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Centring the Margins: Fifty Years of African Border Studies

ANTHONY I. ASIWAJU

Un dialogue politique pour l'Afrique

SIDI MOHAMMED MOHAMMEDI

'Saving Africa From Dangerous Ideas'

MUTUMA RUTEERE

Réflexion(s) sur l'architecture et l'urbanisme en Algérie :
de la période coloniale à nos jours

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dans l'espace public

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Les articles critiques et essais devront être des contributions originales : elles ne devront avoir fait l'objet d'aucune autre publication avant d'avoir été proposées, pas plus qu'elles ne pourraient être prises en considération pour d'autres publications au même moment.

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Global Context

The inherently interdisciplinary and comparative nature of studies of borders of modern states, which are offshoots of the Westphalian system, has led to their broad categorization into 'traditional' and 'modern' border studies. Raimondo Strassoldo, a leading scholar and pioneer of border studies in Europe, would appear to have appropriately captured this distinction when he described the latter vis-a-vis the former in terms of 'a new emphasis on the socio-economic aspects; focused on the integrative rather than conflictual processes; and on problems of border people instead of the nation-states; ... instigated by local authorities and European organisations rather than national governments... [and] more than the traditional ones ... policy-oriented'¹. The 'traditional', based on a state-centric vision of the border, is typically explored within frameworks of such established disciplines as History, Geography, Political Science, Economics and Law. On the other hand, in 'modern border studies', popularized as 'Borderlands Studies' by North American experts who initially concentrated on the most spectacular, i.e. the U.S-Mexico border ('Where North Meets South')², the focus is on the border in its local setting. In contradistinction to 'traditional border studies', borderlands studies is the domain of local and comparative historians, regional geographers and economists, ethnographers, sociologists, anthropologists, epidemiologists, environmental engineers and regional planners.

In North America and Western Europe, the field, especially in its 'modern' edition as 'Borderlands Studies', has attracted the sustained attention of scholars and researchers. A veritable avalanche of scientific literature has been generated, and is still rapidly being generated, as to warrant its emergence in the mid-1970s as a distinct area of academic specialization to be taught and researched at tertiary level, most prominently in the numerous universities in border cities of the American Southwest adjoining twin-sister urban centres in the territorially adjacent Northern Mexico. Border and Borderlands Studies also became famous in Europe, where the driving force was their demonstrable relevance to the twin policies of trans-border cooperation and special development focus on European border regions as cornerstones of the European integration process. Both in North America and Europe, many specialized research establishments (Centres, Institutes and Programmes) were also created and lavishly funded.³ Nothing illustrates better the intellectual maturing of 'modern' border studies in North America than the creation in 1976 of the US-based Association of Borderlands Scholars, later renamed Association of Borderlands Studies (ABS), now a world-wide learned society in the field, and the launching of its internationally reputed biannual

Centring the Margins: Fifty Years of African Border Studies

Anthony I. Asiwaju

Governance and Border Security in Africa

by Celestine Bassey and Oshita O. Oshita, eds.

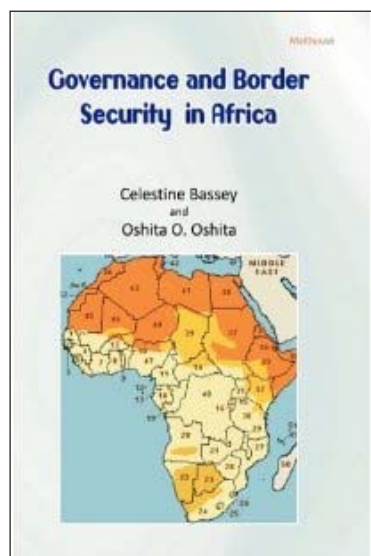
Malthouse Press Ltd for University of Calabar Press (Lagos),
2010, xvii+327 pages

&

Border and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa

by Dereje Feyisa and Markus Hoehne, eds.

James Currey, 2010, xv+205 pages



Journal of Borderlands Studies (JBS) in 1986. A clear pointer to comparable developments in Europe is to be found in a special issue of *JBS* co-edited by Joachim Blatter and Norris Clement⁴, to say nothing about the European Community Studies Association, which embraces members whose works are about commitment to the ideal of 'Europe Without Frontiers'.

African Contributions

The publication of the two co-edited volumes under review in 2010, the Golden Jubilee Year of African Independences, provides perhaps the most opportune moment to engage in a reflection aimed not only at commenting on these two works but also using them as an appropriate platform for a critical review of African border scholarly literature and the contributions that have been made to the development of border and borderlands studies in the continent and globally.

The two publications provide typical illustrations of the range of contributions which African and Africanist scholars have made and are continuing to make to both border and borderlands studies and the blurring of the distinction or boundary between the two. The first, *Governance and Border Security in Africa*, as the title clearly denotes, is written from a statist perspective and is co-edited by two of Nigeria's brightest political scientists with shared experiences as teachers at the University of Calabar, South-South Nigeria. Both of them later became members of the faculty of two of the nation's high-profile government establishments: Bassey, during a

sabbatical leave, as Directing Staff at the African Centre for Strategic Research and Studies of the National Defence College; and Oshita, for sometime now, as the Director of Research and Policy Analysis of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, both in Abuja. As expected, the twenty-three chapters of the book are all contributions to the general theme of the border as a risk factor to peace and state security: Part I (consisting of four chapters) addresses 'policy and institutional context'; Part II (six chapters) is focussed on 'Conflict Development and Management'; Part III, the largest section of the book, is made up of the remaining thirteen chapters and is devoted to the discussion of different aspects of 'border security management regimes'.

On the other hand, the second book, *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa*, places a refreshing emphasis on the localized impacts of the border and explores the borderlands as *sui generis*. The book bears the stamp of unmistakable originality in the nine constituent substantive essays on the various strategies by which borderland communities (opportunistic nationalists, irredentists, separatists and unionists, cross-border alliance seekers and regionalists, rebels and smugglers) explore and exploit the border in their diverse contexts and situations not just to survive but even to flourish economically, socially, culturally and politically. Of particular fascination is the way different transborder peoples across same borders (e.g. the Anywaa and the Nuer astride the Ethio-Sudanese border) play distinctly different games around the issue of national identity vis-a-vis kith and kin on the other side of the boundary (pp.27-44).

Unlike the co-editors of *Governance and Border Security in Africa*, civil servants and establishment scholars, so to speak, Dereje Feyisa and Markus Hoehne, the co-editors of *Borders and Borderlands as Resources*, are seasoned social anthropologists. The first is an Ethiopian scholar and author of a distinguished

doctoral dissertation on the colonially partitioned Anywaa and Nuer in the Ethiopian Gambella region on the western border with Sudan, already revised for publication as *Playing Different Games: Paradoxes of Anywaa and Nuer Identification Strategies in Gambella, Ethiopia*. The other is a German Africanist with research experience on issues of identity and conflict in northern Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland) and a Ph.D candidate in the famous Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale (Germany), where Dereje Feyisa was a Research Fellow. While the editors and contributors to *Governance and Border Security* tend to have a general fixation on the State and related security and development concerns, their counterparts in *Borders and Borderlands as Resources* have their eyes focused on the peoples and their ears close to the ground in the various border localities.

In spite of these distinctions, however, the two publications provide pointers to the danger of over-drawing the contrasts between 'traditional' and 'modern' border studies. The concerns for state in the one and for the people in the other are matters of differing emphases, indicating that the contrasts in the realities being confronted by experts working within the two frameworks are more those of degree than of kind. Thus, for example, though the conceptual or theoretical framework for the one, as brilliantly articulated in the Introduction (XIII - XXVIII) and further elaborated in chapter 2, both by the lead editor (Celestine O. Bessey), emphasizes the over-arching concern for state and cross-border relations between states, there are substantial references to dimensions of localized impacts and roles and functions of borderlands, reflected, for example, in the essay on 'Cross-Border Relations in Africa', included as Chapter 1 (pages 1 - 12) of the book.

Conversely, there is no complete escape in *Borders and Borderlands as Resources* from the fundamentals about borders as installations of sovereign states whose policies, individually or collectively, form the core of the meaning of 'borders and borderlands as resources'. This fact is prominently indicated in the theoretical grounding provided in the particularly insightful 'Analytical Framework' provided by the joint-editors in Chapter 1 (pp. 1-26). In any case, if *Governance and Border Security* dwells primarily on borders as 'risks' to state security, *Borders and Borderlands as Resources* provides the justification by the emphasis on the border as a world unto itself, predisposing the borderlands as asylum to a wide spectrum of frauds and criminal behaviours on account of proximity to a foreign jurisdiction that offers opportunities for quick escape. Smuggling, for example, is the act of disobeying the law of the state in order to obey the more compelling law of economics - problem and solution at the same time! Both border and borderlands studies are of great attraction to states

engaged in regional integration projects, precisely because the success of such projects, in the final analysis, is the answer to the basic policy questions posed by both the border and its borderlands.

One admirable feature common to both these two apparently companion volumes is the balance neatly maintained between theoretical and empirical data and the scholarly introductory discourses by the co-editors in each case, which help readers to situate the presentation of each volume within its wider regional and global contexts. On matters of detail, however, the editors and publishers of *Borders and Borderlands as Resources* would appear to have done a much more skilful job of editing than their counterparts in *Governance and Border Security*. On the whole, these two works illustrate the two interdigitating, though distinct, phases in the evolution of 'border studies' and the manifestations of the visibility of the field as a viable interdiscipline on its own right even in the African continent.

The Last 50 Years

This visibility is evidenced principally in the substantial and steadily growing scholarly literature, antecedent to the two edited volumes under review. The foundation was solidly laid in the rich European archives that emanated from the delimitations and demarcations that followed the infamous era of the European scramble for and partition of Africa at the turn of the 19th Century. As with African historiography in general, the process was initiated by European experts (historians, jurists and political geographers) whose pioneering publications characteristically reflected European imperialist and colonialist rather than indigenous African perspectives. Among these were Sir E. Hertlet's three-volume *Map of Africa by Treaty* (1909), precursor of the late Ian Brownlie's authoritative *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia* (London: C. Hurst and Co. Publishers, 1979); and Sybil E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference, 1884-1885* (London: Longman, Green & Co. 1942), the first comprehensive publication on the conference, surpassed only relatively recently by S. Foster, W.J. Mommsen and R. Robinson (Eds.), *Bismark, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference 1884-1885 and the Onset of Partition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for the German Historical Institute, London, 1988).

By the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when African and Africanist scholars became active, largely in response to the challenges posed by the new sovereignties achieved after independence having to be exercised within the inherently problematic territorial frameworks defined by the colonially arranged boundaries, scholarly focus shifted explicitly to the African boundaries themselves. Accordingly, we enter into the phase of the African perspective marked by a concern for the sovereign African States and the nation-building projects. Archetypical

publications in this regard are, first and foremost, the two pioneer Nigerian case studies based on two doctoral theses, both submitted to the University of London in 1960, by J.C. Anene, a Nigerian historian, and J.R.V. Prescott, an Australian geographer. These were published in their revised editions, respectively in 1970 and 1971, as *The International Boundaries of Nigeria, 1885-1960: Framework of an Emergent African Nation* (London: Longman) and *The Evolution of Nigerian International and Regional Boundaries 1861-1971* (Vancouver: Tantalus Research). A.C. McEwen's *International Boundaries of East Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), published contemporaneously, also grew out of the author's higher degree dissertation. Saadia Touval's *The Boundary Politics of Independent Africa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972) and Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *Les Conflits des Frontieres en Afrique (Etudes et Documents)* (Paris, 1973), followed quickly, one from Political Science and the other from International Law perspective. A critical early warning signal to the essentially multidisciplinary and comparative nature of the field was provided in C.G. Widstrand (Ed.), *African Boundary Problems* (Uppsala: Nordic Institute of African Studies, 1969), which also beamed the searchlight on issues of the borderlands as top research priority.

The emergence of 'modern border studies' or 'borderlands studies' in Africa became perceptible when, in the early 1970s, scholarly works began to appear with emphasis placed on the localized impacts of the boundaries. Here, perhaps, the best known early publications are L.R. Mills, 'The Development of a Frontier Zone and Border Landscape Along the Dahomey-Nigeria Boundary', *The Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 34, June 1973; and A.I. Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule, 1889-1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism* (London: Longman, 1976). The initial focus on the Nigeria-Dahomey (now Benin) borderlands and in the context of comparative studies of localized impacts of French and British colonialism was eventually expanded from the Yoruba to other West African case studies subsequently pooled together and published in 2001 as *West African Transformations: Comparative Impacts of French and British Colonialism* (Lagos/Oxford: Malthouse Press Ltd).

The transformation from comparative study of French and British colonial regimes in West Africa's cross-border areas to Comparative African Borderlands Studies was marked by extensive literature surveys and practical field missions to sample borderlands sites and institutions in Africa, North America (notably the U.S.-Mexico) and Europe, beginning in late 1979 and resulting in several publications, including the edited volume, *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984* (Lagos/

London/New York: University of Lagos Press/ C. Hurst and Co. Publishers and St. Martin's Press, 1984); *Artificial Boundaries* (Lagos: University of Lagos Inaugural Lectures Series, 1984) and *Boundaries and African Integration: Essays in Comparative History and Policy Analysis* (Lagos: PANAF Publishing Incorporated), a book of readings selected from a larger body of writings, mostly chapters in specialised books and articles in journals, published between 1984 and 2003.

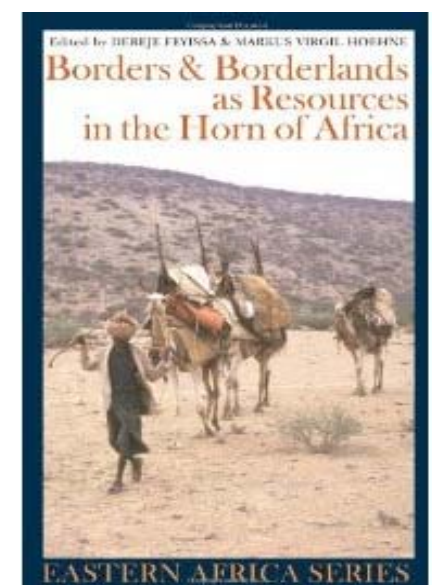
Further propagation of the field of African border and borderlands studies in Nigeria, spearheaded by University of Lagos, led to the organisation of sensitization seminars and conferences as well as the institution of the University's Centre for African Regional Integration and Border Studies (CARIBS). All these developments were marked by special scholarly productions, exemplified by A.I. Asiwaju and P.O. Adeniyi (Eds), *Borderlands in Africa: A Multidisciplinary and Cooperative Focus on Nigeria and West Africa* (University of Lagos Press, 1989). It also included *Borderlands and African Integration* (Lagos: PANAF Publishing Inc. 2008); *Academic Disciplines and Border Studies* (University of Lagos Press, 2007); and *Contemporary Issues on Boundaries and Governance in Nigeria* (Lagos: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005), all edited by R.T. Akinyele, Director of CARIBS since 2004. Equally promotive of borderlands studies are the National Boundary Commission's publications based on the series of bilateral workshops on trans-border cooperation with each of Nigeria's neighbours, organised between 1988 and 1993.

Since the 1980s, there has been a phenomenal expansion in the scholarly literature on Borderlands Studies in Africa, far beyond the limits of the initial productions in Nigeria. Typical in this regard are William F.S. Miles', *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994) and Paul Nugent's *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914* (Legon, Ghana/Oxford/Athens, Ohio: Sub-Saharan Publishers/James Currey/Ohio University Press, 2002). While both books, as explicitly acknowledged by the authors (Miles, 12-16, 61-62, 314-315 and Nugent, pp 4-9, 28), build on the foundations of such existing works as *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule* (1976) and the edited volume *Partitioned Africans* (1984), each has made distinctively original contributions to African borderlands studies.

By the emphasis placed on issues of citizenship and identity, Miles' award-winning work shares analytical interests and concerns with two other equally fascinating contemporary

borderlands scholarly publications, albeit in two other different regions: Peter Sahlin's *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) and the more contemporaneous Oscar J. Martinez's, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994). Miles' own commitment to comparative borderlands studies subsequently led him to primary research work in sites outside Africa, in South Asia and the South Sea, leading to several other admirable scholarly publications, most notably his 'Citizens Without Soil: The French of India (Pondicherry)', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Vol. 13 No.2 1990, pages 250-273), and *Bridging Mental Boundaries in a Postcolonial Microcosm: Identity and Development in Vanuatu* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998). On the other hand, Nugent's more explicit focus on the Ghana-Togo borderlands as a *sui generis*, his supplementary exploration of the anthropological research methodology of a participant observer and his controversial utilitarian thesis about the border as a variable on which the local communities depend for their daily living and socio-economic welfare (e.g. as smugglers!) make the book an attractive model and preferred reference point for the co-editors of *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (pp. 10-13).

Of particular importance to the expansion of scientific literature on Borderlands Studies in Africa in the last half-century or so are the works (mostly by economic geographers, social anthropologists, regional historians and economists as well as criminologists) focusing on cross-border and wider regional flows of persons, goods and services. Typical titles in this genre include John O. Igue and B. Soule, *L'Eta-entrepot au Benin: Commerce informel ou solution à la crise?* (Paris: Karthala, 1992) and Igue's own follow-up volume, *Le Bénin et la mondialisation de l'Economie: Les Limites de l'Integration du Marche* (Karthala, 1999). These geographic studies of cross-border trade in West Africa should be read conjointly with the more theoretically informed anthropological perspective on Zaire in Janet MacGaffee et al, *The Real Economy of Zaire: the Contribution of Smuggling and other Unofficial*



Activities to National Wealth (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) and the expanded case studies in Georges Kobou (Ed.), *Real Economies in Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2003).

In this same sub-category of studies in cross-border trade are the survey series on Eastern and Southern Africa, edited by A.I. Asiwaju and M. de Leeuw and entitled *Border Region Development in Africa: Focus on Eastern and Southern Sub-Regions* (Nairobi: UN Centre for Regional Development Africa Office, 1998). Worthy of special citation is the fascinating essay by Chris Ackello-Ogutu, the Kenyan geographer, entitled 'Informal Cross-Border Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa: Methodological Approaches and Preliminary Result'. Of similar import is Kate Meagher's 'Informal Integration or Economic Subversion? Parallel Trade in West Africa' in R. Laverge (Ed.), *Regional Integration and Cooperation in West Africa: A Multidimensional Perspective* (Trenton, New Jersey/Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 1997). B.M. Barkindo and A. Lipede (Eds), *Human Trafficking and Economic Crimes across Nigeria's International Borders* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2007) illustrates the border security perspective.

This survey of the rapid growth in African border and borderlands studies literature would be incomplete without reference to the contributions by experts in regional science, especially history and geography. The relevant publications include Boubacar Barry's *La Senegambie du XV^e au XIX^e Siècle: Traite négrière, Islam et Conquête Coloniale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988) and, more recently, the strongly border-implied UNESCO-sponsored multi-volume case histories of nation-state problematics in regional integration, under the main title *Les Etats-Nations Face à L'Integration regionale en Afrique de l'Ouest (National-States and the Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa)*, one for each of the fifteen member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), published by Karthala in Paris, which he co-ordinated⁵. Also sponsored by UNESCO under its Culture of Peace Project were the series of regional histories of International Boundaries and Borderlands which, in the case of Africa, has led to the publication of *Des Frontières en Afrique du XII^e au XIX^e Siècle* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), proceedings of an International Symposium held in Bamako, Mali in 1997. Also serving the same purpose of wider regional perspective are books on cross-border relations, on wider regional canvas, such as Momar-Coumba Diop (Ed.), *Le Senegal et Ses Voisins* (Dakar: Societe-Espace-Temps, 1994), Basse E. Ate and Bola A.

Akinternwa (Eds.), *Nigeria and Its Immediate Neighbours* (Lagos: Pumark Nigeria Limited, 1992), Paul Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju (Eds.), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London: Frances Pinter, 1996) and Wilbert Gooneratne and R. Obudho (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in regional Development Policy: Perspectives from Eastern and Southern Africa* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, Ashgate Publishing Company, 1997), notably Section 4 of the four component essays on 'Least Developed Regions and Border Areas', 203-260.

Future Projections

The growth and development of African border and borderlands studies would appear to have peaked with the creation on 13 June 2007 of the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE), following the foundation conference at the University of Edinburgh, U.K, hosted by the institution's Centre of African Studies. The Network embraces researchers and institutions in Africa, Europe and North America, who share long-term interests in all aspects of international boundaries and transborder phenomena in the continent. Though focused on borderlands as physical spaces and social spheres, the Network is also concerned with inter-related regional flows of persons, goods and services as well as socio-economic processes that may be located at some distance from the geographical border.

Since its creation, ABORNE has grown by leaps and bounds. It has held its Annual Conference on a regular basis: Bayreuth, Germany, in 2008; Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2009; Basel, Switzerland, in 2010. The 2011 conference is scheduled for September in Lisbon, Portugal. Each annual conference has focussed on a carefully selected pertinent theme; the Network's membership has expanded spectacularly from the thirteen founding members in Edinburgh in 2007 to over 170 by the last Conference in Basel, members being drawn from Africa, Europe and North America. By 2009, the Network has also secured major funding support from the European Science Foundation, though mainly for members who are nationals of the contributing Member States of the European Union. It says a lot about the quality of the work of the Network members that they have been able to pool together a collection for the first ever African-perspective issue of the internationally reputed *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, entitled *From Empiricism to Theory in African Border Studies* (JBS, vol. 25 No.2, 2010) and guest-edited by David Couplan, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and founding Member of ABORNE.

The evolution of African border studies has, therefore, come a long way in the last fifty years; but the cruising altitude, such as is in evidence in Europe and, especially, North America, is yet to be attained. For example, outside Dominique H. Zidouemba's, *Les Sources de l'Histoire des Frontières de l'Ouest africaine* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions africaines, 1979), there are no specialized bibliographies of the same size and quality available for North America, especially the US-Mexico Borderlands.⁶ Nor is there a standard guide to relevant institutions and organisations, be it at the national, regional or continental level, to assist researchers.⁷ For a model, see Milton H. Jamail and Margo Gutierrez, 1992, *The Border Guide: Institutions and Organizations of the United States-Mexico Borderlands*, revised and updated edition of *The United States-Mexico Border: A Guide to Institutions, Organizations, and Scholars*, Austin, Texas: Centre for Mexican Studies.

Given the magnitude of boundary problems and the grave challenges posed to African peace and development processes, the continent should have been dotted by now with numerous high quality and well resourced specialised research and training institutions. No such development is in evidence. The Centre for African Regional Integration and Border Studies (CARIBS) of the

University of Lagos, Nigeria, the first of its kind in any African tertiary institution, has recently suspended operation. Similarly, the African Regional Institute, Imeko, also in Nigeria, a privately registered research and training outfit with a vision and mission similar to CARIBS, is now faced with challenges of sustainability. The dream for African equivalents of specialised border studies establishments in Europe and North America remains far remote from realisation.

The way to specialized institutionalisation may become clearer if and when the African Union Border Programme Unit, domiciled in the daily bombarded Conflict Management Division of the constantly engaged Department of Peace and Security of the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, is able to carry out a long-standing proposal for an inventory of relevant research and training institutions in Africa and recommend on strategies for improvement. Until such a time, we would have to depend on the kind of heroic efforts of individual scholars, such as those who have put together the edited volumes under review, located in different institutions in which African border and borderlands research interests. These are dispersed rather than consolidated into recognisable centres of excellence, distinctly or as integral parts of larger institutions.

Notes

- 1 R. Strassoldo, 1989, 'The State of the Art in Europe', in A.I. Asiwaju and P.O. Adeniyi, eds., *Borderlands in Africa: A Comparative and Multidisciplinary Focus on Nigeria and West Africa*, Lagos: University of Lagos Press, pp. 383-384.
- 2 Lawrence A. Herzog, 1990, *Where North Meets South: Cities, Space, and Politics on the U.S-Mexico Border*, Austin: Centre for Mexico American Studies.
- 3 Such institutions include the European University Institute, Florence, Italy; the Europa Institute, Edinburgh, U.K.; Institute of International Sociology, Gorizia, Italy; Institute of European Studies, Brussels; European College, Luzanne, Switzerland; and, in North America, the Centre for Inter-American and Border Studies, University of Texas at El Paso; the Albert Utton International Transboundary Resources Centre, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Institute for the Regional Study of the Two Californias, San Diego State University; and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), Tijuana, Baja California, Northern Mexico.
- 4 *European Perspectives on Borderlands*, JBS Special Issue, Vol. XV, No.1 (2000), 293 pages.
- 5 The eleven national case studies already published are Benin, 2006; Mali, Senegal and Niger, 2007; Cape Verde and Burkina Faso, 2008; Ghana, Togo, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, 2009; and Nigeria, 2010.
- 6 Cf. Ellwyn R. Stoddard et al, eds., 1983, *Borderlands Sourcebook: A Guide to the Literature on Northern Mexico and the American Southwest*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, or B.G. Valk, ed., 1988, *Borderline: A Bibliography of the United States-Mexico Borderlands* Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Centre.
- 7 For a model, see Milton H. Jamail and Margo Gutierrez, 1992, *The Border Guide: Institutions and Organizations of the United States-Mexico Borderlands*, revised and updated edition of *The United States-Mexico Border: A Guide to Institutions, Organizations, and Scholars*, Austin, Texas: Centre for Mexican Studies.



In the last two decades, no other ideas have gained the totemic status that 'democracy' and 'human rights' have attained in global and African public policy and political discourses. From Cameroon to Kenya, democracy and human rights were the rallying cries of the 1990s reform movements that have radically reshaped the politics of most African states. While ridiculed and rejected as Western impositions by many African leaders (many of them relics of the Cold War), the indigeneity of the voices for democracy and human rights were never in doubt, particularly among the victims of injustice and misrule in Africa.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that no matter how benign, ideas and concepts are always intertwined with power and the values of their promoters; that, indeed, every idea and concept, and even more so those which speak the language of liberation and freedom, should be subjected to critical analysis. This is the meaning of Issa Shivji's caution, long before the onset of the 'Democracy and Human Rights' in the 1990s, that the idea of human rights in Africa was not politically innocent (Shivji 1989: vii).

We need to dispense with a possible preliminary misconception, however. The approach of this paper is not a rejection of the well intentioned promotion of democracy and human rights in Africa by Western activists, academics or even states. Far from it. Indeed, the work of committed activists and ordinary Westerners who support groups such as Amnesty International can only be applauded. In many places in Africa, pro-democracy and human rights work has gained immensely form grants by Western governments.

However, democracy and human rights are promiscuous concepts, sometimes appropriated by the powerful and recruited for morally problematic causes. Good ideas can also end up serving bad ends when their theoretical deployment is not sufficiently rigorous. That is the problem with the recent work on democracy by Paul Collier, professor of economics at Oxford University. Collier's *Wars, Guns & Votes* is troubling because it takes to a new extreme some of the ideas that have steadily gained currency in international development and humanitarian discussions on Africa and the developing world (Collier 2009a). Collier's focus is what he calls the countries of the 'bottom billion', largely Sub-Saharan Africa and some Asian countries (Collier 2009a: 1). His argument is that these post-colonial countries are structurally insecure and structurally unaccountable. They lack social cohesion as they are too large to be nations and too small to efficiently produce basic goods such as security that are the responsibility of states (Collier 2009a: 9).

In Collier's view, the experimentation with democracy in these countries has failed and '[i]n promoting elections, the rich, liberal democracies have basically missed the point' (Collier 2009a: 49). The elections that the 'international community' has assiduously promoted have merely driven these countries to a cul-de-sac of violence and insecurity that they cannot extricate themselves from. Collier's prescription is, therefore, simple: the international community has

to step in and take on the burden of providing and guaranteeing security for these countries. The international community can do this by investing more in international peacekeeping and intervening militarily. He concludes that the threat of military coups should be used against those leaders who steal elections and jeopardize democracy- what he euphemistically refers to as the harnessing of 'the potent force of domestic violence for good' (Collier 2009a: 231).

Collier's book is important for several reasons. First, its author is a highly regarded international expert on development who is regularly called upon to advise international multilateral institutions that support African development. He is also professor of economics at Oxford University and the Director of the Centre for the Study of African Economies, where he is producing the next generation of experts for Western foreign ministries and for international organizations. What he, therefore, proposes will come to influence events and policies in the developing world.

Second, it is important to address the arguments raised by Collier because they are part of a set of influential ideas on the question of the use of military force by the West for humanitarian purposes in the non-Western world. Because bad ideas have the tendency of contaminating good ones faster than the good ones can cleanse the bad, it is important that we inoculate the good by robustly confronting the bad.

In 2000, a Canadian government-led initiative led to the constitution of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty to examine the dilemma posed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on the international community's response to systematic and widespread human rights violations in the face of state sovereignty. The Commission, co-chaired by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and Special Advisor to UN Secretary General Mohammed Sahnoun coined and popularised the idea of 'Responsibility to Protect' (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001). In their argument, sovereign states have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens against catastrophe. In the event they are unable or unwilling to do so, however, the community of states has the responsibility to provide that protection.

'Saving Africa From Dangerous Ideas'

Mutuma Ruteere

Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places

by Paul Collier

Bodley Head (London), 2009, 255 pages, \$26.99

Most policy and international affairs experts understood that argument to apply to contexts of mass slaughter or genocide, similar to what happened in Rwanda in 1994. In practice, however, the appetite for the use of Western military force to 'do good' in the developing world has been growing with new grounds for 'humanitarian intervention' being promoted in policy think-tanks and academic circles.

What has come to be known as 'humanitarian intervention' gained ascendancy in policy and academic circles in the West following NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999. The failure of the international community to decisively act to prevent the Rwanda genocide in 1994 has also heavily influenced the discussion surrounding the use of military force to 'save strangers' faced with the peril of genocide or mass slaughter.

Filtered through the language of morality and ethics, this new form of humanitarianism rejects any suggestion that it is imperialistic. In fact, Paul Collier, writing in the July/August 2009 issue of the *Boston Review*, has sharply rejected this criticism by fellow economist William Easterly of New York University that his advocacy of military intervention to 'promote democracy' in poor countries is not even 'neo-colonialism', but full-blown and old-fashioned 'colonialism' (Collier 2009b; Easterly 2009).

By speaking in the name of universal humanity, this military humanitarianism has allowed humanitarian and human rights actors, development experts and even old-fashioned empire-builders to find common cause in the use of the weapons of war in "rescuing" others. It has also led to a conceptual shift in the principles of humanitarianism. Where, in the past, the humanitarian movement stressed its neutrality in contexts of armed conflict, certain sections of the humanitarianism movement now advocate the use of military force in the name of humanity. In fact, the earliest advocate of an international 'right to intervene' is Bernard Kouchner, the founder of the charity, Médecins sans Frontières, who is currently the French Foreign Minister.

However, the humanitarian justification advanced by scholars like Paul Collier is not necessarily accepted in those countries where military interventions take place. Certainly, it was not accepted in Iraq, even though some in official Washington and advocacy circles pushed the argument. Having failed to stop the United States from invading Iraq, the UN's attempt to be part of the post-war normalization and reconstruction of the country was seen

by the insurgents as an attempt to legitimize the US military intervention. In 2003, the UN headquarters in Baghdad was attacked and its representative, Sergio Vieira de Mello, was among those killed.

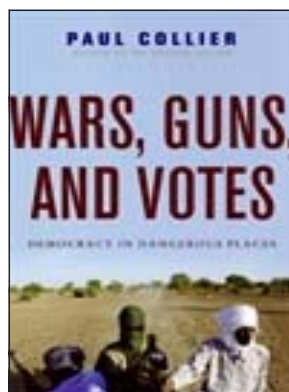
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), universally known as the very symbol of humanitarian neutrality, was also attacked in Iraq in 2003. In his book, *The Humanitarians*, David Forsythe, a leading expert on the ICRC, has pointed out that the ICRC was well known in Iraq, having operated in the country since the days of the Iran-Iraq war (Forsythe 2005). The reason the ICRC was targeted this time was because it was no longer seen as neutral – the consequence of the erosion of the idea of neutral humanitarians. Forsythe notes:

The ICRC was probably attacked for the same reason the UN headquarters had been attacked some weeks earlier, leading to the death of Sergio de Mello, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Iraq, among others. No matter how much the UN or the ICRC might try to signal that they were separate from the US-led coalition forces, for example by not fortifying their in-country headquarters, their work for the Iraqi people dovetailed with US objectives. In working for humane conditions for the Iraqi people, the ICRC inherently contributed to the US strategic objective of a stable Iraq under a new regime. Those carrying out the attacks most likely wanted chaos, disorder, insecurity – at least for a period – to rid the country of foreign occupation before a new pro-western regime was secure. Probably for these same reasons, the head of CARE in Iraq was kidnapped by unknown persons in the fall of 2004 (Forsythe 2005: 99).

Conor Foley, writing in the UK *Guardian* in May 2004, has noted that in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, 'the humanitarian emblems' designed to protect NGOs and other humanitarian actors, are now identified 'as legitimate targets' (Foley 2004). Those who attacked the humanitarian agencies and the United Nations saw them as extensions of the American military mission.

Developments experts and humanitarian actors who continue to assume that their mission in such contexts is not serving the interests of intervening state only delude themselves. At the onset of the war in Afghanistan, the US Secretary of State Collin Powell was clear that he regarded NGOs as subcontractors to the US mission, noting that 'NGOs are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team ... [that we are] all committed to the same, singular purpose to help humankind...' (Brauman and Salignon 2004: 269-70). Even such ardent liberal Western supporters of the war in Iraq such as the Canadian scholar and politician Michael Ignatieff have concluded that the humanitarian governance imposed after intervention is 'imperial because it requires imperial means: garrison troops and foreign civilian administrators, and because it serves imperial interests' (Ignatieff 2003: 59).

Moreover, while the politics of human rights and humanitarian rescue



may be constructed in the language of shared humanity, the western-non-western moral encounters mask what human rights scholar Makau Mutua has called 'a subtext that depicts an epochal context pitting savages, on the one hand, against victims and saviours, on the other.' (Mutua 2001: 201). In this 'savages-victims-saviors' metaphor, the savage is the non-western state or culture, its citizens the victims, with the western states, NGOs, activists and institutions as the savior. The metaphor involves the reduction of those rescued into flat, cardboard figures of object and sympathy, Mutua concludes.

A basic characteristic of the victim is powerlessness, an inability for self defense against the state or culture in question. The usual human rights narrative generally describes victims as hordes of nameless, despairing and dispiriting masses. To the extent that they have a face, it is desolate and pitiful. Many are uneducated, destitute, old and infirm, young, poorly clad, and/or hungry. Many are peasants, the rural and urban poor, marginalized ethnic groups and nationalities, and lower castes, whose very essence is a state of divorce from civilization and a large distance from modernity (Mutua 2001: 229).

Humanitarian intervention coming to the 'rescue' of these powerless people is rarely cast as an arena of power but of morality. Yet 'rescuing' the 'powerless' also constructs the interveners as the 'powerful', the 'good guys' in their own eyes and in the eyes of the victims. It is a morality and power play that precludes any discussions on interests or the historical and political implication of the interveners in the misery of the victims. On this power play, Coustas Douzinas writes:

Pity and a sense of superiority unite humanitarians. The massive pity engineered by humanitarian campaigns supports Western superiority, increases distanciation from its targets and breeds disdain. Pity is addressed by a superior to an inferior, it is the patronizing emotion of looking down at the person pitied. The human rights campaigner as rescuer can become deeply egotistical: he is the one who keeps the world together and, as a bonus, he receives full recognition for his goodness by others from close and afar (Douzinas 2007: 75).

Most arguments for military intervention to solve the problems of bad governance in Africa and other parts of the developing world are often predicated on a stunning disregard for the complex politics of nation-building. Keen to convince a skeptical official West to intervene, most of the interventionists like Paul Collier reduce the complex political dynamics of African conflicts into simple morality tales of good versus evil.

With regard to the 2007 contentious Kenyan elections, Collier concludes that the evil of ethnicity inevitably led 98 per cent of the Luo to vote for their ethnic kin, Raila Odinga (now Prime Minister in the coalition government), and likewise the Kikuyu to vote for incumbent Mwai Kibaki (now President) to a person. In his view, if of all African countries, Kenya could not hold credible elections, not much should be expected of the rest of Africa (Collier 2009a: 203) Collier is not

alone in viewing ethnicity as Africa's destiny. Many analysts share the view that ethnicity is the basic identity of most Africans and not the nation-state. This reasoning often ignores the fact that the ethnic group in its political understanding in Africa is to a considerable extent a product of the modern African state; that, for most Africans, the most relevant social and cultural unit outside the family is likely to be the clan rather than the ethnic group. Ethnic groups gain relevance when they are recruited for political exclusion or competition for access to state resources. In other words, ethnicity is actually a consequence rather than the cause of such political behaviour as voting.

The weakness here is that ethnicity is really a description and less of an explanation. While a commendable attempt to link academic analysis to policy, Collier's policy prescriptions rest on rather shaky theoretical premises. The Western donor support to the democratic enterprise in Africa and other developing countries does not necessarily yield positive results. This point has been eloquently argued by William Easterly, a former World Bank economist. According to Easterly, Western aid 'doesn't have a great record on improving matters, on making governments do the "right" thing' (Easterly 2006: 128). To succeed, democracy should not be imagined externally, as Collier does.

The argument here is not that there can never be grounds for outsiders to intervene in African countries to avert genocide or mass slaughter. The thinking informing the International Commission that popularised the 'responsibility to protect' is sound. African states have also gained important expertise and experience in creatively addressing war and violence on the continent. Unfortunately, there is often a knee-jerk attempt to ignore or underplay the achievements by the African Union and other regional efforts in responding to African crises. Paul Collier, for instance, suggests that the British intervention in Sierra Leone war is the model for what the West can do for Africa, but ignores the intervention by Nigeria which for almost a decade committed its forces and resources to avert complete collapse in both Sierra Leone and Liberia. Likewise, he makes no mention of the South Africa-led Southern Africa Development Community's intervention in Lesotho in 1998 to reverse a military coup. Of course, long before humanitarian intervention became fashionable concept, Tanzania had sent its military into Uganda in 1978 to stem Idi Amin's reign of terror.

In fact, regional states have shown greater willingness to put their soldiers at risk whenever they intervene militarily or undertake peacekeeping activities (Adebajo 2002). In his book, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, General Romeo Dallaire, who was commander of the UN Mission in Rwanda at the time of the 1994 genocide, notes that his best troops were the Ghanaians and the Tunisians (Dallaire 2003).

Since the argument of interventionists such as Paul Collier stands on a premise of an Africa that is incapable of solving its problems, they tend to ignore whatever progress Africa and the developing world has made. Economist

Edward Miguel of University of California at Berkeley concludes that Collier's 'premise that the poorest countries cannot grow ignores a decade of modest successes' (Miguel 2009). To study Africa as though everything about its history is an unbroken catastrophe is not useful to African struggles for better governance, development and human rights. Surely, the democratizations struggles of the 20th Century are important indigenous developments. If Tanzania managed to forge a nation out of a diversity of its peoples, on what credible basis can one conclude that Africa's diversity is its curse?

To prescribe the threat of military coups as a tool for enhancing good governance in Africa, as Paul Collier suggests, is to return the developing world to a past it is still struggling to free itself from. The military coup as a means of ascending into power is now discredited in Africa. The African Union has been emphatic on this. It is not a solution to disputed elections in Zimbabwe, Kenya or elsewhere. After the contentious 2000 presidential elections, the United States had to reach into the recesses of its own systems and institutions to rectify that problem. Curiously, Paul Collier is silent on whether a military coup should have been encouraged in the United States in

2000, as he proposes for cases such as Kenya's 2007 elections. William Easterly makes the point succinctly. The West should not 'reward bad governments by working through them, but don't try to boss them around or overthrow them either' (Easterly 2006: 138). Between 2003 and 2009, Benin, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia all held successful and peaceful elections judged as free and fair by most observers. This point appears to be lost in Collier's analysis.

The ascendancy of the discourse on security which is often collapsed into development, as Collier does in his work, should also concern Africans and others in the developing world. While it is important to view security as a right that the state should guarantee, security is not the basis for all rights. The temptation to 'securitize rights' – to view all other rights and social needs through the lens of security – should be treated with caution (Lazarous and Goold 2007). Otherwise, in the name of 'providing security', the developing world and Africa in particular will have opened itself up for military adventurism. States still act in their selfish interests in international affairs. Pure humanitarian motive is a good idea, but to act as though that idea is the reality is very unwise.

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Note

- 1 The bulk of the writing of this review was undertaken when I was a National Research Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Centre of Criminology, University of Cape Town, between July and December 2009. My thanks to the NRF South African Research Chair in African Security and Justice for financial support and to the UCT Centre of Criminology for providing an enriching intellectual environment. Thanks also to Mikewa Ogada for editing and important comments.



It is with a dose of nostalgia that one recalls the halcyon days when the voices of African scholars resonated in debates about the currents and trends that shaped the different prisms through which Africa was viewed. Refreshing but critical appraisals were offered in an intellectual mix that was mostly dominated by a hegemonic epistemology originating in the West, primarily in the United States, France, and Britain. The terms of contestation often evolved around how, if anything, western scholarship shared in the ex post facto complicity that helped to entrench the 'curse of Berlin', which originated in that infamous conference of fourteen European powers in 1884-1885 presided over by the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and which carved the continent into enclaves for colonial annexation. For instance, the post-war British school of social anthropology led by scholars such as E.E. Evans-Pritchard, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Meyer Fortes, and Max Gluckman provided a rich vein of field-work that informed the Colonial Office's methodology of indirect rule. Rooted in the ethos of Berlin's political alchemy and ideological sophistry that concocted the subtle poison of colonialism in Africa, they very much legitimised a political economy of accumulation, extraction, and control in the same manner as their French structuralist counterparts did with the policy of *assimilation*.

However, amid Africa's decaying post-colonial research, publishing, and academic infrastructure there emerged the Kenyan-born Ali Mazrui, who was trained in the best of British traditions at Manchester and Oxford with, sandwiched in between there, a post-graduate exposure to the United States at Columbia University. No sooner had his professional career taken off than he was hounded out of Uganda's Makerere University by Idi Amin's repressive and idiosyncratic rule. Mazrui then found refuge in American universities and, despite the physical displacement, never lost his organic connection to the continent. With these as formative experiences, he became a leading exponent of a different interpretation of Africa that examined the complex matrix of domestic and international contextual factors that conspired to either reinforce the status quo or were the harbingers of change on the continent. This found its apotheosis in his nine-part documentary, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. Above all, Mazrui challenged established political, cultural, and intellectual orthodoxies so much so that his work is an amalgam of cogent scholarship, irreverent iconoclasm, and sardonic polemics with its own panoply of devoted adherents and acerbic detractors. This is the hallmark of an expansive canon that defines Mazruiana; indeed, an annotated bibliography published by the Foundation for Global Dialogue in 1999 has close to one thousand entries.

It is no small wonder then that Adebajo dedicates this book to Mazrui, whom he describes as the '...foremost

Africa's Triple Quest

Garth Le Pere

The Curse of Berlin: Africa after the Cold War

by Adekeye Adebajo

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Prophet of Pax Africana and the undisputed doyen of Africa's international relations'. Mazrui's influence and example is palpable throughout this book and, indeed, he provides a fitting preface which is vintage Mazrui in terms of its panoramic remit, pithy turn of phrase, and analytical insight. It is appropriately titled, 'Black Berlin and the Curse of Fragmentation: From Bismarck to Barack'. While nominally a preface, this is more a penetrating essay that lays bare the anatomy of the curse and how its various paradoxes and manifestations have shaped not only Africa's physical borders but also its existential, mental, and material boundaries. This instrumentalisation of borders and boundaries plays itself out in a fatal combustion of religion, ethnicity, identity, resources, and ultimately, in war and conflict. In exploring the pathologies of the curse from the historically divisive (Bismarck) to the contemporarily unifying (Barack and Mandela), Mazrui is never lost in his pursuit of a Pan-African vision. Mazrui, thus, contributes a forceful backdrop to Adebajo's cognate mosaic. The book, in a sense, marks the proverbial passing of a generational torch as far as the study of Africa's international relations is concerned.

Adebajo's intellectual trajectory and biography is equally arresting and it is here that we discover his affinity with Mazrui and how this book of essays has evolved. A Nigerian by birth, he began his academic career at the University of Ibadan as a student of German which also took him to Germany for a year where he discovered Berlin. Coinciding with the fall of the Berlin Wall, he then won the prestigious Rhodes scholarship which took him to Oxford, where he studied international relations and from which he emerged with a doctorate. Adebajo's five year tenure with the International Peace Academy in New York gave him unique insights into Africa's evolving yet fragile regional architecture and the (dys) functional machinery of the United Nations. This was followed by what he calls the 'return of the native' to head up the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Cape Town, South Africa. Adebajo began with CCR providing him the institutional platform and widely informed by his travel through twenty-six African countries – with something approaching evangelical zeal – to shape and advance his own etymology and definition of post-Cold War Pan-Africanism, but one that traced its genealogy right back to Mazrui. This book is a result of that odyssey,

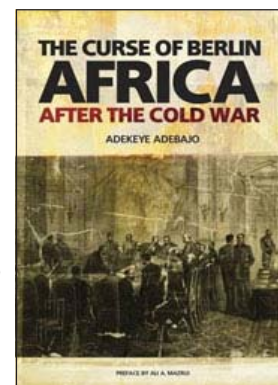
grounded in Mazrui's plinth. Thus in tribute to Mazrui, Adebajo writes: 'Few have thought as profoundly, or written and spoken as eloquently, about Africa as this committed Pan-African Prophet'.

This prologue is important because it helps to frame the significance and path-breaking nature of this collection of essays, eight of which have previously been published but substantially revised and six of which are new additions. Among its many virtues and rare for a volume such as this, the fourteen chapters (which include an inviting introductory chapter) make up a coherent and trenchant narrative whose essential premise and argument is to demonstrate that '...Africa suffers from the curse invoked in Berlin'. Tellingly, in the century and a quarter after the Berlin conference, the horsemen of the apocalypse continue to traverse the African landscape, leaving in their wake war and conflict, social deprivation, corrupt and autocratic leadership, and failed institutions. The 'bondage of boundaries inherited from the era of the Berlin conference' thus still haunts the continent. However, Adebajo is quick to point out that, notwithstanding Berlin's tragic colonial and post-colonial heritage, Africans were not simply hapless subjects of history but active agents in trying to forge their own destiny against insurmountable odds and constraints in a mercurial global context. An important notional and conceptual thread that animates the book is Adebajo's attempt to grapple creatively and inventively with the policy challenges and governance dilemmas which arise from the curse and which have continued to afflict Africa after the Cold War. The book, therefore, brackets an era of momentous geo-strategic change, and indeed tectonic shifts, in Africa's international relations from 1989 to 2009 but with the effects and legacy of 'Bismarck's sorcery' at the Berlin conference providing the sordid tale as sub-text. And Adebajo quotes Mazrui who points out that: 'One of the great paradoxes about Otto von Bismarck was that he united the Germans and helped to divide Africa'.

As a purgative to break and reverse the 'curse of Berlin', those whose inheritance was post-colonial Africa have been forced to seek the three magic but elusive kingdoms of security, hegemony and unity, themes that also concerned and occupied Mazrui through his four scholarly decades. In a manner of speaking, these quests constitute the

normative edifice of Adebajo's Pan-Africanism and how these unfold in the context of Africa's international relations after the Cold War anchor the thematic organisation and analytical coverage of the book.

The book's chapters fall under three parts: the Quest for Security; the Quest for Hegemony; and the Quest for Unity.



The first part has three chapters. The second chapter broadly maps Africa's evolving security architecture inspired by Mazrui's important work on the subject, *Towards a Pax Africana*; the third chapter examines

the continent's interface with the United Nations in the context of rising asymmetries between the rich and developed North and the poor and underdeveloped South (what the author terms 'global apartheid'); and the fourth chapter provides a contrasting portrait of two very different African 'faces' of the UN, namely, Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan. Hence, even with a maturing regional and sub-regional framework of institutions, an osmotic presence in the fabric of the UN, and two figures who tried to reshape the UN's *raison d'être*, Africa's security dilemmas persist.

The second part, titled 'The Quest for Hegemony', deals with the dialectic of countries' leadership styles and interests in Africa across a changing geo-strategic and geo-political landscape. The thrust of the five chapters that shape the thematic contours here depicts and elaborates the impact which different country actors have exercised – directly or indirectly – on Africa's hegemonic quest, critically understood as the ability and space to act autonomously. Thus, with regard to South Africa's post-apartheid role in Africa, Adebajo examines in Chapter 5 whether this must be construed as that of a messiah or a mercantilist, that country's fateful repressive past remaining an incubus on its promising democratic present. Nigeria's role in Africa is viewed through the optic of a troubled Gulliver, a continental giant which, according to a lead-in citation to the chapter by Africa's great elder scholar, Adebayo Adedeji, '...is reputed to be one of the most corrupt societies in the world, has no moral basis to lead others. If it tried to, it will be resisted' (Chapter 6). The ambivalences in the foregoing two chapters provide a useful base to consider, in Chapter 7, whether the strategic partnership between South Africa and Nigeria is an 'axis of virtue'? There is much in this relationship and the personalities that drove it that is complementary to and salutary for the continent but there are also tense rumblings and competitive undercurrents in the bilateral chemistry, especially with the exits of Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo from the African and global stages. Chapter 8 comes with a scathing but balanced critique of the role of three external actors in Africa, namely, China, the

United States, and France; Adebajo contemplates whether this trinity make up an 'axis of evil', borrowing George Bush's infelicitous phrase. The author, however, reserves his sharpest sabre for France and its *folie de grandeur*: 'a chronic delusion of greatness' as he puts it. This part concludes with Chapter 9 on the implications for Africa of South Africa's increasingly close relationship with China. On the basis of their comparative footprints across a range of case studies, Adebajo suggests that the record is an ambiguous one, meaning that '... both Pax South Africana and Pax Sinica could come to represent a new breed of economic exploitation and political imperialism in Africa'.

The final part and its five chapters bring into stark relief the elusive but important quest for unity in Africa and the role played by certain personalities, institutions, and shifting systemic forces in advancing the Pan-African ideal. The antinomies of Nelson Mandela and Cecil Rhodes and their historical bequests are brought together as a 'monstrous marriage' in the Mandela Rhodes Foundation founded in 2002: one 'a nation-builder par excellence' and the other an 'expansionist empire-builder', one 'An African Avatar' and the other a 'Colossal Imperialist', in short, the

incarnation of 'Good vs. Evil'. Has the Foundation and the symbolism that it embodies taken the idea of reconciliation too far? (Chapter 10). The entire Chapter 11 is next devoted to Thabo Mbeki as Africa's other philosophising, next to Kwame Nkrumah. The subtitle, 'A Nkrumahist Renaissance', is apt, for Mbeki strove to '...restore Africa's past glory through his promotion of an African Renaissance'. And so Adebajo compares and contrasts these figures as the two main *dramatis personae* in Africa's unity imperative and does so on the basis of the monarchical and prophetic traditions in African politics pioneered by Mazrui. The metaphor of 'Towers of Babel' is most appropriate for an examination of the institutional and normative integrity of the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) and the moral enterprises of their visionary founding fathers: Adebayo Adedeji in the case of the former and Jean Monnet in that of the latter, both of whom provided the philosophical foundations for the respective evolutions of the AU and EU. These institutions very much represent the construction of heaven-reaching towers of unity interrupted by the confusion of tongues that make up their memberships (Chapter 12). In the penultimate chapter, Chapter 13, there

is a serious attempt to search for the meaning of Barack Obama in terms of relations between America and Africa, crucially given his African ancestry and hope for a progressive front in forging a new African and American unity and identity. Sadly, it seems the euphoria of 'Obamamania' has given way to the *realpolitik* associated with the 'Avuncular Sam'. The book attains a crescendo in the final Chapter 14, which shows how Africa and Asia as the 'Heirs of Gandhi' have changed the world. The Mahatma was a creature of the two universes and immortalised their struggles, very much incubating the idea of Afro-Asian solidarity and South-South cooperation that was forged in the crucible of the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. However, this warm inductive promise of unity still has to do battle with the cold reality of Berlin's curse.

Ultimately, this is a very satisfying and important book and it is difficult to find major faults with it. While very well written, some might be put off by the overkill in rhetorical embroidery, mixed metaphors, and tendentious labelling of countries and personalities,

but that is part of Adebajo's oeuvre and allure, again imbued with the spirit of Mazrui. The book could also have been better rounded off with a final reflective and synthetic chapter that is forward-looking as far as the dynamic intersections of the curse and the three quests are concerned, including what this portends for the future of Africa. Moreover, notwithstanding a gold-mine of footnotes and given the book's obvious importance for future scholarship and research, it could have used with a bibliography. However, it is decidedly superior in its conceptual organisation, substantive reach, analytical breadth, technical preparation, and depth of research; the footnotes alone take up sixty pages and the book has a most user-friendly and well-crafted index.

That said, this book is not only a fitting salutation to Ali Mazrui and an acknowledgement and celebration of the great *Mzee's* contribution, but in a major way, it defines a new paradigmatic frontier in our understanding of Africa's international relations by an African scholar who is as passionate as he is meticulous about his subject.



This is a book of memories that lingers on long after it is read. Right from the start, in a short engaging prologue, Abraham Verghese takes us with him in the retelling of a touching portrait of an Indian family that made Ethiopia its home, and the lives and tortured relationships of two identical twins born of an Indian nun and a British surgeon, who runs away in shame and disgrace for having fathered by a nun sworn to a life of poverty, celibacy and obedience. This is a book that deals with big themes: forbidden love; sex; faith, guilt and shame; the purpose-driven life; and devotion to one's country of birth. It is, above all, about betrayal and redemption, and love that transcends geography, ethnicity and blood lines.

The Story

The great writers usually engage the reader right from the start with powerful introductory lines or paragraphs. Tolstoy is perhaps the best example as can be seen from his well-known, stunning one-sentence opening paragraph and the immediately following paragraph in *Anna Karenina*. He eschewed static introductions and colourful background paintings and plunged the reader directly into the middle of an action among persons unfamiliar to him 'so that the reader would be drawn into their situation like a participant, and not remain aloof like a mere observer.'¹ Verghese, too, throws us directly into the middle of the action in the first few sentences and evocative prologue by telling us the shock, disbelief and commotion at Missing Hospital, Addis Ababa, caused by the fact that Sister Mary Joseph

Praise, a much loved nurse and a nun sworn to a life of celibacy, had been, unknown to all those closest to her, pregnant and was now in the throes of cataclysmic labour which was endangering both her life and her unborn twin babies.

The story is narrated by one of the twins, Marion Stone, now 50 and a respected surgeon, to render some order to the events of his life and the mysteries that surrounded his birth, and to express his gratitude to his estranged twin brother Shiva for 'the gift of yet another sunrise'. It is above all an effort to exorcise old ghosts and heal old wounds. 'Only the telling can heal the rift that separates my brother and me. Yes, I have an infinite faith in the craft of surgery, but no surgeon can heal the kind of wound that divides two brothers. Where silk and steel fail, story must succeed.'

The twin brothers were born at Missing Hospital, Addis Ababa, in the very room where their mother, Sister Mary Joseph Praise, 'spent most of her working hours, and in which she had been most fulfilled'. In a beautiful paragraph that is likely to be amusing

and familiar to the Ethiopian ear and a damning but correct commentary on our cavalier attitude towards precision and attention to details, Marion tells us that 'Missing was really Mission Hospital, a word that on the Ethiopian tongue came out with a hiss so it sounded like "Missing"'. A clerk in the Ministry of Health who was a fresh high-school graduate had typed out THE MISSING HOSPITAL on the license, a phonetically correct spelling as far as he was concerned. A reporter for the *Ethiopian Herald* perpetuated the misspelling. When Matron Hirst had approached the clerk in the ministry to correct this, he pulled out his original typescript. 'See for yourself, madam. *Quod erat demonstrandum* it is Missing', he said, 'as if he'd proved Pythagoras's Theorem, the sun's central position in the solar system, the roundness of the earth, and Missing's precise location at its imagined corner. And so Missing it was.'

Sister Mary Joseph Praise stayed and worked at Missing hospital in the presence of Thomas Stone, a respected British surgeon. The two were close

and worked together in perfect harmony; they were 'pure ballet', 'a heavenly pair'. But when his assistant of seven years, a nun of the Diocesan Carmelite Order of Madras, unexpectedly went into labour, Thomas Stone, the man who everyone believed to be the father, didn't know or suspect she was pregnant! But there she was, bleeding profusely and dying of child birth. When he, therefore, saw her lustreless eyes, her lips turned blue, in agony and quickly fading away, he was overwhelmed with fear of losing the woman he secretly loved. He 'could do nothing but call and repeat her name. From his lips, Sister Mary Joseph Praise's name sounded like an interrogation, then an endearment, then a confession of love spun out of one word. Mary? Mary, Mary!'

In spite of all their efforts, all the three physicians who lived and worked together at Missing Hospital – Stone, Dr Kalpana Hemlatha (Hema), and Dr Ghosh – were unable to save her. Stone was totally devastated. And, he who had been asking for a miracle to save her was not moved by the sight of the twins. In fact, he detested them and wouldn't look at them. He left the room, run away, no one knew where, and was never heard from.

For Dr Kalpana Hemlatha, or, Hema as she was known, the death of Sister Mary Joseph Praise while giving life to these two infants was worse than tragic. It was madness, and the 'only sensible response to the madness of life ... was to cultivate a kind of madness within' and, in a scene reminiscent of *Zorba the Greek*, she started dancing and dancing 'to the music

Of Tizita, Saints and Sinners

Assefa Bequele

Cutting for Stone

by Abraham Verghese

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in her mind'. But she finally saw the beauty of having these two infants and said to herself that she had won 'the lottery without buying a ticket' and that 'these two babies had plugged a hole in her heart' that she didn't know she had. She became their mother. She named them Marion and Shiva, and 'finally, reluctantly, almost as an afterthought, but because you cannot escape your destiny, and so that he wouldn't walk away scot-free, she added our surname, the name of the man who had left the room: Stone.'

Marion tells us of a warm and loving family and a happy childhood – he and Shiva falling asleep, 'arms around each other, breathing on each other's face, heads touching'; growing up with and like other Ethiopian and neighbourhood kids; enjoying the free and inclusive Ethiopian-Western social life; and exposed to culture and good education. Above all they grew up very much loved and dotted by their cultured and cosmopolitan adoptive parents, Hema and Gosh. It was apparently an ideal, boisterous and colourful family.

The twins were extremely close; they were one. 'All one of us had to do was think of an action and the odds were the other would rise to carry it out'. But they were also different. Marion was the more thoughtful, obviously emotional, and inhibited especially about sex. Shiva, on the other hand, was the more detached, rational, practical and worldly. Although still in his teens, he had more experience with sex and no qualms about sleeping with women, any woman.

Marion describes Shiva as a genius, impatient with school, someone who did not subscribe to convention but knew more medicine, certainly more gynaecology, than many a trained physician and was formed into a brilliant surgeon, thanks to his non-formal training and apprenticeship under Hema's supervision. Marion had an exceptional eidetic gift while Shiva lived in the now, without bothering about the consequences of his action. As close as he was to his brother and as harmless and totally decent as he was, he did eventually commit an act of betrayal which left a deep wound and rift that separated the two brothers. It was while this wound and estrangement between the brothers was still raw that Marion was wrongly suspected of being an accomplice or a member of a radical student group that hijacked an Ethiopian Air Lines plane and, therefore, had to leave his country of birth for the United States.

Life in the US involved hard work and rigorous training to be a doctor. Emotionally, his life was barren, empty and bitter. He was bitter that he left his beloved country because of the infantile act and behaviour of a woman he loved but who along with his twin brother caused him the deepest sorrow and disappointment. He missed terribly his family and his *Ethyo-pya*, as he would call his country. But it was also a life of surprises where he experienced, even if for a few fleeting days, the taste and ecstasy of rekindled love and the joys

of a dream fulfilled, but one which turned into a nightmare. He would have died were it not for love that was pure and selfless. In a strange twist of fate that evokes the birth of two twins from the womb of a dying woman, we bear witness, towards the end of the book, to a life born out of the death of another and a resurrection which, unlike that associated with divine act, was inspired by the love and sacrifice of a very human, life-loving brother who didn't care at all about the life beyond, but lived in the now and present.

The Bunyan's Hymn

The principal characters in this book are mostly a good and saintly group. These are people who are inspired by the most sacred of motives and aspirations, perhaps best encapsulated in the 'Bunyan's Hymn' which, we are told, Matron must have sung a thousand times to a dying friend and would-have-been-lover and husband:

*He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster
Let him in constancy
Follow the Master.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a Pilgrim.*

They are also an ambitious lot. There is Matron, an enduring inspiration and the one who advised Marion to go for the hardest thing he could possibly do, to make his life 'something beautiful for God' and not to settle for 'Three blind Mice' when he can play Bach's 'Gloria'. There is also Hema, the woman he calls his mother, who decided early on in her life 'to avoid the sheep life at all costs'.

The same commitment to a higher goal is reflected in Shiva. Otherwise unconventional in his attitudes and actions, Shiva devoted his life to serving the least wanted and most marginalised, instead of pursuing formal education in medicine like his brother. He was the embodiment of the secular saint. These kinds of inspired and saintly figures give the novel its unique moral compass.

The Cost of Forbidden Love

Faith is a highly personal matter and must be respected. Yet, one cannot help but wonder about the wisdom of aspects of it, for example celibacy which has led to many scandals that have befallen the high priests and citadels of morality and caused damage to the lives of many, many young girls and boys around the world. 'Birth and Copulation and Death' are common denominators. Nothing is more natural, and anything that ascribes sin to Sex is all too often a challenge to our being that almost inevitably leads to dissonant behaviour in our lives, as is told in this

novel. Sister Mary Joseph Praise received her nursing pin and took the *final vow of celibacy* when she was only nineteen. Though undertaken at a young age, she had to live with the consequences of the vow, both in the respect and breach of it.

It was impossible for all involved that the everyday miracle of conception had taken place in the one place it should not have – the womb of a devout and much loved nun, one of their own, a bride of Christ! Even for the good and expansive Matron, who herself had her share of loss and missed fortunes to love and be loved, it was unthinkable that this pregnancy, 'a mortal sin', could take place.

It was the taking of the vow and the expected or assumed adherence to it which compromised their expectation and ability to see what was happening in front of their eyes. Even the secular Hema, an accomplished gynaecologist, was blinded to the obvious signs she would otherwise have detected. The celibate and virgin nun was above suspicion – she couldn't possibly be in love with Thomas Stone, let alone be impregnated by him. But Hema could not help also reflecting on her blindness and blaming herself for it. It should have been clear to her that Stone and the young nun

were a perfect match; maybe if we'd encouraged them it could have been something more. How often did I see Sister assisting him in surgery, working on his manuscripts, taking notes for him in his outpatient department? Why did I assume that was all there was to it? I should have reached over and smacked him at my dinner table. I should have shouted at him: Don't be blind. See what you have in this woman! See how she loves you. Propose to her! Marry her. Get her to discard her habit, renege her vows. It is clear her first vow is to you. But no, Thomas, I didn't do it because we all assumed that you were incapable of anything more. Who knew that this much feeling was hidden in your heart? I see it now. Yes, now we have these two [the twins] as proof of what was in your hearts.'

It was proof of the tragic consequences of archaic moral standards and the denial of one's sexuality. Sister Mary Joseph Praise's death could have been avoided. As Hema says to Thomas Stone, while trying desperately to save her, 'One prenatal visit? Could you have let me see her for at least one prenatal visit? ... Look at the soup we are in ... Completely avoidable...completely avoidable'.

The Problem with Fathers

Of all the characters in this book none is as honest, as committed to the fate and wellbeing of the twins and as blunt with the truth and Thomas Stone as Hema, the adoptive mother of the twins. And none is as intriguing and conflicted as Stone. When Hema confronted him, as we saw above, with the possibility that a prenatal visit could have prevented the tragedy and that he should have alerted her, he stammered that *he didn't know she was pregnant!* Hema

couldn't believe her ears. 'You are thinking virgin birth, Dr Stone. Immaculate conception?' She goes on to tout him: 'In that case, guess what? This is better than the manger in Bethlehem. This virgin is having twins!'

We come back to this same point on two other occasions where Stone says that, though the pregnancy was somehow his doing, he had no recollection how or where or when it happened. This is one of those mysteries left unexplained in the book, although we can guess from a short reference to Stone's sometimes bizarre behaviour how or when it might have happened. The persistent Hema tries to force the issue of his fatherhood believing that Stone, having foolishly 'lost the one woman in the world who fated for him', would now rejoice for having gained two sons. She asks him 'What shall we name these babies?' To which he hurtfully and cruelly replied, 'Please get them out of my sight'. And when Hema asks him to think about it again and not to turn his back on his children, he says simply and once again cruelly, 'Hema, I don't want to set eyes on them, ever'.

There are attempts by Hema, and Ghosh, her husband, and even by the embittered son, Marion, to explain and excuse Stone's behaviour. For Ghosh, Thomas Stone was a good surgeon who 'had no understanding of life'; he had lost his parents when he was a child and was terrified that if he got too close to anyone they would hurt him or he would hurt them.

Whatever the explanation, the fact that Stone did not try to contact Hema and Ghosh and find out about the fate of his sons even after having established himself as a leading and highly respected surgeon and long after the twins were born is an inexcusable act of omission. Even Ghosh, who was the most sympathetic and understanding of the three, says that he had after all expected Stone to contact him and was disappointed that he did not do so. Though this is not the place for a discussion of gender differences in parenthood, one cannot help but wonder as to how the mother, Sister Mary Joseph Praise, might have responded had she been faced with a somewhat similar situation or opportunity. Would she have abandoned her twin sons? Would she have been totally indifferent to their situation if she had the same set of opportunities and the same level of success that Dr Stone had in later years? We would never know, of course, but we can guess what the answer might be.

The Beautiful Life

One of the striking features of Verghese's engaging book is how likeable and manifestly decent his characters are, something which normally wouldn't be a good recipe for tension and momentum in a novel. They are also supremely wise – unpretentious, down-to-earth and appreciative of the simple life. They have none of the existential doubts that afflict many of us or the insatiable needs that make our affluent lives so unnecessarily miserable.

Take, for instance, Hema, the twins' adoptive mother, devoted wife and saviour of many lives.

She'd been kept busy from her first day. If the truth be known, she secretly relished the emergencies, the situations where her heart was in her mouth, where the seconds ticked off, where a mother's life hung in the balance, or a baby in the womb, deprived of oxygen, needed a heroic rescue. In those moments she did not have existential doubts. Life became sharply focused, meaningful just when she wasn't thinking of meaning. A mother, a wife, a daughter, was suddenly none of these things, boiled to a human being in great danger...

These were committed humanists who saw meaning in service. Or take Dr Ghosh, Hema's husband and the twins' adoptive father. Ghosh, a lecher who loved his drinks and women and yet turned into a dotting husband and devoted father, was immensely appreciative of each day. 'Another day in paradise', was his frequent pronouncement when he settled his head on his pillow. Like Maurice in *Tuesday's with Morrie*, he says 'the uneventful day was a precious gift'. 'The key to happiness,' Ghosh tells us, 'is to own your slippers, own who you are, own how you look, own your family, own the talents you have, and own the ones you don't. If you keep saying the slippers aren't yours, then you will die searching, you will die bitter, always feeling you were promised more'. This indeed happened to Genet, Marion's great love and his source of misery and unhappiness; she 'died chasing greatness and never saw it each time it was in her hand, so she kept seeking it elsewhere, but never understood the work required to get it or keep it.'

The Perfection of Life and of Work

A common narrative in our modern age is the tension between work and life or work and the family. This is a real challenge in daily life that is directly addressed in this novel. Matron, as we saw earlier, challenges and advises the young Marion to play his Gloria and to go to the height of his possibilities. He found his purpose in life by being a physician. Similarly, Hema, his mother, was of the same caste of mind; her ambition was 'to avoid the sheep life at all costs.' At all costs?

Ross, who, as we learn later in the book, was the young Thomas Stone's guardian, was very much impressed by the young man's academic and professional achievement. After all, Stone had successfully 'skipped a real childhood and gone directly to doctorhood', and Ross tells him, 'You are my consolation for never having married. That wasn't by choice, by the way – not being married. "Perfection of the life or of the work" – I could only do the one. I hope you don't make that mistake.'

But Thomas Stone did not agree. He was convinced that 'he had found the cure and he'd found it himself. Ross had it wrong, or so Thomas thought; perfection of the life *came* from perfection of the work'. Work was all

that mattered; it 'was his meat, his drink, his wife, his child, his politics, his religion... until the day he found himself seated... in the room of a child he had abandoned; only then did he admit to his son how completely work had failed.'

And so, what or which is the right path? It is obviously not one or the other. Nor is the path linear – from the perfection of the work to the perfection of the life or vice versa. It is a meeting of both. In this story, the best example of the fusion of the perfection of life and of work are Ghosh and Hema, both successful in their profession, very much endearing to each other, and successful parents. Unfortunately, that path and destiny is only for the few; the vast majority can only envy them; and those who achieve it can only be grateful for their good luck and good fortune.

Of Ethiopians and Indians

On a personal level, the story resonates with Ethiopians of my generation for several reasons. There are, of course, the familiar events that form the backdrop to the story – the Haile Selassie period which in hindsight was arguably amongst the most glorious in Ethiopian history; the attempted coup d'état against him which saw the beginning of the end; the long, bloody fratricidal war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, ultimately resulting in the amputation of our country, and so on. But there are two other aspects to this book that make it endearing for Ethiopians, other than the moving story and the way it is narrated.

The first is the Indian connection. Many of us of the Haile Selassie generation were products of Indian 'teacher-hood'. In those days, most of the few free-government elementary and secondary schools were run or staffed by Indian teachers from the Christian Indian state of Kerala.

Ask an Ethiopian abroad if perchance they learned mathematics or physics from a teacher named Kurien, Koshy, Thomas, George..., and the odds are their eyes will light up. These teachers were brought up in the Orthodox ritual which St Thomas carried in south India. But in their professional roles, the only ritual they cared about was engraving the multiplication and periodic tables as well as Newton's laws into the brains of their Ethiopian pupils, who were uniformly smart and who had a good aptitude for arithmetic.

So the Ethiopian affection for India is both apparent and incontestable. Similarly, the love Marion feels for his birth country is palpable and moving. No *ferenji*² novelist has arguably written about Ethiopia with as much love, delicacy, and passion as Abraham Verghese does through his Marion, the narrator. Geography brought him there, but he embraced his destiny in a manner that converted fate into a meaningful life of giving. His descriptions of the beautiful landscape, the Ethiopians' propensity for both kindness and violence, the arbitrariness of justice and of power that has been the hallmark of our history to this day and the heart-wrenching pain of exile are unsurpassed literary works.

Varghese's feelings are echoed through many of his characters. Marion, the narrator, smells Ethiopia wherever he goes – 'the faint scent of charcoal and the frankincense that permeates [every Ethiopian woman's] clothes.' Ghosh, perhaps the most colourful character, also described as *dooriye* or lecherous, is struck by the natural beauty of the land, now seriously threatened and undermined by its inhabitants' callous and indifferent abuse of their habitat, and the conflicted Ethiopian psyche. 'My greatest consolation,' Ghosh thought, for only the hundredth time since his arrival in Ethiopia, 'has been the women of this land'. This country had completely surprised him. Despite pictures he had seen in *National Geographic*, he had been unprepared for this mountain empire shrouded in mist. The cold, the altitude, the wild roses, the towering trees, reminded him of Coonoor, a hill station in India he had visited as a boy...

Their [Ethiopians'] sharp, sculpted noses and soulful eyes set them between Persians and Africans, with the kinky hair of the latter, and the lighter skin of the former. Reserved, excessively formal, and often morose, they were quick to anger, quick to imagine insults to their pride. As for theories of conspiracy and the most terrible pessimism, surely they'd cornered the world market on those. But get past all those superficial attributes, and you found people who were supremely intelligent, loving, hospitable, and generous.

The observant Ghosh in a sharp dig at Ethiopians, further tells us of a people interested in 'getting their shoes shined more often than they bathe'.

And there is the ever present shadow of fear, injustice and abuse of power that is at the heart of Ethiopia's social, economic and political fabric. We see this in a brief but illuminating incident involving Gosh, who was arrested and taken to Alem Bekagne (Kerchele) – then, and for long after the central prison in the country – apparently because of his association with a general who had tried to topple Emperor Haile Selassie. His wife, Hema, and adoptive son, Marion, didn't know where he was arrested and naturally went there to look for him. In one of the most beautifully constructed passages evocative of the theatre of the absurd, the sentry at the prison says without looking up, 'I don't know if he or she is here, I don't know when I will know if he or she is here or not here, if you leave food or blankets or whatever, if he or she is here, they might get it, if not somebody else gets it. Write his name on a paper with whatever you are dropping off, and I will not answer'.

Marion recalls a conversation with a university lecturer he met at the same prison and whose father had been in this same jail many years before. 'As a boy,' the lecturer tells him, 'I would run the three miles from my house, once a day, to bring food. He was so thin, but each time he would feed me first and make me take back more than half the food.

He knew that for him to eat, we had to starve. One day, when my older brother and mother came with food, they heard the dreaded words, "No need to bring food anymore". That's how we knew my father was dead. And you know why they arrested my brother today? For no reason. He is a hardworking businessman. But he is a child of one of their old enemies. We are the first suspects. The old enemies and the children of enemies..." I have quoted so extensively because such stories, especially those of fear of retribution, remain to this day an unfortunate facet of our lives and political fabric.

Even so, Marion's love and loyalty never waivered. Soon after Ghosh was released, he once overheard him and his wife contemplating taking the family somewhere else (Persia or Zambia), before another attempted coup. Marion was not amused: 'Were they joking? This was my country they were talking about, the land of my birth. True, its potential for violence and mayhem had been proven. But it was still home. How much worse would it be to be tortured in a land that wasn't your own?' He continues:

Call me unwanted, call my birth a disaster, call me a bastard child of a disgraced nun and a disappeared father, ... but the loamy soil that nurtured Matron's roses was my flesh. I said Ethyo-pya, like a native. Let those born in other lands speak of Eee-theee-op-eee-ya, as if it were a compound name like Sharm el Sheikh, or Dar es Salaam or Rio de Janeiro. The Entoto mountains disappearing in darkness framed my horizon; if I left, those mountains would sink back to the ground, descend into nothingness; the mountains needed me to gaze at their tree-filled slopes, just as I needed them to be certain I was alive. The canopy of stars at night; that, too, was my birthright. A celestial gardener sowed meskel seeds so that when the rainy season ended, the daisies bloomed in welcome. Even the Drowning Soil, the foul-smelling quick sand behind Missing, which had swallowed a horse, a dog, a man, and God knows what else – I claimed that as well... All possibilities resided within me, and they required me to be here. If I left, what would be left of me?

But, sadly, he had to. He went on exile because of a suspicion that he was part of a conspiracy in a political/criminal act committed by Genet, the girl he always loved. Those years of exile were years of painful memories, playing and singing in his mind the ever-enchanting, melancholic and haunting Ethiopian song, *Tizita*.

Tizita

Tizita is almost certainly the most beloved of Ethiopian songs. There is no English equivalent that captures the meaning of *Tizita*. Abraham Verghese translates it to mean 'memory tinged with regret', which is almost correct. But it is more than that. In its simplest form it means memory, or memory of one's love, or of a turbulent love affair, a longing for one's lover, even for his/her anger and irritating behaviour. You sing it when you are happy and when

you are sad, or when you are in love and out of love. You listen to it in the comfort of your sofa, but you are also as likely to waltz on the floor with the one you love. You sing it in the familiar surroundings of your native land, but especially when and if you are banished to exile. It is mostly melancholic but it can sometimes be fast. It is a very unusual song which speaks to the Ethiopian psyche and soul. It is in the end about *remembrance of things past* in all their manifestations.

It grows with and on you and stays with you for ever. And so it does with Marion, the Ethiopian/Indian. 'After lunch, Shiva and I fall asleep, arms around each other, breath on each other's face, heads touching. In that fugue state between wakefulness and dreaming, the song I hear is ... *Tizita*', he says. It is the song he hears through all his years in Ethiopia, the one he carries with him whenever and wherever he goes, and the one he hears during his years of exile in America.

There are various versions of *Tizita* – for example, those of Bezawork Asfaw, Rahel Yohannes, Getachew Kassa, and Mahmoud Ahmed. As Verghese says, 'every Ethiopian artist records a *Tizita*. They record it in Addis Ababa, but also in exile in Khartoum... and of course in Rome, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Dallas, Boston, and New York. "Tizita" is the heart's anthem, the lament of the diaspora...' It is therefore not surprising that the first thing Marion carried in his bag upon leaving suddenly his house is the bag which had the slow and fast *Tizita*, and it was *Tizita* cassettes that were among his precious possessions and a connection to his land of birth. *Tizita* is the symphony that plays throughout the story, and Verghese, in an appropriate tribute, devotes a whole chapter to it.

The Return

In a replay and yet another confirmation of the American dream, Marion's stay in America was successful and satisfying professionally. He was also able, during this stay, to reconnect and exorcise the potentially destructive spell of his beloved, who nearly caused his death were it not for the miraculous intervention of Shiva. The end was both tragic and uplifting, resulting in feelings of longing and gratitude. 'Twin brothers, we slept in the same bed till our teens, our heads touching, our legs and torsos angled away. We outgrew that intimacy and proximity, but I still long for it, for the proximity of his skull. When I wake to the gift of yet another sunrise, my first thought is to rouse him and say, *I owe you the sight of morning*.'

Marion returns to his Ethiopia to work alongside Hema, his devoted mother, at Missing Hospital. 'Born in Africa, living in exile in America, then returning at last to Africa, I am proof that geography is destiny. Destiny has brought me back to the precise coordinates of my birth, to the very same operating theatre where I was born.'

A Beautiful Novel with the Wrong Title

This is a sensitive, often elegiac book with a well-constructed and engaging plot and full of vivid characters. The title is taken from the Hippocratic Oath but remains a poor and unconvincing choice that fails to do justice to the underlying themes and to the story beautifully told in this book. Although he sometimes tells us about things he couldn't possibly remember or know, Marion the narrator does a good job of describing the events and the personalities that shaped his life, and does so with respect and balance, without making them persons 'neither of superlative goodness nor repellent wickedness'.

Minorities and Majorities

This is a novel which should reach a much wider audience than would otherwise be through an American or UK edition. It is of manifest interest to an audience in Ethiopia, where much of the action takes place. But it would be of equal appeal to the wider African audience or to minority communities within and outside Africa. It serves as a counterpoint to the conventional narrative on the relationship between minority groups and indigenous majorities, and speaks of the rich and interwoven relationships between them. More importantly, it is a moving eulogy and testament that love of country and love of a woman can transcend ethnicity and cultural barriers. It is an alternative and uplifting antidote to the real or imagined grievances about the parochialism of Asians in Eastern Africa and the racist policies that it ostensibly triggered or justified in Amin's Uganda.

The Writer as a Moralist

Early on in the book, Marion shares with us in a deeply moving and philosophical way his reflections on the flow and flood of life, more precisely his life, the piercing losses that shaped the very beginnings and last phase of his life, and the nostalgia, sentimentalism and wisdom that elusive memory bestows on the past. We live and act in the present, without the benefit of hindsight to judge whether our actions and decisions are right or wrong, he concludes. Says Marion: 'You live forward, but understand it backward. It is only when you stop and look to the rear that you see the corpse caught under your wheel.' But, having returned

to his country of birth, he also sees 'in the African night' the many ordinary miracles of life, grateful for the privilege of yet another sunrise and the life of service to the people he loved and that needed him most.

Abraham Verghese is a manifestly passionate observer and lover of Ethiopia, warts and all. This book is a moving and memorable evocation and confession of love to his Ethiopia. We are however told in the inside cover this writer of obviously great moral values now lives and teaches in the United States. This last piece of information is a minor detail, but it raises a big ethical question.

Clearly, the aim of good literature is not to pontificate on religious, social or political dogma. It is to reflect life in its varied facets, to make people happy or sad and experience and even dream life in its infinite ways. So, the author should not be constrained by a social or political agenda or expectation. Yet, the reader cannot help being unsettled by the dissonance between, on the one hand, the book's moving conclusion where the narrator and principal character, Marion, resists the temptation to stay in America and returns to serve in a somewhat primitive hospital in his Ethiopia and, on the other hand, the knowledge that the author of this inspiring book is not where one would expect him to be but has a post as professor of medicine at the highly respected Stanford University, California. Is it too much to ask, Abraham, why only Marion? And what in the world are you doing there?

Notes

- 1 From, "Introduction and notes," by E. B. Greenwood, in Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, Wordsworth Classics, Chatham, 1999, p. xi.
- 2 Amharic for 'foreigner'.



Since the celebration a few decades ago of the life and work of Raymond Mauny, African historians have routinely withdrawn, almost every decade, from the busy schedule of their daily occupation to pay homage to one of the best among them. Robin Law's is the latest in an already impressive string of celebrations dotting like memory signposts the tortuous path leading to the growth of an authentically African approach to history. But, even though, by the standards of earlier events of the kind, Robin Law may look like a rather young man, this does not affect in the least the meanings traditionally assigned to such congregations of university dons: first, to take stock of the progress so far made by African historians in a particular field of research, and secondly, to draw a road map for future scholarship. Nevertheless, the dilemma facing scholars on such occasions is whether to be forward-looking or backward-looking in the assessment of

Celebrating a Knight of Clio: Robin Law and the Merry-Go-Round of Atlantic Africa¹

Anselme Guezo

The Changing Worlds of Atlantic Africa: Essays in Honor of Robin Law

by Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, Eds.
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the contribution of their illustrious colleague. Indeed, depending on the age of the hero of the day, it proves very difficult to strike the right balance between these two approaches. Admittedly, the presence of the frail figure of an elderly professor may easily sway his colleagues into indulging in glib eulogy as they vie with one another in praise for the past achievements of an obviously declining star. On the contrary,

the celebration of a teacher in mid-career has none of this inhibition. Rather than closing a chapter, it is a prospective exercise circumscribing clearly the challenges still lying ahead. This is exactly the impression one gets through a perusal of this voluminous festschrift in honor of Robin Law, combining harmoniously as it does retrospection and prospectation in a balanced picture.

But let no one be deceived by the relatively young age of Robin Law. He deserves as much as all his predecessors who underwent the same ritual to take his rightful place among the founding fathers of the mighty discipline that African history has become today. Indeed, he has greatly contributed to the growth of this branch of human inquiry of which he became a devotee at the tender age of twenty-seven. Robin Law's long presence in the field has turned him both into an astute student of West Africa and a privileged eye-witness of its recent history; incidentally, he lived in Nigeria throughout the duration of the civil war in the late sixties. This fact explains the range of topics covered in this book as well as the diversity of background of its contributors.²

'The changing worlds of Atlantic Africa' is indeed a very fat book both in terms of content and detail. With its 513 pages, it stands as a vivid testimony of the scope and depth of Robin Law's

scholarship. Perhaps, more than one review article is needed for this book, which represents the latest statement on the controversial issue of the Atlantic slave trade.³ There can be no better tribute to Robin Law than to collect in a book a bouquet of writings on the very question which has exercised his mind since his undergraduate years. It is no exaggeration to assert that all the aspects of this obnoxious trade except perhaps one have been covered in this well bound book. As it is known, the number game has dominated the early debate on the Atlantic slave trade. However, for one reason or another, as time wore on, the matter has become redundant, giving the impression that the last word has already been said on this aspect of the trade. On the contrary, much as one can agree roughly on the number of Africans exported to the Americas, a great deal still remains shrouded in darkness as far as the statistics of the trade are concerned. The late Werner Peukert cogently argued that statistical studies of the flow of European commodities imported into the Slave Coast can shed much needed light on the workings of the African societies.⁴ Unfortunately, very few African historians are willing to follow in his footsteps as they are deterred by the widespread opinion that European commodities were just trinkets to lure African chiefs into an unequal exchange.

This opinion is hardly borne out by the contributors to this book who have given a very good account of the manner in which trade had expanded inland in the wake of the Atlantic slave trade. As is evidenced by the study of Lagos, this process of trade expansion predates the inception of the Atlantic slave trade by many centuries and in many respects vindicates the Smithian theory of growth.⁵ Actually, the early Portuguese explorers inserted themselves into this well-established trade system as middlemen, carrying *ijebu* cloth from the Slave Coast to the Gold Coast. Later, when the *Akan* began to invest the profit they made from the gold trade into the clearing of the Gold Coast forest, the Portuguese middlemen were still at hand to import labor from the same area. Therefore, one can conclude that, but for the disruptive effect of the Atlantic slave trade, West Africa could have experienced a steady growth based on the exploitation of its own natural resources.

On the contrary, according to certain authors in this collection of essays, the Atlantic slave trade, by resorting to the forceful displacement of people, had impeded the process of economic growth in the sense that it led to both the shrinking of the internal market and the neglect of the endogenous industries.⁶ In the assessment of the contributors to the volume, the Atlantic slave trade was a traumatic experience which cannot even be redeemed by the emergence of the state in Africa as earlier historians had assumed. Indeed, the state in Africa played very little role in the development of trade, to the extent

that the living conditions of the Africans under state-controlled institutions were no different from those of the Africans in stateless societies.⁷

African states, on the other hand, had the tendency of affecting negatively the settlement pattern in a given region by causing the emergence of a periphery on their marshland. It is thought that by raiding their weaker neighbors with the firearms supplied by their European trading partners, the African states eventually pushed the latter into the mountainous recesses and inhospitable resorts. If states played such a limited and negative role in the development of the market, how then can one account for the procurement of export slaves? Some of the contributors to this collection suggest that the imbalance between center and periphery which resulted from trade expansion was enough to destabilize less organized societies to the extent that their populations became vulnerable to food shortage. They lay great emphasis on the role of kinship in the expansion of trade network. It would appear that it was through the channel of family alliances and trade networks that commodities against which were exchanged the millions of Africans were conveyed. Trade also served as a conduit for the transfer of the technologies and know-how of the populations living in the centers to the communities in the peripheries. Hence the necessity to bring under closer scrutiny these two pillars of any African society: kinship and trade.

The Omani aristocracy of the Indian Ocean relied heavily on trade networking to sustain their hegemony over the centuries and accumulate wealth which they lavishly displayed in conspicuous consumption.⁸ The same trade strategy was used by the Oyo Alafinate towards its periphery in Igbominaland by stressing descent from Oduduwa as a claim to leadership.⁹ Thus, the ideology of kinship, the second pillar of African social organization, justifies the control of manpower, one of the preconditions for the development of the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, the status of domestic slaves was a direct outcome of the ideological restrictions on the assimilation of strangers within the extended families. Domestic slaves were said to be protected against sale into the Atlantic slave trade. But the extent to which captives were also sheltered against such a treatment is not known. What is clear though from this collection of essays is that, due to the commitment to family members, it was not uncommon to see a kin entering into bondage or pawnship on behalf of his relation.¹⁰

Here again, pawns were not immune to sale until and unless the debt was paid. One can, therefore,

assert that a substantial number of slaves were the hapless victims of the kinship system. Others were, however, indirectly produced by the breakdown of this system, especially when faced by a subsistence crisis which eventually led to famine and war. Viewed from this perspective, the supply side of the Atlantic slave trade appears to be fully integrated into a system of transfer of manpower and knowledge subsequent to the expansion of the market into the interior of the continent. It was this well-oiled mechanism that Abolition brought to an abrupt end. It remains to be proven whether this momentous event was equally beneficial to the three sides of the famous triangular commerce.

Many of the contributors to this book have tried to assess the impact of Abolition in the economic development of the three continents involved in the Atlantic slave trade. Thus, in contradistinction to all the predictions of economic slump likely to follow Abolition, this decision ushered in Europe an era of tremendous growth in all sectors of the economy. This prosperity can be measured both in microeconomic and macroeconomic terms. It may not be amiss to assert that Abolition paved the way to the industrial revolution, in which Britain took a very decisive lead. The other European powers, which at first did not feel bound by the British decision to abolish the Atlantic slave trade and thus did not follow suit, also reaped some profit from the withdrawal of their British competitors.

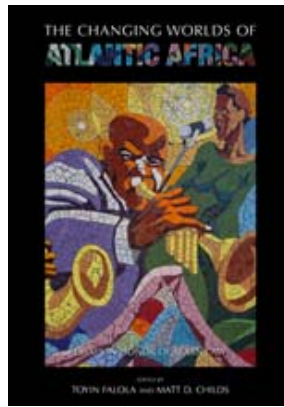
Spain, for instance, welcomed the British slave traders and sailors into the country, and these latter continued to operate under a different European flag. In this way, they proved instrumental in transferring to their new Spanish employers all the technologies and business acumen necessary to carry on trade for another half a century. As far as France was concerned it took advantage of Britain's official withdrawal from business to expand its own sugar industry, mostly by attracting British finance with alluring rates of interest and other financial perks.¹¹ On the American side of the triangle, the conclusions that one can draw about Abolition are in the nature of things much more tempered. Here, the color bar was skillfully manipulated so as to keep blacks away from any benefits which may accrue to them from the new dispensation arising from Abolition. On the contrary, the white settler communities who were by then fully integrated in the world capitalist system were given free range to accumulate capital and invest in other industries. They were, therefore, poised to seize control of the colonial economies by becoming the new property-owning bourgeoisies of Cuba and Brazil. Meanwhile, the most enterprising among their black fellow citizens had to struggle against all odds to keep their heads above water.¹²

The new world in which freed slaves found themselves proved to be very inimical to black business which had no leeway except in the gray area between

legality and illegality. This is very well illustrated by the case study of a black liberated slave in post-Abolition Brazil. As this essay shows, the white settler authorities tolerated the gainful activities of the blacks as long as there were not yet in place legal institutions aimed at excluding them from a particular economic sector. Thus, in Brazil, the establishment of the saving banks finally pushed into illegality the Yoruba traditional credit system operating among the black Brazilians. Another gray area in this country was the *candomble* confraternities which were frowned upon by many, even though they were tolerated by some well-connected whites who frequented them. This situation exposed the priests of this cult to legal harassment and prosecution at any time the authorities might decide to do so. On the whole, if there was any change in the life of liberated slaves in Brazil, it was in the fact that some of them have been able to use the profits accumulated from their business venture in acquiring slaves themselves or in expanding the circle of their clients.¹³ The same attitude prevailed among so-called Abolition merchant princes on the African coast.

Given this background, it is a misnomer to speak of an economic revolution, as far as Africa, the third side of the metaphoric triangle, was concerned. Even though Abolition in Africa is widely praised as the harbinger of change on the continent, this must be taken with a pinch of salt. A very stimulating study of a Lagosian entrepreneur convincingly proves that the Blacks, when given equal opportunities, evince the same foresight as their white counterparts in matters of detecting promising fields of capital investment. However, the big stick of colonialism was always there to beat them out of sight. In the end, this typical Lagosian businessman had no space left for him by the colonial system except extending credit and developing property pending the establishment of the banks which would complete the job of his exclusion from the economic arena of Lagos.¹⁴ One can draw a parallel here between the plight of this businessman and the fortunes of the blacks in post-Abolition Brazil. But even more interestingly, this description of the situation in the mid-nineteenth century sounds like a premonition when set against the predicament in which contemporary Nigerians find themselves.

Today, the same Lagosians had very little room for manoeuvre outside registering as mules or couriers in the bruising drug trade.¹⁵ The lesson of the story is that capitalism entertains no morality when its interests are at stake. Likewise, this is the message conveyed by a study which evoked the antics played by BP Shell in the pursuit of their own interests. The management of this society did not shrink from sitting on a fence throughout the Nigerian civil war rather than taking the costly decision of siding with one of the two belligerents.¹⁶ Given all these counter-examples it would be difficult to adhere to the



conclusion that Africans were the sole beneficiaries of Abolition.¹⁷ Indeed, such a conclusion is based on a careful analysis of the growth of the market economy throughout the four periods of African economic history: Africa before the advent of the Portuguese, Africa during the Atlantic slave trade, Africa in transition and colonial Africa.

In the light of this argument, the vibrant economy before the sixteenth century fueled by an autonomous development of exchange between the areas of West Africa was suddenly brought to a halt after the inception of the Atlantic slave trade. This outward-looking activity eventually stifled all the indigenous industries of the continent. The products of these industries, which were highly acclaimed by the first European traders to the extent that they put themselves forward as middlemen in their exchange, gradually lost in quality and were replaced by European manufactures. Therefore, the Atlantic slave trade contributed very little to the growth of the market economy. It rather shrank into insignificance internal demand through its decimation of the continent's population. The opposite was true of the following period heralded by the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by 'legitimate' commerce, many African entrepreneurs responded to the demand of the market by expanding their business. Even though this demand came mainly from international trade, the profit percolated into the internal market pursuant to the rule of the surplus theory.

For instance, in certain regions of the continent such as Hausaland, land became so valuable as to be privately owned. These developments, which were formulated into the theory of 'adaptation crisis' by Professor Hopkins about half a century ago, led to a change of leadership in some of the major African polities and, ultimately, to the colonial conquest of the African continent.¹⁸ However, it would seem that one would be hard-pressed for evidence to prove the case for transition. More often than not, there was no radical change either in the political leadership or in the economic field. The common pattern was that, after Abolition, the ruling aristocracy simply extended control over the natural resources still lying idle and established a rent-based economy not unlike the previous exchange of human resources.

As far as plantations were concerned, they were really few and far between. In the Oil Rivers as in the hinterland of Porto Novo, the produce of the existing natural groves was simply tapped to respond to the demand of the international market. In Dahomey, where plantations did exist, they were a direct outcome of clandestine slave trade, not of Abolition.¹⁹ Contrary to a widespread opinion, in the hinterland of Lagos, slave hands were not used to produce cash crop, but rather food for the large households of Yoruba chiefs and kings. The palm oil export of Lagos was supplied mainly from the Weme

valley, the hinterland of Lagos being slightly marginal to the palm oil belt. If, microeconomically, there is no gainsaying that there was the rise of a few merchant princes – albeit their ability to accumulate wealth was restricted by the death tolls – macroeconomically, the domestic economy continued to loom larger than international trade in the GDP of these countries and labor never became free. Transfer and improvement of technologies remained limited except perhaps in Hausaland with its export-driven dying industry.

Admittedly, we tend to put too much weight behind the meaning of the word Abolition. On the ground, Abolition has never been a straight fight between bad and good. As is demonstrated by many contributors to this book, Abolition was a meandering process with a great deal of willing and dealing behind the scenes. For instance, the prosecution of British-born clandestine traders caught red-handed in slave trading was not always straightforward. On the contrary, it was likely to become entangled in lengthy and intractable court procedure. In the few court cases which have survived the ravages of time, it is clear that the law was harder on the African accomplices of these British-born slave traders who were liable to jail, even when they were found to be women.²⁰

Perhaps the so-called 'adaptation crisis' is only in the eyes of the historian. Between pre and post-Abolition African societies on the continent, as indeed in Brazil, there was a great deal of continuity. It is symptomatic that the only change noticed in post-Abolition Dahomey in this book was towards the development of kinship ties with the adoption of the *asen*, this portable iron altar designed to celebrate the ancestors of the royal family in Danxome. According to Professor Bay, this was a cult innovation which was later taken over by the families of commoners. Interestingly enough, *asen* predates by centuries the establishment of the family cult as it was found associated with the worship of the local deities in Africa and in the Diaspora.²¹ This important discovery raises the question of whether the Africans sold into slavery belonged to the same stock as their captors. Was not the Atlantic slave trade one of the tragic outcomes of the spread of family based land-tenure and farming?

The essay on Igbominaland gives a tentative answer to this question. It described the process of expansion and decline of the family ideology in this periphery of the Oyo Alafinate.²² It is, therefore, evident that rather than being addicted to any linear growth, the African societies followed a pattern of cyclical development predicated upon the flow and ebb of trade. Indeed, much as family bonds helped integrate its members within a large community with rights and obligations, they could also serve as discriminatory labels to classify and rank people on a social scale. The contradictions of the family institution became apparent when trade, which was the only cement keeping this

arrangement together, happened to dwindle. This was the case of the Oyo Alafinate, the slow collapse of which according to one contributor predated by decades the Islamic Jihad.²³ As was indicated later by the cases of the Modakeke revolt in Ifè and the Male revolt in Brazil, Islam operated as a rallying ideology for all the downtrodden churned out by the mill of an unjust society. These latter were not fighting for any Islamic cause, but were venting their anger at the discrimination underpinning the kinship system.

Such are the topics covered in this impressive book. They were written by some of the best minds in Western academia whose prose has nurtured my own formative years as an historian. Indeed, it is a good chance for Africa that the issue of the Atlantic slave trade should be addressed so comprehensively by European and American historians of the caliber of Robin Law. Clearly, there is an advantage in writing about this controversial topic from the vantage point of a foreigner. As many expatriate observers would discover to their amazement, the morality of the Atlantic slave trade continues to affect private behavior and public relations in the African countries that took part in this activity. The nasty aftertaste of guilt felt by many Africans is still a powerful deterrent to many a native scholar to openly engage the issue.

But even when they are bold enough to open this controversial file, they often produce a tepid and biased rendition of this tragic episode of their own history.²⁴ Expatriate historians do not labor under any such handicap. They can freely apply their intellectual acumen to uncover all the unspoken aspects of the Atlantic slave trade. This is exactly what Robin Law did when he generously collected and edited the writings of former slave traders. But it is the manner in which this information is arrived at that poses a problem to the historian who would like to make use of it as evidence in his reconstruction of the past. More often than not, what later assumed the character of first hand evidence was concocted from hearsay and rumor pieced together from the testimony of their African partners by the European traders. These latter spent much of their stay on the coast within the precincts of their national forts. Such information is all the more unreliable because it could be copied from one author to the other with no fear of plagiarism as demonstrated by Robin Law's study of Jean Barbot.²⁵ But the rumor which was to become later historical evidence could also originate from false information purposefully spread by coterie having an axe to grind with an African polity, as was the case with Asante and its British protected southern Fante neighbors.²⁶

On the whole, the written material on which this history is based appears flimsy both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, this deficiency may be corrected one day by the chance discovery of a new store of evidence, as suggested by David Henige.²⁷ Where the onus lies is on the

quality side, simply because, according to him, historians are firmly in the grip of their *Zeitgeist*, which keeps them enthralled to a particular vision of the world.²⁸ Indeed, despite all their effort, European historians are not any more objective than their African colleagues in their assessment of the Atlantic slave trade. Domination is an infectious disease which affects to the same degree masters and slaves. That is why no matter how hard European historians may try, they cannot free themselves from the ghost of colonialism which causes their writings to be constantly buffeted between the Charibdis of exoticism and the Scylla of ethnography. I will use two examples to illustrate this point.

The exotic literature which is aimed at a European audience purports to paint the world in sharp contrast so as to raise the consciousness of the European elite. Its objective has never been to study alien cultures in their own right but with the view of what Europe can learn from them. Caricature is, therefore, the most suitable literary device to make sense of the educational goal of *castigare ridendo mores*. That is why the process of 'discovery' and conquest of Africa by Western Europe, which reached its peak in the nineteenth century with Hegel's sibylline pronouncements about the African peoples, is marked by a string of exotic concepts. A few of them, such as the gun-slave-cycle theory and the slave-raiding mode of production apply directly to the Atlantic slave trade, if not Dahomey.

But it is baffling to realize that an historian of the talent of Robin Law should also find it necessary to coin his own exotic concept: revolution of destruction.²⁹ For him the rise of Dahomey in the area of the Slave Coast wreaked havoc and desolation on the previously well organized *Aja* states which had to bear the brunt of Dahomey's addiction to the Atlantic slave trade. This interpretation is not original as such. It is entirely dependent on arguments culled from the writings of the Abolitionist authors of the nineteenth century. The opposite view was also held by their Anti-Abolitionist protagonists in the debate. What it failed to explain is why a revolution of destruction could have lasted for about one hundred and sixty-seven years, that is from the conquest of Ouidah by Agaja in 1727 to the French conquest of Dahomey in 1894.

In reality, the closest that one can get to a revolution of destruction in the recent history of the Slave Coast was the relatively short episode of the Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin (PRPB), which was led by the presumed victims of Robin Law. Moreover, in the case of Dahomey, which had incorporated the pre-*Fon Aja* states into a new political organization, should we understand that history moves backwards rather than forwards as is implied in the concept of revolution of destruction? Finally what is the rationale behind the hypothesis of lumping together in his major study of Ouidah two different political dominations: the Dahomean and the French? Should we

understand that there was only a difference of degree and not of kind between Dahomean rule in Ouidah and French colonial rule there? If the answer to this last question is yes, then are we not facing a subtle attempt to justify colonialism posthumously?

Presumably, even in the expression of their empathy for Africa, the European historians cannot help being selective. They are unable to see the continent as a whole because they are trapped in the Manichean world view of colonialism. Here Robin Law openly takes sides with those he considers to be the victims of the Atlantic slave trade. In perhaps the most brilliant piece in this collection of essays, Professor Tom McCaskie, on the contrary, did not conceal his sympathy with the former perpetrators, whose descendants form the Kumasi-based Ghanaian elite and of which President Kufuor is a member. With tremendous dexterity of narrative

and considerable mastery of *twi*, he mingles oral and written sources to come up with a comprehensive genealogy that fully justifies, historically, the president's claims to political leadership.³⁰ But while it is a very convincing account of the historical background to the rise of the two political traditions which compete today for the exercise of power in Ghana, his analysis appears a little bit reductionist and tends to exonerate colonialism in the establishment of this artificial bi-polarization of the country's political scene.

Yet it is known that it is the rent economy fostered by colonialism on the backs of the Ghanaian masses that entrenched the wealth, exhibited today by the so-called bourgeoisie, as passport to political power. Elsewhere in Africa, where there were no proven natural resources, colonialism did not lend its support to traditional rule. If it

did at all, it was for reasons other than the promotion of any modern African elite. In any case, to what extent is an elite whose members have to underwrite their credentials by British universities still regarded as representative of the Ghanaian peoples whose political experience it pretends to summarize? But Professor McCaskie sees no prospects for Ghana's political future beyond the 'democratic' transfer of power between these two traditions.

For him, this is the sole condition to ensure the continuation of Western financial support. This is exactly the mirage of development against which Kwame Nkrumah, the founder of the second tradition, was warning the Africans about in his writings.³¹ But this limitation of the political debate to the Western-educated elite keeps out of the picture the overwhelming majority of Ghanaians still sharing their African cultural heritage. This presence of the

African culture is conspicuous, though in the role kinship played in shaping the psyche of the elite on both sides of the divide. Family ties determine largely the rules of the political game as could be seen in the elegant description by McCaskie of the socialization of the members of the elite. Indirectly, he is pointing the way to bridging the gap between these two competing traditions, which must reconcile with their African heritage.

To go through these essays is a highly rewarding exercise. One comes out of it a little dizzy as one would from a merry-go-round. African historians deserve this timely distraction even if this means returning to reality with a deep sense of unfulfilled expectations. I would recommend this book as the latest compendium on the Atlantic slave trade after correction of the numerous grammatical mistakes which are an eyesore to its majestic tapestry.

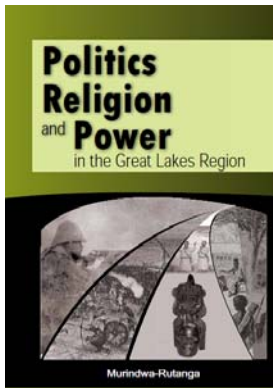
Notes

- 1 On 22 February 2010, Professor Robin Law honored the entire staff of the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Abomey-Calavi by paying a visit to the Department. On this occasion, I delivered an introductory speech in French on the contents of the recently published book. This review article is an English version of the gist of that presentation.
- 2 For a biography of Professor Robin Law, see the introductory chapter of the book. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, 2009, pp. 1-18.
- 3 See P. D. Curtin, 1969, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, Madison : University of Wisconsin Press. See also J.E. Inikori, 'Under Population in Nineteenth Century West Africa : the Rôle of the Export Slave Trade', *African Historical Demography*, 1981, vol. II, pp. 285-313; L. Diop, 1978, 'Le sous-peuplement de l'Afrique Noire', *BIFAN*, série B, XL (1978), pp. 718-862 ; David Henige, 'Measuring the immeasurable : the Atlantic slave trade, West African population and the Pyrrhonian critic', *JAH*, 27, (1986), pp. 295-313.
- 4 See Werner Peukert, 1978, *Der Atlantische Sklavenhandel von Dahomey 1740-1797*, Wirtschaft Anthropologie und Sozialgeschichte, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, GMBH.
- 5 See Sandra T. Barnes, 'The Economic Significance of Inland Coastal Fishing in Seventeenth-Century Lagos', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 51-66.
- 6 See Obarè Bagodo, 'Transatlantic Slave Trade and Endogenous Technological Backwardness in the Bight of Benin Region: An Archaeological Consideration', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 253-266.
- 7 See Gareth Austin, 'The State as Help or Hindrance to Market-Led Economic Growth: West Africa in the Era of "Legitimate Commerce"', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 145-162.
- 8 See Chapurukha M. Kusimba and Rahul C. Oka, 'Trade and Polity in East Africa : Re-Examining Elite Strategies for Acquiring Power', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 67-88.
- 9 See Aribidesi Usman, 'Empires and their Peripheries: A case of Oyo and the Northern Yoruba', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 31-49.
- 10 See Lynne Brydon, 'After Slavery, What Next? Productive Relations in Early Twentieth Century Krepe, and Beyond', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 479-495.
- 11 See J.E. Inikori, 'The Economic Impact of the 1807 British Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 163-182.
- 12 See José Guadalupe Ortega, 'From Obscurity to Notoriety: Cuban Slave Merchants and the Atlantic World', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 287-304.
- 13 See Joao José Reis, 'Domingos Pereira Sodré, a Nago Priest in Nineteenth-Century Bahia', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 387-407.
- 14 See A.G. Hopkins, 'A Lagos Merchant and His Money: I.B. Williams, 1846-1925', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 201-219.
- 15 See Axel Klein, 'Mules or Courriers : The Rôle of Nigerian Drug Courriers in the International Drug Trade', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 411-423.
- 16 See Phia Steyn, 'Shell-BP and the Nigerian Civil War', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 425-443.
- 17 See J.E. Inikori, *op.cit.*, p. 182.
- 18 See K. Onwuka Dike, 1956, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885, An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, and A.G. Hopkins, 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa : Lagos, 1880-92', *EHR*, 1968, pp. 580-605.
- 19 The plantations were established by the ruling slave owning elite in order to feed the slaves awaiting shipment. This situation was not different from that in the Oil Rivers, according to Waddel: see Hope Masterton Waddel, 1970, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 315-320.
- 20 See Silke Strickrodt, 'British Abolitionist Policy on the Ground in West Africa in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 183-200.
- 21 See Edna G. Bay, 'The Kings of Dahomey and the Invention of Ancestral Asen', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 307-322.
- 22 See Aribidesi Usman, *op.cit.*
- 23 See Olatunji Ojo, 'From "Constitutional" and "Northern" Factors to Ethnic/Slave Uprising : Ile-Ife, 1800-1854', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 233-252.
- 24 See Elisée Soumonni, 'From a Port of the Slave Trade to an Urban Community: Robin Law and the History of Ouidah', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 223-231.
- 25 See Robin Law, P.E.H. Hair and Adam Jones, *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712*, Hakluyt Society, 2 vols.
- 26 See Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, 'Rumor of the Human Sacrifice of Two Hundred Girls by Asantehene [King] Mensa Bonsu in 1881-82 and its Consequent Colonial Policy Implications and African Responses', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 97-122.
- 27 See David Henige, 'The Lessons of the Rawlinson Correspondence', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 89-96.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 See Law, quoted by Toyin Falola in the introductory chapter of this book, p.7. Actually, no revolution can endure if it is not based on some degree of popular consent.
- 30 See T. C. McCaskie, 'Asante, Apagyafie and President Kufuor of Ghana: A Historical Interpretation', in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., 2009, pp. 445-477.
- 31 See Kwame Nkrumah, 1964, *Consciencism*, London: Panaf, pp. 72-77.



Politics, Religion and Power in the Great Lakes Region

Murindwa Rutanga



Politics, Religion and Power in the Great Lakes Region covers the political, religious and power relations in the contemporary Great Lakes States: Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Kenya and the Sudan. The work is important because of the nexus between these countries' shared present and past - their political, socio-economic, cultural and historical aspirations. In terms of regional cooperation, they are the countries, save for the DRC and the Sudan, which form the current East African Community (EAC). The book reflects on the complex dynamics and strategies of the ensuing power struggle, bringing forth a unique set of fascinating revelations of patterns of primitive capital accumulation, resistance, human rights violations and the political compromises between traditional enemies when confronted by a common (foreign) enemy. A critical analysis of the political distortion the region suffered brings to light the relevance of these divisive tools on the current trends in the African countries, drawing inferences from the African Great Lakes Region (GLR). The study highlights how the conflicts were finally resolved to avert a serious war, thus bringing about new reforms. This history is instructive to the contemporary reader because of the frequent skirmishes caused by ethnic and religious differences, political and territorial conflicts as well as resource and leadership disputes in the GLR.

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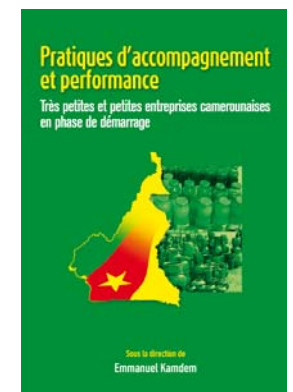
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Cet ouvrage présente les résultats d'une enquête menée auprès des promoteurs de 250 très petites et petites entreprises camerounaises par le Groupe National de Travail (GNT) Cameroun du Conseil pour le Développement de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA). Les résultats de cette enquête révèlent quelques tendances dominantes (fort potentiel humain des promoteurs camerounais, niveau de scolarisation élevé, forte expérience dans le secteur d'activité, rôle déterminant de l'engagement personnel des promoteurs ainsi que des structures informelles dans le processus d'accompagnement des très petites et petites entreprises, importance considérable du capital social (famille, amis, tontines, réseaux de proximité) dans l'activité de ces promoteurs. Cette réalité camerounaise confirme la particularité de la très petite et petite entreprise africaine dont l'insertion dans des réseaux sociaux de proximité constitue une stratégie forte de contournement des difficultés institutionnelles, sociopolitiques et économiques caractéristiques de l'environnement des affaires au Cameroun et en Afrique. Les résultats de cette étude sont révélateurs d'un modèle camerounais émergent d'accompagnement entrepreneurial à forte prégnance du capital humain et du capital social. Par ailleurs, ils sont une source d'interpellation des principaux acteurs du marché de l'accompagnement entrepreneurial quant à l'efficacité des pratiques d'accompagnement des promoteurs et des porteurs de projets d'entreprises.

Pratiques d'accompagnement et performance**Très petites et petites entreprises camerounaises en phase de démarrage**

Emmanuel Kamdem



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Décentralisation et gouvernance locale**Appropriation des instruments de la fiscalité : élaboration du budget de la commune rurale de Kalabancoro**

Moussa Djiré, Amadou Keita, Rokia Traoré Dembélé



Avec la gestion de proximité, les ressources ont été transférées aux communes. Ceci leur permet de prendre en charge leur fonctionnement et d'assurer l'investissement. Seulement, les ressources dont une commune peut disposer peuvent paraître insuffisantes si les besoins ne sont pas hiérarchisés dans l'optique de lui apporter une solution appropriée. C'est ainsi que les collectivités territoriales ont la possibilité d'établir des priorités dans la résolution des problèmes. Les ressources sont destinées à alimenter le budget de chaque commune (emprunts, subventions de l'Etat, impôts et taxes) pour subvenir aux besoins de fonctionnement et au développement. Donc, la gestion de ces ressources doit naturellement se faire dans la logique des principes de la décentralisation et de ceux de la comptabilité publique à travers les différentes structures en charge de la question. La décentralisation postulant la responsabilisation des communes, celles-ci doivent mettre l'accent sur la mobilisation des ressources fiscales pour ne pas continuer à dépendre des ressources venant d'autres acteurs comme l'Etat et les partenaires techniques et financiers. C'est donc la question de la gouvernance de la décentralisation qui est interpellée et qui requiert l'implication de toutes les composantes de la commune pour une mobilisation effective des ressources et de leur utilisation judicieuse. Tout ceci se pose en termes de défis que doivent relever les collectivités territoriales, notamment les communes. La présente étude se propose d'analyser ce processus à travers l'exemple de la commune rurale de Kalabancoro.

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Contextes locaux des conflits et de la reconstruction de la paix**Migration et tensions sociales dans le sud du Mali**

Bakary Camara, Bakary F. Traoré, Bréma E. Dicko, Moro Sidibé

Suite au phénomène de l'appauvrissement des populations, la rareté des terres cultivables et la manipulation des élites politiques et intellectuelles, la crise ivoirienne a éclaté le 19 septembre 2002. Malgré le ralentissement du flux migratoire par la crise économique des années 1980 et 1990, le nombre de maliens en Côte d'Ivoire au début des hostilités est évalué à près de 2 000 000. Une partie de ces migrants revenaient souvent au Mali pour y investir ou pour rendre visite à des parents restés au village. Suite à la conjoncture économique depuis les années 1980 et à l'exacerbation des hostilités contre la communauté dioula, la communauté malienne en Côte d'Ivoire n'était plus la bienvenue. Après l'éclatement du conflit ivoirien, les ressortissants maliens ont été victimes de xénophobie, d'arrestations arbitraires, d'exécutions sommaires et de spoliation de leurs biens à Abidjan, Daloa, Bouaké et d'autres localités de la Côte d'Ivoire, provoquant ainsi le déplacement de milliers de rapatriés vers le Mali. Cette situation constitue une nouvelle forme de « migration » ou de mobilité au Mali. Par ailleurs, depuis bien avant le conflit ivoirien, les conflits libérien et sierra-léonais avaient provoqué un important mouvement migratoire de réfugiés vers le Mali qui a contribué à la prolifération des armes légères et créé une situation d'insécurité dans ce pays. La présente étude ne s'intéresse pas spécialement au conflit ivoirien, elle étudie plutôt ses conséquences socioéconomiques sur le Mali. Elle analyse uniquement le rapatriement en masse des immigrés maliens de Côte d'Ivoire suite au conflit ivoirien et la problématique de leur réinsertion dans le tissu économique malien.



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Appropriation des instruments de gestion des ressources naturelles par les acteurs locaux de la commune de Madiama, cercle de Djenné

Bréhima Kassibo, Boureima Touré



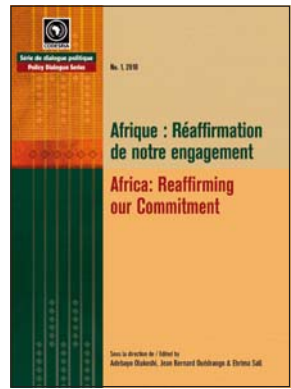
Conçue comme un élargissement du pouvoir de l'Etat du centre vers le niveau local, la réforme sur la décentralisation est perçue comme un processus qui permet de faire participer les populations à l'élaboration et à la gestion des politiques qui concernent leurs territoires. Au niveau local, sa mise en oeuvre met en rapport direct et indirect plusieurs « acteurs » relevant des catégories variées et ayant le plus souvent des intérêts divergents. Ce faisant, son appropriation constitue un enjeu fondamental pour ces derniers, notamment pour la « société civile », si cette dernière doit jouer un rôle de contre-pouvoir face aux autorités communales afin d'établir un équilibre entre les acteurs de « l'arène locale ». C'est cette dynamique analysée dans la présente étude qui se réfère au cas de la commune de Madiama, cercle de Djenné. Ainsi, à travers l'intervention des bailleurs de fonds et des ONG, il s'agit d'évaluer le niveau d'appropriation des instruments de gestion environnementale par les acteurs locaux et l'impact de leur intervention sur les plans social, politique et économique. Ceci amène à analyser les relations entre les institutions communales et la sphère de la gestion environnementale à travers l'implantation des projets de gestion des ressources naturelles. Ainsi, il s'agira d'évaluer l'effectivité des instruments de gestion des ressources naturelles transférés aux acteurs locaux dans la phase actuelle de post-projet, et de voir ainsi comment la création et le renforcement d'organes parallèles de gestion, tels que le Comité communal de gestion des ressources naturelles, peuvent avoir un impact sur la gouvernance démocratique locale.

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L'Afrique, c'est connu. C'est la pauvreté, les guerres, les génocides, les réfugiés, le sida, la dictature, les coups d'État et la liste est longue de fléaux qui marquent encore l'histoire contemporaine du continent. Et les facteurs responsables ? Une autre liste peut être établie : l'esclavage, le colonialisme, l'impérialisme, la corruption, etc.

Mais l'Afrique n'est pas seulement la terre du mal-être, elle est aussi une



terre d'espoir en une vie meilleure pour toutes ses générations, des séniors témoins d'une tradition lointaine de solidarité et de responsabilité aux enfants

comme projet d'avenir digne du continent sur la scène internationale.

C'est dans cet esprit que le CODESRIA a lancé une série de dialogues politiques auprès de plusieurs personnalités africaines (chercheurs, hommes politiques, personnalités de la société civile et autres) suivant la célèbre formule d'un leader africain: « penser avec nos propres têtes, en fonction de nos propres réalités ».

Cet ouvrage rassemble quelques contributions à ce dialogue de chercheurs africains qui traitent de trois grands axes : la citoyenneté, la gouvernance et l'avenir de l'Afrique dans la communauté mondiale.

La citoyenneté

Le sociologue algérien Ali El Kenz met l'accent d'abord sur l'importance de la participation de l'intellectuel africain au débat sur les finalités de l'action politique et, ce non simplement en qualité d'expert apportant son savoir et son savoir-faire technique, fut-il important, et qui ne remplacera jamais la réflexion sur les valeurs au fondement du politique.

C'est dans cette direction qu'Ali El Kenz esquisse une réflexion sur le pouvoir politique et l'autorité en menant une comparaison entre la situation de l'Union Européenne et celle de l'Algérie, les deux ayant connu une crise de confiance entre gouvernants et gouvernés. Alors que les Européens essaient de trouver une issue par le dialogue, les Algériens, eux, ont sombré dans la violence, et c'est ce modèle algérien qui semble, selon El Kenz, en cours dans les sociétés africaines.

Enfin, Ali El Kenz termine sa contribution en la situant sur l'axe du temps : le repli communautaire et sur le passé en général ne trouve pas sa raison seulement dans un présent difficile, mais aussi dans la perte de perspective d'avenir, d'un horizon politique qui donne sens à l'existence et de l'espoir pour les Africains comme c'était le cas après les indépendances. C'est cette projection dans l'avenir que doit prendre en compte tout projet politique pour l'Afrique.

La gouvernance

La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage traite de la responsabilité des élites et des

Un dialogue politique pour l'Afrique

Sidi Mohammed Mohammedi

Afrique : Réaffirmation de notre engagement

par A. Olukoshi, J. B. Ouédraogo et E. Sall (dirs.)

Série de dialogue politique, n°1, CODESRIA, 2010, 89 pages, ISBN : 978-2-68978-250-1

citoyens ordinaires. Partant du constat que le monde contemporain se caractérise par la globalisation et l'hégémonie de la pensée néolibérale, Aminata Diaw de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop pose la question de la responsabilité des élites intellectuelles et politiques africaines par rapport à « l'engagement et la prise en charge de la construction de l'Afrique » (p. 28).

L'auteure expose d'abord une périodisation de l'époque postcoloniale de l'Afrique : après les indépendances, il y avait cette euphorie et cet enthousiasme dans la conception et la mise en œuvre d'un projet de développement nationaliste. Mais cette période tourne court et vient l'âge du désenchantement : les politiques ont trahi le projet nationaliste. Enfin, nous sommes à présent à l'âge d'oscillation entre la renaissance symbolisée par l'Afrique du Sud et la résignation symbolisée par le génocide du Rwanda.

En se basant sur cette rétrospective historique et sur l'hypothèse d'une rupture entre nationalisme et panafricanisme, A. Diaw s'interroge dans un deuxième moment sur la responsabilité des élites africaines dans une posture prospective. Elle avance qu'une telle responsabilité ne peut être appréhendée qu'à partir d'une rupture d'avec l'illusion messianique : c'est cette illusion forgée et entretenue par les élites intellectuelles et politiques dans leur euphorie développementaliste qui a effacé « le citoyen », acteur cardinal de tout projet démocratique et panafricain.

Enfin, dans la dernière partie de sa contribution, A. Diaw appelle à l'innovation et à l'initiation politique. Elle appelle les politiques surtout à redonner l'espoir aux populations africaines, non dans une logique des hommes providentiels, mais des hommes rationnels ayant le sens de la mesure, de discussion et de mobilisation des efforts pour le bien-être de tous les citoyens. C'est ici une responsabilité non seulement politique mais aussi éthique.

Adekunle Amuwo de l'African Association of Political Science traite, lui, de la responsabilité des citoyens ordinaires, mais il peint d'abord un tableau global où se situent ces citoyens. Ces derniers, affirme A. Amuwo, sont plus des sujets que des citoyens aux yeux des leaders et des régimes africains et la relation entre gouvernants et gouvernés est désormais loin des cadres institutionnels et éthiques de la gouvernance.

Il y avait certes une certaine relation entre peuple et leaders dans les années 1960, mais elle a été brisée après

l'arrivée des partis uniques et des militaires au pouvoir. Et, par analogie à l'Occident ou le Nord, la démocratie ultérieure est vidée de son sens politique et est devenue une simple stratégie d'hégémonie et de domination.

D'après A. Amuwo, les programmes d'ajustement structurel ont dramatisé davantage la situation dans la mesure où là où ils sont appliqués, les responsabilités sociales de l'État paraissent les premières à être affectées, d'où l'approfondissement du fossé séparant les citoyens des gouvernants.

Quels sont donc les facteurs qui favorisent une participation active des citoyens dans la pratique gouvernementale ? A. Amuwo en donne trois :

- La conscience de leur place dans le jeu politique, aussi bien à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de l'État-nation ;
- La connaissance de la balance des forces entre eux, les leaders et les forces sociales en présence ;
- La recherche de la somme-zéro dans leur relation avec les gouvernants selon l'expérience et l'usage et non selon l'attitude de confiance ou de non-confiance totale.

Enfinement, A. Amuwo présente quelques considérations pouvant minimiser ou maximiser ces facteurs et qui s'orientent dans leur ensemble dans le sens de préserver les droits humains fondamentaux des citoyens et les droits politiques en premier lieu, l'objectif à atteindre étant la participation active des citoyens dans la prise de décision concernant les intérêts communs de la collectivité. C'est ainsi que se renouvelle le contrat social entre gouvernants et gouvernés et que se transforment les droits constitutionnels en droits sociaux, conclut A. Amuwo.

L'avenir de l'Afrique dans la communauté mondiale

Partant de la fameuse thèse de Marx sur l'interprétation et la transformation du monde, Souleymane Bachir Diagne de Columbia University (USA) plaide pour une participation des philosophes africains, par leur réflexion, à la transformation de la réalité africaine en partant des problèmes eux-mêmes selon le précepte de Husserl tout en ayant une attitude prospective. Alors, d'après cette démarche, S. B. Diagne part du problème-paradoxe que l'Afrique est « jeune » d'un côté et « non ouverte » d'un autre côté. Comment advenir donc à une société ouverte en Afrique ?

Pour répondre à cette question, S. B. Diagne propose plusieurs pistes de réflexion :

A propos des biotechnologies, il y a lieu pour les philosophes africains de

participer au débat mondial sur la « nature humaine » (« quand, dans le vivant, l'humain commence t-il et quand se termine t-il ? » - p. 44) et sur l'environnement.

La question épineuse de l'identité est un autre thème de réflexion. Comment peut-elle ne pas l'être après le génocide au Rwanda ? Il faut cesser de penser la question, avance S. B. Diagne, en termes d'adversité extérieure, ancienne et nouvelle, mais en ce qu'elle engendre de drames intérieurs qui n'ont pas exclusivement des mobiles religieux.

C'est ici qu'apparaît l'importance au premier plan d'une éducation à la citoyenneté, ouverte à la diversité culturelle et assurant la sécurité humaine. Cette éducation peut même aboutir à la redéfinition de la relation entre citoyenneté et ethnicité comme l'a tenté S. B. Diagne : alors que la pensée libérale veut que la citoyenneté soit basée sur la catégorie abstraite de l'individu et partant elle est disjointe de l'ethnicité, une autre vision, plus « réaliste » selon Diagne, insiste sur le caractère utopique de la neutralité ethnoculturelle de l'État et donc il faut penser la construction citoyenne en termes communautaires et non individualistes.

Enfin, l'auteur appelle à une « culture politique du temps », à une attitude prospective ouverte sur l'avenir qui participe à la sortie de la crise du sens qui semble frapper sans retour l'Afrique, voilà ce que peut faire un travail philosophique africain pour transformer le monde africain.

Non loin du monde de la réflexion, Amina Mama du Women's Resources and Research Center (USA) présente une contribution sur la relation entre connaissance et pouvoir en Afrique. Elle commence par énumérer les facteurs qui ont mis en exergue l'importance de la connaissance et sa production : l'émergence de la société du savoir, la « marketinisation » de l'enseignement supérieur, l'hégémonie américaine, les enjeux sociopolitiques et économiques liés au continent. L'auteure évoque particulièrement la question du financement du secteur tertiaire en général et de l'enseignement supérieur en particulier et la responsabilité des intellectuels et politiques africains dans l'élaboration des politiques d'éducation et de production de connaissance pour faire face aux défis du développement du continent.

Pour ce faire, l'Afrique, affirme l'auteure, peut se baser sur une longue tradition éducationnelle : des soucis ancestraux de transmission du savoir à l'hypothétique héritage scolaire colonial et aux efforts en matière d'éducation nationale après les indépendances. Mais les défis restent énormes pour construire un système éducatif et de production de connaissance qui réponde aux besoins fondamentaux des populations africaines et aux exigences d'un développement interne et surtout égalitaire. Une approche genre en matière d'enseignement supérieur

présentée par l'auteure montre bien l'énorme travail qui reste à faire.

Et pour contribuer à ce travail, A. Mama avance quelques réflexions pour une entente alternative entre la connaissance et le pouvoir dans les trois volets suivants :

- *Les institutions de la connaissance* : Il est connu historiquement la résistance des universités aux changements, mais à l'heure actuelle, elles sont obligées de se restructurer. En attendant, plusieurs autres institutions ont vu le jour et ont constitué de véritables alternatives de productions de connaissance comme le CODESRIA à Dakar et SARIPS à Harare.
- *Nouveaux paradigmes de recherche et d'enseignement* : Pour la recherche, ces institutions se sont positionnées consciemment loin des systèmes dominants de pensée et se sont ancrées consciemment aussi dans les traditions intellectuelles africaines. Quant à l'enseignement, il est orienté plutôt vers le sens de responsabilité et de citoyenneté en pratiquant des méthodes actives et participatives.
- *Nouveaux réseaux et technologies* : De nouveaux réseaux sont instaurés au niveau continental et transnational pour faire face à « l'hégémonie néolibérale » en matière de production de connaissance. Le CODESRIA en est un exemple.

Ces exemples montrent la nécessité de développer une nouvelle entente panafricaine entre connaissance et pouvoir. Ce dernier est dispersé, il n'est plus l'apanage des bureaucrates

étatiques et des armées, d'autres acteurs entrent en scène : ONG, formations intergouvernementales, organisations mondiales, etc. La production de la connaissance est aussi dispersée et n'est plus l'apanage des universités. Sans tarder davantage donc, il faut travailler en prenant en considération ces nouvelles données de l'Afrique contemporaine.

Anthony I. Asiwaju de l'African University Institute (Nigéria) interroge pour sa part la problématique de la renaissance africaine par la question lancinante des frontières. En effet, derrière cette question se trouvent deux tendances antinomiques : la division et l'intégration. L'Afrique a hérité de l'époque coloniale des frontières qu'elle a gardées après les indépendances. Or, pour les uns, ces frontières sont des causes supplémentaires de crise que connaît le continent, tandis que pour les autres ces mêmes frontières, ou plus exactement le retraçage de ces frontières peut participer à la résolution de ces crises.

L'apport d'Anthony I. Asiwaju est de proposer une réflexion se concentrant sur les zones frontalières entre États comme étape intermédiaire vers une intégration plus large. Cette réflexion a trouvé sa concrétisation dans un projet pilote entre le Mali, le Burkina Faso et la Côte d'Ivoire. Mais de tels projets et plus généralement le projet d'intégration à l'échelle continentale, nécessitent la réunion d'autres conditions d'ordre politique (démocratie, décentralisation) et éducatif comme perspective stratégique à long terme.

La dernière contribution est celle de Nkolo Foé de l'Université de Yaoundé. Il revient sur le contenu idéologique de la politique d'ajustement structurel. Cette politique, selon l'auteur, est loin d'être une simple pratique économique et sociale. Au contraire, elle constitue une vision globale du monde basée d'un côté sur une perception atomique de la société (la société comme agrégat de subjectivités irréductibles), et d'un autre côté sur la foi inconditionnelle dans les lois du marché et partant de la nécessité de la neutralité de l'État, voire son éclipse. C'est en fin de compte le libéralisme classique. Mais il y a d'autres courants idéologiques tels le pragmatisme, le postmodernisme ou l'anarchisme qui viennent compléter le tableau à l'aide, aussi paradoxal soit-il, de quelques chants africains qui s'interrogent sur les conditions « légitimes » de l'utilisation de la violence dans l'accumulation du capital et l'acceptation docile de cette violence par ses victimes.

Nkolo Foé présente aussi la finalité et la justification de la politique d'ajustement structurel. Selon l'auteur, cette politique a comme finalité la destruction des communautés et des États-nations pour « libérer » les individus. Or, ces individus se trouvent fragilisés et livrés aux forces aveugles du marché sans protection sociale, d'où l'importance de consolider les liens communautaires et de l'État-nation comme ligne stratégique de résistance, surtout si on réalise que la justification

dernière de cette politique d'ajustement structurel, affirme l'auteur, est le pillage organisé tout comme à l'époque romaine.

« La théorie de l'ordre social spontané est une fable », poursuit N. Foé, et le capitalisme a une essence autoritaire, il est même anti-libéral si on prend la distinction de F. Braudel entre économie du marché (fondée sur la concurrence) et le capitalisme (fondé sur le monopole). La politique d'ajustement structurel ne fait qu'étendre cette essence autoritaire capitaliste et monopoliste à la périphérie du système mondial.

En guise de conclusion

On ne peut résumer dans une petite recension la richesse et la profondeur de cet ouvrage. Moment de pause réflexive sur des questions stratégiques pour l'Afrique en ce nouveau millénaire, il est aussi un point de départ pour d'autres réflexions sur d'autres questions mais plus en détails, car penser la politique ne se réduit pas à penser sur sa part idéale, normative et philosophique. Les questions pratiques, d'organisation, de programmes, d'échéances, d'acteurs et de ressources sont aussi importantes que les questions de finalités et des idéaux. Un ou plusieurs autres ouvrages sur ces questions et de la même profondeur que celui-ci pourront sans doute constituer d'autres volets de ce dialogue socio-politique sur et pour l'Afrique.



Cet ouvrage qui se veut sans prétention scientifique comme tient à le préciser Jean-Jacques Deluz, s'adresse aux architectes, enseignants et autres politiques inévitablement impliqués dans les processus de fabrication de la ville. Après un *coup d'œil autobiographique*, auquel s'est résigné cet homme solitaire et secret qui a fini par adopter le *je*, il aborde l'objet du livre qui est structuré en quatre parties thématiques : *la ville, le logement urbain, Alger-Algérie, l'enseignement et la création*. Plusieurs sujets y sont abordés autour des problématiques urbaines et architecturales sous forme de *réflexions, notes et propos* mêlant les *commentaires théoriques* aux récits dont certains ont valeur de *témoignage*. C'est donc avec un véritable intérêt et autant de plaisir que se lit cette compilation composée de recueils qui constituent le résultat d'une vie de lutte(s) : « Le travail que je propose ici est de constituer le recueil d'un certain nombre d'écrits que j'ai semés dans mon enseignement, dans des revues ou des colloques afin d'en vérifier la solidité. Je ne pense pas qu'il s'agisse d'une théorie de l'urbanisme ou de l'architecture : j'ai toujours été sceptique sur le bien-fondé de toutes les théories dans ce domaine, théories qui, tout en ayant qualité de stimulation, (mais aussi de stérilisation) sont à la clé de toutes les illusions et justifient tant

Réflexion(s) sur l'architecture et l'urbanisme en Algérie : de la période coloniale à nos jours

Ammara Bekkouche

Le tout et le fragment

par Jean-Jacques Deluz

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d'erreurs, jusqu'à ce que d'autres théories les remplacent et entraînent à d'autres illusions et à d'autres erreurs ».

C'est en effet sans équivoque ni complaisance aucune que Jean-Jacques Deluz tient à réitérer ses mises en garde et à exprimer ses critiques à l'égard de la production architecturale en Algérie, une situation par ailleurs, qu'il *e s t i m e* transposable au Maghreb et à l'Afrique. Tout en décrivant l'inextricable complexité d'un tel domaine, il s'explique en reliant au bilan négatif qu'il nous présente, d'une part les ambiguïtés de son enseignement et d'autre part, le règne d'une grande confusion dans le système réglementaire et administratif.



Un bilan négatif mais pas forcément pessimiste

L'objectif de ce bilan non dénué d'espoir est une invitation à poursuivre la réflexion pour cerner les références et analyser les tendances afin d'éviter les leurres, qu'il s'agisse du stéréotype de l'architecture industrialisée ou de l'architecture de prestige des gros bureaux étrangers. Manifestement, *l'architecture spectacle* qui a les faveurs des médias est pour lui un artifice dont il convient de mesurer la menace sur les influences d'autant qu'elles semblent s'installer durablement dans les institutions d'enseignement. À l'appui de ces recommandations, l'expérience hors du commun de la ville nouvelle de Sidi Abdallah, entre autres, occupe une place importante dans l'engagement de Jean-Jacques Deluz qui au passage, revient sporadiquement sur les nombreux démêlés qu'il a eu à affronter, souvent en vain.

Quelle sorte de ville? et Comment définir aujourd'hui une ville? sont des questions, malgré leur récurrence et leur antériorité dans l'histoire de l'urbanisme, toujours embarrassantes compte tenu de la multiplicité des points de vue et des amalgames commodes pour dévier les difficultés. Au centre des dangers qui guettent la production qualitative urbanistique et architecturale, JJD met en exergue *l'incohérence et l'uniformité*. L'une présentée comme étant une conséquence de la sectorisation soumise à l'urbanisme de contrôle; l'autre renvoie au modèle occidental type *clé en main* reproduit par l'industrie du bâtiment.

Plusieurs aspects puisés dans les abondantes épreuves et études de Jean-Jacques Deluz sont en outre exposés, explicités, commentés pour déterminer et évaluer les rapports du monde développé avec celui du Tiers-monde. Son pressentiment carrément à l'encontre des visions dominantes se nourrit de ses continuelles observations des pratiques de fonctionnement et de réalisation du cadre bâti : « On raisonne comme si le Tiers-monde – ou les États en voie de développement qui cherchent à s'en sortir – était en retard de quelques décades et que son devenir le condamnerait à suivre – toujours en retard – les traces imposées du développement ». C'est ainsi qu'en Algérie et partout ailleurs dans les pays anciennement colonisés, des zones

d'habitations sous forme de grands ensembles standardisés ont été réalisés avec 20 ans de retard.¹

La ville nouvelle de Sidi Abdellah

Pour mieux comprendre la vision de Jean-Jacques Deluz et les leçons à en tirer (même si là n'était point son intention), il nous livre le déroulement d'une expérience passionnante, au demeurant unique, de concevoir et projeter une ville nouvelle : Sidi Abdellah, non loin d'Alger, sur laquelle il travaille depuis 1997. Le concept nécessite des éclaircissements dont les composantes théoriques, une fois éludées, ne reflètent pas les obstacles à franchir quand on est dans la réalité des lacunes de procédures et des conflits d'intérêt. « La pratique a montré [...] que ni les maîtres d'ouvrage, ni les entreprises, ni les maîtres d'œuvre, dans leur majorité, n'étaient prêts à accepter le dialogue, ou plus simplement à comprendre des directives unificatrices leur paraissant carrément ésotériques : c'était le cas des "plans d'épannelage", ce qui m'a contraint à recourir au "plan de masse", définissant essentiellement la nature des espaces et les silhouettes du bâti ».

Entre autres conditions de mise en œuvre, les problèmes à résoudre relatifs à la programmation et à la parcellisation du site, celui du support juridique pèse défavorablement sur la démarche et la cohérence du projet : cette « [...] condition manquait et reste un problème ». Aussi la confusion n'a pas manqué de nuire à la gestion du projet contraint à des affronts et des dysfonctionnements administratifs et financiers. Le supposé discernement entre le contenu de la Charte de l'habitat à Alger et ceux de la réglementation ou des normes à appliquer n'a jamais fait l'objet d'un quelconque consensus pour mettre à niveau les a priori et les objectifs attendus. Cette démarche est d'autant plus essentielle qu'elle s'inscrit dans une évolution de production architecturale qui cautionne un certain mimétisme ambiant pour lequel Jean-Jacques Deluz n'est pas tendre : « L'architecture contemporaine – celle de la seconde moitié du XXe siècle – se distingue par le vedettariat des architectes et l'objet architectural considéré en soi comme une œuvre singulière. Le développement des technologies, les idéologies néo-libérales, l'abrutissement médiatiques, ont favorisé ce dévoiement architectural ». Comment faire autrement et comment surtout enseigner cette matière pour laquelle il a voué de nombreuses années de pratiques et d'engagement. S'étant inlassablement et concrètement impliqué dans les réformes, les méthodes et les débats dont il nous fait part, il avouera, non sans amertume, que *l'enseignement a été pour [lui] un combat*. Il concerne plus de deux décennies partagées entre l'Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts d'Alger (ENABA) en 1964 où il fut parmi les premiers enseignants et l'Ecole Polytechnique d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme (EPAU) qu'il quitta en 1988.² Pour cette période, il avouera notamment : « Lorsque je regarde le décor architectural de ces vingt dernières années autour d'Alger et dans tout le pays, que je pense que des centaines

d'architectes sortis de l'école en sont en partie responsables, je ressens, sinon de l'amertume, au moins une certaine inquiétude : est-ce que l'enseignement sert à quelque chose, ou alors avons-nous été de mauvais enseignants, ou encore la société broie-t-elle les individus au point de leur faire perdre ce qu'on croyait leur avoir appris ? ».

Au sujet de l'enseignement et de la création

La part réservée à cette partie de l'ouvrage, en tant qu'œuvre d'une vie, culmine par son omniprésence implicite et son aboutissement à susciter des interrogations spécifiques au domaine de l'architecture. Pour cette raison, elle nous intéresse au plus haut point du fait des nombreuses équivoques qui caractérisent cette discipline en perpétuelle confrontation soit avec les règles d'un vague académisme, soit avec les aléas d'une improbable application des connaissances acquises. Quel contenu et quelle direction donner à la recherche quand on est architecte ? Jean-Jacques Deluz nous livre ses pensées dans le chapitre intitulé *Proposition pour une recherche en architecture* en concluant sur *Faire autre chose...Hypothèse de travail, Direction d'études*. Par ce texte, il nous invite simplement à constater la production blâmable du logement et à identifier les séries de problèmes inhérents à une vision anti-urbaine de la ville. Mais au centre de la réflexion, il s'agit de retenir et de partager sa *...conviction que des solutions existent dans la simplicité et le didactisme, contre le simplisme imposé par la technocratie*. Il nous rappelle et précise que toutefois, s'il termine son raisonnement par une sorte de proposition architecturale, c'est parce que c'est son métier : « [...] ce n'est pas tant pour prétendre donner la solution que pour montrer la relation qui peut s'établir entre des données objectives – qui devraient faire l'objet de recherches sérieuses menées par des équipes où les disciplines de l'économie, de la géographie, de la sociologie, du droit soient représentées – et des problèmes à caractère purement architectural ».

A titre d'exemple, pointant du doigt les risques de conjonctions et autres réductions du problème de rapport ville/campagne, Jean-Jacques Deluz, arguments et justifications à l'appui, soutient que d'autres solutions sont possibles. Sans occulter la mesure de la complexité (tensions de voisinage, moyens et compétences des entreprises...), la densité, la diversité typologique, l'échelle des opérations, les équipements publics... sont autant de paramètres à mettre en équation pour réviser la propension hasardeuse de l'étalement urbain au détriment des terres cultivables. Le cas d'Alger et de la Mitidja est ici suffisamment éloquent pour consentir aux appréhensions que Jean-Jacques Deluz nous lègue au terme de ses démonstrations.

Alger, entre hasards et projets

Lorsque Jean-Jacques Deluz débarque à Alger en 1956, il se consacre d'abord à un travail en agence où il rencontre

nombre de figures qui ont marqué l'histoire architecturale et urbaine de l'Algérie coloniale. Au centre de ses souvenirs, plusieurs catégories de personnalités sont évoquées telles que Pierre Dalloz, Gerald Hanning, Robert Hansberger, Jean de Maisonseul, Pierre Emery, André Ravereau³ ... Ces premiers contacts avec le milieu serviront plus tard quand lui fut confiée en 1997, l'étude de la ville nouvelle de Sidi Abdellah. Entre temps, le hasard a voulu qu'il rejoigne l'enseignement puis l'ETAU, un bureau d'études étatique où il passa une *malheureuse année*.

Alger en fait, au regard de la bibliographie qui lui a été consacrée, est dans ce volume, une parenthèse présentée en ouverture pour lui donner une assise visant à revenir sur les questions du patrimoine. En titrant un chapitre *Architecture coloniale ou architecture en territoire colonisé? (1995)*, Jean-Jacques Deluz introduit une nuance pour poser les *problèmes de l'appropriation* autour de la question de savoir si *l'architecture coloniale doit...figurer, dans une histoire de l'art exhaustive ..., à l'intérieur d'une catégorie à part où la qualification coloniale primerait sur la qualification architecturale?* En citant plusieurs exemples pour Alger tels que le Palais du Gouvernement (1930), l'Aéro-habitat (une transposition de l'unité d'habitation de Le Corbusier), la Cité des Allobroges au val d'Hydra, la Cité des Palmiers, l'époque Jonnart, les ensembles de Pouillon..., il en déduit que le *problème du patrimoine architectural est avant tout un problème culturel* menant le raisonnement général soit à justifier des démolitions soit à laisser se dégrader jusqu'à l'état de ruine.

Mais le patrimoine c'est aussi pour Jean-Jacques Deluz, une occasion de toujours revenir sur sa conception en se référant aux écrits de Le Corbusier concernant Algérie : « L'architecture arabe nous donne un enseignement précieux. Elle s'apprécie à la marche, avec le pied ; c'est en marchant, en se déplaçant que l'on voit se développer les ordonnances de l'architecture. C'est un principe contraire à l'architecture baroque qui est conçue sur le papier, autour d'un point fixe théorique. Je préfère l'enseignement de l'architecture arabe ».⁴ Il s'agit en fait de tempérer une certaine vision du patrimoine qui le muséifie en privilégiant une période au

détriment d'une autre ou en donnant la primauté aux monuments historiques.

En guise de conclusion

L'ouvrage que nous propose Jean-Jacques Deluz, et dont il a vu le produit peu avant sa mort (2009)⁵, est sans aucun doute un héritage dont la valeur instructive peut s'exercer de plusieurs manières:

- Les architectes praticiens y trouveront ce que *Faire une ville* veut dire quand toutes les conditions ne sont pas réunies et qu'il faut affronter les lacunes d'une situation, négocier, expliquer en gardant à l'esprit que le dernier mot est du côté des financiers.
- Les chercheurs auront le choix entre les différentes propositions relatives à la spécificité de cette discipline pour problématiser et élaborer des hypothèses à la manière de ceux qui ont ouvert des voies et parmi lesquels sont cités Hassan Fathy, Le Corbusier... Des émules existent en Algérie, à en croire Jean-Jacques Deluz, avec qui il faut espérer que leurs travaux s'imposeront un jour et qu'ils feront école.
- Dans cette lignée où se distinguent les maîtres de l'architecture, les architectes enseignants, pourront y puiser et développer les quelques réflexions et approches pédagogiques où se reflètent les visions centrées sur l'aspect pratique et professionnalisant de cette discipline. Pour le moins et à l'instar de ces maîtres, les croquis qui illustrent le livre, sont quasiment tous dessinés à la main: geste essentiel pour représenter une pensée et une sensibilité, ce fut ma réponse à des étudiants qui se questionnaient sur le bien-fondé d'une technique qu'ils jugent archaïque. Leur entêtement à n'utiliser que des logiciels de dessins assistés par ordinateur s'ajoute aux multiples tracas qui préoccupent les enseignants en mal de persuasion face à ce raz de marée technologique.

En sus de son couronnement d'une vie professionnelle, cet ouvrage, enfin, est à comprendre comme son titre de notoriété dans lequel se perçoit une petite revanche: celle d'avoir *tout* dit (ou presque) avec détermination mais *sans mot de trop*⁶. Le ton y est engagé, les sujets pertinents et riches en idées, le fond novateur et même provocateur. Sans doute est-ce là l'ultime message de cet architecte suisse qui a choisi l'Algérie pour vivre, ce "Prof" qu'un certain conformisme universitaire n'a jamais affecté ?

Notes

- 1 Tel retard qui a permis aux pays fournisseurs d'améliorer leurs techniques industrialisées de construction après avoir vendu aux pays sous-développés, celles qui avaient fait leur temps chez eux.
- 2 L'ENABA comprenait les sections Architecture et Beaux-Arts qui utilisaient la même enceinte pour leur enseignement respectif. L'architecture fut délocalisée dans les années 70 vers l'EPAU, institution nouvellement créée.
- 3 Voir le texte de Ammara Bekkouche, "Pour une architecture algérienne", in *État des savoirs*, ss direction Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun et Mustapha Haddab, pp. 503-513, Oran, Ed CRASC, 2008.
- 4 Le Corbusier, *Œuvres complètes*, 1929-34, cité en p. 198.
- 5 Hommage à Jean-Jacques Deluz, « *L'Homme qui marche* », par Ammara Bekkouche, in *Insaniyat* N° 44-45, Oran, CRASC, 2009.
- 6 Selon l'expression de ses collègues et amis de longue date Manuelle Roche et André Ravereau.



L'intérêt de Mohamed Kerrou pour le hijâb est récent. C'est la médiatisation et la politisation de ce phénomène, non en Tunisie, son pays, mais en Europe et notamment en France, qui l'a amené à réfléchir sur la question. Il convient de souligner que l'objet d'étude de M. Kerrou est le hijâb et non le niqâb (le voile intégral). Ce qui intéresse M. Kerrou, ce n'est pas le hijâb classique mais les nouvelles manifestations vestimentaires du hijâb qu'il appelle clairement « nouveaux voiles » et les enjeux politiques et de société qu'elles impliquent. Dans ce livre, l'auteur y analyse cette pratique dans l'espace public en Europe mais également dans les pays musulmans.

L'auteur relie l'avènement de ce nouveau phénomène à une montée du pouvoir féminin dans les sphères publiques. Le voile exprime des choses significatives sur les individus et sur la société et se veut porteur d'un discours révélateur d'un rapport organique entre identité et altérité. La symbolique identitaire de cette pratique favorise ainsi la visibilité des femmes dans l'espace public et remet en cause l'ancien ordre social et moral. Au sein de cette logique identitaire qui se déploie dans le cadre de la mondialisation, le revoilement est un phénomène social doté, de la part des femmes d'une stratégie politique de conquête de l'espace public.

L'espace public dans le monde est devenu le théâtre d'un mélange vestimentaire où s'enchevêtrent des corps vêtus d'habits inspirés de diverses traditions culturelles et d'effets de mode à travers lesquels s'expriment le souci de la différence et l'obsession de la ressemblance.

Comment lire ce signe vestimentaire qui, malgré de nombreuses contributions de valeur, demeure largement « impensé » par le savant et non maîtrisé par le politique ? Comment interpréter ce symbole dont la fonction sociale est moins de cacher ou de taire que de montrer et de dire, voire de manifester et de protester ? Ces questions fondamentales sont posées par l'auteur.

En vue d'étayer cette thèse, plusieurs niveaux d'analyse constitués par le vestimentaire, le corporel, l'esthétique, l'éthique, le politique et l'économique mondialisés seront, tour à tour, abordés avec la perspective d'un croisement progressif afin de saisir les significations du « voile islamique » en rapport avec la question des identités des sphères publiques. En effet, la trilogie – voile, identité et sphère publique – rend compte de la configuration et des variations d'un phénomène social complexe qui tient à la fois de l'esthétique, du ludique, de la stratégie matrimoniale et politique protestataire, de la distinction sexuelle et culturelle, de l'interconnexion entre le privé et le public et du conflit réel ou supposé entre l'Islam et l'Occident. Signe public par excellence, le voile est à penser en relation avec la théorie habermassienne et post-habermassienne des sphères publiques.¹

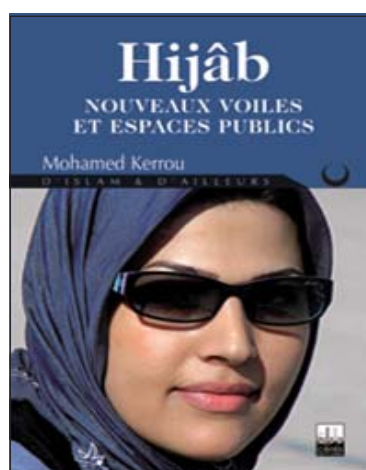
Voiles, identités et visibilité des femmes musulmanes dans l'espace public

Khedidja Mokeddem

Hijâb : nouveaux voiles et espaces publics

par Mohamed Kerrou

Editions Cérès, Paris, 2010, 205 pages,
ISBN : 978-9973-19-738-2. 13 euros



L'objectif de l'auteur est de rendre intelligibles les jeux et les enjeux de la question du hijâb et celles des voilements, devenus spectaculaires actuellement. L'étude d'un tel phénomène s'avère complexe en raison des processus de subjectivation découlant des passions déchaînées par les débats entre les acteurs sociaux autour du port ou du rejet de ce signe vestimentaire.

Le phénomène du revoilement des femmes musulmanes pourrait être analysé grâce à la double problématique de l'identité et de la sphère publique, à condition de tenir compte, d'un côté, de l'aspect polymorphe et transactionnel de la première et, de l'autre, des critiques de la seconde qui ont reproché à Habermas l'absence de prise en compte des mouvements sociaux ainsi que du rôle des femmes et des facteurs de l'identité nationale, culturelle et religieuse.

C'est pour l'ensemble de ces raisons qu'il serait opportun de penser les « voiles islamiques » en les considérant comme un phénomène identitaire, de facture globale et multidimensionnelle, intégrant aussi bien le paraître que l'être individuel, au sein d'une configuration sociale, politique, économique et symbolique où la sphère publique constitue à la fois un espace de débat et un enjeu politique.

Le voilement tel qu'il est visible dans les sphères publiques au Maghreb ou en Europe n'est point dénué d'esthétique renvoyant à une culture individuelle de l'être et du paraître. Au sein de cette culture diffuse, le jeu de la corporéité renvoie à une théâtralité et à une socialité où interagissent des signes, des sensations et des représentations de soi et de l'autre.

Ces voiles, à la mode dans les lieux urbains, symbolisent une revendication esthétique représentée par des individus et des générations partageant un ethos et une vision du monde où le politico-religieux n'est pas nécessairement de mise; et lorsque c'est le cas, la religion se fait l'expression d'une polyphonie sociale enrobée d'identité culturelle. C'est en ce sens que les « nouveaux voiles » ne sont pas que des signes religieux ou politiques, ils sont révélateurs de changements sociaux empruntant le langage de la religion et de la culture pour mieux exprimer l'être collectif. La religion n'est qu'une dimension du revoilement en tant que phénomène individuel et social une multiplicité de significations qui relève du vécu et de l'imaginaire.

La raison d'être du voile n'est plus la sauvegarde de l'honneur masculin mais plutôt la garantie morale de la participation féminine à la vie publique, en tant que « voilées et modernes ».

Le hijâb constitue pour les femmes la solution à leur « dilemme » dans la mesure où « il autorise la liberté de leur déplacements et l'exercice de leur métier tout en signifiant publiquement leur adhésion à l'ordre traditionnel ». En somme, le voile assure une mise en scène du corps et du pouvoir féminin tolérés au sein de « l'espace public musulman » dont l'accès est permis aux dévoilées mais selon des contraintes morales et sociales plus fortes sous prétexte d'une conformité avec les prescriptions de Dieu. En ce sens, les nouveaux voiles traduisent une sorte de révolution esthétique, politique et culturelle où le corps voilé joue le rôle de révélateur et de médiateur des nouvelles identités en mouvement,

tirillées entre les apparences individuelles et les affiliations communautaires.

L'accès des femmes au travail salarial a été un facteur déterminant dans l'émergence de ces dernières en tant qu'actrices sociales perceptibles dans l'espace public sans que, pour autant, cela ne s'accompagne nécessairement d'une égalité des droits avec les hommes. Il subsiste toujours des inégalités économiques, sociales et politiques entre hommes et femmes.

Qu'elles soient voilées ou dévoilées, les femmes acquièrent de nos jours une visibilité, par des paroles, des gestes et des actions destinées à assurer une publicisation politique du genre féminin. A ce titre, il importe d'adopter une perspective comparative afin de penser la visibilité féminine en l'appréhendant comme un croisement de deux logiques différentes et complémentaires : celle du dévoilement et celle du corps féminin conçu en tant que corps individuel et corps politique. A son tour, le mouvement de voilement et de revoilement du corps féminin qui a succédé, pour certaines, à la phase du dévoilement et de l'émancipation, a permis à des femmes issues de tous les milieux, y compris des couches populaires et des milieux ruraux, d'accéder à l'espace public et d'acquérir une visibilité sociale et politique, tout en étant mues par une logique identitaire oscillant entre l'individualisme et le communautarisme.

Conclusion

Le voile en tant que comportement vestimentaire est au cœur du débat entre le politique et le religieux, il est à l'interface entre le moral et le sexuel. C'est un choix vestimentaire individuel et autonome qui inscrit la voilée dans une sphère collective où se constitue l'opinion publique. C'est un symbole identitaire, une stratégie de paraître dans les surfaces publiques.

Dans cet ouvrage, M. Kerrou ne se place pas en censeur moral sur la question du voile. Il n'émet pas non plus des jugements de valeur. Il fait juste un constat de cette pratique vestimentaire. Son objectif est de montrer comment les voilées s'extériorisent dans la sphère publique et d'analyser les enjeux de ce voilement-dévoilement.

Note

- 1 Pour Jürgen Habermas, la sphère publique, notion empruntée à Emmanuel Kant et popularisée à partir des années 1960 dans le champ des sciences sociales et des débats médiatiques, désigne l'ensemble des personnes privées rassemblées pour discuter des questions d'intérêt commun et revendiquant la capacité de négocier avec le pouvoir des règles de l'échange économique, social et politique. Cette idée de débat public ou de publicisation des idées émerge, pour la première fois de l'histoire, dans les pays de l'Europe occidentale (Angleterre, France et Allemagne) par la constitution de sphères publiques bourgeoises qui interviennent comme contrepoids aux pouvoirs absolutistes. Liée à l'État-nation européenne qui se construit à l'époque moderne, entre le XVII et XIX siècle, la sphère publique nationale se situe entre l'État et la société civile dans un rapport de complémentarité et de concurrence.



Composé de deux parties portant sur l'enfant et la famille en Afrique, pour la première et le processus de mutations et d'intégration en cours pour la seconde, ce volumineux ouvrage entreprend de nous faire effectuer un long périple, à la fois multidirectionnel et multiforme dans les univers de l'enfant africain.

En effet, loin de s'arrêter aux cadres familiaux, en Afrique mais aussi en France, comme le laissent penser les titres des deux parties du livre, les dix sept chapitres qui les composent traitent aussi bien de la colonisation que de l'esclavage, en passant par la religion, la sexualité, la maladie, l'alimentation, la maltraitance ou la mort...



Dans la première partie, consacrée à l'enfant africain en Afrique, l'auteur traite en dix chapitres de l'histoire ancestrale et de ses bouleversements, qu'ils soient liés à l'époque esclavagiste ou à l'époque coloniale plus récente.

Les diverses formes de déstructuration de l'ordre lignager et du droit coutumier ont lourdement pesé sur les traditions et les usages qui structuraient l'univers de l'enfant africain avec des nuances spécifiques aux garçons et aux filles. Des valeurs structurantes comme la solidarité clanique ou la vénération des ancêtres, constituant des repères cardinaux dans l'éducation des enfants, commenceraient à se remodeler et à être chargées de nouvelles significations. Ce qui ne va pas sans induire de nouveaux comportements et donc nécessairement de nouvelles conduites aussi bien chez les adultes que chez les enfants. C'est ce qui ressort de la lecture du chapitre deux consacré à la psychologie africaine et aux concepts revisités mais aussi au statut de la parole et du langage¹ ainsi qu'au rapport au corps et au temps, avant d'aborder l'univers religieux avec le rapport à Dieu et aux mythes.

On comprend, par exemple, comment l'image du sorcier a façonné l'imaginaire de l'enfant africain aussi bien à travers les contes que dans le vécu. De même que la coexistence de diverses croyances et pratiques religieuses (Islam, Christianisme, Animisme) a contribué à un « enrichissement » de son univers. Les pratiques culinaires et l'alimentation en général ou la nourriture participent d'ailleurs elles-mêmes à des rituels remplissant des fonctions de socialisation.²

Pour une anthropologie de l'enfance africaine

Fatima-Zohra Sebaa-Delladj

L'enfant africain et ses univers

par Ferdinand Ezémbé

Éditions Karthala, Paris, 2009, 381p, ISBN 978-2-8111-0172-5

L'auteur distingue le concept de famille de celui de parenté : « Il s'agit d'une parenté qui n'est pas biologique, mais sociale. En effet, on est parent parce qu'on partage le même espace social : c'est une parenté de fréquentation ».³ Mais les modèles de famille patrilinéaire et matrilinéaire restent les plus répandus malgré une crise de l'autorité parentale qui selon l'auteur s'étend à l'ensemble des sociétés africaines, sans atténuer ou altérer les « techniques de maternage » comme l'allaitement, le massage ou le portage qui restent des pratiques essentielles dans la vie de l'enfant africain.⁴

Par ailleurs, la symbolique du nom continue à jouer un rôle fondamental « l'enfant qui va naître et porter un nom a déjà un long passé derrière lui » (p127). Mais la transmission du nom est variable. Dans les sociétés patriarcales, c'est le père qui attribue le nom à l'enfant, comme c'est le cas des Bambara du Mali, des Peuls, des Soninké... Par contre, dans l'ethnie Dagara du Burkina Faso l'enfant porte le nom de la mère. Au Congo, en fonction des ethnies, certains noms sont spécifiques aux femmes, d'autres aux hommes et d'autres sont mixtes, mais dans tous les cas ils restent codifiés.⁵ C'est pour cela que certains noms sont réservés aux griots qui sans être rattachés à une ethnie précise sont les détenteurs de l'histoire du groupe, ou encore à des forgerons qui sont les maîtres de la forge, de la poterie et de la magie. Cela montre bien que les processus d'identification sont à la fois divers et variés. Ils se différencient des schémas occidentaux et notamment des topiques freudiennes.⁶

L'adolescence, un stade méconnu

La notion d'adolescence reste mal cernée dans beaucoup de sociétés africaines. Pour les filles, la puberté signifie l'entrée dans l'âge adulte. « L'adolescent africain acquiert l'identité individuelle par son nom et l'identité psychosociale par les caractéristiques du groupe ethnique auquel il appartient ».⁷

Le statut de l'adolescent est d'autant plus problématique que les rites d'initiation et de passage sont en voie d'affaiblissement voire de disparition dans

certaines sociétés africaines. Dans un pareil contexte, les rôles et les enseignements de l'école coranique et de l'école occidentale et les contradictions qui les opposent sont bien mis en évidence. Il en est de même pour la question de la maltraitance, qui n'a été jusqu'ici que peu abordée dans les études concernant l'enfant africain. Elle se trouve ici mise en exergue par la présentation de cas cliniques souffrant de troubles psychologiques plus ou moins graves.

Une autre question également peu abordée ailleurs, en l'occurrence la sexualité, est traitée dans ce livre. Les problèmes de la virginité, de l'excision et de l'inceste sont abordés avec force détails, ce qui offre une belle transition à l'auteur pour l'esquisse d'une anthropologie de la maladie avec un retour sur les médecins traditionnels et les conceptions magico-religieuses plus que jamais confrontés au développement de la médecine moderne. Cette partie sur l'anthropologie de la maladie constitue un prélude à une anthropologie de la mort et des rituels qui l'entourent dans le cadre familial traditionnel.

Dans la seconde partie de l'ouvrage, consacrée aux processus d'intégration de l'enfant africain en France, Ferdinand Ezémbé présente d'abord une typologie des migrants africains. Au sein d'une population hétérogène, les adolescents africains sont souvent

tirillés entre plusieurs modèles culturels, notamment l'enfant africain dans le milieu scolaire et la complexité des médiations intellectuelles.⁸ L'auteur cite plusieurs exemples de compte-rendu de différents groupes de paroles sur divers sujets (sexualité, scolarité, adolescence).

Le chapitre treize est consacré à l'adolescent africain en France où la quête d'identité commence par une quête de définitions et se prolonge jusqu'à la perception sociale et les préjugés psychologiques causés par le racisme enduré par les enfants africains. A telle enseigne que l'auteur consacre toute une partie à la « Psychopathologie de l'adolescent immigré : Paradoxe de l'identité raciale » avec une présentation de cas cliniques.

Cette psychopathologie est-elle introductive à la question des violences intrafamiliales de la maltraitance dans l'immigration qui prolongerait par l'esquisse d'une psychopathologie des migrants africains en France, et serait à la base de « l'intégration rêvée en France » ?

L'ouvrage se termine avec ce projet « d'intégration rêvée » avant d'amener l'auteur à conclure avec Aminata Traoré : « Nos repères et nos valeurs culturelles sont nombreux qui auraient pu ou qui devraient nous aider à reformuler notre quête d'alternative, en des termes clairs pour la grande majorité de la population et conformes à ses aspirations. Mais ils ne font pas l'objet d'une connaissance saine, capable de nourrir la réflexion et la créativité, de manière à transformer nos sociétés dans le sens que nous souhaitons » (p. 345).

L'enfant africain et ses univers s'impose comme un ouvrage de référence qui a permis à Ferdinand Ezémbé de conjuguer son expérience personnelle et sa maîtrise conceptuelle. Il a réussi surtout à confirmer l'enracinement des univers de l'enfance dans une africanité vivante et prometteuse.

Notes

- 1 Jean-Godefroy Bidima, 1997, *La palabre, une juridiction de la parole*, Paris, Michalon.
- 2 V. Ratsimbarison, A. Saidou, J. Douli Sourou, J. M. Ouenabio, D. Ndachi Tagne, M. A. Leplaideur, 1994, *Poulet bicyclette contre poulet cadavre, L'Afrique côté cuisine : regards africains sur l'alimentation*, Paris, Syros.
- 3 Th. Locoh, « Familles africaines, population et qualité de vie », *Les dossiers du CEDEP*, N°31, Mars 1995.
- 4 Camara Laye, 1953, *L'enfant noir*, Paris, Plon.
- 5 « Les noms africains. Sens, valeurs, avenir », *Revue Pirogue*, N°41, Avril-Juin 1981.
- 6 Edmond et Marie-Cécile Ortigues, 1984, *Œdipe africain*, 3ème édition, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- 7 Marie-Chantal Cacou, « Santé mentale des adolescents », *Vie et Santé*, Paris, Mars 1993.
- 8 J. Barou, H. Prévot, 1992, « L'immigration en France des ressortissants d'Afrique noire », Rapport remis au secrétariat général à l'intégration, Paris.



On ne présente plus Patrick Buisson, ardent conseiller de Nicolas Sarkozy, de la chaîne Histoire, des cabinets Publifact et Publiopinion, naguère de l'hebdomadaire d'extrême-droite *Minute*. Si l'histoire vraie s'écrit en confrontant des documents d'origine différente, le luxueux album de Buisson ne montre que des photos militaires françaises conçues comme armes de guerre psychologique. Que dirait-on d'un livre sur la guerre de 1954-1962 qui serait illustré uniquement avec les photos du FLN ? Qu'il s'agirait d'apologie, non d'histoire. Rien dans le titre ne dit qu'il s'agit de la guerre vue par le service photographique des armées : circulairement, l'armée se raconte l'Algérie qu'elle a rêvée, et fait encore *post bellum* rêver l'auteur. L'album est un bréviaire de l'esthétisme légionnaire/para, un péan nostalgique au temps viril guerrier. En dépit de la suppression de l'article 4 de la loi du 23 février 2005, il magnifie l'Algérie française et réhabilite le fait colonial. Cela avec les thèmes de prédilection récurrents du nationalisme français : protéger la France des étrangers menaçants, défendre une armée française – celle de l'affaire Dreyfus, des fusillés pour l'exemple de 1914-1918, de la répression du peuple algérien en lutte pour son indépendance, alors que « l'Algérie n'était pas une colonie, mais la France prolongée jusqu'au Sahara ».

Les maux du système colonial – extorsion de biens par la violence conquérante, crimes de guerre, racisme structurel, œuvre scolaire dérisoire... – sont engloutis sous le « déferlement de violence » du seul FLN. Les légendes des photos sont autant de poncifs pompeux de nostalgie coloniale, non des outils de compréhension et de réflexion. Les « autochtones » n'ont belle figure que sous la tutelle de la France. Face aux *wilâya(s)* terrorisantes, « le glaive et la truelle » des SAS : main droite répressive et main gauche humanitaire du scoutisme dérisoirement tardif, en contretemps de l'histoire qui se faisait. Le mai 1958 de l'Algérie française est célébré pour les « fraternisations du forum », mais sur la photo relatant la manifestation de fraternisation du 16 mai 1958, quasiment tous les visages des Algériens sont fermés et inquiets.

Une fois l'ange gardien français déchu, c'est en 1962 « l'horreur

Guerre de libération et nostalgie coloniale : lorsque la 'nostalgie' fait office d'histoire

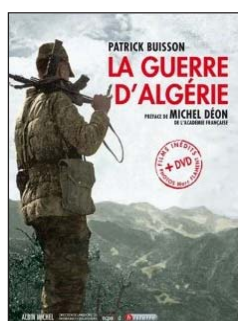
Mohammed Harbi et Gilbert Meynier

La guerre d'Algérie
par Patrick Buisson
2009, 271 p + DVD

généralisée ». On déboulonne, les statues, « on rembarque la casquette du "père Bugeaud". Avec elle, cent trente ans de présence française en Algérie, pour le meilleur et pour le pire ». Avec pour épilogue, « les hommes bleus et l'or noir » – nostalgie exotique du Sahara et richesse pétrolière française bradée en *naft* arabe. Dès lors que le FLN a gagné la partie, que les Français en sont partis, l'« apocalypse » de 1962 change radicalement l'Algérie : ce pays dont les photos militaires faisaient un paradis au ciel bleu et au soleil permanent ne découvre la neige, la pluie, le froid qu'au chapitre 13 (« La France perd la paix ») : le temps a changé lorsque les Français sont partis. C'est peu subtil, mais bien à l'unisson de toutes les grosses astuces de l'album. Avec ses photos fabriquées, c'est une resucée de l'Action psychologique. Les barrages électrifiés aux frontières : une nécessité vitale incontournable. Aucune réflexion sur les systèmes clos dont la clôture signe à terme toujours la disparition. Les occasions manquées – peu souvent tentées en temps utile – ne sont quasiment pas évoquées. Pas un mot sur la conférence franco-maghrébine de Tunis que l'interception de l'avion de quatre dirigeants du FLN le 22 octobre 1956 fit avorter sans retour. Inconnu le secrétaire d'État de Guy Mollet Alain Savary qui s'y était engagé pour trouver à cette guerre une issue politique négociée, et qui dut démissionner, désavoué par son lâche gouvernement. L'appareil militaire ne cultivait pas cet art du possible qu'est la politique : il voulait mater. A l'inverse, au lieu de promouvoir « l'intégration », de Gaulle, renieur des « promesses tenues », se

lance dans l'autodétermination au moment où la France gagne la guerre ; d'où l'inévitable « vide moral et idéologique » de « la France de l'hexagone ».

L'album oppose en catégories tranchées eux et nous. Eux sont les fellaghas, les rebelles, sans guillemets. A la différence des soldats français, seule la violence des Algériens est mentionnée. Seules les victimes européennes sont signalées, jamais lorsqu'elles sont « autochtones », même si celles-ci furent bien plus nombreuses que celles-là.



Page 111, un « rebelle », accompagné de guerriers en tenue léopard, est debout, les mains ligotées derrière le dos, et reliées à un licol qui l'attache à la ceinture du soldat qui le surveille comme un animal en laisse. Les pages suivantes montrent de vaillants blessés, magnifiquement soignés, un mort auquel on rend les honneurs : les chevaliers contre des animaux. Erreur de jugement ? Non, grosse ficelle : l'album ne montre qu'une splendide armée, équipée des moyens les plus modernes, jeune, combattive, une armée de gagners. Face à Massu, et surtout Bigeard, héros omniprésents, sur plus de 400 photos, seulement deux de responsables algériens – le chef historique Ben Bella et Yacéf Saadi –, et encore, bien sûr, après leur arrestation. Le lecteur ne saura rien ni des combattants de l'ALN, ni des vrais politiques du FLN. Côté français, la seule photo de pleine page que le livre propose du général de Gaulle est la plus laide qu'on puisse choisir. Le livre réitère le poncif sur les accords d'Évian qui n'ont pas été appliqués, sans dire que les politiques du FLN qui les avaient conclus et voulaient les appliquer ont été

chassés du pouvoir à l'été 1962 par l'appareil militaire de l'armée des frontières – l'État-major général dirigé par Boumediène.

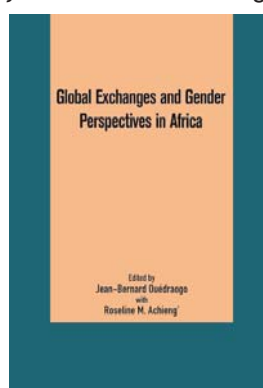
Reste « la discrimination positive avant la lettre » du plan de Constantine – l'« intégration » –, « avec son abandon, en pratique, lorsque de Gaulle lance dans sa conférence de presse du 16 septembre 1959 le mot "autodétermination" » : une chimère ? Eux étaient si différents de nous que nous ne pouvions les comprendre. La « question cruciale » [...] « Que pense, que veut la population musulmane » ? est aveu implicite d'une évidence : le peuple algérien fut bien globalement à l'unisson du combat du FLN. Inéluctable ? Si, pour l'auteur, « l'inéluctabilisme » est le péché des historiens », il reconnaît *in summa* que « les possibles de l'Algérie étaient en nombre réduit et la "pacification-intégration" sans doute le moins probable de tous ». Dont acte. Mais alors, pourquoi s'être échiné à commettre un tel livre quand il est établi que les non civilisés refusèrent de se faire civiliser ?

L'album de Buisson, au diapason de la guerre psychologique française de 1954-62, est à l'unisson de la campagne orchestrée pour exalter « l'identité nationale » : Buisson-Besson, les deux octobasses du te deum, sont en harmonie, qui nient que l'identité soit autre chose qu'une suite d'identifications mouvantes et multiples. Enfin, si de mauvaises langues ont traité Buisson d'expert en surtraitance des sondages élyséens, ce qui est extrait du congélateur guerrier est décongelé dans la médiatisation rentière : le livre, coédité par Albin Michel, la chaîne Histoire et par deux institutions du ministère de la Défense – de l'État, de la puissance publique française – s'inscrit dans la privatisation publique. Scoop publicitaire encensé et officiellement recommandé sur le site du secrétariat d'État aux Anciens combattants, il est fait pour être vendu. En tout cas, son esthétisme colonial-guerrier à sens unique est de nature à décourager un peu plus la réflexion en général et les historiens en particulier, jamais convoqués dans la prose de Buisson. Bref, le public aura du mal à trouver un livre avilissant autant la dimension historique de la colonisation, produit avec une telle suffisante légèreté et aussi peu de vergogne.



Global Exchanges and Gender Perspectives in Africa

Jean-Bernard Ouédraogo & Roseline M. Achieng



The global perspectives adopted in this volume by the authors, from different academic disciplines and social experiences, ought not to be locked in sterile linearity which within the process of globalisation would fail to perceive the irreversible opening up of the worlds of the south. There is the need within the framework of the analyses presented here, to quite cogently define the sense of the notion of the market. The market here does not refer to saving or the localised exchange of goods, a perspective which is imposed by normative perceptions. In fact, a strictly materialistic reading of exchange would be included, since every social practice and interaction implies a communitarian transaction; meanwhile the exchange system under study here broadens to root out the obligation of the maximisation of mercantile profit from the cycle of exchange. Trade here would have a meaning closer to those of old, one of human interaction, in a way that one could also refer to as "bon commerce" between humans. In one way, trade places itself at the heart of social exchanges, including the power of money, and is carried along by a multitude of social interactions. The reader is called upon to take into account the major mercantile formations of the social trade system, the market society, without forgetting the diversity of exchange routes as well as the varying modalities of social construction, at the margins and within market logics – those of implicit value in trade between humans – which the texts herein also seek to review. The age-old project of restructuring the domestic economy, the market society as it has developed in the West – whence it has set out to conquer the whole wide world – places at the very centre of the current capitalist expansion, the challenge of imperatively reshaping gender identity, inter alia, in market relations.

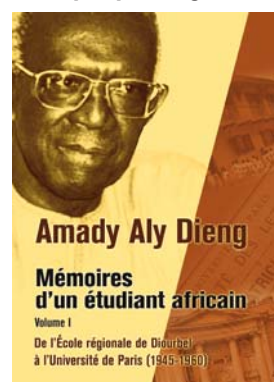
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Mémoires d'un étudiant africain

Volume I

**De l'École régionale de Diourbel à l'Université de Paris
(1945-1960)**

Amady Aly Dieng



Ces mémoires d'un étudiant africain sont essentiellement destinés aux jeunes Africains qui veulent continuer le combat en faveur d'une indépendance et d'un développement véritables. Il ne s'agit pas d'égrener un chapelet de souvenirs d'anciens combattants, mais de transmettre par écrit aux jeunes Africains les expériences politiques, syndicales et sociales de l'ancienne génération. L'auteur, né durant les années consécutives à la Grande Crise de 1929, a pu obtenir son Certificat d'études primaires élémentaires (CEPE) en 1945. Comme tous les élèves de sa génération, il a connu les affres de la Seconde guerre mondiale et les pénuries qui en ont résulté. La période allant de 1945 à 1960 est une période exaltante de lutte en faveur de l'indépendance et de l'unité des pays africains. La défaite de l'armée française à Dien Bien Phu en Indochine a considérablement contribué à affaiblir le système colonial français. Elle sera suivie par le déclenchement de l'insurrection de 1954 en Algérie, l'indépendance du Maroc, de la Tunisie, du Ghana et l'accession de beaucoup d'autres pays africains subissant la domination française à la souveraineté internationale. L'année 1960 qualifiée d'année africaine va clore le chapitre de la lutte contre le colonialisme classique, et ouvrir une ère nouvelle caractérisée par le combat contre le néocolonialisme.

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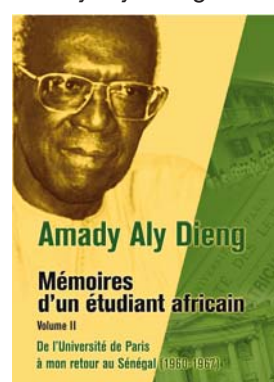
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Mémoires d'un étudiant africain

Volume II

**De l'Université de Paris à mon retour au Sénégal
(1960-1967)**

Amady Aly Dieng



Avec les indépendances formelles des anciennes colonies françaises d'Afrique noire, s'ouvre l'ère de la lutte contre le néocolonialisme. Les étudiants africains, mobilisés autour de cette lutte, étaient désormais devenus des étrangers qu'on pouvait facilement expulser de la France. Le gouvernement français d'alors n'hésitait pas à procéder à des expulsions massives pour réprimer leurs organisations syndicales ou politiques. La liquidation des deux grandes fédérations d'AOF et d'AEF et la suppression des commissions fédérales des bourses – consécutives à la mise en application de la Loi-cadre Gaston Defferre de 1956 destinée à balkaniser l'Afrique noire sous domination française – vont considérablement affaiblir la Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France (FEANF) au profit de ses sections territoriales. Les gouvernements africains, par le biais de leurs ambassades et de leurs commissions territoriales de bourses, vont eux-mêmes prendre en charge leurs étudiants et se donner à leur tour les moyens de réprimer les organisations d'étudiants hostiles à leur politique de collaboration avec les autorités françaises. Parmi les divers procédés utilisés, il y avait la suppression des bourses et des subventions aux hôtels et résidences habités par les ressortissants de leurs territoires (La Maison de la Côte d'Ivoire, du Gabon, de la Haute Volta, du Congo, d'AOF), la création d'associations progouvernementales telles que celle des étudiants de l'Union progressiste sénégalaise (UPS), le Mouvement des étudiants de l'organisation commune africaine et malgache (MEOCAM), l'Union nationale des étudiants de la Côte d'Ivoire (UNECI). La Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France entre alors dans une phase de déclin, le ver est dans le fruit de l'Unité avec l'application de la Loi-Cadre.

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Côte d'Ivoire: la réinvention de soi dans la violence

Sous la direction de

Francis Akindès



La grave crise sociopolitique qu'a connue la Côte d'Ivoire en septembre 2002 a déchaîné des passions politiques. Immigration, étranger, ethnonationalisme, nationalisme, patriotisme, guerre civile, jeunesse à risque. Voilà le corpus du vocabulaire à partir duquel est restitué ce qui arrive à la Côte d'Ivoire. Les efforts d'explication de la « crise » que traverse ce pays présenté dans un passé récent comme étant « relativement paisible » se déclinent surtout sur le registre de la surprise, rendant une fois encore compte du contrôle presque absolu des médias sur l'événementiel, avec finalement le risque de ne penser l'événement qu'à partir des canevas médiatiquement corrects. Cette capacité des professionnels de l'événementiel à fixer les mots dans lesquels l'histoire sociale doit être pensée complique la tâche des sciences sociales et humaines en même temps qu'elle nous apparaît stimulante. La compréhension des situations complexes étant désormais confinée dans une confusion entre le simple et le simplifié, l'enjeu pour les sciences sociales et humaines est de reprendre les places qui sont les leurs en tentant de restituer les réalités sociales et politiques dans leur complexité. Les contributions qui composent cet ouvrage tentent justement de dépouiller les mots simples de leur excessive simplification pour aider à la compréhension des maux sociaux et politiques, voire du sens de l'histoire. Cet ouvrage se veut avant tout un regard de l'intérieur. Le défi, ici, est avec le recul nécessaire, de déconnecter le réel de l'idée de surprise qui empêche une plongée dans l'analyse en profondeur de réalités qui ne sont que les résultats d'un processus historique sur une durée relativement longue. Au coeur de ce processus se trouve le paradoxe d'une réinvention de soi dans la violence mais au nom de la démocratie. La crise postélectorale de 2010 et l'intensité de la violence qui la ponctue démontrent encore une fois tout l'intérêt de la thèse du paradoxe démocratie-violence et du présent exercice de son objectivation.

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