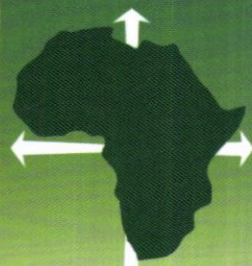


TINABANTU

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The Timbuktu Manuscript Tradition

John Hunwick

Introduction

Islam first entered the African continent nearly 1400 years ago. The first Muslims to enter Africa were early followers of the Prophet Muhammad, who sought refuge in Christian Ethiopia in what is often called "the first *hijra*" in about the year 615 A.D. Just a quarter of a century later many more Muslim Arabs pushed their way into Egypt during the great expansion of the lands of the Caliphate during the caliphate of Umar b. al-Khattab in 640-1. Before the end of the 7th century, the territory of the Caliphate had been extended westwards to the Atlantic Ocean, covering what are now the countries of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.

Although some exploratory thrusts were made into the Sahara, no actual conquests were made; instead expansion turned northwards across the Mediterranean and into the Iberian peninsula. Over the coming centuries, however, Islam was introduced to some of the nomadic peoples of the Sahara, and some of the black African kingdoms along the borders of the southern Sahara. This was done not through any form of conquest or political dominance, but through the agency of Muslim traders, whose primary objective was to obtain gold which was mined in certain parts of West

Africa, largely in territory that now forms part of the Republic of Mali. By the end of the 11th century a number of African rulers in this region had become Muslims, and the majority populace of the Berber tribes of the western Sahara belonged to Islam.

Timbuktu's development

According to the *Ta'rikh al-Sudan*, a chronicle of the Songhay Empire (written in the 17th century),¹ the origins of Timbuktu go back to around the year 1100, when some nomads established a summer camp a few miles away from the river Niger as a base from which they could pasture and water their camels during the hottest season. Timbuktu's position proved strategic for commerce. This camp site gradually attracted people who settled there and turned it into a permanent dwelling place. It was situated at the junction of the dry Sahara and the lush central valley of the river Niger, a waterway that constituted an easy pathway for transporting goods to and from the more tropical regions of West Africa. Over the early centuries of its existence Timbuktu rapidly attracted settlers, in the form of merchants, and then Muslim scholars, from Saharan oases such as Walata, Touat, Ghadames, and the Fezzan, and from the southern reaches of Morocco. Ghadames

traders played an important role in Timbuktu trade from the 15th to the 19th century, and also in trade with Kano in northern Nigeria. Ghadames was a gateway to Tripoli and for routes leading to Egypt. Similarly, Touat was a trade entrepôt, with routes radiating out to Fez, Algiers and Tunis in the north, and Gao, Agades, and Katsina in the south.

Timbuktu's importance as a center of commerce is vividly illustrated by its first appearance on a European map in the year 1375. This was a map drawn for the Catalan ruler Charles V by a cartographer of Mallorca, who was Jewish, this information no doubt reflecting the role played by Jewish merchants in trans-Saharan trade. A quarter of a century earlier Timbuktu had been visited by the extraordinary Muslim traveler from Tangier, Ibn Battuta, who found there the grave of an Andalusian poet, Abu Is'haq Ibrahim al-Sahili, who had accompanied the ruler of Mali, Mansa Musa, upon his return from pilgrimage to Mecca in 1325. Timbuktu at that time was part of the great medieval empire of Mali, and it was this ruler, Mansa Musa, who ordered the construction of Timbuktu's Great Mosque — Jingere Ber — and the Andalusian al-Sahili, who oversaw the construction of it.

The building of a great congregational mosque clearly established Timbuktu as an Islamic city, and over the next two centuries many Muslim scholars were attracted to settle in it, so that by the mid-15th century Timbuktu had become a major center of Islamic learning.

Timbuktu scholarship

Many of the scholars settled in the north-eastern quarter of the city, called Sankore, where another large mosque was built and named after the quarter. The Sankore mosque was also a location for teaching Islamic texts,

though individual scholars also taught their students in, or near, their own houses. It was in these homes of scholars that the establishment of libraries took place. Some of these personal libraries were evidently quite large. Timbuktu's most celebrated scholar, Ahmad Baba (1564-1627) claimed that his library contained 1,600 volumes, and that it was the smallest library of any of his family — his family, the Aqit, being the leading scholarly family that had provided the city with *qadis* throughout the 16th century. Ahmad Baba was, of course, part of the Timbuktu teaching tradition. His primary shaykh was a certain Muhammad Baghayogho, a Mande Dyula scholar who had migrated to Timbuktu from Jenne. To illustrate the teaching tradition, here is part of a biography of Muammad Baghayogho, recorded by his pupil Ahmad Baba in his famous biographical dictionary *Nayl al-ibtihaj*. He described him as:

Our shaykh and our [source of] blessing, the jurist, and accomplished scholar, a pious and ascetic man of God, who was among the finest of God's righteous servants and practising scholars. He was a man given by nature to goodness and benign intent, guileless, and naturally disposed to goodness, believing in people to such an extent that all men were virtually equal in his sight, so well did he think of them and absolve them of wrongdoing. Moreover, he was constantly attending to people's needs, even at cost to himself, becoming distressed at their misfortunes, mediating their disputes, and giving counsel.

Add to this his love of learning, and his devotion to teaching—in which pursuit he spent his days—his close association with men of learning, and his own utter humility, his lending of his most rare and precious books in all fields without asking for them back again.

no matter what discipline they were in. Thus it was that he lost a portion of his books—may God shower His beneficence upon him for that! Sometimes a student would come to his door asking for a book, and he would give it to him without even knowing who the student was. In this matter he was truly astonishing, doing this for the sake of God Most High, despite his love for books and his zeal in acquiring them, whether by purchase or copying. One day I came to him asking for books on grammar, and he hunted through his library and brought me everything he could find on the subject.

It is clear from this that the man himself possessed a considerable library, to which any aspiring scholar could have access.

What kind of books would such a library have contained? First and foremost, it would have contained the texts that were used to teach his students: commentaries on the Qur'an, books of *hadith*, theological treatises in the mainstream Sunni tradition, and works of Maliki jurisprudence (*fiqh*), such as the *Muwatta'* of Malik b. Anas, the *Mudawwana* of Sahnun, the *Risala* of Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, and the *Mukhtasar* of Khalil b. Ishaq, with some of its many commentaries, and works on Arabic grammar such as the *i Alfyya* of Ibn Malik and the *Mulhat al-i'rab* of al-Hariri. But Timbuktu scholarship went beyond the teaching of basic texts. We know, for example that Ahmad Baba had access to the great "History" of Ibn Khaldun (*Kitab al-'ibar*), a work which he quotes from in one of his writings.² In the same work he also quotes passages from al-Suyuti's *Raf' sha'n al-Hubshan* ["Raising the status of Ethiopians"], a less than commonly circulating work.

Manuscript books

Indeed, there was clearly an important trade in books in 16th century Timbuktu. This is clear

from the account of Leo Africanus (al-Hasan b. Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Zayyati), who visited Timbuktu in the early years of that century and observed, "Many manuscript books coming from Barbary are sold. Such sales are more profitable than any other goods". Not only were manuscripts imported to Timbuktu, both from North Africa and Egypt, but scholars going on pilgrimage often studied in both Mecca and, on the way back, in Cairo, and copied texts to add to their own libraries. There was also an active copying industry in Timbuktu itself. One amazing piece of evidence for this is a work that the scholar Ahmad b. Anda Ag-Muhammad had copied for himself in the late 16th century.

The work referred to is an Arabic dictionary, the *Muhkam* of the Andalusian scholar Ibn Sidah (d. 1066) and the copying of the full work, running to twenty-eight volumes, was completed in April 1574. What is interesting about these volumes—some now preserved in Morocco—is that their colophons throw some light on the copying industry of 16th-century Timbuktu, thus confirming the interest in book collection and library building. The colophons name the copyists, the person for whom they were copied, and who provided the blank paper for them, the dates of beginning and ending the copying of each volume, and the amount paid to the copyists. The colophons, in essence, constitute a labour contract. Two of the volumes contain a second colophon, in which another person records that he proofread the accuracy of the copying, and records what he was paid. The copyist received 1 *mithqal* of gold (about 1/7 oz.) per volume, and the proofreader half that amount. It would appear, from the evidence provided in these various colophons, that manuscript copying was a truly professionalised business. Compensation was paid by legal contract, and it would seem that both the copyist and the proofreader (himself also a professional

copyist) worked full time to complete their contracted tasks; the copyist was copying some 142 lines of text per day, while the proofreader was going through the material at the rate of about 171 lines of text per day.³

Libraries

We know less about whether or not there were public libraries in 16th century Timbuktu. One of the rulers of the Songhay empire, which incorporated Timbuktu within it in 1468, Askiya *al-hajj* Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr (1493-1528) made an endowment of 60 *juz'* (segments) (equivalent to two complete copies) of the Qur'an to the Great Mosque of Timbuktu, and it is said that a later ruler, Askiya Dawud (1549-1583), set up public libraries in his state, though no trace of them has ever been discovered.

What has survived, however, is the private collection (or parts of it) of one of the two great chroniclers of Timbuktu, Mahmud Kati (d. 1593), now looked after by one of his descendants in Timbuktu, Ismael Haidara, who reassembled it from various branches of the Kati family who had inherited it over generations. He invited me to see a number of items from this library when I was in Timbuktu in August 1999. I was truly amazed to see that the copying of some of these manuscripts went back to the 16th, and even in some cases, the 15th century. For example, I saw a beautiful copy of the Qur'an in a fine eastern script with a copying date equivalent to 1420. The final page was, in fact, written in Turkish, and recorded the fact that the copy had been dedicated as a *waqf* ("endowment") in the name of a woman named as Sharifa Khadija Khanum. How this manuscript got to Timbuktu we do not know. But possibly it was purchased by Mahmud Kati, or some member of his family, whilst on pilgrimage.

Another very old and very beautiful manuscript is a copy of the *Kitab al-Shifa' bi-ta'rif huquq al-Mustafa* (on the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad) by the 11th-century Moroccan scholar, *Qadi* 'Iyad. Although we do not know the date of copying, a note at the end of volume 1 tells us that it was purchased in 1468. What is truly surprising is that it was purchased in a Saharan oasis by a man migrating from Toledo in Spain to "the land of the Blacks" (*bilad al-sudan*), hoping, as he put it, that God would grant him repose there.⁴

The writer of the note and purchaser of the manuscript turns out to be the grandfather of Mahmud Kati, so evidently the male ancestry of the family was from central Spain, and appears to claim Visigoth origins. However, they settled in West Africa and married locally, since Mahmud Kati himself uses an ethnic label (*nisba*) that relates him to the Soninke people (Wa'rkuri), and it is possible that he was related to the ruling dynasty, the Askiyas, of the Songhay empire, whose male ancestry was also Soninke.

The Kati library (known as Fondo Kati), however, is not the only valuable library in Timbuktu. A collection of 5,000 Arabic manuscripts was inherited by Abdelkader Mamma Haidara from his father, and that has now been housed in a new library building (Bibliothèque Commemorative Mamma Haidara), funded by the American Mellon foundation through Harvard University, and the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation (London) has already published a catalogue of it.⁵

There are, in fact, some twenty private manuscript libraries in Timbuktu, and approximately one hundred in the sixth region of Mali.⁶

Ahmad Baba Centre

The largest library of Arabic manuscripts, however, is a public one in Timbuktu at the Ahmad Baba Centre for Documentation and Historical Research, generally known as CEDRAB, an abbreviation of its French title (Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques Ahmad Baba). The origins of that centre go back to a meeting that I was privileged to attend in 1967. When UNESCO was beginning to plan its multi-volume history of Africa, it convened a “Meeting of Experts” in Timbuktu to examine the range of Arabic sources for African history. At the conclusion of the meeting, chaired by Najm al-Din Bammate (a UNESCO official of Afghan origin), a resolution was passed calling on the government of Mali to establish a centre for the preservation of Arabic manuscripts in Timbuktu. Some years later, after funding had been raised, the centre was built, and soon manuscripts were being obtained, either by gift or purchase, from private libraries in Timbuktu. It developed and expanded considerably after the appointment in the late 1970s of the Timbuktu scholar Dr Mahmoud Zouber, who directed CEDRAB for some fifteen years.

CEDRAB now contains close to 20,000 manuscripts, ranging from single-page archival documents to large scholarly tomes. A handlist of the first 9,000 items has been published by the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation.⁷

The great majority of the items preserved at the Centre Ahmad Baba are of local authorship, though some non-local items have been acquired if they were donated by other library owners.

Almost all the items are in the Arabic language, though the index does record the existence of a letter in Tamacheq and several

poems and letters in the Songhay language—the only examples of this language written in the Arabic script so far preserved as far as we know yet.

Arabic writing

It is important to note that whilst Arabic was to Muslim Africa what Latin was to medieval Christian Europe, Africans adopted, and sometimes adapted, the Arabic script, just as Europeans appropriated the Latin script, to express themselves in their own languages. Hence many Africans could write their own languages long before European missionaries and colonialists came to impose their own forms of writing upon them — and in fact replacing the Arabic script and suppressing its usage in the case of such major languages as Hausa (N. Nigeria) and Swahili (E. African coast).

It is difficult to do justice to the richness of the collection in a brief article, but it may be worthwhile to indicate some of the principal categories of materials and to give illustrative examples of one of them. There are two broad categories of material:

- 1) Items of a “literary” character—religious treatises, chronicles, and poems, all of which (or most of which) may be attributed to a named author.
- 2) Items of a documentary character, such as letters, and commercial and legal documents (including a large number related to slavery).

Between these two categories come a large number of items that are in one sense documents and in another sense—in that they are written by scholarly authors—works belonging to a literary tradition. These are the *fatwas* (legal opinions)—both individual ones on specific topics and collected volumes—*rasa'il* and *ajwiba* (“responsa”), often on quite specific topics but addressed to particular individuals or groups. There are a

dozen or so major collections of *fatwas* at CEDRAB, totalling over 1,800 folios. Some of these are collections of the legal opinions of a particular scholar, whilst others are more diverse collections of opinions of the scholars of the region as a whole. Most of the collections by single individuals are, in fact, by scholars of “Mauritanian” origin, though the major one is by the Kunta scholar Shaykh Bay b. Sidi Umar al-Kunti (1865-1920+) of northwest Mali, which runs to some 488 folios, in nine volumes (nos. 118-126). There are also three copies of the major collection of the *fatwas* of the scholars of West Africa—*al-Amal al-mashkur fi jam’ nawazil ulama’ al-Takrur* by al-Mustafa b. Ahmad al-Ghallawi (nos. 521, 1031 & 5346).

As an illustration of this, here is a short list of some of the topics dealt with in these *fatwas* and *responsa*, mainly dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries:

- i) On dwelling with the Christians.
- ii) On lost camels.
- iii) On ritual purity.
- iv) On a wife’s rejection of her husband’s authority (*i nushuz*).
- v) On whether it is permissible to eat with a man who fails to perform pre-worship ablutions without valid reason.
- vi) On a slave who committed a crime against a free boy.
- vii) On the purchasing of plundered goods.
- viii) On division of inheritance.
- ix) On cutting down trees in order to feed goats.

- x) On a man and woman who befriended one another, claiming that they were related through milk kinship (i.e. had been breast-fed by the same woman).
- xi) On a married couple who were told after many years of marriage that they were in fact related through milk kinship.
- xii) On a man who married a woman without anyone telling him she was within the prohibited degrees of marriage.
- xiii) On the failure of women to observe veiling (*hijab*).

These and other *fatwas* will eventually help us to better understand the nature of social and economic issues in the Timbuktu region in the 18th to early 20th centuries, and how Islamic law regulated them.

As regards purely religious issues, there is relatively little writing, since all the Muslims of the Timbuktu region have been Ash’ari Sunnis and adherents of the Maliki *madh’hab*. The one exception is the conflictual literature over Sufism. Prior to the 19th century the only Sufi *tariqa* in the region was the Qadiriyya. By the middle of the 19th century the new Tijaniyya *tariqa* (spiritual “path” following the teachings of Ahmad al-Tijani, who died in Morocco in 1815) had been introduced into the broader region, and gained adherents. The two *tariqas* became rivals, especially since they were also associated with political leaders. Some also rallied against Ahmad al-Tijan’s spiritual claims, and his assertion of the uniqueness of his *tariqa*, and his refusal to allow his followers to have association with any other Sufi shaykh.

Research projects

In conclusion, I introduce projects I am involved in to perpetuate the Timbuktu library legacy, and to make the city's intellectual heritage more widely accessible. The first of these, which I initiated a decade ago, is called "Arabic Literature of Africa", or ALA for short. The object of it is to produce a series of published volumes — a total of at least six — as a guide to the Muslim writers of Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa and their writings, principally in Arabic, as the title suggests, but also including anything they also wrote in African languages that were, before the 20th century, written using the Arabic script. Writers are grouped together according to their relationships to one another; family, ethnic group, city, Sufi *tariqa*, etc. Each author is presented through a brief biography; then his/her works are listed alphabetically, with indications of where manuscript copies are to be found, and if they have been published.

Hence, a researcher will eventually be able to trace any work written in Arabic in Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa. So far two volumes have been published in English, and will soon be republished in Arabic. ALA 1 deals with the Sudan down to 1900, and was prepared by Professor Sean O'Fahey of the University of Bergen (Norway), published in 1994. ALA 2, which I prepared, covers Nigeria and Chad, and was published in 1995. ALA 4, which I also prepared, is to appear in 2003, running to some 800 pages. It covers the Timbuktu tradition and the rest of Mali, as well as Senegal, Guinea, Niger and Ghana. Sean O'Fahey has prepared ALA 3A, recently published, covering Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, and before long volume 3B, on the Swahili coast of East Africa (including writings in Swahili as well as Arabic), will appear as ALA 3B. The two of us are working on ALA 5, "Literature of the Sudan in the

20th century", and later I will work with other colleagues to produce ALA 6, covering the Western Sahara.⁸

The ALA project is now a key element of the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa (ISITA), which we inaugurated in January 2000 within the Program of African Studies at Northwestern University. The principle objectives of ISITA are:

1. To preserve, and disseminate information on, African Arabic manuscript libraries.
2. To establish networks of collaboration between African, American, and European scholars working on the Islamic intellectual tradition in Africa.
3. To bring scholars together to discuss multiple aspects of Islamic thought in Africa through workshops, colloquia and conferences.
4. To promote the publication of collective volumes of studies arising from scholarly meetings, and essential works of reference relating to the Islamic intellectual tradition in Africa, including translations of some works.

Timbuktu has been the focus of much of my research for the past forty years, and I have been fortunate enough to be able to work on editing and translating some manuscripts. The largest work was just the English translation of the *Ta'rikh al-Sudan*, a chronicle of the Songhay empire, with focus on Timbuktu, by the Timbuktu historian Abd al-Rahman al-Sa'di, written in about 1656. This work was first published with a French translation a century ago, but I wanted it to be more easily accessible to students and scholars who do not read either Arabic or French (particularly in Africa), especially since it contains two chapters on the Islamic intellectual tradition of Timbuktu down to the early 17th century (see note 1 below).

The other 17th century Timbuktu manuscript worked on was the responses given by the famous scholar Ahmad Baba to questions about the lawfulness of retaining enslaved black Africans of various ethnic groups (see note 2 below). This led Ahmad Baba to define which West African ethnic groups were to be considered “pagans” and which were Muslims (since it was unlawful for Muslims to enslave adherents of their religion).

The most recent manuscript worked on (but not yet published) is an epistle, written in the late 19th century, condemning what the author said he had heard during a visit to Morocco, that to be black was automatically to be a slave; entitled *i Tanbih ahl al-tughyan 'ala hurriyyat al-sudan* (“Notifying oppressionists about the freedom of Blacks”). The author argues that within Islam no such argument can be made on a legal basis, and that so many black Africans are Muslims that the relationship of slavery to blackness is religiously unsound.

A further choice for editing and translation is manuscript no. 1045 of CEDRAB, of which there is also a copy in the Mamma

Haidara Memorial Library. Title: *Shifa' al-asqam al-'arida fi'l-zahir wa'l-batin min al-ajsam*, written by a member of the Kunta semi-nomadic group. A work on healing, the manuscript book consists of four sections as follows:

1. The benefits of (divine) names, Koranic verses, and prayers.
2. The benefits of animals and what they give birth to.
3. The benefits of herbal plants.
4. The benefits of minerals taken from mines and elsewhere.

As work continues on its manuscripts, Timbuktu will cease to be seen just as a legendary fantasy, and will be recognised for what it really was: a spiritual and intellectual jewel inspired by the Islamic faith.

NOTES

1. For a translation, see John Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, new paperback edition, 2003.
2. That work of Ahmad Baba is his response to questions about slavery sent to him from Touat; see John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak, *Mi'raj al-su'ud: Ahmad Baba's Replies on slavery*, Rabat: Institut des Etudes Africaines, Université Mohammed V, 2000.
3. An image and translations of the pair of colophons of one volume can be seen in Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire*, pp. 353-5.
4. Text and translation of this purchase record are in John O. Hunwick, 'Studies in *Ta'rikh al-fattash*, III: Kati Origins', *Sudanic Africa*, 12 (2001), 111-114.
5. *Catalogue of Manuscripts in Mamma Haidara Library*, 3 vols., London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2000.
6. See Abdel Kader Haidara, 'Bibliothèques du désert: difficultés et perspectives' in *Les Bibliothèques du Désert*, ed. Attilio Gaudio, Paris: l'Harmattan, 2002, pp. 187-204.
7. *Handlist of Manuscripts in the Centre de Documentation et de Recherches Historiques Ahmed Baba*, Timbuktu, 5 vols., London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1995-8.
8. All volumes of ALA are being published by Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden.

Obliterating African Memory and History: African Archives in Tatters

Kwesi Kwaa Prah

This contribution is made from the viewpoint of a user of archives and not an archivist. I am raising an alarm about the state of African archives, in the hope that this will help in rallying support for the rescue of African archives, which over the years have been deteriorating at a rapid pace. There is even the danger that, in some cases, the damage factor has carried on for so long that some of these archives may be largely beyond repair. The dangers lurking in the plight of Africa's archives cannot be understated. The tragedy is that if we allow these dangers to take effect, then on a wide scale, the damage may be certainly unrectifiable. In a way, this alarm is similar to what we frequently hear about the conditions of the fauna and flora on this globe. We are frequently reminded of the many endangered species, both plant and animal, which our rapacious practices have created. To wipe off our collective memory represents a retreat into a new dark age.

Many years ago, in December 1975 to be precise, I discussed this matter with the late Professor Meyer Fortes at Lomé during the

15th International Sociological Association Conference on Family Research. I indicated that in my view Africa's archives, from what I had seen in Uganda during the late 1960s and in Ghana during the early 1970s, suggested to me that if attention and consideration was not directed to the protection and preservation of our archives, then very soon irredeemable damage would be inflicted on this heritage. My idea then was that, with the support of the UNESCO and other interested individuals and institutions, a systematic attempt needed to be made to at least put all the holdings of African archives onto microfiche, which can be held in different places in each instance. Meyer Fortes immediately agreed and suggested that I refer the matter to Professor Vinigi Grottanelli in Italy. Unfortunately, we did not manage to go beyond initial attempts to reach Vinigi Grottanelli. A few years later, in 1980, I discussed the matter again with Meyer Fortes in his twilight and final years in Cambridge. Again we resolved to pursue the matter to a successful conclusion but were unable to find the initial funding for a meeting of minds to look into the matter. It has,

however, been a matter which has persistently dogged my memory and which has resurfaced in the form of this contribution.

Compared to other principal areas of the global community which have collections of literary and related records, stored for future generations of interested parties, Africa has, in this respect, for various reasons, the most limited heritage. The main reason for this is that the tradition of literacy in Africa is generally of relatively recent vintage. While it is not possible to generalise about the tradition of literacy in Africa, it is possible to say that for most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa literacy and writing has been accomplished over the last very few hundred years under the aegis of missionary groups. Africa, it is often boasted, is the global heartland of orality. Knowledge and a collective memory of Africans have been passed on to successive generations through oral traditions. The institutions around which orality in Africa has from time immemorial been consolidated have been the subject of interesting and persistent research over the past century, and sometimes there has been a tendency amongst some scholars to glorify orality at the expense of its serious limitations.

As earlier said, in comparison to the other major civilisational areas of the human community, which have collections of historically accrued literature, Africa has, in this respect, for various reasons, the most restricted legacy. The foremost reason for this is that the tradition of literacy in Africa is for most parts of the continent relatively young. It is important not to overstate the point about the paucity and limitedness of a literature culture in Africa, especially of the kind which predates the colonial experience. Berry has summarised the facts about these languages. Adaptations of the Arabic script have been used to render into writing some of these

languages. Versions of the Arabic like *ajami* have been used extensively in the Western Sudan. *Ajami* refers to languages other than Arabic which have been written in the Arabic script. They included Swahili, Bambara-Malinke, Kanuri, Hausa, and Fulani.

Ethiopic, a language directly derived from one of the root languages of the world, Afro-Asiatic, and written in a Semitic script, continues to be used to write Ge'ez, Tigrinya and Amharic. The classical Greek script has been used in the rendition of Old Nubian and Coptic. There are also some indigenously inspired scripts. Tifinagh, the script of the Berber peoples of North Africa, including the Tuareg, has now fallen into disuse. As a written form of literary composition, its use was limited, but in historical experience, its existence gave rise to a small class of literati. A Somali script called *Osmania* was developed by Ismadu Yusuf Keradi. The rather limited Vai alphabet developed by Momadu Bukele (Morrison gives another name, Dualu not Bukele) in the 1830s, apparently still enjoys some popularity amongst the Vais. Some other West African languages like Mende, Kpelle, Loma and Bassa have scripts of more recent vintage inspired by the Vai syllabary. The Bamum script developed by King Njoya of the Southern Cameroons was initially structured as a logographic system. It later evolved through the agency of royal edicts into a syllabary and then into a more definitive alphabet. There is also the particularly interesting case of Oberi Okaime, a language which was created by members of a millenarian sect based in the village Ikpa in the Itu Division of Calabar Province in 1931. There is no evidence that the language and script survived beyond the 1930s.

Historical records point to the fact that from the early years of the western encounter,

indeed from the 15th century, some literature has been steadily produced on African affairs in Africa at the western trading posts and forts in West Africa. The Portuguese, who established the earliest western presence, were responsible for the earliest western records and evidence of this can be found in Portuguese archives. Later, in the 17th century, the Dutch generated literature on Africa, some of which still remains in South Africa, and a good part is held in Dutch archives, particularly the *Rijks Archief* in the Hague. The French have likewise contributed to this corpus. But most of the materials that were produced in Africa have not survived. For a variety of reasons, one of which being climatic conditions, another being insensitive and inappropriate storage methods, and possibly a third reason being the lack of sufficient premium placed on such materials, there is precious little left of such Africa-based materials. Almost all the archival materials on Africa of significance are stored and kept in European and North American archives.

Much of the records that we have of Africa today arises out of the colonial interlude of African history and is therefore, for the most part, not older than a century. African archives hold the bulk of these materials. What has been generated and stored in African archives since the beginning of the post-colonial era appears to have been unsystematically assembled, with major gaps and flaws in these holdings. Comparative African records covering the same period in Europe and North America are so much better kept that, limited as they are, they are increasingly becoming the centre of gravity of African archival records.

In my experience of African archives in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Sudan and South Africa, without

doubt the best of these are South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Ironically, these are societies which have been stable economies enjoying a fair degree of buoyancy, and which have excellent infrastructure for the storage, preservation and retrieval of archival materials.

In most of Africa it would appear that as economic conditions deteriorate, the archives also suffer grievously. It is close to impossible to get people to care for archival materials in societies where daily bread is continuously in question. I vividly recall that in Cape Coast, Ghana, during the early seventies, some archival materials found their way onto the streets as wrapping paper for peanut/groundnut sellers. In Uganda, Ghana, Zambia and the Sudan, precious archival materials were strewn over the floor, with some gathering veritable dust. In the Sudan, in Juba in particular, archival material was also used for wrapping foodstuff and that which was stored in the so-called archives was to some extent exposed to the elements.

In Juba, there was a disturbing case of an American scholar who carted off large holdings during the early 1980s to his house in Juba town, and then on through Nairobi to the United States, with the excuse that he was in a much better position to preserve these holdings. War and conflict in Africa constitute one of the most important destabilising factors for African archives (amongst other things). The Sudanese civil war has done possibly irreparable damage to the archives in the south of the country.

All in all, with the steadily deteriorating circumstances of African economies, and with archives low on the priority list of African governmental authorities, African archives are deteriorating at a fast rate. If urgent attention is not paid to this the historical memory and

legacy of Africa will be enormously damaged and largely obliterated. The collective amnesia which Africans have about their societies and history will then continue.

It would be useful for the African Union, UNESCO, selected research institutions and universities, and perhaps a cohort of African

academics and senior bureaucrats to create a body tasked with the comprehensive investigation of the current status of African archives. This commission can then, within a year, come up with firm and manageable recommendations on how to proceed. The time for this is now, not tomorrow.

The Hidden Past and Untold Present of African-Palestinians

Susan Beckerleg

Introduction

Whilst visiting the Gaza Strip at the start of a EU-funded project to evaluate and improve maternal and child healthcare to Palestinians, I stumbled suddenly upon a social issue so sensitive that nobody wanted to discuss it. A Palestinian colleague was driving us through a refugee camp when I saw a group of women of sub-Saharan African appearance who were dressed and walked with the demeanour of local people. "Who are they?" I asked my colleague. "They are Africans, we like them", was his cryptic response. Sensing that this was a delicate issue that he did not want to discuss, I asked no more questions, but determined to find out more. Over the next five years my main work was as a Research Fellow on the EU-funded project, but I also obtained a Nuffield Foundation grant to research the origins and social circumstances of Palestinians of black, sub-Saharan African origin.

Most of my colleagues on the EU project found my attempt to address the neglected and sensitive subject of the history of people of sub-Saharan African origin in Palestine distasteful and irrelevant to their contemporary struggle. Although it is acknowledged by Palestinians that the region

has been settled by peoples from Asia, Africa and Europe for thousands of years, contemporary territorial disputes are a more urgent matter than the tracing of roots in foreign soil. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have had little time or inclination to study their origins prior to settlement in Palestine. Indeed, such studies could be counterproductive as they might pander to Israeli claims that Palestinians are migrants to the region. In recent years, much international attention has focused on the Ethiopian Jews and their position within Israeli society. However, although peoples of African origin other than the Ethiopian Jews have been in Palestine for far longer, there are few accounts of how they arrived in the region or their position and role within Middle Eastern society.

Ethnicity and ethnic origin and identity are highly complex concepts that are subject to change over time. It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into the theoretical discourse on ethnicity. Rather, based on interviews with Palestinians of recognisably sub-Saharan African origins, contemporary accounts of family histories and present-day circumstances are presented as an attempt to reveal a hidden aspect of Palestinian society.

In this paper, the terms relating to ethnicity are those used by Palestinians themselves, and not an attempt to debate the significance and use of terms such as “black”, “white” or “Arab” or “African” in the social sciences. Indeed, it is the use of such specific terms by different groups of Palestinians themselves which reveals local conceptions of ethnicity.

The terminology of identity

As in much of the Arab world, most Palestinians refer to anybody of visibly sub-Saharan or black African appearance as “*abed*”, a word that means, literally, “slave”. Hence, the terms for slave and black person have become interchangeable. Many, but not all, Palestinians with an African heritage avoid the term “*abed*”, and refer to themselves as “*sumr*” (pl.). Hence, most Palestinians of African descent refer to themselves as *asmar* (sing. masc.) or *abid* (sing.), which both translate as “black”. In colloquial Palestinian Arabic, the word *sumr*, meaning the colour black, is favoured over the term “*sawd*” which is considered an uncouth term when applied to either people or things. This is intriguing, as in other Arabic speaking countries “*sawd*” is used for black, while *sumr* means brown. Palestinians with no “black” heritage may refer to themselves as “white”, but only as a descriptor marking the contrast between themselves and Palestinians of African origin, who are also considered to be Arabs. In this part of the world, the primary ethnic distinction that concerns people is between Jew and Arab.

Apart from the tightknit African community in Jerusalem, most black Palestinians do not identify themselves as Africans. Indeed, some professed no awareness of African origins. For these people the national pride that goes with a strong Palestinian identity entailed denial of African origins or identity. All the black people I spoke to considered themselves

Palestinian, regardless of whether they were also Israeli citizens. The Bedouin of the Negev inhabit an area that was Palestine before the creation of the Israeli State. Many of their relatives are classified as Palestinian refugees in Jordan, the West Bank or Gaza. Increasingly, as they have been forced to give up their traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle, Negev Bedouin identify themselves as Palestinian first and Bedouin second. Black people living amongst the Bedouin who are aware that their origins are not in the area may be even less inclined to describe themselves as Bedouin, but identify themselves as Palestinian Israeli citizens. Similarly, the African community in East Jerusalem live in an area that the Israelis occupied in 1967. They see themselves as Palestinian although they are governed by Israel.

Despite both Israel and the southern end of the Gaza Strip having a land border with Egypt, a country on the African continent, there is little sense that the region has any connection with Africa. Egypt is viewed by Palestinians as a fellow Arab nation. In this part of the Middle East being Arab and African are considered mutually exclusive categories by Palestinians. Sub-Saharan Africa, viewed by Palestinians on the television news, is considered a vast and distant region plagued by famine and terrible poverty. Palestinians consider themselves Arab and, as such, to be set apart from sub-Saharan Africans.

This study was made possible by the co-operation of Palestinians living in Jerusalem, Gaza and the Negev. People with a visible sub-Saharan African heritage were approached, often through mutual friends, and were interviewed informally in their homes in either English or Arabic. At the start of the project the “peace process” under the Oslo Accords was in its early stages and many Palestinians were optimistic. However, as the

political situation worsened it became more difficult to talk to people about the highly sensitive and political issues of ethnic origin, the legacy of slavery and their current status as Palestinian or Israeli citizens.

Some older people I spoke to in Jerusalem had been born in Africa, while others in the Negev and Gaza told me what they knew of how their ancestors came to Palestine. For many other people the link with Africa had been lost and all but forgotten. In London I searched libraries for historical accounts of the links between Africa and Palestine. I did not find much. This shortage of historical documentation makes the accounts of the people I spoke to all the more important.

Early contact between Africa and Arabia

Palestine lies at the crossroads of Africa, Asia and Europe and has been subject to conquest and reconquest by the armies of competing empires (Butt, 1995; Lewis, 1996) For thousands of years spices have passed along trade routes through Palestine. Ambergis and frankincense were brought from Somalia and Ethiopia. As well as trade, war, colonisation and pilgrimage all ensured that the peoples and cultures of north-eastern Africa and Arabia mingled (Rashid and Van Sertima, 1995).

In the seventh century there were sub-Saharan Africans living in Arabia, and the Prophet Mohammed's trusted companion, Bilal, was an Ethiopian freed slave. Many, but not all, the Africans in Arabia were slaves (Lewis, 1971; Oliver and Crowder, 1981). It is often forgotten that there were slaves from many parts of the world in the Middle East. For example, Circassian people from the Asia Minor to the north were prized as slaves. Black African male slaves were often soldiers or government administrators and some achieved high rank. Black African women

worked as household slaves or were the concubines of wealthy high-status men. The children born to concubines were not slaves, and some with fathers of high rank became leaders.

With the spread of Islam in Africa, more and more sub-Saharan Africans participated in the annual Haj pilgrimage to Mecca. However, there were also migrations from Arabia to Africa by people who later travelled back to Arabia to perform the Haj.

Africans as guardians of the Holy Places of Islam

European writers and travellers report that slaves of sub-Saharan African origin guarded the Haram As-Sharif mosque complex in Jerusalem (Rogers, 1989; Peters, 1986; Cohen and Lewis, 1978). According to these accounts Africans were deployed by Mamluk and then Ottoman rulers to guard the holy places of Islam (Marmon, 1999). Similar guards also existed in Mecca and Medina. Although the guards were slaves, they were respected, trusted and sometimes quite powerful.

The contemporary African community of Jerusalem has written an account of their history. The following information is taken from a translation of their document entitled "The Palestinian Africans in Jerusalem: Between their Miserable Reality and Hopes for the Future" (Sons of the Africans, 1996).

The Africans living in Jerusalem are proud of their historic role as guardians of the Islamic holy places since the time of the Mamluk in the thirteenth century. They occupy the thirteenth-century Mamluk buildings on either side of Al'a Ad-Deen Street, leading to Al Aqsa Mosque. Originally the two town quarters (*ribat*) were hostels for pilgrims

worshipping at Al Asqa Mosque, the third most holy site of Islam. During the Ottoman period the *ribat* were occupied by Africans who worked as guards of the mosque and *waqf* properties. Because of their honesty these Africans held keys to the gates of the mosque and were responsible for preventing non-Muslims from entering the mosque area. Towards the end of the Ottoman era the *ribat* were converted into prisons.

After the British took over Palestine in 1918 the prisons were closed and responsibility for the buildings was returned to the Islamic *waqf* authorities, who used the buildings for temporary housing for the poor, including Africans. When Imam Hussein, Al Mufti, who led the struggle against the British and Jews until 1948, took charge of the *waqf* in Jerusalem he rented the two *ribat* to the Africans at a nominal rate. Some of the Africans continued their traditions and worked as bodyguards to the Mufti. The descendants of the Africans still live in the two *ribat*, today. In 1971 the care of the tomb of the founder of the quarter, Al'a Ad-Deen Al Busari, restored by the African community, was entrusted to them in a ceremony led by the ex-mayor of Jerusalem and historian, Arif el-Arif. In his speech he stated that: "Members of the African community were devoted guards of Al Aqsa mosque. The African community is steadfast in Jerusalem and they did not leave even in crisis situations." (Jeddah, 1971)

Contemporary Africans in Jerusalem

During interviews with members of the African community in Jerusalem I learnt of the recent history of Palestinians of African origin. Their written account provided additional information. Most contemporary members of the African community came to Jerusalem as pilgrims and workers under the British Mandate of Palestine (1917-1948).

They came mostly from Senegal, Chad, Nigeria and Sudan. They regard themselves as Palestinian and played an active role in the Intifada. Some of the Africans arrived as part of the Egyptian-led "Salvation Army" which aimed to liberate the Palestinian areas held by Jews in 1948. After the defeat of that army and its retreat to Egypt, many Africans returned to their original countries, while others preferred to stay in Palestine. Men who came from Africa to Jerusalem married local women, many of whom were of sub-Saharan African descent. Ties with Jericho, where many "black" Palestinians live, are particularly strong. Others married Palestinian women who have no ties with Africa.

El Haj Jeddeh, who was born in Chad but traces his family origins to Jeddah in the Hijaz, is the headman (*Mukhtar*) of the African community and some other Palestinians living in the vicinity. He has served under the British, the Jordanians and now the Israelis. In addition, he also takes care of the tomb of Al'a Ad-Deen Busari and acts as a spiritual leader to his community (Miles, 1997).

When Israel occupied the West Bank, many Africans were forced to become refugees in surrounding countries, leading to a 25% reduction of the numbers of African Palestinians living in Jerusalem. African Palestinians were particularly active during the Intifada and many confrontations with Israeli troops took place. One day the Israelis arrested all males aged between 10 and 45 years and insulted them, telling them "you are Africans, you have nothing to do with Palestine" (Sons of the Africans, 1996).

Memories of slavery in Bedouin society

Although black Africans have been in Palestine for centuries, most people know little about this migration. For centuries, under

the Ottoman Empire and before, slaves were brought from Africa (Crabites, 1933). Some older people today remember stories told by their parents or grandparents of how they came to be in Palestine. Therefore it is possible to discover something of the later history of slavery. Several people interviewed mentioned that they had heard that there was a big slave market in Egypt and one Bedouin told me that his grandfather had been a slave trader who travelled regularly to Egypt. A vivid eye-witness account of this market in the nineteenth century is provided by Frank (Le Gall, 1999).

Most people I spoke to with any idea of where their ancestors came from mentioned Sudan or Ethiopia. Sometimes they knew the name of the town. Indeed, it is probable that many Africans came from these countries, as they are near to Palestine. However, one woman I spoke to pointed out that “we just say Sudan because we do not know and because the name means ‘place of black people’. It could just as easily have been Congo!” According to history books, slave traders and owners used to make a distinction between Ethiopians (Habash) who they regarded as superior to and other Africans such as the Zanj from the East African Coast.

In Gaza I spoke to people of Bedouin origin who had been living in the Negev prior to 1948. In the Negev I spoke with Bedouin of sub-Saharan African heritage who had stayed in the area after 1948. In Gaza, I also encountered black people of the Al Rubayn tribe (ashira), who were settled Bedouin living around the area of Jaffa, before being driven from their villages as refugees in 1948 when the state of Israel was established. They said that they were unconnected to the Negev Bedouin. Their name derived from Nabi Rubooyin (the prophet Ruben), who thousands of years ago used a well near their home area.

These people of Bedouin origin currently resident in Gaza and the Negev recall being told by their elders how children were kidnapped or bought in slave markets and brought, sometimes carried in the camel saddle-bags, to live with important Bedouin families. This occurred in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. One Bedouin man told me that slaves used to be branded like animals, but that there were no papers concerning ownership or origins. Slave children were often the only blacks living with the family. They looked after animals, grew wheat and barley and performed household tasks. People told me that the Bedouin did not use the girls as concubines, although in the West Bank non-Bedouin did “marry” female slaves. Only big wealthy families owned and traded in slaves. Black people were scattered throughout Palestine, living with families who “owned” them. Some families needed slaves to help in self-defence when they were weak in number. It is possible that within the twentieth century adults were also brought from Africa and sold as slaves. One elderly man reported that in his youth he had come across African men who were strong, bore tribal scars on their faces and spoke little Arabic.

In the Negev the Bedouin had a three-tier social and political system. Sheikhs were drawn from the Samran, the original Bedouin. Attached to them as clients were the Hamran, families who were originally felaheen peasant farmers, but required protection and/or land from Samran families. The abed, the slaves, were on the bottom tier and did not have the same rights or status as free people. In the family unit, there were sometimes also other slaves who were not of sub-Saharan African origins, as well as low status dependants, the hamran. But one man told me that a “white” slave would never have answered to a “black” slave.

Some black slave children were educated along with the other, free, children of the family. Once the children grew up, their masters arranged for them to be married. They never married "white" people, even if they were also slaves. As there were not many black people around, marriage often meant that girls moved away from the master's family. People also reported that, upon becoming adults, slaves could choose to take their chances with freedom or to remain attached to a family who would arrange marriage. This probably only occurred towards the end of the institution of slavery, during the British period, when it was already outlawed.

Slaves did not count in blood feuds between families. Several people told me that if a black man killed a "white" man, the death of that "black" man would not count. Payment (*sulha*) could be made in money or by the giving of a slave of a certain height. If a black man kills a white, the family of the deceased may kill the "owners" of the black man. Recently, in Rahat, a town of settled Bedouin in southern Israel, a black boy eloped with a "white" girl. They were discovered and the girl killed by her family. However, the boy survived and subsequently married a black girl.

Under the old system slaves could not sit in the guest tent, or *shig*, at the same level as their masters. In some places this is still observed, with the role of the black people being to serve tea and coffee to people with no visible or known African heritage. One man told me that there were some *shig* that he would not visit because they would ask him who he "belonged to". But in other *shig* this no longer happens and black and "white" sit happily together. In one *shig* in Gaza, the black sheikh presides, while "white" people take responsibility for serving tea and coffee.

Changes before and after 1948

Slavery appears to have been an active institution under Ottoman rule. The British Mandate of Palestine was established in 1917. Slaves were not given release papers and it appears that the British made little formal effort to end the system of slavery in Palestine. Rather, with the creation of Israel and rapid and traumatic economic and social change, the institution collapsed in some places, but still operated in other areas until the 1950s.

The groups of black people living in the Negev and as refugees in Gaza today are the descendants of slaves of the Bedouin. As the peoples of Gaza and the Negev have been separated by frequently closed borders only since 1948 (when Israel was established and the majority of the Negev Bedouin became refugees in Gaza and Jordan), the various communities retain kin ties.

Prior to 1948 a political and social system of tribal affiliation operated in the Negev. There were four tribal confederations (*gabail*): the Gdarat, the Azazme, the Turabeen and the Dlam. Of these, the Tarabeen probably had the most black slaves. Each confederation was subdivided into tribes or *ashira* (Lewando Hundt, 1978).

According to several Bedouin I talked to, Jama'an Abu Jurmi, of the Tarabeen was a powerful black Sheikh to whom all black people could turn. However, during the war of 1948 the *ashira* of Abu Jurmi was dispersed and is now in Sinai, or possibly Jordan or Gaza.

Many black people in the Negev are now affiliated to the Abu Bilal tribe. There is some confusion amongst many Bedouin as to the origins of the Abu Bilal: some people say that the Israelis invented the Abu Bilal to represent all black Bedouin, and named the

hamula after Bilal, the Ethiopian companion of the Prophet Mohammed, because he was black. However, the son of the current Sheikh of the Abu Bilal tells a different story. Five or six generations ago a child, Bilal, was stolen from Africa and taken to Sinai. The boy became a slave of the family who purchased him, and although his own family found him and asked him to come home, he was used to his new life and refused. He married and had descendants, and up to now, the Abu Bilal have land in Sinai. However, the descendants moved to the Negev.

Bilal's grandson, Sulemain was very clever and a natural leader. During and after the war of 1948 he was appointed as a Sheikh by the Israelis and negotiated with the Israeli Military Authority; and many poor people, both black and "white", asked him to speak on their behalf. This was a time when all Bedouin had to be affiliated with a Sheikh in order to get rations and travel permits. After 1950 Sheikhs, such as Suleman, were formally appointed by the Israelis. In 1952, when a census was carried out, many black people registered as Abu Bilal, despite the fact that they had been attached to other families.

For example, one elderly man told me how he took the opportunity of registering as a member of Abu Bilal, as a means of disassociating himself from the descendants of his grandfather's masters who had anyway lost their land. He explained: "Sulemain Abu Bilal was a very clever and strong man, although he could not read and write. Many went to join him. Before 1948 Abu Bilal was a family. Bilal was a slave living in Sinai." The elderly man told me that he and his family had lived a nomadic existence in the West Bank with the Abu Bilal for about 10 years. That way of life ended with the war of 1967.

In some areas slavery as a way of life appears

to have continued into the 1950s. One black man who came to Palestine as a migrant worker from Egypt and was caught up in the war of 1948 recalls life for black people attached to the Al Huzail. He had been working in the orchards near Rishon in what is now central Israel with black people of the Abu Barakat family. When war broke out they fled back to their home area of the Al Huzail, where Rahat has now been constructed. When the Egyptian man arrived there he found black people growing wheat for Al Huzail. They were given food and, if they requested it for a special purpose, money. Slaves and masters lived separately in black tents. There was no intermarriage and no concubinage. The Egyptian man slept in the Sheikh's *shig* and worked as a shepherd, but received no wages. The Sheikh arranged his marriage to a "white" girl from Gaza. However, after 1952 under the

Israelis, when the census was taken, slavery as an institution faded away.

After 1948 most of the Negev Bedouin lost their land and those who had not left the area to become refugees in Gaza and Jordan were confined to a small military zone around Beersheba. Many Bedouin, including black families, appear to have moved around, working in the orchards to the north around Rishon, Rehovot and 'Atir or labouring or herding animals in the West Bank (Kressel, 1992). One family, now resident in Rahat, told me that they had moved nine times between 1956 and 1958. After the 1967 war it became much harder to move around.

In the late 1960s the Israelis started developing planned settlements to house the Negev Bedouin. Currently, about half the Negev Bedouin live in these towns, while the other half have resisted moving and remain in shanty settlements or in encampments. Many black families moved into the planned towns,

the biggest of which is Rahat. Of about 30,000 people who live in Rahat, about a third are black and are concentrated in three areas of the town. Many, but not all, of these families are registered as Abu Bilal.

Marriage

Everybody I spoke to stressed that they had been told that in the past marriage between black and "white" slaves was not permitted. In addition, there seemed to be no evidence that slave owners took black women as concubines. Rather, black slaves were married to other black slaves belonging to other families. Nevertheless, not all blacks were slaves and most people of African origin living in Palestine have some non-African Arab ancestry. Family histories reveal intermarriage for several generations, at least, between people of African origin and other Palestinians.

In the twentieth century, particularly after 1948, there were changes. Black men of slave descent married non-black women from *fellahen* peasant backgrounds from the West Bank, Gaza or Galilee, but never Bedouin women. Rarely a non-black Bedouin man might marry a black Bedouin woman. Hence, most people who are considered black are of mixed descent. The male line is all-important in reckoning descent. I met one man of black African appearance in Gaza. His family had come from the Negev after 1948. However, he claimed that technically he was "white", because his father's father had been "white". Conversely, I met a man of non-black appearance in Rahat, who was black because his father was black, although his mother was "white".

Black Bedouin also continued to marry other black Bedouin, usually within the tribe, thereby conforming to the cultural preference in Arab society to marry relatives. One man told me that cousin marriage is becoming

more common among black Bedouin. However, after 1956 it became relatively easy for black Nagab Bedouin men to arrange marriages with white *fellahen* women. One result was that left some women without husbands. Therefore black Bedouin have recently started marrying between tribes, for example between Abu Rqaiq and Abu Bilal.

Although the African Palestinians of Jerusalem are a separate community from the black Bedouin, some intermarriage occurs. For example, one of the wives of a man of I met in Jerusalem was from a family of Negev Bedouin originally from Beersheba, but now living in a refugee camp in Bethlehem. However, many of the Jerusalem community have intermarried with families from Jericho, some of whom are clearly of sub-Saharan African origin, although few people seem to know when or how Africans came to Jericho. Several people told me that Jericho suited black people because the weather was hot!

Status and identity

As the Bedouin of African descent have been geographically dispersed and caught up as individuals and families in the enormous political changes affecting the region, there has been little opportunity to develop a sense of identity as Africans. Some are Israeli or Jordanian citizens while others are registered as Palestinian refugees and hold UN papers, but have no nationality. Others were dispersed to Lebanon and Tunisia and have achieved military rank in the PLO. Many families have been broken up and are unable to meet often, separated as they are by frequently closed borders.

Living within such a complex political and daily reality, where ethnic identity and citizenship are so important, it is hardly surprising that most black people do not have a developed sense of being of African descent.

Those still living in the Negev spoke of a changing sense of identity from being Bedouin to being Arab and/or Palestinian. Although they were also Israeli citizens, many said that there was little room for them within the Jewish State.

Many Palestinians of African descent are poor and disadvantaged, even compared with other Palestinians. However, some black people have achieved leadership roles. The roles of Al Hajj Jeddeh in Jerusalem and the Sheikh of the Abu Bilal have already been discussed. In Gaza I also encountered several people of African/ Negev Bedouin or Al Rubayn descent who were prominent local leaders. For example, one elderly Bedouin Sheikh hears cases and settles disputes amongst Palestinians of any ethnic heritage and people from his *shig* in Zuwaida in central Gaza. His wife hears cases concerning women. Until border closures made movement difficult, the Sheikh returned to Tel Sabaa, a town of settled Bedouin in southern Israel, to hear cases. He said that his family had played an important role in dispute settlement since the days of the British. His work is recognised by the Palestinian Authority and since 1995 he has been registered under the Bedouin Association. Another “black” local leader, I was told about but did not meet, is the headman, or *Mukhtar* who lives in the Yaramouk area of Gaza, who settles disputes within the Al Rubayn community. In addition, many black Palestinians of Bedouin origin, in Gaza and in Jordan, continue the military tradition of people of African descent serving in the armed forces and police.

Over and beyond citizenship and rights, many black people associated with the Bedouin talked about the strong affinity and sense of common roots they felt with black people they encountered or saw on television. Indeed, in the Negev and Gaza it is common for all black

men to refer to each other as *khali*, or “my mother’s brother”. One woman explained that the term *khal* indicated respect and affection. If somebody was referred as ‘*am* (father’s brother) it was a sign that the speaker wanted something because there were obligations between these categories of kin that did not exist between maternal uncle and nephew. The term is used to address all black people and is recognition of shared ancestry and common roots. People told me that the term is used in relation to the Black Hebrews, who migrated from the USA to live in Dimona as a Jewish group. However, *khali* would not be used to address Ethiopian Jews, who, although clearly African, were closely associated with the state of Israel.

Black people in the Negev, Gaza and Jerusalem refer to themselves as the *sumr*. This is in stark contrast to many other Palestinians, who persist in referring to all black people as *abed*, a term that has the primary meaning of “slave”. In addition, some older black people still use the term “*abed*” as a means of self-referral, while younger people avoid the term. Yet many younger people know little or nothing of their history. One young woman, upon hearing from her grandmother tales of slavery, was shocked and asked for reassurance that such things only happened centuries ago.

Although some non-black Palestinians claim that “*abed*” is not an abusive name and that any connotations with slavery have been lost, others are embarrassed to even hear the word mentioned. Clearly the issue of the origins, identity and terminology used to describe people of African origin is highly sensitive. When I spoke to some non-black and black Palestinians they denied that black people were ever slaves in the region, and said that, rather, they had been soldiers of the Ottoman Empire. When I pointed out that this was not

the case, one man almost whispered to me “we never talk about it”. Yet non-black Palestinians, by persisting in calling people of African origin “*abed*”, perpetuate discrimination.

The African Palestinians living in Jerusalem told me that they would fight with anybody who referred to them as “*abed*”. They added that this does not often happen as their place within Palestinian society and their role in the struggle is widely acknowledged by the citizens of Jerusalem. They also clearly identify themselves as African and Palestinian.

Conclusion

This research project addressed issues of ethnicity upon which most Palestinians did not want to reflect. Clearly, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has determined the ways that people living in the region think and talk about ethnic origins and identity. Within the current political climate, as the Palestinians struggle to regain occupied territory, national identity is stressed, while the diverse origins of the people are largely ignored. As such, *abed* or *sumr* (black) people are considered Arab and Palestinian. Yet, Palestinians of sub-Saharan origin are frequently referred to and even addressed as “*abed*”. Slave origins in many parts of the world, including Palestine, still carry a sense of stigma. The term *abed* is a constant reminder of low origins, continued low status and “otherness”; hence, the move by many black people to redefine themselves as

“*sumr*”. It is clear from the use of the term *khali* that black Palestinians do identify with black people everywhere. However, the contemporary political struggle precludes the development of a strong African identity amongst most black Palestinians. This may change if the Peace Process is successful, for conceptions of ethnicity are socially constructed, and are subject to change and alteration.

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Black Book of Sudan: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan

Abdullahi Osman El-Tom

Introduction

Most of the recent literature on the civil war, political turmoil and social upheavals in the Sudan is written in Arabic. At least three reasons explain this tendency. First, Arabic is the official language of the Sudan, the main spoken language among its diverse nationalities and ethnic groups. Second, the Arabisation (*tarib* in Arabic refers to the use of Arabic as a language of instruction) of higher education means that English is gradually losing ground to Arabic. Third, the Sudan Government's orientation courts the Arab World and perceives Arabism as the edifice of Sudanese nationalism, regardless of the fact that the majority of the Sudanese peoples are of an African or Afro-Arab origin. For all three reasons, the Arabic language became dominant even in regions such as Southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains and Darfur, where Arabism, apparently an ideology of dominance, is resisted and its political designs rejected by peoples of non-Arab origin.

Evidently the discourse of power and the struggle for providing the symbols of a dominant identity cannot be separated from issues such as language and religion. Nor can these issues be separated from the twin domains of wealth-sharing and equitable resource distribution and their discontent. However, this review article does not focus on the common theme of identity politics. Its objective is more mundane, i.e. an attempt to avail to the non-Arabic reader a glimpse of a mysterious new Arabic publication titled *The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan*, which appeared in 2000. The authors of the book have opted to remain anonymous, calling themselves "The Seekers of Truth and Justice". The place of publication has also been withheld. The Black Book, as we will refer to in the rest of this review, has no copyright either.

The mystery of the Black Book is compounded by its impeccable method of

distribution, which was executed with military precision. A once-off distribution of the book took place at Friday prayers in the Capital and in most major cities in the country, thus beating the government's tight grip on information circulation.

According to one source, top officials, including personnel of the Presidential Palace, had their copies on their desks on the same day. Within weeks of its release, the book, now popularly known as *The Black Book*, (*al-kitab al-aswad*) became a topical issue at every venue in the country. Its success in tapping grassroots imagination in a way which is unparalleled by any other literary work in the recent history of the country has made it the envy of every author in the land. The distribution of the book took on a life of its own through spontaneous photocopying. The book has no copyright. Indeed its free duplication constituted the greatest bulk of the distribution as most readers have never seen the original copy of the book. Translation of the book into English for southern Sudanese readers was taking place during the collection of data for this article (Summer 2000) but has yet to see the light of day.

The main issues

The authors spell out the aim of their publication in the following passage:

This publication unveils the level of injustice practised by successive governments, secular and theocratic, democratic or autocratic, since the independence of the country in 1956 to this date. (p. 1; all translations are ours unless otherwise stated).

The authors then proceed to the distribution of various types of powers among population blocs in the country. Using the 1986 Official Census, Sudan's regional populations are shown in the first two columns of Table 1:

Table1. Population and Representation (1986)

Regions	Population	%	Representation	%
Northern	1,026,406	5.4	58	79.5
Eastern	2,222,779	11.8	1	1.4
Central	4,908,038	26.5	2	2.8
Southern	4,407,450	23.7	12	16.4
Western	6,072,872	32.6	0	0

The table reveals that the Northern Region, with a population of 5.4 percent of the total population of the Sudan, provided 79.5 percent of national representation. The figures illustrate the inequitable distribution of regional representatives and the political dominance of the minority Northern Sudanese, who historically dominated the country economically as well.

The authors then move on to examine the Regional status of the occupants of the Constitutional posts for the first five national governments from 1956 to 1964. Given that these are the early governments, we may be tempted to throw the blame on inherited deformed colonial structures. The Northern Region has maintained a representation of more than 50% and occasionally exceeded 70%. Since independence, not a single president came from outside the Northern Region, while many military coups have failed simply because their leaders came from outside the fortunate Region (p. 11) for instance, the 1977, 1980 and 1991 military coups.

An impressive array of statistics has been compiled regarding regional representations in successive governments from 1964 to date. These are as follows: Multi-party democracy

(1964-69), Nimeiri regime (1969-1985), Military Provisional Council (MPC) (1985-1986), second multi-party democracy (1986-1989), NIF/National Salvation 1 (NS 1) (1989-1999) and National Salvation 2 (NS2) 1999 to date. The ministerial representation in these governments is given in table 2.

Table 2. Ministerial Representation in Governments, 1964-2000

Gov/ Region	Northern		Central		Western		Southern		Western	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 st Dem.	55	67.9	2	2.5	5	6.2	14	17.3	5	6.2
Nimeiri	79	68.7	4	2.5	19	16.5	9	7.8	4	3.5
MPC	21	70.0	0	0	3	10	5	16.7	1	3.3
2 nd Dem.	55	47.4	3	2.6	17	14.7	15	12.9	26	22.4
NSI	120	59	6	3	18	8.9	30	14.9	28	13.8
N52	18	60	1	3.3	2	6.6	4	13.3	5	16.7

The list here refers to Federal (national) Ministers as opposed to State/Wilaie Ministers

The Black Book here gives some credit to the then Prime Minister Sadiq Al Mahdi and his democratic government in 1986-1989 (Table 2, 2nd Dem.) for increasing the representation of marginalised groups in the country. This is taken as a testimony that liberal democracy goes some way towards tackling the dilemma of representation (p. 14).

Although the Black Book stresses the domination of the entire Sudan by the Northern Region, it does not take these regions as undifferentiated entities. The most startling element in the thesis is the claim that just three ethnic groups within the Northern Region in effect dominate the country. The authors state that, "This tiny population of the North contains several marginalised ethnic

groups like the Manaseer and the Mahas. The former represents the marginalised — Sudanese — Arabs while the latter the marginalised Nubian tranche. These and others are dominated by just three ethnic groups within the Northern Region, i.e. the Shaygia, the Jaalieen and the Danagla" (pp. 15-16).

The Black Book allots a substantial space to the performance of the current government, perhaps due to its repeated claim to nonsectarianism, justice and equality. Statistics presented, however, reveal a spectacular conformity with the previous pattern of distribution of power prevalent in the Sudan. Regional composition of the Military Command Council at the time of the

takeover of power by the present Government of National Salvation (ONS, 1989) is as follows:

Table 3. Revolutionary Command Council, (1989)

Region	No. of Representatives	%
Northern	10	66.7
Eastern	0	0
Central	0	0
Southern	2	13.3
Western	3	20.0

Once the power was consolidated, a return to normal politics became evident in the distribution of ministerial positions (p. 15).

Table 4. Ministerial Positions of the GNS, 1989

Region	No. of Representatives	%
North	120	59.9
Eastern	6	3.0
Central	18	8.9
Southern	30	14.9
Western	28	13.8

The recent political demise of Turabi, the spiritual leader of the National Islamic Front (now the Popular National Congress) in December 1999, was a cause of euphoria for the majority of the Sudanese people. The authors of the Black Book, however, see little cause for celebration. The power distribution is evident at the level of the Presidential Palace positions, the Federal ministerial posts as well as State governors. To save space, I will present a summary of the regional distribution of powers at the Presidential Palace combined with computation of Federal Ministers (Table 5).

One would have assumed that the imbalance shown would not feature at the level of State

Governors, Provincial Commissioners and Regional Ministers. The Black Book, however, states otherwise, as shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Presidential and Federal Ministerial Posts

Region	Presidential		Federal Ministerial	
	No.	%	No.	%
North	10	83.3	18	60.1
Eastern	0	0	1	3.3
Central	0	0	2	6.6
Southern	2	16.6	4	13.3
Western	0	0	5	16.7

Table 6. Governors, Commissioners and State Ministers

Region	Governance		Commissioners		Ministers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
North	9	69.2	160	51	240	47.
Eastern	2	12.5	13	13	9	1.8
Central	2	12.5	27	27	25	4.9
Southern	Excluded		69	69	160	31.
Western	3	18.8	47	47	71	14.

Using similarly powerful statistical support, the authors arrive at the same conclusion regarding the legislative power in the Sudan. Although the domination of the North has remained a prime feature, the authors concede that liberal democracy and its elected parliaments give marginalised areas a better representation (p. 25). In the case of appointed legislative bodies, the authors conclude that many of those appointed in non-northern regions are in fact of northern origin but have been living in other regions.

Legal system

The Black Book acknowledges the important role attached to the legal profession in the making of any modern state. It equally praises the history of Sudanese legal profession and its striving for justice and equality. However,

the legal profession has also been subject to the insidious hand of the northern power brokers, as the publication states. In the words of the authors: "the leadership of the legal system at the level of the Minister for Justice and the Attorney General has been controlled by the executive powers, which are characterised by nepotism and discrimination among the members of the nation." (p. 28). Table 7 shows the regional affiliation of heads of the legal system in post-independence Sudan.

Table 7. Sudanese Attorneys General

Region	No.	%
North	8	67
Eastern	0	0
Central	3	33
Southern	0	0
Western	0	0

The media

The media too has not escaped the assault of the Black Book. It is described as dominated by the north and playing its tunes. This, as the Black Book claims, is evident at the level of news, art and appreciation of tunes and lyrics and evolution of culture. In short, the media has projected the culture of the north and elevated it to a national culture at the expense of other parts of the Sudan (pp. 28-33). With extreme sarcasm, the Black Book narrates how the Jihad itself did not escape the wrath of the northernisation process: "Examine with us the documentary films on Mujahideen which are produced by the Popular Defence Forces and (National) charity corporations. Look at the pictures and scrutinise the names. Wouldn't you be certain that all the Mujahideen in the Sudan are from the Northern Region? That the defending army and its martyrs who fall every day are equally from the same region? And the weddings of these martyrs are classified in tandem with their corresponding levels of citizenship; first,

second and third." (pp. 32-33). The involvement in "Jihad" and the sacrifice it entails are, however, different according to the Black Book, as shown in table 8:

Table 8. No of "Martyrs" for a Certain Period for Present Government

Area	No. of Martyrs
South Darfur	1923
North Darfur	1212
West Darfur	713
Northern	111
River Nile	196
Western Kordofan	1796

Strict control over the media meant that the agenda are determined by the north. Those who wished otherwise are subjected to character assassination, often involving the usual racist card. A number of leaders were quoted as an example of this exclusionary mechanism, including Bolad, Faroug Adam, Au Al Haj and Jar Al Nabi (pp. 33-37).

Wealth (mal)distribution

The Black Book contends that distribution of resources in Sudan has always been skewed in favour of the Northern Region. This pattern has been set in stone by the northern control over public finance in the country: "... The Ministry of Finance has become an estate belonging to the northern Region. Excluding some Board directors inside the Ministry, you would not find 5% of its staff from outside the northern Region. Appointment of staff in the Ministry is primarily reserved for the citizens of the north. Those from other Regions have to be content with tea-making and cleaning services. Even the drivers are recruited from northern school dropouts whose family members are working in the Ministry" (p. 39).

The Black Book concludes that this pattern of employment has its bearings on the approval of government allocations for developmental schemes across the nation, which again favours the northern Region: "No (non-northern) State has ever exceeded 36% of its allocated budget, while actual expenditure of the two northern States has never dropped below 60% of their annual approved allocations. This has left the northern States in continuous position for attracting extra funds originally destined for other States" (p. 39).

In line with this pattern, the Black Book bemoans the liquidation of eight developmental schemes, none of which was in the north: "These schemes were not sold or privatised but simply cancelled despite the fact that they were developmental in nature and had an impact on the life of ordinary citizens of these States ... To date and since independence, not a single scheme has been established in the Western State which is capable of making a primary support of one Province for a period of one month" (p. 43).

Seventeen public enterprises (schemes, corporations, etc.) were privatised in recent years. It is implied in the Black Book that the privatisation of these public amenities was characterised by nepotism, corruption and open defiance of the national interests (pp. 43-44).

Other issues raised in the Black Book, which we are not able to summarise, include topics such as Agricultural Services, Natural Resources, Animal Resources, Industrial Sector, Energy and Water, Transport and Communication, Development and Public Services, Banking and Economic Corporations.

Committee for Distribution of Wealth

The start of petrol production and export has introduced a new dimension in Sudan's economy. This necessitated formation of what has come to be known as the National Council for Distribution of Resources.

Regional membership of the Council is as follows:

Table 9. The National Council for Distribution of Resources

Region	No. of Representatives	%
Northern	19	76
Eastern	1	4
Central	1	4
Southern	3	12
Western	1	4

Needless to say, the Black Book sees the composition of this Council as firmly in line with the pattern of northern domination of the country.

In its last chapter, the Black Book explores the consequences of the alleged "imbalance in the scale of justice", a term used as a subtitle for the publication. It says: "Loss of government credibility has been one of the prime consequences of this injustice. All governments since Independence and up until Al Mahdi's rule of 86-89 (which is the only government which made some efforts towards a better distribution of wealth) have adopted a single path, that of entrenching the power and resources in the north and a small part of the centre. The government of National Salvation, however, has come to affirm the ethnic and regional domination of the north over the rest of the country ..." (pp. 58-59).

Comments and analysis

The Black Book is certainly very controversial. In the words of Francis Den

(1989), "What is not said is what divides". Success of the Black Book in making a persuasive discussion of what is not talked about made it an instant grassroots topic. Indeed its method of reaching the public is a unique case worthy of being studied by every student of mass media. In many ways, its speed of dissemination has probably surpassed alternative media in comparable settings with strict official control over information. An informant working in a public photocopying office claimed that he had duplicated 11 copies for his friends in five different cities. An owner of a photocopying shop in Khartoum said: "This book came to us from heaven. I made no less than 100 copies for our customers. We sometimes charged them more due to the risk involved in duplicating illegal documents".

The mystique of the Black Book is further boosted by the high level of illiteracy in the Sudan, as most people knew about it and its contents through word of mouth, apparently the most powerful tool of mass media even in the modern world. A company manager in Khartoum (originally from Darfur) declared: "As I was coming out from the mosque, somebody handed me a copy of a book. I threw it in my car and forgot about it. Suddenly everybody started talking about the Black Book. It was three days later when I realised I was one of those who had received a copy. I read it and found nothing new. Well, I had already mastered the contents of the Black Book from my neighbours even before reading it".

Naturally, the Black Book is met with different feelings, ranging from admiration, embarrassment, disbelief, fear, contempt and anger. Wherever one stands, it is hard to think as though the Black Book has never been published. This is clear from the response of most major political players in the country.

Both government and opposition parties, including Turabi's faction, contend that the Black Book raises an important issue of injustice. The mess highlighted in the Black Book is, however, common throughout the policies and actions of all governments and political parties. Hence the criticism is general and so is the responsibility. Indeed every party in the country is now claiming to be the better candidate for setting things right.

Following the demise of Turabi in December 1999, an intense power struggle ensued in the country. The Government as well as Turabi's factions toured the country for support. Delegates who toured the western Regions found that public agenda were mainly dominated by three issues: the western highway project, pay of public servants (in particular teachers), and the Black Book.

Needless to say, the distribution of the Black Book sparked off frantic investigation by the security. It was rumoured that several junior officials were fired from their posts in the Presidential Palace due to the appearance of the Black Book on the desks of top officials including the President. Writers, journalists, academics and publishing houses were subjected to security investigation during which fonts of computer software, typewriters, etc., were checked. The investigation was fruitless and the authors remained unknown.

Turabi declared that he sensed an Islamic touch in the Black Book. Others say the Black Book is the work of frustrated scholars from the western Region. The Sudan Democratic Gazette seems to favour this view. Yet others say this publication must have been done by people who have been close to power and had access to classified information.

Certain observations can, however, be made about the Black Book which may shed some light on its authors. Firstly, the language of the Black Book reflects some sort of an Islamic vision common among the Islamic parties in the country. This is further affirmed by the attempt of the Black Book to read the situation within a clearly defined Islamic Sudan.

Secondly, the grievances of the western Sudan and its leaders seem to be paramount and disproportional to other marginalised regions which the Book tries to defend, including the south. Thirdly, there is a distinct lack of sympathy for the north. This is despite the fact that, following the logic of the book, its numerous ethnic groups are dominated by the "Powerful Three" Northern ethnic groups: the Shaigia, the Jaaliyeen and the Danagla.

Fourthly, confining the Black Book to an Arabic version implies that the South had little or no input in the publication (translation of the book into English is volunteered by some southern readers to make it available for their non-Arabic readers).

Fifthly, the distribution of the Black Book reflects a style of organisation, discipline and execution that is far beyond the competence of organisations other than the NIF. Nonetheless, the Black Book is unlikely to be the product of the mainstream NIF.

Public reaction

The fact that the Black Book is written in Arabic gave it an immediate public response for the material it contains cannot be ignored by Sudan's tense and severely divided identities. A similar response was echoed earlier in relation to the role of discursive narratives in the making of competing identities in the Sudan. In examining writings of 15 Sudanese authors of various ethnic

origins, Mohamed Salih (1999:29) laments, "caught between ethnic and national identity crises, Sudanese authors who publicly expressed ethnic sentiments were denounced for fear that they might frustrate the nation-building project which embarked violently on creating one nation-state (Arabist in its orientation), one religion (Islam as an ideological inspiration) and one language (Arabic as a dominant discourse), despite the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country. The result was the development of an increasingly agonised intellectual milieu, with split identities which are often privately ethnic and publicly nationalist".²

In the process of writing this review we interviewed a very small number of Sudanese across the ethnic divide in order to sample their response to the Black Book. Although the majority of the Sudanese population may not share their views, they give an impression, no matter how partial, of the significance of the book and its ability to engage people in a noteworthy political debate on the nature and structure of Sudanese polity. The reactions of members of the general public are as follows.

A bank official commented on the Black Book as follows: "A man went to the court and was asked to present his case in writing. Being illiterate he commissioned a scribe to write his case. When the case is documented, the scribe said: Let me read it to you to see if you are happy with it. Upon reading the document, the man started weeping. The scribe said: why do you cry? I am only reading what you have just told me. The customer said: I knew I was subjected to injustice but I never knew it was that bad".

The banker continued: This is how I felt in reading the Black Book. We all knew that we were taken for a ride and that we have been discriminated against. I was so angry that I

wanted to go out and beat up the first northerner I met. Well, I might be exaggerating but for the first time, I have the information to prove that we are done" (from Darfur).

Another reader commented: "Now we have the information in front of our eyes and if we say the system is unjust, then we cannot simply be accused of being racists. What we want is plain and simple: a Sudan which is for everybody and in which we are all equal, including the specified three ethnic groups" (from Kordofan).

A woman reader commented: "I like those guys because they wrote from the heart and in a language which we can all follow. They knew what they are talking about and they don't put it in the way you intellectuals do. Not a single politician has been able to dispute what is said so far" (a teacher from Darfur residing in the Central Region).

A taxi driver from the North: "There has never been any justice for you westerners. But you are not alone in that. We in Haifa suffer even more than you. Even the southerners have a better deal than us, despite the Jihad against them. At least you are able to speak out. We are relegated to nothing but cooking for those guys. A cook is a cook even if he works in the kitchen of the (Presidential) Palace."

A politician from Kordofan said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the book. We have always raised the issue of injustice but the Black Book was able to prove it with clear and straight statistics. It occasionally went too far giving ammunition to racists and tribalists. What is the point when the case is already made? The highway, the petrol revenue, Al Obeid Water Project; the injustice is unmistakable."

A security man stated: "I read the book three times. Things shouldn't have been said in this way. We know that the system has never been fair, but we should avoid stirring trouble. Strangely enough, I have never been able to dispute what is said. I thought the government would, but they kept quite. Even the northern journalists just said the book is racist but stopped there" (from Darfur, living and working in Khartoum).

A lawyer, of mixed parentage (Darfur/River Nile) said: "I was so embarrassed reading the Black Book. Where are all these politicians we admired. Can't they see all this? Having said that, I would like to think that the Black Book got it wrong. How did they manage to find the ethnic origins of all those who are listed? We can establish the ethnic affiliation of the members of this government but can we be sure about those who were in power even before I was born? I think part of the Black Book is cooked, but I cannot prove it. I hope someone else does."

A pensioner from Darfur stated: "It has finally been said loud and clear. We have known this for years and years. Here it is for those who do not know. I cannot imagine any present or future leader able to ignore the contents of this book. I am glad it came out and would love to know who the authors are. They are great."

A civil servant (from Kordofan working in Khartoum) commented: "The Black Book is definitely the work of Turabi and his boys. What did he do when he was in power? He only made it worse. Now he is trying to embarrass the government. We know that that type of printing is only available for Turabi's people. The Black Book is certainly well written and has important information, but the timing is not right. Sudan is now facing war staged by the whole world and we should unite. No, this book doesn't help at all."

Judged by its popularity, the Black Book could certainly be rated as one of the most important political publications in contemporary Sudan. It is unthinkable that any present politician will act as though it has not been published. Indeed it is a publication that would be foolish to ignore. The compilation of the statistics is worthy of note and has given the Black Book a power that is hard to challenge. The main thesis of the Black Book remains intact no matter how many slips are detected in the publication.

The latter part of the Black Book is, however, less organised and often carelessly presented. Some claims are not substantiated and it is not good enough to state points whose evidence lies outside the text, for example in newspaper articles, government decisions, etc. Occasionally, the Black Book relies on anecdotal knowledge. For example, the claim that equipment owned by the Western Highway Project was diverted to the Northern Highway Project is not corroborated by evidence in the Black Book. One may say everybody knows this but still evidence is missing in the publication. Other examples here include treatment of Jar Al Nabi, Farouq and the Governor's house in Al Obeid (the HQ of Kordofan State). Supportive evidence for these claims might be available in newspaper articles and official documents. Nonetheless, lack of presentation of these documents weakens the argument considerably.

In several passages, the book launches into personal vendetta. This should have been avoided. The Black Book also fails to distinguish between government policies and ideosyncratic behaviour and corruption enacted by certain individuals. Surely not every action which went against the alleged marginalised regions or was performed by officials from the north is rooted in

government policies. This point is not fully observed in the Black Book.

Despite this, one has to concur with the main view of the Black Book, that a minority within the northern Region has dominated the Sudan and that a move towards a more inclusive Sudan is wanting. The implications of the Black Book for the current debate on the future of the Sudan are significant and this is what we intend to allude to in the closing pages of this review article.

Concluding remarks

The Black Book touches a raw nerve in the Sudanese identity construction debate by deconstructing the political use of identity politics in cementing the dominant discourse of power. The potency of the discourse espoused by the Black Book is embedded in a politics of difference expressed in an economic reality characterised by inequality and social injustice. It signals a shift in Sudanese conceptualisation of their political reality from an abstract notion of difference based on cultural and ethnic cleavages to tangible material differences projected in the unsettling task of choosing between competing definitions of what informs the genesis of a collective Sudanese identity, if that common identity has ever existed. Behind the glow of the nation-building project and its discontent there exists a tragic tale of social, political and economic exclusion, a tale of a nation divided not only in terms of the constitutive elements of identity politics, but the resonance of the political economy that usurps the cultural meaning of distributive justice.

The fact that the Black Book of the Sudan has come from unknown sources, and is authored by unknown "people" who advocate the grievances of forgotten people says much about the nature of the political space

available to those brave enough to interrogate injustice. It says little about the dominant social forces behind this episode, although these social forces could be regionally and ethnically diverse but working collectively within the boundaries of a dominant discourse that rejects those who fail to keep silent. This is not surprising in situations where the search for identity in conflict-ridden states is an important ingredient in the making of political boundaries which serve to reproduce subjugation or dominance.

In the Sudan, and probably elsewhere, identity construction is not a simple assertion of cultural or ethnic difference. It bestows meaning on the ideology of dominance on which economic difference thrives, while its nature is denied, hence pushed to obscurity. Engaging obscurity and redeeming it from the possibility of deconstructing the myth of community or nation is in itself a very

powerful counter-discourse and a politically informed ideological strand built around the narrators' capacity to unravel the bedrock of injustice. The Black Book of the Sudan has done exactly that and in a discourse proved capable of alienating its opponents. Its consequences would certainly outlive the eternity of its ghost publishers since ghosts are immortal.

NOTES

1. An article with the same title is published in Sørbo, G. and Ahmed, A.G.M. (eds). (1989) *Management of the Conflict in the Sudan*. University of Bergen, pp. 10-18.
2. Salih, M. A. (1999) 'Other Identities: The Politics of Sudanese Discursive Narratives.' *Identities: The Journal of Global Power and Culture* 2, no. 2.

The Power of Logo: The Implication of the Chinese Revolution on Pan-Africanism

Li Xing

Introduction: China and Africa

In the 1840s, the Sino-British Opium Wars ended with China's defeat. The Treaty of Nanjing forced China to pay a huge indemnity to Britain for the cost of war and imposed on China a tariff on all imported goods. Since then, the Chinese civilisation was greatly contested and challenged when the well-equilibrated Chinese feudal system gradually collapsed. Unlike the downfall of previous dynasties, which did not inflict any obvious damage on the Chinese way of life and the identity of Chinese culture, the decline of the Manchu Dynasty had the whole civilisation face collapse. The causes of the decline were both multiple and complex. There were certainly a number of domestic socioeconomic factors as well as external forces which contributed to this state of affairs.

The consequences of the Opium War for China were very damaging: traditional tributaries were taken away; concessions to foreign privileges were made; the authority of the emperor, upon which the Chinese order was based, was ended; the hand-labour-based industries on which the Chinese economy depended were destroyed; and the favorable

balance of trade, which existed until 1830 and which had brought an uninterrupted flow of silver from the outside, became lopsided (Kapur, 1987:2). China became indeed an international colony. The traditional social structure was finally broken down. China's customs and post offices were largely controlled by Westerners; Western ships were permitted to navigate freely in its waters, and even to demolish some of its coastal defenses; many Western troops were stationed at a number of points on a permanent basis; pieces of territory in various parts of the country were taken over as concessions. China was thus divided by Western powers into "spheres of interest" and was "carved up like a melon." This situation was very similar to what colonialism had once imposed on Africa.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, never before in history had Chinese society been so radically transformed in so short time. China underwent more thoroughgoing and dramatic changes than any other country in the world. Its state and society transformed from an imperial monarchy to a short-lived republic, from a weak and decentralised warlord authoritarianism to a centralised revolutionary

socialist state; economically it went from a state-led industrialisation based on planned economy and socialist egalitarianism to an all-round structural reform based on market mechanisms; the economy underwent repeated shift from crisis and failure to very rapid growth and modernisation; politically the Chinese society and people experienced imperialism and warlordism as well as dictatorship and class struggle; ideologically the Chinese value systems underwent transformations from feudalism to socialism and from collectivism to individualism. For more than a century, generations of Chinese revolutionaries have been striving to find answers to the dazzling puzzles: war and peace, national liberation and independence, development of productive forces and human capacities, self-reliance and equality.

The search to ensure their existence as a prosperous strong nation and political entity has been a key concern in China's modern history. Seeking a way for the transformation and revival of the Chinese nation, Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party eventually found elements of an answer in Marxist philosophy and revolutionary worldview to deal with the scope of the challenge and the pressures from internal and external forces. Depending on how one assesses its successes and failures, China was characterised as a historically unique experiment to skip over the stage of capitalism and to bring about a socialist transformation of both the social structure and the consciousness of the people (Li, 1998).

Today, China is struggling to probe its own way to find an industrialisation path to develop the nation into a prosperous great power while adjusting Chinese society strategically and practically to the existing capitalist world. A difficult task facing the Chinese people is how to promote wealth-

creating aspects of the market economy while restraining its socially polarising tendencies as well as its ecological destruction (Li, 1999).

If we take the case of continental Africa, we notice that for the past century the so-called "development in Africa" has already been an global issue — Africa and Africans have not so far "developed". Contemporary Africa is beset with difficulties rooted in its inability to unite territorially, politically and economically. The consequences have been national economies incapable of developing because of geographical, economic and political reasons. On the other hand, Africa has been constantly beset with underdevelopment, poverty, endless border wars, economic domination and the dictatorship of the IMF and the World Bank.

Today, the continent is the most oppressed and exploited, the most marginal and debt-ridden, the most impoverished and war-worn, and the most corrupted and diseased in the world. Despite its abundant resources not only is Africa considered to be the least industrialised of all the developing regions, but also has it more than half of the world's economic and war refugees. The African socio-political landscape has been widely described or perceived to be one full of political oppression, human rights abuses, continuous ethnic, racial, regional and religious conflicts, endless military coups, and high illiteracy. After all, it is doomed to be a "hopeless continent" (*The Economist*, 13 May 2000). As one scholar describes:

The fact is that over the decades that Africa became independent, none of its languages, literatures, institutions, religions and systems of thought have had any impact on the social, political, economic and technological experience imposed on the continent. Islam and Christianity are recognised as religions

in all constitutions, but no African religion gets that place since anthropologists have long since reduced African religion to folklore. (Alvares, 1995:5-6)

The continent's economic situation is claimed to be the worst in the whole world. The \$300 billion which African countries owe to foreign creditors represents a serious burden which fundamentally hampers progress in every sector. Africa's debt burdens, says Jesse Jackson, "are the new economy's chains of slavery" (*Los Angeles Times*, 29 September 1998). But 33 of the 41 countries identified by the World Bank as "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" in sub-Saharan Africa spend more on debt repayments than on health care and education combined. Sub-Saharan African governments owe foreign creditors an average of almost \$400 for every man, woman and child on a continent where the average annual wage for most countries is less than \$400 per person. Africa carries 11% of the developing world's debt, with only 5% of the developing world's income.

In terms of social well-being, over half of Africa's population is without safe drinking water and two-thirds lack access to adequate sanitation. Africa, with about 12% of the world's population, accounts for 80% of the world's deaths due to AIDS and almost 90% of the world's deaths due to malaria.

Pan-Africanism

Historically, one of the strongest social and intellectual movements to resolve Africa's dilemma and bring new hopes to its people is the Pan-African movement. It became a positive force after two conventions in London and America in the early 1900s with great inspirations from Jamaican Marcus Garvey. In the 1950s, the movement was dominated by Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah, and the "father of Pan-Africanism",

W. E. B. Du Bois. In 1963 in Addis Ababa 32 independent African nations founded the Organisation of African Unity, by which time Pan-Africanism had moved from being an ideal into practical politics.

Philosophically and theoretically, Pan-Africanism is based on the belief that African people share common bonds and objectives and this commonality advocates unity to achieve these objectives. Politically, Pan-Africanism is:

the construction of a Pan-African identity through the development of a shared goal and social and historical experience of struggling to lift up Africa from its untenable status as a marginal, oppressed and largely written-off continent.... It is a process which comes by a sustained fostering of communication, conversation, deliberation, dialogue, coordination, cooperation and solidarity amongst the population in Africa as equal and different African citizens based on a sustained development of a shared African identity, conscious and interest irrespective of color, creed, racial origin, nationality, region and so on. (Mammo, 2000:1)

Still today, Pan-Africanism represents a strong political will to undertake transformative changes in the African continent. It implies the essential elements of a social-political revolution aiming to bring about fundamental changes to all spheres of the continent. Recently, some scholars even proposed an African defence and security system, which adds a new dimension to Pan-African integration (Mammo 2001).

Pan-Africanism has been conceived in varying ways. Given the common assumption that life began on the African continent, it has been applied to all black African people and people of black African descent; to all people on the

African continent, including non-black people or to all states on the African continent. As one scholar put it, "The acceptance of a oneness of all African people and a commitment for the betterment of all people of African descent" (Kodjoe, 1986: 368).

These broad concepts of Pan-Africanism contain strong political connotations on the basis that "African people all over the world could exert sufficient political clout toward liberation from slavery in the Americas and from colonialism on the African continent" (Fosu, 1999:7-8). It is the belief that "all people of African descent have common interests and should work together to conquer prejudice and oppression worldwide" (Sharp, 2000: 33). Pan-Africanism has been used as a general term for various movements in Africa that have their common goal in the unity of Africans and in the elimination of colonialism and white supremacy from the continent.

However, on the concrete scope and meaning of Pan-Africanism, especially regarding such matters as leadership, political orientation, and national as opposed to regional interests, they are widely, often bitterly, divided. Is Pan-Africanism purely a wishful ideal or is it a realisable project? Are there any lessons in the world history of social transformations from which Pan-Africanism can draw some inspiration and strength?

Objectives

The overall objective of this paper is to establish a theoretical discourse relevance between the way Marxism, Mao Zedong's Thought, and the Chinese Revolution emerged, developed, and succeeded and the ongoing struggle of the Pan-African movement. It emphasises the role of consciousness (politics, goals, desires, skills, knowledge) and ideological conviction as an approach to understanding the Pan-African

movement as a "continental political project". In other words, it intends to argue that political discourses and the ideological or conscious elements in social-political life can be the driving force for societal transformations and for a specific socio-political project. It is not intended to provide the answers, rather, it aims at constructing a framework of understanding Pan-Africanism and the complexities of such a movement on the basis of historical novel forms of political, social and ideological relations.

Methodological considerations

This contribution attempts to take a novel approach to the study of discourse and its power effect on the macro-context of social, political and cultural structure. It offers an empirically and historically applicable framework of concepts and methods to analyse its applicability to the new Pan-African social-political movement, to the politics of Pan-African identity as well as to ideologies and social imaginaries that structure Pan-Africanism.

The method is an open-end discussion on the Pan-African movement based on the framework of discourse analysis. According to Alexander:

(discourse) refers to modes of argument that are more consistently generalized and speculative than normal scientific discussion. ... Discourse, by contrast, is ratiocinative. It focuses on the process of reasoning rather than the results of immediate experience, and it becomes significant where there is no plain and evident truth. Discourse seeks persuasion through argument rather than prediction. Its persuasiveness is based on such qualities as logical coherence, expansiveness of scope, interpretive insight, value relevance, rhetorical force, beauty, and texture of argument. (Alexander, 1988: 80)

Discourse is often expressed in the form of theories. And theories are constructed to generate assumptions entailing empirical facts so as to legitimise and generalise discourses. Discourse theories intend to offer a particular type of explanations that are constructed to generate assumptions to legitimise certain political and ideological ideas and conceptualisations. Discourse theories are often established at both epistemological and ontological levels.

Discourse is related to the study of important concepts such as argument, identity, relation/relationship, conflict, power, dominance and inequality, the role of the state or state institutions, and the processes of societal, cultural and ideological reconstruction or reproduction. Discourse represents both knowledge and power.

Knowledge and power

Francis Bacon's "knowledge is power" is known to most people. However, the reverse principle, "power is knowledge", is equally true but less well known. Yes, knowledge does produce power. For centuries the Western world has apparently been both a powerful producer of ideas and knowledge and a dominant enforcer and promoter of a vast corpus of knowledge about nature, human beings, societies, the rest of the world as well as itself. Less discussed is the fact that power, whether physical and non-physical, decides and defines knowledge.

Power can decide whether a certain system of knowledge is universal, scientific, creative, economic, rational, or whether it is primitive, local, irrational and backward. Over the last several centuries, knowledge, based on assumptions or empiricism, has become so imposing and de-culturalised that the West has dominated the power to decide and define everything. Not only modern Western sciences

but also all its social sciences and humanities are so universalised that they become non-deniable and non-negotiable beyond any culture, creed, class and colour. It is commonly accepted that the driving force of motivation promoting continued progress of human beings is to be found in the self-propelled, inherent dynamism of the West. One of the West's key universalised explanation systems to make sense of the real world and life is economic rationality (the econocentric approach), with theological principles seen as guidelines for human behaviour and societal development.

Discourse theories: Econocentrism and Logocentrism¹

Econocentrism

In its specific form, econocentrism refers to a belief that the economic mode of production absolutely determines a society's social, political and intellectual life. It sees the primacy of economics as a point of departure in the production and reproduction of social life due to human "rationality". In other words, it is an ideology that views economics as the key factor that determines the course of human history.

Today, the econocentric world view dominates every part of our everyday life. All theories of rational choice — major theories in politics, sociology, international political economy, international relations, development studies — are constructed based on the premises of economic analysis or within the framework of economic thinking as their primary paradigm of interpretation (Li, 2001). Most concepts which we deal with daily, such as "culture", "ideology", "nationalism", "democracy" etc., are used to serve either as residuals or supplements to econocentric models. It is generally accepted that economic structure determines all aspects of human activities and social relations, and that

economic dominance leads to political and ideological leadership.

The central concern of the econocentric model is methodological individualism in which politics is perceived as a process that “objectifies private and individual wants and desires in the form of social needs and priorities according to distributive schedules and alternative possibilities” (Apter and Saich, 1994). It can only survive in the environment of private property, individual profit-seeking, innovation and entrepreneurship. The understanding of power under the econocentric systems of explanation (discourses) is associated with rationality — bargaining and compromising forms of politics in which interests prevail over principles and negotiations over confrontations.

Thus, it is obvious that Pan-Africanism can never be constructed under the norms and values of econocentrism. It will only bind Africa to the existing capitalism world system defined and run by imperial powers and institutions like the WTO, the World Bank and IMF. It also ties Africa to certain types of social relations and political systems promoting civil society and liberal democracy, which in return award an effective way for US-led Western powers to promote polyarchy in the Third World in order to complement neoliberal economic restructuring and facilitate the US global hegemonic role (Robinson, 1996).

Logocentrism

The word *logo* originated from the Greek language, meaning “word” and “speech”. In its general form, *logo* is short for *logogram* and *logotype*, which refers to “a name, symbol, or trademark designed for easy and definite recognition....”²

Logocentrism, philosophically, is a concept used in critical theory aiming to designate the way thought systems are organised around fundamental assumptions about reality and truth. It is a key term in the thinking of Jacques Derrida (1983, 1974, 1978) and the deconstruction theory. It argues that language in terms of explanations and interpretations is composed of elements which combine with each other to produce linguistic signs which are accorded meaning (logos and symbols). Since language and texts are always tied to experience, the use of language contains perception, conceptualisation, power and position.

Logocentrism implies a process of deconstruction and reconstruction and its final aim is to reconstruct a world view, a new interpretation of the truth and reality in order to find alternative possibilities. It is a strategy applied to writing generally and to literature in particular, whereby systems of thought and concepts are dismantled in such a way as to expose the divisions which lie at the heart of meaning itself.

Politically, logocentrism can be applied to display an alternative view of the world where the search for other perspectives, for what is present, for what can be brought to light, for what can be signified, for the narrative structure of new explanations. Narratives can become the new totalising logos, which, in return, gathers multiple narratives for practical purposes.

Hence, political power may be generated through *logo* (language and symbol), i.e. through both power *behind* discourse and power *in* discourse. It is concerned less with available choices, but with *projections* on the basis of some convincing definition of necessity that specifies its own rules and theoretical principles and its own logic (Apter

and Saich, 1994). Its central goal is to reestablish social order based on a redefined and projected equity. It looks into the conscious part of human beings and emphasises learning and education as the key to power, and knowledge and wisdom as a form of truth. Power is identified with logos (discourses), with proto-religious characteristics intertwined in a secular theory of politics (Apter and Saich, 1994).

The logocentric strength of such an emphasis on political discourse and symbolic capital is that it can unleash potential energy to create a political community under conditions of virtual chaos and disintegration. The construction of alternative discourses can transcend randomness and create a logic of order so that the condition of disorder itself becomes the condition of transition and even transformation. The logocentric discourse approach cultivates a common interpretation of shared history and experiences. It offers people the idea of liberation and transformation in order to think a way out of their current predicaments, no matter how hopeless these seem to be. By reinterpretation it attempts to resolve the contradictions of historical legacy in their own favour in order to pave the way for great economic, social and cultural transformations

Logocentricism and the Chinese Revolution

The Chinese logocentricism explains the way Maoism and the Chinese Revolution emerged, developed and succeeded. The dynamic strength of logocentricism in the context of the Chinese revolution lies in its effort to generate power through an *inversionary discourse* (inverting the econocentric discourse and social order) based on its own language of conviction, together with ideological, ethnic, linguistic strands. The Chinese logocentricism can be analysed as follows:

- 1) *To change people's world view through reinterpretation of history and narrative reconstruction of reality in order to think one's way out of current predicaments.*

The Maoist Marxism related China's underdevelopment to the outcome of a historical process caused by the Western colonial-imperialist expansion rather than to the "stage of development" by the modernisation school or to the consequences of a specific mode of production caused by cultural barriers.³ In the light of this view, underdevelopment is not an inborn characteristic of pre-industrial societies but a consequence of a specific historical process. It argues that even though imperialist penetration did bring elements of modern economy to China, the impact was geographically confined and sectorally skewed to serve foreign interest (Esherick as quoted in White, 1982:114).

After numerous failures in resisting Western imperialist challenges since the Sino-British Opium War in the 1840s, Confucianism as a state ideology and as ethical and political traditions obviously proved to have lost its viability during a time when China urgently needed a new analytical framework. Marxism and especially Lenin's theory of capitalist imperialism provided Chinese intellectuals with a partial theoretical framework as well as a psychological answer to their difficulties in finding the proper explanations and theories for the failures of traditional Chinese culture and for the humiliation suffered at the hands of the West (Peck, 1975: 73).

At the time when Confucianism failed to function as a state ideology, Marxism-Leninism made the Chinese intellectuals

more open-minded and internationally-oriented in conceptualising and analysing the world from different perspectives. China, as they saw, was no longer an isolated center of the globe surrounded by barbarians, but a part of the world full of different forces and ideas. The Chinese view on its role in international affairs had changed from regarding China as the center of the world and universal authority to seeing its problems as part of the world's problems and the Chinese revolution as relevant to the outside world. The attraction of Marxism-Leninism to the Chinese was that, as Kapur observed:

It was an effective ploy to criticize the West from a Western point of view; b) it gave the Chinese a new methodological framework to understand their own past and foresee the contours of their future; c) it offered a conceptualized view of international reality. Lastly, it amply proved its anti-imperialist credentials-an important source of attraction-after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution when the Soviet leaders denounced imperialism, unilaterally abolishing unequal treaties and relinquishing many privileges of tsarist Russia including extraterritoriality as well as their share of Boxer indemnities. (1987:3)

- 2) *To unite people based on collective individualism and a social, political and economic divide.*

It persuaded people to associate their private narratives and personal interpretations to the collectivity. It called for individual contribution but emphasised collective consequences. Such a strategy was to analyse society

through the lens of a politic-economic and sociocultural *divide* (class divisions), which perceives human morality and consciousness in close relation to the superstructure of society. In a society in which people (human beings) are divided into different classes, all men possess certain class interests and relations. All realms relating to human beings, such as value, rights, dignity, liberty, freedom, love and hatred, humanity and inhumanity, etc., can only be correctly understood and explained through concrete historical and class analysis (Chen, 1984: 41-44). It persuades people to think in this way that all political conflicts can be interpreted in terms of this *divide*. Its power is established when the majority of members of all social strata interpret politics and participate struggle in terms of this divide.

The failure of Sun Yat-sen's Republic Revolution and the destruction of the First World War together with Japanese imperialist intention destroyed Chinese admiration for the West and Japan. So, if both Western constitutional monarchy and republicanism, as well as Japanese militarist culture could not be imitated as alternatives to save China, then what else could be an option? Early Chinese Marxists Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu argued that with or without a strong state the establishment of Chinese capitalism would eventually become the agent of Western capitalism and would not solve China's poverty and backwardness. The most forceful and comprehensive argument was put forward by Li:

.... although China itself has not yet undergone a process of capitalist economic development such as occurred in Europe, America, and Japan, the

common people (of China) still indirectly suffer from capitalist economic oppression in a way that is even more bitter than the direct capitalist oppression suffered by the working class of the various (capitalist) nations....

If we look again at the international position of China today, (we see) that other nations have already passed from free competition to the necessary socialist-cooperative position, while we are still juveniles; others have walked a thousand li, while we are still taking the first step... I fear that we will be unable to succeed unless we take double steps and unite into a socially cooperative organization. Therefore, if we want to develop industry in China, we must organize a government made up purely of producers in order to eliminate the exploiting classes within the country, to resist world capitalism, and to follow (the path of) industrialization organized upon a socialist basis. (Li as quoted in Kung, 1975: 259)

Li's argument identified China as a "proletarian nation" although it lacked a strong proletarian working class. He associated the potential of a Chinese proletarian revolution with the worldwide proletarian movement against international capitalism and imperialism. His far-reaching and insightful analytical worldview paved the way for the establishment of a populist tradition within the Chinese Communist Party, which was further developed by his disciple, Mao Zedong.

Armed with an inversionary discourse based on the conceptual power of class divisions, the Chinese Communist Party transformed the Chinese people from

being "a piece of blank paper"⁴ to become ideologically and politically conscious. Being a member of this inversionary revolution, one feels oneself becoming a member of decision-makers, an activist of social transformation, a master of his/her own fate, rather than an unconscious wanderer and a passive victim.

- 3) *To project a future based on structural transformations rather than evolutionary modifications.*

The immediate context of logocentrism is *conflict and chaos, war and revolution* (not reformism or evolutionism). It rejects what the current *reality or truth* is, and it intends to project what is to be realised. It attempts to constitute a new hegemonic project — a *moral economy*, not a political economy — which is inversionary in object and transformational in consequence.

Some scholars argued that even though imperialist penetration did bring elements of modern economy to China, the impact was geographically confined and sectorally skewed to serve foreign interests (Esherick as quoted in White, 1982: 114). The reason why China was able to industrialise more rapidly after 1949 was because the "Communist revolution decisively broke the ties that chained China to the imperialist system" (Mould as quoted in White, 1982:114). In other words, China went straight to the roots of its historical problems and made thorough structural transformations — unique experiments to skip over the stage of capitalism and to bring about a socialist transformation in terms of both society and consciousness of the people.

For almost a half century many Chinese truly felt China to be at a disadvantage

and some of them even were ready to admit its culture to be inferior to that of the West. But with the rise of Chinese Communism, with its logocentric mobilisation together with armed struggle, this view was changed. Many later believed that the Communist party represented the progressive side of contemporary human society. Although it was a fact that not all Chinese supported the Communist party (some were even strongly anti-Communist), they could not avoid being gratified by the achievements the Chinese Communist Party had made, and that China once again started to wield an undeniable influence in world affairs, which it had not enjoyed for many, many years. Some Chinese might wish that such a result had not come about under Communist leadership, but whatever they might prefer they could not but admire the result.

- 4) *To continue the logocentric tradition and bring "uninterrupted revolution" into postwar development.*

After the communist victory in 1949 and with the successful development of the socialist economy and transformation in the early 1950s, few people in the communist leadership thought of a continuous revolution through a prolonged period of contention and struggle. Revolution was mainly regarded as the act of seizing power, whereas the building of a new economy and society would require a different method. But the next three decades was to see the continuation of the Chinese revolution through a progression of several mass movements, such as the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s, and the Anti-rightist Movement and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Mao's theory of uninterrupted revolution was practiced in these

experiences and it maintained that even under socialist development the revolution must continue. Among those experiments, the Cultural Revolution was perhaps the most dramatic example of a nation in search of a development strategy that would avoid the shackles of the "old", resolve continuous contradictions and pursue an independent self-reliance development.

The meaning of "uninterrupted revolution" should be understood as referring to the preservation of some important logocentric continuities in Mao's thoughts and practices, as Selden summarises:

They include the fierce commitment to eliminate exploitation and property-based inequality; the emphasis on political mobilization, class struggle, and political and ideological transformation and their relationship to economic development; the proclivity to replace the market and the household economy by large cooperative, collective, and state institution; and the emphasis on self-reliance and the suspicion of intellectuals and technical personnel. (Selden, 1989: 54-55)

In order to fully utilise human beings as a decisive factor in the socialist development strategy Mao found it important to establish a world view in which one thinks of the part in the context of the whole. It aimed at broadening the concept of the "whole", which had been narrowed to imply loyalty to one's family, village, clan, to the consciousness of the class, the nation and beyond. The goal was to form in society a *Gong*-oriented (collective, public and broadened) outlook in contrast to the *Si*-oriented one (selfish, individual and narrow). Mao firmly believed that only collective socialism could save China and

build a strong nation, and in order to adopt such a world view one needed an uncompromisingly ethical and moralistic revolution. He very often referred to the Cultural Revolution as a movement to establish the moral foundation of socialism — collectivity, which was advocated not only in terms of public ownership as a socialist ideology but also in terms of devotion and unselfishness in the behavioral sense. *Gong* implied that socialist economic development was a process based on collective effort rather than based on *Si*, individualistic self-oriented motivation. Hence, one of his purposes in launching the Cultural Revolution was aimed at eliminating the consciousness and motivation of the old semi-capitalist society and establishing a just socialist consciousness and motivation in conformity with the new socialist economic base. It was an attempt to substitute egotistical motives (*Si*) with moral impulses (*Gong*) as incentives to increase production and development. The wage policy attempting to bridge income differences at that time reflected such incentives. In urban industries, wage differences were under control and encouraged to reduce, whereas in the people's communes, income through allotting working points was based not only on the individual physical contribution to production, but also on the level of his/her political consciousness and socialist devotion.

Implications for Pan-Africanism: the need for logocentrism

The above discussion of the Chinese Revolution is aimed not at applying the same process to various global and regional Pan-African movements. Rather, it attempts to inquire whether some of its logocentric powers can be generated in the Pan-African movements. If Pan-Africanism is to be seen as, first of all, a transformative political project, the most important element, as shown

by the success of the Chinese Revolution, is how to dismantle the structural and ideological “hegemony” in the domestic and international system and especially to overcome the dominant discourses of contemporary mythology. The effectiveness of the Chinese Revolution was its devotion to inventing a nationwide logo — common concepts, metaphors, ideologies, narratives and myths.

For Pan-Africanism to achieve a similar objective, the construction of an overriding identity of a united and emancipated Africa is the first step in such an ambitious hegemonic project. For example, a logocentric Pan-Africanism can be generated under the common glorious history of the most ancient civilisation in the world as well as the collective historical and social experiences as an oppressed people since 1500. The success of the Pan-African movement depends not only on strategic methods but also on the unity of a broad ontology.

A shared logo

Pan-African logocentrism can conceptually be identified as a project of constructing shared logos. First, a shared logo refers to a unified “African” metaphysics without which it is not possible to achieve a united front and to sustain the spirit of solidarity. It also refers to a common narrative which covers everyone who shares the African continent including those whose ancestors had left the continent in the enforced exile of the slave trade. As one scholar rightly points out:

A shared African value and vision worthy enough to shape, mediate and put in place effective mechanisms for resolving intractable conflicts and stimulate and inspire the capabilities of citizens and communities is necessary in order to achieve harmony

consistent with a shared conception of an African identity. (Mammo, 2001: 30)

There will continue to be ideological and intellectual crises in the African world until Africans understand Pan-Africanism, its value and benefits, and apply it to their many problems. The flaws of the econocentric and polyarchic approaches to Pan-Africanism is to pluralise and individualise the understanding of Africa and its problems.

A shared history

A shared logo means the common colonial history: the disruption of natural processes of nation-state and class formation; the deformation, distortion, and disarticulation of the native African ethnical and social formations; the imposition of capitalist social relations — production and accumulation patterns; the imposition of alien tastes and values; and the incorporation of Africa into a metropolitan dominated and controlled global capitalist order. These experiences require an ideological response and political will to challenge the established econocentric discourse on the development of underdevelopment of Africa. This is where the African independence movement was betrayed: the failure to fundamentally challenge imperialism, and reconstruct an African logo — the socio-political and economic landscape to reflect popular realities and aspirations, and this is where the Chinese Revolution fundamentally succeeded. Political decolonisation did not automatically include the decolonisation of cultural and ideological domination and did not unconsciously generate Africa's own logo of identity — a fundamental basis for real self-determination.

The historical relationship between Africa and the rest of the world especially the West is very unequal: people from Africa going to the rest of the world are slaves, conscripts, maids,

servants, attendants, soldiers, cheap labourers, refugees, students, skilled Africans fueling the brain drain, some as migrants in search of new opportunities.

Figure: The historical relationship between Africa and the world (especially the Western world)



The rest of world's people coming to Africa are "explorers", missionaries, slave traders and raiders, imperial "civilisers", aid workers, humanitarian relief workers, investors, project contractors, consultants, settlers, tourists etc. It is important for all Africans to remember that this historical narrative is a *common* rather than an individual legacy.

The above shared historical heritage can be a valuable source for the promotion of Pan-Africanism. A "cultural Africa" and a "continental Africa"⁵ can be logos for broad identity and unity. As Mammo sharply points out,

The key to a theory of Pan-Africanism is to forge a shared value and vision worthy enough to shape, mediate and put in place effective mechanisms for resolving intractable conflicts and stimulate and inspire the capabilities of citizens and communities in order to achieve harmony consistent with a shared conception of an African identity. A shared conception of an African identity should be a universal value which is not

detained by partial interests, cultural particularisms, state-nationisms, ethnic primordial loyalties, racial classifications and other desultory practices, capable of commanding moral and political authority, much like Christ, Mohammed and Buddha commanded religious authority. (Mammo, 2000:23)

In the context of modern China, the Chinese logo embedded in the century-long experiences of humiliation brought by Western imperialism has been one of the key elements which have kept China from disintegration. Today, Hong Kong and Macao have been handed over to China, and despite the unwillingness of the Taiwan regime to reunite with Mainland China, it feels powerless to revoke the "one China" concept, that is the "Chinese nation" and "cultural China".

Conclusion

The reason why China was able to industrialise more rapidly and to become a global power after 1949 was that the Communist revolution "decisively broke the ties that chained China to the imperialist system" (Mould in White, 1982: 114) and also broke a variety of complicated domestic confinements, such as localism, provincialism and warlordism. A new and efficient take-off could only be realised by cutting the roots of these social diseases and re-establishing an independent social, political, economic and cultural foundation.

Many people tried to study the history of the Chinese Revolution in a non-logocentric approach, but they all ended up with a dilemma. As Dirlik describes it, "students of Chinese Communism in the West, the majority of whom do not share a similar conviction in Marxism's truths, have nevertheless found in China's circumstances

variegated reasons for radicals' attraction to Marxism and consequently turning to Communist politics, as the only means to resolve the problems of Chinese society" (Dirlik, 1989: 255). Therefore, to understand the transformation of China one has to understand the nature of the Chinese communist revolution and its entire discourse.

Seen from some lessons of the Chinese Revolution, it is argued here that in order to transform the idea of Pan-Africanism into a reality, a second wave of decolonisation is a must. In first wave of decolonisation, most African states stood up and achieved political independence. However, the very questions can be addressed directly to challenge the fundamental nature of "African states": are African states African? Are African states states? These questions imply that Africa has not fully achieved real "independence". It needs further decolonisation in order to build such a hegemonic project that represents a real independent Africa.

Gramsci's "war of position"¹ is believed to be a decisive strategy to the success of Pan-Africanism. Although Africa consists of vast differences in culture, language, religion and race, and despite the fact that race, nation and metaphysics do not necessarily enforce an identity, Africa can still choose, on the basis of historical experiences, and political and economic realities, what is important for Africans both now and in the future. The triumph of Pan-Africanism, the only way Africans can survive the foreign onslaught and live as a truly liberated people, will come out of the sweat and blood of the African people themselves.

NOTES

1. See Apter and Saich (1994).
2. Source: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition.
3. Friedrich Hegel, in comparing it with Western consciousness of the world which created revolutionary history, placed China in the "childhood" of history. Even Karl Marx, whose theories and insights inspired the Chinese Revolution, described China as a society "vegetating in the teeth of time", and discovered in the Great Wall of China a metaphor for the universal resistance of non-European societies to change. See Dirlik and Meisner (1989:17).
4. Max Weber also considered Chinese culture (Confucianism) and social patterns (family relations) as structural barriers to the rise of capitalism. See Weber [1904] (1976).
5. This is part of Mao's understanding of power in which ignorance and illiteracy can be a source of power. It also means that poverty and underdevelopment can be a driving force for societal transformation.
6. "Cultural Africa" constitutes all Africans including those in the Diaspora outside the continent. "Continental Africa" includes those settled in Africa from various parts of the world, despite their origins.
7. "War of position" refers to the struggle to receive broad unification of various social forces and groups under the general consent of a political ideology (Gramsci, 1971).

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Commentary on War and Warlordism in Africa: The Role Of Western Democracies In Fuelling Africa's Wars & Warlordism

Claudia Anthony

Some scholars perceive conflict as a means of co-operation and a chance whereby problems could be solved in a constructive way.

This has not proved the case in Africa's warlordism politics. Though warlords claim their armed "struggles" are all about making better the lives of their compatriots, their primary goal has frequently demonstrated quite the opposite.

They promise to provide the basics of life — indiscriminate access to health care, universal education, proper drinking water, better roads and infrastructure, a sound legal system, justice and a secure income. Invariably, the infrastructure for these services has been left to dilapidate by deceitful people full of greed, who lack the sense of foresight, maintenance and continuity; and who call themselves politicians and policy makers.

It is against the backdrop of such an environment that most disadvantaged youths answer the "take up arms" call by Africa's warlords. In the process, the youth become immersed in the defence of their personal right to life and opportunities, despite the consequences. This is a consequence sustained by the economic logic of unprecedented, shocking violence and banditry.

After examining 47 civil wars between 1960 and 1999, a 2000 World Bank Report authored by the Director of the Economic Department suggested that civil conflicts are more often caused by rebel groups competing with governments for resources rather than political, ethnic or other reasons.

The World Bank Report, *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for*

Policy, showed that countries which earn about a quarter of their GDP from the export of raw materials face a far higher likelihood of civil war than countries with more diversified economies. It also showed that rebel groups loot primarily commodities in order to remain viable.

One could disagree to agree that, this in turn, allows them to maintain their fighting forces and keep their rebellion alive.

Thus, the emergence of warlordism has in no way improved the living conditions of the citizens of those countries waging hate and revenge (as in the case of Sierra Leone), civil (formerly, Liberia), religious (pacified in Nigeria) or ethnic cleansing (Burundi) wars.

On the contrary, citizens of distant countries have continued to benefit from war and warlordism. This has been in the form of a strengthened economy, better-paid jobs, employment creation and improved standards of living, through the manufacture and sales of arms and ammunition by arms magnates and the inflow of invaluable raw materials, into Western countries such as Switzerland that neither has nor mines, or such raw materials, but exports diamonds, whether conducted on individual (profit-seeking security firms) or national interest.

The United Nations estimates that up to 60 percent of the 500 million small weapons around the world are used in 46 of the 49 conflicts raging around the world since 1990. This has translated into the deaths of four million people, most of them women and children.

What is clear is that these small arms are neither manufactured by African entrepreneurs, nor on the continent. This

makes a mockery of the Mali Moratorium on small arms.

The overwhelming majority of African countries are yet to establish, develop and manage their primary industries (and even their agrarian economies) — it could take several decades for such industries to attain competitive status in the world market. Even more so is the establishment of secondary industry, including Internet technology and modern weaponry in countries like Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which logically at least, is another half century or more away.

The historical record reveals that African warlords and the respective states they come from do not manufacture the deadly weapons used as catalyst for the continuing misery of millions of innocent children, women and other vulnerable people.

Nonetheless, warlords have not been short of supply of ammunition used to maim and kill the very people they claim they are fighting for and to redeem from the abyss of poverty.

After a two-week session of a United Nations conference on small arms that ended 20 July 2001, developing, war-affected and other countries succumbed to United States pressure, ending up with non-binding recommendations and a resolution that does little or nothing to address the arming of rebels by governments.

Despite a plan to curb the small arms traffic around the world, most countries of the global community accepted a watered-down version, filled with many compromises, in a bid to appease the United States' resistance to limiting small weapons sales.

From the very first day of the conference the atmosphere of inaction was felt across the board. The United States made it clear it would veto any plan that infringed on legal civilian ownership of weapons. The United States-based NGO Human Rights Watch accused the United States of exhibiting an isolationist outlook that put the powerful American gun-ownership lobby first.

The rapidly increasing incidences of armed violence are a direct consequence. The outbreak of civil conflict in Niger, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone during the past decade has increased the demand for light weapons.

Recent international relations have proved that most of these warlords have merely continued in the footsteps of politicians, by employing inciting slogans and agitation to gain support and influence for their personal greed and gain.

The rest of this commentary attempts a brief look at the experience of Sierra Leone, but also the DRC and Angola.

On 23 March 1991, a little-known former corporal in the Sierra Leone military, Foday Sankoh, declared himself the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and commenced a war in Bomaru in the Kailahun District, in the east of the country.

He claimed his war was to oust the then one-party dictatorship of the All People's Congress (APC) party and to provide the fundamental amenities that a God-endowed rich Sierra Leone should provide for her citizenry.

Barely a year later, in April 1992, a group of young soldiers staged a *coup d'état* that overthrew the APC and formed the National

Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) under the leadership of twenty-eight-year-old Captain Valentine Strasser.

The RUF did not end its war. The war raged on for a decade, leaving more than 75,000 dead, over half of the 4.5 million inhabitants either displaced or as refugees and hundreds amputated and maimed.

As "reward" for his war crimes, the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement appointed Sankoh as Chairman of a Commission for the Management of Strategic Mineral Resources (CMRRD) and conferred upon him the status of a vice-president, an agreement reached through intense pressure (on the Sierra Leone government) from US envoy the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

Jackson, in his Lomé Agreement, begged the question behind the rationale of the patchwork diplomacy of western countries, who label themselves as human rights advocates and democracy champions and protectionists

While the West offered high political offices to people accused of crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone — such as Sankoh and Major Johnny Paul Koroma, who was the AFRC junta boss — it simultaneously sent Yugoslav's Slobodan Milosovich to answer for war crimes in the Hague. It is this western-imposed style of impunity that equipped Koroma with the daring, insulting effrontery to refer to the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP) — which he headed — as a lame duck

Between Lomé and 8 May 2000, civil demonstrations that called on Sankoh to respect the Lomé Agreement which led to his arrest, the CMRRD never functioned. In fact, it never met as a body. Instead, Sankoh signed dozens of agreements with

international business firms and solicited financial favours from other entities in his own name, in the name of the Commission, and in the name of the RUF, according to business files found in his office after his arrest.¹

Diamond trade documents discovered in a search of his residence after his arrest portrayed an image of a two-faced figure, chasing financial opportunities for personal and political gain, outside of the governmental framework in which he was supposedly working.

He encouraged a wide variety of potential investors including the Integrated Group of Companies based in McLean, Virginia, from which he received 14 vehicles with the logo of the RUF Party painted on the side of each.

Even while the Lomé talks were still under way, another US-based, self-employed Belgian made contact with the RUF in Togo, with which the former's US-based Trading & Investment Company, recalled an arrangement with Sankoh which would have given them authority to broker rights to all of Sierra Leone's diamond and gold resources for a ten-year period.

Despite the fact that there was no official source of income, the warlord controlled a fleet of expensive vehicles, satellite telephones and ostentatious wealth.

In 1999, British imports of rough unsorted diamonds (code 71021000) totalled £107 million (down from £347 million in 1998). Of this, Switzerland was recorded as the "country of origin" for 41 per cent or £44.2 million, despite the fact that Switzerland is a non-producer of diamonds.

The same situation is evident in the case of The Gambia, which produces no diamonds, but in recent years has become a diamond-exporting nation. In 1998, Belgium recorded imports from The Gambia of 449,000 carats valued at \$78.3 million, an average value of \$174 per carat. In diamond trade circles, The Gambia is referred to as Mini-Antwerp.

In the process of double-dealing, personal gains and greed, the RUF established what is referred to as the RUF Mining Ltd. This is truly what warlordism is really all about.

The end of the Cold War brought unemployment and unmasked the socio-economic status of the countries behind the "Iron Curtain", most of whom, employing the highest degree of hypocrisy (like their Western counterparts) — and double-dealing like the warlords themselves — turned to their sales of massive stockpiles of military hardware to bolster their economies.

For instance, the Ukrainian *Duma* (Parliament) on 14 December 2000, overwhelmingly approved President Leonid Kuchma's proposal to send an 800 troop-contribution to the United Nations military mission in Sierra Leone.²

Seven days later, through her representative Sergei Lavrov, the Ukraine blocked the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) from taking any action on recommendations put forward by the UNSC-August 2000-appointed panel of international experts (who came from diverse fields including weapons, law enforcement and diamonds), linking the conflict diamond trade in Sierra Leone to Liberia, President Charles Taylor and other parties including the Ukraine herself, of supplying arms to Sierra Leone.

This development did not go down well with members of the UNSC Sanctions Committee for Sierra Leone, whose Bangladeshi Chair, Anwarul Chowdhury, blasted the suppression of the Report as disappointing and unhelpful in terms of transparency. This is not simply a question of the governments of Liberia and Burkina Faso directly contributing to a human rights catastrophe in Sierra Leone by using international criminal networks with tentacles in other African countries. It is also a tragic failure by powerful governments such as those of Belgium, Switzerland and the United Kingdom to set up proper regulatory systems to control arms brokers in rough diamonds.³

In March 1999 Human Rights Watch alleged that 68 tonnes of weapons flown from Ukraine to Burkina Faso were diverted to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The shipment apparently included Kalashnikov assault rifles, machine guns and rocket-propelled guns.

In the first quarter of 2001, the Kharzakh Customs Administration began an investigation into the attempt to export to Sierra Leone, two Mi-8T military helicopters.⁴

According to reports, Customs certifications indicated the vessels were bound for Russia. However, Russian Customs Authority presented another document, which certified that the helicopters were bound for Sierra Leone, in transit through Russia. The helicopters were sold to a non-existent American business enterprise based in Russia, "named" the United States International Development Company, as collateral for unredeemed credit, the Turan Alem Bank export certificates showed.

The East European blood diamonds cartel plays no less a role in stimulating and maintaining the socio-economic and political

tornado in the DRC, Sierra Leone, Angola and Liberia. At the centre of the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) investigations into the diamonds-for-arms trade is a thirty-three-year-old former *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti* (Committee for State Security — KGB) officer (interpreter and pilot), Victor Anatolyvich Bout, who is currently based in the United Arab Emirates and has seven passports with names including Vadim Aminov.

In contravention to UNSC arms embargo, he is believed to have carried out no less than 38 diamonds-for-weapons transactions within the Southern African region, including deals with Angola's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels, with supplies of Ukrainian, Moldovian and Bulgarian-made ground-to-air-missiles (SAM), 122mm artillery weapons and other sophisticated military hardware.

Bout dismissed the report as untrue in an interview with Russia's *Nezavisimoe Televidenye* (Independent TV — NTV),⁵ claiming that third parties such as his business rivals in the Southern Africa region were behind the unfounded findings, which he considered a big plot to destabilise his business interests. Far from the situation on the ground, he claimed his company deals in Russian technology, but does not include weapons.

Apart from Liberia and the Ukraine, other countries implicated in Sierra Leone's diamonds-for-weapons trade included Russia, The Gambia, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa.

Diamond trading in Angola, Sierra Leone, and the DRC has come under international criticism as rebel movements from these countries have been financing their forces

through the sale of blood diamonds, which account for almost 4% of the world diamond trade.

A UN panel dealing with sanctions against Angola issued an addendum in 2001 that concluded that although the attitude of impunity may have lessened, the intentions of sanctions busters to continue to derive profit from war remains firmly intact.⁶

Monitoring agencies indicated that the level of UNITA's diamond output for 1999 and 2000 could not be estimated, but was almost certainly larger than US \$150 million in 1999. The question is not whether UNITA had

access to diamonds, but how easily it moved them to markets. A strategy of mining and stockpiling high-value stones ensured that UNITA could always find buyers.

Africans have always dreamt and spoken about unity in the form of a selfless, genuinely concerted effort towards righting the wrongs of the past.

Egoism and inaction overshadow this goal. However, a united voice could be achieved only when Africans, this time not in theory but in practice, face the truth.

Notes

¹ UN Panel of Experts Report on Diamonds and Arms in Sierra Leone, December 2000.

² Radio Ukraina, 14 December 2000.

³ Amnesty International Press Release, December 2000 (response to the UN Report).

⁴ Khabar TV, 9 January 2001.

⁵ *Zerkalo Nedeli*, (Mirror of the Week), February 2001.

⁶ IRIN, June 2001.

Recollections of Zimbabwe in the 1960s

Judith Amanthis

From January 1959 to January 1967, I lived in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). Before we left England, I was told our family was going to live in a multiracial country in Africa, part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.¹ Very quickly I learned that other countries throughout the region, including South Africa, were pretty much the same, apart from the slightly eccentric Botswana (Bechuanaland): in them all Africans were poor and subhuman. Even those less poor than others were still subhuman.

Learning racism

On arrival in Rhodesia at the age of ten, my conditioning into racial segregation and racism went smoothly. Only white people, apart from servants in shacks, lived in the beautiful suburbs of Salisbury, and only Africans lived in the townships: the two names I knew were Highfield² and Harare³. It was unimaginable that a young white girl should go there: it was more than just illegal. I didn't want to, anyway, because of the bad-smelling bodies, dirt, ragged clothes with no colour left, bad-tasting food, no real streets, darkness and one black cooking pot inside shacks, no beds or chairs, no water, no oven. Nothing had a symmetrical shape or polished

surface. When Africans of the same sex shook hands, their hands kept touching too long. Hardly any of them wore shoes. Their music wasn't played on proper instruments but on thin small penny whistles or little wooden blocks fixed up with strips of metal which the player held in his palm, twanging randomly, on and on. This was how Africans necessarily were. They weren't intelligent enough to be otherwise. A white person couldn't possibly have these attributes, especially the smell and eating nothing but *sadza* (Shona for maize porridge).

White terror

Early in 1960, I was sitting in a quince tree in our garden in what's still a mostly white, entirely wealthy, suburb of Harare. I was going over in my mind what I'd heard about the Congo and Kenya, thrilled by the horror. Belgian nuns in the Congo were getting massacred, the survivors fleeing south to Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). I imagined severed heads and limbs, black robes fluttering. Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN peacekeeping envoy to the Congo, had died in a plane crash.⁴ There was war in Katanga, in which Africans were butchering each other as well as any white people around, including

male missionaries. These events were the result of the Belgian colonists' incompetence.⁵ At the same time, there was Kenya. A girl at school⁶ who used to live in Kenya whispered after dark that the hairs on Kenyatta's elephant tail whisk carried poison and witchcraft: "It drives them all mad, Mau Mau. They creep around at night in dirty animal skins murdering people and they get in through bedroom windows as well." All white people had metal bars over their ground-floor windows. Most windows were ground-floor because their houses were spread along the ground rather than piled one storey on top of another.⁷

White liberals

There were, however, brave African nationalists in Rhodesia: Ndabaningi Sithole, Nkomo, Samkange and Chinamano, names I associated with Gonakanzingwa,⁸ a prison camp in the south of the country surrounded by barbed wire and without shady trees. As far as I knew, I'd never seen these men; there was no TV. White liberals like my parents, true blue Tories in their native environment and believers in the British method of neocolonisation, talked to Africans other than their servants and workers. Every so often African couples whose names I didn't take in came to dinner at our house, embarrassing partly because their clothes appeared to creak with their own embarrassment, and what did the servants (only African) think?⁹ My (only white) friends' parents didn't behave in this way. We children were forbidden to call Africans "munts",¹⁰ a term of casual abuse — as in, "A couple of munts just walked past our gate," or "Hey you munt, pick up my napkin," — and I made sure I didn't speak with a Rhodesian accent, rooted via South Africa in Afrikaans. I also heard about the multiracial Capricorn Club,¹¹ which was next door to the National Gallery, a swathe of swinging London architecture in town. Here the

multiracial society was discussed amongst members, including Garfield Todd.¹² To no avail. In 1962, the Rhodesian Front came to power, beating the just about multi-racial United Federal Party.¹³ Rhodesian Front people were more likely to be Afrikaners, that is, stupid and inelegant, or at least with Afrikaners' impolite attitude to Africans. They were against majority rule and therefore bad. In this way I was early on impressed with the necessity of taking up moral positions.¹⁴

Collapse of British control

Roy Welensky, the UFP prime minister of the Federation, was fat in a loose spilling-over European¹⁵ kind of way, as opposed to the tight bulging African way, and an ex-railway worker, besides which his name showed he wasn't really British. These things accounted for his poor showing. Godfrey Huggins, UFP prime minister of Southern Rhodesia until 1953, and to a lesser extent Edgar Whitehead,¹⁶ were a different kettle of fish altogether, but now out of the picture. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland¹⁷ ended in 1963.

On the one hand, in northern Rhodesia, where the copper mines were, and in Nyasaland, Kaunda and Dr Hastings Banda were getting dangerously above themselves, the latter probably not a doctor at all because most Africans didn't understand the intricacies of titles and qualifications and were likely to cheat. Besides, witch doctors and superstition had to be combated. Further away, Nyerere, another communist, and Kenyatta, yet another communist as well as enflamer of primitive instincts, were doing just what Africans didn't do: acting independently of Europeans. Then in far-away Ghana, in a darker more tropical part of Africa, there was the hardly nameable because so appalling Nkrumah,¹⁸ a communist of the most virulent variety, and, equally

outside the natural order of things, a Pan-Africanist.

The names of these men hung over most white conversations like a *banga* (Shona for knife). Bouganvillea and passion flowers climbed the columns of a verandah where a director of a tobacco company plus wife, a mining company official or two plus wives, a district commissioner plus wife, drank their sundowners (cocktails). Those columns, which only two generations of African servants had been instructed to treat and retreat with pollutants against white ants' jaws and hornets' spit, were exposed: wooden, vulnerable to fire,¹⁹ to the slash of a *banga*. But the uniforms²⁰ of the British South Africa Police somewhere beyond the high garden hedge were like shiny beige armour and their leather gun belts and knee boots glittered. I was frightened of the BSAP. A white officer had once bent over me in town and told me to get off the road and onto the pavement or else.

On the other hand there were also Ian Smith with his strong Rhodesian accent and funny eye which never made a convincing war wound, Denis Lardner-Burke the minister of justice, the terrible Law and Order Maintenance Act which became worse under the Rhodesian Front, and talk of a unilateral declaration of independence from Britain.

Life and racism as usual

At the time of the November 1964 referendum, when the majority of white people voted for UDI, I was about to be locked up as a boarder at school. My father gave up his white Salisbury medical practice for the bush, even though he'd been able to run a clinic in Harare (township) and stand as a medical witness in court against police torture. We went to live on an Anglican medical mission. Now I often passed women on the path leading by the church and the

hospital to Ngomo, a mountain of granite boulders scored with black shadows. They weren't servants, they didn't give way to me, and they didn't look me in the eye although they always offered greetings. I walked on by huts with ragged grass roofs and black holes for doors, a few charred sticks outside for ovens. For some time, Jesus had seemed a bit off colour when he'd said, "Unto every one that hath shall be given", which I couldn't work out if he meant description or prescription. Nonetheless I passed a lot of time at school on my knees in front of the communion altar, not out of guilt but to escape. That Africans should have to pay for education when white people got it free was clearly bad, as was the state of *pikininis*²¹ running noses crawling with flies, their little stomachs bulging and their hair thin and orange because of kwashiorkor (starvation). As well as the absolute segregation, the racism and inverted prurience of most teachers and girls at school I imbibed every day — African women had large bottoms so they could carry their babies on their backs, Othello (my A level text) wasn't black and didn't have sex with Desdemona, African women were girls and men were boys, chiefs lolling around in the circle of dust between their huts fattened up their many wives on elephants' milk, the mealie-growing Shona people were too nice to cause trouble, unlike the Ndebele, who were related to the Zulus — came up against the height and barrier of the black servant/white settler relationship. When I went to the door of the school kitchen to beg for some cheese because I'd been starving myself over my A level texts, the man who was called the head kitchen boy looked down over his white uniform in silence, his bare feet underneath, and in his eyes was what? Hatred? Irony? Compassion? Calculation?

UDI

On 11 November 1965, classes stopped and the deputy headmistress summoned the school into the gym. She was bow legged, the geography teacher, known to be strict, and an Ian Smith sympathiser. He had, she said, declared UDI. There would be sanctions, but we must be resilient. The headmistress, an Ian Smith despiser like me and fan of early romantic Wordsworth without letting on who Toussaint L'Ouverture was, was nowhere to be seen. I went to listen to the radio in my sixth-form bedroom. Harold Wilson, the British prime minister, was on, talking about sanctions and not sending British troops against the "rebels". Smith then came on talking about kith and kin²² and having been a Battle of Britain Royal Airforce pilot in the Second World War. He had already declared a state of emergency, which touched white people not at all. During the next eighteen months, negotiations, including the HMS Tiger talks, showed clearly the British government weren't going to do anything.

As far as I was concerned, there were now three questions — would the British examining board mark my A level papers, would the neither brown nor white sanctions-busting sugar taste alright, and would Chief Tangwena win the fight against his people's eviction off their land? The first question was quickly resolved: yes. So Smith and the British government weren't such enemies after all. The second question was part of living on the mission, where my mother and her servant Samuel boiled our drinking water and milk, we shared the bath water between three and then siphoned it out of the window onto the garden, the small pink juicy bananas — "ladies' fingers" by name, white ladies — came from the trees by the kitchen door, the telephone was on a party line, the roof of our house was corrugated iron and beloved of geckoes and hornets, the walls were

asymmetrical, the lights went out at eight in the evening, no other white teenagers lived nearby, and the student nurses were an African crowd who sang songs and drank drinks I couldn't possibly enjoy, let alone take to. In other words, sanctions were a joke, and manufacturing — food processing, clothes, household goods like matches and soap — flourished. Rhodesian corn flakes were only slightly more leathery than Kellogs. Oil, money, agricultural and industrial plant, came from the US, West Germany and, extraordinarily, Britain, all via South Africa. Tobacco, which everyone except my parents smoked, was stockpiled. But I knew that underneath the enthusiastic sanctions busting, ostensibly in defiance of the British government, was the shoring up of defences against the actual threat — Africans.

The third question wasn't answered before I left for England. The BSAP were trying to evict Chief Rekayi Tangwena and his people off the hills and valleys in Manyikaland (*nyika*, Shona for country, land, the world) near where we lived. They were to be deported to a barren mountain behind mile upon mile of barbed wire where no-one else went.²³ This was connected to the way the BSAP and the Rhodesian army now strolled around everywhere, obviously in charge, and to the gun-toting fear of most white people. Tangwena²⁴ must be a brave man, since the Africans I saw in the countryside were thin, and what would they fight the BSAP and the army with? Their *badzas*? (*Badza*, Shona for hoe, plural *mapadza*.) I did, however, sense the anger inside the doors of the huts, in the chests of the women on the path, of the man who gave me food. But underneath these questions lay another: were Africans clever enough to beat these Europeans? In January 1967, I left.

My experience, which began in Zimbabwe, of

Africans as implacable fighters against the system has accompanied cleaning out the question's racist presupposition. I therefore want to be on Africans' side, on the continent and in the diaspora, but have never been able to trust organisations created by white progressives to fight racism, drop the debt, start from the bottom up or make international links. Despite the illusion of national independence as long as neo-colonialism exists, nothing can persuade me, not even Mugabe calling in the IMF in 1983, that the struggle which preceded 1980 and political

independence from the white settler regime weren't gains for the movement against imperialism and for Pan-African liberation. Perhaps my knowledge that any human being can change, like I did, makes me more optimistic than reality warrants. So an appropriate answer to that last question has been to take on political work, as far as I'm able and required, in an organisation led by Africans and shaped by the struggle against neo-colonialism, while the world remains as racist, racialised and soaked in injustice as Zimbabwe ever has been.

NOTES

1. The Southern Rhodesian white regime had been “self-governing” and independent from Britain in all but name since 1923.
2. Highfield was a particular target of police and military attack. Its history of political resistance continues today.
3. As if in 1994 Johannesburg had been renamed Soweto. Pass laws, the Land Apportionment Act, and the Native Accommodation and Registration Act all imprisoned Africans within the most infertile and unhealthy areas, both rural and urban, of their own land. As in South Africa at the time, there were “indecent” laws, except that in Rhodesia the white (male) regime had in 1906 legislated only against sex between black men and white women, imprisonment for the former, hard labour for the latter. Hence, rape of black women by white men was legitimised, but rape of white women by black men was punishable by hanging. White women could always cry rape if their male black servants refused them sex, or if they were charged with sex with a black man.
4. No-one mentioned Lumumba.
5. The Portuguese colonists were completely beyond the pale. You only had to drive over the border near Umtali (Mutare) for your prawns in piri piri sauce in a Vila Pery (Chimoio) restaurant to see how inefficient and generally slummy Mozambique was. That is, rural poverty was visible at the roadside, not shoved away behind white people's gardens and farms. The settler regime in Zimbabwe had also enforced a relatively high degree of industrialisation on the people, as well as the theft of their land.
6. All white girls except for the two Patels and Jackie Khama, the coloured (mixed race) daughter of the scandalous marriage between Seretse Khama, king of Bechuanaland, and an English woman.
7. They had as much land as they could steal, both in cities and farming areas.
8. After 1964 there were two major prison camps: Gonakandzingwa in the south east for ZAPU leaders, including Nkomo, and Sikombela in the north for ZANU, including Mugabe. Other leaders, such as Chikerama and Chitepo, went into exile, the latter to direct ZANU's armed struggle.
9. The use of servants by the elite didn't end at independence. They still live in shacks at the bottom of beautiful suburban gardens, banana groves screening their ugliness from bedroom window view.
10. Derived from *munhu*, with the *u* pronounced as in “put”, the Shona word for person, human being.
11. The Capricorn Club was founded in the 1955 by a white man who left Kenya at the prospect of independence. African members, whom I didn't hear about, included Takawira and Chikerama. In the 1962 uprising after Edgar Whitehead banned ZAPU, militants attacked African policemen as sellouts. They called them “Thsombes” after the western-backed secessionist in Katanga, and “Capricorns” after the African members of the Capricorn Club.
12. Prime minister of Southern Rhodesia from 1953 to 1958, and then leader of the liberal Central African Party. Garfield Todd (one of less than a quarter of a million white people) had in 1956 authorised troops to tear gas a peaceful African meeting. A year later the ANC

was formed, led by Nkomo. By 1962 a couple of thousand Africans out of 4 million (now 11 million), were enfranchised on the basis of property.

13. Known as the "establishment" amongst white people. The following year Ian Smith deposed Winston Field — not tough enough against the British government — to become prime minister on a "no majority rule in my life time" ticket. I didn't know about the many African organisations — the African Teachers' Association, the City Youth League, the ANC, the National Democratic Party, the Zimbabwe National Party, the Pan-African Socialist Union — which successive governments banned and militants then revived, with the emergence of ZAPU in 1961 and ZANU in 1963. All African parties were banned by the RF in 1964 and leading figures like Edson Sithole, Mugabe and Nkomo started ten years of detention.
14. Moral positions which had little to do with the realities of who was dehumanising and exploiting who. Liberals tend to assume their arguments will have to convince no-one more sophisticated than a child. There is also in the European tradition an assumption that children can't understand the world: they're therefore kept in ignorance.
15. White people of British as opposed to Afrikaner descent used the term "European" to refer to themselves.
16. Godfrey Huggins, prime minister before Garfield Todd, was the main proponent of Rhodesia's version of apartheid. He advocated the parallel development of the races and referred to the African as the horse and the European as the rider. Edgar Whitehead, prime minister from 1958, failed to do British imperialism's job for it. He initiated the notorious Law and Order Maintenance Act after the 1960 uprising in the townships, authorised successive states of emergency in which in that year eleven people were killed, banned African organisations, notably the ANC in 1959, and detained African leaders. He also reinstated the 1906 "indecent" law (see footnote 3). He then lost the 1962 election on a manifesto of ending racial segregation of public swimming pools and majority rule in 15 years' time.
17. The white regime in Southern Rhodesia dominated it and took the profits from the Copper Belt. The smaller white populations in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland had agreed to the Federation in 1953 in the hope that independence would be staved off.
18. In 1963, at the collapse of the Federation, Nkrumah at the UN tried to block the transfer of the British-controlled Federal armed forces to the Rhodesian Front government, arguing presciently that the white minority might one day use them against independent African states. The British government vetoed the Ghanaian resolution. It is doubtful a Labour government would have done otherwise.
19. From August 1962, especially against white farmers, arson increased. In July 1962, the ZAPU leadership had decided to go underground and send young men out of the country to train in sabotage. In September 1962, Whitehead banned ZAPU.
20. The BSAP wore shorts, as did and do many white men. This seems to be based on a belief in the beauty of the European male calf. Cecil Rhodes's invasion of the land now known as Zimbabwe was based in the British Cape Colony, hence the name of the police force.
21. The word for children in the pidgin Shona — "Kitchen Kaffir" (sic) — spoken by some white people, mainly farmers and

their wives and children (who weren't *pikininis*).

22. I spent some time in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and found the majority of Protestants' views of Catholics and the British government almost identical to most Rhodesians' views of Africans and the British government. The militarisation of the country was also sickeningly familiar.
23. Tangwena's ancestors had come to an "understanding" with the original white invaders. In 1966 another white man decided he wanted the land. Tangwena fought in the courts initially. The following quotes about land crimes in Zimbabwe are from a white ex-district commissioner's report of 1959. "In most Reserves men with six or eight acres of sand soil can see with their own eyes across their own Reserve boundary-line thousands of acres of European farmland, mostly underdeveloped and often virtually unused. Very often the soil is better than that of the Reserve, and sometimes the change in soil-type coincides exactly with the boundary. Most European farms consist of thousands of acres." ... "The fact is indisputable, that when, before the advent of the Europeans, Africans had abundant land, the erosion they caused was negligible, and the soil maintained its fertility and structure. It is the coming of

the Europeans which has changed this and caused most of the soil erosion and soil exhaustion in the Reserves; there have been three stages, (i) by the Land Apportionment Act which limits the land of the African population, (ii) by the huge increase in the African population [under 500,000 at the end of the 19C], an increase which would not have occurred had there been no European occupation, and (iii) by the continuous cultivation policy which for nearly a generation has been encouraged by the Native Agriculture Department ..." ... "Spokesmen of the Southern Rhodesian government will readily admit that one aim of the Land Husbandry Act is to force "loafers" either to farm properly in the Reserve, or to go and work in European industry and agriculture, and also to stop the present practice of Africans alternating for different periods between town and country, between work and 'loafing in the Reserves.'" (Windrich, E. (1975) *The Rhodesian Problem*.) Nearly all the factual material in my footnotes comes from the CLR James Collection in the CLR James Library, Hackney Council, London. This library is to be closed down (2002) as a result of the racist neoliberal policies of the British government.

24. Tangwena is honoured as a hero killed in the Second Chimurenga.

Afrocentric Rectification of Terms: Excerpt from: What Slave Trade? And other Afrocentric reflections on the Race War

Chinweizu Chinweizu

Why rectification of terms?

The way reality is perceived and acted upon depends crucially on how it is packaged, on the framework within which it is presented, and on the concepts and terminology used in representing it. And this is not an innocuous matter. For example, to teach a child that an adder is a rope is to program him for fatal risk; for, if asked to pick up a rope, he may well pick up an adder from the ground and get bitten to death. Likewise, there is danger for a people who live in a dangerous world which has been described innocuously or neutrally or euphemistically by their enemies. They would then live in a world with a false sense of security, with a false consciousness of reality that could be dangerous to their survival. They would be like a child in a den of snakes who has been taught that snakes are ropes. Then take the case of the eagle which has been taught that it is a chicken, or the sheep which has been taught that it is a wolf. The former would leave its natural potential unrealised, while the latter would be devoured by the genuine wolves should it confidently

wander into their midst. Inappropriate descriptions are thus a great and practical danger, and should be rectified.

It has long been recognised, from as far back as the time of Confucius, that there is a general need for a periodic exercise in rectification of terms. That is because words are tools for mentally grasping reality; and like all tools, they get worn out with use. When words cease to mean what they say, or become too vague, they are like ill-fitting clothes or worn spanners. It is then necessary to mend or replace them.

Furthermore, in cases where there is a conflict of viewpoint or of interest, the terminology devised by one side is not likely to reflect the viewpoint or the experience of the other side.

The Black World's situation

In the particular case of the Black World, a Black World which is trapped in a global structure of institutions, ideas and terminologies set up by its white enemies, the

need for a rectification of terms is acute. And the rectification requires a redefinition or re-description of reality in our own terms, terms that convey our true experience and serve our interests. To illustrate the point consider the following definition of racism.

By racism we mean ethnocentric pride in one's own racial group and preference for the distinctive characteristics of that group; belief that these characteristics are fundamentally biological in nature and are thus transmitted to succeeding generations; strong negative feeling towards other groups who do not share these characteristics coupled with the thrust to discriminate against and exclude the out group from full participation in the life of the community.¹

By not touching on the historical role of racism as the system, theory and practice of white supremacist superstitions and on its imperialist history; by ignoring its role in programs of unprovoked political, economic and military aggression; by obscuring its malignant roots in a specific capitalist vocation of chattel slavery; by overlooking the psychotic violence of those possessed by its spirit; and by reducing it to ethnocentric social discrimination, this definition deftly equates racism with any ordinary ethnocentrism and xenophobia. But there is much more to racism than xenophobia and ethnocentrism. Reducing racism to ethnocentrism is like calling murder molestation. On this definition, if a mutilated Black, a grandson of chattel-slaves, should emerge partially roasted from a Ku Klux Klan lynching, and should declare that he hates whites and would have nothing to do with any whites, and would forever stick to the company of Blacks, and would work for the physical separation of black and white communities, he would be denounced as being a racist, indeed as being no less a racist than the Ku Klux clan attackers who barbecued

him alive! Such a definition of racism is clearly obscurantist and mischievous; it seems calculated to make everyone, its inventors and practitioners as well as their victims, equally racist. Furthermore, it fails to capture the Black World experience and interest.

Why an Afrocentric Rectification of Terms?

In the case of the Pan-African World, which is in profound conflict with a Pan-European World, which is addicted to oppressing and exploiting Africans, many of the terms employed by Europeans do not reflect the African experience of what they describe.

As we shall see, terms like "slave trade" and "colonialism" are not only Eurocentric; they are no more accurate in describing what happened than "molestation" would be in describing mass murder. In fact, they are insidiously hostile to our interests. What is at stake in retaining or rectifying such orthodox terminology is this: Which version of reality shall we work from, that imposed by our enemies or our own, that which serves the interests of our enemies or our own? Shall we be blinded by what, for us, would be false consciousness or act by the light of a correct consciousness?

If the African experience is to be correctly presented, particularly in historical works, there is a special need to rectify orthodox, Eurocentric terminology in ways that register the African experience or viewpoint. That is over and above whatever rectification of terms is made necessary by the usual wear and tear that usage inflicts on words.

An Afrocentric rectification of some key terms

We need to be quite clear and precise on what has been going on between the Pan-African World and the Pan-European World during the last six centuries. Imprecision and

euphemism can only add to our confusion, and confusion can only help to increase our already long line of disastrous defeats. With an eye to greater accuracy in terminology, we shall start by re-examining the three principal phases of the Black World's insertion into the Eurocentric Global Order (EGO), those conventionally called slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Do they describe phenomena from the Afrocentric perspective? If not, what terms should replace them? And as there is no collective term in conventional use for all three — even though some have taken to using “Holocaust” or “Black Holocaust” or “The Maafa” — what term would be appropriate? And is the term racism precise enough?

1. Slave Trade

When the era of the so-called Slave Trade is examined, what do we find? Its two main features were interminable wars and forced labour; and the targets of both were the Black Race; and the entire thing was organised by Whites of European stock, and they were its prime beneficiaries. It was a system of war and violence on four continents and on their interconnecting seas. This war system operated in three zones:

- (1) There was Africa, the war front, the zone of daily battles, skirmishes, raids, kidnappings and ambushes, which yielded war prisoners for carrying off into captivity.
- (2) There was the Diaspora zone, the rear area of the Europeans, made up of the transit waters (the Atlantic and Indian Oceans), together with the territories of the Americas as well as the plantation islands in the Indian Ocean, off shore from East Africa (Mauritius, Seychelles, Reunion, Zanzibar, etc.). For the Black

war captives, this was the zone of permanent martial law and terrorism (especially on the plantations, mines and slave-holding towns); the zone of forced labour (the Gulags and Siberias of their time); the zone of daily resistance by the captives, and of their periodic escapes, mutinies and revolts, and of the brutal suppression thereof (there were some 250 recorded revolts in the USA alone, an average of one a year for the era before Emancipation); the zone of guerrilla wars between the Maroon communities (hundreds of which existed at any one time all over the Americas) and the slave-owner communities around them which sought to re-enslave them; and the zone of full-scale wars between the slave-owner states and the liberation movements, as between France and its slaves in Haiti, or between the USA and the Black Seminoles. And

- (3) There was Europe, the headquarters from where the entire far-flung system of daily warfare was masterminded, stimulated, coordinated, armed and financed, and to which the bulk of the resulting riches was taken.

It needs to be pointed out that, in its search for labour, Europe took war to the Black Race; that Europeans went to Africa as deliberate war provocateurs, and craftily fomented wars, and committed and suborned warlike acts, in order to stimulate a harvest of war prisoners. This was how it all began:

The captains of two of Prince Henry's exploring caravels brought back with them to Lisbon in 1442 a dozen Africans, whom they had captured on the West Coast in the course of a wholly unprovoked attack upon an African village. Further exploits of a similar kind followed.²

After Columbus “discovered” America, and labour was needed for plantations there, the raiding of Africa for slaves became the official business of rival European states. By the early 18th century, it

brought war, war of the most atrocious and desolating character, and on a scale until then unimagined, to Africa, and “made of England the great slave trader of the world.” . . . The trade had grown so large that mere kidnapping raids conducted by white men in the immediate neighbourhood of the coast-line were insufficient to meet its requirements. Regions inaccessible to the European had to be tapped by the organization of civil wars. . . . Tribe was bribed to fight tribe, community to raid community . . . Tribal feuds and individual hatreds were alike intensified, and while wide stretches of countryside were systematically ravaged by organized bands of raiders armed with muskets, “hunting down victims for the English trader whose blasting influence, like some malignant providence extended over mighty regions where the face of a white man was never seen,” the trade put within the reach of the individual the means of satisfying a personal grudge and of ministering to a private vengeance.³

This inter-Black warfare which Europeans stimulated and orchestrated yielded a steady harvest of war prisoners. The Europeans then carried this harvest into captivity across the waters, and converted them into chattel-slaves. It should be emphasised that those they carted out of Africa were not yet actually slaves. They were turned into slaves only after they were landed in the Americas, where the slave plantations received them and broke them in, and put them to toil under a system of state and private terrorism. For example:

For a hundred years slaves in Barbados were mutilated, tortured, gibbeted alive and left to

starve to death, burnt alive, flung into coppers of boiling sugar, whipped to death.⁴

Thus, the Americas were, for four centuries, from Columbus’ arrival in 1492 till the last act of emancipation there in Brazil, in 1888, a vast forced-labour camp for the transported Black captives and prisoners of war, a forced-labour camp vaster than Siberia with all its Gulags! In the eyes of the operators of this war system, these captives were chattels, things excluded from humanity and from the polity, the legal equals of cattle and pigs and pots and pans. In the eyes of these Europeans, and of their most Christian law, every Black was a chattel, either chattel-in-stock already or chattel-in-the-wild awaiting capture; all Blacks were livestock, beasts of burden to be hunted, corralled, marched to market, bought and sold, broken and tamed and stripped of human culture, and then worked to death and replaced by another breathing tool. The equation of Blacks with livestock was even manifested in the plantation architecture in the USA. At Monticello, the plantation of Thomas Jefferson, that great champion of liberty, as at Mount Vernon, George Washington’s plantation:

the symmetrical placement of the slave quarters and stables were not mere formal accidents. . . . they indicated in architectural terms what was commonly accepted among planters in the South — that slaves were equivalent to livestock. In fact, as Frederick Law Olmstead noted during his journey to the cotton kingdom a half century after Jefferson’s time, slaves were often traded for horses.⁵

Seen in its totality, this was a vast war on the Black Race that was most cunning in its grand strategy. In Africa, the first zone, Europeans made war on Blacks by inducing Blacks to

make war on one another. It was “divide and conquer” at its devilish worst, applied to an entire Black race on the vast African continent, by a well-disguised white hand manipulating from afar. For the kidnap victims and the war prisoners who were carried off into captivity in the Diaspora, there was a second zone, a zone of total war — military, cultural, economic, psychological, ideological; a total war waged against them by whites, clearly and visibly by whites, and designed to break each of them into an obedient workhorse for the rest of life. When taken altogether, this was the most devious and devilish of war systems ever contrived: Europe was the headquarters, Africa was the war front, the Americas were the prisoners-of-war camp, chattel-slavery was the kind of forced labour to which the prisoners of war were subjected in that camp, the produce and profits which went to Europe were the peculiar booty from this most peculiar of wars. As for all the Blacks caught up in it, the overwhelming majority, probably as much as 99.9%, were victims of different kinds and degrees: the war captives shipped abroad, the war dead and the war survivors left in Africa, all those who resisted the pressure to collaborate, and even those among the Black procurers who never made contact with the Whites but unwittingly served the interest of the European war fomenters. All were caught in the toils of a devilish system whose totality they were in no position to see or guess; all were driven by overpowering forces beamed and controlled from outside their societies, forces which crushed all resistance, even those put up by African kings and queens. They were, one and all, victims of a Mammonist Europe, which devised the entire thing and kept it going.

Within that war-making system, the chattel-slave was simply an intermediate producer-good, highly desired, and with an

indispensable economic function in the overall Mammonist scheme; similarly, slave trading was only a middle-segment economic activity; in contrast, race war and captivity-with-forced-labour were the heart and soul of it all. Contrary to the conventional portrayal, this was not a system of slavery and slave trading accompanied by violence; it was, rather, a system of grand violence to produce Black chattel-slaves who would produce other commodities for the profit of Europeans. It was a great war-making system for profit; it operated in far-flung theatres; it killed or carried off into captivity well over 100 million Blacks; and though the yields from the farms, factories, forests and mines of the system were enormous, and though the profits from these were the ultimate interest of its masterminds, its principal products were actually death and wholesale destruction: it cannot, therefore, be correctly described by terms like “The Slave Trade”. In this it is much like World War II. Despite the enormous economic output which sustained that war, the killing and destruction was the main feature of the phenomenon; to name it by one or other of its economic aspects would be a euphemistic misnaming of a whole by the name of one of its parts; it would be as if a blind man, who got hold of only the elephant’s ear, were to call the elephant by the name “ear”.

And now, and most importantly for us of the Black World, what name should this entire part of our past bear so as to correctly reflect our experience of it? It can only be named the Chattelisation War, for that is the dominant character of the entire phenomenon when seen from the standpoint of the Blacks. Consider a Black African who was captured in any of its battles or skirmishes, and then carried across the ocean into captivity to toil for the rest of his life: or from the perspective of the kidnapped African who, as Lerone Bennett

put it, “stepped out of his hut for a breath of fresh air and ended up, ten months later, in Georgia with bruises on his back and a brand on his chest”⁶ (quoted in C. Anthony, 1986, p.111), the actual buying and selling would be but a tiny part of his total experience; his life as a chattel-slave would be a much bigger part indeed; but if he considered the overall quality of his experiences, he would see it as one of war, first at the battle front in Africa and then at the prisoner-of-war camp in America where he was forced by terrorism to toil for the rest of his days. If he could further see the entire system, and see the prime movers who contrived to have Blacks kidnap other Blacks and to bring Blacks to fight Blacks on the battlefield where he was captured, he would accept that, superficial appearances notwithstanding, it was indeed a Race War to chattelise Blacks, an imported hurricane of war.

From the foregoing, we can see that the Eurocentric term “The Slave Trade”, when applied to the Trans-Atlantic system of chattel slavery, hides and distorts the African experience of that phenomenon. From the African viewpoint, it was a system which instigated wars in Africa, harvested and enslaved the prisoners of those wars, sold them on the African coast, transshipped and resold them on the American coast, and then worked them to death as chattel slaves on the plantations and mines of the Americas. Slave trading, the actual buying and selling of slaves, was a minuscule part of an African experience which was dominated by warfare, insecurity, captivity, forced labour, torture, harrowing brutality, terrorism and other abominations. However, slave trading was the dominant experience of the Europeans who organised and financed the system, or who sailed between the ports of Europe, Africa and America carrying the human and non-human cargoes. Whereas “the Slave Trade” is an

appropriate name for the European experience, it is not appropriate at all for the African experience; nor is it even appropriate for the American planter’s experience, which consisted mostly of managing plantations, putting the chattel-slaves to toil, selling produce, watching out for runaway slaves and putting down slave rebellions. The buying and selling of chattel-slaves was neither his main preoccupation nor the dominant part of his experience.

Of course, “Slave Trade” is the European world’s euphemism for its four centuries of premeditated, unprovoked, relentless, cunningly orchestrated and devilish aggression on the Black Race. It focuses on the phenomenon from the chief interest of its European instigators. It allows them the irresponsible illusion that it was just trade, that Europe came like a shopper to Africa, and placed its order for slaves, and paid, and was simply handed some Black slaves that the Black shop owner already had on the shelves. That illusion has no foundation in the facts, and must be done away with. And it is our duty to our race to evoke the accurate picture by adopting an accurate name.

2. *Colonialism*

Similarly for the era of so-called colonialism. It too needs to be seen more clearly and precisely, and accurately renamed. Two parallel processes ushered it in: the emancipation of the slaves in the Diaspora, and the invasion and conquest of Africa by European powers. With emancipation, the White race ceased to officially regard the Black race as chattels, actual and potential, as chattel-in-the-corral and chattel-in-the-wild. All were admitted into humanity, and into the polities of the European peoples, either as subjects in the colonies, or as citizens in the independent countries, even if of a handicapped or lower status.

This induction into humanity and citizenship and citizen rights was what the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the constitution of the USA finally accomplished for its ex-chattel-slaves — from being non-human, to being 3/5 of a human (according to the 1787 Constitution of the USA), to being a full human and citizen; but the Jim Crow or racial segregation laws soon kept them from the enjoyment of their new status as citizens.

With that done in the Diaspora, the chattel-in-the-wild in Africa was also accorded the same new status. In Africa they were invaded, conquered and made subjects or protected persons of the imperial states of the Pan-European World. In other words, by being invaded and conquered and brought under the rule of these empires, they were inducted into humanity, but admittedly into a lower order. As a notorious remark of the early 20th century had it, Blacks are their brothers, though their junior brothers! (Albert Schweitzer). Blacks would now be prepared for civilisation, and the job of doing that was dubbed the “White Man’s Burden”.

For this privilege of being tutored in the ways of “civilisation”, Blacks were subjected to genocide, terrorism, land expropriation, property confiscation, forced labour, and taxation by the modern versions of Sparta’s genocidal, helotist state. The starkest and best-documented varieties of this were in King Leopold’s Congo Free State (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), France’s Congo, Portugal’s Angola, Germany’s South-West Africa (now Namibia), Britain’s Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the British-Boer Republic of South Africa. In the Belgian example, a “System” was devised to terrorise and exploit the Blacks to the point of utter ruin. How did it wreak its havoc?

The beneficiaries aimed at no work of

permanence, no constructive national task. They had no enduring interest in the Congo. Their one and only object was to get as much indiarubber out of it as they could in the shortest possible time, and to inflate their rubber shares on the stock exchange. And a perennial state of warfare all over the Congo was necessary to the accomplishment of that object, because there was no finality in the demand. It was incessant. An act of political submission after the usual massacre of unarmed — in the modern sense — men by armed men did not suffice. The community, clan or tribe, must produce indiarubber and continue to produce it, and must be fought and fought and fought again, tortured through its women, deprived of homesteads and foodstuffs; until broken, hunted, starving, fugitive, despairing, every capacity to resist demands, however outrageous, every shred of self-respect, had vanished.⁷

How was all this carried out? First, all of the Congo Free State was made the property of one man — all the land, all the people, all the resources were owned by Belgium’s King Leopold II. Secondly, Concessionaire Companies were set up in which the King kept half the shares while the other half were held by his business associates. These companies were then floated on the stock exchange. Thirdly, most of the territory of the Congo Free State was farmed out to these companies to exploit. Fourthly, the Blacks, the indigenous population, were deprived of their right to trade with Europeans in rubber or ivory, and Europeans were to be prosecuted if they bought these articles from the natives. Fifthly, the natives were required to pay taxes in rubber and ivory. Sixthly, colonial officials were instructed that their paramount duty was to extract the maximum quantity of rubber and ivory from their districts, and that promotion would be based on what they achieved. Seventhly, a bonus system was instituted

wherein an official's commission was higher the lower the expense in getting native labour and collecting the "taxes". Eighthly, a native army was recruited and used to terrorise the villagers, and encouraged by the rule that the more rubber and ivory they extracted the more freedom they would have to loot and rape. Ninthly, "hostage houses" were created and women and children imprisoned there to ensure the "good behaviour" of their men in collecting rubber and ivory, in producing food for the officials and soldiers and carriers and their camp followers. This "System", worked out with scientific thoroughness, was advertised to an admiring European World as being for the "moral and material regeneration" of the natives of the Congo.

The Blacks of the Congo Free State, quite naturally, refused to be robbed and exploited as forced and unpaid labourers. They resisted, but to no avail. Soldiers were unleashed on them, with license to commit all manner of atrocities, including murder, mutilation, starvation in hostage houses, flogging to death. To break the resistance, in some areas,

*All the chiefs were gradually killed off, either outright or by the slower processes of confinement and starvation in the "houses of detention," or by tortures, which rival those inflicted upon the plantation slaves in the West Indies.*⁸

Eyewitnesses reported that

*The soldiers sent out to get rubber and ivory are depopulating the country. They find that the quickest and cheapest method is to raid villages, seize prisoners, and have them redeemed afterwards for ivory. . . . It is blood-curdling to see them returning with hands of the slain, and to find the hands of young children amongst the bigger ones evidencing their bravery.*⁹

One of the European employees of the Concessionaire Companies wrote home boasting of having killed 150 men, cut off 60 hands, crucified women and children, and hung the remains of mutilated men on the village fence.¹⁰ The atrocities aside, other aspects of the "System" devastated and depopulated the land. A report from the Kasai region states:

*The rubber tax is so heavy that the villages had no time to attend even to the necessities of life . . . the capitais (the Company's armed soldiers stationed in the villages) told me they had orders not to allow the natives to clear the ground for cultivation, to hunt, or to fish, as it took up time which should be spent in making rubber. Even so, in many cases the natives can only comply with the demands made on them for rubber by utilising the labour of the women and children. In consequence, their huts are falling to ruin, their fields are uncultivated, and the people are short of food . . . and dying off . . . This district was formerly rich in corn, millet, and other foodstuffs. . . . now it is almost a desert.*¹¹

These measures, wherever introduced, rapidly transformed the district:

*It was as though a tornado had torn across it and destroyed everything in its passage. But the effects were much more lasting than any natural phenomenon. Thriving communities had been transformed into scattered groups of panic-stricken folk: precipitated from active commercial prosperity and industrial life into utter barbarism.*¹²

Commenting on the "System" and its principles, methods and consequences, E. D. Morel said:

You cannot steal the land of the natives of

tropical Africa, degrade them from the position of agriculturists and arboriculturists in their own right, lay claim to possession of their actual and potential wealth, destroy their purchasing power, deny them the right to buy and sell by denying their ownership in the natural or cultivated products of their own country, which their labour alone can make accessible to the outer world, and impose upon them the duty of harvesting their products for you as a "tax." You cannot do this, and thereby convert them into slaves of European capitalism, without the use of armed force, pitilessly, relentlessly and, above all, continuously applied. And the circumstances under which that force must be exercised in tropical Africa are such that its application must involve the destruction of the population, if only because it must be pursued in utter disregard of the natural needs and requirements of the native population, and at the cost of the complete annihilation of African society.¹³

This example of helotisation of a conquered people had its predictable result. In twenty years, 1891-1911, it wiped out more than 10 million of the Blacks in King Leopold's Congo Free State, one half of the population when it began. This act of genocide, with its meticulously rationalised "System", was just one of many committed on Blacks by Europeans during their so-called Scramble for Africa, their thirty years' war (1884-1914) of invasion and conquest and helotisation of Africa; and it was, by itself, greater than that which Hitler's Nazis inflicted on the Jews.

While that was an example of the helotisation of indigenous Blacks by Whites who came only to pillage and not to settle, another kind of helotisation was carried out, particularly in southern Africa, by Whites who came to both settle and pillage. Consider the case of the British. In the words of Earl Grey, written in

1880,

*Throughout this part of the British Dominions the coloured people are generally looked upon by the Whites as an inferior race, whose interest ought to be systematically disregarded when they come into competition with their own, and who ought to be governed mainly with a view to the advantage of the superior race. And for this advantage two things are considered to be specially necessary: First, that facilities should be afforded to the White colonists for obtaining possession of land heretofore occupied by the native tribes; and secondly, that the Kaffir population should be made to furnish as large and as cheap a supply of labour as possible.*¹⁴

Such was precisely what British settlers, in partnership with the British Government of Queen Victoria, did. Consider the case of the AmaNdebele (Matabele) of what became Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). By the trickery of treaties and the terrors of war, the AmaNdebele were dispossessed of their land, stripped of their cattle, reduced to the status of bondsmen, scattered, barred from moving about from place to place except under a system of permit or pass, and made to do forced labour on the farms and mines of Whites. The net result?

*The net position is this: The native population of Southern Rhodesia possesses today no rights in land or water. It is allowed to continue to live upon the land on sufferance and under certain conditions . . . There appears to be no attempt on anyone's part to deny the bedrock fact that these 700,000 natives have been turned from owners of land into precarious tenants.*¹⁵

And among the methods employed in the raids and wars that achieved this? In the words of the *Matabele Times*,

*We have been doing it up to now, burning kraals because they were native kraals, and firing upon fleeing natives simply because they were black.*¹⁶

And for a glimpse of the spirit in which the British troops waged that war, consider these words by an adventurer friend of Cecil Rhodes, a W. A. Jarvis:

The best thing to do is to wipe them all out as far as one can – everything black.

And in letters to his mother, Jarvis wrote:

*I hope the natives will be pretty well exterminated. . . . There are 5500 niggers in this district (Gwelo) and our plan of campaign will probably be to proceed against this lot and wipe them out then move on towards Bulawayo wiping out every nigger and every kraal we find. . . . And after these cold blooded murders, you may be sure there will be no quarter and everything black will have to die, for our men's blood is fairly up.*¹⁷

At the end of it all, the AmaNdebele view of what the British had done to them was this:

*Our country is gone, our cattle have gone, our people are scattered, we have nothing to live for, our women are deserting us; the white man does as he likes with them; we are the slaves of the white man, we are nobody and have no rights or laws of any kind.*¹⁸

Similar exercises in genocide and helotisation have been documented from other parts of Black Africa in that period, one of the more notorious being the German attempt in Namibia. The policy was “the substitution of the native owners of the soil by German immigrants and the transformation of free men into a landless proletariat of hewers of wood and drawers of water.”¹⁹ The

implementation of the policy led to war, and to an attempt to exterminate the Herero under General von Trotha's extermination order.²⁰ And for the crime of resisting the German attempt to dispossess them of their land and cattle and independence, the remnants of the Herero were heavily punished by wholesale executions and forced labour. In the words of a high-ranking German government official:

*The Herero must be compelled to work, and to work without compensation and in return for their food only. Forced labour for years is only a just punishment, and at the same time it is the best method of training them.*²¹

On the eve of World War I, after these acts of conquest and dispossession/helotisation were concluded, the daily regimen of warfare, which had been imposed on Blacks for five centuries, could at last be relaxed. After all, Blacks had finally been militarily defeated and broken everywhere on earth. Their political structures had been smashed and swept aside, and state structures managed by Europeans had been erected over them. The police and the economic strangulators, assisted by White vigilante terror squads, such as the Ku Klux Klan in the USA, were sufficient to keep the Black ex-chattels in their allotted place, and in subservient demeanour. In many parts of Southern Africa, reserves were set aside for cattle, for wild game animals, and also for the Black natives. In their new docility, Blacks were meant to be exploited thoroughly till the end of time. With the conquerors of White race and the conquered of Black race, a harsh and bloody rule overtly based on race was imposed on Blacks everywhere; and as Blacks had little prospect of ever overthrowing White rule, it would be White Supremacy forever! Everywhere, therefore, military operations against Blacks were muted, but White military might was, at all times, held in readiness to

put down any uprisings. It was in this way that the entire Black World finally graduated from the old era of daily armed skirmishes to that new era of economic warfare and endemic White terrorism which was known as Jim Crow in the USA, and as colonialism elsewhere. By 1914, Blacks were everywhere subjected to the kind of rule which lasted longest in Apartheid South Africa: rule by violent dispossessors who came to turn the place into "White man's country" and to make of themselves, through rampant terrorism, a permanent and exclusive ruling race.

But what was the main character of that "Colonial" phase when seen from the Afrocentric perspective? Everywhere, White armies; White terror squads; White bureaucrats; White traders, farmers and miners; and White politicians and White priests together sat upon the conquered Black Race. And though no longer chattel-slaves, the members of the Black Race were not yet citizens in these states set up by White power, as they were allegedly still being tutored for civilisation and citizenship; they were, rather like the Helots in ancient Sparta, of an intermediate status between slaves and citizens. And as in ancient Sparta, these White conquerors' policy was to exterminate, enslave and exploit the conquered in the struggle to expropriate/steal their land, labour and liberty. They also had the means and the will to periodically terrorise their Black Helots and keep them docile and toiling away for their masters. In describing the system in Northern Rhodesia, Basil Davidson said:

There was in practice an utter domination and an unbounded subordination with no bonds or rights or obligations established between the two except those of the settlers' convenience. Nothing appears to have tied these two groupings together except a mutually hateful

contiguity from which neither could escape. The Africans regretted that the Europeans were in the country . . . but could not possibly get rid of them. The Europeans longed for the Africans not to be there, physically not there, yet were unable to do without them. The Africans provided labour and in this they were horribly indispensable. If they had to be recognized, it was to the extent of their labour value (estimated at the lowest possible rate), and no further.²²

Thus, for Africans, the so-called colonialism was, in reality, Helotism, a Spartan-type despotism maintained by an ambience of raw terror. Whether called the Jim Crow or Racial Segregation system in the USA, or the Separate Development or Apartheid system in South Africa, or the *Indigenat* system in the French colonies, or the *Indigena* system in the Portuguese colonies, or the Colour Bar in the British colonies, or whether unnamed as in the countries of Latin America, these were merely varieties of the same structure of legalised terrorisation and servitude for the Black helots. Black labour, initially coerced physically, was subsequently channelled into a system of legalised low wages, or even of starvation wages, for the Black helots. It was a system of immiseration maintained by raw terror. It was the Helotism phase of the Race War, and should be so recognised and named.

Of course, as with the term "slave trade" discussed earlier, colonialism is a term reflecting the European experience of the phenomenon. They sent out parties of Europeans from their homelands to settle in colonies abroad; hence their use of the term colonialism for the whole phenomenon. But for the indigenous populations among whom they settled, whom they conquered and ruled by terror, the experience was one of helotism. They conquered and helotised us. Thus, the proper Afrocentric name for what is

conventionally called colonialism is helotism.

In the Americas, it is standard practice to refer to the day of the official ending of the status of chattel-slavery as Emancipation Day, as the day on which the chattel-slaves were freed. In fact it was simply the day on which they were legally dechattelised, left poor and propertyless, left without compensation and without political rights, and left free to starve as a marginalised and terrorised labour reserve, i.e. as helots in the White supremacist capitalist societies in which they found themselves. In the USA, with the Compromise of 1877, even the formal citizen status awarded soon after Dechattelisation in 1863, was rescinded and the ex-chattels were thoroughly helotised for another full century under what is called Jim Crow or Segregation. While the term Jim Crow gives no clue as to what befell the ex-chattel, the term segregation is a euphemism of sorts in that it does not focus on the nature and quality of the experience, but on the mildest, formal aspect of the situation. It indicates nothing about life in the chain gangs of the Gulags of America, or about life under the White terrorist associations which, through frequent lynchings and White race riots cowed the Black ex-chattel into social docility and automatic caste deference to all Whites, and which obliged them to acquiesce in dispossession and underpaid labour. This so-called segregation was experienced by its terrorised victims as helotism, American style.

3. Decolonisation/Neocolonialism

World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, World War II and the Cold War which followed it, combined to drastically shorten the period of this helotism. World War I took Imperial Russia out of the EGO, and the Bolshevik Revolution turned it into the Soviet Union, and made it an ideological crusader against the principles of the EGO. Then

World War II severely weakened the EGO and set the stage for the Cold War, that era of propaganda and proxy wars between the EGO and the Soviet Union. This produced a new situation in the world. Sensing the weakness of their masters, and discovering a new and strong ally in the Soviet Union, the helotised Blacks sought to reverse their recent and thorough defeat. With a season of protest (e.g. The Fifth Pan-African Congress, 1945), of agitation (everywhere), and of strikes and uprisings (e.g. Madagascar 1947; Nigeria 1949; Kenya 1952; French Cameroon 1955), the Black World's counter-offensive opened. Appraising the new situation, and fearful of losing all in a storm of agitation and insurrection backed by Soviet power, the European conquerors made concessions to their restive Blacks.

First of all, the Black helots were formally admitted to full human status, and accorded human rights in keeping with the UN Charter of 1945. The state-apparatus of each helotist state was then handed over to a trans-civilised elite of Black politicians and soldiers, who had been carefully culled and bred from among the helots; they were to supervise it on behalf of the White conquerors. In 1960 alone, the great year of "freedom", 17 territories in Black Africa were granted self-rule. Where these political concessions were withheld, the Black helots took to insurrection, and even to full-scale wars of liberation, which they eventually won against Pan-European armies (e.g. Angola, 1961-1975; Mozambique, 1964-1975; Guinea-Bissau, 1963-1974; Zimbabwe, 1964-1980; Namibia, 1966-1990).

Even in the USA, Cold War exigencies obliged the Whites to retreat from Jim Crow/Segregation and from the more blatant manifestations of White Supremacy. Thus, in the mid-1960s, after a decade of great agitation, Blacks there were reluctantly

readmitted to that formal citizenship which had been granted them a century before, after Dechattelisation, but which had been quickly annulled. And after its Portuguese-ruled neighbours fell to Black liberation armies in 1975, a USA-style retreat from helotism was orchestrated for the unabashedly White Supremacist Republic of South Africa, and Black-majority rule was eventually installed there in 1994. And so it came to pass that Blacks were everywhere installed as administrators of the countries into which the Black World had been carved. This partially reversed the military and political defeats which the Black World had suffered in the anti-invader wars of the 19th century.

With this accession of Blacks to some degree of political power a new dynamic, with unprecedented possibilities, began. With the recruitment of Black helots into the state apparatus, the Negrophobic/Melanophobic rigors of state terrorism and oppression abated. As kinship, ethnic and racial solidarities developed between the state apparatus and the Black society it administered, each state apparatus became the seed of a proto-state. Efforts at economic development began to be partly geared to the welfare of the native society of Blacks, rather than exclusively to the interests of the European conquerors. But with time, it became clear that the developmental possibilities of these proto-states were severely restricted by the structures which still bound them to their absentee conquerors. Within a decade or two, it became quite clear that the White-ruled territories of the era of helotism had become glorified Bantustans, all nominally sovereign, all poor, some a little less poor than others, each with a severely constricted resource base, and each debt-trapped in decay. Their anti-helotism struggles and wars of independence had merely Bantustanised them.

The day on which the administrative apparatus of each helotised country was handed over to some local compradors is conventionally called its Independence Day. But now, some four decades later, we know that that is a profound misnomer. Each such day was merely a Bantustanisation /Bantustan Day. It was the day on which the European helotisers handed over the despotic apparatus of their helotist state to their African comprador lackeys to start misruling on behalf of their masters, in exchange for a share of the spoils from helotism. It was the day on which began the misrule of the African population by the nigger "boss boys" for the absentee White Baas who supervised from afar. In effect, the African independence struggles, whether conducted by armed struggle or negotiation, were like jailbreaks that failed. The prisoners had tunneled out of the old prison, beyond its outer wall, but while they were tunnelling, the jailers had expanded the jail and erected an outer wall, so the escapers surfaced outside the old wall, but well within the new, and so, for all their effort, found themselves still in prison, though in a new wing.

These Bantustans have now been embroiled in yet another phase of a centuries-old race war. The European conquerors' assault has continued using economic warfare (through IMF and World Bank strangulation and by Debt Trap Peonage); political warfare (through sapping their pseudo-sovereignty and imposing ruinous regimes on them); military violence (through foreign-engineered wars and mercenary attacks, e.g. South Africa's direct and proxy wars on Angola and Mozambique), together with ideological warfare (through an alienating education, Christian brainwashing and an anti-African propaganda). Clearly, toning down the ferocity of the Pan European World's anti-African violence and Negrophobia/Melano-

phobia did not mean that the race war has been suspended or is over. The Pan-European World continues to wage it by every available means. Some of these means, which use Black proxies and agents to keep the Black World in turmoil, are reminiscent of the methods of the Great Chattelisation War; as in those wars, the current turmoil are disastrous and devilishly devious, with the White hand stirring the Black cauldron kept cleverly out of sight. In describing the effects of the economic assaults on the Bantustans in Africa, even some official observers from the Pan-European World, in a 1985 report, have stated: "What has happened in the past two decades can be compared to the effects of a world war."²³

This era of the European World's tactical retreat from direct administration of their conquered African territories has been called neo-colonialism by many, and semi-colonialism by some; which may be appropriate from the Eurocentric point of view. From the Afrocentric perspective, however, it ought properly to be called the Bantustan era, for that was what the territories were turned into. Its heyday has been quite brief, from Ghana's proclamation of independence in 1957 to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the latter being the event which has set the stage for a transition towards rehelotisation or worse.

With the end of the Cold War; with the evaporation of the ideological schism within the Pan-European World; and with the recovery of power and confidence by those imperial powers (Britain and France especially) whose weakness at the end of World War II had precipitated the concessions to the Black Helots, a new situation has again arisen. Those concessions are no longer seen as necessary, and are about to be withdrawn. Hence the plan and open talk about

Recolonisation (i.e. a full Rehelotisation) of Africa. And so the Race War goes on, changing yet again in its methods and intensity. But, unlike after World War II when the Blacks took the initiative which, in the end, fell short and landed them in Bantustans, the initiative now has passed back to the Pan-Europeans; and their intention is to return Africa to some advanced version of the pre-World War II condition of unmitigated helotism and White Supremacy forever.

4. Racism

Racism is a term used for a phenomenon associated with chattel-slavery, helotism and Bantustanism; it denotes the White Supremacist System and Ideology of the EGO as well as behaviour based on its doctrines. It is the theory and practice of European global domination. The ideology proclaims the White supremacist superstition that the races of humanity stand in a genetic hierarchy in ability, with Whites at the top, Blacks at the bottom, and yellows in between. Thus, Whites are allegedly the genetically supreme race, the master race, born to rule all others; and Blacks, allegedly, are genetically inferior to all others, and are born to serve them all. Racism, as the White supremacist ideology of the EGO, propagates blancophilia and Negrophobia/Melanophobia among other things. It belongs to the arsenal of weapons for psychological warfare which European power employs. It was used to boost the morale of Europeans and to demoralise persons of other races, especially those forced or tricked into believing it.

While racism is an omnibus ideology, encompassing all the races in its doctrines; its attitudes towards Blacks, which constitute Negrophobia/Melanophobia, should be of special interest from the Afrocentric/Negrocentric point of view. While the term racism is still pertinent, and only needs to be

regularly spelled out as the White supremacist system, the more specific term Negrophobia/Melanophobia needs to be used whenever the racism being referred to is of the kind directed at Blacks. Just as, for the Semites (Arabs and Jews), it is the anti-Semitism within racism that is of prime concern, hence their general use of the more specific term, so too should the Negrophobia/Melanophobia within racism be of prime concern to us Blacks, and lead to our regular use of the term. Acts of racism are White supremacist acts in the general race war; acts of Negrophobia/Melanophobia are White supremacist acts against Blacks in that race war.

It is vital to now look at how Negrophobia/Melanophobia, that branch of the EGO's ideology of racism which is targeted at Blacks, has evolved in these five centuries. During the Great War of Chattelisation, which lasted from the 15th to the 19th century, Blacks were defined as subhuman, i.e. as non-humans belonging somewhere among the apes and baboons and horses and cattle and other wild animals. Blacks were considered chattels, beasts no better than cattle except for having two legs, beasts to be hunted and yoked for toil. Much like workhorses, plow oxen, water buffaloes or elephants, Blacks were to be hunted in the wild, captured, broken, stripped of any traces of human culture, and thereby made fit for forced labour. From that point of view, that war on Blacks was not, technically, war at all; it was the hunting and corralling and taming of wild beasts. It is from our Afrocentric/Negrocentric point of view that it can be called a Race War, since we consider ourselves human, and no less so than Whites. Only when that premise is granted can it be considered a Race War; and during its first four centuries, the EGO did not grant that premise.

However, from the time of dechattelisation in the 19th century up until World War II, Whites officially redefined Blacks as human beings, but of an inferior quality: they classified Blacks as primitives, as savages, as humans of the backward kind that required to be slowly made civilised by the terrors and rigours of helotism. We must "thank God for little mercies", mustn't we? It was not until after World War II that the EGO officially declared Blacks to be fully human, and admitted them to civil rights and human rights. Nevertheless, Blacks are still considered underdeveloped, economically and politically and culturally. Thus, in all its six centuries so far, only within the last fifty years has the EGO officially agreed that Blacks and Whites are humans alike! But for how long will that concession, born of Cold War propaganda needs, continue to be made? And how seriously is it believed in anyway, even by the top managers of the EGO, let alone by their hoi polloi, by their skinheads and crypto-Nazis?

As the foregoing makes clear, it is absolutely important to rectify our terms, and to name phenomena from the Afrocentric/Negrocentric standpoint. In particular, the entire six-centuries-old encounter between the Black World and the EGO should be called the Race War; and its principal phases should be renamed the Chattelisation, Helotism, and Bantustan eras of the Race War. And in place of Recolonisation, the term should be Rehelotisation. These terms capture the essence of the condition of the Blacks in each phase. And, in the interest of precision, the terms "White supremacist system" and "Negrophobia/Melanophobia" should, as appropriate, be generally used in place of the term Racism. As for the term "Black Holocaust", it represents accurately the sum total of what the Black Race has been put through in this Race War. The term *Maafa*, meaning "disaster" in KiSwahili, has the merit

of drawing attention to the disasters which the African-European encounter has inflicted on the Africans, but it fails to capture the fact that these were not natural, but rather man-made disasters. Hence "Race War" is still the preferable term.

It should be noted that each Black community experienced each of these phases of the Race War in its own time. But, generally speaking, the chattelisation wars raged between 1442 and 1888; they were endemic, with chronic and acute phases in each locality, and lasted till slave raiding and captive trafficking and slave holding died out there. The anti-invader/anti-helotisation war began in the 17th century with the Dutch settlers' wars on the Khoisan aborigines of the western Cape in South Africa; it spread generally from c. 1807 to 1942, from the start of the British effort to militarily suppress captive trafficking till the end of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia; however, it climaxed and was most intense and Africa-wide during the so-called Scramble for Africa, 1884-1914. That was Europe's thirty years' war of conquest and partition and helotisation of Black Africa, and was followed by some 30 years of unmitigated helotism (1914-1945) on the European-ruled haciendas into which Black Africa had been partitioned. Among the anti-chattelisation wars must be included those wars fought between the helotisers and the die-hard chattelisers, such as the Civil War in the USA, after which the ex-chattel-slaves were helotised. The de-helotisation wars lasted from 1945 to 1994, from the agitation of the Fifth Pan-African Congress, through the failed

insurrections in Madagascar, Kenya, Cameroon, etc., to the successful liberation wars of the Portuguese and British colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe), and to the successful agitation and insurrection against Apartheid South Africa. These were the struggles where, by combinations of agitation, insurrection and total war, the peoples of the Black World sought to regain their political autonomy. Some aimed for more, some aimed for less, but all wound up in Bantustans of one sort or another. Even Mandela's new South Africa, which was achieved at such great cost, especially in the lives of the generation of the Soweto children's insurrection, is but another disguised Bantustan.

It is one of the ironies of events that though Mandela was adamantly, and correctly, opposed to his nephew, Kaiser Matanzima, for heading one of the Apartheid-era Bantustans, Mandela himself succeeded only in founding a bigger, disguised G-7 Bantustan, but a Bantustan all the same, like the other "flag independence" states in Africa.

SUMMARY

Eurocentric Terminology	Afrocentric Terminology
Slave trade	The Great Chattelisation Wars
Emancipation Day	De-chattelisation Day
Colonialism/Jim Crow/Segregation	Helotism
Independence Day	Bantustan Day
Neocolonialism/Independence or post-colonial Era	Bantustanism/Bantustan era
Racism	The White Supremacist System and ideology; Negrophobia/Melanophobia
?	Race War
?	Black Holocaust
The Scramble for Africa	The anti-invader wars/anti-helotisation wars
Decolonisation, anti-colonial struggle	The anti-helotism/dehelotisation struggle

What Slave trade? And Other Afrocentric Reflections on the Race War is a work-in-progress in which Chinweizu proposes Afrocentric terms to replace, in African discourse, many obscurantist and disorienting terms from the Eurocentric lexicon. The proposed changes will be made through mini-essays on terms like “slave trade”, “slavery”,

“traditional”, “modern”, “philosophy”, “the scramble for Africa”, “colonialism”, “nigger/niggerism”, “decolonisation”, “renaissance”, “culture”, “civilisation”, “classical”, “history”, “prehistory”, “the state”, “development”, “free trade”, “the market”, “democracy”, “human rights”, “freedom”, and “globalisation”.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Charles, S. (1986) 'Black Civilization and the Religious Dimension', in Okpaku et al., *The Arts and Civilization of Black and African Peoples, Vol. 7*, Lagos: CBAAC, p. 38.
2. Morel, E.D. (1969) *The Black Man's Burden*, New York: Monthly Review Press, p. 15.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 20.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
5. Anthony, C. (1986) 'The Big House and the Slave Quarter: Prelude to New World Architecture' in Okpaku, J. et al. (eds) (1986) *The Arts and Civilization of Black and African Peoples, Vol. 8*, Lagos: CBAAC, p. 108.
6. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 111.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
17. Quoted in Samkange, S (1986) 'The History of Zimbabwe: Source of Nationalism', in Okpaku et al., *The Arts and Civilization of Black and African Peoples, Vol. 5*, Lagos: CBAAC, pp. 245-246.
18. Morel, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
20. *Ibid.* See also Drechsler, *op. cit.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
22. Davidson, B. (1994) *The Search for Africa*. New York: Random House, pp. 152-153.
23. 'Report of the Committee on African Development Strategies -- A Joint Project of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Overseas Development Council', quoted in Amoda, John M. (1995) *Economic Development and Capacity Building for Conflict Prevention*, Lagos: International Training Institute for Peace, p. 1.

A Slice of Life, New York Style

Akwasi Aidoo

I was soaked. The rain was good. We needed it, after all those months of alarms about water shortage. It came down heavily, without warning. The sky seemed to open up apocalyptically, with blinding lightning and deafening thunder. Many umbrellas turned into wobbly satellite discs, losing their fragile values in the end (although many in this land seem to be irretrievably wedded to their battered umbrellas). I thought: "Hmm... When the good Lord decides to piss on us, everyone catches it the same way."

Anyhow, it was one of those rains that hit you mercilessly even as you welcome the renewal of life it brings. And somehow it brought me memories of small, fragile things — babies strolled on the streets, a little voice of dissent, even a cyclist competing impossibly for space on these jungle streets. These small things suddenly hold new meanings.

Perhaps it's the terrorist attacks on the tallest buildings. Perhaps it's that plus all the talk of war — these ceaselessly ugly drum-beats of war that drown out any fragile dreams of beauty. Any small spaces of sanity. Any quiet reminder that humanity still thrives, if tenderly, even in the broken spirit. Any

semblance of humane reasoning. Any reason to love in these preposterous times with all those serial killers of our dreams. When the inferno engulfs all big things before it, including our most fervent pleas and dreams, then nothing but only miracles can happen, even in the small things of our encounters.

Still, I continue to dream.

On the train home yesterday, a middle-aged woman sat next to me. She ran in just as the train was starting its move from Grand Central. She looked terrified, like she was running from some demons but didn't know where safety and refuge lay. She sat delicately, as if afraid to damage the fragile momentary silence brought on by fatigue clearly written on everyone's face, quickly heaved a heavy sigh of discomfort, and closed her eyes, water dripping from her broken umbrella. I made more space for her.

My train neighbor seemed oblivious to all around her, least of all me, a Blackman in a suit — or so I thought. Might I have, without any action on my part, incensed her fear if I wasn't well-dressed? Probably. But then again, probably not. What, after all, can be

more menacing than the everyday monstrosities of these loud noisy times infested with a mean spirit?

She avoided all eye contact. Everyone in our encased neighborhood seemed self-absorbed anyway.

Then suddenly, in the middle of the journey, she spoke:

“Do you know him?”

I looked at her and around, and looked away, gazing into blocked space the way everyone here does on the train.

“Do you know him? He looks like you. Don’t tell him I said so. He is so beautiful. Isn’t he? Don’t tell him I said that either. They’ll kill him if they know he is so beautiful. I mean inside.”

“Are you talking to me?” I managed a wide smile, but wondered deep down whether my neighbor was sane.

Silence.

Suddenly the ticket woman shows up behind me. She clicks her punch and I know it’s my turn to show my ticket. Sixty-ish and petite, in navy blue suit with a striped blue tie and cap to match. Her hair is fuzzy with something like a pony tail, which makes me think she’s still relevant and able to understand the beat and rhythm of today’s teenagers. She is polite: “Thank you, sir”, she says with a smile. I smile back.

Soon we were at 125th. 125th always reminds me of Malcolm, for some reason, and Apollo Theatre. Apollo Theatre. That remarkable space where our people sang and danced and created and laughed for all people. Where, in

the midst of all despair, the small people didn’t give up dreaming and the dream was not deferred. I started to wonder why Apollo Theatre was not a national heritage site. Why we hear so little of it today, even though it has survived against all odds.

My train neighbor looked at me. I must have said something to myself.

“He was on TV last night,” she said. “He was so beautiful, when he spoke. I had to call him, which I did. Just his voice was enough.”

“Who?” My doubts heightened. I gave her a careful, furtive look this time. Her crimson blouse over pink skirt suggested a serious and controlled inner spirit; in another time and place, that would have signified a free spirit who couldn’t care a hoot about the norm.

With a lonely tear running down her cheek, she said, softly —

“They didn’t have to do that to that young man. He was only here for his dreams. The same dreams we all have. There was nothing someone like me could do about it, so I called the one hero I know who is still alive; ignored but alive. I call him ‘My OD.’ You know who I mean.”

I thought she meant Ossie Davies.

“He doesn’t know me, of course. But I called him all the same. I thought perhaps he could say something publicly to help us all regain our sanity. He did, on TV last night, and who knows, perhaps it was good for him to know that an ordinary white woman cared too. I sent him flowers this morning, you know. He doesn’t know from whom.”

Silence.

My mind went to Harry Belafonte. Harry is a beautiful soul. One of the tallest trees we have left in our diminishing forest of courage and truth. The other day, I heard him on Larry King Live, explaining all about house slaves and plantations and global justice and policies of the powerful that breed death and pain. He was beautiful. I heard him say Colin Powell should/can do more for justice or he's just another house slave. I heard him talk quietly of Africa with pride and pain all at once. Compassion. Palpable compassion. So they say he's controversial.

Someone phoned in to tell Harry Belafonte: "I'm saddened that you define yourself first as black, and then as American." So true; yet I thought: "What of the system that imposes such primal definitions?" Black, White, Brown, Yellow — aren't we all of the same tree? Bayard Rustin, the brilliant and indefatigable organizer and internationalist, was so right: "We're all one, and if we don't know it we will learn it the hard way."

I started to think of Jimmy Carter too and the trouble he's in for winning the Nobel Prize. "He's an embarrassment," says Robert Novak on Cross-Fire. Poor Jimmy. He's done too much good.

"Are you from there as well?" My neighbor interrupts my thinking.

"You mean Africa? Yes."

"You look like him. I mean OD."

"Thank you, but he is bigger than me. And, we're not related."

"Is that right? Not related?"

Silence.

There's a whistle-stop at Mount Vernon, that enigmatically jazzy place, and I see a Burkinabe get out (his "tribal" marks mark him out). He nods and I nod. Then Pelham. A gust of cold wind comes in, and nearly everyone gets out. My neighbor stays on. My neighborhood is almost empty now. Just the two of us. Unlike 125th, the noise here is natural and bearable. It's grey outside; everything is washed grey by the rain, but the air has no smell. My allergy disappears from here on. No fumes, little noise. There is a police car in the parking lot by the train station, but no sign of trouble. Everything looks boringly tidy and calm.

Soon, our train slowed down again as we approached New Rochelle. My neighbor looked at me with a gentle, imploring smile, as if to say: "Take good care while you're here." The first full eye contact. Bushy lashes, hair half grey. Sunken cheeks and pointed forehead, reminding me of a striking Ancient Egyptian face I once saw in the Cairo Museum. The thin lips suggested a tenacious spirit as well. Cerebral look. Beautiful smile. If the face is a reflection of the inner self, then surely that too was a beautiful soul.

The train stopped.

She got up, slower than she did getting in, nodded at me, again with a smile. A goodbye smile. And in a second she was gone.

I walked out of the train and looked left and then right. A few rush-hour souls stepped out as if the train was throwing up the last of an indigestible mix. They all headed the same way. The same destination — home and some refuge from all the belligerent noises. But maybe not... there is TV, I reminded myself.

Where the platform yields to the staircase, a torn and fading headline of the New York

Times lay implanted by a multitude of feet. It read —

“Four Police in Diallo Killing Innocent.”

Next to the headline was a freshly-torn maple leaf. My mind went back to my train neighbor and I started to wonder again — this time about how really related we all are...

When I woke up this morning, all this seemed like a dream. Sort of half nightmarish, half

pleasing. Bits and splinters of facts from different happenings at different times, woven into a common, continuing, complex fabric that reflects the struggle between our humanity and inhumanities.

I started to miss my train neighbor... and who is to say she was insane?

New Rochelle, Thursday, 19 December 2002.

Theresa Musoke, East Africa's Top Female Artist, has Carved out a Niche in Wildlife Paintings (Her Brush Tames Wildlife)¹

Edris Kisambira

While many Ugandans left the country in the 1970s due to political persecution, Theresa Musoke's exile was for a different reason. Hers is what you would refer to as professional exile. "I had to go. There was a scarcity of materials like paint — the basics an artist would need to survive. One had to make orders from Nairobi and this would be followed by a lull in time before they would arrive," she says.

While she was away, Musoke succeeded in carving a niche in wildlife paints. She is actually referred to as East Africa's top female artist.

Musoke's paintings are impressionist and have been extensively exhibited abroad, because hers is a style that appeals to modern art lovers and collectors.

In one of the reviews of her Nairobi exhibitions, she was described as a painter who thinks big because most of her canvasses

are large. With smaller paintings, she still manages to create an illusion of space with her use of light and surprising colours.

While in Nairobi, she divided her time between her work as a painter and a teacher. She taught at Kenyatta University and the United States International University.

She exhibited in all the major galleries and cultural centres in Nairobi, including the former Tryon Gallery in International Life House, the French Cultural Centre, Gallery Watatu and the former Donovan Maule Theatre.

Her most exceptional works include the murals of giraffes and acacia trees that offer splendour and brilliance to the walls of the New Stanley Hotel in Nairobi. These, she says, were a special assignment in preparations for the 1982 meetings of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Another magnificent mural graces the VIP lounge of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. In Uganda, there is a huge painting of leopards at the International Conference Centre (ICC), Kampala. There is another piece of her work at Entebbe Airport.

She says she completed the one at Entebbe Airport in 1975, a year before the famous raid by the Israeli Airforce over a kidnap. Upon her visit back to Entebbe (old airport), Musoke says she was delighted to see that the commandoes had left her ostriches still standing. "Women simply are not encouraged to be artists. Several stereotypes still linger and if women are not expected to stay at home, cook and produce children they are allowed to pursue more conventional careers such as teaching," she says.

When Musoke graduated from the College of Fine Arts of Makerere University in 1965, now the Margaret Trowell School of Fine Art, she was one of two women to do so.

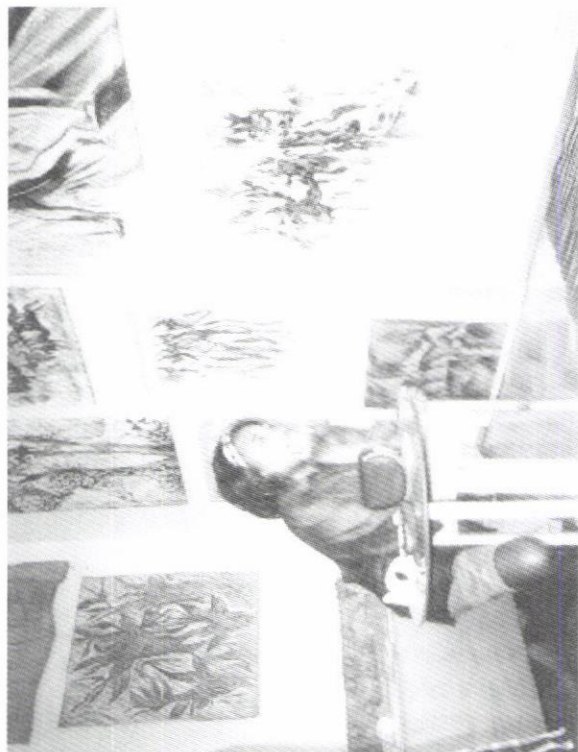
Musoke's genius is in the unique combination of oil on tie-dye canvas with the use of a final wash technique. But she has also come up with some equally impressive watercolours, using gold as the primary medium.

Musoke, born in Kampala, began her schooling at Kisubi boarding Primary School and then went on to Trinity College, Nabingo before joining Makerere University. She received a postgraduate scholarship to attend the Royal College of Art in London from 1966 to 1968.

In 1969, Musoke attained a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship to attend the Graduate School of Fine Art and Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, USA from 1969 to 1973.

NOTES

1. First published in *Vision Weekend / Art & Theatre*. Uganda.



BLACK AND BLACK WOMAN

Anna Lúcia Florisbela dos Santos

The whip cracked - I screamed, wept, struggled,

But they called my resistance cowardice

Indolence

They attacked me and locked me up

I'm black, still black, but only in colour

I've tried my best to become white

As white as you like

Black and white, right?

Today the whip is my wage

The belt which I must fasten tighter

I scream, weep, struggle

But they call my resistance insurrection

Outrage

They turned me against myself, made me white

But I'm black, still black, and not just in colour

I know I'll get out, out of madhouses and hospitals

Of prisons and youth detention centres

I'll escape from the kitchen and the streets

I'll win, I'll be black

As black as you don't like

Black and black, Zé!

Discourses on Difference, Discourses on Oppression

Edited by Norman Duncan, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Murray Hofmeyr, Tamara Shefer, Felix Malunga, Mashudu Mashige. Cape Town: CASAS, 2002.

Cheryl Hendricks

The Textbook Writing Project, based at the University of Venda for Science and Technology, seeks to “evaluate the use of self-empowerment authorship collectives as a means for redressing extant “racialised” patterns of authorship in the social sciences in South Africa and...to examine the relationship between discourses of difference and oppression “(Thakhathi:x11). This book is a product of that project. It is a collection of 21 essays that are interconnected through a common concern with the politics of identity.

There have been a number of texts on identities in South Africa. The distinctive features of this text are its authorship, magnitude, breadth and the varied approaches contained within a single volume. By bringing together the scholarship of South African black academics writing on identity, the text has succeeded in breaking the dominant publishing patterns. And it has done so on an as yet unprecedented scale where at least 17 of the contributions are by blacks, both men and women. This makes nonsense of

the often-stated argument that “we could not find blacks to contribute” and indicates an emerging pattern where these academics will create their own spaces to make their voices heard. The text displays a range of ideological, theoretical and methodological approaches: Africanist, Post-modernist, Political Economy, Discourse Analysis, Textual Analysis, Life-History Method, Literature Surveys, and so forth. It also addresses identity-related issues across differing contexts, that is, in art, literature, education, religion, trade unionism, agrarian politics, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, nation-building, language, gender relations and interpersonal relations.

This diversity is simultaneously both the strength and weakness of the book. Its strength is that it captures the multiple ways and spaces in which identities are being theorised in South Africa. The Post-modernist approach often tends to dominate discourses on identity in South Africa and is also strongly represented here. But this text reveals that an African-centered view is equally abundant and is making its way into

academic publications. The weakness is that because of this diversity the flow between chapters is often disjointed. This should, however, be expected of a book with this many ideological and theoretical persuasions and areas of focus.

Kwesi Kwaa Prah has the lead chapter and, curiously too, writes the introduction though he is not part of the editorial collective. His chapter provides an overview of the development of racist thinking, debunks its myths and contends that culture is more useful a concept for understanding social relations. Prah cautions us that ethnicity can be, and has been, abused. This point is also taken up in Sandile Schalk's chapter on ethnicity. Both argue that ethnicity is a valid social identity in Africa but that it needs to be separated from political mobilisation. These kinds of arguments reinforce Lonsdale's distinction between "political tribalism" and "moral ethnicity" and for a highlighting of the positive roles that ethnicity plays within our societies.¹ Abrahams outlines the basic tenets of womanist theory and its relevance for the African context. She asserts that "womanism is a theory which defines race, class and gender as mutually constitutive categories of analysis ...[and] rests on womanist language ...[that] is constructed through experience and struggle" (p. 41). The chapter also defines race, racism, black, brown and African identities. Being African, she contends, should not merely be equated with citizenship but with heritage and consciousness (p. 43). Although Abrahams accepts that these identities are social constructs she continuously points to the reality of differing experiences and uses a more essentialist view of identification and activism. Abrahams, Khushi, Manoma and Nodoba are explicitly Africanist in their approaches. Khushi notes the still predominantly Eurocentric nature of the South African education system and the need to incorporate an African world-view and knowledge-based systems while

Manoma laments the waning of African Traditional Religion. She argues that there is a need to "eradicate the deep-rooted Christian arrogance that leads to ignorance of other religions and indifference to the possible contribution of their adherents to the creation of a just society" (p. 282). Nodoba reviews the language policy and argues that a linguisticism (deemed superiority of English and its associated culture) prevails in South Africa, with adverse effects on democratic participation and service delivery and calls for an aggressive intervention to make indigenous languages into scientific languages. Prah's chapter concurs with this, advocating the need for the use of African languages in education and mass media communication. The language issue will continue to be problematic in South Africa precisely because it is so closely linked to social mobility. We are therefore likely to see a continuance of rhetorical gestures of multilingualism but realities of increased biases towards monolingualism.

Del la Rey and Boonzaier, Duncan, and Ratela, through the utilisation of interviews and/or group discussions, elicit the internal/personal struggles with identification in South Africa, the ways in which racialised identities are either accepted or rejected (discourses on identities), and the tensions between differing black identities. De la Rey and Boonzaier, employing a "life-history method", show the subjective, shifting and contradictory meanings of identification amongst black women activists. A recurring point within the chapter is the feeling of marginality that Coloured women are experiencing within the post-apartheid period. The authors agree with Stevens (1998) that perceived "racial threats" in the Western Cape emanate from competition over economic, political and social resources (p. 85). Duncan's chapter, "based on a series of group discussions with 26 adults from various working class, so-called

“coloured” communities in the Cape Peninsula ...” examines the way in which participants responded to the articulation of group differences (p. 114). From these interviews he draws the conclusions “that there are “no meaningful differences” (whether racial or cultural) between the various black groups constructed by the ideology of apartheid but that they emphasise differences between whites and blacks, that there are conscious attempts to reconstruct positive self images and that while the study reflects anti-racist dispositions, it also contains various elements that feed into the ideology of racism, i.e., stereotyping, dualism, and acceptance of racialised labels. De le Ray and Boonzaier’s chapter obviously refutes Duncan’s first conclusion. Part of the reason is located in the differing period in which the interviews were conducted, i.e., Duncan’s from 1990-1992 and that of De le Ray and Boonzaier being far more recent. But, a large part of this conclusion is influenced by his own ideological position, as he boldly confesses to in a footnote. The denial of “meaningful difference” has been quite commonplace in academic interpretations of Coloured identity but neither history nor present experiences substantiate this argument and defining what is “meaningful” and what is not (which he does not do) is itself subjective.

Ratela teases out the discourses on interpersonal relations between blacks and whites, categorising them as a rejection of interracial relations, those that turn on notions of difference, those that align themselves with anti-racism, and those that gesture towards an Africanist discourse (p. 373). I found this chapter particularly insightful for it conveys discourses amongst the youth (in this case students) and indicates that after 10 years of constructing a non-racial society much has changed, but much has remained the same, particularly with regards to perceptions of race (a concept that he uses and blanks out at the

same time rather than the conventional use of inverted commas). For Ratela, whose work employs post-modernist conceptions, “there is no one kind of relationship as there is no single identity for all people, for all black people, for women, for disabled people, for masculinities” (p. 406). This argument has been largely accepted within academia, the debate is now centered around the conclusions one draws from it: Does this imply that there cannot therefore be identification and/or mobilisation on the basis of being black women, African, and so forth? The answers to this distinguish Africanists, nationalists, and post-colonialists from the post-modernists.

Dederen looks at white critics’ interpretations of black artists, in this case a carving by Albert Munyai, and perceptively shows that even though they are putatively from differing ideological perspectives, i.e., conservative, liberal and radical, they are variants of the same theme of a stereotypical other. Gqola critiques the way in which Rayda Jacob’s novel *The Middle Children* deals with black heterogeneity. She points out that the text’s approach to hybridity is conservative, refusing to identify the white-hued “middle” body with blackness and largely ends up reinforcing colonial discourses and/or stereotypes on race rather than being “self-consciously disruptive”. Mashige uses a selection of Black Consciousness poems to probe their impact on identity and difference within the cultural and literary milieu. He argues that these poets have opened up a space “for creative possibilities to facilitate the rediscovery of cultural values, the reclamation of dignity, the reshaping of black identity, and the articulation of the need for a transformed society in forging a national identity” (p. 96).

The chapters by Prins and Motsemme and Ratela focus on the testimonies of women in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Prins, using Antjie Krog’s text, highlights

the difficulties of representing traumatic testimonies and that because of the identity difference between the writer and the narrators we are left with a "fractured reconceptualised narrative marked by the gap between 'truth telling' and perception" (p. 369). Motsemme and Ratela highlight the limitations of the TRC as a nation-building exercise and how the use of familiar tropes of African women reinforced their marginalisation. They note that women were situating themselves in the everyday experiences and that their testimonies were more concerned with "immediate, intimate loss and private abuse...in ways that left the female victims bereft of something more precious than nation" (p. 319). Both Prins and Motsemme and Ratela point to the resonation of pain and the silences within these testimonies. The TRC was a mechanism to provide victims with an opportunity to express their anger and pain, but women, especially the victims of sexual abuse, registered silence. Motsemme and Ratela observantly read these silences as but another equally valid form of expression/language.

Mahosi looks at racism in the trade union movement (1941-1947), while Kiguwa and Molapo's chapters highlight persisting race-based discontentment and unaltered socio-economic and power relations in the post-apartheid era. Malunga's chapter is one of the more insightful chapters, detailing how traditional dance was used on the Messina Copper mines as a means of maintaining ethnic identity, networks, and support structures. The dominant literature on urbanisation and proletarianisation argues that it leads to a transcendence of ethnic identity. Molapo's study adds to a growing body of work that illustrates that within Africa processes of urbanisation and proletarianisation have often reinforced ethnic identities. Hofmeyer and Shefer reflect on discourses of culture and difference, the former addresses problems around self-realisation and universality,

while Shefer's study is focused on the construction of heterosex. Kirkaldy reflects on the discourse around cannibalism by missionaries in Vandaland.

One can glean from the above that this text covers an extensive range of issues. I believe that it would have been more beneficial to produce two thematically oriented volumes. The chapters are comprehensive, informative and well written. It is a text that will become standard reference material in the South African academy. A text, such as this, that purports to contribute to academic transformation has to be judged not solely on the number of contributions by blacks or the quality of their work but also on the transformative aspects of the work itself. It is in this regard that I find the work lacking. Though the focus on race is welcomed, most of the chapters are simply more of the same kinds of analysis produced by those who dominate South African academic publications. This is especially the case with the chapters analysing other texts. The text is too parochial. It, like many other South African texts, does not venture past the Limpopo (with the notable exceptions of Prah and Schalk), either by way of contributions, comparison or examples.

NOTES

- ¹ Lonsdale, J. (1994) 'Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism' in Kaarsholm, P. and Hultin, J. (eds) *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Roskilde, Denmark: Institute for Development Studies, Roskilde University.

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*Correction

All the information concerning Raymond Suttner in the previous issue of *Tinabantu* was incorrect. At the time of writing he was no longer an Ambassador, nor a member of the ANC National Executive Committee, nor the South African Communist Party Central Committee. He had not been Head of the ANC Political Education Section since 1994. At the time of publication, he was and remains at this time, Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Policy Studies, and the article that was printed was based on a book *Inside Apartheid's Prison* that appeared in South Africa in 2001, published by University of Natal Press. Presently he is also a Series Editor for Unisa Press, attached to the University of South Africa, History Department.

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