

AFRICA TALKS

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

A PROGRAMME OF
AFRICA-FOCUSED
TALKS AND EVENTS
ORGANISED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF
AFRICAN STUDIES
AND
ANTHROPOLOGY (INCORPORATING
THE CENTRE OF
WEST AFRICAN
STUDIES)

Photo courtesy of
Augustina Adusah-
Karikari.



Spring Term Programme

The topics of this Term's series of Talks range widely across regions and disciplinary approaches. In the first talk, Berny Sebe presents his newly published book, which illustrates the mechanisms of hero-making in imperial France and Britain. This is followed by two talks, by Saul Dubow and Jonathan Steinberg, respectively, which discuss how recent events in South African history

shed light on the evolution of racial tensions, politics, and violence. In February, Tina Karikari explores the consequences of the oil business for Ghanaian women, and Yvan Guichaoua analyses the transformation from nationalist to religious militancy in Northern Mali. In March, Rebekka Habermas looks at the case of a colonial cotton project in German Togo to inquire into questions

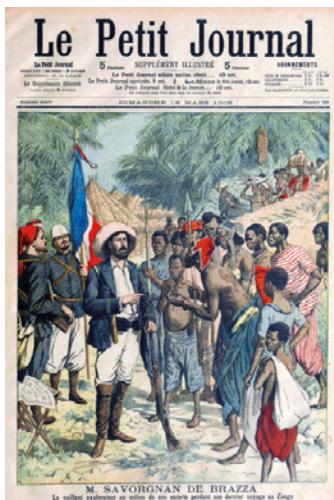
of broad theoretical import on the relation between colonial economic history and area studies. Vincent Oling's much awaited talk has been rescheduled for 12 March. And Anne Haour concludes this Term's programme with an examination of the ways in which archaeology contributes to the advancement of African research, based on her current research in Benin.

Heroic Imperialists in Africa: The Promotion of British and French Colonial Heroes, 1870-1939

Wednesday 15 January, 5:00-7:00 pm Danford room

Berny Sèbe, UoB

From David Livingstone to Charles de Foucauld, from Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza to General Gordon, from the 'Sirdar' Kitchener to Jean-Baptiste Marchand, these standard-bearers of the 'civilising mission', armed with Bible or rifle, often both, became widely celebrated in their metropoles, with their exploits splashed across the front pages of the penny press, inspiring generations of biographers, painters and, later, film-makers. At this talk, Berny Sèbe presents and discusses his new book, which explores in comparative perspective the ways in which heroes of the British and French empires in Africa were selected, manufactured and packaged from the height of 'New Imperialism' until the Second World War. He uncovers the media processes and publishing stories behind the legends of a dozen imperial heroes on both sides of the Channel, offering a comprehensive analysis of a phenomenon which was at the heart of popular imperialism. For all their now-transparent biases and shortcomings, these icons of a bygone age provide us with a fascinating insight into the mechanisms of hero-making in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain and France.



South Africa, 1960-1: From 'Wind of Change' to Armed Struggle

Wednesday 22 January, 5:00-7:00 pm Danford room (jointly organised with the History Department)

Saul Dubow, Queen Mary University London

The recent death of Nelson Mandela has occasioned an extraordinary outpouring of public media comment, much of which accords weakly with the existing historical scholarship. In his career, Mandela made two very big decisions: the first, in 1960, was to embark on the armed struggle in South Africa; the second, in the mid-1980s, was to enter into a process of political negotiations with the apartheid government. This talk focusses on Mandela's first decision, and suggests that the ANC's decision to embark on revolutionary change might have delayed rather than hastened achievement of a political solution. My talk focusses on the year 1960-1 when Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, was formed. Much of the historiography of this period has represented the decision as unavoidable in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. In doing so, the relentless tempo of events over the course of 1960-1 is tidied up and telescoped into a narrative arc so as to occlude other possibilities. My talk seeks to integrate two increasingly divergent historiographies - one African nationalist, the other Afrikaner nationalist - which mirror each other to the extent that neither sees any alternative to armed resistance (in the case of the former) and state crackdown (in the case of the latter). By reading both across and against the grain of these historiographic traditions, I shall point to other possible outcomes. In particular, I highlight the political fluidity of this moment and ask whether there were any serious prospects of some form of 'national convention' taking place - particularly if prime minister had died at the hands of his attempted assassin in April 1960.

A Murder and its Aftermath: Land, Race and Violence after Apartheid

Tuesday 29 January, 5:00-7:00 pm, Danford room

Jonathan Steinberg, Oxford

In October 1999, a young white farmer was assassinated while en route to tend to his cabbage fields in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. That the killers were his labour tenants was widely known across the district, despite the fact that nobody was convicted for the crime. Among black and white alike, the killing initially came to symbolise the ebbing of white power during South Africa's transition to democracy. Yet, over the years, as white farmers adapted and acquired new forms of social power, the meanings of the murder changed in surprising ways. This paper tracks the legacy of the murder in the district's various collective imaginations over a period of 15 years in order to understand the changing dynamics of race, land and violence during the two decades of democracy.

Black Gold in Ghana: Socio-Economic Implications for Women in the Oil Communities

Wednesday 5 February,
5:00-7:00 pm Danford
room

Tina Karikari, UoB

In 2010, Ghana joined the league of oil producing nations. The news of the oil find was interpreted paradoxically by Ghanaians. On one hand, it was seen as a revolutionary removal of poverty and on the other, there was suspicion the proceeds of vast oil reserves would not be used to improve the standard of living of the average Ghanaian. One regrettable consequence of oil production, in some African countries, has been the deprivation of the livelihoods of the indigenous people, particularly women. Women are essential to the survival of their families due to their social role of providing sustenance. Ecofeminists argue that development destroys nature – land and water - which sustains women and on which they depend upon for their economic growth and survival as nature is the bedrock of women's economic activities. This research undertakes an ethnographic study to (1) examine the experiences and the real life situation of the women in oil producing communities in Ghana in order to know how their private and public spaces have been reformulated by the discovery and production of oil in their community; and (2) To investigate the coping strategies adopted by the local communities, particularly women, in dealing with the conscious dislocation of their livelihood brought about by oil extraction in their region.



From Tuareg Nationalism to Jihad: Changing Patterns of Militancy in Mali

Wednesday 26
February, 5:00 -7:00 pm
Danford room

**Yvan Guichaoua, University of
East Anglia**

The talk will try to explain the transformations of logics of irregular militancy in northern Mali over the past ten years. Namely, it focuses on the partial (and possibly reversible) eviction of Tuareg nationalist militancy by religious militancy advocating the local enforcement of the Sharia Law, as well as the Jihad. The shift from one sort of militancy to another results from individual trajectories of conversion among leaders and followers, from confrontations between antagonistic tribal factions, but also, crucially, from complex alliances between heterogenous domestic and international actors. I will trace the major historical steps that have produced these dramatic changes and insist on the exogenous processes catalyzing them, whether state-driven, economic or political.

Economy and Colonial History: German Togo and the Cotton Project

Wednesday 5 March,
5:00-7:00 pm Danford
room (jointly organised
with the History
Department)

**Rebekka Habermas, University
of Göttingen/Oxford**

My investigation of a colonial cotton project undertaken in German Togo around 1900 is due to the observation that the new imperial history as it took shape the last years in Great Britain and the so called entangled colonial history, very popular in German history, is not very much if at all interested in economy, meanwhile global history has a tendency to focus very much and sometimes exclusively on economy. I want to argue that colonial history should be more aware of economical questions, without following the track of global history. Instead a much closer cooperation with area studies is needed, in order to come to new insights not only concerning the cotton project undertaken around 1900 in German Togo, which will be at the center of my paper. This closer cooperation would although promote fresh insights into the early European History of global anxieties and fantasies.



War in Northern Uganda: Background and Effects

Wednesday 12 March,
5:00-7:00 pm Danford room (jointly organised with the History Department)

Vincent Oling, FAPAD Uganda

This paper aims to discuss the background and consequences of the war in Northern Uganda. I will look at what have been seen as the main national and local-level causes for the war; the course the war took as it developed differently in different regions, and the war's effects on national and regional services and community life. Moreover, I will consider the economic, ethnic, and class dimensions of the war for Uganda's society, and the perceptions of the international community.

Bio: Vincent Oling is a Ugandan peace activist, and the founder of Uganda's Concerned Parents Association in the aftermath of the Aboke Girls' Abduction in 1996, as well as of several other development and post-war reconstruction-focused NGOs. Since 2004 he has been the acting Chairman of Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD) Uganda.



How Archaeology Contributes to African History and Interdisciplinary Research: Evidence from Benin

Wednesday 26 March,
5:00-7:00 pm Danford room

Anne Haour, University of East Anglia

It is widely acknowledged that for most periods, and for most parts of the African continent, archaeology is the only source of information we have. Archaeologists are thus often asked to address or even help solve very thorny questions of interest to colleagues in other branches of the social sciences and humanities: for example, the time-depth of occupation of a region by a particular group, religious or economic practices, or the impact of the polities to which historical sources. These were some of the questions at the heart of the 2010 book co-edited by Benedetta Rossi and myself, *Being and Becoming Hausa*, which, as the title indicates, considered the Hausa areas of Niger and Nigeria. The present paper will now take the example of ongoing archaeological work in northern Benin, undertaken as part of an interdisciplinary European-Research-Council project I am leading, to illustrate what archaeology is able to contribute to these questions

