



AFRICAN STUDIES OUTREACH

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SPOTLIGHT ON GLOBAL-LOCAL CONNECTIONS

"Everything is connected. You really can't understand what's going on in one part of the world, without looking at how its related to everything else." Bigelow & Peterson (2002).

Today most of us think of the world as a "global village." This is because in many respects, economies are interconnected (the global economy), transportation and communication systems link people across oceans, new diseases ignore national boundaries and environmental destruction in one part of the world profoundly affects other parts of the world. The global village is dynamic, even chaotic at times, exhibiting good and bad features. It contains hunger and famine, wars and other forms of violence, and growing despair in many regions. But it also contains extraordinary acts of kindness and courage, medical breakthroughs, new technologies, and hopes for a better future. (Bradshaw & Wallace, 1996)

Bradshaw & Wallace cite disparity as the most striking feature of the global village. Disparities are to be found across every human community on the globe and is responsible for producing tensions and polarity. Why are some countries richer than others? Why do people in some countries have better life chances than others? Why do some countries present more opportunities for their citizens than others? One theoretical explanation focuses on factors *within* countries and another focuses on factors *between* countries.

Modernization Theory: Blaming the Victim: Proponents of modernization theory divide the world into two types: modern and traditional. They argue that underdeveloped countries are poor simply because they lack modern economies, modern psychological traits, modern cultures and modern institutions. Therefore underdeveloped countries should get modern if they ever want to attain the status of being developed. They stress the promise and virtues of national modernity.

World-System Theory: Blaming Outside Actors: Proponents launched a vigorous attack against modernization theory. They claimed it was inaccurate, ethnocentric and simply naïve. According to world-systems theory there is inequality in the

world not because poor countries lack modernization, but because rich countries historically have exploited poor countries. Bradshaw and Wallace claim that world-system theory does a much better job of identifying external factors that restrict the development of poor countries. This theory holds that economic realities of the world system help rich countries stay rich, while poor countries stay poor. They argue that despite of its limitations, the theory needs to be taken seriously as a possible explanation for inequality among nations.

In their book *Rethinking Globalization*, Bigelow & Peterson (2002) list the following factors as being responsible for global inequalities between rich and poor nations:

- The history of colonial domination that took self-sufficient economies and distorted them.
- The debt crisis, and how it has been manipulated by institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which enforce "structural adjustment programs" in poor countries.
- The free trade, neo-liberal emphasis of recent trade agreements like NAFTA, and now the World Trade Organization, that encourage poor countries to export their way to economic health and to specialize in the "commodity" of cheap labor.
- Military interventions in places as far apart as Vietnam, Guatemala, and the Congo which have discouraged alternative routes to development.

In this issue we bring you stories- The Business of the War in the Congo; Bittersweet Chocolate; Deconstructing Tribe and Tribalism, and Song of Lawino: A Lament- that illustrate global-local connections and the myriad of experiences these connections foster. ♦

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THE BUSINESS OF WAR IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The interplay among a seemingly endless supply of mineral resources, the presence of multinational corporations desperate to cash in on that wealth, and the provision of arms and military training to political tyrants has helped to produce the spiral of conflicts that many regard as "Africa's First World War." When consumers reach for their cell phones or pagers, turn on their computers, propose marriage with diamond rings, or board airplanes, few of them make the connection between their ability to use technology or buy luxury goods and a war raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), half a world away. In what has been called the richest patch of earth on the planet, the DRC's wealth has also been its curse.

The DRC holds millions of tons of diamonds, copper, cobalt, zinc, manganese, uranium, niobium, and tantalum. Tantalum, also referred to as coltan, is a particularly valuable resource - used to make mobile phones, night vision goggles, fiber optics, and capacitors (the component that maintains the electrical charge in computer chips). In fact, a global shortage of coltan caused a wave of parental panic in the United States when it resulted in the scarcity of the popular PlayStation 2. The DRC holds 80% of the world's coltan reserves, more than 60% of the world's cobalt, and the world's largest supply of high-grade copper.

These minerals are vital to maintaining military dominance, economic prosperity, and consumer satisfaction in the developed world. For instance, because the United States does not have a domestic supply of many essential minerals, the U.S. government identifies sources of strategic minerals, particularly in Third World countries, then encourages U.S. corporations to invest in and facilitate production of the needed materials. Historically, the DRC (formerly Zaire) has been a key source of strategic minerals for the United States. In the mid-1960s, the U.S. government helped bring about the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko, which ensured U.S. access to those minerals for more than 30 years.

Today, the United States claims that it has no interest in the DRC other than a peaceful resolution to the current war. However, U.S. businessmen and politicians are still going to extreme lengths to gain and preserve sole access to the mineral resources. Thus, the DRC's mineral wealth is both an impetus for war and an impediment to stopping it.

Background to the War

In October 1996, President Kagame's

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and President Yoweri Museveni's Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) formed a coalition with the Congolese rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, in an invasion of Zaire. The coalition, known as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), included U.S. trained troops. In 1997, they succeeded in toppling President Mobutu and Laurent Kabila succeeded him as President of the DRC. Once the AFDL coalition took control of Katanga (one of the DRC's richest mineral patches), Western friends and allies began negotiating with President Kabila for access to mineral resources. The engineering and construction company Bechtel established a strong relationship with Kabila. Bechtel drew up a master development plan and inventory of the country's mineral resources free of charge. Bechtel also commissioned and paid for NASA satellite studies of the country for infrared maps of its mineral potential. Bechtel estimates that the DRC's mineral ores alone are worth \$157 billion.

Renewed War in the East

Kabila had been fighting a civil war since August 1998, when rebel forces, backed by Kabila's former allies, Rwanda and Uganda, turned against him. The Presidents of Rwanda and Uganda claimed that they entered the DRC to undermine Kabila's power and protect their borders from rebel groups that threatened to destabilize their countries. In the name of pursuing peace, these leaders have been able to advance their own mineral interests. The territories controlled by Rwandan and Ugandan supported rebel groups have become defacto states where mining companies have openly expressed interest in investing. Rwanda is allied with Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCDGoma), while the Ugandan government has formed a close relationship with leaders of the Congolese Liberation Front (CLF), a Mobutuist rebel movement. The RCD and the CLF now control the entire eastern region of the DRC, the wealthiest in terms of natural resources.

Both Rwanda and Uganda provide arms and training to their respective rebel allies and have set up extensive links to facilitate the exploitation of mineral resources. Local Congolese, including children, and prisoners are forced to work in the mines for little or no pay, under guard of Rwandan and Ugandan troops. The illegal mining has been a huge windfall for Rwanda and Uganda. The two countries have very few mineral reserves of their own. But since they began extracting the DRC's resources, their mineral exports have increased dramatically. For example, between 1996 and 1997, the volume of Rwanda's coltan production doubled, bringing the Rwandans and their

THE BUSINESS OF WAR IN THE CONGO

rebel allies up to \$20 million a month in revenue. Also, the volume of Rwanda's diamond exports rose from about 166 carats in 1998 to some 30,500 in 2000—a 184-fold increase! From 1997 to 1998, the annual volume of Uganda's diamond exports jumped from approximately 1,500 carats to about 11,300, or nearly eight-fold; since 1996, Ugandan gold exports have increased tenfold. The final destination for many of these minerals are Western nations including the United States.

Western corporations and financial institutions have facilitated the mineral extraction in the DRC. For example, in 1999, RCD-Goma's financial arm - known as SONEX - received \$5 million in loans from Citibank New York. United States military aid has contributed significantly to the crisis. During the Cold War, the U.S. government shipped \$400 million in arms and training to Mobutu. After Mobutu was overthrown, the Clinton administration transferred its military allegiance to Rwanda and Uganda, although the U.S. State Department has accused both countries of widespread corruption and human-rights abuses.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have also contributed to the war effort. They praised both Rwanda and Uganda for increasing their gross domestic product (GDP), which resulted from the illegal mining of DRC resources. Although the IMF and World Bank were aware that the rise in GDP coincided with the DRC war, and that it was derived from exports of natural resources that neither country normally produced, they nonetheless touted both nations as economic success stories. Although Uganda in particular has made significant strides in improving access to education and reducing the rate of new AIDS infections, debt relief has also allowed it the space to appropriate more money for its military ventures.

Even though rebels control half of the DRC's territory, deals with the Congolese government itself are still attractive. In January 2000, Chevron which has been present in the Congo for 40 years announced a three-year, \$75 million spending program in the DRC, thus challenging the notion that war discourages foreign investment. In 1999, the company was producing 17,700 barrels of oil a day, and production is set to increase to 21,000 barrels per day. The gamble seems to be paying off. On a recent visit to the United States, Joseph Kabila, Laurent Kabila's son and successor, (Laurent Kabila was assassinated in January 2001) reassured Chevron officials that stability under his leadership would ensure a safe environment for investment. Of course, because of war and ongoing political unrest,

these deals may not endure. But considering the potential for billions of dollars in profits, many mining corporations believe the investment is worth the risk. As one investor put it, "It is a good moment to come: it is in difficult times that you can get the most advantage."

Prospects for Peace

In August 1999, Uganda, Rwanda, and their rebel allies, among others, signed a cease-fire agreement with the DRC. However, the demand for mineral resources continues to drive the DRC conflict. The United Nations has called for sweeping restrictions on Uganda, Rwanda, and their Congolese-based rebel allies. These would include: embargoing the import or export of strategic minerals; embargoing the supply of weapons; freezing the financial assets of rebel movements and their leaders, and freezing the assets of companies or individuals who continue to illegally exploit the DRC's natural resources.

These proposals, however, would obstruct Western corporations' access to strategic minerals. Not surprisingly, the U.S. State Department has indicated that it is unlikely to recommend sanctions against its African allies. According to East African media reports, U.S. diplomats continue to view Rwanda and Uganda as "strategic allies in the Great Lakes region" and "would not want to upset relations with them at this time."

Since 1994, close to four million people have perished in Rwanda and the eastern region of Congo. Many of the deaths are due to direct combat and torture by the belligerent parties, but most have been caused by starvation and malnutrition. Thousands of people hiding in the forest from soldiers have watched their villages burned to the ground and their families tortured, their possessions, crops, and life's savings looted. Oblivious to the suffering, many Westerners continue to reap the benefits of the rich Congolese soil. The real party fueling the conflict is foreign capital investment by corporations, with the tacit support of their own governments. This war of genocidal proportions cannot end until U.S. and other Western corporations and governments are forced to change their priorities. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have helped to raise awareness about the urgency of the situation in the DRC through campaigns against "blood diamonds," economic exploitation, and the massive humanitarian crisis the country faces. ♦

This article is an excerpt, from *The Business of the War in the DRC*, by Dena Montague and Frida Berrigan, of the World Policy Institute, New York City. The complete story can be found in *Dollars and Sense Magazine*, July/August 2001 or at this url: http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Africa_Business_War_Congo.html

Bittersweet Chocolate

CHILD LABOR IN IVORY COAST'S COCOA FARMS

What is Child Labor

One of the reasons child labor exists is because of poverty. Because their families are so poor, most children are forced to work otherwise their families would starve. However child labor takes jobs away from adults, and in fact becomes a vicious cycle that causes more poverty. The United Nations and International Labor Organization call it child labor when one of three things happen:

- ◆ work is done fulltime by children under the age of fifteen,
- ◆ work prevents children from attending school, and
- ◆ children work at jobs that are dangerous or hazardous to their physical, mental or emotional health.

The Cocoa Farms

The most recent survey of conditions on West African cocoa farms, completed by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture for the U.S. Agency for International Development, estimated that nearly 300,000 children work in dangerous conditions on cocoa farms in the four countries surveyed — Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon — the vast majority of them in the Ivory Coast. The report, released in July 2002, says that of the 300,000 children, more than half (64 percent) are under 14 years old. Twelve thousand had no connection to the family on whose cocoa farm they toiled, but only 5,100 of them were paid for their work. Almost 6,000 were described as “unpaid workers with no family ties,” provoking advocates to refer to them as “slaves.”

Boys, some as young as nine are sold or tricked into slavery to harvest cocoa beans in Ivory Coast, a nation that supplies forty-three percent of U.S. cocoa. In an attempt to answer the question “How can modern society allow youngsters to be enslaved to produce a crop that becomes the very food—chocolate—that symbolizes happiness, luxury and romance?”, investigators at Knight Ridder Newspapers traced the path of the cocoa bean. They found that slavery occurs because it's nearly hidden. The enslaved boys work mostly on small farms scattered in interior parts of Ivory Coast. Few people get to the farms, even those in the cocoa trade. If they visit and see children at work, it's nearly impossible to tell if the children are members of the farmer's family or have been bought by the farmer, who may or may not pay them after years of work. This allows everyone along the chocolate chain to pass blame and responsibility for the boy slaves to someone else.

Blaming the Global System

Farmers who use slaves blame the people responsible for the price of cocoa. Ivory Coast

government officials who enforce slavery laws say it's foreigners who are selling and using slaves in their country. Cocoa suppliers say they can't be responsible because they don't control the farms. Chocolate companies say they rely on their suppliers to provide cocoa untainted by slave labor. The trade associations blame Ivory Coast's unstable political situation. And consumers don't have an inkling that their favorite chocolate treats may be tainted by slave labor.

Many who acknowledge that slavery exists offer the same explanation: the low price of cocoa. “We cannot blame the farmers for exploiting these workers,” said Abdelilah Benkirane, commercial director of the Society of Commercial Agricultural Producers of Daloa, one of Ivory Coast's biggest cocoa and coffee buyers, which exports 80 percent of its purchases to the United States and Europe. “The farmer has no influence on the global system. The system dictates the price.” Ivory Coast Agriculture Minister Alfonse Douaty also blames cocoa prices, and says other nations must help. “. . . At an international level, we must also combine our efforts in committing to prices which provide sufficient income to the basic producer, so as to avoid perpetuating poverty in exporting countries and thus creating the conditions which lend themselves to the development of slavery in whichever form it presents itself.”

The Buyers

“It's not clear how big or small it is,” said John Faulkner, spokesman for Godiva chocolates, which uses a lot of Ivory Coast cocoa because of the fine flavor. “There are people who have been to the Ivory Coast 50 times and say they have never seen this. . . . But just because you haven't seen the problem doesn't mean there isn't the problem. People who buy the finished chocolate product say they are largely powerless to address the issue. “We are definitely aware of it and definitely concerned about it, but being a very small voice to our suppliers you can't easily go demanding a lot of things,” said Tim Bergquist, president of International Chocolate Co. in Salt Lake City. The company sells single-origin chocolates, including some made from Ivory Coast cocoa beans. “It's more a matter of economics than a lack of principle,” Bergquist said.

“We buy a finished product long beyond the bean,” said Gary Regenbaum of Mom 'n Pops candy company of New Windsor, N.Y., which buys chocolate to coat its lollipops. “I have never considered where the beginning of this product came from. . . . I'll look into this and make every effort to stop it.” Most distant of

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Deconstructing Tribe and Tribalism:

AFRICAN ETHNICITIES AND THE WESTERN WORLD'S PERCEPTION

by
Matthew Carotenuto

Among various Western policy makers and media circles, it is not uncommon to hear the terms "tribe" and "tribalism" used when discussing African affairs. Issues involving violent clashes, or affairs of the State are often dismissed as inherently ancient "tribal" matters, as Africa is generally lumped into a single common category in which diverse peoples and issues are portrayed to hold some intrinsic commonalities. But what does the common usage of these words and categories imply to our understanding of the African continent? At the heart of this debate arise questions such as, why has the ongoing conflict in the Balkans been referred to as an ethnically based struggle, while similar acts of genocide perpetrated in Rwanda have been deemed examples of "tribalism"? To get at the nature of these inconsistencies, one must try to break down some of our "Western" perceptions of African identities and reveal the diverse and complex systems in which African peoples have historically shaped and manipulated the boundaries and definitions of these categories.

Current scholarship reveals that ethnic or national categories of identity should not be viewed as static natural groupings, but seen primarily as constructs of social inventions which are continuously negotiated and redefined by various interest groups in a given society. Thus one is not born with a certain ethnicity, as it is a learned cultural trait which is shaped by one's upbringing, education and overall path in life. This view can be readily applied to Africa as well, and while it is impossible to fully generalize for such a diverse continent, African ethnicities have never been static primordial categories.

Historically African identities have been very loosely constructed as boundaries between ethnic, linguistic or cultural groups were in most cases fairly fluid borders in which people frequently moved back and forth across these imagined divisions. Research, for instance by Justin Willis, has shown for the Mijikenda of the Kenyan coastal hinterland, that these boundaries have been extremely fluid. Willis shows that the Mijikenda's long standing trading, and client-patronage relationships with Swahili speaking communities of Mombasa allowed many to assume Swahili identities, through adopting Islam and various Swahili socio-linguistic traits. He also points out that the term Mijikenda itself is a modern construct, conceived only in the 1930s under British rule due to the colonial system's need to group and categorize people based on their perceived ethnic background.

Willis and various other scholars have highlighted the role the colonial period played in shaping the way contemporary ethnicities are constructed across the African continent. Beginning in the late 19th century, colonial powers began to manipulate African identities by creating the new imagined unit of the Colony, which drew fairly arbitrary borders grouping large numbers of diverse cultural and linguistic groups together for the first time. Following this creation, colonial policies of education and labor classified people based on the European perceived systems of identity.

The British and other colonial powers came to the African continent with the notion that "of course" African identities were set categories easily able to be classified, similar to bounded borders of national citizenship among the nation states of Europe. However, large political units encompassing whole socio-linguistic groups were quite uncommon in pre-colonial Africa. Most people constructed their identity based on smaller clan or extended family groupings, rather than the larger ethnic or linguistic identities which are seen today. Through various colonial policies though, linguistic and cultural differences were codified by creating in many cases the first written forms of various African languages and dialects.

People were then grouped and classified by these new socio-linguistic categories and in many cases required to even carry documentation which defined their ethnic background. Further polarizing ethnic divisions within the colonies, under the colonial system African groups were often only allowed to form political or social associations based on these ethnic categories. Inter-group associations were feared to breed colony-wide or nationalist sentiment, which was perceived as a threat to the colonial system. Overall these diverse and complex policies had a huge effect on the way African ethnicities have been envisioned and manipulated since, during, and after the colonial period. No more poignant an example of this manipulation is the case of the Rwandan Genocide, which resulted in the death or displacement of some forty-percent of the country's population in 1994.

A look at Rwanda's history reveals that violent ethnic based massacres had never occurred in the small central African polity prior to colonial rule. Peter Uvin, has even argued that "Hutu" or "Tutsi" are not even distinct ethnic groupings as they share a

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Song of Lawino: A Lament

OKOT P'BITEK, UGANDA

Okot p' Bitek is a biting satirist who sparked a literary revolution in East Africa soon after Uganda gained independence. He is best known for the traditional African woman's lament in Song of Lawino and her westernized husband's response in Song of Ocol. The narratives reflect the traditional song stories of the Acoli people and raise issues concerning the conflict of culture. The songs dramatize the tensions between the values and lifestyles of traditional Acoli people and the new educated elite who seek to imitate western civilization. Lawino berrates her husband for uprooting the pumpkin, or the traditions of the Acoli people. Ocol responds with disdain. (O' Brien, 1998). Below is an excerpt from Song of Lawino.

Husband, now you despise me
Now you treat me with spite
And say I have inherited the stupidity of my aunt;
Son of the Chief,
Now you compare me
With the rubbish in the rubbish pit,
You say you no longer want me
Because I am like the things left behind
In the deserted homestead.
You insult me
You laugh at me
You say I do not know the letter A
Because I have not been to school
And I have not been baptized
You compare me with a little dog
A puppy
...
My husband pours scorn
On Black people,
He behaves like a hen
That eats its own eggs,
A hen that should be imprisoned under a basket
...
He says Black people are primitive
And their ways are utterly harmful,
Their dances are mortal sins
They are ignorant, poor and diseased!
Ocol says he is a modern man,
A progressive and civilized man,
He says he has read extensively and widely
And he can no longer live with a thing like me
Who cannot distinguish between good and bad,
He says I am just a village woman,
I am of the old type,
And no longer attractive.
He says I am blocking his progress.
My head, he says,
Is as big as that of an elephant
But it is only bones,
There is no brain in it,
He says I am only wasting his time.

Listen Ocol, my old friend,
The ways of your ancestors are good,
Their customs are solid,
And not hollow.
They are not thin, not easily
breakable.
They cannot be blown away
By the winds
Because their roots reach deep into
the soil.
I do not understand
The ways of foreigners
But I do not despise their customs.
Why should you despise yours?
...
When the drums are throbbing
And the black youths
Have raised much dust
you dance with vigor and health,
You dance naughtily with pride,
you dance with spirit,
You compete, you insult, you provoke,
You challenge all!
It is true, Ocol,
I cannot dance the ballroom dance.
Being held so tightly
I feel ashamed,
Being held so tightly in public
I cannot do it,
It looks shameful to me!
They close their eyes,
And they do not sing as they dance,
They dance silently like wizards.
If someone tries
To force me to dance this dance
I feel like hanging myself
Feet first!

It is true
I cannot do my hair
As white women do.

Ask me what beauty is
To the Acholi
And I will tell you;
I will show it to you
If you give me a chance!
My mother taught me
Acholi hair fashions;
Which fit the kind
Of hair of the Acholi,
And the occasion.
Listen, Ostrich plumes differ
From chicken feathers,
A monkey's tail
Is different from that of the giraffe.
A white woman's hair
Is soft like silk;
It is light
And brownish, like
That of the brown monkey,
And is very different from mine.
A black woman's hair
Is thick and curly.
...
[Some black women] cook their hair
With hot iron
And pull it hard
So that it may grow long.
Then they rope the hair on wooden
pens like a billy goat
Brought for the sacrifice
Struggling to free itself.
And the hair sizzles,
It cries aloud in sharp pain
As it is pulled and stretched.
And the vigorous and healthy hair,
Curly, springy and thick,
That glistens in the sunshine
Is left listless and dead
Like the elephant grass
Scorched brown by the fierce
February sun.

Song of Lawino: A Lament

It lies lifeless
 Like the sad and dying banana leaves
 On a hot and windless afternoon.
 I am proud of the hair with which I was
 born
 And as no white woman
 Wishes to do her hair like mine,
 Because she is proud
 Of the hair with which she was born,
 I have no wish
 To look like a white woman.

My husband rejects me because I do not
 appreciate
 White men's foods,
 And that I do not know
 How to hold
 The spoon and fork.
 He is angry with me
 Because I do not know
 How to cook
 As white women do
 He complains endlessly.
 He says
 Had I been to school
 I would have learnt
 How to use
 White men's cooking stoves.
 I confess

...
 I do not deny! I do not know
 How to cook like a white woman.
 I am terribly afraid
 Of the electric stove,
 And I do not like using it
 Because you stand up when you cook.
 Who ever cooked standing up?
 The white man's stoves
 Are good for cooking
 White men's food:
 For cooking the tasteless,
 Bloodless meat of cows
 That were killed many years ago
 And left in the ice
 To rot!
 For frying an egg
 Which when ready
 Is slimy like mucus,
 The white man's stoves
 Are for boiling cabbages

And for baking the light spongy thing
 They call bread.
 They are for warming up
 Tinned beef, tinned fish,
 They are for preparing foods for the
 toothless
 For infants and invalids,
 It is for making tea or coffee!
 I do not know how to cook
 Like white women;
 I do not enjoy white men's foods;
 And how they eat -
 How could I know?
 And why should I know it?

...
 Ocol has brought home
 A large clock.
 it goes tock-tock-tock-tock
 And it rings a bell.
 He winds it first
 And then it goes!
 But I have never touched it,
 I am afraid of winding it!
 I wonder what causes
 The noise inside it!
 And what makes it go!
 I do not know
 How to tell the time
 Because I cannot read
 The figures.
 And Ocol has strange ways
 Of saying what the time is.
 In the morning
 When the sun is sweet to bask in
 He says
 "It is Eight o'clock!"
 When the cock crows
 For the first time
 He says
 "It is Five!"
 My head gets puzzled,
 Things look upside-down
 As if I have been
 Turning round and round
 And I am dizzy.

Time has become
 My husband's master,
 It is my husband's husband.
 My husband runs from place to place

Like a small boy,
 He rushes without dignity.
 And when visitors have arrived
 My husband's face darkens,
 He never asks you in,
 And for greeting
 He says
 "What can I do for you?"
 I do not know
 How to keep the white man's time.
 My mother taught me
 The way of the Acholi
 And nobody should
 Shout at me
 Because I know
 The customs of our people!

Listen, My husband,
 In the wisdom of the Acholi
 Time is not stupidly split up
 Into seconds and minutes
 It does not flow
 Like beer in a pot
 That is sucked
 Until it is finished.
 It does not resemble
 A loaf of millet bread
 Surrounded by hungry youths
 From a hunt.
 It does not get finished
 Like vegetables in the dish.
 My husband says
 My head is numb and empty
 Because, he says,
 I cannot tell
 When our children were born.
 I know that Okang,
 My first-born,
 Was born at the beginning
 Of the Dry Season.
 A person's age
 Is shown by what he or she does
 It depends on what he or she is,
 And on what kind of person
 He or she is. ♦

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Ancient West African States, Trade, and Islam: Ghana and Mali.

by

Maria Grosz-Ngate



Adapted from *Exploring Africa: West African Kingdoms*
<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/curriculum/>

This short essay focuses on ancient Ghana and Mali, two states whose legacies live on in the names of the present-day countries of Ghana and Mali. Although the former Gold Coast named itself Ghana when it became independent from Britain in 1957, its territory is not contiguous with the territory of the ancient empire. Instead, ancient Ghana covered a significant area of present-day Mauritania and Mali. The heartland of ancient Mali lay astride the borders of Guinea and Mali. During its greatest expansion in the 14th century it covered today's Mali and Senegal and reached north into Mauritania and east to Niger. The connection between the ancient empire and the contemporary state was reinforced by the first president of the newly independent republic of Mali, Modibo Keita: through his family name he was able to link himself to the founder of the empire, Sunjata¹ Keita.

Ghana

Information about Ghana comes from al-Bakri, a resident of Cordova in Spain who based his account on written sources and travellers' reports, as well as from archeological excavations and oral history.² It is still unclear when the Ghana empire first emerged as a political power. However, it was known in the Muslim world as the "land of gold" by the end of the eighth century. "Ghana" is the name found in the Arabic records whereas the oral traditions of the region refer to it as "Wagadu". To the west of Ghana was the state of Takrur, the dominant power over the lower Senegal river and probably a commercial and political rival to Ghana. Some 1500 km to the east was the kingdom of Gao, also a competing commercial center. As suggested by the appellation "land of gold," Ghana

came to be identified with the gold traded across the Sahara desert. It was located close to the gold fields of Bambuk and served as transshipment point in the exchange of gold for the salt from the desert. Its rulers received tribute from the gold producers and taxed the salt traded south. As significant as trans-saharan trade was to the empire, the empire could not have emerged without local production in foodstuffs and iron implements that supported a ruling class, traders, and warriors.

Excavations show that Ghana's capital Kumbi Saleh consisted essentially of two towns: the royal capital and a town of stone buildings. The latter was probably occupied by merchants and had a mosque that could have held as many as 2000 persons. The entire conglomeration appears to have had a population of 15,000-20,000. For most of its existence, the rulers of Ghana seem to have held on to their ancestral religion while living side by side and maintaining good relations with Muslim traders. Significant numbers of Ghana's population, known as Soninke, adopted Islam toward the end of the 11th century.

Ghana's northern frontier changed in accordance with its relations with the Berber nomads of the desert. The Berbers acted as protectors and guides on the trade routes and held political authority over Awdaghust, a city of traders north of Kumbi Saleh. Although Ghana was able to conquer Awdaghust in the mid-11th century, it was unable to maintain control and Kumbi Saleh itself was conquered by Berber nomads in 1076. Ghana lost its commercial significance when it was eclipsed by the oasis town of Walata as the principal terminus of trans-saharan trade at the beginning of the 13th century. After Ghana's power declined, many Soninke left and settled as traders throughout the subregion.

Mali

Sosso, one of the vassal kingdoms of Ghana, increased its political power during the 12th century and came to dominate the area, including the Maninka chiefdoms to the south. It reached the height of its strength under Sumanguru Kante in the 13th century. Sunjata Keita, a member of the ruling clan of one of the Maninka chiefdoms, united the different chiefdoms and led the war against Sosso. He is credited with founding the Mali empire. The epic of Sunjata,³ a master piece of orature,⁴ tells his

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story. Sumanguru Kante appears in it as the sorcerer king who spreads terror. The epic is recounted by specially trained griots.⁵ A major center for the preservation and transmission of old Mali's historical traditions is the village of Kela in the Mande⁶ heartland. The story of Sunjata "serves to explain and especially to justify the ascent of Sunjata, by revealing his warrior's destiny as well as the way in which Maninka society works. It induces people to recognize their own identities, and leads them to act accordingly" (Camara, 1999:63). Although the epic is always recounted orally, the narrative transmitted at Kela rests on a written document, produced in the 19th century in Arabic script and accessible only to a small circle of griots (Camara, 1999:65).

The center of the Mali empire was in an ecological zone that received more rainfall than Ghana and supported significant agricultural production. Pastoralists, fisher people, blacksmiths, leatherworkers, and woodworkers were specialized producers who exchanged their products against foodstuffs and other commodities. Products were traded across ecological zones within the empire and long-distance traders linked Mali with the forest regions to the south and North Africa and Europe to the north. Like Ghana, Mali was located close to a gold-producing area. In fact, the development of the Bure gold fields is thought to have favored the creation of the empire. The emperors of Mali did not directly control production but received tribute paid in gold.

Niani, a city noted for its iron industry, became the capital of Mali under Sunjata. The council of elders met at Kangaba which remains the sacred center of the Keita. The political organization of Mali was similar to that of Ghana. The provinces were ruled by governors who frequently were traditional rulers and collected tribute. The emperor had a standing army that was used to protect the empire against attacks, patrol the trade routes and ensure that taxes were paid. The political security provided by the empire was good for trade. Timbuktu, a town on the desert edge but close to the Niger river developed as an important commercial center during the time of the Mali empire.

Sunjata's successors and their court officials became Muslims during the second half of the 13th century. Like the kings of Ghana, they hosted Muslim traders and employed literate Muslims as scribes and treasurers. They did not impose Islam on the population at large. Several of Mali's rulers made the pilgrimage to Mecca. The pilgrimage of Mansa Musa in 1324-5 is the most famous because of his large entourage and his display of wealth. He

is said to have put so much gold in circulation that the price of gold declined in Cairo. He also purchased books, brought back an architect from Egypt who designed the mosque of Gao, built other mosques, and encouraged Islamic learning. Timbuktu became an important center of Islamic scholarship and law. Two famous mosques (Djingareiber and Sankore) were built in the 14th century after Mansa Musa's return from the pilgrimage. The Sankore mosque was constructed of mud brick on the model of the Kaba in Mecca. It was linked to a university that became the center of scholarship. 150 koranic schools are said to have existed in Timbuktu in the 14th century and had more than 25,000 students.

Mali had its greatest expanse during the 14th century, but suffered attacks in various areas during the 15th century. As its power declined in the north, Timbuktu was raided by Tuareg and eventually incorporated into the Songhai empire that dominated the Niger bend in the 16th century. ♦

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Endnotes:

- ¹ Another spelling, based on French transliteration, is Soundiata.
- ² The most comprehensive history based on these sources is *Ancient Ghana and Mali* by Nehemia Levtzion (1973). A new edition is forthcoming. The present essay relies heavily on this work.
- ³ The most widely used version in prose form is *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* by D. T. Niane (1965).
- ⁴ "Orature" is increasingly replacing the term "oral literature".
- ⁵ Griot is the French term for bard, or praise singer, that is now also used in English. The indigenous term is *jeli* or *jali*.
- ⁶ *Mande* designates the heartland of the Mali empire while *Maninka* refers to the people of the area. Linguists use *Mande* as a classificatory term for a related cluster of languages in the region.

**Deconstructing Tribe and Tribalism:
AFRICAN ETHNICITIES AND THE WESTERN WORLD’S PERCEPTION**

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common language (*Kinyarwanda*), religion, and cultural traits. So how were these divisions drawn and manipulated to the point of Genocide? It has been widely argued that the roots of this terrible Genocide lay in the colonial period, when Belgian colonialists perpetuated a myth of Tutsi racial superiority and instituted the Tutsi minority into all the leading positions of the government. This was a class-based decision as Tutsi identity was loosely defined by the number of cattle one owned, a sign of wealth in Rwanda. As a result the cattle owning elite were favored as “Tutsi” in the colonial government and strict ethnic divisions were constructed, which did not exist prior to colonial rule. Upon independence in the early 1960s, and fearing repercussions from the Hutu majority on Belgian colonialists and investments, the colonial government backed a Hutu dominated state, thus deeming the Tutsi as scapegoats to the colonial injustices. Since its independence and leading up to the Genocide in 1994, Rwanda was lead by an oppressive Hutu regime which ostracized and persecuted the Tutsi labeled minority, as well as any Hutu who opposed the government. Periodic violent struggles ensued, resulting in its final culmination in which over 800,000 Tutsi and “opposition” Hutu were killed in a Genocide perpetrated by the radical Hutu regime.

Thus one can see that this was not an inherently “tribal” struggle, but a complex class-based

ethnic system that had been grossly manipulated by the ruling elites since the beginning of the colonial period. Ultimately African ethnicities in their current form cannot be seen as primordial “tribal” categories, and the understanding of the roots of African ethnicities is a vastly complex topic which involves constant redefinition as these identities are not static, but ever changing constructs. ♦

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Bittersweet Chocolate

CHILD LABOR IN IVORY COAST’S COCOA FARMS

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all from the cocoa farm is the consumer, who has little reason to think about who harvested the cocoa beans that went into the gaily wrapped chocolate at the candy counter.

“In Canada, Europe, America, what we have on our shelves is cheap, such as coffee, chocolate bars,” said Michel Larouche, the West Africa regional director for Save the Children Canada. “If we put a stop to child trafficking the prices of certain things— cotton shirts, coffee, candy bars— will rise. The reality is if your products are this cheap, it’s because of this situation.” “Are (the companies) responsible?” Larouche said. “It’s hard to say one is responsible. It’s easier to look at who is not responsible. “Every time one closes his eyes and buys a product made by children, then he is also responsible. He becomes an accomplice.”

Child Rights as a Global Public Good

Waal (2002) argues that in a globalized world, no country can be considered remote and

isolated from any other. The whole world has reason to be concerned about the poorest and most unstable corner of the globe. Africa’s problems affect the world, solutions to those problems benefit the world. Waal contends that while the immediate beneficiaries of investments in African children are the children themselves, and followed by their families and communities, the realization of African children’s rights will benefit all. “To be precise, the realization of the rights of poor and vulnerable African children is a ‘continental merit and public good, but with global benefits. This we argue is enough to class it as a global public good. ♦

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Global Exchnage: <http://www.globalexchange.org/cocoa/>

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

International Studies Summer Institutes (ISSI)

High school students and grade 7-12 teachers are invited to join us on Indiana University's Bloomington campus for 2 concurrent International Studies Summer Institutes. See details below.

8th Annual International Studies Summer Institute JULY 13 - 26, 2003

Indiana University's Center for the Study of Global Change annually organizes summer residential institutes for high school students and teachers. The Institute's academic program is organized in collaboration with other IU Centers and Programs including the African Studies Program. Participants explore diverse topics such as global environmental change, international trade, populations at risk, and conflict resolution.

The International Agricultural Education (IAE) Summer Institute July 13-19, 2003

Indiana University, Purdue University's and the Indiana FFA Organization, are pleased to announce a residential, one-week Summer Institute on International Agriculture and Global Food Security.

The objective of this program is to introduce critical international agriculture issues to high school agriculture teachers and university Agriculture Education majors. The program will address three

major themes: the state of international agriculture, the development of global agribusiness, and the role of food in international security. Topics include: ♦Global Food Security and Foreign Policy ♦Genetically Modified Foods: The Next Green Revolution? ♦Water Scarcity and the Future of International Agriculture ♦World Population Growth and Food Demand: Can We Feed Nine Billion People? ♦Global Agriculture and the Environment & ♦International Agribusiness and the WTO

High school agriculture teachers may receive graduate credit through Purdue University (EDCI 643: Special Topics in Agriculture Education). Agriculture Education majors may earn undergraduate credit through Purdue University.

For more details including applications and cost, please contact:

Katherine Gold
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201 North Indiana Avenue
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E-Mail: kgold@indiana.edu
<http://www.iub.edu/~global/institute.htm>

The Diverse World of Islam: A Workshop for Teachers of Grades 3-8.

Friday, May 2, 2003, 8:30-4:00pm Washington Township Administration Building, Indianapolis, IN

This workshop will introduce twenty-five teachers, grades 3-8, from central Indiana to the demographics, history and current practice of Islam in four different world regions: the Middle East, the former Soviet Union (Russia and Central Asia), Eastern Europe (Bosnia), and Africa (Senegal). All teachers in

attendance will receive a \$100 professional service honorarium, lunch, and a packet of teaching materials. Teachers will have the option of enrolling in one credit hour of continuing education course work for attendance at the workshop and completion of a follow-up project supervised by the facilitator. Please call 812-855-0391 or e-mail reei@indiana.edu to register.

New Methods for Teaching Multicultural Music in Classrooms and Choirs

Summer Workshop June 27-29, 2003 Indiana University - Bloomington

Indiana University announces a special workshop with faculty members Mary Goetze and Jay Fern. The workshop, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Global Change, is for general music teachers, teacher educators, and choral conductors at all levels. The workshop will provide methods using technology, materials, and models for learning about and performing unfamiliar musical styles with integrity. Participants will learn folk and composed music from artists and utilizing recorded models. Link-ups with artists in remote sites via web technology are

planned. The workshop will focus on music of the Pacific Islands, particularly the Maori of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Costs: The \$100 registration fee for the workshop also includes a prototype of a new CD-ROM developed by Goetze and Fern featuring music of the Maori culture. One hour of graduate credit is available for an additional fee.

For details regarding the workshop, or if you have questions, **contact** Katherine Domingo by e-mail at kdomingo@indiana.edu.
<http://www.indiana.edu/~ive/dates.htm>

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