Documents without an Audience are Documents without Value

by XXXXXX

The Kent State/WARA IFAP (Information for All Project), funded by UNESCO, seeks to promote knowledge dissemination among broad groups of stakeholders in West Africa, North America and Europe. To this end, Dr. Wendy Wilson-Fall, professor and researcher in the Pan African Studies Department at Kent State University, worked in partnership with the West African Research Association (WARA) to implement two workshops on digitization and knowledge production and management, and to produce two DVDs and a series of web-based tools for communication.

Following a meeting held at Kent State University in April, participants decided that the Learning Community approach would be a vital strategy for enhancing communications and information sharing among scholars and institutions in the U.S. and West Africa. Additionally, training in digitization through document scanning, the use of Wikis, and the use of blogs as opportunities for scholarly exchange was planned for the July workshop.

The July workshop was held at WARC on July 16th and 17th. The main themes of the workshop were the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration in designing and using web tools for furthering studies of West Africa, and the role of emerging technologies in digital information management and intellectual production. If there was one theme that emerged from the workshop, it was that expressed in the title of this report, “Documents without an audience are documents without value.” During the July meeting there were many references to the richness of materials in the Sahel in dire need of preservation, the range of resources to be used for their preservation, duplication, and dissemination. For example, scholars and NGOs in Timbuktu using state-of-the-art equipment still collaborate with local scribes to create duplicate documents, which also serve to strengthen local resources. The participant from Ghana emphasized the need for public education to raise awareness of what is available for scholarly use. In Burkina Faso, there was concern about the digitization of old TV footage. While scholars in Niger would like to expand collaboration in the subregion, exploring the document resources in such places as Sokoto (Nigeria) and Pir (Senegal), which are ancient centers of learning that maintained a correspondence through the exchange of documents.

Senegalese Moslem Intellectuals at the End of the 19th Century

by XXX

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to academics in Senegal and the United States, the University Cheikh Anta Diop awarded an honorary doctorate to Professor David Robinson of Michigan State University.

The day after the award Prof. Robinson gave a lecture entitle “Fighting the Greater Jihad: Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba and the Generation of Senegalese Moslem Intellectuals at the End of the 19th Century”. The event was chaired by Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily, a distinguished scholar of West African history.

Earlier on, the Director of WARC, Prof. Sene, underscored the pioneering role played by Professor Robinson in promoting academic exchanges between Senegal and the United States and in clearing the ground for the establishment of WARA, AROA and subsequently, the West African Research Center (WARC).

In his presentation, Professor Robinson emphasized the uncompromising option made by the Founder and Spiritual Guide of the Muridiyya Brotherhood: the only Jihad, the only war, worth fighting is that of the mind and its continual uplifting and betterment. At the outset, the Saintly Man disparaged and disqualified the rule of the sword only to promote the teaching of knowledge and the Eternal Truths to his followers. Such was the path that Bamba followed in his lifetime. Such was also the option he advocated among the religious leaders of his generation.

Professor Robinson, in his exploration of the topic, referred several times to the doctoral dissertation of one of his students, the Senegalese Cheikh Anta Babou, whose research findings are now available in the form of a book entitled Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913, a copy of which has been generously donated by the author to the WARC library.

Professor Robinson’s presentation was followed by a lively session of contributions and questions from an audience of people including university professors, researchers and the general public. The lecture followed on a major event held the day before at University Cheikh Anta Diop which awarded a honorary doctorate (Docteur Honoris) to Professor Robinson along with another distinguished don from Michigan State University.

The full text of Professor Robinson’s presentation can be accessed on the WARC website at www.warc-croa.org.

Continued on page 19
Feature Articles

View From Nigeria ...........................................................................................................1
ECOWAS as an Honest Broker.......................................................................................1

From WARA and WARC Headquarters

From WARA’s President.................................................................................................3
From AROA’s President..................................................................................................3
From WARA’s US Director.............................................................................................4
From WARC’s Director...................................................................................................4

News

WARA at ASA ................................................................................................................5
WARA 2007 Grantees ....................................................................................................5
Contemporary Faces of Islam in West Africa ..................................................................6
Welcome to WARC Fellows............................................................................................7

Film Reviews

Arlit: Deuxieme Paris.....................................................................................................8
Liberia: An Uncivil War.................................................................................................9
Bamako..........................................................................................................................9
Kounandi .......................................................................................................................10
Le Malentendu Colonial/Colonial Misunderstanding....................................................11

From Our Fellows

The Treatment of HIV in Hausa Novels and Film .......................................................12
Traders, Soldiers, Carriers, and Educators ..................................................................13
Rebellious Histories: The Amistad Slave Revolt ............................................................14
11th Annual International Congress of Parasitology .................................................15
The Kinetics of Microbial Ferrous - Iron Oxidation ......................................................15
Humans and Elephants: The Situation at Diya National Park ....................................16
The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade ...............................................................17

Announcements and Opportunities

Residencies for West African Scholars .......................................................................20
Other WARA Grants and Fellowships ........................................................................20
Interrogations of Freedom, Memories and Meaning ...................................................20
African Film Conference ..............................................................................................21
News from Our Members ............................................................................................21
WARC Travel Grants ..................................................................................................22
Acknowledging WARA’s Intern ..................................................................................22

Acknowledgements

WARA would like to acknowledge Maitre Aissata Tall Sall, in Senegal, and Peter Kelman, Esq. in the US, who serve as our legal representatives. We are most grateful for their expert advice and counsel. And, as always, we extend our thanks to the Payroll Company of Milford, Massachusetts.
WARA and WARC have been busy since the Fall Newsletter has gone out. We had a very productive Board meeting at the ASA in San Francisco, discussing future activities for the association as well as issues concerning WARC. Board committees (i.e. Membership, Nominations, Fellowship, Finance and Development, Program) are working on action items. The fellowship committee has been particularly busy reading and ranking applications and designating awardees. Its work will increase even more as we shift the selection of West Africa travel grantees to the U.S. because AROA has assumed responsibility for the selection of WARC fellows. To ease the burden, we look to member-volunteers to assist with the evaluation of applications. Please contact WARA Director Jennifer Yanco if you are willing to help. We also value member input and support more generally. Do send us your suggestions on strategies for increasing our membership (individual and institutional), fundraising in support of WARA initiatives, networking in West Africa and with coordinate associations in the U.S., and program activities.

As is evident from the WARA and WARC Director reports as well as the report by AROA President Ibrahima Thioub, WARC has become a lively center of intellectual activity. The lectures, film screenings, and symposia organized by WARC are complemented by the presence of CREPOS, led by Momar Coumba Diop, and now also the WARC fellows. Colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic increasingly look to WARC as a venue for hosting conferences and workshops. All of this is due in no small part to the dedication of WARC Director Ousmane Sene and his staff. I was able to see first hand the professionalism, effectiveness, and cooperation of all staff members during a month-long stay in December-January. Our challenge is to retain them given our limited means, and to assist them in their continued professional growth. With such a dynamic team in Dakar we are able to explore ways of attaining our longer-range goal to expand WARA activities beyond Senegal.

With the academic year drawing to a close, I wish everyone a productive time away from teaching and related obligations. I also invite you to send us short essays on your research or other topics of broad interest for the Newsletter—we look forward to including material from the WARA community on both sides of the Atlantic.

Maria Grosz-Ngaté  
WARA President  
Associate Director, African Studies Program  
Indiana University - Bloomington

From AROA’s President

La dernière assemblée générale de l’Association de Recherche Ouest Africaine (AROA) avait demandé au Bureau élu de renforcer sa stratégie d’intervention en faisant du Centre de Recherche Ouest Africaine (CROA-WARC) notre opérateur privilégié en matière d’animation culturelle et scientifique.


Dans le domaine de la formation, CREPOS abrité par le WARC, a redémarré ses activités le 02 mars 2007. CREPOS regroupe des chercheurs et universitaires basés à Dakar et offre aux doctorants des séminaires. Les trois doctorants bénéficiaires des bourses du WARC pour la période janvier à août 2007 participent à ce séminaire. C’est le lieu d’exprimer notre sincère gratitude et nos remerciements à tous ceux qui ont contribué au succès de ces manifestations et ont rendu possible l’octroi de ces bourses, en l’occurrence l’Ambassade des États-Unis d’Amérique à Dakar.

Nous restons conscients de l’ampleur des efforts à fournir pour donner à l’organisation sa réelle dimension ouest africaine. Dans ce sens, la prochaine édition du Bukki Blues Festival, en préparation, devra contribuer à l’atteinte de cet objectif.

Pr. Ibrahima Thioub  
Président AROA  
Chair, History Department  
Cheikh Anta Diop University - Dakar

From WARA’s President

Dr. Maria Grosz-Ngaté

Dr. Ibrahima Thioub

Spring 2007  
Page 3
From WARA’s US Director

We are pleased to announce the 2007 WARA fellows (see page 7), and thank those who served on the review committee for their tireless work. We had an excellent pool of applicants for this year’s grants and regret that we could not fund more of those who applied. Our thanks go to committee chair and board member, Jemadari Kamara, and to all those who worked on the selection process, including Patty Tang, Emmanuel Yewah, Scott Youngstedt, Ivor Miller, Gretchen Walsh, Emilie Ngo-Nguidjol, and Adama Diouf.

As you will see from the list of WARA institutional members (on the back cover), our family is expanding! We are pleased to welcome UNC Greensboro, Willamette University, UNC Chapel Hill, the University of Nebraska, Northwestern University, Colorado College, and the Five Colleges consortium (Amherst College, Hampshire College, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Smith College, and Mount Holyoke) and look forward to working together.

In this issue you will find reports from seven WARA/WARC grantees, a report on the enormously successful international workshop “Contemporary Faces of Islam in West Africa” that took place at WARC in the fall. Organized by Professors Penda Mbow, Leo Villalón, and Ousmane Sène, the workshop was made possible by generous grants from the US State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and a grant from the US Embassy in Dakar. You will also have the chance to meet our new WARC Fellows, who will be in residence at WARC through the summer. Thank you to those members whose generous contributions helped get this up and running! You will also find a number of film reviews contributed by WARA members. We are especially grateful to New Yorker Films, California Newsreel, and to the New York African Film Festival for providing us with review copies. And I would like to thank Steven Howard and Masse Ndiaye for their contributions to the discussion of Darfur that was initiated in the fall issue with the article by Ali B. Ali-Dinar. We invite your responses to these pieces, or to anything else in the newsletter. Please send to wara@bu.edu with Letters in the subject line.

We encourage members to contribute to the newsletter in the form of book and film reviews, brief research reports, and announcements. Please let us hear from you — this is your newsletter and we welcome your input. A big thank you is in order to Pankani Lindberg, WARA’s graduate assistant, for pulling together this year’s newsletters and maintaining the WARA membership database. And, as always, WARA is grateful to its major funders, the US Department of Education, and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US State Department.

Jennifer Yanco, WARA US Director

From WARC’s Director

At the time I am drafting this report, WARC is readying itself to host yet another major workshop on Islam scheduled for Monday March 12, 2007. The workshop, “Islam and the Public Sphere,” is being held by WARA member institution Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois) with some 25 West African scholars and academics slated to convene at Northwestern in May 2007.

Meanwhile, WARC is collaborating with the US embassy in Dakar in celebrating Black History Month with a public lecture on issues and themes in contemporary African American literature. The talk will be given on March 13 in Dakar by the WARC Director.

It should also be noted that WARC determined to be signaled among institutions celebrating the centennial of the former president of Senegal, poet laureate Leopold Sedar Senghor in the year 2006. In this respect, a successful lecture was held in the Center in January 2007, with Senegalese novelist Cheikh Hamidou Kane as the major speaker.

Prior to the above developments, several scholars affiliated with WARC, including the Director, contributed to various fora, discussions, radio and television programs to provide commentary and analysis on issues relating to the just concluded presidential election in Senegal. Several organisations specialising in the arts, culture and research in and on West Africa have approached WARC for collaboration and joint initiatives, and an increasing number of researchers and post-graduate students have requested affiliation with the Center. Indeed, WARC’s pledge has always been to be able to stand up and be counted as a body dedicated to the furtherance of research and scholarship on the West African scene and such a goal and objective is being materialized every day.

The visits of a number of WARA’s board members, including WARA President, Professor Maria Grosz Ngatè (in January), and their positive appreciations of the work done here have certainly re-energized the staff and inspired them to spare no effort to make their Center a place of excellence. In an effort to improve the working conditions of the staff and in an attempt to abide by the host country’s labor legislations and procedures, WARC has recently appointed two full-time salaried staff members who, until now, were part-time. While funding opportunities need to be tapped wherever they may be, the effort to make WARC a vibrant place and a location conducive to rewarding research and academic endeavours will be sustained and increased.

Ousmane Sène, Director, West African Research Center
WARA at ASA 2007

WARA Membership Meeting: Please, mark your calendars: WARA will hold its annual membership meeting on Saturday evening, October 20, during the African Studies Association’s Annual Meeting in New York and we urge everyone to come. We will have updates on WARA and WARC ’s activities, reports from grantees, and want to hear from you with your ideas for how WARA can better fulfill its mission. Please consult the program for details on the room and exact times.

This year, WARA is sponsoring two rountables.

Know Your Rights! Translating and Disseminating Human Rights Documents in African Languages
Chair: John Hutchison, Boston University/Coordinator ALMA Project
✓ Donald Osborn, Bisharat!
✓ Alamin Mazrui, Ohio State University
✓ Matarr Baldeh, National Literacy Service of the Gambia
✓ Musa Bitaye, African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

Researching and Responding to the NYC African Immigrant Community
Chair: Linda Beck, University of Maine, Farmington
✓ Natasha Johnson-Lashley, Sanctuary for Families/Center for Battered Women’s Legal Services
✓ Bakary Tandia, African Services Committee
✓ Zeinab Eyega, Sauti Yetu Center for African Women
✓ Zain Abdullah, Temple University
✓ Awa Ba, Uppsalla University/AROA
✓ Beth Buggenhaggen, Indiana University

WARA 2007 Grantees

WARA Post-Doctoral Fellows
Chima J. Korieh (Rowan University) “African Voices: Letters of Petition from Colonial Nigeria”
Kwasi Konadu (Winston - Salem State University) “The Culture of Healing in West Africa: A Biography of Nana Kofi Donkor”

WARA Pre-Doctoral Fellows
Dontraneil Clayborne (UCLA) “Colonial legacy and post-colonial approaches to urban land tenure, property rights, and slum upgrading in Ghana”
Matthew Kirwin (Michigan State University) “Political Identity and Conflict Mitigation in Burkina Faso”

WARA Residencies
University of North Carolina-Greensboro
Kalamazoo College

WARA Graduate Internships
Giavanni Washington, UCLA (CINOMADE, Burkina Faso)
Jeremy Kenyon, Indiana University (WARC Library Intern)

Thanks to the members of the 2007 Review Committees for their meticulous and thoughtful work.
Jemadari Kamara, Chair (University of Massachusetts), Patricia Tang (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Ivor Miller (Boston University), Scott Youngstedt (Saginaw Valley State University), Emmanuel Yewah (Albion College), Emilie Ngo-Nguidjol (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Adama Diouf (WARC Librarian), Gretchen Walsh (Boston University)
Workshop: “The Bloody Writing is Forever Torn”

On August 8–12, 2007, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture convened in Ghana a major international scholarly conference, “The bloody Writing is for ever torn”: Domestic and International Consequences of the First Governmental Efforts to Abolish the Atlantic Slave Trade, to mark the 200th anniversary of the actions taken by Great Britain and the United States in 1807 and 1808 to outlaw the Atlantic slave trade. Jointly hosted by The Historical Society of Ghana and the University of Cape Coast, the meeting was opened in the International Conference Center in Accra, on the morning of August 8, by conference co-chair Emmanuel Akyeampong of Harvard University, who welcomed the delegates to his country and introduced the ceremony’s three distinguished speakers: Nana Dr. S. K. B. Asante, chairman of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Honorable Stephen Asamoah Boateng, Minister for Tourism and Diasporan Relations, and His Excellency Alhaji Aliu Mahama, vice president of the Republic of Ghana. Ronald Hoffman, director of the Omohundro Institute, presided over the second part of the Opening Session and presented to the audience Professor Adiele E. Afigbo of Ebonyi University in Nigeria, who delivered the keynote address. At the conclusion of the Opening Ceremony, conference participants boarded buses for the trip to Elmina, where the remainder of the proceedings took place at a hotel located midway between two of the most notorious of the slave trading forts that have stood along the Gold Coast for hundreds of years—Elmina and Cape Coast Castle.

The conference vastly exceeded the organizers’ expectations in a number of ways, among them the size of the audience which included 300 enthusiastic and engaged participants. The evocative setting in which the proceedings took place, the quality of the papers, the vigor of the discussions they inspired, and, most importantly, the presence of fifty-eight faculty members and graduate students from sub-Saharan African universities who won scholarships to attend the conference transformed the four-day event from an academic meeting into a truly memorable experience, that, in the words of one participants, “will live with me for the rest of my life.” The sub-title of this article is taken from an email message received by the Omohundro Institute from a Travel Scholarship recipient from Cameroon.

In his keynote address, Professor Afigbo identified “The bloody Writing is for ever torn” as the first pan-African meeting of historians held in Africa since 1961. In remarks that built on Professor Afigbo’s observation, Omohundro Institute director Hoffman noted that when he began planning the conference three years ago, the Institute’s fundamental goal, as always, was to enrich the world of scholarship and the life of the mind as directed by the organization’s founding commitment to research and publication. However, at some point he began to realize that the expansive character of the overtures to scholars and graduate students of history throughout sub-Saharan Africa made possible by the generosity and commitment of the sponsors of the Travel Scholarships Initiative was unprecedented. The interactions that took place during the course of the conference attested that African scholars and their counterparts elsewhere had much to teach and learn from each other, and the dialogues that occurred both formally and informally were exceptionally valuable for all who engaged in them. These conversations and encounters enhanced, deepened, and expanded not only the knowledge of individual participants but also the larger universe of historical understanding. Moreover, the exchanges strengthened the determination among scholars within sub-Saharan Africa to revitalize an interactive community in which they can regularly participate and encouraged the transnational network of scholars to strengthen its efforts to reach out to and include within its ranks the vibrant cohort of African colleagues.

The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture is grateful beyond measure to the supporters whose generosity and commitment made “The bloody Writing is for ever torn” possible: The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, The Reed Foundation, The W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, and the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation at the University of Hull. The enthusiasm and largesse that characterized the involvement of the individuals and institutions who contributed to the Travel Scholarships Initiative was equally remarkable and deeply appreciated both by the Omohundro Institute and the faculty members and graduate students who received these awards. Those contributors are: The British Council, The College of William and Mary, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Rouse-Bottom Foundation, The United States Embassy—Accra, Ghana, Mr. Sid Lapidus, Mr. Paul Sperry, and Mr. Hays Watkins. The organizers and sponsors were especially pleased that two of these donors, Mr. Sid Lapidus and Mr. Paul Sperry, attended the conference. The proceedings of the conference can be viewed on the Omohundro Institute’s Web site at http://oieahc.wm.edu/conferences/ghana/sessions/sessions.html.
Workshop: “Know Your Right!/Connais Tes Droits!”

The first Know Your Rights! workshop took place from June 26 to June 27, 2007, at the West African Research Center (WARC) in Dakar. The idea for the workshop grew out of a remark made by members of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) that African populations, who are mostly illiterate in the official languages of their governments, do not have access to the content of the human rights charters and treaties that their governments have signed. This lacuna was highlighted in the welcoming remarks, on the second day of the workshop, from Her Excellency Ambassador Salamata Sawadogo, President of the ACHPR, represented by Chafi Bakari, Senior Legal Advisor at the Commission. The primary goal of Know Your Rights! is to make available in African languages the content of the five legal instruments of the African Commission

- The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- The Protocol to the African Charter on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Rights in Africa

Organized collaboratively by the African Commission, WARA, and Brandeis University (USA), the purpose of the workshop was to reflect on and reach a consensus on the characteristics of a desirable model for the translation/adaptation, presentation and dissemination of human rights documents in African languages. Know Your Rights! has been launched in Senegambia, in its pilot phase, while organizers prepare to expand the project to other West African countries. Senegal and Gambia were chosen because of the important expertise and experience found in both these countries in translation/adaptation into local languages of a variety of materials for the purposes of non-formal education. Senegal’s experience, in particular, has shown that while literal translations are important, they are not sufficient for all the non-formal education needs of the local population, and that several different pedagogically-oriented adaptation models for dissemination might be necessary, depending on the purposes of the exercise.

The workshop brought together experts from a variety of backgrounds. It was clear, over the course of the two-day workshop, that all participants had much to learn from one another. The participants heard about the history of the translation of human rights documents into Senegalese languages from Lamine Kane, of the National Association for Adult Literacy and Training (ANAFA). They benefited from the literacy experience and translation expertise of colleagues like Amadou Abdoul Sy also of ANAFA, of Mamadou Ndiaye, African Society for Education and Training for Development (SAFEFOD) and the Center for Applied Linguistics of Dakar (CLAD), and of Matar Baldeh of Education for All (EFA) in the Gambia. Participants were guided by the knowledge, and expertise of Université Cheikh Anta Diop professors Fary Silate Ka, from the Department of Linguistics, and Fatou Kiné Camara, from the Faculty of Political and Legal Sciences, and blessed to have the wisdom and experience of Arame Diop Fall, Organisation Sénégalaise d’Appui au Développement (OSAD). The presence of partners from the media like Henri Pierre Koubaka, West African Democracy Radio; and Seydou Nourou Ndiaye of the publishing house Papyrus Afrique proved invaluable. Molly Melching of the NGO Tostan and Awa Dia Ka from Associates in Research & Education for Development (ARED) were some of the non-formal education sector participants. Their presentations contributed significantly to the workshop’s understanding of various translation/adaptation models.

Outcomes

Given the importance of standardizing legal terminology in the translation/adaptation process, it was agreed that a database of legal and judicial terminology should be created and that it be housed initially at the headquarters of WARC. WARC will also serve as a repository for all human rights documents in Senegalese and Gambian languages that are collected. Initially using WIKI technology, the database will eventually be transferred to an appropriate database software program. Terminology entries will be gathered from existing human rights documents in all the languages of Senegal and the Gambia. New terms will also be solicited and evaluated. Resource people relevant to this effort will also be sought out, contacted, and encouraged to contribute. A representative Network Coordinating Committee, made up of workshop participants, will facilitate the interaction of the relevant stakeholders, develop and manage the database, and coordinate the translation/adaptation process for the documents of the ACHPR into the languages of Senegal and the Gambia.

Concerning the process of translation/adaptation, workshop participants agreed that the ideal approach is multi-disciplinary, attempts should be made to work with bilingual, monolingual and multilingual people, and that any approach that involves over-simplification of the material should be avoided. The workshop recommended adopting a multi-faceted approach with a range of possible products, and adjusting the form and format of each product to its pedagogical purposes according to the needs of the population (information, training, awareness, reading, self-training, etc.) As necessary, relevant monolingual glossaries and lexicons, which explain the concepts and terms adopted in the translation/adaptation document, will also be developed.

Follow-up activities are being pursued by both organizers and the network coordinating committee, the team is also preparing to develop proposals for future funding that will facilitate the continuation of this important effort.

The workshop was jointly funded by Brandeis University’s International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life, WARA/WARC, and WARA’s African Language Materials Archive Project, with funds contributed by Title VI centers. John Hutchison
ALMA Project Coordinator
**Dollars and Dreams: Dreams and Realities of West Africans in New York.** Directed/Produced by: Jeremy Rocklin and Abdel K. Ouedraogo. 56, 2007. Distributed by D.E.R.

Reviewed by Tanya Serdiuk, Medgar Evers College/CUNY

The documentary, **Dollars and Dreams: West Africans in New York** by Jeremy Rocklin (2007), presents a visually stunning look at the choices made by immigrants in pursuit of the American Dream. Drawn by the promise of opportunity and economic success, immigrants speak of their experiences and the realities they face once in New York. Interviewees range from the most recently arrived to established academics, activists, religious leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs and second-generation students.

**Dollars and Dreams** uncovers New York City as few have seen it. For the knowledgeable viewer, commentary from scholars such as Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome (Brooklyn College), Mohamed Mbodj (Manhattanville College), and Sulayman Nyang (Howard University), enriches their understanding of the African immigrant experience. For those who are unaware of their contributions to the economy and social fabric, the documentary makes visible their often times invisible lives in America.

For the most part, an optimistic tone is maintained while examining the pursuit of wealth in contrast to the realities of work. But a sense of the darker currents is intimated on the soundtrack of Ivorian Reggae star Alpha Blondy’s *Wari*. Even if the viewer is unfamiliar with Blondy’s lyrics, his baseline borrowed from The O’Jays’ hit single, *For the Love of Money*, signals a crucial message that economic success comes with seductive dangers and pitfalls.

A consistent theme voiced by recent immigrants in the film is the absolute necessity and, in some instances, moral obligation to earn a living. As the foundation upon which the American Dream can be achieved, the documentary illustrates how earned income – meager or substantial – reinforces a sense of identity and social continuity through remittances “back home.” But for the newly arrived immigrant, the film also shows how “opportunity is visible, but hard to touch,” especially given their all-consuming work schedules.

Nonetheless, **Dollars and Dreams** vividly demonstrates how newly established African religious institutions serve to reaffirm a sense of collective identity, as they struggle to help members sustain shared ethical, moral, and cultural values. This is particularly true for many African Muslims, who might find themselves as new minorities within the larger American Muslim community. Based on research from his forthcoming book, *Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem* (Oxford University Press, 2008), Zain Abdullah, an assistant professor at Temple University, comments in the film on the harsh realities of these immigrants and what it means for them to negotiate their Black, African and Islamic identities. But the film also shows how emerging immigrant leaders from Christian and African traditions have taken on roles customarily performed by elders in West Africa, even as many are overwhelmed by the need to maintain menial jobs in order to survive.

The film also illustrates how many do realize the dream of economic success. “You’ve got your money. You know you are an American.” Whether it is gaining entry into particular professions, owning a business, or finding success in the arts, these achievements remain tempered by the fear of losing one’s cultural identity, and of the desire to “return home.” **Dollars and Dreams**, although focused on the daily life of West Africans in New York, reflects the totality of the American immigrant experience, with all its challenges and rewards, realities and expectations. Trailer can be viewed at [http://www.der.org/films/dollars-and-dreams.html](http://www.der.org/films/dollars-and-dreams.html).


Reviewed by Amadou T. Fofana, Ph.D.

Willamette University

[afofana@willamette.edu](mailto:afofana@willamette.edu)

Against a poignant backdrop of social commentary on unemployment and job insecurity, polygamy, and the weight of tradition, *A Child’s Love Story* features five 12-year old children, Omar, Yacine, Layti, Ngone and Demba, growing up together in a middle-class neighborhood of Dakar, Senegal. As the film unfolds, we see the strong emotional bonds the children form with one another, bonds that are both intimate and innocent. Although the storyline is not typical of Senegalese films, it does provide a glimpse into a world seldom explored; the world of pre-adolescence.
The film brings middle-class, urban children central stage. Omar, an intelligent boy, is drawn to his classmate, Yacine, a bright and talented schoolgirl. The two cherish each other and get along well. Yet, while Omar and Yacine’s close bond develops, Senegal is suffering extraordinary economic burdens and very high unemployment, due in part to harsh austerity measures imposed by the World Bank. To escape the prospect of perpetual unemployment, Yacine’s father must take a job 270 kilometers away from Dakar. In moving his family with him, he separates Yacine from her dear friend Omar.

Meanwhile, Omar’s family is on the brink of falling apart. Much to the consternation of his mother, the father takes a second wife. Distressed and pensive throughout the rest of the film, Omar’s mother, who refuses to believe her husband’s family pressure excuse to justify his remarriage, becomes less tolerant of Omar’s overt generosity toward his friends. She makes it clear to him that times have changed and that life has become too expensive for one person (implying his father) to carry the load of a whole family.

The intimacy of this innocent couple rests on the personal story of their companions. Démbe, who is very fond of the blind beggar’s daughter, rarely misses an opportunity to hand her the daily sarax, which provides him with occasions to exchange tender looks and slight touches with her. Layti, a boy full of life and humor, is the couple’s second companion. Omar is envious of the kind of relationship Layti has with Ngone; an envy that temporarily endangers their friendship. Layti and Ngone get along well, maybe because she always carries food and he is always hungry. Layti, with a basketball for a companion and Michael Jordon for an idol, dreams of going to America.

Their mentor, Grand Laye, who sells motorcycle rides by the sea and is constantly harassed by the police, is a stark illustration of the desperate employment situation and the disillusionment it engenders. An intelligent and embittered man, Grand Laye understands that the Senegalese system is deeply dysfunctional and needs to change. He speaks up against corruption and social injustice to the children as well as the police, and takes part in demonstrations. A revolutionary at heart, his dream is to turn things upside down in the country. Grand Laye is a school dropout who strongly believes in education and always encourages the children to study harder and be serious about school. A hardened activist, he becomes involved in street protests, exposes himself to police brutality, and comes to see prison as a second home.

Despite the film’s focus on this group of middle-class children, there is a strong presence of other children their age, begging. The rail fences that separate Layti from the talibés he always tries to talk to and who went to the same Koranic school as he did, form an artificial, yet insurmountable divide between two worlds. As the young talibé walks by on the other side of the divide, one cannot help wondering why he is not in school. A number of other shots point in more subtle ways to their massive presence in Dakar. While talibés are clearly not the central focus of the film, the director missed an opportunity to make a strong human rights case for these poor, disenfranchised, and vulnerable children left at the mercy of fate. The beggar’s daughter, more or less the same age as Yacine and Ngone, is likely to have no life of her own. The director’s clear effort to focus primarily on children’s romance has made the film unrealistically sentimental. This is indeed a deliberate choice most certainly dictated by an understanding that the world outside Africa is tired of the disaster images they usually get, and need more complex pictures.

The film ends with a physical separation, but a spiritual reunion of Yacine and Omar through the moon, their messenger. The fragile but ruthless world of adults has interposed between them and prevailed over their love. How else could it have ended? Didn’t their teacher say that love was “an adults’ game,” and that they should be studying instead? The decision to end the film with Yacine and her mother visiting the school her mother attended as a girl may suggest that education should take precedence.

The film is a beautiful piece despite subtle way in which social issues are dealt with though the tendency to brush on several themes sometimes abruptly disrupts the flow of events. For instance, the topic of AIDS, so out of place in the movie, is thrown in anyway. Ironically, the merit of the film is to be found in its portrayal of happy, beautiful, sensitive and smiling young faces from a continent associated with horror and suffering. In its simplicity, the film offers a hopeful view, but such portrayal, more inspired by the Hollywood model, is not without dangers in the long run, among them the risk of sexualizing little girls on the screen.

(Footnotes)

1 Sarax, a Wolof word for alms refers to items given in sympathy to needy people.
2 talibés are children entrusted to a Koranic educator to teach them Koran and humility as prescribed by Islam. However, it is known that instead of teaching them Koran and the way to God, many educators send them to beg money for him. Urban cities, Dakar in particular, are swarmed with such children aggressively harassing passers-by, and persistently following them around asking for money.
Researching Neglected Chronic Disease Epidemic: a New Multidisciplinary Academic Partnership

Africa faces an urgent but neglected chronic (non-communicable) disease epidemic. Across the continent increasing numbers of individuals live with or die - prematurely - from stroke, hypertension, diabetes and cancers. In places like Ghana a greater number of medical admissions and deaths result from chronic diseases than from communicable diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis. Africa’s chronic disease epidemic is attributed to complex - medical, psychological, socio-cultural, economic, structural and geopolitical - factors.

Experts agree that successful interventions will require ‘multi-faceted multi-institutional’ approaches. However, two major challenges exist. First, biomedical research dominates the chronic disease arena in Africa and operates in isolation from existing and emerging insights from the social sciences. Second, African health systems and health policies privilege communicable diseases: 80% of health budgets has been allocated to communicable disease over the last decade (1996 – 2006); most health workers are trained to treat communicable disease creating a severe shortage of health workers with chronic disease skills; and the majority of countries do not have chronic disease policies.

In 2006, a multidisciplinary partnership was established between UK and African chronic disease researchers with funding from the British Academy. The partnership has four goals:

1. To integrate social and medical science research on chronic physical and mental illnesses of public health significance in Africa and among Africans outside Africa;
2. To influence chronic disease policies in the West African sub-region through evidence-based research and intervention;
3. To offer postgraduate teaching, training and support in West Africa and in the UK on Africa-centered chronic disease research, intervention and policy; and
4. To disseminate partnership research and related activities to social science, international health and African Studies audiences.

The partnership is currently made up of 24 partners from institutions in the UK (9), Ghana (10), Nigeria (3), Burkina Faso (1) and Benin (1) with disciplinary interest ranging from anthropology, biological sciences (biochemistry, pharmacology), biomedicine (psychiatry, public health, surgery), geography, nutrition/dietetics and psychology (clinical, cognitive, social). Collectively partners have research expertise on asthma, cancers, cardiovascular diseases (including hypertension), diabetes, neuro-cognitive disorders, schizophrenia and sickle-cell disease.

In April 2007, the partnership held its first annual workshop in Accra at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR) under the theme “NCDs in Africa: Bridging the Research Public Gap”. Presentations focused on six conditions of public health importance: asthma, cancers, diabetes, epilepsy, hypertension and sickle cell disease. Four cross-cutting themes were discussed: burden of disease and prevention; treatment and management; care, support and advocacy; and funding and policy. The workshop presentations and report are available at the partnership website at www.ncdafrica.org.

A second workshop will be held at the University of Cambridge in 2008 under the theme “Chronic Disease and the African Diaspora”. To join the partnership, post research on the website or participate in the next workshop contact Ama de-Graft Aikins (ada21@cam.ac.uk) or Daniel Kojo Arhinful (darhinful@noguchi.mimcom.net).

Ama de-Graft Aikins, PhD
Department of Social and Developmental Psychology, University of Cambridge,
ada21@cam.ac.uk

(Footnotes)

The Olaudah Equiano Global Legacy Project

Olaudah Equiano’s autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, published in 1789, is one of the few texts written in English by a person of African descent during the eighteenth century. Until recently, its impact as an account of a journey up from slavery written by one who had personally experienced the middle passage and subsequent enslavement has been monumental. Recent interest in Equiano has been motivated by contemporary developments, such as the work of Vincent Carretta, a professor of English at the University of Maryland at College Park and author of, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man*, which has raised questions of “where Equiano was actually born and claimed that he “may have invented rather than reclaimed an African identity.”

The controversy generated by the discovery of Olaudah Equiano’s baptismal records has led some to question the authenticity of his place of birth and indeed other slave narratives, especially those which purport to document the middle passage experiences of African slaves aboard slave ships enroute to the New World, call for a critical re-assessment of the existing scholarship.

Dr. Catherine Acholonu, the researcher who discovered Equiano’s hometown and surviving relatives in Isseke, Anambra State, Nigeria, Dr. Chima Korieh, a Professor of History at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Dr. Dorothy Ukaegbu, a Professor of Anthropology at the College of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, collaborated to hold a conference on Equiano this summer under the auspices of *The Olaudah Equiano Global Legacy Project*. The Inaugural conference “Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Revisiting the Olaudah Equiano Legacy,” took place from 26-28th July 2007 at Imo State University, Owerri Nigeria. The conference, sponsored by the United Nations Forum of Arts and Culture, Nigeria, The Catherine Acholonu Research Center for African Cultural Sciences, Abuja, Nigeria, and Imo State University, Nigeria, was a platform for exchange of ideas and an opportunity for researchers and students to present on-going research on Equiano and work within a variety of fields and disciplines and to either reinterpret/revisit any of the major debates that emerged recently regarding the birth place of Equiano.

The conference attracted both scholars and non-scholars interested in the Equiano debate, including a contingent from Isseke, the original birthplace of Equiano and surviving members of Ekwealu family, who are said to be direct relatives of Equiano.

Day three of the conference was spent on an excursion trip by the conference participants to Isseke, The traditional ruler of Isseke, Igwe Boniface Nnabuife welcomed the guests and reiterated the plans of Isseke people to immortalize their son Oluade Ekwealu. He said that the Ekwealu family and the Umuikenkwo kindred had donated the portion of land where Oluade’s late father’s homestead had stood towards the erection of a monument in honor of Oluade Ekwealu.

For further information contact: Dr Chima J. Korieh, Department of History, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881. Email chima.korieh@marquette.edu

For further information contact: Dr Chima J. Korieh, Department of History, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881. Email chima.korieh@marquette.edu

Participants in the conference.
**Phenotypic and molecular characterization of *Staphylococcus aureus* isolates in South-Western Nigeria**

Dr. Adebayo Osagie Shittu, one of the recipients of the WARC travel grant, is a lecturer in the Department of Microbiology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, NIGERIA. He obtained a Ph.D degree (Microbial Biotechnology) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Republic of South Africa. Dr. Shittu’s host was Professor Johnson Lin of the Department of Microbiology, School of Biochemistry, Genetics, Microbiology and Plant Pathology, UKZN. The duration of the research visit was six weeks (May 15-June 29, 2007).

*Staphylococcus aureus* has remained the major causative agent of infection in all age groups following surgical wounds, skin abscesses, osteomyelitis and septicemia. In Nigeria, *S. aureus* is one of the most important pathogen and a frequent isolate obtained from clinical samples in the clinical microbiology laboratory. In view of the consequent implications on health-care costs, there is considerable epidemiological interest in the tracking of *S. aureus* strains to gain a better picture on the distribution in the population, and the dynamics of clonal spread. Data on clonal identities and diversity, surveillance and new approaches in molecular epidemiology of this pathogen in Nigeria are limited. This study was conducted for a better understanding of the spread of *S. aureus* and to enhance therapy and management of patients in Nigeria.

**Objectives of Study:**

1. To confirm phenotypic identification of *S. aureus* and methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA) isolates by molecular techniques.
2. To determine the antimicrobial susceptibility profile of *S. aureus* isolates from South-Western Nigeria.
3. To type the isolates by phenotypic and genotypic methods.

A total of 50 *S. aureus* isolates were obtained from various clinical samples, nasal specimens of healthy medical personnel and individuals in South-Western Nigeria. *S. aureus* and MRSA were confirmed by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) detection of the *nuc* and *mecA* genes respectively. Typing was based on antibiotic susceptibility pattern (antibiogram), polymerase chain reaction-restriction fragment length polymorphism (PCR-RFLP) of the coagulase gene and pulsed field gel electrophoresis (PFGE).

The antibiotic susceptibility testing showed that all the isolates were resistant to penicillin, 33 (67%) to tetracycline, 11 (22.4%) to erythromycin, 3 (6.1%) to gentamicin and 2 (4.1%) to ciprofloxacin. None of the isolates exhibited inducible or constitutive resistance to clindamycin by the D-test method. Only one isolate was confirmed to be MRSA. The study established the importance of confirming phenotypic identification of *S. aureus* and MRSA by molecular techniques. There was a high level of agreement between the 3 methods for typing the methicillin-susceptible *S. aureus* (MSSA) isolates. Furthermore, the existence of a predominant MSSA clone in one of the health institutions was observed. A total of nine of the 50 isolates were Panton-Valentine leukocidin (PVL) positive indicating that they are community-associated *S. aureus* isolates. The study provided baseline information on the need for effective infection control measures in health-care institutions in South-Western Nigeria.

The WARC travel grant has assisted the recipient in understanding the molecular epidemiology of *S. aureus*, identifying clonal lineages of MRSA and in monitoring the geographic expansion of epidemic clones in Nigeria and Africa.

**HIV/AIDS Fatigue**


I lived, worked, danced, and drummed with members from a performing arts ensemble, *Le Burgeon du Burkina*, in Ouagadougou as part of my preliminary research. Proposed research activities included: 1) conducting focus groups; 2) conducting in-depth and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders including: people living with HIV/AIDS and their families; government officials; sex-workers; HIV/AIDS NGOs; and griots, the oral historians and keepers of the musical traditions; 3) surveying the current daily use of drumming and dancing in Burkinabe culture; 4) investigating other prevalent genres of performance, 5) developing basic language capacity in the

**From Our Fellows**

Dr. Adebayo Shittu

**Department of Microbiology**

Obafemi Awolowo University,
Ile-Ife, NIGERIA.

**Email:** bayo.shittu@yahoo.com

ashittu@oauife.edu.ng
appropriate local language; and 6) pursuing further training in the dance and drum arts. I also administered baseline and post-project questionnaires to assess any change in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. In addition to rehearsing and performing the piece, the performers participated in formal conferences about HIV/AIDS and in-depth discussions with people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

*Le Burgeon du Burkina* performed the piece for varied audience including: children who have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS; the parents, families, and friends of the performers; and at an educational event of a women’s association that, in conjunction with Médecins Sans Frontières, promotes HIV/AIDS awareness in their community. All of the performances were followed by public discussions about HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, and transmission; the latter performance’s discussion was led by a PLWHA. The pre-/post- questionnaires indicate an increase in knowledge about HIV transmission among the performers.

Ouagadougou has over 70 organization dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention and education. Despite varied outreach efforts and committed government engagement, misinformation about HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention abounds. Conversations are focused instead on social conditions, such as economic hardships that create a market for sex between young girls and older men, which contribute to the spread of the disease. Sentiments like “You only get AIDS from haircuts with dirty razors,” “HIV is contracted through rough and vigorous sex,” and “You can’t get AIDS from having sex one time,” coupled with the lack of interest in discussing transmission lead me to conclude that urban Burkinabe are experiencing HIV/AIDS fatigue.

As new infections among urban youth are increasing at an alarming rate, determining culturally appropriate, effective ways to redress this HIV/AIDS fatigue among urban Burkinabe is a worthy research direction.

Presently, I am seeking funding to continue pursuing this research path. Utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach inclusive of collaboratively created forum theatre, peer-education, interviews, content analysis, surveys, and workshops, I hope to expand on this formative research in order to investigate the cultural aspects conducive to the effectiveness of live performance for outreach education among the reproductive population in urban Burkina Faso.

Please feel free to contact me with questions, comments, or suggestions.

Giavanni Washington
Ph.D. Student - Culture and Performance
Department of World Arts & Cultures
University of California, Los Angeles
giavanni@ucla.edu.

---

**WARC Library Internship 2007**

I was fortunate to be an intern at the WARC Library in Dakar, Senegal from June to July of 2007. My background in librarianship prepared me for this opportunity as well as the many projects I was involved in. Throughout my stay, I worked alongside many of the staff members of WARC, but primarily Adama Dieye, WARC’s fantastic Librarian, and her assistant, Ousseynou Dia. Adama’s demonstration of librarianship in the face of numerous infrastructural challenges was quite instructive.

While there were frequent power outages and language difficulties, my experience with WARC was very positive. Everyone was truly gracious and welcoming. In fact, the sense of inclusion provided by the WARC staff made the transition to West Africa an easy and comfortable process. The staff was kind enough to arrange an excellent home stay experience which enabled me to explore Dakar as I liked. Because of this, we were able to get to work without delay. Specifically, my two main objectives of this internship were to redesign the WARC Library website and to develop a new electronic catalog of the Library’s resources. In each case, there was a positive and tangible (well, electronically tangible) result. While these types of resources are always undergoing updates and improvements, WARC’s catalog and website are functional, usable, and hopefully will make research at and through WARC much easier for everyone.

We worked on a process of coordination with the Digital Library for International Research (DLIR) on updating WARC’s records in their online catalog; we also added an African Languages materials section to the library. I was also given the opportunity to participate in a fascinating “Information for All Peoples” (IFAP) workshop concerning the “Digitization of the Sahel” which brought together librarians, archivists, and other interested scholars from America and West Africa. It was a truly unique experience.

I cannot speak highly enough of the value of WARC, both as a place of scholarship and as a community. Prof. Ousmane Sene and Abdoulaye Niang created an atmosphere of collaboration and respect that I cannot understated. Adama was kind enough to accompany me on a “tour of Dakar libraries,” including the National Archives, the National Library, the Bibliothèque Universitaire at UCAD, and the library at l’Institut Fondamental de l’Afrique Noire (IFAN). It enabled me to expand my awareness of how libraries in Africa operate and the tremendous challenges they face. There is always a lot of work to do in a library, and African libraries are no different, but the WARC library has a bright future and I am proud to say I played a small part in it.

Jeremy Kenyon
School of Library and Information Science
Indiana University
jrkenyon@indiana.edu
Ethnic Diversity in Burkina Faso

Although Burkina Faso has many of the factors believed to incite ethnic conflict, such as ethnic diversity, poverty and a primary resource based economy, it has experienced very low levels of civil conflict compared to other countries in the sub-region. Most of the attention has focused on the troubled regions of Africa; hence cases that have not degenerated into violent conflict often go unnoticed. My research attempts to identify factors that mitigate potential communal conflict in Burkina.

This project contributes to our general understanding of ethnic and religious politics and offer a deeper understanding of the politics specific to Burkina Faso, which has remained one of the least studied countries of West Africa.

The objective of my research is threefold. The first is to locate Burkina Faso within the broader context of African countries in terms of variation in levels of conflict. Secondly, I seek to understand why Burkina Faso, despite apparent ethnic divisions and intense poverty has avoided any significant violent conflicts. Finally, I wish to identify the variables that account for the variation in levels of conflict within Burkina Faso.

West African Research Association pre-dissertation Fellowship supported me in my first steps in tackling this research question. I had two main objectives that I wished to achieve during my visit to Burkina Faso in the summer of 2007. The first was to meet with faculty members at the University of Ouagadougou to discuss my project. The second was conduct interviews that would provide insight into my research question.

I worked with two faculty members from the University of Ouagadougou, Abdoul Karim Sango and Augustin Loada. Sango as my primary contact arranged meetings with political, traditional and religious leaders with whom I conducted in-depth interviews.

Professor Loada who is also director of a civic NGO, the Center of Democratic Governance (CDG) was also a great resource. The CDG conducts national public opinion surveys that are quite similar to the Afrobarometer’s. Dr. Loada granted me access to the Center’s public opinion data which will allow me to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Professor Loada also asked that I give a guest lecture in his political science course at the University of Ouagadougou when I return in 2008.

I was able to conduct over forty semi structured interviews during my time in Burkina. While many of the interviews took place in Ouagadougou I also interviewed people in Bobo Dioulasso, Po and Gaoua. I found that many people attributed the lack of conflict in Burkina to a cultural phenomenon known as cousinage or parentés a plaisenterie. These terms refer to a form of interethnic joking relationships that exist between different ethnic groups. Respondents frequently referred to cousinage as mediating conflict between ethnic groups.

Another common explanation for low levels of conflict was that the political composition of the government has roughly mirrored the ethnic makeup of the country as a whole. The lack of significant levels of communal conflict in Burkina Faso presents an interesting research puzzle but at the same time it is a challenge because it means that there is little variation in levels of conflict. Upon closer inspection, however, I found that Burkina does have varying levels of violent communal conflict albeit at very low levels.

Since my research topic is interdisciplinary I met with faculty members from a number of academic departments at the University of Ouagadougou. In July I attended the Ciné Droit Libre film festival organized by the Centre Culturel Francais, the event showcased recent African films that dealt with human rights and free speech. The guest of honor of the festival was Aminata Dramane Traoré who gave a passionate discussion of Africa’s place in global affairs.

Matthew Kirwin, PhD Student
Department of Political Science
Michigan State University
Email: kirwinma@msu.edu
From Our Fellows

Ibrahim Abdullah: Visiting Scholar to Kalamazoo College: April 5th to May 1st 2007

In December 2006, Kalamazoo College submitted a request to the West African Research Association nominating Dr. Ibrahim Abdullah to visit Kalamazoo as a visiting scholar for a period of four weeks. In February 2007, the request was approved which paved the way for Dr. Abdullah’s visit in April. In fact, his visit coincided with the start of the spring quarter which is usually our final quarter of the academic year.

The African Studies Program was fortunate to have Dr. Abdullah as a visiting scholar at this time. His visit was not only constructive and productive, it was timely. Since the program offers about ten courses in all in African Studies, Dr. Abdullah’s presence was useful in enriching the learning experience of the students in some of the courses, particularly courses dealing with contemporary Africa and Islam in Africa. His expertise in these disciplines showed range and verve with a command of the extant literature which many of the students appreciated. He visited a few of my classes where he actively participated in lively discussions with students on various themes. In addition to visiting my classes, he gave a public lecture to students, staff and faculty on: “An Abandoned Generation? Youth Agency and State (In) Capacity in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone.” The lecture was well received as it generated lively debate among members of the audience. In his lecture, Dr. Abdullah catalogued the problems engulfing the postcolonial state in Africa and the complicity and/or role of international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank in adopting policies that are inimical to the development of many African economies including Sierra Leone. In all this, he argues, the youths tend to be the biggest losers leading them to engage in sinister and fiendish acts of unfathomable proportions. In addition to the lecture, Dr. Abdullah also took part in a roundtable discussion with faculty members and students: “The African Continent and the Challenges of Globalization.” The Director of the Africana Studies department at Western Michigan University Dr. Wilson Onaiwu Ogboro took part in the discussion as well lending his vast expertise on the topic. The panelists including Dr. Abdullah covered a wide array of issues ranging from Africa’s current socioeconomic and political predicament to the hope of a bright future for the continent. In short, the discussion was very successful as many students appreciated the ingenuity of the panelists which they displayed with lustrous finesse.

Dr. Abdullah and I also worked on a few projects which we hope to conclude soon. While he was able to successfully conduct research during his residency here, we agreed to write an article on: “The (Mis) Perception of Creole/Krio Identity in Sierra Leone Historiography” which will review a book edited by Gibril Cole and Mac Dixon-Fyle on the Krio in Sierra Leone. The article will review and challenge the views expressed in this work and in others about the uniqueness of Krio society in colonial Sierra Leone. It is clear from our research that Krioness as portrayed by these scholars was not a given; it was to a large extent an imagined and/or invented community driven by competing interests. In other words, the identity of the Krio was never linear; those who came to be identified as Krio carried an inconsistent identity ranging from “Black Englishmen to Sierra Leoneans.” By arguing that the Krio emerged in the 18th century as a fixed ethnic entity with shared aims, aspirations and values, overlooks the evidence. In addition to the article, Dr. Abdullah and I hope to convene a conference on Sierra Leone historiography which will feature historians of Sierra Leone to be held at Fourah Bay College in December 2008. We will be soliciting donor support for this undertaking.

The visit of Dr. Abdullah reached its climax when he received a special invitation to dinner from the President of Kalamazoo College, Dr. Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran. The dinner was held at the president’s residence. Dr. Abdullah used the occasion to highlight the long standing connection between Fourah Bay College and Kalamazoo College.

Outside Kalamazoo College, Dr. Abdullah visited and interacted with members of the Sierra Leone community in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids. In fact, he was guest of honor at the 46th independence anniversary of Sierra Leone organized by the Sierra Leone community in Kalamazoo and Holland Michigan.

All in all, Dr. Abdullah’s visit to Kalamazoo College was positive as it achieved the intended goal and purpose given the feedback received from members of the college and the Sierra Leone community in Kalamazoo.

Kalamazoo College and the African Studies Program look forward to having such scholarly visitations in future.

Joseph Jusuf Bangura, Ph.D.
Director of African Studies and Assistant Professor

The WARC family is growing!

Congratulations to WARC Librarian Adama Diouf on the birth of her baby girl, Amssatou

Spring 2007
**Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge**

Through a generous Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship from the West African Research Association I was able to conduct archival and oral history research for a biography of a very important—albeit little known—indigenous healer who lived in the Takyiman (Techiman) district of central Ghana. This research was conducted between May and August 2007 to collect key archival and oral materials for a biographical study that will explore the historically shaped confluence of health, disease, and culture using the life story of an indigenous healer in colonial and post-colonial Ghana.

The rationale for this study is that Nana Kofi Donkor’s life and work is distinctive for his accomplishments in healing and medicine—as the number of dissertations and academics who utilized his knowledge will attest—and one whose life sheds light on the intersections of the changing landscape of disease, health, and culture in Takyiman in particular, a historical town which linked peoples of the savannah and the forest, and in colonial and post-colonial Ghana in general.

Using my previous study, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*, as groundwork material, I was able to locate and examine Dennis Warren’s collected works and the works of other anthropologists on indigenous medicine and healing in Takyiman for the late 1960s to 1990s, varied documents at the regional archives at Sunyani (of the former Ghana National Archives), the records and annual reports of the Holy Family Hospital (the primary hospital of Takyiman), oral history collections at the Institute of African Studies and the Balme library at the University of Ghana, and a recently discovered patient record book of Nana Kofi Donkor kept during the early 1980s. These research activities were complemented by preliminary interviews of family and community members, as well as other indigenous healers who knew Nana Kofi Donkor. Unfortunately, siblings, some children, and the last contemporary of Nana Donkor, Nana Kofi Kyeremeh, have passed and those healers that reside in the Takyiman area have certainly heard of Nana Donkor, but have no intimate knowledge of him or his life’s work. Be that as it may, my research thus far has revealed the task of writing an historical biography of this sort to be more challenging in terms of “biographical data” but still doable in terms of using the materials gathered to complete an extended biographical essay and making a transcribed and perhaps electronic version of Nana Donkor’s patient record book, and other relevant sources, available to scholars and students alike.

At this juncture, I have a general sketch of Nana Donkor life and some biographical details complemented by an equal sketch of the social and cultural history of Ghana in the twentieth century. I intend to visit the Manhyia Record Office in Kumase, and examine records at the archives of the Wesleyan Methodist mission and the Roman Catholic mission with regards to Takyiman, since these institutions may have materials that deal with culture and medicine and the social context in which those processes unfolded in twentieth century Ghana. I hope to also locate those scholars who have worked in the Takyiman area and perhaps have interviewed Nana Donkor or amass data on healing and medicine in the area. While in Takyiman this past summer, I met Ray Silverman from the University of Michigan and we spoke briefly about my project; out of that conversation came a copy an interview conducted in 1980 by Dr. Silverman, which he kindly shared with me. I thank WARA for the support and trust that this project helps to further its mission.

**Kwasi Konadu**

*Assistant Professor of History*

*Winston Salem State University, North Carolina*

*kwasini@yahoo.com*

---

**African Voices:**

**Letters of Petition from Colonial Nigeria**

Petitions, despite the important functions they performed in the formal and informal setting in the colonial period, have not been significantly explored as tool for understanding interactions within formal and informal colonial settings. Yet, correspondences, which emerged with western literacy, offer a window into the socio-cultural, political, and economic dynamics of the times. Letters of petitions and supplications provide scholars of African history, literature, sociology, and political science as well as those who are interested in scholarship on Africa with an invaluable source of information, not only about the conditions of the petitioners, the context in which they emerged, but about colonial society in general. The language embedded in them represents the distinct social and ethical perceptions of the local population about colonial institutions. Till date, not much research has been done fully integrate these correspondences into the colonial historiography.

This aim of this project is to provide full transcriptions of thousands of letters of petition written by ordinary African against colonial taxes, court cases and decision, restrictions and price control imposed on traders and peasant producers during the Second World War, and make them accessible to historians and other scholars. This project is based upon extensive archival research. I began collecting these letters in 2004 while I was working a monograph focusing on African dynamics and socio-economic change in colonial Eastern Nigerian. So far, I have collected over 3000 such petitions from the regional archives in Enugu and Calabar, all in the eastern part of Nigeria.

In order to collect a wide range of letters of petition from different regions and class, I traveled to Nigeria on May 30, 2007 to explore other regional archives at Ibadan and Kaduna. I believe that a comprehensive collection of these letters and petitions is essential to a full understating of the implication of colonial control on Nigeria as well as regional peculiarities. My goal was to explore...
both Ibadan and Kaduna archives for petitions similar to what I had collected at Enugu and Calabar. I wanted to ensure that the research also covered the Western and Northern regions respectively. This goal was achieved to a large extent although I spent a substantial portion of my time at Ibadan because of the overwhelming number of petitions covering both the Western Region and the Colony of Lagos. I spent a week at Kaduna and revisited both Enugu and Calabar archives, where I spent another week. Overall, my result did not differ from my expectations.

Fieldwork was conducted between 5 June and 24 August 2007, and was based at the National Archives of Nigeria at Ibadan and Kaduna. I revisited the Enugu and Calabar archives briefly to cross check materials and explore other items. At the Ibadan archive, I was able to collect about 1400 petitions relating to Oyo province. Most of these were written from the 1930s to the 1950s. They deal with judicial cases and tax related matters. Others were personal petitions seeking the intervention of colonial officials in disputes between Africans.

Ibadan archives also housed materials relating to the Colony of Lagos. I was able to collect over 500 petitions dealing with various matters in the colony. Due to time constraints, I was not able to explore other provinces in Western Nigeria. Petitions at the National Archives located in Kaduna date back to the early decades of colonial rule. I collected about 300 petitions from Kaduna. A large number of petitions still exist. My short trip to Enugu and Calabar archives yielded further documents dealing with petitions to colonial officers appealing to them to intervene in cases involving Africans. So far, I have collected over 7000 petitions. The new regulations banning the use of digital camera meant that I had to rely on photocopying materials which is not only expensive but time consuming. The present task is the transcription of petitions that emerged during the Second World War as part of the final products from this research. On the whole, I plan to produce three volumes of primary source materials dedicated to (a) petitions against colonial controls during the Second World War, (b) petitions against colonial taxation, and (c) petitions against court cases and court decisions. I have discussed and secured a letter of intent to with Brill Academic Publishers in Leiden, Netherland the publication of specialized articles for scholars is the publication of African Voices: Letter of Petitions from colonial Nigeria. Another appropriate venue for a scholarly publication of specialized articles for scholars is the Journal of African History and History in Africa. In addition to finished publications, the raw data from this work will be made available as digital images through the computer. The model (in standard AutoCAD format, called .dwg, or in the widely used transfer format called.dxf) will be available through a Digital Archive Project. The site will be accessible to the general public. Finally, I plan to distribute the collection through the creation of CD-ROM designed primarily for researchers at colleges and universities.

Chima J. Korieh
Marquette University
chima.korieh@marquette.edu

Land Use Change in Kumasi, Ghana

From 26-31st August, 2007, I visit the department of Cell Biology and Genetics, University of Lagos, Nigeria to present my paper “A case study of the Barekese Reservoir Catchment Area” on the impact of land-use change along the Barekese Reservoir Kumasi, Ghana. A series of seminars were also organized for final year students of the department. I also able to visit the departmental Laboratories and the Biological garden and was interviewed by the Voice of America on my research.

The specific objectives are:
- To identify the main land-use change along the catchment area as a result of anthropogenic activities.
- To assess the impacts of these land-use change along the catchment area on the physio-chemical water quality parameters of the Barekese Reservoir.
- To assess the microbiological quality of the water with respect to its recreational and drinking purposes vis-à-vis its compliance with internationally recognized water quality directives.
- To assess the presence and levels of heavy metals in the water.
- To explore ways of sustainable managing the Barekese catchment area to ameliorate the deteriorating water quality.

Preliminary findings:
- The use of the reserve was very alarming in all the communities.
- The quality and quantity of water at the feeder streams and the reservoir are increasingly polluted due to the use of the reserve.
- The feeder streams were more polluted than the raw water at the reservoir.
- The feeder streams of the Barekese reservoir are highly polluted and do not meet the WHO standards for drinking water.
- The communities along the catchment area depend on these feeder streams for their source of drinking water and recreational use.

I am most grateful to WARC for the travel grant which enabled me interact, share and exchange knowledge. This has contributed immensely to my research work as a whole has had a positive impact on my lecturing career after school.

Carolyn Tyhra
Department of Theoretical and Applied Biology
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
Kumasi, Ghana
tyhracarolynkumasi@yahoo.co.uk
Rapport d’activités des Travaux dans le Parc National de Hwange, Zimbabwe.


L’objectif de cette étude était donc de comparer l’impact des termites dans deux végétations soumises à différentes contraintes.

Mon séjour dans le parc de Hwange a duré trois (03) semaines, du sept (07) au vingt-sept (27) avril 2007. Cette période a été choisie pour mener mes travaux car le consortium de troupeau devrait débuter ses travaux sur la démographie des arbres dans le cadre du projet BioFun (projet de recherche français) à cette date. Mon co-encadreur Dr. Jacques GIGNOUX (du laboratoire de BIOEMCO à Paris) qui fait partie de ce projet a pris les mesures nécessaires pour que je puisse mener mes travaux parallélement, tout en bénéficiant de la main d’œuvre qu’allait constituer les membres et techniciens du projet. Malheureusement, le projet n’a pu démarrer effectivement faute de moyen (il débutera en décembre 2007), mais nous avons profité des visites de terrain de quelques membres du projet qui y étaient et qui ont bien voulu m’aider, et aussi des travaux de recherche des étudiants Zimbabwéens pour faire les échantillonnages. Les membres du projet et les étudiants, que je tiens à remercier pour leur aide, leur soutien et leur sympathie sont ci-dessous cités :

- Dr. Hervé Fritz, Directeur scientifique du consortium de troupeau et coordonnateur du projet BioFun
- Dr. Jacques GIGNOUX, du laboratoire de BIOEMCO à Paris, membre du projet BioFun et mon co-encadreur.
- Simon CHAMAILLE, étudiant postdoctoral et membre du projet BioFun
- Justice MUVENGWI, étudiant en Master à l’université de Zimbabwe, était en stage dans le parc
- Tatenda NYENDA, étudiant en Master à l’université de Zimbabwe, était en stage dans le parc
- Nicolas (français), ingénieur agronome, venant effectuer des travaux dans le parc dans le cadre d’un projet
- William (français), étudiant en thèse, effectuant ses travaux avec Nicolas
- Monica, étudiante en Licence à l’université de Zimbabwe, était en stage dans le parc

Les échantillonnages ont consisté à :
- Faire une étude de cartographie sur un (01) des sites choisis dans le cadre du projet BioFun. Cette cartographie servira à réaliser une analyse spatiale, qui permettra de déterminer le type d’interaction spatiale (s’il y a une association spatiale ou non) entre les arbres et les structures biogéniques épiégées des termites (buttes et nids). La cartographie a consisté à déterminer la position des arbres et des structures biogéniques épiégées des termites, cela grâce à un télémètre Laser et une boussole de visée. Une distance et un angle ont été relevés par rapport au piquet le plus proche (un des quatre piquets utilisés pour quadriller la parcelle a été utilisé) ;
- les espèces des arbres cartographiées ont été déterminées sur le terrain grâce aux botanistes du parc. Les termites présents dans les buttes et les nids ont été prélevés dans des piluliers contenant de l’alcool 70° ;
- les galeries et les placages de récolte des termites présents sur les arbres, sont des signes extérieurs d’attaques de ceux-ci sur les arbres. Les arbres portant ces structures ont été notés afin de déterminer la proportion des arbres attaquées par les termites. L’état général des arbres a été noté afin de faire une corrélation entre l’état de santé de l’arbre et les attaques des termites. En dehors de la parcelle cartographiée, ces structures biogéniques ont été relevées sur d’autres transects.

Plus haut, il est précisé que le projet BioFun n’a pas pu démarrer effectivement, nous n’avons donc pas pu effectuer nos travaux sur une grande superficie. Cela aura pour inconvénient de biaiser les analyses spatiales (les analyses spatiales, ne sont pas assez précises lorsque la superficie est réduite, surtout concernant les buttes, pour lesquelles la fréquence de rencontre est généralement faible).

Je tiens à remercier très sincèrement l’organisme WARA pour l’opportunité qu’elle nous donne de réaliser nos travaux. Mes sincères remerciements à Madame Jennifer Yanco avec qui j’ai collaboré et qui était vraiment sympathique et disponible.

Aya Brigitte N’Dri
For WARA Institutional Members:
Residencies for West African Scholars

This competition, which is open only to institutional members of WARA, provides support for bringing a specific West African scholar to your campus. In the interest of enhancing transatlantic exchange and collaboration, WARA will offer two of these grants for 2008. Applications are made by WARA member institutions, in collaboration with the scholar they wish to host. The residency lasts 4-8 weeks and provides the visiting scholar with opportunities for library research, guest lecturing, and/or collaborative work with American colleagues—both at the host institution and elsewhere. The fellowship covers international travel for the scholar and a living stipend. Host institutions are encouraged to provide additional support in the form of housing, local travel, arranging conference participation, etc.). Details on the application procedure can be found on the WARA website (www.africa.ufl.edu/WARA).

WARA will also be holding its annual competition for Pre- and Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships and for WARA Graduate Student Internships for the summer of 2008. Details on these grants and application procedures can be found on the WARA website.

WARC Pre- and Post-Doctoral Grants

WARA will also be holding its annual competition for Pre- and Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships and for WARA Graduate Student Internships for the summer of 2008. Details on these grants and application procedures can be found on the WARA website: www.africa.ufl.edu/WARA.

Interrogations of Freedom: Memories, Meanings, Migrations

A conference in commemoration of the Bicentennial of the British and American Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
October 9-12, 2007

You are invited to participate in the fourth conference of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD), to be held at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, and co-sponsored by New York University.

The conference will be research driven, featuring panels organized in ways which effectively stimulate discourse across geographic, disciplinary, cultural, and theoretical boundaries. All geographic areas will be represented, including Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Paper and panel proposals that incorporate gender and women as categories of analysis are encouraged.

Proposals Please send a two-page abstract (for either a single presentation or a panel) and a one-page CV (or one-page multiple CV’s). The deadline for receiving the abstracts has been extended to MARCH 31, 2007. They can be sent prior to submitting the registration fee, and are to be sent electronically via email attachment to: Barbados07@nyu.edu

Other queries (but not abstracts) can be addressed to:
Michael Gomez
Dept. of History, New York University
53 Washington Sq South
NY, NY 10012-1098
michael.gomez@nyu.edu

Find out more about ASWAD at www.aswadiaspora.org
African Film Conference, November 9-10, 2007
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Call for Abstracts, Deadline: May 31, 2007
This conference will explore how an appreciation of films as mode of expression and form can be combined with an understanding of their content. Cinema has a more pronounced public dimension than some of the other arts; it creates an audience and depends on it for its survival, and filmmaking itself can be situated within the history, economy, politics, and broader cultural trends of postcolonial Africa.

The conference aims to foster a dialogue between film scholars, critics, and the social science interpreters, users, and enthusiasts of African films, and will try to achieve, among other things, a greater sensibility for film as a medium among the latter. We seek abstracts from scholars and writers interested in participating in this project.

We invite contributions on thematic and stylistic development in African filmmaking and on the way the films reflect and feed upon urban popular culture. A subset of related themes involve the connections to international film making styles or to the ethnographic and documentary film traditions, including considerations of emerging regional and national styles within Africa. We would like to see sober and carefully documented studies of continuity with older African verbal, dramatic, and visual arts, or of the emergence in film of new expressive manners breaking away from them. Film music and soundtracks, the use of traditional and popular musical genres in the films, the influence of international film scores, and a documentation of the impetus that films give to national musical composition could enrich our reflection on modern Africa.

Who the domestic audiences of these films are, the reactions of these audiences to the films, and the training and careers of African directors and actors can as well bear more sustained attention. Of particular interest to us are the popular film and video industries on which relatively little gets written, for example the one in Nigeria. Finally, our understanding of the subject matter and the style of African films can be deepened by an understanding of the broader political economy of the African film industries, the role of public and private financing from home and abroad, the share in revenue of domestic and export markets, the initiatives for co-production or the sharing of post-production facilities, among African countries and between them and the countries of the north.

Please send abstracts of 250-300 words by e-mail or by post to:
Mahir Saul
Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois
Davenport Hall, 607 S. Mathews Ave.
Urbana, IL 61801
m-saul@uiuc.edu

Ralph Austen
Department of History, University of Chicago
Pick Hall 214, 5828 S. University Avenue
Chicago IL 60637
wwb3@uchicago.edu

News from Our Members

Colin T. West, a former WARA pre-dissertation research grant awardee received his Ph.D. in anthropology from The University of Arizona this last December, 2006. The title of his dissertation is: “Pugkeenga: Assessing the Sustainability of Household Extension and Fragmentation under Scenarios of Global Change.” The work is based on Colin’s fieldwork among Mossi rural producers in Burkina Faso. Colin is now a NOAA Climate and Global Change post-doc Fellow at the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Patricia Tang, WARA board member, is the author of a new book, Masters of the Sabar: Wolof Griot Percussionists of Senegal, published by Temple University Press. The book is a biographical study of several generations of percussionists in a Wolof griot (gewel) family, and explores and documents their learning processes, repertoires, and performance contexts. Tang examines the history and changing repertoires of sabar drumming, including backs, musical phrases derived from spoken words, noting the recent shift towards backs which are rhythmically more complex and which highlight the musical skills of the percussionist. She also looks at the popular music genre, mbalax.
WARC Travel Grants

The West African Research Center in Dakar, Senegal is offering travel costs, and a stipend of up to $1000 to West African scholars and graduate students. This competition is open only to West African nationals. Travel grant funds may be used to 1) attend and present papers at academic conferences relevant to the applicant’s field of research; 2) visit libraries or archives that contain resources necessary to the applicant’s current academic work; 3) travel to a research site.

Applications will consist of the following:

- A brief (50-80 word) abstract of the activity to be funded
- A description (6 double-spaced pages maximum) of the research and how the proposed travel is relevant
- A curriculum vitae with research and teaching record when relevant
- An abstract of the paper to be read and a letter of acceptance to the conference (for those wishing to attend meetings)
- A description of the collections to be consulted and their significance to the applicant’s research (for those wishing to travel to libraries or archives)
- Proof of citizenship in the form of a photocopy of the applicant’s passport
- For graduate students, a letter of recommendation by the professor overseeing their research
- A WARA grant application cover sheet

Complete applications will consist of one original and three copies of all materials (4 sets total). Deadlines for the 2006-2007 academic year are March 15, 2007 for travel to take place between July 1, 2007 and Dec. 31, 2007 and September 15, 2007 for travel to take place between Jan. 1, 2008 and June 30, 2008.

Upon completion of their research, grantees are required to submit a detailed report of their work and findings. This report will subsequently be published in the biannual WARA newsletter.

Please direct inquiries and submit applications to:
WARA/CROA
B.P 5456 (Fann Residence) Tel: 221-865-22-77
Rue E x Leon Damas Fax: 221-824-20-58
Dakar, Senegal warc_croa@yahoo.com
http://www.warc-croa.org/

Acknowledging WARA’s Intern

WARA has been fortunate this year to have the assistance of Rak Lim Dong, a student at Boston College High School, who has been helping out at the WARA headquarters with various tasks. Rak plans to travel to Malawi this summer and looks forward to a career working in Africa.
South African - imperialists is unflinchingly documented in this film.

Teno’s film makes full use of the ELC’s archives and of detailed interviews with its research staff, cleverly intertwined with extensive observations by the head of the now autonomous Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Bishop Zephania Kameeta, who traveled to Germany for the centennial commemorations. While visiting local museums, Teno wryly notes the presence of a distinctive mask originating from his own home district (where it was shown only for special rituals). Among the trinkets that early missionaries used to trade with the ‘natives’, the un-self-conscious curator of a Cologne museum also points to a sturdy flint lighter, which she matter-of-factly explains was commonly exchanged for an ox.

The facts (and the interviewees) speak for themselves, repeatedly illustrating the proverb that “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions”. The real critical discourse in the film is supplied by four African academics: two from Cameroun, one from Togo - countries that once also were colonized by Germany - and one from Benin. In fact, Teno deliberately alternates sequences shot in Germany or Namibia with excerpts from these interviews and with scenes shot in Cameroun. While this may leave uninformed viewers somewhat disoriented, this skilful editing allows Teno to expand the scope of his documentary - and, incidentally, to adroitly link it back to his earlier Afrique je te plumurai.

In a memorable scene shot on Cameroun’s Atlantic coast, we meet Rev. Imata, a minister and teacher based in Douala’s New Bell district, who has single-handedly endeavored to excavate from the tangle of vegetation that has overgrown it the vestiges of the first Christian church in Cameroun. Established at Bimbia in 1844, that church was founded by a missionary named Joseph Merrick, a freed slave from Jamaica sponsored by the Baptist Missionary Society in London. After Merrick died in 1849, he was succeeded by Alfred Saker, a Briton who had been his assistant but who later came to be credited (for reasons that may be easily discerned) as the one who first planted Christianity in Cameroun. Saker soon abandoned the Bimbia settlement and, according to Imata, strove to erase the memory of that first establishment while attempting to persuade the British government to extend colonial rule to the region.2

Flashes of scholarly research are provided by three young German historians, but the broader ethical views are supplied by the African intellectuals mentioned above. Each of them, in his own way, makes a case for that “mental decolonization” in the absence of which Africa will never truly be free. In this respect, missionaries, colonial officials and settlers - albeit in different ways - equally contributed to the continent’s cultural disintegration to the extent that they shared a common faith in the superiority of Western values and institutions, which they could only reproduce in the colonial territories. Indeed, in the course of the Berlin Conference, it was unanimously agreed that missionaries were those best suited to carry on the “civilizing mission” that served a convenient smokescreen for other, more predatory, imperial appetites.1 Under the guise of a new terminology - ‘aid’, ‘modernization’, ‘globalization’ - and with ‘humanitarian’ agencies taking the place of missionaries, the same doublespeak persists to this day. In the words of Jean-Marie Teno: “Les siècles passent et l’Afrique reste toujours une terre de mission. Les ‘humanitaires’ d’aujourd’hui ont remplacé les missionnaires d’hier. La colonisation a revêtu le costume de la mondialisation et, en Afrique, rien de nouveau à l’horizon: toujours un peu plus de charité et de moins en moins de justice.”

Footnotes
1 Official apologies on behalf of the German people were expressed by Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, a member of the left wing of the SPD sometimes nicknamed “Red Heidi”.
2 Saker’s name remaines attached to a prestigious college in Douala, but Merrick’s is now also linked to the Baptist College at Ndu, in Cameroun’s Northwest Province. (DeLancey, Mark W. & Mark D. DeLancey: Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon (3rd ed.). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2000; p. 174)
WARA Officers and Board of Directors

Officers:
President: Maria Grosz-Ngamé, Indiana University
Vice President: James Essegbey, University of Florida
Secretary: Wendy Wilson-Fall, Kent State University
Treasurer: Sandra E. Greene, Cornell University
Past President: Catherine Boone, University of Texas at Austin
US Director: Jennifer Yanco, Boston University
WARC Director: Ousmane Sène, Université Cheikh Anta Diop

Board:
Erin Augis, Ramapo College of New Jersey
Emmanuel Yewah, Albion College
Emilie Ngo-Nguidjol, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Jemadari Kamara, University of Massachusetts, Boston
Allen Roberts, University of California, Los Angeles
Patricia Tang, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Carolyn Brown, Rutgers University
Fallou Ngom, Western Washington University
Dennis Galvan, University of Oregon
Ibrahima Thioub, AROA President (ex-officio)

Institutional Members of WARA

Amherst College
Boston University
Brandeis University
Colorado College
Council on International Educational Exchange
DePauw University
Emory University
Five Colleges African Studies Center
Hampshire College
Harvard University
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Howard University
Indiana University
Johns Hopkins University
Kalamazoo College
Kent State University
Mount Holyoke College
Michigan State University
Northwestern University
Ohio State University
Ohio University
Pomona College

Rutgers University
Smith’s College
Smithsonian Institution
University of Florida
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Kansas
University of Minnesota
University of Massachusetts - Amherst
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina-Greensboro
University of North Florida
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Texas
University of Wisconsin
University of California at Berkeley
University of California at Los Angeles
Wells College
Western Washington University
Willamette University
Yale University

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.

For more information about WARA or to become a member, please check our website at www.africa.ufl.edu/WARA/index.htm and click on “Membership”