The View from Nigeria: An Interview with Dr. Usman Bugaje
by Steve Howard

Dr. Usman Bugaje is Chair of the International Relations Committee of the Nigerian House of Representatives, represents a constituency in Katsina State, bordering Niger, and is possibly Nigeria’s leading Sudan expert. Dr. Usman, who speaks Sudanese Arabic fluently, did his graduate work at the University of Khartoum’s Institute for African and Asian Studies and completed a dissertation there on the history of Islamic revival in the ‘Western Bilad-a-Sudan’.

I asked Dr. Usman if he would agree to an interview on Nigeria’s view vis a vis the crisis in Darfur and he agreed to meet me at the Center for Democratic Research and Training, Bayero University. I was actually a little astonished that he would take the time to meet in Kano, given that he is currently the Action Congress candidate for Governor of Katsina State and was just coming from a rally for the Action Congress Presidential candidate and currently embattled Vice President of Nigeria, Atiku Abubakar. Nigeria will hold its third democratic presidential and gubernatorial contests in the post-Abacha era, mid-April.

But Dr. Usman’s statement, “Nigeria—any Nigerian government—cannot afford to ignore what is happening in Darfur,” made it clear why he took the time to meet with me. From positions in the government of President Obasanjo’s first term, and now in a critical role in the national legislature, Dr. Usman has been involved as a leader of Nigeria’s many attempts to intervene in Sudan’s crises, both the South and Darfur. He knows all of the political and governmental personalities in Sudan and speaks with authority on their positions and the constraints they face in dealing with each other.

His formula as to Nigeria’s keen interest in the Darfur crisis is a simple one, “Chad is unstable; we can hardly tell where Chad ends and Darfur begins these days. The proliferation of small arms in this crisis has spilled over into Chad and those arms make their way here to Nigeria.”

ECOWAS as an Honest Broker in the Darfur Crisis
by Masse Ndiaye

In a search of an end to the Darfur crisis, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN)—despite their continued pressure on the Sudanese government—have come full circle. As regards the proposed deployment of UN-mandated troops to supplement the already deployed AU troops, Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir continues to waffle between conditional acceptance and outright refusal. By playing the two organizations off one another, Al-Bashir has managed to both prolong the state-sponsored genocide perpetrated on the people of Darfur by the Janjawid militia and to gain bargaining leverage to strengthen his stance against ‘outside interference’ on the part of the UN.

Given the political deadlock over this deep and protracted crisis, policy makers should look to bringing in a new set of actors to the negotiation process—actors who have no direct stakes in the conflict and whose impartiality and neutrality are therefore beyond question. Such a role can be filled neither by the UN—widely seen as being a prop for the US to further its interests on the Sudanese government—have come full circle. As regards the proposed deployment of UN-mandated troops to supplement the already deployed AU troops, Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir continues to waffle between conditional acceptance and outright refusal. By playing the two organizations off one another, Al-Bashir has managed to both prolong the state-sponsored genocide perpetrated on the people of Darfur by the Janjawid militia and to gain bargaining leverage to strengthen his stance against ‘outside interference’ on the part of the UN.

Given the political deadlock over this deep and protracted crisis, policy makers should look to bringing in a new set of actors to the negotiation process—actors who have no direct stakes in the conflict and whose impartiality and neutrality are therefore beyond question. Such a role can be filled neither by the UN—widely seen as being a prop for the US to further its interests—nor by the AU which, because of its cumbersome size and weak capabilities, ends up being a loose and rather ineffective organization. Such a mediator could, however, be found in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It has ample experience in conflict resolution in a troubled West African region and is geographically and geopolitically positioned to remain neutral and impartial. If assisted with logistics and given international legitimacy, it would be in a position to successfully mediate the Darfur conflict and end the deadlock that leaves the people of Darfur helpless.

ECOWAS is particularly suitable to mediate the Darfur conflict for several reasons. First, this West African regional organization has no immediate interests in Sudan, be they economic or security-related. It can therefore avoid the strategic and tactical maneuvering that countries such as Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) have demonstrated when entering a negotiation process—as has recently been the case during the
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Acknowledgements

WARA would like to acknowledge Maître Aïssata 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 Sène and his staff. I was able to see firsthand 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.


La visite du Professur Maria Grosz-Ngaté, Présidente de la WARA, a permis de faire le point sur les relations entre nos deux organisations lors d’une séance de travail et à la réunion de bureau de l’AROA. Prof. Grosz-Ngaté a contribué au succès de la table ronde du 11 janvier 2007, Senghor et les Écrivains Sénégalais: Dialogue d’Outre-Tombe. Dans la même dynamique, le 12 mars 2007, le Professur. Souleymane Bachir Diagne de la Northwestern University a animé un atelier, Islam et Sphère Publique qui a mobilisé chercheurs, étudiants, journalistes et religieux dans un dialogue fécond.

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 and WARC Headquarters

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. We look forward to featuring reports on the research of these grantees in the fall issue of the newsletter and wish all of them success in their work.

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 Villalon, and Ousmane Sene, 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 U.S 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 signalled 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 Ngaté (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 roundtables.

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 Dionf (WARC Librarian), Gretchen Walsh (Boston University)
An international workshop on “The Contemporary Faces of Islam in West Africa” was held at the West African Research Center (WARC), Dakar, from October 29 to November 4, 2006. The workshop was hosted by the West African Research Association (WARA) with funding from the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) and the US Embassy in Dakar, Senegal and organized by Professor Ousmane Sene, Director of WARC, Professor Penda Mbow, Department of History, University Cheikh Anta Diop and Professor Leonardo Alfonso Villalon, Director of the Center for African Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville.

The opening session was chaired by Professor Abdou Salam Sall, Rector of University Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) and also attended by MM. Claud Young (Public Affairs Officer) and Chad Cummins, Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S embassy in Dakar. The November 1 round table in Dakar was attended by over a hundred people including major religious figures of Islam and the Catholic Church, scholars, academics and students. The U.S ambassador in Senegal hosted a dinner reception that evening.

On November 2 the participants traveled to the Holy City of Touba, seat of Mouridism where they had discussions on the workshop theme with members of the dynamic mourid youth movement, Izbut Tarqiyya. On Friday, November 3, they had meetings with the Rector of University Gaston Berger (UGB) of Saint Louis and the Governor of the Region of Saint Louis and visited old mosques. Saturday November 4 participants left to the Holy City of Tivaouane, the seat of the Senegalese Tijanyah. They were received by the second in command of the Tijan brotherhood, Serigne Abdoul Aziz Sy Junior.

Participants stressed that their teachings on Islam would be positively influenced and refined by the workshop and the idea of the creation in Dakar of a Center for Religious Studies (Islam, other major religions in the world and traditional African religions) was discussed. The workshop ended Saturday Nov 4 with a substantial financial donation to the Center by the participants. A full report is available on the WARC website www.warc-croa.org.
Welcome to WARC Fellows 2007

This is the first year of a new initiative, the WARC Fellows Program, which provides advanced doctoral students with their own office and computers at WARC and a modest research stipend. Selected through a competition open to Ph.D. candidates at Universite Cheikh Anta Diop, the Fellows will be in residence at WARC during the academic year.

The goal of this program is to recognize and provide support to young West African scholars who are in the final stages of completing their dissertations. Their presence at the center and participation in its many activities is having a very positive impact on the vitality of WARC. Thanks to the generous donations by WARA members, we were able to outfit an office specifically for the fellows so as to welcome them in style.

This year’s WARC Fellows are Mme. Madina Diallo (Chemistry), Mr. El Amine Diop (Geography), and Mlle. Sadio Bâ Gning (Sociology). Congratulations and Welcome!

Mme. Madina Diallo (Chemistry)
Mme. Diallo obtained her Licence in Chemistry from the Faculty of Science and Technology of the University of Nouakchott, Mauritania, in 2003, and her Maitrise from the same faculty the following year. The subject of her maitrise thesis was “The manufacture and control of carbonated beverages.” In 2005, Diallo obtained her Diplome D’études Approfondies (D.E.A) in molecular chemistry at the UCAD. She is currently working on her doctorate thesis entitled “Lachimia-chemistry of organic coordination.” Diallo has had a two-month training period at the Société de Boissons en Mauritanie (SOBOMA).

Mr. El Amine Diop (Geography)
Mr. Diop obtained his Licence in Geography at the University Cheik Anta Diop (UCAD) in 2001 and his Maitrise a year later. His thesis was titled “The role of the Langue du Barbarie in the promotion of tourism in Saint Louis.” He is currently working on his doctoral dissertation, “The impact of tourism in the deltas of the Senegal river and Saloum.” Mr. Diop’s presentation, “The impact of tourism on the fragile environment of the Langue du Barbarie,” won the prize for best poster presentation at the Journées Jeunes Chercheurs at UCAD. He also presented a paper, “The human and organizational potential of ecotourism in the delta of the Senegal river,” at the Saint Louis Workshop on Ecotourism in the Delta of the Senegal River organized by the Wetlands Institute in April 2006.

Mlle. Sadio Bâ Gning (Sociology)
Mlle. Gning obtained her License in sociology at the University Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) in 2003. A year later she obtained her Maitrise with a thesis entitled “The problem of taxing the informal sector in Dakar.” In 2005, she obtained her Diplôme d’Etudes Approfondies (DEA) at the same department. The title of her DEA thesis is “Changes in the function of the Mouride’s pact of allegiance.” She is currently working on a dissertation entitled “The fiscal resistance of the Mouride entrepreneur in the private sector: the stakes and implications in the Senegal of today.” Gning’s other research include a study on the role of NTIC in the socio-professional integration of the handicapped in Dakar, and another on the influence of the media among the students of UCAD.
This is the second year of WARC’s enormously successful Vendredis Cinematographiques, organized in collaboration with UCAD Fulbright professors Kenneth Harrow (MSU) and Francoise Pfaff (Howard U). Because not all of us can be in Dakar to enjoy the screenings and discussions, we are pleased to be able to feature the following thoughtful reviews of some recent films from West Africa. All were prepared by WARA members, to whom we extend our thanks. If you wish to respond to any of the reviews, send an email to wara@bu.edu with “letters” in the subject line.


Reviewed by Scott M. Youngstedt, Ph.D. Professor of Anthropology
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*Arlit, Deuxieme Paris* explores a familiar scenario: The vulnerability of a poor nation dependent on a single export commodity in the face of predatory global capitalism. However, Beninois filmmaker Idrissou Mora Kpai exposes the audience to faces and voices very few of us have seen or heard, in a place heretofore not captured on film—a uranium-mining town in the Sahara desert of Niger. This alone would make the film worth watching, but it is the way in which Kpai structures it that makes *Arlit* a masterful work of art that rises above other documentaries focused on the tragedies wrought by exploitative multinational corporations.

Most of *Arlit* consists of narratives told by about a dozen Nigeriens (miners, smugglers, the leader of an NGO, and a mining company doctor), two Togolese barmaids, and a Cameroonian migrant. Regularly interspersed between the narratives are panoramic images of the vastness and emptiness of the surrounding Sahara; everyday life scenes of a crumbling town, including children playing football amidst toxic, derelic mining equipment; and chilling images of winds blowing uranium dust from enormous open-pit mines and mountains of tailings toward Arlit. *Arlit* does not rely on a glamorous celebrity narrator to provoke outrage or pity. Moreover, the film does not use narration at all, and in only a couple of fleeting moments do we hear questions posed by an off-screen interviewer. Kpai allows the people of Arlit to tell their personal stories of tragedy and hope. They do so with remarkable eloquence and insight, but it is the striking ways in which they recount their experiences that makes *Arlit* so poignant, haunting, and stunning. No one shouts furiously or cries. Each person speaks deliberately and matter-of-factly, even a miner who declares, “If someone dies, he dies. End of story…Same old story: Radiation.” Despite their horrible circumstances, the people of Arlit remain amazingly patient, dignified, personable, and generous.

*Arlit* became a boomtown in the 1970s with the opening of uranium mines. European, Japanese, and American technocrats and tourists streamed in on frequent international flights, 25,000 well paid miners from across Africa made Arlit home, and a vibrant nightlife thrived in what became known as “le deuxieme Paris.” By the 1980s, uranium prices on the world market collapsed and most of the multinational mining corporations pulled out overnight, recklessly leaving behind their machinery and uncovered mines. Today few jobs remain in Arlit and the heydays of the 1970s are remembered by only a handful of old miners who have managed to survive radiation poisoning, one of which aptly concludes that now Arlit is “the second dump.”

*Arlit* is thus a case study of global inequality and environmental racism, highlighting how the human rights of Africans—especially access to health care—are maliciously sacrificed for corporate profits and nuclear power. Industrial capitalists were provided with safety equipment and first-rate hospitals; whereas miners were initially completely uninformed and largely denied health care. This catastrophe extends beyond neglect. Mining companies offered contaminated scrap metal to miners as bonuses and encouraged local blacksmiths to recycle it into cooking utensils and water pipes. And the mining companies never acknowledge any connection between radiation and the hundreds of workers who succumb to cancers and pulmonary diseases. Rather, company doctors blame these deaths on smoking and AIDS.

Today the people of Arlit are not deceived. Through their narratives, they deconstruct the lies, and recognize the devaluing of their lives in a two-tiered health system. Their stories are told stoically, completely lacking in fury, with only occasional hints of sadness, and yet brilliantly this speaks louder to the audience than any narrator—compassionate or strident—ever could. One man explains that while the Nigerien state received one-third of the revenues from the mining operation, local Touareg got nothing. Retired miners tell stories of their dead comrades, while they seem resigned to their cruel fate, waiting to die from various horrible diseases. Indeed, most people in Arlit are waiting: waiting to die, waiting for divine intervention, waiting for new doors to open, or just stuck waiting without the money to get out of Arlit.

Yet we see glimmers of hope for Arlit is not just a place of waiting it is also a conduit of dreams and migration. Intrepid, local Touareg truck drivers describe how they earn a living clandestinely transporting desperate migrants in perilous convoys across the Sahara and into Libya and Algeria en route to Europe.
Film Reviews

One Touareg smuggler explains that generations of West Africans have had no work, but now have dreams of earning fortunes in Europe. While he knows this might be unrealistic he argues that taking the risk is better than sitting around waiting to die, “might as well die on your feet.” And a Cameroonian migrant fantasizes about opening a bottle of champagne upon his arrival in France, imagining metaphorically that the sky is blue there as opposed to the black sky of Africa, and proclaims, “even if I die there, it would be ok.”

Liberia: An Uncivil War

Reviewed by Patrick L. N. Seyon, Ph.D.
Research Fellow, African Studies Center, Boston University
Dean of Liberal Arts, Roxbury Community College
pseyon@rcc.mass.edu

For its first one and a half centuries as a state, Liberia was associated with the ideals of freedom, liberty, and democracy in Africa. Africa’s first republic, its very name – Liberia – is derived from the Latin word liber, which means freedom. The national motto reads: “The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here.” Yet, its critics say Liberia’s founders and their descendants have not only not lived by these lofty principles, but also that they brutally colonized and oppressed the indigenous states and peoples of the area that is now Liberia. For almost a century, Liberia maintained the dubious distinction of being Africa’s oldest one-party state, starting from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the last quarter of the twentieth century, when it was overthrown by a military coup in 1980. It may be argued that the 1980 coup was intended to put Liberia on track to live by its founding ideals, and a new constitution was written to navigate by. But something went terribly wrong, and Liberia descended into chaos and “organized anarchy” from 1985 to 2003.

Liberia: An Uncivil War reports, in great detail, the mindless, unimaginable savagery that took place, with child soldiers practicing cannibalism, as Liberia took a free fall into uncontrollable violence and chaos. A quarter million people lost their lives, and half of Liberia’s population of three million was internally displaced. Liberians pleaded with the international community, particularly the United States of America, their country’s “traditional friend,” to help stop the bloodshed and save the country, but such help was too little and too late to make a difference.

In desperation, Liberians felt betrayed by the United States, which, it was felt, had failed to reciprocate for past favors. When the United States’ young automobile industry was threatened by European rubber monopoly, Liberia gave Firestone a ninety-nine-year lease on one million acres of prime land for its rubber plantations—all for pennies. That lease is still in effect today. Liberia declared war on Germany, its number one trading partner, in World War Two, because the United States asked it to do so, and provided America the biggest base in Africa, from which it could supply ally troops in North Africa, who could not be supplied from Europe. U. S. President Roosevelt visited Liberia to seal the deal. And during the Cold War, Liberia allowed the U.S. to operate its VOA station for Africa and the Near East, and the Omega tracking station to monitor Soviet Union marine traffic around Africa from Liberia. There was obvious disappointment then, when three U.S. warships anchored off shore and watched Liberians being killed on the streets in Monrovia, and the handful who entered the city protected beer being taken to the U. S. Embassy, while Liberians were being shot. The film vividly reports the scenes.

In the end, Liberians have themselves to blame for the wanton destruction of their country. The warlords’ “organized anarchy” and violence, which descended on Liberia and its people like tons of bricks, had nothing to do with freedom, liberty, and democracy, or creating a better society for all Liberians to live in peacefully. Instead, as Bishop Michael Francis said in the film, “the war was all about greed and power.” And while all wars, in general, are never civil, the Liberian war was particularly vicious and brutal in its total disregard for human life.

Bamako

Reviewed by Odile Cazenave, Ph.D.
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In an initial long take reminiscent of Djibril Diop Mambety’s La Petite Vendeuse de Soleil, between night and dawn, with a silhouette walking slowly through empty streets—here, with metallic scaffolding in the background—Sissako takes us into a multifamily courtyard in a popular neighborhood of Bamako, Mali. As people wake up and start to go about their daily tasks,
Film Reviews

In ‘Bamako’, the courtyard transforms itself into a courtroom for the trial of globalization.

The presence of Aminata Traoré, former Minister of Culture and Tourism in Mali (1997-2000), playing the role of an impassioned writer called to the bar, signals a fusion of genres. This isn’t a documentary discussing the responsibility of the IMF, the World Bank, and multinational companies in African societies’ pauperization. Yet, as a former coordinator of the United Nations development Program, with her book, Le Viol de l’imaginaire (2002) which attacks the role of the West in Africa’s increasing poverty, and as current coordinator of “Forum for the Other Mali,” she remains a leading voice on the continent, speaking for another form of globalization, one based on cultural and political creativity. The many witnesses, through their eloquence, like Traoré’s, their moving testimonies, and even their silence, gradually engage us with the topic.

The film beautifully escapes the risk of being overly didactic. Even though the focus is a courtyard transformed into a courtroom, the camera soon takes on an ambulatory quality, wandering about, capturing the inhabitants of the courtyard and surroundings—young and old—in their daily activities. Reminiscent of the poetic quality of his earlier film, La Vie sur Terre, Sissako gives us snapshot-like slices of life: a man enjoying his frugal breakfast in the morning, a toddler walking in his diapers and squeaking shoes, a bed-ridden sick person with little nursing other than water and an IV, a child’s Rambo bicycle, hard-working women tie-dying Malian cotton fabrics, the strikingly beautiful batiks drying in the wind, a young girl looking after a baby child, the enchanting singing of Mélé at night, her husband Chaka studying perate hope that an Israeli embassy will appear in the city and hire him as a guardian. These fleeting moments when the camera leaves the courtroom—and we still hear both legal parties debating in the background—are most telling, as they subtly illustrate how the local and the global intersect.

The griot-like intervention of an old peasant is most powerful in that respect: “When I sow, why don’t I reap? When I reap, why don’t I eat?” asks the song of Zégué Bamba. The insertion of powerful in that respect: “When I sow, why don’t I reap? When I reap, why don’t I eat?” asks the song of Zégué Bamba. The insertion of the poetic quality of his earlier film, La Vie sur Terre, Sissako gives us snapshot-like slices of life: a man enjoying his frugal breakfast in the morning, a toddler walking in his diapers and squeaking shoes, a bed-ridden sick person with little nursing other than water and an IV, a child’s Rambo bicycle, hard-working women tie-dying Malian cotton fabrics, the strikingly beautiful batiks drying in the wind, a young girl looking after a baby child, the enchanting singing of Mélé at night, her husband Chaka studying perate hope that an Israeli embassy will appear in the city and hire him as a guardian. These fleeting moments when the camera leaves the courtroom—and we still hear both legal parties debating in the background—are most telling, as they subtly illustrate how the local and the global intersect.

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The court’s ruling however, will not take place; it is interrupted by Chaka’s suicide. With the same audience, and Maître Fall holding Mélé, the camera has displaced its focus, the photographer/cameraman who shoots weddings is now filming Chaka’s funeral, with the courtyard silently emptying, vanishing in a last iris-out shot. If the emblems of western power remain unaffected and untouched, BAKAJO’s audience does not: the film remains with us, the small details, pieced together, helping us see the larger picture.


Reviewed by Portia Cobb, Ph.D.
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The fairy tale or fable has proven to be a recurring theme in the African village-centered screenplay. Commonly infused with magical realism, these plays often present issues that question or grapple with old world versus new world values by locating the discus-
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ッション within the framework of its source…the village. Noticeably, this middle ground between tradition and modernity can take on different dimensions when depicted by women Cineastes.

I am not suggesting in the least that men aren’t capable of accomplishing similar stories or perspectives. In fact, critics have remarked that Ousmane Sembène’s sympathetic portrayal of women makes him a feminist. Two recent films by Sembène, certainly demonstrate this: Moolaade and Faat Kine. The former, returns us to the source, the village, where women are struggling to do away with female circumcision.

However, by observation, when women tell women’s stories, they depict some of the nuances and complexities in relationships and interactions between women that aren’t always so well conveyed in stories told by men.

Such is the case of the drama Kounandi, released in 2004 by emerging director/filmmaker, Appoline Traore, and produced by veteran filmmaker, Iddrissa Ouedrago. Kounandi, which means, “Gift from God,” has as its lead protagonist, a dwarf (played by an untrained actress, Deborah Coty). Within West African folklore dwarfs are commonly associated with misfortune. Ms. Traore, who penned the screenplay after observing the mistreatment and banishment of a dwarf from a Burkina Faso village, shares the distinction of being one of a handful of recognized female directors from Burkina Faso (the host country of the Pan African film and Television Conference (FESPACO).

This drama is about a young woman faces discrimination from her community for being a dwarf. Situated in a staged village setting, it is a tale that takes on a laundry list of issues: domestic violence, jealousy, unrequited love, difference, discrimination and ultimately, compassion and forgiveness. In summary, the lead character, Kounandi, is orphaned and later banished from her compound when her adoptive mother is killed. She falls in love with Karim, a compassionate local farmer who shows her great empathy when he offers to build her a hut on his property. She eventually discovers that he is married and so begins the saga of Kounandi. When Karim’s wife Awa, who has been ill, returns to the village from an extended stay with a healer, more complexities and interactions between women that aren’t always so well conveyed in stories told by men.

While there is the expected simpatico in its framing of a story by a woman about women, Ms. Traore does not spare us the indiscretions of women’s behavior when she reveals their least flattering attributes (jealousy and envy).

Through the humanistic portrayal and positioning of the dwarf, as the lead character, we begin to identify with her plight, causing us to reassess our own projections and discriminations about difference. In time we realize that though Kounandi is often the whipping post, she too, has to work through her own human set of issues when her jealousy and envy flare up. We also witness that the golden-hearted Kounandi is not any less immune to arrogance than others are. In fact these attributes become apparent when she first learns about Karim’s marriage to Awa.

While women’s treatments of stories are often and predictably redemptive—as this one is—it may fall prey to some of the obvious patriarchal conventions placed to return the status quo. When our dwarf protagonist is struck by lightning and killed, her sacrifice is the moral-of-the-story device needed to justify the narrative’s greater cause of restoring harmony to the (conventional) couple and to the village at large.

Kounandi’s birth and subsequent death bring about the needed transformation of the people in the village and in the lives of those she becomes closest to. In spite of these trappings, at the core of this village fable, the moral of the story is essentially about the heart, and about the potential of all human beings to develop greater humanity and tolerance.

Le Malentendu colonial / Colonial Misunderstanding


Reviewed by Edouard Bustin, Ph.D. Professor of Political Science Boston University ebustin@bu.edu

Le Malentendu colonial focuses on German colonialism in Teno’s native Cameroun and in Namibia, but there is no doubt that other brands of white rule - French, British or South African - are equally targeted, as is the self-satisfied view of colonialism (mixed with dismissive Afro-pessimism) that still pervades Western societies. The film was made in time to coincide with Germany’s (low-keyed) centennial commemoration of - and repentance for - the 1904-1907 genocidal campaign against Namibia’s Herero nation,1 and exercise in which the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) took a leading part. It had in fact been Lutheran religious fervor (kindled in part by a reaction to the French revolution) that had originally led to the emergence of the Rhineland missions, whose activities in Africa predated - and, in some ways, paved the way for - colonial rule, as was often the case with other imperial powers. The “civilizing mission” which served (however ambiguously) as a common denominator between Lutheran proselytizers and German - or, later,
The Treatment of HIV in Hausa Novels and Film

During the period from May 20 to August 24, 2006, I carried out pre-dissertation research on representations of HIV in Hausa popular literature and film. Based in Kano, Nigeria, under the direction of Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu, I collected novels and films dealing with HIV; identified MA theses and PhD dissertations at Bayero University relevant to my research; carried out interviews with authors, filmmakers, actors, and critics; attended several conferences and participated in the production of several Hausa video-films.

While as I suspected, HIV is rapidly becoming adopted as a symbol in the popular imagination and is often associated with exposing hidden sins, the symbolic uses of the disease in the novels and films that I collected are far more complex and varied than my initial viewing of several NGO sponsored films last year had suggested.

While I was in Kano, my research interests evolved to questions of how the sphere of morality theorized by religious leaders is threatened by the Hausa film industry.

From lively (and gendered) debates I heard this summer, I suspect that the film industry has inherited many of the associations formerly attributed to activities, such as the bori cult and the karuwa lifestyle (prostitution), performed “outside” the sphere of Hausa morality. These activities, combined with forces of globalization, have become more threatening when they infiltrate domestic space through video technology, creating tensions between artists, who claim their works are moral, and critics, who claim the films are corrupting society.

The literary use of HIV as a symbol, which both exposes hidden corruption and brings that corruption into the home, is thus linked to a larger debate about media and modernity.

While in Kano, I attended two professional seminars organized by the film industry and the Nigerian export council, MA classes on Hausa literature and culture at Bayero University, and several theatre productions.

I also presented a paper “Operating from the inside: Deconstructing the Woman’s private sphere in Zainab Idris’s and Abbas Sadiq’s film Albashi” at the First International Conference on Communication, Media, & Popular Culture in Northern Nigeria sponsored by the Mass Communications Department at BU.

Although living in Kano, I also traveled briefly to Damagaran, Niger; Gusau; Sokoto; Makurdi; and Jos, where I gave a guest lecture in the English Department at the University of Jos. In addition to conducting interviews for my own research, I was interviewed in two Hausa language newspapers: Jamhuriya and Manuniya; and the Hausa film magazine, Fim. I was also interviewed in Hausa on Radio Freedom in Kano and Radio Shukurah in Damagaran, Niger.

I am grateful for the hospitality and helpfulness of my contacts at the university, the Association of Nigerian Authors, and the film industry. The most memorable part of the summer was being invited to participate in several films and acting a scammed American in Sheriff Ahlan’s film 419-2!

After returning to the U.S., I presented a version of the Kano conference paper at the Peter Straub Symposium for Popular Culture in October. I also presented a paper on my research findings at the African Studies Association Conference in November. After finishing PhD coursework, preliminary exams, and my dissertation proposal, I hope to return to Kano in 2008-2009.

I am grateful for WARA’s support, which enabled me to build relationships at the university and in the artist communities. My on-going communication with these contacts is mutually beneficial, as they keep me updated on current events in Kano and as I send them information about grants available for African academics and artists.

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“Traders, Soldiers, Carriers, and Educators”
The Hausa Diaspora in the Gold Coast and Asante c. 1820-1950

The Hausa, one of the groups that epitomize pre-colonial African trade, largely originated in Northern Nigeria and gradually spread out all across West Africa. As they traded, they also set up Hausa trade diasporas wherever they went. So effective were the Hausa in this enterprise that they defied a norm of government monopoly over trade in many pre-colonial West African states.

My research project focuses on the Hausa diaspora in Ghana and with the West African Research Association Fellowship, I traveled to Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, Sunyani, Cape Coast, and Obuasi. I found a treasure trove of materials at the Manhyia Palace archives, the repository for all documents related to the Asantehene’s palace.

Given the fact that the kola trade in Ghana was in essence a frontier-experience between the Asante and Hausa merchants, and given the Hausa/Muslim presence in Asante up to 1874, and the Hausa drive all the way to the coast after the decline of Asante empire, the records of the archives provide both eyewitness accounts and recorded accounts of the Asante-Hausa Asante.

While archival work was the main focus of the research trip, I also spoke with archivists, Africanists, and some kola producers and sellers that I had met in 1995.

The Hausa trading diaspora is a unique case study of indigenous credit creation. The Hausa relied extensively on kith and kin for private credit, commercial links, and information about market conditions; they provided same to other members who wanted to participate in long-distance trade.

But the Hausa role in the establishment and consolidation of British colonial authority in Asante and the Gold Coast in the 19th and 20th centuries is even more fascinating. In desperate need of a stable force to combat internal disturbances in the Gold Coast and to check both Asante hegemony and the gradually encroaching French and German colonial forces, the British adopted a formula that had worked well in Nigeria—recruiting Hausas to constitute what became known as the Gold Coast Constabulary or Hausa Constabulary, a precursor to the West African Frontier Force that fought in World War I and World War II. An important dimension of the role of Hausa Constabulary that is worthy of note is that British and Irish military. In effect, the force was to act as colonial police but also a frontier force that could be used against the French to the west of the Gold Coast (in Assinie) or the Germans to the east (in Togoland). The Hausa preponderance in the West African Frontier Force would carry over into the independence period.

The Hausa, who are largely Muslim, were major players in the provision of education, particularly Islamic education, in the Gold Coast. With the advantage of Arabic literacy, Hausa Muslims provided a corps of civil servants who were prominent in the Asante empire. They drew up treaties, and kept records for the Asantehene.

Trade, security and religion constituted the triad which under girded Hausa-Muslim activities in the Volta Basin and the Gold Coast and for that matter the Hausa role in the Gold Coast and Asante during the period under consideration. But the term Hausa did not always refer to a people. It was also the language of trade and not everyone who was classified as Hausa by the British was in fact Hausa.

In essence, the role of the Hausa as “traders, soldiers, carriers, slaves and educators,” encapsulates their contribution to the political economy of Asante and the Gold Coast.

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From Our Fellows

Rebellious Histories: The Amistad Slave Revolt, Transnationalism, and Modernity in the U.S. and Sierra Leone

My WAR A Postdoctoral Fellowship supported research toward the completion of my book on Sierra Leonean and U.S. discourses on race, globalization, and modernity by funding a research trip to Freetown, Sierra Leone from May 15-July 27, 2006. My book, Rebellious Histories: The Amistad Slave Revolt, Transnationalism, and Modernity in the U.S. and Sierra Leone, examines the uses to which the 1839 Amistad shipboard slave rebellion has been put by Sierra Leonean and American writers and visual artists during the past thirty-five years in their efforts to scrutinize the specific effects of past and present global economies on people of African descent. By tracing the emergence of a set of texts that look to the nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic slave trade to make sense of the racialized effects of global capitalism, Rebellious Histories investigates broadly the problem of historicizing the trans-Atlantic slave trade as an antecedent to contemporary global capital and of the challenges such a historicization poses for developing a postcolonial critique of globalization.

My objective was to research “The Diamond Trilogy,” an unpublished series of Krio-language plays by Sierra Leonean national Jonathon Peters. The trilogy includes “The Gentleman,” which stages Amistad revolt leader Sengbe Pieh’s return to West Africa and his life up to the moment of the shipboard rebellion; “Acres and Acres of Diamonds,” a play that explores the colonial-era rise of the diamond economy out of the slave trade; and “Pis, Pis, Pis [trans. Peace, Peace, Peace],” which interrogates the civil war of the 1990s. Created while Peters reflected on the formal end of the war, the trilogy focuses on how trans-Atlantic slavery, giving way to the diamond trade, reshaped village life and fashioned cultural values underlying the country’s markedly unequal socio-economic hierarchies and violent wartime sociability. Giving his work its unique critical significance is Peters’ vision for staging the play. As a twenty-year resident of the U.S., Peters stages his plays in Sierra Leone’s capital Freetown, primarily for other expatriates returning “home” for brief holiday visits from the U.S. and England. Consequently, when performed, the theater becomes a laboratory, a ritual space even, for the working out of ideas about displacement, identity, and belonging. Filtered through the Amistad narrative, the local space of the post-war nation is reshaped and the meanings of citizenship and identity redefined by the diaspora. I had hoped to conduct an “ethnography” of the production and staging of one of the plays.

Unfortunately, a week after my arrival in Freetown, Peters contacted me with news that he had encountered paperwork complications with his green card and would have to delay his trip. After two subsequent delays, he cancelled his trip altogether.

All was not lost, however. With my time freed up, I turned my attention to Raymond DeSouza-George’s play on the Amistad rebellion, The Broken Handcuff (1993), and to his recent play From Under the Carpet (2005), which explores the parallel dynamics of trans-Atlantic slavery and the contemporary relations between West Africa and the U.S. Through interviews with DeSouza-George and others and through archival research in Freetown, I have been able to formulate an analysis of the Amistad play that traces its charting of a more expansive cartography of the Atlantic world with its ever-morphing circuits of exchange—of which colonialism represents but one spatio-temporal element—to bring a new focus to the residual traces of the trans-Atlantic slave trade’s re-making of village social structures, practices of violence, and definitions of personhood in civil-war era Sierra Leone. I was also able to conduct archival research on Charlie Haffner’s play Amistad Kata-Kata, on which I have previously published.

Despite the disappointment of not being able to carry out my research on Peters’ play, the research trip proved remarkably productive, for me and for WAR A. As part of WAR A’s goal of disseminating information on West African research issues, I was able to make revisions to an article on DeSouza-George’s play The Broken Handcuff and spoke about it at the November 2006 ASA meeting. I also have new material of his, which I intend to discuss at the 2007 ALA meeting. Once I complete the transcription of my interviews, I will submit a portfolio of documentation to the WARC library for the benefit of future researchers. Moreover, in light of WAR A’s goal to foster interest among U.S. university students in West Africa, I was able to bring Freetown playwright Charlie Haffner to my campus in November for class visits in the departments of English, Theater, and Anthropology and for a public address on his pioneering role in preserving the history of the Amistad slave rebellion in Sierra Leone.

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From Our Fellows

11th International Congress of Parasitology (ICOPXI)

I wish to express great appreciation and gratitude for the travel grant awarded me. This grant made it possible for me to attend the XI International Congress of Parasitology (ICOPXI) in Glasgow-Scotland from the 06th to the 11th of August 2006.

The main focus of my research is on Helminths, which is extended to co-infections with other parasites such as malaria. My presentation at the Conference was titled, “Malaria and Intestinal Helminthiasis in school children: a case study within Kumba Urban Area – South West Province, Cameroon.” The vulnerability of school children to certain infections within this region, due to extremely unhygienic conditions, spurred our interest in carrying out a cross sectional study/research. This study commenced in 2003, in four randomly selected schools with the aim of assessing the level of endemicity of malaria and helminth infections in school children.

Due informed consent from legal parents and guardians of pupils were approved to enable our research work. Blood samples were randomly collected from pupils between the ages of four and fifteen years old. A total number of two hundred and forty-three pupils had malaria parasites in their blood. The geometric mean parasite load was found to be one thousand two hundred and eighty two per micro litre of blood. Of this total, seventeen pupils were anaemic (PCV<30%). The prevalence of helminth infection was thirty eight percent, with a geometric mean parasite load of six hundred and eighty-seven eggs per gram of faeces. Co-infections were recorded in 38.3% of the pupils. In conclusion, both malaria and helminth parasites do co-exist without clinical symptoms of infection in school children of the Kumba Urban Area.

Judith—can you say something about what this means? Is it possible that helminth predisposes children to get malaria? Would combating helminth have a positive effect on malaria rates in children? I invite you to say something about the significance of your research for malaria control.

West African Research Association (WARA) is an institution that aims to foster the advancement of African researchers to enable them to create ties with their colleagues from the developed countries. The travel grant did make it possible for me to personally meet with other researchers, hold discussions, and exchange ideas in relation to our various research interests. It was a great positive step on the part of WARA to promote research in Africa.

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The Kinetics of Microbial Ferrous-Iron Oxidation Over the Range Of Conditions in Heap Bioleach Environments

My attendance at the 6th European Symposium on Biochemical Engineering Science (ESBES 2006) gave me the opportunity because of low iron content of most heaps. Ferric iron is the critical reagent for most metal oxidation. The Effect of total iron concentration of heap bioleach liquor on bio-oxidation of ferrous-iron oxidation was investigated. Our findings revealed that the microbial activity is maximum at low total iron concentration. Therefore bioleaching of sulphide minerals can be sustained at lower total iron concentration that is relevant to heap bioleach operation without any external supply of iron.

My presentation attracted some interesting questions simply because, though it is biochemical Engineering related, it was the only presentation on biomining, which is critical for the industrial bioleaching of sulphide minerals and other types of ore. The conference also afforded me the opportunity to acquaint myself with research in other fields of bio-science and biochemical engineering. Of particular interest was the work of Professor Kondo from Kobe University Japan; his findings showed that it is possible to use site specific vector to deliver drugs to target site in the human body without other interferences. He demonstrated this using a
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mouse with two different tumours on different parts of its body, the drug was delivered successfully to the targeted tumours. There were a number of other presentations that I found interesting and informative including one on the possibility of producing a very high density cultivation of bakers yeast in a pressurised vessel presented by Knoll and other workers from RWTH Aachen, Germany; and another on the optimization of PHA productivity using a mixed culture of micro-organisms presented by Dr. Serafim from Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal.

Before flying back to Cape Town, South Africa, where I am studying, I visited some historic places in Salzburg, and enjoyed an open air game of chess

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Human and Elephants: The Situation at the Digya National Park, Ghana

Dates and Location(s) of the Project
March 2005 – October, 2006, Digya National Park, Ghana

Objectives of the Research
The research sought to study the population ecology of the Digya elephants and examine the nature and extend of Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) in the area. It had the following objectives

- To determine the temporal and spatial distribution of elephants in the Digya national park (DNP)
- To estimate the population size of Digya elephants population
- To determine the pattern of HEC in time and space

The forested nature of the area coupled with presence of two perennial rivers i.e. the Buma and Sumi rivers contribute to keeping the elephants in the this area. It was realized that elephant do not move to the eastern portion of the park, (Areas around Digya arm) because of the possible confrontation with settlers in the area.

The elephants were also found not to be resident all year around in the park. The study realized that some elephants move out of the park between April and June via a forested area near Sabum (Between Agoam and Charles Akura) and head towards the neighbouring Kogyae Strict Nature Reserve.

Human elephant conflict was prevalent in communities in the southwestern, western and occasionally northwestern part of the park. The major source of conflict was elephant crop raiding. Raiding occurs between November and last till April mostly at night. Virtually all crops (maize, groundnut, beans) on a farm were susceptible to raiding but Yams (irrespective of the variety) were the most damaged. Farms located within 2Km radius of the park were the most susceptible to elephant crop raiding. Bull and family elephant groups were identified as culprits. Whiles wildlife staff did little in terms of preventing elephant crop raids, some farmers employed noise making techniques and people to keep awake on their farms whiles others leave the farm to the mercy of the elephants. The Noise making is effective only in some situation. In spite of all the troubles associated with living with elephants local people advocated for their conservation.

Some Major Activities during the Research Period
During the research period I was privileged to participate in two international conferences. I presented a talk on ‘Corridors – a hope for elephants of western Ghana and eastern Cote d’Ivoire’ at the 2006 Annual meeting of the Student Conference on Conservation Science in Cambridge, UK. I also presented a talk (Corridors, Elephant Movement and Social Issues in Western Ghana) at the 2006 annual conference of the Society for Conservation Biology in San Jose, California. I have also been on a study visit to the University College London with whom I am currently collaborating to research on taxonomy of the African elephant using an external analysis of morphological features.

Account of how the WARC Travel Grant served to advance the mission of WARA.

The grant proved very essential to the study in that it facilitated the acquisition of some field equipment and most importantly in the provision of fuel for transportation during the study. The park is large, road network poor and sometimes not motorable. The grant helped in the hiring and maintenance of two motorbikes and vehicles used in the project. The grant also helped in supporting two undergraduate students whose capacities were built during data collection.

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Trekking in the Digya National Park, Ghana

Travel grantee Bright Kumordzi (left) talks with farmers

Page 16 West African Research Association Newsletter
From Our Fellows

American Historical Association, Annual Meeting, Atlanta, January 4-7, 2007

This group of five panels was part of the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association and opened a series of events on three continents commemorating the bicentennial of the abolition of the obnoxious human traffic. As a matter of fact, the British Abolition of 1807 sparked off a long and sustained crusade for the suppression of the transatlantic slave trade. A bicentennial reflection on this historic move and its multifarious implications was therefore called for and welcome.

I could not have honored the invitation, by the American Historical Association, to be a member of one of these panels without the generous travel grant I received from W ARA, a grant for which I am deeply grateful.

Before reporting on the sequence and contents of the panels devoted to discussing the suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade, a few words about the scope and atmosphere of the American Historical Association Annual Meeting itself may be relevant. The over two hundred panels in the program took place simultaneously in 4 impressive hotels. Yet, the planning of the various sessions was done in such a way that no one could get confused. Unfortunately, one had to make a difficult choice out of many simultaneous attractive sessions! The exhibit hall, a side attraction of the meeting, was a vivid picture of what publishing houses can offer in the field of American and world history and the ideal venue for meeting and discussing with friends and colleagues in one’s special research field.

These are the 5 panels on the suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade:

- New Directions in the Study of Abolition: a Multi-national Approach
- Abolition and Atlantic Slave Ports: Africa, Europe, and the New World
- ‘Liberated’ Africans: New Forms of Unfree labor and the Contradictions of ‘Return’
- Abolition and African American History: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Research
- The PBS Series African American Lives: Science and the Reclamation of History

The panel, ‘Abolition and Atlantic Slave Ports: Africa, Europe, and the New World’, chaired by Professor Paul Lovejoy, of York University, Toronto, was the one in which I talked on ‘the impact of the British abolition on the slave trade ‘port’ of Ouidah. Other ports discussed were Luanda (by Roquinaldo Ferreira, University of Virginia); Liverpool (by David Richardson, University of Hull, UK); Lagos (by Kristen Mann, Emory University); and Havana (by Ada Ferrer, New York University).

In my own contribution, I first attempted a clarification of the concept of ‘port’ in the context of the ‘Slave Coast’ of West Africa; I went on by highlighting the centrality of Ouidah on this coast in the strategy of the British-led crusade for the suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade; and I concluded by critically assessing the significance of the abolitionist era in the history and historiography of pre-colonial Dahomey and of Ouidah, its major outlet to foreign trade. Only 10 minutes were allocated to each panelist for his introduction, a limitation that made it possible to have a full one-hour meaningful and stimulating general discussion.

I cannot, unfortunately, within the scope of this report, give an insight into my co-panelists’ presentations nor into those of the other panels on the issue of abolition. I would like however to conclude by reminding readers of the international conference being organized by the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, in cooperation with other institutions, in Cape Coast, Ghana (August 2007) on the Domestic and International consequences of the First Governmental Efforts to Abolish the Atlantic Slave Trade. Though the deadline for submitting paper abstracts for presentation is over, faculty members and graduate students in sub-Saharan African Colleges and Universities who would like to attend the conference can apply till March 9, 2007. Details about the application procedure are available online at: www.oieahc.wm.edu/conferences/ghana/travel.cfm

Up to 100 scholarships are being offered to cover travel and lodging for successful applicants. It would be a pity not to seize such a golden opportunity our institutions of higher learning in crisis are unable to offer!

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Feature Articles...

The View from Nigeria... continued from page 1

He spoke of the porous border at Baga, near Lake Chad, and through the hilly terrain of Adamawa State on the Cameroon border. In fact, security at Baga has become intense in recent years, as Lake Chad becomes more of a land border. “They don’t come through Niger because of the desert.”

The spread of small arms from Darfur has had a dangerous impact on the intensification of crime in crowded Nigeria. “I don’t know the statistics on these crimes; our police do not keep good records,” Dr. Usman said, “But it is clear that gun-related crime has increased in Nigeria since the start of this crisis.”

The main paved routes between Maiduguri in the far northeast through Kano to the south to Kaduna and Abuja are lined with barricaded police check points to try to stem this arms flow in an area about as big as Ghana.

We talked about President Obasanjo’s appointment of former Kano State Governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso as his special advisor on Darfur and Somalia. Kwankwaso was also Defense Minister in Obasanjo’s cabinet, but his nomination to run for governor again in Obasanjo’s party—was withdrawn following various corruption allegations.

The special advisor appointment was seen as a reward for a crony rather than as forward movement in Nigerian policy in East African affairs. Media reporting on the Darfur crisis here has been limited to wire reports with the exception of the *Daily Trust* which sent correspondents to Darfur last summer, an unusual assignment for a West African paper.

I asked Usman Bugaje about regional interest in the Darfur crisis. “At the ECOWAS Parliament there is limited interest; that is a consultative body, not a legislative one. The consciousness is more on the basis of the AU (African Union) concerns than on specific West African country interest. (Senegalese President) Abdoulaye Wade has his views and (Ghana President) Kuffour has been dynamic on the issue, actually wresting the AU Presidency from Sudan President Bashir over the deployment of AU troops to Darfur. There is passion in West Africa for the Darfur crisis.”

He went on, “The Sudan Government is already in a delicate diplomatic position with West Africa in that the subregion has great solidarity with Southern Sudan and there is this mentality of ‘Arabs oppressing Africans’ that comes out when Sudan issues come up.”

Bugaje and I talked about northern Nigeria’s historic ties to Sudan and he waxed professorially about how “1/3 of the Sudanese have Nigerian roots; there are villages all over Sudan where only Fulfulde or Hausa are spoken. But the Sudan government ignores these people of Nigerian origin, moving them around in Khartoum and so on.”

Dr. Usman Bugaje faces a tough election for governor, making the time he spent with me on Darfur all the more valuable. His state of Katsina, neighboring Kano, with a population of close to 6 million, is home to both of the leading Presidential candidates.

With his energy and great expertise Dr. Usman Bugaje will continue to serve Nigeria’s needs for information on Sudan whatever the outcome of the April contests.

Steve Howard
Professor and Director of African Studies,
Ohio University
On leave at the Department of Sociology
Bayero University Kano

Readers can access some of Dr. Bugaje’s work at http://www.webstar.co.uk/~ubugaje/
ECOWAS as an Honest Broker... continued from page 1

Franco-African Summit in Cannes. Second, as a regional organization experienced in peacekeeping and conflict mediation during wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and even Cote d’ Ivoire, ECOWAS is well positioned to apply lessons learned from the peace processes that occurred in these hot spots. Finally, unlike the AU, ECOWAS is not subject to petty rivalries over leadership, particularly those that occur between English-speaking countries such as Nigeria and French-speaking countries, namely Senegal, as ECOWAS’ actions in Darfur would not constitute a competition over regional hegemony within West Africa.

Because of its geopolitical distance from the region, ECOWAS can gain the trust of the parties involved in the conflict while maintaining a degree of neutrality impossible to those countries that neighbor Sudan. The current “road maps to peace” proposed by the AU and the UN have ignored this important aspect of conflict resolution by directly associating Chad, CAR, and even Lybia in the negotiation process. To be sure, Chad and CAR have been dealing with the Darfur conflict’s spill-over effects in their respective territories by receiving an ever-increasing flow of refugees from across the border in Sudan. In addition, Idris Deby and Francois Bozize, the respective presidents of Chad and CAR, have been fighting rebellion movements in their own countries that, whenever weakened, find strategic backing in Darfur in the form of tactical retreat and even logistical support from Khartoum. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Lybia, while pursuing “irredentist dreams” during its war against Chad in the 1980s over the Aouzou strip, formed an “Arab belt” and “enrolled, armed and trained” what is now known as the Janjawid militia. It is this very militia that continues to perpetrate the reported genocidal crimes against the people of Darfur.1 Due to the intricate and complex relations that entangle the countries that compose most of the region, it follows that neither Lybia, nor Chad, nor CAR can actually enter any conflict resolution process over the Darfur conflict without a biased perspective that, from the onset, cripples any chance of success. At continental and international levels, the Sudanese government appears to maintain the upper hand in the negotiation process underway to increase the 7000 AU troops already on the ground and to place them under UN mandate. The refusal of the Sudanese government reveals at least two important characteristics of these two international organizations: One, the AU lacks the capacity, the political will, and the diplomatic means to pressure the Sudanese government to accept the troop increase. Two, the Sudanese government considers the UN an empty shell that the US fills with its own foreign policy substance to further its own narrow interests.

As Gamal Nkrumah, the foreign editor of an Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram, suggests, “‘international community’ is often used as a euphemism for the US and other Western powers’ political agenda.”2 Therefore, a takeover of the conflict resolution process by the UN from the AU, as was the case with Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Cote d’ Ivoire, will not be fruitful, as the Al-Bashir government is both defiant and resentful toward the AU and the UN. This lack of trust would certainly have been less of a factor had ECOWAS been mandated to play a major role in the process. The lack of effectiveness observed with the AU, or the bias of the UN toward Western powers’ interests as alleged by some Sudan observers would not heavily impair ECOWAS’ impartiality and neutrality.

As a consultative body, ECOWAS has already shown interest in Darfur and has made moderate moves to call for the end of the conflict in the region. Moreover, the governments of Ghana (currently president of the AU), Senegal, and Nigeria—all members of ECOWAS—have already made diplomatic efforts to bring the Sudanese government to a softer position. Continuing such pressure through a more structured and institutional framework would certainly bring the trust needed from the Sudanese government to begin talks with rebels without indulging in the diplomatic game that the Al-Bashir administration has been performing on the international stage with the AU and the UN.

Of course, the UN is jealous of its international legitimacy, and resorting to ECOWAS might be viewed as undercutting the world organization’s authority and capacity to put pressure on a country such as Sudan. But for the people of Darfur, nothing is more urgent than the ending of a genocide in which they are the helpless victims. Faced with the insurmountable obstacle that the Sudanese government constitutes, and unable to enforce the slogan of “Never Again” or the new international norm articulated in the “responsibility to protect,” the AU and UN should recognize their limits as politically colored organizations and promote ECOWAS as an honest broker whose impartiality and neutrality, given geography and geopolitics, are requirements for any genuine conflict resolution.

Masse Ndiaye
PhD Candidate in Political Science
Boston University

Mr. Ndiaye aslo teaches at the University of Rhode Island

Footnotes
1 See Alex de Waal, “Counter Insurgency on the Cheap”
2 See BBC “Head-to-head: Darfur Situation”
Announcements and Opportunities

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
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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
Announcements and Opportunities

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.
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m-saul@uiuc.edu

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Department of History, University of Chicago
Pick Hall 214, 5828 S. University Avenue
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News from Our Members

Colin T. West, a former W ARA 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, W ARA 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)  
Rue E x Leon Damas  
Dakar, Senegal  
Tel: 221-865-22-77  
Fax: 221-824-20-58  
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 to the significance of the German/Namibian case study by broadening the horizon (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.

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In a memorable scene shot on Cameroun’s Atlantic coast, Rev. Imata, a minister and teacher based in Douala’s New Bell district, who has singlehandedly 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 appetites3. 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 remains 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)
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For more information about WARA or to become a member, please check out our website at www.africa.ufl.edu/WARA/index.htm and click on “Membership”