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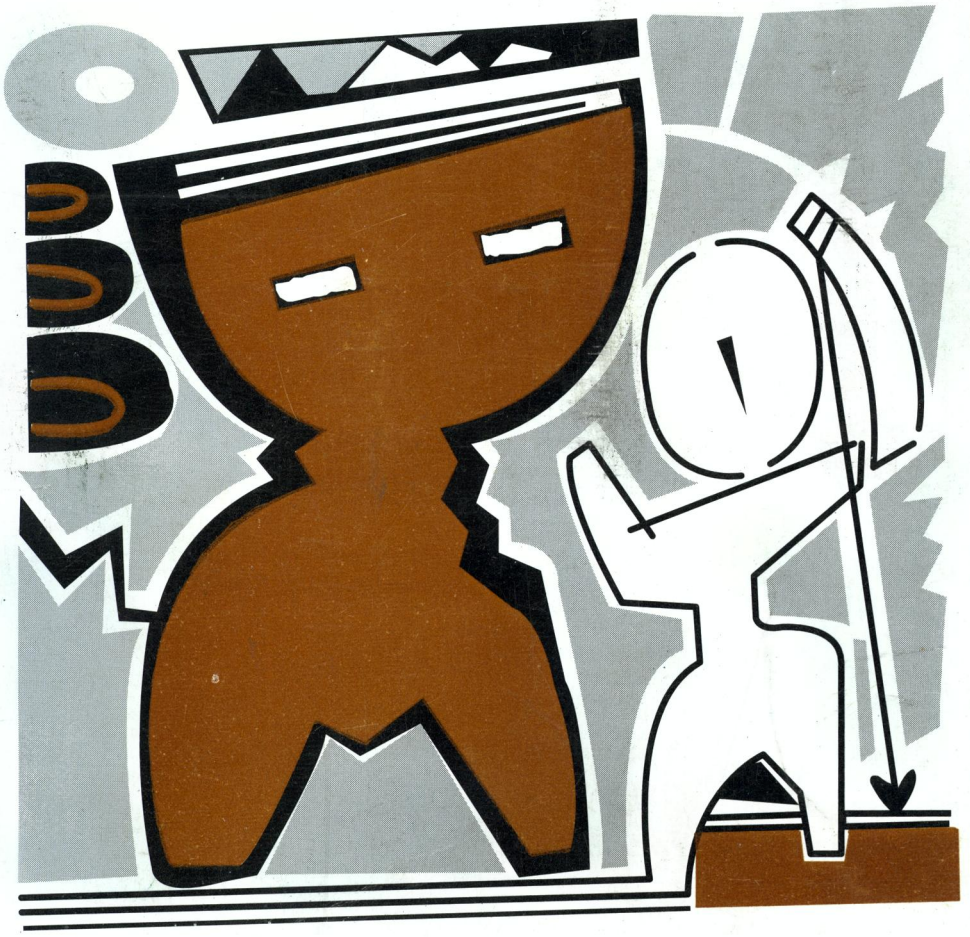

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Africa Development
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Contents / Sommaire
Vol. XXIX, No. 4, 2004


Africa Development, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, 2004, pp. 1–18

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The Alternative Genealogy of Civil Society and Its Implications for Africa: Notes for Further Research[1]

Ebenezer Obadare*

Abstract

Despite its ubiquity in popular and academic discourses, consensus about the epistemological status of the idea of civil society remains elusive. In Africa, the literature is circumscribed by doubts about, first, its applicability; and second, the usefulness of civil society in explicating social processes on the continent. This has generated a conflictive, yet deeply illuminating, scholarship. The paper makes a modest contribution to the debate, first, by mapping the main contours of the existing intellectual divide, and second, critically complicating it by suggesting the emergence of an 'alternative genealogy' that seemingly renders the debate itself redundant. The 'alternative genealogy' seems to have emerged, partly out of the desire to respond to misgivings about the possibility of civil society in Africa, and partly to provide a description of civil society which, while not totally divorced from its original meaning(s), nevertheless strikes out in fresh directions, taking into cognisance the radical ways in which the notion of civil society is being used across non-Western societies in general. The paper concludes with an examination of the implications of this re-imagining of civil society for both theoretical analysis and practical engagement.

Résumé

Malgré son omniprésence dans les discours populaires et académiques, il n'y a toujours pas de consensus bien défini autour du statut épistémologique de la notion de société civile. En Afrique, la littérature est circonscrite par des doutes relatifs à l'applicabilité de cette idée, et à l'utilité de la société civile en matière d'explication des processus sociaux en cours au niveau du continent. Ceci a généré un débat académique à la fois conflictuel et assez éclairant. Cette

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présentation apporte une modeste contribution à ce débat, tout d'abord en traçant les principaux contours de la division intellectuelle existante, puis en exacerbant celle-ci de manière critique en suggérant l'émergence d'une 'généalogie alternative' qui rend le débat superflu. La 'généalogie alternative' semble être née de la volonté de réagir aux doutes relatifs à la possibilité d'instauration d'une société civile en Afrique; elle découle également, en partie, de la volonté de fournir une description de la société civile qui, tout en ne se départant pas totalement de sa (ses) signification originale(s), n'en adopte pas moins de nouvelles orientations, en tenant compte de l'utilisation radicale de la notion de société civile dans les sociétés non occidentales, en général. L'auteur conclut par une étude des implications de cette redéfinition de la société civile, au niveau de l'analyse théorique et de l'engagement pratique.

> It is in the nature of the problem that the debates about civil society remain inconclusive; but these are not, for that reason, fruitless. After all, these debates form parts of a collective reflection on the nature of the conditions which political democracy requires to take root and flourish. Precisely because of its elusiveness and intractability the idea of civil society in the Third World forces us to think about the social terrain behind the explicit political institutions and to try to explicate what happens in that essential but relatively dark analytical space (Sudipta Kaviraj 2001:323).

In lieu of an introduction

Sometime in late 1993, while reporting underground for *TEMPO*, Nigeria's frontline opposition newspaper, I was puzzled by a question put to me by a correspondent of a foreign journal who interviewed me for a story on the activities of what at that time was easily the only audible voice in a gagged Fourth Estate. Having cross-examined me about my motivation for working for a guerrilla publication under such personally perilous circumstances, and having in turn promptly obliged with the right noises about 'justice' and 'equality', he went on to ask me if I had considered the likely implications of the press's exemplary doughtiness for 'civil society' at large. This was my first acquaintance with 'civil society', an article that was just about then making its way into the terminological market, before it became insinuated into the everyday vocabulary of anti-authoritarian and pro-democracy forces in Nigeria, and nay Africa at large. I cannot immediately recall the response I gave to my eager interrogator; but I remember making a mental note to check up on the actual meaning of the strange animal. Suffice to add that since that time, civil society has witnessed a general explosion in its usage to become what John and Jean Comaroff (1999) call the *idée fixe* of the contemporary era, courted by sundry groups to champion, justify or promote various social and political projects.

I have followed on this personal trail to illustrate two points. The first is the by now well-known fact that civil society as an analytic concept did not acquire its contemporary currency in most parts of the African continent, certainly not in Nigeria, until the closing years of the 1980s, after which it then became arguably the epicentre of a major intellectual ferment. Nwokedi rightly observes that 'up until the widespread demand for political reform... beginning in the late 1980s, the use of civil society as an analytic variable in the study of sub-Saharan politics *was an exception rather than the rule*' (Nwokedi 1995:63). A number of factors have been implicated in this process of altogether sudden conceptual fame of the notion of civil society, but it is generally agreed that the most critical singular factor, if any, was the momentous events associated with the collapse of the socialist experiment in the former Soviet Union and the attendant unpopularity of Soviet-like social systems in different parts of the globe. Some would argue, with some merit, that we have yet to see the back of the myriad consequences unleashed by that fateful collapse.

In truth, even before the Soviet Union expired, a popular surge in favour of increased liberalisation of the political space had been evident on the African landscape. To take one example: in 1979, a whole decade before the Gorbachev projects of *perestroika and glasnost* came to grief, a combination of persistent pressure from 'civil society' and a measure of consensus within the highest echelons of the Nigerian military had led to the voluntary transfer of power by the Obasanjo regime to the elected civilian government of Shehu Shagari. This fact becomes more remarkable when it is recalled that the subsequent epidemic of 'democratic' 'transitions' (Diouf 1998) to civil rule across the continent was still, at that time, little more than a forlorn hope. Once the Wall gave way (and the Soviet state 'withered away') however, the dream of social pluralism became more or less instantly realistic. The symbolism of the collapse of the Berlin Wall was not lost on popular forces throughout the continent, and it opened a dam of agitation that has left deep furrows everywhere on the continental landscape. While it may be true that basic ethnographic particulars mainly shaped the nature of oppositional politics that challenged ossified regimes everywhere on the continent, what is virtually beyond any shade of doubt is the fact that in general, the various pro-democracy forces had been massively impressed by the emergent global clamour for a 'civil society'. Howell and Pearce describe this inspirational quality of civil society thus:

> Much of the challenge, particularly in the South and Eastern Europe, came from peoples: workers, intellectuals, clergy, poor women, and young people, who rejected the cruelty and corruption of their governments... 'civil society' was reinvented as a conceptual weapon in this challenge. Initially it represented a claim to the right of self-determination in societies where the totalitarian state denied the very principle (2001:15).

This insight is similarly applicable to the processes of 'democratisation' (yet another conceptual offspring of that heady era) in contexts as varied and apart as Zambia, Togo, Nigeria, Ghana, Gabon, Republic of Benin, and Cameroon (Ihonvbere and Shaw 1998).[2] Civil society became a notional rallying point, an ideological shelter where ordinarily polarised forces pooled their antipathy (momentarily at least) towards the authoritarian African state.[3] This invocation of civil society plugged into a similar awakening in other parts of the world where the idea had come to embody layers of historical meanings. With specific reference to Eastern Europe, Chandhoke has identified three of such meanings. First, the civil society argument sought to limit formerly untrammeled power of the state by the institutionalisation of political, but more importantly, civil rights and the rule of law. Second, and correspondingly, the argument sought to carve out a domain that would function independently of state regulation. Here people, free from state inspired diktat, could engage in projects of all kinds. Third, the civil society argument propelled an important issue onto the political agenda. It simply asserted that the active engagement of ordinary men and women in groups that were smaller than the state, namely family and kinship groups, neighbourhoods, professional and social associations, and voluntary agencies, was a good thing in itself (Chandhoke 2001:2).

A second point that I would like to underscore relates to the epistemological status of civil society as an idea. From the personal anecdote that I briefly recapture above, it would appear that civil society, especially when narrowly defined in relation to certain specific practices, might not be as alien to the African landscape as a section of the theoretical literature on the subject definitely makes it out to be. When the journalist asked me how I felt about contributing to the strengthening of civil society, he apparently took it for granted that there already *was* a civil society, or at least something approximating to one.[4] More important however, is the light this helps to cast on the crucial distinction between civil society as an idea, and as an existent and functioning reality, a distinction usually glossed over in many studies.

This latter problem is critical because it goes to the heart of the existing debate about the nature and possibilities/limitations of civil society in Africa. This paper makes a modest contribution to this debate, first, by highlighting its main contours in terms of the existing scholarly divide, and second, by critically complicating it by suggesting the emergence of an 'alternative genealogy' (Howell and Pearce 2001) that seemingly renders the debate itself redundant. In order to put these contributions in their proper perspective, I will proceed by summarising the general background to the debate on the nature of civil society in Africa.

An African civil society?

> Civil society...reflects not only a particular stage of historical development in the West but the particular conditions that obtained there and not necessarily in other parts of the world (Gellner 1994:169).

The academic discourse on civil society in Africa might be still growing, but it has nonetheless continued to be haunted by persistent doubts regarding the nativity of the concept, and thus its applicability or otherwise to African social and political circumstances. There is a rough divide between sceptics who doubt the usefulness of civil society in explicating African (nay, non-Western) realities (Hutchful 1994; Callaghy 1994)[5] and relative enthusiasts who see it as a useful tool of analysis, if not of praxis (Lewis 2002; Chan 2002). Occupying the cleavage in between are a good number of scholars who, while admitting the relative merits of the two perspectives, nevertheless advocate caution in the way civil society is used (Chandhoke 2001; Trentmann 1999). What is less obvious perhaps is the larger theoretical controversy into which the divide in question is folded, and of which it is a mere fallout, and it may be appropriate here to reflect briefly on this for the sake of perspective and clarity.

Inevitably, the question of the provenance of civil society has been bound up with the similarly unsettled matter of its definition. In discussing the origins of civil society, scholars invariably have to come to terms with what it means. Thus, it may be impossible to uncouple the meaning from the provenance, especially if one were to appraise civil society from the point of view of its classical Western emanation.

In any case, some scholars argue that this is the only valid and non-contradictory way of conducting any such appraisal (Nairn 1997). 'Civil society', Serif Mardin affirms, 'is a Western dream, a historical aspiration'. Mardin echoes a tradition that traces its genealogy back to Hegel, Adam Ferguson, the Scottish Enlightenment thinker, and, in more recent times, to Ernest Gellner and Adam Seligman. The basic arguments of this school,[6] what elsewhere I have called the 'civil society-as-Atlantic society' school, can be summarised as follows.

First, it is held that civil society, being an outcome of specific processes in the West, is irreproducible outside that self-same geo-political ambiance. The unique history that this Western exceptionalism alludes to is real.[7] We can break it down as follows. According to Adam Seligman, the idea of civil society emerged in late seventeenth century and eighteenth century Europe as a result of 'a crisis in social order and a breakdown of existing paradigms of the idea of order' (Seligman 2002:14). He goes on to specify the character of this emergent crisis as follows: 'Whereas traditionally the foundations or

matrix of social order was seen to reside in some entity external to the social world – God, King, or even the givenness of traditional norms and behavior itself – these principles of order became increasingly questioned by the end of the 17th century' (Ibid). Admittedly therefore, civil society was, *ab initio*, a normative prototype impelled by the felt need to tame the demon of unfeeling individuation unleashed by the forces of rapid industrialisation. The accent on rationality as opposed to feelings that was the immediate by-product of the European Enlightenment, and the emergence of the market as the arena where the new individual could realise his new found 'freedom' had to be tamed by something much larger than the private individual himself, hence 'civil' society'. It was a society, as Tester (1992) said, of 'less barbarous manners'. Note the paradox, then: While 'the developing economy of market relations in the 18th century problematized social existence in new ways', (Seligman 2002:16) creating among other things, the highly autonomous social actor, it also unwittingly invoked 'a greater stress on community, on the "reestablishment" of some public (and perforce communal) space to mediate somewhat what are seen as the adverse effects of the ideology of individualism'.[8] (Seligman 2002:28).

We round off this point with two clear insights, first of the reality of civil society as a unique emanation from a specific conjuncture in Western social and cultural history, and second, as something imagined, a normative understanding of 'what *ought* to be the relationship among the individual, the society and the state' (Howell and Pearce 2001:13).

A second argument, in some ways an extension of the first, is to view civil society as connoting the possession of certain values (for example privacy, individualism and the market) which are present in and actually define the West but are, alas, absent in non-Western contexts. In this light, civil society becomes what the West has but 'others' don't, others in this context ranging from other cultures to other socio-political systems, or at times a combination of both. Within this understanding, Jack Goody notes, civil society becomes 'like human rights... what authoritarian regimes lack by definition. It is what the Greeks, the Enlightenment and we today have; it is what despotic governments, whether in the past or the present, the here or the elsewhere, do not have' (Goody 2002:150). It is also, above all, an understanding that confirms Kaviraj's (2001) wry observation that from time to time (or for some time), civil society appears to have been used to 'denigrate the other'.

A third complementary understanding of civil society from within this western-centric paradigm is its conceptualisation as the highest (and qualitatively the purest) in the hierarchy of types of society achieved by different cultural communities. According to this notion, the idea of civil

society could be used to separate (non-Western) societies that are rooted in monarchism and absolutism from those (obviously Western) in which there is a 'regulatory framework accepted by all' (Howell and Pearce 2001:21). The former, seemingly, is the domain of the uncivil, and the latter the civil.

Several critical issues are thrown up by these three modes of understanding. I will address just two. The first is the subtle transformation of the major issue(s) in the critical discourse of the idea of civil society from 'what' it means to the altogether more political issue of 'who' owns it. While it is beyond any argument that civil society is a child of Western political history, it is doubtful whether those who stridently affirm this specificity do not have a different agenda altogether in mind. It is one thing of course to argue that civil society's original spoors can be traced back to the West, but a different matter entirely to use the same fact as a marker between supposedly superior and inferior cultures. For instance, there seems to be more than sheer factual accuracy in Gellner's celebration of civil society as a 'social form among others',[9] one unlikely to be had by 'segmentary non-Western societies ...pervaded by awesome ritual' (p. 103) or for that matter 'ritual-pervaded cousingly republics, not to mention, of course, outright dictatorships or patrimonial societies' (p. 43). A similar affirmation of cultural exceptionalism is found in other thinkers, including Ferguson and, especially, Hegel, for whom civil society is, among other things, 'the *achievement* of the modern world...'[10]. This 'culturalisation' has triggered a multitude of reactions, most especially in other parts of the world where scholars have taken it upon themselves to debate the applicability or otherwise of civil society to their respective socio-cultural contexts. In the specific context of Africa, I have already indicated the existence of two divergent and apparently irreconcilable discursive traditions.

In the second instance, a summary of the three different conceptions outlined above would seem to suggest that, specific nuances apart, they all appear to converge on the imagination of civil society as an idea that ultimately expresses what Howell and Pearce describe as '... the rupture of a society rooted in blood and kinship ties to one whose development rests on the individual freed from such ties...' (2001:19). Clearly, this assumption has obvious implications for African societies, generally believed to be steeped in communal logics. Given this seemingly fundamental epistemological barrier then, how is civil society to be imagined on the continent?

Civil society in Africa: A summary of the main perspectives

Far from being a comprehensive analysis of the extensive literature on civil society in Africa,[11] what follows in this section is an attempt at a somewhat arbitrary taxonomy, the aim being to highlight the broad areas of convergence

and divergence among scholars. In this regard, perhaps it might be appropriate to begin with Peter Ekeh's sagely warning of the danger of '... misapplying Western political constructs to African circumstances, especially when their analyses concern such history-soaked concepts as civil society' (Ekeh 1992:188). This warning would seem to be the benchmark for scepticism about the usefulness of civil society for explicating African, nay non-Western realities. In broad terms, Ekeh's scepticism is shared by, among others, Hutchful (1991), Mamdani (1997), Gyimah-Boadi (1997), (Mustapha 1998) and Africanists such as Orvis (2001) and Callaghy (1994); and Chandhoke (2001) and Darnolf (1997).

We should state straightaway that these scholars have been grouped together for the sake of analytic convenience, for in truth, there exist several subtle differences in their opinions. What would seem to unite them is the element of doubt, particularly at what Callaghy, in an objection that recalls Ekeh, articulates as the impropriety of using a 'vague, often confusing and ever shifting concept', one with 'all its attendant historically specific baggage', to analyse African social systems. While the first part of the complaint about civil society being ambiguous and imprecise may come across as familiar, it is the latter rejection based on the presumed foreignness of the idea that appears to cut across the sceptics' ranks. Perhaps there is a need to state more clearly the fundaments of this rejection.

It is true that in seeming defiance of Ekeh's cautionary note, civil society has been liberally used to describe and analyse a variety of situations and promote sundry intellectual and political projects. As I already explained above, this 'democratisation' is partly explicable by the circumstances surrounding the latest emergence of the idea and its perceived appropriateness for the enunciation of a pluralist agenda in confronting entrenched dictatorships throughout the African continent. Admittedly however, this 'promiscuous' (Deakin 2001) embrace has had its own untold consequences, one of which is the obvious lack of attention to the historical and cultural particulars which the Ekeh school believes is so fundamental. Blaney and Pasha (1993) arguably had a similar menace in mind when they also lamented the perceived failure of Third World conceptualisations of civil society in general to take into account 'matters of structure and process' – another oblique reflection of the seeming uneasiness with the geo-cultural ancestry of the idea.

While uneasiness at the alien nativity of civil society may be one source of scepticism, there are, in general, those who have even deeper problems with the allied issue of its unresolved 'ontological status' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). This is a more direct reference to the miasma of imprecision that has always surrounded civil society, even within the western universe of its origins.[12] The argument would seem to be: If civil society cannot be held

down to a particular definition, or even a set of meanings, how useful can it be in explaining dynamic social processes? Callaghy for example doubts 'whether civil society as commonly defined can do much to elucidate important processes in contemporary Africa, can do more than label them vaguely, can be more than a "metaphor masquerading as a player"' (1994:235). He continues: 'The current search for "civil society" is much like the long Africanist flirtation with class analysis; you often "find" what you go looking for if you just try hard enough. In the case of civil society, I would argue that there is even less reality out there than with "classes"' (1994:250). In a similar vein, Hutchful warns that:

> As a historical moment... the notion (civil society) is associated with fundamental transformations in western society and economy that do not *necessarily* apply to the African condition (capitalist modernisation, urbanisation, the communications revolution and growth of literacy, the dissolution of traditional bonds and the decline of religious consciousness (Quoted in Van Rooy 1998:22).

By contrast, he concludes, 'African "associational life" is most often made up of ascriptive groupings (organisations one is born into) rather than voluntary ones, and ones that may be entwined with the State and ravaged by outside forces (ethnicity, sectarianism, etc)' (Quoted in Van Rooy 1998:22).

Two interrelated issues emerge here. The first is the rejection of civil society based on its valid appreciation as a foreign concept. The second issue, one that has been further explored in the more recent African discourses of civil society, is the rejection of civil society because of its presumed incompatibility with some basic elements of the African socio-cultural make-up. This problem is what Hutchful's allusion above to Africa's plethora of ascriptive groupings aims to capture. This position is also quite significant, especially as it recalls the arguments of the 'civil society-as-Atlantic society' school that I referred to earlier. Be that as it may, it does raise certain pertinent questions about the nature of civil society in Africa, or even in non-Western contexts in general. For example, does the presence of ascriptive groupings necessarily militate against or make civil society impossible; what are the implications of Hutchful's 'outside forces', ethnicity and sectarianism,[13] for civil society; is Africa really as culturally exceptional as this reasoning would partly suggest?

The intention, of course, is not to attempt to answer these questions here, apart from noting that they have formed part of a larger debate in the theoretical literature on the relationship between kinship, ethnicity and civil society (Barber 2001; Varshney 2001).[14] I have only dwelled on them so as to give a sense of the reasoning behind the position of those who, in the broadest terms, doubt the applicability civil society to African social and political

processes, and the possible theoretical implications of some of the bases of their scepticism. The argument of this school, especially the part of it relating to kinship, seems to have been summed up by Ekeh (1998) thus:

> The... problem confronting the successful adoption of the elements of civil society in Africa concerns the relationships between individuals and kinship... Kinship will continue to be relevant in the lives of millions of Africans who are either threatened by the state or else ignored by its agencies. Yet kinship distorts the expansiveness and universalism of civil society. Civil society requires that the worth of the unique individual be recognised beyond his or her ethnic group. *However, the ideology of kinship imposes restrictions on the moral worth of individuals, with those from outside its domain being morally valued than the kinsfolk... the universalism of civil society helps to offer common moral empathy, whereas kinship is restrictive in its meaning of freedom.* The dilemma of African politics is that the ineptitude of the state emboldens kinship and its organization of ethnic groupings which in turn threatens the operation of civil society appears' (1998).

To advance, these doubts must be counterbalanced with the arguments of the opposing school, which in general is much more convinced of the usefulness of civil society for elucidating African social processes. While those who articulate this position do not doubt the fact of the western provenance of civil society as an idea, they nonetheless argue that an African civil society is not necessarily a contradiction in terms, the relative salience of factors like ethnicity and kinship notwithstanding. According to Michael Bratton, While many pre-colonial cultures in Africa may have lacked states, they certainly did not lack civil societies, in the broad sense of a bevy of institutions for protecting collective interests' (1989:411). One thing is evident here, in making this argument, Bratton, and indeed a majority of scholars of a similar disposition, anchors his reasoning on a particular understanding of civil society, one based on a 'diluted' definition that locates civil society within the mainstream of developments associated with its most recent reincarnation – the struggle for political liberalisation and democratisation of the public sphere. It is in this sense, arguably, that Bratton talks of 'the broad sense of a bevy of institutions for protecting collective interests'.

If that is the case then, civil society is not only useful in describing social dynamics in Africa, it is actually a categorical imperative. Such, it seems, is the range of the analytic vista opened up by this radical interpretation, the basis of which is that civil society is *not*, as Lars Jorgensen (1996) said, 'the prerogative of European-type industrialised countries' (p.40). According to him, 'In any country, its citizens need to organise to protect their families, develop their agriculture or crafts, form some health service or educational

initiative, arrange for their burials and so on. The balance to be struck with the other social sectors varies from country to country and period to period' (Ibid). Chabal (1991:93) adds that civil society 'is indispensable to conceptualise politics in Africa'. In addition, Harbeson argues that '... civil society by definition roots political values in culturally specific value systems and is thus singularly valuable in *overcoming* and counteracting ethnocentrism' (1994:27).

These latter contentions suggest radical possibilities for the study and analysis of civil society, and at the very least appear to capture the variety of ways in which civil society is (being) imagined by various political and social communities on the African continent. Are we then at the end of an era; and might one be justified to declare victory for the 'enthusiasts' in this struggle for the hermeneutic futures of an admittedly difficult concept?

This does not seem to be the case. It is obvious for one that its frequent use notwithstanding, the evanescent property of civil society appears to linger. The Comaroffs have aptly spoken of a concept that constantly 'eludes the critical gaze'. At the same time, doubts still persist about its usefulness for explicating African social processes. It is this situation that makes the emergence of the 'alternative genealogy' all the more crucial, especially as it does seem to respond to these nagging doubts in a definitive way. The basic principles of this genealogy are outlined in the following section.

The alternative genealogy of civil society: The issues

> In many cultures and societies as distinct as South Korea, Palestine, and India, civil society is used in some form to express opposition, whether to the elites of a given country or to global capitalist development writ large... For all of these groups, the most common thread is the use of the concept of civil society to legitimise their right to resist the prevailing development paradigm. In so doing they have shown that the liberal meanings of this concept are now truly contested. For some, these liberal meanings have weakened civil society and emptied it of any real content and meaning; *for others, civil society has enabled critical voices to occupy an intellectual space where an alternative set of values and propositions on how societies ought to develop and change can be put forward, challenging those that would otherwise dominate* (Howell and Pearce 2001:36).

As made clear above, its adoption by several actors and communities in various parts of the world notwithstanding, it has been difficult eradicating the reputation of civil society as a Western import. Thus, expressions of doubt regarding its usefulness appear to have grown in inverse proportion to its popularity and frequency of its use in non-Western contexts. In recent times, these doubts have taken an added urgency given the subtle political ramifications of the use of civil society to demarcate societies that are 'civil'

from those which are not. The civil/uncivil binary is one of the more fascinating developments in the evolution of recent theoretical reflections on civil society, and partly owes its inspiration to the speculations of Gellner (1994) and Seligman (1992) among others. Specifically, Islamic societies have come under closer scrutiny because they have, in most cases, been cited to illustrate the point about the non-feasibility of civil society in non-Western contexts. To take an example from Gellner, the problem about Islamic societies is that they 'exemplify a social order which seems to lack much capacity to provide political countervailing institutions, which is atomised without much individualism, and operates effectively without intellectual pluralism' (1994:29). Islamic societies are part of the so-called 'segmentary societies' (African societies being another) which, according to Gellner, even though they may boast a surfeit of associations, are nonetheless 'total, many-stranded, underwritten by ritual and made stable through being linked to a whole inside set of relationships' (p.100). Hefner (2000) captures the same argument thus:

> That 'Islamic civilization... does not value intermediary institutions between the government and the people, thus precluding the emergence of civil society, and is based on a legal culture of rigidity, thus placing a premium on obedience and social conformity rather than on critical inquiry and individual initiative' (p. vii).

The alternative genealogy of civil society seems partly to have grown out of the desire to respond to these misgivings, and also to provide a description of civil society which, while not totally divorced from its original meaning, at the same time strikes out in newer directions, and takes into cognisance the radical ways in which the notion of civil society has/is being used in different non-Western societies. The challenge for the African continent for example was, as Orvis puts it, 'to create a concept clearly part of the Western tradition, precise enough to have analytical utility, and able to include and reflect the rich associational life of contemporary Africa' (Orvis 2001:20).

What we can refer to as the philosophical bases of the Alternative Genealogy can therefore be summarised as follows: First, that 'in all societies there are values and practices that hover close to the ground and carry latent possibilities, some of which may have egalitarian and democratic possibilities' (Hefner 2000:9). Second, that 'values of mutual support and solidarity exist in the history of human sociability' that for example 'form the basis of a challenge to the predominance of individual accumulation in capitalist development' (Howell and Pearce 2001:36). Third, that civil society has always existed in different forms in other societies. Kamali (1998) for example argues with respect to Islamic societies that civil society was actually there at the very beginning of the establishment of the Islamic political

order, adding the interesting observation that the first Islamic community was referred to as *al-mujtama' al-madani* (civil society), 'with civil here indicating the establishment of the city that was composed of Muslim segments allied on tribal and geographic lines, as well as Jews and others who were allied on similar lines' (p. 249). According to him, therefore, 'the term civil society was not exclusively Western, although the definitions and meanings certainly varied. Islamic civil society was based on diversity' (p. 249). Finally, there has also been an attempt to undermine Gellner's submission that 'civil society is a cluster of institutions and associations strong enough to prevent tyranny, but which are, nonetheless, *entered and left freely*, rather than imposed by birth' (1994:103). Here, Kamali's contention is that, in Iran at least, 'civil society... is not directly conditioned by the existence of "sovereign" and "free" individuals, but by groups or communities and their institutions enjoying a significant degree of autonomy from the state' (p. 36).

One immediate fallout of these postulations is that it underlines the need for a definition of civil society that embraces these concerns without sacrificing the original meanings(s) of the concept; in short a definition that is not 'civilizationally circumscribed' (Hefner 2000:221); and one that no longer conveys 'the dilemmas of a small burgeoning class of male merchants and entrepreneurs in one part of the world'. (Howell and Pearce 2001:37). It is apparently with these concerns in mind that civil society has been loosely defined, for example, as 'a social space where individuals and groups can interact and organise social life' (Kamali 1998:xvii).

This is not to presume of course that this definition is acceptable to all concerned, or to deny for that matter the sheer heterogeneity of the groups and tendencies necessarily involved in this project of 're-inventing' civil society. As Hasan Hanafi (2002) has appropriately observed, '...this reinvention of civil society remains theoretically eclectic and confused. While it is possible to detect some of the values, normative ideals, and intellectual currents that influence the new definition, it does not represent a clear body of ideas that can do much more than critique and challenge. *Nevertheless, such critique and challenge do make it more difficult for dominant institutions to sustain their claim that their vision of civil society is the natural and only one'* (pp. 37–38).

I would like to add that these obvious problems notwithstanding, its benefits cannot be ignored. For one, my main argument in this essay is that this project of re-invention seemingly renders redundant the protracted debate about the applicability or otherwise of the concept which has largely dominated the literature on civil society in Africa over the past decade or so. With the focus arguably shifting to a re-definition of civil society as a space

where groups and individuals can interact and organise social life, and the consequent search for the distinctive elements of the public sphere in various cultural contexts, the concern may have shifted from the applicability or not of the idea to the different ways in which it can be used, among other things, in the cause of social justice.

Possibilities and challenges

These, then, are the possible futures[15] with regard to the use and analysis of civil society, with opportunities and challenges alike for both researchers and activists. For the latter, a re-invented notion of civil society, (reflecting as it were 'a multiplicity of diverse and often diverging voices that share a wish to preserve a concern for a common humanity, undo the negative aspects of capitalist development, and promote forms of economic organization that are environmentally sustainable and socially just' (Hanafi 2002:37) becomes a forum through which power can be easily challenged. It is not difficult to imagine how easily this chimes with current social and political concerns everywhere on the continent where the imperative to align power with the interests of the disprivileged remains strong indeed.

Yet this also comes with its own challenges. If activists want equity, so to say, they must come with clean hands. As Farhad Kazemi (2002) has warned, it should be borne in mind by all concerned that '... only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic civil society can sustain a democratic state. The civility that makes democratic politics possible can only be learned in the associational networks; the roughly equal and widely dispersed capabilities that sustain the networks have to be fostered by the democratic state' (p. 319). Adopting civil society within the alternative genealogy framework thus clearly imposes the burden of tolerance and what Kazemi describes as the willingness to accept the fallibility of one's position and that 'there are no *right* answers'. Before this can be done however, some other things have to be taken into consideration. This brings us to the challenges before scholars. I go back to Howell and Pearce who have entered the caveat 'that civil society does not automatically gain social relevance and meaning as an explanatory or descriptive concept, even though it may in fact adequately describe certain empirical formations. The concept has first to be *owned* before it can have any political significance' (p. 224).

How is this to be done? One possible way might be to follow the path suggested by Jeffrey Crawford (1998), which is for African scholars to make civil society part of our very own 'intellectual capital'. Historians, political scientists, and anthropologists, I would like to suggest, have several roles to play here. The Western discourse of civil society contains a lot of assumptions about the notion especially in relation to the continent that only further

systematic investigations by African scholars can help to either reinforce or refute. Part of this, to cite just one example, relates to the relationship between ethnicity, kinship, associationism and civil society, about which, I believe, further empirical investigations can provide greater insight and illumination.

Notes

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) Biennial Conference held at The Manor House, University of Birmingham, 9–11 September 2002, CODESRIA 10th General Assembly 8–12 December 2002, and the PhD Seminar Series at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Victor Ayeni, Timothy Shaw, Bjorn Beckman, Hakan Seckinelgin, Wale Adebanwi, and Chris Ankersen for their suggestions and comments.
2. Needless to add of course that this challenge inevitably produced a mixed bag of results across the continent, although it is fair to say that the overwhelming result has been largely salutary.
3. A fine illustration is the Campaign for Democracy (CD) in Nigeria, an umbrella body of numerous fissiparous groups which mobilised against the cancellation of the 1993 presidential election and prolongation of military rule.
4. At the level of ideas, this reveals an interesting possibility – of one having something that one may not be aware of. With regard to Africa, could civil society be one such 'hidden property'?
5. It must be added of course that what seems to be the basic fear among the sceptics centres on the possible danger of 'banalising' civil society once it is removed from its original Western-liberal moorings.
6. This is a direct allusion to Gellner. See my 'Civil Society in Nigeria: Conjectures and Refutations' (Obadare 2002).
7. There are of course several contending narratives on the historical evolution of civil society (see for example Nairn 1997, and Chandhoke 1995), but the one that I describe here is arguably the most dominant, or at least the most popular. As Salvador Giner has observed, 'There is no such thing as *the* classical conception of civil society. There is a Lockean interpretation, but there is also a Hegelian one; and then there are Hobbesian, Marxian and Gramscian theories of it' (Giner 1995:304).
8. With minor inflections, variations of this evolution can be found in Gellner (1994), Seligman (1992), Cohen and Arato (1992) and Krader (1976) among others.
9. See Gellner (1994:211).
10. Quoted in Comaroff and Comaroff (1999:3). See also Seligman (1992); and for a summary of other issues involved in this debate, see Orvis (2001).
11. It goes without saying that this cannot be achieved in a study of this nature. For studies with a continental focus, see for example Onwudiwe (1998), Monga (1996), Gyimah-Boadi (1997), and Harbeson et al., (1994).

12. When Michael Kennedy (2001) wrote of 'civil society's polysemous elaboration', he was apparently referring to this difficult conceptual history.
13. For more on this, see Bayart (1986) and Keane (1998).
14. See also Obadare (2004).
15. In their thoughtful and provocative collection of essays, John and Jean Comaroff (1999) also map out possible directions for anthropological studies of civil society in Africa. They emphasise specifically the need for studies that '... disinter the cultural seedbeds and historical sources of anything that might be regarded as an analogue of civil society in Africa', and for those few that consider 'the sorts of public sphere presumed by specifically *African* relations of production and exchange, codes of conduct, or styles of social intercourse, by *African* markets, credit associations, informal economies, collective ritual, modes of aesthetic expression, discourses of magic and reason; by the various strands, in other words, that 'weave the fabric' of the civil here beyond the official purview of governance' (1999:23).

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The Role of NGOs in Fostering Development and Good Governance at the Local Level in Africa with a Focus on Kenya*

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Abstract

Non-governmental organisations have since the colonial period played a major role in socio-economic development in Africa. This role has increased in the post independence period, especially from the 1980s, following the demonstrated failure of the state all over the continent, as a credible provider of basic needs services to the poor both in the rural and urban slums. As a result, instead of channelling development assistance through the state, some donor agencies have during the last two decades or so, opted to do so through non-state actors – especially the NGOs. The Kenyan experience demonstrates that the NGO sector has since the 1980s emerged as a major player in the design and implementation of projects as well as the actual provision of basic needs services to the disadvantaged groups both in the rural and urban areas. Although they are individually engaged in diverse activities, the Kenyan data suggests that the concentration of their activities is – in the social sector (education, health, general welfare). The operational strategies employed to reach the intended beneficiaries varies between direct and indirect interventions depending on the service to be delivered and the institutional configuration on the ground. Where NGOs have opted for direct linkage with service recipients, their activities have tended to elicit negative response from the state as the latter usually prefers to act as intermediary between non-state actors and the service recipients. The impact of NGOs has varied both in terms of quality and quantity of service provided. The variation assumes both service and areal (i.e. spatial) dimen-

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sions, and the factors accounting for the variation are the stability of funding sources as well as commitment by the founders of the organisations to their missions and objectives. The Kenyan case study demonstrates that the sector has emerged as a major player in the provision of basic needs services.

Résumé

Depuis la période coloniale, les organisations gouvernementales jouent un rôle crucial dans le processus socio-économique en Afrique. Ce rôle s'est renforcé au cours de la période post-indépendance, à partir des années 80, tout particulièrement, après que l'état eût montré son incapacité a fournir des services de base aux populations pauvres vivant dans les bidonvilles rurales et urbaines. Ainsi, au lieu d'acheminer l'aide au développement a travers l'État, certains organismes bailleurs de fonds ont choisi, depuis ces deux dernières décennies, d'avoir recours aux acteurs n'appartenant pas a l'État, particulièrement les ONG. L'expérience kenyane montre que depuis les années 80, le secteur des ONG joue un rôle crucial dans la conception et la mise en œuvre de projets, ainsi que dans la fourniture de besoins de base aux groupes défavorisés, aussi bien dans les zones rurales qu'urbaines. Bien que celles-ci soient engagées individuellement dans diverses activités, les informations collectées au Kenya révèlent que leurs activités se concentrent dans le secteur social (éducation, santé, service social global). Les stratégies opérationnelles destinées a atteindre les populations bénéficiaires, consistent en interventions directes et indirectes, selon le type de service à fournir et la configuration institutionnelle sur le terrain. Lorsque les ONG choisissent d'établir un contact direct avec les populations bénéficiaires, l'État réagit souvent négativement, car ce dernier préfère jouer le rôle d'intermédiaire entre les acteurs non gouvernementaux et les populations bénéficiaires. L'impact des ONG a varié, en ce qui concerne la qualité et la quantité des services fournis aux populations. Cette variation concerne les services fournis et l'aspect territorial; elle s'explique par la stabilité des sources de financement, et l'engagement des fondateurs de ces organisations envers leur mission et leurs objectifs. L'étude de cas kenyane révèle que ce secteur joue aujourd'hui un rôle clé en matière de fourniture de services de base.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present an analysis of the performance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in development and good governance at the local level in Africa with a special focus on Kenya. Although reference is made to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the accent of the analysis is on the post-independence period. The data on Africa are drawn from secondary sources and the Kenyan data derive from both secondary and 'field' interviews.

A total of twenty-two NGOs and an NGO regulatory body were interviewed for the Kenyan study, and of the NGOs interviewed, twelve identified themselves as local, eight as foreign and two as pan-African. The information

received from these organisations is presented in section III of the paper. A list containing the names of 2040 NGOs, which had registered with the state NGO Co-ordination Bureau by the end of September 2001, was received and data contained therein are also analysed in section III as well.

Although the term NGO remains conceptually elusive, in this paper the writer is mainly concerned with organisations which are not part of the government, which are voluntarily and legally set up to serve the common good, and are not profit oriented.

From information available, it is possible to classify the NGOs operating in Kenya and Africa at large into two broad categories:

- Indigenous NGOs: that is, organisations that have their roots in the country and are predominantly managed by the indigenous people. Their headquarters are mainly in the capital city, with their branches or field offices located in administrative areas where the NGOs in question are engaged in project development and/or provision of services. There are also the indigenous NGOs whose operations are confined to that level. These are the organisations often referred to as Community Based Organisations (CBOs) or People's Organisations (POs) (Semboja and Therkildsen 1995). Good examples of these in the Kenyan case are the so-called Harambee self-help groups and the village-based women's organisations.
- Foreign NGOs: which operate in the country through what are usually referred to as country offices.

The analysis that follows focuses on the activities of both foreign and local NGOs; and where necessary, identifies the functional relationship that exists between them and the community based organisations operating in similar functional areas. In doing so, the writer discusses, even if only briefly, the situation as it has evolved over the years since the colonial period.

The role of NGOs in a historical perspective

Pre-colonial and colonial periods

For a long time, the state remained the major actor in the development and governance process both during the colonial and the post-independence periods in Africa. With the advent of colonialism, the framework which the various African communities had used for purposes of self-governance and for the provision of basic-needs services, were either destroyed or, when adopted, were at once subordinated to the colonial structures. This was much more the case in the area of governance than in the development front. In the latter case, the communities continued to fend for themselves for the better

part of the early phase of colonial rule. The role of the family as a key production and distribution institution continued to be important, supported by a network of kinship ties, which obligated the kinship group to come to the aid of one another in times of need. This was the case among the various African communities until the colonial authorities registered their presence on the ground through the construction of various facilities intended to supplement or complement the efforts of the 'natives' in service provision.

While the colonial state emerged, especially during the later phase of colonial rule, as a partner in service provision both in the urban and the rural areas, new non-state actors had also emerged at that time and did so with overt support of the colonial state. The emergence and influence of religious organisations as providers of basic-needs services began during this period. Throughout the continent, the missionary organisations established institutions through which basic needs services especially health care and education were subsequently provided. The mission centres also became the only centres, excepting the urban and the European-settled areas, where clean drinking water could be found for the better part of the colonial period. The Protestant and Catholic missionary orders played a major role (Wellard and Copestake 1993).

An equally important role the missionaries played was that of humanitarian assistance through the provision of clothing, foodstuffs, and healthcare, especially for orphans and the destitute, who otherwise could not get assistance from the existing kinship networks. In performing these services, the missionary organisations would emerge as the most important non-governmental actors during the colonial period.

And even in the area of governance, there was a very close working relationship between the missionaries and the colonial administration. Apart from playing the pacification role on behalf of the administration, the missionaries played an important role in fostering the emergence and development of various welfare associations formed by the budding elites. In many instances, they did play a containment role on behalf of the colonial administration, as when they would for example take over or influence the leadership of any organisation that was trying to engage itself in manifestly anti-colonial agitation. The Kenyan experience presented in Oyugi (2002) illustrates this point clearly.

Indeed, in the majority of African countries very few non-missionary NGOs had a noticeable presence before independence. Of the twenty-two organisations interviewed in the Kenyan study, only two had been in existence before independence and one of them was a faith-based organisation. Thus, as Copestake observes, prior to independence, in most African countries, the most prominent NGOs emanated from European settler society, missionary

activity and grassroot society organisations, whose major concerns were welfare and religious activities (Copestake 1993). The situation would however change after independence.

Trends in the post-independence period

In most African countries there was a spate of new NGOs around the time of independence. These organisations have continued to grow ever since (Bratton 1989). According to Fowler, NGOs have mushroomed, doubling and tripling their numbers in many countries since the 1980s (Fowler 1991).

The failure of African governments on the political and socio-economic fronts must be regarded as a major reason for the proliferation of NGOs. Indeed, the growing stature of NGOs in development is related to the decline of the state as the dominant development actor in Africa. There has been a paradigmatic shift since the 1970s in the attitudes of the donors and development policy-makers, away from the state-centred development models towards more participatory bottom-up approaches (Farrington 1993). As a result, the role of NGOs in the development of third world nations and not just in Africa has grown precipitously. Today there are 5,000 international NGOs based in developing countries that work with over 20,000 local NGOs in developing countries (Picciotto 1996). A large percentage of these are in Africa.

A cursory survey of some African countries reveals a steady growth of the NGO sector. In the Central African Republic (CAR) for example, three periods of NGO emergence have been identified:

- From the 1960s through to the beginning of the 1970s (church supported development structures).
- The 1980s, where the economic crisis and aggravation of social problems produced a new generation of NGOs based on the principle that the government cannot do everything.
- The beginning of the 1990s, which was affected by three major features: the permanent economic crisis; the new context of political liberalisation; and UN interventions. The majority of present day NGOs owe their existence to this period (Charancle 1996).

In the Congo, certain developments in the polity influenced the growth of the sector, including the establishment of legal status for associations in 1989, the holding of a national conference in June 1991, where one had to be a member of an organisation to participate, and the holding of international summits and conferences, which opened the way to diversification. These

developments were also a reflection of the inherent economic crisis. (Charancle 1996).

In yet another country – Egypt – civil society (incorporating the NGOs) has grown during the last two decades in response to the growing needs of the country and the political and economic trends towards democratisation and economic liberalisation (Kandil 1999). This can be seen from the fact that in 1976 about 7,500 associations were registered, with the number rising to 22,000 (including 17,000 NGOs) by 1996 with a total membership of about 10 million (Beshasa 1999).

Separate studies by Moyo et al (2000), and Wellard and Copestake (1993) demonstrate that before independence in Zimbabwe, the most prominent NGOs were staffed by the white settlers and missionaries. Independence triggered an increase with many NGOs opening offices in Zimbabwe. Tremendous growth has also been reported in Tunisia, where the number of registered NGOs changed from 1,886 in 1988 to 5,186 in 1991 (Marzouk 1996).

Similarly in Ghana, there has been tremendous growth of the sector, after independence (Fowler et al 1991; Ayee 2002 and Annorbath-Sarpei 1991). One study estimates that while there were only 10 registered NGOs in 1960, by 1991 they stood at 350 (cited in Wellard and Copestake 1993).

The phenomenal growth of the NGO sector in the post-independence period referred above was not the rule everywhere in Africa. NGO growth was less significant in the case of those countries which until recently were ruled by ideologically/socially oriented parties (Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia etc. before 1990s). The NGOs which existed before the 1990s in those countries, operated under very strict state control (see e.g. Duffield 1994 in Ethiopia).

However, since the end of the Cold War, such regimes have ceased to exist; and in the meantime bilateral and multilateral donor agencies have been pursuing a 'new policy agenda' which gives renewed prominence to the role of NGOs and GROs in poverty alleviation, social welfare and the development of civil society (Robinson 1993). This has led one observer (Salamon 1993) to claim that a veritable 'association revolution' now seems underway at the global level that may constitute as significant a social and political development of the latter 20th century as the rise of the nation state was in the latter 19th century.

Explaining the growth of the sector in Kenya

According to available data, Kenya recorded a good growth rate (averaging 6.7 percent per annum) accompanied by some tangible development during the first decade of independence (i.e. roughly up to the middle of 1970s) (Republic of Kenya 1970). But following the oil crisis of that period which directly affected the flow and direction of financial resources, the country

embarked on a downward development trend. By the late 1970s, the country was already facing a development crisis on many fronts. One such important front was food. By 1980 the food situation had developed into a major crisis occasioning the formation of long queues both in rural and urban areas for access to the little that was available in the shops.

The diversion of scarce resources to meet food import requirements together with importation of oil at inflated prices occasioned by the crisis in the Middle East (following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war) deprived the state of money both for development investment and for the provision of services in the existing facilities. As the interview data presented below indicate, this was the same period during which a number of humanitarian organisations either began to operate in the country; or for those which were already in the country, intensified their operations in support of the efforts by the state. World Vision, for example, began to be more visible in the country during this period by providing the badly needed humanitarian assistance among other services.

It is also during the same period that a number of developmental NGOs already operating in the country intensified their activities. In fact, with steady decline in government support for construction of development projects and decline in qualitative and quantitative provision of services, the NGO sector emerged during this period as a major player, especially in the provision of services. NGOs gave special attention to the groups perceived to be inadequately catered for by the state such as the urban poor, orphans, those in need of soft loans for a variety of productive activities, etc (Fowler 1995).

Indeed, there has been tremendous growth in the number of NGOs operating in the country since independence (besides the CBOs). An earlier estimate put them at 291 in 1988 (Fowler 1995). Another source put them at between 400 and 600 in 1989, of which 100 were international (Ng'ethe 1991), and by November 2001, according to an official of the National NGO Council, which is the umbrella organisation for NGOs operating in the country, there were a total of 2039 registered NGOs (personal communication). The NGO Co-ordination Bureau, which is a government body, formed in 1991 to co-ordinate the activities of NGOs in the country, put the figure at 2,220 by December 2001 (personal interview). If the figures quoted above are correct, then there has been a tremendous growth in the sector and that may explain why the government has been jittery about the uncoordinated activities of the NGO sector recently.

The proliferation of NGOs in the recent years can also be attributed to the attitude of the bilateral and multilateral donors. Especially since the mid 1980s these donors seem to have decided to channel a good percentage of development assistance to the country through non-state actors. Indeed, there

are those who argue, as Cross does, that the growth of the NGO sector could be attributed to the perception by both the leftists and rightists in the global system, of the NGOs as a sector through which they can promote their agenda (Cross 1997). Cross further contends that because of the greater power that donors have over these organisations, NGOs represent a convenient avenue for asserting donor influence as opposed to the risks and difficulties of dealing with governmental agencies.

The awareness of the favour that NGOs found in donors' eyes obviously provided an opportunity for all kinds of NGOs to spring up. Secondly, the leaning towards NGOs also coincided with the crisis in governance and the consequent agitation for democratisation of the body politic, which eventually led to the emergence of a number of civil society organisations and other traditional NGOs agitating for openness in the way the government conducted its activities. This development had to be seen within the broader context of the donor pressure for 'good governance' in economic management and the opening up of the political space for fair competition.

Taking their cue from these developments, a number of local (i.e. indigenous) NGOs, especially the church ones – the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCK), the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission, etc. – began to adopt a critical posture vis-à-vis perceived state excesses against the citizens. Other people would also pick courage, as a result of which many organisations would emerge to champion various pro-democracy causes. Organisations such as the Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs), League of Women Voters, ECONEWS, etc. emerged during this period.

As it happens, the advocacy organisations that emerged from the late 1980s to the present have been responsible for putting a great deal of pressure on the state to allow the citizens directly or indirectly to have more say in the way they are governed. It is this movement for good governance, and that fact that most of its funding does come from foreign donor sources, that has largely been responsible for the discomfort of the state that is referred to above. The donor organisations supporting pro-democratisation movements have often been accused of undermining the authority of the state. And such organisations have had their operational areas circumscribed and their freedom of operation curtailed. This is exemplified by the frequency with which the state, through the Provincial Administration (a para-political department of the government with its own security responsible for maintenance of law and order in the localities), has interfered with civic education seminars organised by pro-democracy NGOs such as 4Cs.

On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that a combination of donor intervention and the agitation by locally based NGOs/civil society

organisations has been largely responsible for making Kenya a relatively more open society than it was in the period before the 1990s.

In the interview data presented below the perception of the NGOs regarding their role in development and governance is presented and analysed with a view to demonstrating the role such organisations are playing in Kenya, as is indeed the case throughout Africa.

Presentation of interview data

Interviews were conducted with twenty-two NGOs between April and May 2001 and with the NGO Co-ordination Bureau (the regulatory body) in December 2001. The NGOs were chosen from a list of registered NGOs in the country. A deliberate selection method was employed that ensured that different types of NGOs were included in the study. Particular attention was given to NGOs engaged in development (i.e. those that provide tangible services to local communities) as well as those primarily engaged in advocacy, whether politically oriented or not. The choice of who was interviewed was influenced by the willingness and availability of people in NGOs to be interviewed. As it turned out, of the twenty-two organisations interviewed, eight identified themselves with advocacy; nine with development; and five claimed they were involved in both.

Of the organisations included in the study, two identified themselves as pan-African, meaning their activities are found all over Africa where interested groups have incorporated local chapters. Eight identified themselves as foreign, which means that the Kenyan office is regarded as a country office of a metropolitan-based organisation. World Vision and Action Aid, for example, fall into this category. The remaining twelve identified themselves as local, meaning that they are locally incorporated and operate only within the country.

It is important to point out that those NGOs that regard themselves as being engaged in advocacy are issue-oriented organisations pursuing or promoting a particular value or cause and, therefore, they tend to be more inclusive in terms of who their target groups are, except where the organisation has an exclusive gender focus, e.g. International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) or League of Women Voters. Under the broad rubric of development are included those NGOs that are engaged in the development, management and provision of tangible services to local communities such as water, healthcare, capacity building, etc. They are also involved in the dissemination of values and skills, which are necessary in the implementation of the projects they support and the provision of the services they deliver.

Except for two organisations, all the NGOs studied were either formed in the country during the post-independence period or, in the case of foreign-based NGOs, began operating in the country after independence. The

exceptions referred to are the Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) formed in 1930 under a different name (i.e. Protestant Churches Medical Association, PCMA), and Pathfinder International, which began operating in 1957. Out of the eight organisations that are involved in advocacy, 50 per cent were formed in the period after the mid 1980s when agitation for an open political environment began in earnest; which may explain why most of them are engaged in manifestly political activities and/or political empowerment as in the case of gender based organisations such as the League of Women Voters.

Areas of functional operation

With regard to functional areas of operation, six emerged in terms of frequency of mention from the interviews as follows: Advocacy – 15; Capacity building – 15; Health – 9; Education – 5; Water – 4; Humanitarian intervention – 4. (The figures refer to the frequency of mention and not to the number of organisations exclusively providing the service.) It is important to note that even those organisations that are engaged in purely developmental activities are also quick to add that, more often than not, they are also involved in advocacy, as for example when trying to influence policy-making in their operational areas.

From the responses received, and in relation to the functional areas of operation, it appears that both the local and foreign NGOs perform overlapping functions (or complementary roles?). For example, in the area of capacity building, the responses from foreign and local NGOs suggest that this is a function that is shared equally – almost on a fifty-fifty basis. In the area of humanitarian assistance 67 percent of the service providers are local NGOs. In the area of education, local organisations comprise 40 percent of the service providers, whereas in the health and water sectors, they comprise 44 percent and 50 percent, respectively, of the service providers. Even in the area of advocacy, although the local NGOs seem to be more involved than foreign ones, the responses indicate that up to 34 percent of NGOs involved in advocacy are foreign NGOs.

Apart from the field interview data, the writer also analysed the data from the NGO Co-ordination Bureau for purposes of comparison. Any organisation registered with the Bureau is, among other requirements, supposed to indicate its area(s) of functional operation. From the Bureau data most organisations have indicated more than one area of functional operation, which means a particular given functional area can be mentioned by several organisations if not all. A frequency count was made and the following main areas emerged as the ones, which were indicated by the 2040 organisations, as their areas of operation. These are: Health – 814; Education – 758; Welfare – 752;

Environment – 437; Relief – 290; Informal sector – 264; Water – 263; Multi-sectoral activities – 260; Population – 121; Agriculture – 35; Not recorded – 85; Others – 192. It is clear that the major areas of functional operation are health, education, welfare, and environmental matters.

Advocacy was mentioned only five times and capacity building nineteen times in the NGO Co-ordination Bureau data. Both of them account for only 0.6 per cent. An explanation may be advanced. First, in normal circumstances only very few NGOs would readily identify advocacy as their main area of operation in the registration form, which is to suggest that their actual intended activities may be camouflaged under different activities. And in the case of capacity building it is possible that it could be subsumed under other functional activities such as education. Furthermore, in an interview situation people are most likely to explain what they actually do as opposed to what they are supposed to do.

What emerges from the two sources is that health and education are the two most important tangible functional activities. And the frequency of mention of the two services from the sources of data used is also very close.

Perhaps the information yielded by the data would have been more comparable were a more scientific method employed in the collection of the 'field' data. For the needs of this study, purposive sampling technique was used in order to include in the sample a large enough number of organisations engaged in development and in advocacy. The choice of this method was influenced by the need to build a database that would assist in addressing the key question in the study, namely, what roles do NGOs play in governance and development?

Studies on Zimbabwe present data not too dissimilar to the Kenyan situation. In regard to education, it is stated that 10 percent of all NGOs in that country are involved in this sector carrying out mainly direct literacy activity on the ground or research. 'Advocacy NGOs' account for more than 30 percent of the entire total, mainly focused on Women and Gender issues. A further 3 percent are concerned with child and human rights issues. On the humanitarian front, 15 percent of Zimbabwe NGOs are concerned with supporting communities in dire straits due to the agricultural upheaval. As a direct result, 30 percent of the NGOs are specifically concerned with agriculture and food security (Moyo et al 2000). In the developing countries generally, and in many African counties, the perception of NGOs as service providers is quite well established.

Operation by geographical areas

There is evidence that Kenya is well covered by the activities of NGOs. Of course, there are some areas that are over-represented. The reason appears to

be that in choosing where they go or from where they will operate, NGOs are sometimes influenced by parochial factors. This is to say that where the founders of an NGO happen to come from one area of the country, one would obviously expect a conspicuous presence of that NGO in the area where the person behind it comes from. This is so, for example, in the case of Partnership for Productivity Foundation (PfP) which was originally founded in Western Kenya in 1959 and has most of its activities in the area; although it has extended its activities to other provinces more recently.

Indeed, a closer examination of the operational areas reveals that most of the NGOs engaged in the implementation of development projects are rural oriented, although their operational headquarters, as would be expected, are usually located in key urban areas if not in Nairobi. This is critical for purposes of linking up with potential donors, most of whom are urban-based, and especially Nairobi-based.

There is also evidence which suggests that where developmental NGOs undertake activities in the urban areas, more often than not the NGOs involved happen to be foreign. These are the ones that are, for instance, often involved in the development of urban slums. A good example here is Action Aid, which besides operating in twenty-two districts in Kenya, is also involved in slum renewal in one area in Kariobangi, Nairobi.

Another important factor that influences the choice of operational area is patronage politics. A number of NGOs have patrons who usually set the operational agenda in terms of where to operate as well as the scope of operation. This, plus the fact that NGOs' activities are rarely coordinated, is responsible for the concentration of NGOs in some areas and their thinness or absence in others.

In the responses received during the interview, there was recurrent mention of Nyanza and Western Kenya (the latter is generally assumed to include Nyanza and Western provinces) as operational areas. Indeed there have been a lot of NGO activities in recent years in these two provinces, which also happen to be some of the poorer ones in the country. But a number of organisations claim nonetheless to be operating throughout the country. What is evident from the responses is that virtually all organisations whose primary objective is the mobilisation of the people behind a given cause (e.g. advocacy) are mainly urban-based, a typical example being the Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs). However, there are exceptions, for example, the Greenbelt Movement, which although based in Nairobi, engages in activities that require it to have field outposts away from urban areas. Their presence is in this respect conspicuously felt in the Aberdare Mountains water catchment region, Western highlands, Lake Victoria water catchment Region

and the Coast Region. This is not to downplay its conspicuous presence in Nairobi and its environs where over the years it has courageously confronted the state over environmental degradation occasioned by rampant excision of the forest around Nairobi City.

A closer examination of operational areas of NGOs interviewed reveals that in the majority of cases, operational areas tend to be areas that are regarded to be relatively poor, which may explain why there is little reference to activities in Central Kenya and some parts of the Rift Valley province. But the shift seems to be a recent development.

To put the issue of geographical area of operation in a better perspective, the data obtained from the NGO Bureau are also presented below. It is a requirement that an NGO applying for registration indicates the geographical area(s) where it intends to operate. The information was analysed in this regard, firstly on a district-by-district basis and later aggregated the data on provincial basis. The district data is provided as Appendix II and does show quite clearly that of the twenty-seven districts with a frequency mention of at least one percent, up to thirteen are in the Rift Valley, which makes 48 percent, with Nyanza following with four districts, which makes 15 percent, with North Eastern and Central getting one mention at the bottom end, which makes 4 percent. The data show the Rift Valley as the province with the greatest concentration of NGO activities followed by Nyanza, Nairobi, Eastern, Western, Coast, Central, and North Eastern in that order, according to information provided by the individual NGOs in the registration forms. The data from the NGOs interviews and the Bureau does confirm that in fact there are more NGO activities in the western part of Kenya (Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces) than in other areas of the country (with Nairobi being a special case).

Indeed one could explain the greater representation in the Rift Valley Province in particular, partly by the fact that it has some of the most deprived areas in the country (i.e. arid and semi-arid areas especially in the southern and northern areas) and at the same time it has some of the richest districts with well connected power brokers who are in position to influence the flow of services to their areas. The richest districts are to be found in the central part of Rift Valley.

Elsewhere on the continent, it has been observed that the scenario is not much different. In Zambia, the majority of NGOs are said to be urban-based with the concentration in Lusaka. In Ghana, during the early 1950s, NGOs were mainly based in the urban centres but with independence in 1957 there has been a sharp increase of NGOs activity in the rural areas over the years. On the other hand, a study in Nigeria found that unlike elsewhere on the continent,

the leading international NGOs had given Nigeria a wide berth, the reason being the perception that Nigeria has enough resources to go it alone. As a result, the organisations that have a presence in the country and especially in the indigenous rural areas are the CBOs (Adejumobi and Seteolu 2002).

Table 1: NGO representation per province

Province	Frequency
Rift Valley	1,078
Nyanza	593
Nairobi	514
Western	481
Eastern	469
Countrywide	453
Coast	304
Central	216
North Eastern	168
Not recorded	96
Others (vague)	46
Others (outside Kenya)	34
Total Frequency of Mention	4,452

In Namibia, before independence, NGO activity was restricted to the urban areas mainly located in the south of that country because of the struggle for independence where the northern region of the country being the stronghold of the freedom movement was avoided by NGOs for fear that their activities might be misconstrued as support for the liberation struggle (Totemeyer 2002). And in Zimbabwe, there are more NGOs operating in the rural areas today than in the urban areas (Moyo et al. 2000); while in South Africa their presence is more conspicuous in the poor urban areas.

Beneficiaries of the development efforts

There is considerable debate whether NGOs really target and reach the poorest segments. There seems to be a push for breadth rather than depth. In the worst cases, NGOs may be benefiting those who pretend to speak for the disadvantaged, but in reality they misappropriate funds intended for worthy causes (Stromquist 1998). The Kenyan study presented below attempts to

critically examine who actually benefits from NGO activities wherever they may be operating.

Of the twenty-two organisations interviewed, there are those whose activities are functionally specific and therefore target a particular given group in society. This is the case for example of the Federation of Women Lawyers and League of Women Voters. On the other hand, there are those that target particular geographical areas and are therefore more exclusive in a geographical sense. The best example here is Northern Aid whose activities target only six districts spread across Northern Kenya namely Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Moyale, Marsabit, and Isiolo.

There are also organisations that seem to be concerned mainly with income generation for the relatively disadvantaged members of the society. Examples here include Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) which mainly targets small-scale entrepreneurs and the labour sector in general; Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development (TICH) whose core business is training of local business people who have taken the initiative to improve their own welfare. On the whole, most of the activities of NGOs seem to be directed mainly to local communities; and who actually benefits from their services is determined by what the organisation regards as its core function. In practice, most NGOs adopt the so-called community development approach according to which project activities are area-directed rather than directed to individuals. The general assumption underlying this approach is that those who actually need the service will always come forward upon knowing that a service is available. In order to ensure that indeed that is the case, some NGOs do establish an operational relationship with community based organisations (CBOs) that are supposed to know the nature and character of the need existing in a given area.

The organisations whose core function is to sensitise the masses about their constitutional rights and constitutionalism in general, as is the case with Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change, have tended in their initial stages to direct their activities to the urban areas and to rural elites. Only later have their activities involved the local communities usually through networking with community based organisations of similar shades and opinions. In a more direct way, the activities of these organisations have also targeted crucial but relevant institutions in the society i.e. relevant government organisations, or professional groups such as the Law Society. As is the nature of most organisations, a number of NGOs that were started to serve mainly narrowly defined objectives have over the years extended the scope of their activities and have, in the process, become more inclusive. This has for example been the case with African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) which in its formative years focused its activities exclusively on

women groups but which in the recent years has extended its activities to include men as well.

Reported impact of project activities

Edwards and Hulme (1992) state that the NGO sector experiences several bottlenecks that hinder the sector's ability to be more effective. Such limitations include: limited capacity for research; poor networking with other NGOs; absence of representativeness and accountability mechanisms within themselves; and weak links with the wider policy areas, resulting in their effects being small and localised. In a similar study, Bourne and Seager (2000) identify more or less the same limitations. As indicated above, what projects actually are implemented in a given area by NGOs is influenced both by the mandate and perception of the NGO and only occasionally by the demonstrated need on the ground; for as Mutiso points out, not many NGOs solicit community preferences on development (Mutiso 1985:65), preferring instead to do what they believe is good for the people. Below, an assessment is made of the performance of the NGOs included in the study with respect to what they have reportedly achieved in the various functional areas of their operation.

One of the basic needs, which is always in great scarcity especially in rural Kenya, is clean drinking water. This is the case regardless of the rainfall pattern in the country. But regarding the availability of water per se, the situation is much more serious in arid and semi-arid areas of the country. And it is in these areas that some NGOs have been actively engaged in addressing the problem. One such organisation, Northern Aid, has been very active in the provision of water in the northern part of the country, one of the most arid regions in the country. As a result of these activities, water sources have been established around settlement areas, bringing them much closer to the communities. This has had the impact of reducing time spent looking for and fetching water, and the pastoral communities now spend the time saved to engage in income generating activities.

Elsewhere, another NGO, Network for Water and Sanitation International (NETWAS), has reportedly succeeded in training several government and NGO officials in the most cost effective methods of water harnessing and sanitation in otherwise very harsh environments such as the drier parts of Machakos district. Another indirect benefit of the availability of water within reach of families is that female children hitherto involved in long distance water fetching can now find time to concentrate on schooling.

Another area where NGO activities have had a positive impact is the health sector. A number of NGOs have over the years been involved in the provision of this basic need, for example, the Christian Health Association

of Kenya (CHAK). It has been engaged in making available cheap medical facilities to needy communities throughout the country. A similar role is also played by Medical Assistance Programme International (MAP), though MAP's strategy is different in that it offers medicine to community based organisations on the assumption that the latter know better who the most vulnerable in society are. And more recently World Vision has also been playing an important role in this sector through the provision of free medicine to the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH), which in turn has enabled the two institutions (MoH and KNH) to provide subsidised or free healthcare to those who are unable to meet the cost.

In the area of education, only a few (10 percent) of the NGOs studied seem to be involved. This is understandable considering that historically the providers of education in the country have been the state and the religious organisations. It is only recently that the private sector has emerged as the third major provider of education, especially in the urban areas. Therefore, the few NGOs (apart from the religious organisations) that engage in the provision of educational facilities do so very selectively as is the case, for example, with Northern Aid whose activities in the recent years have targeted nomadic communities by providing school boarding facilities. The African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) and Action Aid have focused their activities on home based day care, thus providing accessible and affordable early childhood education and care for children under six years in selected needy districts. ANPPCAN is active in Siaya district (Nyanza Province) and Kiambu district (Central Province) while Action Aid is active in Samburu (Rift Valley province), Malindi (Coast Province) and Siaya.

Humanitarian intervention is yet another important function performed by some of the NGOs interviewed. The activities in this area mainly involve the provision of relief food to save lives in drought stricken areas and/or in the case of crop failure. Two of the organisations interviewed, namely Northern Aid and World Vision, are involved in the exercise. In this regard, it is also worth mentioning that this is an area (i.e. humanitarian intervention) in which a number of organisations not interviewed are involved; for example, World Food Programme (WFP) is, of course, the leading provider of relief food in Kenya in drought-stricken areas almost on a permanent basis, and a number of organisations such as UNICEF do from time to time intervene in situations of emergency, e.g. where there is a mysterious outbreak of disease.

The other area of intervention by the organisations interviewed is the rehabilitation of street children. One of the organisations interviewed, Entrepreneurship Development Centre, is directly involved in this service. This intervention involves the establishment of rehabilitation centres and/or

feeding centres for street children especially in the major urban areas, notably Nairobi.

As indicated above one of the areas mentioned by fifteen out of the twenty-two NGOs interviewed is capacity building. Capacity building involves a number of activities: providing technical advice, research and consultancy, direct training programmes, functional training, youth development programmes, computer education for informal sector workers, and various training programmes linked to skill improvement in various operational areas.

Of course it is difficult to quantify success in this area beyond simply indicating the extent and scope of the activity itself as indicated above. There are, however, a few organisations that have reportedly achieved some success on the ground in this area. One organisation (PfP), for example, claims to have trained 10,250 farmers in various technical skills since its inception in 1969 – that is approximately 350 farmers trained per year.

Since no visits were made to some of the facilities where the beneficiaries of the various training programmes receive services, it is not possible to assess the actual impact of the various capacity building efforts made as indicated above. What is important to say, however, is that capacity building has emerged as a major concern of NGOs, and that in their various ways the organisations interviewed are doing what is within their individual capacities.

Another major activity that most of the NGOs studied engage in is advocacy. As a function, advocacy manifests itself in several ways. First, there is a focus on awareness creation over an issue as by means such as civic education. Second, there is the lobbying (campaign) for support of the issue with stakeholders; and where no action is forthcoming on the basis of lobbying, the third stage of advocacy is usually mass mobilisation for action in order to dramatise the seriousness of the issue. Mass mobilisation is also used to put the issue on the action agenda when lobbying and negotiation fail.

The organisations involved in advocacy are of various types. There are those with a limited agenda, that is those with restricted sectional concerns, as for example of the League of Women Voters, FIDA, FEMNET, etc. There are those whose issues are of concern to the society in general, for example, the Greenbelt Movement and its environmental conservation campaign, 4Cs and its concern for a people driven constitutional order, etc. Most of the organisations that are engaged in advocacy actually emerged in the post-independence period and particularly since the resurrection of multipartyism in the country (1992). Prior to this period, the operational area of advocacy NGOs was generally restricted through harassment by state law enforcement agencies. And even presently, the government is still very suspicious of NGOs that it considers to have political inclinations.

A close examination indicates a number of recorded successes in the area of advocacy in the last few years. The Federations of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and League of Women Voters have succeeded in putting the gender issue on the 'political agenda'. The Greenbelt Movement has similarly succeeded in creating environmental awareness and in some cases in moving the state to reverse some unpopular decisions with implications for environmental degradation. Its fight to prevent environmental degradation around the city of Nairobi is widely known and acclaimed. A case in point is its mobilisation of Nairobi residents in the late 1980s to resist the excision of a large part of Uhuru Park (the famous and only major recreation park in the city centre) for allocation to 'developers' of a high-rise building. And currently, it is engaged in a major (media) campaign to rally Kenyans against a Government decision to excise/de-gazette parts of major forests for settling squatters and general development.

In addition, there are organisations which regard themselves largely as developmental in terms of their core functions, but which on closer examination of their activities are found also to be playing a major role in the area of advocacy. This they do through strategies intended to influence policy making in their operational areas. NETWAS, for example, indicated that it had made a significant contribution to the Water Rights Bill, while ITDG successfully lobbied for the review of building laws.

Although some respondents identified advocacy as their major preoccupation, it is also important to point out that all NGOs regardless of their stated core functions are in practice involved in development directly or indirectly. Those which have been, for example, referred to as advocacy NGOs are involved in establishing an environment in which people become aware of factors inhibiting their development and therefore their well being. To that extent, therefore, they are engaged in development endeavours however indirectly that may be. Of the twenty-two organisations surveyed nine preferred to identify themselves with development activities. These organisations are involved in the development of facilities used in provision of basic-needs services. These include health centres, training centres and the construction of water sources such as boreholes, protected springs, wells, etc. Those engaged in entrepreneurial development (e.g. Action Aid) are involved in providing financial resources for onward lending at concessionary rates to prospective small-scale entrepreneurs. In the agriculture sector, assistance has been given in the form of farm inputs (e.g. PfP). The same organisation is also involved in soil conservation and afforestation, food production and storage techniques, and irrigated agriculture. ITDG is similarly involved.

In the field of education there are at least three NGOs in the sample that have been directly involved in what can be characterised as educational development. For example, Northern Aid has built a full boarding school (Wargadud Primary School), ANPPCAN has built 120 home-based day care centres and Action Aid has two projects: strengthening primary education and early childhood development.

The lessons from experience in other African countries are similar. In Uganda for example most of the NGOs operating in the field of development, target specific areas and population groups (Namara 2002). To repeat, development is an inclusive undertaking, therefore, what has been said under it here is simply an abstraction from a wider spectrum, which is already presented in the preceding sections.

Modes/Methods used in the course of service provision

The method or approach that an organisation uses in its project support or service delivery is determined by a number of factors. Some of the factors are germane to the mode of operation of the individual organisations as outlined in their operative rules. On the other hand, others are inherent in the laws that have been enacted by the state to govern the operation of non-state actors in development. And there is of course also the local development situation to consider. With regard to this point, whether or not an NGO directly or indirectly participates in service provision or project management at the grassroots level would depend on whether or not there are Community Based Organisation (CBOs) which are engaged in similar activities and, more importantly whether the potential recipients or beneficiaries of the project are generally supportive or not of the actions being undertaken.

Of the organisations studied, fifteen provided succinct information on their mode of operation on the ground. From that information, two different modes of operation emerged. First, there are organisations that are directly involved with the local people in whatever services they are providing, alone or with other actors on the ground who are also involved in similar endeavours. More often than not, these are organisations with capacity to hire and deploy their own staff in areas where they have project activities and/or services to provide. And in the majority of cases the personnel are nationals even in projects that are under the control of foreign management. A few examples illustrate the point. One local NGO, Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA), is directly positioned on the ground but at the same time relies on the local District Development Committees (DDCs) to legitimise its operation. It also relies on social development officers and community based organisations to initiate and maintain its projects. The other organisations that fall into this category are Northern Aid, Entrepreneurship Development

Centre (EDC), Community Initiative Support Services (CISS), and Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG). All of them have a presence in the project areas and often use it to liaise with the relevant government departments and in some cases, even call on the relevant government departments to evaluate their performance e.g. EDC.

But the mode of operation of advocacy organisations, even when direct, presents some variations. The mode of operation may rely on popular mobilisation. This they do through a network of facilitators. A good example here is the Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs). However, there are some which rely on volunteers, mainly members of the organisation, who are usually mobilised whenever there is an issue to propagate or a cause around which there is a need to arouse people. Two organisations, FIDA and FEMNET, often use this approach.

Second, there is indirect involvement through proxies. In this category are organisations that rely either on other NGOs or CBOs once their initiated projects have 'taken off'. Whatever units they might have in the field are used as support and co-ordination units due to the thinness of staff. The mode of operation of Pathfinder International, World Vision and Action Aid are good illustrations of this. A case in point is the mode of operation of World Vision, which does encourage the setting up of elective management committees at community level, which it then empowers to take up the running of projects on its behalf. Of late it has been moving towards supporting partner community based organisations in the project choices, and in so doing, they have been steadily moving away from direct involvement. In this category too are organisations that are mainly involved in advisory/technical back up to projects already being implemented. Some of the examples here include NETWAS and MAP.

Similar modes of operation by NGOs are also found in other African countries, for example in Uganda, the Uganda Rural Development and Training Programme, an NGO operating out of Western Uganda, utilises the village level approach which involves collective involvement of community members in their own development. URDT works with over 20 villages and each village develops a Village Action Plan (VAP) which is incorporated in the URDT action plan (Namara 2002).

In Zimbabwe, initiatives by NGOs and Church organisations with strong community roots include the Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) which engages in AIDS support, education and counseling and offers home based care to people with AIDS in the Masvingo area. Another NGO is the AIDS Counseling Trust (ACT). This is engaged in developing appropriate AIDS training materials and courses to care providers in counseling and patient care. ACT also provides direct counseling and support services to persons

and families affected by HIV/AIDS and promotes the establishment of self-help groups by persons with HIV/AIDS (Moyo et al. 2000).

Relationship with government ministries

Edwards and Hulme (1992:16) argue that 'traditionally, most NGOs have been suspicious of governments, their relationships varying between benign neglect and outright hostility'. Two suggested factors controlling the nature of relations between NGOs and the state are regime type, and function served by the NGO. Cross (1997) asks, with regard to state-NGO relationships, whether NGOs should be competitors or partners with the state, that is, whether NGOs should maintain their distance so as to attain autonomy, or to work hand-in-hand with the state projects.

Indeed, the mode of operation of NGOs in the field has been a major bone of contention between these organisations and the state. In Kenya, the government has tended to take the view that whatever assistance these organisations might want to offer ought to be channelled through the relevant government ministries. To that end, the government now requires all NGOs to channel their project proposals through the relevant District Development Committees (DDCs) before they can be allowed to operate on the ground. This requirement has been a source of friction between the government and the NGOs. Most NGOs feel that the requirement has the effect of delaying the implementation of projects since the meetings of DDCs are infrequent and the NGOs also do not have control over when they receive the funds that they commit to various uses. Furthermore, there is usually pressure from the donors to commit funds once they are received, which makes it difficult for the recipients to have the use of the funds processed through the DDCs. In addition, there are those NGOs that respond to emergency situations, and this requires that they act in good time to save the situation. Here, again, processing the action through the DDCs just will not work. The matter is further compounded by the fact that in some districts DDCs meet very rarely.

However, the evidence available suggests that the NGOs have managed to find an 'exit option' which involves working closely with departmental heads who then act as their link to the relevant authorities that might be interested to know what they do on the ground. But, as would be expected, there are some NGOs that feel that there should be no need to have their activities sanctioned by the government since, in their own perception, the government is least interested in development programmes for the poor. In the majority of cases, these are the well-connected NGOs, who have powerful patrons capable of shielding them from any harassment by state agents.

Of the twenty-two organisations interviewed, fifteen claimed to have cordial relations with the government and which had resulted in consultations,

joint programming and co-ordination of project management with the relevant government agencies. This is corroborated by similar studies which have been done in the Agro-forestry sector in Siaya, Machakos, Siaya and Kisii, and also on the activities of KENGO and Mazingira Institute in the same section (Achieng' and Wellard 1995). These studies reported that there had been a lot of co-operation between the NGOs and CBOs on the one hand and the government departments on the other, in all the districts studied. In Siaya for instance, the study by Achieng et al., established that the NGOs operating in the agricultural sector had established links with the governments' Agricultural and Forestry department extension workers and other projects operating in the area, as a result of which NGOs received technical support from the ministerial staff as they in turn provided a badly needed resource: transport for the government staff. James Kaluli's study of Machakos also found that there had been collaboration between the NGOs and government ministries, which yielded benefits for both parties. And in his study of Rural Afforestation in Machakos, Siaya and Kisii, Mung'ala (1995) established that there had been co-operation between the NGOs and the forest extension service division of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and that this manifested itself also at regional and grassroots levels in various activities related to forestry development such as research, seed collection, handling, storage and distribution, land use etc. Arum's (1995) study on KENGO though a little critical in that it reported some difficulty in establishing trust and a cordial working relationship between KENGO and the relevant government department, Forestry, nonetheless found there had been concerted efforts to establish links with other actors in the sector. And finally the work by Buck covering the period 1980–91, established that the NGOs had played catalytic roles in bridging the gulf between government agencies and the beneficiaries, and that the collaboration between the NGOs and other service providers in forestry development (such as ICRAF, KEFRI and the Forestry Department) had led to the co-operation in the design and implementation of the projects.

From the evidence available, therefore, it appears that by and large there has been sufficient co-operation between the NGOs and the relevant government ministries engaged in project development and service provision at the local level. However, the relationship has not been completely rosy or without some hiccups. There is however evidence to suggest that there have been areas of friction from time to time, largely arising from differences over project location and financial management.

Then there are two organisations that characterise their relationship with the state as basically hostile. These are 4Cs and CPDA. According to the latter, their relationship has been hostile because of the alternative leadership

approach they propagate. Of course this kind of approach cannot go well with the Provincial Administration who have a distaste for any organisation that tries to establish itself as an alternative locus of influence. That may also explain the hostility of the state towards 4Cs since its mode of operation, too, tends to ignore the established authority structures.

A third group made up of five organisations – NGO council, ECONEWS AFRICA, EDC, League of Women Voters and Greenbelt Movement – report that the relationship with the government is characterised by ups and downs. When they are operating in some areas, there is some co-operation from the state, the next time they are in a different area, which the government regards as 'sensitive', then all of a sudden there is a change of attitude. The case in point is the experience of EDC, which for some time has been trying to act as mediators in the conflict between the Pokot and the Marakwet (in north Rift Valley Province) as a way of pacifying the situation, thereby enabling them to carry out their development mandate. Naturally the government has looked on this as an attempt to undermine its authority over what it regards as a 'sensitive' security issue. And the mobilisation approach adopted by 4Cs and its objective of challenging the existing laws has tended to put the state on the defensive and naturally has attracted negative reaction from the state. This is true also of the activities of the League of Women Voters, particularly regarding their manifestly political activities in search of women candidates for various elective positions. On the whole, however, where a government ministry or department realises that an NGO is in a position to strengthen its hand in the discharge of its responsibilities, the co-operation has usually been forthcoming.

Elsewhere, Maipose's (Maipose 2002) study in Zambia found that the major source of conflict between the state and civil society organisations tended to be the divergence of opinion on what role the organisations should play. A similar study in Ghana (Ayee 2002) concluded that governments are inclined to monitor NGOs more in fear of political competition rather than a genuine concern for the level of on-the-ground accountability of the NGOs in their regions of activity. Ayee adds that the relationship (between NGO and state) was better at the local level than the national level.

Governments in general will on their own attempt to avoid duplication of efforts and therefore in many cases would rely on NGOs to carry out their projects effectively. However, should there be a lack of professionalism and accountability leading to the stalling of projects that had been given the government nod and even physical support, the latent friction usually becomes overt.

In Tanzania, the period before the liberalisation of the economy was characterised by good working relationship between the NGOs and the state, but during the post liberalisation period, which has witnessed the proliferation of NGOs in the country, the government has been trying to put in place an effective machinery to control the activities of these organisations (Munishi 2002).

In Namibia the government has laid down policy guidelines on the functioning of NGOs through the National Planning Commission. Like elsewhere there is a level of mistrust on the government side fuelled by the belief that the level of funding of NGOs is not commensurate with the results of their activities on the ground (Totemeyer 2002). Studies on CAR, Gabon, the Congo indicate the existence of an easy relationship between the state and the NGO (Charancle 1996).

In general one could say that the relationship between the state and those organisations that engage in advocacy of human rights related issues has fluctuated from bad to worse. The Kenyan study, presented above is only illustrative. Which leads to the question; how can the relationship between the state and the NGOs be improved? Bench and Lipietz (1998) list the factors that could lead to a successful relationship with the state as: common objectives and strategies in a particular intervention; agreement on the means of achieving the objectives; and a shared commitment to principles of mutuality, respect, cooperation and collaboration. Contributing towards the same end, Campwell (1997) argues that donors have the ability to smooth out differences between the state and non-state actors. This is because both the NGO and the government are dependent on the donor for aid resources and secondly, that the donors have relationships with both parties. Another way of addressing this issue is through improving flow of information between NGOs and governments through the funding of coordination bodies for joint NGO-government meetings.

Funding

Bratton (1990) and others have pointed out that while popular support and self-financing provide the basis for legitimacy; official (state) funding erodes legitimacy. A broader question can be asked, whether NGOs can be accountable to the poor at all if they are funded by donors, as Van der Heijden (1987:106) says, quoting a traditional African proverb: 'if you have your hand in another man's pockets, you must move when he moves'. In the final analysis, whether the presence of NGOs makes any impact or not on local level development would tend to depend on the financial resources at their disposal. From the interviews, it is quite evident that practically all NGOs receive assistance from foreign donors in one form or another. Fifty percent

of the organisations interviewed receive their financial support exclusively from donor sources. About 41 percent, reported receiving money from both foreign and local sources, and the remaining 9 percent were rather reluctant to reveal their sources, with one senior interviewee admitting that she did not have full knowledge about her organisation's financial sources. For the organisations that claim to be partly sourcing their finances locally, the sources which recurred throughout the interviews were: fees and consultancies for services rendered, annual membership contributions for those organisations which recruit members, individual donors, sale of literature, training programmes, conferences and seminars, and in the case of one organisation (FIDA) a few locally-based corporations.

From the foregoing, therefore, it becomes very clear that the NGO sector is largely dependent on donor financing. One author identified some of the major sources of NGO funding as USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Oxfam, and the 'smaller' sources as overseas churches and related charitable organs (Ngethe 1991). But how much money is involved or actually changes hands is regarded as top secret by NGO managers, be they foreign or local. It is this lack of transparency about financial flows that has enabled the managers of NGOs, most of whom are also the founders of the NGOs in the case of local ones, to run these organisations as though they were personal fiefdoms. Therefore it is difficult to tell what proportion of the funds that are remitted from abroad does actually end up in supporting service provision at the local level. In fact, a number of NGOs are regarded as outlets for self-employment for those who establish them. In the circumstances it is very unlikely that preference will be given to project support over personal monetary interests.

With regard to the activities of the advocacy NGOs, the fact that they get support from foreign sources has been a major source of friction with the government which perceives that support in terms of an attempt by foreigners to undermine state integrity and 'stability'. Hence the accusation levelled against such organisations that they are 'agents of foreign masters bent on destabilising the state'.

Of the organisations that claim to receive part of their money from internal sources, five of them are engaged in advocacy and therefore receive money from local individuals who perceive the success of these organisations as being beneficial to them. Indeed, those which are more politically oriented, seem to receive such support from those that are likely to benefit from their political support.

The experience elsewhere in Africa suggests that most NGOs are still dependent on donor funding. In Zambia, for example, the sources of funding are largely foreign, leading to the fear that there is a development of a new

type of aid dependency. Studies by Maipose on Zambia, Namara on Uganda, Totemeyer on Namibia (in Oyugi 2002) all point to similar experiences; so too does the Moyo et al (2000) study of Zimbabwe. On the whole many writers and researchers on the subject point out that with the possible exception of South Africa the NGO sector on the continent is weak and dependent on support from international agencies (Bratton 1989, Edwards 1999).

Influence on good governance

Good governance is responsive governance. Its hallmarks are: the rule of law; a fair and efficient system of justice; broad popular involvement in political, social and economic processes; the capacity to manage development; and accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs (Oyugi 2001 esp. pp. iii–xix). If indeed these are the major ingredients of good governance, then the question that arises is what roles have NGOs and CBOs played in influencing government positions on these issues?

The discussion begins by focusing on whether NGOs have or have no influence on the government on matters relating to project management. In this regard, the analysis specifically seeks to find out whether the NGOs studied have had influence on policy choices, project choices and project design.

It is generally believed that Kenya is one of the most open countries in Africa as far as interest group intervention in policy making is concerned. One of the most influential interest groups in the policy making process in the area of development is the donor community, both bilateral and multilateral. And if we consider that it is the same donors that finance the activities of the NGOs, which are actively involved in the development process, then one cannot help concluding that by extension developmental NGOs too have a lot of influence on policy choices in their respective areas of operation. To the extent that NGOs, whether indigenous or foreign, receive financial support from outside Kenya, they are in many respects the instruments that those who finance them use to further their agenda. It is common knowledge that NGOs from the 'North' do receive considerable financial support from their respective governments, either directly or indirectly, and are therefore bound to operate according to the values and stipulations of the financing authorities. In a recent study, Shaw (1990), for example observed: 'by the late 1980s, development NGOs in the North raised over $3 billion from private sources and received a further $1.5 billion from Northern governments, which altogether accounted for 15 per cent of all official foreign aid'.

Indeed, quite a number of organisations interviewed claimed that they have had a lot of influence on government policy choices in their respective areas of operation. Most of the organisations mentioned specific areas in

which they have influenced government policies, and some of them indicated that they had gone as far as establishing mechanisms through which they monitor the policy making process in government with a view to identifying the appropriate point of intervention. In the water sector, for example, the NGOs operating in this sector e.g. ITDG and NETWAS have established relationships with the relevant government agencies responsible for this sector in such a way that in the process of formulating water development policies they are often invited to the relevant meetings where policy related matters are discussed. It is through this kind of relationship that NETWAS, for example, is credited with influencing the government policy on the choice of the appropriate technology in water supply as reflected in the Water Rights Bill currently in parliament. Evidence is also available, though skeletal, to indicate that NGOs have also played some role in influencing the choice of project design. This is exemplified by the government's adoption of micro-electric schemes which ITDG have been experimenting with in the construction of small dams in, for example, Chuka in Meru (Eastern Province) and Kerugoya in Kirinyaga (Central Province).

In the health sector, a number of organisations work closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH). Indeed a number of organisations have been co-opted as members of health sectoral working committees, which committees are responsible for the initial identification of policies that find expression in the national development plan. Action Aid, for example, is an active participant in the policy formulation process. The presence of NGOs has also been felt in certain operational areas like testing of new and innovative health reform ideas, which Engender Health (formerly AVSC) does from time to time.

As far as education is concerned, some NGOs have played a major role in influencing not only the policy choices but also in determining the location or siting of specific projects. This is illustrated by the activities of Northern Aid in its operational districts in Northern Kenya where it has influenced the siting of schools in areas with greatest need.

Through capacity building efforts, a number of government officers have benefited from training courses designed and delivered by NGOs. NGOs have also influenced, through capacity building, the adoption and promotion of appropriate technology (e.g. ITDG), or the setting up of the Media Practitioners and Model Community Media Task Force (e.g. ECONEWS). Therefore, in many respects one could say that NGOs have played some role in influencing the management of development programmes by influencing government policy choice, choice of project type as well as design. But how much of this has been achieved varies from one sector to another depending

on the type of NGO that is involved. If at the same time an NGO is the financier of the project its influence has been more extensive.

However, with regard to their role in bringing about good governance in the politico-administrative sphere, they have had to contend with the mistrust of their intentions by the state. The decision to create a bureau (NGO Coordinating Bureau) in the Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Home Affairs was intended to create a machinery through which the government could monitor their activities. The manifestly politicised Provincial Administration has also been reminded from time to time by the relevant authorities of the need to monitor the activities of both international and local NGOs operating in their respective areas. The main target of this pronouncement has been those NGOs that seem to work closely with the more 'politically' oriented civil society organisations. On the whole, however, it could be said that such organisations would not have managed on their own without financial support from international donors. In that respect, therefore, one cannot help concluding that in the field of political liberalisation the NGOs have made an impression too. In particular, NGOs have been actively involved in the ongoing debate and process of constitutional reforms. A significant number of commissioners sitting in the Constitutional Review Commmission of Kenya have been fronted/nominated by NGOs.

However, the NGO sector itself is not without its shortcomings. Many NGOs are considered 'oligarchies' whose paths are determined by the founder's and directors' perception of a community's needs. As Wellard and Copestake concluded in their study, 'few NGOs (have) either formal, democratic systems for choosing office bearers, or transparent mechanisms for canvassing grassroots opinion' (Wellard and Copestake 1993). In the Kenyan case, nepotism is a widespread practice among NGOs. A case in point is the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), which has been associated with nepotism in the determination of its office bearers. It has experienced crises from time to time in its internal management as leaders try to manipulate the process of electing office-bearers. At one point (1988-1996), all three top officers of the organisation were close blood relations (*Presence magazine* 1996).

On the issue of accountability, NGOs are viewed as focusing their attention on their legal obligations to the donors rather than their moral obligations to their client-groups (Cross 1997). This is so because the poor do not have the ability to force 'accountability' on NGOs, nor do they have the legal or economic standing to do so since they do not, in the majority of cases, pay for the services they receive. There are thus a number of NGOs involved in the misappropriation of funds, although this is difficult to trace. And some interviewees expressed the now common view that some NGOs only exist to

go round the world looking for funding. Others have left incomplete projects behind but still go on to write glowing proposals for new areas to attract more funds. The names of two Nairobi-based NGOs involved in this practice were given to the writer during the interviews. Indeed one writer has observed that PVOs/NGOs are too secretive about their operations and has suggested that they need clearly to state the resources they control and on what and where they use them (Mutiso 1985). According to the ideology of IMF/World Bank, what Mutiso suggests is an important attribute of good governance in economic sense.

Concluding summary

Non-Governmental Organisations have been key partners in the development process in Kenya since the colonial period. Over the years their number has increased tremendously and this has been accompanied by the diversification of their functions. However, their activities essentially parallel and complement those of the state (see e.g. Fowler 1995; Tandon 2000).

Today, the sector is made up of indigenous and non-indigenous organisations with complementary and often overlapping roles and functions. In the post-independence period, their role has been felt especially in arid and semi-arid districts of the country where the state's service provision has been wanting due to a variety of factors. But when one considers basic services as a whole, the NGO sector is a micro-actor compared to the state (Kanyinga 1995).

Their tendency to bypass state machinery in the performance of their roles has tended to attract suspicion from the state, which in the more recent years has tried to subject their activities to bureaucratic controls. Friction has been experienced, especially where the state has viewed the activities of a given NGO as manifestly political.

Evidence gathered in the interviews with personnel from twenty two organizations engaged in either development and/or advocacy suggest the following situations:

(a) Although their functions are highly diversified, most of them operate in the areas of advocacy, capacity building, health, water and humanitarian intervention.
(b) Their activities are spread throughout the country but concentration in some areas has been reported.
(c) The beneficiaries served are sometimes other organisations operating at the grassroots level, while in some cases services are provided directly to communities.
(d) The impact of NGOs has been felt especially in times of national crisis as when they provide food relief in food-starved areas or when there is famine.

In general though, their complementary role has increasingly been felt in many service sectors as state capacity to deliver has dwindled over the years against a background of rising demand and shrinking resources.

(e) The mode of operation of some organisations – that is by relating directly with the beneficiaries in service provision instead of through the relevant state agencies – has been a source of friction. Nonetheless, the spirit of co-existence has emerged, even though uneasy at times.

(f) The relative operational autonomy that the NGO sector enjoys lies mainly in its financial self-sufficiency. A close examination of financial sources suggest that almost all NGOs rely on sources outside the country; which also explains why the state is sometimes jittery about their conduct.

(g) More recently, the pro-democratisation NGOs have played an important role in forcing the state to relax its hitherto authoritarian character in the conduct of public affairs.

The situation, which the foregoing observations reveal, is that the role of NGOs in both development and governance is bound to increase with time in Kenya. The Kenyan experience is not unique. The experiences of the African countries cited in this study indicate that while the NGO sector is playing a major role in both governance and development at the local level in Africa, the sector is still faced with many challenges, which must still be overcome.

Appendix I

List of NGOs interviewed in Kenya

1. Northern Aid [developmental]
2. Partnership for Productivity Foundation (PfP) [developmental]
3. Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA) [development]
4. Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) [development]
5. Community Initiative Support Services (CISS) [developmental]
6. Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development in Africa (TICH) [development]
7. Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) [development]
8. Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) [development]
9. Network for Water and Sanitation International (NETWAS) [developmental]
10. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) [development]
11. Action Aid [development]

12. World Vision Kenya [development]
13. Pathfinder International [advocacy]
14. Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs) [advocacy]
15. African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) [advocacy]
16. National NGO Council [advocacy and development]
17. League of Women Voters [advocacy]
18. Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) [advocacy]
19. Engender Health (formerly AVSC) International [advocacy]
20. Greenbelt Movement [development and advocacy]
21. ECONEWS AFRICA [advocacy]
22. Medical Assistance Programme International (MAP) [advocacy and development]
23. NGO Coordination Bureau [Regulatory body].

Appendix II: NGO areas of operation

Areas of geographical operation

Provinces	Frequency	Provinces	Frequency
Countrywide	453	Rift Valley	
Nairobi	507	Kajiado	111
Other areas in Nairobi	7	Nakuru	108
Total	514	Turkana	107
Nyanza		Baringo	80
Kisumu	147	Narok	73
Siaya	72	Bomet	70
Homa Bay	69	Kericho	59
Nyanza (general)	51	Samburu	55
Kisii	46	Uasin Gishu	54
Suba	37	Rift Valley (general)	53
Migori	37	West Pokot	47
Rachuonyo	35	Trans Mara	45
Nyamira	26	Nandi	45
Nyando	20	Trans Nzoia	45
Kuria	19	Laikipia	44
Bondo	17	Marakwet	24

Areas of geographical operation (continued)

Provinces	Frequency	Provinces	Frequency
Gucha	17	Koibatek	22
Total	593	Bureti	19
Eastern		Keiyo	17
Kitui	91	Total	1,078
Machakos	71	Western	
Makueni	64	Kakamega	100
Mwingi	62	Busia	88
Embu	42	Bungoma	77
Meru	42	Vihiga	77
Isiolo	34	Western (general)	32
Marsabit	26	Mt. Elgon	27
Eastern (general)	20	Lugari	24
Mbeere	17	Butere	23
Total	469	Teso	18
Coast		Mumias	15
Mombasa	80	Total	481
Kilifi	47	Central	
Kwale	45	Kiambu	51
Coast (general)	40	Kirinyaga	33
Tana River	40	Central (general)	32
Taita-Taveta	24	Muranga	31
Lamu	16	Thika	29
Malindi	12	Nyandarua	27
Total	304	Maragua	13
North Eastern		Total	216
Garissa	53		
Mandera	35		
North Eastern (general)	34		
Wajir	32		
Moyale	14		
Total	168		

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La modernité mauritanienne: Enjeux difficiles d'une quête de citoyenneté

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Abstract

Building a homogenous and modern nation, a community of citizens within a sovereign state is a problematic issue in Africa. Everywhere, any attempt to achieve this has resulted in internal conflicts and devastation. Political and social actors have failed to overcome their parochial politics and build a national project, to which all citizens could identify. The creation of Mauritania is the evidence of the shortcomings of the colonial political projects. It was created to serve as a buffer state. It was structured from a conglomeration of peoples whose internal organisations and way of life are completely different. Ever since, any attempt to build a modern nation is confronted with both the complexity of the issues at stake and the complexity of the struggles for control of the political and economic spheres and even, of people. Increasingly, there are more and more virulent contestations which are reflected in everyday behaviours and are at the basis of identity fantasies. Inter-communal conflicts dominate the political and social scene; the needs for visibility of the social communities lead to constant and violent clashes, on a regular basis. To me, this reality is what Mauritanian modernity is all about. In my contribution, I attempt to describe this never-ending and plural conflict.

Résumé

La construction d'une Nation homogène et moderne, d'une communauté de citoyens au sein d'un Etat souverain est une problématique générale en Afrique. Elle a conduit, partout à des conflits internes porteurs de désolation. Les acteurs politiques et sociaux n'arrivent pas à dépasser leurs particularismes et construire un projet national dans lequel tous les citoyens se reconnaissent. La création de la Mauritanie relève de la stupidité des projets politiques coloniaux. Ce territoire devait jouer le rôle d'un État tampon avec ses errements et ses aventures. Il

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fallait, pour des raisons, structurer ce territoire qui rassemble des populations dont les organisations internes et les modes de vie diffèrent.
Dès lors la tentative de construction d'une nation moderne se heurte à la complexité des enjeux, des luttes autour du contrôle du politique, de l'économique voire de la vie des hommes. Des contestations de plus en plus acerbes innervent la société. Elles déterminent les usages quotidiens et alimentent les fantasmes identitaires. Les luttes inter-communautaires dominent la scène politique et sociale, les tiraillements et les besoins de visibilités des groupes sociaux conduisent à des confrontations régulières, permanentes et violentes. Cette réalité constitue, pour moi, la modernité mauritanienne. C'est cette palabre infinie et plurielle que je tente de rendre compte dans ce texte.

> ...au point de vue de l'État africain post-colonial, ce qui tenait lieu de citoyenneté ne conférait pas de droits politiques en tant que tels, qu'il s'agisse de droit à la représentation individuelle, de droits sociaux ou de droit au travail. Entre l'État et l'individu venaient s'intercaler la famille, le lignage, la parentèle, voire la confrérie religieuse. L'individu se trouvait-il dépourvu de tout bien, privé de toute ressource et menacé dans sa subsistance même? Il ne revenait pas à l'État de lui assurer les protections élémentaires. Sa parentèle s'en chargeait. Sombrait-il dans la déshérence, l'errance et la misère? Il n'avait aucun droit sur l'État avec lequel il n'entretenait, dans ce domaine en particulier, aucun rapport de face à face (Mbembe 2000:87).

Les chantiers de la Nation

Le hiatus colonial a conduit à l'éclatement des sociétés, à leur dissémination et surtout à la perversion de leurs modes d'observation considérés comme défaits par la civilisation. L'État mauritanien né du néant colonial, symbolisé par le rêve de mise en valeur et par ce que Cheikh Hamidou Kane a appelé le recensement, la répartition, le classement, l'étiquetage, la conscription et l'administration. Le néant colonial c'est le non-événement. C'est cette phase durant laquelle les nations européennes ont prétendu gouverner les autres, les civiliser et leur apporter la grâce de Dieu par l'intermédiaire de leur église (Mbembe 1990). C'est ce moment de conquête, de bataille, d'incendies, de pillage, de viol et de protectorat. C'est tout ce moment fait d'esquives, de fuite et de ruses, de simulation et d'ambivalence. C'est cette période devenue le site de la construction d'une nation voulue et pensée homogène et solidaire. C'est tout cela qui se trouve aujourd'hui déclassé, discuté et disputé avec des discours qui puisent souvent dans le même corpus, mais qui utilisent une autre grammaire.

Et pour illustrer de manière plus significative l'ethnogenèse de la nation mauritanienne prenons l'exemple fondateur de cette volonté: l'érection de la capitale. Transférée de Saint-Louis du Sénégal aux environs du Ksar au bord de l'Océan Atlantique (en 1957), la capitale mauritanienne, Nouakchott,

symbolise, par l'acte de la pose de la première pierre, tout le nationalisme de l'élite mauritanienne qui alimente sa volonté de construire un État moderne, indépendant et souverain. D'ailleurs, dans l'imaginaire populaire, encore aujourd'hui, cette fondation défie les forces «hostiles» de la nature, nourrit son orgueil et investit sa vitalité.

Sortie du désert, la capitale mauritanienne peut donc servir de modèle d'explication et d'analyse de la trajectoire historique de cette société et des contradictions internes qui fondent son évolution. En effet, l'image symbolique qui valide la légitimité de cette demande pressante d'indépendance épouse les mêmes formes, le même cheminement qui sous-tendent la volonté d'homogénéiser les communautés mauritaniennes. La capitale concentre l'ensemble des énergies et du génie créateur de la nation mauritanienne. Elle abrite, comme dans d'autres États africains, la totalité des structures chargées de mettre en place une politique développementaliste inspirée des vertus et normes occidentales du jacobinisme. Cette forte centralisation laisse en rade les périphéries et les réalités ethno-sociales qui fondent et instruisent la légitimité de ce mode de fonctionnement antérieur à l'État décrété moderne. Cette antériorité ne fait aucun doute, mais sa validité est secouée et malmenée par le désir de modernisation. Construire une ville moderne où l'anonymat dissout toute forme de revendication identitaire constituait l'un des objectifs poursuivis par l'élite mauritanienne.

L'État postcolonial mauritanien avait comme objectif l'urbanisation du pays afin d'aboutir à ses conséquences considérées comme salutaires: la sédentarisation des nomades et leur incorporation dans le tissu économique et socio-politique naissant , comme si les deux éléments pouvaient garantir l'émergence d'une nation forte et solidaire au-delà des différences et des contradictions qui fondent leurs «légitimités» respectives. Et pour égaliser les différences le parti unique fut institué comme la seule force capable de produire l'unité et de l'ériger comme l'un des piliers du fonctionnement de l'ensemble des membres de la communauté nationale . Il a tenté de fédérer des sensibilités différentes. Son discours unificateur se retrouve dans le slogan évocateur de: «Faisons ensemble la Nation mauritanienne». Il symbolisait, dans le fantasme onirique des pères de la nation, dans la lourdeur de son fonctionnement et dans la singularité des luttes internes qui caractérisent la compétition entre ses membres, le lieu de convergence des énergies qui ont longtemps contesté son existence, sa pertinence et sa pérennité.

En visitant sa phraséologie on se rend compte de cet effort de mimétisme angélique qui ponctue les discours de ceux qu'on pourrait appeler les usurpateurs de la paternité des nations africaine et mauritanienne. Cet état de fausse conscience a trahi les vérités africaine et mauritanienne et a tenté de

gommer les traces d'une organisation ethnique et tribale qui jouait comme système de régulation et de négociation de la quiétude et du devenir des peuples africains. Cette «rature» historique laisse apparaître des contradictions internes et des clivages irréductibles. Elle a tenté d'inhiber toutes les autres formes d'expression en insistant sur les compromis qui se révéleront, par la suite, fragiles. De nouvelles réalités sociales émergent et cherchent, chacune d'entre elles, à faire triompher le vocabulaire qui structure les fondements de son imaginaire et les désirs de visibilité des acteurs sociaux qui en écrivent le discours et l'épistémè.

Ensuite l'«État-nation-multiethnique» s'adjuge l'Islam comme référent identitaire et décrète l'arabité comme seul horizon possible. Il disqualifie les autres ethnies qui composent la communauté nationale et surtout leur mode de fonctionnement et leur régime de vérité qui fondent leur existence et les imaginaires qui les alimentent. Il les invite, les intime voire les force à se dissoudre dans le monde arabe idéalisé et vécu comme le stade ultime de la finitude humaine. Les reconversions identitaires et culturelles, la «continuité pigmentaire» entre les deux espaces (le Sud du Sahara occidental et l'espace Nord de la Mauritanie) et les fantasmes statistiques servent d'éléments de validation du rêve d'appartenir à un bilad el islam et à une dewla arabes vierges de toute souillure et donc de tout métissage avilissant.

L'aventure islamisante s'érige en prétention et en normes de comportement. Le fait d'avoir vaincu le Dieu totémique des autres, d'habiter leurs consciences, de s'immiscer dans leur imaginaire et d'investir leurs corps de manière quotidienne justifie leur soumission et prouve leur infériorité innée: leur indigénisation. Ceci est valable non seulement pour les Haratin anciens esclaves, mais aussi pour les Négro-mauritaniens. L'islamisation de l'espace mauritanien remonte au temps du commerce transsaharien. Elle s'est, vraisemblablement, renforcée à partir du 11e siècle avec la naissance du mouvement almoravide et des conquêtes qui s'ensuivirent. L'islam allait connaître, de manière continue, un succès au sein des populations. La célèbre guerre de Shar baba qui opposa marabouts arabes et guerriers berbères au début du 17e siècle dans l'espace mauritanien, en illustre la continuité. D'ailleurs, elle eut des prolongements dans les royaumes noirs de la Vallée du fleuve Sénégal.

«Le mouvement des peuples, les déplacements du pouvoir, la transformation des États, les vagues des conquérants qui se succèdent, la montée de la ferveur religieuse, puis son déclin» alimentent un véritable bouillonnement qui va marquer durablement la région ouest-africaine de manière ininterrompue de la moitié du 17e siècle à la défaite d'Al hajji Umaar Taal , le «prophète» toucouleur et de la conquête définitive de cette partie de

l'Afrique. Cette période est non seulement dominée par l'introduction d'une nouvelle religion, mais aussi par la naissance de nouveaux rapports de domination et les Noirs en seront les victimes indiquées. Et toute cette réalité socio-politique alimente les stéréotypes au point de les ériger en normes de classification dans la Mauritanie actuelle.

Ces peuplades sont plus proches de la nature que de la culture, à asservir par la civilisation supérieure de «l'envahisseur». La violence symbolique qui accompagne cette vision déstructure et invalide toute autre forme de revendication qui n'épouse pas les canons, le vocabulaire et la grammaire de l'arabité et donc de l'Islam. Il fallait s'arc-bouter (s'arrimer) à défaut du monde moyen-oriental lointain , au Maghreb arabe. L'adhésion en 1973 à la Ligue arabe achève une partie de cette longue et pénible quête de l'arabité voire de cette recherche de reconnaissance internationale devant un Maroc paternaliste. D'ailleurs, c'est durant ces années que plusieurs mesures furent prises, la frappe d'une nouvelle monnaie (ouguiya), la nationalisation des sociétés à économie mixte, arrivée massive de coopérants arabes: algériens, marocains, tunisiens et leur affectation dans le secteur technique et l'enseignement, qui marquent un véritable tournant dans la trajectoire de l'État mauritanien indépendant .

La vocation arabo-islamique de l'État indépendant et souverain de Mauritanie rejette (dans son acception primaire) la sauvagerie instituée des ethnies. Celles-ci relèvent du fantasme et s'inscrivent dans ce qu'on pourrait appeler les «civilisations du tam-tam». Et voilà que ces cultures deviennent illégales dans un territoire à arabiser, un front sud du bilad el islam à élargir et conserver des influences négroïdes, tel que pensé par les baathistes alimentés à l'école irakienne. Et au-delà, on peut affirmer que la comparaison entre la Mauritanie et le Soudan s'avère opératoire. Les deux pays me semblent représentatifs de fronts de convergence de deux mondes appelés à s'intégrer par la voie du chaos et de la désolation. La négation des autres constitue l'un des piliers qui essentialise la démarche de l'État islamisant, fondateur des différences et distributeur de la souffrance. Il utilise et abuse de la force haratine (Noirs de culture arabe et anciens tributaires des bidhan) et signe ainsi, par ces manipulations, la fracture entre les deux communautés qui souffrent une marginalisation identique sur plusieurs points. Toutes les manifestations de l'État mauritanien, depuis les indépendances, a consisté à faire croire à l'inexistence des autres communautés ethniques. Ceci est, quelque part, validé par les études consacrées à la Mauritanie, sauf la partie arabophone est étudiée. Elle seule intéresse les chercheurs . Elle est fascinante par ses anciennes villes-escales, ses lieux de culte, les bibliothèques familiales dont elle regorge et le caractère nomade des populations qui l'habitent. Et

pourtant quatre ethnies (Bambara, Soninké, Toucouleur, Wolof) composent la quotidienneté démographique de la Mauritanie dite moderne.

Les compétitions pour la gestion de la chose publique s'instruisent à partir de cette trame. Elles s'instituent dans ces anfractuosités et s'y greffent depuis la constitution de la République. Durant les 18 ans de son règne, le premier Président de la République a tenté de façonner l'image d'une Mauritanie moderne où la chefferie traditionnelle, le tribalisme, l'ethnicité et le régionalisme seraient bannis. Quelques rapports administratifs des années 1970 permettent d'analyser cette situation. L'administration territoriale, sous l'impulsion du parti unique, était confrontée à un réel dilemme. Dans un rapport daté du 10 avril 1972, un Préfet d'un centre industriel et minier disait ceci: «La chefferie traditionnelle, telle qu'elle est actuellement dans notre pays, ne pose plus de grands problèmes dans la transformation de notre société primitive. Les chefs existants s'adaptent ou acceptent dans leur majorité le changement qui s'opère. Cette attitude louable, même si en partie elle découle du principe retenu depuis quelques années par le Parti, nous la devons en partie aussi à la volonté de cette catégorie de citoyens, car jusqu'à présent aucun texte législatif ou réglementaire n'est encore intervenu pour supprimer cette institution sociale». L'aveu de cet administrateur est clair. L'administration n'a pas pris de décisions formelles pour accompagner les mutations en cours. Mais nous sommes en droit de nous demander si les chefferies traditionnelles s'adaptent d'elles-mêmes ou si elles simulent afin de pouvoir profiter de manière conséquente des émoluments de l'État? Dans le même rapport l'administrateur déplore le fait que «les fils ou les veuves des chefs traditionnels héritent leurs salaires, et c'est dans de rares cas seulement où les héritiers d'un chef ne continuent pas à bénéficier de cet avantage, parce que n'ayant pas de personnes influentes auprès des milieux de la capitale». On voit donc cette forme de stratégie, entretenue et maintenue par des relations complexes qui échappent à ceux qui sont appelés à veiller à l'évolution de la société mauritanienne.

Deux années plus tard, le même administrateur est nommé Gouverneur d'une région située à l'Est du pays. Dans un rapport portant la mention Secret-Confidentiel, il relate, avec détails la campagne de réimplantation du Parti unique en indiquant que «d'une manière générale depuis notre indépendance, les efforts du Parti (...) se sont (...) portés à la transformation de notre société primitive en écartant les personnages traditionnels du circuit administratif ... Aussi ces hommes notables acceptant malgré eux les transformations ainsi imposées se sont tournés vers les postes politiques en lesquels, ils veulent poursuivre d'une manière déguisée cette politique». Ce constat se passe de commentaires dans la mesure où il dénote cette forme de recyclage opéré par

les chefferies traditionnelles. D'ailleurs les hommes politiques locaux n'hésitent pas à s'identifier soit à leur fraction, à leur tribu, à leur région, à leur race, dans toutes les affaires de la vie publique pour reprendre textuellement les idées de cet administrateur. Ainsi nous pouvons soutenir que tout cela ne fut qu'un vœu pieux, un discours politique et programmatique, resté inaudible du fait des pratiques souterraines de l'État lui-même. Les différences longtemps étouffées par les manipulations politiciennes surgissent comme seul horizon possible.

Prégnance de l'ethnicité et du tribalisme: la défaite de l'individu

D'emblée essayons de saisir l'un des termes de ce débat sans fin afin de circonscrire notre champ d'observation et de limiter nos ambitions conceptuelles. Le paradigme de l'ethnicité reste insaisissable à cause de la multiplicité des enjeux qu'il fait naître et des connotations conceptuelles qu'il recouvre (N'gaïde 2002c:618). Tous les chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines qui se sont penché sur ce concept reconnaissent sa complexité et les dérives auxquelles conduisent ses interprétations. Dès lors, son utilisation dans le contexte africain demande prudence et pondération sinon nous risquons de tomber dans des conclusions hâtives et simplistes qui relèvent, le plus souvent, d'une véritable diversion voire d'un divertissement qui annihile toute possibilité de produire des analyses savantes sur les questions qui bouleversent l'existence de l'Afrique et modifient sensiblement les trajectoires des sociétés qui la composent. C'est le plus simple exutoire qui permet, à ceux qui sont confrontés aux problèmes de compréhension des sociétés africaines, d'opérer un raccourci salutaire pour eux et qui limite considérablement leur perception des situations et enjeux qui innervent les quotidiennetés africaines .

Il me semble donc que l'utilisation de l'ethnicité-dans le sens négatif du terme-comme seul et unique facteur d'explication, d'appréciation et d'observation de la modernité africaine et mauritanienne pose de sérieux problèmes d'appréhension et de compréhension des diverses mutations internes qui caractérisent cette partie du monde. Les crises qui secouent l'Afrique peuvent être interprétées comme une longue quête d'un équilibre entre les forces centrifuges, mais pas comme une fatalité irréversible. Les sociétés africaines ont vécu des violences internes dont l'historicité doit nous permettre de rendre compte de «ce qu'il y a de pathologique et ce qu'il y a d'authentique dans la condition humaine».

Le politiste congolais (ex-Zaïre), Biaya (1998:111), envisage «l'ethnicité comme une valeur politiquement positive et une historicité innervant le champ du contre-pouvoir». Il conceptualise le paradigme de «pouvoir ethnique» et

le définit comme un pouvoir «que les sociétés civiles africaines ont mis en place à la suite de leur lutte quotidienne multiforme contre l'État» (Biaya 1998:109). Il tente de sortir l'ethnicité de l'image négative dans laquelle elle a été longtemps confinée. Le regroupement ethnique agit, sans exagération, comme un parti politique social qui s'inscrit et inscrit ses modalités d'action et ses différentes revendications dans le sillage de la société. La tension interne qui le caractérise et ordonne son mode de fonctionnement ressemble aux tendances et aux différentes alliances qui peuvent soit renforcer et/ou soit affaiblir l'existence d'un parti politique. Ce type d'organisation longtemps considéré comme relevant de la sphère de la sauvagerie et du primitivisme a renforcé sa façon d'exister, sophistiqué sa démarche d'insertion et «séduit» par sa modernité. L'ethnie est donc un cadre d'expression, par les solidarités qu'elle crée, qu'elle définit et qu'elle administre. L'image de son épaisseur dans nos esprits a non seulement façonné un mode de comportement et d'attitudes mais aussi les manifestations de notre intellect.

Au temps pré-colonial les compétitions entre les différentes formations étatiques qui se sont succédées sur l'espace mauritanien ont tourné autour non seulement de l'administration des ressources, mais aussi de la gestion des hommes et du contrôle de leur vie. Elles ont entretenu soit des relations conflictuelles soit des relations d'interdépendance qui ont fondé leur stabilité et assuré leur reproduction. Leur qualification d'ethnique ou de tribale les a rendu inintelligibles et les a estampillé du sceau du discrédit et de la barbarie. «Ethnique est l'antonyme de civilisé» (Gossiaux 2002:2). La guerre ethnique est stigmatisée comme guerre sans loi, cruelle et sauvage, avec son cortège de borgnes, de mutilés et de morts. La cruauté et la barbarie rythment les atrocités commises sur les innocents. Les guerres tropicales sont décrétées ethniques. Il ne peut en être autrement. Dès lors l'ethnicité recouvre le sens de la puérilité. Le concept recouvre un «arrière-sens qui est le sien dans tous ses usages: celui de naturel» (Gossiaux 2002:2).

Un pouvoir non partagé s'ethnicise et produit de l'ethnicité (Gossiaux 2002:189). Tant que la distribution du pouvoir entre les différents acteurs politiques tournera autour de la satisfaction arithmétique des quotas calculés sur la base des appartenances religieuses, régionales et/ou communautaires, l'ethnicité et le tribalisme s'imposeront comme le seul mode opératoire. De ce fait les élites ethniques et tribales essayent de capter les espaces de pouvoir et les ressources afférentes afin de se hisser au sommet de l'administration. Ainsi je peux affirmer avec J.-F. Gossiaux qu'«à l'instar de l'État, et en compétition avec lui, le groupe ethnique apparaît ici comme porteur de valeur et comme acteur politique légitime: l'ethnicité est principe de légitimité» (2002:2). Même si, par ailleurs, beaucoup de dangers s'insinuent dans la façon

d'utiliser cette ressource politique, sa longue occultation a conduit vers une forme d'impasse presque incontournable. Elle aiguise les compétitions et installe au milieu de la République son corollaire le plus insidieux: la corruption, le règne de la faveur et de l'incompétence. C'est l'une des sources à laquelle s'alimente la modernité économique, politique et sociale en Mauritanie. La prégnance de l'ethnicité et du tribalisme consacre la défaite non seulement de l'État en tant qu'ordonnateur de comportement, mais aussi de l'individu en tant qu'être libre et capable de prendre en charge son destin. C'est dans ce cadre particulier de tiraillements entre l'État, l'individu et la communauté qui le porte que les conflits violents apparaissent dans l'espace public.

Pluralité des compétitions et/ou modalités d'une rupture?

Depuis son indépendance, la Mauritanie est confrontée à des problèmes restés irrésolus. Son identité est affirmée par les uns et contestée par les autres. La préséance et la méthode, l'exaltation et le bannissement en décrivent la conflictualité permanente. Depuis 1966, après la décision de l'arabisation forcée, des confrontations musclées ont rythmé les rentrées scolaires. En effet en 1979, une longue grève permet de comprendre que ce qui était évacué, un moment, revient sur la scène de manière récurrente et surtout, sous le couvert d'une violence inouïe. Mais en 1986, d'autres réalités s'ajustent et se fécondent pour produire une situation explosive et porteuse de désordre. Elle s'insinue dans l'histoire de la Mauritanie et en continue le cheminement. Le «Manifeste du négro-mauritanien opprimé. De la guerre civile à la lutte de libération nationale» (1986) signe l'entrée des FLAM (Forces de libération africaines de Mauritanie, 1983) sur la scène publique et dénonce le racisme et ce que ce mouvement a nommé le «système beydane». Le mouvement s'impose dans le paysage politique clandestin et se présente comme une force d'opposition au régime mauritanien dont les pratiques sont comparées à celles de l'apartheid. Est-il un mouvement nationaliste, racial, ethnique ou «étroit», toutes ces caractéristiques dont l'affublent ses détracteurs?

Ce nationalisme noir recrute la majeure partie de ses membres dans l'ethnie haalpulaar. Son orientation ethnique est sans appel même si dans son sigle s'insère le terme «libération africaine de Mauritanie». Mais elle n'en diminue point la vérité de son discours et la constance de celui-ci dans le paysage politique mauritanien. Son action sur le plan international permet de dévoiler les pratiques discriminatoires dont sont victimes les Noirs en Mauritanie. Le mouvement est décapité sans qu'il n'ait pu avoir un véritable ancrage dans la société. Dans son abondante littérature ou dans celle de quelques-uns de ses membres, on retrouve une esquisse de ce que serait le «pays» des Noirs: toute cette bande de terre qui épouse, de manière schématique, les méandres du fleuve et qui s'étend sur plus de 600 km. Sa largeur coïncide de manière

approximative avec les zones inondables et s'étale au-delà des terres de pâturage et des zones d'habitation d'été des pasteurs peul. Il est désigné sous le nom composite de Walfougui . Sa grande particularité est la volonté de rassembler les populations des deux rives dont l'histoire commune et la continuité géographique valident cette perception. Ce territoire «imaginaire» est très contrasté à cause des réalités ethniques qu'il englobe et de la géographie mouvante qui dessine ses contours. Le mode de pouvoir pensé par les théoriciens du mouvement prône une autonomie instituée par les principes d'une fédération à la nigériane. Ce discours nationaliste à forte dose peule tire une partie de sa légitimité dans les traumatismes qui endeuillent, par moment, l'ensemble de la communauté négro-mauritanienne. Je me pose, cependant la question de savoir sur quelle légitimité s'appuient les Haalpulaar pour revendiquer au nom de tous les Noirs la réorganisation administrative du Sud?

Les détracteurs arabophones du mouvement manipulent voire falsifient le manifeste et l'érigent comme preuve d'un péril noir imminent. Cette entreprise leur permet de porter leur idéologie au-delà du cercle dans lequel elle était confinée. Le démantèlement, en 1987, d'un noyau d'officiers noirs (haalpulaar essentiellement) dont l'objectif était de renverser le pouvoir est vécu, dans le milieu arabophone, comme un véritable affront, une prétention voire une insolence. Le verdict est sans appel:trois officiers sont condamnés à mort et exécutés (haalpulaar). Des émeutes se soldent à Nouakchott et dans quelques villes de l'intérieur par plusieurs blessés. Dès lors tout noir devient suspect et est identifié comme appartenant au mouvement dont les desseins sont non seulement de renverser la situation de domination, mais d'instaurer une «dictature» noire.

Les baathistes et les nassséristes (inspirés des théories du Président Nasser) s'infiltrent dans l'armée, dans les rouages de l'État, quadrillent l'administration territoriale et deviennent de ce fait incontournables dans les prises de décisions. Ils verrouillent le régime et décrètent l'extermination comme seul moyen pour guérir cette «tare congénitale» de la Mauritanie. Les autres (baleebe, lekwar, les Noirs) mettent en place des moyens pour endiguer cette vague qui nie leur existence et qui prépare leur disparition soit par assimilation, déportation ou élimination physique. Ainsi, ils ouvrent, par leurs actions combinées, «un nouveau champ de solidarités et de rivalités» entre les différentes communautés mauritaniennes.

Dès lors s'accélère le processus d'élimination des Noirs de tous les services: armée, administration, des petits métiers. Ce climat de tension se généralise et les déplacements des Noirs à l'intérieur du pays deviennent un véritable calvaire à cause des tracasseries policières et des vexations qui les rythment.

Pendant ce temps les conflits inter-tribaux sont tus et des compromis sont trouvés pour en limiter les effets déstructurants.

En 1989, un conflit entre la Mauritanie et le Sénégal permet au régime en place de déporter «ses» citoyens. Dès lors la référence à l'ethnie, à la religion, à la région et aux différentes solidarités répondent «aux abus incessants de la puissance étatique» (Biaya 1998:108). Le sentiment ethnique se renforce et favorise le regroupement et surtout la cohésion des membres de la communauté opprimée. Il devient, sans exagération, une force politique qui se positionne sur l'échiquier national afin de réclamer la visibilité de ses membres. Mais la référence à l'ethnie ne peut être interprétée que comme la «résurgence d'une identité indélébile» (Géraud & alii 1998:67) longtemps enfouie dans les mémoires africaines et mauritaniennes. L'État mauritanien puise sa motricité et ses ressources dans les fondements de ces deux principes. Son historicité légitime ses caprices et ses capacités d'adaptation, de négociation et ses multiples ressources de reproduction. Ils sont devenus une réalité incontournable et leur institutionnalisation comme mode de régulation sociale et politique s'impose à la réalité de l'État et à ses multiples démembrements. Ils disciplinent les citoyens et contrôlent leur intelligence. Point de salut en dehors de cette réalité. La quotidienneté mauritanienne se lit dans l'ethnicité et le tribalisme.

L'État postcolonial africain de manière générale et mauritanien en particulier a échoué dans sa tentative d'homogénéiser la société, de mettre en place une justice pour tous et d'impulser le développement. Cet échec doublé de la violence qu'il exerce sur ses citoyens ont fait émerger sur ses flancs des forces dissidentes et porteuses d'autres rationalités. Le régime actuel puise toutes ses ressources dans la réactivation de ces formes de gestion du quotidien des citoyens en leur adjoignant la violence comme le seul mode de vérité. Maawiya gouverne et sa tribu règne . Et à cela s'ajoute un autre élément: le rôle primordial continu et non démenti des Haratin sur l'échiquier politico-social et leur implication dans les exactions contre les Noirs (1966, 1979, 1989 et durant les répressions de 1990 et 1991). Mais au-delà de toutes ces réalités traumatiques, se pose avec acuité, la question de savoir à quel niveau les situer au moment où les uns et les autres se les disputent? Quelle est leur place dans la République? Comment sont-ils devenus l'enjeu principal non seulement du jeu politique, mais social, démographique voire ethnique? Le glissement de la question dite «question nationale» vers cet exutoire ne s'explique, en réalité, qu'avec le poids démographique de cette entité. Le désir de s'additionner, voire de «s'adjuger» les Haratin reflète de manière dramatique les enjeux qui investissent la trajectoire de la modernité

mauritanienne. Il se pose dès lors la problématique de l'émergence effective de l'individu, du citoyen et de leurs rôles respectifs dans la marche de l'État.

Les Haratin, par la voix d'El Hor, revendiquent leur visibilité en remettant en cause leur statut antérieur et en revendiquant celui de la reconnaissance de leur humanité entière. Malgré la loi sur l'abolition de l'esclavage (1981), cette frange de la population mauritanienne continue de souffrir une forme de marginalisation sociale et politique qui dénote le statut second dont ils jouissent et qu'ils souffrent.

L'identité haratine comme enjeu

Pour introduire cette partie je tiens à soutenir avec Pierre André Tagguieff que «l'identité (...) est un cadre vide que l'on remplit de façon plus ou moins arbitraire avec des représentations, des valeurs, des croyances, des intérêts, des formes d'attachement ou de loyauté qui sont des faits culturels». Une définition parmi tant d'autres ? Mais elle semble, à mon sens, refléter l'idée qu'on peut se faire de l'identité. L'essentiel étant ici de saisir comment l'identité peut faire et être l'objet de manipulations. L'identité haratine pose de réels problèmes en Mauritanie. Il est impossible de contourner cette question cruciale. Elle occupe, aujourd'hui, la scène publique et demande un traitement judicieux de la part des acteurs politiques. Elle est, pour tous, un élément fondamental dans l'expression de l'identité contestée de la Mauritanie.

Il y a deux ans un débat passionnant et passionné a été ouvert dans le forum de discussion en ligne des FLAM. Je soutenais dans une intervention que le débat ouvert sur l'identité de l'une des composantes de la nation mauritanienne touche l'un des aspects les plus fondamentaux de la crise sociale dans ce pays. J'espérai tout simplement que le débat allait être une occasion d'échanges fructueux, contradictoires et enrichissants pour que l'ensemble des acteurs socio-politiques impliqués dans la marche vers une modernisation de la société mauritanienne puissent en profiter. Mais les réactions m'ont conforté dans mes convictions que ce thème reste extrêmement sensible car il concentre en lui toutes les contradictions qui traversent de manière horizontale et verticale la société mauritanienne. Chacun y est allé selon ses convictions, ses émotions, son affectif, voire son intérêt politique et/ou social. J'étais et reste encore persuadé que, pour rendre compte de la complexité de cette architecture sociale qui institue les ordres et les rapports statutaires internes qui la caractérisent, il faut se garder de tomber dans les travers des analogies et des associations hâtives. Aujourd'hui le vocabulaire politique des négro-mauritaniens est envahi de termes puisés dans le répertoire linguistique néo-nazi et ceci perturbe de manière univoque les approches et les observations. Il y a quelques années encore le terme négro-africain englobait, dans le corpus du langage identitaire mauritanien, les Haalpulaar,

les Soninké et les Wolof, et seuls les Bambara étaient considérés comme une autre variante des Haratin. Aujourd'hui le concept est élargi à d'autres, qui, par la couleur de leur peau, sont nécessairement (je dis bien nécessairement) intégrés à ce groupe dont l'une des caractéristiques identitaires reste son hétérogénéité. Le concept s'est enrichi démographiquement et s'est dévalué symboliquement car il s'est racisé . Tout ceci relève bien entendu de ce jeu de tiraillement qui prend sa source dans le flou arithmétique qui caractérise les recensements de la population mauritanienne. Pendant que les Noirs prétendent que les Haratin sont négro-africains ou négro-mauritaniens, les Arabo-berbères les considèrent comme des Arabes. Et les Haratin dans tout cela ? Culture, identité, race (dans le sens de la pigmentation de la peau) se mêlent dans les discours des uns et des autres sans qu'on puisse déterminer à quel moment et en quelles circonstances l'un prime sur l'autre. Chacun y va donc avec sa conviction historique, anthropologique, sociologique et/ou politique et les thèses s'enchevêtrent dans un imbroglio indescriptible. Cette toile d'araignée tissée autour des Haratin alimente les supputations et fonde les discours politiques. Les Haratin eux-mêmes se rendent de plus en plus compte qu'ils sont l'objet de convoitises, de tentatives de récupération et de manipulations de la part de ces deux entités. En tout état de cause ils constituent une sorte de tampon social entre Négro-Mauritaniens et Arabes. Ils sont «culturellement Arabes mais racialement Noirs» (Brhane 2000:197). Même si, par ailleurs beaucoup de Haratin ont, par adoption intégré la société toucouleur, ils restent la plupart du temps stigmatisés et indexés comme hardaane qui recouvre une connotation insultante.

Les rapides raccourcis et les multiples analogies ne doivent pas primer sur le poids irremplaçable d'une réelle réflexion sur cette question qui est restée longtemps taboue et qui aujourd'hui encore alimente les fantasmes identitaires en Mauritanie. Un minimum de précaution est nécessaire pour appréhender les questions qui innervent la société mauritanienne et qui fondent les frustrations/récupérations qui animent les uns et les autres. La discussion et les trajectoires des débats politiques et sociaux tournent autour de la pigmentation, des phénotypes et des statistiques démographiques. Mais les fantasmes de la mélanine et des «vérités» statistiques se heurtent contre les réalités imposantes d'une communauté dont les membres sont restés tributaires plusieurs siècles durant de l'invective de leurs maîtres et du mépris de leurs prétendus «frères» de couleur. Cette polémique nationale qui prend ces raccourcis est divertissante et détourne du débat réel en Mauritanie post coloniale: l'émergence d'une nouvelle classe sociale et politique dont le poids ne cesse de grandir au point de devenir un point nodal de l'évolution générale de la société. Malgré l'abolition de l'esclavage proclamée en 1981, les

conditions et la place des Haratin restent encore indéfinies car aucun décret d'application n'a été voté à ce jour. Le problème reste entier et cela alimente, à mon avis, toutes les récupérations qui se font jour au sein de la société mauritanienne. Le discours en Mauritanie post coloniale reste investi par cette discussion permanente autour des identités et de leur affiliation possible.

La culture d'un groupe social ne peut être saisie à la simple couleur des yeux, à l'état des cheveux, à la forme du nez et/ou à la stratégie du moment des individus qui le composent. Cette vision relève d'une ethnologie puérile qui s'alimente au sarcasme et à l'hilarité qu'elle produit. Elle limite la compréhension et informe sur les inquiétudes et surtout sur l'incapacité présente de reconnaître (plutôt de saisir) les contours, les frontières et les passerelles qui rendent compte de la complexité «cartographique» de l'identité mauritanienne. Car elles se dilatent, se compriment, se combinent et se concurrencent selon les enjeux du moment et les rapports de force voire simplement des fantasmes de la ressemblance pigmentaire et de la proximité culturelle. L'identité est fugace et n'accepte pas d'être saisie de manière aussi concluante qu'on a tendance à le faire croire et valoir. Dans sa prétendue «modernité», l'État mauritanien reste prisonnier de ce discours dont la portée didactique ne fait qu'alimenter des conflits qui instaurent la désolation et l'amertume au sein de la République. Les antiquaires des identités se perdent dans le Musée labyrinthique de la mémoire. L'espace public mauritanien est envahi de manière permanente par ce discours et les luttes qu'il alimente de manière quotidienne.

Que serait la centralité d'être hartani, maure, soninké ou wolof, si rien n'est garanti, dans un cadre démocratique et épanoui, pour leur émancipation en tant qu'individus jouissant de droits inaliénables ?

Les acteurs politiques et sociaux de la Mauritanie ne promeuvent pas l'émergence du citoyen responsable et capable de choisir, sans aucune contrainte, ceux qui prétendent travailler pour l'amélioration des conditions de vie de l'ensemble de la société. Ces considérations empiriques permettent, à ceux qui les manipulent, de réactiver la notion du «degré de mélanine» comme seule et unique échelle de valeur et comme seule forme d'observation qui permettent de définir et de tracer les contours des appartenances culturelles des uns et des autres en Mauritanie. Le versant racisant de ces affirmations leur ôte toute validité scientifique intelligible. Il essaie de vider la gravité des jeux et enjeux qui l'entourent. Nous assistons depuis toujours à des formes de réécritures permanentes des identités, à leur récupération et surtout à leurs manipulations. L'interpénétration des cultures est une chose incontestable et chaque peuple adopte, selon ses besoins les plus immédiats, les pratiques de la communauté humaine qui lui est la plus proche. La communauté haratine en Mauritanie a vu son identité «confisquée».

Désirs de phagocytose et/ou instrumentalisation

Que comprendre dès lors à travers ce débat «moderne» ? Les Haratin sont l'enjeu du moment car leur histoire particulière en Mauritanie est au devant de la scène nationale et internationale. Arabo-Berbères et Négro-Africains sont pris dans le piège de leur ancien jeu de «ping-pong». Ils se disputent un groupe humain qui doit se prononcer librement sur son «autodétermination identitaire», mais aussi sur son choix politique. Tout ceci renseigne sur les volontés d'instrumentalisation de leurs causes. Ils sont Noirs de culture arabe, disent les uns, ce sont des Haratin. Donc ils comptent parmi les arabo-berbères. Non ils sont Noirs et sont le résultat d'anciennes razzias arabes donc ce sont des «négro-mauritaniens» dans le sens de la catégorie ethnique que peut recouvrer ce terme. Ils sont mauritaniens dans l'anonymat qu'aurait dû procurer leur nationalité et surtout leur citoyenneté et leur humanité reconnues. Mais leur «irruption» sur la scène culturelle, politique ou tout simplement humaine produit un effet d'autodéfense des autres entités qui ont longtemps accommodé leur discours de domination à leur volonté de faire taire cette force.

Qui sont-ils ? Cette question revient très souvent dans les débats atour de leur identité. Le seul problème auquel je suis confronté, au risque d'être taxé de nihiliste, est justement de ne point pencher pour cette forme de lecture historique qui, par obsession, se donne comme objectif de retrouver les origines de chaque entité. Impossible car on s'égare dans les profondeurs des suppositions et des hypothèses. Chaque peuple a connu, durant sa longue histoire, suivant un processus complexe (qui n'est pas linéaire), des mutations profondes qui ont conduit à des reconversions identitaires insoupçonnables.

L'identité d'un peuple résulte-t-elle de la somme des idées qu'il se fait (subjectivités fondatrices du culte du nous anonyme et enveloppant), des idées que s'en font les Autres (stéréotypes sources d'images et d'imaginaires qui invitent à la haine, au rejet voire à la déshumanisation) ? Les deux visions s'alimentent mutuellement.

La complexité des rapports entre les Haratin et la communauté négro-africaine (entendue ici comme la somme des quatre ethnies: Bambara, Haalpulaar'en, Soninké et Wolof) de Mauritanie est dominée par un mélange de haine et d'amour impossible et leurs relations avec leurs anciens maîtres sont tissées dans la force du mépris (inte abd :tu es un esclave), mais aussi d'une filiation «honteusement» acceptée (rôle des esclaves dans l'allaitement des enfants et ce qu'en dit la religion musulmane et la Mauritanie est réputée être musulmane à 100%). La parenté pigmentaire est incontestable mais est-elle suffisante, aujourd'hui dans le contexte historique actuel, pour que les uns et les autres se revendiquent d'une appartenance culturelle commune?

La culture arabe des Haratin est tellement vraie qu'il est inutile d'en discuter et leur origine ouest-africaine (car issus d'une multitude d'ethnies, razziées ou assimilées sur place) est tellement patente qu'aucune thèse ne peut la nier. Mais qu'y a-t-il dans cette culture de spécifique, d'enrichissant, de subtile qui ne trouve pas encore son expression dans le paysage culturel voire cultuel mauritanien ? L'anthropologue français Olivier Leservoisier a réussi à faire ressortir la dualité des rapports entre Haratin et Négro-mauritaniens . Ainsi donc, à elle seule, la question haratine informe sur l'ambiguïté, la complexité et la dangerosité qui découlent des manipulations identitaires. Mais le terrain politico-social mauritanien moderne s'y prête à merveille et toutes les communautés sont prises dans un tourment identitaire interne révélateur d'un tiraillement entre l'identité collective et l'identité individuelle. On dirait qu'il n'existe pas d'autre identité possible que collective source d'un nationalisme déviationniste. Cette manière d'aborder les communautés mauritaniennes a conduit aux confrontations. L'émergence de l'individu-citoyen acteur de son identité ne se fera pas de sitôt dans la mesure où il faut se conformer au statu quo antérieur et se mouler dans le voile d'une pudeur morale imposée par les communautés respectives. Et ce sont les «évolués» qui cherchent, aujourd'hui, à codifier les normes traditionnelles et surtout à les figer. Cela ressemble étrangement à un cri de désespoir devant la réalité incontournable du monde et de la volonté de modernisation des moyens de gestion des hommes dans la cité. De cette palabre, on entend un lointain brouhaha, signe d'impuissance de mettre en place une société plurielle, mais unie. Et tant que cet esprit corporatiste imprimera son identité aux aspirations les plus profondes des Mauritaniens, ils resteront victimes de ces luttes de préséance qui innervent la société.

L'identité est un construit à partir de multiples représentations élaborées par la communauté mais elle peut être aussi saisie dans l'image que s'en font les autres. Les différents éléments qui la composent sont acquis par socialisation progressive. Ils résultent d'une longue histoire et se réfèrent à une mémoire. Dans le cas des Haratin, leur être et leur identité leur ont été inculqués par ceux qui ont prétendu, très longtemps, détenir la vérité du monde par le biais du Livre. Ils leur ont, non seulement transmis leur culture par leur langue, mais aussi à travers d'autres éléments qui entrent dans la définition de ce qu'ils sont: l'art culinaire, l'habillement, etc. L'esclave lui aussi, transplanté, a apporté avec lui quelques éléments enfouis dans son subconscient et qui s'extériorise en fonction des circonstances.

Les desseins des communautés négro-africaines (baleebe) et maure (bidhan) de phagocyter et/ou d'instrumentaliser les Haratin, ne sont plus réalisables dans le contexte actuel. Un tournant est amorcé et les mutations

en cours sont irréversibles. L'État a réussi, par sa magie et sa technicité, à créer une nouvelle bourgeoisie haratine complètement coupée de sa base sociale et qui s'inscrit sur le registre d'une revanche sociale mal placée. Mais elle est contrée par ceux qui pensent que l'objectif de lutte a été trahi .

Que conclure?

Il m'est impossible de conclure car la discussion et la palabre continuent encore en Mauritanie «moderne». Les acteurs se cherchent, les identités se redéfinissent, les communautés luttent, les individus restent embrigadés dans ces ensembles anonymes dont le dynamisme et les capacités d'adaptation défient nos intelligences. Et l'État en profite largement pour investir ces structures sociales prises dans un impératif de visibilité qui nie toute possibilité de compromis social et politique. La discussion se poursuit et dénote ce qu'on pourrait appréhender comme une forme de modernité discutée et surtout contestée par les pratiques quotidiennes des acteurs sociaux. Elle est faite de brouhahas, de bruits, de luttes dans les coulisses du pouvoir, dans la clandestinité, mais aussi sur l'espace public, car l'instance régulatrice n'a pas encore jugé nécessaire de donner sens ni à la démocratie ni aux choix des individus. La gestion patrimoniale des différences reste le pilier de l'État car elle alimente la reproduction assurée des instances traditionnelles qui ont investi ses rouages et qui en profitent largement aux dépens des individualités qui tentent d'émerger et d'émarger à sa «périphérie».

L'État africain et mauritanien se décline dans cette hésitation et cette reproduction voulue et entretenue car productrice de subordination, d'allégeance et de vénalité. La modernité mauritanienne s'inscrit dans cette complexité et s'institue dans cet imbroglio de méthodes et de discussions. Pour combien de temps le compromis pourrait-il servir de garant de la stabilité? Les discussions actuelles n'en définissent pas l'horizon et les confrontations qu'il fait naître instaurent le doute et le questionnement. De toute évidence se pose, de manière cruciale, l'idée d'indépendance de l'individu et de l'émergence du citoyen comme acteur souverain de son destin. L'Afrique et la Mauritanie vivent les tourments de cette difficile gestation d'une «société démocratique fondée sur la négociation et les compromis» (Schnapper 2002:188).

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Hegemony and Spatial Politics: The Press and the Struggle for Lagos in Colonial Nigeria

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Abstract

Hegemonic and counter-hegemonic politics are inherent in most human groupings, particularly where such politics are geared toward the appropriation of space. Against this backdrop, the paper attempts to explain how an elite and counter-elite dichotomy in a social formation arose in the struggle for power. Contentious micro-politics in Lagos, the capital city in colonial Nigeria, with the attendant pull and push of elite bargaining for power and prominence, is examined, particularly as the dual claims to consent and dissent were reflected in the nationalist newspapers of the era.

Résumé

La pratique d'une politique de type hégémonique et contre-hégémonique est inhérente à la plupart des groupements humains, particulièrement lorsque ces politiques portent sur l'appropriation de l'espace. C'est dans ce contexte que cette contribution se propose d'expliquer la manière dont la dichotomie élite/ contre-élite au sein d'une formation sociale conduit à une lutte pour le pouvoir. La pratique d'une forme de micro-politique controversée à Lagos, la capitale du Nigeria colonial, ainsi que les manœuvres de l'élite intéressée par le pouvoir sont examinées, particulièrement au moment où les manifestations de contentement et de frustration étaient véhiculées dans les journaux nationalistes de l'époque.

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Introduction

> To study affiliation is to study and to recreate the bonds between texts and the world...To recreate the affiliative network is therefore to make visible, to give materiality back to, the strands holding the text to society, author, and culture...(Edward Said 1983).

Space, the attendant inscription of space with meaning and its imbrication in power relations have very interesting implications which have come to be described as spatiality. Spatiality – the politics of space – can produce important consequences for local, national and international politics. Sometimes the contest over the meaning, importance and appropriation of space at one level have important consequences for other levels. The status of Lagos and the implications of this status for national politics in Nigeria have always been a contentious issue. The city, therefore, as the capital of colonial – and later post-colonial – Nigeria was imbricated in the struggle for hegemony and domination by ethnic groups, which was folded into the struggle against colonial rule, the struggle for independence, and later, the struggle for national cohesion. Barely five years after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, with Lagos becoming the capital city, interested elements in the new colony and protectorates of Nigeria began a move to hedge Lagos out of its 'central status' and replace it with another capital, perhaps more fitted to the political goals of such elements.

The 'anti-Lagos' elements presented what they considered important points against the retention of Lagos as capital city – or 'Administrative Headquarters' as it was then known – and the removal of the capital to 'an uninhabited spot in Kaduna, 570 miles away from Lagos', somewhere behind Lokoja, perhaps near Abuja, the present Federal Capital Territory.[2] The 'anti-Lagos' elements had described Lagos as 'the nerve-centre of political agitation and the grave of official reputations' (*The Lagos Weekly Record*, 14 February, 1920:1). *The Lagos Weekly Record* described as 'unauthorized and fallacious' the claim in some quarters that the then Governor-General of Colonial Nigeria had ordered that:

> the Headquarters of the Governor-General and the central seat of Government would be the high plateau immediately behind Lokoja known as Mount Patte, situated in the *very centre* of the Protectorate, commanding the Niger and the Benue, within easy (reach) of Baro the starting-point of the central railway, and linked up with the western railway by a branch line to Osogbo (ibid).

Consequent upon the agitation and rumours of the impending shift in the capital, the Governor-General, Sir Hugh Clifford, toured the Southern and

Northern Provinces, and addressed the Nigerian Council on the matter on Monday, 29 December 1919. Clifford declared to the Council:

> After giving this question the most careful consideration, I have arrived at the conclusion that, at any rate, for a great many years to come, the only possible place at which the principal seat of Government can be located is Lagos. I have said that Nigeria is today standing on the threshold of great commercial expansion and development; and experience gained in other new and undeveloped countries in the Tropics shows that during the initial stages, so much depends upon the inspiration and initiative of Government and upon *its close cooperation with those sections of the public which are actively engaged in the promotion of trade and of business enterprises*, that is essential that the administrative Headquarters should itself be the great radiating centre of energy, innovation and progress (ibid).

Clifford's reasons for remaining in Lagos transcended commercial reasons – even though, as he acknowledged, these were supposed to lead to the radiation of 'energy, innovation and progress'. Curiously, for a foreign imposition at its infancy, Clifford was also concerned about the government moving too far away from the articulation of dissent. The Governor-General argued that the functions of the colonial government would suffer in its execution if it moved away from the critical appraisal that was evident in Lagos:

> This is a function which (we) can hardly hope to fulfil unless the principal operations of the Government are carried on in the *midst of the most active life and thought of the country*, whence it is able to maintain the closest touch with every section of the community, and where *its activities are exposed to the closest scrutiny and criticism*. Such things, I contend, are aids to good government with which no administration can safely afford to dispense (ibid).

Clifford did not stop there. He argued further against the agitation to take the capital to what would appear to be the present day Abuja or even Kaduna, affirming that such a move had been 'definitely abandoned' and hoping that it would not be revived for many decades:

> (I)f the seat of Government be situated in some position of comparable isolation it must inevitably tend to become *increasingly bureaucratic, and automatically deprive itself of the assistance in the framing of its measures which articulate public opinion* of those whose affairs are its charge can alone efficiently supply (ibid).

Contrary to Clifford's hope, the matter again came up in the 1940s and 1950s Nigeria as the nationalist struggle increased in tempo, and as the dynamics of the concomitant political calculations for the appropriation of space and power

in the lead up to independence, took on a new life. But first, the debate began in terms of the rightful and also constitutional 'ownership' of the space, and consequently deteriorated into the propriety or otherwise of moving the capital to another part of the country.

This paper analyses the structure, nature and dynamics of this struggle for hegemony over a city that was seen by some of the 'gladiators' as the social and political – perhaps also, the economic – equivalent of the rest, if not the whole, of Nigeria. As one of the leading nationalists of that era, H.O. Davies, captured this sentiment, the city contained 'the genius of the country' (Awolowo 1960:154). Obafemi Awolowo, who was also one of the leading activists of that era, but resident in Ibadan, accused the nationalists in Lagos of seeing the city as 'the alpha and omega of political sagacity and wisdom', believing that 'only those who lived within its confines should essay to lead the country' (ibid).

The foregoing descriptions of the centrality and assumed primacy of Lagos explained why it was important in the (ethnic) hegemonic and counter-hegemonic politics of the period, particularly in the context of how this politics was geared toward the appropriation of space – within that particular socio-political formation – as explicated in the newspaper press of the period. Two rival newspapers – The *West African Pilot* and The *Daily Service* – are used in this paper, as they represent rival claims to 'ownership' and 'primacy' in spatial politics, to explicate a theoretical position that captures these struggles within the framework of the creation and institutionalisation of a 'pattern of group activity' in which idealised forms that cohere with the interests of the (ethnic) group are leveraged into 'commonsensical' ideas in the pursuit of the group's political, economic and social interests (Laitin 1986:19).

The City and the structure of elaboration and affiliation

Intellectuals exercise hegemony over particular locations, not only because they create particular ways of life and particular conceptions of the world, but also because they are able to translate the interests and values of specific social formations into general and 'common' values and interests. One way in which this can be done is through the text – which propagates these ways of life and conceptions of the world. Here, hegemony, which resides in civil society, is translated into a bulwark in support of political society (ibid:105). Hegemony is here conceived as involving the 'creation and institutionalization of a pattern of group activity in a state with a concomitant espousal of an idealized framework that strives to present itself as "common sense"' (ibid:19). It is a 'vehicle' with which the dominant social groups establish a system of 'permanent consent' that legitimates a prevailing social order by encompassing

a complex network of mutually reinforcing and interwoven ideas affirmed and articulated by intellectuals (Fontana 1993:141).

The intellectuals, in the context of the empirical situation here, are the activists and partisans – what David Laitin (1986:100) calls 'political entrepreneurs' – who were using the newspapers to legitimate or de-legitimate the prevailing social order in colonial Lagos. The conflict that is inherent in the logic of hegemony, which produces counter-hegemony, is captured well by Laitin who argues that a successful hegemony does not necessarily yield 'order', but rather it 'yields a set of conflicts that automatically and commonsensically stands at the top of the political agenda' (ibid:107). I proceed to examine here an empirical situation which explicates the foregoing argument.

Lagos as a centre of struggle

It can be argued that the modern history of Lagos – which is also called Eko – began in 1851 when the British forced the King of Lagos, Kosoko, from the throne on the grounds of his slave-raiding activities. His more pliant uncle, Akitoye, replaced him. As Michael Crowder (1962:120) argues, the installation of a king who was not only sympathetic to British interests but also depended on the British for survival, in place of a hostile one, was 'a classic example of nineteenth century colonial expansion'. Britain, on 30 July 1961 annexed the 'internally stable' Lagos because of her need for a base from which it could regulate trade with the interior (ibid:133). With the 'cession' of Lagos to the British by King Dosumu, who succeeded Akitoye, and the subsequent annexation, a new era began 'in the history of British relations with that part of the coast, an era which inaugurated the new territory of Nigeria' (ibid:136).

With the annexation of Lagos came debilitating conditions in the Yoruba hinterland as the Ijaye war flared up again. Eventually, the troubles in the interior boiled down to competition between the Egba and Ibadan to exert control over access to Lagos. So, while Lagos enjoyed relative peace and centrality in trade, the parts of the interior were either engaged in war or bitter rivalry.

Against this background, Lagos became the hub of economic and social activities, with the attendant political significance of such an emerging centre of modernity. The dynamics and intensity of the politics of Lagos was so strong as to even trap and impede the nationalist fervour that was being generated by Herbert Macaulay over the 1923 elections in which the 'natives' were allowed to elect four people to the legislative assembly – three representing Lagos and one representing Calabar in the east of Nigeria. It was not until the 1930s that a new generation of Nigerians looking beyond the 'narrow political horizons of the capital' seized control of the nationalist movement from the generation of the Macaulays (ibid:217).

The political history of Lagos in the period between 1923-1938 revolved around the quinquennial elections for the Legislative Council and the triennial election for the Lagos Town Council – the latter which had the elective principle partially extended to it in 1920 – and the long-running issue of the status and headship of the House of Docemo, the ruling house in Lagos (Coleman 1986:197). Macaulay, who is regarded as the father of Nigerian (anti-colonial) nationalism, threw himself at all of these, using his newspaper, the *Lagos Daily News*, market women, the House of Docemo and its supporters, and 'his unique ability to fire the imagination of the semiliterate and illiterate masses of Lagos' to advantage (ibid).

The competition for the elective posts in Lagos increased political awakening in the city, with the number of newspapers (five) surpassing the number of parties (two) (ibid; 198). However, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), led by Macaulay, emerged as the most powerful party, returning candidates to the Legislative Council in 1923, 1928, and 1933. Even though it claimed to be 'national', the NNDP was a Lagos affair, notwithstanding the fact that it took a 'national' stand on crucial issues, reminding Lagosians of their linkage with a larger territory called Nigeria (ibid:199).

Until the 1930s, most educated Nigerians who invariably led the nationalist movement and controlled the press were from Yoruba or Creole families who had been in long contact with Europeans (Crowder 1962:217). This 'closed aristocracy' of the Yoruba and the *Yorubalised* Creoles was only intellectually challenged, in a serious and sustained manner, from the 1930s (ibid). With this challenge came concrete developments in nationalist organisation.

The Ibo, as they were then called, now Igbo, constituted the largest ethnic category that challenged this 'closed aristocracy'. But this challenge was only possible when it was organised around the towering image and figure of Nnamdi Azikiwe, who then had just returned with a string of degrees from America. By the early 1950s, the Ibo constituted 44.6 percent of the population of Lagos (Coleman 1986).

From 1934 to 1949, Azikiwe, popularly called Zik, was 'the most important and celebrated nationalist leader' on the West Coast of Africa, if not in all tropical Africa (ibid:220). He initiated a new era in journalism upon his return from America, first in Ghana and later in Nigeria. With bold, daring and sometimes shocking directness in his editorials and news, Azikiwe's *West African Pilot* displaced other newspapers, emerging as a commercial success (ibid:222-3). As the author of one of the most cited works on Nigerian history, James Coleman, stated, Azikiwe's

> Combative and provocative journalism was the principal source of his fame and power, and the most crucial single precipitant of the Nigerian

> awakening. Although Azikiwe's power and influence resulted partly from his fresh and militant approach (to the issue of freedom and independence), they also reflected the fact that he was the first non-Yoruba Nigerian (apart from Ernest Ikoli, an Ijaw) to emerge into prominence (ibid:223-4).

Before the emergence and ascendancy of Azikiwe in Nigerian journalism and politics – which were meshed in those days (Adebanwi 2002) – the Ibo had been on the periphery of politics, lacking a symbol and a spokesman, even while exhibiting an unprecedented passion to catch up with their main southern rival, the Yoruba, particularly in the area of education and modernity.

With the pressure exerted in the main by Azikiwe through his papers, the issue of Lagos became very salient. After the dissolution of the activist Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), an off-shoot of the Lagos Youth Movement, due to internal wrangling over the choice of the Movement for the Legislative Council, in which Azikiwe and Samuel Akinsanya were pitched against Ernest Ikoli and Obafemi Awolowo with the attendant press war between the Zik-owned *West African Pilot* and NYM-owned *Daily Service*, the emergent parties, the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons, NCNC (later National Council for Nigerian Citizens) and the Action Group engaged in a battle over the status of Lagos.

Azikiwe had earlier protested the domination of Lagos politics by the Yoruba who were also discriminating against non-Yorubas particularly in the area of housing (Coleman 1986:340); but his presidency of the Ibo State Union did not help matters. He had said while addressing his Ibo constituents that 'It would appear that the God of Africa had created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of ages...' (Crowder 1962:228).

Zik's main rival, Obafemi Awolowo, in his autobiography, concedes that 'the Ibo had never had a share in newspaper publicity before the advent of the (Zik's) *Pilot*', but argues that 'no Yoruba man of *the class of Ibos* publicised in the *Pilot* ever had a share of publicity in any paper either' (Awolowo 1960:139, emphasis added). Even though it is difficult to determine what Awolowo meant by 'the class of Ibos', he also conceded that 'the Ibos needed all the boosting they could get', ostensibly through Zik's medium. But even here, Awolowo queries the actual practice of this 'ethnic boosting' (Coleman 1962:342-3). This bears extensive quotation:

> But, Dr. Azikiwe went about it in a manner which disgusted those of us who were used to describing citizens of Nigeria as Nigerians or Africans, and regarding their achievement as reflecting on Nigeria, indeed Africa, as a whole... But as against these, the achievement of Yorubas and in particular, the academic laurels of their scholars received, if at all, inconspicuous notice in the *Pilot*. When an Ibo did or was about to do

> something praiseworthy, he was invariably given a two-column headline and report in the *Pilot*, and was always described by his ethnic origin in the headlines. But when the Ph.D. degree of London University, indeed of any university for that matter, was conferred on the first Nigerian ever, the historic news was given a small single-space in the *Pilot*, and the headline read: 'Nigerian Economist Passes Ph.D. in London'. The scholar concerned was Dr. Fadipe, a Yoruba... Apart from failing to give publicity to the achievements of the Yoruba, and holding their public men to obloquy, the *Pilot* always made sure that all their misdoings received the publicity (Awolowo 1960:140-1).

Awolowo fails to note that given the prior advantage enjoyed by the Yoruba in the press, the *Pilot's* attitude to 'Yoruba achievement' might only have been an attempt to 'balance out' years of publicity enjoyed by the Yoruba. Even while this will not excuse the attitude as detailed by Awolowo, it can partly explain the urge for the Ibo in this era to 'equal' or 'balance out' the Yoruba who had a head start. This was eventually achieved, as the Yoruba later started complaining of 'Ibo domination' in metropolitan (Lagos) and even national politics.

With the creation, and subsequent activities, of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a Yoruba socio-cultural organisation, the Yoruba-Ibo tension rose in Lagos, as the creation of the *Egbe* heightened tribal antagonism between the Yoruba and the Ibo (Sklar 1968:68-70). Prior to the creation of the *Egbe*, the immediate past years had witnessed the establishment of Ibo's ideological leadership of the pan-Nigeria movement, which also ran alongside the pursuit of Ibo 'cultural supremacy' organised around the Ibo State Union (ibid). The *Egbe* seemed to have unveiled this bifacial hegemony, which the West African *Pilot* was to deride as 'Ibo domination stunt'. By 1948, Oluwole Alakija, a leading member of the *Egbe*, made a statement which was not untypical of the rivalry and passion against Azikiwe, and by extension, the Ibo:

> We were bunched together by the British who named us Nigeria. We never knew the Ibos, but since we came to know them, we have tried to be friendly and neighbourly. Then came the Arch Devil [meaning, Azikiwe] to sow the seeds of distrust and hatred... We have tolerated enough from a class of Ibos and addle-brained Yorubas who have mortgaged their thinking caps to Azikiwe and his hirelings (Coleman 1986:346).

The Ibos responded in kind to this intemperate statement leading to a press (civil) war which preceded a near descent into physical violence between the two groups, as gladiators descended on the local markets to purchase machetes (ibid). Mahmood Mamdani's concept of 'civil war' captures this event. Mamdani (1993:292) argues that, in the context of tribalism in Africa, a civil

war constitutes 'a continuum along which muted tensions co-exist long before they break out into open confrontation'.

A mass meeting of Ibos in Lagos resolved that any further personal attacks on Azikiwe would be seen as attacks on the 'Ibo nation', because 'if a hen were killed, the chickens would be exposed to danger' (Coleman 1986:346). In the middle of all this, the *Pilot* affirmed that:

> Henceforth, the cry must be one of battle against the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, its leaders at home and abroad, up hill and down dale in the streets of Nigeria and in the residences of its advocate... It is the enemy of Nigeria; it must be crushed to the earth... There is no going back, until the Fascist Organization of Sir Adeyemo [leader of the Egbe] has been dismembered (ibid).

It was against this backdrop of civil war that the struggle for Lagos was enacted. The NCNC and mainly Ibo, led by Azikiwe, argued for the administrative separation of Lagos, as federal capital, from the rest of the West, while the Action Group, mainly Yoruba, led by Obafemi Awolowo, rooted for the retention of Lagos with the Yoruba West. While the *West African Pilot* represented the position of the former, the *Daily Service* represented the position of the latter in a passionate tussle for hegemony in the increasingly multi-cultural city. To use Mamdani's (1996:292) phrases, while the *Service* sought to 'flatten the ethnic diversity' of Lagos, the *Pilot* attempted to turn a 'simple fact of heterogeneity into a source of ethnic tension'.

The press and the construction of hegemony

In the push and pull toward hegemony and counter-hegemony by the rival ethnic/political groups over the status and 'ownership' of Lagos, the newspapers representing the opposing camps gave vent to the ideas, ideals, interests and values of the groups. The Yoruba elite in the AG and Igbo elite in the NCNC saw themselves as a 'determinate hegemonic force' (Fontana 1993:32), which could transform the position, power and privilege of their groups. The consequence of such consciousness, Fontana (ibid) argues, 'is the transformation of a subordinate, particularistic mass of disaggregated individuals into a leading and hegemonic subject whose thought and values have become the prevailing conception of the world'.

In the 1940s and early 1950s Nigeria, the North was largely indifferent to the status of Lagos. Therefore, it was a straight fight between the East (NCNC) and the West (AG).

The reforms in the Lagos Town Council (LTC) removed the independent status of Lagos, which was then largely controlled by the NCNC, which had produced an Ibo mayor for the city, and merged it with the Western Region.

The *Pilot* argued in this context that changes in the status of Lagos must be conceived along with the *essence* of the city:

> If Lagos is still assumed to be the capital of Nigeria, surely in all its phases, institutions must exist to act as unifying media so that the centric force created will be Nigerian, neither entirely Yoruba, nor Ibo, nor Hausa. It is in this light that the proposed LTC reforms must again be examined.[3]

The paper makes the case that it is in the 'common' interest of all Nigerians to make Lagos free of any regional control. At the start of this debate, the *Pilot* comes across as if it were a dispassionate observer of the trend, speaking to the seemingly 'transcendental' significance of a 'multi-cultural' city for all:

> If we succeed in making Lagos Nigeria's capital, where all tribes of the nation can live without feeling themselves ostracised, where the government system of the city will not be biased in *nature* but based on *progressive formula*, if *we* can indeed make Lagos a sort of London, or New York, where all citizens from all parts can commingle and inhabit without animosity, then surely *we* would have succeeded in cementing the Nigerian ideal...[4].

What *Pilot* calls 'nature' could be seen as the claim of the Yoruba to the 'natural ownership' of Lagos, which explains why the newspaper then makes a case for the determination of the status of Lagos based on a 'progressive formula'. Such a formula, 'for the sake of unity', the paper argues further, will 'determine for centuries to come the graph line of peace among the people of Nigeria'. The paper therefore urges Nigerians to make this Atlantic City a truly worthy capital of Nigeria. One that will serve as a unifying force to make three warring *Nigerias* impossible. And the NCNC is dedicated to this *magnificent obsession*[5].

The theme of 'unity' is one that resonates in any hegemonic process as the hegemonic group attempts to unify all, or at least, the majority around an organising idea, which, at base, only serves the interest of the group. Lagos, for the *Pilot*, is no longer just another town, but a centre of unity, a 'cosmopolitan city inhabited by a more politically advanced people drawn from all sections of a federated Nigeria'.[6] The decision by the colonial government to incorporate Lagos into the Western Region, which would then rule the city indirectly, was consequently condemned by the paper as gratifying the 'personal ambition of certain disgruntled and interested individuals'[7] through the introduction of 'a decadent and contemptible indirect rule system (which) will retard the progress of this metropolis'.[8]

Pilot challenged Lagosians to oppose the move whose actualisation would mean that Lagos 'has lost its status':

> Shall Lagos citizens allow this retrogressive Action Group policy to jeopardise their communal interest on account of party politics? Lagos has lost its

> *homogeneous* character and should any attempt be made to revive that *lost heritage*, then the Central Government will be admitting our plea that Lagos is no longer the capital of a federated Nigeria[9].

The case of Lagos was very contentious in this battle for hegemony for a number of reasons, both economic and political. The West needed Lagos to add to her size, population and influence, as well as for economic reasons, as Awolowo repeatedly stated (Adebanwi 2002b:258). Again, the AG did not have political control of the Lagos Town Council (LTC), but would control the council indirectly if the city were merged with the Western Region. For the NCNC, Lagos was one of its major areas of support and it did not desire to lose it to the AG. Related to this was the rising population of the Ibo in Lagos. The NCNC obviously preferred not to place them under (rival) Yoruba control. This is apart from the economic benefits that would accrue to the West only if the city was placed under the Western Regional Government.

A *Pilot* popular columnist and member of the NCNC, Mbonu Ojike, in his 'Weekend Catechism', argued that the 'history' of federal capital all over the world supported the position of his party.[10] He cited Canada, where Ottawa was independent of provincial control; Australia, where Canberra was independent of the control of any state; and US, where Washington D.C. enjoyed 'political freedom', to emphasise that the Action Group's terms were unacceptable:

> And what is worse is that Nigerians are expected to sign away to Action Group ambition the city of Lagos which for three quarters of a century or more was developed with Eastern, Western and Northern funds...[11]

When the Macpherson Constitution eventually merged Lagos with the Western Region, the *Pilot* stated that colonial Nigeria no longer had a capital:

> The Macpherson Constitution has given us a country without a capital. Lagos though theoretically recognized as the capital of Nigeria, really belongs to the West and *henceforth* she will be subject to legislations from the Western House of Assembly. What impudence. What a degradation of status![12]

The paper further argues that the Macpherson constitution, by making the position of Lagos 'anomalous', unsheathed one of its 'greatest weaknesses'. 'It is a weakness, which, perhaps, the unity of the country hinges. Theoretically, the municipality is ward and responsibility of the Western Region, but in practice the Central Governments estimates make several provisions for special expenditure for Lagos. This is because of the dual position of Lagos. Sooner or later matters are bound to come to a head in the first real test of the Macpherson Constitution over this matter of where Lagos stands'.[13]

This remained one of the important reasons why the paper fought the Macpherson Constitution, described as a 'perfect monster',[14] until it was abandoned.

The fears of the NCNC elements were to begin to come to light shortly after the merger. The Western Regional Government set up the Storey Commission of Inquiry to look into the affairs of the LTC, which was controlled by the NCNC. The Commission's report was to form the basis of the dissolution of the LTC. The *Service* was as ecstatic about this dissolution as it was full of condemnation for the dissolved NCNC-controlled LTC:

> The dissolution of the Lagos Town Council, following the findings of the Storey Commission, is just, timely and expedient. The *NCNC rascals who dominated the council since 1950* had proved themselves to be wholly incompetent, irresponsible, corrupt, shameless and utterly devoid of all sense of decency and of proportion... They had (...) exposed Lagos to ridicule not only of the rest of Nigeria but of the whole civilised world. Lagos Town Council under the NCNC had long become a bedlam and a disgrace to the good name of Lagos.[15]

The *Service* then congratulated the regional government, 'especially the Minister of Local Government (Hon. Obafemi Awolowo) ... for taking action so promptly' on the findings of the commission.[16] For the *Pilot* the situation foretells 'the encircling gloom of a not distant future ahead of Lagos' unless '*all true patriots* lead *the isle of Nigeria's destiny* out of Pharaoh's land (emphasis added)'.[17] The paper presents the position of the NCNC as that of 'true patriots' who were concerned with the 'collective destiny' of a Nigeria ostensibly trapped in the 'land of Pharaoh' (the Western Region).

The *Pilot* asks, in the absence of the will for a reversal of the status of Lagos, for a new capital to be created:

> We are no alarmists, neither do we intend to precipitate an unholy rivalry for supremacy among the three states that now constitute Nigeria. *The only solution* lies in the creation of a new capital unfettered by regional legislations. Meanwhile *Nigeria* remains without a capital.[18]

This was strictly in line with the paper's earlier warning, in which it declared the 'irrevocable' position of the NCNC:

> The NCNC (...) irrevocably maintains that if Lagos is to remain the capital of Nigeria, it must also be placed on a status exactly similar to what obtains in many capitals all over the world; so that any *mischievous attempt* to merge Lagos with the West must be *vehemently opposed* as that would *automatically strip* Lagos of the *glory and privilege* it had hitherto enjoyed as capital of Nigeria.[19]

This 'glory and privilege' which Lagos had – metaphors for the political, economic and even social significance of the city – appeared to be the main reason while both sides wanted to keep Lagos within their sphere of influence. The *Pilot* described as 'shameless gospellers' those canvassing 'Lagos for Yorubas'[20], including the *Service*, while the *Service* described those engaging in the 'stupid talk' of de-linking Lagos from the West as 'ne'er-do-wells'.[21]

When the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the immediate past Labour Government expressed surprise that the matter of Lagos merger was alive when he met the representatives of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, *Service* avers that the paper would have been surprised too but for the fact that it knows 'who has been holding the question in the air' – ostensibly, Azikiwe, through the *Pilot*. In what would appear a pointer to how the capital could be moved out of Lagos to elsewhere – as it eventually happened when the capital was moved to Abuja, a move which, incidentally, the Yoruba West opposed – the *Service* stated:

> The people of the Western Region are not compelling the whole country to make Lagos their capital. But, at least, it is the duty of the Governor to make it clear that the only alternative to the present situation of Lagos is for the people of Nigeria to buy a piece of land and establish on it a federal capital independent of the three regions.[22]

The two papers entered a period of 'détente' when the two parties began working together on the subject of the date of independence. They then turned on the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), which became 'the imperialist stooge' (Adebanwi 2002b:262). Both the NCNC and the AG were committed to 1956 as the year of independence for Nigeria while the leaders of the NPC entered a caveat, described as 'as soon as possible'. This 'united front' however could not be sustained beyond mid-1953 when the party leaders met in London for constitutional talks with the British Government. When the issue of Lagos came up at the conference, Awolowo and his AG colleagues staged a walk out. Against this backdrop, the *Service* argued:

> What should be the position of Lagos in a federal Nigeria? ... The people of Nigeria have a right to say that their capital (not necessarily Lagos) should be independent. But neither the NCNC nor the NPC has any right to say that the town of Lagos should be truncated from the region to which it naturally belongs. All they can do is to demand that the capital of Nigeria *be removed from Lagos to say, Kaduna or Port-Harcourt*, which was *bought with the money of Nigeria* and which, in fact, should not belong to any one Region.[23]

The *Service* then presented the reasons why the West would not agree to the severance of Lagos from it:

> To submit to the severance of Lagos from the West would amount to economic and fiscal suicide on the part of the people and Government of

> the Western Region ...[24] The *population and revenue* (will be) cut down by 270,000 people and millions of pounds.[25]

The *Service* stated that the decision of the Colonial Secretary in London, Mr. Lyttleton, to 'dismember' the Western Region for the sake of the 'future of Nigeria' was not only unfair but also indefensible (Adebanwi 2002b:265). The newspaper added that:

> Lagos, an indisputable Yoruba City owned by the West, is to remain a lone star... And in arriving at his decision, Mr. Lyttleton disregards all historical facts and constitutional precedent (ibid).

But the *Pilot* contested this. What was indisputable for the paper was the 'joint-ownership' of the city:

> There is hardly any Nigerian who does not regard Lagos with special sentimental feelings. To the Binis,[26] it is part of their ancient empire; to the Northerner, it is not only *a capital developed with the revenue from their tin, groundnuts and cotton* but the *life-blood of their economic existence* with particular reference to their export and import trade. Similarly, Easterners feel that Lagos has been developed not only from their revenue but through *their blood, sweat and tears* as well; while a *section of Westerners* feel that they have an *exclusive attachment* to the city because of historical and *geographical connections*. The truth, in short, is that Lagos is very dear to all sections of the country.[27]

I have noted elsewhere that this narrative is very interesting in the way it negotiates the interests of the *Pilot* on the Lagos issue (Adebanwi 2002b:266). While the *Pilot's* Binis could claim Lagos as 'part of their ancient empire' and therefore a 'lost possession', the North, whose inadequate resources necessitated amalgamation with the South, for the paper, *suddenly* had enough resources part of which was used in developing Lagos. The *Pilot's* East was bound to Lagos with 'blood, tears and toil', while only a section of the West feel 'exclusive attachment'– not ownership – of the city.

The *Service*, affronted by this, disclaimed the connections of the other parts of Nigeria:

> The development of Lagos dates as far as the days before the amalgamation of 1924 and even from that date the contribution of which the North and East have made (...) is infinitesimal.[28]

A front-page story in The *Service* even uses what Azikiwe wrote in the *Pilot* on 14 May 1940 to back the claim of the Yoruba to Lagos. The *Service* claimed that Zik had written that:

> When we speak of the Oba of Lagos, we refer to the paramount Native Ruler of Lagos Township, although Lagos is peopled mainly by the Yoruba-speaking peoples and Lagos is part of Yoruba land. And since Yoruba is

> part of the Western Region, Lagos should remain in Yoruba land which is part of the West.[29]

The *Pilot* praised the decision of Her Majesty's Government which it believed tallied with the 'wishes of the majority' that 'Lagos should serve as the central bound of unity'.[30] The paper averred that the city had, by its severance from the Western Region, been elevated to 'an exalted position'. This wish, for the *Service*, was unreasonable, and a reflection of the 'pet(ty) jealousy and covetousness of certain malcontents'.[31]

The *Service* declared that rather than that Lagos should lose its status as federal capital, the West was prepared to contribute to building an 'independent federal capital', so that while Lagos remained the commercial centre, the political capital could move elsewhere to allow the West claim ownership over Lagos.

> But to compel the West to surrender Lagos as a federal capital is to sow the seed of permanent disunity and bitterness between the West and the other regions ... the other Regions are not prepared to allow *their federal capital to remain* in the Western Region, they *can remove the capital to any other place...*[32] (emphasis added).

But for the *Pilot* Lagos must remain the political, as well as the, commercial capital of colonial Nigeria and future independent Nigeria:

> The political capital of any country should also be its commercial capital as well as the principal mirror of its cultural and social progress.[33]

By this time it was obvious that the alliance constructed over the date of independence between NCNC-*Pilot* and AG-*Service* had broken down. While the *Service* deplored the 'underhand tricks' and 'stab in the back' by the ally of AG in the London talks, which proved that the 'NCNC is not being true to the spirit in which the (alliance) was born';[34] *Pilot* claimed that the AG was 'unfortunately back to the tribal shrine from which it emerged (with) the ugly old days of hate, rancour and disunity'.[35]

Conclusion

The newspapers in their support for hegemonic and counter-hegemony groups not only tried, as explicated here, to create a way of life and a conception of the world, but they also attempted to translate the interests and values of the groups they represent into the 'common' values and interests of the wider society (Fontana 1993:140-1).

As 'experts in legitimation', they attempted to render existing power structures – where such structures favoured the group they represented – acceptable; and where they were otherwise, unacceptable. They attempted to *universalise* the values of the social group which they represented. The

hegemonic and counter-hegemonic moves of the two ethnic groups, Ibo and Yoruba, and the ethnic entrepreneurs on both sides show that, to paraphrase Mamdani (1996:8), ethnicity can be both a dimension of power and resistance – as it can be a problem and a solution.

In the case examined here, given the centrality, the political, economic, social and symbolic value of the city at stake, the press became a practical means of securing and resisting power as well as a tool of hegemony and counter-hegemony in the city. The case shows the centrality of discursive, non-material and non-forcible construction of consent, dissent and consensus as crucial ways of understanding hegemony in a contentious context.

Notes

1. This was achieved by the 1930s and 1940s when the Igbo in fact bested the Yorubas in educational attainment. Coleman (1986:224 & 226).
2. 'The Evil Gospel Spreads', *Pilot*, 4 February, 1952.
3. 'Symbol of Nigeria', *Pilot*, 16 July, 1952.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. 'Native Authority in Lagos', *Pilot*, 16 July, 1952.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. 'Lagos Merger Issue', 'Weekend Catechism', *Pilot*, 19 July 1952.
11. Ibid.
12. 'Country Without Capital', *Pilot*, 11 February 1953.
13. 'The Anomalous Position of Lagos', *Pilot*, 11 October, 1952.
14. 'The Perfect Monster', *Pilot*, 14 October, 1952.
15. 'The Nuisance if Removed', *Service*, 7 February, 1953.
16. Ibid.
17. 'Lagos Loses Its Temper Again!' *Pilot*, 11 October, 1952.
18. 'Country Without a Capital', *Pilot*, 11 February 1953.
19 'The Bone of Contention', *Pilot*, 4 August, 1952.
20. 'Lagos Belongs to All Alike', *Pilot*, 14 January, 1952.
21. 'Facing Facts', *Service*, 12 January, 1953.
22. Ibid.
23. 'Lagos', *Service*, 20 August, 1953.
24. 'West Cannot Submit to Separating Lagos', *Service*, 21 August, 1953; 'Economic Suicide', *Service*, 25 August, 1953.
25. 'Nigeria's Cinderella', *Service*, 21 August, 1953.
26. In fact a letter published in the 'Public Opinion' column of Pilot, written by one D.V. Edebwin, argues that 'the Binis are by historical fact, the owners of Lagos, and naturally they should be the most interested in the question of its future state'. 'We Own Lagos', *Pilot*, September 15, 1953.

27. 'Lagos is Dear to All', *Pilot*, 10 September, 1953.
28. 'Nigeria Funds in Lagos', *Service*, 8 September, 1953.
29. 'Zik Supports Lagos-West Merger - Odebiyi', *Service*, 17 October, 1953.
30. 'Lagos is Dear to All', *Pilot*, 10 September, 1953.
31. 'Nigeria's Cinderella', *Service*, 1953.
32. 'A Neutral Capital', *Service*, 24 August, 1953.
33. 'Action Group Fails Again', *Pilot*, 2 September, 1953.
34. 'Action Group-NCNC Alliance, *Service*, 10 September, 1953.
35. 'Secret of *Daily Times* Drive to Break the NCNC Revealed. Action Group Enters Its Trap', *Pilot*, 21 September, 1953.

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The Politics of Marginal Forms: Popular Music, Cultural Identity and Political Opposition in Kenya

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Abstract

In the contemporary world, discourse on global cultural flows and related outcomes has moved to the center stage in scholarly research and activist realms. In this discourse, especially that related to fundamental world views on globalization and to the links between different communities of the world, the space that popular music occupies is very central. This is because popular music has always subverted the notion of national boundaries, transcended and transformed them into new conduits and spaces that allow for the emergence of new identities.

While there is nothing particularly new about the foregoing global trend, its significance in cultural and political debates, at least in Africa and Kenya in particular, has scarcely been appreciated. Little attention has been paid by scholars to an interesting dimension of popular music as a means of making history, interpreting reality and also as a medium that is directed at transforming the present reality in order to realize a better future for the people. At best scholars have treated popular music merely as a debased culture produced only for entertainment and whose aim is to render the audience passive and mindless in the corporate search for the lowest common denominator of acceptability and appreciation.

This paper focuses specifically on the Kenyan context to contest the foregoing position. Its argument rests on the axiom that whereas it has become normal in the writings on civil society, democratization and so on, to emphasize forms of cultural expressions that are perceived to be avowedly more understood in political circles than others, the space of popular music cannot be under-estimated. It is beneath the dialectics of production and consumption of this popular music

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with all its contradictions that the fertile intellectual arena on its potent marginalization could be resuscitated. The paper, addressing popular music from a historical perspective, takes into account its dynamic interplay as an aural percept, experience, social practice, individual and cultural expression and as a means of creatively adapting to perceived material conditions to reveal the complex and vital role of popular music as a system for the enactment and negotiation of emergent patterns of identity under conditions of pervasive social, political and economic change.

Résumé

Le discours sur les mouvement culturels mondiaux et leurs conséquences occupe désormais une place centrale au niveau de la recherche universitaire et du milieu activiste. Dans le cadre de ce discours, plus particulièrement dans le cadre de celui portant sur les opinions fondamentales internationales concernant la mondialisation, et les liens entre les différentes communautés du monde, la musique populaire occupe une place centrale. Ceci s'explique par le fait que cette forme de musique a toujours bouleversé la notion de frontières nationales, transcendant celles-ci et les transformant en de nouvelles voies et en un espace favorisant l'émergence de nouvelles identités.

Même si la tendance mondiale dont il est ici question, ne présente aucune nouveauté particulière, il demeure que son importance au sein des débats culturels et politiques est à peine considérée, en Afrique, et au Kenya, en particulier. Les universitaires n'ont accordé que très peu d'attention à la musique populaire, en tant que moyen permettant de 'faire' l'histoire, d'interpréter la réalité, mais également un moyen permettant de transformer la réalité présente, de sorte à réaliser un meilleur futur pour les populations. Au mieux, les universitaires ont considéré la musique populaire uniquement comme une forme de culture dépréciée, uniquement destinée au divertissement, et qui rend son audience passive et hagarde, dans le contexte de recherche collective du plus petit dénominateur commun d'acceptabilité et de reconnaissance.

Cette contribution porte sur le contexte kenyan et cherche à remettre en question la situation décrite précédemment. Même s'il est devenu normal, dans les écrits portant sur la société civile, la démocratisation etc., de mettre en exergue les diverses formes d'expression culturelle considérées comme étant mieux comprises dans les cercles politiques que dans les autres milieux, l'espace occupé par la musique populaire ne doit cependant pas être sous-estimé. C'est en-dessous de la dialectique de la production et de la consommation de la musique populaire, avec toutes ses contradictions, que le terrain intellectuel fertile relatif à la marginalisation de cette forme de musique peut être restitué. Cette contribution, qui analyse la musique populaire à partir d'une perspective historique, tient compte de son interaction dynamique, en tant que percept oral, mais également en tant qu'expérience, pratique sociale, expression individuelle et culturelle et moyen d'adaptation créative aux conditions matérielles, ceci pour révéler le rôle complexe et vital de la musique populaire comme système de promulgation et de négociation

des formes identitaires émergentes, dans un contexte de profonds changements sociaux, politiques et économiques.

> What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only his eyes if he is a painter, or ears if he's a musician, or a lyre at every level if he is a poet, or even, if he's a boxer, just his muscles? On the contrary, he's at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery or happy events, to which he responds in every way... (Pablo Picasso, quoted in *Art and Power: Images of the 1930s).*

Rethinking interdisciplinary approaches: An introduction

In his classic text, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, P. Chatterjee has observed that subject-centred reason that was characteristic of the post-enlightenment modernity erroneously claimed for itself a singular universality by asserting its epistemic privilege over all other local, plural, and often incomprehensible knowledges. This approach, the author cautions, intolerantly concealed the virtues of the fragmentary, the local and the subjugated ways of unmasking what lies at the heart of modern rationality and research. This argument raises two concerns that form the benchmark from which this paper proceeds.

On the one hand, there is the need to transcend subject-centred entities in our unending search to understand the universality of human experience. This need is particularly pertinent in African contexts where interdisciplinary focussed approaches seem to have managed to challenge the previously held misconceptions and generalisations about the African reality. This distinct nature of interdisciplinarity is forcing a radical rethinking and reformulation of knowledge away from traditionalist approaches on discourses of domination to what Homi Bhabha has characteristically called 'an in-between hybrid position of practice and negotiation' (Bhabha 1989). Part of the importance of this 'fragmentary' point of view lies in the fact that it resists the drive for a shallow homogenisation and struggles for other, potentially richer definitions of discourse.

The second issue which emanates from Chatterjee's caution and which relates to the first one is the need to explore alternative sources of information. In this paper, an attempt is made to tap the 'virtues' of interdisciplinary approaches and to reflect on the interface between popular music and politics. Attempting to pay attention to a dimension of popular music as a means of making history and interpreting reality, the paper charts ways in which the dialectics of its production and consumption could be tapped in interpreting a political reality. In so doing, we challenge and pose two related issues. The first is the challenge to scholars who have treated popular music merely as a debased culture produced for entertainment and whose aim is to render the

audience 'passive and mindless' in the corporate search for the lowest common denominator of acceptability and appreciation. The quotation with which we begun this section couldn't capture this challenge any better. The second challenge revolves around the need to take into account the dynamic interplay of popular music as an aural percept, experience, social practice, individual and cultural expression and as a means of creatively adapting to perceived material conditions. Our argument is that it is only by doing this from a historical perspective that the complex and vital role of popular music as a system for the enactment and negotiation of emergent patterns of identity under conditions of pervasive social, political and economic change could be understood. The focus here is on the link between popular music and politics in Kenya during the multiparty era, which is defined as the post-1990 period.

Popular music in Africa as a marginal form? Some contextual reflections

In the contemporary world, discourse on global cultural flows has pushed the study of popular music to centre stage in scholarly research and activist realms. This is because popular music has always subverted the notion of national boundaries, transcended them and transformed them into new conduits and spaces that allow for the emergence of new identities.[1] But, while emphasising the centrality of popular music in scholarly circles, sight is not lost of the fact that the definition of the concept popular music itself has continued to elicit countless definitions. The uniting component in these definitions however is that they focus upon the means of its production, distribution and consumption. According to Street (1997) and Barber and Young (1997), popular music is a form of musical entertainment that is mass-produced or one that is made available to a large number of people. Availability may be measured by the opportunity to enjoy the musical production or by the absence of social barriers to the enjoyment.

Although there appears to be an appealing formality about defining popular music in terms of the mechanisms that organise its production and consumption, the definition raises problems in its failure to say anything about the character of music itself or even the various contexts in which music is produced and enjoyed. Our concern here is about the concept of music in Africa, and Kenya in particular. Here, music as a creative art form continues to play an important role in the lives of the people. Music and life are indeed said to be inseparable (Nketia 1975). There is music for many of the activities of everyday life, as well as music whose verbal texts express the African's attitude to life, his/her hopes and fears, his/her thoughts and

beliefs. In most Kenyan communities in particular, music is markedly utilitarian and is nowhere limited to situations of leisure. Music serves to fulfill the social, political, economic, religious and other inter-related aspects of the culture of the people. These aspects of life have continually been changing within different time contexts. In the same way, new musical forms are composed and transmitted in time and space, and adapt to the changing socio-economic and political conditions and have thus helped to create new identities.

In examining the link between popular music and politics in Kenya, we assess the role played by popular music in the political process as a means of political mobilisation and resistance as well as a means of articulating and maintaining identities thereby providing alternative readings of history that is usually ignored in various intellectual discourses. This alternative reading is expressed by the fact that music cuts across race and class and derives its character from both the already thematised and other interactions, which makes music a process of several forces. The paper will specifically look at the extent to which music has been used to conscientise people on the various facets of the political process including, educating voters on voting arrangements, warning them against election malpractices, supporting the manifesto of particular parties or individuals and so on. In this way, popular music will be portrayed as a powerful tool used to report on current affairs, to exert political pressure, to spread political propaganda and reflect and mould public opinion. Have studies on popular music in Africa and Kenya paid attention to these perspectives or is it that the study of popular music occupies a marginal position in the analysis of politics?

To be fair, there have been many differing views by social and developmental scientists on the role of popular music in relation to the expression and consolidation of political power. Some, like the structural functionalists see all art and music, not just the popular variety, as part of the tension managing mechanism regulating the values and 'needs' of society. Opposed to these so called 'consensus' models are the Marxist-influenced conflict theorists who treat popular music and art as an ideological tool used by the ruling class or group to hold power or hegemony (see Collins 1992). Within these contending perspectives one can clearly envisage a dual role for popular music. On the one hand, there is the hegemonic role of popular music associated with social and bureaucratic control – that which seeks to maintain the political status quo. On the other hand, one can also discern the anti-hegemonic, decentralising or what Bigsby (1976) has called 'emancipatory' or 'apocalyptic' role of popular music.

As we have already observed, within the context of Africa there has and continues to be an intimate connection between popular music and politics. However as Collins (1992) observes, the recent history of African popular music throws more light on the anti-hegemonic side of popular music for obvious reasons. Specifically, Africa has been faced with the hegemony of the colonial and neo-colonial powers, and some local popular musicians have attempted to overcome the resulting 'cultural imperialism' in various ways. The latter include the indigenisation of their music, the utilisation of the music of the New World and, finally, the continued use of the African tradition of using music to voice protest and social conflict. These ways continue to be used and incorporated in the various political processes but have remained latently unacknowledged.

The scholarly literature concerning African popular music has continued to grow tremendously over the last two decades. Richly detailed and lucid accounts on the development of music in Africa, making use of historical, ethnological and musicological data have received various appraisals.[2] Despite such studies being dominated by broad approaches, in itself an indication of the efflorescence of diverse popular musical traditions on the continent, their analysis of the contextual dynamic interplay between popular music and political life in Africa has been commendable. They have sought to address the most persistent theoretical questions that have preoccupied most scholars in the study of music, and popular music in particular concerning the relation of music to the aesthetic and ideological needs and aspirations of individuals, ethnic groups, classes or nations of people. Popular music in Africa, therefore, as an experience, as a social practice, as an individual and cultural expression, and as a means of creatively adapting to perceived social, political and economic circumstances, plays a complex, yet vital, role in society.

The important role played by music as a creative art in Kenya's political process cannot be over-emphasised. Popular music has been appropriated (by both its producers and consumers) to fulfill the political functions of reporting on current affairs, exerting political pressure, spreading propaganda and reflecting and moulding public opinion. In this sense, various musical texts have acted as major cultural resources that serve in spreading the ideas of unity, nationalism and a peoples' right for self determination as well as carrying within them messages on their grievances and aspirations.[3] As Karin Barber has suggested:

> If we take (popular) art forms simply as social facts, and examine the network of relations through which they are produced and consumed, we may already be uncovering important but unnoticed aspects of the societies in which they flourish. Popular arts penetrate and are penetrated by political,

> economic and religious institutions in ways that may not always be predictable from our own experience (Barber 1986:2).

Popular art, of which music is part, therefore cuts across and indeed penetrates various facets of life as it struggles to establish a particular view of the world, one that, in various significant ways, challenges the conventions of the dominant common sense. In the sense that it uncovers important but hitherto unnoticed aspects of life, popular music provides what Scott (1990) has appropriately called the 'hidden transcript'. This hidden transcript is one in which is written 'the anger and reciprocal aggression denied by the presence of domination'.

Political opposition and the politicisation of music in Kenya

In Kenya, like elsewhere in Africa, music and song in particular have historically been part of the political process, that which struggles to establish a particular view of the world. Thus, as opposed to the old European image of traditional Africa and its music as only geared towards social cohesion and static equilibrium (Collins 1992), Kenyan music has been in the forefront in expressing a people's identity within the context of social, economic and political change. This way, Kenyan music has been able to discount the various erroneous negative ideological concepts associated with African music – including 'primitive' and 'tribal' – which were mainly created by the colonialists who wanted to create passive subjects without their own history.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that Kenyan historical cultures have regarded performance genres and song in particular as powerful, integrated and to some degree autonomous modes of social action in political contexts.[4] Since time immemorial, and more precisely in the traditional African society, songs drawing on various themes served as major repositories of information on particular societies and their way of life, history, beliefs and values. It was common, for instance, for deliberate attempts to be made especially by elders, to educate the young people through songs at initiation camps and other social events. It was during such occasions that songs stood out as important components in the dissemination of specific societal values relevant to the young peoples' responsibilities in the days ahead. This education through songs was, however, not restricted to the youth. Songs were equally a central avenue employed for the transmission of information germane to the formal or ordinary activities in the life of society. It was common, for instance, to find songs being employed in the making of announcements, proclamations, expressing gratitude or appreciation to benefactors, warning, advising, boosting and performing other numerous social, economic and political functions that cut across various age groups. Indeed, as a source of

pleasure and information, music's greatest attribute in the traditional society lay in its ability to transcend the various age, gender, class and other related social divisions.

In this context, therefore, the argument that the use of music or song as a form of communication is a recent phenomenon does not arise. It was common in the African traditional communities to communicate through this form as it was with everyday speech. Indeed in certain circumstances, for example, when people wished to complain or cast insinuations, they found it more effective to do so through song than speech. War songs, songs of praise, songs of insult, challenge or satirical comment were overtly used as politically effective weapons of spreading ideas to the people, maintaining and stabilising the political structures and also moulding public opinion. What needs to be emphasised is that song was seldom performed for its own sake. It was also invariably accompanied by dance, mimes or drama to make its appeal effective. On the other hand, given its varied roles in serving communal or personal, and recreational or ritual functions, songs were performed on an enormous variety of instruments to achieve the desired communicative and affective latent effects. Such instruments for the sake of convenience have been classified in the following families; chordophones (stringed instruments), idiophones (shaken instruments), aerophones (wind instruments), and membraphones (drums). It is these instruments that give the songs of a given repertoire their musical content and some kind of unity or coherence (Nketia 1974).

Music making therefore was, and still is, not simply an exercise in the organisation of sound. It remains a powerful symbolic expression of the social, political and cultural organisation, which reflects the values and the past and present ways of life of the human beings who create it. The unity and coherence of various songs have affected their character, content, production and consumption over a historical period of time. Their ability to produce and articulate people's feelings make songs important sources of political thought and action within the various Kenyan communities. Indeed as Street (1997) has observed, music makes us know who we are through the feelings and responses that it exposes us to, and which in turn shapes our expectations and preferences. This argument is reinforced by Frith and Horne (1987) who claim that by knowing what we are, we develop a kind of identity, which is a founding aspect of politics. According to the same authors, people's sense of themselves always comes from the use of images, symbols and a whole series of responses which they come to identify with and which also distinguish them from others.

Behind the foregoing arguments is the thought that if politics is the site within which competing claims are voiced and competing interests are

managed, there is an important question to be addressed: why do people make such claims or see themselves as having those interests? The answer is that they are the consequence of us seeing ourselves as being certain sorts of people, as having an identity, which in turn establishes our claim upon the political order. There is a need to re-examine this statement in the light of political opposition in Africa and Kenya in particular.

According to Berliner (1962 and 1978), although it is now a time-worn cliché that music is an important constituent element of African culture closely associated and integrated with the daily being of the African, the statement has rarely been applied to political activities in African societies. Although the situation seem to have changed a little since Berliner made these observations, the scenario becomes more striking if compared to other parts of the world. In the West,[5] for instance, the power and ability of popular music to focus a people's passion and express defiance has been noted and extensively investigated. We have only to recall the propaganda machines of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia to remember the ways in which the machinery of culture and popular music in particular were deployed to legitimate a political order and to orchestrate popular sentiment. Harker (1992) has indeed aptly captured the manner in which the state in the West still tries to make popular music a device for securing deference and marginalizing dissent. The state continues to draw upon music's ability to move people by encouraging compassion and charity. Although neither of them was directly organised by the state nor related to politics, the mega-events of the 1980s were the most dramatic examples of the use of mass mediated popular music in conscious raising and mobilisation of masses of people. These events included 'Live Aid', 'Band Aid', 'USA for Africa', 'Farm Aid', 'Amnesty International Tours', and 'Nelson Mandela Tributes'.[6]

Perhaps the Mandela 'concerts', 'tributes', or 'festivals' as they have variously been called, have a direct link to the African context and politics in particular. In their very choice of the theme, the Mandela 'concerts' which were staged first on 11 June, 1988 and then on 16 April 1990 in Wembley stadium in London, had been organised to champion the release of Mandela from prison. The imprisonment of Mandela who was the chief architect of the black liberation struggle in South Africa was considered officially illegal by most of the countries that broadcast the concerts. By their conception therefore, the 'concerts' emphasised and indeed internationalised the marriage between music and politics. Far from merely being events to express solidarity with Mandela's tribulations, they provided an avenue through which people articulated their thoughts and feelings about the political phenomenon related to the need for the release of Mandela. Through the 'concerts', music was made available to a large number of people whom it afforded an opportunity

to enjoy and articulate their political feelings. Thus from the pleasures of popular music, people became engaged with politics through the feelings it articulated, the identities it offered, the passions it elicited and in the responses it prompted (Street 1997:14). It is no wonder that after his release and during his attendance, on 16 April 1990 of the second 'Mandela concerts', Mandela noted thus:

> Over the years in prison I have tried to follow the developments in progressive music... Your contribution has given us tremendous inspiration... Your message can reach quarters not necessarily interested in politics, so that the message can go further than we politicians can push it... we admire you. We respect you, and above all, we love you (quoted in Garofalo 1992:65).

In these words Mandela seems to sanction and amplify the linkage between music and politics and emphasize the key ways in which music becomes—through the uses that it is put and through the judgements made of it—a form of political activity. Popular music as is argued makes us feel things, allows to experience sensations that are both familiar and novel. It does not simply echo our state of mind and our emotions but also gives us terms to articulate them (Street 1997). In articulating our emotions therefore, popular music links us to a wider world. Let's focus specifically on the Kenyan context to show how popular music has been employed for political purposes and more so by opposition politicians and their parties.

Ethnic or national identity: The case of Kenyan music in the multiparty[7] era

The popular music scene in East Africa and Kenya in particular is often said to offer a contrast when compared to that of other parts of Africa in the sense that musicologists have made great headway in the study of both traditional and urban music (Graham 1988:235). This perceived success story notwithstanding, a great deal of information about the origin and historical development of music in the country and the contextual functional imperatives of actual recordings is still lacking. There is particularly a lacuna in the study of music, both secular and gospel, that addresses the issue of the link between politics and music. In classifying the political songs of the current Kenyan repertoire, this section identifies and discusses three main categories. First are the traditional African songs that continue to be incorporated as voices of protest and social conflict. Second, are the borrowed or adapted songs or what Collins (1992) calls the 'indeginised' styles. Third is the use of church or religious hymns in political protest. We look at each category separately.

i) Traditional African Adaptations

In terms of traditional styles, we take cognisance of the fact that while examining the music of Kenya we need to note that it exhibits all the variety in style and instrumentation that one would expect to find in a country comprising numerous ethnic groups. These ethnic groups include the Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kamba, Kalenjin, Maasai, and Samburu among others. These ethnic groups have evolved more or less similar social contexts of music, which embrace all the events and occasions with which music in Africa is associated – from ritual ceremonies to work songs, praise songs, recreation, lullabies, children songs, love songs and popular entertainment (see Nketia 1974).

As earlier observed in the paper, songs specifically associated with the various facets of government are numerous among the particular ethnic groups within Kenya. However, although the earlier traditional songs are still being incorporated in commenting on aspects of the Kenyan political process, contemporary songs appear more direct and forthright in their statement on policy, goals and platforms than the older ones. Praise songs for instance, which in traditional Kenyan communities were used to extol the virtues of greatness of the chief or elder and thus contribute toward maintaining their authority, and stabilising the government, are still in vogue.

Specifically in terms of praising, there were a number of artists from regions and political classes that supported the ruling elite and mainly the party in power, the Kenya National African Union (KANU). Various songs were produced and recorded in support of the political status quo, the party candidates and its policies. In comparative terms, the ruling party functionaries and the political system in general directly and indirectly supported these artists. At the height of the campaign for the multiparty elections in 1992, for instance, one artist Joseph Kamaru, from the Kikuyu ethnic community was seen by the ruling party as an important vehicle to deliver the Kikuyu votes. He would appear at all KANU rallies in Central Province, where he attracted and entertained thousands of people who would probably have had no other opportunity to watch him perform live.[8] His recordings were constantly played on the national radio and television station, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). The same can be said about the Muungano National choir, conceived by the former president Daniel Arap Moi as a mass choir in 1989. However, instead of being a national choir, it became more of a state house project singing praise songs to the former head of state. Though they composed songs to educate the people on the need to vote, especially during the 1992 elections, their focus was on the need for people to support KANU during the elections. It is in this context that the following composition was conceived:

Kura imefika Haa. 'The voting period is here with us'
Kupiga kura jamani 'My people, voting'
Ni haki yako. 'It is your right'

Alongside the Muungano National Choir was a host of other choirs belonging to institutions, individuals and churches. Perhaps, the other most notable group worth mentioning in relation to their role in singing praise songs was the Prisons Choir. Individuals such as a primary school teacher from western Kenya, J. Wasonga produced among other hit songs 'Tawala Kenya' (Rule Kenya). 'Tawala Kenya' remained in vogue for close to a decade and was often played on the state radio during every year's national holiday. Its message went as follows:

Tawala Kenya tawala 'Rule Kenya Rule'
Tawala Kenya tawala raisi Moi tawala 'Rule Kenya Rule President Moi Rule'
Tunamsifu Moi 'We praise Moi'
Tunampongeza Moi 'We thank Moi'.

These praise songs were however in no way limited in focus to the former president Moi and the former ruling party, KANU. They also extended to opposition leaders and their parties. Within the songs one can make out the transformation from the traditional role of song or music. The songs have been adapted and transferred from the figure of the chief or elder in the traditional context to that of the political leader and the party. By a simple substitution of names and variations of text for instance, the old songs are given a new meaning to meet current situations in a rapidly changing world. This is a remarkable example of cultural continuity and homogeneity.

On the other hand songs of insult have provided, just as they did in the traditional setting, an effective medium of social control and political influence. Public figures, both in the ruling party and the opposition are constantly subject to scathing criticism, ridicule, and reprimand. It is significant however to note that the relevance of the ethnic configuration in the way in which praises and insults in the songs are qualified. Indeed, ethnicity remains a fundamental force in Kenyan politics, a fault line along which elites mobilise and compete for power. The significance of the ethnic cleavage in the transition to multiparty politics both in 1992 and 1997 was clear with the re-enactment of the conflict over national identity and representational institutions. Political parties in Kenya today, as they were in 1992 and 1997, are as narrowly based on ethnic coalitions as they are organised under ethnic leaders. Apart from KANU and the now ruling National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) parties that claimed a countrywide representation,[9] other parties formed after the re-introduction of multiparty politics are organised under ethnic lines. The former Democratic

Party (DP) was popular among the populous Kikuyu, the National Development Party (NDP) among the Luo, and FORD Kenya among the Luyia (mainly the Babukusu). Since the December 2002 elections these parties have merged into the NARC party.

The significance of these categorisations to the production and indeed the consumption of popular music is clear. Artists from ethnic groups and political classes that identify themselves with opposition parties produce songs that are critical to the political system in power. The recently released hit song 'Unbwogable' by musicians Gidi Gidi and Maji Maji is a case in point. The song, which became a household hit in the opposition 2002 campaign, praises a number of prominent Luo politicians who had been involved in the struggle against the former Moi regime. Noting that they are 'Unbwogable' (apparently a Luo anglicised word meaning 'unshakeable' or 'unscareable'), the song became a major rallying point for opposition campaigns in Kenya. It also became synonymous with the anti-Uhuru Kenyatta campaign that challenged Moi's nomination of Uhuru Kenyatta as the preferred political heir. The song not only became popular on the opposition campaign trail but also on the various FM radio channels. Interestingly the song was hardly played on the national radio station, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation.

'Unbwogable' is not the only song that criticised the former KANU regime. Most of the other songs commented on politically sensitive issues such as massive corruption and mismanagement of public funds by the central government under KANU. Others directly related the people's problems like poverty, lack of access to education, poor governance and saw a hope in positively changing their lives in people's participation in elections and the subsequent change in the political status quo. Such compositions usually received innumerable challenges from the former political system in power that overly restricted their composition and transmission. Apart from such music not being played on the national radio station and its artists being detained or harassed for producing 'subversive' productions, the songs mainly remained in local languages.

Opposition politicians in Kenya were also on the forefront in harnessing the advantages of music in passing out their messages to the audiences. Partly in recognition of its traditional role and partly because of its pervasive nature, politicians increasingly borrowed the techniques and skills of popular entertainment to communicate their message and promote their image. Most politicians in Kenya borrowed from the traditional idioms or specifically from the popular hits of the past, called 'Zilizopendwa' in Kiswahili (or those that were famous or liked) to transmit their messages. In so doing they also creatively retained the original form of the songs but changed the words to

suit the political situations. Three examples from Raila Odinga, Mukhisa Kituyi and Otieno Kajwang, prominent former Kenyan opposition politicians and now in government, will suffice here.

In the run up to the 14 October 2002 KANU nominations for instance, Raila Odinga, an ardent critic of the Uhuru Kenyatta for President campaign emphasised his political position to the crowds at various rallies through the song:

> *Kasarani siendi tena* (X3) 'I will not go to Kasarani Again'.
> *Kuna shida mingi huko* 'There is a lot of trouble there'.

In this song which Raila adopted from a popular oldie by Fadhili Williams 'Majengo siendi tena' ('I will not go to Majengo again') he communicated his unwillingness to go to Kasarani stadium to sanction the nomination of Uhuru Kenyatta as Moi's preferred candidate. Indeed he emphasises his position by stating that 'Kasarani itakuwa Kisirani' (Kasarani will be Confusion).

For his part, Mukhisa Kituyi also borrowed the form of a popular oldie by John Mwale to emphasise the fact that Uhuru Kenyatta was not his own man and was being fronted by politicians who had in the past ruined the Kenyan economy. Mukhisa's song, which was relayed in kiswahili says 'Nyuma yake Arap Moi, Kando yake ni Biwott na pembeni ni Sunkuli...' ('behind him [Uhuru Kenyatta] is Arap Moi, Beside him is Biwott [Nicholas] and Sunkuli [Julius]'). In this song therefore Mukhisa, like Raila, deployed the language of popular song in his political campaigns.

Otieno Kajwang in turn successfully transformed the 'KANU Yajenga Inchi' ('KANU builds the Nation') song into 'KANU Yavunja Inchi' ('KANU breaks or destroys the country'). These examples are not isolated ones and nor are they restricted to opposition politicians. What is clear however is that the politicians are increasingly trying to use the advantages offered by popular culture to create a constituency for their parties, programmes and policies.

ii) The indigenisation of sounds from the outside

Another interesting dimension of Kenyan popular music, like that from other parts of the world, within the multiparty period was the increasing hybridisation of its sounds. Kenyans have been employing externally generated sounds and influences for their own political purposes, by first initiating and then assimilating them into their own cultural experience. This has been due to the constant state of flux and a number of external influences that continue to alter the trend in the development of Kenyan popular music. According to Collins (1992), the indigenisation of African music can be linked

to three factors: the geographical diffusion of western ideas, the cultural tenacity of traditional music and the emergence of nationalism.

Among other influences, the overwhelming impact of the music from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and its political role perhaps deserves more detailed consideration here. Although music from various parts of Africa as far apart as South and West Africa and as near as Tanzania and Uganda has been significant, the Congolese influence is very noticeable. Equally, music from regions outside Africa has continued to enjoy a lot of popularity and hence also inform and impact greatly on Kenyan popular music. The latter categories include music from Jamaica and other Caribbean countries, the USA, Europe and even Asia. Class, gender, age and other social differences are in the forefront in defining the enjoyment dynamics of particular types of music. It is especially common to find, for instance, western pop influence favoured mostly by the urban youth. It is out of all these varied characteristics in terms of styles and sounds that any serious analysis of Kenyan music and its functional imperatives can be made. Here I look at the Congolese influence in more detail.

The arrival of Congolese musicians and bands in East Africa and Kenya in particular did not begin in the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed since the 1960s and 1970s Congolese musicians from DRC had begun leaving their country in large numbers, to escape civil unrest and perhaps more important in personal terms, to establish solo careers away from the domestic dominance of Franco Makiadi and Rochereau. Those who opted for Kenya found appreciative audiences and a number of record companies, both large and small, willing to release their material. On the other hand, with Kenyan governmental censorship of local musicians and music, non-Kenyan African musicians who settled in Nairobi dominated the scene (Wallis and Malm 1984:93). In time therefore, and as one author argues many of these bands adopted specifically Kenyan idioms while their growth in popularity greatly helped to undermine the development of a Kenyan national band (Graham 1988:240). These Congolese bands and musicians included Baba Gaston of the L'Orchestre Baba National, Samba Mapangala and Orchestra Virunga, Les Mangelepa and Super Mazembe among others.

The popularity of these Congolese bands and musicians did not just lie in their borrowing of Kenyan idioms, but also on the refined nature of their music and the topical choice of their themes. More important also was the main language they used in their music – Lingala. This is a Bantu language which is tonal, primal sounding, and has a melody that is easy to sing along with. Indeed as Ewens (1994:223) has remarked, the language simply sings itself. The singing along notwithstanding, the words in Lingala are easily comprehended by a large section of the Kenyan Bantu speakers. On the other

hand, its mix with Kiswahili, the national language, makes the appeal of Congolese musicians resounding and immediate to the entire Kenyan population. Indeed in many social places and other entertainment spots, Lingala music has continued to act as a bridge among diverse audiences since its advent on the Kenyan music scene. For the Kenyan youth, the Congolese musical rhythms, together with the brisk dancing styles of its singers and dancers and also the 'pornographic' aspect of their themes has been a major source of attraction.

Practically, then, Congolese bands and musicians based in Kenya acted as link points in creating a space for the appreciation of Lingala music. Indeed when famous Congolese bands and musicians based in Europe and DRC, including Franco Makiadi, Koffi Olomide, Zaiko Langalanga came to stage shows in the country, they were met with thunderous receptions. The country had not only become the prime promotion spot for music from the DRC, but equally the most profitable market for the same music. Various musical rhythms such as 'kwasa kwasa', 'Ndombolo', 'Mapuka'and 'Kiwanzenza' have increasingly gained ground in the local musical space.

Partly because of its proliferation, Congolese music, and its associated artists, has been considered as a compelling avenue through which political messages could be transmitted to the population in Kenya. Various artists and their music have been co-opted directly or indirectly in the political process and thus have acted as major rallying points that cut across ethnic, class and gender categorisations.

Congolese music does not penetrate the Kenyan market unpackaged. Some numbers, like 'Mobutu' by Franco and TPOK Jazz, although composed in the early 1980s with clear messages supporting the Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, were appropriated in support of Kenyan President Moi. More directly Congolese 'songbird' Mbilia Bel, then with Tabu Ley's Africa International band, recorded a praise song, 'Twende Nairobi' ('Let's go to Nairobi') for Moi, an excerpt which is reproduced below:

Twende Nairobi 'Let's go Nairobi'
Tumuimbie baba Moi 'To sing for the father (of the nation) Moi'.

Apart from the songs that praise the regime in power and the incumbent president, the ruling party KANU directly incorporated Congolese artists in the campaign process. During the 1992 multiparty campaigns, for instance, the ruling party and its youth wing YK 92 lobby group hired the services of a Kenyan based Congolese musician Samba Mapangala and his popular compatriot the late Pepe Kalle to campaign for the party. The two traversed various parts of the country strewn in KANU T-shirts, spreading the party's

ideals and urging voters to participate in the elections and ensure that they voted for the KANU party.

On the other hand, the opposition parties similarly found favor in Congolese music. Various 'Lingala' music choruses that sounded close to 'chibili chibili' (meaning 'two two' in various Kenyan Bantu languages) were appropriated by opposition sympathisers to signify change. The latter group considered the 'chibili chibili' chorus, championed by Congolese artists such as Arlus Mabele, Dally Kimoko and Koffi Olomide, to symbolise the two-finger salute for pluralism. Especially in the early 1990s, when such choruses were re-enacted during political rallies or campaigns the opposition sympathisers accompanied it with flashing the two-finger opposition party symbol.

iii) Religious Songs and Political Discourse in Kenya

Although Kenya is home to a multiplicity of religious orientations and worldviews, Christianity, African traditional religions, and Islam tend to dominate the spiritual credoscape. Of the three, Christianity seems to have succeeded on a wider scale in capturing the popular imaginations of many Kenyans. Some scholars (see Chitando 2002) argue that this overwhelming popularity of Christianity is due to its association with modernity and the colonial project. In this section, we use examples from Christianity and Christian or gospel music in particular to demonstrate the extent to which they have been incorporated in the political discourse in Kenya. This is not by any means underplaying the significant role played by the two other religions and indeed others in the political process.

Christian or gospel songs, just like the traditional African religious songs, have historically carried within them political messages. Indeed before the multiparty era in Kenya, a number of scholars have demonstrated the manner in which religious songs were significant in the Kenyan political struggle. Ogot (1977) and Kinyatti (1980) for instance have demonstrated how religious songs and hymns were actively employed as a mobilising strategy to raise morale among Africans during the Mau Mau war of liberation. Such hymns sought to forge a common identity between the combatants and the peasant supporters, as well as to articulate the goals of the struggle. In the post-independence period, such songs and hymns shifted from the militancy of the war to the struggle for peace, unity and development. As politicians began to exhort the nation to redefine its national goals and aspirations, artists became an important component of this nation building effort. They produced various songs through which they urged Kenyans to unite, support their leaders and pull together towards national development.

In the Kenyan multiparty context in particular, gospel musicians have continued to play a significant role in spreading Christian and also politically

related messages to their audiences. Besides the direct Christian themes, most gospel musicians in the country also continued to articulate varied socio-economic and political issues concerning the general life in society. Specifically in terms of politics, the gospel songs have been directly incorporated to emphasise particular political concerns by a number of political groupings, parties and individual politicians. In this case, the form in the gospel songs was maintained but the words were changed to suit particular political situations. In doing this, the various groups and politicians succeeded in demonstrating their contextual sensitivity and creativity. One example will suffice in demonstrating this aspect.

During a public rally organised by the then opposition NARC party at the Uhuru park on October 2002, the Kiswahili song 'Yote Yawezekana bila Moi' ('Everything is possible without Moi) was exploited to serve a political agenda. The song, a direct derivation from a Christian song 'Yote Yawezekana kwa Imani' ('everything is possible by faith'), was transformed by merely substituting the words 'Kwa Imani' ('By faith') with 'Bila Moi' ('Without Moi'). In the song, the opposition politicians who included the current president Mwai Kibaki and their supporters emphasised the fact that Moi was at the centre of all the political and economic ills afflicting the country, including bad governance, poverty, corruption, and the constitutional crisis, to mention but four. To them, the only way to get over these problems was to remove Moi and indeed his entire system and KANU from power.

It is significant to note that this song, 'Yote Yawezekana bila Moi', became what one may call 'a national anthem' for opposition political rallies. The song was employed by politicians (and specifically Members of Parliament) in different forums – including parliament. Indeed at one time in October 2002, before the dissolution of the August house, it required the intervention of the speaker of the national assembly to stop opposition MPs from singing the same song. This is just one of the many examples in which the opposition in Kenya increasingly employed the medium of gospel songs to win popular support and to advance their political goals and aspirations. Operating within the context where songs were utilised to impart ideas concerning political programmes and to elicit a commitment to specific aspirations, the opposition in Kenya found it necessary to employ this technique.

Conclusion

The Kenyan musical space, like that of other African countries, offers a striking example of a field where contestations between ethnic and national identities are expressed. In this paper we have shown that such contestations, usually ventilated through traditionally adapted styles, indigenised forms and religious discourses have become a characteristic feature of the country's political

landscape. Especially within the multiparty era in general, and among opposition groupings and parties in particular, political commentary has come to find an easy medium through music. Various musical productions have continued to play a key role in conscientising the masses, reporting on current affairs, exerting political pressure, spreading propaganda, and moulding public opinion. Given that politics is a site within which competing claims are voiced and competing interests managed, the production and consumption of music have captured the feelings, thoughts and actions of various Kenyan peoples. Through praise, insult, satire, elevation, rejection, degradation, abuse, and deceit, the creative and dynamic sensitivity of music to the various political developments has been demonstrated. It is in the music's or precisely the songs' flexibility in adapting to different contexts and the versatility of the artists and politicians that its relevance has been ensured through a wide transmission. Thus, as a major cultural device, music has been central in the construction of ethnic and national identities involved Kenyan politics. Like other forms of cultural expression and protest such as strikes, demonstrations, letters, newspapers, armed rebellion and many more, the relevance of music needs to be privileged in trying to understand the universality of the human experience in Africa. Only through this can we, as Chatterjee argued, unmask what lies at the heart of modern rationality and research.

Notes

1. The ideas and debates on music and globalisation were well captured by the 2000 CODESRIA African Humanities Institute on transcending boundaries held in Legon, Ghana and Northwestern University, USA. The author would like to express his appreciation of the incisive debates that were initiated under the able directorship of Professor Koffi Anyidoho.
2. See the works of Nketia 1974 and 1988, Coplan 1985, Barber 1986 and 1997, Collins 1986, Waterman 1986, Wallis and Malm 1984 and 1992, Kidula 2000, Graham 1992 among others.
3. Several scholars have underscored the role of popular culture in nation building and particularly in the electoral process in Africa. See for instance, Lange 1995, Olaniyan 1997, and Bateye 1997.
4. Nketia 1974 and Waterman 1986 among other scholars have aptly demonstrated the fact that various historical cultures in Africa have regarded music as a powerful a tool in political contexts. While Nketia's work traverses several African cultures, Waterman particularly singles out for discussion juju music within the Nigerian context.
5. We use the concept 'West' here to refer to both the European and American worlds.
6. For an in-depth analysis on these events including their organisation and mobilisation see Garofalo 1992.
7. Although the multiparty era is often projected by some analysts to have commenced in the early 1990s, we are aware that multiparty politics in Kenya

began during the struggle for the country's independence and was evident at the early years of independence. What we refer to here is basically the re-introduction of multiparty politics.

8. Apart from Kamaru being featured prominently during performances at KANU campaigns and other party functions, his music was regularly played on the KBC radio and television thus allowing him to reach out to a wider audience.
9. Whereas KANU as a ruling party claimed to have a nationwide representation, there were regions and districts in Kenya where the party did not win a single parliamentary seat during the 1992 and 1997 multiparty general elections.

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Politics, Etiquette, and the Fight Against HIV/AIDS in Kenya: Negotiating for a Common Front

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Abstract

HIV/AIDS is the single most serious socio-economic and health problem affecting Kenya presently. The rapid spread of the epidemic resulted from the failure of government to recognise it as a problem early enough and institute necessary measures to counter it. Today, there are efforts from various stakeholders to slow down the spread of the epidemic. Some of these efforts have caused much debate and controversy, sometimes taking a political angle. Hardly any agreed steps are accepted by national institutions and even individuals on how to tackle the epidemic. This diversity of views and standpoints may be healthy especially when it comes to finding concrete solutions to the problem. However, this is only so if unity in diversity is achieved within a certain time-frame before the problem gets out of hand. This paper tries to assess the efforts and methods suggested in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya and the resultant controversies, debates and chances for unity in diversity.

Résumé

Le VIH/SIDA est le problème socio-économique et sanitaire le plus aigu auquel le Kenya est actuellement confronté. La vitesse de développement de cette épidémie est due au refus du gouvernement de l'identifier assez tôt comme étant un problème à part entière et d'adopter les mesures nécessaires à son éradication. Aujourd'hui, les différentes parties prenantes déploient tous leurs efforts pour ralentir la prolifération de l'épidémie. Certains de ces efforts ont provoqué un certain nombre de débats, ainsi qu'une grande controverse, sur le plan politique, notamment. Pratiquement aucune mesure approuvée relative aux moyens de combattre cette épidémie, n'a été acceptée par les institutions nationales et les personnes concernées. Cette diversité d'opinions est en soi, de bon aloi,

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particulièrement en ce qui concerne la recherche de solutions concrètes à ce problème. Mais cela ne peut être de bon aloi que si l'on arrive à réaliser l'unité dans la diversité, dans un certain délai, pour éviter que le problème ne prenne d'énormes proportions. Cette contribution tente d'évaluer les efforts et les méthodes proposées dans le cadre de la lutte contre le VIH/SIDA au Kenya, les controverses et débats qui en résultent, ainsi que les chances de réaliser l'unité dans la diversité.

Introduction

HIV/AIDS is the single most serious problem that has been carried forward from the last millennium into the current one. The epidemic has taken advantage of how people express their sexuality and puts a premium on a limited number of sexual partners for any individual. It is clear that for many people to restrict themselves to only one lifetime sexual partner is not necessarily possible or even desirable, but it is something everybody must take seriously in order to live in the current world bedevilled by HIV/AIDS.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is nowhere worse than sub-Saharan Africa. Statistics show that out of the world's 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, 75 percent are from sub-Saharan Africa (Price 2002). Last year alone, 2.2 million people died of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and many more were infected. Given these facts of HIV/AIDS in Africa in comparison to other continents such as Europe, North America and Asia, it is no longer tenable to claim that the disease 'knows no boundary'. It is evidently visible that HIV/AIDS thrives within certain socio-economic boundaries such as those found in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, of the 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, about 730,000 are receiving antiretroviral treatment. Out of this, over 500,000 or 68 percent live in the high-income countries of North America, Europe and Asia.

Similarly, of 2.2 million people who died of AIDS last year (2001) in sub-Saharan Africa, only 30,000 or less than 2 percent received treatment (Price 2002). The lesson to learn from all these statistics is that HIV/AIDS is prevalent in poor economies where money cannot be raised for prevention campaigns and treatment by antiretrovirals. In this case, therefore, HIV/AIDS knows, and indeed, respects economic boundaries which in most cases coincide with political boundaries. In fact, the over-estimation of the number of people who had HIV/AIDS in Africa before the mid-1980s and the rapid spread of the virus in the region after that led many from the west to allege that HIV came from Africa (Schoepf 1993). This baseless allegation was meant not only to revitalise racism and discrimination against Africans, but also cause heightened denial and delayed acknowledgement that HIV/AIDS is a global problem requiring global efforts to fight it.

Kenya, like other sub-Saharan African countries has inherited a huge HIV/AIDS problem from the last millennium. Sero-prevalence levels have risen from 2 percent in 1985 to well over 14 percent in the year 2000 (NASCOP 2001). In fact, it is now estimated that one in every eight adults in Kenya is HIV-positive and that at least 700 people die from AIDS or AIDS-related ailments every day. At independence in 1963, Kenya pledged to fight three common enemies namely: poverty, ignorance and disease. In respect to this, Kenya rightly views good health for its citizens as the basis of socio-economic development. However, this expectation is threatened by high prevalence of HIV/AIDS that places a very heavy socio-economic burden in the country.

No disease or phenomenon since 1960s has brought about such a negative and devastating transformation on Kenya's socio-economic landscape as has HIV/AIDS. The disease has nearly held economic development in the country at ransom and torn apart the social structures and networks of the entire population. The epidemic has physically attacked and disabled people at their prime time of productivity and reproductivity (between 15 and 45 years). Although both the urban and rural population is affected by the epidemic, the worst hit is the urban population (UNDP 2001). This has meant low production due to absenteeism, high expenditure on settling medical bills, and a budget set aside for prevention campaigns (Hancock et al. 1996). In this regard, the epidemic is actually compounding the poor status of health in the country. Consequently, it is projected that the fight against HIV/AIDS will cost the country Ksh. 5.5 billion in the next two years (*Kenya Times* 13/7/2002).

Basically, the fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya has gone through four broad phases. In the first phase between 1984–1987, the disease was not considered as a serious problem for the country and was described in the press and by policy makers simply as a 'disease for westerners'. The attitude changed when it became apparent that the epidemic was affecting tourism, one of Kenya's leading foreign exchange earning sectors. For instance, in early 1987, the British army prohibited its soldiers from taking leave in Mombasa citing the threat of HIV among the commercial sex workers in the city. Following the HIV/AIDS scare, tourism drastically dropped as the tourists opted for other holiday destinations. This marked the beginning of the second phase between 1988–1991 when political leaders started giving AIDS a more realistic appraisal as a potentially harmful health issue. Even then the responsibility of managing the disease only remained with the Ministry of Health and as such, the public did not respond positively by changing their personal behaviour.

The third phase, 1992–1998, marked another significant change in Kenya's policy in that for the first time data on HIV/AIDS were released, and in April 1993 the first national conference on AIDS was held to deliberate on the problem. The Ministry of Health took the onus on itself to declare that HIV/AIDS had become a national crisis. This, coupled with rising number of illnesses and death from AIDS across all population groups, provoked pressure from business, the media, NGOs and professional societies for clear policy directions from the government. The government was forced in a number of its subsequent policy documents, for instance the Development Plan 1994–1997 and in Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1997, to address the issue of HIV/AIDS in terms of its impact and setting out of general statements to guide the future action. However, this seemed to be a public relations gimmick since no tangible efforts were visible on the ground. For example, no backups accompanied the various proposals in the documents. The Ministry of Health's budgetary allocation remained more or less the same.

The fourth phase (1999–2002), witnessed the President declare HIV/AIDS a national disaster and appeal officially to the international community, local organisations and individuals to assist in the fight against the disease. This created a stage for action from a host of players that ranged from institutional research, NGO interventions to individual efforts. Various initiatives, suggestions and approaches taken by these players in the fight of the epidemic have brought many issues for debate in terms of their effectiveness, legal, policy, ethical and human rights concerns. These debates have centred on a wide range of issues, among them importation and use of condoms, introduction of sex education in formal schooling system, HIV testing and confidentiality of the results, criminalising the spread of HIV, and the efficacy of certain drugs e.g. *the Pearl Omega* of Prof. Arthur Obel and *Polyatomic Apheresis* of Dr. Basil Wainwright.

In all these debates, the hand of politics has been quite conspicuous thereby greatly shaping people's response to these issues. Political utterances on some of the interventions suggested have resulted in a strong undercurrent of scepticism or downright opposition by the public without due consideration of the facts available. The conceptual basis for the fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya leans toward concept of unity in diversity. It is basically a good gesture for people within a nation (stakeholders) to let their views and fears about a particular phenomenon be known. Freedom for stakeholders to air their opinions and doubts gives rise to divergent views which need to be accommodated and properly assessed with the aim of coming up with common solutions that are practical. Unity in diversity in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya is a hallmark for success for the struggle. As such, whatever suggestion, view, disagreement and contradiction that stakeholders put across about the process,

needs to be appropriately assessed in the light of others so that a common fighting front can be formed. The questions, then, that this paper attempts to answer are: What has characterised the fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya? How have Kenyans reacted to various initiatives, approaches and suggestions on the fight against HIV/AIDS?

The fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya

The fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya has been characterised by much controversy around the methods used and approaches taken. Every method suggested has met heated debates from various quarters with hardly any compromise being reached. Sometimes what seems to be entirely the prerogative of experts to comment on has been, in many instances, taken up by lay people, thereby politicising the issue. The delay by the government to issue policy guidelines on the fight against HIV/AIDS early on gave room for the emergence of conflicting views and suggestions. However, in the situation of a national crisis everybody's contribution counts. Institutions and individuals charged with spearheading the fight need to put in place a properly functioning screening mechanism to harmonise various views and suggestions that come in.

The use of condoms in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS

There have been wide-ranging debates and controversies on the use of condoms to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS. The main battle has been between the Catholic Church together with some Muslim groups, on one hand, and the government on the other. The argument from the Catholic Church has been that promoting use of condoms would encourage promiscuity among the youth. They, instead, advocate creating awareness and understanding among the youth on the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS and the need to abstain from sex. Although this method is morally good, it does not give an alternative to those who cannot abstain and want to have a chance to live. Hence, religious groups opposed to the use of condoms have always been on the war path with politicians and other organisations and individuals who believe strongly that the use of condoms can help save lives that would, unnecessarily, be lost through AIDS.

During a one-week symposium of Members of Parliament (MPs) at the Continental Resort in Mombasa, MPs described the Catholic Church as being an impediment in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in Kenya. They stated that 'The Catholic Church is undermining every effort being made by those fighting HIV and we want to know what the church stands to gain when millions of Kenyans are dying' (*Daily Nation* 27/11/1999).

Arguably, those who advocate the use of condoms and those that argue instead for upholding moral standards and abstinence from sex are all fighting against HIV/AIDS but on different fronts. All they need is to harmonise their efforts, focussed on the common goal. Former president Daniel Moi himself underwent an impressive transition from advocating the fight against HIV/AIDS from purely a moral perspective to a combination of morality and the use of condoms. When Moi started talking about HIV/AIDS openly in public, he was a strong believer in the school of thought of fighting HIV/AIDS from a moral standpoint by people abstaining from sex (*Kenya Times* 27/12/1998). At one point he even made a passionate appeal for Kenyans to abstain from sexual activities for at least two years to save their lives and save money spent on the importation of condoms (*Kenya Times* 16/7/2001). However, in reaction to this appeal on one of the FM radio stations call-in-session, a caller described Moi's appeal as a joke because according to the caller if Kenyans abstained from sex for even a week, they would all go blind. These sentiments may be taken as a joke but they actually stand for what the majority of Kenyans believe. Therefore, the fight against the epidemic in Kenya needs to move away from the use of a one method approach to one that will use a composite of methods.

Daniel Moi as head of state was very concerned about the spread of HIV/AIDS among the populace. This explains his quick change of stance on how to fight the epidemic as the situation got worse. Moi came out strongly in support of the use of condoms while officiating the 27th Graduation Ceremony of the University of Nairobi, describing the practice as inevitable in fighting HIV/AIDS. He argued that in today's world, condoms are a must to save the precious lives of young people being lost due to the epidemic. Moi's open support of the use of condoms led to the importation of 300 million condoms worth over Ksh.1.5 billion (*East African Standard* 13/7/2001). The statement aroused much controversy. The argument was why import condoms worth that much when people were dying of hunger, hospitals had no drugs and the economy was on its knees. However, what the critics of the move failed to take note of was the fact that 700 Kenyans were dying every single day, 30,000-40,000 children were being born HIV positive and that there were 1.1 million orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS (*Kenya Times* 16/4/1998). These concomitant effects, obviously, were costing the economy more money that what was spent on importing condoms.

Many times, the church has been strongly blamed for not doing enough in the fight against HIV/AIDS yet it is rightly argued that nobody or organisation is in touch with the people like the church. It is only the church that commands audiences of the people at least once a week every week. In Moi's address to the nation when he arrived from the UN Summit on AIDS in New York, he

accused the church of not doing enough to prevent their followers from falling victim to the HIV/AIDS scourge. He illustrated the church's lax in tackling the epidemic by pointing out that although 80 percent of Kenyans are Christians, the spread of HIV/AIDS was continuing unabated contrary to Christian ideals. His challenge to the church was that they should play their role by preaching abstinence and fighting to change people's attitudes and beliefs. The church for its part accused Moi of behaving like a proverbial man who pursued a rat from a burning house forgetting his immediate aim of salvaging his belongings. The urgent issue in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Kenya is for all stakeholders (government, church, NGOs and people) to work together to eradicate the spread of the epidemic before they start evaluating who did the most and who did the least.

It is not only the church that is opposed to and campaign against the use of condoms. Some anti-condom lobby groups dismiss the use of condoms, not on the grounds of morality, but because they doubt their effectiveness in preventing HIV/AIDS infection. The lobby groups argue that the HIV virus is smaller than the pores on the condoms and, therefore, there are high chances of the virus passing through the condom. But according to efficacy studies carried out by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) based in Atlanta, USA, condoms reduce the transmission of AIDS by about 85 percent (KEMRI 2001). Condoms, which are made of latex, if not damaged or degraded, are impermeable to the HIV virus. One indication is if a condom does not leak water, it cannot possibly allow the transmission of HIV virus unless damaged. In fact, the point made by the anti-condom lobby that condom pores are larger than the HIV virus is true. However, what is important to note is that the virus does not walk or fly across a condom but has to be carried in a fluid media (blood, vaginal secretions, semen etc) or a cellular medium such as blood cells. In this regard, therefore, the exchange of body fluids and not the virus size is the most important determinant of viral passage through latex.

The use of condoms is, so far, the only known effective way of preventing the transmission of the HIV virus. However, their use in Kenya like many other African countries is hampered by perceived discomfort, culture and superstition (Nasirumbi 2000). There are people who find wearing a condom during sexual encounters uncomfortable to the extent that their pleasure is compromised. This explains why some people would wear a condom during the first sexual act and forget about it altogether during subsequent acts. As mentioned earlier, sex in many African cultures is treated as taboo and an act that cannot be talked about in the open. As such, many people fear buying condoms across the counter where many people might see them. Efforts aimed

at finding a solution to this has seen the introduction of condom-dispensing machines where rather than a person buying condoms across the counter, he simply inserts appropriate coin in the machine and it dispenses condoms equivalent to the amount inserted (*Daily Nation* 25/11/1999). The machines were supposed to be strategically placed near social places such as bars, nightclubs, discotheques, brothels and even in colleges. Unfortunately, this innovation is yet to take root in Kenya.

There are also a number of superstitions concerning condoms. The popular one is that the condoms are treated with chemicals capable of making the user impotent or sterile. This claim is often illustrated by the fact that condoms are given free of charge in health institutions, local administration offices, quasi-brothels and in bars and other leisure joints. It is the nature of Kenyans always to become suspicious of items and services given free in an environment where almost everything is paid for in the name of cost sharing. For instance, people would not understand why they pay to get malaria treatment in a health centre and be given free condoms in the same institution. This, to them, looks ridiculous, hence the room for much speculation.

HIV/AIDS medical research and the efficacy of new drugs

Since the diagnosis of the HIV virus, many research projects have been going on in search of a cure and/or vaccine, not only in Kenya, but throughout the world. A number of candidate drugs and vaccines have been tried since the first injection of an experimental HIV/AIDS vaccine in 1987 in United States, but none at all has been found to cure and/or immunise against HIV/AIDS. Some of the prominent drugs and/or vaccines that have been tried include:

- AZT drug therapy which reduces mother to baby transmission by about 51 percent;
- Virodene PO58, described as a wonder drug;
- Nevirapine, an antiretroviral drug;
- T20 that prevents the HIV virus from getting into immune cells;
- Kemron, developed by Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI);
- Pearl Omega developed by Prof. Arthur Obel;
- Hydroxyurea (not new) used together with other anti-HIV drugs, a cocktail developed by Research Institute of Genetic and Human Therapy (RIGHT);
- Triple-drug cocktail of protease inhibition that sends the HIV virus into a quiescent state in cells;
- Cotrimoxazole, an antiretroviral drug recommended for Africa by UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation (WHO);
- Polyatomic apheresis (Oxygen therapy) of Dr. Basil Wainwright.

At the local level, Kenyan scientists, sometimes in collaboration with scientists from other countries, have been fully involved in research for HIV/AIDS cure and/or vaccine. Some of the drugs/vaccines have caused some controversy in terms of their efficacy. For instance, research on Kemron that had proved quite promising in its initial stages ended up failing in meeting efficacy tests. A point worth noting about Kemron research is that the last stages of the research coincided with the time Kenyans were preparing to celebrate a decade of *Nyayo* Era (president Moi's rule). During the celebration, every sector was struggling to put something on the table to show the achievements of the era. A number of achievements were publicised, including the *Nyayo* bus, the *Nyayo* car, the 8-4-4 system of education, Nyayo tea zones, and even the Kemron drug. However, eyebrows were raised by some scientists to the effect that the research on the drug was hurried through its final stages against the protocol guiding the research. Even if the drug would have failed efficacy requirements, the hurry to list it as among the achievements of a decade of *Nyayo* Era was ethically and procedurally wrong. Although the celebration organisers achieved their aim of using the drug to give political mileage to the *Nyayo* Era politicians, especially as the country was preparing for general elections, the act was not friendly to the course of medical research, and more specifically HIV/AIDS research in the country.

Kenyans still remember well the debate and controversies that surrounded polyatomic apheresis that was developed and administered by Dr. Basil Wainwright. Polyatomic apheresis treatment involved passing rays of atmospheric oxygen through the body of a patient. Dr. Wainwright claimed this could treat cancer, HIV/AIDS and a host of other diseases. In a letter dated 30th of July 1996, Dr. Wainwright was cleared by the then Director of Medical Services Dr. James Mwanzia, to set up a Polyatomic apheresis Treatment Centre. The letter in part read:

> It has been wonderful meeting with you and discussing early stages of what is likely to be a medical breakthrough in Kenya and indeed East African region. The setting up of a polyatomic apheresis treatment centre in Nairobi is greatly appreciated by the government of the Republic of Kenya. I would like to assure you of continued government support in assisting our fight against the many new, emerging and re-emerging diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Yellow fever etc (*East African Standard* 19/7/1998:12).

Although Dr. Manzia had authorised Dr. Wainwright to set up a polyatomic apheresis treatment centre in Nairobi, the Medical Practitioners and Dentists' Board was totally opposed to the administration of polyatomic apheresis to patients. In search of support for their stand, the board had written to those in authority both at international and local levels. Following these efforts, the

United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wrote to the government of the Republic of Kenya cautioning it that polyatomic apheresis was not medically approved in the US (where Dr. Wainwright was before coming to Kenya) for the treatment of HIV/AIDS and that Dr. Wainwright was a fugitive on probation violation. Consequently, about a year later in 1997, Dr. Wainwright was banned from administering polyatomic apheresis anywhere in Kenya. In correspondence dated 24th September 1997, the same Dr. Mwanzia after one year banned the administration of polyatomic apheresis noting that the government had information that Dr. Wainwright was a conman. In part the letter read:

> In view of the fact the unsuspecting public is being or is likely to be exploited, I have instructed the C.I.D. and Chief Drug Inspector to close down and seal all loopholes being used by Dr. Wainwright and take action on any criminal activities (*East African Standard* 19/7/1998:12).

Dr. Wainwright saw the hand of politics and corruption in the ban on his polyatomic treatment. He argued that it was the same Director of Medical Services who had allowed the administration of polyatomic apheresis who was now banning it hardly a year later. In the whole saga of polyatomic apheresis treatment, the lack of clear government policy to guide medical research in HIV/AIDS and its enforcement was an impediment in the fight against the epidemic. For instance, a decision granting Dr. Wainwright permission to carry out research on human beings and stopping it within a year on the pretext that he was not a medical doctor and was a fugitive was self-defeating. One would have imagined that before clearing Dr. Wainwright to practice in Kenya, the authority would have sought information on his background.

Pearl Omega invented by Prof. Arthur Obel is another HIV/AIDS candidate drug that took Kenyans by storm. Its ban met with a lot of criticisms from the public and some members of medical fraternity. According to Prof. Arthur Obel, since 1989 when he started administering the drug, more than 77,000 patients had used it, out of which 53,000 were Kenyans (*Kenya Times* 25/4/1997). Prof. Obel argued that since he started administering the drug to patients, many had reverted to HIV negative and nobody was injured or killed by the drug. In indirect support of these facts, the then Assistant Minister of Health Mr. Basil Criticos noted that the government did not dispute the drug's efficacy since no death had been reported. In addition, the government was also aware of patients who were wasting away but after having been on pearl omega, regained weight. However, these facts notwithstanding, the Pharmacy and Poisons Board went ahead and banned the manufacture and administration of the drug, arguing that 'Prof. Obel's behaviour has been unorthodox and

against all protocol and etiquette in a field where the rules are clear cut and heterodox procedure is not expected of researchers' (*Daily Nation* 16/2/1997).

One of the unorthodox behaviours for which Prof. Obel was dismissed was discussing his medical findings in newspapers instead of academic journals and conferences both locally and internationally. To crown this, he refused completely to disclose Pearl Omega's formula and its beneficiaries as required by the government.

In what seemed to be the support of government's stand on the ban of Pearl Omega, the Kenya AIDS Society went to court to seek injunction to stop Prof. Obel from manufacturing, distributing and administering the drug. The society claimed that the drug was ineffective and that Prof. Obel was out to con HIV/AIDS sufferers. However, the court in its wisdom ruled that the society had no prima facie case and, therefore, it was dismissed with costs (*Daily Nation* 17/5/1997). Prof. Obel strongly believed that the government was out to frustrate his efforts, observing that 'This is an intrigue at its pinnacle which is part and parcel of the power game to those who are initiated. The system has given me the opportunity to work as an industrialist in and outside the country' (*East African Standard* 9/2/1997).

According to Prof. Obel, it was the end that was important and not the means. For the simple reason that the drug was in some instances effective, it was argued that the government should have looked for an alternative method to establish its formula and trace its beneficiaries rather than banning it altogether. The then Vice-chairman of Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya, Mt. Kenya branch, Dr. Edward Kamamia and a leading psychiatrist Dr. David Ndetei, came out to criticise the way the government had handled the Pearl Omega issue. They argued that the manner in which the drug was banned was unprocedural and unscientific and was likely to ruin Kenya's possibility of ever discovering a cure for the disease (*Daily Nation* 12/2/1997). They accused the government of politicising the Pearl Omega issue, observing that it was unethical for a doctor to disclose the identity of his or her patients as the government demanded. HIV/AIDS patients also protested the ban of the drug. They argued that the drug was their only hope and gave the analogy of a drowning man who tries to hold on everything in an effort to save his life and in the process he gets saved.

Although Prof. Obel was fully aware of the statutory requirement under the Pharmacy and Poison's Act that the contents and formula of drug be known before registered for use, he feared for his patent and intellectual rights. This made him dismiss both the act and research protocol arguing that what was the standard approach to carrying out research yesterday may be totally obsolete today. Issues of protecting patent and intellectual rights that

Prof. Obel held to so dearly have, in the recent past, been of great concern in HIV/AIDS research in Kenya. The best example for this is the on-going collaborative HIV/AIDS vaccine trials on commercial sex workers in Majengo between researchers from Oxford University, United Kingdom, and University of Nairobi. Kenyan researchers on the team had been, technically, excluded from the list of beneficiaries of the proceeds of the research results. The researchers had to stand firm to be included on the list, with the result being that all the three partners would share equally research proceeds (*East African Standard* 13/8/2002).

After debates, accusations and counter accusations about Pearl Omega certain issues remain obscure. Among these issues is why the drug was allowed on the market for quite some time yet it was never registered under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act. Prof. Obel in this regard defied all laid down rules in medical research with impunity yet the government allowed the sale of an unregistered drug for years. By the time Prof. Obel invented the drug, he was designated as chief government scientist (although the post was never gazetted) drawing his salary from the exchequer (*Daily Nation* 16/2/1997). As such, it is not clear whether the KShs. 2 billion estimated to have been collected from sale of the drug went to the Exchequer or to Prof. Obel since he was an employee of the government.

Antiretroviral drugs

The politics of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs is of concern to many people in developing countries. Since their discovery in mid 1990s, antiretroviral drugs have proved highly effective at combating the voracious growth of HIV within the human body (Kuadey 2001). The drugs are specifically important in controlling opportunistic diseases that come as a result of the breakdown in the body's immune system, and in reducing mother-to-child transmission. When the HIV virus is not checked with medication (ARVs), it replicates with a fury, producing 10 billion copies each day. Even though ARV drugs are important in preventing virus replication, accessing these drugs, which are mainly the product of the large pharmaceutical companies such as Glaxo Smithkline, and Boehringer Ingelheim, is a big problem in terms of price to the poor majority. For instance, the cost of AZT treatment for mother and baby is about $1000. This is way beyond the purse strings of developing countries with health budgets of less than $10 per capita. As a result, multinational pharmaceutical corporations have been dangling these drugs before developing countries with a set of conditions such as having exclusive rights of supplying affected country with all or a majority of its drug requirements.

In Kenya, there have been debates on how to make generic antiretroviral drugs accessible to AIDS patients. Efforts contrary to achieving this end have

greatly been criticised by the public. For instance, the then Minister for Health Prof. Sam Ongeri and the then Chairman of Parliamentary Select Committee on Housing and Health Dr. Newton Kulundu were widely criticised by the public for refusing free HIV/AIDS drugs offered by Boehringer Ingelheim of Germany. The Minister explained the circumstances behind his refusal of the drugs on the basis of exclusivity rights with which the drugs were attached. He consequently warned that politicians should stop politicising the issue of AIDS drugs noting that the government was ready to receive free drugs offered without conditions (*Kenya Times* 3/7/2001). The Minister argued that if he was to accept the drugs with conditions of exclusivity attached, he could be left unable to act when another company offered drugs because his hands would be tied.

The country's commitment of availing its citizens with cheap generics of antiretroviral drugs was demonstrated when parliament passed the Industrial Property Bill amidst lobbying and canvassing against the Bill. Unfortunately, the end result was an Act without an essential clause allowing the importation and/or local manufacture of cheap antiretroviral drugs (*East African Standard* 7/8/2002), which had been mysteriously removed. The interesting thing was that shortly after the enactment, an anonymous MP emerged with a miscellaneous amendment to the Act, not knowing the clause he wanted to amend had mysteriously disappeared. The amendment was to effectively bar Kenyans from importing cheap antiretroviral generics except by express permission from the original patent holder (*East African Standard* 12/8/2002). However, it is common knowledge that no patent holder would willingly allow another person to import mimics of his drug that are cheaper. At the same time, Article 31 of the World Trade Organisation Agreement on trade related intellectual property rights allows a country on declaring a national state of emergency to produce cheaper generic versions of any drug (Kuadey 2001). This agreement, therefore, allows Kenya to produce cheaper drugs to treat its citizens. According to Dr. Kulundu, the aim of the anonymous MP was corruptly to give a certain manufacturing company the right to manufacture antiretroviral drugs.

Introducting family life education in schools

A proposal to introduce family life education in schools by the government contained in Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1997 met with resistance from a number of church organisations. The most outstanding opposing force came from the Catholic Church. The argument of the church was that the government was using the AIDS epidemic as a pretext of promoting the use of contraceptives such as condoms among the youth. The church, up to today, is adamant against the use of condoms claiming that they enhance promiscuity among the youth.

After constant negotiations with other stakeholders, the church agreed to reconsider its decision and, therefore, allow the introduction of family life education in the schooling system on condition that it was not used as a pretext of promoting the use of contraceptives.

The government in collaboration with the World Bank and UNICEF was finally able to launch the programme and integrate it into the school curriculum. The programme aimed to teach the youth about HIV/AIDS and the prevention of STDs. This initiative resulted from the concern about the high numbers of adolescent youth who were contracting HIV/AIDS and STDs (*East African Standard* 16/11/1998). Apart from teaching the youth in classrooms, the programme also exposed them to films, poems and drama containing messages about safe sex, the control of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs.

Ethical and legal issues in the fight against HIV/AIDS

As is the case with any epidemic, the reaction to the outbreak of HIV/AIDS has been, in most cases, highly emotional. In panic, governments and organizations have instituted measures that are affront to human rights and the law (Rachier 1996). Some responses have tended to disrespect confidentiality requirements and acted as a loophole for discrimination in employment and educational institutions. Kenya's reaction to HIV/AIDS epidemic has tended to be greatly influenced by emotions rather than decisive steps to fight the epidemic. Moi on at least two occasions directed that deliberately infecting others with HIV virus be made a criminal offence. The first instance was in his speech declaring HIV/AIDS a national disaster and the second when he arrived from a UN summit on HIV/AIDS in New York. The most conspicuous was the second occasion, when he directed that people who infected others with the virus should be hanged and rapists jailed for life. He stated that 'We (Kenyans) have to make laws that restrict those who deliberately infect others because young girls cannot protect themselves from such criminals' (*Daily Nation* 21/7/2001).

Moi was supported on his stand by among others Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK), and the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kenyan Chapter. While it is necessary to pass down tough sentences to those who deliberately infect others with the HIV virus, such decisions need to be made with sober minds and not based on emotions. Emotional directives that are in contravention of the constitution are likely, in the long run, not to be implemented. The scale which the epidemic has reached in the country can no longer accommodate time wasting on things that are not practical.

According to medical practitioners, the principle of doctor-to-patient confidentiality has been their biggest dilemma. In this regard, there have

been a lot of debates on the issue of doctors disclosing the nature of illness of their patients to relatives or people who are likely to be affected. Some doctors have strongly advocated the repeal of the legal and ethical guidelines prohibiting them from revealing their patients' HIV/AIDS status (*Daily Nation* 12/5/2001). For instance, Dr. Rosemary Okeyo who was then Kisumu Medical Officer of Health, in an area badly hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, constantly advocated the relaxation of legal and ethical guidelines prohibiting doctors from revealing nature of illness of their patients. The argument has been that once the section is repealed, doctors would be free to disclose to people who are likely to be affected by the HIV status of their patients. They believe that once this is achieved the malicious spread of the virus would significantly be reduced. Even the chairman of the National AIDS Control Council (NACC) is on record as saying that one of the major frustrations they face as a Council in tackling the HIV/AIDS epidemic over the years is the legal constraint in respect of doctor-to-patient confidentiality (*East African Standard* 13/8/2002). A task force on legal issues relating to HIV/AIDS formed by the Attorney General and chaired by Ambrose Rachier came up with a solid report that was to be eventually turned into a bill and enacted by parliament. Among the things the task force recommended were:

- The outlawing of mandatory HIV testing before employment, being given an insurance cover/mortgages or being granted refugee status;
- The establishment of an Employment Equity Tribunal and Trust Fund to cater for the interests of people infected with HIV/AIDS;
- The general argument was made that most of the people seeking employment are youths between the ages of 15 and 45 years and unfortunately, they are the same ones most affected by HIV/AIDS. Discriminating against them raises issues of stigmatisation and feeling of social rejection. In addition, they require access to antiretroviral drugs and need public trustees to intervene in cases of inheritance by or for orphans. The task force in its report argued that if these issues were not addressed it might promote the further spread of the disease hence creating a sort of vicious circle.

Traditional and spiritual claims for the cure of HIV/AIDS

Apart from efforts to get an HIV/AIDS cure and/or vaccine from modern medicine, there have been claims by traditional medicine practitioners and spiritual leaders of the ability to cure the disease. By their nature, these claims have lacked scientific backup. In Kenya, many claims regarding HIV/AIDS cures have been announced by herbalists. The most widely known is that made by Mr. S.K. Maingi. He claimed to have completed research on the

drug he calls Blue Computer Drug (BCD) that is able to treat among other diseases HIV/AIDS, cancer and diabetes. According to Mr. Maingi, Patients take the drug for only one week and they are cured (*Kenya Times* 14/8/1999). Similarly, there have been claims across the country of HIV/AIDS cures by spiritual power. The most publicised in Kenya is the open air healing mass at the Holy Ghost Catholic Cathedral in Mombasa. Many people claimed to have been cured by prayers from Sr. Brioge McKenna, a Catholic nun believed to have powers to cure AIDS patients (*East African Standard* 5/2/1997).

Claims such as these are not unique to Kenya alone but are found across Africa. For instance, Nigeria has experienced quite a number of these claims including those made by people like Dr. Paul Amanya and Prophet Temitope Balogun Joshua (Udo and Aimiemwona 2000). Dr. Paul Amanya who claims to be a holder of Ph.D. degrees in traditional Chinese medicine and pharmacology from Shanghai College of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology claims to cure HIV/AIDS by his drug Kasa boom boom. He strongly believes that the jinx about AIDS has been broken except in the minds of those benefiting from huge grants for phoney AIDS research. This is the same case with Prophet Temitope Balogun Joshua of the Synagogue Church of All Nations, Ikotun-Egbe, who claims to cure HIV/AIDS patients by prayer. A known fact about HIV/AIDS epidemic is that many people across the world and more so in Africa are suffering. As a result, they are ready to spend any amount of money to improve their health. Quack medical practitioners capitalise on this scenario to exploit the public. This explains the reason why there are individuals and even institutions coming up with unfounded claims of certain concoctions being able to cure the disease.

HIV/AIDS as a national disaster

It took the government of the Republic of Kenya 15 years to recognise the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS and consequently declare it a national disaster. Moi declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster on 25 November 1999 during a national symposium for members of parliament in Mombasa. While addressing MPs, he noted that HIV/AIDS was not just a serious threat to social and economic development, but also to the very existence of people of Kenya and, therefore, every effort needed to be made to bring the problem under control (*Daily Nation* 26/11/1999). As a consequence, Moi ordered a number of measures to be taken. These measures included:

- The immediate setting up of a National AIDS Control Council to coordinate the fight against the epidemic;
- The education of children regarding the threat of HIV/AIDS, with special lessons to begin in schools and colleges;

- The setting up of constituency AIDS committees chaired by the respective MPs to coordinate the fight against the epidemic at constituency/divisional level;
- The formation of committees of elders by Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs to produce solutions to cultural practices and beliefs that help the spread of the disease;
- The age of consent marriage and maturity be harmonised to 18 years to protect young girls from infection by the older men;
- The criminalisation of any one making any public announcements of HIV/AIDS cures or treatment without formal authority of the National AIDS Control Council;
- The National AIDS Control Council to regulate all biomedical research involving human subjects;
- Making it a crime for anyone to deliberately or knowingly infect another person with HIV virus;
- Making it mandatory for all health workers to inform family members of HIV/AIDS diagnosis and record the same in the death certificate.

Despite the declaration of HIV/AIDS as a national disaster and ordering of the above measures and programmes, tangible results are yet to be felt on the ground. The process of implementation of the measures is too slow, badly managed and in some instances non-existent altogether. Although Moi recognised the vital role of MPs in turning around attitudes and mobilising people to play their role more vigorously in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS as heads of constituency AIDS committees (*East African Standard* 26/11/1999), their actual action has been more of seeking political supremacy than coordinating the fight against the epidemic. This has resulted in constituency AIDS committees formed to tackle the epidemic at constituency/divisional level being poorly managed to the extent that there have been calls for their disbandment. For instance, local council leaders from Machakos District and District Officers and social workers from Kisumu District have, separately, argued that constituency AIDS committees have been rendered useless because MPs were using them for their own political mileage and not to fight the epidemic. The local leaders claimed that the MPs appoint their stooges to the committees instead of more competent individuals at the expense of the noble work of the committees (*Daily Nation* 11/5.2001).

Although antiretroviral drugs are important in the fight against HIV/AIDS in reducing mother-to-child transmission and prolonging patients lives, the casual manner in which the government handled the process of making them available at a reasonable price is worrying not only to HIV/AIDS patients but to all Kenyans. This, to a large extent, gives validity to claims by the then

chairman of Parliamentary Select Committee on Health, Housing, Labour and Social Welfare Dr. Newton Kulundu that the government was dragging its feet on the issue of antiretroviral drugs to allow a few favoured individuals to invest in the sector while 700 Kenyans die every day (*East African Standard* 12/8/2002). The amount of time the government took to operationalise the Industrial Property Act that was supposed to include a clause on the importation and/or manufacture of cheap generics of antiretroviral drugs was too long for tackling a disease that had been declared a national disaster. The Act was passed on 29 May 2001 only to wait until 31 December 2001 to receive presidential assent and to further wait until 1 April 2002 to be effective, mysteriously missing a clause on importation and/or manufacture of cheap generics of antiretroviral drugs. The Kenyan constitution stipulates that in times of emergency, people shall be allowed to ignore rules in the process of resolving the crisis or disaster (Rachier 1996). Nobody seemed to notice the presence of this clause in the constitution and to use it appropriately.

Even with the legal permission to import and/or manufacture cheap generics of antiretroviral drugs, the staff and equipment of National Drug Quality Control Laboratory is ill-equipped to be able to test their efficacy so that the concerned companies do not fill the market with placebos of the drugs. According to the National Drug Quality Control Laboratory Board chairman Prof. Gilbert Kokwaro, Kenya has no capacity to test AIDS drugs. The incapacity results from the fact that there are no chemical reagents for testing efficacy and toxicity levels when the Industrial Property Act is fully implemented (*Daily Nation* 12/5/2001).The problem is squarely due to budgetary constraints, because, out of the total amount requested from the Ministry of Health to purchase chemical reagents and other equipment, they only received about 32 percent. As a result, the Laboratory has a huge backlog of untested ordinary drugs in store and this situation is likely to be compounded further by the requirement to test antiretroviral drugs. This shows that although there are measures and programmes to suppress the spread of HIV/AIDS, they only exist in government documents with hardly anything on the ground.

Conclusion

The cases and rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Kenya are still very high. The high number of cases of the epidemic resulted from the government's delay in instituting decisive measures to control its spread when the first case was identified in 1984. Until 1999 when the government declared HIV/AIDS a national disaster, there had been no clear policy guidelines on how to tackle the epidemic. This meant disjointed efforts by various stakeholders in the fight against the epidemic, such as education and creating awareness, advo-

cacy of the use of condoms, HIV/AIDS medical research, criminalising the deliberate spread of HIV/AIDS, and the introduction of family life education in schools. Much controversy has erupted in the process. The implementation of the measures and programmes to fight HIV/AIDS is of concern to everyone and is not supposed to be left to the government alone. However, the government has the task of leading and coordinating the activities of other stakeholder, in the fight. This is definitely not the time to apportion blame or to pursue an escaping rat from a burning house. What is important nonetheless is to agree on a common front to pursue a common enemy – HIV/AIDS.

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Review Article/Note de lecture

Piet Konings and Francis Nyamnjoh, 2003, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity. A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon*, Brill, Leiden, and Boston: African Studies Series, 230 pp. Maps, bibliography, index

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This book is a critical analysis of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon and is constructed against a background of political liberalisation in Cameroon since 1990. Anglophone Cameroon 'has been at the forefront of ethno-regional protests and demands for the re-arrangement of state power' (p. 2). According to the authors:

> there appear to be sufficient grounds to justify the claims of Anglophone movements that the nation-state project after reunification has been driven by the firm determination of the Francophone political elite to dominate the Anglophone minority... and erase all cultural and institutional foundations of Anglophone identity (p. 96).

They note that Anglophones have been regularly relegated to inferior positions in the national decision-making process and have been constantly under-represented in the various spheres of public life. This graphical presentation constitutes the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. The problem is of topical relevance and impacts directly on the survival of postcolonial Cameroon, and regional security. Yet it has hardly been subjected to a comprehensive and a critical analysis that facilitates deciphering its nettlesome nature as Konings and Nyamnjoh have done. Authors writing on the Anglophone problem typically approach it from emotional and narrow perspectives, which tend to obfuscate the problem. One school championed by the SCNC ideologues[1] (Tata 1991; Anyangwe 2000) has the tendency of demonising the Francophones as the sole author of their problems. Another championed by J.C. Ngoh (1996, 1999, 2001) argues forcefully that the Anglophones have no case whatsoever and have themselves to blame for their current predicament. Ngoh unsparingly castigates the ineptitude, naivety, and cowardice of Anglophone leaders as significant factors that contributed to the emer-

gence of the Anglophone problem. The last school, which is the official mind of the Francophone-dominated government, uses the media to consistently accuse Anglophones as a new set of troublesome rebels, infatuated by the oil wealth of Anglophone Cameroon, who have no genuine grievance that is exclusive to their region.[2]

This book by Konings and Nyamnjoh is a magisterial work on the Anglophone problem in Cameroon and is a culmination of the research of these two internationally renowned scholars for over a decade since the eruption of the Anglophone problem. It is brilliantly researched, argued, and well annotated, and contains a substantial select bibliography and up-to-date information on the activities of Anglophone nationalist or sovereigntist movements in the Diaspora tapped from their websites. It is an immensely valuable contribution to our understanding and knowledge of contemporary Anglophone-Francophone relations, and sets the platform for the commencement of real scientific research on nation-building endeavours in Cameroon. Most of the contradictory and confusing issues about the Anglophone problems that constitute topics of discussion in the public sphere in Cameroon as well as on CAMNET and the SCNCforum/ SCNCNation are addressed and clarified with expertise, sagacity and objectivity. I would say 'le débat est relancé pour tous' and this book would certainly generate much interest and attract several reviews, especially when the French edition is made available. The authors in essence posit that the Anglophone problem is real and it can be explained by multiple factors and actors, each of which carries it own share of responsibility although of different magnitudes. No academic, diplomat or politician seeking a deeper understanding of the Anglophone problem can afford to circumvent this very resourceful book.

The eight chapters of this book address the following issues: the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the Anglophone community; the nature and evolution of the Anglophone problem; Anglophone strategies for sustaining and managing their identity; Anglophone-Francophone perception of the Anglophone problem, and the question of the distribution of blames for Anglophone marginalisation; strategies of the dominant Francophone government to contain the Anglophones and finally proposals to tackle the Anglophone problem. The first chapter examines the political liberalisation and the mobilisation of an Anglophone identity in Cameroon. The second looks at the Southern Cameroons road to reunification and federation. An interesting revelation in this chapter is the deconstruction of 'the widespread belief among Francophones that Southern Cameroonians warm-heartedly embraced reunification and fed-

eration' (pp. 48–49). The third chapter deals with the development of Anglophone consciousness during the federal and one-party unitary state (1961–1990). The fourth chapter is about the struggles for the return to the federal state while chapter five is about the strategies employed by the Biya regime to deconstruct the Anglophone identity. The sixth chapter ingeniously highlights Anglophone and Francophone responses to the views of the Anglophone movements, which is quite innovative. Chapter seven treats the Anglophone struggle for the preservation of its educational and economic legacy. The eighth chapter is the conclusion and examines the impact of the Anglophone problem and possible solutions to it.

In the Francophone memory and writings, Anglophones are treated as a homogeneous bloc; people from the same ancestry with one vision. This view is corrected and amply illustrated by the authors by highlighting 'the contradictions, contentions and contestations between the North-West and the South-West elites' (p. 14). The authors reveal that the federal framework, which was established in 1961, was expected to protect the institutions of the Anglophone minority. They admirably captured the fragility of the federated states and the limited areas of competence of the West Cameroon government. They noted that 'the customary courts of West Cameroon and primary education had some constitutional warrant for being taken as state tasks'. Other tasks left to the West Cameroon government in the early years of the federation, by convention rather than constitutional prescription were local governments, social welfare, archives... (p. 45). The Federal government soon assumed responsibilities in almost all spheres within its competence and this 'created disillusion among the majority Anglophones who strongly resented the loss of their region's autonomy and Francophone hegemonic and assimilative tendencies'. This led to the 'emergence of an Anglophone consciousness: a feeling...that their community with its distinct colonial legacy was a subject' of 'marginalisation, exploitation and assimilation by the Francophone-dominated state and even the Francophone population as a whole' (pp. 51–52). Then followed Francophone arrogance like attempts dismantling the West Cameroon state and absorbing it into the neighbouring Francophone regions by decreeing West Cameroon as one of the six regions into which the Cameroon federation was carved, and placing it under a succession of Francophone Inspector Generals who were more powerful than the Anglophone Prime Ministers. Anglophone officials were harassed with impunity. According to the authors, 'on several occasions gendarmes stopped and searched top West Cameroon officials, parlia-

mentarians and even Secretary of States by the roadside for no apparent reason other than to demonstrate their powers over these officials' (p. 54). Consequently, 'the demeanours of the gendarmes generated considerable public protest in Anglophone Cameroon but it also indicated effective powers of the federal inspector of administration who [and not the West Cameroon prime minister] had direct command over the gendarmes' (p.54). 'Foncha regularly protested while the renowned Anglophone academic, B. Fonlon, predicted the total "frenchification" of West Cameroon in two or three generations at the rate things were moving. With the event of the one-party state in 1966 and the ascension of Muna at the expense of Jua and Foncha, things were never the same again. The Anglophone political elite appeared to be more interested in seeking Ahidjo's patronage than safeguarding West Cameroon autonomy and identity' (p. 64). With the discovery of oil in West Cameroon and its consequence on the psychology of the Anglophones, there was the rush to establish a unitary state without any genuine consensus or consultation. In this way the original agenda of the Francophone elite to destroy the autonomy and identity of West Cameroon was realised. The renaming of the country from the 'United Republic of Cameroon' to the 'Republic of Cameroon' by President Paul Biya in 1984 was the logical conclusion of the long term Francophone agenda. It was a 'clear indication that the Francophone elite simply denied the fact that the Cameroon state was made up of two distinct entities' and a suggestion that 'the Anglophone territory had been assimilated and absorbed by the former Republic of Cameroon...' (p. 74).

The authors make the strong argument that 'there appear to be sufficient grounds to justify the claims of the Anglophone movements that the nation-state project after reunification has been driven by the firm determination of the Francophone elite to dominate the Anglophone minority in the postcolonial state and to erase all cultural and institutional foundations of Anglophone identity' (p. 196). They note that 'Anglophones have been regularly relegated to inferior positions in the national decision making process, and have been constantly underrepresented in ministerial as well as senior and middle level positions in the administration, the military and parastatals' (p. 196). This observation is evident to all interested observers of Cameroonian affairs but the point would have been more solid if it was buttressed with statistics, which clearly indicate Anglophone-Francophone ratios in certain spheres. If Francophones are accused of bad faith by Anglophones today, it is because 'the Francophone political leaders had assured [them] during the constitutional talks on reunification that the inherited colonial differences in language and insti-

tutions were to be respected in the bilingual union' (p. 196). This agreement not only remained a dead letter but the Anglophone region remained 'relatively underdeveloped which shows that it has not benefited sufficiently from its rich economic resources, particularly oil' (p. 196). The union in essence was not a worthwhile endeavour.

The merits of this book notwithstanding, some critique touching certain points, especially of historical details, must be unavoidably made. The argument cited from Ebune that links the formation of the KNDP to Catholicism because of protestant dominance of the hierarchy of the KNC (pp. 29–31) is not tenable because religion was not really an important issue in the politics of the Southern Cameroons. The KNDP was a creation of the Francophone émigrés in the Southern Cameroons and Foncha was simply invited and offered the crown of leadership because he was an indigene of the Southern Cameroons and he could easily mobilise support (cf. Awasom 2000). The authors appear to be prisoners of the logic of the politics of belonging as they tend to perceive everything from a regional basis. Foncha's KNDP is consistently presented as a North West party while Endeley's CPNC is called a South West party. Foncha and Endeley did not perceive their parties that way and voter behaviour in the Southern Cameroons did not conform to the ethnic logic of the authors (cf p. 39). Equally, the SDF, LDA etc. are labelled regional parties as if their founders so defined them or so intended them to be. Despite the fact that TAC and CAMTAG had an Anglophone-wide representation, the authors cannot resist the temptation of perceiving their leaders in ethnic lenses. The logic of appointing Drs Dorothy Njeuma and Herbert Endeley from the same Bakweri village as Vice-Chancellor and Registrar respectively of the so-called Anglo-Saxon University of Buea for an unprecedented record period of more than a decade could be better appreciated if it is seen in the wider framework of one of the several divide and rule strategies containing the Anglophone agitation.

The warning of the British Colonial Secretary of State for Colonies, first made in 1957, that the Golden Key of the Bank of England would not be handed over to the British Southern Cameroons (p. 33), has been misconstrued by the authors. It was not a threat at any attempt at extending the period of trusteeship. What the British meant was that the Southern Cameroons would be deprived of economic assistance if it opted to join the French Cameroons in the place of British Nigeria (Awasom 2004). The christening of Anglophone Cameroon as 'the Southern Cameroons' dates from 1954 when the territory was raised to a quasi-region in the

Nigerian federation under the Lytelton Constitution and not earlier as indicated on page 23.

There is also a common tendency to treat the Anglophone political elite in the pre-reunification era as actors in a sovereign state when the final decision actually depended on the administering authority. The authors opine that Anglophones 'have been inclined to lay all the blame for the Anglophone problem on the Francophone-dominated state, and gloss over the co-responsibility of the Anglophone elite who have dismally failed to form a united front in the pre- and post reunification period for the representation and defence of Anglophone interests, being preoccupied with their own internal power struggles' (p. 196). This observation does not totally hold for the pre-reunification period. Union with Francophone Cameroon was not a popular option and was never envisaged as a short-term possibility but an issue to be explored leisurely after the independence of Anglophone Cameroon. The authors recognised the fact that Endeley was opposed to reunification while other smaller political formations stood for an independent Southern Cameroons state (pp. 19, 32-33). When it dawned on the Anglophone political elite that the electorate was overtly hostile to reunification and even integration with Nigeria, which was being pushed down the throat of Southern Cameroonians by the UN, they quickly resolved their differences and collectively requested independence for the Southern Cameroons during the November 1960 London conference (Awasom 1998, 2000; Kale 1967). Unfortunately, the UN rejected to consider this option. It was therefore the international circumstance that conspired against the Southern Cameroonian political elite from acting as a united force in the defence of their interests before reunification.

Finally the preferred style of the organisation of the book is somewhat awkward. It should have followed the traditional format providing a preface of the work, which would appear in Roman numerals, followed by the eight chapters of the book, which would be outlined in the preface. In this regard, pp. 1–2 up to the fourth paragraph and pp. 20–21 beginning from 'Organisation of the Book and Research Methodology' should have constituted the preface. Chapter One of the book should have started with the title: 'Postcolonial Nation State Project from p. 12 up to the first three paragraphs (i.e. line 1–28). The preface of this book should be extracted from Chapter One and stand out distinctly from the rest of the book. The preferred format followed in this book is not very tidy to me.

The critique made in no way waters down the substantive part of this book, which deserves a place in the hall of fame. I highly recommend its

usage in all institutions of higher learning and its immediate translation into French for easy reading and understanding by all. Political scientists, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, national and international stakeholders would find this book extremely informative.

Notes

1. See All Anglophone Conference 1993.
2. This is the typical Francophone government propaganda. The former Prime Minister of East Cameroon often propagated this view over the Cameroon Radio Television on the approach of February 11, which is a national day in Cameroon and the date that Anglophones voted in a UN plebiscites to join their Francophone counterpart.

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Book Reviews/Notes de lecture

E. S Atieno Odhiambo and John Lonsdale (eds.) 2003, *Mau Mau and Nationalism: Arms, Authority and Narration.* Oxford: James Currey. 306 pages.

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In the history of Kenya, Mau Mau movement remains one of the widely written about and there seems to be some consensus that the movement that characterized the 1950s shook the grip of British rule over Kenyan colony. However several disagreements have emerged on for example who constituted the Mau Mau movement? To what extent was it a national rather than a Kikuyu uprising resulting from colonial social and economic frustrations? Who are the real Mau Mau fighters? Who deserve to be celebrated as Mau Mau heroes? How should the movement be remembered? Was Mau Mau defeated militarily? And is Mau Mau memory of any relevance to the creation of the Kenyan nation? In attempting to answer some of these questions, the Mau Mau movement has become one of the most divisive anti-colonial movements in Kenyan history. In fact as pointed by one author, any story of Mau Mau remains divisive rather than reformative and its memory has remained for ethnic bargaining rather than as an avenue of national and social transformation. The book under review attempts a critical analysis of almost all the questions that are continuously asked about Mau Mau in Kenya today. It is written by authors who have a wealth of knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon. The authors not only provide the readers with a deeper, intriguing and innovative understanding about Mau Mau, but also on how the movement can be harnessed to build a sense of nationhood in Kenya. The book is divided into twelve chapters with an introduction, but after reading it the issues raised can be divided into two: those that provide a detailed understanding on Mau Mau and those that attempt to build a relationship between Mau Mau and nationhood. A majority of the authors are based outside Kenya and can best be described as Africanist.

In the introduction, Lonsdale and Atieno Odhiambo provide a critical evaluation of trends in the nationalist histories by comparing the

Mau Mau debate in Kenya and what has been going on in other countries particularly Europe, America and other African countries. They contend that national histories tell a bitter struggle about the meaning of nationhood and it is an outcome of protracted argument that nations, if they are to be made at all, must be made. Consensual agreement is a mirage, an African socialist fantasy. Some arguments have broken nations apart, nevertheless, no nation has been born without having to face up to questions about who is to be included, whom excluded; about how equal rights of citizenship can in practice be; what degree of privileged differentiation is tolerable between regions; language and personal status; what in any conflict of rights it means to be subject to more than one rule (p. 2–3). Mau Mau remains one thing in the history of Kenya that all Kenyans must not only come to terms with for the nation to be born but also for the fragile plural nation to survive.

In chapter one B.A. Ogot advances two critical issues about the Mau Mau movement. He firstly examines the creation of various ethnicities and traditions amidst colonial frustrations and argues that process was in place prior to 1952 and was not only confined to Kikuyu. However, among the Kikuyu both the moderates and the radicals were motivated by Kikuyu ethnic pride and Kikuyu nationalism. All Kikuyu leaders emphasized three things: the need for Kikuyu unity, the need to preserve Kikuyu identity and the need for self-help especially in education and development (p. 10). This was the form of Kikuyu nationalism that Kenyatta embraced and was to pose a problem to him in attempting to forge a Kenyan nation after independence. Ogot thus finds it opportune to dismiss Kenyatta's stature as a nationalist and a freedom fighter-as he is the very man who denounced Mau Mau in 1952 by comparing it to poverty, irresponsibility and criminality. In fact he replaced the Mau Mau original version with his own version that 'we all fought for Uhuru'. Ogot then negates the populist version about Mau Mau in the Kenyan history which identifies the heroes and heroines with the forest fighters and places the rest of our freedom fighters, who worked tirelessly for the national project (like Odede, Murumbi, Pio Gama Pinto, Girdhari Lal Vidyarthi, Argwings Kodhek, Hurry Thuku, Makhan Singh and Tom Mboya) to suffer the second death. These leaders are hardly mentioned on the list of Kenyan nationalists. He poses two critical questions i.e. those who died fighting for the national project, what do we do with then? Do they deserve a place in Kenya's Uhuru garden? This takes Ogot to the history of the nationalist project, where he argues that on the whole, this has been a history of conflict and frustration among the invented communities, as they failed

to agree on appropriate policies, strategies and leadership. The failure of this project according to Ogot explains not only the fragmented nature of Mau Mau debates but also of the Kenyan nation. Thus from 1970 to his death in 1978, Kenyatta worked very hard to establish a kind of monarchical court from which he promoted Kikuyu nationalism and entrenched Kikuyu dominance just as the British had predicted. Other Kenyan communities reacted to this by consolidating imagined communities they had established prior to 1952. Kenyan nationalism died and politics became ethnicised.

In chapter two, Atieno Odhiambo summarizes what he calls the seven theses on nationalism in Kenya and how they have been appropriated by ruling classes in order to make false claims on the fruits of independence. All these theses have been advanced in relation to Mau Mau and to posit that it was the constitutionalist who fought for Uhuru; it was the forest fighters who fought for Uhuru; we all fought for Uhuru but, the Kikuyu fought the hardest; the fight for Uhuru was robust in the classroom of Alliance High School; that it was the small man, the working man and the rural masses who fought for Uhuru and deserve to eat; and lastly that there were during the fight for Uhuru, many nationalisms, and many more are yet to be accorded the requisite attention in Kenyan official annals. John Lonsdale argues in chapter three that whether in the forest, at home or on the conference table, Mau Mau emergency and colonial frustration divided Kenyans particularly the Kikuyu along several fissures, dominant ones being gender and authority. That colonialism disturbed the bedrock issues of straightness and growth in Kikuyu community. On several accounts, the Kikuyu petitioned the colonial government about their deplorable condition, but the colonial silence forced them to take oaths of commitment to their culture. This time, however, it was not the male elder who took the oath as customarily dictated, even wives and children found it comfortable taking the oaths – a great vulgarization of authority occurred. Lonsdale concludes by saying that Mau Mau was the outcome of competition for the authority to take action particularly pitting frustrated young men and elders. The unease was also experienced in the forest in the form of gender relations and education, all these impacted on the Mau Mau movement.

Anticipating to fulfill the prophetic assertion of prophet Mugo Wa Kibiru and to maintain Kikuyu unity, Derek Peterson in chapter four analyses the critical role of writing in maintaining the Mau Mau morale in fighting. Writing made the Mau Mau fighters imagine a sovereign state, claim paramountcy over the colonial state, and curtail British monopoly

of law making. To Derek, the Mau Mau oath taking had more to do with rebuilding public order hitherto destroyed by colonialism. He asserts that writing gave dissolute, poverty stricken men reasons to hope that they might live again in national lineages of the future. It was also to remind Mau Mau descendants of their father's private sacrifices. In chapter five Cristiana Pugliese attempts to assess the very varied Kikuyu pamphlets and songs published between 1945 and 1952. From the chapter, readers can easily map out the Kikuyu thinking before, during and after the colonial period but more importantly, what they anticipated in the postcolonial Kenya. One of Henry Muoria Mwaniki's publications (Nyina) depicts the need to develop Kikuyu spirit of patriotism and hegemony. He says

> Kikuyu were also wise...other black people must therefore be guided by them, just as Europeans followed the thoughts of the Greeks: when people go on a journey there are those who lead and those who follow, so we Kikuyu must be good, trustworthy and brave leaders so that black people will acknowledge us hence follow us (p. 161).

This Kikuyu parochialism is further demonstrated in the Mau Mau oaths, thus the Kikuyus various manifestations help us to understand the complexity of Mau Mau political thought, it's all about the very old stories of Kikuyu, land and violence.

Percox in chapter six argues that for the British to sustain their economic survival in Kenya they had to continuously arm the state with all forms of disaffection such as those posed by Mau Mau, Somali secessionists and communism then promoted by Odinga. Without much choice they had to accept Kenyatta, whom they had called erstwhile leader of darkness and death. To Percox, the greater the threat to the state the more massive forces were employed. With the political climate apparently moderated by Kenyatta's rehabilitation, and the circumstances ripe for the withdrawal of formal British rule, the United Kingdom did all it could to bolster Kenyatta's state to ensure that future threats to Kenya's stability could be dealt with only by political means. In tandem with the colonial wishes, Kenyatta thus continued with the state's legitimate monopoly of the use of force and one-party democracy. Thus president Moi may have not been the first nyayoist although he coined the term. Kenyatta was also a nyayoist, he had the British footsteps to follow. But what exactly arming of the state means remained hanging.

In chapter seven David Anderson gives a detailed analysis of Mau Mau land freedom army. He negates the conventional view that it was only the dispossessed, the young, the ex-squatters evicted from European owned farms, the landless, the unemployed, the poor in the sprawling

urban locations in Nairobi that went to the forest to fight in Mau Mau. Instead, he contends that some of the Mau Mau recruits particularly those in the Land Freedom Army (LFA) were forcefully recruited and eventually exposed to unlawful prosecution thus weakening the counter insurgency campaigns. In chapter eight, Kennell Jackson Jr. provides the readers with wartime survival skills paying particularly attention to Mau Mau survival craft–including camps and band life, food acquisition, secrecy techniques and oral traditions. He argues that all these aspects played a critical role in giving the Mau Mau movement a remarkable longevity and forced the British colonialists to consider majority rule as a possible future definition of Kenya nationhood. This he contends makes the conventional idea that Mau Mau movement was defeated elusive. In chapter nine Caroline Elkins attempt one of the most critical questions that faced the colonial government in Kenya during the emergency: how would the Kikuyu oath takers who came out of the forest live a normal life? In answering this question Elkins argues that Mau Mau writers need to go beyond the forest to the civilian arenas of struggle i.e. in the detention camps, Mau Mau prisons and emergency villages. Here the readers are introduced to efforts by the colonial government to rehabilitate Mau Mau adherents to reconstruct Kikuyu into governable citizens and to prepare them for a multi-racial future. Readers are also introduced to some of the limitations the colonial government faced in the process. Nevertheless, after frustrating the Kikuyu on all fronts the colonial administration went ahead with full force to force the oath takers to confess. The result of this destruction of the Kikuyu community has continued to haunt ex-Mau Mau fighters and their families as they are still trying to reconcile their involvement in the movement with postcolonial Kenya, and what it means to be a Kikuyu. One very important aspect missing in this chapter is how the Mau Mau detainees were transported to as far as Mageta over 400 km from central Kenya.

In chapter ten Joanna Lewis takes us through a study on how Kenya's emergency was reported informally, provocatively and manipulatively in key sections of the British popular press namely the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*. He posits that, while the two papers claimed to be independent, in practice they were loyal to a particular political party: *Daily Mirror* was backed by Labour Party while the *Daily Mail* was backed by conservatives.

It was thus not unusual for the *Daily Mail* to back the government, sympathise with the settlers and often share their racial prejudice against African capacity. *Daily Mirror* became completely critical of the govern-

ments response and even attacked the very foundation of British policy in Africa. However, by the end of the 1950s, both dailies seem to have prepared their readers about the unstoppable power of African nationalism.

The last two chapters focus on Mau Mau memory. Marshall Clough explains how Mau Mau has been ambivalently or selectively remembered in Kenya. This has been so in order to make claims on the present political and economic dispensation. He for instance singles out Kenyatta, who at first dismissed the Mau Mau adherents as hooligans and gangsters in need of quick eradication and must not be remembered, yet later he invited Mau Mau ex-generals at his Gatundu home and even to independence celebrations. This he did keen enough not to offend the loyalist, non-Kikuyu, the British government and the European settlers as it was his government's wish to follow a policy of amnesia (forgive and forget) towards the Mau Mau memory. However from 1963 Mau Mau memory has continued to be elusive, changing, diverse and dependent on who is remembering, why, where and when. Amidst all these stunted and opportunistic Mau Mau memories Clough questions if there is a Mau Mau memory of relevance and of value to people of Kenya as a whole. Ogude in chapter twelve similarly examines the stunted memory of Mau Mau in Kenyan literature particularly through the works of Ngungi Wa Thiong'o's oeuvre. In tandem with Grele (1985:251), he compares Mau Mau to events, which are recalled, but their nature, details and meaning are altered, rearranged, exaggerated and reinterpreted in the light of the intervening history or present concern. The past ceases to be fixed category and instead becomes a palimpsest upon which there is a continual inscription of new narratives contingent upon the complex and the ever-changing realities of the moment. To Ogude, because social needs change with the passage of time, Ngugi insists that the memory of Mau Mau, in a similar manner change in response and must continue to act as a critical moment at which the narrative of the nation must begin and be reconstituted against all odds.

The above constitutes the major thrust of the argument in this book and as can be seen, it is not based on much original evidence, but a rigorous and innovative reinterpretation of available Mau Mau literature in Kenya. The issues and the debates are adequately presented, however the most critical question on Mau Mau memory relevant to all Kenyans and to the creation of a sense of nationhood, leave alone national identity remains unsettled. What is clear is that Mau Mau may not be the right banner for Kenyans to rally behind for the fragile nation to survive. Nevertheless the book continues to put to rest some of the sterile debates or the conventional views about Mau Mau. It makes a significant contribu-

tion not only to Mau Mau historiography but also to African nationalist debate in general. I strongly recommend the book to those students interested in Kenyan history particularly in Mau Mau history.

John O. Hunwick, 2003, *Arabic Literature of Africa Volume 4: The Writings of Western Sudanic of Africa*. Leiden-Boston. Brill. 814 p.

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John Hunwick, éminent professeur à l'Université du Michigan aux États-Unis, est un spécialiste réputé de l'Afrique musulmane. L'œuvre qu'il nous présente est une compilation des écrits africains relatifs à la littérature et à la culture arabo-islamiques. Ce Volume 4 ouvre la zone du Soudan occidental ou en grande partie l'ancienne Afrique occidentale française. Il englobe précisément le Sud-ouest nigérien, le Sahara malien, la Sénégambie, la Guinée et la région voltaïque (Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana et une partie du Togo).

L'auteur de cette compilation a voulu à juste titre éviter la division par pays. En effet, les frontières ethniques ou culturelles ne correspondent pas à celles dessinées par la colonisation européenne. Et un travail de cette ampleur qui couvre toute une sous-région, depuis le XIVe siècle jusqu'à une date récente, s'intéresse à chaque zone culturelle avec ses spécificités. Le classement est d'abord effectué selon les tendances religieuses ou les différentes familles dans un ordre chronologique pour les sous-parties.

Le compilateur ne se contente pas de répertorier les ouvrages en arabe. Il ratisse très large y compris des œuvres éditées à large diffusion et d'autres plus ou moins connues du grand public dont il révèle la teneur. Ceux écrits en caractères arabes dans les langues africaines (peul, haoussa, wolof, songhay...) ou européenne (français, anglais) y trouvent leur place; de même que ceux relatifs à l'agriculture, la politique, entre autres domaines. Même les écrits anonymes ont été classés et présentés à la fin de l'ouvrage. Les différents index (index des noms, des titres, index général) facilitent l'accès aux renseignements recherchés.

Une introduction géo-historique permet de localiser les écrits. L'un des grands avantages de cet ouvrage est de faciliter l'établissement des cartes des principaux foyers islamiques, avec les itinéraires des Cheikhs et des divers courants confériques à différentes époques. Cette géographie historique offre la possibilité même de rétablir les chemins empruntés

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Une introduction géo-historique permet de localiser les écrits. L'un des grands avantages de cet ouvrage est de faciliter l'établissement des cartes des principaux foyers islamiques, avec les itinéraires des Cheikhs et des divers courants confériques à différentes époques. Cette géographie historique offre la possibilité même de rétablir les chemins empruntés

dans la quête du savoir. À travers les ouvrages cités, les influences subies par les auteurs de la part de leurs prédécesseurs ou contemporains se font sentir.

John Hunwick, qui a eu le mérite de réussir une telle collecte a su aller trouver la matière là où elle se trouvait, en collaboration avec les spécialistes des différentes régions concernées. Le souci de délimitation géographique fait appel à l'histoire étudiée par zones pour mieux situer les événements et exposer les différents courants religieux qui ont pu orienter les auteurs cités. De ce fait, cet ouvrage présente une histoire religieuse en corrélation avec la biographie des plus éminents écrivains. L'accent est surtout mis sur les grands foyers islamiques, comme Tombouctou, qui ont joui d'une grande réputation dans le passé et ont joué un rôle historique remarquable. C'est un travail de longue haleine qui demande beaucoup de patience. Il s'impose comme la référence qui manquait à la bibliothèque du chercheur dans ce domaine, mais requiert quelques remarques constructives.

À notre avis, il fallait insister sur une présentation plus équilibrée des auteurs. Certains ont pu bénéficier d'une biographie assez développée. Et d'autres, pourtant pas de moindre importance, n'ont pas trouvé la place qu'ils méritaient dans cet ouvrage, ce qui permet d'entrevoir l'une des difficultés de cette entreprise hardie. Il nous semble que le compilateur n'a pas eu l'esprit assez critique car il s'est limité uniquement aux renseignements tirés des documents qui ont été mis à sa disposition. Il aurait pu, dans un souci de rigueur, compléter ces informations pour rendre cet important travail encore plus exhaustif.

Cet ouvrage, bien que méritant d'être complété avec les renseignements disponibles dans le futur, est une source intarissable de documents et un outil indispensable pour tout chercheur, mais aussi pour celui qui aimerait avoir un aperçu des ouvrages relatifs à la civilisation arabo-islamique disponibles dans cette partie de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. La langue est claire et accessible, la transcription des termes arabes simple et harmonisée. À travers les renseignements fournis sur les plans géographique et historique, il serait même possible de tracer une carte des grands foyers d'enseignement arabo-islamique, pour mieux comprendre avec différents schémas, les directions prises par les prosélytes et l'essentiel de leur enseignement. L'œuvre de John Hunwick, encore une fois, est une source intarissable pour la connaissance de la culture arabo-islamique en Afrique en général et pour la littérature africaine d'expression arabe en particulier. C'est un travail de synthèse qui donne une version globale du panorama de la littérature africaine d'expression arabe en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Il mériterait de ce fait d'être traduit en plusieurs langues (arabe, français...) pour une meilleure vulgarisation.

Magubane Zine, 2004, *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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Zine Magubane's *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa* is strikingly original in its quest to understand the complex entanglements of race, class, and gender hierarchies and contradictions that emanate from the capitalist social formations of the two countries that are her focus. Magubane concentrates primarily on how black South African bodies figure in British political and social commentary, however, her argument is strengthened by sustained, critical engagement with the legacy of these ideas as manifest in North America's regimes of New World Slavery.

In her commitment to studying the way race, class, and gender 'intersect' in the scenarios under consideration, Magubane builds upon the program developed by critical feminist scholars, and outlined most famously in Kimberly Crenshaw's 1991 article, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionalist, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women'. Magubane perhaps even follows the argument through to its next step, by showing that studies of race, class, and gender ought to yield powerful insights about the way people are positioned-and position themselves-in social hierarchies. Thus against the impression that one ought to tabulate the different ways members of certain groups are oppressed-a rather bizarre reading of Crenshaw's argument that has unfortunately gained some intellectual currency-this work suggests that we place emphasis on the way people are uniquely situated in a given social formation. This shifts emphasis from the number of social distinctions a person is likely to bear to the special configuration of these identities in different social spaces, geographic locations and moments in time. At times in her argument, though, Magubane partakes of a functionalism that goes against the rather nuanced argument she develops throughout this work. Citing Hortense Spillers, she suggests that black people – and black women in particular – have been so crucial to the way postcolonial and post-Jim Crow economic infrastructure have been arranged that if the black woman did not exist it 'would have to be invented' (Spillers 2000:57, as cited in Magubane 2004:187).

The analytic purchase of this statement is not clear to me. The argument seems to suggest that capitalism could not have developed the way it did without recourse to a certain type of racist symbolism typified by caricatures of black women (as Magubane discusses...). This is undeniably true. But presenting the argument this way runs the risk of communicating that it had to develop this way. This part of the argument is a little difficult to endorse because, as Magubane's work shows, it was the unique combination of actors, institutions and historical processes that shaped the British, South African and American worlds her work illuminates. As she shows us, racism manifests itself in curious and contradictory ways manifest in social phenomena we can comprehend and those we do not. Structuralism slips in to replace history whenever we assume that there could have been no other alternative.

I have taken issue, here, though with Magubane's rhetorical posture. The merits of her work, though, are clear and leave us with a much needed theoretical elaboration – steeped in meticulous historical engagement – of the ways race, class, gender and sexuality not only intersect, but are lived through each other.

References

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