

INTRODUCTION

The articles in this issue may appear too disparate to constitute a "special issue" of Africa Development since, at least judging from the titles, there is no apparent common theme. However, these articles have some important elements in common. The first is their origin. They are all products of a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship programme in which the authors participated and were all initially presented at a conference bringing together the African fellows and their Asian counterparts. The programme known as "Reflection on Development" Programme seeks to enable a small group of "mid-career" African and South East Asian Scholars to undertake basic social and historical analysis of the development experience of their respective regions. This programme of awards with its emphasis on relatively long term scholarship that concentrates on reading, reflection analysis and writing rather than the collection of new data is geared towards enriching a scholar's existing research material and thus avoids the constraints imposed on researches by the "Consultancy Syndrome". In the present conjuncture, where individual survival compels most researchers to seek "consultancies" which are often of limited scope and little analytical value, the opportunity provided by the fellowship can not be underestimated.

The second common thread, as it were, is their reflective character. Although each of the papers is based on some form of "case study" none of the authors shies away from drawing generalizations that are of theoretical import to the African experience as a whole.

The third is thematic and, We believe, symptomatic, of the general concerns of African scholarship. The questions that virtually all the authors touch upon, albeit from different theoretical and ideological perspectives, include power in the process of accumulation, the ubiquitous "crisis", the problems of democracy and peoples rights, the problems of ethnicity, clientalism and nepotism as these impinge or are sustained by the styles of accumulation and exercise of state power.

Fourth is the general awareness of the need to specify the characteristics of the particular context one is analysing in terms of theoretically relevant parameters and the need to avoid mechanical transpositions from other places and other times. Given the widespread tendency to discuss African specificities anecdotally within theoretical perspectives aimed at explaining other situations, this concern for the

specificities of the African experience is important especially if it does not treat the experience of Africa parochially and as sui generis but seeks to enrich and widen theory by locating it within the African context.

Fifth is the point implicit in others but explicitly stated in the paper by Anyang Nyong'o and Mamdani*, namely, the falsity of the approaches that attribute the authoritarianism of African regimes to vague cultural and historical determinations within African society - i.e. modernization theory and the current resurgence of cultural determinism which attribute contemporary socio-political structures to long-range socio-cultural determinism of pre-industrial tradition, pre-industrial ideological continuities, absence of a liberal political culture etc...

The papers show that in the presence of rapacious type of states there emerges a need for patrons who act as mediators between the community and the formal institutions (i.e. the legal and bureaucratic apparatus of the state) and argue that "patronage", "clientelism", that is the gamut of networks of clientelistic relationships and all the nuances of informal channels of political control are relationships between different classes and are based on economic exploitation and political domination. These relationships may be clad in traditional gear but their existence and content are responses to exigencies of contemporary society rather than simple and unfortunate remnants of Africa's past. Unlike the conventional view which overemphasizes patronage as an ideology based on elements of reciprocity - Mamdani and in passing Nyong'o show the character of moral and physical violence embedded within these relationships in situation where the process of social differentiation is underway.

The final element of commonality is the position that the authors assume with respect to "internal" versus "external" determinants of Africa's crisis. In the literature on African underdevelopment it is customary to group the various schools under the rubrics "externalists" and "internalist". While the former stress external causes of Africa's underdevelopment (the world system, dependency, imperialism) the latter lay emphasis on the internal determinants of underdevelopment (class, primordial relations, personal rule, policy blunders, corruption). The authors in this collection are not bound by this polarity. Instead each of them brings out both the internal and external factors as they impinge on the object of their analysis. Although the collection is not a sample of all research tendencies in Africa, it does point to the errors of such generalizations about

African scholarships as: "Indeed, external determination remains the dominant perspective among Africa's nationalist, radical and progressive theorists"¹.

Africa's Past and Governance

History weighs heavily on Africa's present. The roots of the present crisis stretch back into Africa's past. This much is widely accepted except by a rather strange ideological alliance of the right and "warrantee" radicals who consider reference to the past as either "blame-the-colonialist" escapism or as "chip-on-the-shoulder" nationalist reaction by Africans. Ekeh's reflection on the African predicament is a direct critique of the tendency to discuss Africa through highly generalized classificatory categories. The author argues that Africa has its unique development problems which can be better understood not by comparing the Africa experience with those of other underdeveloped regions but with those of Western Europe and other developed regions.

Ekeh advances a methodological approach which builds on the notion of "unit ideas" which include (i) epochs as benchmarks of development, (ii) threshold problems of development as growth crises, (iii) the environment and the historical moment of development, (iv) reciprocity and exploitation in the development process, and (v) the end product of development.

"Epochs" are benchmarks which emerge at points of time and history of nations and civilisations and which continue to influence thoughts and actions long after their occurrence. For Africa he identifies slavery and colonialism as backwash epochs which hinder development years after their formal abolition. In the process of development, an inherently crisis-ridden process, society must seek to resolve four "threshold problems": (a) the integration and differentiation of state and society; (b) the hegemonisation of society; (c) the development of the self and (d) the management of culture and civilisation. In Africa these problems remain unresolved.

Unlike Europe, Africa must resolve these problems within a short span of time. The current environment and the historical moment of development defines parameters of national development. Contrary to the past where nations would opt to remain isolated or insulated, the current environment of internationalization limits the options open to national economies. Such an internationalization negates the notion of mutual reciprocity between multinational units and chances

exploitative relationships, with serious consequences on development efforts. In this context Africa remains the most exposed of all regions to outside influences hence the need for regional cooperation.

Eke's preoccupation is with hegemonisation of society and with governance, or rather, the seeming ungovernability of African society and his quest for order and the need for a strong state and an appropriately structured civil society tailored to ensure "stability" are far from unproblematic. They bare the inherent danger of being anti-democratic. While for the other authors a "strong state" is problematic, for Eke it is simply desirable and the fundamental problem is then to identify both the historical and current hindrances for the emergence of such a strong state. It is in light of this preoccupation that the African civil society appears as a pathological case lacking in discipline and definitely not facilitating the exercise of state power.

The problem of governance is placed largely on the governed. From this perspective, Eke can, for instance, point to the failure of African intellectuals to serve the state and their maintenance of a critical distance from the state as one example of this pathology. For the other authors in this issue who touch upon the problems of the state and civil society, the main concern is with the democratization rather than the strengthening of state structures.

Presidentialism and the state

Although Anyang Nyongo's study addresses the question of governance and the state, his research problem is authoritarian "stability" and the socio-economic and political forces that go into creating such a state structure. Presidentialism is a dominant feature of African politics. In the immediate post-independence years such presidentialism was said to be essential to the charisma of the leadership which would steer the new nations towards development. Today, presidentialism is viewed as increasingly problematic. It is said to account for the sad state of affairs in most African countries by introducing elements of arbitrariness, patrimonialism and corruption.

The dominant explanatory framework for the rise of presidentialism is the personalist paradigm a mode of interpreting political change which reduces issues to personality and culture. Hence, accounts of one president being "prince", one "prophet" another "tyrant" etc to use Jackson's and Rosbergs subtitle to a book on personal rule in Africa². However, how one society is saddled with

one ideal type and not another remains a speculative exercise.

Anyang Nyong'o seeks to place presidentialism within a historically specific context in which presidentialism is associated with an increasingly problematic accumulation process, demobilisation of the masses and the ascendancy of the repressive apparatus of the state. The author underlines the sociological context of political leadership. Whatever the ambitions and political acumen of the individual, the eventual success of the individual depends on his/her ability to recognise, use, cajole or even manipulate social forces. Similarly, social forces, as concrete historical actors, organised or otherwise, seek to further their interests through the careers of individuals. In the final analysis, the changing fortunes of individuals are shaped by the changing balance of social forces.

In the specific case of Kenya, the authoritarian president merged and developed as an apparatus of state power and was reflective of the manner in which political power was evolving and being organised in society. Kenya became independent not with a dominant ruling party at the top but within a winning coalition of nationalist organisations forming a government. The lack of a hegemonic organisation of the ruling bourgeoisie which could control the destiny of the nationalist movement led to factional rivalries where each faction struggled to dominate the others through influence and organisations. Hence, the real political power of the bourgeoisie became directly associated by both imagery and actual deeds with the presidency. As the incumbent president daily arbitrated among feuding factions of the bourgeoisie and mediated between them and the masses, the presidency gained autonomy over almost all bourgeois factions within Kenya society and became the repository of power. One could not help wonder how would one explain the rise of presidentialism in other countries which became independent with a dominant ruling party at the top?

The particular model of accumulation generated tensions that could only lead to greater concentration of power. Throughout the 1960's the Kenyan economy expanded rapidly, enhancing the legitimacy of the Kenyatta regime, despite growing social inequities. At the same time autonomous popular movements such as trade unions and parties were banned or demobilised. Instead, the state relied on manipulative "mobilisation" of the masses through the ideology of "Harambee", which elicited popular contributions to national-building through voluntary labour for various social projects.

The economic crunch that came with the world crisis underscored

the the great social divide engendered by the chosen accumulation model. In the absence of a hegemonic political party, the state was the only organised force in society that the bourgeoisie could use when faced with crisis. As most powers of the state had been progressively concentrated in the office of the president, the response to the crisis is a further accrual of power to the presidential authority.

Agrarian crisis and democracy

Africa is under the throes of its worst agrarian crisis in years. While virtually all other continents have increased their per capita food availability and their shares in the world market for tropical crops, Africa has seen both its food and export production decline. Capitalist economies both in the developed and underdeveloped countries have increased their agriculture output through increased subsumption of the labour process by capital itself. Why has Africa not achieved similar results? Mamdani argues, the question productivity cannot be understood or solved through an approach that focuses on relations of exchange.

In Africa agricultural stagnation and involution continue to pose a major interpretative problem. Much of the current analysis of the agrarian crisis is by implicit or explicit analogy to experiences in other developing countries. In some cases it is simply stated that Africa has certain "advantages" over other areas (e.g. better man-land ratios than Asia, more equitable distribution of land than Latin America etc). In others the "advantages" are listed as disadvantages. Access to land by the peasantry blocks capitalism since an "uncaptured" peasantry wreaks havoc on all state endeavours to promote modern capitalist farming.

Mamdani's point of departure is that such analogies are misleading. This is particularly the case with the fixation on land ownership as the only major explanatory factor of forms of exploitation, a fixation which fails to explain why the peasantry enters into exploitative relations even in situation where access to land is not a problem. Mamdani argues that social differentiation proceeds by multiple routes that are historically and socially specific. That is, the differentiation of the peasantry develops as a result of differentiation in any of the elements of the labour process land, labor or its implement. In Africa, the peasantry is faced with two forms of exploitative relations. There are the "voluntary relations" entered into as a result of objective factors faced by different strata, underlining the difference internal to the peasantry either because of unequal access to land or to implements of

labour. This constitutes the stuff of petty exploitation. Mamdani stresses that for Africa at least access to land is not sufficient to shield the peasantry from relations of exploitation that are "voluntarily" entered into by the peasantry. The distribution of other means of production is uneven and therefore exerts pressures on the "implement poor" peasants to seek sources of livelihood by selling their labour.

The result of "voluntary" unequal relations is a path of accumulation "from below", through peasant differentiation as one stratum enriches itself at the expense of another, giving rise to a village bourgeoisie out of the ranks of the rich peasantry. In the African case, the process of accumulation is eclipsed by a path of accumulation from above which requires extra economic coercion. At the origin of this path is political connection. Surplus expropriation emerges not through direct control of the process of production but through political expropriation sustained by the extra-economic coercion of the peasantry.

In the case of labour, it could be extracted in multiple forms, openly as wage labour or disguised as communal labour and it is these sets of controls over labour which are key to understanding low productivity. In cases where these processes prevail, the state assumes entirely different roles from those paths of accumulation based on the internal dynamics of peasant differentiation. First, to the extent that political connection is the basis of surplus accumulation, political struggles assume a life and death character, blocking the emergence of even bourgeois democracy.

Clearly democratisation in Africa does not hinge on "land reform" measures to ensure access to land of the peasantry but demands the dismantling of the regime of extra economic coercion that weighs so heavily on the peasantry.

Gender and demographic change

The theoretically central issue of access, control and use of resources is also the focus of Milimo's study which provides an analysis of the relationship of women to productive resources from a historical perspective and underlines the impact of such relationship on demography. Taking issue with the view that sees women as the main cause of the population and food problem, the author argues that women are in fact the key to the solution of both the food and population problem. In the specific case of Africa, current efforts such as birth control measures per se neither guarantee the solution to

accelerated population growth nor that of the food crisis.

In the diagnosis of the current food crisis and so-called population crisis, social scientists have started looking at gender inequality as one of the key explanatory factors. Conventional development theory perceives population growth as the major obstacle to economic growth and relatedly the fundamental cause of the present food crisis. Critics of this approach have convincingly argued that over-population is not a matter of too many people but of unequal distribution of resources. To appreciate the real significance of this argument however, analysts have to examine gender stratification system with equal rigour as that of social differentiation. Similarly, the established practice where broad scale comparisons that spanned enormous variations in cultural traditions levels of development and type of kinship organization have been found to be hence, the need for studying concrete socio-historical situation.

Until recently demographic studies viewed women's role as an isolated topic rather than one which is central to the mainstream theories of reproductive change. Similarly, studies of food production, Milimo argues have suffered major drawbacks from the failure to recognize the actual and potential role of women in agricultural production.

Milimo points out that the historical roots of the food and population problem include the interrelated processes of women's loss of access to productive resources and the concomitant growth of patriarchy as a result of socio-economic transformations under colonialism. Of these, the most significant were changes in land tenure, introduction of cash crops and the migratory labour system. In turn, all of these brought about changes in the sexual division of labour and resulted in undermining the subsistence sector of which women were now in charge. These situations have only worsened in post colonial Africa.

Male migration and cash cropping transformed the labour needs and the allocation of household labour to these various tasks. Women's work load increased as they had to undertake both productive and reproductive tasks. Thus the need for child labour implying maintaining high fertility levels. Related factors contributing to high fertility rates include early marriage, polygamy, lack of education and the persistence of cultural and traditional practices which emphasize fecundity.

The failure to take account of the various implications of the gender division of labor is a major stumbling block in the current search for food self-sufficiency in Africa. The study concludes with a call for structural changes aimed at removing patriarchy and thereby ensuring egalitarian access to and control of productive resources as well as equal access to education and training. Such measures, it is argued would lower fertility rates and increase productivity by reducing women's workload and the importance of children's labour. However, contrary to the dichotomy presented in the study between feminists and marxist, the conceptualization of patriarchy, how it originates, is maintained and how it changes is much more complex and highly controversial even among feminists. The consensus among feminists is that any theoretical account of social relations that omits gender relations can only provide partial answers to fundamental problems like the food crisis or demographic change.

Migration and human rights

The extent of migration and the rapidity of migratory patterns in West Africa is probably most clearly demonstrated by the changing roles of Nigeria and Ghana in the last 15 years or so. In "rational choice" models such movements are a reflection of the individual's perception of the gap between their current incomes and their expected incomes (measured as product of real wages and the probability of obtaining gainful employment) in regions of emigration. Little is said about the structural forces that generate and sustain those income differentials and the expectations of the individual migrant. Yeboah's emphasis is on the structural-historical determinants of uneven spatial development within which the individual "choices" are made.

What emerges is a context in which the basis of individual migrant's choice is precarious being subject to uncertain economic and political conjunctures, the whims of unstable states and various forms of national chauvinism often whipped up by beleaguered states.

Large-scale migration has been based on an extremely fragile economic basis given the nature of labour markets in West Africa. With perhaps the exception of Ivory Coast in no country of the region does one find a ruling class that is structurally and functionally linked to the productive exigencies of the economy nor one whose relation to production is strong enough to persuade it to mobilise the state apparatus for direct access to cheap labour. In addition there is no regional project of accumulation which would provide regional rationale to the movement of labour. Consequently

and in contrast to the tightly managed migration patterns of Southern Africa, migration in West Africa is spontaneous and "illegal" from the point of view of virtually all sections of the population of the country of migration. It is not surprising that in a number of cases the expulsion of cheap labour is spearheaded by the state.

A second source of the fragility of the basis for migration is political. This is a result of the transformation of colonial space which was regional in character to a much narrower notion of national space. Under colonial rule it was the French, the British who determined the space over which migrants would travel "freely" (i.e. without passports and foreign currency restrictions). The particular chauvinistic responses of indigenous populations against migrant labour received little hearing from the colonial state except in so far as it was a useful tool in the "divide and rule" politics of colonial rule. With independence, nationhood has bred a plethora of restrictions on the legal movements of individuals and commodities.

Various attempts at regional cooperation have not replaced the regional colonial space with a pan-African one. This is partly because African efforts at integration have been highly depoliticised and reduced to state-centred integration efforts which go hand in hand with denial of legal, political and civil rights of citizens from other African countries. It is therefore not surprising to witness the expulsion of migrants from member states of ECOWAS in a manner that contracts the spirit if not the letter of ECOWAS. Millions of Africans are forced to move from one country to another under the most inhuman conditions while heads of state propound on African unity and regional integration.

Given the poor economic and political foundations for migration, any sign of crisis unleashes all kinds of chauvinistic responses from states which are anxious to find a scapegoat and to conceal the systemic origins of the crisis.

Creating writing and social change

African creative writing has focussed on the problems and prospects of change. And in this it has often demonstrated greater prescience in its diagnosis of societal problems. Indeed some of the most insightful analyses of African society is to be found in creative writing than in social analysis. It is also interesting to note that

themes which have currently become of great concern to African social scientists as exemplified by collection's of articles in this volume have been themes which African novelists and poets have been concerned with since the immediate post colonial period. Just to cite a handful, it was in African novels such as Sembène Ousmane's Novel, **Les bouts de bois de Dieu (1960)** that themes such as the plight of workers and solidarity among the appressed, were dealt with. As for the hardships and dilemma of urbanization these were covered in works such as Mongo Beti's **Ville cruelle** which appeared as far back as 1954. Similarly themes such as authoritarianism, corruption and bureaucratization were already the focus of novels such as Soyinka's **Kongi's Harvest**. It was also in the sixties and earlier that African novelists began to address the issue of gender conflicts and solidarity as exemplified by Okotop' Bitek's, **Song of Lawino**.

In this article, Mnthali traces portrayals of social change in African literature. Reflective of its central concern for social relevance, African literature has gone through a number of phases which closely parallel changes in political thought and concomitant economic concerns.

The phase of identity - this phase which included variants of negritude and its derivatives such as black power authenticity and black consciousness came to an end with Fanon's warning of the pernicious glorification of the African past as opposed to the challenge of "rehabilitation of a future national culture".

The phase of protest and conflict - with dominant themes such as heroism and solidarity, this phase dramatized moments in the struggle against colonialism with landscapes which were populated by traitors, cowards and the survivors of the struggle who were beset with numerous disappointments. What did change points Mnthali "is history as well as the parameters within which further changes could be realized". Not surprisingly, the third phase was,

The phase of disillusionment - It is here that we find dominant themes such as the corroding and corrupting effect of power and wealth among the elites in post independence Africa. These themes and the concomitant disillusionment were captured even in titles of monumental works such as Ayi Kwei Armah's **The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born** and Ngugi's **Devil on the Cross** and **Petals of Blood**.

The phase of exhortation and satire - In terms of literary craftsmanship, this phase marks a shift from rhetoric to involvement with dominant themes focusing on revolution and/or satire which tend to combine a call to arms with "a devastating mockery of the present". This phase marks, the writer's active participation in and society's recognition of the writer's voice in the struggles and debates concerning change and development.

A careful analysis of this phases, underlines Mnthali, helps us unravel the unspoken paradigm and thus the formative value that literature embodies. Behind literature's apparent negation lie certain affirmation. What then are the "energising principle" of writers, that is the cluster of resources, skills and tensions from which creative energy radiates?

Through the use of "semiotic constants" to denote the recurrence of clusters of symbols, imagery, situations and tensions in the works of a single author Mnthali interpretes the social visions in the works of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Having isolated, the central concept utilized by each writer, he conveyes the collective impression left on the reader from the ensemble of metaphoric resources utilized by African writers . One of the distinct characteristics of African literature is its concealment of meaning beneath symbols and conveying a multiplicity of meaning through a single piece of imaginery reality.

For Achebe, the central concept is "wisdom" the underlying social dilemmas accompanying a changing world: bewilderment, cynisism resulting from the corruption and moral turpitude and lack of accountability. In the face of these changes, Achebe emphasize the need to balance between retaining the best of one's culture and the reception of a new age. Ngugi's central concept is "land" and traces the process of landlessness, the hopes of rebuilding, the use and abuses of the land symbolizing the use and abuse of capital and warns against perpetuating colonialism through alienation of land and accentuating social differentiation.

The current phase of African literature with its powerful and enigmatic metaphor would tend to indicate a shift towards the further development of critical aesthetics, the risks of which have meant repression and exile for many outstanding African creative writers. It

is to be hoped that African creative writers will continue to combine their literacy production with critical reflections on the significance and meaning of their work, a heritage which ought to be more widely practised by African social scientists.

The papers in this issue cover a wide range of issues from different perspectives. It would be surprising if such a collection of "reflective" papers did not provoke some reaction. Comments on these articles are welcome in the pages of *Africa Development*.

T. Mkandawire
Zenebeworke Tadesse

Dakar, June 1987.

Notes:

* This article was originally written in English. The English version has recently been published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol.14, N°2, January 1987. We will also be happy to send photocopies of the English version for readers who request for its.

1. Paul Lubeck "The African Bourgeoisie: Debates, Methods, and Units of Analysis", Paul Lubeck (ed.) *The African Bourgeoisie: Capitalist development in Nigeria, Kenya and the Ivory Coast* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987).

2. Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg *Personal rule in Black Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California press, 1982).