people and their rights may matter less. President Nyerere's socialism may have had economic weaknesses but it did create a united country with a sense of self-worth. Today on the radio there was a report that in neighbouring Kenya top CEOs are now earning US\$30,000 a month,

while the basic wage is US\$45. And a Kenyan CEO argued that he deserved that, and more. Tanzanians do not generally want to see that sort of differentiation happen here.

Back to railway system. Some weeks ago *The East African* (produced in Kenya, one of the group of papers owned by HH the Aga Khan) reported that the hope is that the three railway systems of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda may be sold as a unit. This highlights another remarkable development; the reinvention of the East African Community, dismantled in the 1970s. There have been moves towards a united customs system, especially to encourage trade between the three countries. Already in existence are an East African Legislative Assembly and an East African Court of Justice. These are based in Arusha, Tanzania, where the Tanzanian Government has donated land for a new headquarters for the revived East African Community.

We must not lose sight of the fact that most Tanzanians are still peasant farmers struggling for existence in what is generally a fairly harsh environment. For most life has changed little. As the population increases so does pressure on the land. The 2002 Census put the population at thirty-four million – roughly four times what it was at Independence in 1961. The population continues to grow, though there are signs of a slowing-down. In the Iringa region the average number of children per woman was assessed at 4.5. This is a decrease on past figures. AIDS will continue to have devastating effects: estimates are that twelve percent of the adult population are HIV positive (*Sunday News* 10 August 2003). In some areas the figure is much higher.

The National Development Vision aims to eliminate abject poverty by 2025, and lays down development goals in a number of areas, centred on three, good governance, building a strong economic base, and human development – in which education plays a key role.

A recent report stated that some eighty-five percent of Tanzanian children receive primary school education, some eight percent go on the secondary school, two percent to form six (Higher School Certificate), and one percent to university. There are just under 1,000 secondary schools in the country and the number is growing as religious groups are now encouraged to start schools. Private investors are also entering the field, as there is such a demand and people are willing to find the fees in the hope of improving their children's chances for the future. Last year in response to urging from overseas donor agencies the Government abolished primary school fees, to make primary



education more readily available. There are, I believe I am right in saying, nine university campuses – though not nine universities. For example, the Lutheran University, Tumaini, has three campuses: a medical school at the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) at Moshi, a theological faculty at Arusha, at Makumira Seminary, and a campus at Iringa with several departments (education, law, theology, journalism, commerce). The Catholic Church also has a University although not yet the Anglicans – the other major denomination; although they are working towards it. Some universities are specialised, such as the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro.<sup>1</sup>

An interesting debate continues as to whether English or Swahili should be the language of secondary and higher education in which so far English has won the day. But there is a groundswell of support for the national language, Swahili, and most secondary students are more comfortable in it than in English. A teacher from England (a VSO volunteer) in our local Teachers' College tells me some of the students, who are training to teach in secondary schools, are quite openly negative about learning and using English, as a colonial imposition. Yet Tanzania cannot afford to be isolated from the wider world. As yet, there are not sufficient books in Swahili for it to be used for higher education.

Overall Tanzania remains a very pleasant country to live and work in. It is still a fairly gentle society, friendly and courteous and it is politically stable. The area of politics deserves an article on its own; suffice it to say that the only contentious event was the controversial election in 'the islands' (Zanzibar and Pemba) a couple of years ago, when allegations of deliberate mismanagement in order to keep the ruling party in power led to riots, and a flood of refugees into Kenya. The outcome of that crisis has however been positive for it led to a re-examination of the Constitution and of the relationship between the mainland and the islands. In the bye-elections this year when the great majority of seats were won by the main opposition party, the Civic United Front (CUF) the Government displayed considerable political maturity when it accepted the results.

*Colin Reed\**  
*Iringa, Tanzania*

---

<sup>1</sup> And here's a nice little item about that from there in the newspaper this week. Sokoine is training sniffer rats! Actually this is not amusing, it is very serious. The large bush rats are being trained to find landmines. The hope is that they will be used instead of dogs in some of the neighbouring countries that still have a legacy of landmines from past conflicts. (*Sunday News*, 10 August 2003)

\*Colin Reed has been teaching in the Anglican Church College in Iringa for the past four years. This note was sent to ARAS in September 2003.(Ed)

# Australian Input into the African Virtual University

The African Virtual University grew out of World Bank discussions with various African Vice-Chancellors in 1997 on the use of internet technology for the delivery of tertiary technical and other education services to African universities. As colleagues will be aware the deterioration of the terms of trade which allow us in developed countries to enjoy our high standard of living is largely achieved by a skewed globalised market that impoverishes much of the rest of the world. World Bank/ IMF imposed policies of 'floating' currencies has seen the exchange rate of most African currencies collapse against those of the OECD. Decades ago Michael Crowder and others were writing about the 'book famine' in Africa, where universities were confronted with escalating book prices in the face of falling exchange rates and restricted access to foreign currency. Even where university libraries have not been ravaged by civil wars, journal subscriptions often terminate in the 1980s or earlier.

The project in which Australia has become a significant player has been a major academic undertaking - involving consultation with numerous university administrators (Phase 1, 1997-1999) and investment in IT infrastructure, the establishment of satellite and land-line linkages, and contracting for the pilot delivery programs (Phase 2, 1999-2002). In 2002, RMIT won against global competition the initial World Bank contract to provide over four years a range of Computer Science (IT) programs. RMIT offers a one-year certificate course, a two-year diploma and a four-year degree course in Computer Sciences. RMIT provides the course design and content, including lectures (on-line) and overseas assessment. The initiative not only provides pedagogical and technical expertise but is designed to transfer capacity building to a partner institution. In the case of RMIT's IT program, the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania is the Principal partner Institution. At the end of the four-year contract, Dar es Salaam will assume full responsibility for provision, maintenance of standards and accreditation of the Computer Science programs.

In addition to the University of Dar es Salaam, the Computer Studies programs were available in 2003 at Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia), Kigali Institute of Science, Technology and Management (Rwanda) and the University of Cape Coast (Ghana). Five additional universities will be participating in the RMIT-Computer Science program in 2004 - Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (Accra, Ghana), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Kumasi, Ghana), Kenyatta University (Nairobi, Kenya), Egerton University (Nakuru, Kenya) and the University of Namibia-, with planned enrolments of 800.

RMIT provides the course design, content and on-line lectures. Local 'facilitators' in each of the institutions provide the actual teaching-student interface. This involves training local academic staff in use of the equipment and distance education techniques, as well as interaction between RMIT staff and their African colleagues.

The main server is located in South Africa, a somewhat hierarchal centralised system based on the original World Bank design, though regional web networks would be preferable and will hopefully evolve. As a backup in event of power failures and other web 'down crises', AVU Centres in each university are supplied with back-up material on CD-ROM, DVD and in print. In addition, the African Virtual University is building up a digital library of journals and e-books that students can access.

The three RMIT programs are designed so students can move from one course to another, depending on circumstances. Thus, a student who finds they cannot complete the four-year degree has a fallback position that still allows them to earn a qualification, and visa-versa. The RMIT program outline is available on the internet at <http://www.international.rmit.edu.au/avu/index.html>

Curtin University of Technology is due to commence its one-year diplomas and three-year degree courses in Business Studies in 2004, with the University of Addis Ababa as its Principal Partner Institution. Other participating universities include Kenyatta University (Kenya), Kigali Institute of Science, Management and Technology (Rwanda) and the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). The University of Dar es Salaam is also assisting with initial training of additional facilitators. Initial enrolments are estimates at 200. The Curtin involvement is part of \$6 million AusAid funding for AVU under the Colombo Plan announced by Foreign Minister Downer in August 2001.

In addition University of Laval in Canada is offering Francophone Computer Science degree and diploma courses in partnership with Université Gaston Berger (St Louis, Senegal), with four other participating institutions: Université Lumiere (Burundi), Université Abdou Moumouni (Niger), Université d'Abomey Calavi (Benin) Université Gaston de Nouakchott (Mauritania). Current enrolment is 120. There are also various ten-week 'short' courses, such as an Information Technology certificate from New Jersey Institute of Technology, a certificate of Journalism from Indiana University, and Professional and Business English Communications from Georgetown University.

By 2007 (Phase 3, 2002-2007), the African Virtual University hopes to have 150 learning centres in 50 countries. Unfortunately the sting in the tail are the fees which

range from US\$200 to US\$1,000 - not much by Australian standards but often almost insurmountable in countries with such low per-capita incomes. The good part is that the fees can be paid in local currency and go to the participating African institution to cover tuition, books, etc. However the most exciting aspect is the real transfer of technology, expertise, capacity building and ownership to African institutions, albeit the downside is that the technology is 'owned' by transnational corporations - another extension of African technological dependence.

*David Dorward  
African Research Institute  
La Trobe University  
Bundoora Victoria*

## **A DFAT Trade and Investment Analysis of *African Renewal***

**I**n the December 2002 issue of *ARAS* Cherry Gertzel drew attention to the decline in Australian overseas development assistance to Africa. *African Renewal* is the other face of Australia's approach to Africa: extolling trade and investment opportunities. Produced by the Economic Analytical unit of DFAT it focuses on five countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Kenya and Uganda, with assessments of cost competitiveness, legal environment and risk analysis. These five countries account for seventy-six percent of Australian trade with SSA and were selected because their high growth rates and macroeconomic management is viewed as favourable to foreign direct investment or, in the case of Kenya, moving toward such a regime. In terms of Australian FDI South Africa is the main beneficiary, though the report highlights projects such as the MOZAL aluminium smelter, the largest single FDI in Mozambique employing over one thousand Mozambiqueans.

The report also documents existing Australian trade and investment largely in mining, agriculture, infrastructure and service sectors as well as prospects for African (largely South African) investment in Australia and the implications for both business and government. Colleagues will find this document a mine of information as well as providing useful insights into DFAT's perspective on Australian business opportunities in Africa. Copies of *African Renewal* are available for \$A20 on the DFAT website at [http://www.dfat.au/publications/African\\_renewal/index.html](http://www.dfat.au/publications/African_renewal/index.html)

*David Dorward*

## Archbishop of Capetown on the Challenges of Living in a Global Village

**T**he Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, visited Australia in October in the course of which he launched the annual appeal of *AngliCORD* an Anglican overseas relief development agency. A controversial and compassionate voice from Africa, Archbishop Ndungane is a respected spokesperson and leader for millions of Anglicans across seven countries in southern Africa. During his visit he highlighted the devastating HIV/AIDS crisis, challenged Australians to commit to the fight against poverty. 'Our mutual entanglement is not a choice, it is a fact' Archbishop Ndungane says. 'The terrible events of September 11, 2001 and the bombing in Bali showed us that we cannot isolate ourselves from poverty, injustice, and discontent. When we consider the reality that more than twice the number of people die daily in sub-Saharan Africa of AIDS related illnesses as the number of people who died in Washington and New York on September 11<sup>th</sup> then we have every reason to expect a global response and commitment to the fight against AIDS. As Kofi Anan has recognised, the pandemic is a global emergency'.

In a seminar moderated by former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser at the University of Melbourne under the auspices of the Australian Institute for International Health and *AngliCORD*, Archbishop Ndungane observed that his vision for an Africa free of HIV/AIDS and poverty rests on partnership, commitment, creativity, and the courage 'to relinquish the fears and prejudice of the past.' 'Our political freedom in South Africa today is proof that dreams can become a reality. The AIDS epidemic seems overwhelming, but we must remember we have the resources to fight it.'

Archbishop Ndungane is taking his leadership role on HIV/AIDS seriously. Along with thousands of priests across South Africa he publicly went for HIV counselling and testing, attending a clinic in a Cape Town township rather than seeing his private GP. 'In the townships we have something called "bush radio" and on it news travels very fast,' Archbishop Ndungane says 'and on the day I went to be tested there were people everywhere around the clinic - children, mothers, young men - waiting to see what would happen. Even the media were there with their cameras, and people were saying I must have been naughty to need to go for a test. When I came out everyone wanted to know the results but I said that this is a matter between my wife and myself, but that it is an important step for all men to take responsibility for their sexuality and relationships.'

On a national level, the Anglican church in South Africa with the support of DfID through Christian Aid is working to use the extensive community networks of the church to share information, train home-based carers, and to promote healthy sexuality. ‘We have trained 90,000 women across the country to care for their family, neighbours, and community who are affected by HIV/AIDS, the Archbishop says. This voluntary network of people bears the constant burden of caring for those dying, grieving, and orphaned by the epidemic.

Archbishop Ndungane also challenged the Australian government to take HIV/AIDS and poverty in Africa seriously. In a meeting with Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Alexander Downer, Archbishop Ndungane called for a financial commitment to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. He has also called for a stronger commitment to the Millenium Development Goals – a tangible strategy to halve poverty by the year 2015 – as agreed by the global community, including Prime Minister John Howard at the United Nations Millennium Summit in August 2000.

Rapid economic growth in India and China is helping make these goals more achievable. However, the fight against poverty in Africa is seriously compromised by unpayable debt, unjust trade barriers, the HIV/AIDS crisis, and conflict.

At a corporate lunch in Melbourne hosted by the legal firm Malleeson Stephens Jaques, the Archbishop said that economic freedom comes with responsibilities. ‘Financing for development recognises that the global community is more than simply an economic system and that a joint partnership is required between governments, corporations, civil society and local communities. South Africa is the economic powerhouse of Africa and beyond, with a wealth of natural resources, infrastructure, industry, and human capital. But South Africa’s future is at risk in the face of the potential devastation of HIV and AIDS. A recent World Bank study pointed to the potential devastation of the economy and people of South Africa.’ He warned that unless that warning is taken seriously South Africa’s prognosis will have devastating consequences for Africa, for the Global South and the global community.

‘But we face great challenges in the new South Africa. We are not only struggling with reconciling black and white – we also need to reconcile rich and poor. We have expanded our exports and dropped trade barriers to enter the global economy and yet have been marginalised and left with ever-declining commodity prices.’

While in Melbourne Archbishop Ndungane met with Sudanese refugees, post-graduate students at the University of Melbourne Business School, women who are HIV positive, secondary school students, community health professionals responding

to HIV/AIDS in Australia and overseas and with corporate and legal executives. He addressed the Synod, spoke on the theological dilemmas of the HIV/AIDS pandemic at Trinity College, and preached in local parishes in Melbourne. He also visited Canberra - meeting Australian government officials, preaching at St Paul's Manuka, and addressed a seminar on challenges for Australians in the fight against poverty and hardship.

*Alison Preston and Greg Thompson  
Anglicord,  
Melbourne, Victoria.*

## **African Studies Centre WA**

**T**he African Studies Centre WA held four meetings during the second semester.

**Professor Norman Etherington**, History Discipline, University of Western Australia gave a seminar on 'Putting Tribes on Maps' on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

**Dr Jeremy Martens**, also of the History Discipline gave a paper on 'The Impact of the Enlightenment theories of Civilisation and Savagery on Native policy in Colonial Natal' on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

**Dr Peter Limb**, now Assistant Professor and Africana Bibliographer at Michigan State University, gave a paper on 'Africa and Global/World history: Globalisation and Continuing Marginalisation' on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

**David Robertson**, History Discipline, UWA, gave a paper on 'A Tiny Cog in a Global Machine: the Comoros islands and the Cold War in Southern Africa' on 21 November.

## **Somalia Development Symposium at La Trobe**

A symposium entitled *Somalia Development: looking forward* will be held by the African Research Institute at the Institute of Advanced Studies, La Trobe University on 28 – 29 August 2004. The symposium follows an earlier meeting held at the African Research Institute in April 2002 at which papers on Somalia and Somali communities in Melbourne were delivered. The primary objective of the 2004 symposium will be to examine development issues in Somalia through the next few years. Panels will be concerned with: Health, Education, Economic Development, Good Governance, Regional Security and the Rule of Law. The convenors will draw upon contributors from Somalia, Australia and international agencies with expertise in these sectoral interests. Anyone wishing to contribute a paper may submit an abstract to the convenors, who will invite papers according to the above-mentioned parameters. Registration will be open to anyone. Further details will be posted on the African Research Institute home page.\*

## **Brisbane Forum on Western Media Perceptions of Africa**

A forum held in Brisbane at the University of Queensland in August 2003 on *The Western media and perceptions of Africa* provided the occasion for an interesting and lively debate on this topic. The University of Queensland African Students Association organized this forum which attracted over 250 students over a lunch-break. Speakers at the forum were Dr Levi Obijiofor, Dr Christine Mason and Rob Minshull. Dr Levi Obijiofor, a former Nigerian journalist and now University of Queensland lecturer in the School of Journalism and Communication, discussed the way in which Western journalists cover third world countries and made some criticisms of this coverage. Obijiofor examined suggestions for improving the coverage such as the New World Information Order proposals. Dr Christine Mason, UQ lecturer in the School of Political Science discussed the representation of female Eritrean guerillas by the Western media as sexual objects instead of soldiers. Rob Minshull, director of ABC 612 Brisbane local radio, discussed his experiences of reporting the genocide in Rwanda. He posed the question – should journalists apply

---

\* ARAS readers will be pleased to know that SBS have now launched two radio programs of interest to relevant African communities in Australia, and Somali and Amharic language programs will go to air nationally for one hours a week (Ed)



self-censorship (as proposed by the New World Information Order) in such contexts in order not to damage Africa's image; or should journalists tell it 'the way it is'.

A lively debate followed the speakers with many members of the audience expressing concern at the way in which Africa was portrayed in the Western media. A wide array of perspectives was offered as to why the coverage of Africa was so negative; and a diversity of opinions expressed as to whether development journalism was an acceptable way of dealing with Africa's problems or not.

*Eric Louw  
University of Queensland*

## **Botswana Opens its High Commission in Canberra**

**T**he Botswana High Commission officially opened for business on 7th August 2003. The first High Commissioner is H.E. Mr Molosiwa Selepeng, PH BA, who prior to this appointment was Secretary to the Cabinet, Permanent Secretary to the President and Head of the Public Service in Botswana.

The first purpose of the High Commission is to develop bi-lateral relations between the Governments and the peoples of Australia and Botswana and to identify potential areas of cooperation in which Government, Private Sector and People to People activities can be generated. Second, the mission is here to cater for the consular needs and functions (such as passports, visas and law and order issues) for the sizeable number of Botswana in Australia whose interests and welfare have to be catered for on the ground. Third, Botswana and Australia are endowed with similar mineral resources like copper, coal and diamonds and the High Commission hopes to facilitate mineral exploration by Australian entities and interests given the latter's experience and technological advantage in Botswana. Botswana also hopes to benefit from Australia's experience in dry-land farming, given the arid conditions obtaining in Botswana and in some parts of Australia. Of particular interest are the areas of cartography, geographic information systems, remote sensing, agricultural engineering, soil science, integrated pest management, horticulture, agronomy and range science. Fourthly Botswana wishes to take a leaf from Australia's experience in tourism management.

Botswana has already placed more than 450 students in Australian institutions of tertiary education, particularly in the technical and professional fields of agriculture,

medicine, engineering, IT, science and technology and law. The challenge is to focus on the scope and scale of training in various fields across the sectors.\*

## **New South African High Commissioner in Canberra**

**H**E. Mr Anthony Mongalo took up his post as the new South African High Commissioner in Canberra in September 2003. Mr Mongalo was previously ambassador to Italy. Prior to joining the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria in 1995 he had a distinguished career with the A.N.C. going back to the 1970s when he set up the ANC Rome office in 1970. He served as ANC's chief representative in Italy (1970-1978) and in the former German Democratic Republic (1978-1986). He was elected to the ANC's National Executive in 1985. As a member of the ANC's Civil service unit from 1992 he has attended several management courses in Britain, the United States and South Africa. He has an MS.C in chemical engineering from Baku in the former USSR.

## **Conferences**

**T**he African Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, together with the Department of African Languages and Literature, the Department of French and Italian, and the International Academic Programs office, are pleased to announce the **African Literature Association's 30th Anniversary Conference 14-18 April 2004 Madison, Wisconsin, on the theme 'Verbal Performance and Visual Cultures.'** The Conference will also celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Department of African Languages and Literature. Complete details, including a description of the theme deadlines, registration, exhibiting, etc. can be found on the conference web site: <http://africa.wisc.edu/ala2004/>

If you have any questions or comments, or do not have access to the web and need information mailed to you, contact the conference organizers at <[ala2004@africa.wisc.edu](mailto:ala2004@africa.wisc.edu)>

ALA 2004 Conference,

African Studies Program,

University of Wisconsin-Madison

205 Ingraham Hall 1155 Observatory Drive Madison, WI 53706 USA.

**The African Studies Association of Australasia & the Pacific** will hold its 27th Annual & International Conference, with the theme **'African Renewal, African**

---

\* I am grateful to the Botswana HC second secretary who provided this information. (Ed)

**Renaissance':** New Perspectives on Africa's Past and Africa's Present' at the **University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia**, 26-28 November 2004. This is the first call for papers and participation in the 27th annual conference of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP), to be held at the University of Western Australia (UWA), Perth, Western Australia from 26-28 November 2004.

**The 13th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, 'Sin Fronteras: Women's Histories, Global Conversations,' will be held June 2-5, 2005 at Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA.** The Program Committee welcomes proposals that cross geographical, cultural, and disciplinary borders, and especially those which address the plurality of histories of transnational encounters and empires. We particularly encourage submissions in earlier periods and those that address sources and methodology. Funding may be available for some international panelists. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.berksconference.org>.

Donna Guy, Department of History  
309 Gregory Hall, 810 S. Wright Street, Urbana, IL 61801, USA

Eileen Boris, Women's Studies Program  
University of California - Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA 93106, USA

**The Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists, Inc.;** Cleveland, OH invites submissions for its annual conference 'Globalization: Reexamining Political, Social & Economic Issues of the New World Order' to be held on March 10-13, 2004 in Cleveland, Ohio at the Wyndham Hotel. For additional information contact:  
Dr. Sanza Clark, ASBS 2004 Program Chair, Dept. Curriculum & Foundations  
1349 Rhodes Tower Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH 44115  
Tel.: 216-523-7129  
FAX: 216-687-5370  
[s.clark@csuohio.edu](mailto:s.clark@csuohio.edu)

**The University of Stellenbosch, in conjunction with the South African Historical Association, Final Call for Papers - Conference: 5-7 April 2004.** In 2004 Stellenbosch History Department, the oldest of its kind at an Afrikaans university and one of the oldest in South Africa, commemorates its centenary. This important milestone presents an opportunity for reflection on the influence of the department on the making of history and historians in South Africa. Both for good and for bad, the department has had a significant impact - an impact that requires re-evaluation and re-framing in the broader context of the discipline of history. The department's centenary also offers an occasion for stocktaking in the discipline as it has been practiced on

South African history over the past century, both locally and abroad. We believe that occasions such as these that revolve around memory can serve as an instrument for restoring the knowledge of the past that has been suppressed or no longer forms part of public consciousness. Equally we accept that memory can both be a tool to deepen reflection and also to provide the basis for action and reaction. Here we look at the memory of the discipline, from the position of a post-colonial, post-Apartheid, post-Mandela Southern African context, in order to consider in more nuanced ways on the production of history itself.

For further information contact Dr. Chris Venter [cven@sun.ac.za](mailto:cven@sun.ac.za) and Visit our webpage: [www.sun.ac.za](http://www.sun.ac.za)

Scholars are invited to present papers at the **41st annual meeting of the Japan Association for African Studies, May 29th and 30th, 2004, at Chubu University, Kasugai City, Aichi Prefecture Japan**. The meeting is open to scholars of any discipline, including the various disciplines of the humanities, as well as of the social and natural sciences. Submissions may be in any language, but English is next most widely understood in the Association, after Japanese. Any attendee at the annual conference is required to join the JAAS as a full member of the Society as well as to register for the conference itself. This principle is applied on an equal basis to foreign as well as domestic participants. The annual membership fee is 6,000 yen, the registration fee of the conference is 5,000 yen (3,000 yen for students) and the conference social gathering fee is 6,000 yen (4,000 for students). The deadline for applications to present papers is February 27th.

For further information contact Professor MINE Yoichi <[africa@intl.chubu.ac.jp](mailto:africa@intl.chubu.ac.jp)>.

### AFSAAP Postgraduate Essay Prize 2003

The 2003 Essay Postgraduate Essay Prize has been awarded to Edith Miguda for her essay '*Global Impulses/Local Politics: Comparing Two Eras of Constitution-Making in Kenya*'. Ms Miguda's essay which was delivered as a paper at the 2003 Annual Conference presented an ambitious topic augmented by an original and engaging analysis. Ms Miguda included many insights and observations in her paper and her originality helped propel her work to this year's prize. The three judges were Dr Tanya Lyons, Graeme Counsel and Jolyon Ford. Congratulations to Edith and thanks to all those who contributed essays.

**A copy of the Guidelines for the Postgraduate prize is printed in this issue below (see p. 127).**

### Minutes of the AGM, October 2003

The Annual General meeting of the Association for 2003 was held at Flinders University, the conference venue, on Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The meeting opened at 3.30pm with twenty-five members present and vice-president Dr Liz Dimock in the chair.

Apologies were received from David Dorward, James Gray, Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe and Wayne Pelling.

**The Minutes of the 2002 AGM**, published in the December 2002 issue of the *Australasian Review of African Studies*, were accepted.

#### **Business arising:**

##### *Calling of Nominations:*

It is regretted that nominations for the AFSAAP Executive were not called for or published prior to the AGM as agreed at the 2002 meeting. An email, however, was sent out to all members online when this oversight was realized. This will be remedied in 2004.

### ***Changes to the Constitution:***

The changes to the constitution proposed at the AGM in 2001 were, by resolution of the 2002 AGM, published in the December 2002 edition of ARAS (see p. 128) and took effect on 28 February 2003, no objections having been received. A consolidated copy of the Constitution (see p. 125 of this issue) was tabled at the meeting, and is now available on the AFSAAP website.

### **Secretary's Report**

The Secretary's report (appended below) was tabled, discussed and accepted.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's report for 2002-2003 (appended below) was tabled, discussed and accepted.

Arising from this discussion motions relating to changes in membership subscriptions were agreed as follows:

1. Regular member in the Australasia/Pacific region \$A35 (outside region \$A40)
2. Organisational Member \$A60 (outside region \$A65)
3. Student membership was retained at \$A15 (outside region \$A20).

### **Editor's Report (appended below)** was tabled, discussed and accepted.

In view of Cherry Gertzel's decision to retire as Editor the meeting supported unanimously a resolution that a Search Committee, as recommended by her, should be established to identify the next editor of the journal.

### **Postgraduate Essay prize 2002**

The AFSAAP Postgraduate Essay Prize for 2002 was awarded to Clare Buswell of Flinders University of South Australia for her paper on *Women's Power and Farming in Colonial Kenya 1839-1950* and was announced in the June 2003 issue of ARAS.

### **Election of officers**

Nominations were called for office in the Association and those elected declared as follows:

President:	Professor Deryck Schreuder
Vice-president:	Dr Geoffrey Hawker
Secretary:	Graeme Counsel
Treasurer:	Dr Tanya Lyons
Editor ARAS:	Professor Cherry Gertzel
Past President:	Professor Pal Ahluwalia

Postgraduate Member: David Robinson  
Conference Convenor 2004: Dr Jeremy Martens

Ordinary Members: Dr Liz Dimock  
Jolyon Ford  
Dr Christine Mason  
Wayne Pelling  
Professor Helen Ware  
Dr Jonathon Makuwira

### **General Business:**

#### *1. Issues relating to visas for conference attendees and paper-givers.*

Liz Dimock reported that she had discussed these issues with Immigration officers and as a result recommended that:

\* Applicants should be sent hard-copy details of the conference with their visa application.

\* The conference organisers should send details of the conference to the Department of Immigration and ask that they be forwarded to all Immigration Department offices in Africa.

In discussion, Helen Ware suggested that bona fide paper givers should receive a letter of invitation from the conference organiser.

The meeting supported these proposals, and further agreed that they should in future be included in the Conference Organiser's Pack.

#### *2. Ex-officio Membership of the Association.*

A recommendation from the Executive that ex-officio membership of the Association should be drawn from (a) the African Research Institute, La Trobe University and (b) the African Studies Centre, Western Australia was moved as a resolution and approved by the meeting. In discussion, it was also accepted that such ex-officio nominees would in the normal course be expected to be individual members of the Association in their own right.

#### *3. Budgetary and Constitutional Issues*

Further resolutions were received from the floor and approved by the meeting as follows:

\* That the executive should prepare guidelines for conference budgets and bring such material forward to the next AGM.

\* That conference outcomes should appear as a one-line item in the annual consolidated accounts of the Association.

\* That the executive should consider updating the Constitution to account for the provision that President, Secretary and Treasurer should ‘normally reside’ in the city hosting the annual conference (clause 4).

#### *4. Conference Venue 2004*

The venue of the 2004 conference was confirmed as Perth, with Dr Jeremy Martens as Conference Convenor. The offer of the University of New England (Armidale) for 2005 from Professor Helen Ware was gratefully received.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm with a unanimous vote of thanks by acclamation to Dr Tanya Lyons and her helpers for the successful organisation of the conference.

### **Reports.**

#### **Secretary’s Report 2002-2003**

Developments in the year have included:

\*Continuing work on the development of an integrated database of names and contacts drawn from the membership list, conference inquiries and attendees and other sources. This work is however by no means complete.

\*Awarding of the AFSAAP postgraduate essay prize, to Ms Clare Buswell, as announced in the June 2003 issue of ARAS.

\*Responses to casual inquiries about the Association including attendance at the 2003 conference at Flinders University in Adelaide.

\*At a local (Sydney and NSW) level, close association with the activities of the Australian – Southern African Business Council continued, with two members of the executive presenting papers at the annual conference of the ASABC, amongst other activities.

\*The resolution adopted at the 2002 AGM, to call for nominations through ARAS with nominations closing in mid May, did not draw nominations in fact, though the process remains in place and seems worth continuing in future years.

Issues arising from members during the year have included:

\*The possibility that the model of conferences used by the Australian Historical Association might be adopted, namely the alternation of a large plenary conference with a smaller thematic conference in sequential years. The annual conference is the major activity of the Association and this suggestion was not meant in any way to detract from it; but the work of organising a conference is so considerable, especially when university resources in support may be very limited, that a more varied program may have merit.



\*The tasking of executive and ordinary members of the Association has been discussed in previous years and remains an important matter to be achieved.

Thanks to members of the Executive and other members of the Association for their guidance and willing support over the last two years.

*Geoffrey Hawker  
Secretary 2002/2003  
October 2003*

### **Treasurer's Report 2002-2003**

#### **AFSAAP Treasurer's report 01 July 2002 - 30 June 2003**

Funds are deposited in the Australian Central Credit Union (Marion Branch)

#### **Liberty 12 Month Investment Account Number 61684338**

**Balance at 30 June 2003** **\$12,548.74**

##### **CREDITS**

Interest	\$549.77
Tax Withheld*	\$266.65
<b>Total (A)</b>	<b>\$283.12</b>

#### **My Account number 61568472**

**Balance at 30 June 2003** **\$7,160.49**

##### **CREDITS:**

Subscriptions:	\$2,639.93
Donations:	\$5
Interest:	\$3.77
<b>Total (B)</b>	<b>\$2648.70</b>

**Total CREDITS: (C) =(A+B)** **\$2931.82**

##### **DEBITS:**

AFSAAP Review and Newsletter:	\$2799.50
Editorial Assistant (Karen Miller)	\$687.20
Website Designer	\$250
Postgrad Prize**	\$50
Govt BAD Tax	\$5.40
Cheque book fee	\$3

**Total DEBITS: (D):** **\$3795.10**

**Working balance (E) =(C-D)\*\*\*** **-\$863.28 (+ \$266.65 refund) = \$596.63**

**Total Balance at 01 July 2003** **\$19,709.23**

**Notes:**

\* Interest was withheld from the account for tax reasons. This has now been rectified, and the money will be refunded \$266.65.

\*\* Two Postgrads received a \$50 prize but only one has cashed their cheque this year.

**\*\*\* We have made a loss this financial year of \$596.63**

**Subscriptions**

We have received a total of 85 individual and institutional subscriptions for 2003. The total for 2002 was 116 memberships. The current free listings remain intact. Given this years expenses, we will need the equivalent of 107 full individual memberships a year (@\$25 each), and to keep the 24 Institutional members @\$55 a year in order to balance the association's budget.

**Table 1 Number of yearly Subscriptions to AFSAAP**

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	total	
83	97	116	85	18	5	1	405	Paid Subs
26	26	26	26	26	26	26	182	Free Subs

**Recommendation**

Given that interest in the Association has remained fairly constant (around 85-100 paid members) and appears to be in a somewhat declining position, I suggest that we increase membership fees by \$10 in order to cover the rising costs of publishing the ARAS. I also strongly suggest that all executive members set an example and pay their membership fees. We may also need to reconsider the costs of the ARAS, although I believe a smaller print run costs just as much. If we had to pay the postage for ARAS it would be a problem. We may need to factor this cost into new subscriptions.

### **Current Membership costs**

Regular Member in Australasia/Pacific Region \$AU25 (outside region \$AU30)

Organisational Member \$AU50 (outside region \$AU55)

Student membership \$AU15 (outside region \$AU20)

### **Recommended New Membership Subscriptions**

Regular Member in Australasia/Pacific Region \$AU35 (outside region \$AU40)

Organisational Member \$AU60 (outside region \$AU65)

Student membership \$AU25 (outside region \$AU30)

### **Website**

The AFSAAP website [www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/global/afsaap](http://www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/global/afsaap) is kindly being hosted by the Flinders University server and has been updated somewhat thanks to the efforts of Jenny Clift who redesigned the site to make it more user friendly.

*Tanya Lyons  
AFSAAP Treasurer July 2003*

### **Editor's Report 2002-2003**

In view of the lengthy and detailed report on ARAS' transformation from a 'review and newsletter' to a peer-refereed journal submitted last year (see ARAS XXIV/2, December 2002) this report for the year 2002-2003 need only be brief. The two issues of ARAS published this past year indicate that the journal continues to grow and to be well-received as the Association's professional journal. The peer-review system is in place and works well. I am especially grateful to Karen Miller whose professional assistance over the past two years in the production of the journal has lightened the editor's work at that stage and more importantly has ensured a high quality but appropriately modest publication.

There are nevertheless specific constraints on further growth as a refereed journal which need to be confronted. First, the decline in the number of Australian-based African specialists on whom the journal can draw for contributions, not only of articles but also book reviews and notes on African and African related Australian events, means that the available pool of specialists in Australia has been depleted. As Editor I rely on a declining number of Australian contributors who all tend to be already over-stretched in

their commitments. In these circumstances the international connection becomes increasingly important, and I am pleased that the forthcoming issue for December 2003 will carry several contributions from African contributors. At the same time it is essential to counter more effectively than has been the case to date the shift away from African studies in Australia. This is a matter to which all of us in the Association must in fact give increasing attention. Second (and essentially related to the above) AFSAAP membership and therefore journal subscriptions have not increased markedly within Australia, which means that the circulation of ARAS within Australia as well as overseas remains small.

It seems ironic that as an Australian-based journal in African studies/affairs ARAS has had its initial expansion at this period of visible decline in official and academic interest in and concern for Africa and it is this which gives me confidence for the future. Wider circulation will bring greater interest and hopefully increased contributions especially of article material. I have raised this matter before when urging on AFSAAP members the need for a concerted attempt to increase institutional subscriptions, especially from libraries. I do so again, since the need to increase subscriptions will also become more urgent as the costs of production increase as is bound to be the case.

I must finally report my decision to retire as Editor of ARAS in 2004 which I have submitted to the Acting President and the Association's Executive. I have greatly enjoyed my work as Editor over the years, and am proud to have been associated with the growth of the journal to its present status and content. I am grateful to the many contributors who have made this possible and all those colleagues over the years who have responded to calls for assistance and advice. It is time however to move on and in the absence of an existing procedure for the appointment of a successor I have recommended the search procedure set out below. Professor Deryck Schreuder, as incoming President, will take up the matter early in 2004. Hopefully an appointment will be possible by late March, so that the incoming editor and I can work together on the June 2004 issue in the course of which time the transfer of responsibility will be made. It remains therefore for myself to thank the Editorial Advisory Board and AFSAAP members as well for their support and assistance especially over the last few years.

*Cherry Gertzel*  
*Editor, ARAS*

*Recommended Procedure for Appointment of Editor, ARAS.*

- A small Search Committee drawn from among the Australian members of the Editorial Advisory Board and from the AFSAAP Executive will be set up. The committee to consult widely amongst those engaged with African affairs/African studies, and not only with academics, to identify suitably qualified persons who might take on the editor's position, and recommend a list of possible appointees
- The Executive consider these recommendations and select one from this list for the editorship. If they are unable to agree on a candidate then the search would resume
- This procedure be announced at the Annual General Meeting 2003 and
- An appropriate announcement should be included in the December issue of ARAS. In both cases expressions of interest should be called for and welcomed.

## **AFSAAP Constitution (as amended to 2003)**

*Ratified at the Annual General Meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1979.*

*Amended at the Annual General Meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1995.*

*Further amended at the Annual General Meeting held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2002.*

*Further amended at the Annual general Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2004.*

1. The title of the Association shall be the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP).
2. The purposes of the Association shall be: 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; to coordinate African Studies programs and the acquisition of African materials by Australian and Pacific libraries; to contribute towards an understanding of Africa in the community at large; to serve as the professional body representing Africanist interests to governments and the community; and to establish contact with African universities and

scholars, other overseas scholars and African Studies associations, and to promote interchanges between them.

3. Membership of the Association shall be open to all individuals interested in African Studies. There shall be four categories of members: regular members; organisational members; student members (the subscriptions for whom shall be lower than for full members); and honorary life members. Members of the Association shall pay an annual subscription rate to be determined by the General Meeting.

4. The officers of the Association shall be the President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Those elected will normally reside in the host city for the next General Meeting and Conference.

5. The Executive Committee shall conduct all business of the Association between General Meetings. It shall consist of the Officers and not more than ten other paid-up members of the Association, the exact number to be decided at the General Meeting. The members of the Executive Committee shall be nominated and elected at the General Meeting and shall include adequate regional representation. Three members of the Executive Committee, including at least one officer, shall constitute a quorum.

6. A General Meeting of the Association shall be held at the time of the conference to discuss the affairs of the Association, all resolutions to be by a majority of members present, and voting to be binding on the officers and Executive Committee of the Association. The General Meeting shall also set the time and place of the next General Meeting and Conference, normally held annually but not less than biennially; nominate and elect the Officer and Executive Committee members to serve until the next General Meeting and Conference; and set the membership fees until the next General Meeting.

7. A bank account in the name of the Association shall be established, all cheques drawn by the Association to be signed singly by either, (i) the President and Secretary/Treasurer, or (ii) in instances where the latter office is held by two individuals, the President and Treasurer.

8. This constitution may be amended by a majority vote of those members present and voting at the General Meeting or by a majority of all members in a postal ballot, three weeks notice of the proposed amendment having been sent to all members.

## Guidelines for Post-Graduate Essay Prize

Any student enrolled in a tertiary institution may submit a paper at the AFSAAP Postgraduate Workshop or the annual conference for consideration for the AFSAAP Annual Conference Postgraduate Prize. Written papers should be submitted as hard copy at the time of presentation, that is, during the course of the conference. The paper must be related to African Studies.

The written paper should be not exceed 3000-4000 words and should be written in a style acceptable for publication in an academic journal.

Papers should be submitted on A4 paper with double or one and one-half line spacing and a 12 point typeface. Standard conventions for academic publishing should be followed. Papers should be submitted together with a diskette in Word.

All papers should be accompanied by a declaration that the paper is the student's own work. Revision of work taking account of a lecturer's marking is valid, but papers should not have been submitted to formal review by or for an editor of a book, journal or working paper series.

Papers will be judged by a panel of three selected by the Executive Committee, to include the postgraduate representative on the Executive Committee and two senior academic members of the Association. The decision of the panel is final, and if in their opinion, no entry is regarded as of high enough standard, they may decide not to award a prize.

All entrants will be advised of the successful postgraduate, and a notice will be placed in the *African Studies Review and Newsletter* subsequent to a decision having been made by the judges.

The winner of the award will be given assistance to publish in a refereed journal. A cash prize of \$100 will be awarded.

## Note for Contributors

*The Australasian Review of African Studies*, as the only Australian journal devoted entirely to African affairs, aims to publish both scholarly and generalist articles and other materials that contribute to a better understanding of contemporary African societies and states: authoritative, informed, critical material on Africa and African affairs that is both interesting and readable.

What makes the *Review* distinctive as a professional journal is its 'mix' of authoritative scholarly and generalist material on critical African issues. Each issue includes a number of scholarly and generalist articles on African affairs; short notes on current African issues and events; reports on research and professional involvement in Africa, and notes on African university activities. The journal is inter-disciplinary in scope and welcomes articles across the broad range of African affairs written from different disciplinary and professional perspectives across the humanities and social sciences. Articles that explore the historical context within which contemporary African issues have to be situated are particularly welcome as is comparative material on Africa, Asia and the Pacific and shorter notes that provide critical background understanding of current issues.

Articles should usually be no more than 4,500-5000 words. Articles are peer reviewed and two referees' reports submitted to the writer. The final decision as to acceptance and publication is made by the editor in consultation with the two referees. Shorter notes and reports should not exceed 2,000 words. We ask that contributors write in a form that makes their work available to as broad an audience as possible, both academic and non-academic.

All contributions should be formatted to be compatible with Microsoft Word and sent electronically as an attachment. If this is not possible they should be sent via the post on a floppy disk.

The journal's style sheet, as well as a copy of a recent issue of the journal is available on request from the Editor.

All manuscripts and correspondence should be sent to:

The Editor

**The Australasian Review of African Studies**

Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Media, Society and Culture  
Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987 PERTH, WA 6845.

Email: C.Gertzelt@exchange.curtin.edu.au