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REVUE AFRICAINE DES LIVRES

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Tribute to a Committed Intellectual

Godwin R. Murunga

Let the People Speak: Tanzania Down the Road to Neo-Liberalism
by Issa G. Shivji
CODESRIA, 2006, xiii+303pp., ISBN: 2-86978-183-0 (pbk)

Let the People Speak was Issa Gulamhussein Shivji's last book before his retirement from the University of Dar es Salaam in 2006. Retiring at the age of 60, he had by then served the University's Faculty of Law for 36 uninterrupted years. He distinguished himself as a thorough intellectual whose work reflected a commitment to Africa that is unmatched in its passion, rigour and vigour. Shivji combined erudition and relevance which he presented in accessible modes that also included poetry and short story, oftentimes rendered in Kiswahili. He earned his LL.B. (Hons.) in 1970 from the then University of East Africa, his LL.M. in 1971 from the University of London and his Ph.D. in 1982 from the University of Dar es Salaam. Throughout these years, and considering the multiple crises that befell many African universities, Shivji stayed put at Dar es Salaam, rising through the ranks from tutorial fellow on 1 May 1970 to full professor on 1 July 1986.

Shivji's stay at the 'Hill' did not compromise his academic productivity, his active and wide engagement with Africa and the world and the quality of his work, most of which are published within the continent. In fact, the stay cemented his connection to and involvement in local social struggles and emancipatory movements and enabled him to remain a steadfast defender of local communities on a wide rang of issues, such as wage levels for the working class, human rights, democracy, constitutionalism, land rights, and women empowerment. Apart from the villages, the courts and related arena, his convictions on freedom and struggles for democracy are documented in his published works. He authored and edited more than ten books, six monographs, numerous book chapters and journal articles. He also served as chairman of the Presidential Committee of Inquiry into Land Matters and as member of CODESRIA's Executive Committee.

The essays in the book under review, originally published in three different Tanzania-based newspapers, reflect Shivji's knowledge on a wide range of topics. The book targets a broad audience which Shivji simultaneously learned from and educated. It illustrates how such engagement can be conducted without compromising quality and relevance and without turning into a patronising monologue from a book professor. Considering the declining utility and relevance of public intellectualism in the world, especially in the global North, where this activity mirrors simple randomness and chaos,[1] Shivji's essays retain a ray of hope that intellectuals can still express the popular will of the general citizenry and be conscious instruments in articulating the social and economic struggles of the people. The book's title, taken from an essay Shivji penned on 25 April 1998 (see p. 285), conveys this. It emphasizes the dangers posed by the neo-liberal context that has sanctioned the onslaught on peoples' voices through its worship of the uncontrolled market. There are ten thematic clusters in the book, bracketed by poems and with an introductory chapter. The clusters include a reflection on the multi-party system; constitutionalism and constitution-making; the question of the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar; party politics and politicians; intellectuals in politics; neo-liberalism in Tanzania; race, religion and ethnicity; state violence and impunity; freedom; and pan-Africanism.

A review of Shivji's previous publications confirms the longstanding and deep reflection on almost all these themes. Thus, judgement on the contribution of this volume rests not on whether it meets the so-called academic standards (an undertaking one need not ask of Shivji anyway), but on whether it is sufficiently educative to the wider, perhaps, non-specialist audience and whether it expresses the concerns, desires, and demands of a public that is so often politically asphyxiated and academically ignored, misrepresented or misinterpreted. Further, it should be useful to determine the extent to which this volume enables us to read Africa's concerns through the experiences of Tanzania. This review has these concerns in mind but is implicitly also a tribute to an academic life executed with honesty, commitment and credit.

All the essays in this collection engage issues of public interest. They also expand the terms of such an engagement beyond those set by the state, politicians or intellectuals eager to operate within a neo-liberal framework while serving political dogma. There is no doubt therefore on whether the book is educative. Parts I (on multi-party politics) and VI (on the road to neo-liberalism) ably flag the goals of this book. In Part I, Shivji critically engages the Report of the Presidential Commission on Party System chaired by Chief Justice Francis Nyalali (Nyalali Report) while in Part VI he examines the implications of Tanzania's road to neo-liberalism for, among others, industry, labour, urban housing, and land; the force of South Africa's second primitive accumulation of wealth in Africa; education, which has not only undermined relevance and quality by orienting schooling towards a 'mimicking rather than thinking' culture (pp. 161, 192) but also turned intellectuals into party ideologues and 'globalisers' errand boys' (p. 178); and trade and agriculture, where the land tenure system has been distorted and community systems of resolving land disputes have been undermined - all in the name of subjecting land exchange to market logic.

In both parts of the book, neo-liberalism is dissected. Viewed as an ideology that mutilated our perceptions of democracy by reducing it to a choiceless multi-party version, the sections illustrate that the ideology has prioritised market relations as primary to our discussion of the overall processes of globalization, even though this process predates the neo-liberal moment. By critically engaging neo-liberalism from a political economy perspective, Shivji shows convincingly that the invidious project of subjecting every realm of society to unmitigated liberalisation, privatisation and marketisation has no democratic possibility of empowering the people but rather accentuates neo-imperialism and dismantles the pro-poor protective legal regime in labour and housing, for instance. Further, in its unquenchable desire to create an investor-friendly environment, the state has been reduced to the role of a 'night watchman', as Mkandawire put it, abdicating its role of making policy, and managing politics and the economy. 'A state which is not independent in making policy decisions,' Shivji argues, 'cannot be held accountable by its people nor can [it] let its people participate in policy-making' (p. 177). Clearly, these two sections of the book go beyond the terms of debate set by the originators of such imperialist ideologies and shows that neo-liberalism has reduced the struggle for democracy into a project conducted by 'state patronage or elite proxy' (p. 27).

The deceit around the rhetoric that multi-party politics equals democracy is discussed and exposed in Parts I, II, V and VI. This is a debate that exercised the attention of African scholarship of the last two decades and Shivji was an active participant.[2] This debate has important continent-wide ramifications. However, in many countries on the continent, the celebrated arrival of multi-party politics occluded the deeper questioning of the neo-liberal framing of the prospects of that so-called democratic transition; the results have become too obvious in countries like Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria, etc., where elections have become periodic rituals of creating illegitimate leaders. Much of that celebration focused on important, but superficial, changes like increasing the number of political parties, deepening of civil society, installing esoteric freedoms and rights without delving deeper into questions of constitutionalism, constitution-making and national consensus arrived at through tested means like the national conference and the validation of the legitimacy of constitutions through referendum. By analysing these options hinted at but hardly thoroughly investigated by the Nyalali report, Shivji shows the shallowness of the discussions of multi-party transition and its inability to grasp the centrality of popular power in validating democracy. Particularly relevant are sections that deal with the Nyalali report which argue for crystallising the national consensus on public issues; with intellectuals in politics that illustrate how these elites have abrogated their roles and obligations; with constitutionalism that emphasizes that 'the prerequisite of a constitutional government is that the constitution and the laws themselves are just, fair and equitable and therefore legitimate' (p. 53).

Part III focuses on the union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar crafted in 1964. Shivji argues that the Achilles heel of Tanzania's constitution has always been the Union question. Issues of constitutional democracy are at the heart of the historic altercations among people in the Mainland and between them and Zanzibaris regarding the Union. Born out of the Cold War fears of the East African heads of states and America, the Union was cobbled together by Nyerere and Karume to deflate the heroic uprising that defeated the sultanate under British tutelage at independence in 1964, but soon after, the new head of state of Zanzibar, Abeid Karume, ignored all pretences to constitutional democratic rule. Much of the post-Karume era in Zanzibar, Shivji argues, has been characterised by denials within Chama Cha Mapinduzi party (CCM) on the needs, nay demands of Zanzibaris for a new democratic era in which their voices on the Union issues are heard and implemented. The era has further witnessed denials with respect to a people-driven discussion of the Union issue in the Mainland, with CCM seeking to 'keep total and exclusive control over' the debate, how it proceeds and the final outcome (p. 105). The Zanzibar question has therefore gelled into broader concerns for a new constitutional dispensation with various demands in the Mainland for three or two Union governments. Shivji discusses this in several essays in Parts III and VII of the book. He proposes that, in the context of multi-partism, the way out is to entrench the Union issue in a new constitutional order, whose legitimacy can only be established if the enactment is preceded by an acceptable public debate and the holding of a people-driven referendum. The point, he concludes, 'is that political unity between Zanzibar and Tanganyika is feasible and desirable provided it is built on democratic foundations and therefore beneficial to the people' (p.120).

Parts IV and VII of the study examine party politics in the era of *mageuzi* (change) in Tanzania, reflecting more particularly on the question of political choice and the tycoonisation of CCM in its relation to the racialisation of political discourse. Shivji frames this discussion in the context of the difference between social visions and visionaries, arguing that the ability of people to craft long term guides for society must be distinguished from the role of visionaries who, like missionaries, are wedded to a mission which they must achieve. Shivji foregrounds the desire to 'evolve our own mode of politics' and using the lessons of the Fourth Congress of CCM held at Chimwaga asks what should be the basis of choice between party programmes and personalities in the era of *mageuzi*. The notion of mode of politics is usefully mentioned to underscore the need for a party system that offers choice based on the assumption that the electorate is 'fully informed and enlightened so as to make a rational choice' (p. 133). The assumption, too, is that competing parties articulate contrasting visions to give the electorate a real choice. In Shivji's understanding, none of the parties in Tanzania offer such alternatives. Instead, much of the rhetoric about choice is empty as none of the parties propose a vision of liberation and emancipation that aims to lift people from their downtrodden and oppressive reality.

On the contrary, the reality of this kind of pluralist politics is that people are forced to choose on the basis of personalities rather than party policies and programmes. In the years after the death of Mwalimu, Shivji points to the liberalised appetites of Tanzanian politicians whose greed had previously been tamed by Mwalimu but whose newfound liberty is safeguarded by the neo-liberalism of the current era. Reflecting on the consequences of this new era, Shivji shows that not only did CCM find itself in the grip of tycoons willing to bankroll the party, but also that such liberalisation had unleashed a dangerous opposition racial discourse in which the racial and ethnic extraction of party sponsors became cause for scoring populist points. The study warns of the dangers of such a campaign approach and proceeds to illustrate, using the case of Zanzibar (see pp. 228-231), why the racial and religious discourses represent diversionary smokescreens employed by irresponsible elite to blame religion for problems that are essentially political. But even more important is the extended reflection on the role of personalities in politics where Shivji correctly argues that the kind of politics that focuses on personalities has no emancipatory agenda as the example of Chiluba and Mwanawasa in Zambia, Muluzi and Mutharika in Malawi, Eyadema and Kabila in Togo and DRC, respectively, illustrate. In particular, the reality that politics in the era of transition in Africa is power- rather than people-driven is clearly explained in Part IV (pp. 148-152).

There are many more themes covered in this study than can be ably summarised in this review. The one area, however, where the usefulness of this study can be measured is how well it brings together three themes of paramount concern not just to Tanzania but also to Africa. These themes are citizenship, pan-Africanity and the required social vision that bridges them. Tanzania occupies a special place on the issue of vision. As Shivji shows in Part VII, Ujamaa was a radical nationalist ideology that cemented people together regardless of ethnicity or race. Thus, underlying Tanzania's notion of citizenship was a social vision that inspired unity and equality across diversities. Shivji is aware that Tanzania may not have achieved equality among people, but there was a vision that gave people the hope for the eventual attainment of equality. The dismantling of Ujamaa with the onset of neo-liberal 'marketisation' of politics opened the way for politicisation of these identities. The negative results are there for all to see.

Shivji extends this analysis to the question of pan-Africanism which he contrasts with the dangerous forces of imperialism. Pan-Africanism was driven by two main currents: nationalism and continental/ Diasporic unity. African nationalism was indeed a repudiation of European imperialism. It was founded on and driven by a desire to re-humanise African people. If the attainment of independence meant national sovereignty for and humanity of the people, the debt trap in Africa has represented a threat to this sovereignty and humanity. Though the essays in Part X focus on the debilitating debt crisis, showing how Tanzania often substitutes the provision of basic human needs for debt repayment (pp. 277-286), they constitute a basis for a good discussion on a key principle of pan-Africanist ideology, that is, national sovereignty. The implications of this discussion for Africa are many; and these essays have greater resonance with the wider African debt predicament than the author was able to capture.

In conclusion, it is important to return to the theme of social vision, hope and self-reliance which run through this book and illuminate Shivji's convictions. Citing Mwalimu Nyerere, Shivji illustrates the significance of social vision in assuring people of a hopeful future. That hopeful future, based on the self-reliance of a sovereign nation-state, was the cornerstone of Tanzania's history after the Arusha Declaration. Neo-liberalism has deflated that hope and allowed an otherwise dormant volcano to erupt into social upheavals - an eruption that is, above all, driven by inequality and poverty. 'Peace,' Nyerere argued, 'is born of hope, when hope is gone there will be social upheaval' (p.224). In a nutshell, the single most important lesson that one takes away from this enthralling collection for Africa is the urgent need to re-enact a new social vision for the African people that is based on the idea of self-reliance but anchored in a pan-African ideology. These two have been central to Shivji's scholarship and to his commitment to the people of Africa. Shivji can still walk proudly knowing that his service at the 'Hill' was not in vain and that his voice still reverberates across the African terrain.

Notes

1. See Richard A. Posner's reflection on the US situation in *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.
2. One of his seminal publications in this debate is Shivji, "The Democracy Debate in Africa: Tanzania," in *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 50, 1991, pp. 79-99.

Making a Living in Contemporary Rural South Africa

Maano Ramutsindela

Livelihoods and Landscapes:
The People of Guquka and Koloni and their Resources
by Paul Hebinck and Peter Lent (eds)
Brill, 2007, 387 pp, ISBN 978 90 04 16169 6

Researchers and commentators have variously been intrigued by the connection between people and landscapes, especially in rural environments, where such connections have remained intact despite the huge impact of industrialisation and modernisation on society. Accounts for the people-landscape nexus reveal that humans contributed to shaping existing landscapes and adapted their livelihood strategies to changing landscapes.[1] The interconnectedness of people and their rural landscapes has largely been projected as a sign of backwardness. Such projections are clear from images of Africa and its people, which have historically been linked to the livelihoods of rural inhabitants as if all people in the continent live in rural areas and under similar conditions. Mudimbe clearly articulated those images and their link to rural environments in the following words: 'from … the insistent image of the African continent as a "refused place" arise: a hot piece of land on which pathetic beings live on roots, herbs and carmel's milk; a monstrous place and, therefore … a place where madness and melancholia reign supreme'.[2]

In the 21st century, those images are recycled by the tourism industry. The industry perpetuates stereotypes of rural landscapes as remnants of 'Eden', static and untouched by humans, and some groups of people as exotic as their landscape.[3] I refer to these examples to emphasise the point that rural environments have continuously been used to characterise both the bio-physical qualities of rural areas and the people who live in those areas. Rural landscapes in South Africa embodied these characterisations in different historical moments. Before the implementation of apartheid rule in South Africa, the majority of blacks who lived in rural areas were seen as ignorant and unable to care for the land on which they survived. Equally, their methods of cultivation were seen as uninformed and destructive, despite the existence of a successful African peasantry.[4]

During apartheid, rural areas not only acquired their political significance as 'the home of black people' through the bantustan policy, but also continued to represent the failure of black people to survive on their own without the assistance of the white minority. That is to say that bantustans were politically and materially dependent on the apartheid state, despite their projections as either independent or on the road to independence. They also became symbols of backwardness, and their demise in 1993 did not significantly change the stereotypes about people who lived in those areas. For example, Limpopo Province in the north of the country is portrayed in the media as a haven for witchcraft.[5] It could be suggested that the post-apartheid provinces that incorporated most of the areas of the former bantustans are still read through the lens of those bantustans. Hebinck and Lent's edited volume seeks to unpack the complex ways in which people living in the rural areas of the former bantustans, particularly the bantustan of Ciskei, make a living. Those complex ways cannot be understood within the narrow view of the rural as a fixed place.

Reconceptualising the Rural

Rural studies in the South African context have largely been preoccupied with land issues and the migrant labour. This is understandable because land policies always aimed at maintaining the spatial separation of blacks and whites. The authors appreciate this historical process, but go further to suggest that it is too simplistic to ascribe the transience of black people in urban areas to apartheid policies alone, as some migrant labourers remained attached to the rural areas of their origin out of choice. Their view is that the ways in which migrants maintained ties with their rural communities can be differentiated according to those who resisted westernization (the Red) and those who were accommodative (the School). A 'School' migrant opts for an urban-based livelihood and is less oriented to transfer money to rural areas, as opposed to 'the Red' migrant, who sends money to the rural homestead and visits the rural home as often as possible to protect his interests. In this way, rural livelihoods are intrinsically connected with urban-based livelihoods. This connection is clear in post-apartheid South Africa where a significant number of migrant labourers remain connected to their rural communities despite the abolition of racial segregation. The rural, therefore, is no longer a fixed geographical area but is lived through connecting different places that are supportive of life in rural areas. The authors correctly argue that livelihood encompasses more than portfolios of resources and income-generating activities and should include lifestyle and value choices, status, sense of identity and local forms of organisation. This begs the question of the relevance of the notion of livelihood in rural development.

Understanding Livelihood and Landscapes

The book attempts to counteract the emphasis on livelihood as constitutive of employment and cash income. It does this by bringing in life histories to highlight how actors value resources and interpret their world. The authors prefer the notion of resources above that of capital, because capital, as critics have argued, conceals the multiple ways in which people make a living outside the sphere of economics. It argues that, 'livelihoods should be understood as co-production; that is, an outcome of a continuous encounter and interaction between the natural and political, the social and the cultural'. The book therefore endorses the view that people and their environment are inseparable. The recognition of the mutual influences between the two (i.e. people and environment) is expressed through the links between livelihoods and landscapes. Landscapes, defined in their social, institutional, political, economic and biological contexts, set the scene and provide the natural resources for people to construct their livelihoods. The ongoing interactions between the 'natural' and the 'social' transform each other through conscious human action and agency. The assumption of the book is that 'livelihood transformations can be read from the transformations that occur at the level of landscape and also vice versa, that the landscape tells us something about the nature and dynamics of rural livelihoods'. This conception of livelihoods and landscapes is opposed to the idea of co-evolution, where the human-environmental relationship is less consciously managed. The book questions a common feature of the theses of deagrarianisation, diversification and modernisation, 'which all appear to assume that the shift from agricultural land-based livelihoods to more diversified livelihoods is an inevitable and structural process'. It validates the deagrarianisation hypothesis but suggests the existence of the peasantry in South Africa.

Repeasantisation in the Post-apartheid Era

Studies on the decline of African agriculture reveal that the process was set in motion by a number of factors ranging from adverse agro-ecological conditions to population dynamics and state intervention. The question of the prospects of repeasantisation has resurfaced in post-apartheid South Africa in academic and policy circles. Drawing from Bundy's seminal work on the African peasantry, Hebinck and Lent's volume observes that 'the persistence of a peasantry does not only raise the question of why peasants have not totally dis-

appeared but also of what the prospects are for a process of peasantisation'. Defining peasantisation as a process by which rural people continue to make a living from utilising land-based resources, the book not only suggests the existence of the peasantry in South Africa, but also links it with migrant labour. Migrant labour contributed to peasantisation through investment in rural areas. For example, migrant labourers, particularly the 'Red' invest in the rural homestead (*umzi*), which functioned as a productive unit in pre-colonial Nguni society. That productive unit was disrupted by the combined processes of land dispossession and migrant labour. Land dispossession in Guquka and Koloni can be traced back to the clash over land specifically between the trekboers and Xhosa. Using the Magisterial District of Victoria East as an example, the book argues that 'the decline in African homestead production is partly explained by the increase in landlessness … and partly by the reduction in the area of land per person brought about by the increase in the number of people with access to land'.[7]

Access to land was not only determined by the Natives Land Act of 1913 and Natives Trust Land Act of 1936, but was also fundamentally shaped by planning policies. For example, betterment planning rearranged settlement and land use patterns under the guise of development imperative while promoting the political goal of the development of bantustans.[8] Betterment planning perpetuated the allocation and arrangement of access to natural resources that was implemented in Guquka and Koloni after the Frontier Wars. This is so because betterment planning is based on the distinction of land categories for settlement, arable purposes and livestock grazing, which contrasted sharply with previously existing settlement patterns and use of the landscape. The Tomlinson Commission[9] sought to refine these categories by abolishing communal land. It recommended that communal land tenure should be replaced by private tenure and that the rural population should be divided into a landless group and a group of 'progressive farmers'. The landless group was to make a living in urban centres and industries in native areas. According to the Commission's report, 50% of black people in the reserves were to be removed. Conceptually, betterment planning and the loss of land reconfigured resources, which in turn constrained existing livelihood patterns. It also changed the pattern of migrant labour.

As the authors have observed, the bantustan system provided jobs closer to the village. The question that arises from this historical condition is whether current policies change the configuration of resources. It could also be asked whether, given the complex nature of livelihood, it is even necessary to focus on the configuration of resources in rural areas. Hebinck and Lent's volume argues that the current policy-makers pursue the same logic of modern production that underpinned betterment planning in the 1930s. There is some merit in this observation. For example, the shift in land reform policy from access to land by the masses to a small group of black commercial farmers in 1999 suggests that South Africa's land reform promotes commercial farming above the peasantry. Despite these policy shifts the authors claim that repeasantisation in rural villages should take place through full or partial commercialisation of smallholder agriculture, and that the state should support that endeavour.

The authors' call for repeasantisation is challenged by case studies that demonstrate that there has been a declining role of agriculture in the rural livelihoods of the inhabitants. It is unfortunate that the authors have not used land reform projects to demonstrate the viability of repeasantisation and the form that it should take in the country. Clearly, South Africa's market-driven land reform continues to determine access to land for housing, production and other developmental projects. The question arising from Hebinck and Lent's edited volume is whether land reform in its current form has negative or positive impact on repeasantisation. Does the shift towards black commercial farmers advance black agriculture in the same way that white agriculture benefited from the apartheid state? To be sure, the apartheid state supported white-dominated agriculture and promoted policies and provided infrastructure that favoured white farmers. As the authors noted, 'contrary to their white counterparts whose access to markets improved the development of South Africa's railway system, African producers continued to rely on wagons and sledges to transport their goods from farm to trader, and from trader to market'. Against this backdrop, what is required of the democratic state to support black farmers in post-1994 South Africa? Any form of state intervention in contemporary black agriculture should recognise the population dynamics and changes in the social and physical characteristics of rural areas.

The State of Flux in Rural Areas

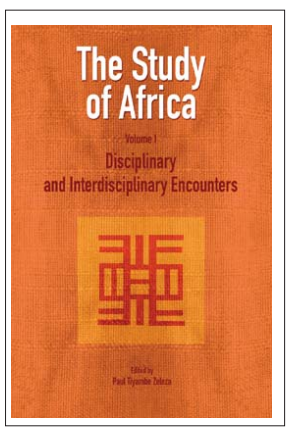
Rural development planning and approaches that ignore the dynamism of rural areas are most unlikely to succeed. As Hebinck and Lent's book has shown, South Africa's rural areas are not static; their biophysical and social conditions have changed over the years. Moreover, rural areas such as Guquka ad Koloni are completely different from each other despite their location in the same vicinity. It should be noted that rural areas in South Africa are divided into two main categories. The first category involves white commercial farms. These farms have undergone significant changes over the last three decades or so. Most of them have been converted into game farms.[10] The second category, which is central to the theme of the book, refers to areas of the former bantustans. Most studies confirm that areas of the former bantustans experienced large-scale degradation,[11] which has been ascribed to a vicious cycle of overpopulation, deterioration of natural resources, migration and impoverishment. Chapters 3 and 5 of the book describe the bio-physical composition of Guquka and Koloni to confirm the deterioration of the environment.

Social transformation in the rural areas of the former bantustans is manifested in institutions, changes in population and livelihoods patterns. The institution of the chieftaincy that exercised exclusive powers over people and resources has been challenged by civil society organisations (CSOs). Chiefs, especially those who supported colonialism and apartheid, lost their legitimacy at the height of the liberation struggle in the 1980s. The mushrooming of CSOs and the redrawing of local government boundaries in post-1994 South Africa facilitated either the emergence of new institutions of governance or the maintenance of old power structures. For example, the formation of Residents Association (RAs) in Makhuzeni in the early 1990s symbolised a radical break from the tribal authority system. However, in reality the RAs did not significantly change the power balance in that area. In Guquka, the RA was dominated by descendants of families who exercised tribal authority. Those families held three quarters of all land and livestock. Although the new system of local government was not intended to retain the RA structure, it did so at Guquka. The number of people living in rural areas has declined mainly because of urbanisation. The urbanisation trend in South Africa has prompted urban theorists to argue for a development policy that focuses more on cities and towns than rural areas. In terms of the theme of the book, urbanisation has impacted on livelihoods in rural areas. For example, the authors ascribe the decline in remittances to the permanent and semi-permanent migration of young families from rural to urban areas. This is a broad statement, which has some relevance to young nuclear families in urban areas. A combination of the cost of urban life and the decline in values that are supportive to extended families in rural areas have reduced young families' investment in rural areas.

One of the most resilient features in the rural areas of the former bantustans is communal land tenure. Disappointingly, the book glosses over this feature, which is crucial to any meaningful discussion of the peasantry in rural South Africa. Despite its progressive constitution, South Africa has yet to resolve land tenure in the former bantustans. The ANC-led government made belated attempts to transform land tenure in those areas when it passed the Communal Land Reform Act in 2004, ten years after the first democratic election. In many respects, the Act confirms the rural settlement patterns and their governance bequeathed by apartheid as the organisational basis of rural life.[12] In support of the authors' thesis of the interconnection between the urban and the rural, it could be argued that conceptions of rural livelihoods should encapsulate the spectrum of activities taking place at different scales and places. The book concludes that the pattern of rural life in post-apartheid South Africa is mainly affected by access to land, labour and social grants. It suggests that, as the greater proportion of households in Guquka and Koloni owns cattle, development initiatives focusing on increasing cattle production would have a better chance of improving. livelihoods. Such a one-sided approach could be costly in the long term.

Notes

1. James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape*, Cambridge MA, Cambridge University Press, 1996; James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, 1800-1990*, Portsmouth NH, Heinemann, 1999.
2. Valentin Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988.
3. Robert Murray, *Mister Africa: The Story of African Car Hire and Trans Africa Safaris and the Development of Overland Touring from Cape Town to the Nile*, Cape Town, Murray, 1996.
4. Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, Oxford, James Currey, 1988.
5. Isak Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics: Exploring the Occult in the South African Lowveld*, London, Pluto Press, 2001.
6. Norman Levy, *The Foundations of the South African Cheap Labour System*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.
7. The consequences of the loss of land were worsened by mass killing of cattle following Nongqawuse's prophecy.
8. De Wet provides a useful definition of betterment planning as 'attempts by successive South African Governments to combat erosion, conserve the environment and develop agriculture in the "homelands", and so also cut down on urbanisation, and in some phases even migrant labour, thereby keeping more black people in the homelands' (Chris de Wet, 'Betterment Planning in a Rural Village in Keiskammahoek, Ciskei', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15 (1989), pp. 326-345.
9. The purpose of the Tomlinson Commission was to advise government on the socio-economic development of black areas. The Commission's Report of 1955 suggested plans for the consolidation of scattered reserves, because the existing areas had no foundation for community development and growth (see Anthony Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, London, Routledge, 1994).
10. In 1990, private enterprise managed 8.6 million hectares and, by 2003, game ranching covered some 17 million hectares.
11. Timm Hoffman and Ally Ashwell, *Nature Divided: Land Degradation in South Africa*, Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001.
12. Maano Ramutsindela, 'Resilient geographies: land, boundaries and the consolidation of the former bantustans in post-1994 South Africa', *Geographical Journal* 173(2007), pp. 43-55.



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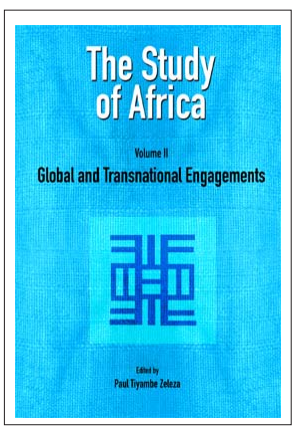

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In Search of an Explanation for the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974

Shiferaw Bekele

Haile Selassie, Western Education and Political Revolution in Ethiopia
by Paulos Milkias
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Ethiopia had more than its due share of wars and social turbulence through most of the known periods of its long history (upwards of two thousand years). Perhaps only one century (the 16th) compares with the 20th for the extent and intensity of the external and internal wars that the country fought, the population displacements and movements, and the massive destructions of property and national heritage. A considerable proportion of this turbulence and these wars were generated by a veritable and bloody social revolution that scholars have compared with the great social revolutions of the world – the French, the Russian and the Chinese.[1] It is argued that social revolutions are rare phenomena in world history and that they are even rarer in the African context. It is therefore a matter of great intellectual importance to explain this phenomenon when it occurred in Ethiopia.

The revolutionary intellectuals did not by any means find it difficult to 'understand' it or to account for it. They saw a feudal monarchy in the kingship of Haile Selassie, a feudal nobility in the ruling class of the country, a subject peasantry in the rural producers akin to the French or the Russian ones before their respective revolutions, the petty bourgeoisie in the social group of teachers and students who agitated for the coming of the revolution and then provided the cadre (or the rebels) when it came. They characterised the country as backward, the economy as stagnant and the regime as oppressive. Thus, they concluded that this was a classic case of feudal oppression leading to revolution. This summary may sound like a caricature but it carries the essential arguments.[2] The military government, which very quickly assumed the revolutionary mantle, went on to embrace the Marxist Leninist ideology and launched a massive propaganda that offered the above explanation, albeit in a much cruder form, to the people.

Yet, the reality was much more complex. Ethiopia underwent impressive changes during the reign of Haile Selassie, particularly after the restoration of imperial rule in 1941, following the five year occupation by Fascist Italian forces. These transformations profoundly affected most aspects of national life. The subsequent three decades witnessed a period of relative peace. A modern state machinery was built up; the foundations for the modern sectors of the economy were laid down; the infrastructure (roads, air transport, health stations and hospitals, schools) was developed. Given the limited resources that the state had at its disposal, the achievements were remarkable. For instance, the GDP grew between 4 and 4.5 % for most of the1950s and 60s. Though not high, it was considered a decent rate of growth. In any case, it was slightly higher than the Sub-Saharan average for the period. According to the World Bank, 'The economic growth rates in the region [Sub-Saharan Africa] during 1960-75 averaged about 4 percent a year… Agriculture did poorly in this period with annual rates of increase averaging only about 1.5 percent.'[3] In contrast to this general picture, Ethiopian agriculture did not do badly. Shiferaw Jamo, a respected senior Ethiopian economist, writes that 'During the decade of the 1950s, agricultural value added increased at an annual average rate of about 2%. This was only marginally higher than the estimated population growth rate of 1.6% a year. In the 1960s, agricultural value added increased at an annual average rate of about 2.2% …'[4] This would not compare badly with the estimated population growth rate for the decade. The growth rate started to fall sharply in this sector (falling to 1.4%) at the turn of the 1970s.[5] On the other hand, some of the other sectors underwent fast growth. According to a government report, the manufacturing sector registered no less than 16% annual growth during the Second Five Year Plan period (1963 -1968).[6] In the services sector, education expanded at an average growth rate that oscillated between 15 and 16% from liberation to revolution.[7] This rapid growth rate gave rise to new social groups (labour, intellectuals, the unemployed, the homeless, etc.) who had new political perceptions and demands.

Seen against the background of the country, however, these transformations had major long term and negative consequences. The peace factor and the expansion of the economy, together with the modest efforts of the imperial government to control and eradicate killer diseases and to introduce clinics and hospitals around the country, led to an increasingly high population growth. In 1941, Ethiopia had an estimated population of seventeen million. In the following three decades, this figure almost doubled to reach thirty million in 1971.[8] More remarkable (and frightening) was the fact that the rate of growth itself rose dramatically from 1.5% in the early 1940s to 2.1% in the late 1950s and to 2.3% in the 1960s.[9] If this growth rate for the country as a whole was considered very high, the annual growth rate for the urban population would have to be regarded as extraordinary – 3.5% from 1938 to 1967 and 7.1% for the years immediately before the revolution.[10]

This leads us to the paradoxical conclusion that the background to the revolution saw years of economic and infrastructural expansion (much like the classic French case), which, however, generated population growth far beyond the capacity of the economy to feed, to house and to clothe. Urban poverty was born. The countryside coped with the problem by sharing its resources, with the attendant fragmentation of land. But, the urban centres, particularly the major ones (Addis Ababa, Asmara, Dire Dawa, Harar etc.), could not handle the rising demand for jobs, housing, schools and other services. Thus, by the turn of the 1970s, the big towns, particularly Addis Ababa, had become combustible material for revolution. On the other hand, the state had not developed the capacity to decisively address all these very new (or modern) problems.

In his later years (and after his demise), Haile Selassie was blamed as much for the wrong reasons as for the right ones. One of the principal projects of his career as 'king of kings', for which he should not have been subjected to severe criticism, was his centralisation drive. Seen against the background of the age-old political system, centralisation could not but be seen as a very progressive and positive policy. There was no way a modern state could be built if the old regional ruling houses and nobilities were allowed to continue with their traditional autonomy. 'International pressure' in the 1920s focused, among other things, on the call for the reduction of the powers and privileges of the regional lords.[11] The intellectuals of the early decades of this century also articulated this 'reform' in their writings.[12] This demand fitted in with the interests of the young monarch, who made considerable efforts to introduce centralisation, which in turn facilitated his project of building a westernized state.[13] Yet, like the other westernization policies, the end result turned out to be very damaging to the interests of the very man (and class) who built up a centralized monarchical regime.

Recent evidence show how much the emperor was a bottleneck for government decision-making in his later years. His capacities as a person, his memory, his energy, all declined in the years that led up to the Revolution. Yet, he continued to intervene in the day-to-day activities of ministers, provincial governors and divisional commanders, let alone of the prime minister. It was common for decisions taken by any one of these authorities to be reversed by the emperor. The most eloquent testimony has come from Ahadu Sabure, Minister of Information in the Endalkachew Mekonnen cabinet (February-July 1974), who details how the monarch interfered in his work.[14] That an emperor who was growing senile was allowed to stay at the helm of power and to mismanage the country can also be seen as a manifestation of the decay of the ruling elite. In the Court, aging courtiers, out of touch with the country's fast-changing realities, were busy in the age-old traditional intrigues of promoting their factional interests (succession to the throne, ministerial positions, etc.) until it was too late. By a supreme irony of history, the emperor's actions (together with the decay of the ruling class) brought about the paralysis of his own government. Whar role this played in making the revolution possible is a major theme for future research. Yet, no effort at explaining the revolution could succeed without taking into account the paralysis of the central institutions of the state at the time of the outbreak of the revolution.

Long ago, political scientists pointed out the structural weakness of the state, which contributed to its collapse in 1974 possible.[15] A major feature of this weakness was the failure to introduce a political party which would have enabled the rulers to mobilize the people when the need arose. In the absence of the traditional institutions of political mobilization, there was no organisational intermediary between the rulers and the ruled. If I may bring in a personal observation, I would like to draw attention to the campuses of the only national university of the country (Haile Selassie I University, automatically rechristened during the revolution as Addis Ababa University). Radical students enjoyed a complete domination of the political space on the university campuses before the revolution for two reasons – firstly because imperial rule was benevolent and secondly because there was no ruling party or, for that matter, any other party to contest their domination. The state could only send its secret agents to spy on student activities. But these agents could not deliver much because the leftists easily smelled out newcomers, who did not in any case look like student types. After the outbreak of the revolution, however, student militants (opposed to the junta) found out that the campus was no longer a place that they could dominate because some of the radical groups had decided to ally with the military. In a very short time, the soldiers could effectively control students and faculty with the help and support of student and staff party members, respectively. These party activists exercised enormous power due to the overwhelming presence of the state that loomed behind them.

Given the critical significance of a ruling party, why (we may ask) did the imperial government fail to build it up? This question will help us to gain insight into some of the problematics of the imperial state. We readily use the expression that Haile Selassie built up a modern state. This is true up to a point.[16] But it obscures the fact that the process of modernization (I prefer the notion of westernization) was not yet completed at the time of the outbreak of the revolution. Thus, there is a need to see the state as a fledgling westernising state, which was caught unawares by the revolution. Perhaps this factor would guide us in the effort to explain why the army, which had been established in the first place to protect the imperial order, ultimately spearheaded the movement to demolish it.

Yet, the army's role in the revolution of 1974 was not the only paradox that confronts the historian. The intellectuals and the university students provide the other case. Paulos Milkias proposes precisely to look into the role of this social group. The theme of his book, in his own words, is to

> … explore the role of education as an important variable in the socio-political transformation of Ethiopia which culminated in the far-reaching revolutionary upheaval of1974.
>
> … The research was conducted with some basic assumptions in mind. One of the guiding presuppositions was that the intelligentsia's perception of their own status is crucial for an understanding of the root causes of social upheavals. (pp.18-19)

The author devotes a fairly sizeable book to develop his theme. The book is divided into fourteen chapters and has a rather big postscript. They can however be grouped into four parts – the first section consists of chapter two only. It is a long but useful summary of the theoretical literature on social revolutions. We will come back to it later when we analyse the revolution on the basis of the data furnished by the book. The next group of chapters (two and three) present the development of modern education in Ethiopia from 1941 to 1974. Then the author moves on to chapters 6 to 9 to reconstruct the history of what is now unanimously called - both in the historical literature and among the public - the Ethiopian Student Movement (for some inexplicable reason, the author does not use this term very much). The narrative goes on until it reaches the climax, the outbreak of the revolution in February 1974. The author devotes the next four chapters (10 to 13) to the seven revolutionary months (18 February to 12 September), taking his story up to the deposition of Haile Selassie on 12 September. This is by far the meatiest part of the work.

This book is a very welcome addition to the not-so-rich literature on the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. It is very gratifying to see that Ethiopian scholars are beginning to undertake a sustained reflection on a major social phenomenon in the contemporary his-

tory of the country. Paulos directs our attention to a very important group whose role is often taken for granted but never subjected to a critical investigation. In the global literature on revolutions, intellectuals are given primacy of place; in fact, Brinton, the noted theorist, identifies the desertion of the system by the educated elites as one of the commonalities in the revolutions of the world (cited in the book under review, p.14). Again and again, the author underlines the decisive role of the educated elites (sometimes he calls them intelligentsia) and the need to study their place in social change (pp. 14, 20, 24, 27). In this book, he draws not only from the secondary literature but also from interviews and responses to questionnaires. He uses to good effect government publications as well as agitational flyers and pamphlets distributed during the revolution. He also occasionally brings in his own observations as an activist student. All of this has enabled him to weave together an interesting account of the revolution from February to September 1974. In general, he has written a thought-provoking analysis of the role of university students and young intellectuals in Ethiopia's greatest social upheaval of the last century.

There are several issues in the book that trigger debate and discussion. His efforts to characterize the 'intelligentsia' as the most decisive factor for the outbreak of the revolution and for its success leads him to overlook (and even to reject) other important variables that made the upheaval possible. He argues that '…to the apologists for Haile Selassie, including most western scholars, the important consideration was the façade of social and economic transformation that had taken place since the 1941 liberation' (p.160). He specifically cites the 'the developed sector of the economy' (Ibid.) and dismisses it as insignificant rather than arguing out his case. Yet, as I tried to show above, there was a steady expansion of the modern sector of the economy over the three decades between liberation and revolution. In fact, I would like to argue, following Tocqueville, that "Revolutions are not always brought about by a gradual decline from bad to worse. …The regime, which is destroyed by a revolution, is almost always an improvement on its immediate predecessor" (quoted on p. 12).

Paulos has opted to organize his book around the notion of 'feudalism'. It is replete with terms like feudal autocracy, feudal government, feudal rulers, feudal lords, feudal regime, and feudal monarchy from beginning to end (see the index). The underlying paradigm of the study is Marxist. And this paradigm has blinded him to the social and economic dynamics of the country. The very facts that he marshals in his work can be used, however, to bring out the significance of the other factors.

An interesting national trend to which I drew attention at the very beginning of this review article is the question of population explosion in the country as a whole and in the urban centres in particular. The consequences of this can be seen in the role that the poor and the jobless played in the revolutionary months. When university students and teachers went out on demonstrations, they, in the words of Paulos, '…soon attracted a large number of street vendors and the urban poor and jobless. Buses, private cars - anything moving on the streets - were stoned' (p.179). The police were unable to control the mass unrest; and to make matters worse, the disturbances quickly spread to major towns around the country.[17] In some of the provincial towns, virtual revolutionary upheavals occurred even if the author cites only two of them. I would like to mention here the case of Jimma where the people rose up against the notorious provincial governor, Tsehayu Enqwo Selassie, who had to flee to save his life. In fact, the Ethiopian revolution was a preeminently urban affair; the peasantry was calm. Paulos had to strain the sources to report peasant revolts in a district not far from Addis. At the end of the day, the revolution would not have succeeded if the government had effectively controlled the instruments of repression.

One of the seven commonalities of revolutions round the world that Brinton lists is the 'inept use of force to contain the growing rebellion' (p. 14). Ethiopia was no exception. There was a clear lack of direction from the centre and in fact the emperor obstructed (as I pointed out above) government efforts to take firm measures to cope with some of the numerous problems that arose. He was too old to use the enormous powers he had amassed. His infirmity explains why he acceded to the recurrent demands of the armed forces. In fact, there were persistent rumours (Paulos cites one of them on p. 228) that he turned down proposals to crush the *Derg* with a sudden and lightening attack in its early days. The decay of the ruling elite reinforced the disarray, confusion and helplessness of formerly influential and powerful courtiers. The author talks of 'a virtual power vacuum' in late spring (p.217). This is a correct assessment. Unless this factor is taken into account, no explanation would suffice to account for the revolution.

The last substantive point that I would like to raise is the question of ideology. The 1960s saw communism at its apex worldwide. European and American universities were shaken by student revolts, which were principally inspired by leftist ideology. It was at the beginning of this decade that the Ethiopian Student Movement was born, primarily because a group of radicals (nicknamed Crocodiles) espoused Marxist-Leninist ideology. Communism had some 'virtues' that enabled it to quickly dominate the political space in the university – it had 'answers' to all the leading political questions of the country; it was highly promissory; it had a millenarian tinge that appealed to students with an Orthodox Christian background. It offered a perfectly new way of looking at the society that gave students the cocky feeling that they had intellectual superiority over their non-Marxist professors. It had many of the key slogans and rhetoric needed to mobilise the masses. And it was riding high on the international arena, further adding to the self-confidence of the young Marxists. Thus, by espousing Marxism-Leninism, the Ethiopian Student Movement gave the revolution a complete ideology, a formula, a 'road map' and a sense of purpose. In sharp contrast to the vigour, vitality and sense of superiority that the radicals acquired from the new ideology, the conservatives were inactive or did not systematically think the problems through. The most educated within the power elite – Aklilu Habte Wold, Endalkachew Mekonnen, Mika'el Emeru, to cite only the leading ones – were the least 'intellectual' of them all. The less educated – Haddis Alemayehu, Asrate Kassa, Girmachew Teclehawariat, to cite again the most prominent – struggled to understand the complicated problems of the country and attempted to propose solutions. But they were little equipped – by formal education - for the task. In short, it is not possible to conceive of a revolution without an ideology; it is a pity that Paulos did not give it due credit in his narrative and in his analysis.

In spite of this, however, he has written a book that can generate extensive discussion and debate. This is commendable. Yet, there are some factual and technical glitches. The late Harold Marcus, professor of history at Michigan State University (East Lansing) was never an 'official' of the US government and, as far as I know, never 'worked for the Rand Corporation' (p.108). Major Teferra Tekleab, of Eritrean origin one of the founders of the *Derg*, was not, to the best of my knowledge, the 'best man of Mengistu and a godfather to the son of Atnafu Abate' (p.216). While it is true that the redoubtable Mesfin Wolde Mariam was 'appointed' to the governorship of Gimbi *awraja* (in the former province of Wellega), he never accepted the post; he remained in Addis (p.167). The statement that '…the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively' reflects the general view(p.3). Nevertheless, the last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 60% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems constituted 32%. The author also states that 'The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie's centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation' (p.27). Fascists indeed killed quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold 'family' is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term 'family' is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that 'the strongest pressure on Haile Selassie to step down in favor of his son came from the Habte Wold family, which included Prime Minister Aklilu Habte Wold, and an ambitious aristocratic group led by Leul Ras Asrate Kassa, chairman of the Crown Council' (p.188). This kind of bold statement has to be documented together (ideally) with a critical evaluation of the evidence. Otherwise, it would not have any value.

It is a pity that the author did not take care to furnish his book with an accurate bibliography. The entries are not well-organised and some of the useful works he cites in the text (ex. Ahadu Saboure's and Zenebe Feleke's memoirs) are not included in the list. A more serious complaint concerns the works he has not consulted for this book: to cite some examples, Andargachew Tiruneh's book on the revolution, Bahru Zewde's book on the intellectual pioneers, Tesfaye Mekonnen's memoirs and Andargachew Aseged's history of Meison. The index does not include all the names discussed in the text or in the notes. Finally, this reviewer finds it difficult to understand the rationale for the long Postscript (pp. 247-282). It does justice neither to the history of the revolution after 1974 nor to the history of the regime that toppled the *Derg* in 1991.

In spite of these shortcomings, *Haile Selassie, Western Education and Political Revolution* is a highly thought-provoking and useful book.

Notes

1. C. Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
2. Addis Hiwot was among the first Marxist intellectuals to propose a Marxist explanation to the Ethiopian revolution in his much read, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution* (London: Review of African Political Economy, 1975).
3. The World Bank, *World Development Report, 1978* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, August, 1978), p. 47.
4. Shiferaw Jamo, "An Overview of the Economy, 1941-74," in Shiferaw Bekele (ed.), *An Economic History Ethiopia* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), p. 21.
5. *Ibid.* 6 Imperial Ethiopian Government, *The Third Five Year Development Plan (1968-1973)* (Addis Ababa: Imperial Ethiopian Government, 1968), p.
7. Tekeste Negash, *Rethinking Education in Ethiopia* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1996).
8. Asmerom Kidane, "Estimating the Ethiopian Population by Age and Geographical Distribtion 1935-1985", *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. I (Moscow: Nuka Publishers, 1988), p. 63. This is a reliable estimate as it is based on the estimates of the Central Statistical Office.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
10. Alula Abate, "Demography, Migration and Urbanization in Modern Ethiopia," in Shiferw Bekele (ed.), *An Economic History Ethiopia* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), p.307.
11. However, in the 1920s and early 30s, the major pressure or (to use a current buzz word) 'conditionality' set by the powerful European colonial countries was characterized by the demand for the effective and quick abolition of slave trade and slavery. But, in spite of the wishes of the rulers, the state was unable to 'deliver' promptly because the regional lords exercised considerable autonomy and were thus able to resist the pressure from the Centre.
12. Gebre Hiwot Baykedagn raises this issue as the first item in the list of ten reforms he suggests in his article, 'Até Menelikena Ityopya,' It is also interesting to see Haile Selassie's presentation of the issue in his memoirs: see E. Ullendorff (trans. and ann.), *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I: 'My Life and Ethiopia's Progress' 1892-1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 75. It should be noted that Haile Selassie considered himself to be an opponent of feudalism.
13. I use the expression 'modern state' for the imperial state even if the process of westernization was not completed. Seen against the structure of the traditional polity, which he inherited, it can be said that Haile Selassie left behind a relatively westernized state.
14. Ahadu Sabure, *Yäqädamawi Haylä Selassie Fesaména Yä-Därg Anäsas* (Addis Ababa: n.p.), pp.215-217.
15. C. Clapham, *Haile Selassie's Government* (London: Longmans, 1969). See also his *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Patrick Gilkes, *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia* (London: Julien Friedman, 1975); J. Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).
16. See Robert L. Hess, *Ethiopia: The Modernization of Autocracy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970); Gilkes, *The Dying Lion.*
17. Some of the leading members of the *Derg* were born and raised in towns – Teferra Tekleab (already Marxist-oriented before the Revolution), Mengistu, Fekre Selassie, Moges, Legesse, and a few others. Other key soldiers from outside of the *Derg* but who occupied key offices in the security apparatus of the military regime had an urban background – Daniel Asfaw, Tesfaye Wolde Selassie, to name only two. Could this background have a correlation with their readiness to spouse the revolutionary ideology? It merits investigation.

Africa's Avuncular Saint

Adekeye Adebajo

Mandela: A Critical Life
by Tom Lodge
Oxford University Press, 2006

Tom Lodge, a former politics professor at South Africa's University of the Witwatersrand, has written a biography of South Africa's first democratically-elected president, Nelson Mandela, that follows three earlier biographies by Fatima Meer, Anthony Sampson, and Martin Meredith. Lodge seeks to shed more light on the role of Mandela's childhood in shaping his leadership qualities; he assesses Mandela's role in 'leading from prison', examines the mythical cult that was consciously developed around his iconic status, and analyses Mandela's 'messianic' leadership of South Africa's democratic transition.

Mandela grew up in a royal Xhosa household, attending elite Methodist schools modeled on the English education system. He developed great respect for English democratic institutions and gentlemanly manners, becoming a life-long Anglophile. Mandela studied at the black elite Fort Hare University, where he met Oliver Tambo, the future head of the African National Congress (ANC). Moving to Johannesburg, he met another ANC stalwart and mentor, Walter Sisulu, who was with Mandela for most of his 27 years in jail. Before prison, Mandela had married two women (including Winnie Madikizela) and became involved in ANC politics. The political struggle in apartheid South Africa, which led to an absentee father role, caused Mandela much personal anguish – a subject that Lodge tackles well.

Mandela's intellectual thinking was particularly influenced by members of South Africa's Communist Party (SACP), before he helped to found the ANC Youth League in 1944. He gradually metamorphosed from a black nationalist who expressed concern that South African Indians were dominating the liberation struggle to a prophet of multiracialism. At first inspired by Gandhian tactics of passive resistance, Mandela would eventually come to play a leadership role in the Defiance Campaign of 1952, before initiating the 'armed struggle' that led to a life sentence in 1964. His visit to Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Guinea in 1961 had given him great insights into continental diplomacy and the tactics of other liberation movements. Mandela was particularly influenced by the Algerian *Front de Liberation Nationale*. He had always adopted a much broader pan-African vision of his country's struggle, as the name of his party – sheltered during the apartheid struggle by many neighbouring countries, at huge costs to themselves – suggested.

Lodge describes Mandela's difficult experiences in jail: his eyes, lungs and prostate were badly affected by the squalid conditions on Robben Island. But this was also a forum in which the ideological struggles of the ANC were played out, as Mandela and Govan Mbeki (father of the current president, Thabo) battled over the role of traditional chiefs, the prospects for revolutionary warfare, and the role of the Black Consciousness Movement and Communist Party in South Africa's liberation. Mandela read widely, and wrote his memoirs which were smuggled out of jail. He became a 'constant gardener', planting vegetables during his captivity. Mandela's relationship with Winnie is touchingly described, as is the tragic aftermath when the relationship that had sustained him in jail for three decades disintegrated bitterly and in public within two years of his release.

Mandela and his comrades stubbornly stuck to their principle of majority rule, and refused offers to renounce their armed struggle in exchange for their freedom. Despite being isolated in jail, Mandela instinctively knew when to negotiate with apartheid's leaders, requesting a meeting with Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee in 1985, and eventually meeting both Presidents P.W. Botha and F.W. De Klerk as a prisoner. As Mandela noted: 'There are times when a leader must move out ahead of his flock…' Like a good shepherd, he skillfully guided his followers to freedom. Mandela's leadership was clearly decisive in ending apartheid and ushering in democratic rule. Lodge effectively tackles the acrimonious battles that took place between Mandela and De Klerk during the transition, with Mandela angrily accusing De Klerk of acting in bad faith in not curbing the excesses of his security forces. During a cabinet meeting in the post-1994 government of national unity, Mandela, then president, chastised deputy president De Klerk so harshly that the latter considered resigning.

Mandela not only embodied the nation but also became the leading apostle of reconciliation. He emerged from prison without any apparent bitterness towards his former enemies, and tirelessly promoted national reconciliation. This biography is, however, not very critical of Mandela, though it does point to some of his flaws: his lambasting of critical black journalists; his suggestion that Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu not criticise the ANC in public; his occasional intolerance of dissent, which led to the ousting of Pallo Jordan as Minister of Telecommunications, and Bantu Holomisa as Deputy Minister of the Environment; and his obsessive loyalty to some politicians of dubious moral character and competence.

Mandela consistently upheld personal loyalty abroad as well, as seen, for example, in his insistence on maintaining his friendship with Libya's Muammar Qadaffi and Cuba's Fidel Castro, both of whom had strongly supported the ANC's struggle. This loyalty was to serve Mandela well in brokering a deal on the Lockerbie bombings in Scotland which finally lifted UN sanctions on Libya. After retiring in 1999, Mandela became a tireless peacemaker in Burundi. He also pushed Mbeki's government to provide anti-retroviral drugs to HIV/AIDS sufferers in South Africa, where five million people are currently infected by the pandemic. This was a battle which Mandela – much to his regret – had neglected during his own tenure in office. Employing his incredible moral stature, South Africa's icon also became one of the fiercest critics of America's invasion of Iraq in 2003.

As the author himself appears to concede, this is not a definitive biography of Mandela, and earlier studies have gone into far greater depth about the man. But this is a thoroughly researched book that pulls together different strands of the tale and captures well the essence of one of the greatest moral figures of the 20th century. Critics have noted that Mandela may end up doing more long-term damage by papering over racial differences and by not having forced whites to show more contrition to their largely black victims of apartheid. Mandela's legacy in liberating his country is secured, but the success of his efforts at reconciliation will only endure if rapid progress can narrow the country's grotesque socio-economic inequalities.

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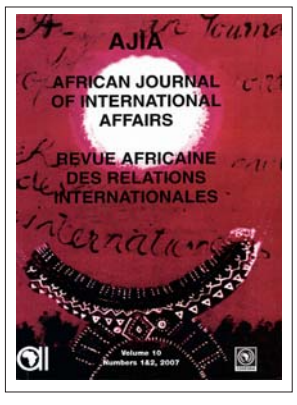

Special Issue on Elections and the Challenge of Post-Conflict Democratisation in West Africa
Guest Editor: Cyril I. Obi

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Beyond Urban Socio-anthropology

Owen Sichone

The Management of Urban Development in Zambia
by Emmanuel Mutale
Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2004, xv + 268 pp., ISBN 0 7546 3596 1

Zambia is said to be one of the most urbanized countries in Africa and is known in the social sciences as one of the main research sites for the study of urbanization. Anthropologists, for example, recognize the research conducted on the Copperbelt in the colonial period as being on par with that produced by the Chicago school of urban anthropology. Mutale's study however does not build on that colonial tradition directly. This book is not very sociological and pays little attention to the pioneering ethnographic studies of James Clyde Mitchell, A.L Epstein or any of the other anthropologists who worked on the Copperbelt. Mutale's field is classified as urban management and his book is one of Ashgate's International Land Management series. It provides a fresh way of looking at the urbanization process - one that encompasses "...a range of traditional disciplines, for example, town planning; civil engineering, architecture, surveying, economics, law, sociology, public administration, management and others." (p.3) But is it possible for one researcher to employ all these different analytic frameworks and disciplinary skills? Can urban policy ignore urban anthropology? Mutale's book suggests that the answer to both questions is possibly yes.

The main aim of the book is it to analyze the development of urban policy in Zambia with special focus on the mining town of Nkana-Kitwe on the Copperbelt but with comparative references to Lusaka and other cities. Although, as already noted, little mention is made of the pioneering work of the Rhodes-Livingstone school of urban anthropology, e.g. A.L Epstein and J.C Mitchell's work on urban politics and ethnicity in the neighboring Ndola and Luanshya, this study of urban management is much more comprehensive than urban sociology or urban anthropology as far as the daily workings of urban policy and governance are concerned. Mutale's predecessors in the study of Zambian urban development are thus not the RLI/Manchester school urban anthropologists but the Swedish architects Ann Schlyter and Thomas Schlyter whose studies of squatter upgrading in Lusaka in the 1970s are in the same genre. Urban development, it seems, is a branch of land management and not of sociology. Mutale thus draws from the work of architects, town planners, economists, surveyors (and legal experts like Melvin Mbao) rather than from political scientists or urban anthropologists. But since one cannot discuss land or housing without referring to the population inhabiting urban spaces, his work does inevitably overlap with sociology and anthropology. It is quite exciting to see that social studies are possible without the social sciences. Indeed compared to the theoretical mystifications that anthropologists have been producing in recent years, this simple and straightforward technical study of urban development in Zambia is a reminder that socially relevant and constructive scholarship is not a modernist dinosaur.

The book is divided into nine chapters, including the introduction and conclusions. The introduction spells out the challenges of urban growth today and outlines the author's main argument as well as the structure of his book. Mutale begins his analysis with a discussion of the problem of urbanization in global development and illustrates this with references to the World Bank's projections of rapid urbanization especially in the developing world. But what is the significance of Gabon's population being 80% urbanized or that 39.6 % of Zambians reside in urban areas? Are they involved in non-agricultural work? Do they have access to waterborne sanitation? Do they all consider themselves citizens of the towns they reside in and not members of say, villages or ethnic communities located elsewhere? Some Zambian cities, we might say, are just huge villages, complete with piggeries, pit-latrines, orchards and maize fields so how does one differentiate the rural from the urban? These are the sort of questions that preoccupy sociologists and anthropologists more than urban management experts and Mutale suggests simply that a town with a population exceeding 50,000 is urban if economic activity is largely industrial, commercial or services (p35).

The second chapter outlines a "structural conflict model of urban management" which is not quite the class or nationalist struggles that historians of the Copperbelt have highlighted in the past. In fact even when reference is made to Marxist theory, it is usually to secondary sources, the one exception being Engels's studies of urban poverty in Britain Although he analyses urban management mainly from administrative, political and demographic perspectives, governance issues seem to loom large in his study. Mutale highlights three key elements in his analysis of Zambia's urban management process: the financial, political and planning of urban growth and is thus doing what the old town planners would have done. In addition, he draws upon the work of the civil engineers and architects who built Zambian towns and cities situating all this in the context of competing economic and social interests that have to resolve the major social concerns of the day using the available and limited resources.

The third and fourth chapters review key theoretical issues in urban management questions and trace the evolution of urban management and settlement policies in Zambia. The author reviews over a century of urban development in Zambia, from the 1890s to 2000. The British South Africa (BSA) Company that colonized Zambia for Britain operated out of South Africa and the same racist policies that Cecil Rhodes had implemented in South Africa formed a part of the urban management regime in colonial Zambia. Although there was rapid and revolutionary change after independence in 1964 when Zambians won the freedom to move and settle as they chose within the country, urban management retains a lot of the colonial traditions. Although the history of Zambian towns is quite well known, Mutale's review does pay more attention to the various local government structures that were in place. Between 1913 and 1927, BSA Company dominated Village Management Boards, which served the interests of property owners (i.e. white residents) of the larger mining towns and administrative settlements, controlled the process of urbanization. From South Africa they imported racial segregation as well as "the Durban system" which used beer sales to funding black townships development. From 1929 to 1965, The Municipal Corporations and Township Ordinance formed the basis for the management of urban areas under the control of the Governor and covered both black and white residents albeit unequally. The mining townships, especially during the war-time copper boom, developed independently of these and provided (generally better) housing and other services to employees without being encumbered by government bureaucracy. When neo-liberal policies were implemented in the late 1990s and the copper mines privatized (which had been nationalized after independence), the new owners shed their township management and social service provision with disastrous consequences for the mine townships which had always been independent from government control.

Chapter Five is dedicated to the growth of Nkana-Kitwe and is one of the most important for it shows the structures that sought to determine the city's development path in the colonial and post independence period. Basically the mining town was designed for the white minority and today it is mainly occupied by people for whom it was not designed with a result that structures have broken down in many parts of the city. And so when the Zimbabwean or South African governments smash poor people's houses in order to prevent the mushrooming of illegal structures, they are enforcing colonial construction standards in a determined albeit futile bid to ensure that the city does not become African or "Third World". Mutale's word of advise to neocolonial politicians is that the success of urban planning, development and management depends on "balancing the needs of all power bases" (p.111), political, economic, and informal.

The next three chapters all show how the main power structures: mining companies, government and citizens have interacted to determine the nature of Nkana-Kitwe's development. The supply of land and property and the changing structure of rates, of revenues allocation to finance service provision and the supply of basic services such as water and housing form the core of the book. I found these last chapters very informative, and the description of the conflict-ridden relationship between the local authorities, the central government and the mining company is a major contribution to our knowledge of the Copperbelt. The form and agency of housing provision and the nature of the housing problem in Nkana-Kitwe respectively are both excellent studies of real life in Zambian cities and I would urge the sociologists and anthropologists to emulate Mutale's careful use of council records, government plans and his own fieldwork to construct a very complete picture of urban development, one that researchers have in the past declared difficult to do because African countries lack reliable data.

In the concluding chapter, Mutale makes a number of policy recommendations which governments and other agencies involved in urban renewal after the collapse of the copper industry will find very useful and useable, which cannot be said for the most recent examples of urban anthropology. One major lesson that we can draw from this study is that leaving out the people as the colonial and current town planners tend to do is a major reason for failed urbanization.

After independence in 1965, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government under President Kaunda introduced local government reforms that did away with indirect rule structures like the Native Treasuries and Native Authorities in the rural areas and the urban structures that favored white property owners with "democratically" elected rural councils and local authorities. Whether seen as democratization or Zambianization, this process had two major weaknesses (1) the exclusion of the public from the planning and implementation of development issues and (2) the politicization of the councilors and committee members turning them into vehicles for party patronage. This corrupting legacy needs to be addressed.

As Mutale shows, with proper management, existing and emerging sectional interests in urban areas can help to provide conditions which foster the formulation of a more equitable urban policy. Although focused on Zambia, the proposed structural conflict approach has potential for wider application.

Although it is based on his PhD thesis and has a substantial appendix on water consumption data, numerous tables on municipal service provision, and illustrations of housing designs, maps depicting town expansion and even city council civic awareness posters, none of it are superfluous. This is probably the best book on Zambia to have been published in a long while and should be essential reading for everyone involved in the study of African urbanization or even in the formulation of urban policy.

Reference

Schlyter, A. and Schlyter, T. (1979), *George - The Development of a Squatter Settlement in Lusaka, Zambia,* The National Swedish Institute for Building Research, Gavle, Sweden.

Intellectuels d'Afrique entre colonisation et mondialisation

Hirreche Baghdad Mohamed

Figures croisées d'intellectuels
(Trajectoires, modes d'action, productions)
Sous la direction de Abel Kouvouama, Abdoulaye Gueye,
Anne Periou, Anne-Catherine Wagner
KARTHALA, 2007, Pages 474
ISBN 978-2-84586-866-3

Dans la présentation de ce livre, Abel Kouvouama a bien montré que les textes et les interventions «Proviennent des travaux présentés lors du colloque international organisé du 17 au 19 mars 2005 à l'université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour… Ce thème s'inscrivait dans les réflexions et les travaux de la plupart des chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs du centre de recherche et d'études sur les pays d'Afrique orientale (CREPAO), du laboratoire Identités, Territoires, Expressions, Mobilité" (ITEM) de l'université de Pau et des pays de l'Adour et du réseau "Acteurs Émergents" de la Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH) de Paris » (p. 7). L'ouvrage s'inscrit dés lors dans une" longue réflexion", il n'est pas le fruit de l'urgence ou de la précipitation. L'ouvrage présente les résultats de recherche de plusieurs organismes et instituts sur l'état des lieux de l'intellectuel africain, et même il essaie de « cerner les postures des intellectuels dans différent espaces, en Afrique, en Europe, en Asie et dans les Amériques en soulignant les modes variés de constructions sociales internes et externes des figures de l'intellectuel, ainsi que les différents usages que les individus et les agents sociaux font de cette notion » (p. 8). Dans cette perspective l'intellectuel devient objet de recherche, et les recherches sont réparties en quatre parties majeures qui enveloppent vingt-cinq interventions au total, étalées en 465 pages y compris la présentation du livre et les introductions qui se trouvent dans chaque partie.

Construction et déconstruction des figures de l'intellectuel

La première partie met l'intellectuel face à l'histoire de la colonisation, et de la décolonisation, ce qui justifie l'utilisation d'une terminologie qui met en avant l'identité des "peuples noires", de "l'intelligentsia négro-africaine", et des "écrivains de négritude". Cet homme cultivé est né pendant la colonisation**,** car avant il n'y avait que des magiciens, des hommes de religion, des sages et des savants au sens propre du terme. Il ne peut que revenir par d'autres qui mettaient en avant des intellectuels tel que Léopold Senghor, Lamine Senghor, Norbert Zongo, etc.

Deux visions contradictoires se manifestent concernant le rapport de l'intellectuel avec la société: d'une part, il rompt les liens qui le rattache à la société en adoptant une langue académique (la langue du colonisateur) destinée à une élite, d'autre part, il adopte une "langue ethnique". C'est un choix difficile, mais il peut être résolu rapidement par des "intellectuels" qui se soucient de leurs « propre image de marque » (p. 117) et qui visent à protéger des intérêts individuels par "la manipulation". Michel Leclerc- Olive démontre qu'au Mali la langue académique (le français) est une langue étrangère à la culture, et aux traditions, ce qui rend son intégration dans la société difficile, car « tous ont recours à la langue maternelle… dés que la discussion concerne des enjeux importants ou qu'elle prend une tournure plus familière » (p. 412).

Dans ce climat les vrais intellectuels deviennent "invisibles" ou "marginaux", et « l'exemple de Lamine Senghor est une autre illustration de la marginalisation, et de la non légitimation d'une tentative de production nationale…Lamine Senghor a défendu des thèses pour l'introduction des langues nationales dans le système scolaire et administratif » (p. 132). C'est grâce à la Guerre froide entre les deux blocs, que l'intellectuel pouvait exercer son talent de déconstructeur des modèles occidentaux au profit d'une vision nationaliste, et on voit que « Léopold Senghor "déconstruit" Karl Marx pour proposer une "lecture africaine du socialisme" » (p. 133). Il y a cependant d'autres intellectuels qui ont une vision plus ouverte; ils ne se positionnent pas comme intellectuels africains, mais comme des intellectuels tout simplement. C'est pour cette raison que le Burkinabé Idrissa Ouédraogo a « remis publiquement en question cette notion d'africanité en déclarant qu'il n'était "pas un cinéaste africain" mais "un cinéaste tout court" » (p. 59).

Intellectuels et lieux de pouvoir

L'Afrique a connu des tragédies issues des conflits armés entre les différents mouvements politiques qui n'arrivaient pas à s'entendre. Ces conflits étaient d'une atrocité incroyable aboutissant à des génocides, comme c'est le cas au Rwanda et au Burundi. Devant le fait accompli, les historiens avaient le devoir d'écrire cette histoire, mais Christian Thibon réalise que « les intellectuels se retrouvent au cœur d'un projet qui les dépasse » (p. 239). Certes l'historien se retrouve devant l'obstacle des conflits de mémoires, mais surtout devant un étrange passé que Thibon caractérise par « un passé qui ne passe pas » (p. 240), c'est-à-dire que les génocides révèlent une transgression radicale, qui a causé un traumatisme collectif, obligeant les gens à rester enfermés dans un passé qui se prolonge à l'infini. Tandis que « l'écriture d'une mémoire historique consiste à fabriquer du passé, à retenir des faits et des analyses qui aident les sociétés à se projeter dans l'avenir » (p. 241), la préoccupation majeure de l'historien « s'inscrit dans un horizon d'attente positive… celle de la civilisation ou celle de la fin de l'histoire » (p. 245). La question qui se pose dans ce cas, et contrairement à ce que pense Thibon est de savoir comment les historiens européens par exemple ont pu analyser et écrire l'histoire de la Première et la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, malgré le fait que ces deux guerres étaient pleines d'atrocités. C'est le cas par exemple du génocide des Juifs qui a pu être reconstitué dans le contexte d'une logique que les Allemands nazi appelaient "la solution finale", sans autant que les polémiques concernant ces événements tragiques aient cessé jusqu'à maintenant.

Les historiens ou bien les intellectuels ne peuvent agir directement sur le réel pour empêcher des guerres ou des génocides, mais ils ont « un pouvoir d'agir sur le réel en agissant sur les représentations du réel » (p. 258). Janvier Onana croit fervemment à une efficacité symbolique du discours (des) savant (s) sur la politique puisque les conditions au Cameroun par exemple sont propices pour que les intellectuels puissent agir sur "les représentations du réel" surtout que « les textes réglementaires qui organisent l'Université camerounaise… affirment avec force l'autonomie de l'université » (p. 259). Le problème ne consiste pas dans la difficulté d'expliquer et de comprendre des violences extrêmes, autant qu'il consiste dans le courage d'exploiter l'autonomie de l'université pour pouvoir agir sur les représentations, afin de faire reculer le mal. Donc « l'investissement de l'espace médiatique par les savants rend compte de l'emprise d'une contrainte structurelle, celle de la réussite de l'espace public comme site d'arbitrage légitime des conflits sociaux » (p. 267). L'investissement de l'espace médiatique par les intellectuels va empêcher que les hommes politiques créent pour eux « un programme à suivre ou à expliquer » (p. 294), car l'intellectuel est en quête perpétuelle « d'une autonomie croissante par rapport à la religion établie (cas du philosophe), à la classe dominante (pour le poète ou l'artiste)… et par rapport au public (savant, artiste) » (Charles, p. 37).

L'intellectuel africain ne constitue pas l'élite en tant que « classe dirigeante » (Coenen, p. 35) mais il essaie d'être parmi « les élites comme groupes d'influence » (Coenen, p. 69). Les intellectuels d'Afrique sont l'élite des universitaires, sans autant dire qu'ils sont l'élite de la société, car les élites sont « des personnes considérées comme les meilleures ou les plus remarquables dans tel ou tel groupe, à définir » (Coenen, p. 1). Ali El Kenz a bien signalé dans son article "Les chercheurs africains, une élite" que « l'Afrique est aujourd'hui la région du monde qui exporte le plus sa "matière grise" » (El Kenz, p. 21). Ce phénomène est la cause majeure qui empêche les intellectuels de constituer un groupe d'influence, afin de changer le cours des événements.

Territoires localisés et réseaux internationaux

Face aux problèmes que les intellectuels peuvent constater dans leurs pays, des stratégies de résistances peuvent se déployer de plusieurs manières. Zhang Lun met la lumière sur le rôle que peut jouer Internet dans la mobilisation de l'opinion publique, et surtout en Chine où en voit que "le 10 février 2003, un texte intitulé "déclaration des divers milieux sociaux de la Chine contre le plan de guerre du gouvernement américain en Irak" (p. 356). Cette déclaration émane du mouvement démocratique et des intellectuels libéraux qui essayent d'impliquer leur pays dans les débats concernant la souveraineté, la démocratie, la liberté, afin de limiter le champ d'action des conservateurs chinois qui tend à isoler la Chine du reste du monde. L'intellectuel se doit de « sortir du champ de l'abstraction et du spéculatif, et de servir une réflexion collective » (p. 373), comme il est de son devoir de « discuter publiquement de questions embarrassantes » (p. 399). Ayant compris l'importance des échanges culturels entre les pays, la Suède et d'autre Etats, choisissent d'investir dans les relations transnationales pour faire face à la globalisation.

La trajectoire des intellectuels d'Afrique reste celle du passage de la colonisation à la décolonisation, et leurs modes d'action sont un combat permanent contre les pouvoirs internes et externes qui mettent les valeurs humaines en danger. L'intellectuel n'est pas un simple fonctionnaire, ou un universitaire, mais il est celui qui procède une « lecture critique des processus en cours,…et lutte pour la démocratie » (p. 54). Il est celui qui garde l'espérance en un changement positif au delà des contraintes de la modernité et de la mondialisation, même s'il continue d'écrire dans un monde qui ne lui garantit pas l'immortalité. Le combat de l'intellectuel est un combat difficile, mais non impossible.

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L'identité africaine serait-elle moins soluble que les autres dans l'occidentalité ?

Aïcha Benamar

Identité africaine et occidentalité
de José Kaputa Lota
L'Harmattan, Paris, 2006, 195 pages
ISBN 2-296-00285-4, Prix : 17,50 €

Le problème du rapport entre l'identité africaine et l'Occident est au centre d'un ancien débat dont les termes sont ravivés par José Kaputa Lota, qui s'interroge dès l'incipit sur l'existence d'une culture africaine et partant de là d'une civilisation africaine ; la culture entendue comme un « sens collectif de la conscience qui est suffisamment bavard pour révéler son sens de l'histoire et de la langue, mais suffisamment silencieux pour rendre neutres et banales ses structures, valeurs et relations »[1]. Si nous admettons avec l'auteur que la rencontre entre l'Européen et l'Africain est caractérisée par une relation dialectique de dominant à dominé, nous pouvons sans doute formuler l'hypothèse d'une négation multidimensionnelle de l'Africain surtout lorsque nous pensons au discours habituel des sciences sociales sur la culture et l'identité des Africains ; discours généralement articulé autour du refus de vouloir comprendre ce que cette culture africaine peut apporter à la construction de la société moderne. Ce type de relation, poursuit-il, constitue un handicap sérieux à son progrès et à son développement harmonieux. La situation d'asservissement et d'apathie que connaît l'Africain a pu bénéficier, d'après José Kaputa, de la complicité du Nègre lui-même. Et pourtant, pense-t-il, le Nègre reste le créateur de la première civilisation et son continent, le berceau de l'humanité.

De nombreux travaux[2] établissent l'antériorité de la civilisation nègre sur toutes les autres, montrant qu'il a existé une unité culturelle africaine ; unité que l'on identifie par le moyen du paléo-africain qui serait la langue négro-africaine originelle de laquelle seraient issues toutes les autres langues de l'Afrique noire. Cheikh Anta Diop[3] revisite pour nous l'histoire de l'humanité pour découvrir (et montrer, preuves à l'appui) que c'est bien en Afrique, dans l'Égypte noire, que se trouvent les racines de la civilisation qui donnera naissance et fécondera ce qui deviendra le berceau de l'Occident: la Grèce des philosophes et des mathématiciens. Cet apport est considérable pour la restitution de la contribution à l'Histoire universelle du continent africain. Nous conviendrons qu'il ne peut y avoir d'histoire sans un début, et il ne peut y avoir d'émancipation pour un peuple ou pour un individu sans la construction d'une conscience historique. Contrairement aux philosophes critiques et aux scientistes modernisant de tout bord, José Kaputa Lota tout comme Cheikh Anta Diop pense que le manque d'enracinement dans l'histoire africaine est la cause principale de nos égarements, errements et/ou hésitations théoriques.

Dès la préface, la question posée est de savoir comment l'Afrique traditionnelle peut-elle entrer en contact avec l'Occident et pour une société plus identitaire comment l'interpénétration peut elle être possible ? L'auteur préconise une nouvelle approche de l'identité envisagée comme un « kairos » ou « le moment opportun » où l'Africain doit reprendre l'initiative dans les projets qui engagent son avenir car le développement de même que l'idée qu'il s'en fait ne peuvent surgir de la négation de son histoire passée et présente. La véritable authenticité africaine, affirme-t-il, ne doit pas se contenter de défendre, démontrer ou illustrer la tradition africaine, mais elle doit aider l'africain à prendre conscience de ce qu'il est devenu, de ce que la violence de l'histoire a fait de lui. On comprend aujourd'hui que le problème de la préservation de l'identité et de la culture en Afrique sont inséparables du procès historique par lequel la question nationale elle-même se pose en lien étroit avec la question sociale. Et en nous référant à Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1961)[4] nous pouvons dire que l'identité culturelle constitue une fiction anthropologique qui désigne un temps historique pendant lequel un peuple se reconnaît par des valeurs précises se manifestant à travers ses pratiques, ses pensées et ses croyances. Pourquoi une fiction pourrait s'interroger le lecteur? Parce que tout simplement il est difficile de dire avec précision qu'à un temps donné tel peuple se caractérise par telles ou telles valeurs culturelles; puisque, au moment où on le dit, ces valeurs ont déjà amorcé leur trajectoire de variation et de plus aucune valeur humaine n'est pérenne.

L'ouvrage comprend six chapitres : « l'identité culturelle et la civilisation africaine », « la conception africaine traditionnelle du monde et de la société », « la traite négrière et la colonisation en Afrique », « la problématique de la décolonisation », « la réhabilitation de la culture africaine » et enfin « la revalorisation du communautarisme ». Le premier chapitre essaie de répondre à la question de savoir s'il existe une culture africaine et partant de là, une civilisation africaine ? Sachant que chaque peuple possède une culture propre, le lecteur ne peut songer qu'à une réponse affirmative. Si on admet que les africains ont leur culture et leur propre vision du monde peut-on conclure à l'existence d'une philosophie africaine ? Le chapitre tente d'y répondre. S'ouvrant sur la définition des notions d'authenticité, de culture et de civilisation, il se consacre aux idées d'unité culturelle africaine, de philosophie africaine et d'antériorité de la civilisation nègre. L'authenticité africaine est définie comme : toute recherche d'identité et de renaissance de la culture africaine en même temps qu'une ouverture aux apports positifs venus de l'étranger » (p.16). Si l'authenticité est corrélative à l'universalité, comment entrevoir l'unité africaine, s'interroge l'auteur ? Citant Cheikh Anta Diop (1982), il fait ressortir clairement la similitude des problèmes et des situations des peuples africains, et ce, au delà des diversités socio-économiques et politiques actuelles entre les Etats. Soulignant ainsi la relative parenté culturelle des peuples de l'Afrique et partant de la conception africaine traditionnelle du monde et de la société, il définit l'existence comme une conséquence directe de la solidarité, plaidant ainsi pour la réhabilitation du communautarisme, caractéristique fondamentale qui semble s'être dissoute lors de la rencontre de l'Africain avec l'Occidental. A propos du discours philosophique africain, il conclut qu'il doit centrer ses préoccupations aujourd'hui sur l'être et le devenir existentiel de l'homme africain pour lequel « le coup de massue » c'est à la fois l'esclavage et la nuit coloniale. La reconnaissance de sa civilisation peut permettre au Négro-africain de se réhabiliter vis-à-vis de soi-même et des autres. Elle peut ainsi justifier la nécessité d'une culture africaine par rapport au « travail de sape, de perversion, de défiguration et de dévalorisation totale de son histoire par la colonisation » (p.57).

José Kaputa Lota relance le débat sur la problématique de la préservation des valeurs culturelles africaines, face aux enjeux de l'occidentalité. Les élites africaines sont sans cesse interpellées autour du phénomène du mimétisme qui peut probablement être perçu comme un des obstacles majeurs au développement économique et social. Face à ce mal rampant qui prend les allures d'un syndrome à évolution insidieuse, Pogba Gbanacé[5], pour sa part propose aux Africains une profonde remise en cause de leurs modes de pensée et d'action. L'auteur lance un vibrant cri d'alarme, pour les cultures africaines menacées de naufrage dans l'océan de l'occidentalité. De toutes les crises qui affectent les sociétés africaines aujourd'hui, il en est une dont la prise en compte semble être reléguée au dernier plan, alors qu'elles méritent d'être au cœur des préoccupations de l'élite africaine. Il s'agit de la crise culturelle. Les efforts de réflexion portent beaucoup plus sur les crises politiques et économiques, lesquelles ne sont rien d'autres que les conséquences de la crise culturelle. Axelle Kabou[6] à son tour nous invite à consacrer une étude entière à l'ampleur de la crise culturelle. Selon elle, le refus du développement en Afrique découle directement du système idéologique post-indépendances basé sur ce qu'elle appelle le « vendredisme » qui a rencontré un soutien de la part des pays occidentaux. L'auteur prône une Afrique qui s'assume elle-même, pratiquant largement et sans complexe les emprunts à l'Occident. Tout comme José Kaputa Lota, Axelle Kabou cite Nkrumah qui « a le culot de reconnaître avec le colonisateur que l'Afrique est arriérée et de le dire sans ménagement » (p 37).

Le second chapitre, consacré à la *conception africaine traditionnelle du monde et de la société* se subdivise en six sous-chapitres : « la famille africaine », « la vie communauté », « l'institution politique », « l'ontologie bantu », « la morale et l'idéal vital des bantu » et enfin « le sacré et l'institution religieuse ». Il ressort de ce chapitre qu'en Afrique traditionnelle l'homme se conçoit comme un être multidimensionnel, entretenant des relations avec ses semblables, ses ancêtres, Dieu et certaines forces cosmiques. A l'heure actuelle, cette conception n'a pas connu de changements. Le Négro-africain ne vit pas isolé; sa vie n'a de sens que par, dans et à travers la communauté. Ce mode de vie collectif ou communautaire est radicalement opposé à l'esprit individualiste, capitaliste. Ce que les Africains recherchent, dit-il, c'est de trouver dans leur société les conditions maximales de leur développement; ils désirent refonder une communauté basée sur l'égalité et surtout la solidarité. Leur historicité est désormais liée à la rencontre relativement féconde avec l'occidentalité.

Le troisième chapitre portant sur *la traite négrière et la colonisation en Afrique* interpelle les lecteurs africains sur leur responsabilité collective face à ces phénomènes qu'ils doivent considérer désormais comme faisant partie intégrante de leur histoire. A propos de la colonisation, l'auteur souligne qu'en dépit de quelques œuvres philanthropiques elle restera une période sombre dans les annales de l'histoire africaine. Il faut peut-être relire André Gide décrivant dans *Voyage au Congo* durant les années mille neuf cent vingt la pratique et les ravages du travail forcé et Frantz Fanon pour lequel le colonialisme n'était ni une machine à penser, ni un corps doué de raison mais une violence à l'état brut.[7] Il faut également revisiter « l'existentialisme » de Sartre exprimant clairement en ces termes : « la violence coloniale ne se donne pas seulement le but de tenir en respect ces hommes asservis, elle cherche à les déshumaniser … »[8]. Cependant il faut aussi se demander si la traite négrière et la colonisation sont les uniques responsables de nos maux actuels, si elles justifient le retard accumulé dans notre développement? Tout au long de démonstrations claires voire pédagogiques, l'auteur fait œuvre d'historien, ne se contentant pas de relater les faits dans le sens où il analyse pour nous les nombreux effets de la colonisation. La colonisation comme la traite négrière constitue une page tournée de notre histoire, affirme-t-il, mais malheureusement une page non encore fermée du fait de l'émergence du néocolonialisme.

Le quatrième chapitre est consacré à la problématique de la décolonisation africaine. Le lecteur peut éventuellement s'étonner de voir l'auteur consacrer tout un chapitre à la décolonisation alors que la colonisation a théoriquement pris fin il y a de cela plusieurs années ; la raison en est que la décolonisation de l'Afrique est loin d'être achevée, en particulier sur le plan mental et conceptuel. Nous serons d'accord pour dire que toute décolonisation qui utilise les structures coloniales alors même qu'elle cherche à exprimer son indépendance est vouée à l'échec. Une décolonisation authentique requiert une rupture définitive avec les structures coloniales. Malheureusement, cette rupture définitive n'a pas eu lieu en Afrique. Les mécanismes de contrôle mental mis en place au moment de la colonisation du continuent, dans une large mesure, aidés par d'autres instances tels que les média et les différentes ONG. José Kaputa Lota parle d'illusion de la liberté, caractérisant les indépendances africaines comme des pseudo-indépendances. En dépit de leur accession à la souveraineté, ajoute l'auteur, dans le prolongement des travaux de Mabikan Kalanda[9], les pays africains manquent d'autonomie parce que leurs dirigeants politiques ont laissé subsister l'ancien régime colonial sans aucune modification.

Dans le cinquième chapitre, quelques courants de pensée relatifs à la réhabilitation de la culture africaine sont passés en revue : le panafricanisme introduit en Afrique par Nkwame Nkrumah, la négritude selon les conceptions d'Aimé Césaire, de Léon Damas et de Léopold Senghor, le socialisme africain « cheval de bataille » de Senghor et de Nyerere et enfin le recours à l'authenticité comme idéologie culturelle africaine lancée par Mobutu Sese Seko; courants de pensée se complétant les uns les autres et présentant quelques avantages dans la mesure où ils font une percée historique dans la tradition africaine, même s'ils pèchent par le manque de prise en compte des phénomènes économiques. L'authenticité africaine souligne l'auteur n'est pas hermétique aux apports positifs des autres

authenticités. Elle est perméable à la contribution positive de la culture occidentale mais pour cela ajoute-t-il il est nécessaire de se connaître soi-même et de connaître son patrimoine. Dans cette optique, il nous invite à tirer de l'héritage occidental non pas l'intégralité des éléments mais ceux qui peuvent servir à notre développement.

Le dernier chapitre consacré à la *revalorisation du communautarisme*, plaide pour la réactualisation de l'esprit communautaire dans le but de faire progresser l'homme africain. Le communautarisme dont il s'agit devrait selon l'auteur être libéré de tout parasitisme, autrement dit purifié de tout aspect négatif. La mentalité africaine privilégie comme valeurs la solidarité et l'égalitarisme ; valeurs qui trouvent leur pleine essence dans le communautarisme, prélude au socialisme, décrié en Occident. Le modèle de socialisme proposé dans l'ouvrage consiste en une africanisation de l'économie qui ne remplacerait pas les monopoles internationaux par des capitalistes nationaux mais qui ferait du gouvernement de chaque pays le chef de clan élargi au niveau national . Chaque Etat ressemblerait à un clan moderne et son chef serait le responsable de tous les clans, dirigeant ainsi la vie économique et répartissant les bénéfices du travail communautaire entre les différents acteurs ou tribus. L'argument de taille de ce modèle étant qu'aucun projet économique ne peut parvenir à des résultats s'il ne s'inscrit pas en harmonie avec le système cognitif et social des masses africaines.

La conclusion de l'ouvrage débute par une invitation adressée aux chercheurs pour la prise en considération du concept de communautarisme dans l'élaboration de leurs théories de développement du continent. Elle se poursuit par la suggestion d'une stratégie basée sur le modèle traditionnel qui d'une part permettrait de satisfaire les besoins élémentaires de la majorité et d'autre part de miser sur la diffusion maximale du savoir de sorte que la société dans son intégralité soit un système éducatif. Pour mettre fin au sous-développement, José Kaputa Lota pense qu'un changement de démarche de la part de l'Africain s'impose. La revalorisation de l'identité africaine et de son communautarisme permettra à coup sûr de reprendre l'initiative dans les actions qui engagent l'avenir de l'africain et d'établir un partenariat de type nouveau avec l'Occidental, un rapport d'enrichissement culturel mutuel.

Notes

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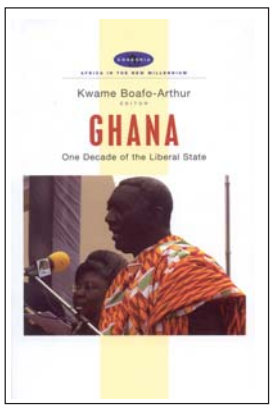
Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State

Edited by Kwame Boafo-Arthur



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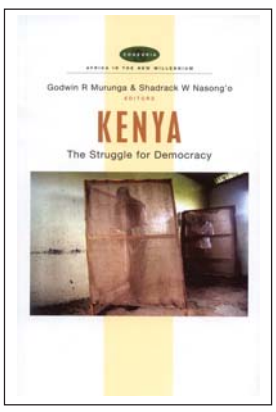

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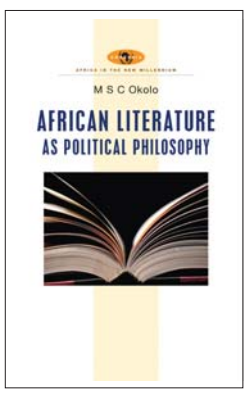
The institutional forms and process of democracy are spreading in Africa as dictatorial regimes have been forced to give way. But democratic form and democratic substance are two different things. Western derived institutional forms are neither necessarily the most appropriate nor the most practical in the current African context, and rooting democratic norms in African political cultures raises socio-cultural questions. This book draws on the experiences of particular African elections and countries to explore the continuing impact of police state apparatuses; the factors influencing voters' attitudes and behaviour; the impact of incumbency on electoral competition; women's participation; and the lack of choice in party programmes. The fundamental issue is whether democratic processes as currently practised in Africa are really making any difference.

African Literature as Political Philosophy

MSC Okolo



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The politics of development in Africa have always been central concerns of the continent's literature. Yet ideas about the best way to achieve this development, and even what development itself should look like, have been hotly contested.
African Literature as Political Philosophy looks in particular at Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah and Petals of Blood by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, but situates these within the broader context of developments in African literature over the past half-century, discussing writers from Ayi Kwei Armah to Wole Soyinka. M.S.C. Okolo provides a thorough analysis of the authors' differing approaches and how these emerge from the literature. She shows the roots of Achebe's reformism and Ngugi's insistence on revolution and how these positions take shape in their work. Okolo argues that these authors have been profoundly affected by the political situation of Africa, but have also helped to create a new African political philosophy.

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Une historienne au cœur de l'Afrique

Ouanassa Siari Tengour

« *Mama Africa* », hommage à Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch
de Chantal Chanson-Jabeur et Odile Goerg
Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006, 477 pages.

Comme son titre le souligne, les contributions de ce bel ouvrage sont offertes à Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, spécialiste de l'histoire contemporaine de l'Afrique. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch s'inscrit dans la lignée des grands maîtres de l'histoire de l'Afrique : Henri Brunschwig, Charles André Julien, Charles Robert Ageron, Jean Suret Canale, Joseph Ki Zerbo. Chantal Chanson Jabeur a conçu un abécédaire qui retrace l'itinéraire de Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, depuis la création et l'animation du groupe de recherches « Connaissance du Tiers-Monde », ancêtre de l'actuel laboratoire SEDET (Sociétés en développement dans l'espace et dans le temps), rattaché au CNRS. Mais ce n'est pas la seule tâche à laquelle Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch a voué son temps : outre les enseignements d'histoire, elle a fait soutenir plus d'une centaine de thèses où *la colonisation/décolonisation* de l'Afrique demeure le thème central, recoupé sans cesse par l'exploration de nouveaux objets tels le champ de *l'histoire économique et politique, les villes et le processus d'urbanisation, la transmission des savoirs, les femmes…*

Nouveaux objets et nouveaux territoires

Après avoir soutenu une thèse très remarquée sur *Le Congo au temps des grandes compagnies concessionnaires (1898-1930)*[1], Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch entame une longue carrière dans l'enseignement et la recherche. Pour les générations des années 1970, ce sont les enseignements inscrits dans le cadre de la préparation au DEA « Connaissance des Tiers-Mondes » qui vont s'avérer un lieu d'échanges incomparables pour le renouvellement de la réflexion sur l'histoire de la colonisation, non plus limitée à un seul pays, mais ouverte à d'autres territoires relevant de l'empire colonial français.

La fécondité de ces rencontres a contribué à inscrire l'histoire de l'Afrique noire dans une perspective de comparaison du fait colonial et à s'interroger sur les interactions entre les contraintes du passé et le devenir de ses populations. L'adoption d'une telle posture fera que les préoccupations des recherches engagées par Catherine Coquery Vidrovitch s'inscriront en permanence dans une dynamique qui, en approfondissant des axes classiques de l'histoire coloniale en Afrique, n'ont cessé d'être attentives à l'actualité des questions de développement. D'où l'intérêt pour des approches pluridisciplinaires intégrées non pour le plaisir du complément introduit pour renforcer telle démonstration, mais partant d'une conviction fondée sur la nécessité de procéder d'urgence au désenclavement de l'histoire comme discipline dans le champ des sciences sociales. Autrement dit, la grille de lecture énoncée sur le mode de la perspective structurale[2] s'en trouve ébranlée au profit d'une ouverture sur les questions contemporaines. Cette mutation sensible dans le champ de l'historiographie générale de l'Afrique a contribué à multiplier les études sur la question des frontières, les processus d'urbanisation en Afrique, les entreprises et les entrepreneurs, la mobilité des populations, les jeunes, les femmes.

Comme on peut le constater, ces nouveaux chantiers multiplient les analyses où sont saisies les transformations sociales de l'espace urbain et la complexité des rapports de domination et de pouvoir que l'on peut discerner grâce à l'émergence d'identités sociales plus ou moins importantes (cas des élites) ou marginalisées (femmes, jeunes). Peu à peu, les questions se sont affinées et approfondies au point d'orienter la recherche vers la prise en compte de nouveaux acteurs (les minorités d'hier) de plus en plus impliqués dans la vie publique et politique. En filigrane, on ne peut ignorer la place que l'histoire du politique et l'ensemble de toutes ses déclinaisons dont les plus visibles se reflètent dans des conflits meurtriers, à l'échelle de nombreux Etats africains. Il appartient aux historiens du continent africain de réfléchir, de s'impliquer dans tous ces territoires ouverts désormais à la recherche, sans faire la moindre concession aux impératifs méthodologiques, aux présupposés épistémologiques, en investissant tous les matériaux possibles (la question de la diversité des sources est fondamentale : sources écrites, sources orales, matérielles et immatérielles), en poursuivant les questionnements critiques, garants de l'élaboration d'une histoire savante.

Pour Catherine Coquery Vidrovitch, cet objectif a été amplement atteint si l'on en juge par le panel de compétences érudites (dont beaucoup ont été ses étudiants) qui sont à l'origine des 24 contributions réparties autour de cinq axes principaux qui illustrent la pertinence et la fécondité des pistes de recherche qu'elle a su initier :

- Les savoirs, pouvoirs et écriture de l'histoire africaine
- Villes et urbanisation en Afrique
- Intermédiaires, élites et situation coloniale
- Femmes et genre
- L'histoire de l'Afrique entre passé et présent.

On peut lire dans chacun de ces axes, une série d'articles tous aussi intéressants les uns que les autres. Nous n'avons retenu que quelques uns seulement, non sans arbitraire, mais ils donnent le ton au reste de l'ouvrage.

Le texte de Sophie Duluq s'attache à *la quête documentaire en situation coloniale* au début du XX^{ème} siècle. On suit la constitution du fonds des archives de l'Afrique (AOF et AEF) versées dès 1919 au Ministère des Colonies. Cette première organisation des archives coloniales sera suivie du même souci, cette fois, à l'échelle de diverses colonies et protectorats. Ainsi, dès 1906, les Archives de la colonie voient le jour en Algérie. William Ponty diligente plusieurs missions dans le but de conserver les sources au niveau de toute l'AOF. Lentement, des efforts sont consentis pour classer une documentation indispensable aux recherches historiques. Mais cette catégorie de sources coloniales n'est pas la seule à retenir l'attention des historiens. Manifestement, quelques uns, tels Georges Hardy attire l'attention sur « *les sources internes de l'histoire indigène* » qu'il faut aussi sauvegarder… les Orientalistes s'intéressent aux nombreux manuscrits arabes du 17ème et 18ème siècle… Les traditions orales se révèlent un autre gisement pour la connaissance du passé qu'il faut collecter… Sans vouloir nier « *la dimension instrumentale* » de ces opérations de sauvegarde de ces fonds ordonnées par l'Etat, Sophie Duluq rappelle à juste titre que *« c'est la nature des questions posées aux sources […] qui est déterminante dans l'écriture de l'histoire* ».

C'est précisément l'exercice critique auquel se prête l'historien Ibrahima Thioub dans sa contribution intitulée : *Savoirs interdits en contexte colonial : la politique culturelle de la France en Afrique de l'Ouest.* La réflexion quitte les rivages de la dénonciation de l'exploitation économique des ressources pour s'attacher à l'analyse d'un autre système de domination, celui du savoir. Il s'agit alors de mettre à nu le projet culturel développé en situation coloniale. Ce sont donc les processus de production des savoirs sur les sociétés africaines et parallèlement les modalités de contrôle et de répression qui ont visé *la circulation des savoirs élaborés hors des sphères du pouvoir*. Ce sont d'abord les formes culturelles empruntées au Monde arabo-islamique qui ont fait l'objet d'une étroite surveillance. Peu à peu, la double émergence d'une élite africaine, très sensible aux libertés politiques et démocratiques et d'un mouvement nationaliste plus radical dans ses revendications, met au défi l'administration coloniale de changer d'attitude. En guise de réponse, celle-ci adopta une attitude plutôt frileuse et s'ingénia à étendre le spectre de la censure sur les nouvelles expressions nationalistes, telles le cinéma, la radio, le théâtre… *réduisant le champ de tolérance de la contestation.* En fait, à la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, l'heure de la décolonisation a sonné pour les Africains, adoptant des modes de mobilisation de plus en plus radicaux, remettant en question la domination coloniale. Ce que montre Ibrahima Thioub est que le renouvellement de l'histoire coloniale est possible pour peu que l'on abandonne les impératifs idéologiques au profit de vraies questions.

La contribution d'Odile Goerg , intitulée « *Les femmes, citadines de deuxième plan* » se situe dans la perspective d'une histoire du genre d'où les femmes ne sont plus exclues. Elle a ce double intérêt de « *coupler femmes et villes dans une même approche* » fort originale dans la mesure où elle attire l'attention sur la manière de lire les phénomènes migratoires et leurs conclusions construites à partir du paradigme du *sex ratio* – ou taux de masculinité – mettant à l'avant la subordination des mouvements migratoires féminins. Il n'est pas question de revenir sur les raisons de ce manque d'intérêt pour les femmes dans l'historiographie générale (en Afrique comme ailleurs dans le monde), mais de souligner les modalités de cette exclusion par la démographie et de la fabrication de quelques catégories de subalternes (délinquance et prostitution).

Cette invisibilité des femmes du peuple dans le processus d'urbanisation des villes africaines pendant la période coloniale, à partir du XIX^{ème} siècle, est donc remise en question par les nouvelles recherches qui mettent en garde contre les généralisations hâtives, effectuées à partir des premières études consacrées aux centres miniers qui ont fait appel à une main d'œuvre masculine en Afrique australe et au Congo belge. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un décompte statistique des femmes dans les villes, mais de montrer la diversité des situations qui ne sont pas toutes les mêmes et d'insister par conséquent, autant sur les stratégies déployées par les sociétés d'exploitation minière et la politique coloniale de contrôle des flux migratoires que sur les réponses apportées par les sociétés concernées. Celles-ci se sont caractérisées à maintes reprises par des résistances à la migration des femmes, ce qui fait dire à Odile Goerg que « *la collusion entre les intérêts de genre des colonisateurs et des colonisés* » a joué dans la division sexuelle du travail et a encouragé le maintien des femmes à la campagne, comme main d'œuvre indispensable à l'agriculture. Cependant, ces contraintes ont été bousculées par les changements de la conjoncture née au lendemain de la seconde guerre mondiale et le mouvement migratoire conjugué au féminin enregistre une réelle mutation qui oblige à reconsidérer l'analyse de l'histoire urbaine, dégagée des représentations ancrées dans un conservatisme politique et social et faisant place à la dynamique induite par les processus du « faire ensemble » la ville.

Dans un autre registre, Pierre Boiley aborde la question des frontières africaines héritées de la colonisation. Bien sûr que leur tracé doit beaucoup à la raison diplomatique et aux intérêts impérialistes. Bien sûr que ces frontières ont bouleversé non seulement la vie quotidienne des populations africaines mais ont engendré des conflits à l'heure de l'indépendance des États-nations. La décision adoptée par l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine – qui consiste à respecter les tracés issus de la colonisation – n'a pas toujours été suivie d'effet. A travers le cas du Mali, Pierre Boiley, sans renier l'arbitraire qui a présidé à l'établissement de ses frontières, remaniées plus d'une fois, au gré de la conjoncture politique impériale, invite les historiens à dépasser ce constat, à initier des recherches sur « *les politiques locales et les facteurs endogènes qui ont influé sur les tracés* ». En d'autres termes, ces frontières n'ont pas toujours été faites au hasard, mais sont le résultat de tractations entre autorités coloniales et les intérêts des groupes en présence. Et de citer l'étude de Camille Lefèbvre qui montre que la frontière entre le Mali et l'Algérie a été inscrite « *depuis au moins le XV^{ème} siècle, dans une zone de marge reconnue entre deux pouvoirs politiques, celui de l'amenokal touareg de l'Ahaggar et celui du sultan d'Agadès* ».

A l'aune d'une telle étude, les revendications des Touaregs telles qu'elles ont émergé en 1990, exigent une autre appréciation. Il s'agit moins d'une volonté sécessionniste que d'une prise en compte par les Etats nationaux des problèmes qui se posent à ces populations. D'où une conclusion rapide qui remet en cause les lectures traditionnelles : c'est précisément l'intériorisation du cadre étatique avec ses frontières qui semble constituer « *un blocage aux regroupements régionaux* » et qui mérite l'ouverture d'une réflexion sur les transformations de l'Etat post colonial, si l'on veut en finir avec les lieux communs et les conclusions hâtives sinon stériles, pour la discipline et le futur des populations concernées.

Ce regard neuf est heureusement partagé par le reste des contributions de ce beau volume qui se laisse lire et invite les chercheurs spécialisés dans l'histoire contemporaine de l'Afrique à ouvrir d'autres fronts et à poursuivre l'œuvre de Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch.

Notes

1. Publiée à Paris-La Haye, éd. Mouton, 1972.
2. La référence renvoie à l'hégémonie de *l'Ecole des Annales* et ses fondateurs parmi lesquels Marc Bloch, Georges Lefebvre, Fernand Braudel.

Les mutations géographiques du Sahara : d'hier à aujourd'hui

Abed Bendjelid

Mythes et réalités d'un désert convoité :
Le Sahara Abed Bendjelid
de Jean Bisson
L'Harmattan, Paris, 2003, ISBN : 2-7475-5008-7, 479 pages, 40 Euro.

Ouvrage documenté, cette synthèse portant sur le Sahara présente une formidable somme d'informations, fruit d'un demi siècle de recherches effectuées par Jean Bisson sur le terrain de différents pays (Algérie, Tunisie, Libye, Mauritanie) et complétées par des incursions dans les pays de la frange saharo-sahélienne.

Couvrant 8.500.000 km2 et habité par 7.000.000 de personnes, ce milieu naturel aride chevauche sur l'Afrique du Nord et l'Afrique subsaharienne ; c'est dire là, la portée de son rôle géostratégique en ce début de millénaire caractérisé par la mondialisation et la protection de l'environnement. Dans cet ordre d'idées, cet espace naturel est une zone d'échanges multiformes qui, dotée d'énormes ressources minières et énergétiques, reste géographiquement fractionnée entre huit Etats africains (reconnus). Certes, il demeure caractérisé par un sous-développement de niveau différencié, mais il connaît, depuis la période de la décolonisation de l'Afrique des transformations démographiques, économiques et spatiales indéniables. Par tous ces éléments d'analyse, le Sahara apparaît aussi, dans le texte présenté, comme une zone de conflits politiques récurrents en raison des enjeux territoriaux et économiques, c'est-à-dire un désert convoité tant par des pouvoirs étatiques africains en place que par les grandes puissances mondiales.

La lecture attentive de ce livre structuré en six parties, nous permet de hiérarchiser les idées exposées par l'auteur. Ainsi, à côté des multiples permanences décelées et étudiées dans les différents secteurs géographiques sahariens par Jean Bisson, nous tenons à souligner la place accordée aux diverses mutations enregistrées sur le terrain durant la décennie des années 1950, voire celle des années 1960. Une des métamorphoses les plus significatives se rapporte à la croissance démographique, car « depuis les années 1955-62, qui ont été celles du début de l'exploitation des richesses du sous-sol et de l'accession à l'indépendance de divers Etats se partageant l'espace saharien, la population du Sahara s'est accrue d'environ 5.000.000 de personnes : il s'agit d'une croissance inconnue jusqu'alors ». En effet, cet espace ne perd plus de population, la retient et même en attire. En ce sens, l'urbanisation est un constat tout à fait concret. La multiplication des villes permet de dessiner l'armature urbaine saharienne qui est géographiquement déséquilibrée ; en effet, « les villes les plus nombreuses se situent su la frange septentrionale du Sahara ». L'affermissement de la trame urbaine donne implicitement une idée sur l'intensité des migrations humaines en direction du Sahara, que ce soit à partir de son Nord ou de son Sud ; bien plus, l'auteur donne enfin des exemples d'intégration urbaine de populations soumises à une mobilité plus ou moins forte (ruraux du Gourara, Touaregs de différents Etats, jeunes migrants subsahariens…). La notion d'urbanité, voire de citadinité, est introduite à travers des études de cas portant sur des villes neuves (villes du commerce, villes du pétrole, villes de la pêche, ville de la gestion administrative…) et sur des cités de vieille tradition urbaine (Ghardaïa en Algérie).

La deuxième mutation la plus significative concerne le rôle de l'Etat en tant que pouvoir politique traçant des programmes de développement et de financement ; « ainsi, la promotion des régions sahariennes n'a pu atteindre un tel degré (de développement) que parce que les dirigeants des Etats ont pris la mesure de l'enjeu que constitue la possession de l'espace et l'intérêt qu'il peut représenter en poids économique, militaire, politique, diplomatique, voire symbolique… ». Les diverses actions d'aménagement territorial (découpages administratifs, promotion administrative d'agglomérations, grands travaux d'infrastructure, équipements collectifs, habitat…) sont illustrées par des cartes redessinées pour ce texte. N'oublions pas enfin, la place notable accordée par l'auteur aux conflits politiques entre des Etats africains et/ou des groupes d'ethnies (Sahara Occidental, révoltes des Touaregs, différend portant sur la Bande d'Aouzou…).

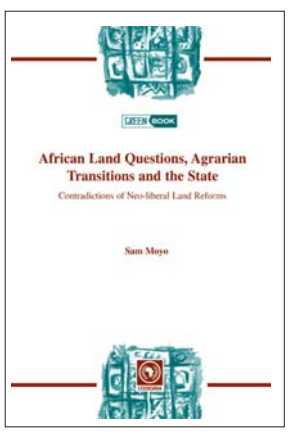
L'oasis, finage modelé par de vieilles sociétés maîtrisant le savoir-faire hydraulique, est qualifiée de « monument historique » par l'auteur, en dépit des tentatives récentes de réhabilitation de palmeraies. La maîtrise hydraulique est approchée à travers les différents modes de techniques d'irrigation pratiquées localement (foggaras du Gourara et du Tidikelt en Algérie, seguias du Ziz-Tafilalet au Maroc, forages du Jérid en Tunisie…). Les contraintes rencontrées dans la réhabilitation des palmeraies sont progressivement levées grâce à un apport d'eau permis par l'introduction massive de motopompes en vue de soutenir le débit des foggaras et ce, après ''la liberté'' accordée à la population servile des Harratins spécialisés dans l'aménagement et l'entretien des foggaras. Si ces techniques d'irrigation traditionnelle, mises en place par de vieilles sociétés hydrauliques, semblent condamnées à long terme car impliquant une production agricole faible, les pouvoirs politiques centraux ont logiquement tenté de mettre en valeur de nouveaux périmètres d'irrigation grâce aux énormes potentialités des nappes fossiles sahariennes.

Le développement agricole programmé sur la marge saharo-sahélienne n'a jamais atteint la même ampleur que celui concrétisé sur la frange saharo maghrébine. Il faut dire que l'agri-business au désert est principalement pratiquée par les pays pétroliers comme la Libye et l'Algérie. Ailleurs, en raison d'handicaps multiples (pédologie, eau, structures sociales, disponibilités financières, éloignement des sources de décision et du marché de consommation, …), les actions demeurent bien modestes, voire prudentes comme c'est le cas dans le Sud tunisien. Les réalisations agricoles modernes sont spectaculaires grâce à « l'installation de rampes-pivots regroupées en grands ensembles (Gassi Touil, Touat… en Algérie, Al –Maknusah-Barjuj au Fezzan, Koufra dans le Désert Libyen) ou, plus rarement, isolées auprès d'oasis, a paru le moyen le plus prometteur d'obtenir rapidement une production massive de céréales : n'est-on pas allé jusqu'à qualifier de 'stratégique' ce type d'agriculture ? ». En dépit du volontarisme imprimé par les politiques étatiques, ce type d'agriculture apparaît encore fragile et Jean Bisson se demande s'il est « possible d'envisager l'avenir agricole du Sahara à partir de tels programmes de développement qui réclament un suivi technique, difficile à assurer, et une parfaite maîtrise des conditions de l'environnement désertique ». Devant permettre de réduire la dépendance céréalière, cette agriculture connaît aussi des échecs retentissants, notamment chez les entrepreneurs privés en Algérie, voire en Libye où les grands périmètres appartiennent au secteur public qui prend en charge l'entretien onéreux de ses installations techniques.

Localement, une agriculture péri-urbaine fondée sur les cultures fourragères et maraîchères, développée au sein de petites exploitations familiales, connaît un grand succès comme dans les Ziban (Algérie) ; profitant de marchés urbains littoraux proches, les petits propriétaires ont permis un « remarquable développement agricole des Ziban (qui) illustre la formidable capacité dont sont capables des communautés rurales » et ce, dans des conditions climatiques extrêmes. Toute cette production agricole provenant des nouveaux périmètres de mise en valeur et des vieilles palmeraies donne lieu à une circulation marchande en direction à la fois du Maghreb (céréales, dattes, maraîchage) et de l'Afrique subsaharienne (dattes vendues au Niger et au Mali, approvisionnement des pays du Maghreb en bétail). Ces relations commerciales, encore bien modestes, sont symbolisées par la tenue annuelle de la grande foire africaine de *l'Assihar* de Tamanrasset (Algérie), qui attire des commerçants venus de tous les pays de la région (Algérie, Mali, Niger, Libye, Tunisie, Mauritanie …).

La fin de l'ouvrage comporte une série d'études de géographie régionale (le Bas Sahara algéro-tunisien, le Centre-Ouest saharien des vieilles paysanneries, le Désert mauritanien, le Sahara Touareg,…) qui font ressortir l'extrême diversité des espaces, des ethnies et des problématiques de développement posées à chacun d'entre eux. Dans ce Sahara, partagé entre les différents pays africains, les mutations rapides restent complexes. Quant à la recomposition tribale, elle est loin d'être achevée face à des Etats-nations - pour certains- en voie d'affermissement. Dans cet immense désert qui a basculé en un demi-siècle dans l'urbanité, les échanges formels, les trafics informels et la mobilité des hommes prennent de la consistance à travers des frontières politiques, au demeurant bien difficiles à contrôler.

Fin connaisseur de l'espace saharien qu'il a parcouru durant des décennies, Jean Bisson nous laisse en héritage une œuvre de qualité, cinquante ans après celle de son maître Robert Capot-Rey. Le déroulement des idées est enrichi par de nombreuses études de cas réalisées au cours de sa vie de chercheur ; par ailleurs, il déconstruit avec brio et humour toute une collection de 'mythes sahariens' et étale son savoir scientifique. C'est dire le plaisir qu'éprouve le lecteur à le suivre tout au long de l'ouvrage.



African Land Questions, Agrarian Transitions and the State: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters
Sam Moyo

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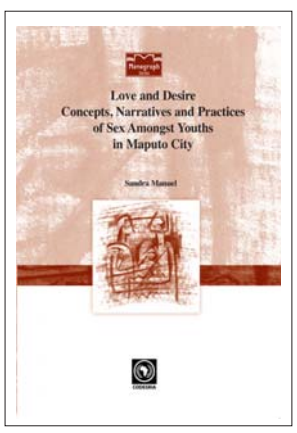

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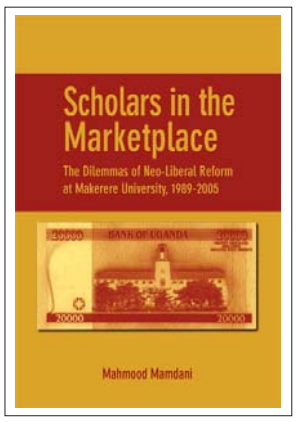

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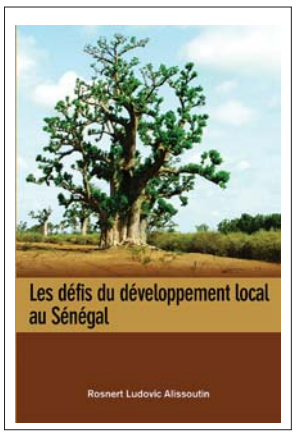

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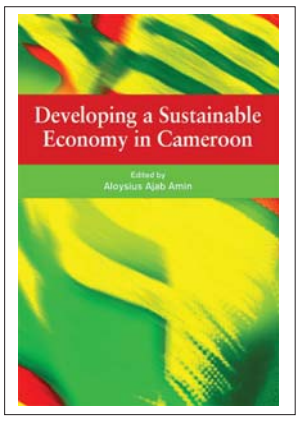

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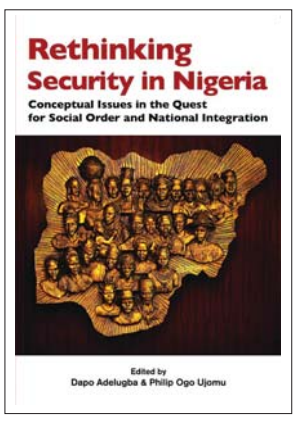

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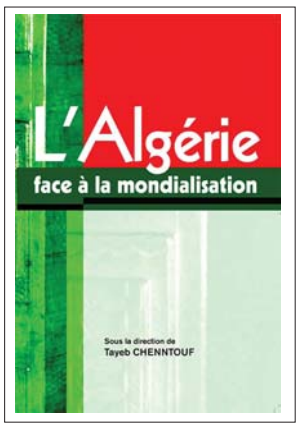

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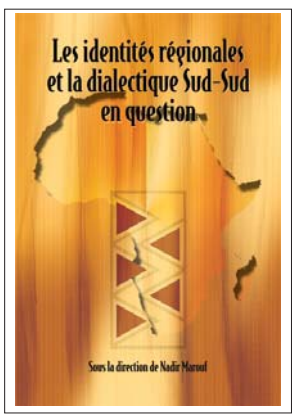

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