

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
Spring 1992-93

History 861

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5222 Humanities
263-1784/1800

**Graduate Seminar
Religion and Resistance in African History**

Two recent reviews of the literature on religion and resistance by Ranger and Isaacman conclude with the need to understand the meanings and significances African historical actors attach to their own actions. Neither, however, goes very far in proposing how this should be done. Religion, or more broadly, ideology, is clearly one of the ways in which African peoples have sought to understand and control their circumstances, and thus offers one means of doing so.

We begin the seminar by reading, thinking about, and discussing a number of recent books that consider different aspects of the problem of recovering and understanding cultural meanings. As we are starting at the end of a number of different and complex intellectual conversations--on religion, ideology, politics, resistance--you would do well to catch up early on the wider contexts in the reviews of the literature by Ranger and Isaacman listed under week 1. We will then discuss a number of important recent books on the topic to develop our own interpretations. It is thus essential to read the assigned book before each session and to think about its analysis and implications. Several of you will also be asked to prepare reaction papers to each reading to facilitate your own thinking and the seminar discussions. The second half of the seminar will then be devoted to researching, writing, and presenting your own research papers.

Requirements: (1) completing the required reading and attendance and participation in seminar discussions. (2) Reaction papers: Two papers, each reacting to the assigned reading for one of the first seven weeks. Each paper should be 3-5 pp., with two copies submitted to the instructor by Monday noon preceding the assigned class. (3) Research paper: A 15-20 pp research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. Papers will be staggered over weeks 8-15, and each should be distributed to the instructor (2 copies) and to all participants by Monday noon preceding the assigned class. In introducing your paper to the seminar, you should assume that all have read the paper and focus your comments on particular analytical issues or methodological problems encountered in writing it. (4) Critique: A short (ca. 3 pp.) critique of one of the research papers, to be presented in class, with 2 copies given to the instructor. (5) Auto-critique: A short critique of one's own research paper to be submitted by the end of the semester.

Assigned books are available at the University Bookstore. All assigned and recommended books are also on reserve in Helen C. White.

Assigned Readings

Jan 20 Introduction to the Literature
T.O. Ranger, 'Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa,' African Studies Review, 29/2(1986), 1-69.
Allen Isaacman, 'Peasants and Social Protest in Africa,' African Studies Review, 33/2(1990), 1-120.

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- Jan 27 J. B. Peires, The Dead Will Arise
cf. T. Stapleton, "'They No Longer Care for their Chiefs': Another Look at the Xhosa Cattle Killing," IJAH, 24(1991), 383-392 (optional).
- Feb 3 David Lan, Guns and Rain
cf. T.O. Ranger, Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe, esp. pp. 284-333 (optional).
- Feb 10 Jean Comaroff, Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance
cf. Karen Fields, Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa (optional)
- Feb 17 Bruce Berman & John Lonsdale, Unhappy Valley, Book II. (NB: Books I & II are combined in the hardback edition, but separate in the paperback.)
- Feb 24 Steven Feierman, Peasant Intellectuals
cf. I. N. Kimambo, Penetration and Protest in Tanzania (optional)
- Mar 3 Andrew Apter, Black Critics and Kings
- Mar 10 Spring Break

Research Paper Presentations

Mar 17

Mar 24

Mar 31

Apr 7

Apr 14

Apr 21

Apr 28

May 5