

DR. MATTHEW STERLING BENSON

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EDUCATION

Durham University

2020

PhD History

Durham, UK

Dissertation: 'Taxation, Local Government and Social Control in Sudan and South Sudan, 1899-1956'; Awarded an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Studentship (2015-2018); Archival research conducted in Khartoum, Sudan; Juba, South Sudan; and, London & Durham, UK; Supervised by Cherry Leonardi and Jutta Bakonyi

MA Social & Economic History (Research Methods)

2016

Dissertation: 'All Should Understand that they have a Legal Allegiance to the Government': Taxation & State-Formation in Early Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Sudan; Awarded a History Departmental Scholarship (2014-2015); Qualitative, quantitative & historical research methods; Archival research conducted in Durham, UK; Awarded with Merit

Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex

2012

MA Governance & Development

Brighton, UK

Dissertation: Tax and State-Building in Post-Conflict South Sudan; Field research conducted in Juba, South Sudan

Tufts University

2007

BA International Relations - Global Conflict, Cooperation & Justice Concentration

Medford, MA

Senior Capstone Project: Advocacy and Operational Work in Conflict Related Crises - Case Studies of Ethiopia, Sudan, & Zimbabwe; Findings disseminated as an Oxfam America briefing paper

SELECTED GRANTS & AWARDS

- 2021-2026 – LSE CCRG Contribution to the Peace and Conflict Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) led by the University of Edinburgh Law School | approx. £4,000,000 (Group Submission)
- 2024-2025 – Open Society Foundation Grant for Boy Brother Friend | \$100,000 (Group Submission)
- 2022-2025 – Charities Aid Foundation Grant for South Sudanese Bridge Network Research | £150,000
- 2023-2024 – International Centre for Taxation and Development Research Grant | £4,400
- 2020-2022 – British Council/FCDO Sudan Stability and Growth Programme Research Grant | £87,858
- 2020-2020 – LSE Black History Month Staff Showcase 2020
- 2019-2019 – Conflict Research Programme Research Grant | £10,000
- 2015-2018 – Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) PhD Studentship | £54,327
- 2014-2015 – Durham University History Department Scholarship, 2014 | £4,052
- 2010-2011 – International Centre for Tax and Development Research Grant | £5,000

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

- Benson, M. (2024) '[Of Rule Not Revenue: South Sudan's Revenue Complex from Colonial, Rebel, to Independent Rule, 1899 to 2023](#)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Issue 66-3.
- van den Boogaard, V., Prichard, W., Benson, M. and Milicic, N. (2018) '[Revenue Mobilization in Conflict-Affected Developing Countries](#)'. *Journal of International Development*, Special Issue on 'Fiscal Policy, State-Building and Economic Development', Issue 30.

Works in Progress

- Benson, M. 'Aiding Predation: Peace Agreements & South Sudan's Coercive Revenue Complex' (Manuscript in preparation for submission in April 2024).
- Benson, M., Greenbaum, J., and Awany, J. 'Subversion & Control: The Moral Economies of Timber in South Sudan' (Article in preparation).
- Srinivasan, S., Benson, M., Makawi, R. 'Political and Economic Thought in Sudan's Uprising'. (Data collection and analysis in progress and article manuscript in preparation for submission in May 2024).
- Detzner, S., Berridge, W., Makawi, R., and Benson, M. 'Sudan's Changed Security Arena'. (Policy Brief in preparation for submission in April 2024).
- Benson, M. *Revenue and Subordination in Sudan and South Sudan* book manuscript to be submitted to Cambridge University Press's *African History* series.

Peer Reviewed Working Papers & Policy Publications

- Benson, M. and Alneel, M. (2023) '[The Everyday Politics of Sudan's Tax System: Identifying Prospects for Reform](#)', Peace and Conflict Resolution Research Platform (PeaceRep), London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Benson, M. (2022) '[Taxation and Civiness in South Sudan: Revenue Reforms for a More Inclusive Democracy](#)', Peace and Conflict Resolution Research Platform (PeaceRep) London School of Economics and Political Science.

- Benson, M. (2022) '[Taxation, Coercion and Civicness in South Sudan](#)', In Lynch, M., Aidi, H. and Mampilly, Z. (eds.) *The Struggle for Democracy in Africa: Elections, Coups and Popular Opinion*. New York: Program on African Social Research at the Marxe School of Public and International Affairs, CUNY.
- Kaldor, Mary, Radice, Henry, de Waal, Alex, Benson, Matthew, Detzner, Sarah, Elder, Claire, Hoffmann, Kasper, Ibreck, Rachel, Majid, Nisar, Morgan, Azaria, Mehchy, Zaki, Rangelov, Iavor, Sarkar, Aditya, Spatz, Benjamin J., Theros, Marika, Turkmani, Rim, Vlassenroot, Koen and Watkins, Jessica (2020) '[Evidence from the Conflict Research Programme: Submission to the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#)'. Conflict Research Programme, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.
- de Waal, A., Boswell, A., Deng, D., Ibreck, R., Benson, M. and Pospisil, J. (2019) '[South Sudan: The Politics of Delay](#)'. Conflict Research Programme, London School of Economics and Political Science. Policy Memo.
- Pape, U., Benson, M., Ebrahim, M., and Lole, J. (2017) '[Reducing Poverty Through Improved Agro-Logistics in a Fragile Country: Findings from a Trader Survey in South Sudan](#)'. World Bank, Poverty & Equity Global Practice, Africa. Research Working Paper.
- Denney, L., Mallett, R. with Benson, M. (2017) '[Service Delivery and State Capacity: Findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium](#)', Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC), Overseas Development Institute. Synthesis Report.
- van den Boogaard, V., Prichard, W., Milicic, N. and Benson, M. (2016) '[Revenue Mobilization in Conflict-Affected Developing Countries](#)'. International Centre for Tax and Development and United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER). Working Paper.
- Benson, M. (2016) '[Paying for Government and Services: 28 States and Revenue](#)'. In Aalen, L. and Schomerus, M. (eds.) *Considering the State: Perspectives on South Sudan's Sub-Division and Federalism Debate*. London: Overseas Development Institute and the Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Allouche, J., Benson, M. and M'Cormack, F. (2016) '[Beyond Borders: The End of the Mano River War\(s\)?](#)'. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton. Evidence Report No. 188.
- Benson, M. (2015) 'Let's Talk About Tax: Revenue and South Sudan's Constitution'. *Africa in Fact*, Issue 32.
- Benson, M. (2007) '[Insecure Environments: The Missing Piece?](#)', *Forced Migration Review*, Issue 29 : p.20-21.

Policy Engagement

- Benson, M. and Mabu, R. (2023) '[Where are Our Mangoes? Local-Driven Contestation of Predatory Practices in South Sudan's Resource Extraction](#)'. 'Conflict Zone' Podcast. Conflict and Civicness Research Group at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 22 September 2023.
- Benson, M. (2022) '[Transitioning from Taxation without Representation in South Sudan](#)'. Peace and Conflict Evidence Platform (PeaceRep), University of Edinburgh, 2 November 2022.
- Benson, M. (2022) '[A History of the Cedi: Dystopian 'Little Shells' or a Pathway for a Utopian Ghana?](#)'. Boy Brother Friend. Issue 4.
- Benson, M. and Craze, J. (2021) '[What Happens When the Oil Runs Out?: Traumatic Decarbonisation in South Sudan](#)'. 'Conflict Zone' Podcast. Conflict Research Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 17 March 2021.
- Benson, M., Radice, H., Turkmani, R., Ali, Z., Al-Kaisy, A. (2020) '[Opportunities for Peace and Democracy: Civicness in Conflict Societies](#)'. 'Conflict Zone' Podcast. Conflict Research Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 11 September.
- Benson, M. (2020) '[COVID-19 Rumours as Transcripts of Resistance in South Sudan](#)'. Conflict Research Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 18 June.
- Benson, M. (2020) '[Who is this Government Really? South Sudanese Perspectives on Taxes and Public Authority](#)'. Conflict Research Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, 14 May.
- Benson, M. (2011) '[Making Tax Work in South Sudan](#)'. Royal African Society and the Social Science Research Council, 14 November.

Book Reviews

- Benson, M. (2023) '[Review of Roadblock Politics: The Origins of Violence in Central Africa](#)' by Peer Schouten'. *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute*. Vol.93, Issue 3.
- Benson, M. (2023) '[Review – When Peace Kills Politics: International Intervention in the Sudans](#)', Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep), 23 January.
- Benson, M. (2021) '[Review of Taxing Africa: Coercion, Reform and Development](#)' by Mick Moore, Wilson Prichard and Odd-Helge Fjeldstad'. *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute*, Vol. 91, Issue 2.
- Benson, M. (Issue 55, February 2017) 'Review of *Borders and Borderlands as Political Resources in the Horn of Africa*, edited by Dereje Feyissa and Markus Virgil Hoehne'. *Journal of Sudan and South Sudan Studies*, Sudan Studies Society of the United Kingdom, Book Review.
- Benson, M. (2015) 'Review of Naseem Badiey's, *The State of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Land, Urban Development and State-Building in Juba Southern Sudan*'. *Journal of Sudan and South Sudan Studies*, Sudan Studies Society of the United Kingdom. Issue 52.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE (Selected)

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

June 2019 - Present

Sudans Research Director

London, UK, S. Sudan & Sudan

Principle Investigator for projects examining climate and South Sudan's political economy and civic engagement in economic transformations in South Sudan and Sudan; Directly managing a team of South Sudanese and Sudanese research networks and related budgets; Authoring peer reviewed publications, policy briefs and engaging in public and closed-door research dissemination events and international media appearances; Drafting manuscript for Cambridge's *African Studies* series

Conflict Research Programme South Sudan Research Director & LSE PeaceRep Research Manager

Principal Investigator for two research projects on tax, conflict & authority in South Sudan and Sudan, which developed my PhD-research findings; Research Director for the South Sudan research group and the Research Manager for the £6.8m consortium, including managing a network of South Sudanese and Sudanese researchers and regularly briefed UK-government officials in Whitehall, Juba, and Khartoum

The World Bank

Research Consultant – The World Bank, Kenya

March 2019 - March 2020 | London, UK & Kenya

Researched whether devolved public services have impacted poverty and equity in Kenya; collaborating on the design of the analysis and co-authoring a Background Paper and Synthesis Policy Note

Consultant – Poverty and Equity Global Practice, Africa Region

March 2016 - Aug. 2017 | Durham, UK & South Sudan

Co-authored a research paper reviewing findings from a survey identifying agricultural market linkages and barriers between food surplus and deficit areas across South Sudan to alleviate poverty and reduce food insecurity in the country; led the design and implementation of a survey of approximately 600 market traders in South Sudan

Consultant – World Development Report

Oct. 2009 - Feb. 2010 | New York, NY

Researched and compiled a literature review and annotated bibliography on the financing of stabilization efforts in post-conflict and fragile state situations; research findings are an input to a background paper by Dr Shepard Forman and Dr James Boyce for the World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report* on 'Conflict, Security and Development'

The Rift Valley Institute (RVI)

July 2018 - Dec. 2018

Research Consultant

London, UK

Co-authored a 'state of the field' review on how international agencies have attempted to understand borderlands in South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia; project is part of the DFID-funded Cross Border Conflict – Evidence, Policy and Trends (XCEPT); Collaborated on an historical analysis of South Sudan's trading sector, which was presented at RVI's 7th Juba Lecture Series on the theme of 'Everyday Economies: Historical Perspectives and Present-Day Realities in South Sudan'

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

April 2016 - March 2017

Research Consultant

Durham, UK

Co-authored a synthesis report with the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium on state capacity and state-building initiatives in conflict-affected situations and how approaches to both could be more effective

Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex

Research Consultant

June 2015 - April 2016 | Brighton, UK

Researched and co-authored a Working Paper on policy responses to regional and cross-border security & peace in W. Africa

Research Consultant

March 2011 - April 2012 | Brighton, UK & South Sudan

Co-authored a journal article and Working Paper on taxation in post-conflict states; research assistant on a DFID-publication on the taxation of Africa's informal sector and on an ICTD Working Paper on the political economy of taxation; co-authored an IDS publication on conflict dynamics in Côte d'Ivoire; research assistant on a DFID Governance Appraisal for Feeder Roads in South Sudan; drafted a Save the Children advocacy brief on child malnutrition in Uganda; Lead researcher for an ICTD project examining tax and governance in South Sudan; published findings in *African Arguments*

Center on International Cooperation at New York University

Sept. 2009 - Dec. 2009

Graduate Research Assistant

New York, NY

Investigated the militarization of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and assisted efforts to innovate due diligence and transparency measures for the country's mining sector; researched, drafted and edited country analyses for publication in the Center's *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations*

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

May 2007 - April 2008

Research Consultant – Emergency Preparedness & Response Section

Geneva, Switzerland

Authored regular country forecasts of potential conflicts under tight deadlines to support UNHCR's early warning and emergency response system; participated in UNHCR emergency contingency planning sessions for Algeria, the DRC and Kosovo; coordinated with a UK-based editor and team in Geneva to fulfil reporting needs and deadlines; cultivated a network of early warning units in other United Nations agencies, NGOs and specialized think-tanks

Research Intern – Policy Development & Evaluation Service

Researched the policy and practice of Remote Management Operations in insecure environments such as Afghanistan and Iraq; conducted detailed interviews with UNHCR field and HQ staff; findings contributed to UNHCR policymaking and were published in *Forced Migration Review*

Oxfam America - Humanitarian Response Department

Sept. 2006 - May 2007

Research Intern

Boston, MA

Measured impact of advocacy campaigns on Oxfam's operations in Ethiopia, Sudan & Zimbabwe; findings were published in an Oxfam America internal policy brief

Henry Luce Student Research Scholar, Makerere University

June 2006 - Sept. 2006

Research Assistant

Uganda

Assessed the accountability of NGOs operating in Gulu & Lira districts in Northern Uganda under the guidance of a Makerere University faculty member; assisted in the development of minimum accountability standards for Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International, an independent NGO regulatory body

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (Selected)

Crown Agents

April 2012 - May 2014

Country Manager – South Sudan

Juba, South Sudan

Provided in-country management from July 2012 through December 2013; developed Crown Agents' South Sudan country strategy and established their first South Sudan office; aided Crown Agents' implementation of the £120 million DFID-led Health Pooled Fund (HPF), which supports improvements in the country's health system; assisted in the initial development of the HPF's Public Financial Management (PFM) elements that ensure grants are accountably delivered through in-country systems using the Local Services Support Aid Instrument; drafted elements of the HPF's Scope of Work related to innovation and utilising the evidence-base, community based participation and new technology, which helped shape the design and implementation of the 3.5-year project

Consultant – Governance and Public Expenditure Management (GPEM)

London, UK

Project manager for a successful bid to support debt management and macroeconomic performance improvements in The Gambia (African Development Bank-funded); lead technical writer for Crown Agents' successful bid for inclusion in DFID's Wealth Creation Framework; Examined how to improve the management of large donor funds in post-conflict and fragile states; project managed two Department for International Development (DFID) proposals to support public sector management reforms in Somalia.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Doctors Without Borders

July 2008 - May 2009

Programme Consultant

New York, NY

Partnered with the NY operational desk to develop and implement a knowledge management system for MSF's programmes in Haiti, Nigeria and Somalia; provided short-term research assistance to MSF's Communications Department

Head of Mission Assistant

Khartoum, Sudan

Supported the Head of Mission with policy analyses examining the impact of national and international political, economic, agricultural and military developments on MSF's operations; represented MSF to Sudanese Government, UN and NGO officials; drafted and edited international press documents

Assistant Deputy Head of Mission

West Darfur, Sudan

Collaborated with a diverse team to deliver medical assistance to remote communities in W. Darfur; briefed representatives from United Nations agencies, other NGOs, the Government of Sudan and local authorities on MSF's positions and objectives; assisted in the management of an international and national team

United States House of Representatives

Jan. 2002 - June 2002

House Page

Washington DC

Sponsored by Congressman John Shimkus to serve as a congressional page in the U.S. House of Representatives; duties included carrying bills/amendments and raising the flag over Capital; experienced historical events and witnessed significant legislation including the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and the signing of No Child Left Behind Act

TEACHING

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

MSc Teaching Fellow – ‘African Political Economy’

Sept. 2021 - Feb. 2022

Seminars study contemporary African political economy, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa; the course sets major questions of state, politics, and economic development in Africa in historical, geographic, and international context

Durham University

Guest Lecturer & MSc Course Tutor/Teaching Assistant – ‘Capacity Building in Post-Conflict States’

Mar. 2017

Lecture and seminars examined the history and contemporary application of ‘capacity building’ for the School of Government and International Affairs MSc course: ‘Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Stabilisation, Development and State-Building’

Undergraduate Course Tutor/Teaching Assistant – ‘The Making of Modern Africa’

Oct. 2015 - May 2016

Led seminars on the modern, political, social and economic history of Sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on how the nature and impact of colonial rule, and subsequent independence, continue to shape the post-colonial state

Undergraduate Course Tutor/Teaching Assistant – ‘Introduction to Legal History’

Feb. 2015

Assisted students interpret the legal, social and historical context within a selection of colonial images from Sudan

Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex

MA Course Tutor/Teaching Assistant – ‘Public Management & Organisational Development’

Jan. 2012 - April 2012

Led MA seminars and prepared teaching materials on the administration of the pro-poor delivery of public services, approaches to public sector reform and the sociology of organisations in developing countries

RESEARCH CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS (Selected)

- *Cambridge University Centre for African Studies Seminar Series: The International Politics of Armed Groups in Africa*, October 2023. Research Presentation: ‘A History of Sudanese and South Sudanese Revenue Complexes’, Cambridge University.
- *University of California Berkeley African Studies Seminar*. Article review session: ‘Subversion & Control: The Moral Economies of Timber in South Sudan’, May 2023 University of California, Berkeley.
- *London School of Economics International Development Department Seminar*, ‘Enduring Predation and Rule: South Sudan’s Revenue Complex from Colonial, Rebel, to Independent Rule, 1899-2022’. February 2022. London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).
- *South Sudan: Risk and Resilience Assessment Consultations*, January 2021. Invited Expert, Chatham House and the World Bank, London.
- *Politics of Numbers, Security Sector Reform in South Sudan, and Priorities for Preserving the Peace Agreement*, August 2020. Invited Expert, FCDO, London.
- *Covid-19 Conflict, Security and Governance Lesson Sharing*, Invited Expert, FCDO, London.
- *South Sudan Conflict Economy: The Case of South Sudan*, January 2020. Expert roundtable, FCDO, London.
- *DFID Horn of Africa Research Event*, November 2019. Presentation: Tax and Authority in South Sudan, British High Commission, Kenya.
- *University of Cambridge-London School of Economics African Economic History Workshop*, June 2019. Research Paper: ‘Revenue and the Subordination of Local Government in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium’s Peripheries, 1899-1956’, LSE.
- *Durham University Sudans Study Day for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)/Department for International Development (DFID)*, March 2019. Expert Panel Paper: ‘Taxation and the State-Society Contract in the Sudans’, Durham University.
- *Spatial Dynamics and Inequalities in African Political Economy*, January 2019. Workshop Paper: ‘Fiscal Relations and Sub-National Variation: Taxes, Debt & Livelihood in the Sudans’ Economic Peripheries, 1898-1956’, London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE).
- *HMG South Sudan Conflict & Economy Expert Discussion*. May 2018. UK Department for International Development/UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, DFID/FCO Sudans Unit, London.
- *Centre of Historical Economics and Related Research at the University of York (CHERRY)*. November 2017. Seminar Paper: ‘Acknowledgement, Submission & Justice: Fiscal Relations and Public Authority in the Sudans, 1899-1956’, Department of Economics, University of York.
- *Black and Minority Ethnic Historian’s Workshop*. April 2017. Joint Panel Presentation: ‘Institutional, Structural, Implicit and Explicit Racism in Higher Education’, School of History, University of Leeds.
- *Global and Transnational History Research Group Seminar*. March 2017. Seminar Paper: ‘[W]e are very poor and not enjoying a citizen’s life’: Emergent Perspectives on the Fiscal Social Contract in the Sudans, 1899-1956’, School of History, Classics & Archaeology, The University of Edinburgh.
- *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRFF) Expert / Donor Meeting*. February 2017. Briefing Paper: ‘CSRFF Briefing Note on Revenue in South Sudan’, Nairobi, Kenya.

Dr. Matthew Sterling Benson

- *VI Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network*. October 2016. Conference Paper: 'All Should Understand that they have a Legal Allegiance to the Government': Tribute, the Revenue Imperative and Citizen-State Ties in Colonial Sudan and South Sudan', University of Sussex, Brighton.
- *The Ethnographic Archive: History, Anthropology and the Sudan Archive Durham*. September 2016. Conference Paper: 'No Taxation without Representation? Emerging Perspectives on the Fiscal-Social Contract in the Sudans', Durham University.
- *African Studies Association of the UK*. September 2016. Conference Paper: 'Paying for Government in South Sudan: Historical Perspectives on Revenue and Decentralisation', Robinson College, University of Cambridge.
- *Considerations about the 28 States of South Sudan: A Handbook for Thought*. January 2016. Workshop. Chr. Michelsen Institute and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Reading University.
- *Africa: Interdisciplinary Conversations and Experiences*. April 2015. Seminar Paper: 'Using Revenue to Study Citizens and the State in Sub-Saharan Africa: Methodological Considerations', Ustinov College, Durham University.
- *Negotiating States: The Postwar State in the 'Three Worlds', 1945-1990*. December 2014. Workshop Paper: 'Revenue and the State in South Sudan', Hatfield College, Durham University.
- *The State of Research on the New Sudans*. November 2014. Workshop Paper: 'Thinking About Citizens and the State in South Sudan', Hatfield College, Durham University.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Editorial Director for [Boy Brother Friend](#) magazine and reviewer for:

- *Journal of Development Studies*
- *Journal of African Cultural Studies*
- *International Journal of African Historical Studies*