



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 Number 24

July 2001

## Beneath the Bird

*From our Special Correspondent in Oxford*



Africanist visitors to Oxford are familiar with the large bird, copied from Great Zimbabwe, perched majestically over the neo-classical rotunda of Rhodes House, a reminder of what Oxford has gained from Africa. The Zimbabwe bird motif is repeated in the letterhead of the Rhodes Trust (above), and carved wooden replicas mount the stairway to the Library on the first floor, where the African and Commonwealth holdings of the Bodleian Library are on access. Rumours have been circulating, however, repeated even in *Private Eye*, that the bird might cease to be the guardian of the Library, and instead was poised to dump on it.

Rhodes Scholars, past and present, were sent a letter from the Warden dated last November, hinting at plans for revamping the interior of Rhodes House, the better to serve Rhodes Scholars. What this would entail began to emerge only later this year when the Warden outlined to groups of current Scholars his proposal to turn the wood-panelled reading room of the Library into a common room where Scholars, past and present, could meet. The Jameson Room, where parliamentary papers are currently kept, was to be transformed into a library of books by and about Rhodes Scholars (presumably the juicier works about Bill Clinton would be placed on the upper shelves, tightly wrapped in cellophane, or kept beneath the librarian's counter and asked for only in whispers). The current library was to be moved to the lower floor of the rotunda, placed directly beneath the bird and, with fitting – if unwitting – symbolism, next to the toilets.

The Scholars were told that this plan had the approval of senior academics in the University. And surely it is possible that locating the reading room directly adjacent to the toilets might have been done out of consideration for more elderly researchers who would welcome not having to face a journey down two flights of stairs, along a corridor, and across the marble rotunda commemorating past Rhodes Scholars, before arriving at the 'cloaks', and relief. But, as the Scholars found out on reporting these plans to their tutors, not only did senior academics not approve, they had not even been consulted. As one Oxford lecturer complained: he was a member of several University committees, but was hearing about these plans affecting the research facilities of University only from his graduate students.

The current and former graduate student network – being more adept at the new technology than their tutors, and more courageous as well – set the e-waves flashing with direct citations from the Warden's meetings with Rhodes Scholars. This has been the only detailed news available by the end of Trinity term. The only formal statement issued by the University at the end of May claimed that discussions were taking place, that no decision had been reached, but when it was, another statement would be issued. There was no suggestion that the University might wish to consult the users of the Rhodes House Library for their views or needs. In the meantime users of the Library found that some of its holdings were already being removed: microfilms formerly stored in the Librarian's office were transferred in disorder to the main Bodleian Library.

A letter writing campaign began, involving even the councils of the Royal African Society and ASAUK. Many eminent scholars both inside and outside Oxford joined, only to receive brush-off replies that no decision had been made, but when it was. . . One former Rhodes Scholar who wrote the Warden asking what was happening received a three page response stating the Rhodes Trust's case: that it was an independent legal entity, under no obligation to continue supporting the Library, that it did not have the authority to consult library users (this being the prerogative of the Bodleian Library), that it had made numerous generous contributions to the University in the past, but that its first responsibility was to its Scholars. This came as a surprise to other Rhodes Scholars who had done their own research into the founding of Rhodes House. In 1929, when Rhodes House was opened, the Rhodes Trust went out of its way to deny rumours that the new building was intended as a 'clubhouse' for Rhodes Scholars, and publicly proclaimed that Rhodes House itself, and Rhodes House Library, were intended as a 'contribution' to the University.

With no consultation forthcoming an *ad hoc* group of Users of Rhodes House Library was formed to ask the Rhodes Trust and the University for both a formal statement of their immediate and long-term plans, and a mechanism for consulting regular users of the Library. Some members of the Rhodes Trust have privately expressed sympathy for the concerns expressed, but even they have not suggested how those most affected by any changes, good or bad, in the current organization of the Library will be consulted. A Rhodes House Library Committee, which was previously abolished, has been reconstituted, but with what powers, and under whose authority is not yet clear. It is possible an announcement will have been made by the time the *Newsletter* appears, but at time of press no plans have been put forward for public discussion, no consultation has been proposed, and secrecy still surrounds all deliberations.

Outsiders see Oxford as an over-funded, over-privileged centre of complacent scholars. The images purveyed by *Brideshead Revisited* and Inspector Morse hold the public imagination captive: pampered, but murderous, dons in their college rooms furnished with antiques and oriental carpets, waited on by deferential scouts, who keep their decanters full of Founders Port and their humidors supplied with pre-revolutionary Havana cigars. This is only partly true – the dons are murderous in intent, but not in action. The reality is that the modern University of Oxford is rather more like an Italian Renaissance city state, with centres of wealth and magnificence set like Doges' palazzi amid drearier, cash-strapped departments and post-war colleges. A new managerial dispensation has recently been established – adapted from the discredited 'internal markets' of the National Health Service and the BBC – where the old General and Faculty Boards have been abolished, decisions are being centralized and accountants have revealed to an astonished University community that the newly formed divisions are beginning life with large budget deficit and must make cuts. New ways of funding are being explored, but the richer colleges and institutions,

mindful that if millions are to be plundered to feed the deserving (and undeserving) poor, they are prime targets, are muttering rebellion. Allusions are being made to Fort Sumter and the Confederacy (or in the case of Rhodes House, UDI). The pretence that they are not somehow part of the University is, therefore, not confined to the Rhodes Trust. With the old representative bodies for consultation gone, and no new bodies truly representative of the University community set in their place, how is the centre to hold? The inability of the University to treat the Rhodes House Library in an open and rational way is a direct result of these of wider changes.

It is notable in this whole affair that it has been the graduate students and recent graduates who have shown their heads above the parapet, have gathered and disseminated information like ammunition, and have tried to force both the Rhodes Trust and the University into an open and honest dialogue. Their elders and betters, perhaps perplexed about where real authority now lies in the restructured University, have been more hesitant, and therefore less visible (or more discrete); thus depriving those concerned of any formal or focused leadership. And what of the somnolent Inter-Faculty Committee for African Studies? One would have thought that they would have seen the preservation of the main holding of African research material in the University as an overriding duty. But Oxford Africanists operate along the principle of segmentary opposition: like Evans-Pritchard's Nuer they have sharpened their skills of opposition on each other. Unlike Evans-Pritchard's Nuer, however, they have yet to find any threat big enough to unite against. This most recent threat finds them, yet again, wanting in collective action. Having held aloof, as a body, from the rest of the UK's Africanists for so long, it will be a supreme irony – post-modern or otherwise – if Rhodes House Library is saved, not through their efforts, but through the united efforts of Africanists around the country.

#### Obituary: Adrian Hastings

Adrian Hastings, who died on 30 May 2001, aged 71, was acclaimed as a great historian of the Christian Church in Africa, but his involvement with the continent went far deeper. His first African publication, *White Domination or Racial Peace?*, was a political pamphlet, written four years before he first arrived in Uganda as a priest in 1958.

His political engagement with Africa reached its peak in 1973 with his disclosure of the massacre by Portuguese troops of the villagers of Wiriyamu (Mozambique). The world was disbelieving at first (there were denials that the place existed), but with typical energy and determination he pursued his campaign, which included a 36-hour visit to New York to speak at the United Nations, and may even have contributed to the fall of the Portuguese government the following year. He never stopped writing articles on African political issues, especially for *The Tablet*, the last being 'Congo is just too big' (January 2001).

1973 also saw the beginning of Adrian Hastings's academic career, a Leverhulme scholarship at SOAS, resulting in two authored books, *African Christianity* (1976) and *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (1979) and a co-edited work, *Christianity in Independent Africa* (1978). He then moved to Aberdeen, to Andrew Walls's flourishing Department of Religious Studies, where Lamin Sanneh, Rosalind Shaw and Elizabeth Sirriyeh were colleagues, and Kwame Bediako, Rosalind Hackett and David Shank research students.

After six years in Aberdeen, his constant search for new challenges took him back to Africa as Professor of Religious Studies in the University of Zimbabwe,

where, somewhat paradoxically, he completed a large part of his great *History of English Christianity 1920-1985*, while his magisterial *Church in Africa 1450-1950* was written mostly in Leeds, and published in 1994, shortly after his retirement from the Chair of Theology. *African Catholicism*, a collection of essays, is, as he points out, his only African book of the 1980s.

His arrival in the Leeds Department of Theology and Religious Studies coincided with his new role as Editor of the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, which increased substantially in size and reputation under his almost single-handed direction. His interest remained very active after he retired at the end of 1999: he continued to referee papers and write reviews, as well as providing support and guidance for the new editorial team.

But his service to Africa went beyond priestly vocation, political activity and scholarship. In all sorts of way he fostered African and Africanist scholars: by teaching and supervision which was inspirational as well as deeply pastoral, by career guidance and generous reference writing, by meticulous and (mostly!) encouraging comments on articles submitted to the *JRA* (occasionally, against stated editorial policy, on rejected papers), and even more painstaking editing of monographs in the companion series, *Studies of Religion in Africa*.

It is in that series, under its new editor Paul Gifford, himself a Hastings protégé, that a memorial volume will be published, *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings* (D. Maxwell & I. Lawrie, eds, Brill, 2001). (Ingrid Lawrie)

### Ethiopian Academics Arrested

Professor Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, 71, retired Professor of Geography at the University of Addis Ababa, and Dr Berhanu Nega, 43, Director of the Ethiopian Economic Research Institute at the University of Addis Ababa, were arrested on 8 May 2001, the former at his home and the latter at his university office. They were detained at the Maikelawi police central investigation bureau. The court initially remanded them in custody for investigation into their speeches at a panel meeting for university students organised by the Ethiopian Human Rights Council on 8 April on the subject of 'human rights, the nature of a university and academic freedom'. Police seized numerous documents and computer files from the two and from the Ethiopian Human Rights Council. On 25 May they were charged with 'organizing themselves in an underground political party called the Ethiopian Democratic League to change the constitution by illegal means' and a vaguely worded accusation which includes 'inciting students to achieve respect for their rights by violence and rioting'. These charges separately carry penalties of several years' imprisonment. Both men deny the charges.

Amnesty International considered Professor Mesfin Wolde-Mariam and Dr Berhanu Nega to be prisoners of conscience imprisoned as human rights defenders with particular regard to academic freedom and rights issues of concern to the students of Addis Ababa University.

Professor Mesfin is the most prominent founder and former chair of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (which was finally in 2000 allowed to be officially registered and is internationally recognized), of which Dr Berhanu (who returned recently to Ethiopia from the US) is a member. Professor Mesfin is a well-known figure in Ethiopian academic and human rights affairs, a vigorous human rights defender and critic of the government who has not been linked to any political party. The basis for the charge that he belongs to an unregistered party is not known: he has said nothing public about any such party. He has been a consistently supporter of democratic freedoms including peaceful political

activity. He has been frequently vilified by the government and subjected to personal abuse, and was briefly arrested in 1993 on a spurious charge. He has engaged in a wide range of human rights activities through the governments of Emperor Haile-Selassie, Mengistu Haile-Mariam and Meles Zenawi (since 1991).

Amnesty International made urgent appeals for the immediate and unconditional release of Professor Mesfin Wolde-Mariam and Dr Berhanu Negga as prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence. Human Rights Watch also pressed for their release. Having been denied bail on three separate occasions, they were finally provisionally released on bond by a court on 4 June. It is not yet known if they still face trial. (Martin Hill)

### Funded PhD Places African History

The Department of History at the University of Durham is pleased to announce the availability of two fully-funded three-year doctoral studentships to work on an AHRB-funded project on *'Colonial governance and the nature of authority in the Sudan'*. The University of Durham is the UK centre for Sudan studies. The project provides for fees, maintenance, research costs in the UK and in the Sudan, and for appropriate language training. Applicants would normally be expected to have, or be about to complete, a relevant Master's qualification, but graduates of exceptional promise or those with other appropriate research experience will be considered. Applications should be made as soon as possible by email to Justin.Willis@durham.ac.uk; or by post to Justin Willis, Department of History, 43 North Bailey, Durham DH1 3EX; fax: 0191 374-4754.

### Franco-British Africa Seminar Group

The Franco-British Africa Seminar Group was established in March 2001 by Roland Marchal at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales (CERI), Paris and Comfort Ero at the Centre for Defence Studies (CDS), King's College, London. The group consists of 16 researchers with a wide ranging multidisciplinary background.

A total of six seminars are planned between 2001-2002, 3 in Paris and 3 in London. The first seminar took place on 6 March 2001 at CERI, Paris with a focus on the economic dimensions of civil war and the privatisation of security. The second, which focuses on the unpredictability of violence, with a critical discussion on the recent British Government paper, *'The causes of conflict in Africa'*, and the role of children in conflicts, will be held on 4 July 2001 at CDS, King's College. The three London seminars being sponsored by the ESRC under its Seminar Research Competition award. The seminars complement and extend existing research that seeks to understand the numerous actors in African conflicts. For more details contact Comfort Ero at the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College, Strand, London WC2R 2LS, tel: 020 7848-2973, email: comfort.ero@kcl.ac.uk or comfortero@hotmail.com.

[www.african-century.com](http://www.african-century.com)

A new webzine focussing on the strategic issues facing Africa in the arts, society and the economy. A key theme will be the impact of new technologies on the development of arts and the opportunities they create for life and society. It is being produced on a non-profit basis. Creativity, originality and vision are to be

the hallmarks of articles on the magazine, which is named in honour of Nelson Mandela. It is a fundamental goal of this journal that for Africa and Black people generally the future shall not be like the past. The editor of the new webzine is Dapo Ladimeji, a Cambridge-educated chartered accountant (international tax partner at Chantrey Vellacott DFK, [www.cvdffk.com](http://www.cvdffk.com)).

### Meetings, Lectures and Events

**June-August:** The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, St. Philip's & St. James', Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6HB, will continue its Tuesday lectures at 10 am, and its Wednesday research seminars at 11 am to 1 pm. There will be a colloquium at 11 am to 1 pm on 30 July, on the topic '*African culture as praeparatio evangelica?*' Contact: Ben Knighton, tel. +44 (0)1865 556071 X207; fax +44 (0)1865 510823; email: [BKnighton@ocms.ac.uk](mailto:BKnighton@ocms.ac.uk); website: <http://www.ocms.ac.uk>.

### Conferences Future. . .

*Conference listings may appear twice: one short and one long, the second notice appearing in the nearest quarterly number prior to the conference date. Organizers are invited to keep the Newsletter up-to-date with any changes or additions to earlier notices.*

#### UNITED KINGDOM

**2-4 August:** International symposium and festival, '*Composition in Africa and the diaspora*', Churchill College, University of Cambridge. Contact: Akin Euba, Churchill College, University of Cambridge CB3 0DS; email: [oe21@cam.ac.uk](mailto:oe21@cam.ac.uk).

**14-16 September:** '*Human rights in Africa in the new millennium*', University of Central Lancashire, Preston, organised by the African Studies Unit, University of Central Lancashire in association with the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom (ASAUK). Contact: Liz Kelly, Business Services, Livesey House, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE, UK; tel: +44 (0)1772 892256; fax: +44 (0)1772 892938; email: [ejkelly@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:ejkelly@uclan.ac.uk); website: [http://www.uclan.ac.uk/business\\_services/conf/index.htm](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/business_services/conf/index.htm).

**22 October:** '*Zimbabwe: which way forward?*' One-day conference, organised by the Southern Africa Study Group at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), London. The conference will seek to offer a balanced and up-to-date analysis and assessment of the political and economic outlook in Zimbabwe in the run-up to the forthcoming presidential elections. It will also seek to elucidate the land issue, and to examine the implications of the current crisis in Zimbabwe for the country's regional and international relations. It is hoped that the speakers will include a substantial contingent from Zimbabwe itself, representing a wide cross-section of interests and opinions. Operating under the 'Chatham House rule' of confidentiality, the conference will offer the opportunity for frank and open discussion of the way forward in Zimbabwe. Enquiries to the conference secretary, Rosa Weeks, tel +44-(0)1273-678033, fax +44-(0)1273-673563, email [R.L.Weeks@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:R.L.Weeks@sussex.ac.uk) (Please note change of date from earlier publicity).

#### INTERNATIONAL

**26 Oct:** '*The Africanist discourse in transformation*', Graduate student and faculty work-in-progress conference, Columbia University, New York, NY. Contact: R.

Kiki Edozie, Deputy Director, Institute of African Studies, Columbia University, 420 West 118th Street, Room 1105 IAB, New York, NY 10027; tel: +1 212 854-4428; email: rke13@columbia.edu.

### Theses Recently Accepted at UK Universities

*The Newsletter depends on supervisors and successful candidates to supply us with details of new theses.*

Anthony C. Cleobury, 'Non-Governmental Organisations: Civil Society, Democratisation and the Case for Linkages', African Studies Centre, School of International Studies and Law, Coventry University (2000)

Stan Granberg, 'A Critical Examination of African Leadership and Leadership Effectiveness among the Churches of Christ in Meru, Kenya', PhD Open Univ./Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (March 2000)

David Koudougoueret, 'Literary Aesthetics and Bible Translation with special reference to the Translation of the Book of Genesis into the Sango Language', PhD Leiden Univ./Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (Sep 2000)

Alemu Mammo, 'Cross-sectional Maasai Primigravidae Dietary Habit and Pregnancy Outcome Study Loitokitok, Kenya', MPhil. Open Univ./Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (Dec 2000)

Sharon Samson, 'Developing an Eclectic Pedagogical Approach to Training Semi-Literates to Teach Children in the Church, with special reference to Addis Ababa', PhD Univ. of Wales/Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (May 2001)

Lorraine C. Young, 'Surviving the City: The Place of Street Children in Kampala's Urban Environment', PhD, Geography Subject Group, School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Coventry University (2000)

### Recent and Forthcoming Publications

*Listings of recently published or forthcoming books by ASAIUK/RAS members. Members are invited to send in details, including number of pages, ISBN numbers, price and publication date (where known).*

Manfred Georg Aschaber (ed.), *Aspects of African History*, vol. 2. (Westendorf) 91pp. £9.90, available from Edition Harmoni, Albrechtsbergerstr. 9, A-3390 Melk, Austria (harmoni@melk.telecom.at).

Birgit Englert, *Die Geschichte der Enteignungen Landpolitik und Landreform in Zimbabwe 1890-2000*. (Hamburg: Lit Verlag) 208 pp. ISBN 3-8258-5631-3 DM39.80 (2001).

Clemens Gütl, *Johann Ludwig Krapf "Do' Missionar vo' Deradenga" zwischen pietistischem Ideal und afrikanischer Realität*. (Hamburg: Lit Verlag) 184 pp. ISBN 3-8258-5525-2 DM39.80 (2001).

### Appointments, Academic Links and Exchanges

*Cambridge University, Department of Geography:* Elizabeth Watson, Newnham College, Cambridge, has been appointed to a University assistant lectureship in Human Geography.

*Centre for African Studies, University of London:* Next term CAS will be hosting the following visiting scholars: Dr Grace N Wamue, Department of Religious Studies, Kenyatta University (Kenya), writing a critical religio-political analysis of the Mungiki movement; Mrs Vicky Khasandi, Department of Languages and Linguistics, Egerton University (Kenya), researching language use in Kabras

conflict resolution; Violet K Wawire, tutorial fellow and educational researcher, Educational Foundations Department, Kenyatta University, (Kenya), evaluating government primary boarding and mobile schools in the North Eastern Province of Kenya; Mukhtar Umar Bunza, Department of History, Usmanu Danfodiyo University (Nigeria), researching Christian Missionary activities in the now defunct Sokoto province; and Mohammed Inuwa Umar-Buratai, Department of English and Drama, Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria), researching public spectating and political undertones in Durbar display.

*Centre of West African Studies, Birmingham:* Magrit Insa Nolte, currently Kirk-Greene Junior Research Fellow in Tropical History at St Antony's, Oxford, is taking up a two-year lectureship as Lecturer in African Culture, in September 2001.

*Royal Anthropological Institute:* Wendy James has been elected president of the RAI, succeeding John Davis.

*Trinity College, Dublin:* Stephanie Newell, Robinson College, Cambridge, has taken up a lectureship in postcolonial literature, commencing Autumn 2001.

### Awards, Prizes and Fellowships

*Christ Church College, Oxford:* David Wengrow has been awarded a three-year Junior Research Fellowship, beginning in October 2001. He will be working on the Sudan collection in the Pitt-Rivers Museum.

*St Antony's College, Oxford:* Magrit Insa Nolte has won the Callaway Prize, and Luvuyo Wotshela has won the Ranger Prize this year.

*Trevor Reese Prize:* The Trevor Reese Prize in Commonwealth History has been jointly awarded to Terence Ranger for *Voices from the Rocks* (James Currey, Indiana University Press) and Samita Sen for *Women and Labour in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge University Press). The prize will be presented in the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, on Thursday 25th July at 5 pm. Terence Ranger will give a seminar in the Menzies Room on 'The afterlife of *Voices from the Rocks*' and Samita Sen will also give a seminar on 'Representing women workers: politics of gender and class in India'. This will be followed by a small reception to mark the award.

#### Note to Contributors

The *Newsletter* solicits short reports (of around 2-300 words) on recent conferences, announcements of forthcoming conferences, symposia and workshops (giving topic, date, venue, and contact address), announcements of the awarding of grants, fellowships and prizes, news of appointments and visiting fellowships, recently completed theses, publication announcements of books by members, and brief articles or notices on matters of importance to Africanists in the UK. All items for inclusion in the *Newsletter* should be sent to Douglas H. Johnson, Editor, ASAUK Newsletter, James Currey Publishers, 73 Botley Road, Oxford OX2 0BS (fax: (+44) (0)1865-246454), or e-mail: 106155.3441@compuserve.com (please send as text, not as attachments). Deadlines are 31 December (for the January Newsletter), 25 March (for April), 25 June (for July), and 30 September (for October). Any opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the ASAUK. For all matters relating to membership of either the ASAUK or RAS contact Lindsay Allan, RAS/ASAUK, SOAS, Thornhaugh St., Russell Sq, London WC1H 0XG; tel: +44 (0)20 7898 4390; fax: +44 (0)20 7898 4389; email: asa@soas.ac.uk, or ras@soas.ac.uk.