**Association of African Historians**
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# Afrika Zamani

## An Annual Journal of African History
## Revue annuelle d'histoire africaine

**Nos 20-21, 2012-2013**


Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
Conseil pour le développement de la recherche
en sciences sociales en Afrique

*Afrika Zamani* is a yearly journal published by CODESRIA for the Association of African Historians. Devoted to the history of Africa, the journal covers all periods. It solicits articles that analyse historical processes, reflect critically on methodological approaches and historiography. Its languages of publication are English, Arabic, French and Portuguese.

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Publications Programme / Programme des publications
Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop X Canal IV,
P.O. Box 3304, CP 18524 Dakar, Senegal
Tel. : (221) 33825.98.22/23 Fax: (221) 33824.12.89
E-mail: codesria@codesria.sn
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| | |
|---|---|
| (a) Africa / Afrique | $ US / dollars EU 10 |
| (b) Elsewhere / Ailleurs | $ US / dollars EU 15 |

**Cover / Couverture**

Kwele (Congo), Masque (Bois, Pigments, Hauteur: 55 cm)
Anciennes collections Aristide Courtois, Charles Ratton, Musée Dapper, Paris

**Typesetting / Mise en page**
Daouda Thiam (CODESRIA)


ISSN 0850-3079

*Afrika Zamani*
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# Metissage in Nineteenth Century Senegal: Hybrid Identity and French Colonialism in a West African Town

Hilary Jones

## Abstract

This article argues that Saint-Louis' peculiarity matched neither the identity of African societies of the interior nor that of metropolitan France. Nor was it identical to notions of sychretism or creolisation. On the contrary, this city gave birth to a cosmopolitan society with different national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities comparatively influenced as they were by their relationships with States and societies of the Senegal Valley region, and the trans-Atlantic trade. The article offers a re-reading of accounts by European travellers and officials combined with study of archival records, publications such as the *Moniteur du Senegal*, private papers and portrait photographs. Based on extensive fieldwork, the article sheds light on an overlooked aspect of African history and engages modern Atlantic and French colonial history by suggesting that these locations were not solely formed by elite European actors but by local inhabitants of the colonies and remote outposts.

## Résumé

Cette étude soutient que les traits de l'identité saint-louisienne ne correspondaient ni directement aux sociétés africaines profondes ni à ceux de la France métropolitaine. L'identité saint-louisienne ne correspondait pas non plus parfaitement à la notion de syncrétisme ou de créolisation. Au contraire, cette ville a donné naissance à une société cosmopolite composé de différentes identités nationales, ethniques, linguistiques et religieuses de plus en plus façonnées par leurs relations avec les États et les sociétés de la vallée du fleuve Sénégal, le commerce transatlantique et par un discours sur la citoyenneté universelle et la démocratie républicaine qui a pris forme au XIXe siècle en France et dans les Antilles françaises. Cet article propose une relecture des écrits des voyageurs et fonctionnaires européens associés à une étude des documents d'archives, des publications telles que *Le Moniteur du Sénégal*, des documents personnels et des photographies de portrait. Sur la base de travaux de terrain détaillés, cet article met en lumière un aspect négligé de l'histoire de l'Afrique et éclaire d'un jour nouveau l'histoire coloniale française et Atlantique moderne en soutenant que ces sites n'ont pas été uniquement l'œuvre d'acteurs de l'élite européenne, mais également celle des habitants des colonies et des avant-postes reculés.

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The trans-Atlantic slave trade produced cultural transformations that shaped New World societies in profound ways. Plantation slavery gave rise to a specific race, class and gender order that influenced the development of new identities for people of African descent in the colonies of North America, South America and the Caribbean. Mintz and Price characterized the birth of African American culture in terms of Creolization in which people of African descent were stripped of their original identities in the harsh and polyglot confines of the slave ship.[1] Ira Berlin suggested that the charter generation of enslaved Africans in Anglo and Dutch North America actually developed Creole identities in the coastal forts and depots of the West African coast before experiencing the middle passage and plantation life. Others have rejected the notion that African American identity developed through creolization by showing the re-Africanization or regeneration of African identity in the Americas throughout the slave trade era (Lorand Matory 2005 and Sweet 2003).

While this research has contributed to a much broader understanding of the transformation of identity for Africans in the Americas, much less attention has been devoted to understanding transformations in society and identity for people who inhabited Africa's Atlantic coast towns.[2] Historians have examined Creolization in coastal locations such as Freetown or the Bight of Biafra, yet there remains a tendency to view West African coastal societies as static and unchanged from the era of the Atlantic slave trade to the establishment of formal colonial rule in the early twentieth century. In addition, the language that we use to understand African coastal identities in the era of the slave trade borrows too readily from the American context and thus obscures the specific realities of particular regions or towns on the continent. As one *métis* informant reminded me, 'we share commonalities with people of Martinique and Guadeloupe but Creolization in Senegal is not the same as the French Antilles'.[3]

The development of *métis* society in Saint-Louis du Senegal from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century offers an opportunity to investigate transformations in race, social class and gender identities for a West African coastal community that was linked to the Atlantic World in one respect and the French empire in another.[4] Histories of inter-racial mixing in pre-colonial Senegambia concentrate on the role that African women called *signares*, who entered into customary marriages with European men, played in the formation of costal societies. These unions, called *mariage à la mode du pays*, corresponded to understandings of marriage common among African populations of Senegal's interior. European officials or traders residing temporarily in the French settlement arranged marriages with a woman'sfamily and provided the requisite marital exchange to formalize the union. By the

mid-eighteenth century, the children of these unions formed a self- conscious group of Afro-Europeans who carried the last names of their European fathers but were raised in the households of their African mothers. In the nineteenth century, the *métis* elite established themselves as a politically influential population of inter-related families who adhered to the teachings of the Catholic Church, constituted a property owning bourgeoisie and pursued French education. Adopting visible markers of identity in dress and comportment further established their identification with the educated elites of metropolitan France.

Métis families of Senegal's coastal towns held much in common with free people of colour in nineteenth century Brazil, Louisiana or Guadeloupe but differed in particular ways. Called '*militaar*' in Wolof or 'mulatto' in French, the *métis* of nineteenth century Senegal more commonly referred to themselves as '*enfants du pays'*. While Senegal's *métis* lived in-between white and black worlds, their sense of identity was rooted in the particular history of signareship, the presence of Islam in the Senegal River valley and town residents' decision to opt for loyalty to France over sovereignty under the Wolof kingdoms. Historians have understood the social and cultural environment of Senegal's Atlantic towns as either the product of Creolization or as the outcome of a French policy of assimilation (Marcson 1976; Reyss 1983; Sackur 1999; Hargreaves 1965; Idowu 1968:1421-1447). Practices of tolerance, cross-cultural interaction and mutual dependence characterized the cosmopolitan environment of these Atlantic towns, yet cultural syncretism does not adequately capture the way that culture operated for town residents. The French idea of assimilation influenced official policy but suggests that African town residents passively accepted French cultural hegemony. While the *métis* pursued strategies of cultural assimilation at key moments, Muslim city dwellers rejected it. Colonial accounts tend to emphasize the idea of cultural assimilation as part of a unified narrative of imperial power; yet realities on the ground suggest a more complicated struggle over the nature of cultural change.

The concept of hybridity as a category of analysis provides a new lens in which to understand the transformation of identity and society in Senegal's coastal communities (Bhabha 1994; Young 1995; Amselle 1990, 1998; Verges 1999). The term hybridity is rooted in nineteenth century biological discourse that supported scientific racism and thus presents certain problems for escaping its past meaning. Postcolonial studies scholarship, however, reframes hybridity as an analytical concept that emphasizes the mutual construction of cultural identity in the 'contact zone'. Understanding hybridity in terms of the struggle between 'colonizer' and 'colonized' reveals rather than conceals the contradictions and ambiguities that shaped new race, class and gender

formations in Africa's nineteenth century colonial towns. Being *métis* in late nineteenth century Senegal did not involve a linear progression of cultural assimilation to France or generic mixing. Rather, the *métis* population developed a sense of dual identity grounded in the hybrid cultural environment of the towns that could be employed at key moments in response to the changing realities of life in a West African society under French rule.

## Saint-Louis du Senegal: lieu du métissage

Saint-Louis and Gorée served as the centre of French military and commercial activity on the Senegambian coast in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Saint-Louis became a strategic foothold for French trade interests along the Senegal River valley while Gorée provided access to export markets of slaves, gold and other commodities from Senegal's Petit Côte, the Gambia and Sine Saloum Rivers.[5] Both locations gave rise to new African communities that provided skilled workers for the mercantile companies who ran the fortified outposts and for European ship captains. Located a mile off the coast of Senegal's Cap Vert peninsula, Gorée held strategic importance for Portuguese, Dutch and English merchants seeking trade with the Wolof aristocrats of the Jolof kingdom and the Serer of Sine-Saloum. While signareship gave rise to a small métis population on Gorée, the influx of African workers to the island resulted in the growth of an influential free black Catholic community, called *gurmets*.[6] Gorée's economic role waned during the era of legitimate trade in the first half of the nineteenth century but regained its strategic importance as French imperial interests shifted to Senegal's peanut basin after 1850. In the 1860s, Gorée became the military and administrative centre of French expansion from southern Senegal to the frontier with Sierra Leone at the Southern Rivers Region (Guinea) (Barry 1985).

Saint-Louis, on the other hand, served as the nexus of *métis* social and cultural life from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Called Ndar by the Wolof of the mainland, the island town is located where the Senegal River empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Stories of the town's origins suggest that the Walo Kingdom viewed the land as a peripheral location useful for fishing and salt collecting (Barry 1985). In 1659, the French built a fort on the location after obtaining rights to build on the land from the *brak* (king) of Walo. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, France granted a mercantile company exclusive rights to the export trade between Senegal and the French West Indies.

*Signares* and their *métis* children formed a property-owning class that played key roles in the provisional trade and acted as 'cross-cultural brokers' for European officials in their dealings with ruling elites in the Senegal River

valley. In the eighteenth century, Wolof speakers from the lower Senegal valley migrated to Saint-Louis. This group worked for the company government, learned some French and adopted Catholicism. In the mid and late eighteenth century, the *métis* and black Catholics constituted an emerging bourgeoisie, who called themselves *habitants*.[7] They chose loyalty to France over sovereignty under the Wolof king. In 1758, when faced with British occupation, the habitants took up arms on behalf of France. When France regained control of the town in the revolutionary era, Senegal's habitants demanded protection under French law from the abusive practices of the mercantile company and adopted local traditions of democratic government in keeping with principles espoused by the French Revolution. By the late eighteenth century, free, propertied permanent residents of Saint-Louis considered themselves entitled to the same rights and responsibilities as metropolitan Frenchmen and Frenchwomen.[8]

Although, Britain occupied Saint-Louis and Gorée during the Napoleonic Wars, the treaty ending the conflict resulted in the return of the two settlements in Senegal to French control. The year 1817 marked a new era for French imperialism in Senegal. Saint-Louis became the administrative headquarters of the French military and the most important commercial port for 'legitimate trade'. Gum Arabic from the acacia trees along the Senegal replaced slaves as the most valuable export from the Senegal River valley. 'Gum fever', as historian Roger Pasquier termed this period, had a profound effect on the Saint-Louis population (Pasquier 1987; Webb 1994). Private entrepreneurs from Bordeaux arrived in Senegal to capitalize on the gum trade. Some married the daughters of habitants in Church weddings. Others married African women according to *marriage a la mode du pays* that produced children (Pehaut 1883:48-69). Habitants established trade houses that specialized in the middleman trade between Bordeaux wholesalers in the town and Bidan (Mauritanian) rulers and their agents who controlled the supply of gum from the trade depots (called *escales*) on the north bank of the Senegal River. Métis men dominated the middleman trade until the 1840s when the fluctuation in gum prices caused financial ruin for habitant trade houses and Bordeaux merchants sought to suppress the profit margins of middlemen traders. In 1848, France declared an end of slavery 'on French soil'. Although intended for the plantation colonies of the Caribbean, the declaration resulted in property losses and a restructuring of the labour regime of the towns for *signares* and habitants who relied on slavery. In addition, the collapse of the gum market and Bordeaux merchants' restructuring of the colonial economy towards the peanut basin led to a period of financial insecurity for the *métis* elite and the rise of Muslim Saint-Louis traders who became the dominant intermediaries

in the peanut trade. Despite these setbacks, the *métis* population continued to play a dominant role in the political life of the colony. Socially, they developed a stronger sense of distinctiveness as a group with close cultural ties to French power in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Islam played a key role in the formation and development of Saint-Louis du Senegal because of the town's strategic relationship to regions of the Senegal River valley that experienced Islamization as early as the eleventh century. Trans-Saharan trade, the influence of Sufism and the presence of Sanhaja Berbers in the Western Sahara led to the gradual expansion of Islam among Bidan of the north bank of the Senegal and the Wolof, Pulaar and Soninke peoples of the south bank of the Senegal River. The population of permanent residents grew from 2,500 in the mid-eighteenth century to 5,000 to 6,000 by the 1780s.[9] This growing population of city dwellers resulted, in part, from the migration of free people of Wolof and Soninke origin called *laptots* who came from the middle and upper Senegal to serve as workers and crewmen in the Senegal River trade. Many were Muslim or came from territories in which Islam had taken hold among the commercial and ruling elites (Manchuelle 1997). In the late eighteenth century, domestic slaves of *signares* and habitants constituted the vast majority of the African population. Habitants owned slaves who supplied household labour and could be rented out by the company government for public work. In Saint-Louis, slaves also filled the same wage labour occupations as *laptots* who served as crew for river trade expeditions (Searing 1993). By the mid-nineteenth century, the population of Saint-Louis du Senegal consisted of approximately 2,000 *métis* and several hundred European merchants and officials and an overwhelming majority of African traders and workers.

Saint-Louis du Senegal emerged as a thriving port town on the West coast of Africa in the nineteenth century. The coastal town gave rise to a multi-cultural and cosmopolitan urban society shaped by the rhythms of Atlantic commerce as well as its connections to the societies of the Senegal River valley. The inhabitants of Saint-Louis forged a new social and cultural environment that was neither strictly European nor purely African. European soldiers and merchants came from a variety of backgrounds (French, English, Alsatian and Irish). Wolof, Pulaar and Soninke people who settled in Saint-Louis came from regions long influenced by the presence of Islam. *Signares* established new Afro-European households that gave rise to a *métis* population biologically connected to both Africa and Europe. The articulation of distinctive *métis* identity is rooted in the formation of Saint-Louis society in the late eighteenth century.

## Developing Dual Identity: The Origins of Métis Society (1750-1820)

While men controlled the rhythms of commerce and politics, the women of Senegal's coastal towns played key roles in shaping the cultural and social environment and transmitting cultural identity to their children. *Signares* adopted specific cultural practices that responded to the local realities of the coastal towns. They emphasized loyalty to France yet established practices that reflected the important role of Islam and African tradition in coastal society. European travellers in late eighteenth century Gorée and Saint-Louis noted the extraordinary beauty of the women of the towns, their taste for fine fabrics (from the East Indies imported by European merchants), Moroccan shoes and gold filigree jewelry fashioned by local goldsmiths from gold of Galam (on the upper Senegal).[10] *Signares* relied on domestic slaves for household labour and also to conduct trade on their behalf in up- river trade expeditions. For these women, public processions accompanied by female slaves demonstrated their wealth and established their social standing in the towns. The consumption habits of *signares* moreover offer an example of West African patterns of globalization in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Although official company policy forbade 'co-habitation' between African women and European men, most officials viewed it as a necessary aspect of life and commerce for European men in a distant and tropical location. Eighteenth century botanist Michael Adanson viewed signareship as a corruption of an administration that failed to regulate co-habitation between European men and African women. Despite metropolitan taboos regarding sexual relations between European men and African women in the colonies, inter-racial unions occurred. *Métissage* in Senegal's coastal towns, as Natalie Reyss observed, served as a means of survival for European men in a harsh and unfamiliar climate (Reyss 1983). By conforming to accepted marriage practices in the towns, European men solidified kinship bonds that facilitated commercial relations within African society.

Signareship afforded women of the towns the ability to establish respectable households. The male spouse presented her family with gifts to consummate the union and provided his bride with a house to establish their household in keeping with Wolof tradition of Senegal's mainland. The children that issued from these unions adopted the surnames of their European fathers, thus signalling their paternity by European men. In most respects these unions corresponded to expectations of marriage and family life common among African societies of the mainland but differed in two ways. The marriage ceremony occurred immediately rather than following an obligatory one or

two month courtship and the union dissolved upon the death or permanent departure of the male spouse from Senegal leaving a *signare* free to remarry (Brooks 2003:122-161).

Marriage in the towns adopted to fit the necessities of coastal society in which trade dominated the patterns of European and African interaction. These arrangements benefited *signares* because it allowed women to develop their own ties to mercantile commerce independent of male traders and authorities who controlled access to Atlantic trade in the interior or male employees who worked for the company government in the coastal towns. It created a class of women entrepreneurs and property owners who held high social standing and who operated on the frontier of African and European interaction.

By the late eighteenth century, *signares*, habitants and gurmets identified with the Roman Catholic Church. Despite the fact that no permanent priest or clergy existed in Saint-Louis until the 1820s, *signares*, their métis offspring and black Catholics professed their affiliation to the church. In the absence of a parish priest, habitants granted the locally appointed mayor of the town the right to officiate Sunday mass and perform marriage, baptism and funeral rites. In a 1758 visit to Gorée, Revered John Lindsay noted that the inhabitants feared that the British would force them to covert to Protestantism and adamantly refused to abide by their religion. Writing about religion in Saint-Louis in 1789, Lamiral observed that 'mulâtres, mulâtresses, quarterons, négresses libres' and their captives lived on the south side of the island called 'quartier des Chrétiens' while the majority of incoming African and Muslim residents lived on the north side known by the Wolof term '*lodo*' meaning people of the countryside (Lindsay 1867:75-76).

Saint-Louis society, unlike Creole societies of the Caribbean, developed in relationship to the growth of Islam in the region. *Signares* celebrated *Tabaski* (the festival of *Eid*) with Muslims of the town. Writing in 1789, Lamiral described the religious environment of Saint-Louis:

> All the *gens de couleur* and some *négresses* are Catholic but with a mix of *Mahométisme* and idolatry. They equally celebrate Christian and Muslim rites. Many of the Christian habitants are circumcised since baptism and they carry all the external marks of *Mahométisme*. There are those who after having been to mass still do the Salam. They pray with the same fervour to Jesus-Christ and Mohammed (Lamiral 1789:40).

Religion operated in eighteenth century coastal society in a similar fashion to the function of Islam among the Jula traders of the Mali Empire or the Berbers of the Western Sahara who specialized in trans-Saharan trade. Adopting Christianity reinforced the connection of coastal peoples to a monotheistic

tradition. For *signares*, identification with the Catholic Church did not preclude their interaction with and even participation in Muslim ceremonies and rituals. *Signares* and habitants considered themselves faithful members of the Catholic Church. When the English occupied Saint-Louis and Gorée in the mid-eighteenth century, town residents refused to adopt the British (Protestant) religion and appointed a notable black Catholic as their priest. In 1776, the inhabitants of Saint-Louis, under British occupation, sent a petition to London complaining that Governor O'Hara sought to abolish their Church and forbid them from practicing their religion.[11]

Language served as another contested cultural form in Senegal under French colonial rule. From the imperialist perspective, the ability to communicate in French suggested progress in their 'civilizing mission'. In eighteenth century Saint-Louis, unlike other areas of European and African encounter, a Creole language did not emerge as the primary means of communication. Slaves and free people of colour adopted patois in the French Caribbean and in British colonies like Jamaica. Luso-Africans on Senegal's Petite Côte and the Southern Rivers of today's Guinea-Bissau spoke a creolized Portuguese language called Crioulo that developed in their interaction with Portuguese traders and officials beginning in the sixteenth century just as West African trade houses in the Bight of Biafra communicated in creolized English (Mark 2002 and Sparks 2004).

In Saint-Louis, French served as the language of company government but Wolof remained the primary language spoken in daily communication. *Signares* probably spoke very little French as Wolof served as the primary language of communication in daily life. European spouses of *signares* most likely adopted some level of proficiency in Wolof to communicate with their wives, workers and household servants. Métis and gurmets men probably spoke French and perhaps had some proficiency in reading and writing as they worked for the company government and served as intermediaries and interpreters for French officials. In some cases, European men provided their *métis* children with education by hiring a tutor among French soldiers or clergy in the colony. A few sent their *métis* sons to France for primary education in the early nineteenth century (Guillabert unpublished genealogy). Creole language did not develop as the language of cross-cultural interaction because African town residents and European strangers adopted mechanisms for communicating in Wolof or French depending on the situation.

Signareship provided the institutional mechanism for creating new Afro-European households that adapted to the needs of mercantile society and the nature of economic, political and social relations in the Senegal River valley. Women, both slave and free, played key roles in transmitting cultural codes

to *métis* children raised in *signare* households. The cultural practices adopted by these women facilitated communication and interaction across linguistic, religious and ethnic lines. *Signares* and habitants relied on social and cultural practices that allowed them to maintain close ties to French merchants and officials. At the same time, in daily life, they relied on mutually beneficial relationships with Wolof and Muslim people in the towns and with ruling elites and their agents in the Senegal River valley. The expansion of French imperialism, however, held new implications for shaping *métis* identity in the nineteenth century.

## Transformations in Métis Society and Identity, 1820-1870

By the late nineteenth century, the *métis* elite of Saint-Louis and Gorée appeared as an inward-looking group who closely resembled French colonialists. A cadre of *métis* men pursued higher education in metropolitan France and achieved professional status as lawyers, doctors or military officers. Métis families no longer viewed signareship as a viable option preferring for their daughters to marry men of similar social standing instead. A few sought European mates but marriage within the group became more common for young men and women of this generation. Most *métis* families proclaimed their affiliation to the Catholic Church and maintained close ties to Christian clergy in the colony. Their dress and comportment, as exhibited in portrait photography, shows that *métis* men and women cultivated a public image of themselves as equals to members of the educated classes of late nineteenth century France.[12] At the same time, *métis* men and women were born and raised in colonial society. They were similar but not quite the same as their metropolitan counterparts.

Transformations in *métis* identity occurred at the same time that French interest in Senegal expanded from mercantile commerce to formal colonial rule. After regaining possession of Saint-Louis and Gorée from Britain in 1816, the restoration monarchy experimented with establishing plantations in Senegal in order to generate economic production from the colony. Although the plantation scheme failed, gum fever attracted French commercial interest to Senegal and provided an economic boon to habitant intermediaries. As Saint-Louis emerged as Senegal's most important nineteenth century export centre, French officials embarked on a more aggressive policy of cultural imperialism. Saint-Louis became the administrative capital of the Senegal colony but also the place from which France imagined its 'civilizing mission' would spread.[13]

In the first half of the nineteenth century colonial officials expressed ambivalence about French occupation of territory beyond the coastal enclaves. They understood the problem of pushing French cultural imperialism in the Senegal River valley; where Islam had made significant inroads, and yet Christianity served as a central aspect of French imperialism. Appointed Governor of Senegal in 1816, Colonel Schmaltz received orders to focus the cultural objectives of French imperialism on the Christian inhabitants of Saint-Louis who already had 'ties of kinship and friendship' with the people of the Senegal River valley and could serve as their agents on the ground. The naval ministry charged the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritains) with appointing a parish priest for Senegal. In 1819, the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny arrived in the colony to provide civilian medical services, education for *signares* and an orphanage to train 'jeunes négresses'.[14]

Ironically, the clergy considered *signares* the most suitable candidates for evangelism and turned their attention towards eliminating signareship. The clergy considered *mariage à la mode du pays* immoral and implored young *demoiselles* to marry according to the teachings and practices of the Church. In 1834, Abby Manahan claimed to have performed eight church weddings among the most esteemed *métis* families of Saint-Louis; Crespin, Pellegrin, O'Hara, d'Erneville and Descemet among them (Benoist 2007 and Guillabert unpublished). Habitants, thus, opted for marriage rites officiated by the local clergy and recorded in the civil registry of the towns. A public announcement of the promise to marry at the town hall preceded the church wedding. The mayor served as the officer of the civil state legitimizing the union and any children issuing from the union in the eyes of the French state. A royal decree of 5 November 1830 extended the civil code to residents of the colony, thus strengthening claims to citizenship among those who adopted notions of marriage, family and inheritance consistent with French law.[15]

As the *métis* responded enthusiastically to the clergy and French legal systems, *mariage à la mode du pays* disappeared gradually. Some Bordeaux merchants and French administrators married *métis* women in Church weddings since marriage to the habitant elite shored up their networks in the colony. French merchants and officials as well as some habitant men continued to observe *mariage à la mode du pays* despite attempts by the administration and the Church to eliminate the practice and control the growth of the mixed-race population in the colonial capital. By the 1860s habitant families considered marriages that conformed to the teachings of the Church and recorded by the civil registry as appropriate for their class position. Making a good match depended upon marriage to a family of equal social and economic standing.[16] For sons and daughters of the *métis* elite, marriage within the group became

the most viable option as few single European women resided in the colony and the majority of French soldiers and administrators looked to extra-marital relations with African women rather than marriage to *métis* women. Nineteenth century racial ideologies thus rendered African women as unsuitable for marriage while *métis* women of high socio-economic standing had fewer options within colonial society.

In addition to eliminating *mariage à la mode du pays*, the clergy sought to instil stricter adherence to Christian practices by rooting out 'superstitious' practices among Saint-Louis residents. According to members of the Catholic orders, women proved the most difficult to covert. The clergy routinely complained that *signares* brought gris-gris to mass and continued to engage in 'superstitious practices'. Missionaries wrote of convincing *signares* to throw all their gris-gris (amulets) into the sea following mass as a signal achievement (Benoist 2007 and Boilat 1984). By insisting on purity of religious practice the clergy sought to transform *signare*-headed households into ideal versions of the respectable bourgeois household. While outward expressions of religiosity of the *métis* elite increasingly conformed to this ideal, oral tradition suggests that knowledge and even observation of local beliefs and practices continued to operate within the *métis* community.[17]

The French language continued to serve as a marker of modernization for colonial observers. Administrators recognized the need for French schools to cultivate local intermediaries who could serve as clerks and bookkeepers for the administration and for the trade houses. For French officials, women again appeared as the most viable option for instilling French cultural values in the colony. Although the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny arrived in Senegal to provide medical services at the civilian hospital, they considered their most important mission to provide proper moral and religious instruction for *signares* and their daughters. David Boilat, an ordained priest and member of the *métis* population, complained that *signares* did not speak French to their children in the home. Speaking at the annual award ceremony for young girls of the Sisters School, Boilat implored fathers to speak French in the home as necessary to produce 'educated youth, virtuous daughters and civilized persons' (Boilat 1984:12-14 and Bouche 1975).

Abandoning Wolof for French, in the estimation of colonial authorities, served as the key to reproducing colonial society. Mothers and wives held primary responsibility for ensuring that future generations spoke French not Wolof. The *métis* elite responded to these changes by considering themselves as representatives of the promise that French colonialism held out for progress and modernization. In 1864, Louis Descemet authored his own Wolof-French phrasebook.[18] From a highly esteemed habitant family, Descemet pursued higher education in France with the assistance of a government scholarship.

He began his career as secretary to General Faidherbe but resigned due to health reasons. The same year, Faidherbe, considered the architect of French colonialism in Senegal, published his own dictionary. Whereas Faidherbe sought to educate military officials arriving in the colony of the languages spoken in the Senegal River valley, Descemet aimed to educate Wolof speakers in the towns. Descemet argued that rote memorization, a method adopted by religious instructors in the colony, proved ineffective because the instructors did not know how to communicate the meaning of French words to Wolof speakers. Instead Descemet offered translations of Wolof phrases into French that would allow Senegalese to comprehend the language.[19] The phrase book not only shows that Wolof remained the dominant language in the towns despite the French presence but also shows that the métis elite carved out a niche for themselves as most capable of teaching Wolof speakers French because of their understanding of both worlds.

In addition to the expansion of French colonial rule in the mid-nineteenth century, the growth of Islam in the Senegal River valley helped to consolidate group identity for the *métis* elite. Fulbe cleric Umar Tall emerged in the mid-1840s as the leader of aTijaniyya (Sufi) order. A native of the Fulbe states of the middle Senegal, Umar Tall built a community of faithful supporters who followed his vision of re-establishing an Islamic state in the middle Senegal through jihad. By the early 1850s, the French and the Umarians were engaged in a struggle for power over control of the middle and upper Senegal.[20] Saint-Louis labelled Umar a fanatic and began to see Umar's expansionist aims as threat to French supremacy on the coast and in the river trade depots. Umar Tall recruited supporters from among the Saint-Louis Muslim community in support of his expansionist aims.

Consequently, administrative policy focused less on cultural imperialism and making France a 'friendly' power to Muslims in the region took precedence in political affairs (Robinson 2000). France relied increasingly on Muslim traders who had established important trade houses in the trade depots of the middle and upper Senegal. Colonial authorities also bolstered the institutional presence of Islam in Saint-Louis by erecting a mosque on the North side of the island, creating a Muslim tribunal headed by a notable Muslim cleric and establishing Koranic education for Muslim students of the town who attended French schools. Faidherbe elevated key Muslim scholars to positions of influence as interpreters and translators in the political affairs office. While cultural assimilation remained an objective of French imperialism, French officials in Senegal considered it more important to develop a positive association between the French presence and Islam in the Senegal River valley.

The *métis* elite responded to the changing landscape of colonial society by emphasizing their distinctiveness as a population that shared the same cultural outlook as metropolitan Frenchmen and women. In describing the habitants of Saint-Louis, Boilat wrote, 'they are all mulattos, who carry honourable rank in society, they are all Christians, of good breeding, and in general, educated and religious'. (Boilat 1984:209). Despite Boilat's insistence on an idealized view of Christian habitants, his words capture the transformation of *métis* identity from the era of the *signares*. Cultural transformations rarely occurred in a linear direction in which local customs and traditions disappeared entirely in favour of the cultural aims of colonialism. The *métis* considered themselves as the embodiment of French cultural assimilation yet they continued to operate in a Senegalese environment. In assuming positions of power in the local assemblies established in Senegal by Third Republic France in the 1870s, the *métis* elite argued that they held specific knowledge of the local environment and relied on a network of kin and clients that reached into the frontier of French expansion in the country. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the métis elite found it more advantageous to emphasize their close affiliation to French society rather than African society.

## Conclusion

Writing about the emergence of colonial cities in Africa, historian Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch argues that continuity played as important a role as that of rupture for urban societies (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1993:15-18). Colonial cities in Africa, as elsewhere, became locations of cultural exchange where the populations did not live by agriculture alone and looked outward for social, cultural and economic development. *Métissage* in Africa's coastal towns, operated as a mechanism for responding to changes brought about by colonial rule just as interaction and engagement characterized the emergence of African cities before European contact. The city served as an instrument for spreading French imperialism but the colonial town never existed as a purely European creation.

Saint-Louis du Senegal emerged as a contact zone where colonial hybridity developed in response to the changing nature of African and European interaction. The emergence of a self-conscious *métis* population illustrates the contradictions inherent in French cultural imperialism and its articulation within African societies. S*ignares* played central roles in developing new Afro-European households and transmitting cultural identity to their mixed-race offspring. In the late eighteenth century, these cultural practices demonstrated loyalty to French rule but relied on a more flexible understanding

of religion that corresponded to the importance of Islam and local customs of the Senegal River valley. After 1820, habitant households emphasized their distinctiveness among town residents as a group with close cultural affiliation to French power.

Historians have under-estimated the transformation of cultural identity for the inhabitants of Africa's Atlantic coast towns. Scholars writing about people of mixed racial ancestry in twentieth-century Senegal considered them as a people wholly identified with the French without examining how and why this transformation occurred.[21]The concept of Creolization does not adequately address the ways in which people of Saint-Louis developed mechanisms for moving between culture groups. Creolization, as understood in the New World context, implies the fusion of culture identities to produce something entirely new. Eighteenth-century Saint-Louis residents, Christian and Muslim, developed a means for communicating in the appropriate language and engaging in the appropriate religious observation given the situation. Forging a dual sense of identity allowed the métis population to move in-between both worlds.

The French idea of assimilation simplifies the cultural transformations that developed in Senegal's Atlantic coast towns. Assimilation suggests that French cultural hegemony produced Afro-European societies that conformed strictly to metropolitan ideals. The idea of assimilation conceals rather than reveals the heterogeneous nature of Saint-Louis society. The concept of cultural assimilation obscures the variety of responses that town residents adopted in response to the expansion of French rule. In a few cases, *métis* men opted to marry African women, recorded their unions in the civil registry and claimed the children of these unions as their legitimate heirs according to French law.[22] In the late nineteenth century, some *métis* disassociated from the Church joining the freemasons and, in one case, joining a Sufi order in Senegal's peanut basin. Understanding *métis* identity simply as mimicry does not allow for a fuller understanding of why certain individuals chose Senegalese citizenship over French citizenship at the moment of independence or why some opted to marry within African society.

Hybridity is a thorny concept. It is laden with nineteenth century meanings of miscegenation as biological inferiority. As a category of post-colonial analysis it provides a new lens in which to understand the history of African and European interaction and the implications it held for shaping new ideas about race, class and gender within African societies.

## Notes

1. For an early work on African American identity, see Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African American Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press 1976). On revisionist approaches to the formation of African American Identity, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1993) and Ira Berlin, 'From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America,' *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, 2(Apr 1996), 351-288.For a critical interpretation on the development of race and class in the formation of African American identity in North America, see Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1998).
2. Robin Law and Kristin Mann, 'West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56 (1999), 310. For an interpretation of the role of Central Africa in the charter generation, see Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 236-242. For recent works that examine transformations in identity for coastal communities in West Africa, see Robin Law, *Ouidah: A Social History of a West African Slaving Port 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004); Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2007) and Mamadou Diouf, 'Assimilation coloniale et identités religieuses de la civilité des originaires des Quatre Communes (Senegal)',*Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34, 2(2000): 565-587.
3. F. Brigaud, Interview with author in Saint-Louis, Senegal, 4th December 2000.
4. 'Mulatto' was the common term used to describe people of mixed racial ancestry in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. I prefer the term *métis* as it is commonly used to refer to inter-racial populations among French speakers today and it avoids pejorative connotations of infertility associated with the word 'mulatto'.
5. The extent of the trade in slaves that passed through the two ports remains the subject of scholarly debate. The debate regarding Gorée's role in the Atlantic slave trade centred on the dedication of Gorée's Maison des Esclaves as a UNESCO world heritage site. See the articles from the proceedings of a conference on this subject. Djibril Samb, ed., *Gorée et l'esclavage* (Dakar: IFAN 1997) and Djibril Samb, ed., *Saint-Louis et l'esclavage* (Dakar: IFAN 2000).
6. I use the spelling 'gourmet/gourmette' or gurmet meaning 'noir baptise introduced by Abbé David Boilat in his 1853 work on the people of Senegal. The word comes from the Portuguese term grumete which referred to a hired African seaman. For more on the difference between the *métis* and black Catholic populations of Gorée and Saint-Louis, see Abbé David Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises* (Paris: Karthala 1984, reprint 1853). On the etymology of terms for different population in the commercial towns see George Brooks, *EurAfricans in Western Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press), 17.
7. The term *habitant* initially referred to people who lived outside of the 'habitation' or the fort that housed company employees. My research shows that in the mid-eighteenth century, the term habitant included Africans who were closely identified with the company. Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, David Boilat describes habitants of Saint-Louis exclusively as 'mulattos who carry honorable rank.'Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises*, 209.

8. See copy of 1787 petition by habitants of Senegal to the Etats-Généraux demanding right to free trade and protection against the abusive practices of the mercantile company in M. Lamiral, *L'Afrique et Le Peuple Affriquain* (Paris, 1789).
9. Population statistics from this period are fragmentary. A population survey conducted in 1754, seven years before British occupation, described the population of permanent residents as 2,500. In 1789, Lamiral wrote that '300 habitants libres, negres ou mulâtres' lived in the town with around 5,000 to 6,000 slaves. His numbers are somewhat exaggerated but are corroborated by other travellers' accounts of the same period.M. Lamiral, *L'Afrique et Le Peuple Affriquain* (Paris, 1789). For a study of census records for Saint-Louis, Gorée and the Senegal colony, see Charles Becker, V. Martin and J. Schmitz-Chastanet, 'Les premiers recensements au Sénégal et l'évolutiondémographique' (Dakar: ORSTOM 1983), p. 3. On the 1754 study see James Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), pp. 103-104.
10. Many of these accounts come from the mid and late eighteenth century. See Pruneau de Pommegorge, *Description de la Nigritie* (Paris, Maradan, 1789); Reverend John Lindsay, *A Voyage to the Coast of Africa in 1758* (London, 1867), 78; Lamiral, L'Afrique, 49-53. Consequently, their perceptions of life in the towns and the role of signares is influenced by their view of the exotic African woman and also racial thinking based on their concept of slavery, free people of colour and their view that they were inherently excluded from the French nation.
11. The articles of capitulation granting Britain control over Senegal in 1763 stipulated that 'free mulattos and negroes' be protected in their liberty, property and religion. See 'Petition presented by the inhabitants of Senegal to request redress for the injustice done to them by Govr O'Hara', 22 August 1775 in John Hargreaves, ed., *France and West Africa: an Anthology of Historical Documents* (London: Macmillan, 1969).
12. Portrait Photographs Devès Family, 1Z11, ANS and Xavier Ricou, *Trésors de l'iconographie du Sénégal colonia*l (Dakar: Riveneuve éditions 2007).
13. The Senegal Colony at this time consisted of Saint-Louis, Gorée and a few river trade posts along the Senegal River.
14. The permanent clergy consisted of one *préfet apostolique* (lay priest). Seven sisters arrived in Senegal to provide charitable services. Anne Marie Javouhey founded the order to educate young girls in France and Reunion (then Ile de Bourbon) before establishing a presence in Senegal. Joseph de Benoist, *Histoire de l'église catholique au Sénégal* (Paris : Karthala, 2007), 88-94 and Geneviève Lecuir-Nemo, *Anne Marie Javouhey* (Paris : Karthala, 2001).
15. 'Actes de Mariages' Etat Civil, Commune de Saint-Louis 8M/52 (ANS).
16. Ibid, 1861-1863 and 'Matricule de la Mission Catholique à Saint-Louis' (notes taken by Oumar Ba in1966).
17. Fatou Niang Siga, *Reflets de modes et traditions saint-Louisianes* (Dakar: Editions Khoudia). My conversation with informants during a year-long research fellowship in which I held formal interviews and informal conversations with informants in Saint-Louis and Dakar Senegal confirmed this.
18. The fact that the two books appeared at the same time with similar titles raises questions about Descemet's contribution to the Faidherbe dictionary. Louis Descemet, *Recueil d'environ 1,200 phrases françaises usuelles avec leur traduction en regard en ouolof de Saint-Louis* (Saint-Louis: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1864). See also,

Louis Léon César Faidherbe, *Vocabulaire d'environ 1500 mots français avec leurs correspondants en Ouolof de Saint-Louis, en Poular, Toucouleur du Fouta, en Soninké, Sarakollé de Bakel* (Saint-Louis, 1864).

19. I am grateful to Fiona McLaughlin for her clarifications about the Descemet phrasebook. See Fiona McLaughlin, 'On the Origins of Urban Wolof: Evidence from Louis Descemet's 1864 phrase book.' *Language in Society* 37 (2008), pp. 713–735.
20. For a contemporary account of El-Hajj Umar Tal's 1846/47 tour of Bakel and Podor and his letter to the faithful 'children of Ndar', see Frederic Carrère and Paul Holle *de la Sénégambie française* (Paris, 1855), pp. 194-196. For a critical perspective on the account see Yves Jean Saint-Martin,*Le Sénégal sous le second empire: naissance d'un empire colonial, 1850-1871*, (Paris: Kathala), p. 57 and David Robinson, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 124, 162-163.
21. This appears in seminal works on Senegal's political history by G. Wesley Johnson and François Zuccarelli. Rita Cruise O'Brien made this observation in her study of French settlers in twentieth century Senegal. She goes as far to say that 'the old métisse families of Saint-Louis… have a select group of French friends…who point out that they are not really Senegalese.' This may have been true from the French perspective in the years following independence but in Senegal today the *métis* families that remain emphasize their Senegalese-ness. See Rita Cruise O'Brien, *White Society in Black Africa: The French of Senegal* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 264-265.
22. The most striking example of this is the marriage between Madeline Tambe and Gaspard Devès. Devès married Tambe after his first marriage in a habitant family ended with the death of his first wife.The couple married officially in 1889 just before the marriage between their son and the daughter of another habitant family. While not common, other unions like this existed. Although only 'proper' unions were recorded in official documents, birth records and family reminiscences suggest that other such unions existed. 'Devès, Pierre Gaspard et Magdeline Fatma Daba Daguisery dite Magdeleine Tamba', Civil Registry of marriage, Commune of Saint-Louis, ANS 9 Mai 1889.

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*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp. 21-68



# Musical Hybridity in Flux: Representing Race, Colonial Policy, and Modernity in French North Africa, 1860s-1930s

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## Abstract

Colonialism posed the challenge of coexistence amid almost insurmountable differences. Music had long been considered an audible representation of these differences, the performance of intelligence, character, and even soul. French colonial policies, ranging from assimilation to association, too impacted how music was understood and what function it could play. Under assimilationist colonialism, some French hoped that appropriating foreign ideas and the hybridities that resulted could lead to innovation. After 1900, however, attention turned from exploiting cultural differences to wanting to preserve them.

Here I examine three genres in which European and African music were brought into hybrid relationships: piano/vocal transcriptions of African melodies by Salvador Daniel, Jules Rouanet and Edmund Yafil in Algiers, Antoine Laffage and Baron Rudolph dôErlanger in Tunis, and Alexis Chottin in Morocco; orchestral music that incorporates African melodies, rhythms, and timbres by Camille Saint-Saëns; and marches by Africans as well as French composers, with narratives of not only triumph, but also accommodation and resistance. This music and the ideologies behind its hybridities encourage us to reflect on issues at the heart of the colonial process.

## Résumé

Le colonialisme a posé le défi de la coexistence dans un milieu marqué par des différences quasi-insurmontables. La musique avait longtemps été considérée comme une représentation sonore de ces différences, la manifestation de lôintelligence, du caractère, et même de lôâme. Les politiques coloniales françaises, allant de lôassimilation à lôassociation, avaient beaucoup dôinfluences sur la compréhension et la fonction que la musique pourrait jouer. Sous le colonialisme assimilationniste, quelques français espéraient que lôappropriation des idées étrangères et les hybridités qui en résultèrent, pouvaient conduire à lôinnovation. Après 1900, cependant, pour les préserver, lôattention est tournée de lôexploitation des différences culturelles vers le désir.

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Ici, jôexamine trois genres dans lesquels la musique européenne et africaine ont été mises en relations hybrides : piano / transcriptions vocales des mélodies africaines par Salvador Daniel, Jules Rouanet et Edmund Yafil à Alger, Antoine Laffage et le baron Rodolphe dôErlanger à Tunis, et Alexis Chottin au Maroc, la musique orchestrale qui intègre les mélodies, les rythmes et les timbres africaines par Camille Saint-Saëns, et les marches par les africains ainsi que les compositeurs français, avec des récits pas seulement de triomphes mais aussi de logement et de résistance. Cette musique et les idéologies derrière ses hybridités nous incitent à réfléchir sur les questions qui sont au cî ur du processus colonial.

Colonialism posed the challenge of coexistence amid almost insurmountable differences. Music had long been considered an audible representation of these differences, the performance of intelligence, character, and even soul.[1] As Jules Rouanet wrote of Algerian music in 1905, óavec cette musique lôâme dôun grand peuple a palpitéô (Rouanet 1906:150). However, if music offered a way to understand traditions and values of other peoples, the context for this was racial theories ï monogenism and polygenism ï and racial hierarchies based on stereotypes. Depending on oneôs orientation, studying African music was either a step toward an imagined universalism in the language of music or a mode for contemplating racial distinctions, both helping the French reflect on the ideology of Western superiority.

At the same time, music was capable of far more. Because, as art, its meaning is never entirely graspable, music seemed neutral, a domain that could be shared. In this sense, some wanted it to assist in the process of assimilation, thereby infusing energy into the colonial process. Through western songs taught in schools and liturgical music sung in local languages or performed on indigenous instruments in the missions, the colonized would take the *mî urs* and values of the colonizer literally into their bodies. Moreover, performance on western instruments ï by locals in their own western-style orchestras[2] or wind bands ï could be understood as suggesting latent respect for French culture. And because music is not entirely dependent on language and could also potentially transcend the limits and location of cultures, it was a window onto diasporic movements in history. In Africa, as elsewhere, music was inevitably a product of multiple influences, not only local traditions but also those accompanying people in migrations and invasions-the result of layers of negotiation of Self and Other. African musical scales were studied as not only remnants of the distant past ï like the shards of archaeological ruins ï but also the product of hybridities. Certain musical intervals suggested links between North Africa and ancient Greece, others between North Africa and Turkey. When Republicans came to power, they saw such cultural collisions as nourishing, inducing progress. Music, as a metaphor for society, could be a potential source of vitality.

Under French colonialism, composers, performers, and scholars forged a variety of musical hybridities. After examining the meaning of hybridity in nineteenth century France, I look at three genres in which European and African music were brought into hybrid relationships: piano/vocal transcriptions of African melodies (the most contentious of the three and the subject to which I devote the most attention); orchestral music that incorporates African melodies, rhythms, and timbres; and marches with narratives of not only triumph, but also accommodation and resistance. What aspects of music could be shared to make hybridity possible? If hybrid means giving up something to gain something else, what were these musicians willing to give up, what specifically did they hope to gain? And what were the racial, political, and historical as well as musical implications of their hybridities?

Under Napoléon III, Francisco Salvador Daniel, composer and violinist of Spanish roots, born in France and living in Algeria from 1853 to 1870, transcribed music from Algiers, Tunis, and Kabylie not only to make this music available to westerners, but also to explore how differences in European and African culture might be negotiated and how European/African coexistence might work. If his focus on Kabyles, the indigenous people of Algeria, reinforced the empireôs military agendas, his transcriptions of their rural music were also found important by socialist Communards, music historians, and later French republicans. These transcriptions also set the standard to which later music ethnologists in North Africa responded and reacted.

Under assimilationist colonialism - French policy, in theory, 1870-1900 - differences were appreciated especially for their use-value. Some French hoped that appropriating foreign ideas and products could lead to innovation, possibly to new commodities. At first this meant bringing exotic plants and animals to France, in places such as the Jardin dôAcclimatation in Paris where it was determined which species could acclimatize to France and what economic and social utility they could serve. While most French living abroad took little interest in indigenous music, Camille Saint-Saëns collected and incorporated what he heard on visits to North Africa. Orchestral works like his *Suite Algérienne* (1881), *Africa* (1892), and the Concerto no. 5 (1895), ólôEgyptien,ô are complex and provocative as the composerôs motivations are not obvious. Because the Other here is more than a function of the composerôs imagination, was the composer attempting to stimulate curiosity and interest in the continent, as might a tourist after an *agréable séjour*, or was he merely paying tribute to his own impressions? Was he writing to encourage escape, albeit an imaginary or vicarious one, creating a fantasy on which western listeners can project their own desires? Or was he pointing to racial differences and diversity and how they inevitably coexist? Using African materials to infuse his music with new scales, sonorities, and

rhythms, the composer points to new musical resources in Africa as potentially rich in implications as the continentôs natural resources. Engaging with the Otherôs difference thus could push on the boundaries of Western sound, for the French a musical benefit of colonial expansion. As I show, however, there is more to the story than appropriation and exploitation. Saint-Saëns also explored what kind of coexistence is possible between European and African tastes and practices, albeit, like Daniel, from a French perspective.

Through their use of African tunes and other gestures, marches too played a role in colonialism. Here I only touch on this vast topic with a few examples from both French and African music, emphasizing that the genre was used not just to represent pride and glory through conquest, but also to reproduce these feelings through resistance, the weak to the strong. And while the *tirailleurs africains* performed marches on indigenous instruments as part of the French military, the Beni *ngoma* of East Africa reinterpreted western military marches for their own ends.

After 1900, however, French attitudes toward hybridity changed, including for Saint-Saëns and those supporting, collecting, and transcribing African music. With Jacques Bertillonôs study of depopulation among the French (more deaths than births) in the 1890s, anti-colonialist sentiment in the metropole (especially during the Madagascar expedition in 1895-96), and deep fault-lines in the French assimilationist project abroad, came racial panic (fear of racial degeneration) and increasing resistance to anything hybrid. Hybridity became associated with the potential loss of vitality, such as Gobineau associated with racial mixing. In music too, increasingly criticized for the unforeseen consequences of hybridity, some resisted ófusionô. In France, it was a reaction to the influence on French music of the German composer Richard Wagner and his fusion of symphonic and dramatic music. In Africa, among music scholars, there was anxiety about the impact of not only European music, but also Turkish and Egyptian music, contemporary recordings, and other modern musical practices, as if they would inhibit musicôs function as an emblem of soul or sign to the distant past. With the shift to associationist colonial policies and French focus on the difference represented by indigenous arts came the search for ópureô African music, unaffected by the compromises of hybridity. This led to increased valorisation of the urban classical musical tradition in North Africa, brought from the Andalusian courts. If intensified French participation in the collection and dissemination of indigenous music after 1900 showed respect for local cultures, it also implicated the French in shaping both the musical histories of their North African colonies and the tastes of their elites, with important ramifications up today.

This music and the ideologies behind its hybridities thus encourage us to reflect on issues at the heart of the colonial process: new meanings and new functions for indigenous materials, removed from their original contexts, and the consequences of these; ambiguities of authorship and ownership between those who produce source material and those who make new use of it; the nature of collaboration among Africans and Westerners when collecting indigenous melodies and transcribing and/or adapting them for western contexts; and the extent to which musical hybridity can involve mutual appropriation and mutual assimilation. In conclusion, we must ask, was hybridity capable of unsettling the binary oppositions of Self and Other? And was the authenticity that purportedly stood opposed to it in Arabo-Andalusian classical music necessarily a more accurate or desirable expression of the Self, especially in the modern era?

## French Hybridity, Race, and Music

### *Salvador Danielôs Transcriptions of North African Music*

Long before the postmodern and postcolonial preoccupation with hybridization and the impact of migrations, North Africans were aware that their cultures were the product of not only migrations from Spain, but also a succession of invaders-Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, and then western Europeans-their history the result of both assimilation and resistance. What has been far less recognized is that many French of the late ni$^{neteenth}$ century, even as they were preoccupied with asserting their national identity, felt a deep-seated anxiety about their own racial hybridity. While French republicans wanted to believe in the Revolutionary notion of the Republic as óone and indivisibleô (Chapman and Frader 2004), and sought an identity that would distinguish them from their neighbours, they had to come to grips with a past characterized not by homogeneous coherence, but by invasions, conflict, and accommodation. Celts, Gauls, Romans, Franks, Southerners and Northerners, the people and the nobility, colonized peoples and *émigrés*, each formed part of the fabric of French identity.

Historians, such as Fustel de Coulanges, struggled with the transnational nature of peoples like the Celts who, living in northern Europe and southern Germany as well as France, raised questions about the relationship between race, culture, and nation. More recently, Homi Bhabha has returned to this concern, defining culture as a óstrategy of survivalô (Bhabha 1994:172).[3] But the anthropologist Paul Broca saw no problem in this complexity. He proposed that the French exemplify óeugenesic hybridityô, a people óformed by the intermixture [*croisement*] of two or more racesôthat is óindefinitely prolificô. Their mixing had not caused loss of fertility, vigour, or intelligence: óFar

from decaying or presenting a decreasing fecundity, this hybrid nation grows every day in intelligence, prosperity, and numbersö (Broca 1864:16-18, 21-22). At the end of the nineteenth century, the sociologist Alfred Fouillé used a musical metaphor to describe how, over time, these different peoples, each with their own set of assets and liabilities, came into óune harmonie rare et précieuseö. Careful to point out what each race contributed to the mixture, Fouillé suggested how the French escaped physical and environmental determinism by becoming óune sorte dôaccord parfait où le Celte donne la tonique, le Méditerranéen la médiante et le Germain la dominante,ô their mental as well as physical attributes in balance and equilibrium (Lavignac 1895:441).[4] As such, it appeared that óla France résume lôEurope et que, au point de vue de la race et du caractère comme au point de vue du climat, nous avons en nous quelque chose des plus diverses contrées européennesô (Fouillé 1895). This idea, which spoke to French ambitions about their place in Europe as well as the world beyond, was meant to bolster their sense of superiority, particularly amid the *fin-de-siècle* panic over possible degeneration (Pasler 2006:459-504).

Although the formation of something hybrid tends to involve antagonism, resistance, and subjugation, and vastly different theories have arisen to explain how and why this may have worked in France, many nineteenth century French, given their own history, clung to the purported advantages of assimilation. In Algeria, even if there was little intermarrying between French and Muslims and few Muslim children attended French schools, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu believed that French *moeurs* and tastes could serve as ófermentô in the vast Muslim population of North Africa (Leroy-Beaulieu 1874, 1886:331). Those who thought that the Arabs could never be assimilated, in part because of their religion, looked to the Spanish, Italian, and Maltese living in North Africa to join the French in forming a ónew Mediterranean race,ô a vigorous and virile product of the intermingling of Europeans and locals willing to embrace France.[5] Through shared schools and cultural activities, such as music and theatre, the French sought to promote their values, eventually naturalizing others of European descent as well as Jews. As such, the óFrenchô population in North Africa itself was hybrid (Leroy-Beaulieu 1874, 1886:316). Anthropologists who worked on Algeria, like Broca, believed that when hybridity results from óproximate speciesô as opposed to distant ones, óunions between allied races are fertileö.[6] Given a high birth rate among these Latin peoples, Paul Bert thought they might one day dominate Algeria (Bert 1885:6). One of the arguments for promoting such hybridity came from Louis Bertrand, a native of Lorraine who taught at the Algiers Lycée. Like many archaeologists studying the Roman ruins in North Africa, he saw the region as originally part of a Latin Mediterranean diaspora. Hybridity was integral to its nature.

Music and musical instruments, in their ability to embody and recall the past, were studied for what light they might shed on racial origins and hierarchies, migrations and hybridity.[7] While few French historians acknowledged influences that remained from the twenty years during which Spanish Arabs settled near Lyon and Maçon, the Egyptian music scholar Victor Loret found remnants in numerous songs in the Pyrénées (Loret 1917: 166-171). Particularly interesting in terms of music documenting intercultural contact between the North and the South are essays on Arab music (1860s) by Francisco Salvador Daniel (1831-1871). These were based on nine years of research in Algeria, performances with North African musicians, and transcription of some four hundred local songs. From them, he observed similarities between Arab and medieval church modes (musical scales). Like others who studied non-western music as if frozen in the distant past, he jumped without much evidence to the conclusion that contemporary Arab music was órien autre chose que le chant des Trouvèresô and could help Europeans understand óla musique des premiers siècles de lôEre chrétienne (Daniel 1879:4-6, 13, 17). More significant were resemblances he perceived between Arab and ancient Greek modes and between the Tunisian guitar, the Kouitra, and the kithara of ancient Greece, as if Roman invaders may have brought these with their civilization (Daniel 1879:20).Claiming not to have heard anyóintervalles de tiers et de quart de tonô in Arab music (Daniel 1879:4,Weckerkin 1864 and Farmer n.d.:204-205),[8] Daniel argued that Arab music shared with ancient Greek music eight diatonic modes (made of tones and semitones) as well as four chromatic modes. Finding different versions of the same songs, what interested him most was not trying to óretrouver la première formuleô or the óoriginaleô of each melody (Daniel 1879:158-159)- his successorsô preoccupation. He noticed that the mode remained constant, and mode signalled race for him more than any other element.

For political, racial, and musical reasons, Kabyle music in particular attracted Daniel. First, it seemed to resonate with his complicated politics. Salvador Daniel grew up royalist and Catholic, sympathetic to the Emperor, though he later became a órevolutionary socialistô.[9] Like other Frenchmen of the time, he believed the Kabyles were óla vraie population indigène au nord de lôAfrique.ô Fascinated with the warrior music he heard in Kabylie just before and during the French expedition there in 1857, Daniel focused on the Kabylesô use of the Phrygian scale, with its tritones (three whole tones) dissonant to Westerners. Daniel associated it with not only the Kabylesô strength and ferocity, but also their pride in óavoir toujours été libre, et ne sôest soumis que récemment à la domination françaiseô.[10] Such an attitude was also consonant with French military policy. The French often sought

support among indigenous peoples, pushed into the hills in both Indochina and Algeria by previous invaders. Indeed, Salvador Daniel dedicated his 1863 book on Arabic music to the War Minister, Le Maréchal Comte Randon. Its first page explains that the chapters appeared in *Revue Africaine*, the journal of the Société historique Algérienne, founded under the Comteôs auspices. Even more important, it was the Comteôs support ï ôla haute protection dont vous avez bien voulu môhonorerô ï that allowed Daniel to undertake this study of Arabic music and the Comte himself to whom he owed ôsa position en Algérieô.[11] Daniel also acknowledged the ôencouragementsôhe had received from ôchefs des bureaux arabesô (Daniel 1879:37). In 1866, a month after his transcriptions were performed in Paris, Napoléon III recognized Danielôs work with a gold medal.

Second, Daniel was drawn to Kabyle music because its Phrygian scale reminded him of the Greek Phrygian, one of four Greek chromatic genres. This observation convinced him that Kabyles were descendants of ancient Greeks as well as, distantly, French Celts. Daniel contended that (1) since Kabyle songs often used the Phrygian mode as Plutarch described it, (2) since Kabyle songs in this mode were usually accompanied by the flute, according to Plutarch also as in ancient Greece, and (3) since certain religious customs of contemporary Kabyles were ôreproductionsô of the sacred rites of the Phrygian Cabires, then Kabyles were most likely descendants of ôla grande famille aryenne des Pélasges, premiers occupants de la Phrygia et pères de la caste cabirqueô.[12] Gobineau had identified the Pélasges as the ôhabitants primitifsôof France, and theirôorigine Celtique ou Slaveô(Gobineau 1853, 1983:791). Moreover, the Phrygian mode in French folk songs and cabiric-like sacrifices among the Celtic Gauls suggested that the Celtic family too belonged to the Greek Pélasges. Later scholars reiterated these observations. Finding Arab pieces in the Phrygian and Hypolydian modes in his 1904 collection of Algerian music, Jules Rouanet too claimed that Arab music had its roots in ancient Greece, as did Alexis Chottin in his 1928 study of Moroccan music (Rouanet and Yafil 1904; Chottin 1928:14). Such theories suggested that, although Daniel provided more affirmations than proof, North African music seemed a potential source of knowledge about ancient Greek music: knowledge of the Other was capable of enhancing knowledge of the Self.

Common musical scales supported the theory that the French and the Kabyles had similar ancestorsï with important political implications. French ethnographers had long considered the Kabyles a ôsister populationô in that, other than with their Islamic religion, they espoused a way of life resembling the French one. Their sedentary, farming culture preserved in the mountains

had given them a sense of private property, a quasi-democratic organization with civil laws, and the practice of monogamy, whereas Arabs were understood as essentially nomadic, feudal, and polygamous. The distinctions of race thus transmuted into distinctions of history and culture to promote positive qualities of Kabyles as opposed to negative qualities associated with Arabs. Daniel was not alone in considering these mountain peoples descendants of Celts, Aryans, or at least a people with the same ancestors. Emile Masqueray, who ran the Ecole Supérieure de Lettres in Alger (1872-1894) and produced the only scholarly work on the Kabyles in those years, compared Kabyle villages to the primitive villages of both classical Rome and Greece as well as Auvergne and Savoy in France. He was convinced that studying these ósmall republicsô would shed light on the óinstitutional origins of Western civilizationô (Bert 1885:34 and Lorcin 1995:189-190). Common racial origins offered justification for French occupation and colonialism.

Third, Salvador Daniel was drawn to kabyle music for the challenge of understanding ócette musique essentiellement primitiveô as well as trying to reproduce the óeffet sauvageô of its tritones ódont la dureté est très appréciable pour tout le mondeô (Daniel 1879:158, 162). The fruits of his years of study resulted in not only his book and articles, but also transcriptions of Algerian, Tunisian, Kabyle, and Maltese melodies into western notation, documenting this tradition and making it available to westerners. Most were for solo voice with piano accompaniment. In many ways, these hybrid creations should be understood in the tradition of nineteenth century *chanson populaire* transcriptions. First, as signifiers of culture and race, such songs were understood as melodic ótypesô with allusions to racial types, as Julien Tiersot once explained, although in North Africa, as in France, migrations and intermarriage (such as among the Kabyles and Arabs) had long made the notion of distinct racial differences far more imagined than real. At the same time, as Tiersot pointed out, óla mélodie populaire est chose essentiellement fluide, malléable, infiniment délicate et susceptible de se transformer sous les influences les plus diverses; que parfois le peuple é nôest quôadaptateur, arrangeur des matières déjà existantes, et que dans certain cas é il ne fait que sôemprunter à lui-même des éléments traditionnels qui lui appartiennent depuis de longues générationsô (Tiersot 1894:29-30). Although the musical mode tended to not change from one performer or town to another and ópar consequent, le caractère dôensemble du morceau,ô Daniel also remarked on having found variants of the same melodies in different regions, with one he first heard in Tunis óconsidérablement amoindri et défiguréô by the time it made it to Algiers (Daniel 1879:158-159). These attributes made melodies particularly apt for what the French called óacclimatation.ô To acclimatize

an object, individual, or race meant to remove it from its place of origin and imprint on its organization modifications that rendered it able to perpetuate its species under new conditions (Saint-Hilaire 1849). Because the western violin was too powerful for urban Arabs, for example, in Morocco they used a viola tuned as a violin (Chottin 1928:14). Calling on the mechanism of racial transformation in analysing the effects of regional differences on musical production in France, Tiersot saw song variants from one province to another as the result of óacclimatation musicaleô. The process, however, was far from neutral. Anthropologist Armand de Quatrefages, who understood acclimatization as the victory of milieu over an organism that bends to its requirements, acknow-ledged that this never takes place without a more or less violent struggle and leads to loss for individuals and generations (Quatrefages 1883:373-375).

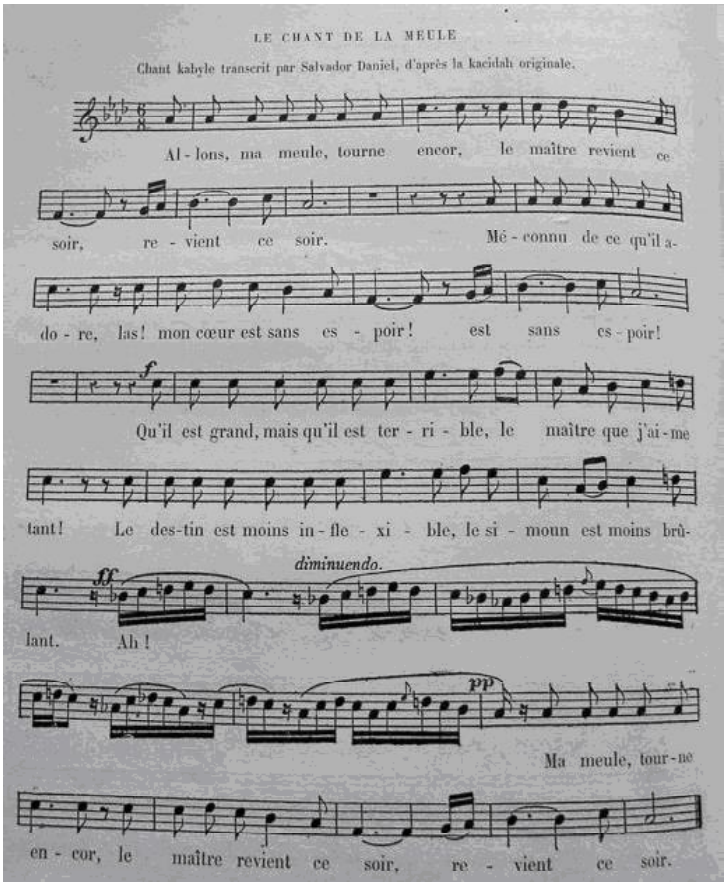
The most compromising aspect of musical acclimatization derived from the transcription of melodies into conventional western notation. Even the transcribers themselves were frustrated with their inability to indicate microtones and subtle timbres.[13] To make matters worse, to facilitate performances on western instruments like the piano, many transcribers often added harmony, cadences, and other accoutrements of western art song, including instrumental introductions, interludes, and codas. With folksongs of the French provinces, ócharmants débris de lôart primitif de notre raceô, Julien Tiersot chose to óles habiller dôun vêtement dôharmonieô. His reasoning: óNotre seule pensée, en les transportant dans un milieu si différent de leur milieu naturel, a été de les présenter de telle façon quôelles ne semblassent pas dès lôabord par trop dépayséesô.When these songs were performed in concert halls, perhaps not surprisingly Tiersot was often listed as their ócomposerô. If composers used these melodies as ósujetsô for their symphonies, this would be óune nouvelle preuve de leur vitalité toujours renaissanteô(Tiersot 1888:1 and 1911:3; Pasler 207:156-158).

Daniel believed transcription of North African music into western notation was possible because Arabic music was based on tones and semi-tones (for example Clément 1861, 1878:63), as in western music, and clear rhythms. Like Tiersot, he used key signatures to indicate basic tonality, western musical meters to establish the rhythm, and metronome markings to set tempo. Moreover, Daniel was careful to use accidentals to signal non-tonal melodic movement. Suggesting that his intended audience was Westerners, Daniel also presented words in his songs in approximate French translations, ómitationsôof the original Arabic. But unlike Tiersot, who ignored provincial dialects, Daniel also reproduced his song titles in their original language, indicated the modes, and occasionally noted performersô names and place of performance.

The most remarkable aspect of Danielôs transcriptions are his piano accompaniments. Unlike in transcriptions of most French *chansons populaires*, the piano rarely doubles the vocal part, remaining more distinct.[14] Daniel added chordal harmonies in the piano parts, but not always to force western harmony on the vocal part. If, for example, in óStamboulô diminished sevenths on F# resolve to G major, in óLe Ramier,ô there is a leading tone on D# in cadences (in E minor) in the piano, but D natural in the vocal part ï a kind of tonal/modal coexistence. And, unlike in Christianowitschôs transcriptions of Arab melodies (1863) with their four ï part harmonies and contrary motion among the lines, Danielôs harmonic accompaniments are relatively static, restricted to short repeating patterns with few chords and often only two or three motivic elements[15] For example:

> This allows musical interest to go to the singer. If Danielôs transcriptions begin with piano introductions, their purpose is not to introduce the melody or even the mode. Rather, as in Arab music, Danielôs instrumental preludes serve to establish the rhythmic pattern underlying the piece and give some sense of the original timbres.[16] Accents in the piano help orient the western singer and encourage correct interpretation of the vocal rhythms, particularly valuable in the frequent alternations between two and three beats per measure (6/8 and an implied ¾).[17] Mid-range rolled chords (in óMa Gazelleô), arpeggiated flourishes (in óKlaa Beni Abbesô, óYaminaô, and óChebbou-Chebbanô) or both (in óChant de la meuleô, Example 1) not only reinforce these accents, but also suggest the guitar, mandolin, or harp that may have accompanied the North African songs.

In one of his most hybrid creations, for which only the manuscript survives, Daniel transcribed and arranged ódôaprès lôoriginelô a Kabyle song for male chorus, flute (or oboe), tambourine, and tenor solo,[18] possibly conceived for the orphéon he directed in Algiers. Whereas in Algerian *nouba* a chorus would sing certain parts in unison, here, significantly, Danielôs chorus functions like the piano in his song transcriptions, that is, in a subservient role, while the melodic solo is shared between a tenor and a woodwind. The chorus provides a four-measure prelude with the words, óAllons au rendez-vousô, and the melody that will begin the workôs six stanzas. Although in four-part harmony as if to announce the tonality of G major with its F# leading tone, its alternation of only two chords (I-$V^7$-I-$V^7$-I) resembles the short patterns characteristic of Danielôs other piano preludes (see endnote 15). Moreover, all the choral parts are extremely static, with each singer hovering on one to three notes. In contrast, the woodwind and tenor lines are lilting and rhythmically interesting. In the first stanza, the flute performs Danielôs transcription of the original melody, alternating duple and triple patterns and ending its phrases with a quick descending melisma as the text refers to the




**Exemple 1:** ñSalvador Danielò Chant de la meuleas reproduced in Félix Clément, *Histoire de la musique* (1885)

beloved as ófolle,ôósorcière,ôand ófont aimer.ôIn the second stanza, B, as the chorus repeats óAllons au rendez-vous,ô the tenor solo takes over the wood-wind melody verbatim, adding its own text. The result is not only the simultaneity of two different musical styles, but also two texts. Sections A and B then repeat, but with a new text in the tenor part (Bô). The form of the piece is thus:

Intro AB AB' A'B'

The last two stanzas are highly unusual in Danielôs oeuvre. The fifth stanza, section Aô, begins with the Arabic melody in the woodwind, however with grace notes, accents on off-beats, and melodic and rhythmic complexity, as a North African performer might add.[19] In the sixth stanza, the tenor solo

repeats music from the first stanza, but with another text, the melisma falling on ófidèle,ô ósorcière,ô and, if the lover were to betray his beloved, she would ófont mourir.ô The woodwind joins the tenor in his second half, doubling the melodic line, forcing them both to sing exactly the same pitches. A brief coda follows, with the chorus singing óAllons au rendez-vousô as the woodwind recalls its opening phrase.

Such a song suggests that Salvador Daniel was attempting to create a way for western music, and indeed western musicians, to be supportive of African music (with the chorus accompanying the flute solo), to enter into a dialogue with it (in the alternation between A and B sections, with flute and tenor singing the same music), to respect the limits of western appropriation (with the flute alone performing the musical variants on the melody in Aô), and finally to come into harmonious coexistence (with the flute and tenor performing the same music at the end) ï a kind of utopian political statement about mutual assimilation, albeit in a western context.

If such musical hybridity helped make this music accessible to sophisticated urban audiences, it also served a number of purposes, both musical and political. For both Tiersot and Salvador Daniel, transcriptions were a way to recapture a tradition deeply rooted in the distant past, to shed light on western music history. In his *Histoire de la musique* (1885), Félix Clément reproduces Danielôs Kabyle song óZohraô (without piano accompaniment) to suggest how, in a clear 6/8 and óur minor modeô, it was not that different from western music. Clément also includes another Kabyle song, óChant de la Meuleô, to show that the tritone, once óbanished from western musicô, is still used in North Africa (Example 1). In *Journal de musique* (1882), óChant de la meuleô (this time *with* piano accompaniment) seems chosen for its vocal melismas. Here it appears before a similarly melismatic óChanson indienneô (from Lecocqôs *Le Jour et la Nuit*) and a óChant de la Sulamitô (from Massenetôs *Hérodiade)*, transcribed for piano. Such examples would have allowed readers to compare how French composers treated melismatic music from different musical traditions.

Danielôs transcriptions also functioned as signs to contemporary North Africans, their tastes, and their culture, with political implications. In 1870, the socialist journal *La Science sociale* reproduced óChant de la Meuleô for its socio-political undertones with which Salvador Daniel would have resonated. This Kabyle song ï about a óhumble esclave et le maître puissantô between which there is óun abîme infranchissable, lôabîme de la naissanceôï begins in the Lydian mode, the óeffeminante modeô banished by Plato from the Republic, with syllabic declamation, one note per syllable. Here óla femme condamnée aux travaux les plus pénibles ô, quasi-slavery, awaits her beloved

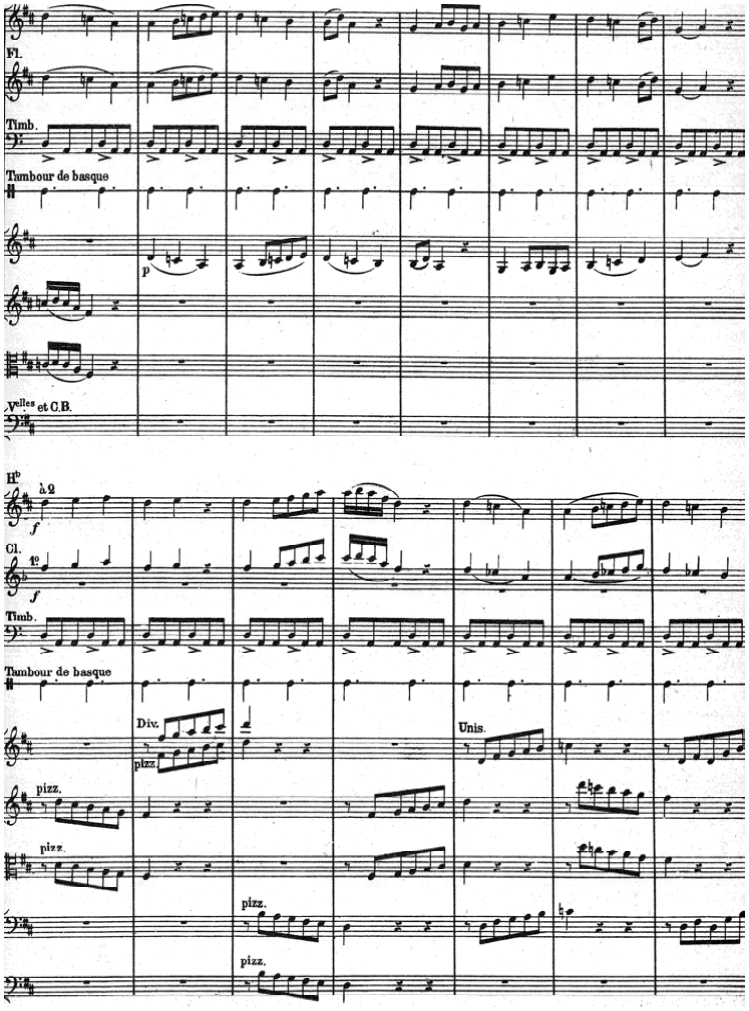
husband for whom ólе destin est moins inflexibleô. The reviewer sees ólа phrase musicale simpleô,óen teintes grises et monotoneô, as expressing ólе dégoût dôun travail repugnant et toujours le mêmeô. However, in the middle of the song, the music shifts to the Phrygian mode, the proud, warrior mode full of tritones, and syllabic text declamation gives way to the melismatic outpouring of pure music on óahô. The editor of *Science sociale* interpreted this momentary change as the ófemme revoltéeô, the slave who resists, although at the end she falls back into despair, returning to the Lydian mode and declamatory resignation.[20] The Tunisian song, óLe Ramierô, also with both syllabic and melismatic text-setting and modulation in the middle, likewise appeared in the French press, albeit with a politically neutral text. Both the *Journal de musique* (January 1882) and *Le Figaro* (19 October 1881) reproduced it to draw attention to Tunisia during the conflict that led to it becoming a protectorate in May 1882.

Danielôs óLôAnge du désertô, a óvieille chanson des Maures dôEspagneô, is ironically the most western of all his transcriptions, even more than óMargueriteô, a villanelle based on a Maltese song. This song, to be played as a óquasi valseô, is full of changes in tempo and dynamics, expressive indications for the singer, and pedal markings for the pianist. After starting out as in his other transcriptions with two alternating chords, the piano functions as if in a duet with the voice rather than its accompaniment. The piano not only often doubles the vocal part, imposing western tuning on the singer, but also adds its own interludes (perhaps like an Arab violin might) and with each vocal repetition, adds its own variation, including a section with full triads - a kind of western musical development building to a climax.

Transcription in many ways resembles translation, subjective and driven by the skills, capacities, and values of the transcriber. While respecting and building on Salvador Danielôs work, numerous colleagues later took issue with Danielôs harmonizations, though without distinguishing between the style of óLôAnge du désertô and that of his other songs. A reviewer in the *Journal asiatique* (1865) was not convinced by Danielôs attempt to fuse ónos lois musicalesôwith those of North Africa (Meynard 1865:567). Tiersot felt the rhythms in Danielôs transcriptions óparfois semblent rappeler Auberô, the director of the Conservatoire during the Second Empire (Tiersot 1902:51). While he found óZohraôvery charming, Loret objected to Danielôs choice of harmonies, ótrop modulantes et trop compliquéesô, and his bass rhythms lacking óun peu de franchise et de fermetéô (Loret 1917:160). Rouanet, who later published his own transcriptions of North African music, harshly criticized Daniel for not being able to get beyond his European musical education, that is, for having ótraduit au lieu dôenregistrerôwhat he heard, as

if humans can or should be like phonograph machines. Even though Daniel for the most part used chords óappropriate to the scale of each modeô, Rouanet found Danielôs chordal accompaniments ótortureôto his ears, removing ótoute leur originalitéô(Daniel 1879:124 and Rouanet 1906 in Lavignac 1922:2913). In Danielôs defence, Henry Farmer pointed out that Daniel ótook the rough, unpolished song of the Arab and created a veritable work of art out of itô. Most of Danielôs songs with accompaniment, he thought, óshow how the Arab would have presented his song had he reached the harmonic stageô. Farmer concluded, ówhilst retaining all the genre of Arab physiognomy, Salvador, following their quaint melodic intervals, struck out in an entirely new path as original as anything Grieg or the new Russian school touched onô (Farmer n.d.:12, 13, 205, 209, 218-19, 248, 252, 254). As Rouanet likewise órchestratedô some of his own transcriptions, making óun certain nombre de pièces destinés aux musiques militaires françaises et aux musiques civiles,ôthere is, therefore, some hypocrisy in his attack. Moreover, Rouanet was proud that Arab musicians were impressed and moved by his orchestrations (Rouanet 1906:2913). This suggests that the project of collecting and transcribing North African music for Salvador Daniel and Rouanet was not just about archaeology or study of a tradition capable of shedding light on western musical traditions, but also the basis of musical hybridities with óeffets nouveauxô (Daniel 1879:163) that brought their creators admiration and respect.

Although both had the support of Jewish North Africans (Farmer n.d.:17-18),[21] political differences may also have divided Daniel and Rouanet. Although Daniel also transcribed and composed works based on óchansons maurequesô from Algiers and Tunis, his scholarship focused on Kabyle music, music performed by the rural, agricultural population of Algeria. He also spent his last years advocating for óles chants du peupleô, including the kind of urban popular song practiced by Mme Thérésa in Paris.[22] A radical communard in Paris, he was shot by French troops in 1871. Farmer explicitly connected Salvador Danielôs rebellious political views with his embrace of a music that rejected western harmony. His hybrid transcriptions were óthe aesthetic reflex of this revoltô.[23] In contrast, Rouanet ignores Kabyle music in favour of urban music, particularly ómusique savanteôthat came to North Africa from the Spanish court. Rouanet sought to underline the Andalusian roots of contemporary African music, óla glorieuse époque des khalifes de Grenadeô (Rouanet 1906:2844). Daniel had not ignored this tradition in his music and his book.[24] But Rouanet went much further, as if nostalgic for the time when music was part of ódes fêtes somptuairesô and ólôinstruction des élitesô. The musical hybridity involved in western transcriptions of North African music,




**Example 2:** Rapsodie mauresque, *Suite algérienne*

thus, was not without its troubling limitations as well as its suggestive possibilities, ranging the gamut musically as well as politically.

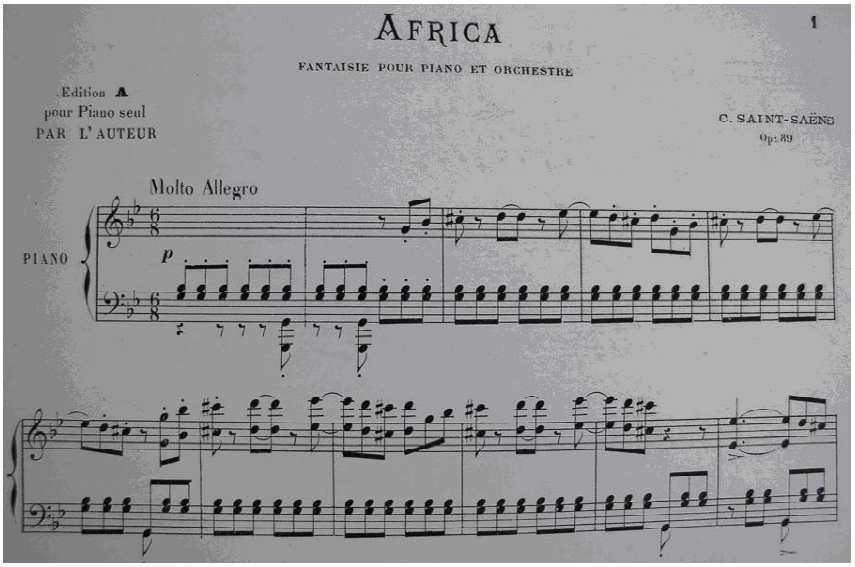
## Hybridity in Saint-SaënsôMusic

After Félicien David, whose use of an Arab melody in *Le Désert* (1844) brought him great fame, Camille Saint-Saëns was one of the most important French composers to incorporate Arab music and attempt to acclimatize African musical timbres. What interested him was not just assimilation, that is, how Arab music could infuse new vitality into western music, but also a

kind of hybridity that implied coexistence. His *Suite Algérienne* was written as ‘impressions’ of a trip to Algeria in 1873 and premiered in 1881 when France was imposing a protectorate on Tunisia. To suggest the French military presence in Algiers, Saint-Saëns opens the four-part work with bugle-like horn patterns and ends with a bombastic, exuberant French military march. The second movement, ‘Rhapsodie mauresque’, incorporates Arabic-like melodies, possibly noted by the composer when he was there.[25] At first these melodies come in the woodwinds and percussion, instruments with cousins in North Africa; then they are echoed (and assimilated) by the string orchestra. After juxtaposing timbres, themes, and temperaments, the composer insistently superimposes two meters and two tonalities, the triple meter theme in A over the static duple meter accompaniment in D (Example 2). As Ralph Locke has pointed out, this ‘contrasting sequence of moods and meters’ resembles those of North-African *nouba* ensembles;[26] it also suggests how Arab and western musical practices can coexist and even collaborate.

Saint-Saëns also took on the problem of how to work with indigenous melodies as an artist. Whereas he might have added just ‘une harmonisation regulière’, which would imply that melody and accompaniment were ‘indissolublement unis’, it was more original, as one critic pointed out, to ‘imaginer telle harmonie à quoi la mélodie garde l’air d’être en quelque sorte étrangère’. The composer excelled at creating, ‘par mille ingénieux raffinements, cette amusante equivoque’. As if to foreground his western skills, in the ‘Rhapsodie mauresque’ the composer accompanied an Arab theme with itself moving in contrary direction in a way that recalls western counterpoint. Elsewhere overt modal differences between an Arab theme and its accompaniment give ‘l’illusion d’une mélodie sans accompagnement’. Metric and tonal ‘indécision’ and ‘incertitude’, together with the ‘compromis’ underlying the ‘suite rationnelle d’accords’ (Quittard 1906:107, 111-113) is a kind of ‘in between’ or ‘zone of intersection’ that results in what Homi Bhabha’s has called ‘unresolved and unresolvable hybridity (Bhabha1994:4). It is also a metaphor for the uneasy and imbalanced cultural coexistence under colonialism.

With the policy of assimilation coming under attack in the 1890s and even Jules Ferry admitting its failures, Albert Girault reminded everyone that assimilation ideally could help unify the empire (Girault 1894:107, cited in Thobie 1991:299-302). Whether the composer, a staunch Republican, was sympathetic to this idea or not, in his *Africa* (1891), a fantasy for piano and orchestra, Saint-Saëns created another hybrid about coexistence, but this time focused on African cultural diversity. Again recalling Arabic *nouba* music, the work is a succession of themes but with different scales and moods, rather than, as in *nouba*, one scale linking the parts. Three aggressive, assertive,




**Example 3:** Musical theme A in Saint-Saëns, *Africa*

virile themes dominate, A, E, and G (Example 3 and Table 1). *Africa* opens with A, a tune Saint-Saëns heard in Biskra, a gateway to the Sahara desert settled by desert nomads in the Middle Ages and later a tourist destination. Most of the population is black, known for their warrior spirit, and the oboeï like instrument they used to perform. Biskra means instability, which is precisely the nature of *Africa*ø opening theme. Turning round and round on the same pitches, its first downbeat lands on an augmented second melodically and harmonically and its syncopated rhythms avoid any regular beats. Moreover, the insistent accents on off-beats result in an aggressivity characteristic of Chaui music. Later, after spinning a huge melisma out of this material, the composer ócacclimatizesô this theme, using it in a thoroughly western manner to modulate to another key and writes western counterpoint with it between the piano and other instruments. Rapid two-octave descents then accompany the ostinato rhythm of theme C, recalling war songs recorded on wax cylinders in French Sudan. Towards the end, the composer cites a Tunisian melody he assumed was the Tunisian national hymn. While it does not begin in an aggressive manner, it helps drive the work to its final frenzy. *Africa* also has lyrical and dance-like themes. In the middle, they function for the sake of contrast, as in military marches. Was Saint-Saens referring to the difference between the desert and the cities, or vengeance and love, the two passions expressed in Arab music? While the fourth theme, D, is very dance-like and western, themes H and I are also dance-like, but seem African-

inspired. This suggests that Saint-Saëns did not essentialize African music as merely virile, but also listened to and recognized its playful side. Another western lyrical theme, the second theme (B) ï folk-like, marked *andantino expressivo*, and in E flat major ï raises other questions about the work, not difference, but similarity. This melody resembles those of Brittany or Auvergne, the oldest parts of France. That scholars had often compared not only Auvergne to parts of Algeria, but also, in the distant past, their musics, suggests that this pastoral theme may also have been a way to signal such a connection.[27] With its syncopations, augmented seconds, multiple themes, and frenetic ending in common, Saint-Saëns himself compared *Africa* to a ôRapsodie hongroiseô, saying that maybe Hungarian gypsies had come originally from Africa.[28] In a certain way, the comparison is appropriate. Saint-Saëns was a ôinternal outsiderô, a foreigner in Africa, just as the gypsies were internal outsiders in Hungary (see also Locke 2009:136).

A third kind of theme in *Africa*, Theme F in parallel thirds, is specifically western although not specifically French. Thirds depend on the equal temperament of the piano to be harmonious. To the extent that the theme is playful and easy, providing moments of repose from the challenges of surrounding music, it points to the *moeurs* of the coastal cities. This theme thus adds another important dimension to *Africa*. It suggests that North Africa was also inhabited by a motley collection of westerners: Italians, Spanish, Maltese, and Greeks, naturalized in 1889. Was the composer both acknowledging the existence of this European diversity in African cities and supporting the idea of a ônew Mediterranean raceô in the region? Inclusion of western music in *Africa* furthermore suggests that the process of assimilation should apply to the integration of Western as well as African elements of difference.

Music, along with trade and commerce, was central in the French project to create settler communities in Africa. Besides the theatre in Cairo, a theatre for opera opened in Algiers in 1853 and later in Oran, Constantine, Bone, Tunis, Tananarive, Tamatave, Casablanca, Rabat and Dakar. The cities hired theatre directors, who annually travelled to Paris to form their troops. Meanwhile, settlers performed in their own orchestras and choral societies, and military bands played twice weekly for everyoneôs enjoyment in city parks. Saint-Saëns was part of this community, his music played relatively frequently in Algeria and streets eventually named after him. In 1892, Algiers put on his opera *Samson et Dalila* nine months before its premiere at the Paris Opéra. Performing and listening to Western music served an important political purpose: it provided French elites and other settlers of European descent with a sense of the culture they shared and an ongoing connection to the outside world.

Musical hybridity in *Africa* is thus complex in its signification. Saint-Saënsôs appropriation of African tunes inevitably entailed removing one kind of meaning ascribed by African users ï tradition and history ï and replacing it with another, oriented to the Western listener. In this context, musical borrowing risked reducing varieties of difference to the category of difference, potentially collapsing into the binarism of Self-Other. This risk had other consequences as well. To the extent that new uses ignored the effects of displacement and disjunction on objects themselves and fixed the borrowed objects in new ways, their commodification could derail musicôs capacity to signify in meaningful ways. In other words, African music in such a context risked losing its Africanness.

Structure, however, is what makes *Africa* work ï its subtitle, ófantasyô, referring to the chain-like unfolding of African-inspired tunes in dialogue with western ones (see Table 1). In section 1, the rondo-like alternation of an African-inspired theme (A, non-italic bold) and western themes (B and D, italic non-bold) underlines the distinction of theme A which here dominates and frames the western melodies. In other words, we hear westernness differently when surrounded by Africanness. This is just the opposite in the *Suite Algérienne* where the óaccents guerriersô of French military music surround the órythmes bizarres et les langoureuses mélodies orientalesô of the Arab-inspired middle movements, suggesting the dominance of France.

**Table 1:** Thematic Structure in *Africa*

| |
|---|
| A pf Aôpf B Aôpf c D Dôpf A |
| E E Eô pf F |
| A |
| G G BôH GôH I F G |
| pf G G E Fô pf |
| A |

Note that western music does not have the last word in *Africa*. The western theme F too derives its power from the workôs structure. It both comes at the end of the second, third, and final sections and articulates the final tonality, G major, now purged of the augmented second with which the work began. But, I would argue, this is not just a conclusion. Theme F helps the music escape earlier binary oppositions, its rapid thirds leading the work toward

pure sonority. At the end, western listeners could delight in the transcendent virtuosity of the pianist, while Arab audiences may have recognized the virtuose ótourbillonô of traditional Arab *noubas*. Perhaps, as he began to live among them, this is how Saint-Saëns envisaged the challenge of coexistence under French rule in North Africa.

## Hybrid Uses of Marches

Marches, the western musical genre most often heard in the colonies, were frequently used to express triumph and glory. For the western composer, this meant ócolonizingô as much of the musical space as possible with the same rhythms and theme, óconqueringô any elements that may threaten the dominance of the downbeat and the main tonality, and in the end returning victorious with the original material fortissimo and (if the original tonality was minor) in the relative major. Marches do this through their structure, the key to the enactment of their function. They are either ternary forms or rondos, like the refrain structures of the old óchansons militairesô. That is, military marches have a theme that returns, ABA. French orchestral marches often feature a series of contrasting ideas, ABACA (where each letter name represents an extended section of the music, as in *Africa*). Listening to the relationship between the returning material and the interrupting sections in these marches suggests how the power they may represent comes in part from the capacity of the A theme to contain difference. They suggest that the French thought of heroism as ever more apparent, dramatic, and triumphant when it follows, comes as the consequent to the softer, more relaxed, even feminine middle section.

In France, marches were a popular genre in which to submit exotic, modal melodies to western conventions of order and predictability. Although it does not suggest anything specifically French about the ówestô, Saint-Saënsô march *Orient et Occident* (1869) articulates a French ideology of Western superiority and progress, written before he went to Africa. Using an ABAôform, the music coded as Occident (the use of strings and counterpoint in the A sections) serves as the framework for understanding, containing, and dominating the music coded as Orient (the predominance of percussion and static harmonies in the B section). In ways far more complex than the typical military march, however, Saint-Saëns does not merely juxtapose their differences, but instead deploys an arsenal of compositional and formal devices to make his point. The A section demonstrates that a Western theme can adapt to different contexts and endure change both from within as well as without. In the B section, as if to contain the slippery improvisational elasticity of real Oriental melody, Saint-Saëns squeezes the melismas into upbeats that emphasize the marchôs downbeats and he accompanies its main theme in

fifths and tonal movement that brings the section into an unambiguous G major. In section Aô, the instruments associated with the B theme are forced to imitate the A theme. In the final minutes of the march, the rhythmic and timbral diversity disappears and the whole orchestra marches together, its simultaneous quarter notes triumphantly pounding out the E-flat major tonality. Saint-Saëns thereby posits the Orient as a stereotyped Other only to take it over, neutralize its difference, and assimilate it by virtue of Western skill. By the end of this march, the juxtaposition and binary opposition of East and West seem an illusion.

For Berlioz, such as in his *Marche hongroise* (1846), the march could also represent a story about the weak standing up to the strong. Its main theme is the Radoczy march, the national hymn of Hungary. Radoczy was the crown prince who tried to expel the Hapsburgs in the early 18th century. Although the Hungarian theme is light, playful, dance-like, and limited in its pitch materials, Berlioz shows it to be capable of real aggression, of standing up to loud brass interjections and ominous timpani, of melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, timbral, and registral expansion. By the end of the march, it has lost its simplicity and naiveté, exotic as it may have been, and proven itself masterful in many contexts. The idea of a national leader summoning the common people to help him push out a strong foreign aggressor undoubtedly had resonance among French listeners who may have identified with these Hungarians after their defeat to the Prussians in 1871.

In a colonial context, marches sometimes expressed the militaryôs civil role as a symbol of the controlling order. One critic saw the final march in Saint-Saënsôs *Suite Algérienne* as embodying ólla justice et les avantages de notre dominationô, perhaps referring to the disciplined coordination and coherent structure of the marchôs ABA form (Baumann 1905:299). Peace times also gave local military regiments and their bands the occasion to welcome visiting dignitaries and open formal ceremonies all over Africa. Some bands doubled as dance hall orchestras.

A little studied but important hybrid genre is music the zouaves, spahis, and other *tirailleurs indigènes* played on their own instruments (Figure 1) Did these musicians replicate sonneries performed by their French counterparts? If so, how did they adapt indigenous instruments to the timbres and tonalities of music for the clairon and the tambour?

Military music expert Thierry Bouzard points out that these indigenous ensembles were conducted by French chefs de musique who also arranged the music they performed.[29] Nonetheless, that some transcriptions of it resemble other indigenous music suggests that these conductors may have tried to replicate certain characteristics associated with African music.

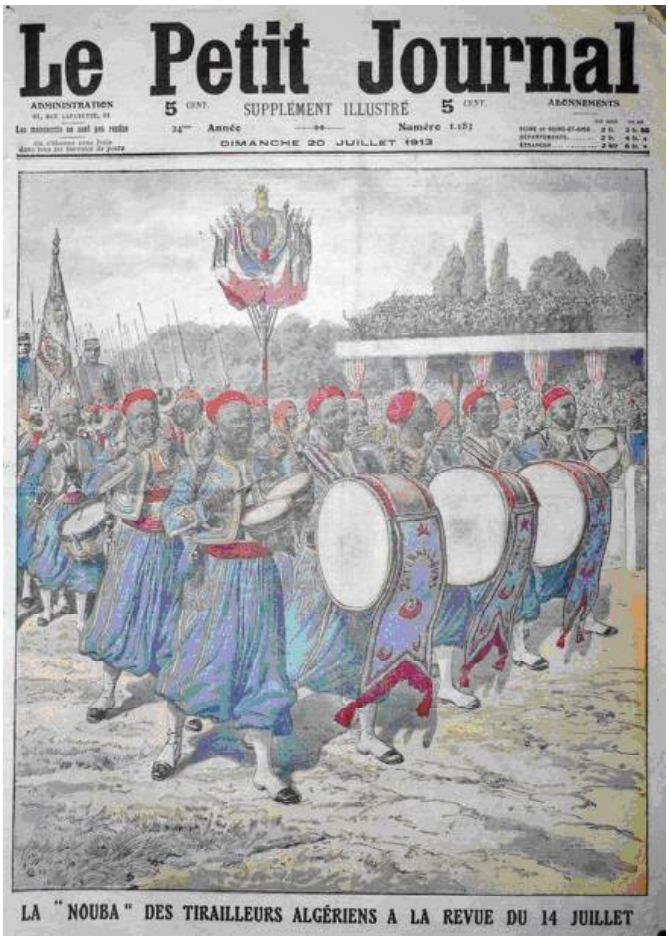



**Figure 1:** The nouba of Algerian tirailleurs, on the cover of *Le petit parisien* (20 July 1913)

In Bénédictusô transcription of a *nouba* performed by Algerian *tirailleurs* during the 1889 Exhibition, for example, the right hand (RH) stays close to the theme (performed in unison by the *nouba*), while the left hand (LH) establishes a constant triplet rhythm using only four arpeggiated chords-reiterating Salvador Danielôs manner of transcribing African songs, albeit less creatively (Bénédictus 1889: 18-19). Tiersot furthermore noted that, even if *tirailleurs indigènes*wore European uniforms, moved with European gestures, and appeared ócivilisésô, they had their own repertoire: óairs nationaux, très vraisemblement arrangés et rythmés pour la marcheô. Eight to ten performers played the ó*nouba* des turcosô in unison, supported by the

percussion, including French cymbals. Like French marches, many of these pieces were in 6/8 and in a major scale; but like in Arab music, their music accelerated over time, ending very fast (Tiersot 1889:77-78). In his transcription of a "March of the Algerian *nouba*", Tiersot tried to reproduce the repetitive quality of a tune they played "at least twenty times in a row for five minutes"with four ideas, each recurring four times. If these piano versions cannot represent the sound and timbral variations of the original music and the march ends in C minor, at least both feature F# against E flat - an indexical sign of the Orient, but in Bénédictus functioning as a diminished seventh rather than an augmented second. As such, the transcriptions document African-inspired intervals in military music-hybridity where one might not expect it.

There were also hybrid uses of military marches by other Africans. For decades, the wind band of the Bey of Tunis performed its repertoire in unison on western instruments with its conductors, often European, who knew little about Arabic music.[30] In his book, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa* (1975), T.O. Ranger writes about how missionaries in Africa used European military music to introduce the freed slave children to "the necessities of industrial time". Marches stood in direct contrast to the "inexplicable monotonies and sudden passions of African drumming; musical ability was taken as a sign, a promise of potential for civilization ... and the idea of drill and of uniform was intimately connected with the idea of learning civilization".[31]

Ranger also argues that, while "the dance was in some sense an adaptation to a new world dominated by European power"ï the power of its culture as well as its arms ï in some parts of East Africa colonized peoples used the brass band rather than merely adopted it in their struggle for both accommodation and self-pride. Dance associations called Beni developed in the 1890s; they enacted a form of music called *ngoma*, march-like music and dance based on the idea of military drill.

> Sometimes the dance took the form of a parade, a procession, a march past; sometimes it took the form of a dance in platoon form; sometimes it took the form of a circling drill step. Singing was always an important part of Beni performances. Almost universally the language of Beni songs was Swahili and they normally took the form of simple rhyming commentaries on current affairs. Invariably the music and dance were merely one part of the activity of Beni members. The Beni *ngomas* had a hierarchy of male and female officers with elaborate ranks, uniforms, and titles of honour.... the features of Beni-the sound of a brass band, the military drill, the hierarchies of officers with European titles-made it instantly recognizable wherever it went.... The mode was popular for a very long time and in very many places (Ranger 1975:5).

Amid the colonization process, Ranger explains, Africans used such music not only as a ósymbol of progress toward the desired new lifeô, but also as a way of continuing their pre-colonial tradition of ócommunal competition as expressed in dance, procession, and mimic combatô (ibid. 10, 15). In other words, marches were an attempt not only to absorb and master what was considered powerful in the life of their conquerors ï a way of becoming ómodernô ï they were a form of resistance, a way to reject the colonizersô emasculinization, recast the expression of their own communal values, find new outlets for artistic innovation, and maintain their own pride and prestige among their peers.[32] I hope to find other examples of western musical genres appropriated, transformed, and used by African musicians to suit their own purposes.

## Hybridity after 1900: ôMusic Ethnologistsô Search for the ôPureô in North African Music

Along with relative consensus on the hybrid nature of the French people came ambivalence toward hybridity, especially in the colonies. Robert Young calls this óan ambivalent axis of desire and aversionô (Young 1995 :19). By 1900 hybridity of all sorts was being used to fuel debates over whether France had become a ógrande dégénéréeô, or was merely suffering from óune crise morale et sociale commune à toutes les nations modernesô (Fouillé 1895:793; Nordau 1894). Many came to agree with Paul Broca that if mixing closely related varieties can have advantages, among distantly related races it can threaten to erase the distinctions of difference (Broca 1864:16-18, 25-28). From Africa to Indochina, hybridity became a lightening rod for what was wrong with assimilationist colonial policy. Families were increasingly troubled by the impact of French education on their young, creating ódes êtres hybrides é des déracinésô, óune génération hybrideô who, óbaragouinant un français simiesqueô, felt themselves superior to their compatriots.[33] This led to rethinking education throughout the empire, even music education,[34] and to shifting colonial policy to the principle of association, or gaining cooperation and participation by native peoples in their own administration, education, and defence. With this change came indigenous participation in discussions at the Congrès de Marseille (1906); the founding of *La Revue indigène* (1906) and a new newspaper *Le Tunisien* (1907), both oriented to the concerns of indigenous peoples; and early independence movements among les Jeunes Tunisiens and les Jeunes Algériens. As *Le Courrier de Tunisie* put it (4 January 1907), France must órenoncer à lôutopie de lôassimilation de la race arabe.ô

As part of the new approach to their colonies, attention turned from exploiting cultural differences to acknowledging and wanting to preserve them. In the 1890s Gustave Le Bon, who had written on Arab civilization, popularized the idea that the soul of a race is reflected in its beliefs, traditions,

and arts ï óthe inheritance of all its ancestorsôï and that this soul is fixed and homogeneous, not alterable by education or intelligence (Le Bon 1894 and 1924:37, 126). As such polygenist racial attitudes began to take precedence over the monogenist search for universalism, the 1900 Congrès Colonial unanimously voted that native institutions and customs should be respected and maintained as much as possible. This idea found considerable resonance in the field of music. The 1900 Congrès de lôHistoire de la Musique called for using the phonograph to collect folk melodies in all countries. And whereas in 1889 Tiersot was preoccupied with what non-western music shared with western music, during the 1900 Paris Exhibition he was taken aback to find so much inauthentic hybridity ï a Malgache musician playing a Spanish dance on an indigenous instrument that Tiersot himself had learned on the piano, and Italians dressed up and performing as Cambodian dancers, led by none other than the Opéra *étoile*, Cléo de Mérode. Consequently, he sought to focus on ólôétude des races les plus différentes des notres et les peuples les plus éloignés de nous: nous nôaurons donc pas à craindre de trouver leur musique contaminée par les influences européennesô (Tiersot 1900:324). This preoccupation drew him to interviewing and writing about thirty Dahomean musicians.

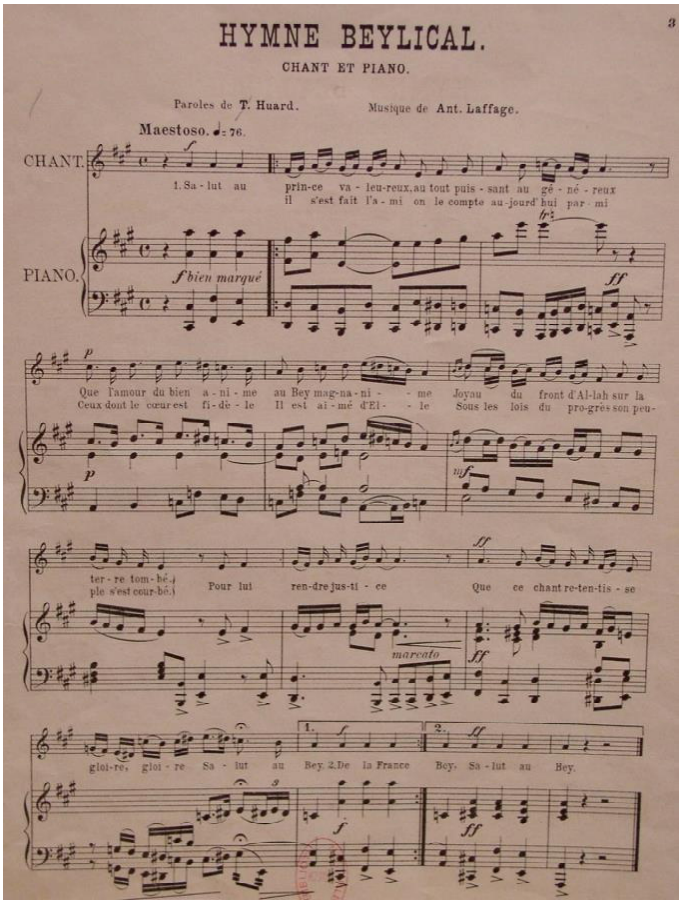
Commentary about musical hybridity turned harsh in 1906. One critic noted that if a composer óvoulut transposer dans sa musique ce quôil avait entenduôabroad it was as if a colonialist who, gripped in a ófantaisieô ofóun Orient lointainô, sought themes to óplier sous ses lois et obliger à entrer dans la trame de ses compositionsô (Quittard 1906:107). Since attempts to incorporate Oriental melodies inevitably end up in distortion ï an óinsurmountableô problem-in part because Oriental scales are óa priori inharmonisablesô, he threw his hands up at the possibility of true assimilation: ôMusique européenne, musique orientale, ce sont deux organismes distincts, souvent opposés, aussi loin lôun de lôautre en tous cas que les langues aryennes le sont des langues sémitiquesô(ibid.:108-09, 116). After Caprice Arabe *(1894) and* his Piano Concerto no. 5 (1895), with its second movement incorporating a tune he heard rowers sing on the Nile, even Saint-Saëns changed his view. Until his death in Algiers in 1921, the composer continued to spend his winters in North Africa and, after hearing the Algerian tenor Bachetarzi sing, he was still interested in transcribing what he heard (Bachetarzi 1968).[35] However, he produced few additional musical hybrids incorporating African tunes.

Most musical compositions written by western settlers in Tunis and Algiers after 1900 remained thoroughly western fantasies, romances, mazurkas, triumphal marches, and the occasional operetta ï as if to assert settlersô connection to European traditions or express nostalgia for the metropole.


**Figure 2:** Laffage, óKhadoujahô

Antonin Laffage, a composer, violinist, conductor, and music publisher born in Algiers, was among the few to compose and publish popular songs inspired by Tunisian tunes, albeit following western musical principles. For example, óKhadoujahô (1902), a óRêverie traduite de lôArabe,ô has the RH of the piano doubling the voice, but the LH adding tonal harmonies and contrapuntal lines (Figure 2).

A recent blogger has called attention to the multiple levels of appropriation underlying ôKhadoujahô and takes issue with Laffage for publishing it under his name. One could also mention that, as its *éditeur*, he made money from its sale.[36] When it came to publishing a ôHymne beylicale,ô based on another




**Example 4:** Laffage, ôHymne beylicaleô

well-known tune, Laffage did not claim authorship (Example 4). The composer added a French text praising the Bey and harmonic accompaniment in the piano, but acknowledged himself only as the ôharmonizer.ôA reviewer in the *Dépèche tunisienne* (23 March 1898) praised Laffageôs adaptation in explicitly colonialist terms and suggested that, since some settlers may have had problems in listening to indigenous music, there was an audience for such hybridity among westerners:

> Qui de nous nôa souffert de cette cacophonie, douloureuse pour nos oreilles civilisées, de ce tohu-bohu de notes heurtées, grinçantes, criardes, à travers lesquelles lôesprit se perdait en vain à la recherche dôune idée introuvable ou dôun rythme musical?
>
> Grâce à M. Laffage, ce chaos sôest débrouillé; la lumière sôest faite. Par un véritable tour de force musicalé le distingué professeur a fixé le rythme, lôa soutenu et mis en valeur par une harmonie des plus heureusesé . ôLôHymne beylicaleô prend rang dans les î uvres que lôon peut écouter et applaudir; et ce ne sera pas la première fois que le génie français aura mis en lumière les î uvres à peine ébauchées par les civilisations rudimentaires.

If this kind of hybridity pleased because it served to tame the rhythms and smooth out the harsh elements of the original, it also served an important political function, allowing westerners to ólisten to and applaudô indigenous traditions without having to encounter them in their órudimentaryô forms.

Some continued to see a role for indigenous musicians in hybrid performances and performance groups, albeit in service of the colonizers. In 1906 the Résident Général of Tunis received a proposal of the French government instructing the creation of wind-bands made up of *tirailleurs indigènes* in all the African colonies. Members would be fitted with their own red and white uniforms and play not only simple military-band instruments ï drums, brass, triangle, flutes ï but also portable African instruments ï a Senegalese balafon, Bambara drum, African flute and Malgache guitar. Arguing that such bands could invigorate French soldiers, lighten the fatigue of their marches, and entertain the population, the author pleaded for indulgence regarding the cacophony that such an ensemble might produce ï undoubtedly not worse than municipal bands in many French villages (Bretagne 1906). There is no evidence that the project materialized.

In 1904-07 when óla politique indigèneô preoccupied colonial administrators and the press, French interest in indigenous music grew, but changed in nature. French scholarship on Arab music had advanced since the 1860s (for example Collangettes 1904:365-422 and 1906:149-190), but there were no major collection and transcription projects until those by Laffage (1905-11) in Tunisia and Jules Rouanet and Edmond-Nathan Yafil (1904-23) in Algeria. Later efforts, such as the transcription work of Alexis Chottin (1922-42) in Morocco and Baron dôErlanger (1937) in Tunisia strongly resonated with the colonial policies of Hubert Lyautey. Finding óthe crumbling vestiges of an admirable civilization, of a great pastô in Morocco, in 1921, this Gouverneur général told French scholars their role should be órestoring the foundation, renewing the construction work, and on the foundation which you rebuild in

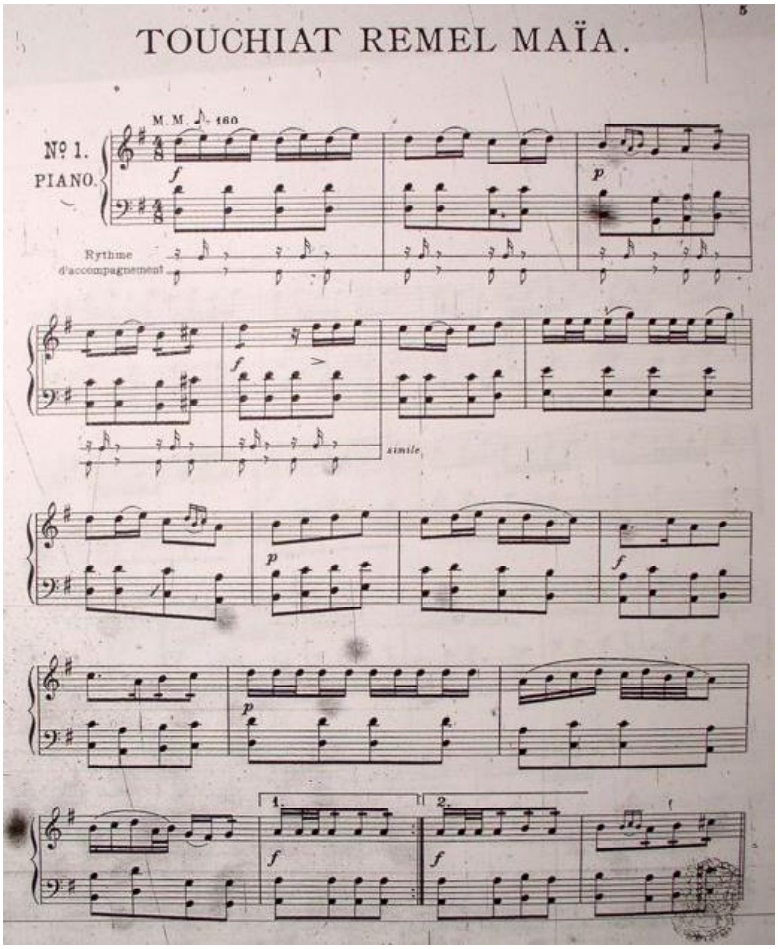
good cement you are undeniably aiding us to build the marvellous future that we wish to make spring from this pastô (Lyautey 1921, cited in Wright 1991:79). As we will see, these music ethnologists shared respect for difference in their sources, increasing distaste for hybridity (whether European or other Arab influence on North African music), and an ideological bent with consequences.

On the simplest level, all continued to transcribe for the piano, rejecting the use of specialized notation to indicate microtones as proposed by Dom Parisot in 1898 (Parisot 1898 and Coulangettes 1904 and 1906). Each also rejected the addition of harmonic accompaniments and French texts, the hybridity previously thought necessary for western ears. When it came to Laffageôs twelve fascicles of *Musique arabe*, the pianistôs RH and LH only double the Tunisian melodies in octaves. There are no chords.[37] In the separate volume Laffage published after his government-funded 1906 mission to Tripoli (Libya),[38] the Turkish charkis, military sonneries, popular and ceremonial music he collected also appear mostly without accompaniment. Arthur Pougin, writing in the music journal *Ménestrel*, concurred with this choice: ónotre système occidental dôharmonie ne pouvant que leur enlever leur saveur et leur originalitéô (Pougin 1905:216). Rouanetôs critique of Salvador Danielôs transcriptions that year echoed this. At the same time, Laffage specified that the melodies could be played by the western flute, clarinet, oboe, violin, or mandolin, with or without piano. That beginning with his fascicle 2 all French words ï title names, collaborator names, song incipits, and even tempo indications ï lso appear in Arabic suggests that the public for these may have included the Arab population who could play western instruments, read western notation, and afford this luxurious publication with its water colour images of Arab instruments and ornamental blue cover resembling a page out of the Koran (Figure 3).

*Répertoire de musique arabe et maure* (1904-23) was the fruit of a long collaboration between Yafil, the Jewish-Algerian musician who collected some of the tunes and published the volumes, and Rouanet, the French director of an Algerian music school who ódirectedô his work, also collected tunes, transcribed them, and wrote introductory analyses.[39] As with Salvador Daniel, the modes were crucial to Rouanet, the pieces possibly chosen to illustrate them. Like Laffage, Rouanet reduced the role of the accompaniment to doubling at the octave, albeit not always with the same rhythm. This unfortunately results in frequent dissonances caused by passing tones (such as in the accompaniment of Example 5).


**Figure 3:** Laffage, *Musique Arabe*

Also important, perhaps inspired by Salvador Danielôs use in his original transcriptions of Kabyle songs (Daniel 1879, nos 3-5, 8,10,12-14). Rouanet added two separate staves below those of the piano to indicate the órhythmic accompanimentô of the original and explanatory notes for each transcription, practices Chottin and Erlanger later repeated. All titles either point to the




**Example 5:** ôTouchiat Remel MaiaôfromRouanet and Yafil, *Répertoire de musique arabe et maure*

mode and genre or are given in Arabic, as are the words for the vocal works in the collection, the French translations reproduced separately from the score. In the 1930s, attempts to reproduce performances more accurately led to additional innovations. Recognizing the importance of dance for the Chleuh, Chottin added feet patterns and choreographic indications along with photos and notes on instrumental tunings. In his *Mélodies Tunisiennes* (1937), borrowing a notation developed by Philippe Stern at the Musée Guimet, Baron dôErlanger added timbral indications (e.g., signs indicating guttural, intense, sombre, brilliant, vibrating, closed mouth, etc.).

Documenting what they found, these transcriptions include a range of genres, from serious to light, old to contemporary, classical to popular, ôhispanoô to ónègre,ô although not without communicating a sense of hierarchy among them. Significantly, the music ethnologists proposed categories to classify their knowledge, categories heavily influenced by binary oppositions dominating discourse in the metropole: urban and rural, serious and popular, private and public, *les élites* and *le peuple*, as if distinct entities. Laffage, who eschewed categorization, included some popular music, but ignored distinctions pointed out by later scholars: that Tunisian music was largely performed by ódilettantes musmulmanes et professionnels israélitesô, the first devoted to óla musique arabo-andalouseô and the second to óchanson populaireô.[40] Rouanet, working in Algeria, concentrated on binary divisions within urban music, which he also categorized as either ómusique andalouseô or ópopulaireô and performed by men or women. Perhaps in response to Lyauteyôs need to see urban Arabs and rural Berbers as distinct in his strategy to divide and conquer Morocco (Irbouh 2001), Chottin insisted instead on the stark divisions between urban and rural music, the result of ódeux civilizationsô. After identifying a órhythmic phaseô of music (rural Berber) and a ómelodic phaseô (urban Andalusian), Chottin devoted his first volume of *Corpus de la musique marocaine to* Andalusian music ï performed indoors, in private, and by highly trained musicians ï and his second to Chleuh Berber music ï older, more varied, performed outdoors, in public, and accompanied by dance.[41] Later, like Rouanet, he too found it necessary to examine urban music in two categories, classical and popular music.[42]

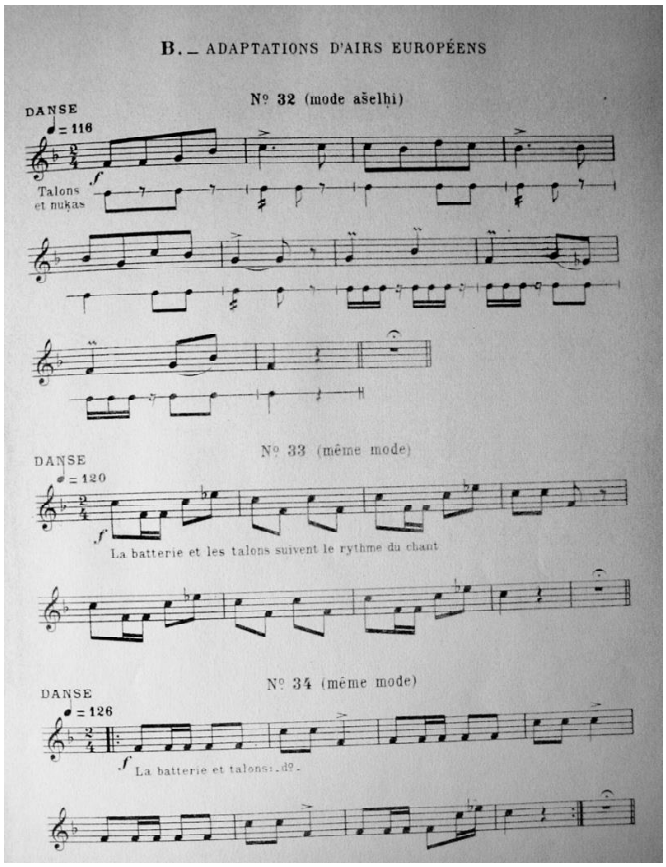
Erlanger presented his collection of Tunisian melodies based on purported age. While Laffage included one example of ómusique des nègresô in his Tripoli volume, Erlangerôs *Mélodies tunisiennes* begins with a óchant nègreô performed by Nigerian Haoussas, as if it is an example of Tunisiaôs most primitive music, although with two parts in counterpoint. Then come four examples of ómusique arabo-berbèreô, four from the ótradition andalouseô, music by various confréries, and finally an óair tripolitainô. Harking back to Salvador Daniel, he even claimed that one of his óarabo-berbèreô melodies came from the troubadour tradition. Erlangerôs categories thus suggest not only certain racial stereotypes but also a concept of musical evolution. At the same time, Erlanger acknowledges the diverse geographical origins and religious associations of music in contemporary Tunisia.

Largely left out of these categories except as a form of urban popular music, the most problematic music these music ethnologists encountered resulted from mixing, which Prosper Ricard called óbrassageô (Ricard n.d.).[43] Laffageôs Tripoli collection includes Egyptian, Syrian, and mostly Turkish

music. But performances he heard by Turkish military bands, conducted by an Italian, were dominated by Italian music. Although France had given Italy the right to pursue its interests in Tripoli since 1902 in return for Franceôs free hand in Morocco, Laffage bemoaned, ódans tous les pays de lôOrient, [la musique] sôitalianise, et les principaux hymnes, le turc, le tunisien, lôégyptien, et dôautres hymnes encore ont été écrits par des compositeurs italiensô. Whether expressing patriotic envy or sympathy towards the Turks, Laffage could point to performer indifference towards Italian music and the very small public for it. Yet, although he suggested that it would be better to órenoncer à toutes participations ou introductions, si effacées soient-elles, de la musique européenneô, Laffage composed his own march for the 57th Turkish Infantry, dedicated to the Redjeb-Pacha. Other Tunisians, however, were more receptive to external influences, including the Conseil municipal of Tunis, perhaps because of its Arab members and president Mohamed Sadok Ghileb. In 1907-08, pushed by a socialist journalist from Oran and in hopes of stimulating the creation of local Arab theatre, they invited the first Egyptian theatrical group to perform in Tunis.[44]

In Algeria, Rouanet was much more anxious about hybridity, his attitudes echoing the contemporary preoccupation throughout the French empire with epidemics and contagion. In his three small collections of *zendani*, popular songs from Algiers (nos 15, 18, 21), Rouanet bemoans European influence on this genre which he places ódans la catégorie la plus inférieure du répertoireô. If *zendani* were scorned by male artists who played their *noubas* in private, if they ócourent les ruesô, and were performed by women, children, and óla multiplicité des interprètes maladroitsô, they were also susceptible to all kinds of óaltérations provenant des contacts européensô.[45] Still, Rouanet argued that these short melodies deserved to be protected from óles déformations que ne tarderaient pas à leur imposer la pénétration de la musique européenneô, as if the more they became Europeanized, the more these influences would take root in the culture and might contaminate Arab classical music. When one looks closer in his *recueils*, however, one finds not European-influenced genres, but music from the rest of the Arabic world. Included are a ózendani moderneô (a satirical song of Algerian Jews), a Spanish melody, and an Egyptian dance. Salvador Daniel had noted how quickly African melodies themselves could change in migrating from Tunisia to Algeria, but Rouanet was more distressed about the increasing ógoût du chromaticismeô infiltrating from Turkey, óamolissant la rudesse primitiveô[46] of Algerian music. In other words, it was important to protect Algerian music from any kind of hybridity.

Twenty years later in Morocco, A. Gastoué pointed out that, ódes Marocains musiciens les plus appreciés remplacent [le 3/4 de ton] sans scrupule par la touche la plus voisine du piano ou de lôharmoniumô (Gastoué 1931). But in his *Corpus*, vol. 2, Chottin transcribed three óadaptations dôairs européensô recorded for Odéon that tell another story (Example 6).




**Example 6:** Chottin, *Corpus de la musique marocaine*, Vol. 2

Fascinating examples of musical hybridity from the native perspective, these recordings, based on ósonneriesô, suggest that óEuropean musicô meant not just waltzes and mazurkas, but also western military music. Believing that they show óà quelle point lôéducation antérieure de lôoreille peut, chez les primitifs, devenir exclusive des formes nouvellesô, Chottin interpreted them pejoratively. óCette imitation dôune sonnerie de clairon entendue par Sasbo à

Casablanca montre bien comment lôadaptateur accomode à son oreille les intervalles de quarte juste, de tierce mineure, et de sixte majeure, qui heurtent sans doute trop fort ses habitudesô. In translating this music for the rebab, he pointed to Sasboôs errors in aural judgement: óla quarte du clairon, sol do, est devenue la quinte fa-doô, la tierce majeure do-mi a compensé lôallongement de la tessitura en devenant mineure, do-mi bémol; la sixte majeure du clairon, devant enfin une septième mineure, fa-mi bémolô. His conclusion shows little sympathy for the endeavour: óQuoique lôintention de lôadaptateur ait été de reproduire fidèlement ce quôil entendait, lôallure nouvelle de cette sonnerie, ainsi transposée, nôen est pas moins caricaturale pour nous (emphasis mine), (Chottin 1933). Ironically, these observations could have been made by Africans about westernersô perceptual limitations and about their adaptations of African music for western instruments.

What bothered Ricard more than the easy seductions of European music were the ódôinnombreux airs étrangersô introduced into Morocco from the rest of the Arab world by phonograph recordings, especially the óOrientalô tunes by óturcs, Egyptiens, tunisiens, et algériens, la plupart empreinte dôun modernisme assez vulgaire mais aussi séductive aux Marocainsô (Ricard n.d.). While music ethnologists were stepping up efforts to notate and preserve indigenous music on wax cylinder recordings,[47] Gramophone and Pathé were flooding local markets with commercial recordings ofódes airs bruyants ou curieux, même vulgairesô that put these traditions into jeopardy.[48] In Europe too, folklorists worried about ólôaltération dôun répertoire archaïque par une infiltration urbaine ou suburbaine, la perte dôun caractère dialectal dôun style régional avec le contact avec le style dôune autre régionô, et óla naissance de types mélodiques hybrides par assimilation rapide de la musique artistiqueô heard on recordings (Brailoiu 1931:234). Like Rouanet, the hybridity Ricard saw with the most potential to lead Moroccans to ónégliger ou travestir leur musique propre, même à leur fausser le goûtô (Ricard n.d.) was that which might result from ómélangeô with music from other parts of the Arab world, significant enough for him to consider it a third category of Moroccan music.

With óle patrimoine local grandement menacéô by hybridity (ibid.), the French had a pretext for getting involved, as if African traditions needed French protection. For Rouanet, Yafil, Chottin, and Erlanger, what was important was not just notating indigenous melodies óavec la plus rigoureuse exactitudeô et óun scrupule formel de ne rien changer aux mélodies exécutées devant nous et de les noter sans la plus petite modificationô.[49] It was finding ódes mélodies et les rythmes avant quôils ne sôaltèrent au contact dôinfluences étrangèresô (Chottin 1928:16). Like in France where the notes of a folksong were understood, especially by Ancien Régime sympathizers, as the remnants

of resistance to outside influences and the impact of urban civilization-pointing to a time before layers of assimilation and hybridization -this meant the oldest music they could find. Just as those seeking to understand French racial origins looked in their mountains for the ópure and most completeô version of certain French *chansons populaires*,[50] these collectors sought to find, fix, and reproduce ódes mélodies typiques de leur race et de leur religionô[51] that could serve as models for African musicians in the future.

From this perspective, Rouanet, Yafil, Chottin, and Erlanger concurred in the need to collect, first and foremost, music the medieval Moors brought from Andalusia, Spain. They referred to it as ómusique arabe ancienneô, ómusique arabe classiqueô, and óune musique officielle, faite pour les cours et les palaisô, introduced by Spanish émigrés from the óintellectual classô (Rouanet 1904 and 1906:128, Ricard n.d., Erlanger 1917:67, Chottin 1928). This music expressed values the French wished to support: óle respect quasi-religieux de la tradition, la soumission aux règles reçues des anciens, la défiance à lôégard de toute innovation.[52] French music ethnologists hoped not only to produce óune sorte de compendium dôune musique restée immuable depuis le VII[e] siècle,ô but also to ósauver dôun oubli définitif les traditions dôart qui avaient créé tant de chefs dôî uvresô.[53]

The genre, its repertoire, and its future were perceived at risk for a number of reasons. Few musicians knew Arab classical music, which had been constantly ómenacé par lôassimilation et le progrèsô(Rouanet 1905:327).Some musicians even confused one mode for another. Old masters had not wanted to write down their music or share their knowledge with the young, perhaps because of not wanting óprofanation par les infidèlesô. While popular genres were thriving in North Africa, the classical tradition was dying out for lack of a new generation of practitioners. Whether this was reminiscent of Franceôs depopulation problems or traditions threatened with extinction at the end of French monarchy, French administrations understood it as a call for action.

What was to be done? Music ethnologists first sought out the finest musicians available, sometimes identified by their peers, especially those whose respect for tradition was such that they would be óincapable dôy changer une seule noteô.[54] At least some of their sources were acknowledged- for Rouanet, Yafilôs teacher, M. Sfindja óqui lui seul sonnait 1,000 mélodies, paroles et musiqueô[55] and Yafilôs Jewish collaborator, Laho Seror; for Chottin, the help of Si Omar Jaidi for Vol. 1 and Rais Mohammed Sasbou, director of the Chleuh troop, for Vol. 2. Then they sought to notate not the improvisatory creativity of individual artists, but the óracine [el-asl] du chantô,óla mélodie fondamentale dépouillée de ses ornements les plus souvent parasitesô.[56] If the notion of fixing these melodies might seem antithetical to the oral tradition

and Arab performance practice, in their defence both Rouanet and Chottin pointed out that the oral tradition itself has ôoublisô, ôaltérationsô and ôimmanquables défaillancesô.[57] Whether their informants were responding to what they were asked or helping to shape their questionersô perspectives and conclusions, we will never know. But what is clear is that, just like ôpure high Javanese cultureô was the product of the ôjoint efforts of Dutch Javanologists and conservative native elitesô (Florida 1995 in Cooper and Stoler 1997:9), the collection, transcription, and preservation of ôles seules vestigesô of the ôgrandeur artistiqueô of the Muslim people[58] involved both French music scholars and conservative masters of the classical tradition who shared belief in the importance of this repertoire.

The history of what followed is well known. These scores were marketed and sold all over Europe and indigenous musicians got increasingly involved in transcription projects, sometimes making similar compromises.[59] Yafil went on to train the famous tenor Bachetarzi, form an ensemble of indigenous musicians, El Moutribia, and bring his group to Paris to perform and record this music in the 1920s (for other similar stories see Miliani 2008:91-99). Arab music schools were started, often with French backing. In 1932, Ricard, director of the Service des Arts Indigènes who directed Chottinôs work, claimed not only that the ôprospéritéô of such artistic groups was ôune conséquence de notre présence au Marocô, but also that the French had contributed ôdans une large mesure, au dévelopement de lôArt musical Chleuh et de ses ressourcesô Ricard n.d.). Moreover, by 1939, French vanity and ambitions went so far that Chottin felt they could determine what the future would need from the past: ônous tenterons de prévoir quelle pourrait être lôévolution future de cet art et dans quel sens doit sôexercer lôaction officielle en vue de sauvegarder ses caractères distinctifs et sa valeur culturelleô (Chottin 1939:54). That some master musicians may have conceived the Arab classical tradition differently or thrived, built a following, and performed widely in North Africa without any contact with the French was not part of their story.

## Conclusion

Musical hybridity, at best, was a forum for encountering the Other, a space for examining and pushing on the boundaries between European and African musical cultures, for settler and indigenous cultural creativity. But, as I have suggested, far more was at stake in the colonial context. If hybridity before 1900 may have expressed curiosity, an imagination of coexistence, or the utopia of assimilation, all from the French perspective, the shift in colonial policy from assimilation to association and early independence movements after 1900 brought anxiety. Musical hybridity became a highly contentious and politicized genre. Even though westerners had been an integral part of

North Africa since the Christians arrived and, with colonization, settlers built theatres that natives eventually attended and concert organizations in which they participated, and if it would have been difficult for locals to escape hearing western music in city parks and on July 14 festivities, the notion of indigenous music changing as a result of contact with outside influences was troubling. The collection, notation, and preservation of local music was meant not only to document racial distinctions ï European vs. African, Arab vs. Berber ï but also to stem the spread of modernity. From Salvador Daniel to Chottin and Erlanger, these music ethnologists may have contributed to local pride, but they also reinforced, or arguably helped construct, musical identities that were firmly linked to the distant past, not the modern present. Unable to inhibit the flow of change stimulated by widely available recordings, they used the gravitas of their projects to deny the kind of progress brought by these new media, except when their use reinforced French agendas.

Although never explicitly articulated, two political goals, I would argue, drove both the twentieth century resistance to musical hybridity in the French colonies and the focus on locating and transcribing indigenous music, going well beyond the nineteenth century preoccupation with studying music for what one could learn about racial categories and intercultural contact. The French needed to forge traditions that would unify their colonies both from without and from within. To the extent that Andalusian emigrants settled all over North Africa, their *musique savante*, still practiced in urban centres from Morocco to Tunisia, was not only a high art tradition. It was also one that reminded North Africans of what they shared, even if it took different local forms ï Rouanet points out, for example, that indigenous musicians in Tlemcen played ótouchiat inconnues à Algerô.[60] It is perhaps no coincidence that Rouanet and Yafil began their project to collect and preserve Andalusian music during the French attempt to take over Morocco ï between the secret agreements with Spain and Britain in 1904, the Moroccan ethnic rebellions of 1907 that led to French occupation and the Treaty of Fez in 1912. If Andalusian music offered a way to conceive of North Africa as a unified region, it was important to include Morocco, óoù les traditions andalouses sont plus vivaces et ont semé des racines plus profondesô than in Algeria (Rouanet 1906:2845). Although their transcriptions included a wider range of traditions, some arguably older, music ethnologists also perhaps valued this tradition because of its association with elites, elites from Spain and later Jewish and African elites, including the Sultanôs court in Morocco. Chottin admitted that his master informer, Si Omar JôAidi, was the personal musician of the Sultan.[61] Was the ethnomusicology part of currying favour with them, or helping to form new elites, connected, if not also indebted, to the French?

With the African empire solidified by the 1930s, the continued anxiety toward hybridity can be explained, perhaps, as a response to the political need for unity within the various colony/protectorates, the continent previously characterized by fluid identities. To emphasize that Chleuh Berbers lived all over Morocco ï implying that their music could serve as a unifying factor within rural Morocco ï Ricard reproduced the touring schedule of a Chleuh ensemble that in 31 months performed in 26 Moroccan towns and villages (1928-1931).[62] Unlike urban *musique savante*, the point was not that rural *musique populaire* was fixed, but rather that it expressed a shared, ongoing taste and could assimilate and be assimilated throughout the country, as Tiersot had shown for *chansons populaires* in France.[63] With Volume 2 of his *Corpus*, Chottin intended to represent not ó*un monument traditionnel immuable, mais un moment particulier dans la production incessante de lôart musical Chleuhô* (Chottin 1933:25).

All the musicians discussed here were supported by the French government. That Andalusian and Berber musical traditions, far more than any others, were so valorised that a distinguished French aristocrat, the Baron dôErlanger, in Tunisia and a branch of the Direction générale de lôInstruction publique, des beaux-arts, et des antiquités in Morocco both commissioned and funded its transcription into western notation must have sent a signal to local musicians: what interested those with money and power were ópureô traditions, not hybrids ócontaminatedô by outside influences. Music ethnologists and their collaborators began a process that contemporary African scholars, musicians, and their promoters have continued to build on.[64] If there has been little deconstruction of the mythologies and their meaning, perhaps it is for similar reasons of regional and internal identity. In the post-colonial world, equally popular experiments in hybridity, like Afropop, may be again blurring identities, particularly between classical and popular, óNorthô and óSouth.ô This music too has a substantial following and has made substantial contributions to local pride and emerging economies in North Africa.

## Notes

1. In his *Histoire générale de la musique depuis les temps les plus anciens jusquôà nos jours*, 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1869), i1 and 11, F-J. Fétis claimed that hearing the music of a people makes it easy to judge their intelligence as well as their morals, passions, and other dispositions.
2. E.g. La Société philharmonique arabe de Sousse, fd. 1900.
3. In his ó*The Postcolonial and the Postmodern*,ô in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), Homi K. Bhabha notes, ó*The transnational dimension of cultural transformation ï migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation - makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural[ised], unifying discourse*

of ónation,ô ópeoples,ô or authentic ófolkô tradition, those embedded myths of cultureôs particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of traditionô (p. 172).

4. Similarly, in La *Musique et les musiciens français* (Paris: Delagrave, 1895) Albert Lavignac defines the beautiful in music as óresiding in the felicitous harmony of proportionsô (p. 441).
5. European descendants in Algeria became naturalized French in 1889. See Faidherbe and Topinard, óInstructions sur lôAnthropologie de lôAlgérie,ô *Bulletin de la Société de lôAnthropologie de Paris*, 8 (1873), pp. 603-659, discussed in Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities; Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London: Tauris, 1995), pp. 157, 196-197, 202, 209-210. In *De la Colonisation*, Leroy-Beaulieu also mentions other Europeans in Algeria as óuseful auxiliariesô and those most capable of assimilating with the French (pp. 330-31, 336).
6. In his *Colonialist Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Robert Young notes that this was the ódominant view from the 1850s to the 1930sô (p. 18).
7. Because such discourses can also be ódriving forces in history, and not merely representations,ô as Tzvetan Todorov argues in *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), xiii, these concerns had larger implications which music helped to illuminate. See Pasler, óTheorizing Raceô and óThe Utility of Musical Instruments in the Racial and Colonial Agendas of Late Nineteenth-Century France,ô *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* Vol. 129, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 24-7.
8. Daniel, F.S., 1879: 4. In this, he disagreed with G. A. Villoteau who, in his *De lôétat actuel de lôart musical en Egypte* (Paris: Imp. Impériale, 1812), attributed óles petits intervallesô in Arab music to a ócorruption ou décadenceô of ancient Greek music. Weckerkin, in óLecture sur la Musique des Arabes,ô (26 March 1864), *Bulletins de la Société des Compositeurs de musique* (1864) and Farmer, in óNotes on Arab Musicôin *The Music and Musical Instrumentsof the Arabs*, 204-05, concurred that Villoteau may have been confused by the nasal style of Arabic singing and performances in which singers glided from one note to the next.
9. Farmerôs óMemoir,ô in *The Music and Musical Instrumentsof the Arabs* (19, 22), discusses Danielôs views about óla musique socialeô and his music criticism in leftist newspapers, *La Marseillaise* beginning in 1869 and *Lôhomme* in 1870-71.
10. Daniel, *Musique arabe*, 58. Daniel had personal reasons to empathize with resistance. According to Henry Farmer inóMemoir,ô Danielôs father, a nobleman, óhad his property and estates confiscatedô for ósupporting the Carlist rebellion of 1830,ô after which he fled to France.
11. Daniel, *Musique arabe*, page before the title. In his óMemoir,ô Farmer notes that the Comte sent Daniel 1000 francs (p. 10).
12. Seeó Les Chants de la race cabirique ou galliqueô, Salvador Danielôs lecture to the Société des Compositeurs in Paris on 39 May 1868, published in *Bulletins de la Société des Compositeurs de musique* (1868): pp. 141-156, especially 155; Paul Lacome, óLes Chants de la race cabirique ou gallique dôaprès Salvador Danielô, *Revue et gazette musicale* (14 November 1880): p. 363, and Lacome, óLes Chants de la race cabirique ou gallique dôaprès Salvador Daniel,ô *Revue et gazette musicale* (5 December 1880): p.

387. In ónotice sur la musique Kabyle,ô appended to *La Musique arabe*, Daniel also refers to a mode in Kabyle music that resembled the Greek Lydian without its second note (pp. 161-62).

13. For example, in his *Corpus*, vol. 1, Chottin notes that the correct pitch was between B flat and B natural, but that his informant preferred for him to indicate B flat (p. 6).

14. The exception being the Andalusian song, óLôAnge du désert.ôCf. *chansons populaires* reproduced and discussed in my óRace and Nation.ô

15. For example:
    - ï in óYaminaôG major- $D^7$ chords repeat five times before variation;
    - ï in óZohraô the same four-measure pattern centering on E minor repeats three times before a variant;
    - ï in óMa Gazelleôthe harmony remains static on A major five of every six measures; and
    - ï in óKlaa Beni Abbesôthe accompaniment consists of G major arpeggios alternating with $D^7$ chords.

16. In ónotice sur la musique Kabyle,ô Daniel notes that the piano accompaniment in his *Album de chansons arabes, mauresques, et kabyles* (Paris: Richault, s.d.)óreproduit le rythme des tambourdô (p. 163).

17. At the end of óCancion morisca,ôthe first North African song (from Tunis) he published in Spain (1858), Daniel explained that to reproduce Arab rhythms, the pianist should emphasize the sforzando accents, creating a rhythmic effect of 3+ 3+ 2.

18. Ms. 1730, Département de musique, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Daniel considered the flute and the tambour the basics of the Arab popular orchestra (*Musique Arabe*, p. 68).

19. This song is unusual in its written-out variants of the Arabic original melody. Daniel published most of his songs as if strophic, that is, assuming identical music for each stanza and ignoring ornamental variants that would have characterized performances.

20. V. Faneau, óLe Chant de la meule,ô*La Science sociale* (1870): p. 63. He concludes, óNul espoir pour vous, esclaves en Barbarie, et salariés en civilisationé .ô

21. Yafil was Rouanetôs collaborator.

22. See above and Salvador Daniel, *A propos de chansons: Le Personnage régnant. Première lettre à Mlle Thérésa de lôAlcazar* (Paris: Noirot, 1867) and *A propos de chansons: La Complainte de lôogre. Deuxième lettre à Mlle Thérésa de lôAlcazar* (Paris: Noirot, 1867).

23. Farmer, *Memoir, 20-2*1, It would be fascinating to examine how Salvador Daniel treated Arab tunes and modes in his other music; how in his symphonic suite of Arab dances he negotiated his intense interest in the sound of North African music with the means available to a western orchestra; how in his four *Fantasies arabes* for piano his use of theme and variations may have been influenced by Arabic models; and what his opera would have sounded like - all works mentioned by Farmer but apparently lost.

24. Daniel, whose father was a Spanish organist and composer, had visited Spain, knew its music, and included two Spanish songs on his concert at the Salle Herz in Paris on 14 March 1864. Daniel, *Musique arabe*, 5, 13, 28, 163 and Farmer, óMemoir,ôp. 11.

25. Unfortunately any transcriptions Saint-Saëns made in Algeria are apparently lost.

26. Ralph Locke considers the óRhapsodie mauresqueô the ómost artistically successful evocationô of ónon-Western music-making before Colin McPheeôs gamelan-inspired

*Tabuh-Tabuhan* (1936).ô See his óCutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East,ô*19th-Century Music* (summer 1998): p. 41.

27. From Villoteau to Tiersot, ethnographers had long underlined these similarities, some assuming that French songs had been brought to North Africa by French sailors.
28. Saint-Saëns letter to Jacques Durand (23 March 1891), Bibliothèque Mahler, Paris.
29. Private conversation.
30. In hisóAu sujet de la musique arabe,ô*Revue tunisienne* (1917), Baron dôErlanger disparaged this music, calling itóune musique bâtarde qui nôa pas le caractère dôune science et non plus le charme dôun artô (pp. 91-95).
31. I am grateful to Richard Roberts (Department of History, Stanford University) for directing me to this valuable study.
32. Ironically perhaps, Ranger notes that some of these tunes were so much in the European military band tradition that they were later adopted by the bands of German and British armies. Ibid. p. 43 .This idea of performing the marches of oneôs conqueror to absorb what was powerful in them was also practiced in Paris. Nothing symbolized German musical might, its vitality and virility, more than Wagner. Until his operas were produced in France, most of what the French heard by Wagner was done in orchestral concerts. Marches from *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* were among the most popular excerpts.
33. See for example, *La Dépêche Tunisienne* (1 October 1900) and Georges Froment óLa Politique indigène en Indochineô,*La Revue indigène* (March 1906): p. 57.
34. Erlanger, in óAu sujet de la musique arabeô, suggested that since Arabs óne goûteront jamaisôwestern music, Arab students should be encouraged to study with Arab masters, not western music teachers (p. 95).
35. I am grateful to Anissa Bouayed for bringing my attention to this anecdote.
36. A recent internet blog by a Monsieur Choc, at http://esmma4.pagesperso-orange.fr/kem0805.htm, accessed on 6 November 2010, suggests that not only was óKhadoujahô based on a song of the same name written by an officer of the Chasseurs dôAfrique, Captain Vallabrègue, probably in the caserne Marguerite or a café of the Champ-de-Manoeuvres in Mustapha around 1900; it was also a well-known Arabic air, thanks to its use in a quadrille written by a Zouave who apparently only knew Arabic tunes. Indeed there is a song at the Musée de lôArmée, Paris, with this name and the same text (thanks to Thierry Bouzard for providing me with a copy). But not only is the tonality and accompaniment different, especially with the descending chromatic line in Laffageôs introduction, but also the arabesque of Laffageôs melodic line, as if a variant that evolved over the years. Moreover, the structure, of Valabregueôs song is AABAô A, that of Laffageôs song, ABABCC.
37. It is possible that this decision was inspired by transcriptions made by indigenous arrangers, such as Bouaziz whose transcription for piano of óMélodie arabeô (Algiers, 1902) opens with a free introduction, but for the ómélodie,ô uses octaves doubling the RH in the LH accompaniment.
38. Letter from the Gouverneur général to the Gérant du Consulat général in Tripoli (21 July 1906), and letters from Laffage to the Résident général de la Tunisie (23 June 1906), (3 January 1908), Archives diplomatiques à Nantes. Laffageôs Tripoli volume was recently translated into Arabic and annotated by Mohamed Garfi: Al-mÎ sāqŪ al-

Ẋarabiyyæ: ŪŪuhŪwa uæniyŪuhŪ/ taĀqf AnĭĪnŪh LaffŪỲ; tarỲamæ, ġar^ wa taỲĀqq Mu^ammad al-Qarfq̄(Beyrouth: Dar wa Maktabat Al-Hilal, 2006). The introduction unfairly assumes that Laffageôs work was intended to ósôen servir dans ses propres compositions et dôen fournir aux musicians européens en quête de couleurs exotiques.ô

39. Laffage suggested in a letter to the Résident Général that his cohort in Algeria (probably Rouanet) had received government funding for his órestauration de la musique mahométane.ôSee endnote14.

40. Garfi, *Musique et spectacle*, p. 97. I have here deleted the demeaning manner in which Garfi presents Jewish musicians and their music.

41. The Chleuhs from Sous, chosen for their musical talent and ósouplesse dôassimilation,ô were known for their óisolement pastoral,ô believed to have kept their music vital and closer to ancient Greek customs than the urban music of Algeria. Chottin, *Les Visages*, 4-7; Chottin, *Corpus de musique marocaine*, Vol. 2. *Musique et danses berbères du pays Chleuh* (Paris: Heugel, 1933); and Chottin, *Tableau de la musique marocaine* (Paris: Guethner, 1939), pp. 12, 52.

42. óLa musique classique, dôorigine andalouse, art de cour et art bourgeois, complexe, savant, et raffinéô, and óla musique populaireô,which could be influenced by Andalusian song, Berber music, and/or foreign music, óturque dans la musique de cortège, nègre dans certaines confrériesô. Chottin, *Tableau de la musique marocaine*, p. 107.

43. Note that Ricard was also the editor of *Corpus des tapis marocains* by the same publisher (1923-34).

44. This in turn gave rise to the first Arab theatre in Tunisia. See*La Dépêche tunisienne* (10 February 1907), *Le Courrier de Tunisie* (13 February 1907), press clipping (23 March 1909) from the Archives Nationales de Tunis, and Hamadi Ben Halima, *Un siècle de théâtre arabe en Tunisie (1907-59)* (Tunis: Publications de lôUniversité de Tunis, 1974).

45. See Rouanet, Introductory analysis of no. 21, «3e Recueil dôairs populaires dôAlger,» *Répertoire*.

46. Jules Rouanet, Introductory analysis of no. 8, *Répertoire*.

47. Such as Träger (1903) and Karutz (1906) in Tunisia, Smend in French West Africa (1904), Kramer in Madagascar (1906), and Lachmann (1919) in North Africa. See the collections now in the Berlin Phonogramm Archiv.

48. Ricard, óPréface,ô ii. Ironically Rouanet was later an advisor to Gramophone and some of these music ethnologistsô transcriptions may have been based on wax cylinder recordings. *Annales africaines* (28 December 1907) announced that óMme Rouanet et Yafil recevront une collection de cylindres sur lesquels sont registrés les chants des houris du Paradis de Mahomet (musique arabe).ôBy 1927 Yafil himself claims to have made over two thousand phonograph recordings of indigenous airs, óutilisant heureusement la science occidentale pour sauver les airs millénaires de lôOrient.ô See also Valentin de Saint-Point, writing in *Phénix* (1927). On the recording industry in North Africa, see Ali Jihad Racy, óRecord Industry and Egyptian Traditional Music: 1904-1932ô, *Ethnomusicology* 20,1 (January 1976): pp. 23-48.

49. Jules Rouanet, Introductory analysis of no. 23, *Répertoire.*

50. Chottin, in his óAvertissement,ô *Corpus*, xiv, cites Albert Udry who writes in his*Les Vieilles Chansons patoises de tous les pays de France*, óLes premières civilisations ont

donné naissance à une littérature orale ódifficileô qui sôest longtemps conservée absolument pure. Nul nôavait le droit de la modifierô (13). See also Pasler, óRace and Nation.ô

51. Jules Rouanet, General Introduction, *Répertoire.*
52. Chottin, óAvertissement,ô xiv.
53. Rouanet, General Introduction.
54. Chottin, óAvertissement,ô xii. Although Rouanet gives no names in his general introduction to *Répertoire*, in óEsquisseô (1906) he does mention the old masters and some male and female musicians who still knew this repertoire (141 and 141 n. 1).
55. Chottin, Avertissement, xii, 328. Rouanet also acknowledges the role of two Algerians in collecting or performing the musical excerpts he publishes in his óEsquisse,ô p. 215.
56. Chottin, óAvertissement,ô xiv. See also Rouanet, General Introduction.
57. Chottin, Ibid., xiii; Rouanet, óEsquisse,ô p. 140.
58. Rouanet, General Introduction.
59. In his letter to M. Mahillon (7 July 1908), Laffage explained that he had sent his flyer to all Belgian cities asking for subscribers for *La Musique arabe* and only six had not responded. According to Christian Poche, *La Musique arabo-andalouse* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1995), Ben Smail was the first Moroccan to transcribe *noubas* into western notation.
60. Rouanet, óLa Musique arabe,ô p. 2848. Jonathan Shannon, óPerforming al-Andalus: Mediterranean Soundings from Mashriq to Maghribô,*Journal of American Folklore*, 120, no. 477 (Summer 2007): pp. 308-344, makes a similar argument about shared Andalusian traditions in Syria and Morocco, the result of a tradition that isô one of exile and movementô (p. 312), albeit taking very different musical and poetic forms. He concurs similarly that, õThe evolution of an Andalusian identity through music began in earnest with the efforts of French and other European scholars to document Moroccoôs musical patrimony during the French Protectorate over Morocco from 1912 to 1956. Prior to a 1939 conference on Andalusian music held in Fez, there are no references to the music as óAndalusianô.é in Algeria, however, the term óAndalusianô was applied as early as1904 (Yafil and Rouanet 1905)é . For many of those involved in producing or marketing Andalusian music, the óArabianôaspects of it are downplayed in favour of its associations with Moroccan culture and with Spanish and, by extension, European cultureô (pp. 321, 324). I am grateful to Jihad Racy for pointing me to this article.
61. Chottin, óAvertissement,ô xiii.
62. Ricard, óPréface,ô 14.
63. Tiersotôs last volume of *Mélodies populaires des provinces de France* was published in 1928.
64. For the dominance of the órabo-andalouseô tradition across North Africa today, see the 2010-11 season of the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris.

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*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp. 69-93



# Des cow-boys dans la savane : cinéma et hybridation culturelle en contexte colonial

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## Résumé

Dans les colonies, puis dans les pays indépendants, le cinéma s'offre à la fois comme un vivier d'images dans lequel puiser et comme une scène où se rejouent les relations interpersonnelles. Les images animées permettent d'instaurer un dialogue avec le monde extérieur, d'échanger avec un au-delà inconnu des éléments symboliques qui peuvent être recyclés localement. Circulent des bribes de western, de films hindous, de comédies égyptiennes, etc. et, plus récemment, de productions de Bollywood qui véhiculent chants, attitudes, dialogues dont l'impact reste à mesurer.

## Abstract

In the colonies, and later on in independent countries, a movie theater stands as a bank of images and as a replay scene for interpersonal relationships. Moving pictures help establish a dialogue with the outer world, to interact with the unknown beyond the symbolic elements that can be recycled locally. This is all the more true with the fragments of Western, Indian films, Egyptian comedies that circulate... and more recently Bollywood movies that convey songs, attitudes, dialogues whose impact is yet to be measured.

Le justicier s'avance sous un soleil de plomb. Des cow-boys circulent dans les rues vides, accablés de chaleur ; certains ont une cigarette aux lèvres, d'autres mâchonnent un bâtonnet cure-dent. Musique de circonstance. Les balles sifflent ; une femme passant par hasard par là s'écroule. Son enfant pleure. Nous sommes à Tombouctou, dans un plagiat de western, qu'insère le cinéaste mauritanien Abderrahmane Sissako au milieu du film *Bamako* (2006), à la fois archétype des films à succès en Afrique et symbole de violence arbitraire. *Death in Timbuktu*, film dans le film, dont le titre en anglais s'inscrit à l'écran en lettres gothiques à la manière des films hollywoodiens, joue un double rôle d'intermède et de métaphore.

Il intervient en effet comme le film de la soirée, diffusé sur la chaîne de télévision nationale du Mali, après quelques problèmes techniques dont

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s'excuse, gênée, la présentatrice. Intermède donc : le public fasciné, essentiellement des enfants, suit les faits et gestes des cow-boys. Comme l'un deux, les téléspectateurs rient de la tuerie comme d'une bonne blague : un unique coup part, mais deux morts s'écroulent. Le rire est communicatif, le sens se perd : quel parti prennent les spectateurs ? De quel côté se trouvent les victimes ? Comment déchiffrer le regard ? Cet intermède introduit l'ambiguïté constante de la compréhension du message et de la perception cinématographique.

Mais *Death in Timbuktu* sert aussi de métaphore puisque *Bamako* fait le procès du FMI et de la politique de libéralisme forcené imposée à l'Afrique, politique qui se traduit par des morts et un sentiment d'arbitraire. De manière plus précise, la diffusion du film dans le film intervient après le témoignage du seul survivant d'un groupe de migrants ayant tenté la traversée du Sahara pour rejoindre l'Eldorado occidental.

Pour réaliser ce plagiat de western à l'atmosphère parfaitement reconstituée en moins de 5 minutes, Abderrahmane Sissako a fait appel à de grands acteurs de la scène artistique internationale, dont les noms apparaissent à l'écran comme sur un générique : le cinéaste palestinien Elia Suleiman, l'acteur américain et co-producteur du film Danny Glover, le réalisateur et acteur congolais Zeka Laplaine, le cinéaste français Jean-Henri Roger … Francophones et anglophones à l'écran, ils sont représentatifs à la fois de la mondialisation du 7e art et de l'hybridation que concrétise le cinéma, produit culturel qui intègre et recycle des éléments venant d'horizons divers.

Ce détour par *Bamako* paraît tout indiqué pour introduire une réflexion sur les films comme véhicule d'hybridité culturelle, comme ressource créative et comme outil de modernité. Le western, genre populaire de la génération du cinéaste, nous servira de fil conducteur.

Ce n'est pas un hasard si Abderrahmane Sissako choisit un western comme archétype du film diffusé en Afrique et comme mode d'expression. Ce genre filmique s'est rapidement imposé sur les écrans coloniaux en Afrique et a poursuivi sa carrière après les indépendances. Son apogée suit celle de sa production (années 1930/1950) et son déclin illustre le succès croissant d'autres types de film en Afrique (« hindou », karaté). Ainsi que l'exprime Abderrahmane Sissako : « j'aime les westerns : c'est une preuve que *Bamako* est un vrai film de cinéma, pas seulement une œuvre militante de dénonciation »[1].

Peut-on envisager le western comme métaphore du cinéma aux colonies ? Le film hollywoodien comme marque d'acculturation universelle ? La situation s'avère plus complexe dans le double contexte de diffusion d'une technologie occidentale et de domination culturelle. Si de nombreuses études ont montré le succès de ce genre cinématographique ainsi que l'impact profond qu'il eut

sur des générations de jeunes spectateurs essentiellement masculins, les tendances actuelles de l'historiographie insistent sur la diversité des perceptions et des interprétations selon les contextes culturels ambiants. C'est bien la question de la réception des films, de leur impact ou de leur usage local qui est centrale ici et non celle de leur production, car les films projetés en Afrique sont étrangers au continent, à l'exception de l'Egypte, jusqu'à la fin des années 1950.[2] L'hybridité est d'abord dans le regard, tout film étant perçu en situation, à chaque fois individualisée et contextualisée. L'hybridité est aussi dans l'expérience, le vécu de la séance cinématographique. Finalement, l'hybridité est exprimée par les diverses productions culturelles qui en découlent (mentales, matérielles).

On peut aisément distinguer divers niveaux ou étapes d'analyse, généralement imbriqués :

- la question de l'interprétation, de la traduction du sens en fonction des données culturelles personnelles, des capacités linguistiques, de la maîtrise des connaissances du monde extérieur ;
- la question de l'accessibilité des salles, de la réaction des spectateurs et du dialogue par écran et images interposés ;
- la question de la façon dont les images étrangères, américaines, européennes puis asiatiques, circulant en Afrique, contribuent à l'élaboration culturelle locale au sens large par l'intégration d'éléments tirés des films et injectés dans un autre contexte.

La réflexion qui suit tire ses exemples de pays divers, notamment francophones, selon la richesse des sources. Celles-ci ne permettent pas d'aborder toutes les questions. Les documents officiels donnent des informations sur la législation, le fonctionnement des commissions de contrôle (listes de films autorisés ou censurés accompagnées parfois d'un argumentaire explicatif) et la surveillance des salles. Les témoignages écrits (mémoires ou romans) de même que la presse ou les enquêtes orales permettent d'appréhender certaines visions des spectateurs et des acteurs locaux, issus notamment des élites. L'accent est mis sur les années 1950 qui voient l'essor du cinéma, la croissance rapide des publics et des salles, même si les spectateurs restent majoritairement urbains.[3] Ceci est une constante jusqu'à nos jours, comme l'exprime le réalisateur sud-africain Darrel Roodt à propos de *UCarmen eKhayelitsha* : « Les gens qui sont allés le voir sont plutôt issus de la classe moyenne. Mais le public que je vise, les gens des townships ou ceux de la campagne n'ont pas l'occasion d'aller au cinéma. Il y a peu ou pas de salles dans les quartiers noirs ».[4]

Par ailleurs, en choisissant le western, je me concentre sur les films de fiction et non les documentaires, fréquemment diffusés dans les circuits gouvernementaux ou para-étatiques (centres culturels, ciné-bus…).

Après avoir interrogé la notion de réception, ce qui suppose une certaine connaissance des principes régissant la programmation, l'article met les westerns au cœur de l'analyse. Ceci permet d'en montrer la prégnance auprès d'un public d'adolescents et de jeunes hommes qui y trouvent à la fois un répertoire de comportements ou de choix vestimentaires et une grille d'interprétation du monde, voire des outils de modernité. Le cinéma sert ainsi de véhicule à des processus de création culturelle, puisant à des registres divers.

## L'hybridité est dans le regard : les films et leur réception

Abordons d'emblée la question de l'hybridité. Ce terme est pris ici comme synonyme de métissage, paradigme en vogue auparavant pour désigner des processus puisant à plusieurs registres afin de produire des éléments (mentaux, matériels, comportementaux) dotés de leur originalité propre.

Hybridité a succédé à métissage, à la connotation certainement trop directement biologique, tout en renvoyant à un processus similaire, celui de mélange, de *melting pot* ou de fusion d'éléments de différentes origines (Amselle 1990). Il se situe aux antipodes des notions de pureté (de la 'race', des cultures), d'homogénéité, de fixité. Une autre vision du monde sous-tend par conséquent cette perspective qui renouvelle l'analyse de la mondialisation comme processus à sens multiple, sortant d'un européocentrisme implicite. L'élément approprié agit en retour, de manière plus ou moins perceptible ou immédiate.

On peut par ailleurs aisément postuler que tout processus créatif est en lui-même, intrinsèquement, un phénomène hybride, puisant son inspiration, implicitement ou explicitement, à plusieurs sources, indigènes et allogènes, en constant renouvellement selon des intensités ou des rythmes différents.

Le cinéma, qui se diffuse rapidement dans les villes africaines, ne fait pas rupture dans ce processus, mais il contribue à élargir visiblement la gamme des références, des images, des idées … en ouvrant à des horizons lointains et généralement étrangers. Puisque les images sont des éléments qui forgent les identités, elles introduisent des différences entre les populations en fonction de la hiérarchie des salles, des publics et donc de l'accès aux outils culturels : entre les exclusivités des centre-villes et les vieux films déjà amortis des banlieues, entre les films d'art et d'essai et les séries B … Ceci suppose de connaître les images disponibles, c'est-à-dire les principes de la programmation.

### *Une programmation arbitraire*

Les projections cinématographiques trouvent leur origine dans l'initiative d'entrepreneurs privés, souvent étrangers (Européens, Libanais, Indiens), parfois Africains.[5] Ces individus décident de la programmation, selon les contraintes du marché et leurs propres impératifs. Peu à peu, des circuits de distribution s'organisent et dominent le marché, à partir de la fin de l'entre-deux-guerres. Les deux compagnies sont alors la COMACICO (Compagnie Marocaine de Cinéma Commercial) et la SECMA (Société d'Exploitation Cinématographique Africaine).

Les autorités coloniales s'efforcent d'orienter le choix des films par le biais de la censure en édictant des mesures d'interdiction totale ou des coupures. Le processus de sélection (et de censure préalable) s'opère en fait essentiellement à l'amont et le fonctionnement des commissions de contrôle (fédérale ou territoriale) reste aléatoire. Les élites religieuses (missions étrangères, personnalités locales)[6] ou laïques font aussi entendre leur voix, parfois en opposition, souvent en accord avec les instances gouvernementales, car elles sont soucieuses du même contrôle de la jeunesse.

Il faut préciser d'emblée qu'à l'exception du Congo belge[7] et de l'Afrique australe, l'accès aux salles est soumis à des critères financiers et sociaux et non statutaires ou raciaux. Les commissions de contrôle évoquent à plusieurs reprises leur perplexité face à cette situation où les films sont potentiellement visibles aussi bien par la bourgeoisie blanche que le moindre portefaix. Bien sûr, la géographie des salles de cinéma et des pratiques de la ville coloniale relativise fort la possibilité pour tout colonisé de voir tout film.

Dans ces conditions et sans en faire une analyse détaillée, on peut évoquer la programmation pour envisager les notions de réception et d'usage d'éléments filmiques en dissociant deux aspects : quels sont les films offerts sur les écrans (quel choix possible pour les spectateurs virtuels) et quels sont les choix faits (comment se marquent les préférences). Autrement dit, de quelle marge de manœuvre disposent les amateurs de cinéma.

De nombreuses sources, dont certaines émanant des autorités coloniales elles-mêmes, mentionnent la mauvaise qualité des films diffusés. Se pro-nonçant pour l'ouverture d'un second cinéma à Niamey en 1950, le gouverneur du Niger insiste sur les conséquences du monopole des exploitants de salles : « Le contrôle de la censure cinématographique n'est que négatif, il ne peut donc suppléer à une carence de la qualité des spectacles, et c'est la concurrence seule qui permettra un relèvement de leur niveau intellectuel et moral ».[8]

Georges Balandier (1985:256) résume cette idée en soulignant les déficiences de la programmation dans le Brazzaville des années 1950 et donc la difficulté de raisonner en termes de réel choix : « A notre sens, il y a là une production présentée en 'vrac' qui s'adresse à un public dont les goûts restent

peu exigeants. On ne peut cependant mettre en doute que ce public soit capable de discrimination et qu'il réalise un choix fondé sur des critères particuliers ».

Il en va toujours de même dans les années 1970 au Mali. Pierre Haffner (1978:40) indique ainsi qu'on ne peut guère partir d'une étude de la programmation pour analyser les préférences du public : « …il faut tenir compte des exigences de la distribution plus que des modes ou des goûts. »[9] Les distributeurs mettent en avant des critères de rentabilité (ils privilégient donc les vieux films à bas coût et facilement accessibles), la peur de prendre des risques par rapport à la censure coloniale, mais aussi les préjugés par rapport aux attentes du public africain qu'on suppose « primaire », sans bien sûr que des études précises de marché aient été faites. Ce raisonnement est généralisé et le western y trouve sa place : « … for pure entertainment the native must be treated as we treat a ten-year-old white child, i.e. that he must be shown films of action of the Western type »[10], affirme Oliver Bell, membre fondateur du *British Film Institute.*

La programmation reflète cette stratégie, avec quelques variantes régionales.[11] Ce qui domine à l'écran ne renvoie donc pas forcément aux films à succès ou aux préférences du public, mais contribue à former son goût.

La deuxième limite à la notion de choix est le fait que, dans bien des cas, il n'existe qu'une seule salle dans la ville ou un quartier donné, ce qui rend l'idée même de préférence problématique. Comme ailleurs, en Europe notamment, on va AU cinéma, divertissement global, et non voir UN film spécifique, que ce soit en Afrique occidentale ou orientale.

Ainsi les jeunes adeptes de western de Mamou (Guinée) sont-ils souvent frustrés :

« • Qu'y a-t-il aujourd'hui ?

- Un film d'amour ! Le vieux Seïny-Bôwal a peut-être l'intention de nous châtier.
- Wallâhi ! Il y a des semaines qu'ils n'ont pas passé un seul film valable… Je vais finir par brûler le cinéma ! » (Monénembo 1997:34).

Cette contrainte s'atténue avec le temps et la diversification des salles qui changent régulièrement leur programme ; les films ne restent à l'affiche que quelques jours pour satisfaire un vivier de spectateurs limité. Les pratiques se modifient donc peu à peu et les cinéphiles peuvent, dans une certaine mesure, choisir leur film. Pour faire connaître le film du jour, les exploitants posent des affiches devant les cinémas, aux carrefours ou dans des lieux publics comme la Grande Poste à Bamako qui voit affluer les curieux à l'heure de midi (Haffner 1978:157). La presse sert aussi de moyen d'information, mais cela ne concerne qu'une minorité de lettrés.

Au final donc, des films souvent vieux et des copies parfois en mauvais état, une rotation rapide des films (dont certains repassent régulièrement), un choix privilégiant les films d'action (western, épopée…) ou les films policiers, des films produits par des mondes lointains, en grande majorité occidentaux.

***La réception : un processus complexe***

Que voit-on lorsque défilent des images provenant de registres culturels totalement étrangers ? Quelle perception a-t-on en fonction de sa formation et de sa culture mais aussi de ses attentes ?

Les études contemporaines se sont éloignées de l'analyse théorique désincarnée des films (telle qu'elle était à l'honneur dans les années 1960) pour se pencher sur les films en situation et mettre en avant la réception des films. Il n'y a de film que regardé par un individu dans un contexte donné (culturel, matériel) et donc autant de visions de films que de projections vécues et intériorisées. Ceci n'est propre ni à l'Afrique, ni au contexte colonial. La multiplicité des expériences est amplifiée par celle des vécus cinématographiques concrets, actes partagés, se déroulant le plus souvent dans les villes africaines sous les étoiles que dans une salle couverte, assis sur un banc inconfortable plutôt que dans un moelleux fauteuil, le son du film étant souvent couvert par les commentaires bruyants des spectateurs ou les bruits du dehors.[12]

La prise en compte de ces éléments remet en perspective les paradigmes antérieurs d'acculturation ou d'aliénation culturelle en mettant l'accent sur la diversité des expériences et des « traductions » personnelles ou collectives. Cette approche se situe également dans la lignée des interrogations sur la marge de manœuvre des colonisés ou des citoyens en général, de leur *agency*. Le rôle du cinéma comme véhicule culturel se trouve reconsidéré sous le double renouvellement de l'historiographie de la colonisation et du cinéma. Par conséquent, ce qu'un individu retire des images dépend de nombreux facteurs.

On saisit vite l'impact de cette approche pour le cinéma en situation coloniale, vu que les films diffusés sont en majorité occidentaux jusqu'aux années 1950 où apparaissent sur les écrans de grands concurrents, les films dits « arabes », majoritairement égyptiens, et indiens. L'accent mis sur la réception éclaire différemment les théories de la domination culturelle et de l'impérialisme américain. Celles-ci, prégnantes tout autant dans les discours nationalistes des années 1950/70 que dans les courants antiaméricanistes en Europe (de la gauche ou de l'extrême droite), minimisent la capacité de distance du spectateur, le rôle de la distanciation par le rire ou les éclats de voix, mais aussi les qualités intrinsèques d'un regard informé par des références localisées.

Il faut par conséquent dépasser la simple présomption logique (l'hégémonie commerciale entraînerait *de facto* la domination idéologique) et s'interroger sur les modalités multiples de réception et d'interprétation des images en fonction de la culture et de la situation des publics ou des spectateurs en tant qu'individus dans la société (genre, classe, rang…). Il importe donc d'essayer de comprendre comment un film est vu différemment selon le bagage culturel du récepteur et comment les interactions jouent entre les images à l'écran (visuel) et les sens (véhiculé, tiré) et sa propre culture.

Cette analyse fonctionne à diverses échelles. Fabrice Montebello (2005:XII) suggère ainsi de « faire une histoire nationale du cinéma mondial » qui insisterait sur la nécessité de traduction, au sens linguistique bien sûr, mais surtout culturel, national[13] ou social.[14] Les productions d'Hollywood qui inondent le marché après la Seconde Guerre mondiale se trouvent au cœur des interrogations[15], mais leur impact doit être réévalué à l'aune d'une analyse de leur réception, sans *a priori* sur l'impérialisme culturel occidental.

La question de la compréhension,[16] au sens littéral, importe peu en fait : c'est ce qu'on fait des images qui compte. Or, contrairement à ce que supposent les diverses autorités (élites africaines, censeurs coloniaux), les réactions des spectateurs sont bien plus complexes que le simple mimétisme supposé : voir un vol entraîne la chapardise, être témoin d'un meurtre fictif vous transforme en assassin. Cette idée, aussi ancienne que le cinéma lui-même, est source d'anxiété majeure des élites en Europe comme dans les colonies. Dans les empires, elle est accentuée par la vision primitive des spectateurs africains que l'on pense dénués de capacités de jugement et de distance. Maintes anecdotes alimentent cette théorie ; ainsi au Congo belge, des jeunes auraient essayé de faire dérailler un train après avoir vu un western (Ramirez & Rolot 1985:274).

Dès le début des années 1970, Pierre Haffner, grand connaisseur du cinéma africain et des pratiques cinéphiles, conteste la validité de la notion de « genre » cinématographique dans le contexte africain en constatant que les publics puisent des éléments dans divers types de films sans forcément raisonner selon les catégories occidentales (western, drame psychologique…) (Haffner 1978:38-39). Il insiste aussi sur l'ancrage local de l'expérience cinématographique ; celle-ci, dans le cas du Mali, passe par la pratique du théâtre du *koteba*, pour analyser les réactions des spectateurs qui, comme en Europe, transfèrent sur le cinéma des habitudes antérieures. Outre la durée indéterminée des spectacles, il note que « La fête est par essence participation, négation de la distance » et souligne la complicité entre les comédiens et le public, l'alternance obligée de sketches courts et de moments de respiration par des chants et des danses (Haffner 1978:62).

Plus récemment, des chercheurs, s'interrogeant spécifiquement sur l'impact des films hollywoodiens hors de leur contexte de production, aboutissent à des conclusions similaires et mettent en évidence la complexité de leur réception.[17] Dans *Hollywood Abroad* (Stokes et Maltby 2004) est examinée la façon dont les divers publics, en Europe mais aussi en Inde ou en Rhodésie, perçoivent et s'approprient les films diffusés dans les salles. Ce qui circule dans ces contextes nationaux ne renvoie pas à une mythologie globale ou à un discours homogène mais à des fragments, des icônes, qui peuvent prendre des sens totalement différents selon les contextes de réception : seule cette extraction des films et leur simplification rendent possible leur *reinterpretation within the cultural matrix of the host culture* (Maltby 2004:1).

Sur la base de ces précisions épistémologiques et méthodologiques, on peut poser la question de la façon dont des éléments épars, tirés de films variés, participent à la construction de comportements, d'attitudes, d'identités soit collectives, soit individuelles. Le western peut servir de modèle à ce type de réflexion, car il est à l'origine des transpositions ou emprunts les plus visibles.

## Le western, un riche vivier de références au temps des colonies ?

Les westerns forment les références partagées d'une génération de jeunes hommes et leur proposent des filtres de lecture du monde accessibles et des images aisément déchiffrables. Leur réception est en partie déterminée par l'expérience de l'ailleurs, les attentes et les outils de décryptage à la disposition des adolescents et jeunes hommes, scolarisés ou non.

### *Le western, un genre populaire*

Revenons donc au western, dont les images viennent à l'esprit lorsqu'on évoque une séance de cinéma en Afrique au temps de la colonisation. Son succès ne fait aucun doute ; il est toutefois difficile d'en mesurer exactement la diffusion et encore plus la fréquentation qui varie selon les périodes, les villes et les salles. Dans les archives ou la presse, on trouve des titres ou des listes, de films mais rarement des chiffres de spectateurs. De plus, comme cela vient d'être montré, la notion de genre préféré est pondérée par le fait que le public pèse peu sur la programmation.

La diffusion des westerns dans l'Empire suit celle de leur exportation outre-atlantique, avec un léger décalage : encore peu nombreux dans les années 30, ils dominent après la guerre. Lors de la sortie du premier week-end de juillet 1936, parmi les cinq films proposés par les trois cinémas de la COMACICO de Dakar ne figure aucun western mais deux films américains.[18] De même, ils ne sont pas nombreux sur la liste des films diffusés au Soudan

la même année. Le western qui naît avec le cinéma dans le prolongement des épopées de l'Ouest et se développe dans les années 1920 sous la forme de métrages moyens (70mn, petits budgets, type feuilleton-série B) est encore peu diffusé hors des USA, mais son essor dans les années 1930 assure rapidement son succès à l'extérieur. Se remémorant ses souvenirs d'enfance à Freetown au début des années 1940, Farid Raymond Anthony évoque l'engouement des garçons pour les films de cow-boys : « The boys in our group were all fond of film-shows, especially cowboy films, and we would do anything not to miss Roy Rogers and his horse Trigger and the Sons of the Pioneers, or Gene Autry, or Gary Cooper » (Anthony 1980:138).

La présence de cow-boys chantants comme Roy Rogers et son groupe les « Fils des pionniers » fondé en 1933 et surtout Gene Autry, célèbres avant la guerre, contribue à marquer la mémoire. Les westerns ne sont pas encore stigmatisés par les administrateurs et les élites moralisatrices comme facteurs d'incitation à la violence ou à des comportements déviants.

Ce genre, déjà en vogue dans l'entre-deux-guerres, va trouver son public dans les faubourgs et les salles destinés plus spécialement au public populaire. Le « tourneur », entrepreneur de cinéma ambulant, Raymond Borremans, basé à Abidjan, se serait « longtemps refusé à projeter des westerns, car […] c'était une mauvaise manière d'éduquer le public en lui montrant trop de violence ». Comme ces concurrents n'ont pas ces scrupules, il est obligé de faire de même après 1946.[19]

Désormais on peut voir régulièrement des westerns dans les villes africaines. En 1955, trois westerns figurent sur la liste d'une vingtaine de films pour lesquels la COMACICO sollicite une autorisation ?[20] Le fils de visage pâle (*Son of Pale face* 1952), L'homme des vallées perdues (*Shane*, George Stevens 1953), Le triomphe de Buffalo Bill (*Poney Express* 1953).

A la même époque, Georges Balandier souligne leur importance dans la programmation à Brazzaville où, avec les épopées, ils forment environ 45 pour cent des films à l'affiche à Poto-Poto et Bacongo, quartiers populaires. Le choix des distributeurs précède-t-il ou révèle-t-il les goûts du public ? En tout cas les films cités sont fort anciens, ce qui confirme la stratégie des circuits cinématographiques qui visent un amortissement assuré de leur investissement : *Justiciers du Far-West* (1938), *Cavalier Miracle* (1935), *Ecumeurs du Far-West* (1939), *Terreur du Ranch* (1939) (Balandier 1985:256-257).

Pierre Haffner arrive à la même estimation : « Les petites salles de Bamako projettent presque 50 pour cent de westerns, 30 pour cent de films policiers ou de films d'espionnage, 10 pour cent de films d'aventure ou de guerre »,

tandis qu'à l'écran des grandes salles les westerns viennent en second (20 à 30%) après les films policiers (40%) et avant les drames psychologiques (10 à 20%) (Haffner 1978:40).

Tous les hommes interviewés, amateurs de cinéma, évoquent les westerns et se souviennent des noms des acteurs et des titres.[21] Certains évoquent le plaisir de voir et revoir encore le film préféré, comme *Le dernier des fédérés* (*The Lone Ranger* 1938) cité par Pathé Diagne, qui précise que le cinéma populaire de Sor, en périphérie de Saint-Louis, sa ville natale, passait uniquement des westerns.[22]

La place des westerns est telle dans la pratique des cinéphiles qu'elle détermine familièrement le nom des emplacements dans les salles : l'orchestre pour les cow-boys, le parterre pour les Indiens : « … à l'orchestre (la place des cow-boys, comme on l'appelle encore communément), à une ou deux rangées de chaises de la place des Indiens (c'est-à-dire la partie la moins chère de la salle ») (Monénembo 1997:189).

De même, à Bamako, l'« indiennat » désigne les « places les moins chères [… surtout pour] les plus jeunes, assis par terre ou sur de petits bancs sans dossier. La référence aux Indiens tapis derrière les buissons ne fait pas de doute » (Haffner 1978:169). Selon d'autres sources, c'est l'attitude bruyante des enfants au cinéma qui leur vaudrait le qualificatif d'« Indiens ».[23]Le succès des westerns et leur impact dans la pratique cinématographique découlent de certaines de ses caractéristiques.

### *Le western, un genre codifié, ersatz des contes ?*

La raison principale du succès des westerns, en Afrique comme ailleurs, est leur extrême codification, leur manichéisme (les bons et les méchants) et leur morale simpliste. Tous les éléments visuels permettent de situer rapidement les actions et de reconnaître les personnages : les vêtements (cow-boys, habits sévères des femmes de pionniers, hommes en costume sombre), les attitudes, les moyens de transport clairement hiérarchisés (cheval, âne, pieds), les combats, notamment à coups de poing. Le suivi de l'histoire et sa compréhension sont donc accessibles à un public large, tout en laissant de la place à des interprétations personnelles et locales (Ambler 2007 ; Burns « John Wayne… », 2002:106). Les dialogues ne sont pas fondamentaux, d'autant que la compréhension de la langue étrangère est souvent imparfaite et que les bruits venant de la salle et de l'extérieur en rendent difficile l'audition.

A partir de ses observations et enquêtes effectuées auprès de citadins (hommes uniquement), Balandier confirme les motivations de l'appréciation des westerns : attrait pour le mouvement et les péripéties, héros faciles à identifier, justice élémentaire et impitoyable. Il note par ailleurs le parallèle avec les cultures congolaises :

> … au-delà de l'action mouvementée, l'enseignement est recherché comme il reste habituel de le faire lorsqu'il s'agit du conte et de la légende traditionnels ; le film associant ces trois éléments : héros puissant, multiples péripéties manifestant cette puissance et morale élémentaire, connaît toujours un grand succès (Balandier 1985:257).

Le western correspond à cette grille d'analyse. Ses héros ou les leçons qu'on en tire viennent enrichir l'expérience antérieure. L'hybridité se situe dans cette fusion entre des attentes anciennes et des référents nouveaux, dans cette rencontre entre suppositions des distributeurs de films et usages des colonisés, ce que Larry Yarak nomme *creative misunderstandings* (cité par Akyeampong et Ambler 2002:14).

Les westerns, dans leur version stéréotypée, offrent effectivement des modèles d'héroïsme, des rôles de genre acceptable ou valorisé et des normes morales limpides (bien/mal). Ceci favorise des processus d'identification collective et individuelle et facilite l'extraction d'éléments recyclés ensuite dans un quotidien localisé à des milliers de kilomètres des lieux du tournage.

Si les jeunes sont enthousiastes, les autorités coloniales sont, elles, de plus en plus ambivalentes par rapport à ce genre cinématographique, synonyme de divertissement innocent mais aussi de violence.[24] Après 1945, la méfiance se manifeste aussi bien de la part d'administrateurs que des représentants de l'élite politique et sociale, moralisateurs, qui adoptent souvent le même discours.[25]

Ainsi, les autorités du Soudan (Mali), de peur d'être débordées par les élus, expriment leur inquiétude : « On voit, en effet, trop fréquemment sur les écrans des films sur la vie de la pègre, sur le monde des gangsters, des 'western' […] qui exercent sur l'esprit de la jeunesse une influence subversive. » Un fonctionnaire fédéral marque toutefois son scepticisme en notant en marge : « qui y-a-t-il de mal dans les westerns ? ».[26]

Ce regard compréhensif est toutefois rare et le western est généralement vu d'un mauvais œil. Ainsi, en Côte d'Ivoire, Gbikpi, chef de la Filmothèque des Affaires sociales, membre de la commission de contrôle, déclare « que les films de cow-boy et du Far-West, après avoir ravagé les villes, continuent leurs méfaits dans la brousse ».[27] La même opinion est exprimée par Ouezzin Coulibaly, vice-président du Conseil de gouvernement de Haute-Volta, en 1958 :

> Autant quelques [western] sont des scènes de pugilat et de fou rire, autant par contre et c'est la majorité sont des victoires du gangstérisme, du brigandage, des leçons de viol, d'assassinat et d'immoralité. Voilà ce qu'on montre à un public qui croit encore ce qu'il voit. Quel est le but d'un tel film dans un pays comme le nôtre … sinon d'intoxiquer les consciences, de perturber la moralité ?[28]

Ces marques de méfiance, qui augmentent avec l'afflux vers les villes de jeunes ruraux et le sentiment de montée de la délinquance, n'empêchent pas que les westerns occupent les écrans et servent d'inspiration à de nombreux jeunes spectateurs. Les westerns sont sans conteste des films à la visibilité éclatante, car elle se traduit concrètement dans le quotidien.

## Les films comme rites de passage ou modes d'entrée dans la 'modernité'

Passer du côté du public pour aborder les films et non partir des souhaits des distributeurs ou du regard des censeurs change la perspective. Ce décentrement permet de dépasser la vision des films comme vecteurs de propagande ou machines à produire de la domination et de l'aliénation. Dans cette optique, la place des westerns dans la naissance d'une culture masculine préconjugale est évidente. Cette fonction a déjà été soulignée par divers auteurs, pour l'Afrique centrale et australe, selon des mécanismes similaires.[29] Je me propose de la revisiter sous l'angle de l'hybridité, en partant de l'Afrique occidentale.

### *Le western, modèle ambigu*

Dans une double tension liée au passage à l'âge adulte et à l'environnement de contestation coloniale, les jeunes urbains, concept à la définition élastique,[30] trouvent dans les westerns de quoi alimenter leur besoin de s'affirmer en tant que groupe ou en tant qu'individu (chefs de bande ou non).

Comme dans le pays fondateur, l'aura du Far West précède et dépasse le cinéma. Une certaine littérature de jeunesse porteuse des mêmes images avait déjà popularisé la figure de l'homme de l'ouest. Bernard Dadié en témoigne dans *Climbié*, récit autobiographique se déroulant à Grand Bassam dans les années 1930 :

> Dibetchi, le plus riche de la bande, payait toujours un nouveau roman d'aventures au Far West. Ils le dévoraient à tour de rôle et émaillaient leurs propos de 'Signor Caballero ! Amigo ! Bonas dios !'. Ils vivaient chacun en compagnie de leurs héros favoris, ne parlaient plus français mais espagnol. Que leur manquait-il ? Le chapeau aux larges bords, les revolvers, les pantalons cow-boys et la monture ? même pas, car l'habit ne fait pas le moine (Dadié 1966:129 ; texte fini à Abidjan le 18 avril 1953).

De même, ce modèle circule parmi des adolescents qui n'ont jamais vu de film, comme à Ebe, village ibo du sud-est du Nigeria où est fondée « The Couragous Company of Cow-boys » en 1948, observée par Paul Hair au début des années 1950.[31] Le modèle tire lui, bien sûr, une part de son inspiration des westerns, le nom tout d'abord mais aussi des éléments de l'uniforme et

de l'armement. La première *Compagnie de Cowboy* apparaît à Lagos vers 1930, atteint rapidement Kano *via* le chemin de fer et les migrants yoruba et se diffuse au sud dans la ville d'Enugu au début des années 1940. C'est un migrant revenu d'Enugu qui la transfère à Ebe.

La prégnance du western s'impose pour les adolescents qui font du cinéma à la fois leur mode de loisir favori et leur lieu de rencontre. Pour ces amateurs de cinéma, le western est, avec les films de gangster ou de guerre, la référence par excellence ; il met à leur disposition une large panoplie d'images au sens propre et figuré.

Thierno Monémembo en fait la trame de son roman *Cinéma* se situant à la fin des années 1950 à Mamou, ville moyenne de Guinée, où il a grandi. L'histoire met en scène une bande de petits malfrats dont la vie gravite autour du western :

> Moi, quand je me sens ratatiné comme je le suis en ce moment, c'est d'un bon western que j'ai besoin : *3 h 10 pour Yuma, L'homme qui n'a pas d'étoile, Du sang dans le désert, Winchester 73* !…- Tu n'as pas dit le meilleur : *Le Virginien* ! Te souviens-tu du dialogue entre Trampas, le tricheur, et Gary Cooper quand ils commencent la partie de poker ? 'Trampas : mise donc, fils de pute !' 'Gary Cooper : Souris au moins quand tu dis ça !' Ça c'était du cinéma ! (Monémembo 1997:34)

Le narrateur, écolier, déserte les bancs pour se mettre à fréquenter cette bande. Il découvre peu à peu un monde inconnu, admire l'attitude décontractée et sûre d'eux des petits truands dont le chef l'accueille en disant : « Moi que tu vois, mon petit Binguel, je suis *Oklahoma Kid*, le vrai. Si tu as déjà rencontré quelqu'un d'autre portant ce nom, oublie-le, il doit être en foin ou en porcelaine » (Monémembo 1997:41).

Binguel abandonne son surnom de « petit môme », pour celui plus prestigieux de « L'homme de l'ouest », marque d'intégration au groupe. Le western constitue alors l'élément majeur de son imaginaire à la fois pour s'adapter au quotidien et pour s'en échapper : « Aussi, dans les moments les plus durs, je m'imaginais dans un film. Le Pavillon et sa toiture informe qui ne me semblait faite que pour amplifier l'humidité et l'insolation devenues Veracruz ou Sante Fe, Fort Alamo ou O.K. Corral » (Monémembo 1997:46).

Sous cette forme romancée, Monémembo présente de manière condensée l'usage et la circulation d'un genre issu d'un monde lointain mais faisant écho dans les cultures vécues. Les surnoms des meneurs, les mélodies sifflées, les mots de passe, les conversations, les modes d'initiation au groupe… tout tourne autour du western qui se prête à des adaptations et lectures personnelles ; les adolescents adoptent gestuelle, attitudes, vêtements ou expressions, pratiques pour lesquelles il n'est guère besoin d'être passé par l'école.[32]

De même, si les jeunes migrants du Niger, protagonistes de *Moi un Noir*, admirable film-vérité de Jean Rouch (1959), se prénomment Eddie Constantine alias Lemmy Caution, Edward G. Robinson ou Dorothy Lamour, acteurs américains, leurs références et leur environnement sont imprégnés du monde des westerns : affiches sur les murs, habits, slogans (bar*Ambiance* : « ceux qui sont heureux, qui vont pour faire le cow-boy »). Lors d'une fête rassemblant les originaires du Niger, de nouvelles acrobaties sont inventées dans le contexte à la fois urbain et migratoire : des figures sont exécutées en bicyclette, métaphore du cheval, par des hommes habillés à la mode des cow-boys.[33] « On y partage tout, les rêves du Far West et les rythmes traditionnels », ajoute le commentaire.

L'organisation de bandes tirant leurs références des épopées de l'Ouest ou l'affirmation de chefs de groupe nourrissant leur imaginaire dans cet univers n'est pas étonnante. Ce phénomène est généralisé, tant l'univers du Far West ouvre la porte à des reconfigurations variées, mêlant éléments pris de l'écran et éléments locaux. Les westerns permettent de se distinguer (ceux qui vont au cinéma et ceux qui n'y vont pas), de se faire une place dans la ville, nouveau territoire de jeu et de vie, en se différenciant, et donc de s'affirmer par rapport à d'autres adolescents, mais aussi de se positionner face aux adultes.

### *Western et changement social*

Les années 1950 sont une sorte de condensé des transformations socio-politiques : accélération de l'exode rural et des migrations interurbaines (afflux vers les capitales et les ports), accentuation de l'urbanisation, effervescence des mouvements politiques, contestation des aînés… Les usages du western prennent sens dans ce contexte spécifique, même si des antécédents et des prolongements existent. Situons donc le western dans la double confrontation avec les adultes et une « situation coloniale » vacillante : peut-on aller jusqu'à parler de conscience d'une rupture personnelle (générationnelle) et collective (historique) ?

Plutôt que d'envisager les films comme des vecteurs d'acculturation ou d'aliénation, envisageons-les comme une des ressources (parmi d'autres) dans lesquelles puisent les individus pour se situer dans le présent et définir leur avenir dans un contexte de changement social accéléré. On pourrait qualifier ce processus, amplifié par l'impérialisme du XXe siècle, de « modernité », au risque d'employer un terme galvaudé. Ce concept, en vogue depuis plusieurs décennies, est devenu un mot-valise, aux sens multiples et aux connotations souvent suspectes parce que renvoyant implicitement à l'Occident. F. Cooper dénonce ainsi sa fréquente inutilité ou ambiguïté épistémologique tout en proposant une réflexion historiographique dans le cadre de la colonisation (Cooper 2005:ch. V *Modernity*).

L'anthropologue Jacky Bouju propose une définition intéressante de ce concept par son potentiel de rupture : modernité, « qu'on peut caractériser par la généralisation de la division du travail social et de l'échange marchand accompagnant l'autonomisation des différents champs politiques, religieux, économiques et sociaux » (Bouju 2003:note 1).

Aussi ouverte soit-elle, cette définition reste toutefois liée au cadre occidental, voire capitaliste et à une phase de la culture européenne ; mais elle évite la dichotomie modernité/'traditions' en mettant l'accent sur les structures socio économiques.[34] La dimension retenue ici de modernité en tant que modalité d'accélération des changements et de circulation des références reste toutefois pertinente. Ainsi, Richard Maltby désigne sous le terme de *vernacular modernity* les productions culturelles liées au cinéma, qui sont plus ancrées dans les communautés urbaines respectives que dans le lieu d'origine des films (Maltby 2004:15). Dans cette perspective, la notion de modernité inclut forcément celle d'hybridité, c'est-à-dire relevant d'un processus croisant des éléments hétérogènes aussi bien autochtones qu'étrangers, circulant selon des voies et sur des supports divers.

On peut invoquer d'autres paradigmes et reprendre celui d'acculturation qui dominait les analyses de la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle et poursuit, sa carrière, plus marginalement toutefois car il semble induire une dimension de domination. L'acculturation désigne certes des « phénomènes de contacts et d'interpénétration entre civilisations différentes » (Bastide 1968:103), mais conçus généralement dans un rapport inégalitaire entre les cultures, celle d'origine se portant vers (*ad*) une autre pour en embrasser certains traits perçus comme stratégiques, fonctionnels, utiles dans une période de changement. En reprenant la littérature, Bastide oppose d'ailleurs acculturation planifiée – par un groupe national ou d'intérêts – cas le plus fréquent – et acculturation libre. La connotation négative est nette dans le contexte colonial où acculturation semble impliquer l'idée de perte de repères et de valeurs, de déstabilisation et de sujétion.[35] Cet emploi implicite ressort de l'analyse des centres culturels, initiés en AOF par le gouverneur Cornut-Gentille, comme « un projet de contrôle sociopolitique des jeunes élites . » Parmi les attributions de ces centres figure la projection de films, essentiellement documentaires et didactiques, plus marginalement de fiction. Tout en démontrant l'échec de ces centres, l'auteur évoque l'écho qu'ils rencontrent auprès de la « nouvelle classe urbaine acculturée » et conclut : « Les responsables des centres et son public régulier apparaissent ainsi comme une élite acculturée et acculturante » (Bancel 2009:130-131). Celle-ci relaierait donc auprès de l'ensemble de la jeunesse urbaine (non scolarisée, populaire…) les vœux des colonisateurs.

Plus positivement, l'acculturation peut être vue comme faisant appel à des capacités personnelles d'adaptation à une situation nouvelle, comme un processus dynamique qui résulte de l'exposition à d'autres façons de faire, de penser, de vivre…

La notion d'hybridité ou de mixité culturelle s'impose alors, car elle permet d'analyser autant la réception que les usages des images. Les spectateurs absorbent les images exotiques, discutent des actions des personnages de l'écran et proposent des réinterprétations selon leurs propres termes (Ambler 2001:87). Ils infusent ensuite leur quotidien des leçons tirées de cette expérience visuelle selon leurs propres filtres. Autrement dit, ce qui compte dans la création individuelle ou collective, ce sont les formes de réception et d'interprétation des images par une personne ou un groupe donnés et non le lieu d'origine du film. De fait, Hollywood fonctionne comme une sorte de lieu utopique, qu'on peut s'approprier pour imaginer sa propre 'Amérique'. Il ne s'agit pas de se transformer en cow-boys ou en Américains, mais d'intégrer un élément tiré d'une expérience cinématographique. Les spectateurs mêlent leur compréhension à leurs propres codes de conduite : « They thus found ways to use the characters and action of their B-Western diet as 'a kind of guide to urban modernity and sophistication' in central Africa 'weaving witchcraft and kinship politics into discussion of the meanings of particular sequences » (Maltby 2004:15).

Partout les images sont un des éléments qui permettent aux jeunes spectateurs de construire leur identité dans la salle et en dehors, face aux autorités politiques (contestation par le simple fait d'être là, par le choix du film, par les manifestations orales ou les petits gestes favorisés par l'anonymat et l'obscurité du lieu), mais aussi face au groupe d'âge, aux pairs, c'est-à-dire ceux parmi lesquels la réputation compte vraiment.

Comme on l'a vu, le registre du western donne naissance à des formes multiples de ré-emprunt immédiat : il permet de se distinguer des paysans restés au village, mais aussi de certains scolarisés plus policés qui préfèrent d'autres registres cinématographiques. Il permet aussi de s'affirmer par rapport aux adultes en empruntant un registre perçu comme contestant l'autorité des aînés ou transgressant les valeurs enseignées.

En portant des chaussures, élément obligé de l'uniforme, les membres des *Cow-boys Societies* d'Ebe se distinguent des campagnards qui vont pieds nus, quitte à devoir en louer pour l'occasion. Outre le clivage ville-campagne, le monde du western constitue avant tout une marque de modernité pour les jeunes Ibos qui copient le modèle yoruba, vu comme précurseur.[36]

Si on voit bien le rôle du western dans le processus de différentiation des jeunes, on pourrait s'étonner de son succès tant le clivage cow-boy/

indien renvoie métaphoriquement à celui du rapport dominant/dominé, aisément transposable dans le contexte colonial. On ne peut évacuer la domination coloniale du contexte de la réception, ce qui débouche sur la thématique de l'aliénation, si souvent maniée pour dénoncer le cinéma colonial. Deux voies s'ouvrent alors. De manière générale, comme en témoignent les entretiens, le spectateur s'identifie au puissant, au héros victorieux, au cow-boys ou au justicier et non au personnage dominé – l'Indien – qui exprime objectivement la position de colonisé. Amady Aly Dieng, comme d'autres, évoque comme une évidence cette posture anti-indienne, car « on ne comprenait pas »[37] Cette réaction renvoie à un ressort psychologique connu : sauf exception, un individu quelconque se met spontanément du côté des vainqueurs. Cette attitude est ici renforcée par les questions de génération (les westerns attirent surtout des adolescents, moins formés à la critique)[38] et de genre (non remise en cause des schémas machistes par les adolescents, adhésion à la virilité affichée des cow-boys). D'autres exemples confirment que le chromatisme ou la situation personnelle ne sont pas les clefs utilisées spontanément pour interpréter les films :

> Les cinémas de Lomé se nommaient « Le Rex », « La France » et « Archambeau . » Ils étaient en plein air, et l'on entendait la voix des acteurs dans tout le quartier. Je revis un jour un film intitulé *Le trésor secret de Tarzan* [1941], avec l'acteur Johnny Weissmüller. Je savais que les Noirs y étaient souvent présentés d'une façon péjorative (cannibales, bestiaux, grimaçants, cruels…). D'autre part, Tarzan, dans certaines séquences, pratique joyeusement une véritable hécatombe de Noirs. Je m'étonnai qu'un spectacle de ce genre soit présenté à un public en grande majorité composé d'Africains, mais je fus encore plus surpris quand je constatai l'enthousiasme bruyant que ces hécatombes provoquaient dans ce public. Incontestablement, les « bons » étaient les Blancs et les « mauvais » les Noirs. Chaque fois qu'un « sauvage » noir était mis hors de combat par le poing de Tarzan ou la balle d'un autre Blanc, toute la salle (si l'on peut dire, le spectacle étant dehors !) applaudissait sans restriction [39]

Aller au-delà de ce mécanisme d'identification au puissant suppose une prise de conscience. Outre l'âge, la formation et l'apprentissage critique peuvent faire dépasser le niveau du divertissement et déboucher sur une distanciation par rapport au message visuel. Bien sûr, l'expérience directe de l'oppression suffit à sentir la similitude des expériences, sans forcément la rationaliser. Ceci ouvre la voie à la contestation *via* l'écran. L'anthropologue Hortense Powdermaker, observant les publics dans les années 1950 en Zambie, attribue le succès des westerns à ce fait : « The cowboy fits into the present power relationship betweeen European and Africans » (cité par Burns 2002:109).

La circulation des discours militants ou les slogans politiques contribuent aussi à modifier la réception des films dans la dernière décennie de la colonisation et entraînent parfois de vives réactions de la part du public. Contrairement à ce que pensent les coloniaux qui mésestiment les capacités de compréhension des spectateurs ou ne s'intéressent pas à leurs regards et réactions, les westerns purent jouer un rôle moteur dans la prise de conscience des rapports de domination.

L'anxiété croissante des autorités coloniales et des élites africaines après la guerre face au western découle sans aucun doute de la réalisation intuitive ou explicite de la portée politique des westerns. Les commissions de censure cherchent alors à anticiper en coupant les remarques ouvertement racistes ou discriminatoires de certains films. Rares sont toutefois les westerns interdits, ce qui fut le sort en 1955 de *Bronco Apache*, western de Robert Aldrich avec Burt Lancaster (1954) : « Le film *Bronco Apache* présentant des aspects outrés d'antagonisme racial, la Direction des Affaires Politiques en [propose] l'interdiction, nonobstant la manière de voir de la majorité de la Commiss.ion ».[40] Cette décision imposée par la commission fédérale de Dakar à toute l'AOF témoigne d'un changement d'analyse sur la capacité des spectateurs à projeter leur propre destin sur les films. De même, *Flèches de feu* (film de Lew Landers 1953), autorisé en 1954 mais soumis à nouveau à la censure en l'application de l'arrêté du 21 juillet 1954, subit une coupure : « abréger le second combat entre Anglais et Peaux-Rouges en ne laissant subsister que le début et la fin ».[41]

Les autorités ont donc conscience du danger que le visionnage prolongé d'une scène de répression pouvait entraîner dans la salle. Pour contrer ces images, elles cherchent à proposer aux jeunes des films édifiants et censurent les autres.[42] Au final toutefois, ce sont les spectateurs qui décident et le western reste plébiscité par un certain public. La notion de choix intervient là sans conteste.

## Conclusion

Loin d'être passif, le public joue un rôle majeur dans cet équilibre complexe entre désir de divertissement des spectateurs, objectif de rentabilité des gérants de salle et volonté des autorités de maintenir l'ordre social (Ambler 2002).

Pour ces dernières, le cinéma trouve sans conteste sa place dans les outils de contrôle des esprits, parallèlement à la scolarisation par exemple, mis en place dans le cadre colonial. Mais il n'est pas que cela.[43] Pour les publics, les films sont des moyens de détente, des échappatoires et des ressources culturelles. Ces nouveaux médias sont bien souvent présentés soit comme de puissants façonneurs d'aliénation, soit comme des vecteurs de révolte

selon une vision manichéenne que les analystes peinent à dépasser, ce qui revient paradoxalement à nier la force de réaction et d'organisation des acteurs locaux. Or ceux-ci sont loin d'être des récepteurs neutres face aux images.

Le détour par le western, genre cinématographique correspondant à une phase de la vie d'un jeune cinéphile, montre la complexité du processus de création qu'il peut générer et qui exprime une culture en renouvellement, une culture mélangeant allègrement divers registres. Sont inventés attitudes, valeurs, gestuelles, apparences, modes d'organisation ou représentations identitaires. Même si les services des Renseignements généraux veillent et surveillent les salles, même si les commissions de contrôle exercent leur travail de censure, le cinéma se présente dans le contexte colonial comme un espace de liberté, un lieu d'ouverture, notamment pour les adolescents. Lieu d'intoxication et d'abêtissement pour les uns, il est un lieu d'innovation et d'invention pour d'autres. Il est les deux à la fois. Les années passant, comment se traduit cette expérience dans le vécu des adultes ? Quelle trace le cinéma des jeunes années et premières séances laisse-t-il ? Ceci est difficile à cerner, au-delà du souvenir d'un paradis perdu et de la vision nostalgique projetée sur l'adolescence qui ressort des entretiens.

Le temps des westerns est désormais révolu. D'autres images circulent parmi les générations d'adolescents et de moins jeunes. *Rambo*, popularisé par les vidéos, s'est imposé en Sierra Leone (Richards 1996) et les *Ninja* à Brazzaville (Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999). La puissance contemporaine de ces symboles en temps de conflit a été démontrée. En ce début de XXIe siècle, les images se renouvellent de plus en plus vite du fait de la simultanéité de leur diffusion à l'échelle mondiale (Larkin 2008:ch. 7). Par ailleurs, d'autres genres cinématographiques contribuent bien évidemment à (re)construire l'image de soi et de son rapport au monde en y incorporant des codes puisés dans des référents diversifiés : les *telenovelas* d'Amérique du Sud, le registre islamique et ses contradictions (feuilletons turcs ou égyptiens), Bollywood … mais aussi Nollywood, les vidéos du Ghana et les séries ivoriennes.

A partir des années 1960 apparaissent en effet, de manière déterminante, les premiers films africains, aux objectifs militants, qui entraînent une réelle décolonisation culturelle du continent. Même si leur diffusion fut entravée par le monopole des sociétés de distribution et que les difficultés financières et logistiques conditionnent actuellement leur production, ils proposent aux spectateurs une vision renouvelée de leur passé et des grilles d'interrogation critique sur leurs propres sociétés.

Au fil des années, le cinéma continue donc d'être une des ressources auxquelles puiser pour se positionner dans le monde.

## Notes

1. *Libération*, 17-10-2006. Il est né en Mauritanie en 1961 mais a grandi au Mali. *Bamako* fut projeté hors Compétition au festival de Cannes de 2006.
2. L'Inde présente un cas de figure très différent, car la production s'y développe dès le début du siècle, intégrant certains traits stylistiques hollywoodiens.
3. Le cinéma ambulant touche un peu les centres ruraux.
4. Interviewé par F. Pompey in *Le Monde* du 27-28 février 2005.
5. Le rôle de l'Etat fut plus marqué dans les colonies britanniques et au Congo belge, notamment par une politique de production de films destinés aux colonisés. A cela s'ajoute la politique des loisirs des compagnies minières en Afrique centrale et australe.
6. Loimeier (2006:111) (il propose une réflexion sur la notion de culture populaire et la façon dont les élites religieuses en apprécient certains traits et en rejettent d'autres).
7. Ramirez & Rolot (1985) ; Convents (2006: 35) soulignent qu'en avril 1934 la commission de contrôle doit préciser à quelle catégorie de spectateurs le film est autorisé : « les adultes européens, les enfants européens, les boys de bar et les indigènes. »
8. Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS) 21 G 198 (versement 174) censure, commission 1947-58, Gouverneur du Niger au Haut Commissaire de l'AOF, 25-11-1950.
9. Après l'indépendance, divers pays cherchèrent à s'assurer le contrôle du marché du film, mais ils subirent des représailles de la part des compagnies françaises de distribution. Outre la Guinée, le Burkina Faso (alors Haute-Volta) fut le premier à nationaliser l'importation-distribution de films en 1969.

   « Qui tient la distribution tient le cinéma », Tahar Cheriaa, Président d'Honneur de la FEPACI (Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes) cité par Ferid Boughedir « Cinémas nationaux et politiques cinématographiques en Afrique noire : 'Du rêve Sud-Sud à la défense de la diversité culturelle' », in *Afriques 50 : Singularités d'un cinéma pluriel* (L'Harmattan 2005, pp. 161-171).
10. Cité par Burns (2002: 34) (Bell to Gale, 9 juin 1942) (« … dans un but purement récréatif, l'indigène doit être traité comme nous traitons un enfant blanc de dix ans, c'est-à-dire qu'on doit lui montrer des films d'action de type western »).
11. Ainsi à Zanzibar, les exploitants indiens privilégient les films indiens pour leur propre communauté.
12. Il importe toutefois méthodologiquement de dépasser les expériences individuelles juxtaposées pour proposer des analyses plus générales selon un groupe d'âge, un statut socio culturel, le genre, une situation géopolitique…
13. Un titre de film peut faire écho dans la mémoire nationale.
14. Par exemple les versions VO prisées par certains publics.
15. Les quelque 2000 films américains produits de 1939 à 1944 expliquent en partie la peur des milieux du cinéma en France qui contestent les accords Blum-Byrnes signés en mai 1946, permettant l'entrée des films américains.
16. Voir les hypothèses sophistiquées faites sur les capacités des colonisés à comprendre les images et leurs messages qui furent à l'origine de la production de films spécifiquement faits pour les colonisés en Afrique britannique : Burns (*Flickering Shadows*, 2002), Charles Ambler (2001).

17. Fabrice Montebello propose une analyse similaire sur la France : on surestime souvent la part du cinéma américain en raisonnant en termes de titres et non de fréquentation (2005: 22 ; 45-46, le « filmaméricain »).
18. *Courrier cinématographique de l'Ouest Africain Français*, revue de la COMACICO, 4 juillet 1936.
19. Souvenir cité (sans référence) par Tabsopba 2003:2172.
20. ANG 21 G 190 (versement 174), courrier du 28 mars 1955.
21. Je ne cite que ceux qui en proposent une analyse spécifique. Par exemple Dr Sultan, né en 1917, voit un film de cow-boy muet dans les années 1920 (entretien le 25/1/2005, Conakry) ou Moussa Kemoko Diakité né en 1940 (entretiens le 21-10-2003 et le 27-1-2005, Conakry) : « Comme enfants, on dessinait des cow-boys sur des bâtons ; on imitait les musiques de film »… Il en va de même en Angola où les *cowboiadas* rencontrent un grand succès (Moorman 2001).
22. Pathé Diagne, né en 1934 (entretien en avril 2006, Paris). Les cinémas les plus anciens, le *Rex* et le *Vox*, sont situés sur l'île.
23. Bakary Kamian, né en 1926 au Mali (entretien le 24/11/2008, Ouagadougou).
24. Les accusations portées contre les westerns démarrent aux USA et ne sont spécifiques ni du contexte colonial, ni des autorités coloniales. Elles se développent rapidement dans le Copperbelt nord-rhodésien où l'anthropologue Hortense Powdermaker l'analyse pour les années 1950 (1962). Je ne développe pas ici le côté moral ; sur les mesures par rapport aux jeunes spectateurs, voir Goerg, CEA, 2012, pp 165-198.
25. Akyeampong et Ambler (2002) ; Burns « John Wayne… », (2002:103sq ; 115) « … unanimity of evidence from African witnesses rather than European regarding the need to protect the uneducated, unsophiticated Africans from the impact of films that for them were unsuitable and disturbing » ; Genova 2004.
26. ANS, 21 G 193 courrier du 6 janvier 1951 du Gouverneur du Soudan au Haut Commissaire, service des Affaires politiques, arrivé à Dakar le 18 janvier.
27. ANS 21 G 192, PV de la commission de contrôle cinématographique de Côte d'Ivoire, 13 septembre 1956.
28. ANS 21G 193 lettre au président de la commission fédérale de censure du 9 mai 1958. Pour d'autres citations de cette teneur, voir Goerg, à paraître, 2012, par ex. ANS 21 G 193 : Cyrille Aguessy, président du comité catholique du cinéma au Sénégal, 12 mai 1954.
29. Ambler (2007) ; Burns « John Wayne… » (2002) ; Convents (2006: 167sq ; 178-179) « Les 'Copperbelt cow-boys' » : il parle de « bandes de jeunes qui s'affublent de noms de westerns, parfois créent des bandes de petits criminels » ; Boeck de (2000) ; Gondola 2009 ; Hair (2001).
30. Almeida-Topor d' *et al.* (1992). La tranche d'âge concernée est variable, mais le critère du statut marital est ici important, même pour les hommes qui continuent à aller seuls au cinéma une fois mariés (contrairement aux épouses).
31. Hair (2001). L'auteur note l'exotisme du Far West dans cette zone du Nigeria : « There are, incidentally, few cows and few horses in southern Nigeria, so a Cowboy appears as exotic a creature as he does in an English city ». (2001:91).
32. Pathé Diagne (entretien cité) insiste sur le fait que les illettrés vont voir des westerns et en prennent la gestuelle.

33. Hair (2001:87) note que les *Cow-boys Societies* de la ville d'Enugu qui en ont les moyens louent un cheval pour faire parader leur leader ; sinon, ils utilisent une bicyclette.
34. Pour une analyse du cinéma africain dans cette optique, voir Shaka (2004).
35. Voir le roman-clef, *L'aventure ambiguë* (Kane 1961).

On pourrait évoquer aussi les situations migratoires et le rapport à la culture dominante des pays d'accueil.

36. Hair (2001: 84 ; 89) : « At this date, the Yorubas held the lead in the race to acquire Western culture […]. The Ibos felt themselves inferior and eagerly copied Yoruba ways. » Cela passe notamment par l'emploi de la langue yoruba, non maîtrisée mais utilisée dans les chansons par les *Cow-boys Societies*.
37. Né en 1932, historien sénégalais (entretien le 7 mai 2005, Dakar).
38. Pathé Diagne formule aussi cette hypothèse (entretien cité).
39. Claude Lestrade a passé son enfance au Togo et témoigne sur cette période (1995: 212).
40. ANS 21 G 195 Commission de contrôle cinématographique, 1953-56, Dakar, dossier « Films interdits 1955 », note non datée.
41. ANS 21 G 195, réunion de la commission du 28 février 1955.
42. On censure ainsi *Paris Canaille*, *Graine de violence* … qui offrent de la jeunesse un tableau déplorable (sic).
43. Genova (2006:59) : « Thus, while film had always been a part of the imperial framework from its invention in the 1890s, it became a central site for the struggle over representations and mentalities in colonial West Africa only in the 1950s, when both imperial officials and anti-colonial cultural activists seized upon the potential inherent in cinema to articulate a « film politics' meant to more effectively convey a range of meanings to broad sectors of the population already attentive to the medium as a source of information, entertainment, and identity. Control of all dimensions of the industry became an objective of both colonizers and their resisters. »

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Pathé Diagne (Sénégal), né en 1934, entretien en avril 2006, Paris.

Bakary Kamian (Mali), né en 1926, entretien le 24 novembre 2008, Ouagadougou.

Amady Aly Dieng (Sénégal), né en 1932, entretien le 7 mai 2005, Dakar.

*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp. 95-105



# A la recherche d'un primitivisme fédérateur : le peintre Atlan et le groupe Cobra

Anissa Bouayed*

## Résumé

Quand le jeune Jean-Michel Atlan part de sa ville natale de Constantine, en 1930, à dix-huit ans, il quitte l'Algérie pour faire sa philosophie à Paris, à la Sorbonne. Epris de poésie, il fréquente le milieu artistique de Montparnasse. Militant anticolonialiste, puis engagé dans la Résistance, il se donne tout entier à la peinture dès la Libération. Son succès est fulgurant à Paris et très vite sur la scène internationale. L'artiste Atlan se revendique comme Juif berbère tout en refusant les assignations aux relents coloniaux. On parle d'un art aux tendances « barbares » ou « primitives ». Quelques années plus tard, le groupe Cobra reprend comme un étendard la notion de « primitivisme ». Cette approche d'histoire culturelle cherche à saisir en quoi l'irruption d'Atlan sur la scène de l'art et la rencontre entre Atlan et Cobra montrent pour une part les affinités communes et l'écho de cette notion dans le champ artistique contemporain.

## Abstract

When young Jean-Michel Atlan left his hometown of Constantine in 1930 at the age of eighteen, he left Algeria to read philosophy at the Sorbonne University in Paris. His love for poetry drove him into artists' circles of Montparnasse. As an anti-colonial activist and member of the Resistance Movement, he entirely indulged into painting since the start of the Liberation. He enjoyed an instant success in Paris and soon became internationally acclaimed. Atlan claims to be a Berber-Jew while denying assignments with colonial overtones. It is an art with 'barbaric' or 'primitive' trends. A few years later, the Cobra roup took up the concept of 'primitivism'. This approach to cultural history seeks to capture how Atlan barged into the arts milieu and the encounter between Atlan and Cobra shows on the one hand common affinities, and the echoes of this concept in the field of contemporary art on the other hand.

## Introduction

Quand le jeune Jean-Michel Atlan part de sa ville natale de Constantine, en 1930, à dix-huit ans, il quitte l'Algérie pour faire sa philosophie à Paris, à la Sorbonne. Epris de poésie, il fréquente le milieu artistique de Montparnasse.

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Militant anticolonialiste, puis engagé dans la Résistance, il se donne tout entier à la peinture dès la Libération. Son succès est fulgurant à Paris et très vite sur la scène internationale. L'artiste Atlan se revendique comme Juif berbère tout en refusant les assignations aux relents coloniaux. On parle d'un art aux tendances « barbares » ou « primitives ». Quelques années plus tard, le groupe Cobra reprend comme un étendard la notion de « primitivisme ». Cette approche d'histoire culturelle cherche à saisir en quoi l'irruption d'Atlan sur la scène de l'art et la rencontre entre Atlan et Cobra montrent pour une part les affinités communes et l'écho de cette notion dans le champ artistique contemporain.

## Le succès fulgurant d'une œuvre résolument novatrice

### *Un destin hors du commun entre exil et résistance au nazisme*

Atlan enseigne la philosophie quand il est victime des lois antijuives de Vichy en 1940, il ne peut plus être professeur. Il commence alors à peindre tout en entrant en contact avec la Résistance où son frère est déjà engagé (il sera tué au combat). Arrêté, Atlan simule la folie et continue à peindre au cours de son internement à l'hôpital psychiatrique Sainte-Anne, à Paris, et c'est sans doute l'acte de peindre qui le maintint en vie dans le huis clos psychiatrique. Sa vocation s'est ainsi affirmée dans un contexte hors du commun et des plus difficiles. Dès la Libération, Atlan participe au premier Salon des Surindépendants à Paris, il est exposé dans le même temps à titre individuel dans une galerie privée, la Galerie Arc-en-ciel. A partir de là, ses expositions collectives et individuelles s'enchaînent et il participe à toutes les grandes manifestations de l'art français contemporain. Pour le critique Michel Ragon, qui suivit dès leur début la carrière de Soulages ou de Hartung, Atlan est un peintre d'une même importance, l'un des plus grands de l'après-guerre en France. Peinture gestuelle, peinture du signe, peinture non figurative, Atlan anticipe sur toutes les recherches de son temps.

### *L'arrière-pays en soi*

Quels liens, même invisibles, Atlan entretenait-il avec sa culture d'origine et quelle place a-t-elle eu dans ses choix picturaux ? Quand Atlan commence à peindre, il produit d'emblée une œuvre de la maturité. Né en 1913, il a alors 30 ans et commente son œuvre en expliquant non pas pour qui il peint, mais à partir de quel lieu il peint. Kenneth White entreprend dans le texte « Atlan, une Atlantide picturale » un remarquable essai de biographie, une remontée aux sources de l'imaginaire du peintre constantinois. Sans rapport mécaniste simpliste, sans causalité forcée, en se défendant même de tout historicisme étroit, l'auteur rend au milieu culturel dans lequel Atlan a grandi et évolué « la puissance de l'émotion plastique » :[2]

> Si, sur les bancs du collège et du lycée, en lisant par exemple le *Bellum Jugurthae* de Salluste, le jeune Atlan apprend l'histoire, dans la rue et dans les alentours de la ville, il s'imprègne d'une atmosphère assez particulière. Mais le monde que connaît surtout Atlan est un monde moderne, dont la modernité s'est installée sous le signe du colonialisme. (…) Le colonialisme, c'est la main mise sur l'espace (…) Il ne s'agit pas ici d'entrer dans les détails de la politique et de l'économie, il s'agit d'observer leurs incidences sur la culture et sur l'art d'Atlan. La culture, c'est sans doute d'abord une sensation de l'espace, de l'espace vécu, a fortiori lorsqu'il s'agit d'un peintre. (…) Je ne suis pas certain que le jeune Atlan était pleinement conscient de cette situation (…) mais cela eut deux résultats : d'un côté il allait s'attacher à ce qui restait de sensoriel et de palpable; de l'autre il allait chercher une dimension de vie située bien en dehors du cadre colonial, de tous les contextes aliénés. Par ses origines, Atlan est un résistant et un rebelle (…) et le résistant, le rebelle, le mystique évoluent dans le contexte d'une terre sensible, riche en images. Il utilisera certains éléments de cette terre comme métaphores, pour dessiner les contours de cette *atopie* que nous appelons son Atlantide.[3]

## Atlan et le récit de ses identifications

### *Une matrice féconde*

L'œuvre d'Atlan est bien loin de tout réalisme analogique, de copie de la réalité. Il ne s'agit pas ici de peinture figurative au sens conventionnel, encore moins de peinture de paysage. Les genres académiques ont peu de place ici. Mais tous ceux qui ont approché et connu Atlan insistent sur le lien à la terre et à la culture d'origine.

Alors, comment dire qu'Atlan peint à partir d'un lieu, à la fois géographique, mythique et objet mental, qui lui sert de matrice ? En se référant aussi à ce qu'il dit lui-même de son identité, d'homme et de peintre, « Mes origines sont judéo-berbères, comme un peu tout le monde là-bas dans cette vieille ville, comme Jugurtha, qui fut la capitale de la Numidie et qui est construite avec des rochers, des ravins, des nids d'aigle et des cactus » (Bénézit 1999:520). Le peintre algérien Abdallah Benanteur comme le grand critique d'art (et ami d'Atlan) Michel Ragon insistent sur cette revendication d'Atlan qui n'a pas été une formule facile, mais plutôt une constante de son discours qu'il tenait haut et fort. L'Algérie, sans doute mythifiée dans son passé, était ainsi très présente, non pas comme chez les orientalistes, de l'extérieur mais bien de l'intérieur. La référence dans le monde de l'art, le dictionnaire *Bénézit*, synthétise de cette manière la place singulière de la peinture d'Atlan : « On s'accorde unanimement à en reconnaître le caractère barbare, bien que formulé en toute clarté d'esprit dans des peintures sévèrement

construites où traînent des échos de l'Afrique profonde » (*Bénézit* 1999:520). Le discours était prévalent au point qu'un peintre ami comme Corneille, (qui appartint au groupe Cobra), dédie un dessin, à la mort d'Atlan en 1960 à « Atlan, peintre kabyle » (*Action poétique* 1961).

Le substrat culturel fait fonction de matrice à l'œuvre créatrice, passe par le geste et le rythme. Deux caractéristiques fondamentales de l'œuvre d'Atlan. Ajoutons à cela la dimension centrale de l'exil, cette mobilité voulue et qui est reconnue dans l'art contemporain comme l'un des moteurs essentiels de la création artistique.

### *Le primitivisme moderne, catégorie libératrice*

Ses fervents admirateurs, dont le célèbre critique André Verdet voit dans les toiles d'Atlan « les ombres immenses d'un plein Midi des tropiques dans la forêt vierge ou bien les spectres allongés du soleil au coeur de la nuit saharienne »(*Action poétique* 1961:521). Son ami et critique Michel Ragon parle d'« une faune et une flore qu'on n'avait pas vues ailleurs, parfois l'humanité primitive encore mal dégagée de la matrice universelle ». (Ragon *in Benezit* 1999). Dans ce même texte, il reprenait l'idée du caractère « barbare » de l'œuvre, terme utilisé ici de façon positive, comme antidote puissant aux conventions répétitives de l'art occidental, comme une sorte de bain de jouvence. Lors d'une « visite d'atelier », l'écrivain et critique René de Solier parle de « manifestation rituelle » et d'un « monde hybride » (Solier 1953).

Au-delà du regard des amis et des critiques, il y a encore le discours que le peintre lui-même tient sur le monde qu'il porte en lui et qui lui est non seulement source d'inspiration mais aussi affinités électives. Atlan eut le génie de revendiquer son inspiration, sans être assigné dans un genre mineur de peintre exotique. L'individuation, l'affirmation de soi de l'artiste furent ses remparts les plus sûrs contre toute visée folklorique. « Mes formes n'ont pas de passeport, pas de papier d'identité », disait-il.

A travers sa propre trajectoire, d'homme issu du monde colonisé, dominé par la puissance politico-militaire des Etats européens, issu de cultures que la civilisation européenne moderne déstructura et minora, Atlan fait un choix culturel largement assumé et proclamé en différents écrits, qui rattache sa propre cosmogonie aux mondes dits périphériques. La dimension berbère, la référence au judaïsme du Maghreb s'amplifient par des références plus vastes aux cultures africaines ou amérindiennes par exemple. Dès 1948, il déclare dans ses entretiens avec l'écrivain Aimé Patri : « J'admire par-dessus tout l'art des Dogons, celui des Précolombiens et des anciens Assyriens. Il faut que les formes qu'on invente soient capables de « vivre » aussi bien que celles qu'on trouve dans la nature. »[4]

***Les titres, « indication poétique »***

Les titres, autre indice, sont très souvent un guide pour la lecture d'une œuvre. Leur relevé sur tout le corpus du catalogue raisonné constitue une série significative, à mon sens, des préoccupations présentes au moment de la création, tout en se gardant bien de réduire l'œuvre à un thème ou à un sujet précis et anecdotique. Par précaution, je préfère dire encore qu'il ne s'agit absolument pas d'une peinture « analogique ». Atlan disait lui-même : « Le problème des titres est en effet irritant. J'en ai donné autrefois, j'en redonne aujourd'hui. (…) Pourtant, le titre est nécessaire. D'abord pour une raison pratique. (…) Ensuite le titre donne au spectateur une suggestion, une indication poétique. (…) à mi-chemin entre ce qui risquerait d'épaissir – ou d'éclaircir – le « mystère » de mes formes » (Atlan cité par White 89). Si Atlan donne peu de titres à ses œuvres (la plus grande majorité des œuvres n'est pas désignée par un titre), le sens de l'identité transparaît, en revanche, presque toujours dans les intitulés des œuvres qui en expriment la dimension. Identité religieuse (référent *sui generis* du père féru de la Kabale et d'ésotérisme) et identité culturelle sont présentes dans « Le lion de Judas » de1945, la série des « Miroirs du roi Salomon » de 1959. Egalement et surtout, au moment même où les combats en Algérie ne pouvaient pas ne pas avoir de résonnance chez cet artiste, ne nomme-t-il pas une toile « Les Aurès »,une autre « La Kahena »en 1958, désignant ainsi le lieu et le symbole emblématiques de la résistance algérienne. Il ne s'agit pas bien sûr d'une position politique ou d'une peinture « à sujet », mais de l'indice d'un fonds culturel que l'artiste porte en lui et qu'il convoque dans le présent. C'est d'ailleurs cette partie du monde, d'où il est issu, qui revient sous les qualificatifs de Maghreb (terme pourtant peu utilisé à l'époque où l'on parlait plutôt d'Afrique du Nord et de Nord-Africains) : Toiles nommées « Maghreb I », « Maghreb II ». De façon plus intérieure au monde de cette région, il nomme aussi une toile, en 1954, « Peinture berbère »[5]. C'est à mon sens la seule de ses œuvres qui porte ce titre tout à fait générique, ouvert, sans recherche d'un titre plus codé, ou plus poétique. « Peinture berbère », ce titre a la simplicité d'une profession de foi ou d'un manifeste. « La rutilante « Peinture berbère » où se profile l'arrière-pays des songes », dit justement Kenneth White.[6] La dimension africaine est également très présente, avec plusieurs œuvres qui se nomment « Rythmes africains I »(en 1954) et « Rythmes africains II » (en 1959), « Sahara », « Sahel », « Soudan, African Queen », etc. En revanche, si l'on procède à « une lecture en creux », on ne trouve aucun titre contenant l'item : Algérie ou Algérien. Ce qui est aussi à mon sens l'indice d'un attachement culturel fort, mais d'un évitement strict de l'engagement politique au moment

des épreuves de la décolonisation. Anticolonialiste militant dans les années 1930, Atlan comme créateur se garde désormais de laisser transparaître un thème politique dans sa peinture. Aucun réalisme ne lui sied.

## L'œuvre comme métamorphose d'un lien puissant au réel

### *La conférence de Copenhague*

Atlan a eu la dent dure contre le réalisme socialiste qui fut l'une des modalités de dénonciation de la guerre et de ses violences, des inégalités sociales, dans la peinture. Mais il est aussi intransigeant contre toute volonté analogique de copie du réel, d'une part, et, d'autre part, il s'insurge contre toute abstraction dite pure, qui ne vaut que pour elle-même. Il essaya toute sa vie de peintre de se placer au-dessus du débat abstraction/figuration qui était virulent dans le Paris de l'après-Deuxième-Guerre mondiale, et toujours repris dans les années 1950, 1960.[7]

En 1950, il déclare au moment de sa deuxième exposition à Copenhague :

> La peinture actuelle, en temps qu'aventure essentielle et création, est menacée par deux conformismes auxquels nous nous opposons absolument :
>
> a) le réalisme banal, imitation vulgaire de la réalité
>
> b) l'art abstrait orthodoxe, nouvel académisme qui tente de substituer à la peinture vivante un jeu de formes uniquement décoratif. (…)
>
> Les formes qui nous paraissent aujourd'hui les plus valables, tant par leur organisation plastique que par leur intensité expressive, ne sont à proprement parler ni abstraites, ni figuratives.
>
> Elles participent précisément à ces puissances cosmiques de la métamorphose, où se situe la véritable aventure (d'où surgissent des formes qui sont elles-mêmes et autre chose qu'elles-mêmes (*Dialogues* 112-113).

### *Les éléments d'intérêt de Cobra pour Atlan : une convergence ?*

Dans cette déclaration d'une clarté limpide, même si la marge de création semble alors étroite, on peut immédiatement saisir ce qui a fait le socle du rapprochement des jeunes artistes de Cobra avec la pensée d'Atlan et sa peinture. Car c'est entre ces deux écueils, ainsi nommés par le peintre, que les artistes du groupe vont essayer eux aussi ensemble de faire front. Cette volonté de résilier les doctrines qu'ils considéraient comme stérilisantes est à la base de l'originalité de leur apparition sur la scène artistique européenne de l'après-guerre. La Conférence, citée plus haut, a d'ailleurs était reprise dès 1950 par la Revue du groupe Cobra, qui demandait alors à des artistes déjà reconnus (Dubuffet, Bazaine, Giacometti, Mathieu…) d'exprimer leur point de vue sur l'art contemporain. Tout montre que les membres du groupe

Cobra, qui sont arrivés de leur côté à ses conclusions, cherchent chez les grands aînés une filiation ou pour le moins une reconnaissance.

Cobra, avant l'invention du sigle, se cherche dès 1945, par la volonté d'Asger Jorn, du poète Dotremont pour accoucher en 1948 de cet acrostiche Cobra, qui montre par le procédé du collage que leur destin ne peut être qu'Européen. On peut même faire remonter aux recherches novatrices des artistes belges, danois et hollandais dès les années 1930 les antécédences qui ont abouti à la naissance du groupe.

Cette recherche d'un art qu'ils nommeront expérimental a été marquée profondément par le contexte de l'après-guerre. Nous sommes alors dans une Europe sidérée par les destructions, la découverte des camps de concentration, et particulièrement dans cette Europe du Nord, par la culpabilité et la conscience de tragédies irréparables. Pour les artistes, l'idée de *l'irreprésentable* est forte, comme l'est tout autant celle de devoir, sous forme d'une responsabilité existentielle, reprendre le chemin de la création sans laisser le grand public sur le bord du chemin. Le contenu « populaire » de leur démarche est donc une dimension revendiquée. N'oublions pas qu'Asger Jorn en tête, l'idée du communisme, du progrès social et culturel sont dans les préoccupations de certains membres de ce groupe. Adeptes d'une pensée révolutionnaire, ils dénoncent toutefois la peinture du réalisme socialiste pour sa facilité propagandiste et sa soumission aux arcanes du pouvoir politique, dans une instrumentalisation de l'art. Pour eux, l'art doit être en lui-même révolutionnaire. Cela les conduit aussi à critiquer avec force « l'embourgeoisement » du mouvement surréaliste, sa dimension hyper-intellectuelle qui le coupe des masses, conspuant vertement André Breton. Certains d'entre eux prennent acte devant l'histoire de leurs distances avec ce mouvement par la publication du « Manifeste surréaliste-révolutionnaire ».

### *La rencontre avec Atlan*

Paris reprend alors une place importante dans la création artistique et c'est tout naturellement que Jorn et quelques autres s'intéressent aux peintres novateurs qui, à Paris, sortent des sentiers battus : ils se rapprochent de Dubuffet dont le concept d'art brut est en pleine gestation, et d'Atlan qui est l'un des artistes les plus inventifs de l'après-guerre et dont la renommée est fulgurante. La nouveauté de la démarche d'Atlan, qui place le geste avant le sujet, son substrat culturel, la spontanéité et le côté « primitif » de sa peinture ont des résonnances profondes sur Jorn et les autres membres du groupe.

Sur le plan factuel, les biographes d'Atlan insistent sur le voyage fait par Jorn en 1946 dans le but explicite de rencontrer Atlan qui tenait un atelier ouvert, rue de la Grande Chaumière, tous les samedis. Contacts antérieurs donc à la formation de Cobra, mais qui indique les affinités et les convergences.

Jorn suit le travail d'Atlan. Il est présent aux expositions que fait Atlan au Salon Corner à Copenhague en 1948 et 1949, haut lieu de l'art expérimental. C'est au cours de ces rencontres informelles que Jorn demande à Atlan et à Michel Ragon, qui accompagne l'œuvre de son ami peintre par des articles éclairés, des textes pour le numéro inaugural de la revue Cobra, en 1948 puis pour la petite bibliothèque Cobra en 1949. Ce deuxième texte de Michel Ragon, accompagné d'illustrations d'Atlan, est une monographie et devient un petit ouvrage autonome qui prend place, aux côtés des monographies des peintres de Cobra, dans ce que Jorn avait appelé *Encyclopédie permanente de l'art expérimental.*

Selon les biographes d'Atlan, le fait d'être intégré à une série, associé « malgré lui » de facto au destin collectif de Cobra, aurait fâché le peintre. Sans doute Atlan ne souhaitait-il être associé à aucun groupe de façon organique. Pourtant, un an plus tard, il donne encore un texte à Jorn. Texte important puisqu'il s'agit de la conférence faite à Copenhague l'an passé dans laquelle Atlan fait l'effort conceptuel de situer son art dans l'histoire plus globale de la peinture du long XXe siècle. Laisser paraître chez Cobra cette prise de position esthétique et spirituelle sans concession peut en effet laisser penser que les liens aves le groupe étaient très solides depuis les débuts des publications du groupe.

En dehors de ces publications, Atlan n'a pas marqué de sa présence les manifestations spectaculaires et souvent scandaleuses du groupe Cobra. Sans doute par refus de toute affiliation et surtout par tempérament solitaire, en tant qu'homme et en tant qu'artiste qui ne souhaite pas résoudre collectivement ses questions picturales. Pourtant, depuis les années 1980, les grandes rétrospectives concernant les mouvements artistiques de l'après-Deuxième Guerre mondiale font à Cobra une place incontournable. Dans ces rétrospectives, Atlan est toujours associé au destin du groupe.

### *Le désir d'un art naturel, le retour au mythe du primitivisme*

Toutefois, les affinités, les convergences demeurent et mettent en résonnance des approches artistiques marquées par des préoccupations similaires, même si la singularité de chaque artiste est indéniable.

Sans aucun doute, a été très évocatrice pour Cobra : la singularité d'un artiste tel qu'Atlan qui disait de lui-même :

> Moi, mes préoccupations magiques et mystiques se retrouvent dans ma peinture. (…) Mes lignes de force m'auraient conduit, en un autre temps, à être sorcier ou danseur (…) Je me sens proche des Hassidîm, des derviches musulmans, des danseurs bouddhistes, des envoûtés d'Afrique ou d'Amérique. (…) Ce ne sont pas les musées qui m'ont conduit à être peintre mais les chamanes. Le besoin de rythme caractérise ma peinture.

En effet, la démarche du groupe Cobra va aussi se frotter aux possibilités créatrices qu'ils voient dans les arts premiers, on disait alors primitifs. Ils considèrent alors qu'il existe dans les cultures populaires, les folklores, des universaux propres à revitaliser l'art. Par ce retour aux mythes et ce détour vers les mondes non européens, ces artistes veulent se détourner d'une culture classique occidentale qu'ils jugent antinaturelle, formaliste, aliénante. Le vieux fonds culturel des peuples nordiques fascine le danois Asger Jorn qui ira aussi se ressourcer en Tunisie, étudiant les motifs populaires (tapis, *Khamsa* appelée alors *Main de Fatma*). L'artiste hollandais Corneille part à plusieurs reprises en Tunisie et dans le Sud algérien. Encore :

> Du côté hollandais, Karel Appel avait subi l'influence du cubisme et de l'art tribal africain, Anton Rooskens avait été fortement impressionné quelques années auparavant par la découverte de grandes statues d'ancêtres de Nouvelle-Guinée et par l'art africain, et Eugène Brands avait collectionné les objets primitifs et dessiné des masques africains. L'influence des arts exotiques est, au départ, moins évidente chez les Belges, mais on sait la part qu'ont occupé les statuettes et masques tribaux dans l'expérience surréaliste (Mater 2008:154 à 205).

### *Le questionnement des notions*

Ces artistes avaient une vision généreuse, ouverte de la culture. Leur but avoué était non seulement de révolutionner l'art, mais aussi de faire évoluer les rapports sociaux vers plus de participation et de partage. On peut se demander toutefois s'ils n'ont pas été piégés par leur propre vitalité, leur espérance débordante dans la construction d'un monde nouveau qui reconnaîtrait la valeur culturelle de chaque peuple dans le grand concert du monde. Pressés, ils assimilent sans grande rigueur les termes arts primitifs/ arts populaires, ou encore arts dits primitifs et spontanéité. D'autres textes, comme ceux de Constant, comparent en guise d'éloges la spontanéité de l'enfant à celle des cultures dites primitives, source selon lui de vérité, alors que l'homme moderne vit dans le mensonge.

Graham Birtwistle, historien de l'art, reprenant l'usage de la notion de primitivisme dans le champ de la modernité artistique, en analyse la revendication chez Cobra et en révèle « une certaine ambivalence » : « le primitivisme de Cobra (…) ne peut se définir uniquement comme une question de relations culturelles entre l'Occidental et l'Autre. Mais, en tant que produit de son temps qui ne pouvait renier ses racines typiquement européennes, le primitivisme de Cobra véhiculait certainement sa propre part de positions et d'idées de base qui ne seraient plus jugées acceptables dans le contexte actuel de politique culturelle » (Birtwistle:144 à 153). Toutefois, l'intérêt de Cobra pour les autres cultures va beaucoup plus loin que celles des premiers peintres

européens trouvant dans d'autres univers des formes de quoi renouveler leur propre travail plastique. Pour Cobra, comme pour Atlan, il s'agit non seulement de recherches formelles, mais surtout d'une démarche empreinte de spiritualité. L'influence du philosophe français Gaston Bachelard, attestée pour Jorn, décisive pour Atlan qui correspondit longtemps avec le philosophe, contribue aussi à rechercher dans la poésie et la création artistique des symboles fondamentaux inspirés par les éléments naturels. La dernière lettre d'Atlan, peu avant sa mort annoncée, parle en termes magiques de la peinture « aventure qui met l'homme aux prises avec les forces redoutables qui sont en lui et hors de lui, le destin, la nature » (Atlan 1959:145). Le terme d'art naturel revient souvent sous la plume des Cobra. Notons que la plupart des membres de Cobra ont pris ouvertement des positions anticolonialistes dans la phase des guerres coloniales. Le côté rousseauiste de leur empathie pour les autres cultures relevant aussi d'une vision naïve de ces cultures, perçues comme « naturelles » et comme puissant antidote à la culture bourgeoise, conformiste de l'Europe. Ce faisant, ils ont largement libéré leur propre potentiel créateur et ont contribué à propager des éléments de connaissance et de valorisation des cultures extra-européennes (comme le montre l'exposition actuelle « Cobra et les masques » au Musée Cobra d'Amsterdam). Dans les années 1980, une grande exposition à New York, sur le primitivisme dans l'art, avait reçu de cinglantes critiques. On jugea même inadmissible qu'à l'ère postcoloniale, on puisse continuer à ne voir les arts premiers que comme faire-valoir des artistes primitivistes occidentaux, dans une conception relevant de l'européocentrisme. Doit-on appliquer ce même jugement aux artistes de Cobra ? Que dire alors de la vision poétique et mythique d'Atlan, issu lui-même de la périphérie dominée, qui élargit son univers sensoriel aux cultures non européennes qui l'inspirent ?

Leur approche est sans doute aussi redevable d'une période historique particulière de remise en cause de la culture européenne au moment où les violences de la décolonisation agitent le monde, noyant l'idée de « mission civilisatrice » dans un bain de sang.[8] Et c'est cette temporalité particulière qui fait du primitivisme de Cobra un formidable pouvoir de levier pour s'arracher aux traditions et aux conventions de la peinture académique. Leur effort participe d'une révolution permanente de l'art, d'une volonté émancipatrice tout en contenant, comme tout phénomène d'hybridation, des ambiguïtés certaines.

Le goût pour la médiatisation de leurs apparitions publiques, le succès sur la longue durée de leur brève entreprise collective, l'originalité poétique et l'ouverture de l'univers de ces peintres ont, de toute façon, contribué à imposer dans le champ culturel européen *la coprésence*[9] des arts non européens. Les peintres issus d'autres cultures, souvent en exil, eurent eux aussi une part

décisive dans ces coprésences artistiques foisonnantes, hybrides, et sans cesse renouvelées. Quant à la réception explicite de ces tendances primitivistes auprès des artistes en exil ou créant dans leur pays d'origine, les précédents plus anciens de Paul Klee en Tunisie[10] ou de Matisse au Maroc[11] eurent un impact certain sur la création moderne d'artistes autochtones comme un levier pour sortir de l'orientalisme. De même que pour les artistes algériens ou maghrébins, l'œuvre d'Atlan[12] est considérée comme fondatrice d'une nouvelle esthétique.

## Notes

1. Citation de Flaubert après son voyage dans l'Est algérien et en Orient (1848-1851) et avant d'écrire *Salammbô.*
2. In *Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre complet, Atlan,* p 39 Paris, Gallimard, 1996, 676. pages.
3. Entretien avec Aimé Patri, publié dans la Revue *Paru*, n°42, mai 1948.
4. Reproduite in *Catalogue raisonné* n°242, p. 226.
5. Reproduite in *Catalogue raisonné* n°242, p. 117.
6. A Paris, les courants réalistes : Nouveaux réalistes et Figuration narrative ne font surface qu'au début des années 1960.
7. Voir à ce propos l'ouvrage sur le témoignage des artistes internationaux face à l a Guerre d'Algérie : Anissa Bouayed , *« L'art et l'Algérie insurgée »,* Alger, ENAG, 2005.
8. L'écrivain Edouard Glissant utilise ce terme en lieu et place de métissage.
9. Entretien avec Abdallah Benanteur, peintre algérien non figuratif, 2007.
10. Entretien avec Choukri Mesli, peintre algérien, ancien professeur aux beaux arts d'Alger à l'Indépendance, fondateur du groupe *Aouchem.*
11. Ecrits du peintre algérien non figuratif, Mohamed Khadda, principal représentant de l'Ecole du signe en Algérie, in *« Eléments pour un art nouveau »*,Alger, UNAP, 1972, p. 51.
12. Le peintre constantinois Nadir Remita, issu des générations d'après l'Indépendance, se réclame aussi d'Atlan, Correspondances avec le peintre, 2008-2009.

*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp. 107-130



# Colonial Encounters: A Danish Planter in German East Africa

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*This article is a slightly revised version of a paper for the 21st International Congress of Historical Sciences, Amsterdam 22-28 August 2010, presented in the workshop: Colonial Empires in Africa and Cultural Hybridity. It benefited from comments and discussion in the workshop, so thanks are due both to the convenor, the discussant and participants in the workshop.*

## Abstract

In 1888, Christian Lautherborn set out to establish a cotton plantation for the German East Africa Company in Pangani, Tanzania. Little did he know that he was heading out at a dramatic moment, and would soon (literally) be caught in the crossfire of a war between the coastal Africans, the Zanzibar government and German imperialist interventions. While in Tanzania, Lautherborn wrote a series of letters, some published in a local Danish newspaper and some written privately to family. A substantial number of Christian Lautherborn's letters home were printed in a newspaper, *Vendsyssel Tidende*, as 'Letters from our correspondent in German East Africa'. This article will take its point of departure in the analysis of differences between what may be termed the 'public' and the 'private' discourses in the letters. Parts of the letters may be read as a contribution to the formation of a colonial discourse in Denmark/Europe. Here one finds a number of familiar stereotypes about Africa and Africans. On the other hand, some of the letters, often eyewitness accounts of incidents that diverge from the common colonial discourse, suggest very different interpretations. The letters may thus be read both as a way of negotiating African experiences and European expectations and also as evidence of cultural adaptation and hybridity.

The article will therefore comment on discrepancies between common stereotypes present in the letters about the African's childishness, laziness etc. and Christian Lautherborn's actions as a plantation manager and member of colonial society. A careful reading of Lautherborn's letters also reveals a number of contradictions between what he says and what he does.

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## Résumé

En 1888, Christian Lautherborn entrepris de créer une plantation de coton pour la société allemande d'Afrique orientale à Pangani en Tanzanie. Il ne savait pas qu'il allait ainsi s'empêtrer dans un bourbier, et qu'il se trouverait plus tard (littéralement) pris entre les feux croisés d'une guerre qui opposait les Africains de la région du littoral, le gouvernement de Zanzibar et les forces impérialistes allemandes. Pendant qu'il vivait en Tanzanie, Lautherborn a écrit une série de lettres, dont certaines ont été publiées dans un journal local danois et d'autres lettres privées adressées à sa famille.Un nombre important des lettres que Christian Lautherborn a postées dans son pays d'origine ont été publiées dans le journal *Vendsyssel Tidende* sous la rubrique « Lettres de notre correspondant en Afrique orientale allemande. » Cet article bâtira son argumentaire autour de l'analyse des différences entre ce qu'on peut appeler le discours « public » et « privé » qui transparait dans les lettres. Une partie des lettres peut être perçue comme une contribution à la formation d'un discours colonial au Danemark/Europe. Ici, on trouve un certain nombre de stéréotypes familiers sur l'Afrique et les Africains. D'autre part, certaines des lettres, souvent des témoignages d'incidents qui s'écartent du discours colonial commun et proposent des interprétations très différentes. Les lettres peuvent donc être lues à la fois comme un moyen de négocier les expériences africaines et les attentes européennes et aussi comme une preuve de l'adaptation et de la mixité culturelle. L'article se propose donc de commenter les écarts entre les stéréotypes populaires qui ponctuent les lettres au sujet de l'enfantillage, de la paresse de l'Africain, etc. et les actions de Christian Lautherborn en tant que gérant de plantations et membre de la société coloniale. Une lecture attentive des lettres de Lautherborn révèle également un certain nombre de contradictions entre ce qu'il dit et ce qu'il fait.


The point of departure of this article is a collection of letters written by the Danish planter Christian Lautherborn to his family home in Denmark during the years he worked for Deutsch Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft (DOAG) in German East Africa (GEA, today's Tanzania). Christian Lautherborn (CL) was born in 1859. In 1879, he migrated to the United States (Texas), hoping to earn enough money to return home and buy a farm of his own. We do not know exactly what motivated him to take on the job as plantation manager for DOAG and migrate to East Africa in 1888, but it seems he had some money problems in Texas and thought working in Tanzania would enable him to achieve his initial goals. Before migrating to the US he had been an agricultural trainee on two Danish manors. Agricultural trainees normally entered a career as land managers, working for the owner of a manor. He thus had an educational background as a land manager and during his year in Texas he had learned to grow cotton, which is not grown in Denmark. He thus had a proper education for a plantation manager. He also had strong language skills, teaching himself English while in the United States. He probably knew German from home as most educated Danes in the nineteenth century could read and speak German, and during his first years in East

Africa he also learned to speak Swahili, giving him unusual access to the local communities in GEA.

Most of his letters were written to his sister, who was married to the editor of a local Danish newspaper, *Vendsyssel Tidende* (VT). His brother in law, the newspaper's progressive editor, took the opportunity and printed a substantial number of Christian Lautherborn's letters in VT under the heading 'From our correspondent in East Africa'. It may seem strange that an editor of a Danish provincial newspaper in the 1890s would want to print the letters. However, David Livingstone's and especially H.M. Stanley's newspaper articles and books had spurred an interest for travel accounts from Africa among Danish readers in the late nineteenth century. That interest probably explains why CL's brother-in-law took the opportunity to stage CL as 'our correspondent in East Africa'. The letters were printed with minor alterations. In this way CL's letters became part of the public discourse on colonialism and particularly on Africa at the end of the nineteenth century in Denmark. Denmark did not count among colonial powers at the end of the nineteenth century, but as Europeans, Danes took a general interest in other European nations' colonial/imperial projects. As already mentioned Stanley was a well-known figure in Danish popular magazines and newspapers at that time. Reading CL's letters (and the letters printed as newspaper articles) it is fairly easy to find a number of common nineteenth century European stereotypes about Africa and the Blacks. But there is more to the letters than stereotypes. Read carefully, they reveal the story of how CL adapted to his new life as a plantation manager in Africa, and how he negotiated what was expected of him as a European and a plantation manager with his own experiences, shaped often by a Danish lens, but also deeply influenced by his experiences of daily life in German East Africa. Indeed, the letters reveal a gradual adaptation to life in Africa. In the beginning he still spoke about returning home some day, but he stayed on for 18 years (until his death) and in some of his last letters he states that he will never return as he has found a home in Africa. Some of his first letters are written in an H.M. Stanley style, where he talks about all the dangers that lurk on 'the dark continent' with snakes, scorpions, wild men etc., but the dangers gradually disappear and in his last years, they give place to an almost idyllic picture of life on his plantation, albeit one that recognised the many challenges facing agricultural producers in the region.

The letters most obviously serve as a source for CL's reflections on his experiences as a plantation manager and reveal a number of details about life on the plantation seen through the eyes of a plantation manager under pressure to discover new ways to profit from East African agriculture. The letters also provide glimpses into the social life of Europeans in the region,

particularly the details of get-togethers and holidays. But the letters are also important sources for knowledge about Lautherborn's African workers, both those struggling to adapt to life as plantation labourers, as well as the construction workers and caravan labourers he worked with during his stint building houses in Bagamoyo. Glimpses of family life emerge as well. The letters thus offer new insights into the colonial project, and its impact on both colonisers and colonised.

Colonial imperialism is normally seen as a Western project defined by the ideas and practices of the colonial/imperial power in authority in a given situation. Yet we argue that if you look closely at individuals participating in the colonial project, this assumption is complicated by a number of factors. Power and its execution is a many-facetted process of empowerment and disempowerment in this complex arena. The article will comment on discrepancies between common stereotypes present in the letters about the behaviour of Africans on the plantation and in other sites and Christian Lautherborn's actions as a plantation manager and member of colonial society. A careful reading of Christian Lautherborn's letters reveals a number of contradictions between what he says and what he does. The contradictions between discourse and actions raise some important questions about established notions about the power of discourse, and suggest a need to adopt a more nuanced view of the relationship between discourse and agency. For such an undertaking the concept of performativity (Butler 1997) may prove useful, along with Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry (Bhabha 1994). Both Butler and Bhabha focus on enactment in the form of 'speech acts' or daily behaviour based on social norms or habits (performative acts). Performativity may in this sense equal 'doing', implying that it is through 'doing' that social relations and processes are constructed.[1] We use the term performativity because it calls attention to how agency contributes to cultural constructions of social positions. Besides, it seemed to us to be a useful term because it also calls attention to the way the public interprets or perceives a 'speech act' or a 'doing'. Butler focuses on how what she terms regulative discourses coerce subjects to perform in certain ways, but she also stresses that performativity (the way people act or perform in a specific situation) has the potential to subvert a regulative discourse. Homi Bhabha mainly focuses on the ambivalence inherent in colonial encounters. Mimicry refers to the way the colonial subject mimics positions assigned by the colonial discourse. Mimicry at one and the same time represents a resemblance and a menace/challenge to these positions as the colonial subject is always only partially appropriated and represented in the colonial discourse. Both Butler and Bhabha raise important questions about the relationship between discourse and agency. The complicating factor taking CL's letters as a point of departure is that his

actions are so to speak performed on two different scenes and the enactment related to at least two different discourses or cultural contexts, one basically Western and the other a local/African context. We will in this article focus particularly on the way CL's actions (what he actually does) are interpreted, both by CL himself through the way he relates incidents in his letters home, and by his African workers. We argue that it is not the individual act in itself that is either 'Western' or 'African' to use a rude, binary set of classification, but the way the individual acts become interpreted. What is especially interesting is that the same act may be interpreted in different ways and thus serve as an enactment in different discourses or cultural contexts. We will argue that, especially in a colonial context, it is essential to look at action both as an alternative and supplement to analysis of metropolitan colonial discourses. Without stretching the argument too far we will also argue that it is particularly useful to examine colonial actors who, like CL, do not come from the colonial power they are working for, because they can bring a different cultural and political value system to the colonial experience that offers the possibility of a different interpretation of colonial authority and practice, both by colonial authorities and by the subjects they encounter.

Whether the term 'cultural hybridity' is a useful term or not is not the main point of discussion in this article, although it gives certain labeled cultural transformation i.e. a process which eventually created a new kind of culture and social life on African soil. What we want to escape is, like many others, exactly a rude, binary classification of cultural signs (including actions) as either/or and instead point out that the colonial encounter created a complicated, fluid hybrid culture, that contained elements of 'Western' and 'African' but that in many ways can be seen as a local colonial culture of its own.

## Hybridity and Performativity – taking on the Role as Plantation Manager

One of the stereotypes widely held about Africans in this period was that they were ignorant and superstitious. They were 'wild men' whereas the Europeans were civilised and therefore superior. This superiority was used in the European colonial/imperial discourse to justify the colonial project and the Europeans' role as natural masters. The following examples from CL's letters tell us about how he learned to cope with the limits of rational explanations and the utility (or not) of Western ways and Western knowledge as a tool of power. We explore the way his own understanding of the world and colonial management techniques changed over time, particularly his adoption of local symbols of power and power hierarchies. The three examples

all revolve around sorcerers, superstition, scientific explanations, medicine and curing illnesses.

CL started work setting up a plantation to grow cotton when he arrived in Pangani, a coastal town in Northern Tanzania, in 1888. The work was soon interrupted and came to a complete stand still when the coastal uprising in 1888-1890 broke out. He fled to the German garrison in town and was part of the group rescued by the Zanbari. After a period in Bagamoyo, where he rebuilt much of the town, CL returned to Pangani in February 1891 to start rebuilding the plantation. The incident with the lunar eclipse takes place in June 1891. The incident with the sick young woman takes place around September 1891, and the encounter with a sorcerer/medicine man, related in a newspaper article in September 1892, took place in the first half of 1892.

*The Lunar Eclipse*

CL writes about superstition and the belief in evil spirits among his workers. Among other incidents he relates a story about a lunar eclipse. CL noticed that his workers one evening made a lot of noise, beating on drums and cans in order to drive away the evil spirits that wanted to swallow the moon. After the eclipse had taken place CL tried to educate his labourers by telling them about the solar system; how the earth rotates around the sun and how this may result in a lunar eclipse, using three balls to explain – probably the way he himself had had the solar system explained at home.

> I did not, however, get very far, because none of them would believe that the earth rotates. If it did all the houses would fall off, and people could not stand on a ball, even if it was very big, when it started to move. They laughed greatly over my joke, as they called it. I saw them talk about it with each other different times during the day. They always laughed heartily over it, as if I had tried to play a joke on them. But it was actually too much to ask that they would believe it; it sounds so incredible.[2]

So CL gives up on his project to educate his workers by presenting a natural scientific explanation to the lunar eclipse. The episode in the letter juxtaposes the superstition among the natives with the enlightened, knowledgeable, superior Whites. Thus while sympathetic to his workers' reaction/disbelief, his sense of superiority over the superstitious Blacks remains intact. The letter may be read, or most probably was read home in Denmark, as a funny story of how the workers on the plantation reacted. It may, however, also be read as a story, although rendered with humour, where CL looks with self-conscious irony at his own performance, which turned out not to have achieved the wished-for effect.

### *The Sick Young Woman*

The workers on the plantation tell CL that they will abandon their work and depart, because the plantation is haunted by the devil.[3] CL starts out trying to explain to the workers that evil spirits do not exist and that there is a rational explanation for the young woman's illness. People on the plantation get sick like people everywhere else and for the same reasons. CL, however, knows that he will be in serious trouble if the workers leave the plantation that he is trying to rebuild. So, once more, CL tries out Western rational explanations, hoping they would do away with the belief in evil spirits by enlightening the people. He tries to reason with his workers, but fails. Not succeeding, he decides to resort to a different tactic.

> I then went to the people and explained that the woman became sick not with the Devil's help, but like all other people become sick here and everywhere else. They said that in other places they become well again, but here they always die, because the Devil is involved. I told them that the woman was not dead yet and might become well again. 'Yes maybe' they said, 'but if she dies, which is more likely, will you then believe that the Devil is here?' I said no that I did not believe in the Devil. 'But if the young woman gets well, will you give up your belief in the Devil and stay with me?'. Yes, they all agreed. 'Let's go to work then', I said, 'and if the woman dies we can have a meeting tomorrow.[4]

CL does all he can to cure the young woman. He knows she has malaria and he also knows the cure – so he gives orders to the women taking care of the patient. He does not try to explain, he simply tells the women what to do. The quotation shows that the question of curing the young woman has turned into a kind of power struggle between CL and the evil spirits. His workers have agreed to reconsider leaving the plantation <u>if</u> the young woman is cured, so there is really a great deal at stake for CL. He succeeds in curing the young woman (among others by giving her quinine pills) and she returns to health. The incident in fact turns out to be an empowering act. CL shows his workers that he is in command in a double sense, by taking over command of the women taking care of the sick woman and by succeeding in curing her.

### *CL Taking on the Role as Medicine Man*

A medicine man is frightening the workers on the plantation. He has threatened to transform himself into a lion, if the workers do not give him substantial gifts. He is chased from the plantation/the local community firstly by the German officers (the commanding officer 'had had him caned'), but the frightened plantation workers are not sure that this will be powerful enough. Alerted by loud screaming, CL sees one of his workers trying to drag the medicine man away. In order to calm the workers down again/end the conflict, CL presents himself as an authority on witchcraft. Thus, at least on the

surface, Lautherborn concedes to the notion that you can transform people by magic, rather than trying to convince the workers that they are being ignorant or superstitious. He explains his performance carefully:

> Now we were in a mess. I therefore took on the air of an expert and demanded to see what he had in the pots hanging around his waist. He handed the whole arsenate of trash and incense to me. It was just red clay, mashed insects etc. I examined it solemnly, and after my examination I declared in a firm voice that with these items nobody would be able to transform himself into a lion only a pig. After that I took the man aside and gave him the good piece of advice to disappear as fast as he could to prevent any further unpleasantness. There was no need to tell him twice. Never in my life have I seen a man run as fast as this sorcerer. I am sure he set a record any sportsman would envy him.[5]

CL in both cases places his authority at stake. The workers on the plantation may not have discerned or differentiated between using quinine pills to cure malaria and staging oneself as medicine man, but to a European audience that would make a huge difference. Both incidents described in the printed letters, however, depict CL as the hero of the story. In the first incident because he understands and knows things the blacks do not know. This is a story about how western medicine and scientific knowledge provides an expected superior command of the world. In the other story CL acts not as a European but within the African cosmology. He, at least on the surface, acts as if he also believes in magic, albeit he states that the medicine man will not be able to transform himself into a lion, but only a pig, in this way ridiculing/ disempowering the medicine man and empowering himself, but still accepting the possibility of such a transformation. So CL does not use the authority of a white man and a white man's knowledge, but rather enters into the performance of Africans who understand power and sorcery in particular ways. He as a person thus gains authority, but European ways and supposedly superior knowledge did not necessarily at the same time gain authority over African ways. Indeed, by engaging with African dialogues about sorcery and power within their own discourse and set of practices, he is conforming to and reinforcing African notions of power and spirituality. The power he gains from his performance is that of a chieftain or medicine man, rather than a colonial authority.

Presented to the public at home in a regional newspaper, CL relates the story about the sorcerer with irony. He thus allows himself to tell his audience that he does not personally believe in magic, it is only the superstitious Africans who do. The way he relates the story in the newspaper allows it to become a tale of how the white people are in control and command. By

using irony and telling the story as a story of his own mastery of the situation, CL presents the superstitious Africans, as to a certain degree, manipulated by his actions. And, of course, they are manipulated. On the other hand the story (unintentionally) questions the notions of the all-powerful whites and their civilising mission, given that it seems they sometimes had to resort to and give in to African notions of power. The story thus raises questions about the idea of the civilising project and the kind of mark the colonial project is making on African and colonial society.

CL did not rely on the kind of power presented by the guns and authority of the German soldiers/army. If he had, he might as an example have reported the incident to the German authorities and they could first have tried to subdue the workers and afterwards have chased the medicine man away. One of the reasons why he did not pursue this tactic may be because he was more or less the only white man on the plantation (apart from a German assistant or two). So he was in fact dependent on the Africans and wanted to avoid any kind of trouble between the authorities and the workers that might have led to the workers taking the law into their own hands, thus disturbing what for CL was the most important, the work on the plantation.

However, the examples show that we have to look much more deeply into how cultural encounters and cultural hybridity interplayed with power relations in colonial arenas. Power is about getting your way. Coercion and imposition are part of the power game. Empowering yourself to become an authority is part of that game too. Yet power is also about controlling discourses, knowledge and world views. What is interesting about the examples above is the way CL empowers himself using both European and African notions of power. If we look at his actions one might even argue that he mainly empowers himself using African notions of power? In the first incident he cures the young woman (that means he is a powerful man because he makes the disease disappear, although his ability to do that is based on his Western knowledge of medicine). In the second incident, he demonstrates his power through a symbolic act based on African systems of knowledge and power, where he demonstrates his ability to use shamans' tools as well as convincing the medicine man to flee the plantation because he has been ridiculed – i.e. his power has been superseded by a more powerful presence. So he practices power and we will argue that he does it in a way that is just as much African as it is European.

When CL presents himself to the European public through the newspaper articles, he on the other hand represents himself as a white man, who is in command because he, contrary to the Africans, can grasp and see through the situation. It thereby becomes a story about white supremacy where the Africans are staged in their roles as 'wild' people (superstitious, acting in

counterproductive ways/they might kill the medicine man to be sure he does not harm them). What is most remarkable is perhaps that the performance or enactment (CL's performance as medicine man) can be read in two different contexts with two different results. Even more interestingly, CL in a seamless way seems to be able to move between the two worlds/publics in which his performance is presented to or played out, one being the local setting with all its complexities, the other as a story in a newspaper article at home.

There is another incident where CL takes advantage of local notions of power and status to get his way. In 1889, during the coastal uprising, he found himself serving as a non-commissioned officer. It was his job to train recruits in the hastily collected and very diverse army consisting of locals, but also Zulus and Somalis among others. CL remarks that the Somalis look different from other 'Negroes' – their head has a different shape and their bodies are slender, thus indirectly arguing that the Somalis are closer to Europeans and racially superior to other Africans according to European thinking about racial differences at the time. He remarks that the Somali women are some of the most beautiful women he has ever seen. CL then goes on to say, that the Somalis also consider themselves to be superior to other Negroes and that

> they have, in all contexts, a sense of honour, which is very rare among the Blacks. I remember, for example, one morning a pair of them had come late to work, and I, in quite clear words, made them understand that they were to arrive on time just like the others. One of them cast his head back and looked amazed at me, and said: 'You speak to us just like to the other Negroes (he meant the men from the unyamwezi-caravan, whom I have written about before); we are Somalis and belong to a great tribe and are not slave people like the others, but used to good treatment and want that to be taken into consideration.' I answered that if he wanted to be better treated than the others, he would have to earn it. I did not care that he belonged to a great tribe. When he did not do his job, he would have to accept being treated like the other Negroes. He left without a word, but I have received more loving looks than the one he sent me upon departure. Consequently, however, they both came to work on time every day, since they did not want the other Negroes to believe they were treated the same way as them.[6]

Once more, according to CL's rendering of the event, he gets his way; he makes the Somalis behave as proper Western workers. However, the Somalis agree to his standard, not because they accept CL's north-western, Protestant reasoning about the importance of being punctual and earning better treatment through good work, but rather because they do not want to be ordered about and scolded in front of the other workers (soldiers). They want respectful

treatment, and are smart enough to figure out how to achieve that. None of the parties in fact give in to the norms of the other. They keep acting according to their own value systems. Even so the actions of the Somalis now correspond with CL's wishes and demands and he therefore treats them with what the Somalis think of as proper respect (not ordering them about and scolding them in front of the other workers, including local slaves).[7] The example is offered here as yet another illustration of how enactment (doing) makes it possible to move between and relate to two cultures (discourses) simultaneously because the same act can be interpreted differently and carried out with different intentions. As an example of cultural hybridity, we may perhaps qualify the notion of cultural hybridity and add that it should not only be used as a way of thinking about hybrid forms of culture (creolization), but also in terms of enactments that may function as a go-between or bridge two different cultures.

## Cultural Hybridity as Creolization: Aadaptation of African Practices

In CL's letters it is also possible to find examples of how he adopted or incorporated African ways of doing things when it comes to more mundane matters.

The first example is from 1891 when CL returned to the plantation near Pangani and started once more planting cotton.

He remarks that the fields could have been ploughed with 'four strong Danish horses', but that the Indian oxen he uses on the plantation to plough fields cannot pull the plough through the thick grass that has grown over the fields in the three years they have been lying fallow. CL therefore adopts a local method for dealing with this problem, first setting fire to the grass to clear the fields.

> Thereafter I put 300 Nyamwezi [8] to work each equipped with a hoe, and they chopped all the grass roots away and loosened the earth. The next day the roots, when they were dry, were gathered up and burned. Bushes and trees were chopped down and the roots dug out and in a short time, I had a dry, clean piece of land. Now I set six Indian oxen to work with three heavy English harrows and harrowed all the land, after the Blacks had chopped away all the grass and bushes. In six weeks I had 65 acres of land as clear and smooth as a field at home and then began to plant cotton.

CL then goes on to relate how cotton is planted in Texas and how he found an 'African' way of doing that too.[9]

CL has also noticed that the locals used clay jars for storing water, and he finds out that it is a good way of cooling drinking water. He altogether takes

a keen interest in providing clean, cold drinking water. More examples could be offered e.g., CL's explanation of building techniques that also de+9 into a mix of local and European techniques. In short CL has a clear idea of what he wants and uses his eyes and ears to find local solutions. He is a practical man (hence the book's title) who first and foremost looks at the ends, not the means of achieving them. The way he farms thus ended up being a sum of his practical experiences from Denmark, the US and East Africa. In short, his agricultural techniques and practices are an example of practical, cultural hybridity, and this approach is the basis of much of his success (and he was a success as a plantation manager). Given his training, with its insistence on the superiority of Western scientific agricultural techniques, Lautherborn's adaptability and openness demonstrates the possibilities of moving beyond such assumptions when placed in foreign situations with an open mind, but also that the criteria of 'success' (in economic terms) takes precedence over cultural norms. Thus CL demonstrates the way the need to succeed in colonial production sometimes inspired a willingness to adapt to local conditions and to use local knowledge where it made a difference. Moreover, CL's behaviour suggests that over time, this process often inspired hybrid agricultural practices and ways of thinking and talking about agriculture in a colonial setting.

***Socialising/being Part of a Mixed Community***

CL's frame of reference when it comes to value judgements and discussion of morals and ethics seems, through all the years, to have been his family at home. In this sense he remains an expatriate. He discusses among other things religion, socialism and what a fair pay for work is, education etc. with his sister at home. His published letters are careful to express opinions on both the German and British presence in East Africa. A more open critique of the colonial powers is only found in the private letters whereas he in the published letters sometimes defends the German colonial projects that are frequently criticized in the Danish newspapers and contrasted to the British imperialists.[10] In these cases CL sides with his employers in DOAG and GEA. His private letters also reveal some class-based critiques in the sense that he juxtaposes himself as the sensible, hard-working middle-class manager vis-a-vis the colonial elite, including the upper management of DOAG, who are presented as people of aristocratic origin addicted to a more leisurely [lazy], aristocratic way of life.

Apart from a German assistant or two, CL was the only white man on the plantation. However, in his social life he was part of the white or European community in the area around Pangani. It consisted of German officers and civil servants in the German colonial administration and a diverse group of

other Europeans on the coast, along with a few people of colour. He entertained guests in the style of a Danish/European land manager or landowner,[11] and enjoyed doing so. He prided himself on his ability to provide guests with excellent food and drink as well as a good time, and sent home pictures demonstrating his hosting skills. We know that CL translated a Danish cookbook he obviously must have brought with him to East Africa into Swahili and taught his Black cook how to make the dishes in the Danish cookbook. Besides entertaining guests at European-style dinner parties, CL relates of outings and hunting-parties.[12] The European community on the coast was basically a male community. He relates, however, also about a Viennese family as friends, and he tells about playing tennis together with the family members, including an adopted African daughter who seems to have been readily accepted in the community (including on the tennis court).

CL is definitely not uncritical of the other Europeans. Part of his criticism is related to lifestyle and especially that they do not grow vegetables, protect their water supplies from contamination or have a hen-house etc. When it comes to household matters, CL seems to have mixed a Danish farmer/ landowner lifestyle with an African one. He among other things criticizes the other Europeans for buying their meat in the market (where the meat may be bad/is of unknown origin – he notes that the Africans do not eat meat like this, only the Europeans do). He also criticizes the local Europeans for drinking too much alcohol, for ignoring local knowledge about or just not bothering to dig good, deep wells and consequently adopting an unhealthy lifestyle.

Besides the official social life – dinners with German officers present etc. – CL also had what he terms personal friends. One was a French Father at the French mission station, who was a favourite drinking companion. In another letter he mentions, 'My friend, a Portuguese and a Negro[13] was one of those types of people one seldom meets'.[14] CL then goes on to tell the story about how a boat turned over and his friend (the local postmaster) drowned. It may be a personal trait of CL's that he also counted Africans and people of mixed origin among his friends. Being friends with the locals is mainly mentioned in passing – never highlighted and never told in detail as the event with the Europeans at the dinner party at his plantation - most probably because he, in his letters home, aimed to demonstrate his social successes, like the dinner party where he performed the role of land manager and shows off as the perfect host to the German superiors. Yet socialising with the locals clearly made up a lot of his life and was important to him both for company and for companionship. He mourned the loss of this friend the postmaster, lauded him as an exemplary man: 'I do not believe that he

had many external advantages, but he was open and honest, courageous, truthful and loyal. These are traits one seldom meets', suggesting that local friendships were indeed an important part of his life, albeit one that he might not write home about in detail.

CL, of course also takes part in occasions or more formal festive get-togethers with the Africans. He tells in a letter of his return from a trip home (he went home for six months at the end of every four-year contract (1892, 1896, 1900 and 1903).

> At the plantation I was received with jubilation by my Negroes, and I, naturally, had to go out with something good for them to eat – rice and a couple of goats. [...] The entire village of Bweni paid me a visit the other day with both of the chiefs with all of their wives and slaves, about 300 men in all I believe. They had brought music and performed a dance with singing in the middle of the garden. 'Bwana malete is here again from Europe. He cleans his cotton with steam now. He himself is as strong as a steam engine, because he has eaten his mother's good food. She has not seen him for many years, and therefore, gave him the best she had. But it is good that he is strong, because he uses his strength to work and not to beat the Black people. We hope that he may be long among us.' When the dance was finished, I passed out a couple of cases of mineral water among them. Which they gladly drank. To the chiefs I gave the clothes I had brought, which pleased them greatly.[15]

Towards his workers and the local community around the plantation CL acts as a chief and is received as a chief. Over the years, he seems to become increasingly comfortable with this.

As examples of cultural hybridity we may conclude that on many levels CL acts according to local (i.e. East African) norms and customs. He entertains people from the local European community in a European manner, whereas the workers on the plantation and in the village of Bweni are treated according to African norms and practices. Yet there is an aspect of hybridity in both cases. The European community in Pangani adapted many local practices, including more mixed social groups, such as the Portuguese mailman (his friend, 'the Portuguese and a Negro)' and the Viennese family. CL's dinner parties appear European, but benefit from local produce, knowledge and practices. His behaviour with the workers and local African chiefs adapts to African notions of hospitality and social obligations, but may also reflect some of the practices of Danish land managers, who were expected to provide workers with rewards, such as arranging a harvest festival and providing food and drink for the celebration. Danish land managers were also expected to deal with the Lord of the Manor and to entertain on a more formal scale (albeit not at the level experienced by CL in Tanzania). Consequently, although

the settings were very different, there are some likenesses too between being a land manager at home and plantation manager in East Africa, which no doubt influenced CL's adaptation to life in East Africa.

## Hybridity and Mimicry – Africans' Relations/adaptations to the Colonial Presence

CL's letters are written by a European and of course do not render the African experience with the Africans' own words and the way the Africans experienced their meeting with the Whites. On the other hand letters like CL's are one of the few sources where the African experience and their explanations of it are at least retold. The letters are particularly important because CL knew Swahili, which most workers spoke, and thus could both converse with them as well as overhear their private conversations. CL provides numerous examples of how the Africans he encountered tried to make sense of the Europeans and their doings – trying to figure out why the Europeans have come to East Africa and why they behave the way they do. As he explains in a letter:

> In their language we are called Mzungu. This does not only mean European but also 'the incomprehensible'. The Negroes absolutely do not understand us. They often say 'What does he really want here, he does not trade in slaves, he doesn't keep a harem,[16] he is not a Moslem, he does not work like us, but everything has to go quickly, and, when it doesn't he becomes angry, but why? What he doesn't finish today, he can always finish tomorrow. Why so much worrying about one day?! After all we live so many days that we cannot count them. And why work so much? When we die we cannot take it with us. Planting for our children is stupid. It is much better that they work just like us. They then become much better people. When a person has enough to live without working he usually becomes a bad person. No, Europeans are strange people. But they are clever, much cleverer that the Arabs, that is certain.' That is the Negroes' idea about us.[17]

One wonders if this quote reflects some of his own queries about European work habits, although CL in many ways seems to have incorporated a protestant work ethic.

In a newspaper article titled 'Life of the people in East Africa', CL describes the evening entertainment among his workers:

> The Blacks gather in homely cosiness and sit under the roofs of their huts and chat while the water pipe chuckles and the cigarettes send their blue smoke out in the quiet of the evening. What occupies them, besides the episodes of the day, are tales about their travels. Many have travelled widely around the 'dark continent' - more of them have even travelled across Africa.[18]

We may note, that in this passage CL in fact questions the European notion of being the discoverers of the interior of Africa; more Africans have done what Stanley became so famous for – namely to be the first (white) man to cross Africa from East to West, starting in Tanzania, ending in Congo.

CL goes on to tell about how some of the objects the Europeans use or have amaze the Blacks.

> It was an object of special sensation when one day they had seen a European take out his false teeth. One of them told, the others listening breathlessly, that one of the whites were a sorcerer who could take out his teeth and hold them in his hand. He added that he would willingly give one month's pay to do the same (ibid.).

The most interesting part, however, is the passage where CL writes about how the Africans re-enact events as part of the evening entertainment:

> It is funny to sneak up on them and listen to what occupies them. They have a rare talent for apt comparisons and to catch the character of a man in a nick-name. [...] It is even better, though, when the Blacks as is the custom here, dramatise their critique. Some of them will mock people who do not speak Swahili well. There are two parts. One plays the Negro, the other plays the European, who blabber away in a funny mix of bad Swahili and broken German. The audience rolls over, screaming with laughter.[...] One day a hot-tempered European forgot himself and hit one of the Blacks. In the evening he could see the whole scene re-enacted in the workers' circle as one of them, with agitated gestures, rushed himself at one of the others and they ended up rolling around the dirt. It all looked so funny that the hot-tempered man, who in fact is quite good-natured, started to laugh too, and from then on strained [sic] himself in order not to become part of the evening entertainment again. The critique may sometimes aim at one of the men from the Black community. [...] The object of the native's joking, though, is first and foremost the Europeans. One of the Blacks had been to Zanzibar and I saw him first perform the Frenchman, bowing, gesturing, strutting around talking; soon after he straddled like an English sailor [...] One day I heard one 'Hurrah' after the other. I snuck up on them and saw the re-enactment of a European dinner party the Europeans had held the day before. They sat in two long rows around the table; every moment one or the other stood up, gave a speech, then the others stood up and they toasted, touching their coconut shells with each other. Whereafter, giggling, they would shout their 'Hurrahs' just as strongly and as any animated European party could have done (ibid.).

According to CL's newspaper article, the re-enactment and mimicry is used for two things. It is a way of criticising unjust behaviour or any other kind of behaviour which is deemed socially unacceptable by the Black community, or it is an opportunity to mimic certain kinds of stereotypical behaviour

among the Europeans that the Africans find funny (or strange) – as in the mimicry of a European dinner party. Mimicry, according to Homi Bhabha,[19] is not just copying, but also subversive in that it becomes a way of dealing with and even criticizing acts by the colonial authorities as well as potentially a way of taking on some of that power. It disempowers the Europeans in the sense that they are ridiculed – or part of their behaviour is. The re-enactment and the mimicry in the example above, according to CL, even seem to have had that effect. It is a kind of reverse of the example with the Somali soldiers. The European (one of the assistants on the plantation) seems to have overheard/ seen the performance by accident (?), but it is quite likely that the workers staged the performance for his benefit/education. It appears that CL and his assistant may have on occasion enjoyed this type of evening entertainment, not officially invited, and thus not officially present, but it seems unlikely that the workers on the plantation were unaware of this practice by the manager(s). It does not sound as if they were sneaking up on the Africans, but rather that the Africans deliberately used the opportunity (his presence) to criticise the assistant and even to change his behaviour. Indeed, they succeed as afterwards he at least strains himself to avoid their critique. It is interesting that the Black community on the plantation seems to have used the opportunity to come up with a critique that would probably have been unacceptable in any more direct form. Thus mimicry in this case provided a means for seemingly powerless Blacks to air their views on behaviour of whites that they regarded as unacceptable. So both in a more general sense and in a very specific way mimicry and enactment is used to empower the Blacks by criticising the Europeans and through mimicry to undermine the authority of the whites and thus make them less formidable. The mimicry is also used by the Africans to try to make sense of the Europeans and to understand what they are doing in Africa. It is also a mechanism for expressing admiration, especially towards some of the objects that the Europeans have brought with them, and the hard work of some Europeans including CL, while at the same time providing a platform for both critiquing some of their behaviour and also performing, taking on and translating what they see into something that makes sense in their own world. Thus they are not only making fun and criticizing some European practices, they are also performing and thus practicing new ways of organizing life.

CL's letters also contain examples of Africans adapting to and transforming European ways of doing things. In a letter dated November, 1891,[20] CL relates that the Blacks at first were afraid to drive with the oxen (ploughing the fields etc.), but gradually learned. Once the African drivers mastered the skill, they began to consider new ways to negotiate their wages.

> When they realised they could do their work fairly well, they came to me and asked for an increase in their wages. They said that they now did their work much "better than the other". 'With the six oxen we clean more land than fifty men with their hoes, and we should therefore also earn more. If we did not clean with the oxen, you would have to give a lot of money to others to keep everything clean'. I thought, however, that it was the oxen that pulled the cultivator and did most of the work, while they had little work behind them. Actually I should pay them less, since they did not have it nearly so hard as the people who worked with the hoes. They did not agree with this, but thought it was probably better that everything remained as before (ibid.).

While CL's rendition demonstrates his cleverness at deflecting their demands, the letter also reveals the adoption of new skills and expectations. Besides having learned how to drive with the oxen, the Africans have also learned that wages are something that can be bargained (although CL outsmarts them in this specific bargain). This knowledge has implications for future practice and demonstrates the on-going learning curve being taken on by many of his workers. This story highlights the way both Whites (CL) adjusted to African ways, and forms of cultural hybridity where CL mixes African ways with diverse European (including Danish) practices. We also have examples of Africans adjusting (and not adjusting) to a changing work environment.

One last example is another incident from the years when CL was a non-commissioned officer during the coastal uprising, not with Somalis, but with the Zulus, who, according to CL, were renowned for their courage and skills as warriors:

> When they first arrived, they did not have a clue about what it meant to be a soldier or about civilisation either. Their clothing was little and loose, like our first parents after the Fall. Instead of a fig leaf, however, they hung a piece of skin, cut into a thin fringe and tied about the loins. They have big holes in their ears, which they use for hanging small necessities. In one ear they have their snuff in a dried leaf. In the other they have a toothbrush, not one like the one we civilised people use, but a short, green branch of a hardwood tree, of which one end is chewed into fine threads so that it resembles a painter's brush. [...] When they put their uniforms on, it was a laugh to watch. The uniform consisted of short pants and short-sleeved shirts. It was undoubtedly the most difficult work in their lives. It took over an hour before they learned to put on the two pieces of clothing. Some used the shirts as pants, others the pants as shirts. [...]The woolly mop, which have been, for so many years sticking out to all sides, would not in a few minutes fall in place for a cap. The stiff braids were pulled into the sides of the cap and the cap put on, but the slightest movement freed them from their captivity, and they flew up in the air. [...] The next day they sat on the

> streets and cut the braids off of each other, so that they could get the cap on. They said they wanted to look like the other soldiers. [...] They now shoot no worse than the other Black soldiers. They become more civilised every day. Now, when they walk by, instead of snuff and a toothbrush, they have a cigar in one ear and a bullet in the other. They say it takes a longer time to get the bullet from the bag than from the ear. They also say that if Bushiri[21] comes, they will be prepared. Furthermore they are brave and proud. They say: We are wild men and have never known about soldiering, but it will not be long before we can do as much as the others', and they do all they can and will, with time, become good soldiers.

Apart from the equations of soldiering and civilisation, which both sides seemed to take with little question, this is an interesting example of adaptation and cultural hybridity. Once more it is also a passage that back in Denmark/ Europe could be read as a confirmation of European stereotypes – the Zulus do not know how to put on European clothes, which of course show how uncivilised they are. On the other hand the letter challenges such an interpretation by acknowledging that the Zulu soldiers are quite conscious of the possibilities for taking on Western practices of soldiering. Moreover, CL admires and applauds their success in adapting to Western practices, as well as their own innovations, such as carrying the bullets in their ears.

The workers on CL's plantation were, as mentioned, mainly Nyamwezi - caravan people from central Tanzania. The caravans carrying goods from the interior out to the coast and vice versa were organised by the chiefs who spent the time on the coast trading, while the ordinary caravan people in the meantime looked for casual work to keep them fed before they returned with the caravan to the interior. CL started employing some of the caravan people as casual workers and ended up with the Nyamwezi being employed the year round on the plantation, moving their families out to the coast as well. This demonstrates the ability of local people to evaluate plantation managers and to take up options that they believe will be in their best interest. CL had started employing the Nyamwezi when he participated in the rebuilding of Bagamoyo in 1890 after the coastal uprising. In March 1891, when he was ordered to return to his plantation, he asked if any of the workers wished to go with him. Many more than needed volunteered.[22] CL in his letters never goes into detail about this, but it seems that the Nyamwezi on the plantation chose to work with him rather than the constant travel and dangers of caravan labour. CL and other Europeans on the coast had to attract people to their plantations – there was no forced labour in GEA. And many German plantation managers had constant problems obtaining sufficient labour. It is a testament to CL's management style that he rarely suffered a labour shortage. While the Germans accused him of being soft on his workers,

his labour practices worked and his workforce, including the Nyamwezi, adjusted both to becoming settled instead of constant travelling and to wage labour. He describes their lives on the plantation:

> At the market place people buy maize, mtama, sweet potatoes, muhogo, mamaensje, mboya, peas, beans and dessert is a huge amount of fruit. At sundown one sees them sitting in small groups around a huge plate of cooked vegetables. When they are finished with that they will begin on the fruit. They dance in the evening and the night until midnight, when all lay their heads down on their beds.
>
> Yes! It is going well on the plantation now.[23]

This description of Saturdays and thus a weekend, apart from the dancing stopping precisely at midnight (it must have been something CL had ordered and made his workers conform to), could be a description of life in many African villages.

## Conclusion

Two conclusions may be drawn from CL's letters. The Europeans (the Whites) were not as all powerful as they have often been seen. They had to find ways to transcend their own understanding of what was 'European' and what was 'African' in their daily work in order to survive in an African context. They used this hybridity on the one hand to further their own aims (the colonial project), but could only do so if what they were trying to achieve also fitted in with parts of the Africans' own agendas. Thus, the colonial experience seen through CL's letters reveals a more complex set of power relations than normally assumed.

We tend to look at the ideologies and the grand colonial schemes, and let there be no doubt that the grand scheme of the colonial project was a European imposition on local life. On the other hand the Europeans had to adapt to local circumstances and in their actions find ways to do things that often mixed European and African practices. In fact the letters demonstrate the many ways colonial life was characterised by a process of mutual adaptation, albeit of course in a situation with asymmetrical power relations.

If we look at the connections between the public at home and the metropolitan colonial discourse and local colonial life, a connection which we believe is of importance, then the stories related to the public at home seem to confirm the Western/European outlook on the world with its binaries of civilised-wild/primitive; but when it comes to doing the examples in the letters demonstrate how frequently the Europeans had to adapt in order to make themselves heard/understood by the Africans. The stories are told to the public at home in a way that will not destabilize accepted colonial/imperial

ideology, but they do actually disturb assumptions about the way the Africans and Europeans act in the colonial context. This is, however, never admitted in the letters home.

African hybridity demonstrates the many ways Africans sought to come to terms with and transform the colonial/imperial project to fit their agendas. Especially the mimicry (the evening entertainment) reveals very interesting cracks in the supposedly set hierarchies of colonial power. The evening entertainment and other stories of subversion and mimicry provide insight into the many ways the colonial project was interpreted and questioned by colonial 'subjects'. The letters demonstrate the way the colonial project's political agenda and official discourse rarely fully covers the social realities on the ground. They reveal the limits of colonial power faced with distances and the complexities of different localities, cultural practices and resistances.

Ilan Kapoor's reading of Homi Bhabha (2008) may be illuminating in this context. According to Kapoor, Bhabha's notions of hybridity and mimicry should not be interpreted as explicit political strategies. Still according to Kapoor, Bhabha seeks to de-couple enactment/agency and intentions stating that an act should not only be read as the sign of an explicit intention (where we try to deduct an intention from the act) and thus as firmly linked to a regulative discourse. Instead Bhabha, according to Kapoor, suggests that we simply read an act as an act, nothing more, nothing less. First and foremost the act will always in itself transform/create a situation that may destabilize the colonial power structure (or sustain it) depending on its interpretation. In short what we should avoid is to read examples of hybridization and mimicry into a scheme of resistance/subjugation and instead look at the act in itself and what it creates. The act/any kind of enactment is in itself an act of transformation/creation that may subvert or change a project without necessarily being intended to do so. These reflections seem very relevant to the letters of Christian Lautherborn.

Kapoor also discusses the power of discourse, based on a reading of Bhabha. Kapoor states that a reading of Bhabha may suggest that even though each and every agent has to stay within a certain discourse or scheme (the colonial project) – Kapoor cites Bhabha for stating that it is not possible to act from a position 'outside' the 'scheme' or 'discourse' – but even so the colonial project may be undermined from within, by mimicry and the way an act is interpreted and reacted to. This adds a quite new facet to discourse theory and the notion that it is not possible to 'escape' discourse. Kapoor, citing Bhabha, will agree to that, but with the important qualification of the possible empowerment/disempowerment of enactment and mimicry. Another point in introducing Kapoor is that besides the dichotomy resistance/subjugation, concepts related to politics, and pointed out by Kapoor as a

possible analytical pitfall that may trivialize the analysis of the colonial past, we may also, if we follow Kapoor, escape another common analytical pitfall, to install a dichotomy between tradition and modernity' The description of how the Africans act in the quotes above demonstrates how elements of tradition and modernity mixed in an immediate, spontaneous manner.

We would like to take the argument a little further . What we find intriguing, based on a reading of CL's letters, is the fact that an act seems to be able to be read into different discourses/cultural settings. The incident with the Somali soldiers and also the incident with the sorcerer that was chased away open up the possibility that a specific act can be understood in different ways, allowing the parties involved to achieve their sometimes contradictory goals at the same time, at least temporarily. If we go along with the argument based on Kapoor's reading of Bhabha, we may add that it is true that it was not possible to take on a position from outside the colonial project; but it is important to acknowledge that when it comes to power games it is possible to think outside the binary of resistance/subjugation and traditional/modern. In this sense the colonial system was not necessarily one all-encompassing endeavour. If it is possible for an act to be meaningful at one and the same time within two different contexts, cultural hybridity may also consist in different agents being able to transgress and simultaneously move/act within different contexts at one and the same time, because an act may be interpreted in different ways, which allows for this kind of openness or situatedness. It points in a very specific way to the fact that the colonial project was much more fragile and porous than often thought. Hence the destabilization of the colonial project – or perhaps more accurately: it was never stabilized.

Christian Lautherborn's letters are in some ways unique, but we are convinced that if we start looking for letters like these, more will be found in archives and libraries throughout Europe. We may for too long have relied too heavily on official sources for colonial history and focused too much on political history, whereas the social and cultural aspects of colonial history to a certain degree may have been neglected. CL was part of a colonial project, he knew so and in between he also defended it in letters home. On the other hand his success was dependent on his skills in cultural hybridization. This was not a new experience for the Africans, particularly the people on the coast of East Africa and the workers on the plantation, who had long understood the Arabs on the coast as cultural hybrids, and most likely interpreted the Europeans as a new kind of 'Arab'. The Arabs had been on the coast as masters for a long time and the coastal area had a long history of cultural hybridization adopting to shifting circumstances. This, no doubt influenced the way the different coastal peoples understood and interacted with their latest colonial 'masters'.

The story of Christian Lautherborn and his cotton plantation is one among many little pieces that may contribute to a colonial history where we, to cite Frederick Cooper, acknowledge that the colonial state and various colonial projects were 'less clear in their objectives and less capable of realizing them in practice' (2008). Our examination into the daily processes where colonial power relations were performed and enacted, and the many hybrid forms of power relations that came into being, affirms Cooper's point. Further work with sources such as the letters of Christian Lautherborn is needed in order both to understand the colonial realities and write a more nuanced and balanced story of the colonial period.

## Notes

1. We are aware that this usage of the concept 'performativity' may not strictly be within the confinements of Judith Butler's theory of 'performativy' and that we may have transgressed the borderline into symbolic interactionist sociological analysis and Erving Goffman's concept of performance which anyway is one of Judith Butler's inspirations.
2. Letter 13/11/1891 (also printed in *VT*), *The Practical Imperialist,* Parpart and Rostgaard (2006) pp. 147-148.
3. CL sometimes uses the phrase 'the devil' instead of evil spirits in letters home, the devil was a recognized reality in Denmark, but not evil spirits. In another letter to his sister and brother-in-law, who both belonged to Danish, middle-class, progressive circles, CL equates more orthodox varieties of Christianity (with a belief in the devil) with African belief in evil spirits. Both beliefs/religions were according to CL equally superstitious.
4. Letter 13/11/1891, newspaper article 26/01/1892, in *The Practical Imperialist,* p. 144.
5. Newspaper article 29/09/1892, *The Practical Imperialist,* p. 154.
6. Letter, July 24, 1889 (not printed as newspaper article) *The Practical Imperialist,* pp. 87-88.
7. It was illegal for colonial producers to have slaves in the 1880s, but local Arabs and Indian plantation owners on the East African coast still had slaves.
8. The workers on CL's plantation were mainly Nyamwezi. The Nyamwezi had for many years before the German's came to East Africa earned their living as caravan people/tradesmen carrying goods (mainly elephant tusks/ivory) from the interior out to the coast once a year.
9. Letter 13/11/1891 (printed as newspaper article) *The Practical Imperialist,* pp. 141-142.
10. The two Schleswigian wars between Denmark and Germany in the 19th century had cast Germans as the eternal villains in Danish public debate, whereas the British normally were classified as friends (Britain had as a great power come to the rescue of Denmark in the first Schleswigian war) and the British were consequently benevolent people.
11. See e.g. Letter October, 8, 1891. *The Practical Imperialist pp*. 137-38.
12. *The Practical Imperialist,* p. 197 as an example.

13. Most probably a man of mixed origin, people of mixed origin was not uncommon on the coast of East Africa.
14. Letter, June 27 1897 (not printed as newspaper article), *The Practical Imperialist*, p. 192.
15. Letter, November 25 1892 (printed as newspaper article), *The practical Imperialist*, p. 156.
16. CL/the Africans are here comparing the Europeans to the Arabs that had been on the coast for many years and that the Africans therefore were accustomed to.
17. Letter, July 24 1889 (not printed as newspaper article), *The Practical Imperialist*, pp. 89-90.
18. *Vendsyssel Tidende*, September 16, 1892. Probably from the outset written as a newspaper article (and not a letter CL's brother in law converted into a newspaper article) during CL's home-leave in summer/fall 1892.
19. Homi K. Bhabha, 'On mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse' in Bhabha (1994).
20. Also printed as newspaper article, *The Practical Imperialist* pp. 146-147.
21. Bushiri bin Salim was one of the leaders of the coastal uprising against the German imperialists in 1888-1890. Bushiri belonged to the Shirazi elite on the East African coast. The Shirazi elite were people of mixed African and Arab decent, *The Practical Imperialist*, "Chapter Two, The African Context", pp. 28 – 31.
22. Letter March 1, 1891 (also printed as newspaper article), *The Practical Imperialist* p. 123, ' [..]that I only would use 50 men to build the new buildings [the plantation buildings]. The others I could not use, because they required too high a wage. Then one of the workers stepped forward and said: 'Master you have been our father for over two years, and, when you leave, your children will go with you. When you say you cannot give us so high a wage as before we will work for less. If you won't take us with you, we will go to you; we know where you are going.'
23. *The Practical Imperialist*, p. 219, Letter August 27, 1904 (not printed as newspaper article).

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*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp. 131-147



# Affirmation d'une identité afro-portugaise et éducation en Casamance fin du XIXe siècle début XXe siècle.[1]

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## Résumé

L'histoire des Afro-portugais s'inscrit dans l'espace sénégambien au moment de l'arrivée des Portugais au XVe siècle et plus spécifiquement en Casamance au XVIIè siècle. L'identité de ces métis se construit dans leurs relations successives avec les Africains, les Portugais et les Français. Les Afro-portugais créent une société originale et consolident leurs liens en constituant des réseaux économiques et en mettant en œuvre des stratégies sociales et éducatives spécifiques. Les « Portugais » de Ziguinchor envoient leurs enfants dans les écoles locales ouvertes par les missionnaires ou en Europe. Réinvestissant le projet français d'assimilation par l'école à partir de la fin du XIXe siècle, les « Portugais » de Ziguinchor continuent longtemps à revendiquer leur origine européenne. Du fait de leur faiblesse numérique, malgré leur relative réussite sociale, ils perdent progressivement le pouvoir tant sur le plan politique qu'économique, sont marginalisés dans le Sénégal post-colonial centralisé sur Dakar.

## Abstract

The story of Afro-portuguese began with the arrival of Portuguese explorers in the fifteenth century, more specifically in Casamance in the seventeeth century. The identity of these mulatos was built up through their successive relationships with the Africans, the Portuguese and the French. The Afro-portuguese created a unique society and strengthened their ties by setting up economic networks and by implementing social and educative strategies. Zinguinchor's "Portuguese" sent their children to local schools that were established by missionaries or to Europe. They continued claiming their European origins despite the long running French assimilation project implemented since the nineteenth century. They gradually lost their power both in the political and economic fields despite their relative social success because of their dwindling population. They became marginalized as pre-colonial Senegal was centralized in Dakar.

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## Introduction

Les communautés « eurafricaines » ont fait l'objet de nombreuses études universitaires[3] (Boulègue 1972 ; Brooks 2003 ; Mark 1999). Si des traits communs les caractérisent, il existe cependant, des spécificités liées notamment aux pays européens et aux populations africaines d'appartenance ainsi qu'aux territoires et à l'administration auxquels elles se rattachent : Cap-Verdiens, Akou, Krio sierra-léonais, Saint-Louisiens, Afro-Brésiliens du Togo….

En Afrique de l'Ouest, la première communauté eurafricaine est née de la rencontre entre Portugais[4] et Africains. Les Portugais, à partir du XVe siècle, sont en effet les premiers Européens à s'être installés dans la zone, où ils fondent des comptoirs. Ces hommes – très peu de femmes portugaises migraient en Afrique – nouent des relations avec des femmes africaines. Les enfants nés de ces unions furent plus ou moins bien intégrés au sein des sociétés ouest-africaines en fonction de leur organisation sociale, d'une part, et du statut de leur mère, d'autre part. Nés et élevés en Afrique, ils forment progressivement une société métissée, unie par des stratégies sociales ainsi que par leurs activités économiques liées à la traite. Ces métis intègrent les réseaux commerciaux portugais et se forgent une identité proprement afro-portugaise dont témoignent une architecture originale, un style vestimentaire européanisé, un art culinaire intégrant des influences multiples, une langue – le créole –, et la conversion au catholicisme.[5] Comme l'a montré Peter Mark, jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle, la frontière culturelle qui sépare les Afro-portugais des Africains est tout de même poreuse.

> This model of identity formation flexible, malleable, and based on cultural and socio-economic factors - was characteristic of societies along the Upper Guinea Coast and derived from a local identity paradigm (Mark 1999:183).

En Casamance, où l'autorité portugaise se limite à quelques comptoirs, dont Ziguinchor fondé en 1645, la communauté afro-portugaise, fruit des relations entre les Portugais, les Cap-Verdiens et les populations locales (majoritairement baynouck et diola), constitue l'élite urbaine numériquement très minoritaire. Elle domine la vie politique et contrôle les activités économiques essentiellement à Ziguinchor, qui constitue alors un carrefour où transitent les esclaves, l'ivoire, la cire, le caoutchouc et d'autres marchandises et matières premières. Au moment de la domination portugaise, du XVIIe siècle au XIXe siècle, Ziguinchor est composée de deux quartiers distincts avec, d'un côté, les captifs, majoritaires, et, de l'autre, les hommes libres, majoritairement afro-portugais, souvent propriétaires d'esclaves. Les relations entre Afro-portugais – métis – et Africains – noirs – s'inscrivent

ainsi dans le contexte de la traite et de l'esclavage. A partir de la fin du XVIIIe siècle et au cours du XIXe siècle, Français et Anglais supplantent progressivement l'influence politique et les réseaux commerciaux portugais et afro-portugais et leur imposent de se définir en fonction de critères occidentaux.

En Casamance, la fin de la domination politique portugaise et l'avènement de la colonisation française sont entérinés par la convention du 12 mai 1886.[6] Dans ce contexte, vont ainsi s'affronter les descendants des Portugais et les Français (Roche 1985) et ce, non pas avec des fusils, leurs armes respectives sont culturelles. Pour les Français, l'impératif est avant tout de franciser cette frange de la population. Ce ne fut cependant pas une entreprise aisée (Roche 1985) ; selon René Pélissier, « pendant longtemps, ils maintiendront leur lusitanité autant que possible » (Pélissier 1989 :188). Bien que les Portugais se soient essentiellement cantonnés au commerce et aient été assez peu intéressés par le développement social de ce préside *« négligé par Lisbonne »*(Roche 1985), l'empreinte afro-portugaise marque la vie politique et culturelle de Ziguinchor, ce, jusqu'à nos jours. Son identité s'est forgée dans le cadre d'une territorialité portugaise limitée à des comptoirs, mais surtout constituée de réseaux socioéconomiques allant de Cacheu, à Ziguinchor, en passant par l'archipel du Cap-Vert. Au début du XIXe siècle, lorsque Français et Anglais arrivent dans la zone, ils imposent leurs propres modèles identitaires. Contestant l'origine européenne des Afro-portugais, ils les ont contraints à se redéfinir en fonction de la couleur de leur peau et ainsi à se distinguer des populations africaines. A la fin du XIXe siècle et au début du XXe siècle, l'affirmation de cette identité est à replacer dans le contexte des rivalités franco-portugaises en Casamance et des luttes de pouvoir entre l'autorité française tutélaire et les familles influentes de Ziguinchor. La colonisation française de la Casamance imposa en effet aux Luso-Africains de se (re)définir en tant que communauté en bouleversant l'espace et les référents par rapport auxquels elle se situe. L'identité d'un groupe est à aussi replacer dans un contexte historique et « renvoie fondamentalement à la dialectique de l'identité imposée/identité assumée » (Goerg 1995:114). Avec l'arrivée des Européens en Casamance, au milieu du XIXe siècle, les « Portugais » sont donc amenés à affirmer leur identité face à la menace que représente cette domination.

Plusieurs excellents travaux (Boulègue 1972 ; Mark 1999) s'intéressent aux Afro-portugais de Sénégambie du XVe siècle au XIXe siècle, mais n'abordent pas la question de l'éducation et de la scolarisation en tant qu'élément constitutif de cette identité. Dans cet article, nous nous demanderons quel a été le rôle de l'éducation et de la scolarisation pour cette

communauté. Parallèlement, quelle politique scolaire la France mène-t-elle pour capter cette population. La période au tournant du XIXe siècle et du XXe siècle est un moment fondamental dans la définition de leur identité sur lequel il est important de revenir pour comprendre la place actuelle de ces Ziguinchorois d'origine portugaise.

## Ziguinchor : l'éducation sous domination portugaise

Pour les métis, la filiation européenne, le mode de vie et l'appartenance à la religion catholique leur confèrent un statut à part. Dans les comptoirs, sous autorité française ou anglaise, ils étaient envoyés dans les écoles sur place ou en Europe ; en Sierra-Leone, par exemple, les enfants des commerçants anglo-africains fréquentent l'école de Freetown. C'est également le cas des familles afro-brésiliennes du Togo et du Ghana qui accordent également une grande importance à l'éducation. Francisco Olympio, né à Salvador au Brésil en 1833 d'un père prêtre portugais et d'une femme d'origine africaine et amérindienne, s'installe au Togo en 1850. Là il fonde, avec ses sept épouses, une grande et importante famille. Selon Alcione M. Amos,[7] tous les enfants de Francisco Olympio ont été scolarisés d'abord localement, dans les écoles fondées par les prêtres catholiques portugais, puis certains ont poursuivi leurs études en Europe.

Les filles d'Olympio, quant à elles, n'ont pas été scolarisées comme leurs frères. Leur mariage avec les fils de familles afro-brésiliennes va contribuer à renforcer l'importance de cette communauté. De savantes alliances matrimoniales et une éducation à l'européenne sont donc les deux facteurs qui resserrent les liens solides entre les Afro-Brésiliens. Il semble que ce soit également le cas des quelques familles luso-africaines de Ziguinchor, de Cacheu et du Cap-Vert, bien que les informations dont nous disposons soient peu prolixes tant sur les stratégies d'éducation que sur les stratégies matrimoniales.

Dès la fin du XVIIIe siècle et surtout au début du XIXe siècle, les Cap-Verdiens en Guinée-Bissau et les Afro-portugais à Ziguinchor ont progressivement remplacé les Portugais aux postes de commandement et dans les garnisons. Carlos de Carvalho Alvarenga, capitaine de Ziguinchor, et Joao Pereira Barreto, un prêtre cap-verdien, par l'importance de leur rôle sont respectivement à l'origine de l'affirmation des communautés afro-portugaises de Ziguinchor en Casamance et de Cacheu en Guinée. Le mariage de leurs enfants, Rosa de Carvalho Alvarenga et Joao Pereira Barreto (fils), alors chef de Cacheu, a permis aux deux familles d'accroître leur influence dans toute la région allant de Cacheu à Ziguinchor. Le parcours d'Honorio Barreto, fruit de cette union, premier gouverneur africain d'une colonie portugaise, nous semble exemplaire malgré le peu de données dont nous disposons.

A Ziguinchor, seuls les enfants des familles « importantes », appelées à gouverner, suivent une instruction dispensée par un précepteur puis dans les écoles de Cacheu,[8] de Gorée ou encore de Lisbonne. Honorio Barreto est envoyé au Portugal, à l'Université de Coïmbra pour faire ses études, éducation qu'il jugera plus tard « très limitée, pourtant suffisante ».[9] Son retour en Afrique est précipité par le décès de son père à qui il « succède […] à la tête du comptoir et de la maison de commerce familiale »![10] Il est ensuite nommé capitaine de Cacheu et gouverneur de Bissao. Son intérêt pour la Casamance, qu'il juge mal exploitée par le Gouvernement général du Cap-Vert, l'amène à solliciter le Portugal afin que celui-ci soutienne ses actions en faveur de l'éducation des enfants. Dès 1845, il sensibilise les autorités portugaises sur le sort des jeunes « gourmettes »[11] de Ziguinchor qui n'avaient aucune formation et émet le souhait que ceux-ci puissent apprendre un métier en métropole. En réponse, le ministre portugais l'invite à lui envoyer une douzaine de jeunes de 12 à 15 ans maximum. Trois ans plus tard en 1848, il est à nouveau frappé par « l'oisiveté » des habitants de Ziguinchor, et propose la construction d'une église ainsi que la mise en place d'un enseignement primaire, en demandant aux autorités portugaises « un subside de 800 Reis au vicaire pour chaque élève qui reçoit une instruction primaire ».[12] Cependant, cette requête n'aboutit pas. Les prêtres portugais se font de plus en plus rares à Ziguinchor ; en 1854, la suppression de l'ensemble des ordres religieux du Portugal entraîne une diminution importante des missionnaires et l'abandon de certaines missions. Les prêtres portugais, venus visiter le comptoir et baptiser les enfants, restent à peine quelques jours et n'ont donc pas le temps de dispenser une instruction religieuse – et donc encore moins une instruction – à la communauté catholique de Ziguinchor.

Tant en ce qui concerne l'éducation religieuse que l'enseignement public, les opportunités pour les « Portugais » d'instruire leurs enfants sont rares et il ne semble d'ailleurs pas que cela ait été ressenti comme une nécessité pour nombre d'entre eux. Comme le souligne Eduardo de Sousa Ferreira, « depuis la première apparition des Portugais en Afrique au 15e siècle jusqu'au 19e siècle, leur présence sur le continent a surtout été celle des marchands d'or et d'esclaves, accompagnés d'un petit nombre de missionnaires ».[1] Ce n'est qu'à partir de l'occupation européenne effective des territoires (entre le milieu du XIXe siècle et le début du XXe siècle) qu'une administration et un système d'enseignement public sont véritablement mis en place. Au cours de cette période, la formation et l'éducation des Africains et des métis ne furent ainsi ni organisées ni même envisagées par les autorités coloniales. En revanche, l'Eglise et plus spécifiquement les missionnaires portugais prennent sporadiquement en charge la formation religieuse de quelques adeptes,[14] et ce, dès le XVe siècle. Cependant, la formation d'un clergé africain ne fait

pas l'unanimité et les expériences ont, dans l'ensemble, été jugées décevantes : « les prêtres noirs ou métis, demeurés seuls, ne tardèrent pas à partager la décadence du clergé portugais de l'époque ».[15]

Jusqu'au XIXe siècle, la présence portugaise en Afrique se limite à quelques comptoirs et sa vocation était essentiellement commerciale. L'éducation et la scolarisation restent très marginales, même si des initiatives intéressantes ont été menées. La Casamance,[16] où seuls le comptoir de Ziguinchor et quelques villages environnants sont placés sous la dépendance du Portugal depuis la fin du XVIIe siècle, n'est pas une exception, malgré quelques tentatives velléitaires des autorités administratives et religieuses portugaises de s'occuper de l'éducation des enfants. Lors de l'annexion de Ziguinchor par la France, F. Galibert, alors délégué du commissaire français chargé de la délimitation de la Guinée, dresse un tableau assez chaotique de la ville, où il n'y a pas d'école et où « le seul individu qui sache lire a été élevé à Gorée ».[17] C'était sans doute minorer la réalité pour justifier la présence française, en même temps que méconnaître l'œuvre des spiritains en Casamance.

## Dans les comptoirs français de Casamance : une éducation spiritaine

A partir du milieu du XIXè siècle, les missionnaires de la Congrégation des Pères du Saint Esprit viennent à plusieurs reprises (1864, 1875, 1877) en Casamance au cours desquelles ils administrent des sacrements (baptême, communion, mariage) aux enfants et adultes et leur dispensent des leçons de catéchisme. Au cours du dernier quart du XIXè siècle, les spiritains fondent des missions et ouvrent des écoles dans les centres politiques français à Sédhiou (1876) et à Carabane (1880). Dès 1877, neuf ans avant l'acquisition de Ziguinchor par la France, un indult de Rome attribue la juridiction aux missionnaires français. Ce n'est que onze ans plus tard, en 1888, qu'ils y ouvrent une mission.

Bien avant l'ouverture de l'école à Ziguinchor, certaines familles « portugaises » manifestent le désir de confier leurs enfants aux évangéliques[18] puis aux spiritains établis à Sédhiou. La mission n'est pas aménagée pour les recevoir et les prêtres regrettent de ne pouvoir accéder à cette demande immédiatement. Malgré cela, ils n'excluent pas d'y donner suite dès qu'ils pourront accueillir des élèves internes et se réjouissent par avance du succès de cette future entreprise :

> On veut nous confier des internes, mais nous ne sommes pas installés pour cela. Quand nous serons bien connus, nous aurons tous les enfants de famille de Ziguinchor.[19]

A Carabane, île située à l'embouchure du fleuve, des enfants chrétiens sont confiés aux prêtres : deux catholiques, dont l'un est originaire de la famille Carvalho[20] de Ziguinchor. Cependant, les missionnaires ne peuvent pas entretenir un nombre important d'élèves internes.[21]

En 1888, lorsqu'ils ouvrent une station missionnaire à Ziguinchor, ils concentrent leur action sur la population christianisée, en partie « portugaise »[22]. Ils constatent leur manque d'éducation religieuse : la plupart des habitants n'ont reçu que le baptême, « [les parents] sont eux-mêmes fiers de porter le titre de chrétiens, et ils en pratiqueraient à peu près les devoirs, s'il ne fallait pas renoncer à avoir plusieurs femmes ».[23] L'école est considérée pour eux comme le principal moyen de remédier à ce manque d'instruction chrétienne :

> A Ziguinchor, dit-on, tout le monde est chrétien. Oui, chrétiens de nom, mais païens de mœurs. Cela provient de la trop grande facilité avec laquelle les prêtres portugais, il y a dix ans, baptisaient enfants et adultes sans instruction aucune. Aujourd'hui, connaissant le mal, nous tâchons d'y porter remède par l'école et par l'instruction religieuse. [24]

Les spiritains, appuyés par les autorités françaises, instruisent ces enfants,[25] filles et garçons. Parallèlement, pour renforcer leur hégémonie, les « Portugais » donnent à leurs enfants une éducation « à l'européenne ». Les « Portugais » sont donc parmi les premiers Casamançais à associer l'école, sous sa forme européenne, à leur stratégie de reproduction sociale.

## Les Français en Casamance : une politique scolaire d'assimilation par l'école

Etablis au nord du Sénégal depuis environ trois siècles, les Français envoient une première expédition en Casamance en 1826. Ils signent ensuite une série de traités avec les villages d'Itou, de Diogué, de Carabane et de Sédhiou et resserrent ainsi l'étau autour de Ziguinchor. Ce grignotage de la Casamance, qui engendre un contrôle de la navigation sur le fleuve, et donc des activités commerciales, est diversement accepté. Cette dépendance de Cacheu intéresse peu le Portugal qui s'émeut assez tardivement de sa perte d'influence dans la zone (Carvalho 1967 ; Pélissier 1989). En effet, « face à la montée de la présence française en Casamance, la réaction des autorités portugaises se fait attendre » (Pélissier 1989:45) Réagissant à cet immobilisme, Honorio Barreto défend avec vigueur l'appartenance de son comptoir au Portugal face à l'impérialisme des Français et des Anglais. En 1844, redevenu « un simple commerçant privé », il acquiert une dizaine de terrains qu'il cède ensuite au Portugal. Cependant, ses efforts sont vains, l'expansion française en Casamance s'intensifie. Les Portugais sont amenés à reformuler leurs codes

identitaires face à la menace française. Ils n'échappent en effet pas au discours français qui les enferme dans des catégories chromatiques et ethniques figées qu'ils refusent. A Ziguinchor, les « Portugais » revendiquent leur spécificité :

> Les gens du village portugais proprement dit se disaient Blancs, tandis que pour eux les Diolas étaient des sauvages. Si on leur demandait pourquoi, ils répondaient que le Diola ne portait que le « kafoul » (le pagne) tandis que les Portugais portaient le « calça » (pantalon)[26].

Etre « Blanc » permet aux Afro-portugais de se distinguer du reste de la population africaine, ce qui revient en fait à affirmer leur christianité et leur caractère d'hommes libres. Au cours du XIXe siècle, cette identité se définit désormais tant face aux Français que face aux Africains. A l'inverse, pour contrôler et assimiler ce groupe, les Français nient leur ascendance européenne et les considèrent avant tout comme des Africains.

> By the late 19th in Senegambia the establishment oh European economic predominance followed by the imposition of colonial military and political control was accompagned by the spread of notions of identity based on physical characteristics competition between France and Portugal for political controle of the Casamance accentued French efforts to redefine the «Portuguese» of Ziguinchor as black Africans[27](Mark).

Des Africains à part tout de même, car ils contrôlent la vie économique et politique de Ziguinchor depuis plus de deux cents ans. Bien que Ziguinchor n'ait pas été conquise par la force, l'opposition politique et culturelle créole à laquelle les Français durent faire face s'avère tenace.

L'acquisition de Ziguinchor par la France en 1886 et la limitation des frontières entre le Sénégal et la Gambie en 1889, puis entre le Sénégal et la Guinée portugaise en 1890, réduisent considérablement le rôle économique de cette communauté. Cette reconfiguration territoriale entraîne inéluctablement la perte de leurs attributions politiques et de leurs avantages économiques. Pour ces raisons, selon Christian Roche, les Afro-portugais n'approuvent pas d'emblée le transfert de l'autorité tutélaire :

> Ils redoutaient l'arrivée des Français, et leur crainte fut avivée par les notables qui ne dissimulèrent pas leur colère et leur consternation. La présence française allait mettre un terme à l'autonomie relative de l'enclave qui, jusqu'ici, s'était administrée elle-même, sous le contrôle de Cacheu. Depuis des générations, aucun Portugais de métropole n'avait dirigé directement le village et les mulâtres appréhendaient l'arrivée d'un administrateur français qui allait tout régenter (Roche 1985:208).

Les premiers rapports entre l'autorité française et les Afro-portugais, avec en tête la famille Carvalho qui régente la ville depuis le XVIIIe siècle, sont empreints d'hostilité. Or, à la fin du XIXe siècle, la présence française au

Sénégal ne se limite plus à des comptoirs et il est donc urgent d'achever la colonisation de la Casamance, alors que le nord du Sénégal est quasiment « pacifié ».

Pour le maintien des positions françaises mais surtout le contrôle de la région puis l'assimilation des populations, l'école est considérée comme un moyen privilégié : la politique scolaire dans les colonies françaises a avant tout pour objectif de pérenniser la conquête en diffusant les valeurs de la République et surtout en imposant la langue[28] française. Comme l'a montré Denise Bouche, l'école ne concerne qu'une minorité politique et sociale : la captation des élites, chefs traditionnels et notables, par l'école doit permettre à la France d'asseoir plus rapidement et profondément son autorité.

Conscient du rôle et de la place de l'élite portugaise de Ziguinchor, Galibert, nommé administrateur provisoire en 1888, oblige les familles à envoyer leurs enfants à l'école congréganiste, et ce, même si elles n'ont pas un « besoin absolu »[29] de les garder au foyer. La propagation de la langue française revêt une importance particulière, car les Afro-portugais s'expriment essentiellement en créole, mélange de portugais et de langues africaines. Pour cette élite, la fréquentation de l'école a eu donc d'emblée un caractère quasi obligatoire. Une quarantaine d'enfants sont rassemblés sous l'autorité d'un spiritain. Le gouvernement colonial soutint l'école catholique[30] et n'ouvrit pas d'école laïque à Ziguinchor, redoutant que les parents, majoritairement catholiques, refusent que leurs enfants soient instruits par des instituteurs de l'école laïque, fréquemment de religion musulmane :

> Ziguinchor [sic] […] est habitée presque exclusivement par des créoles portugais qui sont tous catholiques, et l'élément musulman y est à peine représenté. Donc une école, avec un instituteur musulman, n'est pas admissible à Ziguinchor, car elle n'aurait certainement que très peu d'élèves. Si donc l'on veut développer à Ziguinchor l'usage de la langue française, ce qui serait à désirer, car ce serait développer en même temps l'influence française, qui dans cette escale aurait besoin de prendre la place de l'influence portugaise, il faut donner de l'extension à l'école qui y est établie et qui est dirigée par les Pères missionnaires de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit et du Sacré-Cœur de Marie.[31]

Le père spiritain chargé de la classe ne peut cependant pas assurer ses cours quotidiennement « à cause des devoirs imposés par le culte »[32]. Le lieutenant-administrateur de Ziguinchor demande donc à la mission de Ziguinchor d'accueillir un frère de Ploërmel,[33] qui se consacrerait uniquement à l'enseignement. Ainsi, selon lui, l'augmentation du nombre des élèves devrait permettre plus facilement le remplacement du créole par la langue française. En 1901, l'école de garçons devient gouvernementale et le Frère Malo y fut chargé des cours. Le conseil général de la colonie lui accorde un adjoint ainsi qu'un budget de 30 000F.[34]

L'année suivante, le résident n'est toujours pas satisfait des progrès des enfants :

> L'école des frères de Ziguinchor laisse à désirer, les jeunes Portugais sont peu familiarisés avec notre langue. M. le gouverneur Guy a pu le constater lors de sa visite à Ziguinchor.[35]

A partir de 1904, le processus de laïcisation de l'enseignement est enclenché au Sénégal : l'Eglise est remerciée pour son action dans le développement de l'œuvre scolaire ; toutefois, elle justifie sa volonté de contrôle de l'instruction publique en soulignant l'inadéquation entre les objectifs et les méthodes des écoles congréganistes et la politique scolaire coloniale.

> Les spiritains s'inquiètent vivement de l'effet de cette loi sur l'éducation des « Portugais » :
>
> L'élément portugais de la Casamance laisse également beaucoup à espérer.
>
> Hélas ! Qu'en sera-t-il l'année prochaine ?
>
> Toutes nos écoles sont laïcisées et la franc-maçonnerie fait partout une propagande acharnée pour détruire tout ce que les missionnaires ont édifié depuis un demi-siècle.[36]

En 1905, le remplacement des missionnaires par les instituteurs laïcs entraîne une baisse des effectifs scolaires ; néanmoins, dans les années qui suivent, les « Portugais » sont majoritaires sur les bancs de l'école.

Vingt ans après l'annexion du comptoir par la France, la résistance qu'opposent les Afro-portugais aux Français est toujours aussi vive :

> L'effectif scolaire est composé d'enfants d'origine portugaise et ce sont les plus nombreux. Il n'y a en effet dans la classe que 4 musulmans dont un est d'origine soussou, un Balante et deux Wolofs […] En général presque tous reconnaissent les bienfaits de la domination française. Malheureusement, il y en a quelques-uns qui disent encore qu'ils sont Portugais.[37]

Cette année-là, la commission municipale émet le vœu de construire une école de filles, regrettant que « les fillettes errent dans les rues et ne savent s'exprimer qu'en créole portugais ».[38] Elle témoigne ainsi de la faiblesse des progrès de diffusion de la langue française et, parallèlement, de la prédominance de la langue créole. Dans le cadre de la laïcisation de l'enseignement, les autorités n'ont en fait pas prévu de structures d'accueil pour les filles qui avaient fréquenté jusqu'alors massivement l'école des sœurs. Cette initiative souligne en outre la prise de conscience de l'importance politique de l'éducation des filles seulement entreprise dans la capitale de la Casamance et dans les Quatre Communes du Sénégal.

Créée en 1909, l'école de filles de Ziguinchor attire d'ailleurs avant tout les jeunes filles « portugaises » :

> Elles parlent cependant avec plus de difficultés, et cela tient à ce que, en dehors de l'école, chez elles, au catéchisme, à l'église elles ne parlent plus et n'entendent plus parler que le créole portugais.[39]

L'enseignement ménager est en outre suivi avec plus d'assiduité que l'enseignement général,[40] sans doute parce qu'il correspondait à l'idéal de l'éducation féminine catholique, ce qui explique en partie la lenteur de la diffusion de la langue française.[41]

Incités par l'administration, sensibilisés par les missionnaires à donner une éducation en partie religieuse à leurs enfants, les Afro-portugais sont soucieux de maintenir leur prépondérance sociale et politique à Ziguinchor, ils forment le groupe socioculturel majoritaire[42] à l'école publique de Ziguinchor. L'école, malgré ses efforts soutenus en direction des « Portugais », n'est toujours pas parvenue à annihiler l'identité créole citadine et catholique. Au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale, l'administrateur rendit à nouveau compte du manque d'attachement des « Portugais » à la France :

> Comme toujours, l'élément catholique portugais, qui malheureusement est assez nombreux à Ziguinchor, s'est tenu à l'écart du mouvement patriotique qu'on a pu constater chez les autres races »,[43] et l'année suivante, « l'état d'esprit de la population, bon à Carabane, est satisfaisant à Ziguinchor, en ce qui concerne du moins les musulmans ; l'élément catholique, appelé ici 'les Portugais', reste toujours turbulent, agressif dans son attitude et peu respectueux de l'autorité pour laquelle d'ailleurs il ne cache pas son antipathie.[44]

L'exemple de la résistance politique et culturelle afro-portugaise à la colonisation française montre, d'une part, les limites de la politique d'assimilation « à la française » par l'école et, d'autre part, que la scolarisation des enfants ne constitue pas nécessairement un acte de soumission à l'autorité coloniale.

Au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale, Ziguinchor ne dispose que d'une école pour une population totale de plus de 1500 habitants. Le faible impact de l'école, tant sur cette communauté que sur l'ensemble de la population africaine scolarisée, s'explique ainsi par la faiblesse numérique des enfants concernés, le manque d'infrastructures primaires et post-primaires, la déficience en matière de formation des maîtres, le peu d'outils pédagogiques et l'utilisation d'une langue d'enseignement différente de la langue maternelle des élèves. Les moyens mis en œuvre par l'administration coloniale sont bien en deçà des besoins nécessaires à la réalisation des ambitions assimilationnistes françaises. Dans les années qui suivent la mise en place de la fédération de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, et au moins jusqu'au lendemain de la Grande Guerre, l'urgence est plus de former des auxiliaires

pour le commerce et l'administration, choisis parmi l'élite, que de « civiliser » les populations africaines, comme le prétendent les colonisateurs français (Bouche 1975). La scolarisation des enfants afro-portugais, à Ziguinchor, répond ainsi à cet objectif : située dans le quartier administratif de l'Escale où résidaient Européens, Wolofs et Afro-portugais, ces derniers sont recrutés prioritairement au détriment des populations africaines des autres quartiers. Ces élèves – pour la plupart fils de fonctionnaires ou de commerçants – sont ensuite recrutés dans le commerce ou dans l'administration. L'école joue ainsi son rôle dans la reproduction, voire dans la promotion sociale, de ces communautés ; cela explique qu'il y ait eu convergence sur ce point entre colonisateurs et anciennes élites.

## Conclusion

L'influence « portugaise » sur la vie politique et culturelle ziguinchoroise ne s'est pas démentie pas au fil des années : le premier maire de Ziguinchor élu en 1956 est un métis franco-portugais, Jules Charles Bernard ; son successeur, en 1966, Etienne Carvalho, est un créole. Les Afro-portugais sont en outre parvenus à imposer leur langue à l'ensemble de la population de Ziguinchor et le créole était devenu, selon Caroline Juillard, « un facteur d'intégration à la vie urbaine »[45]. La prépondérance du créole comme langue de communication urbaine et le poids politique et culturel de cette communauté ont perduré jusqu'à l'indépendance. A partir des années soixante-dix, l'influence des métis s'est affaiblie et leur langue a progressivement été supplantée par le wolof.

Aujourd'hui, l'héritage portugais à Ziguinchor est visible à travers quelques patronymes (Corréa, Barboza, Carvalho), quelques bâtiments et l'action d'associations qui revendiquent l'appartenance à cette culture lusophone. L'organisation d'un carnaval à Ziguinchor par un collectif de cadres casamançais majoritairement créoles (au début des années 1980) permet, selon S. Awenengo d'Alberto, de le rappeler :

> L'héritage portugais de Ziguinchor était une manière pour les créoles, qui avaient perdu leur prééminence politique dans la ville – ils avaient été victimes des expropriations foncières et Mamadou Abdoulaye Sy venait de succéder à Etienne Carvalho à la mairie – de se reconstituer et de faire valoir leur capital symbolique à Ziguinchor.[46]

La politique d'assimilation des « Portugais » de Ziguinchor par la France et les mutations économiques en Afrique de l'Ouest n'ont pas annihilé la lusitanité de cette communauté.

L'histoire des Afro-portugais de Ziguinchor s'inscrit indéniablement dans l'histoire des communautés métisses d'Afrique de l'Ouest. Européens en

même temps qu'Africains, les métis parviennent à créer une société originale caractérisée par des pratiques socioculturelles et économiques spécifiques. Elles se définissent enfonction d'un contexte historique, de critères socioculturels, politiques et économiques par rapport aux autres tant Européens qu'Africains. Au fil des époques et des recompositions territoriales (comptoirs portugais, colonisation française, indépendance sénégalaise), l'identité afro-portugaise a existé au-delà des cadres territoriaux définis par les frontières coloniales et post-coloniales,[47]

Au sein des comptoirs, dans le contexte d'une économie de traite, jusqu'à la fin du XIXe siècle, les métis, à l'image « [des] habitants [de Saint-louis], ont vite réalisé que tout système de domination a besoin de construire une idéologie discriminant les dominants et les dominés. Sa nécessité est encore plus forte dans le système esclavagiste où il masque l'arbitraire et la violence qui le fonde. Les catégories naturelles, la couleur de la peau, l'ethnie semblent les plus efficaces dans cette production de la différence, même si la religion, la culture peuvent être mises à contribution » (Thioub 2009[48]). L'identité des Afro-portugais de Casamance est ainsi profondément liée à l'économie de traite dont la fin engendra le déclin progressif au cours du XIXe siècle et du XXe siècle. L'arrivée des Français leur imposa d'affirmer et de redéfinir leur identité afin de maintenir leur pouvoir. Ils intégrèrent ainsi leurs écoles sans renoncer à leur lusitanité. La scolarisation leur permit d'accéder aux métiers créés dans le cadre de la domination coloniale française, que ce fût dans le commerce ou dans l'administration. Cependant, à partir des années trente et surtout après 1945, la scolarisation a touché plus massivement les ruraux qui ont ensuite émergé sur le plan politique (Foucher 2002 ; Labrune-Badiane 2008) et pris progressivement la place des anciennes élites. En outre, les Français s'appuyèrent d'abord essentiellement sur les Wolofs pour coloniser la Casamance et exclurent ainsi les « Portugais », numériquement très minoritaires, des postes clés de l'administration coloniale. Les « Portugais » de Ziguinchor ont tout de même résisté à l'assimilation française et réussi à s'imposer dans l'échelle sociale.

La marginalisation de la communauté créole dans la société post-coloniale sénégalaise s'est traduite par la perte de leur place dans la politique locale et la progression du wolof au détriment du créole. Elle s'explique d'abord par le déclin économique et politique de Ziguinchor au profit de la capitale Dakar, l'espace sénégalais étant redéfini selon le modèle centre/périphérie qui relègue les capitales régionales à un rang secondaire. Les Afro-portugais ont progressivement perdu leur place ainsi que ce qui faisait leur spécificité, statut social, fonction économique et appartenance à la religion catholique. Leur identité s'est ainsi progressivement diluée. Les Luso-Africains ne se

revendiquent d'ailleurs plus comme « Portugais », argument qui leur a permis de s'insérer dans les réseaux commerciaux portugais puis de se positionner contre la menace que représentait la colonisation française, mais comme « Créoles ». Leur revendication identitaire est ainsi liée au contexte historique ; or dans le Sénégal indépendant, être « Portugais » ne représente plus un enjeu politique ni ne garantit plus l'accès à un statut social. L'action culturelle menée par les cadres créoles, issus de l'école souvent ancrée dans une tradition familiale depuis plusieurs générations, témoigne tout de même de la volonté de cette communauté à Ziguinchor d'exister culturellement malgré tout.

## Notes

1. Je remercie Odile Goerg et Alain Tirefort pour leurs conseils.
2. Par Eurafricains, Brooks désigne les communautés métisses issues de la rencontre entre Portugais, Français, Anglais et Africains.
3. George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 2003, 355p.; Hilary Jones, From Mariage à la Mode to Weddings at Town Hall: Marriage, Colonialism, and Mixed-Race Society in Nineteenth-Century Senegal, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2005, pp. 27- 48; W. Johnson, ….
4. Administrateurs, commerçants, *lançados* (aventuriers), condamnés politiques ou repris de justice .
5. Ce catholicisme est teinté de religion africaine.
6. Cette cession ne se fait pas sans heurts et intervient après plusieurs années de tractations. Voir C. Roche, 1985.
7. Alcione M. Amos, 2001.
8. Moreau Marie-Louise, 1992.
9. Lettre d'Honorio Barreto au Gouverneur portugais, le 26 août 1857, citée par Carvalho G., 1967 :139.
10. Roche 1972 :46.
11. Nom donné aux catholiques africains.
12. Carvalho 1967 :139.
13. De Sousa Ferreira 1974 :33.
14. Boulègue, J. et Pinto-Bull, B., « Un prêtre sénégalais au XVIe siècle »,*Notes africaines*… Au Sénégal, le premier prêtre sénégalais, un wolof, le Père Joao Pinto, est envoyé au Portugal dès le XVIe siècle pour poursuivre des études. A son retour, il est nommé « curé à vie » à l'Eglise de Santo Amaro sur l'île de Sao Tomé. Quelques années plus tard, à sa demande, il est envoyé en mission dans l'évêché des îles du Cap-Vert où il entreprend l'évangélisation, sans grand succès, de ses « compatriotes » puis, avec plus de succès, à l'embouchure du Rio Sao Domingos. André Alvares d'Almada nous apprend qu'il est respecté par « tous les Blancs », et que son prestige inquiète à tel point l'évêque qu'il le « suspendit de ses fonctions et le rappela », de peur que le père Pinto ne supplante son influence.

15. Boulègue et Pinto-Bull, 1966:29.
16. La Casamance ne correspond à ce moment-là à aucune réalité administrative. Dans les textes des voyageurs européens, ce terme désigne en fait le fleuve Casamance et les territoires alentours.
17. ANS, 11D1/284, Lettre de F. Galibert au gouverneur du Sénégal et dépendances, le 14 mai 1888.
18. En 1863, les missionnaires de la Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris avaient ouvert une école fréquentée notamment par quelques élèves « portugais ». Pour plus de précisions, voir, C. Labrune-Badiane, 2008 (a).
19. CPSE, *Bulletin de la communauté de Sédhiou*, 3I111b1, 17 février au 1er juin 1876.
20. CPSE, *Journal de la Communauté de Carabane*, le 17 janvier 1887.
21. A Ziguinchor, leur nombre est fixé à quatre chez les sœurs et à trois chez les pères.
22. Les Afro-Portugais ne sont pas les seuls catholiques de Casamance. En effet, les prêtres portugais et spiritains ne baptisent pas seulement les enfants de ces familles.
23. Congrégation des Pères du Saint-Esprit, *Bulletin CPSE* XV, 1887-1889, p. 470.
24. CPSE, *Bulletin de la CSPE*, 1899-1900, Communauté de Ziguinchor, p. 259.
25. L'enseignement à l'école spiritaine est cependant plus religieux que général. Cf C. Labrune-Badiane (2008).
26. ANS, 2Z1, *Annales religieuses de la Casamance*, p. 86.
27. Mark, P., 2002:145.
28. Sur l'enseignement colonial en Afrique de l'Ouest, voir Bouche 1975.
29. Roche 1972 :46.
30. CPSE, Lettre de M. Galibert au vénéré Père, le 6 février 1890. Dans un premier temps, le gouverneur du Sénégal aurait souhaité, dès 1890, installer un instituteur laïc à Ziguinchor, qui aurait été en concurrence directe avec les pères, mais, pour des raisons que nous ignorons, ce projet, resté secret, n'a pas abouti. L'expérience carabanaise, où l'opposition entre les deux écoles était ouverte, a peut-être joué.
31. ANS, 13G494, Cercle de Basse-Casamance, Rapport sur les écoles, le 1er octobre 1900.
32. ANS, 13G494, Rapport au sujet des écoles de Basse-Casamance, le lieutenant-administrateur de Ziguinchor, le 6 octobre 1900.
33. Fondé en 1817 par l'Abbé Jean-Marie de La Mennais, l'Institut des frères de l'instruction des frères de Ploërmel est chargé de reprendre les écoles du Sénégal par le ministre de la Marine. Leurs activités se cantonnent à Saint-Louis et à Gorée. Leur envoi à Ziguinchor à la rentrée 1901 correspond à la volonté de l'administration de diffuser l'enseignement dans l'ensemble de l'AOF. Cette même année, une dizaine de frères sont envoyés au Sénégal et un à Conakry.
34. CPSE, *Bulletin CPSE*, XXI, 1901-1902, p.384.
35. ANS, 2G3-56, Rapports politiques mensuels, Ziguinchor, 1903.
36. CPSE, 3I113a7, Œuvre de la Ste enfance, Vicariat apostolique de la Sénégambie, 1904.
37. ANS, J33, Statistiques scolaires, Ecole de Ziguinchor, 1908.
38. ANS, 2G8/39, Rapports politiques Casamance, 1908.

39. ANS J33, Rapport sur l'école de filles, Année scolaire 1910/1911.
40. ANS, 1912/13, Ecole de filles de Ziguinchor, J33 : « L'enseignement ménager est dans la partie du programme qui [les] intéresse le plus. La directrice a remarqué que quelques élèves, qui manquent quelquefois la classe dans le courant de la semaine, étaient toujours présentes les jours de lessive ou de couture ; cela tient à ce que les parents ne voient dans l'école que le côté pratique et sont indifférents à l'instruction en ce qui concerne les filles. Aussi retiennent-ils plus souvent leurs enfants un jour de classe qu'un jour de couture ».
41. Pascale Barthélémy a néanmoins montré que l'élite féminine scolarisée d'Afrique Occidentale Française est avant tout composée de métisses, dahoméennes pour la plupart, issues des classes sociales aisées, et a établi l'homogénéité sociale du recrutement scolaire féminin. Barthélémy 2004.
42. En 1914, ils étaient 39% à l'école de Ziguinchor.
43. ANS 2G14-40, Ziguinchor, le 4 octobre 1914, L'administrateur du cercle de Ziguinchor à M. l'administrateur supérieur de la Casamance.
44. ANS, 2G15/28, Rapports politiques Casamance, 1915. Les rivalités entre l'administration et l'Eglise n'arrangent d'ailleurs pas la relation des « Portugais », catholiques, et de la France.
45. Julliard 1995:58.
46. Awenengo D'Alberto 2005:495.
47. Par exemple, à travers les liens entre les familles afro-portugaises de Ziguinchor et de Guinée-Bissau, notamment lors de la guerre de libération nationale de celle-ci dans les années soixante-dix.
48. Thioub 2009 :10.

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*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp.149-164



# Camwood (*Pterocarpus Tinctorius*) in the Political Economy of the Cross and Manyu Rivers Basin of Cameroon and Some Hinterland Communities, 1916-1961

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## Abstract

Camwood exploitation and use played an important role in the political economy of the Cross and Manyu river basin of Cameroon and Nigeria including some hinterland communities throughout the era of British administration which spanned 1916-1961. The British occasionally intervened to end its unrestricted exploitation and regulated its commercialisation for the local and external market. In spite of their laborious effort in this direction, Camwood exploitation continued for various internal and external uses.

## Résumé

L'exploitation et l'utilisation du Camwood ont joué un rôle important dans l'économie politique de la Région du bassin de la Cross River et du fleuve Manyu du Cameroun et du Nigeria, mais aussi certaines communautés de l'intérieur du pays tout au long de la colonisation britannique qui a duré de 1916 à 1961. Les Britanniques sont parfois intervenus pour mettre fin à son exploitation sauvage et réglementer sa commercialisation sur le marché local et extérieur. En dépit de leurs efforts laborieux, l'exploitation du camwood a continué pour satisfaire divers usages internes et externes.

## Introduction

African economies and resources that were hitherto independent of foreign domination systematically came under wanton exploitation by European economic interest groups during the colonial era. While some of these resources such as coffee, cocoa, cotton, banana and tea were introduced from other parts of the world into the continent, others like various species of wood, wild rubber, palm trees and kernels, and mineral resources were exploited from within Africa. Throughout the African continent, Europeans recklessly plundered the abundant natural resources for their industries back

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in Europe (Ajayi and Espie 1968; Duignan and Gann 1970; Rowlands 1979; Afigbo *et al.* 1986; Oliver and Atmore 1994; Shillington 1995; Ngoh 1996; Mazrui 1999; Aka 2002). Among the highly prized indigenous resources exploited by the British for example was camwood in the Cross River Region of Cameroon and Nigeria and other hinterland communities of British Southern Cameroons. Camwood is a reddish material that is extracted from the *Baphia nifida*, a leguminous tree, of the suborder *Caesalpinieae* camwood tree. The tree is of fine colour and used in tannery for making knife handles and other similar articles (www.probertencyclopaedia.com/cgi.../res.pl?). It was also used for wool-dyeing as in Liberia, festive occasions and in the production of other very costly cosmetics (Nkwi 1987; www.jstor.org/stable/483540).

This essay focuses on the significance of camwood, a scarce but valuable resource in the Cross and Manyu river basin and beyond. It also examines the problems and ramifications of camwood exploitation in this region during the era of British colonial rule from when the Germans were defeated in the First World War of 1914-16 and forced out of Cameroon.

## Importance of Camwood among the Cross River and Other Communities

The importance of camwood in the history of the Cross River and some hinterland communities as well as other African communities dates back to the pre-colonial era. This resource was economically important to the Nkum traders of Nigeria, British merchants and the indigenous people during the colonial period. Prior to colonial rule, hunters from Keaka or Ejagha country used camwood to decorate stones of the *Obassi* altar. This was meant to solicit good luck from the spirits during hunting expeditions. Besides, Boki men in Nigeria and Cameroon went to the *Olum* family shrine with their feet rubbed with camwood as a cleansing device. The rubbing of stones at the *Obassi* altar with camwood was a cleansing ritual and hunters used it as a form of motivation during their numerous hunting expeditions. Women in the many ethnic groups of the Cross River and some hinterland communities rubbed their bodies with the red powder to keep clean and smooth. Children were also made to accompany their parents to the family shrine dressed with necklaces of palm leaves and their bodies rubbed with camwood.[1] Family members used it for cleansing and purification purposes.

The traditional priest in the Cross river basin of Cameroon and Nigeria used camwood in the *Olum* family shrine for anointment of other people. Also in this region, nursing mothers were rubbed with camwood when they were about to deliver to smooth their bodies and to eventually deter men from going to bed with them when they were nursing and breast feeding

their babies. The importance of camwood was not only for purification but also fertility rites, anointment, and a symbol of command and authority. In many Ejagha villages across the Cameroon/Nigeria boundary, women dancers of the *nchi or manchung* danced following the death of important personalities dressed up in mat ruffles. This included camwood which became a noticeable recognition of their status and authority.[2] In the Mundani region of the Cross River basin, girls, marriageable and married women were rubbed with camwood and a barren woman was given a plantain rolled in pounded camwood which she kept by her bed to guarantee fecundity.[3]

The importance attached to camwood in the Bangwa polities became manifest during the death of a Chief or prominent family head. Their wives were rubbed with the relish.[4] Such a ritual also took place in the Laimbwe polities of Bu, Mbengkas and Baisso in Menchum Division of the North West Region of Cameroon during the coronation of a new *fuai* (Chief), *zhehfuai* (Queen Mother), *zheh'abei* (Family Head) and when the *kefa'a* women regulatory society performed at a funeral or when its new member was being initiated into the society of elderly women. The women shaved their heads which were rubbed with camwood as well as their cylindrical instruments which produced the music. Among the Kom, Aghem and Bu of the North West Region of the country, the initiation of a new member into the *dua* or *chong (tschong)* was never complete if he was not rubbed with camwood. He was considered cleansed from his own iniquities and born into a new life in manhood. Besides, in many of the grassland fondoms of the North West Region, camwood served as rubbing oil because it smoothed and kept the body warm. The condiment also signified authority and was often used to send away evil spirits in the different communities. Among the Laimbwe for instance, the communication officers or spokespersons of the *kuiifuai* male regulatory society, *tsitenduoh*, addressed and continue to address the population with camwood marks on their foreheads.[5]

Still among the Laimbwe and Kom polities of the grassfields of Cameroon, camwood is used to make peace and ensure prosperity. The resource is also used in healing rituals. During traditional wedding ceremonies, young women are washed and rubbed with camwood to cleanse them of any impurities and initiate them into womanhood. Nursing mothers are also rubbed with camwood to keep their bodies soft and smooth. Barren women go through this ritual with the hope of attracting the sympathy of God to be able to eventually give birth to children.[6] The Moghamo people during the colonial period stole camwood from the border communities of the Banyang country for various traditional uses in male and female societies. Among the different uses of camwood among the Moghamo was for purification rites, births and the

protection of individuals from evil spirits.[7] Their clandestine exploitation of this resource in the forests of the Banyang-speaking polities was often a source of inter-ethnic tension which intermittently abated after traditional diplomatic negotiations between these Banyang polities and those of the Moghamo people.

In many other grassland chiefdoms, camwood was an important commodity which was very often used during different ritual and initiation ceremonies. Traders of different commodities like palm kernels and mats often returned home with a good quantity of camwood for their wives and female relations (Rowlands 1979:9). They used it as rubbing oil or for initiation rituals. The Nkwen traders for instance who exchanged their locally made hoes for oil in Meta country went on to obtain camwood from Bali which came all the way from Widikum, an important camwood market at the borders of the then Mamfe and Bamenda Divisions of British Southern Cameroons. Meanwhile in the Nso slave markets of the western grassfields, the heads of slaves were shaved and rubbed with camwood by different slave dealers for easy identification and sale to slave merchants coming from far and near (Nkwi 1987:108-9, 118, 122 & 123).

In addition, during the British colonial era spanning from 1916 to 1961, camwood came to be a highly prized resource because of the revenue derived from it by Nkum traders and other local stakeholders. They exploited and sold it to waiting customers at a very high cost.[8] The importance of camwood as an export commodity of greater importance was not limited to the Cross River region of Cameroon and Nigeria and some hinterland communities but also Sierra Leone as observed by Walter Rodney (www.marxists.org/subject/africa/rodney-walter/.../cho3.htm). Between 1916 and 1922, many inhabitants of the Cross river transported the valuable commodity through the Manyu and Cross Rivers to Ikom and Calabar but the British described this as a smuggling activity. While the local inhabitants and their Nkum traders profited from the trade to Ikom and Calabar, the colonial economy witnessed a considerable leakage in monetary terms because the colonial authorities hardly received anything from this transportation of the resource along the river to important commercial centres like Calabar.[9]

Throughout the colonial epoch, the British colonial authorities tried to raise money from the exploitation of camwood by asking for a charge for permits granted to exploiters who officially indicated their willingness to exploit the resource. The aim of insisting on permits was also a way to regulate the irrational exploitation of this tree that was of value to many people. In Kembong and the Takamanda Native Court areas of the Cross River basin, the village authorities asked and received from buyers of

camwood a fee of 1/-. It was only then that these exploiters were given a paper which permitted them to fell the camwood trees.[10]

It is worth noting that the British forest policy was designed primarily to serve their vested interests in Southern Cameroons. As late as 1958, the chief duty of the Forest Department was to acquire, protect and manage the forest estates through constant patrols and to adequately maintain the boundaries. Although the colonial authorities recognised the importance of agriculture for both the indigenous people and the colonial economy, they still embarked on a policy of keeping permanent forest that once in place could not be destroyed. The indigenous population in many parts of British Southern Cameroons opposed this forest policy but every effort was made by the colonial authorities to constitute the remaining valuable accessible forest areas as part of the permanent forest estate. They argued that keeping a permanent forest would be used to satisfy the peoples' requirements of forest produce and also to raise maximum possible revenue (Cameroons 1959:140-1). The quest for a permanent forest led to friction between forestry officials and different indigenous communities of British Southern Cameroons. This policy created more problems in the Cross River region where there was an abundance of forest with a lot of exploitable forest resources like camwood but which was subjected to government control.

Meanwhile in the Mbo area, which was a little further way from the Cross River basin, the indigenous people continued to collect the roots of the camwood tree and sell them to waiting buyers from the grassland of Cameroon. In Matene, Matene Magbi and Badschama, villages of the Assumbo area, including Ovando, the people exploited the camwood tree for money from the numerous customers coming in from the grassland region who needed it for several traditional reasons.[11] While indigenes of these villages made a fortune out of the sale of camwood, those of Otutu in the Menka District did not get as much from the resource because they were only able to sell smaller quantities of the *pterocarpus tinctorius*.[12]

Meanwhile, the British colonial authorities tried to preserve the resource from uncontrolled exploitation because of its increasing economic value. The economic importance of camwood was not in doubt when the District Officer for Mamfe on 20 December 1941 remarked that 'The Camwood trade is quite important in this Division (Mamfe) and I should welcome any measures that would prevent its dislocation.'[13] In fact, the different colonial officials promoted a policy of rational exploitation of camwood in the Cross River basin for the benefit of their merchants stationed at Calabar. It was also to enable exploiters to pay a forestry fee to the forestry department.

The Nkum traders from Ikom Division in Nigeria turned out to be the greatest beneficiaries in the commercialisation of camwood. They were the principal buyers of large quantities of this commodity in the Ekwe District and from 1916 onwards in a way promoted its 'clandestine' exploitation. They were able to do this with great success because Britain had taken over the administration of Southern Cameroons after the defeat of the Germans and the partition of Cameroon between them and the French. These Nkum traders later sold the resource to European merchants in the Cross River markets of Nigeria for a huge profit. Each billet sold at 6d in Cameroon but stood at 3/- and 5/- in Nigerian markets. The Nkum also extended business tentacles into Boki territory South and South West of Basho. For every 56 billets of camwood roots supplied by the Bokis, the Nkum business operators paid them 12 shillings.[14] Other indigenous Boki, Eba Mbu and Ekokisam traders carried the camwood roots downstream together with other commodities and sold them at Akataka near Obubra or at Oburu near Afikpo. A few itinerant traders from Nsanakang and Nsanarati also got involved in the purchase and sale of camwood. From the sale of its roots alone, a trader made a £5-10 profit.[15] Apart from the sale of camwood exploited from their forest to Nigeria, the Nyang, Eastern Banyang and Biteku people sold it to the Bangwa and Bali who had great need for it during traditional festive and other important occasions.

Throughout the colonial period camwood like other resources became important to different people. The trunk of the tree was used to build canoes and facilitate trade in camwood and other commodities like salt, palm kernels and oil along the Manyu and Cross rivers to and from Ikom and Calabar in Nigeria. Camwood was used by the villages of Akwa and Mbu of the Mbulu ethnic group and Nyang and Mukonyong of the Banyang area to make dye. This was not limited to these communities because the people of the region from Senegal to Angola also used it as a red dye (www.jstor.org/stable/483540). The Mbo people of Mamfe Division also combined camwood with leaves of the *esere* bean to produce dye.[16] The mad rush for camwood by the Nkum traders was a result of pressure from the Ikom markets for its red powder for sale to Europeans, desperately in need of the resource. The Boki exploited and marketed camwood to the Calabari and other merchants who in turn used it to manufacture cosmetics. In the midst of these benefits, the government stepped in to systematise its exploitation and commercialisation for sustainability.

## Government Systematisation of Camwood Exploitation and Commercialisation

On account of the value that was attached to camwood by the different stakeholders involved in its exploitation, use and commercialisation, the government came in to systematise its exploitation and sale. Other episodes that spurred the government to action included the impact of the First World War, the Economic Slump of 1929, the Second World War and the flow of trade in commodities like kernels and goats from parts of British Southern Cameroons towards French Cameroon notably Dschang, Melong and Nkongsamba.

The British colonial officials roundly condemned what they called smuggling of camwood. By 1922, camwood 'smuggling' was so rampant that the more profit smugglers made, the more the colonial economy was deprived of money from camwood trade because this was not controlled by the government. Another deterrent measure employed by the colonial officials to prevent what they considered as irrational exploitation of camwood was to demand from interested exploiters and/or buyers a forestry fee and the payment of royalties to the communities where camwood was being exploited. The huge amount of money that was levied on permits for those willing to fell the camwood contributed towards raising some money for the colonial treasury. This responsibility was not limited to the government but included the Native Authority (NA) councils of the Cross River area. These were to ensure that permits were obtained by exploiters following the right procedure before they were allowed to exploit the camwood resource. The forestry fee for camwood was 1:1:- for 56 billets. The following year, permits for camwood exploitation stood at £132.[17] The enforcement of this forestry fees was also a subtle way to ensure the protection of certain trees and exercise control on the fairly large destruction of camwood. Table 1 illustrates the forestry fees and royalties for camwood for the period January to December 1926 in the Mamfe, Nsanakang and Basho areas.

**Table 1:** Schedule of Forestry Fees and Royalties, January to December 1926

| Month | Name and class of tree camwood3/cl £ | Fees paid into local treasury £ | Royalties paid into native treasury £ | Area where permits were issied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | 2 | 13 | - | - |
| February | 6 | 17 | - | - |
| March | 5 | 5 | 6 | Mamfe |
| April | 4 | 6 | 4 | - |
| May | 3 | 3 | 18 | - |
| June | 10 | 10 | - | Nsanakang |
| July | 21 | 13 | 9 | - |
| August | 24 | 5 | 17 | - |
| September | 12 | 2 | 15 | Basho |
| October | 25 | 5 | 10 | - |
| November | 8 | 19 | 18 | - |
| December | 12 | 12 | 12 | - |
| **Total** | **132** | **110** | **109** | - |

**Source:** Cameroons Province 1924, File No. 37/24, Qh/a (1924) 1, National Archives Buea (NAB)

From this table, the total number of camwood exploited as indicated in the official sources alone from January to December 1926 was 132. The actual number was certainly far more than this considering the illegal exploitation of this scare resource in the entire Mamfe Division especially in the Basho area by the indigenous population and other smugglers from across the boundary in Nigeria. Such illegal exploitation was never accounted for and so could not be included in the official statistics presented by the government in the three main exploitation areas. The amounts that were paid into the local and native treasuries by recognised exploiters within these twelve months stood at £110 and £109 respectively for the same period. The only areas where exploiters could go for permits for camwood exploitation were Mamfe,

Nsanakang and Basho. In fact, the regulation of the exploitation of this tree by the colonial government and the different native authorities yielded positive results in some areas although the challenges of exploitation without government approval continued unabated.

In 1927 forestry fees and royalties were also paid into the treasuries for the exploitation of camwood. Table 2 illustrates the statistics in terms of the name and class of the camwood tree, the fees paid into the local treasury in pounds, royalties paid into the native treasury in pounds and the main areas of exploitation of the resource from January to October of that year.

**Table 2:** Schedule of Forestry Fees and Royalties, January to 17 October 1927

| Month | Name and class of tree camwood3/cl £ | Fees paid into local treasury £ | Royalties paid into native treasury £ | Area where permits were issued |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | 3 | 3 | 4 | - |
| February | 3 | 13 | 1 | - |
| March | 3 | 4 | 17 | Mamfe |
| April | 1 | 11 | 9 | - |
| May | 6 | 16 | 19 | Nsanakang |
| June | 19 | 19 | 14 | - |
| July | 8 | 8 | 8 | - |
| August | 32 | 12 | 18 | - |
| September | 19 | 19 | 14 | Basho |
| October | 14 | 15 | 3 | - |
| **Total** | **108** | **120** | **107** | - |

**Source:** Forestry: Cameroons Province 1924, File No. 37/24, Qh/a (1924) 1, (NAB)

Of the different classes of exploitable forest trees like iroko, camwood and ebony that fetched an income for the local and native treasuries, camwood was the most regular in the Cross River region of Cameroon and Nigeria. Of the total number of the trees that were exploited in the Cross River basin between January and 17 October 1927, 108 of these were camwood according

to official sources in Mamfe, Nsanakang and Basho where permits were issued to exploiters. The total amount that was paid into the local treasury for the exploitation of this number of camwood trees was £120 and £107 was paid into the native treasury during the same period. Of this amount, part of it was deposited into the local treasury by the native authorities to support government action and other development initiatives in the different NA areas.

Meanwhile, one other measure that was taken to regulate illegal camwood exploitation and marketability was the employment and stationing of forestry guards in areas where camwood exploitation was clandestinely carried out. This measure was heavily enforced in the villages bordering the Bamenda Division of British Southern Cameroons. The Moghamo villages for instance 'stole' camwood from the neighbouring villages of the Banyang country. Some other neighbouring Bamenda villages plundered the resource in the forest areas of Mbome, Mashi, Kepoti, Fumbe, Sabes and Mango Pongo village groups.[18] The Native Administration of this area took up the challenge and stationed forest guards in the affected villages to arrest these culprits from the Bamenda Division.

In other areas notably Ewisi and Kesham in the Akwaya area, about 50 camwood trees according to official sources were felled annually especially between 1923 and 1924. To prohibit the rate at which the tree was exploited in this area, the colonial officials admonished the Native Administration to ensure its protection without which the tree would be extinct.[19] It was indeed the responsibility of the Native Administration to employ many more guards to fight against the uncontrolled exploitation of camwood especially for commercial purposes by indigenous people as well as others coming from up the Cross River.

When the demand for camwood exploitation increased in the different areas where the resource was in abundance, the colonial officials were quick to limit its exploitation to dead and fallen trees only. This could only partially satisfy some ethnic groups and villages notably Akwa and Mbu of the Mbulu area, Nyang and Mukonyong of the Banyang area and Widekum but not all of them.[20] Besides, those who were engaged in the exploitation of the tree had them stamped with the forest mark by the guards to ensure compliance. Any camwood that did not bear these marks was considered illegally exploited and thus confiscated by forest guards and disposed of by the colonial government. Some of the 'smuggled' camwood was openly sold to the people of villages of Bamenda Division that bordered those of Mamfe Division. The sale more often than not took place at the important border market of

Widikum.[21] It was therefore very difficult for the government to successfully prevent people from the exploitation and use of this resource which was even more useful to the people than it was to the colonial administration.

The colonial and Native Administration officials occasionally objected to the issue of forestry licenses. This was when some unscrupulous licence holders embarked on the reckless exploitation and exportation of camwood and in the making of canoes far beyond the quantity they were permitted to exploit. Meanwhile camwood which was located in virgin forest in the Anyang territory was exploited by the people without restriction by the government for a long time probably also because of the difficulty of communication. Besides, for a long time, the camwood tree was still in abundance in this area and the British were still to effectively put in place control mechanisms.[22] Following the eventual putting in place of an effective if not efficient mechanism to regulate camwood exploitation and exportation by the colonial officials, the repercussions on the political economy of the Manyu and Cross River basin as well as other hinterland communities that relied on camwood supply from the Cross River region was disheartening.

## Ramifications on the Political Economy of Camwood Regulation

Throughout the colonial period, the regulation of camwood exploitation and marketability had a ripple effect on the political economy of the Manyu/ Cross River basin and other hinterland communities of Southern Cameroons and Nigeria in several ways. The 'smuggling' of camwood for commercialisation in the Bamenda villages and to the Nkum traders by indigenous people of the Cross River was the result of restrictions on the free exploitation of the camwood tree as was hitherto the case. The situation got to the point where forest guards were posted to the areas of illegal exploitation to keep this resource more or less intact.[23] The posting of forest guards to the Moghamo area did not deter the villagers from 'smuggling' camwood from the neighbouring Banyang villages where camwood was in abundance. These villagers had a mastery of the terrain and used this to outsmart the forest guards. They were also bent on exploiting the resource for traditional use. Besides, other neighbouring Bamenda villages wrestled with the inhabitants of Mbome, Mashi, Kepoti, Fumbe, Sabes and Mongo Pongo as they continued to exploit camwood in their forests without any approval and with such reckless abandon.

Smuggling was accentuated by the establishment of forest reserves such as the Takamanda and the Mawne River Native Administration Forest. The indigenous communities were prevented from freely collecting camwood and other resources within these reserves as was the case before their

establishment. Faced with this difficulty, the village council of Nyang met at Eshobi to encourage the Native Administration to permit the villagers to have free access into the Mawne River Native Administration Forest Reserve to exploit what they considered as their God-given resource. Similarly, the Akwa and Mbu villages solicited the authorities to also permit them to exploit camwood for local use and commercialisation.[24] The establishment of the Takamanda Forest Reserve hindered the exploitation of camwood by the Boki people of Cameroon and Nigeria for sale in the Nigerian markets notably Calabar. As long as the administration did not allow the different village communities to exploit the resource without seeking its permission, the people devised other strategies of exploiting the resource without being caught. These included exploitation at night and the development of trade routes which were different from those officially recognised by the government.

Although permits were occasionally issued to people to procure forestry licences, some licence owners exploited the *pterocarpus tinctorius* to near extinction because they did not respect the terms of their permits which limited them to the exploitation of a certain number of trees. When this happened, the colonial authorities were forced to withdraw licences from these culprits in an attempt to protect the sustainable management of this resource for their future benefit. The licences issued in the Mamfe Division of British Southern Cameroons were however different from royalties to chiefs and/or villages as was the case in Nigeria. The chiefs and villages of this highly prized commodity in most cases did not reap any substantial benefits from its exploitation. According to them, the licences needed to be jointly issued in order to facilitate the receipt of royalties for the development of their villages.[25] Since the colonial government was reticent on this, many of the chiefs were not keen on whether exploiters had licences or not because they reaped little or nothing from these licences.

The payment of money for the exploitation of camwood however remained a serious bone of contention throughout the period of British colonial administration. Since the colonial administration could not forever be indifferent to the grievances of the people, the Secretary of the Southern Provinces in Lagos discussed it with the Resident of the Cameroons Province. The result was a memo sent to the Resident, which advised that the matter should not be pushed too hard because it would 'cause trouble, expense and exasperation.'[26] In fact, many were those who had before British rule exploited camwood without external interference. During British colonial rule, 'smuggling' became extremely rampant. The people were forced to smuggle camwood because they needed it to augment their family revenue and also to continue to perform specific socio-cultural rituals that could not take place

without the use of camwood. They did not have a substitute for camwood and so could hardly improvise.

Meanwhile on 20 April 1928, the District Officer for Mamfe energetically sounded the warning bell that restrictions on the sale of camwood would be strongly resented by the indigenous people. Seventeen days later, that is, on 7 May 1928, the Resident allowed the District Officer to permit the felling of camwood, but only if the tree was in large quantity in the forests of the Cross River region.[27] Political considerations such as these on economic matters were intended to create an atmosphere of camaraderie in the management of resources. Their implementation was another ball game altogether.

Besides, people who were caught felling the protected tree were arrested, beaten and locked up. In one such instance, a defaulter was arrested by a guard Ndip Enoh who in turn attacked him. The culprit was eventually tried and sentenced to a fine of £20 or two months imprisonment.[28] This episode was considered as an abomination to a people who before the colonial intervention exploited their God-given resource without any strings attached to it. Similarly, on 27 November 1930, the District Officer for Mamfe summoned Echu of Amebesu to appear in court for felling two camwood trees in contravention of the permission to fell only one.[29] The fate of Tenche Nakakwo and Tambe Awa of Tafu hanged on a thread because they had been implicated in illegal exploitation of camwood by the colonial officials. The District Officer commanded that all camwood felled should be confiscated and taken to Mamfe.[30] These measures created problems between the colonial officials and the local population throughout the colonial period.

Furthermore, the presence of the Nkum traders in almost all corners of the Manyu and Cross River basin for camwood and its regulated exploitation made the availability of the red powder for local use scarce. Besides, hunters increasingly found it difficult to use camwood in their shrines, unlike before. Initiation into regulatory societies like the *ekpe* gradually became expensive because of the competition for the available scarce camwood which was used at different stages of initiation of new members and also by old members. Other substitutes with a red colouring were eventually sought. A good number of the Nkum traders always bought large quantities of camwood to meet the demand in the Ikom and Calabar markets. Cosmetic industries in Calabar needed much of the camwood to be able to meet the demand of their customers.

## Conclusion

Camwood was one of those natural resources that meant and still mean much to the people of the Manyu, Cross River and other hinterland communities of Cameroon and Nigeria. It was and is still used in homes, by herbalists, shrines, in juju and masquerade societies and on many cultural and festive occasions that are organised once a year. It was a trade commodity that was used for red powder, dyeing and other cosmetics. Considering the multiple uses of camwood, many people wanted to procure a quantity of it. When the British stepped in to regulate and/or prohibit its exploitation, many of the indigenous people grew furious. Many communities however circumvented the regulations put in place and were always ready to bear the consequences. Camwood then became an economic resource that not only influenced economic activities in this region and beyond but also the political decisions of the indigenous people and the colonial officials. All these came to affect the people's possession and use of camwood in the Cross River basin and beyond. Today, many different male and especially female societies use camwood in their initiation and other rituals but this is being purchased from distant places at an enormous cost. Others are seeking alternatives that are also expensive to get. This is the dilemma of the people after many years of subjugation that resulted in what we now see as a challenge to be surmounted.

## Notes

1. File No. 115/1927, Af 27, Keaka Tribal Area Mamfe Division Assessment of, National Archives Buea (NAB); File No 1592/26, Af 24, Boki Eba-Mbu and Ekokisam Assessment Report, NAB.
2. File No. 115/1927, Af 27, Keaka Tribal Area Mamfe Division Assessment of, NAB.
3. File No. 267, Af 49, Intelligence Report on the Mundani Area of the Mamfe Division of the Cameroons Province, NAB.
4. This is a practice which was never neutralized by colonialism because in many fondoms today the practice goes on.
5. Interview with Salome Kaifetai, Kasa Quarter Bu, 15 May 2004, who was Queen Mother. Meanwhile Laimbwe consists of villages speaking a common language and a common heritage. The three main villages are Bu, Mbengkas and Baisoo.
6. Interview with Mami Ngoisei and Mbei Ikai, Kasa Quarter Bu, 15 May 2004; Walter Gam Nkwi, Molyko Buea, 10 June 2004; Vida Wei Chou, Bomaka Buea, 7 October 2006. Mami Ngoiisei and Mbei Ikai are very influential members of the women regulatory society, the *Kefa'a*, in Bu; Walter Gam Nkwi is a lecturer of history at the University of Buea and hails from Njinikom, Kom, and Vida Wei is from one of the royal families of Bu, the Ehzem and daughter of another prominent family, the Eselemei.
7. File No. 11346, Qh/d 1941/2, Camwood, NAB.

8. No statistics exist in the archives but reference is constantly made to its increased commercial value under the British colonial administration.
9. File No. 868/1923, Ce (1922) 1, Mamfe Annual Report 1922, NAB.
10. File No. 11346, Qh/d 1941/2, Camwood, NAB.
11. File No. 1469/23, Af 31, Mbo Tribe Mamfe Division Cameroons Province, 1923. Assessment Report on, NAB; File No. 124/31, Af 7, Reassessment Report on the Assumbo District Mamfe Division 1931, NAB.
12. File No. 411/21, Af 37, An Assessment Report on the Menka District of the Mamfe Division in the Cameroons Province 1924, NAB.
13. File No. 11346, Qh/d 1941/2, Camwood, NAB.
14. File No. 133/1927, Af 25, Ekwe District Mamfe Division Assessment Report on 1926, NAB; File No. 1231/24, Assessment Report on the Anyang and manta Tribes Mamfe Division 1924 Cameroons Province, NAB.
15. File No. 133/1927, Af 25, Ekwe District Mamfe Division Assessment Report on 1926, NAB; File No. 1592/26, Af 24, Boki Eba Mbu and Ekokisam Assessment Report, NAB.
16. File No. 442/1921, Ja/d (1921) 2, Mamfe Division Local Problems, NAB; File No. 19332, Qh/d (1952) 1, Mawne River Native Administration Forest Reserve Mamfe Division, Cameroons Province, NAB; File No. 1469/23, Af 31, Mbo Tribe Mamfe Division Cameroons Province 1923, Assessment Report on, NAB.
17. File No. 37/24, Qh/d (1924) 1, Forestry: Cameroons Province 1924, NAB.
18. File No. 11346, Qh/d 1941/2, Camwood, NAB.
19. File No. 1231/24, Assessment Report on the Anyang and Manta Tribes Mamfe Division 1924 Cameroons Province, NAB.
20. File No. 19332, Qh/d, (1952) 1, Mawne River Native Administration Forest Reserve Mamfe Division, Cameroons Province, NAB.
21. File No. 1A, Ce (1927) 1, Mamfe Division Annual Report 1927, NAB.
22. File No. 1231/24, Assessment Report on the Anyang and Manta Tribes Mamfe Division 1924 Cameroons Province, NAB.
23. File No. 11346, Qh/d 1941/2, Camwood, NAB.
24. File No. 19332, Qh/d (1952) 1, Mawne River Native Administration Forest Reserve Mamfe Division, Cameroons Province, NAB.
25. File No. 449/1920 B, Ce 1920/2, Ossidinge Division: Annual Reports, 1920-21, NAB.
26. File No. 11346, Qh/d, 1941/2, Camwood, NAB.
27. File No. 37/24, Qh/a (1924) 1, Forestry: Cameroons Province 1924, NAB.
28. File No M. 91, Qh/d (1933) 1, Forest Staff (Government) Miscellaneous Correspondence, NAB.
29. File No 23/1929 NA, Qh/a (1929) 4, Native Administration Forestry Cameroons Province 1929, NAB.
30. File No. 23/1929 NA, Qh/a (1929) 4, Native Administration Forestry Cameroons Province 1929, NAB.

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*Afrika Zamani*, Nos 20-21, 2012-2013, pp. 165-194



# Colonial Economic Disempowerment and the Responses of the Hlengwe Peasantry of the South East Lowveld of Zimbabwe: 1890-1965

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## Abstract

Much has been written on how colonialists economically incapacitated Africans through wrestling control of the means of production from them. Some studies have also looked at how various Africans responded to the new order. In the British territory of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) the economic disempowerment of the Africans was through land alienation. However, the areas which have received much coverage on the subject in the country are Matabeleland and Mashonaland on the highveld. Given the economic attractiveness of these two areas to the colonialists and the resistance that the Ndebele and Shona in these areas put up, the overshadowing of peripheral areas such as the S.E. Lowveld, home to the Hlengwe is understandable. However, though the Hlengwe have attracted little more than an occasional passing reference in many studies, they were not spared from the colonial experience, especially the oppression, exploitation and economic disempowerment which other African groups experienced. Therefore, this article is primarily concerned with filling the gap created by the seeming lack of interest in the history of the Hlengwe. Information on Hlengwe colonial history was collected and compiled through oral interviews and a thorough study of archival materials and written sources. The article thus establishes that the loss of land led to the loss of economic independence by the Hlengwe peasantry whose main economic activities were land-based and that this same loss resulted in the Hlengwe people responding in diverse ways to the new colonial order. It goes on to explore the dynamics and variations of the Hlengwe response to colonial rule and exploitation. Most importantly, it establishes that contrary to what the Native Commissioners said, the Hlengwe were a warlike people. The article reveals that as they were integrated more into the orbit of colonial rule and felt its squeeze, they became more aggressive.

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## Résumé

Il existe une pluralité de documentations sur la façon dont les colons ont débilité économiquement les Africains en essayant de leur ravir le contrôle sur les moyens de production. Certaines études ont également examiné les différentes façons dont les Africains ont réagi à ce nouvel ordre. Dans le territoire britannique de Rhodésie du Sud (actuel Zimbabwe), la marginalisation économique des Africains s'est faite à travers l'accaparement des terres. Ainsi les zones ayant fait l'objet d'une attention particulière dans le pays sont le Matabeleland et le Mashonaland dans la région du Highveld. Compte tenu de l'attractivité économique de ces deux régions aux yeux des colons et de la résistance que les Ndebele et Shona ont opposée dans ces régions, le peu d'intérêt qu'ont suscité les zones périphériques telles que la région Sud-est du Lowveld (terroir des peuples Hlengwe) est compréhensible. Toutefois, bien que seules quelques études occasionnelles ont fait allusion aux Hlengwe, ils n'ont pas moins été épargnés par l'expérience coloniale, en particulier l'oppression, et la marginalisation économique comme d'autres groupes africains. Par conséquent, cet article vise principalement à combler le vide créé par le manque apparent d'intérêt pour l'histoire des Hlengwe. A travers des entretiens oraux et une étude approfondie des documents d'archives et des sources écrites, des informations ont été collectées et compilées sur l'histoire coloniale des Hlengwe. L'article établit ainsi que la perte des terres a conduit à la perte de l'indépendance économique par la paysannerie Hlengwe dont les principales activités économiques étaient liées au travail de la terre. En effet, cette perte a poussé les peuples Hlengwe à réagir de diverses manières au nouvel ordre colonial. Il va plus loin pour explorer la dynamique et la variété de la réaction des Hlengwe à la domination coloniale et à l'exploitation. Plus important encore, il atteste que, contrairement à l'idée répandue par les Autorités coloniales locales, les Hlengwe étaient un peuple guerrier. L'article révèle que, à mesure qu'ils ont été intégrés dans l'orbite de la domination coloniale et qu'ils en ressentaient la pression, ils se sont montrés plus agressifs.


## Introduction

A lot has been written about the colonial land policies and their impact on the indigenous people of Africa. In Zimbabwe, the main works on the subject include R. Palmer's books, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (1977) and *Aspects of Rhodesian Land Policy, 1890-1936*, (1968) and L.H. Gann's paper entitled, 'The Southern Rhodesia Land Apportionment Act 1930: An Essay in Trusteeship', in *The National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland Occasional Papers, No. 1*, June, 1963. One of the major post-independence works is a book by A.V. Moyana entitled, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, 1984. All these scholars look in detail at the colonial land policies of the Southern Rhodesian government and how they impacted on the Africans, with Moyana going a step further to look at how the Africans, especially Chief Rekayi Tangwena's people, responded to the new colonial order.

However, in this article the main focus is on the Hlengwe who are a Zimbabwean minority group in Masvingo Province whose history has often been overshadowed by the history of their Shona-speaking counterparts who are the majority in the province. In these studies the Hlengwe have received or attracted little more than passing reference, yet as a people, they were not spared from the colonial experience especially the oppression and exploitation and economic disempowerment that other African groups experienced. Like all other groups, they also responded to the colonial experience in various ways. To that end, this article analyses the Hlengwe economic disempowerment through loss of land and the subsequent response of the same.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section looks at the Hlengwe economic activities prior to the colonisation of Zimbabwe with a view to proving that so long as the Hlengwe controlled all their land they were economically independent and empowered. The second section looks in detail at how the Hlengwe land was appropriated from 1890 to 1965. The third section looks in depth at the impact of land alienation on Hlengwe economic activities; while the last section looks at how the Hlengwe responded to the loss of land and the consequent economic disempowerment. In this section, l'analyse the factors that shaped their responses and the various forms of resistance that were used by different groups and individuals at different times showing the dynamism and diversity in the Hlengwe response to economic disempowerment.

## Background Information

The Hlengwe are a Zimbabwean minority ethnic group, which is the dominant population in the South East Lowveld area. They are mostly found in the Chiredzi district but also occupy parts of the Mwenezi and Zaka districts in the S.E. Lowveld of Zimbabwe. They are also commonly referred to as the 'Shangani', yet that is a distortion of the truth for the Hlengwe were not originally Shangani people. Chiredzi District was part of the Chibi/Chivi, Ndanga and Nuanetsi/Mwenezi districts. It was created in 1966 after major changes to administrative area boundaries in the Masvingo Province.

Prior to colonization and subsequent land apportionment of Zimbabwe, the Hlengwe were a riverine people, mainly found along the Mutirikwe, Runde, Save, Mwenezi, Bezi, Mukwasini, and Chiredzi rivers. Some were found mostly around the larger hills such as Bendezi, Mateke and Chivumburu where rainfall was slightly higher (Bannerman 1981:9). It is therefore evident they chose better-watered areas because the S.E. Lowveld is predominantly a semi-arid area that experiences very hot temperatures throughout the year with notable exceptions in the winter season. It was this settlement pattern

that caused the early colonial administrators to argue that the Hlengwe country was largely empty at the time they arrived (NAZ L2/2/12/2, J.C.J. Cooper, Notes on a Tour with Mr R. Walsh). This belief contributed immensely to the formulation of policies that resulted in the Hlengwe losing large tracts of land. However, it should be pointed out that as far as the Hlengwe country was concerned, no large interstices of unoccupied land existed between territories of the various Hlengwe chiefs (Mason 1964:54).

On the eve of the Pioneer Column's occupation of Mashonaland in 1890, Hlengwe country was divided among a number of chiefs and sub chiefs, who included Sengwe, Gezani, Tsovani, Chisa, Masivamele, Ngwenyeni, Chilonga, Gudo, Mpapa, Xitanga and Furumela. All had their clearly marked boundaries. That being the case, by the time the whites occupied Zimbabwe in 1890, there were no areas that were unclaimed or unoccupiedin the Hlengweni country. The fact that some areas were sparsely populated did not mean that they were not important to the Hlengwe nor did it imply that they did not want to use them. All their land was economically significant to them so losing it to the colonialists economically disempowered them economically. In this article, disempowerment means the economic incapacitation of the peasants through dispossessing them of their main means of production, 'the land', and denying them access to it.

## Pre-colonial Economic Activities of the Hlengwe

There is ample evidence to justify the fact that before colonial domination, the Hlengwe were independently increasing their capacity to extract or eke out a living from their natural environment. Bannerman identified about five branches of production among the Hlengwe namely gathering, hunting, fishing, agriculture and trade (Bannerman 1981:14-23). However, rearing of livestock, salt production, pottery and basketry were equally important. All these activities were disrupted by the subsequent loss of land to the colonizers.

The S.E. Lowveld of Zimbabwe lies in Zimbabwe's agricultural region V. It is predominantly a very hot area with temperatures ranging from 22 to 30 degrees Celsius, but at times reaching to extremes of about 40 degrees Celsius. It usually receives extremely low rainfall rarely reaching 500 mm per annum (Boast 1961:236; Michie *et al*. 1981:90). In this region, drought is more the norm than an exception, and is a vital factor in determining human activity. Thus in such an environment the above-mentioned economic activities were very important since they were complementary.

Given the prevalence of drought that occurred on an average of three in every four years, gathering became a very important branch of production especially in the lean years (Bannerman 1981:14). This was an activity that

required vast expanses of land, thus making every piece of land that the Hlengwe owned very important to them. Both men and women engaged in this activity and it secured a wide variety of products for them (T. Makondo, interview, 23/2/91). Their environment yielded a great deal of important nutrition in the form of wild fruits, vegetables and insects. The forest products included *mauyu (*baobab fruit), *makwakwa* (wild oranges), fruits of the *Strychnos Madagascariensis* tree, and fruits of the *nkanyi* (*sclerocarya Caffra*) tree. Honey, grasshoppers and two types of edible caterpillars, *macimbi* and *magandari* were no less important. *Kwangwali* palm or ilala palm (*hyphaene natalansis*) was collected to make a popular alcoholic beverage called *njeman*i (NAZ, NVC2/1/1, NC Chibi's report, December 1913; NAZ, N9/1/14, NC Chibi annual report, 1911; Mapindhani and Rupangwana, interview 17/02/91).

Gathering became more important during the droughts. *Makwakwa or wild oranges* were very important in the Hlengwe diet during droughts (NAZ, NVC 2/1/1 NC Chibi, report, Dec 1913). The seeds were fire-dried and eaten or pounded into a tasty powder. During droughts, bulbous roots of a plant that the locals call *gwangwata* were an important source of food. The *gwangwata* grows on the riverbanks. The stem was used to make mats and the roots were dried and ground into a powder used to make porridge (Malalani, interview, 21/2/91). The tiny seeds of the *gwangwata* were also boiled and eaten but at times they were ground to a fine powder, which was also used to make porridge (Kanuka, interview, 26/02/91).

The Hlengwe also lived off the river as much as they lived off the veld. Fishing was one of their most important economic activities as it supplemented their diet. The rivers of the S.E. Lowveld and the numerous streams were rich in fish and even contained fish such as the tarpon and the occasional small shark which were found in the Marumbini area (Wright 1972:26, 40). However, most of the best fishing areas were closed to the Hlengwe by the creation of the Gonarezhou National Park and other land categories designated European areas.

Hunting formed a major branch of production and consumed much of the men's time. Game was plentiful and it featured prominently in the Hlengwe diet. In the pre-colonial times the S.E. Lowveld had large forests teeming with game and was a hunter's paradise. Most Hlengwe men were great and skilful hunters which led many colonial administrators to wrongly conclude that the Hlengwe solely depended on hunting (NAZ, N3/33/8 History of Ndanga District:74; NAZ N3/33/8, History of Tshitanga Tribe:68). They killed a variety of animals including big game such as the rhinos and elephants. These big animals were killed for meat, skins and ivory.

Agriculture was a very important branch of production though reports by early colonial administrators reflect that their mainstay was hunting. The reports were based on a gross misconception of Hlengwe economic activities in general. Gezani argued that in good agricultural seasons the Hlengwe grew many varieties of crops in their fields (interview, 23/02/91). In fact, having fields on its own is a sign that they were agriculturalists. If they were solely hunters it would have been unwise of them to clear the land when they actually needed wooded areas to attract game. One of Bannerman's Hlengwe informants even said that in the Marumbini area near the Save-Runde junction, they watered their crops even in times of drought. He said, 'Our *country (Marumbini) was marvellous country - we cultivated among the small streams along the Lundi River. During the dry spells we were always assured of having a crop. We could irrigate with water close at hand. We could grow pumpkins, maize and sweet potatoes'* (Bannerman 1981:20).

The Hlengwe grew various types of sorghum and millet. They knew no less than six varieties of sorghum, which were the main grain crops. These varieties were *xikombe, chibedlane, chiraxavane, maxalane, xiponda* and *xitishi*. They also grew *matimba* or sweet-reeds. Other types of crops included *marhakarhaka* (cucumbers), *timanga* (groundnuts), *tinyawa* (beans), *tindluwu* (roundnuts or bambara groundnuts), *xifake* (maize), *lininga* (sesame) which was grown for purposes of extracting oil, *mahonti* (pumpkins), *mihlata* (sweet potatoes) and *makavathla* (water-melons). *Fole* (tobacco) was also grown for making snuff (Bannerman 1981:20).

The Hlengwe also had good knowledge of soils on which to grow their various crops. For example, sandy soils known as *nthlava* were good for millet and sorghum. *Seke* or alluvial soil, which was found along rivers, was good for *xifake, mahont*i and a variety of *mirhoho* (vegetables). *Ndzovolo* or fertile basalt soil was used for cultivation on a semi-permanent basis (Bannerman 1981:20). The Hlengwe's unparalleled knowledge of soils reflects that they were good agriculturalists and that agriculture was therefore an important branch of production, hence H.S Keigwin's assertion that, '*Natives have always worked granite and actually prefer granite…*' did not apply to the Hlengwe (NAZ, N3/24/4, H.S. Keigwin to B.S.A. Co. Secretary, 27/12/19). Their agricultural activities required them to have access to various soil types.

Herding was also an important economic pursuit except among the Hlengwe of Ngwenyenye who lived in a tsetse-infested area near the Save-Runde junction (Wright 1972:47; NAZ, V1/10/7 Reports of tsetse-flies, 8/10/23). Cattle were rarely killed in good times because of the abundance of game and also because they acted as a bulwark against hunger in lean years known as *malembe endlala.* Cattle were also used to pay the bride price and

were in most cases a status symbol (Mpapa, interview, 21/02/91). Besides cattle the Hlengwe also kept goats and sheep (Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91).

Other economic activities included salt making, basketry and trade (Mtetwa 1976:264). Oral sources among the Hlengwe say that salt was obtained from some soils along the rivers and was abundant at Manyoweni and Chizenjele. These places were all subsequently enclosed in the Gonarezhou Game Park in the process depriving the Hlengwe of access to salt. Salt was also obtained from a plant called *dangala*, which was obtained from areas, which are now enclosed in the Gonarezhou (Malalani, interview, 21/2/91).

The Hlengwe were also involved in trade which covered a much wider area. They traded meat for grain with neighbouring Shona, especially in lean years. They also had contacts with the east coast where Portuguese settlements were found (Bannerman 1981:22). Hunting was very important in this trade for it provided ivory, and skins of various cats, which were in demand at the east coast. In exchange for these game products, they got guns, cloth called *masinda,* beads called *vuhlamu* and bracelets called *magava* (ibid:22). Free access to all areas was therefore very important for the growth and sustenance of this economic pursuit.

The Hlengwe were also good craftsmen and they engaged in this activity when their agricultural branch of production failed. They made fine mats, baskets, clay-pots, blankets, and bags, which sold readily in areas as far west as beyond the Tokwe River (Mtetwa 1976:263). Their raw materials were obtainable from areas that were converted to European areas.

Thus before the arrival of the whites, the Hlengwe were a people that enjoyed economic independence and engaged in various activities as dictated by their environment. Their economic activities were complementary. Their ability to make a living out of the environment reflects their achievement of a high stage of economic development if Walter Rodney's definition of economic development is anything to go by. He says that, '*Every people have shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature - which means that every continent can point to a period of economic development'* (Rodney 1989:11). In brief, all these activities depended on the Hlengwe's ability to control their means of production especially the land. As such, any slight disruption to land ownership had a negative impact on their economic order, which is what this article partly seeks to prove.

## Appropriation of Hlengwe Land From 1890 to 1965

The appropriation of land among the Hlengwe was a gradual process with about three clear phases:1890-1908, 1908 to the 1930s and the period after World War II. These phases relate specifically to the periods that the Hlengwe

were directly affected by the land policies because they differ slightly from the times that the people in other parts of Zimbabwe especially Matebeleland and the Highveld were also directly affected by the colonial land policies.

After the creation of the first Reserves in Southern Rhodesia in 1895, the process quickly gathered momentum. By the 1898 Order-in-Council, the BSA Company was obliged to set aside adequate land for the Africans throughout Zimbabwe. So Native Commissioners (NCs) throughout the country began the difficult task of demarcating reserves (Gann 1963:73). At this stage the areas under Hlengwe chiefs Tsovani, Gezani, Chisa and Sengwe were set aside as Alienated Company Land. The areas under Chilonga, Masivamele, Ngwenyenye and Mpapa were made part of the Matibi Reserve, which was established between the Runde and Mwenezi Rivers and stretching all the way to the border with Mozambique. However at this stage there were no movements of the Hlengwe to the reserves until 1908 (Bannerman 1981:32; NAZ, N3/24/2 NC of Chibi District to CNC,4/8/1900). This law did not have an immediate impact on the Hlengwe activities. This partly accounts for their non-participation in the Shona-Ndebele Risings of 1896-7.

However, events took a new twist after 1908 when the Company diverted its attention towards land after it realised that there was no second Rand in Southern Rhodesia. The Company's new goal was to recoup expenses it incurred in its wild chase for elusive minerals. The new drive was to create a white rural bourgeoisie, which by developing the country would raise the value of its assets. It was this company move that impacted negatively on Hlengwe access to and ownership of land.

In pursuance of the new policy, the company launched an attack on the African areas in the years 1908 to 1914 with a clear intention of grabbing the best land and making it available for European settlement. In Tsovani's area a farm and two ranches were established in 1911 and this affected eight kraals (villages) with a total adult population of 665 (N9/1/14 NC of Ndanga, report for 1911). The rest of the adult population in the remaining area (which was by now Unalienated Company Land) was forced to pay rent. This was a deliberate ploy to force people to move into the reserves. Though some people moved into the reserves to avoid paying rent, the movement in the Hlengwe country was very slow when compared with other districts especially on the highveld. This was largely because of a negligible European presence in the S.E. Lowveld.

From 1914 the disempowerment of Hlengwe through loss of land intensified as their area was affected by the ruling of the Coryndon Native Reserves Commission of 1914, which recommended that there be a final resolution to the whole reserve issue in line with the company policy of recovering the best land for whites (Gann 1963:73; Palmer 1977:254). The

Matibi Reserve was reduced from its original size of 3,485,942 to a mere 824,596 acres (Palmer 1977:254). The land excised from the central part of Matibi, about 1,800,000 acres, subsequently became part of the Company's 2,500,000 acre Nuanetsi Ranch (Palmer 1977:254). By the same act, the Matibi Reserve was divided into Matibi I in the northwest and Matibi II in the southeast. Mpapa's Hlengwe were directly affected by this recommendation. The company took a greater part of his area to establish the Nuanetsi Ranch. In 1919 a large group of Mpapa's people were moved *en masse* from their Chivumburu hills location into the Matibi II Reserve to make room for company cattle coming into the Nuanetsi Ranch (Bannerman 1978:42). They settled in areas which Forestall the first NC of the area had described in 1900 as, *'… waterless and uninhabitable'* (NAZ, N3/24/2, NC Chibi to CNC, 4/8/1900). However, some remained on the ranch paying rent or as labour tenants.

In Tsovani's country, one major development in 1919 that later significantly altered Hlengwe position on the land was the application by Thomas Murray McDougall to buy land between Mutirikwe, Runde and Chiredzi Rivers for his sugar project (Saunders 1989:7; Mapindhani, interview, 17/2/91).

Further south, in Sengwe, Gezani and Furumela's areas the Company entered into rent 'agreements' with the people. In reality these were not genuine agreements but rather conditions imposed on the Hlengwe people of these areas. The Hlengwe were only allowed to remain on Company land on condition that every adult male paid rent amounting to one pound sterling per annum. However if the land was required for any other purpose the Company or landlord or his successor was entitled to resume possession of the land so required as was happening throughout the country (NAZ, NVH 1/1/1, Mwenezi Native Tenants on Co. Land, 1919). So to all practical purposes and intents, the land had been alienated but the reason why this land continued to be 'unalienated' or more accurately unoccupied by whites was that there were no applications for land by white settlers at the time.

In the area along the border with Mozambique, Masivamele and some of his people were moved into the Matibi II Reserve in 1920. However, this movement was not necessarily directed by the need to create room for European settlement, but it was undesirable from a security point of view to have reserves along the borders of the most remote areas of the country (Wright 1972:202).

However, although by 1920 land alienation and African movement into reserves was gaining momentum in the S.E. Lowveld it was not as serious as it was in other parts of the country such as Gutu District where the movement of people into the reserves as from 1910 was described as 'enormous' (NAZ, N9/4/23, NC Gutu, Monthly Report, April 1910). This seeming lack of land buyers up to the 1920s must have been a result of

environmental constraints associated with the lowveld and its remoteness from the then key administrative centres, and lack of precious minerals.

After the 1920s, the major land policy that affected almost all black Zimbabweans negatively was the Land Apportionment Bill of 1930, which became law in 1931. This law demarcated land unfairly between Whites and Blacks. Europeans were given 51 per cent of all land and Blacks 29.8 per cent only. The rest of the land remained either as: Unassigned area (18.5 per cent), Forest Area (0.6 %) or Undetermined Area (0.1 %). The Land Apportionment Act's first major negative outcome for the Hlengwe was that no area was marked as Native Purchase Area in their land until the 1960s. Between 1931 and the end of World War II the movement into Reserves was quite slow compared with other parts of the country. However, after the war the Hlengwe were stripped of whatever little claim and denied whatever access they had to their land.

After World War II, there was a vast influx of new white settlers into Southern Rhodesia who were escaping the post-war austerity in Europe (Palmer 1974:2). In the heart of the Hlengwe country in the area stretching from modern north to western Chiredzi District most cattle ranchers arrived soon after the war and by 1947 the Department of Land Settlement was flooded with applications for permission to use the land for ranching purposes. The applicants were described by the Chief Land Inspector as people '…. *suffering from land hunger'*. These men included De la Rue, Stockil, Baxter, Sparrow, Bridges and Sommerville, men who acquired large pieces of land in the area (NAZ, S2111/30, F. Gillward to the Undersecretary, 21/11/47). After the direct occupation of the land the Hlengwe were dealt a final blow and had no option but to move to the reserves.

Following a lull in evictions during World War II, two major developments in the Triangle and Hippo Valley Estates saw massive evictions of the Hlengwe of Tsovani into the Sangwe Reserve as from 1944. The government took a keen interest in the sugar project, following the success of MacDougall's sugar cane production experiment. It took over the project and expanded the area under irrigation to boost sugar production in the country. In 1954 it sold out to a Natal Syndicate, which accelerated the settlement of sugar cane farmers. The syndicate expanded the area under sugar cane and by the time it sold out to Sir J.T. Hullet and Sons Limited in 1957 the area had been increased from 1,189 acres in 1954 to 1,441 acres. The Hullets who had absolute confidence in the future of the S.E. Lowveld irrigation scheme quickly committed the company to massive investment in the enterprise and this resulted in vast tracts of Hlengwe land being brought under sugar cane production (Saunders 1989:45; Bennet 1969:31).

In 1956 Sir Raymond Stockil who had established a citrus estate in the Bendezi hills area earlier on also started sugar cane production right in the heart of Tsovani's country (Agricultural Development 1959:21). Tsovani and the majority of his people were then moved into the Sangwe communal land to make room for European projects. The whole process of evicting people in the Triangle-Hippo Valley complex was completed when about 800 families that were still on European land were evicted from the fertile area west of Mutirikwe River and South of the Runde and moved into the Matibi II area in the early 1960s. This followed the transfer of part of the Nuanetsi Ranch to Triangle Sugar Estates following the conclusion of a deal whereby the Imperial Cold Storage Commission Company was to release part of its rich land to Triangle for irrigation purposes (Saunders 1989:66; Wright 1972:265).

With the 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act enforcing the removal of all Africans from all Crown or European Land by 1955 whether or not it was required for European settlement the Hlengwe had no choice but to move to the reserves. From the 1950s to the 1960s the Nuanetsi Ranch was subdivided and sold to private owners (Wright 1972:143). Thus the remaining pockets of Hlengwe on the vast ranch were effectively removed. In the other parts of the lowveld evictions continued with greater intensity. Furumela's people were split and moved into either Matibi II or Sengwe Reserve. Chisa's people were moved from the area between the Chivonja Hills and Save Runde Junction and settled in the south of Sangwe Reserve. His area became part of the Gonarezhou Game Reserve controlled Hunting Area. Lastly, when the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area was created in 1954 it was another curse to the Hlengwe in that the land was sold mostly to non-Hlengwe people. The Hlengwe in this area who were under village heads Dumela and Natali were evicted to the Sengwe Tribal Trust Lands (Rukanda, interview, 16/2/91; N. Zanamwe, interview, 23/2/91).

By the Land Apportionment Amendment Act No. 37 of 1961 part of the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area and areas along the border with Mozambique were converted into the Gonarezhou Forest Area (Wright 1972:137). This development led to further evictions of Africans from their ancestral lands. Masivamele's people who had remained behind in the Gonarezhou Forest Area were moved into the Matibi II reserve to join their kinsmen. A 100 square mile strip of land excised from the Forest Area was created into a special area to accommodate Shilothela's people as there was nowhere else to place them. That area later became part of the Sengwe Reserve or Tribal Trust Land. Ngwenyeni's people, the last of Hlengwe groups to remain on European land were moved to Sengwe Reserve in 1968 (ibid:243, 328).

Three distinct strategies were used to force Africans off the land in the Hlengwe territories. These were the imposition of rentals, threat to use force and direct use of force. The rentals had the immediate effect of forcing people off the farms in that in the reserves people were paying one British pound sterling in tax and those on European farms were expected to pay an extra two pounds for using the land (Gezani, interview, 23/02/91). So once these fees were imposed on tenants, many moved fast into the reserves to avoid having to pay the exorbitant taxes. Those that insisted on staying even when the land was needed for immediate occupation faced open threats of forceful evictions. One interviewee confirmed that if these two methods failed people were beaten and sent off to the reserves by farm owners who were assisted by the police (Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91). This view is supported by R. Palmer who says that after 1945, *'To make way for the new immigrants recourse was had to the traditional policy of eviction which had lain somewhat dormant during the war years, the bulldozers moved in …..'* (Palmer 1974:2).

By 1965 most Hlengwe chiefs and their people had lost their lands to the whites and had moved into areas specifically demarcated for African settlement. These areas were remote, very dry, infertile and some uninhabitable especially considering the nature of the Hlengwe technology, which suited their original environment. The evictions were in short a manifestation of the new order that reflected the colonialists' abandonment of the nobler values of enlightened humanity and of those fundamental principles of justice, which are part of the common heritage of all mankind. To the Hlengwe therefore, the evictions meant loss of a livelihood and consequently, economic disempowerment.

## The Impact of Land Alienation on the Hlengwe

The Hlengwe's ultimate security and subsistence lay in their ability to control their land. The loss of it (land) was a direct onslaught on their economy and livelihood in general. Studies carried out elsewhere prove that land alienation was a tool meant to make Africans more amenable to white demands and to weaken their position as competitors to whites. Jack Woddis (1960:8) argues that, the essential reasons behind the wholesale expropriation of land in Africa as a whole were, '…. *to prevent the African peasant from becoming a competitor to the European farmer or plantation owner and to impoverish the African peasantry to such an extend that the majority of adult males would be compelled to work for the Europeans in the mines or on the farms.'* Lionel Cliffe (1986:18) believes it was done for three reasons; to make room in better-watered areas for whites, to create a permanent supply of cheap labour and to reduce competition from Africans. A Zimbabwean study by

A.V. Moyana (1984:42) authenticates these claims and even concludes that the idea of alienation was to '*…. incapacitate the African by removing him from the arena of economic competition'*. As also noted by Phimister (1988:61), this would reduce the African to a position whereby he would be a permanent source of cheap labour.

Evidence collected from the area under study confirms these observations. Land alienation in Hlengwe country was systematically done, targeting the best lands for European settlement. Letters and reports written by the early colonial administrators give credence to this claim. For example, when writing about the land between Runde River and Mwenezi River one official said, '*The few natives …. inhabiting it, are mostly hunters of Shangaan* [Hlengwe] *origin who are unable to make use of more than a very small portion of the Reserve. I consider that some of the best ranching country in the territory is in this area and it should be brought into use for large ranches, it would materially assist in the development of the country*' (NAZ, L2/2/12/2, J.C.J. Cooper on tour, p. 6). In another letter the Company Representative wrote, '*Very good land is also contained in the native reserve lying between the Tokwe and the Lundi and it is hoped that it may be possible to resume possession of a portion of the land'* (NAZ, L2/2/12/2 Commercial Representative (BSAC) to the Secretary of the BSAC, 28/6/13).

Mr Jenkinson writing to the Director of Land Settlement about an area in the Matibi Reserve said, '*The proposed area is in very hilly country with vleis: I do not consider this area suitable for European settlement. …..…. The area I would recommend to the Company is that of about 120,000 acres between Nyazugwi and the Mtilikwe River and bounded on the South by the Lundi River. Another good area is the South of Chiredzi River ranch …. the grazing …. is equally good* (NAZ, L2/2/12/2, EH Jenkinson to the Director of Land Settlement, 23/12/19).

Thus the best agricultural and grazing areas of the Hlengwe were turned into European land. By this move, the food security of the former was gravely compromised as their many branches of production were dealt an enormous blow. The impact of droughts and famines on the Hlengwe was intensified. In the Sangwe communal land it was surprising to note that good harvests were so rare that when a good harvest occurred the year went down in history as *lembe lamaguta* (the year of a good harvest). This is a departure from the norm where years of catastrophe or calamities are the ones used as time markers in oral history. Most people in the area remember the year 1952 as the year '*lemaguta*' (Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91).

In the new fragile environment, food production among the Hlengwe dwindled and food shortages became serious as the people were now dependent on agriculture only. Ngwenyeni (Ngwenyenye) indicated to

Bannerman that he missed his original homeland in the Save–Runde junction from where he had been evicted in the 1960s. With nostalgia he said, *'Our country Marumbini. It was marvellous country …..… we cultivated among the small streams along the Lundi River. During the dry spells we were always assured of having a crop. We could irrigate with water close at hand. We could grow pumpkins, maize and sweet potatoes'* (Ngwenyenye cited in Bannerman 1981:20). His statements alluded to problems of food shortage in the Sengwe area and summed up the sorry state of Hlengwe agriculture and food security after land alienation. Given the techniques employed by the Hlengwe peasantry and the type of land allocated to them, the implication of the transformation of the systems of cultivation was progressive soil erosion and thus decreasing agricultural productivity as the type of soil continued to deteriorate year in year out.

One other consequence of the loss of land was overcrowding in the reserves, which resulted in serious problems for the Hlengwe who besides other activities, were cattle herders. By 1954 while the Natural Resources Board was becoming concerned about overcrowding and the resultant conditions in the reserves, in the Sangwe and Matibi II reserves conditions had started to deteriorate in the 1930s. Though the Matibi II reserve was very big (480,000 acres), its carrying capacity was very low. The NC's reports for 1934 to 1937 reflect that there were inadequate pastures for livestock in the area (NAZ, S1563, Assistant NC Nuanetsi, Annual Report, 1934; NAZ, S1619 Assistant NC Chibi, Monthly Report, December 1936, NAZ, S1619 NC Chibi, Monthly Report, January, 1937). In 1934, 1,790 out of 9,900 herd of cattle died due to insufficient grazing (NAZ, S1563, Asst. NC Nuanetsi, Annual Report, 1934). This was a clear sign that the carrying capacity of the area had been exceeded. However, this did not deter the government from settling more people in the reserve after World War II. The estimated population of 3,102 in 1946 rose to 16,640 by 1969 as a result of more evictions of the Hlengwe from areas now turned into European areas. In 1955 more people came from Mashava Crown Land, which was an area well outside Hlengwe Land (NAZ S2588/1 CNC to Department of Statistics, 1946; Chiredzi District Development Plan, 1985:3).

In the Sangwe Reserve, cases of overpopulation were reported mostly after 1934 as it became manifest that the southern part of the reserve could not carry a larger population than it already had at the time (NAZ, S1563, NC, Ndanga Annual Report, 1934). However, after WWII, more people evicted from European areas continued to pour into the reserve. By 1946 the area had an estimated human population of 2,753 and 1,926 cattle (NAZ, S2588/1 CNC to Dept of Statistics, 1946). The northern part of the Sangwe Reserve with an area of about 81 square kilometres had an estimated human population

of about 1,680 and 1,425 cattle (ibid.). By 1952 the carrying capacity of the whole reserve had been exceeded. This excluded the number of goats, sheep, and donkeys whose grazing habits are detrimental to the environment. The main consequence for the Hlengwe was loss of their livestock through scarcity of good pastures.

In the 1960s, the situation in the Sangwe Reserve worsened following the mass movement of Chisa and Tsovani's people into the Sangwe Reserve. By 1969, the population had risen to about 12,300. By the mid-1960s the Sangwe reserve had the highest population density of about 64 people per square kilometre (Bannerman 1981:37). Erosion set in and was exacerbated by the Hlengwe's reluctance to cut down the size of their herd of cattle. However, in the southern areas of Hlengwe country, there was some marked difference in that though the people continued to be moved into the reserves in large numbers, the main reserve (Sengwe) had not shown signs of a disaster by the 1950s. It was only in the 1960s that the people became restless owing to congestion on the few good pieces of land in the reserve.

Giovanni Arrighi (1977:24, 32; 1975:221) says that to improve labour supplies in Africa, the whites found it necessary to lower the opportunity cost of the peasantry by progressively reducing its overall productivity. Among the Hlengwe, this was achieved through land alienation, which put a stop to most of the Hlengwe economic activities as the people were settled in a very hostile environment. Most of them became so vulnerable that they had to depend on offering their labour to whites in order to survive. Land alienation therefore had the great effect of impoverishing the Hlengwe and turning them into a labouring class, providing cheap labour to the white capitalist farmers in the S.E. Lowveld.

The sugar and citrus estates and farms in the area depended much on this cheap labour, which was now being drawn from the reserves (NAZ, S2337/288/43/2, P.H. Fripp to CNC, Fort Victoria, 24/5/43). Excess Hlengwe labour was used on a number of public projects in different parts of the country. In the 1940s some were used in areas as far afield as Gweru in the construction of roads and dip tanks. In Chisa's former area, they were engaged in clearing trees as a way of getting rid of tsetse flies in the area that was now European land (Mapindhani, Interview, 17/2/91). Hlengwe labour was now being used on projects from which they did not derive any direct benefit. Their wages were miserly and labour conditions in general were horrible (Van Onselen 1975:228-246; Muteyo, interview, 17/2/91, Mpapa, interview, 21/2/91).

The harnessing of male labour for use on European farms and other projects caused a reduction in agricultural production as women and children were forced by circumstances to perform tasks hitherto viewed as a preserve for men. For most families, agricultural production further declined as men

decided to escape the harsh conditions by going to seek employment in South African mines. Land under cultivation was reduced as fast-growing bushes took over. It is no doubt that most of these men's wives raised families as single parents while enduring the hardships of colonial rule and its many demands single-handedly.

Besides agriculture and herding all other branches of production such as fishing, hunting, gathering and basketry suffered a premature death. These activities officially ceased when most rivers and hunting areas were closed in the Gonarezhou Game Reserve and other occupied European areas. The activities were deemed illegal by the state laws. One law, which had the immediate effect of disempowering the Hlengwe after their land was occupied, was the Herbage Preservation Act of 1913.

Paragraph 2 of the Act, destroyed basketry and gathering activities for it stated that, '…. *anyone found guilty of the destruction of any tree, shrub, bush, brushwood, undergrowth or grass, not on his property is upon conviction liable to a fine not exceeding 100 British pounds sterling* (Southern Rhodesia Ordinance, No. 9, 1913, para. 2). This meant that it was illegal to cut reeds, which were essential in the making of baskets. Also outlawed or illegalized was the supplementing of Hlengwe diet by gathering fruits or any other forest products. Barter trade with the Shona associated with basketry also suffered a huge blow and consequently it meant loss of a mitigatory measure to the impact of drought.

Paragraph 8 of the Ordinance stated that '…. *no person shall pursue any kind of animal or knowingly enter upon, the land of another with the intention of pursuing any kind of animal without the consent of the owner or occupier of such land* (ibid, para. 8). Paragraph 9 also stated that, *'No person shall remove honey or bees from the land of another without the consent of the owner or occupier of the land upon which the honey or bees maybe* (ibid, para. 9). Paragraph 10 stated that, '…. *any person trespassing upon such land away from a recognised road or path is liable to punishment'* (ibid, para. 10). This made all areas that were of economic significance to the Hlengwe inaccessible, in the process crippling the Hlengwe economically. In 1961 the Gonarezhou was declared a protected Game Forest and hunting died as an essential branch of production.

If anything, land alienation also weakened the Africans' position as economic competitors against whites. While the Hlengwe were barred from entering the rich game areas, the whites had the rights to hunt and benefit from the sale of game products. Chisa's former area was even converted into the Save-Runde Special Hunting Area (Kanuka, interview, 26/2/91; Muteyo and Mapindhani, interview, 17/2/91). The restrictions placed on the Africans with regard to hunting thwarted the development of other activities such as

ivory trade with the Portuguese in Mozambique and meat trade with the Duma for grain especially in times of drought. Uninterrupted participation in this activity could have seen the Hlengwe entering the lucrative curios and other game products trade business. However, the prospects of this development suffered a stillbirth as a result of a well-executed land alienation system by the colonialists.

Whatever hopes of competing with the whites that the Hlengwe cherished, if any, were finally dashed in 1954, as a result of the creation of the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase area. Much to the disenchantment of the Hlengwe, the offer to purchase land was open to all Africans from any part of Zimbabwe. In 1958 the Purchase Area was reduced by more than half to create more room for the Gonarezhou Forest Area (Wright 1972:326). Among the first eleven farm purchasers there was not even one Hlengwe farmer (Rukanda, interview, 16/2/91; N. Zanamwe, interview, 23/2/91). Today, there are only three Hlengwe-owned farms out of forty-three farms in the Gonakudzingwa Small Scale farming area (L. Zanamwe, interview, 5/7/2008).

In the discourse on the economic disempowerment of the Hlengwe, there is truth in Arrighi's assertion that competition from an African rural bourgeoisie was considered by the whites to be dangerous. Its emergence was therefore accordingly prevented and contained within well-defined limits (Arrighi 1977:38). Hlengwe competition was checked through policies of land apportionment and alienation. Following land alienation in the Hlengwe country in the S.E Lowveld, economic and social differentiation became well marked in the rural areas. The clear separation of land between Africans and Europeans made it possible to direct capital expenditure in roads, dams and other general improvements to European areas, totally shunning African areas. The Hlengwe were located in a hostile environment that was far away from markets, railways and main roads, and were effectively denied access to what used to be their most productive land. All these were indirect checks on African competition and well-calculated measures to keep them in a position of perpetual servitude.

Following land alienation, the imbalance in the man-land relationship led to a rapid deterioration of the physical resource base in the Hlengwe reserves. Land apportionment put a definite limit to the land available for Hlengwe settlement and use. This meant that all of their activities were now to be carried out in a restricted, fragile and hostile environment with limited resources. The situation was exacerbated by a combination of factors such as lack of the required environmental management skills among the Hlengwe and the artificially created overpopulation in the reserves through evictions of more people from white areas. Thus their economic sovereignty was grossly compromised.

## Hlengwe Response to Economic Disempowerment and Exploitation

Walter Rodney contends that Africans responded aggressively to the destruction of their economic independence leading to many revolts (Rodney 1985:332). Though the Ndebele and the Shona on the Zimbabwean Highveld reacted aggressively in the 1896-7 First Chimurenga, this was not the universal response in colonial Zimbabwe especially in the early years of colonization. In the Hlengwe area in the S.E. Lowveld, there is no evidence pointing to an aggressive response to loss of land in the early years of colonization. However, in the years after 1945 there was no small amount of resentment amongst the Hlengwe. Thus the assertion by the early colonial administrators in the area that the Hlengwe were not '…… *a warlike people*,' were made prematurely (NAZ, N3/14/3 NC Chibi, Confidential report to the CNC, 9/10/1914). Bannerman (1978:492) points out that in the 1950s and 1960s there was great resentment to the evictions. In reality, the nature of the Hlengwe response to the colonial order underwent gradual transformation and became more and more aggressive as the evictions intensified.

A number of factors shaped the Hlengwe response during this period. One was the slow pace of direct occupation of Hlengwe land in the early years of colonization as a result of the limited number of whites interested in land in the Hlengwe country. Lack of white interest in the area is demonstrated by the fact that by 1911 only one farm and two ranches in the whole of the Chiredzi District had been effectively occupied. As such the indigenous people still had the option of remaining on European land paying rent or as labour tenants. Thus under such circumstances, there was no point in being aggressive, but this does not mean that the small pockets of those directly affected did not engage in various forms of resistance.

Secondly, there is a great possibility that as from 1890, the majority of the Hlengwe had not realised that their country was under new authorities. This was largely as a result of the fact that they were far placed from where colonial treaties or agreements were being signed and they were neither consulted nor involved when this was done. To make matters worse, the first administrative office responsible for the huge Chibi district, which encompassed their land, was far placed from the area such that it is almost certain that it took a long time before they were directly affected by colonial policies. This is why Forestall, the first NC at Chibi was shocked to find Portuguese flags and influences among the Hlengwe, stretching all the way from the border with Mozambique to as far west as Mpapa's country as late in the colonial era as 1897 (NAZ, NVC1/1/1 NC Chibi to CNC, Quarterly Report, 3/1/1899).

Even when the European powers agreed upon the boundary between Mozambique and Zimbabwe, it was done in the European capitals far away from the Hlengwe country and the people whose fate was going to be affected by this development were not immediately consulted. Masivamele's people living along the border with Mozambique were only moved from the area in 1920. Thus lack of information also slowed the development of co-ordinated Hlengwe resistance in the early years of colonization.

One other factor, which was very significant in shaping Hlengwe responses, was what I call a 'Hlengwe personality'. This is what also contributed greatly to the dynamism and diversity in their response. An informant, Luckson Zanamwe (interview, 5/7/2008), said that the Hlengwe are a small group of people who from years back were very conscious of their numerical inferiority hence they fought hard to maintain their numbers. As a result they always tried to avoid or delay violent confrontation with occupiers or strangers. However, this did not mean that they tolerated open challenges to their manhood. The younger generations seem to have inherited this behavioural trait. They quickly adapt to their new social environment to ensure their survival within the system. They are also very cunning so that they can easily mislead an opponent or stranger into false security by exhibiting features of docility and harmlessness. They also have great ability to conceal their true emotions and to keep family and community secrets. They are masters at the game of deception so it is hard to judge their next course of action and this always gives them an upper hand when dealing with strangers. Thus in a way they are unpredictable which trait can easily mislead an outsider (Chabvepi, interview, 28/6/2008; L. Zanamwe, interview, 5/7/2008; Chinhavi, interview, 7/7/2008).

They are also a conservative people and always strive to maintain their traditional way of life (Chinhavi, interview, 7/7/2008). In short their survival instincts and their numerical inferiority taught them to devise survival strategies, which only use violence as the last resort to safeguard their vital interests when they are severely threatened with destruction. This is the reason why the effective occupation of their traditional land after world war II caused gross resentment among their lot. They were now feeling the 'squeeze'.

However, an analysis of their response in the interwar period reveals that the full establishment of the state machinery, such as the police force, also influenced the nature of Hlengwe responses. Under such tight monitoring, the people opted for the approach that Phimister (1988:81) described as, 'the struggle in the shadows,' or silent responses.

All these factors shaped the Hlengwe response to their disempowerment, hence the dynamism and diversity that it generated. The response was not homogeneous but was characterized by heterogeneity in various areas and at

different times. From 1890 to about 1911 there were no major signs of restlessness among the Hlengwe. They did not even seem to be perturbed by the implications of the Southern Rhodesia Order-In Council of 1898, which resulted in the creation of the Matibi Reserve and the conversion of Tsovani, Gezani, Chisa and Sengwe's areas into official alienated land. One very possible explanation for the seeming absence of resentment is that they were not consulted so they were not aware of the new political dispensation and land order. But if they knew about the new development and decided to do nothing about it, then, according to their judgment, it was not time to act since this ruling had no direct impact on their activities at that conceptual time. Accordingly, the survival instinct prevailed. However, one other possibility is that some Hlengwe, like Ngwenyeni and his people, were aware of the drawing and existence of the border between Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Mozambique but were deliberately trying to play one European group against the other. This could be the reason why Forestall the NC, Chibi District, found Portuguese flags and other influences among the Hlengwe in 1897 yet the drawing of the Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) boundary had left them on the Rhodesian side.

However, from 1911 when the first farm and two ranches were marked in Tsovani's country and more land acquired for European settlement in other parts of Hlengwe country, some defied the order to move to the reserves. Defiance in its various forms, overt and subtle, was a common response in many parts of the S.E. Lowveld throughout the period under study. There was a marked increase in instances of refusal to comply with orders in many parts of the Lowveld. In 1921 the NC for Ndanga District wrote that, '*The Shangaans [Tsovani's Hlengwe] in the south prefer to remain until the land is taken up when they will move into reserves if an agreement can be come to with the landowner'* (NAZ, N9/1/24, NC Ndanga, Annual Report 1921). This was defiance, which was inspired by an attempt to avoid violent confrontation with the colonial authorities but at the same time reflecting a desire by a people to continue with their way of life as they had known it. A similar approach but with a slight variation was also used by Ngwenyeni in 1961. He requested not to be moved to the reserves but instead be allowed to move with his people to Mozambique (Wright 1972:328). This was defiance associated with diplomacy. He must have been aware that the colonial administrators were not prepared to lose their cheap labour to a rival colonial power so he used the colonialists' fear as a negotiating tool. It is clear here that violence was avoided and he successfully evaded eviction. A special area created for him was finally incorporated into the Sengwe Special Native Area in 1968 (ibid.).

In other parts of the S.E. Lowveld people openly defied the order to move to the reserves. This was influenced by the fact that they were conservative by nature and strongly desired to maintain their traditional lifestyles and homelands. Dumezulu refused to move from the Mateke Hills area from the 1930s until the time of his death (Gezani, interview, 23/2/91). In 1958 Mashamba refused to move from an area down the Mwenezi River called the Buffalo Bend Area, which Allan Wright, the District Commissioner (DC), wanted to turn into a game reserve (Wright 1972:54). He only moved to the Sengwe Reserve after the continuous destruction of his crops by elephants. This was aggressive defiance, which was motivated by the desire to protect a vital economic interest that was under threat. These four cases of defiance cited above reflect the conciliatory and aggressive dynamics of Hlengwe response, one being influenced by a desire to avoid violence at all costs and the other by a desire to protect a birthright. However, the aggressive response by Dumezulu and Mashamba might have been influenced by their knowledge that the NC and DC did not have sufficient police back-up at the time.

Cases of the 'struggles in the shadow' were also common among the Hlengwe. As has been alluded to above, the Hlengwe would look harmless and docile, but it should be remembered that this would be mere deception. In the whole period under study, there were many acts of sabotage that were carried out by the Hlengwe against the Europeans. This mode of resistance was employed more by individuals rather than by large groups of people and involved destruction of property, theft, arson and the use of other various forms of social banditry on European farms and in the Gonarezhou Game Reserve.

On a number of occasions some individuals started fires on European farms. This act was sustained by the Hlengwe's ability to take on a character of docility and harmlessness and to keep secrets. Most Europeans simply believed that these fires were a result of 'the natives' carelessness' (NAZ, N3/33/7, NC Belingwe, to the Superintendent of Natives, Gwelo, 15/10/1919). This showed their lack of understanding of the unique Hlengwe personality and behaviour that were reinforced by their initiation ceremonies, which were quite critical in character building. It was very difficult to trace the offenders as their fellow men would all profess ignorance. The burning of grass was a sign of protest against the loss of their land. The idea was to punish the whites through destroying their property.

One very controversial response which the Hlengwe engaged in was the 'silent struggle' which included theft from farmhouses, and destroying or stealing farm fences for the purpose of trapping livestock and game on

European farms. Whilst theft cannot be condoned there were some unique cases as witnessed among the Hlengwe where the targets were carefully chosen to include only the colonizers. A case in point is that of a character called Chitokwa who was identified by the District Commissioner of Mwenezi, Allan Wright, as a nuisance among the white farming community in the area. Between 1961 and 1962, Chitokwa became infamous for breaking into the European farmhouses to steal goods. He also engaged in poaching and killing the farmers' livestock. In the Sengwe area he was treated as a hero for he shared his loot with the locals (Wright 1972:289-300). The people gave him sanctuary, and this clearly demonstrated that they supported his activities. They even gave him the honorary title, 'Mister Chitokwa'.

Another character called Mutongi took it a step further by stealing livestock from European farms and also African farms in the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase Area (N. Zanamwe, interview, 23/2/91). The reason for stealing from African farms as well according to an informant was that he was one of the people evicted from the Gonakudzingwa Native Purchase area (ibid.). Thus according to Mutongi the black farmers were equally as bad as the white farmers. His approach was unique in that he was fighting against the system and not a racial group. With this response therefore, there were two variations and thus two dynamics based on differences in the ideology of a land expropriator. One emphasized race in the definition of the enemy while the other emphasized the evil act of land grabbing. The latter targeted both white and black farmers whilst the former targeted whites only. The two characters were using the same strategies but their ideologies of a land expropriator differed.

The Hlengwe women who do not feature much in the colonial records seem to have played a complementary role to that of the menfolk in the struggle against land alienation. Since there is no record of them betraying their men it can be safely concluded that women were reliable partners in the struggle against the 'land grabbers'. They were fully aware of their men's escapades against the whites but they never 'sold out'. Instead the majority of them continued to break the law by going undetected deep into the European land to fetch firewood, harvest caterpillars and collect fruits and other edibles. They also engaged in poaching fish, which they caught using pieces of cloth and rugs. They also stole thatch grass from the farms (Govani, interview, 27/6/2008; Chinhavi, interview, 7/7/2008). However, it is not very clear whether they perceived this as fighting against the system; but all in all, this turns out to be part of the 'struggle in the shadow'.

External migration was one other common method used by the Hlengwe to escape oppression and exploitation. It brought out two dynamics in the Hlengwe response. One dynamic was that associated with permanent migration to enable them to continue with their traditional way of life while the other was associated with temporary migration to escape forced labour and to reach the best labour markets. Some Hlengwe showed their resentment to loss of land by crossing into neighbouring Mozambique and South Africa to live there permanently. In 1914 it was noted that in the Matibi Reserve there was a slight increase in population because, '…. *more natives* [had] *left the territory for Portuguese Territory than* [had] *come to this territory from there*' (NAZ, N9/1/14, NC Ndanga, Annual Report, 1914).

However, it should be noted that it was not every Hlengwe who opted to migrate permanently to neighbouring countries and that those that migrated did not just go to any neighbouring country. Those who went to Mozambique were mostly hunters, who chose to go to Mozambique not because the conditions there were better than those in Zimbabwe. Instead taxes were even higher in Mozambique than Zimbabwe. However, what made the difference to them was that hunting which was forbidden in Zimbabwe was going on uncontrolled in Mozambique. These were people who were not prepared to change their traditional way of life but at the same time were not ready to fight for they realised that if war was to be an option, the odds would be stacked against them. One other reason why some preferred to go especially to Mozambique was that their relatives were there but had been separated from them by the drawing of the Mozambique-Zimbabwe boundary. Therefore it was not every Hlengwe group that opted to go to Mozambique but those in the border areas like Masivamele and Ngwenyenye's people. To that end, the people's main economic pursuits and geographical location contributed to the heterogeneity in the response. The Hlengwe that were further inland chose to stay, while those separated from their fellow men in neighbouring Mozambique chose to join them.

For the temporary movements, the main motivation was to escape labour exploitation or to go to countries offering competitive wages, which they would use to pay the taxes or rent demanded by the European settlers. In the 1920s there was in the S.E Lowveld a marked absence of men caused by a flight of men to the South African mines (Bannerman 1981:33). It is true that the labour conditions in South Africa were not princely, but the wages were better than those offered in Zimbabwe. One other notable thing here is that it was mostly men who engaged in this type of response. This is what explains the lower number of males to women in many parts of colonial Africa. Only a few women in the Hlengwe country dared to go because of the many

challenges on the way to South Africa. However, one other hindrance to their emigration was their culture, which had clearly defined gender roles that forbade such adventurous undertakings by women.

The Africans who were employed on European farms or were recruited into forced labour gangs also devised strategies to escape wanton exploitation of their labour. They did this either as individuals or small groups of close friends. The tightly controlled situations resulted in modification of their strategies of resistance. At the slightest opportunity, they deserted to unknown destinations whilst some chose to stay and feigned illness. Some pretended not to be competent enough in performing their tasks that some authorities complained that, *'They (Hlengwe) are poor agricultural labourers'* (NAZ, N3/33/8, History of Ndanga District:74). In May 1943, P.H. Fripp even said in a letter to the Director of the Irrigation Department of Triangle Estates, *'To date, there is no hint of labourers arriving for the contractor gang to replace boys who are finished their three tickets of 30 days. In this connection it is very noticeable that some of the boys have been released due to illness by the parties concerned'* (NAZ, 2337/288/43/2 Fripp in a letter to the Director, Triangle, 20/5/43). The frequency of the illnesses and the number of workers concerned was sufficient proof that these illnesses were not genuine. Such behaviour can best be understood in the realm of the Hlengwe personality and behaviour.

Thus the Hlengwe in different places responded differently, hence there was no uniformity in the modes of Hlengwe response.

## The Phase of Overt and Violent Response

> 'Only exposure to adverse circumstances brings out the hidden nature of a people'

In many parts of the Hlengwe country, restlessness associated with more radicalism began to manifest after World War II. Resentment of the colonial order was becoming more overt and violent. This shift to a radical approach was a result of pressure created by the increased eviction of people from European land to the overcrowded reserves. This left them with limited options since the state now wanted all Africans to be driven to the reserves except a few who were directly employed on European properties. Reality had now dawned on the Hlengwe that their vital interest, especially their position on the land, was under severe attack and that their interest had to be protected at all costs.

After the 1950s, the Hlengwe became more confrontational and daring in breaking the law. Allan Wright, the D.C of Mwenezi, reported having serious problems with law-breakers, especially the poachers. However, it is

very clear that these were not genuine poachers who were only after game because these so-called 'poaching gangs' would hunt up to within half a mile of the homestead of the ranchers simply to provoke them. If the landowners tried to assault or corner them they fought back. One farm owner named Francis Taberer was killed (Wright 1972:50). The DC also said that, '…. *there were several reports of arrows wounding pursuing farmers.'* This kind of response shows that the Hlengwe had been pushed to the limit and felt that it was time to defend their birthright.

Even some traditional authorities became very confrontational. In 1957, Sub-chief Lisimati Mpapa in the Makambe area threatened a government lands officer or demonstrator with unspecified action for delineating fields for a group of Shonas evicted from the (Victoria) Masvingo district in his area. He even uprooted the pegs that the demonstrator had used to delineate the fields (Chisi, interview, 13/6/2008). The sub-chief was irked by the loss of land to people he called 'outsiders'. In the interview, the retired officer also revealed that another sub-chief, Lisenga Chilonga, was very uncooperative and '…. *was a very difficult man to deal with'* (ibid.). He always resisted orders from the DC and only implemented them after receiving threats of use of force against him. In the Sengwe Reserve one headman retorted to the DC, '*Can I stop my followers from drinking water*' (Wright 1972:143). This was after the DC instructed him to stop his people from hunting on European farms. This confrontational attitude reflects the general feeling that most Hlengwe had towards Europeans as from the 1950s onwards.

In the early 1960s, the Hlengwe political situation, which had been described as stable in the 1920s was close to tipping point. The nationalist wind, which was sweeping across the country, began to have an impact on many Hlengwe in the S.E Lowveld. Wright attributed the blossoming of modern nationalist ideas among the Hlengwe in the 1960s to the arrest and detention of Joshua Nkomo at Gonakudzingwa Restriction Camp in the S.E. Lowveld. According to him, people treated Nkomo as a 'Messiah', because he was promising them a restoration of their land when he came to power. This message appealed to the Hlengwe who had been economically disenabled through the loss of their land. Matters came to a head on 8 and 9 May 1965, when over 500 followers of Joshua Nkomo defied police orders and gathered at the Chikombedzi Mission Hospital aiming to attack the white missionaries after the meeting. The missionaries were only saved by instant flight to neighbouring towns (Wright 1972:143).

In the Sengwe Reserve, spears and fresh arrows were made and old muzzleloaders resurrected, cleaned and readied for a 'Big Day' in May 1965. Women informants, who revealed the whole plan to the DC of Mwenezi

District, also disclosed that some six whites had been put on the death list. Of the six farmers, three owned land in the Mateke Hills, an area from which Gezani's people had been evicted. One was a rancher just across the Runde River, while the other two were from the Beit-Bridge area (ibid:378). The state dealt with the situation by declaring a State of Emergency in May 1965. Many Hlengwe men were arrested and a ban was slapped on visits to the Gonakudzingwa Restriction Camp (ibid.:376). There is no doubt that this was an Hlengwe-directed operation, because it mainly targeted whites that had settled on their traditional homelands. It is also clear that the Hlengwe were now spoiling for war to recover their land, dignity and ultimately economic emancipation.

Two dynamics of the Hlengwe response identified in these incidents were their ability at this stage to unite with other ethnic groups in the struggle against a common enemy and to engage in coordinated action as one big Hlengwe group fighting for its birthright. The Hlengwe response had entered a new phase and it was not surprising when some young men from the area such as Justin Chauke who later became one of the prominent nationalist leaders went for military training as a liberation fighter in the 1960s (Martin *et al.* 1981:22).

However, the existence of a group of women who revealed the Hlengwe Insurrection plan proves that the Hlengwe response was not uniform for they represent a group that was comfortable with the status quo, which was yet another dynamic of the Hlengwe response. In traditional Hlengwe culture, women had no right to make decisions that were ultra vires the male-dominated community's wishes. So this act by these women proves that there was a team of Hlengwe men behind them. Thus the Hlengwe response was heterogeneous because there existed within the same society some groups against and some, though in the minority, for the status quo.

From the above discourse, it is very clear that the Hlengwe used various methods in responding to the loss of land and colonial oppression associated with it. It is also quite clear that it is wrong to homogenize their response for it was characterized by great diversity. Different people at different times and in different places reacted differently to the new colonial set up depending on the different impact the land expropriation had on each of the Hlengwe groups.

## Conclusion

One major achievement of this article has been its success in extricating the history of the Hlengwe from a maze of what is largely Shona or Karanga history. In that history, the Hlengwe have always been largely obscure yet

they are a people with their own identity and with their own colonial experiences to tell. It is hoped that more detailed studies covering other aspects of their history will be carried out.

Before 1890 the Hlengwe were an economically empowered people who were charting their own course of economic development as their environment dictated. They had many branches of production, which assured them of food security and above all sustained their livelihoods. However through various land policies starting with the Southern Rhodesia Order-in-Council of 1898, the Land Apportionment Act of 1931 and the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, the Hlengwe lost their grip on their land.

The loss of land meant to them loss of their economic sovereignty as their traditional economy was destroyed. People who were at one time masters of their own destiny were turned into a labouring class that was now dependent on the wages from the new masters. There is no doubt that land alienation economically incapacitated them because of the centrality of land to their economic activities. In no time signs of impoverishment began to show among their numbers. A Hlengwe-driven mode of economic development died a sudden death leaving the majority of them in a pathetic state.

This course of events ignited numerous and diverse Hlengwe reactions. From the passive forms of resistance in the early years, the reactions became more violent in the ensuing years as the evictions intensified and conditions in the reserves deteriorated. The warlike nature of the Hlengwe manifested itself when their vital interests were threatened. By 1965, many of them were taking part in modern nationalism and were ready to kill the colonialists so as to repossess their traditional lands. All in all, a deep analysis of the Hlengwe modes of response to colonial rule and exploitation reveals that there were many dynamics and variations and heterogeneity in their response as opposed to the common analysis that sees homogeneity in African resistance and often ignores its salient features.

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## Interviewees

Chabvepi, Peter, (history teacher) Alpha Mpapa Secondary School, Matibi II, interviewed, 28/6/2008.

Chinhavi, Agnella, B.A Hons., history student from Chiredzi South, interviewed in Gweru, 7/7/2008.

Chisi, A.K, (demonstrator in the Matibi II area from 1956-76) interviewed at Village 12, Mushandike Resettlement Scheme, 13/6/2008.

Gezani, Amos, (heir-apparent to the throne) interviewed in the Sengwe communal area, 23/2/91.

Govani, Chipo, of Matibi I, interviewed in Gweru, 27/6/2008.

Kanuka, B.J., (headman) interviewed at his homestead in Matibi II, 26/02/91.

Makondo, Thomas, interviewed at Chikombedzi Business Centre in Matibi II, 23/2/1991.

Malalani, Lisenga, Rev. interviewed at his homestead in Matibi II, 21/02/1991.

Mapindhani, Kasitoni, (headman Sangwe communal area) interviewed at Chief Tsovani's place, 17/2/91.

Mpapa, interview, 21/2/91.

Muteyo, W. (village elder Sangwe communal area) interviewed at Tsovani's place, 17/2/91.

Rukanda (businessman and farmer) interviewed at Farm 2, Gonakudzingwa, 21/2/91

Rupangwana (headman, Sangwe communal area) interviewed at Tshovani's place, 17/2/91.

Zanamwe, Lackson, (headmaster) interviewed at Kamba School, Triangle, 5/7/2008.

Zanamwe, Nehemiah, interviewed at Farm No. 1 Gonakudzingwa Purchase Area, 23/02/91.

## Key words and Abbreviations

**Economic disempowerment:** refers to the economic incapacitation of people either by withdrawing their main means of production or denying them access to the same and passing inhibitiing pieces of legislation which in the process make the targeted people a vulnerable group incapable of fully sustaining itself through independent production or utilization of its own resources.
**Peasantry**: in this article refers to the class of peasants who solely depended on land for subsistence.
**NAZ**: National Archives of Zimbabwe material.
**NC**: Native Commissioner (in this article this is immediately followed by the area he was in charge of, e.g. NC, Chibi).
**CNC:** Chief Native Commissioner.
**DC**: District Commissioner (formerly NC).