



**AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER**

**ILANGA**

Fall 2008 Newsletter

**FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK**  
**Dr. Lee Cassanelli**

For more than two decades, Penn's African Studies Center (ASC) has provided resources for those in our University community engaged in research, teaching, and service related to Africa. With support from SAS and the U.S. Department of Education, we have been able to offer regular courses or specialized tutorials in a dozen African languages, making Penn a national leader in African language instruction. We roster African Studies courses in many SAS departments and across several of Penn's professional schools. Our Outreach program organizes workshops for Philadelphia-area school teachers, community organizations, members of the business community, and local media outlets. The Center's internationally-recognized website attracts an average of three million uses per month.

New Africa-related initiatives throughout the University coupled with growing student interest in the continent have made the ASC an even busier place. For example, Penn's Medical School has been sending an average of 28-36 students a year for internships to Botswana, where they work with HIV/AIDS



(From left )Dr. Richard Hodges - Penn Museum Director, His Excellency Festus Mogae - Former President of Botswana, Dr. Lee Cassanelli - Professor, History Dept & Director, African Studies Center, Dr. Sandra Barnes – Professor, Anthropology Dept at Africa Healing Journeys Reception; Penn Museum, Fall 2008.

patients in hospitals and clinics alongside African health professionals. The Botswana-UPenn Partnership has recently expanded to include faculty and student exchanges in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, as well as summer internships for Penn graduates and undergraduates in a variety of fields. The ASC provides pre-departure orientation programs for these students, and in 2009-10 we expect to offer regular Setswana language classes along with abbreviated courses for medical students and others going to Botswana for short-term research or clinical work. Penn's well-established programs in Ghana (Study Abroad at Legon, SEAS's Digital Villages

Project, participation in CHOP's Sickle Cell Research Center in Kumasi) will soon be augmented by new partnerships. The School of Engineering and Applied Sciences is taking the lead in developing a comprehensive link agreement between Penn and Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Science and Technology (KNIST), whose unique mission is to promote teaching, research and entrepreneurship training that will contribute to the development of Ghana (and Africa) as well as provide service to the community. The Open Mind for Africa Program (see article, p. 4) will be sending two Penn students to Ghana in the summer of 2009. One graduate student from the School of Social Policy (SP2) and Practice will facilitate the growing relationship between KNIST and SP2.

The University Museum's splendid collection of Benin art is being highlighted in a new exhibit, IYARE (see p. 3), while Museum staff and African Studies faculty are in the planning stage of a major new

show on 'African Healing Journeys' which will help transform the Museum's Africa gallery in 2011-12. The Penn Libraries' outstanding collections of African videos, language materials, and electronic resources continue to grow under the energetic leadership of bibliographer Lauris Olson (see his report on p. 9)

Introductory undergraduate courses in African Studies have enrolled unprecedented numbers this fall, and more students than ever before have contacted the ASC in search of short-term study and service opportunities in Africa. The Provost's Global Development Initiative helped send Penn students to Africa for 2008 summer internships with four international NGOs; you can read about some of their experiences in our Newsletter.

The challenges facing us now include developing courses which will prepare students to conduct original research in Africa, as well as courses which can provide returning students with opportunities to apply their acquired knowledge and develop their expertise at a more advanced level. The aforementioned Botswana-UPenn partnership, which seeks to integrate basic linguistic and cultural training with professional on-the-ground experience, might well serve as a model for student engagement with other African countries in fields ranging from Engineering, IT, and Communications to Sociology and Demography, Health, Education, Business, Urban Studies, Gender Studies, and Law.

The programs discussed here are only the tip of the iceberg. I look forward to sharing other opportunities and challenges in African Studies with readers in our next Newsletter.

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## 14th Annual African Scholar For a Day: David Coplan

A report from Gavin Steingo & Roger Grant

On Friday, March 28, 2008, the African Studies Center and the Department of Music collaborated to welcome Professor David B. Coplan of Wits University, South Africa, as our 14<sup>th</sup> annual African Scholar for a Day. A tremendous success, this year's event bore the title "South Africa Sonically" and was a day-long celebration of Coplan's work, filled with lively conversation and stimulating ideas. Our Scholar for a Day event culminated in Coplan's two weeks stay as a Provost's Distinguished International Scholar and guest of the Department of Music. During his visit, Coplan worked with and taught undergraduates, graduate students, and members of the wider Penn and Philadelphia communities. The unprecedented collaboration between the African Studies Center and the Provost's Distinguished International Scholar Program allowed us to benefit from our African Scholar for substantially longer than usual.

David B. Coplan is Professor and Chair of Social Anthropology at Wits University, Johannesburg, South Africa. He has also held visiting appointments at diverse institutions such as L'École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris), Rice University, NYU, and the University of Cape Town. He acted as the Chief Researcher for the "Mobilising Culture and Heritage for Nation Building" in South Africa's Arts and Culture Department and worked as an ethnographic research consultant for University of Pennsylvania Museum and International Library of African Music.



He authored *In Township Tonight!*, currently in its second edition, a seminal ethnomusicological work and the first comprehensive study of South African black performance. *In Township Tonight!* won the Herskovitz Award from the African Studies Association. Coplan is also the author of *In the Time of Cannibals: Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants*, and editor of *Lyrics of the Basotho Migrants*.

Dean Jack Nagel and Professor Lee Cassanelli opened the Scholar for a Day with their remarks. Two panels followed that

panel, moderated by Professor Carol Muller, had three graduate students - Garry Bertholf, Glenn Holtzman, and Gavin Steingo - respond to and critique Coplan's first book, *In Township Tonight!*. Professor Coplan's skillful and graceful responses fostered lengthy conversations that continued well into the delicious lunch, courtesy of Kaffa Crossing.

A screening of *Songs of the Adventurers*, a film about Basotho migrants directed by the late ethnographic filmmaker Gei Zantzinger and narrated by Professor Coplan, preceded the second panel. We were touched that Zantzinger's widow was able to join us for the screening. The second panel focused on the interaction between the film and Coplan's second book, a study of Basotho world music. The panelists, John Paul Meyers, Oleosi Ntshabe, and Ellen Scott, represented various disciplines and brought unique insights to bear on this fertile and rather understudied topic. Professor Lee Cassanelli moderated this panel and the subsequent question and answer period.

Following the second panel, Professor Coplan presented a key-address titled "Performing the City: The Music that Made Johannesburg." Professor Coplan's decades of work on the music of Johannesburg informed this erudite and brilliantly orated talk.

The day concluded in a celebratory and well-executed performance by Penn's only African music ensemble: Penn African Performing Arts (PAPA). Led by Philip Asare, the group performed several classic songs from around the continent. We owe thanks to: our co-sponsors, the Department of Anthropology, and the Political Science Department; the graduate student assistants Ian MacMillen, Christine Dang, and Nina Ohman; the amazing and dedicated staff at both the African Studies Center and the Music Department: Lee Cassanelli, Faye Patterson, Ali Ali-Dinar, Cedric Tolliver, Anastasia Shown, and Maryellen Malek; Dean Nagel for taking time out of his busy schedule to join us; and Professor Carol Muller, without whom none of this could have been possible. And, of course, a final thanks to the David Coplan himself, an excellent scholar and true gentleman.

### EXCHANGE SCHOLARS FOR FALL 2008

For Fall 2008, Penn Abroad at the Office of International Programs welcomes two visiting scholars and professors in Applied Physics for their exchange program with Gaston Berger University, St. Louis, Senegal - Dr. Diène NDiaye (Left) and Dr. Bouya Diop (Right).



## IYARE! Splendor and Tension in Benin's Palace Theatre

"You can't resist the palace." That's a proverb from Nigeria's Benin Kingdom, where I went to live and research in 1992. Imagining the palace began in 1977, when I began writing my dissertation at Indiana University. I moved to Nigeria the month I graduated in 1983, and taught at Nigerian Television's TV College. I was eager to visit Benin, but distance and work kept me away for another decade. Once I got there, I was hooked. Its fascinating people, history, and culture have kept me busy ever since, writing numerous articles and chapters on diverse subjects such as the ideal man in art and society, dwarves and their representations as jesters, and fasting periods with their roots in Renaissance Catholicism. A guide to the Penn Museum's Benin collection will be forthcoming in 2009.

Scholarly publications reach a limited audience. I wanted Benin to enrich other lives, and had been thinking of ways to do so—even writing a historical mystery set in the kingdom. While on sabbatical last year, I had the opportunity to teach the Halpern-Rogath curatorial seminar for Penn's History of Art Department, and the result is the exhibition *IYARE! Splendor and Tension in Benin's Palace Theatre*, which is on view until March 1, 2009.

Based on the Museum's fine collection of ivories and bronzes from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present (and supplemented by some additional loans), it looks at palace life through a theatrical metaphor. Why? Because drama—historical and contemporary—is a

feature of the court. Rivalries in power centers are universal, and allow viewers to jump into the palace as audience members and appreciate its specifics and commonalities. The various sections tease out stories and personalities. *Sets & Backdrops* looks at the structure and its altars, *Players, Props & Costumes* discusses the regalia and personalities of the royal court, *Scripts* looks at royal events through video and objects. *Intermission* explores the palace at more relaxed moments, *Playing the Provinces* examines Benin's impact on neighbors and subject states, and *Revivals* assesses the West's appropriation of Benin art in multiple ways.



Guest curator Dr. Kathy Curnow (second from left) with Benin Chief Eduwu Ekhaton Obasogie and cultural dancers at IYARE!'s opening.

This is a new lens for viewing Benin, and one I hope will intrigue visitors. A catalogue with student contributions will be coming out within the month, and more public activities are planned for Spring semester. The students helped plan our very large website with a linked blog online at [www.iyare.net](http://www.iyare.net). In the hope that Philadelphia will be an epicenter for Benin studies, we will continue with a joint Nigeria-U.S. digital archive that will grow to incorporate field notes, images, videos, and texts internationally.

Dr. Kathy Curnow is an Associate Professor of African art history at Cleveland State University and Research Associate in the Penn Museum's African Section.

## ASC and Penn Abroad Host First Annual Africa Orientation

The African Studies Center is an active participant in the Penn Global Development Initiative (GDI). The GDI seeks to enhance the University as a global player in international research, policy and development;



Penn students present findings from water & sanitation assessment in Cameroon (April 2008)

to illuminate the potential of research universities to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals; and to enable new synergies across the Penn international community of students, faculty and staff. Each of Penn's 12 schools has students and faculty participating. This semester the African Studies Center reviewed applications for the GDI internship program, hosted an African Orientation, and presented at the GDI annual forum.

This year, internships were offered to qualified Penn students to Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Egypt, Senegal, Togo, and Burkina Faso through PLAN International, Save the Children, UNICEF, and Africare.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Africa Orientation was held on April 18<sup>th</sup>. The event was open to all students and staff going to Africa. Over 60 people going to 13 different African countries attended. Speakers from the Penn Abroad Office, African Studies Center, and Van Pelt Library discussed issues of health, safety & security, crisis management, travel, logistics, conducting research abroad, online resources, and re-entry. Participants had the chance to discuss cultural differences such as gender, religion, sexual preference, and disability, plus region specific logistics, what to bring, medical concerns, etc.

The Second Annual Forum was held on April 10-11, 2008. The topic was Higher Education and International Development, in the context of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There were nine panels spread over the two days:

1. Questioning Development
2. Integrating Health Training with Community Needs in Poor Countries
3. Going abroad for the MDGs: A Penn Internship Perspective
4. Globalization and Higher Education
5. Planning Models to Address Urbanization
6. Language, Empowerment and Development
7. Higher Education and Civic Engagement
8. Law and Human Rights in Developing Countries
9. Technology for Development: High Tech vs. Low Tech



## ASC HELPS FOSTER PENN PARTNERSHIPS IN GHANA

Anastasia Shown, ASC Assistant Director, participated in the Penn delegation to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. The mission of the trip was to continue to solidify a working relationship between Penn and KNUST and to follow-up on initiatives proposed during KNUST's delegation visit to Penn in the fall 2007. Faculty and staff from Penn's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Wharton School of Business, School of Medicine, School of Nursing, School of Public Health, Study Abroad Office, Libraries, Graduate School of Education and School of Arts and Sciences held meetings with respective departments at KNUST. ASC facilitates contacts among departments, schools, and individuals with interests in Ghana; serves as a campus-wide source of information and publicity on all Ghana-related programs and projects; helps identify sources of funding for student internships, visiting scholars, research projects and workshops on Ghana. ASC plans to develop and maintain a Penn-in-Ghana website that describes all of Penn's activities in Ghana and provides links to specific programs and projects.



Penn Delegation at KNUST, Ghana



ASC Assistant Director, Anastasia Shown with Dr. Kwasi Adarkwa, Vice-Chancellor, KNUST



The Open Mind for Africa program in honor of Dr. Louise Shoemaker, Dean Emerita of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, builds on the Christian Association's foundation of promoting open minds and working faith. The program provides an experiential learning opportunity for Social Policy and Practice students and Penn upperclassman within our social justice priority.

Dr. Shoemaker has spent a significant part of her life working on behalf of the people in Africa. Working for systemic change, she guided the University of Ibadan in Nigeria as it established its social work degree program. She also lived out her ideals by opening her home to two Sudanese refugees who became part of her family. A long-time supporter of the Christian Association, she is a wonderful example of someone who has lived with an open mind and working faith.

The Penn School of Social Policy and Practice is working with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, offering both universities' faculty and staff opportunities to collaborate. Working in partnership with the Christian Association, the Open Mind for Africa program will provide students an opportunity to get involved. Projects will be defined for students in support of the collaboration. Students will live in Ghana with a host family to complete the project.

For upperclassmen the Open Mind for Africa program will sponsor travel to Africa over the summer. Students will live with Penn alumni host families and participate in a service work environment. Upon their return they will be required to participate in a dissemi-

nation process which will include an evaluation of their experience and potential next steps for the individual, the University and for the program.

All students will be required to complete a comprehensive leadership and orientation training prior to travel. This education and training will include strategic planning, time management, African traditions and culture, safety and logistics, and international travel regulations. For example, strategic planning as a mechanism for change will be taught to enable the students to evaluate the environment and help to develop a vision for improvement, working closely with Africans as Dr. Shoemaker did.

There are two development phases for the program. First is the establishment of program parameters including education and training, grant application process, and specific African structures (e.g. host families, project definitions, etc.). The second phase is to award initial grantees, monitor progress, and structure dissemination mechanisms. In support of these two phases a fundraising goal of \$85,000 has been established. Further we are working toward building a minimum \$100,000 endowment to ensure long-term sustainability.

To make a donation, get involved, or learn more please contact Katherine Primus, Executive Director at 215-746-6350 or [primuska@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:primuska@pobox.upenn.edu).

The Christian Association at the University of Pennsylvania  
A: 118 South 37th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104  
P: 215-746-6350. W: [www.upennca.org](http://www.upennca.org)

## **The Way of the Massai**

### **Dr. Kathleen Ryan Studies Cattle's Imprint Upon a People**

The beginning of cattle pastoralism in East Africa is the subject of an intensive, three-year international collaborative research effort, made possible by a \$185,000 grant from the National Science Foundation awarded to Dr. Ryan in 2007. Currently she and her team are engaged in systematic archaeological fieldwork, including mapping and test excavation, in central Laikipia, Kenya.

Surprisingly, until recent decades little research had been conducted on the origins and spread of cattle domestication across Africa. Although cattle domestication is believed to have occurred in Africa roughly 9,000 years ago, cattle pastoralism in East Africa began several millennia later, between 4,000 and 5,000 years ago. Ryan's research team hopes to shed new light on the advance of cattle pastoralism and its impact on the social organization, settlement patterns, and diet of the area's indigenous, hunter-gatherer peoples, adding to a developing understanding of the early forces that shaped present-day cattle pastoralism, now so at risk.



As a pivotal part of the study, the team will work to identify the beginnings of widespread cow milk consumption in Laikipia, contributing to current scholarly discussions about the genetic basis in modern East African populations for lactose tolerance in adults—something generally not true of adult populations in other parts of the world.

Dr. Ryan with Maasai long-time friend and consultant.  
Courtesy of William Fitts, MASCA.

Dr. Kathleen Ryan is a Research Scientist at Penn Museum's Applied Science Center for Archaeology (MASCA) and a Research Associate in the African Section. From 1990 to 2002, Dr. Ryan worked among the Maasai of East Africa, one of the best known of Africa's many cattle pastoralist societies. She focused on what she termed "cattle ecology," and the ways in which the requirements of the cattle shaped Maasai life. In Africa today, cattle pastoralism and dairy farming are principal livelihoods for millions of people, integrated into most aspects of cultural life. In the last few years, harsh and unpredictable climate fluctuations in East Africa—possible signs of global warming—have affected the region's pastoralists, and threaten their long-term ability to continue their semi-nomadic way of life.

#### *Related Publications:*

1. Ryan, K. "Facilitating Milk Let-Down in Traditional Cattle Herding Systems: East Africa and Beyond," in *The Zooarchaeology of Fats, Oils, Milk and Dairying*, eds. J. Mulville and A.K. Outram, Chap. 9, pp. 96-106. Oxbow Books, 2005
2. Ryan, K. (in preparation). "Spreading Risk in Risky Environments: an East African Example," in *Forces of Nature: Environmental Risk and Resilience as Long-Term Factors of Cultural Change*, eds. N.F. Miller, K.M. Moore, and K. Ryan.



Guardian of the medicine of the Yassi Society. Figure was used in public procession to present newly initiated members. Yassi Society Figure, Cherebro, Kanwo, Stiwa Chiefdom, Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone. 37-22-279. Photo courtesy of Dwaune Latimer

### **AFRICAN HEALING JOURNEYS—Coming at PENN MUSEUM!**

The planning phase for an innovative exhibition, "African Healing Journeys," being developed by Penn Museum has received funding of \$39,768 from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The exhibition has an anticipated opening date of 2012 at the Penn Museum; it will subsequently travel to other venues around the United States as part of the Museum's highly-successful traveling exhibitions program. It will incorporate up to 300 objects from Penn Museum's 10,000 African holdings, along with photographs, botanical illustrations, video clips, and oral and written testimonies.

The exhibition will be co-curated by Lee Cassanelli, (Professor, Penn History Department, Director of Penn's African Studies Center, and Consulting Curator in Penn Museum's African Section) and John Janzen (Professor, Anthropology Department, University of Kansas, and Penn Museum Research Associate), in collaboration with Dwaune Latimer (Keeper of African Collections), and Kathleen Ryan (Project Director). Partners include the African Studies Center, the Africa Health Group, Penn Medical School and the Penn-in-Botswana Program.

## African Languages: Serving the Penn Community and Beyond

By Dr. Audrey N Mbeje



Dr. Audrey N Mbeje, African Languages Director

The importance of educating globally competent students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate and function successfully in the international community cannot be underestimated. The African Studies Center embraces this view by offering a wide variety of African languages (between eight and ten) every academic year, spanning three regions of Africa (west, east, and southern Africa). The African language offerings are well infused into the African Studies curriculum, providing Penn and consortium students interested in Africa a range of language courses to

choose from to satisfy a language requirement, to prepare for research and/or study abroad and internships in Africa. Each of the languages is offered from elementary through advanced levels, i.e. from first through third year, with the exception of Swahili that has been offered through the fourth year level as well. While the majority of our language students are comprised of traditional students who come with no prior knowledge of the target languages, a sizable pool consists of heritage learners who take language courses to sharpen their skills in their heritage languages and cultures. Our heritage language offerings include Amharic, Igbo, Twi, and Yoruba, which are all offered on a regular basis due to a consistent demand mainly from heritage learners.

As a National Resource Center, Penn continues to serve as a leading institution in providing access to Africa-related resources, including African language resources, beyond Penn and the consortium. At the national level, the African Studies Center is currently administering the federally-funded Fulbright-Hays Zulu Group Project Abroad (Zulu GPA) in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, since 2005. The Zulu GPA is an immersive intensive intermediate-advanced summer program held in affiliation with the School of isiZulu and the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg campus. The program selects participants

nationally, and the overall objective of the program is to enable the students to attain the advanced-mid competency in Zulu in order to function effectively in Zulu speaking communities. The program curriculum features 1) daily classroom instruction by native speakers of Zulu, 2) bi-weekly lecture seminars given by (UKZN) faculty and community members, 3) two home stays in rural and urban settings, 4) and educational tours to cultural/historical sites. Dr. Audrey Mbeje, a native of Durban, is the Director of the Zulu GPA and she also grew up in Pietermaritzburg where the program is based. Dr. Mbeje received a Fulbright-Hays grant in 2005 to conduct the first three-year cycle which ended in summer 2007, and in Fall 2007 she submitted a proposal which was funded for a four-year cycle for the summers of 2008 through 2011. The 2008 Zulu GPA had 17 participants from 15 different US institutions: 1 faculty, 8 graduate and 8 undergraduate students.



The 2008 Zulu GPA participants

Dr. Mbeje is the Director of the African Language Program at Penn. In addition to overseeing African language instruction at Penn, Dr. Mbeje teaches courses in Zulu, at all levels, and another course called *African Language and Culture*. Her research interests include semantics, pragmatics, second/foreign language pedagogy, African language curriculum design and assessment, and language and society.

The 2009 Fulbright-Hays Zulu GPA is scheduled for June 12-August 9, 2009. More information is available at: <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/afl/zulugpa.htm>

The Spring African Cultural Event is scheduled for Friday, March 20, 2009 from 5:30 - 8:00pm in DuBois College House, 3900 Walnut Street, at the Multi-Purpose Room.

## CAPTURED BY A CULTURE : LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH IMMERSION

By Toni Cook, Graduate Student in Linguistics Department

Zulu Name: Noxolo (Mother of Peace)

I first started studying Zulu halfway through my first year of grad school for linguistics. I was interested in learning a lesser-known, non-Indo European language and I picked Zulu more or less randomly. A few short weeks into the course, I knew I had made the right choice. Anyone would love learning the clicks (all told, Zulu has 12 different click consonants!), but I also loved how logical the word formation processes were, with all the different pieces fitting together like a puzzle.

When I went to South Africa for two months this past summer,



with the government-funded Fulbright Hays Program, I had a year and a half of Zulu under my belt. I went with a decent understanding of grammar and basic conversation, but my speaking, writing, and (especially!) listening skills all improved a great deal over the course of these two months. The highlight of the program for me, as well as for many of the other students who participated, was a 2-week rural home-stay in a small village called Maqongqo

(we could barely pronounce it when we first arrived!). In Maqongqo, we were immersed in Zulu 24/7. Continued on p7



I stayed with the Hadebe family, which consisted of 2 gogos (Zulu for grandma, or old woman) who were sisters, 2 mamas (also sisters), and 3 amantombazane (young girls) ages 4-9. They welcomed me into their home with open arms, and I'll never forget our first meeting. I saw that the youngest girl, Andiswa, had bright orange crumbs all around her mouth, and I asked her "Udleni?" (What did you eat?) and she said "i-kilayni" (a crayon). I knew from that moment that the Hadebe family and I were a perfect



Zulu is now my main area of research, and it is an ideal language to study from a linguistic perspective for a number of reasons. While the grammar has been well described, in the style of late 19<sup>th</sup> century, early 20<sup>th</sup> century descriptive linguistics, it hasn't been much studied under modern approaches. I plan on returning to South Africa to do work for my dissertation, which will be on morphosyntactic variation in Zulu. This basically means investigating the subtle ways in which speakers' grammars may be different from one another. In order to do this kind of research, I'll be traveling around KwaZulu-Natal and interviewing Zulus from a cross-section of society, young and old, rural and urban, modern and traditional, relying heavily on what I learned with the Zulu GPA throughout. Hopefully, I'll be able to drop in on the Hadebes a time or two as well.

## AFRICAN STUDIES CULTURAL DAY

By Hong T Truong; Graduate Student in Biochemistry Department  
Swahili Name: Kamila



Students of Yoruba performing performances from all over sub-Saharan Africa. Even though a few of the event coordinators, such as Mwalimu (Beatrice Bolger), Faye, Dr. Audrey and their families, arrived much ahead of time and set up there delectable East and West African dishes in time for the announced 5PM start time, other coordinators and guests only started to pour in around an hour later, true to the easy-going and adjustable spirit of the African culture.

The first aspect of African cultures that guests to the event were able to experience was the generous amount of delicious food. There were chapatis, samosas, fried plantains, fish, goat meat, beef, chicken, cabbages, Nigerian spice soup, and the list goes on and on. These food were what people could expect to have in an authentic traditional African feast; visitors to the event were lucky enough to experience them right here at Penn without having to travel the far distances.

All guests to the event were able to enjoy platefuls of the too-good-to-have-enough food, only after which did the actual performances begin. The first group to present was the beginning and Intermediate Swahili class led by Mwalimu Mshomba. They started off the event with the harmonious sound of the Kenya and Tanzania's national anthems. Listening to these foreign students raised and lowered their voices to the melody of these beautiful songs, I was momentarily transported through the great distance and time back to the 4x4 Land Rover truck that took me around East Africa over the summer. I could see vividly

free days that I allowed myself to emerge in the beauty and culture of Africa; those were the moments that I always want to relive in my life.

As the singings subside, my Swahili II class took the stage to perform our "Jambo Bwana" and "Malaika" songs along with the colorful Swahili proverbs. Michael, also known as Kaka Dubu, and I had the privilege of playing the drums and rattles for our class's performances. I must admit that while my colleague tapped on the drum with great rhythm, I awkwardly shook the rattles in imitation



of his beat and hoping that the two sounds would somehow miraculously blend well together. Regardless of how off-beat our songs and performances were, the audience gave us hearty applause. The rest of the evening performances were amazingly colorful and enjoyable. Several other languages like Amharic, Yoruba, Twi, Igbo, Wolof and Zulu



Students of Swahili performing

classes performed skits, songs, storytelling, and games. I particularly enjoyed the monologues and poems performed by individual students from other languages. Overall, I was delighted to attend and be a part of this African Cultural day. The festive atmosphere, the generosity shown in the amount of food, the rich visual display in the performers' outfits, the great dancing, the unique music and rhythm, and the hospitality and courtesy that everyone exuded reminded me again of why I fell in love with the African cultures. I would recommend to all Penn students not to be left behind and that they should take time and take Swahili as well as other African languages and join the journey to other cultures.

## ONE BOOK, ONE PHILADELPHIA: REALITIES OF AFRICA UNFOLDED LOCALLY



Associate Director Dr. Ali Ali-Dinar and Assistant Director Anastasia Shown

Founded by the Philadelphia Mayor's Office in 2003, *One Book, One Philadelphia* strives to promote reading, literacy, and libraries by encouraging the entire Greater Philadelphia area to come together through reading and discussing a single book. The program plays a vital role in unifying Philadelphia's many and diverse demographic groups.

Last year the African Studies Center partnered with *One Book, One Philadelphia* to transform this culturally vibrant region into one cohesive community, bringing together thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds to compare views and interpretations, share feelings and personal stories, view exhibitions, movies, and musical and theatrical performances, attend classes, panel discussion, writing, dance, craft, and cooking workshops--all of this inspired by a common reading experience. The African Studies Center played the role of lead Educational Programming Support. The 2008 *One Book, One Philadelphia* Selection was Dave Eggers' *What Is the What*. *What Is the What* tells the story of Valentino Achak Deng, who as a child witnessed atrocities of civil warfare in Sudan and became one of the so-called Lost Boys. The content and themes in *What Is the What* enlightened readers, stimulated discussion, and generated programs dealing with both East African culture and history, as well as issues of violence in the world, and within our own region. As lead Educational Programming Support, the African Studies Center was consulted in the planning process, the execution phase, and the large closing event. The 2008 program reached thousands of people through a comprehensive marketing and media campaign. This campaign included the following components, many of which included the name and logo of the African Studies Center.

• Print advertisements were placed in eight different newspapers; each advertisement publicized specific events.

• Radio advertisements ran throughout the program on National Public Radio/WHYY.

• Resource Guides created with the help of the African Studies Center were distributed to public and private schools, libraries, recreations centers, literacy groups, and book clubs.

• Calendars were distributed to all 54 public library locations, other municipalities, recreation centers, museums, performing arts spaces, and retail venues.

• Bookmarks were distributed to all 54 public library locations, as well as schools, community partners, retailers, and corporate sponsors; bookmarks were also distributed to the general public at events.

• Posters were distributed to all 54 public library locations, as well as schools, community partners, retailers, and corporate sponsors.

• Flyers promoting *One Book, One Philadelphia* events were distributed to library branches, businesses, non-profits, universities, museums, and performing arts organizations throughout Philadelphia.

• Throughout the program period, outdoor banners and billboards were displayed across the region, downtown, on the back of buses and off interstate I-95 (region's main highway).

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- Calendars were distributed to all 54 public library locations, other municipalities, recreation centers, museums, performing arts spaces, and retail venues.
- Bookmarks were distributed to all 54 public library locations, as well as schools, community partners, retailers, and corporate sponsors; bookmarks were also distributed to the general public at events.
- Posters were distributed to all 54 public library locations, as well as schools, community partners, retailers, and corporate sponsors.
- Flyers promoting *One Book, One Philadelphia* events were distributed to library branches, businesses, non-profits, universities, museums, and performing arts organizations throughout Philadelphia.
- Throughout the program period, outdoor banners and billboards were displayed across the region, downtown, on the back of buses and off interstate I-95 (region's main highway).

Collaboration was inherent to the mission of *One Book, One Philadelphia*. The African Studies Center assisted with the recruitment of over 400 institutions, schools, libraries, businesses, organizations, media entities, etc. to become community partners in the project. These community partners created exhibits and events for public all over the region. The participation of these partners was an essential element of the project and significantly contributed to the success of the program. Community partners planned events, distributed materials, and promoted the project throughout the city. Additionally, more than 8,000 books were distributed to community partners that served students or clients who could not otherwise purchase them.

The partnership between the School District of Philadelphia and *One Book, One Philadelphia* 2008 was integral to the program's success. At least one full classroom set of books (30 copies), accompanied by user-friendly reading guides, was provided to each high school in the district. Teachers in Philadelphia's public school system rarely receive new, full sets of books at no cost, and they were eager to participate in the program. Additionally, books were provided at no cost to all interested charter and parochial schools. The African Studies Center led a workshop for teachers on how to use the book and themes in the classroom. Private schools and universities provided copies of the books to their students or sold copies in their campus bookstores.



ASC staff and the FREE Library of Philadelphia welcome Valentino Achak Deng, leading character of *What is the What*

*One Book, One Philadelphia* 2008 worked closely with many local social service agencies and community groups to encourage participation among their clients and constituents. *One Book, One Philadelphia* provided books and volunteer book discussion leaders to homeless shelters, affordable housing complexes, work-ready programs, adult literacy groups, and senior centers in neighborhoods throughout the city. *One Book, One Philadelphia* included the Sudanese immigrant community in all stages of the program. Many Philadelphian-Sudanese led cooking classes, presented at schools, and promoted the program within and outside their community group.

The African Studies Center held events, recruited partners to host events, co-sponsored events, and provided consultation for events. These events were open to the public but catered to our outreach constituencies: K-12 teachers, the media and business community, government, and area university staff and students. This year's 2009 selection, *The Soloist*, will generate programs on homelessness, mental illness and the transformative power of music and creative arts. Look forward to African Studies programs in the *One Book, One Philadelphia* 2009 calendar at <http://www.freelibrary.org/libserve/obop.htm>.



# Penn Libraries Activities and Acquisitions, Academic Year 2007-2008

By Lauris Olson

## Activities

The Elsevier Foundation awarded the Penn Libraries an Innovative Libraries in Developing Countries grant to conduct a comprehensive assessment of library and information services in support of medical education and HIV/AIDS care in Botswana, working with the U of Botswana. Kay Raseroka, University of Botswana Library director and past president of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), visited the Penn Libraries during mid-April 2008. See Penn Libraries news release, January 2008, at URL: <http://www.library.upenn.edu/news/407> and the Elsevier Foundation's news release at URL: <http://www.elsevierfoundation.org/libraries.html#point1>

As a partner of One Book, One Philadelphia with the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Penn Libraries made available for Penn readers 40 copies of *What Is the What: the autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng*: a novel by Dave Eggers and prepared a web page of scholarly resources on the book and on the topics of conflict in Sudan and Sudanese refugees. The Penn Libraries prepared a web page of scholarly resources on the book and on the topics of conflict in Sudan and Sudanese refugees at the Free Library's request. See the Penn Libraries WITW web page at URL: <http://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/africa/witw.html>

Health Sciences Libraries interim director Anne Seymour visited Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana in February 2008 as part of a Penn delegation to explore cooperative programs in medical sciences information delivery. Bob Krall, Penn Libraries director for resource sharing and delivery services, represented the Penn Libraries at the 73rd International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) general conference at Durban, South Africa, August 2007. Mr Krall's specific interest was in sharing the Penn Libraries' expertise and national leadership in cooperative lending partnerships and document delivery in an international forum.

Following from its hosting of the Africana Librarians Council Spring 2007 meeting, the Penn Library Web now hosts the Africana Librarians Council web site, assuming responsibility for this project from the Library of Congress's Africa and Middle East Division. Visit the web site at URL: <http://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/africa/ALC/>

Lauris Olsen, the Penn Libraries African Bibliographer is the interim convener for the Africana Librarians Council-related African National Resource Center (Title VI) Libraries group during the 2007-2008 school year.

## Recent significant acquisitions

Approval plans for books on history, politics, literature, and ethnography published in Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire were established with Hogarth/MEAbooks in January 2008. Swahili-language books and pamphlets on Islam distributed in Tanzania by the Al-Itrah Foundation, mostly translations from Arabic on the Koran, Hadith, Shiism, and other Islamic topics were acquired in Summer 2007.

E-resource document collections acquired this year include:  
•Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports, 1974-1996: Africa, Middle East, and South Asia  
•Digital National Security Archive, including the collection South Africa: the Making of U.S. Policy 1962-1989.

E-reference and online news sources acquired this year include:  
•Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Online  
•Oxford Islamic Studies Online  
•Observatory on Borderless Higher Education  
•Jane's Defence Magazine Library (includes Foreign Report, Islamic Affairs Analyst)

Microform sets acquired include:  
African missions, education and the road to independence.

Microform sets acquired by Center for Research Libraries and Cooperative Africana Microform Project available to Penn readers include:  
Arabic Manuscripts in the SOAS London; German Colonial Archives Reichskolonialamt; and Records of the American Committee on Africa.

Videos and scholarly books were acquired to support specific courses, programs, and researcher requests in African topics, including foreign aid in Africa, Senegalese tirailleurs in World War I, African immigrants and conflict refugees.

Greater Philadelphia area teachers participate in the annual Summer Institute "Demystifying Stereotypes and Understanding Contemporary Cultures in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East" (June 2008)



Assistant Director, Anastasia Shown and Dr. Louise Shoemaker at the *Eat Your Way through Africa* event, supporting the Open Mind Grant for Africa (Oct 2008)



Penn African Performing Arts, student choir, perform at the African Scholar for a Day event (March 2008)



## PENN ABROAD — STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

### Penn GDI Internship in South Africa



Tefesehet Mesfin  
Undergrad: Bioengineering

My name is Tefesehet Mesfin. I was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I am currently a fifth year Undergraduate student in Bioengineering in the school of engineering and applied sciences. I am finishing up my Pre-dental requirements and starting applications to dental school.

I went on an internship that Penn GDI (Global Development Initiative) organized from May 31, 2008 - Aug 10, 2008. I went with two other Penn Students but we all worked under the different departments of Africare. I worked with an NGO called Africare

which has a headquarter in Washington D.C. and reaches families and communities in 25 countries in every major region of Sub-Saharan Africa. I worked under the Injongo Yethu Comprehensive HIV/AIDS project which is largely a US government PEPFAR funded through the Centers for Disease Control. Injongo Yethu Comprehensive HIV/AIDS project is dedicated to supporting government and community initiatives to expand access to, and improve the quality of HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support, as well as to establish effective prevention and stigma reduction through community outreach.

The Injongo Yethu project has five components - Prevention, Care and Support, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and Treatment. I was working with the Care and Support and Treatment components. Within the Care and Support, I worked with the nutritionist in helping her prepare manuals for home based care educators who work with People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) and I also attended training sessions for clinicians on nutrition for PLHAs. positive support group leaders on ARV education and adherence.

Within the Treatment component, I prepared educational materials for clinicians and PLHAs that are currently taking the anti-retroviral drugs (ARV). I drafted and finalized an assessment tool that will be used by the clinicians when preparing patients to start ARVs. I was able to carry out a workshop with the HIV positive support group leaders on ARV education and adherence.

What motivated me to participate in the program is my interest in health care and aspirations to pursue dentistry along with public health. Even though all my class room learning at Penn had been nothing but phenomenal, the strict bioengineering curriculum hasn't allowed me to engage in service learning. I haven't had a chance to explore my dreams of going back to Ethiopia with ideas of tackling health care problems from the roots and this internship was the perfect opportunity for me to learn about health care in the continent.

Going to Queenstown South Africa, I didn't have any expectations in particular. I have heard that South Africa was one of the most developed African nations so I thought the problems of health care would have been lessened. That was true for the most part in the cities but the area I was working at was a different story. I had enjoyed my stay so much. I have learned a lot about the challenges of mobilizing, teaching and implementing health care services in rural areas. The highlight of my internship was at the end when I was doing training for the HIV positive support group leaders on Anti-Retroviral Drugs. It was just the most rewarding part of my internship as I was able to see the immediate people HIV/AIDS affected. I consider this internship as my baby steps in learning and getting involved with health care in Africa.

**For more information on Penn GDI  
(Global Development Initiative),  
please visit  
[www.gdi.upenn.edu/](http://www.gdi.upenn.edu/)**



# PENN ABROAD — STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

## International Student Exchange Program in Ghana



Rachel Mai Tran

Undergrad: Religious Studies; Minor: Photography and African Studies

My name is Rachel Mai Tran and I am a senior in the college majoring in Religious Studies and minoring in Photography and African Studies. I had never been outside of the United States before, but in the spring semester of 2008, I was the only Penn student studying at the University of Ghana, Legon. I was one of seventeen students, from all over the United States, studying there as part of the International Student Exchange Program, one of many international student programs at the University of Ghana.

I first became interested in Ghana when I took Professor Kobina Ofori-Donkoh's course on African religion at Penn. Captivated by his descriptions of Ghana and African religion, I soon decided that I needed to see Ghana for myself.

As a religious studies major intrigued by the way religion evolves with cross-cultural interaction and time, I enjoyed the fascinating and unique religion courses offered at the University of Ghana. I studied the impact of European Christian missions in West Africa, traced the development of African initiated churches, examined the influence of African Traditional Religion on the African Diaspora, and compared the ethics of Ghana's three major religions, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion. Since returning to the US, I have continued to pursue my interest in African religion by writing my honors thesis on Ghanaian Christianity in Philadelphia.

Outside of the classroom, I had a great time experiencing Ghanaian culture during my time abroad. I love Ghanaian food! *Banku*, a sour dough made from fermented maize served with stew or fish, is absolutely delicious! Ghanaian arts are beautiful, and I am especially mesmerized by *kente*, *adinkra* symbols, and brightly colored wax print fabrics. I also love Ghanaian architecture, which encourages a strong sense

of community by bringing people together around a common courtyard. Additionally, I am a huge fan of Ghanaian and nearby Nigerian pop culture, especially the music of 2face and Psquare. Ghana has a beautifully rich culture.

In addition to academic and cultural opportunities, what I cherish the most about my study abroad experience is the amazing friendships I have made. Ghanaians are renowned for their hospitality, and this reputation is well earned. I felt very welcome in Ghana as my classmates and professors made sure to include me in class discussions and explain cultural references. I became particularly close to my roommate, Lucy, who, like an older sister, taught me how to cook, showed me around town, cared for me when I was sick, and helped me with any problems I might have. I will also always treasure Tahir teaching me hilarious dance moves he claims they do down in Nigeria, Bonti letting me play Street Fighter on his Super Nintendo whenever I needed a video game fix, Eli and Courage discussing social issues late into the night, and Jeremy inviting me to attend the durbar in his home village. I had great times with these people, and by sharing their lives with me, they have exposed me to new ways of thinking about the world. I still keep in touch with these friends in Ghana and they are very important to me.



I am immensely grateful that Prof. Ofori-Donkoh inspired me to study in Ghana. I learned so much academically in my study of religion, culturally in my exposure to Ghanaian arts, and personally in my friendships. My experience has been enriching and I am eager to visit Ghana again.

**For more information on  
Penn Abroad Programs in Africa  
please visit  
[sa.oip.upenn.edu/](http://sa.oip.upenn.edu/)**



## **Mongo Beti, *Le Rebelle I*, texts selected and introduced by André Djiffack; Gallimard, 2007**

**BOOK REVIEW** (in French) By Hervé Tchumkam; Translated into English by Matthew Pagett (Penn Graduate Students in French & Francophone Studies)

2007 saw the publication, by Gallimard, of *Mongo Beti, Le Rebelle I*. This collection of texts, selected and introduced by André Djiffack, inaugurates a new cycle in research on African literature in general, on the Cameroonian text in particular, and more specifically, on Mongo Beti. This is, perhaps, also the place to recall the cardinal position that Mongo Beti, the Cameroonian writer and essayist, holds in the evolution and the history of African literary aesthetics. From the outset, this collection of texts is a striking echo to the quiet passing of Mongo Beti in 2001. As such it places itself in a perspective of restoring the writer's memory to the African and international literary communities.

The work that André Djiffack presents brings together 17 essays by Mongo Beti that were published between 1953 and 1993. Forty years of Mongo Beti's literary life are thus summarized and presented by André Djiffack with precision and finesse. We rediscover the other Mongo Beti, the essayist. His essays mark a critical moment in the reflexion on auctorial and fictional activity in Africa. In the essays "*L'enfant Noir*, de Camara Laye" (1953) or "*Afrique noire, littérature rose*" (1955), the novelist and essayist examines in detail the parameters of literary production in Africa on the eve of independence, i.e. during colonization. For Mongo Beti this means reflecting on the diverse forces that come into play during the production of fictional texts. After returning to Camara Laye's dedication of *Regard du Roi* to the High Commissioner of the Republic in French West Africa ("In testimony to respectful friendship") (Plon edition) and after having tried to situate Africa in the French consciousness of the time, Mongo Beti calls our attention to a question that is certainly dated, but is still and perhaps more than ever worthy of our attention: "Could it be then that the French audience is asking the African writer to write the picturesque, nothing but the picturesque?" (33). This question, as I have said, is extremely pertinent for situating the African text in a social and reception domain. Taking my inspiration from Mongo Beti's brilliant demonstration, already several decades old, I would add the following question: does the condition of reception and promotion of the writer in the postcolonial situation necessarily depend on their adhering (or not) to political and strategic powers?<sup>1</sup> Or, from another perspective, how should we understand this sort of "trend" that has persisted in the African novel for the past several years, of forcing itself to portray an Africa incapable of thought, forever damned and bloodied in the darkness of its night?<sup>2</sup>

The other essays presented in this work approach diverse questions ranging from the problems inherent to the circulation of a certain "type" of literature, to censure and propaganda, or focus on the imposture that certain French researchers, like Robert Cornevin, would show in talking about African texts. Just as important is the overture that Mongo Beti brings to a purely geopolitical question, when in 1980 he publishes *Mr Giscard d'Estaing*,

*remboursez !...*, an "Open letter from a free African to the President of the French Republic, regarding the Bokassa diamonds affair." Whether Mongo Beti is proceeding with the explanation of his novel *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* or questioning the definition and possible meanings of the concept of the African writer, a constant emerges: Mongo Beti the essayist seems to adopt, across the board, a veritable intellectual posture of refusal that inscribes itself in an aesthetic of profanation that remains to be analyzed. It is at this level that we see the originality of the project carried out by André Djiffack, in the sense that this collection of Mongo Beti's essays indisputably offers a new corpus that should, I hope, give rise to studies and theses in the years to come. It would, for example, be interesting to put into perspective Mongo Beti's essays from 1953 and 1955 mentioned above in light of his return from exile novels. This would allow seeing a difference if it exists, or if not, would underline the consistency of a writing that, insouciant of base interests in recognition and literary prizes, is committed to the path of a "risky word" (*parole risquée*).

However, in my opinion, some issues prevent André Djiffack's work from being perfect. It would perhaps have been more interesting to group Mongo Beti's articles and essays into thematic categories rather than in chronological order. This probably would have allowed André Djiffack to propose a thematic grouping of these essays that would have been certainly debatable, yet fundamental for a research project on Mongo Beti's essays. Likewise, it is equally regrettable that the preface does not offer the reader anything more than a summary, sometimes truncated, of the life and literary career of Mongo Beti. As a preface, it would have been preferable that this accompanying discourse from the pen of Boniface Mongo Mboussa commit itself in saying: "This is why and how you must read this book," as Gérard Genette writes (1987: 200) on the subject of the basic function of the preface<sup>3</sup>. The proliferation of literary references (Chester Himes, V.S Naipual and Tierno Monenembo) and the display of a quasi-journalistic knowledge do not, unfortunately, give these pages the allure or the role expected from a preface. It remains to be hoped that the volumes to come take into account this thematic grouping, and just as importantly, if not more so, that there be a preface that situates itself clearly in a perspective of opening debate on Mongo Beti's texts and - why not - that suggest lines of thought around the "why" and the "how" of the book. For there is but one step between bad management of the prefacial space and impossible digestion of the escorted text.

In the end, the fundamental interest inspired in me by André Djiffack's remarkable work of synthesis and research remains focused on the emphasis of another Mongo Beti, the Mongo Beti whose essays should inspire us to begin research that could bring out another "manner of seeing" in studies in African literatures. André Djiffack has the undisputed merit of having allowed the receiver, after having read the texts he selected, to ask themselves the following question: could the condition of the African writer's popularity reside in a triangulation between bloody writing, erotic writing, and the death of the author? This is the question, which attempting to respond to will mean opening another page of research in African literature. In the meantime, it is undeniable that the work

presented by André Djiffack marks the turning point for new research in francophone African literature, and for this reason, is certainly worthy of our attention.

Notes:

1. Incidentally I would note that Ferdinand Oyono, the well known Cameroonian writer, has, at least in Cameroon, a better reputation than Mongo Beti.
2. This is clearly evidenced in Léonora Miano's recent novels, *L'intérieur de la nuit*, Paris, Plon, 2005 and *Contours du Jour qui vient*, Paris, Plon, 2006.
3. Genette, G. (1987), *Seuils*, Paris, Edition du Seuil (coll. Points Essais)

## **The Other Hybrid Archipelago: Introduction to the Literatures and Cultures of the Francophone Indian Ocean; By Peter Hawkins; Lexington, 2007**

**BOOK REVIEW** By Namrata Poddar (Penn Graduate Student in French & Francophone Studies)

From Bernadin de Saint-Pierre's idylls to post-colonial enthusiasm for Creole worlds to contemporary tourist brochures, a long standing literary tradition has posited small islands as socio-political and/or ecological utopias. And yet, critical studies have often ignored the cultural production emerging from the islands themselves, or at least from certain islands. This is particularly true of postcolonial Francophone studies where research has been predominantly focused on the African continent (– neatly divided into the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa), the Caribbean, and to a lesser extent, Canada and Indo-China. By exposing a neglected and rich repository of cultural production from the Francophone islands in the Indian ocean, Peter Hawkins' *The Other Hybrid Archipelago* is a thorough and rare scholarly attempt to fill up this lacuna.

Although most of the islands discussed in Hawkins' study geopolitically belong to Africa, the Introduction along with the first two chapters underscore the difficulty of their classification into any single category. This complexity is due to their geographic dispersion, multilayered history often involving both French and the British colonial presence, indentured labor immigration and the resulting ethnic, linguistic and socio-political diversity. For instance, the islands of Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles were inhabited out of colonial expansion in the seventeenth century; Madagascar and Comoros however, boast of a substantial pre-colonial Malagasy and Islamic culture respectively. While most of the islands achieved independence from colonial rule under different historic frameworks, Mayotte of the Comorian archipelago chose to remain a French territory and Reunion, being a French overseas department (Département d'Outre Mer), is an integral part of the French Republic and the European Union. Furthermore, English and/or French are among the official languages of the islands; yet Creole is the effective *lingua franca* of Mauritius and Seychelles (39), and Malagasy of Madagascar (3). This linguistic complexity is further heightened by the co-existence of secondary regional languages spoken by the various ethnic groups, viz. Hindi, Bhojpuri (a type of creolized Hindi), Tamil, Mandarin Chinese, Swahili. It is this diversity that makes the Indian oceanic islands, a fascinating locus through which some of the key concepts in postcolonial studies today (ex. diaspora, migration, subaltern status, subversive mimicry, diagglossia and hybridity) can be reconceptualized, as Hawkins rightly expounds in chapter three. For instance, the notion of cultural creolization as propagated by Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant (*Éloge de la*

*Créolité*, 1989) acquires a different meaning in the Indian oceanic context. Moreover, Hawkins' study sheds new light on postcolonial theory of creolization by tracing its origin to Indian oceanic and Reunionese writers in particular who were theorizing the cause of Creole culture some ten years earlier than their Caribbean counterparts. (20)

The following four chapters focus on Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Comoros and Seychelles respectively, situating the cultural production of each of the islands within their specific historic-cultural framework. At the same time, Hawkins incessantly relates the individual works discussed, beyond their specific context to the broader field of postcolonial studies by examining the ways in which the former foreground a resistance to the European or colonial aesthetic models – in both content and form. Through references to various contemporary novels and theatre plays, he shows how the post-independence fictional works emerging from the region are undoing the myth of the island-paradise as propagated by both colonial literature and contemporary tourism. According to Hawkins, the contemporary works vociferously articulate the current socio-political problems that plague the island societies, including their continual vulnerability to neocolonialism and ethnic conflicts within their much-touted multicultural framework. It is this emphasis on the aesthetic fertility of the contemporary period that makes *The Other Hybrid Archipelago* a refreshing update to the already existing and sparse scholarship (Prosper 1978, Joubert 1991) on the Indian oceanic literatures. While French dominates the region's literary scene as the language of intellectual and cultural exchange, it is Creole that dominates the popular music and dance scene (*sega* in Mauritius, *moutia* in Seychelles and *maloya* in Reunion) which traces its origins to the African heritage, including the influences of Jamaican reggae and Rastafarianism. Hawkins' work is refreshingly comprehensive as it goes beyond the literary production of the Indian oceanic region to include references to works of popular folklore, theatre, music and dance. This integral approach to the islands' cultural production could nonetheless have benefited by a brief mention to the role and scope of local cinema even if it meant accounting for the latter's relative absence.

Hawkins concludes his study by underscoring the paradoxes and vulnerability ensuing from the islands' postcolonial situation, further opening up new ways of re-examining the phenomena of insularity, multiculturalism and globalization, with their inherent ambivalences. While each of the islands boast of a rich indigenous cultural production, the latter continues to be dependent on the former colonial powers for its survival and international recognition. It is hardly surprising then that many of the contemporary artists from the islands continue to live and/or publish abroad and France in particular. Moreover, with their geographic and economic marginality and the increasing impact of globalization, the islands evince a higher vulnerability to the economic and cultural trends of the trading super powers of the European Union, North America, India and China. This phenomenon is a double-edged sword that could lead both, to the difficulty of asserting cultural autonomy, but also to more creative possibilities of cultural exchange within and beyond the region.

With four chapters on the cultural production of each island within its specific historic framework, and the other four, relating the former meta-critically to the overall field of postcolonial studies, *The Other Hybrid Archipelago* reads as a well-balanced and compelling study that forces its reader to reassess the (often-overlapping) boundaries of Postcolonial, African, French and Francophone and Island studies.



## SPRING 2009 OUTREACH EVENTS

### **The Healing Power of Music: An African Studies Workshop**

Saturday March 14th 9:00-12:00  
University of Pennsylvania  
Carriage House, 3907 Spruce St.  
Philadelphia PA 19104

Kinobe, the Ugandan multi-instrumentalist musician, will discuss the role of music and dance to overcome tragedy and heal personal and shared grief. Learn about history, culture and contemporary life in Uganda. Earn professional development credit for PA/NJ teachers.  
[www.kinobemusic.com](http://www.kinobemusic.com)

Contact Anastasia Shown:  
215-898-6449 [shown@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:shown@sas.upenn.edu)

### **Causes and Consequences of Homelessness around the World**

January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 @ 7:00pm  
University of Pennsylvania  
Carriage House, 3907 Spruce St.  
Philadelphia PA 19104

Join the University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Center, Middle East Center, South East Asia Center, the Center for East Asia Studies, the United Nations Association of Greater Philadelphia and the Women's Campaign International for an engaging panel on homelessness throughout our world.

*One Book, One Philadelphia*  
<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/onebook/obop09/index.cfm>

Contact Anastasia Shown:  
215-898-6449 [shown@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:shown@sas.upenn.edu)

### **Honoring Philadelphia's African and Caribbean Community Mental Health Workers**

February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 @ 6:00pm  
University of Pennsylvania  
Carriage House, 3907 Spruce St.  
Philadelphia PA 19104

An increasing percentage of community mental health staff in Philadelphia are from African and Caribbean countries. This evening will recognize their service and support their efforts to care for our mentally ill. The evening will include: 30 minute educational workshop, Afro-Caribbean food, and employment and educational resources.  
Co-sponsored by the Coalition of African Communities (AFRICOM).

Contact Anastasia Shown:  
215-898-6449 [shown@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:shown@sas.upenn.edu)

### **African Studies Center Staff**

Dr. Lee Cassanelli, *Director*  
Dr. Ali B. Ali-Dinar, *Associate Director*  
Anastasia Shown, *MSW Assistant Director*  
Dr. Audrey N. Mbeje, *Language Program Director*  
Faye Patterson, *MSW Program and Title VI Coordinator*  
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