

## **Law, Labour and Authority in African History**

Dr George Karekwaivanane, Dr Ruth Watson, Dr Emma Hunter

Michaelmas and Lent Terms, Thursdays 2-4pm, CAS Meeting Room, starts 28 October

This MPhil option course explores African history by using law, labour and authority as three interconnected themes through which to analyse social, cultural and political change in colonial and postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa. The course is divided into two parts: the first module (taught by Dr Karekwaivanane and Dr Watson) examines law, labour and colonialism in Africa. The second module (taught by Dr Hunter), takes up these themes in connection to late-colonial and postcolonial Africa, and also considers how decolonisation and the making of the postcolonial state led to the articulation of new forms of rights and obligations, along with new ideas about labour and novel ways of conceptualising authority. Through class readings and seminar discussions, students will engage with historical methodologies and various modes of critical thinking about the past, as well as primary source analysis. Rather than providing a survey history of the African continent, this option course seeks to offer a perspective on the diversity of African experiences of colonialism, decolonisation and postcolonialism.

The first three weeks of the Michaelmas term module deal with three key debates in the study of law and colonialism. These are: the role of law in aiding the colonial project; the fortunes of African legal systems under colonial rule; and finally, how Africans interacted with colonial legal systems and the varied ways that they asserted individual and collective agency. Drawing on case studies from East and Southern Africa, we will examine temporal and regional variations in the development of legal systems during the colonial period, and the diverse forms in which law was deployed, experienced and contested. Primary sources, such as court records, will be used in class to analyse some of these issues. The second half of the module uses labour as a lens through which understand colonial social and power relations. Taking up the theme of agency explored in relation to colonial law, we initially investigate agency and mobility in connection with histories of labour migration in colonial southern Africa. The next topic examines these questions in more specific detail through a case study on labour and the making of the Apartheid state in South Africa, while the final class investigates labour and the politics of decolonisation in West Africa.

The Lent term module develops the three key themes of law, labour and authority through addressing one of the central questions in African history: how far did decolonisation constitute a rupture in the history of twentieth-century Africa? In the first class we examine recent historiography of this transition through two case studies on Tanzania and Kenya, and consider the extent to which the postcolonial state constituted a break with the past in the forms of power and authority that it sought to construct. This theme runs as a shared thread through the remainder of the course, which covers the following topics: Human rights, the OAU and the UN; Taxation in the postcolonial state; Labour and nation-building; Gendering authority; and finally, 'Traditional' authority in the postcolonial state. Case studies are drawn from across the African continent, but especially Tanzania.

## Reading:

- Burton, A. and Jennings, M. 'The emperor's new clothes? Continuities in governance in late colonial and early postcolonial East Africa' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40 (2007): 1-25
- Comaroff, J.L. 'Colonialism, culture and the law: A foreword' *Law and Social Enquiry* 26 (2001): 305-314
- Cooper, F. "'Our Strike": Equality, anticolonial politics, and the 1947-48 railway strike in French West Africa' *Journal of African History* 37 (1996): 81-118
- Guyer, J. 'Representation without taxation: An essay on democracy in rural Nigeria, 1952-1990' *African Studies Review* 35 (1992): 41-79
- Leonardi, C. *Dealing with government in South Sudan: histories of chiefship, community and state* (Oxford, 2013)
- Mann K. and R. Roberts (eds.), *Law in colonial Africa* (London, 1991)
- Merry S.E. 'Law and colonialism' *Law and Society Review*, 25 (1991): 889-922
- Murray, C. *Families divided: The impact of migrant labour in Lesotho* (Cambridge, 1981)
- Posel, D. *The making of apartheid, 1948-1961: conflict and compromise* (Oxford, 1991)
- Terretta, M. "'We had been fooled into thinking that the UN watches over the entire world": human rights, UN trust territories, and African decolonization', *Human Rights Quarterly* 34 (2012): 329-360

This course is divided into two parts. Dr Emma Hunter teaches the first part, '**Power and Authority in Twentieth-Century Africa**', in Michaelmas Term. The second part, '**Themes in the Social History of Colonial Africa**', is taught in Lent term by Dr Ruth Watson, with assistance from our Smuts Research Fellow, George Karekwaivanane.

## Power and Authority in Twentieth-Century Africa

Dr Emma Hunter, Michaelmas Term

This course explores the social and cultural history of changing ideas about power and authority in twentieth-century Africa. Rather than focusing purely on states, whether colonial or post-colonial, we will consider how power and authority were understood in a series of spaces: the village level, the emerging African press, and African fiction. The course will explore a number of key questions: How far did competing ideas of 'modernity' frame African thinking about power and authority in the twentieth century? What did new technologies of political engagement, such as the press and political parties, mean for the exercise of power? How were boundaries between the public and the secret contested and redrawn? How was the gendered nature of authority reframed over the century? In what ways were historical narratives deployed to create and legitimise new identities? The focus is particularly on late-colonial and post-colonial Africa, but this period is examined in the context of longer-term historical change over the course of the century. Seminars include 'Microhistories of Modernity', 'Gendering Authority', 'Power and Secrecy' and 'Writing the Post-Colonial Nation'.

### Reading:

- Achebe, Chinua. *A Man of the People*, (1966)
- Bernault, Florence. 'Body, Power and Sacrifice in Equatorial Africa', *Journal of African History*, 47. (2006). 207-239
- Feierman, Steven. *Peasant Intellectuals*, (1992)
- Kourouma, Ahmadou. *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote*, (2001)
- Lonsdale, John. 'The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought', in Lonsdale and Berman (eds.) *Unhappy Valley*, (1992)
- McCaskie, T.C. *Asante Identities: History and Modernity in an African Village*, (2000)
- Maddox, Gregory. *Practicing History in Central Tanzania*, (2006)
- Pels, Peter. 'Creolisation in Secret: the Birth of Nationalism in Late Colonial Uluguru, Tanzania' in *Africa*, 72. (2002). 1-28
- Peterson, Derek and Macola, Giacomo (eds.) *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa*. (Ohio, 2009)

### Themes in the social history of colonial Africa

Dr Ruth Watson, Lent Term

This course presents an overview the social and cultural history of colonialism in Africa. Each week, we will focus on a specific theme to illuminate the various ways in which Africans lived and experienced colonial rule during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – sometimes as oppression, commonly as coercion and, occasionally, as opportunity. Themes to be explored include colonial health and medicine, literacy and colonial consciousness, marriage and sexuality, colonial law and punishment, wage labour and industrial time, as well as urban leisure and popular culture. Through exploring various these various approaches to Africa's colonial past it is hoped that we will develop a deeper understanding of the processes of cultural adaption that characterised colonial societies in Africa.

### Reading:

- Allman, J et al (eds). *Women in African colonial histories* (Bloomington, 2002)
- Barber, K, *Africa's hidden histories: Everyday literacy and making the self* (Bloomington, 2006)
- Mann, K & Roberts, R (eds). *Law in colonial Africa* (Portsmouth, 1991)
- Vaughan, M, *Curing their Ills: colonial power and African illness* (Stanford, 1991)