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*Special Issue on Re-reading the History and Historiography of
Domination and Resistance in Africa*

*Numéro spécial sur la relecture de l'histoire et de l'historiographie
de la domination et de la résistance en Afrique*

Guest Editors / Éditeurs invités
Penda Mbow & Felistus Kinyanjui



Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
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Introduction

Penda Mbow* and Felistus Kinyanjui**

This edition of *Afrika Zamani* contains articles from papers presented at the CODESRIA SOS African History Conference held in Kampala from 27 to 29 June 2008. In line with CODESRIA's unflagging efforts to sustain debate in the social sciences on the continent, the conference was organised to help resuscitate the discipline of history which has been 'endangered' for some time now. Dwindling numbers of undergraduates studying history, a decline in funding for history from local and international organisations, as well as a reduction in the vigour in historical research, call for urgent measures to salvage the discipline.

More specifically, this issue profiles some of the insights and perspectives introduced and debated on the theme 'Re-Reading the History and Historiography of Domination and Resistance in Africa'. This theme was appropriate as it coincided with the onset of a period when many African countries were celebrating fifty years of independence. It was therefore a good time to take stock of the reality on the continent in terms of achievements so far, as well as assess the gains in terms of the historiography of the continent. The decade of nationalist fervour – the 1950s – was phenomenal in African historiography. Therefore, accounting for the other fifty years of self-rule was considered a worthwhile academic engagement. Hence, the conference opened up new ideas and engaged old debates. In accordance with the theme of the conference, the articles hinge upon a series of preoccupations, ranging from racial and ideological debates to social agency issues.

The articles selected for publication in this issue of *Afrika Zamani* have a common theme, that of foreign (colonial) domination and the myriad attempts made by the Africans to resist it. In particular, chieftaincy received

* Département d'Histoire, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Sénégal.
Email: pmbow@refer.sn ; pendambow@yahoo.fr

** Department of Philosophy, History and Religion, Egerton University,
Nakuru, Kenya. Email: kinunaf@yahoo.com

ample attention as evidenced in the articles on the institution. In addition, there are articles on gender, social agency and movements, literary evidence, ideology and race. In this issue too, British, German and Anglo-Francophone Africa are represented. Gender appears as a category of historical analysis used to present the case of how women used their power to influence the political destiny of their communities. The issue contains articles in both English and French.

Re-Reading the History and Historiography of Domination and Resistance in Africa

As highlighted at the Kampala conference, the institution of chieftaincy was a centre-piece to colonial domination and resistance. Using a multiple number of sources, the article by Dennis Laumann on Kpandu shows how one can unearth evidence that brings out an objective picture of what really happened in Cameroon. Laumann demonstrates how conventional medicine was employed as a tool of domination that attracted resistance from the German subjects. While the Germans believed that their knowledge of disease and medicine was 'rational' and 'scientific', the people of Kpandu viewed their colonizers as ignorant bullies who lacked a proper understanding of the local ecology. Faced with opposition to their vaccination campaign, the Germans resorted to force, removing Kpandu's supreme political authority. Colonialists used medicine as 'a tool for domination'. The outbreak of an epidemic serves as an instructive historical moment to examine the nature and extent of colonial rule and the resistance to it.

The author argues that a historian writing on this historical episode, consulting only the German archival records would concur with the facts and interpretation presented in those sources: that the residents of Kpandu were suffering from sleeping sickness. Yet, combining written with oral sources reveals that the residents of Kpandu, who had long and immediate experience with the diseases found in their environment, diagnosed the ailment as meningitis. They quickly concluded that the primary cause of the deaths was German medical ineptitude, beginning with a failure to properly diagnose the disease and continuing with the use of either ineffective, inappropriate, or fatal vaccinations. And, lastly, the people of Kpandu registered their opposition through their legitimate authority, the chief, whom they entrusted to deal with the German colonizers. Today, we can confirm that the people of Kpandu were correct in their assessment of German medicine. Nevertheless, in the colonial context, the Germans were in a position of power which they exercised by removing and exiling Dagadu, the legitimate ruler of Kpandu. Dagadu resisted German authority by first questioning and

then advocating a boycott of the German medical protocol. Based on both German archival sources and those from oral traditions, Laumann demonstrates the differences and the challenges, as well as the tensions between white and traditional medicine.

Julia Wells introduces a new dynamic on the renowned conflicts between Ndlambe and Ngqika in South Africa. Although, her article is largely written from archival sources recorded by colonial sympathisers, the author is able to sift through the evidence that introduces new dynamics and insights in existing southern Africa historiography. She argues that power shifted frequently from Ndlambe to Ngqika, and proceeds to demonstrate how a more subtle, less visible dynamic of cooperation and unity that also operated between them contributed to the occupation of the Zuurveld. Ferocious as their conflicts with each other were, they also enjoyed periods of peace, cooperation and mutual support. This submerged dynamic suggests that a powerful imperative towards unity was also present. Though the colonial observers who recorded events could not make sense of this tendency, they nevertheless captured enough information to allow us to retrieve a glimpse into the inner dynamics of traditional leadership to formulate a new appreciation of a potent unity principle at work. Indeed, the documentary evidence gives us glimpses into this other side of the relationship during the intervals of peace. It could be referred to as a particularly African dynamic of maintaining cohesion among leaders.

Pre-colonial African leadership in eastern Africa is represented in this issue by the work of Godwin Siundu. Using the case of Chief Mumia of Wanga, Siundu presents a revisionist representation of how collaboration, so much condemned in extant sources, is presented as the best of bad choices in a complex system of colonialism. Siundu uses both archival and oral sources for this article. Rather than solely reading the existing written archive, he supplements it with invaluable oral evidence gleaned from interviews with Nabongo Mumia's descendants. Akin to other articles on leadership in this issue, he supports the perspective that there is a possible interface in the logic of Nabongo's 'collaboration' with that of colonial 'domination', meeting at the point of self and communal interest rather than the former's supposed sympathy for the colonial authorities that has been documented in the existing historiography.

Ramola Ramtohul's article adds to the Mauritian historiography which has concentrated more on class struggle at the expense of gender issues. She observes that the vote was the first step towards women's equality and citizenship that had been given substance without creating disorder. The article reveals the struggles that saw women acquire suffrage and entitlement to vie for political seats in the 1950s. She argues that Mauritius presents

itself as an interesting case study on the gender dynamics of the politics of plural societies and observes that, despite the strong patriarchal culture prevalent in colonial Mauritius, a class of women were granted political citizenship on an equal basis as men and women were elected to parliament prior to independence. Indeed, the Mauritian case study indicates that in plural societies which have multi-ethnic populations and a political arena which is acutely dominated by concern for ethnic and class representation, issues pertaining to women's rights and political representation are easily sidelined or are promoted for a cause other than a genuine concern for the empowerment of women. In these societies, the presence of a strong women's movement or united women's front becomes imperative to safeguard women's interests and rights. In the Mauritian case, an absence of a women's lobby or 'voice' in the suffrage debates facilitated the marginalisation of women's concerns. In fact, the lack of women's organisations and women's rights in society supports the idea that women were assumed to vote like their men. Female suffrage also created sex antagonism, as a group of women were granted the franchise before all men had been enfranchised, despite women's inferior status in the Mauritian society. A class of women were thus indirect beneficiaries of the ethnic and class tensions prevalent in Mauritian politics and society during the 1940s, despite the absence of any formal and genuine policy geared towards women empowerment.

Henry Kam Kah uses the case of a woman's uprising, *Kelu*, to demonstrate how women revolted in southern Cameroon to gain power and respect from local men and the colonisers. According to him, prior to the uprising, the colonial enterprise had relegated women to the background in political and economic matters. The women used these revolutionary years to transform hitherto held perceptions into notions of freedom and control. The article shows how the use of symbolism and body gesticulations proved as powerful tools to fight oppression. The kinds of instruments and bodily gesticulations employed by the *Ehzeleghalu* were mechanisms of success put in place from the very beginning. They radiated messages that facilitated coordination of the resistance and frightened the 'all powerful' men into submission. No wonder then that even the most powerful elderly institution like *Kuiifuai* crumbled and was only resurrected after the revolution. The Church was shaken to its very roots because it was considered to be the bastion of anti-traditional feelings. Although the heat of this resistance evaporated three years afterwards, the post-*Kelu* society in Bu had witnessed a remarkable change. Women became freer than before to engage in any

economically rewarding activity and in the decision-making processes of the Fondom.

Mwangi Macharia relates the case of the *Mungiki* in Kenya as one of active resistance that has been undergoing transformation. The article suggests that the resistance to the colonial power of the 1950s has been re-born in the now often-talked about and misunderstood *Mungiki*, a religious-political and cultural movement that had once been proscribed. The author argues that the activities of the Mau Mau, therefore, and the resilient resistance to social, economic, political and even religious domination in Kenya, did not stop at independence. The same ex-Mau Mau soldiers – landless, whom Kenyatta never rewarded except by a mere handshake – continued to struggle for basic resources under both the Kenyatta and Moi regimes. The author contends that the peasants and workers who fought and died did so, not only for the sake of culture but also to cement a unity of purpose – putting a Kikuyu leader into power. The Mau Mau’s greatest strength was its organizational independence. The split with moderate nationalists allowed radical activists to promote the aspirations of the masses and thus challenge the very foundations of the colonial order. The problem was that this challenge remained diffuse because the Mau Mau did not develop its own independent ideology. The failure to evolve a coherent class-based social programme meant that Mau Mau was simply the militant wing of a nationalist movement.

Ismail Rashid explores the root causes and effects of what he calls ‘subaltern activities’, such as a workers’ strike in Freetown and a peasant war in northern Sierra Leone that disrupted the relative tranquillity and predictable process of decolonization in the country. Through his article, he shows how the peasants successfully seized the opportunity presented by the 1955 war to negotiate their demands in the new political dispensation – that the predatory systems be removed, which did happen.

Relying on ‘top secret’ documents recently de-classified and now housed in the South African Military Intelligence Archives, Sifiso Ndlovu highlights the power of history as an analytical tool in understanding the struggle for liberty in South Africa. Ndlovu considers these documents as having been compiled by the former ‘enemies’, thus rendering them very important in defining the geopolitics of knowledge of domination and resistance in Africa as a continent. He shows how various players shaped the process of ending apartheid in the country. These new primary sources are also very central in promoting and consolidating empirical research connected to the continent’s immediate past.

In an innovative use of sources in North African historiography, Afis Ayinde Oladosu demonstrates that whereas it is true that the histories of

Egypt and Sudan have largely been preserved and are accessible both in English and Arabic, a third and an un-explored perspective – that of an experiential-literary-historical angle – does exist. Re-reading al-Faytûrî's poetry (or *poestory*) compellingly draws readers to a theatre, to witness the poetics of colour in African history.

In Wassouni François' article, 'L'artisanat africain entre domination et résistance de la période coloniale à nos jours: Le cas de la ville de Maroua au Nord du Cameroun' (African Artisanry between Domination and Resistance from the Colonial Era to Date: The case of Maroua City in northern Cameroon), the author revisits the history of domination and resistance in Africa through the prism of arts, especially arts and crafts. with example of artisans from Maroua City in the north of Cameroon. Kanouri and Hausa artisanry, introduced in this city in the nineteenth century, was subject to multiple influences, dating from the French colonial times. Some of the causes of the shift in the technique, organization and trade of Maroua artisanry were the type of support for artisanry developed by the French colonialists, the opening up of the northern Cameroon area to tourism in the 1970s, and the advent of non-governmental organizations working for the promotion of artisanry.

In his contribution, Agbeyenga Adedze approaches the issue of domination and resistance in African history through the prism of postage stamps. According to him, commemorative postage stamps serve as memorials for special events, occasions or personalities. They have therefore been used during the colonial era by Europeans to memorialise conquerors and explorers. Similarly, after independence, African countries have commemorated some of their leaders (freedom fighters, martyrs, traditional chiefs who resisted colonialism, politicians and political leaders. However, with examples from six former British and French West African colonies – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal – he argues that since the issuing of postage stamps remains the monopoly of the central government, in contemporary times, commemorative stamps are more or less subjective – mere tools of propaganda – and therefore objects of diverse political interpretations.

Guillaume Nkongolo Funkwa uses a variety of technical data and local currencies to demonstrate the resistance of the Congolese to the introduction of European currency. This, however, does not affect in any way the originality of the research. Although there are already many studies on currency, this article's perspective – from a resistance point of view – makes it quite interesting in many regards. Currency plays a primary role in the exchange of goods and services. It also serves as a means of payments

(taxes, debts) and the financing of economic expansion (credit, capital, shares). The author demonstrates that in an occupied country, the imposition of foreign power (by invaders) over local power often happens through the control of currency. The current Democratic Republic of the Congo was not an exception in this regard. The king of Belgium, Leopold II, and his envoys battled hard to control the Congolese commerce through the control of the circulation of currency, which the author has reconstructed, to analyze the Congolese resistance through the circumvention of the currency introduced by Belgian colonists.

In his article 'Ecrire l'histoire du mouvement de résistance à la colonisation : un enjeu historiographique à Madagascar' (Writing the History of the Resistance Movement against Colonisation: Madagascar's Historiography at Stake), Denis Alexandre Lahiniriko revisits epistemological issues. As demonstrated through his approach, research on the colonial era constitutes one of the main themes of history studies in Madagascar, starting in the 1970s and 1980s. However, immediate history is not left behind, given the fact that the resistance movement against colonization received full attention during Madagascar's Second Republic (1975-1991). This situation found its rationale in the ideological tendency of a political regime that made anti-colonialism, especially in its anti-neocolonialist version, its foundational basis. This, to a large extent, brought about the 'malagachisation' of history teaching. The history of nationalism was, however, blamed for its 'quasi-official', 'apologist' nature. It was apologetic in the sense that it presented the colonial liberation movement from a monolithic perspective, and which could not be apprehended outside the issues of independence and freedom for the Malagasy people. Generations of historians have greatly contributed to the edification of that image, as they formulated their research interrogations around that orientation. They were called upon to provide the new nation state with a national history. Those generations accomplished their mission by being mere depositories of the knowledge of the past at the state's disposal.

A new generation in Madagascar has emerged; one that has not directly experienced inequality and injustice from colonial domination. This generation, which is more concerned with the ongoing situation characterized by political and economic woes, has a different view of the history of Malagasy resistance against French domination. Based on those existentialist considerations, this generation proves to be more prone to analyzing nationalism as a regular political movement that is highly heterogeneous and subject to internal strife between various antagonistic trends. The author attempts to demonstrate the dichotomy that exists within the representation

that most Malagasies have of the fight against domination, by examining the nationalistic representation of the collective memory of Malagasy and the limits of the unanimous conception according to which resistance against French domination in Madagascar has to be a monolithic movement at the service of the country.

This edition opens space for dialogue and conversation. New questions are raised and new areas for further research are pointed at, which should open up future discussions on African colonial and post-colonial historiography in the wake of new waves of globalisation and power relations.



Domination and Resistance: Epidemic and Exile in the German Togoland Colony¹

Dennis Laumann*

Abstract

In 1914, King Dagadu III of Kpandu was forced into exile by the colonial regime in German Togoland. The king's banishment was the culmination of friction between his royal court and the German colonial administration. The roots of this conflict lay in Germany's suspicions that Dagadu remained too friendly with his former British allies in the neighboring Gold Coast. Tensions came to the surface, however, with the outbreak of an epidemic in Kpandu. The primary charge against Dagadu was that he encouraged resistance to a German vaccination campaign against the spread of sleeping sickness. From the perspective of the people of Kpandu, the vaccination effort itself was to blame for the rising death toll in their town and the disease affecting them was meningitis. This story provides a lens through which to explore how domination and resistance in colonial Africa was played out in the arena of medicine. While the Germans believed their knowledge of health was 'rational' and 'scientific', the people of Kpandu viewed their colonizers as ignorant bullies who lacked a proper understanding of local medicine. Based on Ghanaian oral history and German colonial records, this article considers conflicting notions of health and illness and contested spaces of sovereignty in the colonial state.

Résumé

En 1914, le Roi Dagadu III de Kpandu fut forcé à l'exil par le régime colonial vers la colonie allemande du Togo. Le bannissement du roi pouvait être considéré comme le point culminant d'une série de frictions entre sa cour royale et l'administration coloniale allemande. À l'origine de ce conflit sont les soupçons que les Allemands nourrissaient envers Dagadu qui à leurs yeux demeurait trop amical avec ses anciens alliés britanniques de la Côte d'Or voisine. Cependant, des tensions firent surface au début d'une épidémie à Kpandu. La première charge contre Dagadu était qu'il encourageait la résistance contre une campagne de vaccination allemande dont le but était de freiner la propagation de la maladie du sommeil. Du point de vue du peuple de Kpandu, cette campagne de vaccination était la cause de l'augmentation des décès dans leur ville alors que le

* Department of History, The University of Memphis, USA.
Email: dlaumann@memphis.edu

coupable était la méningite. Cette histoire fournit l'opportunité d'explorer comment la domination et la résistance en Afrique coloniale étaient interprétées dans l'arène de la médecine. Tandis que les allemands croyaient que leur connaissance de la santé était « rationnelle » et « scientifique », le peuple de Kpandu voyait leurs colonisateurs comme des tyrans ignorants qui faisaient preuve d'un manque de compréhension totale de la médecine locale. Basé sur l'histoire orale du Ghana et sur les archives coloniales allemandes, cet article prend en compte les notions contradictoires de santé et maladie et les espaces de souveraineté contestées dans l'état colonial.¹

Introduction

On March 11, 1914, Chief Dagadu III of Kpandu was picked up by officials of the German Togoland colony at the Lomé train station for immediate transportation to the 'Henry Woermann', a ship docked at the town's harbour.² Under arrest, Dagadu was being sent to exile in the Cameroons, German's other colony in West Africa. Dagadu's exile was the culmination of friction between his court and the German colonial regime, rooted in German suspicions that Dagadu remained too friendly with his former British allies in the neighbouring Gold Coast. Tensions came to the surface, however, with the outbreak of what the Germans thought was a sleeping sickness epidemic in Kpandu. After his expulsion from German Togoland, Dagadu remained in a prison in Duala for about nine months until his release by British forces which defeated the Germans in Cameroon.³

During the epidemic, German colonial authorities went about the town examining the necks of men for symptoms of sleeping sickness and rounding up those they suspected of being infected with the disease.⁴ These men were sent to a quarantine camp at Kluto, the headquarters of the local German district commissioner on a hill overlooking Kpandu, where many of them died. Dagadu protested these actions to colonial officials and encouraged his subjects to resist a German vaccination campaign, which residents of Kpandu believed was the cause of the deaths. The colonial regime responded by arresting and exiling the chief.

This paper will provide a narrative of these events based on oral history from Ghana, German archival records, and secondary sources. The episode described here provides another example of an African monarch exiled by a European colonial regime⁵ and offers a lens through which to explore how domination and resistance in colonial Africa was played out in the arena of an epidemic. While the Germans believed their knowledge of disease and medicine were 'rational' and 'scientific', the people of Kpandu viewed their colonizers as ignorant bullies who lacked a proper understanding of the local ecology. Faced with opposition to their vaccination campaign, the Germans resorted to force, removing Kpandu's supreme political authority. Colonialists

used medicine as ‘a tool for domination’⁶ and an epidemic serves as an instructive historical moment to examine the nature and extent of colonial rule and [resistance](#).

Background to the German Occupation

Kpandu is a large, mostly Ewe-speaking Ghanaian town on the east bank of the Volta River about 90 miles (144 km) north of the Atlantic coast. Historically, it was part of the Krepi Ewe state, along with Ho and Hohoe, two other large towns in the present-day Volta Region of Ghana. After 1880, Kpandu and the rest of the Krepi state were administered by the British as part of the larger Volta River district of the Gold Coast protectorate. Ten years later, Kpandu, Ho, and Hohoe were consigned to German occupation through the Heligoland Treaty of 1890. But, as Peki, the Krepi capital, remained in the Gold Coast, this pact between European imperialists divided the Ewe state and ‘separated farms and lands from their owners [and] relatives from their families’.⁷

At first, Kpandu was reluctant to break ties with the British and accept German authority, but the Germans raised the spectre of a military assault. According to Gilbert Joel Nyavor, an oral historian:

The Germans gave a condition: either the Kpandus accept the German flag or Kpandu would be shelled with bullets. So, [the chief] sent a messenger to Williams, the English colonial administrator, for help. The English sent word to him that they had already handed over the Kpandu area to the Germans, so they could not help the situation. It was then that the Kpandus accepted the flag, thereby bringing Kpandu under German rule.⁸

And, in fact, the court at Kpandu came to view the European-demarcated boundary positively in relation to its own regional power. In a letter to the Gold Coast governor in Christianborg, William Brandford Griffith protesting the new boundary agreement, the Krepi King, Kwadzo Dei VI, derided the decision by the chief of Kpandu to accept the German flag.⁹ The king’s concern partly was based on fears that Kpandu (as well as Ho) would assert its independence from Peki. On the German side of the boundary, Kpandu was the largest and economically most important Krepi town. In its dealings with the Germans, the royal court sought to highlight this fact as a way to affirm its autonomy from Peki and develop its supremacy over surrounding towns and villages.¹⁰

At the time of the treaty, the ruler of Kpandu was Dagadu II (also known as Dagadu Nyavor) who ruled from c. 1866 to 1897 and was a paternal relative of Dagadu II, the main subject of this paper. Dagadu II’s authority over the area around Kpandu initially was admired by the Germans. Heinrich Klose, a German traveller who participated in a so-called scientific expedition

to German Togoland in the 1890s and published an account of his brief visit to Kpandu,¹¹ wrote approvingly of the chief: 'Dagadu is the first chief in the entire Ewe country who maintains any real rule over his subjects. The sub-chiefs in the Kpando region have little to say and are entirely dependent on his energetic will'.¹²

Dagadu's authority was significant to the Germans, who were frustrated by what they regarded as the lack of a centralized system of power in Eweland.¹³ In southern Togoland, which included Kpandu, the German regime experimented with forms of direct and indirect rule. Most chiefs were appointed by the colonial government, and nearly all were replacements for their predecessors who had signed 'treaties' with the Germans. The new chiefs, generally younger and selected for their 'energy and obedience', were often viewed as illegitimate by the population they presided over and 'commanded little respect from the community elders'.¹⁴ Thus, the fact that Dagadu's authority was recognized by both his subjects and the German regime was a notable exception in the colony.

The German's respect for Dagadu II eventually turned to disdain and distrust. The primary source of German hostility was Kpandu's continuing economic, political, and social links across the Volta to the Gold Coast. These relations existed not only amongst Ewes and other ethnic groups in the area, but also between Kpandu and the British. Before the British-German partition, Dagadu II had established close relations with British merchants operating in his town as well as with the British regime in Accra. These continued, despite German protests and penalties.

Kpandu's assertiveness was rooted in its heightened economic importance in the area, particularly as a trans-shipment point in trade coming south from Salaga.¹⁵ The Germans were preoccupied with economically linking northern Togoland with the coast and thus preventing commerce from being directed toward ports in the Gold Coast, namely Keta and Accra. Pre-existing commercial links between Kpandu and Accra continued during the German occupation, as agricultural goods were traded across the Volta River to the Gold Coast capital. Initially, a 'small tax' had to be paid by traders at a customs point in Kpandu but later the Germans often punished residents of Kpandu when they returned from 'their economic activities' in the Gold Coast, imposing a one pound fine and a one-month jail term on each offender.¹⁶

Frustrated by the Kpandu court's refusal to sever economic ties to the Gold Coast, the Germans attempted to forcibly occupy Kpandu. In 1894, the German colonial police force attacked and destroyed several towns in the Kpandu area, confiscated property, and imposed fines on some of the inhabitants of the razed communities.¹⁷ The German military campaign not only was aimed at establishing colonial authority in Kpandu but, more

importantly, in promoting the redirection of commerce towards their capital at Lomé. By 1896, a German colonial officer cautiously reported that 'Dagadu gives the impression that at this stage he is solidly on the side of German interests'.¹⁸

A German station was established in Kpandu in 1897, the same year in which Dagadu III was installed as the new chief or, in local terminology, assumed the stool.¹⁹ To the German occupation, historian D. E. K. Amenumey, this:

dealt a blow to Kpandu's power and prestige by setting a number of Kpandu's former vassal villages up as independent of it. After this, Dagadu's position could not be compared with that of even a subchief in the neighbouring Gold Coast.²⁰

The German Togoland Colony

With a new administrative presence in Kpandu, the death of their adversary Dagadu II, and an untested new chief, the Germans proceeded to extend their colonial system from the coast. Oral historians today recall a highly-centralized, efficient, and sometimes brutal authoritarian regime which imposed frequent and arduous dictates on the Togolandiers.

Misahöhe was the seat of the German official responsible for Kpandu and surrounding areas which constituted the Misahöhe district.²¹ Hans Gruner, who served as district commissioner for most of the German occupation, is so well-remembered by oral historians today that they refer to the German colonial period as 'Gruner's time'. Edward Kodzo Datsa states: 'The name that we came to hear of, in our early childhood, was Dr Gruner. He is said to have been a very strong administrator, very disciplined'.²²

Oral historians emphasize that the district commissioner's decisions were absolute. 'This place was governed by decrees from the Kaiser', Datsa asserts, 'You dared not question the District or Provincial Commissioners on this, as to their legality'.²³ Seth Adu explains, the 'highest authorities' were based at Misahöhe and 'whenever a case was beyond the jurisdiction of the authorities' in a town like Kpandu, 'it was referred to Misahöhe'.²⁴

The German district commissioners exercised nearly complete administrative, judicial, and military powers. The colony's penal code of April 1896 granted them absolute authority over the population they ruled and allowed district officers to punish Togolandiers through beating, by delivering sentences of hard labour, and by imposing fines.

The Germans, like all European imperialists, mainly were focused on controlling African labour and economic activities. In addition to trying to redirect trade to Lomé, the Germans also prohibited African merchants from exporting produce and manufactured goods and restricted them to retail

trade. Aggressive policies were implemented to expand the cultivation of cash crops in the southern part of the colony. In 1907, the German regime decreed that compulsory labour should be salaried and used exclusively for public works projects, yet flogging was still employed as the primary means of coercing Togolanders to perform forced labour. Both direct and indirect taxes were imposed on the Togolanders, ranging from import duties, which remained the regime's main source of income throughout the occupation, to income, urban, emigration, and dog taxes, as well as a levy for flying the German flag.

The Germans invested minimally in social services for the Togolanders. The regime mostly relied on missionary groups, notably the North German Missionary Society, to provide schooling at their stations. Towards the end of the occupation, the German administration established several governmental schools, but educational opportunities remained extremely limited. Children were often sent by their families to the Gold Coast for post-primary education. Many other Togolanders emigrated to the British colony to escape the harshness of the German occupation.

Health care was prohibitively expensive, if at all accessible, since only a few hospitals provided services to Togolanders and missionaries often offered the only access to western medicine.²⁵ The German regime concentrated its efforts on combating infectious diseases and epidemics, usually by providing vaccinations.²⁶ Those afflicted with leprosy, for example, were 'isolated and camped in Lomé' and could be visited only with permission from German authorities, Adu explains.²⁷ Anyone entering the leprosy centre was vaccinated and 'could neither eat nor drink anything there'.²⁸ During an epidemic of sleeping sickness, the government dispatched 'special doctors who went about treating the afflicted by giving them injections'.²⁹ Another quarantine centre was established at Kpalimé (in present-day Togo), according to Matthias Yevu Tegbe, who asserts the Germans were consistent in their campaigns against infectious diseases. 'Any time there was an epidemic', he says, 'the people attacked were quarantined in order to prevent the diseases from spreading any further ... and when healed they returned to their communities'.³⁰

In their efforts to contain infectious diseases, the Germans also enforced border controls, in order to stop travellers afflicted with any of these diseases from entering Togoland. During an epidemic in Dahomey, for example, people coming from the French colony were denied entry.³¹ Similarly, when an outbreak of smallpox was reported in the Gold Coast, residents along the colonial boundary were not allowed to cross into the British colony.³² Afafe Badasu maintains that whenever a traveller passed the border between the colonies in either direction, they were vaccinated.³³

In addition to the vaccination programmes, the quarantines, and the border controls, the Germans regulated the sale of foods. According to Adu, there were 'sanitary inspectors' who checked the markets and disposed of food which was 'found to be unwholesome'.³⁴

Western medicine, particularly the vaccinations, was not always welcomed by the Togolanders, however. Adu explains that some Togolanders refused vaccinations, but they were simply 'arrested and vaccinated' by officials, who were escorted by the police. He explains that 'some people thought the injections were lethal, that is why they didn't want to be vaccinated'.³⁵

The Epidemic in Kpandu

According to oral historians, an outbreak of cerebro-spinal meningitis in Kpandu in 1912, in which many of those injected by the Germans died, led to a direct challenge to the German occupation. Nyavor describes the events surrounding the epidemic thus:

There were mass protests or complaints during the crisis period. [In addition to cerebro- spinal meningitis] others also suffered from sleeping sickness and strangely, too, all these ailments attracted the same treatment, which caused deaths. The people protested to Chief Dagadu, who was considered as the person who could champion their cause against the mass deaths.³⁶

Jane Atakumah, a granddaughter of Dagadu III, corroborates this account, explaining: 'There was a strange disease and many people died and many people stood against [the Germans] because they were responsible for those deaths'.³⁷ Bakotse confirms, 'While the Germans were here, I was told that a disease broke out which was called the "neck disease". I do not know the English name but I hear the individual's neck was tested with the hand'.

German colonial-era sources corroborate much of this oral history, but confidently identify the disease as sleeping sickness and of course, belittle the protests of the people of Kpandu. In the Lomé regime's yearly report for 1911-1912, it was noted that there was significant opposition to the work of a sleeping sickness commission established by the colonial regime, but the Germans felt certain of their ability to contain the protests. The report stated:

Isolated cases of death and blindness in the sleeping sickness camps on Kluto created the grounds for a big agitation amongst the population of Misahöhe against the sleeping sickness commission. The agitation became known through more or less secret meetings and mass petitions. The majority of the population of the district came together under the leadership of Chief Dagadu and the former chief of Gidegide, whereby the unruly and chaotic elements, namely the fetish priests whose income and influence were damaged by the European doctors, stoked the fire of dissatisfaction. Strict actions against the ring leaders and a renewed, thorough effort to explain

the purpose of the campaign against sleeping sickness directly caused the movement to fully subside.³⁸

Indeed, the report for the following year notes that resistance to the campaign against sleeping sickness was no longer in evidence, the advice of German doctors was being followed, and the chiefs were supporting them in their work.³⁹

Dagadu's own version of events is purported to be presented in a short volume published at the end of the First World War titled *German Colonies: A Plea for the Native Races*. Authored by the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Hugh Clifford, the purpose of this book was to present Germans as violent and irresponsible colonizers, a goal which must be understood in the context of efforts by the Allied nations, in particular Great Britain and France, to win control over the former German colonies.⁴⁰ Yet, the series of events described in a section entitled 'The Case of Dagadu', in which the author states that the chief 'related' the story to him, seem consistent with the oral history.

The Clifford text explains that after issuing an order that the necks of men should be examined, those 'who were found to have enlarged glands were removed from their homes and taken to a camp which the Germans had established' at Kluto. It continues: 'Shortly after their removal, said Chief Dagadu, these men died'.⁴¹ Dagadu went on a mission to Lomé to meet with German officials, including the Governor, Edmund Brückner, to protest the quarantine policy. The Germans refused to alter their strategy and, according to Clifford, '[t]he only message of comfort which [Dagadu] brought back to his people was that the Germans were about to experiment with a new drug which they had reason to think would prove more efficient than hitherto employed by them'.⁴²

According to oral historians, Dagadu returned to Kpandu and encouraged his subjects to resist the German campaign against sleeping sickness. The chief and his advisors 'rejected the law which prescribed the injection treatment', Nyavor states. Gabriel Kofi Bakotse elaborates:

Whenever the disease was detected on you, you were sent to Kpalimé, not for treatment, but to be isolated until you died. So our chief Togbe Dagadu Anku decided enough was enough. He was not going to allow anybody to test the neck of his subjects anymore to find out if he had the disease or not.⁴³

But, Nyavor argues, 'The German colonial government did not like the protest'. Gruner, the district commissioner at Misahöhe, was furthermore incensed that Dagadu did not consult him before presenting his grievances to the central government in Lomé.⁴⁴ Nyavor details the altercation between the two men:

This over-jumping of channel by Dagadu to the governor brought a conflict between Dagadu and Gruner. Gruner claimed Dagadu was disrespectful. So, he decided to punish him. He fined Dagadu and the Kpandu state an amount of 10,000 pounds. This official imposed the fine in order to incite the people of Kpandu against Dagadu, but the Kpandu people did not agitate and even when the law was repealed, the people jubilated extremely. This heightened Dr Gruner's anger towards Dagadu.⁴⁵

Not long after, on accusation that he had written a letter maligning the German monarch, Dagadu was de-stooled, that is, is stripped of his authority and rights as ruler, and imprisoned for three months at Misahöhe by Gruner, with the assistance of Perl, the German official based at Kpandu, and a police detachment. A British flag given to the previous chief by Gold Coast officials in 1886 and retained by Dagadu was seized from him.⁴⁶ Nyavor states that 'there was complete uproar in Kpandu on that fateful day'. Although he 'vehemently denied' authoring the document, Dagadu was told by Gruner that his case had been tried and that his punishment would be permanent exile in Cameroon.⁴⁷ In his book, Clifford maintains that Dagadu was accused of having written two letters, one to the German Minister of Colonies and the other to Clifford himself, both critical of German policies in Togoland. 'Neither of these letters was ever produced then or later', Clifford writes, '... and the one which is alleged to have been addressed to me certainly never reached its destination'.⁴⁸

According to Nyavor, Dagadu on several occasions 'revealed certain bad practices by the Germans against the people of Kpandu' in his communications with the British, his former allies. The chief was 'just arbitrarily tried, found guilty, and sent on exile', which was 'his punishment for insulting Kaiser Wilhelm the Second and also because it was realized he preferred English rule to German rule'.⁴⁹ Atakumah, Dagadu's granddaughter, concludes 'it was a bitter experience to the people because he was a great ruler who helped his state'.⁵⁰

Dagadu's exile was not permanent, of course, as barely half a year later, the First World War began, and the combined forces of the British and the French invaded Togoland from their neighbouring colonies. The Germans quickly surrendered, after only a few skirmishes, on 26 August 1914. Likewise, the Germans abandoned Cameroon, where, according to Clifford's account, a German official 'entered Dagadu's cell in tears, wrung him by the hand and, leaving the doors open, took his departure sobbing bitterly'.⁵¹

Oral historians credit the British with freeing Dagadu from jail. Bakotse describes the liberation and return of Dagadu as follows:

When the British entered the prisons in Cameroon, they saw a certain man shouting 'king! Dagadu! Kpandu!' several times while pointing to himself.

The English had heard the story of Dagadu while they were in Kpandu so they realized that must be the king spoken of in Kpandu. He was, therefore, released from prison and brought to Kpandu. From Cameroon, he was brought first to Lomé which was the capital, then to Kpalimé from there he was brought down to us in Kpandu. The day of his arrival was a big celebration... That is why people could or can still boast that 'I have even seen Dagadu's return from Cameroon so I am not moved by anything today', meaning what is happening in modern days cannot be compared to the olden days when Dagadu returned to Kpandu.⁵²

In a parting shot to the Germans, Dagadu was reported to have sent a contribution of \$500 towards the costs of war to the political officer in British-occupied German Togoland, writing, according to a short article in the *New York Times*:

It was my willing [sic] to give more than what I have done above, but on account of the Germans, and owing to their bad treatment giving, most of my village young men have removed from this land and entered into another colony for their daily bread, and also my land is very poor to say. May God the Almighty bless the Great Britain to master the victory ... God save the King!⁵³

Conclusion

The foregoing historical episode can serve as a case study to consider the themes of this issue: domination and resistance played out in different arenas, every day, in small and big ways, in the colonial state. A vast and engaging literature, born in the reclamation of African history in the 1960s, considers the myriad methods of resistance employed by Africans across the continent. And, of course, Africanists established that oral history is a key source for capturing African perspectives on the colonial experience. A more recent but rapidly growing scholarship has shown disease and medicine as contested matters in the colonial epoch. In an influential work on sleeping sickness in the Belgian Congo, Maryinez Lyons argues that the study of the intersection of disease and medicine at key moments illuminates the realities of colonialism.

Highlighting the similarities between the epidemic and Kpandu and the events described in Lyons' book is informative and reveals general features of disease and medicine in colonial Africa. First, European colonialists were preoccupied with containing epidemics and viewed their cause partly in what they considered unhygienic conditions and practices in African communities. Second, as the field of 'tropical medicine' was developing in Europe at this time, doctors in this specialization were dispatched to the colonies to study and control epidemics. Lastly, these efforts were not always welcomed by

the communities who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of western medicine.

Ambivalence or resistance to colonial medicine (a preferable term to western medicine in this context) was rooted in many factors. Often there was disagreement between Europeans and Africans as to the proper diagnosis of the disease affecting a community, as evidenced by the Kpandu epidemic. Moreover, European doctors many times provided counterproductive – or again, in our case – fatal medicine. It must be emphasized that there was no proper vaccine to combat sleeping sickness at this time (and up through today) so what the German doctors injected into those Kpandu residents was purely toxic, leading to their deaths. Additionally, colonial medicine was dispensed or imposed through the assistance of all the other mechanisms available in the colonial regime's arsenal, ranging from administrative orders to outright violence.

As Lyons shows in her case, areas affected by an epidemic 'experienced the full shock of colonial efforts to contain and eliminate sleeping sickness'. She continues, 'For many peoples in northern Congo, their first and perhaps most vivid meetings with the new European colonial administration were directly related to the issue of sleeping sickness'.⁵⁴ Thus, in its self-perceived mandate to cure the ills of Africans (if only to ensure a reliable labour force and the extraction of wealth), European regimes often resorted to the worst abuses associated with colonialism.

Returning to the epidemic in Kpandu, it is easily conceivable that a historian writing on this historical episode, consulting only the German archival records, would concur with the facts and interpretation presented in those sources. For example, the Germans were confident the disease affecting residents of Kpandu was sleeping sickness, and that their vaccinations would stop its spread. Additionally, they understood resistance to their medical strategy as senseless agitation instigated by a disloyal chief and irrational priests.

The oral history, of course, tells a very different story. The residents of Kpandu, who had long and immediate experience with the diseases found in their environment, diagnosed the ailment as meningitis. They quickly concluded that the primary cause of the deaths was German medical ineptitude, beginning with a failure to properly diagnose the disease and continuing with the use of either ineffective, inappropriate, or fatal vaccinations. And, lastly, the people of Kpandu registered their opposition through their legitimate authority, the chief, whom they entrusted to deal with the German colonizers. Today we can confirm that the people of Kpandu were correct in their assessment of German medicine.

Nevertheless, in the colonial context, the Germans were in a position of power which they exercised by removing and exiling the legitimate ruler of

Kpandu. Dagadu resisted German authority by first questioning and then advocating a boycott of the German medical protocol. The Germans perceived Dagadu's opposition as further proof of his continued alliance with the British against German interests. Thus, the conflict between the 'modern' nation (Germany), as represented by its local colonial officials, and the 'traditional' chieftaincy (Kpandu), also provides an opportunity to consider notions of sovereignty in the colonial state. Faced with the united resistance of the people of Kpandu, the German regime's only recourse was to carry out a *coup d'état*. At first, Dagadu followed colonial procedure by registering his complaints with the German administration but ultimately he defended the sovereignty of his court and his people by refusing to follow German orders. In turn, the Germans further, and they hoped permanently, undermined and the independence of Kpandu by exiling its chief.

Although a distant, brief and (outside Kpandu) little-known historical episode, one which occurred in an equally obscure, short-lived colony, the events discussed in this paper nonetheless have relevance to the issues raised by our conference. And while the story relayed here is based on specific events in a particular place in the past, these types of interactions continue to occur in Africa today, as local notions of disease and medicine are often brushed aside in the name of medical research. Consider, in recent years, the heated debates around Thabo Mbeki's statements and policies on HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the polio vaccination campaign in northern Nigeria. Those questioning the dominant medical discourse are dismissed as irrational, irresponsible, or worse. But, it may serve as a reminder to note what Lyons points out her work that:

by the early twentieth century, many African peoples perceived the increased incidence of disease as a kind of biological warfare which was part of the recent overall upheaval and chaos brought about by European military conquest and the roughshod tactics which accompanied early implementation of colonial authority.⁵⁵

Notes

1. Thanks to Peter Sebald in Berlin for generously providing relevant archival materials and guidance at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz; Anindita Nag for research assistance at The University of Memphis; and Emmanuel Akyeampong and Richard Rathbone for feedback after a presentation at the International Conference on Chieftaincy in Africa: Culture, Governance, and Development in Accra in January 2003. Research for this paper was conducted through a United States Fulbright Grant and a Faculty Research Grant from The University of Memphis.
2. FA 3/366, p. 277. Dagadu III is also known as Dagadu Anku.

3. Sir Hugh Clifford, *German Colonies: A Plea for the Native Races*, (London, 1918), 77.
4. The marked enlargement of the lymph nodes at the back of the neck is a common sign of sleeping sickness.
5. In this area of Africa, the best-known case is of Prempe I, the Asantehene (king of the Asante), who was exiled by the British in 1896. In that year, Prempe was arrested after the British invaded Asante, occupied the capital of Kumasi, and declared the kingdom dissolved. He was sent into exile first to Sierra Leone and then to the Seychelles. Prempe was allowed to return to British-occupied Asante in 1924 but was not recognized by the colonial regime as the Asantehene.
6. As cited in Maryinez Lyons, *The Colonial Disease: A Social History of Sleeping Sickness in Northern Zaire, 1900-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.
7. A. K. Asem, *A History of Awudome* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1973), 17.
8. Gilbert Joel Nyavor (Kpandu: 5 March 1997).
9. The text of this letter appears in Asem, 48.
10. David Brown, 'Anglo-German Rivalry and Krepi Politics', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. XV (ii), 201-213.
11. Heinrich Klose, *Togo unter deutscher Flagge* (Berlin, 1899). The sections of this work describing areas of present-day Ghana have also been published as *Klose's Journey to Northern Ghana*, trans. Inge Killick (Legon, 1964).
12. As quoted in D. E. K. Amenumey, 'German Administration in Southern Togo', *Journal of African History*, x/4 (1969), 631.
13. Of course, this was in stark contrast to what their neighbouring colonialists, the British in the Gold Coast and the French in Dahomey, found amongst larger historically expansionist ethnic groups, such as the Akan (Gold Coast) and the Fon (Dahomey).
14. Chiefs in southern Togoland were responsible for publicizing and enforcing orders of the administration in Lomé, maintaining roads for travel and commerce, marshaling labour, and reporting outbreaks of disease to the German regime. Chiefs received a minimal share of taxes collected, were allowed to maintain a small police force, and were issued 'official garb' to wear. They had jurisdiction over civil cases but criminal matters were handled by German officers (Arthur J. Knoll, *Togo Under Imperial Germany 1884-1914* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 47-8 and Amenumey, 'German Administration', 630.
15. Brown, 'Anglo-German Rivalry and Krepi Politics', 202.
16. Gilbert Joel Nyavor (Kpandu: 5 March 1997).
17. Amenumey, 'German Administration', 625.
18. FA 1/268 ('Dienstreise des Landeshauptmanns nach der Westgrenze des Gebietes u. Kpandu'), 48.
19. Chiefs throughout this general area 'occupy' 'stools', which are the symbols of royal families.
20. Amenumey, 'German Administration', 631.
21. This district encompassed today's central Volta Region, including the towns of Ho and Hohoe, as well as the area around the Togolese town of Kpalimé.

22. Edward Kodzo Datsa (Amedzofe: 17 April 1997).
23. Edward Kodzo Datsa (Amedzofe: 17 April 1997).
24. Seth Adu (Ho: 15 June 1997).
25. Abra Janet Kumordzi (Akpafu Todzi: 17 June 1997) and Mathias Yevu Tegbe (Hohoe: 17 June 1997).
26. Seth Adu (Ho: 15 June 1997) and Mathias Yevu Tegbe (Hohoe: 17 June 1997). The diseases treated by the Germans included leprosy, sleeping sickness, smallpox, and influenza.
27. Seth Adu (Ho: 7 March 1997).
28. Seth Adu (Ho: 15 June 1997).
29. Seth Adu (Ho: 7 March 1997).
30. Mathias Yevu Tegbe (Hohoe: 17 June 1997). He asserts that there were additional quarantine centres.
31. Seth Adu (Ho: 15 June 1997) and (Ho: 7 March 1997).
32. Seth Adu (Ho: 15 June 1997).
33. Atafe Badasu (Waya: 16 June 1997).
34. Seth Adu (Ho: 7 March 1997).
35. Seth Adu (Ho: 15 June 1997).
36. Gilbert Joel Nyavor (Kpandu: 5 March 1997).
37. Jane Atakumah (Kpandu: 5 March 1997).
38. FA 1/187, 'Generalbericht 1911-1912', 7-8.
39. FA 1/529, 'Generalbericht 1912-1913', 3.
40. Clifford bases his assessment on observations he made and interviews he conducted during visits to Togoland, both during the period of German rule and after the allied victory and examines the use of forced labour, German violence towards women, and other abuses. Clifford's tract is typical of a number of publications by British writers who sought to portray the Germans as failed colonizers in order to strengthen Allied claims on their colonies. For a discussion of this literature, see Dennis Laumann, 'A Historiography of German Togoland, or the Rise and Fall of a "Model Colony"', *History in Africa*, 30 (2003), 195-211.
41. Clifford, 75-6.
42. Clifford, 76-7.
43. Gabriel Kofi Bakotse (Kpandu: July 2001).
44. Dagadu did stop at Misahöhe before visiting Lomé, however, according to the version of events detailed in Clifford (76).
45. Gilbert Joel Nyavor (Kpandu: 5 March 1997).
46. 'Chief Welcomed British', *New York Times*, September 11, 1915.
47. Gilbert Joel Nyavor (Kpandu: 5 March 1997). Jane Atakumah (Kpandu: 5 March 1997) also discusses Dagadu's forced exile to Cameroon by the Germans.
48. Clifford, 77.

49. Gilbert Joel Nyavor (Kpandu: 5 March 1997). Despite his continued resistance to the Germans, however, Nyavor claims that Dagadu 'condemned each colonial power to the other', and also criticized British policies in the Gold Coast.
50. Jane Atakumah (Kpandu: 5 March 1997).
51. Clifford, 77-8.
52. Gabriel Kofi Bakotse (Kpandu: July 2001).
53. 'Chief Welcomed British'.
54. Lyons, 3.
55. Lyons, 3.

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The Invisible Cohesion of African Leadership: The Lead Up to the 1819 Battle at Grahamstown Reconsidered

Julia C. Wells*

Abstract

Historians are often troubled by the need to account for the ways that disunity among African leaders helped to pave the way for colonial conquest. In the Eastern Cape of South Africa, the success of the British in conquering territory belonging to the Xhosa people has been frequently attributed to a bitter power struggle between King Ngqika and his uncle Chief Ndlambe of the Rharhabe nation. From the first arrival of the British in the area in 1798, the newly-inaugurated Ngqika tried to enlist their help to counter the influence of his uncle, who had recently handed over the reins of power after a long regency. Over the next 20 years, the two leaders went to battle against each other on three occasions. The ultimate massive defeat of a large Xhosa force of up to 10,000 men at the battle of Grahamstown in 1819 has been identified as the turning point of Xhosa power, confirming the high price to be paid for royal rivalries. This article, however, identifies a concurrent trend towards cooperation between the two Chiefs, which has gone unrecognised. It argues that through the tumultuous twenty years of trying to come to terms with the implications of the British presence, the younger chief came to understand the greater imperative of unity in the face of a dangerous enemy. A starting point is the insight of Xhosa informal historians which claims that the conflicts between the Chiefs had more of a character of disciplining and enforcing traditional leadership values, than of a rivalry for the sole domination of one over the other. Using oral traditions, archival sources and translations from texts written in the Xhosa language, the seldom-appreciated spirit of building the nation is traced.

Résumé

Les historiens ont souvent des difficultés face au besoin d'expliquer la manière dont la désunion au sein des leaders africains a aidé à baliser la voie de la conquête coloniale. Dans la partie orientale du Cap de l'Afrique du Sud, le

* History Department Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.
Email: J.Wells@ru.ac.za

succès des britanniques dans leur conquête du territoire du peuple Xhosa a été fréquemment attribué à une lutte de pouvoir âpre entre le Chef Ngqika et son oncle le Chef Ndlambe de la nation Rharhabe. Dès l'arrivée des britanniques pour la première fois dans la région en 1798, le Chef Ngqika, nouvellement intronisé, a tenté de s'assurer de leur concours pour contrer l'influence de son oncle qui venait de transmettre les rênes du pouvoir, suite à un long règne. Au cours des vingt années qui suivirent, les deux leaders sont allés en guerre l'un contre l'autre à trois reprises. L'ultime défaite massive d'une force Xhosa prodigieuse d'environ 10.000 hommes à la bataille de Grahamstown en 1819 fut perçue comme étant la période charnière de la puissance Xhosa, confirmant le lourd prix à payer pour les rivalités royales. Toutefois, cet article identifie une tendance concomitante sur une coopération entre les deux chefs qui a été occultée par les chercheurs. Il indique qu'à travers les vingt années tumultueuses consacrée à la résistance contre la présence britannique, le plus jeune chef en est arrivé à comprendre l'impératif d'une plus grande unité pour faire face à un ennemi dangereux. Un bon point de départ serait les récits des historiens informels Xhosa qui affirment que les conflits entre les Chefs revêtaient plus un caractère visant à discipliner et renforcer les valeurs traditionnelles du leadership, que celui d'une rivalité pour la domination unique de l'un sur l'autre. L'esprit rarement apprécié de la construction de la nation est retracé dans cet article sur la base des traditions orales, des sources d'archives et de traductions de textes écrits dans la langue Xhosa.

Introduction

Anyone attempting to understand the events that led up to the attack of 10,000 Xhosa soldiers on Grahamstown, British military headquarters, on the Cape Colony's eastern frontier, in 1819, starts with three well-known and central events. The slide into all out warfare is often seen as starting with the Kat River meeting in 1817. At this time, the colonial government laid down to the Xhosa chiefs its own prescription for dealing with rampant cattle theft. The infamous 'spoor law' stated that colonial forces could trace the tracks of stolen cattle to the first kraal it encountered and then demand the number of missing cattle from the occupants thereof. To prevent such actions, the chiefs were expected to stop thieving and to return any stolen livestock they found.

The second major event was a bitter battle fought between the followers of Chiefs Ndlambe and Ngqika at a place called Amalinde. Ngqika's forces were severely beaten, leading him to request assistance from his British friends and allies. This, in turn led to the third major event, commonly referred to as the Brereton raid, after the British commanding officer. In this attack on the AmaNdlambe, 23,000 head of cattle were taken by the colonial forces. The fourth and final event in the sequence was the attack on Grahamstown itself, of up to ten thousand Xhosa soldiers, which ended in their bloody defeat. The war did not end in Grahamstown. When the long-fermenting struggle

was eventually concluded, an expulsion took place, as the British annexed the second portion of Xhosa territory in seven years – the land between the Fish and the Keiskamma River.

While historians focus primarily on the disputes between the British and the amaXhosa, the divisions between the two contending Xhosa chiefs, Ndlambe and Ngqika, follow close behind. Their differences with each other are viewed as offering a classic example of the high price paid by African disunity. No historian could possibly dispute the fact that these two chiefs were locked into an enormously destructive power struggle throughout most of the period when the Zuurveld area was being heavily contested. The attack on Grahamstown in 1819 is often seen as simply a by-product of the dispute between these chiefs. They went to war against each other at least three times over a twenty year period. Their final battle against each other at Amalinde in 1818 is considered one of the most virulent and destructive wars ever fought amongst amaXhosa. This has led historians with colonial sympathies to point to the inevitable African propensity towards violence and bloodshed. On the other hand, even the most pro-Africanist historians see it as a tragic object lesson of the dangers of falling into the colonial trap of divide and rule. Or, their volatile relationship left historians simply confused. As Noel Mostert puts it, 'In the quarrels between Ndlambe and Ngqika power shifted frequently from one to the other. It is sometimes difficult to trace the course of it'.¹

None of these approaches, however, takes into consideration a more subtle, less visible dynamic of cooperation and unity that also operated between them. Ferocious as their conflicts with each other were, they also enjoyed periods of peace, cooperation and mutual support. This submerged dynamic suggests that a powerful imperative towards unity was also present. Though the colonial observers who recorded events could not make sense of this tendency, they nevertheless captured enough information to allow us to retrieve a glimpse into the inner dynamics of traditional leadership to formulate a new appreciation of a potent unity principle at work. Indeed, the documentary evidence gives us glimpses into this other side of the relationship during the intervals of peace. It could be referred to as a particularly African dynamic of maintaining cohesion among leaders. By reading carefully between the lines and finding the odd fragments of supporting evidence, it is possible to construct another dimension to this relationship – one that helps us understand why, for starters, despite all of the animosity, they never killed each other. This dimension takes us deep into the dynamics of a particularly Xhosa-style of traditional leadership. Some day, no doubt, they will write more about this and articulate it much more effectively than is done here. However, a preliminary attempt to raise some of the issues is made.

The impetus for this kind of re-interpretation of the events comes from Xhosa attorney and historian, Mda Mda, who believes that few published histories have come close to understanding the nature of the tensions between Ngqika and Ndlambe.² Rather than viewing their strife as a contest for power, in which first one and then the other, tried to annihilate his rival, the conflicts should be seen as an attempt on the part of the older, royal leaders, to discipline Ngqika to bring him back into line with traditions whenever he erred. Mda views Ngqika as having been young and rebellious, often testing the limits of his authority. By contrast, Ndlambe represented an older generation, which was soon to die out, still trying to maintain a familiar social order. Traditional leadership, Mda claims, functioned as an institution, whose rules and guidelines were widely understood, and which had the capacity to correct itself in times of threat.

Early Disputes and Harmonies

It was generally said by British sources that the problems between Ngqika and Ndlambe started when Ngqika completed his circumcision rituals, attained manhood and was inaugurated as chief of the amaRharhabe nation. Ndlambe had been serving as regent since the death of his brother, Mlawu, who had died while Ngqika, his heir-apparent, was still very young. These sources claim that Ndlambe refused to hand over the reins of power, wishing to maintain himself as the ruling king.³ However, others, such as Col. Collins and Lt. J Cuyler, who interviewed Ndlambe in person, portray him as *always* acknowledging the senior rank of his nephew, Ngqika.⁴ Before looking more closely at the tumultuous ups and downs of their relationship, it is useful to first look at how traditional leadership as an institution functioned.

First, the possibility that two related men from royal families could amicably co-rule together is amply born out by Xhosa history, particularly close to the time that Ndlambe and Ngqika lived. European travellers and writers were perhaps most impressed by what they observed of the high levels of cooperation between chief Pato and his older brother, Chungwa, who had acted as his regent for many years. George Thompson noted that,

though Pato has now come of age, he generally deposes Congo (Chungwa) to act on all important occasions, such as holding conferences with the other chiefs, or the British officers on the frontier, etc. The two brothers seem to live in a very good understanding, and to act with great unanimity.⁵

The younger brother became chief of the amaGqunukwebe because his mother held higher rank than his older brother. At the time of writing, they lived near the coast in the area between the Keiskamma and Buffalo Rivers.

Similar accounts of high level cooperation, trust and respect describe the rule of King Hintsa, the most senior of all Xhosa chiefs, and his brother Bhurhu. In the years following Ngqika's death, his own sons also followed the more

traditional pattern of cooperation, as the elder Maqoma nurtured his younger brother Sandile and then gracefully saw him installed as chief when he came of age.⁶

Secondly, when conflicts did arise between chiefs, the animosities got resolved and were not maintained. Beverly Mackenzie described the amaXhosa as people who 'pass over grievous provocations as soon as a wish for conciliation is manifested'.⁷ Though wars were fought between chiefs, they were never intended to destroy each other, but rather to establish a recognised supremacy of one over the other. Writing in 1799, the missionary Johannes Van der Kemp described how the chiefs Phalo and Gcaleka, of an earlier generation, had often fought, with each of them at one time or another defeating the other. However, whatever was won by the victor was always returned to the loser, in order to 'restore him to his dignity'.⁸

A third notable quality within the institution of traditional rule is the important role played by councillors to the chiefs. No chief rules as an individual, but rather through the advice and deliberations of a carefully-chosen group of wise men. As we shall see, Xhosa traditions credit the councillors of Ngqika in particular of often intervening in poor decisions. This form of collective rule is also sensitive to the interests of the chief's followers, thus reducing the solo focus of leadership more familiar to western traditions.

Finally, tensions and conflicts between chiefs were often resolved by contracting marriages between royal rivals. This made the women, who moved to their new husband's home, important diplomats and ambassadors between royal families. In theory, a husband was expected to treat his wife well, showing due respect for both her and her family. A marriage was never seen as simply a personal matter between two individuals. A failure to treat the daughter-in-law well could be grounds for going to war, making the woman's life a barometer of how well two chiefs' communities were relating to each other.

If Mda's views are taken seriously, they expose previous attempts to explain this strained relationship as all too typical of the western 'great man' school of thinking. Until the late twentieth century, this approach dominated all forms of history-writing coming from Europe. Male historians traditionally wrote about male political leaders who contested for power. Such contestations were generally understood to be motivated by personal ambitions of individuals to achieve personal power, rank, status, control and authority over others. This heavily masculinist approach to the past leaves little room for the subtler nuances of African collective leadership. As such, the differences between Ndlambe and Ngqika have always been interpreted within the western framework, as simply a rivalry to see who would 'win' the top leadership position of the Rharhabe nation. N. Tisani points out that this European

obsession with kings, chiefs and other male leaders also left out the important roles played by advisors and queen mothers.⁹

With all these checks and balances, what then went wrong between the nephew and uncle? Why was there so much friction? Following the line of thinking proposed by Mda, the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of Ngqika, the rebel, seeking new levels of independence. Evidence from the written sources makes it abundantly clear that he had a very unique personality which often jarred the expectations of even his European observers. In particular, his unabashed greediness for small and large items of personal gain flabbergasted those who met him. For example, at a critical meeting with the Governor of the Cape Colony in 1817 at Kat River, Ngqika's behaviour was described as follows:

The conduct of Gaika was remarkable while receiving the presents. So greedy was he, that he could not wait a moment to examine separately what was presented to him, although Colonel Cuyler was at the pains of opening each parcel for that purpose: the articles were no sooner put into his hand than they were laid on the ground, and his hand stretched out for more.¹⁰

In this account, Ngqika then retired for the night but came back the next day with a long list of further desires, 'Not being content with all that he had received, he sent next morning to ask me for a knife, tinder-boxes, looking-glasses, handkerchiefs, and food.'¹¹ Historian Jeff Peires makes perhaps the most scathing judgment of Ngqika, who by the end of his life in 1829 had become a chronic alcoholic,

Alcohol was a logical consequence of his moral capitulation. He purchased it, danced for it, 'sold' his wives for it, and ultimately died of it. He would do nothing unless he was paid for it, and even took to receiving his presents in private to avoid sharing them with his councillors.¹²

He simply did not conform to the kind of behaviour and bearing that was expected of a chief of such high standing.

By contrast, Chief Ndlambe is always described as maintaining at all times a sense of dignity, calm power and command of every situation. Mostert captures this sense of Ndlambe as a chief of an entirely different order, when describing his encounter with Col. Collins in 1809, as meeting 'an elderly chieftainly figure of great experience and presence, confident in his power and authority, and possessed of all the considerable Xhosa diplomatic gifts in blank-faced parley, circumvention and subtle disdain'.¹³

Mostert goes on to paint a vivid picture of how Ndlambe dramatically stage-managed that encounter in a way that left Collins feeling he had been treated as a small boy. First refusing to meet Collins in his own camp, Ndlambe forced him to come meet him on his own turf.

A scene of great power confronted them. The moon was full but ridge behind heavy clouds, and its shifting light helped to dramatize the solemnity of their reception. Ndlambe was seated at the edge of his kraal surrounded by a host of his warriors and people. More of his army were known to be hidden from view inside the kraal itself. But his power and the force it brought to this encounter were symbolised by the forest of uplifted spear shafts that stretched in a wide curve around him, their shiny blades gleaming fitfully, menacingly in the restless moonlight.¹⁴

This level of controlling encounters with colonial authorities was not an art Ngqika commanded. Eight years later, when Governor Somerset met with him at the Kat River, it was Somerset who meticulously stage-managed the event. Ngqika, with his uncle Ndlambe beside him, sat on a grass mat in front of the impressive marquee that Governor had set up to house his own entourage. Although Ngqika was acknowledged by all as the senior chief in rank, he came dressed as 'the commonest Caffre, except that he had a handkerchief tied around his head' while Ndlambe by contrast, wore 'a handsome tiger skin, and he had round his head a bandeau of about an inch in breadth, made of very small beads'.¹⁵

If Ngqika struck outside observers as strange, how much more did his unique personality challenge his own family and people? His unchiefly behaviour cost the amaXhosa dearly on many occasions. He showed disrespect for both Hintsá, the highest ranking of all Xhosa chiefs and Ngqika's superior, as well as his uncle Ndlambe, by taking them by surprise in military attacks and then holding them prisoner. He was emotionally volatile, at times terrifying his own people while at other times, blubbing his deepest fears to European visitors. Sometimes, he evaded his councillors and acted and spoke compulsively and alone. Emotional insecurity, greed and jealousy appeared to shape his every deed. How could the other members of Xhosa royalty not see him as a great embarrassment and buffoon? Such concerns would lead to what Mda sees as the 'disciplinary actions' they felt compelled to take against Ngqika on various occasions.

The Unfolding Relationship

Ndlambe grew up in a world in which the Xhosa nation had divided itself into two. The elder son of the great chief, Phalo, who was named Gcaleka, remained east of the Kei River as head of the senior house. His younger brother, Rharhabe, moved his headquarters further west, presumably settling in the breathtakingly beautiful Chumie River valley at the foot of the Amathola mountains. All of this took place prior to the arrival of Dutch-speaking farmers, or boors, as they called themselves. Rharhabe's eldest son and heir, Mlawu, was reputed to be even more powerful than his father.¹⁶ But when

he died in battle, Rharhabe named his younger son, Ndlambe, to fill Mlawu's place, including marrying one of his widows. He then became regent over Mlawu's eldest son, the very young Ngqika, thus securing Ndlambe's role as mentor and father-figure for the small boy. Peires believes that Ngqika was born in 1779 and that his father, Mlawu, died in 1782.¹⁷ When Rharhabe died soon afterwards, Ndlambe was left clearly as the senior chief of the western Xhosa nation, a position he held by 1783.¹⁸ In acknowledgement of the seniority of the Gcaleka royal house, the King, Khawuta, was called to officially pronounce on the next heir. According to Peires, 'the majority of the councillors chose Ntimbo and sent for the paramount Khawuta to invest him, but to their surprise he invested Ngqika, who was the choice of Mlawu's younger brother, Ndlambe.'¹⁹ This indicates that Ndlambe backed Ngqika as the choice for future Rharhabe leadership.

Only a few hints exist about the early relationship between Ndlambe and his young ward. Ndlambe was once recorded as having referred to Ngqika as 'a boy whom I have nursed'.²⁰ Ngqika also expressed a similar sentiment, saying, 'When you were my tutor, you taught me to be a generous king'.²¹ Clearly, the elder chief played a crucial teaching and mentoring role as regent of the future king. Ndlambe 'placed his sister, Ishua over those kraals that had been under the sway of his deceased brother'.²²

When it came close to the time for Ngqika's initiation into manhood, his uncle introduced him to the arts of warfare, taking him along on the campaigns of the second frontier war. As the traveller George Thompson put it, 'At this time Gaika was a very young man; and was carried by S'Lhambi on the expedition, to train him to hardihood and heroism'.²³ This 1793 war witnessed the resounding victory of the amaXhosa over the boers, but only after the various chiefs stopped fighting each other and united against a common enemy. This stands as one of the examples of Xhosa leadership acting according to the unifying principle. It quite puzzled pro-colonial historian, George Cory, who said, 'Strange to say, a reconciliation seemed to have taken place between the tribes, which up to that time, had been at variance'.²⁴ He then goes on to describe the utter annihilation of boer farms and livestock. It was during this war, Peires states, that Ngqika got his praise name 'Aah! Lwaganda' meaning he who stamps the ground while fighting'.²⁵

All sources agree that the problems between Ndlambe and Ngqika started as soon as the young man's initiation into manhood was finished. Although colonial sources allege that it was Ndlambe who refused to acknowledge Ngqika's new status as king, more detailed and reliable accounts show that it was Ngqika who provoked the first war between the two of them. Juju, the son of one of Rharhabe's councillors, claimed that Ndlambe fully accepted the young man's kingship, and peacefully moved further west, to create a

reasonable distance between them.²⁶ However, Ngqika became jealous because so many people followed the elder statesman. At that time, it was understood that when people were unhappy with their chiefs, they simply moved away, seeking protection from another chief; 'the fear of desertion consequently operates as a considerable check on the arrogance and cupidity of the chieftains'.²⁷ Ngqika's unpredictable personality might well have induced people to remain close to their veteran chief, Ndlambe.

The fighting apparently started when Ngqika urged some of the young men from his initiation group to steal cattle from the kraals of Ndlambe's people. Ndlambe intervened, coming to Ngqika 'in a peaceable manner, and remonstrated against his violent conduct,' and the cattle were restored.²⁸ But then Ngqika's young men stole cattle from Ndlambe himself, which were in turn recovered by Ndlambe's followers. To this, Ngqika claimed he had no knowledge, leaving his uncle to go back to his home. But the final blow was still to come,

It was the custom for young men just emerged from circumcision to distinguish themselves in some brave action, and his young age-mates urged him on. 'you see, chief', they said, 'the *Maduna* [big-shot] is running away with your people, for they have become accustomed to him. Go, pretend you are paying him a courtesy visit and then we shall attack him'. Shortly thereafter, Ngqika visited Ndlambe, ostensibly to settle a court case between their subjects. Oxen were slaughtered for the visitors and a dance was in progress when Ngqika gave the signal to attack.²⁹

Thompson learned that 'this act of audacity gained Gaika no small admiration, particularly among the young warriors of his tribe'.³⁰ This account confirms Mda's view that it was Ngqika's independent and rebellious spirit that launched them into their spiral of conflict.

As a result of this provocation, Ndlambe fled to the Gcaleka Great Place, where he remained for nearly a year. When King Khawuta died, however, not long thereafter, in about 1796, Ndlambe and the Gcaleka initiated an attack on Ngqika at Debe.³¹ The Gcaleka were over-confident of victory and brought their women and children along to the battle. Suffering a disastrous loss, several key people fell into the hands of Ngqika as his prisoners. This included the young Gcaleka heir-apparent, Hintsá, one of his brothers and Ndlambe. Ngqika is alleged to have killed the brother with his own hands, but released Hintsá 'because he was only a boy'.³² Collins claims that elder councillors had a hand in securing the young heir's freedom, giving some insight into the role played by councillors to mitigate the actions of errant chiefs.³³

Ngqika then held Ndlambe as a prisoner, although he was given a fair amount of freedom of movement and allowed to have his wives with him. The old

chief was placed under the watchful eye of Ngqika's sister, Dusa.³⁴ During this time, the old chief was protected from harm by 'his own people' who lived under Ngqika's rule and by Ngqika's councillors, suggesting that the rift between the two was not considered worth spilling royal blood over.³⁵ This demonstrates how the unitary nature of traditional leadership operated on the ground. As a result, Ndlambe was held prisoner for six months and then released and allowed to move to the southern coast, near present day Alexandria. Again, it was the insistence of Ngqika's councillors, who restrained him from taking punitive action against his departing uncle. But Ndlambe's maturity as a senior leader influenced many people, including, Dusa, to join him.³⁶

At the time when Ndlambe fled, his brother, Mnyaluza, an influential chief in his own right, chose to flee to the south. He settled in the area of present day Alexandria around 1796. When Ndlambe left his confinement, it was to this brother that he came. Ndlambe and large numbers of followers flooded into the Zuurveld just before the third frontier war started in 1799.³⁷

During the time that Ndlambe was still being held prisoner, a pair of British colonial officials paid a call on Ngqika, describing him as 'the adored object of his subjects; the name of Gaika was in every mouth, and it was seldom pronounced without symptoms of joy'.³⁸ Although the exact dates and timing are not clear, it appears that the missionary, Johannes van der Kemp arrived in Ngqika's territory just prior to the time of Ndlambe's departure. He noted that Ngqika feared a rebellion led by Ndlambe, but when it came to day-to-day governance, Ngqika only made decisions after consulting his mother, his sister and Ndlambe.³⁹ 'He treats him outwardly with great respect, and resolves nothing of importance before he has consulted him ... but keeps him as much as possible out of real power.'⁴⁰ Of the other Xhosa chiefs who lived in the Zuurveld, van der Kemp reported, 'There exists no war between them and Gika, who corresponds daily with them, and receives their deputies in a friendly manner'.⁴¹

All of these observations reveal the gentler side of the relationship between the two rivals. At this point in time, one might say it was Ngqika trying to discipline his uncle to conform to his own definition of power sharing. Upon releasing Ndlambe after his imprisonment, Ngqika said to him, 'When you were my tutor, you taught me to be a generous king, and since I became your king I hope I have taught you to be a faithful subject'.⁴² Peires sees Ndlambe's flight into the Zuurveld as a move to nurture his own 'hunger for power', but also describes how Ndlambe had just had to intervene to prevent Ngqika from killing Ndlambe's brother, Siko.⁴³ Ndlambe himself described his move as having the intention of living peacefully, without causing problems to Ngqika.⁴⁴ It appears that Ndlambe's move to the Zuurveld was all done in good faith.

So far, the Mda theory is confirmed. It was not a question of Ndlambe ousting Ngqika and taking over, but rather of establishing a hierarchy and mode of operation. What good is it to be 'king' if nobody likes you and they all move away? These events indicate that Ngqika had a rather fragile ego which played an important role in shaping the relationship. There is every indication that because it was in line with tradition, Ndlambe always respected Ngqika as the hereditary head of the Rharhabe nation. However, his ability to attract numerous followers should not be credited to his own ambitions for power. Given, the impetuous nature of Ngqika's personality, no doubt many people chose to join Ndlambe because of seniority, maturity and wisdom which earned him respect and high regard among his people. This in turn triggered jealousy and anger in the young King Ngqika.

However, the impetuous Ngqika could not remain at peace with his uncle. A second major war between them took place around 1807 when Ngqika abducted one of Ndlambe's wives for himself. Famous for her exceeding beauty, Thuthula appears to have had her own romantic interest in Ngqika. When he sent men to fetch her, she willingly complied. As one account puts it,

They said to her, We are here because we have been sent by King Ngqika, he has sent us to steal you so that you can be his wife. At the mention of Ngqika's name she dashed to her hut. When she got into the hut, she took off the chief's skirt she was wearing and wrapped it with the grass mat, and left it there. She immediately left with the men.⁴⁵

This brazen deed was viewed as an intolerable moral disgrace and as an act of incest. Even Ngqika's own councillors were outraged and soon authorised military actions against him. Ndlambe, the one to whom the greatest insult had been made, however, sent messages cautioning them that they were 'fighting a chief' and that they should not pursue him.⁴⁶ So outraged were the people, that they continued fighting anyway, reducing Ngqika to absolute poverty. It was in this reduced condition that the British intelligence officer, Col. Collins, found him in 1809. At that time the British were still relative newcomers to take control over the Cape Colony, having finally taken over from the Dutch in 1806. Collins had been sent to assess conditions on the borders of the colony, and in particular to find potential allies among the chiefs. Ngqika received him kindly, being in sore need of recognition and material support. One of the consequences of the Collins report was the expulsion in 1812 of chief Ndlambe, all of his followers and his subordinate chiefs, from the portion of the Cape called the Zuurveld. Col. John Graham used a scorched-earth strategy to clear the entire area from the Sundays to the Fish River of 20,000 Xhosa people. It took him nine months to rout out the last stragglers, burn their huts and destroy their crops. He thus forced all of Ndlambe's people to settle in territory under the control of Ngqika.

Peace from 1812 to 1817

The traditional euro-centric masculinist approach to history would expect such a turn of events to mark a course for disaster and intensified conflict between the two powerful chiefs vying endlessly for power. However, the period from 1812 to 1817 rather gives us glimpses into their special style of mutual respect and cooperation. Though documentation is sparse, a few key events emerge. In 1815, when renegade boers instigated an armed rebellion against British overrule, they tried to enlist Ngqika as an ally by making him the attractive offer of handing back the Zuurveld. Ngqika consulted with Ndlambe and together they agreed to refuse this offer. No doubt Ndlambe would have been interested, three years after his violent expulsion, to get the Zuurveld back. But it appears they were unwilling to place much faith in the success in the boers who approached them, as they were well-known among the Xhosa as drunkards and trouble-makers.⁴⁷

Apart from open rebellion, the biggest concern on the eastern frontier for the British authorities in this period was the never-ending raiding of cattle. The amaXhosa came in small parties of about six to seven men, who in the middle of the night set fire to settler farm houses and made off with their cattle. The boers, in retribution, formed armed commandos of generally 10 to 20 men, who rode into Xhosa territory, searching for their stolen livestock, but often removing much more than they had lost. This left the frontier in a state of ongoing turmoil and violence.

When a new governor, Sir Lord Charles Somerset, was sent to the Colony in 1815, his instructions on how to handle the frontier were very clear. He was to use every possible means of influencing the dominant chief to cooperate peacefully in suppressing cattle thefts and desertions of people, and to minimise military costs.

Presents in his (*the King of England*) name should be made to them principally of articles of consumption, such as Brandy, wine, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco and which may be easily distributed amongst their women & other of the Chiefs' favourites – that a few ornaments and other articles of essential utility, such as hoes, saws, axes, files should be given to the Chiefs in small quantities with an intimation that, if the Chief pleases, two or more annual meetings may take place for barter.⁴⁸

Ngqika was by then already identified as not only the titular head of the Rharhabe nation, but as someone who was more than receptive to special gifts. After creating an appetite for European manufactured goods, it was hoped that the Xhosa would soon learn to bring in 'their cattle, skins or wild beasts and that ivory of different kinds and gold dust should be pointed out to them as articles most desirable by us'.⁴⁹ Not only did the British choose to

win friends through generous gifts, but they also sought ways to create sustainable forms of dependency on themselves. Trade was just such an important sector. Always on the look-out for opportunities for economic gain, part of colonial policy included shaping the new trade in ways that gave the local leaders, like Ngqika, a cut in what was to come and to give them monopolistic powers. In this way they would be rendered unlikely to object to any other measures their new-found benefactors might impose. Similarly, and perhaps even more effective, was the British policy of quickly trying to induce a chemical dependency on alcohol among their new allies. All of these dynamic permeate the history of Ngqika's rule.

Whilst Ngqika faced these pressures, however, it appears that he and Ndlambe maintained a common front. Together with all their subordinate chiefs, their approach was to do nothing to seriously curtail thefts and other forms of harassment of colonists, whilst at the same time doing just enough to appease the officials to maintain their favour. When confronted by commandos, the chiefs assisted them to search for cattle. Very occasionally, they returned stolen goods and livestock. As the pressure for greater results mounted on Ngqika, he insisted that he could not control the actions of the other chiefs and that if he tried, 'they would raise up against himself'.⁵⁰ At times he claimed to have gathered stolen cattle to be returned to colonists, only to have them stolen from him before he could do so.⁵¹ In the hopes of promoting better cooperation, the governor ordered that Ngqika should be given 'a good horse with Saddle and bridle ... and forward by the first Vessel going to Algoa Bay a Cask of Brandy for Gaika.'⁵²

The entry of missionaries into Xhosa territory in 1816 provides us with some particularly vivid glimpses into the working relationship of chiefs Ndlambe and Ngqika. James Read led an expedition in April 1816 to determine if the Xhosa were willing to have a mission station established amongst them, and if so, where. He first visited chief Ndlambe and his powerful senior councillor-cum-diviner, Makhanda. Both eagerly welcomed the proposal, with Ndlambe leaving the selection of a site to Makhanda. They offered little assistance to the missionary group in finding King Ngqika to also consult with him. This left Read to conclude that there was a high level of tension between them, though it was not openly articulated. Eventually, he met with Ngqika and settled on building a mission station about an hour's horse ride away from his Great Place, on the banks of the Kat River. Joseph Williams and his wife arrived to set up the station in June 1816. From then on, he served as a virtual secretary for Ngqika, conducting written correspondence with the Governor's office, via the military authorities in Grahamstown.

In August of 1816, Ngqika paid an extended visit to the mission station, bringing along three wives and his elder sons to learn what the missionary had to offer.⁵³ By November 1816, the mission station became the focus of attention of the two great chiefs. At the beginning of the month, Williams heard rumours that Ndlambe was determined to 'murder us all and take our cattle' due to his outrage at people living at the station.' Ngqika, when asked for advice, answered that it was just the opposite. Ndlambe had 'expressed great satisfaction at his having the word of god with him first and that he should be glad to come hear but the distance prevented him'.⁵⁴ Next, Williams learned that both Ngqika and Makhanda were on their way to the mission station. To his great surprise, Ngqika came running up, on foot, alone and covered in perspiration. He said he had come to warn Williams about Makhanda's evil intention to ridicule him and Christianity, but to also advise him on how to appease this important visitor with appropriate housing, gifts, etc. When Makhanda appeared and Williams asked him if he was angry, he replied, 'No, why should I be angry?'⁵⁵ Indeed, he was even more friendly than on previous occasions. The two leaders remained for about five days, during which time Williams engaged in discussions on what was expected of good believers. Makhanda also mastered the alphabet in one day, whilst Ngqika and his wives soon caught up with him. Each of the prominent men confided freely with Williams, Makhanda about his recent polygamous marriage to Ndlambe's niece and Ngqika about his confusion over Makhanda's belief system.⁵⁶

Before the extended meeting ended, sharp words, however, were exchanged between Makhanda and Ngqika. Just as Makhanda was about to depart, Ngqika asked him for 'news'. In answer to this request, Makhanda called a special meeting of all present, which opened with a session of prayer and hymn singing. Then he lambasted Ngqika in front of everyone for a full 15 minutes. It appears the required 'news' had to do with stolen cattle and the implications for relations with the colony. He berated Ngqika for not being willing to practice the 'good news' of the missionaries, presumably in relation to the evil of theft, 'How is it you go on to steal now you have God's word among you? How is it that on my way here I took 10 beasts which were stolen by your caffers? Are you not yet satisfied that you enquire after news?'⁵⁷ A heated exchange ensued between the councillors of both men, but resulted in Ngqika's men heartily condemning cattle thefts. In a private session, however, Makhanda further blasted Ngqika, 'the ridicule was begun in an indirect and ended in a direct manner'.⁵⁸ Among other issues, Makhanda touched on the issue of Ngqika having 20 wives already and made indirect references to the immoral Thuthula affair. He also indicated that he had refused to give permission for Ngqika to marry his own sister. To all this, Ngqika

'sat speechless' and then asked Williams to tell him what to do. After Makhanda left, Williams tried to get Ngqika to respond to the latest complaint about cattle thefts from the Governor, but all he could do was present a list of further gifts that he wanted.

This vivid description of the meetings between Makhanda and Ngqika reveal many interesting aspects of the relationship between the uncle and nephew chiefs. Throughout, Ngqika's childish and compulsive behaviour emerges. He clearly greatly feared Makhanda as both a spiritual leader and as his uncle's closest advisor. Apparently, he was quite accustomed to being upbraided and belittled by them. Also, the issue of how to handle relations with the colony proved to be a sore point.

In later years, Ndlambe's people recalled with bitterness how the British foolishly placed their trust in Ngqika, while he was more guilty than them of crimes against the colonists. Speaking at the conclusion of the 1819 war, Makhanda's head councillor told the British,

When there was war we plundered you. When there was peace, some of our bad people stole; but our chiefs forbade it. Your treacherous friend Gaika always had peace with you; always plundered you; and when his people stole, always shared in the plunder. Have your patrols ever found cattle taken in time of peace, runaway slaves or deserters, in the kraals of *our* chiefs? Have they ever gone into Gaika's country without finding such cattle, such slaves, such deserters, in Gaika's *own* kraals?⁵⁹

At this time, the colonial authorities strongly encouraged Ngqika not only to return stolen cattle, but also to severely punish anyone found guilty of theft, but to no avail. Ngqika continuously pleaded that he had no powers to detect who had done the stealing. Col. Cuyler, the magistrate of Uitenhage, applied pressure on Williams to act as a spy and report even on the Ngqika's facial expressions when certain demands were made on him. Forwarding the most recent quarterly 'Depredations Return' to Fraser, Cuyler curtly suggested, 'Perhaps Mr W may from these circumstances feel rather more anxious to explain to Gika the nature of what should be his conduct as Upper Chief of those murderous fellows'.⁶⁰ Despite the lack of progress in curbing hostilities, the Governor chose to maintain faith in Ngqika's character, stating that 'all Gaika's assurances appear to be as candid & pacific as could be expected from a Chief professing so little real authority as he does'.⁶¹

By January of 1817, Somerset decided to pay a personal visit to the Eastern frontier to try to take firm command of the situation, knowing that his 'policy of treating the Caffres with mildness and kindness' was not very effective and that his capacity to use military force was dwindling due to troop reductions.⁶² Xhosa attacks were 'rapidly driving the Colonists from

those fertile tracts' and raids had taken place as deep into the Zuurveld as Uitenhage.⁶³ The Xhosa raiders 'kept the country in such a disturbed state that it was impossible to carry on agricultural or pastoral operations with any prospect of success'.⁶⁴ Ngqika's acquisitive disposition made him particularly vulnerable to British tactics. Knowing of his own low regard among his royal peers, the British aimed to secure him as a firm ally. They did all in their power to elevate him to a higher status among the amaXhosa than he occupied by tradition.

Meeting at Kat River

In late March, 1817, Ngqika was summoned to a meeting with the Governor himself, ostensibly so that he could give Ngqika numerous presents as a 'token of a more lasting friendship between His Majesty and the Kaffer people'.⁶⁵ The Governor arrived on the banks of the Kat River, across from Williams's mission station on 2 April, with a strong military force, designed to impress on the amaXhosa that the British 'had easy access to their abodes' and 'by our formidable appearance in some measure to overawe the Caffer Chiefs in their own country'.⁶⁶ Never before had such a military force, with all its pageantry and bright uniforms, been seen so deep inside Xhosa territory, a mere 15 miles from Ngqika's Great Place. The spectacle nearly made the whole plan back-fire. At first Ngqika simply refused to attend. Major George Fraser, sent ahead a few days in advance, had to rely heavily on the missionary, Joseph Williams to find a way to persuade Ngqika. On arriving at Ngqika's kraal, he found him engaged in deep consultation with his 'principal people and councillors'.⁶⁷ Fraser's account of what he observed gives rare insight into how chiefs Ndlambe and Ngqika related to each other at that time:

I have always stated that Gika and Psambie invariably meet and consult relative to any thing which they consider of importance, when I was ordered to Gika's kraal in April 1817 I found him and Psambie in close and friendly consultation, and for a long time Gika would not consent to meet His Excellency because Psambie refused to accompany him, after much persuasion Gika at length consented though I could not obtain a positive promise from Psambie.⁶⁸

Although Ngqika's Great Place was only an hour's walk away from the meeting site, he continued to balk. When the appointed day arrived, he secured a postponement for a day due to rain. Hours after the starting time had passed, he sent messengers to Williams 'to ask me what he should do ... he was much afraid'.⁶⁹ Eventually, Fraser rode, with a group of armed boers, to meet Ngqika and once again assure him of his safety. Agreeing only reluctantly, 'on the way his heart failed so much, that he halted several times in the short space of an hour's journey'.⁷⁰ On reaching the river, Ngqika refused to cross

until Williams came over. 'He appeared to be in great distress and dread, but on seeing me, he seemed much relieved, and took me by the hand very heartily.'⁷¹ Ngqika had an armed honour guard of three hundred men, but they did not interfere with events. At this stage the two Landdrosts, Cuyler and Stockenstrom, took both Ngqika and Ndlambe 'with great difficulty' arm in arm and escorted them across the river to the meeting site. The depth of the terror felt by the Xhosa chiefs was unmistakable. Interestingly, the Governor noted that it was Chief Ndlambe and other chiefs who had ultimately convinced Ngqika to take part.⁷²

Once across the river, the chiefs were escorted to their places in a carefully-orchestrated event. The combined British forces formed three sides of a square, with a white marquee tent in the middle and the two pieces of field artillery poised ceremonially on either side of it. 'The walls of the marquee were thrown down in order that the conference should be as public as possible, and that all the Caffer attendants upon the Chief should hear what passed and know and disseminate the results.'⁷³ When the royal entourage arrived, 'The square then opened and formed into line and the Chiefs Gaika and Tsambie came forward and walked for the Marquee, arm in arm with Lt. Col. Cuyler, Major Fraser, and Mr. Stockenstrom, several other chiefs being in the rear, the Caffre guard following.'⁷⁴ Somerset sat in a chair, while Ngqika sat to his right with Ndlambe and other chiefs next to him and his young son, prince Maqoma, just behind him.⁷⁵ Interpreters came from both sides, to ensure there could be no misunderstandings.⁷⁶ Ngqika's guard formed a semi-circle around him and the other chiefs and followed the proceedings very attentively, though often breaking in with their own comments.⁷⁷ Placed in this exalted position, Ngqika acquitted himself well: 'The gracefulness with which Gaika spoke was very striking, and the manly and decided tone he took was extremely impressive', noted the Cape Town press.⁷⁸

Most of the issues that were discussed have been thoroughly recorded and form part of the record of subsequent events. In retrospect, it is clear that whatever Ngqika agreed to at the time was under extreme duress and coercion, endured only because his uncle was by his side. Fraser noticed that 'Gika not only frequently addressed Psambie but appeared most anxious to meet his approbation in whatever he said'. A particularly sensitive point was the pivotal one of the British insisting that they would deal only with Ngqika as the supreme chief who would be held responsible for the actions of all the other chiefs and their followers. To this, Ngqika replied, 'We do not do things as you do them; you have but one chief, but with us it is not so; but although I am a great man and king of other Caffres, still every chief rules and governs his own people. There is my uncle, and there are the other chiefs.'⁷⁹ Ngqika pointed out to Somerset that 'many who were there present

considered themselves to be independent of him, nor does he believe that any of them excepting his uncle 'T Zambie will entirely acknowledge his authority'.⁸⁰ When the Governor flatly refused to accept this explanation of the Xhosa style of leadership, the other chiefs conferred and said, out of the hearing of the interpreters, 'Say yes, that you will be responsible, for we see the man is getting angry'.⁸¹ Speaking nearly twenty years later, Dyani Tshatshu clearly recalled the sense of coercion experienced by the chiefs, 'for we had the cannon and artillerymen and soldiers and boors with loaded muskets standing about us'.⁸² Ngqika also tried to resist Somerset's suggestion that the British could make him king of the Rharhabe, by humorously asking if he, Ngqika, in turn could make Somerset into a king.⁸³ In the months and years to come it would be clear that from the Xhosa point of view, nothing legitimate had been concluded under these circumstances, let alone a morally binding 'treaty'.

The issues that were raised and discussed at this meeting elicited Ngqika's statement of his willingness to punish cattle thieves, cooperate in the return of stolen livestock, prevent runaway slaves, servants and military deserters from taking refuge among the amaXhosa, assist colonial forces to trace livestock and to agree to the 'spoor' law. In return, he was to be given twelve specially designed gorgets, as symbols of his authority. These he could give as a kind of passport to any person he authorised to visit Grahamstown. Such visitors could only cross the Fish River at De Bruyn's Drift and had to travel strictly on the road, without deviation, under armed escort. Also, trade fairs were to be established in Grahamstown twice a year, in which the amaXhosa could bring their goods for barter. The colony would try to reciprocate with copper, copper wire, brass wire and iron as trade goods. All of these measures advanced the British strategy of enhancing his role over that of all other chiefs.

The detailed descriptions of the Kat River meeting offer interesting glimpses into the personality of Ngqika and also his relationship, at that time, to his uncle, Ndlambe. He showed almost pathological fear of meeting with the British, and was only convinced by the wisdom of his councillors and by the hand-holding of missionary Williams. He did not even come dressed for the occasion, although he impressed the Cape Town journalists with his authoritative style of speaking. He greedily grasped at the gifts offered to him, followed by making a sudden exit before the meeting's events had concluded. These things can be taken as symptomatic of the compulsive side of his personality. Ndlambe, by contrast came dressed as a chief of high standing, and apparently maintained his composure throughout the event. He played out his role as a fully supportive uncle, regent and co-ruler of the

amaRharhabe. The manner in which they conducted themselves through this trying event exemplifies the unity principle of traditional leadership.

Enforcing the Kat River Agreements

The Kat River meeting is generally considered as pivotal for two reasons. The first, as cited above, was that it opened the door to new colonial dynamics which could be seen as a form of massive 'legalised' plunder against the amaXhosa. The second is the way in which the British drove a poisoned wedge between the Xhosa chiefs by trying to accord more power to Ngqika than he deserved. The dynamics among the chiefs were to change dramatically over the coming year and a half as the implications of the new policies came to be felt. Though many historians point to the third and final war between Ndlambe and Ngqika, fought at Amalinde in October 1818, as evidence of their intractable hatred for each other, a closer scrutiny of the records shows that up through the first half of 1818 they were acting in one accord on a level that is seldom appreciated.

There is surprisingly little evidence of regular efforts to carry out the provisions of the spoor law. It was first tested in May, 1817, in a confrontation with Chief Habana. His armed warriors fought against the invading commando, but suffered several casualties. Another recorded attempt in July 1817, led to the recovery of 66 cattle and 18 horses.⁸⁴ By that time, just four months after the meeting at the Kat River, Ngqika protested that if he enforced the spoor law, all his people would defect to Makhanda, who was 'already stronger than himself'.⁸⁵ This statement offers further evidence that apart from himself, the idea of cooperating with the British was not embraced by anyone else, neither the rest of the chiefs, nor the ordinary people. The second armed confrontation over the issue involved Chief Ndlambe, who was visited by a commando in November 1817. After taking cattle from the first three chiefs it met, the commando got an extremely hostile and non-cooperative response from Chief Ndlambe. The leaders reported that he met them with a large military force, and that in discussions, he had used very rude and insulting language, ferociously ordering them get out of his land.⁸⁶

As Peires puts it, such events contributed to a simplistic 'good Ngqika, bad Ndlambe' stereotype.⁸⁷ By early December, Governor Somerset sent orders to Major George Fraser, to lead a major commando against Ndlambe, which was to be punitive in nature and using the services of armed boers from both Uitenhage and Graaff-Reinet. His instructions were very clear: to punish Ndlambe and make an example of him by kidnapping him and holding him captive until he yielded up all the stolen cattle held by his people. The plan included warning Ngqika to remove his people from harm's way, so that they would not suffer.

Crossing the Fish River on January 7, 1818, when Fraser reached Ndlambe, however, he found him fully prepared for the encounter. The chief had gathered hundreds of men and organised them into three units, which surrounded the commando. Bravely, Fraser demanded all the colonial cattle be given up to him, asking that it should be done by the next day. When the day dawned and the full strength of the Xhosa resistance became apparent, his boer colleagues advised a hasty withdrawal.⁸⁸ Not wanting to return empty handed, Fraser then moved into what had always been considered Ngqika's territory, and conducted wildly successful raids against the kraals of many prominent chiefs. Before he finished, he had collected 2,000 head of cattle – an unprecedented number for any commando, which usually recovered under 100. When he returned to Grahamstown, he was congratulated for a job well done and for having severely punished Ndlambe.⁸⁹

However, his triumph was to be short lived. By early February, he received a letter from Ngqika, protesting that rather than punishing Ndlambe, he, the British friend and ally, had been punished, as all those who lost cattle were his own adherents.⁹⁰ He angrily demanded an explanation. It took nearly another nine months for his questions to be adequately answered by the Governor. The British were thoroughly perplexed about which subordinate chief belonged to Ndlambe or Ngqika. They could not comprehend that in their own minds, the chiefs formed part of one and the same nation, defended by their co-rulers. Somerset clung desperately to his policy of nurturing friendship with Ngqika as the low-cost solution to frontier problems. Eventually a small number of cattle were restored.

Of far greater significance, however, was the way that the Fraser commando served as a catalyst to unite the Xhosa chiefs on an unprecedented level. Jeff Peires, in his 1971 Honours thesis, put forward the idea that a great confederation of all the Xhosa chiefs, including not only Ndlambe and Ngqika, but also Hintska of the Gcaleka senior house and the leaders of the Thembu nation, all came together and agreed on a plan to launch a major attack against the colony, designed to eradicate the pernicious settler presence and colonial rule once and for all.⁹¹ This theory flies in the face of everything ever written about this period. Even Peires himself seems hesitant to take the proposition very far, as he remained steadfastly dedicated to the idea that the root cause of problems on the frontier was the implacable hatred between Ndlambe and Ngqika.

Peires based his argument on a few odd reports which trickled into the ears of the British. A recaptured runaway slave explained the basic developments. Suspicions that something was up were then fuelled by a report from Khoikhoi 'spies' who reported the presence of even Ngqika at a series of 'rejoicing' events which included other top ranking chiefs. As Fraser

put it, 'Gika and Psambie with a number of their followers met at the Kat River where they remained in consultation and merriment for several days, and about that time, from the 16th January to the 3rd March, the Kaffers murdered no less than 11 People in this colony'.⁹²

Uncertain as these isolated reports may seem, they are supported by a wide range of circumstantial events. First, the nature of the theory is entirely consistent with the Mda theory that the institution of traditional leadership acted to unify. As we have already seen, the alleged bitter relationship between Ndlambe and Ngqika has been shown to vacillate, exhibiting as much cooperation as hostility over time.

If the combined Xhosa national forces had agreed to a major attack on the colony, surely a certain period of preparation should be evident. Indeed, the first half of 1818 witnessed unprecedented levels of not only cattle thefts, but also murders of those who offered resistance. Like other periods in the history of this era, it is clear that accelerated cattle raiding was orchestrated as part of moving towards war. First, such raids frightened off a significant portion of the white settlers. Secondly, they strengthened the amaXhosa economic basis of security by providing greater numbers of cattle. Thirdly, the raids tested the military strength and will of their opponents. Fourthly, such stepped up incursions allowed the amaXhosa to plunder the very assets that gave the colonists their military advantages: horses, guns, ammunition and iron. It is interesting to note that after 1817, no more horses were returned to the colony as tokens of good will. Indeed horses were increasingly used by the Xhosa in the military encounters.

Descriptions of a rather abrupt change in conditions in the first part of 1818 are all consistent with these actions. Even the sharply pro-colonial historian, G. M. Theal viewed this time as major turning point.⁹³ However, being dedicated to the feud between Ndlambe and Ngqika as the central factor in frontier events, he cannot quite explain why things changed so drastically. He attributes it to three causes. First, he notes that during this period, Ndlambe's alienated son, Mdushane, became persuaded by senior councillors to drop his allegiance to Ngqika and rather support his father.⁹⁴ Theal describes him as the most able of all the Xhosa chiefs living at the time. The credit that he gives to the councillors is consistent with the way that the unifying principle worked. His second point is the rise of Makhanda to prominence. He is viewed as someone who dedicated his whole energy to building the Xhosa confederacy. Again, such a rise in prominence is consistent with the unity tendency, simply naming Makhanda as a powerful driving force behind it. It is significant to note that all oral traditions about Makhanda remember him as someone who never wavered in his supportive loyalty to Chief Ndlambe. As the unification took hold, it would not be surprising that

Ndlambe, the honourable old chief with an unprecedented thirty years of experience in dealing with colonial aggression, would play a significant role in the emerging confederation. Theal's third point is that it was the weakening of British military strength that left room for the Xhosa, inevitably, to overrun the Zuurveld and plunder colonists. This view, which keeps the British at centre stage, is shared by most colonial historians.

In addition to the circumstantial evidence of some vague rumours and the noticeably stepped up raiding, the British authorities actually uncovered a serious plot to overthrow them during this time period. At the time it was probably viewed as the deeds of a few renegade individuals. However, it fits exactly with the timing and circumstances of the emerging new united Xhosa force. Three Khoisan convicts escaped from the Uitenhage prison on 1 March 1818, stole some horses and then took refuge with chief Gita, a former principal councillor of Ndlambe. He agreed to support them in an attack on Uitenhage to include murdering Magistrate Cuyler and burning the whole town. However, the chief sent along only four men to assist and the plotters were eventually captured and tried. Geswind, the leader, was sentenced to hang, while his colleagues received sentences of 10 years on Robben Island.⁹⁵

If Ngqika's own behaviour is looked at broadly, he can be seen as at least initially being in line with the rest of the chiefs. Although he complained in 1817 about losing followers to Makhanda if he enforced the spoor law too strictly, he never tried to do so with any zeal. His participation appeared to be calculated, as was Ndlambe's, to merely appease the British, but go no further. Indications that he acted in concert with the rest of the chiefs in early 1818 take several forms. First, there are the reports that he took part in the series of 'rejoicing celebrations'. Secondly, during this time he took an additional wife, which would have sealed an alliance with other royals. Thirdly, during this period he expressed virulent bitterness against his former friends, the missionaries. After a three day visit to the mission station in mid April 1818, Ngqika launched into a tirade against his mission escorts who travelled with him back to his kraal. He strenuously objected to mission teachings against the wearing of traditional insignia and facial painting, saying:

You have your manner to wash and decorate yourselves on the Lords day and I have mine the same in which I was born and that I shall follow. I have given over for a little to listen at your word but now I have done for it, for if I adopt your law I must entirely overturn all my own and that I shall not do. I shall begin to dance and praise my beast as much as I please and shall let all see who is the lord of this land.⁹⁶

Amidst the increasing tensions, Williams was abandoned by all the people from Bethelsdorp, including Dyani Tshatshu, the only individual Williams could speak with, with 'any satisfaction'.⁹⁷ When they got back to

Grahamstown, his former flock informed Fraser that Ngqika's people had descended upon them, burnt their wagons and stolen all the iron – another indicator of building military ambitions.⁹⁸

If the united Xhosa chiefs were preparing for a major attack on the colony, something went quite wrong before it could be carried out. What exactly the trigger might have been, the colonial written records do not reveal. But it is clear that all the rest of the now united chiefs came to view Ngqika as a threat to their intentions. We can see that he mended his relationship with Williams sufficiently to continue requesting gifts from the Governor, and that he is likely to have valued having such a powerful 'friend' who did his best to uphold the notion that Ngqika was indeed the chief over all other chiefs. But by October, 1818, the confederation fell apart. All the military preparations that had been intended for the united attack on the colony now were expended on a well-calculated plan to truly put the errant chief in his place once and for all. Ngqika's wavering in the direction of the British could not be tolerated, if they were to be effective against their real enemy. So he had to be dealt with first. Perhaps the ferocity can be traced to the huge resentment of Ngqika's flaunting customs when he clearly knew better.

Conclusions

The break-down of the unity principle heralded the spiral of tragic events which are most familiar to historians. The combined forces of Ndlambe and Hintsá decimated Ngqika at Amalinde in October 1818, driving him to take refuge at the nearest British military post. Upon Ngqika's cry for help, the British then undertook the infamous Brereton raid in December, which took 23,000 head of cattle from Ndlambe's followers, leaving them destitute. This, then triggered the most massive clearance of the Zuurveld ever witnessed, when Ndlambe's forces swept all colonial farmers away in the early months of 1819, before finally attacking British military headquarters in Grahamstown in April. The British had thoroughly panicked, declaring a state of emergency which allowed them to call up every able-bodied man to help them defend the frontier. With reinforcements of fresh troops from England, they launched their most massive invasion ever in July. This war concluded with Makhanda's voluntary surrender, Ndlambe's fleeing to the far north and Ngqika being forced to give up vast areas of his own territory. Yet, even amidst this massive collapse of unity, little flickers of the old uncle/nephew relationship peeped through. Shortly after the battle at Grahamstown, Ngqika asked for permission to visit Ndlambe to recover some cattle. Not long after the end of the war, Ngqika asked if he could receive his uncle back from exile. The British refused both requests, but are likely to have been ignored. Ndlambe soon settled near present-day East London, where he lived

peacefully without rancour under Ngqika's leadership throughout the 1820s. This was a decade that saw Ngqika losing his favoured status with the British. He lost his own lands, saw his son's villages subjected to massacres and even had to disguise himself as a woman to elude British soldiers sent with orders to kidnap him. Thus, the British approach to colonial conquest assisted to restore the unity that was so hard for the Xhosa leaders to maintain on their own. Ngqika's death, just one year after Ndlambe died, in his nineties, suggests that the eccentric younger chief could not live without the steady guidance of his mentor. The unity principle might be said to have survived through even the most trying of tests.

Notes

1. Noel Mostert, 1992, *Frontiers*, 360.
2. Personal interview, Mda Mda, 12 August 2005.
3. For example, see J Hutton, ed., 1887, *The Autobiography of Sir Andries Stockenström*, Vol. 1. 45.
4. Jeff Peires, 1981, *House of Phalo*, 59.
5. George Thompson, 1827, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, Parts 2 & 3, (1968 edition) 216.
6. See Timothy Stapleton, 1994, *Maqoma, Xhosa Resistance to Colonial Advance*.
7. Justus, (Beverly Mackenzie), 1837, *The Wrongs of the Caffre Nation*, 55.
8. Johannes van der Kemp, in *Transactions of London Missionary Society*, 1801, 465.
9. Nomathamsanqa C. Tisani, 2000, Unpublished PH D Thesis, 'Continuity and Change in Xhosa Historiography during the Nineteenth Century: an Exploration through Textual Analysis', Rhodes University History Department, 51.
10. Basil Holt, 1954, *Joseph Williams and the Pioneer Mission to the South Eastern Bantu*, 64.
11. Ibid.
12. Jeff Peires, 'Ngqika, c. 1779-1829', in C. Saunders, ed., 1979, *Black Leaders in Southern African History*, 28.
13. Mostert, 369.
14. Ibid.
15. *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, 19 April 1817. The tiger-skin here would refer to the traditional leopard skin worn by royalty alone as a sign of their rank.
16. Van der Kemp, 465.
17. Peires, 'Ngqika', 15.
18. Peires, *Phalo*, 211, Fn. 27.
19. Peires, 'Ngqika', 17.
20. Thompson, 197.
21. Van der Kemp, 466.
22. Thompson, 194.

23. Thompson, 194.
24. George Cory, 1910, *The Rise of South Africa*, Vol. 1. 44.
25. Peires, 'Ngqika', 19.
26. 'Reminiscences of an Old Kaffir', *Cape Monthly Magazine*, Vol. III., July to December 1880, 290.
27. Thompson, 201.
28. Thompson, 195. In a much later publication 'Old Kaffir' related the story in a very similar way. However, since Thompson's book had long been published by then, it is possible that the narrator was familiar with it and gave the same version as if it was an authentic oral tradition.
29. Peires, 'Ngqika', 19
30. Thompson, 194.
31. 'Reminiscences', 291.
32. Thompson, 195.
33. Donald Moodie, 1841, *The Record; or, a Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa*, Col. Collins journal 1809, 13.
34. 'Reminiscences', 292.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid, 292.
37. Collins, 14, and Stockenstrom, 26.
38. J. Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, 1801-1804*, Vol. I., 151. 'Gaika was a young man at this time under twenty years of age, of an elegant form and a graceful manly deportment; his height about five feet ten inches; his face of a deep bronze colour, approaching nearly to black; his skin soft and smooth; his eyes dark brown and full of animation; his teeth regular, well-set and white as the purest ivory.' Cited in Peires, 'Ngqika', who notes that Ngqika took offence at Barrow's paltry gifts. 22.
39. Van der Kemp, 397 and 415.
40. Ibid, 466.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Peires, 'Ngqika', 22.
44. CO 2563, 2 March 1808, 'Conversation between Major Cuyler Pro. Landdrost of Uitenhage and the Caffer Chief Slambie', on the 25th February 1808.
45. W.K. Ntsikana, 'Imfazwi KaThuthula', in W. B. Rubusana, ed., 1906, *Zemk 'inkomo Magwalandini* 53. Translation from isiXhosa by Pamela Maseko.
46. Ibid.
47. Theal, *History of South Africa*, Vol. 1, 294.
48. Cape Archives, CO (Colonial Office) 4838 Lord CH Somerset Letter Book from 19 June 1815 to 17 Oct. 1816, 16 Dec. 1815.
49. Ibid.

50. Cape Archives, 1/UIT/15/3 Letters Despatched, Miscellaneous and Statements from the District of Uitenhage 1816 and 1817, 3 Aug 1816.
51. Ibid.
52. CO 4838 Lord CH Somerset Letter Book from 19 June 1815 to 17 Oct. 1816, 7 June 1816.
53. Council on World Missions, Box 6, Williams Report, 15 June 1816; 7 Aug 1817. In addition to endless requests for goods, ranging from handkerchiefs to axes, they held long discussions on theology, who sent the missionaries, Christian worship practices and what was expected of true believers. Ngqika and his wives learned to drink tea twice a day and started to try to learn the alphabet. Though Ngqika appears to have been genuinely curious, he claimed that his councillors 'refused to come'. Some of the mission staff thought that he was indeed 'converted' but Williams was 'always in doubt respecting him – His heart seems to be set on things of no value'.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Thomas Pringle, 'Letters from South Africa, No. II – Caffer Campaigns, the Prophet Makanna', *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, January 1827.
60. 1/UIT/15/3 Letters Despatched, Miscellaneous and Statements from the District of Uitenhage 1816 and 1817, Cuyler to Fraser, 21 Oct. 1816.
61. CO 4838 Lord CH Somerset Letter Book from 19 June 1815 to 17 Oct. 1816, 22 Aug 1816.
62. George M. Theal, 1902, *Records of the Cape Colony*, Vol. XI, Letter from Lord Charles Somerset to Earl Bathurst, 23 January, 1817, 253.
63. Ibid. 252-3. Of 145 families that had been lured into settling in the Zuurveld near military posts with offers of living with reduced rents, 90 had fled by early 1817 and 3,600 head of cattle had been stolen. Theal, *History of South Africa*, Vol. 1, 323.
64. George M. Theal, *Compendium of South African History and Geography*, third edition, Lovedale 1877, 184.
65. 1/UIT/15/3 Letters Despatched, Miscellaneous and Statements from the District of Uitenhage 1816 and 1817, letter from Cuyler to Williams at Kat River, 24 March 1817.
66. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, Letter from Lord Charles Somerset to Earl Bathurst, 24 April 1817, 306. This show of force consisted of 'one hundred dragoons, detachments of the 83rd, 72nd and Cape Regiments, a small detachment of artillery with two field pieces, and three hundred and fifty burghers, armed and mounted', Holt, 60.
67. Holt, 58-59.
68. CO 2613, Letter from Fraser to C. Bird, Colonial Secretary, 31 July 1818.
69. Holt, 59, Williams believed this was a tactic designed to place the blame on Williams if anything went wrong.
70. Holt, 59.
71. Holt, 60.

72. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, Minutes relative to a communication with and of a conference between His Excellency Lord Charles Somerset and the Caffer Chief Gaika at the Kat River on the 2nd April 1817, 310.
73. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, 'Minutes', 311.
74. *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, 19 April 1817.
75. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, 'Minutes', 311. The chiefs included Ndlambe, Botoman, Nqeno, Mnyaluza and others.
76. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, 'Minutes', 312.
77. *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser*, April 1817 reports that 'the caffres made such a clacking during the whole conference, that it was with difficulty the parties could be heard', and Holt, 61.
78. Ibid.
79. Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements), 1836, 569.
80. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, 'Minutes', 313.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Justus (Mackenzie), 71, Ngqika also noted that, without being able to write down things, as the British were busy doing, he would not be able to recall all that had been said. Theal, *Records of Cape Colony*, 'Minutes', 315.
84. Peires, 76.
85. Peires, 76.
86. CO 2608, Report of Commandant Muller, 6 Nov. 1817, enclosed in Cuyler to Bird, 7 Nov. 1817.
87. Peires, *Phalo*, 61.
88. Jeff Peires, 1971, 'Causes and Development of the Frontier War of 1818-19', B.A. Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, History, 76; CO 1/UIT/15/4 Letter from Col. Cuyler to Major Fraser, 22 January 1818 and Letter from Col. Cuyler to Landdrost Van Kervel, George District, 18 February 1818.
89. Ibid.
90. CO 4840 Letter from C. Bird, Colonial Secretary to J. Williams, Kat Rive Mission, 19 June 1818, giving summary of correspondence.
91. Peires, 'Causes'.
92. CO 2613, Letter from G. Fraser, in Grahamstown, to Col. Bird, Colonial Secretary, 31 July 1818.
93. Theal, *History*, 328.
94. Ibid.
95. 1/UIT/15/4 Uitenhage Letters Despatched July 1817 to February 1819.
96. Holt, 80.
97. Holt, 81.
98. CO 2613, Letter from Major Fraser to Col. Cuyler, 9 May.





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Strategic Submission as Resistance? Nabongo Mumia in the Struggle for Post-Colonial Kenya's Histories

Godwin Siundu*

Abstract

This article pursues the debate on the role that various regional leaders in late pre- to colonial Kenya played in their people's responses to colonialism and its agents, and the contests for moral historical spaces that have continued to be played out in intellectual and public discourse. Focusing on Nabongo Mumia, the political and cultural figure of the Wanga people in western Kenya, the article examines the fluidity between collaboration and resistance as processes that have been presented mistakenly as dialectical oppositions. Situating my argument within the counter-revisionist trajectory, I demonstrate that the earlier presentation of Nabongo Mumia – and indeed a few other leaders – as a 'collaborator' largely simplifies the dilemmas that many a leader were confronted with in the wake of colonial violence, and is used in the current political setup to rationalise deliberate forms of exclusion from central political structures in the country. I further show that for regional leaders in colonial Kenya, strategic submission guided by a variety of legitimate considerations, was often misread as 'collaboration', a line that was picked up by earlier Africanist inclined scholars whose nationalistic impulses drove them to a search for 'heroes', often guided by the matrices of 'resistance'.

Résumé

Cet article poursuit le débat sur le rôle que les divers leaders régionaux ont joué pendant la fin des périodes pré-coloniale et coloniale au Kenya par rapport aux réponses de leurs peuples à la question du colonialisme et de ses agents, et dans les combats pour des espaces moraux historiques qui sont toujours interprétés dans le discours intellectuel et public. Se focalisant sur Nabongo Mumia, la figure politique et culturelle du peuple Wanga au Kenya occidental, l'article examine la fluidité qui existe entre la collaboration et la résistance en tant que processus qui ont été présentés par erreur comme des oppositions dialectiques. Cette article situe l'argument dans le cadre d'une trajectoire contre révisionniste

* University of Nairobi, Kenya. Email: godwinsiundu@yahoo.com

et démontre que la caractérisation de Nabongo Mumia et de quelques autres leaders comme « collaborateurs » sous-estime la complexité des dilemmes auxquels beaucoup de leaders étaient confrontés face à la violence coloniale, et est utilisée dans le milieu politique actuel pour rationaliser des formes délibérées d'exclusion à partir des structures centrales politiques du pays. Aussi, l'article montre que pour les leaders régionaux du Kenya colonial, toute soumission stratégique guidée par une variété de considérations légitimes, était mal interprétée comme une « collaboration » ; ce qui a été repris par les premiers érudits d'obédience africaniste dont les pulsions nationalistes les ont conduits vers une recherche de « héros », souvent guidée par les matrices de la « résistance ».

Introduction

One of the most trying attributes of colonialism in Kenya specifically and in Africa generally was the way in which it created a moral dilemma for a people regarding their structures of power and modes of leadership. Indeed the idea and practice of 'indirect rule' in parts of the continent could have been meant to cut the costs of administration, besides ensuring a broader acceptance of the new system, knowing as its proponents did that the Africans were so imbedded in their own conceptions and management of power. Principally, initial resistance to colonialism was precisely because it tinkered with long-held structures of power – appointing to positions of authority people who, in the traditional African setup, stood little chance of rising to such positions of responsibility either because of their personal attributes or simply because such positions never existed in the then structures of governance. Such resistance was in essence an affirmation of the existing philosophies of the colonized people, and in many ways elicited coherent and sustained rejection of the impostors and the system they advocated for. Historical, literary and anthropological texts have since emerged as part of the post-colonial discourses that record the tensions generated by that historical encounter, and the possible logic for the varied responses to the colonialist changes. For instance, Jomo Kenyatta (1938) placed the anti-colonial establishment in the context of the colonialism's disregard of the traditional power structures, and suggested that such responses were to be expected anyway.

The present system of rule by the Government Officials supported by appointed chiefs, and even what is called 'indirect rule', are incompatible with the democratic spirit of the Gikuyu people. It has been said that the Gikuyu do not respect their chiefs, namely, the 'appointed ones'. This is perfectly true, and the reason is not far to seek. The Gikuyu people do not regard those who have been appointed over their heads as the true representatives of the interests of the community. No one knows this better than the chiefs themselves, because many of them are only able to continue

in their position through the fact that might is over right. The Gikuyu knows perfectly well that the chiefs are appointed to represent a particular interest, namely, the interest of the British Government, and as such they cannot expect popularity from the people they help to oppress and exploit. In the eyes of the Gikuyu people, the submission to a despotic rule of any particular man or a group, white or black, is the greatest humiliation to mankind.¹

This quotation is important for us in two respects; first, as we shall see later in this essay, it relates to the predicament of ‘collaboration’ at the personal and communal level and, two, it signals to the breadth of ‘collaboration’, specifically as having transcended particular communities that have been contrasted with others that supposedly ‘resisted’ colonialism. Put differently, ‘collaboration’ and ‘resistance’ were neither simple modes nor choices of interaction between the colonized and the colonizer; they were indeed complex processes of adaptation to broad-based transformations of a political, economic, cultural, generational and social nature. That ‘collaboration’ and ‘resistance’ are much more complex than simple dichotomies they have for a long time been presented is to be borne out by the unending scholarly debates surrounding proponents of the two processes, and particularly the attempts at explaining the underlying psychology of the choices.

From 2003 onwards for instance, the Kenyan public has been sporadically treated to a debate on the idea of heroism within the context of increased democratization and individual liberties in the idiom of a second, sometimes third, liberation. Thus far, there has been little consensus on who a ‘hero’ is or was, and how such a hero should be treated. This lack of consensus is partly due to the fact that the whole debate has been hijacked by political interests in a context of continued competition of ethnic polities within the country. This is such that identification of individuals as heroes precedes demands by some people from their ethnic communities to be given preferential treatment as recognition of the hero’s contribution to the present Kenya, or, inversely, of the condemnation of the same person by politicians from outlying communities who may feel slighted by their neighbour’s recognition.

Two examples easily come to mind in this regard. One occurred some time in 2003 soon after Kibaki’s ascension to power. It refers to the much hyped return of historical General Mathenge, a figurehead of the Mau Mau war of liberation, after years in Ethiopia. Prior to the planned date of Mathenge’s return, the Kenyan public was treated to a barrage of media coverage of the planned return, with government involvement quite noticeable. At this point, there was nothing much by way of resistance to the idea of Mathenge’s return. But the actual return of the same Mathenge caused excitement because

of the blazing publicity that engulfed his arrival; the excitement led to anxiety and doubt when the old man appeared lost and ultimately the doubt turned to be a big embarrassment for the government and specifically the people involved in the logistics and publicity.

The initial response to the confirmation that the supposed General Mathenge was not just him led to a lot of amusement by some people from different parts of the country, who debatably thought the whole thing was part of a bigger scheme that was meant to muffle the rest into submission as one community embarked on a mission to further empower and enrich itself. Then, the rest of the Kenyan people began asking questions. Why did the government find it necessary to ship back the man, even if he was indeed General Mathenge, after years of 'neglect'? Was the return supposed to bear some symbolic meaning? That Mathenge's return was facilitated during Mwai Kibaki's first term as president is notable and could well have been symbolic.²

The second example relates to the debate that surrounded the change of the name of the former Western University College (then a constituent college of Moi University), now Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Leaders from around Kakamega town, where the university is located, argued that naming an institution of such an important value in society after an 'outsider' not only belittled them, but also suggested that there was no one from around Kakamega who was worth recognizing with such honour. On the defensive, leaders from Bungoma and Trans-Nzoia where Masinde Muliro came from sought to downplay such accusations. They claimed that Muliro was a national leader and any suggestion that his influence and vision was limited to Bungoma was in itself disrespectful of the man himself.³

These debates have necessitated a return to the past of Kenya's struggle for independence and the role of specific individuals in the same struggle, alongside a tendency to reflect on the Kenyatta and Moi regimes as having overseen the destruction of the ideals of independence. Hence, some people have (rightly and wrongly) cast aspersions at the liberation credentials of the two leaders, in a sense re-reading their role in the making of Kenyan history alongside that of other leaders hitherto only footnoted or dubiously presented as having stood in the way of the struggle. Subsequently, various communities and their leaders have embarked on audible reinvention of their 'heroes' – some of them prominent players in the making of Kenya's anti-colonial struggles, as is the case with General Mathenge of the Kikuyu and Masinde Muliro of the Bukusu people. Others include Samoei Koitalel of the Nandi and, interestingly, Nabongo Mumia of the Wanga people. Interestingly because for a long time now the historical figure of Nabongo Mumia in Kenya's

history has had the dubious distinction of being one of the most notorious ethnic leaders who was a ‘collaborator’ with the colonial establishment.

The tag of collaborator is imbued with connotations of cowardice, unbridled love for the colonial system, lack of patriotism, and is also understood in many ways as the real antithesis of heroism. Yet, this distinction notwithstanding, the memory of Nabongo Mumia lives on in the heart and mind of many a people, especially those from around Mumias, a place appropriately named after the most famous son of the region. The questions then are, was Nabongo Mumia really a collaborator? What were his options, when faced with the might of colonial weaponry and ruthlessness? Could he have simply been pragmatic? How did his immediate subjects perceive him? I seek answers to these questions by revisiting the current history that has damned the image of Nabongo Mumia. My position is that the projection of Nabongo Mumia as a ‘collaborator’ is rather simplistic in as far as it projects collaboration and resistance in dichotomous terms, as well as de-linking such processes from the crucial circumstances that informed them. I am inclined towards understanding the dynamics of colonialism in Kenya as complex choices and responses made in difficult circumstances. Whether this is a question of positionality or not is secondary to the point that the revisionist impulse in reading political history of Kenya invites a second gaze at figures whose place in history has thus far been assured, whether glamorously or otherwise.

I have structured this article to begin with methodological issues, then the spatial-temporal context of Nabongo Mumia’s response to colonial entrenchment in the region, and emphasizing the disconnection in perception of crucial issues between Nabongo Mumia and the colonial agents. Lastly, I look at how descendants of the Wanga Kingdom have reinvented the image and memory of Nabongo Mumia in order to accord him a clearer image in the on-going national struggle for historical spaces.

On Methodology

I am largely guided by the counter-revisionist approach⁴ to reading history – an approach that acknowledges the silences that were perhaps necessary in the immediate post-independence era so as to counter the categorization of Africans as either absolutely ‘resisters’ or ‘collaborators’. If the logic of narrating the anti-colonial struggles in Kenya – as indeed in the former colonies generally – was in part to celebrate the valour of those who sacrificed life and limb for freedom, such narratives were never complete without a round vilification of fellow compatriots who chose alternative ways of voicing their discontent with colonialism and its structures. Subsequently, the

template of heroism was instituted into which key figures were inserted and given voice, while their antagonists and broadly those with alternative views and responses remained frozen and muted in the image of collaboration. Such a reading may have served immediate scholarly needs and was indeed consistent with the Pan-Africanist spirit of the time. But it ignored what has become increasingly clear with time – the simple fact that independence was achieved with the help of changing global political economy and events as much as and perhaps more than local nationalist agitations. Yet, the unsympathetic presentation of ‘collaborators’ was neither most dominant nor confined to historical discourses; it was also quite common in literary texts, notably in Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s works. Eschewing the tendency to read history in linear terms then, revisionist and counter-revisionist approaches acknowledge and indeed appreciate the complexity of history by removing it from the logic of causality, and instead understanding the multiple ways in which fluidity disturbs simple notions of the past as representing some truths. In a sense, this approach is deconstructive of the various orthodoxies, both in fact and approaches, of what already exists. In the words of Terry Eagleton (1986: 80) to deconstruct, then ‘is to *reinscribe* and *resituate meanings*, events and objects within broader movements and structures; it is, so to speak, to reverse the imposing tapestry in order to expose in all its unglamorously dishevelled tangle of threads constituting the well heeled image it presents to the world’.⁵ Re-reading the place of historical figures as Nabongo Mumia in this paper is then a truly deconstructive venture, meant to disturb historical and other hidden ideological structures that have for long been presented as orthodoxies.

Rather than solely reading the existing written archive, I supplement it with oral sources. I am guided by the Vansinian idea of orality as a source of history, which is why interviews with Nabongo Mumia’s descendants would be important in helping fill in the lacunae. Jan Vansina (1985) distinguishes between ‘oral history’ – a verbal transference of a historical deed that took place within the lifespan of a people of the generation – from ‘oral tradition’, which is a verbal transference beyond the generation in which the deed occurred, provided it can be traced to the original, initial speaker or observer (196). Hence, an interview with descendants of Nabongo Mumia has value as a source of historical evidence because it reveals levels of historical consciousness in the group concerned.⁶ This distinction is important for us because it affirms the links of narration between the time of an event’s occurrence and its recording. It is also critical that though such sources may pass as subjective, such a weakness is not always automatic, nor is the whole method without benefit. Indeed as Vansina further asserts, ‘[o]ne cannot emphasise enough, however, that such sources are irreplaceable, not

only because information would otherwise be lost, but because they are sources "from the inside" (197). 'Incendiarism', then is a form of authority where such data are concerned, which means the descendants of Nabongo Mumia are important because of the insider value of their responses.

Enlisting 'oral traditions' as a source of history liberates us from the handicap of having to rely entirely on the written word that was exclusively created by foreigners in every sense of the word. 'Writings by foreigners or by outsiders', Vansina argues, 'have their own biases. They select their own topics of interest, which they follow in *attributing various activities and qualities to the populations they describe, and their interpretations are shaped through their biases*'⁷ (197). It is the awareness of this malleability of narration and interpretation of historical occurrences that informs the reinvention of Nabongo Mumia's history and memory by his descendants and the counter-revisionist reading of his image in existing literature by this scholar.

Placing Nabongo Mumia's Response to Colonialism in Spatial-Temporal Context

Nabongo Mumia was born around 1849, and took over leadership from his father, Nabongo Shiundu, upon the latter's death in 1882. Mumia was able to reign and rule over the Wanga people, with some unverifiable accounts suggesting that occasionally his territory went beyond this to include the entire Luhya nation, with varying degrees of influence up to 1949 when he died. The Wanga people were relatively few, but had the fortune of having had an earlier exposure to the outside world of Arab and Swahili cultures. Records indicate that after the mid-nineteenth century, the place we now know as Mumias emerged as an active and important contact zone for traders and local people.⁸ Formerly known as Elureko, the place was, in the words of Kenyanchui (1992: 28), 'a meeting centre for the caravans of Arabs, Swahili and European traders'. The abundance of food in the neighbouring Nandi Escarpment regions made Mumias an apt market centre, which was made even bigger when it was made an administrative post by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEACo). In terms of political organization, Mumias was the capital of the larger Wanga Kingdom that was the closest to a centralized state, as we know it today, under the leadership of a King, or Nabongo. Traditionally, these kings had been friendly and quite accommodating to foreign travellers and traders. As Hobley writes, '[t]he Chief Mumia had always been friendly, first to traders, later to the I.B.E.A. Co., and then to the [British colonial] Government'.⁹ Nabongo's first-hand experience with the three most important agents of change in the later nineteenth century, long distance traders, the I.B.E.A Co and the colonial agents,

not only bequeathed him with a fore-knowledge of the changes that were sweeping across the region, but also the possibility of appropriating their influence for his own benefit. As Were (1967: 163) further notes, '[a]lready, he was fully aware of the efficacy of modern firearms. By befriending the British, he thereby hoped to strengthen and consolidate his position and state at the expense of his traditional enemies'. Could his knowledge 'of the efficacy of modern firearms', especially what the latter were used to do in the neighbouring communities that 'resisted', have been a dominant influence on his decision to 'collaborate'?

For instance, Were writes that '[t]he Babukusu put forth strong resistance which was overcome by the superior arms (which included one maxim gun) and numbers of the invaders [150 Soudanese soldiers and about 900 armed Wanga volunteers] [...] As against this, about four hundred and twenty Babukusu were killed, several of them wounded and captured, and about four hundred and fifty cattle captured' (167). The bloody expedition was overwhelming both in numbers of casualties and in the ruthlessness of their execution. This seems to be the rediscovery now emerging that, contrary to the apparent orthodoxy of colonialist benevolence and self-defensive military responses to attacks by local African communities during the early hazy days of colonial imposition, the colonial agents could indeed annihilate entire villages.¹⁰

Yet, it would appear that the Wanga Kingdom increasingly came under siege as the nineteenth century wore on, particularly from immediate neighbours, subjecting the political position of Nabongo to real threats. As Kenyanchui (1992: 28) writes,

[t]he relationship between Abawanga and their neighbours deteriorated in the course of the 19th century, and on the eve of British colonial rule, the Kingdom was at breaking point. In 1892, the Kager Luo renewed with vigour their territorial expansion. In the same year, Arabs, Swahili and Baluchi wanted to expand trade in ivory (in Suk and Karamoja) and slaves (in Bukusu). On the other hand, the Maasai wanted to intensify cattle-raids among the neighbours of Abawanga. The political position of the Nabongo was precarious.

The foregoing quotation clarifies the position Nabongo Mumia was in when he made that decision. It is correct therefore to state that as far as politics goes, there was little trust between Nabongo Mumia particularly and the Abawanga generally and the neighbouring communities. The threats came from all directions contiguous to the Wanga Kingdom, making it difficult for them to feel secure, or even share in the same thought patterns as their neighbours.

The animosity between the Abawanga and their neighbours logically would lead to an attempt by each group at allying themselves with whoever promised to buttress their political and military standing. But what the Wanga King did not comprehend was that the initial British interest in Nabongo Mumia and the entire land over which he ruled, was secondary to the older and more important interest in Uganda. Hence, from the outset, the colonial agents only perceived Nabongo Mumia and the people he represented in terms of how they could be made to fit into the larger scheme of exploiting Uganda. What is equally important was that by the close of the nineteenth century, there were no clear boundaries that demarcated Uganda from Kenya. In a sense then, what we now call Mumias was seen as part of Uganda. At any rate, the political organization of the Nabongoship was more like the Kabaka's in Uganda than it was of the immediate neighbouring communities, particularly the Babukusu and the Abanyala. Clear boundary changes only came into being in 1902, when 'Eastern Province was transferred to the East African Protectorate, which was later renamed Kenya' (Kenyanhui, 29). It was after the 1902 boundary changes that the role of Nabongo Mumia became more definite: he would be employed as an agent of British Indirect Rule policy. Indeed, the British set out deliberately to use the likes of Nabongo Mumia and Odera Kang'o to ensure the success of the policy. As Bruce Berman (1990: 53) notes, 'the conversion of sporadic African collaborators into a relatively permanent subordinate administrative cadre as the actual agents of local control was necessary. They would have to accept the handful of the white prefects as the sole source of authority and exclusive intermediaries with the larger political and economic structures of the economy'.

Clearly, the relationship that obtained between Nabongo Mumia and his agents on the one hand and colonial officials on the other was symbiotic. Whereas the colonial agents who enlisted Nabongo Mumia thought they were doing it for the benefit of the British colonialist system, Nabongo's own acceptance was informed by his personal and communal interest in saving the community against threats posed by neighbouring communities. As Were has written, '[f]or all that, Mumia never regarded himself as a servant of the Government but, rather, as an independent ruler acting in his own interest and that of his people. Even to the local people all over Baluyia, this is the picture he created; whenever headmen or chiefs were appointed, he was believed to have been responsible for it, not the Government' (163).

The relationship between the two representatives of power – the traditional hereditary power of Nabongo and the new colonial power of the British – was based on half-truths and self-serving interests that transcended the

personalities of the immediate representatives. If the colonial agents acted for and on behalf of the Government, so did Nabongo Mumia, '[s]o that in the eyes of the great majority of the Abaluhya, it was the Government which was in the service of Mumia and not vice versa' (Were, 164). Hence, the entanglement of conviviality between Nabongo Mumia and the subjects that he represented on the one hand, and the colonial faces like Hobley on the other hand, was in important ways an antecedent to later analyses of the relationship. There is a possible interface in the logic of Nabongo's 'collaboration' with 'colonial 'domination', meeting at the point of self and communal interest rather than the former's supposed love for the colonial system represented by the latter, as insinuated in post-independence literature on colonial Kenya. By the strength of its argument, I am inclined to draw on Achille Mbembe's (2001) analysis of the relationship that exists between the African postcolonial regime and its subjects. '[T]he postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration, but can best be characterized as convivial, a relationship fraught by the fact of the *commandement* and its "subjects" having to share the same living space' (104). Likewise one can refer to Frantz Fanon's (1965) celebrated analysis of how power changed hands from colonial to the early post-colonial leadership. The latter did not lead the newly independent countries to developing a truly complete national consciousness, but instead inherited the reins of power still stuck in the groove of tribalism, cronyism and the like. Hence, the relationship between a majority of the citizens and their respective states was one of tension, at once desiring to follow the rhetoric of nationalism as they remained alive to the pitfalls of such a pursuit. This ambivalence of independence – marking the end to forced labour, corporal punishment and overt racism, as well as a realization that economic and political structures put in place by colonialism remained largely unchanged – has recently necessitated a change in the mode of analysing the African situation. This is clearly the idea of Frederick Cooper (2002), which 'cuts across the conventional dividing point between colonial and post-colonial African history, a division which conceals as much as it reveals. Focusing on such a dividing point either makes the break seem too neat – as if colonialism was turned off like a light switch – or suggests too much continuity, positing continued Western dominance of the world economy and the continued presence in African states of "western" as a mere change in personnel within a structure of power that remains colonial' (4). This paper situates itself within this context in the sense that the failure of post-independence Kenyan regimes to blunt Kenyans' sensibilities to 'tribe' as a form of social organization has made it impossible for the descendants of Nabongo Mumia's Wanga Kingdom

to attract a favourable reading. Nor have the Kenyan elite pointed out precisely when Nabongo stopped ‘collaborating’ with foreign powers.

Nabongo’s Relationship with Colonialists: Alliance or Collaboration?

We see thus that a long history of contact with the outside world, increasing threats to the Wanga Kingdom by neighbouring communities, and the dubious misinformation by colonial agents, were some important factors that led Nabongo Mumia take a path that has since been summed up as collaboration. What can be condensed out of all these is that to ‘collaborate’ or to ‘resist’ were decisions that were premised on circumstances. In a somewhat different context, Godwin Murunga (2000) refers to Adu Boahen’s *UNESCO General History of Africa Volume VII: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935*, in which Boahen ‘problematizes the idea of resistance, demonstrating that it cannot be seen as the polar side of collaboration’. Indeed Murunga further adds that ‘[h]istorically, the alliances built between Nabongo Mumia of the Wanga and the British, for instance, were, in their own way, modes of resistance, call them passive resistance if you wish. Indeed, those who resisted at other times collaborated and vice versa’ (97). Thus some historians perceive the role of pragmatism in leaders’ decisions. Elisha Atieno-Odhiambo (2002) illustrates this point using Kenyatta’s turn-around when he saw real prospects of assuming power in post-independence Kenya. After years of colonial vilification and incarceration, Kenyatta changed tune from ‘the white man must go’ to ‘please remain around and farm’. Atieno-Odhiambo writes, ‘[i]n 1962 the settlers, realizing the inevitability of the transfer of state power, recaptured Kenyatta and made him guarantee them a safe future. At an anxious moment Kenyatta reassured the assembled settlers in Nakuru in August of 1964 that he would respect and honour their property rights in land....’ (239). This capitulation on the part of Kenyatta was taken badly by some of the Mau Mau veterans, who saw it as an act of betrayal. Atieno-Odhiambo further writes that indeed some of these veterans revisited the forest with intent to fight back. But the point is that when it suited Kenyatta, he ‘worked with’ the colonial masters. Whether this was ‘collaboration’ or not remains a valid, if sterile, question. If no leader was insulated from these colonial machinations, what is the valid basis of tagging some leaders as ‘collaborators’ and others as ‘resisters’?

This seems to be the position of Nabongo’s descendants, who argue that the label of collaborator has been placed on individuals – including Nabongo Mumia – whose hospitality was abused by the whites at various moments. Fred Matianyi, for instance, argues that for Mumia, forming alliances with

visitors was a long tradition that began with his dalliance with the Maasai whose greatest contribution to the Wanga kingdom was to strengthen it militarily. Given that the Wanga population was generally low, it was always necessary for Nabongo to guard against its annihilation in war by ensuring that he had allies. It was this idea that made him welcome Arab and Swahili caravans that passed by Mumias much earlier than the whites, as well as with the Nubians and friendly Luhya ethnic communities, especially the Kisa, Marama and the Marachi. So long was this tradition of gaining allies that when eventually the whites came by, Nabongo Mumia thought he was just continuing his tradition. Unknowingly the whites had a far bigger agenda than he could comprehend. As Nabongo Peter Mumia Shitawa states, '[i]t did not occur to him [Nabongo Mumia] that he was collaborating; he thought he was extending the usual expected hospitality'.¹¹ And so the idea of collaboration as a hallmark of Nabongo's relationship with the colonial masters is not so different from the dubious idea of 'treaties' that white explorers apparently entered into with African chiefs. There was really no shared understanding between these parties, as there were differences in understanding of the motives, language and legal implications of the agreements. At any rate, Nabongo Mumia had entered into forms of understanding with foreigners before who had not sought to undermine his power base. As Ahmed Binsumeit Jamalilyl (2006: 12) writes,

Sharif Hassan Abdalla was among the pioneers who introduced Islam in Mumias, in Western Kenya and then into Uganda. The Tribal Chief of Mumias, Chief Nabongo Mumia who was impressed by Sharif Hassan and [embraced] Islam together with his three brothers (Kadima, Mulama and Murunga), and a good number of his subjects and members of his cabinet. It is noteworthy that most of the Muslims who settled in the interior had gone there with no wives, and most of them subsequently got married to the local women. Such spirit of real integration was one of the factors, which contributed to the early conversion of the local people into Islam. The Muslim traders did not have hidden political agenda, and did not have political control over the African states. Their expertise in different fields such as herbal medicine, navigation, literature, architecture, handcraft, commerce, etc was for the service of the communities they were living in. They were mainly used as technical advisors in their respective field of specializations. They did not have nor did they seek political power.

It seems reasonable that Nabongo Mumia did not expect that the new batch of visitors that he welcomed would behave any different from their Muslim counterparts. He saw only potential benefits rather than potential threats to his authority and his people.

Hence, it may well be true to state that Nabongo Mumia was in a sense a victim of a tradition of hospitality and, later, of global changes. He inherited a throne that celebrated hospitality as a virtue to be espoused by a leader; his entire kingdom traversed lands that were fertile, climatically rich and inhabited by a friendly people with abundant food, and which had a long history of facilitating passage to other places, notably the present day Uganda. Nabongo Mumia further presided over a centralized system of governance that had, among other attributes, tamper-proof structures of checks and balances, particularly in the supreme organ of the council of elders. His choice was thus only personal to a rather limited extent, but largely circumstantial. I am inclined to agree with Were's conclusion that 'it is quite conceivable that if the British had established their center in some other place, say Bukusu, Nabongo Mumia and his people would have adopted a different policy towards them and that the local Babukusu would have been the collaborators rather than resisters'.¹ (186). My view is that Nabongo's decision at that time was therefore a political strategy of camouflage that appeared to accommodate the imperial will, even though the motive could have been to protect his people against colonial violence. It was also consistent with his personal political schemes of the moment, even though based on his limited exposure to the cunning ways of the white men. That is the way his descendants remember him.

Remembering Nabongo Mumia Post-2000: The Nabongo Cultural Centre

Having died in 1949 at around 100 years of age, the person of Nabongo Mumia continues to occupy the minds and souls of his descendants in the wider Mumias area, appropriately named after him. From 2000, some of these descendants came together to find ways of ensuring that the memory of Nabongo Mumia was preserved for the benefit of posterity.¹² The outcomes of this initiative were two: first, the formation of the Nabongo Welfare Society (NWS) whose membership was initially drawn from among Nabongo Mumia's grandchildren, but later expanded to include any willing Luhya. Secondly, the NWS approached the Mumias Sugar Company (MSC) management for support in starting a centre that would be a tribute to Nabongo Mumia, whose jurisdiction had traversed much of the MSC's land now under cane cultivation. While the then Managing Director Evans Kidero accepted, the matter was all the same referred to the Kenya Sugar Board (KSB), after which Nabongo Cultural Centre was mooted and constructed.¹³ So far, these efforts have achieved remarkable infrastructural success.

The Nabongo Cultural Centre is situated in Matungu, formerly the seat of power for Nabongo Mumia, about five kilometres from Mumias town on the Mumias-Busia highway. It sits on a seven-acre piece of land, and has three main structures that are yet to be fully completed. It is envisaged that it will have a library, a museum and a bar/canteen (the last two are almost operational). An important part of the centre is a mausoleum that was erected to preserve the burial sites of Nabongo Mumia, his father Shiundu, and that of Wamukoya, Shiundu's father. Like all the structures in the NCC, the plaques with details of where exactly each of these leaders lie buried are yet to be placed, which, according to Kennedy Inyanje, awaits the official opening of the centre by the current Prime Minister, Raila Odinga. At the time I conducted this fieldwork the proposed date for the official launch of the site was August 2008, which has long passed. Raila Odinga's coming to officiate the opening of the centre may be in tune with the recent trend where many communities wish to be associated with the courage, singular focus and determination of Raila.¹⁴ If the figure of Raila is an embodiment of courage and bravery, then his association with Nabongo by officially opening the NCC becomes a way through which Nabongo's name can also be inserted on the roll of heroes in Kenya. But it is also an attempt to trace through family trees the blood relationship that exists between the Luo of Nyanza region – to which Raila belongs – and the Nabongo Mumia's Wanga people. It is widely believed that Raila Odinga is a distant relative of the Wanga people due to Nabongo Mumia's extensive network of relatives.¹⁵ Indeed, claims that Nabongo Mumia 'had sixty-five wives, half of who were Luos'¹⁶ are commonly bandied around to buttress the blood kinship bonds that may exist between Raila and the descendants of Nabongo Mumia. The unanswered question is whether these descendants view Raila's influence in the larger western region as a continuation of Nabongo Mumia's work.

According to Mzee Wycliffe Mulama, the overriding objective of running the NCC is to create unity among all Abaluhya at home and in the Diaspora. His view is that unless such unity is nurtured, the larger Luhyia nation will continue 'being belittled' by other communities.¹⁷ It is quite clear then that the pre-colonial animosity between the Wanga and other Luhyia communities notwithstanding, there is an increased interest in fostering a unified image of the Luhyia nation that may enable them to negotiate better for the available opportunities. In order to nurture this idea of Luhyia unity, the structural organization of power within the NCC is inclusive of members from non-Wanga communities. The NCC has three positions of chairmen, in charge of culture, history and publicity, respectively. This structure is supposedly a replication of the historical organization of the Wanga kingdom, where power

was not solely resident in the figure of Nabongo, but rather spread across a spectrum of leaders who, though largely invisible, remained influential in the decisions made by Nabongo. According to the reigning Nabongo Peter Mumia Shitawa,¹⁸ the indispensable council of elders was historically (and even now) all inclusive, and acted to check the possible excesses of the Nabongo. This was the context in which decisions affecting the Wanga nation were made, and at times the council could even overrule the Nabongo, especially on weighty matters.

Accordingly, it was this structure of consultative democracy that the colonial masters found in place and which they sought to exploit. The Anglo-Wanga alliance that has been presented as ‘collaboration’ was thus a political imperative that was summoned to buttress, and was in turn buttressed by, the existing structures of governance in the pre-colonial Wanga nation. Drawing on the existing structures of socio-political organization of the Wanga Kingdom, and enlisting the military support of the British against traditional neighbouring enemies were for the British and Wanga leadership respectively mutual ‘hegemonic enterprises and instrumentalities of survival’¹⁹ that were possible in the then cultural and political economies. Hindsight can now bequeath us with these insights as we attempt to understand the sub-texts that appeared to fly in the face of reason. In fairness, it must be said that the colonial discourse of categorizing communities – through their leaders – as either rational or atavistic contributed in large measure to the subsequent projection of them as either resisters, and therefore patriotic, or collaborators. For instance, the colonial textual condemnation of the Mau Mau as barbaric and its association with the Gikuyu people has led to the often uncritical acceptance that the Gikuyu were on the forefront of Kenya's struggle for independence. Such a projection elides the role of the home-guard element among the Gikuyu people of that time, without which Mau Mau would possibly never have been defeated. In the same vein, the projection of Nabongo Mumia as a ‘collaborator’ removes him and his entire community from the roll of those who struggled for independence.

Yet, one can remotely sense a hint that Nabongo Mumia did not simply content himself with enlisting colonial assistance to shield himself and the Wanga nation against attacks from neighbouring communities. With the support of colonial authority, he later tried to extend his leadership to lord it over the neighbours, suggesting that he had in him some instincts of rudimentary expansionism. Safely backed up by the colonial machinery, Nabongo Mumia was seduced to send his agents to rule over other parts of Luhyialand, a task he undertook with commitment. Naturally, the agents met with stiff and sustained resistance in Luhyialand and wherever else such

impositions were attempted. Were (1967: 178) asserts that '[o]wing to the fact of their [Nabongo's agents] being foreigners and, in the eyes of the local people and rulers, usurpers, they were all thoroughly hated'. Further, 'the fact that some of the agents were indolent, extortionate and oppressive did not help the situation. The agents tended to be autocratic and certainly less benevolent' (181). These sentiments regarding personal weakness of individual agents were generally and unfortunately applied to all the Wanga people; while the 'thorough hatred' would spill over to the post-independence Kenya, and would metamorphose into a play of stereotypes²⁰ against the Wanga people by their cousins in the larger Luhyia nation. All these have contributed in varying degrees to the image of Nabongo Mumia as a 'collaborator' with colonialism, and partly informs the recent efforts aimed at re-reading his place in history. All these issues point to the complex nature of a person's and a group's place in the making of a nation's history.

Notes

1. *Facing Mount Kenya*, Nairobi, Kenway Publications, [1938] 1978, p. 196. Indeed, other writers have presented a similar view of the colonial agents, most notably Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in *A Grain of Wheat*, where he rather unsympathetically presents the character of Karanja as one who pursued personal interests over communal ones.
2. Answers to these and other related questions could be quite interesting, though they fall beyond the ambit of this paper.
3. The debates around Masinde Muliro were so fierce that the university had to engage its best minds to counter argue for the name in what was largely accepted as a necessary 'rebranding' project. Naturally, the university would have been compelled to do so anyway had the name been changed to any other.
4. If the colonial historiography sought to paint leaders in neat categories of rebellious (therefore bad) or law abiding (therefore good), the immediate post-independence revisionism reversed the underlying interpretations, where rebellious was also nationalist and liberatory, while law-abiding was the hallmark of Quislings. With hindsight, such revisions were prone to distortions that now need clarifications.
5. My emphasis.
6. I obtained much of the information for this section during interviews with respondents around Mumias – some of them family members of the historical Nabongo Mumia. I owe huge debts of gratitude to my colleague and friend Mark Wabuli who introduced me to important contacts and further chaperoned me as I interviewed the respondents. I am also grateful to the entire staff of the Nabongo Cultural Centre, particularly Kennedy Inyanje, Nabongo Peter Mumia Shitawa (the reigning Nabongo and grandson to Nabongo Mumia), Mzee Wycliffe Mulama (the Chairman of Nabongo Welfare Society) and Mzee Philip Matiany, all who gladly agreed to answer my questions at short notice. As I thank each one of them, I take responsibility for whatever infelicities that may be in this paper.
7. My emphasis.

8. Here I echo Mary Louise Pratt's phrase in *Imperial Writing: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London & New York, Routledge, 1993, p. 4.
9. Cited in Gideon S. Were, *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya c. 1500 - 1930*, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1967. p. 162.
10. Indeed, the question of colonial violence has re-emerged in the recent scholarship on colonial operations in Kenya, especially during the years of the Mau Mau war. See for instance Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, Jonathan Cape, London, 2005. Much earlier, writers had captured the absurdity of colonialist instrumentalisation of violence in pursuit of its economic objectives, projecting it as not discriminating between those who supported the system and these who opposed it. See Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child*, Heinemann Educational Books, Nairobi, 1964, and *A Grain of Wheat*, Heinemann Educational Books, Nairobi, 1986.
11. A brief anecdote on the essence of hospitality as part of the philosophy of the Wanga people and expectations of their leaders may help place Nabongo Mumia's obsession with hospitality into a clearer context. According to the current Nabongo Patrick Mumia, in the family history of Nabongo Mumia, one of them, Chitechi, had been deposed by the council of elders who deemed him too selfish to be a leader, and replaced him with Osundwa. In the order of Netya – (Chitechi) Osundwa – Wamukoya – Shiundu – Mumia. Therefore, Mumia remained alive to the threats against his authority by the council of elders, and tried very much to remain hospitable to visitors as a way of securing his own position.
12. Such efforts have sought to remember the entire leadership of the Wanga Kingdom, placing Nabongo only as one of those whose reign coincided with colonialism in Kenya.
13. This is according to Mzee Wycliffe Mulama, in an interview with this author.
14. I have in mind the sense in which over time, it has become increasingly difficult to pigeon-hole Raila Odinga with the pejorative term of 'tribal chief' as was the case in the early 1990s. Currently, many people are beginning to view Raila as a charismatic and pragmatic leader with a national appeal. One leading example of his stature comes from his decision to share power with Kibaki even after the latter was controversially sworn in after an election many believe Raila won with a big margin. Indeed, this decision made him perhaps the most important Kenyan politician.
15. Claims of blood relations between Raila and the Wanga people are mutual, but hard to verify. During one of the anti-draft constitution campaigns in November 2005, this author was present at a public rally where Raila appealed to his 'relatives' not to abandon him, and instead reject the constitution. And in the 2007 elections, virtually all the people around Mumias and the larger region affiliated themselves with Raila Odinga because he was perceived as one of them, an idea supported demographically by a huge Luo presence in the region.
16. Philip Matianyi, in an interview with this author in Mumias town, on 13th July 2008.
17. Interview with the author conducted at the NCC, on 13th July 2008.
18. In an interview with this author at the NCC on 13th July 2008.

19. This is Atieno-Odhiambo's phrase that he uses in a somewhat related context. See 'Hegemonic Enterprises and Instrumentalities of Survival: Ethnicity and Democracy in Kenya', *African Studies*, 61, 2, 2002, pp. 223-249.
20. Indeed stereotypes were, as I intimate throughout this paper, quite effective tools of a divisive colonial governance in the country.

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Engendering Mauritian History: The Hidden Controversies over Female Suffrage

Ramola Ramtohol*

Abstract

This **article** examines the controversy over female suffrage in Mauritius at the time of British colonial rule. Mauritius presents itself as an interesting historical paradox on the timing and form of women's enfranchisement. This issue has been marginalised by male dominated historical accounts. Drawing from the constitutional debates of the 1940s that took place in parliament and were reproduced in verbatim in the press, the paper examines the manner in which female suffrage was attained in Mauritius. It argues that despite the strongly entrenched patriarchal culture in the island, the social divisions (ethnic and class) in the population had a major bearing on the debates over female suffrage, which were eventually beneficial to a class of women. The **study** reveals how the strength and domination of class and ethnic lobbies clearly marginalised women's interests and silenced women. This **article** thus attempts to undo some of the male bias in Mauritian socio-political history.

Résumé

Cet **article** examine la controverse sur le droit au vote des femmes à l'Ile Maurice en période coloniale britannique. L'Ile Maurice se trouve être un paradoxe intéressant dans le choix du temps et la manière par laquelle les femmes ont gagné leur droit au vote. Cette question a été marginalisée par les récits historiques qui sont produits essentiellement par des hommes. L'article s'inspire des débats constitutionnels des années 1940 qui ont eu lieu au parlement et qui ont été repris verbatim par la presse pour examiner la manière dont les femmes ont gagné leur droit au vote à l'Ile Maurice. Il défend qu'en dépit d'une culture patriarcale bien enracinée, les divisions sociales (ethnique et classe) dans la population Mauricienne ont profondément influencé le débat sur le droit de vote des femmes. Ce qui fut bénéfique pour une frange des femmes. L'article révèle comment la force et la domination des lobbies basés sur la classe sociale et l'ethnie ont fortement participé à la marginalisation des intérêts des femmes et à leur silence. Il tente de déconstruire une partie du parti-pris des hommes dans l'histoire sociopolitique Mauricienne.

* Department of Social Studies, University of Mauritius. Email: rr9591@yahoo.com

Introduction

As a British colony in the 1940s, Mauritius differs from most Western nations and former colonies in the timing and manner in which women were given the right to vote. Mauritian historical texts¹ unfortunately attribute only marginal coverage to women, let alone the concern of women's suffrage. Women were rendered virtually invisible within the political discourse and policy of that time period. This situation is in fact reminiscent of the African continent where history textbooks are predominantly male and sexist as they downplay the important role women have played in all aspects of African history (Zezele 1997). The constitutional debates on female suffrage that took place in parliament in 1946 and 1947 were reproduced verbatim in the press. These debates are the main sources of data for this [article](#) and enable a thorough analysis of the manner in which female suffrage was attained in Mauritius at the time of British colonial rule. The consultation of the press archives of 1946 and 1947 also enabled the verification of evidence of the presence of any activities of women's organisations, women suffragists or women's voice on the topic. Print media were mainly owned and controlled by private individuals who were in favour of female suffrage. Hence, any women-led demonstrations for the right to vote would have been reported in the press.

An analysis of female suffrage in Mauritius also contributes to theorisation on the gender dimension of politics in plural societies. The paper is structured into a number of sections. Following on from the introduction, a brief section on the history of Mauritius outlines the diversity of the population. The next section analyses the status of women in the country under colonial rule, before moving on to an examination of communalism and constitutional change. The [article](#) then delves into a gender analysis of the constitutional debates on the introduction of female suffrage.

Mauritius: Historical Overview

Mauritius is a small island of 720 square miles, located in the south western Indian Ocean with a population of approximately 1.2 million inhabitants. The Island of Mauritius experienced successive waves of colonisers and did not have an indigenous population. Mauritius was first 'discovered' by the Portuguese in the first decade of the sixteenth century (Toussaint 1977). After the nominal occupation by the Portuguese during this century, the Dutch² attempted settlement when they initially landed in September 1598. From 1715 till 1810, Mauritius was a French colony and French settlers became the first permanent inhabitants of the island. Large numbers of slaves were imported from Mozambique and Madagascar and a few artisans were brought from southern India. The French settlement of the island was very

successful and led to significant development. The small group of French settlers became wealthy land-owners due to the development and exploitation of the sugar industry. The British took over in 1810 during the Napoleonic Wars. British colonial rule over Mauritius lasted from 1810 till the accession of Mauritius to independence in 1968. Indian immigrants were brought to the island as indentured labourers to work in the sugar cane fields, following the abolition of slavery in 1835. The arrival of Indian indentured labourers brought a radical and permanent change in the ethnic composition of the island: in 1853 they formed a tiny fraction of the population of 100,000, of whom 80,000 were slaves, but by 1861 they made up two-thirds of the inhabitants (Houbert 1981). Chinese immigrants began to settle on the island in the 1830s as free immigrants, but the Mauritian Chinese population is small. Each successive wave of immigrants added new layers to an increasingly complex cultural, socioeconomic and political milieu (Bowman 1991). Until recently, the small but powerful Franco-Mauritian elite controlled political and economic power in the island followed by the light-skinned Creole professional and middle class. Franco-Mauritians represented the bourgeoisie and remained a strong interest group throughout the island's history and they fought to preserve their political and economic interests with efficacy for many decades. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the dark-skinned Creoles and Indo-Mauritian labourers. The former slaves turned into artisans, carpenters, masons and fishermen. Class and ethnic divisions in the population of Mauritius hence remain very pertinent. Although the Mauritian nation is often referred to as a 'rainbow nation',³ in reality, it remains very fragile with a semblance of unity in diversity.

Women in Colonial Mauritius

Mauritius has been and still is a patriarchal society. Since the eighteenth century, the island had a strict demarcation of sex roles, supported by patriarchal forces that have been very resistant to change. During the colonial period, the status of Mauritian women was legally inferior to that of men, despite the fact that women played extremely important and diverse social roles. Discriminatory legislation included the 'Code Noir' and the 'Code Napoleon'. The Code Noir, proclaimed in 1724, defined the status of slaves and authorised masters and husbands to punish women slaves. The Code Napoleon⁴ or Napoleon's Civil Code of 1804 was adopted in 1808. This piece of legislation was characterised by severe patriarchalism and restricted women to the private sphere. It also imposed the status of minor on a married woman. Different groups of women in Mauritius were located in very different positions, primarily according to their class position, although ethnic identity also influenced women's experiences.

The majority of male-authored and male-biased writings on the history of Mauritius have failed to acknowledge women's contributions to the political and economic life of the country.⁵ Although documentation does not cover the lives of the wealthy white Franco-Mauritian women, research on the lives of female slaves and indentured workers clearly highlights the strength of patriarchy in Mauritian society, which had a bearing on all women in the colony. The Franco-Mauritian women were privileged in the sense that many of them lived in greater luxury, and financial resources allowed them easier access to education. The extent to which they were able to participate in the public sphere was however limited as women were still legally the 'inferior sex'. In the case of slaves, although both men and women were brought to Mauritius to work in the sugar cane plantations, female slaves suffered from sex-based disadvantages, where they mainly provided a pool of secondary labour from which the planters could draw (Teelock 1998). Women were considered as the 'weaker second' group working behind the main group, weeding and picking up left canes and leaves. Women slaves were also not able to use the sugar industry for their advancement since most of the jobs requiring skills were held by men (Teelock 1998).

Indian indentured female immigrants did not fare better than the former female slaves in terms of the work opportunities available to them. One of the central paradoxes of the female immigrant experience in Mauritius was that despite the fact that Indian women were brought as part of a labour importation scheme, they were considered marginal to the production of sugar (Carter 1994). It was rather the use of women to reproduce the workforce locally which was of particular importance. The Mauritian state realised that the importation of Indian women could lower labour costs by providing an indirect source of labour through the retention of Indian male workers in the colony and through the reproduction of the workforce closer to the plantations. Moreover, women's reproductive role, in the context of a gender division of labour in the family, was instrumental in ensuring and sustaining an agricultural labour force and underwriting cheap labour in the sugar export sector (Burn 1996). From the outset therefore, women's value for the colony of Mauritius lay in their domestic roles as wives and mothers and not in their labour power (Carter 1994, Burn 1996). Even when new female immigrants wished to be given the chance to earn their own wages by being contracted as indentured workers, they faced obstacles because of the opposition of male migrants and colonial officials who considered women's rightful place to be in the home (Carter 1994). Under nineteenth century Mauritian law, the state also treated women as the inalienable property of their husbands, thereby further restricting any attempt towards autonomy by women.

Women have thus been subjected to male authority and have experienced multiple levels of oppression for a very long period in Mauritius. They had to cope with a patriarchal state, legal discrimination and living within patriarchal family and community structures. Marriage was considered to be the definitive fate of girls and any focus on women was limited to their reproductive roles. Women also had little control over their own fertility and birth control primarily depended upon sexual abstinence, primitive forms of contraception, backstreet abortions and a high rate of infant mortality. Moreover, there was little concern for gender issues, except from the perspective of health, fertility and welfare (MAW/SARDC 1997). Education for girls started later than for boys in the early 1940s with access to education limited to the privileged few. Under colonial rule, education of girls was not deemed economically beneficial to society and girls were excluded from formal education to learn domestic skills at home. When female schools did appear, their functions were not the same as male schools (Alladin 1993). During that period, the education of non-white children was neglected as most schools operated a segregationist policy. It was only in the 1950s that the education of girls received more attention. The systematic educational disadvantaging of women is however believed to have affected women's self-perceptions, their ability to conceptualise their own situation and their ability to conceive of societal solutions to improve the prevailing state of affairs (Lerner 1993). This argument partly explains women's lack of agency in public and political issues in Mauritius.

The colonial period was also marked by an absence of an organised women's movement, a fact that stands out in the suffrage debates. A women's movement is important as it allows women to find their own voice and to express a feminist consciousness. Although Mauritian women have been involved in civil society since the early eighteenth century, the focus at that time was primarily on social, religious and cultural activities in specific communities. Each community sponsored or worked with specific associations, thereby highlighting the pertinence of class, ethnic and religious divisions among women in Mauritius. A number of socio-religious associations had women's branches for particular communities. Muslim women for instance, were involved in the Mauritius Muslim Ladies Association, formed in 1940 by Begum Hoorbai Rajabally (Emrith 1994:121). Hindu⁶ women were involved in the Arya Samaj movement⁷ since 1912 and in the Bissoondoyal 'Jan Andolan' movement⁸ since 1942. The Catholic church also had activities for Christian women, and a women's organisation, the 'Écoles Ménagères' was founded by Ms France Boyer de la Giroday in 1956 (Orlan 1980). Hence, although women were actually involved in civil society organisations in the pre-independence period, these were strongly connected to socio-religious organisations covering social, educational and welfare activities.

According to Lerner (1993: 274), 'feminist consciousness consists of:

- (i) 'the awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group and that, as members of such a group, they have suffered wrongs;
- (ii) the recognition that their condition of subordination is not natural, but societally determined;
- (iii) the development of a sense of sisterhood;
- (iv) the autonomous definition by women of their goals and strategies for changing their condition; and
- (v) the development of an alternate vision of the future.'

In the Mauritian context however, the segregation between women along class and ethnic lines compounded by the high level of illiteracy among women had the effect of separating them into interest blocs and identity groups. This was a major obstacle towards meeting Lerner's (1993) conditions for the development of feminist consciousness. For a women's movement to have the ability to present its demands clearly and forcefully, it needs to have a considerable degree of unity, at least on a few major issues (Bystydzienski 1992). Women's groups need to be willing and able to work together towards getting their demands endorsed.

Furthermore, due to widespread poverty and illiteracy of the majority of Mauritian women as well as their confinement to the household, these women were poorly placed to develop feminist visions. The strong patriarchal culture and women's inferior legal status at the time also constrained women's activism and even today many women experience stiff opposition from their men folk. Gender differences in access to economic resources and limited employment opportunities for women with low levels of literacy meant that very few women dared abandon or critique patriarchal authority. For women to move on to more participatory roles, they need to understand the mechanics of participation and become aware of their potential influence on community and national affairs (Huston 1979). In fact, societal changes such as a decline in infant mortality, maternal death rates, number of births, an increase in life span and access to education, which allow substantial numbers of women to live in economic independence, are crucial to the development of feminist consciousness (Lerner 1993). However, because of the way they have been structured into patriarchal institutions, their long history of educational deprivation and economic dependence on men, it was very difficult for Mauritian women to develop a feminist consciousness.

Communalism and Constitutional Change

The Mauritian colonial state has been characterised as an ‘African anomaly’ because, unlike other African colonies that were dominated by a small state dependent on indigenous strongmen for the control of local populations, Mauritius had a large and centralised state apparatus with direct and formal control over the entire colony (Lange 2003). Mauritius obtained its first constitution with an elective system as early as 1885, while it was still a British colony. The 1885 Constitution which remained effective until 1948 was the result of the French planters’ demand for a better elective legislature. It was also the first step towards some form of democratic governance in Mauritius (Mathur 1991). The 1885 Constitution provided for male suffrage (men above the age of 21) with educational and high property qualifications that excluded the near totality of the Indian immigrants and their descendants as well as the former slaves and their descendants, from political participation. The 1885 Constitution also denied women the right to vote, although wealthy women could be represented by their husband or eldest son if widowed. Since social institutions at that time limited women’s education, and the law treated them as minors, women might have been denied the suffrage on the same grounds as uneducated or propertyless men. Women’s natural inaptitude for public affairs was another factor that was later used to justify their absence from the political sphere. It has been argued that the 1885 Constitution remained effective for the relatively lengthy time span of sixty years because it strengthened the power of the Franco-Mauritian and Creole elites and enabled them to remain in control of politics (Simmons 1982). The 1930s witnessed agitations of the working class, especially by the poor Creoles and the Indo-Mauritians and calls were made for a better representation of their interests in parliament. Labour organisations were formed, the most important being the Mauritius Labour Party, which was also a political party. These organisations campaigned for a revision of the Constitution to cater for the interests of the working classes and also lobbied for male adult suffrage. They believed that social and economic reforms could only materialise with constitutional reform. The formation of the Mauritius Labour Party and the rise of Indian intellectuals on the political scene eventually altered the political configuration of the colony.

In 1939, Lord Dufferin, parliamentary undersecretary of state for the colonies, officially suggested the necessity of constitutional reform in Mauritius (Simmons 1982). However, the class and ethnic divisions in the Mauritian population caused constitutional reform to be concurrently an antagonistic issue and a political question. The Franco-Mauritians and well-to-do coloureds were resistant to any change which would endanger their

political authority. The Indians and Creoles on the other hand, sought constitutional change to grant them access to political power. In February 1945, the Governor put forward a draft proposal for a new constitution where he mentioned the importance of balanced representation, i.e. no community should feel that it was not represented or was inadequately represented in Council. However, the proposed qualifications for the franchise were restricted to adult males of the age of 21 and were still high in terms of property and education. The Governor set up a Consultative Committee in 1945 to solicit the views of different sections of the Mauritian population on his draft constitution. This committee was characterised by heated debates between the conservatives (Franco Mauritians and well-to-do coloureds) and the Mauritius Labour Party (MLP) which was representing the interests of the working class (Indians and Creoles). Despite the post-war changes which carried new ideals of freedom and democracy, the conservatives were opposed to any fundamental legislative reform and preferred the introduction of gradual changes in order to maintain social stability. They considered the masses or working class to be politically immature and hence, incapable of making a judicious selection of parliamentary representatives (Dukhira 2002). Indo-Mauritian intellectuals and Creole trade union leaders lobbied for male adult suffrage and the removal of the educational qualification for the right to vote. The conservatives proposed reserved seats, female suffrage and for voters to have the Standard VI educational certificate. Simmons (1982) argues that the main problem in Mauritius, as in other colonies with plural societies, was to reconcile majority rule with minority rights. Communal representation was a tricky issue since it carried the risk of exacerbating existing conflicts.

In 1947, Governor Mackenzie-Kennedy set up a second Consultative Committee after the receipt of the draft constitution from the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Varma 1975). The latter was in favour of more extensive reforms in the new Constitution. The new proposals included plural voting, female suffrage, franchise for ex-service men and pensioners, additional powers to the Governor, an increase in the number of members of the Executive Council and the appointment of a Speaker to preside over the Council. The conservatives opposed the quest for universal suffrage because of the illiteracy of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants at that time. They were, nevertheless, strongly in favour of the grant of franchise to women, although this was restricted to women who had the Standard VI educational qualification. At that time, almost all Franco-Mauritian and very few privileged coloured women had the Standard VI Certificate (Dukhira 2002). As such, the proposal for female franchise at the same time entailed both a class and an ethnic bias. Colonial authorities worked out a compromise from the proposals of the divergent parties and as such, educational

qualifications for the franchise were lowered and female suffrage was also granted. On 5 June 1948, the Mauritius Letters Patent instituting the new Constitution came into effect and the Council of Government was dissolved. The franchise was extended indiscriminately to all adults, male and female aged 21 and above who could pass a simple literacy test in any language spoken in the country.⁹ Although many Indians were unable to meet the literacy or property requirements, most of the new voters were Indian, whereas 23 percent were women (Simmons 1982).

Female Suffrage in Mauritius

Mauritian women's access to political citizenship began with the advent of female suffrage under British colonial rule in 1948, following the adoption of the new Constitution. The Mauritian situation evokes interest because women obtained the right to vote, albeit with literacy requirements but on equal terms with men, twenty years prior to independence. The catalyst for this change was the widespread demand for the democratisation of the electoral system in national politics to permit a more equitable representation of all segments and strata of the population. The new Constitution simultaneously provided women with both the right to vote and to stand for election although the franchise for men and women carried literacy qualifications at that time. Universal adult suffrage only became a reality in 1958, a decade after women were first given the right to vote. Mauritian historians¹⁰ however focus extensively on the class struggle and the struggle for male adult suffrage during the 1940s whereas female suffrage is mentioned only in passing. Yet, the issues that evolved from the process leading to female suffrage warrant greater attention. The vote was the first step towards women's equality and citizenship that had been given substance without creating disorder.

Unlike their foreign sisters, Mauritian women did not have to fight for the right to vote as the political system gave them this right. In fact, female suffrage was neither a reward for women engaging in any kind of freedom struggle nor was it the result of suffragists' campaigns for the right to vote. The majority of Mauritian women were subjugated on the social, educational and legal levels, and were not given the space and opportunity to publicly voice their opinion on the suffrage debate. Women were thus not in a position to fight for personal freedom as Mauritius was a highly closed patriarchal society at that time. Moreover, in the absence of a formal structured women's movement, women were considered to be silent over the whole issue. This 'silence' was interpreted as a lack of interest in politics on the part of women. Through force of circumstances, the suffrage may not have triggered significant interest among the vast majority of working class women who were preoccupied with the problem of making ends meet and were also

isolated from the institutions of political power. Given women's inferior rights and status at the time and the fact that most men did not have the franchise, it was very difficult especially for working class women to engage in any kind of struggle for female suffrage. Furthermore, no effort was made to mobilise women and educate them on the importance of politics. A few women from privileged backgrounds did articulate their opinion in the press, but these were isolated pieces and did not reflect any activity of an organised movement. Under such conditions, the achievement of female suffrage a decade before the proclamation of universal adult franchise seems somewhat a paradox.

The richest sources of information on the achievement of female suffrage in Mauritius are the constitutional debates of the 1940s. These debates were integrally reproduced in the 1946 and 1947 press and show that women's suffrage was the source of contestation between men of different class interests. They also highlight the strong patriarchal culture and degree of female subordination. The relative 'silence' of Mauritian women over the whole issue was also highlighted in these debates. This discloses the capital importance of women's movements and women's political activism to safeguard women's interests, in the absence of which, the political arena and decisions on important political issues are monopolised by men.

Women's suffrage in Mauritius was a very controversial issue because it became inextricably intertwined with the broader and highly emotional discussions of overall electoral and constitutional reform. These discussions were particularly heated because they had the potential to affect the political power of the different social groups in the country. Parliamentary politics was polarised between the Franco-Mauritian conservatives and the MLP, representing the interests of the working class. In the 1940s, representatives of the working class (Indo-Mauritians and Creoles) sought male adult suffrage to ensure a fair representation of their interests in parliament. The principal goal of the Mauritian male suffragists was to abolish property and educational requirements for the right to vote, thereby enabling working class adult males to become voters and be represented in parliament. The question of female suffrage based on property and educational qualifications was brought up by Franco-Mauritian politicians as a proposal for the new Constitution which would widen the franchise, in line with the demands for Constitutional reform. The Indo-Mauritians and Creoles were strongly opposed to female suffrage despite their insistence on widening the franchise. They were particularly anxious to resolve the issue of universal male adult suffrage first and feared that women's suffrage would be used to tip the balance of power more favourably towards the elite Franco-Mauritian ethnic group. Moreover, the majority of Indo-Mauritian and Creole women did not own property, were

illiterate and, therefore, would not qualify for the franchise. Moreover, the new female electors were expected to cast their votes according to class and ethnic lines, which would be in favour of the Franco-Mauritian and Coloured politicians, leaving the Indo-Mauritians and Creoles no better off. There was no assumption of women being able to act as independent political agents and vote for candidates of their choice. The diversity of the population, high level of social inequality and diverging interests of the different groups thus led to a bitter contestation around both the male and female suffrage.

In the constitutional debates, masculine interests converged with class and ethnic interests to prevent women's suffrage. There was a firm defence of norms and beliefs that evoked the naturalness of male superiority. Female suffrage was unacceptable to many men, especially in the MLP which represented the Indo-Mauritians and Creoles, because it meant that some women would be voting before all working class men did. However, the normative expectations of femininity of the MLP and its supporters did not include women's participation in formal politics. The MLP asked for the introduction of universal male adult suffrage prior to female suffrage, arguing that there was a need to proceed in the 'natural way' with men becoming electors before women.¹¹ Men claimed to be more deserving of the franchise than women because of their participation in the formal sphere where workers were defined as male. Men were described as politically active, craving for political power and taking a keen interest in political matters as opposed to women.¹² It was argued that women did not attend political meetings and were 'slaves to the community and kept indoors by the drudgery of the household'.¹³ MLP politicians also stated that villagers found it very odd that women should be asked to come and take part in elections, thereby emphasising the secondary status attributed to women in Mauritian society. These all-male debates revealed that women were naturally associated with the domestic sphere, engaged in activities such as housework, reproduction, nurturing and care of the young, sick and elderly. Women's seclusion in the private sphere was even used as an argument to deny them political citizenship.

The absence of a women's lobby or struggle for the right to vote was brought up strongly in the constitutional debates. MLP representatives stated that female suffrage was delaying the introduction of male adult suffrage because women had not asked for the franchise.¹⁴ In fact, some MLP parliamentarians found no rationale in giving women the franchise without any struggle¹⁵ and argued that women did not show sufficient interest in the political affairs of the country.¹⁶ The men claimed that Mauritian women did not want the vote and would shun the ballot box. Women's status at that time also influenced perceptions of political engagement. MLP members expressed concern over the fact that married women did not have full civil

rights and that this situation could influence their vote.¹⁷ Although the party eventually approved of the franchise being given to all women, MLP representatives insisted that men should be enfranchised before women got the vote. This was despite the MLPs acknowledgement of women's mass participation and presence with banners in the foundation meeting of the MLP in 1936.¹⁸

Despite the intense opposition to female suffrage, Mauritian women eventually obtained the right to vote in 1948 based on literacy qualifications. The new constitution extended the franchise to all adults who could pass a simple literacy test in any language spoken in the country. Universal adult suffrage was only proclaimed in 1958. The proclamation of women's suffrage in the British metropole in 1918 also influenced Mauritian politics. The Governor of the Colony of Mauritius found it unfair to deny the franchise to women on the basis of sex. Following the advent of female suffrage, MLP Indo-Mauritian politicians and intellectuals did very little to provide women the necessary tools and knowledge to qualify as voters.¹⁹ The Hindu missionary, Basdeo Bissoondoyal, took up the task of teaching Indo-Mauritian men and women to read and write and special literacy classes were held for women.²⁰ At the time of the 1948 elections, the country had about 15,000 registered female electors (Dukhira 2002:96).

The 1948 elections had a first woman candidate, Ms Marie-Louise Emilienne Rochecouste, a Franco-Mauritian woman who was a government primary school teacher. She left her teaching job to join active politics and came second in the Plaines Wilhems-Black River regions, gaining 9,329 votes from 20,904 voters (Benedict 1965). Ms Marie-Louise Emilienne Rochecouste was elected as the first Mauritian woman legislator. There is unfortunately very little recorded information on Ms Rochecouste, except that she had a bourgeois background and took an active interest in politics. There is also no evidence of her being a member of any women's organisation. Despite its opposition to female suffrage, at its meeting of 11 July 1948, the MLP executive committee agreed to sponsor Ms Rochecouste, among other male candidates. This decision to sponsor a woman candidate was a strategy aimed at wooing women's votes. Since a number of women had acquired political citizenship and were empowered to select their representatives, it became important for the MLP to adopt a new image given its earlier opposition to female suffrage. Surprisingly, the Franco-Mauritian and coloured conservatives who had championed the cause of female suffrage did not sponsor a single woman candidate for the 1948 elections. This shows that they expected women to vote along class and ethnic lines but not to stand for election. Following these elections, another woman, Mrs Denise De Chazal – a Franco-Mauritian woman – was selected to form part of the 12 nominated members of

parliament. Mauritius thus had two women MPs in 1948, one elected and the other nominated.

Although the main divisions in Mauritian society along class and ethnic lines had a major bearing on the debates over female suffrage, the high degree of resistance can also be explained by the fact that female suffrage was perceived as a threat to patriarchal authority, especially by the working class Indian and Creole sections of the population. To a certain extent therefore, women's suffrage created sex antagonism as it implied that a group of women would be voting before all men were allowed to do so, which was unconventional in the male-ruled Mauritian society of the 1940s where women were legally and socially minors. The right to vote would upset the status quo as it provided women with an opportunity towards public standing as individuals, which was independent of their general subordination as women, especially as wives in the private sphere. However, the franchise gave women little recognition as fully fledged citizens as they did not have the same rights as men.²¹ Women were also quick to take up the newly available opportunities and rise to political positions, following the franchise, albeit in a limited number. Thus, women's apparent 'silence' over female suffrage did not mean that all women were passive. It was rather the absence of an organised women's movement to promote a feminist consciousness, low levels of literacy among women and the fact that women did not constitute a unified group due to class and ethnic divisions, which made it difficult for women to exert any form of agency over the suffrage issue at that time. Moreover, since female suffrage was attained much before independence, the Mauritian experience differs from that of most former colonies in the African continent, where female suffrage and women's right to stand for elections were proclaimed on the attainment of political independence. Mauritius is thus, to a certain extent, a pioneer in the developing world in terms of providing women with the franchise on an equal basis as men at an early stage.

Conclusion

Mauritius presents itself as an interesting case study on the gender dynamics of the politics of plural societies. Despite the strong patriarchal culture prevalent in colonial Mauritius, a class of women were granted political citizenship on an equal basis as men and women were elected to parliament prior to independence in an absence of any form of women's agency on this issue. Indeed, the Mauritian case study indicates that in plural societies which have multi-ethnic populations and a political arena which is acutely dominated by concern for ethnic and class representation, issues pertaining to women's rights and political representation are easily sidelined or are promoted for a cause other than a genuine concern for the empowerment of women. In

these societies, the presence of a strong women's movement or united women's front becomes imperative to safeguard women's interests and rights. In the Mauritian case, an absence of a women's lobby or 'voice' in the suffrage debates facilitated the marginalisation of women's concerns. In fact, the lack of women's organisations and women's rights in society supports the idea that women were assumed to vote like their men. Female suffrage also created sex antagonism as a group of women were granted the franchise before all men had been enfranchised, despite women's inferior status in Mauritian society. A class of women were thus, indirect beneficiaries of the ethnic and class tensions prevalent in Mauritian politics and society during the 1940s, despite the absence of any formal and genuine policy geared towards women empowerment.

Notes

1. Texts studied here include Bowman (1991), Dukhira (2002), Juggernaut (1993), Mannick (1979), Mathur (1991), Moutou (2000), Simmons (1982), Toussaint (1977), Varma (1975) and Varma (1976).
2. The Dutch settlement lasted from 1610 till 1710 (Toussaint 1977).
3. The Mauritian population is presently composed of four ethnic groups and four major religious groups, namely, the Franco-Mauritians and Creoles who are Catholic; the Indian community, Muslim and Hindu; and the small Chinese community, either Buddhist or Catholic. The Franco-Mauritians, Hindus, Muslims and Chinese have retained cultural ties to their original homelands, whereas the Creoles who are descendants from the slaves brought to Mauritius from East Africa have no such ties (Simmons 1982).
4. The Code Napoleon, backed by the Catholic Church and enacted in 1804, classified married women with children, the insane and criminals as politically incompetent. It restricted women's legal and civil rights, made married women economically and legally subject to their husbands and declared that they belonged to the family, not to public life. This legislation also forbade women to attend political meetings or to wear trousers (Lerner 1993).
5. A few woman-authored texts (Carter 1994, Teelock 1998) document the activities of Indo-Mauritian and slave women in the colonial era but most writings on the history of Mauritius are male authored, male biased and tend to marginalise women.
6. These activities involved Hindu women from the Aryan group. The Hindu population in Mauritius of the Sanathan faith is also large. Both groups are Hindus but practice religious rituals in a different manner.
7. The Arya Samaj Movement was based on the teachings of Maharishi Dayanand who emphasised equal rights in marriage for men and women. The Arya Samaj movement launched its first women's association in Vacoas in 1912, geared towards promoting education among women and a school for girls was opened in the village of Bon Accueil in 1922. In 1931, the group launched another women's association in Port Louis. It also held conferences for women in 1933, 1965 and 1970. At present the movement has fifty women's organisations in Mauritius, which encourage Vedic prayer, provide

- education and encourage women writers (Arya Samaj in Mauritius: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arya_Samaj_in_Mauritius, accessed on 10.06.08).
8. The Jan Andolan movement was launched by the Bissoondoyal brothers -- Basdeo and Sookdeo. It aimed at defending the cause of people of Indian origin, the promotion of Indian culture and literacy among the Indians and the propagation of Indian languages. The movement opened more than 300 voluntary Hindi schools all over the island between 1944 and 1949 and is renowned for its 1948 literacy campaign (Bissoondoyal 1990).
 9. The languages spoken in Mauritius at that time included English, French, Gujurati, Hindustani, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Chinese and the Creole Patois.
 10. Bowman (1991), Dukhira (2002), Juggernauth (1993), Mannick (1979), Mathur (1991), Moutou (2000), Simmons (1982), Toussaint (1977), Varma (1975) and Varma (1976).
 11. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (23.01.47).
 12. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (23.01.47).
 13. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (06.02.47).
 14. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (06.02.47).
 15. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (28.01.47).
 16. The struggle of suffragists in the UK was discussed and compared with Mauritius (*L'Oeuvre*, 18.11.46).
 17. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (11.03.47).
 18. *Le Cerneen-Le Mauricien-Advance* (15.03.47).
 19. Simmons (1982), Juggernauth (1993).
 20. Basdeo Bissoondoyal founded schools for Indian culture and language and contributed significantly towards educating Indo-Mauritian men and women so that they could vote in the 1948 elections (Bissoondoyal 1990).
 21. Women had the status of 'minors', were subordinate in marriage and were voting while still being considered as men's dependents rather than citizens of their own entitlement.

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Feminist Activism, Economic *Carte Blanche*, Political Control, Symbol and Symbolism: A Historical Interpretation of the *Kelu* Women Revolution in Bu-Cameroon, 1957-59

Henry Kam Kah*

Abstract

The centrality of women in the opposition of male domination and subjugation in colonial Africa was a fall out of decolonisation which quickened after World War II. Within this epoch, the Laimbwe women of Bu in North West Cameroon launched a virulent attack on men and their institutions. The intention was to achieve economic freedom and political control. An effective mechanism of operation, using traditional bodily symbols, was put in place and the result was a neutralisation of the overbearing and imposing influence of men and their institutions respectively.

Key Words: feminist, activism, symbolisation, symbolism, revolution, resistance, Laimbwe, Cameroon.

Résumé

L'une des conséquences de la décolonisation qui s'est accélérée à la fin de la deuxième Guerre mondiale est la centralité des femmes dans l'opposition contre la domination et la subjugation par hommes en Afrique coloniale. Pendant cette période, les femmes Laimbwe de Bu fondom au nord-est du Cameroun avaient lancé une attaque virulente sur les institutions telles que le *Kuiifuai* dominées par les hommes. Leur intension était d'obtenir leur liberté économique et le contrôle politique sous l'administration coloniale. Un mécanisme efficace d'opération se basant sur les symboles physiques traditionnels était mis sur pied, résultant à une neutralisation de l'influence démesurée des hommes et de leurs institutions.

* Department of History, University of Buea, Cameroon.
Email: ndangso@yahoo.com

Introduction

The African continent during the colonial era witnessed the emergence of persistent pressures on rural communities for labour and natural resources to serve the needs of the expanding urban population as well as the expanding industrial complexes in Europe. This turn of events coincided, and in some cases, led to a firm resolve among women of different African countries to tackle poverty and disease, as well as participate in decision making in the new colonial dispensation. During this same epoch, urban women and children in some African countries were stressed up by the capitalist forces of their colonial power. Unable to bear this pressure *sine die*, some of these women mobilised and developed different stratagems to repel economic and political domination of the men folk in different colonial dependencies in sub-Saharan Africa, notably Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Cameroon (Ifeka-Moller 1975; Kanogo 1987; Kah 2011).

The pre-colonial situation in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa was generally different. It offered women opportunities to actively participate in the stages of production. Conversely, many of them were relegated to domestic chores during the colonial era because of a new economic superstructure that projected men to the limelight. Some women, who continued to engage themselves in economic activities, observed that these activities were systematically deformed and devalued. The Baule women of Ivory Coast, for example, played a prominent role in yam and cloth distribution and were engaged in intercropping cotton in the yam fields in the pre-colonial era. They also spun and dyed thread which was then woven and marketed by men far and wide.

The advent of colonial rule in Baule made male weavers to import thread instead of depending on female spinners for its supply. Cotton was also introduced into the economy and the new seeds and technology were controlled by men (Etienne 1997:44). It became clear that the interdependence of men and women in the cotton industry was a thing of the past. Men controlled most of the activities hitherto handled by women. The result was open confrontation between men and women, not only in the Ivory Coast but also in other parts of colonial Africa like Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Kenya.

This development in Baule community led to women's loss of land rights and control of the productive process. Many of them were turned into employees instead of employers of men in the cotton fields and some were completely rendered powerless and unemployed. This scenario was reinforced by the growing availability of manufactured cloth purchased with proceeds from cash crops sale. These cash crops which included cotton, cocoa and coffee were controlled by men (Etienne 1997:44).

Similarly, in Kumasi Ghana, several African women were wholesalers of imported cloth in the 1950s. The situation turned sour towards the end of the decade because of the adverse political conditions under the government of Kwame Nkrumah. When the price of imported textiles rose sharply in the 1960s and there was a shortage in foreign exchange and a decline in the cocoa trade, many women traders suffered (Garlick 1971:102). The colonial and early post- independence eras thus had a very devastating impact on women. Meanwhile in Zimbabwe, like in British Southern Cameroons, after the Land Resettlement Programme, only men were given land while women were taught to handle home economics, cookery, small scale craft and related projects (Jacobs 1984:48; Adams 2006). This programme was gender insensitive and women took it with a pinch of salt. In Zimbabwe and Zambia, party women's wings were founded only as adjuncts of the main parties in the pre-independence period (Tordoff 1997:103). These parties were largely controlled by men, with women playing secondary roles. The story in Yorubaland is an exception to the rule because women were fairly independent of their husbands (Onwuejeogwu 1992:24-5). They traded in goods without the intervention and subjugation of their male counterparts who were instead farmers.

On the contrary, women in many matrilineal societies like Bu in Menchum Division of North West Cameroon were rather economically and politically freer than those in patrilineal societies during the pre-colonial period. Although Bu was a matrilineal polity, women's politico-economic freedom during the colonial period was limited. They however retained rights over children, which are customarily not transferred during marriage within the Laimbwe ethnic group to which Bu belongs. Children are part and parcel of the mother's lineage. The locus of effective authority within this matrilineal society is usually not the father but the mother's brother or the child's maternal uncle. In such societies, the status of women in the domestic domain is usually higher. Based on this premise, the women of Bu were intent on attaining greater economic freedom and political leadership when they launched the *Kelu* revolution of 1957.

As the revolution unfolded, the women of (*Ehzele-ghalu*) *Kelu* reacted to their economic and political subjugation in coded or peculiar traditional symbols. The coded messages and language were directed to one another, to the men folk and leaders of the accompanying institutions, and to the church as an anti-traditional institution. This article interprets, from a historical point of view, the economic and political concerns of the *Ehzele-ghalu* resistance. It examines meaning into the bodily symbols that were part of this revolution in the evening years of British colonial administration in southern Cameroons.

Relevant Frame of Analysis

The universality of the wrangle over women's contribution to historical phenomena has brought to the limelight several contending but relevant postulations. Early advocates of theories like De Beauvoir (1952) argue that women play second fiddle to men. The reason advanced is that women are constrained to reproducing and sustaining life more than anything else. In this way therefore, it becomes difficult for them to perform other functions at their optimum. This contention, otherwise known as cultural dualism, emphasises the dual action of men celebrating but also denigrating women by virtue of what they think these women can and cannot do. Another theorist who wrote a pioneering work on women and development is Ester Boserup. An exponent of the social evolutionary school, Boserup (1970) argues that women are often relegated to the backward sector of the economy and deprived of participating in community wide decisions by a patriarchal system.

For the defenders of the dependency school like Martha Mueller (1977), the urban and landed elite create opportunities for men in towns who abandon women to community life back home. Exponents of the developmentalist school led, by scholars like Inkeles and Smith (1974), point to the separate development opportunities for men and women. They also argue that when women are opportune to gain employment, the ironic "benefit" they receive is the exploitation of their services and talents by the employer. Other very contemporary theorists include March et al (1999) who highlight four frames of analysis with regards to gender. These include the Harvard Analytical Framework, the People-oriented Planning Framework, Moser and the Women Empowerment or Longwe frameworks. These frameworks notwithstanding, the early theories are still relevant to the gender experiences the Laimbwe women of Bu were faced with during the colonial period and explain why they were relegated to the background within the colonial dispensation. The recent frames are also important because they raise awareness as to the overall advancement of every member of the society.

Some scholars have also been concerned with the different meanings surrounding the body, sexuality and bodily practices. With regards to bodily practices, Connerton (1989:74) argues that in all cultures much of the choreography of authority is expressed through the body. Smith (1997:184-6) generally describes dress which is worn on the body as a people's shared views and experience on a complex set of items. He discusses what obtains among the Kuba, Turkana, Igbo and Frafra of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana respectively in this regard. These societies contextualise several issues pertaining to the body and the use of it. On his part, Roberts (1997:192) describes symbolism as that which evolves with

time and meaning too. He posits that symbols are used to express a people's dynamic worldview. These are indeed the basis of any ritual, religious, political or economic understanding which is however always subjected to debate, depending on different experiences.

Besides, symbols and meanings have also been examined by Davis, Bordo (1997:2), Frank (1993) and Crawford (1984:80) who argue that bodies are used for self expression so that people become who they would like to be. According to Davis (1997:7) and Bordo (1993) the female body is the object of processes of domination and control. It is also the site of women's subversive practices and struggles for self determination and empowerment. Meanwhile, Frank (1990:133) contends that the body is the 'only constant in a rapidly changing world and has remained the source of fundamental truths about who people are and how society is organised.'

It is true that the body has been subjected to different interpretations. The fact however remains that the Laimbwe women used their bodies, gesticulations and other symbols to protest against domination in the colonial period and to assert their own self determination and empowerment in economic and political matters. This could not have been achieved without recourse to certain 'deadly' bodily practices to frighten the men who had gained undue fame and prominence within the colonial system. The women argued that these privileged men needed to be brought under control so that they could regain their positions of freedom. That is exactly what happened in the *fondom* or chieftom of Bu between 1957 and 1959 when, among other things, *Kelu* women justified the need for economic freedom.

The Rationale for Economic *Carte Blanche*

The *Ehzele-ghalu* used the *Kelu* revolution of 1957 to address burning economic issues that affected them. One of these issues was the implementation of new farming rules and regulations. The women were unswerving in their resolve to maintain the old form of slope-wise and not the newly introduced horizontal cultivation of crops. The insistence on the implementation of this method of crop cultivation was at the centre of the women revolution which was ignited from Njinikom-Kom and engulfed some areas of the Bamenda grassfields. Two years earlier, that is, in 1955, the Endeley government enacted a law on farming rules and regulations for British Southern Cameroons.¹ Two years later, the Wum Divisional Native Authority Council (WDNAC)² under the leadership of Chia Kiyam Bartholomew, a representative of the Kom Clan Council to the WDNAC, decided to implement this government policy to the letter.³ According to the 1955 farming rules and regulations, slope wise crop cultivation was prohibited in favour of horizontal cropping or cultivation across contours.

The government presented arguments in support of the reform in farming regulations but the impact was disastrous in Bu village (Kah 2004, 2011). The government argued that slope wise cultivation led to erosion of the cultivated beds and destroyed crops. The end result was a poor harvest, hunger, strife and disease. Horizontal ridging was advantageous because running water and other nutrients were trapped within the furrows of cultivated crop beds for plant nourishment. This new farming method was strange to the women who stuck to the old method. They 'pitched their tents' with the opposition Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) against the ruling Kamerun National Congress (KNC) in Southern Cameroons. The traditional philosophy of providing food and meat to the child, *Wuai, Nyengui, Kesiazheh*,⁴ (child, bush meat and food) which was a guiding philosophy of the people in their communion with nature was threatened by what they considered as the callous attitude of the leadership of the WDNAC.

Furthermore, the *Kelu* women (*Ehzele-ghalu*) were disenchanted with the government restrictions of farming within the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve which in 1923 covered a surface area of 13,440 acres.⁵ The people were also prevented from exploiting God given resources there. Throughout the period from after the First World War, the colonial government demarcated farmland from the forest reserve with boundary stones. Anyone who ventured into the reserve for clandestine exploitation of its resources was rough handled by forest guards, some of whom were sons of Bu.⁶ The revolt was also fuelled by Sylvester Foy, the Wum Native Authority Forest Guard who was in charge of the Kom-Wum Forest Reserve by 1958.⁷

The anger expressed by the Laimbwe women, the prime movers of agricultural productivity, boiled over in 1957. They questioned the restriction imposed on land which, in the pre-colonial days, was exploited freely by all and sundry. Besides, they wanted to redouble their farm sizes by extending their farms into the Kom-Wum Forest Reserve to keep pace with the increasing population. These women then joined forces with their counterparts of the kin village of Mbengkas (Eh, Mbeka) who took the lead in flouting boundary restrictions by removing the boundary stones. They were bent on resisting colonial exploitation with the last iota of their energy for economic freedom. Although some of their ring leaders like Njughekai, Esa-ah Fueh Induum, Kebwei Mbonghelesam, and Ngem Ibo-oh (from Mbengkas) and Kebwei Zei, Fuehlejheh, Musso Mbong, Futele Chou, Sangah Buh, Naiisi, and Ngwo Ndai (from Bu) (Kah 2004:32) were interrogated in the Wum court for disobeying authority,⁸ it was clear that the women were on a journey of no return as far as their freedom to exploit natural resources in the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve was concerned.

In addition, they were unhappy with the fact that although men did little farm work, the decision on when the farming or harvesting season commenced came mostly from them. This decision in the past was based on consultations with the *Zhehfuai* or Queen Mother. She was the main person who defended women's interest in male clubs and associations. The major point of dissatisfaction to the *Ehzele-ghalu* was that women representation and influence was trifling, compared to men. They contended that as the majority, they deserved the right to freedom in decision making on matters related to farming and harvesting, without any recourse to men for approval. This explains why during the *Kelu* revolution of 1957 to 1959, women leaders gave instructions relating to crop cultivation without turning to men for approval.

The entire control of the economy would have gone to women had the initial force of the revolution not dissipated in 1959. After the three years of revolt, women began, but slowly, to play an instrumental role in many economic related matters in Bu. Rigid laws on farming and harvesting of crops emanating from men are issues of the past. Women largely control economic issues, especially those related to the rice economy (Kah 2011a; Kah forthcoming). The *Kuifuai* male regulatory society still, however, advises on farming related matters but does not dictate to women farmers. Many of the women are very conscious of their rights and duties to the extent that any interference is likely to lead to revolt.

The Laimbwe⁹ women were discriminated against in the ownership of land and property during the colonial era although, today, the story is slightly different. The colonial enterprise regarded men as controllers of land. It was common practice that men cleared a virgin forest, divided the farm into a number of plots which were distributed to the wives, sisters, mothers, aunts and girl friends or concubines. The men owned the farms because ultimate power and/or decision on what to do with these farms rested on them.¹⁰ In 1957, women seized the opportunity and attacked men for their egoistic and land grabbing tendencies. Tradition had placed men in this position but the *Kelu* revolution challenged this *status quo*. From 1957, women demanded to have the right to own land and the sylvan wealth therein.

The long run impact was that women came to own, not only land, but also houses of their own. Some widows and ex-wives are doing it alone and helping themselves and their children today in Bu village. Divorce is gradually complimenting concubinage, a product of family cleavages unleashed by the age-old chieftaincy row in the village (Kah 2008). This gradual change in the sociological environment is giving female headed households greater freedom in economic activities of their own.

Besides, men and women were engaged in different economic activities with unequal fortunes (see Table 1). Men generated income from animal trapping, hunting and timbering in the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve, fishing in the Rivers Muteh and Menchum and their tributaries, mat and bag weaving, blacksmithing, pig and goat rearing and palm oil production. Some of them cultivated upland rice which came in from Abakaliki Nigeria.¹¹ Some of the other activities, especially palm oil production, farming and rice cultivation, were overwhelmingly in the hands of female labour. In farming *exempli gratia*, apart from male participation in clearing the virgin bush, the difficult task of cultivation and harvesting was reserved for the womenfolk.

Table 1: Gender Division of Labour in Bu by 1957

Men's Activities	Women's Activities	Joint Activities
Trapping and hunting	Pottery	Farming
Mat and bag weaving	Basketry	Palm oil production
Lumbering	Palm kernel collection	Upland rice cultivation
Pig and goat rearing	Charcoal burning	
Blacksmithing		
Bricklaying		
Fishing		

Source: Compiled by Author from Field Interviews

From the table above, men did most of the income generating activities in the colonial era. Women were engaged in very few of these and could therefore not raise a substantial amount of money for the family. The story today is different because women are the main cultivators of rice which is the main cash crop in Bu. Most elderly men have retired from rice cultivation for coffee and animal rearing but these are, however, on a small scale. Even, weaving and lumbering which use to give them a substantial income are now on the decline because of other economically rewarding ventures out of the village like plantation labour in the South West Region of Cameroon and transportation of planks in the thick forests of the Littoral Region.

Meanwhile, in the farming activities, women gathered and burnt the trees and grass after the men had cleared the bush. They also tilled the soil with their hoes, planted food crops, did weeding of grass and harvesting of crops in due seasons.¹² Men usually gave them compensation for their toil and

sweat which was not considered commensurate to the services rendered. The *Kelu* uprising was then a struggle also for economic disentanglement. It was also an avenue for women to showcase how they were ingenious when it came to issues related to economic development. The fact that some men worshipped money made many women to think that they were slaves to these economic "hawks."

Contrary to the thinking of this category of men, women did a lot to provide for the basic needs of the entire family. Besides their active involvement in rice, maize, plantain, cocoyam, cassava and potato cultivation, women also collected palm kernels and nuts for sale in neighbouring Aghem. They also made refined pots with clay (Geary 1983:6) and baskets with material from bamboo.¹³ In spite of all these, men seldom cooperated with women in farm matters because they were preoccupied with economic activities like hunting and fishing. Only very little of what women toiled for was sold for an income. This explains why at times they were not able to meet up with their basic needs. Some men worked for money but used it up in the consumption of the locally distilled *ka-ang* (corn beer) or beer on "country Sundays" or traditional resting days (*Utu-oh-Metsche*). The year 1957 provided a safety valve for accumulated grievances to be diffused. The *Kelu* women (*Ehzele-ghalu*) were determined to banish the men and this was indicative of the kind of torments they had quietly gone through during the colonial years.

Furthermore, long distance trade and the movement of young energetic people to the plantations of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in the coastal region, soon after the Second World War, was sex selective. Only men moved with many of the long distance traders of palm kernels and mats to the Bafut, Abakwa (Abakpa), Bali, Mamfe, Kumba and Nkongsamba markets, stealing the show. Some of them stayed away for long periods depending on market conditions before returning home. Although some raised money which was used for marriage arrangements, others returned home worse off than the time they left.

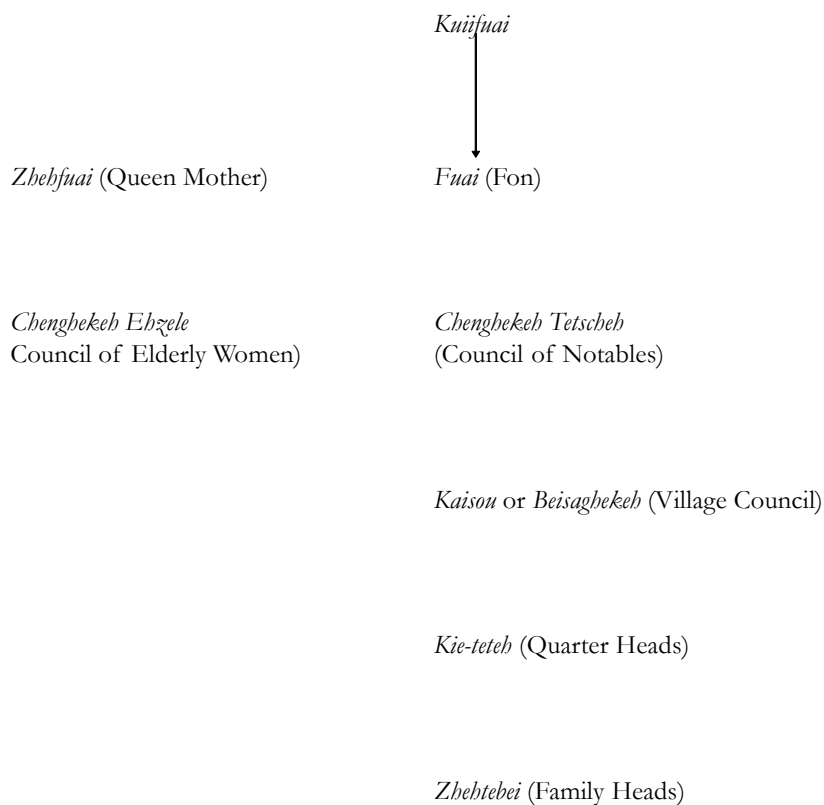
Among young men, it was also a common practice to seek a fortune in the colonial plantations. Since they were guided by the craving for hard currency, they did not go with their wives. While some were in the plantations, they got married to new wives to the disappointment and frustration of their former wives.¹⁴ The 1957 uprising of the womenfolk was partly a result of women discontent with this category of men. Many women wanted plantation workers who were already married to migrate to these plantations with their wives. If this was not possible, it was incumbent on them to provide money for their wives who remained home for the upkeep of the children.

Meanwhile, during the *Kelu* uprising, the *Ehzele-ghalu* maintained the freedom to collect food items from men and women for their regular feasts and to support the women of Kom who were also in revolt.¹⁵ Wombong in Njinikom, Kom was the seat of the *Kelu* movement resistance in the grassfields. The *Utootekpwei Wooteteh* or the quarter/ward leaders led the collection of different food items, notably maize, groundnuts, eggs and beans from the *Ehzele-ghalu* and sympathisers. Throughout this period, they were the only hens to crow so to speak. This freedom was complemented by the need to have political power that had eluded the women for a long time. Their activities had political undertones.

Political Undertones of the *Kelu* Revolution

In the political realm in Laimbweland, women were only partially involved in the decision making process. This was due to male chauvinism, promoted by the structure put in place by the colonial administration. The signal for greater women involvement in leadership matters was ignited by the Mbengkas women who did not only assert their authority but went to Bu to meet their counterparts. Their leaders were received with pomp and pageantry by an enthusiastic crowd of women from the different quarters of Bu, notably Ngohtebah, Fuleh, Nyachu, Fundong and Etei-ngoh.¹⁶ This year marked the beginning of women political leadership. The *Ehzele-ghalu* dictated the pace of events according to their whims and caprices. The table below shows the distribution of political power by 1957.

From the hierarchy of political power presented in Table 2, only the *Zhehfuai* was a noticeable and influential woman in a male dominated society. From *Kuiifuai* to the *Zhehtebei*, men were in control of the destiny of Bu. Women only indirectly influenced decisions and this depended on whether their husbands were in influential positions and willing to listen to them or not. They could also through the *Chenghekeh Ehzele* (Assembly of Women) put up a serious case for redress of a given situation or offence. Other avenues existed but there was a procedure to be followed before attaining a set objective.

Table 2: Power Distribution in Bu by 1957

Source: Compiled by Author from Field Research in August 2005

Besides, the *Kelu* women (*Ehzele-ghalu*) were determined to usurp the authority of the male regulatory society, *Kuiifuai*. In one instance in 1958, they buried Abuh Sangha, a member of the highest *Kuiifuai* lodge, the *Ikuum* and this made news.¹⁷ His burial was repugnant to tradition and custom and thus loathsome. It was indeed the very first time in the history of Laimbwe that the influential men of *Kuiifuai* were rendered impotent by women. During this time, some men took to their heels only to return after the revolution had subsided. Throughout the revolution, women seized power and authority. For three years, women determined the destiny of the fendom. They were those who decided matters of war, peace and order in the fendom. The political destiny of Bu became the preserve of the *Ehzele-ghalu* who controlled the affairs of the fendom.

The Presbyterian Church, Bu, also came under a virulent attack from the *Ehzele-ghalu*. The institution was described as a new form of authority that spelt doom for the women regulatory society, the *Kefa'a* (Kah 2004). Although some women embraced Christianity to shake off the shackles of subjugation by men, the church's doctrine was in opposition to the customs and practices of the people. The catechists preached against polygamy and regulatory societies describing them as heathen.¹⁸ The *Kelu* women therefore gunned for political power with which to suppress the church. The *Ehzele-ghalu* were of the contention that the church should not be allowed to continue its mission of converting Christians because this would negatively impact on traditional and vibrant women societies like the *Keseem*, *Ketem*, *Fumbweih* and *Kefa'a* to the point that they will dwindle into oblivion. With arrogant pride, dignity and interest therefore, the *Ehzele-ghalu* tried to maintain these societies, not only for the propagation of the culture of the Laimbwe but also for posterity. They sought after power to cripple the Presbyterian Church and what it represented.

Political power was also at the centre of the feminist activism in Bu, considering their support for the opposition KNDP in Southern Cameroons. Like their counterparts in Kom, the women gave support to the KNDP – praying that it should assume the mantle of leadership in southern Cameroons and support them in their quest for political leadership (Nkwi 2003). Although Bu village was the bastion of the ruling KNC, with men such as Rev. Thomas Ngong Amaazee, Daniel Atei Kungem and Andrew Ndo Muam (Kah 2003:111; Amaazee 2004:2) playing leading roles, the 'sleeping giant' in the women of Bu wanted an alternative leadership. They succeeded to hold on to leadership for three years. This awareness in a way contributed to the victory of the KNDP in the general elections of 1959 in Southern Cameroons.

In addition, the *Ehzele-ghalu* made public their intention of not only sidelining the traditional ruler and his Council of Elders but force Fon Chu Mbonghekan to abdicate the throne. The Fon was the subject of attack and ridicule in songs, speeches and ululations. He was considered a foreigner from Kung village in the Fungom Clan Area of Wum Division. This issue was also discussed by the Assistant District Officer (ADO) in the 1940s.¹⁹ The *Ehzele-ghalu* also accused the fon of taking problems of his subject to the Aghem Native Court instead of settling them amicably at home. Some of these women were annoyed with the fon's attempt to subjugate Nyo'oh Wei Induum (Tita Fonjong) and Wangwo Wei Tam, respected notables of the village and of the Ehzem and Eselemei lineages respectively. These two notables wielded enormous power in the affairs of the fondom. Nyooch Wei Induum, for instance, was too influential in lineage and village politics to the extent that no major decision could be taken without him endorsing it. The

Ehzele-ghalu counted on the support of these two personalities whenever they encountered some difficulties. Following the detention of some of the women leaders in Bamenda in 1958 for example, Nyoooh Wei Induum was one of those who travelled to Bamenda to secure their release.²⁰

The *Ehzele-ghalu* also extended the *Kelu* revolutionary spirit to their counterparts of neighbouring Befang and Aghem. While those of Befang quickly bought over the idea of a revolution, those of Aghem rejected it. Their resentment was fuelled by the fact that this sort of a revolt originated from Kom with whom they were arch-rivals in local politics in Wum Division. Around this period too, there was a subtle leadership feud between the politicians of Kom and those of Wum which impacted on the women of both areas.²¹ As long as the Kom women were also in revolt like their Laimbwe counterparts, the Aghem women refused to embrace it because it would have meant stooping low to their counterparts of Kom. The Aghem women tried unsuccessfully to convince the *Ehzele-ghalu* of Bu to stop the revolt.²² Although the *Ehzele-ghalu* did not succeed in winning over the Aghem women, they successfully pulled the Aguli (Kekuli) and Befang women towards them. The struggle for economic freedom and political control notwithstanding, the *Kelu* revolution was rich in symbol and meaning which were used to good effect.

Symbols and Symbolisation in *Kelu* Revolution

In the course of the women uprising of 1957-59, they used different symbols to communicate serious messages to men regarding their actions. Among the symbols and symbolic actions were the wearing of specific regalia, dry banana leaves, creeping plants, shirts and trousers. Besides, humorists among them painted their faces with wood ash and charcoal and other women sang weird songs and blew whistles.

The use of symbols and other bodily practices as a weapon of attack was not limited to the *Kelu* women of Bu. This was very common among the Kom, Babanki, and Mankon women during the colonial and post-independence periods (Nkwi 2003:159; Diduk 2004:32-35). In Kom, the *Anlu* women used different symbols like dresses, body adornment and other instruments to wade off men from subjugating them. Meanwhile, in Babanki, the women were disguised in old clothing, intentionally mix bright and often gavis colours, necklaces of old bottle tops or wild seeds and whistles (Diduk 2004:32). Some of them were in dried grass tied knots (Diduk 2004:34). In the case of the *Takembeng* women marches of the 1990s, following the reintroduction of multiparty politics, one woman would move ahead of the others with a small pot that contained protective medicine. The others who accompanied them carried stalks of the *nkeng* plant (Diduk 2004:35).

In addition, bodily practices have been used all over Africa from time immemorial. Following the Igbo women riot of 1929 for instance, the women gathered in front of Native Administration centres, putting on short loincloths and all carrying sticks wreathed with palm fronds. They all had their faces smeared with charcoal or ashes and their heads bound with young ferns. All this paraphernalia which was not known to the British was a symbolism for outright confrontation with them. The stick they used was to invoke the power of the female ancestors (Acholonu 1995; Van Allen 1997:314). In other African societies, other bodily practices have been part of their cultural practice from ancient times. The Kuba and other related groups of the Democratic Republic of Congo use camwood mixed with palm oil on the skin to enhance their beauty and the Igbo women of Nigeria paint curvilinear designs called *Uli* on their faces and torsos to demonstrate how beautiful and important they are (Smith 1997:185).

Since symbols and other bodily practices (Roberts 1997:192) are the stuff of culture and constitute the worldview of a particular group, the *Kelu* women of Bu used them to threaten and address issues which they had not been able to address directly. These symbols can better be appreciated within the socio-cultural cosmological and aesthetic environment of the Laimbwe people of the North West Region of Cameroon. The kinds of old dresses worn in a frightening manner conveyed unspoken messages to the *Ehzele-ghalu* and sent a dangerous signal to opponents of the revolution, many of whom were men. Some of the revolutionary *Ehzele-ghalu* disguised into male masquerades to take on and invade the realm of maleness (Kah 2011). These disguised male masquerades included the *Kembaikoh*, *Kooh* and *Mubuh* of the *Kuiifuai* prestigious lodge and *Mukwasuuh*, *Fuhsooh* (*Phesooh*) and *Kekikum*.²³ These were masquerades of the major lineages of Ehzem, Ukwosuuh and Eselemei respectively. The aim of disguising first into masquerades of the *Kuiifuai* lodge was a challenge to this institution and the yearning for the status of equality between women regulatory societies of the *Kefa* and *Kuiifuai*. It was aimed at ridiculing men and also demystifying the myth that men always attributed to these masquerades and the *juju* society as a whole.

The various multicoloured dressing of the *Ehzele-ghalu* also carried with it a lot of meaning not easily discernible from onlookers. Many of these revolutionaries wore dry banana leaves, creeping plants while others gallantly put on shirts and trousers traditionally reserved for men.²⁴ The wearing of dry and not wet banana leaves was a form of mourning for the difficult economic situation in which the colonial environment had placed them. Creeping plants play an important role in the Laimbwe society. These plants are important because they are used in lineage and community shrines to

cleansing people of ailments especially at the heart of the dry season. Leaves of these plants are squeezed in water for people to drink and for bathing sick children. By wearing these creeping plants, the women pointed to the need for a cleansing ritual that would re-establish the Laimbwe society to what it used to be where there was respect for all gender.

Besides, when women disguised in plantain leaves, they hid in strategic areas to collect information from passers-by which was used to devise new strategies for the success of the 1957 to 1959 uprising. The leaves and plants also provided comfortable bedding for women during night patrols, feasts and long tedious treks to Mbengkas, Baisso and Njinikom to meet with the women leaders there. Meanwhile, the wearing of men's clothing was a way to provoke them into misdemeanour so that they could be punished. It was even more a symbol of the shift of authority and leadership from men to what was considered women-men. This power of the dress was also symbolised in the kind of attires notables wore as community power brokers.

The revolting women also had their faces smeared with charcoal and wood ash like their Aba riot counterparts of 1929 (Ifeka-Moller 1975; Van Allen 1997:34). The use of charcoal and wood ash was no accident. It was an intended, determined, serious and frightening attempt to declare "war" and bring about change in a fendom that had been structured by the colonial authorities in such a way that men stood to benefit while women suffered. The dark charcoal was rubbed on faces to indicate the level of disenchantment the women had for the existing order of things in Bu. This was a very serious way of passing across a message to men, indicating that things were going the wrong way. The women also used compounds of recalcitrant men as public toilets. They urinated and defecated there. The stubborn men were extradited or ostracised and some of them only returned after a cleansing rite had been performed by the village leadership.

To forestall any frustration of their activities, the *Ehzele-ghalu*, like their counterparts in *Takembeng*, threatened to expose their vaginas to public view. The *Takembeng* women had, following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s, done this to scare the gun trotting police officers sent to maintain law and order in Bamenda, the regional headquarters of the North West. Kom women had within this same period threatened to expose their vaginas (Nkwi 2003; Kah 2012) on similar counts. The symbolisation in this threat of the vagina shows the central role of women in matters of procreation. Reverence for the vagina is reverence for the woman and her creator. A woman can lose all else but not her vagina which is representative of her entire womanhood. Women do not expose them carelessly and when this happens or threats are made to this effect, men take to their heels for they cannot abuse the part of the body that brought them to mother earth. In fact, in

contemporary Cameroon, the *Takembeng* women of Mankon, Bamenda, used the vagina as a weapon to lend support to the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party and dispel the gun trotting military men (Kah 2012).²⁵

The importance of the vagina as representative of an entire womanhood and a dangerous curse to men was not limited to the Cameroonian scenario. Among the Mende of Sierra Leone where tradition and custom is formally practised, men cannot stand the site of a woman's intimate private part. In this society, should a man look on voyeuristically at women while they bathe and were naked, wrath was expected to strike him. If he found himself in such an awkward situation, he would publicly confess and submit himself to a ritual cleansing (MacCormack 1997:94). Although today there is the abuse of this important part of a woman's body by both women and men, many are those who still do not want to abuse it, because of its potential to strike a devastating blow on the culprit.

Besides, in the course of the *Kelu* revolution, the *Ehzele-ghalu* sang weird songs and the whistles were part of their daily preoccupations.²⁶ The messages in these songs and bodily gesticulations were telling of the relationship between the traditional institutions and women. In one of these songs, the women wished Fon Chu Mbonghekang of Bu dead or forced into exile (Kah 2004). Some of the songs were in praise of Augustine Ngom Jua, a prominent politician of the KNDP of that generation from Njinikom. He had used his party's position to support the bid of Njinikom women to overcome the overarching influence of the colonial administration. Some of the issues the women addressed in the songs included the love for one another, justice, fairness, equality and respect for women. Meanwhile, the whistle was a rallying instrument for members, and was used to sanction culprits and cure the sick.²⁷ Furthermore, bamboos and sticks were used in the 1957 revolution. The bamboo was prestigiously handled by the *Tekpwei*, who were commanding leaders of a higher rank and the stick or the weep was for women leaders of a lower rank, otherwise called the *Basinji (Balinja)*. Unlike the Igbo women's sticks which were used to invoke the power of the female ancestors (Van Allen 1997:314), the bamboo among the Laimbwe was a symbol of authority and majesty which was used to incarcerate wayward people by the supreme commander, the *Tookete Kpwei*. The use of bamboos and sticks was also to instil order from among the ranks of the *Ehzele-ghalu* or the enemies of the women movement. In fact, the two symbolised power in unison which was also personified in a single sovereign, the *Zhehfuai* or Queen Mother.

Conclusion

The 1957 *Kelu* women revolutionary movement in Bu was a veritable outpouring of venom by the womenfolk because of the need for greater economic freedom and political control. Prior to this year, the colonial enterprise had relegated women to the background as far as political and economic issues were concerned. They used these revolutionary years to transform hitherto held perceptions that did not favour them into notions of freedom and participation. The *Kelu* women (*Ehzele-ghalu*) were uncompromising in their attack of institution and structures that were a hindrance to their freedom.

When this women revolt began, men under-estimated its seriousness and not long afterwards, the revolution gathered momentum and became a serious threat to the stability of the fondom. The kinds of instruments and bodily gesticulations employed by the *Ehzele-ghalu* were mechanisms of success put in place. These symbols and bodily practices radiated messages that facilitated coordination of the revolution and frightened the "all powerful" male institutions into submission. No wonder that even the most powerful male elderly institution like *Kuifuai* crumbled like a pack of cards and only resurrected after the revolt. Even the sanctuary of God was shaken to its very roots. Although the heat of this revolution evaporated three years afterwards, the post *Kelu* society in Bu was never to be the same again. Women became freer to engage in any economically rewarding activity and decision making processes of the fondom without male scornful looks.

Notes

1. This Southern Cameroons Agricultural Law of 1955 was captioned "A Law to Make Provision for Regulating the Planting and Growth of Agricultural Crops, for the Control of Plant, Diseases and Pests and for Matters Connected Therewith." This law was published in *Laws of the Southern Cameroons 1954, 1955 and 1956 Containing the Ordinances and Subsidiary Legislation of the Southern Cameroons*, National Archives Buea (NAB) Cameroon. Any individual who hindered or molested an Agricultural Officer or other person charged with implementing the law and who failed to furnish the required information was liable to either a fine of one hundred pounds or to six months imprisonment or both.
2. In actual fact, on July 21 1956, the Wum Divisional Authority Soil Conservation Rules were enacted to re-enforce the 1955 law. These rules contained eight main articles describing farm sizes, method of cultivation and restrictions to farmland. In article two for example, farms were to be divided by grass strips six feet wide across the slope on the line of the contour of the land into farming areas. In the fifth article, all cultivated ridges or beds in the farming areas were to be across the slope on the line of the contour of the land. The sixth article restricted farming within ten yards of any small stream, twenty yards of any large stream and thirty yards of any river bank. Those who contravened these rules were liable to a fine of up to ten pounds or two months imprisonment or both. These rules were approved and signed by J.O. field, Commissioner of the Cameroons on 13 August 1956 and went into operation on 1 October 1956. These

rules are contained in *Laws of the Southern Cameroons 1954, 1955 and 1956 containing the Ordinances and Subsidiary Legislation of the Southern Cameroons*, NAB.

3. Chia Kiyam Bartholomew, Njinikom, Personal Communications, 15 December 1997.
4. Within the Laimbwe community, the child is a precious pearl because he/she is an embodiment of the continuity of the lineage. The parents toil daily to provide food and meat to the child for a balanced intake. Women have a special attachment to this philosophy especially in matrilineally organised societies like Laimbwe.
5. File No. 772/22, Ad/14, Wum Assessment Report Bamenda Division 1923-1932, NAB.
6. Cleanboy Che and Peter Chengei, Bu, Personal Communication, 3 January 2003 and 15 May 2004. Cleanboy Che was a forest guard in the Kom/Wum forest Reserve for many years. Peter Chengei always accompanied him.
7. Letter from Sylvester Foy, N.A. Forest Guard in charge of the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve, 3 November 1958; Letter from Sylvester Foy, N.A. Forest Guard in charge of the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve, 4 December 1958; Letter from Sylvester Foy, N.A. Forest Guard in charge of the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve, 11 December 1958.
8. Njughekai, Mbengkas, Personal Communications, 3 January 2004. Mami Njughekai was a principal women leader or kpwei (sing.) in Mbengkas second only to Mabah Isoo. She was interrogated in Wum and threatened to be imprisoned for her role in spearheading the removal of the boundary stones of the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve. Fueh Isi and Kaifetai were prominent Tekpwei (plu.) of the Kelu.
9. Laimbwe (also Laimbue) when literally translated means "I say". The use of it is in reference to the fondoms of Bu (in Menchum Division), Mbengkas and Baisoo (in Boyo Division). These fondoms speak a common language. Laimbwe is also used to distinguish these fondoms (excluding their many satellites) composed of over 14,000 inhabitants. Read Muam Andrew Ndo "A Lecture on the Laimbwe People and their Culture: Traditional Way of Solving Conflict." If a census is conducted today the figure will certainly be higher. Estimates for Bu alone put the figure at over 10,000 inhabitants.
10. There was recently a protracted court case between Vilian Neme Sih and Andreas Kom nephew to Soppo Ndong, father of Neme Sih. Although the administration was backing her, it took a single action by the children of Andreas Kom to flush out Neme Sih from the land.
11. File No. Ci (1954) 1, December Report Wum Division, NAB.
12. Many informants (men and women) maintained that women played an important role in farming.
13. Salome Kaifetai and Fueh Isi, Bu, Personal Communications, 31 December 2002 and 7 January 2003.
14. Zacheus Zam, Limbe, Personal Communication, 9 September 2002. Zacheus Zam who is of late was a traditional medi-practitioner who left Bu for the coastal plantations in 1949.
15. Many of the women remembered with nostalgia how wonderful these occasions were.
16. Kule, Njuh, Bu, Personal Communication, 6 January 2003. She was one of those who witnessed the preparation and the coming of the *Kelu*.
17. This act frightened men and rendered them completely powerless in the face of the *Kelu* women.
18. The Rev. Pastors I spoke to confirmed this and said that the women even threatened them into abandoning the faith.

19. File No. 1b/1949/2, Petition by Bu Quarter Head and others, NAB.
20. Ngoisei, Fueh Isi and Lembwe Wei, Bu, Personal Communication, 7 January 2003.
21. When Augustine Ngom Jua pulled the population of Kom towards the KNDP, Jeremiah did same for the KNC as far as Wum was concerned. His party was in government at the time.
22. Salome Kaifetai and Fueh Isi, Bu, Personal Communications, 7 January 2003.
23. Anna Chou Wei and Ngoisei, Bu, Personal Communications, 2 and 7 January 2003. Anna Chou Wei is still a very active and a humorous woman.
24. Most interviewees shared this view.
25. This author was an eye witness to this when he was a student in Longla Comprehensive College in Bamenda at the re-launch of multiparty politics in Cameroon.
26. Many of these women sang and explained the songs with pride, ecstasy and above all nostalgia.
27. Vida Wei Chou, Bu, Personal Communications, 6 January 2003. Wei Chou vividly described a scene when the *Ehzele-ghalu* gathered in the house of her mother, Chou Ebei Kule, and blew whistles to end her headache. Soon afterwards, she got relieved of the pains.

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We Are the Sons of Mau Mau! Re-Assessing the Historiography of Resistance in Kenya, 1924-2008

Mwangi J. Macharia *

Abstract

Mungiki is a politico-religious group and a banned criminal organization in Kenya. The organisation, which apparently originated in the late 1980s, is secretive and bears some similarity to mystery religions. Specifics of their origin and doctrines are unclear. What is clear is that they favour a return to indigenous African traditions and reject Westernisation and all trappings of colonialism. These include; rejection of Christianity, and the practice by the Mungiki of forced female genital cutting. The ideology of the group is characterised by revolutionary rhetoric, Kikuyu traditions, and a disdain for modernization, which is seen as immoral corruption. Their participation in recent ethnic wars in Kenya has evoked serious academic concerns on the group. What is interesting is that the followers of the so-called Mungiki youth sect, whose 500,000 members see themselves as 'the true sons of the Mau Mau'. By using interdisciplinary approaches, I intend to show the myriad ways in which youth construct their own identity and how they derive power and inspirations from the past (Mau Mau). I not only introduce problems surrounding conceptions of Mungiki and the generation, but also show how conflicts between the young (Mungiki) and older (Mau Mau) generations reconfigure power in society.

Résumé

Le Mungiki est un groupe politico-religieux et une organisation criminelle clandestine. Cette organisation secrète qui a vu le jour à la fin des années 1980 ressemble dans une certaine mesure à une religion mystérieuse. Les détails de son origine et ses doctrines sont vagues. Ce qui est évident, c'est que Mungiki appelle au retour aux traditions indigènes africaines et rejette l'occidentalisation et tout autre piège du colonialisme. Ceci inclut la rejection du Christianisme et la pratique forcée de l'excision. L'idéologie du groupe est marquée par la rhétorique révolutionnaire, les traditions kikuyu et le mépris envers la modernisation du Kenya qu'il considère comme une corruption immorale. Sa participation aux

* Department of Philosophy, History and Religion, Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya. Email: mwangijm2003@yahoo.com

guerres ethniques récentes au Kenya a été à la base de préoccupations académiques sérieuses sur le groupe. Une chose intéressante est que les 500 000 jeunes membres du soit-disant secte Mungiki se considèrent comme 'les vrais fils des Mau Mau'. A travers une approche interdisciplinaire, cet article compte montrer les voies complexes pour la reconstruction de leur propre identité et comment ces jeunes puisent leur pouvoir et inspirations du passé (Mau Mau). Pour reconfigurer le pouvoir dans la société, les problèmes de perception du Mungiki et de sa génération sont évoqués, de même que les conflits entre les jeunes (Mungiki) et les vieilles générations (Mau Mau).

Introduction

Recent events across the African continent, including, dramatically and tragically, the eruption of violent conflict and massacres, have once again brought the question of citizenship and identity to the fore. The combination of factors which have posed the issues of citizenship and identity anew ranges from the economic and the social to the political and demographic. Matters have not been helped by the crisis of state legitimacy as well as the project of state retrenchment that has taken a severe toll on governance capacity in most parts of the continent. As can be expected, a broad range of contestations has been organised around the multidimensional citizenship and identity issues.

These contestations have both been generated by and have helped bring to the fore the disjuncture between the formal rules of citizenship and the daily practice as experienced by most people. For example, the shifting spatial (re)distribution of population within and between states challenges the unchanging rules by which rights and entitlement are defined and allocated. The high ideals of the social contract between state and society are negated by the non-justiceability of most citizen rights. The patriarchal foundations of the construction of citizen rights confront the need to accommodate women's rights. The promise of nation-building founded on multiculturalism (as projected by the slogan of unity in diversity) contrasts with the increasing parochial politics of settlers or residents versus natives or indigenes (Kanyinga 1994).

Considering the (sometimes violent) emotions which it has aroused and the toll which it has already taken, one can suggest that the citizenship and identity question has become the most important political issue in Africa today. It is a question that carries serious implications for policy-making and the continuing stability, even viability, of many a polity. With many countries across the continent facing serious intra-state challenges from disaffected groups that define themselves as the victims of long-term exclusion, the time is right for a painstaking comparative research on citizenship and identity in Africa. Such a study is made all the more necessary as some of the intra-

state challenges have already resulted in genocidal violence and the fragmentation and collapse of central governmental authority. Moreover, there is a distinct danger that state legitimacy and viability are likely to continue to be eroded if a balanced framework for the exercise of citizenship and the projection of identity is not established. It is imperative to understand the contemporary dynamics of citizenship and identity in the continent, in ways that can provide a basis for possible pro-active policy and advocacy work at the local, national, sub-regional and continental levels (Kanyinga 1994 and Olukoshi 1997).

Historical and Contextual Background

The nationalist anti-colonial coalition that inherited state power at independence faced many challenges, not least among them the need to define an adequate framework for managing ethno-regional diversity, of preserving the territorial integrity of the countries, and expanding the framework for the provisioning of the broad social welfare needs of the populace.¹

Most of the first generation independence governments went about the broad-ranging socioeconomic and political issues they confronted through a heavy investment in nation-building and a project of state-led development. The task of welding multi-ethnic, multi-religious countries into a nation against the backdrop of the colonial legacy of divide and rule was met by the approach of governments which without exception consisted of the adoption of national unity projects that were, to say the least, distrustful of autonomous ethnic identities. Even in cases where the notion of 'unity in diversity' was embraced as official policy, practice was more attuned to the idea of unity and distrustful of diversity. This, in many cases, included the suppression of the rights and aspirations of ethnic and religious minorities (Olukoshi 1997).

In time, the dominant policy frame translated into the erosion of political pluralism, the institutionalisation of single party, military rule or civilian-military diarchies, and the rise of the cult of the personal ruler. The monopoly on power which these regimes claimed was tragic enough for the abridgement of civil liberties, minority interests and human rights that went with it but worse still, it was itself, in many cases, founded on narrow ethnic pillars. Resistance to this version of nation-building and the disaffection associated with its failure truly to advance the boundaries of national unity elicited high handed responses from the authorities which fed into the political authoritarianism that became a feature of post-independence governance.²

The zeal with which the national unity project was pursued and the monopoly on power that was part of it were justified partially on the grounds that all national energies needed to be mobilised and focused on the task of national development. There were many aspects to the agenda of national

development which the nationalists pursued but perhaps the most crucial centred on the realisation of the goals that constituted the key pillars of the post-colonial social contract whose articulation during the anti-colonial struggle was critical to the mobilisation of popular support for independence. Where the colonial authorities denied Africans access to the amenities that were deemed necessary for the modernisation and full citizenship for which many yearned, and while the state had a narrow social agenda which privileged the colonial officials themselves, the nationalist politicians who led the independence campaign promised an all-round better life. The construction of a national identity was, therefore, as important a priority of post-independence policy-making as the promotion of a project of social citizenship that served as the frame within which expectations about the services which the state could be expected to offer were defined. In practice, given the magnitude of the needs at hand, the state was not able to meet all the demands and expectations that built up. The exercise of policy discretion in the designation of priorities became a central part of the politics of resource allocation in post-independence Africa. The contestations that built up around resource allocation were refracted into the broader dialectic of state-society relations, given the dominant role of the state in the economy. These contestations also fed into the politics of inclusion and exclusion that became a prominent part of post-independence politics of citizenship and identity. The dialectics of inclusion and exclusion intensified with the growth of scarcity and austerity in the political economy; it underpinned the bitterness with which the citizenship and identity question was posed and fought out in the 1980s and 1990s. It also partly explains the intensity of the competition for access to and control of the state (Kanyinga 1994 and Olukoshi 1997).

Groups which felt themselves excluded in the emerging post-colonial political economy served generally as the support base for the organisation of oppositional politics. Their disaffection also coalesced into silent and open challenges to the entire post-colonial nation-building project. The absence of effective mechanisms for responding to the challenges and the authoritarian manner in which they were handled meant that layers of grievances cumulated within the polity. Disaffection and the challenges which they generated often took ethno-regional and religious forms; however, importantly, there were also generational and gender challenges as represented by growing agitation among the youth and women for a bigger voice in governance. There were also rural-based protests which were linked to the concerns of the rural working poor and pressures mounted by the urban working class as represented by the trade union movement. Furthermore, a variety of social movements and civic associations emerged to canvass different concerns,

acting sometimes underground or in exile, and in some cases openly in the domestic context.³

In the context of the economic crises which was later to grip most African countries at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the various disaffected groups were to take a prominent role in the struggle for the opening up the local political space as the post-colonial state-led model of development collapsed. The subsequent political reform agenda that was launched in many countries during the 1990s is part of the recent history of the continent that is still well known and need not be discussed here. Suffice it to note that it encompassed a broad-ranging process of soul-searching that culminated in the abandonment of single party/military rule, and the embrace of multiparty politics and elections.

Mau Mau and the Colonial State

There exists a great deal of literature on the Mau Mau. In this article thus I try to look at those elements of Mau Mau that were carried on throughout Kenyan history, and are today manifested in Mungiki, an intrastate challenge to the nation-state project in Kenya.

According to Rosberg and Nortingham, historians still find it difficult to understand the nature of the Mau Mau insurrection, with the obscurity of its origins and the apparently indiscriminate direction of its violence. Anthropologists, seeing that the violence was a product of present grievances rather than of any atavistic past, interpreted Mau Mau as 'not a reversion to ancient rituals but a regression deriving power from the breach of universal taboos'. Some Africans hailed it as a national struggle for land and freedom; but since participation was largely confined to Kikuyu (with the neighbouring Embu and Meru), and since nearly 2,000 African civilians were killed, as against thirty-two Europeans and twenty-six Asians, such a view raises problems about the nature of the modern Kenyan nation. Later commentators gave more weight to the socio-political context; by 1960 even a hostile official could discern 'violent manifestation of a limited nationalistic revolutionary movement' (Rosberg and Nortingham 1966:23).

This inability to place Mau Mau in the political developments in Kenya allows for general conclusions that it was to a large extent a tribal revolt contesting the political space – or a peasant revolt developing on the fringe of nationalist politics. Some historians, such as Bethwell Ogot, have dismissed Mau Mau as a narrow tribal affair. But it must be admitted that with Mau Mau a truly radical nationalist movement emerged. Because of its sudden break with middle-class nationalism, Mau Mau failed to develop a distinct political programme and an ideology. Even nationalism as a principle remained diffuse and ill-defined. The aim of most activists was winning access to

land. Kikuyu squatters fought and died for land and not for some abstract conception of nationhood (Rosberg and Northingham 1966:23)..

According to Anderson (2005), the Mau Mau movement was itself part of the process of the construction of a Kikuyu identity premised on a shared culture and a shared structural predicament. The hymn texts which were an integral part of the movement were carried forward to the Mwakenya and Mungiki sects. These hymns strongly emphasized land (i.e. Kikuyuland) and the Kikuyu traditional regime. One line reads: God will send a sword from Kiringaga (Mt. Kenya). The hymns constantly echo the necessity of recovering land, for example:

Mumbi's household ...has been disturbed
 They will be asked by the Kikuyu...
 Why did you sell our land?
 We shall get our land which was sold for chieftainship.⁴

The application of these symbols from Kikuyu legends had an integrating function in binding many Kikuyu to the Mungiki movement. The movement was essentially an ad hoc response to changing conditions. It was born of a common experience of economic insecurity, land hunger, a feeling of frustration born of racial oppression, and resentment of the Kikuyu establishment. These sentiments developed spontaneously; nobody had to teach a Kikuyu squatter or a shantytown dweller to hate the colonial police or the Kikuyu authorities. The main catalysts behind the explosion were the unmediated tensions that prevailed in Nairobi and the European settled areas in the Rift Valley and in the Kikuyu reserves. In these regions, tensions were always liable to boil over into conflict (Guy 1978:14).

Guy argues that Mau Mau was not merely directed against the colonial authorities but also against the Kenyatta regime. This was illustrated by the fact that after independence it took nearly four years before the Kenyatta government was able to establish stability on the land. During this period, the conflict between the ex-squatters and the state took on a class character, as those without land tried to fight the new group of African capitalist farmers. The emergence of the protests in the late 1920s which matured into a mass movement in the 1940s and armed struggle in the early 1950s was finally destroyed by the Kenyan African ruling class in the late 1960s (Guy 1978:14).

Civil disobedience became the norm as landless Africans organized to defend their interests. Thousands of landless peasants were determined to acquire land, and they were joined by migrants who poured into the Rift Valley in search of land. Indeed, the neutralization and repression of the KPU can be compared to the containment of Mau Mau. In different ways and under different conditions Mau Mau and the KPU sought to give organizational expression to the grievances of the urban and landless proletariat. Both Mau

Mau and the KPU faced state repression, the difference being that for Mau Mau it was by the British and for the KPU it was the Kenyatta regime. In reality, according to Ogot (1967), Kenyatta and his class hated Mau Mau.

We are determined to have independence in peace, and we shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. We must have no hatred towards one another. Mau Mau was a disease which had been eradicated, and must never be remembered again.

Mau Mau activities did not stop at independence. The same ex-Mau Mau soldiers – landless people whom Kenyatta never rewarded – continued to struggle for basic resources.

However, the peasants and workers who fought and died did so not only for the sake of culture but also to cement a unity of purpose – putting a Kikuyu leader into power. Anderson argues that the greatest strength of the Mau Mau movement was its organizational independence. The split with moderate nationalists allowed radical activists to promote the aspirations of the masses and thus challenge the very foundations of the colonial order. The problem was that this challenge remained diffuse. The failure to evolve a coherent class-based social programme meant that Mau Mau was simply the militant wing of a nationalist movement. The fundamental conflict of interest between those who supported militant nationalism and those who advocated moderation was never clarified (Anderson 2005).

Mau Mau brought the question of social change out into the open. This issue was later quickly to be picked by the Mungiki organization. Once Mau Mau was defeated, an all-class nationalist party could be created, one that precisely because it was undifferentiated would be responsive only to the interests of the new African bourgeoisie. Writing in 1977, a Kenyan historian Ben Kipkorir noted that the Mau Mau emergency was ‘certainly responsible for the precise timing of the conclusion of British rule in Kenya’, but he implies that Mau Mau was in fact responsible for delaying the decolonization process.

Resistance, Ethnicity, Identity and the End of Cold War

With the advent of multi-party politics in Kenya many fundamental changes occurred. They were both positive and negative. Positive in the sense that the changes brought to fruition a wider space of political expression. But, negatively, it ushered in a wave of political violence that was fuelled by tribal and sectarian interests. This spate of violence in the Rift Valley province⁵ is what came to be called ‘land clashes’ prior to and after the first two multi-party general elections in the 1991-92 and 1997-98 periods.

The two protagonist parties the Rift Valley perceived the land clashes differently. The Kalenjins and Kikuyus, who had co-existed well for long

time, were profoundly polarized long political lines with the inception of multi-partyism, and expressed divergent interests. Kikuyus joined the Democratic Party and FORD, while the Kalenjins remained supportive of the Kenya African National Union (KANU).⁶ In the national arena the 'Young Turks' who came to represent the 'second liberation' resorted to demonstrations to dislodge the ruling party from power. Those on the side of the government, the so-called 'KANU Hawks', who represented the status quo, resorted to ethnic chauvinism and threats to hold on to power. The result was violence that was camouflaged in the name of land clashes, although having little to do such phenomena.

Those supporting the single party predicted that the country would disintegrate along tribal lines.⁷ Government MPs from KANU and its party cadres openly called for the removal of other ethnic groups from the province, as they were viewed as opposition adherents.⁸ In addition they called for a *majimbo* (federal) system of governance so as to protect their regional interests. This clash saw the revival of tribal organisations such as KAMATUSA, an acronym for Kalenjin Maasai, Turkana and Samburu, as a tool of advancing tribal politics. It is in this regard that Nnoli observes that the selfish ambition of the ruling elite and the petty bourgeois are often presented as general ethnic interests.⁹

These developments underlay Kenya's transition from a single party to a multi-party state. They brought with them as a spate of mass meetings, demonstrations and rallies to advance the cause of constitutional and electoral reform and violent attempts to ethnically cleanse population in the Rift Valley province and elsewhere.¹⁰

All this prompted the international community to call on the Kenyan government to act swiftly and save lives of innocent Kenyans. The opposition groups, which had taken shape in the name of political parties, joined hands with the international community to call for political tolerance. This was based on the assumption that land clashes were state-sponsored violence. The Kenyan government reluctantly agreed to political and constitutional amendments to level the ground for free and fair elections. Among these was the 'twenty-five percent, five-province rule', which stipulated that a presidential candidate could only be declared elected by garnering twenty-five percent of total votes cast in five out of Kenya's eight provinces.

This rule is widely thought to have intensified the 'Majimboism' debate led by the hawkish government ministers. The hotbed of this debate shifted to the Rift Valley province, which occupies 40 percent of Kenya's landmass. The Rift Valley is occupied largely by the Kalenjin communities who were pro-government, as opposed to pockets of Diaspora communities like the Kikuyu, Luo, Gusii and Luhya who were perceived to be anti-government.¹¹

The 'majimbo' debate was used to instil the fear those who did not support the government of the day would be expelled to their home provinces. One minister was quoted as saying: 'let them lie low like envelopes', meaning that the Diaspora community should be seen and not heard. These and other sentiments found expression in the unleashing of terror by organized. The torching of houses and wider property destruction finally led to a civil war. This spate of violence came to be dubiously called the 'land clashes'. Between 1991 and 2001 this violence led to the deaths of over 4,000 people and almost 600,000 were displaced.¹²

The issue of land clashes needs to be understood in part as a function of a transition from the single party to the multi-party state. This is why it only broke out on the eve of the first of two multi-party general elections. Some politicians and peace advocacy groups who have called for a truth and reconciliation commission akin to that of South Africa thus tend to miss the point. The horrors of the 'land clashes' were systematically hidden and trivialized by the state powers that sometimes instigated them (Kanyinga 1998).

Violent Resistance and Being a Kenyan Citizen: Gikuyu and Mungiki Ethnic Identity

Public concern that the police had failed to take adequate steps to prevent the initial violence was deepened by reports of heavy-handedness, insensitivity and general incompetence in rounding-up supposed 'suspects' when they finally arrived in Kariobangi some hours after the attack. What protection then would the police offer the teeming populations of the estates and shanties of Nairobi's Eastlands and Southlands against further attacks of a similar nature? Underlying these fears was the suspicion that the slaughter had been politically motivated.¹³ There was widespread speculation, reported in all the Kenyan newspapers, that Mungiki members were in fact protected by senior politicians, that the violence had been orchestrated for political ends, and that Mungiki even had recruits within the ranks of the police. Many analysts saw the Kariobangi attack as symptomatic of Kenya's growing culture of political violence, making connections with other incidents of vigilantism elsewhere in the country and with previous cases of politically mobilised inter-ethnic violence surrounding the election campaigns of 1992 and 1997.¹⁴

Grace Wamue has described the nature of Mungiki 'in relation to the traditional religion and cultural practice of the Gikuyu people'. She traces its origins to an evangelical sect known as the 'Tent of the Living God', founded in Laikipia district in 1987, under the leadership of the charismatic 58-year old Gikuyu preacher Ngonya wa Gakonya.¹⁵ The movement initially drew upon Gikuyu traditional values in establishing an indigenous alternative to the materialism of the many evangelical Pentecostal churches that had flourished in central Kenya from the 1980s. Mungiki appears to have emerged as a

splinter movement within the Tent of the Living God before 1990. It came to prominence when its members sought registration as a political party in order to contest seats in the 1992 general elections – an aim in which they were not successful.

The supporters of Mungiki were predominantly young (under 30), many having left the established Christian churches to join the movement. As it grew, it attracted a high proportion of Kikuyu displaced from the Rift Valley districts by ethnic clashes of 1992 and 1997, and it has become firmly embedded among the urban poor of Nairobi's slum estates. Mungiki philosophy espouses a kind of Kikuyu traditionalism, harking back to a mythologized pre-colonial image of egalitarianism and social order, with biblical references drawn from Old Testament texts. All of this was turned toward a moralistic critique of the failings of the modern state in Kenya.¹⁶

Mungiki speaks for the poor and dispossessed, but with a distinctively Gikuyu voice. The influence of the preacher Gakonya would appear now to be minimal and it is Ibrahim Ndura Waruinge, who first joined the movement in 1987 when only 15 years of age, who is identified as Mungiki's leader. This shift from Gakonya, the charismatic hermit preacher of Gikuyu traditionalism, to Waruinge, the 27 year-old radical Gikuyu political activist, is more significant than Wamue's analysis of the movement has allowed for. Though Waruinge strongly promotes the Gikuyu heritage and the foundation of what he terms 'the Kirinyaga kingdom' in rhetoric and deed, Mungiki has become increasingly politicised. As Wamue herself acknowledges, Mungiki adherents can barely manage five minutes of conversation 'without spontaneously deviating into the politics of contemporary Kenya ... They ... criticize the widespread political oppression, poverty and violence experienced by Kenyans at the hands of government agents in the same breath as they condemn cultural and religious imperialism'.¹⁷ Wamue's conclusion that the 'core values' of Mungiki remain essentially rooted in an apolitical and passive rural support base is difficult to reconcile with the strident, violent, criminal and increasingly intimidatory tactics employed by the movement in Nairobi's slums over the past two years.

Whatever Mungiki may once have been on the distant farms of Laikipia, it has transformed itself into a radically different movement in the estates, shanties and slums of the city. In contrast with Wamue's portrayal, Terisa Turner and Leigh Brownhill have emphasized Mungiki's radicalism, placing the movement in the Kenyan vanguard of the international campaign 'for globalization from below to rebuild the civil commons alternative to corporate rule'.¹⁸

This interpretation links Mungiki with Nairobi-based Muungano wa Wanavijiji ('The Organisation of the Villagers'), established among the slum-

dwellers of the city to fight evictions and protect tenants. Taken together, the two movements are seen to represent a 'rebirth' of the Mau Mau struggle of the 1950s for 'land and freedom'. Turner and Brownhill thus emphasize Mungiki support for Rift Valley farmers displaced in the ethnic clashes of 1992 and 1997, and its growing role in urban protests against oppressive landlords and corrupt urban 'land-grabbers'.¹⁹ The involvement of women in these protests is also noted by Turner and Brownhill, as is support for the struggles of the poor, the dispossessed, and the landless. While these accounts indicate that Mungiki is clearly a more complex and multi-faceted organisation than Wamue suggests, the materialist, instrumentalist and ethnocentric character of local Kenyan politics and of the Mungiki movement is glossed over. Nor is there any sense that the Mungiki movement may have undergone significant changes since its founding. These aspects of Mungiki require closer scrutiny.

Under the national leadership of Waruinge, Mungiki has become stridently ethnocentric. He has declared that Mungiki will fulfil the prophecies of Mugo wa Kibiro, the Gikuyu diviner and seer of the late nineteenth century. Reading Mugo wa Kibiro through the writings of Jomo Kenyatta,²⁰ but also with a heavy influence from Ngugi wa Thiongo's presentation of the prophet's words in the novel *Weep Not Child*, Waruinge places responsibility for the 'decay' of Gikuyu traditions squarely on the shoulders of European colonialism. The present Gikuyu generation should now throw off the shackles of colonialism, neo-colonialism and Christianity, which presented the greatest challenge to Gikuyu cultural values, and seek redemption, as Mugo wa Kibiro had predicted they must: 'We have come together and purified ourselves to avoid God's curse'.²¹ The revival of Gikuyu values in the 'Kingdom of Kirinyaga' also implied a political restoration of Gikuyu power through the removal of the oppressive 'Nyayo regime' of President Moi.

Even among the Gikuyu communities, many view Mungiki as 'backward-looking' and dangerously subversive. Mungiki's threatening character is accentuated by its unpredictability. This was perhaps most vividly to be seen when several prominent Mungiki leaders declared their intention to become Muslims in June 2000. This announcement evoked considerable publicity, but to the embarrassment of Muslim leaders it soon became apparent that Mungiki members did not see that embracing Islam in any way implied a challenge to their beliefs in Gikuyu traditional religion and cultural practice. And when Moi was replaced by a Kikuyu, Mungiki still inveighed against the government. A new trajectory of the sect occurred given the role of the Mungiki in the post-election violence experienced in Kenya in December 2007 through February 2008. Clearly much more research on the phenomenon of Mungiki is required.

Notes

1. See for example, Watson, Mary Ann, ed., *Modern Kenya: Social Issues and Perspectives*, Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2000; Widner, Jennifer A., *The Rise of a Party-state in Kenya: From 'Harambee' to 'Nyayo'*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
2. Kanyinga, K., 1998, 'Contestation over political space: The state and demobilization of opposition politics in Kenya', in Olukoshi, ed., 1998.
3. Olukoshi A. 1998, 'Economic crisis, Multipartism and opposition politics in contemporary Africa', in Olukoshi, ed., *The politics of opposition in contemporary Africa*, Stockholm: Elanders Gotab.
4. Ogot: 1956: 78.
5. Kenya is divided to eight administrative provinces, namely Rift Valley, Eastern, Coast, Nyanza, Western, North Eastern, Central and Nairobi. With exception of Nairobi the others are largely defined along ethnic lines.
6. Centre for Conflict Resolution, 'Ethnic Conflicts in Nakuru District a Report of the Current Conflicts in Mau Narok, Mauche and Likia Areas and the Situational Analysis', October, 2004, p. 2.
7. President Moi was a popular advocate of this prophecy.
8. Kagwanja, Peter, 'Killing the vote: state sponsored violence and flawed elections in Kenya', Human Rights Commission, 1998, p. 2.
9. Nnoli, Okwudiba, *Ethnic Politics in Africa*, Ibadan: Vintage Books, 1989, p. 4.
10. Michael Cowen and Karuti Kanyinga, 'The 1997 Elections in Kenya: The Politics of Communitarity and Locality', pp. 128-171, in Michael Cowen and Liisa Laakso, *Multi-Party Elections in Africa*, Oxford: James Currey.
11. The considerable diaspora communities of Rift Valley were largely settled there through government settlement schemes and other African land buying companies immediately after independence when the so-called white highlands were vacated by the whites. The Kalenjins have always believed that they were short-changed by the Kenyatta Government.
12. Kenya Human Rights Commission, 'Quarterly Human Rights Report', Vol. 3, No. 4, 2001.
13. 'Police ignored my three massacre alerts, says MP', *Daily Nation*, 6 March 2002, p. 6.
14. For a review of Kenya's recent politics, see Rok Ajulu, 'Kenya: One step forward, three steps back – the succession dilemma', *Review of African Political Economy*, 88 (2001), pp. 197- 21.
15. See reports of the arrest of Gakonya at a meeting of The Tent of the Living God, for example, Kurgat Marindany, 'Chaos as sect leader is nabbed', *East African Standard*, 1 Ma, 2002.
16. Grace Nyatugah Wamue, 'Revisiting our indigenous shrines through Mungiki', *African Affairs*, 100 (2001), pp. 453-67.
17. See Kimani Njogu, 'The culture of politics and ethnic nationalism in Central Province and Nairobi', in Marcel Rutten, Alamin Mazrui and Francois Grignon, eds., *Out for the Count: The 1997 General Elections and Prospects for Democracy in Kenya* (Kampala, 2001), pp. 381-404.

18. Terisa E. Turner & Leigh S. Brownhill, 'African jubilee: Mau Mau resurgence and the fight for fertility in Kenya, 1986-2002', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 22 (2001), pp. 103-7.
19. Turner & Brownhill, 'African jubilee', op cit., Terisa E. Turner & Leigh S. Brownhill, '«Women never surrender»: the Mau Mau and globalization from below in Kenya 1980-2000', in Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Nicholas G. Faraclas & Claudia von Werlhof, eds., *There is an Alternative; Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization* (London, New York & Victoria, 2001), pp. 106-32.
20. Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (New York, 1965 ed. [London, 1938]), pp. 41-3.
21. For a full discussion of the historical significance of Mugo wa Kibiru, see John Lonsdale, 'The prayers of Waiyaki: political uses of the Kikuyu past', in David M. Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson, eds., *Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History* (London, Nairobi, Kampala & Athens OH, 1995), pp. 240-4, 263-82.

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Decolonization and Popular Contestation in Sierra Leone: The Peasant War of 1955-1956

Ismail O. D. Rashid*

Abstract

Between 1955 and 1956, peasants in the northern region of Sierra Leone, following the steps of workers in Freetown, launched an insurrection to protest colonial taxation and the exploitative practices of their paramount chiefs and local ruling elite. The insurrection, which started as a protest against the paramount chief of Port Loko, Alkali Modu, soon engulfed all of the districts in the northern region and parts of the southern region. Through their violent actions, the peasants indicated that the oppressive practices and the excessive financial demands by the paramount chiefs and the state were neither tenable nor acceptable during the decolonization era. Their actions also illustrated the inadequacy of 'traditional' and 'paternalistic' forms of governance that had been the linchpin of British colonialism in Sierra Leone, and which still underpinned the chieftaincy and new local institutions that had been created by the departing British. The peasant insurrection interrupted the tranquil process of decolonization being executed between the Sierra Leonean elite and the British, and it took a heavy toll on the national and local security forces. However, the subsequent public investigation and acknowledgement of the peasant grievances by the Cox Commission of Inquiry as well as the restitutive actions by the SLPP government affirmed the legitimacy of many of the peasant claims. With the 1955-56 insurrection, it could be argued that the peasants in northern Sierra Leone had not only rudely interrupted the process of decolonization, they had forcibly renegotiated the terms of a 'new' Sierra Leone political order in their favour.

Résumé

Entre 1955 et 1956, les paysans de la région du nord de la Sierra Leone, emboitant les pas des travailleurs de Freetown, ont lancé une insurrection pour protester contre l'imposition coloniale et les pratiques exploitantes de leurs souverains et de leur élite locale au pouvoir. L'insurrection, qui a

* History Department, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, USA.
Email: israshid@vassar.edu

commencé sous la forme d'une protestation contre le chef souverain de Port Loko, Alkali Modu, se propageait bientôt dans tous les districts de la région nord et des parties de la région sud. Dans la violence, les paysans indiquèrent que les pratiques oppressives et les exigences financières excessives de leurs chefs souverains et du gouvernement n'étaient ni supportables, ni acceptables durant l'ère de la décolonisation. Leurs actions illustraient également l'inadéquation des formes « traditionnelles » et « paternalistes » de gouvernance qui avaient été la charnière du colonialisme britannique en Sierra Leone, et qui renforçaient encore la chefferie et les institutions locales nouvelles créées par les britanniques qui s'en allaient. L'insurrection paysanne interrompait le processus tranquille de décolonisation en cours d'être exécuté entre l'élite sierra léonaise et les britanniques, et cela fit beaucoup de victimes parmi les forces de sécurité nationales et locales. Cependant, l'investigation et la reconnaissance publiques des griefs des paysans par la Commission d'Enquête Cox ainsi que les actions restitutives par le gouvernement SLPP confirmaient la légitimité de beaucoup des récriminations paysannes. Avec l'insurrection de 1955-56, on peut arguer que les paysans du nord de la Sierra Leone ne s'étaient pas contentés d'interrompre rudement le processus de décolonisation, mais ils avaient énergiquement renégocié les termes d'un « nouvel » ordre politique Sierra Léonais en leur faveur.

Introduction

In 1955, the relatively tranquil process of decolonization in Sierra Leone was rudely interrupted by two violent events – a workers' strike in Freetown and a peasant insurrection in the northern region. While the workers' strike had erupted over pay and conditions of service in Freetown, the peasant insurrection was directed against the excessive colonial taxation and the pecuniary demands of paramount chiefs in Port Loko, Kambia, Tonko Limba and Bombali districts. By the time the dust settled in early 1956, the insurrection had led to the death of over a hundred people and the deposition of a dozen chieftains.

This article examines the origins, timing, character and historical significance of the peasant insurrection of 1955-56 in northern Sierra Leone. Rather than being anomalous or representation of intra-chieftaincy struggles as some scholars have suggested, it argues that the peasant insurrection represent an organized effort to counter the oppressive and extortionate practices of their local rulers and the state, and to reshape process of decolonization in Sierra Leone in their favour. More broadly, the insurrection, like the Freetown workers' strike, was an organized challenge to the processes of colonial 'developmentalism' and 'modernization', which had started in the 1930s, and had picked up pace after the Second World War. These processes involved the colonial renovation of 'native' administrations, improvement of agricultural production, raising of revenue, and the reshaping of peasant and working classes.¹ By the 1950s, however, this colonial project intersected

with the tide of anti-colonialism sweeping through Africa. In West Africa, 'nationalist' elite groups mobilized the masses to demand independence from the European colonialists. The French and British colonizers rode the initial nationalist storm, but by the mid-1950s they were executing relatively tranquil transfers of power to sections of these elite groups.²

The 'high' politics of decolonization in Sierra Leone was played out mainly between the conservative factions of the protectorate and Creole elite. The movement towards independence, despite the 'conflicts' between the two factions of the Sierra Leone elite, followed rather formulaic processes: parochial cultural and social groups morphed into regionally based national parties, new constitutions (for example, the Stevenson Constitution of 1951) were crafted, legislative council elections were conducted, district and chiefdom councils were being reformed. The most conspicuous problem with these processes institutions lay not only in their conception but whom they included and excluded. The colonial administration had fashioned the institutions to neutralize radical politics, incorporate the rural elite and encourage communal over class-consciousness. It had therefore constructed them around chiefs and their appointees.

The short-lived but violent workers' strike and peasant insurrection of 1955-6 in Sierra Leone bucked this formulaic decolonization trend. Workers from the city and peasants from the countryside fiercely contested the post-war modernisation project, politics and the institutions, which the British hoped would be the linchpins of the post-colonial state in Sierra Leone. In the 1950s, only in Algeria, Kenya, Cameroon and the Portuguese colonies had peasants and other rural groups violently engaged the colonial state and sections of the indigenous elite in the process of decolonization. Unlike Sierra Leone and the Cameroon, these were settler-colonies and scholars agree their decolonization process tended to be more complicated and violent.³ Unable to explain or fit the Sierra Leone rebellion into their neat narratives of the decolonization process in West Africa and Africa, historians have either ignored or treated it cursorily.⁴

Discourses of Discontent, 1945-1954

The 1955-56 Peasant War in Northern Sierra Leone had deep historical roots. The region was the site of the war by Bai Bureh, Chief of Kasseh in protest against the institution of colonial taxation in 1898. The immediate antecedents of the peasant war, however, date to rural disaffection from the late 1930s. Since then, peasants had repeatedly complained to the colonial administrators about exploitative practices of their paramount chiefs. Their grievances included the misappropriation of public funds, excessive taxation and fines, sale of political offices, extortion, and the ill-treatment and disgracing of

'big men' in public. They had resisted with non-compliance, boycotts, and refusal to provide labour for the chiefs or participate in communal services. To maintain social peace, the colonial administrators intervened and deposed at least half a dozen paramount chiefs engaged in excessive extortion and abuse of authority in the 1930s and 1940s in the Sierra Leone Protectorate.⁶ Paramount Chief Bai Sherbro of Mambolo and Alimamy Sattan Lahai (1945-1947) of Massumbala in Kambia district, for example, lost their staff after people resisted their excesses and withdrew their political support.⁵

The colonial administration did acknowledge that the deposed chiefs and their henchmen had been unpopular, extortionate or incapable of enforcing their authority. Colonial administrators argued that since some of the chiefs had been educated, they were less constrained by 'customary paternalism'. They deemed these chiefs as generally incapable of mediating the interests of the various factions in their chiefdoms. Even when they regarded the chiefs as culpable, colonial administrator showed little tolerance for the 'ill-disciplined' and 'defiant' gangs of young men who spearheaded the anti-chief protests. These men who had provided leadership for protestors were aggressive in their resistance to the chiefs. These 'young men' had been become very active around the 1930s.⁷ It was their unbridled radicalism that the colonial state sought to curb with the revamping of 'native administration' from the 1930s onwards.

In reforming native administration, instead of responding to peasant grievances and the radicalism of the 'young men', the colonial government expanded the size of the elite incorporated within the system. The government membership opened the member of new district councils to 'tribal' authorities and other prominent persons in a district. It also broadened the representative base of the districts, allocating one representative to every forty-six taxpayers in a district.⁸ The persistence of peasant protests, however, illustrated the ineffectiveness of these changes. It was hardly surprising. Chiefs and their cronies still dominated the institutions. The discontent, which had been evident in the Scarcies Rivers chiefdoms since the 1930s, continued to grow.

In Port Loko, potentially the most volatile district in the Northern Province, this disaffection took the form of a discernible rebellious discourse in the early 1950s. Rather innocuously, its genesis was signalled by two petitions sent to the administration in 1953 by Kali Morba Bempa, a 'loyal native born at Port Loko and a trader'.⁹ Bempa accused Paramount Chief Alkali Modu of Port Loko of injustice and victimization over a land lease. The lease had in fact been a subject of much dispute, and the Alkali had been made to apologize to another chief, Bai Koble of Lunsar, over its disposal. Bempa, an educated African trader, felt he had been cheated by the chief. The manner in which he framed his case was telling. Bempa expressed his cause as a

struggle between the weak and the powerful, and as a struggle for liberty, justice and individual rights. In his first letter, he wrote:

I know what it has meant for me to acquire property, and for it to be divorced from me in this manner does not in my humble opinion, constitute an act which conforms to individual liberty nor to British law, order, good government and justice. I am well aware what my position is vis-a-vis that of the Honourable P.C. but my humble status does not, nor can deprive me of the ordinary rights of a subject.¹⁰

The colonial administration did not respond to the plea for justice. Undeterred, Bempa sent another letter to the commissioner, complaining of further victimization by Modu. He claimed that the chief had wrongfully fined him for a crime he did not commit.¹¹ Bempa's second letter reiterated the respect he had for authority, but he questioned its efficacy in redressing his grievances. He stated, 'I respect the Chief. I however hardly feel this is British fair-play and justice that had been meted to me. Why the DC has taken no action again beat [sic] me.'¹² Bempa's petitions invoked, and trod carefully between, the twin elements of chieftaincy paternalism and British liberalism.

Far from being unique, Bempa's complaints seemed emblematic of broader discontent against the reign of Alkali Modu. Two other petitions against the chief landed on the desks of Governor de Zouche Hall and Albert Margai, the Minister for Local Government and Education. The first, a well scripted four-page treatise, was penned in the name of the 'Tribal Authority of the Maforki chiefdom' and dated 1st November 1954.¹³ The authors accused Alkali Modu of pilfering £775 from the chiefdom treasury and misappropriating a government loan of £8,000. The loan had been secured through the district council to develop an organized transportation system for the chiefdom.¹⁴ The transport scheme had been one of many development projects enthusiastically drawn up by District Councils and financed by government loans.

Like many of the other local government schemes, it had run into difficulties. In the case of Maforki Chiefdom, the petitioners claimed that Alkali Modu had used only £4,000 to buy useless 'old army trucks' and had diverted the rest of the money to develop his private transport and hotel businesses. The chiefdom transportation system had failed. The 'big men', who as members of the Chiefdom Tribal Authority had co-guaranteed the loan, had to 'mortgage' their property when the government demanded the first instalment of the loan repayment. The transportation loan debacle was, however, part of a wider dissatisfaction with the chief's commercial endeavour. The petitioners condemned his monopolization of chiefdom commerce, which they maintained had stifled trade, driven 'ambitious citizens

of Maforki into exile and seclusion', and threatened the prosperity of the chiefdom.¹⁵

The underlying intra-elite struggle over trade and resources was obvious. It had long been part of the history of the northern region. What was significant was the transformed context in which this struggle was being played out. Paramount Chief Alkali Modu, a supporter of the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) and a representative in the Legislative Council, commanded political power and support that extended far beyond his chiefdom.¹⁶ Furthermore, his actions, far from being extraordinary, were part of the process of renewed accumulation of resources by the political elite in the period of decolonization. The context may explain the manner in which the petitioners framed their claims. They invoked their time-honoured obligations to defend popular interests:

We are the leaders of our tribesmen, and although we elected Alkali Modu III as Paramount Chief of Maforki Chiefdom, we consider it remiss in our duty to our people, if we allow these things to pass without due notice. We are therefore asking that administrative justice be allowed to prevail in all matters, and strongly suggest that a commission of inquiry be set to look into the affairs of the whole Chiefdom.¹⁷

The petitioners requested a discreet investigation of the chief. They appealed to the state to prevent the chief from assembling the 'big men' to swear on 'bad native medicine'.¹⁸ Within Temne culture, this act would immobilize the big men and coerce them into supporting the chief. By claiming to defend the people and not themselves, the petitioners creatively linked their own disaffection with popular discontent against the chief. The state, however, paid no attention to them.

Undeterred by official inaction, the petitioners sent a second letter, this time in the name of the 'Tax Payers, Traders, Farmers, Tribal Authorities and the Youths of Maforki Chiefdom'. Dated 25 September 1955, it restated the earlier charges of financial misappropriation and 'exclusive trade monopoly' against Alkali Modu.¹⁹ The authors added forced labour and excessive fines to their growing list of grievances. They expressed disappointment that the colonial administration and the SLPP government had not investigated the earlier charges made against Alkali Modu.

The new petition was occasioned by a renewed levy of five shillings imposed by the chief to construct a personal house. The chief had collected an earlier levy in 1952 but had not constructed the house. The authors resented the insertion of another five shilling levy into the already inflated 1955 tax. Calling the levy an 'extortion', the petitioners informed Albert Margai:

We do not threaten your Ministry in the Local Government Schedule but repudiate any recourse to extortion of all kinds. We therefore hasten to inform you that if some plan for extortion works, which undoubtedly will deride of

the power of good and healthy living due to lack of resources for getting finance, we may resort to violence in protest or desert the chiefdom and the environs, under the influence of a despotic climate.²⁰

The demand for reform and the threat of rebellion were not new. What was new was the forceful and uncompromising manner in which reform was being demanded. Two years earlier, a petitioner from Loko Massama chiefdom, writing under the pseudonym 'Shegbendeh' had complained about maladministration and the corrupt reign of Bai Sama. He had warned, 'there is riot a-head'.²¹ In ignoring the petitions, the colonial government underestimated the seriousness of the crisis brewing in the Northern Province.

The second petition had clearly expressed popular disaffection with the 1955 tax in Maforki chiefdom. This tax, with the additional district precept, became the major catalyst for rebellion. The passage of 1954 Local Tax Ordinance had replaced the House Tax and Chiefdom Tax with a single poll tax of twenty-five shillings to forty shillings payable by all males who were twenty-one years and above. The new taxation system shifted the burden from property to persons.²² For years, the administration maintained the House Tax at five shillings and chiefdom rates at four shillings. After World War II, it allowed chiefdom rates to slowly increase to meet the financial needs of the newly created Tribal Authorities. Chiefdom taxes grew yearly to a variable rate of six shillings and six pence in Bombali and ten shillings in Port Loko district. Peasant tolerance and willingness to pay the yearly increases might have created the impression that they could continue to pay additional taxes.

The crucial tax increases came at a critical historical juncture when the peasants found it difficult to meet additional financial obligations. By 1955, peasants in Northern Province had begun to feel the negative impact of the changing structure of the post-war economy. The artificial agricultural boom generated by diamonds had faded, and the production and value of key agricultural exports, including rice, had begun to decline. Export of agricultural commodities dropped sharply in tonnage and receipts. The visible balance of trade worsened sharply, with the economy experiencing a formal trade deficit of £1,505,000.²³

The conditions may have been bad, but did it mean that a rebellion was inevitable or even possible? What then made the rebellion possible? Part of the answer lay in the timing of the tax hike. It had coincided with the implementation of two crucial administration decisions. These were the amendment of the district council ordinance and the disbandment of the court messenger force in 1954. The council amendment provided the opportunity for district councillors to replace district commissioners as presidents in ten of the twelve districts.²⁴ Except for Kono and Pujehun, the replacements

were all chiefs. All the councils, with the exception of Kono, removed the district commissioner from the Finance and General Purposes Committees.²⁵ The replacements weakened the position of the District Commissioner vis-à-vis the chiefs and the SLPP government. Consequently, it sharply attenuated the paternalistic role commissioners could play in mediating the relationship between peasant, the chief and the state.²⁶

The retirement, re-employment or reintegration of some of the ex-court messengers within a reconstituted National Police Force removed an important local law enforcement mechanism.²⁷ By its training and organization, the police was an urban force and a poor substitute for the Court Messenger Force, whose focus and orientation had been primarily rural.²⁸ The administration definitely did not consider the impact of implementing the two changes almost simultaneously. The changes in the configuration of power took on an added significance with the tax increase. The diminution of the authority of the colonial state and empowerment of chiefs was lost neither on chiefs nor on peasants. The conjuncture of events in 1954 and 1955 constituted a 'crisis' of colonial rule and an 'opportunity' for its contestation.

The crisis and opportunity became apparent after a workers' strike in Freetown in February 1955. The workers had demanded better wages and conditions of service. The attempt by the state to break up the strike led to three days of 'rioting' in the city. The strike set the tone for the year. Except for urban workers in Bo, the events did not directly involve the people in the provinces. Its significance and achievements, however, did not go unnoticed. It became 'common knowledge' that the wage demands of workers that had initially been rejected by employers were conceded after the riots.²⁹ The Freetown strike provided a lesson in protest and a reference point for rural rebels. Peasant protestors appropriated the discourse of 'strike' and creatively applied it to their own circumstances for their own goals.

The 1955-56 Peasant Rebellion: From Strike to War

The colonial consensus, which the state had worked so assiduously to maintain and refurbish in the post-war period, was in crisis. It was in Maforki Chiefdom, Port Loko district, which had been the epicentre of the 1898 rebellion, and where a rebellious mood already existed, that peasants first seized the opportunity to 'strike' against taxes and their chiefs. On November 25 and 29, over seven thousand peasant protestors marched to the offices of the District and Provincial Commissioners and complained about the five shilling levy by Paramount Chief Alkali Modu for his new house.³⁰ They also protested against the excessive taxation, extortion and oppression in the chiefdom. The commissioners assured the crowd their grievances would be investigated.

They dispersed.³¹ The scale of popular discontent forced Alkali Modu to drop the tax.

The rescinding of the tax, however, did not satisfy Maforki protestors. They wanted the administration to freeze the tax and to ensure that Alikali Modu would not reimpose the levy. They scheduled another meeting for December 2, 1955. Wary about the potential of such a gathering, the government accused the protest leaders of merely attempting to use Alkali Modu's 'concession as a stepping-stone for further negotiations'. Many peasants, it claimed, had been satisfied with the chief's retreat.³² To prevent the meeting, the police blockaded the town. They arrested 73 people and dispersed the thousands of people who were on the way to the gathering. Many eluded the police and made it to the meeting site, but Pita (Peter) Kamara and Abu Sankoh, who had emerged as two of the informal leaders of the protest, did not. The government later claimed that Kamara stayed away from the meeting because he was satisfied with Alkali Modu's concession.³³

Tensions remained high. Fennell Smith, the Provincial Commissioner of Northern Provinces, declared a state of emergency, prohibited all assembly and instructed police to arrest armed protestors in Port Loko.³⁴ By then, peasant protests had exploded in other chiefdoms. In Buya Romende Chiefdom, peasants demonstrated against excessive taxation and misrule of Bai Banta, a native of Port Loko and close friend of Alkali Modu.³⁵ In Marampa-Masimera Chiefdom, protestors destroyed the house and rice stock of the Section Chief, Almami Sheriffu, whom they accused the chief of extortion. The District Commissioner had to calm the crowd with promises of an enquiry into the chief's conduct.³⁶

Peasants in Songo in the Koya chiefdom also held protests to coincide with those in Port Loko on November 29, and December 2, 1955. Led by Amadu Kanda, the crowd complained to the District Commissioner about high taxes, corrupt tax assessors and oppression by Paramount Chief Bai Kompa.³⁷ Kompa was described as 'the worst corrupt chief' in the Northern Province. Police dispersed the crowd with tear-gas and baton charges and removed the twelve road blocks that had been set up. The chief hid during the disturbances, and Amadu Kanda became the 'virtual leader' of the chiefdom. By December 5, the revolt had subsided in Maforki, Marampa-Masimera, Buya Romende and Koya chiefdoms. According to the colonial administration, the 'constitutional approach' became ascendant among the protestors.³⁸

The most intense, and perhaps destructive, phase of the rebellion in Port Loko District took place in Kaffu Bullom and Loko Massama chiefdoms. The protestors destroyed properties and set up road blocks.³⁹ Clashes between the police and demonstrators from the December 18 to 26 resulted in the

death of five people.⁴⁰ The government had to put the International Airport at Lungi under military guard after the police force was overwhelmed by the crowd.⁴¹ Similar violence occurred in the two Bombali chiefdoms, Makari Gbanti and Bombali Sebor. In spite of efforts by leaders in Makari Gbanti to keep the protest peaceful, the crowd destroyed the Native Administration Court house and records, and the eight properties belonging to Native Authority members whom they also 'manhandled'. Protestors pelted the car of the District Commissioner, J. Watson, with stones. They relented only after the neighbouring Paramount Chief Bai Sebor intervened and the District Commissioner promised an enquiry.⁴²

By the time the protests spread to Kambia District on December 19, they had acquired the character of a war. Intelligence reports described the crowds as 'better armed and organized and more directly and systematically aggressive in burning and looting houses and stores of the Chiefs and Native Authority officials'.⁴³ In Samu, protestors destroyed the houses and farms of Chief Yumkella. They claimed that the chiefs had enjoyed 'these evidences of affluence for a long time and now did not need them any longer'.⁴⁴ Expectations that the crisis would blow over at the end of the year proved unfounded.⁴⁵ Fresh outbreaks of violence took place in Bombali and Kambia districts. The police arrested people in Tonko Limba chiefdom for arson. Police guards had to be posted at the rice mill at Kasseire in Mambolo to prevent its destruction. In Sanda Loko, the crowds protested taxation and extortion.⁴⁶ Armed with dane guns, swords and machetes, they defied police tear-gas and baton charges. They construed police actions as 'making war on the people'.⁴⁷ The 'rebels' associated the police with 'steel helmets, tear gas and firearms and regarded them as people who had to be fought'. Police became targets because they were perceived as defenders of chiefs and the corrupt local elite. Their appearance and aggressive tactics to restore order made them unpopular. By February 14, 1956, an estimated 20 people had died in the 'war'.⁴⁸

The most aggressive protestors coalesced in two 'hardcore gangs', which operated from Magbema and Samu chiefdoms. Police estimated that the 'gang' based in Samu town had between 200 to 300 members. One of the gangs ambushed police officers at Kychom on February 24, 1956, injuring many of them. Another gang attacked police at Mapotolon town, wounding a British Police officer. One of the protestors was killed in the fray.⁴⁹ Police attempts to penetrate the gang by infiltration proved unsuccessful. The two infiltrators sent by the police were discovered, denounced and abducted by peasant protestors. They were never found. The police presumed they had been beaten

to death. The police eventually arrested the leader of one of the gangs, which reduced their activities.⁵⁰

Before then, the protestors had succeeded in chasing six Kambia district chiefs, including Kande Yumkella, from their chiefdoms. Kande Yumkella, who was also the district council president, had been sent by the government to explain the tax increase to his people.⁵¹ His mission failed. Peasants did not listen to him. The protestors also intimidated Paramount Chief Bai Farima Tass, who was also a Minister without Portfolio in the SLPP administration. Farima had to be escorted from the wrath of the crowd by the police.⁵² Yumkella and Farima Tass, subsequently accused Commissioner Greenwood and the police of failing to protect them. The allegation was discovered to be false.⁵³

The Southern Province also felt the shockwaves of the revolt but peasant protests actions there were less violent.⁵⁴ The only exception was Moyamba District where protestors burnt ten houses in Rotifunk and Bradford and attempted to destroy a section of the railway. Calm returned only after the police killed two people and arrested about 335 demonstrators. Furthermore, the police proscribed public meetings and the possession of sticks.⁵⁵ By the time the riots subsided, over £750,000 worth of property had been destroyed and twenty-six people, including three policemen, had been killed.⁵⁶ In Bo and Pujehun districts, the thousands of peasant protestors displayed neither the animosity nor the violence of their Northern Province and Moyamba counterparts towards their chiefs.

What was to be made of this general outpouring of the rural discontent? Despite the numerous indications and hints of restiveness, the outbreak of mass protest came as a rude shock to the political elite and colonial administration. The elite had been busy formulating 'constitutional' amendments and political arrangements for greater autonomy. They had put far more credence in the portions of the colonial reports describing the districts as 'law-abiding and peaceful' than those pointing to social discontent. The instinctive reaction of the SLPP elite was to blame their political opponents for both the workers' strike and the rebellion. Their provincial journal, the *Observer*, based in Bo, accused SLPP opponents of using the 'emotions of ignorant people' and 'backdoor methods' to challenge them.⁵⁷ Yet, as clearly explained above, the warning signs had been evident from the late 1940s.

The Rebellion as a Historical Process

Scholars who have analyzed Sierra Leone's political evolution have labelled peasant actions 'reactionary' or 'anomic'.⁵⁸ Martin Kilson drew two major conclusions from the 1955 peasant rebellion. First, he argued that the rebellion challenged the myth that nationalist elites and the masses had identical inter-

ests or acted harmoniously during the decolonization period. Second, although peasants had real and concrete grievances, their 'reaction ... followed anomic lines, entailing violent, riotous political expression'.⁵⁹ John Cartwright essentially endorsed this broad view. While Kilson's first conclusion is tenable, the second needs reconsideration. Kilson had interpreted colonial political evolution in Sierra Leone as a struggle between 'modernity' and 'tradition'. As a consequence, he decried the ambivalence of the rebellious peasants towards the chieftaincy and their failure to push for 'outright revolution'.

Far from being an 'anomic' or 'reactionary' sequence of events, the 1955 rebellion should be understood as an unfolding historical movement – composed of different strands and personalities in different localities – held together by common class discontent and interests. It was also a historical discourse composed with the actions, intent, culture, language and social reality of the participants. Thus, the revolt should be seen for what it was, not what the analysts want it to be.⁶⁰ What started as a strike against excessive taxation and the depredations of Chief Alkali Modu rapidly evolved into multiple 'chieftom rebellions' and 'chieftom revolutions'. By December 1955, even the colonial administration had to concede that the events were a 'peasants' revolt' aimed at corrupt paramount chiefs and their henchmen.⁶¹

By using the language of a 'strike', peasants echoed the actions of workers in Freetown in the same year and strove to give a national dimension to their movement and rebellion. However, by the time the revolt was suppressed, it had assumed the character of a civil war between the state, the chiefs and the peasantry. Although a civil war, it was largely restricted to the ethnic groups in the region. Looking at peasant rebellions in South Africa and Uganda between the 1930s and 1980s, Mahmoud Mamdani makes an interesting observation on this point. He posits that the peasant struggles against oppressive chiefs and indirect state structures assumed the 'dimensions of a civil war inside the ethnic group'.⁶² Northwestern Sierra Leone proved to be no different in this respect.

The peasant rebellion had been primarily directed against their chiefs. It had started peacefully and purposefully though it quickly took on the character of a civil war, with the destruction of the property of the chiefs and local authorities. The state escalated the war when it interposed the police between the peasant rebels and their chiefs in order to enforce law and order. The rebel peasants naturally associated the actions of the police with defence of rural despotism and opposition to their interests. The escalation of the protest into a 'war' also reflected the hardening attitude of some of the protestors, the disintegrative effects of the confrontation and the lack of solidity of the peasant leadership. The destructive violence invested in the protest should also be seen as the consequent supersession of individual and sectarian

concerns over the collective expression of peasant interests in the unfolding drama. This resultant anarchy, however, should not mask the fact that in the sequence of events, the protestors, except on rare occasions, directly targeted chiefs, local chieftdom authorities and property. They spared Europeans, Syrians and their properties.⁶³

The 'crowds', 'demonstrators', 'mobs' and 'rioters' who were engaged in the rebellion were not faceless people. They consisted mainly of peasant farmers, fishermen, small traders and rural artisans with real interests and grievances. In the primary and secondary literature, the tendency has been to lump them together as 'young men'.⁶⁴ The term has ambiguous generational and political connotations. 'Young men' had long been a local euphemism for the politically disempowered. In fact, it included all those, men and women, who did not hold positions of authority within the local network of power.

That disempowerment of a section of populace, and the inability of newly created colonial structures to empower them, partly explains the nature of the peasant leadership that emerged. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, these young people had been dynamic and aggressive in the pursuit of their interests. The question was whether they had the credibility to challenge 'traditional authority'. The peasant protestors, therefore, did not just gravitate around any 'young man'. In every chieftdom and town, they gravitated around those who had the social standing and personality to ably represent their cause. Thus, in Port Loko, Bakorobah, Pita (Peter) Kamara and Abu Sankoh became the most prominent leaders of the protestors.⁶⁵ The colonial administration described Bakorobah as an influential and popular Mandingo businessman of Guinean origin. He had operated a successful transport business at Port Loko, 'until practically squeezed out by Alkali Modu'.⁶⁶ Pita Kamara, also a trader, had a similar axe to grind with the chief. The third man, Abu Sankoh, had strongly opposed the amalgamation of Maforki and Port Loko Chieftdoms. These men drew support from an assortment of local leaders, including Tejan Kamara, Abu Kamara and L. Bangurah, a clerk. The brothers of Pita Kamara, Maligie Kamara and Abu Kamara, also joined the campaign against Alkali Modu. Maligie and Abu were well known diamond dealers.

The administration also tried to link the Port Loko leaders with Mahmoud Akar, a member of the United People's Party. It was said that the party took an active interest in the rebellion and actually held 'propaganda meetings' around it.⁶⁷ Beyond this event, the administration had little concrete evidence to link Akar with the Port Loko leadership. In the end, the crucial point was that the confluence of grievances between the essentially elitist group of leaders and the peasant masses in Port Loko positioned the former to provide the requisite leadership for the rebellion.

The general character of the leadership did not differ radically in the other chiefdoms. In Loko Massama, the site of some of the most violent protests, Pa Buya, Yorro, Kaba Conteh and Mr. A. B. Kamara (Bai Bai) were identified as the inspiration behind the events. A.B. Kamara, a literate man, had very strong ties with Wallace-Johnson.⁶⁸ He carried copies of Mr Wallace-Johnson's correspondence with London and allegedly distributed party cards of the National Council of Sierra Leone (NCSL) to his peasant supporters.⁶⁹ Keku Bangura of Karsona, Abu Ibrahim, a retired civil servant and sub-Chief Alkali Conteh were reported as being very influential among the protestors in Kaffu Bullom. In Masimera, Amadu Kule, popularly known as 'An Boye-Kek', led the crowds.⁷⁰ Headmen, retired petty bureaucrats and educated men for a plethora of reasons led the peasant crowds against paramount chiefs and other chiefdom administrators. In short, the peasant movement drew its leadership from popular community figures that were not necessarily commoners. Drawn sometimes from competing and opposing royal houses and political factions, this leadership represented a credible but ambivalent alternative to paramount chiefs.

This elitist leadership helped the peasant movement by its ability to sufficiently represent the peasant cause to the state. They coherently articulated peasant grievances to the local and state authorities. The crowds accepted and publicly acknowledged their leadership. In some cases, peasants refused to talk with government administrators in their absence. Their unwillingness, however, to pursue peasant demands or challenge the state beyond a particular point hampered the movement. They accommodated the state when they perceived sufficient concessions had been made. For example, Abu Sankoh did not show up for the December 2, 1955 meeting in Port Loko because he felt the tax concessions were enough. Bakorobah, another prominent leader, withdrew when the whole thing got 'too big' for him.⁷¹ The limitation of this leadership to effectively represent peasant interests or provide a real alternative may have been responsible for the intensification of the violence and the degeneration to 'gangsterism' in certain areas.

What triggered the rebellion and what motivated these peasant rebels and leadership? The increase in local taxation and the replacement of house tax with a poll tax in 1955 have been accepted by colonial authorities and scholars as the motive behind the rebellion. There is much merit in this position because the increase did add to peasant burdens. Taxation became equal for the rich and poor. The 'big men' who had carried the tax burden for 'young men' and their dependants were less inclined to do so when it went up to 40 shillings. Heavy extortion and over-assessment by tax assessment committees compounded the burden on the poor.⁷² The lack of visible benefit in remote villages made the tax increases questionable. Peasants perceived correctly

that their taxes swelled the salaries of local officials and paid for their concrete and iron sheet roofed houses. The almost spontaneous outpouring of anger against the taxes is, therefore, understandable.

Eliphaz Mukonoweshuro, however, cautions against over-emphasizing the taxation as the main cause of the revolt. He maintains that neither the concept of taxation nor resistance against tax were new.⁷³ Mukonoweshuro essentially accepts the arguments of Chief Provincial Commissioner H. Childs, who maintained that the 1955 ordinance did not constitute a serious departure from the spirit of the 1937 tax amendment, which already equated house with family. Both Mukonoweshuro and Childs have a point. The novelty of taxation had long worn off after 1898, and the house tax had effectively become a poll tax by 1937.⁷⁴ The system had always been riddled with extortion and assessment problems that the administration could not resolve. Lastly, the Cox Commission later concluded that 25 shillings was a reasonable and affordable tax level for peasants. Peasants, in fact, accepted and paid that amount after 1955. However, while this reasoning is useful in explaining why the protests did not erupt simultaneously or affect all parts of the provinces equally; it does not explain why the rebellion started in Port Loko or became extremely violent in Kambia and other districts.

Part of that answer may lie in the incidence and impact of the new tax system. The striking feature of the 1955 tax assessment was the dramatic increase in the tax amount and taxable population in the Northern Province. The province had an increase of 24.6 per cent compared to 9.6 per cent in South-Eastern Province and 1.8 per cent in South-Western Province. In Port Loko, figures showed a staggering 53 per cent increase in taxpayers.

The figures indicate that the inhabitants of Port Loko and Kambia felt the burden of the new tax-system more severely than those in other districts. The astronomical increase in tax revenue suggests that the paying population had been either previously under-assessed, or was over-assessed in 1955. Under-assessment meant people who had escaped taxation in the past now had to pay taxes. Over-assessment meant existing taxpayers had to pay more. The problem of assessment featured prominently among the widespread complaints received by the administration on abuses that accompanied the collection of the taxes. The taxes ranged from twenty-five shillings to forty shillings a head (in Kambia). This differential impact is important in helping to understand why rebellion started in Port Loko and why it assumed such violent proportions in Kambia.⁷⁵

The focus on taxation can partly explain why the rebellion happened when it did, but it cannot fully explain the virulence of the rebellion or the animosity towards the local elite. It also cannot explain the nature of peasant leadership. After all, the tax was imposed by the state and, until 1955, collected by its

agents. To reach a deeper understanding, we have to turn to the plethora of grievances that underlay politics in rural areas. The rebellion had revealed an alarming extent of corruption, extortion and despotism by the local chieftdom elite. Local authorities interpreted 'native custom' in diverse ways to extract forced labour, levies and fines from peasants and the rural poor.⁷⁶

Petitions sent to the government at the height of the rebellion graphically conveyed the manifold manipulations of 'custom' for extortionate ends. Formulated in the language of the ruling elite, the documents were the work of 'peasant intellectuals'.⁷⁷ These 'intellectuals' were usually educated men who had held minor clerical posts in the bureaucracy. What made them peasant intellectuals was not necessarily their immediate social status, but their wider communal links and spirited presentation of peasant grievances. Their petitions marked a sharp departure from immediate pre-rebellion documents. Unlike Bempa and the other Port Loko petitioners, they made no concessions to the paternalism of the chieftaincy.

The SLPP government and colonial officials received many petitions, which they largely ignored and discarded.⁷⁸ Two petitions from Loko Massama and Samu Chiefdoms, however, made their way to the Colonial Office in London. A.B Kamara, Alimamy Sampha Yorroh Kargbo, Pa Lamina Bonthor and Idrissa Fofanah authored the Loko Massama petition on behalf of the chieftdom residents. The Samu petition was penned by one M.S. Mansaray. The Loko Massama petition addressed from the office of the West African Youth League, 7 Trelawny Street, symbolized the facilitative role of Wallace-Johnson as well as the link between rural and urban radicalism. Significantly, the two petitions came from areas where the tax rebellion had assumed the character of a war.

The petitions countered the stigmatization of peasant protestors as anomic, and shifted responsibility for the violence to the state and local elite. The Loko Massama petition attributed the violence to the local ruling elite and security forces, calling them the perpetrators of the violence. It stated, '[t]he people only protested and without an act of violence at all to the paramount chief and tribal authority against excessive taxation'.⁷⁹ M.S. Mansaray of Samu expressed similar sentiments, describing the protestors as 'law abiding and loyal inhabitants who have silently and patiently borne a variety of hardships' under the chief, and not 'hooligans (sic) destroying property indiscriminately and wantonly'.⁸⁰

Both petitions censured Paramount Chiefs Bai Sama of Loko Massama and P.C. Bai Sherbro Yumkella II of Samu. The Samu petition painted an unflattering image of Yumkella. It described the chief as a self proclaimed 'Black Governor', who was 'intolerant of popular opinion, uninterested in the welfare of the people and exploitative of his people'. Among his long list

of transgressions were incompetence, despotism, corruption, bribery, malicious persecution, incarceration, victimization, extortion, financial misappropriation, use of 'free labour without feeding them', and the imposition of a plethora of fines. Mansaray wrote:

We have seen people fined £50 or more, or flogged, or asked to 'pick pins' on one leg for a long time or to be placed in stocks in front of their wives and relatives, just because they had no money to pay; in some cases their farms are taken and given to the Chief so that the Chief now owns a lot of farms. Lands have been seized by this means and given to the friends of the Chief. The Chief is always after money and uses many ways to obtain the utmost from the people.⁸¹

Mansaray maintained Yumkella had insulted their 'manhood'. He claimed the chief had reduced people to poverty, enslaved them and made it impossible to maintain tranquillity. Many protestors later described their condition vis-à-vis chiefs as 'domestic slavery'.⁸² The Provincial Commissioner of Northern Province dismissed Mansaray's allegations against Yumkella as 'false and exaggerated', though he conceded that the general picture painted of the depredations of the chieftaincy was 'fairly true'.⁸³

The Commissioner may have questioned the veracity of Mansaray's claims, but his accompanying despatch essentially legitimized the substance of the anti-chief discourse of the peasant intellectuals. In his despatch accompanying Mansaray's petition, he added his own long list of the omissions of the chieftaincy. High on his list was forced labour. Chiefs had continued to demand forced labour even though that right had been commuted to fixed salaries. The commissioner also conceded that chiefs set up illegal courts and collected undeterminable sums in fines and levies. There were levies for funerals, for sending chiefs to Legislative Council and for the crowning of 'Black District Commissioners' – as presidents of district councils became known. Peasants paid fees or fines for fishing, hunting, birth and death, carpentry, and secret societies.⁸⁴

The commissioner also pointed out that chiefs profited from sale of titles to the local elite and elections to public offices. Many chiefdoms were cluttered with *almamis*, *kaprs*, and *santigis*, many of whom had paid the various paramount chiefs for their titles. Chiefs also took bribes and presents from candidates for tribal authorities and district councils. These officials, more often than not, recouped their expenses from peasants. The district commissioner also maintained that with the introduction of Native Authorities, 'chiefs have revived old habits and got away with what amounts to a breach of contract'.⁸⁵ The chiefs used every opportunity to line their pockets. Mansaray's petition was finally vindicated, with the concession by the

commissioner that the chiefs of Mambolo and Samu (Yumkella) had enriched themselves considerably by using unpaid labour for their farms.⁸⁶ Popular revulsion against the conduct of this chiefly elite was evident in widespread destruction of their farms, stores and houses.

Excessive taxation and local tyranny in 1955 had sparked the tinderbox of frustrations over colonial institution-building and modification of the historical relationship between the state, chiefs and peasants. Initiated with the native administrations in the 1930s, by the 1950s the changes had modified the chieftaincy, giving chiefs greater access to resources and prominence in state politics. The refashioned and revitalized chieftaincy re-assumed control over peasant lives in ways which were far 'more powerful' than in the precolonial period.⁸⁷ In the decolonization period, the decision by Dr Margai to anchor the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party around the chieftaincy considerably strengthened it. The propensity towards primitive capital accumulation and ostentatious consumption, which became the hallmark of the new political elite, sharply attenuated the traditional paternalism of the chieftaincy. Under these circumstances, the customary means of challenging local despotism became greatly circumscribed. The institutional modification of the relationship between chiefs and peasants and its ensuing contestation has been wrongly construed by colonial officials and academics alike as the struggle between 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

The failure of customary mechanisms or the new institutions to accommodate or resolve the struggle produced the violent rebellion. Protestors had used petitions and peaceful demonstrations to articulate their grievances, contest and negotiate their relationship with the chiefs and the state, and defend their class interests. It was the failure of these peaceful actions to convey effectively the depth of peasant discontent and produce speedy results that led to the 'riots' and the 'war'.

Until then, the reasons for the outbreak of violence should be sought in the contradictions between chiefs and commoners, and the inability of 'custom' to accommodate them. To its credit, the colonial administration admitted that the 'absence of any recognised means by which changes in chieftain government could be made peacefully and constitutionally' had produced the violent confrontation.⁸⁸ The government's attempts at restoring order were not, therefore, limited to the use of force. It also tried mediation and conciliation. In short, as the situation worsened, it tried to reassert its paternalistic role. At the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956, it instructed provincial administrators to conduct enquiries in the areas of unrest. The government advised administrators to give people the full opportunity 'to voice their grievances and disclose the root cause for the comment'.⁸⁹ African

as well as European administrators took on the tasks of visiting, enquiring and reconciling the turbulent chiefdoms in Northern Province.

Administrators learnt about the level of animosity within the chiefdoms, the main targets of peasant grievances and the dynamics of the protests. In Loko Massama, the protestors refused to even meet or reconcile with Chief Bai Sama, who was described as despotic and tyrannical. In chiefdoms like Sella Limba and Kaffu Bullom, popular animosity was directed more at chiefdom clerks, tribal authorities, sections and headmen than at the chiefs. The Massumbala Chiefdom enquiry revealed that sub-chiefs had spearheaded the protests against the chief and the government. Only the chief's house had been destroyed during the protests. According to administrators, the sub-chiefs had joined the protests because the institutional changes had curtailed their access to 'illegal' resources.⁹⁰

The conciliation exercise gave the opportunity to contending factions to articulate their grievances and for the administration to take stock of the situation. In a few cases, the 'riot fever' seemed to have propelled unscrupulous individuals into action.⁹¹ On the whole, however, they revealed the twin impact of the cumulative 'customary' or 'traditional' demands made by chiefs and new local government institutions. An administrator observed that peasants complained about a bowl of rice levied by the chief in Sella Limba. Putting the complaint in context, he maintained that the bowl of rice may seem negligible but when added to district and chiefdom taxes, birth and death taxes, circumcision taxes, palm wine taxes and many other seemingly minor customary 'obligations', it became unbearably burdensome for peasants. The meetings also demonstrated that many people simply could not fathom the role and functions of the new officials and institutions and their relationship to much more familiar ones.⁹² What was the relationship between the court president and chief? What was the relationship between Native Administrations and District Councils? Colonial administrators and chiefs had not provided sufficient answers for these questions. The murky ground between intention and practice gave chiefs not only leeway for corruption, but also bred popular suspicion and antagonism to the members of the new institutions.

The Cox Commission: Validation, Arbitration and Intimidation

Even with all the unresolved questions, the colonial state felt that local enquiries would be cathartic and remedial enough. Both the governor and African-led government resisted demands for a general commission of inquiry. The demand for a general enquiry had been vigorously pushed by I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, who accused the administration of using excessive force

to quell the rebellion. He telegraphed a socialist British Member of Parliament, Fenner Brockway, to demand a tax freeze and an inquiry into the disturbances from the Colonial Office.⁹³ Johnson reiterated this position in a letter of December 30, 1955, calling on the Colonial Office to resolve the 'great burden of taxation, thus obviating the threat of the incident which took place in the year 1898' by appointing a Royal Commission.⁹⁴ Pressured constantly by Wallace-Johnson, Fenner Brockway pushed the Colonial Secretary for Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, for an investigation into the rebellion.⁹⁵ Unsurprisingly, to deflect the pressure, the colonial administration in Freetown accused Wallace-Johnson of being a prime instigator of the rebellion. Administrators charged him with having gone to Rofinka in Maforki Chiefdom to address demonstrators.⁹⁶

The scale of the revolt and fear of further pressure from the British Parliament eventually compelled the Colonial Office to concede to the demand for an inquiry on January 16, 1956. The Local Government Minister, Albert Margai, felt that the district level inquiries that had been conducted were sufficient. Colonial Secretary Lennox Boyd insisted on a single official inquiry. The Leader of Government, Milton Margai, reluctantly agreed with him.⁹⁷ A commission of inquiry was set up on March 29, 1956. The commission paid most attention to the events in the Northern Province since it was the epicentre of the rebellion. It authenticated the multitude of grievances – excessive taxation, extortion, corruption and despotism – already expressed by peasants and known to the colonial administration. The commissioners posited that the tax problems which triggered the rebellion had been 'a mere symptom of an administrative breakdown', for that the government should be held responsible.⁹⁸ In its view, the 'riots' merely 'unmasked' an administrative weakness which had been present in the system. They wrote:

Apart from taxation and rural despotism, the commission mentioned other causal factors. It suggested that diamond digging and high taxation disorganized rural family life. Generally, it suggested that the sociological and economic changes following World War II had greatly corroded the fabric of rural life, but it did not elaborate on these changes. Its main focus throughout the report remained colonial institutional arrangements and provinces and the relationship between chiefs and peasants.

The commission confirmed the linkage between the workers' strike and the peasant rebellion. It referred to the language of protest and actions of the rebels. The peasant rebels in Maforki, who were essentially non-violent, called their protest against taxes a 'strike'. Others justified their violence by indicating that a strike involved the 'indiscriminate' destruction of property.⁹⁹

The commission showed no sympathy for chiefs and other victims of violence, many of whom, it maintained, retained their 'provocative conduct' during the rebellion. Even as it condemned the violence, the commission reiterated 'the people whose property has suffered were sometimes collectively and sometimes individually and, to a greater or lesser extent, guilty of committing maladministration as to inflame the rioters'.¹⁰⁰ In short, the Commissioners justified the actions of the protestors.

Having placed omissions of chiefs at the heart of the rebellion, it was not surprising that the commission strongly censured them and the tribal authorities.¹⁰¹ The commissioners indicated that considerable popular mistrust existed about the new government machinery and peasants wanted to return to the 'supremacy of administrative officials'.¹⁰² This suggestion has been taken too literally to mean that peasants preferred colonialism rather than the rejection of colonial modification of the relationship between chiefs and commoners.¹⁰³

The future position of chiefs created a dilemma for the commission. It wanted to recommend their abolition but had to concede their relevance for the people and the state. To compromise, the commissioners advised the adoption of measures to reduce their power and influence. The state should restrict the access of chiefs to peasant labour and resources, and their role in politics. Their right to forced labour should be terminated. Chiefs must be kept away from party politics and commercial relations with their people. The emoluments of chiefs were to be strictly controlled and their rights to forced labour terminated. The commission suggested that no funds should be spent on buildings except those that were chieftain property. Finally, the commissioners recommended that the state investigate the conduct of certain chiefs. The commissioners sincerely believed these steps would make rural life tolerable and the relationship between chief and commoners less oppressive. They believed historical change and institutional development would render the chieftaincy, a 'sinecure'.¹⁰⁴

The commission supported administrative development at chieftain rather than at district level. It suggested the scaling down of district councils because they had performed woefully. The commission recommended limitation of their role to local affairs and a return of some of their functions to chieftain authorities. Chieftain authorities should replace Tribal or Native Authorities, which had degenerated. The new bodies should be smaller, more representative and more closely supervised by government. The commission clearly outlined the role that chiefs and local authorities should play with reference to justice, law enforcement, taxation and issuing of licenses. Ultimately, the commission's emphasis leaned heavily on 'regulation' and

'control' of affairs in the provinces in view of the 'desire for constitutional developments and the social revolution of recent years'.¹⁰⁵ Caught between popular demands and elite aspirations, these essentially institutionally-minded and bureaucratic men called for more state supervision and control.

Like the David Chalmers Commission that investigated the Hut Tax War of 1898, the Cox Commission served similar 'public' and 'latent' functions. Publicly, the commission, in its procedures, its findings and recommendations, sought to reaffirm faith in colonial paternalism, liberalism and justice. It also gave the opportunity to the rural rebels to ventilate their grievances. This function was perhaps more crucial from a popular perspective in the late 1950s than it was in the late 1890s. Unlike the earlier situation, the rebels of 1955 lacked the means to voice their grievances. The former 'colony' newspapers, especially the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, which had provided a forum – ambiguous though it was – for 'protectorate' voices, had disappeared.¹⁰⁶ The *African Vanguard*, owned by Wallace-Johnson, came out intermittently and was out of circulation for the duration of the rebellion. The most vocal politicians were in government and opposed to the rebels. Except for Wallace-Johnson, the Creole elite who were in the opposition, made no political capital out of the insurrection.¹⁰⁷ In its 'latent' function, the commission gave the Colonial Office the opportunity to assess, and mediate the behaviour of its African partners in the decolonization process. For the Office, the rebellion and the report had revealed an apparent lack of popular support for the SLPP government and had confirmed it was merely an oligarchic 'alliance of the Chiefs and educated element'. Loveridge, one of Commissioners, accused SLPP ministers of being incompetent and the real 'villains' of the rebellion.¹⁰⁸ The Colonial Office, never enamoured by the 'independence' of African governments, suggested to the Governor R. De Zouche Hall that he should 'clip the wings' of SLPP ministers.¹⁰⁹ It instructed Hall 'to let the Ministers know that they have been given their yard of rope, that they came pretty close to hanging themselves and that in the future a much shorter length of rope would have to be used.'¹¹⁰ Colonial Officials insisted that the fact that the government had been maintained in power by security agents under 'European direction' should be driven home. The extent to which the leverage, arising from the Commissioner, was used during colonial talks at the pre-independence negotiations between Sierra Leone politicians and the colonial office is unclear. What is clear was that the plans for independence in 1961 were executed with the minimum of difficulties.

The Colonial Office did not spare De Zouche Hall from criticism. Hall was seen as too familiar and tolerant of the SLPP regime. In the eyes of the Colonial Office, he displayed familiarity, indecisiveness and a lack of policy

when dealing with the government.¹¹¹ Hall had been ailing for some time and could hardly be said to have been in firm control of the situation. Furthermore, his political position steadily grew weaker with 'constitutional' developments and the transfer of power to the new African ruling elite. For its part, the Colonial Office accepted no responsibility for the crisis and ensuing rebellion. Instead, it despatched a 'conscientious and vigorous' governor, Maurice Dorman, 'to tighten things up' in the colony at the end of 1956.¹¹²

Needless to say, the SLPP government found the report unpalatable, especially in its criticisms of the government's ignorance of and ineptitude in dealing with rebellion.¹¹³ It rejected the commission's argument that rural oppression had intensified. The government blamed the conflict on the diamond boom and other economic changes. In general, the SLPP felt that it had been treated unfairly by its British partners in colonial administration. In the Legislative Council, the government, led by the Minister of Mines, Siaka Stevens, accused British provincial officials of intrigue and collusion in fomenting the crisis.¹¹⁴ The SLPP government relented in its attack only after the Colonial Office and the Governor called for a more 'constructive approach'. In its public statement on the rebellion, the government endorsed the British provincial officials as 'agents' of the government. It quickly addressed some of the recommendations and pressing demands by peasant rebels. The government, however, retained its critical tone of the Cox Report.¹¹⁵

As part of the recommendations of the Cox Commission, the government instituted two commissions of inquiry. The commissions found the conduct of eleven chiefs and many local authorities 'subversive' of good government. Nine of the paramount chiefs were deposed or forced to resign. Among these were Legislative Council members Alkali Modu of Maforki and Bai Farima Tass II of Magbema. The inquiries surprisingly exonerated Bai Sherbro Yumkella II and Bai Sama of Loko Massama. Both chiefs and others similarly exonerated were temporarily suspended from office. Many district council and Tribal Authority members and headmen lost their positions in the process.¹¹⁶ The tax, which triggered the revolt, was reduced and set at an affordable maximum level of twenty-five shillings. The government proscribed many of the more oppressive aspects of rural life, including forced labour, illegal levies and extortion. Chiefs unsuccessfully fought to retain some of the proscribed privileges.¹¹⁷ Representation in local government structures increased and was made potentially accessible to peasants and other rural groups. These gains partly reformed the relationship between the local 'feudal' elite and commoners but they did not change it. Chiefs continued to be a significant force in the SLPP party and government. They even

reclaimed some of their lost resources through the Riots Damages Commission created by the government. Chief Yumkella eventually received £32,290 out of the £394,360 that was set aside to compensate 'victims' of the rebellion.¹¹⁸ Despite the recovery of lost ground by the chiefs, it was evident that peasants and the rural poor had won a significant victory which included the deposition of despotic chiefs, the abolition of coerced labour and the reduction in taxation.

Conclusion

In a profound historical irony, the colonial state in Sierra Leone had begun and ended in rebellion. The insurrection in 1898, which accompanied its inception, had been spearheaded by chiefs resisting the intrusion of foreign rule and the diminution of their authority. Almost sixty years later, the rebellion that signalled the twilight of the colonial state was launched by peasants against those very chiefs, who had by then become the linchpin of colonialism. Like the chiefs, the peasants had chosen their moment: decolonization, a period when the colonial process was in flux and a new 'moral' and 'political' order was in the process of being created. They used the 1955-56 war to contest and negotiate the demands of, and their relations with their chiefs, and by extension, the colonial state. Peasants indicated that those demands and relations were neither tenable nor acceptable in the new order. Furthermore, in their recourse to violence, they illustrated the inadequacy and obsolescence of 'traditional' and 'paternalistic' forms of seeking redress in face of the British refashioning of the chieftaincy and local institutions. The public investigation and acknowledgement of the peasant grievances by the Cox Commission and the reluctant restitutive actions by the SLPP government affirmed the legitimacy of these peasant claims. With the 1955 rebellion, peasants in northern Sierra Leone, like their chiefs in 1898, had negotiated the terms of a 'new' political order. They had not destroyed the nexus that connected them with the chiefs or with the state. That may have not have been their intention. What they ensured was that some of the more obnoxious features of that nexus which predated, survived and were even enhanced by colonialism, were removed.

Notes

1. Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, pp. 18-19, 173-175. For the origins of British developmentalism see J.M. Lee and Martin Petter, *The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy: Organization and the Planning of A Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945*, (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1982) pp. 243-256.
2. For typology of nationalist groups see Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, (New York: New York University Press, 1956), pp. 139-168. See also Thomas Hodgkin, *African Political Parties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

3. Marie Perinbam, 'Fanon and the Revolutionary Peasantry – The Algerian Case', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11, 3, (1973); Pierre Beysadde, *La Guerre d'Algerie 1954-1962* (Paris, Editions Planète, 1968); Philippe Trupier, *Autopsie de la Guerre d'Algerie* (Paris 1972); pp.427-445; Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau in Perspective* (London: James Currey, 1989); Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflicts in Kenya and Africa*, Books One and Two (London: James Currey, 1992), pp 265-504. For Portuguese colonies, see Chapter 7 in Patrick Chabal's *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 188-240.
4. John D. Hargreaves, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa: Essays in Contemporary History* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 79-80. Tony Smith, 'Patterns in the Transfer of Power: A study of French and British Decolonization', in Prosser Gifford and W. M. Roger Louis, eds., *Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 87-116. David Williams, 'Chapter 7: English Speaking West Africa', in Michael Crowder, ed., *Cambridge History of Africa: Vol. 8* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.350-353; Jean Suret-Canale and Adu Boahen, 'West Africa, 1945-1960', in Ali A. Mazrui, ed., and C. Wondji, asst. ed., *General History of Africa VIII: Africa Since 1935* (Paris: Unesco and Heinemann, 1993), pp. 161-191.
5. See Chapter Six in Ismail Rashid, 'Patterns of Rural Protests, Chiefs, Slaves and Peasants in Northwestern Sierra Leone 1898-1955', Ph.D Dissertation (McGill University, Montreal 1998).
6. *Protectorate Reports, 1949-1952*.
7. Ibid. The colonial administration also blamed 'professional trouble-makers' for fomenting disturbances in the provinces. This oblique reference implicated the radical populist politician, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson. Wallace-Johnson had actively protested government actions in the Boama Chiefdom disturbances. He had also actively solicited the interference of Fenner Brockway, the Socialist MP for Eton and Slough and the Colonial Secretary. These efforts certainly did not endear him to the colonial administration, which accused him of actively fomenting the disturbances for personal gain, an accusation that had no basis in reality.
8. *Protectorate Report, 1949/1950*.
9. SLNA SPA 507/4, Letter 1, Kali Morba Bempa to Chief Commissioner, dated August 13, 1953.
10. Ibid.
11. SLNA SPA 507/4, Letter 2, Kali Morba Bempa to Chief Commissioner, (August, 1953). The precise date of the second letter is unclear because of its condition. Its contents clearly reveal that it was a second letter since it made references to the previous letter.
12. Ibid.
13. SLNA SPA 507/4, The Commissioner, Northern Province to Chief Commissioner, Bo, November 1, 1954.
14. Davidson, *Report on District Councils*.
15. SLNA SPA 507/4, The Commissioner, Northern Province to Chief Commissioner, Bo, November 1, 1954.

16. Alkali Modu III was elected chief of Maforki Chiefdom in 1949 and became a member of the Sierra Leone Legislative Council in 1951, Goddard, *Handbook of Sierra Leone* (1955), pp. 12 & 24; Hargreaves, *End of Colonialism in West Africa*, p. 79.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. SLNA SPA 507/4, Tax Payers, Traders, Farmers, Tribal Authorities and Youths of Maforki to Minister Education Local Government and Welfare, September 25, 1955.
20. Ibid.
21. CSO SPA 506, Shegbendeh to Commissioner, Northern Province, January 2, 1952.
22. CO554/1329/25725, Governor R. de Zouche Hall to Secretary of State, February 20, 1956.
23. Due, *Changes in consumer Goods in Sierra Leone*, p. 23.
24. *Protectorate Report*, 1954.
25. *Protectorate Report*, 1955.
26. *Manchester Guardian* December 8, 1956.
27. *Protectorate Reports*, 1947, 1954 and 1955.
28. *Protectorate Report*, 1947.
29. For the Freetown riots see *Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry into the Strikes and Riots in Freetown, Sierra Leone, during February 1955* (Freetown: GPD, 1955).
30. *Daily Mail*, November 21, 1955.
31. Reuters Report, December 1, 1955; PRO CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November -December, 1955.
32. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November -December, 1955.
33. Ibid.
34. PRO CO554/1329, Ffennell Smith, Provincial Commissioner; SLNA MP 9236/6, Proclamation, December 19, 1955.
35. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November -December, 1955.
36. Ibid.
37. The aforementioned Bai Kompa was elected as chief in 1941 and was different the one who spoke in Legislative Council in 1926 against abolition (See Chapter Four). Goddard, *Handbook of Sierra Leone* (1955), p. 12.
38. Ibid.
39. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Telegram 537, Governor to SS, Colonies, December 12, 1955; In 1967, J. H. Riley, the former Registrar of Cooperation blamed the erstwhile Port Loko District Commissioner for the exacerbation, if not the precipitation, of the rebellion in Loko Massama in a letter to retired governor, De Zouche Hall. Hall disagreed. He maintained that the rebellion was indissolubly bound' with the political and administrative changes made from 1951 onwards. RHL. Mss Afr. S 1752, J.W. Riley to Robert De Zouche Hall, February 14, 1967 & Robert De Zouche Hall to J.W. Riley, February 19, 1967.

40. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November - December, 1955.
41. Thomas S. Cox, *Civil-Military Relations in Sierra Leone: A Case Study of African Soldiers in Politics* (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 32.
42. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November - December, 1955; Reuters, December 5, 1955; *Times*, London December 6, 1955.
43. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November -December, 1955.
44. PRO CO554/1329, Zouche Hall to Vile, March 23, 1956.
45. PRO CO554/1329 Secret, From GHQ, West Africa to War Office, 29 December, 1955; *Times*, January 6, 1956.
46. PRO CO554/1329, Hall to Secretary of Secretary of State, Colonies, January 21, 1956.
47. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Telegram 66, Deputy Governor to Secretary of State, Colonies, January 30, 1956.
48. PRO CO554/1329,25725, Governor Hall to Secretary of State Colonies, February 14, 1956.
49. PRO CO554/1329, Governor De Zouche Hall to Secretary of State, Colonies, March 2, 1956.
50. PRO CO554/1329, Governor De Zouche Hall to Secretary of State, Colonies, March 9, 1956.
51. Yumkella and other paramount chiefs had been despatched by the SLPP government to assuage the protestors. *Daily Mail*, December 29, 1955; *Daily Mail*, January 27, 1956.
52. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Minute, P. A. P Robertson, August 31, 1956.
53. *Report of Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in the Provinces: November 1955 to March 1956* (London: Sierra Leone Government, 1956) (Hereinafter referred to as The Cox Report). Cox was the Chairman of the Commission. pp. 83-85.
54. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Telegram 528, Governor to Secretary of State, Colonies, 13/12/1955.
55. PRO CO554/1329, Reuters Report, December 16, 1955.
56. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone*, p. 68.
57. *Observer* (Bo) December 31, 1955.
58. Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, p.285; Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone*, p. 82.
59. Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, p. 285.
60. In an extreme case of Marxist historical teleology, a Soviet historian, L.V. Pribytovskii, even characterized the revolt as joint peasant and workers' movement, which was eventually sold out by their 'bourgeois' leadership. See Lev Naumovich Pribytovskii, 'S'ERRA LEONE: KRESTI'IANSKOE DVISHENIE, 1955-1956'. SG, *Narody Azii i Afriki*, 3, (1983), pp. 125-132.

61. PRO CO 554/1329/25725 Sierra Leone Political Intelligence Report, December 1955. Secret S.F.9102; PRO CO554/1329, Extract from the notes of a conversation between Minister of State and W.A. Creech-Jones, April 4, 1956.
62. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) p. 196.
63. CO554/1329/25725, Telegram 66, Deputy Governor to S.S. January 30, 1956; Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone*, p. 68.
64. Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, p.179; Barrows, *Grassroots Politics in an African State*, p. 102.
65. Peter Kamara died a few years after the conflict. See Hargreaves, *End of Colonialism in West Africa*, p. 80.
66. PRO CO554/1329, Telegram, Secretary of State Colonies to Governor Hall, January 16, 1956.
67. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Extracts from CID Report on Ant-Taxation Demonstration and Disturbances in North and South Western Provinces from November, 1955 to February, 1956.
68. In the post-independence years, A.B. Kamara joined the All Peoples Congress (APC), a largely northern province based party. He rose through the ranks of the party to become Minister of Finance and Vice President of Sierra Leone.
69. The extent to which the NCSL benefit from its association with the peasant rebels was unclear but Akintola Wyse claims that people of Kambia asked the party to help them defeat Chief Yumkella in the elections of 1956. Apparently, the party's candidate Lerina Bright failed to register her candidacy for the area. See Wyse, *Bankole Bright*, p. 174.
70. See SLNA File on Conciliatory Enquiries, 1955/6 Riots. See especially Chiefdom Conciliatory Enquiries: Loko Massama Chiefdom, A Wurie, Provincial Education Secretary to Secretary, Ministry for Local Government, March 27, 1956; Chiefdom Conciliatory Enquiries: Kaffu Bullom Chiefdom, A. Wurie, Provincial Education Secretary to Secretary, Ministry for Local Government, March 27, 1956; Chiefdom Conciliatory Enquiry: Massumgbala Chiefdom. W. Greenwood, Ag. District Commissioner, Kambia to Commissioner, Northern Province, April 12, 1956; Chiefdom Conciliatory Enquiry: Sella Limba. John Watson, District Commissioner, Bombali to Commissioner, Northern Province, April 12, 1956.
71. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Extracts from CID Report on Anti-Taxation Demonstration and Disturbances in North and South Western Provinces from November, 1955 to February, 1956.
72. *Daily Mail*, October 21, 1955; CO554/1329/25725, Appendix, Political Intelligence Reports: Chiefdom Disturbances, November - December, 1955.
73. Mukonoweshuro, *Colonialism, Class Formation and Underdevelopment*, p. 212.
74. The Cox Report, p. 101.
75. *Sierra Leone Provincial Reports*, 1954 and 1955.
76. Kilson, *Political Change in a West Africa State*, p. 189; Cohen, *Politics of Elite Culture*, p.133; Mukonoweshoro, *Colonialism, Class Formation and Underdevelopment*, p. 212.
77. I have utilized the term 'peasant intellectuals' in a narrower and more attenuated sense than Steven Feierman who coined and applied the term to peasant leadership in Tanzania. For an elaboration of the concept, see Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals*:

Anthropology and History in Tanzania (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 18-27.

78. See for examples SLNA, Correspondence and Files of the 1955 riots, Fallah and Soriba Kamara (c/o M.S. Mansaray, Kychom, Selu Chiefdom, Kambia District) to Mr. Grey-Wood, District Commissioner, Kambia District, January 23, 1956; Petition from Santigi Thoronka of Masunba, a member of the Tribal Authority; Lamina Serrie of Maybean, a member of the Tribal Authority and Dura Tholi of Madorra, a headman to Sir Robert De Zouche Hall, January 12, 1956.
79. Petitioners (witnessed by A.B. Kamara) to Gov. R. Hall, March 21, 1956.
80. PRO CO 554/1329/25725, Mansaray to Commissioner, Makeni Division. cc. to Government, Local Minister etc, December 2, 1956.
81. PRO CO 554/1329/25725, Mansaray to Commissioner, Makeni Division. cc. to Government, Local Minister etc, December 2, 1956.
82. Cox Report, p. 98.
83. Cox Report, p. 98.
84. PRO CO554/1329, The Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to [Mr Hoe,] Colonial Office, March 3, 1956.
85. PRO CO554/1329, The Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to [Mr Hoe,] Colonial Office, March 3, 1956.
86. Chief Yumkella had several farms. One was estimated at about 1,000 acres. Cox Report, p. 131.
87. PRO CO554/1327/25725.
88. PRO CO554/1327/25725.
89. PRO CO554/1329, Telegram: Hall to Secretary of State, Colonies, January 6, 1956.
90. Ibid.
91. SLNA, CSB, Tax Disturbances, Gbonkolenken Chiefdom: Ag. District Commissioner to District Commissioner, Northern Provinces, March 27, 1956.
92. Ibid.
93. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Fenner Brockway to Lennox Boyd.
94. PRO CO 554/1329/25725, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson to Colonial Secretary, through the Colonial Secretary, Freetown. December 30, 1955. (From Wallace-Johnson representing the West African Civil Liberties and National Defence League (incorporating the West African Youth League, Sierra Leone Section).
95. PRO CO554/1329, Brockway to Lennox Boyd, December 30, 1955; PRO CO554/1329, Brockway to Secretary of State, Colonies, January 6, 1956; PRO CO554/1329, Telegram, Secretary of State Colonies to Governor Hall, January 8, 1956.
96. PRO CO554/1329, Telegram, Secretary of State Colonies to Governor Hall, January 16, 1956.
97. Ibid.; PRO CO554/1329, Eastwood to Zouche Hall, Colonial Office, January 21, 1956; PRO CO554/1329, Zouche Hall to Eastwood, Colonial Office, January 26, 1956; *Observer*, January 27, 1956.
98. The Cox Report, p. 9.
99. The Cox Report, pp. 13 & 146.

100. The Cox Report, 14.
101. The Cox Report, p. 146.
102. The Cox Report, p 16.
103. Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone*, p. 86.
104. Cox Report, See Chs. XI to XVI.
105. The Cox Report, p.230.
106. As if signalling the final eclipse of Creole political ambitions, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* ended its run in 1951, the year of the Stevenson constitution and the election of the SLPP. See Bernadette Cole, *Mass Media, Freedom and Democracy in Sierra Leone* (London: Premier Publishing House, 1996) p. 9.
107. Akintola Wyse suggests that the workers' strike and rebellion brought certain Creole leaders closer to the masses. This may have been truer of the workers' strike than of the rebellion. Wyse, *Bankole Bright*, pp. 174-175.
108. PRO CO554/1329, Loveridge to Vile, July 7, 1956.
109. PRO CO554/1329, Secret and Personal, Eastwood to De Zouche Hall, February 22, 1956.
110. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Colonial Office [Eastwood] to Sir Robert De Zouche Hall.
111. PRO CO 554/1329/25725, Colonial Office [Eastwood to Sir Robert Hall, Government House, Freetown, SL; See also CO554/1329, Zouche Hall to Eastwood, Colonial Office, January 13, 1956, The governor calls the party an 'unholy alliance' of chiefs and politicians.
112. PRO CO554/1329/25725, Minute. J. S. Bennet.
113. *The Statement of the Sierra Leone Government on the Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Protectorate* (November 1955 to March 1956 (Freetown: SLG 1956).
114. Sierra Leone Legislative Council Debates, 1956; Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone*, p. 69.
115. Statement of Sierra Leone Government.
116. *Reports of Commissioners of Inquiries into the Conduct of Certain Chiefs and Government Statement Thereon*, (London: GPD, 1957). & *Further Reports of Commissioners of Inquiries into the Conduct of Certain Chiefs and Government Statement Thereon*, (London: GPD, 1957).
117. Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone*, p. 84.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 85.



The Western Super-Powers and the Liberation Struggle in Africa: The Politics of Imperialism, Domination and Resistance, 1948-1980s

Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu*

Abstract

Controlling South Africa during the Cold War era was geostrategic to the Western super powers because of its 1,900-mile coastline with harbours at Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Walvis Bay (a seaport in the then South West Africa, now Namibia). Being the southernmost country on the African continent, South Africa abuts on both the Indian and the Atlantic Oceans and its fascist leaders vociferously pledged to 'defend the free world from the communist threat' during the Cold War era. Thus, apartheid South Africa played a vital role in the global strategy of imperialism led by Western super powers such as the United States of America and United Kingdom to make the Indian Ocean area a region for their dominance and total control. South Africa was thus regarded as a 'second Gibraltar' or 'gatekeeper' to the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. This article is about imperial interventions in the African continent spearheaded by Western super powers, and the pivotal role of apartheid South Africa in this regard. It also discusses the actions of African countries whose leaders acted in solidarity with the apartheid regime which had divisive foreign policy. But those African leaders who acted in solidarity with the racist South African government represented a minority group vigorously opposed by a majority of Organisation of African Unity member states and the African National Congress (ANC).

Résumé

Le contrôle de l'Afrique du Sud durant l'ère de la Guerre Froide était d'une importance géostratégique pour les supers puissances occidentales à cause de son littoral de 1.900 miles, de ses ports situés à Durban, à l'est de Londres, au Port Elizabeth, à la Ville du Cap et à la Baie de Walvis (un port maritime en Afrique du Sud Ouest de l'époque, devenu maintenant la Namibie). Etant le pays le plus au sud du continent africain, l'Afrique du Sud est contiguë à la fois aux océans Indien et Atlantique, et ses leaders fascistes se sont engagés

* South African Democracy Education Trust, Pretoria, South Africa.
Email: sifisondlovu@telkomsa.net

bruyamment à « défendre le monde libre de la menace communiste » durant l'ère de la Guerre Froide. Ainsi, l'Afrique du Sud sous l'apartheid a joué un rôle vital dans la stratégie globale de l'impérialisme conduite par les superpuissances occidentales telles que les Etats Unis d'Amérique (EU) et le Royaume Uni (RU) pour rendre la zone de l'Océan Indien une région sous leur domination et contrôle total, car ils considéraient l'Afrique du Sud comme « un second Gibraltar » ou une « porte de garde » vers l'Océan Indien et l'Océan Atlantique. Ce document concerne les interventions impériales survenues sur le continent Africain et qui étaient le fer de lance des superpuissances Occidentales. Aussi, il a trait au rôle central de l'Afrique du Sud dans la période de l'apartheid. Il évoque aussi les actions des pays et des leaders Africains qui ont agi en solidarité avec le régime d'apartheid dont la politique étrangère était basée sur la division. Mais ces leaders africains qui agissaient en solidarité avec le gouvernement raciste sud africain constituaient un groupe minoritaire qui était vigoureusement contrecarré par la majorité des états membres de l'Organisation de l'unité africaine et le Congrès National Africain (ANC).

Introduction

This article is based on 'top secret' documents which have recently been declassified and are housed in the South African Military Intelligence Archives. It is also based on the ANC Archives which are located at the University of Fort Hare, which historians could only access after the democratic dispensation in South Africa. Both archives compiled by former 'enemies' are very important in defining the geopolitics of knowledge about the politics of colonial domination, imperialism and anti-colonial resistance in Africa as a continent. They are also very central in promoting and consolidating empirical research connected to our immediate past (history) and the political economy of Africa.

One of the primary documents from the Military Intelligence archives is a paper authored in 1949 by the London based Joint Planning Staff under the command of the UK's army chief of staff. It identified the Soviet Union (an ally during the Second World War) as the only country which might threaten the interests of the Western super-powers in Africa as a continent to the extent that it would be necessary to go to war. This assertion was also repeated in a paper on "The World Situation and its Defence Aspect", tabled by the UK government at a conference of prime ministers on supposed threats posed by the Soviet Union. Immediately after the end of the Second World War, and fearing the spread of communism as an ideology, the United Kingdom, United States and the Union of South Africa held elaborate discussions in pursuit of a regional defence strategy of Africa. It is important to note that this era actually marked the beginnings of the Cold War and liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) were criticised for supposed links with communist Russia. Such criticism stemmed from a Cold War, zero-

sum perspective reflecting fears harboured by Western governments, thus anti-communist sentiments were expressed in a series of documents on defence strategy in Africa.

Both submissions claimed that the fundamental aim of Soviet leaders was to impose communism on all parts of the world. Suggesting a possible solution, the document on 'The World Situation and its Defence Aspect' asserted that 'it should clearly be the aim of all non-communist countries throughout the world to concert measures to counter the communist threat both in peace and war' (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 1, 22 March 1949:1). The authors further argued that provided the interests of the Western super-powers were not prejudiced, the primary aims of the post-Second World War anti-USSR defence policy should be:

To convince the Soviet Union that war is unprofitable by showing that Allies possess powerful forces and resources and are fully prepared not only to fight but also to act offensively from the outset. To this end all interested countries should collaborate in organising the necessary forces, in building up effective defences and in working out the necessary plans ... To take all possible action short of war, not only to arrest the further spread of Communism, but also to weaken the hold of Russia on countries she now dominates (Ibid:2).

The Western powers' concept of war against the USSR was based on the premise that they should first destroy the will and ability of the Soviet Union to fight. These countries, led by the US and the UK, were conscious of the fact that the USSR held vast military resources, including satellite nations, so vast that they could not be matched. As a result, they identified three ways of containing the military threat posed by the USSR and how this could be achieved:

- By destroying the enemy on land. To do this would mean fighting Russia under conditions favourable to her, where she has great numerical superiority and where she will fight best.
- By blockade. Russia, will however, shortly be self-sufficient in all essentials.
- By direct air attack on Russia. This is the only feasible means of achieving our aim (Ibid).

The Western allies rationalised that it was vital to defeat a possible onslaught from the USSR, if a military war commenced, on strategic areas and economic well-being. These areas were identified as the African continent and the Middle East as regions blessed with abundant mineral resources. The Western powers' ability to control communication essential for the security and development of strategic bases and military zones in both Africa and the

Middle East was deemed as crucial for any proposed defence strategy. It was also important for the West to have a secure hold on the air bases and sea areas essential for launching air attacks against the USSR and her satellites.

The first joint intervention in colonial wars for strategic resources pursued by Western super-powers in Africa was marked by the South African War ('Anglo-Boer' War) that commenced in 1899. Thomas Reifer argues that on the plane of *haute finance*, the House of Morgan's incorporation of key members of the English establishment ensured Britain's turn to this investment bank to finance hundreds of millions of bond flotations needed for the conquest of South Africa during the 'Boer War'. Hence, the United States' participation in the South African War loans saw the transatlantic migration of financial power from London to New York and the ascendancy of House of Morgan within London based investment banks. This, in turn, helped seal the Anglo-American alliance of the First and Second World Wars, not to mention the investment bank's role as the key intermediary between USA war production, finance and the allies (Reifer 2002:6). Such interests by the Western powers were to be maintained during the reign of terror by the apartheid regime.

Africa's Position in the War Strategy of the Western Allies

As part of the rationale for planning a defensive strategy in Africa, the Western powers were convinced that at the outbreak of war, because strategic resources such as oil were at stake, the USSR would undertake a major land campaign in the Middle East, accessible through North Africa. Therefore, Egypt's security was essential to the allies' war strategy – particularly the land-based defence of the African continent and the Middle East against the probable attack by the Soviet Union army, perceived as harbouring the following aims:

- First and foremost, to capture the Middle East oil;
- To give depth to the defence of Southern Russia;
- To deny (Western) Allies the use of strategic air bases;
- To cut Allied sea and air communications through Egypt and establish a bridgehead for communist penetration into Africa (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 1, 22, March 1949:4).

Practically speaking, it was postulated that such a campaign would be directed against Egypt by the USSR because it was the only African country geographically situated in a strategic position linking the Mediterranean and the Middle East region. In terms of air threat, the only part of Africa which would initially be exposed to a supposed air attacks by the Soviet Union would be Egypt and the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Egypt was

thus identified by the Western powers as one of the three main air bases to be used for mounting air offences that would counteract and undermine attacks by the USSR. Egypt also possessed the necessary manpower, communications network and docking facilities that could provide a base for Western forces defending the strategic airfields and the land approach to the African continent.

This was the first time since the Second World War that Western super-powers mentioned the importance of oil as a strategic mineral resource. Furthermore, the western allies presumed that the Russians would attack Italy and Greece, with the aim of occupying bases from which to block access to the Mediterranean sea route by Western European countries, and thus threaten North Africa. Once established in Egypt, the Russians would be well placed to complete the domination of the whole of North Africa. The hawks driving the Western powers' defence policy reasoned that the rest of Africa would then be largely isolated and the continent's chance of resisting ideological penetration spearheaded by the communists would be negligible. They further argued that Africa was also vulnerable to attacks by USSR submarines and from surface raiders employing either mine-laying or direct attacks on shipping. The threat was, however, likely to increase, particularly from submarine mine-laying, should the enemy overrun the Middle East and Western (Mediterranean) Europe. Hence, their view was that 'should the enemy gain possession of Egypt, the Communist prestige and influence in the rest of Africa would be greatly increased' (Ibid:5). By 1948, the UK was already engaged in co-ordinating both long and short term plans for the defence of Egypt and the North African shore, including taking control of Mediterranean communication by sea. These plans could not be successfully laid without the co-operation of all nations that had a major interest in the defence of Africa.

To consolidate their war strategy, the Western super-powers concluded that one of the main support areas needed for the anti-USSR war economy would be southern Africa, the area in which the Union of South Africa, a British dominion at the time, was a key country. Their argument was based on the fact that most important sources of mineral resources in southern Africa (outside the Union itself) were located in the Belgian Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia). Raw materials from these colonies included uranium, platinum, copper, cobalt, gold, chrome, vanadium and manganese. The Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique were also areas of importance because the Belgian Congo and the two Rhodesias were dependent upon their ports and rail communication for economic access to the sea. But it was also particularly significant to note that satisfactory communication infrastructure between the Rhodesias and the East African territories was lacking.

Southern Africa – South Africa in particular – was referred to by the Western super-powers as the ‘Persian Gulf of minerals’, hence acknowledging their interest in this region as early as the South African War that commenced in 1899. Minerals formed the cornerstone of the US foreign policy on Africa and the West was reliant upon these reserves for supplies of many minerals of strategic importance. For example, the US was particularly dependent upon South Africa for reserves of chromium, manganese, vanadium and the platinum group metals. During the 1980s, South Africa possessed 66.4 per cent of the world’s reserve of chromium, a mineral that was vital for the US in the manufacture of automobile and computer components. Chromium is also used in the production of stainless steel and in the chemical industry. There is no substitute for manganese in the manufacture of wrought steel, and the platinum group metals, of which South Africa had about 73.2 per cent of the world’s reserves, are vital for many industrial applications (Davies 2007:57; Coker 1990; Bowman 1990; Rich 1990).

To secure a constant supply of these mineral resources, a conference on defence strategy in Africa was proposed in the post-war era. It was convened jointly by the British and South Africans and was held in Nairobi in 1951. The correspondence between the UK’s Minister of Defence, E. Shinwell, and the Union of South Africa’s Minister of Defence, J.E. Erasmus, on plans for this conference, is illuminating. The content of the 5 July 1950 (top secret) letter from Shinwell to his counterpart in South Africa highlights the machinations of the masterminds behind the defence strategy in Africa. Emphasising the strategic importance of the Middle East and South Africa, Minister Shinwell wrote:

I was very glad to receive your letter of 15th June, regarding South African participation in the defence of Africa arising from the review which the Union Cabinet has been making of this question. I need hardly say how pleased my colleagues and I are to hear that the Union Government will, in the event of war, be prepared to recommend to Parliament that the Union Forces should participate on and in the defence of the African continent. I entirely agree with your suggestion that the extent of such participation and the question of equipment should be discussed as soon as possible at a conference. I shall, of course, be most happy to take part myself in such a conference, when matters of policy are under discussion. Since you were good enough to ask that I should suggest a venue for the meeting, I should like to propose that it should be in London in the first half of September. This date would give us the time to examine the problem thoroughly. It would be useful if you could let us have in advance of the meeting, details of the equipment you would require, both in the Middle East, and in the Union, so that we could be in a position at the conference to give you firm ideas as to our ability to provide it ... The Chiefs of Staff have recently completed an up-to-date review of

global strategy and I am asking the High Commissioner to hand a copy to you, in the hope that this will form a useful background for our [pre-conference] talks (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 1, Shinwell to Erasmus, 5 July 1950).

The Nairobi conference was attended by military representatives from the Union of South Africa, UK, Portugal, Belgium, France and Italy. The South African delegation was led by the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Defence and included the army's Chief of General Staff; the Secretary for External Affairs; the Secretary for Defence; the General Manager of the Railways; the Commissioner of Customs; the Director of Meteorological Services; and high ranking officers of the Union Defence Force. The British delegation included departmental heads and was led by the Minister of Civil Aviation. The principal aim of the conference, as stated in the invitation, was to secure agreement in principle of crucial facilities to be made available to relevant African countries in the event of war with the Soviet Union over the mineral resources of southern Africa, or over any other emergency that might arise. This would include the location of troops and supplies along the lines of communication between the South of Africa and the Middle East (Suez Canal) which were expected to be kept at the highest level of efficiency (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 1, 22 March 1949:3, Vol. 2, 20-31 August 1951). The geographic scope of the conference included representatives from the following areas: Angola, Belgian Congo, Ethiopia, French Equatorial Africa, French Somaliland, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Somalia, Somaliland Protectorate, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Sudan, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar. The representative from Ethiopia was accompanied by an advisor from the US.

It was emphasised during the conference that South Africa was expected to play a strategic role for the anti-USSR camp. This included:

- Co-operation in the development of resources by the Union and territories of South Africa;
- Co-operation by the southern African industries with the Allied war economy;
- Storage facilities for strategic reserves for the Middle East in peace time;
- Re-fitting and docking facilities;
- Training and transit facilities for personnel;
- Base facilities for maritime aircraft (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 2, 20-31 August 1951).

In short, the Western powers expected South Africa to assist in the regional defence of the African continent in the following ways:

- firstly, to play a part as the keystone of the main support area of southern Africa;
- secondly, to contribute so far as other commitments allowed, to forces required to defend
- the Middle East, North Africa and the Mediterranean; and
- lastly, to assist in controlling sea communications in African waters.

The control of sea communication in the Mediterranean sea route and in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans was of crucial importance to the Western powers who – together with South Africa – concurred that the principal factor to be considered when deciding the extent of the support area in southern Africa was the geographical region which included the Belgian Congo (DRC), Northern Rhodesia (Malawi), Nyasaland (Malawi), Mozambique and all other territories to the south. The allies also hoped to secure the route via the Mediterranean Sea. But should this be cut off by the USSR, the Middle East campaign would rely on the Cape sea route. This route would also be used by all commercial shipping vessels between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans that were not needed to support the military defence of Egypt and the Middle East.

The defence strategy document contended that, as was the case during the Second World War years, the UK would rely extensively on the docking and refitting facilities at Simon's Town, Durban and Cape Town in South Africa. When aircraft carriers were to be used against the USSR, there would be a requirement for accommodation and training of disembarked air carrier groups. Hospitals and transit centres in South Africa earmarked for the allies' anti-USSR personnel would also be 'valuable, particularly should the Mediterranean Sea route be closed to the allies' (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 1, 22 March 1949:7). Confirming that the US was part of the information loop and a valuable strategic partner in formulating the defence strategy of the Western allies, on the 15 June 1950, Erasmus, South Africa's Minister of Defence, authored a letter addressed to Louis Johnson, the US Secretary for Defence. He articulated the following views on the perceived 'communist threat':

During my visit to Washington in August of last year, I informed you of the Government view towards communism, that is, the Government is prepared to support the (Western) Powers opposed to communism. Because of the possibility of an unsatisfactory internal situation developing in the Union [the ANC's Defiance Campaign], I explained to you that the Government had, however, not found itself able to commit itself in principle to Union Forces serving outside the Union. Communism might prove to be a serious danger in South Africa with its large non-European population and if an international conflict should arise, our Forces might be needed to maintain

order and to ensure the security of the Union in the first place. It was at the same time decided by the Government that should the position regarding the security of the Union be satisfactory, the question of sending Union Forces outside the Union would be considered in the light of the circumstances prevailing. Recently the position generally was reviewed and my Government has now decided that it will, in the event of war against communism, be prepared to recommend to Parliament that Union Forces should participate on and in the defence of the African continent. I have also advised Mr Shinwell, the British Minister of Defence in this sense and in view of the importance of the matter and our previous discussion, feel that you should know of this development (DD, MV/EF, Vol. 1, Erasmus to Johnson, 15 June 1950).

To consolidate their position in Africa, the UK initiated defence negotiations with the government of Egypt during the early 1950s. They had hoped to reach an agreement over the Suez Canal base and modalities defining an evacuation formula. Additionally, the UK also intended to sponsor a programme of military and economic assistance to Egypt, to be funded by both the US and the UK; and to secure the participation of Egypt in the proposed Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO), an international, but regionally based defence organisation. Issues related to the formation of MEDO were discussed for the first time at the meeting of commonwealth defence ministers in June 1951. The UK's main objectives were, firstly, to gain the support of Turkey because of its strategic geographical position, and secondly, to secure the participation of the US as one of the principal actors. The following countries were expected to participate in MEDO: UK, US, France, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and South Africa. It was proposed that such an organisation could be established by general agreement of the various states taking part, and need not be the subject of a formal treaty. The proposed functions of MEDO were to provide a centre of co-operative effort for defence purposes, and furthermore:

- to draw plans for the defence of the Middle East;
- to plan for, and provide the Middle East states with assistance in the form of training and advice;
- to co-ordinate requests by Middle East states for arms and equipment;
- to make plans for the operations in war of all forces allocated for the defence of the area in conjunction with the adjoining NATO commands in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor;
- to reduce deficiencies in the organisation and capacity for the defence of the area, with particular emphasis on the need to ensure that the

Middle East states are made increasingly capable of themselves contributing to the defence of the area.

It was proposed that the management structure of MEDO would comprise a Military Representatives Committee (MRC) and Planning Group (PG). The chairpersonship of the MRC would rotate among the participating Western super-powers and would be responsible for the general direction of the PG; it would meet twice a year or more often if required. The PG would represent an integrated structure composed of officers supplied by the participating super-powers under a British chairperson, and would be divided into appropriate sections to handle, for example, operations, plans, intelligence, administration, logistics and liaison with non-participating Middle East states (DD, Memo, encl. to MEDO, Paper No. 2, June 1951).

The UK had to reach formal agreements with the Egyptian government to realise the functionality of some of the proposals on defence strategy in Africa. In March 1950, the Egyptians and the British began re-negotiating the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that granted the British the right to station their forces along the Suez Canal and was due to expire in 1956. It had to be re-negotiated because the Egyptian people were clamouring for it to be abrogated because they wanted the British to leave immediately. In response, the UK, US and France passed a tripartite declaration in May 1950, placing an embargo on the shipment of arms to the Middle East and opposing the use of force to alter state borders. The negotiations dragged on and the British showed no willingness to evacuate their bases along the Suez Canal. Finally, on 1 October 1951, the Wafd government led by Mustapha Nahas unilaterally terminated the 1936 treaty. This not only cancelled the legal basis for the British presence in Egypt, it also ended the agreement in terms of which Egypt and Britain co-governed Sudan. Egypt promptly claimed exclusive sovereignty over its southern neighbour. Of course, the British counterclaimed that this was an unacceptable, illegal and unilateral act. Behind the British attitude was the Cold War, because the Western powers were preoccupied with defending the Middle East and North Africa against the threat posed by the Soviet Union (Aburish 2004:chapter 2). Throughout these bilateral discussions between Egypt and the UK, and through official channels, the apartheid regime was kept up to date concerning the internal situation in North Africa. A letter marked 'top secret', dated 8 January 1953, from A.M. Hamilton, the political secretary at South Africa House in London, addressed to the secretary for External Affairs and General C.L. du Toit, the chief of General Staff in Pretoria, read:

I accompanied Brigadier de Waal, who is on his way to Washington, to a talk yesterday with Mr Pritchard, the Assistant Under-Secretary at the

Commonwealth Relations Office concerned with foreign affairs. Our main topic of conversation was naturally the progress of defence arrangements in the Middle East ... They were however coming to understand that they must take some responsibility if things go badly and if the defence of the Middle East is seriously prejudiced by failure to come to terms with Egypt. While the United Kingdom seems to be fairly confident now about obtaining effective American support on the defence question, Mr Pritchard admitted that there could be no progress in this regard until the hurdle of the Sudan had been overcome. This was entirely a United Kingdom responsibility ... Brigadier de Waal asked Mr Pritchard about the new naval commands which have been set up in the Mediterranean. Mr Pritchard said that there was no geographical division between the Commands of Lord Mountbatten and Admiral Carney and that the new system might seem rather like two men trying to carpet a room at the same moment. This however was the best that could be hoped for and indeed one would have to rely on the two Commanders taking care not to fall over each other. Lord Mountbatten in particular had dealt tactfully with a similar problem in his South-East Asia Command in the war (DD, Hamilton to du Toit, 8 January 1953).

Gamal Abdel Nasser, a colonel in the Egyptian army, assumed power in 1952, and later became the embodiment of the historical confrontation between the Arabs and the Western super-powers and, thus, the proposed formation of MEDO was scuttled. Political subjugation and economic straits of the Egyptian people compelled them to aspire for a better material life and one of the most cherished objectives of the Egyptian government for its economic development was the construction of a new high dam above Aswan. But the refusal of the UK and US governments to give the promised economic aid for the construction of the dam provoked Nasser's government into nationalising the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956. This was done so that the revenue of the canal could be diverted towards financing the Aswan Dam Project. This far-reaching decision was condemned by the Western super-powers; according to them, this would lead to unfettered control by a single power. The whole issue was further complicated when the USSR financed the construction of the dam. Using evocative language, the Western super-powers voiced the opinion that they would not yield on the principle that the international waterway should be left at the 'mercy', the 'caprice', the 'spleen', or the 'hatreds' of one power or one man. They suspected that President Nasser's intention was to deprive them of their economic and political interests in the Middle East and this was why they wanted him to abandon his plan. Otherwise, they contended, that as Western super-powers, they would be free to take such measures as they thought necessary. So vehement was their opposition to the position adopted by the government of Egypt that the representatives of France and the UK informed the UN Security Council on

12 September 1956 that Egypt's action to end international control of the Suez Canal might endanger the free and open passage of shipping and that if the situation were allowed to fester it would constitute a danger to peace and security. On the other hand, speaking at the UN, the Arab countries extended their full support to Nasser for his 'strong step' to safeguard Egypt's interests. The Suez Canal itself was considered by countries outside the sphere of Western influence as an integral part of Egypt and its nationalisation marked the beginning of the end for imperialistic exploitation (Sharma 1969; Aburish 2004).

Moreover, the traditional struggle between Jews and Arabs; the conflict between Israel and Arab states in general, and that between Egypt and Israel in particular, were apparent during heated ideologically inspired debates at the UN. Additional factors that hastened the holding of negotiations between France and the UK were many. They included the British blind spot against President Nasser who had opposed the Baghdad Pact which was designed to fortify an Arab-Turkish-Iranian bloc against the Soviet Union in order to control the oil resources of the Middle East; strong French opposition to Nasser for aiding and abetting Arab nationalism in Algeria; and the British-French plans to overthrow Nasser, considered a dangerous political ally of the Soviet Union against the Western super-powers. In due course, these factors led to the intervention of France and the UK in the war which broke out between Israel and Egypt on 29 October 1956 (Sharma 1969:49). Fearing the intervention of the Soviet Union, events in North Africa led to the ever-alert Western super-powers consolidating their relationship with the apartheid regime in order to claim control of the southern African region.

The Western Super-Powers' Surveillance of 'Kommunisme-Afrika', 1949-1954

The apartheid regime's Department of Defence, through its military intelligence section kept bulky files on 'communism and subversive activities' in southern Africa. Most of the reports were authored by security liaison officers based in various African countries and were formally addressed to the chief of the General Staff in the army and the national commissioner of Police who in turn forwarded them to their counterparts in the UK. These files were shared with relevant government departments in South Africa, such as External Affairs (later renamed Foreign Affairs), Justice and Labour. On 20 October 1949, the secretary for Labour wrote a secret inter-departmental letter addressed to Lieutenant-General Len Beyers, the then Chief of General Staff, in which he confirmed the fact that the Minister of Labour had officially instructed the Department of Labour to assemble and record information on

communist-inspired activities in trade unions based on the African continent and elsewhere, with specific reference to:

- the activities of individual South African communists, trade unionists and trade unions, and ‘fellow travellers’;
- the position of communism in key industries and international trade union bodies;
- the overall position regarding methods adopted by communists to infiltrate and influence trade unions, including technique and tactics; and
- contact between overseas trade unions and individuals, and South African trade unions and trade unionists (DMI, KG/GPW/7/5/1, Vol. 1, SAM/2377/G, 30 June 1950).

Senior officers in the Department of Labour, including divisional inspectors, were expected to transmit to the head office any relevant data which might come their way concerning radical African trade unions in South Africa. But these same officials were also instructed not to usurp the functions of the security police. They were informed that the Secretary for External Affairs and the Commissioner of Police had agreed to co-operate and furnish relevant information gleaned by their departments, both locally and from other countries. Overseas based South African representatives, including those in Kenya, were also officially requested to monitor the situation and submit intelligence reports on trade union activities in the UK, African states (including colonies), Greece, France, US, Australia, Egypt, Belgium, Germany, Canada, Italy, Holland and Scandinavia (Ibid). The July-October 1951 country reviews by the responsible agents of surveillance in southern Africa provide us with examples of these intelligence reports:

The Union of South Africa: On the 30th August 1951, the Communist newspaper, the *Guardian* published a cable message of greeting from Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the Gold Coast leader, to Dr Y.M. Dadoo, the well known South African Communist ... it is learned from a delicate source that the ANC Youth League has recently attempted to influence the Southern Rhodesia African Congress in Salisbury. An interesting and well written document on the ‘Statement of Policy’ of the ANC Youth League has recently been distributed by E.S. Nkomo, the Secretary of its Cape branch, which is under the chairmanship of G. Mbekeni [Mbeki?] (DMI, KG/GPW/7/5/1, Vol. 1, SAM/2377/G/114).

Regarding Mozambique, as an example, these reports postulated

that communism was not a threat there. The Europeans (about 40,000) were well to do and were not attracted by Communism. The Coloured People

(mix race) and 'assimilated' natives seemed to be generally contented with their lot, and the majority of Africans were perceived to be too backward and too disciplined to be affected. The Portuguese native policy was to admit their coloured community to Portuguese citizenship and to extend the same hope to those Africans who can qualify to become assimilated by education; only about 2,000 have taken the trouble to do so, a minute number compared with the rest of the African population. A low grade network of Communist cells existed in Moçambique which included Europeans, Coloured Persons and 'assimilated' natives. Most of them were in Lourenco Marques (Maputo) and tended to be set up in transportation services. Each cell numbered about five persons and they were mostly known to the police and were arrested as soon as the international situation deteriorates; their potentialities for sabotage were limited. The cells faced an uphill struggle and met with little success among the native population, for the penalties for spreading Communism, possessing subversive literature or instigating strikes were very severe (Ibid).

The Mau Mau rebellion against white rule in Kenya provided insurmountable challenges for officials in the UK and South Africa who, at some stage, believed that it was inspired by communists. The challenge posed by the Mau Mau is captured in a flurry of secret documents exchanged by senior army and security authorities in South Africa and the UK and in most cases authored by colonial officials based in Kenya. A secret report compiled in 1952 by a British agent during the state of emergency in Kenya stated:

Due to the great difficulties in obtaining adequate intelligence of MAU-MAU, the initial counter-measures consisted of waiting until a crime had been committed and then assembling forces for locating and arresting the culprits. This necessary negative policy together with the inevitable delays in mounting operations allowed MAU-MAU to gain the initiative ... The Chief of the Imperial General Staff [General Sir John Harding] during his visit to Kenya in February 1953 ordered new and vigorous measures to be taken to go after and stamp out the MAU-MAU movement. Additional troops and equipment as necessary will be supplied from the United Kingdom resources immediately. Despite the leeway to be made up and the difficulties of the operations, there is at last a sense of co-operation between the European farmers and the government forces which will produce real results (DMI, KG/GPW/7/5/1, Vol. 1, 'Emergency in Kenya').

As for international organisations, The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was constantly monitored, particularly after a resolution on Africa was adopted by its Executive Council. The resolution placed special emphasis on activities in colonial Africa and what it defined as dependent countries, with particular reference to intensifying assistance to trade union organisations in Africa, Asia, the Near and Middle East. This was to be done by broadening the scope of WFTU liaison officers which also entailed promoting the

recruitment of the oppressed masses into trade unions. In their report, South African intelligence officers therefore argued that it was a wise precaution to examine activities of the WFTU towards Central Africa in rather more detailed terms than usual (DMI, KG/GPW/7/5/1, Vol. 1, SAM/2377/1/G/39).

These concerns led to a plethora of reports on international trade unionism compiled by the agents of surveillance that, as an example, recorded:

Lawrence Katilungu (General President) and Simon Kaluwa (General Secretary) of the Northern Rhodesia African Mineworkers' Union (NRAMWU) left for England by air on 10th November 1951. Before they left, they telegraphed their expected date of arrival to Desmond Buckle, A. Horner and Basil Davidson. It is reported that Buckle intended to take them to the General Council meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Berlin on 15th November. It is not yet known whether they went (DMI, KG/GPW/7/5/1, Vol. 1, SAM/2377/1/G/114).

In apartheid South Africa, the security police and intelligence officers kept a tight surveillance net, including personal details, over the members of the Communist Party of South Africa and its network, as shown in the following report (originally written in Afrikaans, and translated here) on John Gathercole and Hilda Watts (who later married Rusty Bernstein):

John GATHERCOLE met Hilda WATTS in London in 1936. Hilda Watts is a committed communist who is already 'listed' by the Liquidator under the Suppression of Communism Act. GATHERCOLE was married at the time to a Miss A.N. Dalton, but he had left her and they were not living together. He then moved in with Hilda WATTS, who was known at the time as Hilda Schwartz, and her sister, who was a schoolteacher. Hilda later changed her name from Schwartz to Watts because she felt that the former sounded too Jewish or German. In time, John GATHERCOLE came to be known as Jack WATTS because he went around with Hilda Watts and her sister. At the time, he was a member of the Communist Party in Hendon, London, and served on both the Organising and Propaganda Committees of the party. He lived with the Watts sisters until 1937 when he and Hilda WATTS came to South Africa ... John GATHERCOLE became a member of the Communist Party in Johannesburg and served on its regional management under the name Jack Watts; in fact he was widely known as Jack Watts. At the time, he worked at Polliacks Ltd. He and Hilda WATTS lived together as man and wife until 1938, when Hilda WATTS returned to England. They were never married because GATHERCOLE had not yet divorced his first wife. GATHERCOLE remained a member of the Communist Party until 1942 when he decided of his own volition to leave the party (DMI, KG/GPW/7/5/1, Vol. 1, Report of the Commissioner SAP, 20 March 1953).¹

The evolving internal situation in South Africa that included the insurgent African workers alarmed the majority of white South Africans. By deliberately, albeit misleadingly, labelling this rising class under the umbrella term 'communist', the apartheid regime could more readily justify and legitimise its policy of repression, both to its own supporters and Western powers, specifically the United States. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 was carefully tailored to fit the bill. Ostensibly, its main purpose was to declare the Communist Party of South Africa an unlawful organisation, and make it a punishable offence to defend or advocate 'the doctrine of Marxian socialism' or any related doctrine (Lerumo 1987; Bonner 1993). The apartheid regime's security agents also infiltrated organisations that opposed the regime as the minutes of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement's national committee meeting (at the disposal of the South African security police) confirm.² This particular meeting took place on Wednesday 19 May 1965, in Committee Room No. 5, House of Commons, London, at 19h00. According to the record, those who attended the meeting included, among others, David Ennals, MP; Tom Kellock, QC; Abdul Minty; Lord Brockway; Vella Pillay; Bishop Ambrose Reeves; Josef Dadoo; M. Nkoana; S. Bunting; A.B. Ngcobo; Clifford Parsons; J. Symonds and T. O'Dowd. (DD, MV-B, Vol. 2, sect. 216, AAM meeting).

As was usual during the late 1940s and 1950s, various lists of political activists and others (for example the academic, John Marcum, whose activities within the Pan Africanist Congress are noted) were compiled by the intelligence officers and security police during the 1960s. The September 1965 secret report listed the following names:

- Kitching, Sydney: South African communist and member of AAM's Trade Union Committee;
- Kotane, Moses: South African communist, appointed in 1963 as president of the African National Congress in Dar es Salaam;
- Kunene, Raymond: South African communist, member of the Executive Committee of the AAM, member of the Movement for Colonial Freedom and chief representative of the AAM in LONDON for Europe and SOUTH AMERICA;
- Lang, John: director of the Defence and Aid Fund; member of the AAM and the Joint Committee for the High Commission Territories; member of the African Resistance Movement;
- Leballo, Potlako: acting president of the Pan Africanist Congress and is planning the violent overthrow of the government of the RSA;
- Levy, Leon: South African communist, employed fulltime by the AAM and known as a good organiser;

- Mahomo, Nana: has studied guerrilla warfare in Algeria and is suspected of being in the service of the US Secret Service (CIA) while actively involved as a member of the PAC;
- Marcum, John: one of the most important PAC links in the US; responsible for MAHOMO's reputation in prominent government circles in America (DD, MV-B, Vol. 2, sect. 216, 'Report: Political Attack on RSA').

Names such as these were forwarded to US security personnel and, as a result, most political activists were labelled as 'terrorists' by successive US governments and needed special permission to enter the US. They included Rholihlahla Nelson Mandela and other prominent members of the liberation movements whose names were taken off this list as recently as 2008.

South Africa's Relations with the US after the Second World War: Implications for the Liberation Struggle

The South African apartheid government consistently attempted to rationalise its policies with the argument that the primary threat facing the country had nothing to do with racism, discrimination, undemocratic political, economic and social conditions in South Africa but came instead from an external source – foreign aggression in the form of 'international communism'. The aim of this argument was twofold. First, it legitimised the actions of the most brutal and oppressive regime. Second, the apartheid regime attempted, in the most simplistic form, to reduce every issue into a global East versus West context and Cold War parlance. Statements such as the apartheid regime being the world's bastion of 'Christian civilisation'; that it was defending the world against 'rampart communism', were common, and were often reflected in official documents. For example, the 1982 White Paper on Defence reinforced this view by arguing that 'the establishment of Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique as Marxist satellites has completed the link between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and this leaves the Republic of South Africa as the last stronghold of the West in Africa'.

The US maintained an ambiguous position towards the apartheid regime during the period immediately after the Second World War. Some officials of the US government were against the regime's racist policies because of its ideological desire to secure African support for its Cold War policies in the United Nations and elsewhere. There were also signs of the hardening of US policy during the course of 1965. This was in preparation for the outcome of the South West Africa (Namibia) case before the International Court of Justice and also in expectation of the Security Council debate that had arisen from the examination by the Committee of Experts on the feasibility of sanctions

against the apartheid regime. On the issue of Namibia, the US government had already made it abundantly clear that it would uphold any judgment rendered by the court. Then too, something that had to be taken into account was the fact that the US contingency planning made provision for the eventual use of force by the US in support of any decision by the Security Council calling for the implementation of an International Court judgment. Highlighting the ambiguous position, the US was also the strongest single opponent of the policy of applying full economic sanction against South Africa and of using military force, if necessary, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This was because Namibia was regarded by the US as being in a different category.

To maintain its ambivalent position towards the apartheid regime, the US refused a visa to General R.C. Hiemstra, general chief of staff of the South African Defence Force to pay a routine inspection visit to the office of the military attaché located in the South African Embassy in Washington. This contrasted starkly with the full facilities made available for visits to South Africa by various officers of the American armed forces, including one particular visit in May 1962 by the deputy chief of staff of Intelligence (US Army), who undertook a routine visit to US Army attaché posts in Africa. This visit to various African countries was a direct parallel with the proposed visit to the US by Hiemstra (DD, MV-B, Vol. 2, sect. 216, 1-3).

During the 1960s, the US consistently opposed attempts by other countries to exclude South Africa from scientific and technical agencies. By virtue of the agreement establishing the missile tracking station at Grootfontein in South West Africa (Namibia), US aircraft and senior personnel enjoyed extensive facilities, which in the event of major difficulties arising between South Africa and the US would have provided extremely valuable intelligence and other material. The Americans also requested additional missile tracking facilities at Walvis Bay and this request was approved in principle by John Vorster, the South African prime minister. In addition, the Pentagon offered naval and air force courses to their South African counterparts. In terms of space research, the Hartbeeshoek station near Pretoria played a vital role in US space research, but the decision to build an additional station in Spain, on roughly the same longitude as the South African station, meant that the Hartbeeshoek research station could no longer be used by the apartheid regime as a bargaining tool. South Africa's Hartbeeshoek research station gave the apartheid regime outstanding prestige in the field of space research. This was of immense importance to South African technology in the field of advanced electronics. Over 100 white South African personnel received what was described as 'a major free advanced technical education' in a research field of supreme value to the apartheid regime in the event of war or similar

national emergency. The pool of electronically based knowledge systems (including computers) and experience developed at the research station exceeded what was made available to the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the Defence Force and the Post Office combined (Ibid: 8).

In terms of development in nuclear based technology and armaments, the apartheid regime took a decision to purchase a nuclear reactor of American design for Pelindaba nuclear station situated in Pretoria. This decision made South Africa completely dependent on the US with respect to nuclear fuel and related research on nuclear technology. The US was by far the most advanced country in terms of atomic energy research, and the facilities which the apartheid regime's scientists enjoyed for both contact and training in the US were invaluable to the development of nuclear research – including nuclear power projects – in South Africa. This dependence was successfully exploited by the US State Department to pressure South Africa to accept the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Thereafter, there were no difficulties with the United States Atomic Energy Commission on any aspect of atomic energy cooperation. The US Commission supported apartheid South Africa to the hilt, resulting in a reciprocal aid package offered by South Africa to the US when rich uranium was in a very short supply internationally (Ibid:9).

A memorandum dated 4 January 1951 about a meeting between Dr Dönges, the apartheid regime's Minister of the Interior, and Gordon Dean, the chairperson of the US Atomic Energy Commission, set out the structure and functions of the Combined Policy Committee and the Combined Development Agency in the field of international cooperation in atomic energy matters. It also mentioned the extent to which the US Atomic Energy Commission was prepared to extend a privileged position to the Union of South Africa. Present during the discussions were J.C. Johnson, J. Volpe and J. Hall, who represented US interests. Johnson was one of three US representatives who had conducted discussions in South Africa during October-November 1950 together with delegates from the UK and US Atomic Energy Boards. At the meeting, he referred to the agreement which had been reached between the US Atomic Energy Board and the Combined Development Agency on the sale of South Africa's uranium. He said that the US officials were pleased with the manner in which negotiations had taken place and were satisfied with the agreement reached. Johnson also referred to the plant that would be built in the Union (probably Pelindaba) and a brief discussion followed on security and screening of staff, as well as the price to be paid by the US for the uranium (DFA, PM137/6).

By 1942, research into the possibility of producing an atomic weapon before the end of the Second World War had reached a point which justified

diverting the huge resources in labour (professional and skilled), materials and effort that were necessary to bring the project to fruition. By agreement between President Roosevelt of the US and Churchill, the British Prime Minister, plans for the manufacture of atomic weapons in the UK were shelved because of fears of infiltration by the Nazis, and the whole effort was thus concentrated in the North American continent. There were five main components in this project:

- various research programmes in the US carried out mainly by land grant universities and colleges;
- a research programme at Chalk River, near Ottawa in Canada;
- a gaseous diffusion plant at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, for the production of U235 (plutonium);
- production piles at Hanford, Washington, for producing quantities of plutonium;
- a weapons establishment at Los Alamos, New Mexico, for manufacturing the fissionable material (U235) into atomic weapons. A British team assisted the Americans at Los Alamos (Ibid).

In 1943, in order to coordinate their joint work on the nuclear programme, the US, Britain and Canada established the Combined Policy Committee (CPC). These countries cooperated in the production of atomic weapons and shared a great deal of secret information. Their policies and exchange of ideas were regulated by the CPC, which also provided a means of consultation on general policy issues arising out of their partnership. Under the guardianship of the CPC, they established the Combined Development Agency (CDA), which had the sole function of procuring the raw materials required for the atomic energy programme. A major function of the CPC was to safeguard the secret information held jointly by the US, Britain and Canada as a result of wartime sensitivities; and to arrange the allocation of raw materials procured by the CDA (Ibid).

During the Second World War, the CDA entered into a contract with the Belgian supplier of uranium from the Congo and, from time to time, had joint contracts with various research groups, with the objective of developing answers to problems of extracting uranium in a feasible and economic manner, such as from gold tailings in South Africa. The work done at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Chemical Research Laboratory was based on a CDA contract with these institutions. The Canadian role in the agency was not based on that of a supplier of uranium but on its membership in the CPC. The Canadian ore was sold to the US Atomic Energy Commission through a bi-lateral contract between the Canadian and US governments.

Five countries were identified as significant sources of uranium to be purchased by the CPC. These countries were the US, Canada, Belgian Congo, Portugal and South Africa. The CDA undertook the procurement of uranium from the last three of these significant sources which were outside the territory of the CPC countries. In Portugal, the UK, acting as the agent for the CDA, purchased certain mines by agreement with the Portuguese government, and were permitted to mine and export a certain tonnage of uranium per annum. The Belgian Congo provided the predominant supply of uranium for both the US and UK. In view of the fact that it would be a substantial supplier of uranium to the US and UK, the Combined Policy Committee proposed a special relationship with South Africa, comparable to the relationship with the Belgian government which controlled the Congo as a colony. The suggested relationship with South Africa, implemented after the war, proposed:

- Assistance in placing selected (white) South African students in advanced courses and research on nuclear studies in American and British universities;
- Facilitation of access, on a priority basis, to US and British declassified information on atomic energy;
- Visits by selected (white) South African scientists and engineers to unclassified work being carried out under the auspices of the Atomic Energy Commission and the British Ministry of Supply;
- Assistance to South Africa in obtaining certain equipment and materials needed for research in the scientific field related to atomic energy;
- Close participation as agreed upon from time to time in the mutual exchange of technical information on the exploration, mining, processing and extraction of radioactive ores;
- Provision of information, as might be necessary in the development and design of low-power research reactors, if such research tools were desired;
- In summary, the US and UK would do for South Africa whatever was being done and would be done in the future for the Belgians in this field (Ibid).

In 1953, when Lewis Strauss replaced Dean as the chairperson of the US Atomic Energy Commission, he addressed the American Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities on the importance of maintaining a strong nuclear programme. He was adamant that nuclear weapons were crucial for the national defence of the US and was of the view that the Atomic Energy Commission had to sustain a vigorous atomic energy programme. Therefore

by using expertise available at various land grant universities he believed that the US had to retain its lead in quantity, diversity and power of atomic weapons. This, he said, was because:

Too many of us failed to understand the nature of international communism and the threat it posed to the free nations. Only a few foresaw the difficulties ahead and their advice was to a large degree, unheralded. And now, clear to all, the spectre of totalitarianism which we hoped was buried and in a dishonored grave, again menaces the world. We have no choice but to face our times as they are and not as we would like them to be (Ibid).

As the Cold War intensified, vast quantities of South African uranium were being used to arm nuclear weapons produced by the US and the UK and it became apparent that Pretoria was proving a loyal ally of the Western super-powers. A great deal went on at places like Pelindaba and Valindaba – both were nuclear facilities only a short distance from Pretoria – and at various installations in the Cape (including the Koeberg reactor) where South Africa had developed several prototypes of an advanced missile delivery system for more compact versions of the atom bomb. It was therefore not surprising that apartheid South Africa was a founder member of the IAEA set up in 1957, and became one of the states to draft its statute. The apartheid regime's international status as the most advanced nuclear power on the African continent granted it a permanent seat on the IAEA's board of governors.³ In 1958, the Atomic Energy Board (AEB) of South Africa established the first nuclear research programme that included research on a power reactor concept appropriate to South Africa. At its head was Abraham Roux who had a doctorate in mechanical engineering from the University of the Witwatersrand. He became the chairperson of the AEB in 1967 (Venter 2008: chapter 2).

By the early 1960s the apartheid regime had made the decision to build an atom bomb and other nuclear weapons. The targets were, for obvious reasons, Tanzania, Zambia and Angola – countries that provided bases and offices to both the ANC and PAC. In August 1968, after the Wankie and Sipolilo military campaigns waged by the ANC's MK and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army, General Hiemstra told a gathering in Stellenbosch that 'terrorist attacks on Rhodesia could gradually develop into full scale war', and he doubted 'if Russia would supply nuclear arms to Zambia for use against South Africa' (*The Star*, 10 August 1968). In Parliament, P.W. Botha, the Minister of Defence, issued a warning that the apartheid regime regarded 'facilitating terrorism as an act of provocation, and that any country that incited terrorism and guerrilla warfare must realise that provocation can lead to hard retaliation in the interests of self respect and peace'. Although Botha mentioned no countries by name, he was obviously referring particularly

to Zambia and Tanzania. He asserted that the danger facing South Africa was greater than ever before because 'the communists want to pocket South Africa and use it against the free world' (*Rand Daily Mail*, 2 and 4 April 1968). It was only after South Africa gained independence in 1994 that the world discovered that it had built six atom bombs as part of its defence strategy against the liberation movements (Venter 2008; Albright 1994; Marder and Oberdorfer 1977; Purkitt and Burgess 2005; Hounam and McQuillan 1995; Purkitt 1995). However, through the agency of sympathisers such as Dieter Gerhardt and Renfrew Christie, the ANC and its allies were to some extent informed about certain aspects of the apartheid regime's nuclear weapons programme.

From the outset, the ANC took an uncompromising stand on the whole issue of apartheid South Africa's nuclear capability, declaring that the regime intended to use it for purposes of war. A variety of other voices were added later. In 1979 Leslie Harriman, Nigerian ambassador to the UN, protested by accusing the British government of collaboration in South African nuclear projects. Later, a retired nuclear engineer named J. Vogt wrote a letter to the South African Minister of Mines and Energy, questioning the secrecy surrounding activities in the Koeberg plant, since, he claimed, there were no secrets about nuclear power plants if their sole intention was to produce energy. When a representative of the conservationist organisation, Friends of the Earth, visited Koeberg in July 1981, he maintained that the 'tenuous political situation' in South Africa made the use of nuclear energy 'inherently risky' (*Sechaba*, February 1983:20).

With the liberation movements' policies on consolidating their international struggle against the apartheid regime enmeshed in the Cold War, the Western super-powers could not afford to lose apartheid South Africa to communist powers (see Shubin 2008; and Weiyun and Sujiang 2008). Though the 'war' scenarios and defence strategies discussed in the first section of this article were formulated during 1949 and 1950, they were still relevant in Vorster's and P.W. Botha's time, particularly so because the Soviet Union and Cuba were involved in the war in Angola; those early plans certainly influenced the constructive engagement doctrine that defined US foreign policy in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. It was obvious to the ANC that Ronald Reagan's policy made the US an ally of the apartheid regime (UFH, O.R. Tambo Papers, A17.1.4, Box 17, 1). The roots of this pro-apartheid position go back to the policies of both Henry Kissinger and Chester Crocker. In the 1969 US government document officially known as 'National Security Study Memorandum 39', Kissinger insisted that in South Africa:

the whites are here to stay and the only way that constructive change can come about is through them. There is no hope for the black to gain the political rights they seek through violence ... We can, through selective relaxation of our stance towards the white regimes [in southern Africa], encourage some modification of their current racial and colonial policies (El-Khawas and Cohen 1976).

The military revolution in Portugal in April 1974 set off a chain of events leading to the independence of Angola and Mozambique under Marxist leadership. This increased pressure on white ruled apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia, leading to various meetings between Kissinger and John Vorster, South Africa's prime minister, the first of which took place in Bavaria, Germany in June 1976. It was obvious during these meetings that the US could not try to force the apartheid regime to change and at the same time expect it to help to settle issues in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South West Africa (Namibia). In October 1977, the US supported the UN Resolution banning arms sales to South Africa; a unilateral arms embargo had been imposed in 1964, but the US had vetoed economic sanctions. The Carter administration also banned the sale of non-military supplies to the South African police and armed forces and leading American banks were encouraged to halt loans to the South African government. However, no pressure was put on the more than 300 American corporations doing business in South Africa. Indeed, the Carter administration's attitude towards business in South Africa did not change from that of the previous administration: the motto was: 'the US neither encourages nor discourages investment in South Africa'. The ambivalence in this statement neatly sums up the contradictions inherent in US policy towards the apartheid regime ('Globalism or Regionalism?', *Adelphi Papers*, No. 154, 979-1980).

Under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, US policy on southern Africa was characterised by an unashamed growing alliance with South Africa. Events that took place in 1981 speak for themselves:

- A 20-year ban on military contact with South Africa was lifted, permitting five South African military intelligence officers to meet the National Security Council and Pentagon officials and Jeane Kirkpatrick, the US ambassador to the UN;
- The US offered to train South Africa's Coast Guard and increase the number of military attaches each country maintained in the other;
- The US and Britain vetoed four UN resolutions calling for sanctions against South Africa because of its illegal occupation of Namibia;

- The US declared that South Africa's invasion of Angola should be seen in full context, citing the presence of Cuban troops in Angola, and cast the sole veto during the UN debate to condemn South Africa;
- The Reagan administration asked congress to repeal the Clark Amendment prohibiting covert CIA action in Angola, a frontline state South Africa was attempting to destabilise;
- The US proposed cutting all contributions to the UN Trust Fund for South Africa, a major source of legal aid to South African political prisoners and humanitarian assistance to South African refugees ('Reagan Ties ...', *The Star*, 11 May 1982).

The Reagan administration's consolidation of ties with the apartheid regime was linked to its pro-apartheid foreign policy on southern Africa. For instance, in June 1980, addressing the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Africa, Crocker, at the time the director of African Studies at Georgetown Centre for Strategic and International Studies, argued during the sub-committee hearing on US policy towards South Africa:

We [the United States] have important interests there [in South Africa] that relate to our global concerns, our economic health and our military flexibility, which we would not want to see lost during this transition, this process of political change in South Africa (UFH, O.R. Tambo Papers, A17.1.4, Box 17, 3; see also Crocker 1980, 1981; Crocker et al., 1981; Jackson 1981).

Crocker's submissions were not surprising as he had authored, during the early 1980s, a journal article in *Foreign Affairs*, and other publications, in which for the first time he articulated the basic tenets of his constructive engagement theory. In these articles he argued that constructive engagement was the only basis for Western credibility in southern Africa. He believed that there could be no presumed communist right to exploit and militarise regional tension, particularly in southern Africa where important Western economic, resource and strategic resources were exposed (Crocker 1980; Crocker et al., 1981).

As argued earlier, another strategic consideration in the US policy towards South Africa was the country's geographical importance. In testimony to Congress in 1980, Crocker stated: 'To me there is no debate, that the security of the Cape route is by far the most important Western interest in the African region'. Davies (2007) pointed out that, by 1979, the US was the world's largest oil consumer (about 19 million barrels a day). Every month, about 2,300 ships, including 600 oil tankers, used the Cape route, making it the main access route to the West for oil tankers coming from the Persian Gulf. The Suez Canal was too narrow for ultra large crude-oil carriers, levied higher

tolls and was unreliable due to instability in the region. Approximately 65 percent of Western Europe's oil imports were transported via the Cape route. South Africa was the only country on the east African coast with the necessary economic infrastructure, military potential, ports, airports and dry docks to support Western defence in the area. These factors were enough to convince many in the Reagan administration that protection of the Cape route, and prevention of its falling into the hands of the USSR, was vital enough to warrant the support of the pro-West government in Pretoria. Crocker himself pointed out: 'It is clearly more than a convenience that South Africa's excellent port and air facilities should not be in the hands of potential adversary' (Davies 2007:58; see also Crocker 1980, 1981; Crocker et al., 1981).

In 1981, Crocker, Mario Greznes and Robert Herderson, rehashing most of the late 1940s and 1950s arguments, co-authored an article in which they stated that in military and strategic terms, the Cape route, an import conduit for the majority of Western imports of petroleum and non-fuel minerals, was not vulnerable to imminent disruption in any credibly foreseeable peacetime scenario. In fact, they expressed the view that because of the struggles for national liberation in southern Africa, the potential threat to Western oil and mineral supplies was greater on land than on sea. However, there were two worrisome contingencies, and these were important ones. First, at a time of general war or even limited conflict that could break out elsewhere, the supplies remained vital. It was clearly more than a mere convenience that South Africa's excellent port and air facilities were not in the hands of a potential adversary, the USSR, at such a time. They argued that the Soviet Union was unlikely to begin a war by disrupting Western shipping, because they believed there were far more convenient places from which the USSR might seek to disrupt oil traffic. But they were of the view that the USSR would have major advantages once war occurred if political forces hostile to the West were in control of South Africa. This concern was applicable both to a wartime scenario in Europe and a large scale Middle East conflict in which the Western super-powers were involved. For these reasons, the authors suggested that it was clearly not in the US interest that change in South Africa should lead towards a government that was dependent for its existence and survival on Soviet military power, as was the case in Angola. In such a case, the very presence of Soviet forces at Africa's sensitive southern tip would constitute a powerful basis for intimidation of the Western nations (Crocker et al. 1981:12). To counter the 'communist threat' and publicly confirm the strategic importance of southern Africa, in 1981 Crocker affirmed arguments articulated earlier in the late 1940s and 1950s (Crocker 1981:7).

Concerning the existing relationship between the ANC and the SACP, sub-section 102 (b) (4) of the US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 proclaimed that the US would encourage the ANC to 're-examine their ties to the South African Communist Party'. Anti-ANC conservatives, such as Senators Danton and Helms, harped on this section of the Act. They painted the ANC 'red', an agent of Soviet expansionism. The complex relationship between the ANC, USSR and the SACP was explained in simplistic terms and the ANC's relationship with the Soviet Union was characterised as a threat to the US. Hence, a section of the Helms amendment stated that the US president should have a written report that would determine 'the extent to which Communists have infiltrated' anti-apartheid groups and 'set their policies'. The study released by the State Department in January 1987 spoke of the ANC being 'deeply beholden to the SACP and the Soviet Union' and that the SACP would maintain influence in the ANC. The report elaborated that the SACP was 'only one element' within the ANC and that 'Moscow has learned that it will be no easy task to gain ascendancy in such a diverse organisation such as the ANC' (US Dept State 1987:1, 4 and 10).

The ANC's Ideological Struggle against the Western Super-powers and Pro-dialogue African Countries⁴

O. R. Tambo's critique of US policy towards South Africa was articulated while addressing the Council of Foreign Relations in New York on 8 November 1982 and in other interviews he held. His 1982 lecture was titled 'The African National Congress, the United States and the Future of South Africa'. The ANC's president rationalised that it seemed that, between the ANC and the Republican Party controlling the US government, there was agreement on only two points – that the apartheid system was unjust, and that change in South Africa was necessary. The ANC's perception of what was unjust about the apartheid system, what change was necessary, how much change should be brought about and to what end, differed radically from the perception of the US. It was clear, said Tambo, that Reagan's policy on South Africa made it an ally of the apartheid regime (UFH, O. R. Tambo Papers, A17.1.4, Box 17:1).

The US administration had no other logical option – in the complexity of South African politics, it had to find the forces that could initiate, direct and control the process of gradual change. For Tambo, the question was: In what way, in the eyes of the US administration, did P. W. Botha qualify for this role? The answer was that P. W. Botha was perceived by the Reagan administration as a reformer. Crocker assured the House Sub-Committee on Africa in 1982 that there was a noticeable change in the 'climate and

atmosphere' of Afrikaner politics, which in his view had changed for the better. He argued that this was discernable in Botha's speeches to his party caucus and in the Afrikaners he used as his advisers. In the eyes of US policy makers on Africa, Botha was the one in power and thus had the means to initiate and control the process of change. Thus, from the hard-nosed point of view of the US government, P. W. Botha was the person to deal with rather than more attractive liberal-reformist elements who were outside the corridors of power (UFH, O. R. Tambo Papers, A17.1.4, Box 17).

Tambo challenged Crocker's convoluted reasoning which he argued led to the extraordinary position that the US government totally disregarded human rights, such as, for example, the death of Steve Biko and Neil Aggett while in police custody. Equally, the decision by the US government to permit the export of military equipment to the South African security forces was indefensible. How could this be justified as a necessary part of a total package of measures designed to bring about 'progressive' change through constructive engagement with the apartheid regime? Tambo believed that another factor that 'qualified' Botha for US support was that he was virulently anti-communist and anti-Soviet Union, thus necessitating the bizarre accolade showered on him by Reagan. The US president praised the apartheid regime as an ally with whom the United States was united in a struggle against Nazism during the 1940s. This was of course inaccurate on two counts: the apartheid regime only came to power in 1948, and Botha was an unrepentant racist and Nazi supporter. The predication of US foreign policy on the maintenance of an acrimonious relationship with the USSR had of course encouraged the process of mutual attraction between Washington and Pretoria (Ibid). Criticising US foreign policy on Africa, Tambo voiced the opinion that:

US concerns in international affairs should be freedom, social progress, and peace, and it should align itself with all the forces that strive to achieve these goals internationally. The ANC is fighting for the destruction of a violent anti-human regime in our subcontinent, whose history is one of aggression and oppression, not only against indigenous South Africans, but also against neighbouring states. Can the US really be part of international concern, particularly in southern Africa, to strengthen and provoke aggression against those who fight for peace? ... Considerations of 'real politik', 'power politics', or whatever, cannot justify the formation of an alliance with the self-proclaimed heirs of Hitler's Reich (Interview, *Africa Report*, 1981:22, 40; see also Furlong 1991; Bunting 1986).

Tambo's opinion was that the US should make a choice, continue to sup with the devil or join the struggle against the apartheid regime:

What the US should consider, and very carefully, is whether its role in that area [southern Africa] is to get rid of racism as represented by Pretoria, or to sup with the devil [the apartheid regime] in the interests of profit and raw materials. Indeed, the US must accept that the Soviet Union is striving to liquidate the crime of apartheid in keeping with the OAU and UN resolutions and is supporting us in fighting for a southern Africa that will become heaven and a bastion of peace. US access to raw materials in South Africa and indeed to the hearts and minds of our people can never be guaranteed by forming alliances with those who treat our people as animals and wild beasts (Interview, *Africa Report*, 1981:22).

In 1981, Tambo reminded the anti-communist brigade that the official relationship between the ANC and Soviet Union was historical. It dated back to 1927, when a delegation of the ANC, led by its president, Josiah Gumede, visited the Soviet Union and came back convinced of the support that the struggle for national liberation enjoyed from the Soviet government and people (Gumede 1982).⁵ The ANC stood together with the Soviet Union and allied forces in fighting Nazism during the Second World War. True to its history, unlike the Western super-powers, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries stood with the ANC, fighting the apartheid system and its leaders who were direct pawns of Nazi ideology and practice. Tambo confirmed the fact that the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), having endorsed the armed struggle waged by the oppressed people of Africa, had made repeated appeals to the socialist countries for assistance. He promised that:

The ANC will continue to work for the unity of the greatest possible number of people at home and abroad for the destruction of the apartheid regime and for the birth of democratic, non-racial, and united South Africa. The greatest possible number will include South African communists and those of other lands, including South African Christians as well as the world Christian community. The greater that number and the firmer the unity among these diverse ideological strands in their opposition to apartheid system, the closer the prospect of our victory becomes (Interview, *Africa Report*, 1981:21; see also Ndlovu 2006).

In its opposition to the Reagan Administration's policy on 'constructive engagement', the ANC was supported by the OAU. The Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the OAU which met at Addis Ababa in June 1963 passed a resolution on South Africa which read:

[The OAU] strongly condemns the Reagan administration for its self-proclaimed alliance with the racist Pretoria regime, the violation of the arms embargo and policy of constructive engagement designed to rehabilitate the apartheid regime and isolate the National Liberation Movement in order to

perpetuate the apartheid system ...[This summit is] convinced that notwithstanding its apparent military might and continued support from the Reagan administration and certain other Western countries, the Pretoria regime's inherent and proven vulnerability to armed struggle guarantees inevitable eradication of the apartheid system and establishment of a non-racial democratic society for all the people of South Africa, regardless of race, colour or creed (*Sechaba*, September 1983:16-17).

In the final analysis, the US perceptibly favoured the apartheid regime whose response to Cold War included a clandestine effort by Vorster to maintain diplomatic relations with African countries. The ANC's defiance of Reagan's policies was at first complicated by strategic moves into Africa pursued by the apartheid regime during the 1970s.⁶ Roger Pfister (2003) argues that the South African military was the principal actor in Pretoria's 'dialogue' with Africa, at least initially (see also Nolutshungu 1975; Wheeler 2005).⁷ As proven by the proceedings of the 1953 Nairobi Conference, the South African military sought to play a continental role alongside the imperial powers in their efforts to curtail the encroachment of the USSR into a continent which they falsely believed they owned. In 1969, the South African defence budget amounted to \$359 million and by 1974, the apartheid regime planned that it would spend \$2.2 billion to strengthen its defence capabilities. *Jeune Afrique* listed that the South African armed forces had 43,800 soldiers, of whom 17,250 were designated as an intervention force and 26,000 served as members of the military intelligence. Besides the regular army, there was a civilian commando numbering 60,000. The South African Defence Force also had an Air Force commando and the racially defined 'Coloured Corps' (*Jeune Afrique* 1970; see also Bunting 1986: chapter 15). In the years 1960-1970, the apartheid regime received huge deliveries of arms from Western super-powers.

Such was the military threat posed by the apartheid regime that in 1969, the OAU Summit of the Heads of States and Governments in East and Central Africa adopted the Lusaka Manifesto, which stated the preference of African countries for non-violent solutions to the problems of white minority rule and apartheid on the subcontinent (Lusaka Manifesto 1969). Although the ANC felt short-changed by the Lusaka Manifesto, the organisation was keenly aware that overt criticism of the entire document would demonstrate a lack of political acumen on its part (Ndlovu 2006). Implementing its policy of 'dialogue', South Africa appeared to be making a breakthrough on the diplomatic front in Africa. On 22 April 1971, Vorster addressed parliament about what he called 'stirrings' on the African continent (*Hansard*, SA Parl. 22 April 1971).

Regardless of the contentious clauses reflected in the Lusaka Manifesto, the large majority of African states considered the apartheid regime and its Rhodesian satellite as adversaries to be fought and brought down by every possible means. They practised and advocated various measures, including support of the liberation movements, economic boycotts and sanctions. But on 4 November 1970, President Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast distanced himself from the OAU position and declared:

As to the unfortunate apartheid problem, Africa will secure no real results by resorting to force; what is required is dialogue ... All our diplomats should go to South Africa; this would change many things down there ... the recent mission of Mr Kaunda in Europe and America is but a fractional approach to the problem; what is needed is a global approach ... Let us acknowledge that in our systematic opposition to all realistic solutions we sometimes lay ourselves open to ridicule ... It is a question of time: we feel sure that with the help of time our positions will in the end be understood (Country Files, Ivory Coast, 1/179/3).⁸

Houphouët-Boigny and President Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, as virulent anti-communists, were receptive to Vorster's policy and spearheaded the 'dialogue club'. By 1971, the pro-dialogue group also included Ghana, Lesotho, Niger, Gabon, Central African Republic, Madagascar, Rwanda, Upper Volta, Togo, and Uganda.⁹ These countries invoked the Lusaka Manifesto to establish contacts with the apartheid regime. Houphouët-Boigny, the chief strategist and spokesperson of the 'dialogue club', at his eagerly awaited conference of 28 April 1971, based his pro-dialogue arguments on three conditions, which he enunciated as follows: 'The first condition is peace within every African country. The second is peace between African countries; the third is peace between African countries and the world'. He added:

I do not know of any person who feels that the white South Africans are not Africans ... To be sure apartheid is being practised in South Africa. All of us strongly condemn this policy ... Apartheid is an internal South African problem. It cannot be abolished through force in the Republic of South Africa ... Before concluding this preliminary statement ... allow me to stress the need for dialogue with South Africa ... Our contact with the whites in South Africa can help gradually to solve the apartheid problem ... In fact, Vorster has promised to receive African leaders on an equal footing. For all those who are motivated by peace in the interest of Africa, it would be an act of faith and courage to reply favourably to the invitation of the South African prime minister (Houphouët-Boigny 1971; Country Files, Ivory Coast 1/179/3).

In response, the elated Vorster authored a letter on 14 May 1971, addressed to Houphouët-Boigny, in which he voiced his approval:

I have read with great interest the reports which have been received in South Africa concerning the conference which you gave to the World Press in Abidjan on 28th April, 1971. I was pleased to learn that you advocated a favourable response to my recent invitation to African leaders to visit South Africa and to enter into dialogue with my Government. I should like to convey to my sincere appreciation for the firm stand you have taken in this respect, which I believe to be an act of wise statesmanship animated by a sincere desire for peace and welfare in Africa. It is my hope that your lead will be followed by other states in Africa. Pursuant to the foregoing I should be happy to invite you formally to visit South Africa at a mutually convenient time. Should this approval be acceptable to you, the date and details could be arranged between us in due course. I of course would be pleased to meet you anywhere, but I am convinced that it is best to meet in South Africa so that you can see personally what conditions are like in my country in view of the many misconceptions which exist (Country Files, Ivory Coast 1/179/3, Vorster to Houphouët-Boigny).

Vorster eventually visited the Ivory Coast in 1974 and countries like Liberia and Senegal engaged in secret diplomacy with South Africa. Ghana, Uganda and Mauritius, though amenable to Houphouët-Boigny's proposals, were ambivalent, voicing some contradictory statements about Vorster's 'outward looking policy' (Legum 1972; Nolutshungu 1975; Pfister 2003). The anti-dialogue group – represented by Nigeria, Liberia, Cameroon, Zambia and Tanzania, among other countries – opposed entering into diplomatic, cultural or economic relations with South Africa ('Dialogue ...', *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1971/72; Pfister 2003). The Ghanaian prime minister, Kofi Abrefa Busia supported Houphouët-Boigny's proposals, meaning that he indirectly supported the policies of the apartheid regime which was against majority rule and a non-racial democratic dispensation in South Africa. Addressing his parliament in December 1970, he said dialogue with the apartheid regime was 'neither a declaration of peace nor an acceptance of the status quo, but another weapon in the armoury of the strategy for the elimination of apartheid and the erection of a multi-racial society in South Africa'. His pro-dialogue address also served as a stinging attack on the lack of financial support to the liberation movements (Ndlovu 2006). Busia asserted:

Freedom fighting has so far been the principal weapon accepted and employed by the OAU in the struggle towards this goal [justice and freedom] ... since becoming Prime Minister a number of truths have become evident to me. What has so far been done to train and equip freedom fighters is woefully and hopelessly inadequate for them to wage a successful war against the well-trained and well-armed troops of the South African government. Many of the members of the OAU have neither paid their contributions [to the Liberation Committee] or are heavy in arrears. At the last meeting of the

OAU, I learnt that only six out of 41 members, including Ghana – please note – had so far paid their contribution in full. With regard to Ghana's contribution, I would like to make it known that from 1964, the time of the Nkrumah regime, to 1968, arrears to the tune of 53,875 British pounds, due as contributions from Ghana to the Liberation Committee were accumulated. The outstanding account has now been settled, and we have paid our contribution for the current financial year ... However, if freedom fighting is to be persisted with, a re-appraisal of our attitude to it is called for. It would be necessary for members not only to pay the present contributions regularly, but also to consider seriously whether our clear intention is to arm freedom fighters efficiently and in adequate numbers, to enable them to defeat South Africa ... then the painfully ludicrous effort that has so far been made cannot escape anyone ... what we appear to be doing so far is to send our African brothers to slaughter. I find it difficult as a human being and an African to accept this situation without anxious questioning ... my government is of the view that another weapon which could be effectively used is that of dialogue either with the South African Government itself, or with moderate forces, black and white, within South Africa ... Dialogue and armed pressure are not necessarily incompatible in this strategy. The United States of America and North Vietnam ... talk in Paris in an endeavour to reach solutions to the problems that have led to war, even while their troops are still fighting. What is an obvious assumption in our advocacy for a dialogue is that South Africa should be ready for such a dialogue. This is saying no more than what the Lusaka Manifesto, as endorsed by the United Nations, advocated (Busia 1971).

In February 1971, responding to the pro-dialogue club, Tanzania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the following statement:

There is no doubt, however, that a diplomatic dialogue between the states of free Africa and racist regimes of Southern Africa would, in fact, undermine the cause of liberation – as the South Africans intend that it should. It certainly cannot serve the cause of freedom ... The [real] leaders of the African peoples of South Africa are in South African gaols, the South African government could free those leaders and then talk to them (quoted in Johns 1977).

The ANC endorsed Tanzania's views and argued that Africans did not need emissaries to visit Vorster and beg him to free the African majority in South Africa; the real leaders of the majority such as Nelson Mandela were languishing in various prisons. As discussed in some depth in Ndlovu (2006), the apartheid regime's diplomatic foray into the continent failed because of the ANC's energetic lobbying and diplomatic efforts within the OAU. In this regard, the ANC was supported by Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda, among others. Nyerere's unwavering dedication to the liberation struggle in southern Africa was enunciated in his address to the first OAU Summit of

Heads of State and Government on 24 May 1963. In a moving speech, he pronounced:

At present, not because of any greater dedication to the cause of freedom in Africa, but because of that proximity to non-independent Africa, we are already making a humble contribution to the liberation of Southern Africa, but we are prepared to do more ... I want to assure our gallant brother from Algeria, Prime Minister Ben Bella, that we in Tanganyika are prepared to die a little for the final removal of the humiliation of colonialism from the face of Africa (Nyerere 1963).

Nyerere's words of wisdom influenced the likes of O. R. Tambo who, with his ANC comrades, was also prepared to 'die a little for the final removal of the humiliation of colonialism' in South Africa, whose face was represented by the apartheid regime, ably supported by the Western super-powers.

Conclusion

This article highlights the power of history as an analytical tool for us as Africans to understand the present struggle for mineral resources in the global world, regardless of where these rapacious wars take place – in Iraq, Libya, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Sudan or the present battle of wits between super-powers controlling NATO, Russia and China. The international struggle for the control of mineral resources waged by imperialists began in South Africa and as such has a long history marked by Britain's invasion of the then Transvaal Republic during the late nineteenth century. This war was to secure a constant supply of gold and a land mass later annexed to form part of the Union of South Africa in 1910. In the process, many indigenous people were annihilated. But they were not passive as they resisted by establishing liberation movements. The study explains and analyses critical historical factors that led to a multi-polar world after the Second World War. It therefore highlights our present concerns in terms of what is happening in the Middle East and Africa as a continent, particularly the advent of Communist China and a fortified Russia as alternative global players linked to a continuation of resource based wars with Western super-powers. It further anticipates a possible trajectory to a multi-polar world after a period of uni-polarism dominated by the US since the fall of the USSR in the late 1980s.

This study also illuminates the explicit role of ideology as it informs the political economy of Africa – including self inflicted divisions and failure to stage a united front by African countries against domination by external powers and imperialists. Ideology is a difficult concept to define, but as used in this article, it refers to the overall perception one has of what the world, especially the social world, consists of, and how it works. This includes issues

like political, economic and moral views. This definition of ideology is a fairly general one and does not highlight the fact that ideals, ideas, beliefs and representations are models generated by material conditions, which may only emerge in practical response. The importance of history as an ideological weapon hardly needs stressing. The Western super-powers, Houphouët-Boigny, Busia and Oliver Tambo, as president of the ANC, used this weapon in articulating their respective positions on the effects of imperialism in Africa. For example, in opposition to Western super-powers, and through resistance, the ANC acknowledged the importance of the anti-colonial struggle against the apartheid regime and the centrality of a united Africa, through the efforts of the OAU, in its struggle for national liberation in South Africa. On the other hand, the Reagan administration, in its endeavour to implement its policy on imperialism through constructive engagement, suppressed the history of the liberation movements and resistance carried out by the oppressed in South Africa. Furthermore, the US sought to suppress the role of the USSR in the struggle for national liberation in South Africa, a rich and liberating history of resistance which the ANC was proud to acknowledge.

It is also interesting how, because of entrenched ideological positions, the opposing sides – the Reagan administration and the ANC – interpreted P. W. Botha's pro-Nazi position and his misguided activism during the Second World War (Furlong 1991; Bunting 1986). The article also shows why countries such as South Africa and the DRC, because of an abundant supply of raw materials and other resources, will always remain important to imperialist policy makers. It also highlights the importance of the study of political economy and history, particularly the history of dominance and resistance in Africa as a continent.

Notes

1. In his memoirs, Rusty Bernstein remembers the first time he met Jack Watts during the late 1930s and how he later discovered that his real name was Gathercole. He writes, 'Gathercole disappeared from sight soon after. When SACP members were facing "listing" under the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950, some claimed that the Liquidator's evidence could only have come from him' (Bernstein 1999:26).
2. On the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) see Gurney (2008).
3. The apartheid regime later relinquished this seat as a result of mounting pressure from the international community, as guided by the liberation movements.
4. Some parts of this section forms part of a chapter by Sifiso Ndlovu on 'The African National Congress negotiations'.
5. The Union of South Africa government reacted viciously to the ANC's show of support to communism although the ANC was deeply divided on this issue, with Seme, Champion and other leaders, staunch anti-communists (Ndlovu 2000). On Gumede, Seme and Champion's views on communism see Karis (1986/7).

6. This section is based on S.M. Ndlovu (2006), a chapter on the ANC's international relations in the 1970-1980 period.
7. See also the extensive, rich collection of country files housed in the South African Department of Foreign Affairs Archives, Union Buildings, Pretoria. Each African country has a file dedicated to it and these files contain records of South Africa's relationship with various African countries throughout the twentieth century.
8. In these files there is an unsigned specimen of a top secret loan agreement between the government of the Ivory Coast (the borrower) and the South Africa Reserve Bank of the Republic of South Africa (the lender) of R1 million.
9. See for example, Ivory Coast (President Houphouët-Boigny's Press Conference on Radio Abidjan, 28 April 1971); Lesotho (Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan's statement made before the meeting of OAU Heads of State, June 1971); Ghana (statement by Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs, William Ofori-Atta, at Addis Ababa, 20 June 1971); Malawi (report on President H. Kamuzu Banda's visit published in *Africa Research Bulletin*, Political Series, Vol. 8, No. 8, 1971). All these excerpts are available in the *Africa Contemporary Record*, Vol. 4, 1971/72, C 71-77. See also the country files housed at the Department of Foreign Affairs Archives, Union Buildings, South Africa.

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History and Literature/Domination and Resistance: Re-Reading the British-Sudan

Afis Ayinde Oladosu*

History is what happened; literature is what could have happened

Aristotle

Abstract

This article is hinged on the assumption that the history, and indeed the historiography, of the violent domination of Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has been written from and therefore could be situated, tentatively, in-between two discordant perspectives: that of the perpetrator and the victim. Whereas it is true that these histories, particularly those of North African States (Egypt and Sudan) have largely been preserved in, and are accessible both in English and Arabic, recent findings have shown that there still exist a third and an un-explored perspective – the experiential-literary-historical. In trying to explore the latter – that in which the Sudanese writer, Muhammad Miftâh al-Faytûrî attempts not only to ‘tell’ but also ‘show’ how and why the themes of domination and resistance in African history should be reread – this study relies on a combination of Western, Eastern and Afro-Arabic historical-theoretical styles, including those of al-Jabartî, Ibn Khaldûn, Ali Mazrui, Friedrich Nietzsche and Nawal Saadawi. The article subsequently finds the following questions highly imperative: Exactly how many histories of the domination of and resistance to oppression in Africa are in existence? In other words, what is the difference between *Afranj*, *Africanist* and *African* histories of domination and resistance? What exactly is the philosophy upon which the ‘perpetrator’ premises his ‘history’ of Africa and how is his perspective subverted by that of the ‘victim’? How might the attempt to re-read the history of domination and resistance in Africa benefit from the methods and insights of literary writers and critics? How has the literature of the colonial era functioned in writing/telling the hi/story behind the hi/story, and in filling the gaps in Africa’s memory and dignity?

* Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
Email: a.oladosu@mail.edu.ng

Résumé

Ce texte se base sur l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'histoire et, bien entendu, l'historiographie de la domination violente de l'Afrique à la fin des 19^{ième} et 20^{ième} siècles ont été écrites et situées entre deux perspectives discordantes : celle du coupable et celle de la victime. Même s'il est vrai que ces histoires, plus particulièrement celle des Etats de l'Afrique du nord (Egypte, Soudan), ont été préservées en grande partie en Anglais et en Arabe, de nouvelles découvertes ont montré qu'il existe bel et bien une 3^e perspective encore non explorée : celle dite expérimentale-littéraire-historique. En tentant d'explorer cette perspective, l'article explore trois poèmes de Muhammad Miftâh al-Faytûrî (*Aghânî Ifrîqiyyah* 1967) qui tire son style théorique des travaux d'al-Jabarti, Ibn Khaldun, Ali Mazrûi, Friedrich Nietzsche, et Nawal Saadawi parmi d'autres.

L'article pose des questions essentielles, à savoir : combien d'histoires de la domination sur l'Afrique et sa résistance contre l'oppression existe-t-il exactement ? Qu'est ce que la différence entre les histoires de domination et de résistance *Afranjes*, *Africanistes* and *Africaines* ? Comment la tentative de relire l'histoire de domination et de la résistance en Afrique peut-elle bénéficier des méthodes et enseignements des narrateurs et critiques littéraires ? Comment la littérature de la période coloniale a fonctionné dans l'écriture/narration de l'histoire derrière l'histoire et dans la restauration de la mémoire et la dignité africaines ?

'Doctrines', according to Vico, 'must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat'.¹ In other words, doctrines which in this instance reference the practice of history or 'History'² must begin at the beginning in order for it to gain authenticity. To begin at the beginning in an intellectual exercise like this which is targeted at retrieving the past in the present – an exercise whose future lies in its attempt at expounding and exploding the past in order to hew out of it new ideas, new meanings and new directions for African *history* - two different texts immediately catch our attention. These are Abdulrahman al-Jabartî's (1753-1825) *Târîkh Muddat al-Faransîs bi Misr*³ (History of the French Occupation of Egypt) and Napoleon Bonaparte's *Déscription de l'Égypte* (Description of Egypt).⁴ The first, *Târîkh Muddat*, is probably the first record of the history of domination to be written by the 'victim' in Africa; while the second, *Déscription*, is probably the first history of domination to be written by the 'perpetrator' in/on Africa. Al-Jabartî wrote *Târîkh Muddat* as a victim and an Arab-African eye-witness of resistance to domination while Napoleon's *Déscription* was written by the witness and an actor in the theatre of war, violence and domination of the continent. *Târîkh Muddat* was written by Al-Jabartî to chronicle events in the pre-Napoleonic and the Napoleonic eras⁵ in Egypt, while *Déscription* details the conqueror's strategy and plans for Egypt and indeed for Africa in the twentieth century. While the former strives to, among others, expose the falsehood of the ideological template upon which the French invasion of Egypt took place, the

latter seeks to portray the conquest as the best thing that could ever have happened to Egypt. Al-Jabartî's record images the solemn and salient factors which rendered Egypt and, later, Sudan, 'open' to aggression and exploitation. On the other hand, Napoleon's account details the style of the perpetrator, his strategies and stratagems, his politics and 'politricks' in colonial Africa. Al-Jabartî's record is picaresque of, in the word of Edward Said, the 'price'⁶ Africans paid in the course of resisting domination; but the history written by Napoleon is about the 'prize' the 'perpetrator' won for being brutal and violent while running and ruling over Egypt.

Placed side-by-side as we have attempted to do, scholars appear not to be taken aback by the fact that both *Târikh Muddat* and *Déscription* have subsequently produced, along with Edward Said, other 'histories'⁷ for the world to behold. The two works appear to be 'monumentalistic'⁸ in nature. They call attention to the inner fissures, frictions, and contradictions in the historiography of domination and resistance in and on the continent. For example, whereas Al-Jabartî details, in part, the inhumanity and violence that Napoleon's invasion eventuated in Egypt, the writers of the Napoleonic's version, on the other hand, chronicle the invasion as that of a benevolent conqueror who respects the culture of the dominated. The dissonance and lack of complementarity in al-Jabartî and Napoleon's histories makes a re-reading of that and subsequent phases of African history a categorical imperative. The two works awaken us to the fact that extant histories of domination and resistance written in/on Africa are patently and essentially human records. Human records, according to Ibn Khaldûn, are 'by their nature prone to error'.⁹

But why would the history – or should it have rather been 'herstory' – of such an important epoch the era of forceful domination of Africa by Europe, be susceptible to error? Again Ibn Khaldûn, the African historian and precursor in the field of sociology/ethnography, offers at least seven propositions. According to him, history is prone to error because its 'custodians' often from partisanship, over-confidence, mistaken belief in the truth, misplacement of events in the schema of history, abandonment of integrity for pecuniary/personal aggrandizement, unwarranted exaggeration and embellishment, and, most importantly, ignorance of the law of nature.¹⁰ Thus when writers/historians suffer, for example, a combination of two or more of these 'ailments', when they suffer what Nietzsche calls 'malady of history'¹¹ it becomes inevitable that their product – history – becomes dis-eased the moment it is born; it becomes pertinent that history becomes contaminated the very moment it is documented. Thus historians, as producers of knowledge, or is it understanding,¹² become manufacturers of 'fake' products; they

become, in the words of Collingwood, 'killers' of the past they claim to 'resurrect'; they become detectives of the 'crime' they themselves commit.¹³

Face to face with this reality, the following questions demand our immediate contemplation: given the polyphonic nature of the histories of Africa, could there be an objective and, therefore, 'valid' historiography of 'domination' and 'resistance' in/on the continent? Might there exist, with particular reference to these themes or categories, a corpus of history that could be referred to as excluded, unwritten, or forgotten histories of Africa? How might the latter be written into African historiography? Might the deployment of literature energize or enervate efforts geared toward the appropriation of a holistic history of domination and resistance in Africa since, as it appears, history is incapable of achieving this all alone?

In order to attend to a discourse that would concern itself with the above, a brief engagement with the problematic of the word 'history' becomes a desideratum. In the first instance, the word bears no link, 'historically', linguistically, and etymologically with Africa. The word originated outside Africa, it is circumscribed, in the main, by Western philosophies, even as its goal, when carefully contemplated, does not completely speak to and satisfy the African 'reality'. In other words, before the ascension of the word 'history' on to Africa's intellectual landscape, and long before the extrapolation of the word as a profession, a specialized field of inquiry, a pastime, a window through which the non-African Other 'sees' and constructs the Other and as a weapon with which Europe could 'world' the rest of the world, Arab-Africans had been familiar with and made use of the word *Târikh*. *Târikh* bears and images north Africa's cultural reality; it is closely linked to the 'time' the individual African lived and the space in which he had to negotiate his existence. While approaching *Târikh*, Africans began by asking 'Who am I? How long have I lived? Why am I like this?';¹⁴ but while engaging in historical practice the non-African historian, on the other hand, began by asking: 'Who are they? How are they? How could they be overcome?'¹⁵ In other words, *Târikh* is all about 'us'; history is traditionally all about 'them'; *Târikh* is all about 'we', history is all about 'they'; *Târikh* is for and about the leader and the led; history is, in the main, about and for the leader; *Târikh* is about the masses, history is all about Kingship and royalty – it is, in the words of Salman Rushdie, the 'handshake of the winners'.¹⁶

But whatever it is worth, it could be presumed that the field of history, though not value-free, is nonetheless universal – it is there waiting for us, beckoning on us, inviting us to tell it. In order to tell/write history, we must put on the garb of a 'building contractor'; in order to 'build' the history of domination and resistance in Africa, the blocks must be laid one on top of

the other. In other words, an attempt to re-read the themes of 'domination' and 'resistance' in Africa (British-Sudan) would demand that we recognize the fact that while posturing as two sides of a coin, the two themes were not 'produced' or 'written' all at the same time. The theme of domination emerged first before that of resistance and as such our engagement should primarily be with the former before the latter.

Found in what we have hereafter termed, in recognition of its dissimilarity and unfamiliarity to Africa, as *Afranj* history, the theme of domination was first conceived and written about in the intellectual circles of the metropolis (Europe) before it staged its appearance, in practice, on the sandy terrain of the Nile Valley (Egypt and Sudan). In other words, the idea to dominate Africa started, first, in the mind of, for example, the British imperialists and was initially marketed not in Africa but in the history books written by the racialists in Europe. What this means, among others, is that with reference to the theme of domination in *Afranj* history, we should keep two types of corpus in view: the one written in the metropolis for the citizens of her majesty; the other written in the metropolis by the colonizer for the colonized. The first, like *The Burden of the White Man*, was written for the consumption of the citizens of her majesty, while the other, including Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859)¹⁷ was written in order to convince the soon-to-be-dominated of their primordial inferiority. The first corpus of historical record of domination figures the creation of the White man as a subject which is second only to the divine in creation; the second corpus was written with the sole purpose of dominating the minds of Africans, the blacks and the coloured, and to convince them of their status as the third, if not the fourth, in the hierarchy of existence.

Put differently, the first historiography of 'domination' in which Africa (Egypt and Sudan) occupies not the margin but the centerpiece of the imperialist vision was written in order to enlist the support of the 'King/Queen' and the proletariat in the metropolis for the task of 'civilizing' the backward nations of Africa and Asia. It was, in line with Massis, an 'idea'¹⁸ which was generated in Europe but was meant to be eventuated in Africa and Asia. It was an 'idea' that was mapped in the palace of her majesty, expounded upon by the 'intellectuals' and taught to the mass of the European citizens. In other words, citizens of her majesty were, in line with Plato, 'taught lies' about Africa, 'in order to instill (fake) patriotism'¹⁹ in them. They were taught of an Africa that was primeval and in utter state of 'inertia';²⁰ an Africa on its knees pleading that Europe should take it over; it was only Europe that could save Africa from itself.

The negative portrayal of the continent of Africa as primeval, brutish and backward is nothing but a means towards an end – the violent exploitation of

its human and material resources. In other words, without such a portrayal, there could be no way the perpetrator could have justified its barbarity, inhumanity, and violence while trying to dominate and vanquish the people of Africa. For example, writing as the perpetrator, Evelyn Cromer quotes the explanation offered by her husband, the British Agent and Consul-General of Egypt from 1883-1907, Lord Cromer, and the philosophy which undergirded the British incursion into Egypt. Central to that philosophy is the irresistible material gains which the British expected would accrue to them. It is in reference to this that he is quoted to have said as follows: 'The European would not reside in Egypt (and by extension in Sudan) unless he could make money by doing so'.²¹ But in order to make money from Egypt, the British realized the necessity of dominating, violently, the citizens of the Nile Valley. Thus the theme of domination in *Afranj* history of Africa came to have not only the seal of the dominant but is also picaresque of the style and method that the latter employed in order to achieve his purpose. It is this that a French officer in colonial Egypt probably had in mind when he said as follows:

...the essential thing is to gather into groups this people which are everywhere and nowhere; the essential thing is to make them something we can seize hold of. When we have them in our hands, we will then be able to do many things which are quite impossible for us today and which will perhaps allow us to capture the minds after we have captured the bodies.²²

The officer's reference to a 'people who are everywhere but nowhere' is to the orientalized subjects – the people of Africa; the people of Egypt and Sudan. His description of the 'path' that domination must travel in colonial Africa in order to achieve its purpose gives credence to Elleke Boehmer, who refers to colonialism as a 'metaphoric and cathographic undertaking'.²³ In other words, the theme of domination in *Afranj* history of Africa appropriates two different spheres of reality: the physical and the intellectual. The first, the metaphoric undertaking, speaks to the solemn, subtle, intangible but profound spheres of domination; the second appropriates the physiology, the geography and the reality of the dominated people of Africa. The first 'opened' up Africa's intellectual space for Europe to dominate; the second made the continent available to physical possession by the Europeans. It is probably in order to emphasize the truthfulness of this undertaking for the Europeans that the French Poet, Lamartine, spoke *ex cathedra* about the people of Africa, as 'nations without territory, *patrie*, rights, laws or security... waiting anxiously for the shelter of European occupation'.²⁴ This became the driving force for European incursion into Africa. Thus, Europeans

proceeded to write the theme of domination from imagination into practical reality. For them *history* is not and indeed cannot reference only events in the past; it is and should be a weapon of/from the past for the construction of the future. It is the 'womb' in which Africa of the twentieth century – the colonial Africa – was conceived.

But the *Afranj* history of domination of Africa, the history which bears the emblem and stamp of the 'perpetrator', might also, and curiously too, include the one written by the fifth columnist, the perpetrator within; the perpetrator 'in' Africa who happens not to be 'of' Africa. Here, reference is being made to, with regard to the British-Sudan of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Egyptian State and its Turkish leaders. The Turkish leaders of Egypt did not just become 'perpetrators' and 'historiographers' of domination in Africa. Rather, they became one by virtue of the fact that they represent vestiges of the 'other' domination. In other words, long before Sudan came under British hegemony, Egypt had become a vizier, at least *de jure*, to the Ottoman powers in Turkey.²⁵ While it is true that for most of the period between late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was the *Mamluk*²⁶ that held *de facto* authority over Egypt, history also bears witness to the fact that the political chasm created in-between the Turkish pretenders and the Mamluk occupiers eventually facilitated the entry of the French and the British into Egypt. Whereas the French were driven out of Egypt after three years, the British proved to be astute imperialists, more adroit in intrigues and better in treachery.²⁷ They told the Turks that the deployment of Egypt's economic and military resources to the conquest or annexation of other parts of Africa, particularly Sudan, would be to the glory of, in the main, Egypt not Britain. They talked the Turkish rulers of Egypt into believing that Egypt was superior to other parts of Africa, particularly Sudan.²⁸

Thus, we come to a point in this article where, with reference to the theme of domination in African history, we behold four important lessons: i) that the conquest and the 'domination' of the Sudan by the British would not have taken place had the Turkish rulers of Egypt refused to cooperate with the former; ii) that before the conquest of Sudan, Egypt had become the first African state to suffer triple domination – the domination it suffered in the hands of the Ottomans, the French and the British; iii) that it is in the character of the dominated (reference Egypt) to seek to dominate – in other words, as far as the theme of domination in African history is concerned the example of Egypt in relation to British-Sudan was that of the dominated which sought to be dominant in relation to other dominated entities and spaces within its milieu; and, iv) that to be dominated, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Africa, meant to learn how to dominate and to seek to dominate.

We might at this juncture side-step the *Afranj* history of the British-Sudan, the ‘perpetrator’s perspective of the theme of domination in Africa, in order to consider the second major trajectory we have identified in this article, namely the Africanist historiography. The historiography of domination of Africa written by the Africanist travels, in part, a pathway other than that of the perpetrator. Whereas the perpetrator concerns himself with the theme of domination in African history both as an actor and a ‘witness’, the Africanist, on the other hand, writes either as a witness, a biographer or a recorder of the events as they occurred in Africa; he writes African history neither in the first nor second person but in the third. Two trajectories are discernible in his activity: the subjective/imperial/pecuniary and the objective/altruistic/anti-imperial.

In the first, namely the subjective/imperial/pecuniary, the Africanist historian treats the history of domination of Sudan, and by extension that of the whole of Asia and Africa, as an intellectual sparring partner. Here, he is involved with African history for situational, institutional and personal reasons. The situational reason consists of his identity as a historian on Africa and one who resides and indeed must reside, not in Africa but in the West. To be resident in the West is to assume authority over the non-West; to write the non-West into or out of existence. Thus, this Africanist’s involvement with African history becomes an extension and a continuation of the unfinished business of imperialism. His activity gives credence to Hoyt Fuller who says that ‘the glass through which black...(history) is viewed by white...(historians) is, inescapably...befogged by the hot breath of history. True objectivity, where race is concerned, is as rare as a necklace of Hope diamonds’.²⁹

The Africanist historian might also be involved with African history, not history in Africa,³⁰ for institutional reason. This references the preponderance and panoply of agencies and centers in the academia outside Africa which concerns itself more with Africa than with the history of its immediate environment. Designated atimes as area studies,³¹ these centers derive its glory solely in ‘producing’ Africa. The way it relates to and treats Africa also makes what may be referred to as distanciation in historical exercise a possibility. Here, distanciation references a situation where Africanist historians, entrenched as they are in Western academia, are able to distance themselves from Africa and the values which the continent’s true history embody and entail while posturing to do otherwise. Thus, what they write could be described as history in Africa not African history. The history they write is usually dry and malnourished; atimes it is completely lifeless. They

write in such a way that Africa and Africans are made to carry the can of the evil that Europe has heaped on them for over two centuries.

When the Africanist engages with African history for personal reasons, however, then history simply becomes a means towards an end, the end being the achievement of material comfort. The more he writes about Africa, the more popular he becomes, especially in the inner caucuses of the state in Europe; the more he writes about Africa the more he is acclaimed for the 'profundities' of his knowledge; the more he writes the more he is seen as the specialist on Africa. His perspective on African affairs becomes more valid than that of the African; it is his version of history of domination and resistance that is treated as the 'truth'. This occurs despite the fact that the Africanist could have been involved in writing African history less for the purpose of knowledge but more for the purpose of bread. He could have written about Africans not as Africans would have wished to be written about, but in the way that pleased him; he could have written about African history not based on African experience but solely on the basis of his own experience and heritage.

In the second, namely the objective/altruistic/anti-imperial, the Africanist historian, even though he has no links, biologically that is, with Africa, nonetheless writes African history in the 'first person'; he writes African history as if his umbilical cord was interred inside the African soil. Re-reading texts produced by these Africanists' give the impression that in writing about the theme of domination in African history, this group of historians experiences a guilt complex and as such, it is through fidelity to the history of the continent that they could experience true redemption.

But that might actually not be the case. The anti-imperial/objective/altruistic Africanist historian might approach African history in fulfillment of the oath of truthfulness and honesty which history demands of its practitioners. Thus, a careful reading of the works of such writers invites a synergy and convergence between their version of the historiography of domination and that written by the African. In other words, there appears to be similarities in the works of, for example, Sean O'Fahey's 'Growth and Development of the Keira Sultanate' and that of Muddaththir Umar's 'Imperialism and Nationalism' (1986); there appears to be historical concurrence in G. Warburg's 'Religious Policy in the Northern Sudan' and H. A. Ibrahim's 'Imperialism and Neo-Mahdism' in *A Study of British Policy towards Neo-Mahdism* (1980). A reading of M. O. Al-Bashir's *Revolution and Nationalism in the Sudan* returns us to the work of Winfred Cantwill Smith. In his analyses of the factors for, features and impacts of domination on the Muslim nations of Asia and Africa, Smith, in the manner of the 'victim',

says: 'when a Muslim is subject to alien rule, it feels as if sovereignty is not only lost but the body politic put in chain, but rather one in which history has gone wrong and the government of the universe has been upset'.³²

In other words, reading the perspective of a group among Africanist scholars of African history calls attention to that locale in historical practice where a 'valid' historiography of domination might exist. Here, African historians occupy an important position. To them, history is both a weapon and a profession: a weapon with which the history of domination and resistance in and of Africa written by the 'perpetrator' could be un-written in order to be re-written; a profession by which the African could properly reposition the continent for the future. Such histories, including the ones written by the Sudanese like Mu'awiyah Muhammad Nur,³³ were never printed in Sudan. They could not have been allowed to be printed in Sudan by the British authorities because such an exercise would have amounted to the British committing historical suicide. This is because the works written by Nur and other Sudanese critics of the British picture the barbarity, the inhumanity and the bestiality of the British hegemony. The historiography of domination that got printed in Sudan while the British still held sway over the political fortune of the country were written anonymously.³⁴

But writing the history of domination, particularly after the establishment of the British suzerainty, soon lost its appeal, particularly among the Sudanese; it quickly ceased to be the *doxa*: the dominant theme or opinion in the British-Sudan, the only ace in the country's historiographical and cultural reality. In its place, the Sudanese began to 'sing' the song of resistance. This is because, soon after the establishment of the British hegemony over their land, the Sudanese discovered that resisting the British hegemony was not going to be, along with Edward Said, only about 'the struggle for control over territory'; rather, it was also going to be a 'struggle over historical and social meaning'.³⁵ Thus, resistance to the British in Sudan featured active participation from Sudanese ethnic, tribal and religious subjects³⁶ all of whom strove to reclaim and assert their multiple identities. Beneath and beside this broad and official spectrum of resistance against British domination, however, there exist a corpus of historical materials that could be described as the un-written histories of resistance against the British in Sudan. It is in its portrayal that the Sudanese literature finds relevance.

But why would Sudanese literature, particularly poetry, stage a presence in a field which traditionally 'belong' to history and how? In other words, why is literature important in re-reading African history? Chinua Achebe's oft-cited statement, once again, is very relevant. He says:

The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front... I for one would not want to be excused. I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach their readers that their past – with all their imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them'.³⁷

Linda Orr's perspective is equally germane. She posits that literature could be of immense benefit to the field of history because it does the 'most consistent critique of history; and because it evokes the other history that history refuses to write'.³⁸ In other words, literature provides humanity with 'the story *behind* the story'. Whereas the historian might not write history based on the lack of availability of information or data, the literary writer depends solely on imagination; he is concerned not with what happened but rather with, in line with Aristotle, 'what could have happened'. This is evidenced in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; it is also axiomatic in the trilogy written by the North African Nobel prize winner, Najib Mahfouz.³⁹ These and other similar works were concerned with the 'story behind the story'; they were concerned with 'excluded/forgotten/unwritten' historical agents of the time of their producers. It is to the exploration of the same trajectory in British-Sudan and how the Sudanese poetry has and could function to 'include' the 'excluded' that we shall be engaged with below.

Three poems written by the Sudanese poet, Muhammad Miftâh al-Faytûrî⁴⁰ (b. 1930) in-between the years 1948 and 1953 could be examined to buttress the above discussion. The choice of this poet is not haphazard. Rather, it is based on the fact that his poetry and politics – the former in its lyrical and postcolonial texture, the latter in its practical and existential tenor – image the intellectual perspective to the theme of domination and resistance in British-Sudan and is also mimetic of the non/violent interface between the colonial and the anti-colonial forces on the rigid terrain of the Sudan. Our choice of al-Faytûrî's poetics and politics is also based on its pre-eminent status within the larger Sudanese literary horizon: it is based on the fact that his works not only preceded that of Sudanese writers including Tayyeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), but were actually written when her majesty's flag was still hoisted in Sudan. Again, al-Faytûrî's poetry is uncanny in its Africanist themes and vision – it is dedicated to the critique of race and racialism, domination and oppression in Africa; it mirrors the socio-historical and cultural trajectories in the early modern period in British-Sudan in which the Sudanese became slaves, not on foreign lands, but on the quintessential Sudanese soil.

al-Faytûrî begins by writing as a 'victim', a witness and a chronicler of the history of domination and resistance in Africa. In his *persona*, history, creativity and experience find union. His poetics figures domination as a precondition for resistance. In other words, as far as he is concerned, the texture and tenor of resistance is often a function of the texture and tenor of domination; the quality of domination is prescriptive for the quality and tenacity of resistance. In order to poeticize, not narrativize, resistance, in order to image and mirror the trajectory in the Sudanese's non/violent interface with the British, it appears seemly to him that the idea that generated domination should first be re-engaged as a product of its own antecedent; the idea which produced domination must first be re-enacted in order for the resistance which it produced to be properly mirrored. Thus, his poem entitled *al-Tûfân al-Abyad*⁴¹ (The White Typhoon) bears contemplation. The poem creates the persona of the potential colonialist, while still in Europe, as he contemplates and imagines Africa. The poem goes in part thus:

Land of slaves!... Africa...
 O! Land of the bare-footed naked Negroes
 See how they are walking in their nudity
 And how they are walking behind life
 And their bodies
 Those wonderful ebonies
 Structured like the humans
 And their fire in the ravine of the mountains
 Their children in the bellies of the trees

When shall I find money
 To buy a shoe, a dog and a new cloth
 I shall then proceed to the land of Africa
 To hunt a caravan of slaves

O! land of the naked Negroes
 I will come to you one day...like a new warrior
 Who desires wealth...who desires life.⁴²

This poem amply pictures the frame of mind of the dominant subject (the European) just before he began his journey into the land of Africa. The voice that says: 'Land of Slaves! Africa...' ⁴³ belongs to that of the imperial cartographer who feels he must map his field of endeavour, his space of conquest, before attempting to occupy it. His portrayal of Africa as a land of slaves, as if the experience of slavery in human civilization is delimited to the continent, functions as a pre-condition for its eventual domination. In other words, Africa had to be negatively 'named' or tagged in order that it may be possessed; it had to be designated as a land of slaves so that the British and its imperialistic counterparts may justify, first, the enslavement of the people of Africa, and second, the domination of the people of the continent through colonization.

Again, by portraying Africa in the above manner, the impending dominant subject from Europe postures himself as having a complete knowledge of the continent – he knows what Africa is, what Africa will be and what Africa will never be. But his knowledge of Africa is, on the one hand, empty. On the other hand, it is slippery. It is empty because it is based, in the main, on hearsay, on 'lies' told to the mass of the European citizens in order to justify the project of dominating the continent of Africa. The knowledge the imperialist has about Africa and one which justified its domination of the continent is slippery because it assumes universality over the future of the continent. Thus, he goes on to construct Africa and Africans: 'O! Land of the bare-footed naked Negroes/See how they are walking in their nudity/And how they are walking behind time/And their naked bodies'. ⁴⁴ By describing Africans as a people who go about naked, the imperialist invariably opens up a gap in the cultural template which foregrounds the ideology of domination. Aside from the fact that the statement 'O! Land of the bare-footed naked Negroes' ⁴⁵ is nothing but an indulgence in an unwarranted generalization and essentialization of Africans, the description also flies in the face of the European, especially now that nudity has become the *nodus* of fashion and modernity. But the imperialist still goes on to negatively historicize Africa; he constructs and de-constructs the continent as a preamble to his journey to the continent. He says: 'When shall I find money/To buy a shoe, a dog and a new cloth/I shall then proceed to the land of Africa/To hunt a caravan of slaves'. ⁴⁶

In other words, before coming to the continent, the imperialist feels he is in dire need of three things: a shoe, a dog and a new cloth. The need for the European to venture into Africa in a new cloth and shoe, the type Albert Memmi describes as 'Wellington shoes', ⁴⁷ might be understandable. But then one might be tempted to ask: Why the reference to a dog? The imperialist

feels he needs a dog only as a metaphor for other weapons of violence without which his domination of the continent might be impossible. Thus, he says: 'O! land of the naked Negroes/I will come to you one day...like a new warrior/Who desires wealth...who desires life'⁴⁸. Could the dog be a clue to the unexplored regions of the violent domination of Africa in the twentieth century?

al-Faytûrî's second poem that concerns itself with resistance is curiously titled '*Ila waj-in abyad*' (To a White's Face). The poet imagines that the imperialist has now arrived Africa, he has succeeded in dominating the flora and the fauna of the continent. In order to resist his presence and practice of domination on his soil, al-Faytûrî creates the *persona* of the dominant British ruler in Sudan and engages him thus:

Is it because my face is black?
 Is it because your face is white?
 You named me a slave
 You trampled on my humanity
 You demeaned my spirit
 You made a chain for me
 You unjustly consumed my honour
 You ate my grocery in anger
 You lived in garden of paradise
 Whose hard rocks were cleft asunder my hands
 And I...how many times have I lain the dark hut
 Burning under darkness and cold
 Like a goat...mulling my grief and sorrow
 Until light of the heavens are extinguished
 And the stream of dawn (begin) to flow
 I woke my skinny cattle up
 And I began to drive it towards its pasture
 When it became fat you enjoyed its flesh
 You abandoned the intestine and the skin for me⁴⁹

Reading the above poem as a corpus of historical document, it could be proposed that the theme of resistance began in British-Sudan the same way the theme of domination staged its emergence in the metropolis: in the mind. Probably tired of and nauseated by the carriage and conduct of the imperialist on his land, the Sudanese began by resisting domination in his mind; he

began by positively dominating his own mind in order that he might intellectually and physically resist the British on the sandy terrain of Khartoum. He began by interrogating himself: 'Is it because my face is black?'.⁵⁰ This question references the character of the Sudanese who seeks to know why, for centuries, he has been a dominated subject; he wants to know whether there is a primordial link between blackness and domination. Perhaps not satisfied with the idea that Africa is dominated largely because of its blackness, he goes on to ask again: 'Is it because your face is white?'. Here again he is in search of an answer: he wants to know whether to be dominant means to be 'white'. Put differently, is whiteness a synonym for the dominant the same way blackness is a synonym for the dominated. But if we read these questions together thus: 'Is it because my face is black? /Is it because your face is white?' then we are awakened to the racial template which foregrounds the birth of that historical-geography known as the British-Sudan. The persona of the Sudanese that makes this statement is desirous of investigating the idea that led to domination before accurate account could be given of how Africans stood to resist it. His voice could also reference the need for careful attention to be paid to the dual perspectives of the 'black' and the 'white' historians when reading the theme of domination and resistance in the history of the British-Sudan, of the 'black' and 'white' actors on the rigid terrain of the British-Sudan and of the 'black' and 'white' witnesses to the events.

In other words, the voice that says: 'Is it because my face is black? / Is it because your face is white?'⁵¹ is useful for its polyphonic role. On the one hand, it could be read as reference to the fact that the history of the early modern period in Africa was largely and probably written based on colour. Thus, the voice appears prepared to confront the 'white' historian with the falsity of his claims which was hinged solely on the premise that the African is 'black' and that he, the historian, is 'white'. The voice that speaks in the poem also reminds us of the fact that when the 'white' historian undertakes to chronicle events in the continent, he does this probably because his face is white. He constitutes Africa, in al-Tahtawi's manner, as a subject in 'a blackness in a blackness in a blackness';⁵² he constitutes Africa as a subject in need of being written into history.

Thus, in reading al-Faytûrî's poetry, we find ourselves face-to-face with history; in reading history we are engaged with poetry; in reading 'poestory'⁵³ we are compulsorily drawn, as in a theatre, to witness the poetics of colour in African history. The poetics of colour references the values, the codes, and the importance that colour – red, green, yellow, black, and white – has historically and culturally been endowed with in human civilizations and across times and climes. The voice that says 'Is it because my face is black?

/ Is it because your face is white?' therefore yearns for a new African history not history 'in' Africa. It demands that history of Africa be re-written, not necessarily because of colour but because Africans have hitherto been written as objects of history not as historical agents. Central to this demand is the destruction of the myth that has been woven around the continent – that Africa is a land of the slaves. It is this myth which led to the perpetration of other crimes by the British against the Sudanese and Africans as a whole. The voice reminds us of some of the myth thus: 'Is it because my face is black? / Is it because your face is white? / You named me a slave / You trampled on my humanity / You demeaned my spirit / You made a chain for me / You unjustly consumed my honour'.⁵⁴

. But in saying: 'You ate my grocery in anger / You lived in garden of paradise / Whose hard rocks were cleft asunder my hands',⁵⁵ we witness a transition from the mythical to the practical. The voice reminds us of a 'story behind the story'; of a reality in British-Sudan which historians would probably have, given their preference for the sensational, glossed over. This has to do with the un-explored-for-unsuspected regions of domination in British-Sudan. This references the psycho-social and environmental dehumanization and oppression which the Sudanese suffered in the hands of the colonizers. This occurred via the deliberate bifurcation of the colony into two: an abode for the dominant and the other for the dominated. The abode of the dominant power, the British authorities in Sudan were, in the words of Fanon, 'a sector built to last, all stone and steel; that of the dominated is 'a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal and light'.⁵⁶ The abode of the dominant in British-Sudan was built by the sweat of the dominated and, in doing so, the latter was deprived of all resources with which he could build his own abode.

To put it differently, resistance to the British rule in Sudan in the mid-20th century occurred in part because of the way the British impoverished the natives with reckless abandon. This is evident from the voice which says: 'Until the light of the heavens are extinguished / And the stream of dawn (begin) to flow / I woke my skinny cattle up / And I began to drive it towards its pasture / When it became fat you enjoyed its flesh / You abandoned the intestine and the skin for me'.⁵⁷ In other words, the Sudanese were denied the rights to own lands, they were forced to pay high taxes and for those who could not bear the sight of the dominant British officials on the streets of 'Umdurman, voluntary exile became an escape measure.

Face to face with this inhumanity, and confronted with a condition in which colonialism becomes worse than slavery, the Sudanese soon entered into another phase of their resistance to domination. It is a phase which would make violence a categorical imperative. Thus, al-Faytûrî's poem entitled

Thawrah Qarah (Revolt of a Village)⁵⁸ which was written in 1953 is worth being contemplated. It reads, in part, thus:

A black child said:
O! my father I'm afraid of the red man
Each time he saw me walking he spat on the ground in derision
My father! Don't leave him among us
He is a stranger on this land
Kill him...! Kill him!!
For so long he has thoughtlessly crushed my inner self'

And the old man kept quiet
(then) the darkness was penetrated by the voice of a young girl...
She said, while showing a naked body
A hurricane has been destroyed in anger...
Here, here behind this wall
Which overlays our grief
The master slept...in paradise
The roof of which was made with the bones of our grandfathers
Then the faces became animated
(Faces) whose grief had long been neglected to no end
Their hands became strong under the darkness
Like a plow on top of which is an echo.⁵⁹

This poem combines personal recollection with historical validation. Here, we read of the voice of a small child – a child in the colony who is drawn into an interface with the colonizer; a child who could not escape domination through voluntary exile; the African child whose role in resisting domination in Africa has been excluded from African history. Here he is given a space in the text, in history. Or rather, here we read about and see the African child as he reclaims his voice, as he creates a space for himself in Africa's historiography of domination and resistance. In the first instance, he calls on his father to resist, not the white but the 'red man'. Thus the African child reminds us of the shifting *topoi* and the illogicality of the employment of colour in designating humanity; he awakens us to the fact that, when properly contemplated, 'no white man is actually white like snow or common salt.'⁶⁰

But perhaps more importantly, the persona of the boy-child who says: 'O! my father I'm afraid of the red man/Each time he saw me walking he spat on the ground in derision...' and that of the girl-child who says: 'A hurricane has been destroyed in anger.../Here, here behind this wall/Which overlays our grief/The master slept...in paradise/The roof of which was made with the bones of our grandfathers'⁶¹ represent voices of the excluded in the history of domination and resistance in Africa. The boy and the girl-child also remind us of the fact that resistance against domination would probably not have emerged as a passionate theme in African (Sudanese) historiography if Africans had been contented with the way the British treated them. In other words, resistance to domination occurred as a manifestation of the psychological frame of mind of the colonized and the dominated who feels humiliated not so much for the economic and political deprivation he suffered in the hands of the colonizer – even though this, with particular reference to the British-Sudan,⁶² accelerated, in part, the destruction of the colonial structures- but more for the refusal of the colonizer to constitute and recognize his subjectivity. In colonial Africa, the dominant related to the dominated as lacking the three basic elements that are constitutive of the human being. These are 'the ability to perceive, the capacity to know and the capability to experience things'.⁶³

Thus, the voice that says: 'My father! Don't leave him among us/He is a stranger on this land/Kill him...! Kill him!!/For so long he has thoughtlessly crushed my inner self'⁶⁴ gives credence to Edward Said's proposition that 'each poet or poem is involuntarily the expression of collectivities'.⁶⁵ In other words, the boy and girl-child speak on behalf of the voiceless and the dominated in British-Sudan; they document the events that accentuated the destruction of the dominant by the dominated; they picture how the hands of the dominated become strong under the darkness – at a time the dominant was asleep; they show how the dominated descended on the dominant 'Like a plow on top of which is an echo'.⁶⁶ Thus, as far as the history of British-Sudan is concerned, the theme of resistance features, in its quintessential manner, one in which not only the Sudanese men and women served as actors/witnesses but also children, girls and boys, even though unsung, argue and proclaim its validity.

Approaching the point of departure – since history admits of neither conclusion nor closure – it is evident from the foregoing that the themes of domination and resistance in African history features a panoply of works in which the dominant/perpetrator, the dominated/victim, and the witnesses have interfaced. The article also argued that even though the *Afranj*, the Africanist and the African historians might have attempted to explore, in-depth, the themes of domination and resistance in the twentieth century history of Africa,

the literary writing of the era, itself a product of domination, colonization and resistance, has much to offer us in our effort to re-read and explore the unexplored regions of the history of the continent during the period. It is evident from this inquiry, therefore, that the Sudanese poetry, particularly that of al-Faytûrî, represents one of such regions and perspectives. His poetry calls attention to the fact that in order for us to have a near perfect understanding of the history of domination and resistance in British-Sudan and in the whole of Africa we must endeavour to, along with Louis Mink, 'know its consequences as well as its antecedents'.⁶⁷ al-Faytûrî's poetics also argue the similarity in the literary and historical enterprise; that literature and history have a lot in common: the uncertainty in their vocation, the shifting topoi of their practice and the fluidity in their method. Both fields of inquiry are 'hands in glove' as far as the need for humanity to 'respond to that aspect of human reality that yearns for the translation of 'knowing into telling'⁶⁸ is concerned. al-Faytûrî's poetry could also be regarded as imaging the 'resistant', or the 'dissident'⁶⁹ theme in African history. It is dissident/resistant because it subverts authority, it patronizes and celebrates the excluded, the uncelebrated in African history; it questions colonial order, even as it seeks to dismantle the hierarchy of knowledge, domination and colonization.

Notes

1. E. Said: *Beginnings, Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) p.347.
2. S. Weber: 'Capitalizing History: Thoughts on *the Political Conscious*' in *Diacritics* 1983 p. 20-25.
3. A number of scholars tend to approach al-Jabartî's work only as a foil for their appropriation of the events which immediately followed the occupation of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte even though his work actually engages the era which precedes the Napoleonic incursion. For example see: S. Gikandi: 'African Literature and the Colonial Factor' in *Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature* vol. 1 (ed) A. Irele and S. Gikandi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 379-385. For the translation of the original work see: *Al-Jabartî's Chronicle of the French Occupation of Egypt* (trans.) S. Moreh (Princeton: Marcus Weiner Publishers, 2001) p. 1.
4. *Déscription de l'Égypte* is actually the 'handiwork of the large contingent of scholars whom Napoleon recruited for his conquest and colonization of Egypt' See: *Al-Jabartî's Chronicle of the French Occupation of Egypt* (trans.) S. Moreh (Princeton: Marcus Weiner Publishers, 2001) p. 68.
5. Ibid p.68.
6. E. Said: *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books 1979) p. 334.
7. Ibid
8. The 'monumentalistic' historian, like Nietzsche, is the historian or artist who 'emphasizes certain (historical) traits (facts) at the expense of the others...'. For more on this see: *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (ed) W. Kaufmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 144, 160, 415.

9. Ibn Khaldun *An Arab Philosophy of History* (trans.) C. Issawi (London, 1969) p. 27-28.
10. Ibid
11. Said *Beginnings* p. 270
12. In Arab-Islamic epistemology, the word knowledge (*al-ilm*) references scientific inquiry which is precise, universal and value-free. Thus Muslim scholars would rather designate other fields of intellectual endeavour such as history which is fraught with human biases, prejudices and perspectives as understanding (*fiqh*). Through such designation, researchers become aware of the tentative nature of their findings, the imprecise destiny of their endeavour and the imperfection of their vocation.
13. R. C Collingwood: *The Idea of History* (Oxford 1946) p. 269.
14. A. A. Ibrahim: Abdul Gani, A. Ibrahim: *Târikh: Târikhuhû, watafsîruhû, wakitâbatuhû* (Khartûm: Dâr al-Sûdâniya lilKutub; n.d) p. 1
15. ibid. p.20
16. Quoted in: D. Malouf: *Remembering Babylon* (Chatto and Vindus:: 1993) p.16.
17. For a criticism of these texts see: E. Said: *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage Books 1994).
18. H. Massis: *Defense of the West*, trans. F.S. Flint (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927) p. 133.
19. Plato, *The Republic*, in *The Portable Plato*, (London: Penguin, 1977).
20. J. G. Fletcher, 'East and West', *The Criterion* June 1928: p.313.
21. E. B. Cromer, *First Earl of Modern Egypt* Baring: *First Earl of Modern Egypt* vol. 2 (London: Macmillan 1908) 1908; p.432.
22. T. Mitchel: *Colonizing Egypt*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press 1988) p. 95.
23. E. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995) p.14.
24. Quoted in J. De Groot De Groot Johanna: 'Sex' and 'Race': The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century' in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds) *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 98.
25. On the role of the Turks in modern Egypt see: P.K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs* (London: Macmillan; 1970) p. 709.
26. The word *Mamluk* refers to the descendants of slaves in the medieval Arab society who later became rulers and custodians of political authority. See Hitti: *History of the Arabs* p. 719.
27. On the politics of British occupation of the Nile Valley see: P. Mansfield: *The British in Egypt* (London: Weiderfield and Nicolson: 1971).
28. On the the notion that Egypt is not part of Africa see : Samar Attar: 'The Fascination of An Egyptian Intellectual With Europe: Taha Husayn And France' in *Arab Studies Quarterly* vol. 29 Issue No. 1 (2006) p.13-32; on the notion that Egypt is superior to Sudan see: E. M. Trout Powell: 'From Odyssey to Empire: Mapping Sudan through Egyptian Literature in the mid-19th Century' in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* No. 31 (1999) p. 401-427; for how this is reflected in Sudanese literature see:

- Oladosu, A. A: 'Wad-Nil: Mapping the Egypto-Sudanese History through the Sudanese Fiction' in *Hamdard Islamicus*, (Karachi) 2004.
29. H. Fuller: 'Introduction: Towards a Black Aesthetic' in *The Black Aesthetic* (ed) A. Gayle Jr. (Garden City NY: Doubleday 1971) p.3-12.
 30. The phrase 'African history', unlike 'history in Africa', appears to recognize Africans as participants not on-lookers in the making and construction of their history. The phrase also calls attention to the existence of a body of history which is patently African, written by Africans and, in the main, for Africa and Africans. The phrase 'history of/in Africa', on the other hand, gives a sense of a body of history which is foreign to the continent; a historiography which was written outside Africa and was brought to the continent in order to give it credence and validity.
 31. On the criticism of the Area Studies program in Western academia see: Said: *Orientalism* p. 2, 53, 106-7.
 32. W. C. Smith: *Islam in the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1957) p. 10.
 33. Mu'âwiyyah Muhammad Nûr was one of the earliest Sudanese critics and writers. He studied in Bayrût and upon graduation secured employment in Cairo as the editor of the young Egyptian journal, *Jarîdat Mi'ra*. Due to his sharp criticism of the British rule, he was tagged a security risk and was denied entry into Sudan. Most of his works were published in Cairo. By the time Nûr died in 1935 he had amassed a large collection of essays on history of Sudan and literary criticism. This has, however, only recently been published in a volume. For further reading see: R. U. Khâlid: *al-A'amâl al-Adabiyah li Mu'âwiyyah Muhammad Nûr* (Khartûm: Dâr al-Khar'ûm li Tibâ'at, 1994).
 34. On how the Sudanese who refused to go on self-exile engaged the British through anonymous criticism see: M. S al-Qadal: *Târîkh al-Sûdân al-Hadîth 1820-1955*(Khartûm: Markaz Abdul Karîm Mîrghanî; 2002) p. 413.
 35. E. Said *Beginnings* p. 331.
 36. al-Qadal: *Târîkh al-Sûdân al-Hadîth* p.404-517.
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L'artisanat africain entre domination et résistance de la période coloniale à nos jours : le cas de la ville de Maroua au Nord du Cameroun

François Wassouni*

Résumé

Cette réflexion a pour ambition de lire l'histoire de la domination et de la résistance en Afrique à travers les arts et spécifiquement de l'artisanat. La réflexion a été axée sur le Cameroun et spécifiquement sur la ville de Maroua, chef-lieu de la province de l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun. Ainsi, les filières artisanales mises en place dans cette cité au XIXe siècle par les Kanouri et Haoussa ont subi des influences multiples, de la période coloniale française jusqu'à nos jours. La politique coloniale d'appui à l'artisanat développée par les Français, l'ouverture de la région du Nord-Cameroun au tourisme dans les années 1970 et l'avènement des organisations non gouvernementales qui travaillent dans la promotion de l'artisanat, sont autant de facteurs qui ont changé la physionomie de l'artisanat de Maroua tant du point de vue technique, organisationnel que commercial. Face à tous ces éléments analysés sous forme de domination, les artisans de Maroua n'ont pas manqué de riposter par des manières diverses qui témoignent leur résistance aux impositions, laquelle résistance a permis de sauvegarder ces savoir-faire locaux qui constituent un pan important de l'histoire du Cameroun et de l'Afrique tout entière.

Abstract

This article attempts to approach the history of domination and resistance in Africa through the arts, particularly through artisanship. It deals with Cameroon, specifically with the main city of Maroua in the northernmost part of the country. In fact, nineteenth century artisanship, practiced in this city by the Kanuri and Hausa, underwent multiple influences from the colonial period till today. Other determining factors in the technical, organizational and commercial changes in Maroua's artisanship involved the support policy implemented by the French colonialists towards the arts, the openness of North Cameroon towards tourism in the 1970's and the emergence of non

* Doctorant en Histoire à l'Université de Ngaoundéré, Cameroun.
Email : wassounifrancois@yahoo.fr.

governmental organizations working for the promotion of artisanship. Maroua artisans resisted in many ways against all these forms of domination and succeeded, therefore, to safeguard their local know-how which constitutes an important aspect of the history of Cameroon and that of Africa in general.

Introduction

S'il des sujets d'histoire de l'Afrique qui retiennent beaucoup l'attention des élèves, étudiants et autres personnes amoureuses d'histoire, c'est bien la domination et la résistance. De nombreux ouvrages d'Histoire (Deschamps 1970-1971 ; Ki-Zerbo 1972 ; Mbokolo 1992) édifient sur la manière dont l'impérialisme occidental, symbole de la domination, s'est enraciné en Afrique et comment au moment où cette doctrine se concrétise, des grands leaders africains s'y opposèrent. Samory Touré (Person 1970-1975), El Hadj Omar Tall (Robinson 1985), Chaka Zoulou (Sévry 1991), Béhanzin, Rabah (Ki-Zerbo 1972) sont parmi d'autres figures de la résistance, et qui occupent une place de choix dans l'histoire africaine. L'Afrique entra ainsi sous la coupe des Européens avec l'imposition des valeurs occidentales : mode de penser, de se vêtir, de vivre, entre autres et la relégation au second rang, si ce n'est tout simplement la lutte contre les valeurs africaines. Les religions traditionnelles, les rites divers, les modes de traitement des maladies, les danses, l'organisation politique furent des domaines qui furent secoués. Les sociétés africaines furent ainsi embarquées dans une mouvance de domination à laquelle elles ne manquèrent pas d'opposer des résistances.

Ainsi, l'on ne saurait parler de la domination et de la résistance sans toutefois aborder le domaine culturel. Dans ce sens, il serait impertinent de faire fi du secteur des arts qui a connu des bouleversements du fait de l'intrusion européenne (Soyinka 1985 ; Frank 1990 ; Vansina 1995). Cependant, il faut relever que l'historiographie africaine en général ne s'est pas davantage intéressée à l'histoire de l'art (Adandé 2001-2002 :71-73 ; Agbenyega Adedzé, 2002:29) en général encore moins à la lecture de la domination et de la résistance à travers ces arts qui constituent un aspect important du patrimoine culturel, élément important de l'histoire africaine. Les travaux sur l'histoire de l'art ont certes montré les influences subies par l'art africain, mais sans pour autant les inscrire dans une perspective de lecture de la domination et de la résistance (Mveng 1980 ; Kernache. et al., 1988 ; Frank 1990 ; Kasfir 2000). Pourtant, il s'agit là d'une intéressante question d'histoire qu'il importe dès lors de scruter en s'intéressant aux arts visuels dans lesquels s'inscrit l'artisanat.

Ainsi, comment peut-on lire l'histoire de la domination et de la résistance en Afrique en général et au Cameroun en particulier à travers les arts ou l'artisanat de la période coloniale à nos jours ? Compte tenu du problème des

sources sur l'histoire de l'art au Cameroun, cette réflexion s'appuie essentiellement sur la ville de Maroua sur laquelle nous disposons d'une documentation sur l'artisanat.

La réponse à cette interrogation qui constitue l'ossature de cette réflexion passe alors par une analyse diachronique de la production artistique et met en exergue les objets fabriqués, leur typologie, les règles de production, leur destination et les influences diverses qu'ont subi ces productions artistiques, lesquelles sont prises sous forme de domination face au contact avec l'occident et le degré de résistance des artistes africains.

Située dans la partie septentrionale du Cameroun à 10°8' de latitude Nord et 14°4' de longitude Est, Maroua est le chef-lieu de la province de l'Extrême-Nord et du département du Diamaré (BCEOM 2000:3). Au rang des activités de cette cité caractérisée par l'interaction entre les activités économiques traditionnelles et modernes, figure l'artisanat qui lui donne une certaine spécificité (OCPE 2001:243).

Pour conduire cette investigation, l'on a procédé par la lecture des ouvrages sur l'histoire de l'art africain en général et camerounais en particulier, des archives coloniales, la consultation des archives du Centre Artisanal et du Musée d'art local de Maroua. En plus, une attention particulière a été accordée à l'observation des objets d'art qu'ils regorgent, à la collecte des informations auprès de quelques personnes susceptibles d'éclairer sur l'histoire de la production artisanale de cette ville. Cette démarche a permis de collecter des informations diverses dont l'analyse critique a permis de structurer cette communication en trois parties.

La première donne un aperçu historique sur l'artisanat de Maroua, la deuxième analyse les influences de la colonisation française, du tourisme et des organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) qui opèrent dans le secteur de l'artisanat, lesquelles constituent une forme de domination du secteur artisanal. La dernière partie, quant à elle, étudie la résistance des artisans face à la domination à laquelle leur activité fait face et ses conséquences.

Aperçu historique sur l'artisanat à Maroua

L'industrie artisanale dans la ville de Maroua s'est développée au XIXe siècle. Pour une bonne compréhension de l'histoire de ce secteur d'activité traditionnelle, il faut se référer à l'histoire même de la ville. La période du XVIIIe siècle est marquée par l'émergence de Marva sous les Guiziga.² Les Peuls à la recherche des pâturages pour leurs troupeaux s'infiltrèrent peu à peu dans la région. La cohabitation entre eux et les Guiziga est pacifique au départ. Le nombre de ces nouveaux venus s'accroît très vite. Dès lors, les relations entre les deux peuples se détériorent peu à peu. Entre 1792 et 1794 éclate un

conflit qui sonne le glas du royaume guiziga. Les Bi-Marva défaits sont boutés hors de leur territoire. Le pouvoir politique détenu par les Guiziga passe alors aux mains des Peuls.

Le XIXe siècle est caractérisé par la naissance d'une intense activité commerciale entre Maroua et le Bornou. Des caravanes chargées de marchandises diverses sillonnent les deux royaumes. Tissus, natrons, parfums, verroteries, papier sont importés du Bornou tandis que Maroua exporte les peaux, l'ivoire, les esclaves et surtout les chevaux (Mohammadou 1989:120-134). Au moment où ces échanges commerciaux se développent, les marchands kanouri et plus tard haoussa s'installent à Maroua où ils ont des entrepôts. Sous leur impulsion naît une véritable industrie artisanale de la peausserie, de la forge et du tissage. Issus du grand empire Bornou, les Kanouri comptent parmi les artisans les plus rompus du Soudan central (Mohammadou et Bassoro 1977:23). Le Bornou d'où vient ce peuple connaît une intense activité artisanale depuis le XIVe siècle (Giri 1994:148). Les Haoussa quant à eux ont une réputation ancienne dans le domaine de l'artisanat. Entre les XVIIe et XIXe siècles, les cités haoussa telles que Kano, Katsina, Gerki connaissent une intense activité artisanale et commerciale (Baba Kaké 1977:51-60). Ces deux peuples ont transféré leur savoir artisanal au Nord-Cameroun, surtout dans les villes de Maroua et Garoua.

Les trois filières mises en place à Maroua, à savoir la peausserie, la forge et le tissage produisent des objets divers.

La peausserie produit les cuirs qui servent à confectionner les sacs pour le transport du mil, aliment de base de la région ; des selles et harnachements des chevaux qui occupent une place de choix dans la société peule. En effet, la puissance d'un *Lamidat* se mesure au nombre de ses chevaux et ceux-ci sont en ce moment le moyen de déplacement le plus prisé ; des gaines de couteaux et de sabres qui font partie de l'équipement militaire des chefferies peules : des couvertures de Coran et tapis de prière ; des sandalettes et bottes pour cavaliers ; les cache-sexe, etc. (Dégatier et Iyébi-Mandjek 1992:2).

Dans le domaine de la forge, les objets fabriqués sont les instruments aratoires tels que les houes destinés à l'agriculture, les arsenaux de guerre tels que les sabres, couteaux, lances, flèches et pointes de flèches, les parures avec les bijoux, les perles, les anneaux en cuivre ou en fer (Nkili Robert cité par Garga 2000:22).

Pour ce qui est du tissage, les tissus *Leppi* sont élaborés à base du coton local. Ils permettent de confectionner des tuniques de différentes sortes. Il en est de même de longues bandelettes appelées *Gabak* et des *Godon*. Ces tissus servent à fabriquer surtout les boubous d'apparat destinés à la haute noblesse et à la bourgeoisie (Garga 2000:22). Aïssatou-Boussoura Garga classe d'ailleurs le fer et le coton du fait de leur importance dans la catégorie

des monnaies « utilitaires » de l'époque. Et à côté de ces artisanats se développe un autre type, la teinturerie, qui permet la coloration des cuirs, des tissus et habits cités plus haut (Garga 2000: 23).

De 1916 à 1960, cette industrie artisanale subit les influences de la colonisation française tant du point de vue de la production d'objets, de l'organisation des filières que de la commercialisation des produits. Par la suite, c'est le tourisme et les ONG qui impriment leur marque à ce secteur d'activité.

L'artisanat de Maroua dans la mouvance de la domination : de la période coloniale française à nos jours

Il est question ici d'étudier les influences de la colonisation française, du tourisme dans les années 1970 et des organisations depuis les années 1990, lesquelles constituent une forme de domination dans la mesure où elles vont modifier la physionomie de ce secteur d'activité locale.

Les influences des autorités coloniales françaises dans l'artisanat de Maroua

S'étant rendus compte de l'ampleur et de la splendeur de l'artisanat à Maroua, les autorités coloniales françaises voulurent les développer. Elles vont y apporter des innovations, tant dans le domaine technique, de l'organisation des filières et de la commercialisation des produits artisanaux. C'est ce qu'on a appelé « la politique coloniale d'appui à l'artisanat » développé à Maroua à partir de 1940.

Autorités coloniales françaises, organisation et appui technique à l'artisanat

En ce qui est de l'organisation, les administrateurs coloniaux en service à Maroua conseillèrent au *Lamido*³ de chercher des artisans aptes et de les nommer à la tête des différentes corporations. C'est ainsi que les *Lawans* ou chefs de corporations, titre encore d'actualité dans les filières artisanales à Maroua furent choisis et placés à la tête des secteurs de la tannerie, maroquinerie, de la cordonnerie, du secteur du tissage, de la broderie. Leur tâche consistait à répartir les commandes qui passent par la chefferie traditionnelle qui les a nommés. Patrons des filières, les *Lawans* étaient les représentants du pouvoir traditionnel ou du *Lamido* qui avait une influence sur toutes les activités de sa zone de commandement. Cette organisation se situe dans un contexte où les Européens passaient d'importantes commandes d'objets artisanaux. Le *Lamido* chargeait à son tour ces responsables des filières artisanales pour faire exécuter les tâches (Iyébi-Mandjek 1993:4 ; Seignoboset Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000:160). Le système de commercialisation en

vigueur était régi par la chefferie qui empochait l'argent des commandes et pouvait ou non motiver les artisans.

Sur le plan technique, les Français estimaient que l'artisanat de Maroua avait des insuffisances qui empêchaient son exploitation à des fins économiques. En effet, les produits artisanaux n'intéressaient pas la clientèle aisée constituée des Européens en service dans la région. La production était plutôt tournée vers la population locale avec la production d'objets sus-évoqués, en rapport avec le milieu. Cela ne plaisait guère aux autorités coloniales qui étaient soucieuses d'intégrer cette activité locale dans l'économie moderne. Pour ce faire, il fallait « civiliser » l'artisanat en initiant ses acteurs à de nouvelles techniques. C'est ainsi que des artisans séjournèrent en France et au Maroc pour s'initier aux techniques modernes. (Iyébi-Mandjek 1993:4). Cette vision française de l'artisanat rappelle le regard méprisant que les occidentaux avaient porté sur les arts africains de la période allant du XVIIe au début du XXe siècles (Adandé 2001-2002).

artisans à la fabrication de nouveaux modèles d'objets inspirés de l'art marocain et européen. Dans le secteur du cuir par exemple, les poufs, les babouches et sandalettes à boucles, les mallettes, les porte-documents remplacèrent peu à peu les produits fabriqués antérieurement. L'usage des peaux d'animaux sauvages pour la fabrication de produits artisanaux tels que les chaussures, les sacs, les portefeuilles, les ceintures vit le jour à cette époque. Dans le domaine des textiles, les nappes de table, les habits inspirés des modèles européens furent à la mode. L'administration coloniale confia par exemple la confection des tenues pour le personnel de l'hôpital ainsi que des serviettes de cet établissement, des tuniques pour prisonniers aux artisans (Seignobos et Iyébi-Mandjek 2000:33).

Les actions françaises peuvent être comprises comme une réelle volonté de développer et de moderniser l'artisanat de cette ville du Nord-Cameroun. Mais il faudrait les comprendre aussi autrement, car dans l'histoire de l'Afrique, l'artisanat a été un secteur très important et stratégique. En dehors de sa contribution à la fabrication d'objets utilisés dans le vestimentaire, l'agriculture, le culinaire, entre autres, il fournissait l'essentiel du matériel militaire. C'est dire toute son importance dans les sociétés africaines. Les guerres en Afrique, la puissance des entités politiques et les résistances des leaders africains à la colonisation ne sauraient se comprendre sans l'artisanat (Bah 1985). L'on pourrait comprendre l'intérêt des Français dans le sens de contrôler ce secteur dangereux en l'orientant dans une production moins dangereuse.

Les actions françaises contribuèrent à l'augmentation du volume de la production artisanale à Maroua. Les produits artisanaux connurent dès lors un succès auprès des Européens et conquièrent progressivement d'importants

marchés, notamment hors des frontières du Cameroun (Europe, Afrique de l'Ouest, AEF). L'élargissement du marché a d'ailleurs entraîné l'émergence d'une classe de commerçants européens qui achetaient les produits artisanaux de Maroua, puis les acheminaient vers l'Europe à travers le Tchad. A titre d'exemple, Olivier Iyébi-Mandjek parle de Mathey qui montait des caravanes pour acheminer ces produits vers cette destination. Tout cela démontre l'importance qu'a prise cet art qui s'orienta vers la satisfaction des besoins européens. Les objets fabriqués perdirent dès lors leur caractère traditionnel et cela ressort sous forme de désolation dans un rapport qui mentionne que « si les produits flattent le goût européen, ils n'ont plus qu'un lointain rapport avec l'art indigène. Ce qui est regrettable » (Rapports annuels, Maroua, 1940-1951 cités par Dégatier et Iyébi-Mandjek 1992:17).

Tel qu'on le constate, le visage de l'artisanat de Maroua a été modifié selon les vœux des Français qui lui ont imposé leur vision. Cet art est entré dès lors dans une phase de domination qui ne concerne pas seulement la production d'objets. Après l'organisation et l'appui technique, suivra la mise en place des infrastructures de commercialisation d'objets artisanaux à Maroua.

Autorités coloniales françaises et mise en place des structures de commercialisation d'objets artisanaux à Maroua

Entre 1947 et 1955, les Français s'investissent dans la création des structures de vente d'objets artisanaux. La création de celles-ci comprend deux phases. La première est marquée par l'ouverture d'une section artisanale par la Société Indigène de Prévoyance (SIP) tandis que la deuxième phase est celle de la création du Centre artisanal.

La SIP et la section artisanale de Maroua

En 1947, la SIP ouvre une section artisanale à Maroua à l'emplacement des bureaux de l'actuelle province alors siège de la Région (Iyébi-Mandjek 1993:6). Cette société était un organisme coopératif qui faisait le commerce pendant la période coloniale française. Les SIP furent instituées sur le territoire camerounais par arrêté du 07 juin 1937, promulgué au territoire le 07 juillet de la même année (Guernier cité par Garga 2000:73).

La SIP de Maroua faisait le commerce de plusieurs articles dont l'essence, la vente des grains auxquels s'ajoutèrent les objets artisanaux. Elle encourageait les artisans dans la production des objets qu'elle achetait pour exposer dans sa section. Les rapports annuels de 1940-1951 évoquent ses activités en ces termes : « La SIP achète aux artisans et aux brodeurs pour vendre à la clientèle européenne ou africaine de la région et de tout le territoire (...) ou exporter en métropole » (Rapports annuels 1940-1951).

Il ressort de ce qui précède que les activités de la SIP étaient importantes et dépassaient le cadre de Maroua pour s'étendre au-delà même du territoire du Cameroun. Ce qui veut dire que ses débouchés étaient importants. L'artisanat de Maroua était ainsi sorti de son cadre local pour se faire connaître hors des frontières camerounaises. La demande d'objets artisanaux de Maroua s'accrut et c'est ainsi que la boutique de la SIP ne tarda pas à prospérer comme l'illustre le bilan de ses ventes en 1949 qui ressort ainsi qu'il suit : « Elle a ouvert un magasin de vente très prospère qui est maintenant connu dans tout le territoire. Le montant total de ses ventes s'est élevé au cours de l'année 1949 à 700 021 francs » (ANY, APA 11618, Rapport 1949).

L'artisanat devint dès lors une activité importante à Maroua qui acquit une certaine renommée par le biais de l'exportation de ses produits. L'administration coloniale ne cessa dès lors de multiplier des projets dans ce domaine. Ce fut le cas de l'idée de la création d'une école artisanale à Maroua avec pour objectif de « former des artisans capables de faire revivre les arts indigènes régionaux ». Dans la même perspective fut organisé le tout premier recensement des artisans de Maroua en 1948 (Rapport annuel 1949, Subdivision de Maroua, ANY, APA 11747).

De par ses produits artisanaux, la cité de Maroua commença à être connue non pas seulement au niveau du territoire du Cameroun et des autres contrées d'Afrique, mais et surtout en Europe où la section artisanale de la SIP et certain commerçants européens exportaient la production artisanale locale. Cette renommée va se renforcer dans les années 1950 avec la création du Centre artisanal qui remplaça la section artisanale de la SIP.

L'avènement du Centre Artisanal, une structure de domination du commerce d'objets artisanaux de Maroua : 1955

Le Centre artisanal de Maroua est un établissement commercial spécialisé dans la vente d'objets artisanaux. Sa création se situe dans un contexte où l'artisanat de Maroua avait acquis ses lettres de noblesse avec l'exportation des ses produits au-delà du Cameroun. C'était en quelque sorte l'aboutissement de la politique d'appui à l'artisanat conçue par les autorités coloniales françaises à partir des années 1940. Du fait de la croissance de la ville et surtout de la production et de la demande d'objets artisanaux, il fallait mettre en place un cadre plus grand dépassant la petite section créée auparavant par la SIP. Le projet de construction ne tarda pas à se concrétiser.

Les autorités coloniales sollicitèrent dès 1950 l'appui des autorités traditionnelles de Maroua et ses environs pour la réussite de ce projet destiné à abriter l'ensemble de la production artistique de la Région. La contribution de ces dignitaires traditionnels se situa au niveau de la stimulation des artisans de leurs zones respectives à produire les objets d'art et à les envoyer au Centre artisanal.

Le Centre artisanal (Photo 1) fut ainsi construit en 1955 à l'entrée de l'actuel grand marché de Maroua, en face du quartier Founangué. Ce fut au départ une bâtisse d'une quarantaine de mètres de long et d'une dizaine de large divisée en deux parties inégales. L'une plus grande abritait le Centre artisanal proprement dit. C'est là que se vendaient les produits de l'artisanat. La deuxième pièce où étaient entreposés les objets d'art collectionnés un peu partout dans la région servait de Musée d'art local.⁴



Photo 1 : Une vue de profil du Centre Artisanal de Maroua, édifice de commercialisation des objets artisanaux créé et géré par les Français, véritable instrument de domination du secteur des arts locaux. ©Wassouni François, janvier 2004.

Une attention particulière mérite d'être accordée au Centre Artisanal. Il était en réalité une structure destinée à son tour à alimenter et à satisfaire la curiosité des Européens en service à Maroua, dans la région du Nord-Cameroun, du territoire camerounais et même d'autres colonies françaises d'Afrique. Ces derniers venaient séjourner à Maroua et se ravitaillaient en objets artisanaux au Centre artisanal devenu un véritable marché de souvenirs. Pascal Benoît ne disait-il pas déjà dans les années 1950 que « de par son artisanat, Maroua est une ville touristique par excellence » (Benoît 1957:121). Les anciens agents du Centre Artisanal interviewés disent qu'il était un lieu très fréquenté des occidentaux en service dans le Nord-Cameroun, surtout pendant les week-end. Certes, les artisans approvisionnaient ce centre commercial en produits artisanaux, mais sa gestion était l'affaire des Européens⁵ qui en tiraient réellement profit. Pendant toute la période coloniale d'ailleurs, ce furent les épouses des chefs de région qui gèrent ledit établissement. C'est ce qui fait

dire à Christian Seignobos et Olivier Iyébi-Mandjek que « pendant la période d'après guerre jusque vers 1960, « l'Artisanat » demeura le domaine d'intervention réservé des épouses des chefs de régions ». Au rang de celles-ci dernière figure Mme Lembezat qui en fut la toute première. (Seignobos et Iyébi-Mandjek 2000:162).

L'artisanat devint l'une des caractéristiques de la ville de Maroua. A juste titre, l'administrateur-Maire de cette cité, Prestat, écrivait dans un rapport de 1955 que « Maroua est une véritable ville avec une aristocratie fondée sur la naissance, une bourgeoisie commerçante et un artisanat très développé » (Prestat cité par Mohammadou 1989:143).

Au sortir de cette partie, il convient de remarquer que l'artisanat de Maroua a connu une influence notable de la colonisation française, laquelle constitue une réelle domination. L'organisation des filières, la modification des modèles des produits, les mécanismes de commercialisation ont été élaborés et imposés par les Français. Ils ont ainsi dominé ce secteur local et à travers l'Afrique, des exemples des mutations dans les arts sont légion. C'est ce qui fait dire à Wole Soyinka⁶ que « les arts africains ont connu des transformations au cours de la période coloniale » (Wole Soyinka 1985) tandis que certains ont parlé carrément de la fin des arts traditionnels à la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale, c'est-à-dire dès 1945 (Gillon 1984:347-348 ; Willet 1990:239). Ces influences entamées pendant la période coloniale ne s'arrêtèrent pas à si bon chemin, car l'ouverture de la région de Maroua au tourisme international, l'avènement des organisations non gouvernementales opérant dans le domaine de l'artisanat ne manquèrent pas d'y imprimer leur cachet.

L'artisanat sous l'influence du tourisme

A partir des années 1970, le Nord-Cameroun s'ouvre au grand tourisme (Paba Salé 1980:158-159) L'artisanat de la ville de Maroua va désormais figurer au rang des activités dont les produits intéressent les visiteurs pour la plupart occidentaux. Ce qui ne manque pas de donner une fois de plus un autre visage à cet art.

Toute la production artisanale est orientée vers la satisfaction de la demande des touristes. Les artisans secteur du cuir, du textile, de la vannerie, pour ne citer que ceux-là orientent leur savoir-faire non pas au service de la population locale, mais à l'alimentation du marché des souvenirs dont les touristes sont les principaux maîtres, bailleurs. La Coopérative de Tissage Artisanal (COOPTISART) créée en 1961 exportait l'essentiel de sa production hors du Cameroun (Mainet et Paba Salé 1977). Ce sont les produits comme les poufs, les tapis en cuir, les nappes de table, les habits brodés, les portefeuilles, porte-documents, les chaussures en cuir souvent dénommées *Pierre Cardin*, *Raoul*, *Talon Moustique*, sacs appelés *Sacs cubain*, *Sacs banane*,

Sacs Mouchi, qui sont confectionnés et achetés par les touristes⁷. Des créations locales aux appellations qui traduisent une acculturation, une rupture avec la tradition et plutôt un mariage avec la modernité occidentale. Dorénavant, les artisans produisent rarement les objets qui servent les populations locales tels que les harnachements des chevaux, les gaines des couteaux, sabres, entre autres.

Le tourisme est venu renforcer l'orientation extérieure de l'artisanat, lequel produit en fonction de la demande des touristes dont le goût influence fortement le savoir-faire des artisans. N'est-ce pas une autre forme de domination ? Cette situation qui n'est pas le seul fait de la ville de Maroua a résolu Adandé à qualifier l'art africain en général d' « un art pour les autres ».⁸

Deux organisations internationales (ONG) travaillent dans la promotion de l'artisanat à Maroua. Ce sont la Cellule d'Appui à la Petite Cellule Artisanale (CAPEA) créée en 1999 et Actions pour la Solidarité Internationale (ASI, une ONG française qui est installée à Maroua depuis 1995) qui est en partenariat avec un groupement d'initiatives communes, Appui au développement de l'Artisanat (ADA) a donné naissance en 2000 au projet Appui aux Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (APME-ASI-ADA) (Wassouni 2002). Ces deux structures travaillent avec des groupements d'artisans qu'elles forment en leur apprenant de nouvelles techniques de tannage et de fabrication d'objets artisanaux. Dans le domaine du cuir par exemple, ces ONG prônent par exemple l'abandon des intrants de tannage comme les fientes d'oiseaux, les teintures obtenus à base des végétaux au profit des produits chimiques. De même, il est conseillé aux artisans d'abandonner l'outillage traditionnel pour instruments plus sophistiqués comme les pinces, les pelles, les brouettes dans le tannage (Rossini 2007). L'objectif étant de les amener à fabriquer des produits dont les modèles sont dictés par la clientèle expatriée vers laquelle l'essentiel de la production est exportée en direction des pays comme la France, l'Allemagne, le Canada, pour ne citer que ceux-là. Ici, l'artisan produit selon les exigences de ces ONG qui s'occupent de la commercialisation des produits dont elles se font des bénéficiaires. Et le Projet de réduction de la Pauvreté et actions en faveur des femmes dans la province de l'Extrême-Nord (PREPAFEN) a construit un nouvel édifice de commercialisation d'objets artisanaux, le Complexe artisanal de Maroua. C'est un joyau architectural (Photo 2) qui abrite la production des artisans, mais ils n'y sont pas représentés.⁹ L'artisan de Maroua et son savoir-faire sont ainsi au service de ces soi-disant structures de promotion de l'artisanat, d'où une autre forme de domination réelle.

D'autres faits qui influencent l'artisanat de Maroua ces dernières années et qu'il convient de relever, ce sont les missions de « compagnonnage artisanal », fruit de la coopération entre la Chambre de Commerce, d'Industrie,



Photo 2 : Une vue de face du Complexe Artisanal de Maroua qui expose et vend les objets artisanaux. © PREPAFEN, 2007.

des Mines et de l'Artisanat du Cameroun (CCIMA) et le l'Assemblée Permanentes des Chambres de Métiers-Gilde Européenne du RAID dans le cadre d'un programme dénommé Coopération et Soutien aux Artisans et Micro-entreprises du Sud. Ces missions consistent à faire venir des experts européens dans des domaines spécifiques de l'artisanat dans le but de former les artisans camerounais aux techniques modernes. Maroua a bénéficié de trois missions ayant porté essentiellement sur le secteur du cuir. En 2005, c'est Pierre Luinaud qui séjourna à Maroua de novembre à décembre où il a formé des artisans spécialistes de la maroquinerie et de la cordonnerie (Rossini 2005). En 2006, Françoise Laporte, une autre spécialiste française travailla avec les artisans du 18 novembre au 16 décembre 2006 (Rossini 2007). En 2007, Frédéric Deschamps, spécialiste français de la tannerie qui séjourna à Maroua du 02 au 29 septembre 2007 (Rossini 2008). Ces initiatives constituent une fois de plus à n'en point douter une domination du secteur de l'artisanat qui est davantage orienté vers une perspective de changement radical des techniques de production. En clair, il est question de sortir l'artisanat de Maroua de son caractère traditionnel pour se moderniser.

Il ressort de ce qui précède que de la période coloniale à l'avènement des ONG en passant par le développement du tourisme, l'artisanat de Maroua a été fortement influencé si ce n'est dominé. Des initiatives nombreuses lui ont fait perdre son originalité et son but d'antan. Les mots de Joseph-Marie Essomba selon lesquels « le milieu traditionnel s'est transformé. L'art traditionnel africain est passé dans une phase de transformation brutale, perdant ainsi la notion de cosmogonie qui était son véritable fondement » (Essomba 1976:47) traduisent avec pertinence ce contexte. Cependant, n'y a-t-il pas lieu de relever des formes de résistance des artisans de Maroua face à tous ces contextes qui traduisent la domination de leur secteur d'activité ? Autrement

dit, les artisans de Maroua n'ont-ils pas remis en cause d'une manière ou d'une autre les initiatives prises par des acteurs qui sont en réalité étrangers à leur secteur d'activité ?

Essai d'analyse diachronique de la résistance dans le domaine de l'artisanat de Maroua et ses conséquences

Face aux influences diverses dans le secteur de l'artisanat de la période coloniale jusqu'à nos jours, les artisans ne sont pas restés indifférents. Ils développèrent plusieurs formes de résistance qui peuvent s'analyser sur le plan technique, organisationnel et commercial.

Sur le plan technique

La politique coloniale d'appui à l'artisanat mise sur pied par les Français ne fut pas perçue d'un bon œil par les artisans de Maroua attachés à leur savoir-faire ancestral. Beaucoup se seraient radicalement opposés à l'exécution des directives françaises qui voulaient changer les techniques et les modèles des produits. C'est cette opposition qui expliquerait l'implication de l'autorité traditionnelle qu'est le *Lamido* et ses collaborateurs dans l'application de cette politique. C'est lui qui se chargeait de dissuader les artisans, comme mentionné ultérieurement, dissuasion sous forme de contrainte. Bien des faits témoignent d'ailleurs de cette résistance des artisans de Maroua.

Il a été mentionné plus haut que dans la perspective de la modernisation de l'artisanat, les autorités françaises envoyèrent des artisans de Maroua se former au Maroc et en France afin qu'ils viennent vulgariser les nouvelles techniques à leurs pairs. Mais ce fut un échec dans la mesure où ces derniers ne réussirent pas à vulgariser ces acquis de l'extérieur aux artisans qui opposèrent une résistance. L'on pourrait émettre l'hypothèse selon laquelle les privilèges accordés aux artisans dont l'exemption des corvées de voirie obligatoires pendant la période coloniale (Seignobos et Iyébi-Mandjek 2000:33), serait une stratégie élaborée pour résoudre leur opposition à la politique française vis-à-vis de leur activité. Il s'agirait de faire comprendre à ces derniers qu'ils étaient importants afin qu'ils puissent mettre en pratique le projet de changement du visage de l'artisanat de Maroua.

De la période coloniale à l'ère de la mondialisation actuelle en passant par la période du développement du tourisme, l'artisanat de Maroua a certes changé de physionomie, mais pas complètement. Tandis que les artisans ont été poussés à fabriquer des modèles de produits nouveaux pour les clients européens, d'autres refusèrent en continuant à produire plutôt des objets artisanaux du passé tels que les gaines des couteaux et sabres, les chaussures traditionnelles dénommées *Ngouroudjé*,¹⁰ les tapis de prière, les modèles de boubous à la traditionnelle, lesquels n'intéressaient guère les touristes.

Aujourd'hui encore, il n'est pas rare de trouver des artisans qui sont restés fidèles à cette tradition et leur art est tourné vers la satisfaction des besoins de la population locale plutôt que des touristes.¹¹ Une si belle illustration du refus de l'assimilation de l'art local même si elle ne profite pas beaucoup à ses partisans dans un contexte où les objets vendus aux touristes génèrent plus d'argent.

Les initiatives des ONG qui s'inscrivent dans la perspective de modernisation de l'artisanat, mieux la révolution du savoir-faire des artisans avec l'usage des matériels de travail et la fabrication d'objets à caractère moderne qui satisfont la demande des touristes rencontrent une vive résistance. C'est ainsi que la plupart des ateliers de tannage, de maroquinerie et de cordonnerie, de tissage de Maroua n'ont pas connu beaucoup de changements. Et les responsables de ces structures ne cessent de décrier l'attitude des artisans qu'ils taxent d'analphabètes.¹²

Sur le plan organisationnel et commercial

Sur le plan organisationnel, les autorités françaises ont certes imprimé leur marque à l'artisanat de Maroua, mais c'est surtout à partir des années 1980 que les autorités gouvernementales ont tenté dans le cadre du mouvement coopératif de pousser les artisans à se regrouper dans des coopératives, associations ou groupements d'initiative commune. Les ONG quant à elles se sont investies depuis leur création dans la même perspective en créant des groupements d'initiative commune (GIC). Mais la plupart des artisans refusent d'adhérer à ces initiatives. L'association des artisans vendeurs du Centre Artisanal de Maroua (AAVCAM) créée en 1980 et qui a cessé de fonctionner quelques années plus tard, la coopérative artisanale de Maroua (COOPARMAR) qui a vu le jour en 1985 a de la peine à survivre tout comme l'association des jeunes artisans producteur de Maroua initiée en 2000. Le GIC dénommé association pour le développement artisanal (ADA) attire très peu d'artisans. La plupart des artisans de Maroua refusent d'adhérer à ces associations et GIC qu'ils taxent de boîtes à exploitation créée de toutes pièces par les ONG pour se sucrer sur leurs dos. Ils préfèrent travailler dans l'individualisme (Wassouni 2002).

Sur le plan commercial, les artisans de Maroua devraient, selon le vœu des autorités françaises pendant la période coloniale, acheminer leurs produits auprès des établissements de vente qu'ils ont créés. Mais ce ne fut toujours pas le cas de tous les artisans. Les ONG qui disposent des vitrines de vente de produits n'intéressent pas beaucoup d'artisans qui refusent d'y acheminer leurs produits.

Tout ce qui vient d'être mentionné témoigne d'une résistance des artisans de Maroua face à ces initiatives extérieures. Il ne s'agit pas d'une résistance

armée face aux autorités coloniales françaises comme ce fut le cas avec les Samory Touré, Rabah, entre autres, mais d'une autre forme qui consiste à refuser d'adhérer aux multiples influences qui tendent à changer la physionomie de leur secteur d'activité. Une autre manière de refuser l'acculturation, la domination. Elikia M'Bokolo caractérise ce genre de résistance africaine de « résistance passive » qui se traduit par le refus de se soumettre au système des Blancs, une façon de les affronter autrement que sur les champs de bataille. Des attitudes comme le refus de payer l'impôt, de produire les cultures obligatoires, de servir comme porteur, de fournir des renseignements erronés (M'Bokolo 1992), s'inscrivent dans le même registre que le refus des artisans de Maroua d'adhérer à la politique coloniale d'appui à l'artisanat. A travers l'Afrique, cette forme de résistance a existé et mérite d'être étudiée. L'étude de Ndèye Sokhna Guèye, par exemple, édifie sur la résistance des femmes potières de la moyenne vallée du fleuve Sénégal face aux influences multiples entre les XVIIe et XXe siècles, matérialisée par la pérennité des techniques traditionnelles dans leur art (Guèye 2000). La résistance des artisans de Maroua n'est pas sans conséquences.

Au-delà des critiques qui peuvent être faites à la résistance des artisans de Maroua, il convient de relever qu'elle a permis et permet encore de sauvegarder le caractère ancien de l'artisanat qui constitue un patrimoine culturel de grande importance. Sans cette résistance, les modèles d'objets anciens tels que les chaussures dénommées *Ngouroudjé*, les techniques anciennes n'existeraient plus et des savoir-faire qui constituent un important pan de l'histoire de l'Afrique aurait été jeté aux oubliettes. Or, « l'art et l'artisanat africains représentent une dimension irremplaçable du génie universel... qui doivent être pris au sérieux » (Mveng 1980:151).¹³ En occident par exemple, l'artisanat semble ne plus avoir de sens à cause de l'industrialisation qui a porté un coup dur aux savoirs anciens. Cette résistance des artisans qui permet de pérenniser les savoirs anciens ne manque pas de pertinence si l'on s'inscrit dans la logique de la définition de l'artisanat donnée par l'UNESCO :

On entend par produits artisanaux les produits fabriqués par des artisans, soit entièrement à la main, soit à l'aide d'outils à la main ou même les moyens mécaniques, pourvu que la contribution manuelle directe de l'artisan demeure la composante la plus importante du produit fini. Ces produits sont fabriqués sans restriction en termes de quantité et en utilisant des matières premières prélevées sur des ressources durables. La nature spéciale des produits artisanaux se fonde sur leurs caractères distinctifs, lesquels peuvent être utilitaires, esthétiques, artistiques, créatifs, culturels, décoratifs, fonctionnels, traditionnels, symboliques et importants d'un point de vue religieux ou social ([http : //portal.unesco.org/culture/fr/ev.php](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/fr/ev.php)).

De nos jours d'ailleurs, il y a comme un regain d'intérêt pour les objets anciens et ceux qui ont une certaine authenticité au Nord-Cameroun. Les cache-sexe, les instruments de guerre, les habits et autres modèles d'objets artisanaux du passé sont de plus en plus sollicités par des étrangers et il y a comme une résurrection de ces productions dans les ateliers d'artisans dont fait partie Maroua. Ce commerce dénommé celui des « antiquités » par Christian Seignobos serait, selon lui, en plein essor dans cette partie du Cameroun et bien évidemment dans la région de Maroua (Seignobos 2006:32-34).

Conclusion

Au terme de cette réflexion, il convient de retenir que la domination et la résistance dans l'histoire africaine ne sauraient se comprendre, si l'on se limitait seulement aux mouvements violents organisés par les grands leaders face à la présence des Européens. Ces questions d'histoire méritent d'être aussi lues dans le domaine culturel dans lequel s'insèrent les arts traditionnels dont l'artisanat qui a été étudié dans ce travail. L'histoire de la dynamique culturelle africaine est riche en faits qui témoignent des formes de domination et de résistance dans ce secteur d'activité. Dans la ville de Maroua, l'artisanat, activité qui occupe une place importante dans l'économie, a été développé au XIXe siècle par des communautés kanouri et haoussa. Par la suite, ce secteur est entré dans une phase de mutations dues aux facteurs tels que la colonisation française, le tourisme et l'avènement des ONG qui travaillent dans la promotion de ce secteur local. De nombreuses initiatives prises non pas par les artisans, mais par des acteurs extérieurs constituent une forme de domination, d'imposition qui a modifié les techniques de production, l'organisation des filières artisanales et les mécanismes de commercialisation. Face à ces influences, les artisans ont riposté à leur manière, en s'abstenant d'exécuter à la lettre ces initiatives extérieures. Cette attitude témoigne d'une résistance de ces techniciens, laquelle a permis la sauvegarde de ce savoir-faire traditionnel qui fait partie du patrimoine culturel camerounais et africain en général. Au-delà de l'édification sur l'histoire de l'artisanat de cette partie du Cameroun, cette recherche constitue une piste qui mérite d'être explorée par les historiens africains qui ont pris l'habitude de lire l'histoire de la domination et de la résistance sous l'angle politique en faisant très souvent fi du secteur des arts. Il importe de diversifier les regards en s'intéressant à d'autres secteurs de la vie afin de voir les influences nombreuses qu'ils ont subi, lesquelles influences intéressent l'histoire. Pareille entreprise enrichira l'historiographie africaine en général.

Notes

1. Les Guiziga sont un groupe ethnique du Nord-Cameroun vivant dans les départements du Diamaré et du Mayo-Kani. La cité de Maroua était entre leurs mains au XVIII^e siècle avec la célèbre Marva d'où Maroua, métropole provinciale de la région de l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun tire d'ailleurs son nom.
2. Après le *Jihad* conduit par les Peuls au XIX^e siècle au Nord-Cameroun, des entités politiques nouvelles dénommées *Lamidats* virent le jour et à leurs têtes trônaient des *Lamido*. Jusqu'ici, ces autorités traditionnelles existent dans cette partie du Cameroun. En dessous de ceux-ci se trouvaient les *Lawans* dont le titre a été attribué aux chefs des filières artisanales de Maroua.
3. Boukar Godjé, agent d'entretien du Centre Artisanal retraité, entretien du 28 janvier 2004 à Maroua.
4. Boukar Godjé, agent d'entretien du Centre Artisanal retraité, entretien du 28 janvier 2004 à Maroua.
5. Dans *l'Histoire générale de l'Afrique en ligne*, l'auteur a rédigé un chapitre intitulé : « Les arts en Afrique à l'époque de la domination coloniale » qui abonde de données pertinentes sur les mutations dans le domaine de l'art.
6. Les recherches que nous menons depuis quelques années sur le secteur de l'artisanat nous ont permis d'observer ces types d'objets tant dans les ateliers des artisans que les lieux de commercialisation desdits objets dans la ville de Maroua.
7. On peut lire cette expression « art-pour-les autres » dans le résumé de son article : Adandé, 2001-2002, « L'art africain et l'imaginaire des autres entre le XVI^e et le début du XX^e siècles. Essai d'analyse diachronique des prémisses d'un processus de « globalisation » », *Africa Zamani*, n°s 9&10, p. 60.
8. Ce sont ces mêmes ONG dites de promotion de l'artisanat de Maroua, à l'instar de la CAPEA par exemple qui s'occupent de la gestion de ce complexe artisanal dont les initiateurs avaient martelé auparavant qu'il devrait être géré par les artisans eux-mêmes.
9. Il s'agit des modèles de chaussures fabriqués utilisés par le passé et qui étaient essentiellement fait de peaux. Les semelles étaient faites en peaux de bœufs.
10. Les enquêtes de terrain que nous menons régulièrement permettent de constater la typologie des objets confectionnés par les artisans de Maroua.
11. C'est ce qui ressort des entretiens que nous avons eus avec des responsables d'ONG tels Ofakem Ofakem, P., secrétaire général de la CAPEA, entretien du 22 mai 2002 à Maroua ; Mahamat Chérif, responsable du Centre Artisanal de Maroua, entretien du 18 mai 2002 à Maroua.
12. Pour Mveng (1980:152), les objets artisanaux qui sont des objets d'art confectionnés de tous temps portent les marques des civilisations, de l'histoire des peuples. Ils sont riches des symboles et porteurs de messages qu'il importe de déchiffrer ou d'interpréter. Aussi, écrit-il : « l'histoire négro-africaine est écrite en œuvres d'art. Il déchiffrement de cette histoire ouvre une page d'épigraphie singulière et inédite. Il n'est plus possible de dire que l'histoire négro-africaine manque de documents écrits, ce qui est vrai c'est que souvent nous sommes analphabètes devant son écriture ».

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Domination and Resistance through the Prism of Postage Stamps

Agbenyega Adedze*

Abstract

Every country issues postage stamps. Stamps were originally construed as pre-payment for the service of transporting letters and packages. However, images on stamps have become mediums for the transmission of propagandist messages about the country of issue to its citizens and the rest of the world. Commemorative postage stamps venerate special events, occasions or personalities and are, therefore, subject to political and social pressure from special interest groups. It is not, therefore, surprising that during the colonial era, Europeans memorialized conquerors and explorers on postage stamps and, likewise after independence, African countries have commemorated some of their leaders (freedom fighters, martyrs, politicians, chiefs, etc.) who resisted colonial rule. Using postage stamps of British and French colonies and six independent countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal) in West Africa, I will try to explain why certain individuals are honored and why others are not. I argue that since the issuing of postage stamps remains the monopoly of the central government, these commemorative stamps about domination and resistance are subjective and are found to be interpreted through contemporary political prism. Recent democratic dispensation in Africa has also influenced commemorative stamps to a large extent. Under these conditions, public history debates are now possible where people could claim their own history, and I predict that as more constituents realize the value of postage stamps, marginalized groups will demand stamps for their heroes and heroines.

Résumé

Chaque pays émet des timbres postaux. A l'origine, les timbres étaient perçus comme un moyen de paiement fait en avance pour s'acquitter du service de transport des lettres et des colis. Cependant, les images figurant sur les timbres sont devenues des moyens de transmission de messages propagandistes destinés aussi bien aux citoyens du pays d'où le timbre est émis qu'au reste du monde. Les timbres postaux commémoratifs célèbrent des événements particuliers, des occasions ou des personnalités et font par conséquent l'objet de pressions politiques et sociales émanant des groupes d'intérêt spéciaux. Il n'est donc pas

*Illinois State University. Email: adedze@lstu.edu

surprenant que durant la période coloniale, les Européens aient immortalisé les conquérants et explorateurs sur les timbres postaux. Et de la même manière après les indépendances, les pays africains ont commémoré quelques uns de leurs leaders (combattants de la paix, martyrs, politiciens, chefs, etc.) qui ont résisté à l'autorité coloniale. En me servant des timbres postaux des colonies britanniques et françaises et de six pays indépendants (Bénin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinée, Nigéria et Sénégal) en Afrique de l'Ouest, j'essaierai d'expliquer pourquoi certaines personnes sont honorées et pourquoi d'autres ne le sont pas. A mon avis, étant donné que l'émission de timbres postaux demeure le monopole du gouvernement central, ces timbres commémoratifs au sujet de la domination et de la résistance sont par nature subjectifs et se trouvent être interprétés à travers le prisme politique contemporain. L'avancée démocratique récemment observée en Afrique a également influencé les timbres commémoratifs dans une large mesure. Sous ces conditions, des débats publics d'histoire demeurent maintenant possibles grâce auxquels des gens pourraient revendiquer leurs propres histoires et je prédis que plus les constituants se rendront compte de la valeur des timbres postaux, plus les groupes marginalisés exigeront des timbres pour leurs héros et héroïnes.

Introduction

By 1900, much of Africa had come under European imperial control, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia. The European onslaught on Africa was swift and brutal. African peoples lost control of their lives and territories to the European conquerors who became heroes in their countries for their role in the "pacification" of the "savage and wild" peoples of Africa and adding new territories to the empire. To Africans, these individuals were the savages and brutal dictators who never played by basic rules of human decency. As many African rulers found out, even those that made friends with the white man or remain loyal to them (whether their position was diplomatic or as collaborators) were not spared in the scramble for Africa. They all fell victim to the greed of colonialism. As Africa came under colonial rule, the architects of territorial acquisition became world heroes to be studied in history and geography texts.

Colonial Heroes

The French established the first postal service in West Africa on Gorée Island (Senegal) in 1856. The initial postage stamps depicted French history and allegory of the empire but later ones after the 1900s depicted Africa as imagined by French artists and also honored conquerors and administrators. Among those commemorated were General Louis Léon Faidherbe, Dr. Noël Eugène Balay, Louis Gustave Binger, René Caillié, Joseph-Simon Galliéni, Emil Gentil, Maréchal Lyautey, and Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza. For the purpose of this article, I will limit my research to those actors involved in the

colonial theatre of West Africa, the so-called French "heroes" who plundered, murdered, cheated, abused and imposed their power on African peoples. General Louis Léon Faidherbe (1818-1889, fig. 1) was the conqueror and colonial administrator of Senegal from 1854-61 and 1863-65. He is known as the founder of Dakar and one of the main architects of French colonial empire in Africa. Obviously, in his ambition to conquer much of Africa for France, he came into conflict with several African rulers, some of whom became famous for their resistance – for example, El Hadj Omar and Lat Dior the king of Cayor.¹ General Faidherbe had great admiration for Lat Dior and his army, even in defeat. He was reputed to have said: *Ceux-là, on les tue, on ne les déshonore pas* – you may kill them but you cannot dishonor them. Interestingly, this phrase has become the motto of the Senegalese army: *on nous tue, mais on ne nous déshonore pas* – they may kill us but they cannot dishonor us.² Another noteworthy soldier of conquest was Maréchal Joseph-Simon Galliéni (1849-1916, fig. 2) who was responsible for the defeats of kings such as Samori Toure. Next in the pantheon of French colonial heroes is Louis-Gustave Binger (1856-1936), who is credited with acquiring Côte d'Ivoire for France. In addition to his own postage stamp (fig. 3), the town of Bingerville in the Côte d'Ivoire is named after him.³ The fourth person of relevance to West Africa to be honored was René Caillié (1799-1838, fig. 4), an explorer who was said to have been the first European to have visited Timbuktu.

Unlike the French, the British did not honor conquerors and explorers of the empire as these individuals were deemed to be laboring for the crown for whom a spot is usually reserved at the left or right upper corner of postage stamps. Subsequently, several stamps in the British colonies of West Africa featured Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, King George V, King George VI, and Queen Elizabeth with economic, political and cultural themes (fig. 5).⁴

Postcolonial Heroes

The leaders of the independence movement in Africa were not oblivious to the postal tradition of honoring and commemorating national figures, as well as economic and cultural ideals. If imperialists portrayed conquerors and explorers, then independent leaders reversed this order by representing their heroes and martyrs. This is totally in line with the use of popular image to legitimize power. If one doubts the importance of these small images and their impact, one has only to examine the immediate post-independence postage stamps of Africa. They all carried the bust of the first presidents or prime ministers. This was very important because, for many of these new rulers, a new era had arrived and a new monarchy, emulating the British one, had replaced the old ones in the liberated states.

Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah set the ball rolling for West Africa. His independence stamp (fig. 6) was designed by Kofi Antubam. He claimed that he was contacted as early as 1955 to design stamps for Ghana's independence but his ideas were not accepted until independence. The stamps (Ghana, Scott 1-4) depicted a map of Africa, the bust of Kwame Nkrumah, an African map with Ghana inset, and an eagle (referred to in Scott catalogue as a palm-nut vulture). Kofi Antubam claimed that the symbol of the eagle was from the inspirational words of his African teacher, Dr. Kweggir Aggrey of Achimota College, who inspired a generation of African leaders with the words; "African Eagle, lift thy wings and fly". His explanation of the symbolism of the eagle is best captured in this anti-colonial diatribe from his book, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture*:

An irreparable blow is being struck on the very core of the unfounded established conceptions of the African having no right to own and exist in his own country as a free being, worthy of the title lord of his own land, where and when necessary. Yes; the eagle that was mistaken for a chicken, stolen into captivity, banged into a morbid pit of the fate of darkness, has woken up. Yes, accepting its lot in pious humility, it decided to fall asleep. And, it slept and slept. But as it happens, even in the pitch-darkness of the process of a deep sleep, natural growth does go on. So, the eagle's chicken-like beak, claws, and feathers grew bigger and stronger in its sleep. And, so woken up by the pinch of the shackles of captivity, and finding itself still in a pit of darkness even in the broad daylight of the twentieth century, it summoned courage to itself. And, snatching a torch of freedom from its master, it took its wings and flew, perhaps never to be caught again. And now the slogan everywhere in Africa is either, "freedom," "independent" or "self-government now."⁵

The last sentence reflects the pan-Africanist ideas of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, ideals Kofi Antubam propagated in his works. Postage stamps are probably his least known works. His diverse creations for Ghana include: the state chair (Ghana, Scott 300 A 74); interior carvings of the Parliament house; Ghana Mace (Ghana, Scott 288 A 74), murals, cover designs of several books, etc. When Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966, his opponents who came to power chose to honor J. B. Danquah (their hero) in an international Human Rights Year issue alongside Martin Luther King in 1969 (fig. 7). In yet another political twist in Ghana's political history, a decade later, the new government of People's National Party (PNP) with links to Nkrumah's Conventional Peoples Party (CPP) in a conciliatory move chose to honor all national heroes in a 1980 series – John Mensah Sabah, J. B. Danquah, J. E. K. Aggrey, Kwame Nkrumah, and G. E. Grant (fig. 8)

The similarities between Guinea's independence stamp (fig. 9) and that of Ghana are pretty obvious. I do not know the artist who designed the stamp but knowing the relationship between Ghana and Guinea, and both countries having the same philatelic agency, I was not surprised to find that the designs were similar. In Nigeria, the nationalist hero to be honored was Nnamdi Azikiwe (fig. 10) to be followed on the first anniversary of independence by Nnamdi Azikiwe, Herbert Macaulay, and King Jaja of Opobo (fig. 11). However, by the 40th anniversary, with a new democratically elected government in power, Nnamdi Azikiwe would share the philatelic honor with Obafemi Awolowo (fig. 12) and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Benin's (formerly Dahomey) anti-European heroes honored with postage stamps were Hubert Maga and Toussaint L'Ouverture (fig. 13). King Benhanzin was also honored but I will discuss him in the section on nationalist chiefs. Naturally, for Côte d'Ivoire, Houphouët Boigny held the sole position on the nationalist stamps until his death (fig. 14). Senegal had Blaise Diagne and Lamine Gueye (fig. 15).

"Nationalist" Chiefs in Guinea, Benin and Senegal

Aside from portraying themselves as legitimate princes, the post-independent leaders endeavored to accommodate some traditional chiefs and their constituencies by appealing to the nationalist achievements of their ancestors. The common denominator among the chiefs who were represented on stamps was their confrontation with colonialism, which usually ended in their defeat, imprisonment, exile and subsequent return, dead or alive. Thus, the historical memories of these "nationalists" were linked by colonial violence - violence that was inflicted on these royal individuals by European colonists. The particular experiences of such people were revisited to become part of the national historical narrative, which need to be remembered and commemorated. The representations of such chiefs were transformed therefore, into public art. W. J. T. Mitchell in his book *Picture Theory* has argued that "public art has served as a kind of monumentalizing of violence and never more powerfully than when it represents the conqueror as a man of peace..."⁶ I will go further to argue that public art can be ambivalent in the case of the representation of "nationalist" chiefs on postage stamps in West Africa. The designated nationalists were both victims and aggressors: victims of the European colonizing forces and at the same time aggressors of other African peoples. Nonetheless, the master narratives and their accompanying memorialization and commemoration completely obliterate the other memories of acrimonious and oppressive relationships between the

acclaimed nationalist chiefs and the "other" peoples within the multiethnic nations, thereby restricting the prerequisite to obtain national status to colonial violence.⁷

I will illustrate my point by first looking at the set of post-independence stamps on "African Heroes and Martyrs" from Guinea of the late president Ahmed Sekou Toure.⁸ It is essential however, to indulge a little in the history of Sekou Toure himself. His first civil service job was at the post office as a clerk, so he naturally saw the value of images on stamps. Second, the stamps were issued in 1962 when the people of Guinea were facing real economic difficulties and Sekou Toure's leadership within the ruling party was threatened. It was opportune at this moment to instill nationalist sentiments among Guineans by recalling his ancestral links to his great grandfather Almany Samori Toure⁹ (fig. 16).¹⁰ Almany Samori Toure was a leader of the Malinke kingdom that fought a protracted battle against French occupation of his kingdom until his final capture at Bondoukou in 1898 and deportation to Gabon where he died two years later.

Sekou Toure was said to have exploited his ancestry to Samori during the struggle for independence from the French. The propaganda at the time was that the famous oracle at Kankan had predicted that a descendant of Samori Toure would revenge his defeat in the hands of the French. Samori Toure, thus, had earned his martyrdom, but the other narrative that is repressed by the official account is the historical account of Samori Toure prior to his battles with the French. Likewise, the official record is silent on the organization of Samori's kingdom, his trade and politics as well as his wars of conquest in the territory under his control that covered parts of the region of what is today Mali, Guinea and Ivory Coast. The question, therefore, is how would these "other" peoples perceive the martyrdom of Samori Toure within the new nation of Guinea?

Perhaps the history of the next hero – Babemba (King of Kenegedougou-Sikasso, Mali, 1855-1898; fig. 17)¹¹ – could have provided a counter narrative to that of Samori Toure if his official story had not been narrated in an anti-imperialist rhetoric. Babemba was said to have resisted Samori's siege against his kingdom for sixteen months. Likewise, he resisted the French until he committed suicide in 1898, thus preferring death to capture in the hands of the French.¹²

The other Guinean chiefs earned their place on the stamps through the ill treatment they received from the French. Alfa Yaya (1850-1912; fig. 18)¹³ was the chief of the Labe in the Fouta-Djalon but had a rather dubious history. He was a fervent ally of the French until his fortunes were reversed when a

new governor was appointed to Guinea due to French internal politics. The new governor, Antoine Marie Auguste Frézouls, in an attempt to enhance his own position and discredit the achievements of his predecessor, invited Alfa Yaya to Conakry in 1905. The latter, thinking that it was an official visit, made the several weeks journey with his retinue and guards only to be arrested on his arrival and deported to Dahomey. His son, Modi-Aguibu, suffered the same fate, but both of them were allowed to return to Guinea five years later. Alpha Yaya had hoped that he would be restored to power but he was later accused of holding "secret and mysterious" meetings and was arrested again and jailed at Port-Etienne where he died the following year.¹⁴ So, a French ally who had become a victim of his former master's treachery was now elevated to hero status.

The next victim of French imperial duplicity in Guinea was Tierno Aliou (1820 - 1912; fig. 19).¹⁵ He was a famous eighty-year-old marabout (religious leader) with a large following who was arrested in an alleged Islamic plot against the French in the village of Goumba. Before his arrest, he was said to be a pliant French supporter who even diffused tension among his followers who anticipated the return of the Mahdi to end taxation by the French. Despite attempts by his followers to prevent his arrest and his escape to Sierra Leone, the British extradited him to Guinea where he died in prison in 1912.¹⁶

Aside from Babemba, the other foreign royalty who made Sekou Toure's postage stamp of African pantheon of heroes was Behanzin (1844 - 1906; fig. 20),¹⁷ king of Dahomey. He fought against the French invasion of his kingdom but lost the war and was deported to the Caribbean island of Martinique in 1894. Behanzin has the unique honor of being the only African chief appearing on postage stamps of two countries, but under curious circumstances. He appeared first in Guinea in 1962 and did not appear in Benin (formerly Dahomey) until 1980. Even then, he was preceded two years earlier on Benin postage stamps by Samori Toure and El Hadj Omar¹⁸ (fig. 21 & 22),¹⁹ who were recognized as two African heroes who had resisted colonialism. In order to understand the initial neglect of Behanzin, one has to follow the first two decades of Benin's post-independence history.

Political division and instability in post-independence Dahomey explain the late recognition of Behanzin in his own country. There was intense ethnic rivalry between the three major political entities based on ethnic affiliations led by the triumvirate of Hubert Maga (North), Justin Ahomadegbe (Center) and Sourou Migan Apithy (Southeast). Each of these individuals commanded a considerable following in their respective regions of origin, thereby making

it impossible for any one of them to obtain a majority vote. This problem was further complicated by the incessant interference of the army in the political process by arbitrarily making and unmaking presidents.

After several military coups, interspaced with civilian governments, the final coup in 1972, led by Col. Mathieu Kerekou (a northerner) brought in a semblance of political stability. Kerekou changed the name of the country to Benin, a more neutral name than Dahomey, which was associated with the Fon people and their Kingdom of Dahomey. Furthermore, Kerekou led Benin to join the rank of self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist states. These moves and several attempts by his opponents to overthrow his government rallied the people behind him. The most serious attempt to overthrow Kerekou occurred in 1977 when a planeload of mercenaries landed at the airport but were routed by loyal forces. Kerekou blamed France as well as neocolonial African countries for the failed coup.²⁰ Naturally, imperialism and neocolonialism became easy targets for all Benin's social and economic problems. Kerekou and his government, therefore, needed to arouse the nationalist spirit of the Beninese people by evoking the names of acknowledged African nationalists like Samori Toure and El Hadj Omar and surreptitiously omitting Behazin due to ethnic suspicions of Fon complicity in the abortive coup.

Unfortunately, the left wing rhetoric failed to materialize into economic prosperity for the Beninese people and by the late 1970s and early 1980s, the people's patience was wearing out and Kerekou had to take some drastic actions to steer the country back from its downward slide. He took certain national and international steps to restore the credibility of his country by re-establishing normal relations with France and by releasing political prisoners. To placate the Fon people and further his nationalistic agenda, he honored Behazin in 1979 with a giant statue at Abomey and followed this in 1980 with his representation on a postage stamp (fig. 23).²¹ It is fascinating to note that, unlike Samori Toure and El Hadj Omar who earned the appellation "Heroes of African Resistance Against Colonialism", Behazin's statue and postage stamp had the text "I will never agree to sign any treaty susceptible to compromise the independence of the land of my ancestors".²² The lukewarm appreciation of Behazin was further illustrated by the price of the stamp, which was 1 000cfa, a very steep price for the average Beninese. The subsequent cheaper ones (fig. 24)²³ issued in 1986 simply read *Buste du roi Behazin*, with no commentary about or reference to his confrontation with the French. These omissions were not by simple neglect; they were intentional. Kerekou's government was clearly aware of the ethnic sensibilities and the mixed history of the kingdom of Dahomey among the people of Benin. The oral traditions and written histories about the Dahomeyan onslaught on her neighbors was well entrenched in the memories of the citizens of the new

Benin Kerekou was trying to reconstruct. Nonetheless, Behanzin would not have earned a spot on the postage stamps of Benin had he not fought the French and been sent into exile.²⁴

Finally, Lat Dior (1842-1886) king of Cayor in modern Senegal, also acquired the title of national hero and earned a commemorative postage stamp in 1981 (fig. 25).²⁵ He was opposed to the French construction of railroad between Dakar and St. Louis and fought them several times but was killed in the final battle at Dekhele in 1886. As mentioned earlier, the motto of the Senegalese army was taken from the comments Faidherbe made in his battles against Lat Dior. Aside from the postage stamps, there is a bronze statue (3.5m) at the entrance of the Centre International du Commerce Extérieur du Senegal (CICES) in Dakar by Issa Diop in honor of Lat Dior's stallion Malaw.²⁶

Women

Commemoration on postage stamps remains a domain for the expression of masculinity. The field of heroines in the colonial and post-colonial postage stamps is very sparse. With the British exception of royal triumphalism of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth, one saw occasional scenes of women performing charitable social services on French colonial stamps and other times the allegory of the French republic as a woman spreading "civilization" to the "natives". On the other hand, the appearance of identifiable African women on postage stamps probably started in 1975 with the celebration of the International Year of Women. I presume there was a request from the organizers to African postal services to issue stamps to commemorate the event. That year, Ghana recognized women of Home Economics, Alberta Ollenu and Patience Adow; Nigeria, Queen Amina; Senegal, anonymous mother and child, and another woman pounding grains in a mortar; Benin, anonymous telephone operator; and Côte d'Ivoire, Marie Kore (1910-1953, fig. 26). The latter was among a group of women who participated in the women's demonstration in Grand Bassam against the French.²⁷ In 2003, Ghana issued a commemorative series on famous women amongst whom was featured Yaa Asantewa (1850-1921, fig. 27), the queen mother of Ejisu. She was known to have rallied the Asante to fight the British when the latter demanded the golden stool which was the symbol of Asante unity. She was later captured by the British and sent into exile in the Seychelles Island with the rest of the Asante monarchy. In 2000, the government built a museum in her honor, in the centenary celebration of the Anglo-Asante wars. Yaa Asantewa and the museum became the symbol of "anticolonial freedom fighter, a woman proudly upholding the traditions of her people in a fight to death, a marvelous symbol of shared struggle against political and cultural oppression".²⁸

Although Burkina Faso is not covered in this research, I cannot leave out the unique portrait of Princess Guimbi Ouattara of Bobo Dioulasso (Fig. 28). Her story as a heroine who saved Bobo Dioulasso is quite complex. It is linked to two male colonial and anti-colonial heroes – Samori Toure and Louis-Gustave Binger. Samori, in his flight from the French, fought other kingdoms on his escape route. However, it was said that when he arrived at Bobo Dioulasso, Princess Guimbi gave him gifts and prepared a sumptuous meal for him and he spared the kingdom. With the French still in hot pursuit, Samori reneged on his promise not to attack the kingdom and Princess Guimbi signed a pact with Luis-Gustave Binger for protection against Samori. The irony of this story is that in the end, the kingdom of Kong lost its sovereignty to the French and Samori would probably not have attacked the kingdom had the French not pursued him but Princess Guimbi is now celebrated as national heroine for having saved her kingdom. Her mausoleum is a major tourist attraction and a shrine at Bobo Dioulasso.²⁹

I have no doubts that there are qualified women in the singular struggle against colonialism in these West African countries and, if historians and concerned citizens take the trouble to do some research and make recommendations to the stamp advisory committees in these countries, it is more than likely that we will see more women honored with postage stamps.

To conclude, I have tried in my analysis of the iconography of postage stamps of West Africa, from the colonial period to the present, to demonstrate how dissonant and complex individuals were honored through the historical discourse of dominance and resistance in Africa. To Africans, the colonial "heroes" committed atrocities and violated basic human rights and therefore should not be commemorated or celebrated in history texts. On the one hand, in the postcolonial mindset and by appropriating colonial systems, several post independent governments have honored and continue to revere certain ancestors as "heroes" just for resisting Europeans, without reviewing the historical context of such actions or examining these personalities in their entirety. The honor role, as it turned out, was for current social and political profit. Commemoration is also an exercise in phallocracy, thus a large number of women who participated in the struggle for independence are not honored with postage stamps. Finally, for financial benefits in a globalized world, African postal services now pander to worldwide stamp dealers and collectors by commemorating heroes and heroines of western popular culture (movie stars, athletes, cartoons, etc.). Thus, the soft power of western popular culture heroes and heroines constitute the new frame of reference for Africa's role models.

Figures



Fig. 1 – General Louis Léon Faïdherbe



Fig. 2 – Maréchal Joseph-Simon Galliéni



Fig. 3 – Louis-Gustave Binger



Fig. 4 – René Caillié



Fig. 5 – British Crown



Fig. 6 – Dr. Kwame Nkrumah



Fig. 7 – J. B. Danquah and Martin Luther King



Fig. 8 – Past great sons of Ghana



Fig. 9 – Sekou Toure



Fig. 10 – Nnamdi Azikiwe



Fig. 11 – Herbert Macaulay and King Jaja of Opobo



Fig. 12 – Chief Awolowo



Fig. 13 – Hubert Maga and Toussaint L'Ouverture



Fig. 14 – Felix Houphouët Boigny



Fig. 15 – Lamine Gueye



Fig. 16 – Almany Samory Toure

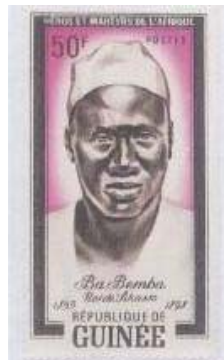


Fig. 17 – BaBemba – King of Sikasso



Fig. 18 – Alpha Yaya

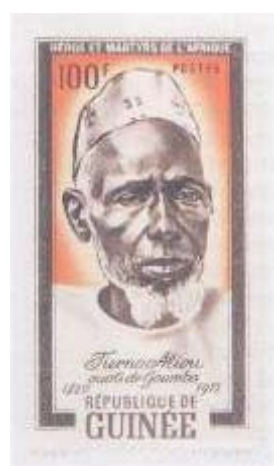


Fig. 19 – Tierno Aliou



Fig. 20 – Benhanzin



Fig. 21 – Samory Toure



Fig. 22 – El Hadj Omar



Fig. 23 – Behanzin statue at Abomey



Fig. 24 – Behanzin



(a)



(b)

Fig. 25 – Lat Dior (a) and Lat Dior on his stallion Malaw (b)



Fig. 26 – Marie Kore

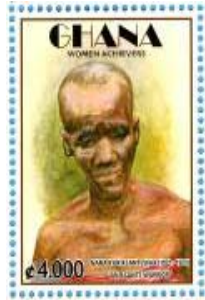


Fig. 27 – Yaa Asantewa

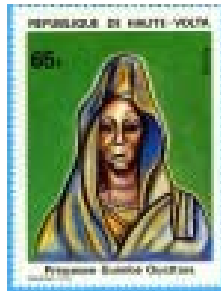


Fig. 28 – Princess Guimbi Ouattara

Notes

1. J. Suret-Canale, *Essays on African History, From Slave Trade to Neocolonialism*, African World Press, New Jersey, 1988.
2. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lat_Dior, accessed on June 24, 2008.
3. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis-Gustave_Binger, accessed on June 24, 2008.
4. Since postage stamps were first used in Britain in 1841, the British established the convention of showing the monarch on the postage stamp instead of the name of the country.
5. Kofi Antubam, *Ghana's Heritage of Culture* (Koehler & Amelang, Leipzig, 1963), 219.
6. Mitchell, W. J. T., *Picture Theory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, p.378.
7. See A. Adedze, «Commemorating the Chief: The Politics of Postage Stamps in West Africa» *African Arts*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Summer 2004, pp. 68-73.
8. Scott Catalogue Guinea # 258-262 A 29.
9. Kake, I. B., *Sekou Toure: le Héros et le Tyran*, Groupe Jeune Afrique, Paris, 1987. Many opponents of Sekou Toure allege that his claims to Samori Toure are dubious, but Kake's research has proved that he was indeed a great-grand child of Samori Toure.

10. Scott Catalogue Guinea 261 A 29
11. Scott Catalogue Guinea # 260 A 29
12. Imperato, P. J., *Historical Dictionary of Mali*, Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986.
13. Scott Catalogue Guinea # 258 A 29
14. See J. Suret-Canale, *Essays on African History, From Slave Trade to Neocolonialism*, African World Press, New Jersey, 1988, for a detailed debate on the European opinions of Samori Toure, however, one is cognizant of the fact that European colonizers persistently demonized any African leader that resisted their conquest.
15. Scott Catalogue Guinea # 262 A 29
16. J. Suret-Canale, *ibid.*
17. Scott Catalogue Guinea # 259 A 29
18. El Hadj Omar was head of the Tukolor Empire in the mid 19th century waging wars against his perceived infidels and encouraging his followers to fight the French along the coast. Although he was unable to defeat the French he signed a treaty with them, which left him to attack other non-Muslim states.
19. Scott Catalogue Benin # 394-5 A 106
20. Ronen, D., *Ethnicity, Ideology, and the Military in the People's Republic of Benin*, African Studies Center, Boston University, 1984.
21. Scott Catalogue Benin # 448A A 126a
22. The giant statue was made in North Korea. It was inaugurated on April 9, 1979 in Abomey amid anti-imperialist speech given by Kerekou. The text at the foot of the statue mainly for local pride reads «Je n'accepterai jamais de signer aucun traité susceptible d'aliéner l'indépendance de la terre de mes aïeux.»
23. Scott Catalogue Benin # 621 A 194 and 636 A 198.
24. Adedze, *ibid.*
25. Scott Catalogue Senegal #549 A 185 and 550 A 185.
26. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lat_Dior, accessed on June 26, 2008.
27. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001386/138609f.pdf>, accessed June 26, 2008. Other notable women who participated in the demonstration but were not honored are Anne-Marie Raggi, and Marie Gnéba.
28. Day, L. R., «What's Tourism Got to Do With It?: The Yaa Asantewa Legacy and Development in Asanteman» *Africa Today*, 51, No. 1, Fall 2004.
29. http://www.globeconteurs.info/article.php?id_article=30, accessed on June 26, 2008.





De la résistance congolaise à la pénétration monétaire européenne (1878-1930) : une véritable guerre des monnaies

Guillaume Nkongolo Funkwa*

Résumé

Dans un pays dépendant, le contrôle du pouvoir étranger dominant sur le pouvoir local peut passer, ou passe souvent, par le contrôle de sa monnaie. L'article rend compte de cette réalité historique en s'appuyant sur le cas de la République Démocratique du Congo. En effet, il démontre comment, entre 1878 et 1930, le Roi des Belges Léopold II, ses envoyés et puis, le gouvernement colonial belge qui l'a succédé, ont livré bataille à coût d'ordonnances, d'arrêtés, des instructions et des menaces pour prendre contrôle du commerce congolais par l'entremise du contrôle de la circulation monétaire. Création d'une nouvelle unité monétaire (*Franc* du temps léopoldien), adoption à titre transitoire de l'une des unités de compte traditionnelle dites monnaies-marchandises (*Mitako*), démonétisation de cette dernière et remplacement par le numéraire (*Franc congolais* du temps colonial), interdiction de l'unité de compte traditionnelle qualifié de troc, etc ; tous les coups étaient permis. L'article démontre d'autre part, comment les Congolais ont entrepris de résister ou de contourner ces mesures, faisant persister la circulation de leurs monnaies traditionnelles. C'est la victoire finale dans cette guerre des monnaies qui a permis à la Belgique d'asseoir finalement son emprise totale sur l'économie congolaise.

Abstract

In a colonized country, control over local powers by a dominant foreign power often goes through the control of currency. This article evokes such a reality based on the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It demonstrates how the Belgian King Leopold II between, his envoys and the following colonial government have waged war between 1878 and 1930 through prescriptions, decrees, instructions and threats meant for the control of the Congolese trade via the control of money circulation. All stratagems were allowed: the establishment of a new currency (*Franc* of the times of Leopold), the transitory adoption of one of the traditional currency called *Mitako* (merchandise-money), its de-monetization and replacement with the numeral (colonial *Congolese*

* Directeur adjoint du Centre de recherche CERDAC. E-mail : probioken@yahoo.fr;
nkongolo.funkwa@unilu.ac.cd, cerdac2003@yahoo.fr

Franc), the prohibition of the traditional barter currency, etc. The article also shows how the Congolese led their resistance, or circumvented those measures through maintaining the circulation of their traditional currencies. It was the final victory of the Belgians in this war of currencies that allowed for their final and complete grip over the Congolese economy.

Introduction

La monnaie joue le rôle de première importance dans l'échange de biens et services dans une économie régionale. Elle sert aussi au paiement (impôts, tribus, dettes), à la réserve (épargne) et au financement de l'expansion économique (crédits, capitaux, actions).

Dans un pays dépendant, le contrôle du pouvoir étranger dominant sur le pouvoir local peut passer, ou passe souvent, par le contrôle de sa monnaie. Le Congo dit Démocratique n'échappa pas, à l'origine, à cette logique. Dans les lignes qui suivent, nous allons analyser comment le Roi des Belges Léopold II et ses envoyés ont livré bataille pour prendre contrôle du commerce congolais par l'entremise du contrôle de la circulation monétaire. Ensuite, nous allons voir comment les Congolais ont tenté de résister ou de contourner ces mesures.

Circulation et espaces monétaires précoloniaux (des origines au XIXe siècle)

Monnaies ou monnaies-marchandises précoloniales

Quand peut-on situer l'émergence des premières monnaies dans la société traditionnelle congolaise ? Les recherches archéologiques n'ont pas encore répondu à cette question. Mais ce que l'on sait à travers Pigafetta, c'est qu'à l'époque du voyage d'Edouard Lopez dans l'Angola de 1598, les populations Kongo achetaient toutes les choses nécessaires à la vie et même l'or et l'argent, au moyen des petits coquillages (Simar 1909:61-62). A la même époque, il est vraisemblable que les coquillages, les tissus et les objets en métal étaient déjà utilisés comme monnaie-marchandises chez toutes les populations congolaises.

Dans la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle, à l'arrivée des Belges au Congo, l'usage de plusieurs objets comme monnaies était général. Ces monnaies, plusieurs experts préfèrent les appelés « monnaies-marchandises » car, en même temps qu'elles étaient des valeurs d'échange, étalons de mesure, elles pouvaient aussi être des valeurs d'usage (c'est-à-dire des objets utilisables et consommables).

En dépit de leur diversité, nous pouvons les classer en quatre grandes catégories : les monnaies en *coquillage*, celles en *tissu*, celles en objet de *métal* et celle en objet *divers*, chaque contrée du peuple congolais donnant à

son type de monnaie un nom. Nous allons dans le tableau I, en faire un inventaire (qui n'est pas exhaustif).

Espaces et circulation monétaires précoloniales.

Du tableau ci-dessus que nous avons construit, certains espaces de circulation monétaire traditionnelle se dégagent. Nous les classifions en trois : la circulation à portée ethnique, la circulation à portée extra ou interethnique (entre 3 à plus de 10 ethnies) que nous appellerons espace monétaire et enfin la circulation à portée générale (concernant les monnaies ayant cours sur tout le territoire congolais).

Si la circulation des monnaies à portée ethnique peut être observée facilement dans le tableau, les deux autres exigent un minimum d'éclaircissement.

A l'aide de ce tableau, quatre espaces monétaires traditionnelles se dégagent à nos yeux :

- L'espace monétaire N'zumbu mbudi : il va de l'Atlantique au Kwango (Bandundu) en passant par la région de Bateke. Le N'zumbu est une monnaie de coquillage tirée de l'île de Loanda.
- L'espace monétaire Trumbash : il va de la région du Haut-fleuve (du Lac Léopold II) et de l'Ubangi à la frontière Nord et Nord-est de la R.D. Congo en passant par le nord du Sankuru, les régions de l'Uélé, du Bobangi et de l'Arwimi. Le trumbash est une sorte de couteau en forme de serpe. Il est en fer. On peut l'appeler aussi un boomerang.
- L'espace monétaire Tshiombo : il englobe tout le Katanga et les deux Kasai actuels. Le Tshiombo, c'est la croisette de cuivre venant des mines du Katanga.
- L'espace monétaire Mbadi ou Madila : il s'étend de l'Atlantique jusque chez les Basongye (du Kasai Oriental, du Katanga et du Grand Kivu actuels) en passant par les régions de Matadi, de Kinshasa, de l'Inkisi, de Wangata, des Basongo et de Batetela. Le Mbadi ailleurs Madiba est une pièce de tissus en raphia souvent enroulés en botte.

Enfin certaines monnaies traditionnelles ont eu un rayon de circulation beaucoup plus large. Elles furent reconnues et acceptées en tant que telles sur tout le territoire actuel du Congo, et même aussi en dehors de ce dernier.

Ces étalons de valeurs à cours général sont le Ngula (à l'Ouest) appelé Nkula (à l'Est du pays) ; le Mitako à l'Ouest et au Nord, appelé Nkanu au Sud, au Sud-est et à l'Est et ; enfin l'esclave utilisé partout comme monnaie de compte et non d'échange.

Le Ngula ou Nkula est une poudre d'un rouge vif qu'on obtient en raclant le bois de « tukula ». Comprimés en cônes, en boules, en tablettes rectangulaires, elle sert à des nombreuses transactions tant sur place qu'avec

Tableau 1 : Monnaies-marchandises précoloniales

Peuples et Régions	Catégories de monnaies et leurs noms					
	Coquillages	Tissus	Objets en métal		Objets divers	
			Fer	Cuivre		
1. Bayaka au Kwango	N° zimbou budi		Nisengo (houe)		Esclave, bétail	
2. Ba-kongo	N° zimbou budi	Mateya	Nisengo (houe)		Esclave	
3. Bambala	Djimi					
4. Warega, Warundi, Bakusu, Wazimba et autres peuples de l'Est	Musanga				Esclave, bétail utego (bracelet très fin)	
5. Peuple de Lukeni	Sona		Kundja			
6. Peuple du Lomami	Nom non donné		Liganda, shoka (hache) Pic, Ngunga (cloche) Gambebete (grande pièce de fer)		Esclave, bétail	
7. Peuple entre Matadi et Léopoldville		Mbari ou mbadi (tissus en raphia enroulés en botte), vuata nlele ou mbundi				
8. Peuple de Tshiloango		Bongo				
9. Peuple de Mayombe		Maftubu, wusu nlabu, babu kimbundi				
10. Bateke		Nta, ntulu, lumi, iko olun				
11. Basongo et Fatebela		Mbari ou Mbadi			Esclave, sel (mbanda)	
12. Bateke et Banfumu	Mópa ou besace				Esclave	

Tableau 1 : Monnaies-marchandises précoloniales (suite)

13. Mongo	Efongolo				Esclave, Pirogue (bwattu)
14. Peuple de Inkisi		Mbari		Lukano (nkano au pluriel = bracelets en cuivre) Tshiombo (croisette), Nsambo (anneaux en fil de cuivre)	
15. Basongye		Madiba		Likonga (lourd bracelet de cuivre), Minkata (bracelet de cuivre enroulés en spires)	Esclave, bétail, sel
16. Wanga ou Wangara		Madiba			
17. Peuple de la Basse Lukenie		Sans nom			Sel
18. Wānande du Haut-Ituri		Nabondo (bracelets de raphia)	Ituyana, Isuka (houe)		Esclave, bétail Mabondo (bracelets en fibres de palmier)
19. Zapo-zapo (à Kananga actuel)			Kasuyu (hache)		
20. Lokele (Province Orientale)			Liganda		
21. Peuple du Stanley Falls			Shoka (hache)		
22. Mobenge			Likonga		Esclave
23. Bankutu			Ivenga, kundja (hache), Ngunga (cloche)	Kunga (gros fil de cuivre en U)	

Tableau 1 : Monnaies-marchandises précoloniales (suite)

24. Bohindu					Kundja (hache)	Boloko (gros fil de cuivre en U)			
25. Mangbetu de l'Uélé au Bomokandi					Trumbash-Pinga mvura, Mapuka (fer de lance)				
26. Peuple de l'Ubangi					Trumbash-bo				Pirogue
27. Peuple du Sankuru					Trumbash-oshele				
28. Peuple du Lac Léopold III					Trumbash				
29. Bapotoie de l'Arwimi					Makonga (lance) bambili (lingot de fer)				Esclave
30. Alulu du Lac Albert					Kwer (houe)				
31. Peuple du Haut- Fleuve					Libako				Pirogue
32. Bangala					Ngunga (cloche)				Esclave, bétail
33. Bampende					Barres de fer				
34. Lesa (de la Lukenie)					Mokanga (Bâtonnet de fer)				Esclave, sel
35. Azande, Mangbetu et Mamvu					Dundu (masse de fer)				Esclave
36. Peuple de l'Uélé en général					Pertes en fer				
37. Peuple de la Moyenne Lukénie					Colliers en boules de fer				
38. Peuples du Katanga et du Kasai								Lukanu ou nkanu (bracelets en cuivre) Tshiombo (croisette), Nsambu (anneau en fil de cuivre), Lukasu (houe de cuivre), Miambo, Mitaga	Esclave, sel

Tableau 1 : Monnaies-marchandises précoloniales (suite)

39. Peuple du Moyen-Fleuve, Ba-Yanzi de Bolobo, Peuple du Haut-Fleuve, du Bobangi				Miako (fils de cuivre rouge en cylindre, collier ou bracelet)	
40. Bobangi ou Ba-Yanzi				Muzanga (pièce de cuivre), Ngétèle (bague de cuivre)	
41. Dekese			Bolo (bracelet en fer)		
42. Peuple de la Haute Busira					Chapelets de baies séchées ou de noyaux de fruit
43. Peuple de la région de Tumba Mani					Bundu di nkwesio (cubes de caoutchouc)
44. Tous les peuples du territoire congolais				Miako ou nkanu (bracelets en cuivre)	Esclave, ngula ou nkula (poudre d'un rouge vif).

les régions voisines. Les ateliers de fabrication monétaire ngula ou nkula étaient disséminés dans tout le territoire national actuel.

Le mitako ou nkanu (lutako, lukanu au singulier) sont des bracelets ou anneaux en cuivre de la grosseur du petit doigt. Les ateliers de frappes de ces monnaies – soit libres (privées), soit dirigés (par des chefs politiques), – étaient regroupés dans deux régions qui alimentaient le reste du territoire national : la région du Moyen Fleuve et la région du Katanga (De Hemptine 1926:1-26).

Pour la première, les Bateke du Pool se le procuraient aux mines de Boko-Songo (Congo Brazza) par l'intermédiaire des Mayanga, et les revendaient aux Ba-Yanzi de Bolobo qui les écoulaient sur le Haut-Fleuve. De là, elles se répandaient vers le Bobangi, l'Uélé, vers le Kwango et dans tout le Bandundu. Par contre, les ateliers de frappe monétaire du Katanga alimentaient les peuples de deux Kasai actuels et du Kivu. Quant à l'esclave, il était utilisé partout, mais ne servait pas d'étalon de valeurs de biens et services.

Pénétration monétaire européenne au Congo à partir de 1878

Lorsque Stanley reçut mission d'établir des stations le long du fleuve entre l'Atlantique et le Pool (1878-1884), le but avoué à l'époque était le développement du commerce avec les autochtones. Mais comment acheter auprès des autochtones si l'on n'a pas des caisses des monnaies qu'ils acceptaient dans les échanges ? Il fallait soit les fabriquer, soit en importer de semblables. Cela était d'autant vrai qu'après chaque construction d'une station, la première chose était d'ouvrir une boutique (dite factorerie). Les factoreries consistaient alors en des magasins d'échange. On y trouvait étalés tant les articles de traite que des caisses d'instruments trouvés au Congo comme monnaies et qu'ils avaient désormais importés en grande quantité d'Europe. Après, les stations des grandes sociétés européennes en nombre considérable étendirent ce commerce (Mfiri :127). Nous nous proposons dans le tableau ici-bas (cf. tableau ii) de présenter ces différentes copies des monnaies traditionnelles congolaises que l'Europe introduisit.

Comme on peut le constater, c'était de la bonne guerre. Stanley, les agents de Léopold II ainsi que les autres Européens se livrèrent à l'introduction de la fausse monnaie traditionnelle.

Remarque : En dehors de ces copies de monnaies traditionnelles congolaises, les Européens les asiatiques avaient mis sur le territoire congolais, des monnaies circulant dans leurs pays. A l'est du Congo par exemple, circulaient, mais à faible quantité, la roupie indienne, le thaler autrichien et la piastre arabe importés par les esclavagistes swahili. Dans le Bas-Congo, comme monnaies importées, les Portugais avaient déjà introduit les Crusades, justs et espadimis de Jean II (au XV^e Siècle (monnaie en or) ; les testaos, indios et

Tableau 2 : Monnaies-marchandises d'origine extérieure (Période Léopoldienne)²

Peuples	Catégories	Types	Pays ou Régions d'origine	Quelques noms traditionnels
Tous les peuples autochtones de l'EC selon la date de l'installation européenne chez eux.	1. Coquillage	- Cônes (connu papilionacéus) - Cauris ou Cyprée (Cyproca moneta)	- Iles Moluques (Océan Indien) - Iles Maldines (O Côte orientale de l'Afrique (Zanzibar et Mozambique)	- Mabale (Bambala), pasi (Bangongo), Kamba-Barakata (chez les Mobenge), Tshilumba (chez les Bakuba), Mubile (chez les Baluba), Kilasa (chez les Baluba)
	2. Tissus	- Americani B16 - Indigo drills B55 - Guinée forte - Guinée Kaniki - Andriple - Pagnes rayures - Cotonnade chekcs et ginghans	Etats-Unis Europe Europe Europe Europe Europe Angleterre et Ecosse	- Luvituku, Amadis, Zaïre, Khanga
	3. Objets en métal	- Fer (couteaux, machettes, fers de houes). - Laiton (fils de 3 millimètres de diamètre mesurant 185 mètres qu'on va couper en barrettes pour fabriquer des colliers et des bracelets. Il est composé de 65% de cuivre et 35% de zinc).	Europe Europe	Mitako, nsambu
	4. Objets divers	- Perles (multicolores) - Sel (fin ou gros)	Venise (exporté au 16 ^{ème} de l'Océan Indien par les Arabes), Italie, Bohême, Bavière, France Europe	Nzimbu (Bas-Congo) Ngalata busolas, madunda dunga (région des cataractes), Kete ou makete (Wania Bungu 10 makete = 1 fundu 10 fundu = 1 lugole 10 lugole = 1 kinono 10 kinono = 1 kikumbi = 1000 makete ; mutunda ou mitunda dans les Kasai et Katanga

reales (monnaie en argent) et les reales preto (en cuivre) frappés jusqu'au milieu du XVIIIe siècle. A partir de 1702, circulèrent les « makuta » avec leur division $\frac{1}{2}$ et $\frac{1}{4}$ en cuivre et leurs multiples (2-4-5-8-10 et 12) en argent, frappées jusqu'en 1889.

Resistance congolaise à la pénétration monétaire européenne durant l'Etat Indépendant du Congo (1878-1908)

Nous allons dans cette section démontrer comment se livra une véritable lutte de circulation entre les monnaies de Congolais et les monnaies d'importation européenne. Les monnaies traditionnelles des Congolais continuaient leur circulation comme par le passé dans les zones et localités exposées précédemment. Par ailleurs, les instruments importés convertis en étalon de mesure (monnaies) s'y entremêlèrent. Ils circulèrent partout dans le territoire de l'EIC mais certains jouirent d'une faveur plus grande encore que dans certaines régions.

Dans la région des Cataractes, on appréciait beaucoup le collier de perles bleues hexagonales (*nzimbu*) et les mouchoirs de cotonette à fond rouge, avec impression noire ou blanche. Dans le Moyen-Congo, ce furent surtout les étoffes et le fil de laiton coupé en barrettes qui servirent pour les transactions. Le long du fleuve, en amont de Coquilathville, les longs couteaux et le fil de cuivre roulé en spirale (*minkata*) eurent de la vogue. Dans la province Orientale, ce fut la pièce de mouchoir ou le *doti* (double brasse) d'americani. Dans le bassin du Kasai, on acceptait volontiers les clous dorés, les croisettes en cuivre, les perles et les cauris. Dans la région du Sankuru, les paiements se faisaient généralement moitié en croisettes et moitié en tissus ou autres objets. Les Congolais de l'Uélé avaient une préférence pour les petites perles blanches et le fusil de traite, ceux de l'Ubangi et du Bomu pour les houes, les machettes en fer et perles. Dans le voisinage du lac Léopold II, les objets importés d'Europe les mieux accueillis étaient les cauris (*kesa*) et toutes les sortes de perles.

Mais dans l'Etat, le *mitako* importé (en laiton) connaît un succès formidable comme monnaie. Mahieu justifie ce succès comme dû à l'éclat de ce métal et sa ressemblance avec l'or (Mahieu 1926:673, 674 et 678). A ce sujet, le laiton importé, sans évincer le cuivre congolais, lui concurrença longtemps la circulation.

Vint enfin en 1887, la première injection pour circulation de la monnaie à effigie léopoldienne (monnaie de l'EIC).

Mais avant d'y arriver, Léopold II mesurant les difficultés qu'il aurait à introduire sa nouvelle monnaie, se résolut à ménager d'abord une période de transition. C'est ainsi qu'il ordonna par décret de 1886 que la monnaie (*mitako*) imposée en circulation par les autochtones soit acceptée par les agents de

l'EIC jusqu'en 1887. C'était, disait-il, une période de transition monétaire entre le régime coutumier et un régime moderne. La valeur du *mitako* fut fixée à 15 centimes par l'autorité.

Lorsqu'à l'issue de ces trois ans de transition, intervint la première injection de pièces de monnaie léopoldienne pour circulation dans l'E.I.C., les Congolais s'opposèrent et perpétuèrent l'usage du *mitako* ainsi que d'autres monnaies traditionnelles. Le compromis pour l'Etat léopoldien impuissant, fut de reculer par circulaire la date d'échéance de la période transitoire. Les chiffres suivants du pouvoir léopoldien, bien que critiquables, sont révélateurs de l'échec monétaire de l'EIC.

Sur le total de 49 300,70 francs de monnaies de cuivre mise en circulation, à la date du 31 décembre 1908, il y avait en caisse à Banane, Matadi, Luali et Stanley Pool 5 661,01 francs. Ce qui revient à dire que 43 639,69 francs étaient en circulation.

Sur la quantité de 235 000 francs de monnaie en nickel frappée durant l'EIC., 52 000 francs seulement ont été envoyés au Congo pour circulation jusqu'à la date du 31 décembre 1908. La raison c'est que ce premier envoi se heurta à une vive résistance des Congolais qui répugnaient le nickel, le trouvant moins valable que leur cuivre et laiton (*mitako*). Ainsi l'autre quantité de 182 800 francs de ces monnaies resta, jusqu'au 31 décembre 1908, bloquée dans le dépôt de l'Hôtel des monnaies et à la 6^e Division, 10 rue de Namur. Ces monnaies se répartissaient comme suit :

- 439 000 pièces de 20 centimesfrs 87 800
- 625 000 pièces de 10 centimesfrs 62 500
- 650 000 pièces de 5 centimes.....frs 32 500

Total..... Frs 182 800

La résistance à ces monnaies fut âpre. C'est ce qui explique, chose surprenante, que même après la période dite transitoire qui expira en 1887, l'Etat Indépendant du Congo continuait à régler officiellement le cours, la valeur, le fonctionnement et la circulation du *mitako*.

En effet, par une circulaire du 15 décembre 1893, soit 6 ans après l'expiration de la période transitoire, le Gouverneur Général décida : « En vue de faciliter les relations avec les indigènes et d'amener la substitution de nos monnaies à cette monnaie du laiton, il importe que dans chaque district la valeur du *mitako* soit arrêté à bref délai par rapport à celle des autres marchandises ». Il poursuit : « vous établirez combien la pièce de différentes espèces de tissus vaut en *mitako* auprès des "indigènes" et vous en déduirez

la valeur moyenne en monnaie congolaise qu'il faudra attribuer au *mitako* » (Conseil Colonial 1893:157).

Huit ans après 1893, soit treize ans après expiration de la période transitoire, l'Etat Indépendant du Congo réitérait encore la réglementation du *mitako*. Jusque là, le Congolais qui avait reçu de ses mains une monnaie léopoldienne l'avait tout simplement thésaurisée et, pour ses transactions avait recouru à son *mitako* ou autres. C'est dans ces conditions que le 28 novembre 1901, une circulaire du Vice-gouverneur général réglementait le cours, la valeur, le fonctionnement et la circulation du *mitako* en ces termes :

Le *mitako* doit conserver le caractère d'un article d'échange (monnaie). L'article 9 du règlement sur l'administration et la comptabilité en prescrivant que la valeur du *mitako* ne doit jamais être inférieure à 8 centimes à pris pour type de laitons n° 9A dont le paquet de 45 kg mesure 478 mètres.

Le calcul des frais divers fixés par l'article précité donne très sensiblement la valeur de 9,5 centimètres au *mitako* en comptant 1 707 unités de 28 centimètres par paquet.

Les laitons n° 10 A et 12 A de 28 centimes donnent respectivement les prix de 8 centimes et de 6 centimes par unités. Lorsque d'autres longueurs seront mises en usage, le prix de revient s'établira par une simple proportion. Ce sont ces prix réels qui doivent entrer en lignes de compte quand on échange des *mitako* contre de l'argent ou lorsqu'on les donne en paiement aux soldats ou aux travailleurs. Ces échanges ne peuvent être tolérés que vis-à-vis des serviteurs de couleurs. Seuls les échanges de *mitako* contre les étoffes ou d'autres articles que les natifs viennent se procurer dans nos magasins se font à des taux conventionnels où le marché est réglé par une question d'offre et de la demande. » (Conseil colonial 1901:41).

Conformément à ces instructions, chaque chef de station ou de service se faisait guider par les autochtones sur l'évaluation de ses étoffes en *mitako*, pour déduire la valeur moyenne de cet étalon et régler en conséquence le montant de ses paiements et de ses réquisitions annuelles auprès du gouvernement.

Cette réglementation valut jusqu'en 1908. C'est ainsi que le *mitako* persista jusqu'à l'annexion de l'EIC par la Belgique comme principal étalon de mesure de biens et services et principale monnaie d'échange. La monnaie léopoldienne se borna à circuler presque exclusivement entre Européens.

Pourquoi cet échec de la politique monétaire léopoldienne ? Les avis sont très partagés. « C'est parce que les Congolais sont primitifs et qu'ils ne comprennent pas les avantages d'avoir une monnaie unique », se sont bornés à justifier les anthropologues et certaines autorités de l'époque. L'insuccès

récolté par les monnaies léopoldiennes auprès des Congolais, expliqua le Conseil Colonial en 1909, « est dû au fait que, pour toutes les populations primitives, la valeur de la pièce de monnaie ne dépend pas de l'inscription qu'elle porte, mais bien de sa valeur intrinsèque résultant surtout de son poids et, si possible de son alliage » (Conseil Colonial 1908-1909:263).

Résistance congolaise à la pénétration monétaire européenne durant le Congo belge (1908-1930)

Des négations (ou changements) monétaires, il en a été question depuis 1880 dans la société congolaise. Mais à partir de 1908, il s'agissait de la négation de la négation pour reprendre le concept d'une des lois de la dialectique (Afanassiev s.d.:110-113). C'était le tour du numéraire colonial de nier la valeur et des monnaies léopoldiennes qui devaient disparaître totalement de la circulation et des résistantes monnaies traditionnelles. C'est en 1916, en effet, qu'une guerre fut ouvertement déclarée contre les monnaies traditionnelles congolaises. Le colonisateur belge les qualifiait de marchandises comme toutes les autres et que, quiconque les utilisait dans les échanges, pratiquait le troc. Toute leur valeur monétaire, c'est-à-dire leur valeur d'échange fut dénoncée et déclarée nulle. Par la même occasion, le troc dans le sens belge, ici, l'utilisation dans les échanges des monnaies congolaises désormais considérées comme ne conservant que leur valeur d'usage fut interdit sur tous les territoires de la colonie. Les Congolais ne se laisseront pas faire. En fait, dès l'annexion, une méthode fut conçue et des instructions données aux agents de l'Etat afin d'enrayer de la circulation les monnaies traditionnelles.

En pratique, il ne fallait admettre d'abord en paiement d'impôt que le franc léopoldien. Pour s'acquitter des contributions dues à l'Etat, les Congolais amenaient leurs monnaies traditionnelles. Au guichet, on les leur échangeait d'abord au franc léopoldien en raison de 60 à 80 *mitako* pour un franc (*Mouvement géographique* 1909:70). Et ces francs, ils le versaient de nouveau auprès du percepteur en guise de paiement de leur impôt. Ces monnaies traditionnelles et ces francs léopoldiens, une fois récoltés, devaient être expédiés à Boma, c'est-à-dire qu'on ne pouvait les remettre en circulation, même en échange de papier-monnaie ou de chèques que des commerçants ou des missionnaires pouvaient offrir » (*Mouvement géographique* 1909:70). A Boma, les étalons léopoldiens étaient remis en circulation tandis que les monnaies de types traditionnelles subissaient une thésaurisation ou une destruction systématique (démonétisation).

Cette méthode de démonétisation aboutit à un échec suite à la continuité de la fabrication de ces monnaies dans les ateliers de frappe autochtones. Cet échec était dû aussi au fait que déjà en 1910, la perception de l'impôt n'était plus admise que directement en numéraire.

Jusqu'en 1915, le gouvernement colonial constata que la majeure partie des opérations économiques entre Européens et Congolais continuait à se régler en des monnaies autochtones qui remplissaient les caisses des magasins (européens). C'est dans ce contexte que, par le décret du 26 août 1916, la haute autorité prit des mesures de répression contre l'utilisation de toute autre moyen de paiement en dehors du franc du Congo Belge (Franck s.d.:151)

Ces mesures stipulaient :

Tout commerçant, toute personne agissant pour le compte d'un commerçant ou d'une société commerciale qui, à titre d'actes de commerce, acquerra habituellement des indigènes des marchandises de toute autre manière que contre remise de monnaie et des billets ayant cours légal, sera punissable de huit jours à trois mois de servitude pénale et d'une amende de 500 à 10000 francs ou d'une de ces peines seulement.

Sera punissable des mêmes peines, tout chef de maison de commerce, toute personne participant au Congo à la direction de l'inspection et au contrôle des entreprises commerciales ; tout gérant d'un établissement ou d'un comptoir qui aura donné des instructions ou pris des mesures pour que l'infraction (troc) fut commise ou qui l'aura tolérée » (Franck s.d.:152)

Ce décret n'était pas appliqué immédiatement, et il ne le fut pas au même moment sur tous les districts congolais. En effet, en cette matière de troc, reconnaissait le Rapport aux Chambres de 1918, « le Gouvernement a continué à suivre une politique prudente » car il reconnaissait que la pratique du « troc » dans certains districts était due à la pénurie ou au manque du numéraire. C'est pourquoi on peut lire, « Le Gouvernement étendra le régime de l'interdiction aux seuls districts où la diffusion des espèces métalliques, secondée par des disponibilités en numéraire, est suffisante pour répondre à tous les besoins » (*Rapport aux Chambres législatives* 1918:94)

Le Gouvernement fut obligé de suspendre momentanément la prohibition du « troc » dans nombre de circonscriptions, certains commissaires de district ayant signalé que les encaisses publiques ne disposaient pas de réserves susceptibles de pourvoir aux demandes de numéraires et d'assurer une circulation monétaire adéquate aux nécessités (*Rapport aux Chambres législatives* 1918:94).

Dans ces conditions, le décret de répression contre le « troc » ne fut applicable que depuis la date du 1^{er} septembre 1917 dans les districts du Bas-Congo et du Moyen Congo, par l'ordonnance du 19 juillet 1917. Il fut applicable depuis la date du 1^{er} avril 1918 dans le district du Haut-Luapula par ordonnance du 26 novembre 1917 ; depuis la date du 12 août 1918, et depuis la date du 31 mars 1919 dans le district du Kasai, par ordonnance du 30 octobre 1918 (Franck s.d.:153 et aussi *Rapport aux Chambres législatives* 1918:95). De

ce qui précède, il ressort que jusqu'en 1919, voire après, l'usage des monnaies autochtones se poursuivait encore au Congo, comme par le passé.

En outre, plusieurs auteurs, nous apprennent qu'à l'époque, les Congolais étaient très allergiques aux monnaies de billon (nickel ou cuivre) de l'Etat colonial ainsi qu'au billet de la Banque du Congo Belge qu'ils jugeaient sans valeur.³ Cela est vrai car à l'époque, ces deux formes de monnaie sont considérées comme ayant une valeur trop conventionnelle. D'ailleurs elles échappent au contrôle de l'Union Latine qui ne les considérait pas.

C'est pourquoi, la condensation de circulaires des Gouverneurs généraux des 17 février 1911, 20 mars 1915, 15 novembre 1916 et 31 mai 1919 donnait des instructions suivantes que le ministre des colonies Louis Franck perpétua sous son mandat (1917-1924) :

L'attention de tous les Européens de la colonie particulièrement du personnel territorial est attirée sur la nécessité impérieuse d'aider, par tous les moyens dont ils disposent, à la propagation interne du numéraire et particulièrement de la monnaie de billon chez l'indigène. La diffusion de cette dernière doit atteindre le double but d'inculquer aux Congolais la valeur exacte de chaque chose et d'abaisser le prix des transactions de détails : il y a nécessité absolue de répandre non seulement le nickel, mais aussi les pièces de cuivre dont la mise en circulation fera disparaître les monnaies d'échange « indigène » (Franck sd.:153-156).

Dans le même but, le taux de l'impôt de capitation fut maintenu jusqu'en 1918 à un appoint de 15 centimes pour inciter les natifs à se procurer du billon.

Mais malgré toutes ces instructions et mesures, les Congolais perpétuaient l'usage de leurs monnaies traditionnelles dans les échanges et autres opérations économiques. Nous tiendrons pour témoin Albert Mahieu et Sylvain Danse.

Lorsque je me trouvais à Kanda-Kanda, en 1908 (Mahieu), j'utilisais pour mes achats au marché local du sel, des capsules qui étaient fort recherchés et de petites perles en verre bleu (*mitunda*). Or. M. Sylvain Danse qui a traversé la même localité en 1920, nous fait connaître dans son carnet de route que rien n'a pu détrôner la petite *mitunda* de verre bleu qui reste, quoi que l'on fasse, l'unité d'échange. Bien qu'il offrit de beaux *alibés* (dénomination du franc congolais) tout neuf aux Congolais, il ne pouvait les décider de se défaire de leurs *mitunda* (Mahieu 1923:694-695).

Ce qui est plus frappant, c'est que les Congolais allaient jusqu'à forcer l'interpénétration de leur système monétaire à celui du colonisateur. Ils avaient institué des taux de change entre leurs monnaies et le franc du Congo Belge. Nous tenons pour témoin le même Sylvain Danse, cité par Mahieu :

Chose curieuse, le franc d'Albert I, l'*alibé* était coté à 100 *mitunda*, tandis que le franc à l'effigie de Léopold II ne valait que 80 *mitunda*, pour la raison paraît-il que la monnaie d'un roi mort ne peut valoir celle d'un Bula-Matari (autorité) encore en vie. Plus bizarre encore et ce qui montre que les Congolais sont peu au courant des conditions de change en Europe, ils n'estimaient le franc français, le semeuse, qu'à 60 *mitunda* » (Mahieu 1923:694-695)

Dès lors, poursuivra Mahieu, on conçoit que c'est malgré lui que le Congolais accepte le nickel et l'argent monnayé qu'on l'oblige à recevoir. Ainsi, le cours de nos monnaies subit-il souvent, dans le cas où ces monnaies sont acceptées, d'étranges fluctuations dans les foires et marchés de natifs (Mahieu 1923:694-695)

Dans un exposé fait en 1926, M^{sr} De Hemptine (de la province apostolique du Katanga) témoignait de la persistance de la frappe et de la circulation monétaires traditionnelles sur les marchés centre et sud-est congolais dans ces termes :

Les principaux fondeurs (de monnaies en cuivre) de l'Ouest du Katanga étaient Nkembeshya, Kimbakene, Kitombolwe, Kamimbi et Mwilu (chez les Baluba) établis sur la rivière Ngomeulu. Ainsi que nous l'avons dit, les Congolais de l'Ouest (du Katanga) sont les seuls qui aient leur industrie en activité jusqu'à ce jour (1926) et continuent à fournir des croisettes (monnaies en cuivre appelé *tshiombo*), au marché du Lomami et du Kasai (De Hemptine 1926:31).

Le système monétaire autochtone, bien que marginalisé, résista aux mesures de répression coloniale jusqu'aux années 1930. En 1933, on pouvait lire dans le Rapport aux Chambres : « le troc », malgré le combat énergique que lui avait opposé longtemps les autorités administratives et judiciaires, se maintenait toujours au Congo Belge » (Rapport aux Chambres législatives 1933:86)

En visitant en 1948 le marché des Congolais à Léopoldville, Dartevelle trouva le *n'zimbu* échangé à une parité ruineuse de 0,50 f la pièce. « A l'intérieur du Congo, écrivait-il en 1953, les *n'zimbu* ont encore cours et ils sont employés en paiement dans certaines transactions coutumières, notamment dans le paiement de la dot. (Dartevelle 1953:121)

En bref, une véritable guerre monétaire fut déclarée par le pouvoir colonial contre les monnaies congolaises traditionnelles. Mais à la place de leur radiation totale, la résistance des autochtones assura, bien qu'avec une faible circulation, leur continuité. Ceci avait pour implication d'avoir en circulation au Congo-Belge, un surplus de masse monétaire difficile à contrôler et impossible à évaluer.

Conclusion

Nous venons d'analyser comment le pouvoir politique colonial belge s'empara du pouvoir monétaire local au prix des va-et-vient de résistance congolaise. Economie multi monétaire, l'espace congolais de l'époque avait néanmoins quatre espaces monétaires principaux au-dessus desquels trônaient certaines monnaies à circulation nationale comme le *mitako* ou *nkanu* (anneau de cuivre).

Nous avons démontré comment le Roi Léopold II et ses agents commencèrent par introduire furtivement entre 1878 et 1886 les monnaies, les copies de monnaies traditionnelles congolaises, mais importés de l'étranger, comment ils introduisirent en 1887 la monnaie d'Etat (Franc Léopoldien), comment à partir de 1908, la Belgique introduisit le numéraire Franc Congolais.

Nous avons montré comment à chacune de ces étapes, les Congolais résistèrent, soit en préférant leurs monnaies traditionnelles, soit en forçant le Roi Léopold II à officialiser une de ces dernières, le *mitako*. Le combat fut âpre. Mais les Congolais, malgré les circulaires du pouvoir colonial assimilant l'usage de leur monnaie à du troc, maintinrent celui-ci jusqu'au-delà des années 1930.

Ce n'est qu'à ce moment là que le colonisateur pût enfin prendre contrôle des circuits commerciaux des autochtones et lever avec facilité l'impôt personnel sur eux. C'est aussi à partir de ce moment-là que le pouvoir colonial assit le mieux son pouvoir politique et économique sur les populations congolaises.

Notes

1. Ce tableau nous l'avons construit à partir des données tirées de plusieurs sources à la fois : Batsikama (1971:256-261). Il s'agit d'une véritable source : traduction française de notes de témoignage de Duarte Lopez publié en Italie par Philipp Pigafetta ; Coquilath (1888:328) ; de Hemptine (1926:419-429).
2. Cela est vrai car à l'époque, ces deux formes de monnaie sont considérées comme ayant une valeur trop conventionnelle. D'ailleurs elles échappent au contrôle de l'Union Latine qui ne les considérait pas. Cf. Wertz, J., *op cit.*, p.582 et aussi Franck, M. L., *op.cit.*, p.582.
3. A propos du pouvoir libérateur des monnaies du nickel et de cuivre, Franck M.L. *op. cit.*, pp. 153-156.

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Ecrire l'histoire du mouvement de résistance à la colonisation : un enjeu historiographique à Madagascar

Denis Alexandre Lahiniriko*

Résumé

Depuis la célébration du cinquantenaire de l'insurrection de 1947 à Madagascar, l'histoire, en tant que discipline scientifique, s'est invitée sur la place publique. Un besoin d'histoire se fait sentir obligeant les recherches à sortir du cadre des amphithéâtres de l'Université. Désormais, l'historien malgache est appelé à jouer un rôle de plus en plus important dans le débat public. A l'origine de cet « engouement populaire » se trouvent les différentes « interprétations » du mouvement nationaliste qui combattait la domination coloniale depuis sa naissance dans les années 1910. En effet, depuis longtemps, les historiens malgaches et de Madagascar ont présenté et étudié le nationalisme malgache comme un courant idéologique monolithique. Dans une vision as oolitique dont Madagascar a connu depuis son indépendance et à la difficulté du pays à mettre en place une vraie démocratie. Ainsi, dans leurs réflexions sur la colonisation et ses différents aspects oppressifs et sur le mouvement d'émancipation malgache, ils ont tendance à nuancer certains « acquis » de la connaissance historique sur le nationalisme malgache.

Le présent article est axée sur cette évolution non seulement des connaissances historiques sur le nationalisme malgache en général et sur l'insurrection de 1947 en particulier mais également celle de l'historiographie malgache concernant ces deux thématiques. Enfin, nous aimerons également évoquer le débat actuel suscité par cette double évolution. L'un des objectifs essentiels est, dans ce cas, d'évaluer l'importance de l'interférence de la mémoire collective sur la manière d'écrire l'histoire.

* Département d'Histoire, Université d'Antananarivo, Madagascar.
Email : denisalex_lahiniriko@yahoo.fr

Abstract

Since the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of 1947 uprising in Madagascar, history, as a scientific discipline, has reached the public stage. There is an emergence of a history need, leading research to step outside the framework of University's amphitheatre. Now, the malagasy historian will play an increasingly important role in public debate. Various «interpretations» of the nationalist movement that fought against colonial domination since its beginning in the 1910s have lead to this «public enthusiasm». Indeed, for a long time, Malagasy historians and historians of Madagascar studied and presented Malagasy nationalism as a monolithic ideological tendency. In a rather simplistic and Manichean view, they believe the struggle for independence is of «all», without exception, colonized.

But in recent years, a new generation of historians emerged in Madagascar. A generation that has neither seen nor experienced the colonialism or the French neocolonialism. They are rather sensitive to the political anomie that Madagascar has experienced since its independence, as the difficulty of the country to establish a true democracy. Thus, in their thinking about colonization and its various oppressive aspects, as on the Malagasy liberation movement, they tend to qualify particular «acquired» historian knowledge on Malagasy nationalism.

This article focuses on the evolution of not only historian knowledge on Malagasy nationalism in general and 1947 uprising in particular but also of Malagasy historiography related to these two themes. Finally, we would also like to bring up the current debate generated by these two evolutions. In this case, to assess the importance of the interference that collective memory has on the writing of history is one of key goal.

La recherche sur la période coloniale constitue un des thèmes majeurs des études historiques à Madagascar. Depuis au moins les années 1970-1980, l'histoire politique et notamment celle du nationalisme sont largement abordées¹. Ainsi, nombreux mémoires et thèses sur ces deux thématiques ont été soutenus essentiellement dans les universités malgaches et françaises². De même, pendant la Seconde République malgache (1975-1991), le mouvement de résistance à la colonisation est particulièrement mis à l'honneur. Une situation qui s'explique par le parti-pris idéologique d'un régime politique qui a fait de l'anticolonialisme, notamment de sa version contre le néocolonialisme français, une des bases essentielles de son fondement.

Les historiens malgaches ont été alors encouragés dans leurs travaux – dont certains ont été publiés. Il est évident qu'une telle politique entre dans le cadre de la « malgachisation » de l'enseignement. La promotion des historiens malgaches marque alors une certaine volonté de « nationaliser » l'histoire et faire en sorte qu'elle ne reste pas aux mains des seuls historiens de Madagascar – dont la plupart sont originaires de l'ancienne puissance colonisatrice.

Une histoire « quasi-officielle » du nationalisme s'est ainsi élaborée petit à petit dont le caractère « apologiste » constitue un de ses aspects essentiels.

Apologiste dans le sens où elle présente le mouvement de libération coloniale comme un courant monolithique dont l'objectif ne peut être que l'indépendance et la liberté pour les Malgaches. Des générations d'historiens ont largement contribué à la constitution de cette image d'Epinal en formulant leur problématique suivant cette orientation. Appelées à doter le nouveau Etat-Nation d'une histoire nationale, elles ont rempli leur rôle de dépositaires de connaissance du passé au service de l'Etat.

Plus récemment, une nouvelle génération d'historiens émerge à Madagascar. Elle n'a pas connu ni vécu, d'une manière directe, l'iniquité et l'injustice de la domination coloniale. Elle est plus préoccupée par la réalité actuelle du pays marquée par les difficultés aussi bien politiques qu'économiques³. Du fait de ce contexte, elle appréhende d'une autre manière l'histoire de la résistance malgache à la domination française. De ces considérations existentielles, elle tend à analyser le nationalisme comme un simple mouvement politique forcément composite, donc sujet à une lutte interne entre divers courants antagonistes. Le recul temporel aidant, elle met à mal certains « acquis » de l'histoire politique de Madagascar et notamment celle de la colonisation. Elle récuse notamment un certain « angélisme » dans lequel les historiens du début de la période républicaine seraient tombés. Elle pointe alors du doigt cette approche « normative » de l'histoire du nationalisme selon laquelle ce dernier serait une idéologie et un courant revendicatif « uniquement » au service des intérêts de Madagascar et de son indépendance. Elle met plutôt en exergue certains aspects difficilement avouables tels que le conflit d'intérêts personnels, la lutte du pouvoir ou encore la guerre nationalonationaliste dans le but d'accaparer l'Etat – et ses avantages matériels – au moment où le colonisateur quittera le pays.

Notre contribution à cette rencontre est justement centrée sur cette évolution de l'histoire et de l'historiographie du nationalisme malgache. L'enjeu sera de démontrer la divergence entre la représentation que la plupart des Malgaches se font du mouvement de lutte contre la domination coloniale et les recherches universitaires en la matière. Deux thèmes seront particulièrement analysés. Le premier se penchera sur la représentation du nationalisme dans la mémoire collective malgache. On analysera, entre autres, les limites de cette conception unanimiste selon laquelle la résistance malgache à la domination française est forcément un mouvement monolithique au service du pays ; qu'au contraire, celle-ci est « divisée » en nombreuses organisations partisans qui se rivalisent les unes des autres. La seconde thématique est relative à l'insurrection de 1947-1948. La question de responsabilité dans ses origines sera abordée ainsi que la « polémique » sur le nombre des victimes.

Le mouvement de résistance à la domination coloniale : union nationale et union nationaliste

Depuis l'indépendance, la résistance à la domination coloniale est incarnée, à Madagascar, par le MDRM. C'est un parti politique né en France en Février 1946 et implanté dans la Grande Ile quatre mois plus tard. Ses succès électoraux fulgurants, acquis grâce à une implantation géographique rapide, laissent penser que l'ensemble des Malgaches a trouvé « le » moyen lui permettant d'exprimer son rejet du fait colonial. Distillée pendant plusieurs décennies dans l'enseignement scolaire de base – et notamment pendant la Seconde République –, une telle conclusion s'est imposée petit à petit dans la conscience populaire. Aujourd'hui encore, lors de la fête d'indépendance ou lors des journées commémoratives à l'honneur des luttes anticoloniales, l'hymne du parti s'impose comme étant la principale référence de la population dans son attachement à la nation. De plus, le nationalisme malgache s'est imposé, dans la pensée populaire, comme étant une force et un mouvement monolithiques et uniformes au service de l'indépendance du pays. Une telle position, nourrie d'un angélisme didactique, est largement partagée même si, au final, elle est loin de refléter la réalité complexe de la résistance à la domination française.

Autour du MDRM se crée alors un discours unanimiste selon lequel il est la matérialisation de l'unité nationale malgache. Mais force est de constater qu'il reste une structure au service de l'élite tananarivienne. Cette dernière revendique déjà, au moins depuis les années 1910, la représentation de la population dans sa lutte pour l'émancipation.

Le nationalisme : un courant politique composite

La domination du parti de la Renovation de l'échiquier politique malgache est quasi totale entre 1946 et l'insurrection de 1947. Elle explique le discours unanimiste dans lequel le MDRM s'arroge, à lui tout seul, la légitimité de la représentation nationale malgache. A l'époque, en dehors de lui, il n'y a que des « traîtres », « fauteurs de division et ennemis de l'indépendance de Madagascar. Ces discours prennent évidemment leur racine dans ses victoires électorales successives, le même qu'il n'est pas seul sur le champ politique nationaliste. D'autres formations politiques lui disputent l'héritage du mouvement d'émancipation nationale malgache et s'élèvent pour contester son hégémonie. Parmi elles, le PDM² est, sans doute, celui qui lui apporte le plus de contradictions même s'il peine à trouver sa place. En tout cas, grâce à sa presse et notamment *Ny Fandrosoam-Baovao* et le patronage du « Père du nationalisme malgache », le Pasteur Ravelojaona, le Parti Démocratique est le principal adversaire nationaliste du MDRM notamment dans la Province de Tananarive. Il trouve alors un allié de circonstance dans le MSM,³ une

formation politique créée par certaines personnalités catholiques influentes. Bref, l'unanimisme politique trouve déjà ses limites.

En effet, l'opposition entre le PDM et le MDRM est la matérialisation de la dualité du mouvement d'émancipation malgache. Le premier incarne alors sa tendance élitaire dans laquelle la bourgeoisie tananarivienne tient une place importante, tandis que le second se présente comme son courant populaire. Ainsi, la multiple défaite électorale du parti de Razafintsalama Gabriel,⁴ entre 1945 et 1947, peut être interprétée comme le résultat de l'extension sociologique et géographique de l'influence nationaliste. La formation des partis à Madagascar signifie donc l'ouverture du champ politique avec l'irruption de nouveaux acteurs de plus en plus nombreux qui vont des simples militants et sympathisants jusqu'aux électeurs. Bref, elle marque une certaine « démocratisation » de la société coloniale.

L'unanimisme politique : le MDRM comme l'incarnation de la nation malgache.

Face à ses adversaires nationalistes, le MDRM se présente comme le parti national : « Le MDRM créé par nos députés malgaches, Raseta et Ravoahangy, à Paris dans le but d'unir les 18 races qui cherchent l'indépendance, est régulièrement constitué » annonce Ny Fahafahana⁵ en Mai 1946. Il a été ainsi fondé pour réaliser l'union de la population autour de l'autodétermination de la Grande Île. La base sur laquelle compte le parti est ainsi très large : « Les Merina et les Betsimisaraka, les Sakalava et les Betsileo, les Bara et les Antandroy et toutes les tribus de Madagascar y sont tous » dit *Mongo*.⁶

Le MDRM ne veut pas reconnaître une quelconque distinction du point de vue ethnique, d'origine sociale, de confession, de condition socioéconomique ou de profession. Une nouvelle conception de la nation est ainsi mise en exergue, celle d'une nation malgache qui transcende tout autre sentiment d'appartenance à un corps social. Dans les discours du parti, cette nation est précoloniale et basée sur le partage d'un certain nombre de valeurs : langue, géographie (l'apologie de l'insularité), us et coutumes. Mais c'est la soumission au joug colonial et à ses abus qui sont mis en avant comme étant le point commun entre les diverses populations de Madagascar. Dans ce cas, l'union nationale est vue comme le seul moyen permettant à la Grande Île d'avancer sur le chemin de l'indépendance. Cela explique également l'intolérance du MDRM vis-à-vis des autres structures partisans jugées comme celles de la division.

Il est évident que cette nation a pour cadre Madagascar considéré comme la seule et unique *Tanindrazana* (« terre des ancêtres ») qui transcende les « terres d'origine » de chaque individu. D'ailleurs, la presse nationaliste fait souvent la distinction entre Madagascar « l'Île heureuse »⁷ commune à tous

les Malgaches et le « *tany niaviana* » qui est plus proche de la définition du *patria*, « pays du père ». Pour ce dernier, l'image qui revient le plus souvent est celle de la campagne, du village où les parents ont vécu, ont travaillé⁸. Dans ce cas, le *tany niaviana* prend l'allure du monde rural dans lequel les habitants s'entraident et où la notion de descendance et d'ascendance est capitale ainsi que la cohésion entre les individus.

Cette nation est formée par l'ensemble de « ceux qui souffraient du travail forcé, des réquisitions abusives, des brimades policières, des exactions d'un certain fonctionnarisme autochtone, ceux qui, quotidiennement étaient opprimés par la peur. C'était avant tout les gens des campagnes, les paysans, les prolétaires, les classes moyennes » (Rabemananjara 1953:48). Et dans la mesure où le MDRM se considère comme le seul pouvant incarner les revendications des « damnés de la terre », toute autre structure ne peut donc qu'aviver la division que la colonisation a créée dans l'île. Cette vision unanime est très visible à travers les discours des parlementaires du parti.

Le MDRM récuse le mot « parti politique préférant l'appellation « mouvement ».⁹ « Le MDRM est la nation elle-même » note alors l'un de ses fondateurs (Rabemananjara 1953:48). En effet, fort de sa domination politique, le parti veut se distinguer de ses pairs. Et quand ses dirigeants sont obligés de reconnaître qu'il est un « parti », ils développent un autre discours tendant à dénoncer la multiplication des structures partisans.

Ainsi, lors d'une réunion organisée autour des députés Ravoahangy et Raseta à Soarano en Mai 1946, les élus critiquent avec force l'existence de plusieurs partis politiques à Madagascar.¹⁰ Ils pointent particulièrement du doigt le fait que c'est à Tananarive que ces structures ont vu le jour. Ce qui laisse supposer que les Merina sont partisans de la division des Malgaches : « Des délégués des autres régions : Antsihanaka, Vakinankaratra, Bezanozano, ont tenu à dire que si l'union n'a jamais jusqu'ici été possible, c'est parce que les Merina, par les partis politiques qu'ils formèrent,¹¹ y mirent obstacle¹² » déclare Ravoahangy. Il préconise alors la suppression de tous les partis.

Mais déjà, le parti veut être au-dessus de la mêlée politique, y compris lors des compétitions électorales : « Le MDRM n'est pas un parti qui s'oppose seulement aux autres partis » affirme *Ny Rariny-La Justice*.¹³ Ce journal recommande alors à ses partisans de laisser aux autres les soins de se battre car ils « ne visent pas à œuvrer pour la patrie mais pour leurs ambitions ».¹⁴ Dans ce discours, on soutient que seuls les partisans du MDRM sont nationalistes et travaillent pour le bien de la patrie et de la nation malgache.

Construction des héros : hagiographie des députés

A partir de 1946 est né le mythe des députés du MDRM, seuls pouvant incarner l'union nationale et aptes à parler au nom du peuple malgache. Un

processus de construction des héros est enclenché et la presse nationaliste y va jouer un rôle prépondérant.

L'une des raisons de la création du Mouvement de la Rénovation est d'assurer la réélection de deux parlementaires de Novembre 1945. L'échec de la Première Constituante et la décision d'organiser une nouvelle consultation législative en Juin 1946 nécessitent alors, dans le camp nationaliste, un regroupement de forces autour des anciens élus. C'est dans ce sens que dès son implantation à Madagascar, il est clair que le MDRM est la formation politique des députés. Il incarne alors l'union autour des parlementaires. Rabenja Alfred, nationaliste influent d'Antsirabe, le déclare sans aucune ambiguïté, lors de la création de la section de la capitale de Vakinakaratra, en affirmant que le MDRM « a été créé à Madagascar dans l'unique but de rassembler tous les autochtones de l'Île autour des candidatures de Ravoahangy et de Raseta ».¹⁵

En effet, sommés de s'expliquer sur leur « échec » lors de la première Assemblée Constituante, partis en France pour y revendiquer l'indépendance, ils ne l'ont pas obtenu, les deux élus ont avancé l'idée qu'ils ont été handicapés par le fait qu'on ne leur reconnaît pas le monopole de la représentation des Malgaches, qu'on les considère uniquement comme les porte-parole des Merina qui voudraient bien rétablir l'ancienne monarchie du XIXe siècle. Raseta l'expose clairement lors de la réunion de Soarano en Mai 1946 :

une chose est à déplorer, c'est que l'union est restée un vain mot à Madagascar. Car cela est à l'origine de leur [des députés] échec, étant donné que des câblogrammes ont été envoyés pour démolir tout ce qu'ils avaient édifié, de sorte qu'ils ne firent que piètre figure au sein de l'Assemblée, qu'ils furent considérés comme ne représentant qu'une minorité réactionnaire, soit, en un mot, qu'ils n'étaient pas les porte-parole de toute l'Île¹⁶.

En fait, les autorités françaises ou métropolitaines ont toujours considéré les deux élus du MDRM comme ceux de la « minorité hova »¹⁷ nostalgique de leur ancienne domination et qui veulent son rétablissement. Le programme de deux députés lors des consultations d'Octobre-Novembre 1945 peut leur donner cette impression dans la mesure où Raseta et Ravoahangy réclament la « restauration de l'indépendance de Madagascar. L'utilisation du terme « restauration » peut être interprétée comme une volonté manifeste d'un retour à la monarchie merina. La situation est d'autant plus floue Et pour contrer cette opinion partagée par la majorité des Français, administrateurs ou colons, le Parti de la Rénovation va essayer de créer une mythologie moderne autour des élus.

Le processus de construction des héros nationaux

La presse tananarivienne, qui s'autodéclare l'incarnation de l'opinion publique malgache, va développer autour des députés l'image des héros dont Madagascar a besoin pour se libérer du joug colonial. Dès Novembre 1945 et longtemps après l'accession de la Grande Ile à l'indépendance, un ensemble de discours, d'images, de qualificatifs seront mis en exergue pour signifier à la population que Raseta, Ravoahangy et Rabemananjara sont les « sauveurs de la patrie », les « Moïses » malgaches, les hommes providentiels envoyés par Dieu et les Ancêtres pour sauver leurs compatriotes des méfaits de la colonisation et assurer l'avenir de la postérité.

Et dès 1946, des « mises en scène » sont régulièrement organisées par le parti pour affirmer le caractère exceptionnel des plus. L'administrateur Riddel, qui a accompagné le député Ravoahangy lors de sa tournée dans plusieurs districts en Août 1946,¹⁸ l'a bien remarqué en affirmant que « tous les autochtones de la côte Est lui vouent un véritable culte [en criant sur son passage] voici notre sauveur ».¹⁹

Partout où les députés passent, les sections du parti organisent des accueils « présidentiels ».²⁰ La foule est toujours au rendez-vous, on marche de nuit comme de jour pour les voir et les écouter, on les ovationne dès que l'on les aperçoit. Leur arrivée est un grand jour pendant lequel on organise des fêtes, on les reçoit avec bouquets de fleurs et poèmes. Et qu'importe la localité, leur réception est quasiment la même en ville et dans les villages ruraux. Évidemment, la presse tananarivienne ne manque aucune occasion d'entretenir la ferveur de la population en donnant les dates et les localités dans lesquelles ils vont passer. Elle indique également les différentes réunions dans lesquelles ils vont prendre la parole provoquant l'afflux d'une foule nombreuse intéressée ou simplement curieuse de voir leurs « bienfaiteurs » et leurs « émancipateurs ».²¹ L'union autour des parlementaires doit, dans le sens contraire réprochée. Dans un environnement où règne un certain mimétisme social, personne ne doit pas avoir le droit de s'opposer aux « envoyés de Dieu » sous peine de désapprobation populaire. *L'Avenir de Madagascar* n'est pas loin de la réalité voulue par la presse nationaliste en analysant que « les délégués autochtones ne sont désormais plus à la Chambre les seuls envoyés du peuple malgache. Ils y sont par surcroît les envoyés de Dieu ».²² *Vox populi, vox dei* pensent les partisans des députés à l'exemple de Ramaholimihaso qui déclare à Fianarantsoa, en parlant de Ravoahangy, qu'il « est l' élu du peuple et qu'il doit être considéré comme l' élu de Dieu, chargé de sauver Madagascar ».²³

De surcroît, utilisant l'emprise des missions chrétiennes sur la population, le MDRM n'hésite pas à organiser, un peu partout, des cultes pour ses élus. Et devant un tel déploiement de moyens, même les hésitants ne peuvent que suivre le chemin tracé par ces hommes qui ont consacré leur vie à la patrie.

Les martyrs de la cause nationale

Une hagiographie des parlementaires va se développer dans les années correspondant à leur élection. Compagnons de route du grand Ralaimongo, membres de la VVS, habitués aux geôles de la force répressive coloniale, éternels abonnés aux résidences surveillées, familiers des arcanes de la justice coloniale Leurs états de service à la nation l'affirment : ils sont les champions de la cause malgache.

Se présentant eux-mêmes comme les victimes du régime colonial, ils se sentent investis d'une mission : celle de libérer leur « peuple de l'oppression. La presse nationaliste fait souvent étalage des sacrifices qu'ils ont endurés. Ils sont les héros qui ont gagné le cœur du peuple suite à leur abnégation devant les actions répressives de la colonisation.²⁴ Le Haut-commissaire De Coppet confirme cette impression en commentant la réélection de Ravoahangy à l'Assemblée Nationale en Novembre 1946 : il « bénéficiait aussi du respect et de la considération qui s'attachent à toute action sincère et désintéressée telle que fût toujours la sienne [et qui] avait rallié autour de lui un certain nombre l'émancipation malgache correspond à l'histoire de ces héros. Au temps de la VVS, ils étaient présents.²⁵ Quand Jean Ralaimongo a mené ses campagnes de dénonciation, ils étaient associés. Au temps du Front Populaire et de la création de la SRI²⁶ et du PCR²⁷, ils n'avaient pas abandonné la lutte.²⁸ Une tenacité qui, selon la presse proche du MDRM, mérite une reconnaissance et un hommage de la part de leurs compatriotes.

Les Malgaches leur devraient être également redevables dans la mesure où, grâce à ces hommes, ils ont pu bénéficier d'un certain nombre des mesures libérales. En effet, leur élection en 1945 a coïncidé avec l'adoption des lois abolissant les institutions les plus impopulaires à Madagascar (indigénat, réquisition, travail forcé). Partout où les députés ou ses partisans passent, on ne manque jamais de relever ces « acquis » de la Première Constituante. Et force est de constater que ces mesures constituent l'essentiel des revendications de la majorité des Malgaches peu soucieuse des débats politiques sur l'avenir de Madagascar, mais très sensible à toute décision visant à améliorer son quotidien.

D'ailleurs, l'élection même de Ravoahangy et de Raseta à la Première Constituante renforce leur emprise sur la population. Le cas du premier est plus que symbolique : « le succès de Ravoahangy est dû à un ensemble de causes dans lesquelles les spéculations politiques entrent pour assez peu. Tout d'abord, il s'est créé sur son nom une sorte de mystique qui expliquerait à elle seule le comportement de ses compatriotes. Il est le premier député malgache, celui qui a siégé au Parlement français qui a fréquenté le Chef du Gouvernement, des Ministres, des grands personnages. C'est durant son mandat qu'ont été réalisées les réformes tenant les plus au cœur des

populations qui n'ont pas manqué de lui en attribuer le mérite. Il est revenu dans le pays auréolé d'un prestige fait de tous ces avantages. Il est apparu comme l'homme prédestiné qu'un peuple frais éveillé à la vie politique suit aveuglément sans lui demander où il le conduit ».²⁹

Tata Maxime est plus explicite sur ce mythe des parlementaires : « Je tremble de parler devant cet imposant personnage qu'est le député Ravoahangy dont la réputation fait écho dans toute l'Ile. Je n'ai jamais vu de décoration pareille (en parlant de l'écharpe du député Ravoahangy). Si vous partagez veut dire l'union de tous les habitants de Madagascar sans distinction de race ».³⁰

Finalement, personne, en dehors des parlementaires malgaches, ne peut incarner l'union nationale. Ils sont proclamés seuls dépositaires de la revendication nationale. S'opposer à eux, c'est s'opposer au peuple, aux Ancêtres et à Dieu. Dans les discours du MDRM, l'unanimité est la règle.

Le MDRM : parti merina ?

« L'autonomisme malgache est purement hova »,³¹ telle est la position officielle de l'Administration envers le mouvement nationaliste à Madagascar. Le MDRM est alors jugé comme un parti dirigé par des Merina nostalgiques du « temps heureux du règne de Rainilaiarivony »³⁶ selon l'expression d'*En Action*, un journal des milieux européens. Une telle accusation est grave dans la mesure où le parti revendique l'indépendance justement au nom de tous les Malgaches. D'ailleurs, c'est une des raisons de l'échec de deux parlementaires quand ils ont sollicité l'aide des partis métropolitains ; ceux-ci pensent qu'ils n'expriment que l'idée d'une minorité évoluée des Hautes-Terres et que la majorité, notamment les côtiers³², n'y est nullement favorable. De surcroît, le grand parti nationaliste n'entreprend que peu de choses pour remédier à cette image. Pire, il semble bien que certaines de ces manœuvres politiques renforcent cette idée comme dans le cas de l'affaire Ralaivoavy.

L'affaire Ralaivoavy

Le milieu politique nationaliste tananarivien compte plusieurs côtiers dans ses rangs. Dans le Bureau Politique du MDRM à Soarano, l'exemple de Tata Maxime est souvent cité : il y est considéré comme le « porte-parole des côtiers » lors des conférences publiques du parti dans la capitale.³³ D'ailleurs, lors de l'implantation de l'organisation partisane à Madagascar et notamment lors de la réunion du 6 Mai, jour de la première élection du bureau provisoire à Soarano, deux côtiers, Jérémie tout-Tananarive politique.³⁴

Quant à Ralaivoavy, il entretient depuis longtemps des relations avec les nationalistes tananariviens. Instituteur à l'École chrétienne d'Ankadifotsy dans la capitale, il a déposé, en Juin 1945, une demande officielle de candidature au Conseil Représentatif en tant que représentant des Tsimihety, son ethnie.

Et même s'il se présente souvent comme le défenseur des intérêts côtiers³⁵, c'est un homme qui a passé une grande partie de sa vie dans la capitale, à tel point que certains pensent qu'il « est inféodé au mouvement nationaliste et aux Comités Ravoahangy-Raseta ». ³⁶ Mais ses relations avec ces derniers ne sont pas toujours sans accroc.

La « trahison » de la Première Constituante

Quand les autorités françaises décident d'organiser des élections en Octobre-Novembre 1945 pour désigner les représentants malgaches à la Première Constituante, des tractations s'organisent auprès des militants nationalistes de Tananarive. Rappelons qu'avant septembre de cette même année, les nationalistes entretiennent encore un semblant d'unité. Mais la tenue de la consultation la fait voler en éclat.

C'est ainsi que dans le Comité électoral de Ravoahangy, Ralaivoavy « exposa l'idée suivante : Allons-nous demander l'indépendance, dit-il, si ce sont seulement les Merina qui y vont, les Européens vont dire qu'il ne s'agit là que de l'idée des Merina. Envoyons donc un Merina et un côtier, d'autant plus qu'on va élire deux députés ». ³⁷ Cette proposition est acceptée et Ralaivoavy est désigné comme le candidat côtier dans la deuxième circonscription. Le choix se justifie par le fait qu'il est Tsimihety, une ethnie de la côte occidentale de la Grande Île. On l'envoie ainsi à Majunga pour y préparer et y mener sa campagne électorale. D'ailleurs, c'est le comité de Tananarive qui a payé son billet d'avion. Mais entre temps, les choses changent dans la capitale. Quand Raseta présente sa propre candidature, le milieu politique proche de Ravoahangy lâche l'instituteur. L'investiture est donnée au médecin libre de Tulpar, ancien candidat malheureux aux élections au Conseil Supérieur de la France d'Outre-mer en 1939.

Cette volte-face s'explique par la méfiance du cercle nationaliste tananarivien envers les côtiers. En fait, certaines personnalités politiques influentes de la capitale doutent que les non-Merina soient vraiment acquis à la cause nationaliste et notamment indépendantiste. Un sentiment qu'elles nourrissent toujours lors des élections futures et spécialement celle de Juin 1946 pendant lesquelles, un temps, il est question que Madagascar aurait cinq représentants : « Un peu partout à Tananarive, on s'attendrait, en effet, à leur nouvelle réélection [de Raseta et Ravoahangy], beaucoup d'indigènes étant avides de l'indépendance de leur pays. On croirait, toutefois, que l'élection de cinq députés pour Madagascar gênera beaucoup l'obtention de l'indépendance, étant donné que les côtiers seraient susceptibles de s'opposer en grande partie à l'indépendance pour ne pas revenir sous le régime du royaume hova ». ³⁸

Apparemment, une bonne partie du milieu tananarivien a intériorisé les discours coloniaux sur la prétendue fidélité des côtiers à la France. Ne voulant

pas prendre de risques, ils choisissent un militant nationaliste Merina qui a fait ses preuves depuis l’Affaire de la VVS. Ils pensent que Raseta peut représenter la côte ouest dans la mesure où il a longtemps exercé son métier dans la ville de Tuléar.

Malgré cette mésaventure, Ralaivoavy maintient sa candidature contre Raseta. Il est battu, n’obtenant que 817 voix (5,86% des suffrages exprimés) alors que le docteur en a gagné 5 476 (39,33 %). Il n’arrive qu’en cinquième position derrière Raseta, Vantana Toto, Razafintsalama Gabriel et Rakotomalala Philippe. Sans doute, constatant que l’investiture de Tananarive est capitale pour être élu, Ralaivoavy veut oublier cet épisode de la Première Constituante et sollicite, de nouveau, l’appui du Comité Ravoahangy lors des élections législatives de Juin 1946.

Les côtiers de Tananarive et les élections à la seconde Constituante

L’élection de Raseta³⁹ est très mal vue par l’Administration coloniale et par une partie de l’opinion côtière. Et faisant écho aux protestations de la « bureaucratie tribale de l’Ouest, « l’administration a pris certaines dispositions pour faire échec à Raseta et obtenir l’élection d’un l’idée qu’une partie de la population côtière⁴⁰ vote en faveur du candidat merina, elles persistent dans leur position selon laquelle le nationalisme est fondamentalement merina et non côtier. Pour elles, l’élection de Raseta en Novembre 1945 s’explique « d’une part par l’activité des groupements Hovas immigrés et des fonctionnaires de même origine disséminés dans la Circonscription électorale, d’autre part par l’impossibilité pour les populations côtières de présenter un homme suffisamment connu ». ⁴¹ L’objectif de l’Administration est « que la véritable attention, qui n’est nullement celle que les résultats de l’an dernier pourraient faire croire, soit rétablie aux yeux de la Métropole et du Gouvernement ». ⁴² Autrement dit, son but est de faire échouer les actions menées en France par les parlementaires de 1945 au nom de « tous » les Malgaches notamment celle visant l’autodétermination de Madagascar.

A Tananarive, les côtiers s’activent également pour avoir « leur député ». Jérémie Ernest, un Antanosy originaire de la région de Fort-Dauphin, intervient dans ce sens lors de la réunion des divers partis politiques et les représentants des journaux tananariviens du 11 Mai 1946 lors de laquelle il a été question de former une Union Nationale Malgache. ⁴³ « J’ai à parler étant le porte-parole de mes compatriotes Antanosy. Certain colon européen de chez nous (à Fort-Dauphin) nous a demandé un jour, pourquoi les Malgaches n’ont envoyé en France que des députés Impriniens alors que dans tout Madagascar, il existe plus de 15 tribus. Ainsi, j’allais vous proposer la présentation, pour les élections de Juin, d’un candidat pour nous autres côtiers » ⁴⁴ déclare-t-il. On constate donc que même parmi les côtiers partisans et proches collaborateurs des

nationalistes tananariviens, beaucoup pensent que Ravoahangy et Raseta ne représentent finalement qu'une minorité des Malgaches et notamment celle des Hautes-Terres centrales.

Dans le courant du mois de Mai 1946, les principales figures côtières de la capitale décident de créer un Comité Provisoire du Parti Côtier.⁴⁵ Parmi ses membres, on trouve Ralaivoavy Paul, Rakotoarivo, Rasandison, Rakoto Raymond, Rakotoarimanana Romule, Tsiranana, Rakotoarivelo, Tsiazonangoly Louis, Ralahanta, Jérémie Ernest.⁴⁶ Et selon un de ses promoteurs, il est question que les deux sièges de députés doivent revenir à la majorité, c'est-à-dire aux côtiers.⁴⁷ Mais le Groupe notamment auprès du Docteur Rakotonirainy Joseph⁴⁸ « partisan de l'élection d'un député côtier ». ⁴⁹ Une réunion entre les deux parties est organisée le 16 Mai 1946 à l'École chrétienne d'Ankadifotsy.

Ralaivoavy rappelle alors que Jérémie a déjà évoqué cette question de représentation des côtiers au Parlement français. Il évoque aussi le fait que « nos députés n'ont pas été écoutés, parce qu'on a prétendu qu'ils ne représentaient que la bourgeoisie hova. La présence d'un député côtier s'impose pour mettre fin à cette allégation ». ⁵⁰ Quant à Tsiranana, futur président de la République, il reproche aux nationalistes tananariviens leur appel à l'union alors qu'ils ne font rien pour y arriver : « Vous, les hova, vous prêchez à chaque soleil levant l'union des diverses races de Madagascar, et cependant à en juger et par votre vie quotidienne et par vos derniers actes, vous cherchez uniquement votre profit ». ⁵¹ Il ne manque pas également de rappeler la « trahison » de 1945 dont a été victime Ralaivoavy. Le groupe soutient alors que la deuxième circonscription doit lui revenir de droit.

Rakotonirainy accepte le rôle d'intercesseur entre les côtiers et le groupe de Soarano. Mais déjà lors de cette réunion, les partisans de Ralaivoavy se rendent bien compte qu'ils ne seront pas écoutés. Le Président du Comité Ravoahangy défend la candidature de Raseta avec des arguments qui ne convainquent pas ses interlocuteurs. Tout en reconnaissant que la circonscription occidentale doit revenir aux côtiers, il reproche au Groupe côtier de n'avoir pas avisé à temps le comité de Soarano. Il tente alors de persuader ses interlocuteurs que les sièges, à pourvoir pour Juin, ne sont pas trop importants dans la mesure où ils ne dureront que trois mois. ⁵² Finalement, le mieux que Soarano propose aux côtiers, ce sont des sièges dans les Assemblées locales. ⁵³ Évidemment, il ne souffle aucun mot sur les futures élections à l'Assemblée Nationale en pensant, sans doute, que celles-ci sont réservées aux seuls Merina. Les côtiers ne seront appelés que pour devenir les auxiliaires des Merina. Une position que Tata Maxime, l'autre leader côtier de Tananarive, exprime bien lors de la fameuse conférence de Ravoahangy tenue au stade d'Antanimena : « Je parle au nom de tous les côtiers de l'Est

et du Sud .Nous, côtiers, reconnaissons que c'est vous, les Ambaniandro,⁵⁴ qui avez éveillé en nous le sentiment patriotique. Nous vous assurons que nous vous suivrons dans ce chemin que vous avez tracé ».⁵⁵ Les Merina sont donc appelés à être les « chefs du mouvement d'émancipation alors que les côtiers ne sont que les subordonnés, seulement aptes à suivre leurs « aînés ». Les côtières, comme à Mananjary : « nous aurons encore à élire cent délégués de toutes les races, lesquels seront les conseillers auprès de nos députés. Les Côtiers ont une grande part sur cette question, car ils n'ont pas de députés, ceux qu'ils auront choisis seront leurs porte-paroles auprès du Parlement ».⁵⁶

Bref, les nationalistes tananariviens se considèrent comme appelés à jouer les premiers rôles tandis que leurs compatriotes des côtes occuperont les secondes places. Une attitude qui provoque bien évidemment des inquiétudes notamment quand l'Administration coloniale et le PADESM essaient de convaincre la population que le but du MDRM est la restauration de l'ancienne monarchie merina du XIXe siècle.

Luttes nationalo-nationalistes des années 1940 et 1950

Ce problème de représentativité des élus ne se pose pas uniquement pendant les années 1940. Il constitue également un des paramètres politiques importants pendant la décennie suivante. Pour le contourner, les structures nationalistes élaborent un discours unanimiste qui se révèle être loin de la réalité du mouvement de lutte contre la domination française. Dans les années 1950, celui-ci montre un visage franchement pluriel. Les différents courants nationalistes n'hésitent pas alors à étaler en public leur désaccord idéologique et leur lutte pour l'appropriation du futur pouvoir que le colonisateur laissera au moment de l'indépendance.

En effet, si l'idéologie est importante dans la formation et l'évolution des structures partisans, à Madagascar son rôle au sein des organisations politiques ne devient prépondérant qu'à partir des années 1950. Le nationalisme constitue au départ l'élément de base commun à toutes les structures politiques luttant pour l'indépendance de Madagascar. L'intensification des activités communistes au lendemain de l'insurrection de 1947 et l'entre-décision du catholicisme politique dans le mouvement d'émancipation créent ensuite une dynamique nouvelle dans l'évolution de ces organisations. Désormais, le nationalisme malgache ne se résume plus à une dichotomie nationalisme entre le couple PDM-MSM et le MDRM.

A la veille de la Loi-cadre en 1956, le nationalisme historique est représenté par deux tendances bien distinctes : celle dominée par les communistes et celle proche de l'Eglise catholique² une opposition surtout visible dans la Province de Tananarive. L'une comme l'autre sont

cons-cientes qu'il leur faut une base plus large donc plus populaire, pour pouvoir peser sur l'évolution politique de Madagascar et, d'abord, gagner les consultations électorales. Par conséquent, les tenants du nationalisme élitaire sont de plus en plus marginalisés comme le démontre le cas des petits partis tels que l'UDIM⁵⁷ ou encore du FNM.⁵⁸ Chaque formation politique cherche alors à rassembler autour d'elle, d'où l'idée d'union nationaliste appelée à être l'incarnation de l'union nationale. Celle-ci est alors considérée comme le moyen le plus sûr pour obtenir l'indépendance du pays, la division n'étant profitable qu'à l'Administration et à ses fidèles. Les élections législatives de 1951 et celles de Janvier 1956 ne le démontrent-elles pas ? Seulement, cette idée d'union est pensée dans le cadre d'un unanimisme politique.

En fait, l'apparition des partis politiques correspond à la matérialisation des diverses tendances composant le mouvement d'émancipation nationale malgache. L'idée selon laquelle ce dernier est un courant idéologique monolithique dans lequel les Malgaches luttant pour leur autodétermination se reconnaissent, est largement malmenée voire démentie. Il s'agit, sans doute, du résultat d'une lutte dont l'objectif est l'appropriation du pouvoir une fois l'indépendance acquise. D'autant que les tenants du nationalisme des années 1940 et 1950 sont dans une situation d'« aveuglement » manifeste. Certes, l'autodétermination du Territoire reste « officiellement » leur but premier. Mais au fur et à mesure que la France accorde plus de libertés, plus de marge de manœuvre aux nationalistes, leur préoccupation devient la conquête du pouvoir ou d'une partie de celui-ci. Ceci explique largement l'affrontement nationalo-nationaliste à l'occasion des consultations électorales et est à l'origine de l'échec de toutes les tentatives d'union des formations qui se réclament du nationalisme historique. Bref, les nationalistes se comportent comme si l'acquisition de l'indépendance est déjà acquise et que le temps est à la lutte politique pour la conquête du pouvoir abandonné par la France. Mais cette conquête ne peut être séparée de celle de la population. Cette dernière, dépositaire de la légitimité, peut, seule, la politique se déclare seule représentante de l'ensemble des aspirations des Malgaches et notamment celles relatives à l'autodétermination. MDRM, PDM, MSM, UIT,⁵⁹ UPM,⁶⁰ CEAP,⁶¹ se considèrent tous comme l'incarnation de l'unité nationale et de l'union nationaliste alors que les autres, animés par des intérêts personnels ou ceux de leurs groupes sociaux, ne sont que les partisans de la division des Malgaches. C'est pourquoi, la notion de « traître à la nation » est largement utilisée pendant les deux décennies précédant l'indépendance de 1960. L'une des conséquences à long terme de la lutte entre nationalistes est l'aversion d'une grande partie de la population pour les partis politiques accusés d'attiser la division au détriment des intérêts supérieurs du pays.

Cette considération unanime n'est que le reflet de la notion de démocratie dans le pays. On est loin d'une conception qui consacre la pluralité d'idées et d'opinions. L'unanimité qui, finalement est la version politique du *Fihavanana*, prône une vision manichéenne du politique dans laquelle on incarne forcément le « bien » alors que les autres sont dans le camp du « mal ». Il en résulte un principe politique tendant à exclure ceux qui n'épousent pas les mêmes idées que soi.

Les nationalistes malgaches n'ont pas été à l'abri de cette donnée politique. Ils ont payé le prix fort en 1958 lors de la mise en place des institutions de la Loi-cadre et de la République et en 1960 lors de l'indépendance. Affaiblis par des divisions internes devenues trop voyantes et un éparpillement des efforts dans l'affrontement des uns contre les autres, ils n'ont pu résister à la montée des forces qui, hier encore, s'opposaient à l'indépendance du pays. En plus, ils se sont embourbés dans une perception politique qui prône trop le national alors que les considérations ethniques et régionales sont devenues des facteurs essentiels de la vie politique malgache. Ils ont certainement contribué à l'avènement de Madagascar indépendant mais ce passage de l'Etat colonial à la République se fait à leur détriment. Etre nationaliste, c'est être condamné au statut d'éternel opposant au régime établi. Finalement, ce discours selon lequel le nationalisme malgache était un mouvement monolithique qui n'œuvrait que pour l'indépendance de Madagascar n'est qu'une vision téléologique pour le besoin idéologique d'un Etat-Nation devenu indépendant en 1960. Un discours nécessaire pour mettre en place le fondement d'une seule et unique nation. Au même titre que le conflit nationalo-nationaliste, les questions ethnicistes et régionalistes, qui ont pris une place très importante dans les années 1940 et 1950, ont été occultées.

Il s'agit d'un processus visant à mettre en place une mémoire collective qui est à la base même du « vivre ensemble à Madagascar. L'historienne Lucile Rabearimanana est plus explicite quand elle développe le rôle combien important de cette mémoire. Elle « est utilisée pour inculquer le sentiment d'appartenance à une collectivité ethnique, à une communauté politique, pour honorer ses fondateurs, célébrer la grandeur du groupe et fonder une identité autour de cette mémoire, donc mémoire autour d'événements heureux : des conquêtes glorieuses, victoire sur des agresseurs, ou malheureux : défaite face à des dominants, les souffrances et les humiliations qui en résultent. Bref, la mémoire répond à un besoin de la société pour s'affirmer, pour se donner une raison d'agir, d'avancer, elle a pour objectif la fidélité, elle est un rempart contre l'oubli de faits passés considérés comme essentiels pour l'existence même et pour le devenir d'une société » (Rabearimanana 2005:148).

Ainsi, la mémoire est « une faculté dont le fonctionnement opère spontanément une sélection dans les souvenirs, exerçant normalement un tri, retenant les uns et oubliant les autres » (Rémond 2002:41-44). Dans le cas malgache, la mémoire collective a voulu oublier ces épisodes difficilement avouables de division nationaliste et de lutte de pouvoir. Une tendance que les trois Républiques ont largement encouragée. C'est pourquoi, toutes les recherches universitaires à contre-courant de cette « vision angélique » ont été toujours condamnées et leurs auteurs fortement dénoncés voire taxés de « vendus à l'ancienne puissance coloniale. Et la plupart des spécialistes de l'insurrection de 1947 en sont justement victimes.

L'insurrection de 1947-1948 : débat, polémique et recherche

« Un proverbe africain dit : « Tant que les lions n'auront pas leur propre historien, l'histoire de la chasse sera toujours à la gloire des chasseurs ». Deux conceptions contradictoires et antagonistes se sont toujours affrontées à Madagascar. La première, inféodée au système socio politico économique importé par l'Etat colonial, est véhiculée par une culture politique de dépendance en la personne des dirigeants du PADESM et des partis néo-PADESM de la fin du XXe siècle et du début du millénaire. La deuxième, qui prône la souveraineté nationale, est animée par les patriotes authentiques indépendants ». ⁶² Cet article, récemment publié dans un journal malgache, est révélateur du fossé séparant l'histoire scientifique telle qu'elle est enseignée dans les universitaires et l'« histoire-mémoire » véhiculée par certains cercles qui s'(auto)représentent comme les dépositaires de l'héritage laissé par ceux qui ont luttés contre la domination française pendant la période coloniale. Mais les choses sont encore plus complexes du fait que même les historiens n'arrivent pas toujours aux mêmes conclusions dans leur analyse du mouvement de résistance au fait colonial.

De l'histoire à la polémique : renouveau de la thèse du complot colonialiste

L'historiographie du nationalisme malgache épouse l'évolution politique de Madagascar depuis son accession à l'indépendance en 1960. Des questions générationnelles influent notamment sur la manière dont on écrit l'histoire de la lutte pour l'indépendance. D'une manière générale, on remarque que ceux qui ont abordés la question du nationalisme dans les années 1960 à 1980 n'ont pas toujours la même conception que ceux de la génération 1990-2000. De même, l'appartenance sociologique des historiens compte énormément dans leurs écrits sur la résistance des Malgaches à la domination coloniale.

Ces considérations ne peuvent qu'influer sur la connaissance historique. On peut le constater justement dans l'enseignement. Et dans la mesure où le programme scolaire est étroitement lié à l'idéologie de l'Etat ainsi qu'à l'évolution de la recherche universitaire et extra-universitaire, il n'est pas étonnant que les résultats des recherches récentes sont largement contestés par une partie de la population notamment celle scolarisée pendant la Seconde République (1975-1991). L'histoire de l'insurrection de 1947 donne un exemple intéressant.

En effet, depuis la thèse de Ramanantsoa-Ramarcel sur les sociétés secrètes (Ramanantsoa 1986.), les historiens, aussi bien malgaches qu'étrangers, sont unanimes : l'insurrection n'a pas été ni organisée ni préparée par les autorités coloniales dans l'éventualité de décapiter le mouvement d'émancipation malgache en général et le MDRM en particulier. Mais récemment, quelques cercles de réflexion et notamment complot mis au point par les autorités coloniales.

Leur argumentation est d'une simplicité déconcertante. Elle se base sur le contexte politique de l'époque et notamment sur les succès électoraux du Mouvement de la Rénovation Malgache. « Les autorités françaises craignent que les Malgaches accèdent à l'indépendance par la voie légale du fait même des victoires électorales du MDRM lors des élections de 1945 à 1947. C'est pourquoi, elles ont fomenté une rébellion pour démanteler le parti ». ⁶³ Bien sûr, on n'explique pas que ces consultations ont pour cadre le contexte républicain français et que Madagascar, à l'époque, ne dispose que de deux puis trois députés sur plus de 500 parlementaires métropolitains. Déjà, à l'époque, la même conception, trop simpliste voire naïve, est partagée par un certain nombre des dirigeants du MDRM et par la plupart de ses sympathisants. Effectivement, forts de leur expérience électorale de 1939, ⁶⁴ ils considèrent les élections comme une source de pouvoir et de légitimité, certes nouvelle, mais beaucoup plus crédible et plus importante pour lutter efficacement contre le régime colonial dans un cadre tout à fait légal. Ainsi, ils surestiment la signification qu'une consultation électorale peut fournir pour leur action (Rabemananjara 1953:32-33). Raymond William Rabemananjara, l'idéologue du MDRM, le constate clairement en écrivant que « beaucoup des Malgaches ont mis leur confiance dans les consultations électorales pour élire les députés. Ces derniers eux-mêmes croyaient que cela peut produire *ipso facto* à la possibilité de faire octroyer un transfert de souveraineté en faveur de Madagascar, qu'ils appellent la voie « légale » et, par déduction, ils avaient été conduits à surestimer la signification des consultations électorales dans le cadre du régime colonial. Il leur semble suffisant d'avoir pour eux, qui avaient personnellement souffert des mesures de répression l'approbation plus ou moins sentimentale d'une majorité

électorale autour d'un programme de réformes du système électoral » (Rabemananjara 1953:32-33).

Il est évident que les succès électoraux du MDRM sont autant d'événements importants pour l'évolution politique de Madagascar. Ils marquent notamment la force des idpes indpendantistes dans l'opinion insulaire. Mais force est d'affirmer qu'en période coloniale, les élections sont loin d'être « le moyen pour accéder à l'indépendance notamment avant la Loi-cadre de 1956. Ceux qui l'avancent utilisent ainsi le peu de « méconnaissance » dont dispose la majorité des Malgaches sur l'insurrection et sur le MDRM. Ils présentent ce dernier comme le grand parti nationaliste pourvu d'une force tellement énorme que la répression resterait le seul alternatif que disposent les autorités coloniales de l'époque pour arrêter la marche de la colonie vers l'indépendance sous la conduite du parti. Selon encore leur explication, les Français ne peuvent pas directement procéder à la décapitation du MDRM. Il leur faut un alibi. C'est pour cette raison qu'ils auraient « infiltré des agents dans les différentes sections du parti. L'objectif serait d'amener les militants à adopter la violence comme moyen de revendication. Ainsi, les membres de la JINA et du PANAMA ne seraient que des « traîtres » au service des colonialistes dans le but de torpiller la politique pacifiste du MDRM. Et par la même logique, les près d'un million d'hommes et de femmes, touchés de près ou de loin par l'insurrection, se seraient embarqués dans une lutte dont le plan aurait été concocté dans les bureaux de la Sûreté Générale de Tananarive et en particulier par son chef, Marcel Baron.

C'est pour ces raisons que des organisations comme *Otrikafoou*⁶⁵ encore *Zanakin'ny*⁶⁶ MDRM réclament la fin de la commémoration de la journée du 29 Mars à Madagascar.⁶⁷ Elles dénoncent également l'association du nom du parti de la Rénovation avec celui de l'insurrection. Cette dernière ne serait pas ainsi une lutte nationaliste et ceux qui y ont participé ne sont pas des nationalistes. Au contraire, ceux-ci ne seraient que des « crédules » trompés par les agents infiltrés des colonialistes, voire même des « traîtres à la nation ». Les députés du MDRM eux-mêmes, dès le lendemain de l'insurrection, ont eu la même position.

Bien sûr, de telles argumentations s'opposent avec les résultats des recherches historiques publiés depuis au moins une vingtaine d'années à Madagascar et à l'étranger. Une discordance qui est à l'origine d'une véritable polémique par presse interposée. Dans tous les cas, les historiens actuels pensent que le MDRM est, en partie, responsable de l'éclatement de l'insurrection de 1947-1948. Voici justement le point de connaissance sur l'implication du parti dans les origines de cette lutte armée.

Préalablement, évoquer la responsabilité du MDRM dans l'insurrection est une question délicate. En effet, la plupart des historiens tendent à écarter

l'accusation des autorités françaises selon laquelle le parti aurait comploté pour faire éclater ce mouvement.⁶⁸ Il ne s'agit pas ici de reprendre la thèse administrative sur l'implication du MDRM dans la lutte armée et notamment le prétendu complot. Il s'agit plutôt d'évaluer la responsabilité du parti dans la mise en place d'une situation politique et sociale violente avant Mars 1947. Deux points sont à soulever. Le premier est relatif à la faiblesse structurelle du parti. Dans ce cas là, l'insurrection est le résultat non pas de la force du parti mais de sa faiblesse organisationnelle. Le deuxième point concerne les activités du parti qui ont conduit aux divers incidents pré insurrectionnels qui ont secoué le pays. La lutte commencée au mois de Mars 1947 n'est donc, dans ce cadre-là, qu'une tentative plus ou moins réussie, de généraliser une insurrection largement entamée dès 1946. La date du 29 Mars n'est donc qu'un « lieu de mémoire » au sens que Pierre Nora donne à ce terme. Le symbole d'une lutte nationaliste dont la génération postérieure a besoin au nom de la mémoire de son pays et de son aspiration à l'indépendance.

Le MDRM : coupable ou victime ?

Il est indéniable que le nom du Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache est étroitement associé à l'insurrection de 1947-1948. Beaucoup de combattants se sont engagés au nom du parti et ont cru répondre à l'appel des députés.

Des attaques au nom du MDRM

Le premier foyer d'insurrection se situe dans le triangle Ambila-Sahasinaka-Ampasimanjeva et atteint très vite Manakara.⁶⁹ Au même moment, Moramanga est attaqué par près de 2 000 insurgés (Tronchon J., 1986: 43). Les camps militaires et les postes de gendarmerie sont les premières cibles des insurgés, sans doute, dans le dessein de s'approprier les armes qui y sont entreposées (Rabearimanana 1980:73). En outre, de nombreuses principales victimes sont les colons isolés et certains membres du PADESM.⁷⁰ Dans d'autres localités comme à Tananarive, à Diégo-Suarez ou encore à Fianarantsoa, les plans d'attaque sont désamorçés avant leur déclenchement. Mais petit à petit, l'insurrection gagne du terrain et touche une grande partie de la région orientale de Madagascar. Elle ne cesse de s'étendre jusqu'en Juillet 1947, date qui correspond à la période où l'armée française reprend l'initiative grâce à l'arrivée des renforts militaires. En dépit de l'appel au calme lancé par les principaux leaders du parti de la Rénovation et le désaveu des parlementaires, la violence ne cesse pas.

En fait, cette insurrection n'a surpris qu'à moitié les différents acteurs politiques à Madagascar. Depuis des mois, des bruits couraient que certains milieux nationalistes préparaient un « coup » contre la présence française.

La date du 29 Mars elle-même est connue des services de la Sûreté Générale. L'ambiance politique tendue, générée par les multiples consultations électorales, laisse penser que quelque chose est en train de tramer. De multiples incidents éclatent dans différentes localités de Madagascar et touchent aussi bien le monde urbain (Tananarive, Antsirabe) que rural (Androrangavola, Anosibe, Ifanadiana). Ce qu'un rapport de la Direction des Affaires Politiques souligne : « Les tragiques événements qui se sont déroulés à Madagascar, depuis le 29 Mars 1947, n'ont pas éclaté comme un coup de tonnerre dans un ciel serein. Français et Malgaches ont encore présent à la mémoire l'atmosphère trouble qui régnait alors et qui allait s'aggravant depuis 1945. Dans certains centres, en brousse, notamment sur la côte est, on vivait dans un véritable climat de préparation à une révolte. Pour les Malgaches loyaux, pour les colons, pour les fonctionnaires, cette atmosphère était voulue, entretenue par une organisation bien connue, par des hommes dont le nom même était un symbole d'hostilité envers la France ».⁷¹

Face à la situation insurrectionnelle, les autorités proclament l'état de siège dans une dizaine de districts de l'Est (Mananjary, Vohipeno, Manakara, Moramanga, Ifanadiana, Nosy-Varika, Mahanoro, Vatomandry, Ambatondrazaka, Fianarantsoa). Mais cela n'empêche pas que de grosses localités comme Ambohimahaso, Tamatave ou encore la capitale du Betsileo soient menacées.⁷² Des régions des Hautes-Terres centrales comme Antsirabe, Fandriana, Betafo sont dans la même situation. Seule la côte occidentale semble épargnée par la violence.

Parallèlement à l'extension de la zone insurgée, les responsables du Territoire mènent une répression sanglante, du moins dans les quelques mois qui suivent Mars 1947. Elle est d'ordre aussi bien militaire que policier. En effet, pour l'administration coloniale, le parti de la Rénovation a tout organisme. Une position que l'Avocat Général Rolland exprime bien dans un rapport du 21 Août 1947 : « Il m'apparaît qu'un point de départ incontestable doit être pris : c'est que la révolte a été faite par des hommes du MDRM, avec les moyens du MDRM, en s'attaquant aux ennemis du MDRM, en épargnant les hommes du MDRM, et en invoquant le nom des chefs du MDRM » (Cité in Spacensky 1970:68). La situation sur le terrain semble corroborer cette accusation : « Les commandos d'insurgés de Moramanga ont défoncé les portes de l'hôtel Larrieu « au nom du MDRM ». Les ordres d'attaque portaient des locaux du bureau local du MDRM. Dans la région de Manakara, les coups de main d'Ambila et de Sahasinaka ont été conduits de même, « au nom du MDRM ». Ce sont les troupes du MDRM, brandissant le « drapeau du MDRM », qui ont investi le terrain d'aviation de Manakara. L'organisation du MDRM constitue le support fondamental de l'insurrection, au moins pendant les premiers mois. Par ailleurs, la plupart des documents

sont signés au nom du MDRM. Les soldats combattent pour le MDRM, avec lequel la patrie se trouve identifiée » (Tronchon 1986:83). Les autorités coloniales croient même que l'insurrection a été préparée au siège du parti trois jours avant son déclenchement.

La réunion du 27 Mars 1947

Pour l'Administration, il n'y a pas de doute, l'insurrection est un complot ourdi par le MDRM. De Coppet lui-même en est convaincu : « la simultanéité des mouvements insurrectionnels à Moramanga, Diégo, Manakara, Vohipeno, témoigne de l'existence d'un vaste complot étendant ses ramifications dans toute l'île. Après avoir pris l'apparence d'un mouvement tendant à l'octroi à Madagascar, par des moyens légaux, de l'indépendance au sein de l'Union Française, le MDRM a révélé peu à peu ses véritables buts en se livrant à des manœuvres dirigées contre la souveraineté de la France ». ⁷³ Toute l'accusation contre le parti repose sur la réunion du 27 Mars 1947 pendant laquelle les principaux dirigeants du MDRM auraient peaufiné les derniers détails de l'insurrection. En fait, lors de cette rencontre, le Bureau Politique de Soarano a convoqué ses membres pour discuter des questions concernant la désignation des membres du bureau de l'Assemblée Provinciale nouvellement élus. Le même jour, un militant de Fianarantsoa, Rakoto François de Sales évoque avec le député Rabemananjara la possibilité d'une révolte pour le 29 Mars. Après discussion, le Comité Central décide d'envoyer à toutes les sections du parti un télégramme d'appel au calme : « Prière diffuser et afficher texte : ordre impératif est donné à toutes sections à tous membres MDRM garder calme et sang froid absolus devant provocations toutes natures destinées à saboter politique pacifique MDRM » (Maron 1971:131). Mais pour les autorités coloniales, c'est un message codé appelant les combattants à passer à l'acte. Le Juge d'Instruction Cazalou l'a bien noté lors de son réquisitoire contre Ravoahangy : « qu'avec Rabemananjara, vous [Ravoahangy] avez rédigé le télégramme du 27 Mars adressé aux diverses sections du MDRM de la Colonie, télégramme apparemment d'appel au calme mais constituant en réalité la confirmation de l'ordre de révolte précédemment diffusé en secret ». ⁷⁴ D'ailleurs, pour les autorités judiciaires, l'insurrection a connu une phase préparatoire pendant laquelle les « divers conjurés [sont] venus à Tananarive de divers points de l'île pour se renseigner exactement sur le soulèvement qui se préparait. Il s'agit, sans doute, d'une allusion à certains délégués des sections MDRM qui ont rejoint la capitale pour assister à ce qui aurait dû être le premier Congrès du parti.

Quoi qu'il en soit, la situation joue en défaveur du MDRM. Les « aveux » des principaux dirigeants du parti semblent clairs : il y a eu complot pour mettre fin à la domination française sur la Grande Île. Martin Rakotovao,

secrétaire-général adjoint du parti, est le premier à « lâcher le morceau. Après avoir été torturé à la Sûreté Générale, il charge les parlementaires d'avoir tout organisé : « Je n'ai été qu'un simple agent d'exécution des ordres qui m'étaient donnés par les députés Raseta, Ravoahangy, Rabemananjara et par le bureau politique du MDRM. Je sais que l'ordre vient de Paris ». ⁷⁵ Plus tard, l'interrogatoire des autres membres du bureau politique confirmera sa déclaration.

Mais pour le Mouvement de la Renovation, ces « aveux ont été soutirés par l'utilisation de la violence physique et des menaces sur les membres de la famille des accusés. Lors des différents procès liés à l'affaire, plusieurs parmi ces derniers témoignent contre les procédés utilisés par les services de la Police pour l'obtention de ces confessions. Des faits que les autorités françaises ont reconnu en écartant Baron et Vergoz de leur fonction quelque temps plus tard. ⁷⁶

Les dirigeants du parti tentent alors de dégager leur responsabilité dans l'origine de l'insurrection. Dès le 31 Mars, les deux députés, Ravoahangy et Rabemananjara, diffusent une proclamation dans ce sens : « réprobation la plus formelle de ces actes de barbarie et de violence. Nous espérons que la Justice fera jaillir toute la vérité et déterminera la responsabilité de ces crimes. Nous affirmons solennellement que le bureau politique du MDRM n'a jamais participé à la machination et à la réalisation de ces actes odieux ». ⁷⁷ Ainsi, les principaux dirigeants du parti se désolidarisent de l'insurrection et pointent du doigt, comme responsables, les « agents de la colonisation. L'Administration aurait ainsi utilisé les affiliés des sociétés secrètes, la JINA et la PANAMA, ⁷⁸ pour la déclencher. Les membres de ces dernières ne sont que des éléments incontrôlés à la solde des colonialistes. Ravoahangy déclare dans sa déposition devant le juge Vergoz : « s'il était prouvé que certains membres de ce parti étaient à l'origine de ces événements, nous nous désolidariserions de ces gens-là. J'estime que tous doivent suivre les directives du parti qui réproouve la violence ». ⁷⁹

Le but aurait été de trouver le moyen de mettre le MDRM hors d'état de nuire étant donné ses succès complets lors des différentes consultations électorales à Madagascar. D'ailleurs, la montée en puissance du parti a de quoi inquiéter l'Administration coloniale qui voit d'un très mauvais œil une autre structure lui disputer son autorité sur la population. Déjà, en Septembre 1946, le Ministre de la France d'Outre-mer a donné comme instruction aux responsables du Territoire de combattre le parti « par tous les moyens. Dans ce cas, l'insurrection n'est qu'une « provocation de l'administration coloniale pour écraser le MDRM et le mouvement nationaliste malgache » (Rabearimanana 1988-2:156). Plus tard, les anciens dirigeants du parti, dans leur mémoire concernant l'événement, soutiendront encore cette idée.

Mais ces deux thèses (responsabilité du MDRM et celle de l'administration) souffrent de nombreuses contradictions face à l'examen sérieux des réalités de l'insurrection. D'autres pistes ont été explorées pour mieux comprendre l'insurrection et mesurer la part de responsabilité des uns et des autres dans ses origines. Parmi elles, on peut citer la faiblesse structurelle du parti de la Rénovation. Victime de son succès phénoménal, le MDRM s'est livré à des surenchères revendicatives dont la première conséquence est une déconnexion entre sa sphère dirigeante et sa base. Incapable de contrôler cette dernière, il n'a pu empêcher ses sections et ses partisans de la côte orientale de Madagascar d'entrer dans une lutte violente contre le colonialisme français. C'est dans ce sens que les événements de 1947-1948, aussi complexes soient-ils, ne peuvent être dissociés de cette ambiance surchauffée précédant l'embrasement général à partir de Mars 1947.

Les troubles préinsurrectionnels.

Le MDRM a été créé pour faire réélire ses parlementaires (Lahiniriko 2000). Et pour mener à bien cette mission, le parti a senti très vite le besoin de constituer une vaste clientèle (membres et sympathisants). Ainsi, il a initié une campagne de propagande intense en utilisant les moyens qui sont à sa disposition : presse, discours publics, sermons, porte-à-porte. Ses différentes structures (sections locales, cellules, sections des jeunes, coopératives) sont mises à contribution pour atteindre cet objectif. Mais assez rapidement, des dérives verbales sont enregistrées de la part non seulement des organes proches du parti mais également de ses propres dirigeants.

Ainsi durant l'année 1946 et le début de 1947, le discours du MDRM présente une contradiction flagrante. Officiellement, le programme du parti est basé sur le triptyque « légalisme-pacifisme-réformisme » (Lahiniriko 2000). Ce qu'un rapport administratif confirme : « Cette propagande [du MDRM] n'était pas dirigée contre la France, elle ne constituait pas un appel à la violence. Elle avait pour thème la transformation de Madagascar, par des moyens légaux et pacifiques, en État libre au sein de l'Union Française. Rien de moins, mais rien de plus ». ⁸⁰ Mais dans la réalité, il n'en va pas toujours ainsi.

Les dérives de la presse proche du MDRM

A Madagascar, les journaux constituent un puissant moyen d'influencer la population. Certes, les tirages ne sont pas élevés mais chaque publication circule de main en main et fait l'objet de commentaires. Ils atteignent une partie non négligeable de la population, rurale comme urbaine. D'ailleurs, la lecture collective de la presse fait en sorte que cet ascendant augmente encore d'une manière notable.

Officiellement, le MDRM ne possède pas d'organe attitré sauf la section de Diégo-Suarez qui a son propre journal, *Ny Fivondronana Malagasy*, dont

la publication débute à partir d'Octobre 1946. Mais un certain nombre de titres diffusent régulièrement ses idées politiques. On peut citer entre autres *Ny Rariny-La Justice* de Jules Ranaivo, *Ny Kintan'ny Maraina* de Docteur Joseph Rakotonirainy, *Fahafahana* dirigé par Martin Rakotovao ou encore *Mongo* de Randriambololona. Dès 1945, ces feuilles se lancent dans une critique acerbe de la présence française à Madagascar, une dénonciation qui s'amplifie au fur et à mesure que le temps avance. Elle atteint son paroxysme en 1946 et pendant les premiers mois de l'année 1947. Cela est rendu possible par la libéralisation du régime de la presse à la fin du conflit (Rabearimanana 1980:72) dont le symbole fort semble être l'arrêté du 24 Novembre 1945 promulguant à Madagascar l'ordonnance du 2 Novembre 1945 qui supprime la censure préalable, « ce qui signifie le retour à la liberté de presse » (Rabearimanana 1980:72).

C'est dans ce cadre que la presse fait le procès du demi-siècle de présence française à Madagascar. Celle-ci est très négativement jugée. Les Français sont taxés d'esclavagistes, de barbares qui font souffrir le peuple malgache. La presse dénonce également l'exploitation colonialiste : «Le peuple malgache est exploité, le peuple malgache est maintenu dans la misère par la volonté de l'administration colonialiste. L'Administration à Madagascar ne gouverne pas pour les Malgaches [mais] pour les trusts. Ainsi, Madagascar est maintenue dans un régime de misère où l'homme, où l'indigène est considéré comme une bête de somme ».⁸¹

La presse du MDRM s'en prend ensuite aux organes proches de l'Administration ou des colons (*Ligue des Intérêts franco-malgaches*, *Tana-Journal*, *L'Avenir de Madagascar...*). Ceux-ci répliquent en attaquant violemment le parti des députés accusé d'être « communiste », « parti hova », « parti des nobles », « collaborationniste ».⁸² La conséquence de cette surenchère verbale est telle que le ton monte en *crescendo* pour atteindre son summum avec le cinquantième anniversaire de la loi d'annexion du 6 Août 1896. Pour les journaux du parti de la Rénovation, la date du 6 Août 1946 doit être « un jour de deuil, anniversaire du jour où l'on a ravi son indépendance à la Nation Malgache ».⁸³ « Tous ceux qui se rendent compte de cela, doivent faire tout ce qui est en leurs moyens en signe de deuil et de recueillement : calme absolu. Les uns fermeront les magasins, les autres ne travailleront pas, d'autres encore s'abstiendront de sortir, et d'autres porteront des brassards de crêpe, etc. ».⁸⁴ C'est un jour lors duquel « un malheur terrible s'abattit sur les Malgaches »⁸⁵ car ils étaient victimes d'« un acte de brigandage sans pareil dans l'histoire ».⁸⁶ Mais la presse du MDRM ne s'arrête pas aux dénonciations de la colonisation et de ses abus. Elle se livre également à la création d'une atmosphère sociopolitique trouble, comme la montre bien l'affaire de Sabotsy-Namehana.

Le rôle de la presse dans l'affaire de Sabotsy-Namehana

Le 23 Juin 1946, lors d'une foire qui s'est tenue dans cette localité proche de la capitale, un gendarme tue deux Malgaches suite à un incident qui aurait pu être une simple affaire de mœurs. Mais très vite la presse nationaliste le transforme en une véritable affaire opposant les Malgaches (représentés par les deux jeunes tués, Ramarolahy et Ramanambelo) victimes du régime et les colonialistes français (à l'image du gendarme qui a tiré sur la foule et a tué).

Dès le lendemain, *Ny Fahafahana* titre que « Madagascar est en deuil : deux de ses enfants encore jeunes sont morts, fusillés par un gendarme français ». ⁸⁷ Son sous-titre est plus explicite : « Assassinat qui prouve de la bestialité, là-bas, à Sabotsy-Namehana ». ⁸⁸ Et le journal de continuer que « quand on réfléchit, il semble que cette attaque ait été préméditée. Il semble que ce soit pour épouvanter et pour effrayer ». ⁸⁹ Quant à *Ny Kintan'ny Maraina*, il qualifie les deux meurtres de « terribles assassinats montrant de la sauvagerie. On voit à présent que nombreux Européens se fâchaient sans motif contre les Malgaches parce que ces derniers réclament ce qui fait qu'ils sont des supportent le coup quand même et attendent la revanche de la vérité ». ⁹⁰

Très rapidement, la presse fait le rapprochement entre cet incident et l'affaire d'Indochine : « Bains de sang en Indochine avant d'accorder l'indépendance à l'Union Indochinoise. Bains de sang de Ramarolahy et Ramanambelo de Sabotsy-Namehana et tant d'autres crimes (cachés soigneusement pour la cause) dans notre pays, à Madagascar » écrit *Ny Rariny-La Justice*. ⁹¹ Les journaux nationalistes en profitent alors pour dénoncer d'autres « crimes » colonialistes dans la Grande Île comme les « assassinats à Antsirabe » dénoncés par *Mongo* du 26 Juillet 1946. De telles manœuvres n'échappent pas aux autorités administratives quand elle évoque une autre affaire de même genre. Un rapport note qu'« en Novembre 1946, un incident se produit à Sakaraha, dans le district de Tuléar le MDRM n'y est pas étranger. Sous le titre « Les Barbares » le 17 décembre *Ny Rariny* en rejette la responsabilité sur l'Administration. Quant à *Ny Fireneko* du 19 Décembre 1946, à propos de la même affaire, il dénonce l'étrange terreur qui règne à Madagascar, évoque Hitler, parle d'incitation « à la révolte ». ⁹²

Cette affaire de Sabotsy-Namehana donne ainsi une idée assez claire du rôle de la presse nationaliste du lendemain de la guerre jusqu'à l'éclatement de l'insurrection. Tout en dénonçant les traîtres, ennemis de l'indépendance de Madagascar, elle fabrique également des héros et des martyrs : « Nous invitons le cœur malgache à s'incliner avec respect et les Malgaches à graver dans leurs cœurs, les noms de ces deux martyrs : feu Ramarolahy (27 ans) feu Ramabambelo (18 ans) ». ⁹³

Le thème du martyr

À partir des exemples comme celui de deux morts de Sabotsy-Namehana, la presse du MDRM appelle les Malgaches à ne pas hésiter à sacrifier leur vie pour la patrie. Ce qu'un rapport administratif semble bien démontrer : « Ce peuple Malgache, entouré d'agents provocateurs, persécuté par l'Administration française, dont le sang coule tous les jours, que l'on opprime, que l'on exploite, que l'on massacre, il ne doit pas avoir peur de ses bourreaux car il est « fort et courageux ». C'est le thème de la Libération obtenue par les patriotes au prix d'une « lutte » dans laquelle, s'il le faut, ils sacrifieront leur vie ».⁹⁴

En effet, pour la plupart des dirigeants du MDRM, la lutte pour l'indépendance est difficile. D'où un besoin d'exalter une certaine « mystique de la résistance active, de la force, de l'union dans le combat ». La vie elle-même ne l'emporte pas devant la nation car elle est sacrée : « Les Malgaches préfèrent mourir plutôt que ne pas obtenir leur indépendance » écrit *Ny Rariny-La Justice*.⁹⁶ *Ny Fahafahana* va encore plus loin dans un article daté du 11 décembre 1946 intitulé « Époque d'épreuve et d'endurance » : « L'attaque de l'ennemi pour détruire est furieuse ; la haine de ceux qui n'aiment pas est violente, les persécutions de toutes sortes se poursuivent précipitamment, tandis que le bateau de la liberté de la population malgache avance irrésistiblement.. Tous les Malgaches qui vivent à cette époque, les hommes et les femmes, les petits et les grands, ceux qui sont haut placés et ceux qui sont bas, se souviendront nécessairement que si nous parlons de cette liberté et de cette indépendance, ce n'est pas que nous promettons un lit moelleux et un oreiller de velours ni une abondance, ni du bonheur : le prix de la liberté est une lutte intellectuelle et matérielle dure, de la privation, un grand dévouement, de la patience et une espérance impossible à étouffer, de la souffrance, des larmes et parfois la mort, que les autres nations ont employés pour l'obtenir.⁹⁷ Il est évident que les journaux nationalistes essaient de mobiliser certains éléments de l'histoire de Madagascar et notamment ceux des martyrs chrétiens du XIXe siècle. Des allusions sont donc faites pour mieux affirmer le caractère sacré du *Tanindrazana*.

C'est ainsi que cette presse se lance dans des articles qui s'apparentent à de véritables appels à la violence. Le véritable début d'une campagne dans ce sens coïncide avec les élections de Juin 1946 et le ton monte ensuite de plus en plus. Ainsi, *Ny Fahafahana* déclare en Juillet 1946 que « La liberté ne se donne pas mais s'arrache et se conquiert. Est-ce que nous nous sommes préparés à la cueillir ? ».⁹⁸ Dans un autre papier, le même journal écrit que « Nous sommes prêts, s'il le fallait en dernier recours à conquérir la liberté par tous les moyens, fussent-ils violents ».⁹⁹ On exhorte alors les Malgaches

à passer « à l'action » car « les désirs seuls et les prières seules que n'accompagnent pas les actes ne permettent pas d'obtenir l'indépendance, car Dieu n'aide pas celui qui ne s'aide pas lui-même ». ¹⁰⁰ Déjà, en Mars 1946, *Ny Rariny-La Justice* appelle la population à résister à la violence de ceux qui s'opposent à l'indépendance du pays : « celui qui laisse son adversaire manœuvrer à sa guise sans riposter est le plus malheureux des lâches. Individuellement, nous Malgaches devront être prêts à tout. Nous devons riposter à chaque attaque. Il faut tirer les Malgaches de cette peur, sans réflexion, de la prison et de la mort, de cet amour sans borne de la tranquillité, de « la vie est douce » (*mamy ny miaina*). Pour être tranquille, il ne faut pas éviter les bagarres provoquées, au contraire il faut chercher à se défendre légitimement, à s'entraîner et tout braver ». ¹⁰¹

Les critiques n'épargnent pas non plus les adversaires nationalistes du MDRM. Le PDM et le MSM sont taxés de partis de traîtres, prompts à diviser les Malgaches dans leur désir de s'affranchir de la colonisation. S'engage ainsi une véritable lutte opposant la presse proche du Mouvement de la Rénovation et *Ny Fandrosoam-Baovao* ou encore *Faheloavantana*. ¹⁰² Le plus souvent, le débat tourne autour des différentes conceptions de l'indépendance. Mais souvent, il s'agit d'attaques personnelles contre les dirigeants de chaque parti. Un exemple en est la bataille journalistique entre *Ny Fandrosoam-Baovao* du 27 Septembre 1946 et *Mongo* du 11 Octobre. Le différend porte sur l'interprétation de la conférence donnée par Ravoahangy à l'Hôtel Lutetia le 17 septembre 1946. Finalement, le résultat de ces campagnes de presse est l'atmosphère très lourde précédant mars 1947. *Lakroa* l'a bien sentie en écrivant que « l'esprit de la population s'agite beaucoup en raison des vicissitudes de la politique et en raison des nombreux articles à tendances diverses que publient les journaux malgaches des divers partis ». ¹⁰³ Le journal fait même une annonce prémonitoire en déclarant que « l'esprit de la population s'obscurcit, sa tête s'embrouille, et c'est une querelle qui risque de se produire ». ¹⁰⁴ L'éclatement de l'insurrection en Mars 1947 semble lui donner raison. D'autant que de leur côté, les principaux leaders du MDRM ne font rien pour arrêter cette surenchère médiatique. Pis, il apparaît qu'ils ont eux-mêmes participé à la création de cette situation pré insurrectionnelle.

La violence de la propagande du MDRM

La propagande du parti ne se limite pas à l'utilisation de la presse. Ses principaux leaders y compris les parlementaires se déplacent eux-mêmes dans les différentes localités de la Grande Île. Plusieurs thèmes sont développés pendant ces campagnes : exaltation du sentiment national très agressif (qui frôle parfois la xénophobie), attaque contre la France et notamment les méfaits de la colonisation à Madagascar, mise à l'actif des députés malgaches des

réformes libérales de 1946, mystique de lutte, de résistance et de la libération et parfois appel à la violence... En effet, en dépit des incessants discours des membres de la sphère dirigeante du MDRM sur leur volonté de collaborer avec la France, quelquefois, lors de leurs conférences et tournées, ils adoptent un ton qui semble indiquer le contraire. Ainsi, le député Rabemananjara et son équipe (formée entre autres de Bezaka Alexis et de Tata Maxime) s'illustrent par leurs propos incendiaires lors de leur passage dans la région orientale de l'île au début de 1947.

Officiellement, le parlementaire veut faire une tournée dans la circonscription dont il est l'plu ainsi qu'une campagne de sensibilisation auprès de la population locale pour qu'elle connaisse ses droits et ses devoirs¹⁰⁵ dans le nouveau contexte politique de l'après-guerre. Mais les discours prononcés prennent une forme de plus en plus violente dans sa condamnation du système colonial, de ses privilégiés (colons, citoyens français) et de ses différentes formes d'oppression. Max Tata, « l'orateur le plus violent »¹⁰⁶ à tel point « qu'il fait même peur à ses amis politiques »,¹⁰⁷ aurait même tenu les propos suivant : « vous avez peur des gardes indigènes. Deux suffisent pour mettre en émoi tout un village. Quand ces gens-là viennent vous déranger ligotez-les et présentez-les à leurs chefs. Si les gardes vous em (sic) jetez leur cadavre dans la rivière ». ¹⁰⁸ Pour les administrateurs, il ne fait pas de doute que les divers incidents (Anosibe, Androrangavola, Ifanadiana) qui se sont produits à travers l'Île, et dont sont victimes des gardes indigènes, ne peuvent être que l'aboutissement de tels propos.¹⁰⁹ La phrase de Rabemananjara selon laquelle l'indépendance est comme une viande dans la gueule d'un chat, qu'il faut donc arracher de force, devient célèbre et semble résumer, à elle seule, l'objectif de la tournée.

Le résultat est sans ambiguïté pour l'administration : les esprits sont surexcités à tel point « que la sécurité publique se trouve sérieusement compromise ; les éléments autochtones d'une part, naturellement portés à écouter les conseils qu'ils viennent d'entendre, abandonnent tous les chantiers, refusent de se conformer aux prescriptions réglementaires et législatives et créent des désordres nombreux ». ¹¹⁰ Un tel constat est contraire au vœu du député lui-même et de son parti dont un des districts de Vatomandry ne peut que rapporter qu'il ne sait pas « si cette propagande reflète foncièrement les idées des dirigeants. Personnellement je ne pense pas que la politique actuelle de la main tendue soit sincère ». ¹¹¹

Du côté même des partisans du MDRM, les propos de Rabemananjara et sa suite sont perçus comme un appel à la révolte (Fanony et Gueunier 1983:17 ; Rajerison 1976:31) à cause de leur violence. Mais il se pourrait que ce soit du à une interférence linguistique : « il y a un décalage entre le discours pensé par les leaders en langage politique moderne, et le discours effectivement

prononcé, et perçu, en malgache, par les auditeurs » (Fanony et Guenier 1983:17). En effet, il se peut que là où il est question de « luttes » politiques, parlementaires et électoralistes, par exemple, ces derniers pourront entendre « lutte » tout court et par conséquent guerre (Fanony et Guenier 1983:17). Dans ce cas, la propension à agir en employant la force est grande dans la mesure où bon nombre des militants du MDRM croient que l'intervention des députés leur garantira l'impunité. La Sûreté Générale le constate dans ses rapports selon lesquels les déplacements des parlementaires provoquent « du désordre dans la population indigène qui, se croyant protégée par les députés, espérait pouvoir tout faire et s'attacherait à suivre aveuglement les conseils qui leur sont donnés ». Une bonne partie de la population agit de la même manière si ces recommandations viennent de gens qui font un usage abusif du nom de ces élus pour attirer plus de sympathie et plus de partisans pour leur propre cause (comme c'est le cas des membres des sociétés secrètes), évidemment à l'insu des concernés. Les encouragements donnés aux adhérents du MDRM pour qu'ils persistent dans leurs idées indépendantistes et pour qu'ils résistent malgré les persécutions éventuelles et effectives¹¹² rendent encore l'atmosphère beaucoup plus lourde, en particulier à la veille de l'insurrection de Mars 1947.

Une atmosphère politique pré insurrectionnelle.

Les campagnes de propagande ont ainsi généré une situation sociopolitique tendue à la veille de l'insurrection. Cette tension est surtout palpable dans la région orientale, là où justement la lutte armée va éclater quelques temps après.

Malgré les appels au calme, la volonté affichée de collaborer avec l'administration, les déclarations officielles pour une cohabitation pacifique entre Malgaches et Français, les multiples appels du Bureau Politique du MDRM à la population pour qu'elle s'oppose pacifiquement aux provocations, on constate que les membres du parti aussi bien dans les centres urbains qu'en milieu rural sont enclins à une résistance violente.

Ainsi, devant certaines exactions du régime et de ses représentants, les sections de base n'hésitent pas à répliquer d'une manière agressive. C'est dans ce sens qu'il faut comprendre leur responsabilité dans les origines des mouvements ou des actions contre les agents de l'administration et les colons. A leur niveau, la violence et la résistance musclée trouvent leurs partisans les plus convaincus. Cela explique, dans une large mesure, les différents événements tels les affaires de Sabotsy-Namehana, d'Androrangavola, d'Anosibe, d'Ifanadiana, d'Ampasinambo, de Benenitra, de Mahanoro, de Vatamandry et bien d'autres encore, d'une ampleur plus ou moins importante. Tous ces incidents confirment qu'il existe une période prélude à l'insurrection, au cours de laquelle les conditions d'un soulèvement populaire contre

l'occupant sont réunies (l'effort de guerre, les privations, le vent soudain de liberté, les élections, la propagande, les luttes acharnées entre les partis politiques...) D'où les multiples soulèvements localisés qui sont souvent fortement réprimés par le pouvoir précédant le soubresaut généralisé de 1947-1948. Donnons-en quelques exemples.

La côte Est en ébullition

L'année 1946 n'est pas une période clémente pour l'administration coloniale. Dans la région orientale, la paix coloniale est plus que jamais ébranlée. La responsabilité de cette situation en incombe largement aux sections du MDRM (Ifanadiana, Anosibe).¹¹³ Le même contexte explosif prévaut également dans certains districts comme Mahanoro, Antalaha, Fianarantsoa.¹¹⁴

En effet, dans plusieurs localités, la propagande du parti est axée sur l'exploitation de la réalité quotidienne des Malgaches, en particulier la dureté de leurs conditions de vie. Elles tournent généralement autour de plusieurs thèmes : le départ des Français oppresseurs, le boycottage des fonctionnaires et des colons, le retour aux coutumes ancestrales (culture de tabac, fabrication d'alcool, *tavy*), la mise en place du pouvoir du MDRM qui remplacera celui de la France. On annonce également que l'autorité réelle est désormais entre les mains des députés et que les adversaires du MDRM seront expulsés sinon massacrés au moment de l'avènement de l'indépendance.

Ainsi, des milices d'autodéfense se constituent un peu partout. L'exemple le plus connu est les fameux « *Miaramila* de Ravoahangy »¹¹⁵ à Moramanga : plus de 450 hommes qui se réunissent deux fois par semaine pour s'entraîner militairement sous la conduite des anciens combattants.¹¹⁶ Dans le poste de Marolambo, les principaux chefs de sections MDRM tels que Bizy Paul, Doama Samson, Botozafy Simplicie, Ranaivo Penaul, Lebo Justin ou encore Marson Justin organisent leur association en véritables troupes armées. Ainsi Bizy, chef de section d'Ambinanindrano, fait tailler une matraque modèle dont les caractéristiques sont les suivantes : longueur totale 0,90m, longueur de la manche 0,30m, masse longueur 0,60m, section carrée de 4cm. Elle est faite de bois.¹¹⁷ Les consignes données à ces troupes sont claires : au premier appel d'un membre du MDRM, tous les adhérents doivent se précipiter vers le lieu de l'accrochage, munis de leurs armes et prêts à attaquer tout assaillant. Des sanctions sont prévues contre quiconque n'obéit pas à ces dispositions et des exercices de rassemblement et d'entraînement réguliers et fréquents sont organisés dans la localité.

De tels procédés sont largement acceptés par la population. D'autant que pour beaucoup, l'Administration coloniale n'est plus une menace, du moins elle n'est plus redoutée comme auparavant. Désormais, le MDRM exerce une autorité bien plus importante que celle du chef de district ou du canton.

D'ailleurs, la propagande du parti a largement porté ses fruits : « Autoriser les *Tavys*¹¹⁸ dans une région forestière, donner cette autorisation à des Betsimisaraka, très attachés à ce mode de culture attirait au MDRM tous les suffrages ; affirmer que le Gouvernement n'existait plus à une population qui avait fourni pendant quatre ans, un fort contingent de requis et de tirailleurs, au moment où la réquisition était supprimée et où les démobilisés regagnaient leurs villages, étaient admis sans commentaire comme une vérité d'autant plus que cette affirmation était faite des indigènes certainement les plus arriérées de la race betsimisaraka, alors que leur était donnée une ne rentrent plus normalement ; fonctionnaires, colons et membres du PADESM se sentent plus que jamais assiégés et menacés ; la forêt brûle ; les concessions sont désertées par les travailleurs malgaches.

Enfin plus grave, sans doute, la diminution sinon la disparition de l'autorité française dans certaines localités. Ces considérations permettent au Haut Commissaire de conclure que « l'action du MDRM constitue une menace pour la souveraineté française. L'instruction judiciaire ouverte au sujet des faits d'Anosibe et d'Ifanadiana, celle également en cours pour des faits secondaires (Antalaha et Fianarantsoa notamment) établiront les responsabilités ». ¹¹⁹ La lutte contre MDRM est ainsi devenue une des priorités des autorités coloniales.

Finalement, avec les résultats des recherches historiques actuelles sur l'insurrection de 1947 à Madagascar, la responsabilité du MDRM paraît être lourdement engagée. Cette lutte armée n'est ainsi que la continuité et la généralisation d'une tension sociopolitique née vers le milieu de l'année 1946. Bien sûr, une telle conception a été combattue par ceux même qui ont dirigé le parti à tel point qu'ils ont accusé les chefs de guerre de la forêt de l'Est comme étant des traîtres au service de l'Administration française et des colonialistes. Soixante ans plus tard, le débat sur l'insurrection fait encore rage et à chaque publication d'ouvrages lui concernant ou à chaque journée commémorative de cette insurrection, des « polémiques » ne tardent jamais à se produire. L'une d'entre elles concerne le nombre des victimes.

Génocide ou massacres coloniaux

Depuis la guerre civile au Rwanda et en ex-Yougoslavie et la diffusion des images d'horreur sur ces crimes à grande échelle, le mot « génocide » est largement entré dans le vocabulaire « ordinaire » de par le monde. A Madagascar, le terme est largement exploité à tel point qu'il perd son sens exact. La caricature est poussée à l'extrême quand certains journaux parlent de génocide même lors d'une de ces attaques crapuleuses de villa dans la grande banlieue d'Antananarivo et pendant banalisation d'un terme à forte signification et dont la science historique fera le frais.

Conflit entre mémoire et histoire

En effet, lors de la célébration du cinquantenaire de l'insurrection en 1997, la question du nombre de victimes est largement discutée. Certes, ce débat n'est pas nouveau et date au moins des années 1950. Mais la publication des résultats de recherche scientifique en la matière fait en sorte qu'il devient polémique.

Les chiffres avancés par les uns et les autres s'opposent. D'abord, celui des mouvements nationalistes qui ont pris la succession du MDRM au lendemain de la dissolution du parti en Mai 1947. Parmi eux, les communistes tiennent une place importante.¹²⁰ Depuis la création du Comité de Solidarité de Madagascar (CSM) au début des années 1950, la fourchette de 80 000 à 100 000 morts s'impose petit à petit dans la conscience populaire et notamment tananarivienne. A l'origine de ce chiffre se trouve la déclaration du Général Garbay, celui même qui conduit la répression de l'insurrection. Repris par les nationalistes, ce chiffre est largement utilisé dans la presse communiste des années 1950 dans le but de montrer au monde la barbarie du colonialisme français à Madagascar. Il devient ainsi une justification de la revendication de l'indépendance. De même, l'amnistie et la libération des prisonniers liés à l'insurrection deviennent les principaux chevaux de bataille des milieux nationalistes pendant la décennie précédant l'indépendance. C'est dans ce contexte qu'il faut comprendre la popularisation du chiffre de 80 à 100 000 morts.

Depuis l'indépendance, aucune étude sérieuse n'a été faite pour aboutir à une bonne évaluation des victimes. Et même après 1967, l'année où la journée du 29 Mars devient commémorative des événements de 1947-1948, rien ne permet d'établir un chiffre cohérent. Il a fallu attendre l'ouverture des archives à partir de 1997 pour que les historiens commencent à faire un bilan. Mais les choses se compliquent du fait même que certains historiens comme Jacques Tronchon avalisent, sans grande critique, le chiffre de 80 000 victimes (Tronchon 1986). D'autant que les recherches récentes n'ont pas pu mettre en évidence un chiffre consensuel : l'historien Jean Fremigacci de l'Université de Paris I parle de 10 à 15.000 morts, sa collègue Lucile Rabearimanana de l'Université d'Antananarivo évoque près de 60 000 victimes. En tout cas, une chose est certaine, les historiens écartent de plus en plus le chiffre de 80 000 à 100 000 morts et n'hésitent pas à affirmer qu'il y a eu exagération. « Ce chiffre officiel de 90 000 morts est avancé par l'Etat-major de l'Armée française. Il s'avère que celui-ci ne correspondait pas à la réalité. Ils ont été avancés dans le but de réprimer moralement les Malgaches.

La répression politique de l'époque visait à enlever dans la tête des Malgaches cette idée de remettre en question la présence française en terre

malgache. En 1950, le journal a fait un recensement, établi un nouveau chiffre de 15 000 morts. Ces deux chiffres sont contestables scientifiquement. On pense qu'il devrait qu'il avoir 60 000 morts. Mais celui-ci ne peut être trouvé que par l'érudition. En tout cas, l'insurrection, et surtout la répression, ont fait mourir plusieurs dizaines de milliers de morts. Elles entraînaient des conséquences sociale, psychologique, morale et politique que cela comporte » (Rabearimanana 2004). Néanmoins, les historiens soutiennent que Moramanga n'est pas Oradour-sur-Glane et que la répression de l'insurrection n'a pas donné lieu à un « génocide oublié ».

Il est évident que cette « réduction n'est pas pure spéculation ou une tentative de minimiser les massacres commis à Madagascar par les colonisateurs. Elle est le résultat des plusieurs recherches entamées depuis le cinquantenaire de l'insurrection de 1947. En effet, selon la règle des 50 ans, les archives, aussi bien à Madagascar qu'en France, se sont ouvertes. Cela a permis aux historiens d'avoir entre leurs mains des documents très précieux leur permettant d'analyser certains aspects de cette lutte armée. Un de leurs soucis est justement de réévaluer le nombre de victimes. Il en résulte de leur analyse que le chiffre de 80 à 100 000 morts ne peut être retenu et doit être écarté. Une conclusion que les enquêtes orales menées sur le terrain confortent.

De telle révision a provoqué une véritable levée des boucliers à Madagascar d'autant que la publication de la plupart des nouveaux chiffres donnés par les historiens correspond à un événement particulier : le vote de la loi de février 2005 en France. Celle-ci impose aux manuels d'enseignement la reconnaissance des « aspects positifs de la colonisation. C'est à ce moment que certains milieux malgaches s'insurgent et revendiquent la reconnaissance d'un véritable « génocide » lors de la répression de l'insurrection de 1947-1948. Ils dénoncent en particulier la révision du nombre de victimes à l'exemple de Gisèle Rabesahala, présidente de l'association *Fifanampiana Malagasy*, qui « réfute la revue en baisse des nombres de victimes annoncée par un journal français au début de l'année,¹²¹ à seulement 11 000 et s'en tient au premier constat de l'administration coloniale de l'époque qui faisait état de 89 000 morts. Du côté malgache, on a été habitué à entendre un chiffre arrondi à 100 000. L'ancienne militante du MDRM¹²² souhaite aussi l'ouverture des archives de l'armée française sur les événements de 1947 à Madagascar. Elle invite les malgaches à continuer à faire des recherches, à recenser les charniers de l'époque. Elle mobilise les survivants à écrire leur mémoire ».¹²³

Ces quelques lignes publiées sur le réseau mondial sont assez révélatrice des enjeux sur l'insurrection à Madagascar et parmi la diaspora malgache de par le monde et en particulier en France.

Formatage éducationnel

De ces polémiques, deux questions se posent : de quelle manière un chiffre la fourchette de 80 à 100 000 victimes a pu persister pendant plus de 50 ans, des années 1950 à la fin du XXe siècle, si celui-ci se révèle être faux ? Et pourquoi tant de réticences à toute idée de « révision » du bilan humain de l'insurrection demi-siècle après ces événements ? Répondre à ces interrogations n'est pas facile. Aucune réponse n'est peut être établie qu'après une longue analyse non seulement d'ordre historique mais également mémoriel. Néanmoins, trois pistes peuvent être évoquées.

Premièrement, le rôle prépondérant du Comité de Solidarité de Madagascar dans les années 1950 et les activités de sa presse (*Tenimiera* et *Fifanampiana* notamment) autour du thème de l'amnistie et de la révision des procès liés à l'insurrection. Ainsi, quasiment chaque numéro de ces journaux communistes rappelle inlassablement ce chiffre sans qu'aucune remise en cause n'ait été faite. Certes, les autorités coloniales ont bien procédé à deux recensements. Mais du fait même que c'est l'administration, responsable de la répression qui les a établis, les rend suspects, donc non crédibles pour l'opinion de l'époque et *a fortiori* pour celle d'aujourd'hui. Dans ce registre, le livre de Pierre Boiteau (1958), une des figures communistes influentes à Madagascar, donne la caution l'autoritarisme colonial ainsi que celui de l'abnégation et de l'esprit du martyr de tout un peuple, le chiffre s'est imposé petit à petit dans les esprits.

Deuxièmement, on trouve le rôle de l'enseignement notamment pendant la Deuxième République malgache. Etant donné que l'idéologie politique de l'époque donne une place importante à la lutte contre le néocolonialisme français, il est normal que le programme scolaire et notamment celui de l'histoire mette au centre de ses préoccupations l'histoire de la résistance malgache à la colonisation française. Dans ce cadre, un soin particulier est accordé aux faits d'armes de ceux qui ont combattu pour l'indépendance du pays : on glorifie les martyrs, on célèbre les journées patriotiques, on érige des monuments aux héros nationaux. Coïncidence de l'histoire, celle qui, dans les années 1950, a soutenu et a défendu le chiffre de 80 à 100 000 victimes lors de l'insurrection de 1947, devient ministre de la culture révolutionnaire. Sa présence au sein du gouvernement ne peut pas ne pas influencer la lecture de l'histoire, celle qu'on enseigne aux enfants malgaches. La génération des années 1980-1990 apprend alors tous que ce chiffre est celui des martyrs de la lutte armée de 1947-1948. Il marque leur bravoure et leur dévouement pour la patrie.

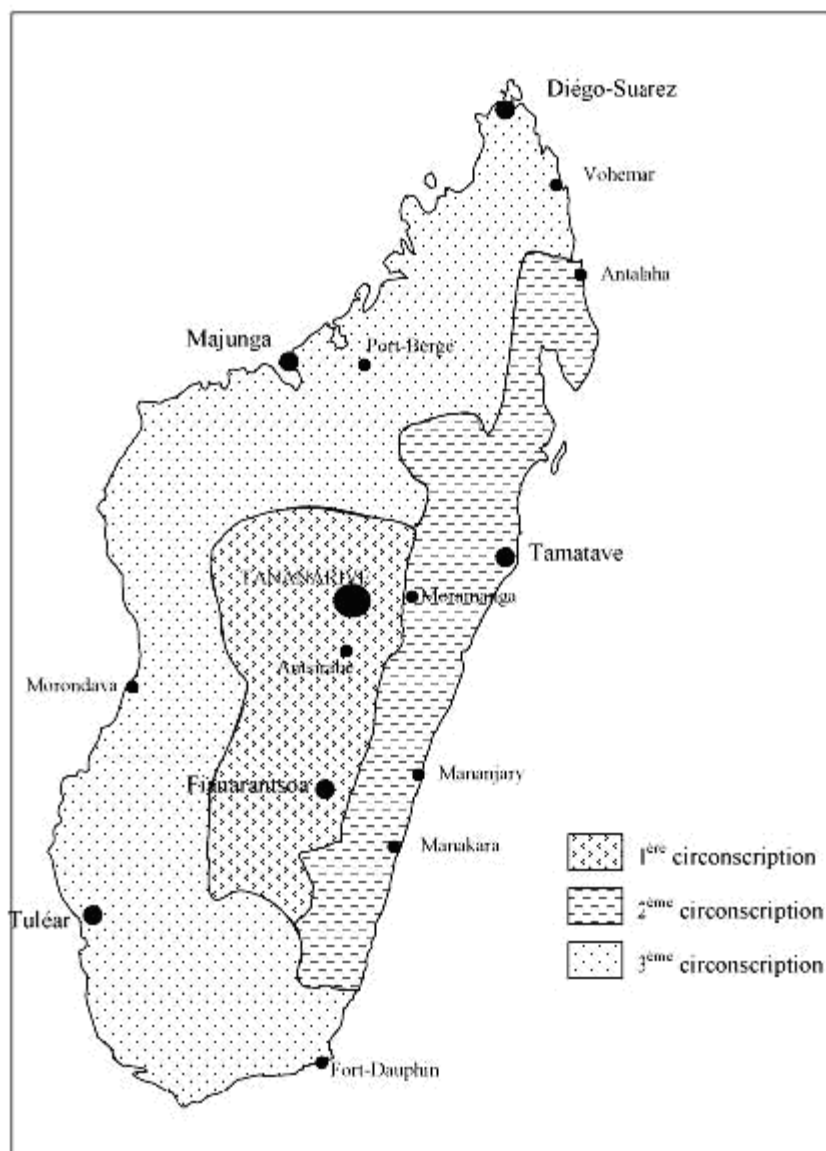
Enfin, la troisième explication possible est relative à la personnalité même de ceux qui dénoncent toute révision du nombre de victimes de l'insurrection. En effet, la plupart d'entre eux sont issus de la capitale. En 1947, Tananarive

n'a pas bougé et n'a pas participé directement à cette lutte armée alors même que la ville joue, à l'époque, le rôle de la capitale du nationalisme malgache. Il s'agirait ainsi, dans un premier temps, de « minimiser la lutte menée par les côtiers de l'Est, eux dont le sentiment nationaliste fait l'objet de doute de la part des élites tananariviennes. Dans un deuxième temps, il s'agirait d'une « fuite en avant » mémorielle dans le but de ménager une bonne conscience de la part des hommes et de leurs descendants qui se considèrent comme les leaders du mouvement d'émancipation malgache mais qui n'ont pas pu tenir leur rôle en 1947. Pour se dédommager, ils tiennent ainsi un discours qui fait appel à une « surenchère victimaire », destiné à défendre la mémoire de l'insurrection et ceux qui y ont participé. Défendre le nombre de 100 000 victimes leur permet ainsi de « participer » *a posteriori* à une lutte armée dont ils n'ont pas pris part.

Récemment encore (en février 2005), la *Fifanampiana Malagasy*, l'actuel nom du CSM, réitère sa position et condamne toute « tentative de minimiser la gravité des crimes commis par les colonialistes français à cette époque. Il y décèle des relents d'anticommunisme en affirmant que « *le parti communiste* », les « *communistes* » auraient utilisé ce chiffre à des fins de propagande ». ¹²⁴ Il en résulte des attaques virulentes contre les historiens malgaches ou étrangers qui « osent » mettre en doute la véracité du chiffre de 80 à 100 000 victimes. Elle exige alors l'ouverture des archives sur l'insurrection (sic). ¹²⁵ Par contre, elle refuse catégoriquement les résultats des recherches si ceux-ci tendent vers une réduction du nombre des victimes. Alors même que l'évaluation des historiens se base justement sur l'analyse des différents dossiers d'archives et des enquêtes orales dans les différentes régions insurgées. Les communistes malgaches des années 1950 et ses héritiers actuels ne veulent pas en aucun cas renoncer à leur appartenance au « parti des fusillés ».

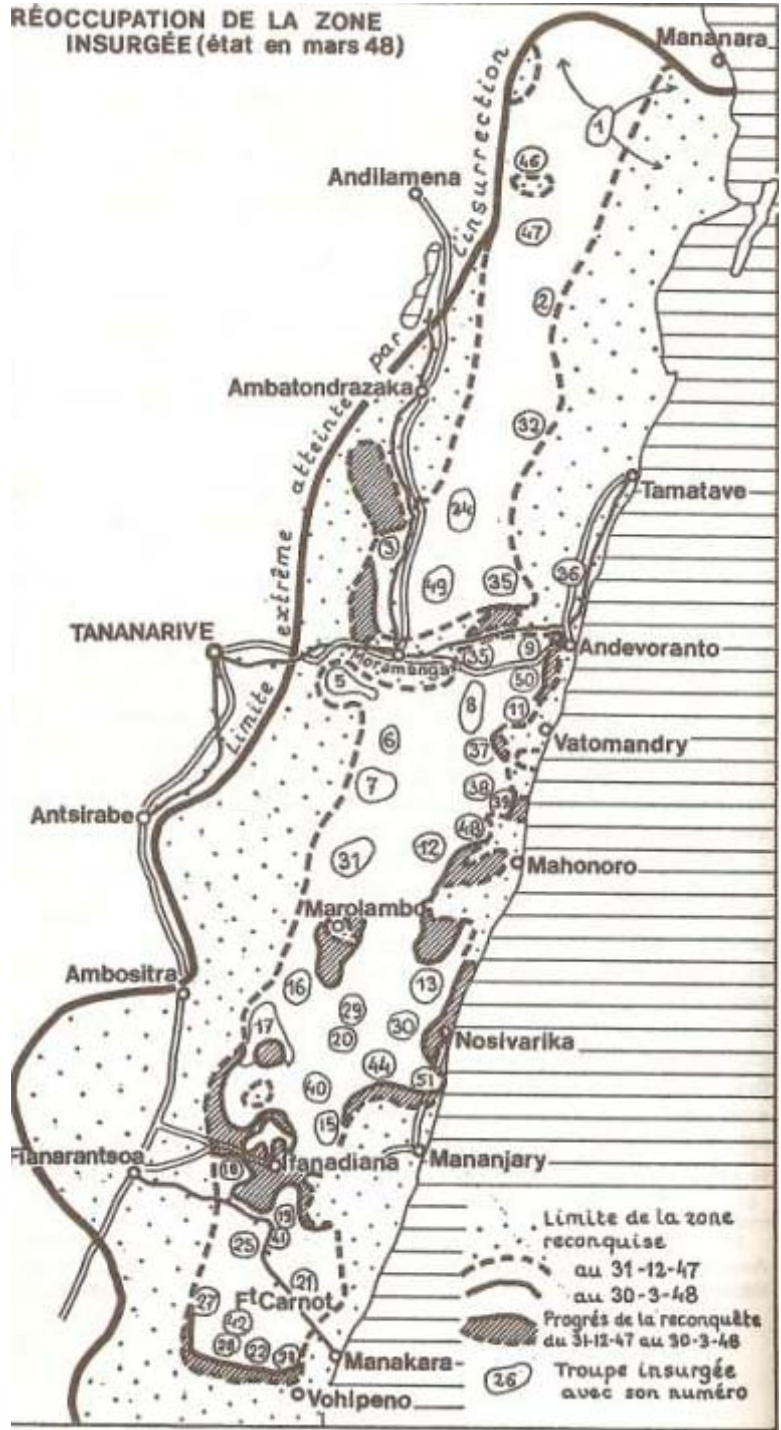
Conclusion

Avec l'émergence d'une nouvelle génération d'historiens à Madagascar, l'histoire et l'historiographie du nationalisme connaissent une importante évolution. Née dans les années 1970-1980, elle n'a pas vécu directement l'injustice du système colonial et ses aspects aussi bien oppressifs que répressifs. Il en résulte une certaine tendance à « relativiser » certaines connaissances jugées « acquises », suite aux différents travaux de ses aînés. Elle remet notamment en question cette « vision angélique » de la lutte contre la domination française, celle qui représente le nationalisme comme un mouvement monolithique au service uniquement des intérêts de la Grande Ile. Bénéficiant d'un recul temporel, elle pense que le nationalisme malgache



Carte : D.A. Lahiniriko

Les circonscriptions électorales du deuxième collège (autochtones) (Novembre 1946- Janvier 1956)





est, en fait, très divisé en plusieurs tendances antagonistes qui n'hésitent pas à étaler sur la place publique leurs querelles liées à des intérêts personnels, des luttes entre groupes sociaux, des enjeux électoraux. Mais force est de constater que cette « nouvelle conception de l'histoire du nationalisme est plus ou moins en contradiction avec celle qu'on a enseigné aux Malgaches depuis l'indépendance et en particulier depuis la Deuxième République. Il en découle alors un conflit qui est à la fois historiographique (entre les historiens suivant leur génération) mais également entre l'histoire (en tant que discipline scientifique) et la mémoire (c'est-à-dire une représentation souvent sélective des faits historiques). Le cas de l'insurrection de 1947-1948 constitue justement un sujet « polémique ». Finalement, toutes ces controverses ne font que poser la problématique du « rôle social de l'historien ».

Notes

1. Depuis la fin de la Première République, Madagascar a connu au moins deux « révolutions » politiques. En 1991 et en 2002, le pays a été confronté à des mouvements populaires à l'origine de la chute des régimes en place. Des longues grèves de plusieurs mois ont mis l'économie à genoux provoquant une crise sociale intense notamment dans les classes les plus pauvres. De même, avec l'irruption d'une certaine liberté politique à la fin des années 1980, Madagascar voit le nombre des partis politiques exploser (plus d'une centaine). Mais le pluralisme politique s'avère purement nominal dans la mesure où tous les rouages du pouvoir sont confisqués par les partis au pouvoir.
2. Parti Démocratique Malgache créé lui aussi en 1946.
3. Mouvement Social Malgache. Ce parti « catholique » a vu le jour également en 1946.
4. Il préside le PDM.
5. *Ny Fahafahana* du 13 Mai 1946.
6. *Mongo* du 6 Janvier 1947.
7. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* n°38 du 11 Juin 1946.
8. *Lakroa* n°848 du 13 Juin 1944.
9. *Ny Rariny-La Justice*, n°71 du 4 Février 1947.
10. Renseignements n°290-S/01 du 07 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM (Centre d'Archive de France d'Outre-mer)*, 6 (15) D 70.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Et préconise l'union autour du seul MDRM. Voir ci-dessus.
13. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* n° 62 du 26 Novembre 1946.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Renseignement n°152-CF du Commissariat d'Antsirabe, 22 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 16.
16. Renseignements n°290-S/01 du 07 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.

17. Dans la phraséologie de l'administration coloniale, les termes *hova* et *Merina* ont la même signification et désignent l'ethnie dominante des hautes-Terres centrales. Dans la réalité, le mot *Hova* ne désigne que le groupe statutaire des hommes libres dans l'ancien royaume merina.
18. Les *Andriamasinavalona* occupent un niveau hiérarchique très élevé dans le groupe statutaire des souverains merina, les *Andriana*.
19. Notes personnelles très confidentielles de Riddel, 27 Août 1946, Antananarivo, *ARM (Archives de la République Malgache)*, D 875.
20. Extrait de transmission n°14-CF du 15 Février 1947 du chef de Poste de Soanierana I, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
21. Lettre du délégué de Canton d'Andrainjato, District de Fianarantsoa, 7 Novembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
22. *L'Avenir de Madagascar* n°47 du 30 Décembre 1946.
23. Rapport du Service Local de la Sûreté Générale du Sud n°1089, 27 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 16.
24. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* n°11 du 15 Novembre 1945.
25. Rapport sur les résultats officiels des élections générales du 10 Novembre 1946, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 484.
26. Secours Rouge International (SRI). La section malgache, fondée en Janvier 1930, a été utilisée par les nationalistes comme une structure de lutte.
27. Parti Communiste de la Région de Madagascar fondé en Octobre 1936. Il s'agit d'une section du PC français. Pour plus de détails, voir Randrianja S., *Le parti communiste de la région de Madagascar 1930-1939*, Foi et Justice, Antananarivo, 1989, 175 p.
28. *Gazetin'ny Malagasy* du 6 Novembre 1946.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Rapport du 21 Mai 1946 n°549-B2CF adressé au Chef de District de Fénériver, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 16.
31. Rapport n°479-CF/AP du 5 Novembre 1946, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 484. 36 *En Action*, n°37 du 15 Décembre 1946.
32. Ce terme est utilisé pour désigner non pas les groupes de population dont la région a accès à la mer mais l'ensemble des Malgaches qui ne sont pas Merina.
33. Renseignements n°2780-D1SCF, 10 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
34. Renseignements n°290-S/01, 7 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
35. Situation électorale dans la 2e Circonscription (collège non citoyens), Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Fandrosoam-Baovao* du 11 Octobre 1946.
38. Renseignements n°2577-D1SCF, 7 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
39. En 1945, Madagascar est subdivisé en deux circonscriptions. La première regroupe les Hautes-Terres centrales et la région orientale. La seconde correspond à la côte ouest. A partir de 1946, les Hautes-Terres centrales deviennent une circonscription électorale autonome. Des législatives de novembre 1945 à celle de novembre 1946, Raseta a été toujours réélu député de la circonscription occidentale.

40. Situation électorale dans la 2e Circonscription (collège non citoyens), Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
41. Rapport sur les résultats officiels des élections générales à l'Assemblée Constituante (2e Tour de scrutin 18 Novembre 1945), 21 Novembre 1945, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (13) D 17.
42. Situation électorale dans la 2e Circonscription (collège non citoyens), Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
43. Il s'agit d'une structure regroupant tous les courants et organisations qui luttent pour l'indépendance de Madagascar.
44. Renseignements n°2826 de la Sûreté Générale, 12 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
45. Renseignements n°29311-D1SCF, 15 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
46. Renseignements n°3082-D1SCF, 17 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
47. Renseignements n°29311-D1SCF, 15 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
48. Une des figures importantes du nationalisme tananariviens et un des principaux dirigeants du MDRM. Il était le président du Comité électoral du député Ravoahangy.
49. Renseignements n°2936-D1SCF, 14 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70. Le « Groupe Soarano » désigne le cercle nationaliste tananarivien autour duquel le MDRM se formera à Madagascar à partir de Juin 1946.
50. Renseignements n°3082-D1SCF, 17 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. Autre dénomination des Merina.
55. Renseignements n°2780-D1SCF, 10 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 70.
56. Télégramme Lettre Officiel n°135-CF, 24 Mai 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 16.
57. Union pour la Défense des Intérêts Malgaches. Parti né en 1956.
58. Front National Malgache. Parti né en 1956.
59. Union des Indépendants de Tananarive. Parti né en 1956.
60. Union du Peuple Malgache. Parti né en 1956.
61. Comité d'Entente et d'Action Politique. Plate-forme politique née en 1956.
62. *Telonohorefy* du 22 Avril 2008.
63. Intervention télévisuelle de l'Association *Otrikafo* sur la chaîne RTR, Mars 2008.
64. Il s'agit d'élire le représentant de Madagascar au Conseil Supérieur de la France d'Outre-mer.
65. Littéralement « Le feu qui couve. Il s'agit d'une association qui revendique l'héritage du mouvement nationalisme malgache historique. Il pense qu'il est le temps est le feu du nationalisme des années d'avant Seconde Guerre mondiale soit rallumé pour combattre le néocolonialisme français qui serait encore d'actualité ainsi que la mondialisation qui menace les valeurs malgaches.
66. Textuellement, « Les descendants du MDRM ».

67. Depuis 1967, la journée de 29 Mars commémore les luttes anticoloniales et notamment l'insurrection de 1947-1948.
68. La première explication sur l'origine de l'insurrection évoque la responsabilité des autorités coloniales. Il s'agit de la position officielle des leaders du MDRM. La deuxième explication, formulée par l'Administration française, accuse ce dernier de l'avoir préparée.
69. Pour la localisation, voir carte.
70. Parti des Dëshérités de Madagascar. Le PADESM est le principal parti malgache qui s'est opposé au MDRM et à sa politique indépendantiste. Pour plus de détails, voir Randriamaro J.R., *PADESM et luttes politiques à Madagascar. De la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale à la naissance du PSD*, Karthala, Paris 1997.
71. Note de la Direction des Affaires Politiques pour le Haut Commissaire, n°223-CF/AP/1, 26 Août 1948, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 18.
72. « Jusqu'en Septembre 1947, elle [l'insurrection] encerclait des centres comme Ifanadiana, Fénérive, Vatomandry, Andevoranto, Nosy-Varika, où il fallut faire débarquer des fusiliers-marins ». Voir Spacensky A., *Madagascar cinquante ans de vie politique (de Ralaimongo à Tsiranana)*, Paris, Nouvelles éditions Latines, 1970, p. 66.
73. 1ÈRE Déclaration de De Coppet le 19 Avril 1947 lors de l'ouverture de la Session de l'Assemblée Représentative à Antsirabe. Cité in A. Spacensky, *op.cit.*, p. 69.
74. Interrogatoire de Ravoahangy, 6 Janvier 1948, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 890.
75. Interrogatoire de l'inculpé Rakotovao Martin, 11 Avril 1947. Cité in D. Razafindrazaka, 1995-1996, *art.cit.*, p. 221.
76. Le premier est le Chef de la Sureté Générale et le second Juge d'instruction pendant le procqs des dirigeants du MDRM.
77. Proclamation à la population affichée sur les murs de Tananarive le 31 Mars 1947. Cité in L. Rabearimanana, « Les événements de 1947 à Madagascar », in *Omalý sy Anio (Hier et Aujourd'hui)*, n°28, 1988-2, p. 156.
78. Jeunesse Idéliste Malgache et Parti Nationaliste Malgache. Deux sociétés secrètes créées pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Pour plus d'informations, voir Ramanantsoa-Ramarcel B., *Les sociétés secrètes nationalistes à Madagascar dans la première moitié du XXe siècle : VVS, Panama, Jiny*, Thèse de doctorat de 3e cycle, 2 tomes, Université de Paris III, 1986.
79. Déposition de Ravoahangy Andrianavalona Joseph du 2 Avril 1947. Cité in Razafindrazaka D., « La réunion du 27 Mars 1947 », in *Omalý sy Anio (Hier et Aujourd'hui)*, n°41-44, 1995-1996, p. 219.
80. Note de la Direction des Affaires Politiques pour le Haut Commissaire, n°223-CF/AP/1, 26 Août 1948, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 18.
81. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* du 11 Mars 1947.
82. « *En Action* utilise souvent ce [qualificatif] pour faire allusion au passé «vichyste» de Rabemananjara Jacques. Un tel adjectif est le pire qualificatif qu'on peut donner à un adversaire politique en cette période où le procès du régime du Vichy est encore d'actualité ». Lahiniriko D. A., *Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache. Des succès aux difficultés*. Mémoire de maîtrise, Antananarivo, Département d'Histoire, 2000, p. 207.

83. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* du 30 Juillet 1946.
84. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* du 30 Juillet 1946.
85. *Mongo* du 2 Août 1946.
86. *Ny Fahafahana* du 2 Octobre 1946.
87. *Ny Fahafahana* du 26 Juin 1946.
88. *Ny Fahafahana* du 26 Juin 1946.
89. *Ny Fahafahana* du 26 Juin 1946.
90. *Ny Kitan'ny Maraina* n°256 du 27 Juin 1946.
91. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* du 6 Août 1946.
92. Note de la Direction des Affaires Politiques pour le Haut Commissaire, n°223-CF/AP/1, 26 Août 1948, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 18.
93. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* du 25 Juin 1946.
94. Note de la Direction des Affaires Politiques pour le Haut Commissaire, n°223-CF/AP/1, 26 Août 1948, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 18.
95. *Idem*
96. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* du 21 Mai 1946.
97. *Ny Fahafahana* du 11 Décembre 1946.
98. *Ny Fahafahana* du 17 Juillet 1946.
99. *Ny Fahafahana* du 18 Juillet 1946.
100. *Mongo* du 14 Novembre 1946.
101. *Ny Rariny-La Justice* n°26 du 12 Mars 1946.
102. Les deux principaux journaux du PDM.
103. *Lakroa* du 15 Octobre 1946.
104. *Idem*.
105. Lettre du chef de district de Vatondry, 15 Décembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
106. Lettre du chef de district de Vatondry, 15 Décembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
107. Lettre du chef de district de Vatondry, 15 Décembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
108. Lettre du chef de district de Vatondry, 15 Décembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
109. Lettre du chef de district de Vatondry, 15 Décembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
110. Lettre du chef de district de Vatondry, 15 Décembre 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
111. Rapport n°15-CF du 16 Février 1947 traitant la situation politique dans le district, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
112. Renseignement de Baron 02 Janvier 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D890.
113. Lettre du Haut-commissaire, 13 Septembre 1946, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.

114. Lettre du Haut-commissaire, 13 Septembre 1946, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
115. Textuellement, « militaire de Ravoahangy ».
116. Lettre du Haut-commissaire, n°529-CF/AP du 26 Novembre 1946, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875. Fanony F. et Guenier N., *art.cit.*, 1984.
117. Rapport n°20-CF du chef de district de Mahanoro, 24 Février 1947, Antananarivo, *ARM*, D 875.
118. Culture sur brulis.
119. Lettre du Haut Commissaire au Ministre de la FOM, n°564-CF/AP, 16 Décembre 1946, Aix-en-Provence, *CAOM*, 6 (15) D 19.
120. Voir Lahiniriko D.A., *Les structures politiques nationalistes tananariviennes de la Seconde Guerre mondiale à la Première République. Union, unanimisme et division partisane dans la culture politique nationaliste (1945-1958)*, Université d'Antananarivo-Université de Paris I, 2008, Thèse à soutenir.
121. Il s'agit de *Marianne* qui a publié un article de Jean Fremigacci sur l'insurrection. Notons que cet historien de l'Université de Paris I est considéré, par ses pairs, comme le meilleur spécialiste de la question.
122. Elle n'a jamais été ni membre ni militante du MDRM. Son apparition sur la scène politique date du procès des parlementaires du parti pendant lesquels elle a joué le rôle du secrétaire des avocats des élus malgaches.
123. Voir www.madanight.com
124. Déclaration du *Fifanampiana Malagasy* (Comité de solidarité de Madagascar), Février 2005.
125. Depuis la cinquantenaire de l'insurrection, tous les fonds d'archives, à Madagascar et en France, sont ouverts. Même les archives personnelles le sont à condition d'avoir une dérogation (cette dernière est accordée quasi systématiquement aux chercheurs).

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