Saharan Crossroads: Views from the North
An AIMS/WARA Collaborative Conference

In June, WARA, together with its sister association, the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS), organized a conference on historical and contemporary contacts and connections across the Greater Sahara Desert. The goal of the conference, which took place at the American Legation Museum (TALM) in Tangier, Morocco, was to confront the misconception of the Sahara as an impenetrable barrier dividing the African continent in two—the northern “white” and sub-Saharan “black” Africa—and to illustrate how the Sahara has been a porous boundary, a bridge rather than a barrier, for the transmission and exchange of arts and culture through time.” This intensive, three-day conference brought together over 40 participants in regional delegations from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and West Africa, as well as scholars from North America, to explore the human, cultural and historical interconnections between the diverse peoples living in and around the Sahara.

Indeed, this was a timely conference. While there has been a growing consensus among scholars that something ought be done to challenge this dichotomous view of the Sahara, there has not been a platform where researchers, especially scholars from the regions bordering the Sahara, could meet to express their views and exchange experiences. In confronting the marginalization of the Sahara and countering misconceptions about it, WARA and its co-organizers moved beyond the traditional micro-level approach by initiating a broad forum designed to foster a deep and contextual understanding of historical and contemporary contacts across the Saharan space. Traditional approaches have tended to focus on the regional level (with each regions’ scholars focusing on their respective region) rather than bringing together scholars and specialists from the various regions peripheral to the Sahara to rigorously debate, re-examine, and re-conceptualize the historical, geographical, and cultural constructions of the Sahara.

The conference opened with a reception and welcoming remarks by conference organizers, Cynthia Becker and Jennifer Yanco; Kerry Adams, Director of AIMS; and Thor Kuniholm, Director of TALM. Also present was Jim Miller, the former president of AIMS; Mary Ellen Lane, Director of the Council of American Overseas Research (CAORC); and the directors of the AIMS Centers in Tunisia (CEMAT) and Algeria (CEMA).

The conference consisted of ten panels dealing with various aspects of cultural exchange at the “crossroads” including music, performance, visual arts, literature and religion.

In addition to the panels, participants had occasion to engage in discussion and exchange views through events featuring artwork and calligraphy from Senegal and a performance by a Moroccan musical group. Other highlights of the conference included a performance by a Gnawa music and dance group and the screening of Abderrahmane Sissako’s film Heremakono: Waiting for Happiness (2002). Each of these activities complemented and enriched the issues explored in the various presentations and discussions that ensued. They were, in fact, testimony to the human and cultural links that bind the Maghréb and those on the southern shores of the Sahara.

The conference revealed the need to foster dialogue and regional cooperation among researchers and scholars working on the various aspects of the Saharan space. A second conference Saharan Crossroads II is scheduled to take place in January 2011 in Niamey, Niger. It will focus on intellectual and cultural production in southern part of the Sahara and its links with the north. Like Crossroads I, the Niamey conference will bring together researchers and academics from the two sides of the Sahara, as well as several scholars from North America and Europe.

By Ismael M. Montana

Dr. Montana is Assistant Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. His presentation at the Saharan Crossroads conference was entitled Evolution and Transformations of West Africans’ Households (Diyar) in Tunis, 1738-1880s: A Preliminary Assessment, was part of the panel, Spirituality at the Crossroads.
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Errata from the WARA Newsletter Spring 2009

In the last newsletter, of Spring 2009, we mistakenly changed the research topic of Dr. Azzez Butali. Where it reads “An investigation into the role of cleft lip and palate in the aetiology of orofacial clefts in Nigeria” it should have read “An investigation into the role of gene-environment interaction in the aetiology of orofacial clefts in Nigeria.” We apologize to the writer as well as our readers for such oversight.
From the outgoing WARAs President

It has been three years since I assumed the position of WARAs President and it is time for me to step down. I am pleased to report that our search for a successor has resulted in the nomination of Mbye Cham and that the WARA Board has approved him by majority vote. Dr. Cham is Professor of Modern African Literature in English and French (West Africa and South Africa), African and Third World Cinema, Film and African Development, as well as Chair of the African Studies Department at Howard University Graduate School in Washington, D.C. His administrative experience as department chair and his long involvement with WARA put him in an excellent position to lead the association. His stature and activities as a scholar of African cinema and literature will enhance the visibility of WARA and strengthen current initiatives to build networks across the West African region.

The leadership transition extends to the WARA vice-presidency as current Vice-President James Essegbey, University of Florida, too is stepping down. He will be succeeded by WARA Board member and Fellowship Committee Chair, Scott Youngstedt. Dr. Youngstedt is Professor of Anthropology at Saginaw Valley State College with long-term research experience in Niger. His familiarity with issues and procedures as a member of the Board is a significant asset to the incoming president and his experience and contacts in Niger will be invaluable in the development of regional ties. 2009 Board candidate Dr. Abu Bakarr Bah of Northern Illinois University will serve Dr. Youngstedt’s remaining one year term on the WARA Board. I extend a warm welcome to President Cham, Vice-President Youngstedt, Board member Bah as well as to the other newly elected Board members Jeanne Koopman (Boston University), Samba Gadjigo (Mount Holyoke College), and Beth Buggenhagen (Indiana University). Last but not least, I thank James Essegbey for his dedicated service to WARA and wish him the best as he concentrates on his academic endeavors.

WARA/WARC activities have grown significantly in recent years, made possible by the unwavering commitment of WARA Director Jennifer Yanco, WARC Director Ousmane Sene, and their superb staff. I am most gratified by the initiatives to expand WARA’s presence in West Africa, one of my goals when I became WARA President. Other goals such as cooperation with other professional associations of the West African region and the expansion of the WARA membership base remain to be realized. I leave those to the talented new leadership team.

Maria Grosz-Ngaté
Indiana University

From the incoming WARA President

With much humility, sincere gratitude and great excitement, I convey greetings to the Board of Directors and officers of WARA, the general membership and all well wishers. I am indeed humbled by this honor to be your new president and I say a sincere thank you for the faith and trust in me. I am especially thankful for the superb achievements of our outgoing president, Maria Grosz-Ngaté, as well as outgoing Vice President, James Essegbey. Along with our Executive Director, Jennifer Yanco and WARC Director, Ousmane Sène, they did much in the last three years to elevate the profile and expand the activities and partnerships of WARA. I inherit a fine record of accomplishments and I pledge to work closely and collegially with the new team to build on this solid foundation.

In this moment of greater needs and more intense competition for dwindling resources, associations such as ours are faced with daunting challenges but also many opportunities. It is important to consolidate our niche and engage in strategic outreach, partnerships and collaboration with professional associations and institutions, particularly in West Africa, and I also believe it is important to grow our membership base. Per the charge to us from our outgoing president, I intend to take on these challenges. As well, I would like to see a more significant minority-serving institutions membership in WARA, and a more active board of directors in policy and decision formulation and implementation. As I indicated in the candidacy statement I submitted to the board, my approach to administration is one based on coordinating and communicating rather than command and control, and this is how I envision work with my team to advance these goals as well as the mission, objectives and projects of WARA. I know we have a stellar committed leadership team in new Vice President Scott Youngstedt, Executive Director Jennifer Yanco, WARC Director Ousmane Sène and the continuing and new board members, and, together, we can do great things for our association. I value your guidance, counsel and support, and I urge you to be generous with these for the good of WARA. I look forward to a productive and exciting tenure, and, again, a sincere thank you for this high honor.

Mbye Cham
Howard University
From WARA and WARC Headquarters

WARC: Words from the Director

On September 1st at 9am, the WARC staff reported back to work in the midst of the holy month of Ramadan and after a well-deserved month of vacation and another year of hard work and effort to keep WARC on the map of research, cultural activity and cooperation between West Africans and the rest of the world—the US and the Black Diaspora in particular.

The month of September has ushered in a new age for WARC as we can now envision the repeated power cuts of Dakar in serenity and with a very zen attitude; indeed, a brand-new generator has been purchased and installed, ready to take over hardly a minute after the electricity company cuts the power. The long hours of waiting sweating and regretting time wasted and labor lost are now behind us! We hope that, gradually, WARC will manage in the same way to solve the other constraints that sometimes hamper its performance and achievements. (The generator was acquired with funds from WARC/WARA’s own resources and from the State Department-funded Peace Initiative in West Africa Project.)

The news is not so good for the computers in the computer room, however. If most of the computers used in the various offices have been replaced by new ones in the course of 2009, it is lamentable that most of the machines available to students and researchers are desperately sluggish dinosaurs which can make a busy person lose patience and shed a few tears over the time lost trying to open e-mail box or browse in the Internet. The best strategy now is for visitors to bring along their laptops and connect through WARC’s Wi-Fi system, which will soon upgraded in an effort to boost visitor satisfaction in the premises of the Center.

A few years ago, to the great pleasure and intellectual and artistic satisfaction of the Dakarais public, WARC launched “Les Vendredis Cinematographiques du WARC” showing movies (American and African) every other Friday of the month and encouraging discussions around the various themes raised in the films. The series was temporarily put on hold due to a chronic lack of films and documentaries to show. Recently, however, thanks to our CAORC grant, we have acquired a substantial number of African films. And two weeks ago, the cultural section of the US embassy in Dakar offered a $20,000 dollar grant to the Center to purchase major American and African-Asian films, as well as state-of-the-art equipment for film screenings. We would like to express our gratitude and our heart-felt thanks to the Embassy and, particularly, to the acting PAO, Mrs. Katherine Diop, for their service over the past years. In particular, I am grateful to Maria for her very dedicated work over the past three years; her ability to see the big picture while keeping a close eye on the details have been an enormous asset to WARA and have enabled us to expand in new directions. I would also like to thank our outgoing board members, Fallou Ngom, Dennis Galvan, and Carolyn Brown, for their service over the past three years.

In terms of programming, this has been an eventful year with a number of firsts: We had the honor in January of hosting the CAORC Directors’ meeting at WARC; we ran our first Fulbright Hays Seminar Abroad (and will do another in 2010, to be directed by former board member Professor Patty Tang of MIT); we partnered with AIMS to host the ground-breaking Saharan Crossroads conference in Morocco; and we have completed the first year of our three year State Department-funded West African Peace Initiative (see p. 7 for a summary of activities). We completed the first year of our partnership with the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund which allowed us the singular privilege of hosting two remarkable scholars from eastern Congo, Mathé Guilain and Valentin Migabo, both of whom are now researchers at the Centre d’Etudes et d’Actions pour la Paix (CERAP) in Abidjan. We wish them well in their work there. And, as we begin this new academic year, WARC has been invited by the American Council of Learned Societies to host one of their African Humanities Fellows, Dr. C. Obafemi Jegede, of the University of Ibadan, who will be arriving at WARC in November.

I look forward to working with all of you over the coming year. Please do plan to attend our membership meeting at the ASA—this year on Friday evening at 7:30. I look forward to seeing you there.

Ousmane Sène
Director, West African Research Center (WARC)

Jennifer Yanco
Director, West African Research Association (WARA)

WARA: Words from the Director

This has been an extraordinary year for WARA; it is our 20th anniversary as an association and as we near its end, it is clear that we have accomplished a great deal and opened new doors for the future of scholarship in the region. It has been a year of many changes—a time for looking back to appreciate the challenges met and forward to those that lie ahead.

One big change is that WARA has a new home! In August, months of packing up culminated when BU’s African Studies Center made the move down the street to newly renovated space in 232 Bay State Road. In keeping with the Center’s tradition of hospitality, WARA has been provided with a fine new office in the center that is at the heart of African Studies in the region.

We also have big changes on the board as we welcome our new president, Mbye Cham; and vice president, Scott Youngstedt; as well as new board members. As we usher in these new officers, I would like to personally thank Maria Grosz-Ngaté, our outgoing president, and James Essegbey, our outgoing vice president, for their contributions to the association over the past years. In particular, I am grateful for Maria for her very dedicated work over the past three years; her ability to see the big picture while keeping a close eye on the details have been an enormous asset to WARA and have enabled us to expand in new directions. I would also like to thank our outgoing board members, Fallou Ngom, Dennis Galvan, and Carolyn Brown, for their service over the past three years.

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I look forward to working with all of you over the coming year. Please do plan to attend our membership meeting at the ASA—this year on Friday evening at 7:30. I look forward to seeing you there.
WARC Staff Singing the Praises of the New Arrival

From left to right: 
Papa Sall Kane, Abdoulaye Niang, Amadou Dieng, and Mame Coumba Ndoye

WARA Research Funding Opportunities for 2010

The West African Research Association is pleased to announce the following research fellowships for 2010. Details on grants application procedures can be found on the WARA website (www.bu.edu/africa/wara/Fellowship). We encourage students and faculty at HBCUs to apply.

Residencies for West African Scholars
This program, which aims to enhance transatlantic exchange and collaboration, is reserved for WARA member institutions. Applications are made by WARA member institutions on behalf of scholars based in West Africa whom they wish to host.
Application deadline: February 1, 2010.

WARA Post-Doctoral Fellowship
The WARA Post-Doctoral Fellowship is for research in West Africa during the summer of 2010. These fellowships are open to U.S. citizens already holding a Ph.D. who are currently affiliated with an academic institution or who work in another related domain (e.g. public health or museology).
Application deadline: January 10, 2010.

WARA Pre-Doctoral Fellowship
The WARA Pre-Doctoral Fellowship is for research in West Africa during the summer of 2010. These fellowships are open to US citizens graduate students who wish to conduct research for a 2 to 3 month period in order to 1) prepare a doctoral research proposal; or 2) carry out research related to the completion of another terminal degree program (e.g. MFA or MPH).
Application deadline: January 10, 2010.

WARC Library Fellowship
The WARC Library Fellowship is designed to encourage the next generation of Africana librarians and to assist in capacity building at the library of the West African Research Center (WARC) in Dakar, Senegal. The WARC Library Intern will work with the WARC librarian on electronic cataloguing and use of electronic research databases and should have well-developed skills in these areas.
Application deadline: February 1, 2010.

WARC Travel Grants
The WARC Travel Grant program promotes intra-African cooperation and exchange among researchers and institutions by providing support to African scholars and graduate students for research visits to other institutions on the continent.
Application deadlines: March 15, 2010 (for travel to take place between July 1, 2010 and Dec. 31, 2010).
Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards.

Soren Kirkegaard

As I reflect on my month in Senegal as a participant of the 2009 Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad Program, I, too, realize the richness of my experience only in retrospect.

In my application packet, I expressed my desire to experience the “real Africa” as opposed to the Africa portrayed in the media, with its negative, stereotypical images of a “dark continent” ravaged by poverty, civil wars, and AIDS. I also indicated my interest in learning about African literature which, at that point, consisted of minimal exposure to the works of Leopold Senghor, Wole Soyinka, and Chinua Achebe. Most of all, I wanted an adventure—the chance to visit places like Dakar, The Gambia and Goree Island, to see the famous baobab trees, and hear the African drums. I got so much more.

“Colonialism” and “post-colonialism” are no longer abstract concepts. They mean something to me now, so I can better understand and articulate my passion for “post-colonial” literature.

Freedom of education is no longer simply an empty phrase. It is forever etched in my mind alongside images of hard-working, dedicated men and women determined to provide an education for their children.

WARC (The West African Research Center), our group’s home base; UCAD (Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar); IFAN, a research institute focused on collecting and archiving African documents and artifacts; and CODESRIA (The Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa) are no longer simply a series of strange acronyms. They mean something to me, because I was there!

The griot is no longer a strange and mysterious figure generally depicted in U.S. literature simply as “singer or storyteller.” I know now that he (or she) is praise singer, historian, and culture keeper and that, despite his lowly status in society, he wields tremendous power, because he knows the stories and secrets and is not afraid to speak the unspeakable.

My favorite memory of Senegal? It’s hard to say. Undoubtedly I will never forget the bustling markets, the amazing Grand Mosque at Touba, the magnificent mangroves of the siné-Saloum Delta, or the mighty baobabs. Nor will I forget our visit with members of the Mouride Brotherhood in Touba; riding a calèche (horse-drawn cart) through the streets of downtown Saint Louis; dancing under the mango trees in the village of Sokone with friends and family of Professor Ousmane Sene (director of WARC); visiting the studio of internationally acclaimed artist Yelimane Fall; or lounging poolside at Hotel Keur Saloum while watching an incredible local dance troupe perform. Of course, there were also our visits to schools, museums and historical sites such as N’Gor and Goree Island; our attendance at cultural events such as a traditional Senegalese wrestling match; and our gala night at the Theatre National du Senegal.

Senegal has made an indelible impact on my life. Quite simply, it has compelled me to consider nebulous concepts such as “cultural literacy” and “global awareness” from a personal perspective. Sometimes, this happens as I talk to friends and colleagues about my Fulbright experience or read the powerful works of Ousmane Sembene, an author I might never have discovered had I not had an opportunity to visit “the continent.” At other times, it occurs through “moments of recognition,” flashes of insight that come to me while I’m going about my normal, everyday life: I hear about NGO’s (Non-Governmental Organizations) and MDG’s (Millennium Development Goals) on the news and realize I now know something about those issues. I learn that a Senegalese man (now living in Denver) has been named “top taxi driver in the country” and feel a sense of affinity. I open my bottle of Snapple Peach Tea and read “Real Fact” #94 inside the bottle cap: “Lizards communicate by doing push-ups.” And I can’t help but smile.

My trip has also given me the opportunity to make new friends across the country and across the globe and to meet two wonderful women—Dr. Jennifer Yanco and Dr. Wendy Wilson-Fall—whose knowledge, wisdom, and incredible energy transformed a travel-abroad seminar into an unforgettable experience.

Thinking about applying for a Fulbright-Hays? Just do it!

Durthy Washington

Currently the director of the Writing Center at the USAF Academy, Durthy was a 2009 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Fellow.
Durthy.Washington@usafa.edu
The West African Peace Initiative

The West African Peace Initiative, a project of WARA and WARC, funded through a grant from the US Department of State, has as its aim the promotion of cultures of peace through the free and open discussion of various aspects of conflict in the region and mechanisms for its resolution and avoidance. In our last newsletter we announced the first Initiative activity, Dékkëndo Jamma Ca Gën, a Youth Symposium on the topic of neighborliness and peaceful coexistence (dékkëndo). The Symposium took place in May and brought together university students from 15 nationalities to present papers and discuss approaches to peace building. Full coverage of the symposium is available on the Peace Initiative website www.initiativedepaix.org.

Transformation of the Special Court of Sierra Leone into a Judicial Training Institute for West Africa

The West African Peace Initiative is pleased to have been able to provide funding for a meeting of major stakeholders to explore and plan for the transformation of the Special Court of Sierra Leone into a regional judicial training institute. The meeting, which took place October 8 and 9 in Freetown focused on developing a proposal for the establishment of an independent and autonomous institute, governed by a board of directors consisting of eminent judges and academics, which would provide continuing professional training to judges from across West Africa, covering new and pressing issues in both substantive law and procedure and practice. Such an institute would also serve to bring judges together, providing a forum for peer review, and facilitating a common legal culture in the region. Once this model and the competence of the institute is established, it could then expand its teaching activities to prosecutors, investigators, court management and other judicial and support staff. With a roster of regular trainers, the institute could also expand its research agenda in the future.

Peacemaking in West Africa: Historical Methods and Modern Applications

While conflict situations in Africa have received significant scholarly and media attention in recent decades, less attention has been paid to the long tradition of peacemaking that kept its societies in peaceful equilibrium. This conference will feature papers that examine successful handling of potential conflicts that have been resolved in their early stages, as well as the range of ancient, historic and contemporary tools for mediation. This first major regional conference of the Initiative will take place in Dakar from December 12 - 15, 2009. We are pleased to have as academic coordinators for the conference I. William Zartman, Professor Emeritus, SAIS, Johns Hopkins; and Edmond Kwam Kouassi, Professor of Law and former Dean of the faculty of Law, Université de Lome. The conference will bring together some 30 scholars from the region. Look for a conference report in your next newsletter, or simply keep your eyes on the Initiative website.

Contributions in Honor of WARA’s 20th Anniversary

Dr. Mary Ellen Lane, the Executive Director of CAORC, a founder of WARA, and an uncompromising supporter of the West African Research Center, has made a generous donation of $1,000 to establish “the WARC Director’s Discretionary Fund” to help the management of the Center be more hospitable to their distinguished guests whenever warranted, or to help the WARC and WARA Directors or other WARA/WARC officers attend important meetings for which there are no alternative sources of funding to tap. It is hoped that the generous move will be a trailblazing initiative and other partners, other men and women of good will, will follow suit.

Hats off, Mary Ellen, for this and for your many other generous contributions to WARA/WARC!

Gorée, Speak!

Gorée, ile de gorée
who owns your memories
where are your memories
you have been reduced
a commodity
a price tag
just like the sons and daughters who
filled your belly
where are your memories
your memories are distorted
1776, 1771, 1786
dutch, signare, anne colas pepin
door of no return
do you really have
a door
or two
three
several
many
your genealogy has
a tag
a fee
hustling men
hustling women
banker bass
peddlers
tourists
come to my shop
how much
everyone wants a piece of you
you who witnessed abuse
rape, beatings
brandings, isolations
you, you, you
now silent
just as you were
when your daughters
cried
Ile de gorée
do you
will you ever speak
gorée
speak!
Rise up
speak about the injustices that you witnessed
that you continue to witness
speak up
please
you
kasa!

Ama Oforiwaa Aduonum
Illinois State University
January 2009

Fall 2009
My WARA Post-Doctoral Fellowship was used to conduct fieldwork and research in Senegal for three months during the summer of 2009. The central topic of my research was the early development of the Layenne, an Islamic group most commonly described as a Sufi order. The Layennes were founded by a Lebu fisherman named Libasse Thiaw on the Cap Vert peninsula in the 1880s. Notably, Libasse Thiaw claimed to be the Mahdi and the reincarnation of the Prophet Muhammad as reflected in his title, Seydina Limamou Mahdiyou Laye. He was succeeded by his son, Seydina Issa Rohou Laye, who the Layenne believe was the reincarnation of Jesus. To provide a historical context for understanding the emergence of the Layenne, I also pursued a secondary topic, a historical ethnography of the Lebu and a history of the Cap Vert region.

The interviews that I carried out with the Layenne were incredibly rich and provided perspectives that I had not been exposed to previously. For example, many of the intellectuals that I interviewed objected to the description of the Layenne as a Sufi order, preferring instead to be seen as a community (communauté in French or ummah in Arabic). Several drew distinctions between the Layennes and the Sufi orders of Senegal by noting that there was no Layenne equivalent of a shaykh-talibe relationship so characteristic of the Murid and Tijani Sufi orders. Across the range of my informants, the Layenne mission was presented as an Islamic reform movement imbued with notions of social justice and gender equality. For the Layenne this is symbolized by white clothing and the use of the pseudonym “Laye” or “Laye Mactar” to address all fellow Layennes thus obscuring any ethnic, social, or occupational distinctions or hierarchy. Justifications and proof of the identities of Seydina Limamou Laye and his son as Muhammad and Jesus were drawn not from any pre-Islamic Lebu beliefs but rather from Islamic sources including various hadith and the Quran. Layenne written sources are also rich and take the form of hagiographies, histories, theological studies, poetry, and polemics.

My secondary topic grew in size and scope as more sources came to light. My fieldwork among the Lebu included interviews with community leaders and historians. The chief objective in this portion of my fieldwork was to gain insight into Lebu perceptions of their history. The Lebu present complex understandings of their origins, emphasizing movements in response to war, environmental changes, and political oppression, and a corresponding search for refuge and the establishment of a democratic sanctuary open to other refugees from conflict. This Lebu historical outlook is reflected in accounts of their war of independence against the Kingdom of Kajoor at the end of the 18th century, the organization of the Lebu Republic, and its diplomatic relations with European powers. The French seizure of the Cap Vert peninsula in 1857 resulted in the transformation of the republic into a collective that maintains the offices of the republic and a distinctive identity even today. The library at I.F.A.N. proved to be a gold mine of sources on both topics, and I utilized the National Archives of Senegal to trace French colonial sources on the Lebu and the Layenne. I would like to thank the staffs of the library and the archives for their valuable help. The library at the W.A.R.C. also proved to be very helpful, and my family and I found the center and its staff to be a home away from home during our stay. Thanks to the WARA fellowship, I was able to make valuable contacts among the Layenne and the Lebu that I will follow up with as my research progresses. I would welcome any inquiries for more information regarding the Layenne and the Lebu and can be reached via email.

John Glover
Department of History
University of Redlands
John_Glover@redlands.edu

The mosque that serves as the headquarters of the Lebu collectivity of Dakar
The emergence of popular video industries in Ghana and Nigeria represents the most important and exciting development in African cultural production over the past decade. Since the late 1980s, video technology has allowed video-makers in Ghana and Nigeria, individuals who in most cases are detached from official cultural institutions and working outside the purview of the state, to create a tremendously popular, commercial cinema for audiences in Africa and abroad: feature “films” made on video. Today in Ghana new video-movies are released at the rate of approximately six per week, while the Nigerian video industry, widely referred to as Nollywood, releases a staggering 1500 movies each year.

With the support of a WARA post-doctoral research grant, I traveled to Ghana this summer to investigate the impact of Nollywood on the Ghanaian video industry. Research undertaken during previous stints in Ghana clearly indicated that Nollywood was having a devastating impact on local production, and though it seems that Ghanaian production has rebounded, there is no doubt that the dominance of Nollywood has profoundly influenced the shape of the Ghanaian industry and the content and aesthetics of the videos it produces.

During my summer stay in Ghana, I conducted interviews with individuals affiliated with video movies at diverse nodal points on the intricate and dynamic web of affiliations that comprise the Ghanaian video industry. My interlocutors included video-makers, producers, marketers, and traders. I also spoke with copyright officials, an employee at the censorship board, and a deputy minister at the National Media Commission. I interviewed filmmakers at Ghana-Malaysia (GAMA) Film Company, formerly the Ghana Film Industry Corporation, and the President of the Film and Video Producers Association. Of course, I spent lots of time chatting with Ghanaians who watch the local movies broadcast on television, projected in movie theaters and video clubs, and sold as video compact discs (VCDs). I also combed the shelves of video shops and purchased about one hundred new movies for my video library. In July, I presented a paper, drawn in part from my summer research, at the Revisiting Modernization Conference at the University of Ghana.

One of the aims of my research was to map the movement of Nigerian movies into Ghana. The first flows of Nigerian videos into Ghana followed well worn paths readied by a long and well documented history of migration, trade and cultural exchange between the two Anglophone West African countries. Nigerian videos made their way into Ghana in the 1990s when Nigerian traders, primarily electrical parts dealers, working in Accra carried small quantities of VHS cassettes into the country, creating an informal and individualized underground network of video exchange. Soon after, Ghanaians and Nigerian traders began smuggling larger quantities of Nigerian video cassettes into Ghana to sell and circulate, and it was not long before Ghanaians and Nigerian video marketers and duplicators became involved in the widespread bootleg duplication and distribution of Nigerian features on videocassette. Although some of the early traffic and trade in Nollywood movies in Ghana was legal, much of it operated within the pirate economy.

In the past few years, new forms of pirate media have appeared in Ghana, and these forms travel global routes recently forged between West Africa and China. One of these new forms is the combo-DVD: a single DVD that contains as many as twenty highly compressed movies. Replicated in China, the DVDs are bundled with other products and smuggled in large containers through the ports at Tema and Lome, Togo. (From Lome, traders smuggle the DVDs into Tema and Ghana by road.) As one might expect, much of the content duplicated on the DVDs originates in the United States. But what is astonishing is that since last year, combo-DVDS featuring Nollywood, and a select few Ghanian, movies have appeared in ever larger numbers on the streets of Accra. What was once a regional transnational flow between Nigeria and Ghana has, in effect, been globalized. This pirate media form has had a brutal impact on the sale and production of local movies. The combo DVD that features as many as twenty movies sells for as little as two or three Ghana cedis, while a locally produced movie, output as a single title on a lower quality VCD, costs as much as five Ghana cedis.

The flood of inexpensive pirate combo-DVDS into the regional video economy has intensified Nigerian and Ghanaian producers’ searches for new markets and for new visual sensations that will appeal to audiences. Currently, more movies are distributed and made in Europe and North America than ever before. And, in Ghana, Nigerian producers have created a series of movies that are promoted as Nigeria-Ghana co-productions. My findings show, however, that the equal exchange implied by the label co-production is entirely misleading and conceals the fact that the media flow between Nigeria and Ghana is disjunctive, exploiting and threatening...
From Our Fellows

Nollywood in Ghana (continued from page 5)

the survival of the smaller, less powerful local industry, Ghana’s video industry. The pronounced presence of Nollywood video-makers making movies in the Ghanaian industry is only one aspect of Nollywood’s growing influence. Television stations in Ghana broadcast far more Nollywood movies than local, Ghanaian movies, and my textual analyses of recent Ghanaian movies have suggested, and interviews conducted this summer have confirmed, that many Ghanaian producers are attempting to recreate the narrative forms and aesthetics of Nollywood movies.

I want to thank WARA for its support. I hope that in some small way my summer research, and the book project it will be incorporated into, furthers the mission of WARA by calling attention to the multiplicity of transnational media forms that move through regional economies in Africa. By looking at Nollywood from a place within Ghana’s video industry, I hope to complicate our understanding of cultural imperialism, which seems always to place Hollywood at the center of the media map, and to highlight the fact that margins, like centers, are multiple, relational and shifting. Faced with the relentless onslaught of Nigerian videos in Ghana, many Ghanaian video-makers have come to regard Nollywood as a far more pressing threat to their survival than Hollywood.

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The African Diaspora in Reverse
The Tabom People in Ghana, 1935-2008

This summer, between May 22 and August 7, I conducted research in Ghana and Nigeria. My area of study is African and African Diaspora history and I am particularly interested in African Diasporas in reverse—reciprocal connections to multiple destinations in Africa and the Atlantic world. The goal of the summer research was to examine archival documents that relate to the “Tabom” people, descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana. This research also involved interviews that were conducted in a number of Afro-Brazilian communities in Ghana and Nigeria. This approach not only allowed me to continue with my earlier research, but it also enabled me to compare and contrast documents that I collected from Ghana with those from Nigeria in my attempt to show the similarities and differences between communities in the two locations. Documents in the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) in Accra, Ghana, covered the history of the community from the late 1800s to early 1900s, while the data in Nigeria covered mainly the early 1900s. Although all of the documents were written in English and easy to read, the fragile condition of the documents made it difficult to photocopy a number of them. The archivists in both locations provided insightful information for the project.

During the summer research, I was able to present some of my findings at the 5th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Study of Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) in Accra, from August 2-6, 2009. The title of my paper was “Ripples in a Brazilian Pond: The History of Disputes over Land, Inheritance and Sites of Memory in Tabom Communities in Ghana.”

Although I did not have enough time to go through the avalanche of documents housed in these locations, with the financial support from the West Africa Research Association Pre-doctoral Fellowship I was able to explore a lot of documents that are relevant to my topic. A future research trip would enable me to explore other documents that may address some of the unanswered research questions and those that may emerge from my recent collections.

This scholarly project fits into the mission of the West African Research Association, one of which is to advance collaborative research efforts and allow scholars in West Africa, the U.S and worldwide additional information to re-evaluate the importance of institutional and Diasporan cultural connections between the descendants of former Afro-Brazilian slaves in West Africa. Finally, I would like to show my appreciation to the archivists at the PRAAD, Chief David and Seun Adeniyi, for assisting me with the interviews I conducted at Brazilian Quarters as well as the Cuban Lodge near Kakawa Street and Bambose in Lagos, Nigeria. Overall, I had a successful research trip.

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Beyond Getting by in Mauritania:
Haratin Women’s Economic Practices and Identity Formation

With the generous support of a WARA Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowship, I traveled to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania from June to July 2009 to conduct preliminary dissertation research in anthropology. My project focuses upon female Haratin (descendents of slaves), asking how they are getting by financially in increasingly difficult economic times. I suspect that the range of economic activities in which Haratin women participate helps them to support themselves and their families and, as women refashion older economic ways-of-being, alter what it means to be female, Muslim, and especially Haratin in Mauritania.

I conducted the bulk of my summer research in a town in southern Mauritania where I lived from 2001 to 2003 teaching English as a Peace Corps volunteer. Since I had not been there for many years, a major goal of my summer project was reconnecting with contacts there. Another goal for this summer was to begin exploring the range of economic activities in which Haratin women participate. I examined women’s economic practices by conducting interviews and participant observation, accompanying women as they moved throughout their daily lives.

Beyond working in the market or being employed in the formal sector, I found that women (and men) devoted much time to discussions of varha (gifts), frequently presenting money, clothing, and household items to others. They also garnered income by participating in group savings associations, assisting at local non-governmental associations, and by soliciting remittances from friends and family in the capital.

Following scholars of material culture and visual studies, another goal of my summer research was to examine the objects that women exchange for the insights they might provide into women’s self-understandings. In recent years, women have increasingly given each other melahfas (the Mauritanian veil) at weddings, naming ceremonies, and around religious holidays. Many melahfas, particularly locally hand-dyed versions, are named and I am curious as to what these patterns might indicate about how women are defining themselves. What does it mean, for example, to wear a veil whose pattern is the “dollar” or the “Messould” (Haratin political leader) or the “Obama”? I began exploring these issues by recording the patterns and types of melahfas that women wore and paying attention to discourse that focused upon these garments.

Over the summer, I also collected feedback from Mauritanian colleagues and interlocutors on my initial project. Individuals in Nouakchott and my field site offered valuable insights with women urging me, for example, to consider how their participation in economic activities is often linked to their anxieties about the instability of marriage. These comments will help me to craft a dissertation project that is meaningful to the people with whom I work.

I was struck this summer by how well financially many Haratin women in my field site were doing. This was surprising to me given the difficult global economic conditions and the fact that Haratin have been disadvantaged historically by their low social status. In my dissertation research I plan to ask how and why some women are flourishing economically considering what the Haratin experience might indicate about the ways in which people create opportunities in difficult economic climates.

My summer research, which was also funded by the Social Science Research Council with funds from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, also involved short stints in Dakar and Aix-en-Provence, where I began to explore colonial archives to get a sense of these issues’ historical background.

Thanks to WARA’s generous support, this research allowed me to begin exploring the questions that I have been thinking about for many years. The data that I collected over the summer will enable me to craft a more meaningful dissertation proposal and I was able to renew contacts (and make new ones) in Mauritania which will help facilitate my return to the field. I very much appreciate the support of the staff members at WARA and WARC throughout this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or comments about my research.

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WARA MEMBERSHIP MEETING AT THE ASA CONFERENCE

Friday, November 20, 2009
7:30-9:30 pm
SAVE THE DATE!!!
In the framework of my doctoral study at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), under the supervision of Dr. Andy C. Pratt, I was awarded the WARC Travel Grant. This grant allowed me to conduct fieldwork on the music economy in Dakar from mid-January to the end of February 2009. I had previously conducted a similar study in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), the main objective of which was also to identify and profile the network of actors involved in the urban music sector. Considering the lack of secondary data available on this topic, such a collection of first-hand data stood as an important step in the realisation of the PhD project entitled “Hip Hop Music Economy in West Africa: From Cultural Entrepreneurship to Social Change”.

In order to profile the network of actors involved in the music sector in Dakar, I decided to “infiltrate” this very network just as I had previously done in Ouagadougou. I therefore offered to help out at the Bureau of Cultural Mediation and Engineering, Accents Multiples. This structure was founded and directed by a resource-person of the Senegalese music sector, Aziz Dieng; he is also the founder and president of the Association of Music Professions in Senegal (AMS) and the president of the Senegalese Copyright Bureau (BSDA). Accents Multiples, among other projects, coordinates the first African musical comedy show “The Extraordinary Stories of the Children of Poto Poto” executed by the West African Hip Hop Collective, AURA (United Artists for African Rap) (www.aurahiphop.com).

During my time at Accents Multiples, I participated in the coordination of the musical comedy taking place in mid-December in Niamey. I was also in charge of the proposal on the potential of a “hip hop cluster” addressed to the Presidential project, Strategy of Accelerated Growth (SCA). In addition, I was actively involved in the realisation of the first empirical repertoire of all musical structures in Senegal. This investigation was ordered by the French association, Culture & Development (http://www.culturedeveloppement.asso.fr/site/-ACCUEIL-), in the framework of OIF’s project on West African cultural enterprises. Finally, I participated in the discussions involving Pikine’s city hall, Culture & Développement and Accents Multiples regarding the project of creating a musical/cultural space in Pikine Nord, which would be similar to the Music Garden, Reemdaogo, located in Ouagadougou and co-realised by Culture & Développement and Ouagadougou City Hall.

All these responsibilities were quite time-consuming but they were essential in helping me to gain credibility and get access to the artists themselves. Although I had little time left to conduct interviews, I was able to collect some precious first-hand accounts from cultural entrepreneurs active in the local music sector. Indeed, in Dakar, many hip hop artists have created their own structures, participating in the structuring of the musical and even more largely cultural sector. Apart from some the AURA artists residing in Dakar, my interviews focused mostly on this new generation of hip hop musical entrepreneurs (see list below).

- Didier Awadi (hip hop artist; ex-PBS; AURA member) founder and director of label and recording studio “Sankara” and the P.A. system “Hyperson”
- Alajiman (hip hop artist; ex-Daara J) founder and director of recording studio “Carbone 14” and of the communication agency “Baatine”
- Simon (hip hop artist; Yak Fu) founder and director of the label “99 Records” and of the duplication plant “Djolof 4 Life”
- Ryan (hip hop artist; Chronik 2H) founder and director of the audiovisual agency “Oracle Vision Future”
- Matador (hip hop artist; Wa BMG 44) founder and president of the cultural association “Africulturban” (Pikine)
- Safouane Pindra (hip hop producer) founder and director of the label “Optimist Produktion” and of the festival “Hip Hop Awards”
- Baay Sooley (hip hop artist and choreograph; ex-PBS; AURA member) creator and designer of the street wear “Bulldoff”
- Moona (hip hop artist; AURA member)
- Keity (hip hop artist; ex-Rap’Adio; AURA member)

The data collected will be discussed during the next European Conference on African Studies (ECAS 3) which will take place in Leipzig from June, 4th to 7th 2009 and for which I will convene and chair a panel, “Spatialities of Hip Hop Music in Africa”. This panel, organised as a roundtable, will welcome five international scholars with the objective of reunifying and engaging the existing research and experience of Anglophone as well as Francophone African Hip Hop.

Thanks to the WARC Travel Grant, I was able to conduct fieldwork that was indispensable to the argumentation of my research. I aim to participate in fostering research on the West African music economy. My PhD project offers precious insights into the actual situation of one music industry at a national as well as regional level. It also contributes to the recognition of original and creative initiatives in the promotion of the music industry and the role this may play in the regional integration of West Africa, as well as the expansion of its business and trade dynamics.

Jenny Fatou Mbaye
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Pour terminer, je souhaite vivement que ce programme dure longtemps et dans les systèmes d’enseignement supérieur des pays en développement et de développement des compétences dans les organismes de recherche et nationales et internationales de renforcement des capacités des individus. Cette thèse pour les doctorants ouest africains. Elle s’inscrit dans les priorités Universités du “Sud” et surtout de soutien important à la réalisation de West African Research Center qui, est une véritable initiative pour la mes compétences multilinguistes des langues étrangères (français, anglais, espagnol, et arabe) et des langues locales usitées en linguistique appliquée à l’instar du wolof. Je suis passionnée de la musique acoustique et de la gymnastique.

Je voudrais remercier le WARA pour le soutien qu’ils m’ont accordé pendant l’année. En particulier, je suis bien reconnaisante de tous que le Professeur Ousmane Sene, Directeur du WARC, a fait a mon egard et pour la promotion de la recherche, et pour son excellence et son humanite.

My research is on gender issues in postcolonial and postmodern literature and my intention in this present thesis is to deepen my investigations by looking at Jamaica Kincaid’s novels and the role of Caribbean women. From the beginning of the 21st century, there has been an emergence of the “voice” of the feminine diaspora throughout the Caribbean (Anglophone, Francophone, Spanish...) through literature in an effort to reclaim their rights and regain their lost identities. This struggle is both collective and individual. Attempting to invalidate the concept of « voicelessness », an idea developed since the early movement of « Négritude », women are willing to break this silence. I have chosen the female writer Jamaica Kincaid, well-known for her visions, her devotion to gender struggle through her female characters, and her new feminine writing style. I hope to thereby help to popularize Caribbean literature, not widely known in Africa, and also to diversify specialities in English studies.


Dans le cadre des activités internes de l’Université, je me suis engagée comme membre bénévole du CACSUP (Centre de Complémentarité Scolaire Universitaire et de Promotion) en 2007 puis mes performances m’ont octroyées l’élection en qualité de « Présidente de la Commission Féminine Bilingue ». A cette occasion, j’ai acquise l’expérience du « Management et du Leadership Féminin ». Mon équipe et moi avons eu à couvrir d’importantes manifestations au sein du Campus et dans différentes localités du pays.

Dans le cadre de ma Thèse, le thème de ma recherche, “Les systèmes sanitaires du Sénégal et de la Tunisie au regard de leurs engagements internationaux en matière de droit à la santé,” s’inscrit, en partie, dans une perspective d’évaluation et de comparaison des capacités managériales, organisationnelles et préventives dans les systèmes sanitaires des deux pays. Cette étude entre dans le cadre des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement, notamment dans leurs aspects sanitaire et préventif. A terme, elle permet de se faire une idée sur la volonté politique réelle des gouvernements desdits états à se conformer à leurs obligations du fait de leurs engagements internationaux en matière de droit à la santé. De nature pluridisciplinaire et comparant deux pays du Sud situés dans un même continent, mais dans des zones différentes, ladite étude se trace une perspective de recherche en santé internationale.

Le sujet promeut l’information / la sensibilisation sur les règles juridiques relatives à la santé et sur l’état des mécanismes de prise en charge sanitaire dans les deux pays. Il permet de faire un rapprochement entre ces textes juridiques et les réalités quotidiennes de couverture des besoins sanitaires des populations. Les manquements desdits États dans l’accomplissement de leurs engagements internationaux dans ce domaine seront mis à nus. Ainsi le document obtenu apportera non seulement des connaissances utiles et solides sur les systèmes sanitaires dans les deux pays, mais également des perspectives dans le but de leur amélioration. Les principaux chapitres rédigés dans cette thèse révèleront la nécessité pour les communautés tout autant pour les États de mettre en place des systèmes viables, bien organisés et efficaces pour assurer à tous des services et des soins de qualité.

Malgré le fait que nous ne sommes pas installés à WARC qu’en mars, j’ai profité de conditions de travail très favorables. J’y ai eu un bureau à ma disposition, un ordinateur avec accès à l’Internet dans un environnement très calme ; et j’y ai bénéficié de plusieurs autres services offerts.

En tant que jeune chercheur du sud du Sahara, je loue cette initiative du West African Research Center qui, est une véritable initiative pour la promotion de la recherche universitaire, du développement futur des Universités du “Sud” et surtout de soutien important à la réalisation de thèse pour les doctorants ouest africains. Elle s’inscrit dans les priorités nationales et internationales de renforcement des capacités des individus et de développement des compétences dans les organismes de recherche et dans les systèmes d’enseignement supérieur des pays en développement. Pour terminer, je souhaite vivement que ce programme dure longtemps et encore très longtemps.


Sélectionnée comme fellow au West African Research Centre (WARC-CROA) affilié au West African Research Association (WARA) pour l’année académique 2008-2009, j’ai vivement participé aux activités scientifiques organisés par le centre. Le WARC qui représente un cadre très approprié à la recherche, m’a permis de réaliser de grands progrès dans mes travaux de thèse.

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I have seen President Barack Obama in several settings—in Seattle, Washington D.C., and Chicago, but having him visit Cape Coast, Ghana July 10th-11th was unique for many reasons. While it certainly confirmed his status as a larger-than-life international figure, more importantly, his visit worked wonders for the relationship between Africans and African Americans.

The President selected Ghana as the first sub-Saharan African country to visit as president for its outstanding democracy and good governance. As Air Force One landed at Kotoka International Airport, the First Family—First Lady, Michelle Obama and two daughters, Sasha and Malia Obama—were met by a large crowd including Ghanaian President, Atta Mills, politicians, past Ghanaian presidents, and dignitaries. Uncontrollable cheers filled the air as President Obama meandered through the gathering of flashing lights. Even the most refined of politicians were giddy to shake hands with the man who made history as the first African American president of the United States. Those who did not attend watched in anticipation from their homes, internet cafes, and restaurants, adorned in US-Ghana regalia.

President Obama joins a long line of African American notables who have visited Ghana. After independence from the British in 1957 President Kwame Nkrumah, who attended HCBU Lincoln University, invited many African Americans to assist in the new nation’s development and promote Pan African solidarity. Many activists and intellectuals including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Maya Angelou, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Bunche and Richard Wright answered the call. Though most of the educators and political activists did not expatriate to Ghana (with the exception of Du Bois who resided in Ghana until his death), some lesser known African American educators and health professionals have since remained. Even today, many African American entrepreneurs, academicians, and health professionals proudly call Ghana their home. Yet the recent presence of President Barack Obama in Ghana has added a crucial chapter to the history of African American-Ghanaian relations and Pan Africanism.

Leading up to the visit of President Obama, the Ghanaian media—TV and radio news stations, newspapers, billboards, etc.—portrayed him as a son of Africa returning home. For many Africans, and Ghanaians in particular, Obama is an inspiration that they too can achieve great feats despite discrimination from the West. He is after all, the son of Kenyan father with humble beginnings. But Obama also identifies with African Americans by his upbringing in the US, and its legacy of prejudice toward those with “one drop” of African blood, and his wife’s ancestry.

While in Ghana, the president held bilateral talks at Parliament, met local chiefs, dignitaries, and visited La Palm Hospital. The most symbolic event of Obama’s visit however, was his trip to Cape Coast Castle. The castle, or fort, is known for its dark history as the final point of departure for African slaves destined for America. The visit of President Obama—an African and an African American—to Cape Coast Castle has afforded Ghanaians and African Americans a rare opportunity to explore their current relationship through such a complex past. These two groups have had a special obstacle in cross cultural understanding in how they relate to Ghana’s history of the slave trade. While Ghanaians in the coastal region have a hesitancy to discuss slavery, African Americans who visit Ghana precisely to tour the slave castles are more vocal in discussing such a treacherous past. These opposing views, exacerbated by deleterious images of African Americans in popular culture and entertainment as well as ingrained stereotypes of African backwardness held by African Americans, have created conflict in the preservation of such sites for community members, the former Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan relations, and African American settlers.

Another marked impact of Obama’s visit to Ghana has been the wide embrace of the term “African American” by the media and Ghanaians at large. Previously, African Americans were referred to as “oburonyi,” or “white person,” or more favorably, “Black American.” While some Ghanaians insist that “oburonyi” is also used to describe foreigners, many African Americans in Ghana who seek to reconnect to their past find the term offensive. During my first visit to Ghana more than five years ago, I was constantly horrified at being called White by Ghanaians, especially having come to Ghana as a pilgrimage to reconnect with my African past. Yet in my third and current trip, I have yet to be called “oburonyi,” a fact I attribute to Barack Obama.

As all of Ghana viewed President Obama leave the castle and address the public on what can be learned from past human atrocities, I took in the moment. Black people, African and Diasporan, celebrated a common victory. I reflected on the stereotypes that both African Americans have of Africans and that Africans have of us that in the era of the internet and information are sadly too often believed. Then I smiled to myself that despite the arduous work that is still needed to bridge our divide, the visit of an African and African American brought us together around our common heritage, at least for a day.

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In the summer of 2008, Ms. Sherman was a WARA Graduate Intern at the W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Center for Pan African Culture in Accra, Ghana.
As a new member of WARAt, I would like to introduce myself by sharing some brief notes on my research. I am a musician and an ethnomusicologist. My dissertation is provisionally titled “Bougarabou: Musical Process, Virtuosity, and Creativity in Jola Solo Drumming.”

As many of you know, bougarabou is a musical style that is culturally emblematic of the Jola (Diola, Jóola, etc.) and little-known outside of the Senegambia region. Since my first trip to the Gambia last year, I have taken a “hands-on” approach to my research, learning as much as possible from my teachers in Brikama, Modou and Landing Tamba. I look forward to returning to the Gambia—as well as visiting Dakar and the Casamance—at the end of this year.

Much of my work deals with issues of musical technique and structure, but I am also exploring a number of related, sociopolitical issues that may be of special interest to WARAt members. My archival research and studies in the Gambia suggest that bougarabou is clearly distinct from other musical styles, but that the style itself is not based on a fixed, formal repertoire. Rather, bougarabou drumming appears to be based on 1) the tonal quality and physical construction of the instruments, 2) a complex musical grammar, and 3) the cultural and social contexts of performance. This suggests that bougarabou is based on an organic, non-linear model rather than static, linear patterns. In this sense, the style can be understood as a prime example of what L.V. Thomas recently described as a “process of continuous re-creation that is intrinsic to sub-Saharan cultures.”

What are the implications of this model for our collective understanding of the relationships between musical structures and social structures? Is the musical form of bougarabou drumming an analogue of the transnational, de-centralized social and political status of the Jola people? What does the bougarabou style teach us about music and the nature of form and identity in West Africa? More broadly, Does the music of trans-national communities offer an alternative to fixed, bounded, and mutually exclusive models of identity and culture?

Additionally, I am deeply interested in the documentation and archival collection of music. Much of my research involves audio and audio-visual recordings, and I would welcome any thoughts and suggestions from the Association regarding ways my work might contribute to cultural archives, particularly those in the Senegambia. It is a privilege to join WARAt, and I am eager to establish dialogues with fellow scholars, musicians, and music aficionados through the Association.

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**Spaces of Contact:**
Interdisciplinary perspectives on political and cultural exchange between the Sahel and the Sahara
ASA 2009

III-B10: Friday, 8:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M.

This year WARAt-sponsored panel develops the notion of ‘spaces of contact’ as an alternative way of viewing the area of West Africa that comprises the Sahara and the Sahel. Presentations will explore contact and exchange between cultures of the Sahel and the Sahara from multiple disciplinary perspectives, focusing on the ways in which contact leads to the reconfiguration of cultures, languages, arts, and literature. The individual papers will address themes of memory and imagination, religious practices, social organization, material culture, and language contact among the nomadic, semi-nomadic, and settled populations of the Sahara and the Sahel. By conceptualizing the Sahara and the Sahel as a contiguous ‘space of contact,’ this panel seeks to problematize the ways in which the Sahara has been constructed as a barrier that divides two discontinuous entities: North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

**Chair:** Abdoulaye Kane – University of Florida

**Fiona Mc Laughlin,** “Language contact at the Saharan crossroads,” *University of Florida*

**Wendy Wilson Fall,** “Intellectual and Cultural Renaissance: 18th Century West African Families and the Construction of Erudite Networks,” *Kent State U.*

**Eugenia S. Martinez,** “Sahelian Qur’anic Talismans as Instruments of the Sacred in the Material World,” *University of Florida*

**Alioune Sow,** “Desert narratives,” *University of Florida*
C’est avec grande satisfaction que je viens de finir mon séjour au WARC (Dakar) où il a plu à la bienveillance de WARA et de WARC de m’accueillir depuis octobre 2008 en tant que “scholar at risk” grâce au soutien désintéressé de Scholar Rescue Fund’s Institute of International Education (SRF/IIE). Je leur exprime tous ma gratitude.

A dater du mois d’août 2009, je viens d’être à nouveau placer par le SRF/IIE au sein du Centre d’Etudes et d’Action pour la paix (CERAP) à Abidjan en vue d’une formation de DESS en Gestion des conflits et paix. Cette formation qui durera douze mois constitue, je l’espère bien, un nouvel épisode dans ma carrière scientifique et vient conforter en même temps mon aspiration à m’engager de tout mon être pour la cause de la paix en Afrique et dans le monde.

Le titre proposé ici haut est le projet de recherche que je viens d’amorcer dans le cadre de ce DESS. Sa réalisation demeure encore fortement tributaire des échanges fructueux que j’espère entretenir avec d’autres chercheurs intéressés au domaine et aux moyens de recherche que nous entendons réunir pour le bon déroulement d’une recherche digne de cette envergure. Il relève du constant selon lequel la prise en compte de la reforme judicieuse et du rôle de l’armée (du secteur de sécurité dans l’ensemble) a souvent été reléguée au second plan dans les processus de pacification et de reconstruction post-conflits au sein de nombreux espaces africains à telle enseigne que la paix tant aspirée y demeure souvent un mythe de Sisyphe.

Pourtant l’armée constituant la plaque tournante du déclenchement, du déroulement des conflits et de l’entretien de la plupart des crises internes en Afrique, c’est aussi avec l’armée qu’il faut explorer les voies et moyens de construction d’une paix durable dans un environnement politique sécurisé.

Deux Etats africains m’ont intéressé pour mieux rendre compte de ce phénomène, à savoir la Guinée Bissau en Afrique de l’Ouest et la République Démocratique du Congo (en Afrique des Grands lacs), Etats que j’ai choisis sur base d’un certain nombre de critères. Ces deux Etats africains, tous potentiellement domptés des richesses naturelles vertigineuses, avec une configuration géopolitique à multiple facettes, ayant connu des crises politiques durables aux enjeux diversifiés, sont résolument engagés il y peu dans les processus de paix matérialisés par l’organisation des élections dites démocratiques. Il va sans dire que la restauration de la paix dans ces deux Etats (dans la mesure où celle-ci s’accompagne de la bonne gouvernance) constitue un atout pour redorer leur prestige dans le concert des nations et leur rôle de catalyseur de développement dans leurs sous régions respectives.

L’autre facteur important qui entre en ligne de compte est que la Guinée Bissau comme la RDC a connu la sucession des régimes militaires, mais également le double phénomène de la politisation de l’armée d’une part et la militarisation de l’espace politique de l’autre à telle enseigne que le signifiant militaire paraît encore déterminant dans le devenir de la paix au sein de ces Etats.

Quelles sont les représentations suscitées par l’armée en Guinée Bissau et au Congo-Kinshasa au regard de son rôle joué durant les conflits ? Les opérations consacrées par les plans de reforme de l’armée en Guinée Bissau et au Congo-Kinshasa répondent-elles aux enjeux politiques en présence ? Comment expliquer les convergences et les dissemblances entre les deux plans ? Quels sont les impératifs qui doivent être pris en compte pour que la reforme de l’armée dans les espaces africains post-conflits (en l’occurrence en Guinée Bissau et en RDC) puisse contribuer efficacement à la consolidation de la paix et à la sécurisation des populations dans la région ? Telles sont les préoccupations auxquelles la présente étude se propose de répondre.

Dans une approche comparative, cette recherche entend procéder par une méthodologie rigoureuse qui doit tirer le maximum de profit de la descente sur le terrain. En attendant de rassembler tous les moyens pour la matérialisation de ce projet, vos échanges et orientations constructifs me seront d’un intérêt indéniable.

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Peace Initiative in West Africa
Baptême without Organized Music: “Still A Grand Baptême”

On Tuesday, January 27, 2009, I attended the baptism of a baby girl. I attended three of these ceremonies in the two weeks that I visited Dakar, Senegal. Baptism, or baptême, is an important occasion among Senegalese Muslims. It is the dedication of a newborn in the presence of family, friends, and community members, seven days after a child’s birth. Like most rites of passage events, these ceremonies are also essential to cultural continuity and for keeping the community unified.

For the occasion, most Senegalese women wear colorful traditional dress, usually two-piece with some embroidery, a headscarf, and matching shoes; the men wear long robes, a hat, and flat shoes. I wore a two-piece dress, matching headscarf, and shoes—courtesy of my host mother.

The ceremony started around ten o’clock in the morning and consisted of several parts—shaving child’s hair, blessing and naming child, gathering women, preparing meal, eating, honoring mother, presenting gifts, dinner, and farewell. Three of these stood out for me. First was shaving of the baby’s head. This is a cultural practice that, according to some, symbolizes purification. In accordance with the hadith, part of the right side was shaved, then the left.

Then the baby was taken to a room full of elders and handed over to the Imam. This was the second part of the ceremony that struck me. The Imam blessed the child and uttered her new name, Khady. Khady was later taken out of the room and shaved completely. Following her exit, elders in the room, including Khady’s grandmother and grandfather, offered blessings to child and mother. The male elders departed after several hours. Soon after, the women started to gather, sharing stories and watching television, while others chopped, cut, sliced, diced, mixed, and ground ingredients for a great rice dish.

Of the three baptisms that I attended, only one involved live music. When live music is present, a professional musician(s)—kora, balafon, or tama player, drummer(s), and/or singer—perform(s). Also, dancers perform sabar spiritedly to pulsating drum rhythms.

At this particular ceremony, it had been hinted that the baby’s father, a staunch Muslim, most likely would not allow such a performance. And there was no music making, except for occasional singing and handclapping interludes by some women and recorded background music. Suddenly, around five o’clock in the evening, we heard loud live music emanating from outside. We all rushed towards the sound. Khady’s mother, who had been missing all this while, entered the house, completely made up, and accompanied by a throng of women chanting, ululating, handclapping, and playing on cooking pans.

She walked proudly and took a seat in the room. There, the women continued the chanting, handclapping, and ululating. They congratulated her, wished her well, and gave her gifts—money, cloth, jewelry, etc. Others danced. The music, though improvised, had a recognizable structure. Two versus three rhythmic handclapping accompanied call-and-response singing, while syncopated-interlocking-polyrhythmic patterns on two silver pans fired up the performance. Everyone was animated. It was Khady’s day and the women ensured that both mother and daughter enjoyed some live music. This was the third part that stood out for me. What a grand baptême!

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Dr. Aduonum, an ethnomusicologist, was a Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Virginia in 2008.
Since 2004, countries in the West African sub-region have witnessed a dramatic surge in the amount of illegal narcotics, particularly cocaine, trafficked across their borders. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the volume of cocaine seizures across Africa represented 2.1% of global seizures, as compared to 2000, where seizures of the drug represented only 0.1%. Between 2004 and 2008 the number of countries reporting seizures of cocaine over 100 kilograms skyrocketed; in 2006 only three West African states reported such seizures, while in 2007 eight countries reported such seizures. Individual seizures across the region regularly exceeded 500 kg and in some cases exceeded two tons of cocaine. Importantly, West Africa does not cultivate coca or produce cocaine, and the market for cocaine in the region is minimal. However, West Africa serves as an important transshipment site for South American cocaine producers and the large and enormously profitable cocaine market in Western Europe. West Africa’s geographic position alone does not account for the astonishing rise in trafficking since 2004. Rather, it is the already existing structural weakness, political corruption, and crippling of some West African states that has left the region open to bulk cocaine trafficking. I have focused my research on this disturbing phenomenon in order to understand why the cocaine trade has become so substantial within the region as well as to identify the effects that it has had on some of the region’s most fragile states, primarily Guinea-Bissau.

While the West African region as a whole has made celebrated improvements in governance, security, rule of law, and development in the recent past, some states have continued to remain locked in a cycle of corruption, unaccountable political leadership, crippling poverty, and violence. Guinea-Bissau, for example, lacks full control over its territory, has high levels of political and institutional corruption, and maintains ineffective and poorly-resourced public institutions, including law enforcement. Unfortunately, it is precisely in this environment that large-scale organized crime groups thrive. While West African networks have been deeply involved in the international narcotics trade since the late 1970s, their small and entrepreneurial organization did not substantially subvert the institutions or political stability of West African states. Larger and more organized groups (such as South American cocaine ‘cartels’) have the ability to severely undermine the institutions and rule of law, especially in weak states. Organized criminal groups are able to pursue their illicit enterprises within the structures of weak states by exploiting the incapacity of institutions as well as by relying on the corruptibility of political elites and key state actors (such as judiciary, security, and law enforcement). The penetration of organized criminal groups in weak states further compromises the rule of law, political accountability, and security. West Africa’s weakest states currently face this situation.

The entire West African region has been affected by the surge in cocaine trafficking, but some states have been more affected than others. Evidence suggests that in Guinea-Bissau military and political elites have facilitated the transshipment of tons of cocaine through the country; military resources such as airfields and vehicles were used to transport and stockpile the drug, and in at least one instance hundreds of kilos of cocaine disappeared from official custody shortly after it were seized. By some accounts, the profitable rents that could be derived from cocaine trafficking encouraged competition between rival military and political factions, leading to further political instability and violence in a country with a history of both. Human rights have also been degraded in the country, as journalists, civil society actors and members of the judiciary who have spoken out against military and political involvement in the trade have faced increasing levels of intimidation and harassment. There have been dangerous social consequences for the country: reports indicate rising levels of drug abuse as well as an abandonment of livelihoods such as fishing in order to profit from facilitating the cocaine trade. In sum, the cocaine trade has had severe effects on Guinea-Bissau, and the continuation of bulk cocaine trafficking through the country could subvert urgently needed political, legal, and security sector reforms.

West Africa currently faces serious challenges from the surge in cocaine trafficking through the region. Concentrating on the cocaine trade alone, however, will not address the root problems facing the region’s weakest states. It is crucially important that domestic, regional, and international efforts to address the issue focus on political, economic, and institutional reforms that will help prevent a similar situation from developing in the future. It is crucially important that the domestic, regional, and international efforts to tackle the immediate threat of cocaine trafficking also address the deeper challenges facing West Africa; poverty, institutional incapacity, and unaccountable political leadership. Without a long-term commitment to enhancing state capacity and accountability in West Africa’s weakest states the region will remain vulnerable to the corrosive effects of cocaine trafficking.

Peter L. McGuire
The research was supported by a Graduate Fellowship from the Pardee Center at Boston University. Longer versions of the article are available by contacting the author at plmcguir@gmail.com.

Endnotes
2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Cocaine Trafficking in Africa: The Threat to Stability and Development (with Special Reference to Guinea-Bissau), Vienna: UNODC, 10.
Two Film Reviews by Ivor Miller

Herskovits: At the Heart of Blackness


This highly recommended video examines the legacy of anthropologist Melville Herskovits, the founder of the first African Studies Center in the USA, at Northwestern University, as well as of the African Studies Association. Herskovits is portrayed not only as “the person who most demonstrates that African-Americans are connected to Africans” in the pre-Civil rights climate of the 1930’s–’50’s, but also as the “Elvis of African-American Studies” because he brought these ideas into mainstream discourse, even as he may have “appropriated” Africa for his own ends—just as Elvis launched commercial white rock and roll by tapping the energy of the Afro-American blues.

The film’s title riffs on Joseph Conrad’s novel, evoking either the colonization of Africa, or the use of Africans as a backdrop to play out foreign philosophical and existential struggles. The script opens with the question of how a white male scholar managed “to know so much about black people.” Herskovits’s family history is reviewed: his father’s migration from eastern Europe, and the struggle of second generation North Americans to find an identity: “Can we be both Mexican/Jewish/Irish and American?” Herskovits’ Jewish identity with a history of displacement is offered as a rationale for his eventual specialization in African-American anthropology. At Columbia University, Franz Boas taught Herskovits the importance of cultural context, not biological inheritance, in determining the complex identities of individuals and groups in situations of mass migration and acculturation. This was in contrast to phrenology, the reigning theory of biological determinism, illustrated in the film with historical photographs and dramatized reenactments of white scientists measuring human physical features. As restagings continue throughout the program, the distinctions between archival footage and theater become blurred to the point of trivialization. More effective, because more sparingly used, is Herskovits’s own film footage and photographs from fieldwork between 1928-34, that included Dahomey (now the Benin Republic), the Georgia Sea Islands, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Haiti, Nigeria, Suriname, and Trinidad.

A towering presence in this program is Dr. Johnnetta Cole, the Director of the National Museum of African Art, who was Herskovits’ student at Northwestern. She articulates the influence of his cultural relativism: “Herskovits was clearly beyond where most folk were, [in teaching] that blacks were like any other humans;” “I will always be grateful to Melville Herskovits for his contribution to my sense of self. He said that I had a culture, and it could be traced back to Africa.”

Herskovits’s relationship with African and African-American scholars is reviewed: his debates with University of Chicago sociologist Franklin Frazier about the extent of African cultural influence among African descendants, as well as his complicated relationship with W.E.B DuBois, whom Herskovits portrayed as a propagandist for wishing to change society with his research. Cole recalled the perceptions gathered about her mentor while a student: “Professor Herskovits seemed to think at some time that he owned Africa. . . [W]hat if there were more African and African-American scholars at Northwestern?” Katherine Dunham, who was helped by Herskovits during her research in Haiti in the 1930s, was lamentably absent from the discussion.

Throughout the film, appropriate attention is given to the issue of which powerful groups were funding what kinds of research in each period. In the 1930s, philanthropists wanted to fund studies of Black Americans that would help diminish violent protests from these communities during the hard years of the Great Depression. Herskovits was able to publish his influential book The Myth of the Negro Past, while W.E.B. DuBois never received funding for his Encyclopedia Africana; the documentary as much as indict Herskovits for colluding with foundations to block DuBois’s funding opportunities, although his motives are not clarified.

The Post-WWII agitation by Africans against colonial rule led foundations that were linked to U.S. governmental agencies to support the creation of African Studies programs. As a leading authority on Africa in the USA, Herskovits had founded the first African Studies Program in 1948. Yet because he had taken the position that what the Nazis did in Europe was comparable to what colonists did in Africa, as well as his earlier participation in groups considered ‘communist’ by the House Un-American Activities Committee, the FBI blocked his appointment by President Kennedy to lead the Bureau of African Affairs.

After his death in 1963, several groups pointed to The Myth of the Negro Past as foundational to their activities, including Black militants during the Civil Rights era, and Aimé Césaire, one of the founders of Negritude. In 1969 in Montreal, Black activists stormed the African Studies Association to challenge the largely white male conveners to include African descendants as scholars. Johnnetta Cole again articulates the agenda: “We want to be, as scholars of color, not only the objects of study, we want to be full participants. No more will we be relegated to the periphery. The real questions is ‘who has access to understanding, to explaining a people, and to what use?’”

The heavy emphasis on the dramatizations of past events, like young Herskovits in his office, scientists measuring body parts, the African-descended students storming the ASA meeting in Montreal, suggest that the producers did not have enough archival material, explaining but not necessarily justifying their use of racial performance stereotypes. Also overdone is the discussion by African, African-American, and Asian-American professors about their own identities and their perceptions of how others perceive them. Harvard Professor Vincent Brown informs us that he is married to an Indian woman, and that when in India, some people thought he looked Japanese; Princeton Professor Anthony Appiah informs us that East Indian taxi drivers in New York City want to position
Herskovits: At the Heart of Blackness (continued from page 19)

his ‘ethnic identity’ in similar terms, but these digressions impose
the standards of our day on Herskovits’ time, long before the current
vogue of identity politics in academia. More informative would be
a discussion of both race and class in the academy, since the
perspectives of working class people are as marginal to academic
debates as those elites with controversial agendas for social justice,
as the case of W.E.B. DuBois shows clearly. The video
problematized white access to knowledge about Africa, but seems
to naturalize the identity politics model wherein only people of
the same race or ethnicity have access to knowledge of, or the ability
to speak for or about, an ‘ethnically’ related group. Similarly, the
film could have more forthrightly addressed the implication that
Herskovits toned down his liberal politics as a strategy for winning
acceptance in the academy.

Despite its flaws, the film’s ‘stir-it-up’ style will provoke lively
discussions in the classroom: about American intellectual and
political history; 20th century anti-colonial and anti-racist
movements; the relationship between anthropological observer and
subject; and the socio-economic context of research in the
humanities.

Pierre Verger: Mensageiro Entre Dois Mundos (Messenger
Between Two Worlds). Director: Lula Buarque de Hollanda. 83 min.
Brazil 2000. In Portuguese, French, Fon-Gbe, Gun-Gbe and Yorùbá,
with translations into English French, Spanish and Portuguese.
Narrated by Gilberto Gil, filmed in West Africa, France, and Brazil.

This tribute to photographer, scholar, and Ifá
initiate Pierre ‘Fatumbi’ Verger is required
viewing for students of trans-Atlantic African
civilizations. Narrated by musician Gilberto Gil,
a native-son of Salvador who later became
Brazil’s Minister of Culture, the film explores
multiple facets of the art and scholarship of a
privileged European who lived among several
West African and Brazilian African-descendant
initiation communities.

The film opens poetically with a scene on a
Salvador beach where a rope extending into
the ocean is pulled by scores of African-
descendants, a metaphor for the collective
process of maintaining fragile ties to African
inheritance through daily practice. Pierre Verger,
described as ‘the messenger’, is celebrated for
his contributions to the communication
between culture bearers on both sides of the
Atlantic in the late 20th century, and in so doing
is valued and respected by them.

Through excerpts of Verger’s diary narrated by Gil, photographs
by Verger, the recollections of local historians and fellow initiates
in Africa and Brazil, as well as interviews with Verger in his 90s
(conducted at his bedside on what turned out to be the day before
his passing away in 1996), Verger’s biography is recounted within
a larger discussion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its
currentday repercussions. Born into an elite Parisian family in
1902, Verger eventually rebelled against their social constraints;
when his immediate family passed away in the 1930s, Verger pursued
a bohemian life of clubbing with the Caribbean migrants working in
Paris, and later traveled the world as a photographer of humans at
work and at play. In an interview with Jean Rouch, we learn that
Verger’s photographs were used in many exhibits in the Musée del
Homme, Paris.

Arriving in Salvador in 1946, Verger made this a permanent home
base. His early photographs capture the people in their daily
activities as fishermen, market women, sailors, and exuberant
participants in public festivals like carnaval. Verger remained in
Brazil because he enjoyed being with Afro-Brazilians; the simplicity
of this decision was matched by his frugal life-style and work ethic.
Part of the bohemian life in the 1950-60s in Salvador was belonging
to a candomblé ‘terreiro’, and Opô Afonjá
(founded 1910) was the ‘terreiro’ of the
personalities of Salvador. His close
friends, writer Jorge Amado and sculptor-
painter “Carybé” (Héctor Julio Párade
Bernabó), introduced him to Mãe Senhora, the leader of Opô Afonjá
for over 30 years, with whom Verger
developed a close relations of friendship
and orixá-initiation. Several Afro-
Brazilian females who knew Verger well
reflect openly that it was his destiny, or
the will of the orixá, to stay in Salvador
and participate in the Candomble. In
turn, Verger wrote: “I enjoyed living in
the world of candomblé, and it wasn’t
just curiosity. In addition to my liking for
the descendants of Africans, I was not
insensitive to the power of this religion
in maintaining their identity and their
faith.” In other words, Verger did not use
what he learned to further an academic career or score a political
point; he contributed his resources and energies to further
community understanding of their own history and philosophies
while at the same time finding a sociocultural niche in which to live
in psychological harmony.

After photographing cultural practices and learning about them
as an apprentice, Verger published several volumes that document
ritual activity on both Atlantic coasts; these pioneering works are
unsurpassed for their aesthetic beauty, as well as for their utility
for comparative studies of cultural transmission. In Bahia, a
photographer commented that Verger “wasn’t interested in
photography. He always used to say: ‘It was really that beautiful. It
was there’, as if he hadn’t done it. It looked beautiful because it
was.” His photographs eventually became a tool “to illustrate his
writing and research.” Anthropologist Juana Dos Santos claimed

Continued on page 21
that Verger, “was the first to show the similarities” between the ritual symbols of West Africa and Bahia. “He was like a detonator in showing that there was a strong element of continuity between Africa and Brazil.”

Gil visited several traditional leaders in Ketu, S. akete, and Zogbedji who display local shrines and divination techniques. One babalawo recounts a legend of Ifa’s journey from Saudi Arabia to old Dahomey. Another who knew Verger reminisced about how much fun he was to have as a guest in S. akate: “He was my friend. When he was here, he would stay at my house. When Pierre Verger arrived, everyone would rejoice, because everyone knew that he would buy them drinks, and give the children money. And the babalorixá would get money too. So everyone knew that they would have fun whenever Pierre Verger got here.”

Verger knew how to learn by paying attention and helping in collective activities. He reflected: “My research was for myself, and for my friends in Bahia. The idea of publishing my findings for a wider public had not occurred to me.” When discussing Verger’s legacy, elders in Bahia and Benin extol his discretion and respect for initiation vows that limit the public presentation of information. According to Mãe Estela, who apprenticed to Mãe Senhora, and who knew Verger since the 1940s: “I think nobody ever went inside the core of it . . . as much as he did, because he had a lot of access, and he also swapped recipes with the Africans. He was a very dear man, a very intelligent man, so he made the best of everything that he learned. You know that has to do with a superior power. It isn’t a matter of being white or black, because it is Olorum’s [God’s] wish.”

Verger was clear in his own mind that his greatest duty was to support the historic and living culture, rather than to interact with those who ‘study’ African-descendants; he seems to have dismissed academics as a path to knowledge, even while making vital contributions to scholarship in his book Flux and Reflex, described by historian Milton Guran as a “fundamental, definitive book on this illegal trade. It is a very competent historical compilation. All the documents are there. You can now spend 100 years studying what Verger merely hinted at.”

On the one hand, his methods were not appreciated by Melville Herskovits, who thought he was contaminating the ‘field’ by sharing information between African and Brazilian initiates. On the other, he was great friends with sociologist Roger Bastide who produced pioneering studies of African-derived communities in Brazil.

The cinematography is first rate, with many poetic and ironic scenes created through juxtapositions. In one sequence, the scene of an African metal worker hand-making a pistol is juxtaposed with statements from a variety of perspectives about the complicity of West African war lords in the slave trade with European and Afro-Brazilian merchants, including the Souza family of Ouidah. Several initiated African elders discuss the history of wars between the Fon and Yorùbá-Nago that led many into slavery. One particularly well-fed ‘king’ of Abomey is used to represent this class in the present generation. Such a profound discussion among Africans and Brazilians about the power struggles and migrations that have shaped their communities is a step forward in the process of recognizing the complex relationships that made the trade possible, and in speaking to the trauma that has yet to be healed. This concrete dialog about a shared history is light years away from the self-examination of the US professors as seen in the Herskovits documentary.

A brilliant section on trans-Atlantic ‘memory’ shows a parallel process of selective memory in both Bahia and the Republic of Benin. On the one hand is the legacy of enslaved Africans in Brazil who returned to the Gulf of Benin after freedom in the late nineteenth century, where they recreated aspects of their lives in Bahia, still carry Portuguese family names, and continue to be known as ‘Brazilians’. The ‘Brazilians’ of Benin dress and speak Brazilian Portuguese on festive occasions even though almost none of them have never personally visited Brazil. Conversely there are Bahian candomblé members who use West African names and identities. Statements from people on both littorals express perspectives ranging from extreme nostalgia to profound disinterest, with most somewhere in between. Implied in this conversation is how a ‘trans-Atlantic identity’ is useful to members of each community in response to their local circumstances.

The film concludes showing various communities celebrating Verger’s legacy. In Rio de Janeiro a samba school performance dedicated to Verger and Bahia is represented with huge replicas of his head and several of his books, while erotic dancers shake to pulsing samba rhythms.

Verger did not have biological children, yet the candomblé community in Bahia was his extended family, and many there called him ‘father’. With the knowledge that Egungun masks are used in Yorùbá-speaking Benin to honor the ancestors, Gil traveled to both S. akete and Ketu in the role of Verger’s chief mourner, to organize the appropriate rites for Verger. When Ifa divination was performed, the oracle announced that “Fatumbí’s soul rests in peace, because he did on the earth what he was meant to do.” A funerary procession is assembled with drummers and singers who carry his portrait through the town. The photography Verger created to demonstrate the cultural achievements of Africans and Brazilians was celebrated by those documented; that Verger’s photograph would be used by African and Brazilian communities to channel his spirit to the ancestral realm speaks to the wisdom of Verger’s process. As it began, the film ends with an Egungun mask dance, indicating Verger’s transition to revered ancestor.

Film extras include scenes of Gelede dance, Zabata dance, interviews with Pierre Verger (in Portuguese), with scholar Milton Guran (in Portuguese), with film-maker Jean Rouch (in French), and commentaries by the director (in Portuguese).

Ivor Miller, a former WARA Post-Doc Fellow, is currently a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Calabar, Nigeria.

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**Announcements and Opportunities**

**Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Abroad Fellowship Program**

**Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Fellowship Program**

**UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi Fellowship**
Deadline: Friday, January 8, 2010.

UNESCO is inviting young researchers in developing countries to apply for grants through the UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi Research Fellowship Programme, financed for the tenth time by Japan through funds-in-trust dedicated to the development of human resources. The programme—named after the late Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi who was known for his commitment to development issues—offers a total of 20 fellowships for a maximum value of US$6,000-10,000 each. They target post-graduate university researchers with a Masters Degree or equivalent in one of four fields: the environment, inter-cultural dialogue, information and communication technology, and peaceful conflict resolution. Researchers under 40 years of age must submit their applications to their country’s National Commission for UNESCO, which will select a maximum of two candidates. A special selection committee of experts in the four research fields concerned will review the applications and propose a pre-selection to the Director-General of the Organization.

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**Multi-Country Research Fellowship Program 2009 - 2010**

The Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) Multi-Country Fellowship Program supports advanced regional or trans-regional research in the humanities, social sciences, or allied natural sciences for U.S. doctoral candidates and scholars who have already earned their Ph.D. Preference will be given to candidates examining comparative and/or cross-regional research. Applicants are eligible to apply as individuals or in teams.

Awards will be given to scholars who wish to carry out research on broad questions of multi-country significance in the fields of humanities, social sciences, and related natural sciences. Given changing travel restrictions and/or security warnings to many countries, applicants should contact CAORC before preparing a proposal. For more details and application, please see http://www.caorc.org/programs/multi.htm

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**Weinstein International Fellowship**
Deadline: January 15, 2010

The Weinstein International Fellowship program provides opportunities for individuals outside the United States to visit the U.S. to learn more about dispute resolution processes and practices and to pursue a project of their own design that serves to advance the resolution of disputes in their home countries. During their time in the U.S., Fellows may be based in a JAMS Resolution Center or may participate in a university program or be connected to another organization or institution. Fellowships may be from one month to one year in duration. Criteria: 1) Applicants must be fluent in English; 2) Fellowship period must be one month to twelve months in duration; 3) Preference for proposals that would help applicant’s home country establish viable dispute resolution systems or change how disputes are resolved; 4) Preference for applicants who have experience as judges, lawyers, court administrators, or law professors. More information about this fellowship can be found on http://www.jamsadr.com/weinstein-fellowship/

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**2010 Summer Cooperative African Language Institute**

The Summer Cooperative African Language Institute (SCALI) 2010 program will be hosted by Michigan State University from June 14, 2010 to August 6, 2010. SCALI offers performance-based instruction in a variety of African languages by experienced and trained instructors who are native speakers of the languages they teach. SCALI provides a unique opportunity to meet persons interested in Africa from across the United States and exposes learners to the culture and traditions associated with the chosen language inside and outside the classroom. Extracurricular activities designed to enhance the SCALI program include research forums, conversation hours, cooking demonstrations, African film showings, and language and culture festivals. Classes are held four hours per day over a period of eight weeks, for a total of 140 hours. Students will earn credits equivalent to one academic year of language instruction. Students who attend SCALI can possibly finish their language requirements for Specialization in African Studies in a year. To view requirements from last year’s SCALI program, visit http://africa.msu.edu/scali/. Updated information for 2010 will be available after December 15, 2009.
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The West African Research Association is a member of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) based at the Smithsonian Institution. WARA is the only Sub-Saharan African member of CAORC. More information on CAORC is available at the following website: www.caorc.org.