



Contents

Special issue

- » African Farming: an interdisciplinary pan-African perspective
- » Research in Marakwet and the Marakwet Research Station
- » News, events, and notices

Introduction

In this issue we profile a new BIEA associated research network 'African Farming: an interdisciplinary pan-African perspective' which forms a major part of ongoing research in Marakwet, Kenya conducted by Professor Henrietta Moore and Dr Matthew Davies (University of Cambridge). The network has been established to share knowledge and develop research capacity concerning the archaeology, history, development and current operation of farming systems across Africa and brings together three sub-projects: Marakwet in Kenya, Tiv in Nigeria and Bokoni in South Africa. The network is funded by a three year (2013-2015) **British Academy International Partnerships and Mobility Grant** to Professor Moore and Professor Caleb Adebayo Folorunso (University of Ibadan Nigeria) and is coordinated by Dr Matthew Davies.

The network links researchers situated in the UK (University of Cambridge), Nigeria (University of Ibadan), Kenya (National Museums of Kenya, Mt Kenya University and BIEA) and South Africa (University of Witwatersrand) and participants stem from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (landscape archaeology, geo-archaeology, bioarchaeology, social anthropology, environmental science). However, a major aim of the network is to develop comparative research across Africa focusing on key questions and topics in African farming, rather than specific disciplinary or regional agendas.

Each year of the network will involve an extended field workshop through which knowledge will be practically shared by network participants and new avenues and lines of research will be developed. The first field workshop and seminar took place in Marakwet in December 2013, and

will be followed by Tiv and Bokoni in 2014 and Cambridge (laboratory-based) in 2015. We hope that the network will result in further collaborative and comparative research across Africa and the future training and capacity building of African researchers. Further details on the network, the researchers involved and each partner sub-project can be found via the network website: www.farminginafrica.wordpress.com/about.

New research and training for Africa

The primary goals of the network are not only to address specific research questions within each of the three sub-projects, but also to share knowledge and develop research capacity for Africa, within and across Africa. A key tenet of the network is that researchers working within the three regional traditions (East, West and Southern Africa) will have the opportunity to experience ideas, methods and approaches in each of the partner regions, as well as in the UK. Instead of being a dialogue between the global north and the global south, we see this as a pan-African dialogue facilitated by reciprocal knowledge sharing across the continent. We hope that the network will not only lead to powerful comparative approaches, but also to the development of knowledge, skills and training within Africa and with pan-African applicability. We envisage future research collaborations between the three partner projects wherein students and researchers from across the continent are able to train and work across the projects thus building an effective body of research capacity within Africa.



Network participants trek along the escarpment above Tot.

At the same time, the network brings together researchers from multiple disciplinary backgrounds and argues that working within traditional disciplinary boundaries is no

longer appropriate to addressing pertinent questions relevant to Africa's present (i.e. concerning agricultural sustainability). The network aims to move beyond simple 'interdisciplinary' conversations and instead unite researchers and local communities around core questions and ideas through practical field engagement.



Helena Chepto (left), Alex Schoeman and Henrietta Moore discuss finger millet at the Koloa market.

The first field workshop: Marakwet, Kenya, December 2013

This approach was exemplified in the first field workshop in Tot in Marakwet, Kenya in December 2013 which was attended by twelve scholars from Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Malawi, Sweden and the UK, alongside an extensive local Marakwet research team. The twelve-day workshop drew on ongoing long-term research into the intensively farmed landscape of the Marakwet. Multiple workshop sessions covered traditional irrigation, field systems, cultigens, cropping and fallowing patterns, kinship and land tenure, local knowledge of soils and fertility, geo-archaeology, crop-



Charly French, William Chukor and Matt Davies collect soil samples along the Embobut River.

histories archaeobotany, domestic architecture, settlement patterns and demography, material culture, conflict and exchange and development practice.

A running theme was the discussion of the application of novel research methods from scientific through to socio-logical approaches and the ability to develop novel cross-continental training initiatives. Another key theme was the great significance of the locally trained Marakwet research team who took the leading role in presenting knowledge and information about their own community and landscape.

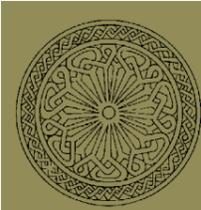


Helena Chepto (right), Martin Jones and a local farmer discuss oral histories.

All participants commented on the effectiveness of long-term engagement with the local community and the great research and human benefits that it entails. The field sessions were complimented by a final seminar in which the participants presented on their experiences, knowledge gained and directly inspired future activities and objectives.

Announcing the Marakwet Research Station

As already noted, the African farming network builds on extensive ongoing research being conducted into the anthropology, history, archaeology and physical geography of Marakwet led by Professor Moore and Dr Davies. Uniquely, the work in Marakwet has focussed on the empowering and training of a local research team who are able to conduct a range of research activities independently and who act to support, drive and communicate research within and to the broader Marakwet community. The Marakwet Research Team comprise an unparalleled resource of local knowledge, support and guidance and represent a new and highly effective means of conducting social science research in collaboration with the local community.



Running the African Farming workshop in Tot was made possible through the support, guidance and leadership of the Marakwet Research Team who played a key role in delivering workshop sessions and defining content. More significantly the local team were able to convey the benefits of long-term community engagement and thus promote this novel yet effective means of sustainable research as a model for projects elsewhere.



William Chukor (right) shares his knowledge of the Kerio River with Henrietta Moore and Charly French.

The Marakwet Research Station currently conducts extensive interview and oral historical research, audio-recording, photography and filming, GPS mapping, and translation and transcription. The team work independently throughout the year and can communicate with external researchers via local mobile and 3G internet networks. The Station can also advise on appropriate local research strategies, goals, aims and objectives, as well as local sensibilities, rates of pay/remuneration, and logistics. The Station is Directed by Mr Timothy Kipkeu Kipruto and Assistant Director Ms Helena Chepto, with administrative support



Timothy Kipkeu and Helena Chepto head up the Marakwet Research Station.



The Marakwet research team at work.

from the BIEA. The Station is able to support other research projects who would like to operate in the Marakwet region and further information can be gathered by contacting Dr Davies in the first instance: md564@cam.ac.uk.

Future events

Research in Marakwet and the activities of the Marakwet Research Station and African Farming network will continue throughout 2014-2016. Work in Marakwet will be pursued through the financial and logistical support of the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy, BIEA and the University of Cambridge. Field workshops and seminars will be held in South Africa and Nigeria in 2014 and in Cambridge in 2015. In addition a special session on African Farming will be convened at the SAFA/Pan-African Congress meeting in Johannesburg in July 2014. Regular updates, member experiences and research results can be accessed via the posts section of the network website: www.farminginafrica.wordpress.com.



Co-PI, Prof. Caleb Adabayo Folorunso (centre with hat) surrounded by the workshop participants, overlooking the Kerio Valley.

News, events, and notices

2014 Membership Renewals

We are now collecting membership fees and subscriptions for 2014. Annual membership of the British Institute in Eastern Africa is open to all, and runs from January to December each year. We rely on members to help us with our work, and we are grateful for your continued support. Full membership costs just £20.00, and we offer a student membership at £15.00. There is also local membership for KES 2,000/= . For a list of membership benefits, visit our website www.biea.ac.uk and click Join Us.

2013 Annual UK Lecture

Professor Lawrence Barham gave the 2013 Annual UK lecture entitled “Africa: birthplace of the first industrial revolution?” in London on 14 November 2013. Professor Barham is a former trustee and BIEA Council member, and is currently Professor of African Archaeology at the University of Liverpool. He has a particular interest in the development of Stone Age technology and its impact on human social evolution. He has worked in Zambia for 20 years and is extending his research into Ghana.



Professor Barham argued that none of what we now think of as the Industrial Revolution would have been possible if a human being, half a million years ago, had not imagined what a stone attached to a stick might do and how it might make life a little easier. This seemingly simple step in human technological achievement paved the way for the manufacture of almost everything we use in our day-to-day lives. His lecture focussed on evidence from Africa to explain how this happened and why.

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2013 Annual General Meeting

The 50th Annual General Meeting of the BIEA was held in London on 14 November 2013. The meeting included farewells to two long-term supporters of the BIEA:

- **Mr Peter Brown CBE**, who was the BIEA’s Honorary Treasurer since 2011 and who had been a trustee and member of Council for thirty years.
- **Dr Matthew Davies** has been the BIEA’s Assistant Director (2008-10) and Archaeology Research Fellow (2010-13). He moves on to a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship researching ‘Applied Agro-archaeology in Eastern Africa’ and will continue to work with the BIEA, where he remains on the research advisory committee.



Peter Brown CBE.



Prof. Goudie bids farewell to Dr Davies.



Sir Jeffrey James KBE CMG, former British High Commissioner to Kenya and BIEA Governing Council member, visited the institute in Nairobi on 12 September 2013 to learn more about the establishment and discuss with staff ideas for the future. He is pictured here in the garden of the BIEA with, from the left, Mr Humphrey Mathenge (Office Manager), Mr Innocent Gathungu (Librarian), and on the right, Dr Edward Pollard (Assistant Director).

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