

ISG Newsletter August 2023



Jennifer, Chama, Nyasha, Bryson, and Ruhan in Lusaka, attending the JSAS and SAIPAR Conference

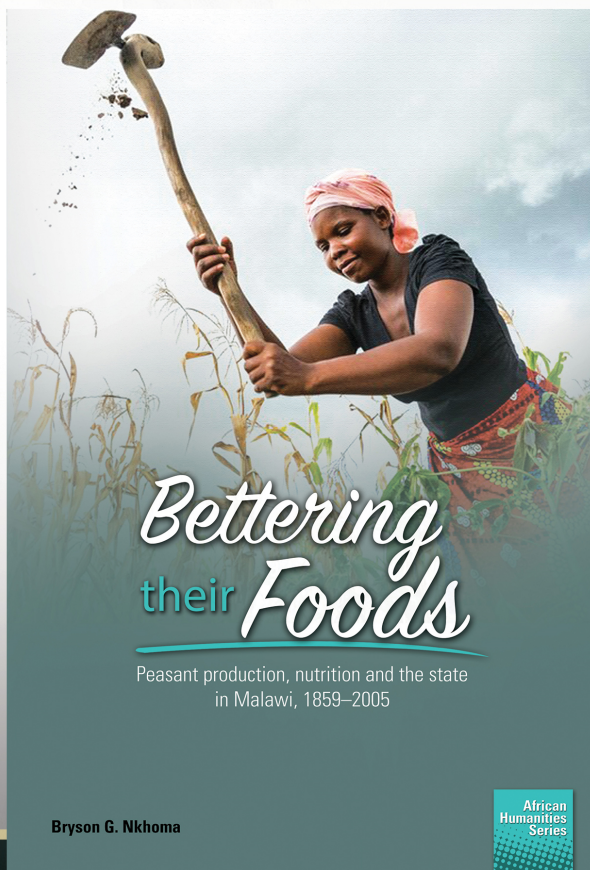
As the picture above shows, the ISG was well represented at the JSAS and SAIPAR conference held in Zambia earlier this month. In addition to the papers presented by ISG members, Bryson was invited to address the conference's early career writing workshop. An article of his published in JSAS in 2020 was among the model papers selected for discussion.

At the end of July, Bryson had also attended the APN proposal development workshop organised in Botswana, but the best was yet to come: his book, *Bettering their Foods. Peasant production, nutrition and the state in Malawi, 1859-2005* has just been published by the AHA in their African Humanities Series. Other publications in the past month include George's article in the *Journal of African Military History*, and the acceptance by *Settler Colonial Studies* of another paper of his. Sibanengi's article in *African Economic History* is about to appear, and Innocent and Geraldine have both had book reviews published; the former in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, and the latter in *H-Diplo*. Very well done, all of you, but of course especially to Bryson on having his first book published!

Bettering their Foods

Peasant production, nutrition and the state in Malawi, 1859–2005

Bryson G. Nkhoma



About the book

Despite the long history of agricultural interventions globally, peasants from Malawi and beyond continue to face the challenge of sustainable food production and nutrition. *Bettering their foods: Peasant food production, nutrition and the state in Malawi, 1859–2005* weaves together the political, social, economic, demographic, climatic, ecological and global developments that have informed the various food production and nutrition interventions to account for this development. By bridging the late precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods, the book presents the history of Malawi through the lens of peasant agriculture, covering important themes such as state formation, slave trade, Christian missions, the colonial state, urbanisation, immigration, trade, conservation, the two World Wars, nationalism and decolonisation, Malawi under Banda's autocracy, African indigenous knowledge systems, rural development, and democratisation. Unlike earlier studies, *Bettering their foods* contends that while capitalism disrupted local economies, it also made efforts (albeit limited) to transform African capacities to produce nutritious foods. The central drawback was that these efforts were mixed and limited by the derogatory attitudes the implementors had towards African practices. In making this argument, the study demonstrates the extent to which well-intended scientific projects are bound to fall short when providers fail to take into their equation the beneficiary communities, including their history, competitive interests and class diversities.

About the author

Bryson Gwiyani Nkhoma is a postdoctoral research fellow with the International Studies Group at the University of the Free State in South Africa. His research interests are in areas of agrarian changes, environmental history, food security, gender relations, irrigation farming, labour and forced migration, intellectual history and diplomatic relations.

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