

International Mountain Day 2016 Promotes Mountain Cultures

I arrived at CB101 at Utah Valley University to attend this long awaited celebration. At 2 PM, we were welcomed by Christian Jensen, president of the Foreign Affairs club, who had stepped in for Tony Medina, the president of the Utah International Mountain Forum (UIMF). Christian invited us all, on behalf of the UIMF, to get engaged in Sustainable Mountain Development in any way we could. Then, Professor Baktybek Abdrisaev was introduced, who explained the principles behind Problem Based Learning (PBL) and its successful implementation through the UIMF,



(R to L): Tony Medina, President, UIMF presents FAO-UN certificate of appreciation to Dr. Patience Kabamba

Following Dr. Abdrisaev, a presentation by Dr. Patience Kabamba began. I was shocked

by his claim that, “the Congolese conflict has caused levels of suffering unparalleled in any recent war.” He provided us with the following statistics:

- *As of 2006, out of a population of 58 million Congolese, as many as 4 million had died,*
- *7 million suffered from malnutrition,*
- *3 million were HIV positive,*
- *at least 40,000 had been victims of sexual violence,*
- *2.4 million were internally displaced,*
- *880,000 had become refugees, and*
- *3 million children were orphans. [Coleman S., 2005)*
- *Fragmentation of the coercive power*
- *From 1998 the country’s territory was` controlled by:*
- *3 main Congolese rebel groups,*
- *A dozen Congolese militias,*
- *Rebel groups from Uganda, Burundi and Sudan,*
- *The Interhamwe, Rwandan militia responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and*
- *The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)*

Dr Kabamba later attested that, “the Congolese traders have managed to build and protect self-sustaining, prosperous, transnational economic enterprises in eastern Congo.” The G8 includes a dozen import-export trader millionaires (in US Dollars) who have gradually captured the social and economic surplus within the Nande society

Imports: They import containers of goods ranging from textiles, motorbikes, and automobiles to spare engines, medicine, and other goods from East Africa, the Persian Gulf, Southeast Asia and China.

Exports: They export agricultural products ranging from coffee, potatoes, and beans to papaya latex and other vegetables, in addition to minerals such as gold, Coltan, wolfram, and

“cassiterites.” The group demonstrates a great level of internal cohesion and trust between its members.

Pre-Colonial Trade: Butembo already played an important role in the salt trade; at the time, the village Lusambo, which is now part of Butembo, was a stopover for caravans coming from Katwe on expeditions for salt (Kambalume 1972). From the salt trade, Nande people learned the dangers and the benefits of long-distance commercial activities including confrontation with dangerous animals and creating friendships through distribution of salt.

Colonial Trade: In terms of incentives to trading activities, the work ethic taught by Baptist missionaries was very important during the colonial area. Even today, Nande traders attribute their success partly to the lessons learned in the Protestant mission.

Three Protestant values: Kamungele, one of the most prominent traders in Butembo today, summarized the legacy of the Katwa missionary in three points: 1) a dedication to hard, honest work (e.g., working hard even when the boss was absent); 2) a demand not to waste earnings on alcohol and prostitutes; 3) the importance of learning to delay gratification.

Post-colonial traders: Road responsibility. Today, each of the Nande traders is responsible for 15 kilometers of road. A tollgate is generally organized, and the money collected is used to repair and mend the road. When there is a part of the road which is not mended the traders, will not hesitate to question their colleague in charge of this road. There is a sort of internal control and accountability. The Nande region is the only one in the country which has good road networks, except in Katanga which is the center of mineral exploitation.

Catholic Institutions: The Catholic University of Butembo, with its four schools of Law, Civil Engineering, and Medicine, has continued to function since its establishment in 2006 by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Butembo, Monsignor Kataliko.

Coercive power of Militia and Traders: As long as the traders don't try to impose themselves too much on the militias' spheres of brutal extraction in the peripheries of the Nande centre, and as long as the militias steer clear of that centre and do not disrupt the Nande capitalists' prosperous sphere of control and stability, then there is a balance between the traders social and economic power, and the militia's various reigns of terror in a kind of multiplicity of somewhat overlapping and intersecting spaces.

Junior Partners: Seen economically, the militias then look like junior partners to the trader-capitalists who ultimately have real production (not merely trade) as their base of accumulation, and the only economic resource the militias have is the sheer piracy of their arms.

Militia and the Catholic Church: Many militias are former choir members and altar-boys. The bishop is respected by the militias.

Traders, the Catholic Church and the militia: There seem to be a very clear social and political hegemony of the Nande "bourgeoisie," legitimated through the Church officialdom, premised upon not one but several relatively mobile formations of violence that supply the ultimate resources of coercion and thus social order.

Two spaces: dependence and engagement. Traders try to balance the space of dependence (local space where they produce and invest) and the space of engagement (transnational space where they do transactions outside of some aspects of family impeding structures)

Inter and intra ethnic dynamics: Intra-ethnic relations are very competitive: rat-race!

Inter-ethnic relations are rather peaceful. One is the consequence of the other.

Elites Struggle and Traditional values: It is fascinating to see ambitious traders, not really yet capitalists in the sense of either Weber or Marx, beginning to forge a vision to turn themselves into producing capitalists. The 'natural' elite of the Congo, those created by years of sitting

behind desks at formal educational institutions marked largely by the quality of their French, their articulate manipulation of language and their knowledge of selected consumer products for display. The chiefs, the 'traditional' who regulated day to day life in rural areas in colonial time and, in other situations in Africa, have made something of a comeback.

At 3 PM, we were addressed by the keynote Speaker, Ms. Mehak Asad, who presented on Kalash customs. Ms. Asad mentioned that the Kalash people, also called *Kafir*/Non-believer, Black Robe and Siah Posh, live in the three sub-valleys of Kalash that consists Bumboret, Rumbor and Birir, in the modern-day District of Chitral, Pakistan. The Kalash are an ancient tribe of Pakistan and they have their own way of life, their own religion, language, rituals and their own identity. This part of Pakistan is considered to be a well preserved ethnic and cultural museum. Owing to this value, Kalash culture has been listed by UNESCO for consideration as a World Heritage Site. There are two types of religious events in Kalash society. The first kind may be considered as having a religious ceremony as well as festivities while other events are only religious in nature, without dancing and singing. The Kalash observe many festivals in a year, their major festivals are: **Joshi**, celebrated in May to welcome the spring. **Uchaw**, observed in late August to ensure good crops of wheat. **Pul/Poh**, observed in September, only in the Birir Valley. And finally, **Chaumos**, observed in December for more than two weeks, it is the grand festival of the Kalash tribe and it is celebrated to welcome the New Year. Today, the Kalash community is in transition, under the pressure of modernization, and it seems this beautiful culture will vanish if it is not preserved by international and national agencies and governments. Ms. Asad also shared the funeral and burial culture of Kalash people, which I found very interesting.

I did not stay to the end of her presentation as I had class to attend. It was a great event,

and I look forward to participate in it next semester. I also am looking forward to helping the SMD agenda to help mountainous cultures everywhere.

Tito A Momen, UVU Students