

State and Society in Africa before the European Conquest

History 63/Black Studies 48

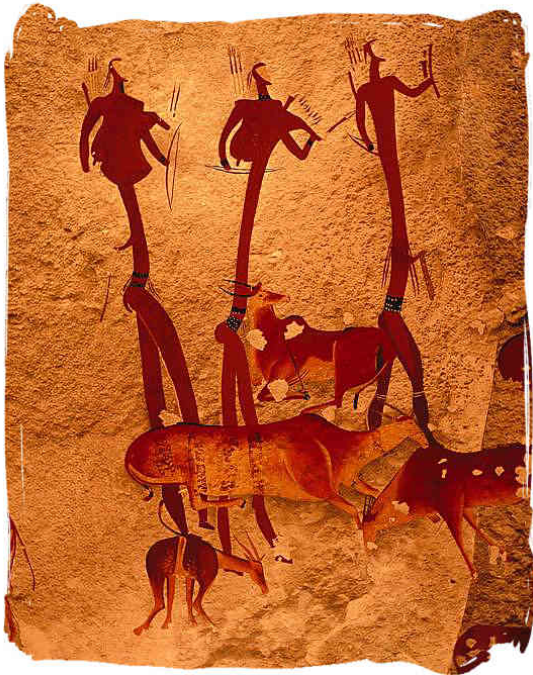
Tuesday-Thursday 10:00-11:20

Professor Sean Redding

Chapin 25

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Office Hours: Monday 1-2, Tuesday 11:30-12:30, or by appointment



The African continent has been called by one historian the social laboratory of humanity. Art, trade, small-scale manufacturing, medical knowledge, religion, state systems, history and legend all flourished before the formal political take-over of the continent by European powers in the late nineteenth century, and continue to have a decisive impact on African societies today. It is this varied and sometimes difficult to access history of states and cultures in the period before 1885 that this course will examine. Initially, we will investigate the notion of “tribe” and its relationship to language, political affiliation and identity, and we will examine myths, both those constructed by non-Africans about the continent as well as those created by Africans themselves. The course will then go on to explore historical narratives of precolonial Africa while discussing four topics in depth: slave-ownership within African societies and the impact

of the global slave trade; the interaction of religion and power on the rise and fall of the kingdom of Kongo and of other west African states; the genesis of the Zulu state in southern Africa and the historical evidence behind the legend of Shaka; and the changing roles of women as economic, political and social actors in the period before 1885. We will discuss some of the differences between oral historical narratives and written ones while we analyze both primary documents as well as histories written by scholars over the past half-century to understand both the history of the people living on the continent as well as the active process of constructing that history.

The following books are required for the course and are available at Amherst Books:

John Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony*

Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Power of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*

In addition, there is a small photocopy packet for you to purchase in the History Department Office in Chapin 11. Many assigned articles will be available via E-Reserves rather than in the photocopied packet, however. If you have questions about how to access an e-reserved reading, please contact me.

Requirements: There are two class meetings per week and most classes will focus primarily on discussions of assigned readings. Each student must be prepared to discuss all of the readings. Students will be asked to post comments on the on-line course site periodically about specified readings or topics; these postings will count towards the class participation grade. Attendance at the class meetings, posting comments when asked to do so, and active participation in discussions will together count as the class participation grade, which in turn will count as 20% of the final grade. As a rough guideline for class participation grades, an example would be that if a student comes to every class and posts comments whenever required but never speaks in class, that student would receive an A- or B+ in class participation depending on the quality of the posted comments.

Eighty percent of the final grade will derive from five papers. The first paper will be short, and will be graded only as a pass/fail and will count for five percent of the final grade. The second paper will be graded and will be worth 15%; each subsequent paper will be worth 20%. The paper topics will be based upon the readings and discussions, and will not involve extensive research outside of assigned readings. I will distribute paper topics approximately ten days before the due date. You should submit your papers to me via email either in a form readable by Microsoft Word (a *.doc or *.rtf file) or in a PDF file.

If you have a technological, medical or other problem that prevents you from successfully submitting your paper, you must contact me directly via email either on or before the due date/time. No exceptions. A paper that is handed in one to two days late without either a medical or cataclysmic technological reason will have one-third of a grade deducted (example: an "A" paper will be graded as an "A-," a "B+" paper as a "B," etc.). If the paper is three days late, it will be dropped two-thirds of a grade (a "B+" would become a "B-"); four to six days late, it will be dropped a full letter grade (a "B+" would become a "C+").

Your papers must be your own original work. This means that you must be extremely careful to acknowledge your intellectual debt to other authors and sources. In your papers you may either provide short form citations (author's last name and page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence), or full footnotes. For correct footnote form, see either Kate Turabian's *A Manual of Style for Writes of Term Papers, Theses, etc.*, or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The Writing Center at Amherst College maintains an informative webpage on writing and avoiding plagiarism: <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/acadhonesty/sources>. I strongly suggest that you read this page if you have never done so, and if you have read it before, that you re-read it to refresh your memory.

In general, any direct quotation must be inside quotation marks and be followed by a citation; any section in a paper that paraphrases the work of another author must be followed by a citation; any data or facts (beyond what is, broadly speaking, "common knowledge") must be followed by a citation or footnote. The handing in of written work that does not provide proper attribution is, on its face, plagiarism; whether you intended to plagiarize or not is irrelevant. You must take great care in doing research and preparing your papers so that you are able to keep your own thoughts and analyses separate from those of the authors whose works we will read. Simply changing one or two words or reversing the order of clauses in a sentence drawn from the work of another scholar does not relieve you of the obligation of citing the author. Please note, in addition, that you may not "recycle" any paper that you have written for another class; such

recycling is unacceptable. **Any** instances of recycling or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the class dean.

Writing good papers is a complicated process, and you may find outside resources helpful in planning, writing and revising your papers. One helpful on-line site is maintained by the Boston University Department of History: http://www.bu.edu/history/writing_guide.html. This guide not only discusses plagiarism, it also discusses framing a paper topic, the importance of writing style and clarity in writing history papers, and the integral role of revision in the writing process. To assist you in revising drafts of your papers before you submit them, you should consider taking working drafts to the Writing Center on-campus. For some papers I may give extended deadlines for those students who need the time to take drafts to the Writing Center and then incorporate suggested revisions. I am also willing to read and comment on drafts or partial drafts before the due date. In general I would need a draft at least three days before the due date in order to get it back to you in time for you to hand in the paper. I do not ordinarily allow students to revise and re-submit papers that have already been handed in and graded.

African History: Theories and Definitions

Tuesday Sept. 7

Discussion of course



Thursday Sept. 9

1) Finn Fuglestad, "The Trevor-Roper Trap or the Imperialism of History: An Essay," *History in Africa*, Vol. 19, (1992), pp. 309-326 (e-reserve).

Myths about Africa and African Myths

Tuesday Sept. 14

1) Donald R. Wright, "What Do You Mean There Were No Tribes in Africa?: Thoughts on Boundaries--and Related Matters--in Precolonial Africa," *History in Africa* 26 (1999): pp. 409-26 (e-reserve).
2) Jeffrey Fadiman, *When We Began, There Were Witchmen: An Oral history from Mount Kenya*, pp. 1-18 (e-reserve).

Thursday Sept. 16

1) Martin Hall, "The Legend of the Lost City: Or, the Man with Golden Balls," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1995), pp. 179-99 (e-reserve).
2) Axel-Ivar Berglund, *Zulu Thought Patterns and*

Symbolism, pp. 32-37 (e-reserve).

PASS/FAIL PAPER DUE ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, AT 5 P.M.

Religion and Power, Trade and Wealth in Precolonial Africa

Tuesday Sept. 21

- 1) David M. Gordon, "History on the Luapula Retold: Landscape, memory and Identity in the Kazembe Kingdom," *Journal of African History* 47 (2006), pp. 21-42 (e-reserve).
- 2) Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a history of political tradition in Equatorial Africa*, pp. 3-26 (e-reserve).

Thursday Sept. 23

- 1) John Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony*, pp. 1-81.

Tuesday Sept. 28

- 1) Thornton, *The Kongolese St. Anthony*, pp. 82-214.



Thursday Sept. 30

- 1) T.M. McCaskie, "Innovational Eclecticism: The Asante Empire and Europe in the nineteenth century," *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 14 (1972), pp. 30-45 (e-reserve).
- 2) Documents from David Robinson and David Smith, "Osei Bonsu and the Political Economy of the Asante Empire," *Sources of the African Past* (e-reserve).

Tuesday Oct. 5

- 1) T.M. McCaskie, "The Consuming Passions of Kwame Boakye: An essay on agency and identity in Asante history," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 13 (2000), pp. 43-62 (e-reserve).

FIRST GRADED PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY,

OCTOBER 6, AT 5 P.M.

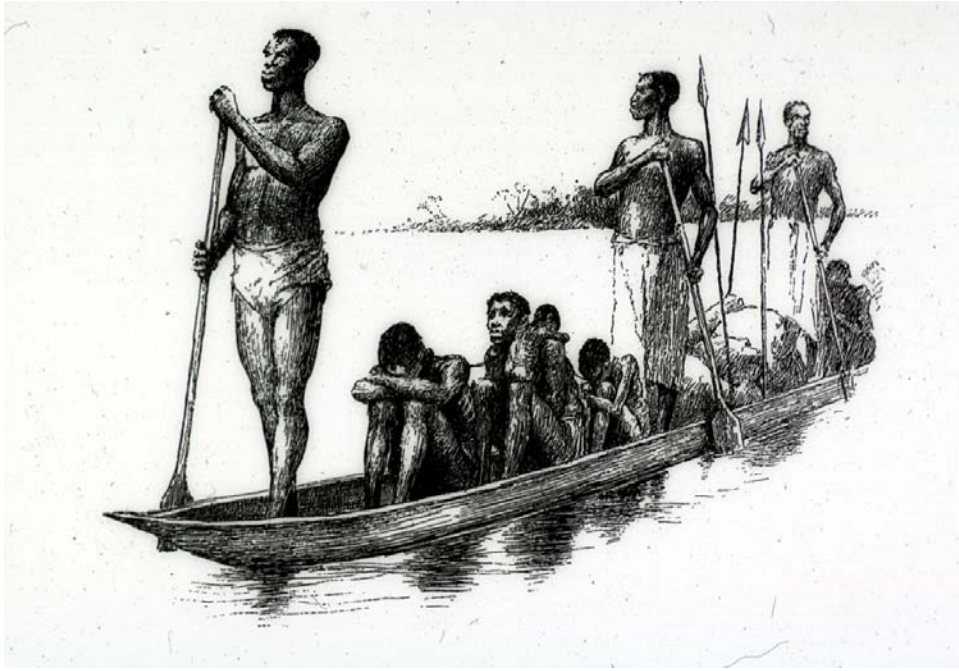
The International Slave Trade and Domestic Slavery in African Societies

Thursday Oct. 7

For Thursday's class, explore the maps at the following website:

<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/intro-maps.faces>

- 1) David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A re-assessment," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (2001), pp. 17-46 (e-reserve).



Mid-Semester Break

Thursday Oct. 14

1) David Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (2001), pp. 69-92 (e-

reserve) .

2) Sharon Lafraniere, "Tracing a Mutiny by Slaves Off South Africa in 1766," *New York Times* 24 Aug. 2005: A3(L) (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/24/international/africa/24slaves.html>)

Tuesday Oct. 19

1) "Contemporary Views of Slaving and Slavers," in David Northrup, ed., *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 67-96 (e-reserve).

Video shown in class: "Gorée: Door of no return" (30 minutes) DT549.9 G67 G67

Thursday Oct. 21

1) G. Ugo Nwokeji, "African Conceptions of Gender and the Slave Traffic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58 (Jan., 2001), pp. 47-68 (e-reserve).

2) Charles Piot, "Of Slaves and the Gift: Kabre sale of kin during the era of the slave trade," *Journal of African History* 37 (1996), pp. 31-49 (e-reserve).

Tuesday Oct. 26

1) Linda Heywood, "Slavery and Its Transformation in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 1491-1800," *Journal of African History* 50 (2009), pp. 1-22 (e-reserve).

Thursday Oct. 28

1) Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, "The Business of Slaving: Pawnship in Western Africa, 1600-1810," *Journal of African History* 42 (2001), pp. 67-89 (e-reserve).

2) J. Willis and S. Miers, "Becoming a Child of the House," *Journal of African History* 38 (1997), pp. 479-495 (e-reserve).

Tuesday Nov. 2

J. Glassman, "The Bondsman's New Clothes: The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast," *Journal of African History* 32 (1991), 277-312 (e-reserve).

PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, AT 5 P.M.

Gender Roles and Women as Historical Actors in African Societies

Thursday Nov. 4

- 1) Beth Greene, "The Institution of Woman-Marriage in Africa: A Cross-Cultural Analysis," *Ethnology*, Vol. 37, No. 4, (Autumn, 1998), pp. 395-412 (e-reserve).
- 2) Oyeronke Oyewumi, "Inventing Gender: Questioning Gender in Precolonial Yorubaland," in R. Collins, ed., *Problems in African History*, pp. 245-50 (e-reserve).

Tuesday Nov. 9

- 1) Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28 (1995), pp. 481-508 (e-reserve).
- 2) Barbara Cooper, "Reflections on Slavery, Seclusion, and Female Labour in the Maradi Region of Niger in the 19th and 20th Centuries," *Journal of African History* 35 (1994), pp. 61-79 (e-reserve).

Thursday Nov. 11

- 1) Leonard J. Beecher, "The Stories of the Kikuyu," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 11, No. 1, (Jan., 1938), pp. 80-87 (e-reserve).
- 2) Claire C. Robertson, "Gender and Trade Relations in Central Kenya in the Late Nineteenth Century," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 30, No. 1, (1997), pp. 23-47 (e-reserve).

Video: *Taafe Fanga [Skirt Power]*. See via streaming video for class on Tuesday

Tuesday Nov. 16

- 1) M. Wright, "Gender, Women and Power in Africa, 1750-1914," *A Companion to Gender History*, pp. 413-29 (e-reserve).
- 2) "Sister of Bones," in *The Girl Who Married a Lion and Other Tales from Africa*, ed. by Alexander M. Smith, pp. 36-42 (e-reserve).

PAPER DUE ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, AT 5 P.M.

The Southern African Mfecane as Event and as History



Thursday Nov. 18

- 1) Norman Etherington, "Were There Large States in the Coastal Regions of Southeast Africa before the Rise of the Zulu Kingdom?" *History in Africa*, Vol. 31, (2004), pp. 157-183 (e-reserve).
- 2) Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*, pp. 1-54 (packet).

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tuesday Nov 30

- 1) Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*, pp. 70-84, 97-127, 148-55 (packet).
- 2) Documents relating to Shaka and Zulu history (e-reserve).

Thursday Dec. 2

1) Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, pp. 1-71.

Video: Shaka, episode 5. See via streaming video for class on Tuesday.

Tuesday Dec. 7

1) S. Hanretta, "Women, Marginality and the Zulu State: Women's Institutions and Power in the Early Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 39, No. 3, (1998), pp. 389-415 (e-reserve).

2) Michael R. Mahoney, "The Zulu Kingdom as a Genocidal and Post-genocidal society, c. 1810 to the Present," *Journal of Genocide Research*, Volume 5, Issue 2, 2003, pp. 251 – 268

Thursday Dec. 9

1) Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, pp. 168-215.



Concluding Thoughts

Tuesday Dec 14

1) John Edward Philips, "What Is African History?" in *Writing African History*, ed. by J.E. Philips, pp. 25-48 (e-reserve).

PAPER DUE
THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 16, AT 5
P.M.