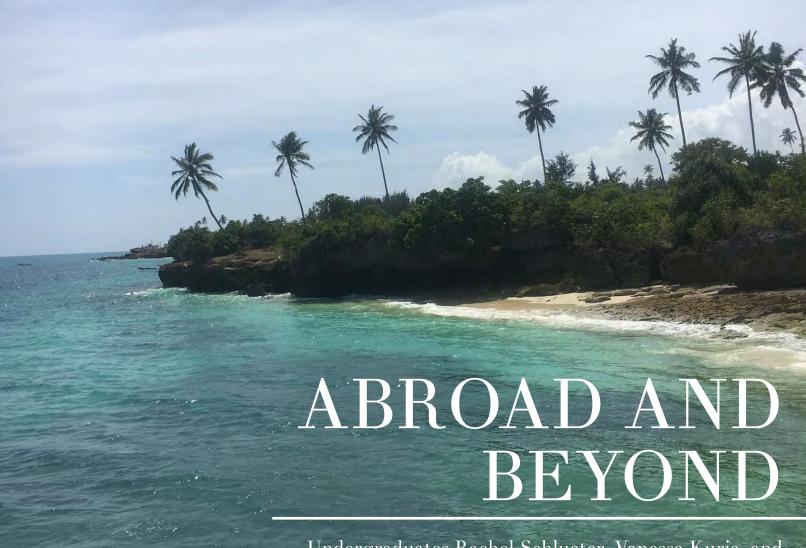
# BOSTON UNIVERSITY AFRICAN STUDIES OUTPUT OUT

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Undergraduates Rachel Schlueter, Vanessa Kuria, and Sam Meyerson speak with us about their abroad experiences in Zanzibar and what it all meant to them.

### What Studying Abroad Means to our Undergraduates

Boston University currently boasts six educational programs across Africa including public health focused programs in Ghana and Tanzania, an East African culture and Swahili program in Zanzibar, and three programs in Morocco focusing on internships and Arabic proficiency. When students return from their abroad experiences we love to pick their brains about what they saw, how they felt, and what



Napassorn Lerdsudwichai, ENG'18

the experience meant to them personally. We believe that an undergraduate immersion experience is vital to language proficiency, but going abroad to Africa for many of our students means so much more. To begin a dialogue about the student experience, we asked three undergraduates, Vanessa Kuria (CAS '18), Sam Meyerson (Kenyon College '17), and Rachel Schlueter (Pardee '17), to share their photographs and stories from their recent study abroad experiences in Zanzibar.

#### Q: Why study abroad in Africa?

Vanessa: As the birthplace of the human race, Africa is home to some of the oldest and richest cultures in the world. These cultures, if not completely overlooked, are often dismissed as primitive, while Africa itself is thought of as unsafe and barren. Studying abroad in Africa helps to dispel some of these myths perpetuated by Western media, providing an opportunity to not only learn about Africa's physical landscape - in both urban and rural areas - but also to gain insight into some non-Western societies with a chance to participate in them. I can't speak for all of Africa, but my experience in Zanzibar taught me to not only appreciate the differences brought forth by an unfamiliar culture, but to draw parallels between personal Zanzibari and American





narratives, helping to create a dialogue between two seemingly polar communities.

**Sam:** Africa is a continent that has been persistently misrepresented in the Western media. As a result, few of us in North America have the opportunity to learn about Africa's diverse cultures on a meaningful level. Studying in Africa not only provided me with the opportunity to make great friends and have exciting experiences, but also broadened my horizons and changed my world view for the better.

Rachel: It has unfortunately become embedded into American culture that the conservative dress of Muslim women stereotypically denotes the restriction of their rights. In the case of Zanzibari women, this was as far from reality as one could get. This choice is not one of oppression but one of empowerment. To cover oneself is to demand respect - rather than judgments made on physical appearance, it is instead character that defines an individual. This value carries through women in Zanzibar to this day and gains physical form through individuality. As I observed in my host home and community, some women voluntarily chose to wear the "ninja" face covering one day, and the next would wear vibrantly patterned head coverings with full-faced makeup. As I became further immersed in the culture of Zanzibar, I was forced to consider why I had expected anything less than pure personal expression in the first

"Studying in Africa not only provided me with the opportunity to make great friends and have exciting experiences, but also broadened my horizons and changed my world view for the better."

place. These women are no different than myself in their desire to form their personal identities, and if anything, are far more courageous to wear flowing layers in the endless coastal humidity and sunshine.

#### Q: What was the most memorable part of your study abroad experience in Zanzibar?

**Vanessa:** By far, the most memorable part of my study abroad was getting the chance to attend a traditional Zanzibari wedding. Part of the Swahili language aspect of the program was meeting with a native Zanzibari language partner a few hours a week to hang out and practice conversational skills. My language partner and I



became good friends rather quickly, and one week she took me to see a wedding in her village. Weddings in Zanzibar are completely different from how they are here in America; as a highly collectivist society, the emphasis is placed more on the community coming together to celebrate the union rather than bride and groom themselves. I've never seen people so joyfully blissful in my life. The whole community - especially the older women - came together singing songs, handing out treats, and dancing for hours with an energy I've never before seen. It was one of the most beautiful moments I've ever been a part of.

**Sam:** The most memorable moments of my time in Zanzibar were those I spent talking about history, politics, and soccer with my language partner.

Rachel: Living with a host family was by far the most memorable aspect of studying abroad in Zanzibar, for, every moment was a learning experience and an opportunity to view the intricacies of Swahili life. Most days, I spent my time with the female figures of the household - mother, grandmother, daughters, and cousins - and it was in these moments that I became familiar with the undeniable power of these women.

For more information about our study abroad opportunities please visit bu.edu/abroad.

#### SUMMER PASSAGES

by Jasmine Miller, CAS '16

Since returning from my first study abroad experience to Zanzibar I knew I wanted to return. I researched internship programs in Zanzibar, but most seemed to be pay-to-volunteer systems that were costly and didn't truly offer the skill building internship experience I was seeking. Spring semester came around, and I began working on my senior thesis on microfinance in Tanzania. As I researched organizations, I reached out to each one to see if they were interested in having me as an intern. I was elated to receive several positive responses, one of which was from YOSEFO, a microfinance organization based in Mwanakwerekwe, Zanzibar, where I would be their first intern ever.

I knew in my heart that I wanted this internship, but was concerned about the feasibility of working with them since they couldn't offer me any financial support. I was on the fence when, quite serendipitously, I was offered a solution: BU's Engineering Department had been planning a Health Initiatives trip that summer to Zanzibar. Early in the spring semester, Dr. Zaman, who organized the trip, reached out seeking feedback and advice. I maintained contact with the group as they planned, and in May they offered me a position as the trip coordinator. It was perfect—I would help coordinate the trip for three students and the director, and in exchange they would provide a stipend that covered my travel and living expenses. In addition to that, I had applied for the CAS Honor's Thesis Travel Grant and was honored when they awarded me a grant to support my research. Between the position and the research grant, I was able to make my trip to Zanzibar work financially, while having the internship that made my trip meaningful.

That trip was more enriching than I could have ever hoped for. Through my internship, I learned so much about the value and limitations of microfinance in Tanzania, I gained valuable career skills and knowledge, and collected fascinating data for my thesis. The coordinator position was also a lot of fun and it felt so rewarding to show new-comers around the island that I had begun to really cherish. In a typical day I worked in the mornings, and made site visits to rural areas to register new clients. After a day in the field and office, I would get back to town and meet up with students, go to interviews with other microfinance institutions, or have Swahili lessons. Time flew by, and at the end of the two months I was still amazed that I had been able to make it work. That was one of the best two months of my life, and I am so happy that I was able to make it happen. I am so grateful to all the people that helped me achieve my dreams, so never stop dreaming, or seeking ways to make it all work.



# From the Director's Desk

The BU reception at the African Studies Association annual meeting in Washington D.C. in December was a fantastic time to reconnect with our alumni – and to introduce our current graduate students to the strong BU African studies community. In recent years, BU has welcomed a large cohort of PhD students in anthropology, history, political science, the history of art and architecture, sociology, ethnomusicology, and theology. Supported by Fulbright-Hays, Fulbright, and other grants, they have conducted fieldwork in Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Lesotho, and South Africa. Nearly a dozen students are now writing up their dissertations, and a few are already on the job market. We also have a growing number of students in the International Relations and Public Health masters programs. We look forward to our alumni community continuing to expand as these students secure jobs both in universities and in applied settings. Meanwhile, the African Studies Center continues to build on its traditions of strong education, research, and outreach:

- Alix Saba has been a fantastic addition to our ASC staff, taking over as Program Administrator over the summer. Alix is a BA and MA alum of BU, who participated in the Niger program and studies Hausa, and she is bringing great new energy to the position. Please take an opportunity to introduce yourself to her, if you have not already done so.
- The African Outreach Program worked with the continuing education NGO Primary Source to develop a new online course on African history that was successfully launched this fall.
- We have developed new intensive Swahili courses specifically focused on public health that we are offering on the medical campus.
- The African Language Program has been developing assessment tools that are being implemented in all classes, as we continually improve our language teaching.
- Professor Fallou Ngom and I led a Fulbright Hays Faculty Seminar in Senegal this summer. Partnering with the West African Research Center, we took a group of 16 college faculty from throughout the US on a study trip focused on religion, diversity, and tolerance in Senegal. We spent time in Dakar, St. Louis, Touba, Toubacouta, Djilor, Joal, Ziginchour, and Cap Skirring talking with academics, activists, and religious leaders. The participants have all developed curricular projects that they are now implementing in their home schools.

We always love to hear from our alumni. Please let us know what you are up to. If you have a new job, a new book, or other news to share, send a note to Alix so that we can include it in our next newsletter.

Tim Longman January 2017



## Staff Introductions

by Breeanna Elliott

This past summer, we were delighted to welcome our new Program Administrator, Alix Saba, to the African Studies Center. Although new to our staff, Alix is no stranger to Boston University nor the ASC. As an undergraduate at BU, she received her degree in International Relations and participated in the renowned Niamey Niger Development Program, which brought her to Niger for a semester abroad. Shortly afterwards, with her regional ties to West Africa still strong, she returned once again to BU to earn her Master's in International Relations and Religion with an African Studies Certificate.

Notably a gifted administrator, Alix's value to the Center also comes from her scholarship. Her Master's thesis exemplifies her analytical and multi-disciplinary approach in research. Her thesis, "The Objectives of Puritanical Religio-Political Islamic Groups in Nigeria and Their Role in the Transnational Islamic Community: A Comparative Case Study of Izala and Boko Haram," explores the development of two separate puritanical Islamic organizations in Nigeria—Izala and Boko Haram—and their inability to collaborate over time. Ground breaking research when it was first completed, Alix continues to investigate the socio-political instabilities in Nigeria and is working on a forthcoming publication on the matter. Beyond the formal classroom, Alix's interest in international relations and Africa includes intensive language study in French, Hausa, and Zarma.

Moreover, what Alix uniquely brings to the ASC is her inviting and genuine personality that is coupled with a strong sense of community and collaboration. Her intellect and resourcefulness, in conjunction with her unyielding sense of humor and approachability, make her a successful interface between the ASC staff and its community, as well as an ideal colleague. In the short six months she has been with us, she has transformed the space, both physically and metaphorically, into one that better serves its students, staff, and faculty. Her emphasis on social media and outreach into the Greater Boston African community has revolutionized the ASC's online presence and made our successes a standard for centers university-wide. In more ways than one, Alix's work represents an important transition into a more reflective and effective ASC.

We are honored to have Alix join our ranks and we are certainly the better for it. Welcome again, Alix!

### A Celebrated History of the Rodney Walter Seminar

by Edouard Bustin

The "Walter Rodney Seminar" has been operating since 1981 under that title, but it had older roots before being named in homage to the Guyanese historian and political activist who was assassinated in 1980 - and is most widely known as the author of "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa."

The naming was advocated by William (Bill) Hansen<sup>1</sup> and Brigitte (Gitte) Schulz<sup>2</sup>, two Ph.D. candidates (PO) who had enrolled at BU in 1979, and were put in charge of coordinating the Center's seminar series. They modeled the ASC's weekly seminar after a similar series at the Institute for Commonwealth Studies, London, which Bill had attended when he was an MA student at SOAS.

Graduate students had been calling for a weekly lecture series as early as the 1960's. Al Castagno (PO) who became the Center's second director had a project for this in the early 1970s - shortly before his death in 1974 - but it was under John Harris' (EC) directorship (1975-1985) that a regular "seminar" was gradually brought into being. Steve Baier (HI), who served as a de facto assistant director, was instrumental in organizing the seminar (and in pressing Hansen and Schulz into service for that purpose). The soon-to-be-renamed seminar series was then launched, and met with such a response that (as Bill Hansen recalls), "For a while we had so many people who wanted to present papers that we organized a second seminar that was named the Ruth First Seminar which met (as I recall) at noon on Thursdays. Ruth First, the anti-Apartheid activist, had been murdered in 1982.

The "Ruth First" seminar did not survive, but the "Walter Rodney Seminar" did - and was directed for some twenty years (after Bill and Gitte had left) by Jean Hay (HI) who ran it for nearly twenty years until she retired and moved home to California.

The rest (as they say) is history...

- 1. Bill had known Howard Zinn when he taught at Spelman College in the early 60s. He was a SNCC organizer and Zinn was one of SNCC's "Adult Advisers". One of his first books was "SNCC: The New Abolitionists." Bill went on to teach in Kyrgyzstan teaching at a post-communist startup university now known as the American University-Central Asia (1998) and later (2005) at the American University of Nigeria in Yola (Adamawa State, Nigeria) where he still works.
- 2. Brigitte went on to teach at Trinity College (Hartford CT). She is now retired and living in Germany.

"Graduate students had been calling for a weekly lecture series as early as the 1960's" Alix Saba, Pardee '11, '13



#### OUTREACH UPDATE

This past year, the Outreach Program partnered with Primary Source, a local education non-profit, to produce an intensive online course for educators, Modern African History, and to host a full-day workshop, Music of West Africa and the Diaspora. In December, we connected with thousands of passionate educators at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the African Studies Association (ASA) Conferences in Washington. D.C. In collaboration with several other area studies and outreach centers, we staffed our African Studies booth, hosted a half-day workshop for area teachers, and presented several topic-specific sessions. In the upcoming year, we are excited to release several new teaching resources and expand our programming in the Greater Boston area by introducing a monthly series of evening professional development.

Above: Resident: Zanzibar Town, Zanzibar by Ashrak Mascherano

Right: Visitor: Tigray, Ethiopia by

Leslie Belay

#### ADJUSTING FOCUS

by Ashika Patel

Boston University's African Studies Center has recently initiated #AdjustingFocus, a photography project and forthcoming educational exhibition. The project seeks to bring together a wide variety of images spanning the African continent. Taken by residents and visitors alike, these photographs challenge and diversify the understandings of what Africa is. Adjusting Focus is an opportunity to discuss the often stereotypical mental image bank Americans, especially students, have of Africa.

Each photographer categorizes themselves as a visitor or a resident of the country they photographed. The photographs are then organized into two categories and displayed online. The goal is to challenge the assumptions of what each photo type (visitor or resident) will look like and to explore the idiosyncrasies of photography from different perspectives—what do we, as viewers, choose to focus on? How does this change from person to person? How are the photographs different from what we might have expected?

The project serves as an opportunity to show viewers a diverse and ordinary collection of people living their lives throughout the 54 countries that make up the African continent in contrast to the more sensationalized and romanticized notions of Africa.

Adjust your focus and let yourself see Africa from a different perspective.





# Sara Berry: Recipient of the Distinguished Africanist Award, 2016

by Jeanne Penvenne

Sara S. Berry, Professor Emeritus, Johns Hopkins University BU African Studies Center Faculty, History and Economics, 1975 - 1991

Sara Berry has been a powerful intellectual force in African studies since the publication in 1975 of her book titled Cocoa, Custom and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria. Along with her many papers and articles, the insights from her award-winning monographs, Fathers work for their Sons (1985), No Condition is Permanent (1993) and Chiefs Know their Boundaries; essays on property, power and the past in Asante, 1896 - 1996 (2001) have powerfully shaped scholarly approaches to land tenure, agricultural labor, family strategies, rural economies and markets in Africa. Berry is a truly interdisciplinary scholar, mastering concepts in economics, history, anthropology, and development studies and bringing them into fruitful conversation. Her research and analysis regarding power, process, accumulation, mobility, and markets are truly foundational. Professor Berry's work is exceptionally broadly cited, with many scholars crediting her work for their own conceptual breakthroughs.

Berry's hallmark is her command of an enormous range of empirical evidence, based on years of field research in Nigeria and Ghana, and her deep and broad reading of relevant literature across the globe. There is remarkable clarity in her compilation of data, interpretation, and practical theory. She consistently marshals precise and detailed support from archives, oral sources, administrative, local and national policy statements, and court cases in making razor sharp arguments about complex socio-economic processes. Her work has reached a broad interdisciplinary audience. Berry's analysis of the complex links and processes that guide choices in agriculture, land management, and governance in Africa have come to guide policy makers. The vibrancy of contemporary research on dynamism, flexibility, and negotiation in the customary domain derives in many ways from her work. Our broader understanding of the manipulation of idioms of custom by rural elites in their guest for power and control over rural resources also owes much to the theoretical frameworks elaborated by Professor Berry. Berry's analytical vocabulary has become so commonplace that scholars working today may not be aware of where their formulations (hegemony on a shoestring, contingent ownership, conditions of access) first appeared.

Sara Berry is as compelling in scholarly conferences in her role as discussant as she is when presenting her own work. She is a much sought-after and appreciated critic and mentor who has collaborated with an impressive range of scholarly groups, universities, and institutions including CODESRIA, the Institute for African Studies/Legon, the MacArthur Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Ford Foundation, Oxfam, and the ASA.

Students, scholars, and colleagues from around the world have benefited from Professor Berry's insightful teaching, generous mentorship, and her contributions to collective publications. Scores of her former graduate students work in academia and other settings both on the African continent and beyond. Her students credit her with directly shaping their intellectual projects and professional lives. They deeply appreciate her wit, grace, patience, and deep loyalty. Her colleagues have continued to benefit from her generous engagement with their own endeavors, over the four decades since her first major publication. In sum, Sara S. Berry is both a leader and a pillar in African Studies and is a richly deserving recipient of the African Studies Association's Distinguished Africanist Award for 2016.



#### SHARE YOUR ADVENTURES WITH US

We are proud to feature the beautiful photography of our students, staff, and faculty in all of our publications here at the Center.

We would love to see all of your adventures across campus and across the continent if you're willing to share. There are several ways for us to keep up with what you're doing and what you've photographed no matter when it took place.

Adjusting Focus: Submit your photos from anywhere in Africa as a resident or visitor at AdjustingFocus.com.

Social Media: Tag us! We follow #OurBUAfrica to track our community near and far. Tag us on Instagram using @BuAfricanStudiesCenter.

Email Us: Send us your images to be featured in our publications. Send your name, affiliation, and any captions to our Program Administrator at xila89@bu.edu.

Cover Photos: Vanessa Kuria, CAS '18

#### Muslims Beyond the Arab World

Fallou Ngom's new book entitled **Muslims Beyond The Arab World, The Odyssey of 'Ajami and the Muridiyya** was released in July 2016. The book explores the tradition of writing African languages using the Arabic script (Ajami) alongside the rise of the Muridiyya Sufi order of Senegal. It demonstrates how the development of Ajami is entwined with the flourishing of the Muridiyya into one of sub-Saharan Africa's most powerful and dynamic Sufi organizations. It offers a close reading of the hagiographic and didactic Ajami texts of the Muridiyya, works largely unknown to scholars. The texts describe the odyssey of the founder of the Muridiyya, Ahmadu Bamba (1853-1927), his conflicts with local rulers and Muslim clerics and the French colonial administration, and the teachings he championed that shaped the identity of his followers.

Ngom demonstrates how the Murids used their written, recited, and chanted Ajami texts as an effective communication tool in conveying to the masses Bamba's poignant odyssey, doctrine, and the virtues he stood for and cultivated among his followers—self-esteem, self-reliance, strong faith, work ethic, pursuit of excellence, determination, nonviolence, and optimism in the face of adversity—without the knowledge of the French colonial administration and many academics. He argues that this is the source of the resilience, appeal, and expansion of Muridiyya, which has fascinated observers since its inception in 1883.

Muslims Beyond the Arab World is available via Oxford University Press.





#### **PUBLICATIONS**

The International Journal of African Historical Studies celebrates it's 50th anniversery with discounted prices on all hardcopy issues of the journal published from 2004 (IJAHS vol. 37) to 2015 (IJAHS vol. 48). Copies can be purchased for \$5.00 each, plus shipping. This includes the following special issues:

Colonial States and Civic Virtues in Africa (Luise White, guest editor), IJAHS 37:1 (2004)

Continuities in Governance in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial East Africa (Andrew Burton and Michael Jennings, guest editors), IJAHS 40:1 (2007)

The Political Ecology of Trade, Food Production, and Landscape Transformations in Northeast Tanzania: 1850-2000 (Mats Widgren, N. Thomas Hå kansson, and Lowe Bö rjeson, guest editors), IJAHS 41:3 (2008).

Current Trends in the Archaeology of African History (Ann B. Stahl and Adria LaViolette, guest editors), IJAHS 42:3 (2009)

Toward a History of Violence in Colonial Kenya (Matthew Carotenuto and Brett Shadle, guest editors), IJAHS 45:1 (2012)

Incorporating Medical Research into the History of Medicine in East Africa (Melissa Graboyes, guest editor), IJAHS 47:3 (2014)

Violence in the Contemporary Political History of Eastern Africa (Øystein H. Rolandsen and David M. Andersom, guest editors), IJAHS 48:1 (2015)

Exploring Post-Slavery in Contemporary Africa (Baz Lecocq and Éric Komlavi Hahonou, guest editors), IJAHS 48:2 (2015)

Wealth in Pluralities. Intersections of Money, Gender, and Multiple Values across African Societies (Charlotte Walker-Said and Andrea Felber Seligman, guest editors), IJAHS 48:3 (2015)

Supplies are limited. Contact us at ascpub@bu.edu to order and arrange for shipping.

#### LIBRARY

#### An Update from the African Studies Library

The beginning of a new semester serves as a good opportunity to bring you a brief update about our recent acquisitions activities. We have received a variety of materials from the following countries: Angola, Cape Verde, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Reunion, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania.

A couple of highlights include:

#### Agostinho Neto e a libertaçã o de Angola: 1949-1974: arquivos da PIDE-DGS

This five volume set was published by the Dr. Antó nio Agostinho Neto Foundation in Luanda. It includes approximately 6,000 documents gathered and produced by the Portuguese Secret Police during the struggle for Independence.

#### Dictionnaire amazighe - français: le parler des Ayt Wirra, Moyen Atlas, Maroc.

Published in 2013, this 1,095 page, comprehensive dictionary is one of several publications recently acquired either about (or in) Tamazight. It is also one of several new language dictionaries that we have acquired. Please note that these materials have not yet been added to the library catalog, but feel free to stop by the library and browse our newest arrivals.

We welcome your help in developing our collections; your purchase suggestions and observations concerning gaps or areas of weakness in our collection are much appreciated. While our mission is to collect materials broadly across Africa, we especially want to support your research and instruction needs. Stop by the library, call, or email us at asl@bu.edu.

We look forward to hearing from you!

