# Inaugural Statements

## A Milestone in the Study of Africa

So, the *Africa Review of Books* (ARB) is born! The road that has been traveled to produce this maiden edition of the *Review* has been a long one and the obstacles that have had to be surmounted numerous. In fact, at a point, such was the magnitude of the difficulties encountered that some were tempted either to give up on the project altogether or to postpone it indefinitely or even modify it so radically as to alter its identity as an autonomous product of the African social research community. But many others also held on tenaciously to the dream, convinced that the impeccable ideals that underpinned it necessitated the investment of all the energies required to bring it to fruition. That is why the appearance of this first issue of the *Review* carries with it a sense of historic moment which, hopefully, will also mark the beginning of a new phase, indeed, even a turning point in the study of Africa. It is for this reason too that there is a pervasive sense of celebration accompanying the issuance of the maiden edition of the publication.

There are other reasons for celebrating the publication of the maiden issue of the *Review*. From an institutional point of view, the birth of the publication not only represents a major success in realising one of the major strategic projects of CODESRIA in its role as the apex pan-African social research organisation but also marks the triumph of the collective will of African scholars as symbolised by the Council and the victory of perseverance over despair. We in the CODESRIA Secretariat share fully in this sense of celebration and, in doing so, thank all those who by deeds and/or encouragement helped to bring the project to fruition. We also congratulate the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) and the Centre for Research in Social Anthropology (CRASC) on their selection by the CODESRIA Executive Committee at its meeting held in July 2002 in Maputo, Mozambique, as the two institutions to pilot the production of the *Review*. Theirs is a mandate with clear historic proportions; their success in responding to the challenges of the responsibility that has been thrust on them will also be the success of all African scholars. Working closely with them, the CODESRIA Secretariat will strive to ensure that the *Review* establishes and sustains a reputation as a standard bearer of the best in the study of Africa.

The discussion on the need for a review of books published in Africa dates back about a decade at least. It arose from debates within CODESRIA networks about the state and future of African Studies at a time when Afro-pessimist sentiments/perspectives were in the ascendancy and the temptation to denigrate Africa was high. While international scholarly publishing on Africa maintained its high tempo, even if research funding was more uncertain, the quality of much of what was being published and the politics of the dissemination and appropriation of knowledge left much to be desired. Furthermore, the mismatch between the concepts that were in vogue and the changes taking place across Africa pointed to a crisis of theory that was clearly in need of being redressed. And yet, the structure of power in the production of knowledge about the continent made such a task of redress as difficult as it was hazardous. The high priests of African Studies increasingly constituted themselves into a closed network of gate keepers who retained and reproduced their power and influence through an incestuous form of inbreeding and selective cooptation that frustrated as many people as it excluded and, in so doing, underdeveloped the study of the continent. In that context, contestations built up on agenda-setting and methodology in the study of Africa as the gulf between interpretative frames employed in critical African knowledge centres and most of those emanating from outside the continent grew ever wider. Not a few scholars were to observe that the trend also seemed to point to the mass production of second and third rate studies on a continent which was increasingly typologised as a "basket case" in a self-justifying logic of thinking. It was a state of affairs which was considered unacceptable not so much because there was no crisis in Africa or even in its higher education system as that the difficulties confronting the continent, serious as they are, call for nothing less than the best quality analyses possible as a first step towards overcoming the problems. Regrettably, much of what was being published did not provide those kinds of analyses.

Most of the participants in the discussion about the need for an African review of books felt that the institution that was best placed to undertake the project was CODESRIA for the simple reason that its institutional mandate as set out in its Charter, and its record of achievement in the period since its founding in 1973, made it the natural choice for hosting such a bold new initiative. In the subsequent consultations that followed, ideas were exchanged on alternative possibilities for the content, design, financing, and management of the project as a sustained initiative capable of contributing to the transformation of the study of Africa. The quality and range of the consultations and exchanges that took place, and the sheer commitment that was displayed even in those early days meant that the publication was conceived from the outset as a *collective* venture belonging to the entire African social research community in all its diversity. Little wonder then that when an unscrupulous attempt was made to hijack and privatize the *Review* in the course of 2000 and 2001, it met with a stout, all-round resistance that also signalled the need to accelerate the production of the publication. An open call for submission of proposals to host the *Review* was issued out of which the FSS and CRASC emerged as the institutions selected, the former with overall editorial responsibility, the latter with responsibility for the French language editorial content. The *Review* will be published twice yearly in the first instance; the ambition over the long haul is to make it a quarterly publication.

The emergence of the ARB should serve to fill several important gaps in the study of Africa. For one, it will function as a critical multidisciplinary forum for debate on trends and directions in African Studies. For another, it will bring interesting work published in Africa but which are not sufficiently well-disseminated to the attention of a wider reading audience both within and outside the continent. Also, by the range and diversity of books which it is able to cover through the reviews that it publishes, the publication will not only help to alleviate the worst effects of the book famine that continues to afflict some parts of the continent but also serve as a useful reading guide to students and staff alike as they wade through the vast literature that is produced annually on Africa. Furthermore, it will provide a forum for reviews from Africa of studies published on the continent by the big African Studies community that exists outside the region. In serving as a critical platform for responding to these studies, the *Review* is expected to contribute to redressing the growing culture of scientific impunity in African Studies in which excessive liberties are taken with evidence, method and theory on a scale not comparable to what goes on in the study of other regions of the world. It is in this sense that the *Review* can be expected to be a standard bearer in the study of Africa. In this role, it will regularly draw attention to interesting new ideas and innovations and, at the same time, challenge the tendentiousness, lack of rigour, and reliance on a shaky empirical foundation that is all too prevalent today. To do so with credibility, the entire editorial team of the *Review* will strive not only to ensure that the materials included in the publication meet the highest standards of quality but also reflect the best of the diverse interests and perspectives of the social research community.

Obviously, the sustainability of the *Review* will depend, in large measure, on the quality, quantity and diversity of the contributions that are received. We will, therefore, be counting on readers to submit reviews and longer thematic essays to the editors of the publication for consideration. As has become established in CODESRIA institutional practice, we pledge to all contributors that their input will be treated with professionalism both in the exercise of editorial judgement on the material received and in the commissioning of peer assessments as may be necessary. For, it is only through such a careful and sensitive nurturing of the seed that has just begun to germinate that we will as a community be able to guarantee its growth into a giant *Iroko* tree, standing tall and proud in the forest as an undisputed number one. Together, we will do it!

**Adebayo Olukoshi,**
***Executive Secretary,***
***CODESRIA***

## FSS Welcomes the *Africa Review of Books*

Book reviews have been for long a vital component of academic and professional journals. Indeed, some journals have been prized as much for their reviews as for their articles, the former often occupying up to 50% of the space. Subsequently, a genre of publication has developed dedicated primarily to the review of books, interspersed with critical and analytical essays. One has in mind such celebrated publications as the *New York Review of Books* and the *London Review of Books*. More recently, *Biblio*, published in New Delhi, has come to represent an Asian (or Southern) counterpart vying with the established metropolitan Reviews for depth and analytical rigor. Evidently, the book reviews in such publications are more substantive and critical than those in the standard academic journals.

Up until recently, the review of African books has been the primary responsibility of journals of African studies based in Europe and the United States. One has in mind, among others, journals such as the *Journal of African History*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies, Journal of Modern African Studies*, *African Affairs*, or *African Studies Review*. More recently, Michigan State University has introduced a more extensive electronic review network through its H-Net Reviews.

While these journals and electronic media have done a commendable job of introducing and evaluating publications on Africa, they have suffered from two deficiencies. The first is the minimal participation of African academics in the reviewing process. The second is the relatively low coverage of books published within the continent itself, either because they fail to attract publicity or because they are published in African languages. *Africa Review of Books* is designed to redress this imbalance. *ARB* hopes to bring to the attention of a wider audience books published by young and promising African scholars as well as seminal works by veteran academics and writers. Moreover, it proposes to give prominence to the African voice that has hitherto been barely audible in the discussion of books on Africa and to dispel the Afro-pessimism that has become fashionable in some Western circles. Accordingly, most of the contributors to the *Review* are intended to be African scholars both in Africa and the Diaspora.

Moreover, *ARB* aspires to transcend the disciplinary straitjackets that have circumscribed most academic book reviews. It is intended to traverse traditional disciplinary boundaries by hosting reviews on art, literature, theater, film and the media as well as the established disciplines in the social sciences broadly defined. It is our hope that the *Review* will provide a forum for the broadest possible coverage of works on Africa as well as critical and in-depth discussions around works of seminal importance, thereby fostering a vibrant intellectual climate and a culture of debate around African development issues. Works to be reviewed will include a broad range of publications ranging from the portrayal of daily life to changes of continental and global significance.

Emanating from this broad mandate, the *Review* will have as its audience primarily the scholarly communities concerned with Africa, both inside the continent and abroad. These include academics, researchers, graduate students and writers. In addition, the *Review* also targets the non-academic audience with strong interest in Africa. Included in this category are policy makers, non-governmental and civil society organizations, the donor community, and the general reading public.

The Forum for Social Studies is proud to have been selected to host what is intended to be a forum for the critical review and analysis of publications on Africa. Although FSS has been concerned largely with national affairs, it has always viewed these within the broader continental context. This has been made possible by the long-standing association of its leadership with continental and sub-regional research networks such as CODESRIA and OSSREA. The hosting of *ARB* draws FSS even more into the continental orbit. It is a challenge for which we feel the experience of the last six years has prepared it adequately. It is a calling to which it responds with no illusion of the hard work involved but also with a determination to give the best and the utmost of what it has. For this is an initiative that addresses a long-standing need and realizes the dream of the African social science research community.

While we are prepared to give all, we do earnestly hope that we will also get the reciprocal support of the academic and research community concerned with Africa as well as the non-academic groups and individuals for whom this initiative marks a turning point in the critical discussion of African publications and African issues. The success of such a venture depends as much on the widest and most active participation of the audience as in the dedication and hard work of the editorial staff.

**Forum for Social Studies**

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## L'ARB, un plus pour les Sciences sociales et l'Afrique

Voici la *Revue Africaine des Livres*. Le Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales en Afrique (CODESRIA) en a décidé le lancement à l'occasion du trentième anniversaire de sa fondation. Pareille commémoration, loin d'être formelle, s'accompagne d'un plus dans le dispositif mis en place pour une meilleure connaissance de notre continent. Le Centre de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle (CRASC), Oran (Algérie), et qui édite un certain nombre de publications (dont la revue *INSANYAT*) se félicite, suite à l'appel d'offres lancé par le CODESRIA, de participer à cette œuvre collective africaine aux côtés du Forum des sciences sociales (FSS) d'Addis-Abeba (Éthiopie). C'est manifestement un nouveau et double défi que le CRASC a accepté de relever : participer à une entreprise africaine tout en élargissant l'horizon intellectuel de ses chercheurs.

La *Revue Africaine des Livres/African Review of Books* (ARB) porte en elle une double exigence académique et sociale, celle de lire l'Afrique. Face à la *politique* de mondialisation (dixit Pierre Bourdieu), il devient impératif de présenter ce qui s'écrit en Afrique et sur l'Afrique.

De l'Afrique, il n'est question le plus souvent que de guerres, de pandémies, de catastrophes humanitaires et naturelles, de sécheresse, de maladies endémiques. Par contre il n'est que rarement question de toutes celles et tous ceux qui, dans leurs universités, dans leurs centres de recherches, essaient de produire des connaissances toujours plus fines sur notre continent. Il est vrai que le caractère extraverti des économies africaines, pour la plupart tournées vers les pays du Nord, la faiblesse des flux internes de circulation des informations scientifiques et culturelles, le tout accentué par les rivalités inhérentes aux découpages territoriaux, ont certainement contribué aux cloisonnements et à l'enfermement dont souffre la recherche scientifique dans nos pays.

En effet, cet enfermement dans les espaces nationaux ne pouvait qu'amener à la question du statut des savoirs autochtones : sont-ils condamnés à rester de simples consommateurs passifs des connaissances et des paradigmes produits ailleurs, ou, au mieux, à être des sous-traitants dont le rôle est de produire de l'information ? Ainsi l'accès à la connaissance de l'Afrique et sur l'Afrique se trouve-t-il être tributaire des sources et données extra-africaines. Il n'est que rarement question également de ce savoir capital que constituent les travaux académiques qui dynamisent le processus d'accumulation des connaissances d'origine endogène et des efforts fournis pour le maintenir à un niveau scientifique international.

En fait, la connaissance, produit social par excellence, ne peut se déployer qu'en fonctionnant comme un capital commun et en circulant à l'intérieur de la communauté scientifique africaine d'une part, et entre cette dernière et le reste du monde d'autre part.

C'est là envisager une stratégie de développement basée sur l'analyse et l'accumulation des savoirs. C'est le sociologue Jacques Berque, fin connaisseur de l'Afrique du Nord, qui écrivait quelque part : « il n'y a pas de sociétés sous-développées, il n'y a que des sociétés sous-analysées ».

La finalité de la *Revue Africaine des Livres*/ARB est justement de servir de lien et de trait d'union entre tous ceux qui portent un intérêt scientifique à l'Afrique, en faisant connaître le plus largement possible ce qui est produit ici et ailleurs ; en impulsant des échanges dans la continuité de ce que font le CODESRIA et d'autres institutions de recherche en Afrique et à travers le monde.

En prenant le pari de la *Revue Africaine des Livres*/ARB dans sa version en langue française, le CRASC mesure les risques, notamment celui de ne pouvoir être exhaustif dans l'exposition de la production intellectuelle.

Avec l'aide du CODESRIA le défi est relevé, le risque assumé ; ils sont à la mesure d'une ambition commune dont le CRASC se fait fort d'être l'artisan : nous mettrons tout en œuvre en effet pour être à la hauteur de la confiance qui a été placée en nous et de la responsabilité qui nous incombe, en comptant bien entendu sur la collaboration de tout un chacun. Vos contributions sont les bienvenues. Elles feront la *Revue Africaine des Livres*.

**CRASC**

# Political Science as an Obstacle to Understanding the Problem of the State and Political Violence in Africa

**Michael Chege**

**States and Power in Africa**
by Jeffrey Herbst
Princeton University Press, 296 pp., $21.95, ISBN 0691010285

**The Graves Are Not Yet Full**
by Bill Berkeley
Basic Books, 2002, 320 pp., $17.00, ISBN 0465006426

Some thirty-two years ago, Albert O. Hirschman published an article in the journal *World Politics* entitled "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Our Understanding".[1] In that article, he inveighed against what he called "the mindless use of paradigms" in Latin America by North American scholars who imagined that with the use of a single sharp edged analytical model, they could unlock the door to the mystery of underdevelopment in Latin America. By way of illustration, he analysed what were then two newly published books on Latin America: John Womack's now classic book, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York, Alfred Knopf, 1968), and James L. Payne's *Conflict in Colombia* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968).

Womack's book provided a well-balanced survey of Zapata's role in the Mexican revolution, juxtaposed to the rivals and the socio-political forces he had to reckon with. By producing a fine textured narrative in that manner, Womack provided the reader with clear evidence that in a number of key junctures of the revolution, things might have gone some other way had key political actors decided differently; that is, he provided for what is now called the role of human agency without compromising the structural limits (physical, economic or social) which Zapata among others confronted. Payne's book by contrast was judged an exemplar of bad social science in Latin American studies. It explained that continual and perverse domestic violence in Colombia, as he saw it, originated from deeply-rooted culture of mistrust, cynicism and lack of principles, and fatalism among Colombian political leaders and their ever-divided following. "Colombians" he wrote, "are never on the brink of anything". That, of course, is quite unlike their counterparts in North America. To Payne, Colombian political culture explained *all* the puzzles of what lay behind the factional violence in Colombia. One key causal variable explained the entire Columbian political tragedy, at least till the late 1960s. This conclusion provoked a withering attack from Hirschman, who pointed out that, contrary to that sweeping conclusion, there had been long periods of political calm and functioning democratic rule in Colombia. In addition, North America had its share of untrustworthy politicians, citing the then US president Richard Nixon, a year before the Watergate scandal broke. In sum, Hirschman recommended, it paid to examine the plurality of the causes behind the cataclysmic events we see in the developing world, rather than become transfixed by elegant, sure-fire models that mislead fundamentally. "After so many failed prophesies", he asked, "is it not in the interest of social science to embrace complexity be it at some sacrifice of its claim to predictive power?"

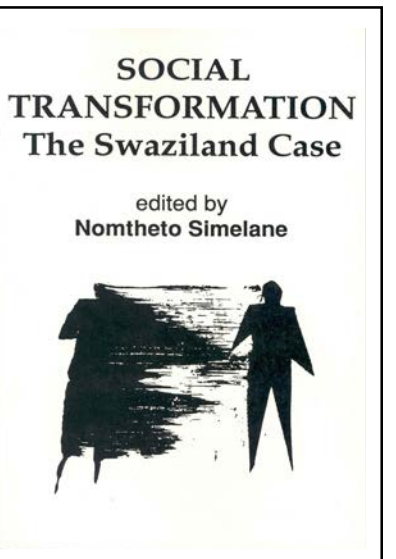
Between 1970 and 2003, the bulk of social sciences have gone in the opposite direction from this injunction. And nowhere is this felt as much as it is in African development studies. Africa south of the Sahara is home to forty-five states that in some ways share little with each other except a continent. The region has more languages (over 1,000) than any other region on earth, and its geographical and cultural diversity is reinforced by different legal and educational systems that draw heavily on the ex-colonial powers—Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal. In response to external pressures during the slave trade, colonialism and years of anti-black racism from the West, the people of Africa have evolved a reactive identity—as Africans—which tends to be taken at face value; that is, they tend to be considered as owners of an ancient homogenous "African culture" with an all-African political behaviour to go with it. No region in the developing world is more subject to the crass modelling and generalities that Hirschman rails against than Africa. Few areas have been subjected to as much academic stereotyping. And this is especially true with respect to the recurring violence and state failure in different parts of the continent in the last decade. The object of this article is to illustrate this phenomenon with two recent publications. We limit ourselves to the 1990s.

### *The State and Political Violence in Africa in the 1990s*

The 1990s opened with much hope for African politics. Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 28 years of incarceration for opposition to white supremacist rule in South Africa—a system whose very affront to African dignity provoked near-unanimity among African peoples. With most economies in distress—a result of the agricultural commodity crash and structural adjustment policies in the 1980s—mass protest against authoritarian regimes began to pick up especially in francophone West Africa (Benin, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Cameroon). But this was also true in the English-speaking countries of Africa—Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, as well as Mobutu's Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi (all ex-Belgian colonies). And with the Cold War winding down, Western support for incumbent anti-communist dictators lacked justification. The withdrawal of US support to the Siad Barre regime in Somalia and Samuel Doe's tyranny in Liberia sent them tottering into collapse since they had no local roots. Democratic rule and market economies were expected to be the rule.

Much has been written by way of evaluation of democratic governance in Africa in the 1990s.[2] To make a long story short, there have been successes but also many disappointments. Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa and Benin have managed to switch government from the old ruling parties at least once peacefully through the ballot. On the roster of disappointments, Burundi's elections led to a Tutsi-led coup d'état in 1993 (against an elected Hutu government) that partially inspired the 1994 Rwanda genocide (of 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus by Hutu extremists). That disappointment must be extended to the countries now embroiled in violent domestic conflict that had their origins in the aborted transitions of the 1990s: civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, factional violence in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville, anarchy and lack of a central government in Somalia since 1991, a thirty-year old civil war in the Sudan, and violence and chaos in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire since December 1999, and the Central African Republic since 1994. Especially in Southern and Eastern Africa, HIV-AIDS threatens to alter the demographic profile of African societies in drastically negative ways. The population profile is expected to reflect a bulge in the very young and the very old, which amounts to an economic and social catastrophe. And yet there are exceptions, like Senegal and Uganda, where government-backed anti-AIDS education has drastically reduced the spread of the disease.

Still, in the theme of diversity of African states mentioned earlier, there are many African states that never make the headlines, where life, though characterized by poverty and underdevelopment, goes on normally, notwithstanding the emaciated UNICEF "African" poster child, who presumably represents all of Africa. No African country in the end is like any other; and no region in a state is quite like another. Tanzania, Uganda, and Senegal come to mind. To say that good scholarship must reflect that is not to argue against overarching theories of politics in Africa. Rather it is to insist that we distinguish good theory by its capacity to survive empirical tests drawn from these diverse experiences. Otherwise it should be rejected.


This rare book provides the social and economic history of Swaziland and portrays the ways in which the colonial experience dramatically transformed the Swazi population and unleashed new social forces. Among the various topics that the book explores in fresh and insightful ways are labour migration, the impact of colonial rule on the aristocracy, the growth of settler and cash crop farmers, the industrialization of agriculture and the appropriation of peasant labour as well as the mining industry.
ISBN: 1 870784-0X-X (Soft Cover)
Price US$35.00


### *A Tale of Two Books on States on Political Conflict in Africa*

The reversal of this baleful trend in at least ten African states is required in and of itself for the sake of the lives of the people who live there. But political stability is also important because it tends to affect neighboring countries in fundamental economic and political ways: the strain from refugees streaming across borders, the dangers of "hot pursuit" across state frontiers, the importation of illegal arms into stable and peaceful regions. Political instability in any region is a seamless web that affects all the neighbouring states. We can see this in the spillover of the Colombia war into the frontier regions of Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela. National security in African sub-regions (i.e. the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and the Great Lakes region) will have to be a collective effort. In the past year, a group of concerned African leaders have pledged themselves to accomplish that goal under the newly constituted African Union and the New Partnership for African Development. In June of 2002, the G-8 summit of the leading developed nations in Canada pledged initial support for African peace-making and economic reforms. Against the backdrop of these new initiatives, it is

worth taking a closer look at the root sources of political instability and domestic violence in African states.

The debate about the causes and cures of African political instability is not new. In the Victorian era, David Livingstone recommended European colonization and the "three C's" - Christianity, civilization and commerce - as antidote. Under the aegis of the IMF and the World Bank, the three C's today translate into "good governance" (i.e. like that of European countries), civil society and market economies. Behind these nostrums lie two conflicting kinds of explanation for Africa's special susceptibility to predatory politics. One kind of explanation seeks to identify a single all-encompassing malevolent factor, in the manner of James L. Payne. Thus Victorian-era "race science" was fascinated by the supposed impact of Africa's torrid climate and inclement geography on the Negro psyche, one of the theories that blossomed at Yale in the 1920s in the Ellsworth Huntington school of "geographical determinism". Huntington, whose academic escapes might have led to the closure of the Geography Department at Yale after Nazi propaganda became better known following the Second World War, argued that the process of natural selection among the races was stimulated by climate. Colder and temperate climates, like that of New Haven, produced people with a commitment to hard work as compared to the impoverished whites he had observed in "sub-tropical" South Africa.[3] Another version of the single-factor causal variable is the idea that there is a violently intractable and erratic quality inherent in all African cultures. Credit for the prime exponents of this perspective in recent times deserves to be given to Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, who argue that, given their cultural background (witchcraft included), African elites have a vested interest in perpetuating a violent disorder in Africa because they gain from it.[4] Predictably, white-ruled South Africa and Arab North Africa are exempted from the Chabal-Daloz rules of African politics.

Both the "geography" and "culture" causal variables have been embraced at various times by right-wing thinkers in the West. Varieties of both were used to justify British colonization in Africa; a phenomenon the author is personally familiar with. In the post-colonial era, however, proponents of single-factor theories have been drawn from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Thus the classic left-wing, nationalist explanation for Africa's political woes puts the blame on Western exploitation of the natural and human resources of the continent under the slave trade, colonialism and then "neo-colonialism." Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is the paradigmatic text for this line of thinking.[5] Just as the new right argues that the causes for African state failure is to be traced to *domestic* causes (physical or cultural), the old African left attributed all African economic and political crises to *external* factors: Africa's exploitation by the North through the slave trade and colonialism in the past and by multinational corporations today using the local "petit bourgeoisie" as a front. Single factor explanations are in fact nothing but the polemical arguments of the old left turned on their head.[6]

The search for the single cause thus spans the ideological spectrum. But there is an alternative and more profitable approach that distances itself from such single-factor theories, whether these derive from Victorian racism or leftist anti-imperialism. Rather than seek one culprit, this approach examines the plurality of possible causes for Africa's catastrophic politics—among them poor leadership, reckless social and economic policies, corruption involving local and external parties, contrived ethnic and religious hatreds and meddling at the regional and international level. This favours a country-specific approach over continent-wide generalizations. In a particular case of national decline different combinations of all or some of these factors may be at work. The debate between those who favour complex explanations of this type and those who seek a single answer dominates African studies to this day. This is true of analyses of political violence.

In contemporary American political science, *States and Power in Africa* represents the latest version of the first kind of theory, a holistic theory that aspires to explain, once and for all, what has bedevilled Africans in their traditional, colonial and post-colonial efforts to build viable states. It has received spectacular pre-publication accolades from leading scholars at Harvard and Columbia universities. Though persuasively written and highly impressive in its theoretical formulation, it is tendentious in its use of factual information about African politics and insufferably condescending towards African political capabilities. That this book provoked praise rather than criticism is a sign of how little some sections of the political science community expect of African leaders and peoples. For the message it conveys is that in the "last several centuries" Africans (rulers and subjects) have rationally adjusted to Sisyphus-like failures to build functional governments, unable to counteract the geographical adversities that lie at the root of their political problems**.**

Bill Berkeley's *The Graves Are Not Yet Full* (a phrase taken from Government-sponsored hate radio during the 1994 Rwanda genocide), despite its misleading title, is a different and more informative book. Written by a professional investigative journalist, the book is based on eyewitness evidence and personal interviews, often undertaken at some personal risk, regarding the actual causes of political violence in the continent's worst trouble spots in the 1990s: Liberia, Congo, Sudan, KwaZulu (South Africa), and Rwanda. Berkeley interviewed some of the most unsavoury characters in recent African history and some of them did not like the findings he confronted them with. Gatsha Buthelezi ejected Berkeley from his office in Cape Town; the Mobutu regime imprisoned and deported him from Zaire in 1993. In clear and refreshing prose, Berkeley disparages commonplace assertions that political conflict arises from "ancient tribal rivalries" or from demographic pressure or the absence of functioning states, or irrational national boundaries (a factor that Jeffrey Herbst makes much of in *States and Power)*. Instead, he traces many of Africa's wars to a strategy favoured by besieged tyrants who, often with external support, deliberately instigate new-fangled ethnic hatreds against their reformist opponents, using hired thugs and militias recruited from the burgeoning population of restive and despairing youth produced by decaying economies.

Jeffrey Herbst starts from the premise that distribution of governmental authority over a defined geographic space determines whether "the government will be stable or unstable, whether it will be a dictatorship …(and) whether we shall have rule of law". *States and Power in Africa* skilfully marries Victorian-era geopolitics with trendy "soft rational choice theory" (my term) derived from economics, to produce an erudite and initially persuasive "huge comparison" to explain the comparative absence of stable and functioning governments in African countries. Its core argument is that given Africa's "inhospitable" geography (bad soil, heat, poor rainfall) and low population densities, pre-colonial African rulers, European colonialists, and post-independence governments chose to "broadcast" their power only as far as the high costs of doing so permitted them to. In effect, this meant that the reach of governmental authority did not extend very far from African capital cities, many of which are located on the coast, far from the heartland. Given the vastness of the land, its poor soil and low population densities, inhabitants of the interior, according to this argument, can defy central authority and prevail. Since, "states are only viable if they are able to control the territory defined by their borders", African governments have repeatedly failed the test of establishing order nationwide. The result is "civil war in some countries, the presence of millions of refugees throughout the continent, and the adoption of highly dysfunctional policies by many leaders".

According to this argument, pre-colonial African rulers - monarchs, tribal chiefs, or clan heads - avoided establishing firm territorial boundaries and hence needed no maps; instead, they sought to control people, warring for "women, cattle and slaves", it is not stated in which order. Fixed territory, however, is one thing the Africans will not fight over. European colonial powers did no better: in fact they reinforced the pre-existing trend. They too pretended that they governed the colonies from border to border without ever doing so, because they lacked the coercive capacity to do so. They did not have sufficient armed forces and covering the "hostile geography" set the limits of how far in the land they could travel—mostly on horseback. But the colonial powers were recognized as the incumbent government at the Berlin conference of 1884. African states therefore survived by dint of international recognition, rather than the Weberian "monopoly of the use of force in a given territory".

The colonial experience set the stage for similar pretensions by post-independence governments. The colonization of Africa, we are informed, was a superficial and incomplete affair that, contrary to accepted wisdom, changed hardly African rulership at all. It was this shallow colonization and incomplete presence of power in entire territories that sowed the seed for Africa's current crop of political disasters in national governance. Thus, in the post-colonial era, international benefits like foreign aid and international legal recognition of statehood were accorded to incumbent ruling elites without any demand on them to demonstrate full internal governmental control. This approach on the part of donor governments (faithfully followed by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations) removed the incentive for African governments to "broadcast power" from the capital to the districts in the remote periphery. To get the external benefits of international recognition all one needed was control of the capital and its immediate environs. The result is that African rulers have had no incentive to build effective road networks to cover entire territories, no compelling reason to tax entire populations, to register land ownership nationwide, to control the circulation of national currencies, or to establish practical citizenship codes. In Roman times, Pliny made the famous statement that there is "always something new out of Africa." Writing from America, Herbst now declares that "there is nothing new out of Africa". All we are witnessing are variations of the chaotic traditional rule clumsily failing to extend power to all parts of

the land, which results in violence and instability.

Comparison is an integral part of Herbst's project. So Africa's experience in state making is juxtaposed to that of Western Europe. Unlike Africa, he argues, Europe was blessed with politically congenial geographic conditions and a compact population, the control of which became the obsession of European state-makers in their perennial wars from the tenth century onwards. European war-making over population, land and state frontiers, in turn, produced an attachment to boundaries and national monuments, a national consciousness and patriotism that Africans have no experience of. From Charles Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States*, he distils the lesson that European war–making required the financial and human mobilization that became essential features of national states. So states made war, then war made states. To her detriment, we are informed, Africa has historically avoided such constructive inter-state violence—one that produces political supremacy over whole territories. Africa's colonial conquest in the nineteenth century and her decolonization in the mid-twentieth century were both "astonishingly peaceful" processes.

This in itself is an astonishing statement. Consider the fact that the extermination of the Herero people in present-day Namibia by German colonialists is listed by Hannah Arendt in her *Origins of Totalitarianism* as the trial phase of the Nazi holocaust. The skeletons are being reburied en masse as I write these lines and there is a pending international case filed against Germany by the Herero people. In Britain's conquest of the Kenyan highlands, Richard Meinertzhagen, a leader in the military campaigns against the Nandi peoples made the following entry in his diary in December 1902: "I gave orders that every living thing except children should be killed without mercy…Every soul was either shot or bayoneted"[7] One could go on to describe the horrors of Leopold's Congo Free State that appear in Adam Hoschild's much-praised *King Leopold's Ghost.* The roster of colonial massacres in Africa is a long one. May be it does not cover the entire continent, and there could very well have been cases of "astonishingly peaceful" colonization. But that is beside the point. In a world of objective scholarship, generalizations about Africa *as a whole* must not only reflect the diversity in modes of conquest but also explain it. The same things have to be said about Herbst's comment on peaceful decolonisation.

Having been denied the experience of full-blooded nationalistic wars over borders by historic experience as ordered by geography, Herbst argues, Africans lack state-legitimising militaristic monuments like the Nelson Column at Trafalgar Square in London, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin (where the Nazi Wehrmacht commenced its marches to broadcast German power across European borders), and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Rather than emotion- arousing, country- specific songs, African national anthems are but hymns shared with neighbouring states (like South Africa's *Nkosi Sikelele Africa,* God Bless Africa). Even though no continent can be said to be regular, Africa is said to be an "irregularly sized continent" containing a "geography of losers" in West Africa. Malians are judged "schizophrenic" for holding to a national anthem that pledges loyalty to both Mali and Africa. Though he stops short of actually advocating the benefits of European style war-making for Africans, Herbst recommends international support only for states and breakaway regions which successfully establish effective control and order, irrespective of current African boundaries. The cure for African political instability, in other words, lies in external donors providing support only to states that "broadcast power" in all the land they claim, ignoring current boundaries. But why should foreign aid be expected to do the trick after a heavy dosage of it, as we know, failed to induce even the minimal task of macroeconomic management under structural adjustment in the 1990s?

*States and Power in Africa* makes much of the intellectual benefits of sweeping generalizations, of "huge comparisons" across continents. But if its basic theory were true, the Australian continent would have been the most politically desolate place on the planet earth. Semi-tropical Australia violates all the rules of successful state building as laid down by Herbst to an even greater extent than Africa does. Unless one wants to perceive the extermination of Australian Aborigines as an international war, Australia has fought no border wars in a century of existence as an independent state. Its most memorable nationalistic battle took place in Gallipoli in modern Turkey in 1915, in the course of the First World War. In fact sports, not war, has been the instrument of choice in consolidating Australian nationhood; witness the skilful use of the Sydney Olympics to heal the wounds between whites and the Aborigines. As for "hostile geography", only seven per cent of Australian soil is classified as arable. The rest is a combination of arid scrubland and desert, the "outbacks". It has a population density of two people per square kilometre compared to 28 for sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 60 percent of the population lives in the small south-east corner of Victoria and New South Wales, with the rest scattered in distant peripheries - just the kind of "hinterland state" format which Herbst insists poses "severe difficulties in state consolidation of power". And yet Australia is not Mauritania or Chad, which Herbst typifies as African "hinterland states". This would suggest that the power of human agency, the initiative of state-builders (or lack thereof), rather than nature or war, greatly determines Africa's political outcomes—something Berkeley's narrative never ignores.

Or consider the case of the Middle East, the real bastion of boundary wars in densely populated lands: Israel versus Palestine from 1948 to the present; Lebanon versus Syria (1972-89); Iran versus Iraq for eight years in the 1980s; the Six Day War of 1967, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, all the way down to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Population density in Middle East and North Africa is higher than that of Eastern and Western Europe. A recent collection of papers commissioned by the US Social Science Research Council and edited by Steven Heinemann, (*War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*) found that, overall, interstate wars had actually set back the process of state-formation and consolidation. This is contrary to the Herbst thesis. In Africa likewise, a case-by-case examination that we have done of African states, past and present, as well as by geographic zone, yielded no discernible statistical correlation between governmental effectiveness and the physical environment. Functioning, failing and failed states can be found in the same environment and the same historical circumstances.

Herbst's huge comparisons and the grand theory then are intellectually provocative - to say the very least - but they do not stand empirical tests. Bill Berkeley, by contrast, stays clear of formal grand theories and yet provides an illuminating discussion of a number of actual wars observed at first hand. Yet, like Womack, Berkeley has a low-key theory of political violence in Africa that is keenly supported by first hand evidence. The domestic wars of the 1990s in the countries he visited had no redeeming value, even when they traversed state frontiers. None of them could have survived without the underhand support of an external actor supporting one side in its own interests. He thus flays the United States, and especially its Africa policy under Ronald Reagan as conducted by Chester Crocker, the then US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. And yet he never strays from the centrality of the role of domestic causes that sparked these wars: the comical but deadly Samuel Doe regime in Liberia (supported by the US) as it rigged elections and attempted ethnocide in Nimba country; the northern Sudanese Islamic front which espoused a racist-cum-religious crusade against the Christians and animists of Southern Sudan, who are further victimized by local predators in the guise of liberators, like John Garang and Riek Macher; the apartheid regime's covert support (with US clandestine assistance) for "Zulu warriors" who butchered African National Congress supporters in what came to be wrongly called "black-on-black violence" in line with western stereotypes of African and African-American propensity for fratricide. In all these scenes, Berkeley brings you penetrating and critical interviews with the authors of the violence, as clear a source as one would wish for on whence and why violence emerges.

In explaining the general nature of these wars, Berkeley considers the appropriate comparison to be that with specific acts of Twentieth Century mass slaughter in Europe, Asia and the Americas. The South African judge, Richard Goldstone, who has worked in Rwanda, ex-Yugoslavia and post-apartheid South Africa, tells Berkeley at one point that "inter-ethnic violence usually gets stoked by specific individuals intent on immediate political and material advantage". The most potent catalyst in the escalating cycle of violence, Berkeley shows, is fear-mongering and systematic propaganda that fosters ethnic hatred by specific power elites. Making perpetrators of mass killings accountable for their actions is the most likely solution to this. The book ends with an account of the convictions of the alleged organizers of Rwanda's 1994 genocide at the ongoing International Criminal Tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania. Here is a good reason why those interested in reducing political violence in Africa should welcome the new UN International Criminal Court at The Hague. More than anything else, the culture of impunity which lets perpetrators of massacres go free must be brought to a halt if the situation is to improve.

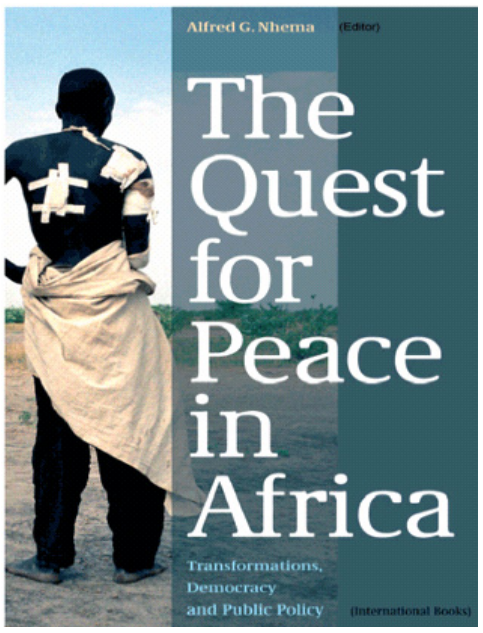
There is a growing intellectual gap in the search for the origins of political instability in Africa, a gap that opens between the sterile grand theorizing of ranking political scientists, and more informative field-based observations from writers without academic attachment. This divide recalls the famous dichotomy in Isaiah Berlin's essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox".[8] The hedgehog knows one big thing, while the fox knows many useful little things. Being a pluralist in both politics and research methods, Berlin was obviously partial to the foxes. In contemporary political studies on the state and violence in Africa, political scientists avidly pursue the one big cure-all theory. Following a tradition increasingly lost to political scientists, there is a new tradition based on field research and interview by independent writes and journalists. Such writers give a voice to ordinary Africans - as victims, villains, and as heroes - and bring us closer to an understanding of

the huge diversity in African states and in political conflicts in Africa. *The Graves Are Not Yet Full* falls into this emerging tradition of case studies by well-informed and committed writers and journalists such as Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold's Ghost*, and Michela Wrong's *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, easily the best book on the terminal years of the unmourned Mobutu regime.

As they seek solutions to Africa's deadly state crises, whether through multilateral channels like NEPAD or the UN or individually, African statesmen and scholars should do themselves a favour by avoiding demeaning language about their capabilities and the cataloguing of structural reasons why Africa is condemned to poor state management and recurrent violence. Given the tender mercies of the grand theorists, they should count themselves lucky that Berkeley and other journalists continue to write objective and well-informed books, especially now that, pace Jeffrey Herbst, there is a reasonable prospect for peace and renewed state-building in Angola, Sierra Leone, and – possibly – Congo and the Sudan. □

**Notes**

[1]Albert O. Hirschman, "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Our Understanding", *World Politics,* Vol.22, No3, 1970.
[2]Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997; John A. Wiseman, ed., *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, London, Routledge, 1995; John F, Clark and David E, Gardinier, *Political Reform in Francophone West Africa*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997.
[3] Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp 177-8
[4] Patrick Chabal and Jean-Paul Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999.
[5] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington DC, Howard University Press, 1974.
[6] Like the dependency thesis, the new right emphasizes stagnation as an inevitable outcome of the processes they espouse. Both sides deride the capacity of African ruling classes to deliver. Both sides also stress the ineluctable determinism of history in shaping the unwelcome events in Africa today.
[7]. Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary 1902-1906.*, London, Oliver and Boyd, 1957, p.51.
[8] Isaiah Berlin, "The Hegdehog and the Fox" in Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, London, Penguin Press, 1978.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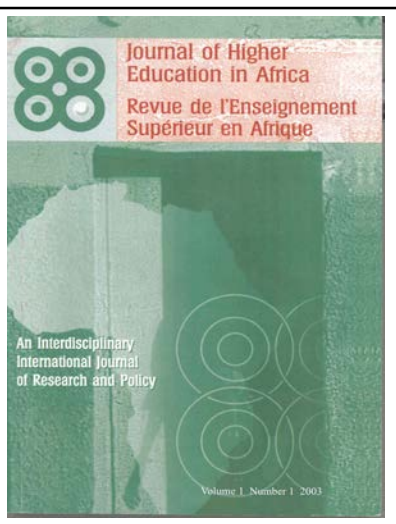


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# The Rwandan Genocide

**Urusaro Alice Karekezi**

**When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda**
by Mahmood Mamdani

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Any student of Rwanda could observe that the 1994 genocide has induced a number of persons and organizations to devote their research capacities to document and explain it. There is no doubt that these analyses have contributed greatly to a better understanding of the Rwanda crisis, especially to the questions of how and why it happened. It is also evident that these analyses have been concerned with a certain mode of knowledge and have privileged certain research questions at the expense of others. Scholarship on the genocide has been divided between a dominant position that sees the violence as the instrument of choice of a select Rwandan political elite and a second position that views the violence as yet another example, though a particularly brutal one, of primordial passions frequently occurring in terra incognita, or as an outcome of "state failure".

Anybody reading the literature on the genocide would note three weaknesses. The first one is related to the fact that the research field is overwhelmingly dominated by "grand theories" explaining the outbreak of violence in terms of macro-level political, economic, or socio-cultural factors at play in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. Second, the micro-level studies tend to identify individuals rather than processes when accounting for the genocide. More importantly, they tend to focus on the elite actors or victims, and within this latter group, often on Tutsi. Finally, in the smaller body of research attempting to answer the question of why so many people killed those with whom they were living side by side, few have tried to answer an equally puzzling question: whether, when and how taking this into consideration would affect the durability of peace. In this regard, this review sees Mahmood Mamdani's *When Victims Become Killers,* published seven years after the genocide, both as a synthesis of early analyses and a contribution towards rescuing the debate which finds itself *dans l'impasse.*

In his recent study of the roots of the Rwandan genocide, Mahmood Mamdani makes clear from the outset his intention to distinguish himself from previous scholars by approaching his subject from a different theoretical and methodological angle. Criticizing the field of area studies for detaching the empirical and setting it up in opposition to the theoretical, Mamdani sets out to present something new: to re-think existing facts and realities in light of re-thoughts contexts (p. xiii, xiv).

Mamdani's stated objective in writing *When Victims Become Killers* was to "make the popular agency of the Rwandan genocide thinkable" (p. 8). In his view, most previous scholars have focused too heavily on the leadership, leaving unanswered the "truly troubling question" of how that tiny group could convince the majority to kill or to acquiesce in the killing of the minority (p, 7, 18). In response to this question, Mamdani casts the Rwandan genocide as a "native genocide": as the violence of "yesterday's victims who have turned around and insisted on becoming masters of their own lives" (p. 12-13). He attributes this turn of events to the perverted legacy of the colonially inspired native/settler dialectic: a version of the Hamitic myth whereby social and ethnic identities were racialized and politicized - Hutu transformed into a deprived native identity, Tutsi into a privileged settler identity - and set in opposition to [against] one another. The workings of this dialectic and the failure of the 1959 revolution to fully deconstruct it enabled the Hutu leadership of the mid-1990s to manipulate the political consciousness of its citizens and incited them to kill one another. While the privilege of the settler was abolished, the political relevance of these identities remained as the settler was subjected to the majority, and customarily inherited, power of the "native". In sum, it is Mamdani's view that had the Belgian colonialists not only racialized the Tutsi into a politically privileged settler class but also "victimized" the Hutu by consigning them to a life of political inferiority, then there would have been no 1994 genocide.

It is from this theoretical starting point that Mahmood Mamdani sets out to tackle his main analytical challenge: to determine how and when Hutu was made into a native identity and Tutsi into a settler identity (p. 14). In so doing, he makes a number of important contributions to the existing literature. His highly political focus serves to clearly elucidate the way that historical and cultural identities can, and have been, manipulated by (colonial and post-colonial) elites to suit (disastrous) political ends.

This point is an important one in combating the widely held perception that African civil wars are simply modern manifestations of age-old tribal animosities. This perception is supported and probably perpetuated by the media outside Africa with depictions such as those of the events in Rwanda in 1994. Mamdani's work tends to challenge this popular perception of ethnicity being the principal cause of such violence by exposing the highly political nature of the violence in the form of the state's action. Thus, his work is valuable in suggesting that the quality and intensity of the group violence witnessed in 1994 in Rwanda could recur elsewhere in the continent and outside it. Mamdani's critical historical analysis of the causes of genocide in Rwanda constitutes a contribution to the deconstruction of the ideology of genocide in Rwanda, widely based it has been on false and corrupted historical premises. This ideology played a vital role in the maturation and the onslaught of the acts of extermination of April-June 1994.

Secondly, perhaps one of the most original and important contributions of Mamdani is that he highlights the regional ramifications of a deep crisis. He offers a rich description of the regional context in which the Rwandan civil war and genocide unfolded, particularly with respect to the experience of the Tutsi diaspora in the Ugandan Army (pp. 159-184), but also with respect to the complex web of refugee and citizenship politics in the Congo and (to a lesser extent) Burundi (pp. 234-263). Afraid that the Banyarwanda (considered globally as settlers) would use national representation to acquire power locally, "indigenous" people came to oppose citizenship rights to them. In the DRC, for example, the immediate practical consequence of being defined a citizen of non-indigenous origins was the denial of "customary access" to land since one would then not have own one's own native authority (p.238). This empirical contribution is carried forward and usefully informs Mamdani's analytical conclusions, where he highlights the very real fact that any sustainable solution to the problems faced by Rwanda must possess a strong regional dimension (p. 280). At the heart of the conflict in the Great Lakes and in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is the issue of citizenship. By bringing to the debate on genocidal violence the feeling of marginalization by many in the continent, Mamdani points out to a multi-dimensional crisis (segregation of civic rights from cultural status, annihilationist xenophobia, nationality-based exclusion from participation, nationality as constraint on voluntary migration and a vector of forced migration, gender-based discrimination in nationality and migration, and nationality and statelessness. This is a concern which has yet to emerge as a key problem of the scholarship and activism in Africa today.

Finally, Mamdani's third key contribution can be found in his basic methodological claim that more effort needs to be made by scholars to usefully link the theoretical and the empirical. Anyone reading the published research on the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda is likely to be struck by the enormous number of studies produced on the topic by academics, journalists, and human rights activists. Important advances have been made in documenting and explaining the 1994 genocide. Yet, there is still a pressing need *to learn more on how to learn* about genocidal violence in Rwanda. Mamdani's work is a systematic critique of the methodological biases existing in the research field dominated by "grand theories", which analyze the genocide in terms of macro-level political, economic, or socio-cultural forces at work in Rwanda before 1994. A second bias is that within the emerging body of research focusing on the micro level, most of the analyses concentrate on individuals rather than processes when accounting for the genocide. Finally, even when looking at individuals, there is a tendency to focus on either the actions of elite actors or the detailed accounts of prisoners or survivors. This leads to implicit and explicit notions of political community and political action in Rwanda.

These important contributions aside, a number of conceptual, empirical, and methodological elements of Mamdani's work merit closer scrutiny. First, while Mamdani's focus on the political dimensions of the Rwandan crisis is certainly a strong point of his work, its extent and formulation may not be so. Indeed, Mamdani privileges the political at the expense of an adequate consideration of other factors and the interconnected nature of these factors with the political. Having usefully demonstrated how economic, social, historical, and cultural realities were co-opted and manipulated for political purposes, Mamdani assumes that once endowed with a political essence, these realities will automatically be most effectively dealt with through political means. This simplistic assumption, inspired by conceptual academic bias rather than the Rwandan reality, serves to obscure the nature of the many challenges Rwanda faces and misleads us as to the types of responses which are truly required. The political realm as a panacea permeates Mamdani's entire work but is laid bare in his concluding section on postgenocide reconstruction, where he argues that in order to achieve peace in Rwanda, "[o]ne needs to close with a sense of the real political obstacles that will face any attempt to democratize public life in postgenocide Rwanda" (p. 280).

A second conceptual shortcoming is found in the way that Mamdani equates correlation with causation, contribution with determinism. While Mamdani is on solid ground in illustrating the contributions of the colonial administration to the politicization of identity, it is not clear that he is equally successful in proving that, on the ground, this was the determining factor without which most, or at least many Rwandans would not have allowed the genocide to take place. While Mamdani identifies the problem of how this set-

tler/native dialectic took root in Rwanda as one of his main analytical challenges, he does not complete the causal link by devoting equal analytical attention to the related question of how this settler/native dialectic was subsequently transformed into individual decisions to kill.

This last conceptual shortcoming is related to a key methodological decision: namely, to deal with "existing facts" as presented by previous authors (without scrutinizing the rigor and relevance of these facts as distinct from the contexts in which they were presented), and to forego conducting substantive empirical research of his own. Mamdani seems to assume, rather than prove, that the political discourse of the native/settler narrative was sufficiently ingrained in the consciousness of ordinary Rwandans for it to become a determining factor in each person's decision to kill or not to kill. The question of how it was successfully transformed into an incitement to kill, and the role of other factors in this transformation and in individual decisions on whether or not to participate (such as threats to be killed if one did not kill, the promise of economic spoils, the dehumanization of the Tutsis), are not sufficiently scrutinized. Of the twenty-two interviews cited in his book, only one pertains to the grassroots motivations of citizens to participate in the genocide, and this account is not only second hand but also one which contradicts Mamdani's thesis by highlighting economic and psychological motivations rather than the political operation of the settler/native narrative.[1] Indeed, while Mamdani asserts that "for the Hutu who killed, the Tutsi was a settler, not a neighbor", he offers no empirical evidence to suggest that in the minds of ordinary Rwandans, this was the case.

Mamdani's treatment of the empirical record of the Rwandan genocide as already "established" seems to have also lessened his imperative to ensure that the theories he presented were consistently supported by concrete empirical examples. For example, a previous review of *When Victims Become Killers* challenges Mamdani's treatment of the use which was made of this narrative by the elite in the years preceding the civil war and genocide. René Lemarchand[2] notes (p. 308) that the racist "settler" propaganda spewed by Radio Mille Collines and which was certainly a major factor in inciting people to kill only got underway in earnest after the 1990 attack by the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front), and perhaps should be understood as a response to it, rather than simply as a continuation of a longstanding narrative put forth by the Hutu leaders, as Mamdani asserts.

While Mamdani's goal of promoting the integration of the theoretical and the empirical is laudable, his deductive approach (whereby he takes the theory from his previous book on post-colonial citizenship in Africa and applies it to the Rwandan context) leads him into conflict with the empirical record. As a result, his work tends to neglect the growth of the academic field of comparative genocide studies that responds more directly to the complex and multifaceted situation of Rwanda. This has been a general tendency of much of the published research in the field.

Mamdani's concluding section on postgenocide reconstruction, while full of suggestions, tends to throw away such slogans as: *" in post-genocide Rwanda Tutsi want justice and Hutu want democracy"*. He makes reference neither to the justice and reconciliation efforts painstainkingly taking place in Rwanda, the challenges that have been encountered, the lessons that have been learnt, and what these real-world experiences have shown us about the applicability of particular theoretical models of justice , reconciliation and reconstruction (including those which Mamdani advocates), nor does he try to problematize justice and democracy, while claiming a contextual approach.

Perhaps, because Mamdani's point of reference is theoretical, he tends to evaluate deductively Rwandan efforts according to the extent to which they mirror abstract models or other historical manifestations thereof (whether they be analogous to the Rwandan context or not). For example, in advocating a solution which he terms "survivor's justice", Mamdani declares that Rwanda is off course *not* because the approach it has taken differs fundamentally from the principled description of survivor's justice (defined as "…the choice [made by the victor] of reaching out to the vanquished on terms that have the potential of transcending an earlier opposition between the two"), but because the way this approach has manifested itself in Rwanda (reforming institutions and blaming those who manipulated them as a basis for unity) does not coincide with the pre-existing manifestation of it (namely the post-Soviet approach of blaming institutions of rule and absolving individuals, as a basis for unity) that informs Mamdani's deductive approach (p. 272). The result is a disconnection between theory and practice: not quite the outcome that Mamdani hoped to achieve. To correct this imbalance, Mamdani would do well to draw from the rich theoretical and micro-level contributions of the field of genocide studies.

Furthermore, Mamdani's deductive methodological approach and conceptual focus on the political realm at the expense of other realms, prevent him from fulfilling his commitment to fully elucidating the popularly perpetrated nature of the genocide. As we have noted above, his analysis of the settler/native dialectic is highly deterministic and does not focus on the variables associated with individual choice. Similarly, his section on solutions holds individuals, and not leaders, accountable. The popularly perpetrated nature of the genocide and the necessarily populist nature of any attempt to reconcile the affected population, is lost in his blind application of the Nuremberg model on the Rwandan context. The effect is that even his victors' justice model—the model that Mamdani casts as the prime approach for securing individual accountability—focuses on institutions rather than people.

In the end, Mamdani does not fully answer one of the main questions he set out to tackle: how a tiny group of leaders could convince the majority to kill the minority. What he successfully does is uncover and deconstruct the heavily political rhetoric used by the elite to incite the population and the historical circumstances that enabled this rhetoric to resonate with so many people. This contribution is important, as the legacies of colonialism must be understood better. However, Mamdani may have overemphasized the role of this one factor at the expense of others, and underemphasized the interconnected nature of the political with the social and economic. This tendency is regrettable, as it is one that transfers easily from academic analysis to practical planning, limiting the effectiveness of policy responses to genocide before they get off the ground.

These concerns not- withstanding, Mamdani's book certainly makes an important contribution to the understanding of this unfortunate period in Rwanda's history and to the understanding of the regional ramifications of the crisis. However, the gaps are too critical to leave unfilled. The hope is that Mamdani and others will pay attention to this in subsequent works. Further research will gain a great deal more depth, not only in integrating comparative genocide studies theories, but also in paying more attention to the psychological dimensions when accounting for the Rwandan conflict. For example, while analysing the widespread nature of sexualised violence during the 1994 genocide, one is struck by the intrusion of cruelty in the heart of the political life. A closer look would indicate that in the early phase, Tutsi women constituted a specific target of the hate propaganda. Four of the "Ten Commandements" of the Hutu published in December 1990 refer to women[3], and Hutu women are among those who have committed sexualised violence against them[4], one of the most famous being Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, former Minister of Women Development detained in the Arusha-based International Tribunal[5]. □

**Notes**

[1] See note 97 of Chapter 7, p. 336. In a book boasting 553 footnotes, Mamdani cites 22 interviews conducted over a period of anywhere between 15-45 days: 9 interviews conducted over 12 days in Rwanda, 12 interviews conducted over anywhere from one day to one month in the Congo, and 1 interview conducted over one day in Tanzania. All but four interviews are found in the chapters on the Genocide (7) and the refugee and citizenship crisis in the Congo (15. Most of these interviews treat questions of fact (pinning down particular events), rather than questions of opinion, impression, or personal motivation.

[2] Rene Lemarchand, "A History of Genocide in Rwanda", *Journal of African History*, 43 , 2 (2002), pp. 307-311.

[3] See, generally, Jean-Pierre Chrétien *et al*, *Rwanda les médias du génocide*, Paris, Éditions Karthala, 1995 ; Pancrace Twagiramutara, "Ethnicity and Genocide", in Okwudiba Nnoli, ed., *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1998 pp.119-120.

[4] See Urusaro Alice Karekezi, *Juridictions Gacaca, Lutte contre l'Impunité et Promotion de la Réconciliation Nationale*, 2001. On the documentation of the systematic and widespread nature of sexualized violence , see René Degni-Segui, Special Rapporteur on Rwanda, *Report on the Situation in Rwanda*, under para. 20 E.CN.4/5-3/1 of 25 May 1994, U.N. ESCOR, 51st Sess. Agenda Item 12, para.28, U.N. DOCE.CN.4/1995/7.

[5] On the role of women during genocide, see particularly African Rights, *Not So Innocent*, 1997. The sexualized violence committed by women against other women took various forms, including extraction of sexual organs, neutralization while being raped and incitement or other facilitation.

# African Cultural Identity and Self-Writing*

**Godwin Rapando Murunga**

For some time now, Achille Mbembe has warned African social scientists against the ghetto to which Marxism and nationalism has consigned them. This admonition is rooted in a personal belief that Africa lacks refreshing, internationally relevant and philosophically grounded scholarship. According to him, African scholarship is steeped in a self-imposed ghetto that has produced stultifying *nativist* and *Afro-radicalist* narratives. The narratives have, in turn, driven African scholarship to "a dead end," one that repeatedly laments the effects of the West's contamination of a pure "Africanness" and calls for a return to the self's mythical ontological purity. In reclaiming this lost purity, Mbembe adds, African scholarship draws its fundamental categories from Marxism and nationalism to argue for a revolutionary politics that would free the continent from imperialism and dependence. He identifies *suffering* and *victimization* as the main *episteme* in these narratives. These two, he argues, position Africa as always being acted upon by forces outside its control but never acting for itself. He therefore proposes African modes of self-writing that neutralize the power relations between Africa and its colonizers and restores "agency to Africans. Unfortunately, this restoration ends up alleging that Africans are as much responsible for their suffering and trauma as those others that they accuse whether one is considering slavery, colonization or apartheid.[1]

Mbembe's analysis borrows from, and is part of, a culturalist perspective that is characterized by two main trends. One, it treats identity as a mere cultural repertoire unconnected to material and political realities. Borrowing largely from literary and cultural studies, this trend focuses on identity solely as a cultural issue and does not pay sufficient attention to broader issues of political economy. Consequently, it treats identity as an imagined category different from daily struggles and realities.[1] No wonder, this perspective has an essentially polemical relationship to studies of a Marxist and nationalist orientation irrespective of their merits and strengths. These culturalist perspectives are reductionist and dismiss key texts from leading authors like Samir Amin or Walter Rodney with no serious counter-arguments.

Further, it perceives power as diffused in society; as a social relation equally accessible to all people irrespective of their relative economic and technological advantages in society. Mbembe, for example, argues that even subjects have voice and power that resides in their ability to laugh at, mock and mimic the potentate. In so doing, they not only comment on the idiocy of imperial authority and postcolonial despotism, but argue that these acts also reduce each (coloniser/colonized) to an equal level of power(lessness). By abstracting culture into an object of mere intellectual curiosity and levelling all people into an equal plane of power, this culturalist perspective credits itself with restoring agency to Africans. Tragically, this is agency that lumps into one homogenous experience historically diverse regions like Africa, Australia, Canada, or the US.[2] This suspicious sameness operates under the rubric of postcolonial theory in which Mbembe, Mudimbe and Appiah constitute its African trinity.[3]

Whatever strategy the postcolonialists/culturalists adopt, three conclusions are inescapable. First, because they disengage identity issues from the broader domain of human social experience, they end up treating culture as if it were suspended above economic and political realities. Their works are largely ahistorical, they treat identity as a sign or text inscribed with multiple meanings that need only to be deconstructed as an exercise in mere intellectual curiosity and elegance. By laying out a notion of identity as multiple, shifting, entangled and intersecting, it becomes possible to render a permissive idea of Africanity as a tabula rasa on which one can create an identity at will, devoid of any relation to historical and social reality. Thus, Mbembe writes that "everyone can imagine and choose what makes him or her as an African" while Appiah adopts the "cosmopolitan patriots" tag.[4] Like those they dismiss, these authors proceed by opposing uniqueness/difference with sameness which prevents them from seeing African writings that are nationalist/materialist but still engage complex philosophical questions of African identity.[5] Ironically, in the process of obsessively attacking *Afro-nativism,* these "new Africanists" often quickly end up in *Euro-nativism*, a standpoint that holds "a deeply recessed, but negative, view of Africa."[6] Their pet western theorists who constitute their authorities on philosophically engaging writings on identity illustrate this.

Second, because the new Africanists' analysis is deeply ahistorical, they refuse to examine the context that has promoted the Marxist and so-called nativist narratives they dismiss. In this respect, their analyses are inferior to other writers of the postcolonialist persuasion like Bernabe et.al., Glissant, and Lazarus. Glissant, as well as Bernabe et. al. produce works that not only proclaim the creole nature of identities, but celebrate this creoleness in the face of essentialist narratives of purity and authenticity. They do not dismiss and disparage the earlier nationalist works of Cesaire and Senghor, which were indeed often affirmations and celebrations of an African particularity.[7] Lazarus, for example, defends the contributions of Amin, Fanon and James against the misreading found in Bhabha and Miller.[8] Like Bernabe and Glissant, Lazarus celebrates these earlier nationalists for making possible the present affirmation and celebration of the creole and combative character of African identities. It was these earlier nationalist works that critiqued the closed and essentialist Eurocentric discourse that equated the Universal with the European. It was these assertions of the existence and fertility of ancestries other than the European that created possibilities for the postmodern assertion and celebration of multiple ancestries. The attention to history that these works portray makes their analyses less polemical and spectacular and, therefore, more insightful than Appiah's or Mbembe's brash dismissal of all so-called nativistic narratives.[9]

Three, there is a dubious reason for restoring agency to Africans. This culturalist perspective 'restores' agency to Africans so as to accuse them of originating or complicity in slavery, colonialism and apartheid. The restoration is suspiciously double edged. It criticises African scholars of Afro-radicalism only because it seeks to absolve Europeans of the crimes of colonialism and colonialism of its ravages on the continent.[10] Thus, the postcolonial tag is convenient for sanitizing imperialism. The new Africanists adopt 'postcolonial' in place of 'neo-colonial' because the term is imperially pliant and it empties slavery, colonialism and apartheid off their invidious content. Consequently, it makes the reality of neo-colonial oppression less visible and, therefore, a hard target for the resilient revolutionary voices on the continent. The term conceptualizes all societies as postcolonial and dupes all into ignoring the repressive reality of neo-imperialism and its ominous effects. As often as possible, this smoothening is accompanied by equally deceitful slogans of a peaceful globalisation or an accommodating multiculturalism in which African identities are allegedly equally paired with other identities globally.

The ideological orientation of the culturalists, as often revealed in their citations, is an equally relevant aspect of identity politics and imperialism. Apart from contriving allegations, the theorists of choice for this culturalist perspective fit into the overall objective of ignoring imperialism as a theme or renovating it to appear palatable. Regarding contrived allegations, it is noteworthy that the new Africanists carefully select those African authors they wish to attack. Often the focus is on those perceived to belong to the "dreaded" political economy approach. But such dismissals are cavalier in many senses. For instance, Mbembe fails to make a close reading of the texts he dismisses while Appiah is decidedly one-sided in his gaze at racism. Thus, Mbembe's "genealogical critique of African discourse appears in places to be too quick and allusive and this leads him into battling arguments that nobody actually ever really upheld."[11] Furthermore, the dismissal relies on writers who have not made any worthwhile contribution to key issues on African identity. Their works refer to Foucault, Bakhtin, Barthes, Benjamin, Bourdieu, Derrida, Heidegger, Lacan, Lyotard and Deleuze though "none of the names cited above ever exhibited the slightest intellectual curiosity of the issue of European colonialism and the concerns of non-European peoples."[12] Does this mean that colonialism and nationalism did not contribute anything to contemporary African identity? Or does ignoring Marxism make resilient revolutionary voices disappear? Haven't African cultural identities been forged in the process of struggle against slavery, imperialism and apartheid?

The combination of Africanist writings and postmodernist lamentations has misled new Africanists into a notion of 'multiple ancestries' that is conceived as a synthesis of the polar opposites of a unique Africanity and a universal sameness. Mbembe argues that African discourses on identity "are inscribed within an intellectual genealogy based on a territorialized identity and a racialized geography."[13] He concludes that the sin of nativism is its inability to conceive of an Africanity that is not Black or to conceive of the existence of Africans of European, Arab, or Asian origin.[14] Mbembe conveniently overlooks the point, forcefully made by the historian Roediger that whiteness involves "a terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back."[15] This is not just the case in the US where poles of racial difference "have remained relatively constant"[16] but also in Africa where white prejudice remains strong. Contrast this with the accumulating evidence that "the African voter is capable of prejudice free choice"[17] and the falsity of Mbembe's assertion is stark clear. Locals have extended a forgiving hand to a minority white population in Africa that reciprocates by receding into exclusive white domains as the case is in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

It is nevertheless obvious that the culturalists are eager to make race a

central issue in African discourses and the notion of "multiple ancestries" serves this purpose. It is not surprising that the array of scholars used to make race an African identity problem include Appiah, Gilroy, and Sarah Nuttall. The Black Atlantic or South African dimension is an extensively theorized area. The problem is that the racial discourse is imported and generalized for Africa from particular diaspora or continental experiences. This is definitely a flawed way of approaching African cultural identity issues. Multiple ancestries make immediate sense to those few who are compelled by their own self-identification with "a white triumphalist vision" to write a "social justification" of their mixed parentage or to white South Africans eager to redeem their multicultural credentials.[18] These are also the few who can identify with the "world as a network of points of affinity."[19] But are there that many Africans who enjoy this status as to elevate "multiple ancestries" or cosmopolitanism into a general basis of an African identity? Even if there were, can we escape the reality that the resulting network of affinity has some consanguines living off the "sweat and labours of others"?[20] These issues must be confronted for the idea of multiple ancestries to be relevant.

Finally, how valid is the view that African discourse has reduced Africanity into a black identity? We could contrast this view with that of "Africanity as an open question" and show how, contrary to the culturalists view, African scholars have always been open to a broad understanding of cultural identity. Souleymane Bachir Diagne uses the notion of *evaluation* to argue that every society has the ability to assess its tradition and appropriate aspects it deems worth integrating while ignoring irrelevant impositions. Using the Senegambia region as a reference point, he argues against the need for a cultural charter to prevent the erosion of Africa's cultural identities. After all, the long years of Senegambian contact with western mercantilism has not obliterated local cultural values. This testifies to local propensity for self-preservation. Diagne criticizes the hoary imagination of traditional culture as always opposed to a modern one. He postulates an understanding of tradition that is dynamic and renders useless the polarity between tradition and modern identities.[21] He cautions against approaches that postulate an "immanent tension between identity, on the one hand, and 'the forces of cultural alienation' on the other."[22] These approaches present the traditional homeland as "inherently hostile to change" and the modern as constantly seeking to obliterate the former. Mbembe's, and by extension, Appiah's work resonate with the hoary formulation in so far as their multiple ancestries sound like charters for co-existence pronounced by a book professor with no inkling of how life is lived beyond the ivory tower. Mbembe's and Mudimbe's Africanity is continuously created through the very process of writing. But more damning for Mbembe is his refusal to factor in the local capacity for *evaluation* and *appropriation*, something that is obvious and is encapsulated in, among others, Mafeje's idea of Africanity as "combative ontology." Diagne links this ontology to Sartre's conceptualisation of Negritude as constituting "one single refusal."[23] What is clear for Diagne, as for Mafeje, is that they centre Africans in the dynamic process of *evaluation* and acknowledge the "capacity of traditional mentalities to mount self-preserving reflexes."[24]

Thus, if the postcolonialists/ culturalists intended to substitute the combative aspect of Africanity with pliant co-existence, Diagne, like Mafeje, underlines local capacity for choice, resilience, resistance and self-preservation. Their ideas on resilience/ resistance differ but the baseline point is a consistent search for alternatives to the dominant line. In analysing Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "performing Africanity", Diagne emphasizes language as a vehicle for developing solidarity, revealing the possibilities open to action and mounting resistance to dominant forces. Mafeje directly develops Africanity as "a historically-determined rebellion against domination by others" in which the underlying sentiment of Africanity is self-liberation and its focus is white racism as "a pernicious social construct."[25] As a combative ontology, Africanity differentiates colour or race from the pernicious acts committed under their guise. Resistance to these acts cannot therefore be confused with resistance to change.

In sum, there is no doubt that African cultural identities have multiple ancestries. But to emphasize race at the expense of other equally important identities like ethnicity, religion, and language, is to ignore the totality of the African experience. Conceived widely, the idea of multiple ancestries can be fruitfully applied to the key challenges of religion, ethnicity and culture that plague many African societies like Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Sudan. But the notion needs to be sufficiently historicized to avoid the traps and dangers of the "all-Africa catastrophe" studies.[26] With regard to self-writing, there can be no doubt that the pernicious effects of racism, their connection to capitalism and empire have influenced African cultural identities and generated specific modes of self-writing. The context requires that we give precedence to these forces over mere scholarly elegance. Many African scholars are suspicious of elegant studies of sexuality, orifices, the body, and race because beneath their elegance lie attempts to sanitize empire under the guise of a modernity that is at large. The new globalism that these studies trumpet benefits some far more than others. Furthermore, not all of us have the capital to explore those cosmopolitan links that are proclaimed. In a nutshell, any notion of African cultural identity that disengages culture from its material context, treats culture as an artefact suspended above daily realities and refuses to heed the facts of history within which identity becomes intelligible is superficial and inconclusive. □

## Notes

* I wish to thank Mshai Mwangola, Nana Akua Anyidoho and Kwame Henry Dougan for commenting on this review. Usual caveats apply.

[1] This summary is based on Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing" in *Public Culture*, 14, 1, 2002, pp. 239-273 which was initially published in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, No. 1, 2000, pp. 4-19. Other versions have appeared in French as and in English in various publications.

[2] The idea of 'imagine' draws from misreading Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1991 while that of invention draws largely from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983 which was later picked up in V. Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988. These two terms have been misused in African studies to mean imagining or inventing into existence things that do not necessarily exist in reality. Anderson and Ranger have cautioned against this de-contextualization.

[3] See for example Bill Ashcroft, et. al., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, London, Routledge, 1989

[4] This is Richard Werbner's characterization. See his "Multiple Identities, Plural Arenas, in Richard P. Werbner and Terence O. Ranger (eds.) *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, London, Zed Books, 1996. Among these three, Mudimbe is the most intellectually persuasive and it seems unfair to lump him together with the other two who seem to use their intellectual resources in defense Eurocentrism. But Mudimbe has on occasion endorsed Mbembe's views as in the debate in *Public Culture*, 4, 2, 1992 and 5, 1, 1992. In addition to those identified above, Mudimbe's other key text is *The Idea of Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

[5] See Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing," p. 258 and Kwame Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," in *Critical Inquiry*, 23, 3, 1997

[6] Interestingly, the philosophically engaging works of Chiekh Anta Diop did just this. Further research into the cultural content of Diop's work has recently been taken up by Ifi Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*, London, Zed Books, 1997. Another philosophically engaging and materially conscious writer is Jacques Depelchin.

[7] Nkiru Nzegwu develops this point in a forceful, elaborate and damaging review of Appiah's *In My Father's House*. See Nzegwu, "Questions of Identity and Inheritance: A Critical Review of Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House*," in *Hypatia*, 11, 1, 1996, pp. 187-189. It should also be noted that the new Africanists use nativism with an imperial slant, as stemming from the idea of a native as "the inferior inhabitants of a place subjected to alien political power or conquest or even of a place visited and observed from some supposedly superior standpoint." It is only this way that one can account for Appiah's disrespect for the stool. See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Revised Edition) New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 215 for this definition of native.

[8] See for instance, Aime Câesaire, *Return to My Native Land*, Penguin, 1969; Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant, et. al., *Eloge de la Créolité*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993; E. Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1989 and Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999

[9] Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice*, chapters 2 and 3.

[10] I owe the insights in this paragraph to my colleague Kwame Henry Dougan.

[11] A central theme of Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001 is that the roots of the present political problem in Africa lie not with premeditated European rupture and incursions into the continent but in the configuration of socio-political forces and behaviour patterns on the continent. Thus, Mbembe locates the problems on the continent in the nature of the contact, not the imperial intentions that date deep into European history. This theme is carried into his "Modes of Self-Writing" where he accuses Africans for the ravages of slave trade (p. 260-1) and the World Bank/ IMF structural adjustment programs (p. 243).

[12] Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Keeping Africanity Open," in *Public Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (2002), p. 621

[13] Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory," in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24, 3, 1996, p. 348. Mikael Karlsstrom shows the contradictions in Mbembe's analysis of power in the postcolony that arise from and also explain his misuse of Bakhtin. He also shows that that Mbembe ignores the historical specificity of Bakhtin's thesis. See his "On the Aesthetics and Dialogics of Power in the Postcolony," in *Africa*, 73, 1, 2003, p. 62.

[14] Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing," p. 257.

[15] *Ibid*.,p.256-257.

[16] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, New York, Verso, 1991, p. 13.

[17] This point is emphasized in Faye V. Harrison, "The Persistent Power of "Race" in the Cultural and Political Economy of Racism," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 1995, pp. 47-74.

[18] Michael Chege, "Africans of European Descent," in *Transition*, 73, 1997, p. 85.

[19] This is taken from Molefi K. Asante's response to Appiah. See his *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism*, Trenton, Africa World Press, 1999, pp. 77-8.

[20] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. viii.

[21] Kwesi Prah, "Accusing the Victims – In My Father's House," in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, No. 1, 1997, p. 14.

[22] Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "The Future of Tradition," in Momar Couba Diop (ed.) Senegal: Essays in Statecraft, Dakar, CODESRIA Book Series, 1993 and "Africanity as Open Question," in Diagne, et. al., *Identity and Beyond: Rethinking Africanity*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001. See also Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997 and Jan Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 257-263 on traditions as processes.

[23] Diagne, "The Future of Tradition," p. 270.

[24] Diagne, "Africanity as Open Question," p. 20.

[25] Diagne, "The Future of Tradition," p. 274 and "Africanity as Open Question," p. 19. See also Souleymane Bachir Diagne and Henri Ossebi, *The Cultural Question in Africa: Issues, Politics and Research Prospects*, Dakar, CODESRIA Working Paper Series 3/ 96, 1996.

[26] See Archie Mafeje, "Africanity: A Combative Ontology," in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 1, 2000, p. 66-71 and Archie Mafeje, "Africanity: A Commentary by Way of Conclusion," in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 3 & 4, 2001, pp.14-16.

[27] See Thandika Mkandawire, "The Terrible Toll of Post-colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa: Towards an Explanation of the Violence Against the Peasantry," in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40, 2, 2002, pp. 183-184.

## Democracy in Africa

**Roger Southall**

**The Liberal Model and Africa: Elites against Democracy**
by Kenneth Good

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The 1990s, so we are widely told, ushered in a 'second liberation' in Africa. The Berlin Wall collapsed, the Cold War ended, dictatorships fell or liberalized, and military governments gave way to civilian. The African populace rose in protest against domestic oppressions and demanded and often seized back the liberties they were promised but denied at independence. Multi-party elections now became fashionable and well-meaning election monitors swarmed all over the continent passing judgement on whether contests were 'free and fair'. African populations breathed more freely and ostensibly or substantively lived in less fear. They were now set up to enjoy the fruits of 'good governance'. Democracy was enabled to enjoy a belated triumph.

All this was well and good, had it not been attended by much myth-making. Africa was very rapidly to find that the new deal had severe limits. Not the least of these was the fact that whilst democratizing countries secured greater Western approval and assistance, political and economic conditionalities often hollowed out the genuine gains that were made. Rather like patients subjected to the tender mercies of medieval doctors, countries which had been bled under structural adjustment plans in the 1970s tant official positions was remunerated so that no citizen would be excluded on financial grounds. These, and other similar provisions, resulted in a conception of citizenship which was 'profound'. Ordinary men saw themselves not just as isolated individuals but as citizens with ties and responsibilities to the wider community; democratic ideology encouraged the distribution of wealth and the exercise of political power only by the wealthy; and poorer citizens were enabled to prevent their exploitation by the rich.

Good sees this model as having been rediscovered in the popular struggle against apartheid, as embodied most notably in the United Democratic Front (UDF) and COSATU. From the Durban strikes of 1973 on, black workers began the transformation of the internal resistance movement which moved away from the exiled ANC's concentration on external assault upon the apartheid state. They forged a democratic movement within the country, which was harnessed to independent working class action. This gave rise to a style of politics which emphasised grassroots participatory democracy, or 'people's power' as evidenced by the appearance of street committees and people's courts that were organisations concerned with dispute resolution and self-government. Meanwhile, the development of a trade union movement which steered clear of 'the futile quest for the revolutionary overthrow of the apartheid state' led to engagement with both capital and the state, and the exertion of countervailing power, whilst simultaneously exemplifying a grassroots industrial democracy which emphasised the direct election of shop-stewards and the accountability of leaders.

Good goes on to argue that, faced by an internal culture of democracy that threatened its elitist practices (long honed in exile), the post-1990 ANC was quick to shut the UDF down. In contrast, COSATU's strength meant that a labour-repressive policy was not possible, and indeed the 'new South Africa' saw the creation of a relatively labour-friendly industrial regime. However, workers' organised muscle has been steadily eroded by the ANC's pro-capitalist policies, industrial restructuring and increasing unemployment. The potential of the highly promising experiment in participatory democracy has therefore not been realised. Nonetheless, nowhere else on the continent does the capacity, vested in an industrial working class, to challenge autocratic elites exist. However, Good is disappointingly vague on how popular power in South Africa can be revived and sustained. He refers to that challenge in a somewhat disappointing concluding chapter of just three pages as 'an unending struggle'. In contrast, my argument is that this pessimistic demand, for perpetual and uncompromising political activity by the masses is profoundly unrealistic, and hence too brutally pessimistic. Whilst the main point is taken that the elitist proclivities of liberal democracy as it exists do need to be constantly challenged, democratic theory does provide us with suggestions about how we can amplify the very real advantages which liberal democracy offers (such as the ideas of individual rights and the limited state) alongside mechanisms and devices for insisting that it becomes more socially just and distributional.

This important book, which should be read widely and is a major contribution to thinking about democracy in Africa, is the product of an expatriate scholar working out of a university in what is the continent's most highly celebrated liberal democracy. Good has been an inveterate and brave critic of the Botswana government, which continues to tolerate his railings, and which continues to allow the university to renew his successive short term contracts. He is wholly and utterly aware that he would not enjoy such favourable conditions if – as earlier in his career – he was teaching in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Ultimately, therefore, it is this personal irony which raises the biggest issues around Good's thesis, suggesting the need for more nuance in his theorizing than he allows. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the fact that Good has written a really important book which moves us forward, and which should compel the salesmen of liberal democracy who are to be found in almost every Western aid agency to confront some peculiarly uncomfortable truths.□

## "Small by Small, Nigeria dey Burn"

**Sanya Osha**

**This House has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria** by Karl Maier
Public Affairs, 2000, 327 pp., $18.99, ISBN 1891620606

A feature that most commentators would not fail to discern about Nigeria is its legendary resilience. One always marvels at how the dysfunctional country manages to stumble from one crisis to another without experiencing a decisive debacle or irreversible slide towards genocidal conflict like other African nations such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Somalia.

All the ingredients that could cause the final dismemberment of the nation are present in copious amount: virulent ethnicity, massive governmental corruption, an over-ambitious and indisciplined military establishment, religious intolerance, widespread crime leading to a breakdown of law and order, acute pauperisation of large segments of the population, collapsed social services and many more minuses.

Karl Maier's *This House has Fallen* is certainly one of the most interesting accounts of what may be termed the Nigerian crisis in recent times. Maier's journalistic expertise and lengthy sojourn in Nigeria, coupled with an easy and convincing familiarity with the country's actual antecedents and intellectual history, have combined to produce, for the most part, an engaging if somewhat off-beat chronicle of contemporary Nigerian history.

Even more importantly, Maier's effort offers new theoretical insights for reading the Nigerian situation. Nigeria's geographical and demographic largeness, its cascading pluralisms and its multiple nexuses of undoubtedly problematic cohesion are perhaps some of the reasons that prevent it from going in the way of former Yugoslavia and Somalia. Where there is no literal centre, in a way that Benedict Anderson might have recognized, that centre would never be at great risk. Such is the nature of the theoretical dimension one is forced to acknowledge.

Being the fifth largest supplier of petroleum in the world and the most populous black nation on the global map, it is not in anyone's interest to see Nigeria disintegrate. The civil war in Liberia had been a very costly affair in terms of human lives and U.S. taxpayer's money and yet the country has less than half the population of Lagos. Maier lists some of Nigeria's intractable problems:

> Ethnic and religious prejudices have found fertile ground in Nigeria, where there is neither a national: consensus nor a binding ideology. Indeed, the virulent spread of virulent strains of chauvinism in Nigeria is part of the world wide phenomenon playing out in Indonesia, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union (xx).

Applying this broad explanatory blueprint, Maier goes on to supply an impressive array of detail and evidence on how these various problems hinder Nigeria from assuming what is regarded as its rightful place among the comity of nations. When talking among themselves, Nigerians usually cynically conclude that the country's problems are so countless and endless there is no point dwelling on the issue.

Maier's book presents a discursive model of the diverse elements that give Nigeria its present gnarled formation, and that model needless to say is deeply disturbing and in most cases unsavoury.

Despite two decades of Structural Adjustment programs imposed on African countries by the Bretton Woods Institutions, African countries are still plagued by extreme poverty and underdevelopment**.** *Our Continent, Our Future* is the very first publication to present the African perspective on the Bretton Woods approach to structural adjustment, and it does so with the input and support of top economists and scholars from every corner of Africa. The book calls for a much broader policy agenda and for a much more active role of the state within what is largely a market economy. This important book should be read by all those concerned with the future of Africa and with issues of sustainable and equitable development.
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Price US$21.00

In Nigeria's current political dispensation, the dividends of democracy are not yet evident. What we see instead are its numerous pitfalls. Also, Nigerians have a depressing inability to look into their past and pronounce a fair verdict on the nation's performance. The national centre is everywhere but nowhere in particular. This results in skewered perspectives on urgent moral dilemmas. In other words, the good that comes out of evil in the moral realm causes a paralysing loss of the collective sense of judgement. The French philosopher, Alain Badiou, has one or two things to teach us here on the nature of sociopolitical evil. For instance, how does one explain the fact that the regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar, which did the uncommon good of ushering in democracy, also got away with at least 3 billion dollars in less than six months? What this means is that the President Olusegun Obasanjo administration dare not look into its antecedents. If indeed it musters the political will to do so, it would also see the fractured image of Ibrahim Babangida smiling with blood on its teeth. Babangida bears the singular responsibility of putting Obasanjo in the state house in Abuja through his enormous financial backing. These are just two of the many unpalatable truths that may elude analysis in a systematic manner. Size and the politics of difference have led to the mass production of "truths" in relation to the understanding of the Nigerian collective self.

In this case, the sermon of truth is always relative and the Nigerian national spirit flounders in a morass of criss-crossing self- descriptions and often counter-productive social heteroglossia.

There are genuinely grotesque moments in Maier's book. For instance, his interview with Ibrahim Babangida is quite revealing and important for being able to draw out the ex-dictator from his carefully constructed smokescreen and the excessive and unreal mythologising of the avid Nigerian media. From his inordinately large Minna mansion, Babangida still commands a lot of power. Furthermore, he talks with Maier in a way he would not dare to do so with any other Nigerian journalist. Having missed the great opportunity to direct a popular version of Nigerian democracy in 1993, the ex-dictator is still very concerned about his notorious place in history and how he might regain favour, and he sees in Maier an avenue for doing this. Not quite successfully, for his present life and image only turns out to be as disorienting and as bizarre as the peoples, elements and features of Nigeria.

Even more disturbing is the portrait of Gani Adams, a leader of Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), an ethnic militia. Adams and his kith represent a significant segment of Nigeria's "lost generation". Economically disenfranchised by the massive failure of IMF-directed structural adjustment programmes and robbed blind by greedy politicians and public servants, this lost generation has emerged to be a potent force in Nigeria's current ethno-political configuration.

Ethnic militias have more or less become an accepted Nigerian feature, since law enforcement agencies have proved to be abominably inept and socio-economic parity has also continued to elude the vast majority of Nigerians. For youths who have nowhere else to turn, the ethnic militias, just like the streets, have become the only welcoming haven.

Other strange narratives include Maier's drive through Wukari, a zone in the middle belt torn by ethnic strife. What Maier describes is a veritable war zone akin to what one would find in Sierra Leone or Liberia when the crises raged. His description of the traditional ruler Wukari is even stranger as the little potentate emerges as a denizen of a lost kingdom completely out of touch with the times. In moments like this it becomes easy to see how Nigeria's enormous size provides a protective shield against internal disintegration.

For more than one decade, Nigeria has constantly been plagued by crises that ought to lead to its demise. Religious wars and ethnic strife are two major threats to the nation, and up till now they still haven't been permanently contained.

Maier provides an interesting catalogue of these various crises with a novelistic sense of construction, and the final picture that emerges makes the book an interesting effort. It also provides good material for professional social scientists who wish to glean new theoretical vistas. And for those who assume that the seemingly interminable discourse on the nature of the Nigerian national character has no beginning or end, *This House has Fallen* offers a fresh starting-point.□

## UNISA Books

# Les chercheurs africains, une « élite » ?

**Ali El Kenz**

Dans la vision hiérarchique que nous avons des sociétés, la notion d'élite permet de nommer un groupe, qui appartient certes aux catégories sociales supérieures, mais dont la position est rendue légitime, à la fois par les services que le groupe en question rend à la société et par les bénéfices, matériels et aussi symboliques, qu'il en reçoit. Qu'en est-il aujourd'hui des universitaires et chercheurs africains alors que de partout on annonce le passage à une nouvelle économie mondiale, celle des savoirs.

Ce court essai dédié à la situation des chercheurs et universitaires africains n'aurait pu voir le jour sans le travail d'enquête minutieux et exhaustif mené par l'IRD sous la direction de R. Waast et J. Gaillard sur les sciences en Afrique[1].

Certes, notre position de chercheur africain et notre propre expérience au Codesria et dans d'autres centres de recherches nous avaient permis de nous familiariser avec cette question[2] ; de nombreux séminaires, colloques, et ouvrages collectifs ont été réalisés auparavant pour analyser, et mieux comprendre la place minime qui est faite en Afrique à la recherche africaine et le sort, généralement précaire, qui est réservé à ses chercheurs. Avec cette enquête nous disposons maintenant d'une vue d'ensemble assez cohérente et d'informations assez précises pour tenter de pousser plus loin nos analyses et aller au-delà de la description, souvent accompagnée d'ailleurs de dénonciations morales, de cette situation. Partons des conclusions structurelles des auteurs de l'enquête.

## VUE D'ENSEMBLE[3]

Du point de vue de la place de la science dans la société, acteurs et institutions confondues, il n'y a pas une Afrique mais trois : l'Afrique du Sud, l'Afrique du Nord (Maroc, Algérie, Tunisie, Egypte), et ce que les auteurs ont appelé « l'Afrique médiane », c'est à dire tout le reste. C'est dans cette dernière région, et notamment au Nigeria, un « géant » de la science africaine dans les décennies antérieures, que les conditions se sont le plus dégradées. Mais en règle générale, l'enquête a révélé que l'activité scientifique s'est maintenue, parfois difficilement comme en Égypte, et a même progressé comme en Tunisie et au Maroc quand deux conditions étaient réunies, la présence de l'État à travers les grandes universités et les centres publics de recherches, et une demande institutionnelle forte en aval. Pour ces trois pays d'ailleurs, les budgets alloués par l'État ainsi que le soutien financier de grandes entreprises a permis d'assurer une allure relativement dynamique à la recherche. Cette conclusion, appuyée sur les données de l'expérience, infirme les hypothèses des techniciens de la Banque mondiale à l'origine du retrait de l'État dans ce domaine. La dégradation de l'activité scientifique est proportionnelle à la diminution des budgets de l'État alloués au secteur éducatif dans son ensemble et à l'enseignement universitaire en particulier comme le montre clairement le tableau synthétique ci-après.

Les fameux PAS et les réductions budgétaires imposés au forceps aux États africains par les organisations de Bretton Woods ont affaibli les économies nationales, mais aussi limité fortement leurs capacités scientifique endogènes[4]. Comme le montre si bien l'enquête, les universités, croulant sous le nombre des étudiants, n'ont plus les moyens d'assurer des conditions minimales d'études, elles se désorganisent : les taux d'encadrement diminuent fortement, les enseignants sont surchargés, les bibliothèques s'appauvrissent, les laboratoires et centres de recherches n'arrivent plus à maintenir et encore moins à renouveler leurs équipements, le fossé avec les pays avancés se creuse de plus en plus.

Du point de vue de la place des chercheurs dans la société, on remarque que dans la majorité des pays, leur situation économico-sociale s'est fortement dégradée. Leurs revenus sont devenus insuffisants pour leur permettre de vivre dignement–diminutions de 50 à 100% de leur pouvoir d'achat– ce qui les obligent à recourir à des activités annexes qui les éloignent de la recherche scientifique proprement dite.

Dans le meilleur des cas, c'est le recours à l'expertise locale ou étrangère qui permet de compenser la perte de pouvoir d'achat du ménage, ou l'expatriation dans une université du Nord ; au pire on abandonne carrément une profession qui ne permet plus de gagner sa vie.

Quatre scénarios se présentent qui correspondent à quatre « figures » de l'universitaire et scientifique africain:

• L'usure des enseignants : la surcharge estudiantine est telle que l'enseignant est dans l'incapacité d'assurer une activité pédagogique de qualité même moyenne. Avec la diminution de son pouvoir d'achat, il perd même la volonté de le faire. Dans le tableau qui suit, on remarque bien cette croissance des effectifs qui correspond à l'arrivée à l'université de la génération des années quatre-vingts et coïncide malheureusement avec la réduction des soutiens financiers des États. Étudiants et enseignants, enfermés dans cette croissance « en ciseau » en seront les premières victimes.

Les étudiants, livrés à eux-mêmes, travaillent sur des cours et des manuels dépassés, les diplômes se dévalorisent. Les familles aisées recourent alors à des formations privées, les plus riches envoient leurs enfants à l'étranger. Le champ universitaire national se segmente en trois parties : le domaine public pour la majorité, un secteur privé local pour les classes aisées, les universités occidentales pour les classes dominantes.

• Les activités parallèles : dans l'enquête déjà citée, un questionnaire a été adressé à 1500 chercheurs actifs dans 41 pays africains et l es réponses sont édifiantes.

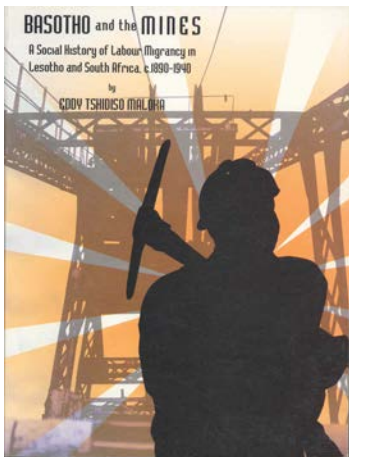
À l'exception de l'Afrique du Sud, du Maroc et de la Tunisie, la majorité des chercheurs se plaint de la modicité des salaires et plus de la moitié envisage de quitter le métier. Soixante-quinze pourcent (75%) déclarent travailler plus de 5 heures supplémentaires par semaine (la moyenne est de 13 heures). Les principales activités sont la consultation donnée à des entreprises ou des bureaux d'études (40%) et l'enseignement en universités privées (25%).

Ces activités parallèles permettent de compenser l'effondrement du statut social et des rémunérations qui étaient à l'origine (dans les années soixante-dix) des critères importants dans les choix de la profession. Souvent d'ailleurs, ces activités rapportent plus que le salaire et l'indemnité de recherche statutaire auxquels l'universitaire continue malgré tout de s'accrocher, parfois par fidélité et vocation, ou encore par ce qu'ils constituent, malgré tout, une rentrée d'argent sûre et une pension de retraite garantie.

Ces activités parallèles peuvent être classées en deux catégories : celles qui sont « hors-champ » comme les petits boulots de chauffeurs de taxis, de commerçants, d'agents hôteliers, etc. et qui constituent une perte nette, pour l'individu et le pays, de capital scientifique accumulé pendant les longues années d'étude ; celles qui demeurent dans le champ des professions scientifiques. Parmi ces dernières, 20% ont crée leur propre entreprise ou des cabinets privés (avocats, médecins) les autres, le double sont dans la consultation donnée à des entreprises ou des bureaux d'études.

• Le consulting et son ambiguïté. La grande majorité des chercheurs africains (universitaires ou à temps plein) ne sauraient aujourd'hui se passer d'activités de recherches, au départ complémentaires, comme consultants de bureaux d'études nationaux (quelques rares pays africains, Afrique du Sud et Maghreb) ou internationaux (Banque mondiale, agences de l'ONU, ONG ou Fondations). Il est devenu pratiquement impossible d'entreprendre une recherche sans aide étrangère.

• Les activités de coopération S&T pour le développement sont de plus en plus importantes dans le continent. Les anciennes puissances coloniales comme le Royaume-Uni ( 43% des programmes), la France (57%) mais aussi la Suède (33%), le Canada (30%) et enfin les USA orientent leurs aides vers l'Afrique à travers des procédures et des institutions différentes selon les pays mais qui constituent dans l'ensemble une part importante du financement de la recherche en Afrique. À cela s'ajoutent les autres bailleurs de fonds comme la Banque mondiale, les grandes ONG internationales (OXFAM, ENDA …) ou encore l'OMS, le PNUD qui financent des grands programmes de recherches... En gros, 5% de l'APD globale est allouée à la coopération S&T[5]. Beaucoup de chercheurs africains se plaignent du rôle passif, ou de simple informateur, que leur assignent les bailleurs de fonds, d'autres essaient, malgré tout, de tirer parti de cette opportunité pour répondre aux demandes des donateurs et continuer leurs propres recherches. Comme on le verra plus loin, ce malaise est révélateur de l'ambiguïté structurelle de la coopération étrangère en S&T. Dans l'enquête déjà citée, les chercheurs « en coopération » sont de moins en moins libres de choisir leur sujet (30% ont changé profondément leurs orientations de carrière) et pensent que les sponsors contribuent à fixer l'agenda plus que les employeurs institutionnels. Mais dans tous les cas, la coopération internatio-




This is the first major study of migrant labour in Lesotho covering the period 1890 to 1940 and the complex ways with which Basotho men and women coped with the impact of labour migrancy. Exhaustive in its coverage and use of primary historical sources on labour migrancy in colonial Lesotho, the book examines the position of Basotho migrant workers in South Africa, Lesotho's dependency on migrant labour and the social cultural consequences of sending so many men away to work. These issues are placed within the framework of the history of colonialism in Lesotho and South Africa and its impact on the current geopolitics of the two interconnected nations. The study is unique in that it provides an in-depth historical analysis of migrant labor, combining aspects of political economy and cultural social history.
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Price US$20.00

nale est devenue pour les chercheurs africains un soutien incontournable à leurs activités et a permis, somme toute de compenser le repli des États nationaux, inconscients ou impuissants devant les immenses enjeux que représente, dans « une économie des savoirs », le capital humain accumulé par les universités du continent.

• L'exode. Avec le déplacement des activités de recherches sur les domaines recouverts par la coopération internationale, le « brain drain » est le phénomène le plus impressionnant de la réalité actuelle de la science africaine.

Selon Annie Vinokur[6] « Pour la seule Afrique, d'après l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM) le nombre des départs de HQ africains vers l'Occident est passé de 27 000 entre 1960 et 1975 à 40 000 entre 1975 et 1984 et 60 000 entre 1985 et 1990 et environ 20 000 par an depuis. Trois cent mille (300 000) au total résideraient en Europe et aux États-Unis. Selon la Banque mondiale, 70 000 HQ africains quitteraient leurs pays d'origine chaque année actuellement. Quarante pourcent (40%) dse professionnels de haut niveau résideraient à l'étranger.

Bien entendu, comme le souligne Vinokur, ces chiffres ne sont qu'une indication quantitative de l'ampleur du mouvement d'exode. Relativement à ces capacités endogènes, l'Afrique est aujourd'hui la région du monde qui exporte le plus sa « matière grise ».
Les transferts commencent avec les chercheurs les plus actifs recensés par les bases de données internationales et/ou ayant travaillé avec des institutions étrangères sur des programmes locaux. Le Nigeria a perdu ainsi plus de la moitié de sa communauté scientifique en deux décennies, l'Algérie l'équivalent en 10 ans ; pour les autres pays, le mouvement, rampant, est moins accentué, mais aussi plus régulier.

Il est relayé maintenant par le départ des étudiants qui , fuyant des universités en dégradation constante, préfèrent s'inscrire dans les centres du Nord. En 1995, il y aurait 190 360 étudiants africains inscrits à l'extérieur[7] et l'on peut raisonnablement penser qu'une grande partie d'entre eux restera dans le pays d'accueil. Comme le note Jacques Gaillard, « tout en apportant une source de revenus non négligeables aux universités de plusieurs pays d'accueil, les étudiants des PED renforcent, par leur présence dans les universités européennes et américaines, les capacités d'enseignement et de recherches de ces dernières.[8]

Ces quatre figures sont représentatives des acteurs de la communauté scientifique africaine à titre de « type idéal » plus que de réalités figées ; dans la réalité de chaque pays, on aura plutôt affaire à des mélanges selon des dosages différents de chacune d'entre elle. Mais partout, à quelques très rares exceptions, on rencontrera sur notre chemin l'universitaire usé et déclassé, souvent en retrait de sa profession, le chercheur ingénieux, parfois humilié par l'arrogance des « donateurs » mais qui reste accroché à la coopération qui constitue son principal soutien pour mener son travail de recherche, le consultant-entrepreneur qui accumule les contrats et enfin le candidat au départ qui traverse toutes les figures. Presque tous ne comptent pratiquement plus sur les institutions nationales pour atteindre les objectifs qu'ils se sont fixés, vivre dignement et continuer à pratiquer leur métier de chercheur et d'enseignant.

Mais au-delà de la description sociologique de ces quatre figures dans leurs combinaisons les plus variées et les situations les plus diverses, au-delà aussi de leur dénonciation morale ou militante, il reste à tenter d'en analyser les raisons, d'en comprendre les causes qui, à l'échelle de l'Afrique, ne peuvent être que structurelles.

## HYPOTHESES D'ANALYSE

### La mobilité estudiantine

Les étudiants qui partent étudier à l'étranger s'engagent dans un processus à long terme, en moyenne entre 5 et 9 années (selon la Fondation internationale des sciences). Comme le note Jacques Gaillard (1999), « ils sont alors en prise avec les réalités socio-économiques et les problématiques des pays d'accueil, souvent peu pertinentes avec les pays d'origine au Sud ». Par ailleurs, dans beaucoup de ces pays, les frais de scolarité sont élevés et la formation est devenue progressivement une source de revenus importante pour plusieurs pays du Nord. En 1992, le deuxième poste de commerce extérieur de l'Australie était avec plus de 1 milliard d'euros celui des frais de scolarité des étrangers.

Annie Vinokur signale qu'au niveau mondial, le nombre de jeunes faisant des études supérieures a été multiplié par 14 entre 1950 et 2000 et est passé de 108 000 à 1,6 million. Cette activité est aux USA le poste le plus important des services éducatifs soit $14 milliards. Beaucoup d'établissements d'enseignement supérieur dont les dotations publiques sont insuffisantes ne pourraient survivre sans cette ressource. Ces étudiants (555 000) ne représentent que 3,4% du total, mais constituent 7,9% des recettes en frais d'inscription. Et, comme ils sont surprésentés dans les études doctorales (47 à 80% des PHD sont délivrés à des étrangers), ces étudiants deviennent ensuite indispensables dans les activités de recherche qui sont une des ressources de revenus des universités notamment en activant dans les filières boudées par les nationaux.[9]

### La mobilité des chercheurs et scientifiques

C'est dans les années soixante que les Britanniques ont utilisé le terme polémique de « fuite des cerveaux » pour désigner l'émigration vers les USA d'un millier de savants et d'ingénieurs.[10] L'un des députés anglais écrivait alors « La valeur des hommes que nous perdons est telle qu'elle représente l'élément le plus important de notre balance des paiements ».

Plusieurs États dont l'Inde ont essayé d'atténuer les effets de ces transferts, d'autres comme les Philippines ont en fait un axe central de leur stratégie d'exportation. Paradoxalement, c'est aux USA, pays d'importation par excellence de cette ressource, que les réflexions et les procédures de réduction sont les plus diversifiées. Ici, ce sont les États les plus touchés par les transferts qui développent les politiques les plus astucieuses : la Pennsylvanie propose aux diplômés de ses universités qui accepteraient de rester une réduction sur la dette contractée pour payer les études ; le South Dakota augmente ses bourses d'études pour freiner le mouvement de départ ; le North Dakota qui perd chaque année la moitié de ses diplômés envisage de leur accorder une réduction fiscale pour les maintenir… Comme le note judicieusement Annie Vinokur[11], l'argumentation des « perdants » au niveau régional américain n'est autre que celle qui est si vivement combattue par le niveau fédéral dans les débats internationaux. Mais ce double discours a ses raisons qu'il faudra chercher, non dans « la raison pure » mais dans les intérêts matériels de la gestion économique. Dans ce sens, l'État fédéral américain joue avec les formules de visas exactement comme un distributeur sélectif de HQ en fonction des besoins des firmes et des régions : un visa U-1B permet à un HQ étranger demandé par une firme américaine de travailler pendant 3 à 6 ans ; 45% de ces visas sont actuellement accordés à des informaticiens..., tandis que les firmes font pression pour augmenter le quota annuel (65 000 en 1998, 195 000 en 2000) et veulent l'étendre aux étudiants en cours d'études. Il faut dire que l'embauche d'un visa H-1B est plus avantageuse que celle d'un citoyen américain (un salaire inférieur de 20% plus une dépendance de l'employé vis-à-vis de l'employeur pour le renouvellement de son séjour). « On est en présence d'une forme de salariat « bridé » comparable à l'ancien *indentured labour* américain ou à l'actuel *Kafala* des pays arabes du Golf, mais cette fois-ci appliqué à la main-d'œuvre hautement qualifiée. *L'employabilité* des HQ étrangers permet, outre leur déclassement salarial de les mettre sur des postes de travail moins intéressants du point de vue de l'enrichissement des savoirs : un médecin sud-africain travaillant en Australie touchera moins que son collègue indigène et sera son assistant technique, un directeur de recherche d'un centre indien sera au mieux assistant de recherche en Angleterre.
C'est en Afrique que les écarts (déclassement, dévalorisation, etc.) se font le plus sentir ; dans ce continent où la proportion du stock d'HQ travaillant à l'extérieur est la plus forte (40%, soit 250 000), il est à craindre que le mouvement continue du fait du désengagement massif des États du domaine et de l'écrasement vers le bas des salaires des universitaires et des chercheurs locaux.

### Le paradoxe de la coopération

Pendant que les HQ africains, fuyant le délabrement des institutions d'enseignement et de recherches de leurs pays, tentent de s'installer en Europe et en Amérique du Nord, les institutions occidentales de coopération scientifique et d'aide au développement tentent de combler le vide.

—— Comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, les donateurs sont de plus en plus partisans de « l'ingérence scientifique » et comme le souligne J. Gaillard [12] « Au-delà des discours sur la promotion d'une politique de recherche définie sur la demande des pays du Sud, presque tous les pays du Nord, à l'exception des Pays-Bas font preuve aujourd'hui d'une attitude de plus en plus interventionniste et d'une approche de plus en plus 'programmatique'. Le modèle américain–programmes définis par des responsables institutionnels et des experts américains qui fixent les axes prioritaires–tend à se généraliser et même lorsque des institutions étrangères ont tenté de laisser à leurs « partenaires » une plus grande liberté de recherche, elles se sont parfois attirées les reproches de leurs États respectifs.

Certes il y a , ici et là, dans les pays occidentaux, en Suède, en France notamment, de fortes résistances à cet hégémonisme technique-scientifique de l'Occident, mais avec l'entrée en force des institutions américaines de coopération fortement articulées comme la Banque mondiale, avec aussi la tendance à la création de consortiums[13] continentaux pour gérer les programmes, il est évident que les « partenaires » africains restés sur le terrain auront de plus en plus de difficultés à négocier la parité.
Les chercheurs africains restés au pays sont ainsi souvent contraints, à leur corps défendant, de se plier aux paradigmes et aux problématiques des « bailleurs de fonds et deviennent pratiquement des assistants ou des « HQ émigrés *in situ* ».

*Gender*, *Good Governance, Poverty*, *Civil Society*, *Democracy* sont aujourd'hui les entrées obligées pour quiconque en SHS veut poursuivre sa carrière de chercheur en Afrique.

**Le statut de la recherche**

Après les Indépendances, beaucoup d'États africains se sont lancés dans une politique ambitieuse de développement et ont mis en place des systèmes éducatifs devant produire un personnel hautement qualifié et notamment des chercheurs et des universitaires compétents, une classe moyenne instruite et informée des réalités du pays et du monde, et donc aussi en mesure de peser sur la conscience et l'opinion des gens. En bref, une élite moderne, dont le statut social est fondé principalement sur le mérite acquis et non hérité, le capital culturel et le pouvoir d'influer par le travail et l'action rationnelle.

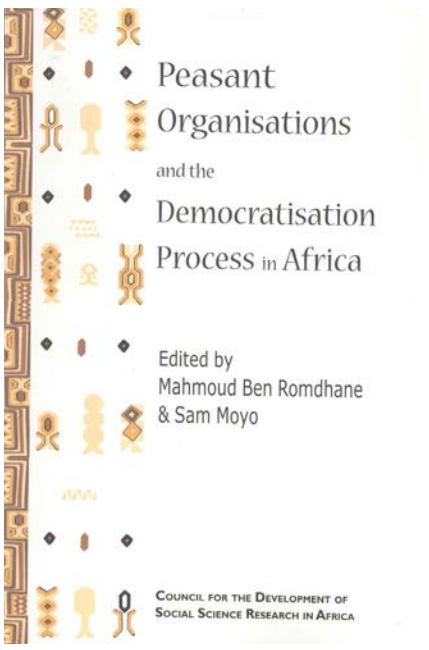
Avec les transformations tragiques qu'ont subi une grande partie des États africains durant les deux dernières décennies, l'allégeance clientéliste s'est substituée aux solidarités politiques ; ce groupe émergent de la société nouvelle attendue a perdu de sa pertinence. Comme segment de classe moyenne, écrasé entre les nécessités économiques et les conditions de travail, il n'a plus de soutien institutionnel pour affronter les dynamiques de la transnationalisation de son champ d'activité avec à un pôle l'émigration et à l'autre « l'aide étrangère ».

C'est ainsi que nous pouvons comprendre l'étrange nonchalance d'un grand nombre de directions politiques africaines à l'endroit des problèmes que rencontre ce groupe et des enjeux immenses qui s'expriment à travers son parcours tortueux.

Durant le pillage colonial des matières premières, les élites politiques africaines avaient l'excuse de leur domination. Les enjeux de la science africaine sont aujourd'hui bien plus importants, mais les élites dominantes n'auront dans ce défi, aucune excuse. □

**Notes**

[1] R. Waast, « L'État des sciences en Afrique », ministère des Affaires étrangères, Paris, 2002. Les données quantitatives sont le résultat de cette recherche. Nous remercions les auteurs d'avoir autorisé leur utilisation.
[2] La plus récente étant l'organisation du colloque international «Les sciences de l'Homme en Afrique» qui s'est tenu en novembre 2002 à Nantes et a réuni une centaine de scientifiques dont la moitié est venue d'Afrique.
[3] Les trois tableaux issus de l'enquête permettent d'avoir une idée significative de la place de la recherche et de l'enseignement universitaire en Afrique.
[4] Comme le note Alioune Sall «Au niveau de l'enseignementr supérieur, les universités produisent relativement trop de diplômés dont on peut douter de la qualité. Ces diplômés n'ont n'ont pas généré les connaissances et la technologie necessaires pour le développement à travers la recherche scientifique autochtone et n'ont pas été des agents pour l'acqusition, l'adaptation et la diffusion des connaissances scientifiques et techniques», in Alioune Sall (ed.), La compétitivité en Afrique, p.33, Karthala, Paris, Abidjan, Dakar.
[5] Jacques Gaillard, «La coopération scientifique et technique avec les pays du Sud», Karthala, Paris, 1999, p.57.
[6] Annie Vinokur, «Mobilité des cerveaux et gestion de l'enseignement tertiaire : vers de nouvelles relations entre savoirs et insertions», Communication au Colloque de Rabat-Maroc : Savoirs et Insertion, IRD-CERED, octobre 2003.
[7] «Les étudiants des pays du Sud recevant leurs doctorats d'une université d'un pays du Nord restent dans des proportions souvent importantes dans le pays d'obtention du doctorat... 60% des étrangers bénéficiaires d'un doctorat américain rstent aux États-Unis aprés l'obtention de leur diplome», Jacques Gaillard, op.cit., p.35.
[8] Jacques Gaillard, op. cit. p.35.
[9] Annie Vinokur (op. cit.) définit trois modèles d'articulation entre formation et mobilité des étudiants : le modèle philippin (transformation sur place d'une ressource locale en vue de son exportation), le modèle néo-zélandais (transformation d'une ressource impotrtée en vue de sa réexportation) et enfin le modèle américain (transformation d'une ressource étrangère en vue de son importation).
[10] Le cout de production d'un PHD était alors évalué à $56 000. Pour l'Inde en 2001, l'UNDP a évalué le cout d'un informaticien indien à $ 2000 et estime à $2milliards la perte de ressources subie par l'Inde du fait de cette émigration aux USA. Elle propose que chaque étudiant soit contraint de contracter un prêt équivalent aux ressources publiques consacrées à sa formation, prêt qui devrait être remboursé n cas d'émigration.
Op.cité.p.34
[11] Jacques Gaillard.op. cit. p47.
[12] Aux États-Unis, les Fondations Ford et Rockfeller ont soutenu un groupe de réflexion associant des universitaires américains, des directeurs de centres de recherche du GCRAI et des directeurs de centres nationaux d'Afrique, d'Asie et d'Amérique latine en vue de créer une nouvelle institution–GREAN–dont le but est de financer des projets de recherche en collaboration dans le cadre d'un appel d'offres compétitif. D'autres consortiums de ce genre se constituent autour de l'UE et au Japon.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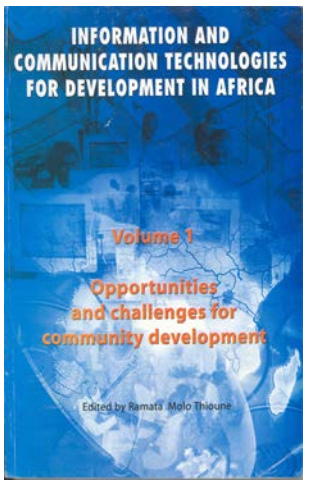


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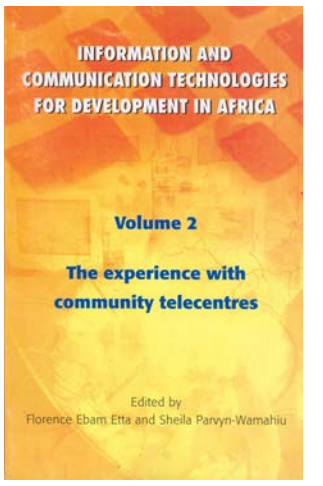


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# Le Maghreb, le Sahara, l'Afrique et la langue berbère

**Hassan Remaoun**

**Le Tassili des Ajjer, aux sources de l'Afrique,** Méditerranée, 1998, 50.31 euros, ISBN 2-84272-052-0

**Les Premiers Berbères,** Edisud, 2000, 56.83 euros, ISBN 2-7449-0227-6

par Malika Hachid

Deux ouvrages publiés ces dernières années par Malika Hachid nous replongent dans le Sahara central à l'époque du Néolithique et de la Protohistoire dont les poteries fresques, gravures rupestres et sépultures datant de l'époque, celles du Tassili des Ajjer notamment, témoigneraient de ce qui fut une zone de rencontre de populations diverses caractérisant la fin de la préhistoire et l'un des principaux foyers de production et de diffusion culturelle en Afrique durant une dizaine de milliers d'années (à partir de l'achèvement de l'Aride de la fin du Pléistocène et le retour des pluies, vers 13000-12000 B.P dû notamment à la fin de la glaciation du würms au Nord du globe terrestre et jusqu'à la phase de réchauffement et de désertification dont les effets semblent irrémédiables à partir de 6000-5000 B.P).

À travers ces deux ouvrages Malika Hachid nous communique le résultat d'une carrière consacrée à la préhistoire et à l'histoire du Sahara et de la civilisation berbère, ceci en tant qu'universitaire, chercheur et directrice du Parc national archéologique du Tassili (en Algérie).

Sa connaissance du Sahara qu'elle a parcouru et au sein duquel elle a longtemps vécu comme archéologue, et la maîtrise des productions scientifiques concernant la région lui permettent à travers une approche interdisciplinaire de nous présenter une somme encyclopédique concernant le Maghreb et le Sahara central de l'Épipaléolithique (fin du Paléolithique)[2] et du Néolithique à nos jours.

Elle fait bien entendu appel à l'archéologie et à la paléontologie, mais aussi à la géologie et à la climatologie, à la zoologie et à la botanique ainsi qu'aux travaux d'anthropologie et d'ethnographie, de linguistique et d'histoire, le tout agrémenté par une iconographie particulièrement riche (des centaines de photos en couleurs, schémas, cartes).

Un peu dans la lignée de travaux qu'elle avait menés plus tôt M. Hachid défend des thèses hardies et,elle l'admet, pouvant parfois prêter à discussion, mais ses conceptions d'ensemble sont novatrices, et argumentées, malmenant pas mal d'idées reçues.

Dans *Le Tassili des Ajjer* son premier ouvrage, l'auteur fait bien entendu le point quant au patrimoine archéologique de la région, les fameuses gravures rupestres notamment, mais en tentant de les resituer dans le contexte écologique et humain au sein duquel elles ont vu le jour.

L'idée qui est développée est que, loin de constituer une simple curiosité touristique due au hasard de transhumances de populations marginalisées, les fresques du Tassili sont au centre d'un important carrefour de cultures fondateur d'une civilisation originale, indépendante et parfois plus ancienne que celles qui depuis l'avènement du néolithique ont vu le jour au Moyen-Orient, en Égypte ou en Méditerranée, les influençant même plutôt que le contraire. Le pastoralisme, la poterie et l'art rupestre seraient ainsi des indicateurs aussi fiables, parce qu'adaptés écologiquement, que l'agriculture, l'architecture ou l'écriture telles qu'apparues ailleurs.

Apparaissant d'abord à la fin du Pléistocène des groupes humains qualifiés par l'auteur d'Épipaléolithiques ou Prénéolithiques qui occupent la Tadrart Acacus et le Tassili. *« Ce sont eux qui peignaient les Têtes Rondes et qui annoncent la négritude africaine. Voilà des résultats qui auraient fait plaisir à feu Cheikh Anta Diop, quoiqu'ils se situent en dehors de la sphère de la grande Egypte, bien avant les premiers Egyptiens et les premières momies. En plus d'une riche et originale sensibilité esthétique, ces Noirs manifestent un profond sens religieux. Chasseurs ils s'essayent à l'apprivoisement du mouflon, leur gibier préféré, premiers pas vers la domestication animale. Enfin, il sont «en voie de développement économique» dirions-nous aujourd'hui, puisqu'ils fabriquent de la poterie »* (Hachid, 1998: 298).

À partir de 8000-7000 B.P, commence à se mettre en place la période bovidienne (ou bubaline) portée par des populations mélanodermes qui élèvent des bovins représentés dans leurs œuvres artistiques, et avec lesquels on retrouvera à partir des VIe et Ve millénaires (B.P) des éleveurs qui semblent être des Blancs et parmi lesquels émergeraient déjà ce que M. Hachid appelle « les Protoberbères », et finiront par devenir les plus nombreux. Par où sont arrivés ces derniers ?

*«Probablement de la façade méditerranéenne, mais non pas de sa région maghrébine, plutôt de sa partie orientale vers la cyrénaïque et la tripolitaine. Ces populations peuvent aussi s'être ébranlées de l'Est, mais cette fois de l'intérieur des terres, de cette vaste zone appelée Désert occidental qui s'étend jusqu'au Nil »* (M. Hachid, 1998, p. 300).

Elle conclut par ailleurs sur l'unité civilisationnelle du Sahara : *« On peut donc voir dans la civilisation bovidienne saharienne datant de 8000 à 7000 ans, l'origine de l'Afrique actuelle de la complexité et de l'unité de son peuplement leucoderme et mélanoderme où Touareg, Bambara, Sarakollès, Peul, Dorzon, Ethiopiens et autres, pour être différents n'en sont pas moins tous africains, nés de la même matrice préhistorique ».*

Dans *Les Premiers Berbères*, son second ouvrage, il sera toujours question du Tassili mais plus sous l'angle de ses relations avec l'Afrique du Nord dans son ensemble puisqu'elle y traite de l'apparition des Berbères et de l'extension de leur langue et de leur culture entre la Méditerranée et le Sahara central. L'auteur va tenter de confronter les résultats de la paléontologie et de la linguistique historique et glottochronologie avec sa discipline de base, l'archéologie pré et protohistorique, pour étayer sa thèse sur l'origine des Berbères (un peu ce qu'un autre archéologue Colins Renfrew avait essayé de faire à propos de l'émergence des langues indo-européennes).

En linguistique historique M. Hachid s'appuiera notamment sur les travaux de Christopher Ehret et de Salem Chaker pour avancer que le berbère serait le résultat de l'évolution d'une langue mère, l'afro-asien ou afrasien utilisé 17000 à 15000 ans B.P entre le nord du Soudan et les hauts plateaux de l'Éthiopie (et non au Moyen-Orient). L'une des branches de l'afrasien aurait connu différentes évolutions par différenciations de populations pour déboucher plus particulièrement au 11e ou 10e millénaire B.P (soit à peu près le 9e ou 8e millénaire B.C) sur l'apparition des sous-groupes que constituent l'égyptien, le berbère et le proto sémite (ancêtre de l'akkadien, du phénicien de l'hébreu, de l'arabe…).

Le berbère émergerait en Afrique du Nord avec les Proto méditerranéens Capsiens dont les traces remonteraient à environ 10 000 ans B.P, et qui assimileront des populations plus anciennes, les Mechtoïdes dont la culture ibéromaurussienne remonterait à 22 000 ans B.P. Le processus d'assimilation pourrait d'ailleurs selon l'auteur être rapproché de celui dû à la vague d'islamisation-arabisation qui commence au VIIe, VIIIe siècle A.C. Le berbère gagnera de même le Sud atteignant le Sahara central vers 5000 B.P (thèse partagée aussi par l'anthropologue Slimane Hachi) et il y côtoiera deux ethnies noires : les descendants des fameuses Têtes rondes représentées dans les fresques du Tassili et qui par leur genre de vie se rapprocheraient des Mechtoïdes du Maghreb, ainsi que ceux mélanodermes représentés avec les bovidés et qui pourraient être les ancêtres des Peuls.

Toujours à propos de la diffusion du berbère l'auteur tient cependant à préciser : « les anthropologues sont unanimes à reconnaître que les populations berbères actuelles n'offrent pas une spécificité physique pouvant renvoyer à un type anthropologique berbère unique, le stéréotype racial doit être écarté même si en Afrique du Nord l'entité civilisationnelle berbère est une réalité évidente dont les racines s'ancrent dans la préhistoire ». M. Hachid indique de même ses divergences avec d'un côté le linguiste Christopher Ehret et de l'autre l'anthropologue Jean Loïc Le Quellec.

Ehret considère en effet que le protoberbère n'aurait gagné le Maghreb que vers 3000 B.C, ceci à la suite d'une nouvelle migration afrasienne causée par des changements climatiques. Plus restrictif encore, Le Quellec pense que le protoberbère n'émergera pas au Maghreb oriental avant 2500 B.C, pour ne gagner le Sahara qu'avec l'introduction du dromadaire (peut être au 1er siècle A.C.). Avec ces questions et quelques autres c'est donc un important débat qui est relancé et qui reflète l'avancée réelle de la recherche concernant la préhistoire et la protohistoire de l'Afrique du Nord et du Sahara. Nous assistons assurément à un véritable processus de mise à jour sinon de renouvellement des synthèses élaborées par des précurseurs tels Lionel Balout, Gabriel Camps et Henri Lhote.

Ces deux ouvrages de M. Hachid se rejoignent et se complètent en fait à plus d'un titre, ne serait-ce que parce qu'ils traitent de l'africanité revisitée à partir du Sahara durant l'Epipaléothique et le Néolithique, et du fait berbère qui émerge pour l'essentiel durant le Néolithique et la Protohistoire (c'est-à-dire durant la phase qui débouche directement sur l'Antiquité).

La problématique de l'auteur très argumentée sur le plan scientifique (même si des éléments de son approche méritent discussion comme elle le reconnaît avec modestie), et son travail très fouillé rejoignent cependant les interrogations et débats qui depuis quelques décennies travaillent la société algérienne en particulier et de façon plus globale le Maghreb, et ces questionnements relèvent en partie au moins de l'identitaire. On sait que l'identité nationale en Algérie a été longtemps appréhendée par les factions dominantes du Mouvement national (depuis les années 1930 notamment), puis par l'État national issu de l'indépendance (en juillet 1962) à travers le prisme paradigmatique de l'arabo-islamisme.

Depuis le Printemps berbère qui a notamment secoué la Kabylie (en 1980), est désormais abordée avec force la place que doit occuper la composante berbère (ou amazighe) au sein de l'identité nationale. Par ailleurs

la crise sociopolitique caractérisée depuis la montée dans le pays à partir de la fin des années 1980 du fondamentalisme islamique et de son avatar terroriste, a mis en avant la nécessité au sein de fractions de la société civile et politique de réajuster la définition de la « personnalité » algérienne, censée avoir jusque-là été trop ancrée sur des constituants idéologiques liés à l'histoire du Moyen-Orient contemporain (panarabisme et islamisme notamment).

Le recours à l'antériorité berbère et à la dimension méditerranéennes de larges pans de l'histoire algérienne est censé constituer aux yeux de nombreuses catégories de l'élite intellectuelle et de la société globale le contre poids à l'excès « d'arabo-islamisme » prégnant jusqu'à ces dernières années.

Nonobstant le fait que les idéologies panarabistes et islamistes sont des phénomènes essentiellement contemporains et qui n'épuisent donc pas la dette identitaire de l'Algérie et du Maghreb vis-à-vis de l'histoire et de la civilisation arabo-islamique, il restait à situer la dimension africaine des sociétés nord-africaines et de l'Algérie en particulier, et de ce point de vue, l'approche qui prend pour relais le Sahara demeure incontournable. L'originalité de la synthèse très fouillée proposée par Malika Hachid est d'avoir largement nuancé la dimension méditerranéenne très au goût de la vogue actuelle de globalisation-mondialisation tournée vers le Nord, en rappelant dans ses travaux l'impact africain auquel elle relie l'ancestralité berbère.

Deux séries de thèses avaient jadis été mises en vogue quant à l'origine des Berbères. L'une d'elle s'appuyant sur des fondements prétendument raciaux, avait mis en exergue une origine méditerranéenne ou même européenne et ne saurait en fait être détachée du contexte de légitimation de l'ordre colonial, duquel elle était contemporaine. La faiblesse méthodologique de l'approche en a ruiné toute validité sur le plan scientifique et nous ne nous y attarderons pas. La seconde quoique marquée par le mythe biblique de Noé et ses descendants a eu quelque bonheur parce qu'elle s'appuyait sur la proximité du mode de vie nomade des anciens Berbère et Arabes, et une certaine comparaison entre parlers berbères et parlers sémitiques, ceux notamment arabes. La langue berbère était ainsi catégorisée comme faisant partie de la famille chamito-sémitique (ou hamito-sémitique), qu'on a qualifiée plus tard de proto-sémitique, c'est-à-dire d'un rameau de langues qui se serait particularisé assez tôt par rapport aux autres langues sémitiques.

On sait que l'origine de ces langues était située quelque part entre la Syrie et la Mésopotamie, ou même dans la péninsule arabique, selon notamment la thèse défendue par H.A Winckler et L. Caetani qui considéraient que la séparation et la diversification étaient causées par des vagues d'émigration successives dues à l'avancée de la désertification. La thèse plus récente à laquelle se rallie Malika Hachid et qui s'appuie sur des travaux tels ceux menés en linguistique historique par Ch. Ehret et S. Chaker, situe donc le foyer originel en Afrique orientale quelque part entre le Soudan et l'**É**thiopie.

Même si dans cette région nous sommes géographiquement à proximité de la péninsule arabique, qu'il suffit pour atteindre de traverser la Mer rouge ou le Golfe d'Aden, et si le paramètre des vagues d'émigration dues à la désertification continue à jouer, il y a assurément un nouveau paradigme qui entre en ligne de compte. Il n'est plus question de référence biblique (à Cham ou Ham), mais de référence géographique, et linguistique puisque la langue mère serait l'afro-asien ou afrasien et qui par différenciations successives en quittant le berceau originel aurait donné ce qu'on appelait jusqu'à récemment les langues chamito-sémitiques, c'est-à-dire le berbère, l'égyptien ancien (le copte), le couchitique avec une variante tchadienne, et même le sémitique (qui paradoxalement garde une appellation biblique). Ce dernier, porté par une population ayant émigré au Moyen-Orient, donnera naissance notamment à l'akkadien, au phénicien, à l'hébreu, à l'araméen, et à l'arabe. De ce point de vue il y a aussi une double symbolique : d'abord le berbère apparaît comme nettement antérieur aux langues issues du sémitique (ou proto-sémitique) et particulièrement au phénico-punique et à l'arabe, langues avec lesquelles il eut d'importantes interférences civilisationnelles et historiques ; ensuite le foyer originel est en Afrique et non au Moyen-Orient. Ce dernier constat permettrait aussi de mieux comprendre la relation de l'afro-asien, non seulement aux langues auxquelles il a directement donné naissance, mais son interaction via des mouvements de population avec d'autres langues africaines parlées au Sud et à l'Ouest du continent, et vue sous cet angle, au gré des mouvements sociaux et climatiques et des différentes vagues d'émigration, la position du Sahara en général et du Tassili en particulier, s'avère stratégique pour la compréhension de nombreux processus historiques.

En fait, la problématique traitée par M. Hachid rejoint, sans les recouvrir, les hypothèses et travaux menés par d'autres historiens du continent qui ont eu à traiter non seulement des relations entre Afrique du Nord et Afrique noire, mais aussi des rapports ayant pu exister entre Afrique orientale et nilotique, et Afrique occidentale, les zones sahélienne et saharienne apparaissant dans tous les cas comme des passages obligés et donc riches en histoire.

Au-delà de toute approche qui pour certains tendrait à renvoyer à la polémique basée sur l'idéologie stérile de la recherche *des origines*, somme toute, trop restrictive pour recouvrir la complexité du monde contemporain, la piste empruntée dans leurs travaux par Malika Hachid et d'autres, mobilise donc déjà un certain nombre de spécialistes et mérite tout l'intérêt des chercheurs.□

## Notes

[1] B.P se lit Before Present (avant le présent que par convention on date à l'année 1950).
B.C se lit Before Christ (avant J.C) et A.C after Christ (après J.C).

[2] cf. notamment de Malika Hachid : ***El-Hadjra el-mektouba***. *Les pierres écrites de l'Atlas saharien,* 1 volume de textes, 176 p. 1 volume d'images, 385 photos couleurs. Éditions ENAG, Alger 1992.

[3] Cf. de C. Renfrew, ***L'énigme indo-européenne. Archéologie et langage*** (Édition française, Flammarion Paris 1990 et 1994).

[4] On pourra se référer à ce propos à :
L. Balout :
- ***Préhistoire et l'Afrique du Nord. Essais de chronologie*** (Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris 1955).
- ***Algérie Préhistorique*** (Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1958).

G. Gamps :
- ***Aux origines de la Berbérie. Massinissa ou les débuts de l'histoire*** *in Libyca* (tome VIII, 1er semestre 1961, Alger).
- ***Les Civilisations préhistoriques de l'Afrique du Nord et du Sahara*** (Ed. Doin, Paris, 1974).

H. Lhote :
- ***À la découverte des fresques du Tassili*** (Arthaud, Paris, 1973).
- ***Vers d'autres Tassili*** (Arthaud, Paris, 1976).
- ***Les chars rupestres du Sahara. Des syrtes au Niger par le pays des Garamantes et des Atlantes*** (Ed. des Hespéride, Toulouse, 1982).

[5] De nombreuses publications ont ces dernières années porté sur la question et j'ai moi-même eu l'occasion de l'aborder dans quelques écrits cf. notamment Remaoun Hassan.
- «Legs de l'histoire et idéologies identitaires » in Gilles Manceron (sous la dir. de), *Algérie, comprendre la crise,* Ed. Complexe, Bruxelles 1996.
- « École, histoire et enjeux institutionnels » in Omar Lardjane, Mustapha Haddab et autres, *Réflexions. Élites et questions identitaires*, Casbah, Éditions, Alger 1997.

[6] On pourra à ce propos se référer à la contribution de J.N. Ferrie et G. Boetsch, « Du Berbère aux yeux clairs à la race eurafricaine : la Méditerranée des anthropologues physiques», in Kacem Basfao et Jean-Robert Henry (Sous la dir. de), *Le Maghreb, l'Europe et la France*. Éditions du CNRS, Paris, 1992.

[7] L'historiographie arabe traditionnelle a notamment contribué à répandre cette thèse. On sait qu'Ibn Khaldoun considérait que les Berbères étaient originaires du Yemen.

[8] Pour un résumé en langue française de cette thèse on pourra se référer à Bernard Lewis, *Les Arabes dans l'histoire*, Éditions de la Baconnière, Neuchâtel (Suisse), 1958.
Des indications bibliographiques concernant les œuvres de Winckler (en allemand) et de Caetani (en italien) sont disponibles dans : J. Sauvaget, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Orient musulman. Éléments de bibliographie* (Édition refondue et complétée par Cl. Cahen) Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien, Maisonneuve, Paris, 1961.

[9] Selon DAVIDSON qui fait référence à l'ouvrage de J.J. GREENBERG, *Studies in african linguistic classification*, (New Haven, 1955), c'est ce dernier auteur qui avait proposé « d'abandonner complètement le terme hamite ».
cf. Basil DAVIDSON, *L'Afrique ancienne,* Ed. Maspéro, Paris, 1973 (2 volumes).

[10] On pourra signaler à ce propos :
- Basil Davidson op.cit. (voir Supra, note 9)
- Jean-Suret Canale, *Afrique noire. Géographie, civilisations, Histoire* 3e édition, Ed. Sociales, Paris (cet ouvrage constitue le tome 1 d'une série en 3 volumes).
- Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Sous la dir. de), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique* (Vol. I), édité par la Commission scientifique pour l'Écriture de l'Histoire de l'Afrique – UNESCO, Paris, 1983 (pour la version en langue arabe).
- On ne manquera pas de signaler aussi l'approche de Cheikh Anta Diop.

# L'odysée d'intellectuels maghrébins

**Amady Aly Dieng**

**Parcours d'intellectuels maghrébins**
par Aissa Kadri *et alii*
Karthala,1999, 428pages, 27,44 euros ISBN : 2-86537997-3

Cet ouvrage publié sous la direction de Aïssa Kadri, maître de conférences en sociologie à l'Université de Paris 8, se situe à l'opposé de nombreux textes portant sur les intellectuels en pays d'islam qui, l'air du temps et la surmédiatisation de l'islam politique aidant, traitent ces derniers au travers du prisme du discours politique et de catégories idéologiques. Les travaux présentés ici se situent dans une perspective comparatiste et historique et s'attachent à comprendre les positionnements des intellectuels maghrébins dans l'action sociale et politique. L'originalité de ces études consiste en une analyse sociologique et anthropologique des modes de socialisation et de formation institutionnels ou non, et des structurations premières définissant des espaces-temps dans lesquels s'inscrivent les parcours individuels. Ces modes et structurations sont caractéristiques des contacts culturels qui déterminent des engagements souvent plus variés et nuancés que tranchés.

Si la production intellectuelle relève ici d'analyses fines, d'investigations dans les parcours faits de bifurcations, d'allers et retours, de reniements et d'accomplissements, elles ne revêtent tout leur sens que rapportées au contexte, d'expérience et de pensée, propre à une certaine génération et aux problèmes dominants. Cette perspective permet de réfléchir aux rapports passé/présent, non seulement dans la continuité ou la discontinuité des problématiques, mais aussi dans leurs conditions et leurs formes d'expression. On s'aperçoit ainsi que la question de la sécularisation, qui inclut celle de la femme et de la citoyenneté, n'a cessé–quid du retour du religieux ?–de travailler les sociétés maghrébines.

Il y a sans doute à approfondir les analyses et à développer les recherches sur les conditions de blocage de ce processus et sur l'incapacité des intelligentsias maghrébines à produire du sens qui puisse accompagner et conforter le changement social. Cet ouvrage indique, en pointillés, quelques pistes. Certaines interventions suggèrent qu'une grande partie de la faible autonomisation du champ intellectuel est liée au mode de structuration des États nationaux indépendants, à leur rôle dans l'instrumentalisation et le contrôle du savoir et de la culture. D'autres mettent plutôt l'accent sur la responsabilité propre d'intellectuels d'avant-garde–messianiques, dirions-nous–qui ont plus imaginé leur société qu'appréhendé celle-ci telle qu'elle est. Il n'en reste pas moins, avancent d'autres, que le travail de déconstruction du discours hégémonique entamé par certains ne peut qu'inaugurer des chemins qui n'ont malheureusement pas été largement empruntés jusque-là. Quelle que pût être la richesse d'un débat autour des définitions des intellectuels et des filiations théoriques qui leur donnent sens, les communications présentées dans ce livre en font usage dans tous les sens–typologique, fonctionnaliste dans une orientation proprement structuro-fonctionnaliste ou néo-marxiste, historique et/ou sociologique dans ses versions marxistes webériennes, ou pratico-sociales ou théoriquement plus construites–référées ou non aux traditions culturelles locales et à leur champ sémantique. Il importait plus de mettre à jour dans l'analyse de ces parcours les questions essentielles que posent ces sociétés et qui se posent à elles à travers les problématiques de leurs intellectuels.

Cette typologie évidemment assez schématique, en privilégiant les événements majeurs de l'histoire sociale des formations maghrébines au détriment d'événements idéologiques moins marqués, court le risque de rater les « générations courtes » par opposition aux « générations longues » selon la classification de M. Bloch.

Les contributions de Lemnouar Merrouche, de Mahfoud Smati (Université d'Alger), de Ahmet Boukous (Université de Rabat) et de El Hadi Chalabi (Université de Paris 8) illustrent bien le cas d'intellectuels dont les contradictions obèrent les projets qu'ils portent et qui sont dans l'incapacité de dépasser les limites objectives du contexte dans lequel ils fonctionnent. L. Merrouche, s'attachant au cas de M'Barek al Mili, montre ce qu'a de nouveau l'entreprise de ce Alem de publier, à la veille du centenaire de la colonisation, une histoire de l'Algérie dans les temps anciens et nouveaux. L'originalité de la démarche est double : elle se veut d'une part objective et d'autre part liée à un point de vue critique vis-à-vis de la conception traditionnelle locale de l'histoire et surtout de la conception coloniale de l'histoire. L. Merrouche n'en relève pas moins chez ce réformiste des limites infranchissables.

C'est à une démarche compréhensive qu'a recours M. Smati pour rendre compte de la personnalité de Ben Badis–véritable icône du nationalisme réformiste. M. Smati souligne d'abord les « paradoxes » de cette personnalité issue du milieu bourgeois et pourtant tout à fait éloignée des pratiques de cette classe, mystique mais combattant les confréries, défendant la *charia* « sans repousser la laïcité ». Il fonde ensuite l'essentiel de son approche sur l'entreprise de rénovation morale, spirituelle et culturelle, que développe Ben Badis en mettant l'accent sur sa lutte contre le mouvement confrérique.

Le cas de M. Soussi est complexe ; voilà un intellectuel plus hybride nous dit Boukous, conjuguant des affiliations soufistes, salafistes, politiques, qui a pour programme de fixer par l'écriture, non pas une histoire nationale mais un état de l'histoire et de la culture du Sous qui est sa région natale.

Si l'on peut dire, dans le cas de Soussi, que l'action politique apparaît sinon comme frein, du moins ne permet pas de tirer les conséquences entières de l'action intellectuelle–et il n'est pas peu paradoxal de voir quelqu'un mettre à jour et valoriser la culture locale pour très vite la subsumer dans une conception de la supériorité de la langue et de la culture arabes-, on peut avancer, dans le cas de Benali Fekar, étudié par E. Chalabi, que l'action politique à travers l'accès à la citoyenneté française, la direction d'un journal bilingue *El-Misbah* attesté pro-français, l'assimiliationnisme revendiqué, commanderaient l'action intellectuelle. Ce projet n'est pas ambigu. Il est bien celui d'une adaptation de l'islam au monde moderne, au capitalisme ; le point de vue est critique.

C'est dans une autre problématique –le mouvement national est aux portes de la lutte armée–qu'est posé en pointillé (Omar Lardjane, CREAD, Alger parle de débat esquivé) la question de la laïcité chez les intellectuels définis ici par rapport aux lettrés qui caractérisent selon lui, davantage l'entre-deux guerres. O. Lardjane montre ce qu'ont de nouveau les positionnements intellectuels d'après-guerre par rapport à la génération de l'entre-deux guerres. C'est le cas de la thèse de Malek Bennabi qui est critique vis-à-vis du mouvement islamiste en tant que celui-ci aurait abandonné l'action morale et sociale au profit de l'action politique et appelle « à séparer l'action religieuse de l'action politique » ; de même que la thèse d'Idir El-Watani (collectif de trois jeunes intellectuels algériens) qui développe une vision séculaire du nationalisme. Ces deux thèses posent en de nouveaux termes la question de la séparation du religieux et du politique que chacun à sa manière, dans les années trente, (A Ben Badis, en distinguant « la nationalité politique » et « la nationalité ethno-religieuse », et Fehrat Abbas, en séparant « la patrie intellectuelle » de « la patrie spirituelle »), justifiait. Il y a sans doute à nuancer l'évolution des réflexions et des engagements des uns et des autres. F. Abbas, notamment par la revendication d'une égalité citoyenne pleine et entière, veut porter à ses limites la logique républicaine sans pour autant gommer ses référents identitaires, alors que A. Ben Badis qui garde une position à-critique à l'égard du kémalisme—dont on pourrait penser qu'il lui est favorable–reste dans une logique communautariste. Il n'en reste pas moins qu'on est dans le cas de Bennabi, tout au moins en ce qui concerne l'ouvrage étudié, et d'Idir Elwatani, dans un moment où est posé d'une manière relativement nette, relève O. Lardjane, le problème du rapport entre le politique et le religieux. Aussi bien M. Bennabi et Idir El Watani, proposent de disjoindre nationalisme et religion.

Les contributions de M. Yelles et de S. Bouamrane témoignent de la permanence de questionnements par rapport au patrimoine populaire, à la tradition qui se sont sans doute précisés, nourris qu'ils étaient par le comparatisme et portés par des intellectuels de double culture et de double référenciation. Les productions de S. Bencheneb et de M. Lacheraf ainsi que celles, plus tardives, de M. El Fassi traduisent néanmoins, comme le relève M. Yelles, une « ambivalence » dans leurs rapports aux cultures populaires et ce qu'ils revendiquent comme ce qui les transcende, c'est-à-dire une culture fondée sur « l'invocation de la tradition arabe » qui incluerait le « watani » dans le « quawmi » pour justifier de la place et de l'existence d'un esprit « maghrébin ».

Les intellectuels comme M. Bennabi, M.A. Lahbabi et A. Aroua pensent les conditions de renaissance de l'Ouma par rapport à l'Occident dénoncé comme « culture d'empire » hégémonique voire « raciste » selon Bennabi ou comme « conquérant idélogique » imposant selon Lahbabi le même modèle dans ses variantes libérales ou marxistes. Ils n'en restent pas moins critiques, comme le relève Bouamrane, des sociétés musulmanes dont le retard relèverait de causes internes. C'est sans doute M. Bennabi qui va le plus loin dans cette critique des causes internes en avançant la thèse de la « colonisabilité » dont O. Lardjane rapporte dans sa communication déjà citée les oppositions qu'elle a suscitées. Il ne faut accepter de l'Occident que ce qui contribue au développement du monde arabe. Définissant un « humanisme musulman propre », dont d'ailleurs Lahbabi ne voit pas d'éléments d'opposition avec le « personnalisme » d'Emmanuel Mounier qu'il développera plus loin, ces intellectuels posent une filiation endogène dans le processus d'autonomisation des individus, autonomisation bloquée dès lors que « le pouvoir dynastique s'est substitué au pouvoir démocratique » (Bennabi) ou que l'État « dépersonnalise ou détruit l'autonomie des individus » (Lahbabi) à l'opposé des

pratiques du calife Aboubakr qui permettait la critique du pouvoir. Cette orientation qu'on pourrait caractériser comme l'action « d'islamiser la modernité » et non « de moderniser l'islam » apparaît anticipatif d'une partie du mouvement social né après les crises de l'État-Nation développementaliste.

A.Yassine qu'analyse Mohamed El Ayadi (Université de Casablanca) est représentatif d'une catégorie d'intellectuels dont on pourrait dire qu'ils sont « des intellectuels de jonction » qui articulent des influences du passé à des démarches, attitudes et pratiques nouvelles. La contribution de Pierre Vermeren (Université de Pais 8) montre bien comment s'est construit historiquement l'enseignement secondaire, supérieur au Maroc et comment la fondation de collèges modernes au début du protectorat a dévalorisé l'institution-phare qu'était la Quaraouinine. Les intellectuels sont divisés sur le plan du type de formation, de la langue d'enseignement, de la destination sociale qu'on leur assignait et des projets de société antinomiques dont ils sont porteurs. Les conflits intellectuels sont partiellement repris par les partis politiques rivaux, le Parti démocratique de l'indépendance et le parti de l'Istiqlal.

Analysant des itinéraires de familles tunisoises, Khadija Chérif (ENAU Tunis) met en exergue le rôle de l'éducation en tant que « socialisation méthodique », familiale et scolaire, dans la permanence et le changement des positionnements intellectuels générationnels. Les ruptures se marquent à travers les types de formation que les uns et les autres ont suivis.

Les positions tranchées chez les catégories intellectuelles analysées par Tayeb EL Mestari (Université de Bordeaux, 2) et Ilhem Marzouki (Faculté des Sciences juridiques, politiques et sociales de Tunis), sont perçues principalement dans leur rapport à l'État : leur proximité de l'État est la cause de leur discrédit et la faiblesse de leur influence. Une fraction de ces élites–les francophones–souffre sinon d'une coupure, du moins d'un décalage de cette catégorie d'intellectuels avec leur société.

C'est aussi du rapport des intellectuels à l'État et plus précisément au pouvoir d'État qu'il s'agit dans la communication d'I. Marzouki. Analysant le débat intellectuel développé à partir de la destitution du premier président de la République, H. Bourguiba, le 7 novembre 1987, Y. Marzouki relève également la faiblesse–« le dénuement et le désarmement » dit-elle–des intellectuels à agir au niveau de la société. Cette incapacité n'est pas, écrit-elle, « tant significative de l'embrigadement et du quadrillage étatique que de la profonde prégnance sur les mentalités de l'omnipotence de l'État. Le débat a vite tourné, parce qu'il y a absence d'une «classe d'intellectuels autonomes critiques » qui d'ailleurs ne pourrait exister que dans un système démocratique qui lui donnerait sens. Dans le cas libyen, analysé par Moncef Ouannes (Université du 9 avril, Tunis), il n'y a point, semble-t-il, de place pour des stratégies intellectuelles mais pour une instrumentalisation par le pouvoir d'une élite au gré des conjonctures et selon les rapports de force politiques internes au pouvoir d'État.

C'est à une entreprise de l'éducation au niveau national que participent –dans une phase historique où l'école est sinon ségrégationniste, du moins fortement sélective, dans le mouvement national–des intellectuels organiques, étudiés par Youcef Fates (Université Paris 10, Nanterre), qui se chargent par la diffusion des idées, des représentations et des symboles à former les corps pour les intégrer à la communauté en en faisant en retour les représentants «idéal-typiques» de la nation. Y. Fates écrit : « La plupart des clubs sportifs algériens deviendront des fiefs politiques » ; et c'est un véritable maillage de la société à travers la création d'associations culturelles et sportives que ces intellectuels vont développer à partir des années 30.

On ne peut comprendre l'itinéraire de Kateb Yacine et W. Laaredj que comme formes d'un processus d'adaptation à travers l'écriture. L. Manuel trace un itinéraire d'un K. Yacine, écrivain engagé dans le combat nationaliste à travers des référenciations successivement religieuses et ethniques et qui prend en charge les combats de son temps. K . Yacine, alors même que le projet nationaliste arabe vit son été indien, enregistre cette faillite–1954 et 1959 marquent un passage à cet égard dans le système d'identifications de K. Yacine qui va critiquer et tourner en dérision les hommes de religion–autant dans la forme (les langues vernaculaires sont convoquées dans l'écriture) que dans le contenu par son enracinement par le bas, une prise en considération prévalente des problèmes sociaux des catégories les plus fragiles de la société.

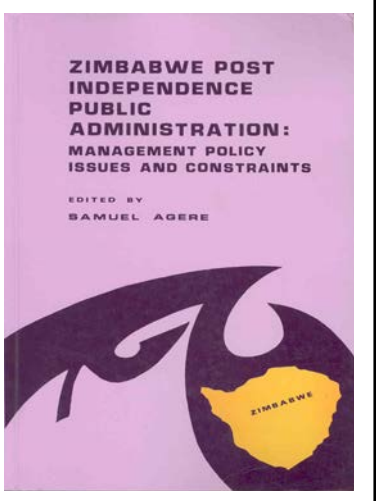
K. Yacine et W Larredj représentent par leurs oeuvres intellectuelles « de déconstruction de l'ordre du discours hégémonique », écrit L. Maougal, des « empêcheurs de tourner en rond ». N'est-ce pas là un chemin ouvert qui n'a pas été largement emprunté par les intellectuels au Maghreb ?

L'émergence d'un intellectuel « amazigh », qu'analyse Terhi Lehtinen, devrait en principe marquer l'irruption dans l'espace public de demandes de minorités jusque-là refoulées et qui traduirait plus que la fissuration de l'unanimisme nationaliste, le triomphe de l'individu. T. Lehtinen, analysant cette affirmation d'une revendication identitaire, remarque cependant que celle-ci–au Maroc–s'est toujours exprimée, contrairement au cas algérien, en retrait de l'action politique propre, au moins sur les dernières décennies et dans le cadre établi. La revendication de cette minorité est légitimée par la Monarchie.

René Gallissot (Institut Maghreb-Europe, Université Paris 8) rappelle que c'est en Europe qu'il existe des Maghrébins ; au Maghreb, il n'y a que des nationaux, qui en outre sont des nationaux musulmans. Les « Européens », qui , eux aussi ne se définissent comme tels qu'outremer, sont devenus des rapatriés dans leur métropole d'adoption, comme une partie des Juifs d'Afrique du Nord qui, par étapes mais pour la plupart, sont partis. Au Maghreb, à la différence du Machrek, il ne reste que des musulmans. C'est qu'il y a recouvrement de la nationalité/citoyenneté et de la compréhension englobante de musulmans, comme le disent chacune des institutions et les codes de la nationalité et du statut personnel, en fait le code de la famille.

De tous ces intellectuels maghrébins, les plus connus sont Kateb Yacine et Malek Bennabi. Il est temps que les intellectuels négro-africains fassent des efforts pour connaître les parcours des intellectuels maghrébins. Le plus connu en Afrique de l'Ouest , et en particulier au Sénégal, est Malik Bennabi dont le livre : *La vocation de l'islam* (Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1954) a profondément influencé les membres de l'Association des étudiants musulmans africains créée à la Cité universitaire de Dakar et présidée par Ciré Ly. Il est temps qu'une étude de l'histoire intellectuelle de l'Afrique noire soit écrite. Ainsi on pourra comparer les parcours des intellectuels maghrébins et des intellectuels négro-africains. Cette étude est d'autant plus utile que le panafricanisme est remis à l'ordre du jour suite à la naissance de l'Union africaine.

Ce livre a l'immense mérite d'avoir, à travers l'introduction d'Aïssa Kadri (enseignante à l'Institut Maghreb-Europe, Université Paris 8), établi les conditions de la comparabilité dans l'analyse des intellectuels maghrébins.□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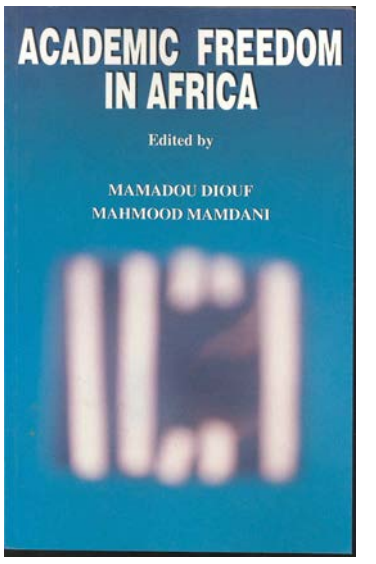


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# L'Afrique noire au Maroc

**Bouazza Benachir**

«*On déambule* [à Tafraout] *nonchalamment entre les étoffes chatoyantes qui donnent aux devantures des boutiques un cachet comparable à celui qu'on retrouve au centre de Dakar car l'Afrique noire exprime ici la ciselure de son mental sensible. C'est le point de convergence heureuse de deux cultures, la berbère et la négro-africaine. Cet art se manifeste dans les moindres choses, les infimes objets, les poteries comme le fer forgé. A travers lui, on discerne le génie de ces peuples qui essayent d'oublier la haine, la traite ancienne et actuelle et qui pratiquent le métissage biologique et culturel sans arrière-pensée.*»[1]

C'est dans le sillage humaniste de cet écrivain qui fut très proche de L.S. Senghor, que nous contribuons, dans les pages ci-après, à des repérages et analyses de quelques-unes des influences de l'Afrique noire au Maghreb et notamment au Maroc car le Continent austral « *exprime ici la ciselure de son mental sensible.* »

Les étapes de notre itinéraire ne sont pas les *stambali* tunisiens et libyens, ni le *diwan bilalien* d'Oran, de Constantine ou de Tlemcen, mais l'introduction à la connaissance des métissages biologiques et mentaux induits par la *derdebba* des *Gnawa* du Maroc sur les sociocultures de ce pays.

*Stambali* tunisien et libyen, *diwan bilalien* algérien et *derdeba* marocaine sont des cultes afro-maghrébins de possession dont les maîtres et les officiants sont les Maghrébins d'origine subsaharienne. On les désigne aussi par le terme « bilaliens » en référence à leur ancêtre spirituel Bilal, l'esclave abyssin affranchi par le Prophète. Les racines africaines de ces cultes de possession sont les mêmes que celles du *Bori* haussa[2]. Cette origine négro-africaine explique le fait avéré que ces cultes sont associés à deux dimensions fondamentales (non considérées ici) : la possession rituelle, d'une part, et la pratique médiumnique (qui est souvent adorciste), d'autre part. Consécutivement à l'immersion de ces cultes de possession dans les sociétés maghrébines, des pratiques et des croyances propres aux ordres culturels de ces sociétés se sont, sous l'effet d'un mécanisme anthropologique syncrétique, ajouté à ces cultes.

## 1. Transsahariennes

En introduisant dans la société et les cultures maghrébines les rythmes existentiels et esthétiques de l'Afrique noire, l'homme subsaharien d'origine y a rendu possible, voire indispensable, la célébration et la reconnaissance (au sens plein du terme) de leur dimension métisse et, partant, sa propre culture. C'est dans le caractère spectral ou occulte des strates de la puissance du métissage qu'il s'agit, non pas de retrouver, mais de trouver la dimension subsaharienne et subtropicale du Maghreb. C'est l'*Aufhebung* hégélienne : la civilisation du Maghrébin d'origine subsaharienne n'est pas uniquement une ritournellisation dialectique et créatrice du métissage de plusieurs traditions ; elle est, en outre, conservation-dépassement des autres civilisations qu'elle rencontre tout au long de son immersion dans le nouvel environnement historique-anthropologique auquel ses acteurs diasporiques sont confrontés. La civilisation nord-africaine noire, si elle paraît «transcender» les civilisations de l'Afrique boréale, y est devenue immanente. De ce fait, c'est l'effet conjugué de son articulation aux autres qui fait d'elle une entité inter-humaine et esthétique transversale et, à la fois, contiguë à chacun des microcosmes ethno-culturels qui constituent les civilisations nord-africaines métisses. C'est ce métissage, ou mieux : ce tropicalisme qui met en évidence, *in vivo,* la réalité de la dimension australe d'un pays éminemment africain tel le Maroc.

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Au-delà du Tropique du Cancer, la voix d'un mage et d'un poète du Sud, Léopold Sédar Senghor, met en poésie les rythmes transsahariens de l'âme polyarchique marocaine. Intitulé *Était-ce une nuit maghrébine ?*[3], un poème de Senghor, en recueillant la célébration de Mogador (Essaouira), rappelle comment le poète sénégalais abolit la frontière imaginaire qui sépare le Maroc de sa matrice subsaharienne. À l'instar de celles des différentes entités maghrébines, les dimensions australes du Maroc sont effectivement des ponts qui articulent, l'une sur l'autre, les deux rives du Sahara. En effet, tous ces souffles australes logent dans la complexité multiplicitaire de la civilisation marocaine. Or, c'est la valeur bénéfique du caractère austral de celle-ci qu'il s'agit de maintenir et de sauvegarder, selon les exigences des *Lumières* d'aujourd'hui. N'est-elle pas la source des puissances socio-historiques d'où la totalité de la société et des ethno-cultures marocaines se mettent constamment en perspective? En respectant sa souplesse, mais aussi sa capacité de vouloir être, d'emblée, au-delà de la pensée et de l'action du temps présent, la totalité des sociétés locales et de leurs cultures les pondèrent en nostalgie tant du futur que d'un être-ensemble, dont le mouvement génésique est, tout à la fois, le respect éthique et politique de la spécificité des sociétés et des cultures régionales, le développement égalitariste multi-sectoriel et dynamique de toutes les régions et de toutes les sociocultures locales, et la construction quotidienne de la défense de la paix et de la dignité de la totalité des communautés qui composent l'être-ensemble transnational pluriel.

Cependant, la paix et la dignité humaine, tout comme la solidarité et la convivialité nationales dans un environnement continental (i.e. africain), et international–voire immédiatement régional, qui se distingue aussi bien par des guerres quasi-civiles ou « sécuritaires » que par la déliquescence et le délabrement du pouvoir consensuel pseudo-légitime–devraient ressortir de l'ordre de *l'instituant* et non de celui de *l'institué*, de manière à ce qu'elles ne se transforment pas en horizon indépassable de leur articulation sur les nécessités du temps présent. Paix et dignité de l'homme ont à être *more majorum* en permanence, en deçà de la construction de l'être-ensemble anthropo-social et au-delà de l'horizon d'où commence à poindre les processus de création des individualités ou des citoyens comme singularité, « des pragmatiques de particules langagières » (J.-F. Lyotard)[4], « multiples » ; paix et dignité de l'homme ne serviront à rien si elles servent à transcender cet être-ensemble et ces processus, ou si elles sont réduites au statut inquiétant de *factotums*.

C'est une évidence, les deux rives du Sahara n'entretiennent pas que des relations d'exclusion ; la culture africaine noire à l'œuvre au sein des cultures et de l'imaginaire maghrébins est indubitablement un des nombreux paradigmes qui l'attestent. Ce constat peut s'appliquer particulièrement au Maroc même si, depuis la fin du XIXe siècle, la «*prise de Tombouctou en 1893-94 et d'In Salah en 1899*», l'espace transsaharien Maroc/Afrique noire «*est mis en marge dans la géographie économique coloniale.*»[5] Dans ce contexte, cette « géographie » ne pouvait que souverainement rejoindre le discours tenu par son inconscient : soit intégrer les « marges » humaines et territoriales nord-ouest africaines dans une belle et opaque totalité où, eût dit Hegel, toutes les vaches sont grises ! La double question de la continentalité et de la marginalité devenait caduque, et ce, au regard du savoir et de l'inconscient que voilà. Au nom de quoi cette tentation se soutient-elle ?

D'où parlez-vous, vous qui parlez? La question, humblement, importe plus que la réponse. Et le Sahara, n'est-ce pas d'abord la métaphore généalogique d'une communauté de situation qui lie, les unes aux autres, les peuples de l'Afrique du Nord-Ouest? L'écrivain algérien Tahar Djaout poétise cette évidente question dans son odyssée romanesque *L'Invention du désert*.

## 2. Canto Negro

La postulation d'un Maghreb autre a comme fondement préliminaire la symbiose transsaharienne atlantique ; et cette symbiose n'aurait pas existé sans la labilité des identités tant personnelles que collectives–les communautés–qui animent la totalité des cultures et des sociétés nord-ouest africaines qui ne cessent d'inventer, non le vide ou le chaos, mais les chemins qui mènent, tout à la fois, vers les individus concrets et leur universalité vitale et non formelle.

En tant qu'*homo aestheticus*, Orphée Noir nord-africain est une des figures qui symbolisent ce cheminement. C'est comme à Jamâa-el Fna à Marrakech, à Essaouira, ou dans les ethno-cultures qui ceinturent la bordure saharienne de l'Atlas et, plus généralement, dans cette vaste aire culturelle métisse qui va de cette bordure jusqu'aux confins austraux et sahéliens du Sahara. Non que les rythmes du *sintir ou gumbri* (ou encore guitare basse à caisse rectangulaire et à ornements cliquetants), des tambours (*ganga*) et des crotales d'Orphée Noir y dominent. Ils possèdent seulement cette distinction sonore typique, qui les fait voltiger, telle une ligne de crête discrète et accueillante, sur une rumeur proche de celle que Elias Canetti avait décrite en 1954 dans *Les Voix de Marrakech*. Ces rythmes africains-marocains sont comme une membrane sonore : ils protègent et amplifient les puissances de ce que l'on pourrait appeler, en détournant une phrase de Juan Goytisolo, «*l'éclat et l'incandescence du rythme prolongeant miraculeusement son verbe*». Les risques encourus par les Bilaliens maghrébins de perdre, non leurs langues bambara, haoussa, wolof, songhaï, etc., – ils les ont, hélas !, perdues et y ont substitué une langue « créole » fantôme…–mais leur musique même, ne diffèrent en rien de ceux qui guettent le patrimoine oral de l'humanité. «*Mais je tremble parfois en pensant,* ajoute J. Goytisolo*, combien elle* [la Place Jamâa-el Fna à Marrakech] *est vulnérable, et je sens monter à mes lèvres cette question qui résume toutes mes craintes : Jusqu'à quand ?*»[6]

Comme on ne manquera pas de le deviner, la question et les craintes de J. Goytisolo concernent d'emblée les médias de l'ethno-esthétique afro-marocaine et, plus généralement, l'ensemble des ethno-cultures orales nord-africaines.

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À l'instar de la Tunisie, le Maroc n'a de frontières avec aucun pays sahélo-saharien. On l'a déjà relevé : si l'histoire ment, la géograpgie ne peut le faire. En clair, le paradigme de l'impossibilité de penser le Maroc en dehors de sa dimension africaine noire n'est pas de l'ordre du phantasme. Il contribue à l'explication du *privilège* dont jouissent l'ethnomusique et l'ethnochorégraphie (et, plus généralement, la culture) d'origine subsaharienne un peu partout au Maroc. Dans ce pays, ces expressions ethnoartistiques opèrent comme partie intégrante des ethnocultures existantes (berbères, juives, arabo-andalouses). L'affirmation du paradigme culturel négro-marocain est aussi une introduction à l'analyse de la genèse de la rencontre de l'homme d'origine *sudique*[7] et de l'homme du Nord, du Noir et de l'«autochtone».

Il est des dispositifs discursifs et politiques qui occultent et nient cependant jusqu'à l'existence des métissages afro-maghrébins. C'était le cas de Michaux-Bellaire, par exemple, qui, s'il écarte d'un seul geste castrateur l'homme Noir de la civilisation et de la géographie spirituelle marocaines, ne saurait intimider que ceux qu'effraie l'imposture ou ceux, intérieurement ou extérieurement, dont le désir ardent consiste à refuser aux auteurs du *Blues afro-marocain* la qualité de communauté humaine transversale à la totalité socioculturelle marocaine. Avec l'homme Noir, nous nous trouvons en présence de la pluri-identité des puissances humanistes et esthétiques de l'un des exercices interculturels les plus concrets de la relation avec l'altérité. Parce qu'il a induit le métissage de la société et de la civilisation marocaines (mais également maghrébines), l'homme austral, métis culturel et biologique comme le boréal originaire, a pu dépasser l'entorse ontologique que des hommes de l'Afrique du Nord-Ouest et d'ailleurs lui ont fait subir.

### 3. D'un acolyte de Mauss ou les Berbères des déserts

Voyons comment cet émule de Marcel Mauss–il s'agit toujours de Michaux-Bellaire–administre son coup de chasse-mouche à ce qu'il appelle significativement «la confrérie des nègres de Guinée», et écarte d'entrée de jeu le métissage culturel afro-marocain :

«*Chez les Djilala de la campagne surtout* (sic)*, les principes mystiques de Moulay Abdelkader ont complètement disparu et ont été remplacés par un culte des puissances mystérieuses et cachées. Sous le couvert du grand chaikh de Bagdad, les Djilala font des invocations à des démons mâles et femelles : Sidi Mimoun, Sidi Moussa, Lalla Mira, Sidi Hammo, Lalla Djemiliya, etc.*

*Il semble* (resic) *qu'il y ait souvent une confusion entre les pratiques des Djilala et celles des Guenaoua, confrérie des nègres de Guinée, qui s'est également placée sous l'invocation de Moulay Abdelkader et qui n'a rien cependant de musulman* (reresic).»[8]

Ce passage est, malgré les apparences, intéressant. Il l'est, *d'abord*, en ce qu'il révèle comment son auteur est victime de son propre aveuglement impérialo-utopique. En insistant sur les *Djilala de la campagne*, l'auteur reconnaît, par ricochet, l'immersion des pratiques mystiques et rituelles de l'homme Noir dans les ethnocultures maghrébines, en général, et marocaines, en particulier. *Ensuite*, le passage cité est intéressant en ce qu'il trace, inconsciemment, les agencements ontologique, existentiel, socio-économique et politique de l'homme Noir marocain avec son environnement socioculturel. *Enfin*, le même passage michaux-bellairéen enracine cet homme –selon le geste d'une aporie qui reste, pour nous, utile–dans les territoires de la géographie mystique marocaine et, *à la fois*, le soude (de manière inquisitoriale !) à son animisme « supposé ». Or, au-delà de la circonscription mystique de l'homme Noir, c'est justement sa rencontre avec la civilisation de l'autochtone qui devait retenir l'attention. Elle ne l'éloigne pas, cette rencontre, de la terre où il vit et, donc, ne le projette pas imaginairement, comme semble le faire Viviana Pâques, sur sa terre d'origine : l'Afrique noire[9]. D'autre part, la rencontre que voilà ne cesse de se développer à travers une multiplicité de figures et de registres différents[10] ; ce que d'aucuns, comme Michaux-Bellaire, n'ont pas voulu voir.

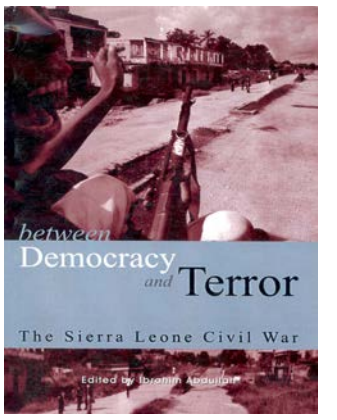
Cependant, les mots étranges que charrie le texte cité du sociologue français, et qu'il ramasse dans un jugement dangereux, n'ont de signification qu'une fois remis dans la bouche du promoteur de la rentabilité que l'auteur (i.e. Michaux-Bellaire) de ce jugement en attend. Michaux-Bellaire est un des ancêtres de «la tentation de l'innocence». En d'autres termes, il est la main invisible et scripturaire, non d'Adam Smith, mais d'une constellation de forces qui ont séparé, heureusement dans leurs imaginaires seuls, le Maroc profond de sa «noirceur» et de son socle africain. Du fin-fond des confins du Sud-Est marocain, Charles de Foucauld (mystique de son état mais qui marchait bel et bien sur ses pieds), proclame, dans une missive datée du 4 septembre 1912 : «*J'apprends par Massignon*[11] *que vous êtes à Fez (...) Il m'est doux de vous y* [Fez] *voir en cette première heure. C'est un bien grand et rare que dès le début de l'occupation du pays, toutes les impulsions soient bien données. Vous y contribuerez.*»[12]

Étrange matin de gésine, eût dit l'écrivain africain Cheikh Amidou Kane, à la lecture de cette prose antisarrasine! Au-delà de toute pudeur, son auteur y claironne sa transe mystique tristement coloniale. Tout en sachant que parmi les Marocain(e)s massacré(e)s aux portes de Fez, figuraient en grand nombre les Berbères mais également des Arabes, il ose écrire, comme en écho à la prose d'un Torquemada en mal d'Amérindiens à néantiser : «*Au milieu de mes chers Berbères touaregs je me sens près de vous qui êtes entouré de Berbères marocains.*»[13]

### 4. Les deux rives du Sahara en Afrique du Nord

Les ethno-cultures marocaines et, plus particulièrement, les ethnomusiques associées à des rituels comme ceux des Gnawa, font partie intégrante du patrimoine oral de l'humanité. De plus, l'ethnomusique et l'ethnochorégraphie des Afro-Marocains sont indissociables de la *négritude* et de la *civilisation de l'universel,* pour reprendre ces mots de Senghor. C'est la mise en perspective de l'importance planétaire de la négritude version marocaine et maghrébine et de la civilisation de l'universel que la présente contribution réfléchit, exprime et interprète. Le privilège esthétique et social dont jouissent, au Maroc, les expressions culturelles (arts, musiques, rites, danses, etc.) des Afro-Marocains, également dans le monde, sous l'emblème de la *world music* doit être au centre des linéaments et de la continuité d'une réflexion rigoureuse et sereine sur les logiques métisses qui animent et traversent de part en part les sociétés (hommes et cultures) de l'Afrique du Nord-Ouest. L'ambiguïté, les contradictions, voire parfois l'ethnocentrisme que les expressions culturelles « minoritaires » comportent[14], n'excusent pas le défaut de la patience du concept ni celui de l'exercice épistémologique de l'altérité professionnelle ou profane qui est un des prolégomènes à l'éthique.

En aède sub-tropicaliste du sable et de la mémoire, l'Orphée afro-marocain chante le passé le plus lointain. Ce chant, qui est un document ethnomusicologique, permet de mieux cerner aussi bien la complexité du temps présent que celle de la personnalité de l'humanité marocaine. Peut-être cet Orphée est-il la métaphore vivante et spectrale, à la fois, de l'impossibilité de penser le Maroc en dehors des mouvements historico-anthropologiques transsahariens. C'est par le rappel de cette impossibilité comme paradigme que devrait débuter toute réflexion présente ou à venir sur le Maghreb dans son rapport vital à la question


This rich and fascinating book is the first serious study to engage with the civil war in Sierra Leone. It explores a wide array of issues ranging from the genesis of the crisis, the regional intervention force to the numerous peace initiatives to end the war. Going beyond the economic factor, the book provides informative answers to the key questions surrounding the war. What were the diverse pathways to power taken by local actors? Why did the war last as long as it did? How were non-conventional actors able to launch and sustain an insurgency that called forth the largest concentration of UN
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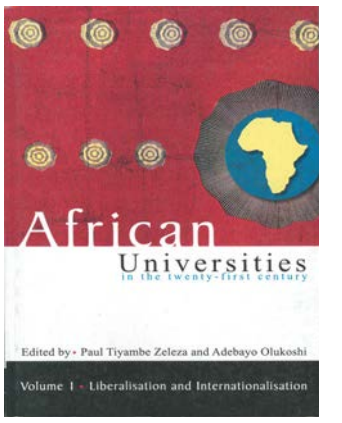


As the twenty-first century unfolds, African universities, and indeed universities everywhere, are undergoing unprecedented change and confronting multiple challenges brought about by the vast and complex processes of globalization and technological change. Powerful internal and external forces - political, pecuniary and paradigmatic - are reconfiguring all aspects of university life constituted around the triple mission of teaching, research and service. The need for redefining the role and defending the importance of universities has never been greater. How are African Universities responding to these challenges? This two volumes address this issues. They articulate new values and missions for African universities, and define effective strategies to meet the challenges. Written by some of Africa's leading educators, Volume 1 examines the implications of the neoliberal reforms and the new information technologies on African higher education, while Volume II interrogates the changing social dynamics of knowledge production, university organization, and public service and engagement.
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majeure de la diversité humaine et des métissages culturels et biologiques qu'accentue de plus en plus la donne dont le nom est la *mondialisation globalisée*.

Il est vrai qu'un enseignant ou un chercheur qui s'intéresse à l'étrangeté cathartique du monde est souvent condamné à être un « possédé» altruisé (traversé par le *devenir-autre*) par les ethno-cultures locales métisses. Tenter de penser le monde, c'est en aborder les négativités, surtout celles qui pourraient en rendre possible le réenchantement. Peut-être les cultures du monde, mais également le monde de la culture, sont-ils comme les grandeurs négatives kantiennes en philosophie... Les effondrements du monde ne révèlent-ils pas les négativités qui le fondent : là, la misère, ici la joie ?

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La saisie de la signification de la rencontre, en Afrique du Nord, des hommes des deux rives du Sahara est aussi une mise au clair de la présence active de la culture négro-africaine dans la totalité de la société et des cultures nord-africaines. M. Khaïr-Eddine écrivait : « *Les affinités qui existent entre le Nord et le Sud du Sahara sont multiples.* »[15] En effet, elle révèle le métissage afro-marocain, mais également la dimension subsaharienne du Maroc profond. Le *Blues africain-marocain* met en rythme et chante une telle évidence. La mémoire marocaine a toujours été, à travers les siècles, porteuse de la réalité anthropologique et existentielle du Sud. Elle est traversée par une loi : celle de la composition polyphonique d'une multiplicité de milieux et de paysages stylistiques, pour reprendre une image de Gilles Deleuze[16]. L'accès bénéfique à cette polyphonie passe par l'exigence éthique de la reconnaissance, côté boréal du Continent austral, de la culture négro-africaine dans sa totalité. □

## Notes

[1] Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine, *Légende et vie d'Agoun'chich*, Tunis-Casablanca, Cérès Éditions et Tarik Éditions, 2001, pp. 18-19 (1ère édition, Paris, Seuil, 1984).
[2] A.J.N. Tremearne, *The Ban of the Bori : Demons and Demon-Dancing in West and North Africa*, London, 1879 (reprint, Paris, Maisonneuve-Geuthner, 1991). *Idem*, *Hausa Superstitions and Custums*, London, 1913. Georges Lapassades, Gens de l'ombre, Paris, Méridiens/Anthropos, 1982, *passim*.
[3] L.S. Senghor, « Était-ce une nuit maghrébine ? », in *Poèmes*, Paris, Seuil, col. « Points », nouvelle édition, 1985, pp. 185-187.
[4] Jean-François Lyotard, cité par Gilles Châtelet, *Vivre et penser comme des porcs. De l'incitation à l'envie à l'ennui dans les démocraties-marchés*, Paris, Exils, 1998, p. 142.
[5] Rita Aouad, Relations Maroc-Afrique noire, d'une guerre à l'autre (1914-1939), in *Maroc-Europe*, Rabat, n° 8, 1995, p. 219 ; *cf.* Charles de Foucauld, *Lettres à Henry de Castries*, Paris, Grasset, 1938, p.117 et suiv.
[6] *Xemaa-El-Fnaa. Patrimonio oral de la humanidad*, Texto originario de la Declaración de la UNESCO de la Plaza Xemaa-El-Fnaa Patrimonio inmaterial de la Humanidad (ilustrationes de Hans Werner Geerdts), Valencia, Edicion conmemorativa, UNESCO, Galaxia Gutenberg/Circulo de lectores, Barcelona, Junio 1997, tr. fr. M. S. El Yamani.
[7] *Sudique* est un mot forgé par l'écrivain Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine. Il renvoie à la portée de la grammaire ontologique des tréfonds africains qui travaillent au sein des cultures berbères.
[8] E. Michaux-Bellaire, *Essai sur l'histoire des confréries marocaines*, *Hespéris*, tome I, Paris, Année 1921, 2e trim., p.151.
[9] V. Pâques, *L'arbre cosmique*, Paris, CNRS, 1964, *passim*.
[10] On rendrait une précieuse justice à l'homme Noir d'origine subsaharienne en consacrant un ouvrage à sa rencontre avec le Nord-Africain. Cet ouvrage prendrait comme modèle celui de Roger Bastide, *Images du Nordeste mystique en noir et blanc*, tr. fr. Ch. Beylier, Paris, éd. Pandora, 1978 (1945 pour la 1ère édition brésilienne).
[11] Louis Massignon fut, de 1912 à sa retraite, professeur au Collège de France.
[12] Charles de Foucauld, *Lettres à Henry de Castries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-195.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
[14] Voir Monique Brandily, *Introduction aux musiques africaines*, Paris, Cité de la Musique/Actes Sud, 1997, pp. 119-129.
[15] Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine, *op. cit.*, p. 19 (1ère Édition, Paris, Seuil, 1984).
[16] G. Deleuze, *Proust et les signes*, Paris, PUF, 5e édition, 1978, ch. V (1ère édition, 1964).


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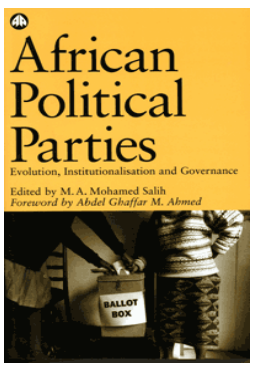


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**Land, gender and the periphery: Themes in the History of Eastern and Southern Africa**

*Edited by Bahru Zewde*

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The study of the African past from a truly African perspective is less than half a century old. It was indeed contemporaneous with the emergence of the continent from colonial rule. In this new effort to redefine their past, historians of Eastern and Southern Africa have registered their fair share of achievement. The essays in this publication are part of the ongoing effort to redefine the past and contextualise the present from an African perspective.

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# The Cultural Foundations of Philosophy

**Lansana Keita**

**The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Democracy, and Culture in Africa**
by Paulin Hountondji

Ohio University Press, 2002, 308 pp. + xxiv, $28 (paper)

The work under review is a quasi-biographical text by one of Africa's most important post-colonial philosophers and intellectuals. Hountondji is known in Africana philosophical circles for having produced two important paradigmatic works representative of the attempted autonomy of Africa's thinkers as they sought to come to terms with Africa's experiences at the end of the colonial era. That era represented the culminating point of the clash of European and African civilizations dating from the fifteenth century. The expulsion of the Moors from Spain and the three hundred year Atlantic slave trade constitute key moments in this ongoing encounter.

The technological dominance of Western Europe, facilitated by its absorption of key elements of the Graeco-Egyptian civilization by way of the Arabo-Moorish presence in Spain, allowed it to create the conditions for a more rapid economic development than Africa and the Americas. The trade in human captives from West Africa and the ethnic cleansing of the Americas were the essential ingredients in this process.

There had to be intellectual justification for this new state of affairs; that task fell to the philosophers and other theorists of Western Europe. Thus was set in motion an intellectual trend which began with the musings of thinkers like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Darwin, de Gobineau, and others down to modern thinkers like Husserl and Toynbee. The received doctrine in Europe was that humanity comprised culturally and phenotypically discrete groups that could be ranked differentially in terms of cognitive and moral characteristics. The label of being cognitively and culturally immature was made against the colonized African as a means of explaining the technological level of the rural societies of Africa. Similar arguments were made against the indigenous populations of the Americas.

The invention of the discipline of anthropology (as distinct from sociology) had as its function the study of non-Western peoples who were viewed in general as culturally distinct and even atavistic representatives of humanity. In this regard three new terms often found their way into the lexicon of the West to describe these studied representatives of humanity: primitive, tribal, and savage. It was Africa and its myriad peoples that served researchers like Malinowski, Levy-Bruhl, Evans-Pritchard, Frobenius, Coon, and others to make their careers. African culture was contrasted with that of a Europe anointed as the just inheritor of the Greek tradition, the source of philosophy, science, and rationality. The European (the Greeks were inducted into this fold *a posteriori)* was seen literally to represent the human archetype of rationality, humankind's most cherished characteristic. This was the intellectual ambiance in which Hountondji found himself as one of the relatively few West Africans chosen to be exposed to and introduced to the French and European *episteme.*

The European claim was that the only acceptable path for the African was to evolve (hence the term *evolué*) by imbibing the mental products of Europe from Plato to Sartre by way of Descartes and Husserl. In the field of mathematics, there was Pythagoras's theorem to be appreciated. In the field of literature, there was Racine, Molière and Corneille along with a long list of French literary luminaries.

The implicit preface to the colonial pedagogy was that the mind of Africa was historically irrational; hence philosophy, the fount of rationality, was alien to it. Hountondji was exposed first, therefore, to thinkers like Husserl, then later to the contemporary thinkers, Althusser and Ricoeur. But such was Europe's condescension while it served up its intellectual offerings that Africa's intellectuals at the dawn of independence had to salvage themselves from the long congealed intellectual indictments of the Kants, Hegels and Gobineaus of Europe. In pragmatic terms, the seemingly intellectual vindication offered by *La philosophie bantoue* was argued for. Hence the birth of the idea of the contentious subdiscipline "ethno-philosophy".

Hountondji, while a *lycéen*, had developed an interest in Husserl that he refined while a student of Althusser in Paris. He had also become fully immersed in the long philosophical dialogue in Europe that was assumed to begin with Plato and Aristotle. It was the British philosopher, A.N. Whitehead, who once quipped that all Western philosophical writings were but footnotes to Plato and Aristotle. The problem with Hountondji's immersion in the European dialogue among its philosophers is that Husserl's philosophy was really about coming to terms with Kant and Newton. And Althusser's writings was concerned with the rehabilitation of Marx after his banishment from the pantheon of post-Enlightenment thinkers in Europe.

Hountondji, influenced by Husserl, saw a qualitative equivalence between philosophy and science (34). Philosophy in the European tradition constituted a set of writings in which epistemology was the constantly employed instrument to distinguish *episteme* from *doxa*. So for Hountondji, philosophy in the African context required that it be a set of written texts as a necessary precondition for serious consideration. This was the context for Hountondji's first internationally stated paradigm claim expressed in "Remarques sur la philosophie africaine contemporaine" (*Diogene* 71, 1970). African philosophy was defined as constitutive only of those philosophical texts written by Africans and deemed as such by this group. Hountondji's definition would necessarily exclude what he referred to as the unanimity expressed by the group thought embodied in the reported cosmologies of Africa's ethnic groups. Thus, for Hountondji, *La philosophie bantoue* did not represent the philosophy of Africans but that of the Belgian priest, Placide Tempels, in his veiled project of presenting the people of Central Africa as subscribing to a metaphysical system that would not be incompatible with Christian conversion (89). Tempels's template thus served as the basis for African ethno-philosophy (the term was not invented by Hountondji and Towa but is found earlier with reference to Nkrumah's studies, as Hountondji himself avers).

On this new paradigm were grafted the ideas of prominent sholars such as Alexis Kagame and John Mbiti. But the debate about the nature of African philosophy really got into high gear with Hountondji's publication of a series of papers during the 1970s and 1980s. There was spirited opposition from scholars such as Olabiyi Yai, Kofi Niamkey and Abdou Toure. The debate had to do with the nature of philosophy itself, including whether it should conform to its Western definition or otherwise (chapter 5, 162-195). The theoretical issue raised by Hountondji's critics was whether his approach to philosophy was essentially Eurocentric with its insistence that genuine philosophy must belong to a written tradition driven along by individual master thinkers (180-81). His critics also made the important point that the term "philosophy" had multiple meanings and that any definition of it was necessarily cultural (177).

Yet, ironically, the vigorous debates engaged in by Hountondji and his critics constituted in themselves an important moment in the formulation of contemporary African philosophy. Hountondji recognized this point and for him this was proof that philosophy was about to take its first steps in the post-colonial era. Although claiming that African philosophy in its orthodox sense was about to be launched in the post-colonial era, Hountondji clearly rejects the idea that pre-colonial Africa was a cultural *tabula rasa.* As he put it: "*Does this mean that precolonial Africa was a* tabula rasa. *Not at all. I was pleading for a less reductive approach, which sought to restore the richness, complexity, and internal diversity of our intellectual heritage instead, and in place, of this smaller common philosophical denominator that is proposed by ethnologists"* (91).

I want to argue though that the two methodologies of African philosophy argued for by Hountondji and his critics were partially in error. And the reason would seem to stem from the nature and configuration of colonial pedagogy itself. The colonial paradigm imposed on Africa was that of a disjointed, non-literate, ethnic Africa stuck in an ahistorical time warp. It is for this reason that the study of Africa focused much less on a dynamic history than on anthropological study.

The term "philosophy" is of Greek origin (which does not mean, of course, that the activity it described did not take place before the era of the Greeks and in other places). In practice, it represents the efforts made by individual thinkers discussing singly or in groups the crucial questions concerning human sensory experience whether in the form of direct or indirect observation, pure reflection or pure sensation. Modern philosophy has coined terms such as epistemology, ontology, and axiology to handle these perennial questions. Briefly, philosophy in its orthodox mode was from its inception concerned with the question of claims to knowledge and how such claims may be justified. In this regard, philosophical inquiry consists necessarily of exercises in critical thinking. Maybe it was this approach to knowledge that prompted Europeans of the post-Greek era to totally discount their own long-standing oral traditions and folk beliefs in favour of the non-

indigenous ideas of the ancient Egyptians of Africa and the Greeks of the borderlands of Africa and Asia. The same may be said about the religious beliefs adopted by the Europeans: they adopted but modified the metaphysical systems of Hebraic folklore which was fundamentally inspired by the African monotheism of ancient Egypt.

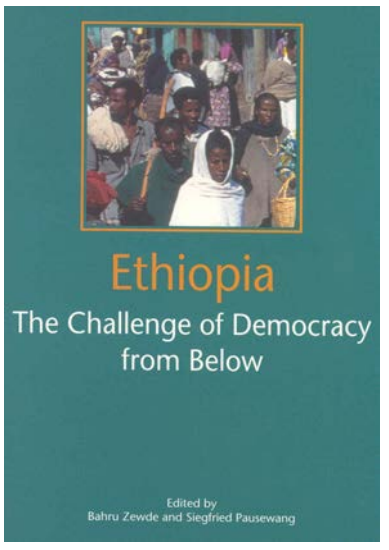
Thus, unfortunately or not, we have no idea of how or what the ancestors of Hume or Kant reflected on or thought about. In other words, we have no record of an European ethno-philosophy. Julius Caesar in his pan-European campaigns did not travel with itinerant "anthropologists"; nor did the Moors while in Spain seem to demonstrate any inclination to study the cosmologies of the indigenous Europeans they came in contact with, viz. the Visigoths, Saxons, Celts, etc. For, after all, the Moors knew writing while the Europeans did not.

The thesis that I maintain is that, if one accepts Hountondji's definition of philosophy as encompassing a written and systematic tradition, then Africa had its own longstanding written and systematic traditions. The ethno-philosophers, in seeking rightfully to establish an African cognitive infrastructure for African philosophy, had in reality a whole written historical tradition to work with. As C.A. Diop has pointed out, there was an indigenous written philosophy in ancient Egypt. And in post-Pharaonic times, the seminal ideas of the Egyptian philosopher Plotinus (he was born in Lycopolis in Upper Egypt) constituted the source of the equally seminal ideas of Augustine. Recall that Plotinus is viewed in the West as the founder of neo-Platonism and that medieval philosophy in the West owes its founding to the ideas of Augustine. Students of a written African philosophy would also have to include in their history of African philosophy the metaphysical writings of members of the Axum school of ancient Ethiopia (Zara Yakob, the seventeenth century philosopher, comes to mind). And in the African Middle Ages, the influence of Ibn Khaldun was recognized for his study of history and other social sciences. One cannot also overlook the ideas of Ahmed Baba of Timboktoo who wrote systematically on jurisprudence, ethics, logic and social philosophy. Furthermore, the writings of Songhay scholars Kadi and Sati are extant and have already been translated into modern languages.

The ethno-philosophers could have looked in this pan-African direction and sought to translate and comment on the texts written by the above-mentioned authors. If Placide Tempels, an obvious colonial of European origin, could be viewed as central to the post-colonial paradigm of ethno-philosophy then why not Ibn Khaldun? This pan-African approach, of course, would not negate the need for Africa's philosophers to explicate and analyze the metaphysical concepts, ethics and legal concepts of Africa's particular ethnicities, if merely to refute the strictures of Hegel and others. European thinkers, by contrast, have not sought to explore their own indigenous cognitive traditions or ethno-philosophies which were assumedly put in place over a period of some twenty thousand years. One might compare this with the fact that "philosophy" in Hountondji's sense of the term was a very recent import into Europe. There is much accuracy in the claim that "philosophy" in that sense began in Europe some five hundred years ago with the advent of Descartes. I mentioned above that the case of the Greeks is somewhat problematic.

Despite Hountondji's reservations concerning research in ethno-philosophy, he seeks nevertheless to bridge Africa's contemporary research in modern science with its traditions of what he calls endogenous knowledge. The recently published text *Endogenous Knowledge* testifies to this (249). Hountondji also discusses with verve Africa's extraverted and marginalized condition with respect to the world's production of knowledge. This condition is discussed in the last chapter (chapter 7) with references to the centre-periphery thesis argued by Samir Amin of the Dakar school. The belief that decolonisation would put an end to Africa's extraverted state, merely by applying the invention of others, was erroneous according to Hountondji (231). This is where Hountondji's threefold role for philosophy in Africa comes into play. This task consists of critique and ideological analysis, followed by the creation of appropriate tools for the solving of real problems that are "masked by the pseudo-problems of the reigning mystification" (204).

While scientific analysis is ultimately about the acquisition and application of epistemologically certifiable knowledge about the sensory world, philosophy's role is meta-scientific in the sense of seeking to ascribe meaning to what humans come to know. One moment in this quest for meaning was instanced in the "quarrel of ethno-philosophy", as Hountondji puts it (207). *In fine*, Hountondji's text is to be understood as the testimony of an African mind wrestling with the impact of the imposed physical and mental contingencies of an itinerant European colonialism. □


The contributions to this book analyse the democratic potential of non-governmental organisations, the independent press and advocacy groups, their ability to give a voice to the view from below and their potential contribution to a more genuine participation by the majority of Ethiopians in democratic decision-making and bringing the sovereignty of the people a step closer to reality.

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