We use cookies to ensure that we deliver the best user experience of our website. If you would like to, you can change your cookie settings at any time. Continue

Professor Gordon Woodman

Emeritus Professor of Comparative Law

Birmingham Law School (/schools/law/index.aspx)

Contact details

Telephone +44 (0)121 414 6313 (tel:+44 121 414 6313)

Fax +44 (0)121 414 3585

Email g.r.woodman@bham.ac.uk (mailto:g.r.woodman@bham.ac.uk)

Birmingham Law School
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT
UK

About

Professor Gordon Woodman has had a long career at Birmingham Law School and has been a consultant for governments, aid agencies, NGOs and the World Bank, and an expert witness in court proceedings which involve issues of African law.

Qualifications

- BA (Cambridge)
- LLM (Cambridge)
- PhD (Cambridge)
- Dr Jur (h.c.) (Bayreuth)
- DLitt (h.c.) (Ghana)

Biography

Gordon Woodman went in 1961 to Ghana work for his PhD, which was on the subject of customary land law in Ghana. After completing it he became a lecturer in the Faculty of Law at Ahmadu Bello University Nigeria for two years. Thereafter he returned to the University of Ghana as a lecturer, where he stayed until 1976, becoming an Associate Professor and editor of the University of Ghana Law Journal. While a member of this School since 1976, he has frequently travelled and worked for periods of time in universities elsewhere, including New York University, the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of the West Indies, the University of Mauritius, the University of Vienna, the International Islamic University Malaysia, and the University of Dar es Salaam.

Teaching

Professor Woodman supervises postgraduate research students.

Postgraduate supervision

- African Law
- Common Law in the Commonwealth
- Customary Law and Legal Pluralism

Current doctoral supervision

Professor Woodman is currently supervising doctoral students undertaking research in the following areas:

- A critical review of Zimbabwe's sources of law with special focus on the current status of its common law;
- Corruption in Law and Development discourse: Towards a rights-based perspective in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- British Muslim women and their use of shariah councils.

Research

Professor Woodman studies and writes about law in Africa generally, and is author of *Customary Land Law in the Ghanaian Courts* (Ghana Universities Press, 1996), co-editor with A O Obilade of *African Law and Legal Theory* (Dartmouth, 1995), and co-editor with Ulrike Wanitzek and Harald Sippel of *Local Land Law and Globalization: A comparative study of peri-urban areas in Benin, Ghana and Tanzania* (LIT, 2004).

He has made a study of customary laws generally in the modern world, in addition to those in African countries, and related issues in legal theory concerning the nature of customary law and the forms of legal pluralism. He was President of the Commission on Folk Law and Legal Pluralism from 1984 to1990, and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* from 1994 to 2011. He has edited and contributed to a number of books in these fields, including *People's Law and State Law* (Foris, 1985, edited with Antony Allot), *Indigenous Law and the State* (Foris, 1988, edited with Bradford W Morse),*Between Kinship and the State: Social Security and Law in Developing Countries* (Foris, 1988, edited with Franz von Benda-Beckmann and others), *Law and Religion in Multicultural Societies* (DJØF Publishing, 2008, edited with Rubya Mehdi and others), and *Risk and the Law* (Routledge-Cavendish, 2008, edited with Diethelm Klippel).

He has been a consultant for governments, aid agencies, NGOs and the World Bank. He has played a part in recent work which aims to have an impact on the World Bank and other international development agencies, leading them to take more informed and favourable attitudes to customary laws in developing countries. He has acted as an expert witness in court proceedings which involve issues of African law, and is involved in debate which aims to make the judicial system more receptive to to

particularities of minority cultures both in the UK and internationally. He is writing a book on customary law and legal theory. For his work on law in Africa he has been awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Bayreuth (Germany) and the University of Ghana.

Publications

Recent Publications:

- *Local Land Law and Globalization: A comparative study of peri-urban areas in Benin, Ghana and Tanzania*, LIT Verlag, 2004 (co-edited).
- *Law and Religion in Multicultural Societies*, DJØF Publishing, 2008 (co-edited).
- *Risk and the Law,* Abingdon: Routledge (co-edited).
- ‚From Alien Intruder to Nation's Monarch to International Agent: The Changing Roles of the African State in the Realm of Law', in Reinhard Zimmermann (ed.), *Globalisierung und Entstaatlichung des Rechts – Teilband 2: Nichtstaatliches Privatrecht: Geltung und Genese,* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008, 187-204.
- 'The Culture Defence in English Common Law: The Potential for Development", in Marie-Claire Foblets and Alison Dundes Renteln (eds.), *Multicultural Jurisprudence: Comparative Perspectives on the Cultural Defense,* Oxford and Portland Oregon: Hart Publishing, 2009, 7-34.
- 'Can There Be Maps Of Law?", in Franz von Benda-Beckmann, Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Anne Griffiths (eds.), *Spatialising Law: An Anthropological Geography of Law in Society*, Farnham Britain and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2009 195-218 (co-author).
- 'The Challenge of African Customary Laws to English Legal Culture', in Ralph Grillo, Roger Ballard, Alessandro Ferrari, André J. Hoekema, Marcel Maussen and Prakash Shah (eds.), *Legal Practice and Cultural Diversity*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, 135-150.
- ' Pitcairn Island Law: a Peculiar Case of the Diffusion of the Common Law', in Dawn Oliver (ed.), *Justice, Legality and the Rule Of Law: Lessons from the Pitcairn Prosecutions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 63-91.
- ' Ghana: How does state law accommodate religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity?', in Marie-Claire Foblets, Jean-François Gaudreault-Desbiens and Alison Dundes Renteln (eds.), *Cultural Diversity and the Law: State Responses from Around the World* , Brussels: Bruylant, Ėditions Yvon Blais, 2010, 255-280 .
- 'On the Sources of Law in Africa – and Elsewhere', in Jörn Bernreuther. Robert Freitag, Stefan Leible, Harald Sippel and Ulrike Wanitzek (eds.), *Festschrift für Ulrich Spellenberg zum 70. Geburtstag*, München: sellier.european law publisher s, 2010, 661-672.
- 'A Survey of Customary Laws in Africa in Search of Lessons for the Future', in Jeanmarie Fenrich, Paolo Galizzi and Tracy Higgins (eds.), *The Future of African Customary Law*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 9-30.
- 'Multiple Sources of Law: A Threat to Constitutional Governance?' in Kennedy Gastorn, Harald Sippel and Ulrike Wanitzek (eds) *Processes of Legal Integration in the East African Community*. Dar es Salaam University Press, 2011. 3-17.
- 'The Development "Problem" of Legal Pluralism: an analysis and steps towards solutions", pp. 129-144 in Brian Z. Tamanaha, Caroline Sage and Michael Woolcock (eds.), *Legal Pluralism and Development: Scholars and Practitioners in Dialogue,* Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- 'Legal pluralism in Africa: the implications of state recognition of customary laws illustrated from the field of land law', pp. 35-58 in Hanri Mostert and Thomas Bennett (eds.), *Pluralism and Development: studies in access to property in Africa*, Juta & Co. Ltd., 2012.

© University of Birmingham 2014