

NIGERIA'S IGBO JEWS

Between images of the Star of David and *menorah*, Habakkuk Nwafor's front door in Nigeria's capital bears the proud notice, 'I AM A JEW'. The leader of Abuja's Tikvat Israel Synagogue, Nwafor is an Igbo, a member of Nigeria's third largest ethnic group, numbering over 30 million people. Seated outside his Abuja home, he holds a copy of William Miles's *Jews of Nigeria: An Afro-Judaic odyssey* (2013), a book about Nwafor's family and religious community. On its cover is a photograph of his son becoming a *bar mitzvah*. For at least a decade prior to its publication, Igbo Jews offered their own written religio-historical narratives, but Miles's was the first book about Igbo Jewry composed by a Western academic.

From 2,000 and 5,000 people, most of whom are Igbo, practice Judaism throughout Nigeria, though a much larger number self-identify as Jews even while practising Christianity. Igbo self-identification with and as Jews dates back to the 18th century, but concretized during and after the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), in which at least one million Igbo died in the failed bid for Biafran independence. The civil war and its disastrous consequences initiated a still-ongoing period of intense questioning among the Igbo concerning their history, present predicaments, and future prospects.

Igbo Jewish identity presents a challenge. Igbo Jews consider themselves part of world Jewry, but are not yet integrated with, nor represented in and by, Jewish institutions/associations around the world. Igbo Jewish identity also poses the truth question, as Igbo oral religio-historical claims are examined and questioned by researchers and scholars using academic lenses.



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fascism 2
Douglas Holmes

anthropology
education
Paul Basu

refugee crisis @ the
front line - part 1
Evthymios Papataxiachis

European moralism
& Greece – part 2
Michael Herzfeld

Nigeria's Igbo Jews
Shai Afsai

asylum appeal
hearings
Nick Gill et al

female migrants
to Syria
Aysha Navest et al

foodbanks

obituary:
Charles JMR Gullick
Fredrik Barth



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Lesbos in the frontline

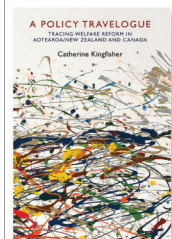
An olive branch with one hand outstretched in aid of a fellow human being, as drawn by illustrator Georgie McAusland.

In the course of 2015, Skala Sykamnias, a tiny, sleepy fishing village and tourist idyll on the island of Lesbos, Greece, became a gateway to Europe for more than 200,000 refugees. In this issue, Evthymios Papataxiarchis analyzes how the European refugee crisis impacted his fieldwork site. The rescue of refugees involves several theatres of operation, ranging from the frontline centred upon the sea and the beach, to backstage revolving around the reception centres further inland. This attracts a multitude of volunteers, activists and humanitarian organizations from all over the world, becoming a focal point for world media.

A swirl of political, ethical, and material elements, both local and transnational, now focuses upon the locality. The massive welcoming of refugees, however, is full of contradictions. With diverse actors enacting what are often dissonant ideals and strategies, what might appear from the outside to be a humanitarian act, is in fact more complex. Humanitarian structures raise several issues, such as local concerns about sovereignty, the authenticity of 'disinterested' motives, the nature of 'solidarity' and the role of the NGOs.

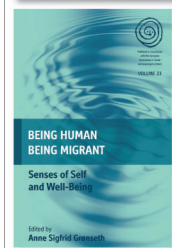
From the local perspective this is a 'generative moment': at the centre of huge human and material flows, the local community is falling apart whilst to the incoming it represents freedom. Skala has become a mini theatre of conflicts that echo wider debates on the political future of Europe. In this capacity it captures a decisive moment in 21st-century European history.

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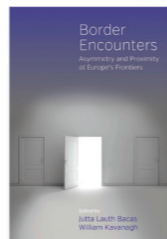


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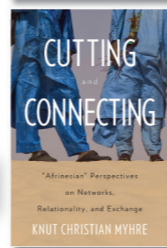
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The 3rd Mary Douglas Memorial Lecture will be held on Wednesday 25 May at 6pm in the Archaeology Lecture Theatre, UCL Anthropology, 14 Taviton Street, London WC1H 0BW, followed by a drinks reception.

How BOFIs (Banks and Other Financial Institutions) Think

Dr Michael Thompson

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

Michael Thompson

Conventional diagnoses of the Global Financial Crisis see it as "abnormal", and then resort to explanations in terms of "irrational exuberance", "animal spirits", "herding behaviour" and so on. The prescription - "better regulation" - follows automatically, as it has done after every such crisis, all the way back to tulipmania 400 years ago. But if there are different "seasons of risk", and if financial sector actors are able to latch onto different risk-handling strategies, each appropriate to one of those seasons and inappropriate to others, then we have a very different explanation. This is a simple and bold hypothesis - one that has its roots in Mary Douglas's *How Institutions Think*, and *Purity and Danger*. The lecture will show how it is well-supported by historical evidence, agent-based modelling, and fieldwork among both BOFIs and their regulators, as well as by parallels from ecology, organisation theory and evolutionary economics.

The annual lecture is sponsored by: UCL Anthropology, Oxford University School of Anthropology & Museum Ethnography, Royal Anthropological Institute.

All welcome to this free public lecture.

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