CENTRE OF AFRICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
"African Borderlands Research: Emerging Agendas and Critical Reflections", 13-14 June 2007

PAPER/ROUNDTABLE ABSTRACTS

A.I. Asiwaju (African University Institute, Imeko, Nigeria): **" Borderlands Research: An Autobiographical Reflection on Africa, North America and Western Europe"**

David B Coplan (University of Witwatersrand): **"Inseparable Since Birth: Twin Towns and Unitary Concepts in Border Studies"**
The literature of the US-Mexico borderlands constitutes a cross-disciplinary theoretical platform for border studies as a field. Those engaged in the study of borders elsewhere might therefore be indulged when they attempt comparison of their own research environments with the American Southwest. A comparative analysis of international borderlands as separate in space and situation as US-Mexico and South Africa-Lesotho, however, may appear to be fetched from far too far. In response one might cite the value of the 'limiting case'. If two such distant and different borderlands can be productively compared, then quite possibly some generalisations, both small and large, might be imported into border theory. This paper marks an initial attempt both to advance border theory at the ethnological level, and to link border studies in Africa with the established and critical heartland of border studies.

David Skinner (University of Santa Clara): **"Mande Participation in the 'Maba jihad' and the Baddibu Wars"**
By the middle of the 19th century the Gambia River region had become a centre of competition and conflict involving powerful military leaders with local political, economic and family networks and also the colonial aspirations of British and French administrators in what would become Senegal and the Gambia. Control over the border areas both to the south and the north of the Gambia River were contested by several shifting alliance structures. The purpose of these conflicts was couched in the language of jihad in a struggle to subdue the existing "infidel" leaders and replace them with a proper Islamic state. However, the evidence shows that the motives were far more complex and indicates many factors were involved in stimulating the wars. Chief among these were the desire to establish political space and control over farm-land, domination of the lucrative river trade, promotion of family power and honour, and resistance to European encroachment. Ultimately, the competition for control and the shifting alliances undermined the power of the African networks and allowed the British and French to manipulate and subdue the leadership of these small states on the Gambia River, and the colonial boundaries were set by the end of the century. Ironically, the establishment of colonial administration enhanced the development of Islamic institutions and strengthened the position of Muslim notables in the 20th century.

Christian Kordt Højbjerg (University of Copenhagen): **"Historical Imagination among Mande Peoples in the Guinea-Liberia Border Area"**
Based on fieldwork by the author, the paper presents cases relating to the conflict between Mandingos and co-existing ethnic groups in southeastern Guinea and northwestern Liberia. A comparison of local recollections of the past points to a significant difference in scale and agency as far as people's self-perception is concerned. 'Forest people', on the one hand, tend to stress autochthony in small-scale settlements; i.e., their status as firstcomers and landowners. 'Mandingos', on the other hand, stress their tradition for political leadership, their economic role in the history of the Liberian nation state and their role as propagators of Islam. The paper pays special attention to the situation of the 'Mandingo', a historically marginalised yet economically and politically powerful 'ethnic' group in Liberia which is often referred to as 'strangers from Guinea'. Recently collected historical narratives suggest, first, the presence of a widespread collective (re)interpretation of the place of marginalised Mandingos in the history of Liberia on the background of loss, death and exile. Second, these narratives also constitute a charter for rights and claims to citizenship, land ownership, political and administrative offices, etc. Third, such historical narratives also inform local conflict resolution and risk at the same time to sustain future conflict.

Mattia Fumanti (University of Keele): **" How to Rethink the Namibian-Angolan Border: Commodities, Social Stratification and State Practices in the Kavango and Cuando Cubango Regions"**
Borders have the capacity to appear and disappear, to matter and not to matter during the course of history. Borders are also powerful spaces for the constitution of moral discourses around the exchange of money, commodities and sexuality. Finally they are sites for the constitution/transgression of a social and political order and for the making, re-making and un-making of identities, whether ethnic, political or gendered. The Namibian Angolan border in the Kavango region is one such border. Throughout its history the border has reappeared and disappeared, and mattered in various degrees for the people living on both sides and for the colonial and postcolonial Nation-States. At various moments the border has been closed and re-opened by the state through the use of force, the imposition of laws or the regulation of people's and commodities' movements through various state technologies. The issuing of pass, IDs and documents are examples of such technologies. While there has been an attention to the history of Namibian borders, in relation to war and the making of the colonial and postcolonial states, very little has been done –and this is true for the Africanist literature in general- on the way in which borders are constituted through commodities, their values and circulation and through their social life, to use Appadurai. I here aim to look at the long-duree' of this process from the colonial to the postcolonial time by focusing on the current socio-economic changes in the region after the end of the Angolan war.

The end of the conflict has signalled a growth in terms of reconstruction and repopulation of the Angolan region of the Cuando Cubango. This region as I will show in this presentation r is de facto a Namibian enclave in Angolan territory. Due to the remoteness of this region the Angolan population relies on everything, from school, to hospital, from telecommunications to electricity, from building material to food and basic commodities, from employment to travel on the Namibian side. This shift is contributing to the

emergence of new forms of social stratification and inequality alongside old ones and the encroachment of predatory and kleptocratic practices of the Angolan State in the region. The area in fact has seen the growth of a coterie of a small Namibian and Angolan entrepreneurship, Chinese, Portuguese and South African traders, as well as Angolan civil servants and army personnel whose appearance, reappearance and disappearance follows closely the fluctuation and relevance of certain commodities, state practices and services in postcolonial Africa. This paper is a first attempt to understand the Namibian-Angolan border by looking at its ever-changing history, through the role of commodities and state practices in the making of this border and the people living on both sides of it.

Kate Meagher (University of Oxford): **"Parallel Commodity Chains: Cross Border Trade and Informal Economic Governance in Nigeria"**
The presentation would consider how local governance processes are affected by the proliferation of informal cross-border raiding networks. It will highlight the integration of popular livelihood strategies into parallel commodity chains that operate under the radar of the global trading system. Evidence of these parallel commodity chains has emerged in literature on small-scale producers in Latin America and Asia, while the African examples tend to   concentrate on criminal goods such as blood diamonds and prostitution. My current research examines the integration of small-scale garment, weaving and shoe producers in southern Nigeria into parallel commodity chains that distribute their goods across West, Central and Southern Africa, and in some cases reach as far as the US and the UK. How does the rise of these parallel trading networks influence governance processes within producing areas? Does the widening of markets lead to popular economic empowerment, or to new processes of marginalization? How are local systems of order and authority shaped by the increasing dependence of popular livelihoods on informal cross-border trading networks?

Francesca Locatelli (Edinburgh): **"Ideas for a project on 'Borders and Identities in the Horn of Africa: a Historical Perspective'"**
Frequently defined as an 'absurd', 'senseless' and 'shocking' war, as highlighted by Jacquin-Berdal (Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut, 2004: ix), the brutal border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998-2000 is the result of long lasting historical processes which span throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The borders between Ethiopia and Eritrea were demarcated at the beginning of the twentieth century, following the Italian occupation of Eritrea, and since then they became a watershed in the processes of identity-formation of the two countries.

Drawing on research already undertaken on the Horn of Africa (particularly on colonial Eritrea) and new archival sources found in the country, my contribution to the roundtable of the workshop will focus on a range of interwoven questions:
1) How, but also to what extent, borders were instrument for the enforcement of colonial policy in Eritrea and imperial policy in Ethiopia?
2) How and to what extent they contributed to crystallise social phenomena, such as movement of people and migratory patterns between the two countries? And what consequences this process generated?

3) In what ways boundaries cut across spaces and gave birth to new cultures and identities in the two countries?

I will look specifically at the period from the end of the nineteenth to mid-twentieth century and try to identify the long-lasting impact of the policy of borders demarcation and identity-making upon present-day political situation and relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Uoldelul Chelati Dirar (University of Macerata): **"Colonial Troops, Colonial Boundaries and Post-Colonial Nationalisms: The Case of Ascari in the Horn of Africa"**
The issue of nationalism in Eritrea has been mainly analysed in terms of a Manichean opposition between 'genuine' nationalists and 'betrayers' sold to the enemy. Time is probably ripe for a more critical and inclusive approach to this complex issue, which should take into account the variety of economic, social, and cultural factors behind individual decisions and choices in taking sides. To this regard Eritrean colonial troops (*ascari*) represent one of the best case study in as much in their experience is possible to catch all the complexities and contradictions of Eritrean nationalism. Depicted by the colonial literature along the stereotypic and patronising image of the 'ascari fedeli alla bandiera' ('ascari loyal to the flag', the Italian one of course) little attention has been paid, also in more recent literature, to the social and political impact of ascari on Eritrean society and to their role in the post-colonial political history of Eritrea.

A peculiar notion of modernity (or modernisation), different social backgrounds, ethnic loyalties, and religious believes – all of them with Italian colonial rule in the background – are the fluid factors which influenced the development of *ascari* as an important social and political section of the Eritrean society. The divergent choices made by this important segment reinforce the notion already consolidated within the field of African studies of a multiplicity of answers given to colonial rule by African societies.

Within this conceptual framework Eritrean *ascari* can be discussed as a case of colonial hybridism. This becomes particularly true if due attention is paid to the analysis of the gap between colonial praxis and expectations with regard to *ascari* and the actual choices made by *ascari* on the ground. It is in fact in this intermediate zone that is possible to analyse how much Eritrean colonial troops retained of the colonial normative discourse on state, society and nation and how much they reinterpreted it on the basis of their background and of their special location within the colonial system. However what makes Eritrean *ascari* such an interesting case studies is their being a fascinating example of social and territorial mobility within a framework of colonial boundaries. To this regard it' is interesting to notice that many of the so-called Eritrean ascari were not actually Eritreans but came from different regions of Ethiopia or Sudan. Moreover, the study of individual trajectories among 'Eritrean' ascari shows that this pattern of trans-border mobility persisted also after the collapse of Italian colonial rule in 1941 and played an important role in the social and political history of the Horn of Africa. On the basis of these arguments I believe that the study of *ascari* might fit into the broader framework of the proposed network on African borderlands studies.

Gillian Mathys (University of Ghent): **'Borders In The Context Of Planned Migration Across The Rwandese/Congolese Frontier During The Colonial Period'**
This research is the history of a migration which was facilitated through the 'Banyarwandan' transplantation and settlement scheme. It was designed by the Belgian colonial government in the 1930s and aimed at solving the labour shortage which hindered the development of a (European) plantation economy in the Kivu region. The solution for this labour scarcity was the relocation of Kinyarwanda speakers from Rwanda to the Kivu. It is estimated that from the official start of this migration until independence, in the wake of this organized migration, 200 000 people migrated towards the Kivu. In the scope of this migration, Africans were incorporated and subordinated in the Colonial/settler political economy by planned or forced migration. However, it seems that this migration also opened the door to other opportunities for Africans. The colonial state was incapable to claim complete control over migratory flows in the region and was unable to force every migrant into this form of waged labour. The question is why they were unable to exert complete control over these migrants? How did Africans challenge colonial structures and policies and used this migration to meet their own ends?

Initial research -executed as part of an MA-thesis on the migration of 'Banyarwanda' at SOAS (September 2005) only partly answers the question. Results (under revision for publication) indicate that colonial migration flows were grafted upon a stratum of pre-colonial migratory patterns. Some actors dealt with borders as if they were inexistent and continued pre-colonial patterns of mobility, others straddled different territories created by this partition and benefited from social, economic and political opportunities this partition brought about. The colonial state and African elites had their prerogatives depending on the context for stressing either the permeability or rigid nature of boundaries. The research in the scope of my doctoral research (start date February 1st 2007) builds on these initial results. The thesis is that the colonial state was unable to restructure migratory flows completely because of multi-layered triangular power-relations in the borderlands area: the colonial state, African elites and African peasants had their own stakes in this migration and in creating, safeguarding or challenging borders. To get a full grasp of these dynamics thorough research on the historical, economic, social and political nature of borders is necessary. More insight in migrant's motives and in the motives of the colonial state and African elites to either impede/encourage cross-border migration is required. All these questions ensure that the role and meaning of borders is not divided from the political, cultural and social economy in which they are embedded.

Wolfgang Zeller (Helsinki): **"Reconfiguring Sovereignty: Boomtowns on the Namibia-Zambia border"**
In May 2004 a new road bridge across the Zambezi was opened on the Namibia-Zambia border. It closed the last gap in a 3700 km long transport corridor connecting the Copper Belt of Zambia and DRC with Namibia's only deep-sea port Walvis Bay, and thus the production centers of the industrialized West. Near the bridge, the border towns Katima Mulilo and Sesheke are booming fast. From sleepy dead-ends they have transformed into thoroughfares for global business, situated alongside a transnational extra-territory

through which goods are moving safely channeled, yet largely uninhibited by government regulation. This space was created by an alliance of foreign investors and aid donors, members of the Namibian and Zambian governments, and "traditional leaders" from the borderland.

Alongside the corridor and in the margins of the new truck stops, warehouses and tourist lodges regional and local traders have also discovered new opportunities for commerce. They too operate in an extra-territory in which illicit flows straddle the Namibia-Zambia border as well as the boundaries of state regulation. The paper argues that in the transnational spaces of both the transport corridor and the borderland state sovereignty is currently neither affirmed nor subverted, but instead reconfigured.

Thomas Hüsken (University of Bayreuth): **"States, Tribes, Associations and Gangs: Interlacing Modes of Political Organization in the Border Region of Egypt and Libya"**
The transformation of statehood is among the most important topics debated under the agenda of globalization. This is particularly true with regard to the African continent, where the construction of the nation-state has been confronted with a number of challenges during the last years. At times and in certain areas, state structures even collapsed, transforming contemporary Africa into the symbol of state failure, and marking the end of the globalized statehood utopia. In particular, the peripheries of many post-colonial states in Africa assist to the local emergence of stateless forms of power.

The paper is based on empirical case studies dealing with the Aulad Ali tribes in the border region of Egypt and Libya. It deals with complex relationships between different modes of political organization and rule. Thomas will argue that these relationships are best described as by the term of "interlacement". Interlacement represents dynamic transformations of political organization dissolving the distinction between formal (state) and informal (not state) political organization creating thereby - eventually - innovation. Thomas will give examples for agents of interlacement (states, tribes, associations and gangs) and processes of interlacement in different fields such as public institutions, tribal politics, legal pluralism, development programs, organized crime and transnational trade and investment. He will pay a particular regard to the following questions: Are these new forms of political organization only a reaction to the weakness or even the absence of the State? Do they substitute the State? Or do they show that global processes, which see stateless societies overwhelmed by the "Leviathan" State, may be confronted with enduring local representations of order and rule? Can the longevity of local political models lead to the transformation of the state as the only and unique model of organised power in the long run?

Gregor Dobler (University of Basel): **"Shared Identities from Different Practices: Traders, Peasants and Casual Workers in Border construction in Oshikango"**
Borders mean different things to different people. In the Oshikango region on the Namibian-Angolan border, businesspeople see the border as a very real - and quite useful - line between two different spheres of regulation. For cattle farmers, the landscape is structured by good or

bad grazing grounds, not by the border. For casual workers, hospital patients or school children from Angola, the border separates bad from good access to ressources. Using these three examples, I will concentrate on the common consequences of differing border practices: How (and how far) do these different perspectives contribute to a common concept of the national border and national identities?

Markus V. Hoehne (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany) **"Borders In The Horn Of Africa: Preliminary Report On Some Advantages And Disadvantages Of Being Divided"**
In September 2006 the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle hosted a workshop with the title 'Divided they Stand: the affordances of state borders in the Horn of Africa'. Dereje Feyissa and I as convenors were excited about the possibility to discuss the 'good sides' of being divided with a mixture of well known established and young aspiring scientists working on the Horn of Africa. We deliberately added a bit of normative 'spice' to our call for papers and to the introduction to the workshop, especially. Most of the literature emphasises the 'artificial' colonial nature of the state borders in Africa and particularly of borders in the Horn (see e.g. Asiwaju 1985; Markakis 1993; Herbst 2000). Therefore, we got interested in borders as 'asset' for divided peoples. From studies on borders in West Africa we learned, that e.g. smugglers do not perceive the national boundaries as dividing, but as providing opportunities (Nugent 1996). Furthermore, borderlands recently attracted scholarly attention in social anthropology (Wendel/Rösler 1999). They appear as open spaces which involve certain dangers, such as external interference, and also provide its dwellers with new chances, e.g. for negotiating identities.

With these thoughts in mind we set out to hear more about the 'affordances' (Barth 2000) of boundaries in the Horn. Some contributors to our workshop, including Dereje and I, gave examples for how members of divided people along the Ethiopian-Sudanese, the Djibouti-Somalia, or the Somaliland-Puntland border (in post-conflict northern Somalia) profited personally or as a group from social, economic or political resources available 'across' the border or by border-crossing. Others, however, outlined the continuities regarding the borders in the Horn – as causing trouble for most people, and at the same time being not really effective e.g. with regard to controlling and channelling trade.

In fact, one preliminary result of the workshop was that state borders in the Horn are so multi-faceted that it is worth to distinguish at least their economic effects from their impact in the political and social sphere. Moreover, it seemed to many of us during the workshop in Halle, that borders in the Horn were really different from borders in West Africa. At least from our cursory reading on the issue, borders appeared to be much less contested (on inter-state level) and much more 'real' in economic terms in West Africa compared to our cases from the Horn. At the workshop in Edinburgh I would like to present some of our findings in more detail, by outlining case studies and controversial discussions. This might open the fore for wider discussions on different characteristics and aspects of 'borders' in Africa.

R.T. Akinyele (University of Lagos): **"Caribs and The Development Of Borderlands In Nigeria"**

The Centre for African Regional Integration and Border Studies [CARIBS] was established in 2000, to promote research and publication in the twin areas of Border Studies and Regional Integration. The Centre was conceived as a resuscitation of the Programme on International Cooperation in Africa [PICA], of North Western University, Evaston, USA which tried to reconceptualise African Borders as points of contacts and windows of opportunities.

In 2001, CARIBS, with the active support of the Trans -Border Resources Consortium [TRDC] inaugurated the Border Development Dialogue Initiative conceived as a training and enlightenment programme for government officials and community leaders in the border areas. The goal was to bring together all the stakeholders to work out the best plan and strategies for the development of the borderlands. So far, the Dialogue has been held in only one of the six geo-political zones in the country. In Dec.2002, CARIBS organised an International conference on Border, Borderlands and Regional Integration'. The Second Session focused on Policy Questions and Concerns. Although the proceedings are yet to be published, the research findings are particularly relevant to this gathering. In 2004, CARIBS and TRDC organised a symposium on 'The Border Communities Development Agency Act 2003'. The symposium identified several loopholes in the operation and funding of the proposed Border Community Development Agency. It noted that the areas that constitute a border community was not well defined, and observed that the deduction of same amount from each of the border states, irrespective of the size of their border communities ,would create problem. It recommended the inclusion of the Executive Secretary of the Agency on the Governing Board .The report of the Symposium made the president to amend the Act and CARIBS was subsequently appointed a member of   Presidential Technical Committee on the Joint Development of Border Towns in Nigeria.

In February 2006, CARIBS participated in the workshop on 'Cross -Border Crimes and Community Policing', hosted by the Ogun State Boundary Committee at Imeko. The workshop was a pilot project meant to be hosted in other Zones subject to availability of funds. As, at present, there are two projects at the proposal stage. The first is the workshop on 'Business Across Borders' and the second is the Seminar on 'Education and the Development of Border Communities in Nigeria'.