

Jan-Bart Gewald: *I.C.E. in Africa: the relationship between people and the Internal Combustion Engine in Africa*

In Africa there is a vast field of study which has never been systematically researched or analysed. In the past hundred years this field has become so pervasive as to now pass us by unnoticed as a simple fact of everyday life, much as the clothes that we wear, and the food that we eat. This is the field of interaction between people and the Internal Combustion Engine (ICE). Internal combustion engines are those in which power comes from the explosion of vapour –usually a petroleum distillate- in a cylinder, and are to be found in virtually every generator, pump, motor-vehicle, train, and boat on earth.

Currently the majority of Africans live in sprawling urban conglomerates, serviced by water, electricity, and transport, all dependent on ICE-technology. Likewise, Africa's export earnings, be they in mining, agriculture, or industry, are dependent on ICE-technology. However, the pervasive interaction between people and ICE extends beyond economics and into all levels of human experience.

The aim of the project is to explore the socio-historical and cultural relationship that has developed between people and ICE in Africa, and to examine how ICE has shaped socio-historical processes. Using historical and anthropological methods, the (I.)mobile and (II.) stationary applications of ICE technology in interaction with people will be examined in four case studies:

- I.) **a.** the social history of the motor car in Zambia, and **b.** the relationship between motorised transport and perceptions of the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.
- II.) **c.** The social history of Tamale, an African town in Ghana through the lens of ICE-technology, and **d.** the manner in which ICE-technology is used in the drive for money in rural Burkina Faso.

The project will result in the publication of a series of books and articles pertaining to aspects of ICE in Africa, as well as an edited volume based on papers presented at an international workshop. The project will make a significant and innovative contribution to the fields of history and cultural anthropology by putting the relationship between people and ICE technology in Africa on the academic map and future research agendas.