

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN FRANCIS MARCHMANT MIDDLETON

It was with immense sadness and sense of loss that the students, colleagues and friends of John Middleton received the news of his death in New Haven, Connecticut, on 27 February 2009. When Ann Biersteker called to tell me that our friend had passed on, I was in Zanzibar where John had done an important study on land tenure, and I remembered the many conversations we had had about East Africa and its peoples. During his final days, we had worked closely to convene the International African Institute Seminar in Nairobi, and edit the book *Media and Identity in Africa* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), his last major intellectual engagement with Africa. I first met John Middleton on a boat between Lamu and Pate in the summer of 1988 when he was undertaking research on the Swahili, and later that year he welcomed me to his home in Guilford, Connecticut, when I joined the Department of Linguistics at Yale University. He was a generous and dear friend to all who knew him.

John was born in 1921 in northern London and his father was a government official in the central income tax bureaucracy. When the family moved to Hertfordshire, John joined a boys' day school and mainly studied French, German, Latin, English and History. Between the ages of 6 and 16, he spent every summer and a month after Christmas on his aunt's sheep farm in Northamptonshire in central England. It is no wonder that later in his life he would be interested in land tenure and gardening. In 1938 he was awarded a scholarship to study at University College London (UCL) graduating with a B.A. in English in 1941. Later that year, he was drafted into the war, posted to an infantry battalion and sent to East Africa to serve in the colonial army. He arrived in Mombasa via Brazil and Durban by sea at Christmas of 1942. In the coming years, he learned Swahili and taught in the East African Education Corps. His experience in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Madagascar and Mauritius during the war was later to prove immensely valuable to his work in anthropology. Reflecting on that experience, John believed that the military system, in addition to training African soldiers for a war against Japan and Germany, was part of the colonial enterprise of consolidating its interests.

It was in 1946 that John returned to UCL to do a three year Bachelor of Science degree in the new Anthropology Department under Daryll Forde. Later he went to Oxford to study African ethnography first with Max Gluckman and then E.E. Evans-Pritchard, who became his advisor. John wrote on systems of land tenure in East Africa, comparing the land systems of the Gikuyu, Kamba, Luhya and Baganda. John's Oxford cohort included Godfrey Lienhardt, Mary Douglas, Clyde Mitchell, Laura and Paul Bohannans, Elizabeth Colson, Ian Lewis among others. John had fond memories of his advisors, calling Evans-Pritchard 'a superb' lecturer who shared his experiences openly with students and Meyer Fortes 'the most sympathetic'. John indexed *The Web of Kinship* (1949) by Fortes and seems to have been

KIMANI NJOGU

positively influenced by Fortes' analysis of the Tallensi ethnography in his study of the Lugbara.

Given a choice between working in East Africa with Evans Pritchard or among the Ndebele with Max Gluckman, John returned to East Africa in 1949 and did his doctoral research among the Lugbara in northwest Uganda. Prior to the field trip he had studied Lugbara in London and learnt Sudanic phonetics from Professor Archie Tucker at the School of Oriental and African languages (SOAS). His Ph.D. research was funded by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and the Colonial Social Science Research Council. Later, John was to remember and share his field work among the Lugbara: the slowness of acquiring data and the need for great patience and acceptance of another culture's senses of time, occasion and causation; the time it took to comprehend the host's categorization of the world around them and the interconnections between different institutions of the local society. John patiently learnt from the societies he studied and learning was for him a 'joint project.'

After receiving his doctorate in 1953 he taught briefly at Birkbeck College, the University of Cape Town, and Rhodes University, before settling back into University College London, with Mary Douglas, Phyllis Kaberry, and other contemporaries of similar renown. During this period he also did research on land tenure in Zanzibar and published two books: *Land Tenure in Zanzibar* (1961) and (with Jane Campbell) *Zanzibar: Its Society and Its Politics* (1965). In addition, John spent time teaching in the United States at the University of Virginia and Northwestern. He spent the spring of 1962 at the University of Oregon and in 1963 he returned to Northwestern to occupy the chair initially held by Melville Herskovits. It is during that period that he visited Lagos for a year and studied the Igbo migrants, working closely with the Ohuhu Town Union. In 1966, he was invited to establish a new program in Anthropology at New York University, where he worked closely with Margaret. At Northwestern and NYU John collaborated with Jim Bohannan to produce a series of 'readers' in anthropology and co-edited collections with Ed Winter (1963), John Beattie (1969) and Ron Cohen (1967, 1970). He continued to publish his own original works.

In 1972, John returned to London as professor and Chair of African anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies; he was made director of the International African Institute and editor of *Africa*. Although the IAI was London and Paris based, it occasionally received funding from the Ford Foundation to hold seminars on Africa. John Middleton contributed immensely in 'Africanizing' the Institute, as I learnt when I became a member of the IAI Council. His devotion to African studies was complete. John spent two summers in Ghana in the Akan kingdom of Akuapem and published his findings. Impressed by the vibrancy of African studies and anthropology in the United States as evident in the African Studies Association (ASA) and American Anthropological Association (AAA) conferences, John joined the Department of Anthropology at Yale University in 1981. He secured Yale's first U.S. Department of Education Title VI African Studies Center Award, established its MA program in African studies and strengthened its Program in African Languages. John

IN MEMORIAM JOHN MIDDLETON

recruited many international students to Yale and worked tirelessly to secure support for them. His research during this period resulted in the publication of *The World of the Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* in 1992.

On reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70 for university faculty, John became an unwilling emeritus in 1991. But he never stopped teaching and researching. He spent time at Frankfurt, Mainz, Bristol, Durban, and Yale's Council on African Studies. John continued writing on the Swahili and edited the four-volume *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara* (Scribners, 1997), and, with Joseph Miller, a five volume second edition in 2007. A Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Royal Asiatic Society, the International African Institute, and the American Anthropological Association (ASA), John was named Distinguished Africanist in 2007 by the African Studies Association. His research – spanning more than 130 published works – revolved principally around Swahili society and culture but engaged a wide range of theoretical fields in anthropology. John Middleton's intellectual contribution was immense and his writings are a testimony of his unwavering commitment to knowledge production.

Kimani Njogu
Twaweza Communications, Nairobi

KIMANI NJOGU

KUMBUKUMBU YA

JOHN FRANCIS MARCHMANT MIDDLETON

Tulipokea habari za kifo cha mwalimu wetu Profesa John Middleton kwa huzuni na simanzi nyingi. John alifariki mnamo tarehe 27 Februari, 2009 katika mji wa New Haven, Connecticut (Marekani) baada ya kuugua kwa muda mfupi. Wakati Profesa Ann Biersteker (Chuo Kikuu cha Yale) aliponipigia simu kuniarifu kuwa rafiki yetu ameaga dunia, nilikuwa Zanzibar mahali ambapo John aliwahi kufanya utafiti muhimu kuhusu umiliki wa ardhi na nilikumbuka mazungumzo mengi tuliyokuwa nayo siku za nyuma kuhusu Afrika Mashariki na watu wake. Katika siku zake za mwisho, tulishirikiana naye kuandaa Warsha ya Kimataifa ya Taasisi ya Afrika (ya Chuo Kikuu cha London) mjini Nairobi na kuhariri kitabu cha *Media and Identity in Africa* (Edinburg university press, 2009). Kitabu hiki ndicho kilichokuwa mchango wake wa mwisho wa kisomi kuhusu Afrika. Nilikutana na John Middleton kwa mara ya kwanza ndani ya ngalawa baina ya Lamu na Pate mwezi wa Julai 1988 alipokuwa akifanya utafiti kuhusu Waswahili. Baadaye mwaka huo huo alinikaribisha nyumbani mwake Guilford, Connecticut, nilipojiunga na Idara ya Isimu katika Chuo Kikuu cha Yale. Alikuwa mkarimu na rafiki wa dhati kwa wote waliomfahamu.

John alizaliwa mwaka wa 1921 kaskazini mwa London na babake alikuwa afisa wa serikali katika makao makuu ya urasimu wa kodi ya mapato. Familia yake ilipohamia Hertfordshire, John alijiunga na shule ya wavulana ambako alisomea Kifaransa, Kijerumani, Kilatini, Kiingereza na Historia. Akiwa na umri wa baina miaka 6 na 16, aliishi na shangazi yake katika eneo la Northamptonshire katikati ya Uingereza na alichunga kondoo katika majira ya joto na mwezi mmoja baada ya Krismasi. Si ajabu kamwe kuwa baadaye maishani alikuwa na mshawasha wa kujihusisha na umiliki wa ardhi na shughuli za kilimo. Mnamo mwaka wa 1938 John alipokea ufadhili wa masomo katika Chuo Kikuu cha London na shahada ya B.A. ya Kiingereza mwaka wa 1941. Baadaye mwaka huo, alisajiliwa katika jeshi na alikuja Afrika Mashariki kutumikia kama askari jeshi wakati wa Vita Vikuu vya Pili. Aliwasili Mombasa nyakati za Krimesi mwaka wa 1942 kwa meli, baada ya kupitia Brazil na Durban. Miaka iliyofuatia alijifunza Kiswahili na aliwafundisha wanajeshi. Tajriba yake nchini Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Madagaska na Mauritius nyakati za vita ilimsadia pakubwa katika kazi ya anthropolojia. John aliamini kuwa mfumo wa kijeshi pamoja na mafunzo kwa askari jeshi wa Afrika katika vita dhidi ya Japan na Ujerumani ulikuwa sehemu ya shughuli za kikoloni za kuimarisha malengo yake.

Mnamo mwaka wa 1946, John alirudi UCL kusomea Shahada ya Sayansi kwa miaka mitatu katika Idara mpya ya Anthropolojia iliyosimamiwa na Daryll Forde. Baadaye alienda Oxford kusomea Ethnografia ya Kiafrika kwanza na Max Gluckman na kisha baadaye na E.E. Evans-Pritchard ambaye alikuwa mshauri wake. John aliandika kuhusu mifumo ya umiliki wa ardhi Afrika Mashariki, akilinganisha mifumo ya ardhi ya Wakikuyu, Wakamba, Waluhya na

IN MEMORIAM JOHN MIDDLETON

Waganda. Wenzake katika Chuo cha Oxford walikuwa Godfrey Lienhardt, Mary Douglas, Clyde Mitchell, Laura na Paul Bohannans, Elizabeth Colson, Ian Lewis miongoni mwa wengine. John daima aliwasifu washauri wake na aghalabu alimtaja Evans-Pritchard kama ‘mhadhiri shupavu aliyenufaisha wanafunzi wake bila uchoyo wala kinyongo.’ Alimkumbuka Meyer Fortes kama mhadhiri ‘mwenye moyo wa huruma’. John aliandaa faharasa ya *The Web of Kinship* (1949), kitabu kilichoandikwa na Fortes na alionekana kushawishiwa kwa njia chanya na uchanganuzi wa Fortes wa ethnografia ya Tallensi katika utafiti wake wa Lugbara.

Alipopewa fursa ya kuchagua baina ya kufanya kazi Afrika Mashariki na Evans Pritchard au kuwatafiti Wandebele huku akishirikiana na Max Gluckman, John aliamua kurudi Afrika Mashariki mwaka wa 1949 na akafanya utafiti wake wa Shahada ya Uzamifu (Ph.D.) miongoni mwa Lugbara kaskazini mwa Uganda. Kabla ya utafiti wa nyanjani alikuwa amesomea Lugbara akiwa London na alijifudisha fonetiki ya lugha za Sudanic. Utafiti wake wa uzamifu ulifadhiliwa na Kampuni Stahika ya Masonara pamoja na Baraza la Utafiti la Utafiti wa Sayansi ya Jamii. John alijifunza kwa subira kutoka kwa jamii ambazo alizifanyia utafiti na kwake yeye ujifunzaji huo ulikuwa ‘mradi wa ushirikiano.’

Baada ya kupokea shahada yake ya Uzamifu mwaka wa 1953 alifundisha kwa muda katika Chuo cha Birkbeck, Chuo Kikuu cha Cape Town, na Chuo Kikuu cha Rhodes kabla ya kutulia katika Chuo Kikuu cha London (UCL) pamoja na Mary Douglas, Phyllis Kaberry na wengine waliokuwa na tajriba kama yake. Katika kipindi hiki, alifanya utafiti wa umiliki wa ardhi nchini Zanzibari na kuchapisha vitabu viwili *Land Tenure in Zanzibar* (1961) na (akishirikiana na Jane Campbell) *Zanzibar: Its Society and Its Politics* (1965).

Fauka ya hayo, John alitumia muda wake mwingi kufundisha nchini Marekani katika Chuo Kikuu cha Virginia na Northwestern. Alifundisha katika Chuo Kikuu cha Oregon mnamo 1962 kisha akarudi Northwestern mwaka wa 1963 kuchukua wajibu wa kuongoza idara uliokuwa umeshikiliwa awali na Melville Herskovits. Ilikuwa katika kipindi hicho ambapo alizuru Lagos kwa mwaka mmoja na kufanya utafiti kuhusu wahamaji wa WaIgbo akishirikiana na Muungano wa Mji wa Ohuhu. Mnamo mwaka wa 1966, alialikwa kuanzisha programu mpya ya anthropolojia katika Chuo Kikuu cha New York. Kwenye Chuo Kikuu cha Northwestern na New York, John alishirikiana na Jim Bohannan kuandika na kuchapisha makala ya usomaji wa anthropolojia na alishirikiana na Ed Winter (1963), John Beattie (1969) na Ron Cohen (1967, 1970) kuhariri kusanyiko la makala. Aliendelea kuchapisha kazi zake asilia. Ni katika mwaka wa 1972 ambapo John alirudi London kama Profesa na Mwenyekiti wa anthropolojia ya Kiafrika katika School of African and Oriental Studies na alifanywa Mkurugenzi wa Taasisi ya Kimataifa ya Kiafrika (IAI) na mhariri wa *Africa*. Ingawa taasisi hiyo ilikuwa na makao yake London na Paris, wakati mwingine ilipokea ufadhili kutoka kwa Ford Foundation ili kuandaa warsha barani Afrika. John Middleton alichangia sana katika kuifanya taasisi hii iwe na sura ya Afrika, jambo ambalo binafsi nililishuhudia wakati nilipokuwa mwanachama wa baraza la IAI. Bidii yake katika masomo ya Kiafrika ilikuwa yenye kina na maki.

KIMANI NJOGU

John aliishi Ghana kwa muda wa misimu miwili ya majira ya joto katika Ufalme wa Akan wa Akuapem na kuchapisha matokeo ya utafiti wake. Kwa sababu alipendezwa pakubwa na ari kuhusu masomo ya Kiafrika na anthropolojia nchini Marekani kama ilivyodhihirika kwenye makongamano ya Chama cha Masomo ya Kiafrika (ASA) na Chama cha Anthropolojia ya Marekani (AAA), John alijiunga na Idara ya Anthropolojia ya Chuo Kikuu cha Yale mnamo mwaka wa 1981. Alianzisha programu ya Uzamili (MA) ya Yale katika masomo ya Kiafrika na kuimarisha Programu zake katika Lugha za Kiafrika. John alisajili wanafunzi wengi wa kimataifa katika chuo cha Yale na alikuwa na bidii ya mchwa katika kuwatafutia msaada na kuwafanya wahisi kuwa nyumbani. Utafiti wake katika kipindi hiki ulipelekea kuchapishwa kwa *The World of the Swahili: An African Mercantile Civilization* kuhusu Waswahili mwaka wa 1992. Alipotimiza mwaka wa kustaafu bila hiari katika kitivo cha Chuo Kikuu akiwa na umri wa miaka 70, John alistaafu mwaka wa 1991. Lakini hakuacha kufundisha na kufanya utafiti. Kwa hakika, alifanya kazi ama kuchapisha katika baraza za Masomo ya Kiafrika za Frankfurt, Mainz, Bristol, Durban na Yale. John aliendelea kuandika kuhusu Waswahili na kuhariri juzuu-nne za *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara* (Scribners, 1997), akishirikiana na Joseph Miller, na Juzuu la Tano Toleo la Pili mwaka wa 2007.

John alikuwa mwanachama msifika wa Vyama vingi vya kitaaluma. Utafiti wake unajumuisha zaidi ya machapisho 130. Licha ya kujihusisha na jamii na utamaduni wa Waswahili, John Middleton alishughulikia nyanja mbalimbali za kinadharia katika taaluma ya anthropolojia. Amemwacha mke wake Michelle Gilbert, mtoto wa kike Jane Harper, mjukuu wa kike Dede, na dada wawili, Ursula Clissold na Fenella Wiersma-Middleton.

Kimani Njogu
Twaweza Communications, Nairobi