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REVUE AFRICAINE DES LIVRES
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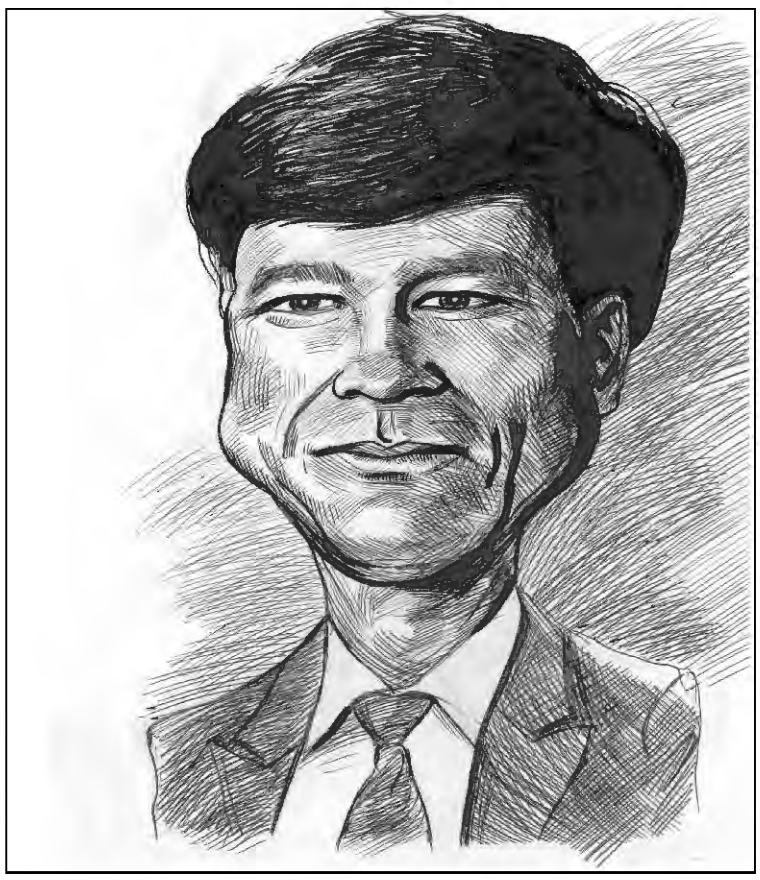
The Intellectual Itinerary of Jeffrey Sachs

Thandika Mkandawire

The End of Poverty: How We Can Make it Happen in Our LifeTime
by Jeffrey Sachs
Penguin Books, 2005, 396 pp., ISBN 1-59420-045-9



In many parts of the world, poverty, undeterred by the vast technological resources at humanity's disposal and unfazed by the many declarations of war against it, still ravages the lives of millions. It is the juxtaposition of the obvious human capacity to "make poverty history" and the empty rhetoric on poverty eradication that Jeffrey Sachs seeks to bring to wider attention in his book. Sachs, as some have observed, is a rock star of an economist - a labelling that is confirmed both by the media hype around the book and the company he keeps - celebrities of all colours and stripes, billionaires, presidents. This has helped the book reach the attention of a much wider audience than is usual for books on poverty and underdevelopment.

Sachs is a man who seems to get one "big idea" at a time, which he then runs with. Many have been turned off by the Spartan way with which he asserts himself and by his use of autobiographical material - often pushed to the outer limits of probity - which often becomes self-serving and lapses into name-dropping. His admirers have been impressed by the passion with which he has taken up arms against poverty and by the can - do chutzpah that he sums up as follows: "When something is needed, it can and must become possible" (p. 147). Sachs sees himself as "an economist making calls", travelling around the globe prescribing treatments in much the same way that the clinician does. However, behind all this there is an economic logic. To understand that logic one needs to step back and find out where Jeffrey Sacks has been intellectually in recent years and the ideas that have dominated policy discourses during these years. This will help us understand both his policy recommendations and the causal and normative beliefs informing them.

In the early postwar period, thinking about development was dominated by structuralism, which posited that a number of factors - geography, culture, colonial heritage and underdevelopment - severely constrained the functioning of markets. Left to the market, poor countries would be stuck in a "low equilibrium trap" caused by a series of poverty-related syndromes that reinforce themselves through "circular causation". To get out of this trap, it was necessary to embark on a "big push" that would lead to "take-off". This called for an active developmental role for the state, and for aid to bridge the "resource gaps" and supplement the savings of poor countries. Under the sway of this developmentalist ideology, significant success was achieved in terms of growth and industrialization, and this growth could be seen in a number of social indicators. The oil crisis and the rise of neoliberalism in some of the major economies led to a serious challenge of this model and ushered in the era of structural adjustment. It was now argued that interventionist policies had led to market distortions that undermined the competitiveness of economies and produced the balance-of-payments problems of the 1970s and 1980s. Consequently, "getting policies right" became the New Gospel according to Washington. For development, it meant that the whole idea of setting up specialized institutions or funds to address "market failure" (for example, development banks) was deemed not only unnecessary but also pernicious and unconscionable nonsense.

1. Sachs and "Shock Treatments"

During the early part of this period of the adjustment era, Jeffrey Sachs was, in the words of the *International Herald Tribune*, a "fervent evangelist for economic progress through market reforms"[1]. He made notable contributions to neoliberal thinking and practices. In an influential paper co-authored with Andrew Warner, he constructed a "Sachs-Warner" index to classify the degree to which economies were "open" to international trade. His argument then was that the more open the economy, the better the economic performance. This view, especially its focus on trade policy, dovetailed neatly with the views of the international financial institutions (IFIs) and his work was cited extensively as the empirical evidence for trade liberalization.

Significantly, during this period he belonged to the school that administered "shock treatments". This was premised on getting things done before victims of the policies knew what had hit them and could organize themselves. The treatment would jolt both the economy and the polity in such a way as to make the policies irreversible. The administrators of this prescription paid scant attention to the political and social consequences of the shock treatment. Apparently the treatment worked well in Poland and for a while in Bolivia, but failed horribly in Russia, where millions of lives were lost as a consequence of the reforms. Sachs acknowledged the failure but manages to blame it on Russian kleptocrats. And this is where Jeffrey Sachs is at his worst, as he attempts to burnish his role as economic advisor in places where the shock treatment went terribly wrong. What he seems to have retained from this period is impatience with concerns over institutional capacities and appropriateness, and the political underpinning and consequences of such policies. Poland had taught him that one could "leap across the institutional chasm" to introduce dramatic policy changes.

And it was in this incarnation - as a neoliberal guru - that Jeffrey Sachs emerged as advisor in Africa to the aid establishment. At the time, he subscribed to the view that economic growth could be "done" in Africa if only African countries would adopt good policies.[2] Thus, in a paper that he wrote once again with Andrew Warner, although he included geographical factors such as lack of access to the sea and tropical climate to the list of contributors to Africa's slow growth, he placed greater emphasis on policies, especially on Africa's putative lack of openness to international markets, arguing that "Africa's physical geography, difficult as it is, does not pose an insurmountable challenge to faster growth. Where strong economic reforms have actually been implemented in SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa), the result has been rapid economic growth".[3]

2. Enter "Good Governance"

By the mid-1980s, more than half of the African countries had structural adjustment programmes administered by the IFIs. At the same time, evidence was mounting that the adoption of Washington Consensus policies was not producing the accelerated development that the Berg Report[4] had promised. Initially there were attempts at denying that African countries had indeed adjusted, but this proved untenable. By the mid-1990s, African and Latin American countries had made dramatic policy shifts: they had reduced inflation and the size of the public sector, liberalized their economies, opened up trade, privatized public enterprise and so on. With some signs of recovery in the early 1990s, the leaders of the international financial institutions went on a road show to proclaim that adjustment was finally working. [5] However, the celebration was turned out to be premature as the "Asian financial crisis" put paid to the signs of recovery. This policy failure led to the question: *"How come that even when countries have adopted the recommended policies, economic growth does not resume?"* A wide range of reasons were advanced. The list included lack of social capital, poor human resources, bad economic policies, ethnic diversity, unfavourable geographical location, "wrong" religions, "debt overhang", colonial background and mode of European settlement. These explanations ultimately fell into two camps: one that insisted that "institutions rule" and the other that insisted that "geography rules".

Almost immediately, the "institutions rule" school gained the upper hand, bolstered by the seminal work on institutions and economic change by Douglas North, the Nobel Laureate. Although in its 1989 report on Africa,[6] the World Bank had argued that "bad governance" was the culprit, this idea did not really catch on until after the mid-1990s, when it was argued that African countries did not provide the conditions propitious enough to attract both local and foreign private investment. In the more fundamentalist "rule of law" rendition, what were missing were institutions that would insure "property rights". It is important to bear in mind that the macroeconomic policies themselves were taken as sound but what they needed was appropriate institutions.

And so by the mid-1990s, "institutional reforms" - or "good governance", as this was popularly known in donor circles - became the new mantra in the policy world. A wave of institutional reforms swept across the continent. Central banks were made "autonomous", laws were rewritten to secure private property, stock markets were introduced, private-public partnerships were set up as the New Public Management was de rigeur and governments were trimmed down. And in a number of countries, democratic institutions were set up. Already by the beginning of the millennium, there were increasing doubts about the "institutional fix" and the institutionalists began to lose ground. While many countries had, under the aegis of the IFIs, introduced major institutional reforms, the economic recovery remained anaemic.

This prompted the new question, *"Why is it that even when countries adopt the recommended polices and the right institutions, economic growth does not take place?"* There have been two responses to this new question: one is that "yes, institutions rule" but the institutions peddled by the IFIs were the wrong ones, partly because of their insistence on one-size-fit-all institutional design, and all institutions should be harnessed to the protection of property rights. These institutions differed radically from not only those behind the East Asia miracle and China but also from those of any successful case of development in modern times. Indeed, some of the institutions being pushed as prerequisites for development (independent central banks, effective patent laws, stock markets) never served the functions attributed to them and successful "late industrializers" assiduously avoided them. No wonder the insistence on these institutions today is thus considered tantamount to "pulling the ladder", to quote the title of Ha Joon Chang's eye-opening book.[7]

3. Geography Rediscovered

Another response to the failure of policies, and one for which Jeffrey Sachs is a prominent spokesperson, is that institutions might not be enough after all in the context of severe physical barriers. Somewhere on his path, Jeffrey Sachs underwent something of a Pauline epiphany and discovered that his preoccupation with inflation had blinded him to geography. His writing gravitated from "getting policies right" to something that can be called "getting geography right". Already in some of his earlier work, one finds intimations of geographical determinism. Geography could go wrong in at least two ways - through its effects on governance and institutions or through the economic costs it imposed. A country could be richly endowed in natural resources, but according to the "Resource Curse thesis", this only produced "rentier states" that tend to be unaccountable to the citizenry and are generally prone to poor governance and waste. Jeffrey Sachs's drift towards geography started with this perspective. However, by the end of the 1990s, he had drifted toward the position which argued that a country could be disadvantaged by its location far from trade routes, in unhealthy climate and areas prone to natural disasters.

This now led Sachs to the view that Africa's distinctive climate and location, and especially its proneness to malaria, were possible explanations to the continent's atypical economic behaviour and performance. Its semi-arid climate and its reliance on rain-fed agriculture made agricultural production intrinsically vulnerable to the caprices of nature. Africa also has a large number of land-locked countries, which further hindered growth. The conclusion was that economic development in tropical ecozones would benefit from a concerted international

effort to free the continent from the grip of unfortunate geography through health and agricultural technologies specific to their needs.

To compound the problems of geography, a consequence of the Washington Consensus was the dramatic reduction of investment in infrastructure on the grounds that (a) the private sector would take up the task, or (b) good policies were to precede investment in infrastructure. The insistence by African policy makers on increasing investment was dismissed by World Bank economists as "capital fundamentalism". In its 1989 report,[8] the World Bank argued that "lower levels of infrastructure and other factors do not pose significantly greater constraints to supply response in Sub-Saharan Africa". This policy position led to catastrophic decline in public investments in infrastructure and contributed to the ineffectiveness of the policies themselves. How could peasants increase production in response to market liberalization when the road network had collapsed?

Sachs vehemently denies he is a geographical determinist and, given his rather eclectic intellectual itinerary, he may have a point. He actually insists that support should go to well-governed countries. Sachs's protestations seem to be based on a misunderstanding. Geographical determinism does not mean that societies cannot do much about their situation; it simply means that the central agenda of a society is set by geography. To the argument by institutionalists that if geography has an effect on long-term growth, its major impact is due to the long-lasting effect on institutions, Sachs's response has simply been that "institutions don't rule: geography matters".

His protestations notwithstanding, Sachs is firmly rooted in geographical determinism in the case of Africa (although maybe less so for other regions of the world). Thus, he states that "geography has conspired with economics to give Africa a particularly weak hand" (p. 208) and "the combination of Africa's adverse geography and its extreme poverty creates the worst trap in the world" (p. 208). Sachs challenges the view that Africa's governance is worse than that of other underdeveloped regions. His point is that (a) Africa is governed poorly because it is poor; and (b) there is distinctly slower growth in Africa even after allowing for the quality of governance and level of income. From this he argues "the slower growth is caused…mainly by Africa's adverse geography and deficient infrastructure".

4. What Next?

The challenge, as Sachs sees it, "is to unravel the interconnections between extreme poverty, rampant disease, unstable and harsh climate conditions, high transport costs, chronic hunger and inadequate food supplies." This should be no cause for despair. He now heads a huge, interdisciplinary team (the Earth Institute, based in Columbia University) that seeks to link such things as soil depletion, climate change, epidemic disease and social upheaval to economic well-being. He has learnt from "knowledgeable colleagues" that there were technological fixes to all these problems—antiviral drugs, mosquito nets, rural electrification, roads, and so on. And as luck would have it, he received "an important new opportunity to put these new ideas into practice", namely, as advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He immediately launched a new Millennium Project that would do the analytical work for the MDGs. Quite remarkably and with no sense of the absurdity of the situation, Jeffrey Sachs informs us that "All of the UN Millennium Project work has depended utterly on the Earth Institute" . That puts paid to the much-touted African initiative and also signals what is profoundly wrong about the book.

It is not too surprising that Sachs assumes a cavalier posture on the issues of governance, state-society relationships and the international policy regime within which development takes place. While he pays a rather perfunctory homage to institutions, he seems to believe that calls for good governance are largely externally driven. But this is wrong. African political actors, social movements and scholarship have for years expressed concerns with the problematic nature of state-society relations in Africa, or what came to be known as governance. The ongoing struggles for democracy in Africa are about changing these relationships as the sine qua non for development. Sachs may be right in suggesting that the bogey of governance is often used as a cop out for inaction and often in poorly veiled racist language, but this does not mean that the issues it points to - accountability, participation, justice - are unimportant for Africa or for other parts of the world.

Throughout his intellectual itinerary Jeffrey Sachs has not fundamentally questioned the macroeconomic policies that have produced the "two lost decades" in Africa and Latin America. Sachs, not one to admit easily to errors, nimbly moves away from positions that he once avidly promoted. On the standard package of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he simply states, "The main IMF prescription has been budgetary belt-tightening for patients much too poor to own belts—finally, however that approach is beginning to change" (p. 74). He doesn't say how. We are thus left with an analysis that suggests the policies themselves are alright but greed by the rich countries, geography and some degree of bad governance are the problem. In this he may not be alone. The Group of Eight (G-8) meeting in July 2005 took a similar position, promising more resources and insisting on good governance from African leaders. There was not a word about the bad policies that have been rammed down the throats of Africans for over 20 years with no success. The Washington folks that brought us deflationary policies and the "low growth trap" left the G8 meeting not only unscathed but also empowered to certify countries' qualifications for debt relief by swallowing the same old nostrums.

5. "Poverty Trap" or "Policy Trap"?

Jeffrey Sachs believes Africa is caught "in the worst poverty trap in the world". More significantly he believes that "although predatory government can soundly trounce economic development, good governance and market reforms are not sufficient to guarantee growth if the country is in a poverty trap" (p. 195). Such "traps" produce "viscous cycles" reminiscent of the earlier literature in development economics: since people or countries are too poor to save, they cannot generate the surplus required for investment; they cannot have economic growth and so remain poor and unable to save. There are a number of problems with this reasoning. Many countries have generated higher levels of saving at lower levels of income than those of Africa today.

Indeed, African countries themselves had much higher levels of domestic saving in the 1970s than they have today. Under the new policies, much of the little surplus that there is is exported or wasted on speculative investments in real estate, shopping malls and treasurer bonds. Governments have no instruments for directing investments in priority areas nor for controlling the flow of capital in and out of the country. Africa has grown faster in the past than it has under the tutelage of the Washington Consensus.. This would suggest that Africa is not caught in a "poverty trap" but in a "policy trap", which if not removed, will frustrate any new initiatives, including the shock treatments against the ailments of geography. Foreign investments flow to countries with high savings, and unless African countries find ways of mobilizing their savings, they are unlikely to attract the required foreign investment or to stimulate domestic investment.

Jeffrey Sachs says nothing about equity. This is in line with the new view that "growth is good for the poor" and that one need not worry about equity issues. And so we have discussions of health and education issues not as aspects of social policy but as simply technocratic issues of delivery of drugs, notebooks and school benches.

Initially, the macroeconomic policy wonks in the World Bank opposed the emphases on geography and institutions because they left little room for them. However, now things look different: Jeffrey Sachs could not have come at a more appropriate time. Over the years, the World Bank had painted itself in a corner by forgetting that the very *raison d'être* of the World Bank was that the market could not finance the lumpy, long-term investments in infrastructure most of which had the character of a "public good" in which social returns exceeded private returns. If markets could indeed identify the socially necessary projects and finance them, as the World Bank argued in its adjustment programs, then there would be no need for development banks in the developing countries and, *a fortiori,* of the World Bank itself - "the mother of all development banks". These arguments have also left it with an increasingly "soft" portfolio of good governance, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and debt relief, and marginalized it from the real long-term financing. But the return by Jeffrey Sachs to the old argument about the centrality of infrastructure in development and the inability of markets to finance such long-term and lumpy projects opens up new opportunities. The World Bank has already signalled its return to the funding of infrastructure.

6. The Missing Africans

Jeffrey Sachs is at his best when debunking the often poorly veiled racist judgements ("prejudices and misperceptions") about African capacities, policies and institutions. He is also enough of an insider to clearly bring out the ideological and arbitrary nature of IMF impositions. What emerges from Sachs's account is an institution detached from the real problems of development but with enormous influence over the fate of millions of poor people, without a moral radar or sense of urgency as it "studies problems to death while an economy collapses" (p. 77). You would expect that from his analysis, Sachs would place Africans at the centre of the development policies. No! After patronizing encomiums directed especially at the grassroots, he allots the driving seat to international experts. Jeffrey Sachs has difficulties reconciling his insistence on geography and his penchant for the "great men in history" to suggestions that Africans have a role in all this. According to him, all it seems to take is a few men and women of wisdom and goodwill to notice a problem and do something about it. For example, it would take a call to the US Secretary of the Treasury to have Poland's debt written off, a chance meeting with George Soros to have a team of economists sent to rescue Poland, and a speech at a conference on HIV/AIDS to get the ball rolling on the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

This is perhaps not surprising: deterministic explanations have a tendency to downplay agency. In the worst case, the people affected by institutions or geography are deemed to be so programmed by inherited institutions or nature that they cannot be expected to lift themselves by their own bootstraps. From there, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that "external agents" are required. Technology takes on this role of deux ex machina and aid is the lubricant. Africans are supposed to watch as foreigners dredge the swamps, tear through the forest to construct roads, traverse the continent to vaccinate all the children, lay down communication lines and distribute bed nets in Africa's remotest villages.

There is no room for social history and social movements. References to social movements are at best perfunctory. Africans themselves play a minor role in the Sachs scheme of things. But history teaches us that success against poverty has been most rapidly achieved not only when the powerful have concluded that its eradication is in their interest, but when the weak have sought justice through social action. In his analysis, there are no individual Africans with their strengths and foibles. His appeals to "grassroots" have a surreal quality to them: they are based on his sporadic forays into areas where the poor live, and listening to what seem to be well-organized, if not well-orchestrated, encounters with the poor. The result is that the poor emerge as a one-dimensional undifferentiated mass, devoid of any social existences. Consequently, his bottom-up approach has little meaning.

Finally, the book is important not so much for what it says about poverty as for what it tells us about the debates on aid, the state of knowledge (or lack of it) about development, and the perceptions of the role Africans should play in the development of the continent. If Sachs is receiving star billing, it is not because of the originality of his ideas. With respect to Africa's problems, similar arguments have been made as passionately by Africans. The case for fixing Africa's infrastructure was forcefully made by Kwame Nkrumah, the Lagos Plan of Action and now by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It was the Africans who placed the issue of "landlocked-ness" on the international agenda. But as it turned out, there was no regional or international financial agency interested in such regional projects. However, since economic ideas that win out in policy circles are not necessarily the right ones but those that have the most political resonance in political circles, it may be that Jeffrey Sachs's standing will have finally made the case convincing. But this in itself is symptomatic of the problem - the denial of Africans' understanding of their problems and the failure to take their suggestions seriously on how to proceed. There are two possible salutary effects of the book. First, it might revive interest in the issues that were the staple of development economics - structural constraints, resource mobilisation, coordination failures and the role of the state. Second, it might help bring to an end the "mission creep" that has led the World Bank into areas where it has displayed remarkable incompetence (governance, health policy and educational reform, culture, "social capital", religion) and get it back to where it belongs: financing long-term investments in social and physical infrastructure. For those who have followed debates about development in Africa over the last half-century, the book will not only elicit a sense of déjà vu (or rather, déjà lu) but will also ring as an indictment of Africans themselves for not taking their own understanding of their situation seriously and for not being steadfast in the pursuit of their projects.

Notes

1. The words in inverted commas in the last three sentences were the staple of "development economics" in the 1950s and 1960s.
2. Jeffrey Sachs, "Growth in Africa: It can be Done," *The Economist* (1996), 19-21.
3. Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner, "Sources of slow growth in African economies," *Journal of African Economies*, 6 (1997), pp. 335-76.
4. This was the popular name given to a 1981World Bank report entitled *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action*.
5. See Thandika Mkandawire, "Maladjusted African Economies and Globalisation," *Africa Development*, XXX, 1 & 2 (2005).
6. World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: A Long-Term Perspective Study* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1989).
7. See Ha-Joon Chang, 2002, *Kicking away the ladder : Development strategy in historical perspective* (London: Anthem, Ha-Joon).
8. World Bank, *Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1994).

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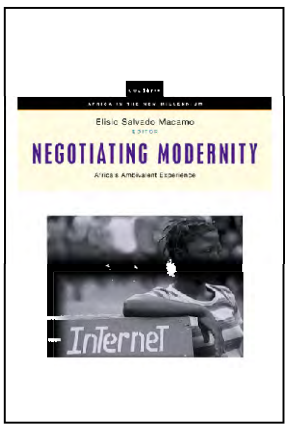

Negotiating Modernity: Africa's Ambivalent Experience

Edited by Elísio Salvado Macamo

Published 2005; 256 pages; ISBN: 2-86978-147-4

Africa has been through a particularly ambivalent experience of modernity. Previous research has tended to emphasize its alien nature in Africa and how it has been resisted. This book seeks to show how this tension and the impulse to modernity have contributed to changing African society over the past one hundred years. The contributors look at how Africans negotiated the terms of modernity during the colonial period and are dealing with it in the post-colonial period. They argue that the African experience of modernity is unique and relevant for wider social theory, offering valuable analytical insights. The cases presented cover labour, land rights, religious conversion, internal migration, emigration and the African diaspora

The Contributors: Elísio Macamo, Julani Niaah, Cassandra R. Veney, Alda Romão Saúte, Francis Njubi Nesbitt, Ines Macamo Raimundo, Samwel Ong'wen Okuro, and Ekuru Aukot

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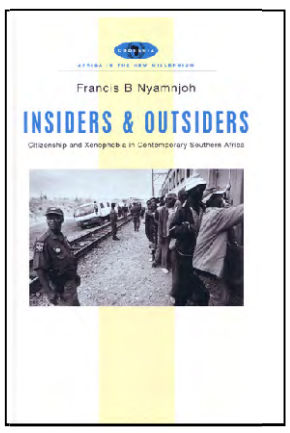

Insiders & Outsiders: Citizenship & Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa

Francis B. Nyamnjoh

Published 2006; 288 pages; ISBN: 2-86978-155-5

Nyamnjoh's new book about the heightened xenophobia that both exploits and excludes is an incisive commentary on a globalizing world that reaches down into the grassroots of so many societies with consequences for ordinary people's lives that have received all too little attention. He meticulously documents the fate of immigrants and the new politics of insiders and outsiders in these Southern African societies, at the same time delivering a telling commentary on the global rhetoric of open societies in an era of increasing closures and exclusions.

This work is an original and perceptive study of issues that resonate in countries across Africa and the globe. As globalization becomes a palpable reality in the bodies of people in transit, citizenship, sociality and belonging are subjected to stresses to which few societies have devised a civil response beyond yet more controls. The latter in turn are subverted and nullified, so that, as in Botswana and South Africa, a world is developing where conflict and flux underlie a superficial global progress.

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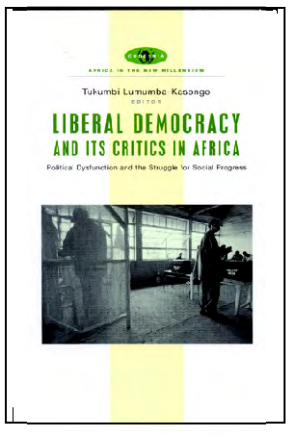

Liberal Democracy and Its Critics in Africa: Political Dysfunction and the Struggle for Social Progress

Edited by Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo

Published 2005; 256 pages; ISBN: 2-86978-143-1

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.

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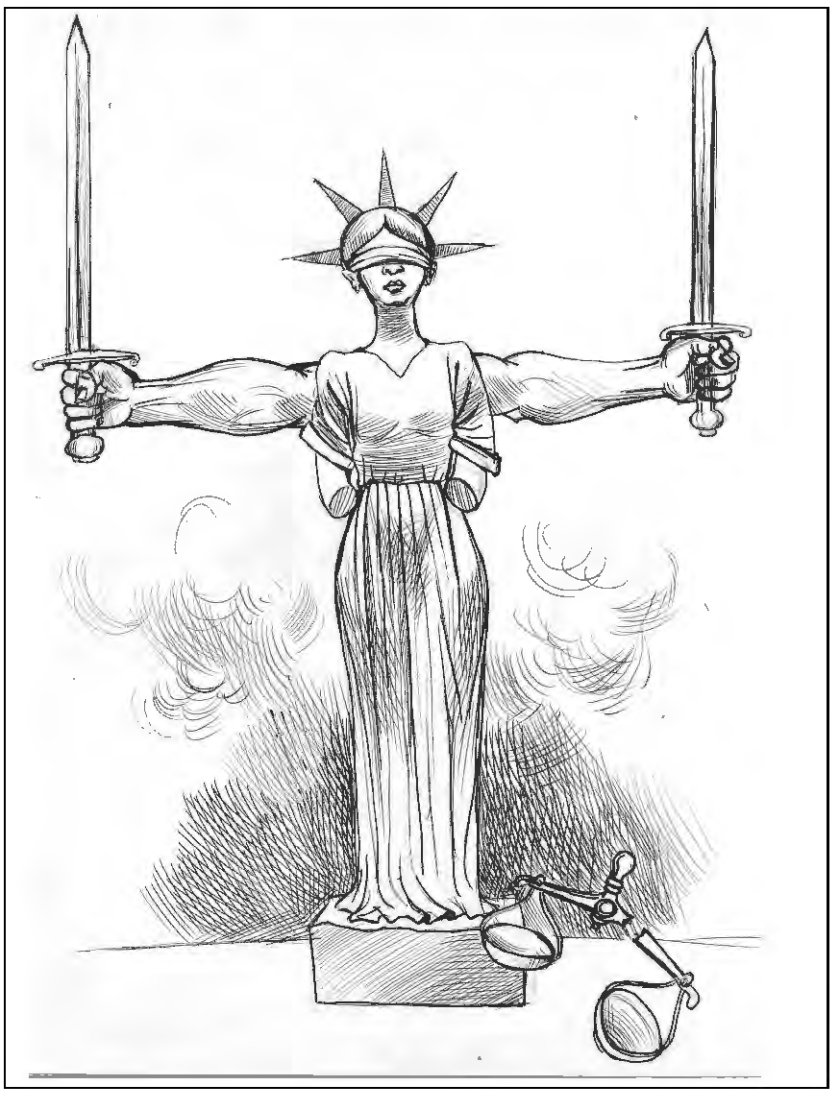
Mau Mau: Understanding Counter-Insurgency

Mahmood Mamdani

Imperial Reckoning, The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya
by Caroline Elkins
Henry Holt, 2005, 475 pages, $27.50, ISBN-0-8050-7653-0.

Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire
by David Anderson
Norton, 2005, 406 pages, $25.95, ISBN 0-393-05986-3.



Who authored the atrocities linked with the Mau Mau? How did Mau Mau, which began as an armed movement against settler power in the White Highlands of Kenya, turn into a civil war among the Kikuyu of the Central Province?

The Mau Mau killed only 32 white settlers. "More European civilians would die in road traffic accidents between 1952 and 1960," notes Anderson. Other Mau Mau victims included some 200 British regimental soldiers and police and 1800 African civilians. The numbers explode when we come to count the Mau Mau dead. The official figure is that of 12,000. Anderson says it is "more than 20,000." But Elkins presents a radical reappraisal of the counter-insurgency both in *scale* and human *cost*: "If the Kikuyu population figure in 1962 is adjusted using growth rates comparable to the other Africans, we find that somewhere between 130,000 and 300,000 Kikuyu are unaccounted for. … I now believe that there was in late colonial Kenya a murderous campaign to eliminate Kikuyu people"

The education of Caroline Elkins began in 1995 when she decided to write a doctoral dissertation on the 80,000 Mau Mau detainees during the 1952-58 Emergency. Knowing that three different departments had followed their track, she expected to find 240,000 files in the London archives – but found none. Even the Kenya archives yielded only a few hundred files.

The surviving records were duplicitous. The daily average of 80,000 obscured the fact that the total detained was between 160,000 and 320,000. The systematic destruction and distortion of documentary evidence about the Mau Mau emergency was no doubt part of a continuing "state-imposed amnesia."

To cut through it, Elkins set out in search of survivors of the Emergency. Her ambition was to shift the search-light from the Mau Mau to the British, and it succeeds spectacularly. In contrast, David Anderson's *Histories of the Hanged* relies on more conventional documentation, mainly 800 surviving testimonies of the 1,090 who were hanged during the Emergency. Not surprisingly, his findings by and large confirm official claims of the number of Mau Mau killed.

Though it reads at times as a charge sheet, *Imperial Reckoning* offers more, including the voices of the victims. Yet, Elkins is unable to explain the outcome of the war: that the British were able to win the middle ground and impose a political settlement that isolated the Mau Mau. Because she writes a narrative with the conclusion very much in mind, Elkins weaves the narrative around the confrontation between militants and Loyalists – which is how the story ends, but not how it begins. In the process, she loses conceptual sight of the middle ground. The great merit of Anderson's political and social history of the Mau Mau war is that it focuses on the battle for the middle ground.

Both books need to be read together. If Elkins' truly innovative oral research for the first time brings out the enormous scale and murderous consequences of the British counter-insurgency, its human cost, Anderson's political acumen gives us the clues necessary to reflect on the lessons of a counter-insurgency that succeeded in its own terms.

* * *

"Some of the most aristocratic immigrants ever to populate the British empire," Kenyan settlers reveled in a life of "gentrified leisure" – "sex, drugs, drink and dance, followed by more of the same" – driven by hedonism and the lash of the infamous *kiboko*, a whip made of rhinoceros hide.

A battery of laws underwrote settler privilege at the expense of native lives: peasants were herded into officially-demarcated native reserves; administrative regulations forbad them to grow the most lucrative crops (coffee) and forced them to sell others (maize) to state marketing boards at a price that protected settlers from native competition; a Hut and Poll tax – the cash equivalent of two months' labor a year – compelled them to work for cash no matter the returns; and the law tracked their movement by requiring that every native carry a pass.

Unlike Elkins who traces the development of African politics into two great tendencies - pro- and anti-colonial - Anderson highlights the moderate middle ground between the conservative *Kikuyu Association*, which brought together leading Kikuyu chiefs and senior Christian leaders, and Mau Mau militants**.**

The birth of *moderate* nationalism occurred around two fissures: land and culture. The Church became an issue when missionaries decided to modernize the Kikuyu way of life. When the Church demanded in October 1929 that all Christians sign a pledge against female circumcision, there were massive defections, leading to the formation of independent churches and schools to defend "Kikuyu tradition." The movement received powerful backing from newly formed political groups like the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) and then the Kenya African Union (KAU). Around the same time, the 1932 Colonial Land Commission turned down Kikuyu demands for the return of "lost lands." Instead, its report called on the Kikuyu to increase the carrying capacity of their land by marshalling compulsory communal (mainly female) labor to build terraces and check soil erosion. Kikuyu opinion was outraged.

If the battle of the peasantry in the reserves for land and for the defense of culture provided the ground for the development of moderate nationalism, it is the great historic battle that squatters waged against settler power for the right to live (land and freedom) that was the springboard of *militant* nationalism. Squatters came from among landless peasants. By 1940, they numbered 150,000; one in every eight Kikuyu was a "squatter" on a European farm, laboring for a third of the year in return for a plot to cultivate and permission to graze cattle.

The World War further altered the balance of forces on the Highland by bringing material prosperity to settlers and political power to settler-dominated district councils. But it also thrust 75,000 peasants and squatters into the colonial army. When demobilized, many of them would provide leadership and men for the Mau Mau forest militias. For the moment, though, the initiative lay with settler-dominated Councils, which used their new powers to revise annual squatter contracts to limit their access to land. As evictions began, squatters from over 400 farms attempted to strike but the 1947 strike failed. Over 100,000 squatters were forcibly 'repatriated' between 1946 and 1952.

* * *

Squatters found it difficult to organize – except in one place, Olenguruone, where they dipped into tradition to forge a wider unity. Taking an oath traditionally meant for male elders in times of crisis, they administered it to all: men, women and children. Some went a step further, taking different oaths, each signifying a higher level of commitment. The oath-taking ceremony symbolized spiritual rebirth. Two of the most common pledges went thus: "If I know of any enemy of our organization and fail to kill him, may this oath kill me," and "If I reveal this oath to any European, may this oath kill me." A Mau Mau was a Born-Again Kikuyu.

As evictions began and the oath reached the Kikuyu of Nairobi and central Kenya, it was taken up by urban militants organized as *Muhimu* (Kiswahili for 'significant'). Later to become the Mau Mau Central Organizing Committee, the militants of Muhimu were recruited from three different groups: trade unionists (Fred Kubai, Eluid Mutonyi, Charles Wambaa, John Mungai), ex-servicemen (Waruhiu Itote – known as General China), and urban criminal gangs, particularly 'the Forty Group' (Mwangi Macharia, Stanley Mathenge).

Beginning with key trade unionists, selected criminals, and Nairobi's Kikuyu taxi drivers, the Muhimu mounted a membership drive and took over the leadership of KAU (except in Kiambu), going so far as to summon Kenyatta to Nairobi in early 1952 to threaten him with death should he not carry out Mau Mau directives. The colonial government estimated that the first oath had been taken by nearly 90% of the entire Kikuyu population of 1.5 million and that the seventh and final killing oath called the *batuni*, had been taken by a good 10% by 1952.

Nairobi was a racialized city where police patrolled first European and then Asian quarters, leaving criminal gangs to control African shanties and housing estates. All Mau Mau had to do to control African areas was to penetrate criminal gangs. Further, as ethnic separation broke down in the cramped and racially segregated living quarters of African Nairobi, Kikuyu militants began recruiting members of other ethnic groups, particularly the Kamba. With the prospect of Mau Mau turning into a multi-ethnic Kenyan insurgency, notes Elkins, "one of the British colonial government's greatest nightmares was becoming a reality."

Mau Mau violence became prominent with the murder of Chief Waruhiu wa Kungu of Kiambu, the Paramount Chief of Central Province, on 9 October 1952. Eleven days later, Governor Baring declared a state of emergency in the colony. Anderson says the militants (Stanley Mathenge, Dedan Kimathi) fled to the forest as the moderates – including Kenyatta – awaited their fate. But more likely it was the political wing, moderate *and* militant, that was picked up as the military wing fled to the forest.

The British responded with the proclamation of an Emergency on 9 October 1952, first isolating the 20,000 Mau Mau fighters in the forest by cutting off their supply lines, to Nairobi and to the Kikuyu countryside, and then confronting them with a roughly equal force.

Both operations were inspired by precedents. Operation Anvil, which cordoned off the city of Nairobi for a month-long sector-by-sector purge, was patterned on the "clean-up" of the then Palestinian city of Tel Aviv by the British military before the Second World War. Every Kikuyu who was not a Loyalist was treated as a confirmed

oath-taker. In a month, half (24,100) of those screened (50,000) had been detained – without a single trial having been held. With the introduction of communal detention orders, the number doubled in six months.

Forced villagization too had precedents: Alfred Milner's herding of Afrikaaners into barbed-wire villages during the Boer War, leaving "tens of thousands of women and children" dead from disease and starvation; and Templer's more recent resort to barbed-wire villages during the communist insurgency in Malaya in the early 1950s. Forced villagization began with entire villages being set on fire. Their houses and property burnt, over a million Kikuyu were forced into some 800 barbed-wire villages between June 1954 and October 1955.

In contrast to the conventional notion that the counter-insurgency was aimed against Mau Mau militants, Elkins recognizes that the British interned practically the entire Kikuyu population as Mau Mau. But how do you intern an entire people without taking them on? Key to this was turning the insurgency inward, into a battle of Kikuyu militants against Kikuyu loyalists, thereby turning the Mau Mau insurgency into a civil war.

* * *

Though resistance to Mau Mau began with the churches, it is the Governor's order of November 1952 that led to the reorganization of Church-led resistance groups as a militia named the "Home Guard". Henceforth, recruitment would be done by chiefs and headmen. That was the first step in the making of the civil war. The second step was taken by the Mau Mau when they targeted the Home Guards and their families.

The turning point came with the night of 26 March, 1953, at Lari, the site of two successive massacres, the first by Mau Mau and the second by Home Guards on the night of 26 March, 1953. In an eye-opening chapter, Anderson links the massacres to a history of colonial land appropriation which left its victims to haggle over a compensation which was neither fair nor comprehensive.

The vast majority of the 400 killed at Lari had been women and children. Anderson refers to General Itote's account of a debate in the Mau Mau forest camps in July, 1953, reflecting growing doubts about the killing of women and children. Did critics sense that if the pursuit of justice gave way to vengeance, it may drown the struggle in its own blood? Did its spectacular expansion in Nairobi bring undesirable elements (criminals) and practices (coerced fund-raising and oaths) into Mau Mau?

Even then, how important was terror as a Mau Mau practice? The colonial government and the settlers claimed it was routine. One of the worst incidents occurred when Joseph Kibunja was murdered on 15 September 1952 for refusing to take the oath, and the community was forced to participate in the decapitation of his body "to show they were not afraid to murder the enemies of Mau Mau." Anderson assures us that while "disturbing," the Kibunja murder was an "utterly exceptional case." Mau Mau violence was usually organized in liaison with local people; rebels often knew victims personally. General Erskine, the commander of British forces in Kenya during the Emergency, was surprised by the strength of local support for rebels, describing Kikuyu locations of Western Murang'a as "nothing more than Mau Mau republics." Even Home Guards were infiltrated by rebels; according to the Government's own estimates, almost half had taken the oath.

To be sure, we are talking of a trend here. When the city poor hit back between June and December 1954, it was without direction from any committee or liaison with elders in the countryside. The result was a mix of the spectacular, as they freed 296 Mau Mau from Lukenya prison, and the disastrous, as they set about murdering suspected informers, sapping the morale of Kikuyu communities. Did the influence of fresh recruits, including criminal elements, increase with the jailing of the political leadership at the outset of the Emergency? And did it proliferate when those who fled to the forest set up several parallel militias – with the result that Mau Mau never again had a unified leadership?

The Kenyan historian, Bethwell Ogot, has identified four categories of recruits: the *constitutionalist* landed gentry, *traditionalists* who believed the Mau Mau had subverted Kikuyu cultural practices by misusing the oath, *opportunists* and *Christians*. Whereas the landed gentry (among whom were chiefs) were the backbone of the Loyalists, we need to focus on the Christians – who were both the most numerous and the most ambivalent – to follow the downward slide of the anti-colonial struggle as the Mau Mau broadened their target beyond informers to include those Christians who refused to take the oath as well as to join the Loyalists.

How many of those who sought to occupy a middle ground were killed and how many joined the Home Guards? By March 1954, there were 25,600 Home Guards – 14,800 full-time – manning over 550 fortified posts in a rapidly militarizing countryside. Loyalists were never paid but received privileges. Loyalists – and never an ex-Mau Mau however much he or she confessed – were issued Loyalty Certificates which allowed them to move freely, to be exempt from special taxes, to have preferential access to commercial licenses and to have the right to vote. Later, they had free access to the property and labor of those herded into barbed-wire detention villages.

With Lari, the Mau Mau began to target, less and less the settlers on the Highlands or even less the colonial power itself, but increasingly those they perceived as local beneficiaries of colonial power, first a combination of Kikuyu chiefs and Christians and the Home Guards, and then those who would seek to occupy the middle ground. As this happened, neighbors – even relatives – turned out to be on opposite sides in a rapidly brutalizing civil war. As the Mau Mau lost the middle ground, the British were able to implement a political settlement that would isolate the Mau Mau.

* * *

The Emergency was a state of exception: violence, not law, was its organizing principle. The Kikuyu countryside was like a stretched-out detention facility. Every Kikuyu who was not a Loyalist was treated as a confirmed oath-taker. This much is clear from the nature of *screening*: "If the screening team was dissatisfied with a suspect's answers, it was accepted that torture was a legitimate next resort. … The screening teams whipped, shot, burned, and mutilated Mau Mau suspects, ostensibly to gather intelligence for military operations, and as court evidence."

The regime of torture gave plenty of room for perversions to flourish. Elkins recounts these, sometimes in gruesome detail. Settlers set up illegal, informal, sometimes mobile, screening centers. One settler claimed that he "could get a very good idea as to how many oaths a man had taken just by looking at him." Another – nicknamed Joseph Mengele of Kenya – operated his own screening camp and boasted that his exploits "included burning the skin of live Mau Mau suspects and forcing them to eat their own testicles."

Then there was the slow and protracted method of torture, reminiscent of the worst of brutalities in the Rwandan genocide. In the words of an interrogator at the Special Branch center: "By the time I cut his balls off he had no ears, and his eye ball, the right one, I think, was hanging out of its socket. Too bad, he died before we got much out of him."

Often, sadism mixed with cruelty as when whites used villagers for target practice, or when they delighted in specially humiliating occupants of detention villages: "The Johnnies (whites) would make us run around with toilet buckets on our heads. … The contents would be running down our faces and we would have to wipe it off and eat it, or else we were shot." Another common practice in the detention villages was that of the confessional *baraza* (public meeting): "Those taken to the front of the crowd were often stripped naked and forced to lead the rest of the village in rounds of anti-Mau Mau songs. When the music stopped and the questioning began, those who refused to confess were beaten, often unconscious. … Some people who had refused to confess were put in sacks, one covering the lower part of their bodies while the other covered their upper part. Then petrol or paraffin would be poured over the sacks, and those in charge would order them to be lit. The people who refused to confess … were always killed in order to instill fear into others who might think of concealing the truth." At the same time, "confession did not mean an end to forced labor … only that they were spared from death, for the time being."

As one reads through Elkins' extended descriptions of the regime of torture, one is struck by its predominantly *sexual* nature. Male detainees were often sexually abused "through sodomy with foreign objects, animals, and insects, cavity searches, the imposition of a filthy toilet bucket-system, or forced penetrative sex." A common practice during interrogation was to squeeze testicles with pliers. The Christian Council of Kenya complained to the Governor that Mau Mau suspects were being castrated, citing an instance of a man who "had his private parts laid on a table and beaten till the scrotum burst because he would not speak."

Women had "various foreign objects thrust into their vaginas, and their breasts squeezed and mutilated with pliers." Variations abounded, with sand, pepper, banana leaves, flower bottles (often broken), gun barrels, knives, snakes, vermin, and hot eggs being thrust up men's rectum and women's vaginas.

The regime of torture was authored by an amalgam of two forces – the White settlers and the Kikuyu Loyalists – under the watchful and benign eye of the British colonial establishment, which was preoccupied with getting results so long as costs were politically acceptable. To contain that cost, they put a tight lid on information, discrediting anonymous accounts as irresponsibly dramatic while responding with extreme brutality to any individually authored account: a detainee who managed to smuggle out a signed statement was paraded, his fingers were chopped off and then he was hanged. The regime of torture outlasted colonialism because its agents did. As Elkins reminds us, among those who cut their battle teeth in the Mau Mau war was Idi Amin, then a soldier in the King's African Rifles, dispatched from Uganda to wage and learn counter-insurgency in the Kikuyu reserves.

* * *

These books do not just dwell on atrocities – what the British did to the Kikuyu. Two valuable chapters focus on the life of militants, in the detention camps (Elkins) and in the forest (Anderson).

How does one survive torture, day after day, and for those who did not break, literally for years? The short answer is that survival was not an individual but a collective strategy. To face an organized camp administration, detainees evolved their own structure of committees: "There was the welcoming committee, the judicial committee, the rehabilitation committee, the debate committee, the mending committee, the medical committee; the list went on and on. Overseeing all was the Executive Committee. Selected by the detainees, its members were often singled out because of their ability to arbitrate disputes, their knowledge of colonial and international law, and their understanding of the political scene in both Kenya and Britain."

If the administration tried to run the camp as a torture chamber and a sweat shop, the detainee committees tried to turn it into a school and a market place. There were dozens of literacy classes: "Some camps had virtual schools, with forms or grades starting at Standard I and going all the way up to Standard IX. There were also lectures and discussions on politics, history, law, geography, and religion – all were wildly popular with the detainees." A former detainee explained how he survived the ordeal that was the camp: "You see, our classes and our teachers kept me alive. They were as important as our miserable food rations." To maintain morale and to recruit new members, militants organized oathing ceremonies in the camps. Guards demanded huge bribes – several packs of cigarettes or few days of ration – to look the other way.

Faced with a regime that tried to break their spirit, detainees endeavored to engage the camp personnel individually, most often through black markets and bribery. To explain how the same guards who brutalized the detainees could engage with them as buyers and sellers, even co-conspirators, J.M. Kariuki, a former compound leader and author of *Mau Mau Detainee,* narrated (and Elkins cited) the Kikuyu allegory about the dog, the jackal and the man: "We say that when a man takes a dog out hunting a jackal, the dog will run far ahead out of sight and start playing with the jackal in a hidden place because they are really the same kind. When the man catches up with them the dog will straightaway begin barking fiercely and chasing the jackal again for a safe distance. This is because it is the man who gives the dog food which it will not get if it disobeys orders."

Inevitably, there were those who broke. The most famous of the detainee-collaborators was Peter Muigai Kenyatta, Jomo's own son, and the best known compound leader was J. M., later an M.P. in independent Kenya. Relations in the camp resembled a tug-of-war. As camp authorities targeted waverers with privilege, and shuffled guards to cut short any relationships with detainees, detainees targeted informants.

Anderson focuses on senior Mau Mau commanders in the forest: Waruhiu Itote (General China), Dedan Kimathi and Stanley Mathenge. Recruits came into the forest in waves, first Muhimu activists and ex-squatters, then refugees fleeing persecution. As the numbers increased, from 12,000 (October 1952) to 24,000 (December, 1953), the camps moved deeper into the forest. But after Operation Anvil and forced villagization, life in the forest turned into "a grim struggle for survival." Not only had the baton passed from political to mili-

tary leaders, the latter were organized as eight separate militias, with the largest 4-5,000 strong. The tension between commanders became evident once the British captured one of them (General China) and were able to turn the distrust between commanders to advantage.

* * *

Wars are fought with words as much as with weapons. If the point of weapons was to vanquish the enemy, the point of words was to rein in waverers and to isolate the enemy. British discourse on the Mau Mau ranged from the patronizing to the dehumanizing to the eliminationist. The *patronizing* discourse focused on the Mau Mau as a cultural aberration: the Kikuyu had either to convert to Christianity (as in J. C. Crothers, *The Psychology of the Mau Mau*) or to return to genuine tradition (as in Louis Leaky, *Defeating the Mau Mau*).

The *dehumanizing* discourse was openly racist and painted the Mau Mau as "vermin" that were "cunning" and "blood-thirsty" like other predatory animals. The *eliminationist* perspective brazenly claimed that "the only good Kuke is a dead Kuke" or that Mau Mau – in the words of the Colonial Secretary – was "the horned shadow of the Devil himself."

If the British justified terror as necessary to get their message across to "savages," the Mau Mau were also prone to mimic the British: Anderson cites the case of the infamous General Tanganyika who was "advised by a woman prophet that a European be sacrificed in the manner a Kikuyu elder had been killed, buried live in the ground." And so, Gray Leakey, a cousin of Louis Leakey, was taken captive and led into the forests of Mount Kenya, high up on the mountain, where "he was buried alive and upside down in deep red soil." As gory stories of Mau Mau violence made the round, settlers rationalized their own violence as preventive.

A common theme among settlers and colonial officials contrasted ritual details of the oath and the bloody nature of Mau Mau killings with pangas, or machetes, with European notions of *normal* violence. Anderson comments instructively: "Here e to face. To kill in this way required commitment and determination. The European imagination found it difficult to understand how such attacks could be perpetrated unless the killers were in some way possessed or controlled by dreadful forces they could not defy." Surely, the "Kikuyu who had taken the oath were no longer in their right minds; they had been transformed and brutalized." In that case, how could their actions be explained by killer and victim were locked together,
face any legitimate grievances, even if the grievances were otherwise acknowledged as real? Is it surprising that when Kenyatta tried to explain the nature of grievances that led to the Mau Mau, Judge Thacker simply shrugged it away: "Grievances have nothing whatever to do with Mau Mau and Mau Mau has nothing whatever to do with grievances."

* * *

As Anderson notes, not only African nationalism but white power too was on the march in Africa in the 1950s. The National Party came to power in South Africa in 1948, Rhodesia's settlers amalgamated the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland into a federation in 1951, and Kenya's settlers hoped for a federation of East Africa. All three projects unraveled, beginning in Kenya. If the great war shifted the locus of power from London to the settler state in Kenya, the Mau Mau shifted it right back to London. The arrival of General George Erskine a few weeks after Lari signaled the beginning of the demise of settler power. General Erskine was no friend of settlers, writing to his wife: "I hate the guts of them all, they are all middle-class sluts." One of his first orders asked the security forces to stop "'beating up' the inhabitants of this country just because they are the inhabitants." Politically astute, he recognized that Mau Mau would be contained if Kenya were purged of settler power: "in my opinion they want a new set of civil servants and some decent police." That, in short, was the British agenda for an independent Kenya.

Unlike the French in Algeria, the British succeeded in turning the anti-colonial and anti-settler struggle in the White Highlands into a civil war among the Kikuyu. This allowed them to win the middle ground and cap the Emergency with a political settlement led by Jomo Kenyatta who personified that middle ground. It is worth mulling over Elkins' account of the exchange between Governor Baring and President Kenyatta when the two met at State House, Nairobi, in October 1965:

> After some initial pleasantries the former jailor turned to his onetime captive, gestured, and said: "By the way, I was sitting at that actual desk when I signed your detention order twenty years ago." "I know," Kenyatta told him, "If I had been in your shoes at the time I would have done exactly the same." The nervousness evaporated, and the room erupted in relieved laughter. With everyone still chuckling, the new President chimed in, "And I have myself signed some detention orders sitting right there too."

Rather than see this as confirmation that Kenyatta was but a colonial stooge, it is more illuminating to think of independence as a compromise between a decolonizing Britain and moderate nationalists at the expense of White settlers and Mau Mau militants, immediate adversaries at the start of the Mau Mau war.

It was an outcome achieved at an astronomically high cost. Elkins sums up the testimony of survivors: "Many of these women think of the entire Central Province as a kind of mass unmarked grave." If these books can trigger soul-searching on the crimes of modern Western empires – even if half as serious as the post-war soul-searching on German crimes in Europe – they will mark a major contribution to understanding the ongoing struggle for land and freedom in the erstwhile colonies.

INSANIYAT N° 25-26 (Juillet-Décembre 2004)

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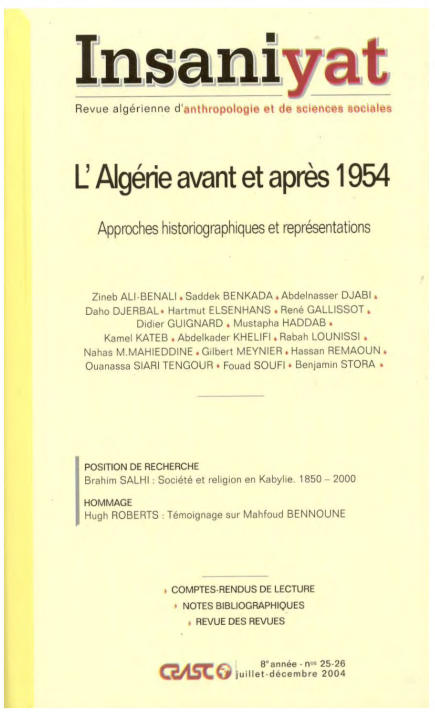


Crusaders for Human Rights and Dignity

Fred Hendricks

Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In our Lifetime
by Elinor Sisulu:
David Philip, 2003, 672pp, 0-86486-639-9

Elinor Sisulu has a written an epic and moving book on her parents-in law. It is different in two important respects to the flood of political biographies that have surfaced in South Africa since the demise of apartheid. In the first instance, Elinor Sisulu had unparalleled access to her subjects and secondly, it is the biography of two people rather than a single hero or heroine. These differences have profoundly shaped the nature of the biography. Elinor Sisulu was driven to write the book by a boundless admiration for her parents-in-law, and by the urge to document the social history of black South Africans. Her admiration is not misplaced. Albertina and Walter and Sisulu lived exemplary lives together and the book does great justice to their monumental contribution to the ongoing struggle for justice in South Africa. But it does much more than that. It provides insight into the minutia of their political and personal decisions and it highlights the intended and unintended consequences of these. The political and personal are linked in powerful ways in this book largely because Albertina and Walter Sisulu were jointly such a consummate embodiment of the struggle against apartheid. There are simply insufficient superlatives to describe their roles in the struggle and their lives as partners and it is possible to disentangle these only when offering a grossly distorted version of their lives.

The story is captivatingly told from the intimacy of an insider. It is honest account of enduring love, despite incredible odds, between two very remarkable people. I think it would have been just about impossible to tell the story of Walter without that of Albertina and vice versa . The connection between them, despite the many years of separation, is uncanny. Yet, the physical separation has one great advantage for the author - it makes the identification of agency relatively easy. Since this biography is written in narrative style, the attribution of agency is all the more important. The book moves seamlessly between the separate and connected stories of Albertina and Walter Sisulu. While she was part of the women's movement in the 1950s already, Albertina only really emerged as a major figure in the politics of struggle after Walter Sisulu was banished to Robben Island. We may wonder what it would have been like if he had not gone to prison, but such counterfactuals are, in the end, not very helpful.

Writing a biography of a couple poses a whole range of special challenges. How to ensure that each subject is accurately portrayed, how to represent the line of influence between them, how to place them separately and yet together within a social context, how to understand the gender relations in such a special partnership are just some of the difficulties that a joint biography encounters. Elinor Sisulu succeeds in meeting these challenges. She does so eloquently as she traces the separate but connected lives of her subjects. She captures the intricate details of Walter's emergence as a national protagonist in the African National Congress and in liberation politics more generally, but she does not ignore the inestimable role played by Mama Sisulu before and after the formation of the UDF during the long years of his incarceration. While the bulk of the narrative deals with Walter, she keeps the balance between them by cementing the story with a candid account of their marriage and partnership. The biography neatly sums up the story of their lives in the following terms (p.17):

Theirs is a story of persecution, bitter struggle and painful separation. It is also one of patience, hope, enduring love and ultimate triumph. It is an epic saga of two people who rose from humble beginnings to become two of the most influential South Africans of the 20th century - in short, a biographer's dream.

Walter Sisulu was born in 1912, the same year as the founding of the ANC and his life was inextricably bound with its unfolding history and the quest for national liberation in South Africa. His father was a white man named Albert Dickinson who worked as a civil servant in the Transkei during the early stages of the twentieth century. The biography mentions his role thus (p.27):

> Walter grew up knowing that his mother and her family had a high regard for his biological father...Walter has vague memories of being shown photographs of his father and his father's sisters...but...(H)is father remained on the periphery of Walter's consciousness, but played no part in his upbringing. Dyantyi Hlakula was the main father figure in his life...Walter identified completely with the Hlakula/Sisulu family and it was their philosophical outlook and way of life that shaped his worldview.

A more powerful statement of the social construction of identity will be hard to find. In response to suggestions that he could utilize his phenotypical characteristics, especially the lightness of his skin colour, to evade prosecution under pass laws (as many others had taken on so-called coloured identity documents), Walter described his own identity in the following unambiguous manner (p.72):

> I am a black man, I am an African, I am subject to all the laws that affect my people... because I never want my colour to determine my race. I was an African in every sense of the word. No less, no more.

Elinor Sisulu makes the following observation (p.73): "(H)aving grown up in the warm embrace of his extended family and guided by the powerful paternal figure of Dyantyi Hlakula, who he worshipped, *Walter was stable and secure in his identity"*. Part of this security, no doubt, was due to the fact that, "Walter would grow up knowing that he came from a clan that was part of the powerful Thembu chiefdom, which could trace its genealogy back 20 generations to king Zwide" (p.27).

Besides the biological accident of his birth, Walter Sisulu grew up in precisely the same manner as other young boys in the village, herding livestock, playing the favourite game of stick fighting and listening to the stories of the elders as the oral traditions were transmitted from generation to generation. The contexts within which Walter and Albertina Sisulu were raised are almost identical rural villages in the Transkei with the extended household as the nurturing unit for both. In contrast to the boys' upbringing though, Albertina Sisulu, in stereotypical fashion for her gender, tended the cultivated fields, collected fire wood and cared for younger children in the extended family. Her subsequent elevation into politics was the catalyst to untie these traditional gender roles, a far cry from the tea-serving hostess described in Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call me Woman*. But Albertina was special from a much earlier age. On his dying bed, her father entrusted her (instead of her elder brother) with the enormous responsibility of taking care of the three younger children when she was a mere fifteen years of age. "I know you are strong," said her father (p.50). Albertina took this role very seriously indeed. In fact when Walter proposed marriage she mentioned that "I have children". To which a stunned and confused Walter replied, " How many?" (p.102). This momentary misunderstanding was quickly resolved with Walter being hugely impressed by Albertina's sense of responsibility over her siblings. In addition he took on the role of guardian over these children himself.

While loosening the traditional gender roles, Albertina Sisulu's elevation into national politics as a leading figure in the struggle for liberation in her own right did not automatically obliterate her domestic responsibilities. For example, prior to receiving her first washing machine at the age of 54, as a present from her children, she did all the laundry for her extended household by hand. The early gender stereotypes were real, and they persisted in an uneven manner during Walter's incarceration. Albertina Sisulu's statement that "I got my freedom the day I married" (p.622) stands in stark contrast to Simone de Beauvoir's famous remark that marriage reduces men and almost always annihilates women. Their marriage and partnership confounds de Beauvoir's pessimism. Albertina's domestic responsibilities did not confine her to domesticity. Instead, she played a vital leadership role in public life. Walter was clearly very important in her political awakening and the manner in which she embraced the struggle for national liberation.

Elinor Sisulu uses her illustrious subjects to tell the story of the structures of and struggles against apartheid. She does this with a depth of sensitivity about their uniqueness and about the many qualities that make them such special people. While she catalogues the horrors of the migrant labour system, so central to the idea of apartheid, she does not forget to mention the joys in the village when a migrant (Walter himself, for example) returns laden with all sorts of scarce edibles for people in the village. Hers is a nuanced picture of the happiness and strife of life under apartheid. Her characters are not one dimensional zombies following a pre-determined path, but multi-faceted real life people. Having said that I must also mention that the reality of their story is somehow unreal. The honesty, loyalty, determination, commitment and humanity revealed in these pages would make even the staunchest supporter wonder. Could they really be that good, so exemplary, so true each other?

In contrast to this moving relationship of love and struggle, Njabulo Ndebele has written an insightful piece of faction on the life of Winnie Mandela, entitled *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. The story of her experience of separation from her husband, Nelson, somehow appears more ordinary embodied in her deceit, criminality, disloyalty and her involvement in kidnapping and assault of young activists. It goes without saying that Albertina Sisulu would lose all respect for Winnie Mandela (p.564). Elinor Sisulu portrays the strained relationship between the two big women of South African politics in a candid manner. In many ways they represent polar opposites. Winnie Mandela was flamboyant and charismatic with an uncanny knack for articulating the concerns of the downtrodden in a manner which generated a prodigious fount of popular (or populist) appeal. She became a folk heroine in the townships notwithstanding the fact that she had been censured by the ANC for her alleged involvement in illicit violence against members of the community. Albertina Sisulu on the other hand, was the exact opposite of the demagogue as she worked quietly, systematically and honourably to dismantle apartheid.

At the tender age of sixteen Walter Sisulu left Engcobo deep in the heart of the Transkei for work on the mines. His transformation from an independent rural-dweller working as a peasant on the family fields to an urban proletarian mirrored the experience of millions of South African youth. But this transformation did not happen as a solitary one way affair. It was complicated by apartheid. In fact, territorial segregation drove a wedge between the processes of urbanisation and proletarianisation through the system of migrant labour and pass laws which compelled many prospective urban dwellers to return annually to the rural reserves. This to and fro movement of people was coupled with the political exclusion of blacks from the central institutions of the state. The systematic disenfranchisement of the majority was the major grievance of the oppressed and it is not surprising that it stimulated such concerted opposition. Walter and

Albertina Sisulu's life experiences reflected these broader processes in the country. They were ordinary South Africans coping with life under apartheid and responding through organised agency in the African National Congress.

Walter experienced a typical example of the mistreatment of black workers in his second job on a dairy farm on the outskirts of Johannesburg, after it was decided that he was far too young for underground work in the mines. His job was particularly arduous. He had to start at 2am and regularly worked a 12 hour day. After working on the farm for 8 months he was involved in a quarrel with his boss who whipped him until he bled. He decided to report the matter to the police only to be "...clouted across the face by a policeman. In addition to handing our verbal and physical abuse, the policeman detained and sent a message to his employer to collect him" (p.58). These were the ordinary, everyday racist experiences of an oppressed people and Walter's consciousness was shaped by such events. His subsequent jobs included domestic work, cleaning and acting as a waiter. Despite his lack of formal education (he left school in standard four, ie after merely six years of schooling) Govan Mbeki states (p.80) that he was "...able to hold his own among the most formidable intellects of the time". Mandela's (p.99) remarks are also telling:

> ...more and more I came under the wise tutelage of Walter Sisulu. Walter was strong, reasonable, practical and dedicated. He never lost his head in a crisis; he was often silent when others were shouting. He believed that the African national Congress was the means to effect change in South Africa, the repository of black hopes and aspirations. Sometimes one can judge an organisation by the people who belong to it, and I knew that I would be proud to belong to any organisation of which Walter was a member.

Albertina Sisulu's work experience as a nurse in Johannesburg was also shaped by the endemic racism of the time. One particular event had a profound impact on her. After a major accident at Park Station, the hospital was flooded with seriously injured people, but there were not enough beds in the black section of the hospital. "Meanwhile, beds in the 'European' section of the hospital were empty as only a few of those injured in the accident were white. Senior black medical staff appealed to the hospital authorities to allow black patients into the white section, as an emergency measure. Their appeals fell on deaf ears" (p.87).

It was out of their familiarity with the everyday experiences of ordinary South Africans under apartheid that the Sisulus constructed their political awakening and their deeply-felt commitment to transform the society. Albertina was the only woman present at the inaugural meeting of the Youth League, the body that eventually transformed the ANC into a mass movement. In a speech at their wedding, the Africanist philosopher, Anton Lembede "...warned Albertina that she was marrying a man who was already married to the nation" (p.104).

Elinor Sisulu mentions the various factors involved in Walter's decision to join the South African Communist Party in 1955, immediately prior to the Congress of the People - his affinity to Marxism, his overseas travel, his respect for communists such as Rusty and Hilda Bernstein, Jack Hodgson, Michael Harmel, JB Marks, Yusuf Dadoo, Moses Kotane and Brian Bunting and his unwavering dedication to the cause of economic as well as political liberation (p.181).

Walter Sisulu was banned in 1955 when he was secretary general of the ANC. Professor ZK Mathews responded very eloquently to the banning (p.180):

> It is of course impossible for any Minister to ban anyone from the ANC. As far as the ANC is concerned, these sons of Africa are still members of our organisation with their names written indelibly not on paper, but in the hearts of our people, where they are beyond the reach of government interference.

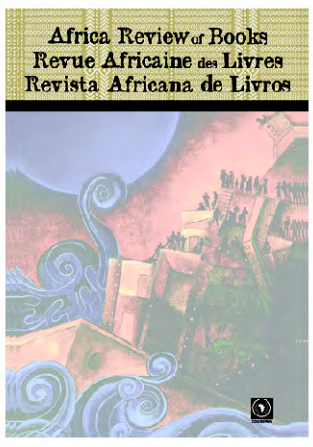
The book deals with the many debates in the struggle against apartheid, especially around the questions of class and nationalism. Walter Sisulu came into his own as a pragmatic strategist and tactician. The most memorable occasion for his skill in this respect is the fact that he was the chief witness for the defence at the Rivonia Trial and Bram Fischer led his evidence. It is testimony to his stature that the more formally educated members of the accused, even those with legal training, placed their trust in Walter Sisulu. It was the trust of their lives because the spectre of the death sentence hung ominously over the entire trial. The book covers the intricate details of the trial and Walter Sisulu was the undoubted protagonist in this crucial moment in the history of the struggle in South Africa.

While in prison, Walter's humanity shone through the correspondence with his beloved wife. While his concerns revolved mainly around family and education matters, the depth of feeling between them comes through their letters to each other. These were love letters with a difference. It is obvious that Walter Sisulu had a genuinely warm personality. He felt things for others, most notably those nearest and dearest to him. Elinor Sisulu does wonderfully well in capturing this humane side of the great man. But she does so, while also revealing his own admiration for his wife and her increasingly important public role.

Albertina Sisulu went on her first overseas trip in 1989. She was ambassador for both the UDF and the ANC, meeting with presidents and prime ministers in USA, France, Sweden and Britain. She was given a special 31 day passport to make this significant trip during the dying days of apartheid when reform and repression were the twin orders of the day. Walter's release from prison in 1989 after 26 years was part of the reform, but it happened in a climate of political repression marked by the state-inspired violence in KwaZulu-Natal, continued detentions without trial of political opponents, police and army occupation of townships, deaths in detention, killing of youth activists, lack of freedom of movement or association and so on. When Walter and Albertina embraced each other after his return to their Soweto home, "That embrace marked the end of a long and painful era for the Sisulu family" (p.589). As if to cement their love for each other, they both threw themselves into the very many political crises of the time. The public and the private were united in their partnership.

Elinor Sisulu paid meticulous attention to the detail and accuracy of her story but she committed one error concerning the fate of the PEBCO Three: Sipho Hashe, Champion Galela and Qaqawuli Godolozi (p.465). Her claim that they disappeared after a UDF meeting and that their bodies were found a few weeks later fly in the face of the evidence that has emerged. The current version of events is that at the height of apartheid repression, the PEBCO Three were abducted from the Port Elizabeth airport by the security police, killed, burnt and then tossed into the Fish River. Their remains were never found.

The titles for the five parts in the book vividly capture the unfolding chronological story: Beginnings (1912- 1939, The Forging: Marriage and Politics (1940-1964), The Scattering: Detention and Exile (1964- 1977), Riding Out the Darkness (1978-1989) and a New Dawn (1990-2002). But this is no mere narrative. It is instead both a vital document of the liberation struggle in South Africa and of the special relationship of equality, love and respect between Albertina and Walter Sisulu. I was moved by this book because it is such a poignant reminder of what it took to get rid of apartheid and how, notwithstanding incredible odds (including a 26 year separation), they maintained a loving relationship. All those interested in South African history from the inside should read this book.



AFRICA REVIEW OF BOOKS

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Africans Do Not Live By Bread Alone: Against Greed, Not Grievance

Ibrahim Abdullah

"This civil war was not caused by a political vision or for religious reasons or for ethnic reasons. **This was done for pure greed**. This was done to control a commodity, and that commodity was diamonds." (David Craine, Chief Prosecutor, Special Court, PBS interview, 10 January 2003, pbs.org).

"To put it very simply, there are many side issues but the cause of this conflict is diamonds. **Fundamentally the cause of this war was to control a commodity and that was diamonds**." (David Craine, Chief Prosecutor, Special Court, Press Conference, Freetown, 18 March 2003).

Introduction

Scholars, NGO activists, and journalists have fed the official mind and popular imagination with a particular kind of explanation of conflict that privileges the economic. Civil war is about resources: rebels are motivated by greed, not grievance. Rebels mine diamonds to buy arms. Diamonds are the heart of the matter. A robust campaign against "blood diamonds" - diamond coming from conflict areas - is one way of depriving rebels of funds to make war. Devoid of historical context, explanations such as these remain captivating but unhelpful.

I want to suggest that the greed problematic is reductionist partly because it limits our understanding of rebellion as a political project and partly because it fails to explain rebellion in non-resources areas. By reducing everything to greed, by labeling rebellion as a criminal enterprise, the greed problematic jettisons legitimate struggles that are rooted in the desire to right the wrongs of everyday life or yester years. My argument is that ethnic struggles, youth agitation for inclusion, the marginalisation of women, and separatists demand for regional autonomy constitute an integral part of the broad struggle for citizenship in post-colonial Africa. The challenge, in my view, is to understand how the citizenship question poses itself as an ethnic/minority/communal struggle in the erstwhile colonial territories.

In what follows, I first present a case for the specificity of the Sierra Leonean conflict. I then turn to Paul Collier's argument: how it illuminates the Sierra Leone case. I offer an outline for an alternative interpretation centered on grievance and the inauguration of an insurgency discourse anchored on pan-Africanism. I conclude by invoking citizenship as a way of understanding contemporary conflicts in Africa.

The Specificity of the Sierra Leone Conflict: A Conceptual Statement

My first point is conceptual: How do we explain the differences between the wars of the 1990s - Rwanda, Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guine-Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire - and the wars of liberation against settler minority regimes in Southern Africa? How do we explain the differences between the wars of liberation in Eritrea and Sudan and that of the *sans culottes*[1] in the 1990s? Are there any similarities between what unfolded in Chad in the 1970s - the first casualty to rebel movements in Africa - and what transpired in Uganda in the 1980s - the first example of a rebel movement capturing state power in post-colonial Africa? How do we make sense of the predominance of forced recruitment, press-ganging, kidnapping, widespread looting, rape, excessive drug abuse and unbridled terror in the *sans culottes*' wars of the 1990s? How do we make sense of these happenings that were manifestly absent in the wars of liberation against settler domination in Southern Africa, the Eritrean war of independence, the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda in the 1980s and Sudan before the 1990s?

I want to suggest that the differences between these wars have nothing to do with the availability/non-availability of resources or the opportunity or feasibility of rebellion as a criminal enterprise. These differences, in my view, have to do with the context within which they unfolded. By context I refer to the changing fortunes of the African state: a) from the era of prosperity in the immediate post-independence period right to the mid-1970s; b) the period of acute economic and political crisis in the 1980s and 1990s and right up to the present moment. The former typifies an era of relative prosperity; the latter a period of mass poverty. These differences are fundamental to understand contemporary armed conflicts in Africa. Armed rebellion may appear as a criminal enterprise, and in the case of Sierra Leone did assume some character of criminality. But this has less to do with the insurgency discourse, which Collier dismisses as propaganda, than with the composition of such movements[2].

Let me make a couple of observations on the specificity of the Sierra Leone conflict.

- Sierra Leone is perhaps the only country in Africa where *non-conventional political actors* have staked their claim to political leadership by taking up arms.[3] The leadership in such movements usually come from marginalized members of the power bloc/established political class, as was the case with Charles Taylor in Liberia, Asumana Mane in Guine-Bissau and Alhassan Ouatara in Cote d'Ivoire. This is significant for it helps explain why the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was the way it was, why the movement was silent for the first four years of the war, and why it doggedly held on to its belief that power was only attainable through military means.
- It is the first example of a *marginalized social group*, in this case youths, appropriating the language of revolution from radical college students to contest political power.
- Subaltern officers, young men in their 20s, seized power a year after war commenced and proclaimed a revolution.
- Throughout the war no member of the established political class in Sierra Leone or the Diaspora lent any covert or overt support to the movement in furtherance of its political/economic objectives.
- After six years of war something unprecedented happened: 95% of the Sierra Leone military joined the rebellion.
- The RUF was composed of *young men in their 20s and 30s*. Sam Bockarie the notorious field commander was twenty-eight when he became a combatant; Issa Sesay who succeeded him was a teenager when he enlisted in the RUF.
- This was perhaps the only war in Africa without an ethnic factor.

Below is a periodisation to guide our understanding of the trajectory of the war in Sierra Leone:

Phase One: Conventional Warfare, 1991-1993

Phase Two: Guerilla Warfare, 1993-1997

Phase Three: Reign of Terror and Criminality, 1997-2000

Africans Do Not live By Bread Alone: The Economic Argument

The underlying assumption in all of Collier's work can be summarized as simply one of greed/economic calculation.[4] Rebels are motivated by the desire to profit from chaos; such calculations are supposedly propelled by the degree to which such a criminal enterprise can become a viable economic project. How to raise revenue to support such a project might begin to explain why rebels without a cause have a better chance of succeeding in the third world than in the first world. Viability is therefore key to the understanding the dynamics of rebel movements. The rebel movement needs source of support, finance to be precise, for the project to stay alive. "It is this, rather than any objective grounds for grievance which determine whether a country will experience civil war". Violence, predatory behavior, and other anti-social acts "may not be the objective of the rebel organization, but it is the means of financing the conflict". Rebellion is therefore economic power by all means necessary!

Extreme dependence on primary commodity exports, low average income and slow economic growth are the conditions under which such predatory rebellions are likely to occur. Primary commodity exports, particularly diamonds, are prime candidates because they are the "most looted of all economic activities". Diamonds are easy to conceal; they are an economic asset coveted by government and rebels alike. A rebel movement in a diamond-producing country would obviously concentrate on controlling the source of this important economic asset if only because it is central to its survival and continued reproduction. Revenue from diamonds is important to both the government and the rebels: predatory war therefore becomes one of control over key resources in a country. "High primary commodity exports, low income and slow growth are a cocktail which makes predatory rebellions more financially viable".

The above is admittedly a crisp summary of Collier's argument as it relates to Sierra Leone.[5] His approach, in my view, constitutes an exercise in writing outside history; it is as if only rational calculations for profit matters. Yet there is much more to human action/ interaction than simple calculation for profit motive; humans/Africans do not live by bread alone!

Is it the case that the RUF - leadership and rank and file - knew a priori that rebellion was a profitable project? Were they aware of the viability or feasibility of such a project? Did the RUF, as a rebel movement, conceive of resources, *ab initio*, as central to their survival and continued reproduction? These are difficult questions to tackle from the perspective of greed precisely because those who inaugurated or participated in the RUF project were NEVER involved in the insurgency dialogue that preceded armed conflict. The primary agents in that dialogue were college students; the combatants in the RUF project were predominantly marginal youths from urban and rural Sierra Leone - in short, the lumpenproletariat! The disjuncture between insurgency dialogue and predatory rebellion poses troubling questions for any explanation that hinges on greed as the primary cause of armed conflict in Sierra Leone.

Even if we accept, for argument' sake, that the revolutionary project of the college students was hijacked by the predominantly lumpen combatants, we still have to flesh out and explain the extent to which those who were "recruited" were "conscientized", to use a tired "revolutionary" formulation, about the economic motive of the rebellion and its feasibility as well as how it was bound to succeed. Indeed, we will be on shaky ground considering the fact that the RUF was unpopular and highly dependent on forced recruitment of all sorts to replenish its fighting force.

The question of timing is also crucial in understanding the economic factor in the Sierra Leone conflict. A criminal enterprise solely crafted for economic gain would have had as its prime target the immediate takeover of the diamondiferous areas. This did not happen. And from 1991 to 1993, the RUF was buttoned down in the rural/ agricultural districts of Kailahun and Pujehun in the southeast. They were forced to retreat with heavy loses when they attempted to take the rich diamond fields in Kono in late 1991. It would take them another four years before they would retake Kono and hold it for any considerable length of time to allow them to exploit the resources in the area. And this happened only in collaboration with the Sierra Leone military. My point here is that the economic factor was not salient during the first phase of the war.

But Collier's main argument is about the economic causes of armed conflict, not about how resources fuelled armed conflict. The latter might be relevant to the Sierra Leone situation particularly during the third phase of the war, that is to say, from 1997-2000, when the RUF became linked to the international criminal syndicate - arms for diamonds - via Monrovia. RUF sources reveal the perennial need for funds to replenish arms supply, feed combatants, purchase medical drugs and other essentials. In June 1996, the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, wrote to the Libyan Arab Peoples Jamahiriyya representative Mohamed Talibi thanking him for the "half million United States dollars (500,000 USD) which I received through you for the purchase of needed material to pursue the military mission".[6] The RUF even asked for more: "I now need one and half million United States dollars (USD1,500,000) in order to purchase twice the listed materials for effective and smooth operation". In another letter written in December 1996, the RUF leader made a request for two million dollars for the purchase of arms and ammunition. Sankoh was writing after the Abidjan peace accord in November which had given him the "opportunity to transact my business in getting our fighting materials freely and easily". He then informed the Libyan representative that the RUF had started to "organize serious mining operations in precious minerals which I believe will help us to generate the needed foreign exchange for our mission".[7]

Fresh arms and ammunition from Eastern European countries, huge diamond export from Liberia to Antwerp and Tel Aviv, mercenaries from South Africa and Eastern Europe all suggest the new networks that the rebels had established with the help of Charles Taylor in neighboring Liberia and Blaise Campaore in Burkina Faso. Al -Qaeda would enter the picture and follow the RUF to the diamond fields to launder their enormous loot on the eve of 9/11.

These developments unfolded at a time when the rhetoric of liberation had ceased to have any meaning. Even so, the RUF still continued, in collaboration with the renegade Sierra Leone military, to push for political power. In this sense politics can be read as an extension of economics: political power will give them more security (legitimacy?) to continue their predatory regime.

Greed, predatory rebellion and its continued reproduction only became a marked feature of the Sierra Leone conflict in 1996/97. It cannot explain why war broke out in 1991 or why marginal youths were at the center of the drama and its continuation. To understand why war broke out in 1991 we have to go back and look at the grievances.

Bringing Back Grievance

How do we explain the preponderance of marginal and alienated youths as combatants/leaders in the nasty war that ravaged Sierra Leone for a decade? Why did young military officers in their 20s seize political power a year after the war started? What propelled young men, and some women, to organize a political party to contest for power in 2002?

Answers to these questions take us back to what I consider to be the central issue in African conflict: the political question. The history, character and dynamics of armed movements in Africa suggest that they are initially propelled by political considerations. By this I mean the often popular but sometimes not clearly articulated call for inclusivity, openness, and democracy in the determination of how decisions are made and resources allocated. Below is an outline of how this process unfolded:

Agency:

- the invention of youth as a political identity;
- the convergence between the mainstream and the marginal youth;
- youth culture, political repression and globalization;
- the invention of an imagined community of youth with shared interests;
- the inauguration of an insurgency discourse.

The Context:

- dwindling revenue from mining and agriculture;
- structural adjustment policies in the 80s: cutbacks on education, social services, and jobs.
- the establishment of a one-party dictatorship;
- the emergence of college students as an informal/de facto opposition;
- the extreme centralization of resources and the creation of an alternative network;
- large-scale political corruption and mismanagement.

Paul Collier *et al* invoke Marx and Lenin, tongue in cheek, to substantiate their point about the primacy of the economic in explaining armed conflicts. But they should have gone further to elaborate on the subjective factor à la Lenin and Che Guevara. By this I refer to the willingness and the "revolutionary" commitment of a select group of people to start the "revolution". This is a critical factor in insurgency. It was college students who inaugurated the insurgency discourse and spearheaded the call to arms in Sierra Leone. They recruited marginal youths, including the future leader of the RUF, for military training in Tajura, Libya, from 1987 to 1989. The issue of resources was never discussed in student circles nor was the issue of finance or sustenance regarded as a key element in the proposed project. The main emphasis was on commitment and willingness to acquire military training to start a guerrilla war. What propelled college students to assume the role of vanguard à la Lenin has more to do with the objective conditions than with the availability of resources or the feasibility of rebellion as an economic project. The disjuncture between those who took part in the insurgency discourse and those who executed the RUF project poses enormous problems for the greed problematic in understanding the Sierra Leone conflict.

Rethinking Post-colonial Conflicts: The Citizenship Question in Africa

I would like to suggest that ethnicity and the struggle for inclusivity by marginalized social/cultural groups is the form in which the citizenship question poses itself in Africa. The wrangling over political rights and the talk about economic and political marginality in the Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire and the Great Lakes are really about citizenship. The Anyanya rebellion in the 1950s, the conflagration in the Congo in the 1960s, the Nigerian civil war, the Chadian musical chairs in the 1970s were all about citizenship: the right of groups to actively participate in the nation-state project without discrimination. We need to recall that the pogroms directed against the Igbos in Kano City in 1966 were the immediate catalyst for the declaration of the independent state of Biafra. The Igbos were simply told to leave Kano City, where they had lived all their lives, and to return to their "native land". Their sojourn in Kano in the Sabon Gari quarters was a painful reminder that they were indeed non-indigene and could be asked to leave at any time. Twenty-some odd years later, Tutsis who had fought with Museveni in the NRM were asked to leave Uganda, where most of them were born or which they knew as home, for a place called Rwanda that only existed in their imagination. It was a painful reminder of their alien "otherness". Even though continuous residency had granted them some respite during the period of struggle, the new post-1986 parliament would turn down their request for Ugandan citizenship. It is to the struggle for inclusion, for citizenship broadly defined, that we must turn if we want to understand conflict in contemporary Africa and elsewhere.

Notes

1 A French expression, literally meaning those without pants, loosely referring to the appearance of poor people. It captures the ragtag character and bizarre outfit of the armed movements and militia all over the continent.

2 Paul Collier *et al* have made no attempt to examine the dynamics and composition of any rebel movement.

3 This is probably true of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda and possibly of the fighters in Western Sudan.

4 Paul Collier and his collaborators in the World Bank-sponsored research project are notorious for repeating the same argument in different publications with absolutely no new information. Neither Collier nor any of his associates have studied or tried to understand any rebel movement anywhere in the world. See, for instance, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler,' Greed and Grievance in Civil War'. World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 2355 (2001), 32pp.

5 In Collier's "Economic causes of civil conflict and their implications for policy", we learn that "the rebel leader was offered and accepted the vice-presidency of the country.....He had one further demand, which once conceded, produced (temporary) settlement. His demand was to be the Minister of Mining." Sankoh was never offered the vice-presidency or the ministry of mines. He was made Chairman of the Mineral Resources Commission with the protocol status of Vice-President!

6 Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL), From Cpl. Foday S. Sankoh, Leader, RUF/SL to Brother Mohamed Talibi, Libyan Arab Peoples Jamahiriyya, Accra, Ghana, dated 26 June 1996.

7 Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, From Cpl. Foday S. Sankoh, Leader, RUF/SL, Abidjan, La Cote d'Ivoire to Brother Mohamed Talibi, Peoples Bureau of Libyan Arab Peoples Jamahiriya, Accra, Ghana, 4 December, 1996.

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Slow Death in the Niger Delta

Sanya Osha

Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil
by Ike Okonta and Oro

In order to understand the various ramifications of the Ogoni crisis, it is necessary to track how the combination of local and global political violence unleashed the peculiar brew that has transformed in ecological terms not only Ogoniland but the Niger Delta as a whole. It is the mix of local and global terror that created the volatile situation that affects the entire region. The expansion of capital, to a large extent, must be blamed for the various forms of destruction affecting the Niger Delta. We are often reminded that "the Niger Delta has substantial oil and gas reserves. Oil mined in the area accounts for 95 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings and about one-fourth of Gross Domestic Product" (p. 18). It is necessary to provide various interpretations for political terror in relation to the crisis in the Niger Delta. In order to do so, I will address Ike Okonta and Oronto-Douglas's study of the ecological crisis in the Niger Delta and suggest ways in which it can be construed theoretically. I shall also address broader phenomenologies of political violence which their study does not completely foreground even though it provides excellent descriptions of gross governmental corruption and the duplicity of multinational capital.

In this instance, there are two main ways to imagine and interpret the kind of political violence one has in mind. The first will be to analyse the political violence caused by multinational capital and the second, the violence endangered by the postcolonial state. In this regard, Shell is the biggest oil corporation operating in the Niger Delta. Before the discovery of oil, we will recall that the region was the most significant palm oil exporting zone in Africa. The palm oil exporting business created an opportunity for the beginning of colonial relations that were essentially driven by the expansion of global capital. George Goldie Taubman, a British merchant, was instrumental to the making of modern Nigeria and we are informed that he "embarked on trading practices that cut off the once flourishing Delta ports from the outside world which plunged the populace into unprecedented penury from which it has never been able to recover" (p. 13).

When the indigenous traders of the region revolted against the economic blockage, "the Consul General of the newly established Niger Coast Protectorate sent a naval force to Nembe Creek, attacked the town, and razed it to the ground. Two thousand unarmed people, mostly women and children, were murdered" (p. 14). The point is, economic factors were the primary reasons for the British incursion and subjugation of the geographical space that came to be known as Nigeria. Indeed, "Nigeria was created by British merchants and soldiers of fortune primarily to serve the mother country's interests as nineteenth-century capitalism entered the stage of imperialism, and desired even more sources of cheap raw material and also new markets for its products" (p. 27).

The violence that began in the Niger Delta at the dawn of colonialism worsened in the postcolonial era when petroleum was discovered. As such "oil is the stuff of contemporary Nigerian politics, and the Niger Delta is the field on which the vicious battle to control this money spinner is waged. The civil war that raged between the breakaway Eastern Region and the rest of the country from July 1967 to January 1970 was not so much a war to maintain the unity and integrity of the country […] as a desperate gambit by the federal government to win back the oil fields of the Niger Delta from Biafra" (p. 24). This argument was also made by Ken Saro-Wiwa, the famous Nigerian author and environmentalist who was hanged alongside eight other Ogoni indigenes by the Abacha military junta. After the defeat of Biafra by the federal forces, a process of internal colonization commenced which has not been reversed.

This particular form of political violence was part of the strategy to maintain the "peripheral-capitalist structure of the economy" of Nigeria. Accordingly, the concept of the rentier state has been applied to the country:

> Terisa Turner has applied Ruth First's concept of the "Rentier State" to Nigeria's post-civil-war political economy, pointing out that the country is sustained not by what it produces, but on "rent" on production: here, the oil industry, where investments, production, marketing, and sundry expertise are completely dominated by multinational corporations that simply pay taxes and royalties to the state. Thus the entire state apparatus becomes a commodity for rent to the highest bidder, a bizarre bazaar presided over by a "commercial triangle" of state officials, local middlemen, and foreign suppliers. This group cannot thrive outside the state political economy, which partly explains the dizzying succession of military coups and electoral frauds the country has been afflicted with since independence. State power is everything, and to be without power is to be condemned to unremitting poverty" (p. 29).

As the oil based economy grew so did governmental corruption. As Okonta and Oronto-Douglas point out, "everybody wanted a piece of the action, not least British Aerospace, which concluded a controversial £22 million ($35 million) kickback deal with Nigerian government officials in order to secure a contract for the supply of eighteen Jaguar ground-attack fighters worth £300 million ($480 million). It was in fact the 'Jaguar deal' that finally pushed junior military officers to demand an end to the Second Republic and subsequently brought General Muhammadu Buhari to power after a military coup in December 1983" (p. 30). By the time, Buhari took over the reins of power, "twenty percent of the nation's oil was being smuggled out of the country" (p. 30). The IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) did the rest of the economic damage. In the mid eighties, 44 percent of Nigeria's entire export earnings was being used to reduce its debt dependenc" (p. 30).

As the economic downturn continued, oil producing communities in the Niger Delta agitated for better treatment from the federal government and the multinational oil concerns. In response to these agitations, the Babangida regime set up an agency, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1993 "with the responsibility of monitoring and managing ecological problems associated with the production and exploitation activities of the oil companies. It was also expected to act as mediator between them and the communities when problems arose" (p. 33).

However, OMPADEC as an agency to improve the conditions in the oil producing areas was a woeful failure under both the Babangida and Abacha regimes. For instance, three years after it commenced operations, OMPADEC had committed itself to projects worth $500 million. Interestingly, the bulk of money paid out for projects "completed" was to contractors whose addresses could not be traced. When Eric Opia, head of the panel set up by the Abacha junta to probe Horsfall, was appointed Sole Administrator in his place, he proceeded to loot OMPADEC in an even more brazen fashion. By September 1998, when he was kicked out for "gross financial misappropriation," Opia had embezzled some $200 million set aside for the development of the impoverished communities of the Niger Delta (p. 35). Perhaps the failure of the agency is to be expected since it was not properly equipped to carry out its functions. A World Bank team that studied the workings of the agency in 1995 discovered that "(1) there was no emphasis on environmentally sustainable development; (2) the commission did not have the requisite personnel to enable it to meet its ecological mandate; (3) there was an absence of long-term planning; (4) there was little or no project assessment, and where projects were initiated, maintenance requirements were not built into them; and (5) there was no integrated approach to development planning, which should have involved the local communities and other government agencies in the area" (p. 35).

The problem of corruption was not just limited to OMPADEC. In fact, it had assumed national proportions and has not really subsided since then. Babangida started the practice of billion dollar embezzlements. The Pius Okigbo panel that looked into the (mis)use of funds that accrued to the national treasury as a result of the Gulf Oil crisis of 1990-91 revealed that "between September 1988 and June 1994, $ 12.2 billion of the $12.4 billion [in the dedicated accounts] was liquidated in less than six years…they were spent on what could neither be adjudged genuine high priority nor truly regenerative investment; neither the President nor the Central Bank Governor accounted to anyone for these massive extra-budgetary expenditures…" (pp. 36-37, citing Pius Okigbo). In view of this scale of brigandage, Okonta and Oronto-Douglas point out "the only legacy that Ibrahim Babangida bequeathed to Nigerians before he was removed from office was the democratization of corruption and the corruption of democracy" (pp. 36-37). There is certainly a lot of truth in this assessment. Sani Abacha was no better. In fact, in some ways he was worse. For example, at the time of his death in June 1998, Nigeria had over eight thousand prisoners in its prisons. Also, in less than five years, Abacha and his henchmen had looted $10 billion from the national treasury. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who took over from Abacha and who handled over to the democratic dispensation of Olusegun Obasanjo, is also heavily tainted by the scourge of corruption. It is noted that "Abubakar awarded to himself, the disgraced former Head of State Ibrahim Babangida, and a handful of senior generals and business associates - including the ubiquitous Gilbert Chagouri - eleven oil exploration blocks and eight oil-lifting contracts worth billions of dollars. Then the generals turned their attention to the country's foreign reserves. In the short space of three months - between the end of December 1998 and the end of March 1999 - $2.7 billion had vanished from the national coffers" (p. 40).

So both the governments that set up organisations to address the problems of oil-producing regions as well as the organisations themselves were riddled with corruption. Even the Petroleum (Special) Task Force (PTF) that was established in 1995 with the supposedly upright Muhammadu Buhari, a former Head of State, at its helm has been "accused of nepotism and financial recklessness" (p. 38). Successive governments of Nigeria have generally not acted responsibly to its citizenry as a whole, let alone the oil-producing regions. In pursuing their narrow interests they have created criminal conditions of chaos and neglect in the Niger Delta. After the failures of OMPADEC and the PTF, the post-Abacha democratic dispensation set up the Niger Delta Development Commission to address the needs of the oil-producing communities just like its predecessors had done. It remains to be seen how successful this organisation would become. Indeed, it was set up within a context of extreme politicisation and strife so it is likely to be only more marginally successful that its predecessors.

Shell, the multinational oil company, does not have an enviable record in the Niger Delta and within human rights circles. For instance, it has been revealed that Shell collaborated with the apartheid regime in South Africa: "Shell's business interests in the country date back to the 1920s. The company has always maintained a cozy relationship with Afrikaner merchants in South Africa. Today the conglomerate owns 50-percent stake in Abecol, asphalt manufacturing firm, and another 50-percent holding in the controversial Rietspruit open-cast mine in the Transvaal. Shell also owns over eight hundred gas stations in the country" (p. 48). It has also been pointed out that Shell's hands in the hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa are not all together clean:

> It is the measure of how powerful Shell has become in Nigeria and the extent to which its business interests had merged with the designs of one of the most brutal and corrupt regimes in the world that Dr. Owens Wiwa, brother of the environmentalist, told journalists he had a meeting with the former managing director, Brian Anderson, in his home in Lagos in May 1995, and that Anderson said he could effect Ken Saro-Wiwa's release from detention but would only do so if MOSOP [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People] called off its international campaign against his company (p. 48).

There are also policemen specially assigned to provide security for the company's operations in Nigeria. Their duties include providing administrative assistance, intelligence and surveillance operations and supervision of the armories (p. 49). This collaboration with armed personnel was evident in September 1993 when "over a thousand Ogoni were killed in the villages of Eaken, Gwara, and Kenwigbara. An estimated twenty thousand more were rendered homeless" (p. 125). In fact, it is claimed that Shell officials met with senior military men and security operatives over plans to exterminate the Ogoni.

The amount of damage the company's operations does to Nigeria is quite enormous. The Niger Delta used to be a region blessed with wildlife and it is claimed that "it has more freshwater fish species than any other coastal system in West Africa" (p. 63). Furthermore, "the World Bank has drawn attention to its importance as home to a great variety of threatened coastal and estuarine fauna and

flora, and to the need for preservation of the biodiversity of the area because of its rich biological resources" (p. 63). However, it is unlikely that the biodiversity of the region would be preserved due to fact that the company is "one of the biggest contributors to global warming" (p. 67). Indeed some of the damage already done cannot be undone: "approximately twenty-two square miles of mangrove has been cut by Shell in its Eastern division alone in the course of its seismic operations and a considerable amount of fauna and flora have been destroyed, expelled, or damaged beyond repair during the period" (p. 69). Bush pig, iguana, monkeys (some rare) have had to flee the destroyed and polluted forests. Some species have become extinct. Acid rains corrode not only zinc roofing but also contribute to the destruction of fauna and flora.

Creeks and swamps are not left out of the relentless assault:

> In the course of separating the oil from water, Shell officials use chemicals to induce settlement in the tanks. The end product of this separation process is thick, oily sludge which combines with firefighting chemicals like Halon, already in the tank, to form a potent mixture. This hazardous substance is then discharged into the swamps and rivers. The Bonny River estuary, the swamps around Forcados, and the Warri River near Ughelli, where Shell discharges its production water, have been contaminated after nearly four decades of receiving this cocktail of dissolved and dispersed hydrocarbons, sludge, and fighting agents (p. 87).

The above description gives a picture of what life is like in the rural areas. In major cities such as Port Harcourt, the politics of oil production has also affected the manner and quality of life as "the poor majority are banished to the sprawling waterfront slums and the other ghettos where there is no electricity, water supply, or sanitation facilities. Here also, refuse collection and dumping is inefficient and badly managed, and waste dumps have taken over whole streets, vying with human beings for space" (p. 192). Also, in cities such as Warri and Port Harcourt, "armed robbery, hooliganism, prostitution, and sudden, seemingly inexplicable explosions of street violence have become a way of life" (p. 192). Okonta and Douglas claim that Shell practices ecological racism, as the standards the company applies in Western nations are much better than what the Niger Delta receives.

In order to cover up the violence of its activities, Shell has had to resort to spin-doctoring. The authors write: "Shell has found common cause with the trinity of Andrew Neil, former editor of the London *Sunday Times*; Donu Kogbara, another journalist, who is, incidentally, Saro-Wiwa's niece; and Richard D. North, the ex-*Independent* journalist whose controversial book, *Life on a Modern Planet: A Manifesto for Progress*, is a battering ram of the resurgent right-wing attack on the environmental movement in the United Kingdom" (p. 172).

The book is a graphic account of how global capital in collaboration with local power unleashes terror on the poor, of how it destroys human beings and the environment and also how it erects elaborate mechanisms to hide the extent and gravity of its violence. It not only destroys human lives but constructs elaborate lies to conceal from history the extent of its destructive activities. Okonta and Douglas offer a vivid description of the modes of collaboration between Shell and the Nigerian ruling class in undermining important facets of Nigerian life. There are detailed explanations of instances of corruption and charges of ecological racism. A sentence sums up the main argument of the book: "the oil-producing minorities of the Niger Delta have become living carrion on which successive regimes in Nigeria and their foreign collaborators, like insatiable vultures, have feasted, are still feasting, without letup (p. 115).

On the whole, the book presents an angry and graphic picture of life being slowly destroyed in the Niger Delta without bothering to provide useful theoretical insights for more clues into the nature of this particular kind of structural and political violence. The nature of this kind of violence indeed has global dimensions and can be better understood via numerous critiques of neo-liberalism. Such necessary critiques of neo-liberalism are absent from the book. Okonta and Douglas write as activists and sometimes allow their anger to get the better of them. Nonetheless, their book remains one of the most engaging accounts of systematic ecological destruction available.

Pentecostal Hubris as Parable for the Theatre

Bate Besong

The Convert
by Francis Nyamnjoh
Mmegi Publishing House, 2003, 44pp, ISBN 99912-525-0-9

Francis B. Nyamnjoh's academic and creative itinerary has embraced a wide range of subjects and moods. The topography of *Mind Searching* (Kucena 1991) and its sequel, *The Disillusioned African* (Nooremac Press 1995), for instance, fundamentally explore fragmented landscapes in which ethnic consciousness, bigotry, exclusivist sentiments and narrow-minded irredentism have become the determinants of an evolving material culture.

These abnormalities have given rise to the institutional and systemic defacements ingrained in the aberrant mode of national intercourse and further adumbrated by sham-democratization circuses that have brought massive concussions to the aboriginal, neo-colonial Cameroonian state structure. The lack of vision of successive francophone leaders and their legendary obduracy to utilize the gifts and gains of Re-Unification have rendered the federation artificial in structure and content.[1] Clearly, then, the idealism of Re-Unification has been imprisoned in an imploding time-capsule.

Like most expository prose writers and socio-cultural activists, Nyamnjoh has tried to observe, as closely and objectively as possible, the character, the patterns, and dynamics of the evolution of the killer-incisors of the Gaullist power structure in Cameroonian politics; to revisit old ideas and beliefs in line with new findings and realities in his polemical and scholarly writings.[2] By targeting the mediocre calibre of the national bourgeoisie emerging from the womb of the Federal behemoth since 1972, the satirical novelist of *Mind Searching* and *The Disillusioned African*, in true caricatural frenzy, was taking a poke at the idiocy of political leadership (francophone and anglophone) in which the nation's historical journey has been one of constant omissions and ineffectualites.

But, although the combative and utilitarian aspects of these novels were recognized and identified, *Mind Searching* and *The Disillusioned African* manifest no ideological commitment. At the core of the implicit philosophy of Nyamnjoh's noves is the literary manifesto that bourgeois society has not only got to liberate itself and its productive powers from prebendal hubris and distortion, it also has to liberate these same productive capacities from their present prostration.

Conflict, which by its modus operandi suggests contrast, is important to Nyamnjoh's social novels; but it is even more vital to the unity of dramatic structure of *The Convert*, for it reinforces the exploration of the complex and ambiguous relationship between reality and illusion in the theatre.

In *The Convert* - set in Gaborone, Botswana - Nyamnjoh is fascinated with the ethically complex issue of Christian fundamentalism. The preoccupations of members of the Ultimate Church of Christ for better or worse has been the focus of his play.

Whereas in *Mind Searching* and *The Disillusioned African*, the plot is *told*, in *The Convert* it develops before the eyes and ears of the audience with a sense of *now-ness*. The need stemming from performance has affected plot structure in that it has obviously regulated the playwright's arrangement and grouping of his characters and the actions arising thereform. The social problems and psychological pressures which give rise to the born-again phenomenon and the strong addiction of fundamentalist, freak religions are given full rein in *The Convert*.

The fictional Ultimate Church of Christ provides a window through which to appraise the explosion of Pentecostal belief system tapping into the deep veins of human desperation. And, since people in the theatre often define themselves by the way they handle challenge and respond to life, their hopes, their fears and their foibles, it is not surprising that *The Convert* would spring from a plot abounding with so much tension and pathos and containing so many memorable scenes of religious angst and vivid eschatological images of suffering.

Nyamnjoh's play begins with an imbalance of forces resulting in the loss of equilibrium by the tragic heroine, Charity, who seems to have repudiated material goods and sensual pleasures. The uniqueness of the drama as a performed literary art has a profound impact on structure and meaning:

> CHARITY: I abused my flesh in every way as I thought myself queen of the world. I smoked cannabis, downed beer, took strong drinks, Visited medicine men and adorned myself with charms and amulets; I bought the latest dresses in fashion and chased after men to make money. As the most famous girl in town, I drove in the latest cars. Mercedes, BMW, Pajero, Hyundai, you name them. I frequented the best chicken parlours and sampled the thickest wallets in hotels of exceeding comfort. Nothing ever pricked my conscience that what I did was wrong. For I was always in time to confess my sins on Saturday in preparation for Sunday mass, where I was a permanent and privileged communicant. For I knew the priests with some of whom I smiled deep.
>
> CHORUS: The Devil at work. What a devious creature.
>
> CHARITY: Then, most suddenly, most unexpectedly, I began to Reap what I sowed. My beauty began to wilt. I had used bleaching creams without knowing of their ugly and harmful side effects. I had hopped into bed with Tom, Dick and Harry, paying scant attention to the ills of lust. Fear took hold of me. But that was just the beginning. I failed my finalsin college and my parents died of grief. My *sugar daddies* fled when my beauty retired. For a year or two I was drained by pain, humbled by hunger and mastered by fear. But then came a glimmer of hope from an angle I least expected
>
> CHORUS: Alleluia, Praise the Lord.
>
> CHARITY: Jesus Christ offered me his bosom and tendered me the key to his heavenly mansion. I seized it with vigour and joy; for I thought I was lost. But I had been found. May the Lord be praised (*The Convert*, 12, 13)

The Convert has its internal laws and its own framework, which gives it shape, strength and meaning. There is a deep, engaging humanism that pervades Nyamnjoh's play but it is an emblematic humanism; to speak analogously, of the Aeschylean colouration.

Perspective in the drama is derived from the events, the conflicts and the characters involved in them, all of which have been conveyed by dialogues and non-verbal action of the dramatis personae. The playwright's blend of styles - satiric commentary, tense confrontation, and heightened ritualistic comments - challenge not only audiences but production teams as well.

In more technical terms, Nyamnjoh has paid attention to plot, character and theme. His use of choric elements, stage objects, nightmare visions, mimes and gestures in the theatre to give form to his social vision has been most effective

The theatre does not pretend to be a factual correspondence to human nature and norms. Within the cosmology of *The Convert* itself, we are primarily and unremittingly concerned with the truth of coherence, with how the parts cohere into a total, meaningful pattern. That is the truest epiphany of the theatre as a *LIE*.

Notes

1 See Richard Joseph, *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadou Ahidjo* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing House, 1978) and Piet Konings and Francis Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity: A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon,* vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

2 See ibid. and Francis Nyamnjoh, "Cameroon: A country united by ethnic ambition and difference," *African Affairs,* Vol. 98, No. 390 (1999), 1010-108.

Qu'est-ce que la Postcolonie? Contribution à un débat francophone trop afrocentré

Abou B.Bamba

«On ne sort pas indemne d'un siècle d'africanisme, même traversé de fécondes remises en causes successives. »

Olivier Barlet, *Africultures*, [1] 28

Cet essai n'a rien d'une élaboration philosophique. Même si la question du titre fait songer à un Kant du « Was ist Aufklärung ? », un Sartre de *Qu'est-ce la littérature ?* ou encore à un Foucault de « Qu'est-ce que les lumières? ». Il a moins la prétention d'être un exercice théorique. Encore que les discussions sur la postcolonialité ne le sont guère que très rarement. Plutôt, ce texte est la contribution d'un américaniste, observateur de surcroît des sociétés et espaces publics franco-africains de l'après Deuxième Guerre mondiale ; contribution à un débat initié—il y a quelques temps déjà, par A. Waberi dans la revue *Notre librairie.*[1] De quoi s'agit-il ? Dans sa tentative de caractérisation des écrivains africains francophones, l'écrivain *cum* critique littéraire djiboutien notait à propos de ce qu'il croit être la dernière génération de ces auteurs—ceux qu'il nomme les « enfants de la postcolonie »:

> C'est toujours une gageure que de prétendre définir un phénomène générationnel et une école littéraire. À défaut d'avoir la science infuse, nous nous contenterons de relever quelques traits communs à une vingtaine d'écrivains africains vivants pour la plupart en France. Est-ce suffisant pour parler d'une véritable génération ? Il est difficile d'être catégorique, mais nous inclinons à penser qu'il y a là quelque chose de nouveau et susceptible d'attirer l'œil du critique. Pour le reste, le débat ne fait que commencer (Waberi 1998:11).

Plus loin, Waberi explicite sa pensée lorsqu'il suggère que ce nouveau groupe d'écrivains africains auquel lui-même appartient d'ailleurs pourrait être appelé les « Franco-quelque chose » (Waberi 1998:12). Par là, le romancier djiboutien voulait insister sur l'*identité-à-trait-d'union* de nombre d'auteurs appartenant à la dernière génération des écrivains francophones africains.

Il est difficile, voire prétentieux, de vouloir résumer par le biais de quelques mots la contribution de Waberi, qui d'ailleurs opère sur un mode suggestif. Pour un homme de lettres, quoi de plus normal ! Mais, à l'instar d'autres intellectuels africains qui ont réfléchi sur la thématique postcoloniale, l'écrivain paraît établir un rapport *essentiel* entre postcolonialité, les territoires anciennement colonisés, les cultures et les artistes issus de ces territoires. Chez lui, comme chez A. Mbembé par exemple, l'événement postcolonial semble alors se donner comme « l'ensemble des choses qui sont arrivées à l'Africain depuis les indépendances » (Mbembé 1991:92, 2000). N'est-ce pas là tomber dans le réductionnisme ? La postcolonialité se résumerait-elle à la seule condition des ex-colonisés? Qu'en est-il des ex-colons et leurs métropoles ? Le reste de cet article tentera d'étayer ces questions certes rhétoriques mais combien cruciales pour quiconque veut comprendre un événement aussi rétif que le fait postcolonial. Pour ce faire, je partirai d'abord d'une histoire étymologique/épistémologique du concept de colonisation pour aboutir sur les images éclatées de la postcolonie —vue comme un espace géo-sociologique non-cristallisé traversé par plusieurs temporalités.

De la colonisation : la colonie, les colons et les colonisés

> La colonisation a eu dans l'histoire des sociétés humaines un rôle immense. C'est principalement par elle que les races les mieux douées ont prévalu, soit en éliminant les autres, soit en se les subordonnant. Bien qu'on puisse très justement appliquer le mot de colonisation à l'expansion méthodique des Chinois dans l'Asie orientale, des Russes dans l'Asie occidentale, on a surtout réservé ce nom à la fondation de cités ou de groupes sociaux relativement éloignés de la métropole et nettement séparés d'elle ; c'est par mer que se sont accomplies la plupart des expéditions coloniales depuis trois mille années.

C'est par ces mots que *La Grande encyclopédie* introduit son article sur la colonisation. Malgré son relent ethnocentrique, cette note liminaire a le mérite d'insister sur le caractère multiséculaire du phénomène colonial. Mais le terme de colonisation a une histoire plutôt récente. Car jusqu'au XIVe siècle, l'on ne l'utilise guère en français. Comme le confirme l'*Encyclopédie universalis*, ce sont « les mots colonie et colon [qui] sont utilisés. » Aussi, il est peut-être judicieux de chercher à définir ces termes. Le *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage François* (1877) nous enseigne que l'on appelait autrefois colon quelqu'un qui a « cultivé et ensemencé la terre. » En ce sens, un colon était simplement un cultivateur. Si cette définition est proche du latin *colere*, elle s'avère toutefois partielle. Et pour cause : si à l'origine tout colon est cultivateur, tout cultivateur n'est pas pour autant colon.

Pour compléter donc cette première définition, l'on doit se référer au deuxième sens que nous propose *Le trésor de la langue française* qui définit le colon comme « celui qui a quitté son pays pour aller occuper, défricher, cultiver une terre de colonisation. » Voila qui éclaire un peu plus. En effet, en mettant en relief le fait de « quitte[r] son pays pour aller … », cette caractérisation a l'avantage de nous rappeler que la colonisation suppose, avant tout, un mouvement de personnes vers un pays, un territoire ou une contrée qui n'est pas originairement la leur. De ce fait, la définition du *Trésor de la langue française* nous rétablit le lien ontologique entre colonisation et émigration. Mais pas n'importe quelle émigration nous enjoint un A. Girault, chauvin qui précisait déjà à la fin du XIX[e] siècle que:

> Pour que l'on puisse parler de colonisation, il faut faire intervenir la réponse à cette question : D'où viennent et où vont les émigrants ? Il faut supposer des émigrants sortis d'un pays civilisé et allant s'établir, soit sur une côte inhabitée, soit sur un territoire occupé par une population sauvage ou tout au moins à demi-sauvage, mais qui, dans tous les cas, n'a pu s'élever toute seule jusqu'à la civilisation. On conçoit alors, de la part de ces émigrants, une double action civilisatrice s'exerçant à la fois sur les choses et sur les hommes (Girault 1907:2-3).

Des paroles qui feront certes sourire plus d'un chercheur contemporain travaillant sur les questions coloniales. Mais nombreux sont ceux d'entre eux qui continuent à se complaire dans l'écriture d'une histoire *unisituée* de la colonisation. C'est que la narration du passé colonial a longtemps été dominée par le grand récit de l'homme blanc, héros/héraut d'une civilisation émancipatrice pour le bonheur des indigènes *vivant outre-mer*, et donc *en colonie*. À cette manière européocentriste d'écrire l'histoire de la colonisation ont succédé, depuis la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, les récits nationalistes et philo-nationalistes, qui cependant qu'ils décentrent le colon comme acteur premier de la scène coloniale, continuent à centrer la colonie comme le lieu par excellence où se joue le drame de la colonisation.

M. Diouf a montré quelles sont, dans le cas africain, les raisons qui expliquent cet état de fait. Avec l'historien sénégalais l'on peut dire certes que l'approche nationalisante rétablissait l'épaisseur actantielle (*agency*) des colonisés (Diouf 1999:10-14) [2]; mais écrire le fait colonial à partir de l'Afrique tout en excluant les métropoles des empires coloniaux, c'est là oublier l'aspect le plus saillant de la colonisation : son caractère à la fois *transcontinental*, *interactif* et *multisitué*. N'est-ce pas ce que nous suggérait déjà H. Brunschwig dans le premier numéro des *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* lorsqu'il définissait les colons comme « ceux qui s'expatrient pour aller cultiver des terres vacantes. Ils forment des *colonies qui restent en rapports plus ou moins étroits avec la métropole* » (Brunschwig 1960:44, c'est moi qui souligne). Ainsi donc, le fait colonial est un procès qui lie les métropoles des empires avec leurs divers outre-mers dans un rapport dynamique multilatéral. C'est, en tout cas, ce que montrent les travaux de R. Aldrich (1996), A. Conklin (1997), ou de F. Cooper et A. Stoler (1997). Dans le même registre, on pourrait évoquer le travail monumental mais controversé de J. Marseille (1984) sur les entreprises coloniales française ou encore les travaux de certains historiens des « sciences coloniales » (Petitjean 1996 ; Sibeud 2002) [3].

Mais c'est surtout dans les travaux dirigés par P. Blanchard et S. Lemaire (2003, 2004) que l'on se rend compte que le procès colonial n'était pas seulement un phénomène touchant les sphères de la haute politique en métropole, mais qu'un pan plus large de la société française a été refaçonné dans les rapports de l'Hexagone avec son outre-mer. Et ce en dépit du fait que la relation coloniale était une asymétrie globalement en faveur de la métropole ; en dépit, en effet, du fait que le drame colonial effectuait une relation dissymétrique qui se nourrissait régulièrement des nombreuses modalités de la violence impériale.

Ainsi, s'il est vrai que la colonisation a restructuré l'économie des pays colonisés (cf. pacte colonial, extraversion, etc.), s'il est tout aussi probable qu'elle a désarticulé la personnalité des colonisés (cf. indigénat, interdiction des langues locales, etc.), l'on devrait se rappeler aussi qu'elle a *interactivement* permis à certaines classes sociales métropolitaines de s'enrichir (cf. comptoirs commerciaux) ; et en exhibant l'indigène comme « l'autre absolu » (Mudimbe 1988, Mbembé 2000), elle a permis à d'autres de se rassurer de leur humanité mise en doute par une industrialisation aussi galopante que démoralisante. Vu sous cet angle, le succès des expositions coloniales en métropole ou des publicités métropolitaines mobilisant les indigènes acquiert une intelligibilité plus accrue.

Cette histoire du concept de colonisation, quoiqu'elle soit télescopée, aura suggéré qu'en tant que procès, la colonisation était d'abord un événement interactif ; un fait à la fois transcontinental et multisitué. En somme, elle était un processus bidirectionnel dans un univers asymétrique. Et dire cela, c'est rappeler que la rencontre coloniale a créé les cadres de l'émergence de nouvelles sociétés et cultures non seulement *branchées entre elles* mais aussi (et partiellement à cause de cela) poétiquement métissées. Toutefois si cette logique métisse était déjà à l'œuvre dans la « situation coloniale, » [4] elle le deviendra davantage, comme on le verra, après les indépendances lorsque colonies et métropole seront contraintes de signer devant le parterre international leur acte de divorce.

Logiques et Pratiques en Postcolonie : Images éclatées d'un Métissage

Le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est que la postcolonie est un espace non-cristallisé, un lieu où les pratiques sociales/sociétales ne sont pas *exclusivement* contrôlées par des États-nations fussent-ils autoritaires. Métaphoriquement, elle évoque ces univers aux contours fluides (*scapes*) dont parle A. Appadurai (1996) ou même les « contact zones » de Mary L. Pratt (1992). Mais un espace transnational singulièrement *in situ plurum*. Car elle est cette Afrique plurielle indocile que tente de réhabiliter A. Mbembé (1988); elle est cette nébuleuse franco-africaine que dénonce F.-X. Verschave (2003); elle est aussi cet espace humain habité par « ceux qui ne sont ni tout à fait dedans ni tout à fait dehors » dont parle un Waberi paraphrasant Salman Rushdie (Waberi 1998:15).

Plus concrètement, la postcolonie c'est le drame de ces pays africains qui tout en applaudissant le départ de la France (à la faveur des indépendances) ne peuvent concevoir leur destin hors de la Francophonie. Viol de l'imaginaire dénoncera A. Traoré (2002) dans un langage aussi militant qu'anti-colonialiste. La postcolonie, c'est cette langue bâtarde, et donc poétique, qu'exhibe A. Kourouma (1968) dans ses *Soleils des indépendances* ; elle est ce nouchi parlé dans les rues d'Abidjan, Bouaké, voire de Daloa. De fait, elle est cette prise d'initiatives et cette marge de manœuvre/autonomie dont se dotent les Africains aux fins de se réapproprier la France (son espace et sa culture) et au besoin la cannibaliser. On conviendra alors avec A. Meddeb (2000) et B. Mongo-Mboussa (2000) que certaines pratiques post-coloniales sont des efforts de décentrement de la France dans ses relations avec son ancien outre-mer.

Ainsi, s'il est évident que la logique sous-tendant certaines des pratiques post-coloniales est de maintenir la relation des Africains avec la France dans un rapport exécrable de type paternaliste, d'autres logiques cherchent à capaciter (au sens anglais de *empower*) ces « damnés de la terre » par le biais d'une reconnaissance de leur épaisseurs actantielles. Mais comme le suggèrent de plus en plus fortement un nombre croissant d'intellectuel(le)s, l'Afrique (ou même les anciennes colonies) n'est pas la scène unique où se joue le drame postcolonial. Il suffit de faire un tour dans un supermarché hexagonal pour s'en convaincre.

Plusieurs observateurs américains de la société/culture française ont longtemps re-

levé les paradoxes de cette autre postcolonie. Ainsi dans son *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, K. Ross (1996) montre que les soubresauts de la décolonisation avaient forcé la France à amorcer sa modernisation, et ce parce qu'elle était mue à la fois par un élan pour se distancier des indigènes (qu'une France de plus en plus marshallisée se les représentait comme sales) et une volonté de réinvestir les capitaux coloniaux en métropole. Cette thèse nous rappelle les propos d'un *insider* des ballets socio-politiques de la décolonisation, l'administrateur colonial Louis Sanmarco qui déclarait dans son mémoire que « Quand la métropole vit qu'allait se réaliser cette plus grande France, elle eut peur d'y être submergée, et préféra alors l'indépendance pour ses anciennes colonies – et pour elle-même » (Sanmarco 1983:14). Comment en pourrait-il être autrement ? Géographiquement, l'Hexagone n'était-il pas « que la vingt-troisième partie de l'Empire français … [cependant que] la France métropolitaine [avait] le plus grand territoire de l'Europe après la Russie ? » [5].

Ainsi la crainte d'une submersion de la métropole par les indigènes aurait donc motivé la rupture coloniale. En forçant la métaphore, on pourrait même dire que la peur d'un abâtardissement de la République et ses valeurs par l'invasion massive des « damnés de la terre » aura eu raison des dernières résistances d'un Charles de Gaulle rappelé *in extremis* en 1958 pour bâtir une V^e^ République à défaut de sauver la IV^e^ et son empire embrasé. C'est certainement pourquoi Sanmarco pense, entre autres, que la décolonisation ne doit pas être perçue comme un échec. Car de Gaulle « en fit un succès, et la séparation s'opéra dans l'amitié, le général assurant à la France un leadership incontesté » (Sanmarco 1983:14). Mais comme le notent Blanchard et Lemaire, « en réalisant cette décolonisation, de Gaulle se sépare surtout d'un héritage et tente de tourner une page de l'histoire de France sans véritablement mesurer la profondeur de son enracinement » (Blanchard & Lemaire 2004:29).

Blanchard et Lemaire n'avaient pas tort. Car le démantèlement de l'empire colonial n'a nullement signifié la fin des interactions à relent paternaliste entre la France et ses (anciens) indigènes. Bien au contraire ! Les accords de coopération signés entre Paris et de nombreuses capitales africaines en sont une preuve. Mais l'enracinement dont parlent Blanchard et Lemaire trouverait aussi sa confirmation dans l'immigration post-coloniale avec les risques supposés qu'elle fait peser sur la cohésion, voire la pureté d'une certaine république française. De fait, la présence en Hexagone d'immigrés provenant des anciennes possessions coloniales françaises ainsi que les politiques d'identité qu'elle alimente, démontrent que *la postcolonie, c'est aussi la France*. C'est ce que tentaient de montrer, il y a quelque temps, A. Hargreaves et M. McKinney (1997) dans leur ouvrage collectif sur les cultures post-coloniales en France. Plus explicitement, quand Salif Keita (1989) chante son « Nou pas bouger, » quand le Groupe Zebda (1995) psalmodie son « Le Bruit et l'odeur » sur le discours d'un Jacques Chirac plus lepéniste que le Front National, l'on doit penser immédiatement à la postcolonie et aux micropolitiques qui la nourrissent en France. On doit y songer encore plus en observant les « Indigènes de la République » et leurs politiques de la mémoire qui, tout en rappelant à la France qu'elle n'est plus *en* colonie, lui enjoint de ne pas oublier son passé colonial [6].

C'est peut-être dans le dernier ouvrage de l'américain H. Lebovics (2004) que l'on se rend compte de l'enracinement de ces pratiques postcoloniales, et surtout de leur caractère capillaire (cf. M. Foucault) et subtilement partagé en France. En effet, prenant la fin de l'empire comme son point de départ, Lebovics nous retrace le parcours de certains des administrateurs coloniaux de la France d'Outre-mer dont Emile Biasini, ancien administrateur en Afrique Equatoriale Française (AEF), qui deviendra un haut fonctionnaire dans l'administration française après les indépendances africaines. En suivant le parcours post-colonial de ce haut fonctionnaire, entre autres, l'historien américain montre comment les pratiques « coloniales » ont été remobilisées pour prolonger le regard disciplinaire de l'État dans les provinces hexagonales. (Et dire que la France voulait se prémunir de la submersion des indigènes des colonies). Il y a certes là une pratique éprouvée de jacobinisme, mais un jacobinisme à la sauce bien tropicale !

En guise de Conclusion

On conviendra que ces quelques lignes lancées ici comme en labour ne donnent pas toute sa valeur heuristique à cette notion aussi rétive que la postcolonie. Tel n'était pas d'ailleurs le but de cet essai. Plutôt, j'ai voulu interpeller sur un fait : le risque de rétrécir la portée du concept de postcolonie (et, partant, de rendre stérile tout le champ sémantique se rattachant à lui) à vouloir le cantonner exclusivement aux réalités des anciennes colonies après leur accession à la souveraineté nationale et internationale. Si l'on accepte que le procès de la colonisation soit fondé sur une « poétique relationnelle » (E. Glissant) qui liait les colonisés, les colons ainsi que diverses catégories sociales en métropole, on admettra alors que les événements post-coloniaux soient également des procès aussi métissés que multisitués. La postcolonie, en ce sens, c'est aussi bien les pays africains que les anciennes métropoles impériales, y compris la France. Plus généralement, la postcolonie c'est tous ces espaces hétérogènes où les mémoires de la situation coloniale continuent à structurer les désirs et les manières d'être, de vivre et d'habiter le monde des individus et des collectivités après l'effondrement des empires coloniaux [7].

Dire cela, c'est interpeller les africanistes francophones (surtout ceux et celles qui se considèrent comme des *postcolonial scholars*) afin qu'ils élargissent les contours de leur champ d'investigation. Car si l'on accepte *Le Roman d'un spahi* de Pierre Loti ou les nombreux récits de G. Simenon comme faisant partie de la littérature coloniale, pourquoi alors récuser *Les Nègres* ou *Les Paravents* de J. Genet, pourquoi ignorer *L'État sauvage* de Georges Conchon comme des littératures postcoloniales? Dans la même logique, pourquoi les études postcoloniales francophones ne devraient-elles pas s'intéresser à des institutions scientifiques telles que l'Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD, ex-ORSTOM) et faire une anthropologie de leurs pratiques épistémiques *en* France après les indépendances africaines ? Les européanistes américains, dans leurs travaux récents sur la France, ont ouvert des chantiers, il appartient peut-être aux africanistes des questions postcoloniales de leur emboîter le pas, de peur que leurs productions scientifiques ne restent piteusement unidimensionnelles.

Notes

1 *Notre librairie* 135 (Paris : Clef, septembre-décembre 1998).

2 C'est moi qui traduis *agency* par « épaisseur actantielle ». La référence à A. J. Greimas est évidente. Dans ce même élan, l'on pourrait parler aussi d'« épaisseur agentielle ». Tout en optant pour une telle glose, je suis conscient de l'existence d'autres traductions telles « agencivité » (Josée Tamiozzo), « marge d'autonomie » (Marianne G. Ainley), « agencéité » (Marie-France Labrecque). Mais compte tenu de la plasticité du concept d'*agency*, ces dernières s'avèrent partielles ou forcées.

3 Signalons que Sibeud fait une distinction entre une « science impériale » plus autonome vis-à-vis du politique et des « sciences coloniales » qui seraient « des sciences nouvelles […] explicitement et entièrement dévouées à la colonisation. » (cf. p. 275-76).

4 Si ce concept fait immanquablement référence à G. Balandier, son utilisation ici est plus large que l'acception balandiérienne. Car la « situation coloniale » recouvre dans le présent essai un espace et des pratiques tant en colonie qu'en métropole.

5 Paul Reynaud, cité in Blanchard & Lemaire 2004:5.

6 « Nous sommes les indigènes de la République !... » (Appel pour les assises de l'anti-colonialisme post-colonial) in http://lmsi.net/article.php3?id_article=336, [accédé le 18 mai 2005]. Voir aussi http://toutesegaux.free.fr/article.php3?id_article=90, [accédé le 18 mai 2005] ou encore http://oumma.com/petition-colonisation.php3?id_article=1355, [accédé le 18 mai 2005].

7 Même s'il ne le réclame guère, je pense au travail de Jean-Pierre Dozon (2003) qui suggère admirablement une telle thèse. Bien sur, il va sans dire que la mémoire de la colonisation *n'est pas le seul paramètre* qui façonne les individus après l'effondrement des empires.

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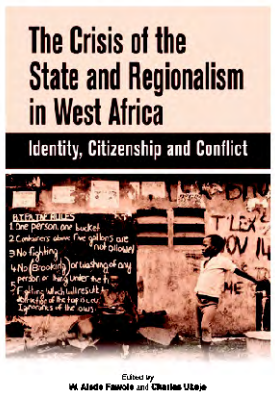
The Crisis of the State and Regionalism in West Africa: Identity, Citizenship and Conflict

Edited by
W. Alade Fawole and Charles Ukeje



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'A new generation of West African social scientists takes on a new generation of postcolonial problems and possibilities – transitional justice, regional integration and collective security, refugee flows, and the complex interplay of local identities, state institutions and global forces. Theoretically informed and publicly engaged scholarship!'
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'This volume on a deeply troubled yet blessed part of Africa weaves together a complex interface of history, democracy, identity, conflict and reconciliation in the West African sub-region. Refreshingly illuminating in theoretical and empirical depth, the book addresses cutting edge precepts, processes and prospects provoked by citizenship, identity politics and conflict in the often unpredictable search for democracy that works. An indispensable addition to the libraries of those concerned about the future of the state in contemporary West Africa'.
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West Africa, with its large number of mini-states, has suffered more political misfortunes than any other sub-region of Africa. No doubt, the glaring artificiality of the post-colonial state, coupled with the failure of the local ruling elites to rise above the limitations of their provenance, is to blame for the myriad crises. The sub-region has been plagued by one-party authoritarianism, violent coups and military dictatorship, leading to the progressive alienation of the people from the state, and thus raising the critical issues of identity and citizenship which are at the base of political crisis and conflict. Many decades after independence, the sub-region continues to grapple with the problems of intra-state conflict, political instability, state failure and outright collapse, thus calling into question the viability and survivability of the Westphalian state model in Africa. Collectively, West African states are still in search of democratic nationhood.

The book critically interrogates the internal dimensions of the identity and citizenship conflicts at the root of state crisis and the steps so far taken to tackle them. Scholars and students of contemporary African politics and development as well as policy makers should find much of relevance in this well researched volume.

W. Alade Fawole is currently a professor in the Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from George Washington University, USA. He specializes in Nigerian politics and foreign policy, an area in which he has published a number of books.

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'LUSOFONIA' EM ÁFRICA
História, Democracia e Integração Africana

Teresa Cruz e Silva, Manuel G. Mendes de Araújo, e Carlos Cardoso (orgs.)

ISBN: 2-86978-174-1
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A obra traz importantes reflexões teóricas sobre a temática "lusofonia", ou sobre redes que tomando como identidade a língua Portuguesa, ultrapassam o continente Africano. Ela contém ainda inquietações teóricas sobre o conceito de renda, questionando a sua pertinência para a análise dos contextos africanos, e questões voltadas para o desenvolvimento, que exemplificam como o habitat, o território, a ecotécnica são corolários sistémicos para um desenvolvimento ecologicamente sustentado a que se devem aliar novos comportamentos e atitudes solidárias consentâneas com as aspirações da justiça social.
Ana Maria Loforte, Departamento de Antropologia e Arqueologia, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, Moçambique.

O desafio deste livro não é de subsumir numa visão dominante as reflexões expostas nesta assembleia de estudiosos, mas proporcionar uma confluência onde várias correntes de pensamentos se misturem e criem um fluxo maior, rico de contribuições vindas de diferentes quadrantes. Trata-se de um grande desafio, pois o encontro de correntes numa confluência não se faz sem turbulências. No leito da corrente maior criada pela confluência destas pesquisas e reflexões, sobrenadam quatro conceitos que servem de balizas para a navegação nesta obra: mutação, transição, espaço e fronteira. Estes quatro conceitos operam finalmente como dois binómios, mutação/transição e espaço/fronteira, que podem ser comparados às luminescências alternadas dos faróis que orientam toda a navegação no mar dos conhecimentos, à procura do bom porto.
Fafali Koudawo, INEP/UCB, Bissau, Guine-Bissau

Nascido no âmbito da Iniciativa Lusófona do CODESRIA e na sequência do simpósio internacional que decorreu sob o mesmo lema, 'Lusofonia' em África: História, Democracia e Integração Africana reune trabalhos de um conjunto de 14 autores de diferentes disciplinas de Ciências Sociais. A obra desconstrói e desmistifica o conceito de 'lusofonia' através de uma análise rigorosa das identidades e diferenças económicas, políticas e culturais que caracterizam os cinco países. Os autores fazem uma incursão a aspectos tão variados como o colonialismo, as lutas pela libertação nacional e o consequente desabrochar de novos regimes políticos no período pós-independência, as transições económicas e políticas que marcaram estes países desde as economias centralizadas e as tentativas de construção de sistemas políticos de tipo socialista. São igualmente analisados a introdução de economias neo-liberais, de sistemas multipartidários e a construção de sistemas democráticos, sem descurar os casos permeados por situações de conflito. 'Lusofonia em Africa...' representa assim um espaço em que se revisita os temas referidos, expondo-os aos novos desafios das mutações económicas, sociais e políticas.

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Pourquoi l'Afrique meurt

Philemon Muamba Mumbunda

«Negrologie, pourquoi L'Afrique meurt»
par Stephen Smith

« C'est seulement au cours de cette rédaction que j'ai découvert que le journalisme, même spécialisé, ne prépare guère à répondre aux questions essentielles » Avant-propos de l'auteur.

Si tel est le cas, alors pourquoi écrire un ouvrage quand il sait qu'il ne peut pas répondre à la question de savoir pourquoi l'Afrique meurt. Cette lucidité aurait pu l'aider à nuancer certaines de ses affirmations du fait que son analyse concerne les 10 dernières années, c'est-à-dire à partir du drame rwandais et de la fin de l'apartheid.

Le mérite de cet ouvrage est d'avoir décrit beaucoup des faits qui sont exacts sur l'Afrique (la question de la religion « chapitre 8) et le « chapitre 10) sur l'Afrique du Sud) même si il y a des affirmations gratuites comme la détention d'un jet privé par le pasteur Kutino en R.D.Congo.

Nous avons eu à lire aussi deux critiques sur le même ouvrage :

- http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/livre/Afrique/introduction/
- chronique : l'Afrique menacée par les « négrologues », *nouvel Afrique-Asie,* février 2004.

Certaines critiques sont fondées, mais ne laissent pas place à une appréciation positive quand il le faut sur une ou l'autre partie de l'ouvrage. Pour ne pas tomber dans le même piège, nous allons recenser chapitre après chapitre.

Ce travail aura deux points : il s'agit de la critique de l'ouvrage et de notre point de vue constituant la conclusion (cri d'espoir). Cet avant-propos nous sert d'introduction à ce travail. Cette critique partira de l'introduction de l'ouvrage, du premier jusqu'au dixième chapitre. Mais, ne pouvant pas surcharger l'article, il sera mentionné par point en lettre alphabétique.

Introduction

Le paysage peint par monsieur Smith est exact mais certaines phrases ne nous renseignent pas sur leurs contenus, comme :

-« oui, heureusement le cadavre bouge encore ». Un cadavre ne bouge pas parce qu'il n'a plus de vie en lui. Il ajoute « l'Afrique est déjà morte comme le faisait remarquer John Keynes, à long terme, nous seront tous morts ». Mais l'Europe dont parler Keynes est en vie et prospère. Pourquoi, cela ne sera pas le cas pour l'Afrique ?

-«L'Afrique meurt parce qu'elle se suicide». Mais à la page 20 quand il parle de « Bismarck des grands lacs », il montre que les régimes de Museveni et Kagame reçoivent de l'argent des USA leur permettant d'acheter les armes pour faire la guerre au Congo/Kinshasa. Par cet exemple, l'Afrique ne meurt pas parce qu'elle se suicide elle-même comme il l'affirme, mais parce qu'elle est assistée dans son suicide par la communauté internationale qui a refusé par exemple depuis 1998 d'accepter que la R.D.Congo était envahie par ses voisins et que l'envoi d'une force Onusienne était urgente. N'ayant pas oublié sa responsabilité dans le génocide rwandais, cette communauté internationale n'a pas voulue se fâcher avec Kagame. L'ONU acceptera la réalité 4 ans après sans condamner les Rwandais et Ougandais après la mort de Laurent Désiré Kabila en janvier 2001, mais il y a en 3,5 millions de morts sans que cela n'émeuve personne du fait que l'objectif de la caméra n'était pas présent.

Là où le bât blesse, c'est quand Smith parle d'un demi million de Tutsi sans citer une seule fois les 200.000 morts Hutu modérés tués au même moment.

À la page 24, il écrit « des africains se massacrent en masse, voire qu'on nous pardonne, se « bouffent » entre eux.

Mais, Srebrenica, Bosnie Herzegovine, Tchetchenie… c'est en Europe, c'était quoi ? Est-ce pourtant que l'Europe est constituée des cannibales ? Est- ce pourtant que l'Europe ne va pas de l'avant ?

Au niveau de la page 27, c'est la culture de l'Africain qui semble expliquer pourquoi il meurt. Nous reviendrons sur cette question de la culture dans la suite des commentaires.

L'apologie du Banquet

«Les femmes africaines continuent à avoir en moyenne huit enfants, alors que les grands fléaux… sont contenus. L'essor est tel que l'historien britannique John Iliffe n'hésite pas à écrire, rétrospectivement «l'Afrique a survécu à sa croissance démographique maximale ».

J'ose croire que le fait de mettre les enfants au monde par les africains n'était pas lié aux grands fléaux. Et la suite de cette citation nous explique que l'Afrique devait aussi mourir de sa démographie.

Mais au même moment, on accuse l'Afrique d'être sous-peuplée. La R.D.Congo avec une superficie équivalente à cinq fois celle de la France pour une même population constitue un cas d'école.

La promiscuité est un fléau par exemple au Congo/Kinshasa mais seulement parce qu'il y a eu l'exode rural en masse à telle enseigne qu'aucune infrastructure ne peut répondre à la demande. Le chômage aidant, trois générations vivent dans une maison prévue pour 6 personnes, mais y vivent à 15.

Elikia M'Bokolo que monsieur Smith qualifie d'encyclopédie vivante dit ceci « l'Afrique est un continent sous-peuplé, dont les possibilités restent considérables ».[1]

Ce qui est aujourd'hui un handicap peut devenir une force demain. La Chine qui avait imposé l'enfant unique est en train de revoir cette stratégie pour les 30 ans à venir.

À la page 45, « les africains, héritiers de rien et producteurs de peu du point de vue des riches déjà attablés, leur place au banquet n'est pas évidente ». C'est ici que l'ouvrage est une injure à l'Afrique car aucun peuple au monde n'est pas sans héritage.

Poursuivant son idée, il écrit « trois décennies, ils sont toujours trop nombreux, parce que seulement candidats à la charité ». Cette charité représente combien en dollars ?

300 milliards de dollars depuis les années 60 contre 350 milliards de dollars comme subventions à l'agriculture par an en occident. Cela représente 31 $ par habitant pendant 40 ans. Peut-on avec 31$ permettre à un africain de se développer, car cela représente moins de 1$ par an.

Et comme les riches sont déjà attablés, il n' y a plus de place pour les africains, alors que faut-il faire ? Il n' y a aucune proposition de la part de l'auteur de la négrologie du fait que l'Afrique est un cadavre même si il bouge encore.

De la Pauvreté globale

À la page 49, l'auteur laisse éclater son racisme quand il pense qu'en remplaçant la population du Nigeria par celle du Japon et de la R.D.Congo par la française, il n' y aurait plus de soucis à se faire au monde.

Mais pourquoi l'Espagne et le Portugal viennent aujourd'hui en bas du classement pour le développement en Europe de l'Ouest ? Or, ces pays sont de vieilles cultures et avaient conquis le monde ?

Ainsi, monsieur Smith, pense que l'Afrique meurt, à cause de : sa civilisation matérielle, son organisation sociale, sa culture politique. Ces éléments constituent un frein au développement de l'Afrique.

Analysons point par point les éléments qui semblent expliquer selon monsieur Smith pourquoi l'Afrique meurt.

La civilisation matérielle

Que ça soit au British muséum, au musée Tervuren, au musée de New York, ce sont les œuvres d'Afrique précoloniale qui y sont exposés, et aucun de ces musées ne veut parler de la restitution de ces œuvres d'art qui pourtant étaient pillés pendant la colonisation, soi-disant des gris-gris empêchant l'Africain d'évoluer. Aujourd'hui la France construit tout un musée pour cet art qualifié de premier.

À propos de la culture, Guy Sorman déclare « imaginez la civilisation contemporaine des européens ou de l'Amérique du Nord sans l'Afrique. Nous n'aurions pas eu les cubistes, nés de la découverte des masques africains, et tout ce qui dans l'art s'en est suivis… de cette rencontre avec l'art nègre date la genèse de l'art contemporain… »[2]

Et, Jean Vansina de l'Université Wisconsin écrit « une seule fouille, peut modifier les perspectives de l'histoire comme ce fut le cas pour les fouilles de Sanga au Katanga, qui démontrèrent l'existence dès le VIIIe siècle d'une culture de l'age du fer pleinement développée »[3]

Ceci démontre le contraire des affirmations de monsieur Smith.

L'organisation sociale

Un jeune dans nos villages pratiquant encore les coutumes de nos ancêtres n'est autorisé à se marier que si et seulement s'il est capable de construire son habitation, avoir son propre champ et ses animaux domestiques. Le respect social dû à l'aîné.

L'organisation sociale basée sur les premiers occupants ou la famille ayant gagné la guerre contre les envahisseurs. J.Vansina ajoute « l'organisation sociale est basée sur le régime matrilinéaire qui est en vigueur chez la plupart des peuples de la savane en matière de descendance, de statut social, de succession et d'héritage et ce régime influe sur les règles du mariage et de la résidence… il y a partout interdiction de mariage avec les parents consanguins… »[4]

Ceci n'exclue pas que certaines pratiques sociales ne permettent pas à certains africains d'évoluer, comme le parasitisme. L'exode rural a des conséquences néfastes sur la vie en ville. Ces personnes qui arrivent en ville, n'ont ni travail, ni logement et sont obligés de vivre chez les membres de leur famille déjà installés . Ces derniers parfois sont confrontés à de graves difficultés de survie. Leur présence ne fait qu'accentuer la misère des citadins.

Cet état de chose doit être dénoncé mais ne peut pas expliquer la situation chaotique de l'Afrique.

La culture politique

S'agissant de ce point, que ça soit le pouvoir personnel, le pouvoir charismatique et le pouvoir légal, l'Afrique a connu toutes ces formes comme le confirme Elikia M'Bokolo « il faut souligner la très remarquable vitalité politique qui s'est manifestée au cours des siècles, par la recherche permanente des meilleures formules de vie commune et de gouvernement…et le premier empire celui du Ghana a existé entre le 8 et 11e siècle, celui des almoravides au 11ème siècle… »[5]

J.Vansina, ajoute pour la région limitée à celle de la savane au Nord du Zambèze et au Sud de la forêt équatoriale que « tous les peuples de cette région, ou presque, ont institué des royaumes ou des chefferies, systèmes politiques dont la structure est centralisée et qui sont gouvernés par un individu… seuls quelques groupes vivant entre le lac Léopold II et le lac Tumba sont organisés en petits États…de même, il y a ou il y a eu des Etats dans le Sud Est africain, mais ils s'inscrivent dans la grande tradition de l'Afrique orientale…ce livre est donc d'abord une histoire politique , une histoire des États africains … »[6]

Après l'analyse de la civilisation matérielle, de l'organisation sociale et de la culture politique en ayant pris soins de citer « un encyclopédiste vivant » selon les termes de monsieur Smith, Elikia M'Bokolo, la preuve semble faite de la fausseté de sa démonstration sur la mort de l'Afrique partant de ces trois éléments sur le passé africain.

Au contraire, l'analyse faite aux pages 50 et 51 sur le Ghana et au chapitre 10 sur l'Afrique du Sud est exacte et peut sans peur d'être contredite s'appliquer à toute l'Afrique ; car, c'est la responsabilité politique qui est en cause et peut expliquer la faillite des Etats africains.

Tenez, lors de l'accession de la R.D.Congo à l'indépendance, son niveau de développement était comparable à celui de la Corée du Sud, mais des politiques comme celle de la Zaïrianisation (confiscation des unités de production des étrangers et leurs distribution aux barrons du régime) avaient fini par désintégrer l'outil de production industriel, agro-alimentaire et de service, et contribuer à l'augmentation de la dette extérieure du pays. Moins de cinq ans après, toutes ces unités de production étaient tombées en faillite. Raison pour laquelle Tshiyembe Mwayila qualifie l'Etat post-colonial d'une féodalité, d'une autocratie, d'une autocratie à tentation monarchique et une république esclave. En d'autres termes « l'État post-colonial est dans sa pratique quotidienne, un pouvoir tyrannique, fondé sur l'asservissement et l'abrutissement de la majorité du peuple dont l'exploitation systématique a débouché sur une colonisation intérieure savamment assurée par une classe qui se dit bourgeoisie nationale ».[7]

Elikia M'Bokolo ajoute : « cet autoritarisme durable représente l'un des legs, les moins superficiels de la domination coloniale à l'Afrique indépendante »[8]

L'État Phénix

Nous partageons l'idée centrale de ce chapitre qui est celle de l'existence des États patrimoniaux en Afrique. Mais en même temps, la démonstration à la page 74 sur la multiplication des institutions, du nombre des députés, de conseillers et des provinces…n'explique pas la faillite de l'État, ni son endettement du fait qu'au même moment par exemple la population a presque doublé, triplé dans certains pays, tout en gardant les mêmes structures.

Le gouvernement américain avait moins de 50 conseillers à l'époque de Nixon, mais ils sont plus de 300 aujourd'hui avec Bush fils.

La R.D.Congo, avec une superficie de 2.345.000 km2 équivalant aux superficies cumulées de la France (544.000 km2), l'Espagne (505.00 km2), l'Allemagne Fédérale (356.000 km2), l'Italie(301.000 km2), la Grèce (132.000 km2), le Portugal (92.000 km2), l'Autriche (84.000 km2), la Hongrie (93.000 km2), la Suisse (41.293 km2), la Hollande (33.491 km2) et le Luxembourg (2.586 km2) n'a que 11 provinces.

La France a 33.000 maires mais la R.D.Congo en a 198. La France possède seulement pour son secteur de l'éducation nationale près d'un million de fonctionnaires, mais

toute la fonction publique congolaise compte moins de 300.000 fonctionnaires. Dans le même temps, on demande à la R.D.Congo par les institutions de Bretton Woods d'assainir, mais comment assurer l'éducation, la santé, l'agriculture dans nos villages ?

Monsieur Smith a démontré que malgré la tentative de balkanisation, les Congolais ont développé un sentiment national très fort, un vouloir vivre collectif qui a sauvé le pays de l'émiettement malgré la multiplicité des ethnies. Ceci démontre qu'il y a un avenir pour le continent et non que l'Afrique est un cadavre.

Les Portes de l'oubli

Affirmer que ce sont des **A**fricains qui ont vendu d'autres **A**fricains, leurs frères (page 86) et que c'est une imposture de parler de la maison des esclaves de Gorée car en vérité, « si ces sous-sols voûtés abritèrent des captifs, ceux-ci firent uniquement partie de la domesticité d'une riche métisse, la signare-du portugais Senhora-Anne Cocas- laquelle n'a jamais servi d'embarcadère à des milliers d'esclaves » est de la pire provocation teintée du racisme et un esprit révisionniste comme Jean Marie Le Pen qui déclarait que les chambres à gaz pour les juifs sont un détail de l'histoire.

Oui, les Africains ont vendu d'autres Africains. Mais remontons l'histoire qui nous apprends aussi qu'avant l'arrivée des arabes et européens sur le continent, il n'y a jamais eu de trafic d'esclaves entre Africains. L'esclavage n'est apparu qu'avec les comptoirs arabes et européens. Le chef du royaume ou de l'empire qui ne voulait pas de ce commerce, a vu ses voisins pourvus en armement pour lui faire la guerre et s'emparer de son royaume à des fins de razzias. Ceci, nous osons le croire que monsieur Smith doit en être au courant, lui qui est spécialiste de l'Afrique.

Si les déclarations du père Roger de Benoist constituent pour lui une preuve irréfutable que la maison des esclaves de Gorée n'en était pas une, la logique simple exige qu'il donne les éléments d'une nouvelle thèse et d'un autre emplacement. Mais aussi, nous ne comprenons pas pourquoi les déclarations du seul prêtre peuvent avoir plus d'autorité scientifique à ses yeux que des milliers d'autres faites sur le même sujet affirmant que Gorée était un passage obligé de la traite sur la côte. Que pense monsieur Smith de El Mina au Ghana?

À propos de l'esclavage et du développement du capitalisme occidental, Guy Sorman écrit « il n'est pas contestable que le profit retiré de l'esclavage a contribué à l'édification du capitalisme occidental…. La main-d'œuvre africaine a permis la valorisation des deux Amériques et des Caraïbes. La traite des Noirs a servi à l'accumulation primitive du capital par des négociants français et britanniques »[9]

À la page 90, pour balayer la thèse selon laquelle la richesse des métropoles coloniales serait due au pillage de leurs anciennes possessions, monsieur Smith donne l'exemple du Portugal qui est pauvre. Mais peut-il nous dire pourquoi y a-t-il plus de portugais autour de Paris et au Brésil qu'au Portugal ?

Nous savons tous que les dictatures au Portugal, surtout celle de Salazar avaient vu fuir ses meilleurs enfants pour le Brésil et la banlieue parisienne. Ainsi, ce qui avait appauvri le Portugal hier, appauvrit aujourd'hui l'Afrique, c'est-à-dire des systèmes politiques autoritaires. Si monsieur Smith pense le contraire, alors qu'il nous dise que le Portugal manque de culture, d'organisation sociale et de civilisation matérielle.

Après sa démonstration aux pages 92 et 93 sur la situation du Congo/Kinshasa liée aux détournements de l'aide, pourquoi conclure que l'Afrique ne se développe pas parce qu'elle continue à être aidé quand on sait que cette aide est nulle ?

Maudits Dons du Ciel

Concernant l'aide, monsieur Smith donne des chiffres à la page 103. Ces statistiques pouvaient l'aider à revoir ses conclusions, ce qui n'a pas été le cas. Mais est-ce que avec 31$ par tête d'habitant pendant 44 ans, on peut arriver à se développer ? Cela équivaut à moins de 1$ par an. Peut-on attendre le développement de la part d'une personne recevant moins de 1$ par an ? Car au dernier paragraphe, il montre que l'Afrique a reçu en termes d'aides 300 milliards de $ mais que chaque année les pays riches subventionnent leur agriculture à concurrence de 350 milliards de dollars. En sachant que ces subventions tuent l'agriculture en Afrique du fait que la production de ce continent ne peut pas être compétitive sur le marché à cause du prix (Le coton malien).

À la page 115, il écrit « le masque de l'anarchie est le vrai visage de l'Afrique déboussolée par la modernité. L'occident pourra apaiser la grimace en multipliant ses «cadeaux». Mais il ne changera pas la nature du monstre qu'il a créé…tout ce qui est gratuit rend ingrat ».

À propos de l'aide, nous prendrons une longue citation de Gautier de Villers sur la question de l'aide entre la R.D.Congo et la Belgique. Ceci peut valoir pour toute l'Afrique : « pour combattre l'illusion que peut entretenir la seule observation des relations de coopération, Baudouin Piret et un collectif d'auteurs ont cherché à démontrer, sur la base d'une analyse de la balance des paiements, qu'en 1980 les revenus procurés à des intérêts privés belges par les relations avec le Zaïre étaient quatre fois supérieurs au montant de l'aide publique accordée par la Belgique. Autrement dit, qu'un franc dépensé par celle-ci en rapportait quatre à la Belgique…il reste, on l'a vu, que la Belgique est gagnante dans ses relations avec le Zaïre. Le contenu et la nature des rapports de coopération contribuent à expliquer le déséquilibre des relations au profit de la Belgique. En termes nets, cette coopération constitue en effet un apport financier très limité pour le bénéficiaire…La coopération en personnel, bien qu'en diminution, demeure très importante, il y avait 1.627 coopérants belges au Zaïre en 1971, il en reste 1.052 en 1980. Le coût de cette assistance technique grève lourdement le budget de la coopération.

Il représente 62% en 1971 et 52% en 1980 du montant de l'aide au Zaïre…Si l'on prend encore en considération des postes de la coopération bilatérale tels que les subsides aux écoles belges du Zaïre, les bourses d'études et de stage pour une formation en Belgique, les allocations de fonctionnement accordées aux Universités Belges recevant des étudiants du Zaïre, les achats en Belgique de matériel d'équipements, de services pour la réalisation des actions de coopération, l'on est amené à constater (sans pouvoir le mesurer avec précision) qu'une assez faible part seulement de l'aide constitue un apport direct de ressources pour l'administration et l'économie du pays «bénéficiaire» et qu'une grande part en est dépensée en Belgique même (les coopérants perçoivent le principal de leur salaire) ».[10]

Nous n'oublierons pas le détournement par les dirigeants des deux parties et l'affectation d'une plus grande partie des miettes qui restent à la garde prétorienne pour la sécurité du chef.

Nous terminerons ce chapitre de l'aide en nous référant à René Dumont que monsieur Smith a cité à plusieurs reprises pour justifier ses démonstrations et qui dit que « ces grands contrats naissent d'un affreux mariage entre l'affairisme et la corruption. Ils endettent les peuples pauvres sans contrepartie valable. La part justifiable de cette énorme dette du Tiers-monde est très faible : sans doute, bien moins du tiers »[11]

Ceci démontre à suffisance que les anciens ministères des colonies ont juste changé leurs étiquettes en ministères de la coopération ; mais en ayant gardé les mêmes objectifs, personnels et critères d'exploitation. Rien n'est fait par l'Europe sans intérêts. De la même manière que la recherche de nouvelles terres était une exigence pour trouver de nouveaux débouchés et matières premières, la coopération n'est que la suite de ceci avec son maquillage d'aide.

C'est ainsi que nous demandons à monsieur Smith, qui aide qui ? Et qui prétend développer qui ? La Belgique a laissé comme héritage aux Congolais leurs problèmes ethniques et linguistiques.

Au Paradis de la Cruauté

Avec le génocide rwandais, monsieur Smith conclut que l'Afrique n'est que cruauté. À la page 136, il déclare que « la mort en Afrique est perçue comme gratuite, sans frais, du fait de la facilité avec laquelle elle est infligée par des Africains ».

Ceci n'est que pur racisme car au même moment que se passait le génocide rwandais, il y avait un autre génocide qui s'est passé en Europe à Srebrenica. Est-ce pourtant que l'on qualifie l'Europe de barbare ?

Sur 4 génocides reconnus par l'ONU, trois se sont passés en Europe : des Arméniens, des Juifs et celui des Srebrenica. Que se passe t-il en Tchetchenie aujourd'hui ?

Il y a lieu de relativiser certaines affirmations car le « Leviathan » nous vient de l'Europe avec Thomas Hobbes (1651).

La Tribu enchantée

Dans ce chapitre, l'auteur nous dit que, l'Afrique meurt parce que les chefs d'Etats mettent aux commandes des institutions étatiques les membres de leurs tribus.

Nous partageons le point de vue de monsieur Smith selon lequel, le tribalisme, le clientélisme et le patrimonialisme sont les maux qui rongent les systèmes politiques africains. Mais, nous sommes contre la vision selon laquelle cela est à mettre sur le compte de spécificité africaine.

Car, si en Afrique, c'est la tribu qui est la gangrène du système politique, en Europe, le clientélisme est sa sœur. Pourquoi Jacques Chirac ne veut pas de Sarkozy qui semble être le plus populaire aujourd'hui au sein l'UMP, mais lui préfère Raffarin. À propos de la France, Jean François Revel écrit « le président nomme à tous les emplois publics et, par la bande, à maints emplois privés. À la veille de la cohabitation (Mitterand) avait d'ailleurs pris la précaution d'étirer jusque dans le moindres recoins du parc prébendier la liste des places à sa disposition directe…l'opiniâtre énergie avec laquelle Mitterrand a utilisé l'État comme une immense machine à distribuer des situations, des revenus, des avantages matériels, de coûteuses faveurs, des positions de pouvoir, des satisfactions d'amour propre, des agréments des logements, des instruments d'enrichissements, des moyens de transport, des voyages gratuits ou des distinctions honorifiques a pu s'engouffrer dans notre constitution comme dans du beurre. Ainsi, le levier présidentiel qui devait arracher aux intrigues privées, aux intérêts partisans et aux appétits courtisans l'accession aux postes de responsabilité sert désormais à ployer l'État sous le joug des membres d'une amicale…La faveur présidentielle accouche de nominations saugrenues et les chroniqueurs du règne et de la presse se sont souvent gaussés. Le fils du président, sa sœur, son beau-frère, son ancienne secrétaire privée, ses vieux amis, leurs veuves, ses anciens collaborateurs… ».[12]

Que dire de l'affaire Alain Juppe à la mairie de Paris concernant les emplois fictifs de membres du RPR. Les pratiques patrimoniales ne sont pas propres à l'Afrique. Que dire de la famille Bush aux USA ? Bien sûr l'Afrique doit inscrire la méritocratie aux nombres des exigences d'une gestion saine de la chose publique.

L'apocalypse au pluriel

La description sur le fait religieux est exacte malgré certaines exagérations du genre, « Fernando Kutino possède un jet privé ». Mais, le reste du texte est vrai surtout concernant la R.D. Congo.

L'éthique des Naufrages

L'idée centrale de ce chapitre est que l'ennemi de la démocratie en Afrique est la pauvreté extrême. Oui, la pauvreté extrême est un handicap en Afrique pour sa démocratisation mais pas le seul. Et, l'Afrique n'est pas pauvre en potentialités ni en capacités.

L'Afrique est pauvre par contre du fait de l'incapacité de ses hommes politiques à produire des schèmes de développement pragmatique pour transformer en richesses ses potentialités que l'auteur cite pourtant comme le coltan dernièrement découvert dans l'Est de la R.D.Congo.

Ce qui empêche l'Afrique de se démocratiser, c'est un ensemble d'éléments dont : la culture politique démocratique qui s'avère assez précaire, l'instrumentalisation par les hommes politiques pour leur positionnement, les différences claniques, intra-ethniques, provinciales, pseudo-raciales et cette extrême situation de pauvreté.

Donc, la pauvreté n'est pas le seul ennemi de la démocratie, car les pauvres de l'inde votent toujours malgré aussi les problèmes ethniques, linguistiques et religieux très accentués.

Le Cap des Tempêtes

Nous sommes du même avis que monsieur Smith sur la question de l'Afrique du Sud. Sauf que l'émigration des meilleurs chercheurs s'explique en partie par la politique du gouvernement, de l'insécurité… mais est aussi le résultat de la mondialisation. Les meilleurs chercheurs européens émigrent tous vers les USA à la recherche des meilleures conditions de travail et de salaire. La grève et la démission symbolique de directeurs des centres de recherches de la France sont dues, pour Axel Khan, à la mondialisation qui est à la base de cette situation. Chaque personne cherche les meilleures conditions de travail et de salaire, car « au fur et à mesure que les frontières perdent leur sens en termes économiques, les citoyens les mieux placés pour réussir sur le marché mondial sont tentés de relâcher leurs liens d'allégeance envers leur pays ».[13]

Si en Afrique du Sud, on tue pour 10$, au Congo/Kinshasa des milliers de dollars sont échangés à même le sol et à travers toute la ville par les cambistes sans que cela donne lieu à des tueries et braquages. Ceci pour dire que l'Afrique n'est pas un cadavre qui bouge. Mais, l'Afrique vit à son rythme et à sa manière. Elle est à la recherche dans ses tourments d'une voie de salut. L'impératif demeure le changement de ses systèmes politiques.

L'Estonie, La Slovaquie, hier pauvre, aujourd'hui qualifiés des dragons de l'Europe de l'Est, les sont devenues juste par le changement des systèmes politiques.

Cri d'espoir

Tout ne glisse pas sur l'Afrique. Tout entre en Afrique, mais les manifestations ne viennent pas au même moment. Les Églises catholiques remplissent encore les bancs en Afrique, mais au même moment en Europe, les bancs sont vides. À Kinshasa, on répare le téléphone portable et l'ordinateur sans qu'il y ait dans la ville des ingénieurs occidentaux pour cette formation.

Aujourd'hui, nous écrivons et parlons les langues européennes, mais avant la colonisation en dehors de l'Égypte, l'Éthiopie, Tombouctou…, le reste relevait de la culture orale. Il y a encore de l'espoir en Afrique car une bonne partie de ses dignes fils et filles y vivent encore et y travaillent. La science de la

mort n'est pas africaine, car en termes de guerres, génocides et barbaries, c'est l'Europe qui est la championne.

Notes

1. Elikia M'BOKOLO, *l'Afrique au xxème siècle,* éd. du Seuil, Paris, 1985, p. 11.
2. Guy SORMAN, *Le Capital, suite et fins,* éd. Fayard, 1994, Paris, p.278.
3. J.VANSINA, *Les anciens royaumes de la savane,* P.U.Z., Kinshasa, 1976, p.8.
4. Idem, p.22
5. Elikia M'BOKOLO, op.cit., pp.34, 36,37
6. J. VANSINA, op. cit. , p.8
7. TSHIYEMBE MWAYILA, «De l'État post-colonial à l'Etat-espace une contribution à la théorie générale de l'État», in *Afrique 2000,* n°5 avri-mai-juin 1991, p.107.
8. Elikia M'BOKOLO, op.cit.p.42
9. Guy SORMAN, *le capital, suite et fins,* éd. Fayard, Paris, 1994, pp.259-60.
10. Gautier de VILLERS, *De Mobutu à Mobutu,* De Boeck Université, Bruxelles, 1995, pp.103-104.
11. René DUMONT, *Démocratie pour l'Afrique,* éd. du Seuil, Paris, 1991, p.305.
12. Jean François REVEL, *l'Absolutisme inefficace,* Plon, Paris, 1992, pp.86-90.
13. Robert REICH, *l'Economie mondialisée,* éd. Dunod, Paris,1993,p.223'

Une mnémohistoire de l'eurocentrisme

Michèle Sinapi

« *Black Athena. Les racines afro-asiatiques de la civilisation classique* » : Sous ce titre provocateur, « sexy » dira-t-on, Martin Bernal faisait paraître en 1987, le premier tome d'un projet monumental qui devait en comporter quatre ; ce premier tome avait pour intitulé « *The Fabrication of The Ancient Greece 1785-1985* ». Dans son introduction, Martin Bernal donnait quelques indications sur son itinéraire intellectuel. Ancien sinologue, il s'était intéressé, à un double titre, à la culture vietnamienne, et à la lutte du peuple vietnamien contre les États-Unis. Son engagement politique, non dissimulé, le conduisit, après 1975, à porter ses investigations sur l'Est du bassin méditerranéen. Il revendique alors sa position de néophyte, venant de l'extérieur, pour mieux dynamiser les certitudes académiques et promouvoir « un changement de paradigme ». Le second tome paraît en 1987-1991 sous le titre *The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence* (New Brunswick)[1].

« Black Athena » entendait démonter l'eurocentrisme en son coeur, en montrant que la Grèce ancienne, tenue pour la source de la « culture occidentale » , était née de l'Égypte pharaonique, qui elle-même devait beaucoup à la propagation de la civilisation afro-asiatique et était donc une civilisation africaine. Le « miracle grec » n'en était un que par la volonté d'oublier et d'effacer ses origines exogènes. Cette reprise d'une thèse qui place l'Afrique à l'origine des cultures égyptienne et grecque a entrainé un grand mouvement de recherches, en liaison avec les théories multiculturalistes et afrocentristes, et alimenté un débat (dont on trouve l'essentiel dans *Black Athena Revised*, M. R. Lefkowitz et G. MacLean Rogers eds[2] – dans les Actes de la Journée d'études organisée aux Pays-Bas le 28 juin 1996, publiées dans *Talanta*[3], et dans un numéro spécial d'*Arethusa*, automne 1989[4]).

La force du livre de M. Bernal est de mettre l'accent sur la part de construction idéologique et imaginaire dans l'élaboration de l'histoire de la Grèce pré-classique. Sa démonstration repose sur l'opposition entre deux versions successives de cette histoire, qu'il nomme le « modèle ancien » et le « modèle aryen ». Le « modèle ancien » correspond, comme il le dit lui-même, « à la représentation traditionnellement acceptée par les Grecs à l'époque classique et hellénistique » et décrit le développement de la culture grecque à partir d'une colonisation réalisée autour de 1500 ans avant J.-C. par les Égyptiens et les Phéniciens. Dans cette perspective, la culture grecque se constitue, par emprunts renouvelés et assumés, dans une continuité avec les cultures du Proche-Orient. La reconnaissance de la dette de la Grèce à l'égard de l'Égypte est un lieu commun d'une partie de la pensée de la Grèce classique, chez les philosophes et les rhéteurs, et chez les historiens. Ce « modèle ancien », dit M. Bernal, fut retenu jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle, et ne présentait pas de graves défauts internes. Il fut victorieusement répudié pour des raisons externes, c'est-à-dire pour des raisons idéologiques et politiques : une nouvelle image de la Grèce servit à la constitution d'une image de l'Allemagne, dans une identification qui se développa en particulier après la Révolution française, dans le mouvement de réaction et de retour au christianisme. Pour M. Bernal, le moment de basculement se situe entre 1790 et 1830, dans l'Allemagne du Nord, alors que s'instaure la philologie, et avec notamment l'œuvre de Karl Otfried Müller qui, dans son *Histoire des tribus et des cités grecques* en 1820, récuse les récits de colonisation égyptienne, et accorde le premier rôle aux Doriens. Dans le romantisme allemand, le mouvement philhellène est inextricablement lié à l'égyptophobie et à l'antisémitisme, et le « nouveau principe de l'ethnicité » envahit tous les champs du savoir : il est intolérable aux idéologies racistes et européocentristes du XIXe siècle en Allemagne que la Grèce ait pu être le résultat d'un mélange impur d'Européens et de colonisateurs africains et sémites. C'est pourquoi le « modèle aryen » a fait l'hypothèse d'une invasion venue du Nord – inconnue de la tradition ancienne - de populations de langue indo-européenne, écrasant une population indigène, mais, souligne M. Bernal, il n'a pu proposer une hypothèse satisfaisante pour le problème des Pélasges.

Martin Bernal propose un retour au « modèle ancien », mais un « modèle ancien révisé », comportant des modifications de chronologie. Ce modèle ancien révisé intégrerait les invasions indo-européennes du Nord, en les situant au cours du 4e ou 3e millénaire, en supposant que les premières populations parlaient une langue proche de l'indo-hittite. Il situerait les colonisations égyptienne et phénicienne plus tôt, dans la première moitié du 2e millénaire avant J.-C : Bernal dit suivre les anciennes chroniques pour faire coïncider l'expulsion des Hyksos par la XVIIIe dynastie, et l'arrivée de Danaos à Argos. Le modèle ancien révisé repose, dit Martin Bernal « sur des faits réels », si l'on veut bien admettre que, pour la reconstitution de cette histoire archaïque, nous ne pouvons nous en tenir au dogme positiviste, et en particulier, au « positivisme archéologique » du XXe siècle. Ce positivisme confère à toute hypothèse fondée sur l'archéologie un statut scientifique, au détriment des « informations provenant d'autres types de sources : mythes, noms de lieux, cultes, distribution des dialectes et des systèmes d'écriture ». Le maniement de ces différentes sources doit se faire avec la plus grande précaution, et on ne peut penser fournir des « preuves », mais seulement atteindre un certain « degré de vraisemblance », donnant aux chercheurs « une structure potentiellement plus riche » (introduction, p. 31, éd. fr.).

Dans le cadre de ces précautions, la lecture de *Black Africa* a pu être très stimulante, et fournir un matériel abondant, pour réouvrir des pistes négligées, mais l'apport du tome II, en ce qui concerne l'histoire des faits, reste très discutable, laissant trop de place à des assimilations et généralisations arbitraires.

L'intérêt de *Black Athena* réside dans le premier tome, qui ne se situe pas tant dans une histoire factuelle que dans une histoire des idées : tout en s'appuyant sur des schémas marxistes, M. Bernal tire de la confrontation entre développement de l'impérialisme, nouvelles relations avec l'Afrique, révolutions et contre-révolutions européennes, et élaboration des nouveaux domaines de savoir dans les universités allemandes, des raccourcis saisissants. On trouve aussi une attention particulière à la continuité d'une tradition hermétique, qui, à travers des courants gnostiques, néo-platoniciens, chrétiens, puis franc-maçons, affirme la primauté de l'Égypte dans la fondation de la politique et des sciences – pour en tirer des bénéfices souvent contradictoires.

Par delà les erreurs nombreuses relevées par ses critiques, *Black Athena* constitue cependant un ouvrage important, si on considère qu'il relève de « l'histoire de la mémoire » , de ce que Jan Assmann nomme, dans son *Moïse l'Égyptien*, publié en 1997[5], la « mnémohistoire », et qui se situe dans la lignée d'Aby Warburg[6]. Ainsi, pour J. Assmann, M. Bernal se fait historien de la mémoire culturelle de l'Europe – sans s'embarrasser d'une critique historique du souvenir - lorsqu'il déconstruit le « modèle aryen ». Mais le paradoxe est, comme le souligne J. Assmann, que Bernal abandonne cette position, lorsqu'il prétend revenir, dans le second tome, au modèle ancien : il croit tenir alors une vérité historique, sans voir que le « modèle antique » est une construction tout aussi imaginaire que le modèle aryen, et que cette construction est mêlée, dès le départ, à des schémas d'argumentation et d'interprétation tout aussi intéressés. C'est le cas, pour les sources antiques, de Diodore, que Bernal privilégie, et d'Hécatée d'Abdère, dans leur apologie de la monarchie égyptienne. Il en est de même pour le projet d'histoire universelle de Bossuet, et l'importance du « modèle antique » dans les Lumières tient toujours à l'utilité politique d'un modèle monarchique éclairé. L'histoire de la Grèce archaïque demeure, sinon le miroir, du moins un des miroirs de la construction politique et culturelle de l'Europe.

Notes

1 Traduction française : tome1, *L'invention de la Grèce antique*, Paris, P.U.F., 1996, 612 p. ; tome 2, *Les sources écrites et archéologiques*, Paris, P.U.F., 1999, 835 p.

2 *Black Athena revised*, Chapel Hill-London, University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 522pp. Cf. le compte-rendu de F.-X. Fauvelle dans *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 153, 1999.

3 *Talanta*[Amsterdam], XXVIII-XXIX/1996-1997, 272pp. Cf. le compte-rendu dans *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 158,2000.

4 *Arethusa*, (published by the Department of Classics, State University of New York at Buffalo), numéro spécial, automne 1989 ; on trouvera une poursuite du débat dans *Arethusa*, vol. 26, n°3, automne 1993.

5 *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1997.Édition allemande : Carl Hanser Verlag Munich, Vienne, 1998. Édition française : *Moïse l'Égyptien*. Aubier, 2001, 412p. ISBN 2-70072316-3. Jan Assmann est professeur d'égyptologie à l'université de Heidelberg.

6 Aby Warburg, né à Hambourg en 1866, meurt en 1929. Père de l'iconologie, A. Warburg révolutionne l'histoire de l'art, en l'incluant dans le projet d'une anthropologie culturelle, qui mettrait en relation différents champs de savoirs et de pratiques rituelles et gestuelles, et naîtrait de la confrontation d'objets hétérogènes. Cette anthropologie s'appuierait, non sur une histoire téléologique, mais sur une histoire qui privilégierait l'étude des anachronismes et des latences, et repérerait les lignes de fracture et les tensions. Il laisse une œuvre importante et un ouvrage inachevé appelé Mnémosyne. Pour la poursuite de ses recherches, il crée l'Institut Warburg à Hambourg, puis à Londres.

Civilisations et relations internationales

Slim Laghmani

Le rôle des civilisations dans le système international.
Droit et relations internationales
par Yadh Ben Achour
Éditions Bruylant, 2003, 324 pp, 60 Euros, ISBN 2-8027-1708-1

C'est à une question oubliée des spécialistes de droit international public que s'attaque Yadh Ben Achour dans cet ouvrage. Le nombre des travaux expressément consacré à cette question est dérisoire. Il y a bien un article de Maurice Flory sur «les relations culturelles et le droit international public» publié à l'*Annuaire français de droit international* (1971), mais il ne traite pas du cœur du sujet. Il y a, également, un colloque organisé en 1983 par l'*Académie de Droit international* alors dirigé par feu René Jean Dupuy qui porte sur *«L'avenir du droit international dans un monde multiculturel»* et un article de M.Virally sur «Le rôle du droit dans un conflit de civilisations: le cas Iran-USA» publié en 1988 par la *revue des sciences morales et politiques,* mais, à ma connaissance, guère plus.

Ce n'est évidemment pas que la civilisation ne travaille pas de l'intérieur les travaux des internationalistes, et parfois, à leur insu, c'est que les internationalistes à la différence des politistes et des spécialistes des relations internationales n'ont pas fait de la civilisation l'objet même de leurs travaux. Et cela s'explique aisément, au moins par trois raisons.

D'abord, parce que leur connaissance a pour objet un monde étatisé et un droit interétatique; ensuite, parce que la solution de n'importe quel différend «*même s'il s'agit d'un conflit de civilisation…devra être coulée dans une forme juridique»* (M.Virally, article cité) ; enfin, parce que depuis la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale, comme le relève Yadh Ben Achour, le mot «civilisation» n'est plus en odeur de sainteté du fait de son exploitation par l'idéologie coloniale.

Le fait, donc, que Yadh Ben Achour consacre un ouvrage au rôle des civilisations est, en soi, pour l'internationaliste un apport important. Une lacune béante depuis la guerre Iran-Irak qui a marqué la première, l'irruption des civilisations dans les relations et le droit internationaux, est ainsi comblée.

Mais ce n'est pas là le seul mérite de l'ouvrage. Yadh Ben Achour n'y est pas qu'internationaliste – publiciste. Il y fait montre d'une parfaite connaissance de l'histoire et de la réalité présente des civilisations et spécialement des civilisations musulmanes et occidentales. Et c'est cela l'atout des authentiques bilingues, ils sont par cela même biculturels, autant à l'aise en compagnie d'Al-Ma'arri que de Valéry et appréciant autant la beauté sulfureuse des poèmes de Abu-Nawwâs que ceux d'Arthur Rimbaud. Yadh Ben Achour témoigne également dans est ouvrage de sa maîtrise des relations internationales et y révèle des talents de spécialiste de droit international privé. Il est vrai que le droit international privé de la famille est dans une large mesure un droit international des conflits des civilisations. Le tout est rédigé dans le style propre de l'auteur, analytique, pointilleux sur les détails, fin observateur des nuances et surtout, souvent, passionné.

Yadh Ben Achour a préféré le mot civilisation au mot culture et défint la première comme *«l'unité morale ou spirituelle la plus large à laquelle puisse se rattacher une société, mais, plus généralement un groupe de sociétés»…. » elle comprend l'ensemble des caractères aux traits spécifiques, à caractère politique, linguistique, religieux, moral, scientifique, technique, civique, qui définissent ou marquent une société ou, plus sûrement, un groupe de sociétés » (*p.2).

La thèse générale de l'ouvrage est que *«les civilisations avec et plus rarement sans l'intermédiaire des États, ont toujours été et demeurent encore un facteur essentiel de l'impulsion des R.I et d'inspiration du droit international»* (p.1). Cette impulsion et cette inspiration ne sont pas univoques, elle ne tentent pas seulement au conflit. Certes «Les conflits de civilisation sont inévitables» (p.9) mais *« les civilisations cultivent également le sens du respect, de la curiosité et, parfois, de l'émerveillement face à l'autre, elles savent cohabiter s 'enrichir de leurs expériences, échanger les biens…leurs talents»(p.13).*Mais au-delà de ces thèses générales sur le statut et les relations entre les civilisations, la thèse spécifique qui anime l'ouvrage, la thèse de Yadh Ben Achour, est que *«une civilisation, toute civilisation n'est qu'une voie de circulation pour toutes les autres ,et le morceau d'une autre civilisation»* (p.13 et p.312). Cette thèse est présente dans les trois parties de l'ouvrage qui traitent successivement de l'impact des civilisations sur les relations internationales, de leur effet sur le droit international et, enfin, de la détermination précise des lieux de rupture ou comme le dit l'auteur *«les lignes de fracture»* entre les civilisations et de leur expression en droit international tant public que privé.

La première partie traite successivement des échanges entre civilisations et de leurs conflits. Il ne faut cependant pas y voir un clivage absolu, une séparation étanche, car l'échange est aussi bien le fait de l'ouverture sur l'autre que des conflits et des guerres. Ainsi est identifié comme facteur ou vecteur de l'échange tout d'abord le commerce: *«La force du commerce, c'est qu'il n'a pas d'âme. Il passe par dessus des conflits de civilisations, les ignore, les oblige à dialoguer à se reconnaître»* (p.30) ; mais aussi l'impact des récits et des relations de voyage des marins et des aventuriers. L'ouverture sur l'autre peut également procéder d'une décision politique à l'instar de celle prise par Al-Mâ'mûn. À ces facteurs pacifiques s'ajoutent également des conflits idéels ou proprement militaires : Que serait *'ilm al kalâm'* sans les disputes théoriques qui opposaient les Musulmans aux Chrétiens et aux Juifs? Que serait la philosophie occidentale sans Ibn Rushd? Que serait l'Égypte sans la campagne de Bonaparte? Mais ces échanges sont, somme toute, soit accidentels soit le fait d'une volonté unilatérale. Un échange volontaire et réciproque est-il possible? C'est la question du dialogue des civilisations. C'est là un phénomène récent et selon notre auteur une *«utopie»* constructive.

Guerres et conquêtes sont bien plus présentes dans l'histoire des civilisations *«Les guerres peuvent être qualifiées de guerres et de civilisation dès lors qu'elles se placent sous l'égide de slogans, de doctrines, ayant une forte pesanteur symbolique, religieuse ou autres, éveillant une allégeance civilisationelle»* (p.61). Ces conflits et ces guerres sont multiformes, ils se manifestent aussi bien dans le discours disqualifiant l'autre, que dans des attitudes exprimant l'hostilité. Ils peuvent prendre la forme de violence officielle ou de ce que l'auteur nomme *«violences supplétives»*: *razzias, piraterie, course, terrorisme.*

Au centre de ces conflits se dresse le conflit Occident – Islam. Cette centralité s'explique selon Yadh Ben Achour par *«un lourd héritage historique et par une politique extérieure maladroite et déséquilibrée de l'occident et en particulier des États-Unis»* (p.69). Ce conflit axial a été au cours des siècles théorisé par la théologie de la croisade, les doctrines du jihâd et plus récemment par l'idéologie coloniale.

Le dernier chapitre de cette partie est consacré à un impact particulier des civilisations dans les relations internationales contemporaines. En effet, la civilisation, non la Nation, peut être à la base de la création et de la désintégration des États. Les exemples du Pakistan, d'Israël, de la Yougoslavie et de Chypre sont, tour à tour, exposés.

La deuxième partie est consacrée au droit international. Le chapitre premier est consacré à l'hégémonie de la civilisation européenne en droit international classique, hégémonie exprimée par certaines institutions de ce droit (principe de nationalité, question d'Orient, principe de liberté de navigation et du commerce, l'intervention d'humanité). Cette *«prédominance de la civilisation européenne»* a été remise en course par *«la nouvelle configuration du droit international»* à laquelle Yadh Ben Achour consacre le deuxième chapitre, cette nouvelle configuration est marquée par l'émergence de *«l'idée de l'humanité en tant que civilisation unique et commune»* ainsi que par *«l'idée de patrimoine mondial culturel et naturel» (p.144)*

L'Occident n'est plus seul acteur, des États nouveaux et des blocs de civilisations hostiles à l'Occident se constituent, des discours se structurent: arabisme, panafricanisme, panislamisme, afro-asiatisme. Cette nouvelle configuration condamne l'usage fait en droit international classique du concept de nation civilisée *«Le destin final du concept de 'nation civilisée allait être sanctionné par sa disparition du langage juridique»* (p.162).

C'est donc à la fois l'idée de l'unité de la communauté ultime de la civilisation humaine et de la diversité des civilisations qui marque la nouvelle configuration du droit international. C'est à l'institutionnalisation de cette diversité qu'est consacré le dernier chapitre de cette partie par l'exposé des diverses organisations internationales définissant ou révélant une identité civilisationelle: Le Conseil de l'Europe, l'Union de l'Europe Occidentale, l'Organisation pour la Sécurité et la Coopération en Europe, l'Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord, l'Union Européenne, l'Organisation de la Conférence Islamique, le Commonwealth, l'Organisation des États Ibéro-Américains pour l'Education la Science et la Culture, la Communauté des Pays de Langue Portugaise, l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, l'Union latine et la Ligue des États Arabes.

La troisième partie nous livre l'essentiel des lieux de rupture entre la civilisation occidentale et la civilisation musulmane. Un chapitre premier démonte les ressorts de hostilité. *«Les figures de l'hostilité»* sont celles du colonisé, du décolonisé et de l'intégriste dont le terroriste est un prolongement (p.238). L'auteur met à nu les soubassements historiques et psychologiques du climat d'hostilité dans la lignée des *«Damnés de la terre»* de F. Fanon et surtout du *«portrait du colonisé suivi du portrait du colonisateur»* d'A. Memmi. Yadh Ben Achour écrit *: «Dans tous (les domaines), le colonisé, maintenant décolonisé, s'affirme par une volonté acharnée de reprendre possession de soi, y compris de ses archaïsmes…l'intégriste (…) est l'une des figures du colonisé»* (pp.227-228).

Et c'est dans cette perspective que l'auteur aborde la question du terrorisme qu'il traite de manière particulière. Il récuse d'emblée, au plan philosophique, la disqualification du terrorisme comme *«combat en dehors des normes»* (p.229). En vérité, il récuse les normes qui déclarent le terrorisme «combat en dehors des normes» et refuse comme *«philosophiquement inadmissible»* l'idée selon laquelle *«l'État aurait, seul, le monopole de la violence juste»* (p.229).

Deux autres figures de l'hostilité sont successivement analysées. La question de l'emblème de l'organisation humanitaire: (Croix rouge depuis l'origine, le Croissant rouge et Lion et Soleil rouges depuis 1929 et depuis quelques années la prétention d'Israël d'élever le Bouclier de David rouge au rang d'emblème officiel). L'auteur envisage, ensuite la question responsabilité de l'Occident pour les «crimes de l'histoire» (génocide des Indiens, esclavage, colonialisme) soulevée lors de la Conférence de Durban en 2001 et s'interroge sur la nature et les effets de cette responsabilité originale.

Le chapitre deuxième évoque la question plus familière à l'internationaliste de l'opposition entre l'Occident et l'Islam à propos des droits de l'homme, de l'état du droit et de la démocratie. Selon «le croyant [musulman] majoritaire,[la théorie des droits de l'homme] abolit le sens du divin et l'essence de l'homme» (p.264). Quant aux différents droits de l'homme, certains d'entre eux heurtent des prescriptions divines explicites.

Un dernier chapitre traite des conflits de civilisation en droit international privé et des techniques juridiques en permettant à un État de se fermer à la circulation des normes attentatoires à ce qu'il estime être le noyau dur de sa civilisation.

L'auteur conclut son ouvrage par une adhésion franche et sans réserve à ce qu'il nomme la trilogie de la civilisation occidentale: les droits de l'homme, la démocratie et l'état du droit parce qu'il considère que cette civilisation est aussi la notre: *«S'il faut suivre le droit, ne suivons pas le droit clos, mais le droit ouvert, celui des droits de l'homme de la démocratie et de l'État de droit. Suivons-le avec honnête…en [nous] disant surtout que s'il est occidental dans son éclosion finale, cet Occident est le notre, depuis déjà fort longtemps. Ce droit est celui qui permet seul l'épanouissement de toutes les personnalités, seul il donne sens à la politique qui resterait, une cité de servitude »* (p.314).

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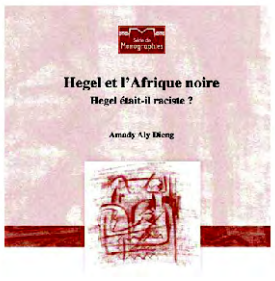
Hegel et l'Afrique noire – Hegel etait-il raciste ?

Amady Aly Dieng



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Depuis 1978, la position de Hegel à l'égard de l'Afrique noire est très discutée. Le philosophe de Berlin a été traité de raciste. C'est l'opinion qui domine chez la plupart des chercheurs européens et africains. Mais une telle affirmation mérite d'être révisée à la suite de la thèse d'Etat soutenue en 1990 à l'Université de Paris I par un philosophe africain, Pierre Franklin Tavarès. La lecture attentive de cette thèse devrait amener beaucoup de chercheurs à nuancer leur pensée sur l'attitude de Hegel sur l'Afrique noire. « La question Hegel » en Afrique ou ce que Guy Planty-Bonjour appelle « les questions africaines de l'hégélianisme » n'est pas seulement d'ordre théorique, mais également pratique.

Des historiens, des hommes de lettres, des hommes politiques, des sociologues et quelquefois, même des philosophes africains se sont dépêchés de traiter Hegel de raciste à la suite de leur seule lecture des *Leçons de la philosophie de l'histoire* qui est une oeuvre posthume publiée sur la base des notes de ses étudiants. Par ailleurs beaucoup de ses auteurs ont ignoré l'ouvrage de Carl Ritter : *L'Afrique* (1500 pages) sur lequel s'est appuyé Hegel qui, introuvable à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, n'est disponible qu'à l'Institut de géographie de Paris. Seul Pierre Franklin Tavarès a pu exploiter ce livre que Hegel a consulté pour avoir des informations sur l'Afrique à Berlin. C'est pourquoi il parle de la deuxième attitude de Hegel à l'égard de l'Afrique motivée par la lecture de ce grand géographe allemand qui s'appuie sur le système de Schelling : le Tout.

Beaucoup d'autres chercheurs ont apporté des informations sur l'attitude de Hegel à l'égard de la Révolution de Haïti qu'il a soutenue dans des textes allemands qui ne sont pas encore traduits en français. C'est pourquoi, l'auteur de ce livre essaie de tenir compte des progrès effectués dans les recherches portant sur Hegel, d'élargir le débat sur « Les questions africaines du hégélianisme » et d'ouvrir quelques pistes de recherche qui peuvent intéresser au premier chef les chercheurs africains.

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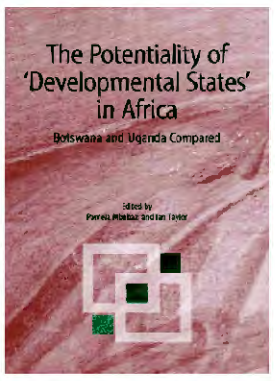

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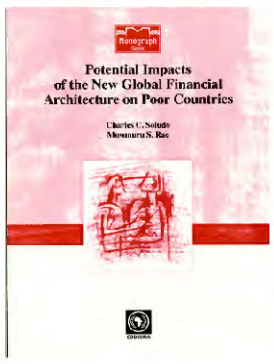

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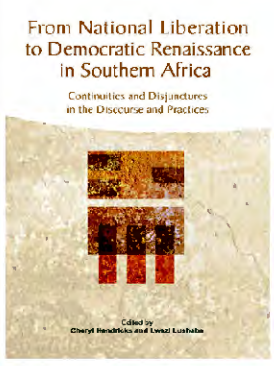

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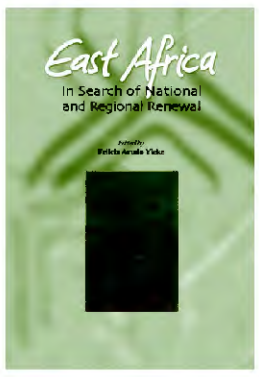

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