

ILANGA

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2009

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dr. Lee Cassanelli

First of all, hearty congratulations to our graduating seniors! The Class of 2009 includes XX Majors and XX Minors in African Studies: their names can be found at the end of my letter. They will join our long list of alumni, and we hope they will keep in touch by way of a new 'African Studies Alumni Newsletter' which we will launch in the fall. One goal of the Newsletter is to learn how many of our alums may be continuing their interests in African Studies and perhaps even pursuing Africa-related careers.

A number of Penn undergraduates will be studying or interning in Africa this summer. XX students have been awarded Global Development Initiative travel grants to work with NGOs in XX, XX, XX, and XX. Penn International Business Volunteers will be working on an eco-lodge venture in Tanzania and a XX project in XX. A water project launched last year in Cameroon by Penn's Engineers without Borders will be evaluated this summer by a team of XX students from SEAS. And XX students will be interning in Botswana.



Dr. Lee Cassanelli - Professor, Penn History Dept & Director, African Studies Center

faculty and staff will be equally busy this summer. Language Coordinator Audrey Mbeje will be directing a Zulu Intensive Language Program for eight weeks at the University of KwaZulu Natal in Durban, South Africa, under a Fulbright Group Projects Abroad Award. Assistant Director Anastasia Shown will accompany the Engineers Without Borders team to Cameroon for two weeks in late May, and shortly after recovering from jet lag will take off again to lead 14 K-12 teachers and educators on a five-week study seminar in Ethiopia (see article, p. 7). Director Lee Cassanelli goes to Kenya to serve again as an instructor in an intensive week-long seminar on the Horn of Africa for NGO, foreign embassy, and media professionals. Sponsored by the Rift Valley Institute, the seminar met last October in Djibouti, and will meet

this June in Lamu, Kenya.

Back home at Penn, Associate Director Ali Ali-Dinar serves as Principal Investigator for Center's newly-funded project on Philadelphia's Muslim African communities. With a grant from SSRC's 'Academia in the Public Sphere' program, the project seeks to document the everyday lives of African Muslims as they seek to create 'sacred space' in a 'secular society.' In addition to producing a documentary film and assembling the popular literature and music produced by and within these communities as they worship, study, shop, work, and play, the project will sponsor a series of forums during the 2009-10 academic year where scholars and students can exchange ideas with public intellectuals and community leaders. Drs. Cheikh Babou and Lee Cassanelli are also designing a course that will integrate academic scholarship and popular knowledge in both classroom and public venues.

Last but not least, this summer our Visiting Resident Scholar Prof John Ayoade (see article p. 4) will offer

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In the health field, XX medical students will do clinical rotations at the XX hospital in Gabarone as part of the Botswana-UPenn partnership. And after spending a semester in Professor Steven Feierman's African Health Practicum, XX students will be conducting research on various health issues in XX African countries. Our African Studies

WHYY & ITVS PRESENT THE PREMIERE OF *TAKING ROOT: THE VISION OF WANGARI MAATHAI*

On March 30th at WHYY Technology Center, Philadelphia; ITVS, WHYY and Philadelphia CineFest presented a Community Cinema special event premiere of *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai*, a film by Lisa Merton and Alan Dater. Taking Root first appeared in festivals in April 2008 & continues to tour worldwide. The award-winning documentary '[Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai](#)' tells the inspiring story of GBM and its founder.

Taking Root follows Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, in her quest to help village women regain basic resources of water, firewood and food by the simple act of planting trees. This led to environmental improvements, community action and political justice that helped to bring down Kenya's 24-year dictatorship. The documentary is a compelling narra-

A scene from *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari*

tive about the first environmentalist and first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1977, Maathai suggested rural women plant trees to address problems stemming from a degraded environment. Under her leadership, their tree-planting grew into a nationwide movement to safeguard the environment, defend human rights and promote democracy.

The screening was followed by a Q&A discussion with the film's co-director and producer, Lisa Merton. The event (free and open to the public) was a co-presentation with the African Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

Moreover, TAKING ROOT is having its broadcast premiere in April 2009 on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard. For more information on the film, please visit pbs.org/independentlens/takingroot.

AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER SPRING 2009 TEACHER WORKSHOP SERIES

February 28th : "Africa's Women Speak Out: Leadership in Liberia, Ethiopia and Malawi"

March 4th : "Immigrant Children and Education: The Role of Educators, Parents, and the Law"

March 14th : "The Healing Power of Music"

For more information on K-12 Teacher Workshop Series, please visit our website at <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/k12workshopspring09.pdf>

STUDY ABROAD IN KENYA – BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

The Nairobi Exchange Program offers undergraduates the opportunity to spend the spring semester 2010 at the University of Nairobi. Courses are available in the Social Sciences and are conducted in English. In addition, Swahili tutorials are available at all levels. Independent research and internships are encouraged in Nairobi which is home to many NGO's. Another unique feature of the program is that students live with homestay families in Nairobi.

For more information please contact:
Jennifer Russell, NEP coordinator
jrussell@brynmawr.edu or 610-526-7473

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK (continued from p.1)

our first fully on-line course in African Studies. Offered through the College of Liberal and Professional Studies, 'People, Oil, and Politics in Nigeria' will be available to students throughout the country and abroad, using innovative distance learning technologies.

With all these activities, I cannot fail to mention the invaluable work of our Program Coordinator Faye Patterson, who makes sure that students are registered and graduated, that callers and visitors to our Center find what they need, that we all respond promptly to queries from our many constituencies, that travel arrangements are confirmed, and that our bills are paid on time. I can't think of anything that Faye hasn't done at some point over the course of the year. Thank you, Faye!

PENN AFRICAN PERFORMING ARTS

The Penn African Performing Arts (PAPA) group was founded in fall of 2006. The group is aimed at increasing awareness of African culture through performing arts and to serve as an enlightening experience for both the members in the group and the group's audience. The group mixes all of the performing arts (singing, dancing, instrumental music, poetry, acting) and has served as a place where African students have found the opportunity to learn more about their culture, and non-African students have found an exciting way to experience the culture. The group has a mix of members both African and non-African and last year (2008) had a member from Haverford College.

PAPA had its first performances in spring of 2007: one at Kings Court/English House's Africa Week; and the other at the Penn African Students Association's Variety Show for their Africa Week. The group has featured at a number of cultural events on and off campus including Calabash, an annual African-Caribbean semi-formal; the 2008 Penn African Student Association Variety Show, Battle of the Curries, a cultural dance show; and invited performances at the African Studies Center's African Scholar for the Day event in spring of 2008, Penn State Abington's Caribbean Fest Celebrations in spring of 2008, the Restaurant School's African Food exhibition on Inauguration Day, and West Catholic High School's International Cultural Night in Fall of 2008.

Since Fall 2008, PAPA has been working closely with the University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Center and Christian Association in their African-related and community outreach efforts. The group has featured at all the Christian Association's "Eat Your Way

through Africa" dinners, aimed at raising funds and awareness for the Christian Association's Open Mind for Africa Program. The program is aimed at sponsoring students to undertake social work related projects in Africa. PAPA has also worked with the Christian Association's "Peacemaking through the Arts" Program, where students go out to schools in the community, perform, and then teach students the performance. PAPA also works with the Student Ambassadors of the World – Africa, and featured at their fund raising event in fall of 2007, and their Martin Luther King Event in conjunction with the Christian Association in spring of 2009.

Show with West Catholic

PAPA members have done presentations at various schools in Philadelphia and the surrounding area through Penn African Studies Center K-12 outreach programs. Through these presentations, collaborations were set up with the International Studies teacher at West Catholic School, Joe Selfridge. In keeping with the tradition of cultural awareness and outreach, PAPA put up a show entitled "Echoes of the Motherland" in conjunction with West Catholic High School on April 17th, 2009. The group performed along side the high school students, three of whom are working on the show as their senior project in International Studies. The show is a story of Africa through the ages, and brings aspects of Africa's culture to the West Catholic students, the Penn community, and the Philadelphia community, as a way of showcasing the sort of healthy partnerships and exciting educational experiences that the university's students and the surrounding the community can have through sharing in the performing arts of another culture.

Penn African Performing Arts @ "Eat your way through Africa" Dinner: Liberia (02/05/09)



Kinobe, the Ugandan multi-instrumentalist musician at Teachers Workshop: "The Healing Power of Music" (03/14/09)



Introducing DR. SUSANNA WING

Dr. Susanna D. Wing is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Haverford College. She recently completed her book *Constructing Democracy in Transitioning Societies in Africa: Constitutionalism and Deliberation in Mali* (Palgrave, 2008). *Constructing Democracy* is based on field work conducted in Mali from 1994 until 2007. In this study Wing considers why so many constitutions in Africa have failed since democratization swept the continent in the 1990s. Her book focuses on the central role that dialogue and participation played in Mali throughout the 1990s and considers the process of participatory constitutionalism and constitutional dialogues as critical factors in Mali's role as a "model democracy" on the continent.



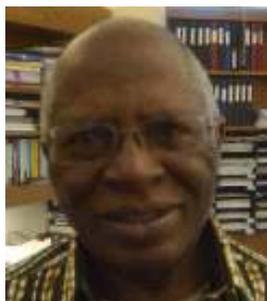
Wing's interest in democratization and women's rights has led her to her most recent project on family law reform in Africa. Wing has worked with Haverford College senior Rachel van Tosh to collect data on legal reform across the continent. She has conducted field work in Benin and Mali on this topic, interviewing supporters and opponents of legal reforms and is planning future research trips to Senegal, Mali, and Benin to investigate the status of current family laws. Wing was

Marriage: Family Law Reform in West Africa" in Barcelona at the Social Trends Institute's Experts meeting as well as at a conference at Yale University entitled *Rethinking Development: Societal Transformations and the Challenges of Governance in Africa and the Middle East* where she presented a paper on "Exploring Democracy, Women's Rights, and Legal Reform in Francophone Africa." As a political scientist Wing seeks to emphasize the political nature of the debates regarding family law reform, a shift away from the more prevalent culture-focused analysis.

Wing's interest in the relationship between Islam and women's rights was recognized when she recently received a Salzburg Global Seminar Presidential Fellowship and attended the Salzburg Global Seminar "International Law and Islamic Law: Searching for Common Ground" in Austria. There she participated in discussions on the role of Islam as it relates to women's rights and legal reforms around the world. These debates on "common ground" between Islamic law, international law and women's rights will be central to Wing's analysis of family law reform in predominantly Muslim countries in Africa.

Interview with Penn ASC Visiting Faculty : John A. Ayoade

Dr. John A. Ayoade was Professor of Political Science at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria from 1986 until 2008. While at the University of Ibadan, he was the Dean of the Faculty of the Social Sciences from 1997-99, and at various times, the Chair of the Department of Political Science.



He served the Government of Nigeria in various advisory capacities including being a Member of National Political Reform Conference of 2005 to recommend a new national constitution. He was also the President of the Nigerian Political Science Association from

for Democratic Studies which was established for the resocialization of the Nigerian public after military rule. At the level of the African Continent, he is a member of the Technical Advisory Panel of the African Capacity Building Foundation on Civil Society. He was also the Chair of Voicenet of the Foundation from 2002-04.

In the USA, he taught at Williams College 1972-73; University of Pennsylvania 1984-85; Villanova University Fall 2008, and was a Senior African Fulbright Scholar at Boston University in 1982. For Spring 2009, he is teaching a course on contemporary African politics as Visiting Faculty for University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Center.

ASC: In the course on contemporary African politics that you are teaching at Penn this semester, what are some of the key issues that you discuss? And what are some of the challenges you encountered in teaching them?

JA: I find teaching Contemporary African Politics in the United States to be very exciting because there are different sets of challenges from those encountered from teaching it in Nigeria. The first challenge is that some of the texts that are readily available are given to sensationalism and emphasis on the deviant behavior of some African leaders. Such sensationalism can be explained; but are hardly excusable particularly when they appear to be presented as the totality of African events. It is understandable that only bad news is news but is by no means a complete view.

The second challenge is that the unfolding events in Africa as the course progresses tend to create diversions requiring explanation or digression. For example, this semester, the International Criminal Court Warrant against the Sudanese President Al Bashir, the Military Coup in Guinea-Bissau, and the upsurge of piracy in Somalia more or less create interference in the course. It is not impossible that such situations could serve to illustrate salient points of African development but at other times they become a pernicious detour.

The third challenge that has been very useful is that the students demonstrate a positive enthusiasm to study about Africa. This has particularly shown a lot of work that they have done on African History. It is also interesting to note that students have shown interest in a wider set of African countries than one would normally find in a typical African University. On an average too, more students have traveled to more African countries whereas African students are more attracted to Europe and America.

One of the key issues that we have dealt with in the course relate to the Decolonization Process which we treat as an on-going process. Secondly, we looked at the various strategies of the Independence movements and how such strategies are products of the operating colonial philosophies. That led to a consideration of why independence did not deliver its promises. Ethnicity has often been incriminated as one of the reasons. Unfortunately ethnicity is one of the least understood issues in African politics because it is always assumed that it is only an African phenomenon.

ASC: Can you tell us something about your published works on Nigerian politics?

JA: The University of Ibadan, Nigeria where I worked for the longest part of my career has a publication policy that emphasizes a mix of books and academic articles subjected to rigorous peer review. Publications, Teaching and Community service are the prime considerations for promotion. I therefore published in reputable journals. I also edited the following books:

1. African Therapeutic Systems (Waltham: African Studies Association)
2. Handbook of Election Monitoring in Nigeria (Ibadan, Vintage Press)
3. Readings in Nigerian Government and Politics (Ijebu-Ode)

and the following Monographs:

1. Federalism in Nigeria: The Problem with the Solution (Ibadan, Vintage Press)
2. Nigeria and the Squandering of Hope (Ibadan, Vintage Press)

ASC: What research are you currently working on?

JA: I am currently engaged in research on the Geo-strategies of Oil in Nigeria. The objective of the research is to evaluate the serial policies of the Government of Nigeria in addressing the challenges and opportunities of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. Such policy analysis has become necessary given the militancy and insurgency in the oil producing region of the country. The progressive escalation and potential internationalization of the violence with implications for global security makes the project

In Summer 2009, Penn African Studies Center will be offering an online course, AFST 302-910: "People, Oil & Politics in Nigeria" taught by Prof. Ayoade. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/>

AFRICAN STUDIES CULTURAL DAY

Friday, March 27—University of Pennsylvania

By Sarah Derbew

Senior at Haverford College

Classics Department

My journey to Penn for African Cultural Day began with a fall. My peer and I rushed to the train station to arrive on time for the event, as we remembered the wonderful food that awaited us. As we dashed through the slippery paths on Haverford road, one sharp turn proved to be too much for us and all of a sudden, hands were slapped on the pavement and pants were checked for rips. After realizing that shoes without soles and slippery asphalt did not match, we slowed down and continued on our journey. Luckily, we arrived with ample time to enjoy the food. Going through the selections, I was ecstatic with my choices. I decided to go light on the meats, although the chicken and beef are tasty, to save room for the rice, plantains, chapatti, kachumbari (salad), and samosas. I had no room in my stomach for drinks so settled for water.

The event began with the beautifully attired Dr. Audrey Mbeje introducing our host for the night, Freeda, an alumna of University of Pennsylvania and former Wolof student who came back to MC the event. The performances began with warriors. The students of elementary and accelerated Zulu marched in with sticks and shields, chanting a warrior song which was sung before going into war. The intermediate Zulu class performed a rendition of Siyahamba, which I always look forward to because Dr. Mbeje joins in to harmonize with her students. The elementary class recited greetings in Yoruba, and by the end I felt like I could go to Nigeria and greet people proficiently. The Advanced Class recited a clever story about a man named Mr. Wise who had to choose between omo (money), owo (child), patience (suuru), and immortality. He asked his senior wife, junior wife, and others what to do and they all gave him different answers. After asking the audience which option they would choose, the students concluded the story and explained the lesson that Mr. Wise learned, that life is complete with all four elements. The elementary Igbo students were showstoppers; the students fell perfectly into their roles of a Nigerian man and woman and battled to see who knew more Igbo proverbs. Their professor, Dr. Nwadiora, joined in occasionally to translate and playfully tease her students. Although the entire presentation was in Igbo without translation, the audience easily understood what was going on, as the students were expressive in their actions. The last of the West African languages performed was Twi. One brave student performed proverbs and songs in traditional at-

tire and the audience joined in and clapped while she sang.

The East African languages had their time to shine as well. The elementary Swahili students sang both the Kenyan and Tanzanian national anthem. The Tanzanian anthem took me back to when I was in Tanzania two years ago at a primary school because the students sang it every afternoon before going home. It was surreal to hear the song come out of the mouth of older students; however it was a beautiful rendition and members of the audience who knew the anthems joined in as well. The intermediate class taught the audience the art of making chapatti and kachumbari, a flatbread and a salad. The advanced class, which I was a part of, performed poetry of Shabaan Robert, a Tanganyikan (as he wrote before Tanzania gained their independence) hailed as “the Shakespeare of East Africa”. The night ended with the Amharic classes. The elementary class beautifully blended the mix of American and African cultures with their Amharic version of “Old McDonald had a farm”. They even took it a step further and went into a second and third verse! It was enlightening to hear an older language with such a modern song and a reminder of the intermingling of cultures that we have here in America.

Our gracious host Freeda then thanked the professors, staff, students, and audience and officially ended the event. On the way out, there was food left over so I was able to have part two of a wonderful dinner. When I returned to Haverford, I felt satisfied with a belly full of food and a mind full of phrases from some of the languages that are spoken in Africa. It was a great feeling.



African Studies Center Staff (from Left): Assistant Director, Anastasia Shown, Program Coordinator, Faye Patterson and Language Coordinator, Dr. Audrey Mbeje at African Cultural Day

Fulbright Hays Award to University of Pennsylvania for “Teaching the Human Experience: Lessons from Ethiopia”

Project activities begin March 1, 2009 and end February 28, 2010.

The Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) Program of the U.S. Department of Education has awarded a grant of \$80,770 to the University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center for “*Teaching the Human Experience: Lessons from Ethiopia.*” 64% of the total cost of the program is funded by the GPA grant, with the remaining percentage (36%) funded by the University of Pennsylvania, participant cost share and nongovernmental organizations.

Fourteen K-12 teachers will travel to Ethiopia for five weeks (July 6-Aug 11). Pre-departure workshops in May and June will draw on Penn faculty experts and Philadelphia’s large Ethiopian business and cultural community. In-country activities will involve Ethiopian educators who will partner with the U.S. teachers. Participants will engage in trips to historical and cultural sites and to international organizations headquartered in Addis Ababa. A distance learning program will be conducted utilizing videoconferencing through collaboration with Global Education Motivators, a Philadelphia-based NGO in association with the United Nations. An educational video of the group’s travels will be produced, edited and distributed for use in classrooms. Post-travel workshops, videoconferences, forums, and web-sites will further serve to disseminate the results of the Seminar to teachers and students throughout the U.S.

The project’s three overarching themes:

1. Participants will gain knowledge of the history of the region, which includes evidence of the oldest traces of humanity in the world. Teachers will learn about the physical and human geography of the region, the origins of humanity, and the ancient civilizations of Ethiopia and

its neighbors in the Horn of Africa. They will hear from local anthropologists, view fossil discoveries, and visit an archaeological site.

2. Participants will learn about past and contemporary religions in the region. A number of global religions are practiced in Ethiopia today, each with a long history. Orthodox Christianity dates to the third century and was associated with the Ethiopian monarchy for more than 1500 years, while Islam arrived in the region during the lifetime of the Prophet Mohamed in the 7th century. An ancient group of Jews lived in Ethiopia, though most have immigrated to Israel in the last decades. Ethiopia is the spiritual homeland of the Rastafarian movement with global followers in the African Diaspora who believe Ethiopia is Zion. There are also numerous indigenous African religions in Ethiopia. Participants will take educational tours to sacred and religious sites and learn in depth about these belief systems.

3. Participants will learn about the larger global issues of migration, displacement, and the Diaspora by examining the consequences of war and famine in the region, and observing the work of international organizations and relief agencies. Ethiopia has 200,000 internally displaced persons and hosts 103,110 refugees. Its capital Addis Ababa is headquarters for many international organizations including the African Union. Participants will study the causes of human migration and the condition of refugees in the Horn of Africa. They will take educational tours to international organizations. Participants will link this awareness to the African immigrant communities in the greater Philadelphia region.

ANASTASIA SHOWN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER RECEIVES 2009 GLOBAL YOUNG ADVOCATE AWARD

Young people around the nation show their commitment to the goals and ideals of the United Nations on a daily basis. UNA-USA is proud to recognize young professionals whose accomplishments demonstrate personal initiative and commitment to the United Nations through the Global Young Advocate Award. Past Global Young Advocate Awardees have been recognized because of their volunteer activities, workplace initiatives, and social endeavors. They have combined their passion for the United Nations with an ability to motivate others and create meaningful change.

On behalf of the 2009 UNA-USA Global Young Advocate Award Selection Committee, I am delighted to announce Anastasia Shown of the UNA Greater Philadelphia Chapter as the 2009 UNA Global Young Advocate. Anastasia has lead efforts to reach out to marginalized immigrant communities in Philadelphia, partnered with Philadelphia public libraries and schools to spread awareness about the work of the United Nations, and facilitated exchange programs between educators in Philadelphia and Africa.

PENN ABROAD — STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Christy Schuetze, PhD Candidate in Anthropology

“O mundo está virado’: emerging social networks of healing and the reordering of society in a topsy turvy world”

“O mundo está virado”: “The world is upside down.” This is what one of my informants and closest friends in Mozambique exclaimed with resignation to me after losing her eight year old sister to malaria that was complicated by her HIV+ status. This was just the latest in a string of tragedies in her family that left she and her siblings as orphans and as the eldest, she took charge of the family becoming a single caretaker for her own two children as well as four of her youngest siblings. In the midst of such frequent and socially altering tragedies the sentiment that the world is topsy-turvy, out of balance, and dominated by evil forces that are creating social disorder is commonplace in Gorongosa, central Mozambique, where I conducted fieldwork from September 2006 to July 2008. Given the current context, my research focused on the ways in which women, in particular are reordering and gaining greater control of their own social worlds through participation in emerging and rapidly growing networks of spiritual and religious healing.

My ethnographic research focused on social suffering, and particularly on women’s lives as they struggle to establish and maintain control in broken and disordered families that are under extreme pressure from economic strain and the increasing frequency and severity of illness and death. After 16 years of civil war that ended in 1992, residents of Mozambique are working to rebuild their lives but facing the challenges of increasing economic and social strain brought about, in part, by economic disparities of a neoliberal economic policies and rising mortality rates linked, in part, to AIDS-related deaths. I focus in particular on how women in this context are transforming misfortune into new foundations of strength by creating and participating in new networks of spiritual healing that provide social, spiritual and material support. I compare the contrasting spiritual healing practices of spirit mediums and of Pentecostal church participants and examine how these networks are growing and the impacts of participation on participants lives.

The spiritual healing practices of Pentecostal churches and spirit mediums are extremely different and they

kind of opposition that people liken to a “war.” My analysis ties together these two forms of social support in that they offer guidance and paths to solutions for a common set of problems. Women are notably the most active and numerous members of church groups as well as the overwhelming majority of spirit medium practitioners and their afflicted patients. Women predominate in both contexts due to their susceptibility to accusations of sorcery and also due to their position as an object of desire for violent foreign spirits that attack lineages with infertility, infant death, the death and disease of adult members, and marital conflict and instability in an attempt to be given a wife as payment for past wrongs.

Through my research I have participated in each of these very different contexts and examined the different ways women are able to manage suffering and gain a new level of control in their households through their participation in these new networks. Also of interest to me has been the social conflict that has arisen between the adherents of these very opposed forms of spiritual healing. My work uses a variety of methods including archival research, quantitative survey work, open ended interviews, and participant observation in a wide range of contexts including individual and social healing ceremonies.

As well as contributing to the anthropology of religion, my research provides insights for studies of globalization and for gender studies providing insights into how women are disproportionately burdened by the negative impacts of “globalization,” and how they manage their situations in flexible and innovative spiritual frameworks that are often overlooked by scholars and development officers interested in women’s “empowerment.” I concluded my main research activities in July 2008 and returned to the United States. I have now returned to Penn where I am beginning the major phase of data analysis disser-



Elizabeth Song
Penn Undergraduate Student; International Relations



Sketches of Ouaga

I first arrived in Ouagadougou in the early hours of the morning on Friday the 13th of June 2008. Working under the aegis of an NGO, I admired the diligence of my co-workers, who braved a 7-to-7 day and the resilience of the Burkinabe families whom we helped support. Biking to work each morning, I marveled at the menagerie of houseplants, timber piles, and livestock that floated past me on battered motorbikes.

Away from work, in my neighborhood of Zone du Bois, I could turn the corner in my cruiser bike and see roast chicken and goat brochette stands alongside the tarmac road; tin-roofed convenience stores selling powered milk and Lucky Strike cigarettes; and brightly-clothed market women balancing enormous bowls of mangoes on their heads. Each morning, I would buy large, fleshy mangoes from the market stalls for 20 cents. And every day, I would taste new dishes that tempted my palate: *sauce*

feuille with stewed baobab leaves, steaming *foutou banane*, *attieke* with tomato onion sauce, sweet bissap juice, ripe papaya, toasty cracked maize, doughy green bean beignets. A vegetarian's feast!

In Burkina, however, the posturing of aid organizations for donations and fame, an inescapable feature of the development landscape, disappointed me. Philanthropic functions often included theatrical troupes, singers, and a crowd of photographers. And while this competition for dollars and recognition sometimes spurred us to greater heights, it also led to a myopic focus on showy short-term solutions and a burgeoning communications budget.

In a field filled with foreign consultants and silver bullets, if we could explore how to empower resourceful Burkinabe people, the kind who keep the country running each day by operating roadside bike repair stands or nickel-and-dime bakeries, we could do a world of good.

**PENN 2009 AFST
SENIORS**

MAJOR
Kyle Burr

MINORS

Rachel Crystal
Emily Denstedt
Olajumoke Falusi
Kenechi Igbokwe
Natalie Kelly
Katelyn Leader
Coryell Stout

PENN 2009 AFST GRADUATE STUDENTS

African Studies Center is awarding THE NNAMDI AZIKIWE PRIZE for the best undergraduate essay in the social sciences 2008-2009 to BRYANNA MCQUEEN for her paper: "A Return to Africa and its Role in United States Hegemony: Establishment of AFRICOM"

Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya. James Howard Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
BOOK REVIEW By Crystal Biruk (Penn Graduate Student in Anthropology)

In the tradition of the Comaroffs' "imaginative sociology," James Howard Smith tells a compelling story populated by memorable characters that excavates and explores the changing meanings and interpretations of development in central Kenya. Centered on the key terms of "development" and "witchcraft," James Howard Smith's timely book makes a thoughtful intervention into the literatures on both topics. He suggests that development and witchcraft are sets of discourses and practices that share a preoccupation with an imagined "good society," even as the former is associated with creative action and the latter with destructive action. The book explores the relationality of witchcraft and development to one another, exploring the manners in which their interaction necessitates contemplation and potential reconceptualization of notions of tradition and modernity or past and present. The book provides an account of how people living in the Taita Hills of central Kenya (the WaTaita) have come to understand development through their engagements with the term and its diverse purveyors from the colonial era to the present day.

In Chapter 2, he provides an overview of crucial aspects of Taita history, political economy, and geography to show how WaTaita experiences of this backdrop inform their understandings of witchcraft as inimical to development. Interesting among these aspects is the notion of the project (*miraadi* in Kiswahili) and its ability to (re-) capture local imaginations even in the wake of so many failed or stunted attempts by past projects to develop the Taita Hills region. The project, Smith argues, nonetheless "remains a hegemonic idea... [and people continue to hope] that there will be a qualitative shift in the way things are..." (65). In this chapter, he also shows how witchcraft and development inevitably articulate with one another. For example, WaTaita claim that land consolidation projects which transferred rights in land to a single, title holding male brought about 'modern witchcraft,' individuals who possessed occult knowledge were formerly managed in local neighborhoods and have now entered alien territory, where their powers are more difficult to manage or control. In Chapter 3, he considers Taita understandings of witchcraft, or that which WaTaita feel must be excluded for development to emerge. He shows how Taita perceptions of witchcraft have

changed with the rise of cities, commercialization, and the eradication of traditional Taita-ness. Chapters 4-7 provide a series of actual events and interactions that illustrate how efforts to foster development in the Taita Hills came to be recoded as witchcraft by those Wataita who were excluded. Chapter 4 discusses the (ultimately thwarted) development aspirations and ambitions of one household and family. Through detailed description of the material objects and structures that comprise the unit of the family household among the WaTaita, Smith shows how houses and the objects they contain acquire symbolic meanings in relation to imagined "true" WaTaita houses that existed in the past. This is one among many examples that Smith provides regarding the manner in which past, present, and future interact in the WaTaita imagination to construct interpretations of development. Similarly, Wataita desires to escape the confines of the hills and their simultaneous dependence on local social relations as depicted in the chapter highlight the manner in which tradition and modernity and development and witchcraft are perpetually intertwined. One of Smith's main interventions in this chapter is to destabilize a normative definition of development as improvement or progress by showing how the material and symbolic dimensions of the concept have become unmoored in neoliberal Kenya. About a family who struggles to keep afloat, but is perceived by neighbors to be "keeping secrets" or "hoarding wealth," he writes, "The family bore the additional burden of possessing all of the signs of development without any material substance to support the image" (140).

One key contribution of the book is its ability to show how the terms "modern" and "traditional" or "witchcraft" and "development" can be unhinged from their normative meanings or assigned new meanings depending on the social context in which they are deployed. In one case, he tells the story of a traditional healer well known for his skill at curing ailments. Locally, this healer was well respected precisely because his power emanated from the recognition of the ancestors that he was a good person who shared their nature and his willingness to forego capitalist benefit for his services. However, at one point, two police officers approach the healer and tell him to translate his knowledge to professors at the University of Nairobi and the Kenyan African Medicine Research Institute. He claims to know nothing, explaining that his power comes intermittently from the ancestors, but the police officers beat him and call him a witch, accusing him of concealing knowledge that would only lose its destructiveness if it was made "transparent" (Smith points to good governance discourse as the source for this term). This anecdote highlights the complicated way in which witchcraft becomes a powerful rhetorical device, often a foil to de-

velopment, that influences and seeps into everyday social relations.

Smith manages to tell the story of key historical moments in Kenya through the lenses of development and witchcraft. The 1990s retreat of the state made room for international and national NGOs and these groups remain a major catalyst for the local imagination, as they provide potential or real sources of income to local people. Smith provides an analysis of an NGO accused of being Satanic or sucking blood of local people because it seemed to be commercializing children and transferring rights in these children to unknown foreigners in the US and Europe. Accusations of Satanism and bloodsucking, he argues, point to local skepticism and ambivalence about the proclaimed benevolent intentions of government and other institutions.

In Chapter 7, Smith tells the story of another kind of development project, whereby villagers paid a transnational (Tanzanian) witch hunter to eradicate witchcraft from their midst. This large payment spoke to the very real fears and anxieties that the Wataita held regarding the ability of witchcraft to impede development (specifically, economic development) in their region. Interestingly, Smith argues that the villagers viewed the witch hunter as “any other outside expert or NGO; he possessed foreign technical skill” (219). Notably, the “sweep” of witchcraft objects from the village was viewed as democratic by the Wataita, as a leveling of society through removal of powerful, secret objects. Ironically, however, the sweeping merely served to dem-

onstrate the sheer ubiquity of witchcraft among the Wataita and left people with no solutions in the face of their economic blight. Significant, though, is that they hired the witch hunter to improve their economic lot (to “develop” the Taita Hills) and found themselves amid yet another failed “development project.”

Typical analyses of development in Africa presume a temporal trajectory into the future and predictable outcomes. In the conclusion to his book, James Howard Smith uses the term “tempopolitics” to index the manner in which temporality (particularly the salient categories of traditional and modern) can be drawn on to make claims that imagine a better future or critique an unsatisfying present. Throughout the book, he illustrates how in the process of controlling witchcraft, Kenyans also bring the sign of development under social control. Though academics and critics of development have grown weary of the term and its wide proliferation has been blamed for its “emptying out,” James Howard Smith’s book shows very clearly that the concept not only retains great significance in the public imagination in central Kenya but is also imbued with the pregnant possibility of material improvements in the Wataita social world. The book’s main contribution lies in its representation of how Wataita appropriate and reinterpret witchcraft and development discourse to rechannel power and reorganize social relations toward a better, more livable world.

BUILDING MUSLIM SPACES IN A SECULAR SOCIETY : AFRICAN MUSLIMS IN PHIALDELPHIA

The African Studies Center has been awarded \$43,921 grant from the Social Science Research Council’s ‘Academia in the Public Sphere’ Program. The ‘Building Muslim Spaces...’ project seeks to familiarize members of the University community and the general public with the lives and concerns of the region’s African Muslim communities, in their own voices, as well as to promote dialogue between members of those communities and the academic ‘specialists’ who study global Islam. In addition to producing a documentary film and establishing an archive of popular devotional, educational, and civic literature, the project will host several public Forums, and design and implement a University course which integrates academic knowledge of African Islam with knowledge produced in the African Muslim Diaspora.

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African Studies Center Spring 2009 Lecture Series was proud to present:

February 2nd: "Old Sudanese Kingdoms"
by Prof. Jay Spaulding, Kean University, Department of History

Most of Dr. Spaulding's research concerns the history of Northeast Africa. He has a particular interest in medieval Christian and early modern Islamic Nubia, and the legacy of this tradition to the contemporary Arab Sudan. He has also written about the western sultanates of Dar Fur and Wadai. His major contributions have derived from the gathering and analysis of Sudanese Arabic sources, including land charters and letters issued by precolonial governments, but primarily private legal documents generated by the new middle class that arose during the eighteenth century and flourished under colonialism during the nineteenth.

February 23rd : "Sudan Diversity: Unity vs. Contention?"
by Prof. Richard Lobban, Rhode Island College

Dr. Richard A. Lobban is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and African Studies at Rhode Island College where he has taught for thirty-six years. He has also taught at the University of Khartoum, American University in Cairo and conducted research in Tunisia, Egypt and Sudan. He is the Executive Director of the Sudan Studies Association, of which he was the founding President. He has published scores of articles, reviews, book chapters and encyclopedia entries, and a number of books on the Middle East including reference books on Sudan, on Middle Eastern Women. Among other things he specializes on urban and complex societies as well as gender, ethnicity, race and class, especially in the Middle East.

This event was co-sponsored by the International Relations Program.

March 23rd: "Oil: Boon and Catalyst of Contention in Nigeria"
by Prof. John Ayoade, Visiting Professor

Dr John A Ayoade was Professor of Political Science at the University of Ibadan - Nigeria from 1986 until 2008. While at the University of Ibadan, he was the Dean of the Faculty of the Social Sciences from 1997-99, and at various times was the Chair of the Department of Political Science. He served the Government of Nigeria in various advisory capacities including a Member of National Political Reform Conference of 2005 to recommend a new national constitution. In the USA, he taught at Williams College 1972-73; University of Pennsylvania 1984-85; Villanova University Fall 2008, and was a Senior African Fulbright Scholar at Boston University in 1982. Dr Ayoade has published in many scholarly journals including *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*; *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*; *Plural Societies*; *Africa Quarterly*; *African Studies Review*; and *Africana Marburgensis*. Among his edited books are: *A Handbook of Election Monitoring in Nigeria* ; and *A Handbook of African Political Philosophy*.

April 13th: "China's Growing Role in Africa"
by Ambassador David H. Shinn, former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso

Ambassador David H. Shinn is an adjunct professor of international affairs at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs. Ambassador Shinn received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from GW. He is a former U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia (1996-99) and to Burkina Faso (1987-90). More at: <http://davidshinn.blogspot.com/>

"Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan"
by Prof. Salah Hassan, Cornell University

Salah M. Hassan is Goldwin Smith Professor and Director of Africana Studies and Professor of African and Diaspora Art History and Visual Culture at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. He is the editor and founder of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, and consulting editor for *African Arts* and *Atlantica*. He has authored and edited several books, among them: *Power and Nationalism in Modern Africa* (2008); *Unpacking Europe* (2001); *Authentic/Ex-Centric* (2001); *Gendered Visions: The Art of Contemporary Africana Women Artists* (1997). He has contributed to numerous art journals and anthologies and curated several international exhibitions. Most recently Hassan has co-edited with Carina Ray a book on Darfur entitled: *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan* (forthcoming 2009).

Co-Sponsors: Center for Africana Studies, International Relations Program, Middle East Center, Political Science Department .