

History 145A
Winter, 2006
Rm.: Meyer 147
Meeting time MW 11:00-12:15

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Office Hours TR 2:00-3:30
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Knowledge and Power in Early African History

Objectives

The course will provide an episodic sketch of African history running from the earliest records up until the early nineteenth century, focusing on the ways knowledge about the natural, social, and spiritual worlds was linked to the exercise of power. Readings and discussions will explore how technological innovations affected the emergence of states and other forms of social complexity; how religious beliefs and practices were used to legitimate authority or undermine the legitimacy of authority; and how notions of health and healing knit together the physical and the social and gave meaning to gender and age relations. The course will also look at how the knowledge of the past was itself woven into relations of power and what the implications of this are for our own study of the African past.

By the end of the quarter, I want each of you to develop the ability to read African primary sources with an eye to the dramatic processes that they both reflected and helped shape; to feel comfortable discussing early African political systems and the ways they were intertwined with ways of knowing both the visible and invisible worlds; and to be able to formulate clear, concise and insightful written arguments about these topics.

Readings

Our readings for this course will fall roughly into two categories: a series of “primary sources” that come from (or purport to come from) the times and places we are discussing, each of which played an important role in a historical process and can also reveal something about that process to us; and a series of “secondary” materials, written by contemporary analysts discussing these historical events and processes.

The following books, assigned as core readings, are available for purchase from the Stanford bookstore:

David Conrad, *Sunjata*
John K. Thornton, *Kongolese St. Anthony*
Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* (Rev. 2nd ed.)

Some of you may find the following reference works of use; all are either in the circulating stacks of Green Library, in Green’s “Information Center” or in the Lane Reading Room:

Philip Curtin, et. al. *African History*, revised edition
UNESCO General History of Africa (8 vols.)
The Cambridge History of Africa (8 vols.)
The Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions

Course Reader (required)

Many of the core readings for the course consist of short articles, texts or out-of-print books. These are available in a reader sold by Field Copy (323-3155; 2848 Cowper St., Palo Alto). The reader will be sold the first day in class, and in the basement of Building 200 (History Corner) every day throughout the first week of class. The price of this reader includes the cost of securing permissions from copyright holders to reproduce the works.

Requirements

- a) Attendance at all class lectures
- b) Attendance and active participation in discussion sections
- c) Weekly online reading responses (maximum 400 words) (must do all 9, lowest dropped)
- d) Map quiz
- e) Take-home midterm exam (3000 wds.)
- f) Final essay (4500 wds.)

Final grades will be calculated according to the following algorithm:

Attendance and participation in section: 20%; Map quiz: 5%; Online response papers: 20% (2.5% each); Take-home midterm: 25%; Final essay: 30%

Policies and Honor Code

Attendance at all class meetings (lectures and sections) and timely completion of requirements are mandatory. All papers and assignments are due as indicated; midterms and final papers will be penalized one step (ie. A- to B+) for each day of tardiness and late weekly reading responses will not be accepted at all. If you have a valid medical or other extenuating circumstance, please talk to the instructor well in advance of the deadline about the possibility of an extension. No extensions will be granted on or after the due date of an assignment except in the case of a dire emergency.

Violating the Honor Code is a serious offence, even when the violation is unintentional. The text of the Honor Code is available at: www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/honor_code.htm. You are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity; you should familiarize yourself with the code if you have not already done so. In brief, conduct prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them unpermitted collaboration, representing as one's own work the work of another (including plagiarism, lack of citation and relexification), or resubmitting work (in whole or part) already submitted for credit in another course. If you have any questions about these matters, see the instructor during office hours.

Provost's Statement Concerning Students with Disabilities

Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in class must initiate the request with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the DRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067).

Description of assignments:

Attendance and participation in section:

Attendance at all lectures and all discussion sections is mandatory. In addition, students are expected to come to discussion well-prepared (ie. having closely read the required material) and ready to engage the TA and one another in intense, searching and creative discussion of the material. More than one absence from section and more than two noted absences from lectures will result in a markedly lowered grade.

Map quiz:

On Monday, January 23, all students will take an in-class quiz on African geography. Lists of all possible terms that might appear on this quiz along with blank 'practice' maps will be circulated on the first day of class. Any student absent this day will receive an automatic 'zero' for the assignment, and students will not be allowed to 'retake' the quiz.

Online response papers:

On the Sunday of each week, beginning January 15, a question will be posted on the course's CourseWork page. Each student will post a response to the question of no less than 200 words and no more than 400 words by 5pm on the day before the student's next discussion section. Though intelligibility is a must, response papers will not be evaluated for quality of writing (ie. grammar, mechanics, etc.) but rather on the basis of how well they reflect completion of the relevant reading assignment, analytic and creative thinking on the question, and ability to place the reading in the broader context of the class. Because of the short length of the papers, students should strive for maximum concision; however responses must be in the form of a "natural language" answer (ie. no bulleted lists, outlines, etc.). No late submissions will be accepted.

Take-home midterm:

On Friday, February 10, the question for the midterm exam will be posted on the course's CourseWork page. Each student will submit a response to this question (either by email to the TA with "carbon copy" to the instructor, or posted electronically to CourseWork) no later than 5pm on Friday, February 17 (no hard copy submissions). Responses should be approximately 3000 words in length (no submissions over 3500 words will be accepted) and will be evaluated for quality of writing as well as for how well they reflect mastery of the material and sustained reflection on the question. All submissions should be argumentative in form with a clear, well-defended thesis statement.

Final essay:

Each student will choose one of the essay topics listed at the end of this syllabus, read the works assigned for the topic, and prepare an argumentative essay on the subject of approximately 4500 words (no submissions over 5000 words will be accepted). All students are strongly urged to consult with either the instructor or the TA on choice of topic. Binding topic choices for the paper must be submitted in writing in class no later than February 6. A thesis statement and substantive (min. 1 full pg.) outline must be submitted in class no later than March 6. Papers will be submitted no later than 5pm on March 23. Papers will be evaluated for quality of writing as well as for how well they reflect comprehension and analysis of the material read and sustained reflection on the subject. All works assigned for these topics are available either on reserve at Green library, online, or through CourseWork. In exceptional circumstances students may choose to write on a topic not listed, but only with explicit permission and after consultation with the instructor.

Grading Guidelines

Timely and uninterrupted attendance at discussion sections is a necessary but insufficient

condition for a participation grade of “B”; students must also participate actively and collegially in all class discussions. Attending without having prepared reading assignments places an unfair burden on one’s classmates and is thus very uncollegial. All written work will be evaluated for how effectively it presents and sustains a focused thesis reflecting thorough understanding of the course material and original analytic reflection upon it. The primary goal of all written exercises is to develop a set of intellectual and imaginative skills, rather than the mastery of a discrete body of information; grades will reflect this. An effective essay or midterm is a polished one, eschewing mechanical, grammatical and stylistic flaws. In all cases and for all requirements, a grade of “A” will only be given to reflect performance above and beyond the instructor’s expectations.

This Syllabus

The syllabus represents the instructor’s best faith effort to communicate the requirements and expectations of the course. All students are responsible for knowing and complying with the information herein. Over the course of the quarter, modification and additions to the syllabus may be made in so far as the instructor feels necessary. Changes will be communicated by email and it is the responsibility of each student to note and comply with such changes.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

WEEK ONE

Wed: Introduction to course (1/11)

Sign up for discussion sections in class

WEEK TWO

Mon: NO CLASS (Dr. M.L.King Day) (1/16)

Wed: Knowledge, power and imagination (1/18)

Reading

J.F. Ade Ajayi, "The Search for Relevance in the Humanities in Africa," in *Tradition and Change in Africa*, ed. Toyon Falola (Trenton, NJ, 2000), 449-458.

Peter Brown, "Learning and Imagination," in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, 3-21
Shillington, 1-12

Jane Guyer and Samuel Eno Belinga, "Wealth in People as Wealth in Knowledge: Accumulation and Composition in Equatorial Africa," *Journal of African History* 36 (1995), 91-120.

PART TWO: EARLY SOCIETIES

WEEK THREE

Mon: Food producing revolutions, or technological drift? (1/23)

MAP QUIZ IN CLASS MONDAY

Wed: Genealogies, lineages and houses (1/25)

Reading

Shillington, 13-21

Jan Vansina, "A Slow Revolution: Farming in Subequatorial Africa," *Azania* 29-30 (1994-5), 15-26.

David L. Schoenbrun, "We Are What We Eat: Ancient Agriculture between the Great Lakes," *Journal of African History*, 34:1 (1993), 1-31.

James Giblin, "Trypanosomiasis Control in African History: An Evaded Issue," *Journal of African History*, 31 (1990), 59-80. [read only 59-65, 70-80]

Rod McIntosh, "Historical Imaginations: 4100BP, 300BC, 400AD #1-3," *Peoples of the Middle Niger* (London, Blackwell, 1998), 81-87, 131-139, 182-189.

WEEK FOUR

Mon: Metals and pots, arts and technologies (1/30)

Wed: Egypt: States, origins and identity (2/1)

Reading

Shillington, 21-40

Jan Vansina, "Pathways of Political Development in Equatorial Africa," in S.K. McIntosh, ed., *Beyond Chiefdoms* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1999), 166-172.

S. Terry Childs and Eugenia W. Herbert, "Metallurgy and Its Consequences" in Ann Brower Stahl, ed., *African Archaeology* (London: Blackwell, 2005), 276-300.

Fekri Hassan, "The Predynastic of Egypt," *Journal of World Prehistory* 2:2 (1988), 135-175.

Fekri Hassan, "Soul birds and heavenly cows: Transforming gender in Predynastic Egypt," in Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon, *In Pursuit of Gender: Worldwide Archaeological Approaches* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002), 43-65.

PART THREE: EXPANDING SCALE: EMPIRES AND WORLD RELIGIONS

WEEK FIVE

Mon: The Islamic tradition (2/6)

TOPIC CHOICES FOR LONG ESSAY DUE IN CLASS MONDAY 2/6

Wed: Mali (2/8)

MIDTERM QUESTION POSTED ON COURSEWORK FRIDAY 2/10

Reading

Shillington 46-48, 71-98

Qur'an suras 1 and 24 at <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/ArabicScript/sindex.htm>

McIntosh, "Historical Imaginations: 1000AD and 1472," *Middle Niger*, 234-239, 287-293.

Conrad, *Sunjata*

David Conrad, "A Town Called Dakajalon," *Journal of African History* 35:3 (1994), 355-377.

WEEK SIX

Mon: Songhay, Suwaris and Sufis (2/13)

Wed: Christianity: Nubia, Axum and Ethiopia (2/15)

Reading

Shillington, 98-105

Muhammad al-Sa`di, *Tarikh al-Sudan* (selections: Intro, chs. 1-7, 12-13)

Shillington, 65-71, 106-114

Stellae inscriptions of Ezana at Axum (Handout)

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE FRIDAY 2/17

PART FOUR: THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

WEEK SEVEN

Mon: NO CLASS (Presidents' Day) (2/20)

Wed: Slavery and slave trades (2/22)

Reading

Shillington, 169-178

Handout: Demographic tables on slave trade (from Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life*)

J.C. Miller, *Way of Death* (Madison, 1988), 40-70.

WEEK EIGHT

Mon: Wealth in people, knowledge... and things (2/27)

Wed: Kongo Christianity and the Kongo state (3/1)

Reading

Shillington 126-143, 195-204

Begin Thornton, *Kongolese St. Anthony*

WEEK NINE

Mon: Dona Beatrice (3/6)

THESIS STATEMENTS AND OUTLINES FOR FINAL ESSAY DUE IN CLASS MON

Tue: MUSEUM VISIT (3/7)

Wed: Abolition and the "Crisis of adaptation" (3/8)

Reading

Shillington, 230-239

Finish Thornton, *Kongolese St. Anthony*

A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (New York, 1973), 117-155.

Robin Law, "Introduction" in Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to "Legitimate" Commerce* (Cambridge, 1995), 1-31.

PART FIVE: REVOLUTIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

WEEK TEN

Mon: Revolutions in East, West and Southern Africa (3/13)

Wed: Nana Asma'u and the legacy of Sokoto (3/15)

Reading

Shillington, 204-207, 256-263

al-Maghili, Letters to Askia Muhammad, in John Hunwick, *Shari`a in Songhay* (Oxford, 1965), 69-95.

al-Maghili “*Obligation of Princes*” (Handout)

Usman dan Fodio, *Kitab al-farq* (Handout)

Nana Asma'u, *Collected Works*, ed. Jean Boyd and Beverly B. Mack (East Lansing, 1997), Selections: texts 11, 12, 17, 20 and 40=pp. 68-89, 97-119, 131-154, 246-249.

FINAL PAPER DUE March 23th, 5:00pm

Final Paper Topics (all books will be on 2-day reserve at Green Library)

1. Religion and non-centralized power

Robin Horton, "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa," in Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (1985), 87-128.

Robin Horton, "African Conversion," *Africa* 41 (1971), pp. 85-107.

J. M. Schoffeleers, *River of Blood*

Susan K. McIntosh (ed.), *Beyond Chiefdoms*

2. Axum and Ethiopia

Yuri M. Kobishchanov, *Axum*

Stewart Munro-Hay, *Aksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity*

Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia*

3. Sunjata as historical source, social charter and/or performance art

Ralph A. Austen, *In Search of Sunjata*

John W. Johnson and Fa-Digi Sisòkò, *Son-Jara: The Mande Epic*

Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*

4. Islam and Songhay

John Hunwick, "Introduction" in *Timbuktu and Songhay*

[Charlotte Blum and Humphrey J. Fisher, "Love for Three Oranges, or, the Askiya's Dilemma," *Journal of African History* 34:1 \(1993\), 65-91. \(JSTOR\)](#)

Thomas Hale, *Scribe, Griot and Novelist* (skip ch. 8)

[Michael Gomez, "Timbuktu Under Imperial Songhay: A Reconsideration of Autonomy," *Journal of African History* 31 \(1990\), 5-24.](#)

[John Hunwick, "Secular Power and Religious Authority in Muslim Society," *Journal of African History* 37 \(1996\), 175-194.](#)

5. Sufism in West Africa

Louis Brenner, "Sufism in Africa," from *African Spirituality*

Abdul-Aziz Batran, "The Qadiryya-Mukhtaryya Brotherhood in West Africa: The Concept of *tasawwuf* in the Writings of Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti (1729-1811)." *Transafrican Journal of History* 4 (1974), 41-70. (journal in stacks)

E. Ann McDougall, "The Economics of Islam in the Southern Sahara: The Rise of the Kunta Clan." *Asian and African Studies (Jerusalem)* 20 (1986), 45-60. (journal in stacks)

E. Ann McDougall, "The Economics of Islam in the Southern Sahara: The Rise of the Kunta Clan." *Asian and African Studies (Jerusalem)* 20 (1986), 45-60. (journal in stacks)

E. Ann McDougall, "The Economics of Islam in the Southern Sahara: The Rise of the Kunta Clan." *Asian and African Studies (Jerusalem)* 20 (1986), 45-60. (journal in stacks)

[John Ralph Willis, "Jihad fi sabil Allah," *Journal of African History* 8:3 \(1967\), 395-415. \(JSTOR\)](#)

Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, ed., *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*

6. The Kingdom of the Kongo

Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests*

John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*

Ann Hilton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*

7. Religion and the slave trade/diaspora

Hunwick and Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam*

Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa*

Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*

8. Sokoto

Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*

Mervyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth*

Beverly Mack, *One Woman's Jihad: Nana Asma'u, Scholar and Scribe*

9. Zulu expansion/the Mfecane debate:

J.D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath*

J.B. Peires, *Before and After Shaka*

Carolyn Hamilton, *The Mfecane Aftermath*

10. Buganda

C.C. Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty*

Richard Reid, *Political Power in Precolonial Buganda*

Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda*

11. The Xhosa Cattle Killing

J.B. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise*

[Timothy J. Stapleton, "Reluctant Slaughter," IJAHS 26:2 \(1993\), 345-369.](#) (JSTOR)

Timothy Stapleton, "They No Longer Care for Their Chiefs," IJAHS 24:2 (1991)

Helen Bradford, "Women, Gender and Colonialism," JAH 37:3 (1996), 351-370.

Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*