

Conference: Transitions in south-east Africa and the Middle East at the end of 18th century

30 January - 2 February 2023

Organised jointly by IFPO (Institut Français du Proche-Orient)/ IFAS-research (French Institute of South Africa-research) (lead partner) and Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative, University of Cape Town

Initial Provocation:

**What was NEW? frictions forces of the contemporaneity
Southern Africa and the Middle East.**

NEW

(International Emerging Action)



NEW aims to investigate potential rupture in the modern era, with specific focus on the end of the 18th century. Two major areas, Southern Africa and the Middle East, witnessed important changes between roughly 1750 to 1830, and a series of observations underpinning these changes provide the potential for a comparative project. NEW seeks to reconsider the political history of Southern Africa and the Middle East, by scrutinizing autochthonous political discourses, entities and their evolution in these two regions. It is based on the hypothesis that two major dynamics reshaped local political entities: a new geopolitical situation with the rise of Western trade and imperialism; and important environmental changes in both regions. The first of the aforementioned areas stretches from current Iraq to Syria. The second one concerns the territory between Eastern Cape to southern Zambia.

In both cases, the period saw the rise of new figures, who feature strongly in the record as “great men”. In Levant, Zahir al-Umar then Jazzar Pacha – with no dynastic links – rose to power, utilizing important military and financial tools along the way. On the fringes of this local power, the tribal confederation (acha’ir) ruled over surrounding lands. In both cases, even while these new powers emerged and consolidated their standing on the map – they did not form new great empires as had been the case in previous centuries, nor even did they destroy the existing one in the Levant. Southern Africa saw the rise of significantly expansive and powerful polities under legendary leaders: Ndwandwe under Zwide, Mthethwa under Dingiswayo; the Zulu under Shaka. It also saw movement outwards of powerful political formations from what is today KwaZulu-Natal into

adjacent areas. The migrant polities included a branch of Ndwandwe under Soshangane, Ngwane under Matiwane and people who became Mzilikazi's Ndebele.

The coincidence of the processes in the two regions sparks a series of questions: Did these political developments mark ruptures in these regions? Why did these changes occur at the same time? Did their geographical and political position matter? To what extent are the developments in these two widely separated regions the result of global developments beyond their respective boundaries? All these questions frame the present project. Two major hypothesis drive our inquiries: global phenomena as ecological and geopolitical reflect differently on local stages, the local stage highlights the key components of the global history.

This investigation brings two PIs, and a handful of core researchers in contact with various research groups in the two cultural areas.

Sunday 29 Jan

Check in at Heritage House in Pietermaritzburg

45 Miller Street, Pietermaritzburg. <https://goo.gl/maps/bYgNRdMk9RWneAXk9>

Ursula 072 179 9903

Inala 062 855 1338

7.00pm Dinner: Tandoor Clay Oven 319 Bulwer Street

Monday 30 Jan.

Workshop at KZN Museum, 237 Jabu Ndlovu Street 033 341 0500;

our host at KZN Museum Dr. Justine Wintjes 074 166 3538

Introduction 8h45-9h30

General introduction by Mathieu Rey, recapping the initial aims of the project, plus group discussion and clarifications (45 min)

Coffee break

9h45-11h45 Panel 1 On Evidence

Salma Hargal introduces the discussion presenting and discussing how we can study the Ottoman Empire. (20-30 min)

Carolyn Hamilton discusses the use of oral testimony and other materials for southern Africa. (20-30 min)

Group discussion

Session resources:

Hamilton and Wright, "Politics and Identities," pre-circulated draft book chapter

12 -13.30 *Lunch*: Rosehurst, 239 Boom Street (preordered)

13h30 -15h30 *Panel 2 Geopolitical and ecological parameters*

Gavin Whitelaw on archaeological evidence and climatic situation for southern Africa, 1750-1830 (20-30 mins)

Mathieu Rey presents how global ecological changes affect partially both areas, including the massive change in the geopolitical / merchant order. He highlights potential difficulties to investigate the topics.(20-30 mins)

Group discussion

Session resources:

Wright and Hamilton, pre-circulated draft Appendix that reviews the climate literature

Matthew Hannaford and David Nash, 'Climate, history, society over the last millennium in southeast Africa', *WIREs Clim Change* 2016. doi: 10.1002/wcc.389.

Tea Break

15.45-17.45 Panel 3: Circulations

Carolyn Hamilton/Thokozani Mhlambi introduce the issue of expertise, knowledges and ideas that emerged during the period. They underline key aspect of the circulation of ideas, news, technologies. (30 mins)

Falestine Hargal reverts on the observations, exploring how the Ottoman Empire was a stage for multicultural experiments and how the changes planned were used. (30 mins)

Group discussion

Session resources:

Hamilton and Wright, "Politics and Identities," pre-circulated draft book chapter

7pm Dinner Athlone Circle (Fire & Vine or Elephant & Co.)

Tuesday 31 Jan.

9-11am Panel Four The nature of the political entities and of sovereignty

John Wright discusses the relationship between identity making and political formations, including paying attention to the nature of rulerships, subjects and marginalized parties. (20-30 mins)

Matthieu Rey reflects on the conclusion and extends the discussion toward to different situations (20-30 mins)

Group discussion

Session resources:

Hamilton and Wright, "Politics and Identities," pre-circulated draft book chapter

Coffee break

11.15 -1.15 Panel Five: Land tenure / taxation / tribute / Administration/food security

Falestine Naïli discusses the notion of taxation / tributes; land administration and territorial struggle. (30 mins)

John Wright/Steve Kotze explore these key components in the region of KwaZulu Natal (30 mins)

Group discussion

Session resources:

Hamilton and Wright, "Politics and Identities," pre-circulated draft book chapter

1.15-2.30 Lunch Sagewood cafe

2.30-3.30 *Round table*: takeaways and how to proceed from this

3.30 -5pm. *Museum Gallery and Stores Visit* (led by Gavin Whitelaw and Justine Wintjes)

7.00 pm *Dinner* Cascades Centre

Wednesday 1 Feb

9 am Heritage House check out after breakfast, depart from HH to kwaBulawayo (3 hours drive)

Please note: you can expect the weather to be very hot indeed. Hats, walking shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen and swimming costumes are advised.

Lunch tbc.

We will probably also visit the emaKhosini, so-called Valley of Kings, with the Zulu royal graves

Check in at Intibeni lodge.

Evening prep discussion for visit to uMgungundlovu

(Resources: John Parkington and Mike Cronin, *The Size and Layout of Mgungundlovu 1829-1838*

Source: Goodwin Series, No. 3, Iron Age Studies in Southern Africa (1979), pp. 133-148; Published by: South African Archaeological Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3858122>

See also "Exploring uMgungundlovu" (<http://emandulo.apc.uct.ac.za/cgi-bin/view/Presentations/fhya-exploring-umgungundlovu.zip/studio-emandulo.uct.ac.za/fhya-exploring-umgungundlovu/index.html>)

Including first hand accounts of people who lived and worked their in their youths, notably Thununu kaNonjiya (can also be read here: <http://emandulo.apc.uct.ac.za/metadata/Stuart/3648/3654/4033/4034/index.html>)

Dinner at the lodge

Thursday 2 Feb

Visit to uMgungundlovu

Packed lunch.

End of the activities