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Justus Ogembo, Associate Professor of Education, travels to Italy

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Justus Ogembo

Associate Professor of Education ~ travel to Italy

On March 11, 2015, I travelled to Verona, Italy, to present a paper at a conference held at the University of Verona and participate in a subsequent two-day workshop. This event, sponsored by National Science Foundation (NSF), and organized by Professors Giovanni Bennardo of Northern Illinois University and Anna Paini of the University of Verona, brought together scholars from across the world who had conducted fieldwork in diverse communities around the world on 'Cultural Models of Nature' during the summer of 2014 with a grant from the NSF; hence, the theme of the event, "Local Knowledge: Fieldwork Experience." The event lasted from 12th to 15th March. I returned on March 16th. My air ticket to and from this venue was made possible by generous support from the Center for International Education, Department of Anthropology, and Department of Education. I am eternally grateful.

My paper, "Gusii (Kenya) Cultural Model of Nature: Intimations from Linguistic Analysis," was one of thirteen that were presented at this conference. Each paper gave a glimpse into the kind of cultural model of nature held by the community studied by the respective researcher: the Philippines, Botswana, Japan, Polynesia, Italy, Pennsylvania (USA), Ecuador, Lithuania, Poland, China, and Kenya. Besides the common goal of depicting a cultural model of nature held by the respective community of study, each paper was, nevertheless, unique in methodological emphasis and consequent findings. This contributed to the rare richness and benefit of this event to its attendees. Cognitive Anthropology can, indeed, be carried out in a scientifically fruitful manner, for, this conference was the culmination of the first phase of our research project during which linguistic and experimental data were collected and analyzed quantitatively. The second and third phases of our research project are being planned.

Besides that specific mission, I was able to see some of the ruins, structures, and memorials of the ancient Roman Empire. I am fascinated by that empire because of the rich social organizational legacy it bequeathed present-day nation-states – e.g., governors and other administrative functionaries, legislatures, taxation, legal lexicon, etc. What I had been taught in my elementary school about ancient Rome became alive before my very eyes as I stood by the Amphitheater of Verona and watched a re-enactment of a Roman soldier, fully clad in that regalia I had only seen on photographs.



Justus Ogembo, UNH professor of education, present at conference at the University of Verona in Italy



Roman soldier (l.), dressed for a reenactment, with Prof. Ogembo (r.)



Statue of Juliet (from Romeo and Juliet) in Verona, Italy

Oh, lest I forget, I was also able to take a photo of the statue of Juliet (of *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare) erected by the city of Verona, because that play, *Romeo and Juliet*, along with two others -- *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Taming of the Shrew* -- were set in that beautiful city. It was an interesting spectacle to watch thousands of tourists from around the world seek out this statue and be photographed along with it. It was especially humorous when all who were ahead of me in a long queue were photographed while standing on the right side of the statue, with their one hand clasping her right breast.



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