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Umoja means solidarity, unity, and oneness in Swahili, an East African language widely spoken as a lingua franca.

Women's Power in the Socio-Political Organization of the Fante of Ghana: The Case of *Asafo* Companies

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Abstract

Many gender activists and policy makers are of the opinion that women's participation in politics and decision-making is limited. This has been attributed to women's traditional domestic roles. Focusing on the Fante of Southern Ghana this paper investigates the role of women in politics in traditional societies. The author identifies himself with the caution given by postmodern feminists that Western ideas should not be transferred holistically into African societies and that gender situations in every society, especially in Africa, should be carefully and completely investigated. He shares the opinion that there is a flexible gender system among the Fante that allows for men and women to share roles and status through a neutral gender construct. Besides, gender roles are at times vested in social organizations such as the lineage and the *Asafo*. In such situations, women can be seen playing gender roles that are often vested in males and vice versa. He also shares the opinions of many writers on women that in traditional societies women were vibrant in politics. The author discusses the roles that women play in the *Asafo*—organized along the patrilineage—vis-à-vis the roles that they play in the *Ebusua*—organized along the matrilineage—and posits that there is a slight limitation on women's participation in politics through the *Ebusua* as compared to the *Asafo*. He posits also that chieftaincy is aristocratic and, therefore, does not offer equal opportunities for all classes of people to participate in politics, as compared to the *Asafo*, which is an egalitarian organization. Therefore, the *Asafo* offers women of all classes a platform to participate in politics. He concludes that through this, women influence decision-making in the *Asafo* and the community as a whole.

Keywords: Gender, politics, social organizations, Fante, Ghana

Introduction

Some scholars (for example, Brempong 2001; Arhin 1983; and Busia 1968) are of the opinion that Akan women play very important roles in traditional politics and conclude that it would be wrong to attribute the low level of participation of women in politics to the culture. What readily comes to mind when people talk about women in traditional politics is the role of the

shemaa (queen-mother¹ among the Akan).

¹ Brempong (2002) indicates that the position of the *shemaa* is wrongly translated as "queen-mother." He is of the opinion that this usage has been imported from European monarchical institutions where the queen-mother is either the mother or wife of a monarch. He argues that the *shemaa* is the female counterpart of the ruler himself. Busia (1968) describes the queen-mother as the official mother of the chief. The person who occupies the position is the real mother, mother's sister, sister or mother's sister's daughter of the chief (see Arhin 1983 and Sarpong 1974).

Brempong (2001) states that of all the cultures in Ghana, it is only the Akan who have female rulers at all the levels of the chiefly positions.² He contends that the Dagomba and Gonja have rulers or princes but these were honorific and not of substantial political significance. Others have instituted female traditional offices based on the Akan model but it is unclear whether they play the same roles as the Akan. Bluwey (2000) points out that the Ewe queen-mothers are merely social leaders of the womenfolk. Even among the Akan where the position of the female rulers is clear, critics brush it aside with the comment that she is only one woman in a council of men. So her position does not really portray the participation of women in traditional politics. Arhin (1983) states that the queen-mother of Asante is officially the foremost authority in the royal matrilineage. Even though many people are involved in the selection of a new occupant of the royal stool, she is vested with the prerogative to select an heir to the stool (Odotei 2002). The rationale behind this is that it is only women who know the children that they give birth to and so they will be in a better position to reckon the genealogy of the royal family. Hence they are those who can say who is the rightful heir of the stool.³ The *shemaa* is the only one who can rebuke the chief when he goes wrong. This is because she is often a mother or sister to the chief.⁴ Besides, she is

² Chiefly positions among the Akan are hierarchical in nature. The king rules the kingdom (only Asante). The Asante kingdom is divided into many states. A paramount chief rules the state. Apart from Asante, the State is the highest territory so the paramount chief is the political leader of the tribe. A state has division under it, and a division has towns and villages under it.

³ The stool is the throne of Akan chiefs. It is the symbol of office that gives a political leader the right to govern his/her people.

the official mother of the chief. Therefore, she has the power and authority to rebuke or counsel him (Busia 1968). If any other member of the chief's council rebukes him in public it will be considered as subversion.

However, in the past when the *Asantehene* (king of Asante) could sentence someone to death, the *Asantehemaa* (queen-mother of Asante) was a refuge for the fugitive of the *Asantehene's* court if the fugitive successfully sought her intervention in case of death penalty (Arhin 1983; Brempong 2001). In this case the queen-mother had to examine the effects of the fugitive's death on children and women, since the fugitive could be a husband and/or a father.

Talking about the queen-mother as officially the foremost authority in the royal matrilineage of the Akan presupposes that she is even more important than the chief in the polity. However, the male counterpart's position overshadows hers. It would be expected that in the absence of the chief she would take over the reins of government. This is not the case. It is rather the *Krontihene*⁵ who takes over. This could be taken to be an aspect of the subordination of women in traditional societies but it is not so because there is gender division of functions in the social and political systems. So there are male stools and female stools. The two play complementary roles.

Oyewumi (2002) points out that feminists use gender as the central explanatory variable to account for the subordination and oppression of females worldwide, and assume that both the category "women" and

⁴ A sister in this case can be one's own mother's child or one's mother's sister's child. A mother means one's own mother or one's mother's sister.

⁵ The *Krontihene* is the commander of all the military wings. He is the second in command of the army. i.e. after the paramount chief—so politically he is the second to the paramount chief among the Akan.

their subordination are universal. Arnfred (2002) presents a similar situation. For her, there is an assumption that Third World women are subordinated par excellence, that subordination belongs to tradition and the past, and that, in contrast, women's emancipation or gender equality belongs to modernity and the future. Both Oyewumi and Arnfred are of the opinion that the modernists assume that African women are oppressed and subordinated; and thus constitute the grateful recipients of the blessings of modernity. They see modernity as a European conception that makes reference to equality and emancipation. But Oyewumi posits that the traditional Yoruba family can be described as a non-gendered one because kinship roles and categories are not gender differentiated but based on seniority instead. Among the Akan the situation seems to be the same as shall be examined later in this article.

Methods of Data Collection.

The ethnographic data for this essay was gathered for a thesis written in partial fulfillment for the award of a Master of Philosophy degree in the year 2000 (Wilson 2000). The towns in which the investigation took place were Dwamba (Mumford), Dago, and Otuaam, all located in the Central Region of Ghana. The fieldwork, which took place between June 1999 and August 2000, was comprised of participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, and focus group discussions with *Asafo* groups and young men and women in the towns. Twenty women and fifteen men were interviewed for the structured interview. After the fieldwork there has been follow up research, this time concentrating much more on women. A major constraint in the fieldwork was that at times men interfered while women were being interviewed. The men tried to answer the questions on behalf of the women. To address this problem the

writer made follow-up visits and interviewed the women when they were smoking fish away from the men.

Aspects of the Social and Political Systems of the Fante⁶

The key concept of social organization is the corporate group. A corporate group is a body that has permanent existence, a collection of people recruited on recognized principles with common interests and rules fixing rights and duties in relation to one another. These are done to ensure that the common interests of the group are ensured.

The kin group is the most important social unit in African societies because it serves as the primary unit of socialization. It is made up of people who are related by blood or marriage. Among the Fante, those who are related by blood are more closely knit together than those who are related by marriage. The only exception to this is the couple in any particular marriage. This is because after marriage one still maintains one's allegiance to one's family of orientation and the extended family associated with it. Those who are related by blood are referred to as the descent group, a social unit whose members have a common ancestor. If the common ancestor is a known person the social unit of descent is known as a lineage. If the common ancestor is unknown the social unit of descent is known as a clan. Therefore, clan is made up of a number of lineages that have a common unknown ancestor. Among the Fante descent is matrilineal. In principle, however, they follow the double unilineal descent system (Christensen 1954; Hagan 2000; Hagan

⁶ The Fante are a people who speak one of the Akan dialects. They live in parts of the Central and Western Regions of Ghana—parts of the coastal fringes of Ghana. Twi speakers comprise another major group of Akan speakers. This group is made up of the Asante, Akyem, Kwahu, Denkyira, Twifo, etc.

1983). Under this system, a child belongs to both his/her mother's and father's lineage but the rights and responsibilities in the two lineages differ. For instance one pays subscriptions to one's matrilineage but not one's patrilineage. One is under obligation to present liquor annually to the father's lineage for rituals but not one's matrilineage. One can be selected to occupy the stool in one's matrilineage but not one's patrilineage.

The relationship between the matrilineage and the patrilineage and the rights associated with them are based on the Akan concept of human personality. The system operates in the following way. The Akan believe that the human being is made up of three entities. These are the body (blood), spirit, and soul. These entities are obtained from God and the parents. The blood is obtained from the mother while the spirit is obtained from the father. The Supreme Being provides the soul (Sarpong 1974; Ayisi 1992). These entities provide the framework for the jural rights of a person.

Those who trace their lineage through the mother (the matrilineage) are referred to collectively as *Ebusuafo*—members of the mother's lineage (*Ebusua*). Membership of the *Ebusua* is basically acquired through the blood relation so everyone belongs to his or her mother's *Ebusua*. However, some strangers who sojourn with a member of the *Ebusua* may be incorporated into the *Ebusua* after going through some rites. When a man and a woman have children their offspring belong to their mother's *Ebusua*. A woman's daughter's children belong to her *Ebusua* but her son's children do not because her son's children belong to their respective mother's *Ebusua*. It is obvious that if a male is incorporated into an *Ebusua*, his children do not belong to that *Ebusua* but when a female is incorporated two scenarios

are created. In the first place, if a woman, upon being incorporated into another *Ebusua* renounces all ties with her previous *Ebusua* then her children will belong to the new *Ebusua*. However if she does not renounce her former one then it means her children do not belong to the new one unless they choose to.

Does it mean that a person can belong to two *Ebusua* at the same time? The answer can be yes and/or no depending on how one examines it. It is no because if a person renounces the *Ebusua* in his or her home town no other *Ebusua* will welcome that person. This serves as a social control measure so that people will maintain the social systems. However, when one travels to another town or village and lives there for a long period of time one may sever relationship with one's home town and hence the *Ebusua*. On the other hand, when one is in a new town or village one may join the replica of one's *Ebusua* in the new community. In that case one will perform one's obligations in both towns/villages and can enjoy rights and privileges in both towns/villages. However, one's rights and privileges and those of one's children are limited. When one is competing for a position or resource with another whose relationship can be traced to the putative ancestor, the latter has an upper hand. It is for this reason that when it comes to selecting an occupant of the stool the queen-mother has to ensure that the lineage of the person being selected can be traced directly to the ancestor who founded the community.

Sarbah (2004) identified four ways by which one may sever the relationship with one's *Ebusua*. These are through cutting *ekar* (the symbolic way of renouncing a descendant or a relative), adoption, partition, and commendation. Since the theme of this article is not on the *Ebusua* I will turn from

it for now and concentrate on the main theme, the *Asafo*.

The *Asafo* is a socio-politico-military organization of the Akan of Ghana, especially the Fante. It is organized along the patrilineage while the *Ebusua* is organised along the matrilineage. The Twi-speaking Akan also have the *Asafo* but it is not as organized as that of the Fante-speaking Akan. Membership of the *Asafo* is acquired through the father so everyone belongs to the father's *Asafo* and religious cult known as *egyabosom*. Admission to both the matrilineal and patrilineal social organizations is basically by birth: it is automatically conferred except where a stranger has been incorporated. There is a difference, however, with regard to formal initiation. Whereas one has to present an alcoholic drink and go through some rituals to be formally initiated into the *Asafo*, only the stranger need be formally initiated into the *Ebusua*. The formal initiation into the *Asafo* has come about as a result of social changes brought about by contact with Europeans. In traditional culture, it was obligatory for a father to introduce his children to his lineage and *Asafo*. So a father bought a gun for the male child after the introduction and subsequent initiation. In times past, the initiation was not to enable the initiate to enjoy rights and privileges but it was a way by which a father commissioned his child to take up responsibilities in the community through his lineage and the *Asafo*. With the contact with Europeans, the *Asafo* companies were branded as groups which were only interested in pitching their energies against one another in a non-competitive civic function. It was, therefore, described as "democracy gone mad" and "mob rule" by the colonial authorities (Shaloff 1974), while Christianity branded it as fetish (Sackey 1998). Christians who were members of the

Asafo were excommunicated. Those who had converted to Christianity and wanted to benefit from the sacraments that the Christian sects offered were made to renounce and relinquish their positions in the *Asafo* (Sackey 1998). Since there was the need to know those who still had allegiance to the *Asafo* and, as a consequence, had the rights to enjoy privileges from it, there was the need for such initiation. Thus developed the rule that one could enjoy the privileges accorded members of the *Asafo* only after one had professed to be a true member and had been initiated into it. Another major difference is that while strangers could be incorporated into the *Ebusua*, such people could not be incorporated into the *Asafo* since that threatened the security of the state because the *Asafo* was the military wing of the state.

The Fante *Asafo* is organized quite differently from that of the Twi-speaking Akan. Addo-Fening (1998, 1997) asserts that the structure of the *Asafo* of Akyem Abuakwa seems to have been borrowed from the neighboring Fante and Ga states. This is depicted in the titles of *Asafo* leaders. According to him, the *Asafo* is composed of able-bodied men who hold no office connected with local stools (political symbol of office). Membership was originally not automatic. Prospective members had to be recommended and initiated. He continues that in times of peace members acknowledged the position of the leaders of the *Asafo* but in times of war the *Asafo* was divided into several fighting units, each of which was under the command of a chief who doubles as *Ɔsafohene* (commander). The position of *Ɔsafohene* of Akyem Abuakwa is appointive at the pleasure of the chief. Therefore, he wields limited political power in a community. Among the Asante, the *Asafo* was based on the *Ebusua* (matrilineal) system. However, in Kumasi,

the lineage system gave way to groupings based entirely on military consideration (Busia 1968). Among the Kwahu, they were organized under the matrilineage. They operate under the local chief, who appoints any of his elders to be an *Asafo* leader (Asiamah 2000).

It is not clear if, among the Twi-speaking *Asafo*, membership is open to women. Fante women belong to the *Asafo* and they wield power within it. Whereas leadership positions in the *Asafo* in Twi-speaking areas are created by the chiefs, for the Fante they are autonomous. The social and political structures of the *Asafo* in Twi-speaking areas change in response to war and peace but those of the Fante are permanent. Therefore, this makes the Fante *Asafo* a formidable force in the political system. The egalitarianism that exists within the Fante *Asafo* creates a conducive environment for the creation of a civil society based on traditional principles. Within the *Asafo*, women have the opportunity to articulate their opinions in the society.

The Akan combine gender and seniority. Many people are of the opinion that the Akan are matrilineal but patriarchal in the sense that the power and authority of a mother are vested in the mother's brother. This is not the reality on the ground. The reality is that the socialization of the younger ones is a shared responsibility. So what a father can do, can be done by any adult male in the community, especially the father's brother and the mother's brother. However, the general principle is that males can socialize males better and vice versa. So if a mother's brother is seen at the helm of affairs he may only be complementing the roles of the father of the child. When it comes to disciplining a female child the mother's brother's role will be limited. Thus patriarchy comes in when a male is being

socialized. But even in this case, the patriarchal principles are not vested in males alone. Women may be seen playing patriarchal roles by virtue of their relationship to a child's father. For instance the father's sister is regarded as a father and not a mother. She is vested with the power and authority to rebuke the children of her brother, offer spiritual guidance to them and many more.⁷ All these are regarded as male gender roles but it is not only men who play them. It is worthy of note that a woman also plays the role of a mother to her biological children as well as her sister's children. The community expects her to play maternal roles to all other people in the community, except women who are older than she is and do not have any kinship relation that makes the person superior to her. Thus the concept of seniority that Oyewumi identifies is inherent here. This shows the extent to which power and authority are vested in women. So, as noted earlier, male roles are not played by males alone. Therefore, in the Fante family systems gender roles are vested in lineages and not the individual sexes.

The facts presented above buttress Oyewumi's (2000; but see also Arnfred 2002) and Amadiume's (1997) points that in African societies, many social positions may be taken up by either men or women and that there is a flexible gender system that allows a neutral construct for men and women to share roles and status. Both adult males and females can discipline a child irrespective of its gender.

⁷ The Fante refer to members of the father's lineage as *egyamoo* (fathers), irrespective of the individual's sex. The situation is captured in a better way by the Twi-speaking Akan who refer to a father's sister as *sewaa*, meaning female father. It comes from the words *se* (father) and *waa* (female). Therefore, a *sewaa* plays the roles of a father (male roles) especially in the absence of the biological father.

In traditional politics, there is gender division of functions. There are male stools and female stools. Every male stool has its female counterpart. The two play complementary roles. However, in the absence of the chief the queen-mother does not take over his responsibilities. Of course the chief cannot also take over the responsibilities of the queen-mother if the latter is not available. The chief has a council made up of only males (except the queen-mother) and the queen-mother's is made up of only females. The culture demands that the principles of division of roles based on gender should be upheld. Moreover, there are rituals that must be performed by the occupant of the stool. An example is the *nkonguafieso*⁸ rituals. The rituals have limitations based on the gender of the person performing them. Even though there are situations in Akan history where women occupied male stools (Arhin 1983), the literature does not show how the females were able to play the religious roles associated with the status of a chief. Again the fact that women occupied male stools shows that gender roles are vested in families and, where they are vested in families, the gender construct is neutral. So women can play male gender roles.

The *Asafo* and *Ebusua*: Competition or Complementary?

The organization of the Fante into *Ebusua* and *Asafo* makes the social and political systems revolve around these two groups of people who are in healthy competition and conflict like the proverbial Akan Siamese

⁸. As part of his religious duties, the chief he is supposed to perform the rituals of *nkonguafieso* (the stool room). Women are barred from taking part in those rituals because they are deemed to be unclean when they are in their menses. As a consequence, people believe that to prevent any calamity befalling the state, women who are in their reproductive stages must keep away from the place where the rituals take place.

twins called *Funtumefudeefu-Denkyemfudeefu*. These twins have two heads but they are joined at the stomach. They compete strongly for food but at the end of the period they satisfy one stomach and, therefore, one body (see Hagen 1995). In this case the *Asafo* and *Ebusua* are the two heads, which are working to bring about the socio-political development of the Fante. The society recognizes the nature of the competition and does not dispute that the competition has the potential to create problems for the state. In principle the two groups offer similar opportunities but the intensity is not on equal basis. The state draws the lines clearly that one supersedes the other. For instance, one succeeds to political office through both the *Ebusua* and the *Asafo*. In this case one can be an *Ŋhen* (chief of a town or state) through the matrilineage but *Safohen* (chief within the *Asafo*) through the patrilineage. With this, the matrilineage is stronger than the patrilineage in the sense that the *Ŋhen* is for the entire town, village or state while the *Safohen* is for an *Asafo* company. However, the *Asafo* is woven into the socio-political systems so that gives every *Safohen* a political role to play in the polity. The political networks involving the *Asafo* and chieftaincy are as follows:

A *Tufuhen* (commander of warriors or *Asafo*) is a politico-military position. His position is a chiefly one and so it is vested in an *Ebusua*. But the *Tufuhen's* council is made up of the *Supifo*.⁹ The *Supifo* represent the interests of the *Asafo*.

The *Ebusua* plays the roles of the state (through the chieftaincy institution) while

⁹. *Supi* (plural, *Supifo*) is the chief warrior and therefore the topmost positions in the *Asafo* companies. Under each *Supi* are a number of *Safohenfo*.

the *Asafo* plays the role of a civil society organization. Chieftaincy is aristocratic and matrilineal. In other words, the chief traces his descent through the females back to the founder of the community. So if one does not belong to the lineage vested with the stool (symbol of office), that person cannot take up a chiefly position. The *Asafo* is patrilineal. Thus everybody belongs to the father's *Asafo* company. Membership of the *Asafo* is open to all classes of people while chieftaincy is open to members of the royal lineage; that is the lineage of the founder of the community. So the *Asafo* is egalitarian by nature. The state is supreme but the *Asafo* checks the excesses of the state or government. The *Asafo*'s respect for the chieftaincy in this relationship is expressed in the adage "*Asafo wɔbɔ no ɔhen ho*" (Lit: *Asafo* is played around a chief. In context: *Asafo* is used to ensure the smooth reign of the chief) (Wilson 2000). Therefore, chiefs use the *Asafo* to execute their policies. Furthermore, the *Asafo* is given some powers but in order to ensure that the *Asafo* does not abuse the powers given, the superiority of the state is highlighted by the proverb, *ɔman tae ho no na posuban¹⁰ si mu.*" (The *posuban* is located within the town. Therefore, the former is a subset of the latter).

Since the father is the spiritual guardian of a child, the bond between a father and a child is very strong. This is because in African societies religion permeates all aspects of life. So for the Fante there is this proverb that *obi mmfa ne nsa benkum nkyere n'egya*

¹⁰. A monument that depicts *Asafo* symbols. In some towns it is referred to as *aban*. In the study areas respondents distinguished between the *aban* and *posuban*. The *aban* is the monuments while the *posuban* (often closer to the *aban*) is a spot where rituals are performed. *Posuban*, in this proverb, is in reference to the *Asafo*.

*fie*¹¹ (one does not point at the father's house with the left finger). Even though religion and social life go together, the religious aspects and bonds are stronger. So normally, when there is danger, for example, when one hits the toe against an object or when one is in pain one exclaims "*egya*" (father). The spiritual bond is very strong. In politics, it gives one the audacity to oppose unpopular decisions of chiefs. This is such that even in a situation where one is a member of the royal lineage, one will be expected to invoke the father's spirit to oppose such unpopular policies.

Since religion goes with morality fathers have the responsibility and power to shape the moral life of a child. This is, however a shared responsibility. So a father's sister can play that role in the absence of a father. This goes further to vest power in women. Once again we see women playing patriarchal roles.

The child obtains economic rights from both parents. Normally girls work with their mothers and boys work with their fathers. However if a child decides to do any other job apart from those of the parents, the father must pay the fees so that he/she can go through apprenticeship. If the father fails then he should not expect a befitting burial from such a child.¹² Upon the death of a father children cannot succeed their father. The rule is that brothers succeed brothers. Where there are no uterine brothers, then a man's mothers' sisters' sons could succeed him. If there is none of such category, then a man's sister's son can succeed him. In any

¹¹ In dual symbolism the left is profane. To use the left hand when indicating direction is something that is not done.

¹² Children provide most of the items that are used for a father's funeral rites. They play very important roles even though they don't belong to their father's *Ebusua*.

case, the children of a man regard these people as their fathers.

From the above discussion it is clear that in politics, matrilineal principles supersede those of the patrilineal. But because in religion, patrilineal principles supersede those of the matrilineal, the two lineages are seen to be engaged in a healthy competition for the common good of the individuals and the communities as a whole. Besides, gender division of functions and obligations are not vested in the sexes so both male and female come together to ensure that the community grows.

Women's Participation in the *Asafo* and *Ebusua*.

In the study areas, the queen-mother does not play any of the roles mentioned above. The *ɔman Baatan*¹³ plays some of these roles. For instance he is the one who has the prerogative to select an heir to the throne. He is the person who can rebuke the chief if he does not conduct himself properly. In any case he can do this only if the chief has not taken advice from his councilors. The queen-mother may advise the chief if she observes something wrong or she may do so in her capacity as a member of the council of elders. A Fante queen-mother cannot plead for clemency on behalf of a fugitive once judgment has been passed in the chief's court. My respondents asked, "How could she plead for clemency on behalf of the 'convict' when she was part of the council which sat on the case?" Thus the queen-mother's role is to mobilize the women and present their views at council meetings. The power vested in her position

¹³ *Head of the royal lineage. Lit: parent of the state.* This position is usually vested in males, but like all other chieftain positions among the Akan, it has a female counterpart. This position exists in some of the Fante states, e.g. Gomoa and Ekumfi. In places where this position does not exist, e.g. Oguaa, the queen-mother has the prerogative to select the chief.

is to rule women. Women in the community seek her interventions in matters relating to the family and children, especially where a father's responsibility is preventing a child from realizing his/her full potential. A man can be summoned before a queen-mother to answer charges. In sum, women do not wield as much political power as the men do when it comes to chieftaincy. However, in matters affecting women, if their interests are not considered, they can sabotage the efforts of the men.

In spite of the fact that women do not wield much power in chieftaincy, they are a force to reckon with when it comes to the *Asafo*. My informants allege that it is women who normally incite riots during inter-*Asafo* displays as they cheer on the men. It is also alleged that, in the past, women were those who used to incite the men to go to war. They usually did this by showering praises on their men and casting insinuations on the opponents. Under the cultural norms, the men will not react to such insinuations coming from women. So when the women come in contact with women of the opposing side they intensify the insinuations to prompt them that their men do not deserve the praises that they are showering on them. When the other side responds, each side dares her men to fight the opponent. This makes the men take up the challenge and the result is often disastrous (Wilson 2000). In the past, whenever there were riots, the women could stop it by moving en bloc between the rioting men. When this happened, the army of both sides had to come to a cease-fire. This is so because women replenish the population of the lineage and, therefore, the state. So women's life is precious to the society. Therefore, men should be prepared to lay down their lives for women at all times. Thus women served as an influential interest group within the *Asafo*. How efficiently women played

this role could be attributed to the fact that women play the roles of wives, mothers, sisters and daughters.

As part of their *uxorem* rights, they can advise their husbands and whenever it becomes necessary, admonish them. This is normally done outside the public realm so it is latent. As mothers, they have every right to admonish their children, even when the children are married. As sisters, they influence the decisions of their brothers. Tradition demands that men should hold family property in trust for women. Therefore, the men are obliged to ensure that the concerns of women are taken seriously. In this vein, men, who are the custodians of family property, are obliged to give their sister's children a fair share of the family resources so that the children will—in turn—look after their mothers. These were rights and privileges which women enjoyed from the *Ebusua*. However, as a social norm, it extended to the *Asafo*. Since the young men were more militant and they formed the bulk of the *Asafo*, the women “controlled” the entire *Asafo* by “controlling” the young men.

In recent times, the *Asafo* women march beside their male counterparts during festivals. In Otuam the women fire musketry during *Asafo* displays. According to Christensen (1954; but see also Wilson 2000) a woman can succeed a father or a brother to the position of *Safohen* temporarily. In the study areas there are female *Safohenfo*, who occupy these positions permanently. In most cases they succeeded the males because there were no “worthy” males in the patrilineage. In any case, the females are chosen on their individual merit; that is, based on their own interests and roles in the *Asafo*. It could be noted that whereas the status and roles in chieftaincy are gender-based the roles in

Asafo are not. There is nothing like male whip¹⁴ and female whip. So in the *Asafo*, female roles do not complement male roles. Women who hold *Asafo* positions are expected to participate fully in all activities of *Asafo* leaders. The only inhibition is that women do not take part in the performance of rituals when they are in their menses. This is because women are regarded as spiritually unclean when they are in this state. In such situations they were not supposed to get close to men.

A close examination of the political roles and status of women in chieftaincy reveals that it is also limited by menstruation. Every chief has to perform the rituals of *nkonguafieso* in honor of the Black Stools since it links him to his predecessors (Arhin 1983). The belief is that the black stool contains the spirit of the dead chief. Therefore, it is the shrine of the deceased chief and so it is regarded as the earthly home of a departed ruler (Sarpong 1971). But women were barred from taking part in the performance of this ritual because of the prohibition associated with menstruation. There was the fear that the presence of a menstruating woman could neutralize the potency of the rituals. Even if the women are not in their menses they should not be entertained because the onset of menstruation is sudden. In other words, it could occur without any prior notice. Moreover, one of the greatest taboos among the Akan is for a menstruating woman to go close to the palace (Sarpong 1971). Even the queen-mother was supposed to stay away from the palace when she was menstruating. For the *Asafo*, such prohibitions were limited in the sense that, in the past, when men were going to the battlefield, they obtained menstrual blood of women, which

¹⁴ The whip is the symbol of office for the *Asafo* while the stool is that for chieftaincy. In chieftaincy there are male stools and female stools.

they believed could neutralize the *juju* (magic) of their opponents. In those days, members of the *Asafo* converged at customary meeting places (the *Asafo esi* or *esiwdo*), which is often closer to the *aban/posuban* before they left for the battlefield. So if menstrual blood was prohibited then whoever came in contact with such blood would have been deemed unclean and, therefore, could not make it to the place. Therefore, there is no known *Asafo* ritual which women are barred from taking part. Respondents were of the opinion that women took care of children so at times that prevented them from participating in *Asafo* rituals. There is nothing to suggest that they could not take part because they were regarded as unclean.

Two issues are pertinent here. It can be seen that the role of the queen-mother, and for that matter women, in traditional political issues is latent. But when it comes to the *Asafo* women are empowered because they participate fully and, to some extent, they influence what the men should do; for example, inciting riots and giving the men the necessary support (spiritual and non-spiritual), negotiating cease-fires, etc. This shows that women's political power (in chieftaincy), which is vested in the *Ebusua* (the matrilineage), is latent but that vested in the *Asafo* (patrilineage) serves as a tool for the empowerment of women in political participation, and therefore, community development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, many gender activists are of the opinion that in African societies, women's participation in politics and decision making is limited. For the Modernist Anthropologists this point of view may be derived from observations of women's traditional domestic roles. The argument has been presented in this essay

that among the Fante of Ghana women's participation in traditional politics was not limited because through the chieftaincy institution, women ruled, and through the *Asafo*, which served as a civil society organization, they played a vibrant role in the traditional political systems. Thus, social and political organizations, among the Fante, are based on the lineage. But the *Asafo* exists as another socio-political organization. The *Asafo* does not play parallel roles with the chieftaincy institution but complements its roles to bring about social, political and community development. In both the chieftaincy and the *Asafo* women play very important roles. However, while the roles of women in chieftaincy serve to complement those of the men, in the *Asafo* the women's roles are on their own merit. Therefore, the participation of women in *Asafo* activities is very clear while that of the *Ebusua* and, therefore, chieftaincy is latent.

In effect, women participated in all aspects of governance, whether in leadership positions or as back benchers. Therefore, among the Fante, in traditional politics, women are seen at the top of the political hierarchy as well as the grass roots. This author submits that change in the scholarly and public perceptions of traditional African culture with regard to women's political roles is needed. In future, researchers who study African societies should examine pre-colonial gender roles and identities before making generalizations.

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The Contexts of Intellectual Education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract

Intellectual education retains a strong hold on the Congolese system, which reflects the influence of Belgium, the former colonial power. In the aftermath of independence in 1960, the Congo was met with the challenge to fill the political and intellectual vacuum created by the massive departure of the Belgians. Scholars agree that from Mobutu's regime on, Congolese education has not undergone any substantial reform. Professional and vocation education most needed to respond to the economic and social needs of the country has been seriously neglected. The author argues that it is important to rethink and reconstruct the current foundations of Congolese education. The World Bank report of 2005 has shown the prevalence of intellectual education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ironically dependent upon a devastated infrastructure. This leaves memorization as the only reliable learning method. The present article advocates for more critical thinking in addition to memorization as learning tools.

Key words: Education, Africa

Contexts of Intellectual Education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Intellectual education applies to all forms of education, particularly moral, political, aesthetic, etc., all bearing intellectual or cognitive components (Elias 1995). As often defined, the direct purpose of intellectual education appears to focus on knowing and understanding for the sake of learning, without necessarily responding to the needs and demands of the society. Not neglecting the cognitive purpose of education, Scalon (1965) argues that a theoretical reflection of an educational system, including the Congolese intellectual education, aims at providing new directions to better fit current and future needs of a society. Arguably, most educators believe that a good educational system should be grounded in

the sociocultural realities of the people to whom the education is geared (Dewey 1990; Freire 1970; Nyerere 1967).

To critically examine the adequacy of the Congolese intellectual education of today, this article tackles the following questions: 1) what are the foundations and purposes of education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?; and 2) what are the contexts of intellectual education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo? This inquiry can claim the support of Freire's reconstructionism (1970) that is a philosophical movement that conceptualizes education as an institution for social engineering. Freire developed the concept of "cultural synthesis" which he defines as a "systematic and deliberate form of action

which operates upon the social structure, either with the objective of preserving that structure or of transforming it.” To operate a “cultural synthesis” within the Congolese intellectual education will require, among other things, to consider the foundational question of the Congolese educational system.

Foundations of the Congolese Education System

By foundations of education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this article claims both the origins and purposes of the current formal system. Left for other discussions and consideration is the tremendous importance of the African traditional education which unfortunately escapes the attention of most educators in Africa in general and the Congo in particular (Okrah 2003). In their *Philosophical foundations of education*, Ozmon and Craver (1999) proclaim that “humanity had a philosophy of education long before it began the formal study of philosophy.... In earlier times, education was primarily for survival. Children were taught skills necessary for living” (p. 2). By extension, it may be argued that in developing countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, people are unaware of the purposes of education, and economic pressure causes parents consider the economic contribution of children to the household economy (“making money”) in the short term over the long-term benefits of education.

Scholars disagree about the beginning of formal education in the Congo, although western schooling is acknowledged as typically linked to the former Belgian colonial power (George 1966; Abedi 1994). From 1885 to 1908 when the Congo, then known as the Congo Free State, was still the private property of Belgian King Leopold II, the government of the Free State had no agenda about the organization of schooling

(Abedi 1994). However the first schools that opened their doors—probably around 1888 at the request of the Roman Catholic Church (Abedi 1994)—were confessional in nature and run by Catholic priests (George 1966). Those first schools were referred to as “*colonies d’enfants indigènes*” (colony of indigenous children) (Kita 1982) whose purpose was to help abandoned and neglected children. From 1908 and 1960, the Congo officially served as a colony of the Belgian state. The colonial power attempted to adopt different educational systems primarily in response to the needs of the metropolis (George 1966; Abedi 1994; Yates 1986).

George (1966) states that the objective of colonial education in the Congo was to relate all schooling to the life which the Congolese were expected to lead and to the jobs which they were expected to hold, and secondly to keep the teaching of French and academic subjects to a minimum (although this objective was never achieved in practice). The purpose of the school colonies was not so much to help the abandoned children and the colonized but to create labor camps where Congolese were to be trained to serve the purposes of the settlers, the colonists (Van Hove 1951; Kita 1982, Yates 1982; Abedi 1984). Congolese schooling was confined to elementary education, given in the four vernaculars (Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba and Swahili), and post-primary vocational training.

Abedi (1994), an advocate of democratic education, where students have a say in the design of their curriculum, remarks that post colonial education in the Congo became elitist, because the educational system geared up to fill the vacuum created with the departure of colonial administrators after independence in 1960. Interest in either vocational or technical education waned

since this came to be seen as reserved for the intellectually incapable and socially inferior category of citizens. The post-independence Congolese dreamed of a more academic, intellectually stimulating type of education with the purpose of becoming “*évolués*,” that exceptional category of trained Congolese that colonial Belgians considered less inferior and capable of imitating the colonial life style and assimilating to the European way of life.

Under the reign of the dictator Mobutu (1965-1998), the Congolese educational system fell into neglect. The policy of the Mobutu administration in matters of educational reform was, as the saying went in Lingala, “*Ebeba, ebeba tokobongisa lobi*” (“Let it be so, we will fix it tomorrow”) (Abedi 1994: 3). The Mobutu regime rewarded the children of his political supporters with education in highly selective European and American schools and universities, while overseeing the destruction of a national educational system that overemphasized intellectual education and demeaned vocational training. In 1994, Abedi cautioned that Mobutu’s regime would not engage in a serious educational curriculum reform that might threaten his regime. Yates (1992) reports that an education reform in 1986 failed to take off mainly because of Mobutu’s resistance to changes and the country’s financial resource constraints.

As a consequence of Mobutu’s negligence of education in the Congo, the World Bank (2005) predicted that the domestic state budget would fail to meet educational objectives and hinder any change of educational policy in the Congo. In the report, the Bank mentioned the inability of the Congo to serve a growing primary school age population of 8.8 million in 2002, predicted to increase at about 2.7%

per year. The report also analyzed the current status of educational coverage, outcomes, and financing at all levels of instruction and found that the educational system was characterized by outdated curricula at all levels and low quality education because of the lack of appropriate education leadership.

In spite of the upheavals mainly caused by the last reform of 1986 (Yates 1992), the educational system in the DRC continues to expand according to the World Bank Report (2005). In 2002, primary education involved 19,100 elementary schools, 159,000 teachers and 5.47 million students. There were over 8,000 secondary schools with 108,000 teachers and 1.6 million students. The number of post secondary institutions has grown even faster, with about 285 students per 100,000 inhabitants (World Bank 2005). In his report to the Spencer Foundation on Congolese education, Shapiro (1998) implies that the active involvement of Congolese in the education of their children is focused on preparing them to participate in the informal sector of the economy. He argues that most Congolese, particularly women, see education as a means of survival in an economy that had been declining since the mid-1970s.

Hull’s (1979) argues that the Zaïrian (Congolese) educational system had become an instrument of underdevelopment rather than development. He maintains that students are not taught how to make a living, speak their own language, think in terms of their own culture, or even produce those things for which they have need in order to subsist. This scholar has addressed the noticeable decline in the economic, social and cultural fabric of education in the Congo, which has caused a major shift in the intended purposes of schooling since the 1970s. In recent years, the Congolese

government has been coping with the consequences of a five-year war (1998-2004) and the impacts on all the core sectors of the country. The current context of education mirrors the aftermath of war and first democratic presidential elections. The question still remains as to who really cares about the outcome of education in the Democratic Republic of Congo? However, the World Bank Report (2005) commends the resolve of the Congolese people who cling to their current intellectual education as a path to a better life and a contribution to the reconstruction of the country.

Intellectual Education

Classical views referred to intellectual education as liberal because it was the education of freemen whose role was to free the mind from the illness of ignorance, illusion and error (Aristotle 1964). Many recent philosophers of education, such as Maritain and Mortimer, have shared this metaphysical view of education also referred to as perennialism, humanism, rationalism, and neo-Thomism. Dewey and Freire see the classical view as elitist and exclusivist since it excludes vocational and manual education from consideration in the school curriculum (Elias 1995). Elias argues that the education of the intellect stands for the acquisition of subject matters that are recognized as knowledge in general or in a particular culture. Intellectual education characterized by aristocratic elitism, excessive memorization and loose critical thinking retains a strong hold on most African systems, which reflects the influence of the western countries that colonized them (Kwado Okrah 2003). Mbandaka and Vinck (1995) acknowledge that although some noticeable changes have occurred during the last two decades, Congolese education remains entirely a product of the Belgian system with its pronounced elitism. Hull (1979) argues that educational systems in

the colonies were designed to be the mirror of those in the metropole in order to serve as the engines of the national development by producing cadres of educated and trained elites. As conceived, intellectual education has meant to embrace colonial elitism, based upon intellectual studies (Latin, philosophy, chemistry, physics, and the like), and to exclude manual (vocational) training, such as that focused on carpentry, woodworking, masonry, and fishing.

The Congolese educational system is divided into six years of elementary school and six years of high school (World Bank 2005). The elementary school program focuses on mathematics, languages (French and one vernacular), sciences, universal geography, and history. The student is expected to use memory more than critical thinking skills (Aglo and Lethoko 2001). The first two years of high school (seventh and eighth grades in the United States' system) require some abstract knowledge in mathematics and language. These two years are called the "*tronc commun*," which is common to all the streams. As nationally regulated, in each of these two grades the very same curriculum is used throughout the country. At the ninth grade level, which corresponds to the first year of high school in the United States, students enroll in three main majors: 1) Sciences, which include two options (Mathematics and Physics, and Biology and Chemistry), 2) Latin and Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy, and 3) Professional majors (includes Trade and Administrative Techniques, Agriculture Techniques, Mechanics Techniques, Electricity Techniques and so forth). Professional Studies are divided into the "*cycle long*" the full six years and the "*cycle court*" also understood as the vocational stream. The vocational options do not allow admission to higher education since graduates are not awarded a high school

diploma. With the exception of particular majors, all high schools use the same curricula in universal geography, history, civics, literature and sociology (World Bank 2005). Religion and morals are taught in accordance with the religious affiliation of the school. By the time they finish high school, students are expected to qualify in their respective majors and to exhibit an acceptable amount of intellectual education. From the post independence era (George 1966) to today the Congolese educational has focused on the humanities at the high school level.

What this means is that the African educational system in general, and the Congolese system in particular, including secondary and postsecondary curricula, is characterized by an elitist intellectualism embedded in intensive memorization (Abedi 1994, Aglo and Lethoko 2001) and a quasi lack of critical thinking. Ayittey (1998) asserts that until the 1970s Africa pursued the wrong type of education.

The educational system was geared to produce more graduates in the arts (law, history, sociology, political science, among others) than in the sciences and the vocations.... Africa urgently needs vocational education, which teaches students skills or some trade so that they can go out into the real world with practical skills and support themselves—instead of relying on the government that provided their education to also be responsible for their employment.... The vocations taught can be many and varied: they may range from carpentry, woodworking, fish smoking, cultivating plantations, and small fishing boat manufacturing to auto mechanics and gari-making (a

local dish made out of manioc or cassava)” (Ayittey 1998: 143).

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo the need to fill the void created by the departure of Belgians after independence in 1960 has generated an elitist education oriented towards morality (Abedi 1994). As a consequence, technical and vocational education is considered to be a third class education. Aglo and Lethoko (2001) argue that “only a few students enroll in technical and vocational schools” (p. 50). These are called the “cycle court” as opposed to the “cycle long” which leads to the university upon success to the national state exam (Examen d’Etat). The World Bank (2005) listed thirty-three options in the vocational stream. However, as a country that strives to emerge from the ashes of destruction, corruption and war, the Congo needs to respond to the enormous need for carpenters, mechanics, fishers, woodworkers and others.

Recently, professor Mbuyamba (2006) questioned the purposes of such an elitist education in the Congo.

What is the importance of training a greater number of humanists while we lack agricultural technicians able to feed themselves and society? How important is it to create many high-level officials while we lack lower-level clerks?” (Mbuyamba 2006 : 2)

The excessive emphasis on humanities in the Congolese education not only minimizes or even excludes the role of vocational education, it also accentuates the rote-memorization learning process (Aglo and Lethoko 2001). Such reconstructivists as Freire and Dewey de-emphasize the rote-memorization of material as demeaning to the education of the student. However, in his

book, *In defense of memorization*, Beran (2004) contends that the culture of memorization does not repress or enslave, rather it enlarges and strengthens and frees. In the Congo, one would believe that the only effective way to learn from teachers' conservative lectures and outdated handouts remains memorization.

A careful analysis of the socioeconomic environment in which Congolese institutions of secondary and postsecondary education operate reveals a lack of didactic infrastructure and an impoverished environment that has limited the ability of students and parents to acquire minimum educational tools, such as copy books, text books, and basic materials for their children (Mbandaka and Vinck 1995; Abedi 1994). The World Bank Report (2005) reveals that the curricula and standards in the Democratic Republic of Congo have not been officially revised for over 25 years. In addition, the Report observes that the educational system in that country is characterized by outdated curricula at all levels, which has affected quality education because of the lack of appropriate education leadership.

All things considered, memorization appeared to be effective for intellectual education and the study of African cultures and African and Congolese traditions. Memorization is also deemed an appropriate instrument to master formulas for the study of mathematics, physics, biology, and chemistry, as well as data for the study of history, geography, sociology and similar disciplines.

Five Congolese students from the Jesuit High School of Bonsomi in Kinshasa won the international trophy in a high school version of Jeopardy in 1991 (CNECC 1995). The test was administered to Francophone

high school students worldwide. In addition to the global curricula found in the high schools of any country, the test included broader universal knowledge. The subjects are diverse, including mathematics, sciences, geography, history, arts, literature, nuclear sciences, and neurochemistry. After defeating Canada in the semifinals, Congolese high school students defeated France in the finals and were proclaimed the brightest students in the Francophone world. Memorization skills as opposed to critical thinking played a positive role in this case. Given the current environment of Congolese education, one feels that memorization remains an indispensable learning tool even as new technologies are introduced into Congolese schools.

However important the role of memorization, problem-solving lessons in meaningful learning contexts ought to be given equal emphasis (Alvarez 1993). Critical thinking stands for a "strategy which offers tomorrow's citizens the opportunities to prepare for the type of lifestyle that will require the ability to think critically and solve a vast array of problems" (Henson 1995: 224). One way for students to develop critical thinking is through the case study method. Self-selected cases spur curiosity and invite students to initiate critical and imaginative thinking (Henson 1995: 224). For critical thinking to work in classroom settings this paper proposes that the entire administration and faculty consider undergoing an adequate training orientation on ways of building and enhancing the critical-thinking abilities of their students.

Congolese higher education sadly follows the same Platonic pattern as does primary and secondary school education. Professors are believed to possess the whole of knowledge whereas students are perceived as empty vessels into which subject lessons

and ideas should be forcibly poured with little discussion and no opposition. Of course most schools and universities cannot afford basic libraries to allow students to do personal research and sustain coherent discussion (World Bank 2005). Nor do teachers and professors have the freedom to depart from their only source of teaching, that is, the books and notes that were a product of their own education. Aglo and Lethoko (2001) note that “education emphasizes memorization and cramming” (p. 50). Implementing critical thinking as one of the major foci of intellectual education could, however, encourage teachers and professors to move in that direction.

Critical thinking will help school bodies to question and deconstruct the legacy of the colonial education and its extension/decline under the Mobutu regime; it will contribute to reconstructing Freire’s “cultural synthesis,” that is, a Congolese curriculum that responds to the real needs of the people. From a reconstructivist perspective (Freire, Dewey), this paper argues that the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for both a de-emphasized intellectual education and a re-valued vocational education embedded in the current structure of its society. However, such an educational orientation finds its balance in the use of both memorization and critical thinking.

In sum, the contexts of the African intellectual education in general and those of the Congolese education in particular have always been presented in terms of colonial and post colonial eras (Mbandaka and Vinck 1995). This historical distortion denies the critical importance of Congolese traditional education that shapes this society implicitly and explicitly (Hull 1979). Therefore, intellectual education in the Congo is based upon an incomplete origin, the Belgian

colonization with its legacy of intellectualism and elitism. Although the Congolese administration has been incapable to restate the purposes of learning in the country, most parents have found it to be a means of survival for their children. Students are still prompted to pursue the honor that diplomas in intellectual disciplines offer while, at the same time and part of the same process, the vocational subjects equally needed by a country in the process of reconstruction are neglected. Many scholars have found fault in the use of memorization as an exclusive learning tool; the present article has highlighted the importance of rote memorization given the grave instability of the socioeconomic structure of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Critical thinking coupled with balanced memorization can move the current direction of intellectual education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo forward.

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Establishing a Terrestrial Cenozoic Paleontological Record in South-central Madagascar: Report from the Field¹

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Abstract

Madagascar is a global biodiversity hotspot but it lacks a terrestrial Cenozoic fossil record that can be used to understand why evolution has been so prolific on this island. My purpose was to systematically sample for fossils and to establish the age of the sediments that outcrop in south-central Madagascar, an area thought to supply basal species that form endemic species at the periphery of the island. The area near Fianarantsoa has high relief with a mountain system that has Madagascar's second highest mountain peak, so relatively young sediments are abundant near roadsides. During summer 2006, I systematically investigated sediments in road outcrops and *lavakas* (washouts) for evidence of vertebrate fossils. Samples were washed over fine screen and then picked for inclusions. Samples for paleomagnetic analysis, sedimentary analysis, tephrochronology, and palynology were exported to the United States for analysis.

Key words: Madagascar, Cenozoic, Paleontology, Stratigraphy

Introduction

The lack of a known terrestrial Cenozoic fossil record in Madagascar is a serious gap in our understanding of the origin and evolution of the modern Malagasy biota. Although this gap in the origins of the modern unique biota is being inferred by reconstructing evolutionary history using molecular data from modern species (e.g. Vences et al. 2001; Yoder et al. 2003) and biogeographic information (Wilmé et al. 2006), there is no substitute for well-dated paleontological data. Such a record is critical to calibrate the molecular clocks used to estimate the time of divergence of taxonomic groups and important in understanding ancient climates (Cole et al. 2000; Visser et al. 2003) that drive biogeographic patterns as well as other factors that have driven the exuberant

evolutionary diversification evident in Madagascar (Myers et al. 2000; Raxworthy et al. 2003; Wilmé et al. 2006).

The Madagascan Cenozoic gap is most serious in terrestrial vertebrate fossils (Samonds et al. 2001; Krause et al. 1999) and is not solely due to lack of effort. The literature contains many papers, frequently written in French, about Tertiary deposits in Madagascar that contain various forms of invertebrate fossils (diatoms, gastropods, cephalopods, anthozoans, etc.) but these deposits are primarily marine. There are many Holocene deposits that contain large terrestrial fossils (e.g. "Subrecent" sites depicted on the map in the Musée de l'Académie Malgache in Antananarivo) as well as pollen and climate records from the most recent ~26,000 years (e.g. Burney

1996, 1997, 1999). In addition, Gasse and Van Campo (2001) reported on a pollen and diatom core from the central highlands that may date back as far as 150,000 years.



Karel with crew.

Knowledge of Madagascar's geology is most detailed along the western part of the island, with bands of sands, sandstones, Mesozoic and Tertiary limestones, marble and quartzite, and lavas running in a general north-south direction (Du Puy and Moat 2003). The central highlands and mountainous areas of the island are classified as undifferentiated "igneous and metamorphic basement rocks" (Du Puy and Moat 2003). However, these high altitude areas contain many road outcrops and mountain washouts (*lavakas*) that clearly represent erosion and sedimentation of strata caused by Cenozoic geological and climatic processes. Much of the work of looking for terrestrial fossils in these deposits has been done by archeologists and "big-bone" paleontologists doing cursory looks at outcrops as they travel through the countryside. No systematic efforts to determine the age of central highland sediments and to screen wash them for tiny fossils has been done. Such work has a strong chance of starting to fill the gap in the Malagasy Cenozoic fossil record. This work is of special importance at high elevations in

Madagascar because Wilmé et al. (2006) have proposed that, during the evolution of the highly endemic modern Malagasy flora and fauna, the central highlands were zones of species retreat and dispersion while the lower elevation river catchments were zones of isolation and speciation.

The purpose of the work I have been doing is to determine the stratigraphy (age, provenance, and depositional environment) of the sediments overlying the metamorphic and igneous rocks of the hills and mountains of south-central Madagascar. While collecting the samples necessary for stratigraphy, I have also been methodically surveying those sediments for fossils and other evidence that can be used to reconstruct the ancient climate and ecology of the region. This paper is a report of the locations, field observations, and preliminary data associated with this project to date.

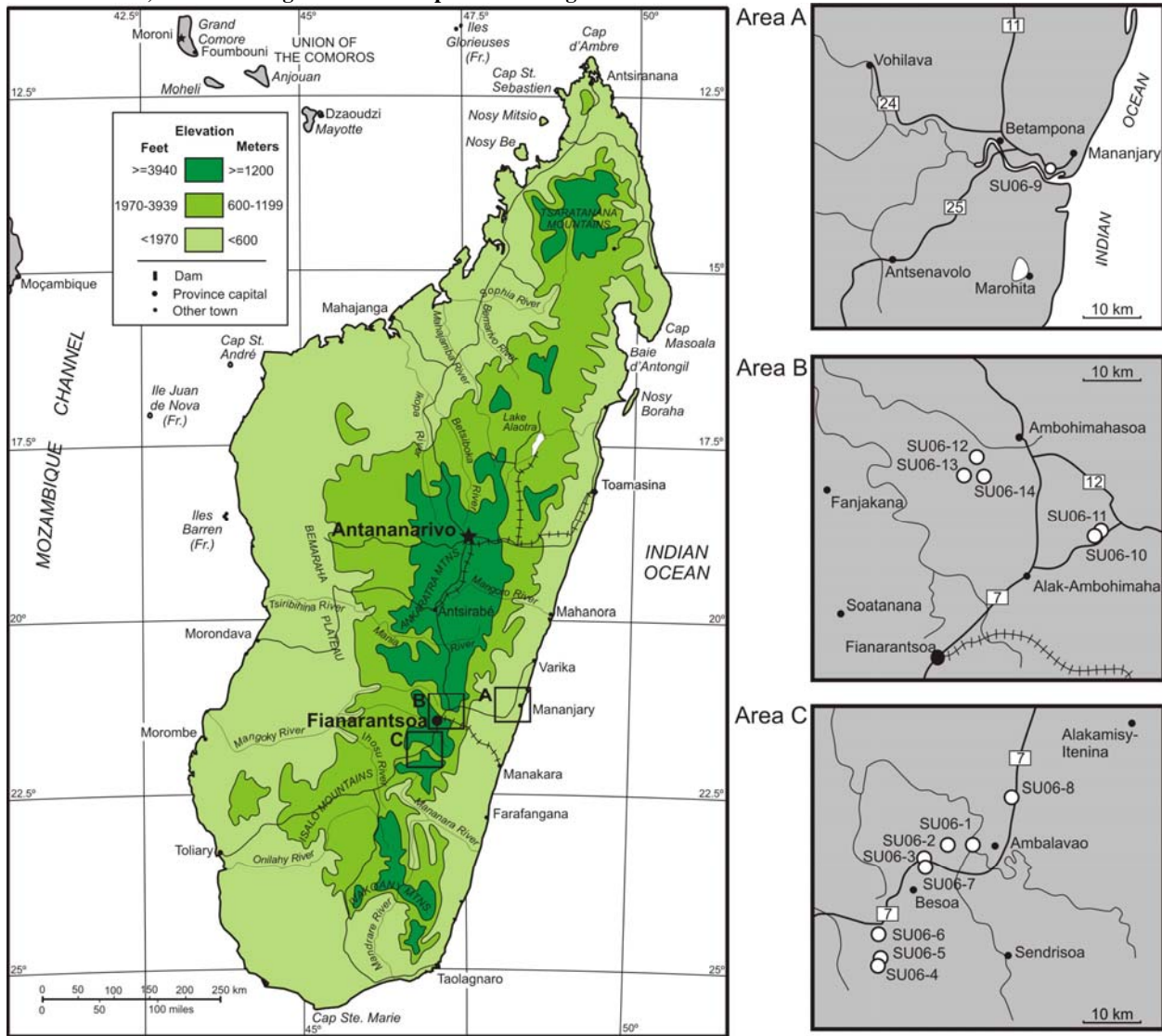
Methods

Four field trips were taken from Fianarantsoa, the second-largest city in Madagascar and the capital of the province of Fianarantsoa. This city is 1115 m above sea level and is located slightly west of the series of mountain ranges that parallel the eastern edge of Madagascar. All lab work done in Madagascar was performed in the lab of Dr. Pascal Ratalata at the University of Fianarantsoa. For each field trip, a car and driver were hired and I was assisted by Harinjaka S. RANAIVOSON ("Njaka"), a student at the Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Environnement at the University of Fianarantsoa, and Mary Jo Kattelman, an art teacher from Newark, Missouri. Because of limitations on camping, cost of travel, food availability, and sleeping arrangements, we restricted our work to areas that could be reached and worked easily within one-day's travel of

available hotels in nearby towns. The work northwest of Fianarantsoa was done from Tombohobe, the ancestral country home of Dr. Pascal RATALATA, the signatory on the GVSU-Malagasy accord under which this work was done. In addition to a permit from the Malagasy government and permission from the province administrator, permission to study sediment and collect samples had to be obtained from the mayor of each local community both before and

after field work. In some cases, even if suitable sediments were found they were not sampled because of time constraints or because the necessary local permission could not be obtained. Nevertheless, we did succeed in doing detailed sampling of ten outcrops and one *lavaka* (Figure 1). Three other localities were noted as being of special interest but were not sampled due to limited time and materials or because they were located in restricted areas.

Figure 1. General elevational map of Madagascar including major rivers. The study areas are boxed and all are in the Province of Fianarantsoa. Area A includes samples from the community of Tsaravary. Area B includes unsampled sites from Ranomafana National Park and sampled sites from the community of Ikalalao. Area C includes samples from the northern community of Iarensena and the southern community of Vohitsaoka. Vohitsaoka is located just west of Imarivolanitra, the second highest mountain peak in Madagascar.



At each locality, the sediment surface was cleaned off by a shovel and we established a measured section based on obvious lithographic changes (color, grain size, bedding patterns) or by measured intervals. The section was then sampled systematically from bottom to top. Sediment samples of 0.5-4.0 kg were taken and subsequently washed over a window screen in nearby rivers or outside of the lab at University of Fianarantsoa. Samples of approximately 100 grams each for sedimentary analysis and pollen analysis were taken in Nasco Whirlpacks®. Small samples of the modern surface were taken for pollen control. Finally, samples for paleomagnetic analysis were taken by carving a cube of sediment, pushing the sediment into a 2-cm plastic cube oriented with “up” and North arrows. All white or chalky sediments were tested for reaction with dilute HCl for carbonates and a sample was taken in a Nasco Whirlpack® for tephrochronology analysis if the sample didn’t react with the acid. All samples were labeled by locality and stratigraphic position.

Depending on the nature of the sediments, the samples for washing were soaked in water or in baking soda (to break down clays), or repeatedly washed and dried. These techniques were used to remove as much of the matrix as possible so the concentrate could be searched under a magnifying glass (no dissecting scopes were available at University of Fianarantsoa) for fossil vertebrates, plant seeds, and other inclusions of interest. Dried concentrate was stored in small paper bags until it could be picked for fossils in lab or in the hotel room. Inclusions picked out of the concentrate were stored in small plastic containers and were left with Dr. Germaine Spiral at University of Antananarivo for study by his students and him.

All samples other than the large samples for washing were approved for export by the appropriate mayor and also approved for export by the Secretariat General of the Ministère de l’Energie et des Mines of the Madagascar. Details of the permit for exploration and of the export of samples were arranged by MICET, a nonprofit Malagasy agency that facilitates overseas research in Madagascar. Subsequent to all of the required approvals, the paleomagnetic, sedimentary, pollen, and ash samples were packed by locality and governmental community and then hand carried back to the United States. Import to the U.S. is restricted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture; samples were imported under USDA permit number S-76604. Finally, sedimentary samples were sent to Eric Roberts at University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, for detailed provenance, dating, and sedimentary analysis and paleomagnetic samples were sent to Josep Pares at University of Michigan in accordance with the USDA permit. No palynologist has yet been identified to study the pollen samples.

Results and Discussion

Localities, governance community, latitude, and longitude of all study sites are presented in Table 1. The city of Fianarantsoa is included for reference. Also included in Table 1 are data relating to numbers of samples washed as well as those exported to the U.S. The heights of the sections vary widely, but the layers found, except those in Tsaravary near Mananjary on the Indian Ocean coast, were similar from locality to locality.

Table 1. Summary of localities identified and sampled during the summer of 2006.

Locality (SU06-)	South	East	Altitude (m)	Number of units	Number of samples washed	Number of sediment samples	Number of pollen samples	Number of paleomagnetic samples	Height of section (cm)
Reference: Fianarantsoa									
	21°29'39.6	47°10'25.1"	1149.1 m						
Community: Iarentsena									
1	21°50'09.2"	46°53'16.1"	947.5	5	4	4	1	4	350
2	21°50'15.4"	46°50'43.4"	944.4	3	3	1	1	3	140
3	21°51'39.9"	46°48'22.4"	1089.3	7	7	2	2	4	10,000
7-M1	21°51'36.0"	46°48'20.6"	1087.6	26	26	26	26	14	321
7-M2	21°51'36.0"	46°48'20.6"	1087.6	22	22	22	22	9	332
Community: Vohitsaoka									
4	22°01'57.6"	46°43'31.2"	806.9	2	2	1	1	3	240
5	22°01'10.4"	46°43'39.8"	792.7	3	3	1	1	3	-
6-M1	No data	No data	No data	14	12	12	13	12	490
6-M2	No data	No data	No data	7	7	7	7	7	140
6-M3	No data	No data	No data	3	3	3	3	3	45
Community: Tsaravary									
9	21°14'45.0"	48°18'18.6"	-36.9	23	23	23	24	23	680
Community: Ranomafana									
10	21°15'28.4"	47°21'38.6"	1122.2	-	-	1	1	-	-
11	21°16'38.4"	47°21'31.1"	1142.9	-	-	1	1	-	-
Community: Ikalalao									
12-M1	21°08'34.4"	47°08'37.8"	1262.3	5	5	5	5	4	87
12-M2	21°08'34.4"	47°08'37.8"	1262.3	9	9	9	9	4	1306
13	21°10'15.6"	47°07'20.1"	1287.1	17	17	17	17	4	170
14	21°10'05.9"	47°09'22.5"	1445.0	6	*6	*6	6	6	~200

*Washed in Summer 2005/ biotite dates 312-450 Ma; feldspar date 325 Ma; dates by Chris Hall, University of Michigan

The longest section was in Iarentsena and actually involves two localities: SU06-3 and SU06-7. SU06-3 is a massive washout called a *lavaka* in Malagasy set back from the road by about 1 km. From a distance, the sedimentary layers are clearly undisturbed and represent a long span of time. However, the walls of the *lavaka* are almost entirely vertical with sheer drops, an impossible situation for sampling. Several days later we found SU06-7, a long series of bedded sediment laying at an angle to horizontal in the road cut. While sampling it in a series of measured sections (we were not able to sample all of it because of time and equipment limitations), I realized that the sediment of SU06-7 was the huge block that had been catastrophically washed out of the side of the mountain containing the *lavaka* and deposited downhill and at an inclined angle for the sediment layers. This sequence may be of primary importance in establishing a geologic reference section for Cenozoic deposition in the central highlands.

The community of Vohitsaoka lies just west of Madagascar's second highest mountain peak, Imarivolanitra in the Andringitra Mountains. Steve Goodman (World Wildlife Fund in Madagascar and the Field Museum in Chicago), who played a vital role in establishing Andringitra as Madagascar's newest National Park, has observed evidence for glaciations in the Andringitra area (Pers. Comm., 2005, 2006). The localities in Vohitsaoka were chosen as possible sites of glacial outwash. SU06-4 was a relatively low outcrop, but the yellow sand layer contained bones of frogs and several of the stratigraphic layers contained small, round, striated inclusions that may be plant seeds. Once the frog bones were found, we made a second trip to SU06-4 to collect and wash a much larger sample of the sediment to determine if the bones were

actually fossils or inclusions. Unfortunately, all bones found appear to be relatively recent and represent either fossorial frogs or the prey of a fossorial predator.

Mananjary lies east of Fianarantsoa in the lowlands adjacent to the Indian Ocean. In the 1800's, an early explorer located the bones of a "Subrecent" rhinoceros in peat beds near Mananjary. The fossils were kept for many years in the Queen's Palace in Antananarivo; unfortunately the fossils were lost in 1995 when the Queen's Palace burned. The peat bed has not been located, but the section we sampled at Tsaravary did contain a lot of peat-like material low (30-60 cm) in the 680 cm section.

Ranomafana is perhaps the most known and visited National Park in Madagascar. It is located high in the mountains east of Fianarantsoa and contains vast tracks of rainforest with many species of lemurs, birds, and other endemic species. As a national park, no digging of any kind is permitted but as we traveled through the area major road construction was underway. Tall (~10 m), vertical outcrops of clearly bedded sediment was visible. Colors ranged from deep purple through reds, yellows and white. The great tragedy is that these sediments can be bulldozed but they cannot be sampled.

The last community was Ikalalao, north and a bit west of Fianarantsoa. This area is not near any major roads and we gained access because it is the ancestral land of the Ratalata family. The area is the highest elevation of any areas we sampled—it is cold, windy, and even though it is farmed for citrus and fish, it still has quite a bit of original forest. In a valley adjacent to a series of ponds formed from the original stream is a thick, white clay layer that makes up SU06-14. This layer had been sampled

with Dr. Ratalata's permission in 2005 and then resampled in 2006. Biotite and feldspar minerals from the clay have been dated by ^{39}Ar by Chris Hall at the University of Michigan. Dates range from ~300-500 Ma, obviously too old for the date the clay was formed but representative of the age of the materials deposited into the clay. Unfortunately, no vertebrate or plant fossils have been found in these sediments. Hopefully, pollen will be present.

Conclusions

The most striking general observation that can be made is that there was absolutely no trace of carbonates in any of the sediments studied. This is atypical of sediments I have studied previously, but fortunately, according to Eric Roberts (Pers. Comm. 2006), it is not an impediment to fossilization.

When the analysis of these samples is completed, we will have a framework for knowing the context of other sediments found in the central highlands of Madagascar. With time and patience and by continuing to systematically sample and wash sediment, eventually Cenozoic fossils will be found.

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Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800. By Robert C. Davis. Palgrave, Basingstoke, U.K. 2004. 280 pages. \$26.95 (paperback).

White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and Islam's One Million White Slaves. Giles Milton. Farrar, New York: Straus, and Giroux, New York. 2004. 336 pages. \$15.00 (paperback).

Reviewer: Roy Cole, Department of Geography and Planning, GVSU. Coler@gvsu.edu.

In this 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade it is salutary to reflect on the observation made by Robert O. Collins that the focus of the public, politicians and scholars on the trans-Atlantic trade is an “understandable obsession.” He attributes our focus on trans-Atlantic slavery here in the Americas principally to our geography and history. After all, it is about us. Although some may interpret his observation as diminishing the significance of the trans-Atlantic trade in some way, I strongly doubt that this is the case. Moreover, it seems doubtful that he used the word, obsession, in any pejorative sense. The presence of African slaves and their descendants in the Americas has shaped much of our history and cultural geography.

In contrast to the Atlantic slave trade, according to Collins (2005), the (Afro) Asian slave trade has been much less conspicuous in the public, political, and scholarly imaginations, although it was no less important in terms of numbers of people captured, transported, and eventually put to work as slaves for strangers. Surprisingly, the demographic impact of the Asian trade on the receiving regions seems small.

Despite the fact that its long history reaches back into the millennia of dynastic Egypt, the reality of the modern Asian slave trade dates from the Arab conquests of seventh century C.E. Thereafter during the

next twelve centuries Africans were taken as slaves to Asia across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. During this time, longer than a millennium, the number of Africans exported to Asia as slaves was approximately the same as the eleven million sent to the New World during the four hundred years of an intensive trans-Atlantic trade. (255)

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the (Afro) Asian slave trade and research has been led principally by Indian, the Middle Eastern, Brazilian, and European scholars.

Another relatively overlooked area of slavery studies has been the Mediterranean slave trade. The enslavement of Europeans by North Africans has been receiving more and more scholarly attention lately. David Brion Davis (no date) calls the topic one of great importance but one that has been strangely neglected. It is recent scholarship on slavery in the Mediterranean geographic region that I will focus on in this review.

Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800, was written by a historian and is a very scholarly, yet readable, assessment of the evidence. *White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and Islam's One Million White Slaves*, while steeped in good scholarship,

brings together the diaries, published accounts, and other anecdotal evidence written from 1500 to the mid-1800s by enslaved Europeans and Americans describing their lives in North (and sometimes Sub-Saharan) Africa, was written for the reading public. Both books are reviewed here because they complement each other wonderfully: Davis gives the historical and geographical overview, while Milton gives the personal narratives of the European slaves in North Africa, focusing principally on one literate young man who was kidnapped by North Africans from a merchant ship on which he was a cabin boy. Reading both books together or one right after the other is a richly rewarding experience, deepening one's understanding of the subject far beyond reading the books independently of one another. Davis' book is more interesting from the perspective of historical truth and is treated in more detail below.

The first two chapters in Davis' book are focused on numbers and process. How many Europeans were enslaved and how was it carried out. Between 1530 and 1780, the author states, that at least a million and perhaps 1.25 million European Christians were enslaved by the Muslims of North Africa (of the so-called "Barbary Coast"). As incredible as it might seem, according to Davis, "for most of the first two centuries of the modern era, as many Europeans were taken forcibly to Barbary and worked or sold as slaves as were West Africans hauled off to labor on plantations in the Americas" (Davis 2004: 24).

The process of enslavement was the coastal raid. Raids were so frequent and the threat of capture so likely that the coastal areas were depopulated in much of the region. The capture and enslavement of Europeans sometimes approached "state policy" (see

Brauer 1995) but was mainly the craft of small fleets practicing a "virulent form of corporate private enterprise" of which the regional viceroys in Tunis and Algiers received an eighth share of the prizes brought in by the *re'is* ($\square \otimes \in \Psi \leftrightarrow []$) or expedition leader.

Slaving by North Africans differed from the trans-Atlantic trade in that the North Africa corsair crews were directly involved in the capture of free people, their shipment, their sale, and in more general brigandage. In the trans-Atlantic trade, Europeans themselves were rarely involved in brigandage or in the dangerous work of capturing free people.

According to the author, the North Africans viewed the enslavement of Christians and brigandage in Europe in general as a kind of "Islamic gold rush, aimed at the poorly-defended shores and shipping of the Christian world" (Davis 2004: 30). Even the terms used in the Arabic language to refer to such endeavor are illustrative of the dichotomized global geography of Islam: figuratively the word "al-futuuh" ($\mu | \chi \square \leftrightarrow []$), means "conquest" but it literally means "opening up" (new lands for colonization and the spread of Islam). It constituted a religiously legitimated form of conquest of populated areas carried out on the frontiers of Islam with *Dar al-harb* (the "domain of war" in Islamic regional geography) that could make the frontier fighter or raider (the ghazi, $\oplus | \cdot \square \leftrightarrow []$) fabulously wealthy with the spoils of war (Peters 1977).

European resistance caused Muslim attacks to diminish by the end of the 17th century although there were some huge and spectacular slave raiding sorties after that time right into the early decades of the 19th century. The preferred prize for the corsairs was the Christian merchant ship. Such slow,

value-laden targets were easier to capture and contained goods as well as human cargo.

Captives were divided into two categories: those who would be held for ransom and those who would be put to work. Those held for ransom generally were merchants or upper class individuals who had (or seemed to have) relations in Europe who might pay for their release.

Christians were put to work in a variety of places. The majority of slaves became galley slaves, although the demand for slave oarsmen declined near the end of the 17th century as the use of sail became more common.

Depending on the size of their galley, slaves were assigned three, four, or five to an oar.... Oarsmen were chained by their wrists to the oar itself and also by their ankles, which were attached to a chain that ran the length of each bench and was bolted to the ship's ribbing. This left them with extremely restricted movement. When the ship was idle, slaves who needed to relieve themselves could make their way to the opening at the hull side of their bench, dragging their part of the chain.... [Oarsmen] were apparently too exhausted or dispirited ... and often ended up simply fouling themselves where they sat. The resulting stench ... was beyond belief, but besides the fumes in which they labored, the shackled galeotti were also tormented by rats, fleas, bedbugs, and other parasites (76).

When the galleys were in port, galley slaves generally were locked down in dungeons and given hard labor (for example,

constructing houses, roads, palaces; cutting stone; hauling material; chopping and hauling firewood; mining) from dawn to dusk. Skilled craftsmen, especially shipwrights were prized and generally received better treatment. Others were sent to the country to work in agriculture. Slaves were commonly rented to others in need of labor when the slave-owners had no work for them. Others, particularly female slaves, worked in the house of the master as domestics, a relatively light burden.

To a great degree in this book Davis tell an evidenced account of North African slavery of Europeans and in so doing enriches our understanding of an institution that had a variety of regional manifestations. He has demonstrated the link and contemporaneous growth of the trans-Atlantic slave and Mediterranean trades, their similarities, and their differences. Davis started his book questioning why there are few investigations of the extent of the enslavement of Europeans in the Mediterranean. He concludes that it “never served anyone’s purpose to know or even guess at an answer” (2004: 193). Perhaps the author is overstating his case here.

In *White Gold: The Extraordinary Story of Thomas Pellow and Islam's One Million White Slaves*, Giles Milton explores the diaries of European slaves in North Africa, mainly focusing on one particular individual, Thomas Pellow. Pellow, an eleven-year-old cabin boy on a Mediterranean merchant ship, was kidnapped in 1716 by North African pirates, the sort of opportunistic frontier fighters harrying a religiously-legitimated target of opportunity discussed above. His literacy and facility with languages perhaps ensured his survival in North Africa. He worked as a house slave for Sultan Mulay Ismai'il and when he was older—and after his

conversion to Islam—he became a soldier for the Sultan. He was allowed to marry and have children. After close to 30 years of captivity, Pellow escaped and returned home. Pellow’s narrative is illustrative of a genre of slave narratives penned by those who were fortunate enough to escape from North African captivity. As slave narratives they join the better-known literature composed in North America.

Of the two books, Davis raises some important and timely questions about master narratives of Europe’s “inexorable” rise to imperialism and world conquest. Davis calls such assumptions in question, likening them to a condescending teleology that ignores the many centuries when “the present” was being contested—often violently—and the many centuries when Europe, particularly Western Europe, was on the periphery of the then more developed world. In his many publications, Bernard Lewis makes the same point—although perhaps more obliquely in his discussions of the two sieges of Vienna (1982) by the Ottoman Empire.

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