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The Nairobi Report

As Dr Thandika Mkandawire (Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) suggests in the foreword of the Nairobi Report, '[a]ttempts to improve Africa's prospects by focusing on scientific advances and the benefits accruing from them have all too often overlooked the important perspectives which the humanities and social sciences afford; perspectives which draw attention to the cultural and social dynamics of people and places and institutions.'

In September 2008, through an initiative led by the British Academy in collaboration with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), a group of 60 African scholars and university leaders, and their counterparts from UK universities, and research and funding bodies, met in Nairobi to discuss the practical steps that need to be taken to strengthen humanities and social science research in Africa.

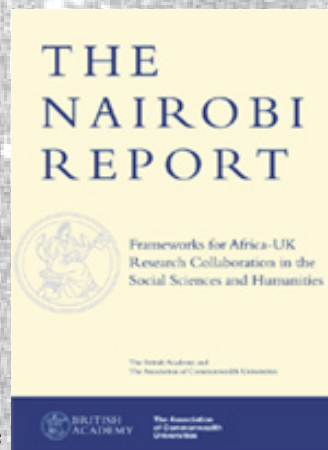
On 18th March 2010, the Nairobi Report was launched with a workshop at the British Institute in Eastern Africa. The one-day event, officially opened by Professor John Peel (representing the British Academy), was attended by many of the individuals who contributed to the report. The two morning panels, chaired by Professor John Mack (President, BIEA) and Professor Justin Willis (former Director, BIEA), saw several of the partnerships forged in the initial meeting in 2008 presenting their research. With subjects ranging

from 'non-formal education and poverty reduction' to 'the role of sculpture in relation to gender and HIV/AIDS' the panels demonstrated the diversity of research the Nairobi Report hopes to encourage.

The afternoon panel, chaired by Professor David Anderson (Director, BIEA), explored the challenges facing those involved in the humanities and social sciences in Africa, including discussions on the library services available and the difficulty of having research published in international peer-reviewed academic journals; the panel highlighted the dilemmas many researchers face on the continent.

Professor Graham Furniss (Chair of the British Academy Africa Panel) provided the plenary lecture, summarising the achievements of the Nairobi Report in identifying three priorities to supporting humanities and social science research: improving institutional foundations; forging collaboration within Africa and; investing in individuals.

The British Institute in Eastern Africa and the British Academy would like to thank everyone who attended the Nairobi Report Workshop for making it such a successful day. Further information regarding the Nairobi Report can be found on the BIEA website (<http://www.biea.ac.uk>). The full report can be downloaded in PDF format from the British Academy website at <http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/nairobi-report.cfm>



The Sealinks Project: Exploring the Early Indian Ocean

The Sealinks Project is a European Research Council-funded project initiated in 2008 and directed by Dr. Nicole Boivin of the University of Oxford. Its aim is to explore the emergence of long distance seafaring and connectivity in the Indian Ocean through a unique multidisciplinary approach bringing together archaeology, linguistics, molecular genetics and palaeoenvironmental studies. The project runs for 5 years, and will see fieldwork across many regions of the Indian Ocean, from East Africa to Sri Lanka. It features collaborations with a range of institutions including the National Museum of Kenya, University of Dar es Salaam, and the British Institute in Eastern Africa. The project has benefitted from the advice and assistance of both current and former directors and assistant directors of the BIEA, and receives critical logistical support from the institution. It also works collaboratively with other projects currently running in East Africa, including the Historical Ecologies of East African Landscapes Project and the KITE Tropical Ecosystem Dynamics Project.



Sealinks field excavations, Kilwa region, Tanzania.

Archaeological fieldwork for the Sealinks Project has so far focused on port or hinterland sites around the Indian Ocean, including the remarkable and deeply stratified port sites of Pattanam in south India and Mantai in Sri Lanka. One of the major themes of the project is the study of the contribution of small-scale societies beyond the Classical World to early Indian Ocean trade. There is an increasing recognition that major state-level societies like the Roman empire simply tapped into pre-existing trade networks, which had been operating for many millennia. The early maritime networks in East Africa, both local and extending further afield, are of significant interest to the project, and work has been initiated in Kilwa (led by Dr. Ted Pollard) and the Kilifi region of coastal Kenya (led by Dr. Richard Helm). A 3-year British Academy post-doctoral fellowship has been awarded to Dr. Alison Crowther of Oxford University to undertake starch grain analysis. This work will help to better understand the transition to agriculture in East Africa, and the arrival of crops and other plants from regions as



Kiprop Lagat (far left) giving his presentation in Panel 1 on heroes and the heroic, with (from left) Neil Carrier, chair Annie Coombes, and Heike Becker

distant as Southeast Asia.

On the genetics front, we have also undertaken work in East Africa, as well as Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in order to collect samples for a new phylogeographic study of taro. The work aims to try to reconstruct the timing and route(s) of entry of this important crop, one of a trio that arrived from Southeast Asia at a still unknown time period. Another study that will begin shortly will explore early seafaring, migrations and connections in the Indian Ocean through the study of commensal species like the ship rat, mouse and Asian house shrew.



Sealinks collaborator Dr. Peter Matthews, National Museum of Ethnography, Japan, with a sample of Colocasia esculenta.

We invite interested researchers to explore our website at <http://sealinks.arch.ox.ac.uk/>, as well as our group blog at <http://ancientindianocean.blogspot.com/>.

'Shaping the Heritage Landscape'

Scholars working on heritage and memory issues in East and southern Africa gathered at the BIEA on 5-6 May 2010 for a workshop featuring Professor Terence Ranger (University of Oxford) as keynote speaker.

'Shaping the Heritage Landscape: Perspectives from East and southern Africa' attracted a wide cross-section of participants including political scientists, historians, anthropologists, museologists, writers, editors, publishers and representatives from Kenyan human rights groups. The event was organised by Dr Lotte Hughes of the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, with colleagues Prof Karega-Munene of United States International University (USIU), Nairobi, and Prof Annie Coombes of Birkbeck College, University of London.

Together they are involved in a three-year research project called 'Managing Heritage, Building Peace: Museums, memorialisation and the uses of memory in Kenya', funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the UK. Dr Hughes is also involved with Prof Munene in a



British Academy-funded UK-Africa Partnership project that runs concurrently. This was an opportunity for the three to present on work in progress, and to showcase other new work on related themes in these two regions.

A panel on ‘commemorating heroes and the heroic’ featured Dr Neil Carrier, who described the legacy of Giriama resistance leader Mekatilili; Prof Heike Becker, who presented on the Namibian National Heroes Acre, and Kiprop Lagat, of NMK who spoke about commemoration of the August 1998 bombings in Nairobi. A second panel, on ‘community, language, spirituality and politics in relation to cultural expression’ featured Dr Belle Asante Tarsitani, who spoke about the regional museum boom in Ethiopia; Prof Frederick Kang’ethe Iraki, who described the importance of sheng as a hybrid language spoken by Kenyan youth; Dr Sada Mire, who presented on the historical significance of sacred landscapes in the Horn of Africa; and Timothy Gachanga, who spoke about the history of the pacifist Akorino faith group in Kenya.

Common themes that emerged included: contestation over the custodianship and management of heritage; the lack of inclusive historical narratives at national and local level; the challenges of commemorating liberation struggles; official suppression of public memory and what this can lead to; tensions between local and global initiatives; and the difficulties of engaging with both private and public memory.

The organisers would like to thank everyone who attended for contributing to a very stimulating discussion, and to thank the British Academy for funding the event.

For more information on the research, and a fuller report on the workshop, please see <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/ferguson-centre/memorialisation/index.html>

Profile of a graduate attachée

Each year BIEA offers a number of attachments to recent graduates from the UK, Ireland and Eastern Africa. These attachments provide the graduates with a wide range of research experiences and help them to develop topics for further study. Graduate attachées also provide assistance for ongoing research projects and those wishing to make use of this scheme should visit our website for more information. In this issue we profile the experiences of a recent attachée, Sarah Jeavons.

Sarah Jeavons: June – October 2009

My first weeks at the institute were spent working on archive material.

With the beginning of July came two trips with Dr. Paul Lane. First was a day trip to Kitui, a kind of recce, to collect oral histories about the 19th century ivory trade. The second trip with Paul was to Tanzania. Over the course of a couple of weeks we travelled to Pangani town on the Swahili coast, inland along the Pangani valley, into the Pare mountains, and back to Nairobi. Conducting archaeological survey we wound our way back towards Kenya from Tanzania, spending our time clambering through the undergrowth looking for signs of human settlement, often accompanied by locals who would emerge eager to help. From camping out under the stars near Korogwe, to waking up early to the sound of the call to prayer in Pangani town, it was wonderful and I am grateful to Paul for taking such a 'green' anthropologist along for the ride!

Back in Nairobi I started on more familiar turf - a couple of Anthropology projects! For Michelle Osborne I conducted archival research at the McMillan Library, focused on the history of Kibera. Through the process of collecting and collating data I learnt a great deal and over the weeks I became part of the furniture in the McMillan basement.

Simultaneously I began working for Dr. Monica Bonaccorso on her Wellcome Trust funded project ‘With the Public in Mind: Ethnographic Investigations of Medical Science and Media in Kenya. The project looks into media, civil society and research institutions in Kenya, working in relation to knowledge dissemination in the fight against both HIV/AIDS and malaria, and is vast. I was tasked with focusing on civil society and so set about securing interviews with various organisations in Nairobi. After some dead ends I conducted my first interviews. And so the fieldwork began!

By the time



Sarah Jeavons and BIEA's Benson Kimeu consult in the field

Monica arrived in Kenya I had managed to provide a decent foundation for us to continue exploring some of the central questions of her research. Over two months Monica and I met some inspiring individuals, dedicating their lives to providing vital support to those infected with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS.

Back in the UK, I often reminisce about my summer with the BIEA. The experience was simply invaluable. It brought greater confidence in my research abilities and my capacity to work through challenges. From working at the institute in an administrative capacity, to participating in an archaeological survey and then conducting the work with both Michelle and, primarily, Monica, the summer is one which I remember fondly. Whatever career path I decide to take, the 'BIEA experience' showed me the benefits of being proactive, being creative and, ultimately, of challenging oneself.

New Staff at BIEA

In January we appointed a new office secretary and bookkeeper, Mrs Janet Njoroge, whose job will be to assist our Office Manager, Mr Humphrey Mathenge, as he takes on new responsibilities. In April we took on Mr John Arum as IT officer in a joint position with IFRA. We also appointed a Research Fellow, Kerry Kyaa, on a two-year fixed-term contract. Kerry is an MPH graduate from the University of Nottingham, whose research at BIEA will focus on social and health aspects relating to the continued practice of female genital mutilation in eastern Africa. Further details on website staff pages.

Change of London Secretary

During December 2009 Mrs Jeanie Moyo retired from BIEA following many years of dedicated service. We wish her all the very best in her future. She was replaced in January by Jane Gillespie (biea@britac.ac.uk) who will work for BIEA on a part time basis. We look forward to working with her.

Appointment of New Director (2010-2012)

From October 2010 the BIEA Directorship will be taken up by Dr Ambreena Manji on a two year secondment from the School of Law, Keele University. We are extremely excited by Dr Manji's arrival. Her legal research will bring a welcome new dimension to BIEA's profile.



In her writing, Ambreena takes a critical and interdisciplinary approach to law and seeks to place it in its wider historical, economic and political context. There are three major strands to Ambreena's research. She has published widely on women's land rights, on the history of African legal education, and on portrayals of law and African literature.

Upcoming workshop: *The Public Understanding of Science in Africa*. To be held at the British Institute in East Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 22-24th September 2010. It will be organized by the Centre of African Studies, University of Cambridge, UK, together with BIEA, Nairobi, Kenya and The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

New Research Seminars Series

In collaboration with the National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi University, Kenyatta University, and IFRA organises research seminars throughout the year. During these seminars postgraduate research students and other researchers discuss their ongoing/completed research, publications they may have or any other research interest(s). For more details, contact our Research Fellow, Kerry Kyaa at kerry.kyaa@biea.ac.uk. A program of events will be posted on our website shortly.

BRITISH INSTITUTE IN EASTERN AFRICA

Postal address: P.O. Box 30710, 00100 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 20 4347195
Email: office@biea.ac.uk

Physical address: Laikipia Road, Kileleshwa, Nairobi
Fax: +254 20 4347195
<http://www.biea.ac.uk>

British Institute in Eastern Africa is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with No. 3341342
Registered Office: 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH
Charity Registration No. 1061622