

# TINABANTU

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# Alert: Land Confiscation in Mauritania

*Mamadou Guisse*

The local authorities in Mauritania are pursuing their dangerous project to take southerners' agricultural land. Fuuta, name of the region of southern Mauritania, covers a large portion of the band that mark the transition from the Sahara desert to what is commonly called Sub-Saharan Africa. Fuuta was once part of the Ghana Empire (8th Century) with its own kingdoms before falling in Mauritania, Senegal and Mali after French subdivided what they called French Soudan into the referenced three countries around 1900. In that country (region) land is life and is a representation of one's family wealth and ownership. The livelihood consists of farming and livestock, growing cows, sheep and goats. Geographically speaking, it consists of the Senegal River valley.

The region has always been the target of the nomad Moors (Arabs), resulting in numerous deadly conflicts throughout the region's history. The attachment to the land of the Fuuta population can be described as religious. The land is what they swear with. The land determines power and family membership. For example, a young man at the age of marrying is offered a piece of land by his father to cultivate in order to attend to the needs of his future family.

The nomad Moors, with their herds of camels travel from place to place in search of water and grass for their livestock during dry seasons. Other caravans come for trans-Saharan trade needs.

They travel from the desert north to the relatively wet south where the Blacks halpular, Wolof, Soninke and other African ethnic groups live. They setup camps in the outskirts of the villages.

For reasons of history, although it is out of the scope of this article, it is during these trips that they kidnap black children playing around the villages or sent to get wood, or also, working as herd keepers. Those kidnapped children are used as a labour-force.

There is no need to say that, in the era of globalization and the race of the fast growing economies and over populated countries for land grabbing, the traditional way of hand farming must leave the place to a modern more productive way. We are seeing countries like China, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait among others go in search for agricultural land in Africa. This phenomenon known as Land Grab is more and more in the news. The prospect of a global food crisis in the coming decades justifies that race. Back in Mauritania, the interest of the north nomadic population on the south land is for a survival purpose. The drastic change in the climate seen in the image of a fast desertification in the north is constraining the nomadic Moors to move south to gain access to water. The Mauritanian government in 2010 recently completed the construction of a 200km pipe system that will supply the capital city Nouakchott with water from the Senegal River.

It is also the case that the people from Fuuta have no means to exploit their land on a large scale. They are impoverished by decades of discrimination and brutal dictatorship with many dramatic results on their lives. Since the country's Independence in 1960, Arab presidents have succeeded each other. They come and go, but, all have one thing in common: they all believe in making Mauritania an exclusively Arab country; denying in the process the existence of the Black African portion of the population; which is, we all know, the majority in the country. The attacks on the Blacks civil rights are made on several fronts. The educational system is the first and main battle field. The first trouble started in 1966 when learning Arabic was made mandatory in all schools. That decision faced a harsh resistance that sparked the first ethnic riots in the country. One protester died and several young Blacks were incarcerated. The other contested domain is the economic monopoly of the Arabs in all economic sectors.

With no opportunity to succeed in business, many blacks resorted to immigration. Last but not least, they installed a military and political domination with a ratio of less than 8% in all office tenures for Blacks at all times.

Misinformation campaigns, relayed by the Arab media, took place to depict Mauritania as an Arab majority country. All these attempts have failed to bring about the wanted results. The Government of the dictator Maaouya Ould Taya (1984-2005) blew out of proportion an incident between a Senegalese farmer and a Mauritanian nomad shepherd in April 1989 (both Black) into an international conflict. Scores of black people were massacred in the streets, in their homes, and at their work places by hordes of angry Moors. They claimed they were targeting Senegalese residents

who they accused of having killed their fellow Mauritians in Senegal. It was the perfect opportunity to actually eliminate the maximum possible of Blacks from Mauritania. Looting and burning of Black owned businesses took place simultaneously. After the cry out of the international community, the killings stopped and the decision was taken to return citizens to their respective countries. With the help of the UN, the French government and some other friendly countries, constructed an aerial bridge between Dakar and Nouakchott. This was another golden opportunity for the racists to rid the country of the "stain" as they used to call blacks.

They went on a hunt for black people from homes, workplaces, villages and streets and boarded whoever they met in trucks and sent them to Senegal and Mali. This is when more than 120,000 Blacks were stripped of their citizenship, of their belongings and deported to Senegal and Mali. Currently 20,000 are still waiting for an organized return after the authorities recognized their citizenship again few years back. In this same year, all officers and NCO's from the Army and all other corps were arrested, accused of trying to overthrow the power. More than 500 more will die under torture or due to summary executions. Worst, on November 28th 1990, in order to celebrate Independence Day, soldiers hung 28 blacks soldiers. Families are still waiting for justice, even though the perpetrators are known and living free in Mauritania.

Let's not forget that previously in the summer of 1986 after a group of Black intellectuals published a document named "The memorandum of the Oppressed Black Mauritanian", in which the document demanded increased justice and equality in favor of the Black, non Arab Mauritanians in the country, this was met with a savage repression. Multiple arrests were made, not only of the signing members of the declaration but of every intellectual. Sent in the four corners of the vast desert country very few of them came out alive after five years of torture and mistreatment.

This period (1986 -2001) marked the bloodiest years of Mauritania's history. The rule of the ruthless dictator Ould Taya ended when he was taken down by his own cousin in 2005. He is today in asylum in Qatar. His reign gave the biggest break to the land grabbers in Fuuta. While whole families are sent to Senegal and Mali fighting to gain the right to come back, Moor businessmen with the help of the Government rushed to setup agricultural perimeters that today are still in place.

With this move today the government is just trying to implement and complete the job of stripping poor farmers of the land they inherited from their ancestors.

There is, without doubt, a real need for modernization of the agriculture in Fuuta, but it must consider the interests of the real owners of the land. Any project of exploitation; be it by nationals or foreigners must start first with discussions with the local populations who have owned the land for centuries. No mandate from any authority should override the traditional ownership of the land. Instead of giving the



land to foreign investors, the government should create an environment of trust and work with the farmers to meet the millennium goal of food self-sufficiency. The irony is, back in September 2010, the government pushed out an envelope of mr62 million (US\$230,000) to support moor farmers develop their land. Those farmers are located just 75km off the site they are targeting today around the city of Aleg. The locals say literally and figuratively that "Land and blood are closely linked in the Fuuta." Consequently a responsible approach is necessary to avoid risk of serious trouble. French colonialists did try during a long time to take over the same fertile zones. Faced with a tough resistance they resorted to imposing a tax for land use and recognizing the ownership of the land to the peoples of the region. Later some Arab emirs tried to extend to their own benefit that tax. Local chiefs like Thierno Souleymane Ball, a historic figure in the region, refused to pay and fought to break that domination.

Today, local authorities representing the central Arab government believe that after decades of suffering and poverty the land grab will be easy and there is no need to convene with anyone but the money holders (Saudi investors). They are using legislation they made several years back in the 1980s in the intent to legalize that expropriation. In that piece of legislation they place the arable land belonging to families for two thousand years in the public domain; as such, it belongs to anyone who has the means to develop it. The Article 3 of this law #83-127 Order of June 5, 1983 on Reorganization of Land and Property ownership stipulates "the system of traditional land tenure is abolished". With the blessing of the central government the last decades have seen a flow of Arab (Moor) businessman taking advantage of the deportations of 1989 to occupy land.

Many NGO's have been denouncing the practice but all complaints are falling on deaf ears.

# Haiti: The Hate and the Quake

Sir Hilary Beckles

## **Freedom**

Buried beneath the rubble of imperial propaganda, out of both Western Europe and the United States, is the evidence which shows that Haiti's independence was defeated by an aggressive North-Atlantic alliance that could not imagine their world inhabited by a free regime of Africans as representatives of the newly emerging democracy.

The evidence is striking, especially in the context of France. The Haitians fought for their freedom and won, as did the Americans fifty years earlier. The Americans declared their Independence and crafted an extraordinary constitution that set out a clear message about the value of humanity and the right to freedom, justice, and liberty. In the midst of this brilliant discourse, they chose to retain slavery as the basis of the new nation state. The Founding Fathers therefore could not see beyond race, as the free state was built on a slavery foundation. The water was poisoned in the well; the Americans went back to the battle field a century later to resolve the fact that slavery and freedom could not comfortably co-exist in the same place.

The French, also, declared freedom, fraternity and equality as the new philosophies of their national transformation and gave the modern world a tremendous progressive boost by so doing. They abolished slavery, but Napoleon Bonaparte could not imagine the republic without slavery and targeted the Haitians for a new, more intense regime of slavery. The British agreed, as did the Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese. All were linked in communion over the 500, 000 blacks in Haiti, the most populous and prosperous colony. As the jewel of the Caribbean, they

all wanted to get their hands on it. With a massive slave base, the English, French and Dutch salivated over owning it – and the people.

The people won a ten-year war, the bloodiest in modern history, and declared their Independence. Every other country in the Americas was based on slavery. Haiti was freedom, and proceeded to place in its 1805 Independence Constitution that any person of African descent who arrived on its shores would be declared free, and a citizen of the republic. For the first time since slavery had commenced, Blacks were the subjects of mass freedom and citizenship in a nation.

### **Ostracised**

The French refused to recognise Haiti's Independence and declared it an illegal pariah state. The Americans, whom the Haitians looked to in solidarity as their mentor in Independence, refused to recognise them, and offered solidarity instead to the French. The British, who were negotiating with the French to obtain the ownership title to Haiti, also moved in solidarity, as did every other nation-state in the western world. Haiti was isolated at birth – ostracised and denied access to world trade, finance, and institutional development. It was the most vicious example of national strangulation recorded in modern history. The Cubans, at least, have had Russia, China, and Vietnam. The Haitians were alone from inception. The crumbling began.

Then came 1825; the moment of full truth. The republic is celebrating its 21st anniversary. There is national euphoria in the streets of Port-au-Prince. The economy is bankrupt; the political leadership isolated. The Cabinet took the decision that the state of affairs could not continue. The country had to find a way to be inserted back into the world economy. The French government was invited to a summit.

Officials arrived and told the Haitian government that they were willing to recognise the country as a sovereign nation but it would have to pay compensation and reparation in exchange. The Haitians, with backs to the wall, agreed to pay the French.

### **Systematic Destruction**

The French government sent a team of accountants and actuaries into Haiti in order to place a value on all lands, all physical assets, the 500 000 citizens who were formerly enslaved, animals, and all other commercial properties and services. The



sums amounted to 150 million gold francs. Haiti was told to pay this reparation to France in return for national recognition. The Haitian government agreed; payments began immediately. Members of the Cabinet were also valued because they had been enslaved persons before Independence.

Thus began the systematic destruction of the Republic of Haiti. The French Government bled the nation and rendered it a failed state. It was a merciless exploitation that was designed and guaranteed to collapse the Haitian economy and society. Haiti was forced to pay this sum until 1922 when the last instalment was made. During the long 19th century, the payment to France amounted to up to 70% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Jamaica today pays up to 70% in order to service its international and domestic debt. Haiti was crushed by this debt payment. It descended into financial and social chaos. The republic did not stand a chance. France was enriched and it took pleasure from the fact that having been defeated by Haitians on the battlefield, it had won on the field of finance. In the years when the coffee crops failed, or the sugar yield was down, the Haitian government borrowed on the French money market at double the going interest rate, to repay the French government.

### **Fledgling Nation Crushed**

When the Americans invaded the country in the early 20th century, one of the reasons offered was to assist the French in collecting its reparations. The collapse of the Haitian nation resides at the feet of France and America, especially. These two nations betrayed, failed, and destroyed the dream that was Haiti; crushed to dust in an effort to destroy the flower of freedom and the seed of justice. Haiti did not fail. It was destroyed by two of the most powerful nations on earth, both of which continue to have a primary interest in its current condition. The sudden quake has come in the aftermath of summers of hate. In many ways the quake has been less destructive than the hate. Human life was snuffed out by the quake while the hate has been a long and inhumane suffocation – a crime against humanity.

### **Moral Obligation**

During the 2001 UN Conference on Race in Durban, South Africa, strong representation was made to the French government to repay the 150 million francs. The value of this amount was estimated by financial actuaries as US \$21 billion. This

sum of capital could rebuild Haiti and place it in a position to re-engage the modern world. It was illegally extracted from the Haitian people and should be repaid. It is stolen wealth. In so doing France could discharge its moral obligation to the Haitian people. For a nation that prides itself in the celebration of modern diplomacy, France, in order to exist with the moral authority of this diplomacy in this post modern world, should do the just and legal thing. Such an act at the outset of this century would open the door for a sophisticated interface of past and present, and set the Haitian nation free at last.

# Prologue on Garvey

Robert Hayfron-Benjamin

On 10<sup>th</sup> November 1964, a British Overseas Airways plane from London carrying a casket draped in a Red, Green and Black flag, landed at the airport in Kingston: the casket was accompanied by Mr and Mrs Thomas Watson Harvey and Mrs J. Alfred Ferguson, all African-Americans and respectively the President-General and his wife and the special representative of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). In the casket was the body of Marcus Garvey, the founder of the Association, who died in London in 1940 and whose remains were to be in Jamaica on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armistice Day at a permanent memorial site, after state ceremonies proclaiming him as the first National Hero of Jamaica. At the airport to meet this small entourage and take delivery of the casket with the body were Mrs. Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey's second wife and her two sons, Marcus Garvey Jnr and Julius Winston Garvey and their families and some members of the UNIA of Jamaica. There was also a representative of the Government of Jamaica, in the person of Edward Seaga, Minister of Development and Culture, significantly a Jamaican of non-African descent.

On the morning of the following day, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1964, the casket was taken on board a launch of the Jamaican Defence Force of Victoria Pier and then, accompanied by thousands of people in a procession led by Sir Alexander Bustamante, it was taken to the Roman Catholic Cathedral on North Street, Kingston and there the body laid in state. Thousands of people of all races and colours and from every walk of life, and from every clime filed past and paid their last respects to departed merit. The body was then taken by motorcade to the National Heroes Park (then known as King George VI Memorial Park) where the ceremonies proclaiming him National Hero were held and where he was finally laid to rest. Several questions must have suggested themselves to the many Pan-Africanists and others who witnessed or followed the events in Kingston, Jamaica on those two memorable days.



Why did it take so long after the independence of Jamaica for the body of Garvey to be moved from London to Jamaica? Was he named the first National Hero by the Bustamante Government in order to pre-empt the newly formed Organization of African Unity proclaiming him the first Hero of Africa and having his body buried in Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the organization, to the embarrassment of Emperor Haile Selassie whom he had ruthlessly condemned in his lifetime? An interesting question which might not have occurred to many of those present, was the role of the British Labour Government under Harold Wilson in the decision to repatriate the body to Jamaica. The Atlee Labour Government had persistently refused to sanction such an act and the Conservative Governments of Churchill, Eden and Macmillan that followed had similarly refused to allow such repatriation on the ground that such an act would arouse political unrest in Jamaica. The campaign by Nkrumah for the establishment of a Union Government for Africa in furtherance of Garveyism was then at its height and it was from Southern Rhodesia that the Wilson Administration sought to sabotage it. It was not by coincidence that the infamous UDI was proclaimed exactly a year after Marcus Garvey had been claimed as the first National Hero of Jamaica. The claim by Garvey to represent Africa had not been recognized even by his fellow Jamaicans; the leadership of a Union Government of Africa by Nkrumah or any other Pan Africanist was not likely to be conceded.

Marcus Garvey, a person of pure African descent from Jamaica, British West Indies, started and inspired the greatest ever 'Back to Africa' campaign among the Africans in the Diaspora; he was fiercely condemned and robustly opposed by Du Bois, a person of mixed African and Caucasian blood from the United States of America. Garvey died in war time London, at the age of 53 in June, 1940 with no African leader to present him reverence, and was denied the benefit of a decent burial for a quarter of a century. He never set foot on African soil and like Moses never led any of his people to their God-given land of Africa. Du Bois died at the age of 95 in Ghana, the first British colony in Africa to become independent; and this independence was attained under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, the first African leader to acknowledge his indebtedness to Marcus Garvey. The mortal remains of Du Bois rest in a marble tomb at the Du Bois Centre, a cultural research and study facility specially set up in Ghana in honour of his memory as a Pan-Africanist guru. Every secondary school student in Africa has heard of the Pan African Congresses and associated them with Du Bois; not one in ten has ever heard of the series of conventions of all African Negroes of the World organized by Marcus Garvey, not even after Nkrumah and George Padmore had modelled on them the epoch making all African Peoples Conference held in Ghana in 1958. There is nothing fortuitous or accidental about this ironic twist of fate.

Given the special historical background of slavery and forcible separation from Africa and motherland, any and every voluntary 'Back to Africa' movement from the diaspora is likely to involve a claim however disguised or vague that Africa is home of the Africans or, put in the form of a political slogan, 'that Africa is for Africans home and abroad'. While in America, Garvey made this claim forcibly and unequivocally and conjoined it with a robust anti-colonial demand for the end of European or white rule in Africa. The European imperial powers in Africa felt threatened by the activities of Garvey and his supporters which were spreading discontent with white supremacy among the African populations in their colonies in Africa and the West Indies. Du Bois on the other hand made no claim to Africa on behalf of those abroad and only objected to capitalism, but not to European or white settler rule as such, in Africa. Logically therefore, there should have been no room for conflict between the two; Garvey claimed Africa for Africans; Du Bois did not; at least not during the lifetime of Garvey.

The politics of Pan-Africanism, like all political discourse has never been logical; the involvement of the issues of race and colour and the relations between the white and coloured people of the world, emotionally a highly charged issue had tended to make Pan-Africanism turn on the highly divisive question of who may be considered an African, rather than when it ought properly to be concerned with the relations between the several African communities scattered around the world. There are Pan-Africanists who are against miscegenation, there are many who keep an open mind on the subject, and there are those who are all for the practice. There are many persons of so-called mixed blood, particularly in the Caribbean and South Africa who feel that because of the lighter colour they are superior to Africans but there are even more of such persons, particularly in the United States of America and the West of Africa who consider themselves not only as of African descent, but as Africans to the bone. Where and when people of mixed blood get involved in Pan-African disputation they always run the risk that their actions would be misconstrued by other Africans or persons of African descent, particularly these disputants come from countries, areas or communities where the social and cultural madness of lighter shade superiority is endemic.

Garvey himself felt that the misfortune that befell him in America had been contrived and was 'the result of a frame up among my political and business enemies'. Extraordinarily, in identifying these 'political and business enemies' Garvey who had lived in Harlem for nearly a decade, settled on people of mixed blood, who were themselves considered as Negroes in America. Garvey claimed 'Being Black' I have committed an unpardonable offence against the very light coloured Negroes in America and the West Indies by making myself famous as a Negro Leader of millions.



He claimed that the UNIA had 'succeeded in organizing the African Negroes all over the world' and they were looking 'forward to a renaissance' that would 'create a new people and bring about the restoration of Ethiopia's ancient glory'.

The foregoing appeared in an article he wrote when he was in prison awaiting the hearing of his appeal against his conviction for mail fraud. Sadly, in the agony of the moment, he unburdened himself of certain ill-considered but apparently long held misconceptions about who had plotted his downfall. In the confines of his prison cell, the early and persistent opposition against him by Du Bois clouded his vision and distorted his judgement; and coloured persons or persons of mixed blood appeared to him as his mortal enemies. This outburst was unfortunate because it was uncalled for and baseless, it did not help him in his appeal or advance in any way his prospects for an early release from prison. It is true that many persons of mixed blood participated in the 'hunt for Garvey' campaign, many of them allowing themselves to be used as tools for mean and foul acts and deeds against his African programme. However many did so because they were provoked and felt themselves personally insulted by Garvey's blunt and unsavoury remarks on miscegenation and interracial hanky panky; the charge that they did so because of fanciful notions of racial superiority does not sound fair or reasonable, and it is unacceptable. It does not show a proper appreciation of the immense contribution to the cause of African liberation by literally thousands of people of mixed blood in America, Europe, West Indies, Africa and indeed in all parts of the world and through the ages. The damage that this unfortunate outburst has done to the image and role of Garvey in the politics of Pan-Africanism has been immense and it might very well have been at the bottom of the sour relations between Garvey and Haile Selassie that emerged during the Italian aggression against Ethiopia and the subsequent difficulties experienced by the founding fathers of the OAU in bringing together in one organization the North African States with light skinned populations and the states south of the Sahara with their dark skinned populations. The position might have been different and the attitude of Garvey less surprising if he had been operating from South Africa or the West Indies where persons of mixed African and Caucasian do not usually consider themselves Africans. In both these countries people of mixed blood are classified either legally or socially as a distinct racial group and referred to as coloureds and term 'African and Negro' are not normally applied to them. In the United States of America, however, unless a person could pass as white he was considered black; and a person could only pass as white if he looked white and was not known or suspected to have any African or non-white ancestors or relatives. In America when the use of a racial term or word became fashionable it was applied by the whites to all non-whites irrespective of colour shades. Thus the term African, Negro, Afro-American, Blacks,



African-American have sometimes even been applied to persons who in other countries might have been considered white or Caucasian.

The truth is that those recruited to hunt down Garvey could have been full-blooded Africans, and indeed quite a few were: that a disproportionate number were of mixed blood only goes to demonstrate the sophistication of those who mastermind the hunt. To pull down an African Unity leader by the use of coloured agents is to indicate from the beginning the intended line of fission along which his support should be splintered and such emotive signals sent to the unreasoning section of the community would most likely set the Africans against the coloureds; divide and rule is the practiced modus operandi of those who rule others. Garvey, with his immensely profound political savvy was no doubt acquainted with the imperial tactics, yet he directed the main thrust of his attack on those who would have been at best only manipulated agents and not the principal masterminds of his downfall.

The bottom line question is what possible objections could any group of coloureds or for that matter any group of Africans in the diaspora have against some of their number voluntarily electing to return to Africa. The same question can be put differently thus 'what possible gains or benefits may accrue or what good can come to any person of African descent from claiming the right to return to mother Africa?' The answer by those who oppose such schemes is straightforward: it is to prevent African-Americans jumping from the frying pan into the fire, and misleading other innocent African-Americans from following suit. African-Americans, according to this view have nothing to gain from Africa and everything to lose by leaving America to settle in the jungles of Africa where 'folk eat folk' and 'monkies jump from tree to tree'. It seems that the number of African-Americans sharing this ridiculous view of Africa has increased since the advent of Martin Luther King Jr. With the increased racial integration in American society coinciding with the period of decolonization, which has in turn exposed the real stark poverty in much of Africa colonial and post-colonial hostility generated by ethnic divisions. It is nevertheless difficult for committed Pan-Africanists to accept that any person of African descent could without any improper pressure, show active hostility to those claiming their African heritage. Some Pan-Africanists might suggest that the expectations or hopes of some reward either in cash or patronage from those who control Africa or who have interests there that need protection from African-American competition might drive some people even of African descent to oppose such ventures. Yet since emancipation was proclaimed by Lincoln in 1863, anytime any person of African descent makes any effort to organize a 'Back to Africa' movement, or to interest any group of Africans in the Diaspora in returning voluntarily to Africa, opposition within America has come principally from those of their own kind who have no visible reason to object. It is possible that these obstructions were suborned from

Imperial Europe though no evidence has even been unearthed or any accusation suggest to that effect. Down the ages if any African-American is recruited to the service of European imperial interests in Africa, he is catapulted by the white controlled media to the leadership of the African-American community without any African-American being the wiser. At the end of the day, after destroying the movement and defeating its objectives, these obstructionists have absolutely nothing to show for their subversive efforts; both the organizers and their opponents subsequently sink back to their traditional role of providing cheap labour to sustain the prosperity of the white communities and the opportunity to transfer some technology to Africa and gain some dignity as a people in the process is made to go by default.

On their part the organizers and promoters of these schemes for 'back to Africa' believe that White Americans do not want any African or people of African descent in the United States, and would prefer a lily-white America: and invariably solicit the support of these underrate racists thereby playing into the hands of those who desire the failure of their movements.

The correct Pan-Africanist explanation of the phenomena of some people of African descent in America opposing programmes for their voluntary repatriation to Africa might be found in their traditional role of providing cheap labour for American white society. In both America and the West Indies, Africans were imported as slaves to provide cheap labour for the white settlers and planters who became the slave owners. In America, it was these slave owners who as the majority gained independence from Europe, and framed the country's constitution in which they incorporated what they claimed as their entitlement to cheap African labour, at that time obtained in the form of slave labour. The vice was hidden behind the façade of a struggle for democracy which was modelled after the constitution of the Greeks, where a people's democracy with an all-white electorate was super-imposed on a solid identifiable and unchanging base of non-voting African slaves. Where a Congress of slave owners proclaims that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their creator with certain inherent rights, they should not be presumed to include their slaves in the endowment, especially where they had been accustomed to treat them as mere chattels.

In the West Indies people of African descent were the majority of the population in almost every island, though it was with extreme difficulty that they eventually gained control of the land and became independent of imperial European control. It is also true that in the West Indies people of African descent occupy the lowest strata of society, but unlike America, they also form the government or exercise the power of government in the several and scattered islands of the Caribbean. The trust that has escaped most Pan-Africanists down the years, is that the white community of



America has never abandoned or given up this constitutional guarantee of cheap African labour which alone provides the white community the abundant leisure enabling them to carry out the training and research that supports their world leadership in every field. These Pan-Africanists forget that Lincoln fought the Civil War to preserve this very Constitution, and purposely to weaken the Confederate States; he used the denial of this privilege intact. The assassination of Lincoln within less than a week after the surrender of Lee made it easy for those who did not want the total loss of this privilege but rather its restoration in a new form to all white Americans to attribute to Lincoln all the permutations and combinations of the various options except the only one which would certainly have put an end to the enjoyment of the privilege for all time, namely the repatriation of the African-American to Africa. They turned Lincoln into a well-protected myth for the promoters of the spurious democratic credentials of America and the deception of the former African-American slaves who remained deprived politically economically and socially. The so-called 'Reconstruction' and its reversal was one gigantic charade to enable the restoration of the privilege albeit in an altered form to those whites who were deprived of it during the Civil War.

The Lincoln fetish taught the African-Americans the wrong reason why they were tolerated in America: they were wrongly taught that because chattel slavery had been abolished they had become free citizens; it concealed from them the basic truth that they were indispensable as the reservoir of cheap labour and that white America would go to any length to serve and support African-American quislings to sabotage any 'Back to Africa' movement. The European imperial powers that ruled Africa were content to keep African-Americans and the technologies and other progressive knowledge that they undoubtedly possessed out of Africa. These European imperialists knew that the secret to their power to rule Africa was not so much their possession of the maxim gun but the mystique surrounding themselves and their lifestyles which the Africans in their ignorance could not fathom. They knew that all African-Americans and their parents had lived with white men in their time and did not consider them as gods. A successful 'Back to Africa' by African-Americans would surely as the day follows the night make Africa ungovernable by or from Europe. It only stands to reason that the European imperial powers took some steps to thwart the plans of Garvey. It was clearly in their interest and to their benefit that Garvey should be silenced by incarceration for a period to allow the destruction of the Movement. The circulation of *The Negro World*, the Garvey paper, was banned and proscribed by the European imperial powers throughout half the globe yet these powers were careful not to provide the American public with any indication that they were operating within America against an American registered Association albeit African or Negro organized. Now Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and other



European nations with colonies inhabited by African subjects, all, like America, held themselves out to be resolutely opposed to the spread of socialist Marxist dogma. The Socialist and Communist parties in America on their part held themselves out to be resolutely against colonialism and imperialism, which Lenin had proclaimed to be the highest stage of capitalism. Africa-Americans could not in the circumstances have imagined that the European nations could recruit the socialist or communist parties in America on their side to fight any 'Back to Africa' movement among Africans in the Diaspora.

He regarded the black communists or socialists who came out against his movement as misguided. Invariably confession as to the proper racial nomenclature has arisen within the non-white community itself; some resent the name African, others object to the word Negro; some would prefer a reference other than 'black'. The terms 'Afro-American and African-American' seem to have generated less heat because each recognizes the Americanness of the non-whites.

Undoubtedly the most disliked racial term among the American non-white population is the word 'Negro' because of its prerogative allied term 'Nigger' which every white child was taught to use in taunting, and every compiler of an English dictionary included as a proper description of persons of African descent. In the West Indies, especially in Jamaica, it was not thought wise to teach white children to taunt those of African descent who were the overwhelming majority of the population. Moreover the term 'Negro' was not usually applied to people of mixed blood; resentment at the use of the term Negro was not as intense and as widespread as in America. The choice of the word 'Negro' for his organization in Jamaica might not have provoked too much resentment but Garvey should have known that its use in America was bound to attract negative and unfavourable response from some leaders of African descent who preferred other terms for their organization. Du Bois chose 'coloured' for his National Association and Cyril Briggs chose 'African' for his Blood Brotherhood, both were of mixed blood and their respective organizations were early opponents of the Garvey movement.

With the advent of the electronic media it takes the form of constant organized mass media campaigns of ridicule of the African continent and its people, to kill the urge in Africans in the diaspora to be associated with the place. To be sure there always would be a substantial number of white Americans and even Europeans who would support a 'Back to Africa' movement not because they are in sympathy with the aspirations of Africans in the diaspora but solely because they want to keep America white. Their fear however is that the American culture of risk-taking which is essential for capitalism, and indeed for every type of development, would be lost without the buffer of African cheap labour which prevents their living standards from

ever hitting rock bottom, and protects them from the consequences of bold economic risk.

The independence attained by several African colonies in the post-war years has not made any difference to the prospects of economic progress. Each of these former colonies entered independence with a couple or more European controlled multinational corporations occupying a dominant position in its economy and wielding an influence on the government not unlike that of Firestone over the Liberian Government at the time. It is not likely that any group of Africans from the diaspora, however determined to come back to Africa to settle and help develop the motherland, would have access to surplus finance or be in a position to compete in this regard with these European multinationals. The IMF and the World Bank have been of no assistance whatsoever to African development. The Garvey strategy remains the only option open to Pan-Africanists.

So long as the global recognition of Africa as the home of Africans and people of African descent remains the central tenet of Pan-Africanism, the story of Marcus Garvey will be relevant to the conduct of race relations and world affairs. The rate of progress in this century of all Africans, both on the African continent and in the diaspora has been in direct proportion to the degree of control they have gained over this home: it is this control that determines the nature of the relations between the so-called white races and the African races in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is bound to continue to do so in the new millennium.

For close to a century, the Pan-Africanist movement has been mesmerized by the clever focusing by Du Bois on the random statement from the first Pan African Congress in London in 1900 that 'the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be that of the colour line.' Enormous human and material resources that should have gone into wresting control of their home from European imperialists were expended and largely wasted in quixotic battles to obliterate the colour line. The stark truth is that even at this late closing date in the century, the colour line still exists, though not constantly visible everywhere as at the beginning of the century. The partial eclipse of the colour line everywhere is due to the control gained by Africans over Africa and other way round. The obliteration of portions or parts of the colour line has never preceded any control over the African continent gained by any African.

The political independence and political control gained over Africa by Africans has tended to blur the colour line everywhere; it will be completely obliterated and should disappear the moment Africans gain economic control of the continent. This much was foreseen by Garvey who also foretold that Europe would exploit but never develop Africa. The adoption of the policy of non-alignment by independent Africa has driven former colonies in Africa back into the grip of their former European masters who have substituted neo-colonialism as the new oppressive imposition for



exploitation. Garvey claimed that only the collaboration between the people of African descent in the diaspora and the Africans on the continent in joint ventures could develop Africa. His vision of collaboration was a scenario with the Africans in the diaspora initially contributing funds even in dribs and drabs and technical know-how through African-American and West Indian allies and the Africans on the continent initially providing the land, the natural resources and the labour. This was the pattern he adopted in his plans for the development of Liberia which were sabotaged. The nearly three quarters of a century that has elapsed since that tragic event has seen Africa taken through all manner of development strategies devised by wicked but clever jokers with the result that the economic gap between Africa and the rest of the world has widened. In the circumstances the experience of Garvey would be indispensable to those Africans who would lead the quest for economic independence of Africans and the meaningful and sustainable development of Africa.

The reasoning of Garvey on the relative merits of the terms 'Negro' and 'African' seems unGarveyite and somewhat lacking in foresight. He claimed that the term 'African' is as healthy and original as nature can make it, but unfortunately the white man has invaded the land of the Africans and has within recent years controlled it as to assume for himself the name and title of 'African' – (the Afrikaner) which brings up the question as to who is the African. The proud unchanging African is the black man that everybody knows. He is native of Africa, he is the hero of the ages, but according to the military and political trend of the domination, we have all kinds of Africans endeavouring to force their recognition upon the real African who has not really thought out the seriousness of this change. The African is the man of Africa. He is black in skin. His ethnic origin can never change, but those conditions have so enlarged themselves through which scores of millions of his race have been forcibly removed from Africa to other portions of the world, that a more general name has been given and accepted as a description that includes both the African and his descendants abroad; and that form is 'Negro'. The term 'Negro' is descriptive of the race. It is a strong word and it singles out the black man. Whenever anyone uses the term 'Negro' others know exactly what or who he means.

To use the term 'African' today is still to leave an impression of doubt as to who you mean, whether it is the South African, the West African or a member from any other section of the Continent who may or may not be black. To use the term 'Negro' universally marks the man without any difficulties. This is a term that is adopted by progressive movements because it is healthy, it is strong and it explains itself.

Hitherto not much African attention has been paid to this serious political misjudgement; no direct harm befell Garvey or his movement though his enemies



presented it as another evidence of what they claimed as the reality of the inner contempt that Garvey had for the African lineage.

In the struggle for leadership within the Pan-Africanist Pantheon, organizations like the NAACP showed all the cunning of their Jewish mentors, they were more subtle; and none of them used the term 'Negro'. Du Bois was specifically asked to 'call a Pan Africanist Congress' in 1919 and Cyril Briggs named his organization the African Blood Brotherhood. This choice was to portray African concern and was intended to facilitate the introduction of ridiculous theories to confuse the central claim in Pan-Africanism of 'Africa for Africans at home and abroad'.

With full knowledge of the vast and fundamental difference between the traditional institution of slavery practiced throughout the old world, and the satanic chattel slavery that was established in the new world, they have endeavoured strenuously to persuade some African bootlickers and time servers that Africans in Africa without any means of knowing what was taking place on or across the Atlantic were guilty nevertheless of causing their brethren to be treated as chattel slaves in the New World. This nonsense was obviously formulated to promote friction between Africans in the Diaspora and those on the continent, and not much was heard of it during the lifetime of Garvey. It became fashionable during the period of decolonization and ensured non-alignment between Africans from the continent and those in America at a time when non-alignment was insisted on between newly independent African states and the overwhelmingly white controlled establishments of America.

# The Power of the Pen

## Blackness Under Attack from Within<sup>1</sup>

Mathatha Tsedu

My supreme gratitude goes to Pastor Xola Skosana and the leadership of Way of Life, for honouring me with an invitation to be a part of this mammoth week-long festival of celebrating blackness. That you chose to ask me to speak and speak today with its significance in the Christian calendar, is beyond me.

My mother Vho Muofhe, who died when I was five, would weep, I am sure, if she saw that her little last born orphan survived the rigours of motherlessness so well that he was being honoured in this way. But then maybe she sees me right now and is not weeping but smiling.

The work that is done here every year and every day is important. The living gospel that is not just blaster and bombast, but work on the ground in various ways is crucial for life, for blackness. The education programme for secondary kids, the introduction of this brand of black theology into an institution of higher learning like you have done, the food parcels for immune challenged people, are all material work that make a huge real difference in the lives of people.

But even more important, is the theoretical work and defence of blackness that this church has been championing. When descendants of settlers have the guts to call us refugees in our own country, blackness is under attack.

It needs defenders, who are fearless and who will tell the madam she is way off line. The banner outside makes it clear. Long ago we used to have a song, *Basi thathaphi isibindi esingaka, so ku thata i Azania ba enze yabo?* (Where to do they get the courage to take and run Azania?)

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<sup>1</sup> Paper delivered by Mathatha Tsedu on April 6, 2012 at the Way of Life Church in Khayelitsha, Cape Town under the theme *Black is Bright, Black is Right, Black is Beautiful*.

When this church organises week long functions that are dedicated to celebrating blackness, in a world where blackness is equated by some with impropriety, you are doing good work.

I work as a journalist and so I know how important this kind of work is. Words build, they live long, they become history to be revisited by latter generations. The pen uses its power to defend blackness from attack from outside.

But I thought I would tweak the topic a bit to focus on the onslaught we face as black people, not from the madam or Afri-forum, but from ourselves. In other words, what is it about us and our behaviour that gives other people the impression we are refugees in our own land and even have the guts to say so publicly?

Colonialism is always based on a number of precepts. Land dispossession, turning the indigenous into cheap labour for the imperial government, psychological subjugation based on the alleged superiority of the coloniser and his culture, and the concomitant denigration of everything local. These operational conditions are the hallmark of colonialism everywhere.

South Africa was no different. Our culture was said to be barbaric, our religion superstition, our clothing unacceptable, our jewellery worn by our mothers were abhorred as symbolising heathenism while necklaces bearing the cross were the thing to wear.

We were shorn of all history, of any past worthy of knowing, glorifying and celebrating. That our forefathers not only built the Pyramids of Giza, in Egypt, but taught the famed Greek mathematician Pythagoras the basics of maths that he used to popularise the Pythagoras theorem, was a fact of history never told.

That we were the same people that built the Great Zimbabwe with its symmetry that could only be done by mathematicians of note, was something we were never taught. That the papyrus as the platform of writing was developed on this our continent of Africa, was hidden.

That the Timbuctou manuscripts were written many years before the settlers set foot into Mali, in local dialect, is one of history's biggest secrets.

What we were instead taught was the lie that white settlers found us dangling from one tree branch to another eating bananas when we were tired of killing each other. We were told that history started when the three ships docked not too far away from here.

What we are taught is that had God not sent these settler angels, we would have wiped each other out by now. They were going for our heads, they knew that if you conquer psychologically, they police themselves and keep themselves in the place you have allotted them. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that a few generations after colonisation many blacks had internalised these self degrading concepts.



When Steve Biko arrived on the scene in the mid 1960s what confronted him and his generation? It was a cowed black community, leaderless and rudderless. Whiteness was supreme. If you lived here, spoke isiXhosa and you looked a bit light complexioned, you tried your luck at playing so-called coloured.

If you were so-called coloured and light enough to pass for white, you played white. If you could not do this, you tried other means to show you reject being black. And so, many women and some men tried hard to look white, by burning their skins with Ambi and He Man. Biko found people burning their heads as they tried to change their hair to something as close to white hair as is possible to try.

Biko found blackness under attack. He found blackness in a mess. What then is this Blackness? It is essentially being black. Black as in a state of mind and a way of life. It is about how you relate to who you are. It is the assertion of black being positive, being good, embodying only good, working always for good, for justice in its broadest sense. It is the assertion of caring because good people care, of sharing because good people share, of loving because good people love. It is black as being Bright, being Right and being Beautiful!

Blackness then, being our being, is what was supposed to have been affirmed by the events of 1994. Cadres of our different liberation movements, the ANC, PAC, Black Consciousness Movement such as Azapo, had embodied the characteristics of blackness.

They fought for what was right, they were jailed for standing up. Some, like Biko, Mlungisi Tshazibane, Mapetla Mohapi, Onkgopotse Tiro, Mthuli ka Shezi, Tshifhiwa Muofhe, Peter Nchabeleng, were killed for asserting blackness. I mean Mthuli ka Shezi was pushed in front of a moving train at Germiston station because he was telling the white guard who used to abuse black women each day, that his mothers cannot be abused in his presence.

Others went into exile to prosecute the struggle on a higher plane of armed struggle. When caught they defiantly went to the gallows with their hooded heads upright, like Solomon Mahlangu because they knew their deaths were a mere setback, they knew that victory was certain.

Others, like uTata, languished in prisons for decades, refusing to bow by accepting sham freedom in the Transkei.

I am saying these are the cadres whose combined efforts ushered in 1994, when these committed fighters for freedom and justice went into government on May 10 1994. These messiahs who gave their all would lead us and lead us to prosperity. The dream of a bright Mzansi that had kept us going was to be real.

What then happened? Nice sounding policies that are erratically implemented. But in the main what is the face of our government today? Whilst there are good people doing good work, in the main black people in government have turned it into

a looting zone. The most incapable people who can however ensure that tenders flow in the right direction are placed in positions of responsibility.

When today, you read a story in a newspaper or listen to the news and hear that a CEO of some institution has been suspended for either failing to do their work or for giving jobs to their relatives, does it ever cross your mind that the said CEO could be white? Or do you just know that it must some so-called comrade?

Public hospitals all over the country run short of critical medicines all the time. They have become places where poor black people go to die. The attitude of black nurses and other health professionals is sometimes just downright sickening. Remember the strike a year or two ago when nurses disrupted surgery that was underway and turned a black pregnant mother about to give birth away? There were no white nurses there. It was us.

Our schools in our areas in Guguletu and Khayelitsha or Mitchells Plain are for the poorest of the poor. The well to do and even those not so well to do send their children to former white schools. Teachers in our areas do not have their children in the schools where they teach. They send them to schools where teachers are white.

Who are the people who get tenders to build houses and then either do a shoddy job at best, or at worst just disappear with the money and never complete their work? Is it white reactionaries who are out to sabotage the revolution?

Limpopo provincial government is broke. Why? The government has been milked dry in officially sanctioned day light looting. Who did that? Was it some remnants of settler colonialism intent on thwarting the national democratic revolution?

The answer to all these questions is NO. And in the case of Limpopo, it was bankrupted by the people who say their blood is black, gold and green.

When the Jews take a seven day old boy and circumcise him, no one shouts about it being barbaric to subject a baby like that to such a cut. When we do it in the mountains of the eastern cape and Limpopo, to young men, all hell breaks loose.

We who give names to our cattle as we tender to them, should we decide we want to kill one of them, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) will be issuing press releases about cruelty to animals.

The onslaught on our heritage is unceasing.

I am asserting here that our very being as black people is under attack. Not by enemies from outer space but from within. The people who are in government and who will not give you service they are paid to give unless you pay a bribe, are attacking blackness.

The tenderpreneur who takes money but does not build the houses or road or toilets, are attacking blackness. The teacher who is a member of a trade union who chooses to go to a meeting during school time, or go on strike just before exams is attacking blackness.



The judge who drinks and drives, gets caught and then does a Julius on the law to perpetuate his term in office, is attacking blackness. When Jackie Selebi allows himself to exchange integrity for a pair of Italian shoes and money, he is attacking blackness.

When Bheki Cele, the police general, signs millions of tax payers money away without reading the documents, the effect is not of bumbling Cele, it is bumbling blacks. When Gerald Majola uses Ali Bacher, the defender of apartheid cricket, as a role model for taking secret bonuses, he is attacking blackness.

When the community of Grabouw demands a school but choose to make their point by burning another school, that madness is an attack on blackness. When we protest lack of service delivery and burn community libraries, it is madness beyond belief.

When every other month we see a story from Khayelitsha or Delft, about a missing toddler who is later found raped or sodomised and killed, that is an assault on blackness.

And I am saying the attack is from within us, it is us against us. In this siege on blackness, who can and will save blackness? Who will defend right, who will stand up? Who will be our Isaiah as recorded in Chapter 6 verse 8 where the prophet says: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" "

The salvation of blackness does not lie in other people's hands. It is in our hands, me and you. We are the ones making us not just look bad, but be bad. When virtually every woman you meet today is wearing hair from India or Brazil and trying hard not to look like themselves, are we not in trouble?

I mean what is wrong with your hair? How is that Brazillian hair different from the skin lightening creams that Steve Biko fought so successfully against? The Brazillian and Indian hair are today's Ambi. The mentality that feeds it has the same genetic makeup. Inferiority, rejection of self, wishing, oh so wishing to be something else, something different, yes something white!

Are we not ok as we are that we have to try and look like other people? Are we unhappy with the in the image of God that we have been created that we are now spending money we do not have buying expensive hair extensions and wigs we do not need? How is black bright, right and beautiful when we negate it through our actions?

Who shall be our Isaiah and say "Here I am Lord, Send me to save blackness from itself. Send me Lord to finish the work Biko and Mohapi could not complete".

Can you stand up today and say "Send me Oh Lord"? What will send me mean today? It means you only do what should be right and you know to be right, all the time.



Send me Oh Lord, is when you, at all times, do not do what should be so obviously wrong and you know to be wrong.

Send me Oh Lord means you speak out at all times when someone does what should be wrong or what you know to be wrong.

Send me Oh Lord is when you, at all times, do not keep quiet in the face of deeds or actions that ought to be wrong or that you know to be wrong.

Send me oh Lord means standing up. And speaking up and protesting and joining others. It means if you are a member of a political organisation, you become active in the branch and make sure those elected to positions of leadership enhance blackness and do not hurt it

It means rejecting the false consciousness where you know what is right but consciously do the wrong thing, all the time pretending you are doing right. It means being real, and it starts with you. Do you crave to be someone else or are you comfortable in your skin and hair, as that special being created by God in His image?

When you are done with yourself, as they say on South African Airways (SAA), then you help the children or your neighbour. But fix your oxygen mask first.

But when you do that, it can get quite lonely. You have to be prepared to be "unpopular". Those intent on subverting blackness have means. They use their ill gotten wealth to buy influence. You may find resistance from within your own family, with your brothers or sisters saying "leave these things, this is how things are done these days, why worry if he is giving us money?"

When you succumb, we are dead. When you stand up and defy the wrong norm, the wrong fashion, like Jesus, you push the frontiers of righteousness, you change the world, you make the world a better place, inch by inch, centimetre by centimetre person by person, day by day.

Then we can join Bra Hugh Masekela in his song which says, Thuma Mina.

# The African Press Coverage of Japan and British Censorship during World War II

A Case Study of the Ashanti Pioneer, 1939-1945

Yasu'o MIZOBE

## Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between the African newspaper coverage of Japan and British censorship during World War II, based on the case of the *Ashanti Pioneer* that was published in the British Gold Coast. The *Pioneer*, Asante's first daily newspaper, was first published in November 1939. Originally, the Kumasi-based newspaper mainly published articles related to local affairs and took a neutral stance towards the recent war. However, around the turn of the decade (1939-40), it gradually shifted its stance towards a pro-war position, and after the 1940s, its stance on Japan shifted from positive to negative and even to hostile.

A recent paper read by the present author suggests possible causes of the 'abrupt reversal' and changing image of Japan among the Gold Coast newspapers during World War II.<sup>1</sup> Among them were the adopted imperial consciousness of African intellectuals, the awakening of African superiority through their experience of the war, the rivalry among non-European nations and/or the censorship imposed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Yasu'o MIZOBE, 'Turned into the Enemy: The Changing Image of Japan among Gold Coast Newspapers during World War II', Paper presented at the international workshop 'Re-evaluating African and WWII', at Rutgers University on 29 March 2008.

colonial authorities. The current paper focuses on censorship and scrutinizes its influence on the stance taken by the *Ashanti Pioneer*.

With regard to the *Pioneer's* change of stance during WWII, the existing study also points out factors such as 'colonial government censorship' and 'political pressures emanating from conservative African nationalist politicians'.<sup>2</sup> However, this research does not refer to any official documents that highlight the relationship between censorship and the shift in stance. This study is chiefly based on documents filed as 'Newspapers General'<sup>3</sup> in the Kumasi Branch of the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), as well as original articles of the *Pioneer*, which are stored in PRAAD's Cape Coast Branch and Newspaper Library at Colindale, UK.

### I. The *Ashanti Pioneer* and J.W. Tsiboe

The first issue of the *Ashanti Pioneer* was published in Kumasi, the then Gold Coast and present-day Ghana in November 1939. It was published by the Abura Printing Works, which was established and owned by John Wallace Tsiboe (1904–1963). Tsiboe, son of a local chief's family in Abura Dunkaw, started trading in Kumasi after completing his secondary education at the Wesleyan Boys School, Kumasi. According to Fynn, 'he was hard-working and shrewd, and within a few years had become one of the wealthiest men in Asante'.<sup>4</sup> As 'a patriot and nationalist', he was 'determined to hasten the end of British colonialism and exploitation by establishing a newspaper to popularize his

John Wallace Tsiboe



[Source] *The Ashanti Pioneer*,  
19 February 1940.

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<sup>2</sup> A. M. Israel, 'The Afrocentric Perspective in African Journalism—A Case Study of the *Ashanti Pioneer*: 1939–1957', *Journal of Black Studies*, 22 (1992), pp. 411–428. It mentions two editorials from the *Ashanti Pioneer*, which refer to Japan and indicate an abrupt change in the viewpoint concerning Japan (pp. 417–8). However, the article does not mention any *Pioneer* articles published between January 1943 and December 1945, since the microfilm that it cites does not contain them.

<sup>3</sup> 'Newspapers General' (11/9/39–31/8/43), PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3

<sup>4</sup> J. K. Fynn, 'Tsiboe, J. W.', *Dictionary of African Biography*, vol. 1, *Ethiopia–Ghana*. New York, 1977, p. 322.



aims and ideals'.<sup>5</sup>

After WWII, Tsiboe devoted himself to political activities. When the Convention People's Party (CPP) was founded in 1949, he became the chairman of the Asante division. Later, after breaking with Kwame Nkrumah's CPP, he joined the Ghana Congress Party led by K.A. Busia, and then formed the National Liberation Movement in Asante, which was later merged into the United Party along with all the other opposition parties in 1957. As he kept utilizing the *Pioneer* as an 'opposition paper', it was banned not only by the colonial government in 1950 but also by Nkrumah's government in 1962, since it continually campaigned for political reforms and social justice for the Asante people. Many studies, therefore, refer to the *Pioneer* as a 'paper with a long and proud history';<sup>6</sup> 'a symbol of the freedom of the press in Ghana';<sup>7</sup> and 'one remarkable exception'<sup>8</sup> among the other Ghanaian newspapers.

During the early phase of WWII, the *Pioneer* did not express any sympathy with its colonial masters. An editorial on 4 December 1939 entitled 'Europe Is Mad' contained the editor's misgivings about the war in the statement, 'the whole world looks at Europe and gapes with awe and surprise, for Europe appears to have become a den of mad men'.<sup>9</sup> However, towards the end of the year, the editorials began to appeal to the readers to prepare for the war.<sup>10</sup> In the beginning of the following year the *Pioneer* published an editorial entitled 'Rule Britannia!', which was concluded with the following words:

Let us pray for this [British] Empire to live and continue to exercise democratic principles. Let us pray for this Empire to improve in her government from day to day as to be able to attain that perfection that will make her the unquestioned leader of the whole world. Let us pray for Britain. RULE BRITANNIA!<sup>11</sup>

Thereafter, war-related articles, including 'War News' from foreign news agencies, came to occupy most of the space in the paper and this trend continued until the end of the war. In 1941 the *Pioneer* began displaying a 'V' symbol for victory at the top of the front page of each issue, as well as a 'B' symbol for 'Give to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Kwame Karikari, 'Press, Power & Politics: Ghana 2000' A Freedom Forum Report on the Ghanaian Media, Arlington: Freedom Forum, 2000, p. 9. (<http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/international/mediaforum/2000/africa/ghanaprrereport2000.pdf>)

<sup>7</sup> J. K. Fynn, 'Tsiboe, J. W.', p. 322.

<sup>8</sup> K. A. B. Jones-Quartey, 'The Ghana Press', *Report on the Press in West Africa*. Ibadan, 1960, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> 'Europe Is Mad', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 4 December 1939.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Time Has Come' and 'War Economy', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 11 and 20 December 1939.

<sup>11</sup> 'Rule Britannia', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 30 January 1940.

Buy [the] Biggest Bomber [to] Bomb Berlin' after 1942. It also appealed to its readers to increase the production of rubber as a contribution to war efforts.

## II. Coverage of Japan during World War II

The *Pioneer's* coverage of Japan in its very early issues did not reveal any hostility. For example, the editorial of the 28 November 1939 issue mentioned Japan in the following manner:

Japan is a world power to-day. In just a little over seventy years ago Japan was a backward State almost on the same footing with the Gold Coast. We could safely say that the Gold Coast was much more politically advanced than Japan then... To-day the Gold Coast is backward politically, economically, educationally. Her comparative progress with that of Japan is an Inverse Proportion. How did Japan do it? She amassed a great national wealth, and with it dispatched her worthy sons and daughters abroad to learn all that human mind could invent. These returned home with their great acquisitions to re-make Japan, and they have re-made Japan. Let us follow this example and take our proper place in the Empire and on the surface of the earth.<sup>12</sup>

This was not the first time Japan had been presented as a model for the Gold Coast. Such references had already appeared in some books published at the beginning of the twentieth century by early Gold Coast intellectuals.<sup>13</sup>

However, after the 1940s, particularly after 1941, when Japan formally declared war on the Allied nations, the press of the Gold Coast, including the *Ashanti Pioneer*, changed its stance towards Japan. In the issue dated 4th August 1942, the editor introduced a newly published brochure entitled 'Japan' written by Moses E. Danquah. The review read:

Printed in attractive style, it is a mine of information of a people [Japanese] who, in less than a century, have carved a niche in the temple of fame, but who intoxicated with [an] exaggerated view of their wonderful achievement, are helping to wreck [the] liberties of mankind.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 'Wine is Mocker', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 28 November 1939.

<sup>13</sup> For example, leading personalities in the early twentieth century Gold Coast such as J. M. Sarbah, J. E. Casely-Hayford and S. R. B. Attoh-Ahuma referred to Japan in their publications, where they portrayed it as a model of successful modernisation among non-Western nations. K. K. Prah, 'Nationalist Attitudes in the Gold Coast in Response to the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905' (paper presented at the Afro-Japanese Relations in Historical Perspective symposium, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1 November 2008).

<sup>14</sup> 'Japan', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 4 August 1942.

In addition, the same issue published a contribution from a 'Student of History', a reader from Accra, which stated:

It is characteristic of the Japanese to sacrifice any precious possession to the achievement of an aim set before them. They have also according to the nature of their environment, developed a naval power. But they cannot be a match for either the British Empire or the United States. Thus every body will take heart and contribute in whatever he can to the war effort. Persistent perseverance and utmost endeavours will never fail us in getting the Axis completely vanquished.<sup>15</sup>

The former describes Japan as a newly developed nation perverting its achievement to harm human liberty, which the British Empire along with the Allied nations was protecting. The latter clearly aims to present Japan as an enemy nation by using the word 'Axis'.

As the war intensified, more and more banners and war reports referring to Japan occupied the front page as well as the inside pages. Moreover, after 1942, the *Pioneer* began to use the derogatory term 'Jap'.<sup>16</sup>

After 1944, when the Gold Coast soldiers of the Royal West Africa Frontier Force actually fought with Japanese soldiers in the India-Burma Theater, the *Pioneer* published some editorials in which the editor praised the ability, bravery and superiority of the West African troops in the field. For example, the editorial entitled 'They Are On The Move' commented:

HOW OUR HEART WELLED within us when the news of the movements of the brave lads in far away India was released last Wednesday! ... The brave West African lads have enlisted for service overseas to fight against the King-Emperor's enemies; they are doing battle to purge the world of EVIL THINGS represented by Nazism and Fascism, the worst and most dangerous aspects of human nature which deny elementary rights of human beings to a people outside the Aryan race, especially the black race which is generally regarded as the "service" race for the dominant races of the world.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 'Our Post Bag (Reader's Views)', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 4 August 1942.

<sup>16</sup> However, as far as the author has confirmed, the *Pioneer* did not disparage the Japanese by using disdainful words as did the Cape Coast-based *Gold Coast Observer* did in its front-page article 'Our Kith and Kin in Burma', published on 18 August 1944. See also Mizobe, 'Turned into the Enemy', pp. 6-7.

<sup>17</sup> 'They Are on the Move', *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 18 February 1944.



### III. Censorship and the *Pioneer's* Response

As is evident from the above survey, as the war progressed, the *Pioneer* gradually shifted its stance regarding Japan as well as the war itself. Although various factors contributed to this change, this paper limits its focus to the censorship imposed by the colonial authority. In the British West Africa, it has been pointed out the colonial governments—more precisely, the colonial office in London—had been reluctant to regulate the local press.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the Gold Coast government issued an ordinance<sup>19</sup> to regulate publications in 1897, which remained substantially the same law until the independence of Ghana despite some amendments in 1950, 1952 and 1958.<sup>20</sup> However, the law required all publishers to register with the government their names, the dates of publication, the number of copies published, the price, and so forth, and did not allow the government to officially censor the publications.

Nevertheless, during the war, the government introduced special regulations to censor all the publications as well as mails and telegrams in the colony. When the war broke out, the colonial government issued the 'Defence (Restriction of Publications) Order, 1939', under which an information officer was appointed to examine and approve for publication the newspapers and other material submitted to him. Although the order was applied initially to publications in Accra, after December 1940, papers published in Kumasi were subjected to the same form of censorship.<sup>21</sup> However, both in Accra and Kumasi, editors did not have to submit copies prior to publication because 'the co-operation between the Editors and the Information Officer has been satisfactory'.<sup>22</sup> Instead, the information officer checked each issue of the publications and warned the editor when he found it to be undesirable.<sup>23</sup>

In Asante, the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti was appointed as the examiner of the government censorship.<sup>24</sup> In his reply to the appointment letter, H. C. Stevenson, the then Chief Commissioner, stated, 'I have been working on the lines indicated in your letter since our only newspaper, the '*Pioneer*', was first published', and interestingly, he continued, 'I have found that the proprietor of this paper [Tsiboe]

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<sup>18</sup> Yasuo MIZOBE, *A Survey of the Gold Coast (Southern Ghanaian) Newspapers in the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century*. Cape Town, 2007, pp.34–36; Fred I. A. Omu, 'The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa: The West African Example', *Journal of African History*, 9, 1968.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Book and Newspaper Registration Ordinance', *The Gold Coast Government Gazette*, 30 November 1897.

<sup>20</sup> Jones-Quartey, 'The Ghana Press', p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/19, Colonial Secretary to Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 9 December 1940.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

has been most willing to co-operate and ready to listen to advice'.<sup>25</sup> In fact, most of the articles the authorities warned newspapers about concerned the military situation of the Allied Powers, including their troops' positions and plans. In such cases, the proprietor and editor of the *Pioneer* immediately responded to the warnings and rectified them as directed.<sup>26</sup>

The degree of 'satisfactory cooperation' between the *Pioneer* and the authorities can also be inferred from the following correspondence between them. The editor of the *Pioneer* sent the chief commissioner a letter to ask him to issue a short message on special occasions, such as the paper's anniversary or Christmas.<sup>27</sup> In every message, the commissioner appealed to the readers to contribute to war efforts and expressed his satisfaction with the *Pioneer*'s role in encouraging war efforts. Among these communications, the 1942's Christmas message of 1942 is worth quoting here:

Last year as a result of Japan's treacherous attack upon the United Nations, we celebrated Christmas under the shadow of one of the greatest perils that has ever threatened the existence of the British Commonwealth of Nations. We then realised that that peril was to be intensified in the months that lay immediately before us. But we were sustained by faith in the justness of our cause ... A hard, and I fear costly, fight lies before our armed forces and we must support them not only by increasing our production of materials essential to the war effort but also by the sacrifice of many of those amenities which we had believed to be parts of our every-day life. It is only through this spirit of self-sacrifice that we can hope to gain a lasting Peace based on Good Will.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, in May 1943, when the war had intensified, Abura Printing Works organised an 'Evening Dress Dance' at Prempeh Hall as part of the war charity campaign 'under the distinguished patronage of His Honour the Acting Chief Commissioner of Ashanti and Otumfuo the Asantehene'.<sup>29</sup>

One of the factors that sustained 'satisfactory cooperation' was the chronic shortage of newsprint during the war. Immediately after its founding, the *Pioneer*

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<sup>25</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/21, Chief Commissioner of Ashanti to Colonial Secretary, 12 December 1940.

<sup>26</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/2, Chief Commissioner of Ashanti to J.W. Tsiboe, 15 September 1939; ARG 1/28/3/27, Chief Commissioner of Ashanti to Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1941; ARG 1/28/3/38, Tsiboe to Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 7 October 1941.

<sup>27</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/41, 48 and 72, Baiden to Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 10 November 1941, 7 December 1942 and 30 August 1943.

<sup>28</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/50, Chief Commissioner's message, 19 December 1942.

<sup>29</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/9/5, 'War Information—Record of Events'.

published a small notification entitled 'Notice To Our Agents', which read as follows:

Papers are very scarce as a result of the War, and in order to standardise our daily output and to avoid unnecessary waste of papers, time and strength we are strongly appealing to you, therefore to let us know at once exactly how many copies you want and don't ask for more.<sup>30</sup>

About six months later, the editor of the *Pioneer* submitted a petition to H. C. Stevenson, the then chief commissioner of Ashanti, in which he complained of the serious shortage of newsprint due to the war and asked the government's assistance in obtaining newsprint.<sup>31</sup> Stevenson requested the information officer in Accra to take precautionary measures on this matter, stating, 'I should be sorry if the only Ashanti paper were compelled to close down owing to lack of newsprint and I hope that the Editor's request will receive sympathetic consideration'.<sup>32</sup> However, the information officer did not accept this request because the *Pioneer* had not submitted precise information about its circulation and stock of newsprint.<sup>33</sup>

As the war continued, the government tightened its control on newsprint. In September 1941, the information officer ordered the *Pioneer* to discontinue the use of the plate entitled 'Aim High, Strive Hard, Go Forward' on the front page, not only because 'supplies of newsprint are limited' but also because 'this plate is of indifferent quality in itself, and it could hardly be said to add to the news value, or propaganda value, of the newspaper'.<sup>34</sup> Tsiboe promptly followed the order and stopped using the plate.<sup>35</sup> The *Pioneer's* dependence on government newsprint grew in December 1941 when the government decided that all newsprint for local newspapers would be rationed by the Government Printer.<sup>36</sup>

The supply of newsprint was the lifeline of the *Pioneer* and, more seriously, the

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<sup>30</sup> *The Ashanti Pioneer*, Saturday, 4 December 1939.

<sup>31</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/5, 'Petition of the Editor, Ashanti Pioneer, Praying His Honour the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti To Assist in the Matter of Newsprint', 12 June 1940.

<sup>32</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/8, Chief Commissioner of Ashanti to Information Officer, 17 June 1940.

<sup>33</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/9, Information Officer to Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 19 June 1940.

<sup>34</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/35, Information Officer to Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 26 September 1941.

<sup>35</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/36, Chief Commissioner of Ashanti to Information Officer, 30 September 1941.

<sup>36</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/39, Information Officer to Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, 3 December 1941.



Abura Printing Works, the *Pioneer's* publisher. This is because jobbing, such as supplying cash books, bill forms, market tickets, posters, and so forth, was 'a fairly large part of the business of the Abura Printing Works'.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Tsiboe, the proprietor and one of the most prominent businesspersons in Asante, made desperate efforts to ingratiate himself and his newspaper with the government in order to secure newsprint for his business.



[Figure] Cover page of the Ashanti Pioneer (26 September 1941)

### Conclusion

This paper has briefly examined the *Ashanti Pioneer's* changing stance on the subject of Japan as well as the war during WWII. Focusing on governmental censorship, this paper has indicated that the management of the Asante's private newspaper, at least ostensibly, willingly accepted the government's censorship instead of opposing it,

<sup>37</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/54, Report by Inspector of Government Printer, 29 January 1943.

and that the governmental control of newsprint significantly contributed to the proprietor's 'loyalty' to the government. It may be possible to say of the *Pioneer's* changing stance as 'The *Ashanti Pioneer* gradually became an organ of war propaganda...'<sup>38</sup>, and that 'In spite of its proclamations of nationalist intent, [it] did not maintain a consistent Afrocentric perspective during its early years...'<sup>39</sup>

However, the *Pioneer* continued to be the mouthpiece for the Asante's affairs even during wartime. In September 1941, when the government revested land in Kumasi in the Asantehene, almost the entire issue of 25 September contained articles relating to this news, with war news being pushed to the last column on the final page.<sup>40</sup> The government did not censor such articles either. Rather, the colonial authorities in Kumasi seemed to be 'tolerant' of discussing Asante affairs. In the anniversary messages to the *Pioneer*, the chief commissioner of Ashanti stated that, 'I am confident that... this newspaper will help to make useful contributions to the solution of the post war problems of Ashanti'<sup>41</sup> and that, 'I am pleased to note that it [the *Pioneer*] is already promoting discussions as to post-war problems'<sup>42</sup>.

This paper clarified the relationship among governmental censorship, the government's control of newsprint, and local press's reactions to these restrictions. Moreover, it also pointed out the apparent 'honeymoon relationship' that existed between the local press and the colonial government. However, it is necessary to further investigate the business status of the newspaper company and carefully examine the business and political ideas of Mr Tsiboe, through a consideration of his life, in order to elucidate the relationship between the company's management affairs and its loyalty to the government. In addition, a comparison between the *Pioneer* and the south-based *Gold Coast Observer* and *Gold Coast Independent* will be of great significance to this study. These issues will be included in the author's future research.

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<sup>38</sup> Israel, 'The Afrocentric Perspective in African Journalism', p. 415.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 427.

<sup>40</sup> *The Ashanti Pioneer*, 25 September 1941.

<sup>41</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/42, Chief Commissioner's message, 12 November 1942.

<sup>42</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/28/3/74, Chief Commissioner's message, September 1943.

Association for World Historians, May 2009, for their comments and suggestions. In addition, this research could never have been accomplished without the invaluable assistance of the archivists at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Cape Coast and Kumasi for their invaluable assistance.



# Sudanese Music: A Loud Voice silenced by an Inconvenient Ideology - A Historical Review<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad Jalal Hashim

## Introduction

This paper sweeps through the last one and half millennium trying to trace the musical genres of the Sudan as being African in origin and how the process of Islamization and Arabization has affected it. The advent of Christianity can roughly be said to have begun around the 6th century AD. While the processes of Islamization and Arabization can also be marked with the establishment of the Black Sultanate of the Funj in 1505 AD.

Like any African society, the Sudanese communities in pre-Arab Sudan used to have their musical performances, which can be concluded in the following: 1) drums, i.e. rhythm; 2) dancing, whether rituals or for casual enjoyment; 3) musical instruments; 4) lyrics; and 5) mix of males and females with no gender segregation. The most common musical instruments are the string (such as the lyre), wind (such as the horns) and drum (such as 'dallūka') instruments, as they are found in almost all the regions (al-Daw, 1985).

## Music in Pre-Arab Sudanese Communities

### *Music in Western Sudan*

Al-Tūnusi (1965: 231-241), who visited Darfur in the first decade of the 19th century tells us how women and men sang and danced at the royal court, with most of them

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<sup>1</sup> M. Jalal Hashim . <http://www.mjhashim.blogspot.com/> Wednesday, September 09, 2009.

under the effect of alcohol. He further gives a list of the dances in the region. He gives a detailed description of the 'shikindira' dance, which is one of the well known dances of Darfur today. In this dance, the girls and boys will form a circle with the former stooping forward fetching the ground with their hands. The boys will come at the back of the girls holding them from the waist.

Such genres have come under threat as a result of Islamization (Abduljalil & Khatir, 1977: 101). The new surge of Islamic puritans and fundamentalist began by the mid 20th century literally marauding the villages and towns preaching a strict version of Islam that does not condone of any feature of creative entertainment such as music, singing and dancing.

#### *Music in Eastern Sudan*

Eastern Sudan, though populated by many ethnic groups, is usually represented by its historical people, i.e. the Beja. More than one scholar has mentioned that it is nothing easier for the Beja person than to start singing (cf. Sanders, 1935: 214; Newbold, 1936: 140-141; Clark, 1938: 5). Ohaj, a Beja historian himself, mentions that the Beja perform in a group using the lyre to sing and dance (Ohaj, 1986: 13-17). Ibrahim (1991) also mentions that each Beja clan has its own ethnic-boundary defining tunes (agāyēb). This tune should only be played for declaring war. No one outside the clan is allowed to play this tune unless they want to announce their present within the precinct of the clan. In this case, food and drinks will be offered to the guests so as stop playing the tunes. If they keep playing it, then this will be taken as an insult and it may lead to having them killed immediately (Ibrahim, 1991).

#### *The Music in Southern Sudan*

The travelers and government officials in the time of Turco-Egyptians rule (1821-1885) recorded many aspects of music among southern Sudanese communities. Schweinfurth (1874: 413-445) tells of a performance done by Monza, king of Nyam-Nyam tribes in Equatoria. Wyndham (1937) tells of the folkloric and musical genres of the Baria, Azandi, Nuer and Dinka. In fact, music and dancing play a central role in the rites of passage and life circle in almost all tribes of southern Sudan (cf. Leinhardt, 1961).

#### *The Music in Northern Sudan*

Being indigenous of the region for thousands of years, the Nubians can be taken as representing the north. The region houses other tribes, such as the great Ja'aliyyin tribes; however, the link between them and the Nubians is very strong, bearing in mind the opinion that classifies them as Arabized Nubians (cf. Fadl, 1973: 145-154). The Nubians have their various musical folkloric genres. These varieties go

according to the inter-ethnic differentiations, such as Dongula up the region; Mahas, Sukkoud, and Halfa down the river (cf. Simon, 1980a). As they were Christians until a few centuries ago (Vantini, 1981), it is expected for music to have played a central role in their cosmology. In fact we know of some of the hymns they used to perform during the time of Christianity (cf. Griffith, 1913; Browne, 1989). Burckhardt (1978) who visited the region in 1813-4, mentions that the lyre was the only instrument he came across among the Nubians. Waddington & Hanbury (1822: 250), who visited the region with the invading Turco-Egyptian army tell us about their encounter with the kings of the Mahas. They tell in particular about the royal bards in both Nubian kingdoms of Mahas and Argo and the crucial role played by them. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that they fit into the type and style of the royal bards in other areas of Africa (cf. Mafeje, 1961). It is interesting that Lepsius (1880: 240) includes one of the songs performed to him by a Mahas royal bard. In 2001 the present writer, when doing field research among the Mahas, succeeded in identifying the same song still being enchanted. Another evidence of the African origin of musical genres and performances of the Nubian is the basic book of Musul (1974) where he cites all forms of dances, songs and musical instruments in the Sukkout region in middle Sudanese Nubia.

### **The Music in Middle Islamized and Arabized Sudan**

#### *The Funj Era (1505-182)*

Middle Sudan is usually represented by the Arabised and Islamized Africans (cf. Fadl, 1973). The Funj sultanate, also called 'the Black Sultanate' was the first Islamic and Arab kingdom to have command of the middle region and other peripheral areas such as Kordufan, the east and the north. In the Funj era people were discouraged from performing music unless it was to praise Prophet Muhammad; music performers were given the derogatory name 'vagabonds' (al-Tahir, 1993). In their Prophet-praising chants, the Sufi bands employed the drums and brass percussion (cf. Simon, 1980b). However, there was a certain Sufi shaikh (Isma'il al-Daglāshi) who used to play music with 'rabbāba' (i.e. lyre) until he was nicknamed 'Ismā'il the one with the rabbāba'. In his songs, which were a mixture of Sufism and flirtation, he used to flirt with specific known women, a matter that caused him troubles (see his biography in Wad Deif Allah, 1985). Girls of noble tribal origin, i.e. of Arabized tribes, were allowed only to sing in order to incite their people to go to war, or to mourn their dead, a brother, a father or son. Singing was left to their slaves.

#### *The Turco-Egyptian Era (1821-1885)*

The Turco-Egyptian government in Egypt invaded the Sudan primarily to procure slaves so as to recruit them in the army. The areas targeted with the slavery raids



were the south, Nuba Mountains, Ingassan and Darfur (Ibrahim, 1971: 5-22). Those enslaved soldiers were put into battalions according to their ethnic backgrounds, i.e. those of Dinka origin will form their own regiment and so on (cf. Mohamed, 1980: 15-16). Regarding the music in the middle of the Sudan, the new rule left it in its old tradition of discouraging music unless it was performed to praise prophet Muhammad. By the mid-19th century, the urban areas began growing fast with the class of ex-slaves forming a community in its own right. This community, mostly or completely detribalized, was different in so many ways than the fully tribalized sections of middle Sudan. Furthermore, it was considered as a social stigma. However, the more the government and the communities of middle Sudan indulged themselves in slavery, the more it kept growing as an urban community with clearly liberal tendencies. In 1851 James Hamilton, an English traveler, relates how he was entertained in Khartoum with a party where beautiful and young girls danced while at the back sat veiled women (1857: 323-328).

At that time the Nubians of northern Sudan, the Mahas in particular, had based themselves in and around Khartoum. Coming from an African background, with Arabization as the only way to prosper, they maintained a balance between adhering to the tradition of performing music only to praise the prophet and between the natural need to perform music for the sake of entertainment. The sons and descendants of their renowned Sufi families began performing flirting music in their youth to resort to Sufi chants when they get older. The most famous for this kind is Shaikh Mudawwi, the great grandson of the Mahasi Sufi shaikh Idris wad al-Arbāb. Shaikh Mudawwi began by composing some of the fine songs which are still being performed today. Later when he became older, he went to the hajj (pilgrimage) and thenceforth concentrated on Sufi chants and religion.

The slave-based regiments kept playing their own ethnic music, which were modified so as to serve the military marches. These songs and chants were the composite of present day marches of Sudanese military, with the lyrics of most of them well known (Jabir, n.d.). When the Turco-Egyptian regime was compelled to abandon slavery, it began recruiting soldiers with the consent of the tribal leaders. In 1858 in his visit to the Sudan the Khedive of Egypt Sa'id Pasha gave his orders to form a military musical band by recruiting youngsters from certain black tribes. Among those who were recruited was Abdullah Adlan who was the son of the leader of the Funj tribe (Bredin, 1961: 37-45). Later the Yuzbashi Abdullah became the first Maestro of the military band. The British rule in Egypt began in 1888 reorganizing the army. As part of this, they began also reorganizing the so-called Sudanese battalions, which were made of soldiers of ex-slave backgrounds.

#### *The Mahdia Era (1885-1899)*

Following a fundamentalist religious jurisprudence, the Mahdia strictly abolished music and singing (Slatin, 1898: 233). It particularly targeted the female dancers and performers, whom it flogged when caught singing (Fawzi, 1901: 170). This has led to the silencing of many female performers who only came back to singing after the defeat of the Mahdia rule; among those was the famous Sharīfa bit Bilāl (al-Tahir, 1993: 25). The only genre of music allowed to men in that time was the 'Karīr' or 'tambūr' (it has nothing to do with the musical instrument called 'tanbūr'), which is a coarse oral music made by harshly blowing guttural sound from the throat. This is an old Sudanese musical genre that signifies virility and usually performed by a group of men circling around girls who dance and sing.

#### *The Colonial Condominium Era (1899-1956)*

When the embargo on performing music was lifted, people began reviving their suppressed musical genres starting from where they were, i.e. the 'tambūr'. At that time the urban class formed by the completely detribalized communities of ex-slave backgrounds were spared the trauma of the Mahdia as they moved to Egypt and came back with the invading army. So, there were two parts of the society: 1) a suppressed part (Islamized and tribalized people of middle Sudan who do not classify themselves as blacks), and 2) non-suppressed part (Detribalized blacks who bore the stigma of slavery). The two parts were performing completely different genres of music. A little later, the suppressed part began catching up with the old traditions of musical performance, which were enriched with music and performances coming from the African tribes of the ex-slaves. Thus the suppressed parts began slowly merging artistically with the non-suppressed to give us the so-called haqība genre of song, upon which the present modern Sudanese music of middle Sudan is based. As it started from the Karīr and tambūr, an illusion was created that the pioneers and forerunners of the haqība are those who performed the Karīr and tambūr.

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# Book Review

By Bridget Edman

(Subaltern Women Subvert Dominant Discourse in Njabulo  
Ndebele's Novel *Cry Of Winnie Mandela*)

In postcolonial Africa, women especially rural women, remain largely disempowered subalterns. This essay intends to foreground how African women in Njabulo Ndebele's *Cry of Winnie Mandela* subvert dominant discourse of foreign oppressors and African males. It disassembles the novel's evocative narrative of women's patient waiting and reassembles palimpsest texts of social, political, cultural discursive discourses. In the novel Ndebele deconstructs borders between history and fiction, realism and magic and reconstructs margins where wounded, mentally, psychologically broken postcolonials create ambiguous liminal existence. In the last chapter Ndebele deconstructs time and space and explores a site of women empowerment. Five African women repossess their land on a stage devoid of male presence but with an ambivalent sign of a white woman. The presence of the now dependent white woman subverts racial and colonial discourse at the moment it enunciates universal feminist discourse. This essay rereads Ndebele's universal femininity as signifier of (im)possible future. Postmodern pessimism that underwrites historical discourse of postcolonial and post-apartheid betrayal is rewritten in post-pessimistic imagination.

"Life is more than discourse" (Foucault). Ndebele rewrites Foucault and inscribes postcolonial discourse in the real lives of five women, or actually six, as I will show later. I do not deploy woman's body as signifying map, because Ndebele's discursive narrative unfolds in a landscape with signifiers both smaller and bigger than female

bodies. Ndebele never deploys simplifications in order to undercut the grand narrative of empire.

In this essay I examine Njabulo Ndebele's feminist discourse in the novel *Cry of Winnie Mandela*. I disassemble female protagonists to problematize postcolonial narrative and read palimpsest texts of social, political, cultural discursive discourses. Historical and biographical intertexts foreground postcolonial (in South Africa read post-apartheid) breakdown in relationships, interpersonal and inter-social, and postmodern psychic disorder. Five African interlocutors are tropes of Mother Africa, exploited, barren, betrayed. At the same time they subvert dominant discourse and inscribe their disempowered womanhood on the map of the world, reclaim their land and deconstruct patriarchy. Borders between history and fiction, realism and magic collapse in postmodern pessimism and postcolonial, postapartheid disillusion. Evocative narrative of women's waiting, patience, suffering revolts against itself in subversive discourse that is both political and psychic. In the final chapter subalterns write back and subvert European-colonial and African-male dominant discourse.

As an academic Ndebele has always insisted that simple political propaganda, even when socially justified, must not compromise literary quality. Times for slogans and pamphlets are limited and should not be exploited. His own fictive narrative adroitly analyses the postcolony in political and cultural metatexts that do not compromise the story line of living people in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa. He has got an uncanny sense for the emotional and psychic life of his characters, notably women and children. Ndebele is a son of Africa's Imbongi and Griots.

Popular binaries, Africa-Europe, black-white, are broken down from the beginning. Ndebele rewrites Penelope, heroine of the *Odyssey*, as colonized subaltern and inscribes universal feminism as the only (im)possible future in global village. African interlocutors are identified as *Penelope's descendents*. Time and space, history and fiction, realism and magic are deconstructed. Although not enunciated as her descendent, Winnie Mandela acts as Penelope's first descendent in the novel, historically and magically. It is not surprising that in the final chapter of the book, with its unexpected modernist ending, it is Winnie who recognizes Penelope, and we reread Nelson as Odysseus.

"My journey follows the path of the unfolding spirit of the world as its consciousness increases; as the world learns to become more aware of me not as Odysseus's moral ornament on the mantelpiece, but as an essential ingredient in the definition of human freedom. I travel around the world to places where women have heard of me, attempting to free them from the burden of unconditional fidelity I placed on their shoulders. I've come to join you briefly on your holiday trip, you women of South Africa, to affirm it for what it is: a signal gesture by five women



who are finally at peace with themselves and the world. I sought only to meet you and to honour you.” (120)

Political discourse of freedom, justice and peace can only be written on the palimpsest on psychic discourse of personal freedom, mutual justice and peace, inscribed in landscapes of women empowerment.

Even if this is a feminist book, written with Ndebele’s uncanny empathy with women’s psyche, male figurations play their roles, as ambiguously victimizers and victims, in the postcolony. They write their discourses, ambivalently dominant and subjugated, dominant in remaining patriarchal society and subjugated in colonist and postcolonist socio-economic order. Close rereading of text and intertexts displaces males and females in margins with constantly fluctuating borders between tradition and modernity, family and politics, rural land and city. Female narrators perform in relation(ship)s with males in open bind.

The trajectories of four African women in postapartheid South Africa write nationalist discourse of postcolonial failure to provide a better life for people, politically and individually. Ndebele’s narrative critique of postcolonial Africa is fictive companion to Mbembe’s analytical foregrounding of political and economic collapse in *On the Postcolony*. At the same time the book closes on a carefully optimistic note as women empower themselves. Postmodern pessimism does not foreclose possible futures.

The first descendent, Mannete Mofolo, is a trope of millions of women in Southern Africa (and elsewhere) who are victims of the exploitive migrant labor system that breaks down traditional family life. Apartheid society legally enforced family separations (pass laws, influx control, etc.), with inevitable result of moral disorder and breakdown of ethical values. Mannete’s husband, Lejone, leaves the highlands of Lesotho, his home, reluctantly, forced by the drought. “He cannot just sit back and watch the world collapse around him”(8). The drought of many years has killed the maize. The maize I read against the grain, to wit, as trope of the Mofolo family. External forces beyond control of the victims, for the maize absence of rain, for the Mofolos absence of food, destroy life. One de(con)struction is inscribed as intertext in the other, as maize, important staple food in Africa, is signifier of life. Signifier without signified, its non-referent is death. Intertexts read the trope as death of the Mofolo family, of traditional family life, of ethical values. Political metatext writes failed maize crops as figuration of agrarian, economic, cultural break-down of postcolony. “The King has called for prayers, but God, remaining as silent as the clear burning skies, has simply not responded”(8). Religious and monarchic patriarchy are disassembled and collapse in futile impotence.

That is when a man stares at the looming mountains of the country he loves, as if noticing them for the first time, looking for answers. They stare back in silence, like God and the skies. It is an unforgettable silence, for it bears on its shoulders the burden of loneliness. Silence becomes loneliness, and loneliness becomes silence. Then out of this world of silence and loneliness emerge inexplicable feelings of longing. For what? Whatever it is, it is something that gets a man unto his feet and urges him to move. Does it have anything to do with vague thoughts connecting the fate of young maize with that of his children? (8)

Mannete's and Lejone's last night together writes ecstatic sexual discourse. Ndebele *traces* (Derrida) eros into agape and collapses them into one ecstasy with religious overtones. "They soared to heights never reached before, whirling in a dizzying, floating feeling---they soared until they reached that moment when they should both have died."(9) But postcolonial life in Africa is not inscribed on the site of European romanticism. Ndebele's lyrical nature discourse is never drawn on maps of antediluvian paradise or imagined utopia. "[t]hey were drawn out of oblivion by stabs of anxiety at the center of their chests. It was time to go. And he left"(9). Short abrupt sentences reinscribe the narrative in realist postcolonial discourse. Mannete watches her husband go, "darkness swallowed him up." The narrator alludes to paratexts of no return

Figuration of African women's resilience through centuries of oppression, Mannete deconstructs the celebrated binary between traditional, subjugated, rural woman and Westernized, independent business woman, as she successfully establishes a little business in her local village and clears a living space for herself in postcolonial margin after her husband's non-return. Unlike her husband who migrates to the city and is lost in the moral disorder and social chaos of hostels and townships, Mannete, after having traveled to the city in futile search of her lost husband, returns to her village in rural Lesotho, bringing modernity with her. She subverts masculinist dominant discourse, as she writes back in magic narrative at her homecoming husband. Mannete's attempt to find her lost husband I reread as figuration of lost roots and impossible return to precolonial Africa.

The second descendent, Delia, writes narrative discourse in the same psychic space as Mannete but in a socially other landscape. Patiently waiting, longing for, hoping in the absent husbands (male figuration of patriarchal, traditional Africa) the two protagonists write back in differing feminist discourses, as they empower themselves and subvert dominant male discourse. Perhaps Delia is angry and more disappointed and disillusioned, because she, the most westernized of the four, had hoped to share the social prestige of her husband. Her pedantic mimicking of European bourgeois tea-ceremonies writes a comic discourse with interlinear satire. The omniscient third person narrator, whose discourse is interspersed between first



person narratives, tells us the importance of this ceremony in her childhood home. Historic-political metatext questions how far back in history European mental colonization goes and how influential it was. Delia had longed for and waited for the day she would be the wife of the first western educated doctor in the township. She had sacrificed for it and helped him economically in woman's unchallenged, selfless domestic discourse that has been inscribed on the female body for generations. When he betrays her patience and takes too long to finish his studies, she can only write back in the subaltern's mute way by betraying him sexually, a physical non-emotional betrayal. But woman has to pay the price, while man goes shot-free. Delia finds herself pregnant from a man not her husband. When the latter eventually returns and finds a child that he has not fathered, he leaves Delia. Did he intend to do that anyway and is just happy to get an opportunity to blame her? He makes Delia the scapegoat and pours out his anger and frustration at his own failure and lack of success in Europe over her in an attempt to save his male ego. Does Delia realize it? Did she ever question his fidelity all those years of his absence? He never became the first doctor in the township. Her bitter disappointment is foregrounded, when he marries a nurse and they establish a clinic and inscribe themselves as the "medical couple" in the landscape, where Delia is displaced in a postcolonial middle class margin with fluctuating borders she cannot cross, either into colonial Europe, as her parents did, or into postcolonial Africa, where her husband and her *rival* (In Delia's psychic discourse his new wife will never be anything else.) perform imagined liminal existence. "Slowly, this abandoned Penelope discovers she has been alone all along. It was a feeling marked by self-denial" (15). Her self-denial is rewritten as non-identity, a subtle critique of the role of many women in traditional African society. Her identity is first as her father's daughter or brother's sister, later as her husband's wife. All through the novel Ndebele emphasizes woman's vulnerability in society. Domestic violence, physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, is the language of the day. "[s]he realizes clearly now the firm contours of the life she has led. A postponement without duration" (15). Is Ndebele here deconstructing Bergson's duration-theory? Time is deconstructed, as dreams are disassembled. "How exhilarating! Frighteningly so. To see things for what they really were" (15). "To realize that her entire life had been a refusal to see what was there to be seen" (16). Postmodern homelessness, displacement, an almost religious longing for something like what Lejone sensed in the Lesotho mountains, is intertextually inscribed in Delia's kitchen.

"[S]he looked around the kitchen, listening to the empty house, heard a hen cackling after laying an egg, and gave way to tears. It was something that happened as if it had to happen. Something to give expression to a deep sense of longing beyond words.



“What? Was it him she longed for? Themba. A desire for a redemption of a ‘decent’ relationship after her secret affair---“(17)

Will Delia be able to pick up the shattered pieces of her life and reassemble realistic discourse? She attempts to subvert self-deception into self-affirmation and write woman’s empowerment. “No more time to waste. She acts fast. She stops teaching and opens a *spaza*, selling tea, soap, sugar, salt, fat cakes, toothpaste, aspirin, and countless little things that make life possible” (16). The resolute expediency with which Delia acts is adroitly foregrounded by short sentences and uninterrupted annunciation of simple domestic items. Her successful economic and social empowerment does not overwrite the moral discourse that destabilizes Delia’s psychic peace. How could she have given in to a moment of weakness? “[T]his Penelope continues to this day to blame herself for having yielded to a moment’s weakness”(16). Do the two men responsible for her “mistake” blame themselves? Subaltern woman is always blamed, whether guilty or innocent. “Of course, the world will always know the mother of the child, for a woman can never escape the messages of her body”(17). Public gossip never spares her. “Proof of infidelity is the aim of society’s interest in the life of a woman who waits for an absent husband. If they cannot find the proof, they’ll invent it”(31). Ndebele’s uncanny empathy for woman’s suffering demands gender equality, socially, culturally, sexually. Woman will no longer be a passive object to be used (and abused) in society but an active subject on the stage, demanding her right to initiative. When Delia’s patient waiting is stretched to its limit, she revenges herself on her lover. “He attempted to resist, but there was only one predetermined victory: hers”(18). Politic interlinear narrative rewrites psychic discourse on the moral and ethical map of the postcolony. Ndebele’s open questions leave South Africa and by implication all Africa and the rest of the world at the crossroad.

“How has the growth of the imagination or the nurturing of new values been affected by the dramatic oscillation of individuals and communities between comfort and discomfort, between home and homelessness, home and exile, between riches and poverty, love and hate, hope and despair, knowledge and ignorance, progress and regression, fame and ignominy, heroism and roguery, honour and dishonour, marriage and divorce, sophistication and crudeness, life and death, return and departure?” (70)

Political analysts are rediscovering the importance of imagination in creating a viable political and social order. Social imagination is foregrounded in Ndebele’s narrative, as political, cultural, psychic and religious interlinear discourses make complex reading of the novel necessary, if we do not want to miss the subtle points Ndebele sharply and adroitly weaves into the narrative. Binaries in the above quotation must be disassembled and collapse into one another in ambiguous marginal

questions. "Which way will the balance ultimately go between creativity and destruction?"(71)

Postmodern homelessness and disillusion are inscribed in the physical landscape of dire poverty, exploitation, hunger, sickness in the "third world" (made third by the first world's draining of its resources). "There would be no departure for her now, only the agony of waiting for the return of a man into a moral situation so complex she began to lose confidence in any claim to really know him"(18). The loss of identity, personal and communitarian, in formerly colonized people will not be reversed until independence ceases to be an illusion. Fanon revisits the site of mimicking in *Black Skin, White masks*. When home, root of identity, is displaced on a global map, postcolonials try to reassemble fractured identities. Spivak rewrites displacements as a critique of nation-states.

[W]omen carry internalized the lesson of the exchangeability of the home, the basis of identity. The superexploited women in Export Processing Zones are set adrift from "cultures" that are, in context, not necessarily "national. The gendered tribal subaltern shares this lesson with the subaltern's distancing from both the culture of imperialism and anticolonial and postcolonial nationalism. (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 252)

Inscribing narrative, fictional and historical, in diverse intellectual, social, political and economic landscapes enables Ndebele to critic postcolonial society the moment he foregrounds suffering and injustice inflicted on individual citizens, especially women, who often are the most vulnerable. It is important to note that the men, who will be immediate causes of the suffering and alienation inflicted on their female partners, are neither beasts nor monsters. Colonial and postcolonial states rewrite them as other to their one-time lovers. Could it have been otherwise? Ndebele leaves impossible questions open. At the end of the novel any return to the beginning is foreclosed. Africa can never return to a precolonial past. Postmodern liminal existence, where everybody is migrant (Rushdie), constantly on the move, attempting to cross fluctuating (imaginary or magic) borders, deconstructs ethnic identities in order to reconstruct them as hybrid possible post-pessimistic futures.

Mamello, Penelope's third descendent, reads hybridity in historical discourse with bitter psychological paratexts. Her husband, former freedom fighter and hero of nationalist struggle, now turned postcolonial bureaucrat, leaves her and marries a white woman, "comrade from the struggle." Mamello's ambiguous reaction draws confused maps of denial, acceptance, revolt, subjugation, subversion and revenge. It climaxes when her ex-husband appears on television with his new wife and their child. Triple victim, of patriarchy, colonial dominance and apartheid propaganda, Mamello writes him a letter in a last desperate attempt to win him back. "Come back home to me"(19). When euphoria of independence is rewritten as postcolonial



pessimism, nostalgic dreams of return to precolonial Africa are foreclosed. Mamello in magic time narrative remembers his arrest and her prison visits in the ambivalence of present questions.

“He was arrested ... I visited him in jail dutifully. Even then, I registered the distance between us when we met for the first time after his sudden departure. There was a remoteness to him ...”(21)

In her letter she vehemently castigates his miscegenation and scorns the offspring of that union. In his reply he makes it unequivocally clear that the relationship between him and Mamello is definitively ended. At the same time he takes the opportunity to “educate” her, writing a discursive discourse on non-racist society and universal humanity. He upbraids her for offending his child. Did he ever consider that perhaps Mamello’s emotional outburst was largely an anguished cry of pain for her own barrenness, a curse in traditional Africa? Her humiliation is intensified by the fact that it is a white woman who fulfills what she was incapable of doing. She begins to question her husband’s motives for joining the struggle. “Was the heroism of joining the struggle a justification for a flight from me” (26)? “Did he fly from my barrenness” (26)? Mamello’s only (im)possibility to cope with her confusion, where imagination is real and reality is imagined, is insanity. After her third breakdown she revisits traditional Africa in an ambiguous, ambivalent attempt to rewrite her identity and reassemble her marriage.

“After the third breakdown some friends told me about a *sangoma* who helped women get their husbands back. I laughed it off. Such silliness. But alone at home, I began to be obsessed with the idea. I decided to try it.” (22)

Western educated Mamello tries to exist in deconstructed, fluctuating time-space margin, homeless before and after, in Africa and in Europe. “Was that really me?”(23) Mamello’s lost identity and broken mind are inscribed on the map of postcolonial Africa. As tragic actor on the stage of 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa Mamello is trope of millions of women, men and children in Africa who have lost their lives, their minds, their limbs in fruitless wars and genocides. Subaltern’s voiceless subjugation becomes a cry of horror, when the only discourse left is insanity. Mamello’s pessimistic postmodern narrative must be revisited and intertexts of (im)possible future reread.

Mara, Penelope’s fourth descendent, is the weakest character in the novel, and the least successfully presented. One almost gets the impression that Ndebele put her in as an afterthought. Be that as it may, she is not an improbable figuration in the postcolony. She might even be the most prolific in her bleakness. She proudly refuses to publicly admit her husband’s social and economic collapse. Having inscribed herself in woman’s traditionally subordinated role, she might fear to lose her own identity in his non-identity. Her metanarrative of disgust and pain is



underwritten by lost feelings. His infidelity and degrading life have long since killed her feelings. Why does she not return his infidelity, tooth-for-tooth? She does not know. Even if her husband is a scoundrel, she remains faithful in the tradition of Penelope. Social gossip displaces her in erotic landscape with lovers.

Against the grain Mara negotiated her subaltern voicelessness and collapsed it into proud silent self-affirmation. Ndebele does not shun moral discourse. Without morals and ethics the postcolony has no future. Nations that uphold traditional morality and ethical demands in modernity of global village is the only (im)possible social discourse to write a map of Africa without corruption, and by implication of the world. Economic and political justice will only be a reality, Ndebele cautions, in hybrid cultural landscape, where ethics and morals from varying traditions co-exist in ambiguous unity. Religious signifiers (redemption, conscience) are inscribed in intertexts.

“But often the easiest things are the most impossible to do, until they become habit. Then they truly become easy. Habit is doing without thought. In such matters habit spells the death of conscience. But before thought and conscience disappear into habit, they are your hurdles, your redemption.” (30)

Ndebele shows woman’s vulnerability, not only sexual, domestic, vulnerability but social and political. Woman is looser in all cases. If she is unfaithful, she is scorned, as Delia was, if she is faithful, nobody believes her, as in the case of Mara and Penelope. Media’s ripping open of woman’s body is foregrounded, when Ndebele disassembles the public discourses on Winnie Mandela.

Penelope’s four descendents subvert their subjugation and rewrite their betrayal in socially diverse ways. Mannete establishes herself as a successful petty trader. Delia involves herself with another man with disastrous consequences for herself. Mamello retreats into insanity. Mara tries to establish a homeless existence in the debris of her life. Ndebele revisits woman’s victimization through history. Her socio-economic space or psychic pressure creates sites for moral and ethical collapse. The woman is blamed and scapegoated as with Winnie Mandela, as with Delia. Dominant masculine discourse writes no moral guilt. Imaginative discourse displaces woman on a stage alien to her. She is never innocent. Why try to be just and faithful and resist corruption, when nobody believes you? Ndebele leaves modernist and postmodernist questions open. There is hope for postcolonial Africa through the women who have been the strength and mainstay of African life since time immemorial, not only as mothers and life bringers but in prominent political and cultural positions in a history we are only now beginning to uncover, as we preempt colonial archives. *Women writing Africa* (2003) is a noteworthy attempt. Thomas Hale discovered in his study of griots in West Africa that male history was overdetermined and by no means exclusive.

The absence of women in the culture of griots is questionable. A more gender balanced view is pertinent.

In the second half of the novel magic realism inscribes itself in conventional social discourse as the narrative draws the four fictive characters together to disassemble their non-identities in order to reassemble identity and empower themselves in written dialogue with Winnie Mandela, whose complex identity the novel attempts to write. Finally, in magic psychic discourse Ndebele problematizes postcolonial identity, as historical/fictive Winnie writes a letter to her own imagined self.

"First, I narrated you from the outset, and then from the inside: two stages of a journey towards myself. I have arrived at myself. Although I conjured you into being, you've become too real for me to extinguish you. I acknowledge your existence, but take the liberty of leaving you to your own devices.----Thank you for being there. Thank you for taking me to the most difficult period of my waiting: the beginning of its end." (107)

The concluding chapter adroitly breaks down binaries of Africa-Europe, colonized-colonizer, history-fiction, reality-magic. Time and space collapse in hope for future as women empower themselves in universal sisterhood, first enunciated in the delimited site of a car, *on the move*. African women are not immobilized in precolonial past. "A deep feeling of fellowship and confidence embraces the women on their journey."(115) Penelope joins the five African women in their ride towards the coast to repossess their land. Africa writes back; *African women give a lift to a European woman*, who now has to beg. Penelope, homeless migrant, inscribes herself in every landscape where women rise up to claim their right to self-determination and empowerment. Feminist discourse is rewritten in universal humanity as Penelope joins her African sisters in gendered solidarity.

"I too claim Greece now for the message of freedom I bear. I'll travel on seeking out key moments in the growth of the world's consciousness, and to lay at each such moment the imprint of my message. Affirming new ways of experiencing relationships wherever they emerge." (120)

Six women perform important roles as signifiers of women empowerment in texts and intertexts, fictive and historical, magic and realistic. Interlinear readings weave the strands of the narrative dexterously into a complex social and psychic tapestry. It is worth noting that in the novel's feminist discourse the driver of the car, taking the five women to the coast, is female. Another woman, who never figures in the narrative, overshadows colonial and postcolonial feminist discourse. The book is dedicated to her, and a photo of her statue covers the front page: Sara Baartman, the tragic figure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Few subalterns have spoken so eloquently with their violated silence. The mute cry of Sara writes a discourse of slavery, old and new,

exploitation, violence against woman, physical and mental. British and French empire brutally drew their racist map on Sara's body that continued to be humiliated even after her death. Colonial dominant discourse overwrote feminist loyalty. European women deconstructed femininity and joined their males in exploiting and humiliating their own female body in the figure of subjugated Sara. Only when South Africa achieved freedom and democracy was the text rewritten, and Sara Baartman's body brought back to her homeland

Sara at last rests in a grave, in her homeland. Penelope, migrant in time and space, constantly crossing imaginary borders, vanishes out of the narrative. As figurations of universal feminine, indestructible empowerment their discourse deconstructs time and history, as their magic presence travels with the five. "They drive on--- continuing on their *pilgrimage* to eternal companionship" (121, emphasis added). Ndebele deploys religious tropes in fictive narrative with historic and socio-politic paratexts.

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# Book Review

By Anderson Chebanne

(*Les Africains et leurs descendants en Europe avant le XXe siècle*  
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Gnamankou & Yao Modzinou. Published by Maison de l'Afrique à  
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This compilation by the Maison de l'Afrique à Toulouse (MAT) of conference proceedings on the *Africans and their descendants in Europe before the 20th Century* is very appealing by its theme and by the topics that it attracted from the contributors. It deals mainly about the history of the "named African individuals and personalities", who made their mark in Europe in the midst of the tragedy of many "unnamed Africans" who toiled for Europeans as slaves. The book's sub-themes are well-sequenced, and all in all there are twenty-two papers excluding the Preliminary Notes (which introduces the theme); the Opening Speech; the Introduction to the Conference (background processes and context); and, a Presentation of Chapters. The edition is arranged in four parts: First Part deals with the "Permanence of the African Presence in Europe". It also deals with African Diaspora themes, history of the African in Europe, and African-European relationships. The Second Part deals with "Actors of the history of Europe" and looks at some prominent Africans who made their mark in the European societies and also in some important events in Europe. The Third Part deals with, "Slavery, Racism and Religion". Part Four presents, "Identity, representation, Documentation", and deals with issues of identity of free and bonded Africans in the Diaspora and the question of their representation in the

European Society. An annex of important documents on slavery is appended. As is the wont of French historical prose writers, the texts are elegantly written and ideas have a certain philosophical and poetic touch. But the subject is momentous and grave for them and for the reader – it is the history of African individuals and personalities during the period of the monstrous slavery. Whichever way and wherever, there can never be an eulogy, a pardon, or a comprise in the narration of this history.

When putting their edition into perspective, the editors remind readers that from time immemorial, when the world had no boundaries except those imposed by geographical features – oceans, mountains and deserts, human populations migrated to all possible and habitable corners of the world. Indeed, Africans have even in prehistory migrated, voluntarily to greener pastures, and it is scientifically established that all the populations of the world have a common ancestry, in Africa. It is for this reason that Africa is even known as the *Cradle of Humanity*. The pseudo-science and the rise of avaricious capitalism has created and worsened the inhumanity among human populations. Next to these heinous crimes perpetrated by Europeans are those slave trade crimes perpetrated by Arabs in Africa, even to this present age. For Europe, the callous forced displacement of Africans for the past 500 years was motivated by sinister capitalist interests that appallingly reduced the Black African people to a commodity and their land to coveted raw materials reservoir. When all is said and done, the argument in this question of African displacement and their presence in foreign lands before the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is that nothing shall wipe away this excruciating memory of scandalous slavery, monstrous abuse, grotesque exploitation of African women and men as sex pets in brothels, as efficacious tools for war, as crude comics for entertainment, and all the odious acts of hooliganism perpetrated on the African person. The crude manner of wanton abduction and the inhuman displacement into foreign lands creates a tragic human condition with consequential human history which will blotch those lands and Africa forever.

Of all the peoples of the world, African people's presence abroad their continent did not make them entirely owners of the new lands, except the cases of the West Indies which were relinquished to Black Africans to minimize their presence among the European societies in Europe and the Americas. Even in his granted freedom, after the abolition of formal slavery in Europe, an African has been viewed as a burden for Europe and other continents. Africans became inhabitants of these continents not out of their choice, but at different epochs under the blatant forms of despicable exploitation under deplorable life conditions.

My gripe in this book review is not about the theme and sub-themes of the book – they are scholarly, but perhaps a caution that we are dealing with a delicate history of people whose compatriots were taken as slaves. Certainly, the mentioned

personalities Abraham Petrov, Ivan Hannibal, Peter Schenk, Wilhelm Sambo, Alexander Pushkin, the Duke Alexander of Medicis, Anton Wilhelm Amo, Juan Latino, and many others, were great people, and accomplished great exploits. But this was not for African, but for themselves, during the epoch that their kinsmen were bondmen in slavery. The consequences of slavery are still manifest in the lives of Black Africans in the Diaspora, even in the home continent. Contacts and relationship of Blacks and Europeans in foreign lands and even in Africa within the colonial context of that time were characterized by racial and pejorative attitudes. The intense missionary societies' religious exportation of Christianity and Islam to the African continent did very little to change the way a Black African was viewed by Europeans and Arabs. The de-culturalising religions also minimised the role of Black African languages, and made them strangers in their own land. Even for those that felt they were accepted as citizens; the relationship was condescending and implying some European "White" superiority over the "Black race". The European esteemed his colour noble and that of the Black cursed. In all these historical and social situations, an African even in the best of social ranks was a subaltern if not a contrivance for European exploits. If he was admired, it has the sort that is comparable to pets or cherished tools. Eurocentricism and its definition of beauty became entrenched in the African mentality and conscience, and this has regrettably persisted even to this age. Nothing can therefore allow us to speak decoratively of any aspect of the experiences of Africans in Europe. Europeans came to Africa, plundered and returned to their native lands as conquerors of the native Africans and exploiters of their land and resources – human and natural. Africans even those who went to Europe as "free" made a pitiful contribution which now requires us to glean in the paragraphs of history to bring them to the fore. It must be recalled in passing that even at the time the USA was racing to the moon, Black Afro-Americans were not yet granted full citizen rights to vote – hundred years after the "abolition of slavery". Outward liberties in foreign lands is not what a Black African should be content to pursue; but Africa should deploy its sons and daughters' ingenuity to strive to make the continent "a home, sweet home". It will be when Africa feeds itself, invents technologies, and amasses powerful armies and engages in sophisticated economies, and runs countries with powerful and democratic socio-political institutions that they will be respected and treated as equals. When that happens, Black people's freedom will be complete.

Notwithstanding, the opportune collection of these richly researched and eloquently written histories of individuals and personalities provide an interesting aspect of the presence of Africans and their descendents in Europe. It is a worthwhile reminder, that even in the most heinous and brutal system that humans can viciously afflict others with, they can still be exceptions that humans are capable of



harmoniously accepting each other and cohabiting in peace. Yet these exceptions should not start painting the odious slavery history with a blotting paint. The tragedy was of such magnitudes that all critical pens should continue to expose it for what it was – an evil on the face of the human world. As time goes by and we as Africans are transported far from the catastrophic era of slavery, we should in pursuing pardon, not seek to disregard all these tribulations in our history.

I may just as an aside regret that these proceedings, as yet, have no English translation, which would, to a great extent, expand the horizons of this important social and historical documentation of the African people in Africa and in all countries of the world. The corollary of publishing in more international languages cannot be under-estimated. It does not just make good sense in terms of the book market, but importantly, it facilitates the engagements of academics to critically analyse the issues the book raises. The history of Africans in Europe before the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has all the symbolism and significance for Africans. They should know this history, and understand the pains that Africans suffered under the yoke of slavery, and subsequently under the subjugation of colonialism. The exceptions of marriages, civil service and scholarship do not redeem the opprobrium afflicted by Europe on the African. Whether they were free or enslaved, Africans were racially degraded, dehumanized, and dispersed. Africans either directly taken to Europe or their descendents or mixed with Europeans have had social and political exploits in many countries of Europe. And this occurred under some very exceptional and extraordinary circumstances at the height of European enslavement of Africans.

This historical compilation by the Maison de l'Afrique à Toulouse conference (MAT) on the *Africans and their descendants in Europe before the 20th Century* pertinently tackles the themes of the permanence of the African presence in Europe; the actors of the history of Europe; the slavery, racism and religion; and the identity, representation, and documentation of African individuals and personalities in Europe before the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. These illustrious themes are intellectually active in the main historical accounts of the European ghastly deeds in Africa. The initiative of the Maison de l'Afrique à Toulouse conference (MAT) on the *Africans and their descendants in Europe before the 20th Century* is praiseworthy in that it contributes another dimension in the history of African, perhaps seen from different vantage points, but a worthwhile documentation nonetheless. This edition will therefore provide a vivid yet necessary critical reading of the social history of the slave trade period. It is perhaps good as an appendix to the history of slavery in Europe, because it should not be used to mitigate the opprobrium afflicted on Africans by Europeans, or to rehabilitate the curse of Europe with regards to the evils of slavery, which indeed will remain a dominant aspect of any history chronicling the Afro-Europe relationships before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For researchers and students in history and

other social scientists in diverse disciplines in African society, this book raises many interrogations which should provide sustained socio-historical debates here in Africa and in the African Diaspora.

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