Toledo, Aliyah Dana L. June 11, 2019

In Marco Polo’s story, he said that his lord Nicolau’s son named Marc learned the Tartars’ customs, languages, and writing which was also what Dan Eldon did when he stayed in Africa. As much as possible he tried to learn how to speak Swahili and made the effort to understand their customs and culture beyond what he learned in school and in textbooks.

In a way, Ibn Battuta and Dan Eldon have similarities in a way that they both came from an affluent family which resulted to them having no difficulties in visiting and traveling to a lot of countries. Although the reason behind Ibn Battuta’s travels were mainly because of his religion and along his travels, he also found out more about other religions and their beliefs. On the other hand, Dan Eldon’s motivation to travel to other parts of Africa was to give help to the less-fortunate areas and to raise awareness by documenting their plight.

Like Christopher Columbus, Dan Eldon gave a lot of useful things to the places they have visited. But their motives are entirely different, Dan Eldon gave things to the people of Africa out of care and pity at their situation while Christopher Columbus offered gifts so that he could gain their affection and would then be easier for him to convert them into Christians.

In Vaz de Caminha’s letter, he told a story about Diogo Dias who brought one of their bagpipe players and his bagpipe and began to dance with the people of the place they visited. The people found this delightful and so they laughed and happily danced with him. This reminded me of the scene in the movie where Dan Eldon brought out a scary looking mask which endeared him to the children and they just laughed and danced after they warmed up to the sight of the mask on Dan Eldon. This part also had a similarity with Matt Harding’s videos where the people Harding visited danced with him.

Dan Eldon’s journey to some parts of Africa also reflected the same thing that happened between Torello and Saladin where the two gentlemen showed hospitality to one another even when they did not know each other’s backgrounds. The same thing also happened to Dan Eldon where people in places he has visited showed hospitality to him because Dan Eldon was very generous to them and he has shown an open heart to them as well.

But to connect the film to Dan Eldon’s artwork, I noticed that in real life, he liked to document his life creatively by cutting out pictures, art papers, newspapers and then putting them into his journal. This element was incorporated into the film in a way that the transitions in the film were designed like Dan Eldon’s journal.

After watching the movie and reading up about Dan Eldon’s life, I realized that travelling is not just about leisure. It is also an opportunity to widen one’s perspective and knowledge, and to realize that there is life that is very much outside our own. In some instances, it can also teach us how to be grateful for what we have just like how travelling affected the life of Eldon.