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Introduction

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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

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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.