

# Program of African Studies



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

## Debating Islamic gender dynamics in Africa

by Margot Badran

### "Gender and Islam in Africa: Discourses, Practices, and Empowerment of Women"

was the theme of the fourth annual international colloquium convened by the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA) at the Program of African Studies. Held on May 20–22 and drawing presenters from Africa, North America, and Europe, this first major international gathering of scholars on Islam and gender in Africa

included senior scholars who have helped lay the theoretical and epistemological foundations of African gender studies and younger scholars who raised new questions.

Presenters took up current epistemological and theoretical concerns and pointed to future directions in the field. These included women's religious re/interpretation; Sufism as an Islamic way of experiencing gender; women's narratives, poetry, and song; gender activism and collective feminist struggle; Muslim law reform; sexuality and the body; violence against women; and the gendered implications of war and displacement.

Several colloquium papers examined diverse modes and contexts of gender activism, such as that of the

Sudanese Republican Sisters and two competing women's movements in Morocco.

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ISITA's May colloquium drew participants from around the world – mostly women, mainly from Africa.

## PAStories

### African scholars and the African humanities

The decline of African universities can be viewed as a call to move African intellectual production beyond its traditions. Last June PAS and Northwestern's Kaplan Center for the Humanities held a symposium at which diverse perspectives on the state of scholarship in the African humanities, as well as ideas that should guide PAS in designing a new program in the arts and humanities, were discussed. Read the full report in PAStories, pages 4–5.

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## Consortium identifies strategies for African development

Representatives of 15 institutions in Africa, Europe, and the United States met for a July 15–18 conference in Eerbeek, the Netherlands, to discuss the agenda and structure of a new PAS-led initiative: the Consortium for Development Partnerships (CDP).

CDP's design took shape over the past year as a response to the slow pace of economic development, democratization, and conflict resolution in many African countries. The consortium recognizes that research, development, and policy organizations can improve this record by working together in a sustained way.

Sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the July conference was convened to identify research and development projects for the CDP in three thematic areas: democracy and state-capacity building; private sector growth and poverty reduction; and regionalism and peace building.

The CDP's first four-year phase (2005–08) will focus on Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria. Proposed project topics include the funding of democratic processes, providing clinical legal education and greater access to justice, stimulating entrepreneurship in agribusiness, and strengthening ECOWAS's capacity to prevent conflict.

Representing Northwestern at the conference were PAS director Richard Joseph, assistant director Alexandra Gillies, law professor Cynthia Bowman, PAS and Kellogg School of Management research associate Atul Wad, and PAS visiting scholar Stephen Ndegwa. Through CDP activities, Northwestern will expand its engagement in African development issues and enable students to work internationally on policy-relevant research.

CDP updates will be posted at [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/programs\\_cdp.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/programs_cdp.html) as projects begin.



**A critical issue of our time** is the highly uneven impact of globalization. Some of the most dynamic centers of the global economy are in countries formerly included in the “Third World.” How can African countries benefit from such trends? Part of the answer lies in rethinking where and what Africa is. Author and sociologist Orlando Patterson once wrote, “Jamaica is no longer only in Jamaica.” At a recent symposium at PAS, distinguished Senegalese scholar Souleymane Bachir Diagne declared that he still considered himself, despite living and working abroad for much of each year, a member of the intellectual community of Senegal. Both Patterson and Diagne were alluding to the contemporary phenomenon of transnationalism, to communities that are no longer solely defined by territorial boundaries.

Created over the last 500 years by overseas exploration and conquest, the slave trade, imperialism, and migration, many of today’s African diasporas — i.e., African communities outside the continent, which include an estimated one million transnational Africans in the United States who were born in Africa — remain engaged in economic and social networks that crisscross the Atlantic. For many African countries (and those of other regions), remittances from the diasporas match or exceed official development aid and private direct investment. Families overseas send home support for education and social welfare to compensate for less government funding in these and other areas.

African studies must pay greater attention to the structure and impact of transnational networks. As more Africans flee the continent, or postpone returning after completing their studies abroad, the balance is shifting in the living standards, professional satisfaction, and disposable income between émigrés and those who remain at home. Africa is steadily losing capital and people to regions that already outstrip it in every category of growth and development. A key question is how these losses can be recaptured.

PAS will explore the feasibility of a Program on Migration and Development, in association with Africa-based initiatives, that can identify ways of mobilizing the resources of overseas Africans more effectively to meet the challenges at home. The transnational perspective of these migrants, who voluntarily assist their relatives and home communities, must be tapped to provide broader inputs for development. More reliable opportunities must be created for capital investment beyond the confines of the family compound. Knowledge acquired overseas about how to build and sustain successful schools, hospitals, banks, transport systems, and corporations, and the values transmitted daily within such institutions, must be transferred to Africa and adapted to local conditions. Rapidly developing countries, such as China and India, benefit from such transfusions by members of their diasporas who transmit without fanfare valuable technologies, both basic and sophisticated. Africa has many sons and daughters overseas with such knowledge and skills; the challenge is to accelerate this vital transfusion.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Joseph". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Richard Joseph  
Director, Program of African Studies  
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## Debating *continued from page 1*

Others discussed modes of activism by women in behalf of national liberation (in Algeria and Eritrea, for example) that simultaneously constitute forms of gender struggle, or may lead to it. Presenters also focused on law, a perennial concern of Muslim women reformists. South African lawyer, scholar, and activist Rashida Manjoo in her keynote address explored the complex pros and cons of opting for the introduction of Muslim family law in South Africa. Another paper analyzed repeated state attempts to reform the national family law in Senegal, which is based on Western-inspired modern law. A paper on Mauritanian experience showed how Moorish women pass on oral knowledge of Islamic law to each other and how they take advantage of Islam-endorsed legal mechanisms to insert conditions in the marriage contract.

Other papers demonstrated various ways Muslim women are entering the interpretive arena long dominated by men. A paper focusing on Niger discussed how a Sufi octogenarian poet disseminates gender-progressive



**Penda Mbow (left) and Amsata Sow Sidibe, both of Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, presented ISITA colloquium papers.**

readings of the Qur'an to a wide audience who accepts her as an authority. An analysis of autobiographical narratives of two Darfur women demonstrated that while some women display visible agency and exert wide public authority, others take control over their individual lives in less visible ways. A paper by one of the colloquium's few male presenters showed how

Sufism can be put to the task of "deconstructing the macho ego."

Finally, several papers demonstrated how gender-progressive Islamic discourse can be marshaled to protect women against domestic and public forms of violence and, in South Africa, appropriated in the campaign to control HIV/AIDS. A paper investigating two cases of Nigerian women accused of adultery was concerned with why women are more often and more likely than men to be accused under the new *sha'riah* laws of northern Nigeria.

Efforts are now under way to publish the colloquium papers together with a selection of papers by other researchers. For a complete roster of colloquium presenters and their papers, visit [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/publications\\_conf.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/publications_conf.html). An expanded version of the foregoing article is available on the web site and also in print. To receive a copy by mail, please call 847-491-7323 or write to [african-studies@northwestern.edu](mailto:african-studies@northwestern.edu).

## PAStories

### Expanding appreciation for African art: A museum curator's perspective

On May 10, as part of the Melville J. Herskovits Library Jubilee, Alisa LaGamma, curator of the department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, gave a presentation titled "Africa's Artistic Heritage: Six Approaches to Expanding Appreciation." She pointed out that American universities, notably Northwestern and the Herskovits Library, have done much to draw attention to Africa's achievements in the visual arts. LaGamma also described the concepts behind past exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum, including "Echoing Images: Couples in African Sculpture," "Genesis: Ideas of Origins in African Sculpture," and "Art and Oracle: Spirit Voices of Africa." She said that in staging these exhibits she and her colleagues sought to balance the aesthetic value of individual pieces with the cultural importance of the artworks to their societies of origin. Following her presentation, when various audience members spoke for or against "artistic" versus "anthropological" approaches to African art, LaGamma said that both tactics can be considered valid, so long as their use expands the place of African art within the greater museum world.

— Michael Chanin (*arts and sciences*, '06)



**Alisa LaGamma of the Metropolitan Museum of Art**

### Symposium will probe meanings and memory of the Haitian Revolution

Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti's independence on January 1, 1804, bringing an end to the only successful slave revolution in history and transforming the colony of Saint-Domingue into the second independent nation in the Western hemisphere. To mark the bicentennial of Haitian independence, an October 22–23 symposium at Northwestern will bring together scholars of French and Francophone literature, history, English, political science, and sociology to explore the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the Atlantic world and the ways in which literary, historical, and political discourse in and outside Haiti have shaped the memory of the revolution. To view the symposium schedule and event details, go to [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/Pdfs/HaitianSymposiumOct2004.pdf](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/Pdfs/HaitianSymposiumOct2004.pdf).

### PAS scholar to research Women's empowerment under Islamic law

Margot Badran, preceptor of the 2003–04 Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, plans to undertake research in Nigeria on a grant from the Fulbright New Century Scholars Program, whose 2004–05 theme is "Equality and the Global Empowerment of Women." Badran will explore the high-profile case of Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman convicted of adultery and threatened with death by stoning in her home state of Katsina where shar'iah law had been recently instituted. Lawal was acquitted in a final court appeal that successfully deployed Islamic argumentation. The workings of justice that resulted in acquittal, Badran argues, can be seen as a triumph for Islamic feminism. At the center of Badran's research project is the collection of narratives on the case by women activists who defended Lawal, members of the legal profession, and other women from different walks of life who took up Lawal's cause. Badran explores how these women have processed the events around the case and how they may have given rise to a narrative, or legend, of homegrown Islamic fem-



"African intellectuals are a privileged people who have challenged systems of oppression . . . but have also let us down." – Micere Mugo

inism in Nigeria. Her hypotheses and questions represent a striking departure from knee-jerk portrayals, especially in the Western media, of an oppressive shar'iah at work.

### June symposium debates past and future trends in African scholarship in the humanities

The June 3 symposium "African Scholars and the African Humanities," cochaired by Sandra Richards, professor of African American studies and theater, and PAS director Richard Joseph, convened several leading scholars in the African humanities for a lively exchange on the state of the African university, the role and self-image of the African scholar, and new directions in African intellectual production.

to institutions, and the way we construct institutions," and a change in "philosophies that have guided the way we run individual and public organizations." He proposed that African studies must overcome "the insider-outsider distinction between its principal producers as well as generate a body of theories that account for the damage that such a distinction wreaks."

Micere Mugo, professor of African American studies at Syracuse University, remarked on the "parrot mentality" of African intellectuals who quote too much of Western theoreticians' work and not each other's, much less African women's work. She pointed out that even with their economic marginalization, African intellectuals are a privileged people "who have challenged systems of oppression to move history forward, but have also let us down." She stressed the need to redress the devaluation of scholars and the devaluation of the humanities as a field of knowledge that is less viable than others.

Abiola Irele, professor of Afro-American studies and Romance languages and literatures at Harvard University, critiqued the perception of African studies as "a tap root of anthropology" and the source of "a genre of literature

Declaring "a profound crisis of categorization" in the African humanities, Biodun Jeyifo, professor of English at Cornell University, argued in favor of an outlook that not only recognizes the world's division into zones of advanced, semi-advanced, and peripheral capitalism but also acknowledges the further division of the world into "advanced, semi-advanced, and peripheral-dependent post-colonial societies." Insofar as most African societies fall into the third zone in both instances, he said, it "defies logic" to expect that [African societies] would have viable institutions.

Nigerian author and poet Ochia Ofeimun called for "a redescription of the way we [African scholars] look at ourselves, the way we relate

## EMINENT HISTORIAN RETIRES

On May 14, PAS and the history and religion departments celebrated the career of John O. Hunwick, who retired in August after 23 years of teaching at Northwestern. Hunwick taught Arabic language and African history in the Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, and Egypt before coming to Northwestern in 1981.

Richard Joseph, PAS director, chaired the retirement observance in Harris Hall. Speakers from Northwestern included President Henry S. Bienen, history department chair Sarah Maza, religion department chair Barbara Newman, and Hunwick's religion department colleague Richard Kieckhefer. Guest speakers included Hunwick's former students Robert S. Kramer (St. Norbert College) and Muhammad Sani Umar (Arizona State University) and colleagues Charles Stewart (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias (University of Birmingham), and R. S. O'Fahey (University of Bergen). Members of Hunwick's family also gave testimonials. Speakers commented on Hunwick's pioneering work on the intellectual history of Islamic



In retirement John Hunwick (at podium) expects to devote time to writing, bibliographical projects, and the work of ISIA.

Africa and his tremendous Arabic language skills, and also on his wit and courage, his generosity with students and accessibility to junior scholars, and his commitment to his family.

As a professor emeritus, Hunwick will continue to work on writing and bibliographical projects and will contribute to PAS's Institute for the Study of Islam and Africa (ISIA), an extension of the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa cofounded by Hunwick and R. S. O'Fahey at Northwestern in 2000.

with a peculiar, exotic appeal for a general public," which has allowed a sidestepping of social and political issues that should be at the center of African studies. He suggested a broadening of African studies beyond the anthropological approach and advised caution in embracing the postmodern "new relativism" that questions the possibility of African studies as a coherent discipline that engages concrete issues. Irele also called for a new African intellectual authority and moral imperative to look at African societies from African perspectives and to responsibly take on roles as teachers for our societies.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, professor of philosophy, and Nasrin Qader, assistant professor of French and Italian and comparative literary studies, both of Northwestern, were discussants. Diagne evoked two narratives: the narrative of



Symposium participants (from left) Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Sandra Richards, Odia Ofeimun, Biodun Jeyifo, and Richard Joseph

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progress and faith in the liberating power of knowledge, associated with the founding of the University of Dakar, as well as the post-structural adjustment narrative of decline, with its constituent problems of campus violence and internal brain drain. He proposed a third narrative: refounding the African university based on the model of CODESRIA, in which both the continental and relocated African intellectual communities are held

together. Qader invited further discussion of the factors that have given form to different categories of African intellectuals and advised against a theory-praxis dichotomy whereby thought becomes subservient to "immediate and truly revolutionary action." She asked for an honest consideration of what postmodernism reveals about earlier assumptions and of whether the "indigenous versus European" distinction in literature can escape

the discourses of authenticity and nostalgia for origins, for which the Negritude Movement was criticized.

Further coverage of this symposium is provided online at [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/video\\_archives.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/video_archives.html).  
— David Afriyie Donkor (*performance studies*)

## STUDENT AWARDS

In June PAS awarded undergraduate minors in African studies to five members of the class of 2004: history major **Tracy Carson**, who begins studies of South Africa's anti-apartheid movement as a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University this fall; international development policy ad hoc major **Anisa Czerniejewski**, who was a summer intern at the Carter Center in Atlanta for the Global Development Initiative and will intern this fall at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.; anthropology major **Anya Drabkin**, who won the 2004 Ivor Wilks Prize in African History for her essay "Women and Gender in the Mau Mau Rebellion"; journalism and history major **Sara Melillo**, who begins studies this fall for an MPH at Tulane University as a Brush Foundation Scholar in International Reproductive Health Policy; and religion major **Lucy Tang**, who did research on multiple sclerosis at Evanston Hospital in the summer.

As recipients of 2004–05 Herskovits

Undergraduate Research Awards, art history major **Darrah K. Doyle** and history major **Gregory Phillip** will carry out research projects in the University's Africana collection under the direction of faculty mentors and the Herskovits Library curator. Doyle has titled her project "HIV/AIDS and South African Art," and Phillip's project is titled "Western Ideology and Genocide: Writing in the Congo Free State."

Graduate certificates in African studies were awarded in June to **Rafi Aliya Crockett** (performance studies), **Anh Ly** (French and Italian and comparative literary studies), **Cedric McCay** (Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary), and **Alphonse Otieno** (history).

Hans E. Panofsky Predissertation Research Awards enabled graduate students **Sarah Benoit** (French and Italian), **Anh Ly**, **Christina McMahon** (theater and drama), and **Alphonse Otieno** to do preliminary field research in Africa in the summer.

A 2004 Morris Goodman Award

enabled **Christina McMahon** to study Portuguese in Lisbon prior to undertaking research in Cape Verde during the summer.

Guyer-Virmani Award Awards were given to **Kathryn de Luna** (history) for travel to Zambia and to **Godwin Murunga** (history) for archival research in Kenya.

Melville J. Herskovits Field Research Awards went to **Kathryn de Luna** for predissertation research in Zambia; **Patrick Johnston** (political science) for research in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone; and **Godwin Murunga** for dissertation research in Kenya.

To read more about student achievements and awards, please visit [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/students.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/students.html).

## FACULTY NEWS

An article by **Jonathan Glassman** (history) appeared in the June 2004 issue of *American Historical Review*. The same issue also included an article by Glassman's former student **Jeremy Prestholdt**, and the cover featured a photograph from the

Winterton Collection archived in the Herskovits Library.

**Richard Joseph's** article "Institution Building and Development in Africa" appeared recently in *Global Dialogue's* special issue on Africa, and his review essay of Howard French's newest book, *A Continent for the Taking*, will be published in *The Journal of Democracy*.

**Paul Berliner** (music), a specialist in Zimbabwean mbira music and American jazz, was one of 10 Northwestern faculty members elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2004.

PAS academic coordinator **Virginia DeLancey** represented PAS at last spring's Association of African Studies Programs meeting in Washington, D.C., and was elected to the planning committee for next year's meetings. DeLancey also was on the organizing committee of the National Peace Corps Association's annual conference held in Chicago August 5–8.

**Karen Tranberg Hansen** (anthropology) did research in Lusaka, Zambia, in July and

August, completing a collaborative four-year research project on "Youth and the City" funded by the Research Council on Development of DANIDA in Denmark. Hansen's writings have recently appeared in *Annual Review of Anthropology* (vol. 33); *Anthropology Today* (2004); and *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, edited by Jean Allman (Indiana University Press).

*Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town* by **Robert Launay** (anthropology) has been reissued by Waveland Press in paperback.

**Richard Lepine** (African and Asian languages) delivered a paper at the 30th annual African Literature Association conference in April. Lepine also received a grant from the Alumnae of Northwestern to purchase Swahili-soundtrack versions of several feature films for use in his Swahili and African literature courses.

With support from Northwestern's University Research Grants Committee, **William Murphy** (anthropology and

update

## HERSKOVITS LIBRARY

### CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

PAS) carried out research during the summer in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and in a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana.

**John Pepper** (art history) was awarded a Kaplan Center for the Humanities Faculty Research Grant for 2004–05. He also received an African Studies Collaborative Research Grant from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for a project to study diasporas of art in Africa.

**Dylan Penningroth** (history) received the Avery O. Craven Award from the Organization of American Historians.

**Will Reno** (political science) received a Searle Foundation Award that supported his August and September travel to the Caucasus with **Georgi Derluigian** (sociology), where they met with scholars who study state failure in their own societies. Reno delivered presentations last spring and summer at several U.S. and European universities and published articles in *Third World Quarterly* and three book chapters related to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

#### WINTERTON PHOTOS GOING ONLINE

The web site that will make most of the Humphrey Winterton Collection of East African Photographs available online is now accessible at [www.library.northwestern.edu/africana/winterton](http://www.library.northwestern.edu/africana/winterton). A work in progress, the site currently includes more than 100 images selected from the archive of 6,500, as well as the complete inventory the collection compiled by Humphrey Winterton and his associates.

#### HERSKOVITS LIBRARY JUBILEE EVENTS

News of jubilee-related activities is online at [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/jubilee.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/jubilee.html).

#### PLANNING FOR THE GROWTH OF AFRICANA

A portion of the Africana collection has been moved from the East Tower of University Library's level 5 to room B249 on the lower level, and the materials remaining on level 5 have been reorganized. Library users are invited to send their comments on the changes to [dleaster@northwestern.edu](mailto:dleaster@northwestern.edu).



A Fulbright New Century Scholars Institutional Partnership Grant is enabling **Kearsley Stewart** (anthropology) to implement a project titled "Integrating African and American Perspectives on Research Ethics: The Case of HIV/AIDS Research in Uganda." Further information about the project is online at [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/ugandaresearchethics.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/ugandaresearchethics.html).

This past year **David Schoenbrun** (history) was named to the selection committee for the Social Science Research Council's International Dissertation Research Fellowships. During the summer he traveled to the United Kingdom, Egypt, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands for archival research and interviews related to the African Trade Bead Project with **Kearsley Stewart**. Later, he, Stewart, and

a film crew went to Friendship, Indiana, to shoot footage and interview participants at the National Muzzle Loader Rifle Association's Semiannual Jamboree — an event attended by Many West African bead traders.

#### VISITING SCHOLAR

**Carlos Manuel Dias Fernandes** has been appointed a visiting scholar at PAS through early December. He

has served as the press officer for Doctors Without Borders in Maputo, Mozambique, and in summer 2003 he was a laureate in the Governance Institute of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Fernandes received both a bachelor's degree in social science and a licenciature in sociology from Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique.

## *The future is now: Reading “prospective” into “African time”*

by Souleymane Bachir Diagne, professor of philosophy, Northwestern University

The core of the notion of development is the exploration of the future — the attitude best expressed by the philosophical concept of “prospective,” coined by French philosopher Gaston Berger. The term refers to the science that explores the future evolution of societies in order to enlighten the decisions of today and actions to be taken today. In other words, the *prospective attitude* is grounded in the notion that the meaning of the present comes from the future. The central question of African development is thus that of fostering prospective in African societies, of fostering a “political culture of time” understood to be in total contrast to the ethnological approach attached to a so-called African notion of time.

To think of a political culture of time is first to get rid of the ethnological divide between cultures about time. Such a question is often translated into cultural terms such as the “African conception of time” whose stake is inevitably whether or not such a conception nurtures a prospective attitude. In this perspective I would like to revisit what John Mbiti wrote about the African notion of time in his influential 1990 work *African Religions and Philosophy*. Those who, like Mbiti, read a distinctly African concept of time in African cultural attitudes and languages in order to contrast it with the prospective attitude misunderstand the very essence of time and, hence, of prospective.

According to Mbiti, conceptions of time stem from the attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are manifested, in particular, in the people’s philosophy of work. And he calls for further research to fully take into account the centrality of time consciousness in studies of African philosophy in general and of the cultural dimensions of development in particular.

For Mbiti, Africans define time as a composition of events rather than the form *in which* events take place (as Kant did) or their order (as Leibniz did). Because time *is* these events, the past is the most important dimension of time, and the present

constantly moves toward the past. For the same reason, there is virtually no future. This is necessary because there is, by definition, a contradiction in considering a future event. As Mbiti writes, time really “is a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a present, and virtually no future” (Mbiti 1990:16). The only aspect of the future that can be said to “exist” is that constituted by *quasi events*, meaning that the present is pregnant with them and that they can be read in it *now*, in the same way the harvest can be read in the blossoming of the seeds. Practically, this means that one cannot consider the future beyond the close horizon of a few months, beyond tomorrow, beyond the shadow that, already, it retro-projects *now*. In short, a prospective attitude is foreign to African conceptions of time.


Mbiti’s supporting evidence comes mainly from consideration of African languages and calendars. The best testimonies for Africans’ concepts of time are the ways in which Africans reckon time in their languages and also the way in which they cast the flow of temporality into calendars. Examining the verb tenses in the Kikamba and Gikuyu languages, Mbiti comes up with “confirmation” that “there are no concrete words or expressions to convey the idea of a distant future” (Mbiti 1990:17) lying beyond the span of a few months, two years at most. Then he goes on to give an account of the African calendars he calls “phenomenon” calendars in opposition to “numerical” mathematical calendars that are not tied up with concrete phenomena taking place and constituting time.

The problem with the kind of linguistic philosophy that concludes the way Mbiti does is to *overanalyze* African languages — reading, as it were, too much into them. Such an overanalysis can be conducted on virtually any human language and bear the same kind of conclusions. What this philosophy fails to take into account is that if words do have often concrete *origins*, they have above all *uses* that ultimately determine their (often abstract) meaning. By doing so,

**The notion of time as duration is an antidote to the ethnological inclination to present “African time” as cyclical, futureless, and radically other than its Western counterpart.**

such a philosophy posits not only an “invented” Africa (to use Valentin Mudimbe’s phrase) but an invented “West” as well. In the “West” as everywhere else it is the human experience of time to measure a distance by what and how long it takes to “get there,” to have not a homogenous line but rather differences between the time of our impatient desire and the time of our boredom. Nobody’s experiential time, neither “ours” nor “theirs,” is that mathematical time of which we always speak in spatial terms like a “line,” a “flow,” etc., because that is the language of our intelligence and not our experience of time as duration. This Bergsonian notion of time as duration is an excellent antidote to the ethnological inclination to present an African concept of time (cyclical, futureless, and God knows what) as radically other than a Western (linear, mathematical, infinite) concept of time.

What is prospective? Mbiti’s ethnologist view considers that planning is founded on the Levy-Bruhlian notion of time seen as “a line on which foresight can arrange events in a unilinear and irreversible series, and on which they must of necessity occur one after the other” (quoted in Adjaye 1994:3). And since he considers such a conception to be a characteristic of Western culture, he naturally concludes that the spirit of foresight has to break into African societies through Westernization and Christianity. The main lesson to be learned from Gaston Berger is precisely that prospective — the true attitude of foresight — has nothing to do with an image of time and the future as a “straight homogenous line.” More precisely, such an image is the absolute contrary of a true understanding of what the future and its exploration mean. The most famous and striking image often used by Berger to illustrate the full significance of a prospective attitude is that of a car running faster and faster on an unknown road, racing along through the night. This car must have powerful headlights that can reach farther and farther down the road if a catastrophe is to be avoided. This image tells us something important about the nature of time, more precisely about its future dimension: We do not know what it will be like just as we do not know what the shape of the road is while it unfolds itself under the headlights. In other words, the concept of a future lying ahead of us and not as a



**Development means that  
a society is racing towards  
its youth, not its old age.**

continuous creation of our own moving present is not a “Western” or a “modern” notion of time: it is an absurdity. This is to say that contrary to what Mbiti affirms, a future void of events is not the condition for prospective thinking: That would be an effort to grasp nothingness. Instead, prospective is based on the freest possible imagination but still

remains an imagination of possible scenarios, of what has been called *futuribles* (possibles that could become real).

There is another teaching coming from this image of a car speeding in the night with high beams on: A prospective attitude means that we act and operate according to our anticipations and not according to the past, not to what happened already, not to what we hold as our “tradition.” Another way to understand this lesson is to see that prospective is radically different from extrapolation, from simply prolonging the past into the future. In that sense, to paraphrase Berger again, development means that a society is racing towards its youth, not its old age. We could define it, then, in Bergsonian terms, as the movement of life and spirit which is the effort to go uphill while matter and its inertia are bound to go downhill. It would be a paradox for African societies where the youth makes up the landslide majority of the population not to be going, through prospective and a political culture of time, towards their adolescence but rather towards a state of senescence, which translates the crisis of planning, which in turn expresses a crisis of initiative. Such a senile attitude leaves the African youth with the feeling that it is futureless and condemned to find “tomorrow” only in emigration.

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## Africa Presence Week 2004

Last spring, in addition to meetings of the Africa Seminar and the April 2–3 Midwest Graduate Student Conference in African Studies, PAS graduate students organized Africa Presence Week (April 25–30), featuring events ranging from the African Students Association’s fashion show and dinner to artistic and scholarly presentations. Highlights included a Monday Night Lecture by PAS visiting scholar Kayode Fayemi on “Governing Insecurity in Post-Conflict States: The Cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia,” and a bag lunch discussion with history graduate student Godwin Murunga on “Governance and the Politics of Structural Adjustment in Kenya.” An evening of music, dance, poetry, and drama featured Northwestern and Chicago-area artists. Performers included Orijajogun Productions, a Chicago collective of drummers and dancers organized by Sina Odukoya; Tewodros Aklilu, a performer of modern Ethiopian music; and graduate students Olateju Omolodun Adesida (performance studies), David Donkor (performance studies), and Nathalie Etoke (French and Italian). The week-ending keynote address by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, professor of history and African studies at Pennsylvania State University, reflected on trends in African studies, Western notions of Africa and African identity, and transformations in contexts and understandings of African studies and identity. – *Olateju Adesida (performance studies)*

## Mahmood Mamdani speaks on campus

On May 6 Mahmood Mamdani, Herbert Lehman Professor of Government and Anthropology at Columbia University, came to PAS to present a lecture on his recent book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. Political discourse on terrorism has woven politics and religion together, using the concepts of “good Muslim” and “bad Muslim” to redefine allies and enemies. Mamdani’s book differentiates between Islamic religion and the politicized religious identity now associated with terrorism. Mamdani’s lecture was cosponsored by the Center



© Mary Hanlon

Members of Orijajogun Productions (above), a Chicago-based Nigerian performance troupe, provided dancing and drumming during an Africa Presence Week event. The week’s keynote speaker was Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (right) of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



for International and Comparative Studies, the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa, and the Department of Political Science.

## Africanist joins history faculty

Rudolph T. Ware III, who has joined Northwestern’s history department as an assistant professor, will teach courses on West African history, Islam in African history, and West Africa and the Diaspora. The recipient of a Fulbright Hays Dissertation Research Abroad Grant and the Franklin Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania, Ware has a BA from the University of Minnesota and an MA from the University of



Rudolph Ware

Pennsylvania. He will receive his PhD from Pennsylvania later this year. His dissertation, titled “Knowledge, Faith, and Power: A Social History of *Qur’anic* Schooling in 20th-Century Senegal,” maps continuity and change in the educational discourses and practices of Senegal’s *Qur’anic* schools. Fluent in

Wolof, Ware spent 18 months in Senegal conducting interviews and archival research to trace the history of *Qur’anic* schooling as experienced by the students themselves. His research also analyzes the discourse and actions of agents external to the schools, especially the colonial and post-colonial governments, and Muslim reformers. He demonstrates that in the 20th century, Senegal’s *Qur’anic* schools were dynamic institutions that met important religious, social, educational, political, and moral needs of Senegalese Muslims.

## PAS welcomes Carter and Annan fellows

Habib Iddrisu, the 2004–05 Gwendolen Carter Fellowship winner, has come to Northwestern to earn a PhD in performance studies. Originally from Ghana, he received his BA in Africana studies from Bowling Green State University. The 2004–05 Kofi Annan fellow is Yordanos Tirunah, an Ethiopian who will pursue her PhD in sociology. The Carter and Annan Fellowships are awarded by PAS to outstanding African students for studies of Africa leading to the PhD. Fellows receive full tuition benefits and a stipend for their first year of study.

## Library research awards offered for Northwestern undergraduates

To encourage undergraduates to pursue research in Northwestern's world-renowned Africana library, PAS administers the annual Herskovits Undergraduate Research Awards

Interested students should begin now to think about possible research projects and discuss them with a faculty mentor. They should then complete the application downloadable from [www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/academics\\_awards.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/african-studies/academics_awards.html). Applications must include a research proposal endorsed by a faculty member and are due at PAS by April 15, 2005. The proposal may also include a research budget of up to \$600.

A committee composed of the Herskovits Library curator, PAS director, assistant dean for undergraduate studies, and Africanist faculty and staff will review all submissions and select five award recipients.

Award recipients will register for African Studies 392-1 and 392-2 in the 2006 winter and spring quarters, when they will work on their projects. Students will also prepare a related bibliographic project involving regular consultation with the curator of the Herskovits Library. Both projects must be completed and presented before the end of the 2006 spring quarter

## New staff member at PAS



Linda Judon

On June 28 Linda Judon joined PAS as a program assistant. Previously she worked in the University's Office of Alumni Relations and Development and held administrative positions with Prospect Management, Campaign Northwestern, and the School of Music. She is a part-time student in Northwestern's School of Continuing Studies and is pursuing a BA in communication studies.

## FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION FOR AFRICAN PHD STUDENTS APPLYING TO NORTHWESTERN

Each year the Program of African Studies awards Gwendolen M. Carter, Kofi Annan, and PAS-NU Fellowships to as many as three outstanding African students admitted to Northwestern's Graduate School for disciplinary studies of Africa leading to the PhD. Each fellowship includes full tuition and a stipend for the first year; succeeding years are funded by the fellow's department of study.

Fellowship applicants follow the admission procedures and application deadlines set by the Graduate School and their intended department of study. Fellows are then selected by the Committee on African Studies from among the candidates nominated by department administrators.

Information about admission to the Graduate School and a link to the online application form can be found at [www.northwestern.edu/graduate/admission/adindex.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/graduate/admission/adindex.html). The Graduate School course catalog can be downloaded from [www.northwestern.edu/graduate/general/gebulletin.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/graduate/general/gebulletin.html). Questions may be sent by e-mail ([gradapp@northwestern.edu](mailto:gradapp@northwestern.edu)), fax (847-491-5070), or mail (The Graduate School, Northwestern University, Rebecca Crown Center 1-502, 633 Clark Street, Evanston, Illinois 60208-1113).

Fellowship applicants are urged to preapply by sending the following to PAS (620 Library Place, Evanston, Illinois 60208-4110, USA): a letter of intent identifying the department in which the applicant's study of Africa will be based; a 750-word description of research aims and desired course of study; a résumé summarizing academic and employment experience; at least one writing sample; mailing address, telephone fax, and e-mail for three academic references.

For intended matriculation in September 2005, the preapplication should reach PAS by November 1, 2004. Completed applications for admission and financial aid are due at the Graduate School by December 31, 2004.

## Alumnus recognized for service projects

PAS alumnus Charlie Cogan was featured in the June 2004 *Rotarian Magazine* for his work with U.S. and Togolese Rotary Clubs on behalf of a children's hospital in Dapaong, Togo. A hospital laboratory was dedicated in memory of Cogan's brother-in-law, Raphael Bilimpo Bomane, who died at age 23 of a misdiagnosed case of hepatitis in Dapaong in 1996. The new laboratory opened in August 2003, and Cogan and four other Rotarians attended the official dedication

ceremony last December while traveling in the region for Rotary's Regional Polio Eradication efforts. He plans to continue organizing Rotarian groups in support of service projects in Africa, including several in Togo, along with a potential partnership with South African Rotary Clubs. Cogan is senior assistant dean of admissions and director of international recruitment at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. He received his MA in African history at Northwestern in 1988.

# Program of African Studies



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## PAS CORDIALLY INVITES ASA MEMBERS

On November 12 PAS will host "The Northwestern Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Herskovits Library of African Studies" – a reception for participants in the African Studies Association's annual meeting, to be held November 11–14 in New Orleans. Paul Berliner (musicology) and Zimbabwean mbira musicians Cosmas Magaya and Beauler Shirto will perform during the reception. Earlier that same day, a PAS-organized roundtable discussion on the Herskovits Library and legacy will take place as part of ASA activities. PAS director Richard Joseph will serve as chair, and discussants will include David Easterbrook (Herskovits Library), Caroline Bledsoe (anthropology), John Hunwick (history and religion, emeritus), and Jerry Gershenhorn (history, North Carolina Central University).

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