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Numéro spécial sur les humanités



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With selected papers from the 12th CODESRIA General Assembly, 2008

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Avec des articles issus de la 12^e assemblée générale du CODESRIA, 2008

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Africa Development is a quarterly bilingual journal of CODESRIA. It is a social science journal whose major focus is on issues which are central to the development of society. Its principal objective is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among African scholars from a variety of intellectual persuasions and various disciplines. The journal also encourages other contributors working on Africa or those undertaking comparative analysis of Third World issues.

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Performance and Power: Cultural Strategies for Contesting Hierarchy and Political Authority in Maazou Dan Alalo’s Song ‘Baudot’

Antoinette Tidjani Alou*

Literature, music, and art are liminoid [liminal-like] genres that suspend the laws of ‘normal discourse’ and transform social actions into performances.

Gunter Lenz

Abstract

In history and literature, colonial rule is often read correctly in terms of violence, trauma, (super) structural mutations and the undermining by external forces of local endogenous authorities, cultures and ideologies. Incorrectly, however, these effects and mutations are typically considered to be induced unilaterally from the outside hence occluding the role and agency of local actors and the characteristics of internal social dynamics in the colonized space. This paper focuses precisely on aspects of these often forgotten dimensions explored through an analysis of the paradoxal ‘Baudot’ praise song by Maazou Inoussa alias Dan Alalo and his troupe. The song foregrounds the colonial administrator René Baudot both as hero and anti-hero, the artist as a powerful actor and lucid critic, the local society as reactive, ambivalent and heterogeneous. In this performance of power, panegyric/parody, empathy/satire, insider/outsider, high-status/low-status, private/public, domination/resistance, centrality/liminality power/powerlessness and low status/high status emerge as key concepts in a piece demonstrating artistic virtuosity, humour and lucidity.

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Résumé

En histoire et en littérature, la domination coloniale est souvent interprétée, à juste titre, en termes de violence, de traumatisme, de mutations (super) structurelles et d'atteinte, par des forces extérieures, aux autorités, aux cultures et aux idéologies locales endogènes. À tort, toutefois, ces effets et mutations sont généralement considérés comme induits unilatéralement de l'extérieur. Ce qui occulte le rôle et l'effet des acteurs locaux ainsi que les caractéristiques de la dynamique sociale interne dans l'espace colonisé. Cet article se concentre précisément sur les aspects de ces dimensions souvent oubliées, explorées à travers une analyse du chant laudatif paradoxal, « Baudot », de Maazou Inoussa alias Dan Alalo et sa troupe. Le chant met en relief l'administrateur colonial, René Baudot, en tant que héros et antihéros, l'artiste comme un puissant acteur et un critique lucide, la société locale comme étant réactive, ambivalente et hétérogène. Dans cette interprétation du pouvoir, panégyrique/parodie, empathie/satire, initié/étranger, statut supérieur/statut inférieur, public/privé, domination/résistance, centralité/liminalité, puissance/impuissance et statut inférieur/statut supérieur, apparaissent comme des concepts clés témoignant de la virtuosité, l'humour et la lucidité artistiques.

In Niger, colonial rule brought into existence not one but a variety of juxtaposed authorities which served to change and to complicate social and political arenas. Here, as elsewhere, colonial rule is often read in history and literature, and rightly so, in terms of violence, trauma and (super) structural mutations. Moreover, in general, the undermining, by external forces, of local indigenous authorities, social practices, cultures and ideologies is often justly regarded as common effects of colonization. But, incorrectly, these effects and mutations are typically considered to be induced unilaterally from the outside. Such analyses, whether based on historical fact, on symbolic or ideological discourse and rhetoric, frequently focus on the public sphere and public authorities viewed as central space(s) and central actors of the power games involved. Less frequently highlighted are the internal dynamics also related to the complex dialectics linking the foreign actors of colonial power to actors of the colonized space subjected to change. The latter include traditional local powers and their central actors, the community at large with its public and private spaces of interlocking as well as its spaces of contestation and disaggregation, 'liminoid' actors, and spaces of action and interaction, as they appear both in real life situations and in imaginary (re) constructions.

This paper studies the interaction between the public and private spheres in Damagaram and its capital Zinder, in the fourth decade after colonial penetration of the region, as reflected in the praise song of Maazou Inoussa,

alias Dan Alalo, a popular singer of the times. This song foregrounds the colonial administrator René Baudot both as hero and anti-hero. In a previous paper (Tidjani Alou forthcoming), I approached the song 'Baudot' from the comparative literature perspective of humour as a powerful and complex social instrument providing catharsis, empowerment and social criticism while pointing out that this work invites analysis of the discreet folds of the power relationships that developed during the colonial era. The present paper follows up my earlier observation.

It is always possible to describe how popular grassroots culture has managed to criticize and deconstruct strategies of (state) hegemony and centrality by exploiting available interstices of resistance, agency, and empowerment. But it is much more challenging to provide broad analyses, based on literature, orature or other cultural fields, conversant with social science concepts and theories, like that of the public sphere, without misinterpretation or over-interpretation. Such pitfalls are rampant when scholars, armed with the best interdisciplinary intentions, lose sight of the transformative nature of artistic processes and actors, and of their complex, active, not necessarily documentary, often ambiguous relationships with 'real life' situations, when academic analysis disregards the back-and-forth movements between social reality and 'imaginative worlds', when it ignores the rhetorical and discursive strategies at the heart of the power games artists also play. Indeed the literary or oral text, suffused as it may be with social content, criticism and projections, is, in most cases, not to be confused with a concrete political agenda. However, managing these different, inter-lapping folds of meaning is far from obvious in actual practice.

Mindful of such challenges, I will show how the popular singer Maazou Dan Alalo and his troupe, in their song 'dedicated' to the colonial administrator René Baudot, engaged in a 'performance of power'. The song evokes, among other things, the transformation of the local power pyramid. It also illustrates the power games that marked Damagaram and in particular the city of Zinder, seat of the sultanate, under colonial rule during the Second World War period. Portraying the colonial administrator who governed the region for one year, from 1942 to 1943, the song 'Baudot' contains at once parody and genuine panegyric. Its allusion to the ambiguous nature of colonial relationships is exemplified through a series of oppositions including: parody/panegyric; empathy/satire, insider/outsider status, low-status actors/public personalities, private sphere/public sphere, and domination/resistance. These are discernible in the text or can be gleaned from the context to which the text alludes.

In order to enter into the spirit of this song it is necessary to bear in mind its character as public performance, of song-poetry, dramatized with the aid

of music, not by an individual artist but by a group with a distinctive leader, Dan Alalo, as the uncontested *maître d'oeuvre*. But this central role organized a group performance in which the role of the other artists-musicians was crucial. While the lead singer had the privilege of composing the theme, of leading rehearsal and performance and of singing the main parts of the song, the success of the performance required the participation of a powerful chorus and of an experienced *san kira* or answerer capable of relaying the lead, and of injecting new energy into the act by echoing or reworking the theme. At points of heightened tension or drama, the entire troupe¹ would perform simultaneously, joining in the song and the musical accompaniment.

The audience, of course, did not observe a religious silence, but would participate in the chorus and in their favourite parts of the song. A special characteristic of the public performance of the 'Baudot' song was the interplay of identity and othering. The satirical treatment of Baudot created a social space of resistance to the colonial other. But othering also involved the treatment of satirized characters liked marabouts, Arabs and Sherifs, houseboys and prostitutes who were members of the local society to one degree of the other. Social identification was thus played out differentially. But let me not move ahead of myself.

The intricate motifs of calling and answering aside, the content and structure of the song seem fairly simple. Isn't this song about praising Baudot's prowess, about revealing the way in which he dominated the local society and imposed colonial economics and politics? Isn't this what the artists mime, invent and dramatize as their roving gaze moves critically from one section of the 'work camp' of Damagaram to the other, tableau after tableau, exploring the happenings in a society divided into fields according to various codes of classification: the field of the marabouts and those of the crippled, the fields of the leprous and of the blind, those of Arabs and Sherifs, formerly high-status individuals, reputed to be descendants of the Prophet Mohammed, those of married women, prostitutes, soldiers, houseboys? The final section of this paper shows that this apparent simplicity of structure and content is misleading. This said, we note that Dan Alalo used his position as an insider/outsider and his multifaceted art, wielding humour and satire as powerful cultural arms, to highlight the ambiguous character of a colonial anti-hero/hero, but also to mock, in dramatic and humoristic terms, the local mighty that fell victim to Baudot's indiscriminating rule of forced labour in the fields.

In the universe of the song, the fields, from locus of forced labour, are transformed, by the artists' performance, into a fragmented public sphere. But this heterogeneous space is also employed as a trope of subjection and

domination, of social mutation and of social conflict, perused with fleeting empathy, scathing satire or the cathartic instrument of tongue-in-cheek humour. It is related to the commanding, pervasive trope of 'work' that organizes the entire piece, readable at a variety of levels: as the panegyric of the taskmaster and master-worker Baudot, as a metaphor of the advent of a new power in the public as well as the private sphere, as the instrument of reversal of social hierarchy, as material for artistic mimesis and critique, as a mode of artistic (re)codification of society' public and private spheres, as a performative representation of change, and as an aesthetic redefinition of power (Bertellini 2005:39, 45, 57).

The singer and his group performed from a position of power: theirs was the role of showing, telling and ridiculing in unison or contrapuntally, in minute and dramatic detail. In the artistic universe of the song, they are shown as doing this without the risk of being answered or sanctioned, since the all-powerful Baudot could not speak Hausa, and demoted persons in the local arena were forced to observe a chastised silence or resort to retreat. The position of the artists as it plays out in the text is strengthened, moreover, by the amused and avenged gaze of many others in the society who had scores to settle with perceived rivals or enemies, and who thanked Baudot, God, and the Prophet for both the levelling and reversal of social hierarchy.

From these rich strata of textual discourse, rhetoric and signification, this paper will highlight three aspects of power and performance: (i) the power game of the popular artist: interplay between centrality and liminality; (ii) the strategic artistic manipulation of the genre of panegyric; (iii) the textual inscription of social change.

The Power Game of the Popular Artist: Interplay between Centrality and Liminality

Colonial rule and its everyday constraints did not eradicate the irrepressible sense of humour of ordinary Africans or of African artists. Nor did colonized society draw to a standstill or freeze from the point of view of its internal relationships including conflict and social transformation. These were, however, obviously affected at diverse levels and in different ways by the advent of a new, foreign and repressive power. Before looking at the way in which Dan Alalo and his troupe turned such interactions 'into a discursive tool of their own', reworking socio-political configurations through aesthetics, we need to take a moment to look at the biography of the popular singer, seen in the context of Zinderian society of the time.

Of central importance is Dan Alalo's position as an insider/outsider thanks to which he had both the distance and the inside knowledge that allowed him

to provide invaluable insights into the overall mutation of the local social pyramid, to the vicarious mirth of the social underdogs and of the self-perceived avenged.

In 'Baudot', Dan Alalo's acerbic and amused gaze scrutinizes and redefines a society that was not really his own: this region of Damagaram, associated with the sultanate of Zinder, situated in the centre of eastern Niger, not far from the singer's native home in Katsina, then under British colonial rule. The origin and expansion of the sultanate of Damagaram is associated with Islam, military organization and an extensive administration (Salifou 1971). While certain sultans were renowned for their military feats, others were celebrated for their religious fervour, in the image of Sultan Mustapha, who 'governed' during Baudot's administration.

Dan Alalo, who was initially trained to be a marabout, voluntarily took up the life of a griot though he was not born into this caste. After singing at the court of Katsina, as of 1930 he worked in the sultanate of Damagaram as a protégé of the sultan, attached to his court. His popularity grew despite the opposition of local panegyrists, jealous of this foreigner and usurper of the art. Hence his situation in this land of chosen exile was both privileged and uncomfortable. Popular, protected by the sultan, his artistic status was both ambiguous and challenged: he was not a griot by right of inheritance, nor a griot of the sultanate by descent, nor a singer of the aristocratic circle of the sultan's court by his cultural positioning. In fact, his favourite instrument was not the *kakaki*, instrument of the court and of princes, but the *kalangu*, instrument of the 'people'² (Niang 1999:32) with which he nonetheless performed for the sultan, for rich patrons and for the general public.

His hybrid status thus combined a unique mixture of popularity and marginality depending on the perspective of social space from which it is viewed. This said, we need to bear in mind the more or less marginal status of performers of any kind in this society (Daba 2006:33). At any rate, Dan Alalo's status and situation bear witness to the internal conflicts of the local 'public cultural arena' with its castes, rules, transgressions, rivalry and finally its relative heterogeneity, providing insight into the interstices of social life, from multiple points of view, in every sense of the term. The stakes of the actors in this arena are, of course, important to this discussion since performance in the court of the sultan represented the holy of holies, the acme of the public cultural space, itself at the cross-roads of the public and the private. But even in less exclusive spaces of public performance, popular artists like Dan Alalo and his troupe gained access to a space of symbolic power. Through and during performance they acquired the status of public personalities to be reckoned with (Habermas 1978:25³), endowed with the

power to move the public, to influence public opinion, to describe, interpret and (re)invent socio-cultural experience (Lenz 2005:71), to reveal dominant values and their subversion (ibid.), from their own point of own. They became influential in forming popular representations, in explicating social identity ... and in affirming their own. In the specific context of interrelations among artists of the cultural public space in question, it is relevant to note that Dan Alalo, challenged in the milieu, resorted to a scathing satire of his rivals and detractors as a potent and effective means of protection and counterattack and was consequently feared (Niang 1999:35).⁴

The overall cultural and political context in which the song was created and performed is important – and not just as ‘background’. Dan Alalo was invited to the court of the sultan of Zinder during the 1930s when the Damagaram region like other regions of Niger had already experienced some three decades of colonial presence. The sophisticated political and administrative system of the sultanate of Damagaram, with Zinder as capital, was a shadow of its past glory (Salifou 1971:4, 47-48, 59, 193, 199). Formerly it was occupied with military attack and defence, governing the various sectors of production, administering diverse indigenous and foreign groups and castes, and diverting the constant and active rivalry of male aristocrats by allocating chieftaincies and honorific or lucrative positions to the sons of princes and princesses. But now real power had moved elsewhere and even the reigning sultan reflected the choice of the colonial master. The sultanate, along with the rest of the ‘Hausa country’, had paid a high price for its role in colonial history, involving the ‘treacherous execution’, ordered by the sultan Amadou Kouran Daga, of the French military Captain Cazemajou and his interpreter Olive, along with some of their *tirailleurs*, and routing of the rest (Salifou 1971:102-109). It is therefore possible to imagine that Zinder was deliberately placed under the command of what leaders and the population regarded as tyrannical administrators.

Baudot was, in all likelihood, particularly severe. At any rate he became the subject/object of the ambiguous praise song composed and performed by Dan Alalo and his troupe, a song that remains popular even today, among Nigériens born just before or after independence who have never attended a live performance of the song and know it only through audio recording. First recorded in Niger in the 1960s, after independence, by the Office de Radio Télévision in Zinder, and transcribed by Abdou Majinguini, of the Institut National de Documentation et de Recherche Pédagogique (National Institute of Documentation and Pedagogical Research) INDRAP, in 1980 (Niang 1999:46), this song immortalizes what is presented as a particularly difficult period in the history of everyday life in Zinder. It went, in actual fact, from

1 February 1943 to 2 January 1944, the year in which Baudot commanded Zinder and subjected the region to forced agricultural labour, producing peanuts, cassava, sweet potato and cotton in huge fields, *gandu*, appropriated and distributed by the colonial overlord. (This both symbolized and instituted the replacement of the absolute authority of the sultan by that of the colonizers as the *gandu* surrounding Zinder in a perimeter of some 30 kilometres were formerly those of the sultan, farmed by slaves and non-aristocratic subjects (Salifou 1971:60, 147).

This is the situation that Dan Alalo, at the head of his troupe and with their active and indispensable collaboration, selectively represents and interprets, from a finite and specific point of view which was neither neutral nor unconscious of the power of the artist as eye and voice of an otherwise silenced society. Exploiting the temporally and spatially limited public cultural space of the sultan's court as of 1944⁵ for the performance of this song, the artists were able to invest, for themselves and for specific others, the influential space of 'publicity' (Habermas), in order to form public opinion and to subversively define and undermine colonial power as well as zones of local power. Later, larger sectors of the local society were able to participate through hearsay, then through less exclusive performances and thanks to recordings made during tours of Nigeria.⁶ Performance transformed these popular low-status individuals into central actors of the public sphere, endowed with the powerful aura of a public personality (Habermas).

Strategic Artistic Manipulation of the Genre of Panegyric

The title of the song, bearing Baudot's name, suggests the centrality of this representative and administrator of colonial power. However, Baudot is certainly not the only central figure here since Dan Alalo works his own persona into the song in a convincing demonstration of the power of the artist as a public personality (Habermas) and of mimesis as a 'powerful rhetorical and cultural strategy' (Bertellini 2005:57) of imaginative reconfiguration of society, capable of influencing critical reflection and social representation.

Nonetheless, from his unique position as an insider/outsider, commanding the multifaceted art of the popular song, with its chorus, musicians, answerers and its dramatic verve based on social portraiture, humour, satire and mimicry, Dan Alalo and the troupe he led, sought, among other things, to highlight Baudot's ambiguous character as both a hero and a anti-hero. Satirically portrayed as a harsh and tyrannical taskmaster, totally devoid of compassion and of common decency, as a pagan fearing neither God nor humans, Baudot's aura in the song bespeaks, nonetheless, both fear and admiration. He forced esteem, thanks to the ardour he brought to the mission of forcing others to

work. This required a constant and immense output of personal physical and psychological labour, giving rise to the impression of an almost miraculous ubiquity. In fact, it could be argued that his negative characteristics did not necessarily cast him in the role of an anti-hero or, that even interpreted as such, his potentially antiheroic traits were a common feature of the personality of certain local heroes and kings, including well-known sultans of Zinder like Ibram, Tanimun and Saleman Dan Ayisa, celebrated for their astounding cruelty (Salifou 1971:49-50, 65, 86-87). Moreover, the Baudot figure, as portrayed in the song, reminds us of the ambiguous character of certain types of traditional heroes constructed on the 'Dodo' model: that of the chief as an awe-inspiring figure admired and feared like the monster Dodo, characterized in Hausa folktales as powerful, dangerous and ambiguous. This image is exploited in the panegyric of chiefs and kings as a flattering evocation of their terrifying aura (Niang 2005:68; Hunter and Oumarou 2001; Oumarou 2005:40; Tidjani Alou 2008). Hence the characterization of Baudot in Dan Alalo's song draws on classic ingredients of a local or adopted and integrated model of the panegyric of the powerful, often perceived as oppressive.

Baudot as a public personality representing French supremacy in the public sphere, benefited, moreover, from the perceived prestige of the white colonizer, which the popular imagination, in search of classificatory models, at times associated not with the banal power of arms but with an unprecedented mystical supremacy (Fuglestad 1975:211; Stoller 1995:75-90). This type of magico-religious representation was particularly strong in local societies which had little or no previous experience of an entrenched centralizing political and administrative system and which followed African traditional religious belief and practice. Thus the sudden imposition of an artificial chieftaincy serving an oppressive colonial system had led, in the 1920s, in a non-Islamized local society, to a cult of possession in which grotesque mimesis served to express resistance, to provide catharsis and capture the perceived power of the colonizer (see Jean Rouch's film, *Les Maîtres fous* 1927; Fuglestad 1975; Stoller 1995; Idrissa 1996). Humour, horror and mimesis were important elements of this cult. But in the case of Damagaram, the strong centralizing power of the sultanate, the muscular and tyrannical rules of certain sultans, the plethoric administration, the existence of the system of levying labour from non-aristocratic subjects, the use of servile manpower in the sultan's enormous fields, *gandu*, were part of the ordinary socio-political and economic landscape of a milieu that was both urban and rural, and which, as of 1850 and up until the time of colonial penetration, was in no wise a petty chieftaincy (Salifou 1971:4, 48, 59-62, 68, 78, 193). At any rate, the point is that the

cultural shock of forced labour was probably less poignant though nonetheless irksome, and the mimesis and catharsis were less dramatic but nevertheless interesting and revealing.

The introduction of the song focuses on the presentation of Baudot, the white Dodo. The introit defines itself (and the song) as a *kidi* or praise theme, one, we are told, that necessarily resonates in the heart of every resident of Damagaram, for in every gathering however great or small, 'there is always a former prisoner of Baudot' in its midst. And Dan Alalo, no doubt fallaciously, also presents himself as one of the lot, an African story-telling technique using the 'dramatic I' continued by Caribbean popular singers like the Mighty Sparrow in his *kaisoes*. From the outset, Baudot's oppressive presence is represented as having been universally felt, making him to be an emblem of the widespread impact of colonial rule in this locality and casting the community as a dominated space. In the same breath, Dan Alalo's persona, imposed on the audience throughout the song, exploits the fictitious omnipresence of the storyteller who proclaims his eyewitness status with the 'willing suspension of disbelief' of the audience. But here the artist pushes this strategy one notch higher by inventing for himself the privileged, central position of Baudot's envoy and overseer, an authorized and powerful presence critically walking through Zinder and reinventing its public and private spheres as a literary geography of political significance (Maffi 2005:276, 277).

Obviously, the praise song of a chief or important official, or indeed of any person, is impossible without the evocation of his genealogy. Baudot's genealogy as sung by Dan Alalo is contrived and fragmented, in keeping with his status of a foreigner about whom little or no information on lineage and social origin is available. He is: 'the relative of Ichère, kin of Gaumont (two French administrators)', 'the father of Abdou' (an indigenous youth⁷), 'the friend of the Sultan Mustapha of Damagaram'. This is very meagre, but it is important to respect the rules of the genre and thus to situate the great man in the social network (in which he emerges as having few ties). Upon examination, this minimal genealogy highlights Baudot's status as marginal though powerful person, an outsider, an illegitimate being with limited claims to personhood, which is not a biological given (Wiredu 2009). Additionally, his status, beyond his personal power, is one of representation of the French colonial power since his classificatory 'kin' are other colonial administrators and his only local 'kin' are a social junior and the sultan. This last 'relationship' marks the 'cooperation' of the sultan with colonial rule and, in the mouth of his 'protégé' Dan Alalo, enhances the status of the sultan no matter how we take it.

But the crux of the matter resides elsewhere, for what interests Dan Alalo above all is the introduction of the European 'chief', of the big white wolf

that managed to disrupt the social hierarchy. This new (dis) order, involving the shift from Islamized ruler to European rule allows the underprivileged of yesterday to show and tell through song, drama and mime, how the mighty, fallen from their thrones, have become the object of public mockery. Hence the singer makes short work of presenting Baudot's praise names: 'the taskmaster', 'the Master worker', 'the White Man', 'the man with the whip', 'the man with the bludgeon'. This foreigner is presented as being obsessed with work, as the enemy of rest, of his own and of that of the whole of Damagaram and these attributes are in turn linked to his status as a foreigner/ White Man (Nasara) while his lack of discernment and compassion are linked to his status as an 'unbeliever' (*kafiri*), i.e. non-Muslim and as a pagan (*arne*, meaning animist), a blame theme that reflects a Muslim worldview. Baudot is, moreover, the supreme authority despite the earlier polite reference to his relationship with the sultan for 'if the man with the whip strikes you/ you can only turn to God' (Niang 1999:162, my trans.), meaning that he is the only master after God, thus implying the degree of the sultan's power in the colonial public sphere. What is also evident is the equation between colonial rule and violence, on one hand, and a new obsessive constraining approach to work, on the other, indicating a change of social ethic. Work, formerly understood as degrading for persons of noble origin, as the sad lot of low-status individuals, becomes an almost universal obligation, an end in itself; an enforced effort operating outside the familiar laws of status, profession, and social modes of production. Indeed, marabouts and Arabs did not perform agricultural labour. Both were high-status individuals. The first had a large field given to them by the sultan, worked by slaves (Salifou 1971:168); the second controlled the very lucrative trans-Saharan trade and lent money to the sultan (ibid. 132). Moreover, the *gaya*, or invitation to collective labour in an individual's field was a matter of consented collective work among neighbours from a village or from neighbouring villages and answered to rules of social exchange and relationships. The workers were fed by the owner of the field. Young men came to show off their strength and compete with one another. Young women came to sing encouragements and pick out a future mate. These dynamics had nothing to do with the conception of work in Baudot's *gaya*. For here work becomes synonymous with foreign domination, with a specific foreigner, with the disruption of every area of social interaction and of socially regulated prerogatives. Work, in the new dispensation ultimately signifies the 'banishment of rest from the city', the eradication of leisure, privilege, privacy and peace of mind.

It rapidly becomes obvious that while Baudot is an important discursive instrument in the song, the colonial official is not really the subject. At the

same time, he is not totally the object of the song either. For the main thrust here is not actually, or not merely, the denunciation of colonial oppression, which is nonetheless revealed as real, pervasive and humiliating in its everyday reality. Nor is the song simply one of resistance, though resistance is in fact performed through satire of the colonial administrator. Particular aspects of Baudot's cruelty, of his arbitrary use of imprisonment, lack of compassion for the old, the handicapped, for women, his disrespect of the local domestic order, of the sanctity of the home, are stressed throughout the song. It is clear: Baudot fears no one, feels pity for no one, respects no one, and answers to no one in the local society. Disrespecting local tradition through ignorance as well as prejudice, Baudot is shown up as a barbarian. Yet, despite all this, despite the fact that his menacing shadow hovers over the social drama performed, we get the impression that the flesh-and-blood Baudot is instrumentalized by the singers, blown out of proportion, transformed into something larger than life: a Dodo projected at will in order to arouse mock terror, to exorcise fear, to regain control of the situation by naming it, and to mediate and settle a few community scores.

The Textual Inscription of Social Change

The final part of this paper looks at the representation of social change. Representation covers a range of meanings including performance in the 'public cultural arena', its influential role in forming public opinion, and its contribution to the definition of social identity as presented in the song. This performance refers to a specific and significant space-time. But it also projects an imaginary social space with its public and private borderlines. It highlights and comments upon, through the use of humour, drama and satire, the transgressions of the frontiers of the private and the public operated by the overzealous French colonial administrator, Baudot, and his interpretation and exercise of the prerogatives of France's power in the colonial public sphere. Exaggeration is of course an ordinary mode of the mixed genre of this performance, combining elements of epic, mock epic, humour and satire. But, even then, certain details of the trespassing of the public authority remain evocative and meaningful. The imaginary social space projected by the performance also suggests social codes of status, caste, ethnicity and gender (Boelhower 2005:11). These make reference to the new professions created by colonial rule and their impact on the renewal of Zinder's cosmopolitan social sphere. Last but not least, they evoke certain types of social conflict and rivalry begging the researcher to probe their relationship with the real-life situation.

Dan Alalo and his troupe first performed this song soon after Baudot's departure from Zinder, in early 1944. This initial performance took place in

the sultan's court,⁸ which represents an exclusive cultural arena, at the frontier between the public and the private (see Habermas). Other more public performances were to follow as mentioned. Other performances took place in the courtyards of nobles and rich patrons, for whom Dan Alalo and his troupe also performed with a more or less important gathering, representing a more ideal 'public cultural arena', regarding the formation of public opinion, than the sultan's court. It is quite possible that no matter how 'open' the gathering, certain members of the society did not repeat the mistake of being part of the audience at a performance of this song and others probably left as discreetly as possible on their first experience. Others yet might not have gone to such a performance in the first place but were bound to receive some unwelcome information of its content, style and reception. At any rate, it is more than likely that the audience was not homogenous regarding point of view and stakes and consequently participation and reception. What is sure is that throughout the space-time of performance Dan Alalo and his troupe were centres and purveyors of socio-cultural power. Their mimesis of colonial domination displaced and captured power by naming and manipulating reality through their representation of the self and of the other. Humorously casting himself as the mouthpiece and eye of the colonial overlord, it is Dan Alalo, along with his troupe, who lords it over the entire society by giving utterance to its redefinitions in progress. How are these redefinitions perceived and expressed in the composition and performance of the song? What do they signify?

In order to respond to the first question, we need to examine certain elements of the content and form of the song which, taken together, will help us to answer the second question. Two leading characters emerge in the song: Baudot and Dan Alalo. We have examined the superficial and deeper meanings of these two protagonists and their imaginary interrelation as performed in the song. In this narrative Dan Alalo is fictitiously but meaningfully (re)positioned as socially close to Baudot. This strategy poses the artist as a high-status individual, a convenient vantage point from which to gaze upon every aspect of society. This (re) positioning allows the lyrics to deal with the viewpoints of both men, one representing the foreign oppressor; the other the local oppressed, much more easily that if they were presented in their 'correct' social reality as distant from each other. This juxtaposition also enables Dan Alalo to assume a poetic credibility that would have been impossible in his 'correct' social station – distant from the colonial oppressor. The song's symbolic reconfiguration of society places all the other characters of the piece in the position of figures in a public arena, figures forcibly deprived of the privileges of private space by the eruption of

the public power of the colonial administrator and of the foreign power he represents. The action of the former operates various forms of 'publicizing' (Habermas) beginning with his performance of power by proxy. It is in Baudot's name that Dan Alalo requisitions a rounding up almost every *body* in Damagaram for labour in the fields. (Exemption applied in the case of the ruling class, related by blood or other close ties to the sultanate). Baudot is therefore portrayed as a public figure mandated by an overlord with prerogatives including the right to requisition labour or to order requisition. Colonial rule is shown in the act of redefining and reconfiguring social space and of controlling social bodies (Stoller 1995). As represented in the song, the entire Damagaram becomes an agricultural work camp. The able body is redefined as almost *any* body that is not dead, as specified near the beginning of the piece: 'Whether you are an Arab/Whether you are a marabout/The Nazarene says/Even soldiers, even gobis/ No one is exempted'. Now these are important people, big men, local and foreign, as defined by pre-colonial social values and by new social values influenced by the colonial system since the *gobi* was a white soldier. Other military men were Africans from neighbouring regions of the French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française – AOF) of the time. They added to Zinder's cosmopolitan character and fed the local economy to some degree since they had money to spend. Prostitutes, military wives or concubines and houseboys were among their clients. The list of persons who could be requisitioned lengthens, descending the rungs of the social ladder. Other requisitioned bodies include: 'prostitutes', 'young female vendors', 'butchers', 'sellers of odds and ends', 'the impotent, the blind, the leprous', and 'the old woman who sells peanuts', 'even if she has to drag herself on her behind' to get to the fields. All are decreed to be 'able-bodied', be they villagers or town dwellers residing in the shadow of the sultan's palace, men or women, married or single. Village chiefs are warned to make sure they provide the quota of workers stipulated. Workers had better finish in one morning the work that takes them one week in the sultan's fields (Niang 1999:160). Dan Alalo as protagonist in the song is the town crier publishing these labour laws of colonial rule, a function the character accomplishes and the singer performs with great relish.

The discrete references to local traditional leaders like chiefs and the sultan are, of course, quite revealing as regards their status under colonial rule and their role in the general system of forced labour. It is clear, moreover, that conscripted local workers are not considered as persons, as social beings with a specific social status and personal agendas, by the colonial administrator. Neither the physical limitations of the handicapped and the aged nor 'normal' exemptions of big men, masters of households and their

protégés – beginning with their wives – are taken into consideration. Hence, it is the entire pyramidal social system of the local society that is disregarded and abrogated, leaving two groups: workers who could be conscripted and a small exempted class which functioned as a provider of working bodies. But is also the right to privacy, private space and private prerogatives of free subjects that is annulled with important implications for the local definition of colonial rule.

In fact, Baudot, admired and feared for his aura and power, is also satirized for this total lack of respect of persons and of local social norms. He is decried as a heartless pagan for forcing lepers to sow among thorns, using the two remaining fingers on a hand incapable of holding a tool. In the same way, his underhand tactics for undermining the status of the head of household and the privacy and sanctity of the local home are condemned. In both these cases, Dan Alalo reverts to the use of minute description, exaggeration and focus on a specific case to make his point. Baudot is shown as integrating local social modes of behaviour in order to undermine social norms. Thus he rides a horse instead of driving a car so that the *mai gida*, the Zinderian *oikosdespotes* will remain unaware of his presence until the last moment. Besides, the character Baudot does not enter into a house through the front door, does not respect the rule requiring that strangers, especially males, limit their presence to the *zaure* or public reception area of the house. He enters through the backdoor, violating the intimacy of the entire household and disrespecting the master of the house. Caught by surprise, the latter is whipped in the presence of his wives, children and dependents. Other violated or abolished spaces of privacy or leisure evoked include the cosy rooms of prostitutes, the local pleasure spot of the bar, selling liquor and fried meat, catering to local and other males employed as colonial auxiliaries, with money to spend, the spaces of courting that brought together unmarried young men and women and their friends in keeping with the social norms of the time.

Shocking references to colonial violence focus on intimate social spaces, with the body as the paramount among them, often ignored by certain studies of colonization, but pinpointed by authors like Césaire (*Discourse on colonialism*) and Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*). While these are worthy of note, they should not blind us to other interstitial social relationships which also existed under colonial rule. I am referring to how Dan Alalo's universally critical gaze also places in the limelight the internal social rivalries of the local society under the influence of change, spurred by colonial rule. To this end, the artist remains faithful to the dramatic use of minute, exaggerated description, social portraiture, humour, satire and mime. His technique also involves an interesting encoding of public space. As mentioned earlier, the

entire society of Damagaram is represented as a vast agricultural work camp, divided into zones represented by the fields allotted to broken, demoted and constrained bodies. Recalling the ambiguous personal status of Dan Alalo and of public entertainers mentioned earlier, it is important to stress that his scrutiny of social action does not necessarily spare members of the local society. Though pity and outrage are not absent from certain evocations of the violation of social norms of respect and decency, Dan Alalo and his troupe also mock and disparage certain victims belonging to the local society to some degree or the other.

Dan Alalo as a main character in the song is portrayed as an alert, mobile and critical observer roaming the region, zone after zone, taking advantage of his in-between identity, transforming real 'social action into performance', demonstrating the ambiguous position of the artist as a non-neutral witness and interpreter of everyday life which, with hindsight, becomes history in the making. His song as a memory archive offers a porthole glimpse into intimate interstices of social change and conflict under colonial rule interpreted from a particular, relatively marginal, informed and stake-laden point of view. Two pairs of contrasting scenes from the song will serve as illustration: on one hand the reaction of local Arabs and Sherifs opposed to that of marabouts, on the other, the response of the soldiers' wives and that of the prostitutes.

In response to Baudot's requisition, the marabouts, habitually early risers, who watch and pray at night and awake at dawn for the call to prayer, especially in the case of muezzins, are up well before the cock, before the crack of dawn. When Dan Alalo arrives on the spot, they are there waiting, a thousand strong. But the marabout is a man of knowledge, unskilled in handling the hoe, enveloped in garb befitting his dignity but unsuited to work in the fields: superimposed boubous, 'an enormous turban', flowing trousers. The narrator observes the distress of the marabouts, the incongruity of their dress and offers practical advice to a marabout singled out from the group. As usual the focus on a single individual serves the end of a dramatic one-to-one interaction: 'I said "plough, marabout, plough"/The marabout stood there silent/I insisted: "Plough, marabout!/The pagan does not know Allah"...' The humble servant of God, who can do nothing with his hands except pray, accepts all of the advice offered, strips off his ceremonial attire and buckles down to work. But the irony of the situation is not lost on the narrator who watches this transformation of these formerly high-status individuals, once influential in government and politics, recipients of rich gifts from the sultan and nobles, of *sadaka*, tithes, who were beneficiaries of slave labour in their own fields. He cannot resist poking fun at the men of God: 'Maybe he will have mercy on you when he comes', he offers as a mock consolation while

reporting their prayerful chanting: ‘Soubhanaallahi Walhamdou lillahi/Wa la illa illaho, Allah Akbar’ (Niang 1999:116; Niang 2005:74). These are revealed to be vain supplications, for, as he dispassionately reminds the marabouts: ‘The pagan does not know Allah/When he comes you will be beaten to death’. He shares his ambiguous reaction with the audience: ‘I felt sorry for the marabouts/But after a while, I found them ridiculous’. But this ironic treatment of marabouts, despite their status as religious leaders in an Islamized society, is almost kind in comparison to the satire of the ‘Arabs and Sherifs’. The singer and his group disparage the pathetic state of these rich, high-status individuals, reputed to be not just learned Muslims but the very descendants of the Prophet Mohammed. Mockingly honoured and recognized through the use of the respectful Arabic title ‘Sidi’, the artists vengefully mime their self-pitying reaction to their fall from glory, as they declare their total ignorance of farming and exhibit their soft hands covered with blisters.

In the same way, the song opposes the group of the soldiers’ hardworking wives to prostitutes they perceive as rivals who steal their husbands. The first group is presented as composed of women of various regions and ethnic groups: ‘Zarmas’ and ‘Bambaras’; women of ‘Maradi’, ‘Gobir’, Zanfara, ‘Adar’, all reputed to be hardworking. To the contrary, the prostitutes are shown to be coquettish, lazy and enamoured of comfort and luxury. While the first group is inured to hard labour, the second group suffers horribly from exposure to the hot sun and a drastic initiation to toil. Interestingly, this is a day of rejoicing for the wives: ‘they exulted/the prostitutes had been brought to the fields/They were fainting from the heat/Those who had stolen their husbands one by one/Baudot the taskmaster/Has banished bedroom rest/They were bent double, and said, rejoicing/Baudot, we thank you./For the prostitutes are in this as well![repeat]/God, we thank you./Prophet, we thank you [repeat x 2]’ (Niang 1999:170-172, my trans.).

Hence, angelic inventions aside, solidarity/empathy is not illustrated here as an automatic social reflex. As mentioned in the introduction, the song portrays *communitas* as a mobile agglomerate of heterogeneous social networks with points of cohesion as well as relationships marked by conflict and feelings of ill-will.

Conclusion

Working with both text and context in the song ‘Baudot’, created and performed by Maazou Inoussa alias Dan Alalo and his troupe, this paper has attempted to examine the ambiguous nature of the public and private spheres portrayed in this artistic (re)invention of and commentary on a social reality. Indeed, the paper pinpoints various types of ambivalence including those of the characters and that of the artistic genre itself containing both parody and

genuine panegyric of the colonial administrator Baudot. The artistic motivation behind this song, which is both praise and parody, seems to go well beyond the simple scope of lauding or disparaging colonial power as other individual and social power games are also brought into the limelight in satirical detail. The paper moreover suggests that ambivalence, at the heart of social interactions, seems to have been exacerbated under colonial rule. Other ambivalences/oppositions alluded to in the analysis of this song, interpreted as a complex performance of power and commentary on social change, include the notions of centrality/liminality and power/powerlessness or low status/high status. These are shown to be reversed during performance through which artists are empowered for their own benefit but also for that of an otherwise silenced society. Artistic creation and performance reveal this society to be living, reactive and heterogeneous, with its relationships of conflict and its networks of solidarity.

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Notes

1. Information provided by Alhassane Amadou during an interview carried out 26/08/08.
2. However, Habid Hamed Daba (2006:4) in his book on the Nigerian Hausa poet, Danmaraya Jos notes that the use of the kalangu or 'talking drum' is documented for the courts of Gao as of the fourth century by the Arabic geographer al-Bakri.
3. All references here are to the French translation of *The Public Sphere* by Marc de Launay. See *L'Espace public*, Paris, Payot, 1978.
4. Daba (2006:25) notes concerning Hausa poet-singers in Nigeria: 'It seems that only *malamai* [marabouts] among the Hausa social stratification can escape the critical mouth of a singer before his audience'. In the case of Dan Alalo, this high-status group is not exempted from satirical treatment.
5. Information provided by Abdou Salam Niang, a Nigérien specialist of Hausa song-poetry and of Dan Alalo.
6. Ibid. Niang cites a 1951-1952 recording made by the Tabarsi recording company of Kano which no longer exists. This information on early audio recordings in Nigeria of Dan Alalo and his troupe was corroborated by the griot Alhassane, a member of Dan Alalo's choir, during my interview with him, with the assistance of Hamidou Ibrahim, Niamey, 26/08/08, during the writing of this paper.
7. In my interview with him (26/08/08), Alhassane informed me that that Abdou was the groom of Baudot's horse and that this servant was held in great affection by the colonial administrator.

8. Information provided by Abdou Salam Niang. Interview with Alhassane, 26/8/08, a griot from Dan Alalo's troupe, confirms that the song was performed long before independence and before the first audio recordings in Nigeria and Niger.

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Linguistic Diversity, Pluralism and National Development in Africa

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Abstract

In the quest for national development in Africa, how are the facts of linguistic diversity to be reconciled with pluralism, the African Union's ideological option for nation building? From the perspective of language planning theory, we motivate, justify, rationalise and propose a tier stratification model of language planning predicated on an adaptation of Jurgen Habermas's 1965 notion of the public sphere. Concretely, the bifurcation of the public sphere into the public and private domains and a principled stratification of languages of the nation-state into these domains, leads to a rational planning process. The process is characterised by the maintenance and consolidation of the linguistic and cultural identities of ethno linguistic communities at the micro-planning level while constructing a pluralistic national identity at the macro-planning level. The efficacy of the interaction between the two domains is mediated by two principles. The Principle of Functional Complementarities (PFC) requires that all languages be assigned (by the state) some valorising functions, i.e. functions that procure economic, social, and political advantages, thereby contributing to elevating the status of the ethno-linguistic communities. The Principle of Attitude Engineering (PAE) is expected to effect a positive change of attitude, culminating in a change of mindset congruent with the paradigm shift of national development anchored on pluralism. This model of Language Planning ensures the empowerment of linguistic minorities, provides for a reduction of ethno linguistic dominance and ipso facto, ensures the democratisation of access to knowledge, especially development-relevant knowledge for the national development enterprise.

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Résumé

Dans la quête du développement national en Afrique, comment les faits de la diversité linguistique doivent-ils se réconcilier avec le pluralisme, l'option idéologique de l'Union africaine pour l'édification de la nation? Du point de vue de la théorie de la planification linguistique, nous motivons, justifions, rationalisons et proposons un modèle de la planification linguistique fondé sur une adaptation de la notion de sphère publique de Jürgen Habermas (1965). Concrètement, la bifurcation de la sphère publique vers les domaines publics et privés ainsi que la stratification fondée sur des principes des langues de l'État-nation dans ces domaines, conduit à un processus de planification rationnelle. Le processus est caractérisé par le maintien et la consolidation des identités linguistiques et culturelles des communautés ethnolinguistiques au niveau de la micro-planification, tout en construisant une identité nationale pluraliste au niveau de la macro-planification. L'efficacité de l'interaction entre les deux domaines sont dictées par deux principes. Le principe des complémentarités fonctionnelles (PFC), requiert que certaines fonctions valorisantes soient attribuées (par l'Etat) à toutes les langues, c'est-à-dire les fonctions qui procurent les avantages économiques, sociales et politiques, contribuant ainsi à élever le statut des communautés ethnolinguistiques. Le principe dit « Principle of Attitude Engineering » (PAE) devrait avoir comme effet un changement positif d'attitude, aboutissant à un changement de mentalité en harmonie avec le changement de paradigme en matière de développement national ancré sur le pluralisme. Ce modèle de planification linguistique assure le renforcement des minorités linguistiques, envisage une réduction de la domination ethnolinguistique et, ipso facto, assure la démocratisation de l'accès à la connaissance, en particulier les connaissances pertinentes en matière de développement pour l'initiative de développement national.

Introduction

From the linguistic perspective, the single most important characteristic of African nations is linguistic diversity. All African countries are, indeed, multilingual and multicultural in varying degrees. This fact establishes the existence of a multiplicity of ethno-linguistic communities within each nation-state. Each linguistic community is in turn characterised by an autonomous ethno-linguistic identity. On the other hand, the most heralded paradigm of development in the current state of African nationalism is predicated on the ideal of pluralism as an ideological foundation of nationhood in Africa. In the quest for national development in Africa, how are the facts of linguistic diversity and the existence of ethno-linguistic identities to be reconciled with the exigencies of pluralism?

Put simply, how do emergent African nations achieve unity in diversity?

This work undertakes the challenge of providing a framework for maintaining and consolidating the linguistic and cultural identity of linguistic communities at a micro-linguistic planning level while constructing a pluralistic national identity at the macro-linguistic planning level. From the perspective of language in the public sphere, solving this national equation requires mediating between languages of the private domain and languages of the public domain. This is accomplished through the agency of a model of tier stratification of languages of the nation in consonance with the instrumentation of principles of functional complementarities and attitude engineering to be motivated and discussed.

National Development

National development is a much sought-after ideal in the developing nations of Africa as evidenced by the well known periodic (Five or Seven-Year) National Development Plans characteristic of these countries. Yet, despite over half a century of planning for development, it cannot be said that the ideal of development, (the object of the search), has been achieved. In spite of evidence of growth, the quintessence of development has eluded all efforts and initiatives as well as all economic paradigms designed for development in Africa, from the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) to the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The relative achievements of African nations since independence in relation to the contrasting evidence of extensive abject mass rural poverty, is best described as growth without development. This sorry state of affairs is due, in part at least, to the fact that the language factor in development has not been fully and comprehensively addressed or has been addressed only haphazardly and half-heartedly (Chumbow 2005).

It has been argued forcefully that the economic and social development of Africa depends crucially on the development and use of African languages in the enterprise of national development (Bamgbose 1991 and 2003; Chumbow 1990 and 2005-among others). Thus, Chumbow (2005:168) articulates this issue in the following terms:

An evaluation of the efforts of African countries in the enterprise of national development shows that in most cases, there has been what we may call growth without development because despite visible signs of economic progress (along with considerable population explosion), African countries are characterised by a massive presence of abject poverty in the rural communities (villages) and the outskirts of urban areas (where most city dwellers live) surrounding a few affluent villas capped by token sky-scrappers in the city centres.

While there is no universally acceptable and accepted definition for national development, a situation where evidence of conspicuous consumption in parts of the urban centres contrasts sharply with the generalised poverty, misery, illiteracy, ignorance and disease in most of the national territory is far from being a reasonable approximation of the national development ideal. The target of development should be the improvement of the welfare and social well-being of the entire citizenry.

We define national development (in Chumbow 1990) as ‘the nation’s human resources acting on its natural resources to produce goods (tangible and intangible) in order to improve the welfare and social well-being of citizens of the entire nation in terms of indicators of development predicated on minimum standards of living which include (among others) a reasonable standard of good health and housing facilities, food security, life expectancy (reduction of infant mortality and improvement of maternal and reproductive health), education and literacy, and employment.

Language, Education and Development

The medium of education in most of Africa is still largely via an exoglossic or foreign language of colonial heritage such as English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, etc., with the consequence that only an estimated 20 to 40 percent of the African population is educated in these languages. The fact that the sum total of the knowledge, technology, skills and techniques relevant to and required for national development are confined to and transmitted in a foreign language used by a relatively small fraction of the population means that the majority (60 to 80 percent) who do not speak the official foreign language are literally marginalised and excluded from the development equation.

This has led to the widely held position of language experts over the years (since UNESCO 1953) adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU 1986) and consolidated by the African Union (AU 2006a, AU 2006b, AU 2006c) that there is a need to develop and use African languages in education, public administration (governance) and other areas of development along with English, French, Portuguese, etc., the official languages, as partner languages. The strength of this position is predicated on the premise that the rural population of Africa is characterised by poverty which stems from ignorance and illiteracy. ‘Ignorance is a disease which only knowledge can cure’ (Chumbow 1999). In the present age of information and technological development, illiteracy is the greatest obstacle to national development because it reinforces ignorance by limiting access to scientific and technological knowledge as well as general and technological know-how. The effective mobilisation of the masses of the rural population for national development

so that they can become trained, skilled, knowledgeable and effective agents of change in the national development enterprise requires the democratisation of access to knowledge not in a foreign language but in a language or languages the people know best: an African language (Chumbow 2005).

What this means is that in nation building, the national development enterprise, to be effective, requires that the languages of the nation are developed, revitalised, revalorised and instrumentalized to assume development-related functions as language of education and language of communication in the economic sphere, etc. The Language Plan of Action for Africa (AU 2006a) and The Second Decade of Education in Africa 2006-2015 (AU 2006c) are two documents which evidence the commitment of the African Union (at the policy level) to ensure for African countries, development, based on linguistic pluralism.

In the implementation of this policy, many African countries experience difficulties some at the conceptual level and others, at the level of implementation. Studies abound dealing with such issues. These difficulties are of two types:

- i) Practical Problems such as inadequacy of resources (trained teachers, textbooks and language materials), language teaching methodology, class size and numbers etc.
- ii) Ideological Issues such as (preconceived) ideas and beliefs that pertain to power structure, ethnicity, multilingualism, and economic and social transformation.

Ideological issues have to do with the will. Hence ideological commitment and resolve for positive engagement can transform apparently daunting obstacles into mere challenges for which solutions are possible. The English adage 'where there is a will there is a way' is quite relevant here.

The most pervasive ideological issues affecting the directionality of language policy have to do with belief and attitudes towards diversity, multilingualism, pluralism and power in relation to social and economic development. In fact, most of the pragmatic polarisation and differences in policy have to do with differences on how to mediate diversity in relation to social, economic and political demands of power and development.

One of the most daunting challenges to the enterprise of national development is the very fact of linguistic and cultural diversity which makes the cost of multicultural development in a pluralistic ideology relatively high. The arguments in favour of multilingual and multicultural development of nations stem from the arguments in favour of the conservation of linguistic and cultural diversity to which we will now turn.

Linguistic Diversity and Pluralism

There is a need to understand and underscore facts of linguistic diversity so as to treat them as facts or incontrovertible reality and distinguish these from positions and attitudes towards these facts. This will also be useful in understanding why despite the apparent difficulties posed by multilingualism in the enterprise of national development, the dominant ideological position is in favour of development anchored on linguistic and cultural pluralism.

Universals of Linguistic Diversity

Research has established certain facts about diversity in general and linguistic diversity in particular that are generally assumed as axiomatic in any discourse in sociolinguistics and language planning some of which are summarised here.

- Bio-diversity is a normal situation in nature and has advantages in that it helps to sustain and maintain the stability and the equilibrium of the world ecological systems (UNESCO 2005).
- Nations have pledged to safeguard and ensure the survival of bio-diversity through commitment to sustainable development. (Rio Conference on the Environment).
- It has been shown that there is a co-relation between bio-diversity and linguistic and cultural diversity. Most countries with a high incidence of biodiversity also have a high level of linguistic diversity (Harmon and Maffi 2002; UNESCO 2003b).
- The same arguments in favour of bio-diversity therefore motivate and justify interest in and commitment to the sustenance of linguistic and cultural diversity. It is argued that the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity is as important to world cultural and linguistic equilibrium as bio-diversity (Harmon and Maffi op cit., and UNESCO 2003).
- Multilingualism is normal and monolingualism is exceptional. Most countries of the world are multilingual and even the few putatively monolingual countries of Europe are increasingly becoming multilingual and multicultural as a result of the mobility and migration factors characteristic of the phenomenon of globalisation.
- Africa is the most linguistically diversified continent with more than 2086 languages of the over 6600 languages of the world. As earlier noted, all African countries are multilingual in varying degrees; from three languages in Rwanda and Burundi to over 450 in Nigeria (Ethnologue 2005).

- Multilingualism in Africa is paralleled by multi-ethnicity in that the multilingual nations are characterised by multi-ethnicity. To attack multilingualism is to attack ethnicity to which members of the ethnic group are emotionally attached.
- Language and culture are intimately related because language is a vector or carrier of culture. Language is the means by which people who belong to a common cultural community, express their belonging to that community. The loss of one language means a loss of part of the national cultural treasure.
- Multilingualism in the African context quite often implies multiculturalism or a plurality of cultures. However, because of the phenomenon of culture permeability (Chumbow 2005a), there are instances where there is not a one-to-one correlation between language and culture, thereby establishing the facts of bilingualism and bi-culturalism at the level of the individual.

Linguistic Diversity and Ideology

Recent scholarship on linguistic diversity and multilingualism has been focused on language endangerment and language maintenance. Languages that are functionally vibrant and full of vitality today may become endangered by losing their vitality and go through varying phases of attrition resulting in language loss or language death. To prevent endangered languages from dying, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure their maintenance by way of revitalisation, i.e., the process of re-enforcing their vitality (UNESCO 2003a).

Two conflicting positions arise with respect to linguistic diversity and language maintenance which we characterise below:

- **Cultural Assimilation:** This is an ideology which favours the assimilation of minority languages and cultures by a majority dominant language and culture. Cultural assimilation is a process whose finality (within the context of a hidden or open agenda), is the loss or death of the minority languages and cultures, usually within the space of three generations.

Cultural assimilation may be conscious and planned and therefore ideological. It may be unconscious and unplanned in which case it cannot be said to be ideological. Cultural assimilation whether ideological or not, is the result of the unfavourable balance of power against the minority language and culture. The dominant language and culture usually assimilate the weaker language where dominance is determined by such factors as the prestige status of the language, the

number of valorising functions (economically viable domains in which the language is used), etc.

From the ideological perspective, cultural assimilation may be and is often used as an instrument of power to ensure the hegemonic domination of a cultural group by another or as an instrument to counter linguistic diversity and multiculturalism.

Whereas cultural assimilation as an instrument of power may be dismissed as an agency to impose cultural and linguistic imperialism, the instrumentalization of cultural assimilation to counter cultural and linguistic diversity is rationalised by the assertion that multilingualism and multiculturalism are sources of socio-economic inequalities. It is reasoned that the assimilation of cultural minorities is doing them a favour because they now can join the majority group and cease to be stigmatised and disadvantaged as a minority group. Thus, ideologically, assimilation is the instrument by which multilingual and multicultural communities can become monolingual and mono-cultural voluntarily or involuntarily.

- Cultural Pluralism: This is an ideology which seeks to maintain and develop each linguistic and cultural heritage within the nation-state. Such an ideology naturally favours linguistic diversity, multilingualism and the pluralism of cultures.

Arguments in Favour of Linguistic Diversity and Pluralism

Justification for cultural pluralism comes first from the incontrovertible facts of linguistic and cultural diversity discussed above. There are, however, independent arguments in favour of ensuring the maintenance of each existing language and culture within the nation-state as opposed to eliminating multilingualism and multiculturalism by the instrumentality of ideological cultural assimilation and linguistic or linguistic genocide.

- Multilingualism is the norm and monolingualism, the exception. Therefore any policy that seeks to counter multilingualism runs counter to nature (Chumbow 2008b).
- The languages of a nation are its natural resources on the same level as its cocoa, coffee, gold, diamond or petroleum. Like all natural resources, they have to be exploited (planned, developed) and used for national development. However, if care is not taken to plan, multilingualism like its twin, multi-ethnicity, may become a source of tension and conflict within the nation-state (Chumbow 1987).

- The co-existence of two or more languages is rarely in itself the cause of tension, conflict, disunity and war. On the contrary, historical evidence shows that it is economic, political and religious factors which cause conflicts, tensions and wars (Fishman 1986; Baker 2003). In other words, the so-called language and linguistic wars or conflicts (Calvert 1998) are ultimately caused by problems of social, economic and political power inequalities between linguistic communities, not by the languages per se. In other words they are caused by extra, supra and paralinguistic factors.
- Language is a historical heritage and is consequently a repository of the history of humanity. Language is the means of accessing knowledge, ideas and beliefs of the past. If one language disappears a world vision of mankind is lost and the world is the poorer for it (UNESCO 2003 a).
- Language is an element and a vector of culture. 'Every language is a monument to the culture that it vehicles' (Nettle and Romaine 2002:114). The loss of a language amounts to the loss of irreplaceable cultural monuments.
- Language is an intimate means of personal identity. Individuals are very often emotionally linked to their mother tongue to the extent that it is the means of expressing one's innermost thoughts and one's ego, personality and (ethnic) identity.
- Language is a right; a human right of the same level of importance as all other inalienable human rights. All languages have the right to be developed and used by those who speak them for their own development. All forms of linguistic discrimination should therefore be fought and countered (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1995).

These and many other arguments have led UNESCO to take a position in favour of the conservation of linguistic and cultural diversity. To this effect, the year 2001 was declared the year of the mother tongue to focus on each and every language in its role as the mother tongue of some speakers. Before then, 8 September was declared world literacy day, with special attention to literacy in the mother tongue. The United Nations Decade of Literacy (2003-2012) was declared to advance the cause of the eradication of illiteracy (of the about one billion illiterates, most of whom are in Africa), and ensure the availability of knowledge in languages of the rural masses. The year 2008 was declared the international year of languages, again to show-case languages as indispensable factors of personal, community and national development. All of this constitutes advocacy for multilingual and multicultural pluralism in national development at the highest international level (UNESCO, UN). This position was reinforced at the continental level by the African

Union's declaration of the year 2006 as the Year of African languages and extended to 2007. Many African nations are now grappling with implementation strategies to which the following sections should be relevant.

Language Planning in the Public Sphere

Given ethnolinguistic identity as an ideological foundation for pluralism within the nation-state, there is need for a model and a model is hereby conceived and presented that makes it possible for languages to be maximally utilised in the public sphere, such that each language community can conserve, preserve and maximise the development of its ethno-linguistic identity and ensure the optimal use of its language at some level(s) of the public sphere.

The Tier Stratification Model

Drawing from Jurgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere (Habermas 1965), we adopt and adapt the concept in the context of language planning for national development in a multilingual pluralistic nation-state as follows:

All languages of the nation-state belong to the public sphere. This underscores the tenet of pluralism and the need to ensure and guarantee a place in the sun for each ethno-linguistic community in a pluralistic national community.

All languages indigenous to the nation belong to and make maximal use of the private realm.

Foreign languages that do not have native speakers within the nation-state do not belong to the private realm but those that do, belong. The private realm is characterised essentially by the identity function of language as a mother tongue of those who acquire and use it as a first language.

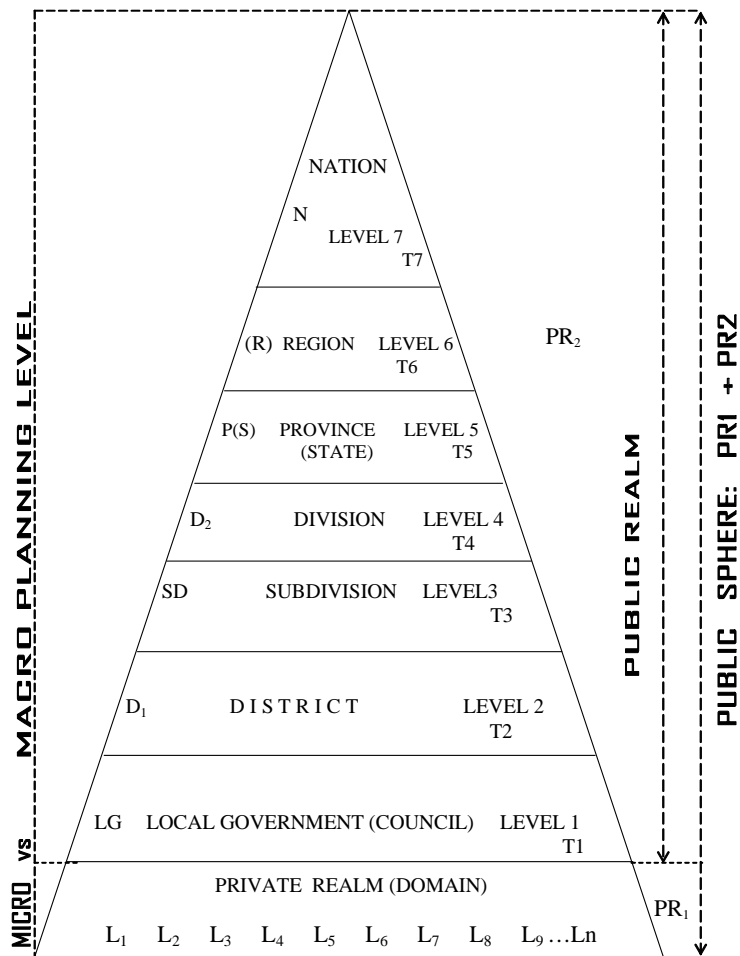
Languages of the private realm can be and should be used in a wide variety of functions and domains beyond the basic identity function (for example, education, commerce, etc.) as will be shown below.

Some languages of the private realm along with exoglossic or foreign languages that may or may not belong to the private realms, are selected to constitute languages of the Public Realm. Languages of the public realm are languages which in addition to their basic identity function of the private realm are established to perform some function at one or more levels of administrative units of the state's governance machinery, such as language of local government councils, districts, divisions, provinces, (regions), states, and nation.

The public realm is stratified into as many *tiers* or levels as there are administrative units in the nation.

The Tier Stratification Model is represented in Figure 1.

Fig. 1: Tier Stratification Model of Language Planning in the Public Sphere



Key: L= Language; Ln= any number of Languages; PR₁= Public Realm; T=Tier.

The number of languages to be selected for each tier of the public realm is not determined *a priori*. It depends on the linguistic reality of each situation. However, there is a need to strike a balance between considerations that seek to ensure that development information is available to a large number of people, and limiting the number of languages in order to lessen the burden for the public of the number of languages to be learned. That is why variants that seek to simplify this basic situation (as discussed below) are appropriate and reasonable where feasible. The pyramidal nature of the model underscores the fact that there are more languages at the base (the private realm) and these gradually decrease with each level of the public realm, so that at the apex which is the national level, one expects only a minimal number of languages (one to three).

Functional Organisation of Elements of the Model

It follows from the above that this model envisions the development and use of language in the public sphere in terms of a stratified pyramid whose base is the private realm and the equilateral sides, the public realm.

The Private Realm

From the language planning theory perspective, the private realm is the level at which micro-sociolinguistic planning is undertaken in that it is the level at which all languages of the nation are present as languages of the ethno-linguistic communities that make up the pluralistic national community.

At this level, languages manifest their existence, their vibrancy and their *raison d'être* as language and symbol of identity and element of culture *par excellence* of a dynamic (ethnic) community that has a right to its language and culture and more importantly, a right to access and disseminate information, knowledge and technology in the language. Each language community has not only the right but also the responsibility of ensuring the intergenerational transmission of the language and culture to the future generations that will inherit and retransmit the language. Individual members of each linguistic community ensure the use of the language in all areas of community interest by organising development projects and cultural manifestations, etc., including school and adult literacy programmes in the community language or mother tongue. This is the sense in which this realm is called private. It is private in that all language-related and language-dependent aspects of community interest are catered for primarily (but not solely) at this level.

Private (realm) does not mean unimportant (realm) as should be obvious from the above. Rather, the private realm is functionally the most fundamental,

as the base or foundation on which the rest of the national edifice is to be constructed. Just like there is no national community without the ethno-linguistico-cultural communities that make up the nation, it is an aberration to talk of official language(s) or national language(s) without the community languages which have a vibrant and dynamic existence as the language of socio-cultural interaction as well as the language of economic and political development of the various communities at the base. Worse still, it is the greatest form of marginalisation not to ensure that all the measures putatively taken by government for the developmental needs of the citizens, for example, with respect to the millennium development goals in the areas of education, health care delivery, agriculture and food security, environmental and bio-diversity conservation, poverty reduction etc., are available to the people in a language they best understand, the language of the ethno-linguistic community. The provision here is that micro-level language planning is to be undertaken as a partnership with the elites of each language community, to develop the language for use in as many domains and functions as possible. Concretely, development and use of the language may involve *inter alia* revitalization, revalorization, instrumentalization and intellectualization of the language where necessary (Alexander 2005 and Chumbow 2007). How are the languages in the Private Realm (PR1) to be organised and structured, since except for the foreign languages, all languages belong to this realm? From the language planning perspective, these languages can be organised and clustered in terms of any one of the superordinate administrative units of the public realm (languages of the local government area, council or municipality, languages of the district or subdivision, languages of the division or province, etc.). It is, of course, understood that languages of any tier or level of administrative unit will reflect the hierarchical order embodied in the tier stratification. Thus, for instance, languages of a province will be presented by division and those of each division will be clustered into sub-divisions which in turn will be sub-divided into local government areas or councils each of which finally, indicates the community languages attested in its local domain. This hierarchical stratification can be presented in the form of a branching tree diagram similar to those realisable for historical reconstructions reflecting genetic relationships between various languages at different generational levels.

The model further prescribes that the complete identity of each language in the private realm be chain-commanded from the public realm above. Thus, the language Mankon will be described as a (grassfield Bantu) language spoken in the Bamenda II council/local government area (T1) of the Bamenda

Subdivision (T3) in the Mezam Division (T4) of the North West Province (T5) of Cameroon (T7). Note that no district (T2) and Region (T6) are relevant to the description. The chain of command in this process of identification underscores the fact that these administrative units have the privilege of counting the particular language as one of their treasures (in the same way that they would value lakes, rivers, mountains, etc in their area of jurisdiction).

In the same vein, the language and its speakers can claim and assert their territorial belonging to the public realm and to a fatherland. The superordinate chain of command also means that the various tiers and levels have authority over the language and the language community but also responsibility for the development (revalorization and instrumentalization) of the language to assume old and new functions in national development.

Public Realm

This is the realm in which selected languages of the private realm and other international languages resulting from the colonial heritage are assigned functions to serve the public as language of official business and governance in some identified administrative unit. In the public realm, the administrative units are ordered or stratified into levels or tiers, from the smallest (council) to the largest which is the state or the nation. The number of tiers in the public realm is equal to the number of state-recognised administrative units. An important assumption in this conception of the language use in the public realm is that good governance in a pluralistic state presupposes decentralisation in consonance with boundaries of natural affinities determined by cultural bonds and /or geographical contiguity. Thus for the public good and in the interest of bringing government and governance closer to the people, there is a need for some languages of a particular decentralised unit of administration to be objectively selected to serve (in conjunction with the national language(s)), the purpose of administration, governance and development at that level without any prejudice to the community languages of the unit, which must continue to serve individual and community interest in relation to the interest of the public at the level of the wider administrative unit.

Language planning at the public realm is at the macro-planning level. The cardinal language planning processes in the African context which, as mentioned above, consist of revitalisation, revalorization, instrumentalization and intellectualization of languages are applicable in the development and use of language in the public realm but with the realisation that there is a need here to plan for a bigger and more complex unit which aggregates, at least,

some of the relatively homogeneous language communities of the private realm at the micro-planning level.

Public Sphere

The public sphere in this paradigm is the aggregation of the private and public realms. The languages of the private realm constitute the foundation or base on which the languages of the public realm are firmly grounded. This underscores the fact that the discourse of national development in the public realm must take into consideration the multilingual and multicultural realities at the base or private realm. Put differently, in the public sphere or national territory, policy for the mega language(s) that function as official languages, should be inextricably linked (by policy) to the reality of the ethno-linguistic diversity at the base. Ultimately there should be a bidirectional flow of information from the top to the base and vice versa, or from the official and national language(s) to and from the community languages.

In this way, the products of development will be shared by the national community thus eliminating the present state of affairs characterised by the marginalisation of the rural communities whose community languages are presently not involved in the national development discourse. The public sphere in relation to tier stratification is made up of the tiers of recognised administrative units plus one (the additional tier being the fundamental tier of the private realm).

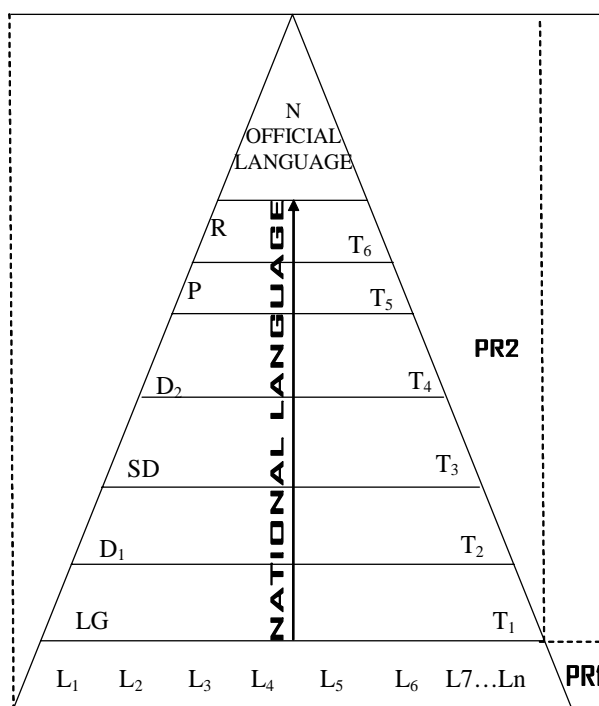
Variations in the Tier Stratification Model

Various forms of the model may be envisaged as dictated by the interest and will of the nation-state. Given the characteristics of the private realm as the fundamental zone where all languages are attested and perform their primary function of language of ethnic and cultural identity, etc. it follows that no modifications can reasonably be effected here without doing violence to the status and function of the private realm. Thus, any modifications can only be conceptualised at the level of the public realm.

National Language Stratification

This is a variant where the public realm is conceptualised to use only one (African) national language for all the administrative units of the public realm and in all the functions and domains (along with a partner language, i.e. a foreign language serving as official language and language of international discourse or language of globalisation). This is illustrated in Figure 2.

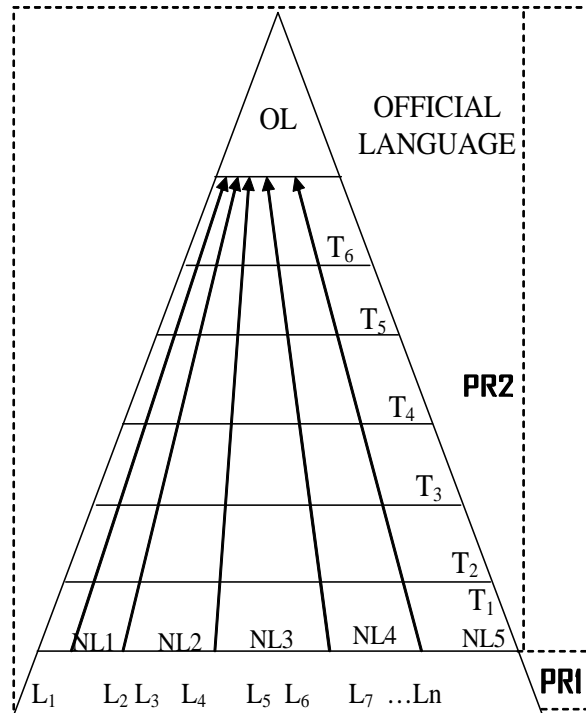
**Fig. 2: One (National) Language Stratification
(Modified Versions of the Tier Stratification Model)**



A typical example is the situation in Tanzania where Kiswahili is the national language used in all administrative units and all functions of the public realm with about 120 languages in the private realm and English as official language. The reservation with respect to the Tanzanian example is that, contrary to what is prescribed in this model, the adoption of a national language has led to the neglect of the community languages (Batibo 1992, 2005; Mkude 2001; Rubanza 2002).

Two or More National Languages Stratification

In this variant the nation or public sphere conceives two or more (but a limited number of languages) to be used in the public realm in prescribed zones or regions of the country. Figure 3 represents this variant.

Fig. 3: Five Languages Stratification

Nigeria would be a good candidate for such a stratification, where Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Fulfulde spoken by over fifteen million people each, can safely be declared the language of education and governance of the public realm in several states along with English, the official language, while each of the about 450 languages are used at the level of the private realm.

Mediation of Linguistic Dominance and Tension

Ethnolinguistic pluralism although important as it is as an ideal for nation building, has embedded in it germs of social tension resulting from linguistic dominance and marginalisation. Majority languages tend to be more dominant than minority languages as a result of their prestige status and the economically important functions they are called upon to play. This may lead to polarisation and social conflict of ethnolinguistic communities as a result of problems of non-linguistic origin, with the law of the jungle or survival of

the fittest playing against the minority language and minority linguistic groups which may then succumb to assimilation. The result, of course, would be the loss of the language and linguistic identity, and a cruel blow to the lofty ideal of linguistic pluralism. The key to the survival of any language in a multilingual situation is its vitality which is determined by a network of micro and macro-linguistic (maintenance) variables that ensure that the language is alive and strong enough to withstand the vicissitudes of threats from other languages in contact. The acquisition or allocation of these factors determines the dominance configuration of the languages in contact and the extent of their vitality and therefore the chances of their survival in the face of threats and endangerment.

Since, in any multilingual and multicultural pluralistic state, dominance prevails as determined by a conjunction of vitality and status-conferring variables of a social, economic and political nature, we submit that Language Planning (LP) has the duty and responsibility of mediating dominance, by way of redistribution of the variables so that all the languages have at least the minimum required for their vitality and survival. The point being made here is that without intervention and a judicious mediation of the variables, we involuntarily (or voluntarily?) ordain the slow death of some of the languages ultimately. This is so because in any language contact situation, the *default situation* is the law of the jungle or the survival of the dominant (and powerful) languages in the power-configuration and the concomitant progressive weakening, attrition or loss of disempowered minority languages.

Functional Complementarities and Mediation

The principle of complementarities of functions proposed and motivated in this section pertains to the domains in which minority languages are used in relation to the domains of the majority or dominant language.

The normal distribution of power between majority and minority languages is not dependent on the intrinsic value of the languages concerned but on historical accidents, of military, political or economic power. Thus, the balance of power in favour of dominant official languages in the African context is due to the unfortunate circumstances of imperialism, economic rape, etc., in the era of colonisation. It may also be attributed to a conspiracy ignited by the forces of globalisation in collusion with the local African ruling class (Mazrui 1997) or by the survival instinct of the African elite class struggling to protect its monopoly in the use of the foreign languages as a source of economic and political power that excludes the masses (Myers Scotton 1993). Similarly, social, economic, ethno-cultural and political factors of dominance explain the ascendancy of the other dominant mega African languages.

Commitment to linguistic diversity means acceptance of ethno-linguistic pluralism as a fundamental element in the paradigm of development for African nations. This requires the promotion of peaceful co-existence of ethno-linguistic groups of people in a pluralistic society where plurality does not entail replacement of one language by another but a recognition of the functional complementarities of all languages in a relation characterised not by mutual antagonisms but by mutual support. Given its importance, the principle is defined as follows:

The principle of functional complementarities (PFC) requires that at the level of status planning (or policy formulation), all languages of the nation-state should be ascribed their identity function (the primary function) and be allocated some other valorising functions (education/literacy, media, public administration, parliament, business/commerce, etc.) necessary to assure the vitality and maintenance of the language and its contribution to the national development enterprise in the private and public realms.

Valorising Functions are those that procure economic, social and political advantages and thereby contribute to raising the status of the language.

What is the motivation of the principle of functional complementarities and what is it intended to achieve?

- Firstly, the PFC is congruent with the objectives of pluralism and the need to develop multilingual and multicultural societies where all ethno-linguistic identities are nurtured, preserved and harnessed for national development.
- Secondly, it seeks to empower minority languages which have generally been disempowered by being left with only the identity function to boast of, leading to a situation where users choose to go straight for the dominant language of power, which guarantees economic advantages and social amenities, leading to the abandonment, endangerment and consequent shift of the minority language. In South Africa, for instance, parents and pupils reject mother tongue facilities because the mother tongue in the bilingual education system does not lead to any valued functions, unlike English, and it is therefore considered a waste of time (Stroud 2001; Alexander 2001, 2005; Kamuangamalu 2003).
- Thirdly, commitment to the PFC requires that languages *share* some functions, and that their users be supportive of each other and see each other as members of a team whose goal is attainment of the ideal of national development. The principle of complementarities commits all linguistic communities to some sort of vicarious responsibility for their common endeavours for national development.

- Fourthly, redistribution and sharing of valorising functions by this principle reinforces the vitality of all languages including minority languages and thereby guarantees their survival and stability.

Attitude Engineering

In the implementation of the PFC and other principles geared towards ensuring harmony in the development of the various ethnolinguistic communities in a pluralistic nation-state, the most formidable obstacle to the endeavour is the negative attitude of citizens towards the other language or towards their own language (in preference to a foreign official language).

Negative attitudes tend to heighten vulnerability when confronted by difficulties or pressure from another language (Gardner 1985). In the case of negative attitudes towards one's own language, one is ready to give in at the least difficulty. Similarly, if the negative attitude is towards another language, one is predisposed to be aggressive with the slightest excuse. Those with a positive attitude, on the other hand, tend to resist pressure and invoke linguistic human rights and minority rights, (etc.) to get results in favour of their language, or any language perceived to be the object of victimisation.

To deal with this syndrome, we propose the principle of attitude engineering (PAE).

- By attitude engineering we mean the systematic use of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic knowledge, principles and techniques to determine attitudes of government and the speakers of various languages in a language contact situation and the use of the findings as input for the design and implementation of a programme to effect polarisation of attitudes in the direction of a desired policy outcome.
What is the rationale for the technology of attitude engineering proposed here?
- The ability for a language to resist domination pressure and adopt mechanisms to appropriate and consolidate the use of existing domains and penetrate new domains and acquire valorising functions etc., as proposed above, depends on the attitude of its users.
- A positive attitude resulting from the application of the PAE and dynamism in favour of the maintenance of the language will guarantee intergenerational transmission of the language to children and ensure that the linguistic community maximises the possible absolute numbers of speakers and the proportion of speakers of the language within the population.

- The attitude and socio-economic dynamism of speakers of a language often contribute to the acquisition of that language as a second language by others outside the linguistic community, thus contributing to the vehicularity of their language.
- With positive attitudes, speakers can constitute Language Planning Committees and mobilise the elites of the linguistic community to lobby for government and institutional support, ensure the production of language and literacy materials and undertake relevant documentation.
- With a positive attitude, members of a linguistic community can fortify and re-dynamise their own attitudes, leading to positive actions and concrete achievements in the maintenance of the language's vitality. The process of mutual reinforcement between attitude and results produces a multiplier effect which maximizes and optimises opportunities.

Another dimension of the PAE is to verify not only the attitude of linguistic minorities but also government's attitude so as to usher in macro-level changes and actions in favour of linguistic minorities. A relevant question in this respect among others is whether there is a policy instrument in favour of the development and use of minority languages in key domains which linguistic communities can use as warrants for their initiatives and as a basis for countering resistance from dominant groups.

A fourth dimension is that attitude engineering as a macro level psycho-social technological activity is intended to bring about the often vaunted but very elusive 'change of mind set'. It is a dilemma of contradictions that Africa and its people are endowed with natural resources of considerable variety, quantity and quality, but remain eternally poor. Scholars who examine this and similar issues have come to the conclusion that what Africans need is a 'change of mindset'.

In a keynote address at a conference on 'Language and development in Southern Africa', Alexander (2001) having reviewed the vexing issue of negative attitudes to the acceptance, adoption and commitment to mother tongue in education policy, which he like Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1995) attributes in part, to the colonial mentality which sees English, the language of imperialism as the only medium for intellectual and academic discourse, laments this state of affairs in the following question:

How can we transform the climate of opinion so that we can shift the colonial minds from the groundless belief that only knowledge which is packaged in the languages of the colonial conquerors is worthwhile knowledge?

He proposes that beyond awareness campaigns, 'structured interventions that are calculated to demonstrate the economic power and the status-conferring potential of African languages' are needed.

Observations on the need for a change of mindset in Africa characterise much of the discourse of social sciences research generated or published by CODESRIA.

It is therefore clear that the concept of change of mindset putatively has some validity. However, it is not clear what mindset change means, or what it entails. It is as yet only a construct that must be operationalized. There is a need for theory of mindset change. It is however, self evident that a change of attitude is an indicator of a mindset change in that the change of mind set inevitable has to go through or result in attitude change resulting from attitude engineering. Ultimately, attitude engineering principles can be generalised to take care of such intractable issues as HIV/AIDS campaigns, etc. The concept and process of Attitude Engineering sketched above has the potential of satisfying the need for a model that can organise a structured set of actions and activities that will result in a mind set shift manifested in attitude change in any area where attitudes are relevant and important. A discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. For the interested reader these issues are sketched in Chumbow (2008a).

Conclusion

This paper seeks to examine and elucidate the problematic of pluralism as an ideological basis for nationalism, nationhood and national development in Africa faced with the daunting challenge of linguistic diversity and ethnolinguistic identities within the nation-state. A study of the facts of multilingualism and multiculturalism provides the background for a framework for language planning in the public sphere. The Tier Stratification Model provides for the private realm where all community languages of ethnolinguistic communities are catered for at the micro-planning level and the public realm where the language needs of administrative units of the public domain are managed at the macro-planning level. The model seeks to capture the dialectical and dynamic relation that exists between the languages at the private and public realms. Given the potential problem of dominance and tension in situations of language contact and the need for a harmonic relationship of symbiosis in a pluralistic state, the Principles of Functional Complementarities and of Attitude Engineering are proposed, motivated and rationalised as relevant factors in the mediation of the relation between languages of the private and public realms, in an ideal language planning model that seeks to enhance national identity while maintaining pluralism and ethnolinguistic diversity.

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Songs of the King's Wives: Women, Power and Performance in the Yoruba Public Sphere

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Abstract

Indigenous festivals, which rely significantly on music and dance, often constitute the village public sphere and the social arena within which the structures of power are performed and negotiated in traditional African communities. This article discusses two unique musical traditions which feature prominently at annual traditional festivals in Emure-Ekiti, a Yoruba town in Western Nigeria. The musical traditions are *orin olori* (songs of the king's wives) and a related ensemble, *orin airegbe*, a musical tradition associated with female chiefs. Exploring an ethnomusicological approach, this article argues that the complementary relationship between these two all-female musical traditions and the scope of their performance practices draw attention to the ways in which public performance speaks to the status and agency of women in traditional Yoruba societies.

Résumé

Les festivals indigènes, qui dépendent de façon significative de la musique et la danse, constituent souvent la sphère publique du village et l'arène sociale au sein desquelles les structures du pouvoir sont exécutées et négociées dans des communautés africaines. Cet article traite de deux traditions musicales uniques qui se mettent en évidence aux festivals traditionnels d'Emure-Ekiti, une ville Yoruba à l'Ouest du Nigeria. Les traditions musicales sont *Orin olori* (chants des épouses du roi) et un ensemble apparenté, *Orin airegbe*, une tradition musicale associée aux femmes chefs. En explorant une approche ethnomusicologique, je soutiens que la relation de complémentarité entre ces deux traditions musicales entièrement féminines et la portée de leurs interprétations attirent l'attention sur la manière dont l'interprétation publique témoigne du statut et du rôle de la femme dans les sociétés traditionnelles Yoruba.

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Introduction

Historical and oral sources point to the vibrancy of musical ensembles as an integral part of palace protocol in ancient Yoruba palaces. The functions of such ensembles include routine activities like saluting the king and royal dignitaries as well as announcing the imminent arrival of visitors. Although many palace ensembles have dwindled in size today they remain a visible and an important aspect of court ceremonies. In palaces such as those of the Alaafin of Oyo and the Ataoja of Oshogbo, for example, talking drummers and bugle players continue to function on a daily basis. Such ensembles, though often limited to just a few instruments on ordinary days, are usually augmented by musicians from outside the palace to provide a performance that is befitting of special occasions.

This paper discusses two unique types of palace-affiliated musical ensembles in Emure, a small Yoruba town in the Ekiti region in south-western Nigeria. These are *orin olori* (songs of the king's wives) and its related ensemble, *orin airegbe*, a musical performance that is associated with female chiefs as well as puberty rites. Membership of *orin olori* ensemble is exclusive to the wives of the reigning king, and widows of departed ones. Although quite widespread in Ekiti, this type of ensemble is rare in other parts of Yoruba land, a phenomenon that draws attention to the ways in which cultural practices in Ekiti tend to differ significantly from those of the more urban parts of Yorubaland. *Orin olori* maintains a complementary relationship with *ere airegbe* (airegbe performance). *Ere airegbe*, though originally performed by Emure women during the annual initiation ceremony for pubescent girls, is now performed mainly by female chiefs and no longer restricted to its original context. In analyzing *olori* and *airegbe* performances in this article, I am guided by certain critical questions as posed by Drewal (1992:172). According to her, in order to move beyond a 'social Darwinist' perspective on gender, it is necessary to ask whether 'the construction of gender in African performances is always in fact asymmetrical and whether power always resides in the male half of that structure'. I am also interested in exploring how *orin olori* and *airegbe* relate to certain well known conventions of Yoruba musical practice. I argue that the complementary relationship between the two ensembles and the scope of the creative and performance strategies associated with them highlight important perspectives regarding the ways in which public musical performances speak to the status and agency of women in Emure-Ekiti. As a background to my discussion it is instructive briefly to evaluate the relationship between gender and public performance in Africa.

Gender in African Performance

Sex- and gender-related issues are often critical to the conception and organization of African musical ensembles. The intersection of gender and power in African societies often manifests itself vividly in bounded, formal performances. Drewal (1992:172) has observed for example that 'there are more restrictions placed on women in performances organized by men than there seem to be in women's performances'. Citing examples from Yoruba media art to further support this view, she explains that socially inscribed notions of gender are manifest both in the type of materials that men and women may work with as well as in the types of artistic formations those artists may create. For example, 'while women work in clay, men specialize in wood, metal and beads' (Drewal 1992:172).

Perceived as masters of the private domain, African women are often associated with informal and non-professional performances. This is a cultural practice that has been discussed by various scholars working in different parts of the continent. In her discussion of Hausa Muslim women's performances, Mack (2004:4) has, for example, explained that although exceptionally gifted Hausa women in Kano may have the opportunity to perform in public spaces such as an emir's palace, the practice of wife seclusion and the need for women to fulfil their responsibilities as mothers and wives in a predominantly Islamic environment often dictate that they perform mainly in private spaces located in the harems of their husbands and inside family compounds. A comparative, though contextually different situation exists among the women of the KwaZulu *iBandla lamaNazaretha* (Nazareth Baptist Church), where, as Muller (1999:224-226) has explained, female performances, even within the context of a modern, syncretic religious organization, are restricted largely to the private homes of individuals and to meetings that are exclusive to women. These examples reflect a general tendency for African musical performances to be dominated by men at the professional and public sphere level. In many such situations women often complement male performances rather peripherally as creators of ululations and as cheerers. Men often dominate instrumental ensembles as has been documented in a number of examples, including *dundun* (Euba 1990; Yoruba Nigeria); *agbekor* (Locke 2005; Ewe, Ghana); *sabar* (Tang 2007; Wolof, Senegal); and *baakisimba* (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005; Buganda, Uganda). Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2005:17), narrating her experience with reference to *baakisimba*, for example, has stated that 'roles ... were clearly distinguished; boys were restricted to drumming and girls controlled the dancing arena. Whenever I tried to "beat" the drums, my teachers outwardly told me "women do not beat the drums, they are dancers"'.

It is important to observe that although these prominent examples all point in the direction of a pre-determined social hierarchy within which women are perpetually disadvantaged, other examples, such as those that I examine in this paper, point in the direction of a dialectical framework within which life and play reshape one another, and therefore within which issues such as those relating to gender are debated and contested. The processual nature of African performances, defined in the ways in which they construct and re-invent themselves, speaks to the utility of an agency-driven musical medium that facilitates social conversation as well as the questioning and the negotiation of social relations. Drewal has thus also observed that African performances or rituals 'operate not merely as models of and for society, which somehow stand timelessly alongside "real" life. Rather, they construct what reality is and how it is experienced and understood' (Drewal 1992:174). My discussion of the music of Emure women examines the ways in which song-texts, musical instrumentation (or the lack of it), the processes of musical composition and performance, are structured and deployed to draw attention to the status and agency of women in Yoruba culture and to their roles as social actors and active moulders of the public sphere.

Olori and Airegbe Ensembles

Olori ensemble in Emure consists mainly of singers who also dance, and two instrumentalists, each playing an *agere* drum, a single-headed membranophone. *Olori* singing is cast in a cantor-chorus format in which the role of cantor moves rather freely amongst a core group of leaders. The two female drummers, whose roles include setting the tempo and sustaining a pervading element of dance, do not belong to the traditional Yoruba drumming families. Their status as drummers thus challenges and deviates from the more conventional Yoruba belief that drummers must belong to endogamous hereditary drumming families known as *ayan*. One of the two women informed me, for example, that she had no prior musical experience before joining *olori* ensemble and that she perfected her drumming skills through regular practice and by performing regularly as a member of *olori* ensemble.

The most important context for the public performance of *olori* ensemble is the annual new yam festival (*odun isu titun*) which takes place in July or August. The festival is noted for the symbolic tasting of the yam by the king, marking the official declaration of the beginning of the harvest season. The festival, like similar ones all over Yorubaland, provides an opportunity for members of the Emure community to celebrate their common ancestry, pay homage and re-affirm their loyalty to the king.

Airegbe was originally restricted to the initiation ceremony for pubescent girls. Significantly however, new musical compositions that derive from the

original *airegbe* tradition are now often performed mainly by Emure female chieftaincy title holders on a wide range of occasions that include the installation of a new king, the commissioning of a new palace, and investiture ceremonies for newly appointed chiefs. While *olori* music is performed to the accompaniment of *agere* drums, *airegbe* does not make use of musical instruments. But although, *airegbe* and *olori* are two distinct categories, a complementary relationship exists between them since many of the women who perform *airegbe* are also members of the *olori* ensemble because of their dual status as chiefs and royal wives. While the membership of *olori* ensemble attracts mostly young adults and a few elderly people, virtually all members of *airegbe* ensemble are advanced in age. Members of *olori* who become chiefs automatically become members of *airegbe* while retaining their membership of *olori*. It is also important to note that performances of *airegbe* and *olori* now often take place at the same event, especially during important festivals and special occasions involving the entire Emure community.

Regency, Gender and Social Mobility in Performance

The social significance of these two ensembles was vividly demonstrated during a performance event that I watched in 2007 when I visited Emure Ekiti. The event, which started as *olori* performance, later evolved into *airegbe* in a manner that symbolically reflected the complementary relationship between the two groups. The ceremony took place when the town was under the administration of a female regent, an interim leader, who had been chosen through divination (*ifa*) to act as ruler until the selection of a new king. The death of a king usually calls for the appointment of a female regent in Ekiti towns, providing a rare opportunity for a female to lead in a time often marked by instability as different families and individuals compete (even fight one another) to occupy the throne. The festival was thus unique in the sense that women played an even greater role due to the fact that a female ruler had to preside over a festival known to be dominated by women.

The festival began with a special performance of *olori* songs, distinguished by the use of *agere* drums and the singing of specific songs. After about forty-five minutes, the performance shifted to *airegbe* performance notably through the cessation of *agere* drumming and the singing of a new set of songs. At this point, members of *olori* who were not chiefs withdrew from the performance. The presiding female regent was clad in male attire, wearing neck-beads and holding a horsetail, two important emblems of Yoruba royal authority. To show her appreciation, she periodically got up from her seat to dance and to paste wads of money on the foreheads of the dancing chiefs who, in return, praised her and wished her a successful tenure.

The songs performed at this festival generally emphasized the critical role of women in the community while affirming the supremacy of the political authority of the Elemure. In the song titled 'Opo Ule Elemure' (Pillars of Elemure's Palace), for example, the women emphasized the importance of the local market as a locus of economic activity and suggested that women are the economic managers of the market:

Opo Ule Elemure (Pillars of Elemure's Place)

1. *Opo ule elemure o,*
Pillars of the palace of Elemure
2. *Ara ule olaja lore,*
The dwellers of the market place
3. *Opo momo yo'se labe orisha,*
The pillar must not collapse under the gods
4. *Maa se t'emiye l'oju aseni*
We will succeed in spite of our detractors.

As instruments of social stability and cohesion, their role is comparable to the concrete pillars of the king's palace. In another song, 'Aso Uyi' (Costume of Honour), the women pledge their allegiance to their king by enjoining all Emure women to answer his call to duty:

Aso Uyi (Wrapper of Honour)

1. *Aso uyi ni in muro o,*
We are knotting a wrapper of honour
2. *Ua uyi ni in wo,*
The sight of us is a sight of honour
3. *Owa ran ni ya pe a o,*
The king has sent for us
4. *Ara oye wo mo sere.*
Thank you for the honour.

They sing that their presence and their performance activities (*ua*) are shaped in response to the king's call, and express their gratitude to the king for counting them worthy of serving their community. They explain that they are persons of honour, affirming that they 'knot a wrapper of honour'.

'You Caught Us Unawares': Agency and Dialogue in the Creative Process

Like the performance and the song-texts described above, the creative process through which Emure female performers generate their music resonates with considerable social significance and therefore deserves analytical attention. Ethnomusicologists working in Africa often focus mainly on public

performances while largely ignoring the creative process that leads to them. Commenting on the relative lack of scholarly attention to the creative process in African music, Ampene, in his study of *Nnwonkoro*, a song tradition of the Akan women of Ghana, has observed that 'not much is known about the techniques and processes of musical composition in preliterate societies' (Ampene 2005:11). Although it is true that the scene of public performance constitutes a major avenue for creative engagement with the material of performance ('composition-in-performance', Ampene 2005:8), a much more deliberative process of creativity often precedes and generates the actual performance. As Merriam (1960:165-84 in Ampene 2005:11) has observed, for example, African musicians do practice 'composition, recognize it as a distinct process, and are in a number of cases quite able to discuss it'. But while some African musicians may not always be disposed to describing the nature of the creative process they engage in, that process is nonetheless often rigorous and intensive as I have found out in my study of the music of Emure women. The ethnographic description below captures the dynamics of this process as it occurred during one of my many visits to Emure to study *airegbe* performance.

My first contact with the women who performed *airegbe* was in 2006 when I embarked on a preliminary investigation. I had become fascinated with their performance after watching a video recording of a previous edition of the initiation festival for pubescent girls. In 2007, when I travelled back to observe that year's edition of the festival, I realized that many of the songs that were performed during that festival were different from those on the video recording. This made me to doubt the authenticity of the recording, and thus looked forward to observing the 'authentic' performance during my visit. I did all the interviews and recorded the music in audio and video format and returned to the United States, where I later transcribed the performances. When I returned to Emure in May 2008 a prominent Emure female chief explained to me that new compositions should be composed for new and specific occasions. Although there is an underlining structural and melodic formula, and although certain key texts and phrases often recur, each song is unique, and every new performance is commemorated by a set of newly composed songs. I did not realize the full import of this information until much later when I paid another visit to the group as a whole. I had wanted them to perform the same songs so I could check to see if my transcriptions were correct. Although they remembered some of the songs, they explained that they would prefer to perform new and more recent songs rather than trying to figure out the texts of old songs. It was at this juncture that they began to put their heads together right in my presence to create

new songs. Relying on past events as well as incorporating some pre-existing thematic material, they embarked on the process of generating new songs.

I watched them as they deliberated on their new compositions. They disagreed, agreed, rejected some phrases, argued strongly, adjusted phrases here and there, laughed, teased one another, and paused now and then as if confused, all in the process of working out a new performance. They told me that one of the songs they were putting together was derived from a previous performance of theirs that took place during the installation ceremony of their new king, an event held earlier in the year. After about forty five minutes of intense but well-mannered negotiation, they told me they were ready to perform a 'final version' for me. The social significance of this creative process is further explored below.

Egbe and Asa: Musical Discourse as Social Action

The notion of a musical discourse derives from the understanding that a musical activity often constitutes a social action. As Monson (2007:24) has explained, a musical discourse refers not just to 'talk about music', but also to 'the relationships between the sounds themselves and the symbolic, social, political, and personal meanings that individuals, collectivities, and institutions construct for them'. In *olori* and *airegbe* music, musical structures resonate with social significance both in terms of their positional relationships within the context of a performance as well as in terms of the creative actions from which they emanate. In the process of creating a new example of *airegbe* song, for example, Emure female chiefs employed two key words that describe the structural technique that guides their compositional process. These are *egbe* and *esa*. *Egbe*, as used by the women, refers to recurring key thematic elements of a performance, while *esa* refers to the process of structural unfolding that propels and gives full life to the performance. Emure women explained to me that *egbe* usually occurs right at the beginning of a song or performance, as an opening musical and textual material. It is the principal thematic idea, the germ from which an entire piece is built. On the other hand, *esa* is the 'flesh and body' of the piece. It is the part of the performance where the full details of the performance are worked out and negotiated. *Egbe* and *esa* are thus not mere musical materials: they constitute socio-musical activities. They refer to specific musical actions, which are enacted through negotiation, argument, debate, fun-poking, and even angry exchanges as I described above. The Yoruba word *egbe* literally means to support and to agree. It connotes communal harmony, both within the specific context of a musical performance as well as in terms of the social idea that generates or informs the performance. Within the specific context of

performance, *egbe* serves the musical purpose of emphasis and as a symbol of agreement amongst the performers. *Esa*, like *egbe*, refers to a musical activity, while symbolizing a process of social interaction that informs the creation and defines the context of the performance. *Esa*, which translates as 'to choose', describes the process through which the opening *egbe* is developed into a full performance. Since the process of musical development could traverse an almost infinite pathway, the musical activity that *esa* describes is informed by an intense process of argumentation and bargaining leading to the adoption of a particular structural arrangement. The social conditions that the two words signify were clearly revealed in my earlier ethnographic description of the creative process employed by the women. The consequent emergence of the performance in its totality thus marks a state of agreement – a communal resolution, the process that led to the final agreement having been framed by intense debate, conflict and negotiation. It should also be noted that both *egbe* and *esa* have a dynamic character in the course of a performance. Within the context of a performance, *egbe* is constantly repeated, but also sometimes reworked. *Esa*, by its very nature is more dynamic since it involves a continuous process of extemporization and development. The final shape of the performance or composition is ultimately defined by the continuing dialectical engagement between *egbe* and *esa*.

Conclusions

The creative and performance conventions of *olori* and *airegbe* challenge certain assumptions about Yoruba performance. The attitude of the two female groups to the use of the drum is particularly significant in this regard. The drum, in its strong attachment to male musicians, has come to be regarded as an instrument through whose presence gender categories are inscribed into Yoruba musical practice. Its inclusion in traditional ensembles often invests men with considerable power. Emure women performers' attitude to the use of the drum serves to neutralize this power of the drum and the way in which its use might privilege the male gender. In the *olori* ensemble, women simply assume responsibility for the playing of the drum, ensuring that men are kept away from their ensemble. In *airegbe* music, the drum is prohibited altogether, foreclosing any potential basis for male participation. The dis-gendering of the drum in *olori* music and its neutralization in *airegbe* manifest the agency of a group of women who feel able to cope with the challenges that they face as women without the inclusion of the male gender. One might be tempted to interpret this process of identity construction through male exclusion as a deliberate oppositional move to curtail the power of men. The response that I kept getting from the women however contradicted any

notion of oppositional gendering. Nonetheless, this dis-gendering and the neutralization of the drum, though not a strategic oppositional move, are both powerfully symbolic of the desire of these women to take control of their lives as they see it rather than as might be dictated to them by any other social category in the community. The structural features of *airegbe* music, the communal creative approach through which performers of the music work out new pieces, and the ways in which the boundaries of compositional styles are negotiated, varied and re-defined, are performance strategies that are agency-driven. Further, these performance and creative features underline the high level of professionalism that goes into the making of the music, and draws attention to the status of these women as an elite group with considerable cultural and political authority.

The role of the two female groups as the main musical groups within key festivals is significant both in their very presence at these festivals as well as in the content of their performances. It must be remembered that these two festivals constitute important public events at which the structures of power and the social and cultural values that help hold the Emure community together are renewed and consolidated. The strong presence of these all-female ensembles at these very important festivals draws attention to the status of Emure women as part of the political elite of their community. In addition, as highlighted in their songs, their performances, rather than fashioned as mere entertainment, constitute a critical part of the social conversation that takes place at these public events.

The status shift that is inherent in the progression from *olori* to *airegbe*, as displayed during the public performance that I described earlier, also has an equally strong social and political message. The acting-out, through the medium of musical performance, of the mobility between the two social categories of 'wife' and 'chief' helps to draw attention to the fluid nature of social movement among the women of Emure. Social mobility is dynamic, negotiable, and not encumbered by the factor of gender. Following the mobility inherent in the complementary relationship between *olori* and *airegbe* musical ensembles, the social status of Emure women, like that of their male counterparts, is shaped within an ongoing social process in which individual effort and seniority of age play vital roles. The fluctuating levels of identity that are homologically represented in the musical performance of chiefs (*airegbe*) and that of the king's wives (*olori*) offer a reflection on the shifting images of the power and status of Emure women. Emure community is organized in a manner that facilitates the elevation of women beyond the domestic space – the often powerless domain of a wife – into positions of social responsibility in the public sphere.

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Contesting the African Public Sphere: A Philosophical Re-imaging of Power and Resistance in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*

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Abstract

Habermas's ideal notion of the 'public sphere' as the necessary condition for a genuine democracy is applied here in the assessment of the ideas contained in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* (2007) in an attempt to map out and understand the African public sphere. *Wizard of the Crow* employs the values of the public sphere to pass satirical comments on society's values and practices: old assumptions are re-interrogated, established world-views reviewed and class and gender silenced issues revealed and re-evaluated. This paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach by employing philosophy and literature, here taken as *Wizard of the Crow*, as investigative tools. My choice of *Wizard of the Crow* to interrogate the African public sphere is particularly guided by the fact that to really encounter the public sphere is to first of all engage it at an imaginary realm. Besides, encountering the issues highlighted in *Wizard of the Crow* away from the structural discourse of the public sphere helps to humanize and plant them in the consciousness of people who may not have access to exotic academic presentation on the subject. Preferring a philosophical re-imaging of the concerns contained in *Wizard of the Crow* is to situate them within broader analytical frameworks. By adopting the basic methods of philosophical inquiry – exposition, critical analysis and reconstruction – the issues are lifted from the domain of fiction to the space of systematized knowledge directed at presenting a comprehensive notion of the African public sphere in as far as this can be achieved.

Résumé

La notion idéale de la « sphère publique » d'Habermas, comme condition nécessaire pour une véritable démocratie, est appliquée ici dans l'évaluation des idées contenues dans l'œuvre de Ngugi intitulé *Wizard*

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of the Crow (2007), dans une tentative de mesurer et de comprendre la sphère publique africaine. *Wizard of the Crow* utilise les valeurs de la sphère publique pour faire des commentaires satiriques sur les valeurs et pratiques de la société: les vieilles hypothèses sont réinterrogées, les visions du monde établies sont reconsidérées et les questions de classe et de genre réduites au silence sont révélées et réévaluées. Cet article adopte une approche interdisciplinaire en employant la philosophie et la littérature, à travers *Wizard of the Crow*, comme outils d'enquête. Mon choix de *Wizard of the Crow* pour interroger l'espace public africain est particulièrement guidé par le fait que, confronter vraiment la sphère publique, c'est d'abord la livrer à un domaine imaginaire. Par ailleurs, confronter les problèmes mis en évidence dans *Wizard of the Crow* loin du discours structural de la sphère publique permet de les humaniser et les fixer dans la conscience des personnes qui n'ont peut-être pas accès à l'exotique exposé académique sur le sujet. Préférer une ré-imagination philosophique des préoccupations contenues dans *Wizard of the Crow* c'est les situer dans de plus vastes cadres analytiques. En adoptant les méthodes de base de la présentation de l'enquête, de l'analyse critique et de la reconstruction philosophiques, les questions sont élevées du domaine de la fiction à l'espace de la connaissance systématisée, destinée à la présentation d'une notion globale de la sphère publique Africaine dans la mesure où celle-ci peut se réaliser.

Introduction: The Public Sphere

The notion of the public sphere is most commonly associated with the work of Jürgen Habermas. In a commemorative lecture he delivered at Kyoto in 2004, Habermas stated that the public sphere as the space for reasoned communication exchange is the issue that has concerned him all his life. Habermas (1989) conceived and identified the public sphere as an area of social life that guarantees access to all citizens to interact, hold free rational discussions, identify common problems and through that discussion influence political action. By implication the public sphere as an impartial space and part of the modern 'social imaginary' (Taylor 2002) takes flesh within social and political discourses and its existence within civil society. Habermas (1964) insists that 'a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body'.

The public sphere provides an arena for the reconciliation of private and state interest by acting as a site where public opinion is generated and distributed. By serving as an *awareness* centre the people regard it as a 'regulatory institution against the authority of the state' (Habermas 1989:27). In Habermas's idealized concept, the credentials of the public sphere include: rational-critical discourse, inclusive public; a disregard for rank; and a space that is removed from state control. The public sphere critically depends on

the ability of citizens to generate public opinion that is outside state censorship and devoid of all external coercion while at the same time positioning the opinion in a way as to influence and direct state conduct and policy. (Although state authority is the executor of the political public sphere, Habermas [1964] maintains that it is not a part of it). Ideally these opinions are expected to have the universal backing of citizens of varying status and background.

This ideal, however, has never been fully achieved. The traditional bourgeois concept of the public sphere implies for Susan Ashley (2005:7) 'the troubling assumption that the public sphere is *not* accessible to all'. Its application that is based on the characteristics of European white males excludes considerations on the basis of gender, race and other characteristics. Nancy Fraser (1992) notes that marginalized groups are not represented in the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere. There is a need for a new model to account for the interaction between excluded groups and the dominant political sphere. Instead of the common admission implied in Habermas's notion, marginalized groups form their own public spheres. She called this the subaltern counterpublics. Seyla Benhabib (1992) points to the conceptual disadvantage of pushing some issues to the private realm and dismissing them from the discussion of the public sphere. She insists that if the public sphere is to be a representative site of common debate and discussion that affects the population, then, there cannot be a separation between 'what is' and 'what is not' discussed (89).

Douglas Keller¹ doubts that democratic politics were ever fuelled by norms of rationality or public opinion formed by rational debate and consensus to the degree stylized in Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere. It would be more accurate in his assessment to accept that 'politics throughout the modern era have been subject to the play of interests and power as well as discussion and debate'. Even Habermas has noted a decline in the public sphere. He attributes this to consumer culture and the influence of the mass media that has turned the public away from its critical role of 'reasoning' to one of an uncritical attitude of 'consuming'.

The criticisms apart, Habermas captured (at least in principle) a critical aspect of a healthy democracy: a public sphere that admits ordinary citizens in the context of egalitarian access and turns them into agents of political change through participating in rational discussion and debate targeted at state transformation but uncontrolled by the state. Based on this consideration, Habermas's notion of the public sphere and its criticisms will provide the intellectual and resource base and act as critical tools for theorizing the contest for the political sphere in this paper. All through this discourse, the 'public sphere' is generally taken in its extended sense to comprise multiple sites and concerns; sometimes locked in synergic action and at other times in conflicting reaction.

Specifically, this paper will argue for the value of literature, represented here by Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* (2007), in expanding the scope and deepening our understanding of the African public sphere. *Wizard of the Crow* points to the continuing importance of Habermas's study. In every society, dialogues are always taking place; nevertheless some conversations are more important than others. From the perspective of Habermas, of crucial importance is the role of critical discourse and participation by citizens in countering unjust authority and mobilizing for social transformation. *Wizard of the Crow* equally underscores the significance of debate, democratic discourses, especially at the grassroots levels and the incorporation of minor voices and local stories in reinvigorating the public sphere and strengthening democratic practices in Africa.

Wizard of the Crow

The novel *Wizard of the Crow* takes its name from a series of misunderstandings that followed the activities of the impoverished, unemployed Kamiti; and is set in a fictitious East African nation, Aburiria. The Ruler, a prototype of every dictator and the quintessential Life President, is the same as 'the country'. His mood represents the state of the nation's affairs; his sigh a warning of an impending doom; and his word the final judgment.

His three pandering Ministers have undergone plastic surgery to elongate, respectively, their tongue, ears, and eyes, the better to pronounce the Ruler's wishes, and hear and spy on dissidents. The ultimate birthday gift for the Ruler is the Marching to Heaven project: an attempt to touch the sublime while down on earth. The project is expected to be the planet's next super wonder, the world's tallest building and a platform to position the Ruler for a face to face contact with God and to elevate Africa above the West. It is a project that captures the esteem with which the Ruler is held by *his* people. It is also a project that can transport its Chairman from an average business man to visions of himself as 'the richest man in Aburiria, the richest man in Africa' and 'probably the richest man in the whole world' (173) based on bribery around contracts. The Marching to Heaven project and the plastic surgeries of the three Ministers already mentioned aside, the Ministers of Defense and Finance who went to America to negotiate loans for their ministries used respectively the occasion to upgrade a collection of pornographic videos, and to begin the process of transformation from a black man to a white man by changing his right arm to white (742). The most disquieting thing is not just power but power plus comprehensive buffoonery and the tragic combination this represents for a civilized and for civilizing a society.

With the support of his courtiers, the Ruler trimmed Aburiria to a country where there is no respect for civil liberties – free speech, freedom of worship, right of assembly and freedom to organize nonviolent opposition; and no due process as legal protection against arbitrary administrative actions (unwarranted detentions, secret arrests, forced confessions), unfair trial procedures, and fuzzy, all-encompassing laws that give extensive discretion to government officials. Vague laws against queuing represent a typical instance. There are also attempts to control the institutions responsible for producing ideas: churches, media and schools.

The Ruler's power is no ordinary power. It is the kind that sits on the brain and completely dissolves into it such that the brain is power and power is brain. As such, every thought and action that emanates from the brain automatically exudes from the seat and site of power. But everything has a price; and the higher the stake, the more intense the final result. The Ruler is shown what he wants to see and told what he desires to hear while his lackeys and flatterers maintain a screen on their thoughts, afraid to even reach out a little to each other. It is not about a plot but hidden plots.

On the other extreme, authoritarian regimes breed resistance. The Movement for the voice of the People working as an underground movement sets about scuttling all flagrant demonstrations of state power. For the Movement, the Marching to Heaven project symbolizes a corrupt, unresponsive state, a state dominated by power-interested bureaucrats and headed by a dictator obsessed with power. The protest movement takes it upon itself to uphold the economic interests of the ordinary people, the moral-ideological values of the state, peace, justice, Aburirian dignity and pride. The Movement also provokes political interest, educates citizens about political issues and values and teaches members the most efficient methods to press their policy demands on the government.

More importantly, power is faithless. Those who court power invariably experience its elusive nature: its possession is the same as inheriting the wind. There is a dilemma that confronts every power-monger: the obsession to 'step on' and the paradoxical conflict of needing the 'step' as the basis for support. Karl Popper (1962:122) avers that 'so long as one man cannot accumulate enough physical power in his hands to dominate all others, just so long must he depend upon his helpers. Even the most powerful tyrant depends upon his secret police, his henchmen and his hangmen'.

The lesson which the Ruler leaves behind is the exact opposite of what he tries to achieve. It is a moral which should always be remembered: alluring as absolute power may be, it ultimately blinds and suffocates the bearer. In the Ruler's case his world-views become ultimately self-justified and self-evident, so fixed, in fact that he becomes incapable of learning. His state of

mind becomes extremely pathological, power mad. His bent towards aggressive action and ruler-megalomania bereft him of ideas and divests him of all sense of limits as he tries to eliminate people whom he suspects oppose his ideas or dreaming of power. He will also stop at nothing to get the character, the *Wizard of the Crow*, to reveal the secrets of his knowledge which he hopes to incorporate into himself and then have the Wizard thrown into a dungeon so as to become 'sorcerer number one' (562).

In spite of all this frantic efforts, by the time the story ends the Ruler has been exterminated by the flame of power. It is an ironic twist that the impoverished, unemployed Kamiti gained a reputation as a powerful sorcerer, a *wizard of the crow*, who delivers. Without any effort in the direction of power, Kamiti has enormous power thrust on him. Here is a lesson and a moral for power seekers: in the final analysis, power chooses its own candidate.

Perhaps there is nothing new in the ethical commitment of the novel, yet the persistence of leaders turning into dictators and manipulating power as an instrument of destruction rather than a tool for service to Africa establishes the moral dimension of the story as both current and persistent. Reflecting but also anticipating the havoc of power in Africa (the ongoing Zimbabwe power crisis easily comes to mind) *Wizard of the Crow* portrays a Ruler whose pathological romance with power is the *sole* reality purchasable at any cost – unemployment, starvation, repression of all opposition and of course killing of opponents (real and imaginary).

Importantly, *Wizard of the Crow* is more than the moral affliction of a single power-confused Ruler. It is also the language of social interaction; the construction of the public sphere. Douglas Keller points to an important aspect of Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere which many of its defenders and critics fail to note. The thrust of Habermas's study, according to Keller's observation, is 'precisely that of transformation, of the mutations of the public sphere from a space of rational discussion, debate, and consensus to a realm of mass cultural consumption and administration by corporations and dominant elites'.² By stressing transformation, however, Habermas points to the means by which social norms can be maintained and critiqued. Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* demonstrates that society can be reformed by social means.

Wizard of the Crow encourages activities that curtail the unbridled actions of state managers, that criticize narrow opinions on who constitutes society, that extend the meaning of what it means to shun authoritarian interference and that strengthen the people's voice, going beyond politeness in speaking 'truth' to the state and mediating and harmonizing private and public interest in ways that speak of Habermas's ideas. *Wizard of the Crow* employs the values of the public sphere to pass satirical comments on society's values

and practices: old assumptions are questioned, established world-views reviewed and concealed class and gender issues revealed and reassessed. Conversation is used to frame problems and solutions are proffered by principal characters in the fashion of idealized conclusions. Habermas, as already pointed out in the introduction, might not deal adequately with some issues, especially, the insufficient attention to gender and marginalized groups, but his notion of citizens engaging in rational discourse and generating public opinion that upsets unjust and authoritarian leaders is one that can be gainfully applied to major aspects of Ngugi's novel. The two dominant aspects that this paper will take up are the nature of power and resistance in African public sphere and more importantly, the character of the African public sphere.

Contesting the African Public Sphere: Power and Resistance

This paper uses the concept of the public sphere to frame the discussion about the role of power and resistance in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*. The idealized vision of the public sphere calls for social integration to be founded on rational-critical discourse that promotes equal participation and communication rather than domination (Habermas 1989). The public sphere, then, is a social construction located at an impartial space where discussions, ideas, information, arguments are shared and entertained and where public opinion can be formed. In essence, Habermas's conception of the public sphere entails the role of political discourse in a democracy. This in turn implies that citizens talk about and criticize government actions, thereby turning public opinion into a political force.

In *Wizard of the Crow* the public sphere is presented as a site of intense conflict between two kinds of power: productive power and repressive power. The right to participate in political concerns is not a given, it is obtained through force, depending on the resources available to the contestants. While those on the side of repressive power – state agents – employ power as coercion and 'construction of incentives' (Shively 1997:6) and ultimately to render people as playthings; those on the side of productive power – the Movement for the Voice of the People – take up resistance and use power as a mark of freedom and interdependence and the capacity of people to change their world. Having shown these two aspects of power, in what follows I will adopt the concept of power for state power while productive power will be subsumed under resistance.

The major conflict between power and resistance in *Wizard of the Crow* is between state owners and the Movement for the Voice of the People. The notion of the public sphere as a realm of social life that admits citizens and their opinions turns it into a target of an authoritarian regime as the state both tries to appropriate it and decimate its members. The Mars Café that acts as

a rendezvous where people can sit and talk 'for long stretches after consuming what they had ordered' (106) is hijacked by official spies to track down dissidents. Kaniuru and two of the policemen 'waiting to pounce on Nyawira' (the leader of the Movement for the Voice of the People) sat 'at separate tables in the Mars Café' (217). This is in compliance with the Ruler's order 'to use all means, necessary and unnecessary to capture dissidents dead or alive and put a stop to leaflets and plastic snakes' (136) used by the Movement to educate the populace and counter government's unpopular policies.

The Ruler also, through the exercise of comprehensive power and a series of anti-citizen policies gradually claims all public space with the intention of silencing all opposition. To ensure that opposition is stamped out a 'ban was imposed on queues involving more than five persons. No matter the time or place or business, it was illegal for more than five people to stand in line, whether entering a church or mosque or riding a bus or meeting in an office' (253). The attempt to scuttle the public sphere by imposing a ban on gatherings of more than five people may be an exercise in futility. Steven Schneider (1997:17) quotes Keane as suggesting that 'a public sphere is brought into being whenever two or more individuals, who previously acted singly, assemble to interrogate both their own interactions and the wider relations of social and political power within which they are always and already embedded'. True enough; the ban did not sufficiently hamper the activities of the Movement. Its members continued to organize and mobilize and turn every government event into an opportunity to struggle for a fundamental transformation of the system – its policy priorities, behavioural interactions that connect political leadership with mass participation, and the structural relationship between rulers and ruled. The resistance movement rejects a subordinate status based on political repression, economic marginalization and public humiliation, and tries to inculcate in their members a higher moral character. This creation of a public interest faces counter-resistance from the state and is stalled by severe difficulties. The state places a death sentence on the leader and seals off all possible space for the members' interaction.

The over-reliance on power and its coercive possibilities eventually leads to political stasis – an inability to respond to crisis situations with innovative policies and strategies. It is this that eventually turns power on itself, leaving the Ruler exposed and fragile and making it relatively easy for a new-comer (Tajirika) to engage in power games to eliminate the Ruler and take over power. This is in direct contrast to the way the members of the resistance group protected Nyawira. Their activities in setting up a people's court to sanction domestic offenders, using the People's Assembly to demand the truth about the murdered Minister of Foreign Affairs, sensitizing the public

through leaflets, helped to revitalize the democratic sphere by bringing private, hidden and new issues to public attention. It is a triumph for the public character (dialogic communication based on respect for common good) of the public sphere as against the controlled nature (one-way communication anchored on authoritarian disregard for public concerns) of power-directed leadership.

More so, it is the contradictions created by the Ruler and his cohorts that provide the basis for transformative change. The truth is at a deeper level of power relations the irresponsible exercise of power breeds resistance. In the last resort, building a healthy democracy and a progressive nation critically depends on tensions – conflict, contradiction and resistance. Indeed the Movement came as near as any to realizing the possibilities of a democratic public sphere. *Wizard of the Crow* underscores the value of protest and the need to encourage the spirit of criticism on which intellectual excellence is anchored, bearing in mind that social relations will never be free of power.

There is something, however, all resistance movements should know: namely that resistance can be manipulated and turned into surrender. The women's protest dance during the dedication of Marching to Heaven aimed at shaming state power is explained to visiting delegates as 'a sacred Aburirian dance performed only before most honoured guests' (242) by the Ruler and his Minister of Foreign Affairs. Again the date chosen by the Movement for a 'general strike and the day for the rebirth of the nation' (669) is thwarted by the Ruler who fixes his birthday celebrations on the same date. As such the call for a one-day general strike by the Movement to mark the Day of National Self-Renewal 'lost the power of threat as the government declared the day a public holiday' (669). In addition, the queues formed by the people in *Wizard of the Crow* to expose high unemployment were converted by government as proof 'that people were voting with their feet in support of Marching to Heaven' (199). To sustain a high-powered resistance calls for continuous re-strategizing, creative applications and the ability to be many steps ahead of the oppressor. In Aburiria where there are very few free spaces, the Movement reconverted the unemployment queue into 'a site of democracy where gatherings did not require police permits' (199) and 'decided that whenever they wanted to have a meeting, they would form a queue. They would use the queues for purposes of political mobilization' (199-200). Also the actual denunciation of the Marching to Heaven project and the Global Bank's involvement in saddling Africa with loans is made possible for the Movement by the 'democratic space guaranteed by the bank we oppose!' (246). The logic here is that to carry out an effective resistance there is a need to turn a seeming surrender into a fertile site to *resist* surrender.

The African Public Sphere

Habermas's conception of the public sphere as a discursive space where people gather together to deliberate on issues and problems of mutual concern has an endorsement of freedom and openness surrounding it. In theory, at least, it projects rational public opinion as both outside state control and an effective check for government excesses. In essence, the public sphere mediates and moderates the political atmosphere. Habermas's ideal notion of the public sphere as the necessary condition for a genuine democracy is applied in the assessment of the ideas contained in *Wizard of the Crow* in an attempt to map out and understand the African public sphere.

Wizard of the Crow portrays the African public sphere as very fluid. The happenings in the private sphere project into the outer workings of the public sphere as the events in the public sphere determine and direct the inner activities of the private sphere. One of the theories advanced for the strange illness of the Ruler is 'the tears, unshed, that Rachael, his legal wife, had locked up inside her soul after her fall from his grace' (6). In fact the women protesters that shamed him during the dedication for Marching to Heaven shouted at him to 'set Rachael free!' (250). In this way, an issue that is consigned to the domestic arena is made public and also brought to the attention of global audience. Also the beating that Tajirika, chairman of Marching to Heaven, received from members of the People's Court on account of beating his wife is situated within the principle that 'what happens in a home is the business of the nation and the other way around' (435). Nyawira, the brain behind the Movement, insists on the need to intensify 'struggle against all gender-based inequalities and therefore fight for the rights of women in the home, the family, the nation, and the world' (428). *Wizard of the Crow* points to the changing nature of the African public sphere by highlighting issues that are usually kept in a reserved area, thereby sending a clear message for the incorporation of such concerns in the construction of a healthy social space where citizens and government can play out their roles.

The role of the public character³ in advancing the cause of the public sphere is also stressed in *Wizard of the Crow*. The police officer, Arigaigai Gather, is one such character. Through his accounts, usually rendered in bars, the happenings in the state-world are transmitted to the people. For instance, it was from him that the people gathered information on what transpired during the Ruler's visit to America. It was, in fact, on his recommendation that the *Wizard of the Crow* was sent to America to cure the Ruler of his malady of words. Much as the public character may not always be in possession of all facts, his/her strategic positioning of being in contact with a wide spectrum of activities and people helps to promote the free flow

of information and generate a variety of criticisms which are essential elements for revitalizing the African public sphere.

Wizard of the Crow also reveals why the position of constitutional theorists concerning protest movements is not tenable in most African political spheres. Charles Andrain and David Apter (1995:147) observe that constitutional theorists expect protest movements to advocate their demands for policy changes through the orderly processes of representative government. Protesters should seek to redress their grievances through established institutions like competitive political parties, legislatures, executive agencies, bureaucracies and courts instead of using disruptive tactics such as riots, rebellions, sit-ins and mass demonstrations.

What does it mean to talk of representative government or competitive political parties in a country like Aburiria where there is 'no tomorrow beyond the Ruler' (751)? He is the country and every other interest derives its existence or extinction from the vagaries of his mood. In response to international pressure the Ruler introduced democracy. But that is only in name; in content its definition is what the Ruler says it is: 'he would be the nominal head of all political parties. This meant that in the next general elections, all the parties would be choosing him as their candidate for the presidency. His victory would be a victory of all the parties, and more important for Aburirians, a victory for wise and tested leadership' (699). Instead of the introduction of democracy to extend public political discourse and critique that would usher in new democratic ideals or at least bring substantial transformation of the existing one, new measures were introduced to further stifle the existing freedom. The Ruler's new Baby democracy 'would do away with secret ballots and introduce the queuing by which one openly stood behind the candidate of one choice. Direct democracy. Open democracy' (699). It does not require sustained reflection to imagine what would happen to an Aburirian who refused to line up behind the Ruler. Indeed the first time the Special American envoy suggested to the Ruler that his Ministers might be interested in forming opposition parties, the Ministers vehemently rejected the idea. In their vociferous denial they claimed that 'we in Aburiria know only One Truth, One Party, One Country, One leader, One God' (580). All these 'ones' of course, refer to the Ruler. The fawning gets to a point that one is convinced it is all fiction; yet at that exact moment all surrounding factual evidence speaks of a reality that even (although it is difficult to imagine) surpasses fiction par excellence.

A few examples will suffice. At a time when Nigerians were breaking under the yoke of the late Abacha repressive regime, there were both the much touted two million Man March in support of his bid for life-presidency, and the Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha campaign. Let us accept that Abacha

is past tense. On September 16, 2008, Channels Television was closed by security operatives of the Federal Government of Nigeria without recourse to legal provisions due to the news item that President Yar'Adua had resigned on account of his health status. From Senegal, in September 2008, El Malick Seck's newspaper, *24 Heures Chrono*, was banned from publication for three months and the publisher jailed for three years for printing an article considered offensive to President Abdoulaye Wade. At least, the sentence was a court judgment even though many think it was an unfair one and that Mr Seck was a victim of authoritarian rule because his paper dared to publish an uncomfortable truth.

Mugabe, president since 1980, insists that without him there is no tomorrow for Zimbabwe and none of the senior officials of his Party has dared to voice public criticism. As a matter of fact, one of Mugabe associates, Didymus Mutasa, once told the BBC that in Zimbabwean culture kings are only replaced when they die and that Mugabe is their 'King'. Mugabe, himself, at the heat of the power crisis in December 2008 'stated that 'Zimbabwe is mine'. So even after a power-sharing agreement between him and the opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, in September 2008, Mugabe on October 11, 2008 declared that his party would retain control of all key ministries like military and police. This stalled the power sharing agreement until February 11, 2009 when Tsvangirai reluctantly took the oath of office as Prime Minister. Even at that, Mugabe still retains control of the army, police force and security establishment, while Tsvangirai's party is compelled to accept the less-powerful ministries of Health, Education and Finance. Whether the power sharing agreement will work still remains to be seen. The conditions – release of political prisoners, removal of the central bank governor, among others, set out by the Movement for Democratic Change – are still to be met. The accident that claimed the life of Tsvangirai's wife and left him with neck and head injuries on March 6, 2009 is viewed with suspicion by some of his party members as another attempt on his life even though Tsvangirai said he believed there was no foul play involved. Yet, the fact that Mugabe and his allies could be suspected at all shows how brittle the agreement is. More importantly, by the time of the agreement Zimbabwe has reached a state of complete social and economic collapse. The central bank had introduced 10 billion Zimbabwean dollars to keep pace with stratospheric inflation that had soared to 231 million percent, cholera epidemic had claimed at least 4000 people and infected more than 87,000, and unemployment rate had risen to nearly 90 percent with just one adult in five holding a regular job. It is estimated that Zimbabwe needs at least \$2bn to stabilize its economy. This situation, of course, did not stop Mugabe from celebrating his 85th birthday on February 28, 2009 with a lavish bash that reliable estimates put at the cost of R1m.

Again, with the World Bank's new finding that Africa has been 'the least successful region of the world in reducing poverty' (Schiffers 2008) and the number of poor people in Africa doubling 'between 1981 and 2005 from 200 million to 380 million' (ibid), and especially at the height of grinding poverty (no water, food or transport to a clinic, and the world highest rate of HIV infection) for most of Swazi citizens, the Swaziland King, Mswati 111, celebrated '40-40' (his birthday and the country independence) on September 6, 2008 with an official budget of \$2.5m which economic experts claim to be at least five times more. Two days protest of trade unions and civic groups ahead of the celebration did nothing to alter the style and grandeur of the event.

In a political environment harbouring politically repressed, economically marginalized and socially oppressed citizenry, alienated and enlightened workers, advanced capitalist accumulation that shuns human needs, a parasitic bureaucracy controlled by an extremely highhanded and power-neurotic Ruler, the logic of constitutional theorists is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. It has been noted that 'bad governance inadvertently and paradoxically results in high political mobilization of a radical kind' (Ayoade 1997:2).

Wizard of the Crow also points to the influence that new technologies have on the African public sphere. With new and sophisticated methods of news production, there is a global awareness on the need for a more delicate handling of political issues. When in the past the West (America) encouraged the Ruler to engage in a national massacre in order to protect American interests (579) the special American envoy on a visit to the Ruler is uncomfortable with the idea of a twenty-first century 'national massacre. To be televised. Live' (579). Instead he reminds the Ruler that 'we are in the post-cold war era, and our calculations are affected by the laws and needs of globalization' (580). The first in this consideration is to create a democratic space for capital to move as its own logic demands (580). To be sure, after Aburiria democratized the high points scored by the Ministers of Defense and Finance during their state visit to America were signing of agreements for loans to enable Aburiria to buy arms from the West and agreements with several oil companies to explore oil and natural gas and mining companies to prospect for gold, diamonds, and other precious metals (710). There is a lesson here: in the new global game of correct public appearance, behind the scene manoeuvres and manipulations are critical. As a matter of fact, the head of the Aburirian Military informs the special American envoy that the measure the military is going to use to contain the 'unauthorized processions' (579) is to 'encircle it with armoured cars and the latest guns you (America) sold to us sometime ago – old, but against unarmed civilians, still lethal' (579). *Wizard of the Crow* points to the need for a careful appraisal before embarking on any commitment so as not to endanger the public sphere.

The role of the military and police in influencing the African public sphere is a subtext in *Wizard of the Crow*. The Ruler relied on the forces to maintain his position and uproot any dissenting voice. The hunt for the members of the Movement and the character *Wizard of the Crow* is assigned to the police. It is with the help of the army and police that the Ruler in the early days of the Cold War crushed the communist insurgency in Aburiria in order to show his support for the West. He eliminated 'seven thousand and seven hundred citizens in just seven days' (579). The Ruler, of course, frequently reminds 'the nation that the only votes that mattered were those cast for him by the armed forces' (234). Indeed his first doubt regarding his omnipotence came when 'he issued an ultimatum followed by an order for the armored division to clear the people's Assembly', but 'instead of tanks running over the dissidents, there, on the television screen, were army boys and young civilians greeting one another with high fives for the entire world to see' (643). In effect, the armed forces play an active role in expanding or contracting the public sphere in Africa. For instance, Mugabe's tenacious hold on power is made possible by the loyalty and public support of Army, Police and Secret Service Chiefs who have vowed never to 'salute' or support the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai who is believed to have secured more votes in the Presidential election that took place in March 2008. Perhaps the most disquieting thing about the character of the African public sphere that *WOC* highlights is that after so many years of independence not much has really changed. Violence and fear still dominate the political landscape. The globalized feature of the twenty-first century Africa is very much like its twentieth century pre- and post-independence era. In Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) people are arrested under the pretext of breaking vague laws; some brutally killed by being labeled Mau Mau terrorists. In *Devil on the Cross* (1982) it is the military and police that create the enabling environment for opposition to be silenced. The protesters campaigning against the activities of some rich subversive elements are attacked; some killed, and many arrested by the law enforcement agents. Ian Roxborough (1979:125) notes that 'the military is a central part of the state apparatus. To view it as somehow "outside" politics is frequently misleading'.

There is also the difficulty of access caused by the mutation of the public sphere to a *secret* sphere in the notion of African public sphere contained in *Wizard of the Crow*. The understanding of the publicness of the public sphere entails that its debates and discourses should be held in the open – in an area identifiable both metaphorically and physically if access is to be gained. *Wizard of the Crow* documents a political atmosphere where citizens are not free to create social space or engage in rational critical discourse. To voice even a

minimal opinion against the Ruler is a virtual invitation to be fed to the 'crocodiles of the Red river' (452). The only way to sustain opposition is to go underground or into exile (234). This creates a problem for access. An interested person may find it difficult to locate the space of a public sphere. This entails that an insider-connection is necessary. For the character *Wizard of the Crow* to join the Movement he had to rely on Nyawira. And despite his intimacy with Nyawira he knew nothing about the Movement until he became a member. This mutation of the public sphere into the secret sphere entails that members have to be assessed for correctness before being inducted as a *wrong* recruit will invariably spell doom for the Movement.

Wizard of the Crow also treats information as vital in reinvigorating the public sphere. Books provide good resource base for information and extension of knowledge production. As such the ideas and facts contained in books are critical for the advancement of a healthy public sphere. *Wizard of the Crow* chronicles a consistent attempt to distort the facts and history of the nation. A memorandum for a new national education programme require that 'all institutions of learning, from primary schools to university colleges, would be required to teach only those ideas that came from the supreme educator' – the Ruler (565). Also 'anybody who aspired to write and publish could do so only under the name of the Ruler' (565). The professor of history who dared to write a book entitled *People make History, then a Ruler makes it His Story* (20) was imprisoned for ten years without trial. The realization of the Ruler that his loyal biographer 'had no imagination to sugarcoat reality and make it more palatable' (709) was all it took to eliminate the loyal biographer. In his place, the Ruler employed a white royalist from London to fabricate a biography of 'the Ruler through the Ruler's eyes, with material generously provided by the Ruler and his handlers' (709). The effect of this convoluted history on the public space will hamper effective knowledge production in the continent, compromise political participation and diminish individual self-development, misdirect research and world views. Invariably, attention will be paid to the wrong issues or where the distortion is discovered fresh resources will be channelled to combat the errors. William A. Williams (1983:149) notes that 'history never provides programmatic answers. But it does guide one to ask the right questions and that is crucial to developing the right answers'. All this will entail huge resources that should have gone into other areas of development.

Closely related to the public sphere as an area where information and misinformation are gathered, the *Wizard of the Crow* points to the need to interrogate the language of the public sphere. For instance, the media is an important player in shaping the debate and discourse in the public sphere. It

is important to understand the interest it represents. It is both possible for the media to serve as the agent of domination and manipulation or function as the source of enlightenment and understanding. In *Wizard of the Crow*, the media did not mention the activities of the Movement to frustrate the Marching to Heaven launching. Instead 'the headlines of the following days were all about the special birthday gift and the impending arrival of the Global Bank mission' (22). In Aburiria the Ruler is news, 'his every moment – eating, shitting, sneezing, or blowing his nose – captured on camera' (3). Indeed the 'Radio is the dictator's mouthpiece' (609). Here language adopts a hegemonic stance and all contrary views are neutralized. An Aburirian Minister admits that 'sometimes we do actually imprison people for asking questions, but only those that question established truths or that undermine the rule of law or how this country is governed' (410). Short of platitudes, what are established truths, what is rule of law or how this country is governed, in a country where 'the Ruler and the country are one and the same' (161) and 'there was only one party, and the Ruler was its leader ... The Ruler was the sole voice of the people, and they loved it so' (24). In Douglas Kellner's⁴ view, 'language suffers its contradictions, it is situated within a conflict between truth and untruth, universality and particularity, communication and manipulation'. Depending on the interest language is made to serve it can critically promote or undermine the activities of the public sphere. For instance a misinformed electorate is most unlikely to make a well-informed choice in elections. This point is particularly valid given the bent towards individualism and the emerging role of the media as the main force in political mobilization, socialization, communication and dissemination of information during an election period. There is a need, then, to appraise the language of the public sphere in order to ascertain the degree of its effectiveness in advancing the ideals of the African public sphere.

Wizard of the Crow also highlights the impact of globalization on the African public sphere. A major feature of globalization is the emergence of a transnational public that can act as a global court where domestic events are closely monitored and scrutinized for possible sanction. Government can no longer afford to think exclusive thoughts or take isolated actions. The Ruler's attempt to cover the murder of one of his Ministers by accusing him of plotting against his government and seeking political asylum was countered by the American Ambassador who told him that 'intelligence services all over the world are telling us that your Minister is not seeking asylum anywhere' (641). In fact, most of the happenings in Aburiria become known to the global sight at times even before the Ruler gets to know of them. The Ruler on a visit to America first heard of the resurfacing of queues and women retaliatory action towards men from the representatives of the Global Bank (499).

The point is that such a free access zone while placing a certain restraint on public condemnable acts also prompts international profile comparison. A continent that aims at a favourable public image, an essential element for continental progress, should be cautious of the goings-on in its public space. The caution though should be less for prudence and more for genuine commitment towards citizens' welfare. For instance, the Marching to Heaven project was purely aimed at egocentric achievement. The crowning benefits (?) are to achieve what the architects of the Tower of Babel failed to achieve, 'the only other human attempt to reach Heaven's gate' (248); to present the 'one and only super wonder in the world' (248); and finally, to practically establish the Ruler as the other face of God. During the dedication of the project, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that 'the Aburirian masses are ready to forgo clothes, houses, education, medicine, and even food in order to meet any and every condition the Bank (Global) may impose on the funds it releases for Marching to Heaven' (248). He easily swears by 'the children of the children of the children of the children of our children to the end of the world ... that we shall pay back every cent of the principal along with interest on interests ad infinitum' (248). The persistent protest of the Movement against the project did not push the government to reassess its position. Instead any one associated with the Movement is declared an enemy of the state and wanted dead or alive. It was only the Global Bank's refusal to bank roll the project because of deficit economic benefits that brought it to an end.

It is difficult to understand this mind set that is completely at variance with the interest of its people and can only be checked by outside intervention. More importantly, the critical issues that should have been considered in the conception of the project were the only ones that were left out. To begin with, the queuing in Aburiria is as a result of mass unemployment and the large gathering at the dedication of Marching to Heaven is because most of the people 'thought that the Global Bank was on a mission of doling out dollars directly' (248). The implication is clear: there is mass poverty. Whether Marx is completely right or not, his articulation of the importance of the economic in determining all other aspects of life is critical in understanding modern life, the relation between nations and power statements in world politics. A continent that understands this cannot engage in economically porous ventures. And if that continent is an economically disadvantaged continent in world affairs, then, the consequences of such an act assumes multiple dimensions – political, social, technological, defense, and even the right to speak and be taken seriously is either denied or granted in fragments. It is less wonder that the Ruler fails to secure audience with the American

president during his visit to America and has to make do with attending 'prayer breakfast' in which 'he was only one among thousands who had paid thousands of dollars a plate' (484), the purpose of which is 'to raise money for the American president's charities' (484). Clearly, in an era where technology strongly defines international relations, for a technologically disadvantaged country to seek funds for a white elephant project is the height of political misadventure.

Again, there are no calculations on the effect of such project on the environment: what will be the degree of risk vis-à-vis the advantage? Will it contribute to global warming? What measures can be put in place to contain the potential consequences of global warming – rising sea levels, desertification, spread of disease (like malaria), poor harvests (especially in Africa), and changing climate patterns? Will it pass the eco-efficiency test?⁵ Anthony Giddens (2001:626) suggests that the massive flooding that occurred in Mozambique in March 2000 may not be unconnected with global warming. He further notes that the report of (in January 2000) a panel of eleven climate experts from diverse scientific fields shows that 'emissions from the developing world are also increasing rapidly particularly in countries that are undergoing rapid industrialization' (625-626). It is estimated that developing countries are more likely to be most affected from the consequences of global warming because they have fewer resources with which to create the needed sources of protection (Giddens 2001; Cheru 2008). *Wizard of the Crow* underscores the significance of packaging the continent well and positioning it strategically in world affairs and links this to the strength of the African public sphere.

Wizard of the Crow also points to some silent zones – frozen thoughts in the mind that nonetheless define the activities of the public sphere. The best representative of this is the 'if' syndrome in which the afflicted person loses all power of speech except the occasional barking of the word 'if'. The character *Wizard of the Crow* diagnosed this as 'a severe case of white-ache' (180); a code for power which all the sufferers agreed with. This acute yearning to be white freezes the thoughts of the afflicted person and renders the individual incapable of any productive action, while at the same time directing a sphere of activities – discussions, decisions – around the sufferer. And depending on who is afflicted, the fate of a nation can hang in the balance. When the Ruler was struck by the malady of words, the purpose for which he and some of his cabinet members went to America was suspended and his people literally 'lost count of the days. Perhaps weeks' (487) in their search for a cure. Most frustrating is the fact that by reverting to silence the sufferer

disconnects the link between the private and public sphere and also withdraws from meaningful cooperation with other human beings.

Wizard of the Crow uses the 'if' syndrome to draw attention to the need to intensify the agenda of decolonizing the African mind. A robust public sphere cannot be cultivated by people dominated by internal insecurities. Claude Ake (1996:16) observed that 'the lack of self-confidence has been obvious in the behaviour of many African leaders'. Typical examples noted by Ake were Idi Amin longing for white aides; Emperor Jean Badel Bokassa longing for long-forgotten and better-forgotten French monarchs; and the decision of some African governments to disallow the speaking of African languages and the wearing of African traditional clothes in parliament. Ake renounces such states of mind and insists that 'development requires changes on a revolutionary scale; it is in every sense a heroic enterprise calling for consummate confidence'. For Nengwekhulu (1981:200) 'one should never assume that it is easy to eradicate psychological attitudes which took the oppressor centuries to cultivate'.

Wizard of the Crow champions an equitable gender public sphere. The critical role women can play in advancing democratic space is given adequate attention. The chairperson of the Movement is a woman, Nyawira. Under her able leadership the Movement expanded democratic sites by providing spaces for people to debate and counter most of the corrupt policies of the government. Their focus is on the politics of change. They achieve this by seeking ways to mobilize the under-represented majorities. For instance a subset of the Movement, the People's court, took up the case of Vinjina, the ever battered wife of Tajirika, the chairman of Marching to Heaven. It is after this encounter that Tajirika's relationship with his wife moved from that of master and servant to one of mutual acceptance, respect, sharing, communication and tolerance. This way the equitable stance in the private sphere is carried into the public sphere to reflect a new balance in power relations that exceeds granting women the right to vote. Indeed, *Wizard of the Crow* offers an important contribution in the poll of theories that aim at providing new interpretative spaces in the effort to appreciate the new developments which are transforming our world.

Conclusion

Habermas's model of the public sphere is applied here in the analysis, criticism and attempt to understand the make-up of the African public sphere. The choice of Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* to interrogate the conduct of the African public sphere is one such application. My choice is particularly guided by the fact that to really encounter the public sphere is to first of all engage it in an imaginary realm.

Ngugi's fictional world acts almost as a direct restitution of his understanding of events in the real social and political life in Africa. The uprising of unscrupulous mediocre who thrive best in a corrupt atmosphere of repressive regimes in African political life is underscored as a serious threat to not just politics but the public sphere in general – the moral emptiness of the political arena is unleashed on the general public sphere. Let us allow for the fact that the Ruler is a fictional creation and therefore probably more than a man in real life might be. Let us further grant that an imaginative writer has more liberty to stretch human frailties. Granted these excuses, *Wizard of the Crow* still retains its validity as a serious attempt to capture and raise some of the most pressing problems underlying Africa today: the wrong application of power among most of its bearers and the lack of interest on the part of most leaders and some citizens to create and nurture a civil society founded on such core values as respect, excellence, hard work, commitment, and of course, honesty and integrity. Ngugi⁶ in an interview he granted Ken Olende about *Wizard of the Crow* and the state of the continent today avers that 'there is no reason why art will not always express our ethics or ideals ... The struggle to transform ourselves will always be there and that struggle will always be expressed in art'. Indeed he views his literature as a 'global literature' which 'raises concerns with which everybody can identify, concerns in which we can all see ourselves'.

Wizard of the Crow is both a retrospective glance and a futuristic proclamation – the figure of the Ruler as a representative of the dictatorial propensities, viciousness and rigidity of the modern African ruler should be seriously addressed. Finally, encountering the issues highlighted in *Wizard of the Crow* away from the structural discourse of the public sphere helps to humanize and plant them in the consciousness of *even* people who may not have access to exotic academic presentations on the subject. This is one profound sense in which literature, here exemplified by *Wizard of the Crow*, helps to expand and deepen our understanding of the African public sphere.

Notes

1. See Douglas Kellner, 'Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: A Critical Intervention'. (<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/Kellner.html>). 8 July 2008.
2. Ibid.
3. I am borrowing an insight from Anthony Giddens (2001) who describes the public character as a fixture of sidewalk life who is in regular contact with a wide spectrum of people.
4. See Douglas Kellner, op. cit.

5. I am borrowing an insight from Anthony Giddens (2001: 631-632) who defines eco-efficiency as 'developing technologies that are effective in generating economic growth, but which do so at minimal cost to the environment'. For him 'the use of eco-efficient technologies can produce forms of economic development that combine economic growth with positive policies for the environment'.
6. See Ngugi wa Thiong'o interview on his new novel, *Wizard of the Crow*. (http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=10062). 15 July 2008.

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The Sphere In-between: Najib Mahfuz on Power, Status and Authority in Africa's Public Sphere

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Abstract

This paper is hinged on the following propositions: in no other region in Africa are the arguments about the role of the artist in the 'public' sphere more intense as in North Africa. The problematic of what constitutes the 'public' sphere in North Africa is circumscribed by the struggle for and the contest over 'power', 'status' and 'authority'; the attempt by North African writers, particularly Najib Mahfuz (d. 2006), to mirror the socio-political and cultural fissures and contradictions in the public sphere usually leads to conflict not only over what constitutes the 'public sphere' and who governs it, but equally on how the 'private' and the sphere 'in-between' could be reclaimed for the 'public good'. In grappling with the foregoing, the paper rereads Najib Mahfuz's *Awld Hratin* (1959). In reading for 'meaning' and the 'meaning of meaning' in *Awld Hratin*, the paper pays attention to the socio-political and cultural codes provided by Najib Mahfuz, even as it searches for possible theoretical insights that the works of Arab-African and Euro-American writers including Ibn Qayyim, Abdul Qhir al-Jurjn, Edward Said, Michel Foucault and Benhabib could yield in an excursus which probes into how the trialectic of power, status and authority continues to shape the 'public', the 'private' and the sphere 'in-between' of Egyptian society.

Résumé

Cet article s'articule sur les propositions suivantes: dans aucune autre région de l'Afrique les arguments sur le rôle de l'artiste dans la sphère « publique » ne sont aussi intenses qu'en Afrique du Nord. La problématique de ce qui constitue la sphère « publique » en Afrique du

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Nord est circonscrite par la lutte et le combat pour le « pouvoir », le « statut » et l'« autorité » ; la tentative des écrivains de l'Afrique du Nord, en particulier Najib Mahfuz (d. 2006), de refléter les fissures et les contradictions sociopolitiques et culturelles dans la sphère publique, conduit en général à un conflit non seulement sur ce qui constitue la « sphère publique » et celui qui le régit, mais également sur la manière dont le « privé » et la sphère « intermédiaire » pourraient être reconquis pour le « bien public ». En traitant des questions précitées, l'article fait une relecture d'*Awld Hratin* (1959) de Najib Mahfuz. En faisant une lecture du « sens » et de la « signification du sens » dans *Awld Hratin*, l'article met l'accent sur les codes sociopolitiques et culturels fournis par Najib Mahfuz, tout en cherchant d'éventuelles idées théoriques que les travaux d'écrivains arabo-africains et euro-américains, notamment Ibn Qayyim, Abdul Qhir al-Jurjn, Edward Said, Michel Foucault et Benhabib pourraient produire dans un excursus qui examine la manière dont la trialectique du pouvoir, du statut et de l'autorité, continue de façonner le « public », le « privé » et la sphère « intermédiaire » de la société égyptienne.

Introduction

Sovereigns are rulers over people, but it is the learned who rule over the sovereign – Abul' Aswad.

If in my title, I have mentioned three types of spheres, namely the public, the private and the sphere in-between, it is meant to call attention not only to the elasticity of spheres/spaces in North Africa's cultural milieu, but also to prevent discourse on the public and private spheres, whether in the Eastern or Western critical circles, from, in the postmodernist fashion, 'being conclusive or teleological' (Hutcheon 1988:110). Central to this approach is the proposition that the public sphere, with reference to North African societies like Cairo¹, did not emerge, as was the case in Western societies, 'in the eighteenth century' (Roderfold 2000:18). Rather, it can be said to have emerged in the Mosque *pari passu* with the advent of Islam in the sixth century. The sphere is usually constituted, as Habermas observes, by 'private people, gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state' (Habermas 1962:176). These are people whose sole concern is to 'uncover topics of relevance to ... (their) society, interpret values, contribute to the resolution of problems, generate good reasons, and debunk bad ones' (Habermas 1992:421-461). Using the 'democratic' space of the mosque and the market square as a platform, these 'private people' usually become 'public' in their vociferous campaign against 'arbitrary political authority' (Woods 1992:77-100) and unwarranted and unmerited privileges.

Reference to the public sphere as one made up of 'private people', however, underscores the fact that the line separating the public from the private spheres in North African societies is usually arbitrary, polysemous and highly slippery. In other words, Egyptian society, for example, images a strong relational link between the 'public issue of justice' and 'private conceptions of the good life', the 'public interests' and 'private needs' and 'public matters of norms' and 'private matters of value' (Benhabib 1989). Thus an attempt to separate the public from the private spheres in such societies is both unrealistic and impossible. It is unrealistic because such an effort would fructify only if North African societies cease to be, in Ibn Khaldun's words, 'an historical group', cited by al-Azmeh (1982:38). The attempt would be impossible unless Islam, in line with the projection of the government of Egypt and its Western allies, ceases to be the focal point of postmodern Egyptian society.

In other words, the public-private sphere of Egyptian society is premised on a number of received, irreducible and immutable principles. These include the sanctity of God and the belief in His attributes, the preeminence of all Prophets of God, reverence of the '*Ulama* as the heirs of the Prophetic vocation and the necessity of obedience to those in authority in so far as they do not command disobedience to the Almighty' (Oladosu 1988:86-108). Thus to separate the public from the private sphere would create a chasm in the very essence of Egyptian society. It might lead 'to the silencing of the concerns of certain excluded groups' (Benhabib 1992:82): the concern and interests of women, children, the poor, the needy and the under-privileged class.

The collapse of the 'private' and the 'public' spheres, and the consequent appropriation of the two to the religious have, however, occurred with serious implications and challenges for Egyptian society. One of such implications is the emergence of conflict between the state and the individual, between the individual and the Other and between the individual and his/her religion. It includes the emergence of conflicts over the essence of the religious in relation or contradistinction to the mundane, the takeover of the public-private space by the tension between, in Arkoun's words, the 'thought and the unthought, the thinkable and the unthinkable' (Arkoun 2002:18); and the 'struggle between the defenders of the living sacred and sacralizing tradition and the supporters of reformist or revolutionary change' (ibid). Whereas there appears to be a consensus among Egyptians with reference to the divine and the status of the Prophets in the Muslim *weltanschauung*, there, however, exists much contestation on the role of the '*Ulama* (religious scholars) and those who wield political authority/power in Cairo's public-private-religious life.

Put differently, when Ibn Qayyim says ‘... since Islam is protected and upheld by the rulers and the jurists alike, this means that the laity must follow (and obey) these two – the rulers and the jurists’² (Ibn Qayyim 10), he is actually calling attention to the dialectics and arguments in Muslim culture and civilization over the essence of power, status and authority and to whom they (should) belong. In other words, how could two apparently separate authorities, the ruler and the ‘*Ulama*, possibly merge into one in order to superintend the ‘public’ sphere without necessarily causing friction? What happens in instances when juristic writs come into conflict with political edicts? Who has the authority to speak, punish or confer reward in God’s name and in the name of the nation – the ‘*Ulama* or the political authorities? How does power/authority feed into the conception of status in Egyptian public-private life and how do the latter image the former? What type of creativity could intervene in the hiatus, sharply mirror the trajectories in the categories of power, authority and status and through that catalyze their transformation for the good of the public? The apparent lack of consensus on the above has served as a recipe for the movement of agents from the public-private sphere of the Egyptian body politic to the third sphere; it has made the emergence of the ‘sphere in-between’ a categorical imperative.

The sphere in-between derives its origin, in part, from Arab-Muslim’s historical-theological experience in which Wasil Ata’s famous statement, *manzila byna manzilatayn*³ (the station between the two stations), finds relevance. It is also one which calls attention to Nashis Andy’s idea of the ‘non-player’.⁴ It is the realm in which meaning derived from and given to religion in the public-private spheres of North African societies is re-analyzed, reconsidered, and reconfigured. Those who occupy this sphere in North African societies are usually outside-insiders; they often posture as if they are defenders of authority – the sacred/religious – in the same breath their vocation usually confounds and confuses the latter as it satisfies the yearning of the proselytizers of change, of revolution. Such is the case of Najib Mahfuz who situates himself in that realm which Hannah Arendt has described as the ‘third position’: ‘a sphere ... where people are with others and (are) neither for nor against them’ (Arendt 1958:155).

In other words, the sphere in-between is a dangerous one. It feels as if its occupiers are at the firing range, or as if their heads are put on the guillotine. Occupiers of this sphere in the extremely closed-open, public-private-religious space of Egyptian society, particularly Najib Mahfuz, are usually traduced for their penchant in their writing to question authority and lay claim to power. They are usually accused of apostacy/heresy, treason and corruption of society. In an interview he granted the critic and novelist, Jamal Ghittani in the 1970s, Mahfuz says that to be a writer, to occupy what we have

referred to as the sphere in-between, is to become the subject of virulent attacks and, in fact, possible extermination. He says again 'The minute we breathe somebody chokes and poisons our lives' (cited in Takiyeddine Amyuni: 'The Arab Artist's Role in Society: Three Case Studies: Naguib Mahfouz, Tayeb Salih, and Elias Khoury', 1999:202-223).

But the sphere in-between is also highly 'useful' for its occupiers. It provides them with the opportunity to live with, study and critique the public-private-religious spheres of North African societies more intimately and truly. For example, by situating himself in this sphere, Najib Mahfuz, becomes able, along with Mehrez, to 'use' (Mehrez 1994:34) the private-public-religious sphere, subjugate it and protect himself with it all at the same time – talk of being a friend to God and not an enemy to Caesar. Mahfuz has been able to do this partly because the sphere in-between is hinged on a methodology: it demands that its occupiers represent the world, the public-private-religious spheres, with neutrality without being overtly neutral. Mahfuz says: 'when I represent the world with neutrality, I do so without being neutral' (ibid, p.36). But the problematic of neutrality of the non-neutral has made his *Awlad Hratin* (*Children of Our Quarter*, hereafter AH), as is the case with such other extremely charged works of his⁵, an important point of reference in an analysis of the dynamics that give the public sphere in Egypt its characteristic vigour and candour.

The novel, set, as the title shows, in an Egyptian quarter, begins with Jabalw summoning his children, Adham, Idris, Qasim, and Rifaa into the 'Great House' in order to inform them of his decision to appoint his youngest son Adham as his representative to manage the Trust/Great House. All his children, including Adham, are shocked at his decision, but no one dares to speak up except his eldest son, Idris. The appointment of Adham, Idris argues, violates the patriarchal order – an order in which age, gender, colour, ethnicity, social and economic status are used as indices in conferring honour and privileges. Idris's audacity to disagree with Jabalw leads to his expulsion from the Great House. But one day he reappears among the workers who have come to the Great House to collect their salary. He uses the opportunity to ask Adham, who now directs the affairs of the House, to help him have access to the great book that his father hides in the dark room. 'Umayma, Adham's wife, hears about the book and instantly becomes interested. She intervenes on behalf of Idris and encourages her husband to go against the instruction of Jabalw by stealing the book since, according to her, it might contain clues to their future and that of their children. Jabalw eventually catches Adham in the room and immediately throws him and his wife out of the House.

Outside the Great House, life becomes a hell for Adham and his wife. After a series of scandals and tragedies, Idris and Adham soon die. Thereafter

the quarter becomes an abode for a new generation; it becomes a space of terror where the strong and the powerful – the *Futuwwat* – oppress the people, rob them of their belongings, while the Trustee's only concern remains that of collecting taxes. Other children of Jabalw including Jabal, Rifaa, Qasim and his grandson, 'Arafah, take turn to wrest power from the brigands. In the climax it is 'Arafah who not only succeeds in laying his hands on the book which Jabalw keeps in the Great House, he is also the one whom people in the quarter believe is responsible for the death of the former. But as it is with those who came before him, 'Arafah's hegemony over the quarter also lapses into infamy – his magic, his ability to invent things, soon become an instrument with which oppression is perpetrated in the quarter. In closing the narrator tells us that as far as the quarter is concerned knowledge (science) alone is incapable of transforming people and society. Rather, it is power, wisdom and collective action that could guarantee equality and peaceful coexistence (Mahfuz 1982:1-364).

Awld Hratin (AH) did not emerge all at the same time. The Egyptian magazine, *Al-Ahram* began, sometime in 1959, to serialize it. But the magazine had hardly gone far into the series when the novel left the sphere in-between, the sphere occupied by its author, in order to become the property of the public-private-religious discursive spheres of Egyptian society. Three Scholars (Shaykhs) of al-Azhar University in Cairo came together to issue a theological decree banning the publication of the novel – an action they believed was in the interest of the 'public sphere', in the interest of Egyptian and indeed Arab society as a whole. The scholars' edict immediately achieved the desired effect. The novel was taken off the pages of the Egyptian journal while its author became Egypt's number one enemy, at least in its religious and cultural contexts, and one whose life could lawfully be taken.⁶ The decree also awakens us to one other fact: that the Egyptian public sphere is, in line with Bakhtin, heteroglotic. Heteroglossia is that 'condition that ensures the primacy of context over text' (Bakhtin 1981:42, 426).

But exactly what does AH mean for an engagement with the public sphere in Egypt? AH is a work of fiction which derives its strength from its employment of rhetorical tropes and techniques such as *Isti'ra* (metaphor), *Kinya* (connotation) and *Tawriya* (allegory). The employment of these tropes has led, in part, to the perspectival studies on the novel. In other words approaches to AH could be divided into two: the religious and the literary.⁷ Critics with a strong affiliation to the public-private-religious sphere of Egyptian society including Abdul Hamid Kishk see the novel as a complete desacralization of the very spirit that gives North African societies their characteristic vigour and identity. Evidence, according to him, abounds in

the novel. Take for example the naming device. The title of the novel, as far as he is concerned, is nothing but an allegory for Egyptian society. This might be found to be true at least going by the structure of Muslim cities in the pre- and early modern period. During these periods, North African cities were usually divided into *hrt* - quarters. Usually walled and enclosed, these quarters were sometimes based on kinship ties, 'occupation, place of origin, (and political) patronage' (Pearson 1982:47-58) of the citizens. Reference to the 'quarter' in the title of the novel, therefore, puts Mahfuz in no position of 'neutrality'. He is seen as a writer whose sole interest is the negative portrayal of his society.

Characters in the novel appear to take the arguments of the religious critics further. There appear to be close parallels, they contend, between the character of Jabalw and that of Almighty God, and between such Quranic-Biblical personages as Adam, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and fictional characters in the novel like Adham, Jabal, Rif'a and Qsim. Reading the plot further they identify close similarities between the role of Idris in the novel and that of Satan in the primordial period, even as the 'The Great House' not only parodies the garden of paradise mentioned both in the Bible and the Qur'n but could also be read to mean the Ka'aba, the holiest site in Muslim eschatology and modernity. While religious critics are struggling to reconcile questions which the novel has occasioned in their minds – questions that border on belief and unbelief, questions that hinge on the conflict between reason and revelation, questions that are so pertinent as to throw open the otherwise closed door of inquiries and contemplation into the necessity of revelation in the age of reason (science) – AH still lends itself to more scrutiny: it is a narrative with one hundred and fourteen sections like the Qur'an!

Perhaps the quintessential source of discord between the religious critics and AH lies in the climax when Jabalwi, the owner of the quarter, is supposedly killed by his grandson, Arafah. Aside from the fact that Arafah has been interpreted as a metaphor for science and its eventual triumph over religion and revelation, the mere thought of the possibility that God could die and Mahfuz's audacity, in Foucaultian manner, to 'fiction' (Foucault 1980:193) such a possibility is enough to put him on the stake; it is enough to warrant the issuance of a *fatwa* that would make his assassination a categorical imperative (Kishk 1990:156).

To give AH such a religiously coded reading as the 'intellectuals' and 'Muslim Fundamentalists' (Najjar 1998:139-168) have done is to restrict the horizon of the work; it means depriving the work of its other essence; it implies glossing over not only its meaning but, in line with Al-Jurjani, the meaning of its meaning – 'ma'an al-ma'an' (al-Jurjani 1959:31). In other

words, an assessment of AH not as a closed text which 'limits the interpretive activity of the reader but as an open text which stimulates constructive interpretive activity' (Eco 1979:47-65) is capable of enriching scholarly efforts which are targeted at the re-engagement of the dynamics and the socio-cultural and political forces in Africa's public sphere. Such an exercise would most likely lead to the discovery of, again Umberto Eco's phrase, the 'discreet and deeper meaning' (Eco 1992:45-66) of the trialectic of power, status and authority in Africa's public sphere; such an exercise might facilitate the engagement of 'authority' in the hands of the authoritarian, the reassessment of 'power' in the hand of the powerful, and the inquiry into how, in the public-private spheres of Egyptian society, the categories of 'authority' and 'power' usually combine together to define, structure and determine people's status.

We might begin with the contestations, in AH, over the Great House. The latter amply images the public-private sphere of North African societies in the modern period. That the Great House is a public sphere and a metaphor/allegory for modern day presidential palaces and government houses in Arab societies is imaged in the fact that workers in the quarter usually go there to collect their salary every month (AH 20). Here the House can be said to belong to all – the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor. In order to exist in the quarter, the inhabitant must visit the House. That the Great House is a public sphere is also instantiated in the event of the marriage of Adham, the director of the Great House, to the negro girl, Umaymah. On the day of the marriage, the House hosts two categories of citizens of the quarter: 'those who love Jabalw and those who detest/hate him' (AH 15). Those who love the maximum ruler of the public sphere in the quarter visit the Great House out of compassion; those who hate him attend the wedding feast out of fear of his punishment. Whatever may be the status of the visitors to the House, it is evident that the wedding feast affords everyone in the quarter the opportunity to partake of or share in its resources and wealth in a manner the like of which they never witnessed before. There is enough food and drink for everybody; movement into and outside the Great House is also unfettered. On this day, the House becomes the extension of the alleys, the streets, and the market-place in the quarter; it becomes, in the Foucaultian manner, an 'external space' (Foucault 1986:22-27) or in Lefebvre's phrase, the lived space (*le vecu*). The 'lived space' is that which belongs to the 'inhabitants' and 'users'; the dominant and the dominated, the King and the proletariat, the 'Ulama and the laity; it is the '... space which imagination seeks to change and appropriate...' (Lefebvre 1991:39).

But the Great House could also be interpreted to mean a private sphere. This is for two reasons. On the one hand, it is private because it belongs, *de facto*, to Jabalw and members of his immediate family; members of ‘the inner quarters’ (AH 13) – women, children, and the servants; the ‘faceless’ authorities inside authority. On the other hand, the Great House is private, like other locales of authority and power in Arab and non-Arab democracies, because it excludes and is forbidden to the members of the public; it is forbidden to people like Umaymah, ‘the poor’ (AH 10) and the less privileged in the quarter. To venture into the private sphere without express invitation of the sovereign, as is the case in the event of the marriage of Adham to Umaymah, is to risk the anger of the King; it is to risk at least imprisonment or at worst death.

While reading the Great House as a private sphere, we are reminded by characters in the novel, particularly Idris and Adham, that the sphere is also a detested, contested and conflicted one. It is a detested sphere because nobody experiences tranquility in it except the ‘cowardly’ – those who rejoice in taking morsels of food while they are despised (AH 12); it is detested because its residents are happy in their ‘worship (of) their oppressor’ (ibid). The Great House is a private but contested sphere because within it Idris and Adham are locked in a deadly struggle over power and authority; it is a conflicted sphere because, in line with Idris, ‘the racially inferior is ... (its) director’ (AH 12). Thus the Great House becomes a caricature of the modern day government houses: houses which look the image of happiness but are riddled by grief and sadness; houses which appear on the outside as tranquil and serene but are engulfed by fire and brimstone; houses populated in the open by individuals supposedly sharing mutual love and compassion but which, in reality, suffer internal disunity and discord.

Put differently, when ‘private citizens’ behold the locus and location of power and authority in the public sphere, they usually come away with awe and reverence for it. But upon close scrutiny, they usually discover that the house which is originally built for the protection of its occupiers often becomes a prison. Government houses in North African societies, as we have it in the Great House in AH, are built to make the occupiers safe and secure. But human history exemplifies a situation in which occupiers of ‘Great Houses’ do not actually experience security; the more the safety measures put in place by security agents the more insecure the authorities become; the more insecure the authorities become the more violent their instrument of repression and oppression. Thus the Great House becomes, once again in Lefebvre’s notion, a perceived sphere (*le percu*) – a sphere whose link to the sphere outside it is, poetically, like the ‘link that binds inanimate objects like the

spider to the web that issue forth from its body' (Soja 1995:13-14); it is from within its otherwise 'catholic'/private space that conflict, chaos, turmoil and tragedy ensue and extend to the public sphere.

Conflict begins in the Great House – the public-private sphere – over the distribution of power and authority. Here the quarter, along with the religious critics, is an allegory of the political space in North African societies – a space where political authority/power is attained not by consensus but through arbitrary means; where people are selected not elected by those over whom they would exercise authority. Jabalw appoints/selects Adham, not Idris or another character, as the director of the Great House contrary to the norm even in the patriarchal setting of the quarter. His action calls attention to the monarchical set-up in a number of Arab countries in which succession to political authority is determined by the patriarch. In other words, in Arab monarchies, the patriarch usually conducts himself in the manner of Jabalw – someone who is completely obsessed with power, someone who believes he is omniscient. This becomes evident when Idris, Jabalw's eldest child, confronts him on his choice of Adham. Jabalw looks him straight in the eye and says: 'it's for the good of the public' (AH 6). In other words, the public sphere in AH, as we have it in reality, does not actually belong to the public since the latter, going by Jabalw's omniscient posture, lack discernment. The 'public' in the public sphere – a metaphor for the masses, the proletariat, the powerless and faceless members of North African societies – is like a child in the cradle whose sense of judgment is, at best, asinine.

But in selecting Adham for the position of the director of the 'Great House', Jabalw is playing the role of an astute politician; he postures as somebody who desires to step out of power but who, in reality, actually desires to remain in authority. This is because whatever political influence Adham would exercise in the Great House would be under his 'supervision' (AH 10). This calls attention to yet another sphere in Africa's public sphere – the sphere behind the public sphere: the authority that controls the authority. Such authorities usually include the rich and the notables – the owners and controllers of the economic superstructure of the society. Such authorities in the Arab public sphere could also be the '*Ulama*, the religious scholars, the heirs of the Prophets of God.

The sphere behind the public sphere in African societies, the authority that controls the authority, might actually belong to the female members of the society – the mothers, the wives, the aunts, the daughters. This is evidenced in that instance in the novel when Adham, immediately he is selected by Jabalw as the Director designate of the Great House, goes to its inner quarters in search of his mother. Adham seeks out his mother not just to inform her of his new status but to request her blessing. In Africa's (Muslims) cultural

set-up children are acculturated to revere and adore their mothers. In fact they are taught right from the cradle that their 'paradise lies at the feet of their mothers'⁸ – a metaphor for the mother's blessing for the child. To enjoy the blessing of one's mother, therefore, means enjoying the blessing of God. Thus in an apparent expression of joy and happiness Umaymah embraces her child and prayerfully says thus: '... may success be your shelter...you are a good child and unto the good ones would be success at the end' (p. 9).

In praying for her son, Umaymah is only acting true to type. Early in the novel, she is represented as a beautiful negro lady and one whose beauty makes her inability to read and write (AH 15) of no significance. She eventually gets married to Adham, the director, and takes up a position behind the man in the eye of the public. But from within this sphere, the private sphere, the sphere behind the public sphere, she employs her feminine power in order to influence the day-to-day running of the Great House. Even though her character is a caricature of traditional Egyptian society – a society that pays little premium to the education of the girl-child – Umaymah nonetheless images the ability of her type to turn their otherwise pitiable circumstance to maximum benefit. Thus her character essays the traditional notion that no woman is useless in and by herself. To be a woman, whether literate or otherwise, is to be endowed with *quaid* power; to have quaid power is to have the ability to influence the man no matter his status in the public sphere.

But the circumstances of Umaymah and her role in AH as an illiterate wife of the power that governs the public sphere returns us to yet another perspective in the unfolding dynamics of the public-private sphere in the novel. In the beginning of the novel, the owner of the quarter and the benefactor, Jabalw, picks Adham as the director. This, according to him, is for two reasons: 'his (Adham's) knowledge of the nature/names of the tenants/workers, and his knowledge of the book of account' (6). But knowledge of accounting, in the estimation of Idris, is inconsequential where race is a factor. In other words, by virtue of the fact that Adham is born of a 'negro slave' (7), he ought not to have been picked for the important position of the director of the Great House. Here Mahfuz is striking at one other core of the public-private sphere of North African society; he is trying to destroy one other hierarchy in the Arab's socio-cultural, political and economic sphere – the inscription of authority and power with racial superiority. Mahfuz appears to be desirous to destroy the racial hierarchy in Arab societies where to be black is to be socially and politically inferior, to be subject to derision and ignominy. This perspective is particularly important in any attempt at reading the Mahfuzian aesthetics and 'politics'.⁹ Thus the characters of Idris and Adham awaken us, in part, to the binary between knowledge and ignorance,

between virtue and vice. Whereas Adham, in this instance, images the ideal for which the public sphere should strive, Idris on the other hand, amplifies the reality, the mentality and the racial proclivity of the upper class of Egyptian/ Arab society. Whereas Adham could be seen as the goal for which the public sphere should strive, Idris images a prevalent tendency in the public sphere – the tendency to privilege mediocrity over and above excellence; the tendency to sacrifice the eternal for the transient and the ephemeral. In the estimation of Idris, colour is not the only factor that should disqualify Adham from taking control of the Great House, (the public sphere), his size, in comparison, probably to that of his own, is diminutive.

In other words, ascension to power and authority in the public sphere, according to Idris, should, as we have it in contemporary *dem-all-cracies*,¹⁰ be based on size, on numerical strength, on the political spread of votes cast for contestants, not on the intellectual capabilities of the candidates or on their knowledge. In privileging size over essence the character of Idris in AH, therefore, becomes a caricature of the public sphere in Africa where, as we have it in the West, *democratic* practice involves the placement of a high premium on the ‘number of heads’ in the body politic not on their qualities.

Thus the stage becomes set for the occurrence of myriad conflicts in the public sphere of AH. The lack of consensus over how authority and power should be shared creates, in the first instance, an eternal chasm and disaffection among members of the upper class represented by the immediate family of Jabalw. Idris not only becomes an eternal enemy of his younger brother, Adham, but also a sworn enemy of his own progenitor, Jabalw. Again in line with the Mahfuzian philosophy¹¹ verbal conflicts soon degenerate into violence and tragedy. Idris goes after his younger brother Adham and ensures he is removed from his exalted position. The sons of Adham become arch-enemies of one another; sexual immorality, debauchery and intrigues become the order of the day. But despite these vicissitudes, the Great House remains a centre of political and economic gravity in the quarter; the locus of power, status and authority. But exactly what do these categories mean for Najib Mahfuz, the author, Egyptian society and Africa’s public-private sphere as a whole?

Power, when viewed literally as a person’s ability ‘to control people or things’ (*Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, p. 1129) does not enjoy a particularly positive patronage among Arab cultural practitioners. Al-Jahiz, for example, says that ‘the person in power is like he who rides a lion – people are afraid of him but he is more afraid of his ride’ (*al-Ibshih* 1942:90). Thus power is nothing but a signifier – it images success even as it is a metaphor for tragedy in the waiting. Power, as portrayed in AH, is contingent and impermanent; it lies not in the hands of the person who wields it – for

example, Adham – but in the hands of the person who bestows it, for example, Jabalw.

But our engagement with this problematic should necessarily start not inside the text but outside it; we have to look for Mahfuz's notion of power in order for us to appreciate the extent to which he has portrayed it faithfully. In the preface to AH, Mahfuz creates a meeting point between himself and one of the characters in the novel by name Arafah. It is the latter who, once, says thus:

You are one of the few ones who know how to write, why don't you write the story of our quarter? It is being told without cohesion... (AH 3).

Here two elements in Africa's notions of power and how it is wielded in the public sphere appear for our contemplation – the ability to write and knowledge of the history of humanity. On the one hand, Mahfuz appears to be suggesting that the ability to write has the potential of conferring on the writer power and authority. Thus to write is to become powerful; to author is to become an authority. On the other hand, the power that writing confers on the writer is, however, hinged on what is written, on the subject matter of the intellectual endeavour, on the knowledge of history. Writing of history, Edward Said reminds us, is 'one of the essential foundations of power, guiding its strategies and charting its progress' (Said 2001). Thus Mahfuz chooses the history of the North African public sphere as a fountainhead of his creativity. But in re-writing the history of Egypt in order to re-write the history of the world, Mahfuz sets for himself an agenda; he treats history as a means toward an end – '... the documentation of the ... complaints of the oppressed and those in need' (AH 3). The end for which Mahfuz strives also includes the sharp portrayal of Egypt's public sphere in which 'private citizens' move about 'with bodies that are virtually naked ...' (AH 4); it includes the necessity of speaking 'truth to power' (Said 2001:184-85); it also includes the necessity of waking the oppressed up from slumber – 'those whose body has become accustomed to injustice ... (those who) have sought refuge in patience and held on to hope' (AH 3). Thus while speaking 'truth to power' through the act of re-telling the story of the quarter, Mahfuz actually desires to *speaking courage to the poor*. Thus he re-writes the history of Egypt with a view towards confronting 'dogma and orthodoxy' (Said 1994:11); his creativity is targeted at embarrassing power, the powerful and the powerless in the public-private spheres of Arab society.

Two of such powers that are evident in the public sphere in Egypt are religion and science. The first is treated with familiarity and divinity, the second with mooted reverence and awe; the first speaks to and about the cultural identity of the Egyptians, the second functions in raising questions

about future destinies and possibilities of the Egyptian nation. In confronting these powers, or rather in imaging the essence and consequence of these powers in Egypt's socio-political and economic reality, the writer in Mahfuz outrightly discards the rule of neutrality in the sphere in-between and pitches his tent with science. One day, 'Arafah's wife, in a typical characteristic manner of an ordinary Muslim member of Egypt's public sphere, says thus: 'God is all powerful'. Her husband quickly counters by saying: 'It is the same with magic [science]; it is all powerful'. In another instance in the novel 'Arafah says with effrontery: 'I have something no one else has, not even Jabalwi: I have magic, which can achieve things for the quarter that Jabal, Rifa'a and Qasim put together could not have achieved' (AH 333). Thus he, in this instance, dismisses the powers in the hand of religion as being mythical, reactionary, retrogressive and primeval and adulates and celebrates the power of science and scientific endeavour.

The conflict over the status of science and religion in Egypt's public sphere returns us to the problematic of status with reference to the public office in AH. This is evidenced in the character of Adham. Before his ascension to the office of the director of the Great House, he used to live a reclusive life. But as soon as he becomes the director he becomes remorseful about the paraphernalia of public office; of the limitations that public office puts on its occupiers; of the change in status that it usually brings to its occupiers. Thus he says: 'woe unto the Great House, it tires me, changes people's perception of my person and deprives me of peace. Let it go to blazes' (AH 18). In other words, Adham is unable to make himself as adequate as possible to his status 'by means of a set of signs and marks pertaining to physical bearing, clothing and accommodations, gestures of generosity and munificence, spending behaviour and so on' (Foucault 1988:85). Unlike Jabalw who revels in his status as the sovereign in the quarter and who is 'charmed by the sound of praise' (AH 13) Adham sees nothing to be happy about in his status. He images characters in Africa's public sphere who find themselves in power not by choice but by compulsion; characters who see the public sphere as that of service, not an opportunity to enrich themselves. In fact Adham shows his hatred for the public office when he says 'God damn this estate' (27). His expulsion from the Great House, therefore, does not come to him as a surprise (49).

The above is, however, only a perspective. The other perspective is a caricature of the notion of status in the patriarchal setting of Egypt's public-private sphere where a man's worth and status in the public sphere lies in and is determined not by his contribution to the public weal but in/by the number of women under his care. One of the characters in the novel named

Zakarya is seen in his constant pursuit of women. Upon being questioned regarding his behaviour he responds by saying that his marriage to women from the quarters lies in his desire to strengthen his link with them. But the narrator goes on to say: 'In our alley the capacity to love women is a thing men boast of, and it gives a man a prestige as great or greater than that of being a chief' (AH 286). In other words, in North African societies, love of women is synonymous with the search, by men, for authority; the urge in men to establish their authority over women.

But just as the category of the woman remains, as is the case with Abu Ris in Tayyeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, a myth that men may never be able to unravel (Oladosu 2004:113-139), the provision of a precise definition for the word 'authority'¹² – a definition that would be consensual and applicable to the multiplicity of disciplines in which the category is relevant – remains problematic. However, in reading for 'authority' in AH, I find Friedman's perspective quite useful. He distinguishes between 'being *in* authority' and 'being *an* authority'. (Friedman 1990:56-91). Being *in* authority means occupying some official position that empowers a person to issue commands or directives while being *an* authority involves accepting the law, utterance or position of a person by another person even though the latter 'does not or even cannot comprehend the grounds on which the utterance rest' (ibid 57).

AH amplifies the above categorizations in the public sphere of the quarter and, by extension and implication that of Arab African societies. These include the authority of those *in* authority represented by Adham, Gabal, Qasim, Rifaa and 'Arafah and the trajectory of being *an* authority represented by Jabalw. The first authority is contingent and bestowed, the second is presumably self-endowed, self-subsisting; the first is accountable, questionable and persuasive, the second is self-accounting, unquestionable and coercive. To be *an* authority, along with Hannah Arendt, is to make people obey you 'without demanding to be persuaded' (Arendt 1968:91-141). This is exactly what Jabalw does in the novel. His authority is premised on coercion not persuasion; it is meant for the pursuit of his own good not for the good of the public. Thus, he employs the services of the gangsters in order to maintain his stranglehold over the public sphere and the latter subsequently make the quarter inhabitable (AH 170). The ordinary masses in the quarter, having been denied their rights, and having lost hope of living a good life, soon take flight from the normal to the abnormal – they resort to 'drugs, terrorism, and begging' (AH 94). Thus, AH could be said to have been deliberately written by Mahfuz, in line with the narrator in Tayyeb Salih's *magnum opus*, *Season of Migration to the North*, in order to dismantle the authority of the

Egyptian bourgeoisie – a bourgeoisie that is ‘in no way connected with the reality of ... (Egyptian) life, (a bourgeoisie) which is more dangerous to the future of Africa than imperialism’ (Salih 1969:120).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explore the notion of spheres in Egypt’s cultural milieu using Najib Mahfuz’s novel, *Awlad Hratin*, as a guide. It is evident from the above that notions of spheres/spaces among the Arab African is like a palimpsest – it features the public, the private, the sphere in-between and, indeed, the sphere behind the public sphere. Whereas many studies on AH have been focused on its portrayal of the socio-religious, cultural and political situation in the Arab world, this study might be found to be significant in its attempt to establish a nexus between creativity and political reality; in its engagement with the dialectics, both in fiction and in reality, of the categories of power, status and authority in Africa’s heterotopia; in its affirmation of, in line with Said, the connection between literary practice and ‘existential actualities of human life’ (Said 1983:5). All these constitute the internal elements in Najib Mahfuz’s aesthetics, his language of referentiality and the goal of his vocation. The elements, in turn, assist us derive meaning from and in Africa’s public sphere, even as they enrich our pursuit of the meaning of their ‘meaning’.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. Reference to Cairo and the North Africa in this paper is strictly to the Arab-Muslim context of the city and the region.
2. The text of Ibn Qayyim’s goes in part thus: ‘properly speaking the rulers (al-Umara) are obeyed (only to the extent) that their commands are consistent with the (articulations) of the religious sciences (al-Ilm). Therefore, the duty to obey the rulers derives from the duty to obey the jurists (fa ta’atuhum taba’an li ta’at al-ulama)’. For analysis of Ibn Qayyim’s opinions on power and authority in Islamic culture and legal history see K. Abou el-Fadl: *Speaking in God’s Name* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003).
3. Wasil Ata emerged as a theologian during the second Islamic century. His school was then known as the Mu’tazilites. The common story often quoted

in the heresiographical works concerns the confusion caused on the status of a sinful person and whether such a person could still be regarded as a Muslim or not. Before Wasil's teacher al-Hasan al-Basri could reply, Wasil b. 'Ata interjected and claimed: 'Such a person is not a believer, nor a disbeliever, rather he is of "an intermediate rank between the two ranks (of faith and disbelief) (al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn)". On Wasil and the Mutazilite school see M. M. Sharif: *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz 1963).

4. See N. Andy: *The Intimate Enemy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1893).
5. Some of Mahfuz's novels that have generated much controversies include *Tharthara fawq al-Nil* (Chattering on the Nile) and *Miramar*. For an analysis of this novel and the controversies they generated in Cairo see F. M. Najjar: 'Islamic Fundamentalism and the Intellectuals: The Case of Naguib Mahfouz', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25 no. 1, 1998, 139-168.
6. On attempts that were made on Mahfuz's life see the above.
7. Here, reference is being made to studies on Mahfuz in the Arabic language and most of which are accessible and available to the public in Cairo. For insights into the religious criticism of Mahfuz see M. J. Kishk, *Awlad Hdratina fihd Qawldn* (Cairo: al-Zahra' li-'lam al-'Arabi, 1989) and for the literary see, among others: S. Khashaba: 'Awlad Haratina lil-Iman, lil-Insaniyya, wa li Mist,' al-Ahrdm', 11 November 1994; Ahmad 'Abd al-Mu'ti Hijazi, 'Awlad Haratina bayna 'Alam al-Mu'allif wa Wahy al-Waqi' al-Ahram, 30 November 1994.
8. This statement is credited to the Prophet of Islam in a famous tradition (Hadith).
9. What I have termed Mahfuz's politics is his penchant to be 'open' and 'hidden' with his personal convictions; his unpreparedness to give straight answers to straight questions. On this, see his N. Mahfuz: *Hawla al-Din wa al-Dimuqratiyya* (Cairo: al-Dar al-Misriyya al-Lubnaniyya, 1990); Najib Mahfuz, *Atahaddath Ilaykum* (Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1977); Ahmad Muhammad Atiyah, *Ma'a NajTb Mahfu*; (Damascus: 1971); In English see M. Mikhail, 'Studies in the Short Fiction of Mahfouz and Idris' (New York University Studies in Near Eastern Civilization, No. XVI 1992).
10. This is taken from a track of a record produced by the late Nigerian (Afrobeat) musician, Fela Anikulapo Kuti.
11. Generally, Mahfuz has a negative perspective on life. According to him, 'humanity is of tragedy, lives in tragedy and is destined for tragedy'. Most of his characters either commit suicide, as is the case in *Bidaya wa Nihayat*, get killed or imprisoned as we have it, for example, in *al-Tariq*. On this see S. Somekh: *The Changing Rhythm* (Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers 1973).
12. On the difficulty posed by the word 'authority' to researchers in the humanities and the social sciences see R. Tuck: 'Why is Authority such a problem?', in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, ed., P. Laslett, W. Runciman and Q. Skinner, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

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Nigeria's Niger Delta: Understanding the Complex Drivers of Violent Oil-related Conflict

Cyril Obi*

Abstract

This paper explores the complex roots and dimensions of the Niger Delta conflict which has escalated from ethnic minority protests against the federal Nigerian State-Oil Multinationals' alliance in the 1990's to the current insurgency that has attracted worldwide attention. It also raises some conceptual issues drawn from 'snapshots' taken from various perspectives in grappling with the complex roots of the oil-related conflict in the paradoxically oil-rich but impoverished region as an important step in a nuanced reading of the local, national and international ramifications of the conflict and its implications for Nigeria's development. The conflict is then located both in the struggle of ethnic minority groups for local autonomy and the control of their natural resources (including oil), and the contradictions spawned by the transnational production of oil in the region. The transition from resistance – as-protest – to insurgency, as represented by attacks on state and oil company targets by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), is also critically analyzed.

Résumé

Cet article explore les racines et les dimensions complexes du conflit dans le delta du Niger qui a évolué à partir des protestations de la minorité ethnique contre l'alliance entre l'État fédéral nigérian et des multinationales pétrolières dans les années 1990, pour aboutir à l'actuelle insurrection qui a attiré l'attention du monde entier. Il soulève également quelques questions conceptuelles émanant de divers points de vue traitant des racines complexes du conflit pétrolier dans cette région riche en pétrole, mais paradoxalement appauvrie, comme une étape importante d'une lecture nuancée des ramifications locales, nationales

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et internationales de ce conflit et ses conséquences pour le développement du Nigeria. Le conflit est alors situé dans la lutte des groupes ethniques minoritaires pour l'autonomie locale et le contrôle de leurs ressources naturelles (notamment le pétrole), et les contradictions engendrées par la production transnationale de pétrole dans la région. La transition de la résistance sous forme de protestation à l'insurrection par le biais d'attaques perpétrées par le Mouvement pour l'émancipation du Delta du Niger (MEND) contre des cibles appartenant à l'Etat et aux compagnies pétrolières y est également analysée de façon critique.

Introduction: Big Prize, High Stakes, Violent Conflict

Hardly a day passes without reports in the international and local news media on the growing insurgency by armed militias in Nigeria's oil rich province, the Niger Delta, which accounts for most of Nigeria's estimated daily oil production of 2.46 million barrels – most of which goes to the United States and other Western oil importing countries (EIA 2009; Lubeck, Watts and Lipschutz 2007; Obi 2007b:94-98). These reports since 2006 have focused on the attacks on oil installations, kidnapping and ransoming of foreign oil workers and the disruption of oil exports as a result of mounting attacks by heavily armed militias. Some articles and reports also profile these militia groups such as the Nigeria Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), and the most noted, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and their respective leaders and spokespersons: Asari Dokubo, Ateke Tom, and Gbomo Jomo. Others have focused on the security threats arising from West African transnational criminal networks involved in the theft and trade in stolen crude, arms proliferation, the use of sophisticated ammunition and explosives by militias and the disturbing human rights situation arising from the activities of armed groups and security forces in the region.

Apart from being Africa's largest oil producer and exporter, Nigeria is also a producer of natural gas, accounting for an estimated output of 22 million tonnes per year. Natural gas exports account for about \$4 billion worth of earnings annually. Most of the natural gas is produced from the Niger Delta or its coastal waters. However, this oil- and gas-rich region that generates billions of dollars worth of revenues and profits annually is also paradoxically one of the least developed and conflict-ridden parts of Nigeria.

According to a UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report, in January 2007 alone, 'at least 50 foreigners were taken hostage, two of whom were killed. That compares to a total of around 70 foreigners snatched in the whole of 2006. Most of the kidnap victims are non-Nigerians working in the oil industry. Victims have included American, European and Asian

workers' (IRINnews.org 2007). The sharp increase in the acts of violence and kidnapping of foreign oil workers in the region has raised some serious concerns both within and outside Nigeria. This is in spite of a heavy military presence and governments' engagement with some of the interest groups in the region. The increased militarization of the region and the strategies of some of the armed groups designed to apply more pressure on the Nigerian government to accede to demands for resource control and negotiate the release of certain political leaders, who are considered sympathetic to the cause of the militants, from detention has further fuelled the intractability of the conflict.

Yet there are other groups with links to local politicians and elites that are into the 'business' of ransoming foreign oil workers and relations of prominent local politicians, business people or traditional rulers, by collecting payments from oil companies and local authorities in exchange for the release of the kidnapped people. What these syndicates do with the money is open to conjecture. Some plausible explanations include the purchase of sophisticated arms for criminal activities or the building of war chests or campaign funds for the coming local elections. Either way, oil is writ large in the escalating violence in the Niger Delta, which has since 2006 resulted in the cutting of Nigeria's oil exports by twenty five percent, and a revenue loss estimated by Nigeria's Federal Finance Minister, Nenadi Usman, to be around 4.4 billion US dollars.

In 2007, the temporary truce between MEND and the Nigerian state declared in mid-2006 collapsed, resulting in a further deterioration of the security situation in the Niger Delta. According to a CSIS report, 'between January 2006 and March 2007, militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) abducted over 100 oil-sector employees. An active ransom market has emerged that has brought considerable financial resources to these groups. A rising level of hostage taking has also made oil and gas service companies increasingly reluctant to dispatch personnel to repair sabotaged or ruptured pipelines, contributing to the enduring shut-in of over 600,000 barrels a day of oil production' (Iannaccone 2007:2).

The report goes on to note that 'Armed militant groups operating in the Niger Delta have graduated to a new level of lethality and technical and tactical sophistication'. Citing a confidential survey which estimates that 'the availability of AK-47s in the Niger Delta has increased five-fold in the last thirty months and militant groups likely possess remote-detonation and night-vision equipment, as well as anti-aircraft missiles', the report paints a frightening picture of 'state failure' in the Niger Delta. Still on the subject,

the survey also reports 'the five best-trained groups have a combined fighting force of 10,000 men and access to 25,000 weapons' (2007:2). While the threat posed by militias should not be trivialized, it should also not be exaggerated. The situation in the Niger Delta is more complex and should not be read simply as a case of state failure, requiring stronger state or military intervention, which does not address the social-political and historical roots of the crises in the region.

While the intention of such a report in magnifying the 'security threat' in the Niger Delta is not in doubt, it brings into sharp focus the magnitude and impact of MEND's attacks which, in 2007 targeted Shell, Agip and Chevron, leading to a shut-in of 27 percent or 675,000 bpd out of Nigeria's estimated daily production of 2.4 million bpd, the highest levels of loss since the crisis escalated early in 2006. The scenario appears to have worsened after Yar Adua was elected President in Nigeria's disputed elections late in May 2007 (Swartz 2007), and one of MEND's leaders Henry Okah was arrested in December 2008 in Angola on charges of gun-running, after which he was deported to Nigeria and arraigned on a 47 count charge, including treason, before a high court in Jos, Central Nigeria.

The breakdown of figures for the shut-ins in oil fields, destroyed pipelines and platforms and affected MNOCs as provided by Swartz in 2007, is as follows in barrels per day: Forcados Terminal and EA Platform, Shell, 477,000; Olero Creek, Chevron, 70,000; Agip, 15,000; Nembe Creek, Shell, 77,000; and Ogbainbiri, Agip, 36,000. However, the most recent figures for January 2008 indicate that the current crude oil shut-in has increased from 600,000 to one million barrels of oil per day, thereby suggesting a worsening of losses linked to the tensions and conflicts in the Niger Delta (Lawal 2008). Apart from this huge loss in terms of oil revenues and profits, members of the Nigerian military and security operatives (Joint Task Force), the armed militias, and villagers caught in the crossfire have lost their lives, and properties worth millions of naira have also been destroyed.

Oil pollution, extreme poverty, high levels of youth unemployment, pollution, perceived discriminatory employment practices against locals by oil companies and socioeconomic and political marginalisation and neglect by successive administrations constitute the main grievances against the oil companies and the government. These complaints have a long history connected to the view of the ethnic minority groups in the Niger Delta that they are being 'cheated' out of a fair share of oil revenues because they are politically marginalised by a federal government that is dominated by bigger (non-oil producing) ethnic groups, which in partnership with foreign Oil Multinationals exploit their region, take their lands and expose them to oil

pollution and environmental degradation, while the indigenes and owners of the land do not benefit from the billions of dollars generated from their region, nor do they get adequate compensation for the destruction of their livelihoods or the 'loss' of their lands (Saro-Wiwa 1995; Okonta 2008). Taking advantage of a favourable post-Cold War discourse on environmental and minority rights, the Niger Delta resistance movements in the 1990s framed their protests and demands in political and environmental terms.

On the other hand, the government sees the activities of the protesting oil communities and the armed militias as acts of economic sabotage to the main source of national revenues and a challenge to its power in the Niger Delta. The activities of some of the armed groups are also interpreted as acts of criminality as well as a threat to national stability and security. Since Nigeria is an oil-dependent nation, with oil accounting for over 80 percent of national revenues and 95 percent of foreign exchange earnings, any act capable of resulting in the disruption of oil production is perceived a threat to the survival and wellbeing of the country. On the other hand, Western Oil Multinationals (Anglo Dutch Shell, Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, Agip-ENI and Total) which operate in partnership with the Nigerian state oil corporation, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), see community agitation and attacks on them as a threat to their business interests. Also, their home countries have become, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and the growing presence of oil competitors from Asia (China and India), quite concerned with the threats that the hostility against foreign oil companies by armed groups in the Niger Delta. This is mainly because armed attacks endanger the lives of oil workers (including foreign nationals), expensive oil installations, resulting in the disruption of oil exports, which is perceived as a threat to the energy security interests of oil-dependent global powers (Obi 2008). There has been a policy of corporate oil support for state repression of protests in the Niger Delta, even though the oil companies are often quick to claim that they do not interfere in local politics. However, given the intensity of the attacks and the high stakes involved in oil production in the troubled region, oil companies have begun to engage with some of the oil communities in social provisioning as an aspect of promoting cordial oil company-community relations.

Whichever way it is viewed, oil defines the high stakes involved, both in terms of politics and power in the Nigerian context (Omeje 2006:5-6), and in relation to the centrality of oil to the energy security, strategic and profit calculations of the world's most powerful states and corporate actors. It is important to note that although the conflict in the Niger Delta in its most recent phase is oil-related, its background lies deeper in the nature of the

Nigerian state and the depredations of the ruling political elite. Also critical is a long-festering sense of grievance and marginalisation by the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta region which has continued to fuel agitation for self-determination and control of the resources of the region.

Perspectives on the Causes/Drivers of Conflict in Africa

New Political Economy/War Economies

The discourse around the causes of conflict in post-Cold War Africa has been characterised by various perspectives. Of note is what may be described as a 'rational choice' or 'war economies' school of thought based on an econometric intervention in the 'greed versus grievance' debate over the cause(s) of war, represented by the earlier works of Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2001), and the World Bank. The new political economy of war generated some controversy and spirited debates in the 1990s. It was hinged on the position that 'economic considerations often shape the calculations and behaviour of parties to a conflict, giving rise to a particular war economy' (Collier 2000; Berdal and Malone 2000:2; Ballentine and Sherman 2003). The arguments of Collier and the other authors centred on demonstrating how wars acted as an incentive or opportunity for African elites and warlords to loot the resources of their countries. In this regard, they played down the role of the grievances of the people, and focused on suggestions about how to 'disincentivize' African wars as a strategy of promoting peace and development. More recently however, Collier has moved on to look at the effectiveness of aid in post-conflict contexts, the conflict trap (2003), the poverty trap, and the connections between conflict, poverty and the crisis of development in the third world (Collier 2007).

Neo-patrimonialism

Another approach to politics and conflict relates to the neo-patrimonial school of thought, which attempts to demonstrate the 'rationality' of corruption, conflict and misgovernance, within Africa's cultural, social and historical milieu. This is perhaps best articulated in the works of Chabal and Daloz (1999; 2006), where they explore the 'instrumentalization of disorder' by African political elites to undermine the state and pursue their personal interests, resulting in conflict, state failure and crises. In a similar way, Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1998), connect the crisis in Africa to the predatory activities of Africa's political elite, which 'criminalize' the state, subvert it and enrich themselves. The combination of such weak, personalized states and patrimonial politics is deployed in providing a context for misrule, corruption, state failure or collapse and conflicts over the state, power and spoils. Neo-patrimonialism is also connected to personal ties and networks of power in

which family, ethnic, communal and religious connections are perceived as being fundamental to political mobilization, access to power and resources, as well as political relations of inclusion and exclusion. This thinking also features in most of the explanations of conflicts in Africa in ethnic, communal or religious terms. Apart from this, it also lays some of the blame for most of the conflict on 'state failure'.

Another interesting perspective is that of Reno. While he takes on board some of the insights from the neo-patrimonial approach, he brings into the debate the role of international actors and agencies, by showing how these external forces impact on local neo-patrimonial networks and the political elites in Africa. This is underscored by the ways in which political elites construct 'shadow states' and 'shadow economies' largely by undermining the formal state and economic structures and engaging in profitable 'informal sector' economic activities whose benefits go directly to them, rather than the state or people.

While Reno goes to great lengths to explain why African states are 'failing', he brings back 'grievances' into the debate about the roots of conflict – except that this time, grievance is linked to injustice and insecurity, which sometimes drives the 'aggrieved' into predatory organizations. To break this circle of grievance, it is suggested that the roots of 'popular experiences of personalist rule and state collapse be addressed' (Reno 2003:47).

While Reno places most of the emphasis on how patrimonial political networks, corruption and state collapse breed feelings of injustice, violence and predatory behaviour, he primarily presents corruption and the struggle for resources as the main source(s) of conflict.

The Resource or Oil Curse

The discourse on the oil-development nexus in Africa is often predicated on the view that oil breeds corruption, misgovernance, human rights abuses and violent conflict (Gary and Karl 2003; Human Rights Watch 2002; Coalition for International Justice 2006; Obi 2007a; Ross 1999, 2001, 2004a, 2004b). This perception is clearly a spin-off of the 'Dutch disease' and 'resource curse' theses, which are mainstream explanations for (resource) conflicts and insecurity in Africa. The 'resource curse' thesis seeks explanations for the causes of violent conflicts by demonstrating how huge natural resource endowments rather than brighten the prospects for development, paradoxically motivate people to struggle over resources, or act as an incentive for armed groups to engage in conflict in order to exploit the opportunity to loot. It is hinged upon the resource wealth-violent conflict nexus (Auty 1993), and provides explanations why, in spite of being relatively well endowed resource-wise, African countries remain poor and conflict-ridden. Ross (2004b) presents

a concise description of the resource curse based on findings 'that natural resources play a key role in triggering, prolonging, and financing conflicts'. In an earlier article, he had observed that 'many of the poorest and most troubled states in the developing world have, paradoxically, high levels of natural resource wealth. There is a growing body of evidence that resource wealth may harm a country's prospects for development' (Ross 2001:328).

The picture that emerges is clearly one in which resource wealth is subversive of the development process. Operating within this perspective, (Billon 2001:562), asserts that 'beyond increasing the risk of armed conflict by financing and motivating conflicts, natural resources also increase the vulnerability of countries to armed conflict by weakening the ability of political institutions to peacefully resolve conflicts'. Thus apart from the risk of subverting development, natural resources increase the risk of war and insecurity.

Environmental Scarcities

This approach is essentially hinged on the view that population growth beyond a particular threshold places pressure on renewable natural resources and the environment in general, leading to the relative scarcities of resources (Homer-Dixon 1994; Myers 1993). Environmental scarcities are also noticeable where resources are being rapidly depleted as a result of degradation, climate change or unsustainable forms of exploitation and production. Such scarcities are mostly associated with the developing countries, where they trigger conflicts over shrinking renewable resources. At the heart of this perspective to violent conflict is the population size-natural resource linkage. Kaplan (1994), a decade and a half ago, constructed a frightening picture of a coming anarchy in a 'Hobbesian' West Africa, as the result of an 'imminent' demographic-environmental catastrophe that would lead to violent wars and chaos in the sub-region. Thus, in a neo-Malthusian fashion it assumes that population growth beyond the rate of replenishment of renewable resources (leading to scarcity) triggers off violent conflict in developing countries. The resource or environmental scarcities approach is also writ large in the explanations for some of Africa's civil wars that are often presented as resource conflicts. The primary concern is therefore with environmental security, which among other things seeks to prevent threats emanating from the environment, and thus avoid environmental conflicts or resource wars from threatening global security (Obi 2000:47).

Horizontal Inequality-conflict Perspective

This perspective is hinged on the human motivation of participants engaged in violent conflict, particularly the role of political, cultural and economic

factors in influencing and constructing group identities and mobilizing such groups to compete for power (Stewart 2000:246-247). Stewart makes the important point that group identity is constructed 'by political leaders, who find group cohesion and mobilisation a powerful mechanism in their competition for power and resources, adopting a strategy of "reworking of historical memories" to engender group identity' (2000:247). Horizontal inequalities relate to 'the existence of severe inequalities between culturally defined groups' as distinct from vertical inequalities (Stewart 2002:2), and the fact that they 'affect individual wellbeing and social stability in a serious way'. In this regard, human inequalities can be multi-dimensional and complex, linking the welfare of the individual within a group to the stability and development of society.

Thus, where there is a sense of inequality in access to power and resources, the disadvantaged groups are likely to be mobilized to challenge an unsatisfactory status quo. In the view of Ostby (2008:143), horizontal inequality is 'highly explosive'; 'when power and resources are unequally distributed between groups that are also differentiated in other ways – for instance by race, religion or language'. However, it is noted that shared group identities may not be enough to mobilize a group for conflict, except when the group has a sense of collective deprivation due to marginalization or discrimination. Yet, in spite of its attractions, most of the conclusions of the horizontal inequalities school of thought have been disputed by the new political economy/war economies perspective that is of the view that 'inequality does not increase the risk of civil war' (Ostby 2008:143). However, the horizontal inequality perspective has continued to grapple with some challenges, not least that of measuring polarities and horizontal inequalities and how these relate to the risk of violent conflict. Also of note is the need for a historical reading of the origin and evolution of inequalities in a given context. The horizontal inequality approach remains a useful conceptual frame for re-focusing attention on the root causes of conflict, and adopting policies that target the fundamental causes of violent conflict as they relate to inequalities and inequities between groups in the context of the interaction of political, economic and cultural factors (Stewart 2000:260).

An Alternative Discourse Regarding the Causes of Conflict in Africa

An alternative discourse on the causes of violent conflicts in Africa is largely based on a critique of the dominant perspective(s) on post-Cold War wars in Africa. This springs from the dissatisfaction with the mono-causal explanations of such conflicts and the realisation that the complex roots of conflict on the continent cannot be fully explained by one perspective. Beyond this is the reality that post-Cold War conflicts are not limited to Africa. There is also

the concern to see beyond the prognosis that Africa's conflicts as an aspect of the failure of the development project on the continent can be solely attributed to the inability of African societies and cultures to accept and 'efficiently' pursue a Western-style modernising project/enterprise.

The foregoing provides the basis for understanding that the roots of war in Africa are complex, and are attributable to more than one cause or solely to internal factors. This is more so relevant because of the ways in which the forces and processes of globalisation contribute to the exacerbation of some of the structural weaknesses on the continent, the weakening of states and the deepening of the social contradictions. Thus, war economies, neo-patrimonial and cultural explanations, and resource curse/scarcities approaches, can at best offer partial value-laden perspectives to an understanding of civil wars in Africa. In the same regard, while the horizontal inequalities approach is relevant to understanding the underlying causes of violent inter-group conflict, it still faces challenges in grappling both with intra-group conflicts, measuring inequalities (sometimes represented statistically), and dealing with the factor of globalized pressures/actors that deepen existing contradictions and cleavages in some African societies. For example, in relation to those that focus on the economic incentives for war, when we examine the roots of violent conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria's Niger Delta, it is possible to establish several trends.

First, the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia were the result of a complex combination of historical, political, economic and historical factors, as well as the deep-seated crises that engulfed both countries (Abdullah 2004; Zack-Williams 1999; Hutchful and Aning 2004). While it is often attractive to focus on inter-ethnic or resource conflicts, the boundaries of the forces-in-conflict are often blurred and contingent on more than one factor or a situation that is fluid depending on leadership, regional, or transnational forces that require a holistic and critical reading. For example, differentiating Nigerian from international actors could be problematic in a context where local actors can simultaneously be global actors either by connecting global networks or using IT and global media to influence global oil markets, while at the same time oil transnationals are domesticated within the context of the Niger Delta, taking decisions that affect (or disrupt) local life. In the same way, some militia leaders form exigent partnerships with some government functionaries, politicians and oil companies, in ways that contradict 'fixed' boundaries or evolutionary tracks. Thus a conflict can be within, or between groups, between a group and a foreign oil company, or a state-company alliance, or between various militias engaged in 'turf wars'.

With regard to the neo-patrimonial perspective and its focus on predatory corrupt elites colluding in state failure, some of the external variables that

undermine the state and partner with corrupt elites are not included into the analysis. In some respects, specific African states show elements of weakness and strength in difference aspects, contributing to their resilience and seeming defiance of predictions by some sceptics of imminent 'state failure'. Rather than locate 'state collapse' exclusively in the 'corruption of predatory ruling elites', it has been noted that it would have been more analytically rewarding to locate the weakening or 'implosion' of some African states in several complex factors, including the collapse of the 'post-colonial mode of accumulation' that was in part linked to the pressures from globalisation, and 'the anti-state market reform agenda promoted by the IMF, World Bank and other donors' (Olukoshi 2005:185).

The resource curse approach suggests that even if Africa experiences an increased net inflow of oil revenues or earnings from mineral/cash crop exports, the 'rentier effect' will conspire to ensure that it feeds into corruption, waste and violent conflict, rather than the democratic development of society. But this approach does not capture the complex dimensions of the politics and international linkages that underpin violent conflicts in resource-rich African countries. Neither does it explain why wars break out in resource-poor countries. Rather it exaggerates the role of a single factor, out of many, as the predisposing factor to violence.

Even when the emphasis is placed on intensified struggles over 'scarce' resources, the fundamental questions about how such scarcities are produced, and the distributive inequities that underpin such scarcities are usually glossed over (Obi 2000:47-62). The second issue relates to the question of who the actors in conflict are. While most of the attention is often placed on local actors: the state/political elites, militia groups/warlords, and weak and inept bureaucracies, very little attention is paid to the role of external and transnational actors and the lack of transparency that shrouds the extent of their involvement in these conflicts. Such external actors include private security organizations, mercenaries, international traders and companies, arms suppliers, and extra-African powers pursuing strategic and economic interests in the continent.

In a rapidly globalising world, the international scramble for, and exploitation of, Africa's resources has been intensified (Bond 2006). While resource-endowment may be a curse for those that lose their land, homes and rights for oil extraction to take place, it is a blessing for those extractive external forces and their local allies that control and sell the oil on the world market or share in the 'spoils' of oil at home. Thus, oil alone does not cause conflict. It is transformed and mediated through market, social and power relations, so that by the time it features in the 'circuits of conflict' involving various groups and transnational interests, it would have entered into other

spheres as energy, profit, and power. The fundamental question then is who has the power over these resources, how are the benefits shared in the context of state-society and local-global power relations. This is partly relevant in explaining why a resource-rich Norway is developed, and not embroiled in 'resource wars'; while a resource-rich Nigeria is confronted by insurgent militias in the Niger Delta. The fundamental issue however is that the roots of Africa's conflict lie more in historical, social and distributive inequalities and inequities, grievances and the contradictions being spawned within the continent by globally-led extraction, and accumulation.

The foregoing goes to the heart of the complex conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta, where the intersection of global, national and local forces and processes also influence or define the various actors, high stakes and lines of partnership, struggles and conflict. It also underscores some of the contradictory alliances and strategic calculations that underlie a transnational process of extraction and dispossession, and the attempts by some local forces to either ride on the process for narrow ends, resist the predatory global-state alliance actions which expropriate their resource and pollute the environment, or navigate between the two positions based on calculations of expediency.

Ethnic Minorities and the Struggle for Local Autonomy and Resource Control in Nigeria

The roots of the Niger Delta conflict lie in the history of the struggles for self-determination, local autonomy and democracy of the ethnic minorities in the region, which goes as far back as the second decade of the twentieth century. The creation of Nigeria by the British as their colony in 1914 consigned the people of the Niger Delta to the status of ethnic minorities in relation to the numerically preponderant neighbouring ethnic groups which dominated political life in what later became the Western and Eastern regions of the country. The successive institutionalization of revenue sharing and power distribution along regional lines tended to reinforce the politicization of ethnic identity, and its mobilization in the struggles for access to power and resources. On this basis, smaller groups defined as 'ethnic minorities' tended to lose out, while the dominant ethnic groups asserted power at the regional (North, Hausa-Fulani; East, Igbo; and West, Yoruba) and the national level.

The initial reaction of the minorities was to protest against the perceived 'majoritarian stranglehold of the three ethno-regional blocs' (Mustapha 2003: 8) over power and resources by forming political parties representing their interests, and seeking local autonomy through state or region creation in the context of Nigerian federalism. These parties included the Cross River Ogoja State Movement (COR), the Midwest Movement, and the Niger Delta Congress (NDC). Although, they did not succeed in their quest for the creation

of new states before Nigeria's independence in 1960, the post-independence crises that culminated in civil war between 1967 and 1970 provided new opportunities.

Shortly before the eruption of war between the secessionist Biafra in the Eastern region in June 1967, the four regions of Nigeria (North, East, West and Midwest), were abolished and replaced with twelve states, of which the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta had three. Sensing that the creation of states had pulled the rug from under their feet in relation to gaining access to the oil fields of the Niger Delta, one of the early actions of the Igbo political elite was to stake Biafra's claim to the oil in the Niger Delta and demand the payment of royalties and taxes by oil companies to the Biafran government. In response, the federal government imposed a naval blockade on the Bonny and Port Harcourt oil export terminals and attacked Biafran forces in the Niger Delta (Ikein and Briggs-Anigboh 1998:128). Thus, the Nigerian civil war was to some extent an oil war and it was logical that the victorious federal army went on to establish its full control over the oil during and after the war. In this way, oil became the main object in the acrimonious politics of revenue allocation after the end of the Nigerian civil war.

By the 1970s, the Niger Delta had become the main source of oil and gas, and as a result the new fiscal basis of the Nigerian State (replacing agriculture), accounting for over 80 percent of national revenues and 95 percent of export earnings. In spite of the ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta having their 'own' states, the federal government, largely controlled by the political elite from dominant ethnic groups, had seized monopoly control of the collection and distribution of oil revenues. Just as the states were created by military fiat, federal monopoly over oil was similarly established through Decree No. 51 of 1969 and Decree No. 9 of 1971. Apart from the state creation exercise, and the centralization of power over oil, the revenue allocation principle of derivation was progressively changed to reduce the share of oil producing states of the Niger Delta from 50 percent in 1966 to 1.5 percent in the 1990s.

The progressive reduction of the derivation principle – which provided for revenue allocation in proportion to the contribution to the federal purse by each state – and the introduction of the Distributive Pool Account (DPA) or federation account that emphasized the allocative principles of population size and need (and de-emphasized derivation), was viewed as an injustice by the ethnic minorities, particularly in the context of decades of marginalization and neglect of the Niger Delta by past governments. It was also strongly felt that the principle of derivation which gave 50 percent of revenues to the old regional governments controlled by the dominant ethnic groups was abandoned in order to enable these same groups to control the oil wealth produced from the oil minority states. Hence the struggle between the oil minorities/states of

the Niger Delta and the non-oil producing ethnic majority groups/states/federal government became the object of the politics of controlling oil revenue or resource control.

The campaign (non-violent until recently), which in Nigeria's political lexicon is referred to as 'resource control', is based on the demand for self-determination to control the resources within the 'territory' of the Niger Delta (inhabited by minorities), compensation for damages inflicted upon the territory by oil production (pollution, degradation, loss of livelihoods), and access to an increased share of oil revenues. It draws its rationale from the view that the control of oil by a federal government controlled by elite from the dominant (non-oil producing) ethnic groups is both unjust and explains why the Niger Delta has suffered decades of neglect, characterized not only by marginalization in relation to oil revenues, but also with regard to 'poor quality infrastructure, high unemployment rates (among its predominantly youthful population), high levels of HIV/AIDS infection rates and high levels of poverty estimated at an average of 69 percent' (UNDP 2006:15-18, 44). Also, its people have been discriminated against in the federal distribution of political and socioeconomic opportunities, entitlements and welfare services and development in general. Federal control of oil is also perceived as the result of an iniquitous political arrangement that enables the ethnic majorities to 'colonise', exploit and persecute the ethnic minorities, who they feel 'cannot pose any real threat to federal hegemony' (Okonta 2005).

Various Niger Delta ethnic minorities led the agitation for resource control. Some environmental/human rights groups protesting against the exploitation, neglect and pollution of the region by successive governments and oil companies also supported them. They expressed the view that the control of their oil resources by outsiders was akin to 'internal colonialism' and demanded for the right to control their own resource, oil. Such demands were largely ignored by the various military regimes that also repressed such protests. It was not until Nigeria returned to democratic rule in May 1999 that the derivation principle was increased to 13 percent. The increase was in response to international campaigns and local protests by ethnic minorities, and constituted a strategy of the new democratic regime of winning legitimacy on the basis of attending to the grievances of oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta. Part of the calculation was also to demobilize the protest groups by providing patronage to the local elite, co-opt the leadership of the protest and activist groups and create the conditions for the operations of the oil industry by stemming the tide of restiveness.

Unfortunately, the result has been the exact opposite, leading to the militarization of the ethnic minority resistance and escalating violence in the

region, partly as a result of worsening socioeconomic conditions, the co-optation of some armed groups by local politicians, and growing frustration and discontent among the youth that democracy had not addressed the roots of their grievances, and demands for improved welfare in the context of the continued extraction of wasting non-replaceable oil and gas resources from their region.

The sharing of oil revenues was again a source of acrimony at the National Constitutional Reform Conference in 2005 where most of the delegates were nominated by the state and federal governments. The conference ended up in a deadlock over its inability to reach an agreement between northern and southern delegates, the demand of delegates from the Niger Delta for an upward increase in the derivation formula from 13 to 25 percent, and a progressive increase within five years to 50 percent (IRIN news, 2005). This further increased the frustration of the people of the Niger Delta and fuelled demands for the restructuring of the Nigerian federation in ways that decentralized power and emphasized local autonomy and resource control.

Closely related to the discontent fuelled by the feelings that the oil minorities of the Niger Delta have been severely short-changed by the dominant groups that control federal power and oil is the issue of the ownership of land. One of the legacies of military rule was the 1978 Land Use Decree, later the Land Use Act, and a host of related laws that transferred the ownership of land from communities to state governments, and gave the latter the power to use land for (oil) 'development' purposes. As Omeje (2005:324), notes, 'what evidently compounds the institutional disadvantage of the oil-bearing communities and the stultification of their customary land rights is the fact that that the 1978 Act denies courts the jurisdiction to inquire into matters of compensation relating to the provisions of the Act'. Thus, not only can the state government acquire communal land, it also determines what compensation is paid for surface rights: i.e., the things on the land, buildings, shrines, trees, crops, etc.; and to whom it is paid. Therefore, the Act has been largely seen as yet another ploy to dispossess the Niger Delta people of their oil-rich land. The other dimension is that state control of land has also fed into the politics of compensation (payments), which has become a source of intra- and inter-community tension and conflict in the region.

Globalisation and Oil in Nigeria: Between Transnationalism and the Politics of Local Resistance

Oil multinationals (OMNCs), as the world's wealthiest and most powerful corporations, play a key role in the processes of capitalist globalisation and power. OMNCs dominate the global energy market through the commodification of oil – the most viable source of energy and the basis of strategic and industrial power in the world. The global reach and might of oil

multinationals is underlined and reinforced by recent mergers in which the 'seven sisters' became 'four': Exxon/Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, BP-Amoco-Arco and ChevronTexaco (Davis, 2006:3). Just as these oil Super Majors have extensive trans-boundary connections, they also have a lot of influence in their home countries.

Shell first struck oil in Oloibiri in the Niger Delta in 1956, began exports in 1958, and was joined by the world's other leading oil multinationals in 1959. Shell maintained its head start over the oil multinationals, today accounting for almost half of Nigeria's daily oil production, while others such as Chevron-Texaco, Exxon Mobil, Total, and Agip-ENI mostly account for the rest (Obi 2001:177-178). Thus, when global interests within oil-rich developing countries are threatened, local states (backed by oil companies and their home governments) seek to crush those threats through a combination of repression of local protests and the co-optation of some local leaders.

Thus, Nigeria has been integrated into the global oil market as a supplier of crude oil and gas. In spite of the recent entry of Chinese and other Asian and South American as well as indigenous oil companies, the OMNCs still dominate the Nigerian oil industry (Obi 2009:136). The enmeshment of 'the global' and 'national' in 'the local' in oil production in the Niger Delta is both emblematic of a seamless trans-global capitalist accumulation process, which also defines the region as a 'local' site of 'global' production (mediated by the 'nation-state') with its attendant contradictions, contestations and crises. Given the nature of the political economy of oil in Nigeria, the transnational production of oil is underscored by a Nigerian state-OMNC alliance, which in the context of the Niger Delta is being confronted by protests and local resistance.

From Local Protest to Resistance

The earliest violent attempt at the local control of oil took place in February 1966, when an ethnic minority Ijaw militant, ex-policeman and undergraduate led a group of youths named the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) in an abortive attempt to secede from Nigeria, and establish a Niger Delta republic. At stake then, as now, was the ownership and control of the oil in the region, which Boro and his supporters feared would be seized by the Igbo ethnic majority-dominated Eastern region government, and the new 'unitarist' Nigerian military government, led by General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo officer. Initially sentenced to death after being found guilty of treason by a court, Boro and his followers were freed after another military coup in July 1966 led by military officers of northern origin resulted in Ironsi's overthrow and death, and his replacement with Colonel Yakubu Gowon as the new head of state. Upon his release, Boro joined the Nigerian Army and

fought in the civil war on the federal side, apparently to defend the oilfields of the Niger Delta from falling into the hands of the rebel Biafran (Igbo) forces. Boro died at the war front shortly before the Nigerian civil war ended in 1970. His bravery and exploits in furthering the cause of Ijaw freedom made him a hero in the eyes of the people, and was to be revived in the 1990s by Niger Delta militants struggling for local autonomy and resource control.

Several developments after the war ended had implications for the struggle of the Niger Delta ethnic minorities. These included the increased transfer and centralization of the control of oil revenues from the regions to the federal military government, the OPEC-led oil-boom of the 1970s, the transfer of the ownership of oil-rich land from local communities to the federal (and state) governments, and the vast expansion in local oil production and its impact on the fragile Niger Delta environment. This provided a background for agitation by the ethnic minorities that felt that the federal military government had short-changed them, after they supported it during the civil war, only for them to lose access to a considerable proportion of the oil produced from their region. Rather than having a right to 50 percent of oil revenues on the basis of the derivation principle of revenue allocation, it was progressively reduced till it got to a mere three percent in the early 1980s. In its place, population size and need were used, giving the greater share of oil to the non-oil producing ethnic majority groups from other parts of the country, who also were seen as occupying the most lucrative political offices as well as high positions in the Nigerian oil industry. By the late-1970s, various ethnic minority identity and elite groups had begun to mobilize support for a peaceful protest against the activities of oil companies and neglect by the government. These took the form of petitions, reports and articles in local newspapers.

The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) moved the struggle to its next phase in the 1990s when it presented the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) to the government, demanding local autonomy and control of its oil, and waging an effective international campaign against Shell on account of its exploitative and polluting activities in Ogoniland, which threatened the survival of the people (Saro-Wiwa 1995). However, rather than respond to these demands, the MOSOP resistance and 'revolution' was literally crushed largely through the use of state military force, and the hanging after a controversial trial and verdict, of nine of its leading members, including the writer and minority rights campaigner, Ken Saro-Wiwa, in November 1995. Although the fate that befell MOSOP was to send a signal to other ethnic minority groups that the government would not brook any challenge to its control of oil, Ijaw youth took up the struggle from 1997 onwards. In December 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) was formed, and it issued the Kaiama Declaration (KD), which among demands, insisted on the Ijaw control of Ijaw oil.

To show that it meant business, the IYC, using the slogan 'Operation Climate Change', demanded that all oil companies should leave the Niger Delta before the end of December 1998. Like MOSOP, the IYC mobilized the youth and ordinary people, by drawing upon local Ijaw idioms and a culture of resistance. Part of this included the use of *Egbesu*: literally the Ijaw god of war, but whose real significance lay deep in Ijaw cosmology as a symbol of spiritual protection (invincibility) for the Ijaw, when fighting a 'just war' for liberation. Rather than respond to the demands of the KD, or seek to enter into dialogue with the IYC on the need to negotiate a withdrawal of the Operation Climate Change, the military government sent in troops that forcefully put down the uprising against transnational oil. Many protesters were injured in the repression that followed, while Boro's birthplace, which was perceived as a rallying point for IYC activists, was sacked by the army. A search then followed for IYC activists believed to have the tattoo of *Egbesu* on their bodies. It was in this state of the repression of the IYC protest, and the non-resolution of the Niger Delta question, that Nigeria returned to elected democratic rule in May 1999.

Expectations were initially high in the Niger Delta that Nigeria's return to democracy would lead to the de-militarization of the region, reduce tensions, and bring 'democracy dividends' to the people. At the same time, the local political class had gone round in an attempt to co-opt the leadership of the various social movements, identity and communal organizations, with a view to de-radicalizing and demobilizing them or using them for narrow/personal political purposes.

After the 1999 elections, the security forces remained in the Niger Delta, but assumed a rather low profile. However, when a criminal gang that had held an oil producing community captive killed some police officers, even before the expiration of an ultimatum given to the Bayelsa state government by the federal government, the Nigerian Army invaded the community ostensibly to apprehend the criminals, but it later took the form of a punitive expedition, which razed the entire community save for a few buildings, and left thousands injured, homeless or dead. After Odi, military forces also raided other communities in the Niger Delta such as Olugbobiri, Liama and Gbarantoru (Human Rights Watch 2002).

The continued militarization of the region contributed to the feeling in some circles that those that had held the oil-rich Niger Delta 'captive' would neither listen to the demands of the people nor respect their rights. Such views were informed by the apparent failure of peaceful protest to effect change in the attitude of the state-oil alliance toward the Niger Delta. The response by such groups was to adopt violence, either in navigating the complex terrain of survival in the region, or in resisting what was seen as the

predatory instincts of the state-oil alliance and wrest the control of oil from them. A very common refrain in response to questions posed to people in the Niger Delta about the attitude of the Nigerian state and Oil Multinationals is that 'they are very arrogant', leading to the widespread view that 'they only respond to force' when their interests are threatened by violence. This is both an expression of frustration as it is the failure of peaceful protest to lead to any meaningful change in the plight of the people, and anger at the impunity with which the region is being plundered by the state-oil alliance, with the complicity of some local elites and 'violent youth'.

The violence of resource extraction in the Niger Delta by the state-oil alliance has dialectically resulted in the violence of local resistance. However, it must be noted that the very nature of such dialectics is complex, and sometimes contradictory, as the various forces find expression at different levels, and alliances are built, destroyed and reconstituted in various ways. For example, three state governors in the Niger Delta in 1999 were able to penetrate and sponsor some of the militia's armed groups in the region to unleash violence upon and intimidate their political opponents and voters. Of note was the case of the governor of Rivers State, who got two of the leaders of such groups, one, Mujaheed Asari Dokubo, then Vice President and later (with the governor's support), President of the IYC, and the other, Ateke Tom, then leader of the Okrika Vigilante (later Niger Delta Vigilante), to 'help' him during the 1999 and 2003 elections (Best and Kemedi 2005; Human Rights Watch 2005). Now estranged from the politicians and the military that have declared him a wanted person, Ateke has been accused of attacking police stations in Port Harcourt just before the Presidential elections in April 2007, destroying the stations and killing some officers in the process. In response, Ateke noted, 'I am a Niger Delta Freedom fighter' (Simmons 2007). Apart from these two groups, there has been a proliferation of other armed groups or 'cults' (Coventry Cathedral 2009). For now, the most potent militant group engaging in local resistance, but targeting a global audience, is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND has launched daring raids into fortified oil installations onshore and offshore and kidnapped foreign oil workers, detonated explosive devices near oil compounds, and fought pitched battles on land and at sea with Nigeria's military forces, and publicised its activities in various global media.

MEND: The Militarization of Local Resistance?

MEND first burst forth into the public consciousness in Nigeria in 2006, with far-reaching global ramifications. The group has effectively attracted international attention to the plight of the Ijaw ethnic minority group and to its resistance campaign through the taking hostage of foreign oil workers,

demonstrating the inability of Nigerian security forces to stop its attacks and sabotage of oil installations. Using the internet to send e-mails and images to the world's leading news agencies and local newspapers, taking journalists to its camps in the swamps of the Niger Delta (Junger 2007), MEND has tried to distance itself from the local political class and the ransoming of foreign hostages, and tapping into local idioms, symbols and grievances to embed itself in the people's consciousness. It has however gained most attention internationally by its threats to 'cripple the Nigerian oil exports' (IRIN 2006).

The organization has proved to be as elusive to those hunting it, as it is concrete to those supporting it in the villages and creeks of the Niger Delta and abroad. It has been profiled by the MIPT (2007) as 'an active terrorist group that uses violent means to support the rights of the ethnic Ijaw people in the Niger Delta'. The report also notes that 'led by a notoriously shadowy and secretive elite cadre, MEND's ultimate goal is to expel foreign oil companies and Nigerians not indigenous to the Delta region from Ijawland. In the short run, the group wishes to increase local control over the money made from the exploitation of the region's abundant natural resources'. While this profile dwells on labelling, rather than analyzing the circumstances within which MEND emerged and the content of its message(s), with a view to constructing the image of an imminent 'terrorist threat' to western energy interests, a more nuanced and informed view locates its emergence in 'the lethal cocktail of economic deprivation, military dictatorship and worsening environmental crisis' in the Niger Delta, and its tapping into 'the fifty year Ijaw quest for social and environmental justice in the Niger Delta' (Okonta 2007:7-11).

While it has targeted foreign oil workers, it has released all such hostages after a period, all unharmed, giving credence to the view that they are used to draw international attention to the injustice in the region, seen as an important aspect in globalising local resistance in the Niger Delta. In an interview with Brian Ross (2007), Jomo Gbomo, the spokesperson of MEND, elucidated on the objectives of the group:

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is an amalgam of all arm bearing groups in the Niger Delta fighting for the control of oil revenue by indigenes of the Niger Delta who have had relatively no benefits from the exploitation of our mineral resources by the Nigerian government and oil companies over the last fifty years.

It appears that MEND's anger is against the government and the oil, which, in tandem with the Oloibiri metaphor, are held responsible for the plunder and pollution of the Niger Delta. Although the militant group has recently

been affected by factionalism following three developments (the release of Asari Dokubo, leader of the NDPVF from prison in June 2007, the election of Jonathan Goodluck as Nigeria's Vice President in 2007, and the arrest and detention in Angola, before the extradition to Nigeria of one of MEND's leaders, Henry Okah), the core of MEND has remained steadfast to its goals and methods.

In its most recent phase, the politics of local resistance has been decisively violent. The new trend in the Niger Delta is also feeding into the global securitization of the region and the surrounding Gulf of Guinea, whereby the international community, particularly the United States, is concerned about its energy security interests and a possible 'contagion effect' of the volatile Niger Delta on its maritime commercial and strategic interests in West Africa. Apart from the billions of dollars worth of oil investments by US oil companies, and the safety of American oil workers, the entry of oil companies from China, India, Brazil, Malaysia and Korea into the region is perceived as a threat by some US policy makers. Also of relevance is the centrality of the Niger Delta to the post-9/11 US security calculations within the overall context of its global security and the US Command for Africa (AFRICOM).

Conclusion

What the foregoing shows is that oil is central to the spiralling violence in the Niger Delta which has gone beyond an ethnic minority conflict, with far reaching national and global ramifications (International Crisis Group 2006; Obi 2007b). Its centrality is reflected at different levels, and underpinned by the high stakes involved, and a deeply felt sense of grievance among Niger Delta ethnic minorities, arising from perceived injustices in the distribution of oil revenues and benefits. At certain levels, the conflict appears to be one between the ethnic minorities against the ethnic majorities-controlled federal government, but such a conclusion would be misleading and false as the reality is much more complex. It involves violent contestation around a historically constructed sense of grievance, injustice, inequality and wanton exploitation and impoverishment by the state-transnational oil alliance, to which a faction of the Niger Delta elite also belongs. The Niger Delta elite faction is ambivalent or Janus-faced: one face for the people, the other for its federal and transnational partners.

In spite of the vast earnings from oil, Afeikhena (2005:15), drawing upon a World Bank report, estimates that 'about 80 percent of Nigeria's oil and natural gas revenues accrue to one percent of the country's population. The other 99 percent of the population receive the remaining 20 percent of the oil and gas revenues, leaving Nigeria with the lowest per capita oil export earning

put at \$212 (N28, 408) per person in 2004'. The anatomy of the struggles over oil is one that pitches the one percent of the populace that has monopolised oil-dependent political and economic power, against the 99 percent, which is also torn from within by bitter struggles over the 20 percent of the oil and gas revenues. However, the nature of economic inequalities as they relate to oil cannot be understood outside the nature and logic of 'fossil capitalism' and the social contradictions that it spawns in developing countries.

Worse, most of the wealth that accrues to the one percent of the Nigerians (the elite) who have 'cornered' the 'national oil cake' ends up outside the country. As Afiekhena again points out, drawing on a UNIDO report, 'Nigeria had an estimated \$107 billion of its private wealth held abroad'. As a result, not only are most Nigerians and the Niger Delta people excluded from the benefits of the oil wealth, most of the wealth has not been invested within the country, contributing to most Nigerians living below the poverty line, and to the deepening social crisis whose effects can be seen in the cities and villages of Africa's most populous country and leading oil exporter.

Nowhere else are the contradictions in the political economy of oil in Nigeria writ as large as in the troubled Niger Delta region which accounts for the bulk of oil production and exports. The UNDP Niger Delta Human Development Report (2006) concludes that the Niger Delta has 'an appalling human development situation summed up in social instability, poor local governance, neglect of infrastructure, lack of access to fundamental services, environmental degradation and extreme economic deprivation' (2006:15-16). The volatile brew provides a fertile context for the growing insurgency.

But while the Niger Delta is the site of conflict, the actors are both local and global. OMNCs through their policies in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta have been implicated in local conflicts through their pay offs to 'pro-company' groups, elites, militias and 'chiefs'. Such pay offs have either been the object of conflicts or division within and between communities, while some of them have ended up buying arms to unleash further violence on the groups or the oil companies themselves.

The evidence coming out of the Niger Delta shows that the conflicts have complex causes: roots and branches that mutate over time in response to various factors, and forces: local, national and global, and defy simplistic explanations or 'quick fixes'. Also reducing these complex factors to statistical assumptions and representations or abstract matrixes that do not capture the nuances and specificities of the Niger Delta conflict may lead to misleading results. It is for this and other reasons that great care must be taken in adopting partial perspectives in examining the roots of conflict in the region. It is important to be wary of perspectives that tend to privilege simplistic

mono-causal or cultural explanations, over those that note the complex roots of African conflicts, including the role of global processes and transnational forces. Failure to recognise the historical specificities and dynamics of each conflict tend to feed the 'one size fits all' shopping list: peace agreements, multiparty democracy, human rights, the securitization of development, that define the solutions that international donors and Western governments promote in Africa in pursuit of the 'liberal peace' (Paris 2002), but which usually end up further down the road in results that are not liberal, developmental or peaceful.

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Des *lançados* aux expatriés :¹ « l’Ethnie² Blanche »³ entre les fleuves Sénégal et Casamance

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Résumé

La région comprise entre les fleuves Sénégal et Casamance a un long parcours historique de contact et de présence de l’homme Blanc occidental. Même si les personnages et les situations qu’ont conformé « l’Ethnie Blanche » pendant le temps ont été très variés, il existe des caractéristiques qui se répètent, des continuités associées avec l’ambiguïté du statut social, des relations entre les sexes ou les spécialisations économiques, à la frontière entre le local et le global. L’article explore cette durabilité d’une frontière culturelle, en proposant des pistes de recherche à partir de la figure des *lançados*. L’analyse montre des indices, des parallélismes réitérés entre les effets des variations dans les conditions frontalières sur le collectif « Blanc », en oscillant entre le maintien de son identité et l’intégration dans les communautés autochtones. L’auteur estime qu’une perspective de longue durée aiderait à comprendre l’articulation actuelle des contingents de coopérants et d’agents économiques qui arrivent à la région, compréhension qui pourrait être extrapolée à d’autres zones du continent.

Abstract

The region located between the Senegal and the Casamance rivers has a long history of the presence of Western white men. Although the characters and situations modeled by the ‘White Ethnic Group’ over time have been very varied, there are characteristics that are repeated, continuities associated with the ambiguity of social status, gender relations or economic specializations, on the boundary between both

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local and global levels. The paper explores the durability of a cultural boundary, suggesting avenues of research from the figure of *lançados*. The analysis shows indications, repeated parallels between the effects of variations in boundary conditions on the collective 'White', swaying between maintaining their identity and integrating into indigenous communities. The author believes that a long-term perspective would help understand the current articulation of contingents of cooperation volunteers who come to the region, an understanding that could be extrapolated to other areas on the continent.

Introduction

Depuis l'époque des grandes explorations qui a précédé la colonisation, en Occident, s'est forgé une image du « Noir » qui a été concrétisée en une littérature volumineuse. Paradoxalement, il n'existe pas trop d'études des « Blancs » (occidentaux) installés dans cette zone ni sur les relations qu'ils ont établies avec les Africains. Je propose d'analyser les caractéristiques de ce secteur minoritaire de population et les motifs qui l'ont incité à se déplacer en Afrique, les activités qu'ils ont réalisées, le type de relations qu'ils ont établies avec la population africaine et, finalement, en insistant sur la vision que les Africains créaient d'eux en forme de stéréotypes, en focalisant les premiers contacts, mais en prolongeant la réflexion jusqu'à nos jours. Je pense que ces images stéréotypées influent sur les relations actuelles qui s'établissent entre les Blancs occidentaux et les Noirs africains.

Je voudrais analyser aussi au moyen de quels processus les Blancs (occidentaux) arrivés à ce territoire ont défini leur identité en face de celle des Africains, ou dans quels cas leur identité a été construite en intégrant des éléments africains, quand l'identité différentielle se maintient et quand l'assimilation prévaut. Depuis les *lançados*, en passant pour les colonisateurs français, jusqu'aux expatriés actuels, les acteurs qui ont configuré « l'Ethnie Blanche » ont été hétérogènes dans leur provenance, leur lien avec les sociétés d'origine, leurs activités dans la région ou les motivations de leur séjour en Afrique. On peut aussi suivre des parallélismes et des similitudes qui valent la peine d'être étudiées.

Je partirai de l'hypothèse selon laquelle les premiers expatriés Blancs en Afrique noire, les *lançados* portugais qui se sont installés dans la région comprise entre les fleuves Sénégal et Casamance, ont adopté – en partie volontairement et en partie en s'adaptant aux sociétés locales – un modèle d'interaction qui caractériserait la frontière « afrooccidentale » pendant des siècles, de façon que certains modèles auraient été perpétués, plus ou moins actualisés, jusqu'aux circonstances actuelles autour des expatriés. Ce modèle

affecterait leur statut ou leurs relations personnelles, mais, peut-être surtout, je voudrais ouvrir des pistes sur son impact sur la capacité de médiateur entre les différentes cultures et les différents mondes de cette « Ethnie Blanche », explorer des nouvelles pistes pour comprendre et évaluer les résultats de la traite négrière, l'héritage colonial, la coopération et la mondialisation.

Premiers contacts et période précoloniale

Par sa position géostratégique, la Sénégambie a été la première région de l'Afrique noire qui est entrée en contact avec le commerce atlantique portugais. Les raisons de la première implantation des Européens dans la région étaient économiques et commerciales. On cherchait à rentabiliser la longue route vers l'Amérique, l'objectif principal de l'aventure atlantique, qui essayait de contourner les concurrents musulmans qui dominaient les connexions connues avec l'Extrême-Orient, soit par la Route de la Soie soit par le Golfe Persique. Il s'agissait, en fait, de stabiliser le drainage de bénéfices additionnels possibles que pouvait rapporter le cabotage africain, une fois – déjà à la fin du XVe siècle – s'est écarté par ordre royal le système prédateur des *entradas*, du fait de son risque et son manque de rentabilité. Les produits recherchés allaient de l'or, si apprécié et entouré de légendes, aux esclaves – qui deviendront la marchandise la plus importante –, en passant par d'autres matières premières exotiques comme les cuirs, l'ivoire ou certaines espèces moins appréciées que les asiatiques. L'ouverture de cette frontière atlantique perturberait et réordonnerait les circuits commerciaux locaux, en créant une ligne d'évacuation internationale de la production locale qui concurrencerait les routes séculières transsahariennes et leurs comptoirs caravaniers. L'implantation des nouveaux marchés où réaliser le correspondant *resgate*,¹ commandait l'installation de facteurs commerciaux ou médiateurs qui accéléraient l'échange, en coopérant avec les autorités africaines. Ainsi donc, depuis le début, les expatriés européens en Afrique seraient caractérisés pour être des connecteurs avec la périphérie du système économique mondial, un rôle qui leur attribue un statut social particulier dans la marginalité.

Lançandose com os negros...

Lançados (*lançados em terra*), *brancos da terra*, *filhus da terra* ou *tangomãos*² dans la Sénégambie et *pombeiros* en Afrique équatoriale, furent les termes qu'on utilisait pour désigner ces agents commerciaux européens, en général des hommes, qui depuis les premiers contacts se sont introduits à l'intérieur du continent africain: « dos christãos que se lançarem em Guiné com os negros ».³ Ils travaillaient comme commerçants et ils approvisionnaient les bateaux étrangers qui commençaient à fréquenter l'Afrique de l'Ouest vers

la moitié du XVI^e siècle. Tous ont été relativement africanisés et ils feraient partie du groupe transculturel, ils vivaient sans difficultés entre deux mondes : l'un animiste et/ou musulman et l'autre chrétien ou juif. Malgré le fait qu'ils n'étaient pas très nombreux, ils constituèrent une population originale.

Ces *lançados* se sont installés dans la Petite-Côte, une région située à environ 70 km au sud de l'actuelle ville de Dakar,⁴ entre les villes de Rufisque (du *Río Fresco* portugais), Cap-Gaspard,⁵ Portudal (aussi du portugais *Porto Dale*) et Joal (royaumes du Kajoor, du Bawol et du Siin respectivement) ; fait qui a doté la façade atlantique de la région d'une importance ignorée jusqu'alors.

Selon les sources, il existait deux catégories de *lançados*. D'une part, ceux qui l'étaient volontairement, fuyant ainsi des normes rigides de la Couronne, bien qu'avec l'idée de revenir au Portugal ou au Cap-Vert après avoir obtenu la fortune désirée. Selon les informations de Coelho, trois ans étaient suffisants pour accumuler un grand capital (Coelho 1953:11). Ils vivaient en petits groupes à l'intérieur d'une communauté d'accueil dans laquelle ils ne se confondaient pas complètement, malgré le fait que, avec le temps, les différences entre eux et la population africaine ont été atténuées. Plusieurs d'entre eux se mariaient avec des femmes africaines, se tatouaient le corps, participaient aux célébrations et abandonnaient peu à peu leurs pratiques occidentales, comme la religion, en même temps qu'ils apprenaient les langues africaines. Ils ont été fréquemment poursuivis par la Couronne portugaise, accusés d'insurrection et d'infidélité religieuse, mais leur qualité d'intermédiaires entre les Africains et les Européens était indispensable pour la bonne articulation de la traite commerciale et des esclaves. Ils ont été les premiers expatriés occidentaux résidant en Afrique noire.

D'autre part, il y avait ceux qui ne l'avaient pas choisi : ou tout simplement ils avaient été abandonnés par le chef d'une expédition, ou ils avaient subi un naufrage. Ils vivaient totalement isolés des autres Européens et ont été pleinement intégrés dans le territoire et dans le groupe d'Africains qui les avait accueillis, essentiellement par question de survie.⁶

L'origine des *lançados*, en particulier au début, était dans sa majorité portugaise métropolitaine ou cap-verdienne, de sorte que, même si certains pouvaient provenir d'autres nationalités européennes, ils étaient assimilés aux Portugais. Il convient de noter que nombre d'entre eux étaient juifs car, depuis l'Inquisition d'Evora en 1536, ils n'avaient pas d'autre choix que la conversion ou l'expulsion.⁷

Socialement, la grande majorité d'entre eux appartenait à une classe modeste, et bon nombre des expulsés étaient des criminels qui ont été graciés

en échange des peines pour effectuer ce type de voyages ou d'activités risqués. Pour cette raison, et parce qu'ils n'avaient rien à perdre, ils ont été également nombreux, ceux qui ont vu dans la fuite vers le continent africain la seule chance de modifier leur statut social. Cependant, il existe des documents qui nous informent sur des hommes qui appartenaient à un statut social plus élevé. En tout cas, et quelles que soient leurs origines, la volonté d'enrichissement et la rapide ascension sociale seront des éléments constants dans « l'Ethnie Blanche » ; la conviction que cette ascension seulement pourrait être atteinte par des moyens plus ou moins « hétérodoxes » – tolérés seulement dans l'ambiguïté de la frontière, dans les marges, qui permettent de définir leur réalité vitale comme « aventure ». ⁸

Depuis le XVI^e siècle, les sources et les documents qui nous parlent de ces *lançados* sont abondants, car tous les voyageurs, explorateurs, commerçants et missionnaires qui sont passés par cette région au cours des XVI^e, XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles ont été étonnés, et souvent indignés par leur présence en Afrique. Les premières sources écrites qui nous parlent d'eux sont des lettres de missionnaires – portugais, français ou espagnols, qu'ils soient jésuites ou capucins –, ainsi que des compilations et des chroniques de voyages. Tous ces récits qui, dans certains cas s'étendent au XIX^e siècle et même au-delà, composent des informations volumineuses qui nous apportent une première approximation de leur réalité, mais toujours dans une optique très officielle et biaisée par la divergence des intérêts parmi les témoins qui ont raconté et les *lançados* « racontés ».

Il existe un autre registre de la mémoire, l'oral, qui nous apporte aussi des informations importantes. Ainsi, à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, l'ingénieur Golberry (1802) a repris une tradition orale de l'intérieur du Bambuk datant du XV^e siècle :

La seconde circonstance célèbre chez les Bamboukains c'est l'invasion des Portugais dans leur pays: elle date, suivant leur tradition, du commencement du neuvième siècle de l'Hégire. Ils disent que les Portugais se rendirent maîtres de tout le pays de Bambouk et des mines d'or; qu'ils massacrèrent plusieurs de leurs princes et un grand nombre d'habitants (...) Ces événements sont souvent racontés par les Manding du Bambouk (...) assurent qu'ils ont conservé la plus grande haine pour les Portugais (...) Cette terreur est sans doute la source de leur éloignement pour tous les blancs, quelle que soit la nation dont ils puissent être (Boulègue 1987:47).

Dans toutes ces œuvres, les *lançados* sont décrits comme des hommes et des femmes polygames, ils sont comparés aux pirates, par leur comportement individuel, en travaillant pour leur propre compte et non dans celui de la Couronne. C'est pourquoi ils étaient considérés comme des hors-la-loi et

des infidèles (ce qui a un fondement historique puisque plusieurs d'entre eux étaient des juifs). Cependant, ils étaient bien reçus par les Africains – du moment qu'ils s'adaptèrent suffisamment aux conventions sociales et culturelles des collectifs locaux –, et ils ont eu un rôle décisif dans l'établissement des relations commerciales entre Européens et Africains. Cette vision négative des expatriés depuis les sociétés d'origine, malgré leur rôle nécessaire, est profondément associée à leur marginalité et à la constitution d'un autre stéréotype très répété (plus accentué quand l'observateur est occidental, et encore plus s'il est d'une autre nationalité), en particulier lorsque son activité est économique ; seuls les missionnaires et, plus récemment, les coopérants ont échappé à cette mauvaise réputation.

L'élément identitaire

Ces *lançados* et leurs descendants fondaient leur identité sur la religion, la langue et une spécialisation économique axée sur la médiation dans le commerce extérieur. La religion, chrétienne ou juive, marquait une différence importante en ce qui concerne l'environnement social autochtone qui est « animiste » – idée très expressive malgré la connotation négative qu'elle a acquise – ou musulman. Et la différence existait, même si les documents nous disent que, dans leur vie quotidienne, ils ne disposaient pas de religieux locaux, pratiquaient la polygamie et exprimaient une tendance à l'alcoolisme. Ils voulaient être connus sous le nom de « Blancs » et/ou de « chrétiens », même si avec le temps leur peau était noire; voulaient être connus comme « les Portugais » pour se différencier des « Mandingues », terme qu'on utilisait pour appeler d'une manière générale tous les groupes ethniques de la région. Malgré les critiques qu'ils ont reçues de l'Église, ils ont fini par être acceptés par celle-là, car leur présence a permis de concevoir une conversion des Africains au Christianisme: contrairement au *Maure*, le Noir était « récupérable ».

En ce qui concerne la langue, au cours du XVII^e siècle, est apparu le *crioulo* ou créole,¹³ un portugais qui se développera rapidement en raison de l'influence phonétique – et aussi lexicologique – des langues locales, jusqu'à être incompréhensible pour l'environnement lusophone. Le créole, avec son dynamisme et sa variabilité, deviendra la propre langue, « vernaculaire » des *lançados* et de leurs descendants, tout en agissant comme *lingua franca* dans le commerce des Africains de la côte sénégalaise et de la Haute Guinée.

Finalement, la spécialisation dans le rôle de médiateurs du commerce extérieur, même lorsqu'ils interviennent dans les circuits locaux, leur a permis de prospérer économiquement, tout au long du XVIII^e siècle, comme acteurs presque indispensables de la frontière afro-européenne. Les États de la région, très stables et hiérarchisés, leur ont donné un rôle dans le commerce parce

que, sur la côte et à la différence de l'intérieur, il n'y avait pas des spécialistes commerciaux. L'exception a été Cantor (Bambuk) et la région du fleuve Gambie, où il y avait des groupes tels que les commerçants djula de l'intérieur – d'origine mandingue –, les Soninké ou les Jaxanké. Quoi qu'il en soit, les *lançados* se sont bientôt articulés avec les commerçants autochtones. Le panorama politique et commercial de la région a fait que le nouveau commerce atlantique ne se dotait pas d'un monopole capable d'assurer les échanges régionaux sur une grande échelle, mais d'un réseau complexe de marchands et de pouvoirs locaux autonomes, dans lesquels les intérêts des *lançados* ont été maintenus. Les produits que ces *lançados* offraient aux Européens qui fréquentaient la côte étaient l'or, le cuir et le fer.

Relations avec les autorités locales

Les *lançados* entretenaient avec les Africains une relation d'ambivalence, différente de celle qui les liait aux sociétés-mères européennes. Et cela est un autre trait qui a été perpétué, au-delà du passage du temps et du changement des protagonistes. Les autorités africaines se sont intéressées à la traite promue par les Portugais sur la côte, mais rapidement ont détecté et rejeté les effets d'un hypothétique monopole commercial portugais (sur le contrôle des prix ou sur la variété dans la fourniture des biens, par exemple). Ces questions affectaient naturellement les *lançados*, mais dans l'ensemble, il y avait plus de possibilités d'ouverture que de fermeture. Aussi, sait-on par Almada que le roi du Siin autorisait la présence des Portugais à Joal, et protégeait les *tangomãos*.

Les relations pratiques que les *lançados* avaient avec les autorités locales ont été transmises par une série de douanes, des taxes ou des dons, en fonction de la générosité ou l'exigence de ces pouvoirs. Toutefois, il est difficile d'établir la nature de ces relations, c'est-à-dire le statut attribué aux *lançados*, toujours caractérisé par une ambiguïté insurmontable – ce que les expatriés du XXI^e siècle rencontrent encore –. Nous savons par Jobson que, lorsque ces *tangomãos* décédaient, le roi local héritait leurs biens, ce qui laisse à penser que leur position sociale dans le royaume était servile, parce que dans les communautés sénégalaises les esclaves avaient une certaine liberté et mobilité, pouvaient, en même temps, posséder d'autres esclaves et, quand ils mouraient, leurs biens revenaient aussi à leurs propriétaires. Dans le cadre de cette approche, l'apparente contradiction entre position servile et pouvoir économique n'en serait pas une, au sein des sociétés sénégalaises. L'argument des partisans de la « théorie servile » est que, malgré le fait que la société d'accueil était patrilinéaire, la plupart des descendants des *lançados* étaient considérés comme des enfants des femmes esclaves du roi, un fait qui pouvait être décisif dans leur « place sociale ». Dans les royaumes wolof

qui dominaient la région, le pouvoir les considérait comme esclaves de la famille royale (*jaami-buur*), en appliquant la pratique traditionnelle d'intégration des étrangers qui souhaitaient s'installer pour une longue période de temps dans le royaume (Boulègue 1989:63). Les *jaami-buur* constituaient la base de l'autorité de l'État en nourrissant sa force militaire et ses cadres administratifs qui, aux yeux de la masse rurale, étaient confondus jusqu'à une certaine mesure avec l'aristocratie politique.

Cependant, il existe d'autres explications possibles qu'il faudrait sonder et qui se rattachent à l'insuffisance de compréhension de beaucoup de catégories et de structures indigènes que l'on a souvent traduit par des expressions comme « esclave » ou « esclave royal », chargées de connotations précises, juridiques même. La confiscation de l'héritage par le roi montre simplement que les *lançados* n'avaient pas d'ancêtres dans cette terre – ils ne pouvaient pas fonder des lignées – ; ce qui les rapproche de ce que nous pourrions appeler esclaves.

Le mépris ou la dévalorisation de l'étranger – plus ou moins occulte –, est une constante du nationalisme et du sentiment ethnique que l'on retrouve même dans les actuelles régions plus pauvres : ce qui ne signifie pas qu'un étranger et un esclave ont le même statut. Il faut approfondir d'autres aspects des relations pour en savoir plus sur celles-ci et pour éviter le recours à taxonomies faciles : connaître ce qui arrivait à leurs descendants, évaluer la diversité des liens des *lançados* et Africains. Par exemple : certains d'entre eux se sont mariés avec des filles de roi, accédant, de cette façon, à une position politique importante dans les royaumes hiérarchisés wolof et rendant plus difficile leur assimilation aux esclaves royaux. Un autre exemple qui mérite plus d'attention et qui ne réfute pas la « théorie servile » : dans les sociétés moins centralisées de la Gambie et de la Casamance, certains *lançados* se sont convertis en vrais seigneurs locaux.¹⁴

Ce qui semble évident c'est que, pour les rois locaux, il était plus pratique de les laisser s'enrichir et hériter de leurs biens quand ils mouraient que de se séparer d'eux. Cette confiscation de biens n'a pas empêché que de nouveaux *lançados* continuaient à arriver sur le territoire durant les XVIe et XVIIe siècles et ils ont maintenu leur rôle médiateur.

Décadence

Depuis le milieu du XVIIe siècle et, surtout, durant le XVIIIe siècle, avec l'intérêt croissant de l'Europe au commerce négrier et au commerce triangulaire, les *lançados* et la population autochtone ont poursuivi leur fusion progressive dans les sociétés d'accueil. Cette situation répondait à deux causes étroitement liées : premièrement, on a noté une baisse des déplacements des Portugais et des Capverdiens dans la zone, à cause du collapsus de

l'entreprise d'outre-mer portugaise ; deuxièmement, la multiplication des liens familiaux a donné lieu à l'africanisation de la communauté moins nombreuse, les *lançados*, avec comme résultat la perte progressive de leur identité. En plus, cela induit une autre constante chez les expatriés en général : la nécessité d'un apport extérieur plus ou moins régulier pour marquer son identité et accomplir son rôle de médiateur.

Vers la même époque, les nouvelles puissances maritimes européennes – Angleterre, Hollande, France – établirent des relations plus ou moins positives avec ces *lançados* et leurs descendants, mais on ne peut nier que, comme durant la période précédente, une partie du succès de ces puissances dans la région s'explique par la collaboration des rois locaux et la médiation des *lançados*. Comme nous l'avions dit plus haut, certains de ces rois se méfiaient du monopole portugais, quand ils ne s'y opposaient pas ; ce qui, tout au moins au début, a facilité le déplacement des Portugais devenus par la force des choses des partenaires forcés. Les *lançados*, qui en fin de compte dépendaient de ces pouvoirs locaux, ont dû s'adapter et nouer d'autres liens que la nationalité : l'exemple des partenariats entre Luso-africains juifs et Hollandais de la même confession illustre bien cette idée. En tous cas, étant donné que les *lançados* composaient la majorité des expatriés, l'identité culturelle européenne occidentale les a maintenus durant un certain temps comme des guides, des ambassadeurs, des commissionnaires des marins et des trafiquants européens, quelle que fût leur origine. Et encore, avec le temps, les agents commerciaux d'autres origines ont proliféré et se sont mieux adaptés au statut liminaire requis par les trafiquants européens ; ce qui scellera le destin des *lançados*.

On retrouve le dernier réduit des *lançados* de la Petite-Côte et leurs descendants dans la localité de Joal qui dépendait du royaume du Siin. Bien qu'ils aient été sous influence de la France, les descendants de ces *lançados* se sont obstinés à rester à Joal jusqu'au milieu du XIXe siècle. À cette époque, des missionnaires de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit ont comptabilisé 250 Portugais chrétiens pratiquant, selon ceux-ci, un catholicisme très altéré, la polygamie et qui sont en grand partie alcoolisés (Boulègue 1987:83 et 84).

Sur le plan linguistique, le créole a été abandonné en faveur du sereer et du wolof, ce qui signifie que la relation avec les Portugais métropolitains était devenue faible et que l'usage d'une langue européenne commune n'était plus nécessaire. C'est un fait très important à tenir compte, parce que la langue est un élément fondamental dans la construction de l'identité. Même ainsi, les Luso-africains affirmaient encore leur particularisme par rapport à la population sereer, par le biais de la religion, de sorte qu'ils étaient hostiles à l'évangélisation chrétienne de la population africaine.¹⁵ Ils ont exigé, en tant

que descendants des premiers Portugais, qu'on les appelât « les Blancs de Joal » ou « les chrétiens de Joal ». Ils ressentait une grande admiration pour les métis franco-africains de Gorée et un désir d'imiter les Européens pour marquer la différence avec les Sereer.

Une illustration de ce processus de retrait est perçue dans le cas de Rufisque et Portudal. Le déclencheur en serait la baisse des prix du cuir qui a été imposée peu à peu par la Compagnie commerciale française après la prise de l'île de Gorée en 1677. Autrement dit, les *lançados*, leurs descendants et les autorités locales du Kajoor et du Bawol, étaient contre la Compagnie de Guinée française, et celle-ci, une fois qu'elle a consolidé son pouvoir, a poussé les *lançados* à quitter Rufisque et Portudal. Par ailleurs, la France était plus intéressée à la traite d'esclaves et au commerce de la gomme arabique, qui se concentraient au fleuve Sénégal.

Plus au sud, dans l'espace du fleuve Gambie et dans la Casamance, plus loin des grands royaumes et dans un contexte culturel et géostratégique différent, la présence luso-africaine a été plus longue et sa fusion beaucoup plus lente. La partie inférieure du fleuve Gambie a été contrôlée par les Afro-portugais descendants des *lançados*, jusqu'à 1780. Malgré le fait qu'en 1661 l'Angleterre s'était installée à l'île Saint-James, la Royal African Company n'avait pas le monopole de tout le bord de la mer ; donc la France maintenait l'enclave d'Albréda et la présence des Luso-africains était encore forte. Dans cette région gambienne, il faut aussi parler des *Akus*, un groupe ethnique créole métissé issu d'unions entre Européens et anciens esclaves libérés venus de Bathurst (Banjul) en provenance de Freetown pendant la fin du XVIIIe et la première moitié du XIXe siècle. Ils parlaient l'*aki*, un créole de l'anglais, dialecte du krio, et ils se sont dédiés au commerce. Aujourd'hui encore, même s'ils sont peu nombreux, ils restent influents dans le monde des affaires et des professions libérales.

Au cours du XVIIIe siècle, ces aventuriers occupaient encore plusieurs villes du fleuve, telles que Sika et Tankula, qui étaient le siège d'un important commerce : celui des esclaves. À l'intérieur, les *lançados* se trouvaient jusqu'à Cantor, point le plus éloigné de la côte. Ici, comme dans la Petite-Côte, l'intérêt de l'or et des esclaves a augmenté, contrairement aux cuirs et aux tissus. Cependant, la cire, l'ivoire et le sel du Saalum ont gardé leur place tout au long du XVIIIe siècle. En tout cas, les conditions des échanges dans la Gambie ont permis de maintenir plus longtemps ces intermédiaires luso-africains. Et quelque chose de semblable s'est produite dans la basse Casamance: aujourd'hui, à Ziguinchor subsiste une communauté diluée qui parle toujours le créole.

Période coloniale

La colonisation française du fleuve Sénégal a été précoce (milieu du XIX^e siècle) et précédée par une installation progressive des Français sur la côte. En fait, la première enclave fondée par les Européens (des marins de la Normandie) en Afrique de l'Ouest a été la ville de Saint-Louis, en 1659, après le déclin portugais. Capitale de l'Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF) et de la colonie jusqu'en 1902, Saint-Louis, est devenue le principal centre colonial, avec une forte concentration d'Européens. Plus tôt, au cours du XVII^e siècle, ces derniers se sont disputés l'île de Gorée à cause de sa position géostratégique, même si la population européenne résidente a été réduite à environ 50 personnes, car les taux de mortalité de l'île étaient très élevés ; ce qui a contribué à créer un style de vie marqué par l'indolence, la crainte, l'intimidation, la violence et le manque d'intérêt dans un avenir sans perspectives. Dans ces circonstances, les femmes étaient très populaires et recherchées. Les Hollandais et les Anglais étaient également intéressés par la région depuis les premiers contacts, occupant plusieurs fois Gorée et Saint-Louis, jusqu'à ce que le Traité de Paris de 1815 accorde la région côtière à la France – à l'exception des établissements gambiens. Cette date marque pour l'île de Gorée, du fait de la nomination d'un Gouverneur représentant directement l'administration royale française.

Au cours des années qui ont précédé la colonisation, le personnel européen qui travaillait dans les comptoirs commerciaux, l'armée et le service domestique ont été recrutés parmi les couches les plus marginales des villes de Marseille, de Bordeaux et de Dieppe. Souvent, les responsables des Compagnies ont été accusés de détournement de fonds, d'indiscipline, d'alcoolisme et de non-orthodoxie religieuse. Les motifs qui poussaient ces personnes à aller en Afrique ont été essentiellement les mêmes que pour les *lançados*, avec qui elles partageaient leur marginalité et l'enrichissement rapide, souvent grâce aux possibilités qui leur étaient ouvertes en Afrique de participer au trafic illicite. Dans d'autres cas, comme dans le cas des Luso-africains, une minorité avait une catégorie sociale plus « haute » : les marins professionnels, les bourgeois et les aristocrates qui se sont considérablement enrichis par la participation à la vente de la gomme arabique et des esclaves. Le Sénégal colonial du XVIII^e siècle était une société complexe et pleine de contradictions : société raffinée et esclavagiste, inégalitaire et métisse, influencée par la culture française et mêlée à des mœurs africaines et anglaises.

Par ailleurs, les proto-colons français se sont unis aux femmes africaines, créant les mêmes métissages que les *lançados*. Toutefois, dans un contexte plus moderne, et à cause de la puissance plus présente de l'État et de la société gauloise, ainsi que d'un index des retours à la métropole plus élevé,

les liaisons se sont beaucoup plus formalisées, en générant un nouveau type de contrat reconnu par l'administration française pendant un certain temps ; ce qui contraste avec la qualification « d'hors-la-loi » des *lançados*. C'était le mariage à la mode du pays, établie sur l'île de Gorée et à Saint-Louis, comme un moyen de légaliser les liaisons entre les hommes européens et les *sighnars*¹⁶ africaines, surtout actives dans le commerce.¹⁷ Avant tout, c'était l'union entre deux familles. Il s'agissait, en fait, de mariages à caractéristiques économiques et politiques, reconnus par le roi de France et l'église catholique, libres et limités dans le temps ; il cessait d'être valable à partir du moment où l'homme rentrait en Europe aux côtés de son épouse qui appartient à la même classe sociale que lui. Il s'agissait là donc d'une polygamie permise qui répondait à des intérêts économiques : d'une part, les Occidentaux obtenaient des bons contacts sur le terrain et une alliance avec les structures de pouvoir qui ont fourni leur activité principale, la contrebande de l'or, de la gomme arabique et des esclaves, et d'autre part, les femmes africaines et leurs lignées stabilisaient leurs partenaires extérieurs et trouvaient la manière de respecter certaines formes qu'exigeait l'honorabilité morale à laquelle les dames du Sénégal aspiraient. Les formalités matrimoniales étaient relativement simplifiées pour l'Européen, mais pas pour les femmes africaines puisque cette institution était pour elles tout à fait légitime. Ce type de mariages a eu cours jusqu'en 1830, date de son interdiction par le Code civil français, pratiquement à la veille de l'attaque coloniale. À partir de ce moment, les fils issus de ces unions, qui parfois portaient le nom du père, héritaient de leur fortune et qui se fixaient au territoire en créant des grandes familles, ont été considérés illégitimes.

Il faut tenir compte que l'extrême rareté des femmes européennes a marqué autant l'époque des *lançados* que des premiers français en Afrique. Les pionniers expatriés étaient très peu nombreux (quelques dizaines), car le Sénégal était dépourvu, alors, d'importance stratégique, ne recevait presque rien de la métropole et la plupart des Blancs mouraient pendant leur première année de séjour, à cause du climat et de maladies tropicales diverses auxquelles ils n'étaient pas habitués comme le paludisme, la dysenterie, les « vers de Guinée » ou la fièvre. Ainsi, au début du XVIIIe siècle, un tiers de la population Blanche du Sénégal mourait, surtout pendant la saison des pluies, et ceux qui réussissaient à survivre devenaient très faibles physiquement et psychologiquement. Cette insalubrité et la crainte de la férocité des « cannibales » – qui a pris la dimension de mythe en Europe – ont fait partie des raisons majeures pour interdire aux employés des sociétés commerciales d'amener leurs familles sur le territoire africain. Cette interdiction a incité dès le début les relations entre les hommes européens et les femmes africaines,

qui sont devenues, au fil du temps, plus stables et plus durables au point de créer un modèle particulier de mariage entre les deux communautés. Le botaniste français Michel Adanson raconte dans son ouvrage : « Les Français établis sur cette île [Saint-Louis] pour le commerce n'ayant pas la permission de se marier et d'i amener des femmes de France, i ont attiré des négresses qu'ils i ont domicilié avec les mêmes avantages qu'eussent pu exiger des Européennes. On pense bien que dans un pays très chaud les hommes ne sont pas insensibles, mais encore les Français qui ont toujours eu des égards pour un sexe aussi dangereux qu'aimable, et il faut dire qu'il i a au Sénégal des négresses qui, malgré leur couleur noire méritent d'être aimées » (Sankalé 2007:42 et 43). Pour ces raisons, la seule forme d'union qui existait avant le début de la colonisation a été celle de l'homme européen avec la femme africaine.

Colonisation

L'intégration définitive du Sénégal à la France est intervenue entre les années 1848-54 avec la conquête de la vallée du fleuve Sénégal qui avançait par une série d'opérations militaires sur le fleuve et les établissements côtiers. Sa présence a été consolidée avec la construction des forts jusqu'à la ville de Podor, après la défaite des Tukuleur.¹⁸

Tout au long du XIXe siècle, il y avait une rivalité constante entre les civils et les militaires qui a atteint son point culminant en 1857, quand Dakar a été occupée pour son excellent port maritime et sa proximité avec la ville de Rufisque qui avait déjà une longue tradition de contact avec les européens. Malgré la résistance du général Faidherbe et de l'élite européenne de Saint-Louis à la création de ce nouveau centre, Dakar est devenue la nouvelle base administrative de l'AOF, à partir de 1902. À ce titre, elle devient le cœur de la société coloniale française sur le continent et la capitale la plus moderne de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. Son port, son industrie naissante, le commerce de l'arachide et son climat de côte exceptionnel, ont attiré rapidement et en grand nombre les Blancs dont la présence a affecté les politiques coloniales de la métropole et les relations entre colonisateurs et colonisés.

Cette nouvelle enclave française sous le tropique a été le terrain d'expérimentation de la politique française d'assimilation en Afrique, « ancêtre » de la Francophonie.¹⁹ Pour ce faire, les travaux publics nécessaires pour répondre aux besoins des Européens ont été entrepris. Toutefois, il y avait une question paradoxale dans l'esprit de certains colonisateurs qui ont travaillé dans l'administration de l'AOF : à priori, ils étaient considérés comme des « colonisateurs par vocation », donc porteurs de la civilisation française et chargés du renforcement du système colonial, réel et symbolique, mais en vérité beaucoup d'entre eux avaient de fortes contradictions avec la politique

française (Cruise O'Brien 1975:114). Ceci montre donc une nouvelle forme de marginalité que la colonisation n'a pas pu supprimer.

L'année 1900 marquera la fin de l'expansion coloniale et verra l'arrivée d'une nouvelle vague d'Européens qui se sont installés dans la colonie pour plusieurs raisons. D'abord, le reste du monde désirait implanter des Compagnies commerciales pour finir avec l'hégémonie de Bordeaux. Ensuite, les nouveaux types d'investissement ont obligé à réorganiser les structures et les intérêts. Enfin, la combinaison de la prospérité de la colonie, de la restructuration de la traite à l'intérieur et de la dépression économique, a obligé beaucoup d'investisseurs à rentrer en France, mais elle a produit l'émergence de nouveaux commerçants indépendants qui provenaient de la classe moyenne et prolétaire de Marseille, Bordeaux et Ariège ; avec quelques artisans, ils ont émigré à la colonie et sont entrés en concurrence directe avec les Libanais. Le retard industriel du sud de la France a été l'une des principales raisons qui les ont poussés à aller aux colonies. En 1900, la population européenne résidante à Dakar était estimée à près de 2 500 personnes (militaires et civils), et la plupart d'entre eux travaillaient dans l'administration de l'AOF ou au service de l'élite coloniale (Cruise O'Brien 1972:54 et 55). La France ne s'est jamais trop appuyée sur les missionnaires, étant donné la laïcité de l'État français et la forte islamisation de cette partie de la colonie, qui rendait difficile la conversion au Christianisme; d'où la concentration des missionnaires dans la Casamance.

Parmi les nouveaux arrivés, figuraient pour la première fois les femmes européennes ; ce qui a modifié la relation des expatriés hommes avec la population locale, tout comme sa nouvelle position de force politique et sa croissance numérique (même s'ils étaient encore une petite minorité). Ce n'est pas par hasard que c'est à ce moment-là qu'a commencé la ségrégation raciale dans la ville de Dakar, sous la forme de regroupements endogames non institutionnalisés par l'État, contrairement à l'*apartheid*. Les *lançados* ont vécu aussi regroupés, mais leurs mariages forcés avec les femmes locales perméabilisaient leurs communautés. La minorité Blanche française s'est concentrée dans les quartiers de Kermel, du Plateau, de Bel Air et de Hann, alors que la majorité des Africains étaient dans celui de la Médina. Vers 1926, il y avait au Sénégal près de 1 500 femmes européennes qui passeront à environ 2 000 en 1955. Il semble que la majorité d'entre elles vivaient l'expérience négativement, à cause de leur inactivité (qui portait fréquemment à la dépression), hormis le travail social, l'assistance médicale aux enfants africains et l'étude de la faune et de la flore (Cruise O'Brien 1972:57 et 85).

La fin de la Première Guerre mondiale – et de la période que le gouvernement français avait nommée par euphémisme « de pacification » –

a ouvert le bref âge d'or colonial et a marqué la supériorité du modèle familial européen : les relations sexuelles entre les Européens et les femmes africaines (celles des Africains avec des femmes européennes étaient difficiles à concevoir) – sont restées enfermées dans le domaine hypocrite clandestin (mais connu de tous), à l'adultère plus ou moins accepté. Ce fait a supposé qu'on commençait à voir des enfants blancs, un secteur de la population, avec celui-ci des vieillards, qui n'existait pas jusqu'alors, puisqu'il y avait seulement des hommes à l'âge de production active. Avec l'objectif d'élever ces enfants, se sont créés des écoles²⁰ privées basées sur le système éducatif français ; ce qui signifiait la rupture avec les écoles coraniques traditionnelles. Dans les nouvelles écoles, le français était la langue avec laquelle on apprenait l'histoire de *nos ancêtres les Gaulois*.

La ségrégation était une norme dans le nouveau style de vie coloniale – et pas seulement dans la distribution des domiciles. La division répondait à différents modes de vie, de professions et de loisir, et le peu de relations qu'entretenaient les Blancs avec les Africains sont restées limitées au travail ou à la vie politique. Cependant, les Européens qui s'occupaient de la politique dans la colonie étaient une minorité et le faisaient ou bien parce que dans la métropole ils s'occupaient déjà de la même activité, ou bien en improvisant ces activités au niveau local.

La vitrine la plus stéréotypée du nouvel idéal était sans doute la vie sociale de l'élite Blanche composée des militaires, des administrateurs et des commerçants européens de Saint-Louis et de Dakar. Cette époque fut caractérisée par des activités comme les fêtes et les danses au Palais du Gouverneur, les concerts, le théâtre, l'opéra, les clubs et l'heure de l'apéritif, entre autres. « En fin de journée et pendant le weekend, ils se rencontrent au cercle européen, un club privé où aucun Noir n'a accès si ce n'est pas pour y servir les maîtres européens » (schipper-de Leeuw 1973:27).

La fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale a provoqué des changements décisifs, une fin brusque de l'âge d'or mentionné plus haut et l'annonce de l'imminence de la fin de la colonie. Entre les années 1940 et 1942, Dakar et l'Administration de l'AOF avaient été contrôlées par Vichy et l'isolement que les colonisateurs ont senti de la part de la métropole durant la guerre a eu des effets sur eux. Peu à peu, ils se sont déliés des affaires politiques qui succédaient en France et on est passé d'un modèle de Blanc dédié basiquement à l'administration et aux tâches militaires à un autre, dédié celui-là au secteur privé. L'idée de la « course coloniale » commençait à disparaître.

Par ailleurs, et malgré le fait que la colonie agonisait, les possibilités peu abondantes d'emploi dans la métropole ont accentué l'idée d'une « terre promise » sous les tropiques et encore une fois, d'une possible ascension

sociale puisque la possession d'un simple diplôme scolaire était suffisante pour obtenir un bon salaire, surtout que la mobilité professionnelle et de classe semblait beaucoup plus faisable ici qu'en Europe (en 1955, 55 pour cent des Européens résidents possédaient seulement le diplôme scolaire). Un ouvrier en France pouvait se convertir en patron aux colonies et le fait d'être placé pour la première fois dans une position d'autorité a fait que plusieurs d'entre eux développaient une « mentalité petite bourgeoise », en embauchant *boys* ou *fatous* comme service domestique: « Les européens qui en Europe appartiennent à une classe moyenne constituent ici [au Sénégal] un groupe privilégié, s'ils sont dans l'administration ou dans le secteur privé ».²¹ Ce différentiel situationnel de prestige et de pouvoir social entre la vie d'expatrié et celle de la métropole est une autre des constantes – toujours raffinée et actualisée, pas toujours également explicite – de l'attraction de l'Afrique qui dure depuis les *lançados* jusqu'aux actuels coopérants.

Le « nouveau type » de Blanc qui s'est déplacé à la colonie en se basant sur ces idées a été appelé *petit blanc*, un Européen de bas statut social, employé et marginal, ce qui collait avec la « tradition » des expatriés dans la zone. Ce colonisateur tardif s'est accroché à l'ancien stéréotype selon lequel les Africains étaient des êtres inférieurs qui devaient être assujettis et dirigés, considérant que le statut social était basé sur des questions raciales. Ils en sont arrivés même à croire qu'ils étaient des victimes d'un racisme anti-blanc discriminatoire et que la métropole ne s'occupait pas suffisamment d'eux. Cette vision obéissait à son fragile statut social, c'est la raison pour laquelle ils se devaient de gagner l'approbation des Européens riches qui vivaient depuis longtemps dans la colonie, les *grands blancs*. Curieusement, les *petits blancs* allaient marquer la phase suivante postcoloniale, incarnée par le coopérant, autant ou plus que les *grands blancs*.

Pour les vieux Sénégalais qui ont vécu la fin du colonialisme, les *grands blancs*, même s'ils étaient plus racistes et moins intégrés, connaissaient mieux le territoire, les grandes villes et la brousse. D'ailleurs, plusieurs d'entre eux parlaient la langue wolof, fruit de l'intérêt exotique de l'*Autre*. En revanche, pendant les années qui ont précédé l'indépendance et avec l'arrivée du « personnel technique », le panorama a totalement changé. La nouvelle population Blanche, après leurs séjours de plus en plus brefs en Afrique, restait pratiquement tout le temps dans les zones urbaines et, peu à peu, elle a cessé de s'intéresser aux langues locales. À Dakar, deux nouveaux quartiers de population Blanche se sont développés, celui de Fann et celui de Point E où logeaient la plupart des directeurs de sociétés et des hauts fonctionnaires civils.

Période postcoloniale

L'indépendance du Sénégal en 1960 a supposé pour la plupart des vieux colons la difficulté d'accepter l'autorité africaine, fait qui s'est traduit par de fortes frustrations. Entre certains de ces colons qui ont décidé de rentrer en France, il y a eu même des cas de suicide, à cause de l'impossibilité de se réadapter à la vie métropolitaine, socialement et professionnellement.²²

Selon le Consulat de France à Dakar, il y avait au Sénégal en 1960 environ 40 000 Français et en 1967 environ 27 500. Quatre ans plus tard, en 1971, le même Consulat avait recensé environ 29 000 dont 27 500 vivant dans la ville de Dakar (Cruise O'Brien 1972:17; 1975:113). Cette diminution a fondamentalement concerné le secteur administratif et militaire colonial. La population française résidant hors de Dakar était minoritaire et se trouvait principalement dans les villes de Saint-Louis, Ziguinchor, Kaolack, Thiès et Diourbel. Le fait de résider presque toujours dans des zones urbaines rattache directement l'homme Blanc à la Modernité.

De nouveau, un autre prototype de Blanc s'est introduit au pays, il a été le dénommé « assistant technique » qui d'une manière générale s'est mieux intégré à la population africaine et a eu quelques attitudes moins racistes bien que la majorité des sénégalais considérât que les français sont plus racistes ici qu'en France (Cruise O'Brien 1975:112). Il faut tenir compte qu'à partir de l'indépendance, le modèle des relations que la France et son ancienne colonie essayaient de suivre était celui-là de « coopération » – ou « dialogue » dans sa version sénégalaise – ; en réalité, ce modèle cachait une dépendance économique, politique et organisationnelle. Plusieurs de ces assistants techniques travaillaient dans le système éducatif et dans les centres culturels des grandes villes – discrimination anti-paysanne – qui fondent les bases idéologiques de la Francophonie, et nous montrent, encore de nos jours, la présence évidente et l'influence de l'ancienne métropole dans la société sénégalaise: pour la plupart des expatriés et des Sénégalais, le référent culturel n'est pas Dakar, mais Paris. Les centres amicaux surgis durant la colonisation ont continué de fonctionner après l'indépendance – dans quelques cas jusqu'au maintenant – et ils regroupaient les communautés, tout comme les Basques, les Bretons, les Corses ou les Italiens.

Les couples mixtes ont augmenté au cours des années 60 et 70 et un nouveau modèle est apparu, celui-ci d'homme sénégalais de l'élite ou de la classe moyenne marié à une française (ou d'une autre nationalité) universitaire ou appartenant à la petite bourgeoisie. Dans certains cas, la femme appartenait à la classe prolétariaire, mais à son arrivée au Sénégal, son statut a augmenté immédiatement. Pourtant, ces couples ont continué à être rares, la plupart des relations qui existaient entre les Européens et les Sénégalais ont continué

à se développer dans le milieu professionnel et le modèle bien connu de l'expatriation s'est perpétué dans le couple de l'homme coopérant et de la femme africaine. Les différents degrés d'acculturation ou d'africanisation, ont quelque chose à voir avec le degré d'intégration d'un individu dans la communauté d'accueil. Et ici la question des mariages mixtes et des enfants métis ont joué un rôle clé. En effet, à la fin du XIXe et au début du XXe siècle, des nombreux enfants métis de ces unions ont été éduqués dans des orphelinats de Dakar car normalement leurs pères étaient des militaires ou des hauts fonctionnaires qui ont passé des longues périodes dans la colonie et, souvent, ont reconnu leur paternité et donc leur responsabilité. À partir des années 50, cette responsabilité n'existait plus, et beaucoup de ces enfants métis ont été abandonnés et leur entretien est devenu un véritable problème social. Cette transformation est due au changement même de la minorité européenne car celle-ci a grandi en nombre et son séjour était plus court. Le métissage postcolonial a été caractérisé, pour sa part, pour une nette tendance à l'occidentalisation.

Peu à peu, et même si la France continue à avoir une influence incontestable dans le pays, des nouveaux expatriés et des *toubabou*²³ d'autres nationalités se sont installés au Sénégal comme des anthropologues, des tour-operators, des diplomates, des journalistes et des reporters, des artistes, des soldats et des mercenaires de diverses nationalités, des hommes d'affaires et un grand nombre de fonctionnaires et de techniciens travaillant pour des ONG depuis le boom humanitaire, avec d'autres Occidentaux en diaspora, en processus de désintégration, qui continuent de se déplacer. On pourrait ajouter des nouveaux voyageurs et des aventuriers, des participants à des *rallyes* et des touristes, bien qu'ils ne vivent pas dans le pays.

Selon les chiffres du Sénat et du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères français sur l'expatriation, la population française résidante au Sénégal dans les villes de Dakar et de Saint-Louis entre 1995 et 2004 était la suivante :

	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Dakar	11 591	13 392	12 690	13 780	14 221	14 247
Saint-Louis	963	779	593	748	858	988
Sénégal	12 554	14 171	13 283	14 528	15 079	15 235

Actuellement, selon le dernier recensement de 2007, le nombre de ressortissants occidentaux au Sénégal est d'environ 20 000 individus, c'est-à-dire 1,7 pour chaque 1 000 habitants sénégalais. Ce sont là des données de référence et non des données pas réelles puisque ce ne sont pas tous les

individus qui sont enregistrés auprès de leurs ambassades ou consulats et que les raisons pour lesquelles on se fait enregistrer à certains moments peuvent être le résultat d'insécurité, de menaces ou de raisons administratives.

Bien qu'il existe d'autres pays africains qui ont un plus grand nombre de personnes d'origine occidentale, je crois que le chiffre du Sénégal est suffisamment représentatif, car c'est un pays qui a de nombreux contacts et accords avec l'Europe, et sa capitale a été historiquement l'ancienne vitrine de l'AOF. Par ailleurs, il est significatif que le Sénégal soit l'un des rares pays en Afrique de l'Ouest où les Blancs, les *toubabou*, sont toujours accueillis à bras ouverts et qu'il n'y ait pas eu de conflit entre eux et la population locale.

Le Blanc, l'Autre, sur le plan idéologique et mental

La philosophie dite du Dialogue, de la rencontre ou de l'Autre a souligné les relations interpersonnelles entre Moi et l'Autre et l'attitude qu'il faut avoir vis-à-vis de celui-ci. Le problème qui sous-tend cette philosophie est que, jusqu'à présent, seul fait référence à l'Autre celui qui appartient à une culture différente de celle du Blanc occidental. Cela veut dire qu'il n'y a pas de questions sur les relations, les modifications, les réactions et les changements que le Blanc occidental souffre quand il devient l'Autre et entre en contact avec quelqu'un qui a une couleur de peau, une religion et une tradition différentes. Qu'est-ce qui arrive à ce Blanc, quand il commence à devenir l'Autre ? La première étincelle qui lui produit l'altérité quand il est en Afrique subsaharienne est la couleur de la peau. On peut passer toute la vie sans se poser la question jusqu'à ce qu'on se trouve dans un contexte où la couleur de peau est minoritaire. Tout au long de l'histoire, cet événement a eu l'habitude d'unir les individus Blancs qui ont été en Afrique dans une endogamie, souvent motivés par un acte irrationnel, par le simple fait d'être Blancs. Cependant, lorsque les circonstances locales ont forcé au métissage local, les Occidentaux africanisés ont présenté des modèles nécessairement différents, en arrivant à produire un effet inverse au point d'être incapables de tolérer ni la compagnie ni la part des espaces, des goûts, des intérêts ou des activités avec d'autres Blancs. Certains autres qui ne se sentent pas trop africanisés, ou même qui participent à des activités pouvant renforcer la domination coloniale ou néocoloniale finissent pour vivre très frustrés.

Le Blanc occidental représente pour certains Africains le vestige de la domination coloniale qui n'a pas encore été inversée puisque la colonisation s'est muée en d'autres formes de dépendance. Cette perception est réelle et historique, et elle occupe également une place dans l'imaginaire collectif des anciens colonisés. Des siècles d'esclavage et de domination coloniale ont transformé le Blanc en quelqu'un qui nie l'existence historique de l'Afrique avant son arrivée, ce qui empêche certains Africains de se représenter sans

faire référence au Blanc, en les poussant à définir certains aspects de leur vie en relation et/ou en opposition à celui-ci. En résumé, le Blanc, dans de nombreux cas, a fait l'objet de discours. Il a construit ce qu'on appelle la « barrière invisible » qui n'est pas une politique discriminatoire, mais qui est réelle et qui met une minorité blanche en face d'une majorité africaine.

Le Blanc peut devenir une obsession. Il est connu que beaucoup de femmes sénégalaises essaient de se blanchir la peau avec de dangereuses crèmes abrasives (le *Khessal*), pour des raisons esthétiques de la même façon que les perruques sont utilisées pour cacher leurs cheveux crépus. Ces modes sont appelés par certains le « traumatisme colonial » et sont le résultat d'un complexe d'infériorité qui leur entrave la projection de l'avenir.

Il existe deux principaux types de Blanc : le premier est celui qui pendant la colonisation était au pouvoir constitutionnel et qui a été maintenu après l'indépendance, le second, ce sont les *toubabou* essentiellement produits de la coopération, mais aussi voyageurs, anthropologues, chercheurs, crieurs de nouvelles croyances, investisseurs, etc., suspects et considérés avec méfiance, car on ne sait pas encore quelles sont les conséquences de leur présence dans le pays.

Le Blanc occidental exerce une forte fascination, il est le protagoniste du rêve occidental et tous ses symboles et attributs le sont aussi. Ses aspects culturels tels que la mode et les tendances, ses moyens de transport tels que les avions, ses systèmes de santé comme les hôpitaux, son passeport et son visa, etc. sont les nouvelles adaptations de l'ancienne pacotille coloniale.

Autour du *toubabou*, on a construit toute une série de stéréotypes. En effet, il est passé de l'image d'un être surnaturel à celle d'individu en tous points égal aux autres humains. Surnaturel par sa supériorité au niveau des armes, de sa capacité à capturer des esclaves et pour fabriquer et exploiter des machines qui ont transformé la nature. Aussi, parce que depuis le début, parmi les Européens venus en Afrique, on a trouvé rarement des handicapés, des malades mentaux ou physiques, ou des mendiants.

Ce changement de représentation du Blanc dans l'imaginaire des sénégalais a été souvent accompagné du nationalisme dans le milieu urbain et a permis la montée de mouvements d'émancipation après la Seconde Guerre mondiale et pendant le milieu des années 60 du siècle dernier. Au cours de la colonisation française, il y avait une relation entre le Blanc et l'Africain, dans laquelle on a essayé d'assimiler le second, en dépit de leurs différences en mettant l'accent sur la distinction de *petit noir* ou *grand enfant*, symbole de leur infériorité dans le classement de la civilisation. L'identité française est basée plus sur la culture que sur la race. La relation entre la France et ses colonies n'était pas basée sur l'extermination ni la ségrégation, mais sur l'idée que les africains finiraient par « devenir français ». D'une part, il y a le mythe de l'efficacité

du Blanc, son développement et son progrès, trois concepts liés à la Modernité, mot inévitablement lié à l'homme Blanc occidental. D'autre part, le Blanc est considéré riche par essence, parce que, comme expatrié il est payé à distance, payé en euros ou en dollars. Et, en général, il est vrai qu'il a un bon salaire, qui a été exploité par la population locale: dans les marchés n'est pas rare de trouver « des prix locaux » et les prix *toubabou*. Dans certains cas, le Blanc est accusé d'avoir favorisé un certain nombre de pratiques humiliantes, dont il n'a pas toujours le monopole, comme l'esclavage, la pornographie, la pédophilie ou l'homosexualité, généralement mal vues en Afrique et souvent attribuées à l'influence occidentale. On considère le Blanc comme le produit d'une société qui a perdu ses valeurs et ses références et qui, dans de nombreux cas, se tourne vers le continent africain : avec lui arrive un certain nombre de pratiques qui ne sont pas toujours bien acceptées dans la société africaine.

Conclusions

L'histoire et les peuples de cette région d'Afrique de l'ouest ne sont pas les mêmes que ceux des autres régions du continent, étant donné son immensité et la complexité de son histoire. Par conséquent, les caractéristiques du Blanc occidental qui y a vécu et qui y habite encore ne coïncident pas forcément avec celles du prototype du Blanc de l'Afrique du sud ou d'Afrique de l'est. Toutefois, son analyse peut favoriser la compréhension d'autres situations, sans la nécessité d'appliquer un « modèle ». La persistance historique que présentent certains des modèles de déploiement d'expatriés dans la région de la Sénégambie semblent aussi trouver écho dans d'autres régions du continent.

En abordant « l'Ethnie Blanche », on doit s'approcher des imaginaires impliqués dans l'histoire. Pour l'homme Blanc occidental, l'Afrique a entraîné un continent réceptacle de ses mythes. Les relations des européens avec l'Afrique « réelle » ont été généralement superficielles et conflictuelles; très peu de fois, elles se sont données dans le respect ou l'intégration. L'Afrique reste, pour beaucoup d'occidentaux, un endroit de rêve, d'aventure et de romantisme. Paradis et enfer sont deux des clichés qui sont dans le subconscient collectif de la plupart des occidentaux, lorsqu'ils parlent de l'Afrique. Au cours des deux derniers siècles, l'image des africains a oscillé entre le Bon Sauvage – mythe forgé en Amérique, caillé dans le Pacifique et embarqué partout dans le monde, y compris le continent africain – et le Sauvage Dépravé – esclave de ses passions et créateur du « cœur des ténèbres » que nous montrent assez souvent les mass media. Les visions romantiques des Blancs se sont alternées ou, mieux encore, ont généralement « décoré » la volonté d'enrichissement rapide, depuis les *lançados* jusqu'à la petite bourgeoisie française qui a osé aller dans certaines colonies déjà « pacifiées ».

Il y avait aussi des motivations géostratégiques, pour le débarquement en Afrique, mais son intérêt a été ponctuel et moins important dans l'esprit de la plupart des expatriés. Le rêve de l'autre Africain a généré le rêve de l'autre Blanc, par les européens eux-mêmes. L'impulsion civilisatrice est intimement mêlée avec un sentiment de supériorité unie le plus souvent à une hystérie nationaliste impériale projetée sur l'Afrique. La figure du « chasseur Blanc » (Carvajosa 2004), résume cette quête d'aventure, de « découverte » propulsée par l'ardeur d'avarice, la soif de notoriété, les intérêts commerciaux, la vocation évangélisatrice, la recherche de la connaissance au nom des nouvelles sociétés géographique et scientifiques de l'époque ou tout simplement pour répondre aux besoins d'espèce, à notre nature de primate.²⁵ La terre africaine, inconnue et primitive, offrait – et offre encore – des nombreuses possibilités de liberté, de retour à la nature, d'hommes faits à eux-mêmes et d'utopies: en tout cas, une auto-vision héroïque, depuis les luso-africains aux actuels coopérants, qui ne cesse pas d'être, dans la plupart des cas, une réadaptation de l'idéal paternaliste, la dure et lourde charge de l'homme Blanc.²⁶ Bien sûr, il y avait aussi une image africaine de ce Blanc, mais « l'Ethnie Blanche » a préféré l'ignorer.

Pour tenter d'attirer ceux regards croisés – tus par les témoins – pas très attentifs –, afin de réduire la subjectivité du discours sur les imaginaires, il est très important de reconstituer la séquence des contacts historiques et historicisés : les commerçants précédèrent – de loin – les explorateurs et missionnaires, et les trois étaient en avance sur les colonisateurs eux-mêmes. Dans cette première implantation résidentielle, celle des *lançados*, on a fixé des règles d'actuation mises à jour régulièrement. Et là, il y avait la rapide et impitoyable exploitation des ressources d'autrui, très peu spécifique dans le fond de « l'aventure africaine », mais aussi la marginalité, le métissage et les partenariats avec les autochtones, l'africanisation, l'ambiguïté du statut et du rôle fondamental de médiateurs entre deux mondes. Contrairement à l'Amérique, et avec la seule exception importante en Afrique du sud, la société coloniale africaine n'avait pas généré une communauté « créole » au sens de descendant des colons opposé à une population « autochtone ». Si le créole américain aimait montrer ses boucles pour indiquer clairement sa différence avec les indiens, le descendant *lançado*, qui parlait *crioulo*, souvent présentait en trois ou quatre générations un phénotype différent des – premiers occupants –. Dans la Petite Côte, sur le fleuve Gambie ou en Casamance, comme dans le reste de l'Afrique, l'expatrié n'est devenu presque jamais africain, mais il est resté jusqu'à nos jours dans une zone liminaire – ni autochtone ni métropolitain –, dans la frontière culturelle qu'il contribuait et contribue à construire.

Dans ce domaine et dans bien d'autres, il y a de place pour la recherche, beaucoup même. La raison des régularités mentionnées peut être en partie dans notre optique, mais elle invite également à reconsidérer l'élasticité du patrimoine culturel subsaharien – il faut se rappeler la fameuse « unité culturelle africaine » des intellectuels de l'indépendance – qui ne découle pas d'un mystérieux substrat africain ou d'une âme africaine, mais d'un continuum historique encadré dans une singularité écologique et dans des décisions qu'ont prises, au fil des siècles, les hommes et les femmes d'Afrique, ainsi que les membres de « l'Ethnie Blanche », expatriée, sans ancêtres, mais incompréhensibles en dehors de l'Afrique.

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Notes

1. Selon le dictionnaire de l'Académie Royale Espagnole, un expatrié est celui qui « habite à l'extérieur de la patrie ».
2. L'utilisation que je fais du terme « Ethnie » n'est rien d'autre qu'une provocation. Ce concept ethnie a été le successeur du terme « tribu », en particulier après la fin du colonialisme, pour se référer aux différences linguistique et culturels des communautés qui vivent en Afrique. En fait, la définition remarque la différence entre les ethnies africaines et les nations européennes, car, selon ces paramètres, les Européens pourraient également être classés par groupes ethniques. La Nation dans sa forme d'État, avec sa pente radicale jacobine, est présentée comme une référence unique en origine et avenir et avec un contrôle territorial. Voir Coulon & Iniesta (1995).
3. Par le mot Blanc, je fais référence à des Européens et par extension à cette catégorie immatériel qu'on appelle Occidentaux. Je ne considère pas à d'autres immigrants ou voyageurs « Blancs » comme les Nord-Africains, les arabophones ou les Berbères, les Libanais ou d'autres moins « Blancs » comme les Chinois.
4. Le *resgate* ou l'acte de *resgatar* signifie acheter, vendre, acheter de nouveau, modifier, échanger un produit par un autre ...
5. Le mot vient du « tanga-mala ». Sans aucun doute, ces Portugais africanisés étaient habillés à l'africaine et beaucoup d'entre eux, selon les textes, avaient tatoué leurs corps. Selon W. Rodney, les descendants des *tangomãos* pourraient être désignés, avec le même nom, contrairement, le mot *lançado* les définît individuellement. Jean Boulège, dans son livre, appelle tous ces descendants luso-africains, car avec le temps la question métisse a été consolidé et africanisé.

6. Lettre de Manuel I du Portugal de 1517 (Brasio 1963:143).
7. L'étymologie du mot est une source de débat. La première fois que le mot a été écrit c'était sur une carte du botaniste français Michel Adanson en 1750.
8. Terme dont les Français dénommaient l'ancien Bezeguiche (voir Monod, Mauny & Duval 1959) situé dans la presqu'île du Cap-Vert.
9. Il y avait un Cap-verdien qui est devenu *alcaire* (gouverneur) d'un peuple du Kajoor qui avait presque oublié sa langue maternelle (Saint-Lô 1637: 56).
10. Selon l'Inquisition d'Evora, il y avait environ 200 nouveaux-chrétiens installés en Guinée.
11. Voir une réflexion sur l'aventure à partir de l'émigration subsaharienne dans Sarró (2007).
12. En ce qui concerne les sources du XVI^e siècle et les auteurs, on doit nommer le métis cap-verdien André Álvares d'Almada, Baltasar Barreira (Brásio 1960) et Richard Jobson. Aussi les capucins français, Père Alexis de Saint-Lô (1637) et Bernardin de Renouard. En ce qui concerne les documents officiels, il y a quelques lettres de correspondance comme celles de João III (Brásio 1963:143 et 352). Au XVII^e siècle, on a certaines chroniques de voyage comme celle de La Maire (1685), ou les descriptions du Jajolet de La Courbe (1913), directeur de la Compagnie de Guinée, ainsi que celles de Francisco de Lemos Coelho (1953), avec ses constantes références à cette communauté originale. Du même siècle, il y a les compilations de Dapper (1686) et Labat (1728), même si celle-ci est publié plus tard, ni l'un ni l'autre n'ont jamais été en Afrique, et Labat, qui fournit des informations importantes sur la politique et la Compagnie Française et ses conséquences, est basé sur La Courbe pour parler des Luso-africains. Au XVIII^e siècle, on a les journaux qui composent l'ouvrage de l'écrivain et facteur de la Royal African Company en Gambie, Francis Moore (1738). Il parle des quartiers et des villages des descendants des *lançados*, de leurs familles et aussi de la décadence et sa réduite à la ville de Joal, au sud de la Petite-Côte. L'année 1814, Geoffroy de Villeneuve publie les mémoires du voyage qu'il a fait en 1787 à cette population. On est déjà au XX^e siècle, quand on publie les volumineux travaux du Père António Brásio, de nombreuse information, ce qui fait de l'ouvrage une référence obligatoire. On peut également obtenir des informations utiles provenant des Archives de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit de Paris, et des Archives du Diocèse de Dakar: dans ces dernières on trouve le *Liber defunctorum in pago Joala, Senegambia, 1849-1892*, le *Livre des baptemes faits à Joal de 1827 à 1847* ou le *Livre des mariages faits à la maison de Joal de 1856 à 1906*, qui permettent de reconstruire l'évolution démographique et l'intégration sociale de la dernière redoute de Luso-africains de la Petite-Côte.
13. Les premières références qu'on a du créole ce sont celles de VILLAUT DE BELLEFOND en 1666 (Boulègue 1989:51).

14. La Courbe, dans l'histoire de son trajet entre Bissau et Gorée en 1686, parle d'un espagnol qui a été trouvé à Gerege qui était le beau-frère du roi de la région (La Courbe 1913: 232).
15. Quand même les Sereer montrent un degré plus élevé de christianisation que tous les autres groupes du Sénégal. Il serait intéressant d'explorer le rôle des traits dans la basse prévalence relative de l'islam – en comparaison avec le wolof ou d'autres groupes – parmi les communautés d'accueil dans la région, sereer, diola et mandingue plus au sud.
16. Le terme *signare*, du portugais « *segнора* » ou dame, a été appliquée à ces femmes, noires ou métisses, appartenant à la noblesse et libres (*gelwaar*), qui sont devenues épouses ou maîtresses des européens qui se sont installés dans la côte sénégalienne, même si elles existaient déjà depuis le XVe siècle dans les comptoirs portugais.
17. Comme exemple des femmes d'affaires influentes dans la région sénégalienne méridionale au XVIIIe et XIXe siècle voir: Brooks (1976).
18. Le nom vient du mot arabe ou berbère *tekrur*, qui précédemment désignait l'ensemble du Fouta Toro sénégalais. Les *maures*, de langue arabe, appelaient les habitants de ce pays *tekarir* (sing. *tekruri*). Selon Maurice Delafosse, ce nom, converti par la prononciation wolof en *tokoror* ou *tokolor*, est devenu, au cours de la dernière déformation phonétique française, *toucoleur* (A. HAMPATÉ BÂ 1996:13).
19. Sur sa définition voir: <http://www.francophonie.org/oif/francophonie.cfm>: « L'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) est une institution fondée sur le partage d'une langue, le français, et de valeurs communes. Elle compte à ce jour 56 Etats et gouvernements membres et a admis 14 observateurs qui totalisent une population de 803,44 millions dont 200 millions de locuteurs de français. Présente sur les cinq continents, elle regroupe près du tiers des États membres de l'Organisation des Nations unies ».
20. Cheikh Hamidou Kane décrit dans son travail à l'École des Blancs comme l'endroit où on apprend *l'art de vaincre sans avoir raison* (2006: 48).
21. Seck (1955), cité en Cruise O'Brien (1972: 83).
22. Certains chefs d'entreprises français m'ont informé au cours de mon séjour au Sénégal, qu'en France, le fait d'avoir été un expatrié en Afrique pendant longtemps c'est un handicap, car il y a beaucoup qui pensent que son caractère est despotique et méprisant.
23. Le mot *toubab* vient de l'arabe *tabib* qui signifie médecin et, plus largement, homme sage ou homme de sciences (même si en Algérie il signifie sorcier). En Afrique de l'ouest, principalement francophone, le mot a conduit à un autre sens, en se référant à des médecins qui étaient dans l'armée et qui étaient de Blancs. Au fil du temps, le mot de *toubab* ou *toubabou* (pl.) désigne à toute personne de peau claire d'origine occidentale. Dans d'autres régions d'Afrique de l'Ouest, on emploie le terme *nassara* (Blanc en langue mooré), de l'arabe *nesrani* / *nesara* qui signifie chrétien. Au fil du temps, il a également acquis le sens de Blanc d'origine occidentale, soit chrétien ou pas. Le terme

d'oreilles rouges a un origine comique, fruit de la couleur rouge qui acquérait la peau des Blancs à cause du contact avec le soleil. Les africains ont toujours été étonnés de la peau rose des Blancs. L'année 1455, dans son premier voyage au Sénégal, Alvise da Cà da Mosto a écrit « certains me touchaient la main et le bras et me frottaient avec salive, pour voir si ma blancheur était de la teinture ou de la chair ». Le mot swahili *mzungu* et le lingala *mondele* sont aussi des termes pour nommer l'homme Blanc étranger. En Éthiopie, il est habituel d'utiliser le terme *farangi*. Les ingénieurs français qui ont construit le chemin de fer qui relie la capitale, Addis-Abeba, avec la mer Rouge, à Djibouti, étaient les *français*, mot qui après des changements de prononciation est devenu celui de *farangi*. Les *ndowé* du Cameroun utilisent le terme *utangani* pour désigner les étrangers Blancs, ce mot vient de l'archaïque *moto a ugani* (être étrange, d'au-delà), car tous ceux qui venaient d'outre-mer étaient vus comme d'au-delà. Au Bénin, les fon les appellent *yobo*, au Ghana *obronis*, à Madagascar *vahazas*, et au Mozambique *tugas*... Cependant, certaines personnes croyaient et croient que *toubab* est vraiment une attitude ou un comportement, plutôt qu'une question raciale, et on peut appelé *toubab* un noir, même si acquit un sens péjoratif. De même, il ya ceux qui appellent *toubabou ñuul* (*ñuul* signifie noir en langue wolof) aux Blancs africanisés.

24. Selon Ortega y Gasset (1943: t. IV, 484), « L'homme est un transfuge de la Nature (...) Après avoir chassé, l'homme réussit à annuler toute l'évolution historique, à se détacher de l'actualité et à renouveler la situation primitive (...) Quand l'homme d'aujourd'hui se met à chasser, cela qu'il fait n'est pas une fiction, ce n'est pas une farce; il fait essentiellement, le même qu'il faisait durant le paléolithique (...) Le chasseur est, à la fois, l'homme d'aujourd'hui et celui-là d'il y a dix mille ans (...) Si on veut jouir de ce bonheur pur et intense qui est le « retour à la Nature », on doit chercher le traitement de la bête sauvage, descendre à son niveau, sentir une émulation en face d'elle, la poursuivre. Ce rite subtil c'est la chasse ».
25. John Gray (2003) parle de ces deux besoins fondamentaux de l'espèce humaine, le sexe et la religion.
26. Rudyard Kipling, écrivain britannique, victorienne, eurocentrique, et franc-maçon né en Inde à la fin du XIXe siècle, avait déjà utilisé le terme de « charge de l'homme Blanc » pour décrire l'évangélisation, et l'implantation de la « civilisation » et du progrès faite sur les peuples qui avaient été écartés du processus de construction d'Occident.

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Les dessous de l'opération Licorne en Côte d'Ivoire : pour une lecture géopolitique nouvelle des interventions françaises en Afrique

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Résumé

Le présent travail porte sur l'intervention militaire française en Côte d'Ivoire. Il s'est donné un double défi théorique et pratique : d'abord analyser les motivations de l'engagement militaire d'une puissance étrangère dans un conflit domestique, élaborer un modèle analytique à partir de la géopolitique nouvelle, puis l'apprécier à la lumière de l'intervention militaire de la France en Côte d'Ivoire. L'intervention française a fait l'objet de moult spéculations pour la plupart narratives voire pamphlétaires. L'originalité de cet article réside dans la capacité de son auteur à systématiser les motivations de la France en s'appuyant sur la dynamique du dehors par une analyse multidimensionnelle et pluri-scalaire. En se focalisant sur des déterminants géopolitiques précis, l'auteur a mis en lumière les considérations idéologiques souvent occultées dans les écrits sur la question. Prenant le contrepied des chercheurs qui tendent à marginaliser le rôle de l'Afrique dans la mondialisation économique, l'auteur a montré l'importance stratégique de l'espace africain, et ivoirien en particulier, pour les grandes puissances qui justifient davantage l'opération Licorne. Il en conclut que cette opération est capitale tant pour la France que pour la Côte d'Ivoire et les pays de la zone Franc CFA.

Abstract

This work is on the French military intervention in Cote d'Ivoire. It sets itself a double challenge which is both theoretical and practical: first, it analyzes the motives of the military commitment of a foreign power in a domestic conflict, develops an analytical model from the new geopolitics, then assesses it in the light of the military intervention of France in Cote d'Ivoire. The French intervention was the subject of much speculation

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most of which were narratives and sometimes pamphleteering. The originality of this paper lies in the capacity of its author to systematize the motives of France, building on the dynamics from the outside through a multivariate and multi-scalar analysis. Focusing on specific geopolitical determinants, the author highlights the ideological considerations often concealed in writings on the issue. Taking the opposite view of researchers who tend to marginalize the role of Africa in economic globalization, the author demonstrates the strategic importance of the African and Ivorian space, in particular for major powers, which justifies more the Operation Licorne. The author concludes that the operation is crucial for France, as well as Cote d'Ivoire and countries within the CFA Franc area.

Les Paradoxes de la politique militaire africaine de la France

La politique militaire africaine de la France a toujours obéi à des règles dont seul l'Hexagone détient le secret. Il convient de remonter aux années 1990 pour situer les paradoxes de la diplomatie française. En effet, plusieurs facteurs ont poussé Paris à redéfinir son rôle face aux crises en Afrique. Il s'agit notamment de la fin de la Guerre froide ayant mis fin au conflit idéologique Est-Ouest. En France, des initiateurs de la politique de la « Françafrique » ont disparu,¹ les « affaires africaines » retrouvent la noblesse dans l'opinion publique et les entreprises de la métropole ont atteint le statut de multinationales. Le remodelage des Sommets France-Afrique dû à l'impératif démocratique au menu du discours de La Baule² n'est pas du reste.

Le génocide rwandais dont est accusé le régime Habyarimana militairement soutenu³ par la France avait précipité la mutation de sa politique africaine. L'opération Turquoise a révélé aux hommes d'État français que dans le contexte de la mise en cause de la responsabilité pénale des individus devant des tribunaux onusiens, la prudence s'impose dans les interventions étrangères. En ce qui concerne la Côte d'Ivoire longtemps considérée comme un havre de paix, « le piège sans fin » a commencé avec un premier coup de force en 1999. Mu en rébellion armée, le putsch d'automne 2002 conduisit à la partition *ipso facto* du pays. Divisé en deux, le nord sous contrôle des rebelles et le sud aux mains de l'armée loyaliste, le pays vit une instabilité politique déconcertante qui conforte la thèse de mise sous-tutelle du continent (Ferguson 2004).

La nouvelle orientation de la politique africaine semble avoir guidé la France à se garder d'intervenir en Côte d'Ivoire lors du coup d'État de 1999. L'opposition du Premier ministre Jospin à toute intervention a créé un précédent. Le ministre français de la Coopération d'alors, Charles Josselin, justifiait la stratégie à la Ponce Pilate de Paris :

D'une manière générale, ce qui vient de se passer illustre la nouvelle politique française en Afrique. Il n'est plus question de nous ingérer dans le débat de politique intérieure, il n'est pas question de maintenir contre la volonté

populaire tel ou tel dirigeant. Cette non-ingérence ne signifie pas indifférence et encore moins abandon (RFI 1999).

Fondée sur la doctrine « ni ingérence ni indifférence », la nouvelle politique adopte la sous-traitance des opérations de maintien de la paix aux organisations régionales. Élément fédérateur de l'identité française, le multilatéralisme devient la règle (Macleod et Voyer-Léger 2004). Aux premières heures de la crise ivoirienne de septembre 2002, Paris envoie un contingent militaire assigné d'une mission ponctuelle de protection et d'évacuation des ressortissants étrangers. De son côté, la CEDEAO a promptement réagi et déploie un contingent de l'Ecomog, son bras militaire.

Le 23 septembre 2002, le colonel de Kersabiec, commandant du 43^e bataillon d'infanterie de marine a affirmé qu'il n'était pas question pour les militaires français de se mêler d'une crise « ivoiro-ivoirienne à 100 pour cent ». Pourtant, le contingent est maintenu. Malgré la présence de l'Ecomog, l'opération Licorne s'est mue en une force d'interposition entre les belligérants. Les autorités françaises étaient obligées de préciser les principes qui guident ce revirement politique. Le Quai d'Orsay a annoncé que l'opération Licorne tient essentiellement à préserver l'intégrité territoriale de la Côte d'Ivoire, la sécurité de l'État et du peuple ivoiriens (Smith 2003). S'agit-il là d'un retour à la « normalité » des pratiques « françafricaines » ? Dotée d'environ quatre mille soldats, la Licorne coûte plus d'un demi-milliard d'euros l'an au trésor français (Le Gris-gris international 2007).

Le réalisme de la diplomatie française rappelle que Paris n'a pas d'amis. Au regard du coût de la mission Licorne, il est pertinent de s'interroger sur les motivations qui la sous-tendent. D'où notre question de recherche : comment expliquer une intervention si coûteuse de la France en Côte d'Ivoire en dépit des déclarations officielles ?

L'objectif de la présente analyse est de sortir des approches eurocentristes souvent utilisées pour dépeindre la survenue du conflit ivoirien et justifier ainsi une intervention française généreuse. Nous entendons montrer que l'opération Licorne dissimule bien des motivations géopolitiques. Et la question est de savoir si ces motivations sont essentiellement d'ordre affectif comme le répète Paris ou instrumental. Avant de préciser ces motivations, il convient de situer l'intervention dont il est question dans le présent article.

Précisions conceptuelles

Intervention

Généralement, l'intervention se rapporte aux actions externes d'un État souverain pour influencer les affaires domestiques d'un autre. Nye (2005) établit une échelle d'analyse à huit niveaux, allant du discours aux sanctions

économiques (*soft*) ou de l'envoi de conseillers militaires à une invasion massive (*hard*). Il ajoute que les interventions *soft* constituent un moyen politique puissant pour régler un conflit; ce qui laisse croire que Paris dispose d'une alternative à l'intervention militaire.

La définition que propose Pearson complète la *hard* intervention de Nye et traduit la réalité de l'opération Licorne. Elle désigne le « movement of troops or military forces by one independent country [...] across the border of another independent country..., or actions by troops already stationed in the target country » (Pearson 1974:260).

Types de motivations

La littérature dégage deux types de motivations dans les interventions extérieures : affectives et instrumentales. Les motivations affectives désignent les liens idéologiques, ethniques et religieux entre les groupes de l'État intervenant et ceux de l'État visé (Mitchell 1970). Héraclides (1990) a reconnu la pertinence de ces finalités tout en ajoutant l'irrédentisme et les considérations humanitaires. Il s'empresse de préciser qu'il en est ainsi lorsque l'engagement est de basse intensité. Dans le cas ivoirien, des liens affectifs enracinés depuis la colonisation et entretenus dans les rapports entre la Côte d'Ivoire indépendante et sa métropole ne sont pas à négliger. Nous y reviendrons.

D'autres chercheurs privilégient les motivations instrumentales au sens de gains économiques, d'enjeux politiques et de considérations stratégiques. Au début de son étude sur les opérations de paix de l'ONU, Neack s'est demandé si la participation des États dépend de l'idéal onusien ou plutôt de leur intérêt national. L'étude de dix-huit opérations de maintien de la paix a poussé la chercheuse à admettre que la « realist interpretation which is that states do whatever they can, given their power resources, to protect and preserve their national interests, better explains states' participation » (Neack 1994:181). Elle doute des finalités affectives.

De son côté, Laquandria (2003) s'est interrogée sur le bien-fondé de l'intervention américaine par le truchement de l'Ecomog au Libéria. Tout en actant les rapports historiques entre les peuples américain et libérien, elle soutient que l'opération exprime un besoin de repositionnement géostratégique dans une Afrique de l'Ouest considérée comme la chasse gardée de la France. Le constat de Morrison Taw et Grant-Thomas (1999) confirme cette perception. Les chercheurs voient en le leadership nigérian, la main de Washington qui justifie son soutien par l'appui dont bénéficie Taylor de la part du Burkina Faso et de Côte d'Ivoire, têtes de pont du front français.

Ces différentes positions s'inscrivent dans le débat qui ponctue les approches en théorie des relations internationales. Pour les réalistes, les États

interviennent dans des conflits externes lorsque leurs intérêts vitaux sont en jeu. Ils partent du principe que toute intervention exige des coûts matériels et humains. L'incitatif devrait être suffisamment fort pour cautionner l'engagement. Suivant ces paramètres de théorisation, nous présumons que des motivations instrumentales seraient à la base de l'intervention de Paris en Côte d'Ivoire. Examiner ces motivations revient à identifier les intérêts adjacents à une intervention impériale. Nous jugeons que leur nature pourrait être étudiée en termes géopolitiques.

La géopolitique : historique, définition et déterminants

Historique

De façon récurrente, le terme « géopolitique » est omniprésent dans les discours scientifique, politique et médiatique. Apparaissant souvent à l'évocation des interventions extérieures, le concept est employé de façon réductionniste, une limite que la présente analyse veut dépasser.

La paternité du concept revient à l'école allemande autour de Ratzel et de Haushofer qui considèrent l'État comme un être vivant nécessitant de l'espace vital pour sa croissance. Leur conception s'inscrit dans une vision du « darwinisme social » ayant servi de base idéologique à l'impérialisme allemand et au nazisme (Lasserre 2001).

Pour sa part, Mackinder a introduit le concept de *heartland* opposant les pays continentaux et maritimes. Le terme renvoie à une terre centrale – identifiable à la Russie – autour de laquelle gravitent des ceintures périphériques, les *rimland* ou les îles marchandes. La clé de la puissance réside dans le *credo* qu'il a ainsi formulé : « Qui tient l'Europe orientale tient la terre centrale, qui tient la terre centrale domine l'île mondiale, qui domine l'île mondiale domine le monde » (Mackinder [1904] 1992:29).

Pendant la guerre froide, l'école matérialiste marque le saut de la discipline en s'inspirant des idées de Mackinder. La géopolitique autorise l'élaboration d'une politique étrangère active ainsi que le témoigne la *strategy of containment* de Spykman et de ses successeurs Kissinger et Brzezinsky. Elle a permis d'assurer la prééminence américaine en Eurasie, point d'ancrage à la domination globale (Brzezinsky 1997).

Il vient que la géopolitique de la période bipolaire se situe plutôt dans le cadre du réalisme classique et confirme l'importance accordée aux facteurs géographiques, déterminants de la politique et du destin des États. Stato-centrée, l'approche est marquée par un fort déterminisme et oblitère la dynamique du système politique international.

Après la guerre froide, la pensée géopolitique apparaît sous un jour nouveau et certains chercheurs parlent de la géopolitique critique (Lasserre et Gonon 2001), d'autres de la nouvelle géopolitique. Sans renoncer à l'héritage des précurseurs de la discipline, la nouvelle lecture accroît le rôle de l'espace dans la politique sans toutefois le considérer comme totalisant. Elle devient :

the analysis of how political systems and structures [...] influence and are influenced by the spatial distribution of resources, events, and groups, and by interactions among subnational, national, and international political units across the globe. It focuses [...] on how groups interact [...] in the pursuit of controlling resources (Wood et Demko 1999:4).

L'espace est capital et son influence se traduit par une série de déterminants géographiques concrets.

Définition et déterminants

Définition

La géopolitique est une méthode particulière qui met en relief les relations de pouvoir entre le territoire et ses déterminants géographiques d'une part, et la politique des acteurs, de l'autre. Elle repère, identifie et analyse les phénomènes conflictuels, les stratégies offensives ou défensives centrées sur la possession d'un territoire (Lorot 1995).

L'analyse géopolitique repose sur la binarité ambitions-menaces qui permet de lire les actions diplomatico-stratégiques comme c'est le cas en Côte d'Ivoire. Selon cette technique, toute intervention extérieure se ramène à la volonté de réaliser des ambitions ou de contrer des menaces. Le jeu de réflexion pousse à s'interroger sur « qui veut quoi, pourquoi et comment ? Que veut ce pays qui vient de déclencher une guerre ? De qui a-t-il peur ? De quel avantage veut-il disposer ? » (Thual 1996:22). La mise en perspective des éléments de réponses en lien avec les représentations idéologiques permettent de découvrir les priorités géopolitiques à l'œuvre. Composée de deux morphèmes « géo » signifiant terre et politique, la géopolitique invite à saisir les visées d'une action politique dans l'espace. Cette conception est pertinente à l'analyse de l'intervention française en Côte d'Ivoire d'autant qu'elle permet de mettre « en relation les facteurs de la puissance étatique, la politique internationale, et l'environnement géographique » (Gounelle 2001:121).

Déterminants

Deux ensembles de déterminants s'imposent dans l'analyse des faits géopolitiques. Les facteurs constants touchent la position générale de l'État par rapport aux autres, l'existence ou non de façade maritime. Les facteurs

changeants renvoient aux ressources énergétiques et minières ainsi qu'aux considérations idéologiques.

Au plan militaire et stratégique, les facteurs constants permettent de saisir l'agenda de l'opération Licorne d'autant que la position générale de la Côte d'Ivoire dans l'espace franc-africain traduit la nécessité de défendre une zone d'influence historique. Au regard de notre problématique, il est pertinent de retenir trois domaines qui constituent l'ossature de notre grille d'analyse : le militaire/stratégique, l'économique et les représentations idéologiques.

Motivations géopolitiques de l'opération Licorne

L'importance militaire/stratégique de la Côte d'Ivoire

Le domaine militaire/stratégique relève de la dimension traditionnelle de la géopolitique. Selon cette lecture, la quête de sécurité est l'enjeu principal de l'attitude d'un État (Waltz 1979). Cette sécurité se définit par la puissance de feu qui garantit l'intégrité territoriale et la survie. Le volet géostratégie se décline en termes de position géographique de l'État et traduit le besoin de protéger une zone d'influence. Dès lors, une intervention militaire est plus probable lorsque la position géographique de l'État cible est importante pour la puissance impériale tutélaire. Dans le cas ivoirien, nombre d'indicateurs sont pertinents comme la sortie maritime, sa position par rapport aux routes stratégiques, la configuration des alliances éventuelles. La Côte d'Ivoire se situe au cœur du pré-carré ouest-africain et la probabilité d'intervenir est renforcée d'autant qu'il existe un risque du *spill-over* pour la sous-région.

En lien avec Thual précédemment évoqué, l'intervention militaire de la France répond à la binarité ambitions-menaces. La Côte d'Ivoire apparaît le *heartland* à partir duquel Paris assure le contrôle de cette partie de la chasse-gardée. Sa situation géographique est intéressante à cet égard. Bordée par le golfe de Guinée et ceinturée par deux pays anglophones (le Ghana et le Libéria), la Côte d'Ivoire dessert les *rimland* au sens de Mackinder, le Burkina Faso et le Mali. Au carrefour des routes maritimes qui longent le golfe de Guinée, elle se révèle le château fort de la France dans la région. Le territoire ivoirien occupe une position géostratégique et l'ancienne puissance tutélaire gagnerait à préserver tant son unité que sa stabilité. Devant les velléités impériales de Washington, l'opération Licorne marque la volonté de Paris de rester maître dans son espace vital.

En effet, à la fin de la guerre froide, la « grande stratégie » a disparu « en même temps que le mur de Berlin et les statues de Lénine dans les rues de Moscou » (Kagan 2003:126). Washington a modifié sa politique africaine qui consistait à sous-traiter le continent aux puissances européennes notamment la France. Des officiels américains saisissent toute occasion pour déclarer la guerre aux intérêts français ainsi que le rappelle le Secrétaire d'État Warren

Christopher. Celui-ci affirmait révolu « le temps où l'Afrique pouvait être divisée en sphères d'influences, où les puissances extérieures pouvaient considérer les groupes entiers de pays comme leur domaine réservé » (N'Gbanda 2004:110).

Le Département d'État affiche la détermination des États-Unis à assumer le leadership dans le déroulement du prochain chapitre de l'histoire de l'Afrique. L'éviction de Paris des Grands Lacs Africains a matérialisé cette volonté de déloger Paris. Washington a mis en place une batterie d'institutions militaro-économiques qui entrent en concurrence avec le dispositif traditionnel de Paris. L'ACRI devenue l'ACOTA et l'AGOA⁴ figurent au rang de ces dispositifs. De plus, Washington a passé des accords de coopération militaire tous azimuts avec des pays francophones symboles dont la Côte d'Ivoire, le Sénégal, le Mali ou encore l'Algérie. À l'hiver 2007, le Congrès a approuvé l'Africa Command que le Pentagone a investi d'une mission de coopération des différents partenariats de sécurité autour et sur le continent africain. Il s'agit d'une première alors que cela était seulement fait de l'Europe jusqu'à présent.⁵

Dans cette perspective, l'opération Licorne s'impose pour parer à la menace américaine et affirmer l'ambition française de puissance. La menace est à la fois interne et externe à l'Afrique. À l'interne, l'implosion de l'ancienne « vitrine » française aurait des répercussions sur la stabilité régionale. De même, il est difficile d'imaginer le coût politique de la réaction du peuple français devant l'effondrement du seul pays dont le succès économique limite les diatribes contre sa mission dite civilisatrice. L'opprobre ternirait davantage l'image de la France dans l'opinion publique africaine voire internationale. L'opération Licorne se révèle un signal rassurant à l'ensemble des États du pré-carré.

Plus qu'une opération de sauvetage allié, l'intervention semble être guidée par le syndrome de la Fachoda. La présence des forces spéciales américaines dans la région ravive la peur de voir Washington intervenir directement dans l'épicentre du pré-carré (Leymarie 2002). Dans sa croisade contre le terrorisme international, l'administration Bush n'apprécie guère l'instabilité d'un pays qui pourrait servir de nids aux organisations criminelles. La présence de mercenaires libériens augmente le risque de déstabilisation nuisible aux milieux d'affaires.

En outre, la configuration des alliances préfigure une intervention directe de la France. L'existence d'un concurrent dans la lutte pour l'influence conforte une action militaire directe. Allié naturel des Américains, le Nigéria est de loin la seule puissance militaire dans la région. Les pays francophones susceptibles d'épauler Paris n'ont pas le statut de puissance locale alors qu'il existe une possibilité réelle d'entrée en scène de l'armée nigériane. Les tapages

autour de la médiation sud-africaine sont révélateurs d'une alliance pouvant desservir la France. Ces considérations justifient la mise en veilleuse de la doctrine de la sous-traitance impériale des opérations de maintien de la paix. Comme le précise l'adage, « on est mieux servi que par soi-même ».

L'irrésistible attrait géoéconomique

Les appétences impériales de Washington en Afrique oblitèrent des raisons stratégiques. Après l'effondrement de l'Union soviétique, la menace communiste a cédé à la conquête néolibérale, les « Cold War ideological rivalries have been replaced by world-wide economic competition » (Luttwark 1990:24). Rougier (1947) prédisait déjà la volatilité des axes économiques et la constante déformation des constellations politiques.

Dans *Géopolitiques & Économies* qu'ils ont publié en 1997, Imbeault et Montifroy ont levé le voile sur les rapports entre la géographie et l'économie des États. À l'aide des exemples du passé, comme ceux de Mégare et de Rome, et du présent, comme ceux de la Russie et de Hong Kong, les chercheurs canadiens ont analysé les processus de recomposition géopolitique en cours. En épousant la philosophie de Gottmann, ils approuvent l'idée que la puissance et la richesse des États s'évaluent à la lumière de leurs ressources en matières premières. Leur étude a le mérite de ressortir la philosophie économique qui préside aux destinées des grands ensembles géopolitiques et débouche sur une remise en question philosophique des doctrines économiques et politiques classiques.

Dans son ouvrage consacré à *l'Histoire de la géopolitique*, Lorot (1995) s'est interrogé sur le rapport entre la géopolitique et l'économie. Par le concept de « géo-économie », le chercheur canadien a montré l'existence de liens directs entre la géopolitique et l'économie. Dans le processus de la globalisation, la puissance d'un État se mesure non seulement à sa capacité à capter les flux des capitaux mais davantage à contrôler de loin les ressources énergétiques et les minéraux stratégiques. Dans cette course, l'emprise économique déborde sur le champ de la géopolitique sous la pression de la mondialisation. Il s'agit là d'un phénomène qui tend à « transcender la logique d'un système interétatique à laquelle se substitue une logique de réseaux transnationaux » (Adda 1996:3). Dès lors, les actions diplomatiques plus ou moins ouatées visent plus ouvertement à localiser, répartir le marché des matières premières et à entretenir de bonnes relations politiques avec les États détenteurs.

Il vient que l'accès et le contrôle des ressources stratégiques représentent des enjeux majeurs ainsi que l'a révélé Maire (1997) dans son article, « Le minerai, clé du pouvoir ». À en croire cet analyste, Paris avait tardivement compris la tactique de Washington à effiloche ses liens avec l'Afrique. Le

« Prométhée déchaîné » des carcans idéologiques d'un monde bipolaire n'a de cesse lancé des pics à la France : « les Américains vont tenir la dragée haute aux partenaires traditionnels de l'Afrique, à commencer par la France » (Brown dans N'Gbanda 2004:196).⁶

La dépendance mutuelle entre l'économie et la puissance forcent l'intérêt croissant que les grandes puissances accordent aux ressources stratégiques et les voies de leur acheminement. Klare (2002) souligne l'importance de ces facteurs à partir d'une analyse des manœuvres de l'armée américaine au Kazakhstan. De même qu'elles avaient motivé la colonisation de l'Afrique, ces ressources se révèlent la boussole qui oriente les politiques impériales actuelles. Devenues essentielles au maintien des économies capitalistes, les matières premières stratégiques pourraient attirer des « proxy wars » aux États pourvoyeurs. Ils risquent d'imploser vu la tendance américaine à user de son potentiel militaire pour en assurer le contrôle (Le Billon 2006).

Il est difficile d'expliquer la dynamique des politiques sécuritaires sans reconnaître l'enjeu des ressources non renouvelables. En ce sens, l'espace africain est révélateur de l'intérêt que les puissances lui portent. Par rapport aux réserves mondiales, le continent renferme 75 pour cent de diamants, 70 pour cent d'or et de cobalt, 50 pour cent de vanadium, 46 pour cent de platine, 20 pour cent du cuivre, 20 pour cent d'uranium en forte concentration (Chaliand 1984). Il est approprié de retenir les ressources naturelles comme des intérêts géopolitiques. Des investigations font état de la découverte d'importants champs pétrolifères et gaziers en Côte d'Ivoire.

En effet, selon les données du rapport de la Commission d'enquête internationale des Nations unies sur la Côte d'Ivoire, le pays possède une réserve pétrolière proche de celle de Koweït. Elle devient le premier État du pré-carré producteur du pétrole vert et le second en Afrique après le Nigéria. Si certains analystes comme Favennec et Copinschi (2003) tendent à assouplir l'importance du pétrole ivoirien, il faut reconnaître l'actualité des données du rapport onusien que confirme le récent audit de la Banque mondiale sur la gouvernance du pétrole dans ce pays. En outre, le rapport souligne la découverte du gaz dont l'exploitation s'étalerait sur un siècle. Le rapport précise également l'existence de métaux précieux (l'or, le diamant) et de métaux rares utilisés dans les technologies de pointe (ONU CI 2004). L'attrait des ressources est renforcé par l'annexe II de l'Accord colonial de défense (toujours en vigueur) entre la France, la Côte d'Ivoire, le Bénin et le Niger. Au regard des articles 2, 3 et 5 dudit accord, la France détient le monopole d'exploitation des matières premières stratégiques de ces pays.

Par ailleurs, l'approche analytique autorise la prise en compte d'autres données telles le réseau routier ivoirien et les investissements directs étrangers

de la France. La Côte d'Ivoire est l'un des rares États francophones de la région les plus équipés en infrastructures portuaires. Le développement de réseaux ferroviaires et routiers favorisent le commerce international des *rimland* du pré-carré. Au plan foncier, la France détient suivant le code rural de 1998, 45 pour cent des terres ivoiriennes.⁷ Il convient de préciser la forte présence de multinationales françaises qui contrôlent les secteurs névralgiques de l'économie ivoirienne.⁸

Au plan financier, l'intervention militaire soutient le principe de la conservation du contrôle de la zone Franc CFA dont la Côte d'Ivoire constitue l'épine dorsale. Selon les données de la Banque Centrale des États d'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO), la Côte d'Ivoire a produit 38 pour cent du PIB et 45 pour cent de la masse monétaire des pays de l'UEMOA⁹ au titre de l'année 2003. La France a sciemment conservé la tutelle du franc CFA qui lui consacre le contrôle des économies de la zone. Le mécanisme de tutelle est assuré par la centralisation des réserves de change. Ainsi que le précise une note d'information de Banque de France, la BCEAO est tenue de déposer 65 pour cent minimum de ses réserves de change auprès du Trésor français en contrepartie de la convertibilité illimitée garantie par la France (Agbohohou 1999 ; Banque de France 2003). La préservation de l'unité de la Côte d'Ivoire ainsi que l'annonce l'objectif de l'opération Licorne est vitale aussi bien pour la France que pour les pays de l'espace monétaire CFA. L'enjeu financier est palpable d'autant que la Côte d'Ivoire représente pour le « CFALand », ce que l'Allemagne représente pour l'*Euroland*.

À la lumière de ce qui précède, la Côte d'Ivoire a un potentiel économique, un intérêt géoéconomique pour la France qui le contrôle par un géo-pouvoir immanent.

Les motivations idéologiques et la grande stratégie

Le domaine idéologique fait appel aux représentations politiques qui indiquent la dimension subjective d'un territoire donné dans l'imaginaire collectif d'un peuple. Elles s'enracinent dans les mythes et les légendes nationaux, les symboles, la religion et l'histoire de ce peuple. La géopolitique embrasse « différents types d'enjeux [...] d'identité sur des territoires, et sur les représentations qui leur sont associées » (Géré 2002:112). Elle analyse des représentations habituelles qui décrivent les situations sociopolitiques localisées géographiquement. Lasserre et Gonon (2001) insistent sur l'idée que tout déploiement spatial du politique est incontournable du fait que nous sommes incarnés et que la communauté où nous vivons et autour de laquelle s'organise notre existence est inscrite dans l'espace. La qualité de leur analyse réside dans l'importance singulière qu'ils accordent aux discours historiques, supports des représentations et instruments de légitimation des actions politiques.

Ces approches balayaient la dichotomie entre géopolitique et géographie politique. Ils rejoignent Lacoste (1984) et Foucher (1988) qui mettent en relief le rôle des représentations dans l'approche géopolitique.

Puisant de la phénoménologie de Husserl, le chef de file de l'école française conçoit les représentations comme l'ensemble des idées et des perceptions collectives qui émeuvent des groupes sociaux et qui structurent leur vision du monde. Lacoste pousse le concept au-delà des idéologies nationales pour inclure les imaginaires collectifs qui font des représentations, un miroir qui reflète les motivations des hommes politiques. Elles peuvent être marquées par la tendance à l'agressivité ou à la défensive. La géopolitique au sens de Lacoste recherche des intentions collectives et étudie les rivalités de pouvoir sur des territoires symboles (Thual 1996:14). L'analyse idéologique discerne les sujets profonds qui inspirent des actions d'une société et commandent à son destin. Contrairement à la *Weltanschauung* allemande, l'idéologie ici a plutôt une fonction positive. Ces conceptions corroborent les objectifs de l'armée française, « avoir une capacité de projection étrangère de ses troupes pour défendre ses intérêts nationaux sur des théâtres d'opération étrangers » (Béland et Bouvier 2006:75).

Les perceptions nationales de grand destin de la France comportent des traits expansionnistes ainsi que le témoigne le général de Gaulle qui identifie la France à l'Europe. Les traits messianiques et les prétentions au rôle de grande puissance se manifestent à travers l'idée même d'intervenir en Côte d'Ivoire. À cet égard, le rôle de l'histoire est pertinent. La Côte d'Ivoire a été le pivot de l'AOF¹⁰ et les relations franco-ivoiriennes ont longtemps été fidélisées par les deux parties. Même si cette appréhension n'exclut pas un empilement de doctrines, les liens historiques entre les deux peuples restent prégnants. À cet égard, l'opération Licorne est l'expression tangible d'une des ambitions de la diplomatie française étroitement liée aux perceptions populaires des Français : assumer le rang d'une des puissances mondiales (Béland et Bouvier 2006:80).

Il se pose toutefois la question de moyens pour traduire les représentations en actions. Le domaine idéologique a une forte composante d'engagement politique qui le rattache aux précurseurs de la discipline. L'articulation politique des perceptions nécessite la « grande stratégie » qui englobe le militaire, l'économique et/ou le démographique. L'interaction entre ces domaines incite à appréhender le concept au sens d'« art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation [...] including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies » (Earle 199:4). Le politique devient le catalyseur des perceptions du rôle et de la place d'un peuple dans le monde. Ainsi, [...] policy makers take these visions

or images, mix them with the 'scientific' principle of causality, and end up with geopolitical theories or doctrines. [...] In international politics often perceptions matter more than 'real' things (Tchantouridze et Lieverse 2000:2). La grande stratégie est permanente; elle ne finit pas avec la fin de la guerre comme elle ne commence pas avec elle. De ce point de vue, sa prise en compte offre un autre degré d'analyse qui dépasse le niveau purement idéologique en même temps qu'il lui est proche.

Il est intéressant de situer la dimension idéologique à différents niveaux. Waltz (1979) situe les perceptions à trois niveaux : individuel et bureaucratique, interne et global. Au niveau individuel et bureaucratique, les leaders politiques ainsi que les différents groupes d'intérêts (l'armée, milieux d'affaire) jouent un rôle clé dans l'élaboration de la politique étrangère. Dans le cas français, la personne du chef de l'État est centrale. La décision d'intervenir repose essentiellement dans les mains du chef de l'État, en l'occurrence le président Chirac. Son appartenance politique rappelle le piège des indépendances en Afrique de même que les velléités d'indépendance du général de Gaulle vis-à-vis de l'administration américaine. Au niveau interne, nous pouvons relever la cohabitation et ses conséquences ainsi que les scandales mettant en cause le financement des partis politiques. Mais plus encore, l'électrochoc du printemps 2002¹¹ tend à renforcer le sentiment national d'une France humaniste et ouverte sur le monde. Au niveau global, la crise diplomatique ayant opposé la France et les États-Unis sur la guerre en Irak renforce les perceptions populaires qui se traduisent en actions géopolitiques.

Conclusion

Le but de ce travail était de comprendre au-delà des objectifs officiels, les causes profondes de l'intervention de l'armée française dans la crise ivoirienne. Nous avons présumé que les motivations de cet engagement sont instrumentales. Dès lors, l'approche géopolitique est toute indiquée pour déchiffrer la dynamique extérieure à l'aune de cette opération. La géopolitique offre l'avantage de favoriser une analyse multidimensionnelle qui prend en compte nombre d'indicateurs. La relation qui rattache l'étude géopolitique à l'analyse inspirée par le réalisme permet d'adopter différents niveaux d'analyse à même de mettre en relief plusieurs dimensions de la problématique. Il s'impose toutefois d'admettre le défaut d'absence de rigueur inhérent à toute analyse inclusive. Ce défaut n'entache pas la crédibilité d'une grille d'analyse multidimensionnelle, multidisciplinaire et multiscalair. La géopolitique dite nouvelle autorise de prendre en compte des déterminants géostratégiques, économiques et idéologiques. Nous aurions pu approfondir l'analyse pour interroger la dynamique interne à la Côte d'Ivoire même si nous avons effleuré la dimension régionale. L'approche multidisciplinaire permet de croire que

l'opération Licorne répond à des objectifs géopolitiques tant dans l'intérêt de la France que de la Côte d'Ivoire et de la sous-région ouest-africaine.

De part la géopolitique dite classique, la Côte d'Ivoire constitue le pivot géographique à partir duquel la France est susceptible de contrôler la partie ouest-africaine de son *heartland* au sens de pré-carré. Cette analyse révèle les lacunes de la conception occidentalocentrée de la mondialisation qui tend à marginaliser l'Afrique et minimiser son importance économique et militaire. Ainsi que l'a fait remarquer Cohen, l'Afrique de l'Ouest en particulier est d'une importance capitale, potentiellement déstabilisatrice du marché global. Les grandes puissances font face à des blocs géopolitiques secondaires depuis la fin de la guerre froide. En Afrique au sud du Sahara, la Côte d'Ivoire occupe une position clé. La découverte des ressources stratégiques et le développement des sociétés offshores au large du golfe de Guinée placent le pays à la croisée d'intérêts géopolitiques. Dans ces conditions, « this politically and economically unstable region [West Africa] can thus become a catalyst for global instability. It warrants sustained strategic and economic attention » (Cohen dans Wood et Dembo 1999:44). Vu sa position géographique et économique, nous pouvons reformuler le credo mackinderien : qui tient la Côte d'Ivoire tient le pré-carré, qui tient le pré-carré domine l'île centrale, qui domine l'île centrale domine l'Afrique. Le syndrome de la Fachoda, les facteurs géoéconomiques et les représentations idéologiques sont en filigrane des motivations d'intervenir en Côte d'Ivoire. Cette analyse amène à conclure que pour parer à la menace hégémonique américaine et à son avancée sur le continent africain, la France organise une vaste parade destinée à marquer un territoire qu'elle a toujours considéré comme son arrière-cour. L'hypothèse de départ reste fondée car les objectifs officiels bien qu'intéressants, n'ont de sens qu'à travers le prisme géopolitique.

Notes

1. Il s'agit entre autres du général de Gaulle, de Michel Poniatowski, de Jacques Foccart ou encore du président ivoirien Félix Houphouët-Boigny.
2. Il s'agit du discours de Mitterrand du 20 juin 1990 lors du sommet de la Francophonie où le président français invite les chefs d'État de la « Françafrique » à démocratiser leur régime. Mitterrand a été obligé de souscrire malgré lui à cet impératif sous la poussée de l'administration Clinton.
3. Il s'agissait de l'Opération Noroît qui s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'accord de défense et de coopération militaire qui oblige Paris à secourir le Rwanda en cas d'attaque étrangère.
4. ACRI, c'est l'African Crisis Response Initiative mise sur pied par l'administration Clinton dont l'objectif est de moderniser les armées africaines

et former les soldats aux opérations de maintien de la paix. L'administration Bush l'a transformée en ACOTA, African Contingency Operation Training Assistance. Depuis 1997, le programme a entraîné des bataillons au Bénin, en Côte d'Ivoire, au Ghana, au Mali, ou au Sénégal. Lire à cet effet, Abramovici, P. (2004) « Activisme militaire de Washington en Afrique », dans *Le monde diplomatique*, juillet, pp.14-15. L'AGOA est l'offensive économique, African Growth Opportunity Act qui ouvre le marché américain aux exportations africaines. Elle est présentée comme le pendant de l'Accord de Cotonou entre l'Union européenne et les pays ACP.

5. Nous faisons allusion à l'US-Eucom, le commandement européen de l'armée américaine basée à Stuttgart en Allemagne depuis le second conflit mondial.
6. Brown Ron fut Secrétaire d'État au commerce dans l'administration Clinton.
7. La Côte d'Ivoire occupe une superficie de 322 462 km² avec plus de 15 millions d'habitants. Les sièges de la présidence de la République et de l'Assemblée nationale ivoiriennes font l'objet d'un bail conclu avec Paris selon le rapport de l'ONUCI (2004).
8. Au rang de ces multinationales figurent Bouygues, les groupes Bolloré ou Total, France Telecom, la Société Générale, le Crédit Lyonnais, BNP-Paribas et AXA.
9. Le Franc CFA est la monnaie de la Compagnie Financière Africaine, l'ancienne communauté française d'Afrique. La zone Franc CFA est un regroupement monétaire rassemblant huit pays francophones. UEMOA, c'est l'Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine dont la zone CFA est un sous-ensemble.
10. AOF, c'est l'Afrique occidentale française qui faisait partie intégrante de l'empire français. Waltz, K., 1979, *Theory of International Politics*, New York : McGraw-Hill, Inc. Wood, W., Demko, G., 1999, *Reordering the World. Geopolitical Perspectives on the Twenty-First Century*, (sous la dir.), Boulder : Westview Press.
11. Il s'agit de l'arrivée « surprise » au second tour des élections présidentielles en France du parti d'extrême droite.

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La guerre dans les médias, les médias dans la guerre en Côte d’Ivoire

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Résumé

Cet article propose une réflexion sur un genre particulier de discours médiatique d’information : le journalisme d’opinion très en vue en Côte d’Ivoire depuis la guerre de septembre 2002 qui a coupé le pays en deux parties. Il s’inscrit donc dans une approche constructiviste car il est évident que l’information journalistique procède d’une entité fabriquée. La question des « médias dans la guerre, la guerre dans les médias » constitue un enjeu majeur pour le débat public en le consacrant comme un espace public nouveau dans la formation et l’expression des opinions. Dans le contexte ivoirien, l’information est le paradigme dominant et l’informateur est le journaliste-militant dont la relation à son public se construit sur un mode essentiellement d’appartenance, au sens idéologique du terme. Le discours journalistique ajoute à sa fonction traditionnelle d’informer de nouvelles fonctions de conditionnement et de mobilisation qui en font pleinement un espace idéologique d’adhésion totale.

Abstract

This paper proposes a reflection on a particular type of informative media discourse: opinion journalism, which has been very prominent in Côte d’Ivoire since the war on September 2002 which split the country into two parts. The paper, therefore, uses a constructivist approach based on the obvious fact that journalistic information is the product of a created entity. The issue of “the media in the war, the war in the media” is a major issue for public debate, for it is established as a new public space in the formation and expression of opinions. In the Ivorian context, information is the dominant paradigm and the informant is the activist-journalist whose relationship to his/her audience is built on a mode mostly based on membership, in the ideological meaning of the term. The journalistic discourse adds to its traditional function, which is to inform, new conditioning and mobilization functions that make it fully an ideological space of full membership.

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Introduction

La Côte d'Ivoire fut longtemps le pays de rêves audacieux, des défis lancés par Félix Houphouët-Boigny, premier Président de la République (1960-1993), dont la préoccupation essentielle fut de donner aux Ivoiriens des conditions meilleures de vie. Son pari le plus osé fut d'affirmer à la face de la nation et du monde entier que la non-violence est le principal facteur de paix et de progrès. Dans un contexte mondial où plus de 500 milliards de dollars USA sont dépensés chaque année pour l'acquisition des armes de guerre, il n'a jamais accepté d'investir dans ce domaine. Ange Barry-Battesti (1995:5) dans *l'Atlas de la Côte d'Ivoire*, Éditions J.A., fait bien de préciser : « cette politique de paix sagement mise en œuvre par le Président Félix Houphouët-Boigny a été consolidée par un contexte monopartiste rigide ».

La vie étant une dynamique, les partis uniques furent contestés dans tous les pays africains à partir de 1990. Comme une forte envie longtemps contenue, la parole fut soudainement et radicalement libérée sur le continent, avec des fortunes diverses, dans chaque pays. Certains, comme pour mépriser les Africains, y ont vu le mouvement irréversible du vent de l'Europe de l'Est, comme s'ils n'étaient pas capables de faire changer les choses qui environnent et influencent leur quotidien ; ainsi, pour d'autres, il s'agit de l'aboutissement des luttes politiques contre la colonisation qui ont consacré les indépendances. Pour les Africains, la décolonisation fut la première étape d'une longue lutte qu'il fallait consolider par la démocratie en rompant avec la dictature des partis uniques.

Il faut souligner que dans tous les cas, deux phénomènes importants ont marqué la naissance du multipartisme sur le continent noir : Il s'agit des nombreuses conférences nationales et du printemps de la presse, répondant à un besoin d'exister de chaque citoyen par la prise en compte de ses préoccupations, à travers la parole libérée et le droit de vote. Le comportement nouveau des Africains, de ce contexte de prise de conscience, fut une bonne réactivité citoyenne mais mal régulée, faute d'un véritable cadre normatif. Du coup, en ce qui concerne la presse, personne ne put la contrôler, encore moins la maîtriser. Tout s'est passé à une vitesse effrénée comme si elle s'était assignée pour rôle de suppléer le manque de véritable forum.

Pour revenir à la Côte d'Ivoire, le Président Félix Houphouët-Boigny mourut en décembre 1993. Sa succession s'est faite dans une atmosphère difficile, pour deux raisons principales : d'abord, d'un point de vue culturel et socio-identitaire, il appliqua dans sa gestion de la cité, une tradition akan (dont il est originaire) qui veut qu'un chef de son vivant, n'ait pas de successeur connu. Dans ce sens, il préféra « remanier » l'article 11 de la constitution, lequel faisait du Président de l'Assemblée Nationale (lui aussi

akan) son successeur constitutionnel, en cas de vacance du pouvoir. Ensuite, comme nous l'avons déjà dit, la Côte d'Ivoire, à l'instar de tous les pays africains, avait également renoué avec le multipartisme dans un contexte où l'on compte un peu plus de 60 pour cent d'analphabètes et plus 90 pour cent de la population subissant la pauvreté et la misère sociale.

Il faut cependant ajouter que la longévité politique exceptionnelle de celui qu'on appelait affectueusement « le Père de la nation » avait fini par créer une forte tension relativement à sa succession. Dans ce sens, toutes les tensions sociales longtemps contenues par le monolithisme politique trouvèrent, dans le nouveau système multipartiste, un terreau fertile. Six ans après sa mort, son dauphin constitutionnel, Henri Konan Bédié, en 1999, fut renversé par la junte militaire dirigée par le Général Guéï Robert qui mit en place un gouvernement de transition. Le Général-Président organisa, en octobre 2000, les élections présidentielles (qu'il perdit) et que remporta Laurent Gbagbo.

Le 19 septembre 2002, alors que le Président Laurent Gbagbo effectuait une visite officielle en Italie, il y eut une tentative de coup d'État. De violents affrontements eurent lieu entre l'armée régulière et les rebelles dans les villes d'Abidjan, Bouaké et Korhogo. Le Général Robert Guéï, ancien chef d'État et Émile Boga Doudou, Ministre de l'intérieur dans le gouvernement de Gbagbo furent tués lors de ce putsch manqué. Depuis cette date, la Côte d'Ivoire et sa population sont dans une descente en enfer. Ainsi, ce pays qui fut longtemps la « vitrine » de l'Afrique francophone au sud du Sahara, traverse, aujourd'hui une période douloureuse de son histoire.

Au total, ce qui nous intéresse, en tant qu'enseignant des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, c'est ici le degré et la forme d'implication de la presse nationale dans cette guerre. Nous avertissons cependant le lecteur que cet article est le troisième d'une série que nous avons entreprise dans le même ordre d'idée. D'abord, nous avons, dans l'urgence, commencé par « Journalisme civique et réconciliation nationale en Côte d'Ivoire », qui est en réalité la conclusion de la série puisqu'il propose des pistes de réflexion aux fins d'une presse citoyenne, support des politiques de développement, d'émancipation des populations et de cohésion sociale. Ce travail est publié dans le numéro 14/2005 de la revue *En-Quête* de l'Université de Cocody, à Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). Ensuite, le deuxième article, « Médias d'opinion et crise ivoirienne », constitue la partie introductive qui doit aider à la compréhension du concept de crise. Cette réflexion est mise en ligne en mars 2007 dans les enjeux de l'information et de la communication qui est la revue scientifique (électronique) du Groupe de Recherche sur les Enjeux de la Communication (GRESEC) de l'Université de Grenoble,³ en France.

Enfin, ce dernier article se situe logiquement en deuxième partie de cet ensemble, comme une étude de cas.

Ce rappel était nécessaire pour faire comprendre au lecteur les raisons pour lesquelles certaines omissions volontaires ont été opérées dans cet article. L'exercice était difficile quand on sait que les trois textes sont intimement liés, répondant pratiquement à une même méthodologie d'approche, à un même contexte sociopolitique, à une même période et à une même dimension théorique. Ce qui est donc tu, dans l'un des titres, peut être lu dans les autres car les trois articles constituent les différentes parties d'un même système où l'on peut entrer par diverses portes.

Cadre théorique et approche méthodologique

Une étude sur le journalisme en Côte d'Ivoire couvre un large domaine à la fois pluri et inter disciplinaire qui peut être envisagé dans des perspectives différentes allant d'une vision journalistique au sens strict du terme à un point de vue beaucoup plus global où la pratique du journalisme constitue un des éléments essentiels de lecture et de compréhension des pays africains, en pleine démocratisation.

Depuis 2004, de nombreux ouvrages et publications universitaires, en Côte d'Ivoire, consacrés à l'évolution de la situation socio-politique du pays s'accordent sur l'idée selon laquelle les médias et les journalistes ont une part considérable dans le déchirement du tissu social. Dans ce sens, les entreprises de presse sont confrontées à un environnement incertain à l'origine de bouleversement tant d'un point de vue des valeurs que des pratiques chez les journalistes. Ainsi donc, on constate d'importants changements qui redéfinissent le territoire des médias depuis 1990. Ce phénomène qui s'est accentué avec la pluralité des titres a révélé des considérations de toutes sortes dont les principales sont d'ordre politique, économique, social et culturel.

Dans ce contexte nouveau, on constate des pratiques professionnelles nouvelles ayant donné naissance à deux courants intéressants du point de vue de la recherche : il s'agit du « journalisme d'opinion » et du « journalisme d'information ». Le premier est, en Côte d'Ivoire, le fait des partis politiques qui ont créé leurs journaux afin de maintenir le lien sacré avec leurs militants ; le second est l'œuvre des opérateurs économiques qui ont investi dans ce secteur. Ces derniers, refusant toute compromission, demandent à leurs journalistes-employés de ne pas tremper dans la politique politicienne. Cette recommandation les invite en permanence à l'autocensure.

Dans le premier cas, l'information est le paradigme dominant et l'informateur est le journaliste-militant dont la relation à son public se construit sur un mode essentiellement d'appartenance, au sens idéologique du terme. Le discours journalistique qui est alors un construit social ajoute à sa fonction traditionnelle (d'informer), de nouvelles fonctions de conditionnement, de

mobilisation, d'identité, d'intégration qui en font pleinement un espace idéologique d'adhésion totale. Un militant lit le journal pour s'informer de l'avis du parti. L'information reçue l'invite à adopter un comportement conforme à la ligne éditoriale, laquelle puise son idéologie dans les directives du parti dont le lecteur-militant et le journaliste-militant sont, tous les deux, membres. Selon Lionel Bellenger (2000:108), « on exprime, par l'effet « band wagon », le fait que l'individu tend à être attiré par le « climat d'opinion » des groupes auxquels il appartient ». Pour la grande majorité des militants, il ne leur est pas donné de critiquer et/ou de remettre en cause (sauf, en interne, de rares fois) les directives de leur parti. On pourra ainsi parler du raz-de-marée de l'information car le journaliste d'opinion, de par sa vocation même, manie l'information dont il vit. Cette information savamment construite est partagée par tous les lecteurs sociétaires du parti qui en constituent les réseaux de partenariat, lesquels fonctionnent comme des ethnies ayant leur propre langage, leurs valeurs, leurs intérêts, etc. C'est une évidence que l'article de presse procède d'une construction car son contenu est une entité fabriquée, différente du fait brut. Dans ce sens, on peut avancer que le constructivisme, au sens de la démarche de John Searle, est un point de vue indiqué sur la pratique journalistique. Si au niveau interne, ce type de journalisme repose sur la cohésion du groupe, la solidarité et le sentiment d'appartenance, par contre, en externe, (par rapport aux autres partis), il s'inscrit dans une dynamique d'antagonisme politique où il faut chercher à neutraliser les adversaires. Les conséquences d'une telle évolution se traduisent par les tensions qu'il suscite, par l'absence d'éthique et le non respect des citoyens qui pensent autrement. La coloration ethnique des familles politiques et le taux élevé d'analphabètes favorisent de telles maladresses comportementales. De ce fait, le journalisme d'opinion avec son idéologie d'exclusion, s'inscrit contre l'esprit de la démocratie.

Dans le second cas, il y a deux logiques contradictoires : celle d'un journalisme qui ambitionne de se fixer sur le fait brut mais qui, en même temps, a des contraintes en tant qu'entreprise marchande. Au commencement, ces journaux sont nés pour occuper des espaces abandonnés par les médias d'État, longtemps dépositaires de la pensée unique (de 1960-2000). Malheureusement, comment concilier une logique professionnelle et une logique marchande ? Le professeur américain de sociologie de l'Université de Berkeley (cité par Jean Solbès 1988:31) donne le ton : « les médias sont défensifs parce que dans notre culture politique ils doivent arborer le message de l'objectivité. Ce masque cache l'insécurité des journalistes, tout comme l'insécurité de la profession. Si les liens politiques étaient trop clairement exposés, alors le journaliste serait accusé de prendre parti, ce qui constitue la

pire chose dans ce milieu... ». En Afrique, les patrons de presse ont la crainte que les gouvernants leur retirent les autorisations de créer des journaux ; concomitamment, les journalistes ont peur de voir retirer leurs cartes de presse par les instances étatiques de régulation des médias. Or, la logique professionnelle commande qu'on dénonce les abus et l'arbitraire des gouvernants et des leaders politiques, pour garantir la crédibilité des journalistes. Selon Rémy Rieffel (2005:40), « toute entreprise médiatique se doit d'abord de convaincre son public que les informations publiées sont sérieuses et fiables ; elle multipliera donc les signes d'authentification... ». Dans ce sens, on peut faire l'hypothèse que le pouvoir des médias en occident, en tant que machine à imposer une ligne de conduite ou de pensée, est relativement faible.

Pour étayer notre propos, nous rappelons qu'aux États-Unis, il existe de nombreuses études sur l'impact et l'influence des médias sur leur public. On peut présenter très schématiquement le bilan de ces travaux en disant qu'ils ont amené certains chercheurs à refuser le schéma trop rigide d'une influence directe et immédiate des médias. Dans l'entre-deux guerres déjà, Harold Lasswell avait résumé le processus de la communication en ces termes : « Qui dit quoi ? À qui ? Dans quelles circonstances ? Avec quels effets ? »

Quelques années plus tard, les travaux de Paul Lazarsfeld ont montré que l'influence des médias n'était pas directe et immédiate, mais plus tôt indirecte et médiata. Elle s'exerce sous la forme d'un flux à deux étages (« two step flow of communication »). Les messages envoyés par les médias sont discutés et évalués à l'intérieur des groupes dont les leaders d'opinion, souvent plus exposés aux médias, exercent une influence déterminante, jouant parfois un rôle de « vigile » (gatekeeper) et peuvent ainsi accepter ou, au contraire, refuser l'entrée des messages dans le groupe. On ne fait donc pas avaler n'importe quoi à n'importe qui, du moins pas, dans une relation de cause à effet : les facteurs contextuels structurent la communication.

Dans le contexte ivoirien, on peut donc, compte tenu du tribalisme et de l'ignorance (la population compte 65 pour cent d'analphabètes), faire l'hypothèse que les médias d'opinion peuvent exercer une influence davantage dans le sens du renforcement des opinions. À ce fait souvent constaté, on peut donner de nombreuses explications : chaque ivoirien choisit de s'exposer au journal dont le contenu correspond davantage à ses idées et à ses opinions. On peut continuer l'hypothèse, en ajoutant que les individus ont tendance à recevoir les informations en fonction de leurs idées et, par conséquent, à choisir, parmi les contenus véhiculés, ceux qui correspondent le plus à ce qu'ils pensent. Enfin, ils garderont davantage en mémoire ce qui semble conforme à leurs opinions et ce qui leur fournit des arguments en faveur de

leurs idées. Mais cette perception de la presse en occident capitaliste est loin de la réalité africaine où les $\frac{3}{4}$ des populations, analphabètes et pauvres, subissent encore, au quotidien, les difficultés de subsistance, si bien que le journalisme « alimentaire » existe et qui se manifeste par la complaisance et la corruption. Bon nombre d'articles sont souvent des publi-reportages qui, comme « un griot », encensent les personnalités du pays. À la suite de Harold Lasswell et Paul Lazarsfeld, nous faisons remarquer que des chercheurs comme Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1965, 1970) ou, dans une moindre mesure, T.W. Adorno (1960) estiment que les médias sont en soi des instruments bénéfiques, mais qu'aux mains du système capitaliste, ils autorisent une manipulation des consciences et l'imposition de modèles logiques appartenant à l'idéologie dominante. Mais, de nos jours, cette option ne fait plus souvent l'unanimité. Selon le Professeur Sery Bailly (2003:119) « les médias sont une référence pour juger d'un niveau de patriotisme, d'indifférence ou de bellicisme qui prévaut dans une société ».

La question des « médias dans la guerre », et « la guerre dans les médias » constitue un enjeu majeur pour le débat public en le consacrant comme espace public nouveau dans la formation et l'expression des opinions. Les discours sur l'apprentissage de la démocratie, singulièrement, en ce qui concerne l'intérêt nouveau pour la « chose publique », le multipartisme, la pluralité des organes de presse et l'existence d'une société civile font désormais partie des préoccupations réelles des Africains. Cette prise de conscience condamne la pensée unique longtemps orchestrée par les premiers dirigeants pour s'ouvrir, en ce qui concerne la presse, à la fois sur la pluralité (dimension quantitative) et le pluralisme (dimension qualitative). Dans cet ordre d'idées, on peut dire à la suite de Patrick Charaudeau (2001:8-13) que le discours journalistique se constitue autour de trois axes (corporate, professionnel et commercial). Le premier est en rapport avec le monde politique, le second s'appuie sur une analyse et une interprétation honnêtes des faits bruts. Il concerne tous les publics. Quant au dernier élément, il s'intéresse exclusivement à la dimension marchande, c'est-à-dire économique. Compte tenu de ces précisions, on peut avancer avec Marcel Burger (2005:127) que « les médias produisent aussi bien du discours professionnel du fait qu'ils fondent sans conteste un domaine professionnel (les médias en général), lequel implique l'engagement d'organisations spécifiques (les médias comme entreprises économiques), ainsi que les membres de la catégorie socioprofessionnelle qui les structurent (les journalistes) ». Nous ajouterons que les médias s'adressent principalement à des destinataires considérés comme des consommateurs, se préoccupant de fidéliser ceux-ci pour susciter également l'intérêt des annonceurs investis dans l'information médiatique.

Une telle visée « commerciale » se situe nécessairement aux confins de l'espace public et constitue dès lors une contrainte de fonctionnement opposée à la contrainte civique.

Dans le cadre de cette étude, l'accent est mis sur le discours journalistique (corporate) qui concerne principalement l'environnement politique en termes de presse d'opinions s'enracinant dans la culture des partis politiques. Cette culture s'exprime en croyance et système de valeurs acceptés comme postulats et référents des idées et comportements collectifs. Elle se traduit en mythes, histoires racontant l'épopée héroïque de la naissance du parti. Par exemple, les journalistes de *Le Nouveau Réveil* ne peuvent s'empêcher d'évoquer la mémoire de feu Félix Houphouët-Boigny ; ceux de *Notre Voie* et de *Le Patriote* en font autant respectivement pour le FPI et le RDR. Si donc la presse d'opinion représente un facteur d'intégration et d'appartenance, sa fonction essentielle est de servir, à l'intérieur du parti, d'espace de régulation dans les rapports individuels et collectifs afin de permettre aux membres et aux sympathisants d'atteindre les objectifs définis par la direction du parti.

On peut lui affecter une seconde mission qui puise son essence dans l'idéologie publicitaire en termes de stratégies d'antagonisme politique (neutraliser les adversaires), de conquête (implantation du parti dans toutes les régions), d'information (fournir des renseignements indispensables aux militants), d'impulsion (inciter à l'adhésion), etc. Dans cette vision, la presse d'opinion utilise toute la culture du capitalisme qui s'inscrit dans le sens du gain. Il faut mobiliser des gens à devenir membres d'un parti, pour en faire des consommateurs achetant, au quotidien, la presse proche dudit parti politique, s'acquittant de la carte d'adhésion et honorant chaque année la cotisation qui sert à « l'entretien » du parti. Ainsi, les membres financent le parti par diverses cotisations.

La presse d'opinion devient une sorte de « bible » dont le contenu ne doit pas être contesté mais en revanche, les journaux du camp adverse sont considérés systématiquement comme nuls et non crédibles. Cette façon de procéder s'inscrit en paradoxe de la démocratie si l'on s'appuie sur Franck Cosson (2005:44) lorsqu'il écrit : « la démocratie rencontre la question de la reconnaissance de l'autre. N'est-il pas légitime de penser que la reconnaissance des différences permet une meilleure expression des libertés individuelles sans que cela mette en péril l'unité de la société démocratique...L'être-commun républicain laisse à chacun la possibilité démocratique que d'être soi ». Nous ajouterons que tout journal, n'importe lequel devrait fonctionner sur le principe de la prise en compte des différentes opinions qui forment la République à travers sa pluralité. Or, la presse d'opinion, partout dans le monde, est exclusive car ne reconnaissant jamais les projets de société du camp adverse, même

s'ils plaident, de manière pertinente, en faveur de la société, donc de tous les citoyens. Pourtant, la presse dans les nations sous-développées devrait se manifester comme un espace démocratique afin que les choses soient dites (telles quelles) même si elles s'opposent aux intérêts des dirigeants. Espace public au sens de Juergen Habermas (1962), c'est-à-dire, un lieu de rencontre, de structuration et d'échanges des opinions et d'idées afin de favoriser l'émergence d'idées citoyennes dans l'intérêt de la collectivité. Toujours à propos d'espace public et son évolution, il n'est pas vain de lire la contribution de Bernard Miège, dans l'ouvrage collectif, sous la direction d'Isabelle Pailliant (1995:165-175) : « l'espace s'est à la fois perpétué, élargi, voire ses fonctions étendues et pour finir, il s'est fragmenté sur la base d'espaces pluriels ». C'est véritablement le cas de la Côte d'Ivoire, comme nous l'avons déjà évoqué dans une recherche précédente (Blé Raoul Germain 2004:108-118) : il s'agit d'une étude qui porte sur l'émergence d'espaces nouveaux, de taille humaine, où des individus de toutes les conditions sociales expriment librement leur citoyenneté en libérant le verbe dans une oralité dialoguée.

Les propos d'Alex Mucchielli (1998:7-8) cadrent bien avec la situation ivoirienne lorsqu'il dit : « la théorie des processus de communication essaie de rendre compte d'une manière systémique et constructiviste des phénomènes communicationnels qui concourent à l'apparition du sens accompagnant tout élément de communication et, notamment des contextes pertinents dans lesquels, justement, ces phénomènes prennent leur sens, pour les différents acteurs qui sont concernés par ces expressions ». En conclusion de cette dimension théorique, on peut situer notre réflexion sur deux axes complémentaires pour la compréhension des enjeux du journalisme en Afrique. Par rapport aux études sur le développement et l'émancipation, elle tend vers l'apprentissage (mal négocié) de la démocratie. Par rapport à la sociologie des médias, elle s'appuie sur la production journalistique ivoirienne de cette période de la guerre et leur impact sur la société.

De ce qui précède, quel regard peut-on poser sur les médias ivoiriens en cette période de crise depuis 2002 ? Et en particulier sur les trois principaux journaux d'opinions (*Notre Voie*, *Le Patriote* et *Le Nouveau Réveil*) ? Au demeurant comment ont-ils transposé la guerre dans leurs colonnes ? Et quels sont leur sort et leurs responsabilités ? Quant à notre hypothèse, elle indique que parallèlement aux confrontations des soldats sur les champs de guerre, les journaux d'opinion ont transposé la guerre dans leur Une et/ou dans leurs éditoriaux. Des images terribles, de gros titres, des mots forus constituent l'arsenal de cette guerre médiatique dont les dérives ont contribué à amplifier et à prolonger le conflit, car le traitement de l'information n'a pas obéi aux normes éthiques et déontologiques.

L'objectif de ce travail porte sur une réflexion dynamique visant à :

- tester la ligne éditoriale des quotidiens cités plus haut ;
- identifier et analyser les articles et les images traitant du conflit ;
- analyser le sort des journaux et des journalistes ;
- évaluer l'impact des informations sur la population.

D'un point de vue méthodologique, notre démarche se nourrit de trois parties dont l'articulation colle à la logique même de nos préoccupations. D'abord, nos étudiants de l'Université de Cocody, de l'UCAO et ceux des grandes Écoles ont, par groupe de six, lu les principaux journaux (*Fraternité-Matin*, *Le Nouveau Réveil*, *Le Patriote*, *Nord-Sud*, *L'Inter*, *Notre Voie*, *Le Courrier*) pour le dépouillement du corpus. Ce travail a été fait pendant six mois de juillet à décembre 2005. Chaque groupe a fait la synthèse du journal que nous lui avons proposé en tenant compte des exigences suivantes :

- travailler sur la base de 6 numéros par semaine de lundi à samedi ;
- chaque étudiant se consacre exclusivement à un numéro dans la semaine ;
- préciser la ligne éditoriale du journal ;
- identifier les articles traitant de ce conflit ;
- analyser leur contenu ;
- dégager de manière nette le brutalisme linguistique et le brutalisme iconique.

Ensuite, à la suite de la contribution de nos étudiants, nous avons entrepris une relecture de quelques articles marquant de manière claire la réalité de la guerre dans les médias et des médias dans la guerre. Mais pour les études de cas, notre corpus repose principalement sur trois journaux (*Notre Voie*, proche du parti au pouvoir, *Le Patriote*, proche du RDR/ opposition et *Le Nouveau Réveil*, proche du PDCI/opposition) sur la période 2005/2006. Puis, à la Une comme dans les pages intérieures, nous avons spécialement choisi d'observer les procédures de mise en scène du chef de l'État et des principaux leaders politiques en empruntant la démarche de Naguénang Wanmé (2004:18-19) :

- « l'image du président Laurent Gbagbo : sa légitimité, ses moyens de lutte, ses rapports avec la France et les autres pays d'Afrique ;
- l'opposition politique : son visage, ses moyens de lutte, sa part dans le conflit ;
- la configuration du conflit : son nom, ses lieux, ses évolutions ;
- la géopolitique : le conflit par rapport au contexte régional africain, la France dans le conflit, l'internationalisation du conflit ».

Pour mieux appréhender la place et le rôle des médias dans la crise ivoirienne, nous avons procédé également à leur analyse de contenu, en nous référant à

certains éléments de la démarche de Eliseo Veron (1981) et de Dusan Babic (2003). E. Veron porte l'essentiel de son travail sur les aspects topographiques, taxinomiques et l'identité du journaliste qui se dévoile par sa signature. Quant à Dusan Babic, à partir de la question des Balkans dans les médias français, il dégage plusieurs thèses car selon lui, chaque journal a son propre angle par rapport à un même problème. En lisant les principaux quotidiens d'opinion de notre corpus, on se rend compte que la Côte d'Ivoire, dont parlent *Le Patriote* et *Le Nouveau Réveil* est « différente » de celle qu'évoque *Notre Voie* dans ses colonnes et vice-versa.

Il s'agit d'un examen méthodique et quantitatif de notre corpus, en vue d'en tirer ce qu'il possède de significatif par rapport à notre problématique et aux objectifs de notre étude. Enfin, nous avons rencontré un nombre important de journalistes, de responsables d'instances de régulation et d'autorégulation pour avoir les positions des professionnels.

Approche définitionnelle

Pour que les lecteurs de cette étude soient au même niveau d'information, il est utile de clarifier certains thèmes ou concepts :

La guerre

Selon le dictionnaire *Petit Larousse illustré* (1988:477), « La guerre est une épreuve de force entre États, entre peuples et entre partis ». Il s'agit d'une situation dramatique, vécue aujourd'hui par les Ivoiriens, Éthiopiens et les Tchadiens, et hier par des millions d'hommes et de femmes en Sierra-Léone, au Libéria, au Rwanda, en Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, République Démocratique du Congo (anc. Congo-Kinshasa), etc. Nous ajouterons qu'en Côte d'Ivoire où la guerre dure depuis 2002, il s'agit d'un terme rebattu. Point d'ancrage encore du discours de réconciliation. À écouter les différentes manifestations et à lire la presse ivoirienne, on ne peut en effet qu'être convaincu du caractère réel de la guerre.

Les médias

Le terme de média a été vulgarisé par le sociologue canadien Marshall McLuhan qui l'utilisait comme étant le prolongement de nos sens. De ce point de vue, il peut s'agir d'un crayon, d'une chemise, d'une guitare, etc. De nos jours, nous devons entendre par ce terme, toutes les techniques de diffusion plus large de l'information par la presse, la radio, la télévision, le cinéma et l'affichage. M. Bedouet et F. Cuisiniez (1995:119) ajoutent que « cette réduction [du terme] met en avant la position importante qu'occupent ces médias dans notre société. Les facilités de reproduction donnent au message, en l'amplifiant, une grande résonance sociale ».

Le brutalisme

Selon le *Petit Larousse illustré* (1988:141), « le brutalisme est une tendance architecturale contemporaine qui privilégie l'emploi de matériaux bruts parmi lesquels le béton...la liberté des plans ». Nous ajouterons que le terme est né de « brut », c'est-à-dire, resté à l'état de nature, donc ce qui n'a pas été façonné. Proche de brutalité/brutal qui signifie de manière grossière et violente, il désigne, dans le cadre de notre réflexion, tout excès ou toute outrance. On parlera ainsi de brutalisme linguistique lorsque des excès de langage seront constatés dans les médias de notre corpus. Dans le même ordre d'idées, on parlera de brutalisme « iconique » lorsqu'il sera donné de constater des images horribles ou exécrables.

La guerre dans les médias en Côte d'Ivoire

La guerre dans la presse est fréquemment mise en scène par les journalistes à travers le choix des mots, des images, des couleurs et leur emplacement, en termes d'occupation de l'espace mais également par les dirigeants politiques aux déclarations « musclées » pour attirer l'opinion publique vers eux. La classe politique ivoirienne est typique de cette forme médiatique depuis 2002.

Le numéro 1788 du 15 septembre 2005 du quotidien *Le Patriote* donne un aperçu de ce que nous avançons, car il y est écrit à la Une « Gbagbo veut brûler la Côte d'Ivoire ». Il s'agit là d'un brutalisme linguistique, au sens que nous lui conférons. Le verbe brûler, utilisé par *Le Patriote* signifie (*Petit Larousse Illustré* 1988:140) « détruire, anéantir, altérer par le feu ou par des produits chimiques ». Ce verbe « brûler » traduit bien l'état de guerre dans le pays. Le journal devient ainsi le prolongement des champs de bataille. Donc le journaliste, en utilisant à dessein ce verbe, tente de prouver l'inconscience de Gbagbo à détruire le pays. Dans ce sens, nous notons que d'un point de vue typographique, chromatique et en ce qui concerne l'investissement de l'espace, ce titre est imprimé en corps gras, en gros caractère et en rouge pour mieux indiquer le danger qui plane sur la Côte d'Ivoire. Son emplacement à la Une lui donne une importance capitale car cette première page correspond dans l'imaginaire de ceux qui connaissent le langage des médias, à la ligne d'attaque des belligérants, au front. Quant au caractère vertical des lettres, il est choisi pour démontrer la volonté de Laurent Gbagbo à anéantir le peuple ivoirien ; c'est pourquoi la couleur rouge est utilisée qui symbolise (négativement) le danger, la peur, la mort ou tout autre événement tragique. Le quotidien *Le Patriote* étant intégralement imprimé en vert et en blanc, l'introduction de toute autre couleur et en particulier le rouge, participe de sa stratégie de captation.

Sur le plan du brutalisme iconique, on voit, à la page deux, une photo de Laurent Gbagbo dans laquelle il a le visage froncé, la bouche largement ouverte,

les dents serrées, le nez aplati et le pouce droit tendu vers le bas. Son regard sévère qui scrute l'horizon dans une configuration faciale agressive cadre très bien avec l'idée de quelqu'un qui veut en découdre avec l'ennemi. Le pouce droit baissé vers le bas, en tant que réflexe, annonce une défaite de l'adversaire. Notre propos va dans le même sens que Desmond Mooris, lorsqu'il évoque dans son ouvrage « le langage des gestes » (1994:273) : « le pouce baissé est le contraire du pouce levé qui indique que tout va bien. Il remonte à une habitude de l'ancienne Rome, où il imitait le coup mortel qu'on portait à un gladiateur vaincu dans l'arène. Si la foule voulait la mort de l'homme, elle baissait le pouce, comme pour plonger l'épée dans son corps. Comme le public était assis autour de l'arène, en hauteur, le corps ne pouvait être donné que vers le bas ». De nos jours, le pouce baissé a conservé son sens négatif. En associant à dessein cette image non valorisante du chef de l'État et la phrase suivante « si je quitte le pouvoir, ce sera une guerre civile de dix ans », *Le Patriote* nous donne la preuve que la mise en scène de l'écrit et de l'image, souvent utilisés hors de leur contexte d'origine, peut effectivement créer de vives tensions, par la manipulation et la désinformation du public. Les photos représentent une arme puissante dans la guerre médiatique car elles sont utilisées pour anéantir ou ridiculiser : par exemple, les journalistes ivoiriens ont la manie de renverser les photos. Cette façon de procéder participe de la dégradation de l'image de l'adversaire, au même titre que les caricatures et les sobriquets (Woudi de mama (Gbagbo), brave tchê (Alassane Dramane Ouattara) ou N'zuéba (Henri Konan Bédié) qui permettent de dépeindre des situations ou des leaders politiques par la moquerie. Dans ce sens, note Reffiel Remy (2005:180) : « la dramatisation et la théâtralisation de la vie politique sont une autre méthode qui a fait ses preuves depuis quelque temps. Elles consistent à assimiler la politique à un spectacle, à jouer constamment sur les affects aux dépens des programmes, des propositions et des idéologies [...]. Il s'agit à chaque fois de privilégier les effets d'annonce (faire savoir et faire croire qu'on agit) et les effets d'emballage (habiller les mesures prises pour leur donner davantage de visibilité ... ».

Toujours dans le sens du combat, *Le Patriote* (proche d'Alassane Dramane Ouattara) donne de la voix en ajustant son tir, cette fois, sur le couple présidentiel : « Gbagbo joue avec son destin pendant que Simone réfléchit à son sort ». Ce titre à la fois « compatissant », moqueur et pessimiste se trouve bien illustré par une photo qui présente le couple sous un mauvais jour. Le Président Gbagbo a l'air anxieux et son regard (est) hagard. Cette image est différente de celle d'Alassane Dramane Ouattara qui, lui, présente un visage radieux et serein comme pour traduire qu'il est l'homme de la situation. *Le Patriote* évoque également le sort de 30 000 chômeurs durant

les six jours (en novembre 2004) d'accrochage entre la Force (française) Licorne et les jeunes patriotes ivoiriens pour annoncer les difficultés qui attendent Gbagbo quant à la gestion de ces citoyens déversés dans la rue.

Aucune guerre ne se gagne sans alliés, note le Président Laurent Gbagbo lors de sa rencontre avec le peuple Akyé en mars 2003. Cette assertion est d'autant plus justifiée que les grandes guerres militaires ont été remportées par des coalitions. En effet, pour vaincre l'Allemagne et ses alliées, la France, l'Angleterre, l'URSS et les USA ont constitué (1939-1945) une coalition forte et solidaire. En Côte d'Ivoire, cette coalition s'est même transposée dans la presse. Pour mieux mener leur combat, les organes proches de l'opposition (RDR, PDCI, Forces Rebelles, MFA, etc.) défendent non seulement les mêmes points de vue, mais sont également parvenus à publier en commun un numéro hors série le 29 novembre 2004, où l'on peut lire les événements de la Côte d'Ivoire aux « colorations » des journalistes de l'opposition. On peut faire donc l'hypothèse qu'il s'agit là d'un puissant arsenal de guerre pour mettre fin au pouvoir de Laurent Gbagbo, en tentant de l'isoler aussi bien sur le plan national, africain, qu'international.

À ce propos, le contrat de représentation qui lie les hommes politiques aux journaux qui les accompagnent dans la conquête du pouvoir est respecté. Dans cet ordre d'idées, on pourrait citer Alphonse Djédjé Mady, Secrétaire Général du PDCI qui harangue son auditoire, en ces termes, lors d'un meeting : « Si Gbagbo est isolé, le PDCI, quant à lui, présent sur les fronts, se rassemble et que de la sorte, c'est la guerre de tous contre un seul ». Pendant que *Fraternité-Matin* (quotidien gouvernemental) et *Notre Voie* (proche du FPI) dénoncent crânement l'attitude belligérante de la force Licorne en condamnant les horreurs et les atrocités perpétrées par celle-ci sur les Ivoiriens, *Le Patriote* et *Le Nouveau Réveil* sont préoccupés par autre chose. Oblé Narcisse (DEA : 2005 ISCOM/UCAO) note dans un travail d'évaluation que « dans ce numéro Hors série n°3, le Professeur Alphonse Djédjé Mady pense que cette tuerie a été planifiée par le pouvoir en place. Lors d'une déclaration de son parti, il soutient la France et son armée ». Il s'agit là de l'illustration parfaite de la guerre dans les médias en 2004.

D'ailleurs, suite à l'attaque de la ville de Gohitafla, dans le centre-ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire, en zone de confiance, le porte-parole des Armées, dans une mise au point rendue publique le 10 juin 2004, a fustigé la presse dont les écrits sont qualifiés de « tendancieux et sous-tendus d'intentions inavouées ». Il a marqué son mépris par rapport aux auteurs de ces articles dont l'attitude est comparable, selon lui, à celle des terroristes ou des gens sans foi ni loi qui disposeraient d'une arme de destruction massive.

Cette coalition se continue en 2005 avec le quotidien *Le Nouveau Réveil* du 15 septembre 2005 qui (s)'annonce dans une autre Une, proche de celle de *Le Patriote*, où l'on peut lire « Le FPI dans sa logique de guerre ». À la suite de ce titre, il cite Affi N'guessan, président du FPI : « écarter Gbagbo c'est la guerre ». Cette citation est écrite en rouge pour bien marquer le caractère grave et dangereux d'une telle déclaration. Mais pour mépriser son auteur, *Le Nouveau Réveil* écrit en sous-titre « KKB répond à Affi : « Gbagbo sera écarté, pian ! ». Il faut rappeler que KKB est le président des jeunes du PDCI. Dans cette guerre dans les médias, à forte base psychologique, il faut, pour mobiliser et rassurer ses troupes, mépriser l'adversaire. C'est pourquoi, le PDCI, en laissant le jeune KKB répondre au Président du parti au pouvoir, tente de discréditer ce dernier. D'ailleurs l'interjection purement ivoirienne « pian » qui pourrait signifier dans ce contexte « de toutes les façons » montre que le parti de Konan Bédié ne prend pas au sérieux la menace de l'adversaire.

Le Nouveau Réveil et *Le Patriote* confirment leur alliance dans leur livraison du 26 octobre 2005 dans laquelle on peut lire (pour le premier) « Gbagbo ancien président » et (pour le second) « Gbagbo : la fin d'un règne nul ! ». Les termes de « ancien » et de « fin » montrent bien que ces deux quotidiens se trouvent en harmonie dans leur logique de tourner la page, de l'histoire de la Côte d'Ivoire, sans Laurent Gbagbo. On peut alors avancer avec Erik Neveu (2004:35) que la notion de champ « invite à penser l'espace du journalisme comme un univers structuré pour des oppositions à la fois objectives et subjectives, à percevoir chaque titre et chaque journaliste dans le réseau des stratégies, des solidarités et des luttes qui le lient à d'autres membres du champ... ». Nous ajouterons qu'en France, dans les années 90, c'est le sociologue Pierre Bourdieu qui, le premier, a forgé et utilisé la notion de champ dans ses travaux sur le journalisme. Il s'agit d'un espace social régit par des antagonismes divers dont la principale limite est le recours à la déontologie et à l'éthique.

En outre, il faut ici signaler la composition chromatique qui présente un intérêt particulier. Dans le titre (à la Une) « Gbagbo : la fin d'un règne nul », *Le Patriote* écrit « Gbagbo » en couleur noire, « la fin d'un règne » en couleur rouge. Rappelons que la couleur noire, dans sa connotation négative signifie enfer, deuil, péché, mort, regret, etc. Nous ajoutons que l'une des clés pour comprendre les mécanismes de la guerre des médias passe nécessairement par la connaissance et la maîtrise du symbolisme des couleurs. Par exemple, le fait d'écrire en noir « Gbagbo », c'est signifier au lecteur que le chef de l'État est définitivement mort politiquement parce qu'il part en enfer (caractérisé par la couleur noire) pour y répondre de ses actes odieux (caractérisés par la couleur rouge). Naturellement, il ne s'agit pas ici de l'enfer au sens théologique

d'absence de grâce mais de prison, de Tribunal Pénal International et autres contraintes ou privations susceptibles de ternir à jamais son image. Ce titre est renforcé par une photo qui montre Laurent Gbagbo, les yeux baissés, les bras croisés et vêtu d'une chemise locale dont les motifs gais pourraient être confondus (par ses détracteurs) avec des gouttes de sang, comme pour signifier qu'il reconnaît et regrette les actes qui lui sont reprochés.

Notre Voie, proche du Président de la République Laurent Gbagbo, réplique dans sa livraison du mardi 21 septembre 2005, avec une Une ressemblant à celle de ses adversaires : « La France et le bloc rebelle veulent frapper ». Il s'agit d'un gros titre en couleur rouge qui annonce une attaque violente et meurtrière. Ce titre est accompagné d'une photo où l'on voit le président français Jacques Chirac au centre entouré de Henri Konan Bédié à gauche et d'Allassane Dramane Ouattara à droite, tous les deux respectivement présidents du PDCI et du RDR. L'image d'Allassane Dramane Ouattara montre un personnage avec une bouche tordue dans une configuration faciale qui annoncerait dans l'imaginaire de ses adversaires un être sanguinaire, prêt à détruire des vies humaines et à brûler la Côte d'Ivoire pour accéder au pouvoir, à n'importe quel prix. A la guerre comme à la guerre, cette photo est la réplique de celle de Laurent Gbagbo dans *Le Patriote* du 15 septembre 2005. Quant à Jacques Chirac, il ne présente aucun signe particulier. Il s'agit là d'une photo standard, quelconque, qui signifierait que l'homme Chirac est banal, et qu'il ne mérite aucune considération. En revanche, *Notre Voie* a présenté curieusement une très belle photo de Henri Konan Bédié, comme pour montrer le visage « mignon » d'un enfant gâté qui, dans l'imaginaire collectif des patriotes, suit naïvement les destructeurs de son propre pays, donc un individu totalement inconscient des enjeux de cette guerre. Sur cette photo, on ne voit aucun souci dans le visage de Henri Konan Bédié, comme si son pays ne traversait aucune crise. Ce discours iconique a été choisi à dessein par la rédaction du quotidien *Notre Voie* pour situer les responsabilités dans le camp de ce qu'il appelle le bloc rebelle. Un autre élément important, dans ce titre, est l'implication de l'ancienne puissance tutélaire aux côtés des rebelles. La présence française est considérée par les patriotes comme une trahison par rapport à la coopération militaire qui lie les deux pays, et par les politologues comme étant le début de l'internationalisation de la guerre en Côte d'Ivoire.

Dans le même sens, Naguémang Wanmé écrit :

on voit également entrer progressivement en scène des chefs d'État, les diplomates africaine et française (Laurent Gbagbo, Blaise Compaoré, Dominique de Villepin), des groupes et des espaces (nord/sud, l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire) ; on y aborde des questions économiques, géopolitiques,

historiques, etc. Mais dans son rôle d'information, on constate par ailleurs, que la presse dans son ensemble participe de la nomination du conflit lui-même, autant que sa vision structurante en différents mouvements et identités socio-politiques en présence. Ainsi, quelques titres du 20 septembre 2002, lendemain de l'éclatement du conflit sont significatifs : *Le Monde* informe d'un soulèvement militaire en Côte d'Ivoire, alors que *libération* indique dans son gros titre que l'État vacille en Côte d'Ivoire. Dès ce deuxième jour du conflit, le dossier de *libération* contient déjà une interview d'un spécialiste de la Côte d'Ivoire dont le titre est : « Le pouvoir manque de légitimité », et le reportage est une correspondance d'Abidjan. *Le Monde* attendra un jour de plus, le 21 septembre 2002, titrer qu'« Une tentative de putsch souligne la fragilité de la Côte d'Ivoire ». Nous ajouterons que le 23 septembre 2002, *Libération* publie un article intitulé « Un règlement de compte déguisé ». Ce journal avance qu'il n'y a eu « ni mutinerie ni coup d'État mais quelque chose qui ressemble fort à un règlement de compte interne au régime (Wanmé 2004:12).

Ces premiers titres de la presse française, non des moindres, donnent raison à *Notre Voie* du 21 septembre 2005 qui annonce l'implication de la France aux côtés des rebelles, car à bien comprendre les termes « légitimité » et « fragilité » utilisés par les journalistes français, on découvre leur fonction d'orientation (de leur public) dans le sens habituel d'une dictature (de Gbagbo). Ce contrat de représentation entre la presse française et ses lecteurs est classique de la caricature du continent africain peint de manière grossière et catastrophique.

Notre voie du 26 octobre 2005 réitère son accusation : « Acculée, la France livre Poncet », tout en rappelant dans un gros titre que « l'ONU met le G7 en garde ». Ici *Notre Voie* fait un contrepois à la France en indiquant la mise en garde du G7 dont elle est alliée, comme pour signifier que l'ONU, (dans l'entendement commun, à tort ou à raison, est la « chose » des USA) donc les États-Unis d'Amérique sont aux côtés de la république légale (sous contrôle de Laurent Gbagbo) contre la France et ses alliés, les rebelles. La présence de la guerre ne fait aucun doute dans les médias ivoiriens, avec sa forte dose psychologique et sa mise en scène sur fond de manipulation et de désinformation.

Les médias dans la guerre en Côte d'Ivoire

Les médias ivoiriens ont déserté le terrain de l'information au profit de commentaires et d'éditoriaux partisans. La conséquence d'une telle déviation est marquante avec des rédactions saccagées, des journaux ayant déposé le bilan et des journalistes assassinés. En 2004, Reporters Sans Frontière (RSF) dénombrait 53 journalistes tués dans l'exercice de leur métier, soit le bilan le

plus lourd. Avec le double, l'année 2005 a battu ce triste record. Et le contexte général de la liberté de la presse se révèle plutôt morose car plus d'un tiers de la population mondiale vit dans un pays où aucun média indépendant n'existe. Au Népal, en Afrique ou en Chine un journaliste peut passer plusieurs années en prison pour un mot ou pour une photo. Quant au contexte ivoirien, en cette période de guerre, il nous livre les données suivantes.

Depuis septembre 2002, Alfred Dan Moussa, Président (d'alors) de l'Observatoire de la Liberté, de la Presse et de la Déontologie (OPELD) note qu'aucun organe de presse n'est en sécurité dans ce pays ». Par exemple, entre le 20 septembre et le 9 octobre 2002, le quotidien *Le Patriote* (proche du RDR) n'a pu être présent dans les kiosques, parce qu'un danger réel inquiétait sa rédaction, aux dires de Méité Sindou, le rédacteur en chef, d'alors, qui expliquait à la délégation de Reporters Sans Frontière à Abidjan, la situation de son journal. Le 14 octobre 2002, César Etou, rédacteur en chef du quotidien *Notre Voie* (proche du FPI) est victime d'une agression physique, en fin de journée, dans une rue d'Abidjan. Le même jour, le quotidien *Le Nouveau Réveil* (proche du PDCI) publie, sur une page entière, un appel à la communauté internationale et à tous les défenseurs des droits de l'homme, annonçant l'enlèvement programmé de Denis Kah Zion, son directeur de publication, et de certains de ses collaborateurs. Par ailleurs, le 16 octobre 2002, vers 9 h 30, des individus dont certains sont armés forcent le portail du siège du groupe Mayama qui édite les quotidiens proches du RDR, saccageant ainsi gratuitement l'ensemble du matériel des rédactions. Le 20 octobre 2002, le domicile du directeur du quotidien *Le National*, Tapé Koulou, fut attaqué par des hommes armés, tuant sa sœur et son ami. Le 17 octobre 2002, Gael Mocaer, journaliste free-lance, de nationalité française, est interpellé par la Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST), puis libéré le 23 octobre 2002. Quant à Anne Boher, journaliste de nationalité française, travaillant pour le compte de Reuters, elle a été interpellée par les forces de l'ordre à San-Pedro.

De simples arrestations, les choses sont passées à une dimension cruelle, dépassant tout entendement avec la mort de Kloueu Gonseu, journaliste ivoirien à l'AIP, le 19 mars 2003, dont le corps a été retrouvé dans la région de Toulepleu, à l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire. Le 23 octobre 2003, Jean Hélène, correspondant de Radio France Internationale en Côte d'Ivoire, de nationalité française, a été tué par balle alors qu'il s'apprêtait à rencontrer quelques opposants sortis de prison. L'homme d'affaires multiscartes, de nationalité française, Guy André Kieffer, est porté mystérieusement disparu en septembre 2004.

Dans la partie sous contrôle des Forces rebelles, les journalistes ivoiriens ne sont pas les bienvenus parce que systématiquement soupçonnés d'espions

pour le compte de Laurent Gbagbo. Dans cette optique, le 20 septembre 2003, Christophe Koffi, correspondant de l'Agence Ivoirienne de Presse au Burkina Faso, se rendant au nord de la Côte d'Ivoire, dans le cadre de ses activités professionnelles, a été arrêté à Korhogo par les chefs rebelles. En outre, les journaux *Notre Voie*, *Le Courrier d'Abidjan* et *Le Temps*, proches du FPI, y sont interdits.

Il va de soi que ces exactions au Nord comme au Sud ont pour seul but d'empêcher les journalistes de faire leur métier, ce qui constitue une entrave à la liberté de la presse, à la liberté d'opinion et d'expression, mais elles présentent aussi des conséquences politiques et économiques. Par exemple, quatre organes (*Le Patriote*, *Le Libéral*, *Le Front* et plus tard *Le Nouveau Réveil*) ont fait l'objet d'une interdiction de vente dans certaines villes, au motif qu'ils soutiennent la cause des rebelles armés.

Face aux menaces des militants de tout bord politique (les uns dénonçant la collaboration avec les rebelles, les autres dénonçant la pensée unique du pouvoir en place), la société de distribution Edipresse a décidé le 21 octobre 2003, de surseoir à la livraison de journaux dans quelques localités au regard de la tension observée. A l'effet de débattre de la question, les responsables des instances d'autorégulation et de régulation se sont réunis pour trouver une solution d'apaisement. Malheureusement, les menaces vont s'amplifier au point que le 31 octobre 2003, toute la Côte d'Ivoire, sous contrôle gouvernemental, est privée de journaux. Cette situation a entraîné pour bon nombre de rédactions un manque à gagner car un journal est avant tout « une entreprise qui doit respecter les règles du système économique : les frais de production, de distribution et de vente doivent être compensés par des recettes [...] qui sont représentées par les exemplaires vendus et par les insertions publicitaires », note Touré Dramane Mohamed (2005) dans un travail d'évaluation en DEA, à l'Institut de Communication de l'Université Catholique d'Abidjan. Cette situation de guerre a donc fait subir à la presse ivoirienne énormément de désagréments, ce qui fait dire, dans un communiqué publié dans le quotidien Nord-Sud n°351 du 14 Juillet 2006, à la page 4, par le Groupement des Editeurs de Presse de Côte d'Ivoire (GEPCI), signé de son Président Kah Zion Denis que « la Presse quotidienne et hebdomadaire est dans un état de déséquilibre structurel et financier sans précédent. En 2001 et 2005 la diffusion a connu une baisse de sept millions et demi d'exemplaires, soit un recul de près de 25 pour cent sur le marché. La situation continue de s'aggraver : le nombre de lecteurs s'est effondré en moyenne de 40 pour cent au cours du premier semestre 2006... ».

Notre Synthèse

Trois choses marquent notre esprit : le journaliste, son public et le politique qui constituent les acteurs essentiels de cette crise. Mais avant, nous nous permettrons de relever que le phénomène du journalisme d'opinion en Côte d'Ivoire n'a guère été analysé. De cette négligence, on ne saurait s'étonner, car tend à prévaloir, de nos jours, l'étude des structures économiques et sociales et de leurs modifications. Dans cette perspective, le sociologue, le communicologue ou l'historien sont le plus souvent occupés à comprendre comment les crises présentes s'inscrivent dans des conditions objectives et travaillent à les transformer.

Perçu comme un acteur privilégié de la crise, le journaliste d'opinion, lui ne paraît pourtant qu'un figurant dont le comportement est déterminé par celui des hommes politiques qui l'actionnent. Pourtant, si au début des années 90, des journalistes ont contribué à la naissance du multipartisme et de la pluralité des opinions, on note aujourd'hui, de manière nette, qu'ils ne brillent plus particulièrement par leur sens civique, ni par l'obligation déontologique, ni éthique, mais plutôt par leur degré de militance idéologique. Les rédactions ont à leur tête des hommes et des femmes dont l'expression est celle d'autres hommes (hiérarchie politique), réduisant le journaliste à une courroie de transmission. Le journalisme d'opinion devient alors à la fois une incorporation de valeurs et une aliénation qui, comme toute aliénation, n'exclut pas le sentiment d'appartenance à la « tribu ». C'est ce qui fait dire, de manière pertinente, à Virginie Kouassi, Directrice des études à l'Institut des Sciences et Techniques de la Communication (ISTC) à Abidjan, lors d'un séminaire sur le thème « Que pensent et disent les Ivoiriens de la presse et des journalistes ? » : « La plupart des journalistes sont des militants. Leurs écrits sont trop partisans, trop partiels, trop partiels. L'enthousiasme de départ qu'on a de voir sur le marché une diversité de titres s'évanouit très vite quand on cherche à aller en profondeur des choses. Quand on cherche à s'informer véritablement, quand on veut se faire sa propre opinion des événements et des situations. On a l'impression que vous, journalistes, ne faites pas confiance à notre capacité de jugement, vous voulez tout nous dire mais à votre façon. »

Dans un tel contexte, le journaliste d'opinion n'échappe pas aux mécanismes de façonnement de l'esprit car il forge des réflexes et se soumet à l'autorité de son double paternel et maternel, le leader politique qui finance le journal. Comme chez les Anglais : « qui paie le violon mène la danse ». ! Il s'auto-dirige dans le monde de la servitude consentie car il le sait : seule une application rigoureuse de la ligne du parti permettra d'atteindre l'objectif fixé. De par sa situation privilégiée dans ce contexte des enjeux politiques nouveaux, il se trouve au centre d'un réseau important de communication,

transmettant aux membres du parti politique les informations, les mots d'ordre de son organisation et son interprétation des événements. En retour, il fait remonter les réactions, les opinions et les sentiments de la base vers la direction du parti afin de vernir la relation d'un « démocratisme », alors qu'en réalité, on en tiendra compte que passablement. Si les directives de son organisation sont déjà préparées et prêtes à être diffusées sous forme de tracts, d'articles ou même de prise de parole auxquels il n'a pratiquement rien à dire, il n'en va pas de même de l'autre opération, dans laquelle il joue un rôle fondamental : il ne transmet jamais au hasard les faits bruts ni la relation des discussions internes, mais il les reconstruit en tenant compte habilement des désirs et des sentiments de son public par rapport à l'idéologie et aux stratégies spécifiques du parti. Souvent, il se comporte en porte-parole de certaines positions, se faisant l'écho (en interne) de la conciliation pour dissiper des malentendus tendancieux ou (en externe) des menaces pour intimider ou répondre aux partis adverses. C'est ce qui fait dire à Bahi Aghi Auguste (2001:130) que « dans les sociétés démocratiques, les médias sont un acteur à part entière des processus sociaux et politiques. Les médias permettent au public d'apprendre des choses dans divers domaines et sont parfois le seul contact qu'une personne puisse avoir avec la réalité politique ». Mais on pourrait se demander si les informateurs sont sincères car leur pouvoir de conviction, si pouvoir de conviction il y a, reposerait beaucoup plus sur celui de l'idéologique que sur des valeurs professionnelles. Le développement de la presse d'opinion en Afrique noire est donc lié à l'apprentissage démocratique, donc il s'agit là d'un processus normal. En revanche, ce qui l'est moins, c'est son contenu sectaire, souvent « tribaliste ». C'est dans ce sens que nous concluons avec Zio Moussa (document tapuscrit non daté que l'auteur a remis à certains de nos étudiants de Licence (2006) lorsqu'il dit : « la dépendance tant financière qu'idéologique des médias des partis et des hommes politiques a servi à préparer, voire à conditionner, dans une certaine mesure, les esprits au conflit armé ivoirien ». On comprend ainsi que la presse s'est constituée en une instance médiatique dans le sens de Charaudeau, cité par Naguémang Wanmé, dans son travail de DEA (2004:145), c'est-à-dire, une instance de production et non un simple « miroir », à travers un processus de transformation qui consiste à faire passer les faits à travers les mailles du discours qui circulent à travers les schémas de construction et en rapports significatifs avec des occurrences spécifiques, bref une entreprise proche de celle du dramaturge.

Conclusion

Au terme de cette étude, nous comprenons que les médias d'opinion en Côte d'Ivoire sont des armes de guerre pour marquer des positions stratégiques. Les hommes politiques les actionnent bien souvent aux fins de discréditer ou

d'attaquer l'adversaire par une escalade de la violence verbale, scripturale, chromatique et iconique. L'apprentissage démocratique, mal négocié, donne ainsi à déplorer l'usage désordonné et mal compris de la liberté et du pluralisme de la presse. Cette situation confirme notre hypothèse selon laquelle les médias ivoiriens ont contribué, à un haut niveau de responsabilité, à la dégradation du tissu social. D'ailleurs, entre journalistes, on note une absence de confraternité qui est sans aucun doute le reflet de l'animosité entre les partis politiques, en dépit des efforts de l'Union Nationale des Journalistes de Côte d'Ivoire (l'UNJCI), pour susciter un sentiment d'appartenance.

La prolifération de la presse d'opinions a des conséquences sociales, économiques et politiques d'une si grande ampleur qu'elle met à risque l'apprentissage démocratique, car elle tire sa force de la vitalité des partis politiques qui la soutiennent et qui transforment leurs membres en lecteurs conditionnés. Par exemple, l'État major d'un parti dicte et applique son idéologie par l'intermédiaire d'une hiérarchie journalistique fortement soumise et bien structurée. Ceci implique une obéissance quasi aveugle de chaque rédacteur aux ordres et consignes venus du parti politique-employeur.

Face à cette situation, les journaux deviennent des armes dangereuses pour le déséquilibre de la communauté. Il est tout à fait normal que les journaux produisent des éditoriaux différents, mais leurs contenus doivent se manifester dans le respect du civisme, de l'éthique, de la déontologie et des valeurs républicaines. C'est dans ce sens que la crédibilité de la presse est à sauver et son professionnalisme considéré dans sa dimension de stratégie structurelle au service d'un développement durable.

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