



Translation Revisited

Contesting the Sense of African Social Realities

Edited by
Jean-Bernard Ouédraogo,
Mamadou Diawara and
Elísio S. Macamo

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INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATION AS TOTALITIES, ALTERITIES, AND INTERPRETATIONS

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Africa N'Ko, Speaking of Africa in the World is a long-term project that aims to establish a synergy between the plurality of reflections on knowledge production in the human sciences in and about Africa. To this end, conferences are regularly organised on diverse topics. After the Dakar conference dealing with colonial libraries, this conference discusses the concept of translation¹ in the social sciences and humanities, where the term usually refers to the operation that makes something said or written in one language intelligible in another. We hope to extend this restrictive meaning to include any form of conversion from one semantic space to another. Since translation is also a singular interpretation, the question of the role of translation in knowledge production is crucial. Having played a significant role in the constitution of the representation of Africa as an object of study, concepts in the social and human sciences are a social representation in need of a space for practice. To broaden this perspective, we need to extend the operation of translation beyond linguistics to all social practices.

¹ The verb *translate* is thought to come from a very old Latin verb with the present infinitive *transferre*, and the past participle *translatus* (See Robert Larousse, 1989:3).

Discussions on the colonial library during the first *Africa N'ko* conference held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2014, highlighted the question of translation in knowledge production about Africa. Translation appears as a key element in the knowledge production process and, as such, entails political stakes linked to the imbalance of the relations expressed. However, beyond domination and political exploitation, it should be emphasised that problems associated with epistemology, the architecture of knowledge and the methods of their construction, interject themselves into discussions. Thus "translation", in the sense we attribute to it, which is a transfer of an element of meaning from one social system to another, highlights social contradictions and affirms identities, which emphasises the obvious imbalances of domination. Very early on, translation posed problems – technical as well as social or political – linked to the singularity (sometimes exacerbated, sometimes in disintegration) of the semantic spaces between which it tries to establish a bridge, a shared space of meaning and an exchange. It soon became apparent that it was necessary to go beyond "translation" as a simple operation of substituting words from one language to another. Since the 1950s, the idea of a mechanical inter-translation of languages has been challenged, as the immeasurability of the historical context makes such a project unrealistic. Each space of meaning reflects the force of the heterogeneous history of societies and makes language not a closed system, but a representation of the world. This is a method which predates human action on the environment in a world that is constantly evolving. The linguistic field, in its broadest sense, has thus been integrated into ordinary social relations. Language is not only an instrument of communication or knowledge, but also always an instrument of power. Translation has, in fact, played an important part in the expansion of colonial empires. We recall the importance of the role of interpreters for early explorers and conquerors, and the impact of local translation of texts, especially legal and religious texts. Translation was a means of establishment and consolidation of colonial domination. Moreover, the absolute power of the coloniser's language and the devaluation of local languages meant that local populations had a vital need for translation. Living between at least two languages became the mark of their colonial condition. In many situations, translations of agreements were manipulated for the benefit of the conquerors. Situations of linguistic non-correspondence and the recourse to translation clearly show the methods of exercising political power and imposing epistemological hegemony. In this respect, it should be noted that the main task of "translator" agents (including traders and military) of the "colonial cultural conversion enterprise" was to re-write and re-

translate indigenous realities, often resistant to colonial command. Tajaswini Niranjana² suggests that it would ultimately be a question of transforming the translation "from being a 'containing' force... into a disruptive, disseminating one. The deconstruction initiated by re-translation opens up a post-colonial space as it brings 'history' to legibility". We should emphasise that linguistic misunderstandings, or even more broadly social ones, can be important moments of expression of resistance against domination on the part of local populations.

In Africa, no less than elsewhere, translation updates relations of competition, political relations between societies coming face to face and, here, the colonial situation decisively pervades the search for linguistic correspondence. Despite the usual attempt to make "translation" appear a neutral activity, translating a text from one language to another is to transform its symbolic identity. Translation, according to August von Schlegel, "is a duel to death where the translator or the one who is translated inevitably perishes" (cited by Danan, 2007). In the colonial context, translation, in the sense proposed here, is the transformation of an indigenous social organisation into a subordinate of a colonial order, and the superposition of a system of colonial domination in which all aspects of the indigenous system must be reconstructed and reconfigured. This operation functions like processes of "translational devaluation". Under colonialism, the colonial copy becomes more powerful than the indigenous original, which becomes devalued.

This historical context has often been misunderstood in favour of a narrow practice of translation limited to only linguistic transfers, and the creation of glossaries of similarities between languages. Yet, as an instrument of communication, language cannot escape the process of qualification, the evaluation of beings and things which presides over all human interaction. It becomes understandable that language itself is under the influence of internal social relations and those built with the "neighbours" of the society that uses it. Systems of meaning are closely indexed to the rhythm of the social dynamic which experience shows to not be fixed at all. The imbalance seen in relations between societies directly influences the structuring of linguistic exchanges. The system of domination into which African populations have been inserted places them in a kind of linguistic imperialism, and therefore in a hegemony of Western meaning. This hegemony is necessary in the epistemological domain, as it guides, and establishes the limits of meaning and the

² See Niranjana Tajaswini, (1992), *Siting Translation. History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, University of California Press: 186.

personal and collective methods of production, development and use of knowledge about Africa. This book directly poses the question of the conditions for an overriding of the relations of power resulting from colonialism and which underlie concepts, languages and symbolic structures. Is it possible to include African realities not listed by the hegemonic colonial system in this process? This last quest helps to reinforce the means of investigation, enrich our knowledge, and broaden our systems of interpretation of a changing world. The unachieved intention of the reduction of violence in translation, the neutrality of translation and, above all, the quest for plurality and thus a limitation of the reproduction of the hegemonic semantic system, will remain.

In this introduction, we will return to the way in which the question of translation has thus far been addressed in the classical African scientific space. To this end, we will develop the conditions for the advent of this intellectual orientation and emphasise the social and political causes which are at their origin. We will thus use a definition of translation as a central theme of the work, an activity at the centre of knowledge production on societies which extends, beyond linguistics, to all operations of conversion, intentional transfer, from all social practices to different significant fields. Translation is then understood only if replaced in the political relations maintained by the connected semantic spaces. This relation is informed by the unequal quality (value) assigned to the 'Other' and, viewed in this light, the operation of translation then gives priority to the question of alterity, difference, definition of the 'Other' and the resulting social, cultural and economic inferences. In the service of colonialism in which it was asserted, the operation of translation served to deny the existence of other languages and peoples, and to legitimise their inferiorities, thus constituting one of the foundations of Western "superiority" and domination. This is the context within which Subaltern Studies asked whether the subaltern could speak, and postcolonial studies deplored the inscription of local life worlds into the order of knowledge purveyed by colonial regimes. A close link clearly exists between discursive structures and forms of knowledge, the definition of truths and justification for domination over conquered peoples. Translation, as an operation for linking opposed social orders, requires us to introduce at all stages of production, presentation and use of knowledge about Africa, the question of the identity, the power of the systems of values confronted, and, ultimately, the subversion of the epistemological frameworks in use. The operation, like the field of meaning to which it allows us access, moves away from the narrow perspective which formerly claimed to reveal the secret resources of connected societies to us through language. This

operation is now considered as a totality, a "total social fact", which is extended to all "translatable" human expressions, the semantic field of which we understand to include a vast domain – the present and past of human interactions.

The assumption behind this book we propose to readers is that knowledge from Africa and on Africa has always been approached through the prism of Western epistemology, which constitutes the order of knowledge established on Africa as a discourse rarely favourable to Africans. This historical situation leads to the promotion of a sort of "Gnosis", which tends to trap traditional African systems of thought in a rigid epistemological order that has been "imagined elsewhere" in the West. The result is a distortion of the content of discourse on Africa, which obscures the fundamental reality that it evokes. This reality results from a "translation" which generates many clichés and negative fictions, translation being part of the power relations linked to forms of domination based on misrepresentation, the commodification of the conquered and exploited individuals. African discourse in its variety and multiplicity is distorted by its expression in non-African languages and in hegemonic systems implementing concepts and categories, paradigms invented and imposed by social and human scientists, with the political objective of grasping and domesticating the social realities of this continent. This phenomenon in its entirety can be considered as an extended form of "translation", hence the importance we attach to it. From this perspective, a real observation post of the social function of languages and knowledge, policy and hierarchy of men and societies takes shape.

The African field of linguistics is vast. The many languages spoken but rarely written on the continent have attracted the interest of linguists, first appearing in the wake of the colonial administration. Learned societies and evangelistic missions assigned themselves the task of inventorying, preserving and analysing the hybrid life of languages. Thanks to independence, emphasis is now placed on national identity that does not obliterate the local, ethnic preservation of languages, as a means of promoting cultural diversity. Translation in the nation, as at the global level, guarantees a translation policy that protects plurilingualism and harmony between identity groups, against the risk of a dreaded hegemony. The work on languages in Africa bravely took a multidisciplinary direction that integrates anthropology, sociology and political science in the approach of linguistic fact. The central concept of "translation", which goes beyond proposals put forth by the promoters (Jacquemon, R. 1992, Newmark, P, 1993, Holmes, JS, 2000) of contemporary *translatology* and *translation studies*, should be strengthened and surpass a simple

metaphorical use, as has grammar in history (F. Braudel, 1993). The multidisciplinary, multi-site and critical approach adopted by the authors of this volume proposes an exploration of the African social dynamic through careful observation of points of convergence, the tensions that emerge there and, finally, a better understanding between men from a humanistic perspective.

Translation then gives priority to the question of alterity, difference, value, and the establishment of the equivalence of related social institutions. Here, we are dealing with the actual content of this supposedly balanced valence of translation. The chapters of this book will examine the social and political stakes of the translation of meanings from one semantic space to another throughout the various phases of the knowledge production process on Africa and in Africa. These confrontations of spaces of intelligibility are seen within the continent, as in its multiple contacts with the rest of the world. We can legitimately inquire about how this conversion of languages, cultures, techniques and social existences takes place between social spaces inscribed in relations marked with the seal of inequality and even political domination. The contributions to this volume are multidisciplinary milestones towards the critique of the political use of knowledge produced on African societies. We present a new heuristic perspective, based on the redefinition of criteria for knowledge production and use in relation to the historical dynamics of societies. The authors explore new fields of interaction between knowledge and politics, to reveal the secret strategies that organise translations, the changes of meaning and the ways of legitimisation of these semantic reconfigurations. Finally, each text invites a deeper study of this equation – translation – which links social groups, to then rethink translation as a tool of emancipation. From this perspective, it must always pass the test of comprehension. Such a goal limits translation to the study of empirical processes, the clearing of new fields of inquiry and the establishment of principles of constructive dialogue by proposing an open, broader approach to the analysis which goes beyond linguistics.

The crux of translation is the interpretive moment. But if "saying something about something is, in the full and strong sense of the word, interpreting", this operation only becomes meaningful once the status of the two parties – the narrator and the thing said – are identified. In Western history, the philosophical movement which focuses on interpretation is hermeneutics,³ long devoted to the technical problems of

³ Since its Greek origins, the art of *hermeneuein* has made hermeneutics a technique of interpreting, explaining, transcribing, transmitting, translating a set of

locating the rules for reading religious and legal texts. Hermeneutics, as a general philosophical problem, experienced a certain boom in the search for the solution to the continuity of the European tradition, particularly the French Revolution. It then follows that access to the spiritual products of other eras and peoples became an essential issue; the Bible and legal texts were no longer the objects of constant attention of all interpretation. This new historical fact, with the discovery of overseas lands, colonisation and contemporary globalisation, allows us to criticise the two main terms of the hermeneutic operation, namely the interpreter and his or her text. Historians are then clearly "members of the uninterrupted chain" which is rooted in Western political history. Starting from the criticism of historical reason, philosophers of this tradition realised that the rest of the world had things to say to them. Recognition of the foreign character⁴ of what comes from the outside leads hermeneutics to be dissatisfied with the simple objective neutrality imbued with ethnocentrism, but to assume an awareness which indicates their opinions and prejudices and qualifies them as such. Thus, the text has the opportunity to appear in its difference and manifest its own truth, against preconceived ideas that western observation had already put forward.

Gadamer observes that "Historical knowledge cannot be described following the model of an objectivist knowledge, for it is itself a *process* which has all the characteristics of a historical event. Understanding must be understood as an act of existence, and therefore a 'discarded project'".⁵ This leads Paul Ricoeur to consider interpretation as an operation that carries understanding within it. Yet, as Yves Charles Zarka⁶ notes, despite the interpreter's openness to the alterity of the text, Ricoeur's openness is often limited to an "unachieved self to self". The recognition of the Other remains very theoretical and is expressed only marginally in the development of the social sciences. In the wake of economic domination and the power of its military system, the West extends a hegemony that encompasses both material goods and men in a vast arrangement of

meanings from a "foreign world" to the world of its own. This is reflected in the meaning of the term *hermeneia*, which includes an idea of ambiguity, plurivocity.

⁴ Jane Elisabeth Wilhelm, *Herméneutique et traduction : la question de « l'appropriation ou le rapport du "propre" à "l'étranger" [Hermeneutics and Translation: the question of "appropriation" or the relation between "own" and "foreign"]* Revue META, Volume 49, Number 4, December 2004.

⁵ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Le Problème de la conscience historique [The Problem of Historical Conscience]*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1996, pp. 73-74.

⁶ Yves Charles Zarka, « Éditorial. L'odyssée interminable de soi à soi ["Editorial. The interminable odyssey of self to self"] », *Cités* 2008/1 (n° 33), pp. 3-6.

meaning. Translation is no longer simple word processing, but the deployment of a permanent evaluation system, a translation system that converts everything according to the supreme pole of the process of validation. This process was already present at the dawn of Western hegemony, as François Hartog⁷ observes: "Master of seeing, master of knowing, master of believing using figures and procedures of a rhetoric of alterity set into motion by the whole set of masks of utterance, it names, inventories, classifies, counts, measures, surveys, arranges, delineates boundaries, distributes praise and blame, it says less about it than it knows. It remembers: it knows, shows, it makes known, we must believe." This hegemony is all the stronger because it imposes on all the means of interpretation, the technical means and institutions of legitimacy which give each sign its meaning and function in an invisible but coercive hierarchy.

Translation is not a simple tool of communication as humanists would like to think, but an operation of domination. In such a context, the open approach to translation that we propose accentuates the difficulty of interpretation: it minimises the semantic centrality of the language (oral or written) to take seriously all the objects entering the process of the dialogical operation of translation, which itself should lead to the establishment of an equivalence of units of meaning considered. The significant status of all the protagonists can only be asserted at the end of an undertaking of intelligibility, an agreement on the meaning to be given to the entities involved in the proposed formulation of the semantic field. In this context, this universe of interpretation must therefore rid itself of hierarchies supported by the teleological, Eurocentrist line of thought to seek other referential types for the social valuation of units as well as the result of their interactions. This new framework of reference is required to break with the reductionist view corresponding to utilitarian standards adopted/adapted from the philosophical and political utilitarianism that permeates the history of our relations with Europe. This task of reconversion of ways of thought will reassess the historical concepts and social and temporal divisions which crisscross our reasoning and our logical links according to trends imposed by the dominant intellectual and political position of the West. It is at this price that a radical hermeneutics will be possible. The texts included in this volume are still-tentative sketches of this critical and general reformulation of our relationship with

⁷ Hartog François, *Le miroir d'Hérodote. Essai sur la représentation de l'Autre* [*Herodotes' Mirror: Essay on the Representation of the Other*] Paris, Gallimard, 1980, p. 372.

African social realities. While our approach to translation seeks to address epistemological issues by laying bare the assumptions underlying the production of knowledge of Africa, it also pursues a methodological goal breaking down into two major concerns. The first concern takes up the preceding discussion on translation as interpreting drawing on hermeneutics, to argue that engaging with the role of translation in the production of social science knowledge today in Africa must entail a commitment to a discussion of how Africa is “told”, as opposed to what is said about Africa. The question of “how” refers to procedures or methodology, and therefore one of the most important challenges faced by those like us, who feel uncomfortable about the representation of the continent in the social sciences. The second concern refers to the potential, based on African challenges, which the proposed engagement with translation has for improving the language of the social sciences beyond Africa. In other words, while the volume takes issue with how translation may have misrepresented Africa, it also seeks to clear the path for a critical engagement with the knowledge production of Africa, which yields useful insights into the practice of social science in general.

This book provides the proceedings of the 2015 *Africa N'ko* conference, with the theme “Translation: Disputing the Sense of African Social Realities”. The goal of the conference was to discuss methods of translation from one social system to another, particularly the relationship to knowledge construction and the need to put forward conditions that allow human societies to connect meaning without having to give up their identities. This book includes a selection of papers from presentations made at this conference, including research from the fields of history, anthropology, political science/political philosophy, international relations, law, sociology, literary and comparative literary studies, linguistics, education, among others. While the papers broached a broad range of topics and research questions, a few resurging themes of discussion in the presentations emerged each day of the conference. Through the different sections and chapters that make up this book, the main points examined during the conference can be seen as follows.

The first section of the work addresses issues arising from Western expansion and highlights the limits of European universalism that is supposed to justify this conquest of the world. This limit generates a series of disputes about the intention of the conquerors to symbolically domesticate the multiple indigenous sources, which have remained recalcitrant in the face of the local imposition of imperial meanings. Dating back to very ancient periods in Africa, this situation is seen in contexts of global political domination, hegemony, or direct colonisation.

This political dispute over the conditions of standardisation, is actualised concretely in operations of translation, seen as a means of transforming local norms and institutions, spiritual values, as in those of the medical science newly imported into Africa, to achieve a form of secularisation of the indigenous social order. A critical feedback on knowledge production conditions in the famous Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Zambia proposed in one of the chapters is an illustrative case of the confrontation between European anthropology (Godfrey Wilson) and its local assistants and informants on interpretation of indigenous social life and dynamics of local change. The process of reconstructing indigenous histories is mediated in acts of translation. African discourse in its variety and multiplicity is distorted by its expression in non-African languages and in conceptual systems, and categories used by social and human scientists, to grasp the realities of this continent. The problematic of the possibility for Africans to think for themselves, to deviate from these conceptual systems, non-African epistemological grids and linguistic universalisation, emerges in the face of the hegemonic agenda. The role of intellectuals in this operation is crucial.

The second section plunges us into the vast space of the globalised business world in the realm of international norms of capitalism, through the African *Ubuntu* as a strategic economic lever for Africans, capable of provoking a reversal of capitalism that is more advantageous for them. The analysis of globalisation, its supranational institutions, its capitalism and its dominant language (English), shows a certain permanence in the regulatory functions of norms as political means of secularisation and subversion of dominated societies. This clearly raises the question of boundaries, their qualifying status and methods for crossing them. Struggles, and thus the valuations of individuals, groups and things, are crystallising on the sidelines. Nothing seems to escape this competitive institution of the development of social spaces: toponymy is strongly influenced by the Eurocentric colonial heritage, and translations of the Bible reveal semantic conflicts between Europeans and Africans, who are disputing the way of structuring African identity in the long term.

The third section includes texts criticising the historical conditions of dispute and "negotiated stabilities" of African perspectives. From anthropological discourse to the manifestation of African diasporas (men and art objects) confronted with the rigidity of European systems of meaning, translation proves to be required moments of tension, expression of symbolic domination and the search for agreements exuded by literary texts of all kinds, material arts (war monuments) and the most sophisticated academic knowledge. Thus, exhibitions function as translations insofar as

they reconstruct contexts in which African objects are created and original messages attached to them. On the other hand, the paradox here is that these modern museums bring to light knowledge processes about African art, and therefore about African societies, of which most of the symbolic functions – not expressed in this European framework – are sacred. There is thus an epistemological problem in that the public, the words and codes used, are external to the art objects. All this rivalry, which arises during knowledge construction – its forms determining the use made of it in social arenas – on various scales of the human world, forces us to revisit the old project of an anthropology of Western origin, whose foundations are challenged in the African field, where it presents itself as a permanent political auxiliary. Here, the universalist epistemological principles are weakened by the triumph of reductionism, which limits its heuristic potential and its explanatory power of social facts. The analysis of moments as a source of translation opens up a new interpretative possibility. Such a perspective will provide a more or less objective assessment of the pluralistic nature of the functionality and phenomenology of artistic works that commemorate a conflict, and thus revisit paradigms of conceptualisation in translation.

The last section restarts the discussion on the enclosure of African thought systems, caught up in constraints imposed by the Western epistemological order. In such a context of domination, African scholars who are required to express themselves in non-African languages and, according to rationalities of Western scientific disciplines, struggle to deploy their semantic potential and assert their own scientific identity. This line of confrontation of modes of constructing knowledge about Africa is evident in the use of social media, in these falsely virtual spaces, where identity quests assert themselves and users rely on cultures of their reference groups, exacerbating the tensions surrounding the permanence of colonialist imageries coupled with African realities. A battle of representations is crossing the very heart of social confrontations which are common in societies in the midst of transformation. At the centre of African social life – here Gabon and Cameroon – the law is increasingly becoming a central norm and appropriation, that is, a "balanced translation". In this new juridified post-colonial universe, legal rules by local populations are paramount. An active and enlightened legal life in traditional circles is the condition for the emergence of truth within an imported positive law with formal principles and displaced ethics. Emphasis is then placed on issues relating to the translation of the law, with respect to standards and methods of social action. Colonial influence in the translation of social law is central here because translation can be

seen as a political discourse, a tool for the control of indigenous peoples. This clearly shows the role of "translation" in the definition of cultures, of individuals, things, thus in a reconversion of what is historically considered "the African tradition". What then follows is a negative intervention of tradition in the updating of all the norms governing contemporary indigenous practices. Edward Said⁸ stressed that this interception of local history "implies control, accumulation, confinement, implies a certain type of estrangement or disorientation on the part of the one who represents". In such a perspective, we understand the importance of an epistemological discussion about the claim of some Western philosophers (here, the American Thaddeus Metz) to assume an organising competence that defines the bases of the "worldview" and therefore the morality of Africans. The confrontation with the "wall" of colonial law shows a constant aspiration of the populations to address it with a proper and appropriate legal discourse. This clearly shows that each society has a "system of truth", and this unbalanced social confrontation in a Cameroonian court of law demonstrates the ethical distance of politically opposed, politically unequal social orders, each producing a competing legal statement.

The reading of these texts highlights the misunderstandings that translation reveals in the enunciation of African realities. Through their work, the authors demonstrate the ideas of political domination underlying "Western translation", the scholarly and popular development of ways of describing and narrating African social realities. They considered the diversity of materials (visual art, sculptural art, museums, written literature, oral traditions and personal careers of African intellectuals) in a multidisciplinary perspective (museology, literature, art, sociology, philosophy and anthropology), and have carefully and rigorously taken on the questions posed. This pluridisciplinarity, called for by the context of the study, avoids a heuristic restriction of perspective to integrate into a space of common meaning all human expressions without *a priori* privileging linguistic translation. Nevertheless, this new approach confronts important epistemological questions. How do we transform the negative constraints of the persisting colonial situation into a positive momentum? African researchers are called on to offer a reflexive feedback on their collective itinerary. In his inaugural lecture given at the first *Africa N'ko* conference, a discussion on the colonial library, Valentin Yves Mudimbe stressed the close relationship between language and power.

⁸ Edward W. Said, *Dans l'ombre de l'Occident [The Shadow of the West]* Payot, 2014, p. 13.

Mudimbe (1994: 13) wrote in *Les Corps glorieux des mots et des êtres* [*The Glorious Bodies of Words and Beings*]: "We are amused by my linguistic talents. [...] I speak French to my schoolmasters, Swahili to my fellow students, Songhye to my father and Luba to my mother." The force of French, the language of the schoolmasters – in both the metaphorical and proper sense of the word, because the schoolmasters were white – imposed itself on him very early on. As a child, Mudimbe realised that the choice of language is far from being a simple matter of mechanical translation. Language is the seat, the instrument of power. He speaks Swahili with fellow students, people of the world, those from elsewhere. Is not Swahili the language of trade? In a school environment, a place of mixing par excellence, this language establishes itself, provided that French allows it. As a *master* required by the context of birth and circulation of different languages, the young Mudimbe navigates between the various societies he tells us about: the society of the schoolmasters, of the fellow students, the paternal domain and that of his mother. Africanists have made an object of knowledge from this polyglottism. We should clarify the conditions for the creation of this object in Africa, but also reflect on how the social sciences, beyond the continent, create their object of research. We have thus broadened the question of translation beyond linguistics, to all social practices. We deal with the way in which translation prioritises the question of alterity, of difference, of the definition of the Other. In the service of colonialism, translation serves to deny the existence of other languages and other peoples and to legitimise their inferiorities, thus creating one of the foundations of Western "superiority". Edward Said has shown the close link between discursive constructions and forms of knowledge, the definition of truths and the justification of domination over colonised peoples.

This particular example emphasises an important question worth discussing: how is history, not only the past, told and re-told, read and re-read, by whom and for whom? How is Africa defined as an object of knowledge and thus defined, interpreted? This issue is all the more complex because it brings into question the researcher's affiliations. Questioning the itinerary of knowledge production about Africa is tantamount to positing the status of the "African voice", the epistemological legacy left to us by experience accumulated in Africa on the functioning of men in society. Ngĩgĩ wa Thiong'o launches a warning that should be kept in mind: "So if we want to develop knowledge, philosophy, and other arts through African languages, then we have to learn how to listen to what African tongues are saying. The pen should

work with the tongue [...] It's sad that instead of that cooperation, the pen has become the knife that cuts off African people's tongues."

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PART ONE:

**TRANSLATION THROUGH THE LENS
OF HISTORY**

CHAPTER ONE

TRANSLATING THE TIME OF CAPITAL: TRAVELLING IDEAS AND COLLECTIVE CLAIMS-MAKING IN ACCRA'S MAKOLA MARKET

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Translating coeval temporalities: Theoretical perspectives on travelling ideas and transformation

According to Harootunian (2000; 2010), temporal interpretative frames and templates have been used throughout most of the twentieth century's social theory to construct a distinctly modern experience in contrast to its ultimate other, the so-called Third World. For the case of Africa, Mudimbe (1988) and Mbembe (2001) most famously pointed to the practice of constituting a category of the continent that can be analysed only in negative terms, in the absence or lack of 'progress', 'modernity' or 'development' (Mudimbe 1988, 4; Mbembe 2001, 1), or in the words of Harootunian (2010, 367), in terms of history, 'stalled (...) to live repetitively their presents as unchanging pasts', because 'any time that doesn't conform to the normative social and historical time of a capitalist modern present' belonged to the historical temporality of untimeliness and was denied 'its immanence and contemporaneity with the modern present, that has judged it as unworthy of equivalent status'.¹

These critiques are grounded in the rejection of social formations, dated along a singular stream of time, on which cultural difference is

¹ Mbembe takes this point furthest when he states that 'the discursive definition of African identities and differences is not about being-other' but about not being at all (2001, 4).

translated into historicity, a point famously raised in Walter Benjamin's *On the Concept of History*. Benjamin notes that 'the concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogenous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself. (...) History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now (*Jetztzeit*)' (Benjamin 1969, 261). Benjamin proposes that the moment of everydayness, marking the emergence of modern capitalism, allows for the possibility of difference in the constant production of sameness in capital's routinising force. For Benjamin, time and history cannot be thought of in singular terms, but are fundamentally multiple, entangled and – crucially – coeval in nature, repeatedly converging with themselves and other temporal strands.

More recently, Anderson (1998) and Cheah (1999) pick up this critique of the 'denial of coevalness' (Fabian 1983, 31-32) when they contest the so-called 'time-lag' associated with the idea of 'latecomers' in history, while Chakrabarty (2008) refutes what he calls the 'historicist', 'stagist' or 'waiting-room' versions of history that do not culminate in the history of capitalist modernity. Their responses to these issues emphasise the mutual integration of various times lived and experienced across the world. Whereas for Anderson, the "specter of comparison" simultaneously brings to the fore Euro-American modernity and its outsides, which are mutually inscribed in each other, Chakrabarty develops a dual historicism in which the categories and subjectivities of capitalist modernity may be reaching into each and every corner of the planet, but their 'universalizing thrusts' are cut through with various 'History 2s', that do not lend themselves to the historical development of capital, thereby disrupting its ordering logic and rendering its realisation necessarily incomplete. Similarly, Mbembe contributes to this debate his concept of 'entanglement', when he describes the time of the postcolony as marked by 'discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another and envelope one another' (2001, 14).

Mbembe, who bases his point on a concept of 'time as lived (...) in its multiplicity and simultaneities, its presences and absences, beyond the lazy categories of permanence and change' (ibid., 8), approaches these often evasive everyday convergences through the lens of the 'contemporaneousness' of subjects, their 'experience of "living in the concrete world"' and ultimately their 'subjective forms that make possible any validation of its contents' (2001, 17). It is in this work of 'validation' that the complex interplay of multiple, coeval temporalities can be

revealed, as convergences require specific efforts of translation between the plausibilities involved. This is in line with Chakrabarty who argues that there are no universally valid concepts. Instead, globalisation is rendered possible through continuous translation which allows those affected by it to creatively adapt (rather than one-sidedly assimilate) travelling significations upon their integration in the new context – thereby evading the universalising thrusts of seemingly universal concepts, such as capitalist modernity, ultimately providing the possibility for difference.

In other words, evasive everyday entanglements between coeval temporal strands can be approached through the lens of translations and subsequent validations of different subjectivities and associated significations of order. This conceptualisation of converging, coeval temporalities as continuous translations moves away from a concept of historical change through unilinear assimilation to a multi-sided process that is actively shaped by the efforts of translation actors. These actors continuously reproduce the plurality of coeval temporalities along with, as Mbembe (1999, 4) puts it, the subjectivities ‘that make these temporalities possible and meaningful’. Mbembe’s point emphasises that instead of thinking about Africa in terms of alternatives, that is, from the point of view of cultural relativism, which ultimately freezes African identities and not least reproduces the notion of an implicit referent of these alternatives (Mitchell 2000, xii), understanding Africa in the world requires us to take seriously the role of capital, while refuting the notion of its unilinear assimilation in local sites. His methodological emphasis on the everyday opens the way to understand the ‘distinctive historicity’ of African societies in this very ‘multiplicity of times, trajectories, and rationalities that, although particular and sometimes local, cannot be conceptualized outside a world that is, so to speak, globalized’ (ibid., 9).

Several authors have theorised the temporal character of capitalism, most prominently among them Thompson (1967), Harvey (2006) and Sewell (2008). Based on its ‘complex and dynamic process wherein diverse material landscapes of commodity production, distribution, exchange, consumption, servicing and disposal are fabricated in reciprocal relation to the temporally determined dictates of surplus value realization’ (Castree 2009, 27), capitalism probably has an ordering effect on all areas of social life. This materialises in a particular capitalist temporality, ‘punctuated time’, which is ‘rigidly programmed into the formal calendrics of financial debt and benefit, self-renewal as a citizen, [and] insistent work schedules’ (Guyer 2007, 411). The structure of the capitalist system of production, in other words, goes hand in hand with the construction of a particular subjectivity as capitalism presumes certain forms of control over

personhood, in the form of free labour. In Chakrabarty's (2000, 654) words, the Marxian category of abstract labour, which 'is juridically and politically free – yet socially unfree', combines 'the Enlightenment themes of juridical freedom (rights, citizenship) and the concept of the universal and abstract human who bears this freedom', because free labour is 'both a precondition for capitalist production and its invariable result' (Chakrabarty 2008, 63).

Yet, as explained by Castree (2009, 35), 'we live in a more-than-capitalist world: one where (...) there are other stories to be told, other modes of living, other today's and various possible tomorrows.' Or, to follow Guyer (2007), all these forces do not necessarily produce complete ruptures or transitions. Instead, transformation results from 'not so much a break as a major shift composed of a multitude of small ruptures', which implies 'continuations and reverberations that are configured into themes and images in novel but not necessarily revolutionary ways' (ibid., 410). These composites then call for an analysis of the 'still-lingering and newly emergent entailments and dissonances that escape their terms of reference and that constitute life in the attenuated temporal spaces in which everyday intelligibilities are forged' (ibid.). Mbembe's emphasis on the *contemporaneousness* or the convivial experience of the everyday that is simultaneously within and without the time of capital equally underlines that that which he calls the modern African condition cannot be described in the simple juxtaposition to the time of capital or modernity. For Mbembe, 'every age, including the postcolony, is in reality a combination of several temporalities' in which persist different significations and relations of subjectivity (ibid., 15).

This chapter is concerned with the translation of capitalist relations of subjectivity into the Makola market of Ghana's capital, Accra. Data for this analysis was collected between 2011 and 2014 over the course of ten months of fieldwork, applying a mix of qualitative interviews and participant observation in market stalls and meetings of market associations. I proceed by retracing these translations in the fields of market leadership, conceptions of justice, and finally notions of entitlement, by drawing on traders' 'validations' of travelling significations of order, previously translated into their everyday.

Coeval constructions of political subjectivity: Translating significations of order

Makola market is the centre of commercial activity in Ghana's capital, Accra, hosting an estimated 30,000 traders. Clark's (1994) seminal analysis of Kumasi Central Market reveals the principles that structure

Ghanaian traders' collective organisation. Although her main preoccupation is the role of these collectivities in safeguarding traders' economic interests – emphasising the role of market organisations in managing entrepreneurial risks and competition besides providing support in times of private hardship or need – Clark also describes the capacity of these groups to voice dissent on a political level. Like Clark's description of the structural characteristics of the market system in Kumasi, collective negotiations of subjectivities in Makola unfold along commodity lines, that is, the '[f]ormal groups and informal sets of colleagues defined by commodity and by location' (Clark 1994, 219). These assemblages of sheds and kiosks into such market stall lines offering goods and commodities of a similar kind can be read as a material expression of the time of the market in that they accommodate the particular subjectivities and relationships of entitlement and obligation between market actors that evade the marketised rationalities of capital time, while at the same time enabling the very rotation of different forms of capital in the marketplace (cf. Marfaing and Thiel, 2013).

In the following, I extend this observation of the entanglement between mechanisms lending themselves to the time of capital and those evading it altogether onto market traders' collective claims-making practices. In my first empirical example, I explore the mechanisms legitimating market leadership and their entanglement with received proceduralistic approaches associated with the time marked by the capital-citizenship-(nation)state formation, which arguably only partially "nationalise" the market traders' concept of order. My second case illustrates the creative appropriation of ideas pertaining to justice in Makola's localised market courts. Finally, I explore transnational travels of ideas in the form of international NGOs seeking to associate traders with concepts of citizenship as a "rights-bearing relationship with the state", thereby affecting the understanding of entitlement by associations within the market.

Translating leadership: Syncretic forms of representation

Commodity lines in Makola run along multiple, overlapping and cross-cutting collective identities, including identities based on capital access and partisan divisions and, to some extent, ethnicity. Irrespective of their structural differences, these associations share fundamental notions of representation and leadership. Equally, they have in common their creativity regarding the reception, translation and adaptation of alternative travelling concepts of order into the context of their marketplaces.

Besides providing clear spatial markers of belonging, commodity lines are headed by market leaders, assisted by a council of elders. The market's organisation is predominantly in the hands of these experienced successful market elders, among whom a paramount market 'queen' is selected. As in the Ghanaian chieftaincy system, this position is usually for life, but unwritten mechanisms of replacement are available to the traders. These leaders embody the voice of the market associations and represent traders during their colleagues' funerals, weddings and outdoorings,² in addition to managing all external relations, both with state institutions and, increasingly, international organisations. Leadership qualities are deeply associated with motherly qualities to vigorously defend the 'market family'³ from the outside, while fostering peace and harmony on the inside.

Market queens generally legitimise their positions in the market with recourse to 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012). Hence, market leaders adopt a number of principles from their royal 'namesakes' in the Ghanaian chieftaincy system, the queen mothers (Clark 1997). For example, the market queen of Tema Station market claims to have been selected on the basis of accounts of her bravery to resist eviction of the squatters' market in the early days of its installation. However, other association members stress that in addition to this historic narrative and her claim to seniority on site, this queen is also part of Accra's Osu royal lineage and is perceived to be an 'owner' of the market's ground.

In this same order of ideas linking legitimate leadership to a particular relationship to the market's soil, Ga ethnicity is a key prerequisite for market leadership in virtually all sections of Makola. As one of the executives of the New Makola Traders Union (NMTU) confides, 'I could never be President of the Union, I am not a Ga'.⁴ In addition to her ethnicity, the actual president of this same union invokes a number of legitimising twists in her biographical narrative.

I was born in the market, it was a miracle. My mother was already in her forties. Everybody thought she had just gotten big. She was the last market queen in the old market [before the construction of Selwyn market, which was destroyed following Rawlings' first coup of 1979 and was later rebuilt

² That is, the presentation of a new born to the community one week after birth (Adjaye 2004, 41ff)

³ Interview, Executive New Makola Traders Union, 8 December 2011, Accra

⁴ Interview, Executive of New Makola Traders Union, 12 February 2011, Accra

as 31st December market]. As a young girl, I came to the market every day. I grew up in the market.⁵

These selection criteria allow the installation of market leaders without recourse to bureaucratic selection procedures and thereby evade the ordering principles associated with the (nation) state, citizenship, and ultimately, the time of capital.

Many market associations, however, claim to purposefully integrate mechanisms of capital time into their ordering activities. The president of Tema Station Annex Market association, doubles as an assemblyman in Accra's Osu local assembly and is well versed in the rules of the political game. This he effectively translates into the market realm, starting with creating legitimacy through regular balloting, in particular on colour-coded paper, 'to include the illiterates'.

About twelve years ago we decided to change leaders through elections. I was the only one daring to challenge the old leader. They had all sorts of meetings about me, one person. After the fire [which destroyed the market section], the old leaders said it [the fire] was intentional to get rid of them. They even sent people to come and beat me, but they couldn't do it. [After the second fire] people started to agree. They even wanted to enforce leadership upon me, but I insisted on elections. (...) For us, we do not have a queen mother in this part and that is it. Our leaders stand for election every four years. The council of elders maybe cannot de-stool me, but I can be voted out after four years and they can bring up the mistakes I made for this to happen.⁶

In yet another move to ensure transparency and accountability, the association's executives mimic the national 'Know your ministers' poster, which depicts the faces and names of all Ghanaian ministers in many government offices in Ghana. The market's 'Know your association members' version provides all executives' roles and responsibilities, including their phone numbers.

In short, the procedures upheld by associations like the Tema Station Annex Market association speak the language of the state's order of authorisation. However, my interviews also revealed how these new, accountable leaders creatively adapt the processes and technologies of legitimisation that have been carried into market politics in the entanglement with capital time. One executive of Kwasea Guasu market

⁵ Interview, President of New Makola Traders Union, 2 February 2011, Accra

⁶ Interview, President of Second Hand Clothes Sellers Association, 2 December 2011, Accra

explained how leaders are elected by the entire market in this market section. Only later was it disclosed that this mandate is normally ‘for life’⁷ – a detail that rather hints at the ordering principles of the time of the market with its emphasis on seniority and status-bearing exchange relations. Also not coincidentally, this executive of Kwasea Guasu is the offspring of the market division’s queen mother, suggesting at least that kin-based legitimising forces grounded in the market’s time continue to affect the orders of authorisation adapted from the time of capital.

In view of this, although current market associations apply foreign terminology, referring to leaders as ‘presidents’, ‘welfare officers’ or ‘executives’, as observed by Clark (1997, 174), they ‘selectively use and modify a vocabulary of roles and procedures from both chiefly and Western models’ and, hence, creatively dissolve and recombine regimes of signifying order. In other words, they creatively translate and adapt the conceptions of order that travel into Makola, in the moment of convergence between capital time and the temporality of the marketplace.

Translating ideas of justice

Besides the mechanisms that legitimise market leadership, translations of capital time also play into traders’ fundamental concepts of right and wrong, and their expression in particular market institutions.

At one meeting of several StreetNet affiliates, a leader of the Kantamanto Banana Sellers association noted how ‘at the market we (...) are like the UN, we are peacekeepers, dissolving disputes’.⁸ This emphasis on conflict settlement is deeply engrained in the bureaucratic culture of Makola’s market associations. For example, the constitution of Tema Station Annex Market defines an entire set of ground rules on operations in the market. These rules pertain primarily to orderly behaviour, starting from the market’s opening hours, the levies, dues and rents to be paid ‘promptly’ and as ‘determined by the association’, the ‘maintenance of cleanliness’ by all members occupying a market stall and, further, in the interest of sanitation and health, the payment of a toll for regular cleaning. Further rules exist on the appropriate display of goods, ways to ‘make easy identification of members operating in the market’, and to avoid congestions of the entrances and pathways. All breaches of these codes are

⁷ Interview, Executive of Kwasea Guasu Market Association/31st December Market Association, 5 December 2011, Accra

⁸ Interview, Executive of Kantamanto Banana Sellers Association, 8 December 2011, ILGS, Accra

handled by the association's disciplinary committee, which not only patrols the market on a daily basis but also gets involved in the settlement of disputes arising between members, sanctioning misconduct with either fines or confiscations of goods, suspension from the market for a minimum of one week and, in particularly grave cases, the expulsion of the member from the market.⁹

The association vigorously enforces its own byelaws in a localised court, which mimics the Ghanaian legal system and is presided over by its president and board of executives. This court is called in whenever the disciplinary committee fails to solve a dispute. A typical case heard by the 'court' involved an ice water seller who was physically assaulted by a market vendor for refusing to sell the accused any further water until his debt of GHS 0.2 was paid. At first, the allegations were denied; however, after two witnesses were called at the court-like hearing at the association president's office, the case was settled with a GHS 20 fine that was paid immediately.

These procedures appear to transpose elements of the time of capital, as it materialises in the state-citizenship-rights triad (Isin 2012), into the marketplace. However, the temporal approach illuminates how these elements are entangled with market traders' coeval contemporaneity. In the example of the ice water seller, the girl was allowed in principle to report the case herself because the accused is an association member. However, she decided to present the case through an elder relative in the market. These senior kin play an important role in conflict settlement in the Ghanaian culture and, in fact, have been described as also playing a role in the use of the state's courts (Lowy 1978). In a similar line of reasoning, leaders of the association referred to their roles in this conflict as elders rather than judges, with their primary role in the mediation of the conflict and the enforcement of strict punishments as a last resort.

Beyond the entanglement of ordering procedures, the market traders' very concept of justice is subject to creative translations and associated adaptations as well. 'If you don't live according to the law, if you put yourself above the [association's] law, human rights do not apply to you'¹⁰ is a common statement in all sections of the market, despite the fact that human rights are conventionally considered more basic than any other type of rights. In view of such statements, widespread practices of instant justice, such as beating thieves or stripping them naked, appear more

⁹ Interview Treasurer of Second Hand Clothes Traders Association, 6 December 2011, Accra

¹⁰ Interview, President of Second Hand Clothes Sellers Association, 29 December 2011, Accra

reconcilable with the discourses of procedural justice otherwise upheld by these associations, which do not prosecute such practices ‘unless you beat the wrong person’¹¹, that is, an innocent party.

‘We are the 99 percent’: Translating grounds of entitlement

In the third and final case, I explore the creative translations that ensue from the transnational travels of ideas of citizenship into Makola market. At the height of media coverage on ‘Occupy Wall Street’ and the movement’s adoption throughout various loci of financial power in Europe and North America, my informants in Makola genuinely identified with the phrase ‘we are the 99 percent’.¹² Not only are traders of Makola closely connected to world events and transnational activism – even though their particular cause may not have matched that of the OWS protesters – but they identified with these activists on the basis of a shared sense of urgency (Roitman 2013). In this section, I concentrate on the significations of order that have come to structure collective organising and, hence, claims-making in Makola market in times of such intensified transnational connection, especially with the increased involvement of international NGOs, which associate the communities they seek to assist with concepts of entitlement that assume the logic of capital time.

The transnational StreetNet Alliance, which associates several of Makola’s collective bodies with the liberal concept of rights and, by extension, with a distinct signification of traders’ relationship with the state, is the pertinent case here. StreetNet is a network of about fifty member organisations in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Set up in the early 1990s in the form of international meetings and workshops, it was launched in its current form in 2002 (Brown and Lyons 2010, 35; Lindell 2009, 130; 2010ab). Today, StreetNet creates ‘opportunities for associations from different countries to share experiences and promote solidarity among themselves.’ (Lindell 2010a, 8) At the same time, the organisation provides the forum for certain discourses to circulate among these organisations, perpetuating themselves on a global scale. ‘StreetNet (...) has been very influential in creating a global platform for knowledge exchange and capacity-building to strengthen street traders’ associations’ awareness of their rights’ (Brown and Lyons 2010, 45). Or, in the organisation’s own words, ‘[t]he aim of StreetNet is to promote the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Interview, Executive of New Makola Traders Union, 24 November 2011, Accra

exchange of information and ideas on critical issues facing street vendors, market vendors and hawkers (i.e. mobile vendors) and on practical organizing and advocacy strategies¹³ including seeking justice and recognition of rights in the courts (Brown and Lyons 2010, 45).

The claim that StreetNet consolidates particular discourses among its member organisations, is evidenced in particular by the network's incorporation of the ILO 'decent work' agenda in the early 2000s¹⁴ and its contribution to the consolidation of an idea of the so-called informal economy as substantial contributor to national economies whose workers are thus worthy of recognition, legal protection (rights-bearership), and participation in policy-making (Lindell 2010a, 9). When listening to the statements of Makola's StreetNet representatives at high-profile international venues such as the 2015 International Labour Conference in Geneva,¹⁵ it is not surprising that they adopt discourses of 'formalization' and claims making in the channels provided by the state. However, these rationalities also find their way into Makola's local market collectives' speech acts.

The New Makola Traders Union (NMTU) is particularly close to what they call their 'sister association StreetNet',¹⁶ and several of the leading figures double as StreetNet representatives in Ghana (since 2013, the Vice President of the network also derives from NMTU). NMTU has a clear stance in market politics and derives its influence from its substantial membership base (quoted at more than 2,000¹⁷) and, more importantly, its remarkable international visibility as one of the first member associations of StreetNet. Through its affiliation with the StreetNet alliance, NMTU enjoys financial and organisational assistance in the implementation of their educational programme, in which groups of approximately thirty traders from different affiliated markets in Accra are trained in topics ranging from accounting, domestic affairs, health and safety, and not the least, advocacy, leadership and public speaking (cf. analogue activities

¹³ 'History' URL <http://www.streetnet.org.za/show.php?id=19>

¹⁴ 'Voice Regulation on the Informal Economy and New Forms of Work' URL <http://www.streetnet.org.za/docs/research/2003/en/voice.pdf>

¹⁵ 'WIEGO Network Member StreetNet International at the International Labour Conference (ILC) 2015' URL <http://wiego.org/resources/wiego-network-member-streetnet-international-international-labour-conference-ilc-2015>

¹⁶ 'StreetNet and [New] Makola Traders Union are the same thing, we are like sisters' (Interview, Executive of New Makola Traders Union, 25 November 2011, Accra)

¹⁷ 'Makola Market Traders' Union' URL <http://wiego.org/wiego/makola-market-traders-union>

organised by StreetNet described by Jimu 2010, 108 in Malawi, and by Lindell 2009 in Mozambique).

Through the workshops¹⁸, expert consultations and, ultimately, the coaching of market leaders in the use of certain discourses, StreetNet associates Makola market traders with the time of capital. At one such workshop held at the Institute for Local Governance Studies (ILGS) in Accra on 8 December 2011, a group of traders and market leaders from various markets in the Greater Accra region came together to receive training in leadership skills. Among them, a banana seller expressed “We know ourselves, we are together. We don’t want others to talk for us. That is why the workshops here at Institute for Local Government [ILGS] are so important. We have learned that we have rights because we are part of the economy.”¹⁹ In line with these trainings, the main rhetoric of claims staked by traders of Makola revolves around the notion of reproducing the nation – hence, channelling claims in the logic of subjecthood within what Isin (2012) coins the ‘nationality–citizenship–state apparatus’. Wholly in line with Turner’s (2001) argument about the foundations of citizenship in Western Europe, Makola’s traders have come to frame their entitlements in terms of returns for their contribution to the state budget in the form of taxation. How then do female traders express their claims in terms of ‘taxpayer citizenship’?

During a TV show²⁰ sponsored by the UK-based NGO, Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), the New Makola Traders Union and other affiliates of StreetNet expressed their concept of entitlements vis-à-vis the Ghanaian state. The invited speakers expressed their notion of their relationship with the Ghanaian state, apparently as previously conveyed by their transnational partner organisations.

We know that in Ghana, traders have a representative for all traders. We have market bye-laws among other things. At WIEGO [a StreetNet partner organisation in Makola] workshops we learned that we have representatives at the AMA who are responsible for the markets, but they do not work on our behalf. They collect their tolls, but sometimes when we go to the AMA to speak with some of the bosses, they collect our letters but it never reaches anyone [because traders are not taken

¹⁸ Although these events benefit primarily the individual association members who attend them, knowledge is disseminated widely through opinion leadership and the rotation of attendants to these programmes.

¹⁹ Interview, Executive of Kantamanto Banana Sellers Association, 8 December 2011, ILGS, Accra

²⁰ ‘Mmaa Nkommo’ (‘Women’s Talk’), broadcasted by Ghana’s public television station GTV

seriously]. If you look into our contribution to the economy, you can see that market women contribute 85%. [this statistic usually refers to the contribution of informal sector workers as a whole, the contribution of trade to Ghana's GDP is in reality closer to 6% (Ghana Statistical Service 2015)] We pay our taxes which are used for the development of the nation. They use them for a lot of things. (...) We have rights because we are part of the economy.

Another invited speaker, the Ghana representative of WIEGO, seconded this association leader's standpoint during the programme.

They contribute massively to the economy, in the sense that IRS [Internal Revenue Service] collects taxes, AMA collects toll. These bits and pieces make it a lot. Some of the money is used for roads, some is used to repair the hospitals, it is used for all sorts of development in our nation. It is important that the government pay more attention to these women and assist them where necessary and possible. (...) These women have come to see that they have a lot of power they didn't know they possessed. They have rights, it is their right, they are helping the government. The government should be thankful, but instead these women have to beg to get attention.

From the two-hour programme, one hour of which was later broadcasted, these two comments are representative of the many more claims rooted in their reproductive contribution to the state (Turner 2001). Also during my interviews in the market, taxpayer citizenship was a common reasoning. 'We are no longer afraid, as we are now educating ourselves. We just have to call the AMA for an audit of all revenues collected from us!'²¹, a NMTU leader expressed.

The notion of a 'strategic sisterhood' and the transnational transfer of norms associated with it are not uncontested. Ong (1996, 109f) argues how following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995:

[s]trategic sisterhood [emerged as] a new transnational and transcultural strategy to confront the entangled issues of globalization and women's rights (...) The term strategic sisterhood implies a contingent North-South feminist partnership for intervention in different countries where the gender gap is pervasive, but it also suggests a transnational notion of citizenship for all women, (...) [that is] conceptualized in absolute, universalistic terms of freedom and equality, regardless of differences in historical and cultural experiences, not the least of which is colonialism.

²¹ Ibid, 12 December 2011, Accra

Ong's concerns are valid and highly relevant, however, market associations are not merely at the passive receiving end of travelling significations of order that are defined in national and transnational settings, but they creatively translate the travelling concepts into the time of the market. In the following paragraphs, I show how the particular citizenship configuration transported in the work of transnational NGOs such as StreetNet are creatively adapted into traders' contemporaneousness.

Traders' efforts to question their subject positions as taxpayers are informed by significations that are plausible only in the temporal zone of the market. Specifically, the conversion of private into public wealth through taxation (Roitman 2005, 60) is much more complicated than meets the eye. Similar to Roitman's argument that taxation in colonial Cameroon was to be calculated on the 'postconsumption residue of wealth', Ghanaian traders perceive their tax obligations in a manner that deducts obligations to their dependents as the primary responsibility.²² Apart from that, traders' definition of taxes is extended to include all forms of payments to state officials, including bribes. The academic literature has paid significant attention to the mutual integration of illegality and the African state (Bayart 1993, Ellis and MacGaffey 1996). In particular, Roitman (2005) explains how traders arrive at perceiving bribery as a transaction that provides the ground for entitlements. In Roitman's words, the notion of taxpayer citizenship based on the practice of bribing tax officials represents 'more than just a rationalisation of illegal practice; it is a reflection that is grounded in particular notions about what constitutes wealth, what constitutes licit or proper manners of appropriation, and how one governs both wealth and economic relations' (ibid., 256). 'While outside the realm of "the law", and hence described as obviously illegal, unregulated (...) [these economic practices] are nonetheless perceived as 'normal order,' as licit activities insofar as they are admissible and have in some ways come to represent certain truths about the economic, or about ways of acting effectively in the economic realm' (ibid., 264).

Conclusion

The ethnographic material presented in this chapter illustrates how traders evade the universalising thrusts of the time of capital by creatively integrating it into their everyday, or in the words of Mbembe, their own contemporaneousness. The theoretical perspective of temporal convergence

²² Interview, anonymous boutique trader, February 2011, Accra

was mobilised for analysing this moment of integration from the point of view of mutual entanglement rather than one-sided assimilation. The notion of translation in the moment of these temporal convergences allowed appreciating difference without reference to the vocabulary of alternatives, which has been described as freezing social identities and placing them in a static relationship to an implicit referent.

The fact that traders take the various travelling ideas I focussed on in this chapter, extremely seriously, indicates that they do not adopt these concepts merely to please donors or officials – as has been suggested by some – but rather deal with them intensively and with the effort and enthusiasm necessary for translating these ideas into their own contemporaneity. Traders' intensive engagement with these concepts then should be honoured for making these travelling ideas meaningful in the context of the marketplace, rather than stressing the way in which they deviate from supposedly hegemonic models.

To expand the significance of my argument, and to return to Mbembe's argument raised initially, market traders' claims-making practices are a perfect example of 'conviviality', that is, the interaction between various forms of domination and contestation that are rooted in the coeval temporal zones coinciding in the social arena of the marketplace. These entanglements allow different kinds of politics to emerge based on the adaptation of concepts of obligation and entitlement from various temporal origins.

Marketplaces represent the perfect social arena for this type of question because they are closely connected to the flows of people, goods and ideas that profoundly shape the experience of the modern world. At the same time, they are deeply embedded in circuits of exchange and codes of sociability that condition claims and their grounds for recognition. Above all, in the concentration of entrepreneurial innovation and constant adaptation to new circumstances, market actors are perfect facilitators of the repeated translations and subtle negotiations between competing temporal orders. In terms of its broader implications, my argument showed how African market traders are full and active participants in the globalisation process. They do not merely receive travelling ideas but actively select, translate and adapt them into their own temporality.

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CHAPTER TWO

APPROPRIATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA: *KURUKAN FUGA*, THE CLEARING OF DISCORD

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*Kurunkan Fuga*¹ means "the clearing on top of the hill". Jan Jansen (2011: 109) located it in Mali, 95 kilometres south of Bamako and two kilometres north of the town of Kangaba. This clearing, symbol of power and discord, will be the subject of this article.

In 1960, *Présence Africaine* in Paris published Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Soundjata, ou, l'épopée mandingue [Soundjata, or the Mandingo Epic]*, a legend collected from the Guinean griot Mamadou Kouyaté, which met with immediate success. The book corresponded perfectly to its time. Jan Vansina's *De la tradition orale [Oral Tradition]* came out in 1962. This scientific work provides a foundation for discussion on the role of oral narrative, not only for specialists from Africa, but also from elsewhere (Coquery-Vidrovitch and Jewsiewicki 1986: 143-144). Niane, who took on the role of the griot's scribe, replacing him over time, gives the stage to Kouyaté, while remaining the author. As for Vansina, he praises this new genre which flourishes in the Mande world.² Reading both documents at

¹ Kurunkan Fuga from *kuru kan fuga* : /stone /above //bowall/ : the clearing on top of the hill.

² The Mande world includes the extension zone of the former kingdom of Wagadu, or Ghana of Arab travelers, the former empire of Mali and their zone of influence which today covers Mali, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, western and northern Burkina Faso, southern Mauritania, northern parts of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Benin and eastern Niger. Note that these are peoples, civilisations, but not territory.

the time of writing, neither author knew of the other. However, the two independent works lead two closely related lives. Many scholars discussing oral traditions mentioned Vansina, following the example of Niane, and forgetting Kouyaté.

The writing of history, like any other writing, is influenced by trends. The style soon changed. The traditionalist celebrated by Vansina finds his real voice in the stories collected by Gordon Innes (1976), particularly in *The Gambia*. He highlights the traditions of Fuladu and Kaabu, related to the Mandinka of The Gambia. The trend was reinforced at this time when the Commercial Society of West Africa (SCOA), a quintessentially colonial society, founded the SCOA Association in 1974, "for the promotion of scientific research in black Africa" on the initiative of influential researchers such as Jean Rouch and Germaine Dieterlen (Cissé 1988: 15). The Association finances the collection of oral traditions and "promotes the establishment of a respectful and fruitful dialogue between followers of tradition and researchers ..." (Cissé 1991: 8). In January 1975 and February 16-22, 1976, two symposia held in Bamako (Cissé 1988: 15, 19) led to an unprecedented discussion. Confronted with this dialogue which was intended to be two-sided, Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias (1989, 1992) rebelled! He believed that the traditionalist, who was listened to quietly or silently, is also an intellectual who holds as much knowledge as sources. Farias put the dichotomy into perspective and drew attention to an aspect hitherto ignored in the clamour of the Bamako (1975, 1976) and Niamey (1974) conference rooms. A decade later, under the pen of John Jonson (1986), the quest deepened. The authors are many, and I cannot cite them all. Sunjata is the subject of detailed research based on narrative, and Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias stands out particularly (1989, 1992). Stephen Bulman (1990) devoted an excellent doctoral thesis and several articles (1997, 1999) to him. The collective work published by Ralph Austen (2009) and articles such as one that Stephen Belcher (2009) devotes to the hero speak volumes. Fortunately, this trend was continued by Jan Jansen (particularly 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 1995). Other versions would follow, including those collected and analysed by David Conrad (2004).

We should recall that in the 154-page narrative published by Niane, he mentions (on page 152) a large assembly held in the clearing of "Kouroukan Fougá", which resulted in a *constitution* for the empire. This was in 1960, in the middle of the period of independence of French-speaking African countries. One of the last works devoted to Sunjata was published by Harmattan in 1998 under the title *The Charter of Kurukan*

Fuga.³ Unlike the other narratives, Niane's introduction to the book presents the text as *The Charter* of the Mande, a text "discovered" following a seminar held in Kankan, Guinea, 1998. "A college of griots" re-established "the entirety of the 44 laws of the Mande Charter or Kurukan Fuga Charter" (1998: 12).

A 2008 conference in Bamako celebrated the text as *The Charter*, which now rivals the English *Bill of Rights*, and the French *L'Esprit des Lois*. The debate on Africa, the cradle of human rights, was launched.

Historians, anthropologists, philosophers and many others, specialists on the continent or not, have wholeheartedly joined in the discussion, leading to an ongoing raging polemic.

Beyond these passionate debates, this article will explore the genealogy of the practice of discovering the human rights of the Mande in Africa at the end of the 20th century and, furthermore, claiming Africa, not only as the cradle of humanity but that of these rights. Focusing on a concept as fundamental as the charter allows a nod to the work of Valentin Yves Mudimbe (1997), and to the concept of the colonial library in particular.

How do we accomplish this through the example of texts which have continued to be shared? The *Charter of Kurukan Fuga* will serve as an example. To this end, I will first study how and under what conditions oral traditions are formed, and how textual innovation occurs. I will next question the parties who are debating the clearing. Finally, I will propose the thesis of cultural editing to explain the discord.

1. *Interpretatio romana*

Before arriving at Antiquity, we will explore the animated debates that preceded our time. Samuel Moyn (2010), author of the noteworthy book, *The Last Utopia. Human Rights in History*, suggests two useful examples. The first involved the relevant remark of an Irish philosopher of the 18th century, the second a heated debate that continues to pit the British, French and Americans against each other with respect to the origins of Human Rights. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), an Irish politician and philosopher, known for his support of the American revolutionaries and opposed to the

³ I have not taken into account the work published in 2014 by Mouhamadou Cissé, son of Youssouf Tata Cissé, entitled *The Charter of the Manden*, T 1. *From the Oath of the Hunters to the Abolition of Slavery* (1222- 1222). The reason is very simple: the publisher has only released the first volume. To do justice to the Master's work, we will wait until it is complete to better judge the genealogy which begins, as its title indicates, with a hunter's oath and ends with a national charter.

French revolution, rightly noted that the universalisation of rights obscured their true origins (Moyn 2010: 19,24). The second allows us to point out the highly contested origin of human rights. Three illustrations follow. First, in the 19th century, the German jurist Georg Jellinke (1851-1911) did not hesitate to affirm that the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man originated from American discussions on rights, which themselves were inspired by the progress of the Reformation in the States which would later make up Germany. As recently as 1989, on the occasion of the centennial celebrations of the Revolution, Margaret Thatcher risked a diplomatic incident by claiming that the French got Human Rights from elsewhere. I agree with Moyn that serious reflection is needed on the origins of Human Rights of which so many are proud. This remark will guide our examination.

I propose a diachronic analysis of the borrowings, interpretations and translations of models that have been sprinkled through history. We will limit ourselves to the Mediterranean region where Africa and Europe meet. We will call on Publius Cornelius Tacitus (60-120), who mentions *interpretatio graeca* and *interpretatio romana*, to summarise two major phenomena of Antiquity. At that time, religion, in all its authority, dominated private as well as public life, and went hand in hand with politics. The religious field had the habit of borrowings and even abductions, as the invaluable examples inspired by Patrick Geary (1978) prove.

In his great classic, *Germania*, devoted to the Germanic peoples, Tacitus (58-120), who dwells on the religion of these peoples, states:

For Suevia is divided and cut in half by a continuous mountain-range, beyond which live a multitude of tribes. The name of Ligii, spread as it is among many states, is the most widely extended. It will be enough to mention the most powerful, which are the Harii, the Helvecones, the Manimi, the Helisii and the Nahanarvali. *Among these last is shown a grove of immemorial sanctity. A priest in female attire has the charge of it. But the deities are described in Roman language as Castor and Pollux. Such, indeed, are the attributes of the divinity, the name being Alcis. They have no images, or, indeed, any vestige of foreign superstition, but it is as brothers and as youths that the deities are worshipped.*" (Tacitus 1942, translated by Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodrigg; Italics are mine; MD. Online access <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0083%3Achapter%3D43>; consulted on December 21, 2017).

H. J. Rose, an eminent translator of Tacitus into English, had this to say about the attitude of Plutarch, and therefore of the Greeks, with respect to religion, and confronted with the religions of the vanquished:

There are two fundamental, tacit assumptions made by the majority of Greek writers on religion. The first is that the gods are real, and care more or less for all men, not only for the Greeks. The second that *the deities of foreign nations are simply the familiar Greek gods under new names* [...] 'All men', says the son of Nestor, 'have need of gods' [...] The whole of Olympos, and particularly Poseidon, attend the banquets of the Ethiopians. *Zeus takes an interest in the tribes of Northern Thrace*, quite beyond the sphere of Achaian culture. [...] *To conceive of an absolutely godless race, or one unacquainted with the gods of Hellas, would apparently be impossible for Homer.*

Starting out with this presupposition, it is *not to be wondered that the Greeks found their own gods everywhere, especially among the more civilized* of the non-Hellenic peoples whom they came to know. The most famous example of this is *the second book of Herodotos*, in which *the gods of Egypt and those of Greece are equated throughout* (Rose 1924: 53-54; MD).

A more recent analysis of texts, archaeological sources and many others, leads to similar conclusions, such as in the work of Alain Cattode (2007).

Cattode notes that the Libyco-Punic gods, thus African, are likened to those of the Roman conqueror. For example, Baal Hamon assumes the identity of Saturn in Rome. However, it is not a "total and absolute" assimilation, although some consider it pure and simple (see Le Glay, particularly 1990: 69 in Cattode 2007: 6). What Cattode calls syncretism, "supreme art of compromise", flourished in North Africa under the High Roman Empire, i.e. from the year 27 under the reign of the Emperor Octavian, to 192 under Commodus. It is known that the *interpretatio romana* was preceded by the *interpretatio graeca*. At the time, religion and politics went hand in hand. The local elites, who were granted Roman citizenship and who were also concerned about the loyalty of their local fellow citizens, took the liberty of Romanising their local deities by erecting temples, altars or statues to them as with their Roman counterparts. These deities were given Roman names to make a good impression and deserve citizenship. A "compromise" was found to please the empire, the divinities and the local populations (Cattode 2007: 11). The fate of their city came at this price, eager as it was to obtain the coveted status of municipality or colony. The couple Hercules and Liber corresponds to its Punic, or African, substratum; Shadraphat and

Milkarstart of *Lepcis Magma* in Tripolitania. The African pantheon was enriched, but it retained most of its personality despite centuries of Roman domination. The gods were honoured in Roman fashion, without changing their nature. Historians refer to a "surface Romanisation" which only concerned important deities (Cattode 2007: 21, 62, 418, 420).

During the 2nd century, however, genies and local African gods appear in Latin inscriptions and were honoured in the Roman tradition. They flourished, only to disappear during the 4th century (Cattode 2007: 422) – the conqueror was conquered. In his way, the African subject conquered his triumphant victor through religion. We should, however, resist the temptation of an *interpretatio africana*, witness to the constant to and fro between the Libyco-Punic and the Roman (Smadja 2011: 205).

According to Elisabeth Smadja, Cattode orientalises some religions. Such a conclusion would have required the researcher to consider the religious consequences of a greater integration of Africa into the Roman imperial system. Smadja accurately points out that the situation in Africa is more like the idea of the "collegiality of the gods" among the Romans during the period of the "second paganism", noted by Paul Veyne (1991: 300, cited by Smadja 2011).

The reciprocal borrowing of the gods and consorts was commonplace. The same is true of texts. What is the situation further south, in sub-Saharan Africa vis-à-vis the colonisers, their norms at the time and today?

2. The Clearing of Discord

The following is a summary of the subject of discord. The project for "exploiting opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies for the collection, safeguarding and promotion of African culture", based in Guinea, organised four seminars: Labé in 1997, Kankan in 1998, Mopti in 2002, and finally Bamako in 2004. The meetings brought together rural radio hosts and "traditional communicators". Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Burkina Faso's "communicators and traditionalists" of the Mande world participated in Kankan. Éric Jolly (2010: 902), who cites online sources on the issue, counts nine griots (eight Guineans and one Senegalese), journalists, and Guinean, Malian and Burkinabè radio staff among the participants. However, only one name is mentioned, Siaka Kouyaté from the village of Niagassola, a member of the Dokala family, bearer of the ritual balafon of Sumanguru Kante (Niane in *The Charter* 1998: 12). In the text below, I will examine the stakeholders in the discord, as well as their reasons, and then conclude with the importance, or lack

thereof, of the "fabrication" thesis of which the Charter's supporters are accused.

Who are the stakeholders?

First, the institutions. Among those present in Kankan were the Centre for Language and Historical Studies through the Oral Tradition (Celtho), Intermedia Consultants, a Swiss organisation appointed by the Swiss Development Cooperation, the Intergovernmental Agency of la Francophonie, rural radio stations, and delegates from the concerned States (73). The Celtho is an African Union centre specialising in oral traditions. Its presence, that of other international organisations, delegates of the respective governments, an NGO (and Swiss at that), as well as populations, shows that those called "development stakeholders" were present. The governments and their bilateral and multilateral partners set the tone. Moreover, we know that Celtho, like the African Union, chronically lacks funds to run its programs, and thus grasps at any potential donor to continue running the minimum of programs. The Celtho crisis reflects that of the African post-colonial state, related to the cult of charters, which is flourishing, especially in Mali. We recall the efforts made by Amadou Toumani Touré's unstable regime (with political ulterior motives) under the pressure of local activists, to inscribe this clearing on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* in 2009.⁴

From an excerpt from the speech of the Secretary General of the African Academy of Languages (Aclan), the reader can understand the hopes that some elites place in the Charter:

[...] Educators, writers and researchers were invited [to the Bamako conference on the Charter] ... Africa must draw on these sources to *find its own way towards development, decentralization, democracy* [...] Shouldn't the organizations of the sub-region (ECOWAS, WAEMU, etc.) be *inspired by the Charter of Kurukan Fuga to accelerate the implementation of their integration objectives?* (Proceedings of the meeting, in *The Charter* 1998: 59; Sagara in *The Charter* 1998: 65-66)

Francis Simonis (2015b) reports in detail on the rivalry between the governments of Mali and Guinea since the mid-1970s to secure the monopoly, first on the sacred balafon of Sumanguru Kante, King of Soso

⁴ Jansen accurately cites the large sign at Kurukan Fuga on the road from Bamako to Siguiri via Kangaba. Images of the panel are easily found on the Internet. Jansen mentions the image from chapter 12 of the doctoral thesis of Étienne Smith (2010). The local activists included those from the *Nko* movement, an influential group in Mali, of Guinean origin, which advocates the use of national languages (see Amselle 1990, Jolly 2010, Smith 2010, among others).

(1200-1235), and then on the text that will be called the Charter. The balafon under the name "Sosso Bala cultural space in Niagassola, Guinea" was finally classified in 2001 as "a masterpiece of the oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity". The revolutionary government of Sékou Touré had decided to permanently block the balafon in Niagassola, Guinea, instead of letting it pass, as required by tradition, from this village to another which is a few kilometres away in Mali (22). As for the "Charter of the Mandé, proclaimed in Kurukan Fuga", after a "subtle struggle of influence" (27) between two prominent researchers and "cultural entrepreneurs" – the Malian Youssouf Tata Cissé and the Guinean Djibril Tamsir Niane –, it was finally classified in favour of Mali in 2009. And yet the text, so often quoted, is in fact the text promoted by Guinea.

These efforts are reminiscent of the lines that Samuel Moyn (2010) devoted to the circumstances of the birth of Human Rights, that is, a context of Western utopian failure following the Second World War. These utopias can be compared with the independence and promise of development in Africa. Moyn writes:

The international human rights movements became so significant, then, *neither because it offered a rights-based doctrine alone* nor because it forged a truly vision for the first time. Rather, it was *the crisis of other utopias that allowed the very neutrality that had made 'human rights' peripheral to the aftermath of World War II –when taking sides in a contest of programmatic visions seemed so pressing – to become the condition of their success* (2010: 213; MD).

Much as human rights become what Andreas Rahmatian (2011: 144, see also Supiot 2007a: 187) calls a rhetorical justification of the powerful, Kurukan Fuga has become a justification for politicians, and even elites in Africa. Some use it uncritically to derive political dividends (Jolly 2010: 905 sq.).

Who were the personalities present?

Niane, author of *Soundjata, the Mandingo Epic*, translator of Mamadou Kouyaté; Raphaël N'Diaye, director of Celtho; and Kouyaté, magistrate and "traditionalist". Also present in this group were Bamako Sheikh Hamidou Kane, Martin Faye, Mangoné Niang and Cissé (*The Charter*, particularly page 12).

The Kankan Seminar, the origin of the book *The Charter of Kurukan Fuga*, was marked by heated debates, which continue to this day (Amselle 2013, Diagne 2011, Jolly 2012, Smith 2009, Jansen 1995, 2000 Simonis 2015).

The essential theses are: the hand of the State, instrumentalisation, and fabrication. Having examined the first two, let us look at the last.

The fabrication thesis is familiar, since the very people who published the *Charter* agree that they are bringing together several voices, several texts from which they have chosen the one they wish to make available to the reader. Let us read them: "[...] the griots began to declaim the praise of Soudjata [...] Mr Kouyaté Siriman [...] without betraying the text, *grouped the "laws" by centre of interest and presented them in the form of a Charter or Constitution [...]*" (Niane in *Charter* 2008: 12; MD). The magistrate Kouyaté is presented as a descendant of the family holding the ritual balafon of Sumanguru, which seems to justify everything. We shall return to this singular combination but let us first read the critics.

Étienne Smith (2009: 2) notes that "the term 'charter' is problematic", since no consensus exists among the "cultural entrepreneurs" who are behind it. Smith points out that everything begins with the "oath of the hunters" of the Mande (*donsolu kalikan*), the hymn of the brotherhood of hunters, collected by the Malian ethnologist Youssouf Tata Cissé in 1965. Later, the same text "was established [...] as 'Charter of the Mande' which would then become the *Charter of Kurukan Fuga*". The metamorphosis continued until 2014, when Youssouf Tata Cissé's *Charter of the Manden* appears, published by Mouhamadou Cissé (see note 3).

Amselle (2013: 4) maintains, with respect to the meaning of the *Charter*:

In the Sunjata epic, and the Kurukan Fuga assembly which marked its climax, one needs to detect the staging (by the dominant aristocracies, or the contemporary political elites that succeeded them, of a process of establishment or re-establishment of an imperial power, which took over from that of Emperor Sumanworo Kanté.(11) This is why Kouyaté and Kanté's idea of comparing the Kurukan Fuga Charter to the "Bill of Rights" and the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" *does not make much sense.*" (MD)

Francis Simonis (2015: 2) adds to this subject in his blog in the newspaper *Libération*:

In reality, this charter has no historical foundation. It is the result of a conflation between a so-called charter of Kouroukan Fouga – which was supposedly enacted in 1236 but was in fact written in 1998 by the Guinean *griot and magistrate* Siriman Kouyaté, probably at the request of the *historian* Djibril Tamsir Niane – and the Hunters' Oath reportedly dating back to 1222, and which the Malian *researcher* Youssouf Tata Cissé claims to have collected in 1965.

In these last two cases the pen is alert, and the style polemic. But what about the following, once we suspect the various protagonists of fabrication, a term that Souleymane Bachir Diagne suspects with respect to the polemicists (2011: 670)?⁵

Jean-Loup Amselle (2013) advances a series of objective reasons that shed light on the historical context of Kurukan Fuga. The new Mande aristocracy benefited from this moment to found its power and authority which it ravished from Sumaoro Kante. Granted. Yet to then argue the idea of the precedence of the "Charter of Kurukan Fuga" to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen or the Bill of Rights appears dubious. Although it has had no real existence, it is quite logical for at least one reason – the historical context.

The stakeholders involved, as true intellectuals, were not content to tell and re-tell stories, as was believed in the past. They continuously innovated, using the tools at their disposal. Farias (1992) convinces us by writing skilfully about Wa Kamissoko, whose shadow looms over Kankan. Of what use is the aftermath of Sunjata's victory to his sycophants who probably do not want to limit themselves to the 13th century? They obviously use the real or mythical facts surrounding them to revive their past, their history. In a global context, what could be more appropriate in the writings of Arab intellectuals or others than to raise the statements of Kurukan Fuga to the level of a Charter? More than ever, those whom Smith referred to as "cultural entrepreneurs" are at work.

In so doing, which model should we accept? Where should the example come from? Formerly, as historians attest to, the example came from the East, whether Yemen, Arabia, or India. Today, the reference is more precise, the *Bill of Rights*, the *Declaration of Human Rights*. Why not the Hammurabi Code, as Amselle suggested? Since the document is little known in the West and almost not at all in Africa, why bother? It is better to aim higher. Let us recall that we are in the late 1950s and early 1960s. No one knows the importance of this crucial turning point better than Souleymane Kanté (1922-1987) and Niane (1960: 152), who in fact called the Sunjata declaration the "Constitution of the Mande". The fervour of Guinean independence in 1958 and of Mali in 1960 had experienced this. With the help of the context, the only thing left to do was to adopt the reference. We will return to this question.

Amselle clearly distinguishes Kurukan Fuga's statement from the *Glorious Revolution* of the 17th century in England. Likewise, he differentiates

⁵ Professor Diagne is preparing a major work on the question of "translation", in which he gives an in-depth account of this example. He was kind enough to share his manuscript. I thank him for his generosity.

the social contract sanctioned by Sunjata and the "social contract" of the 17th and 18th centuries. However, similarity is required. But again, the objective is not to establish an equivalence between identical historical facts, because it does not exist. The debate is moot if we are satisfied with this answer. I am interested in the *why* of things. Let us recall the first sentence of Amselle's article: "One should first of all note that, in this as in other cases, the fact that we are *asking whether Africa invented Human Rights might prove more interesting than any actual answer* to the question itself " (2013: 1; MD). Let's analyse the path that leads to Kurukan Fuga.

In fact, the problem is not the "fabrication" that some purists point out, but how this innovation stands up and will endure, that is, endure in the landscape of oral histories proclaimed in the form of songs, stories, and texts chanted by griots. Note that this is a context of the sudden entrance of the Mande world into the French "written culture" (literacy), as in the work of Roger Chartier (Mbodj-Pouye 2008: 513). I revisit the issue which is the focus of Karin Barber's reflections on "tin trunk literature" (see Mbodj-Pouye 2008: 513), which served as a repository for so many texts produced during the colonial period in Anglophone Africa, particularly in Nigeria and Kenya.

[...] questions about how and in what circumstances a tradition is constituted, how texts can exist without a tradition, how textual innovation takes place, and how we can conceptualize the history of some of the more isolated and sporadic private inventions. One thing this preliminary study may suggest is *that innovation is not the problem. The problem is how to make innovations stick*; in other words, how to constitute and sustain an enduring textual environment (Barber 2006: 405).

Given the francophone character of the debate and the forms that cultural entrepreneurs propose for the text, the chances are very slim that the forty-four legal texts will endure in the griot milieu. In fact, another audience is targeted, that of scholars who very often evade the conditions of knowledge production, namely the Charter. Again, what are these conditions?

3. Cultural editing and norms of composition

Let us linger for a moment on the stories known about *The Charter* only through the book published in 1998, and texts available on the Internet. I am not aware of any audio recordings available. How do we go from the griot, the intellectual of 1970-1980 who strongly mixes in writing

– whether Arabic or French – to those of the following decade that pride themselves on *N'ko*? It is important to understand the impact of his time on the griot, to recognise the new allies on the stage and how the griot updates his text and himself. We need to find the appropriate balance of the phenomenon of "cultural editing", to conceptualise the confrontation between the local media and the print and electronic media which results in a sort of *mise en abyme* (metatheater) of the former. Finally, the role of UNESCO.

To answer these questions, I am compellingly drawn to the work of Barber (2000: 306, 312, 316), who fortunately analyses the complex phenomenon of literacy, "Enlightenment", and "tradition" in Nigerian theatre composition. She has coined the term 'cultural edition'.

3.1 Cultural Editing

This is a component of the life of the text, oral or otherwise. We delude ourselves that it is taking place within an agreed, standard framework. The oral document is only edited with elements from oral tradition, just as the written text. It feels like two separate containers. In reality, given that the two modes are entangled, nothing distinguishes their respective fields. The qualitative leap that the magistrate allows himself on the text is perceived as violent; in the end, it is not. But since proponents of the Charter claimed it as a source and document of history just as the texts that inspired it, they shocked public opinion. Certainly, the forty-four legal texts make history. However, nothing makes it a document of the same value on the evening of the scansion as the accounts of the eight inspiring griots.

Cultural editing therefore takes place in different and inherently complementary fields. The passage from one to the other is managed by unspoken, and even less written, norms. An innovation that breaks the rules of reference and creates.

Cultural editing in the Mande world is really taking place in a context of orality which is literally immersed in writing. This editing, this modernisation, took place in a context of writing and oral stories. Barber, in her book *Africa's Hidden Histories. Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (2006), has reflected on this passage from the oral to the written in Africa:

Writing, that is, made possible unprecedented feats of cultural editing. For writing, and especially print, offers a license and an instigation to refashion what is being written down in ways that authorize the legitimate, excise the illegitimate, and permanently inscribe that act of separation. Oral traditions are of course themselves being continually revised and

reinvented from within, but *writing brought a different order to revision and reinvention, for it gave unprecedented opportunities for either sanitizing or expelling elements of the oral lifeworld*. Writing and especially print, puts the writer into a relation of partial detachment from the traditions s/he inhabits, setting her/him over against them in the act of writing them (Barber 2006: 19; MD).

What happens when the lawyer-griot arranges the multiple legends of Sunjata into forty-four legal texts? He is primarily targeting those who speak and read French and, even more those who understand the legal system. Just as the system is transplanted into francophone Africa, so are the legal texts. What could be more normal than presenting the word of Sunjata as a law, or even a series of laws? Obviously, the sequencing of these laws is new, the form more than ever, resembling anything but a narrative destined for Sunjata and declaimed by a griot (Jolly 2010: 901 sq.). This passage from the oral narrative to the written is like a practice analogous to that which took place in orature, especially Yoruba and Kikuyu. Barber (2006: 401) has found the right words on this subject:

[...] by addressing the implied reader *as* a reader rather than as a listener, the text affirms certain modernizing, supralocal values. In *Iwe Iwa Rere L'Oso Enia* especially, literariness itself is foregrounded: **by adopting a metrical system that is not non-existent but downright inconceivable in Yoruba orature, the text announces its own writtenness** (MD).

It would not be an exaggeration to consider what is taking place today as a continuation of the ancestral act of editing the text. Such an interpretation is inconsistent with that of Jolly (2010: 905 sq.) who situates the phenomenon on a forty-year scale. The author considers independence, but it would be more judicious to resort to the long term in this case. Thus, I have used Antiquity to situate customs. A triple innovation is taking place before our eyes: first the public, then the form of the text, and finally the role of the mass media.

The audience at the 2004 Bamako meeting is somewhat similar to the meeting held in the same city in 1976 by the West African Commercial Society (SCOA). Kankan brought together NGOs (Intermedia Consultants), the press, international organisations (Celtho), the Agency of la Francophonie, rural radio hosts – few academics compared to Bamako (*Charter* 1998: 11). It included the world of cultural activists more than academics. In Bamako, the tone is more clearly political. Why, then, be surprised at such resolutions which came out of the meeting?

The form of the text refers us back to Siriman Kouyaté, a Guinean magistrate, whose education is not known. He allows himself to blend

narratives declaimed by eight griots into forty-four legal texts – what a *tour de force*! This results in an unprecedented purge of performances that we would like to listen to. Jolly (2010: 903) notes that a transcription and translation exist, but they were never distributed. He also noted the modification between the initial text published on the Internet and the version published by Karthala in 2008.

With a close look, everything has changed: the form, the content, the audience. What is going on? Kouyaté, prosecutor of the Kankan republic, belongs to the elite of his country. His family holds the sacred balafon of Sumaoro, the trophy par excellence, which sets him apart. He is called a "traditionalist", which hardly helps us to understand his identity. The man excelled at playing the balafon, certainly, but was he familiar with stories like some of his elders in the Dokala family (*The Charter* 1998: 12)? We do not know. Niane brandishes his function as magistrate which seems to justify everything. According to Niang, it was this chosen version that was the subject of Kouyaté's written synthesis. His action in Kankan is almost indistinguishable from that of the first authors of a history written in the Kikuyu language. Barber writes opportunely: " John Lonsdale has shown how the first authors of printed history in Kikuyu, the Christian *athomi*, or "readers," *simplified and indeed suppressed the complexities of oral traditions* in order to convene a pan-Kikuyu print public. " (2006: 19; MD)

Lonsdale's observations to Kenyan neophytes are quite appropriate for the Guineans or Malians meeting in Kankan and Bamako. His eloquent statement with respect to simplification is very reminiscent of the case of the *Charter*.

Barber (2006: 19) draws attention to the Kenyan Stanley Kathigira who wrote in 1935, urging his readers to follow his example of cultural editing, a staunch simplifier. As if he were speaking to *Charter* advocates, he justifies his action as follows: "No tribe on earth has all good or all bad customs. Thus, I have written all these, for every Kikuyu to *choose what to propagate and what to abandon*" (Lonsdale 2002: 240; MD).

His goal by actively participating in what Barber calls cultural editing was to call his compatriots to writing.

On the evening of the declamation by the griots of *Djéli Tomba* (the great griot association), Kouyaté was torn between two worlds: that of his family and that of his francophone colleagues, members of the local or international elite. He was given the floor; he used it. He launched a phase of innovation that continues to apply to the legend of Sunjata. Forty-four legal texts, duly drafted, make whole sections of history readable and now accessible to his peers and sponsors. Writing, tradition, "writing tradition", to use Barber and Lonsdale's expression (Lonsdale 2002; Barber 2006:

19), makes it readable. This legibility recalls the concept of *legibility* that we owe to James C. Scott (1998: 183). He defines it as such: "Legibility is a condition of manipulation. [...] Whatever the units being manipulated, they must be organized in a manner that permits them to be *identified, observed, counted, aggregated, and monitored* [...]" (Scott 1998: 183).

Kouyaté translated the legend for them in the form of a charter. To achieve this objective, the magistrate, assisted by linguists, produced a text that is at the origin of the dispute. He is like those early neophytes who,

By engaging in continuous and prolific lifelong acts of inscription, they were *refashioning and sanitizing their oral traditions from within*, but as if from outside – and this was because of the urgent need to deal with the uncertainties arising from their intermediate position *between the "enlightened" educational elite and representatives of colonial authority on the one hand and their own less-literate home communities on the other*. In attempting to address these two audiences at once *the need for editing* must have been intense. (Barber 2006: 19; MD)

Why should we be so moved, as if this were the first time? The colonial and postcolonial period have already provided legions of examples (Barber 2006: 19).

Writing renders many services to Kouyaté and the promoters of The Charter. First, they "elevate" Kurukanfuga's account to the level of any written text, before proclaiming it to date from before the *Bill of Rights*. The translator then produces a new text, staged in front of his current and future readers. These temporary stages are his, far from the village. He takes charge from the front of the stage. The conference rooms of Bamako and elsewhere are now reserved for him. Finally, the editor, while claiming his proximity to oral traditions, takes a certain liberty with the text that none of his illiterate masters can dispute. It takes off. Thanks to its translation into several languages, and its evocation in these rather unusual circles, the charter sees its potential audience expanding more than that of the griot's oral text. A new space of creation and competition between translators opens up. We will recall how the passage of Sunjata's declarations was respectively entitled "the constitution of the Mande" and then "the charter" by Niane in 1960 and 1998, respectively. Similarly, we remember how Cissé went from the "hunters' oath" to "the charter of the Mande" from 1965 to 1998.⁶ This unprecedented liberty appropriated by the translator in cultural editing has been the subject of relevant analysis in precursors of African literature. The process is analogous in both cases. In this regard, Barber notes (2000: 19)

Writing, that is, made possible unprecedented feats of cultural editing. For writing, and especially print, offers a license and an instigation to refashion what is being written down in ways that authorize the legitimate, excise the illegitimate, and permanently inscribe that act of separation (MD).

3.2 Electronic media vs. the griots

The singular role of the media in the design and implementation of *The Charter* deserves attention. People in the media are at the root of the development project that the Kankan meeting initiated.

Two types of media come together: electronic and print media in the form of rural radio and griots, the ancestral media par excellence. In 1998, it was not the intellectuals who set the tone for once, but the media people linked to the development world, which had practical consequences in Kankan. This is how many griots moved to the front line, unlike in Bamako, where Wa Kamissoko officiated in 1976. In 2004, the balance of power was obviously reversed in favour of the politicians. Although there were griots in Bamako, they blended into the mass of "dear guests" or "honourable guests", except for one "Kamissoko de Krina, Lasana" who is on the guest list without an e-mail address. Kamissoko serves as an identifier. In Bamako, the political and intellectual elite gather around the Charter (*Charter* 1998: 135, 59). The stated objective of the meeting was to see traditions, which heretofore had been passed on by word-of-mouth, take on another life thanks to the "modern media of information" (*The Charter* 1998: 13). The days of paper, film or magnetic tape are over, replaced by new information technologies. As Smith accurately points out (2009: 4), the book highlights "the cultural work to be done to popularize this Charter [...] to publicize the find [...]" (MD). It could not have been better put to convene the media. The modern media responded in chorus before their local colleagues, the griots who are not always as present as we think.

The *mise en abyme* of the griot? When Niane published his work, now a classic, he took on the role of interpreter of a griot to whom he continued to pay tribute.

This book is the result of a first contact with the most authentic traditionalists of Mandingo. *I am only a translator*, I owe everything to the Masters, Fadama, Djeliba Koro and Keyla, and more particularly to Djeli Mamadou Kouyaté, from the village of Djeliba Koro (Siguiri), in Guinea (Niane 1960: 7; MD).

At that time, there was no question of considering the griot as the author of the book, even if it was he who told the "translated" story. It was obsolete to transcribe his words. We will never have the slightest idea of Mamadou Kouyaté's words. With Cissé's (1988, 1991) generation, this question is less relevant. Wa Kamissoko, despite all the powers of the translator, had the right to speak. Yet, Kouyaté's forty-four legal texts refer us to an unknown period. *The Charter* delivers the translation of the laws "discovered" in 1998, but we know nothing of the identity of the eight griots to whom Kouyaté owes them. The same is true of their narratives. Moreover, the exact recording conditions for the stories remain a mystery. A surprising regression returns us to the pre-1960 period. Is it because we attach so much importance to *The Charter* that we keep secret the sources of inspiration in the work that bears its name? Would *The Charter* play the role of the eponymous ancestor whose ancestry is completely unknown? If sound recordings exist at Celtho and the Institute for Applied Linguistic Research in Guinea (IRLA) – and they should – the omission of this information leaves the impression of the text delivered by a particular being who discovers them *en bloc* and provides them as such. Without sources? It is surprising to exclude this significant methodological aspect.

As soon as politicians got hold of the theme, the official media lavished praise on the *Charter*. Moreover, the visit by the President of the Republic of the time to the site provided an opportunity for all sorts of news reports. A visible metallic road sign shows the space that has since been celebrated as the eponymous Charter. Jan Jansen (2011: 109) alludes to it, as well as Smith (2009: 1), who include a picture.

3.3 UNESCO

The excitement surrounding *The Charter* refers to an international context that deserves attention, characterised by the advent of extensive discussion of Human Rights, and also by the sprint for UNESCO's endorsement (Brumann 2011: 19, 22).

UNESCO is undoubtedly one of the key stakeholders, judging by the insistence with which the presenters of the Charter refer to it. Which standard developed by UNESCO has an impact on the Charter's advocates? In what way has what Michael Rowlands and Ferdinand De Jong (2007) called the "technology of heritage" – globalised, moreover, as Marko Scholze (2008: 215) points out – significantly directed the authors of *The Charter*?

The idea of world heritage of humanity developed by UNESCO originated in the 1950s and 1960s. The race for the world heritage designation has noticeably intensified since, as Christoph Brumann affirms, millions of euros are potentially at stake with success (2011: 19, 22-25). It goes without saying that many stakeholders in developing countries, such as those in Agadez, Niger, see UNESCO as a development agency. Moreover, being on the world heritage list is a sign of modernity (Scholze 2008: 218; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004), which strongly motivates candidates. The competition is in full swing.

Two "charters" govern the cultural heritage of mankind. The Venice Charter of 1964, supplemented by that of Burra in 1979, resulted in a comprehensive strategy in 1994, which gave greater prominence to non-Western countries which to that point had been inadequately represented. As we find the term "charter" twice in the UNESCO organs, the appropriate term was soon found in Kankan. In 2001, a new category of intangible cultural property was introduced. Ninety masterworks, from seventy-three countries, were raised to the rank of *masterpieces*. Among the chosen masterpieces were the Sosso-Bala de Nyagassola in Guinea, the sacred balafon held by the family of the magistrate Siriman Kouyaté. This is a call that deserves to be heard.

Turning back to *The Charter of Kurukan Fuga*, its protagonists who are collaborating on the ground with development agencies are tempted to believe. The opportunity is golden to be canonised and to shine – at least potentially.

4. Conclusion

More than ever, one cannot analyse phenomena in terms that conform to the axiology of the Enlightenment, which readily proceeds by dichotomies: the civilised versus the savage, Africa versus Europe, tradition versus the modern (Barber 2000: 437 Cole 1997: 371). As for the Charter's disciples, research is needed to explain the context of creation that specifies its objective and gives meaning to it. Once we understand this, it is not a problem, but rather opens doors to research, particularly on innovation and cultural editing. The universalism of a Charter, whatever it may be, in no way obscures its true origins; let us recall the words of Edmund Burke.

Do we only know that these sets of laws, to which everyone refers and compares themselves, fall like any other within contingency and not necessity? Moyn (2010: 20; MD) writes on this subject: "*Rather than all originating all at once as a set* and then merely awaiting later

internationalization, the history of the core values subject to protection by rights is one of *construction rather than discovery* and contingency rather than necessity”.

As such, there is no reason to be ecstatic before a Magna Carta or Human Rights. We must show wisdom, by scrutinising the production of legal knowledge, or simply narratives.

The temptation of the elites, whatever their origins, to abundantly consume the notion of Charter reminds me of this very accurate observation by Mudimbe (1997) about the "colonial library". Let us be careful not to reveal ourselves as "[...] this something which is non-Western [which] reveals itself as what Western norms lack, and therefore offers itself as a subject for conversion, transmutation, and standardization [...]". Taking the risk of finding a Charter, without analysing its historical depth and significance, exposes us to the risk of jeopardising the chance of scientific investigation. This temptation of danger that Mudimbe is portraying in the uncritical use of the colonial library is great: "[...] collecting these various elements [past or present narratives, customs and knowledge] and [...] crushing them in a "primitive background" (1997: 176). That is why I have placed borrowing in a broader historical perspective that calls for Antiquity.

The Charter inspires disbelief, of course. Yet, is this not the chance if ever to understand the very question of innovation and creation with several hands and/or voices? Kouyaté shocks because he creates on the interface between two rights: Western positive law and Mande norms. Who can tell us that the innovators of yesteryear did not do the same, embellishing on the Quran, the Bible and many other written documents, while remaining in the realm of oral narrative? Were not the Bible and the Quran also oral documents par excellence? On this subject, the distinguished Ngĩgĩ wa Thiong'o writes:

Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel did not read or write. Even Jesus probably. Their words came out of their mouths and were received by the ears of their listeners. It was only years after that the disciples of Jesus, like Matthew, Luke, John and Mark, or their followers, drew from memory and wrote down the teachings and prophecies. Greek philosophers like Socrates spoke out their thought (2013: 159; MD).

Remaining in their identifiable field, that is, the griot's song, speech or performance, innovative griots have translated these elements without unduly disrupting the audience, readers or spectator. They have the expertise, coupled with experience. When a francophone magistrate allows himself, the double reaction is immediate. Returning to Antiquity, we note

that today we are no longer in the "collegiality of the gods" among the Romans of the period of the "Second Empire" evoked by Veyne (1991: 300), but rather in a certain collegiality constrained by references. "Human Rights" have replaced the Gods. The clearing in which Sunjata erected the foundations of his empire is transformed into a clearing of discord of exegetes of the past.

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CHAPTER THREE

CONVERTING AND DISPUTING THE ROLE OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN CAMEROON'S CROSS RIVER BASIN, 1916-1961

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Introduction

This study examines the British and missionary (mis)interpretation and/or (mis)representation of the role of *Ekpe*, *Nfam* and *Obasinjom* cultural institutions with socio-political, economic, judicial and peace-building missions as irrelevant in the governance and regulation of activities of people of the Cross River basin of Cameroon and, by extension, Nigeria. The area of study was initially colonised by Germany in July 1884. It was officially placed under British administration as a mandated territory of the League of Nations in 1922, following the defeat of Germany in the First World War of 1914-1918. Much has been written about the European and Christian missionary encounter in Africa during the colonial era, but the subject of misrepresentation and misinterpretation of African institutions continues to animate debates in African historiography. Evidence points to a calculated attempt by the colonial administration, acting in tandem with the missionaries in many instances, to give African institutions a bad name. Yet, some of these institutions were solicited in handling difficult judicial matters in the Native Courts by the British in many parts of Africa, including the Cross River region of Cameroon and Nigeria.

Cameroon is officially a bilingual country of English and French, situated in the heart of the resource-rich Gulf of Guinea. Apart from these two languages used for official government business, the country boasts over 280 national languages. It straddles the West/Central African regions.

When the Germans were defeated in Cameroon, Britain and France tried a condominium in Cameroon, but it failed because of differences over territorial control and authority. Both countries therefore partitioned former German Kamerun unequally. France and Britain took control of 4/5 and 1/5 of the territory respectively. Between 1922 and 1961 when British Southern Cameroons gained independence through reunification with the Cameroun Republic (former French Cameroon), the region was governed as an integral part of the British colony of Nigeria. It is worth noting that the administrative policies of Britain, France and Germany in the territory impacted negatively on activities of cultural institutions but did not erase them from existence. Rather, some of these institutions like *Ekpe* (Efik), *Mgbe/Ngbe* (Ejagham) or *Nyankpe/Nyamkpe* (Banyang) spread beyond their origin to other hinterland communities.

The negative policies notwithstanding, cultural/institutions played and have continuously played a significant role in the socio-cultural, economic and political life of many Cameroonian ethnic groups, and those of the Cross River region in particular. Such institutions and festivals of renown in Cameroon include the *Kwifon*, *Nwerong*, *Ngiri*, *Ngumba*, *Ngoun*, *Lela* among others in the grassfields of Cameroon, and *Ahon*, *Nganya*, *Ngondo*, *Muankum* and *Ekpe* in the forest region. Their continued relevance today attests to their importance in regulating the excesses of their communities, sometimes recognised and encouraged by the government. Many Christians who used to oppose them are today members, although the stigma continues in some communities.

Basis of Investigation

Translation has been described as a cognitive procedure and viewed as a predominantly social, cultural, political, ethical and ideologically-dominated affair. In the process of translation, representations of other cultures are constructed (Translation Studies Portal, n.d.). This representation has formed and/or deformed cultural realities through systems and the master discourses of representing the foreign or other for the local or self. At times, translation involves manipulation and subversion of cultural goods (Faiq 2008: 32). This deliberate (mis)translation, manipulation and (mis)representation is succinctly captured by Lhoussain Simour when describing the American and European representation of the Muslim world. Simour (2014: xi) opines that "...citizens of western nations almost uniformly believed only those representations to be one truth about "The East" as supposedly unchanging, antiquated, violent, sexualised, and decadent place". He further contends that "misrepresentation has been a

major trait of the West's portrayal of the Other in the archives of Western History.... Such images are still promoting stereotypes that are prevalent in a post-colonial era" (Simour 2014: 12).

Similarly, Faiq (2008:40) examines the misrepresentation of words in the prevailing master discourse generated from the Western World. He argues that the word "jihad" has been commonly adapted in English to mean "holy war", when to Muslims it literally means striving, and generally occurs as part of the expression '*jihad fi sabil illah*,' that is, striving in the path of God. When the West reduces it to holy war without the accompanying broader meaning, it conveys a completely different message to the western audience and others who then see nothing in Muslims other than that they love fighting. This picture of a people did not start today. In the 19th century, the British colonial agenda translated indigenous texts only as part of the larger enterprise of imperialism (Abu-Mahfouz 2008:1). In Africa, they became involved in the idea of 'Imperial Monarchy' much more than they did in India during the colonial era. Ranger (1992: 212) notes that "The 'theology' of an omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent monarchy became almost the sole ingredient of imperial ideology as it was presented to Africans". People's attitudes to others have often been shaped by their perceptions of the people's past which is often far removed from reality. In this connection, many outside of the African continent, and some within, have very strange ideas about the continent's past (Connah 2003: 26) as depicted by the administrators and missionaries who worked in Africa in the colonial period. Such ideas are thus a mistranslation of what the past held for African people.

The history of translation is the history not only of literary innovation but also of the shaping power of one culture upon another (Venuti 1995: vii). It is against this background that this paper draws its inspiration. The British did not only translate indigenous texts in India as a larger imperial venture, but this was part of their policy in various parts of colonial Africa, despite differences depending on the environment and realities on the ground. Colonial administrative officers and missionaries used their presence and influence to shape, represent and mistranslate what the indigenous cultural institution represented to their people. In the Cross River region of Cameroon, as in Nigeria, a conscious, deliberate and miscalculated representation of cultural institutions was the norm to prevent them from frustrating the greedy colonial agenda of subjugation and exploitation. In what this paper describes as 'historical (mis)translation', the focus is not on textual translation and its challenges but rather a deliberate cultural approach of a master discourse to denigrate, weaken, render irrelevant and destroy other cultural institutions. This

mistranslation or misrepresentation did not mean that these institutions were not relevant to their people in numerous ways.

Importance of Cultural Institutions

Cultural institutions in Africa served several purposes and remained important to their people. In British Cameroon, the colonial government relied on cultural institutions like the *Kwifon* and *Ekpe* for advice at the beginning, as they also regulated the power of the King (Dekorne 2012: 28). Before them, the Germans used some like *Ekpe* to govern. They passed on instructions through this cultural institution to the people who held it in high regard.¹ Their relevance transcends the socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. The *Kwifon* regulatory society in the North West Region of Cameroon was, and remains, a dignifying and royal institution. In the Kom Kingdom, for instance, it was the executive arm of the government of the 'Fon' (Chief) and exercised advisory, judicial and ritual functions. *Kwifon* retainers communicated important messages from the Fon to the people. The institution also regulated the economic affairs of the 'fondom' such as the inauguration of crop harvest and market activities (De Vries 1998: 10-11).

In neighbouring Oku, *Kwifon* was the traditional government of the land and exercised considerable control over medicines. It masqueraded, pursued and punished witches and all other offenders of the customs and traditions of the people. It still dispenses justice today and exercises authority in the form of social sanctions against violators of tradition alongside modern courts, government institutions and gendarmes, a paramilitary force. Punishment for defaulters included restitution, fines, and banishment from public ceremonies or the fondom (Bartelt 2006: 149). Similarly, the *Nwerong* in Nso kingdom was an enforcement-of-policy fraternity. It also provided messengers to the Fon, enforced decisions of the Fon-in-Council, punished criminals and witches on the orders of the Fon, among other functions (Chilver 1960: 2-3). Another cultural institution in Nso, the *Manjong*, was a military club which provided the basis for military and hunting organisation within the kingdom. Its other functions were the reconstruction of compounds

¹ Dennis E. Enonchong, "Conversation Proposed Questionnaire," accessed January 16, 2016.

<http://meca-usa.org/The%20Cultural%20Relevance%20of%20MGBE%20Society%20by%20Dennis%20E.%20Enonchong.pdf>

destroyed during a fire outbreak. The institution also fined members for disobedience and breach of rules (Chilver 1960: 2-3).

In Cameroon's coastal region, several cultural institutions also served important roles. The *Ngondo* traditional and religious institution of the Duala of the Wouri estuary is built around peace, development and social stability among the Duala- and Sawa-speaking people. This is obtained from aquatic spirits (Mokake 2012). Although the notion of Sawa and the ritual has been politicised since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s in Cameroon, it remains an institution of pride, peace and unity of the Duala and Cameroonians. French hostility to the institution during the colonial period did not destroy it. The institution is a link between the Duala of the past and present (Austin 1992: 286). At its inception in early 1800, *Ngondo* was a judicial and governing body presided over by major Duala chiefs. It judged cases related to trade disputes in the inland market places (Austin 1992: 287), similar to *Ekpe's* role in the Cross River basin.

Cultural institutions from other parts of Africa served similar functions. The *Poro* and *Sande* of the Mende and Temne chiefdoms in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the *Ogboni*, *Agemo* and *Egungun* of the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, carried out ritual ceremonies and diplomatic missions for good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence. These institutions also served as guardians and policemen of public morality in their chiefdoms. As local tribunals, they settled disputes, litigations and other matters among their people and created a congenial environment for socio-economic activities to thrive. Still others hunted witches and wizards to rid society of these unwanted elements (Kah 2011: 56). The *Atam* masquerades among the Bakor of South East Nigeria performed several functions, among which imposing of fines for offenders, controlling palm oil production for export, regulating fruit harvesting, and protecting forest reserves from destruction (Majuk 2011: 66-73). Ganyi *et al* (2013: 55-6) have argued that *Atam* facilitated the circulation of information through which cherished cultural values were preserved. It was a contribution of the ancestors to the legitimisation of the ethical code of the community and purification to enhance cordial and crisis-free communal existence such as stealing, sexual immorality, greed and intolerance. In spite of the important role of these cultural institutions in Africa, the colonial administrators and missionaries had a different picture of them.

Cultural Institutions: Administrative and Missionary Depiction

In many parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, European colonial officials and missionaries ascribed to cultural institutions certain attributes out of ignorance or a deliberate attempt to debase them and super-impose other structures in its wake. Many of these institutions are still suffering from this stigma of colonial interpretation. The mistranslations and misrepresentations were resisted but there were always collaborators. Ample literature exists on this, on and about Africa. The colonial administration in tandem with missionary societies deliberately, and/or not, presented a bleak image of cultural institutions in Africa with a view to replacing them with their own. Much of what they said about these institutions was based on a figment of their own imagination.

At the beginning, British colonial officials in many parts of Africa sought to understand and work with the cultural institutions they met without destabilising them. This was more easily said than done. The colonial administrators professed that indigenous systems of government would be maintained for local affairs, but that the Native Administration was to remain subordinate to the British administration (De Vries 1998: 21). Chiefs who were pillars of local administration in their villages were co-opted into the colonial state to serve various purposes (Mbu 2013: 14). Through this practice, the British administrators gradually began an invention of African traditions for Africans and themselves. Ranger (1992: 212) contends that "Their own respect for 'tradition' disposed them to look with favour upon what they took to be traditional Africa. They set about to codify and promulgate these traditions, thereby transforming flexible custom into hard prescription". This might not have been done with the same degree of temerity in all of British colonial Africa, but most colonial administrators performed their assigned functions with this in mind. Afigbo (1985: 489) aptly describes that "Under Indirect Rule indigenous institutions and rulers were expected to serve as media for introducing reform in measured doses and in ways acceptable to the colonial authority". Similarly, Crowder (1993: 81-2) argues that although the British administrators claimed to be advisers to the Native Authorities (NAs), in actual practice they more or less directly supervised many aspects of the conduct of these NAs.

The pretence that characterised British colonial administrators in their functions is captured in Talbot's publication on South Eastern Nigeria and Cameroon. In the preface, Talbot asserts that "... this book claims nothing, save that it strives to tell the story of a little-known people from a stand

point as near as possible to their own” (Talbot 1912: vii). Yet throughout the book, Talbot’s description of the people and their institutions is buried in cultural misinformation and thus misrepresentation and mistranslation of what their values and functions truly represented. In one such description about the *Ekpe* institution he asserts:

The many-sided character of Egbo [Ekpe] may be judged from the immense powers which it has arrogated to itself in almost every direction. Under native rule, it usurped practically all functions of government, made trade almost impossible for non-members, and exercised a deep influence on the religious and mystic side of the nation (Talbot 1912: 39).

A close examination of this description of the *Ekpe* society does not show that Talbot was “as near as possible” in what he said about the institution. To have asserted that *Ekpe* arrogated to itself functions was to show the degree of ignorance or cultural chauvinism in Talbot’s account. The British, like the Germans, met an existing institution which had legislative and executive power over the peace and stability of its communities. It even explains why the merchants were initiated into it and/or used it to defend their trading interests. If *Ekpe* did not secure effective commercial activities, how would merchants from Europe succeed in their business ventures? Did this mean arrogating to itself immense powers? Talbot also argues that *Ekpe* usurped practically all functions of government. The use of the word ‘usurp’ is inaccurate because it was known by members of the society that *Ekpe* was a governing institution with religious and secular functions. It therefore did not seize governance but performed what rightfully and acceptably were its own functions. These are misrepresentations that Talbot had set out to avoid without success. Mungwini deplors such reconstruction and reproduction of African social realities by colonial anthropologists in these words:

Colonial anthropologists construed everything in colonial Africa to be ‘primitive,’ ‘savage,’ ‘pre-logical’ and ‘traditional.’ The colony was projected and disavowed as anachronistic. The effects of this negative characterisation of the African continue to manifest themselves in diverse forms, including scepticism towards indigenous institutions and forms of knowing (Mungwini 2011: 2).

Like Talbot, Charles Partridge, a colonial administrator in South Eastern Nigeria, in the introduction to his book about the Cross River Natives, wrote that he had been advised by many of his seniors in the profession to “Study the native from the native point of view”. Despite this

advice when he joined the service of the Protectorate (Partridge 1905: vii), and which he rehearsed time and again, Partridge like Talbot became a judge of the people and their institutions. This was the mentality of most colonial officials, even if they had the best of intentions to present a balanced view of the customs and traditions of the people they governed. He said of the people of the Obubura Hill District that:

The natives of Obubura Hill district are all pagans. The dictionary defines paganism as 'the worship of false gods,' meaning, presumably, the recognition of spirits that, owing to former geographical difficulties, do not happen to have found their way into our own calendar of canonised worthies (Partridge 1905: 279).

To have described the people of Obubura as 'all pagans' was one of the higher marks of misrepresentation ever provided by a colonial official of a people whose way of worshipping the Supreme Being was dissimilar to that of the British. It was a description buried in the master discourses of superiority and inferiority, in cultural stereotypes which do not reflect reality. If Partridge applied the lesson to study the "natives from the native point of view", was it the people of Obubura Hill District who told him that they were pagans? Such descriptions of the Obubura people would have guided their governance beyond any reference to respect for their own indigenous institutions and, by extension, other African people.

In fact, instability in Africa was exacerbated by European contact with the people. This was accentuated by both European administrators and missionaries. Each of them sought to justify the new order which they brought to Africa (Cadwell 1985: 472). Colonial administrators were hostile towards certain religious practices and did everything possible to abolish them. They also suppressed some cults, but in areas like German East Africa, the well-known and documented *Maji* resisted colonial rule during the first decade of the 20th century. Similarly, the *Mwari* cult in Southern Rhodesia and the *Poro* in Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa also stood their ground against British colonial imposition (Opoku 1985: 514 and 516) and attempts to re-invent and instrumentalise them. In his classic *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe holds colonial rule and missionary societies responsible for the invasion and oppression of the Igbo culture of Eastern Nigeria. Previously, all novels written about Africa and Africans were by Europeans and had in most cases described Africans as uncivilised and uneducated (Kenalemang 2013: 4).

Like the colonial administrators, missionary representation of cultural institutions in Africa was negative. In several instances, cultural institutions collaborated with the missionaries but, in general, their relationship was

cat-and-mouse-like. Colonial administrators occasionally assisted the missionaries and even provided them with security. The missionaries in very critical moments relied on traders for funds and on the administration for physical protection and security. Some missionaries cooperated with colonial officials to exploit and culturally subjugate Africans (Okon 2014: 198-199). Church and local leaders of different communities also collaborated. For example, in the 1840s, in Old Calabar, the Efik Kings invited the Presbyterian missionaries into their communities and used the *Ekpe* to call on people to attend church services. They wanted their children to become literate so that they would be able to keep the books and increase trading opportunities (Miller and Ojong 2012: 10). This romance was short-lived because the church and Efik leaders soon ran into problems, marking the beginning of the rift between the church and indigenous leaders.

Missionary activities in Africa generally witnessed protests generated against mission policy and attitudes (Strayer 1976: 1). From the very beginning, missionaries expressed an uncompromising attitude towards African religion. They taught their converts that life could be separated into spiritual and secular spheres which were in conflict with the fundamental basis of African culture, which stressed the unity of religion and life (Opoku 1985: 513; Tschibangu 1993: 501). The degree of brainwashing and misrepresentation of African concepts of culture and religion is captured in this quotation from Opoku:

The missionaries had a negative attitude towards African religion and culture and were determined right from the start to stamp them out. The missionaries preached that the only God was the one whose nature and character had been revealed in the Bible, and that all other gods were mere illusions; that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was the final revelation and the only Saviour of mankind, and that the Church was the sole dispenser of divine grace and that there was no salvation outside the Church.

They preached against all kinds of traditional practices – the pouring of libation, holding state offices, drumming and dancing, traditional ceremonies of the rites of passage, such as outdoorings, girls' puberty rites and customs associated with deaths and burials (Opoku 1985: 526).

These misrepresentations, not limited to other parts of Africa, affected Cameroon and cultural institutions. At the start of their administration in Kom in Cameroon, the British did not interfere with the functions of the *Kwifon* regulatory institution. Rather, they saw in this institution a useful partner to strengthen the authority of the Fon (chief) with his elders over the people for easy administration. Soon afterwards, in the 1930s, this partnership gave way to scepticism. The British argued that *Kwifon* was

too secretive and should no longer play a significant role in the NA (De Vries 1998: 22-23).

The missionaries were either in conflict with other indigenous Cameroonian groups for misrepresenting them or in reaction to the blending of cultural and church values. In Bakunduland, the missionary translation of what the people should do did not succeed. The people simply blended western and African values and made a mockery of the Basel missionaries' philosophy of evangelisation (Ebune 2012: 48). Similarly, the Basel Mission (BM) encountered difficulties in Ndom in Bakossiland. The Rev Pastor Otto Ebomtene Eseh refused to conduct church services and serve communion because the Christians celebrated *Ndie*, an annual ritual held at a particular place and at the heart of the religious practices of the Bakossi people. Tension mounted, and the people told the Pastor that not everyone attended the *Ndie* ceremony (Ejedepang 2013: 430). Although immersed in a foreign culture, the pastor had failed to understand that the people worshipped God through this annual ritual even before the advent of Christianity. In spite of the misrepresentation and conflicts between the missionaries and colonial administrators, the Cross River basin cultural institutions played important roles like others elsewhere in Cameroon and Africa.

Roles of *Ekpe*, *Obasinjom* and *Nfam*

British administrators and missionaries in their activities and statements painted the cultural institutions of the Cross River basin black, so to speak. Prior to colonial rule and demeaning activities of these people, these cultural institutions were life-sustaining to their people. *Ekpe* was strongest in its core area and performed governing, executive, judicial, religious and knowledge-dissemination functions. This institution also settled credit matters among trading communities, and between communities and European merchants. (Leib and Somano 1984: 48; Ute 2006: 76; Kah 2008: 12; Nwokeji 2010: 6 and 77; Roschenthaler 2011: 15-16; Fenton 2012: 36; Miller and Ojong 2012: 1; Enoh 2013: 200; Agbor 2013: 47; Enor 2015: 497; Hales 2015: 7). The *Ekpe* similarly served a social function among the people of the Cross River basin and beyond. Among the neighbouring Bakundu people, women invoked its help to conceive. Their hunters solicited assistance from *Ekpe* for a successful hunting expedition. It regulated the extraction of forest resources. The rights to own land and build on it among the Efik, Efut and Qua still requires permission from the *Ekpe*, an indication of its continuing local power (Ardener 2002: 57 and 214; Jimoh *et al* 2012: 212; Fenton

2012: 37). *Ekpe* also supervised community projects like the construction of halls, clearing and cleaning of village roads, and the supply of water. Defaulters paid the price of not collaborating.²

Social responsibilities were also one of the hallmarks of the *Ekpe*'s activities. The institution upheld respect for the norms of marriage and sex. The fear of being a victim of a spell from *Ekpe* prevented young people from indulging in premarital sex. They grew up and properly negotiated marriage with their partners and brought forth responsible children (Egbe 2014: 56). As part of its social and also economic responsibility, *Ekpe* provided security and solidarity to migrating groups from the earliest times of their dispersions through the forested and riverine areas. The institution also conferred full citizenship on its members with titles. These people had the right to make decisions with implications for the entire community. In addition, *Ekpe* entertained the population with dances, music and body mask performance. Such performances like the *Ngondo* festivities in Douala had/have the potential to "forge ethnic identity by emphasising a united history, combined objectives for the future and a shared language and culture" (Roschenthaler 2010). *Ekpe* was also a school for esoteric values of human life as a cyclic process of regeneration and the eventual reincarnation of a being.

Research reveals that even in the contemporary Cross River State of Nigeria, *Ekpe* has effectively handled conflicts and communal clashes among kinsmen in those communities with a strong *Ekpe* presence. *Ekpe* has prevented the wanton exploitation of forest in Cameroon by logging companies through its sanctions. The institution stresses integrity, recognition and acceptance of members within their immediate communities and beyond through responsible behaviour. *Ekpe* was/is responsible for providing a social safety net of redistributing the wealth of wealthier members through recycling into the community through buying of titles, and provision of entertainment in food, music and dance to amuse the population. The celebrations also expose, enact and re-emphasise cultural values and social norms of the community (Miller and Ojong 2012: 1-2 and 6-9).

Apart from playing an important stabilising role within the communities of the Cross River and beyond, *Ekpe* was also useful in spreading the gospel at the beginning and protecting business interests of trading Europeans. Since *Ekpe* was considered a "tribal institution" whose laws were valid in all Ekik communities, missionaries used it to proselytise

² "The Origins and Advantages of Nyankpe Society," accessed January 3, 2016. Mecausa.net.

in the area (Rosenthaler 2011: 117). Meanwhile, membership in *Ekpe* had benefits for European traders. Credit given to indigenous traders was recovered with the assistance of *Ekpe*, failing which the debtor was confined to the house until he paid the debt. In extreme cases, he was sold together with his property and slaves (Rosenthaler 2011: 118). It was this protective function of *Ekpe* that made European traders buy titles in the society, sit and drink with *Ekpe* chiefs. The institution also assisted its members in trading slaves and other items through the protection of trading routes and providing its travelling members with free food and lodging.

In all these ways, *Ekpe* contributed to regulate trade (Miller 2011: 287; Rosenthaler 2011: 125; Kah 2013: 31). In fact, in Calabar, Nigeria, *Ekpe* has continued to play the economically relevant function of being a source of revenue for its members and also a mechanism through which they demonstrate status, wealth and power through performative display (Hales 2015: 64). This is similarly the trend in Cameroon. Politicians seek relevance and constituency supposedly by joining *Ekpe*. On April 15, 1979, for instance, the then-Minister of State for Post and Telecommunications Emmanuel Tabi Egbe was enthroned as the Chief of Egbe's *Ekpe* house in his village of Bachou Akagbe in the Cross River basin.³

Besides *Ekpe*, the *Obasinjom* and *Nfam* institutions have played a significant role in the propagation of the culture and traditions of the people of the Cross River basin and beyond. The *Nfam* (also *Afam* or *Mfam*) was used in the adjudication of cases over farmland, death of an individual in doubtful circumstances or cause of crop failure. Suspects would swear by the *Nfam* medicines to either prove their innocence or guilt. *Nfam* was usually recognisable by two horns filled with a medicine concoction (Rosenthaler 2011: 19). During a dispute over a piece of land between two villages, the *Nfam* medicines were brought and elders of the two villages involved swore by it. Those who refused to swear were considered guilty. Swearing by *Nfam* medicines prevented people from telling lies. A contentious problem in the community was settled by swearing *Nfam* medicines. The *Nfam* checkmated the activities of witches and sorcerers and punished misdeeds (Kah 2008: 16-17). *Nfam* was a complementary institution to *Ekpe*. The important role of *Nfam*, like *Obasinjom* and *Ekpe*, is recommended today to wage war against the Cameroonian intellectual and political classes empowered and controlled

³ Dennis E. Enonchong, "Conversation Proposed Questionnaire," accessed January 16, 2016.

<http://meca-usa.org/The%20Cultural%20Relevance%20of%20MGBE%20Society%20by%20Dennis%20E.%20Enonchong.pdf>.

by the Freemason cult (Neba 2014: 264). The use of the *Nfam* was not limited to the Cross River basin of Cameroon. In the 1920s, this anti-witch institution was exported to other coastal regions of Cameroon by the Banyangi (Lee 2012: 583) for the adjudication of cases between their kith and kin and other ethnic groups.

Similarly, *Obasinjom* was at work to rid communities of wrongdoing, especially witchcraft. Among the Ejagham, its members usually gathered to offer sacrifices of food to God because of *Obasinjom*. During the annual ritual ceremony, newly initiated members brought food items like chicken, meat, eggs and calabashes of palm wine to entertain themselves in merry-making. Hunters invoked *Obasinjom* and pleaded for assistance with money and good luck in their activities. In fact, *Obasinjom* served essentially a dual purpose: the propagation of the culture of the people and to inspire them in the pursuit of basic needs; and socialisation for peace and harmony in the communities of the Cameroon/Nigeria border (Kah 2008: 17; Kah 2013: 29). It was this important function of *Obasinjom* that inspired Neba (2014: 271) to note that resorting to it and other related institutions is “a process of intellectual and political circumcision, rejuvenation and empowerment”. This is probably because of the many misdeeds among Cameroonians today, like ritual sacrifices of human beings. *Obasinjom* was a reputed institution in the identification of witches and wizards and stripped them of evil (Neba 2014: 265). Between 1955 and 1956/57, following wealth accumulation in Bakweriland and accusations of witchcraft, the people borrowed *Obasinjom* from the Banyang to handle the problem (Nyamnjoh 2005: 242; Lee 2012: 583). The uses of these institutions notwithstanding, they were misrepresented by colonial officers and missionaries.

Misrepresentations of these Institutions

The three prominent cultural institutions in the Cross River basin of Cameroon and by extension Nigeria were dominant actors in socio-political and economic development. Unfortunately, though, they were branded by colonial administrators and missionaries working in the area with various misrepresentative appellations. Not only did they misinterpret their true relevance, but they also attempted to either limit, confront or outlaw these institutions with consequences. Kah (2008: 13) captures vividly this misrepresentation:

It was due to ignorance or a deliberate attempt by the Germans and British, for example, to describe the religious practices of the different ethnic groups of Mamfe Division as primitive and retrogressive. They also

argued and incorrectly so, that these people were worshippers of spirits like *Obasinjom* and the ancestors. In some cases, the people were described as worshippers of stones, shrines and trees. This belief gave the impression that the people of Mamfe Division were “pagans” or heathens... were considered as good for nothing institutions and the colonial officials derogatorily described them as “food consuming” societies. In addition, they were also seen to be involved in the invocation of spirits, inciting highway robbery, among other unacceptable things in the eyes of the colonial agents.

The representation of *Ekpe* as a primitive institution has also been discussed by Miller and Ojong (2012: 1). It was unfortunate that a people's governing and regulatory institutions would be described in such pejorative terms as to discard them completely. Yet, the activities of such institutions became useful occasionally when they were used to advance British colonial interests in this region of Cameroon. The structures constructed in Bakunduland to house the instruments of *Ekpe* were described by visiting European officials as ‘idol houses’ (Ardener 2002: 214), and thus the people were idol worshippers. Yet, the erection of the statue of Mary and Christ was not considered as idol worship by the missionaries. This negative categorisation of *Ekpe* started early on with merchants, then missionaries and colonial officials, and up to the present where literate individuals have “caricatured [*Ekpe*] as witchcraft and superstition”.⁴ Moreover, since the society restricts membership, it led to the misunderstanding that it worshipped a bush or leopard-like spirit (Fenton 2012: 37).

Misrepresentation of *Ekpe* spanned from the colonial to the post-independence era. The colonial authorities saw the *Ekpe* chief as an autocrat, not knowing that decisions were taken by consensus among the leaders which was consensual democracy. Before German and British rule, this personality was highly respected and not feared. Most decisions taken by the institution were to improve the welfare of the people (Enoh 2013: 200). Colonial authorities gave the impression that the chief of *Ekpe* was acting without consultation with other *Ekpe* leaders. The institution has been so debased after independence that it needs real resuscitation to the status of the precolonial past. Colonial laws and global communications have impacted negatively on its ancient practices of collective decision-making. Furthermore, government agencies concerned with promoting tourism portray *Ekpe* instruments as mere ornaments of folklore and

⁴ UNESCO, “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 2013,” accessed January 3, 2016. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/forms>.

tourism. The masquerade performance which inculcated and promoted harmony and cordiality has become ephemeral.

The tendency to ‘incarcerate’ *Ekpe* members is partly a result of the image painted of it in the colonial period (Miller and Ojong 2012:11 and 13; Ganyi *et al* 2013: 56). The colonial officers regarded *Ekpe* as a political problem rather than part of a solution. Around Kumba in 1889, cultural institutions were banned. Then in the 1940s, educated Christian elite began scathing criticisms of cultural institutions. They argued that these institutions discouraged education and demanded too much money from the families of deceased members (Rosenthaler 2011: 126). A colonial officer in South Eastern Nigeria, Charles Partridge, argued that *Ekpe* was bad because a group of people could gang up against one person and ruin him. If only the educated elite knew that the promotion of western education was to the disservice of indigenous education, they would not have debunked these important cultural institutions. *Ekpe* had actually designed the *nsibidi* language many years before western education and without intervention; this language would have developed to a level for greater service to the people.

Missionaries also painted a bleak picture of these cultural institutions. They described *Ekpe* as instruments of the devil and fetishes (Rosenthaler 2011: xxiv). The London Mill Hill missionaries argued that Christian settlements should be independent of local chiefs. Their clergy encouraged the people to rebel against tradition and cultural institutions that propagated the tradition (Kah 2008: 24). The Basel missionaries at one point exercised restraint in matters of customs of the Mbo, Bangwa and Mundane ethnic groups. This was not the case in all places in the Cross River and its hinterlands. In 1923, a Duala Head Preacher of the Protestant mission in Besongabang and Ossing condemned husbands of some Christian women because they had asked their wives to “swear by the *Nfam* religious cult which opposed the Christian doctrine”. The village council had asked everyone to swear by the *Nfam* medicines (Kah 2008: 25). Meanwhile the BM in Ejagham and Banyang villages complained of the inability of its missionaries to preach the gospel because “entire villages” were away selling their “gods” to neighbouring groups (Rosenthaler 2011: xxiv).

It was ridiculous to think of the people as selling ‘gods’ to other villages, as this was their way of life with great religious significance. Meanwhile, *Nfam* had been used in the Native Courts to adjudicate cases in Mamfe Division. Unverified reports had it that Christians who were asked to swear by it lost practically all the cases and suffered great personal losses. While the administration tacitly allowed *Nfam* to serve a

judicial purpose, the Kembong area saw problems with its use. The Native Court there considered the action of *Nfam* in Kembong to be criminal (Kah 2008: 26).

In Calabar, like other parts of the Cross River basin of Cameroon and Nigeria, early missionaries contested the authority of *Ekpe*. Through the media and propagandist sermons in churches, *Ekpe* has also been demonised today. The *Ekpe* form of prayer through goat and chicken blood has been described as superstitious and heathen (Fenton 2012: 70). Christian churches from the colonial era had the contestable impression that there was a prescribed way of worshipping, and that those who did not adhere to it were non-conformists who wandered away from God. *Ekpe* members, however, fought back the desecration of their respectable institution. In one such instance in 1856 before British rule, the mission house in Duke Town in Calabar was completely severed from the community. The missionaries were asked to leave and were only saved by British intervention (Fenton 2012: 72). The situation is, however, changing as within the *Ekpe* houses; certain issues are openly debated for eventual reform (Fenton 2012: 73). If cultural institutions like *Obasinjom* and *Ekpe* are described today in terms of mythologies, it is because of the opaque image they were given in the colonial era (Neba 2014: 260). The attack on them during that period did not, however, prevent their spread to other areas.

Continuous Spread and Relevance

From the origins of *Ekpe* in the Balondo- or Efut-speaking region of the Cross River region of Cameroon before the colonial period, it spread to the Efik and Ejagham who popularised and instrumentalised it, and then spread it further afield into the hinterlands regions of Cameroon and Nigeria within the context of trade relationships (Miller 2012: 86). The Isangele integrated the hinterland villages into *Ekpe*, thus enlarging its trading sphere. Through this, the Isangele organised raids without military domination and state-like infrastructure. It was the Efik, on acquiring the institution from the Balondo, who introduced it to the Ejagham villages (Ute 2011: 95). While European traders, missionaries and colonial administration used or discarded *Ekpe*, it accommodated these new cultural practices and continued to spread to other lands. The spread of *Ekpe*, *Obasinjom* and *Nfam* far afield from their areas of origin neither started nor ended with the advent of colonial rule in the Cross River region of Cameroon and Nigeria. This was both a manifestation of cultural resilience and their continuous relevance.

Beginning from the Cross River, *Ekpe*, for example, spread beyond the territorial confines of the Efut, Efik and Ejagham ethnic groups. Ute (2006: 76) argues that *Ekpe*, a men's graded leopard society, has its origins among the Isangele people of present-day Ndian Division, and specifically in the Bakassi peninsula. They then sold the institution to the hinterland communities and also the Efik of Calabar, who introduced more grades and then exported it. *Ekpe* was in turn continuously exported by those who acquired it from them, including the Ejagham and Banyang. Other ethnic groups also acquired *Ekpe* from the Isangele people and added their own contributions to make *Ekpe* a truly multi-ethnic institution with assimilationist tendencies (Miller 2005: 13; Miller and Ojong 2012: 10). Among reasons advanced by Ute and other writers for its spread (Miller 2005: 12) is its use as a governing institution by the villages that acquired it. *Ekpe* also facilitated trade, especially the slave trade, prior to colonial rule, and trade in other commodities like palm oil as slave trade declined. The institution was also popular among the acquiring communities because of its masquerade which animated festivities. It was a judicial institution, collecting debts of its members. Initiated members paid an initiation fee, including those who ascended to higher grades within the institution. Today, *Ekpe* operates in hundreds of communities with a common set of values and symbols, among which are truth and justice.

Ekpe became a regional institution beyond Cameroon and Nigeria, exported through trade to neighbouring Equatorial Guinea. In the late 19th century, people with knowledge of *Ekpe* from both the Cross River region and Cuba were transported to Malabo in Equatorial Guinea as political exiles and plantation workers. They gathered there and instituted a genre of *Ekpe* called *Bonko*. This name is consistent with the *Ekpe* grade of *Ebongo* or *Ebonko*, found in both West Africa and Cuba (Miller and Ojong 2012: 5). Considering the spread of *Ekpe* to other areas from its core region of the Cross River basin, during the 2000 Calabar International *Ekpe* Festival, participants emphasised the need to bring all *Ekpe* communities together from Cameroon, Cuba Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria.⁵ The *Abakua* institution in Cuba from the Cross River basin has become a mutual-aid society for its members (Miller 2012: 85), and the exchange of ideas between the *Ekpe* branches can help revitalise this important cultural institution. Calls for a unity of all these branches may be unrealistic, as politicians are likely to hijack it for greedy ends. Effective coordination might be difficult because of distance and different local realities. Branches in Latin America and the United States can work

⁵ Ibid.

together due to geographical proximity, and those in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria can do same.

The spread of *Ekpe* did not end in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria, but continued to Latin America in Argentina, Cuba, Salvador, Uruguay, the Rio regions in Brazil, and some parts of the United States, notably the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia with people of slave origin who trace their origin to the Cross River. The *Abakua* is an important institution that has united the people of Latin America and their brethren of Banyang and Ejagham (Enoh 2013: 206; Miller 2005; 2011, 2012; Miller and Ojong 2012: 7). Evidence from Cuba, where the *Ekpe* offshoot *Abakua* started around the mid-1830s, reveals that Calabar or Balondo of Southwestern Cameroon may have been the original home of *Ekpe* (Nwokeji 2010: 78). The fact is shared by Roschenthaler (2011).

Within Cameroon, *Ekpe* was and still functions in areas which acquired it long ago. Among these ethnic groups are the Ejagham, Banyang, Anyang, Boki, Assumbo and the Obang-Balundu districts (Kah 2008: 15). The spread of *Ekpe* also extended to territory in present-day French-speaking Cameroon, namely Batanga. Through trading networks, the Bangwa of Fontem acquired it, and it also spread to the grassfields region of Cameroon (Miller and Ojong 2012: 5). For *Nfam*, apart from Kembong and Besongabang villages among many other Ejagham and Banyang villages, it was also acquired by the Bakundu villages, among which were Kombone and Marumba in the Kumba neighbourhood and the Balue village of Betene. The price for acquiring the *Nfam* juju during British rule was fifteen pounds, as reported by a British colonial officer (Ute 2011: xxiv). Apart from its spread in the forest region of Cameroon, *Nfam* was joyously acquired by the elders of Ambele, Moghamo and Meta in the northern parts of Mamfe Division and parts of Bamenda (Kah 2008: 16). They appreciated it because people swore by its medicines to prove their innocence or guilt.

Ekpe was one of the most widespread of all the cultural institutions under study. In the Isangele village groups and all Balundu, Oroko (Bima, Batanga, Bakoko), Northern Balong, Ngolo and Korup villages (including Okoyong), the institution became the most important law- enforcement institution. In all Ejagham, Banyang and Boki villages, and Ikum, Akparabong, Okuni, Anyang and Manta villages, *Ekpe* was the governing institution. The institution also spread as far north as Atolo, Matene, Basha, Menka and Mbulu villages (Ute 2011: 120) to show its relevance and popularity among the people.

Apart from the North West of the Cross River's hinterlands, the *Ekpe* network extended to Widekum, an important trading nodal point in

between the grassfields and forest regions of Cameroon. In the direction of the South East, East and North East, Mbonge, Bakundu, Bassosi, Bafaw, western Mbo, Bitieku, Ambele, Befang, Otutu and other communities up to Numba came under the *Ekpe* network which sometimes led to conflict in some communities. Bassosiland, for instance, saw a clash between *Muankum* and *Ekpe*, as both served as law-enforcing societies (Ute 2011: 121). The geographic spread and influence of *Ekpe* and *Nfam* in the Cross River basin and beyond was an indication of how the people identified with it to address their immediate socio-cultural, economic and political problems. The spread had started before German and British rule in the area and continued during their era of administration, against a background of mistranslation and interpretation of the relevance of these institutions to their people.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted an explanation of how misrepresentation, mistranslation, mis-description can give a different meaning and cause conflict between people and cultures. After introducing Cameroon and its triple heritage of German, British and French rule, the paper established the basis on which this study was carried out. Translation has more often been limited to textual translation of one language into another, but in this study, we established that translation also had a historical precedent. The deliberate misinformation, misrepresentation, misinterpretation and description of African cultural institutions by colonial administrators and missionaries, and the choice of words to describe some of their institutions and activities fall within the realm of translation. We have considered this as historical translation. After situating the paper within this conceptual framework, we examined the importance and uses of cultural institutions to Africans from time immemorial, which has continued to cause many people to join them and adhere to their principles, even as church-goers. They blend western and indigenous values to show how important and relevant these institutions are within modern systems of administration.

The paper has also established that *Ekpe*, *Obasinjom* and *Nfam* cultural institutions were debased, misused and misinterpreted by the British colonial administrators who worked in the Cross River basin, like elsewhere in Nigeria and Cameroon. Unfortunately, this sometimes led to scuffles and a strain in relations between indigenous institutions and British representatives in the area. We have also shown that in spite of the deliberate and ignorant description of the true relevance of these important cultural institutions, some continued to spread to other areas of the Cross

River basin and beyond. The institutions were found to serve a very useful purpose in the socio-political and, in some cases, economic life of the people and European merchants. Despite the crack down on them, they continued to flourish in the colonial period. It should, however, be understood that continuous attack on these cultural institutions has impacted negatively on some of their activities, but some, especially the *Ekpe*, live on and are unlikely to be phased out in the foreseeable future. Politicians seeking relevance with their people have joined *Ekpe*, if only to gain prominence in national politics.

From this analysis, we see the need for in-depth studies on the continuous relevance of African cultural institutions in the face of the negative impact of global interaction and communications, and for greater research on colonial misrepresentation of cultural institutions and their instrumentalisation for their interests. The use of phrases to describe African institutions, which depicted the master discourse, needs further study, as well as comparative analysis between Africa, Asia and Latin America. This work is an argument in this direction, and other such studies of historical mistranslation in other parts of Cameroon and Africa would be commendable.

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CHAPTER FOUR

AMACHONA: GODFREY WILSON AND THE TRANSLATION OF LABOUR MIGRANTS' LIFE HISTORIES IN COLONIAL ZAMBIA, 1938 TO 1941¹

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Although not as well-known as his wife, the famous South African-born anthropologist Monica Hunter Wilson (1908–1982), Godfrey Wilson (1908–1944) has been acknowledged for pioneering urban social anthropology in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia since 1964). In 1938 Godfrey was appointed as the first director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (henceforth RLI), the first anthropological research institute in Central Africa.² In this capacity, from 1938 to 1940, he conducted research in

¹ *Amachona* is a Bemba word meaning one who has been away from home for a long time. It is a common term for migrant labourer, today associated with people in the diaspora for work or studies or any other reason.

² The RLI was the first anthropological and social research institute in Central Africa. It was established in 1938 by the colonial government in Northern Rhodesia and financed by the colonial government as well as the mining companies in the territory. It also drew financial support from other territories in the region. The RLI is now the University of Zambia's Institute of Social Research. For a detailed history of the RLI, see for example Lyn Schumaker, *Africanising Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), M. C. Musambachime, 'The University of Zambia's Institute for African Studies and Social Science Research in Colonial Africa, 1938–1988' in *History in Africa*, 20 (1993), 237–48. See also G. Wilson, 'Anthropology as a Public Service' in *Africa: Journal of International African Institute*, 13, 1 (Jan 1940), 43–5.

Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia, at that time an emerging mining town and industrial hub, second only to towns on the Copperbelt.³ His research focused on social change on African societies resulting from the introduction of a capitalist economy, mostly as a consequence of the development of mining in Northern Rhodesia. He examined how these developments affected the social structures of African societies, particularly in the emerging cities.

Using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, Wilson's research was largely a theoretical elaboration of the effects and scale of social change of European colonialism and global capitalism on what he termed a 'pre-capitalist' society. His findings were published in a two-part *Essay on the Economics of Detribalisation in Northern Rhodesia* (hereafter *Essay*) in 1941 and 1942 respectively.⁴

While many scholars including Lyn Schumaker, Richard Brown, Hugh Macmillan and James Fergusson had written about Wilson's work before, they had done so without the benefit of the 'raw' data of Wilson's fieldwork.⁵ The donation of the Wilson Papers to the University of Cape Town's Archives and Manuscripts Division in the mid-1990s and its consequent availability to researchers in recent years has made it possible, for the first time, to gain insights into Godfrey's work and research methodologies that we cannot glean from his published texts. In the

³Broken Hill (Kabwe) is a town located between Lusaka and the Copperbelt, about 104 kilometres north of Lusaka and 164 kilometres south of the Copperbelt. In 1902 huge deposits of zinc and lead, together with other minerals like silver, manganese, cadmium, vanadium and titanium, were discovered at Broken Hill. Until the late 1920s, when copper mining was at its height on Zambia's Copperbelt, Broken Hill remained the major industrial town in the colony. By 1906 the first railway in Northern Rhodesia, built from Livingstone to Broken Hill, had been constructed. The railway was operated by Southern Rhodesian Railways, which established Broken Hill as its major operative town in Northern Rhodesia. After the Broken Hill mine, the railway was the second largest employer of both European and African labour. Hence Broken Hill was quite an industrial hub during the time of Wilson's research.

⁴G. Wilson, *An Essay on the Economics of Detribalisation in Northern Rhodesia*, Parts I and II, *Rhodes-Livingstone Papers* 5 and 6 (1941 and 1942) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968); M. Wilson, 'The First Three Years, 1938–41' in *African Social Research*, 24 (December 1977); and R. Brown, 'Passages in the Life of a White Anthropologist: Max Gluckman in Northern Rhodesia' in *Journal of African History*, 20, 4 (1979), 525–41.

⁵Schumaker, *Africanising Anthropology*; Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*; Macmillan, 'Historiography of Transition'; and Brown, 'Anthropology and Colonial Rule'.

introduction to the edited collection *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and Her Interpreters*, Andrew Bank, has referred to Godfrey Wilson's fieldwork diaries and other materials from his Broken Hill research as an 'almost entirely untouched treasure trove'.⁶

The richness of this archive lies in part in the detailed nature of Wilson's fieldnotes, which span the entire period when he was in the field. Remarkably, Wilson's fieldnotes contain extensive life-histories of his informants at Broken Hill. This is because Wilson's main research and analytical tools during his research were the life-histories of at least one hundred male African labour migrants, with which he came to his most significant conclusion: that Africans at Broken Hill were not rural-based migrant workers as believed by the colonial government but that they were 'temporarily urbanised'.⁷

Using dialectical arguments in which he presented evidence on the patterns of rural and urban migration, length of stay in the urban centre by Africans, wages and expenditure and an emerging urban culture among Africans, Wilson concluded decisively that, despite the colonial government's policy to maintain a labour force based on migrant labour, the African workers in Broken Hill were increasingly severing ties with their rural homelands and developing a permanent urban presence and an associated culture. This was at odds with the colonial government's policy that the developing industrial system was still based on the labour of rural migrants in order to avoid responsibilities such as providing appropriate urban housing for the African workforce, urban social amenities like hospitals and schools, as well as to maintain European workers' privileges such as higher wages and monopoly of specialised jobs.

Precisely because of this focus on individuals and their life histories, Wilson's fieldnotes contain extensive biographical information on foremost informant Xavier Kofie, his research assistant Zacharia Mawere as well many other key informants from the Broken Hill mine compound, the surrounding farms, railway compound and government farms.⁸ Of these biographical sketches, those of Duncan Chanda, Mulenga Bisiketi, Laurenti Blani, Xavier Kofie, Morokeni Mumbi, K. Keala, and Julius and John Brown Kanjanja are the most comprehensive.⁹ These sketches are

⁶ Andrew Bank, 'Introduction' in Andrew Bank and Leslie J. Bank, eds., *Inside African Anthropology: Monica Wilson and Her Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press in association with the International Africa Institute, 2013), 31.

⁷ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 80.

⁸ BC880, E1.15 to E1.17 and E2 to E6.

⁹ *Ibid.*

recorded in Bemba, the local language that Wilson used during his research, with occasional English translations.

Using a close textual reading of Wilson's fieldnotes, this paper examines the processes of the translation of African lives from the field site to the published text. What do these processes reveal about the micro-politics of knowledge production between an anthropologist and his informants at a particular period of history? In doing this, the paper reconstructs, in summary, the life-histories of Wilson's assistant and three key informants at Broken Hill as read through Wilson's notebooks. Here, I suggest that we read these histories as emblematic of African experiences in interwar Northern Rhodesia. This paper suggests that we think of the collection of African life-histories and their representation in *Essay* as a form translation, albeit one that is not only concerned with language difference, but also with the translation of realities from one space to another, whose processes and resultant narratives are embedded in unequal relations of domination in racially segregated Northern Rhodesia. What narratives and representations of African lives and experiences are enabled through these processes?

Collecting Bemba life-histories

Before embarking on his research at Broken Hill, in line with general Malinowskian methods and social anthropological methodologies of the time, Wilson spent time learning Bemba, a local language that he used during his research in Northern Rhodesia. With about seventy-three local languages to choose from, it is easy to understand why Wilson chose Bemba. Firstly, not until late 1938 did Wilson realise that he would never be allowed to work on the Copperbelt. Hence, he chose Bemba because it was quickly emerging as the lingua franca along the line. Additionally, Wilson was obviously influenced by earlier work done by Audrey Richards among the Bemba. In February 1938 he wrote to Malinowski: "I am trying to follow up Audrey's work with a study of the Bemba ... on the mine and in town. I am very pleased to have an opportunity of applying our methods to urban conditions".¹⁰ Wilson therefore interviewed mostly Bemba informants at Broken Hill.

Earlier in February 1938, just after taking up the directorship of the RLI, Wilson undertook a trip to Bembaland to start his language learning. He continued to learn Bemba in Livingstone between July and September

¹⁰ BC880, B4.11, Correspondence with the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Godfrey Wilson to B. Malinowski, 2 February 1938.

1938 under the tutorage of Xavier Kofie, whose engaging life history and relationship to Godfrey is covered in the subsequent section. Wilson returned to Kasama from September to the end of November 1938, continuing to learn Bemba in the villages there as a guest of Paramount Chief Chitimukulu and Senior Chief Mwamba. By November 1938, Godfrey could record full conversations in Bemba.

Marsland's description of Wilson's Nyakyusa field writing sounds uncannily like a description of his field writings at Broken Hill.¹¹ As in Bunyakyusa, Godfrey recorded his information in A5 hardbound notebooks. He writes the place and date on the cover of each notebook, including occasionally a title. As in his Bunyakyusa notebooks, Godfrey recorded his Broken Hill notes on one side of the page, using the adjacent blank page to write extra notes such as short explanations, follow-up questions and frequently, especially in the earlier part of his research, new vocabulary. Few of the notebooks are numbered. As Marsland observes of Godfrey's Bunyakyusa notebooks, it is easy to pick out different styles of writing in Godfrey's Northern Rhodesia notes as well. Chief among these are records of whole conversations with an informant or group of informants, almost always men. He also frequently transcribes, such as when taking dictation when recording life histories and other narratives. When he asks questions on these occasions, he records his questions as well as the answers of the interviewees, using symbols in the form of dashes and initials of participants to indicate where his question or comment starts and ends. During these occasions, Wilson also indicated, in brackets for example, the actions or feelings of the parties involved. There is also evidence of description, to use James Clifford's term, as when Wilson writes up his notes after his observation as he does for portions of Xavier Kofie's life history.¹² He probably did this at home in the evening, as Monica informs her father in one communication.¹³

Xavier Kofie

It is from one of these notebooks and later fieldnotes that we meet Xavier Kofie, Wilson's Bemba language tutor in Livingstone between July

¹¹ Marsland, 'Pondo Pins and Nyakyusa Hammers', 150.

¹² James Clifford, 'Notes on (Field)notes' in Roger Sanjek, ed., *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 58.

¹³ BC880, B5.1, Monica Wilson family correspondence, Monica to her father, 10 December 1939.

and August 1938.¹⁴ Wilson recorded Xavier's detailed life history up to 1938 in Livingstone between July and August 1938, when Xavier was working as a primary school teacher in Livingstone. By pure coincidence, Xavier and Wilson met again in Broken Hill in January 1939, where Xavier had taken up employment at the mine. Wilson recorded at least four more conversations with Xavier between January 1939 and April 1940. Characteristically, Wilson's fieldnotes of his discussions with Xavier are rich, detailed and full of life, evoking the sense of masculine sociability that has been noted by scholars who have written on Wilson's work.¹⁵ He not only records the 'formal' sessions, but includes conversations that have nothing to do with the 'business' at hand. Most of his notes are not descriptive, but are transcriptions of whole conversations, written on the spot. The conversations with Xavier are liberally punctuated with exclamation marks, giving a sense of heated discussion. Wilson recorded the time and place of each conversation. These elements provide significant insights into the contexts in which the conversations are held and, above all, a glimpse into the relationship between Godfrey and Xavier in the field as well as the processes of knowledge production.

Compared to the life histories that Wilson and Zacharia collected at Broken Hill, Xavier's is more detailed, suggestive of a deeper level of intimacy and engagement between Godfrey and Xavier than with the other informants. Part of the reason for this difference is that the bigger chunk of Xavier's life history was collected between July and September 1938 in the more relaxed environment of Livingstone before Godfrey formally embarked on his Broken Hill research. Additionally, by 1940, when Godfrey collected biographical sketches at Broken Hill, he had developed his line of research which focused on the work histories of informants in urban areas as seen from a 1940 template of questions that concentrated on work histories, expenditure of wages, marriage processes and economic relations between informants and kinsmen in town and the countryside.¹⁶

¹⁴ For Xavier's biographical details, see BC880, E1.8, Bemba notes, July–August 1938; a few parts of these notes are also transcribed and indexed under E2.1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie. For details on later discussions between Godfrey and Xavier between 1939 and 1940 at Broken Hill, see BC 880, E2.1.3, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men III. Xavier also reflects on several lists of married men interviewed in the mine compound, see for example BC880, E2.1.1, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men I, which includes a list of men interviewed.

¹⁵ Marsland, Bank and Bank, Hansen, and Mbewe.

¹⁶ BC880, E9.15, Mine compound and mine work, List of questions to ask in interviews, 7 October 1940.

Consequently, the range of interactions between Godfrey and Xavier is much richer than that with other informants; his questions are certainly more open-ended than with informants at Broken Hill.

Nevertheless, as I show in the conclusion to this paper, all of the biographical sketches and life histories of Godfrey's informants, including that of Xavier Kofie, are told as narratives of contact with Europeans, particularly in regard to the working lives of the subjects. I therefore suggest that the accounts of Godfrey's informants including those discussed here are emblematic of the life histories of the male migrant labourers. As such, I read these narratives as mediated life stories told within the context and influence of the prevailing racial relationship in the Northern Rhodesia of the time and affected by the particular relations of power between a white anthropologist and his African informants, relationships affected by the dominant ideologies of the period.

Xavier Kofie's Personal Background

Xavier Kofie, the first of four children, was born in 1916 around present-day Kasama. His father was a carpenter working for the government in Bembaland, a prestigious position at the time.

Despite his father belonging to the Free Church of Scotland, Xavier, his mother and the three sisters were baptised into the Roman Catholic Church, to which they were admitted after taking baptismal lessons. At Godfrey's prompting to narrate his pre-schooling years, Xavier responds that he only remembered 'a few significant events'. Interestingly, the three significant events are all incidences of contact with Europeans during Xavier's childhood.

The last of these 'significant' events is an encounter that the young Xavier, aged only eight, had with European justice – two strokes of the cane at the hand of the *bwana*, the district commissioner of Mpika. He narrates, with the flair and love of detail of a good storyteller, the unfortunate but exciting incident that led to this fateful encounter.

One day I went with my friends to play at Europeans. We took eggs and oil, flour and sugar with us. We went to a place near the golf course on top of the hill where there was thick grass in which we were accustomed to hide from the messengers, for they beat us if we played in the golf course. Now, at the foot of the hill was a huge cattle kraal belonging to the boma, it was built of mud bricks but roofed with thatch. So when we had reached our chosen spot, we lighted a fire and began to cook the food which we had brought. And then one of us was chosen to act the part of bwana, another that of cook, another that of pantry boy, yet another that of dishwasher, one

more was chosen to be the scrubber of pots (Godfrey's translation does not record this tasks), I was chosen as the cutter (Godfrey says table attendant). The one to whom we gave the part of bwana was of course the biggest. So then, he sat on top of a big rock, while the cook cooked some more food. At that moment we heard the midday bell. So thinking that the messengers were going home, we heaped more firewood on the fire (Godfrey says 'fuel' instead of 'firewood'). As soon as we did this, the fire began to spread to the grass, and we soon realized the fire would soon be an inferno. We tried to put out the fire but it refused. We immediately realized that the fire was headed for the kraal. We heard the bell again summoning the messengers and everyone else, for the bell ringer thought the kraal was already on fire. The bwana came running, the store keepers, the brick makers, everybody!

We ran away, for we expected to be thoroughly thrashed. Leaving the fire just as it was getting near the kraal. The messengers saw us running across the golf course but paid us no heed, they heeded only the cattle kraal, but they knew it was we who had set the grass on fire. Then they beat out the fire until it was extinguished, even the bwana picked up branches and beat with the rest, we had run to the village of Johan my friend.

We did not go back, no! We were afraid of being beaten, and we thought that if we spent at least two days at our friends, all would be forgotten. And so when two days had passed we went to the hill to look for gum and after to the garden to snare birds, and there the workers in the garden saw us! And they went to tell the messengers that we children had come back and were snaring birds in the garden. The messengers came running to catch us, and we saw them coming across the golf course, and we fled, leaving our birds. But they ran after us and caught us and took us to the bwana, where the bwana gave us two strokes each and let us go. We went back home. And a fortnight later my father sent me to Chilonga and from there my father sent me to Chilubula. This was 1924.¹⁷

Between October 1924 and 1926, Xavier and an undisclosed number of friends attended school at least three missionary stations, namely Chilubula, Malole, Chilonga and Kaputa, established in the late nineteenth century in Bembaland. Xavier narrates that he spent two years at the 'small' seminary at Chilubula and then joined the major seminary at around age twelve, where he spent the next five years training for priesthood until his parents demanded his release.

Life at the seminary was a harsh departure from the life of seeming abandon that Xavier had known in his childhood. The routine was strict, and the priests ensured that the boys were separated from what they must

¹⁷ See BC880, E2.1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie, for Godfrey's translated English version.

have perceived as the negative influences of African life and culture. Prayer, classroom instruction including Latin, work and supervised leisure time activities such as piano lessons, carpentry and football were the order of the day.

The seminary was set in an isolated area within three kilometres of Chilubula Mission. A tall wall fence ensured the privacy of the seminary. Only two women from a nearby village were allowed access to cook food for the establishment. Visitors including the boys' families were not allowed in the seminary, nor were the boys allowed to set foot outside the walls of the seminary, save for the scheduled trips on Thursday or Sundays, when they were allowed to go swimming or bird hunting.

For young African men, the priesthood represented the new aspirations of fame and wealth embodied in new Westernised forms of prestige, as reflected in the conversation below:

Xavier: The young men want to be priests so that they can work for God and have a mission station built for them. A few who are very intelligent become bishops. After being bishops for three years, many are sent to meet the pope, to tell the pope that these are the black people from Africa we have trained as priests.

Godfrey: Did you agree to leave the seminary?

Xavier: No! I was very grieved. Because if I had stayed in the seminary I would have been a rich man by now.

Godfrey: How would you have been that?

Xavier: Having riches and been respected by white men, but it wouldn't have been my individual wealth, no!¹⁸

At age 17 on the request of his parents, Xavier left the seminary and proceeded to Chitambo, another missionary station, belonging to the Free Church of Scotland. It was at Chitambo where David Livingstone had died almost half a century before. The mission was run by the Moffatts, Livingstone in-laws.

When Xavier was in Standard Three, around 1933, the inspector of schools, a *Bwana* Miller, visited Chitambo and administered a test to the pupils. *Bwana* Miller was in fact Douglas Miller, part of the Northern Rhodesian 'official fauna' that Audrey Richards had given Godfrey some pointers on, in an entertainingly gossipy 1937 letter.¹⁹ He was the education officer of Kasama, 'a young man and worked with B.M.

¹⁸ My translation. Wilson did not translate the entire life history, only portions of it.

¹⁹ BC 880, B4.7, Correspondence, letters to and from Audrey Richards, 28 September 1937.

[Bronislaw Malinowski] at the school [LSE].²⁰ Xavier and three other Bemba boys evidently passed the exam, enabling their progression to the prestigious Lubwa Mission in Chinsali.²¹ Lubwa was an extension of the Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland and was founded in 1905 by David Kaunda, the father of Zambia's first president, who had been ordained together with Malcolm Moffat.

At Lubwa, Xavier again met Miller when he sat for a grammar examination which saw him qualify for Standard Four. Unfortunately, this was the end of Xavier's schooling. After the examination and before progressing to Kasama for Standard Four, Xavier was allowed to go home to visit his family. It was during this holiday that a white man from Mazabuka, *Bwana* Allen, who worked at a locust control research centre in Mazabuka, a town near Livingstone, offered Xavier the job of typist. Against the advice of his father and to the annoyance of Miller and Harvey at Serenje and Moffat at Chitambo, Xavier took the job and left Mpika for Mazabuka.

Xavier's Working Life as a Migrant Labourer

Xavier was in Mazabuka from 1933 to 1934, where he worked at the research station doing various jobs. These included locust collection, documentation and typing. He earned one pound per month. Rations and board were also provided. In Mazabuka, Xavier pooled his monthly rations with another Bemba, Yolam Katongo, who was working for a Mr Hart.

The circumstances leading to his leaving Mazabuka were unfortunate, highlighting the difficulties that African migrant labourers faced as a result

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ It is interesting that on his voyage from England to South Africa in July 1934, Godfrey had travelled and had discussions with a European missionary couple from Lubwa, D. Maxwell Robertson and Ms Robertson: See BC880, A1.5, Diary, 1934–1935. Lubwa was the second station to be established by the Free Church of Scotland in Northern Rhodesia after Mwenzo Mission and was an outstation of the Livingstonia Mission of Nyasaland. David Kaunda was tasked with establishing a mission station among the Bemba. The mission is in fact the birthplace of Zambia's nationalist movement as it is here that the first Welfare Society that paved the way for African political parties was established, mostly by educated African elite. Lubwa's alumni include the first president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, first vice-president and radical politician Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe and a host of other liberation heroes who came to make up Zambia's first cabinet at Independence. See, for example, A. Ipenburg, *'All Good Men': The Development of Lubwa Mission, Chinsali, Zambia, 1905–1967* (Boston: Boston University African Studies Centre, 1996).

of racism. Sometime in 1934, Allen left for Kalomo, a neighbouring district, to study locusts there. He left Xavier in the care of another European, who was a cotton farmer, among other things. The working conditions at the new place were harsh. The African workers started work very early, preparing the land, knocking off only at 8 p.m. At that time, Xavier says, the new employer told the rest of the workers to knock off while Xavier was asked to remain behind doing clerical work – recording activities of the day and writing out receipts. After this, Xavier would go and verify the work done, coming back after midnight.

One Sunday morning Xavier reported late for work and was left behind when others were driven in the motorcar. He walked to the worksite but still arrived late. On payday, the employer decided to deduct two shillings from Xavier's pay, to which Xavier protested, saying he was only late and never missed work, and that it was a Sunday when they were not supposed to work. On hearing Xavier's protest, the new employer got upset and beat him. This did not go well with Xavier, who decided to boycott work and wait for Allen. When Allen finally came, Xavier complained about the beating, explaining that his only crime was that he was late only once, and on a Sunday when they were not supposed to work. Allen appealed to the other European to no avail.

Xavier left the research station in 1934 and went straight to Mazabuka *boma*. There he found a European who was a shoe repairer and asked to be an apprentice under him. Xavier paid two shillings to learn the trade. While Xavier was apprenticing, he was not receiving any pay but was provided with food. After six months, the white man closed his shop and shifted to Durban while Xavier headed for Lusaka by train, where he started repairing shoes. The cost of the train ticket was three shillings and threepence. In Lusaka, Xavier worked solo, repairing shoes for both Europeans and Africans. He did not have a fixed place of business but wandered from place to place within Lusaka. Xavier saved his money, as much as 10 shillings in a good month. He repaired shoes from 1934 to 1936 until a white man came along and asked him to work for him.

His new job was that of a court messenger, delivering communication to and from court. He was paid 30 shillings per month. After six months on the job, Xavier resigned to go to Wankie. He had received an invitation and train fare from a fellow Bemba at Wankie to go there and assist in playing competitive football. It seems his reputation as a good football player, which he had learnt during his years of schooling, had preceded him. At hearing of the decision to resign his job as messenger, Wilson expressed surprise that he had given up his job so easily. Xavier admonishes him strongly, 'Do not be too surprised at my decision to stop

work, no! I used to walk about too much, my feet used to pain a lot! Sometimes when I got too tired, I used to sleep wherever I was, even in the bush, far away from people’.

When Xavier returned from Wankie in 1937, the same time when Godfrey was preparing to leave Tanganyika to take up his appointment at the RLI, he went straight to Livingstone. Xavier stayed with a cousin (the son of his father’s sister) for two weeks. In Livingstone, he found a job as an orderly at a mission hospital, a job which he held for six months. Then the priests requested that he leave his job and take on a teaching position at a primary school. At the time of Xavier and Godfrey’s association in July 1938, he was still teaching there. He was unmarried.

Xavier Kofie at Broken Hill

I was surprised when I came across Xavier’s name on a list of married men that Godfrey interviewed at Broken Hill in 1939. It was the same Xavier Kofie, now in Broken Hill, working in the mine compound and married to Dinah, a coloured girl. There were no fewer than three interviews between Godfrey and Xavier between January 1939 and 1940.²² The first took place on 27 January 1939, in the mine compound hut number 448, which Godfrey indicates is Xavier’s hut. He was working in the mine compound office, earning one pound a month plus food and lodging.

Xavier had been called to Broken Hill by his father Kofie Senior, who travelled from Mpika to Broken Hill to follow up on Xavier’s sisters who were by then living there. Xavier moved there on 7 November 1939 and started work in the mine as a clerk on 25 November.

On Saturday 4 March 1938, Xavier married a ‘half caste’ named Dinah.²³ Dinah was the unacknowledged daughter of a German man named

²² Interviews took place on 27 January 1939 in Xavier’s hut, later interviews were on 7 February, another interview on 27 February, and yet another interview is recorded on 7 March 1940 in the mine compound, this time in hut number 17. See BC880, E2, Outline biographies of married men in the mine compound, February 1939 – May 1940; E2.1.1, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men I includes the list of men interviewed; E2.1.2, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men II; E2.1.3, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men III.

²³ BC 880, E2, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men in the mine compound, February 1939 – May 1940. We learn this date in an interview on 27 February 1939, when Xavier informs Godfrey that the wedding was set for Saturday 4 March 1939.

Brigham from Livingstone and a Bemba woman. Xavier did not know her age but tells Godfrey that she had had her first menstruation in 1938, was born in Mpika and was in the Roman Catholic baptismal class. Dinah had received education in Mpika until Standard Three. This marriage did not last, however, due to the fact that African marriages at Broken Hill were generally unstable, a theme Godfrey takes up in the *Essay*, Part II.²⁴ We get the first hint of Xavier's marital problems in a conversation with Godfrey. At the beginning of the interview Godfrey records '[Xavier] Came into Chanda's hut to greet me.' In this interview Godfrey asks Xavier after Dinah, and Xavier 'anxiously' relates some marital problems to Godfrey, informing Godfrey that he had given Dinah a 'suspension' of three months, to stay with her relative. In a later interview with a man named Enoch on 24 April 1940, Godfrey records, 'Told me that X. Kofie and Dinah were divorced, she was living with her mother'. This is the last that we hear of Xavier's wife. In fact, divorce and having multiple partners seem to have been among the social problems in Broken Hill, as we saw earlier from Zacharia's research. Godfrey, in Part II of the *Essay*, also noted that the lack of African women in Broken Hill, prompted by the disproportion between men and women, caused 'sexual rivalry among Africans' and high levels of divorce.²⁵

Xavier Kofie: Language Tutor and Foremost Informant Language learning

Wilson and Xavier must have met in Livingstone between May and July 1938. It is not clear how and under what circumstances Xavier became Wilson's language tutor and informant. Xavier is not mentioned by Monica in her letters to her father or by Godfrey in his to Audrey Richards.

Xavier started teaching Wilson Bemba in July. Given the progress he makes within that first month, Xavier must have been a good teacher. Xavier's own European education and his history of interactions with Europeans no doubt helped to smooth things.

²⁴ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 39–69.

²⁵ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 20–1. While there were 7,500 men at Broken Hill, there were only 3,500 women. Of the total of 3,000 married men, only 40% had their wives with them in Broken Hill.

Three notebooks were recorded between July 1938 and August 1938, when Xavier was Godfrey's language tutor.²⁶ From the notes, it is clear that they met every day, indicated by conversations at the start and end of sessions. In some instances, there is reference to the previous day's discussion. More tellingly, many conversations end by either party stating that such or such a topic would be discussed the following day, or with promises to meet the following day.

The language learning started with basic words such as verbs and nouns. Long lists of words then appear, related to different things without much discernible pattern. Godfrey calls these his Bemba reader or dictionary. In one entry which Godfrey records both in Bemba and English, he tells Xavier, 'I want you to help me with verbal distinction (noun verb)'. The entries that follow are detailed Bemba records of uses of verbs, present tense, past tense and present perfect tenses, as in 'work, working, was working, will work among others'. Here also is recorded 'exercises in tenses', with a number of verbs such as '*ukukaka*: tie, *ukwisa*: come, *ukuya*: go, *ukufwaya*: want, *ukumona*: see'. These are then written in different tenses, and sentences are used to learn how to use the words in various tenses.

An interesting step in the language learning was practice in how not only to pronounce words but how the pronunciation changes situationally. This was an important aspect, given that Bemba is phonetically complex, and pronunciation varies significantly according to the tense, to the relationship between the people in conversation (old/young), and whether words are spoken in the plural or singular. It may also change depending on what word follows a particular word. Hence Godfrey's notes have detailed linguistic symbols on how to pronounce words according to their arrangement in a sentence. For example, when saying *leta* (bring), the ending changes to 'e' if the next word starts with a vowel, thus *leta insalu* (bring a cloth) is pronounced as *lete insalu*. Similarly, Wilson noted that 'a + o' in a word translates into 'o', for example.

Xavier's language teaching also highlighted variations between written forms and pronunciations, especially when considered against the standardisation of the written form by Europeans. For example, many Europeans, including Wilson, dropped the 'h' in words like *chikanda* (a plant food) or Chanda (a common Bemba name). Thus, Wilson writes Chanda as Canda.

²⁶ See BC 880, E.1.1–E1.7, Notebooks containing Chibemba vocabulary; E1.8, Bemba notes, July–August 1938.

Language learning was also used to learn Bemba etiquette, culture and history. There are sessions on forms of greetings for general and specific situations, and on various forms of address for people with specific relationships, such as seniors, peers and in-laws.

Topical conversations are used to learn the language and also about Bemba culture and African life in general. These discussions include land rights, marriage rites, cultivation, nutrition, *chitemene* (an agricultural method where trees are cut and burnt to fertilise the soil) and family relations. Additionally, Godfrey uses routine conversations as opportunities to learn the language. For example, an entry where Xavier comes in and asks if he should close the door is applied to etiquette and language when one visits. Language learning then follows on how to say close the door, leave the door open, come in, and sit down. In another entry, Xavier starts the conversation by complaining about the hot weather. This opens up learning about how to say it is cold, windy, dusty, and so on. In another instance, the conversation goes:

Godfrey: Were you sick?
 Xavier: Yes I was sick.
 Godfrey: What were you sick of?
 Xavier: Headache and stomach.
 Godfrey: Are you now at peace/better?
 Xavier: Yes much.
 Godfrey: I am happy /I am joyful.

This conversation is used to learn how to enquire after health and show sympathy when someone is ill. Bemba letter-writing etiquette also formed part of Wilson's curriculum.

By 20 July, just under a month after Xavier and Wilson begin their language learning, the indications are that the two had got comfortable enough to discuss intimate matters. Reflecting the immersion in masculinities that Marsland observes of Godfrey's Bunyakusa research, here the language learning gets interesting as seen from these entries: *ukutomba*: to have sexual intercourse, *ukukanda*: to copulate (male), *ukukandwa*: to copulate (female), *kalingilingi*: clitoris, *nyo*: vagina, *ukukuna*: to stretch lips of vagina, *imfwalo*: male genitals, *matope*: female sex fluids, *icikala*: penis, *amatole*: testicles, *amaso*: pubic hair.²⁷

²⁷ BC 880, E1, Notes containing Chibemba vocabulary.

Conversations on sex and childbearing also come up after September while Godfrey is in Kasama.²⁸

While such masculine discussions must have helped to bridge the gap across culture and language, communication across them still had perils, making for interesting exchanges. Earlier Xavier had told Godfrey that he was the only son in his family. On another occasion, Xavier related that he had a brother on the Copperbelt whom he had once gone to visit. In a session a few days later, the conversation goes:

Godfrey: What does your elder brother do?

Xavier: No! I have no elder brother.

Godfrey: You told me that you have an elder brother in the mines!

Xavier: He is from another mother.

Godfrey: Oh. Your father is the same?

Xavier: No! He has his own father!

Godfrey: Say it again!²⁹

In later notes with Xavier and other informants, Godfrey uses the term ‘classificatory brother’ to distinguish such brothers from biological brothers, a term which Zacharia adopted at least once in his own notes.³⁰

Wilson also significantly used Xavier to get background information on African life in urban centres as well as migrant labourers. Detailed conversations on this theme record Xavier’s opinions on migrant labourers, how they lived in town, how they related to the rural homelands, how they sent money and gifts home, did they marry in town, and more. Here, Xavier must have been a sounding board for Wilson’s initial observations and therefore helped Wilson to frame his research ideas. Part of this learning was through Xavier’s own experiences. We find, for example, Wilson asking Xavier about how much, if at all, he sent money back home. The two also had lengthy discussions on African life in Livingstone, which Xavier always refers to as *Mosi oa Tunya*, its local name meaning ‘the smoke that thunders’, due to the Falls’ smoky appearance and thundering noise. Here, there are detailed conversations on different aspects like African beer brewing and drinking which Xavier condemned in strong terms, the lives of the African unemployed,

²⁸ BC 880, E1.4–E1.7, Notes containing Chibemba vocabulary; and E1.8, Bamba notes, July–August 1938.

²⁹ BC880, E1.4, Notes containing Chibemba Vocabulary, entry just after 18 July.

³⁰ For example, Godfrey uses this term when discussing George, Xavier’s ‘brother’ who followed Xavier from Lusaka, and Zacharia uses the term to refer to Herbert’s ‘brothers’, who were among the relatives that helped him work in the bakery.

marriages in urban centres, religion and ‘paganism’, among other topics.³¹ Considering the extent to which marked similarities exist between Wilson’s lines of investigation at Broken Hill and the broad range of topics on African life in urban centres that he discussed with Xavier, to what extent may we foreground Xavier’s influence on Godfrey’s research?

Zacharia Mawere

As with all the life histories collected by Godfrey and Zacharia, Xavier’s ends suddenly. As I have shown earlier, due to the souring of relations between Godfrey and the mining company by May 1940, Godfrey’s permission to work in the mine compounds was revoked. He went back to Livingstone in June 1940. No evidence suggests that Godfrey continued to associate with Xavier or other informants after he left Broken Hill. Despite this abrupt ending, I sought to reconstruct Xavier’s life history and highlight his significance to Godfrey’s project in Northern Rhodesia. He was not only Godfrey’s language tutor but also his foremost informant. Other than language learning, Xavier also taught Godfrey aspects of Bemba culture and etiquette. He was evidently influential in foregrounding the anthropologist’s research at Broken Hill through being questioned on the lives of labour migrants. Xavier Kofie should therefore be seen as a significant other in Godfrey’s work at Broken Hill.

Zacharia Mawere was Godfrey’s research assistant at Broken Hill between January 1938 and June 1940. While the role of a bridge between the anthropologist and the culture that he was studying was one of the main functions of an assistant, this was not the case with Zacharia. Zacharia and Godfrey worked largely independently of each other. Zacharia mostly carried out independent research for Godfrey, collecting most of the census that Godfrey used in the *Essay* and biographical information from mainly Nyanja speakers as well as other data on various aspects of life at Broken Hill, such as pooling of wages among African men, Ngoni marriage practices, and relationships between African men and women. Despite this, Godfrey did not mention Zacharia in his published text, nor did he acknowledge Zacharia’s assistance. This chapter therefore narrates Zacharia’s personal background and examines his work at Broken Hill, highlighting the centrality of his research to Godfrey’s.

³¹ BC880, E1.8, Bemba notes, July–August 193. See also BC880, E2.1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie, for Godfrey’s English translations of some these conversations.

Zacharia Mawere's Personal Background

We learn about Zacharia Mawere through detailed essays about his six brothers and one sister, written by Zacharia between 1939 and 1940.³² These essays were typed by Zacharia and gave abridged life histories of his siblings with special focus on their achievements seen through education, employment, stature in the family and financial status. Each of the life histories is typed separately, in English, and takes up between one to four pages. Frustratingly, Zacharia did not write an essay about himself.

Zacharia Johan Mawere was born to John Mawere and Mereya Shawa sometime around 1917 in the village of Ngulube in Fort Jameson (now Chipata). In 1939, Zacharia's father was still alive. However, his mother died on 20 March 1937. Zacharia was the fifth-born son and had six brothers and one sister. He spent his childhood and early adulthood in Fort Jameson shepherding his family's animals. The Maweres were Christians and were educated at mission schools. Zacharia and his brothers were all educated by Herbert Zilole Mawere, the first-born son of the Mawere household. Herbert sent Zacharia to Mwami Mission in Fort Jameson in 1931, and then to Blantyre Mission in Nyasaland in 1935. Some of Zacharia's brothers had also attended the latter school.

Speaking of Herbert, Zacharia observed that 'he wished always to put on a suit in the Southern Rhodesian style', earning the wrath of Europeans who expected Africans not to dress so well.³³ In his discussion on African dress, Godfrey echoes this point. He writes in the *Essay*: 'Many Europeans, also, are less courteous in their relations with well-dressed Africans than they are in their relations with those in rags, for they resent and fear the implied claim to civilised status'.³⁴

Herbert was in fact affluent enough to have been Zacharia's first employer. While working in Bulawayo, Herbert managed to save 50 pounds in the Standard Bank of South Africa. With these savings, he started a bakery on his return to Fort Jameson. He paid ten pounds to the district commissioner for a permit to start the business and invested 30 pounds in the bakery. He then involved several relatives in his business including Zacharia, a 'half-mad' uncle, and others Zacharia refers to as 'some classificatory brothers and sisters'.³⁵ Zacharia must have learnt this term from Godfrey, who used it to distinguish between biological siblings and other relations that Africans referred to as brothers but were cousins,

³² See BC880, E9.17, Zachim (sic) (assistant): biographies.

³³ See BC880, E9.17, Zachim (sic) (assistant): biographies.

³⁴ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

for example. Herbert did not pay his brothers but sent them to school as payment for their labour.

Other than through the biographic stories of his siblings, we also get glimpses of Zacharia's character and life from his fieldnotes, evoking Clifford's suggestion that field writings can reflect the personality of the writer.³⁶ In a side note dated 8 December 1939 in one of his notebooks, the conscientious Zacharia records, 'Mr Patrick entered the house at 11:30 pm without warning. And in case of theft and burglary I thought to record them down. And the names of his friends are as follows: 'Safeli + Abel.' The note is signed Z. J. Mawere.³⁷ I took this note, together with the detail with which Zacharia records his census and biographical sketches and other notes, as an indication of his diligence, sense of responsibility and meticulousness.

Although probably not as financially affluent as his elder brother Herbert, Zacharia was obviously a man of means. Discussing an aspect of African life whereby a group of Africans took turns in giving money to one person every month, a practice referred to shortly, Zacharia notes that he had been approached for money in more than one instance and that he always turned down such arrangements because of the problems of non-payment. Like most Africans at Broken Hill, Zacharia was conscious of how he dressed. Like his informants, he ordered European goods. An envelope, addressed to Zacharia at Broken Hill, tucked away among the pages of one notebook reveals that Zacharia did business with N. Bhaga, 'gentlemen's outfitters, Sackville street, Livingstone, NR.' Hansen reports a similar communication where in a draft letter in one of his notebooks, Zacharia writes to 'enquire for my goods which I ordered from you on 20 September 1939', in which Mawere listed his return address as 'P. O. Box number of the RLI in Livingstone'.³⁸ This draft may indicate that Zacharia worked in Livingstone before or after his association with Godfrey.

Zacharia's Knowledge Work in Broken Hill

It is not clear how and where Godfrey appointed Zacharia as his research assistant. We know for a fact that, unlike Leonard Mwaisumo who was Godfrey's assistant in Bunyakyusa, Zacharia did not play any part in Godfrey's initial language learning, an important aspect of an assistant's work. Speculatively, it is precisely because Zacharia was not

³⁶ Clifford, 'Notes on (Field)notes'.

³⁷ BC 880, E1.14, Notebooks of assistants, recording hut censuses.

³⁸ Hansen, 'Urban Research in a Hostile Setting', 19.

Bemba-speaking that Godfrey appointed him as his research assistant at Broken Hill.

Of the total population of 7,500 men at Broken Hill, only 8 percent spoke Bemba. The majority of the rest of the men came from nearby ethnic groups like Lenje, while some were from the Eastern Zambia like Zacharia. While Bemba was establishing itself as the lingua franca along the rail line, Zacharia's original language, Nyanja, was equally gaining currency in urban centres, especially in the central part of Zambia where Broken Hill was located. Nyanja is a prominent language in Zambia where it is widely spoken in the Eastern parts of the country and is also a lingua franca in urban centres like Lusaka and Kabwe, then Broken Hill. Nyanja is also spoken in parts of Malawi and Mozambique. Zacharia was Ngoni, one of the groups found in Eastern Zambia, and he certainly spoke Nyanja. In a letter to her father while in Livingstone, Monica expressed surprise that, in the central and southern regions of Northern Rhodesia, Nyanja was spoken more than Bemba.³⁹ All the interviews conducted by Godfrey were conducted in Bemba. Save for one small sentence during an interview between Godfrey and Xavier in which Godfrey explains a Nyanja term from Xavier's narrative, there is absolutely no indication in Godfrey's notes that he spoke or understood any other local language except for Bemba. It is therefore apparent that Godfrey deliberately chose Zacharia, a Nyanja speaker, to be his assistant.

While Godfrey concentrated almost solely on Bemba speakers, Zacharia interviewed mostly Nyanja speakers and people from ethnic groups other than Bemba. Those interviewed were almost all non-Bemba; most were Ngoni, Chewa and Nsenga, all of which are kin to Nyanja. Other than the general fact that Nyanja is spoken more often in Broken Hill than Bemba, evidence from the archive supports this claim that Nyanja was an important language there. For example, on 23 March 1940, Godfrey attended a meeting of African men with the war information officer, to brief the men about the war and war recruitment. Muwamba, one of Godfrey and Zacharia's informants, was asked to translate into Nyanja.⁴⁰ The memo of 13 March 1940, which had been posted in public spaces for the attention of African men, also announced the meeting in Nyanja and Bemba, with the notice in Nyanja on top and the Bemba translation at the bottom.⁴¹ I took this ordering of the memo between the

³⁹ BC880, B5.1, Monica Wilson family correspondence, Monica to her father, July 1938.

⁴⁰ BC880, E9.5, Legal proceedings.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

two languages as well as the preference of translating into Nyanja at an official meeting as indicative of the importance of Nyanja at Broken Hill.

As early as March 1939, Zachariah was already working for Godfrey. One of Zacharia's earliest notebooks is labelled 'Broken Hill, March 31, 1938', one of no fewer than seven recorded at Broken Hill. He recorded census and biographical data from government farms, Pullon's (also spelt as Pullan and Pullen) compound, railway compound, old beer hall section, the Broken Hill market and police camp, among others. According to my count, Zacharia recorded censuses for no fewer than 500 households.⁴² The tables of African populations in the *Essay* thus drew significantly on Zacharia's work.⁴³

Zacharia recorded all his notes and biographical sketches in English, unlike Godfrey, who recorded his mostly in Bemba with occasional English translations. With a sporadic forward slant, Zacharia's handwriting is clear, each letter clearly written. Godfrey occasionally interjects in Zacharia's notes, correcting some data or cancelling words and replacing them with others. Evidently, Godfrey sometimes went over Zacharia's notes or discussed them with him. Zacharia's English is simple and clear, well spelt but poorly punctuated. He usually writes English in the vernacular, obviously literally translating from Nyanja to English.

Apart from the census and biographical sketches, Zacharia also records a significant body of notes on different aspects of African life in Broken Hill. His own knowledge, interpretations and opinion are generously provided throughout some of these texts. He provided information on at least three African churches, for example, on the Dutch Reformed Church Mission, which we learn had 249 members plus 344 children and 161 members in the Bible class. There were also details such as the fees for attending the Bible class, offerings per month, and so on.

He records important 'native welfare' information on money saving and lending schemes among Africans, information Godfrey drew on for the *Essay*.⁴⁴ These schemes, which Wilson calls 'pooling of wages', a phrase that Zachariah did not use in his notes but which he instead termed 'giving chance', involved a scheme whereby Africans in groups of two or more would decide on a rotational 'lending' of money to each other when they got paid. In a particular month, all or most of one's salary was handed over to one person who collected from different people. The next salaries

⁴² See BC880, E1.11, E1.12, E1.14, Notebooks of assistants, recording hut census; and E1.15, E1.16 and E1.17, Notebooks of assistants, recording biographical sketches.

⁴³ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 18–21.

⁴⁴ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 76–7.

would go to another person and so forth. Zachariah records that the scheme was very important as it was difficult for anyone to save money, and the scheme enabled people to buy valuable items in one go. The agreements were verbal. In the *Essay*, Godfrey records these interpretations nearly exactly. While he talked with his informants on this practice, it is clear that Zacharia's interpretations and analysis had an impact on Godfrey's interpretations.⁴⁵

In one interview with the underlined title 'Ngoni girl explained to me', Zacharia recorded detailed notes on romantic and sexual relationships between men and women in Broken Hill. From these notes, we learn how economic needs prompted women to have several husbands when they came to live in urban areas so that they could purchase clothes and send money back home. In giving his analysis, Zacharia notes that it pleased men and women to receive the attention of the opposite sex – and that 'dressing properly' for 'the beer hall where they can meet many men and women' was an important part of the process.

While Godfrey's notes have more transcription because he writes on the spot as conversations are taking place, Zacharia's notes are largely thickly descriptive and recorded in reported speech. The exceptions are the census and biographical sketches, which Zacharia seems to record on the spot. Even then, unlike Godfrey, he rarely records entire conversations but writes a reported narrative of the interview. In this way his notes are less rich than Godfrey's, primarily because it is difficult to pick out interactions between the parties involved and the contexts of the conversations. While Godfrey dates almost all his interviews, indicating also the place, Zacharia does not. His sketches and census are certainly recorded in the homes of the informants. He does give the date and location on the cover of the notebooks, however. In the majority of the sketches he painstakingly sticks to the order of questioning that Godfrey must have inducted him in: tribe, first tax year, work history, marital status, tribe of wife, hut number, number of people the man is living with, number of children, monthly expenditure, relationship with home area reflected through both husband's and wife's visits back home, and amount of money or gifts sent home.⁴⁶ The census/sketch usually ends with the total number in that household.

In some instances, Zacharia's notes reveal a surprising level of zeal and engagement with his informants. In these cases his notes are detailed, clear and have data that are missing from Godfrey's narratives. For

⁴⁵ See in particular, *ibid*, 77.

⁴⁶ Part of the analysis in *Analysis of Social Change* stems from these data, see Godfrey Wilson and Monica H. Wilson, *Analysis of Social Change*.

example, when recording the details of cash expenditures by workers, he lists specific items that are bought – silk blankets, suits, clothes, shoes, and costs of each of the items (postage, deposit sent, ‘war time tax paid’, clearance tax, custom duty, etc.).⁴⁷ He also asks his informants where they buy their clothes. Thus, we learn that the favourite European companies where Africans ordered their clothes are Lenards, Oxendale, Langfield, and John Noble (‘the company that made things cheaper’, Zacharia adds).⁴⁸ He even records the average number of orders that a person made per year. After a session with one of his informants, he sees fit to add, ‘His statement was provided to me in five minutes’ time.’⁴⁹ All these points reveal Zacharia to have been a meticulous researcher with a love of detail.

Hansen has similarly drawn attention to Zacharia’s detail regarding the earlier experiences of labour migrants, particularly aspects of payment in the form of cloth and not cash during the early development of labour migration.⁵⁰ Furthermore, compared to Godfrey’s, Zacharia’s notes are more detailed about the trials of early migrant labourers, such as difficulties of getting to urban centres for lack of transportation.⁵¹

As I have discussed above, Zacharia’s notes reveal that he related easily to his informants. The fact that most of these were his kinsmen from the eastern part of Zambia and with whom he spoke Nyanja must have been a great advantage. He seems to have interviewed both men and women. Nevertheless, unlike Godfrey, who recorded whole conversations thereby contextualising the interactions with his informants, Zacharia did not. It is therefore difficult to get a fuller range of interactions between him and his informants.

The extent of Zacharia’s detail in his research, particularly his interest in clothes and clothing among Africans, is one example of his significant contribution to Godfrey’s research. This is evident when we consider the fact that clothing was an important aspect of Godfrey’s analysis of changing social, economic and cultural patterns among Africans. Zacharia’s own subjective position as an African, with personal and similar experiences to his informants, must have aided his work as an insider ethnographer. In making these general arguments, this chapter has therefore sought to highlight Zacharia’s significance and agency in the knowledge project.

The collection of a large body of biographical sketches (or life histories, as Godfrey occasionally called them) was a central aspect – if

⁴⁷ BC880, E1.15, Notebooks of assistants, recording biographical sketches.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Hansen, ‘Urban Research in a Hostile Setting’, 20–1.

⁵¹ Ibid.

not *the* central aspect – of Godfrey’s methodology at Broken Hill. These sketches are significant in enabling us to analyse not only Godfrey’s methodological approaches but most importantly his conclusions in the *Essay*. Godfrey proved his conclusions about Africans becoming urbanised by providing evidence from the life histories of his informants. The focus of these stories was on the labour histories of the migrants, their expenditures in town which clearly indicate urban forms of consumption, their relationships with original homelands seen through visits and money/gifts sent there, and most importantly their length of stay in town. The life histories also dwelt on analyses of the formations of an urban culture among informants, including through marriage rites in town which had taken a distinct characteristic shift from the style in the countryside, intertribal relations like intertribal marriages, the formation of kinship bonds specific to urban contexts, among other sides of life.

It is these aspects then that formed the basis of the life histories that Godfrey collected from at least a hundred informants at Broken Hill.⁵²

As I have noted, Godfrey worked almost exclusively with Bemba informants, and thus nearly all the sketches he collected are of Bemba migrants.⁵³ It is unclear how Godfrey chose his subjects, or what motivated them to share their stories. He does not seem to have offered any inducements or gifts in exchange for their stories.

We do know from the field notes that the majority of Godfrey’s informants lived in the mine compound. A significant number of sketches were also collected in other places in Broken Hill, including the Broken Hill town compound, government farms, railway compound and aerodrome compound, and other places.⁵⁴ The sketches of the married men included details of their wives. A census conducted by the mining company in 1940 records approximately 2,250 men in the compound of whom 1,800 were single. There were 420 women and 500 children.⁵⁵ Based on Godfrey’s

⁵²This is my approximation arrived at through a cursory count. However, the number of Africans he interviewed was obviously significantly higher, as his tables in both Parts I and II show.

⁵³ Hansen has also drawn attention to this. See Hansen, ‘Urban Research in a Hostile Setting’, 11–12.

⁵⁴ BC 880, E2 to E7 has outline biographies of men from different compounds and residential areas in Broken Hill. E3.1.1 Outline biographies of men in the town compound, 1939–1940 Includes a list of the men interviewed.

⁵⁵ BC880, E8.6, Tables relating to various aspects of Broken Hill research, Statistics from 1940 census. See also G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 10 for Godfrey’s figures.

and Zacharia's figures, the *Essay* reports similar figures.⁵⁶ Most of the sketches were recorded in the small one-roomed huts of the informants, either inside the house or in the yards. In almost all cases Godfrey indicates the hut number of the subject. The mine number, first tax year, as well as personal details such as homeland, tribe, marital status, religious affiliation and family background are usually also included on the initial pages.

These sketches indicate that the sessions in which they were collected are informal. Some are recorded through chance meetings of people that Godfrey had already interviewed. For example, in one session with Mulenga, whose story I discuss shortly, Godfrey and Mulenga met in the house of a friend to whom Godfrey had gone to talk. The conversation between Mulenga and Godfrey is several pages of Mulenga's details. In another, Godfrey met Mulenga on the way to a beer party and launched into a discussion with him on his expenditure over the previous months.⁵⁷ In one interview with Duncan Chanda, whose life history I discuss here, Godfrey went to his house and found him preparing to go to his garden. Godfrey accompanied him and recorded the conversation about his economic life, including agricultural practices in the mine compound. In another entry regarding Chanda, after what seems to have been a short discussion, Chanda abruptly left Godfrey in his yard to go to the garden. Chanda had knocked off from work at 3 p.m. and left for the garden at 4.

In many encounters, a chance meeting turns into a conversation that is recorded on the spot or later. In commenting on this, Hansen has noted that Godfrey seemed to have spoken to or interviewed Africans wherever he found them, including when he was taking walks with his wife Monica.⁵⁸ The notes give a feeling that Godfrey was an everyday presence in the African residential areas, that the interviews with his informants were informal and almost certainly not fixed by, for example, formal appointments. The conversations are also marked by an ease of relationships between Godfrey and the men, revealing laughter, teasing, and intimate discussions about women and marriage.

Most of the detailed sketches, like the two I discuss here, were collected in conversations that took place over several sessions, stretching over a period of at least one year. While the initial sessions are about personal background, family stress, and suchlike, later sessions usually dwell on expenditures as well discussions on general topics like Christianity, marriage rites, and race relations.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Hansen, 'Urban Research in a Hostile Setting', 11.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 10.

It is because of this general line of investigation, which was regulated by Godfrey's research agenda, that the sketches do not differ in scope and are thus emblematic of the experiences of male migrant labourers. I therefore briefly discuss the details of Duncan Chanda and Mulenga Bisiketi, both of whom Godfrey interviewed between 1939 and 1940, as examples of these biographies and representative of the relationship between Godfrey and his informants. The only reason for my selection of these two is that they were drawn to my attention initially because of their specific mention in the catalogue, and they best suit my purposes as they provide enough detail to get a view of the kind of informants Godfrey worked with.

Mulenga Bisiketi

Of the at least five sessions for Godfrey and Mulenga Bisiketi between February 1939 and March 1940,⁵⁹ at least three were held in Mulenga's hut. One on 28 February 1940 was a chance encounter when Godfrey, while in the compound, ran into Mulenga and a friend Icoro who were on their way to a beer party, and another was recorded in Icoro's compound, where Mulenga seems to have stumbled upon Godfrey interviewing Icoro.⁶⁰

Like many of Godfrey's informants, Mulenga was a resident of the mine compound, occupant of hut number 56, where most of his sessions with Godfrey took place. He was employed in the mine and listed as number 868. He came from a village in Kasama and was a member of the Mbulo clan. In 1926, when he was just a young boy, he walked a distance of 554 kilometres in the company of three friends from Kasama to Broken Hill in search of employment because of 'poverty and lack of clothes' in the village. We neither learn of the details of what must have been a very significant journey, nor of Mulenga's first encounters with town life. This information would have been especially interesting given that Mulenga had not had any schooling and had not worked anywhere else before taking up employment at Broken Hill Mine. He paid his first tax at Broken Hill in 1926. As of February 1939, his wage was twelve shillings and sixpence.

Mulenga had five siblings. Two brothers were dead by 1939 while one lived in Luwingu in Northern Zambia. His two sisters were still living in his home village with his mother. His father was deceased. Mulenga had

⁵⁹ See BC880, E2.1.5, Notes on Mulenga Bisiketi.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, entries for 10 February 1939 and after.

not gone back to visit the family in his home village in the fourteen years since coming to Broken Hill.

In 1932 he had married a Bemba woman named Margarita, from Mpika, at Citola village. Margarita reached puberty in 1926. Unlike her husband who was not a Christian, Margarita was a baptised member of the Catholic Church. In a conversation of 30 March 1939, Mulenga informed Godfrey that he did not join the Catholic Church because he did not agree with the Church's strict rules on divorce, which made it difficult for one to divorce a spouse, especially if both were baptised members. While she was Mulenga's first wife, Margarita had been married before and had two children from her first marriage, by a man who was working in Ndola. Mulenga and Margarita had three children of their own between 1932 and 1939, two boys and a girl.

Evoking the sense of dislocation that is evident in Xavier's '*Amachona*' essay, Mulenga informed Godfrey of his desire to visit his home village but admitted he might never do so because of insufficient funds for the preparation and undertaking of a visit home.⁶¹ This conversation takes place in hut number 46, belonging to Icoro, another of Godfrey's informants, who also contributes to the discussion, agreeing with Mulenga on the point of insufficient funds.⁶² In this conversation, Mulenga admits that he wished, however, that if he died, his wife and children would return home. In response to Godfrey's question about why he would want this, Mulenga laughingly responds that he did not want his children to be uprooted the way he had been, because he did not want them to learn the culture and language of other ethnic groups in town to the extent that they would fail to speak Bemba when they returned to the village. Joining in Mulenga's laughter, Icoro jokes that he and Mulenga were rootless as a result of staying in town for too long.

In line with his style of investigation, on 5 December 1939, Godfrey interviewed Mulenga on his expenditures between July and November 1939. We thus learn that in July 1939, Mulenga spent his whole salary of twelve shillings and sixpence on a legal case in the compound. Mulenga gives the details in a later conversation. Apparently Mulenga had taken a lover, a girl who had come from the countryside to visit her sister and brother-in-law at Broken Hill. Upon hearing of the affair, the girl's relatives summoned Mulenga, demanding that he start supporting the girl financially and threatening to take him to the tribal elders or the compound manager if he refused to do so. Fearing that they might make good on their

⁶¹ Ibid, entry for 10 February 1939.

⁶² See BC880, E9.13, Biographical information about various individuals. Melech Icoro is one of the people listed in this part of the catalogue

threats, Mulenga agreed to settle the issue by giving the girl's relatives one pound and ending the affair. His August salary was spent on the preparations for the wife's journey to the village, which she undertook in October 1939, returning to Broken Hill in February 1940.⁶³ On this journey, the wife took an undisclosed quantity of cloth as gifts for relatives in the village. His September salary went for food for the household as well as preparations for his wife's journey. This expenditure is in line with Godfrey's conclusions that travel between Broken Hill and Kasama required at least two salaries for transport fares alone, hence it was financially constraining to visit the rural areas.⁶⁴ In October, Mulenga bought a suit for two shillings and sixpence; the rest of his salary seems to have been saved. In November, ten shillings was saved in a hole dug in the middle of his hut, a form of saving money that was common among the men, five shillings was spent on the purchase of a new shirt, while five shillings went for beer. We learn also that in the absence of the wife, between October 1939 and February 1940, Mulenga employed a male relative of his wife to prepare meals for him. It is not indicated how much he was paid. The practice of employment of Africans by fellow Africans seems to have been common in Broken Hill as some of the men interviewed, including Xavier Kofie, reported having fellow Africans in their employ. The *Essay* reports 140 African houseboys employed by fellow Africans in 1940.⁶⁵

In the conversation of 28 February 1940, when Mulenga was on his way to a beer party and met Godfrey, Godfrey records Mulenga's expenditures for January 1940. He bought two items of clothing for his children costing threepence and sixpence respectively, also fish, flour and bread at sixpence each, paraffin for sixpence, razor blades for threepence and three other items for three pence each. He seemed to have spent another ten shillings from his savings for items I could not make out due to Godfrey's illegible handwriting.

In terms of his relationship with the village, we learn that the time Margarita went to visit was the second time that Mulenga had sent money or gifts back home. The first was in 1927, the year after he arrived in Broken Hill, when he had sent his mother a silk blanket through a friend who had gone to visit the village.

⁶³ BC880, E2.1.5, Notes on Mulenga Bisiketi, entries for 28 February and 5 December 1939.

⁶⁴ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 24.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

Duncan Chanda

Another of Godfrey's informants at Broken Hill was Duncan Chanda, a Bemba from Chief Mwamba's village in Kasama. Duncan was resident of hut number 56 and employed under mine number 1530. He came to Broken Hill by lorry in the company of three friends between 1927 and 1928. Disappointingly, the details of the transition from countryside to town are missing in the narrative. Before coming to Broken Hill, he had held at least three jobs at Kasama, working for at least three different Europeans. These jobs variously involved working as a cook, houseboy, tennis boy and accompanying one of the employers on safaris. In Kasama, his wages were three shillings and sixpence, seven shillings and sixpence later increased to ten shillings, and eleven shillings and sixpence, again increased to fifteen shillings. The motivation for going to Broken Hill was to search for better pay because the employers in Kasama refused to significantly increase the wages.

In 1932, Duncan married a daughter of an acquaintance of Godfrey's, Leni Mwamba, who was a resident of the government farms (five-acre plots). Duncan's wife had travelled from her original hometown, Mpika, to Broken Hill in 1934 and got engaged to Duncan the following year. She reached puberty in 1936. The two got married in 1937 and their first child was born in 1938. Unlike Duncan, who had only two weeks of schooling, Duncan's wife had attended a Catholic school for two years before relocating to Broken Hill.

Godfrey discussed marriage details with Duncan. These included the fact that Duncan had been charged two pounds and ten shillings as *lobola* but had only managed to pay less than half of that. Duncan also related details of the festivities that had taken place during the marriage. In two separate sessions after the discussions about Duncan's marriage, Duncan asked Godfrey to relate procedures and rites of European marriages, which Godfrey did, given that he had invited these questions on at least one occasion.⁶⁶

Other than the fact that marriage was obviously a subject close to his informants' hearts, marriage was one of the key factors that Godfrey used to analyse rates of urbanisation among Africans. Through an analysis of marriage procedures and how the urban context had shaped them, Godfrey was able to highlight urbanisation among Africans through changing practices. For example, the forms of bride-wealth in Broken Hill had

⁶⁶ BC880, E2.1.4, Outline biography of Duncan Chanda (sic). See entries for 22 and 27 February, 31 March and 7 December 1939.

become more monetary than gift-based as in the villages. There was evidence of intermarriage between different ethnic groups as well as of more permanent settlement of families in Broken Hill. Godfrey was equally interested in the relationship between the in-laws in the marriage and juxtaposing the roles of relatives in town and countryside that showed marked changes in marriage procedures between the two places.⁶⁷ These analyses made up part of his argument for permanent and temporary urbanisation in the *Essay*.⁶⁸

Duncan worked for four or five years as a cook for at least two different Europeans in Broken Hill, earning 25 shillings per month. He resigned from these jobs because of bad treatment from his employers as well as a desire for better pay. After leaving his last job as a cook, Duncan stayed for four months without pay. The little money he had saved up (about 24 shillings) ran out within the first month, forcing him to live off friends for the remainder of the time he was unemployed. Upon seeing his distress, the friends donated money for a train fare to Livingstone as well as food for the journey. Duncan left for Livingstone in search of employment. In Livingstone, he worked as a cook for 25 shillings per month from around 1932 to 1933, after which he returned to Broken Hill. At Broken Hill he found work as a cook for a European, leaving the job after just two weeks because he felt he was not liked by his employer. In 1934, Duncan was taken up by the mine, doing surface work in the zinc plant for twelve shillings per month, a job he still held as late as 1940.

The narratives of informants at Broken Hill helped Godfrey to make a more informed and sympathetic analysis of what he called ‘inter-urban circulation’ among Africans, which involved moving from one job to another within the Copperbelt, Broken Hill, Livingstone and occasionally Wankie.⁶⁹ In line with the general themes of the *Essay*, Godfrey explained this phenomenon as resulting from the ‘one-sided economic developments’ that made for ‘social tension’ and ‘instability’ resulting from a lack of ‘mutual understanding and respect’ between Africans and Europeans, which militated against Africans staying long in one job.⁷⁰ The problem of racial tensions and its effect on inter-urban circulation among Africans was compounded by other factors that were a result of the capitalist

⁶⁷ BC880, E.2.1.1, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men I; E.2.1.2, Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men II; and E.2.1.3: Broken Hill mine compound, Outline biographies of married men III.

⁶⁸ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 47 and Part II, last chapter.

⁶⁹ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 56–7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 56.

organisation of the economy, including high rates of rural–urban migration, the lack of skills among Africans that made their labour cheap and plentiful, the competition among urban Africans for jobs and women, among other things.⁷¹ Additionally, a reading of the published text against the narratives of migrant labourers in the archive illuminates not only African agency in shaping the anthropologist’s narrative, but African agency in the face of the difficult working conditions such as low wages and racism among European employers. The shifting from one job to another was a form of resistance against these harsh conditions and also a way of dealing with them.

In a conversation of 27 February 1939, Godfrey records Duncan’s views on race relations. Here, Duncan complained about Europeans, telling Godfrey that they ‘were very bad people’ as they made their African servants ‘suffer a lot’.⁷² This, Duncan explained, was one of the reasons he had shifted from one job to another and ended up working for the mine, where wages were significantly lower than those for a houseboy or cook working for an individual European. Duncan was particularly outspoken about maltreatment by married European men, noting that European bachelors made better employers than their married counterparts.

As with all his other informants, Godfrey collected detailed information on Duncan’s expenditures as well as how much of his money was sent back home as cash or in kind.⁷³ We thus know that between 1927 and 1932, when Duncan relocated to Livingstone, he had sent a total of three pounds to his mother in the village. He had sent a further two pounds during his stint at Livingstone and another pound since starting work at the mine’s zinc plant, which he had sent in 1937. In 1938, he twice sent three pieces of cloth valued at five shillings each, once through an elder brother who had returned home for a visit. At another time, Duncan had sent three unspecified items of clothing to his mother through a person who had travelled to the village. And at yet another time, he had sent his mother a blanket valued at fifteen shillings. All the money was sent through the post.⁷⁴ Like Mulenga Bisiketi, Duncan had not visited home since arriving in town in 1927. In September 1939, Duncan spent five shillings on a shirt and fifteen shillings on relish and flour. In October, two shillings and

⁷¹ Ibid, 56–7.

⁷² BC 880, E2.1.4, Outline biography of Duncan Canda (sic), see entry for 20 February 1939.

⁷³ For a summary of the expenditures of Africans interviewed by Godfrey and Zacharia, see G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part II, 17–25.

⁷⁴ Ibid, Part I, 43–5. Table VI breaks down money sent to home villages, table VII gives types of gifts to home villages, and table VIII shows methods of transfer.

sixpence was spent on relish and one pound on his wife's clothes, and in November, seventeen shillings and sixpence went for his clothes and about five shillings on relish. Other than his earnings and the food rations that mine employees received, Duncan like many other Africans complemented his salary with food from a garden which Godfrey accompanied him to on 27 February 1939.⁷⁵

Other than these points of personal economics, Godfrey interviewed Duncan at length about aspects of African economic life at Broken Hill. Chief among these was the pooling wages among a group of friends, mentioned earlier, where each person received a set portion of money from all the others each month, allowing each one to save. Additionally, Duncan discussed the pooling of food and rations among Africans, whereby a person or family pooled their rations/food with another and ate from one place, or else a group of people alternated in eating from each other's homes. This practice was prevalent among almost all the African men and helped, among other things, to cement kinship ties. All these schemes were forms of urban culture that Africans created as survival strategies in the urban areas. They also significantly contributed to Godfrey's analyses in the *Essay*. For example, data from informants about the money and gifts sent back to rural areas led Godfrey to conclude that only ten percent of African wages in urban areas was sent back to rural areas, either in monetary form or as gifts.⁷⁶ The implication of this for his argument about urbanisation and his critique of the migrant labour system, which assumed that the loss of manpower in rural areas was offset by the transfer of money from the urban centre to rural areas, is obvious. Additionally, an analysis of the forms that part of the ten percent took, such as clothes, bicycles, blankets and pots, led Godfrey to suggest that this portion of the wages sent to rural areas, especially when sent in these ways, was further leading to impoverishment in rural areas, as it was encouraging assimilation of European and capitalist forms of consumption. My

⁷⁵ The 'little garden', as Godfrey described it, was located between the mine compound and the Catholic church and measured roughly 15 by 24 metres. The garden had maize, some groundnuts, pumpkins and beans. While the maize seems to have been doing well, Godfrey observed that 'the other stuff was in a poor state'. It seems that Duncan's garden had not done any better the previous year, producing only a half bag of maize. From the discussion in the garden, we learn that the garden plots were issued by the *capitao*, on request. There was no permanent ownership of plots, and one could request a different plot from year to year.

⁷⁶ G. Wilson, *Essay*, Part I, 43.

argument therefore is the significance of individual informants' experiences and narratives in shaping Godfrey's conclusions.

Conclusion: Translation, Interpretation, Representation

The state of being a migrant can be defined in various ways. The hard-core migrant is the one whereby when he comes to town, he starts working, and then he hears that your father passed away, thereafter he hears that your mother passed away, and his siblings too and his grandmother and grandfather too, all his relatives, then he thinks, there is no one in the village to go back to. If he is not married, he then gets desperate and marries here in town, saying I don't have a wife in the village. I will never go back to the village, who will I go back to? I do not have a father, I lost my mother to death also, and my kin are all dead. So he cannot think about the village, no! He says I will die in town. He is a migrant.

Another kind of migrant is this one. A person comes from Bemba land, he comes here and then he cannot find a job. He moves from one place to another looking for a job. When he finally finds a job, he starts desiring clothes. Once he acquires the clothes he starts thinking of moving forward to another place. And then he reaches the place he desires. He gets tired of the new place, he then thinks of another place to go and he goes there. He eventually forgets the village, hence he stops writing letters there, and he says it's been long since I left the village. I am sure my parents are both dead. I will never go back to the village. He is a migrant; people in the village presume he is dead.

Another kind of migrant is this one. A person comes from the village and starts working. He begins frequently shopping, very expensive suits, he then starts to love beer and to dance, he doesn't save any money, no! He continues in these ways for many years, even when he receives letters from the village! Even when this guy works, and he desires to go home to the village, but he can't go, because he has no money for transport. This man has become a migrant.⁷⁷

Xavier Kofie, Godfrey's language tutor and foremost informant in Northern Rhodesia, wrote this three-page essay which he entitled '*Amachona*', in one of Godfrey Wilson's notebooks on 23 July 1939, in Livingstone.⁷⁸ Although poorly punctuated, the essay was written in well-spelt Bemba in

⁷⁷ BC880, E1.8, Bemba notes, July–August 1938, for the original Bemba version. See also E2.1.8, Notes on Xavier Kofie for Godfrey's translation.

⁷⁸ *Amachona* is a Bemba word meaning one who has been away from home for a long time. It is a common term for migrant labourer, today associated with people in the diaspora for work or studies or any other reason. Godfrey translated the word as 'exile'.

a neat and clear handwriting. I translated the word ‘Amachona’ (plural) and ‘Ichona’ (singular) as ‘abor migrant’, while Wilson translated it as ‘exile’.

The sense of dislocation and impoverishment of Africans is glaring in this essay, in contrast with prevailing notions of that time, that European colonialism was bringing civilisation and progress to African societies. Indeed, the opening sentence of part 1 of *Essay* reads in part ‘Over the heart of a poor and primitive continent, civilisation has laid a finger of steel.....’⁷⁹ Scholars who have analysed Wilson’s work in Northern Rhodesia have observed that a major strength of Godfrey’s theoretical explanation in the *Essay* is the extent to which Godfrey analysed social and economic changes in Northern Rhodesia within the framework of the world economy, an analysis ahead of his time. Wilson’s narrative of African experiences at this time based on life histories was a teleological narrative of progress and civilisation hinged on Western models of development. He explained the social and economic problems that resulted from European settlement and the introduction of capitalism and its discursive practices as temporal ‘tensions’ and ‘disequilibrium’ that would inevitably resolve themselves.⁸⁰ We therefore need to locate Wilson’s representations in the ideological contexts in which British social anthropology was born and mushroomed, especially in the interwar period that hinged on ideologies of race and hierarchical ordering of society along racial lines.⁸¹

I therefore read the life-histories of Wilson’s African informants as mediated constructions of African livelihoods. These unequal relations of power can be seen in the emergence of new African masculinities within the urban Northern Rhodesian landscape. According to Morrell, colonialism introduced new forms of masculinity in the African landscape, ones that were intertwined with work. At the same time, the ‘hegemonic’ form of masculinity in urban Northern Rhodesia was European, seen through unequal work relations where Europeans had better jobs and wages. These urban experiences shaped the constructions of masculinities that form the informants’ narratives, including having good expensive European clothes; living in town itself seems to count as claim to being male and virile. It is within these contexts of unequal relations that Godfrey’s relations with Africans were formed. Arguably, while he smoked with them, spoke their language and visited them in their homes,

⁷⁹Wilson, *Essay* Part 1, p. 9.

⁸⁰Wilson, *Essay* part 1.

⁸¹ See, for example, Talal Asad, ‘Introduction’ in Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973).

when considered against these wider contexts, Godfrey was still a member of the dominant group.

In this new cultural landscape, Abdoumalig Simone argues, African cities like Broken Hill were not designed for the benefit of Africans but as places to ‘organise the evacuation of resources and to construct mechanisms through which broader territories could be administered’.⁸² In the case of Northern Rhodesia and Broken Hill, the African male was viewed as a provider of labour for the mining operations, one who did not have a stable place in the economic structures.

In the case of Zacharia, Xavier, Duncan and Mulenga, what I have outlined are histories of labour migrants and not really narratives of individual lives. In so doing, I have in a way recast these men within the same frames in which they were known by colonialists, colonial administrators, compound managers and, I might add, the anthropologist – as migrant labourers. In doing so, I wonder if projects for the recovery of agency and identities of African knowledge workers do not potentially lead to the reproduction of colonial and racially constructed social knowabilities.

⁸² Abdoumalig Simone, ‘On the Worlding of African Cities’ in Geschiere, Meyer and Pels, eds., *Readings in Modernity*, 139–40.

CHAPTER FIVE

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND COLONISATION.
REFLECTIONS ON KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA:
THE CASE OF SENEGAL, 1895-1958

MOR NDAO, UCAD, SENEGAL

Although reflection on "the history of diseases" and more recently on "the place of diseases in history"¹ has made notable progress,² medical research, in particular the transfer of knowledge and understanding in the colonies of French West Africa from a historical perspective, would benefit from further study. Georges Basalla's work on the model of diffusion of Western science in other parts of the world,³ though questionable, had the virtue of planting fruitful seeds for reflection on methods of knowledge transfer, and their translation and retranslation from the European centre to the outlying colonial areas.⁴

¹ Mbokolo E., "Histoire des maladies, histoire et maladies: l'Afrique [History of Diseases, History and Diseases: Africa]", in Augé M, Herzlich C, *Le sens du mal. Anthropologie, histoire, sociologie de la maladie* [*The Sense of Evil. Anthropology, History, Sociology of Disease*], Ed. Archives Contemporaines, 1984, pp. 155-186, p. 157.

² Delauney K., "Faire de la santé un lieu pour l'histoire de l'Afrique : essai d'historiographie [Making Health a Place for the History of Africa]", *Outre-Mers*, T.93, No 346-347, pp. 7-46.

³ Basalla G., "The Spread of Western Science", *Science*, vol .156, 5 May 1967, pp. 611-622.

⁴ See Petitjean P. et al., *Science and Empire. Historical Studies about Scientific Development and European Expansion*, Dordrecht-Boston-London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992.

The framework of this discussion dictates choices and perspectives. The concept of "translation" or rather the "sociology of translation"⁵ refers not only to the way in which science and technology are produced, the process of establishing their validity and effectiveness, and the mechanisms of their diffusion, but also their impact in the process of transformation of the world.⁶

To approach our subject, we will question the methods and mechanisms of Pasteurian discourse and practices in Africa. Much of the reflection focuses on Pasteur's project and the initiatives deployed to "pasteurise" the West African colonies, in particular the colony of Senegal. Pasteur used three points of reference to revolutionise modern science and societies: hygiene (health), medicine and (laboratory) biology.⁷ Although Pasteur's ideas had triumphed in the West in the 19th century, much remained to be done in the African colonies.

The work conducted by pioneers in the medical and biological fields (Emile Marchoux and Constant Mathis) is reflected in an attempt at theorisation of Pasteurian methods in the colonies and research *in situ* to bring "order to the epidemiological chaos" built around miasmatic, telluric, neo-Hippocratic theory: doctrine of miasma (clinicians) versus the germ theory (Pasteur). At the time, many physicians working in the colonies challenged the utility of biology.

The Pasteurian project, which aimed to transform society through hygiene, is also expressed as a "war on germs".⁸ By rejecting local cultures and traditions in the colonies, the aim was to transform domestic habits, a source of physical and moral degradation. The goal was to "produce" strong and healthy men. Eugenics, which promotes men of good quality,⁹ is expressed in the African colonies by the doctrine of "faire du Noir" ["making the black man"]. The "production" of men in quantity and quality aimed to "develop human capital to make money capital grow".¹⁰

This work sets out to reconsider the idea of an Africa disconnected from global research. During colonisation, research conducted in Africa

⁵ See on this subject Madeleine Akrich, Michel Callon and Bruno Latour (dir.), *Sociologie de la traduction [Sociology of Translation]*, Paris, Presses des Mines, 2006.

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ See Latour B., *Les microbes: Guerre et Paix suivi de Irréductions [Germs: War and Peace followed by Irreductions]*. Paris, A. Métaillié, 1984.

⁸ See on this subject Latour B., *Les microbes : Guerre et Paix*. Paris, A. Métaillié, 1984.

⁹ Pichot A, *La société pure. De Darwin à Hitler [Pure Society. From Darwin to Hitler]*, Champs essais, Flammarion, 2009.

¹⁰ A. Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies [Development of the Colonies]*.

was connected to major global networks: America, (Cuba, USA Rockefeller Foundation, Brazil with the Rio and Dakar missions, Pasteur Institute of Brazil), the British Empire, Germany, the Pasteur Institutes of Asia. The connection of these research networks with cooperation strategies did not, however, exclude competition. On the other hand, dialogue with the African milieu was rather difficult because of the vertical nature of the transfer, ignorance of the Other (the African), difference, and alterity.

If we accept translation as a misunderstanding with necessarily divergent interests in the long run,¹¹ what are the influences exerted by the environment (effects of "environment-contagion" and "translation-betrayal"¹²), and the social and cultural environment on Pasteurian discourse? What are the characteristics and influences the environment can exert on research trends and, consequently, how do encounters between Western official modern medicine and local knowledge take place?

Based on this observation, this work will analyse the procedures and methods of structuring Pasteurian practices in the French colonies in Africa. How is medical knowledge built under colonisation? Is there a rejection or rather a synchronism of models (Western and local) through "translation / betrayal" or "environment / contagion"? How are Pasteurian practices considered in Africa? What is the place of African medical thought and traditions in research, particularly in the discourse of research institutions?

This work is divided into two parts. The first analyses the points of reference and methods of transfer, while the second concentrates on strategies of adaptation to the environment.

1) Points of Reference and Methods of Transfer

While the exploratory phase,¹³ beginning in the 18th century with large expeditions, took the form of an accumulation of data on the geography, climate, fauna and flora of the areas to be colonised, from the second half of the 19th century until World War II, this stage transformed into applied science.

The priorities of colonial development were guiding research (colonial science) towards mine exploration, forestry or agronomy, and the fight

¹¹ Latour B., *Les microbes : Guerre et Paix* suivi de *Irréductions*. Paris, A. Métaillié, 1984, p. 73.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Basalla G., "The spread of Western Science", *Science*, vol .156, 5 May 1967, pp. 611-622.

against tropical diseases, which were putting the demographic components of the colonies to the test.

a. Medicine

Constant Mathis, whose father, a naval physician, died in the 1878 yellow fever epidemic that decimated the medical corps in Senegal (22 deaths out of 26 practitioners), was to conduct an attempt at theorisation of Pasteurian methods in the colonies of French West Africa, bringing "order to epidemiological chaos".¹⁴ The application of Pasteurian methods in Africa was to make available to the scientific community knowledge on pathogenic germs hitherto ignored by research.

However, although the triumph of bacteriology at the end of the 19th century was accepted in the West, in French Africa, major obstacles persisted in the medical field regarding the reception of Pasteurian discourse, particularly on the origin of these strange diseases.¹⁵ In the colonies, this opposition was embodied in the miasma theory.

This war of theories between clinicians defending the miasma theory and the Pasteurian advocates of the germ theory polarised a lively debate in French West Africa from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁶

The miasma theory or telluric, neo-Hippocratic theories are doctrines based on clinical observations which "attributed a preponderant role to telluric and climatic factors in tropical diseases".¹⁷ At the time, miasmatic, telluric or climatic theories predominated, built around the etiology of exotic pathology defended by Dr Mahé. Corre's ideas are in line with those theorised by Professor Mahé who, at the opening of his tropical medicine course in 1875 designed for young doctors of the Naval School of

¹⁴ Mathis C, *L'œuvre des pastoriens en Afrique noire. Afrique Occidentale Française [The Work of Pasteurians in Black Africa. French West Africa]*, PUF, 1946, p. 8.

¹⁵ Jean-Paul Bado and Marc Michel, "Sur les traces du docteur Emile Marchoux, pionnier de l'Institut Pasteur en Afrique noire [On the Path of Dr. Emile Marchoux, pioneer of the Pasteur Institute in Black Africa]," pp. 297-319, p. 297, in Morange M. (ed.), *L'Institut Pasteur. Contributions à son histoire [Pasteur Institute : Contributions to Its History]*, La Découverte, 1991.

¹⁶ See on this subject two works by Dr Corre: Corre, Armand, *Traité clinique des maladies des pays chauds [Clinical Treatise on Diseases in Hot Countries]*, Paris, Octave Doris editor, 1887, 862 pp. Corre, Armand, *Traité des fièvres bilieuses et typhiques des pays chauds [Treatise on Bilious and Typhic Diseases in Hot Countries]*, Paris: Octave Doin, VIII-567 p. 1883.

¹⁷ *Idem.*

Medicine in Brest called to serve in the tropics, described the tropical West Africa world in less than glowing terms: "There, on the reeking banks of the Atlantic, you will encounter the dreaded sphinx of Malaria, pernicious Proteus, the delirious phantom of Typhus, the livid and icy spectre of Cholera, the yellow mask of acute yellow fever. Beware! A poisonous breath is exhaled from the earth and the waters".¹⁸

The medical nomenclature of the time revealed confusing labels: bilious climate fever, remittent gastric or gastric-bilious fevers, atavistic pernicious fevers, among others. A look through two great works of Dr Corre are enough to convince us: *Traité des maladies des pays chauds* [*Treatise on Diseases of Hot Countries*], written in 1887, and the other published in 1883, *Traité des fièvres bilieuses et typhiques des pays chauds* [*Treatise on Bilious and Typhic Fevers of Hot Countries*]. Explaining the etiology of dysentery, Corre maintains that "the marsh, when it exists, is the focal point for the formulation of multiple principles, the effects of which combine and associate; it can give rise to malaria and dysentery by its necessarily complex emanations, through the water which it supplies directly or indirectly for consumption; it is only the common source of two very distinct infectious states".¹⁹

Many doctors working in the colonies were unaware that infinitely tiny beings could be at the origin of diseases.²⁰ Many regarded Pasteurian theories with hostility,²¹ and thus opposed Laveran's discoveries on the role of the hematozoon in malarial pathology and the comma-bacillus in the etiology of cholera as shown by R. Koch. The doctrine of the parasitic microorganism generating a cholera poison,²² defended by Koch, was strongly contested by Dr Corre who attacked the germ's intervention in etiology.

For Mathis, resistance to the Pasteurian discourse triggered a "war of theories" which manifested itself in an opposition between the miasma theory (clinicians) and the germ theory (Pasteurians). In this scientific war, the Pasteurians sought to pull apart the telluric, neo-Hippocratic miasma theories, defended by the most renowned doctors of the colony, like Corre

¹⁸ Mathis C, *op cit*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Mathis C, *op. cit.* p. 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Corre, Armand, 1883 *Traité des fièvres bilieuses et typhiques des pays chauds*. Paris : Octave Doin, VIII-567 pages.

²² Mathis C., p. 9..

and Bérenger-Féraud.²³ The application of Pasteurian principles and methods had a real impact on the creation and emergence of tropical medicine. The dissemination of Pasteurian principles and methods necessitated the creation of the *Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique* [Bulletin of the Society of Exotic Pathology] which emancipated itself from the *Annales d'Hygiène et de Médecine Coloniales* [Annals of Hygiene and Colonial Medicine] established at the end of the 19th century.

b. Laboratory Biology

The history of biology in French West Africa can be attributed to Émile Marchoux²⁴ who established the Microbiological Laboratory in Saint-Louis on 19 February 1896. He had a broad experience to his name, working at the Institut Pasteur in Paris and in Brazil, where he headed the French Mission on Yellow Fever in November 1901 for the verification of American results, the study of proposals for the eradication of yellow fever in black Africa and its consequences on the colonial economy.²⁵ He made his first trip to Africa in 1888, collecting much information on African societies, their lifestyles, and traditions²⁶ which he published in 1895, *Notes ethnographiques sur Porto Novo* [Ethnographic Notes on Porto Novo].

Upon its transfer to Dakar on 24 April 1913,²⁷ it became the Biology Laboratory of French West Africa in 1923 (bacteriology, zootechnics, agricultural chemistry).²⁸ After an agreement with the Pasteur Institute of Paris as a subsidiary on 19 December 1923, which took effect on 1 January 1924, the Pasteur Institute in Dakar was in charge of human microbiology while the Institut Pasteur in Kindian was responsible for animal microbiology.

Marchoux was a pioneer who went beyond the collection phase. The exploration stage, the first theorised by Basalla, was outdated with the establishment of a laboratory *in situ*. For Basalla, the diffusion of modern

²³ Bérenger-Féraud J. L. B, *Traité clinique des maladies des Européens au Sénégal* [Clinical Treatise on Diseases of Europeans in Senegal], Volumes 1 - 2, Vve A. Delahaye, 1878, 1213 pages.

²⁴ Jean-Paul Bado and Marc Michel, “Sur les traces du docteur Emile Marchoux, pionnier de l’Institut Pasteur en Afrique noire”, in Morange M (ed.), *L’Institut Pasteur. Contributions à son histoire*, La Découverte, 1991, pp. 297-319.

²⁵ *Id.* p. 301.

²⁶ *Idem.* p. 297-298.

²⁷ Mathis, C. p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

science in the countries of the South²⁹ takes place in three phases. It begins with an exploratory phase which leads to a period of "colonial science" before ending with "national science".³⁰ The initial phase (exploration) that takes place on the ground is marked by collecting samples of fauna and flora, studying the physical characteristics of the environment. The research results were then sent to metropolitan laboratories.

The choice of Africa at that time was not random, for although in the West societies were pasteurised by the triumph of bacteriology in the second half of the 19th century, in Africa, "the white man's tomb", much remained to be done and interesting prospects opened up in the field of possibilities.³¹ The future of medicine and medical professionals could be resolved on the African continent. The transfer and triumph of Pasteurian methods on the continent could provide the scientific community with knowledge crucial for the future of medical research.

Marchoux uses a three-step approach to science. The first is based on a personal observation of afflictions and respect for the social perception of each disease thanks to research on the behaviours of the populations faced with the disease. This opening to society advocated by Marchoux has its origins in the tradition of the naval doctors on ethnography, the study of exotic societies, their mores, customs and traditions. Furthermore, it was realised by the publication of *Notes ethnographiques sur Porto Novo* in 1895.

Such an approach also seems to be in line with Paul-Joseph Barthez.³² In the 1778 work *Nouveaux éléments de science de l'Homme* [*New Elements of Human Science*], Barthez – although a physician – advocated a dialogue or a link between the medical and the social through an "intimate connection" between the understanding of human societies and medical practice.³³ Thus, he compares the temperament and habits of man,³⁴ the factors at the origin of the modification of the physics of man and his mores in relation to the various places of the earth, the climate and

²⁹ Basalla G., "The spread of Western Science", *Science*, vol .156, 5 May 1967, pp. 611-622.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Dozon, J-P, "D'un tombeau l'autre [From One Tomb to Another]", *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XXXI (1-2), 121-122, 1991, pp. 135-158, p.136.

³² Barthez Paul-Joseph, *Nouveaux éléments de science de l'Homme* [*New Elements of Human Science*], Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier, 1778.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 263-274.

nature of the terrain, moral and political factors, and the constitution and mores of men.³⁵

According to Marchoux, the observation phase is followed by examinations and experiments with a microscope, whereas the conclusion must be focused on scientific prophylaxis and therapeutics. He believed that modern medicine and the application of Pasteurian methods and principles represented the ideal path for the transformation of African societies. Therefore, he advocated scrupulous respect and attention for local African populations, a pragmatism emphasising "useful"³⁶ things, prevention (hygienism) before therapy and medical research.

At the time when Marchoux, and the Pasteurians in general, were deploying their strategy, a lively debate relating to biology, the laboratory and their role in medicine was occurring in French West Africa. What is the scope of biology in the colonies? Can it substitute for doctors? Clinicians and the most renowned physicians of the colony, like Armand Corre and Bérenger-Féraud, were deciding on these questions.

For these clinicians, the art of healing, based on observations, medical history, auscultation, the proximity of the nurse/nursed, can do without biology. Admittedly, this war of theories between the clinicians ("contagionists"), who defended the doctrine of miasma, and the Pasteurians, who supported the germ theory ("infectionists"), had its origins in a lively debate which, as early as the 18th century, pitted clinicians, vitalists, anatomists against the advocates of the reform of medicine embodied in a new medical science.³⁷

At the end of the 18th century, Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis contemplated a medical future based on facts, observation, examination, experiment, comparison, rational empiricism and the use of instruments. For Cabanis, medical reform, the new art of healing, must be based on experimental art founded on the physical sciences and observation. This new view, furthered by Bichat, Virchow, Morgagni and Magendie, was appropriated

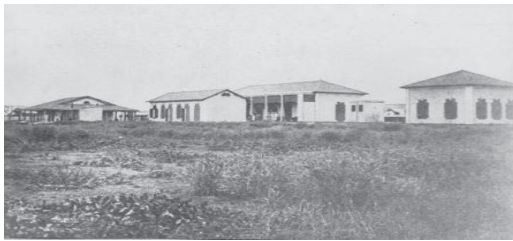
³⁵ Carbone R. "Médecine et science de l'Homme: Paul-Joseph Barthez et la pensée philosophico-médicale (XVII^e-XVIII^e) [Medicine and Human Science: Paul-Joseph Barthez and philosophical-medical thought (17th-18th centuries)]", *Perspectives*, Journal du RFIEA, Numéro 13, 2015, p. 19.

³⁶ Jean-Paul Bado and Marc Michel, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

³⁷ See on this subject the work of Gorges Canguilhem, *Etudes d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences concernant les vivants et la vie [Studies of History and Philosophy of Sciences with respect to the living and life]*, J. Vrin, Paris, 2002., pp. 129-133.

half a century later by Claude Bernard who inaugurated experimental medicine.³⁸

In the colony of Senegal, the war of theories between clinicians and Pasteurians continued in the early 20th century and even beyond, until the triumph of Pasteurian methods in the late 1920s.



LMS Main room of LMS: Dr A. Lafont, F. Heckenroth, assistant A. Baury

Another problem raised by biology and the laboratory in the colonies relates to questions of adaptation to the tropical environment known for its hot and humid climate. Thus, how to store vaccines under physical and climatic conditions characterised by high temperatures. From the end of the 19th century, a lively debate in scientific journals³⁹ raised the problem of vaccine storage due to heat, its disastrous effects on coolers, the thorny equation of outdoor travel under the sun, not to mention cooling down at night. The problem is all the more crucial since mass anti-smallpox

³⁸ Canguilhem Gorges, *op.cit.*, pp. 127-172.

³⁹ See the discussion in *Annales d'Hygiène et de Médecine Coloniales* [*Annals of Colonial Health and Medicine*] On this subject see: Dr Houillon, "Variole et vaccine en AOF pour l'année 1903 [Smallpox and Vaccine in French West Africa for the year 1903]", *AHMC*, Vol. VIII 1904, pp. 546-568. Dr Simond, "Conservation du vaccin [Vaccine Storage]", *AHMC*, Vol IV, 1901, Paris, Doin, p. 145.

immunisation campaigns were beginning in French West Africa at the same time.

According to Dr Houillon,⁴⁰ the vaccine is easily stored between 20-25°C, but becomes sensitive at over 30°C. At 35-37°C, it rapidly becomes inert and dies beyond 40-45°C.⁴¹ At the beginning of the 20th century, Dr Simond's research led to a brilliant invention in 1901. The simple procedure consists of

Immersing the vaccine tube in the water of a small, porous earthenware pot from the country, which is hand-carried by a coolie during the vaccine rounds on the ground and suspended in the air during stops or aboard boats. If care is taken to ensure that the receptacle never runs out of water, the vaccine is kept at a temperature never exceeding 28 °C.⁴²

The same question arose with the storage of the BCG [TB] vaccine. Although between 1921 and 1940 Calmette's method prevailed with oral administration, the period from 1940 to 1950 was marked by the development of a BCG vaccination by scarification. From 1950, however, a major innovation occurred with a dried, frozen vaccine capable of preserving its properties for a long time at atmospheric temperature, developed by Boiron and Sorano at the Institut Pasteur in Dakar.

c. Hygiene

The Pasteurian project aimed to transform society through hygiene. In this pasteurisation project, Africa was an ideal ground for hygienists and Pasteurians to put Pasteurian methods into practice: to clean up, to manage cities, to wash, dig sewers, erect fountains. Its validation presupposes a "war on germs"⁴³ by opposing bad domestic habits, a source of physical and moral degradation. Such a project calls for a reorganisation of human life. In the French West African colonies, a legislative, dissuasive or even repressive system was established beginning in 1905 with the health police and the Hygiene Service for the strict observance of hygiene rules: preventing people from spitting on the ground, pushing them to dig sewerage, promoting asepsis, imposing vaccination, fighting mosquitoes, etc.

⁴⁰ Dr Houillon, "Variolle et vaccine en AOF pour l'année 190", *AHMC*, Vol VIII 1904, pp. 546-568.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

⁴² Dr Simond, "Conservation du vaccin," *AHMC*, Vol. IV, 1901, Paris, Doin, p.145.

⁴³ See Latour B., *Les microbes, Guerre et Paix, op.cit.*

This project was connected to the priorities of colonial development, its aim being to "produce" strong and healthy men, if we take as the definition of hygiene "the study of man and animals in their relations with their environments with a view to the preservation and improvement of the vitality of the individual and the species".⁴⁴ Eugenics, which promotes men of good quality,⁴⁵ a pledge of the "wealth of Nations", is seen in the African colonies by the doctrine "faire du Noir",⁴⁶ dear to Governors Carde and Brévié. Governor General Carde believed that "health work and medical action are dictated by the need to develop the race in quantity and quality".⁴⁷ This intersects the vision of the Minister of Colonies Albert Sarraut, who advocated the production of men in quantity and in quality to "develop human capital to make money capital more profitable".⁴⁸

To "faire du Nègre" ["make the Negro"],⁴⁹ faced with the "degeneration of the black race", "social defence" is called to the aid of the policy of "regeneration" of African races to combat so-called social diseases and, in so doing, ensure "demographic revival" through the promotion of hygiene in African neighbourhoods. Health education, introduced in schools since 1913, its popularisation in black families, the use of mediation (African medical and paramedical corps) and the Institute of Social Hygiene (Polyclinique Roume in Dakar) represented the pillars of "social defence". In the specifications of the Polyclinique Roume, we note the popularisation of social hygiene, medical assistance to African populations and the professional training of African doctors, nurses and midwives.

Colonial authorities believed that hygiene could be a solution to the control of diseases that were hindering colonial development. A look at these remarks of the medical mission for assessment of the health situation in the colony of Senegal provides convincing evidence. For the mission,

It is by hygiene that the white race will truly conquer the tropical zone.
What does it matter, the possession of vast territories in regions where

⁴⁴ Definition of Professeur Landouzy, 1888, in Latour B. *Les microbes. Guerre et Paix* ; *op.cit.*, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁵ Pichot A., *La société pure. De Darwin à Hitler*, Champs essais, Flammarion, 2009.

⁴⁶ ANS 1H102(163), Memorandum of 12 March 1924 of Governor General Carde. Instruction on the operation of the AMI, Gorée, Gouvernement général, 1927.

⁴⁷ ANS 1H102(163), Circulaire du 12 mars 1924 du Gouverneur général Carde. Instruction sur le fonctionnement de l'AMI, Gorée, Gouvernement général, 1927.

⁴⁸ Sarraut A., *La mise en valeur des colonies [Development of the Colonies]*, Paris, Payot, 1923, p. 95.

⁴⁹ ANS 1H102(163), Circulaire du 12 mars 1924 du Gouverneur général Carde. Instruction sur le fonctionnement de l'AMI, Gorée, Gouvernement général, 1927.

colonisation is impossible, where the European can neither develop his activity nor settle, where his health is always precarious and his life continually threatened. Hygiene alone can make the colonial domain inhabitable, accessible to settlers; it alone can protect them from many diseases that lie in wait for them and prevent them from giving their facilities the importance they deserve.⁵⁰

However, the hygienist and pasteurisation project of African societies can be compromised by the way of life of African populations which, according to the colonial authorities, defies the basic principles of hygiene. According to the colonial administration,

The absolute lack of hygiene common to all blacks is the most serious cause of mortality. The black people are generally unaware of or infrequently practice cleanliness of the body and especially that of the dwelling. Although the native lives outside during the day and is rarely overworked, it is often the case that five or six people spend the night in rooms whose cube of air is barely enough for a single individual. These rooms are, moreover, as carefully draft-proof as possible. The expectorations of tenants, thrown against the walls, dry up and soon pollute the atmosphere with their dust. This is certainly where we find one of the main causes of the spread of tuberculosis, a disease very common among blacks.⁵¹

During the colonial period, hygiene, race and the occupation of space are fully connected. Thus, medicine and hygiene were used to rank "races", or to "racialise" the geographical space in some colonial cities. Such was the case of urban segregation in Dakar in 1914, when the colonial authorities evoked health and hygiene arguments for separating European and African neighbourhoods. The plague was brandished by health and political authorities to justify racial segregation.⁵² The Plateau district, at a higher elevation, swept by the winds, was reserved for Europeans while the district of Medina, which occupies the shallows was inhabited by blacks. A 200-meter-wide cordon sanitaire, *non-aedificandi* space, separated the two geographical spaces.

⁵⁰ ANS H48, Mission sanitaire au Sénégal [Health Mission in Senegal], Partial report, Feb-March - 1901, p. 1.

⁵¹ ANS H 19, Comité supérieur et services municipaux d'hygiène [Senior Committee and municipal health services]

⁵² Mbokolo E., "Peste et société urbaine à Dakar : l'épidémie de 1914 [The Plague and Urban Society in Dakar : The 1914 Epidemic]" , *Cahier d'Etudes Africaines*, 1982, pp. 13- 46.

d. Priority Areas and Attempt at Periodisation

Journal indexes⁵³ of the time provide a gateway for identifying target areas which can generally be correlated with development priorities. The analysis of available sources reveals three chronological sequences that stand out: 1890-1918, 1918-1945 and 1945-1960.

From 1890 to 1918, the areas targeted by research relate to the difficult integration of Europeans into a (tropical) environment deemed lethal, considered as the "the white man's tomb".⁵⁴ Exotic pathology and tropical medicine are very charged subjects. The exotic and tropical concepts refer to the "fascination", admiration, the strange, the elsewhere, the disturbing. They also express horror, a debilitating and lethal "milieu" for the white man.⁵⁵ For many Europeans called to serve in Africa, the health situation of the continent could be equated with an epidemiological disaster.⁵⁶

The point of view defended by Lapeyssonie⁵⁷ argues that it was thanks to the advent of modern Western medicine that the epidemiological disaster could be checked with the control and even disappearance of several endemic epidemics. Such an opinion seems to be shared by English authors like L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan, who equated the

⁵³ Among these reviews and periodical, we can cite: *Les Rapports de l'Institut Pasteur*, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pasteur*, *Annales d'hygiène et de Médecine coloniales*, *Annales de Médecine et de Pharmacie Coloniales*, *Médecine Tropicale*, *Bulletin Médical de l'AOF*, *Bulletin de la Société de Pathologie Exotique*, *Archives de Médecine et de Pharmacie navales*, *Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'A.O.F.*, etc.

⁵⁴ See Benjamin Kidd, *The control of the Tropics*, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898. In this work, Benjamin Kidd presents West Africa, the white man's tomb. See also Dozon J-P, "D'un tombeau l'autre [From One Tomb to Another]", *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, XXXI (1-2), 121-122, 1991, pp.135-158, p. 136.

⁵⁵ Bruneau (M.). "Les géographes et la Tropicalité : De la géographie coloniale à la géographie tropicale et à ses dérivés [Geographers and Tropicality : From Colonial Geography to Tropical Geography and Its Deviations]", in *Les enjeux de la tropicalité [Issues of Tropicality]*. Under the direction of Michel Bruneau and Daniel Dory. Masson, Paris, Milan, Barcelone, Mexico, 1989, pp. 67-68.

⁵⁶ See on this subject Warwick Anderson, "Disease, Race, and Empire". *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1996, 70: 62-67 Mark Harrison, "The Tender Frame of Man: Disease, Climate, and Racial Difference in India and the West Indies", 1760-1860. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1996, 70: 68-93.

⁵⁷ We can site the works of Lapeyssonie, *Médecine coloniale. Mythes et réalités [Colonial Medicine. Myths and Realities]*, Seghers, 1987, p. 23. Mathis C., *L'oeuvre des pastoriens en Afrique noire [The Work of Pasteurians in Black Africa]*, PUF, 1946.

introduction of modern medicine in the colonies with the advent of enlightenment and progress that saved the African populations from deadly health crises.⁵⁸

On the other hand, for Mbokolo Elikia, such a Manichean approach deserves to be readjusted in view of the appearance and spread of serious health crises created by the new colonial order following the conquest.⁵⁹ In the same vein, the German historian R. Kuczynski was able to show the disastrous effects of the colonial system (1890-1920) in the destructuring of African communities⁶⁰ with serious health crises and a demographic decline caused by venereal diseases.⁶¹

In such a context, it is understandable that exotic pathology is included in the priority areas of research due to the ravages of tropical diseases (yellow fever, malaria, filariasis, etc.) among European expatriates. At the end of the 19th century, Dr Kermorgant felt that "exotic pathology offers a vast field of study where there is still much to be gleaned. Our colonial domain has expanded so much in recent years that almost everything remains to be done, from the point of view of medical geography".⁶² He then put out a call to doctors, pharmacists for "their dedication to science and to the greatest good of humanity".⁶³ This appeal received a positive response from Pasteurians. For Mathis, the tropical world offered the opportunity to apply "Pasteurian methods to the study of the great endemic epidemics of the hot countries".⁶⁴

Worboys⁶⁵ credits the British Empire with the birth of tropical medicine. At the end of the 19th century, the London School of Tropical Medicine was established (1899). With the opening of this school, a

⁵⁸ Gann L.H, Duignan P., *Burden of Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara*, London, Pall Mall Press, 1968.

⁵⁹ *Id.*, p. 159.

⁶⁰ Kuczynski R.R., *The Cameroons and Togoland: A Demographic Study*, London, 1939.

Kuczynski R.R., *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, vol.1, *West Africa*, London, 1948; vol.

II, *South Africa, High Commission Territories, East Africa*, London, 1949.

⁶¹ Mbokolo E., 1981, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁶² Kermorgant A., *Annales d'Hygiène et de Médecine Coloniale [Annals of Health and Colonial Medicine]*, No 1, Introduction, Paris, Doin, 1898, p. 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁴ Mathis C., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁵ Worboys (M.). "The emergence of tropical medicine: a study in the establishment of a scientific speciality", in *Perspectives on the emergence of scientific disciplines*. Lemaine et al. Mouton the Hague and MSH, p. 75.

specialty of teaching, professional practice and research on tropical diseases emerged.⁶⁶

For Pasteurians whose principles are based on the universality of the germ theory, tropical medicine represented an opportunity to adapt and acclimatise modern knowledge in bacteriology, its methods of vaccination, diagnosis and therapy in the colonial region.⁶⁷

The emergence of exotic pathology reinforced the position of Pasteurians in the colonies at the beginning of the century. In 1903, an agreement between the Ministry of Colonies and the Institut Pasteur in Paris led to the creation of a training program for physicians from Colonial Troops directed by Félix Mesnil to study the pathogenic protozoa which were determinant in tropical pathology. Research on vector agents was instrumental in the emergence of medical entomology. In the project of pacification, domestication and "pasteurisation of African tropical countries",⁶⁸ the deployment of Pasteurians in Africa lifted the veil on certain diseases of warm countries. According to Mathis, "without the application of the Pasteurian and experimental method to the study of tropical exotic pathology, our colonial empire could never have been cleansed and vast inter-tropical territories would still be left in ruins".⁶⁹

In addition to exotic pathology, research was conducted on antidotes, including anti-venom serotherapy⁷⁰ against formidable snakes. A great deal of research was carried out at that time by Calmette on anti-venomous sera.⁷¹ When Constant Mathis arrived in Dakar on 22 February 1924 to join the Pasteur Institute in Dakar, where he had just been appointed director, he was amazed at the frequency of snakes, some of which belonged to the most venomous species.

Tropical medicine, exotic pathology, anti-venom serotherapy and entomology are largely connected to the primitive sanitary doctrine

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 87.

⁶⁷ Gaye, P. A, *La diffusion institutionnelle du discours sur le microbe au Sénégal au cours de la Troisième République française [The Institutional Diffusion of Discourse on Germs in Senegal under the French Third Republic]*, 1870-1940, Thèse doctoral Histoire [PhD dissertation in History] (Univ Paris 7, 1997).

⁶⁸ See Lachenal G., 2006, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ Mathis C., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Brygoo E.R, "Les débuts de la sérothérapie antivenimeuse. Lettres d'Albert Calmette à Paul L. Simond ["The Beginnings of Anti-venomous Serotherapy"] (1897-1900)," Morange M., s/d, *L'Institut Pasteur. Contributions à son histoire*. Paris, La Découverte, 1991, pp. 312-319.

⁷¹ Calmette A, "Sur le mécanisme de l'immunisation contre les venins [On the Mechanism of Immunisation against venoms]", *Annales d'Hygiène et de Médecine Coloniales*, Paris, Doin, 1898/2, pp. 129-134.

centred on individual and curative medicine. During this period of settlement, conquest and pacification of the Tropics,⁷² health policy, or what passed for it, contributed to the protection and survival of the European contingent (colonists, colonial armies). Clinicians, such as Dr Béranger-Féraud,⁷³ conducted interesting research on diseases of hot countries affecting European expatriates and hindering colonial development.

During the period between the wars, for the sake of colonial development, the health of the "Black" became a concern for colonial authorities. Once the "white man's tomb", Africa became the "the black man's tomb". From then on, the dangers passed from the whites (Europeans) to the blacks (Africans).⁷⁴ To "conserve and increase human capital to make money capital grow"⁷⁵ and in the face of the chronic labour shortage likely to challenge the colonial project, the protection of the African population against ruin, disease and death was included in health priorities.

Individual and curative policies focusing on the protection of Europeans were replaced by preventive and social medicine, which gave priority to hygiene, health education and the protection of mothers and children in a context of eugenics where the regeneration of the "black race" inundated the "colonial social narrative" of the time.

Research of the day was oriented towards so-called social diseases (tuberculosis, leprosy, venereal diseases) considered as "social scourges" and "demographic diseases" likely to hinder colonial development. Many studies were conducted: sanitation, urban hygiene and their consequences on so-called social diseases, yellow fever. The period saw significant progress in the field of immunology with the development of the Dakar vaccine against yellow fever. During this period, institutional analysis indicated the creation of the Pasteur Institute of Dakar, the School of Medicine of Dakar and the Institute of Social Health.

After World War II and up to the period of the transfer of sovereignty, the needs of economic and social development and the health protection of human resources were always part of the priorities of late colonialism.

⁷² See Bonneuil C., *Mettre en ordre et discipliner les Tropiques : les sciences du végétal dans l'empire français [Bringing Order and Discipline to the Tropics : Plant Sciences in the French Empire], 1870/1940*. PhD dissertation in the history of science, Université Paris VII, 1997.

⁷³ Béranger-Féraud J.L.B., *Traité clinique des maladies des Européens au Sénégal [Clinical Treatise on Diseases of Europeans in Senegal]* Volumes 1- 2, Vve A. Delahaye, 1878, 1213 pages.

⁷⁴ Dozon J-P., *op. cit.*, p.144.

⁷⁵ Sarraut A., *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises [Development of the French Colonies]*, Paris, Payot, 1923, p. 95.

New priorities emerged under pressure from an international and metropolitan opinion sensitive to the fate of the colonised populations. Childhood diseases (measles, pertussis, poliomyelitis, trachoma, tropical treponematoses, STDs), mass medicine under the direction of the General Service of Mobile Health and Prophylaxis first and then OCCGE [Organisation for Coordination and Cooperation in the Fight against Major Endemic Diseases], mass immunology, the fight against malnutrition (endemic goitre, rickets, beriberi, kwashiorkor, anaemia, food composition table) were targeted by research.

At the institutional level, with the creation of the Anthropological Mission at the end of the war, serious studies were conducted in haematology (blood charts, physical anthropology). The African Food and Nutrition Research Organisation, which replaced the Anthropological Mission in 1952, focused research on nutritional pathologies, while the creation of ORSTOM [Office for Overseas Scientific and Technical Research] and the French Institute of Black Africa expanded the areas explored (botany, archaeology, mineralogy, geophysics, climatology, marine spaces, physical and cultural anthropology, etc.).

2) Dialogue and Adaptation to the Environment

a) Deconstructing "the African isolate": knowledge, careers, circulation, cooperation and competition

The idea of an Africa disconnected from global research should be slightly qualified. After the exploratory phase, marked by an inventory to help understand the environment, came the implantation of laboratories *in situ*. The African continent, set up as a research and application laboratory, became an opportunity for medical research with interesting possibilities. Part of the future of medicine itself and of professional careers could be resolved in the colonial regions.

It is understandable in this context that many young Pasteurians set their sights on the African continent. According to Mathis, once "the course and internship are over, well aware of the Pasteurian rules of observation and experimentation and possessing a good manual technique without which one can only be a bad experimenter, the Pasteurian wanted nothing so much as to use the knowledge acquired in an overseas laboratory".⁷⁶ The scientific resources offered by the African colonies

⁷⁶ Mathis C., 1939, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

(exotic pathology, plant and animal biology) could mean an ideal situation for experimentation and validation of discoveries in the West.

The pasteurisation and "domestication" of African colonial regions led to interesting prospects (opportunities for development, occupying vast spaces) for laboratories and research institutes, but also for young researchers deployed on the ground far from the European continent where competition, already very tight, proved to be most fierce. The African continent, as an *in situ* laboratory, could offer real and interesting career opportunities to Pasteurians, doctors, often itinerant missionaries, in the early stages of the French settlement. Thus, under the most unpleasant conditions, they did not hesitate to "set up shop in the shade of a fromager or giant caïldédraat tree, to set up a table for the microscope and the necessary instruments and reagents, gathering around them people and animals in the hubbub of a curious and chattering crowd to take blood samples and do examinations and inoculations".⁷⁷

Despite often difficult conditions of experimentation, the discomfort and torments of the African climate, career opportunities could open up for the researcher. "The hope of making an interesting observation made one forget the discomfort of the setting, the unbearable heat which, during periods of drought, burned the mucous membranes of the nose and lips and made them bleed. When evening came, bringing a little cool, one was surrounded by the infernal round of myriads of winged insects, mosquitos and suckers of blood".⁷⁸

With the application of medical theories and practices⁷⁹ in colonial countries, at a time when "ordering and disciplining the tropics"⁸⁰ had to be achieved through "pasteurisation of the colonies",⁸¹ Pasteurians and military doctors could gain confidence outside mainland France, in a space where competition seemed less tight. This led to two Nobel laureates: Alphonse Laveran and Charles Nicolle.

The idea of an Africa disconnected from global research under colonisation would benefit from substantial reconsideration. Research conducted in Africa could be connected to large global networks. Latin America (Finlay in Cuba, Brazil with the Rio and Dakar Missions, Pasteur

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷⁹ See Latour B., *Les microbes guerre et paix suivi de Irréductions*, Paris, A-M. Métailié, 1984.

⁸⁰ See Bonneuil C., *Mettre en ordre et discipliner les Tropiques : les sciences du végétal dans l'empire français, 1870 - 1940*. Thèse de Doctorat d'Histoire des Sciences, Université Paris VII, 1997.

⁸¹ See Lachenal G., 2006, *op. cit*.

Institutes), Europe (France, Great Britain, Germany), Asia (Pasteur Institute in Saigon, School of Medicine) had connections with research groups in Africa (Rockefeller mission in Nigeria, English in Ghana and Nigeria, Pasteur Institutes in Dakar, Tunis, Algiers, etc.).

The research networks set up initiatives for exchanges and cooperation without excluding competition. Tracing the history of yellow fever vaccine leads us through Cuba with Carlos Finlay, the US Army Mission with W. Reed in Cuba, research in Brazil with the French and the Rockefeller Foundation from the 1920s on,⁸² but also in West Africa in 1927, on the Anglo-Saxon side, with the Rockefeller Mission doctors in Nigeria (Stokes, Bauer and Hudson). The Pasteur Institute of Dakar, for its part, soon went beyond the theses of the Japanese Noguchi located in Accra, and also contested by the Americans. In Dakar, Jean Laigret welcomed Watson Sellard,⁸³ the professor of Max Theiler.

The exchanges with American researchers and collaboration on advances in research were decisive in the development of a yellow fever vaccine. Notes by Stokes, head of the Rockefeller mission in Nigeria, were transmitted to Sellards from Harvard University in Boston, who himself shared the results of his research with Laigret.⁸⁴ The successful experiments on François Mayali in Dakar were conducted jointly by Laigret and Sellards, who, moreover, "decided that this first known strain of yellow fever should bear the name of *French strain*",⁸⁵ under which the discovery was announced and filed at the Academy of Sciences.

When he left Dakar with samples of the French strain, he went through Europe before returning to his laboratory in Boston where the virus was studied further before developing the vaccine with his assistant Max Theiler. The exchange of notes, results, Sellards's stay in Dakar, his collaboration with Laigret, his journey with samples from Dakar to the United States via Europe, work on these samples and communication of results with Laigret would alone suffice to deconstruct the image of an

⁸² Lowy I, "Eradication de vecteur contre vaccin : la Fondation Rockefeller et la fièvre jaune au Brésil 1923-1939 [Eradication of Vector vs. Vaccine : Rockefeller Foundation and Yellow Fever in Brazil]", *Les sciences hors d'Occident au XXe siècle, vol. 4, Médecines et santé*, s/d Moulin A.M., Orstom Editions, 1996, pp. 91-107, p. 93.

⁸³ Laigret Jea, La petite histoire de la découverte de la vaccination contre la fièvre jaune. [A Side Note on the Discovery of the Yellow Fever Vaccine] Laigret Jean (1893-1966), *Médecine Tropicale*, 2005, 65: 290-292. Text reproduced appeared in la Presse Médicale in 1966.

⁸⁴ *Idem.*, p. 291.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Africa disconnected from the great networks of world research of the 19th century.

b) Strategy: Mediation between the medical and social sectors and the use of African agents

The mediation between the medical and the social in French West Africa has its origins in the institutionalisation of preventive and social medicine. Until the 1920s, medicine in the colonies was generally centred around an individual and curative care medicine based on the protection of the Europeans and the troops.

From the 1920s, a new doctrine emerged: preventive and social medicine which focused more on social issues, including so-called social diseases such as tuberculosis, alcoholism, malnutrition and the protection of vulnerable groups such as women, children and workers.⁸⁶

The new direction of health policy towards the social after World War I was dictated by priorities of the development of the colonies. In the plan to make the colonies profitable, health protection for Africans was the focus of the new health policy. Mass, preventive, and social medicine was also characterised by a mobile medical action that goes beyond static curative and hospital medicine.

How is the link between the medical and social established? What are the points of reference, foundations and strategies? Health education is a pillar of preventive and social medicine. The school is a focal point of the health education project. The project "Hygiene at school and by school" was achieved by the teaching of health education which became compulsory and has been included in programs since 1913. The Medical Inspection of Schools, established in 1942, was in charge of schoolchildren's health. They were called on to spread hygiene messages in indigenous areas.

In the project to make the "indigenous hut at the dispensary"⁸⁷ possible, the promotion of social hygiene and medical assistance for African populations occupied a central place. In Dakar, the Institute for Social Hygiene (Polyclinique Roume), responsible for popularising social hygiene but also for fighting so-called social diseases (venereal diseases, tuberculosis, leprosy), was one of the pillars of "social defence".

⁸⁶ Blanchard Dr., "L'Ecole de Médecine de l'Afrique Occidentale Française de sa fondation à l'année 1934 [School of Medicine in French West Africa and Its Foundation in 1934] ", *Annales de Médecine et de Pharmacie Coloniales*, 1934, Vol. XXXIII, pp.90-11, p. 93.

⁸⁷ Remarks by the Governor General Roume of French West Africa.

Tuberculosis was considered a "social scourge" whose target is the most disadvantaged strata of society. For health authorities, bacillary infection is a disease that affects society, the causes and consequences of which are social.⁸⁸ In this context, the fight against bacillary infection, which is a public health problem and not a specifically clinical problem, must go beyond the pathogen, taking into account contributing factors: hygiene, sanitation, slums, alcoholism and malnutrition. In this new approach, where medical and social links are concerned, several studies on social ills and African societies and their living conditions were conducted by doctors and research institutes.⁸⁹

To establish the link between the medical and the social, the intermediaries and "interpreters", the agents of medicalisation were called on, including doctors, nurses, midwives. After World War I, the Africanisation of health professionals began with the creation of the School of Medicine of Dakar and the Institute of Social Health (Polyclinic) charged with training African auxiliary health agents.

Although the creation of the corps of physician assistants in 1906 after the creation of Indigenous Medical Assistance as intermediaries, relays and "interpreters" marked a turning point in the process of Africanisation of the auxiliaries, it was not until the end of World War I that we would see the emergence of new professional categories with visiting nurses starting in the 1920s, African doctors, midwives, etc. While visiting nurses were charged with educating Africans about hygiene and prevention, midwives were responsible for the medicalisation of births. Yet, despite the use of medicalisation agents and the beginning of Africanisation of the health corps, dialogue with African societies was often difficult.

⁸⁸ Sanner L., "La tuberculose [Tuberculosis]", in *Tâches et problèmes de la santé publique en AOF [Tasks and Problems of Public Health in French West Africa]*, No Spécial *Bulletin Médical de l'AOF [French West Africa Medical Bulletin]*, November 1954, pp. 69-114. p 101.

⁸⁹ We might cite: Bergeret C., Roustaing M., "Note sur la tuberculose pulmonaire à Dakar [Note on Pulmonary Tuberculosis in Dakar]", *BMAOF*, 1946, Tome III, Fascicule 2, pp. 247-251. Sénécal J, Boiron H, "Le problème de la tuberculose en AOF [The Problem of Tuberculosis in French West Africa]", in *Les problèmes de l'enfance dans les pays tropicaux de l'Afrique [The Problems of Childhood in Tropical Countries in Africa]* Colloquium organised by the International Center for Childhood, Brazzaville, 8-12 December 1952, CIE, Meetings and Conferences, 1953, pp. 188-216. Kermorgant A., "La tuberculose dans les colonies françaises et plus particulièrement chez les indigènes d'après les documents fournis par les chefs du service de santé [Tuberculosis in the French Colonies and more particularly among the natives according to documents provided by health service heads]", *AHMC*, 9, 1906 : 220-241.

c) The Difficult Dialogue and the Africans' Reaction

The difficulty of dialogue lies in the character of the vertical transfer, the ignorance of the Other (the African), of difference, of alterity: rejection of local medicine, prohibition of "traditional healers" by the 30 November 1892 decree.

In a context of hygienism and the desire to pasteurise colonial societies, the colonial administration and health services had a negative view and image of the African and his way of life, contrary to hygienic principles. In colonial literature, the contempt for Africans, stigmatised and equated with savages or barbarians, is perceptible in a mixed discourse mixed based on set convictions.

For the coloniser:

The absolute lack of hygiene common to all blacks is the most serious reason for mortality. The black people are generally unaware of or infrequently practice cleanliness of the body and especially of the dwelling".⁹⁰ For colonial health authorities, "The uneducated native is incapable of thinking for himself, repeating like a parrot what he was told when he was a child ... He remains gullible like a young child in France. He is a slave not enslaved to a master but to multiple tyrannies forged not only by his own imagination but also by that of his ancestors. Superstitions reign supreme, and they are so strongly rooted in the native that good pupils who have left the French school humbly confess that they are not entirely free of them. A studious and intelligent pupil of the École Normale [teacher's college] writes that doing the dishes after dinner is to be avoided as it is a very evil action displeasing to the dead whose habit is to return in the evening to lick up the leftovers. She affirms with great conviction that her brother has come every evening since his death to eat what is prepared for him on a table set for him. Another equally naive man claims that sorcerers have the demonic idea of replacing a child's embryo in his mother's womb with plates and bottles, and, she adds (there is always an example to support these statements), in my country during an operation, they found a miniature bowl and plate instead of a child in the stomach of a pregnant woman. It was a fetishist's revenge because this woman, who sells dishes, had refused to give him a discount for a purchase he made from her."⁹¹

The difficulties of dialogue between modern and local medicine are perceptible at the legislative level. The decree of 30 November 1892 laid

⁹⁰ ANS H 19, Comité supérieur et services municipaux d'hygiène [Senior Committee and municipal health services].

⁹¹ ANS : O 212(31), Les superstitions et l'hygiène en AOF [Superstitions and Hygiene in French West Africa]

down the legal bases for the practice of medicine in metropolitan France and in the colonies. A binding and even repressive regulatory arsenal framed the practice of medicine for civilians in the colonies. The decree states:

At the beginning of the judicial year and in the month following the beginning of the new term, the courts of Appeals, in chambers of the Council, and after hearing the Attorney-General, designate, on the lists of proposals of the courts of first instance of the jurisdiction, the medical doctors to whom they confer the title of experts before the courts. In colonies where there is no Court of Appeals, the appointment of medical experts is done in the same way by the Superior Court or the Appeals Board.⁹²

For the civilian doctor, French nationality and earning a doctorate in medicine and a special certificate issued by metropolitan institutes or faculties (Paris, Bordeaux, Marseille, etc.) were requirements for the practice of medicine. Article 2 sets out the arrangements for the installation of pharmacists in the colonies:

Any pharmacist or a physician, before opening a pharmacy or entering into possession of a pharmacy already established, shall be required to make a declaration thereof and to produce his diploma to the Lieutenant Governor of the colony where he is to practice, either directly or through the mayors, directors or commanding officers of circles, as well as at the registry of the Tribunal from which he must practice."⁹³

The practice of pharmacy in French West Africa is regulated by the judgment of 25 May 1905 which lays down the conditions in Article 1. According to the legislator,

"No one shall be allowed to practice the profession of pharmacist in French West Africa unless he holds a diploma as a pharmacist issued by the French Government, following examination before the faculties or Schools of the State. The privilege of selling medicines, granted by this decree to pharmacists established in French West Africa, cannot engage the freedom of the Administration. Within eight years from the promulgation of this decree, no person shall open or acquire a pharmacy without a first-class university pharmacy diploma under conditions provided for by the law of 15 April 1898. Exception will be made for

⁹² ANS, *Bulletin Administratif du Sénégal*, 1904, pp. 553-561.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

medical doctors with a diploma awarded by the French Government who conform to the conditions laid down in Article 8 of this Decree.⁹⁴

The repression against local medicine was thus manifest in the decree of 30 November 1892, laying down the legal bases of medicine, and the decision of 25 May 1905, regulating the practice of pharmacy in French West Africa. The transfer of French legislation to the colonies was achieved by ignoring African socio-cultural realities.

The imposed system of transfer trampled the locals, their culture and traditions. This resulted in the imposition of the western medical system, the reign of "white medicine"⁹⁵ (shots, syrups, pills, etc.), the fight against traditional medicine, the repression of "marabouts, midwives, charlatans and healers" (imprisonment, fines) characterised as sorcerers, confined to illegality and often forced to circumvent legislation by working in secrecy.

This situation resulted in competition and/or a therapeutic duality between the two medical practices: modern, official, western medicine on the one hand, and local medicine on the other. This was the origin of some current health problems (mistrust of modern medicine, therapeutic duality, etc.). Yet, from 1945 on, attempts at dialogue began with a readjustment of approaches. With the creation of the Anthropological Mission, the French Institute of Black Africa, the Research Organisation on African Food and Nutrition, the Office of Colonial Scientific Research (ORSC), which became ORSTOM,⁹⁶ local knowledge was examined: many studies on Africans (physical and cultural anthropology, ethnology, customs, mores) and African resources: plant biology,⁹⁷ animal biology, mineralogy, etc. were produced.

However, this knowledge about Africans often led to the definition of the other with racial stereotypes such as black hypersexuality. Such abuses can lead to the "racialisation" of medical problems. This was the case with the discourse on venereal diseases and tropical treponematoses⁹⁸ which

⁹⁴ Decree regulating pharmacy practice in French West Africa. (*J.O.A.O.F.*, 1906, 73: 290; *B.A.S.*, 1906, 5 : 487).

⁹⁵ Emane A, *Docteur Schweitzer, une icône africaine [Doctor Schweitzer, An African Icon]*, Fayard, 2013, pp. 187-199.

⁹⁶ See on this subject, Bonneuil C, "Des savants pour l'Empire, les origines de l'ORSTOM [Scientists for the Empire, the Beginnings of ORSTOM]", *Cahiers pour l'Histoire*, CNRS, 1990-10.

⁹⁷ Bonneuil C., *Mettre en ordre et discipliner les Tropiques : les sciences du végétal dans l'empire français, 1870 - 1940*. Thèse de Doctorat d'Histoire des Sciences, Université Paris VII, 1997.

⁹⁸ See on this subject, Masseguin A., Ridet J., "Lutte contre les tréponématoses en AOF [The Fight against Treponematoses in French West Africa]", *Médecine*

categorised "all blacks as syphilitic".⁹⁹ The same is true of research which led to the classification and hierarchisation¹⁰⁰ of races, to racial stereotypes, largely connected to the legitimisation of racial inferiority.

The difficulty of dialogue generally lies in the verticality of transfers, ignorance of the other, that is, Africans considered as funnels. However, the hygienist proposal that postulated a change in behaviour was accomplished only with the association and support of the individual and society.

Conclusion

Pasteur's universalist project, destined for humanity, addresses the whole human race. The reception of Pasteurian discourse in French Africa, however, came up against major obstacles in a large part of the medical community. After the triumph of bacteriology at the end of the 19th century in the West, there was serious opposition on the questions of the origin of diseases in the French West African colonies. This opposition, embodied by advocates of the miasma theory, triggered a war of theories between (neo-Hippocratic), "contagionist" clinicians, advocates of miasma doctrine, and Pasteurians, "infectionists," advocates of germ theory. This war of theories polarised a lively debate in French West Africa from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century.

In the colonies, the basic question was of universality versus the local or the problem of alterity. How do we move and transpose Pasteur's ideas into the colonies? The transfer, the dissemination of an idea, practice or experience presupposes a meeting, even a dialogue, even if it barely excludes disagreements and disputes. As a form of imported and imposed knowledge, the diffusion of modern medicine into the colonies was achieved by a transfer of metropolitan legislation without considering African socio-cultural realities. The obstacles to dialogue lie in the vertical

Tropicale 1954, N 1, pp. 35-56. Baylet R.J., " Incidences des tréponématoses sur les avortements et la stérilité de la femme voltaïque [Effects of treponematoses on Abortions and Infertility of Women of Upper Volta]", *Bulletin Médical de l'AOF*, 1952, T IX Fasc.1, pp. 49-50.

⁹⁹ See on this subject, Castets M., "La sérologie de la syphilis chez les Africains de Dakar [Serology of Syphilis among Africans in Dakar] ", *Bulletin Médical de l'AOF* 1958, N° 4, p. 381-398. Diop M., *La syphilis au Sénégal : discours et pratiques des autorités coloniales [Syphilis in Senegal : Discourse and Practices of the Colonial Authorities]* (1905-1960). Master's thesis, 2008, Department of History, FLSH, UCAD

¹⁰⁰ Lefrou G, *Le Noir d'Afrique. Anthro-pologie et raciologie [The Black African. Anthro-pology and Raciology]*, Paris, Payot, 1943.

character of the transfer, the ignorance of the Other, of difference, of alterity. The consequences of such practices are articulated in a therapeutic duality, or even competition between modern Western medicine (official) and traditional medicine.

Medical research, as well as health policy, or what passed for such, was often a reflection of the context. In most cases, there were successive adaptations to unfavourable contexts. Under colonisation, medical research and knowledge were often mobilised for colonial development. However, although often controlled by urgency, contexts and priorities of development, this research was able to contribute to the control of endemic epidemics (yellow fever, malaria, smallpox, measles) and the marked decline in mortality in the colonies during the late colonial period.

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CHAPTER SIX

TRANSLATION AND CONVERSION: THE AUDACIOUS ENTERPRISE OF THE GERMAN PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES IN GHANA AND TOGO

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Introduction

In her study, *Translating the Devil* (1999), Birgit Meyer revisits the translation of missionaries as a social phenomenon, and its overlap and impact on conversion to Christianity in Ghana. The translation of the missionaries, who were precursors of colonialism, did not deny the existence of African languages which, instead, were at first the subject of negotiation, making translation a social act in which the missionaries and their African collaborators were co-actors.

Paradoxically, by transposing the Biblical message into the new African cultural space, the missionaries did their best to preserve it from the so-called pagan influence which was supposed to characterise the target African culture, thereby setting the norms of conversion to Christianity and the new Christian identity in Africa.

The missionaries, who at that time held the monopoly on knowledge and finance, became sponsors, grantors, stakeholders and even censors of translation as a social act. They thereby relegated their African assistants and, indirectly, the whole community and later all African Christians, to a subordination that hid and stifled the diverse aspirations and spiritual practices of this people.

On the basis of Justa Holz-Mänttari's theory of "translational action" (*translatorisches Handeln*) (1984) for the presentation of facts, and Michel Foucault's study *Surveiller et punir* [*Discipline and Punish*] (1975) for

their interpretation, we will emphasise the subversive potential of missionary translation, and then the question of whether the "improved identity" to which missionaries aspired truly occurred without the influence of African culture, allegedly the antithesis of Christian values.

We will thus begin by defining the translators' identity, and then mention the textualization and/or Christianisation of the African language as a prelude to translation proper. Next, we will present the relations between the missionary and the target people and, finally, show the repercussions of missionary translation on the identity of the Christianised African.

1. Profile of co-actors and textualization of local African culture

1.1. German Protestant missionaries and their hermeneutic approaches to African culture

In the Lutheran tradition and for the German Protestant missionaries who landed in the Gulf of Benin in the mid-19th century as well, the translation of the Bible represented both the main point and microcosm of missionary action with, in this case, upstream and downstream impacts. In this sense, translation is a social act that encompasses all intercultural practices during the German Protestant missionaries' contact with the peoples of the Gulf of Benin.

The ethnographic, educational and evangelical activities with which the African assistants were associated, and which would lead to the conversion of the African peoples were part of the process of translation. By striving to learn the language and understand the local culture, the specific objective of the Protestant missionaries was the translation of the Bible. In this hermeneutic approach, they had initially had to work closely with African assistants who were thrust into the dual role of transmitters and receivers in the process of a singular communication, since these assistants provided the missionaries with information on the local culture and beliefs of their own people. They also received the Christian message to convey to the same people. The German Protestant missionaries and their African assistants thus became co-actors of a "translational activity", underpinned by a subtle power game in which missionaries played the role of grantors and censors. We shall return to this below.

To clarify the impact of missionary translation on the Christianised African people, we must examine the social background of the German missionaries as the transmitters of the Christian message.

The activities of the Northern German Missionary Society (*Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft* or NMG), based first in Hamburg and then in Bremen starting in 1851, were part of the vast 19th-century missionary movement aimed at converting non-Christians within and outside of their own European societies. The NMG consisted of two categories of members: 1) the leaders of the society (the committee), largely influential merchants and pastors of the upper class in Bremen who, despite their political conservatism and their anti-rational theological opinion, were in favour of technological progress and economic development and the expansion of trade (Ustorf 1986: 257-292); and 2) missionaries sent to work on the ground in Africa who, unlike the leaders, came from the lower class of peasants and craftsmen and generally had only a basic education. These missionaries came from southern Germany and especially from the region of Württemberg, known for the vitality of its pietistic tradition (Scharfe 1980: 25), characterised mainly by Biblical images and metaphors. Protestant missionary action in West Africa, particularly in southern Ghana and Togo, promoted these Biblical images with a pietistic worldview. The world is like a battlefield where Good and Evil clash and where men's lives are like a pilgrimage that leads good Christians to heaven and those devoted to the pleasures of this world to hell.

Just like the learning of the language, the spread of Christian images would also result in the translation of the Bible into the local language and was preceded by a semiotic activity through a two-step textualization of local African culture.

Initially, German Protestant missionaries sought to familiarise themselves with African culture by conducting research on intangible cultural heritage, collecting, transcribing and translating tales, legends, sayings, proverbs, riddles, and even local surnames.

In addition, they forced themselves to learn the local language, which was an essential tool for the effective transmission of the Biblical message (Yigbe 2010: 123). Moreover, linguistic proficiency was one of the qualities required for any candidate for Protestant missionary activity (Meinhof 1909: 3-22). The mastery of the local language and culture was therefore the first preparatory phase for evangelisation.

The second phase consisted of the Christianisation of the local language (Meinhof 1905: 17-55). This was the daily activity of the missionaries at school, in the pulpit and through the preaching of the Gospel to the so-called pagans. However, most Christianisation came from the translation of Christian literature, including catechism, liturgy and hymns, through which pupils and members of the community became acquainted with Christian terminology. We must remember the importance

of the transposition of Biblical images through the translation of certain classics of Christian literature. The most famous example among Protestant missionaries was John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, translated into Ewe, a language spoken in southern Ghana and Togo, by Andreas Aku (1906), one of the African assistants to the German missionaries.

1.2 African Assistants as Mediators

For the missionaries, African assistants played a significant role in the learning and Christianisation of the local language. They formed the channel for communication between the German missionaries and the African people to be Christianised during the textualization of the local culture. In this case, the term "assistant" refers to all Africans serving missionaries: domestics, guards, cooks, translators/interpreters, teachers, catechists and local pastors. They were at the forefront of the target society in the translation process and mediated between the missionaries and African society.

To better illustrate the role of African auxiliaries, we have focused on the concrete example of the Ewe people of southern Ghana and Togo who were Christianised by missionaries of the North German Mission Society (NMG). In a previous article (Yigbe 2014: 167-168), we have chosen a typical social practice of this people to illustrate the situation of the African assistants and their role in transmitting the Christian message to their own people. The Ewe term which best reflects the mediation of African assistants between Christianity and African oral culture is *gbeselá*, which has three meanings corresponding to three aspects of missionary translation as a social act.

Before explaining the various meanings of the word, we will first look at its morphology. It is composed of the substantive and polysemic stem *gbe* which means 'the voice, the language of a people,' and 'the word, the speech or the point of view of an individual'. The second seme of the word *gbeselá* is *se*, which means to 'hear, listen or understand'. The third and final part *lá* is a grammatical morpheme, a determiner.

The first meaning of the word *gbeselá*, which is accessible to the average speaker, refers to anyone who masters one or more foreign languages and who can act as an interpreter (Westermann 1954: 267).¹ In

¹ Westermann illustrates this first meaning of the word through the title of his bilingual English-Ewe dictionary, *Gbesela Yeye* or *English-Ewe Dictionary*, Berlin 1930. In the preface to this third edition (p. III), Westermann gives the meaning of the word *gbeselá*. As a missionary of the *Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft*,

this sense, the term refers both to missionaries and their African assistants as co-actors in missionary translational activity.

The second meaning of *gbeselá* designates an obedient, submissive person. We shall return later to this second meaning, which is also significant in the missionary context.

Gbeselá has a third meaning which refers to translation as a social act: the person who is the mediator in negotiations. This third meaning is synonymous with the Ewe or Akan term *tsiámè /tsiami* or *ɔkyeámè* (Westermann 1954: 698), who is the spokesman for the king or the traditional chief during popular assizes or in court. During these court sessions, it is only the *tsiami* or *gbeselá* who has the right to speak directly to the king. For other talks with family or friends, a *gbeselá* is designated and tasked with providing discipline to the verbal exchanges so discussions do not degenerate into mayhem. Persons or parties involved in the talks do not directly address the opposing party, but always address the *gbeselá* who conveys the message by softening it should it be aggressive. Anyone who speaks always begins his or her remarks with the following formula: "*gbeselá, se ne woase be*" ... or "*gbeselá se ne woade egbo be*" ..., which literally means "*gbeselá, listen to and transmit the following message to him*", and then concludes by saying "*gbe nye dje anyi*" which means, word for word, "my word has fallen", that is, "I have finished". The *gbeselá* then transmits the message to the opposite party in these terms: "*X, esègbea?*", "X, have you received/understood the message?" If necessary, he repeats the message to avoid any ambiguity. When he is not the spokesman for the king or traditional chief, the *gbeselá* is one of the youngest participants during discussions with family or among friends. It is not a child, however, but a person who has mastered the custom and can understand the allusions and proverbs included in the remarks.

Translation, and especially translation of the Bible, was a very serious matter from the missionary's point of view. It was therefore essential to establish assistants as *gbeselá* to require all those involved to be well-behaved so that the transmission of the Biblical Christian message to the target audience would take place in a calm and disciplined manner. The role of the assistant as mediator was then decisive.

Diedrich Westermann lived in Togo from 1901 to 1903, where he devoted himself to an intensive study of the Ewe language. Subsequently, he published a bilingual Ewe-German dictionary (*Wörterbuch der Ewe-Sprache*, 2 volumes, Berlin 1905/06) and an Ewe grammar (*Grammatik der Ewe-Sprache*, Berlin, 1907). From 1905, he was first appointed a lecturer in Ewe and then a professor in the Department of Oriental Languages at the University of Berlin.

Translation of the Bible has thus been the subject of a long negotiation – mainly linguistic – between the source Christian culture and the target African culture, qualified as pagan. We have explained that during this process, the missionary played the role of translator and grantor. It was he who mastered Christian culture best, and he who had commitments and requirements that had to be considered in the target language and culture which he did not completely master. He had taken precautions from the outset to avoid the use of foreign words which, to his mind, were a last resort in the target language, which had to be accessible to any average speaker.

A useful Biblical translation had to consider the mentality and way of thinking of local speakers who were strongly influenced by their environment and living conditions. In some cases, the missionary translator proceeded by using neologisms, thus enriching the target African language (Spieth 1907: 6). The missionaries' precautions in translating the Bible also included avoiding too crude² a language, for decency was one of the fundamental values of missionary education.

In addition to improper language, typically 'pagan' expressions that reflected religious beliefs antithetical to Christianity were to be avoided. On the other hand, when the pagan connotation was obliterated and relegated to the background, and the term in question was used in everyday situations, it was admissible without too many reservations in the target Biblical language.

The African language to be recorded in the Bible must therefore be carefully filtered. Missionary translation represented more than a simple linguistic transaction. It was closely linked to the Christianisation of the target people and corresponded to a transfer.

2. The Domestication of African Culture

In this context, domestication refers, by hypallage, to all methods that Michel Foucault calls "disciplines" and which "allow for the meticulous control of the operations of the body, ensure the constant subjugation of its strength and impose a relationship of submissiveness" (1975: 161). These

² This is where the ambivalence of missionary translation lies, one of the requirements of which is to produce a text in the target language which is accessible to the average speaker. According to Carl Meinhof (1905: 51), the crude language to be avoided was that of the first African 'negotiators' who were not mediators, but 'businessmen' who had travelled around everywhere and learned other languages in bits and pieces. These first negotiators managed to jabber their own language to make themselves understood by the Europeans.

disciplines are different from slavery. Moreover, the anti-slavery struggle was one of the main reasons for missionary action in its early days in West Africa. The famous campaign for emancipation of slave children by European missionaries is well-attested historically (Sebald 1972: 114, Ustorf 1986: 190f, Alsheimer 2007: 59, Trichet 2015: 349-361). Foucault's "disciplines" are distinct from domesticity which, it is true, was only a transitional phase in the evolution of the freed children whose schooling was the short-term objective. For it was through schooling that these freed children were henceforth perceived not as an indistinct mass but as individuals to render both submissive and useful. The missionaries' African collaborators differed not only from the so-called pagan mass but also from the Christianised people by their varying levels of education in the local mission schools or even in Germany. This education guaranteed them a job at the mission as an evangelist, catechist, teacher or pastor, provided that they remained submissive to the missionaries.

Symbolically, the missionary translator had assigned himself the task of making the African people Christianise on the other bank of the river that separated the so-called pagan universe from the Christian world. He thereby wanted to contribute to the advent of a new African with an improved identity, much as if crossing the river would purify the migratory people and rid them of any influence of "paganism". There was talk of turning him *away* (recall the original meaning of conversion!) from so-called pagan traditions and creating a people obedient to the Gospel brought and even incarnated by the missionary.

This submissiveness, which is first metonymic, is seen in the relationship between the missionary and the African assistant, who has become a *gbeselá* in the second sense of the term. At the beginning of the process of translation and evangelisation, the missionary's African collaborator was more an informant, an intelligence agent with a certain power since he possessed the African language that the missionary sought to understand (Yigbe 2007: 189 -199). Then, in the subtle power game based on the missionary's proclamation of the Gospel, the African collaborator was gradually tamed and domesticated. This domestication, also brought about by the textualization of African culture (Goody 1977), was achieved by the schooling of the African collaborator, as domestication and education were part of the mechanisms of supervision and disciplinary devices (Foucault 1975: 159-264) characteristic of the relationship of domination between the missionary and his African assistant whose body, symptomatically, is the subject of this domination. This body, marked externally by clothing, among other things, was

subjected to a rigorous discipline tending to strengthen the submission of the African and the effectiveness of missionary action.

The domestication of the African assistant had as its corollary an enclosed life where all contact with the outside was strictly regulated; and, subject to monastic discipline, the African assistant was accustomed to obedience and submission.

Moreover, domestication also led to the individualisation of the African assistant and the hierarchisation of the Christian assembly in relation to the so-called pagan mass. Each assistant was assigned a place, a particular function and a rank.³ In the missionary field, each assistant, at the end of his schooling, was assigned a specific post in a specific place and, according to Foucault's principle of individuality-genesis (Foucault 1975: 189), an individual merit. Evangelists were distinguished from primary and secondary school teachers and pastors. Teacher councils, pastoral meetings, frequent activity reports and letters to mission leaders were mechanisms for self-monitoring and oversight of others. Control typically existed through lectures written by assistants that allowed the missionary to observe the assistants' level of education and verify the extent to which Christian values were prevalent within African communities (Schlunk 1911: 1- 2).

Reading and writing constituted the basis of the individual evolution of Christianised Africans. One had to be literate to make home visits during evangelistic campaigns, to preach among the so-called pagans and to read the Holy Scriptures, the basis of all Protestant missionary activity.

3. Christianised, but not converted?

Translation as a social act should ideally lead to the emergence of a blended identity, through cultural mediation and especially in the context of Christianisation in Africa. This identity would be 100% Christian and 100% African, the result of confrontation and dialogue – an identity never accomplished, never definitive. In the missionary context in 19th-century West Africa, translation is characterised by a paradox linked both to openness to the local language and the attempt to eradicate the famous pagan influence. For a better understanding of the identity issues of translation as a social act in the missionary context, we will adopt the concept of "conversion", generally understood in the meliorative sense of "passing from a belief considered false to an assumed truth". The conversion resulting from translation is the provisional outcome of a

³ Foucault 1975 uses the terms "surveillance" and "functional locations" (p. 168).

dialogue, a *convers-at-ion*, if only from the linguistic point of view, which presupposes that each interlocutor agrees to lose his identity to find another in a surge of mutual rapprochement.

In fact, the rapprochement between the missionary and his African collaborator, who became *gbeselá* in this case, served instead to phagocytose, absorb, the *gbeselá*, because the African collaborator, who was originally an intelligence agent, had progressively become translator /interpreter, assistant to the missionary and obedient Christian. On the other hand, the missionary, in the search for information, especially in learning the local African language, showed both curiosity and humility at the beginning, then became a grantor and even a censor during the process of translation and Christianisation of the African Biblical language. The balance of power was then tipped in favour of the missionary, who categorically rejected the so-called pagan identity of the other to replace it with a new identity that might be termed a manipulated identity, because it was not achieved through free negotiation between the two parties but exclusively according to the wish of the missionary.

The hunt for so-called pagan culture and monastic discipline imposed on African assistants, by diverting the translation of the Bible and the conversion to Christianity from the transactional trajectory, sowed the seeds of subversion in the new Christian identity. By dodging the confrontation that was essential to the advent of a truly blended Christian identity, the missionary succeeded in Christianising Africans without actually converting them. In lieu of the blended Christian identity, a manipulated identity was established which had difficulty stifling the original aspirations and practices of the African people. The phenomenon studied by Meyer (1999: 104-108) in south eastern Ghana in the 1990s is a significant illustration.

Meyer has shown that the policy of authenticity advocated in some African countries raised the question of crossbreeding, as described by Nouss (2009 online, Laplantine and Nouss 1997: 39)⁴ – how to be both genuinely African and a good Christian – especially among intellectuals and theologians (Baëta 1968: 80).

But already in the colonial era, there were many "cases of insubmission" of African collaborators, the best known of whom in German Togo was

⁴ Compared with what they call "memory requirement", Laplantine and Nouss note that it "is then up to the memory to ensure that in the alliance or blended alloy, none of the components will dominate or dissolve in the process. Each element must retain its identity and definition, all the while opening up to the other. On both sides, neither repression nor shame: the pride of the blending comes from its origins".

Hermann Yoyo, a committed Christian who did not convert to the missionaries' doctrine. This teacher and evangelist was first trained at the primary school and seminary in Keta and then at the Ewe school in Ochsenbach (Germany). After a decade spent in Keta serving the Bremen Mission, Yoyo sought, with his "audacious speech" (Oloukpona-Yinnon 2003: 161-168), to engage in a dialogue with the Mission's Steering Committee, a little as if it wanted to complete the exclusively linguistic and terminological debate that took place at the same time during the translation of the Bible into Ewé⁵ and catch up with the discussion which had been "dodged" on issues of identity. He believed that it was out of the question to exclude any typically African influence of Christianity in Africa. To avoid any ambiguity, he explained that this was not a questioning of the Christian religion as a whole. Yoyo did not criticise the action of the missionaries, who are thought to have diverted the Africans from their traditional social practices and upset the moral values of African society.

Furthermore, Yoyo presents his demand for direct dialogue on identity to the Steering Committee in Bremen, and not to the missionaries on the ground in Africa, as a confession, a moral dilemma, and a profession of Christian faith.⁶

It is true that the theme of polygamy chosen by Yoyo was not the most relevant subject for initiating a discussion on the identity issues of Christianity in Africa. A discussion on the integration of local music with the liturgy would have been more plausible, but Yoyo's letters sent to the leadership of the Bremen Mission are symptomatic of the uneasiness of the new African Christians under the influence of certain measures dictated by the missionaries and which, to the Africans' mind, were not essential for the identification of the Christian.

Conclusion

Translation, like religious conversion, presupposes the passage from one linguistic or religious shore to another by constructing bridges that connect the two shores and making possible the threshold experience which occurs during the meeting of languages, cultures and religions. It is

⁵ The translation of the Bible into Ewe by the German protestant missionaries in Bremen took place over several decades, beginning with the translation of the four Gospels in the late 1850s by Bernhard Schlegel and concluding in 1911 with the revision of the translation of the entire Bible under the direction of Andreas Jakob Spieth.

⁶ Cf. Staatsarchiv Bremen (StAB), 7, 1025-19/5 Bd. 2.

therefore "an act of never-ending negotiation, a choice where functions of cognitive analysis, syncretic creativity, and political and social strategies can be exercised" (Simon 2002: 307).

In the context of the translation of the Bible by the German Protestant missionaries in West Africa, the threshold experience of languages was lived without problems; the threshold of cultures was selective; the threshold of religions was repressed, making impossible the displacement or the semantic rapprochement between "conversion" and "conversation", a condition nevertheless *sine qua non* for syncretic creativity.

The audacity of the missionary consisted in wanting to construct a one-way bridge on the religious level, whereas he had all the leisure to move about, to come and go as he wished on the linguistic bridge which, in this case, is closely connected to the religious.

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PART TWO:

**THE TRANSLATION OF POWER
AND THE POWER OF TRANSLATION**

CHAPTER SEVEN

CULTURE AND *NEW* PAN-AFRICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY: AFRICAPITALISM, UBUNTU BUSINESS, AND AFRICAN ECONOMIC HUMANISM

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Introduction

Africapitalism is an economic philosophy that is being socially constructed, formulated, promoted, institutionalised, and globalised by the singular efforts of a successful Nigerian entrepreneur, Tony Elumelu. The idea was first launched in a 2013 white paper report authored by Elumelu, who is a product of the “new Nigerian bourgeoisie”, a successful banker, who has transferred his own insights to an economic vision for Africa. Before founding Africapitalism, Elumelu had served for thirteen years as CEO of the largest bank in Africa, Nigerian-based United Bank for Africa, where he was responsible for using the institution to build a reputation for innovation, community deepening, and the democratisation of banking services spanning across Africa. In first launching the Tony Elumelu Foundation, the Africapitalist magazine, and more recently the Africapitalist Institute, Elumelu sought to prove that the African private sector (over the international capitalist sector) could itself be the primary generator of African economic development.

On the other hand, while some of its chief advocates – Reuel Khoza, Mfuniselwa J. Bhengu, and Mark Tellingner – are members of civil society as well as business enterprises, Ubuntu economics is a philosophy that has longer and deeper roots in South African and African history and society. Khoza, Tellingner and Bhengu are best described as cultural political-economic entrepreneurs who draw from Ubuntu philosophies to apply it to African economic practice. Their key objective for Ubuntu economics is to

use it as a platform to serve people instead of people slavishly serving the economy. Like Africapitalism, according to Bhengu, the aim for Ubuntu economics is to create an African self-understanding in economic terms. Khoza, a successful South African entrepreneur who is also a leading proponent of a new management culture based on inclusivity, Afrocentricity, and Ubuntu, and is the author of several books on the topic, has strategically deployed Ubuntu to reposition African ideas of individualism as germane to the continent and its philosophy, while extending these beliefs into corporate life during South Africa's transition to democracy. The Ubuntu economic alternative is thus considered an alternative economic system based on a "solidarity economy", an alternative value-based terrain for economic actions embodied in an ethos that is a contradistinction to neoliberalism (*The Solidarity Economy Alternative*: edited by Vishwas Satgar).

Examined this way, Africapitalism and Ubuntu economic philosophies represent African cases of an internationalised identitarian politics and economics where identitarian politics are political arguments that focus on the interests and perspectives of groups with which people identify. As systems of knowledge production, each reveals ways in which African economic livelihoods, experiences, and aspirations may be shaped by aspects of African identities. Each has emerged within the context of three distinctive processes of globalisation. First are the global processes that are enacting market transformations and ascendancy in modes of economy. Second is the distinctive transformation of the state that now receives greater pressure from above and below. Third is the impact of globalisation on the cultural erosion of certain ways of life that give birth to new hybrid forms and the reassertion of cultural dignity (Glenn Adler and James Mittleman 2004, 193).

Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative have emerged and engage in these three processes of global context providing a framework of action for them that is informed by and navigates a local, national, regional, and global configuration of ideas, institutions, and material forces to enact change and transformation for Africa. Global neoliberalism produces a paradoxical scenario for Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics. On the one hand, as its universalism denigrates the specificity and diversity of cultural context, it promotes African "extraversion" or the blind integration of African economies to a global (Western) one. Africa Rising ideologies build on this engagement. On the other hand, despite the post-imperial structure of the contemporary global economy where nation-states are strictly hierarchised and peripheralised, and transnational class relations compete to take the place of nations, transnational class relations

between Africa and the West remain strongly unequal, causing the need for resistance and opposition strategies derived from Pan-Africanist narratives.

Drawing from this scenario, the current essay further unravels our thesis about Africapitalism and Ubuntu economic to present them as new and alternative African international political economies developed and advocated by new African middle classes and distinctive business sectors in a global political economic arena. Paradoxically, because they are at once enablers of neoliberalism and thus Africa Rising narratives, and resisters in their promotion of the distinctiveness and alterity of African global formations, this chapter reveals how both Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative act as new Pan-African economics and prospective Third Ways for the continent's contemporary global engagement. Negotiating between Africa Rising and Pan-African narratives, both of which are African economic philosophies, thus embodies and represents the contradictions and dialectics involved in regional and cultural social constructions of nationalistic worldviews in a contemporary global economy.

To discern the way that identity and international political economy converge as an African political economy, we present this thesis through a response to four questions: What are the value and philosophical precepts of Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics? How have they been socially constructed as ideologies? How do they operationalise as new Pan-African economic philosophies? How and to what effect are they cultivating new Afri-conscious international political economies and practices?

In answering these questions and elaborating on the aforementioned themes, the essay will reveal how, through the development of African economic humanist ideology, both Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics converge in their goals to Africanise and Pan-Africanise an economy that is currently still extraverted and externalised. This essay concludes by demonstrating how each economic practice reflects the Pan-Africanist principles of self-determination, resistance to Western appropriation, autonomous agency, and African-derived knowledge to reveal ways that Africans continue to put forth alternative economic epistemologies and practices to engage the global economy.

Difference, Culture, Identity and Pan-African Agency

Solutions to African economic challenges in a global economy must come from African conditions, contexts, and solutions. China and Latin America, which tend to by-pass either liberal mercantilist or structuralist

approaches to international political economy (IPE), have discovered that custom, self-reliant approaches drawn from several or alternative models, tend to be best-practice approaches for the current global economy. Custom political-economic approaches draw from local, national, and regional contexts. Africans will not be different. Cultural international political economists, who belong to the “de-colonial” school, are providing alternative theories of international relations and international political economy. These theorists integrate culture into IPE analyses, while also maintaining a structuralist analysis and a powerful critique of the project of modernity that underlies much development thinking for the purpose of realistically understanding Africa’s marginal positionality in the world. Enrique Dussel, for example, a founder of the “decolonial movement” school, puts forth trans-modernity theory as a multiplicity of responses to euro-centred modernity; it is a modernity that is derived from the subaltern cultures and epistemic locations of formerly colonised people around the world. This “critical thinking from the margins” is an epistemic theoretical intervention that challenges the mythology of the West as the only epistemic site from which the rest of the world can be described, conceptualised, and ranked (Walter Mignolo, 2000, Grosfoguel, 2011, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

Decolonialist thinkers critically relate discourses and histories about Africa’s colonial legacies to formulate a recalibrated thesis about the underdevelopment of Africa by integrating notions of African subjectivity and identity into African political economic practices and discourse. Such discourses differ from mainstream development discourses, which are seen to “otherise” Africans, deeming them incomplete without the achievement of development, for example. In this regard, development policies thereby become technologies of subjectivation using the cultural, social, and economic production of Africa as interventions (Escobar, 1995). However, decolonialist cultural political economy appropriately turns back to the African philosophy rendition of the African development debate, which had at its core the tension between tradition and modernity. Messay Kebede outlined this critical problem, stating that while ethno-philosophy thinks that the rehabilitation of African traditions conditions leads to successful modernisation, especially after the disparaging discourse of colonialism, professional philosophy believes that success depends on the exchange of the traditional culture with modern ideas and institutions. Illustrating the importance of culture, identity, and subjectivity analyses of the African international political economy, Kebede contends that theories accounting for the underdevelopment of Africa are too often riddled with this kind of dualism over philosophical questions about whether the

African lag is attributed to colonialism and neo-colonialism, or to African inadequacies, or to both.

The reality is, however, that Africa's development has occurred as an alternative modernity. Indeed, with independence beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Africa's path to modernity was always an alternative one compared to the Western route. Alternative modernity differs from Western modernity's path to capitalism. African economic routes to modernity have occurred in very distinctive paths – anti-colonial, dependent capitalism and resistance, late developmentalism, state industrialisation and political-economic experimentalism. Afro modernity informs a third route to modernity in Africa.

Alternative frameworks and routes avoid seeing development as exogenous to Africa, as a process that inserts communities into a global capitalist hegemonic agenda, stripping the agency of local people, their power of imagination and ability to design their own futures. In their book, *Indigenist African Development*, authors Akwasi Asabere-Ameyaw, Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, George Sefa Dei, and Kolawole Raheem attempt to think creatively about African development that is promoted through local creativity, imagination, ingenuity and resourcefulness of local peoples (Asabere-Ameyaw *et al*, 2014). The authors use “indigenist” development to define and conceptualise development as a process and practice informed by home-grown, locally-informed and locally-driven initiatives to satisfy local needs and aspirations (Asabere-Ameyaw *et al*, 2014, page 3).

The thesis of Asabere-Ameyaw, *et al*, provides further motivation for an IPE approach to Africa that critiques existing paradigms which do not reveal the processes of change that are actually taking place in Africa today, nor bring to bear the regional, national, and local African contexts on the continent. As an interventionist approach for presenting alternative international political economy of Africa perspectives, and also for exploring alternative socio-economic prospects for the continent and for Africans, cultural political economy frameworks serve to resuscitate the theory of Pan-African economics as an international political economy that engages with the popular prescriptions of continental public policies. As both a political-economic policy and an international political-economic theory, Pan-Africanism, an Afro-modernity, serves as an insightful way to present contemporary manifestations of a new and alternative international political economic approach for Africa.

In today's “quasi-post-neoliberal” era (post-2007 global recession), mainstream scholars are celebratory of Africa's engagement in the global economy. Steven Radelet's *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are*

Leading the Way (Centre for Global Development, 2010) captures what has become commonplace in its characterisation of the “emerging Africa” thesis in which he categorises much of the continent as an “emerging market” region. Using seventeen African countries, Radelet describes the positive economic outlook of Africa and attributes success to the rise of democracy, strong economic management, the end of the debt crisis, the introduction of new technologies, and the emergence of a new generation of African leaders. However, while apparently adopting the same “trope” of “Emerging Africa” in titling his own book, *Emerging Africa: How the Global Economy's 'Last Frontier' Can Prosper and Matter*, Nigerian Central Bank deputy governor, Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, challenges this, “Africa as the new frontier”-mantra in globalisation. The notion that, as the West lies battered by financial crisis, Africa offers limitless opportunities for wealth creation in the march of globalisation, is a narrative determined by Moghalu as a false social construction of the continent’s economy. Nonetheless, his book asks important questions about African agency and self-definition in the global economy. He asks, “But what is Africa to today’s Africans? Are its economies truly on the rise?” We can turn to the ways that Africans are reshaping Pan-Africanism for some answers.

The cultural or constructivist turn in international political economy opens up the prospect for Africa’s different engagement through Pan-Africanism. In 1956, seething from his breakaway from the Communist International where he accused the communists of not understanding Africans’ need to achieve “mental” liberation and materialist freedom, George Padmore posed the question in the monograph’s title, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* According to Padmore, for the then-approaching struggle against colonialism for Africans, communism would be a grave danger to Pan-Africanism. Even though Hakim Adi’s book on the same topic in 2013 (*Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 2013) revealed the interlocation of pan-Africanism and communism, Padmore’s real thesis was to present the values of Pan-Africanism over an emergent capitalism for decolonising African nations. Pan-Africanism, like Julius Nyerere’s own assertion that Ujaama was “neither capitalism nor socialism”, would be Africa’s distinctiveness.

Pan-Africanism is an African political economy that deals with power and interest, their dynamics in the international arena, in international political forums, and in the international political economy (Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, 1994:109). Kwame Nkrumah defined Pan-African unity as a nationalist survival shield that protected Africans from the vulnerability of neo-colonialism. Pan-Africanist economics was used to

attain an African command over all vital African economic decisions, which was essential for the achievement of economic reconstruction against underdevelopment for the continent (Green and Seidman, 1966). In relation to development as well, Pan-Africanism would find ways to exercise control over international economic forces that foster the continued process of underdevelopment and alternatively redirect economic policy for Africans toward African goals and contexts (Cohen and Daniel, 1981, p. 251).

As an economic policy at the regional level, in Eddy Maloka's Africa (Africa Institute of South Africa, 2002), we see how Pan-Africanism and African perspectives on African development have historically been intertwined into a single ideology since the 1960s by the Organisation of African Unity/African Union (OAU/AU). The pillars of Pan-Africanist political economy have been collective self-reliance and self-sustaining development, African-owned economic growth and equitable redistribution (Maloka, 2002), "delinking and auto-centricity", intra-regionalism, and equitable globalism (Samir Amin and Kidane Mengisteab). Newer more contemporary theories of Pan-African IPE demonstrate the philosophy's national and community orientation in a global era. Malawian economist Thandika Mkandawire has argued the need for a continued democratising of Pan-Africanism if it is to be useful for re-integrating African regional economies. Considering the hostility of neoliberalism to regionalism and continued tensions between intra-continental economic objectives and extra-African economic objectives, Mkandawire suggests Pan-Africanism's contemporary utility is its ability to awaken African civil societies and capitalist classes in Africa for whom Pan-Africanism can provide a vehicle for a new national growth agenda (Mkandawire, 2008).

Pan-Africanist theory approaches the African economic experience through the prism of struggle and agency. On the one hand, its agency is used to present a critical review of existing paradigms which have failed to capture an analytical framework that does justice to the processes of social change that are actually taking place on the continent today (Chabal, 2009). On the other hand, presenting Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics as resuscitations of business Pan-Africanisms manifest in national arenas underscores select African economic activities as continuing struggles to present alternative political-economies that transcend colonial legacies, infuse African histories, agencies, and identities, and foster modernity routed in African contexts.

The Ubuntu-based Economic Alternative and Africapitalist Economic Development Theory

Ubuntu rather than Africapitalism best begins a definition of both philosophies in relation to identity politics and narratives about African difference. As a value system, Africapitalism in many ways subsumes Ubuntu's African universalism. According to Wim van Bisbergen, Ubuntu is a form of African philosophy that blends in with other potential, imagined or actual gifts of Africa to the wider world: African music and dance, orality and orature, kingship, healing rituals in which trance and divination play major roles, a specific appreciation of time, being, and personhood – all cultural achievements from which the West is learning much, given its own economic, technological, political and military complacency (van Binsbergen, Wim "Ubuntu and the Globalization of Southern African Thought and Society", *Quest*, Vol XV no 1-2, 2001).

South Africa, with its deeply entrenched structures of racial capitalism with all its attendant exploitation and cultural destruction, reflects elements that are also systematic of most other African countries, but are less extreme and less recently manifest in transformation. Living with such a structure has caused several Black policy makers in South Africa's history to recall the words of the late Jason Ngubane, who would argue:

Blacks must have a thorough going re-evaluation of the moral and spiritual values of the African past; an astringent reassertion of the life-force and wisdom of the elders and ancestors, a resolve to re-establish and sustain those family ties and communal bonds that form the basis of black humanism and dignity (Jordan Ngubane, 1979:252, cited in Muniselwa J Bhengu, 2010: 108).

In the late 1990s, with a newly independent South Africa, the country's former President, Thabo Mbeki would follow up on Ngubane's call for a new political economy when he said that because of the infancy of the nation, South Africans were in an opportune condition to infuse the values of Ubuntu into the fabric of the state and society. Desirous of a rejection and reform of the inherited capitalist system, Mbeki stated, "The capitalist class to whom everything has a cash value, has never considered moral incentives as dependable criteria for economic policies and practices". Mbeki continued that "South Africa is challenged to strive to integrate the Ubuntu value system into the national consciousness and world outlook" (Bhengu, 2010).

Most agree that the concept of Ubuntu emphasises the need to build the solidarity tendency of the African people in developing management

practices and approaches. Broodryk (2005, p. 174) identifies five virtues or "core values" of Ubuntu that include humanness, caring, sharing, respect, and compassion. Some scholars define Ubuntu as an African philosophy that draws its existence from the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians (Bhengu, 2010) to demonstrate its African universality. It is touted as a humane economic relations platform for Africans that includes concern for the needs of others, sensitivity to religious and cultural beliefs of others, and having a total commitment to the well-being of all.

The idea of Ubuntu is central to an understanding of morality and ethics in African philosophy. Of its six main philosophical precepts, communal nature of being and the cooperative and ethical character of being are the most relevant to African economic systems. The communal emphasis stems from the reality that, in traditional African thought, human beings are born into a human society; as such African personhood is defined in relation to the community which becomes an organic relationship between individuals in which people are mutually responsive to each other's needs. The cooperative and ethical element of Ubuntu emphasises the African sense of belonging and group membership. Ubuntu is certainly rooted in this agenda as its core mission is the exploration of hidden links – in culture, literature, and folklore across the continent.

The ethics of Ubuntu is a call for action for the African to be influenced by and act in accordance with the suffering of another as part of his/her moral being. Nelson Mandela reflected these values when he said that Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is – are you going to do so to enable the community around you to be able to improve? (Nelson Madiba Mandela). Community is the "cornerstone in African thought and life" (Mbigi, 2005a, p. 75). "An African is not a rugged individual, but a person living within a community. I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" Mbiti (1969, pp. 108-109). "People are not individuals, living in a state of independence, but part of a community, living in relationships and interdependence" (Turaki (2006, p. 36). An action is right just insofar as it produces harmony and reduces discord; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to develop community (Metz, 2007a, pp. 328-334).

The Ubuntu economic alternative asserts a value system based on an African philosophy that teaches the human race that we are one moral universe, and shared moral sense makes humans recognise their duty to each other. The concept also presumes core elements that are contrasted against western capitalism. They are shared African values against western individualism, cooperative systems as opposed to hierarchical institutions, and the underscoring of humanness in social interaction in distinction to

humans as objects as mere consumers, labourers, or owners. Ubuntu economic constitutive rules regard an economic action as good if it preserves the totality, fullness and the harmonious life of a human person. It encourages individual economic activity, just so the individual's family and community prosper from the activity. An individual could prosper so long as the pursuit of prosperity does not harm or conflict with the interests of the community.

Ubuntu provides a strong philosophical base for the community concept of management (Karsten and Ilia, 2005, p. 612). Ubuntu African management philosophy "views the corporation as a community" (McFarlin *et al.*, 1999, p. 71). Ubuntu business management principles reflect morality, interdependence, the spirit of man, and the principle of totality. When the firm is understood as a community, the purpose of management is neither to benefit one collection of individuals, as owner-value-maximisation theories claim, nor to benefit many collections of individuals, as stakeholder theories tell us, but to benefit the community, as well as the larger communities of which it is a part. An Ubuntu measurement will secure the maximum satisfaction of the rising material and cultural requirements of the whole society through the continuous expansion and perfection of Ubuntu and higher techniques.

Ubuntu ideas have been appropriated by the South African political economy. For example, Michael Tellingier, the founder of South Africa's Ubuntu Political Party, draws from Ubuntu philosophy to establish the practice of Ubuntu contributionism which aims to create a global world without predatory banking, and to introduce 100% employment by closing down the South African Reserve Bank and replace it with a People's Bank. Tellingier writes, "UBUNTU is based on the principle of everyone working 3 hours per week in their community. That's all! This is a very feasible movement that I hope everyone looks in to" (Michael Tellingier - UBUNTU- A World without Money, Sept. 2013). Tellingier applies Ubuntu to globalism when he argues that the Ubuntu value system is an African philosophy that teaches the human race that we are one moral universe, and shared moral sense makes humans recognise their duty to each other.

Ubuntu presumes three core elements that inform an alternative economic system and that are contrasted against western capitalism. They are shared African values against western individualism, cooperative systems as opposed to hierarchical institutions, and the underscoring of humanness in social interaction in distinction to humans as objects as mere consumers, labourers, or owners. To its advocates, Ubuntu will be a platform for the rediscovery of an "African identity" and the building of a

society that is new not only in its economic arrangements, but also in terms of the values it upholds. Ubuntu is said to summarise the founding principles of African philanthropy for African leaders of the business world by creating durable wealth while respecting the standard codes of ethics and cultural values such as mutual aid, cooperation, and horizontal/informal: organisations, community and family support.

Whereas its goal is also to promote the good of a community and the good of all its members, Africapitalism is founded on Ubuntu value systems. After all, an underlying tenet of Afrocentric leadership is collectivism defined as communalism, or living collectively, with the objective to ensure that no one falls too far behind anyone else" (Shonhiwa, 2006, p. 41). Africapitalism, however, is more of a hybrid economic system, reforming capitalism with Western owner-value, social-contract and stakeholder theories, and infusing them with African values. These theories agree with one another that the objective of business is to promote the good of individuals; they disagree over how they should be benefitted and who should benefit.

In this regard, Africapitalism is an economic philosophy that embodies the private sector's commitment to the economic transformation of Africa through investments that generate both economic prosperity and social wealth. Africapitalism claims to reject the capitalism of the robber barons of Europe and America, as well as the rent-seeking of middlemen. It presents itself to be a holistic system of social and economic organisation, which seeks to satisfy social needs and provide profit on long term investments, to create a self-sustaining, self-propelling system for improving the quality of life of citizens of Africa. Three elements characterise the distinctiveness of Africapitalism and relate it to the Ubuntu economic alternative. First, Africapitalism becomes a pragmatic way to rein in runaway globalisation. Moreover, it may also be seen to engage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Creating Shared Value (CSV) as vehicles that direct the private sector to contribute to the societal benefits of the development of Africa. Thirdly, it is founded on a robust philosophy and African-centred worldview to guide Africa's renaissance (Kenneth Amaeshi). These principles reflect African values – even if these values are not exclusively African (Arino, *Africa, Africapitalism: Capitalism with African Values* 09/09/2015).

Rejecting neoliberal capitalism's individualist competition and profit motif, drawing from African communalism and collectivist values, Africapitalism is the middle ground between business and philanthropy. The key tenet of the concept is that it is both necessary and possible for entrepreneurs and society to prosper simultaneously, and entrepreneurship

can be the cornerstone of a defining feature of market liberalisation in Africa. Africapitalism is self-defined, describing itself as a vehicle that contains the exegeses of neoliberal globalisation. A reform capitalism, it also claims to engage CSR and CSV as vehicles that direct the private sector to contribute to the societal benefits of the development of Africa. Ezekiel and Elizabeth Oseni (*Theorization of Africapitalism Concept*, 2015) state that Africapitalism has arisen on the premise that, for a continent that is well endowed with natural and human resources required for growth and development but being ravaged by poverty and wars, the solution lies in a home-grown economic policy and strategy.

Elumelu identifies the principles of Africapitalism as entrepreneurship used to unlock the power of individuals to create and grow their business ideas into successful companies. Its focus on long-term investments serves to deploy patient capital that creates greater and broader economic value as opposed to merely the extraction of resources. Elumelu claims that Africapitalism targets African economic strategic sectors to invest in sectors delivering a financial return as well as broader economic and social value. It prioritises the development dividend to conduct investments and business activity in a manner that delivers financial returns to shareholders and economic and social benefit to stakeholders. Finally, it privileges value-added growth to leverage locally available human and financial capital, raw material and other inputs that create longer, more integrated, and higher-value regional supply chains. It fosters regional connectivity, facilitates intra-regional commerce and trade through the development of national and cross-border physical infrastructure, and the harmonisation of policies and practices. Finally, Africapitalism encourages multi-generational development that focuses on investments and economic growth strategies that build value for future generations, and it places importance on the principle of shared purpose to foster collaboration between businesses, investors, governments, academia, civil society, philanthropists, and development institutions.

Like the Ubuntu alternative economic system, Africapitalism has also been used to rethink the role of business for Africa's development. Africapitalism enables a creative space for rethinking business-society relationship. Kenneth Amaeshi argues that Africapitalism is both an imaginative management idea and a creative moral-linguistic artefact, which embodies a new space for appropriating and re-moralising capitalism in Africa. To realise its goals, Africapitalism must bring its moral intuitions and principled commitments into alignment with modern economic practices. Here, the notion of Ubuntu, or African traditional humanism, comes to mind. In economic terms, it is a kind of humanism

that does not proscribe self-enrichment but requires the affluent to improve their community (Lutz, 2009; Littrell et al., 2013). In this kind of voluntary wealth distributism, one's economic and social power is measured in one's economic empowerment of others (Kenneth Amaeshi & Uwafiokun Idemudia, "Africapitalism: A Management Idea for Business in Africa?", *Africa Journal of Management*, June 2015). As an economic idea, it is Africapitalism's goal to coordinate diverse economic actors, such as the state, civil society, and markets, tapping their roles as moral agents of human behaviours and needs that distinguishes it from western capitalism and especially neoclassical economics' *homo economicus*, who is primarily driven by self-interest (Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). Sharing the values of Ubuntu, Africapitalism sees the purpose of management to benefit the community, as well as the larger communities of which it is a part (Lutz, 2009). As such, the common good becomes the principal target of managers (Lutz, 2009).

Whereas Africapitalism is an attempt to re-imagine entrepreneurship and reunite capitalism with its moral roots in Africa, it attempts to achieve this in the following ways. Amaeshi and Idemudia identify four principles rooted in the Ubuntu worldview that support the way that Africapitalism acts as a hybrid bridge between Western and African values. They argue that Africapitalism's pivot toward the principles of peace, progress, parity, and place are the elements that imply the restoration of African-ness in capitalism. These are the economic and social practices implicit in African culture and tradition (Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). It is in this regard that Africapitalism is closest to the Ubuntu worldview.

The quest for investments that generate both economic prosperity and social wealth, which is at the heart of Africapitalism, is a quest for balance, harmony and peace. It is recognition of the tendency of liberal market capitalism to lead to some form of socio-environmental imbalance, which is often dangerous to humanity. This sense of balance, which is expressed as the balance between economic prosperity and social wealth, could be further stretched to include the need to create a balance of the impacts of consumption and production on the ecology, environment, society, and economy. Amaeshi and Idemudia (2015) demonstrate how Africapitalist values are indeed Afrocentric and based in an Ubuntu worldview. Africapitalism's sense of place and belongingness, for example, is a direct response to globalised capitalism. Neoliberal capitalism and its excessive globalisation side steps place and instead focuses on profit making. Globalisation trivialises place and promotes placelessness; it reduces place to mere resources to the extent that the economic value of a place determines its place in the scheme of things

(Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). The authors cite Arturo Escobar (2001) who wrote: “Place has dropped out of sight in the “globalisation craze” of recent years, and this erasure of place has profound consequences for our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy” (Escobar, 2001: 141). The focus on cost and not place renders the global economic order placeless, and this placelessness has implications for managerial framing of costs and opportunities. In linking managerial decision-making with African context and identity, Africapitalism is underpinned by the value of sense of place and rootedness (Tuan, 1977).

Aricapitalism’s nationalistic and pan-African orientation to direct capitalism to serve Africa first reflects its sense of belongingness and patriotism. Pan-African values have always expressed a form of economic patriotism where economic choices might be defined by territorial references and its underlying conception of political economic space, not by its supposed policy content” (Clift and Woll, 2012: 308). Thus, Amaeshi and Idemudia argue that Africapitalism is an exercise in, and an acceptance of, economic and political pragmatism as it jolts conventional wisdom and repositions the development of Africa in the world firmly as an indigenous project in which Africans will play significant, active roles (Amaeshi and Idemudia, 2015). Africapitalism gives off emotive power. It represents a powerful emotional economic tool for Africa’s sustainable development that connects with the African identity in a way that is reflected distinctively in capitalism.

While Africapitalism’s newness makes it a very tentative theory of African capitalism, some Nigerian scholars have tried to identify its core theoretical tenets and apply them to African economic policy. Ezekiel and Elizabeth Oseni (Oseni, Jimoh Ezekiel and Oseni, Elizabeth, *Theoretization of Africapitalism Concept* (July 31, 2015). SSRN: 2015) have formulated a set of assumptions for Africapitalism that might begin an African economic development theory. These include:

- a. Massive funding from both local and foreign investors
- b. No capital flight
- c. Government intervention restricted to creation of a conducive business environment to guarantee safety of local and foreign investments and personal safety of investors
- d. Backward and forward industrial and sector linkages within the economy
- e. Investments made only in sectors that can drive industrialisation, job creation, and economic growth

- f. No discouraging differentiation between local and foreign investments
- g. Investments will be long term only and primary interest of investors will *not* be necessarily maximisation of wealth
- h. No capital loss while a minimum return will be assured to all investors (Ezekiel and Elizabeth Oseni, 2015).

Paradoxically, it is Africapitalism that supplies a ready-made answer to South-African based management consultant and writer Barbara Nussbaum's question, "What would capitalism look like if infused with Ubuntu?" (cited in Bhengu, 2010).

African Economic Humanism

Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative draw their values and precepts from African economic humanism, an economic theory that is also associated with African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism. Mfuniselwa Bhengu describes the basic economic law of African economic humanism as a societal requirement that there must be maximum satisfaction of the material and cultural elements of society. Characteristics of African economic humanist theory include social prosperity over individual prosperity, respect for a natural social order over crass materialism, and communal ownership over the mode of production. African economic humanism is a morally-charged economic system that seeks to increase the welfare of the global community, which simultaneously increases the market for economic goods and services. It is an economic philosophy that appreciates human needs, interests and dignity as being of fundamental importance and concern; and it is rooted in African authenticity based on principles of complementarity and solidarity. It believes that economy is economy through people; it is where traditional Africa reasserts itself in a modern economic context (Bhengu, 2010).

Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative are merely contemporary (in a global era) genres of African economic humanism strains, which can be discerned in the economic philosophies of Nkrumah, Nyerere, Adedeji, and Mbeki's African Renaissance. It was the philosophies and policy formulations of this certainly non-exhaustive array of Africans that informed the underpinning of the Pan-African economic worldview. As early as 1966, the late Ali Mazrui compared African political economy with Western political economy, underscoring the tenets of African economic humanism in this regard. Mazrui argued that Western capitalism would not adapt itself in the African context because of the prestige

motive which pronounced an African fear of being rejected or disapproved of by the community (Mazrui, 1966L 137-38, cited in Bhengu, 2010, p. 46). The Kenyan nationalist, Jomo Kenyatta reflected this when he warned the Gikuyu community against selfish individualism and reminded them of the Gikuyu's religion in support of solidarity (Kenyatta, 1963, p. 119).

In 1967, Nkrumah wrote in "African Socialism Revisited" that true economic and social development in Africa required the socialisation of productive and distributive processes. For Nkrumah, African economic humanism would be recaptured not in traditional African society per se, but in its spirit of communalism reflected in humanism and egalitarianism (cited in Bhengu, 2010, p. 36). Tanzania's nationalist and first president, Julius Nyerere, came closest to practicing an African economic humanist system with Ujamaa, a form of African cultural nationalism. Ujamaa had its roots in African communalism. Ujamaa would be based in African humanist traditions, whereas capitalism was individualistic, competitive, and un-African. Nyerere's Ujamaa was a hybrid economic system that mixed both communalism and socialism to produce an African product (Ayittey, 2005). He claimed that traditional African and socialist organisation was based on socialist principles of communal ownership of the means of production and society in kin and family groups.

African economic humanism has underlain Africa's African Union (reconfigured from the Organisation of African Unity) since the 1960s. The Union's mission statements have emphasised the strong sense of community among Africans with respect to the development of the continent. It has stressed the cooperative relations of production and the treatment of the African economy as an extended family and community belonging. The African Economic Community (AEC) is an AU economic institution established in 1991 with the Abuja Treaty to convene African states to create favourable conditions for the actualisation of economic integration and standardisation of national economic policies. As onetime executive secretary of the AEC, Adedeji justified the institution on the grounds that Africans would use it to rediscover their roots and build on them to establish their own economic institutions and development trajectories. The AEC would serve to reassert Africa's self-determination by drawing from African systems of knowledge and values.

In the 1990s, African Renaissance philosophy would serve as a renewal of Pan-Africanism and African economic humanism with the new agency of the freed South Africa. The formulation of the African renaissance narrative is a South African response to its African foreign policy destiny mission, stemming from Mbeki's 1998 "I am an African" speech. Mbeki first used the term African Renaissance in an address to the

Corporate Council on Africa in the United States, to define the identity of Africans in relation to globalisation and a more meaningful economic development for African masses (José Cossa, “African Renaissance and Globalization: A Conceptual Analysis” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*). In advocating for Africans to adopt strategies to engage globalisation, Mbeki’s African Renaissance was a reaction against the overwhelming influence of globalisation in favour of indigenous systems in various sectors of African life.

The Africanist version of African Renaissance sought a reinterpretation of African history and culture away from its colonial construction towards a consolidation of the wealth of knowledge that Africans have. Authors of this philosophy presume that the African identity is still in the making but that it needs to be rooted in African culture and an Africanist framework. African Renaissance narratives have been tied to Black Power discourses both in South Africa and in the African Diaspora. The African Renaissance’s economic goal serves to end the discriminatory economic position that the continent faces in the global world (Vale and Maseko, *International Affairs*, 1998). In his speech on the topic as Deputy President of South Africa, Mbeki would define African Renaissance as “our task to encourage she, who carries this leaden weight, to rebel, to assert the principality of her humanity – the fact that she, in the first instance, is not a beast of burden, but a human and African being”. It would be a rediscovery of African self, according to Mbeki:

But whence and whither this confidence? I would dare say that that confidence, in part, derives from a rediscovery of ourselves, from the fact that, perforce, as one would who is critical of oneself, we have had to undertake a voyage of discovery into our own antecedents, our own past, as Africans. And when archaeology presents daily evidence of an African primacy in the historical evolution to the emergence of the human person described in science as homo sapiens, how can we be but confident that we are capable of effecting Africa's rebirth? (South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki speaks at the UN University, 1998, *The African Renaissance, South Africa, and the World*)

In *Prophet of Africa's Renaissance*, Adekeye Adebajo reveals the ways that former-president Mbeki socially constructed the African Renaissance narrative around a doctrine that urged Africans to adapt democracy to their own cultural contexts and circumstance. The African renaissance would challenge Africans to discover a sense of their own self-confidence after centuries of slavery and colonialism that had systematically denigrated their cultures and subjugated their institutions to foreign rule (Transition, No. 103, 2010, pp. 168-181).

The Africanist version of African Renaissance theory seeks a reinterpretation of African history and culture away from its colonial construction, towards a consolidation of the wealth of knowledge that Africans have. Proponents of this view see the African identity as still in the making. African Renaissance is thus rooted in African culture and an Africanist framing. It is tied to a Black Renaissance inserting the voice of the African Diaspora in its inspiration by Black Consciousness. Its economic goal serves to end the discriminatory economic position that the continent faces in the global world (Vale and Maseko, *International Affairs*, 1998).

A prominent philosophy reflective of anti-colonial sentiment and closely linked to the African Renaissance is Pan-Africanism, an attempt to mobilise Africans to unite against the tyranny of colonialism by redefining an African identity and freedom independent of colonial influence. In many ways, the African Renaissance is a reigniting of the spirit of Pan-Africanism (José Cossa, “African Renaissance and Globalization: A Conceptual Analysis” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*).

The roots of the African renaissance in Pan-Africanism came at a time of African independence when Africans began to challenge the right of Europeans to impose their cultural spiritual values on African communities, while abolishing the cultural and spiritual rights of the people that they conquered (Nabudere, Dani, “The African Renaissance in the Age of Globalization”, *Journal of Political Science* 200, pp. 11-28). Resulting political, economic and cultural struggles, seen as humanistic struggles against this circumstance, occurred from 1945 until the 1970s, and were framed more explicitly in Pan-Africanism. In the 1990s, South African post- Apartheid triggered a new era in this struggle manifesting as the African Renaissance. Seen this way, the African renaissance is a struggle against imperialism and for continued African independence. Its goal is to place Africa in new global context (Nabudere, 2010). As a genre of African economic humanism, Vusi Mavimbela, President Mbeki’s political adviser, has called the African Renaissance a “workable dream” that is in its “third moment” of African rebirth. This Third Moment is akin to the Asian Renaissance, which was an “economic miracle”. In Mavimbela’s construction of African Renaissance discourse, we see the beginnings of the Africa Rising discourse. The reason for a renaissance in the African continent is the need to empower African peoples to deliver themselves from the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism and place themselves on the global stage as equal to and respected contributors of the achievements of human civilisation (Dani

Nabudere, “The African Renaissance in the Age of Globalization”, *Journal of Political Science*, 2001).

Bhengu tells us that African Economic Humanism (AEH) Theory is an African economics of economic emancipation that is in line with Africans’ ecological cosmologies, knowledge, epistemologies and cultures. It is a community-based economy – a kind of solidarity economy (Bhengu, 2014). Nonetheless, AEH Theory is also distinctive in that it is not merely an alternative paradigm but works best as a hybrid economic system that is an inclusive, moral and humane paradigm that can positively impact not just Africa but the crisis of the neoliberal global economy. “Reasons why indigenous economic systems do not enslave people is because “they include the world of spirit” (citing Some, 1998 in Bhengu, M, blog entry Beyond African Economic Humanism Theory, Jan 9, 2014). A hybrid paradigm operates in a dialectical way in which it confronts and replaces both the dominant and alternative paradigms.

Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative are underpinned by African economic humanist theory and humanist values. Material gain alone cannot lead to true development, and economic activities are interrelated with other aspects of life. African well-being and identity are rooted in their spiritual, social and cultural traditions. Social cohesion is essential for development (Bhengu, 2010).

The Political Economy of African Identity and Global Change

South Africa’s Dr Allan Boesak, co-chair of the country’s Congress on Urban Ministry, in an article on Nelson Mandela wrote:

He looks at the world not from his place of secured glory, but as a hope-filled captive of *ubuntu*. My humanity and my human wellbeing is caught up in your humanity. I cannot be what I want to be until you are what you need to be. The fulfilment of my dreams is measured by the contentment of your life.

The South African anti-apartheid activist meant that understanding and appropriating the principle of *Ubuntu* for South African lives is key to building a just economy. As seen by this genre of application of Ubuntu worldwide, African Ubuntu philosophy is now increasingly touted for its positive contribution to global management as a counter to neoliberal owner-profit maximisation as a corporation’s goal (Lutz) In 2007, the World Council of Churches titled its theme, “For an Ubuntu experience in the global economy” to address the world’s issues of socio-economic

injustice, poverty alleviation and environmental degradation as reforms for a neoliberal economic paradigm.

This is also true for Africapitalism, which has become an imaginative articulation of a face of capitalism in Africa. With his support for the Africa Power Initiative, and his convening of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in 2015, US President Barack Obama has been called the Africapitalist president who has embraced Africapitalist values to enact US foreign policy toward Africa. According to Kenneth Amaeshi, Africapitalism has become a discourse to galvanise a movement that is changing the practice of capitalism in Africa. Amaeshi says that Africapitalism has become an aspiration for Africa's renaissance challenging the *status quo* – capitalism in Africa –, which has not transformed the continent (Amaeshi, 2015). He asserts that the problem is not necessarily the spirit of capitalism as the harbinger of human freedom and economic emancipation, but rather it is the inherited form of capitalism practiced in Africa, which is often at variance with the socio-economic development of the continent. This misalignment invariably creates lopsided outcomes, such as economic banditry, corruption, inequality and poverty (Kenneth Amaeshi, *The Conversation*, "Why Africa needs capitalism that is aligned with its development needs", October 19, 2015).

Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics must be seen in the context of new global African Renaissance ideologies that serve to unlock a series of complex social constructions around global African identity to foster a distinctive genre of modernity and global change for the continent. Their routes to African modernity implies the notion of alternative modernity, a paradoxical notion that all societies are modern in that they coexist in the modern world and negotiate modernity in different ways, all of equal value. This view sees plurality, tensions, hybrids, and dialectical processes for African modernity. In so doing, African economic humanist philosophies likewise reflect the ongoing vitality of the promises of development, but with a twist implying catching up with the global modern North, while retaining local cultural distinctions that do not abandon local values and ways of life (Ran Greenstein, "Alternative modernity: development discourse in post-apartheid South Africa", *ISSJ*, 2009).

Both have emerged in the historical context of the continent's ongoing global marginalisation, dependency, and underdevelopment in a global system that has been defined by a set of attitudes, norms and ideas that have facilitated the Continent's peripheralisation and marginal status. Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics are informed by African Economic Humanism that is representative of Pan-African economic philosophies

and political-economic practices in consideration of their potential to positively transform Africa in a globalised world. Each is refocusing “Africa’s” place in the global political economy, directing Africa’s middle classes and entrepreneurial elite to contribute societal benefits to African communities, and cultivating an Afri-consciousness among African communities that guides Africa’s renaissance.

Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative represent African alternative ideas and institutions delivering rival collective values and narratives of the social order held by Africans, and are characterised as African economic humanism, Pan-Africanism, and African Renaissance worldviews. Institutionalisation of new African middle classes, global business entrepreneurs, civil societies, and intelligentsia are currently promoting this alternative world order for Africans. Both inform a new African economic humanism defined as an alternative economic paradigm for Africans that is grounded on, and rooted in, African ethics, values, and culture (Bhengü, 2010). Both have been critical of globalisation’s externally driven consumerism that benefits a small crop of Westernised African elites, thereby calling for a reinterpretation of their own history and culture towards a consolidation of the wealth of knowledge and capacity that Africans have.

Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative are progenitors of an Africanised global change that, through the promotion of their African economic narratives, produces African agency. They are the harbingers of African economic knowledge and examples of ‘African Cultural Economy’, which are economies embedded in an African culture compatible with African cultural values and infused with African metaphysics. We have already seen how cultural economy examines economic institutions, practices, and texts as cultural entities, just as it explores the economic dimensions of cultural practices and products.

Rather than receiving neoliberal economic ideas and global business foreign direct investment institutional impositions *carte blanche* from the West, as is perceived by the Africa Rising narratives, Africans are developing appropriations of neoliberalism and forging self-determined economic institutions of neoliberalism to suit their own contexts and direct their own wealth as seen by their constructions of Africapitalism and Ubuntu. Where neoliberalism represents a transformational world order, a framework for action premised on a historical structure constitutive of a configuration of forces that determines action as a result of a system of pressures and constraints, Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative act as African counter forces of resistance. As such, especially seen as new hybrid forms of cultural political economy whose goal is to

assert African dignity into the global political economy, it is important to see how these two political economic philosophies both engage and resist global formations that are the inter-societal and trans-societal networks of material exchanges within the global structure that African nations occupy as the periphery.

Global change can come through ideas and institutions, and from the way that people and social forces (civil societies, organic intellectuals, community-level solidarity, multilateralism) organise themselves around the sphere of production in relation to them. Africapitalism and Ubuntu are African change agents whose narratives reflect African business class agency – directed, meaningful, intentional and self-reflective social action toward autonomy and sovereignty for Africans from Western dependency. In this respect, they are also Afro-modernity's hybrid cultural formations that combine with African heritage to expand African modernity in political and economic systems. The modernity that globalisation brings is not universal and will mean something different to the African economy.

For Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative, Elumelu and Khoza are exemplars that represent the social forces and purveyors of African Economic Humanism reflected as “New Pan-African Economics”. Both carry forth their Africanist economic ideas locally, nationally, and globally; they are Afro-modern, Afro-globalists who are impactful political-economic actors involved in engaging a national public-private sector dialogue within their respective economies, while also promoting and participating in their ideas about African economics globally. For example, Elumelu and Khoza's business practices strategically are at once Afri-centric, pan-Africanist, and globalist-seeking to re-centre Africa to cultivate a more equitable globalisation. Nigeria's Elumelu and South Africa's Khoza represent an awakening of a burgeoning transnational capitalist class, middle class, and business sector in Africa. Both are distinctive members of an African business class, who have strategically cultivated discourses of Afri-consciousness to engage national, regional, and international public-private sector dialogues on African political economies. One might define their business leadership, representative of their discourses, as strategically cultivating a rediscovering and interjecting of African visions, values, and philosophies into business practices and economic outcomes.

Global knowledge is seen through a focus on local meanings of the notion and alternatives to it. We see how Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative do not reject the global to assert the local but seek to offer a new way of examining the relationship between the two in the context of Africa. As alternative modernities and identity political

economies, Africapitalist and Ubuntu economic ideas allow a combination of global and local forms of knowledge by engaging with modern technology and global governance, while also highlighting local leadership that draws on African values. For example, we see how Africapitalism rejects conventional wisdom and attempts to reposition the development of Africa in the world firmly as an indigenous project in which Africans will play significant and active roles (Amaeshi and Idemuda, 2014). Business leaders like Elumelu and the African entrepreneurs that he creates in Africapitalism's name invoke the messages of African economic humanism through it. Similarly, in their capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community, Ubuntu values could contribute much to world consciousness.

According to Barbara Nussbaum, Africa has something important to contribute to a change of heart needed in the world, the beauty and power of Ubuntu, an underlying social philosophy of African culture. Ubuntu is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community. Ubuntu calls on us to believe and feel that "My wealth is Your wealth" and is being embraced as a vital part of the African renaissance and the continent's contribution to help a divided, fragmented world (Nussbaum, 2003). Nussbaum's quotation is suggestive of the potential effect of Ubuntu on universal capitalism:

As we begin to entertain the possibility that the roots of poverty are similar to the roots of terrorism, the challenge of radically altering the way that financial markets operate and re-envisioning how wealth could be shared becomes more real. Indeed, if it were possible to sprinkle Ubuntu on the consciousness of humankind, we could look forward to a more just, equitable, and sustainable future (Barbara Nussbaum in *Reflections*, Vol 4, 2003).

As renewed expressions of Pan-Africanism, Africapitalism and the Ubuntu economic alternative have become new ways of raising awareness about the plight of people of African descent and encouraging greater solidarity among African countries. In this regard, Pan-Africanism has always been part of a global consciousness to restore the dignity of humanity as a whole. Africa's problems are part of a larger moral crisis confronting mankind and can only be decisively dealt with when conceived as such. It is only then that the true nature of the dynamics that undermine the continent's renewal can be fathomed and the myriad of forces sustaining its exploitation unmasked (Nganje, Fritz, "From a Pan-

Africanist to a Pan-Humanist Approach to the African Renaissance”, Monday, July 8, 2013).

Conclusion

Cultural dimensions and analyses of political economy, including business culture, leadership subjectivity, and African identities in the analysis of the continent’s progress in global development, reveal new and alternative African international political economies that are gradually emerging in localised African life-worlds. In this framework, Africapitalism can be seen as an Afro-modernity and a contemporary model of cultural capitalism with its emphasis on “business social responsibility” and other everyday habits and practices in economics. The philosophical norms that it engages to reflect post-national Afro-modern values, as a way to demonstrate how Africans are successful at capitalism, are also assessed. Ubuntu economics might be seen as an African-centred African Renaissance ideology studied for its genre of New Economics, moral and a human economy once considered socialist, but that is also theorised as post-development economics, including resource-based economics, gift economies, and every day livelihood sustainable development initiatives.

Ubuntu economics is a philosophy that has longer and deeper roots in African and South African society than Africapitalism has had as an idea in Nigeria when it was first used at a world economic forum in 2013. Yet the two philosophies both differ and converge in emergence from and their engagement of contemporary globalism. The key objective for Ubuntu economics is to use it as a platform to serve people, and not people to serve the economy. Like Africapitalism, according to Bhengu, the aim for Ubuntu economics is to create an African self-understanding, in economic terms. Whereas Africapitalism is a call-to-action for businesses to make decisions that will increase economic and social wealth and promote development in the communities and nations in which they operate, its Afrocentric goal is also apparent.

In reviewing each philosophy in relation to the heuristic meanings of each in the content of African economic humanism, we will see how each attempts to “Africanise” an African economy that is currently still extraverted and externalised. Perhaps they are not mutually exclusive, as capitalism and socialism are usually understood in liberal and structuralist political-economic frameworks, and that in a cultural political economy framework, both may exist simultaneously in concert or together in reinforcing each other in generating agency among Africans to control their own economic determinations. It is in this regard that we see

embedded in Africapitalism and Ubuntu economics, the principles of “self-determination”, African agency, and African knowledge that reveal Pan-Africanist, nationalist, and “Afri-centric” epistemologies in the rhetorical discourses and public policy practices of African business classes.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SECULAR TRANSLATION: SHAPING THE SENSE OF AFRICAN SOCIAL REALITIES¹

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Introduction

In a recent interview, Valentine Mudimbe refers to three distinct dimensions that are crucial to understand what he calls the “Invention of Africa”, namely the creation of a unified object that originated in the encounter between Europeans and the territory and inhabitants of so-called Africa.² The first dimension is hermeneutical and concerns the types of description and methods of interpretation of Africa as an object; the second is about political economy and refers to a mode of production that negatively impacts the African continent; the final dimension is intellectual and designates the speculative process that portrays Africa as the “absolute difference to European society itself”.³ While different in nature, all these dimensions participate in a dynamic way in which a defining subject produces knowledge about another subject, who is

¹ I borrow part of the title of this essay from that of the conference (“Translation: Shaping the Sense of African Social Realities”, Dakar, December 2015) in which my preliminary ideas on this theme were presented.

² Mudimbe, V. Y. “Africa remains the absolute difference- An Interview” in Mai Palmberg (ed.) *Encounter Images in Meetings Between Africa and Europe* (Uppsala: Nordiskab Afrikainstitutet 2001), pp. 248–251. Mudimbe stresses the idea of invention to highlight the fact that, before the 15th century so-called Africans did not identify themselves as such, nor had the perception of belonging to a unified continent.

³ *Ibid.*

however reduced, as human being, to “its difference as an object”.⁴ What is peculiar about this process is not simply its reductionist feature but also its one-sided and oppositional character: the defining subject is considered as both standing geopolitically outside the space in which the defined subject is interpreted and as being immune to the mirroring effect this encounter generates. Although Mudimbe recognises that this predicament has been subject to thorough criticism especially in the social sciences and philosophy, he nevertheless emphasises its continuing significance and connection to the colonial legacy of the 19th century. This oppositional model does not simply condition and shape public perceptions about Africa, but it decisively informs processes of globalisation that violently reduce the African continent and its people to objects subjected to the interests of foreign powers.⁵ Despite the fact that the processes are usually presented as extending the reach and benefit of universally valid values, Mudimbe warns us to be vigilant in that universalism can be a masked form of racism, particularly when it “poses itself as normality to all other cultures, societies and individualities” while ignoring that it “comes from somewhere, from a locality, from a tradition, from a language, from a philosophy”.⁶

Implicit in Mudimbe’s view is the idea that these three dimensions operate through some form of translation which can be generally considered as a process of definition and interpretation of difference that renders the latter intelligible to the defining subject. Far from being a mere hermeneutic exercise, this process is supported by political and economic forces that seek to guarantee relationships of domination which are today expanded and strengthened by globalisation. But what exactly is translation? How does it relate to the processes of globalisation that so negatively impact the African context? Taking Mudimbe’s emphasis on violent implications of globalisation and the interpretative processes on which it relies and continuously produces, this paper addresses the often-neglected issue of translation by focusing on a particular version of it, or what I call secular translation.⁷ I take this notion to refer to the operation

⁴ Ibid, 249.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 250.

⁷ While acknowledging that the meaning of ‘secular’ is not free of ambiguities and does not self-evidently connote a non-religious dimension as it is often used, I employ it here to identify the type of translation relevant to secularism. For recent studies on the idea of the secular, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and

through which different worldviews are reframed in a universal neutral language that makes them compatible with modern secular politics. So conceived, secular translation appears to be a central aspect of globalisation, especially with regard to the global spread of secularism, and thus in need of careful investigation.⁸

To explore these issues, I focus on the thought of Jacques Derrida, who has explored questions of translation, secularism and globalisation. This choice is also motivated by the fact that his reflections on these matters are linked to Africa, specifically to his lived experiences in Algeria in the 1930s. As a context characterised by colonial powers, cultural and linguistic diversity, Algeria presented typical features of many other African societies that still define them or have left, as in the case of colonialism, a legacy of devastating effects. Through an exploration of Derrida's thought, I will illuminate some key theoretical features and practical implications of translation for globalisation in postcolonial contexts. Specifically, by exposing the culture-specific assumptions and powers informing practices of secular translation effected on a global scale, I emphasise how translation is often used as an instrument of domination that violates cultural integrity and equality. Pointing to the resources Derrida offers to reflect on these issues in a complex way, the essay contributes to expand current debates on knowledge production about Africa and the ways in which persisting forms of domination affect its social realities.

I begin by presenting Derrida's view of globalisation to introduce the context in which translation operates as an instrument of domination, and then focus more specifically on his view of translation. Here, I emphasise the critical potential of viewing translation as a central instrument of sovereignty. It is because translation invisibly operates as a central mechanism that enables and sustains sovereign political forms presented as neutral, I argue, that it functions as a means of hegemony that negatively impacts, among others, the African continent. In developing the argument, the discussion will not investigate any African society in particular but will remain on a more general level to offer a theoretical framework through which to address the issue of the function of secular translation and its effects in Africa.

Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁸ I will refer to secularism as a worldview out of which a normative political doctrine about the proper relationship between religion and politics is generated and as a central form of modern governance.

Globalisation and/as Translation

Derrida's reflections on globalisation and translation occur especially in the context of his discussion of 'religion' in his essay "Faith and Knowledge" where he addresses, among other things, the ways in which the global spread of secularism operates based on a specific understanding of politics and law. Instead of using the term globalisation, Derrida uses the French term *mondialatinisation* commonly translated as globalatinisation.⁹ With this term he seeks to emphasise the nature, stakes and significance of what is too generally made to pass as the worldwide extension of neutral universal principles and the political forms that embody them.¹⁰ For him, what is made worldwide is not some universal principle but the "juridical-theological-political culture" of Christianity and its Latin language through the use of media, and the imperialist imposition of political understandings and institutions such as international law, sovereignty and citizenship rights that have inherited a specific "religious substratum".¹¹ While Derrida recognises that Latin is no longer spoken, he contends that its Christianising function continues today through Anglo-American, the language that dominates international institutions and politics.¹² The stakes behind this imposition concern the access to the means through which one gives sense to the world, to that lived reality commonly understood as 'world' (*monde* in French, hence the preference for *mondialatinisation* to globalatinisation), which, Derrida notes, remains "a Christian concept"¹³ with a Christian history.¹⁴ And since technology and means of

⁹ See Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge. Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone" in *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002). For an insightful discussion of Derrida's view of globalatinisation, see Gil Anidjar, 'Of Globalatinology,' *Derrida Today* 6.1 (2013): 11–22; Michael Naas, *Miracle and Machine: Jacques Derrida and the Two Sources of Religion, Science and the Media* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), especially chapter 2.

¹⁰ Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', 66.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79, 64.

¹² *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, "Above All, No Journalists!" in de Vries, Hent, and Samuel Weber, ed. *Religion and Media*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2001), 66.

¹⁴ Derrida "Faith and Knowledge", 76. Samuel Weber, the translator of Derrida's essay, emphasises the problem of translating *mondialiatinisation* as globalatinisation. The problem lies precisely in substituting 'world (*monde*)' with 'globe'. Not only are these two terms not coextensive, but Derrida emphasises that since the concept of 'world' has a Christian formation, it helps to better emphasise the role Christianity plays in the process of globalisation in a way that the more

telecommunication are central in determining the sense of what ‘world’ means and what its spatial-temporal limits are, the relevant stakes here regard the struggle to access and control them.¹⁵ The significance of this determination is not simply conceptual or virtual, but is connected to the legitimation of current international juridico-political norms and institutions.

But what role does translation play in all of this? In “Above All, No Journalists!”, Derrida clarifies that translation plays a key role in defining the semantic and politico-legal space of the modern discourse of religion. Translation is the operation through which a determinate, unifying horizon for conceptualising religious phenomena as ‘religion’ has been established based on a particular conception of religion. In conjunction with several scholars of religion, Derrida points out that the term ‘religion’ has a Latin Christian origin (as *religio*) and its definition is inscribed in Christian history.¹⁶ This suggests that the general applicability of ‘religion’ to a variety of non-Christian religious traditions raises questions of classification and geopolitics that regard the political dimension of knowledge production.¹⁷ A central way in which this phenomenon has been possible, Derrida suggests, is through the use of media and telecommunication, which propagated and implemented ‘religion’ as a sort of normative term for translating non-Christian religious phenomena. As he notes, “media function as the mediatisation between *religions*, in the name of *religion*, but above all in the name of what in Christianity is called *religion*”.¹⁸ In his view, what distinguishes Christianity from other religions is precisely its relationship to media and thus also to processes of

‘neutral’ term ‘globe’ does not. For a discussion of the significance of Derrida’s reflections on ‘world’ for understanding globalisation, see Naas, *Miracle and Machine*, 58 ff.

¹⁵ Ibid, 79.

¹⁶ Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge”, 66. For an excellent and illuminating discussion of Derrida’s position on religion, especially as it appears in “Faith and Knowledge”, and to which my exposition is generally indebted, see Michael Naas, *Miracle and Machine*. For scholars of religion that explore this issue, see for example, Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Hent de Vries, (ed.) *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ For an excellent historical investigation of this issue, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Derrida, ‘Above All, No Journalists!’, 89.

translation and universalisation.¹⁹ Unlike Judaism and Islam, which prohibit/tend to resist the mediatisation, translation and publicity of Abraham's secret, Christianity promotes the mediatisation of the good news, namely the death of Jesus as the incarnated God and thus the possibility of universal salvation.²⁰ If one considers that the incarnation is a form of mediatisation, a making visible of God, as he suggests, then Christianity appears constitutively related to media.²¹ This, in his view, is also supported by the fact that "the Christian religion is the only one in which prayers are not only filmed or photographed, as in other religions, but where prayer itself partakes of the act and process of photography or of filming".²² While Derrida, in this last claim, problematically reduces Christianity to some of its strands only (Protestant and Catholic), his larger point is that the unprecedented use of media and television that characterises contemporary religions is a form of translation as Christianisation and of Christianisation as translation. It is a phenomenon in which specific understandings about the nature and functioning of what is called 'religion' are translated in the mediatic language of Christianity.

However, if translation is the means through which Christianity has actively travelled and still travels by globally shaping the language for naming and interpreting religious phenomena, it is also the one through which it has passively done and continues to do so. Translation, Derrida claims, is the medium through which a non-Christian religion names or presents itself on the international stage as a 'religion' in order to gain

¹⁹ For Derrida, the unicity of Christianity, especially with regard to translation, emerges even more decisively if one contrasts it with Islam, which is so attached to literalness of the language of the Qur'an as to impede its translation. Ibid, 88.

²⁰ Ibid, 58. In an illuminating essay, Gil Anidjar illustrates how Derrida's discussion of the relationship between Christian religion and media signals a certain asymmetry between Christianity and religion. While Christianity refers to the Christian religion it also exceeds it since it also stands for "that which expands the domain of religion/s by its very mediatic nature" (17). See Anidjar, 'Of Globalatinology'.

²¹ Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge", 66. For an excellent and illuminating discussion of Derrida's position on religion, especially as it appears in 'Faith and Knowledge', and to which my exposition is generally indebted, see Michael Naas, *Miracle and Machine*. For scholars of religion that explore this issue, see for example, Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) and see Hent de Vries, (ed.) *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

²² Ibid, 76.

universal visibility and legitimacy.²³ Although Derrida does not mention here that for a religion to present itself as ‘religion’ since the modern period means, as Talal Asad has shown, to present itself as a privatised religion, this is what his argument implicitly assumes.²⁴ This phenomenon does not suggest that non-Christian religions do not have “a universal vocation” of their own. It only suggests that when any so-called religion presents itself internationally as ‘religion’ it inscribes itself in a political and semantic space that is already under the hegemony of Christianity and its conception of universality, which “today dominates both philosophy and international law”.²⁵

The ethnographic work of anthropologists such as Asad and Saba Mahmood in Egypt illustrates this point. Asad shows how the secularisation of the Sharia that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century involved a process of translation in which the Islamic tradition underwent a transformation. This transformation allowed Islam to become a ‘religion’ fit for modern secular politics, namely one in which religion is severed from law and public morality and is confined to the private sphere.²⁶ In her recent research, Mahmood elucidates how national and international norms protecting minorities and their rights to religious freedom are informed by a specifically Christian notion of religion. An important consequence of this situation is that whenever threatened minorities, such as the Copts in Egypt she studies, seek protection against national oppression and embrace international norms, they are forced to undergo a process of translation of what religion means to them so that

²³ Ibid, 74.

²⁴ See Asad, *Formations of the Secular*.

²⁵ “To present oneself on the international stage, to claim right to practice one’s own ‘religion’, to construct mosques where churches and synagogues, is to inscribe oneself in a political and ideological space dominated by Christianity, and therefore to engage in the obscure and equivocal struggle in which the putatively ‘universal’ value of the concept of religion, even of religious tolerance, has in advance been appropriated into the space of a Christian semantics. All these religions are doubtless religions with a universal vocation, but only Christianity has a concept of universality that has been elaborated into the form in which today dominates both philosophy and international law. There is in St Paul a concept of cosmopolitanism, a concept of world citizen, of human brotherhood as children of God, etc., which is closer to the concept of universalism as today dominates the philosophy of international law”.

²⁶ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 253–256.

they can be protected by secular norms.²⁷ They are, in other words, forced to undergo a sort of Christianisation.

Returning to Derrida, the significance of these writings rests in that they expose the politics of translation at work in processes of globalisation, particularly the modern discourses of religion and secularism. On the one hand, this politics is essential to control the language, interpretative schemas and institutions of the international space by imposing a universalism marked by specific Christian traits. On the other hand, it is a vehicle for gaining visibility, agency and legitimacy within such a space at the price of becoming, in some sense, Christian. By putting emphasis on the role translation plays in the worldwide spread of secularism, Derrida illuminates a key and yet neglected feature of globalisation. He also highlights that translation is crucially implicated in questions of sovereignty, as we shall see in the next section.

First, it would be useful to briefly introduce his position on sovereignty to provide the context for the discussion that follows. For Derrida, the notion of sovereignty informing modern political categories and institutions is connected to a long tradition of political theology that conceives of it in theological, masculine and animal terms.²⁸ Sovereignty is the power to enforce the law that stands, like an omnipotent divine

²⁷ Saba Mahmood, "Religious Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the Middle East" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54.2 (2012): 418–446.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005) and *The Beast and The Sovereign Vol. I*, ed. by Michael Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008). We should note Derrida's point about gender. For him, the oblivion and neutralisation of sexual difference is not simply a mark that has long accompanied the western tradition of political philosophy. It still survives in the fundamental understandings of such key political concepts as democracy, sovereignty and citizenship. It then seems opportune to extend the question of gender further: is translation masculine? Although I will not explore this question here, I offer a tentative answer by following Derrida's line of inquiry. To the extent that both sovereignty and the Christian tradition that has informed the Western history of translation are informed by masculine understandings – of sovereignty, citizenship and community in which translation play a decisive role [See especially Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. by George Collins (London: Verso, 1997)] – the dominant conceptualisation of translation too is gendered. Thus, inquiring into the relationship between gender and translation appears an urgent task to gain a more complex account of the production of knowledge in general and about Africa in particular.

figure, above the law.²⁹ Specifically, this power refers to “the reason of the strongest” that determines the conceptual architecture and political boundaries of the frame – military, political, linguistic, economic and philosophical – in which democratic life takes place. Since this determination hardly occurs in homogenous contexts, the effective enforcement of the law requires a mechanism for interpreting and managing difference, namely translation, which therefore needs to be thought together with sovereignty.

Translation and Sovereignty

The discussion has so far illuminated translation as a key component of globalisation without addressing, however, translation itself. Derrida refers to translation throughout his entire *oeuvre* and in relation to a number of themes. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will concentrate mainly on his discussion of translation as it appears in his essay ‘What is a Relevant Translation?’, where translation appears as directly connected to sovereignty, and use other writings to complement or expand this view. This is not to suggest that this is all translation is about, nor that Derrida focuses only on these features.³⁰ Rather mine is an attempt to highlight some of its key political aspects to help us gain a more complex understanding of secular translation and its implications of domination.

In that essay, Derrida addresses the issue of translation through an analysis of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. While not straightforwardly focused on translation, the play can in his view be read as “a problem of translation” containing its salient features.³¹ The contract between Shylock and Antonio, which obligates the latter to offer a pound of his flesh in case he fails to repay in time the loan received from the former, establishes an obligation of fidelity toward a given original as key to translation; it sets calculation as the relevant form of translation between the two parties and their respective languages; it points to the impossibility of full translation between such languages; and it exposes the sovereign power of the “Christian State” exemplified by the figure of

²⁹ Derrida, *Rogues*, 101.

³⁰ I will thus refrain from exploring the connections Derrida makes between translation, untranslatability, the possibility of metalanguage and the idea of dissemination that are all central to his view.

³¹ Derrida, Jacques Derrida, “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” in *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 27 (2001), 174–200, 183.

Portia, who seeks to forcefully translate Shylock's demand for justice with mercy, thereby assimilating the one into the other.³²

For Derrida, the analysis of the play provides the occasion to clarify what translation is through a discussion of its traditional understanding as 'relevant translation'. According to that model, a relevant translation consists in a transfer of meaning between languages so that the translated word appears in the receiving language as the most appropriate or "relevant equivalent for an original".³³ As such, translation involves "the transfer of an intact signified through the inconsequential vehicle of any signifier whatsoever".³⁴ Inscribed in the European tradition of translation, this view, Derrida observes, assigns to the word a prominent role: whether translation is considered according to the model "word-to-word", as in Cicero, or "sense-to-sense", as in Jerome, or "one word *by* one word", as in more recent theories of literal translation, the word is considered as "the indivisible unity of an acoustic form that incorporates or signifies the indivisible unity of a meaning or concept".³⁵

On Derrida's account, this view of translation is problematic in two respects: first, it naturalises the unity of the word, thereby obscuring the "historical, institutional and conventional" forces enabling that concealment.³⁶ Informed by a mechanistic view of language that considers words as atomistic units, this computational model of translation overlooks the complexity of language. Indeed, for him, the quantitative calculation of verbal units problematically presupposes that all possible meanings can be deciphered, and it fails to account for qualitative semantic differences, especially when words have identical pronunciations (homonymic) or sounds (homophone). In such cases, the translator is obliged to add a gloss which somehow testifies to the failure of translation.³⁷ Second, the traditional view of translation appears blind to the culture-specific assumptions and powers that inform it and make it appear as universally valid. This feature emerges most clearly if one focuses on the notion of 'relevance', a word of Latin origin (from *relevans* as the present participle of *relevare*, 'to raise or lift up') that is commonly used in several European languages and that, as a concept, has acquired a universal currency as testified by its central role in 20th-century translation

³² Ibid, 186.

³³ Derrida, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?", 177.

³⁴ Ibid, 195.

³⁵ Ibid, 181.

³⁶ Ibid, 177.

³⁷ Ibid, 181.

theory and practice.³⁸ For Derrida, when the commonly held understanding of ‘relevance’ is associated with translation, it refers not simply to an unequivocal standard of measurement, but also to the definition of the essence of translation: a translation is relevant, and thus valid and acceptable, if it renders what is equivalent to the original in a transparent and univocal way.³⁹ Far from being a neutral and uncontested, this view is, as mentioned, derived from a particular cultural tradition that has become dominant.

In contrast to this perspective, Derrida understands translation as an “economy of in betweenness”, namely an experience of oscillating “between absolute relevance, the most appropriate, adequate, univocal transparency and the most aberrant and opaque irrelevance”.⁴⁰ The ambivalence between these poles is related to a different understanding of language and of how meaning is transferred across idioms. Instead of conceiving of language as a sort of transparent tool for communicating content in which each word refers to a fixed referent,⁴¹ Derrida considers it as a phenomenon mediated by power and history and as characterised by a constant movement of signification in which meaning is produced through the difference between words.⁴² This movement produces a constant repetition or iterability which constitutes the possibility for written signs to endure in time, and thus to be legible at all, beyond their original context and in the absence of their author(s).⁴³ Yet, since repetition occurs across

³⁸ See for example, Nida, E. *Towards a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in the Bible Translating* (Leiden, 1964); Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1986) and Gutt, E. *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) all mentioned in Lawrence Venuti “Translating Derrida on Translation: Relevance and Disciplinary Resistance” *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2003): 237–262, 251.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 182.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 179.

⁴¹ This view of language, which Derrida attributes to John Searle, is arguably the one presupposed by dominant liberal political theory and that informing the discourse of international law and politics. See Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 79.

⁴² For a concise exposition of this view of language see Derrida’s “Semiology and Grammatology” in *Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁴³ For Derrida’s view on iterability see his “Signature Event Context’ in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

time and contexts, it also involves the constitutive possibility of semantic alteration and differentiation. As a result, no word or sign can be considered as a self-identical unit that can conclusively fix reference thereby allowing its ‘clear’ identification, which is also to say that linguistic context cannot completely be closed.⁴⁴ This impossibility points to the limits of polysemy, namely the calculation of all possible meanings of a sign that appears so central to the traditional model of translation. Concurrently, it highlights what Derrida calls dissemination, namely the possibility that the movement of signification engenders a multiplicity of incalculable meanings resulting from the process of repetition across spaces and times.⁴⁵

On this reading, then, there are limits to fix relationship between word, meaning and reference, since the meaning of a word is constituted only in connection with other words in a constant differential movement. Therefore, the calculability of words and their meanings becomes more problematic than it appears in the traditional model of translation. Yet, although the dynamic character of this movement points to these structural difficulties, it does not by itself impede temporary stabilisations of the nexus word-meaning-reference. Indeed, it is because such determinations are possible that translation or the transfer of meaning from one language to another can be practiced in a way that always involves a degree of transformation.⁴⁶ In the passage from one language to another, meaning undergoes a forceful modification that is related to its compliance to a new linguistic context, whose norms establish rules for language usage as well as criteria for stabilising the link between words, meanings, and objects. For instance, using the English word ‘religion’ to speak about religious phenomena in general in the context of international law and politics is an example of translation that seeks to fix the link between word (religion), meaning (*religo*) and object (‘religious’ phenomena) by relying on the rules and interests of the translating language and culture.

It is precisely with reference to the asymmetry of power between the translating and translated language that Derrida emphasises failure as a constitutive moment of translation. This fact, however, does not impede translation but exposes the politics behind models of language informed by putatively neutral values such as transparency and semantic equivalence. His claim that “nothing is translatable; everything is translatable” does in fact indicate, beyond the complex problematics of untranslatability, that when a translation occurs, the meaning of what is translated might be so

⁴⁴ Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, 152.

⁴⁵ Derrida, “Signature Event Context”, 316 ff.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

modified that it might result more ‘relevant’ to context and interests of the translating language than that of the translated one.⁴⁷

For Derrida, then, the oscillation between the two poles of translation is to be understood in connection to the political dimension of language, whose significance should not be missed. Its acknowledgment allows us to appreciate how translation often operates an instrument of domination, starting from the sovereign institution of language and the law. This is a basic point that he articulates in the ‘Afterword’ to *Limited Inc*, a 1977 collection of essays in which he debates with John Searle’s issues related to speech act theory. In response to Searle’s invocation of speech act rules in questions of copyright, Derrida links the political dimension of speech act theory and the attempt to fix a linguistic context to the politics of language as a politics of founding.⁴⁸ Specifically, he affirms that “there is always a police and a tribunal ready to intervene each time a rule [constitutive, regulative, vertical or not] is invoked in a case involving signature, events, or contexts”.⁴⁹ This statement, he explains, emphasises that the fixing of rules and contexts of utterances involves a policing power of “sanctioning, evaluating and selecting” a “cultural patrimony”, an idiom, and rules for communication.⁵⁰ The identification of that power, though, is not always straightforward since there are forms of policing that do not manifest themselves in a clearly recognisable manner. Unlike those that appear in the brutality of physical repression, “there are more sophisticated police that are more ‘cultural’ or ‘spiritual’, more noble”.⁵¹ As a result, their political dimension “often dissimulates itself, articulates

⁴⁷ Derrida develops the theme of untranslatability in relation to the translation of proper names and to psychoanalysis, particularly the translation into language of the non-linguistic conditions of language itself. See especially Derrida’s “Des Tours de Babel” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002) and Jacques Derrida ‘Me–Psychoanalysis’ in *Psyche: Invention of the Other Volume 1* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp.129–142.

⁴⁸ By making a reference to his essay ‘Declaration of Independence’, where he takes up the issue of political foundings, Derrida says explicitly that what is at work in the fixing of rules and the context of utterances is precisely the structure of performativity that characterises the founding of political community and the law. See Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 134–135.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 105.

⁵⁰ On this issue Derrida cites the example of the *Académie Française*, the 1635 institution established by Cardinal Richelieu, as the official authority in matters of French Language, especially with respect to establishing what constitutes ‘good’ French. *Ibid*, 135.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

or translates itself through mediations that are numerous, differentiated, potential, equivocal and difficult to decipher”.⁵²

Derrida’s target here is a type of philosophical discourse which, like speech act theory, introduces, fixes through exclusions and enforces apparently neutral and yet politically charged categories that are presented as neutral and universally valid.⁵³ These less ‘visible’ kinds of police are to be located in the values and theoretical articulations informing the foundation of language and the law. For him, such a foundation is strictly related to the attempt to fix linguistic context by determining rules, conventions and uses of language which are never severed from political interests as it appears, for example, in the imposition of a national language on minority groups, or in the support of public institutions that determine what is proper to a given national language (i.e. ‘good’ French).⁵⁴ While Derrida’s example here refers to the institution of language and the law that define a specific political community, his point can also be extended, as seen, to the language and law of the international arena. Overall, his basic claim is that the attempt to stabilise linguistic context “always remains a performative operation and is never purely theoretical” and “cannot be apolitical or politically neutral”; actually it “is always political because it implies, insofar as it involves determination, a certain type of non- ‘natural’ relationship to others”.⁵⁵

According to Derrida, then, the institution of a language as the official medium of communication in a given context establishes a mode for linguistic and cultural identification whose non-natural property is illuminated by its political origin. Unless reference is fixed by “pragmatically determined situations” which also involve politico-institutional elements authorising particular ways of using language, there would be no possibility of understanding and thus of ‘meaningful’ interaction.⁵⁶ It is thus essential to recognise the political character of fixing a linguistic context: without it, one could neither speak, communicate nor do anything else.⁵⁷ Yet, while such a fixing enables meaningful communication and social interactions, it also enforces linguistic and cultural hegemony, what Derrida elsewhere calls a ‘monolingualism of the other’, namely dominant language imposed “through a sovereignty whose essence is always

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, 135.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 132, 136.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 150.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 136.

colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce the language to the One, that is to the hegemony of the homogeneous”.⁵⁸

This suggests that the political determinations involved in the fixing of linguistic context are a matter of sovereignty and involve drawing linguistic, semantic and political borders as firmly as possible by establishing stable criteria for linguistic, epistemic, and political relevance. Far from being neutral, these criteria are culture-specific and made effective through forced translations that exclude other alternatives – human, cultural and linguistic. As he notes, “every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some politics of language. Mastery begins, as we know, through the power of naming, of imposing and legitimating appellations”.⁵⁹ This imposition displays an inherent coloniality within language and culture, namely the controlling of the means and terms for self-interpretation, and it is in this sense that Derrida’s statement “all culture is originally colonial” gains critical significance.⁶⁰ Yet in order for this colonial homogeneity to be accepted as inclusive, it must be disguised, as in the model of “revolutionary France”, as a form of “universal humanism”.⁶¹ Parallels to the rhetoric about the universal validity of secularism are not difficult to draw here.⁶²

Like his reading of Shakespeare’s play, these reflections on language signal translation as inherent to the functioning of sovereignty. Translation is not simply at work in sovereignty’s normal functioning, as it occurs in the case of the Christian state’s administration of justice. It is above all in the determination of linguistic context, which involves a power that validates and enforces specific standards of knowledge, communication and politics by also imposing *the* relevant model of translation. Since this is an operation that establishes a stable semantic and juridico-political

⁵⁸ Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 39. Derrida refers to the power of naming as early as in *Of Grammatology* and presents it as central to the nature of language. Naming refers to the power of fixing reference –i.e. the relationship between word, meaning and object–by assigning a specific place, in language, to a sign in order to meaningfully refer to a specific object and its nature. In particular, Derrida emphasises that this power is characterised by an original founding violence or “arche-violence” that is needed in view of fixing reference in a univocal a way as possible. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 112.

⁶⁰ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 39.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² For an influential example of this rhetoric, see Charles Taylor, ‘Modes of Secularism’, in *Secularism and its Critics*, ed. by Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31.

space in which differences are interpreted and reframed in the homogenising *language* of the law, then translation appears an indispensable tool to enforce and maintain that very space. In sum, there is no sovereignty without forceful translation. While this point applies to the political domain, it cuts even deeper and reaches the distinctive mode of Western thought. Connecting his early reflections on logocentrism to sovereignty and translation,⁶³ Derrida goes so far as to affirm that “forced hegemony” designates, in the Western tradition, an operation that gathers together the biblical and philosophical traditions and represents *logos* at “the centre of everything” in a position “of sovereign hegemony, organising everything based on its forced translations”.⁶⁴

Secular Translation: Shaping the sense of African social realities

What does an exploration of secular translation through the thought of Derrida contribute to understand the shaping of African social realities? Like Mudimbe, Derrida challenges processes of globalisation informed by a questionable form of universalism. He does so by exposing the problematic linguistic assumptions at work in understanding and practices of translation affected by sovereign powers. For him, understanding the complex ways in which translation operates in globalisation and, especially in the worldwide spread of secularism, is an urgent political task, since the stakes behind it are precisely those of linguistic and cultural nationalism disguised as philosophical universalism.⁶⁵ Today, many people are at risk of having to yield to the hegemony of English as the language of international law and politics (as well as economics and culture production) and this involves not simply learning and interiorising “the language of the masters, of capitals and machines” but also that of Western secularism, which determine the acceptable conception of religion, subjectivity and public co-existence.⁶⁶ By emphasising this risk

⁶³ In Derrida’s vocabulary, logocentrism generally refers to a type of thinking grounded on problematic metaphysical assumptions that assigns to speech (from the Greek *logos*) a central role in the determination of truth and meaning. See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.

⁶⁴ Derrida, *The Beast and The Sovereign*, 343.

⁶⁵ This is what Derrida affirms in commenting on his *Monolingualism* and on the impossibility of appropriating language. See his interview on “Language is Never Owned” in *Sovereignities in Question: the poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 101.

⁶⁶ Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 30.

today, Derrida is not putting forward a naïve and simplistic critique of capitalism, technology, secularism and the political arrangements that have come so far with it (democracy, rule of law and human rights). Instead, he is pointing to the colonial implications of forms of translation that are used for the worldwide imposition of specific cultural representations and political forms.

The significance of Derrida's perspective for thinking about how secular translation shapes the sense of African social realities rests in its critical and political potential. His perspective offers a theoretically complex and critical framework from which to gain a deeper understanding of how structures of hegemony and power travel through translation and affect, among others, the African continent. Derrida shows that translation functions as a decisive vehicle for the global spread of Western secularism as a worldview and form of governance informed by culture-specific, Christian conceptions that violates cultural integrity and equality. As such, his view illuminates the violence required to make particular understandings count as authoritative standards of translation. He also shows that for these standards to be relevant, such violence need to be concealed through a discourse that claims them as universally valid and operates, almost invisibly, through forceful translation. Ultimately, Derrida shows that the political stakes of secular translation regards the control of knowledge production and forms in which modern political life must take place. This does not simply involve determining the relevant criteria for secular representations of community and subjectivity but also ensuring that, through policing and forced translations, only 'acceptable' conceptions of them circulate in the public sphere, nationally and internationally.⁶⁷

Yet, while Derrida's reflections point to translation as an instrument of sovereign domination, they also open the space for thinking of translation as a site of resistance. If the fixing of context is done politically, it can also be resisted and undone, and this equally applies to conceptualisations and practices of translation. Indeed, Derrida advocates moving away from the traditional model of translation, which idealises language as a transparent medium for communication. In particular, he insists on the idea that both language and translation are complex phenomena conditioned by power and history, and that the possibility of dissemination opens up new possibilities for resisting dominant interpretations and language usages, and for creating new vocabularies. In this way, Derrida shows that

⁶⁷ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*.

translation has an open-ended character which calls for an increase of responsibility on the part of all actors involved in translating practices.

CHAPTER NINE

TRANSLATING ON THE THRESHOLDS: THE MODOGO PARADIGM IN KINSHASA

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In his novel, *Congo Inc. Le testament de Bismarck* [*Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament*],¹ In Koli Jean Bofane tells how a hyper-wired and uncircumcised globalist Pygmy invents "Eau Pire Suisse" [worst Swiss water] and lives in a nook in the Grand Marché in Kinshasa with other globalists who don't know each other: Jacula la Safrane, Gianni Versace, Marie Liboma, Shasha la Jactance, follower of the iconic Kate Moss whom she imitates by "dislocating her thin hips", but also, and especially Modogo who, at the time he was living with his parents, reproached them for living a life without creativity and imagination. He was bored with school. Modogo went on to find the thrills of life in horror movies that he watches in the original English version. What we will propose to consider as the "Modogo paradigm" is the work of translation that Modogo realises on the English language and on film characters, and therefore on visual images. The particularity of this work is reflected in this question: How can one translate a language when one is not a permanent or circumstantial speaker, but when one is dazzled by the sounds inseparable from the images of its speakers? The Modogo paradigm is the paradigm of bedazzlement in which individuals and groups have an imaginary relationship with what fascinates them through the form, that is, by visual, auditory, even intellectual images of which their translation and interpretation² consist in incorporating misunderstandings that produce

¹ In Koli Jean Bofane, *Congo Inc. Le testament de Bismarck*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2014.

² It is an interpretation in the sense that the interpreter is the one who translates a message transmitted in a language to a recipient who is not the speaker, but it is also an interpretation in the sense that a role is interpreted.

them as strange and disturbing beings. As a hypothesis, the Modogo paradigm allows us to shed light on the way in which subalterns colonise hegemonic culture while making themselves colonies, that is, black or negative heterotopias of this culture.

Modogo and the cinema of the Devil

Here is how In Koli Jean Bofane describes Modogo's behaviour with respect to the films he watched in their original version:

He did not understand anything and that made the scenes even more enigmatic. He loved to listen to American actors fire off their dialogues, with an inquiring expression or twisted with hate. It had taken him some time to memorise the most seminal monologues. His pronunciation left a lot to be desired, but by giving it his full sense of *interpretation*,³ the boy managed to pronounce these phrases in a sepulchral voice, as though it was coming straight from beyond the grave. In so doing, he had succeeded in frightening his entourage.⁴

What are these sentences that so scared Modogo's parents and why?

Some examples: "Oo mag hhöd!" to say, "oh my god!"; "Or wai you!" to say, "How are you?"; "Yo waa nnex!", to say "you are next!" Why did these phrases frighten Modogo's parents?

The author tells us that it is because "what came out of his mouth was neither Latin nor Pentecostal language and did not resemble any idiom understandable by a basic Christian".⁵ We are dealing here with a double interpretation, and therefore in a certain way with a double translation which produces the misunderstanding: Modogo interprets the poses of American actors by imitating them without knowing precisely what they are saying. His strange behaviour is then interpreted, that is, translated into his parents' language in reference to the languages they are familiar with or know: Latin, Pentecostal language, or another language known to them. This double translation which produces the misunderstanding between Modogo and his parents leads them to try to liberate their son. They want to free him from what must be considered here as shadows of English phrases, images, "negatives" (in the photographic sense) of English words and expressions which appear to them as physical manifestations of little Modogo's possession by the Devil. This gives the devil the figure of

³ Our italics, J.T.

⁴ In Koli Jean Bofane, *op.cit.* pp. 85-86.

⁵ *Op.cit.* pp. 86-87.

misunderstanding which presents itself as the product of a double interpretation generated by lack of knowledge or understanding.

The shadows or spectres of the English language produced by Modogo's interpretation, which his parents see as manifestations of the Devil, are only so because they are the subject of intense work of translation and interpretation in this sense by the Pentecostal churches. Pentecostalism is both the great translator and the great interpreter of the unusual or ordinary in everyday life in Kinshasa (and elsewhere), much like a doctor who interprets the film of a lung x-ray and translates it into a language comprehensible to the patient. Its intense work of interpretation and translation of the meaning of beings and things in Kinshasa society explains why, on the day of his liberation in the church, Modogo will cause a scandal when a cavernous "Oo mag hhöd!" emanates from his throat after the pastor's "Amen". As a self-fulfilling prophecy, Modogo's behaviour could only confirm his diabolical identity produced by the Pentecostal church. From that day on, the boy who had become the child-sorcerer incubus for his parents and the church, entered permanently into the heterotopic empire of Kinshasa street children, to live in this nook in the Grand Marché with other actors, interpreters and translators of globalisation, including Jacula la Safrane, Gianni Versace, Marie Liboma, Shasha la Jactance and the hyper-wired, uncircumcised globalist Pygmy, inventor of "Eau Pire Suisse".

I would point out that this term "Eau Pire Suisse" should be considered a *Congolese translation* of "pure Swiss water" and not an *adaptation*. The French "u" is pronounced by many Congolese speakers of French by "i", translating to "worst Swiss water", which is, incidentally, a commercial argument created by the globalist Pygmy to sell plastic bags of cold water in the streets of Kinshasa. It is therefore a dual-meaning advertising argument, because if the reader of *Congo Inc.* laughs, it is not only because he recalls this peculiarity of Kinshasa French of *converting* the "u" to "i", but also because of the suspicion that it casts on a disturbing "worst Swiss water", sought out just because it comes from Switzerland. It is "worst" but, so long as it is "Swiss", the water will be of excellent quality. From this point of view, worst Swiss water is an "oxymoron" which would increase sales in Kinshasa or any other African city where people *translate advertisements on thresholds*, just as Modogo translates visual images and interprets the gestures of American actors.

Hence the following questions: what is meant by *threshold*, and what relationship can be established between threshold and translation? How would Modogo be a paradigm of translations on thresholds? More generally, how does Modogo's story make him a paradigm capable of

clarifying the way in which subalterns colonise the hegemonic culture while making themselves colonies of this culture?

What exactly is a threshold?

First, I will use the term threshold in the sense of Janus, the two-faced god, the god of thresholds, of passages, both spatially and temporally.⁶ He is thus the god of the "in-between", the blinding and perverse complicities between bursts of light and the power of the shadow. In the French dictionary *Le Robert*, among the definitions of the word threshold, we find: "Entrance, beginning. On the threshold of life, of the new year. Until the threshold of death (Mauriac)". The word thus signifies both the beginning of life and its end, for the "threshold of death" is none other but the end of life. A beginning which is at the same time an end paints the image of an "in-between," between one moment and the next.

Le Robert also gives as an example of a sentence from Albert Camus which seems quite appropriate to characterise Kinshasa, Libreville, but also Brazzaville and other postcolonial cities as thresholds, spaces signifying the in-between: "This neighbourhood where people were always living on the threshold/doorstep". Living on the threshold in a neighbourhood or in a city means living this experience of a life constantly beginning and always in the grip of the threat of the end. From this perspective, the threshold as a reality is endowed with a power that acts on the lives of its inhabitants, and this power is a power of translation and conversion. On the threshold of his family and city life, bombarded by images of the cinema, Modogo translates sentences and interprets American actors and thus takes on the form of *disturbing strangeness* in the eyes of his parents. Confronted with this experience of the threshold that their son has crossed, his parents, whose imagination is colonised by the figure of the Devil, immediately recognise⁷ in this disturbing strangeness the figure of the coloniser of their unconscious, the Devil. They decide to have their child "liberated" by those who, like them, have the unconscious colonised by the Devil, namely the pastors. These imaginations *possessed* by the Christian figure of the Devil, in their action against their coloniser, make the child land in this materialisation of life on the threshold which is the nook in the Kinshasa Grand Marché. Through

⁶ J.-P. Brisson, « Janus », Encyclopædia Universalis, <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/janus/>.

⁷ Recognising is interpreting and any interpretation is a translation.

the example of Modogo, the power of the threshold appears here as a power of deparentalisation – thus, the threshold deparentalises.

The threshold is also understood here in the sense that this "passage" produces *bedazzlement*. It is then this space-time in which light meets shadow and causes *vision problems*: for to dazzle is to produce a vision problem. For Modogo, the vision problems produced by the thresholds in which he lives produce *trances*, as in African initiation ceremonies and Pentecostal churches. These trances cause *transactions* between the real and the imaginary, provoke *transgressions* of boundaries or codes, cause *transports*, for they make people travel to unknown worlds; in short, they cause *illuminations*.

In other words, a threshold is a space that produces intensifications of reality, which can be both intensifications of *reflexivity* and the limitation thereof, since there is a potentially fatal blindness produced by bedazzlement on the threshold. This is at least suggested by Pascal Quignard's ideas on fascination, reflection, Narcissus and the "instant before": "Fascination means this: the person who sees can no longer detach his gaze. In the frontal showdown, in the human world as well as in the animal world, death petrifies".⁸ We must then go through a "reflection" that avoids the mortal confrontation.

According to Quignard, if Narcissus died, it was because he was confronted face to face with his own gaze. Representations of Narcissus are representations of "just before" he meets the gaze that kills. This "just before", which the painter Parrhasios, inventor of pornography, has made a motif in his work, is what I consider a "threshold".

Life on a threshold is thus a life grappling with death, a life that presents itself permanently as a "just before". This is what DelaVallet Bidiefono, a Congolese artist from Brazzaville, says:

In the Congo, death is at the centre of everyday life. The deadly explosions of 4 March 2012 in Brazzaville, reminded us of this (on that day an ammunition depot exploded in the centre of the city). We did not need such a reminder, after years of civil war, famines and the many disasters we have experienced. Cruel dramas punctuate the life of the Congolese, such as the collapse of a market roof in 2011 or the cargo plane crash resulting in thirty-two deaths last November. These catastrophes are not only fatalities: death is also a political problem. Hospitals lack means,

⁸ Pascal Quignard, *Le sexe et l'effroi [Sex and Terror]*, Paris, Gallimard (coll. « Folio »), 1994, p. 118.

people are hungry, wealth is confiscated. All this is the ground on which death thrives.⁹

Death on thresholds, however, does not only refer to the moment of death. For this Brazzaville artist, there is also a "great poetry" in death, directly related to the power of the "threshold" or "passage". He explains:

Although the paths leading to death are particularly terrible in the Congo, I see a great poetry in death. Death is not only present when it occurs, but also through the vigils that are organised for the deceased. The mourning lasts a week, the relatives celebrate and laugh as much as they cry. In the Congo, we honour the dead more than the living. This is that aspect that I wish to work on. The title *Beyond* indicates this place of threshold, passage. In Brazzaville, graves are everywhere; the city itself is a cemetery in which we live. I sometimes wonder if it is we who are dead, or those who are gone. We share the same space. As for us, we dance on the tombs, on this macabre but living space.¹⁰

The dance performance staged by Bidiefono is described by the author himself as a spectacle which indicates the threshold, the passage, this "place", this space-time in which the dead and the living meet and become indistinguishable. I recall that indistinguishability is a criterion which defines imagination according to Deleuze, for whom it is not the unreal, the imaginary, but the indistinguishability of the real and the unreal. I am not sure that DeLaVallet has read Deleuze in *Pourparlers [Discussions]*, the work in which he gives this definition of imagination, but clearly his experience of life on a threshold produces this reflexivity which leads him to see life on this threshold which is Brazzaville as an imaginary life, a life which is the reality of life on the thresholds. To be honest, *imagination on the thresholds is reality*, because on African thresholds, the imagination colonised by the Devil sees the child who is a film buff as a child possessed by the Devil. No rupture or discontinuity exists between the real and the imaginary.

In this context, translations, interpretations, transitions and transgressions between the world of the dead and the world of the living are occurring on the thresholds, to the point of raising doubts about the identity of one or the other: Modogo's identity is the subject of deep doubt on the part of his parents. They translate this doubt into the language of Pentecostalism, and this translation, which is the product of the interpretations produced by

⁹ DeLaVallet Bidiefono in the prospectus published by the Festival d'Avignon in July 2013.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Pentecostalism, resembles a *psychological disturbance* for an observer foreign to the Pentecostal culture. From this point of view, Modogo is the contemporary incarnation of the threshold experience, the experience of psychological disturbance and the translation of the reality which was colonisation.¹¹ Within this context, the Modogo paradigm is a postcolonial paradigm.

Colonisation as psychological disturbance and translation of reality on the thresholds

As I hope to have shown, a threshold is in itself a power of translation, but also of conversion and interpretation of reality, since it induces physiological, physical or psychological phenomena. The colonial threshold is thus exemplary of this power of translation. We will observe it through three authors: the anthropologist and writer Georges Balandier, the writer Georges Simenon and especially Joseph Conrad.

Georges Balandier

Georges Balandier describes the colonial situation of Gabon in terms of a psychological disturbance for Europeans that marks the devastating effects of bedazzlements produced by a threshold:

Gabon, equatorial zero, appears dull, grey, or chiaroscuro in the shelter of the forest. Yet, it has never been achieved without risks for the Europeans who came to settle there: it plays a revealing role, as if, by reaction against the environment, men had to provoke their originality to the point of caricature.¹²

The iconic example of this "reaction against the environment" is that of a doctor whom the author meets at Lambaréné:

In the space of a few years, this man, in his fight against Gabonese torpor and dilapidation, in his struggle to quickly accomplish a task soon discovered to be enormous, found himself in a state of delirious exaltation. On a second visit to Gabon, I wanted to know what had happened to my strange doctor: the administration had sent him back to France. In a game

¹¹ Here, in condensed form, I include discussions from my book, *L'impérialisme postcolonial, Critique de la société des éblouissements [Postcolonial Imperialism, Critique of the Society of Bedazzlement]*, Paris, Karthala, 2015.

¹² Georges Balandier, *Afrique ambiguë [Ambiguous Africa]*, Paris, Plon, 1957, p. 200.

inspired by the action of William Tell, he had ended up spending his time shooting empty bottles of Perrier water placed on the heads of his black servants with a pistol. This case is exceptional in its acuteness but teaches by the effect of exaggeration that it reveals. It shows how rapidly Gabon can wear out men placed at its service. It takes a singularly well-armed personality, or powerful material interests, to rise up without insanity faced with a natural and human environment which has an astonishing capacity for annihilation and, moreover, the advantage of immoderation.¹³

The idea of a threshold that produces bedazzlement manifested in psychological disturbance is summarised in Georges Balandier's phrase: "Gabon, equatorial zero, appears dull, grey, or chiaroscuro in the shelter of the forest". The grey, dull, and especially the chiaroscuro are indeed characteristics of the threshold where the translations, interpretations, transactions, transitions and transgressions between black and white, luminance and shadow, light and darkness are taking place. Such a climate, such an atmosphere, explains many delusions and follies, and it would indeed require a "singularly well-armed personality, or powerful material interests, to rise up without insanity faced with a natural and human environment which has an astonishing capacity for annihilation and, moreover, the advantage of immoderation".

Georges Simenon

Before Georges Balandier, the psychological disturbance of Europeans in Gabon, "equatorial zero", was described by Georges Simenon¹⁴, whose main character, Joseph Tamar, suffered bedazzlement from the equatorial Gabonese sun, associated with colonial violence commanded by "powerful material interests", that is, by value. His symptoms resemble those of a *stroke*. For having in fact taken leave of his senses, despite "powerful material interests", Joseph Tamar had the lucidity of an incontrovertible *translation* of Africa: "Africa does not exist!"

Joseph Conrad

Long before Georges Simenon and Georges Balandier was Joseph Conrad and his *Heart of Darkness*,¹⁵ the seminal paradigm of bedazzlement

¹³ Georges Balandier, op.cit. pp. 203-204.

¹⁴ Georges Simenon, *Coup de lune [Moonlight]*, Paris, Le livre de poche, 2003

¹⁵ Joseph Conrad, *Au cœur des ténèbres [In the Heart of Darkness]*, Paris, Flammarion, 1989.

and translations of the colonial encounter. In *Heart of Darkness* we can see the realities of a prehistoric past in the creation of the empire. Thus, the present is colonised by the imagination of the past, and human beings seen, that is, *translated* as beings with uncertain identity, between animals and humans. Conrad's narrative can be considered the "primal scene" of colonial psychological disturbance and translations of reality that are consubstantial with it.

For their part, Africans delocalised on their own territories which became thresholds – and thus bedazzled – saw ghosts.

Modogo and the face of Christ

Translating on the thresholds produced by colonisation is to interpret the unknown in terms of the known, to make the strange familiar and to subdue the stranger. In this perspective, where translation means an act of familiarisation or mastery of the strange by interpretation, there is commonality between translation and conversion. However, translating on the thresholds, as was the case with the encounter, does not involve the same processes for Africans as for Europeans; for conqueror or subject of conquest.

I will conclude the discussion on this point, which seems to be important and which places colonial translation on the thresholds in the practice of white racism. I would like to start from what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari wrote in *Mille Plateaux [A Thousand Plateaus]*, the second volume of *Capitalisme et schizophrénie [Capitalism and Schizophrenia]*, about the white face and Christ, of which today's Pentecostalism is a historical translation. According to these authors,

If the face is indeed Christ, that is, the average white man, the first deviations, the first standard deviations, are racial: yellow man, black man, second or third category men. [...] They must be Christianised, that is, provided with a face. European racism as an objective of the white man has never proceeded by exclusion or the assignment of someone designated as an "other". Rather, it is in primitive societies that the stranger is understood as an "other". Racism proceeds by determining the deviations of deviance, as a function of the white man's face, which claims to include, in increasingly eccentric and delayed waves, features which do not match, sometimes to tolerate them in such and such a place and conditions, in such and such a ghetto, sometimes to erase them on the wall that never accepts alterity (he's a Jew, he's an Arab, he's a Negro, he's a madman, etc.). From the standpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there

are no people from outside. There are only people who should be like us, and whose crime is not being so.¹⁶

For the European, the translation of the other into a nonhuman figure – half-animal/half-mad – from his prehistoric times, followed a general pattern of white racism according to Deleuze and Guattari. For the Negro or the native, on the other hand, translating the other was part of the scheme of non-white societies, also called primitive societies. This asymmetry in translation is part of what I call negative conversion. My hypothesis is that Modogo's colonial act, which colonises the language of the White, is consistent with the idea of an Other of whom he struggles to be an image: thus, the *image of image*. We are in the realm of cinema. This other, as Deleuze and Guattari have said, has no exterior. Yet Modogo has one, which justifies his act of deparentalisation to go and live in the nook in the Kinshasa Grand Marché after being converted into a Devil by the church and his parents. This is negative conversion: Africans have never been anything but the subjects of negative conversion to the Devil. It is therefore as the Devil, that is, as the colonising power of the white psyche, that Modogo and the other Africans living on thresholds are the same as the Western Other who has no exterior.

Modogo and all the blacks of Kinshasa or elsewhere are colonising powers internal to the psyche of white racism. I would argue that this psyche is a possession, a colonial territory little known to Modogo and all those like him who are living on thresholds in Africa. Their body has the colour of the negative, of the Devil, black power or darkness, invisible power that colonises the white imagination. It is in this capacity that it has historically taken the form of *degeneration* which is only the *degeneration* of self; of madness which is only the particular madness of racism; of the Beast who is only the Beast as a figure of racism. If colonisation was considered a civilising mission, it was because Marlow, alias Joseph Conrad, went to the Congo only in search of this negative of himself. One can then understand why racism is self-hatred since the racist has no exterior.

From this perspective, the Modogo paradigm is, in the end, defined as a paradigm of bedazzlement in which individuals and groups have an imaginary relationship with what fascinates them through the form, by visual, auditory and intellectual images, of which their translation and

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2. Mille plateaux*, [Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2. A Thousand Plateaus] Paris, Minuit, 1980, p. 218.

interpretation consist in incorporating misunderstandings that produce them as strange and disturbing beings in their social or cultural environment. The Modogo paradigm thus shows how subalterns colonise hegemonic culture while making themselves colonies, that is, black or negative heterotopias of this culture.

CHAPTER TEN

EUROCENTRIC VOCABULARY OF SPATIALITY, TOPONYMIC INSCRIPTION AND THE ARTICULATION OF POWER IN BUILT SPACE IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF DAKAR, SENEGAL AND NAIROBI, KENYA

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Introduction

Half a century ago, renowned urban sociologist, Abu-Lughod (1965) noted the paucity of works on initiatives to supplant indigenous features of spatiality with Eurocentric varieties in Africa. These initiatives are not only of academic and policy interest, but also of socio-cultural significance (Njoh, 2013). Some works have since heeded Abu-Lughod's clarion call by interrogating Eurocentric elements in Africa's built space (see e.g., Njoh, 2009; Cooper, 2000; Çelik, 1997; Wright, 1992; Prochaska, 1990; King, 1980, 1976). However, these works have focused mainly on architectural monuments. Thus, some of the most impactful Eurocentric features of spatiality in Africa, namely street/place naming and signposting, have been largely ignored. The toponymic nomenclature imposed on African built space by colonial authorities and agents of Western civilisation generously draws appellations from Eurocentric lexical vocabularies. While the colonial origin of this proclivity is well-established (Bigon and Njoh, 2015), its *raison d'être* is not. Why did colonial authorities, and agents of Western civilisation after them, draw from Eurocentric vocabularies of spatiality? To be sure, this was never because of the absence of African indigenous dictionaries for place and

object names. To relocate this question from the abstract to the actual sphere, consider the following reality. In 1858, the British explorer, John Hanning Speke, stumbled onto a gargantuan lake in East Africa. He proceeded to christen this body of water, which he ironically claimed to have discovered, Lake Victoria. This is despite the fact that indigenous groups of the region, including Kinyarwanda-, Lou- and Luganda-speaking people had known the lake for millennia as Nyanza, Nam Lolwe, and Nalubaale, respectively. Why did Speke ignore the local appellations for the lake in favour of Victoria in commemoration of the Queen of his native England? Similarly, why did colonial authorities and agents of Western civilisation after them draw street and place names in Africa from Eurocentric socio-cultural dictionaries?

I contend that this christening proclivity has one main purpose, namely to articulate Western power in built space in Africa. I begin in the next section by briefly discussing the power theoretical construct especially as it applies to built and physical space in general. Next, I describe the toponymic inscription efforts of French and British colonial authorities in Dakar, Senegal, and Nairobi, Kenya respectively. Following this, I discuss colonial street/place-naming initiatives as efforts to articulate and embellish colonial power. I end the paper with a discussion of the continuities and changes that have occurred in the toponymic inscription domain in the two cities of interest. I focus particularly on the nature of power that post-colonial toponymic inscription endeavours have sought to project in the two cities.

Power: Theory and Concepts

Power, a well-known concept in the physical sciences, was introduced in the social sciences in the early 16th century. Sadan offered a succinct account of leading works on this subject, and noted Nicolo Machiavelli's as the earliest (Sadan, 1997). The second, published in the 17th century, was Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Often classified under political science, these two classical works share a common thread. Both view power as necessary to achieve desired goals in society and similar settings. Other later commentators articulate the importance of this construct in various fields of the social sciences. For instance, Karl Marx was influential in developing the concept of power in economics. For Marx, power in society belongs to those who control the means of production. In the context of Marx's well-known bourgeois-masses dichotomous categorisation scheme for human societies, power rested in the hands of the bourgeois. Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the foremost thinkers on power in philosophy,

viewed power as a ‘necessary evil’. Consider the case of morality, whose establishment and maintenance, according to Nietzsche, has often required immoral means (Sadan, 1997). For Nietzsche, power cannot be considered an end in itself, because power is typically required to regulate power (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). The works of these classical thinkers have since constituted the foundation of more recent works on the subject. Prominent in this regard are the works of Max Weber, Robert Dahl, and Michel Foucault (Sadan, 1997). Weber was heavily influenced by Hobbes (Weber, 1947). However, rather than tie power to society in general as Hobbes did, Weber articulated power as an attribute of the bureaucracy. From this perspective, he linked power to the twin notions of authority and rule. According to Weber, power is the ability of an entity to realise its desires despite resistance. This entity may be an individual or an institution. Weber was also quick to acknowledge power as a factor of domination based on economic or authoritarian interests.

Power is essentially the ability of someone to make another perform a task or act in a manner he or she would not otherwise. Making people, the colonised, perform tasks or act in ways in which they would otherwise be unwilling was an important objective of colonialism. Prominent among the tools that colonial authorities employed to attain their objectives in this regard was urban planning. Thus, we speak of urban planning as a tool of power, domination and control in the colonial project (Njoh, 2009). Foucault is foremost among critics of this attribute of urban planning (Foucault, 1980; 1975). His articulation of the centrality of power in built space has influenced many contemporary works on colonial urban planning (Njoh, 2009; Cooper, 2000; Dovey, 1999; Çelik, 1997). To be sure, Foucault’s works focused mainly on the expression of power in the built environment in modern Europe (Foucault, 1980; 1979). His criticisms were specifically directed at the planning structures through which power is manifested. In *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, he criticised power as negative institutional oppression despite acknowledging its productive capacity (See Foucault, 1975). *Discipline and Punish* is of particular essence here because of its spatial focus. In fact, it is in this work that Foucault advanced his most vitriolic critique of Jeremy Bentham’s 1791 plan for the *panopticon*—the elaborate plan for an incarceration facility (Sadan, 1997) – which contained a semi-circular structure and a centrally-located inspection ledge circumscribed by cells. A shrewdly-designed lighting system and a set of wooden blinds ensured that the prison guards could see, but would not be seen by, the inmates. The facility’s unique design and clever lighting system impressed upon the

inmates—accurately or otherwise—that they were under around-the-clock surveillance.

The design and surveillance techniques employed in the *panopticon* have parallels in the spatial organisation strategies adopted by colonial town planners. Here, the spatial structures were specifically designed to maintain the power of the colonisers over the colonised. Street and place names were drawn straight from Eurocentric cultural lexicons. Such names were meant to serve as a constant reminder to ‘racial/cultural others’ of the real or imagined superiority of everything European—including appellations. Above all, the names were designed to glorify, commemorate, honour and immortalise the achievements of heroes of the colonial and imperial projects.

Vocabularies of spatiality in French and British colonial Africa

French colonial Dakar. French efforts to supplant Afrocentric vocabularies of spatiality with Eurocentric varieties were most pronounced in Dakar. Here, these efforts predated 1884/85, the formal onset of the European colonial era in Africa. The earliest best-known organised and officially sanctioned initiative in this regard occurred in 1856, when Louis Faidherbe, the Governor-General of Senegal (1854-1865) began transforming Dakar into the main hub of French colonial sub-Saharan Africa. The first notable initiative in this regard was the commissioning of Jean-Marie Emile Pinet-Laprade to draw Dakar’s first master plan in 1862 (Njoh, 2015; Harris, 2011; Bigon, 2009). An 1862 map of Dakar shows the gridiron street pattern as per Pinet-Laprade’s plan (Fig. 1). Pinet-Laprade was the chief military engineer of Gorée who later became the Governor of French colonial Senegal from 1865-1869. The colonial policy on toponymic inscription required the final approval of all street and place names by the Governor. The first set of these names was approved in 1863 (Bigon, 2009). As many as twenty-four of the thirty-eight street names approved for the original plan were in honour of the achievements of Frenchmen who played crucial roles in the colonisation of Senegal and its environs. Within the framework of this thinking, the core around which Dakar’s maiden plan was configured was christened *Place Prôtet*, in honour of Auguste-Léopold Prôtet, the city’s ‘founder’. A naval officer, Prôtet later served as colonial Senegal’s governor from 11 October 1850 to 16 December 1854. Dakar’s main street at the time was named *boulevard Pinet-Laprade*, after its maiden plan’s architect.

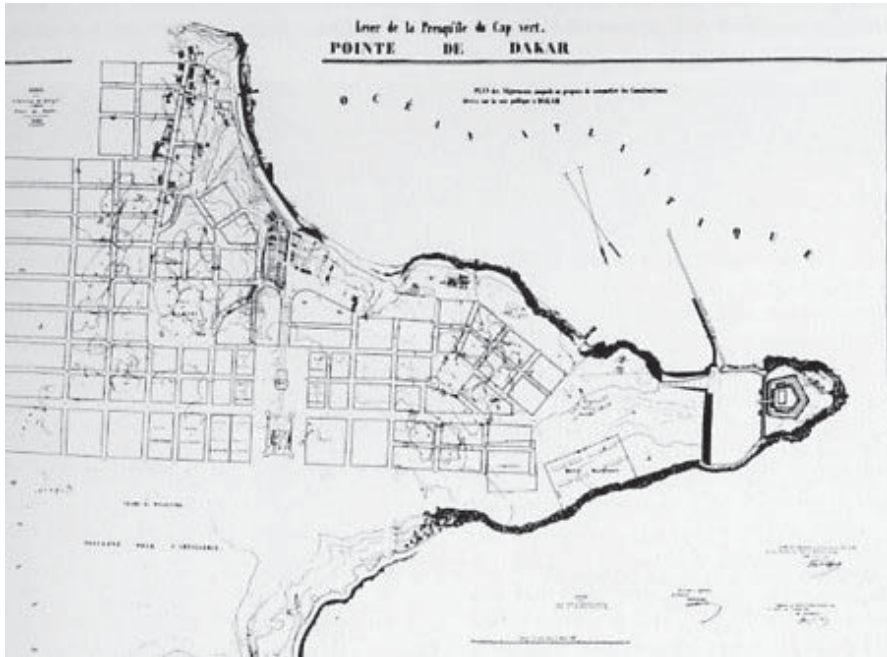


Fig. 1: 1863 Map of Dakar based on Emile Laprade's plan
 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dakar_map_plan_1863.jpg

Images of the street graced the cover of many postcards from colonial Senegal. Thus, the street was used to advertise France's imperial prowess during that era. A number of streets were named in honour of personalities such as Descemet, Dogome and Mage, who were killed in the war to wrest control of Senegal from Muslim rulers. Others were named in memory of Caille, Parent, and Parchappe whose lives were claimed by malaria. *Rue Parchappe* remains one of the major streets in the Plateau District. Several other streets on Dakar's maiden plan were named in honour of French military engineers such as Vincens and medical doctors such as Dr Thèze. Occasionally, streets and places were named to commemorate the achievements of French cultural icons. Two streets, namely *rue Victor Hugo* (see Fig. 2) and *rue Emile Zola*, stand out in this regard – the former in honour of Victor Marie Hugo (1802-1885), French poet, novelist and dramatist of the Romantic Movement, and the second for Emile-Edouard-Charles-Antoine Zola (1840-1902), a prominent French novelist, and political activist.



Fig. 2: Plaque showing street in honor of Victor Hugo in Plateau, Dakar.
Source: Author's fieldwork photo gallery.

The attribution of the names of notable personalities to streets and places, as Bigon (2009) has observed, is an essentially Western phenomenon. It reflects an obsession with engraving personal honour and fame in a metaphorical posterity stone through objects in physical space. Especially noteworthy is the fact that all of the streets in Dakar's Plateau District, the seat of the colonial government, were drawn from Eurocentric lexicons, and generally meant to glorify French and European accomplishments. For instance, *rue Impériale* was designed to glorify France's imperial conquest prowess. The street was later renamed *boulevard National*, as a symbolic gesture in favour of the nationalistic tendencies that prevailed in imperial France.

Apart from culling names from conventional French or Eurocentric cultural dictionaries, French authorities in Dakar created new vocabularies for colonial physical spaces. Christening the locale of the European enclave and colonial government station in Dakar, the Plateau, exemplified this tendency. The unimpressive results of the colonial strategy of assimilation led France to adopt policies of association towards the twilight of her colonial escapades in Africa. Designed to win the hearts and minds of the colonised, these policies entailed not only acknowledging, but incorporating, aspects of indigenous culture in colonial projects. In the toponymic domain, this involved culling street and

place names from indigenous or Afrocentric lexical dictionaries. Streets such as Avenue El Hadji Malik Sy and Avenue Blaise Diagne exemplify efforts to achieve the goal of association.

In 1895, France regrouped all of its colonies in West Africa to constitute the Federation of French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française, AOF*), including Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan (present-day, Mali), Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Upper Volta (present-day, Burkina Faso), Dahomey (present-day, Benin), and Niger. In 1902, Dakar succeeded Saint Louis as the capital of this federation, which existed from 1895 to 1960. Street and place names as a tool for articulating power in Dakar was heightened with the city's designation as AOF's capital. From its founding, systematic efforts have always been directed at affording Dakar an image befitting of a colonial capital. A significant part of these efforts went into street/place naming. The endeavours in this regard can be divided into two groups depending on their goals. Initially, the goal was to assimilate Africans in concert with France's mission to civilise 'racial/cultural others'. The culling of street names from French lexical dictionaries on the city's original plan was designed to achieve France's assimilationist goals. This objective of street-naming continued to dominate the toponymic inscription agenda after the creation of AOF. Accordingly, the city's streets continued to be christened after French or other Western personalities, including *avenue William-Ponty*, in honour of William Ponty (1866-1915) who symbolised French republican paternalism in AOF. He is better remembered for serving as the Governor-General of AOF from 1908 to 1915. *La place Maréchal-Leclerc* was named in honour of the French military man, Philippe de Hauteclocque (1902-1947), more popularly known as Maréchal Leclerc, best-remembered for his role in World War II. *Place Prôtet* was later renamed *Place de l'indépendance* after the creation of AOF.

In 1914, when Dakar had become the capital of AOF, a bubonic plague wreaked havoc throughout the entire city. This unfortunate situation afforded French colonial authorities a pretext to evict all of the city's African residents from the urban core towards cramped quarters in the Medina or the African District. Commensurate with this were efforts to destroy all of the city's substandard structures, a euphemism for buildings of local materials. Thus, as of 1914, Dakar officially became a racially segregated city. The city's European enclave was attributed the official appellation, *ville européenne* while the African District was officially known as *la ville des indigènes*. Ironically, French colonial authorities rationalised this spatial segregation policy as conforming with the objective of association. Here, spatial segregation was viewed as effective

in preserving indigenous ways of life. For instance, Africans in the Medina were free to use local building materials, which were forbidden in the city.

Other relevant forms of toponymic inscription for the purpose of this discussion had to do with the labelling of laws to maintain desired spatial order. *The indigénat*, a set of laws that were applied uniquely to ‘Africans’, constitutes a good example. Here, the importance of labelling is derived from the complex task of classifying some Africans ‘Africans’ and others ‘French citizens’. The French Second Republic had extended rights of full French citizenship to the natives of Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque in Senegal as far back as 1848. The said law, which was borrowed from colonial Algeria, was adopted in Senegal in 1887. In practice, the laws sought to control the movement of Africans especially in urban centres. Under these laws, an ‘African’ could be detained for up to fifteen days without trial for ‘unruly behaviour’ or ‘insubordination’, especially in a town (Harris, 2011). Although the laws were revoked in 1946, many of their tenets remained operational until independence in many erstwhile French colonies.

British colonial Nairobi. Britain extended protectorate status to Kenya in 1895. Four years later, in 1899, it built a major railway station at a midway point along the railway line from Mombasa, the protectorate’s capital, to Kisumu on Lake Victoria. This area encompassing the railway station was incorporated as the City of Nairobi in 1900 (Tiwari, 1981). In 1905, Nairobi replaced Mombasa as colonial Kenya’s capital. Nairobi’s status was thereafter elevated and especially subsequent to becoming the capital of British East Africa, following the Versailles Treaty of 1919/20 which placed Tanganyika (roughly, present-day Tanzania) under Britain’s colonial suzerainty. British East Africa included Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda. Within the geo-political context of colonialism, Nairobi had for Britain about the same value that Dakar had for France. Both cities served as conduits of colonial exploitation for their respective colonial regimes. As a colonial capital and the locale of a major station on a railway linking the port city of Mombasa and the hinterland city of Kisumu, Nairobi facilitated exchange between Kenya and the West. In this regard, and to paraphrase Liora Bigon (2009), Nairobi, like Dakar, played a critical role in mediating between its proximate/remote environs and Europe in the transmission not only of material but also cultural resources. A prominent element of the latter is the vocabulary of spatiality, which is of centrality in the present discussion. Nairobi was similar to Dakar in yet another respect. Both cities were spatially segregated along racial lines during the colonial era. Dakar’s *villes européennes* and Medina were matched in Nairobi by the European Residential District, the Indian Residential Area

and African Settlement. In both cases, the spatial segregation and commensurate nomenclatures were to the advantage of Europeans.

Yet, it is important to note that France and Britain adhered to significantly different colonial philosophies (Njoh, 2009). Prominent in this regard is the widely accepted, if only exaggerated, differences between their preferred colonial administrative strategies. While the French were wedded to the strategy of 'direct rule', the British favoured 'indirect rule'. France's direct rule strategy not only called for a centralised governance structure, it also strived to supplant indigenous practices in all domains with French varieties. In contrast, the British indirect rule strategy in particular and its colonial philosophy in general was tolerant of indigenous practices and processes in most domains.

These theoretical differences were, however, never manifested in reality. Thus, efforts to supplant indigenous vocabularies of spatiality with Eurocentric varieties were just as intense in Nairobi as they were in Dakar. In the toponymic domain, British colonial authorities maximised the opportunity provided by street and place naming to engrave their image upon Nairobi's landscape. All of the streets on the city's colonial era plans bore names drawn from the British politico-cultural lexicon. The earliest of these plans was drawn for Nairobi when it was a uniquely railway town in 1906; and the subsequent plan was drawn in 1927 for Nairobi as a 'Settler Capital'. The 1948 Master Plan for the city as a colonial capital was the last of its colonial era plans. For illustrative purposes, it is necessary to identify the origins of the names of fourteen of the city's main and best-known streets. These include, in alphabetical order: Connaught Road, Coronation Avenue, Duke Road, Donholm Road, Eliot Street, General Smuts Avenue, Grogan Road, Herdinge Street, Kings Way, Princess Road, Salisbury Way, Sir Donald Stewart Street, Victoria Street, and Whitehouse Road.

The names of these streets constitute an indisputable testament of the institutions that the British held in high regard during the colonial era. These include the monarchy, the military and political system. Examples of streets whose names were designed to commemorate the British monarchy abound. Prominent in this regard is King's Way, and Queens Way. Meanwhile Victoria Street was named specifically in honour of Queen Victoria who reigned from 1836 to 1901. Princess Elizabeth Highway was named in honour of a royal daughter, Elizabeth, before she ascended to the helm of the British monarchy as Queen Elizabeth II. Another rung of the British monarchical ladder honoured was that of the duke – Duke Road, Cannought Road, named in honour of the Duke of Cannought who visited Kenya in 1906, the first member of the British

royal family to do so. Coronation Avenue was so named as a way of accentuating British fascination with ceremonial titling and celebrations; it was set aside as the location for royal ceremonies during the colonial era.

Two of colonial Nairobi's major streets were named in honour of Britain's military personalities. They include, Grogan Road, after the British colonial military leader, Colonel E.S. Grogan; and General Smuts Avenue, after apartheid South Africa's military-general-cum-Prime-Minister, General Smuts. British political leaders were honoured in Nairobi with Eliot Street, Herdinge Street, Salisbury Way and Sir Donald Stewart Street. Eliot Street was named for Sir Charles Eliot who served as colonial Kenya's Commissioner from 1900 to 1904; Herdinge Street for Sir Arthur Henry Herdinge, the first colonial administrator of Kenya at the end the 19th century (i.e., from 1895 to 1900); Salisbury Way for Britain's most notable Prime Minister of the Victorian era, Lord Salisbury; and Sir Donald Stewart Street after colonial Kenya's Commissioner from August 1904 to October 1905. At least one thoroughfare, Whitehouse Road, was named in honour of George Whitehouse, the colonial engineer at the helm of the Uganda Railway during the colonial era.

Toponymic inscription and power in post-colonial Dakar and Nairobi

Understanding the vocabularies of spatiality, especially the toponymic inscription proclivities in post-colonial Dakar and Nairobi, requires some appreciation of independence struggles in Senegal and Kenya. More importantly, it helps to understand the relationship between erstwhile African colonies and their former colonial master-nations during the immediate post-colonial era.

The war for independence was brutal and bloody in Kenya. Commonly labelled as the 'Mau uprising', the war lasted from 1952 to 1960 and claimed more than 11,000 lives (BBC.com, online, para. 9). Thus, independence in Kenya was earned literally with the blood of the colonised. The same was not true of Senegal where, as in other former French colonies throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the transition to independence was largely, although not completely, peaceful. France went so far as to employ many unorthodox strategies to ensure protection of its financial, cultural and other interests in the countries it controlled after the demise of colonialism. General Charles de Gaulle, the French president from 1959 to 1969, is credited with establishing a special Africa unit that reported directly to him (Aljazeera.com, Online). Jacques Foccart, a staunch Gaullist, headed this unit, and in this capacity created a meticulous

network of French and African leaders who ensured that the erstwhile colonies remained under France's rigid control.

The acrimony that characterised the relationship between coloniser and the colonised on the eve of independence in Kenya was evident in the latter's post-colonial toponymic inscription policies. The European colonial authorities had hardly left the country when the independent Kenyan leadership embarked on a fervent process to replace colonial street and place names with those honouring fallen and surviving Kenyan war-of-independence heroes. For example, Kenyatta Avenue, long the widest street in Nairobi's central business district (CBD), was named in honour of the leader of Kenya's War of Independence and post-colonial pioneer president, Mzee Jomo Kenyetta (Fig. 3). Princess Elizabeth Highway was renamed Uhuru Highway to commemorate Kenya's independence.



Fig. 3: Plaque showing Kenyatta Avenue in Nairobi's CBD

Herdinge Street was re-christened Kimathi Street in honour of the famous Mau commander, Dedan Kimathi. A conspicuous feature of said

street is the Dedan Kimathi Monument, captured in Figure 4, erected in 2007 to further honour Kimathi's contribution to the country's War of Independence. Sir Donald Stewart Street was renamed Muindi Mingu Street after Muindi's valiant role in the war; Eliot Street became Wabera Street for a Northern Frontier fallen hero of the Shifta War; and General Smuts Avenue was renamed Lt. Tumbo Avenue, after Lt. John Tumbo, also killed in the Shifta War. Several years after independence, Kenyan authorities remained committed to effacing all vestiges of colonialism from the urban landscape of their capital city. For instance, Victoria Street was renamed Tom Mboya Street in honour of an influential native politician who was assassinated on July 5, 1969. Similarly, Duke Road became Ronald Ngala Street after Ronald Ngala who died on Christmas Day 1972. Queens Way became Mama Ngina Street in honour of the wife of post-colonial Kenya's pioneer president, Jommo Kenyatta. The road initially (1899) known as First Station Road became Government Road in 1901, and was renamed Moi Avenue after Daniel Arap Moi, Kenya's president from 1978 to 2002.

Senegal gained political independence from France in 1960. As noted earlier, France continued to maintain a firm grip on its erstwhile colonies including Senegal after they were granted political independence. Consequently, the demise of colonialism did not spell an end to the proclivity for christening streets and places with names from Eurocentric lexical dictionaries. Five of the dozens of street names in Dakar that exemplify this trend include the following: avenue André Peytavin, rue Georges-Pompidou, rue Saint Jean XXIII, rue Jacques Bugnicourt, and Boulevard Martin Luther King. The first of these was named after Andre Peytavin (1926-1964), a French-born, naturalised Senegalese who held several high-level political positions in post-colonial Senegal. The second was named in honour of Georges Pompidou (1911-1974), French president from June 20, 1969 to April 2, 1974. We note that Pompidou's tenure at the helm of the French republic came to pass when Senegal was no longer a colony. The third of the above-mentioned streets was christened in honour of Saint John XXIII (1881-1963), the Catholic cleric who served as Patron of the Papal delegates, Patriarchy of Venice at the Second Vatican Council. He died in 1963, was beatified on September 3, 2000 by Pope John Paul II, and was canonised on April 27, 2014 by Pope Francis in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican. The fourth street was named after Jacques Bugnicourt (1930-2002), a philanthropist and anti-colonialist of French extraction. Before his death in April 2002, Bugnicourt was the Executive Director of the international non-profit organisation, *Enda Tiers-Monde*, whose international headquarters are based in Dakar, Senegal.



Fig. 4: Kimathi Statue, a major feature of Kimathi Street.

Source:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9e/Kimathi.Kimathi_street%2C_Nairobi.JPG

Enda Tiers-Monde (meaning environment and development in the Third World) had as its mission improving living conditions in the developing world. Finally, a street was named in honour of Reverend Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), the slain African-American civil rights activist, best remembered for his non-violent civil disobedience founded on Christian principles and doctrine.

In all fairness, we should mention that a few of Dakar's streets christened during the post-colonial era were in honour of indigenous Senegalese and other Africans. Examples of these include *Avenue Léopold Sédar Senghor*, named for the first president of independent or post-colonial Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001). Dakar's international airport (*Aéroport International Léopold Sédar Senghor*) is also named in his honour. Senghor is also remembered for his achievements as a great poet, cultural theorist, and the first African named to the prestigious *Académie française*. Another street was christened in honour of Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), the renowned anti-apartheid leader who later became the first president of democratic South Africa (1994-1999).

Power dimensions of toponymic inscription in Africa

Christening streets, places and other spatial objects with Eurocentric names was a ubiquitous feature of colonial urbanism in Dakar and Nairobi. Here, as elsewhere throughout Africa, colonial authorities made no effort to compile Afrocentric lexical dictionaries of generic terms, commensurate imageries and meanings in Africa. Although largely ignored in the discourse of colonial urbanism, maintaining European appellations rather than adopting indigenous nomenclatures served to articulate Western power in Africa. Colonial toponymic inscription policies must therefore be seen as instruments for broadcasting or embellishing Western power in Africa. Brenda Yeoh (1996) suggested that place names are typically not designed to reflect reality or adhere to any specific custom. Rather, they seek to express or embellish the power of the 'namer' over the object being named. Thus, in colonial Africa, street names served to concretise the real or imagined power of European colonisers over the colonised. The occasion to christen streets, places and objects was viewed as an opportunity to expand the geographic extent to which European socio-cultural, political and military heroes were memorialised and presumably immortalised. As an instrument to broadcast power, street naming derived its importance from its ability to render certain visions of the past accessible to many over several generations.

We should note that the European colonial era in Africa coincided with a period of unfettered socio-economic progress occasioned by the industrial revolution and unprecedented scientific advancement in Europe. It also coincided with the second wave of European global politico-economic expansionism and territorial conquest. Consequently, Europeans felt compelled to affirm Europe's importance and perceived superiority over other regions and especially 'racial others'. Toponymic inscription presented itself as a viable instrument in this connection. Street names were especially potent in their capacity to articulate, reinforce or embellish European politico-economic and socio-cultural ideologies. This was crucial for efforts to achieve the broader goal of the European colonial project in Africa, hence broadcast European power globally.

To appreciate toponymic inscription as a tool of colonial power, it must be viewed as part of modernist urban planning. It is therefore not surprising that the first master plans of Dakar (1862) and Nairobi (1948) contain the earliest record of systematically named and posted streets in both cities. The simple practice of naming and sign-posting street names constituted the infusion of a Eurocentric vernacular of spatiality in African built space. Here, we must note that toponymic inscription was a major part of modernist planning and a feature of Eurocentric urbanisation. In Eurocentric ethos, urbanisation is considered synonymous with modernisation. More than seven decades ago, Louis Wirth (1938) had contended that as 'a way of life', urbanisation was the hallmark of European civilisation. Seen from this vantage point, urbanisation constitutes a manifestation of Western power and a symbol of modernity. It is associated with industrialisation and the sociological process of rationalisation. For its part, rationalisation is often linked to the progressive changes that occurred under the rubric of the Enlightenment Movement with its three main features: the power of reason over ignorance; the power of order over disorder; and the power of science over superstition. The genesis of Enlightenment coincided with the onset of the industrial revolution and rapid economic growth that triggered urbanisation mainly in Western societies. The need to control this urban growth gave birth to modernist urban planning.

As inventors of this brand of planning, Europeans gained immediate socio-psychological power over other parts of the world to which it was transferred or adopted. Thus, knowledge of modernist planning, including its ancillaries such as the laying out of well-aligned streets complete with clearly posted names, had become a source of power for Europeans throughout Africa. Socio-psychological power thrives on the privileged access to knowledge by a stronger group and the corresponding ignorance—

real or imagined—of a weaker one (Njoh and Bigon, 2015). This invokes the familiar maxim that ‘knowledge is power’. Recall that European colonial authorities were uniquely knowledgeable in modernist planning, which had become one of the leading European export commodities as of the mid-18th century. It was also a leading source of European power at that time.

Through toponymic inscription policies, colonial authorities succeeded in embellishing European power by supplanting African indigenous vocabularies of spatiality with Eurocentric varieties. Reinforcing and embellishing the power of Europeans was necessary in the colonialisation calculus. In fact, evidence of the recognition of power as an essential element in conquest, domination and oppression initiatives appears in the classical works on power by Nicolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. Later statements on power by Karl Marx are informative with respect to understanding the tendency of colonial authorities to monopolise the toponymic inscription process. From a Marxian perspective, this tendency was inspired and rendered possible by the fact that colonial authorities controlled the means of production in colonised societies.

Borrowing from Dovey (1999) and Njoh (2009), the manifestation of power in built space, as it is in the case of toponymic inscription, can be discussed under five sub-headings: force, coercion, seduction, manipulation, and segregation. Force entails the use of physical or other structures designed to confine individuals within a certain locale. This constitutes an extension of major tenets of the *panopticon* as articulated by Foucault (1975; 1980) to a broader spatial context. Reclassifying a previously residential area to, say, commercial or from low- to upper-income, exemplifies the use of toponymic inscription as an instrument of force. It is the label buttressed by the power of law that grants access to a designated area or district to some, while denying same to others. This variant of power was present in the toponymic inscription elements that constituted part of the colonial spatial planning process in Dakar and Nairobi. In the case of Dakar, force was employed to evict Africans from the city’s core areas or the Plateau once it was labelled the *ville européenne*, after the bubonic plague that wreaked havoc on the city in 1914. Similarly, in Nairobi, Africans without a ‘pass’ or permission to be in town were forcefully removed. Thus, Kenya’s ‘pass laws’ served the same purpose of maintaining desired order in Nairobi that the ‘indigénat laws’ served in Dakar. Colonial urbanism then introduced previously unknown vocabularies of spatiality in Africa. Terminologies such as European Districts or *villes européennes*, African Districts or *villes des indigènes* had far-reaching implications for power relations. As suggested

above, the structure almost always assumed an order that placed Europeans above all other groups, while Africans were at the bottom.

Coercion alludes to the latent use of force wherein there is a threat, but not the actual use of force. This type of force finds expression in built space through the use of public buildings and other structures of exaggerated scale. In the toponymic domain, this may entail the use of carefully written street and place names uniformly displayed throughout built space. Note that few African societies had a culture of written expression predating the colonial era. Conceivably, therefore, systematically and conspicuously displaying street/place names was construed by colonial Nairobi and Dakar residents as an ostentatious display of the Europeans' limitless power. In the toponymic domain in Dakar, coercion found expression using conspicuously displayed plaques that included not only the street name but also the national flag (see Fig. 5). Here, the role of the flag in expressing the authority and power of the state or national government is unmistakable.

Seduction has to do with the use of tactics and strategies to advertise an idea, artefact or way of life. Efforts on the part of colonial powers to acculturate and assimilate the colonial subjects typically involved seduction. The conspicuous inscription of place and street names in colonial Dakar and Nairobi constituted an attempt to employ toponymic inscription to advertise the Eurocentric concept of orderliness to the cities' residents. Manipulation employs strategies designed to withhold the truth about a product, service or policy from the relevant public. Implicit in colonial toponymic policies is the belief that Eurocentric appellations are superior to their Afrocentric equivalents. Whatever justifications were employed to rationalise policies of this genre were inherently manipulative. Segregation entails the construction of boundaries or pathways for the purpose of separating or compartmentalising built space along racial, socio-economic, or other lines. Concomitant with this is often an effort to impose a socially constructed hierarchical structure on the affected groups. Toponymic inscription has always played a great role in this regard. For example, designating/labelling a place as 'White Only' in the colonial era invariably charged the police with the task of evicting 'non-white residents' from the area.



Fig. 5: Plaque bearing street name accompanied by the flag as symbol of state power in Dakar.

Source: Author's fieldwork photo gallery.

Although toponymic inscription had numerous power objectives, it would appear that its principal purpose was in the political and ideological realm. Street and place names such as *Place de la République*, *avenue de l'Indépendance*, and *Place de la Liberté* in Dakar's Plateau District had both political and ideological overtones (Bigon, 2009). The French christeners of these streets/place were inspired by a need to immortalise France's self-proclaimed image as the promoter and protector of republican and libertarian principles. In colonial Nairobi, authorities employed street names to concretise Britain's monarchical system in the collective memory of Africans. Among other things, this served to impress

upon Africans Britain's politico-cultural superiority. Presumably, this is what street names such as Princess Elizabeth Highway, Victoria Street, and (Duke of) Cannought Road were designed to achieve.

The afore-noted similarities notwithstanding, French and British colonial doctrine differed markedly. This had implications for the way in which toponymic inscription was employed as an instrument for the articulation of power in built space. For instance, the British seldom deviated from 'indirect rule' as a colonial governance strategy. In contrast, France began its colonial project in Africa steadfastly bent on employing 'direct rule' with a view to assimilating Africans. However, in the 20th century, it drastically changed course by replacing assimilation with association as its colonial governance strategy of choice (Harris, 2011). In contrast to the policy of assimilation, association required the incorporation of indigenous African culture in the colonial policy-making process. In spatial and physical planning, this entailed the incorporation of African architectural designs, albeit conceived in the metropole, to develop physical structures in colonial Africa. The purpose of this was to win the hearts and minds of Africans, especially those who had become increasingly hostile towards the French colonial project in Africa. In the toponymic inscription domain, adopting the policy of association called for the christening of some streets with names from Afrocentric lexical dictionaries. In the case of Dakar, a few streets were named to commemorate African leaders. As stated above, streets such as avenue El Hadji Malik Sy, and avenue Blaise Diagne were named in honour of Malik Sy, a local Muslim cleric, and Blaise Diagne, a local political leader. Both personalities were supportive of the French colonial project in Senegal. Thus, a close read of the policy of association in the toponymic domain reveals that it paradoxically registered political gains for the French colonial project. The policy succeeded in reinforcing the French colonial government's political power over the colonised territories. It did not, however, win the hearts and minds of the colonial project's staunchest opponents.

The post-colonial toponymic inscription experience in Nairobi was, for reasons already alluded to, dramatically different from what has prevailed in Dakar. In this regard, Kenyan authorities made no effort to disguise their intentions of supplanting British and Eurocentric nomenclatures with veritable Kenyan and Afrocentric equivalents. The activities of these authorities in this regard were not limited to the wholesale Africanisation of street names mentioned above. Rather, these activities, which some have dubbed 'the expression of nationalism in the built environment' (Owuor & Mbatia, 2011), included the erection and naming of monuments,



Fig. 6: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi. Named in honour of post-colonial Kenya's pioneer president (1963-1978), Mzee Jomo Kenyatta.

Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:2010_at_Jomo_Kenyatta_International_Airport#/media/File:JKIA_in_2010.JPG

places, and buildings to commemorate Kenyan/African heroes. Prominent in this regard was the creation and christening of an international conference centre, the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) in honour of Jomo Kenyatta. The country's international airport was also named after Kenyatta (see Fig. 6) who was instrumental in the struggles to decolonise Kenya and became the country's first president after independence in 1963. Another notable symbol of national power in Nairobi is the Uhuru Monument, which constitutes a prominent feature of the Uhuru Gardens. This latter was also christened as a manifestation of national power. The post-colonial Kenyan leadership has not seen the toponymic inscription process in Nairobi as an opportunity to acknowledge or embellish the achievements of Kenyans alone. Rather, the leaders have seized the opportunity to inscribe in the collective memory of Nairobians the achievements of other African nationalists. This trend is exemplified by the naming or re-christening of major streets in honour of notable African

presidents of the immediate post-colonial era, such as the late Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere and the late Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie.

Concluding remarks

Christening streets and places in Africa with Eurocentric names did not result from a lack of indigenous African appellations. Rather, this proclivity constituted a ploy on the part of colonial authorities to: 1) establish perceived European superiority over 'racial others,' and 2) articulate Western power in physical space in Africa. Seen from this vantage point, Speke's (re) naming of an East African lake, Lake Victoria, was meant to: a) impress upon Africans that 'Victoria' had a ring to it that was superior to any African name ever attributed to the lake; b) assert British power and dominion over the lake and inhabitants of its environs; and 3) commemorate the Queen, thereby cementing her perceived higher social standing vis-à-vis all other rulers of the lake's proximate region. To the extent that this is true, the following question remains to be adequately addressed. Why did post-colonial authorities in Senegal and Kenya not uniformly scrap the colonial toponymic inscription policies that denigrated African names in favour of Eurocentric equivalents? The answer to this question resides in the different paths to independence experienced by the two countries. As noted above, independence was earned through a bloody war in Kenya. In contrast, the road to independence was relatively peaceful in Senegal. Here, France, the erstwhile colonial master nation ensured that the country remained under her firm grip during the post-colonial era. This explains the continuity rather than change that has characterised post-colonial toponymic inscription policies in Dakar, after the official demise of colonialism. Contrary to this, post-colonial authorities in Kenya, upon emerging victorious in the war for independence, were eager to purge the country of all vestiges of colonialism. More importantly, the authorities deemed the need to articulate indigenous African power in built and other spaces well-earned and compelling. This accounts for the authorities' speedy move to supplant the relics of (British) colonial power with symbols of veritable African power throughout Nairobi. Consequently, the toponym in Nairobi evokes a sense of veritable African 'placeness', identity, power and history that is rare in Dakar.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PROBLEM OF THE TRANSITION FROM CONCEPTUAL SCHEMES TO LINGUISTIC SCHEMES IN AFRICAN SCIENCE(S)

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"A simple question of words, we say with contempt, forgetting that words have the power to form men's opinions, channel feelings, to guide will and behaviour. To a large extent, conduct and character are determined by the nature of the words we commonly use to discuss ourselves and the world around us".¹

We open our discussion with a quotation which succinctly reflects the continuation of our questioning. Discussing the transition from conceptual to linguistic schemes in African sciences raises a series of questions. What is the situation of languages in the translation of thought in so-called African sciences? Should African sciences be judiciously expressed only in African languages considering certain linguistic and philosophical theories? If not, under what conditions should the transition from conceptual schemes to linguistic schemes be made for adequate expression of African scientific thought? The answer to these three questions determines the general configuration of our discussion: the situation of languages in Africa, theoretical points of view on the relationship between language and thought, and the transition from conceptual schemes to linguistic schemes in African sciences.

¹ Hayakawa, H.I. On pense avec les mots [We Think with Words], Paris, France, Empire, Nouveaux Horizons, 1966, p.116.

Situation of Languages in Africa

The situation of languages in Africa is rather complex to define at first look. Mudimbe,² applying the principles of Basil Bernstein³ and considering the contact of languages, arrives at a rather typical classification model:

The situation of languages is simple to define, at the top of the scale are the European languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.). The status of these languages is a code developed to the maximum, socially translating the greatest distance that can exist between speakers; they are dominant languages insofar as they are truly instruments and mirrors of *de facto* power. Next, at a second level, come the great trans-border languages in Africa in a singular place. As restricted codes compared to foreign languages, these languages are objectively codes developed in relation to ethnic languages. Finally, at the last level, are tribal languages, expressions of the smallest social distance that can exist between speakers.

In the hierarchy of languages, one might consider that tribal languages are perceived as absolute restricted codes in the social structure. The languages placed at the top of the scale – all foreign – are considered possessors of a culture that would, without hesitation, be called "the crème de la crème", while the other languages are good for conveying the so-called primitive cultures. Such a classification seems to reflect the anthropological conceptions of authors like Gobineau⁴ and Lévy Brühl⁵, who highlighted a type of dichotomy between the values of societies.

² Mudimbe, V.Y. "Les langues africaines et les langues européennes en Afrique Noire. Problèmes de collaboration". ["African Languages and European Languages in Black Africa. Problems of Collaboration"], Paper from IAI Colloquium IAI, Mons, 26 - 27 April 1976.

³ Bernstein, B. "Elaborated and Restricted Codes: Their Social Origin and Some Consequences" in *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. Cited by Mudimbe, V.Y., art.cit.

⁴ "The most famous is his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* [Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races] (1853-1855) in which he imagines that at one time there existed "pure races" for which he proposes a classification and hierarchy. Even if he attributes to each its own genius, he places the Germanic "race", especially Scandinavian, above the others [...] Most racist doctrines which appeared at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, have appropriated Gobineau's theses". (Foreword to Gobineau's book).

Gobineau, J-A, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, Ed. Didot, 2nd edition, 1884.

⁵ Lévy Brühl, L, *L'âme primitive* [*The Primitive Soul*] Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1963.

1. Theoretical views on the relationship between language and thought

At a time when the question "Are cultures equal?"⁶ and when various theories hold sway, would raising the issue of the transition from conceptual schemes to linguistic schemes not mean ridding oneself of all conceptions coloured by domineering ideologies in the foundation of so-called African sciences? Many philosophers and linguists in the tradition of Von Humboldt⁷ agree that language reflects a people's worldview. For Herder and G. Vico "language depends on the creative activity of the mind". Willy Ba⁸ summarises Von Humboldt's thought in a few points, the most interesting of which for the purposes of this paper are the following:

- Language is a projection, a reflection of the human spirit, as are also society, the sciences, the arts, etc. This is what Walter von Wartburg⁹ asserts when he states: "Language is the expression of the form in which the individual sees the world and carries it within himself".
- Language is closely related to the spirit of the people of whom it is the expression. "The spiritual originality and conformation of the language of a people are so intimately intertwined that, if one were given, the other should be entirely deducible from it".¹⁰ It is the internal form, the worldview peculiar to the linguistic community, which characterises the language of a people, as the manifestation of its particular genius. This tendency was adopted by certain

"Among the differences which separate the mentality of the inferior societies from ours, there is one which has aroused the attention of a great number of those who observed them under the most favourable conditions, that is, before they had been altered by prolonged contact with the whites. They observed among the primitives a decided aversion to reasoning, for what logicians call discursive operations of thought; they also noticed that this aversion was not due to a radical incapacity, or a natural impotence of their reason, but that it was explained instead by their overall habits of the mind".

⁶ Mbonyikebe, D., "Est-ce que les cultures se valent? [Are Cultures Equal?]", in *Synthèses*, N° 5, Kinshasa, Lovanium, 1970, pp. 103-104.

⁷ Cited by Bal, W., *Introduction aux études de linguistique romane avec considérations spéciales de la linguistique française [Introduction to Romance Linguistic Studies with special consideration of French Linguistics]*, Paris, Didier, 1966, pp. 33-35.

⁸ Bal, W. Op. cit.

⁹ Walter Von Wartburg, cited by Bal, W., Op.Cit., p. 34.

¹⁰ Bal, W., Op.cit.

groups of linguists who followed Von Humboldt. One such example is Ferdinand Brunot¹¹ in *La pensée et la langue [Thought and Language]* which proposes "to methodically expose the facts of thought considered and classified in relation to the language and means of expression that correspond to them". "Everyone agrees, I believe", says Ferdinand Brunot¹² "in considering language as a sociological fact which occurs, develops, changes, and perfects itself in relation to the society to which it belongs, and which reflects its collective thinking, with nuances that consciously or unconsciously groups and individuals can add to it". Damourette and Pichon, authors of the monumental and masterful work *Des mots à la pensée. Essai de grammaire de langue française*¹³ [*From Words to Thought. Essay on French Language Grammar*], define an idiom as a specific mode of thought, and argue that the only path that permits us to penetrate into thought is language. Benedetto Croce and Karl Vossler, supporters of the idealistic school, agree wholeheartedly. Moreover, a new principle of relativity, by virtue of which physical appearances are not the same for all observers, and thus do not lead to the same representation of the universe unless their linguistic infrastructures are analogous or can be somehow standardised, intensifies the principle. Marxist-Leninist linguists like Cohen¹⁴ consider language as the direct realisation of thought. Given that thought is the product of collective life, language is thus also a social fact, the development of which results from the evolution of society. Although this tendency is criticised as leading to false interpretations and unwarranted generalisations, most evidence shows that "the correlation between the spirit of a people and its language is plausible". This being the case, it is essential to express the thought of a given entity in its language to present the various realities in a consistently judicious way.

But is this possible if we consider the linguistic situation of Africa? The question was posed and remains on the table, despite attempts at answers sketched out by some African researchers awakened from their

¹¹ Brunot, F. cited by Bal, W. *Introduction à la sociolinguistique [Introduction to Sociolinguistics]*, Coimbra, 1975, p. 4.

¹² Brunot, F., *La pensée et la langue [Thought and Language]*. Cited by Bal, W, Op.cit. p. 34.

¹³ Damourette and Pichon, cited by Bal, W., Op.Cit. p. 50.

¹⁴ Cohen, M. Cited by Bal, W. *Introduction à la sociolinguistique [Introduction to Sociolinguistics]*, op.cit. p. 55.

guilty sleep. The pioneers of Negritude felt the need to reassert the value of African culture. We would mention Senghor,¹⁵ who stressed cultural mixing. Other scholars such as Cheik Anta Diop, Marcien Towa,¹⁶ Mveng, and Theophile Obenga continue to fight to prove the anteriority of black civilisation. In these conditions, how can we ensure the transition from conceptual schemes to linguistic schemes in African sciences?

2. Transition from conceptual schemes to linguistic schemes in African sciences

In our opinion, African science(s) would seem to be the set of reflections on material and human phenomena of African origin. This definition presupposes the prior existence of a subject reflecting on something, that is, the scholar in quest of cause and effect relationships linking phenomena or dissociating them. This scholar, who designs and creates a vast field of understanding, must play not only the role of *knowing* but also that of *making known or informing*. Here then arises the problem of encoding the object designed in a linguistic code to transmit its knowledge. This is the problem of translating conceptualised understanding of Africa into a given language, that is, the effort produced by the producer of knowledge on Africa to move from scientific thought, as an element designed in linguistic signs to be easily understood by his interlocutors. The perceptible world can be understood only through its language, which is structured according to the worldview of its environment. This perception of things arouses true and false questions that we ask ourselves: can we truly produce African science or sciences by using a foreign language? Should the subject reflecting on African realities be linked to its social culture – African culture(s) in this case – to produce knowledge about Africa? If it is true that the surest way to grasp a reality in its deepest roots is to live it, should it be only Africans who produce knowledge about Africa? Should African sciences exclude the possibility of an African studying foreign realities? Our paper attempts to answer these questions by using an analysis of the nature of the components of African science(s) when translating "conceptual schemes into linguistic

¹⁵ Rous. Léopold Sédar Senghor, *La vie d'un Président de l'Afrique nouvelle* [*The Life of a President of the New Africa*], Paris, J. Didier, 1967, p. 96.

¹⁶ Marcien Towa, *Négritude ou servitude* [*Negritude or Servitude*].

schemes, that is, the transition from 'conceptual remarks'¹⁷ to linguistic schemes in knowledge production.

Considering science as a cultural activity manipulating various concepts, we will focus our reflection on problems that arise in science and especially in sciences related to Africa during the transition from the conceptual remark – the term is from Bernard Pottier¹⁸ – to linguistic schemes. We believe that African science is the set of reflections on the material and human phenomena of African origin. This definition presupposes the prior existence of a being reflecting on something, that is, the scholar in search of cause and effect relationships linking phenomena or dissociating them. This scholar is irrevocably conditioned by his or her socio-political-cultural environment and the structuring of his ecological environment (restricted in relation to the space where the phenomena of the material or human universe are unfolding). The object of his reflection can also be limited to a restricted environment in connection with the space where the phenomena of the material or human universe are unfolding. It is therefore also structured according to the world view of the surrounding society. For example, when a Frenchman speaks of a "sheep", he is describing both what the English call "sheep" (a living sheep) and "mutton" (meat of the sheep from the butcher).

The world is thus not the same for all peoples; their worldview also varies. Georges Mounin,¹⁹ on the other hand, believes that the world is the same for everyone and the view of the world as well. We would not disagree, but we would point out that the world of colours surrounding a people of hunters differs from that of a people living by a river, and that the universe of an Inuit is not the same as that of an inhabitant of tropical Africa. By way of proof: while an Inuit has about ten words to designate different kinds of snow, an African does not; while an African distinguishes several types of palm trees, the Innuits have no name to designate such a reality. Thus, the sculptor of African science, that is, the subject reflecting on African reality, must be linked to his or her social culture, African culture in this case. If it is true that the surest way to grasp a reality in its deepest roots is to live it, should it be only Africans who practice African science? Should we exclude from African science the

¹⁷ Pottier, *Linguistique générale, théorie et description* [General Linguistics, Theory and Description], Paris, Klincksieck, 1974, p.329; "Remarks: all information transmitted by the message at the conceptual level, excluding the formulation".

¹⁸ Pottier, B., op.cit.

¹⁹ Mounin, G., *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction* [Theoretical Problems of Translation], Paris, Gallimard, 1963.

possibility of an African who studies foreign realities? These are questions we shall try to answer at the outset. Second, we will look at the drama of the "being reflecting on African realities", when translating conceptual schemes into linguistic schemes. Finally, we will formulate a definition of what we might actually call "African science" if, in fact, it exists.

1. If we represent the African subject by Xa, the non-African subject by Xe, the object of African origin by Ya and the object of foreign origin by Ye, the "subject-object" relationships in so-called African science can be symbolised as follows:

- Xa + Ya, in the case of an African studying African realities
 - Xe + Ya, when a foreigner reflects on phenomena of African origin, and Xa and Ye when an African studies realities foreign to Africa.
- 1.1. The case of the combination Xa + Ya presents no difficulty if we consider the theories of different worldviews from one people to another. This is very much in line with Ki-Zerbo's²⁰ wish that, when speaking of the history of Africa, it be written mainly by Africans who have understood that the glories as well as the miseries of Africa [...] together constitute a substantial ground in which the new nations can and must draw on spiritual resources and reasons to live.
 - 1.2. With respect to the Xe + Ya relation, we can foresee real difficulties of conceptualisation of the African object²¹ by the non-African subject if we again refer to the theory set out above.
 - 1.3. In the case of Xa and Ye, the problem would arise from a reverse perspective. An African who studies non-African realities would raise the same reservations as in the previous case, based on the same principle of non-identity of worldview.

The examination of three types of relations would lead us to conclude that the only ideal possibility of practicing African science would be in the formula Xa + Ya, the others being automatically excluded. This would mean that the subject reflecting on African reality should be African.

This conclusion raises a series of reservations. If African science is closed off in this way, would this not be the most effective way to lead to

²⁰ Ki-Zerbo, J., *L'histoire de l'Afrique. D'hier à demain [The History of Africa. from Yesterday to Tomorrow]*, Paris, Hatier, 1972, p. 31.

²¹ We should accept that the object is no longer a permanent element of the definition of all science, as the scientist can progressively construct his object. We consider the problem from the point of view of "subject-object" relations in the act of conceptualisation.

its decline? "Science, through its unifying dynamism of human intelligence, draws scholars towards universal formations" (5).

Since this science is a universal concept, it should in no case correspond to "a geographical term". Moreover, some elements of scientific practice in Africa give us edifying proofs; the general impression shows a real African adaptation to the study of foreign realities, despite prejudices fortunately overcome, that an African was inaccessible to science. These prejudices have been disproved by the grandiose work of certain African scholars who have devoted themselves to the sciences of the West and feel at ease in this foreign scientific universe. Furthermore, non-African researchers continue to produce work on Africa.

In light of the above, we believe that by observing rigorous methods, a non-African is able (not without some difficulties) to study African phenomena all the while avoiding errors – of minor value certainly – of the sort mentioned by Maurice Houis²² who speaks of "Lumumbashi" (from the name of Lumumba) instead of Lubumbashi. As a result, a foreigner who studies African realities is producing African science. But the question that remains is whether a foreigner can reproduce without too much difficulty the object of his reflection? The same goes for an African who examines phenomena of foreign origin – is he engaged in African science in this case? In what is called African science, if it is only the subject that matters and not the object, we will answer the question affirmatively; but the trend today defines all science by its object. From this standpoint, we must exclude from African science the case of the African who studies a reality foreign to Africa.

From these considerations, we can accept as African science a set of reflections made by Africans or non-Africans on material and human phenomena of African origin.

2. There is more. Science, which has reached maturity, is not confined to a point in scientific and geographical space; it has global objectives. Furthermore, the scientist who designs and creates a vast field of understanding must play not only the role of *knowledge* but also of *making known or informing*. Here then arises the problem of encoding what is designed in a linguistic code to convey the message, that is, the problem of translating African thought conceptualised in a given language.

In the specific perspective of the transition from conceptual schemes to linguistic schemes, the first interlocutor or transmitter is the scientist who seeks to communicate his knowledge to the receiver (the public). This

²² Maurice Houis, *Anthropologie linguistique de l'Afrique noire [Linguistic Anthropology in Black Africa]*, Paris, PUF, "collection le linguiste" N°11, 1971, p. 5.

problem is linked to the effort that the subject of African science must make to go from scientific thought as an element designed in linguistic signs to make himself easily understood by the receiver. There will be a real difficulty, all the more so in that the distance from brain to hand is very long.

The second aspect of the question relates to the expression of African realities by a foreigner in foreign languages, and the translation of foreign concepts into African languages. The German philosopher Von Humboldt believes that language creates the subdivision of the perceivable world, which we can only understand through its language – an important means in the development of human intelligence which comes before reality. This would make it difficult to achieve the transition from conceptual schemes of African realities to non-African linguistic schemes. As language is structured according to the worldview of its environment, concepts designating African realities may not be adequately rendered in a foreign language. An example here would be terms related to kinship in Africa that would be translated into French, and which cover a broader semantic field than in the target language. For instance, "father" refers both to "the father of the son" and "to the brothers of the father of the son" in African languages.

In this example alone, there is already a clear discrepancy in translation. It may also happen that sometimes certain realities have a particular connotation specific to a defined social entity. Take, for example, the colour "white" which has a meliorative connotation in Western societies but may have a pejorative connotation in some African societies or countries. Again, this is a sure source of confusion in translation. Hence the question: can one truly engage in African science using a foreign language? The problem thus stated risks raising the idea of linguistic solipsism, an idea according to which all human-to-human communication would be impossible. Wouldn't this open the door to the downfall of science in general? Some philosophers and writers espouse this idea. Most linguists recognise that language is not and has never been the complete notation of our thought but that this cannot eliminate the possibility of communication. To this end, Bloomfield,²³ while admitting that no two completely similar extralinguistic situations exist, considers that communication is possible all the more because the situation of the messages has similar elements, and that there are distinctive and non-distinctive communicative traits in utterances. Distinctive features are variable; non-distinctive are invariable. By way of illustration, take the

²³ On this subject, see Bloomfield's work, *Language*.

case of the lexeme "apple". The Larousse dictionary indicates the existence of ten thousand varieties of apples. When the word is said, each person thinks of one type of apple (it varies from one person to another), but within variable traits are invariable traits (seed, juice that does not run, etc.). These invariable features allow us to speak of the possibility of communication and even translation.

Therefore, emphasising the impossibility of translating African thought into a foreign language or translating non-African reality into an African language would be to insist too much on the accentuated difference between human phenomena of African origin and those of other places. Yet, the African is a man before being African, just as his realities belong to the whole universe before belonging to Africa. There are surely common traits that can allow for a dialogue between interlocutors.

Furthermore, in everyday life, we are constantly presented on the market with an abundant literature on African realities in foreign languages – linguistic, sociological, philosophical works, written in French, English, Portuguese, etc. The opposite, although not under the purview of our framework, is also true. The attempts of Cheik Anta Diop (translation of a physics treatise into Wolof), Mr. Okito and Professor Kombe²⁴ and the initiative of V.Y. Mudimbe²⁵ to have his students translate the texts of the philosophers Hegel and Marx represent true rebuttals to the impossibility of the passage from foreign conceptual schemes to African linguistic schemes.

However, this transition is possible both in foreign languages and in African languages, given the slight difficulties encountered in translation, due to the difference in structure between language and the reality it renders.

The conclusion of this reflection calls for a synthesis. First, after having defined the situation of African languages from the theoretical and philosophical points of view, we have endeavoured to determine the nature of the subject and **object** of an African science well defined in its expression. We conclude that, despite the non-identity of the worldview and the world itself, the practitioner of an African science could be either Xa or Xe. As for the object, the significance attributed to it by the current trend in the definition of all science leads us to consider as African science only phenomena of African origin. Hence, the combination of Xa + Ye would be excluded from African science as we understand it and should be inserted in the framework of science at the general level. Second, we have

²⁴ Translation of the work *Modern Mathematics* into Otetela.

²⁵ He asked students to translate Karl Marx's *Dialectical Materialism* into African languages.

raised the problem of the transition from the conceptualised object to linguistic schemes, that is, the drama of communication linked to that of the translation of concepts designating African realities in non-African languages. In this latter case, we have pointed out the danger of linguistic solipsism. Thanks to Bloomfield's illustration and the existence of various well-known works on the realities of affirmations, we conclude that, despite some minor obstacles, it is possible to express African realities in foreign languages, and non-African phenomena in African languages. Thus, from the examples above, African science must be defined as a collection of reflections made not only by Africans but also by non-Africans on African realities expressed both in African and foreign languages. However, it should be noted that the ideal would be to express Africa's realities in African languages to explain them adequately, for any translation is always a betrayal of the original thought.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE IN AFRICA: A POSTCOLONIAL AND AN AFROCENTRIC INTERROGATION OF LONG-STANDING TRADITION

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In this chapter, our argument is twofold. First, Bible translation has a strong tradition and a long trajectory in Africa going back to the inter-testamental Jewish translation of the Septuagint (LXX) in Alexandria, Egypt, of the Hebrew Scriptures and other cognate writings into Hellenistic Greek, the *lingua franca* of the day. This translation was then followed by the subsequent proliferation of translation into various indigenous African languages, especially in the wake of the sometimes paradoxically conflict-ridden and peace-promoting early eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionary movement, extending to the present. And second, Bible translation, as an integral part of the larger multidisciplinary discipline of translation studies, is largely ideologically driven. This conviction has grown stronger in recent years, especially in light of the postcolonial context within which an independent Africa, now busy attempting to disentangle itself from all forms of globalisation-inducing and development-impeding neo-colonial control, finds itself. Such a fundamental conviction also provides adequate justification for a more Afrocentric or Africa-friendly approach to, and interrogation of, the whole Bible translation tradition that has characterised the continent.

Granted, in keeping with their own vision and version of evangelism and education, their “Christianising and civilising” mission (see Rotberg: 1969: xviii-xxii), we must concede that European-based missionary societies have played a pivotal and historic role in helping to make the Bible available in print or non-print format in the various indigenous

languages of Africa. Some examples include the long-established Missionary Societies such as the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701), the Church Missionary Society (1790) and the Roman Catholic Association for the Propagation of the Faith (1822) (Ward and Stanley 1999).

Today, one of the foremost Bible translation and/or distribution agencies in the world is the United Bible Societies (UBS). UBS, as a global fellowship of Bible Societies, dates its official origin to 9 May 1946, in England, but has its roots anchored in much earlier Bible Societies like the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and the American Bible Society (1816) (Noss 2004). Operational on all the continents and in more than 200 countries and island territories worldwide, UBS is also responsible for hundreds of Bible translation projects throughout Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Lusophone Africa (see www.unitedbiblesocieties.org).

Furthermore, being a predominantly non-denominational Protestant organisation which has sought to be of service to all churches, UBS has also seen fit over the years to enter into formal agreements with other sectors of the Christian community such as the Roman Catholic Church and the various Orthodox Confessions. In terms of Africa, for example, in 1968 (to be later amended in 1986), UBS chose to formalise an agreement with the Vatican which then legitimated the establishment of inter-confessional translation projects across the continent involving both Protestant and Roman Catholic translators working side-by-side on the same translation teams. The major difference was that it was left up to the Roman Catholic translators themselves to translate the extra seven deuterocanonical books (sometimes referred to as apocryphal books) which constitute the larger Roman Catholic Old Testament collection.

Given that Islam is a faster growing religion than Christianity in Africa, and that Arabic is second only to Kiswahili in terms of number of speakers on the continent, it is not at all surprising that UBS, as part of its translation agenda, also seeks to reach out to the Muslim community. It does so principally by producing translations of portions of the Bible (referred to as *TAZI* products) which are meant to speak meaningfully to that target audience.

In addition, other Bible translation and/or distribution agencies are operating on the continent, such as Lutheran Bible Translators, Scripture Union, The Seed Company/Wycliffe and Word for the World which, alone or in partnership with UBS, help to drive the Bible translation and/or distribution agenda in Africa. In short, Bible translation and/or distribution in Africa is big business (Yorke 2001), especially in countries such as

Nigeria (Anglophone), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Francophone), Equatorial Guinea (Hispanophone) and Mozambique (Lusophone).

The Three Principal Periods of Bible Translation in Africa

The history of Bible translation in Africa can be broken down into three principal periods, namely: 1) the Ancient Period; 2) The Missionary Period; and 3) The Modern Period (Noss 2004 and Yorke 2012).

The Ancient Period

As its name implies, this is a period in which we encounter some of the earliest translations of the Bible. Such translations point to the Jewish intertestamentally and protractedly produced Greek Septuagint (LXX) in Alexandria, Egypt, to which we have already referred—including its various later Greek recensions and versions like *Aquila*, *Symmacchus* and *Theodotian* (see Aejmelaeus 1993). Egypt prides itself in being not only an important source for much of Western civilisation, as controversial scholars like Sorbonne-educated Cheik Anta Diop and Cambridge-educated Martin Bernal have argued consistently (see Diop 1974 and Bernal 1987), but the country also emerges as an important source for Bible translation in Africa.

Some later post-apostolic but still ancient translations of the Bible include the not-in-Africa-produced *Vetus Itala*, the Latin *Vulgata* and the Syriac *Peshita*. However, one can readily include some in-Africa-produced translations as well, such as the Egyptian Coptic and its various recensions and versions in its Bohairic, Fayummic and Sahidic dialects (3rd and 4th centuries CE). Also to be mentioned is the Ethiopian Ge'ez or Ethiopic Version produced under the auspices of and for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (5th century CE). It is a translation which, perhaps, has the Greek Septuagint (LXX) as its principal source text, although the influence of at least the Hebrew Bible must not be discounted (Selassie 2004).

Generally characteristic of these earlier and more ancient translations of the Bible in Africa, as useful as they were and still are, is an attempt to be as literally faithful to the source text as possible without the need, as will become much clearer in the Modern Period, to grapple in a sustained manner with the various linguistic and cultural-anthropological intricacies and existential realities of the target African language, culture and audience. Such early and more ancient translations of the Bible tended to

be more formally equivalent in tone, tenor and thrust rather than being more meaning-driven, functionally or dynamically equivalent in nature.

The Missionary Period

This period coincided with the European and Euro-American expansion into, and penetration of Africa in which militaristic and political attempts were sometimes made to conquer and colonise in the name of God, gold and glory (Mazrui, A 1990). In addition to those missionary societies already mentioned, we encounter, for example, the Oxford and Cambridge Universities Mission and the German Leipzig, Berlin and Moravian Missions. Later, various Euro-American Protestant and Roman Catholic missions will also join the missiological fray on the continent. It was also a period in Africa during which the highly contested triple “C”s of “Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation” or the no-less-contested triple “M”s of the “Missionary, the Merchant and the Mercenary” were inextricably intertwined (see Asante 2007).

Driven by a stubborn and, at times, self-sacrificing sense and a settled conviction that they were being propelled by Providence, these missionary societies sought to beat back the forces of darkness by invading the dominion of the devil in their concerted efforts to extend evangelistically the borders of God’s conquering kingdom throughout the world—including here in Africa. To this end, they would engage principally in what they understood as the Great Commission, as we find it recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (see 28:16-20). They saw themselves as the recipients of the God-given mandate to take the gospel or the “good news” of and about Jesus Christ to “earth’s remotest bounds”. That is, these missionaries sought to redeem others in strange and distant lands from the “bottommost to the uppermost”; from the “guttermost to the uttermost”, as it were. In this way, they sought, risking both life and limb at times, to both Christianise and civilise the objects of their mission. David Livingstone (1813-1883), the Scottish missionary to and explorer in Africa—including then-Northern Rhodesia (modern-day Zambia) where he finally succumbed to death and was initially buried – perhaps best exemplifies this self-sacrificing spirit and commitment.

In one of his oft-cited prayers uttered in what is now modern-day Zambia, for example, Livingstone beseeched the Divine as follows: “Lord, on this land where I rest my bended knees, let it become a mighty Christian nation, a beacon of hope to the African continent and a light to the rest of the world” (quoted in *The Good News Bible Golden Jubilee Edition*: 2014). This prayerful wish would later come to fruition on

December 29th, 1991 when, during the very early stages of the so-called Second Republic, Zambia was proclaimed a “Christian Nation”. This Christian theological designation given to the nation was not only incorporated later into the Preamble to the 1996 Constitution of the country but has since been given even greater prominence by being further foregrounded or frontshifted to the second line of the Preamble to *The Constitution (Amendment Act) of Zambia 2016*.

Also, perhaps it is not in the least surprising that, informed by their own inbred and inveterate notions of superiority, such a noble Euro-driven missionary penetration of Africa sometimes proved to be a mixed blessing in reality in that, empirically, it eventually ended up being both a boon to those who were meant to be its beneficiaries and a bane as well (Yorke 2014). Functioning as both sacred text in the advancement of the evangelistic and Christianising agenda of the Missionary Church and as textbook in the enhancement of its educational and civilising mission, the Bible in translation was very much implicated in all of this in that it not only proved pivotal to the propagation of the mission as a whole but also, and unwittingly, in the provision of a justification for, and a perpetuation of, conflict-ridden and racially induced “airs of Euro-superiority” (Rotberg 1969: xxii; Dube: 1999; West 2000; Reddie 2014).

Some of the earlier translations of the Bible in Africa—or a portion of it—in this missionary period include the *Paternoster*, the Lord’s Prayer, which first appeared in the Kikongo language in Angola; the Gospel of Mark in Bullom (Sierra Leone:1816); the Malagasy Bible (Madagascar: 1835); the Tswana Bible (Botswana and South Africa:1857); the Ga Bible (Ghana:1866); the Kiswahili Bible (East Africa:1844) and the Zulu Bible (South Africa:1883).

The Modern Period

In the modern period of Bible translation, perhaps the most appropriate *terminus ad quem* or starting point, in the Western world at least, is the official establishment of the United Bible Societies (UBS) in May 1946, in England. This period in Bible translation is a post-World War II phenomenon. It is therefore not in the least surprising, perhaps, that issues and events which have characterised this post-bellum period would, in one way or another, also impact UBS and other Bible translation agencies operational in Africa.

It could no longer be “business as usual” in simply perpetuating the missionary mindset and *modus operandi* which characterised the previous period. Instead, Africans began to make a sustained and stubborn drive

towards greater self-determination in the various domains of their lives—be it political, psycho-social, religio-cultural or economic. This drive towards greater self-determination was best exemplified not only in 1957, when Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) gained its independence from British rule as the first African country south of the Sahara to do so, but more so in 1960, when at least a dozen other African countries (both Anglophone and Francophone) gained their independence from European rule. For example, in his more than a thousand-page *magnum opus*, *Africa: A Modern History*, Arnold refers to the year 1960 as Africa's *annus mirabilis* (Arnold 2007).

Other African countries would later follow suit. These include the five former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Cape Verde (Cabo Verde), Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique (Mocambique) and São Tomé é Príncipe. Lumped together under the Portuguese acronym of PALOPS (Os Países con a Língua Oficial Portuguesa—The Countries with Portuguese as Official Language), this Lusophone group gained its independence from Portuguese rule in 1975 (Yorke 1999a and Yorke and Nsiku 2013b).

It is against the backdrop of this sustained and sometimes conflict-ridden post-bellum push towards greater self-determination on, and more meaningful development of, the continent and its peoples that the whole postcolonial interrogation of, and Afrocentric approach to, Bible translation, both in terms of product and process, can best be understood (Yorke 2012). Further, it was not unusual to find Bible translation thoroughly enmeshed in the sometimes rancorous inter-denominational politics of the sponsoring African church community for which the translation was primarily meant, as well as fully entangled within the complex and sometimes divisive ethnicity-driven politics of the host nation as a whole.

In terms of the latter scenario regarding Bible translation *vis-à-vis* the ethno-cultural dynamics and politics of the host nation, among several examples, we can cite the translation of the Bible into ShiNkoya, a relatively small language belonging to the Bantu family and spoken mostly in the Western Province of Zambia in Southern Africa.

As for the compelling articulation of a more coherent translation theory in the modern period, however, much credit should undoubtedly be given to Eugene Nida (1914-2011), the American Baptist, linguist and anthropologist, who sought to lift the creative art of Bible translation to a much more socio-scientific and linguistically sophisticated level. Driven by the fundamental hermeneutical conviction (and assumption) that the translator into the receptor language should strive to reproduce in its end-users the same cognitive and affective effect as did the author of the source text in his/her original users, Nida engaged in a frontal assault on

the notion of a literally-oriented formal equivalence approach to Bible translation.

Instead, Nida opted for a much more meaning-driven or functionally and dynamically equivalent approach to the translation task (see Nida 1986 and 2003). For him, a good translation was characterised by three meaning-enhancing criteria: faithfulness to the source text, and both naturalness and clarity in the receptor language. That is, much of the *fons et origo* (source and origin) of the contemporary formal/functional or dynamic equivalence debate in translation studies generally points to Nida in the modern period, although earlier scholars like the German philosopher Schleiermacher, had already tried to grapple with such issues as well (see Bernofsky 1997).

Further complexifying Bible translation in the modern period are those who would now insist that one should also factor into the translation discourse the role which *Skopustheorie* (Scopus theory) should and does play in the process (see Nord 1991). For still others, the unavoidable influence of the translator's "frame of reference"—be it psychological, socio-economic, ethno-cultural, institutional or any other—should also be recognised (Wilt 2003).

Among some of the contemporary scholars who are now actively engaged in this translation studies debate are Alvarez and Vidal (1996), Bassnett and Trivedi (1999), Hatim and Mason (1997) and Venuti (1998). Venuti, for example, has sought to capture this on-going debate by invoking the language of foreignisation and domestication. By the former, he suggests that the contemporary end-user is drawn into the strange world of the author by placing an undue emphasis on attempts to be as faithful to the source text as possible in not drifting too far away from the lexical, syntactic and other linguistic features and cultural conventions mirrored in the source text itself. That is, for Venuti and others, foreignisation moves us toward the pole of formal equivalence. Its polar opposite, functional or dynamic equivalence, is then captured by the latter term of domestication and points toward a much more meaning-driven translational approach, in that the lexical, syntactic and other linguistic and other cultural conventions of the receptor language are given pride of place in the translation task.

A Postcolonial Interrogation of Bible Translation in Africa

The juxtaposition of the words, 'postcolonial' and 'translation' in Africa or elsewhere is a relatively recent development. So recent that in the *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (1997), edited by Shuttleworth and

Cowie, no mention is ever made of postcolonial translation studies. The dictionary entries simply jump from 'Polysystem theory' to 'post-editing'. However, Sugirtharajah, as editor of *The Postcolonial Bible* one year later (1998), provides us with a working description of postcolonialism and its cardinal features.

In dialogue with recent literary-cultural critical studies, he describes postcolonialism as follows:

It is a way of critiquing the totalizing form of Eurocentric thinking and of reshaping dominant meanings. It is a mental attitude more than a method. It is a critical enterprise aimed at unmasking the link between idea and power, which lies behind Western theories and learning. It is a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial attitudes and their continued incarnations in such wide-ranging fields as politics, economics, history and theological and biblical studies (1998: 93; also see Robinson 1997).

To Sugirtharajah's list of 'wide-ranging' fields, one can now add Bible translation as well, because of the recent emergence of the realisation that all translation is not ideologically neutral or innocent, but rather both marked and sometimes marred by the pathologies, prejudices and predilections of those doing the translating. In addition, we find the settled awareness that translation contributes to the shaping of cultures and identities (see Bediako 1995 and Sanneh 1989).

The hermeneutical role which the translator's socio-economic location, cultural space and gender orientation inevitably play must be factored into the equation as well in terms of the context within which the translating is being executed. It is for this very reason that a postmodernist critique is now levelled at any translation which is accorded universalistic status in terms of its reach and relevance.

As for the socio-cultural, psychological and identity-forming impact of Bible translation, Sanneh, among others, for example, has argued vociferously that there is a clear correlation between the postcolonial translation of the Bible into the various indigenous African languages and an ineluctable emergence of African forms of self-assertion and the boosting of self-esteem as expressed particularly in the proliferation of the African Independent, Indigenous, Instituted or Initiated Churches (AIC's) across the continent (see Sanneh 1989).

Embedded within much of the contemporary debate regarding a postcolonial interrogation of Bible translation is also the unsettling consciousness of the tarnishing role which the pathologies of colonialism, sexism and racism have played in the process. As for colonialism, for example, one can refer to Prior's compelling argument (1997). For sexism, we note the "hermeneutics of suspicion" which has now come to

characterise much of recent feminist and womanist biblical studies (see, for example, Fiorenza 1983 and 2009 and Dube 2000). For racism, the names of scholars like Mojola in his treatment of how the word ‘tribe’ has tended to be dealt with in Euro-driven translations of the Bible in Africa, the Sri-Lankan/Asian-born and British-based Sugirtharajah, African-descendant and American-born Bailey and Cuban/Caribbean-born and US-based Segovia can all be invoked (see Mojola 1989; Sugirtharajah, ed. 1998; Sugirtharajah 1999; Bailey *et al.* eds. 1996; and Segovia and Tolbert, eds. 1995).

Subsumed within this larger phenomenon of a postcolonial interrogation and hermeneutical suspicion of Bible translation is the clarion call for a much more anti-imperial, Afrocentric, Africa-centred, Africa-friendly and, ultimately, a more “de-racialised” translation and reading of the Bible for Afro-consumption worldwide—encompassing both Africa and its multilingual and multicultural Diaspora (see Robinson 1997 and Yorke 1999b, 2004 and 2013a). This call is entirely consistent with the United Nations’ designation, during the 69th Session of its General Assembly (November 2014), of the current decade (January 1, 2015-December 31, 2024) as the International Decade for People of African Descent.

In this postcolonialist and Afrocentric undertaking, the intention is to break the hermeneutical hegemony, and what for some at times clearly seems to be a racially-based and biased ideological stranglehold that the various Indo-European and Western versions of the Bible now enjoy in Africa. Such a relatively novel approach to Bible translation in Africa seeks to put Africa, Africans and Africana generally (e.g. fauna and flora) back into the Bible by raising their profile and visibility at the level of translation—especially into the more than 2,000 indigenous languages (including creoles and pidgins) which are spoken on the continent (Grimes, ed. 1996). In the opinion of a number of scholars, this Africa-friendlier approach is entirely defensible in that “[t]he Bible mentions various people and events in connection with Africa” (Coldham 1966: 1).

The practical usefulness of this more Afrocentric approach to, and postcolonial interrogation of, the translation of the Bible into African languages is that it may encourage the African readership and “listenership”, including some of its more secular and urbanised elites, to embrace the Bible with even greater enthusiasm than now seems to be the case. One of the most noticeable features regarding Bible translation in Africa, especially within the more rural regions of the continent, is the unmitigated joy and spirit of celebration, the ‘song and dance’, that usually accompanies the launching and reception of the Bible or even a New Testament (especially for the first time) within and by a given local church

and speech community. A case in point is the joyful launch of the Xirhonga New Testament in February 2002 in the Province of Maputo, Mozambique. This overt show of enthusiasm and celebration is not at all surprising since it is fairly well established that Africans, at home and in diaspora, love and even adore the Bible which many perceive as the living and both person- and community-transforming Word of God.

In the Afro-Anglophone community, on both sides of the Atlantic, for example, we can cite numerous examples to underscore the deep socio-historical and psycho-spiritual attachment to, and even magical and talisman-like reverence for, the *King James Bible (KJB)*, more commonly referred to in the English-speaking world outside Britain as the *King James Version (KJV)*. Fishel, for example, tells us that on 7 September 1864, 519 African-descendant Americans living in Baltimore, pooled their meagre resources and purchased a pulpit-sized King James Bible costing \$580.75. Following the purchase, four individuals presented it to the “abolitionist” President Abraham Lincoln at the White House on behalf of the group (Fishel *et al.* 1967: 250).

In my considered opinion, then, the Bible should be translated into African languages so as to demonstrate that Africa is indeed an integral part of the biblical drama as well—and not just in a negative or pejorative sense. In this way, Bible translation will contribute to the enhancement of the continent’s collective self-esteem and help to further advance its renaissance agenda.

For explicable historical reasons but unfortunate nonetheless, Bible translation in Africa, as currently practised, tends to labour under the not-always-entirely wholesome psychological and linguistic influence of one Indo-European language and version of the Bible or other. These influential Bibles include the *Revised Standard Version* in Anglophone Africa, *Louis Segond* in Francophone Africa, *Dios Habla Hoy* in Hispanophone Africa and *A Boa Nova* in Lusophone Africa (Yorke 1999a and Yorke and Nsiku 2013b).

An Afrocentric Approach to the Translation of the Hebrew Bible

In some respects, an Afrocentric approach to the Bible is not an entirely new phenomenon in ‘Global Africa’ – this being a rather apt nomenclature which refers to the continent and its scattered sons and daughters throughout the world. The language of “Global Africa” is one which we now find in the on-going UNESCO-sponsored Volume IX General History of Africa Project (Yorke, Forthcoming).

Segal, for example, is quite right in suggesting that the Book of Genesis was an integral part of the rhetoric of resistance among enslaved Africans in America (and elsewhere). Quoting him *in extenso*, Segal writes:

The whole anguish of slavery would have been intolerable without some means to make sense and solace out of it, and among these means was the slave tale. There were tellers of such tales who gave their own twist to the text of Genesis.

Charles Gentry, a slave who took to preaching, taught that all the first humans were black: ‘Cain he kill his brudder Abel with a great big club...and God hecum to Cain, an’ say, “Cain! Whar is dy brudder Abel?” Cain he pout da lip, and say, “I don’ know; What ye axin’ me fur? I ain’t me brudder Abel’s keeper”. De Lord he gets in airnest, and stomps on de ground, and say, “Cain! YouCain! Whar is dy brudder Abel? I say, Cain! Whar is dy brudder?” Cain he turn white as bleech in da face, and de whole race ob Cain dey bin white ebber since’.

(English Translation by author: “Cain killed his brother Abel with a great big club...and God came to Cain and said: ‘Cain! Where is your brother Abel?’ Cain pouted his lip and said: ‘I don’t know; why are you asking me? I am not Abel’s brother’s keeper.’ The Lord got angry and stomped on the ground, saying: ‘Cain! You Cain! Where is your brother Abel? I say’ where is your brother?’ Cain turned white as bleach in the face and the whole race of Cain has been white ever since” (1995: 64-65).

Of course, this subversively homiletical and hermeneutical reading of the Bible must be seen as a self-affirming response to the then-prevailing myth of the ‘curse of Ham’ and his becoming Black because of it. In this pernicious myth, based on a misreading of the biblical account, we are told that it was Canaan, the son of Ham, who bore the curse instead (see Genesis 6). This then provided the ideological basis for the assumption of Afro-inferiority and, later, the moral justification for the West and Southern African slave trade which, for some, amounted to a veritable crime against humanity, the Afro-holocaust or *Maaafa* (Kiswahili).

Despite the importance of these creative and contested readings of already-translated texts, an arguably greater task remains, namely, the need to faithfully translate the text in the first place and from an Afrocentric perspective to boot. By examining one section of the tripartite Hebrew Bible, comprised of the *Torah* (Law), the *Nebiim* (Prophets) and the *Ketubim* (Writings), we will now provide an example to illustrate what a more Afrocentric approach to, and an ideologically suspicious translation of, the Bible might look like (Yorke 1999b).

The Torah

In Genesis, the Book of Beginnings, we must come to grips immediately with the African presence in Genesis 2:10-14. Not only do(es) the Genesis account(s) of creation serve a useful etiological purpose in providing a biblical and, for some, a mythical account of how the world first came into being but, in the view of some Afrocentric scholars, Genesis 2:10-14 undercuts any and all Eurocentric pretensions and de-Africanising tendencies.

Mention is made in the passage, for example, of four rivers, to wit, Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates, and the lands of Cush and Havilah. What is quite noticeable in a number of Indo-European (Western) translations and versions which have influenced the translating of the Bible in Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Lusophone Africa, is that Hiddekel, associated with Euphrates in Mesopotamia (v. 14), is correctly (and for the sake of clarity) replaced by the less obscure word, 'Tigris' with or without a note to assist the reader by drawing his or her attention to the substitution—not to mention the listener when it is read in a liturgical setting, where a footnote will not be read or heard.

For example:

1. Anglophone Africa

- a) *King James Bible*– Hiddekel
- b) *Revised Standard Version* – Tigris – a marginal note and a correct cross-reference to Daniel 10:4 where reference is made to Mesopotamia.
- c) *New International Version* – Tigris – no note; only cross-references to Daniel 10:4 (correctly) and Genesis 41:1(incorrectly). This latter verse refers not to Mesopotamia but to the Nile in Egypt.
- d) *Good News Bible* – Tigris – no note

2. Francophone Africa

- a) *La Sainte Bible (Louis Segond)* – Hiddekel
- b) *Français Fondamental* – Tigre – no note

3. Hispanophone Africa

- a) *La Reina Valera* – Hiddekel
- b) *Dios Habla Hoy* – Tigris – no note

4. Lusophone Africa

- a) *Almeida* – Hiddekel
- b) *A Boa Nova* – Tigre – no note
- c) *Bíblia Sagrada (em Português corrente)* – Tigre – no note

What is also quite noticeable in such translation strategies is that the same linguistic logic is not applied when it comes to the African elements of the passage in question, in particular, the rivers Pishon and Gihon, and the lands of Havilah and Cush. In terms of the location of Cush, for example, Adamo (1989, 1998) and others have shown that there is a questionable hesitation on the part of a number of (mostly Western) scholars to identify Cush with what would pass today as a part of modern Ethiopia and all of Sudan, that is, with Africa, rather than Saudi Arabia or Mesopotamia. By and large, the *King James Bible (KJB)* has not been followed. There, we find the word, ‘Ethiopia’, thus making explicit the association with Africa.

Unlike their treatment of Hiddekel in Genesis 2: 14, Western (and more Eurocentric) scholars, generally, do not substitute the Blue and the White Nile for the Pishon and Gihon respectively either, since, according to them, it is still not a settled issue. When “academic guesses” or educated speculations are made, however, they tend not to be made in Africa’s favour. Instead, the Pishon and the Gihon are located in either Mesopotamia or as far east as the Ganges and the Indus rivers in India. There should, however, at least be a note to draw the (African) reader’s attention to the possibility of the ‘African connection’ for these two rivers as well.

Albright (1959), for example, espoused the view that the Pishon and the Gihon most likely refer to the two branches of the Nile, the Blue and White Nile—and so does the General Editor of the *Original African Heritage Study Bible* (Felder 1993). Moreover, it is quite instructive that the only other place in the Septuagint (LXX) where both rivers are mentioned in the same context is in the deuterocanonical text of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus (24:25). There, in Davidson’s opinion, as expressed in *The Cambridge Bible Commentary*, both rivers are most likely to be associated with the two branches of the Nile. Further, in Ge’ez, a Semitic language still used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and closely akin to biblical Hebrew, another member of the Semitic family, the word for the Nile is *Geon*, thus establishing a clear lexical link and echo with *Gihon*, the Hebrew, of Genesis 2:10-14.

As for Havilah, most Western scholars are equally hesitant to associate it with Egypt, although whenever it appears in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), it is usually associated with Egypt (see Genesis 10:7, 29; 25:18; 1 Samuel 15:7). At times, one encounters what appear to be some incredibly specious arguments to justify the non-association of Havilah with an area in the region of Egypt in Africa.

Skinner (1910), for example, in his commentary on the Book of Genesis in the highly-reputable *International Critical Commentary Series*, argues that Havilah could not have been in Africa but in Arabia. The reason for this is that bdellium and onyx, gold and other precious stones associated with Havilah in Gen. 2:11-12 were not found anywhere in Africa, but in places such as Arabia, India, Media, Babylonia and Greece. As for the German scholars Keil and Delitzsch, in their otherwise excellent and classic nineteenth-century commentary on the Pentateuch (see Keil and Delitzsch 1996 [reprinted and revised]), the Havilah of Genesis 10:29, 25:18 and 1 Samuel 15:7 does in fact point to a region near Egypt but not so in Genesis 2:11, according to them. Why? Unlike the others mentioned above, the Havilah of Genesis 2:11 has the definite article in Hebrew.

From an Afrocentric and Africa-friendlier perspective, it is rather doubtful that the location of Havilah hinges on the presence or absence of a definite article in Hebrew. The context strongly suggests an African location in each case. Without unduly impugning their motives, it is as if Keil and Delitzsch cannot bear the thought of what such a proposition would imply, namely, that the Garden in Eden, with its four rivers emanating from it, two of which having an African provenance, was at least partially located in Africa.

The contention here is that the African reader (and hearer) should be made aware of this explicit connection with the continent at the level of the actual translation of the passage itself. It is not without significance, for example, that when the author first pointed this out to a group of West African francophone translators some years ago during a Translators' Workshop in northern Cameroon, there was a spontaneous and rather uncontrollably loud sound of pleasant surprise expressed by the African translators themselves. It was as if, at that moment of enlightenment and psychological liberation, they were made to see and sense that, after all, and contrary to what they might have imbibed and inherited from the missionary period of Bible translation, Africa was being positively depicted in Genesis as an integral part of the Divine drama. The continent is not to be pejoratively depicted as the "Dark continent" as some missionaries of yesteryear were wont to do. Neither should the continent be portrayed as an afterthought in the Divine mind and mission.

Conclusion

Echoing the language of the Preacher Qoheleth, as captured in one of the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament (see Ecclesiastes 12:13 [KJB]), here, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. Translating the Bible in

Africa not only has a long and strong tradition extending from the ancient period with the Jewish inter-testamental translation of the Septuagint (LXX) in Alexandria, Egypt, of the Hebrew Bible and other cognate writings into Hellenistic Greek, the *lingua franca* of the day, but translating the Bible in Africa must also move with the rhythm of the times on a postcolonial continent.

It is a time when the continent, in spite of all its perceived ecological, economic, political and other conflict-ridden challenges, is no longer willing to submit obsequiously to the prejudices and predilections of others but, instead, is committed to an unstoppable drive towards its own self-determination and renaissance, the development-enhancing boosting of its collective self-esteem and the promotion and protection of the legitimate rights of all of its peoples. That includes how the Bible, still considered in many circles in Africa as both sacred text and textbook, gets translated into the indigenous languages across the continent.

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PART THREE:

**TRANSLATION AND NEGOTIATING
OF INDIGENOUS SEMANTICS**

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LIBERATING AFRICAN DISCOURSE: THE ORIGINAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN AFRICAN STUDIES

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The theme of the renewal of discourse on Africa, which the Africa N'Ko research team has invited us to address, is fundamental in our disciplines in the humanities and human and social sciences. I will approach it indirectly, bypassing the theme and introducing it by anecdotes, then returning to it later, digging into it from within.

In May 2014, after a symposium that paid tribute to a great friend on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, I had the chance to visit an exhibition at the Frankfort Museum, produced by ten talented African artists based on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The exhibit stretched out over three floors; the symbolism of this division left me perplexed. On the first level was Hell where Africa was represented, with its misery, bad roads, diseases, child soldiers, the dictatorship of its leaders, the prostitution of minors, the exile of young people. On a second, higher level was purgatory, where some achievements of Africa through cooperation with Europe were displayed. It was at this level that a film (perhaps a documentary) was projected on the mixed marriage of a Beninese man with a Northern European woman who had later left because of the unbridled sexuality of her husband. In telling her story, the woman repeated the Western representations of the black man with respect to sex (the man was even polygamous): "He had sex in his blood", she said. On the third level, the highest of the ladder, paradise: Europe, with its mirages and humanitarian dreams.

One could have also noted the symbolism of colours: black on the first level (darkness); a multicoloured universe at the second level (it is through contact with other peoples that Africa begins to awaken); and white on the third level (purity in our mythology). How do we interpret this staging?

The spatial boundaries were well ensured by the floors that had to be visited, and by going up a staircase, from one level to the other, the mental representations remained frozen. One might think of the Paris and Brussels colonial exhibitions, which similarly showed the contrast between barbarism and civilisation, and the passage from one to the other through the benefits of colonisation. The Frankfurt exhibition was mounted by ten great African painters, yet the paradigm is the same. It is the "commentary", in the definition of Foucault, of the founding text of the black man or the African.

In 2008, the Canadian sociologist Alain Deneault published a book with a small publishing house; the big houses had refused it to avoid controversy. The title was *Noir Canada. Pillage, corruption et criminalité en Afrique* [*Black Canada. Pillage, Corruption and Criminality in Africa*]. Relying on extensive and accurate documentation, the author demonstrated that Canada, one of the countries that respects human rights and its environment, had lax mining legislation (which explains why 70% of the world's mining companies are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange), and that these Canadian mining companies were plundering the mineral wealth of the Congo, in particular.

The book highlighted environmental pollution by Canadian mining companies in Africa, the corruption of African leaders by these companies, the expropriation of the people who lived next to ore mine sites, and the establishment and financing of militias in Africa to gain control over the exploitation of mineral resources. The Barrick Gold company filed a complaint against the author of the book and the publisher (Ecosociété), claimed damages and interest of \$5 million and a ban on the book. The case was settled out of court. The book was taken off the market, although the author later (re)published it under the title *Paradis sous terre* [*Paradise under the Earth*]. The clear irony speaks to the power and triumph of capital. Yet, the book caused a stir in the media, not for its content, but for the trial. Interestingly, whenever a radio or television journalist quoted the title of the book, the slip was revealing: "Black Africa". They could not imagine a "black" Canada.

In 1986, Daniel Vangroenweghe, a professor at the University of Ghent, a Belgian ethnologist who had lived in the province of Equateur [DR Congo] and was interested in the fate of the people, published *Du sang sur les lianes. Léopold II et son Congo* [*Blood on the Liana. Leopold II and His Congo*], in which he showed the repression, massacres and suffering of the natives. He told of the atrocities (whippings, arrests, hostage taking, punitive expeditions, etc.) committed on villagers by civilians, military and concessionary companies to exploit the Congo

(ivory and rubber). Some villages lost 80% of their population (either massacred or fleeing). Villagers had their hands cut off to incite them to produce enormous quantities of latex which rubber was made of, until British Protestant missionaries protested to the press and parliament in London. It was then that the monarch Leopold II, owner of the Congo, sent a commission of inquiry. The author of the book was almost barred from the university. He continued his career ostracised and deprived of free speech until his recent death.

It is the same fright and horror described in 1999 by the American journalist and professor Adam Hoschild in *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. He writes of 10 million Congolese deaths as a result of violence related to the exploitation of Congo's resources. According to him, half of the population was exterminated. He tells of the fears, the flight, and the blood of populations traumatised by campaigns of pacification and exploitation.

Yet, in 1997, the Congolese historian Ndaywel è Nziem published at Duculot (Brussels), *Histoire du Congo [History of Congo]*, in which he did not mention these atrocities anywhere. Similarly, it is surprising that during the 1980s and even beyond, when the social and economic situation of African countries was deteriorating considerably, during their missions in Africa, experts from the World Bank and the IMF – Africans for the most part – said that the economy was improving. Just as today, we are pleased with the growth of African countries – reportedly between 7% and over 10% – while the social conditions of the populations have never been so deplorable. To remain within the framework of our "scientific disciplines", we could analyse the bibliographies of works by African colleagues, including myself, and see how many African scholars we have consulted or cited. It is not a matter of preference for the work of researchers from one continent to the detriment of another. It would, however, be instructive to undertake a rigorous reflection on all these phenomena of self-peripheralisation of African intellectuals when they speak of Africa, myself included. These unconscious positioning strategies which consist of having contempt for oneself and belittling one's contemporaries to be accepted in the field are simply appalling.

These anecdotes will suffice to recall the regularity of the discourse on Africa or on the African. Although the lexicon has changed by modernising (today "traditional civilisation" is what used to be "paganism", or "art object" for "fetishes" of the past), the framework in which we describe Africa, or the African remains frozen because Africa, as Hegel wrote, is "sleeping". Michel Foucault, in *L'ordre du discours [The Discourse on*

Language], evoked the power of the institution which imposes "ritualised forms" on the possessors of discourse. The institution answers, he writes, "We are here to show you that discourse follows laws; we have long watched over its appearance; (...) and if it happens to have some power, it is from us and only us, that it holds it" (1970: 9). Foucault expressed his concern about the powers, the fierce struggles, the dominations, wounds and dangers linked to written or oral speech. Thus for Foucault, every society controls, selects, organises, redistributes, through a certain number of procedures, the production and proliferation of discourse, to master the "random event".

Among these procedures are some of exclusion, including the prohibited, what one should not say: "We know very well that we do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot talk about everything in any circumstance, that anyone, finally, cannot talk about anything" (*Idem*). Then we observe internal procedures, by which discourse itself exercises its own control by principles of classification, scheduling, and distribution, to master another dimension of discourse, namely, event and chance. In this sense, commentary also ensures a control of discourse. According to Foucault, commentary means a major (founding) narrative that we repeat (in the anecdotes I began with); we reiterate colonial action and its representations. It is "the spirit of Berlin" (V. Y. Mudimbe's expression): "the obligation conceded to so-called superior essences to take charge of the destiny of supposedly inferior essences" (*Carnets de Berlin*, p. 107). The Berlin Conference recognised the right of conquest for any European nation that had explored and "discovered" a primitive territory. John Dozon formulates it wonderfully in *Frères et sujets* [*Brothers and Subjects*], meaning that the European can only regard the African as his "brother" (his fellow man) if, and only if, at the same time, he can enslave him. Thus, by commentary, we repeat formulas and texts that have become ritualised according to the circumstances. There is then a difference in level between discourses, those given over the course of days and exchanges, and which pass with the very act which has pronounced them. Commentary limits speech by giving it an identity by repetition and the equivalent.

Finally, other procedures determine the conditions for their enunciation, including discipline and teaching. Discipline controls discourse production. It sets the limits by the game of an identity which takes the form of a constant updating of the rules. Teaching is a set of constraints on the ritualisation of speech. It determines the roles of speaking subjects, presides over the creation of a doctrinal group, and ensures the distribution and appropriation of discourse with its powers and knowledge.

Foucault points out two major facts: because of the prohibitions that limit oral or written speech, it is never neutral. Discourse always carries the harmonics of the heart. In this sense, it violates the practices it describes. The research of European anthropologists during the colonial period focused on the traditions of colonised peoples and their way of life, and rarely on the living conditions of these populations. In *Les mots et les choses [The Order of Things]*, Foucault has shown the limits of Western ethnology on African objects. There is therefore an economy of the symbolic whose requirements are significant and violence unparalleled. Foucault stresses the materiality of discourse, that is, the conditions that make it possible. It is the impact of time and space circumstances on speech which make it a singular *event* crossed by other events.

My word is located. It also undergoes the constraints of social determinations, of various, sometimes contradictory, legacies. However, it takes its place in other discursive formations, both previous and contemporary, which make it recognisable and institute it as discourse, but from which it must differentiate itself and stand out. The vagaries of the context significantly predetermine the choice of compromises which result from the negotiation of the individual with himself, and which generally consist in fragile arrangements between inherited determinations and a whole context. My language like my discourse is an *already-there* and a *déjà-vu* of my representation. The "I" or "we" of the researcher, with all due respect to Descartes and his *cogito*, is not a disembodied "I". Behind the paper being that says "I", there is a man in flesh and blood. Today we know that even the so-called hard (or exact) sciences are not immune from the human factor linked to funding received by university researchers from companies (e.g. pharmaceutical or food).

One day we should focus on practices of self-effacement among African intellectuals, such as self-criticism, self-contestation, self-derision, or the tenacious will to start over. Self-criticism as such does not pose a problem, but its frequency, the varied, most often hyperbolic forms it takes, and its recurring features deserve to be analysed. We note that most authors do not seem to be interested in the power relations between Euro-African stakeholders. They see the relations between dominant and dominated from a rather unilateral instead of dialectical view of relationships. They do not consider, for example, the material and symbolic imbalances of the researchers concerned and the effects that they can engender, thus avoiding the analysis of Euro-African relations. They seem exclusively concerned about what they believe to be the shortcomings as well as the facts and actions of their compatriots or African colleagues. This tendency to self-flagellation or flagellation of

one's fellow man can be seen in some practices such as linguistic and rhetorical "self-monitoring", with its attendant hyper-corrections, or the denial of specificities seen as a flaw or artefact.

We must then integrate the concept of human motivation which is not necessarily compatible with the completely metaphorical needs of the system. In other words, to understand how these discourses on Africa operate, we should articulate the "struggles between strata" with those that this polemic never intends to consider, whether like Saussure or not. The confrontation between "structural struggles" and those between actors is one of the foundations of field theory.

The scientific field can be viewed as a differential and dynamic system of positions. Corresponding to each of these positions is a certain capital (financial, social, cultural and symbolic), which is itself closely linked to the unequally distributed global capital that an agent must possess to be able to invest the position he tends to occupy. Bodies (agents or institutions) virtually occupy configurations in this field of forces, like a magnetic field. Bitter struggles are playing out there, as a founding stake which allows its empowerment to a certain degree in relation to other fields. By engaging in the field, each agent competes with all the agents who move there. He is led to retain or transform the field of forces based on the particular interests associated with his trajectory and current position. We should stress that interest finds its principle both in the agent and in the field. Here, the concept of interest refers to the mastery of the agent, which results from a knowledge or practical experience of the field and its rules of operation, that is, a gradual recognition of the "game" and its stakes. We would note that there is no calculation and that the way in which the agent is invested in the field is neither voluntarist nor deterministic, neither active nor passive, neither conscious or unconscious.

The instruction of most African scholars, even when they have studied exclusively in Africa, has enabled them to appropriate discourses, doctrinal groups, rituals of their argumentation, strategies of positioning within societies of discourse and in social struggles. By investing himself or herself in the field, the African intellectual internalises and interprets the structures in the form of a habitus of his discipline, which is both structured by his investment and structures it. Very often, he perpetuates these discourses, wanting to consolidate their powers and knowledge for his or her recognition or promotion. Interest is therefore based on its internalised schemes of perception and assessment, on his "own" representations (but of structural origin) of what is more or less interesting to do. It is based on the illusion, acquired and maintained in practice, of the need to exist in the field, in accordance with the discourses that he has

learned, even if they are shifted from the reality of African societies, without ever seeking to unravel the mysteries of the elevator.

Of most importance for the African researcher is to recognise and be recognised, to strengthen his dominant or dominated position through a thousand investments or positions (in this case, above all, textual or media) in an idea of distinction. Very often, this distinction is lacking, and the same discourse is repeated. The dominated is the main agent of his own domination, insofar as he has joined its organisations. He is not inclined to reproduce them as such, but to act according to his own interests, the structures of which are powerful determinants, especially by conferring, through his representations and practices, a role of enviable or hateful (of little importance which) judge for the dominant party.

The African has internalised that he is a national of a poor continent who must live from the aid and humanitarian actions of western countries. This field theory defines types of capital, and therefore of legitimacy, power, or domination, which make the controversies about the origin of discourses irrelevant. Societies of discourse have no relation to the African who is only their instrument, and it is rare that the African researcher questions the context and ideology that made possible the formation of these discourses which often reify him. He looks at the African "field" in which he resides and about which he speaks as a tourist, interested in the appearance of objects, and attracted by the grandeur, glory, beauty, luxury and voluptuousness, never seeking to see beyond.

As the field is fundamentally a field of forces and struggles, the African researcher has internalised that he is dominated because he comes from a poor continent, with no roads, viable schools and standard hospitals, without sources of funding for his research – when he does any – and that the dominant party is the Western researcher, enjoying economic and symbolic legitimacy. Hence the tendency towards self-domination by the African researcher, while recognising that this term restricts and reduces the possibilities of understanding the complexity of a dialectic between objective structures and agents.

The powers and knowledge of discourse lie on the side of the Western intellectual field (and its representatives, whether dominant and even dominated) which defines the very principle of this dialectic and is precisely embodied by Parisian authorities of recognition with respect to Francophone countries. This is not only a particular process of recognition, to which we tend to reduce the relationship between the French "centre" and the francophone "peripheries" of Africa (one is only recognised when co-opted by a Western dominant party), but also the imposition, acknowledged and accepted insofar as it is unacknowledged as violence,

of a particular view of "universal science", and thus the ignorance of the fact that there are different ideas of conducting research.

The African researcher often works with the funding of Western organisations to which he owes recognition and perhaps submission. This source of "delocalised" belief enables us to better analyse the character of the "identity" schism in the African intellectual. He is torn between antagonistic interests of dominant party and dominated. Unlike the dominated parties of the western field, however, he must also put up with a universe of schemes of vision and division specific to an autonomous national space (or considered as such) marked by scientific, material and historical discredit. Perhaps it should be emphasised that the African intellectual proceeds with an assessment of his chances of recognition in the scientific field. This activity is not calculated, but practical, pre-reflexive, almost playful. We should stress, perhaps more firmly, that the same holds true for the Western dominant party.

African scholars thus experience the major difficulty of reconciling this practical necessity of freeing themselves from colonial discourse on Africa with the problematic of the renewal of discourse in vogue in the Western intellectual field. This is thus an *already-there* issue which consists of a frantic quest for ways and means of transforming the human and social sciences through a critique of the "word of the other", which has no relation to the singularity of African objects. We can understand the mistrust, distance or space that the African researcher wants to take, and his temptation to use African objects as a pretext, with a view to radically renewing the discourse on human and social sciences. Lacan distinguished himself from "famillionnaire" scientific practice which, in his mind, constituted a certain "theoretical extravagance", particularly concerning the idea of truth. He thus presented his proposal for intersection, hoping that psychoanalytic practice would interest any scientist and help to annihilate him in a death likely to favour the transfer. Thinking that the African himself will succeed in transforming these human and social sciences thanks to his own (phenomenological) gaze, is to reclaim the belief that the unconscious is the essential structure of man and place oneself under the high patronage of Lacan. In undertaking language criticism of the other on African objects, the African researcher is led to join, as Lacan has shown following Freud, in the symbolic region where the drama of the unconscious of man plays out, and to become conscious of oneself by posing oneself as a real subject that is contradictory.

It is therefore clear that our discourses, which call for the renewal of African studies, are starting from well-defined utterances and originate in the particular place of the Western intellectual field. In this sense, the

singularity of the African experience is an illusion and can only be condemned to become fixed on its pre-textual being in the face of the violent movement of the chain of Western scientific utterances. Yet speech starts from the prehistory of this singularity which gives it the power to judge, gauge, and invigorate the truth of utterances and evidence reclaimed in a field from which one claims to distance oneself.

The discourse of African intellectuals is based on an apparent ambiguity, which shows that it is part of a double relationship – of continuity and discontinuity – with the modern Western field. This ambivalence stems from the (ideological?) insistence on the singularity of African objects about which they want to engage in credible speech. This insistence suggests that the paradigm of difference in question, discovered in the exercise of a new conceptual practice, is intended both as a starting point and as a final point of the initiative for the liberation of African discourse, starting from data from languages in reality.

Let's be very clear. Our research is in line with the Western intellectual field, whether it be our criticism of a certain practice of science or our goal to try to restart the discourse and innovate on it. Using the weapons of Western thinkers, we are claiming to decolonise the human and social sciences, by promising them a marvellous end on African soil through our critical examination. This end, which seems to be an opening, intersects with the project of epistemological renewal seen in the work of more than one modern epistemologist thinker, such as Lacan and Foucault.

The question of language preoccupies this new problem, as if it were seeking to rid itself exclusively of man, present as both object and subject of the knowledge that bears his name. Our own speech is a collective discourse that extends scientific discourse, in search of African originality which it places in its function and place of pretext where it is crossed by "discursive formations" and serves to confirm, legitimate or challenge the truths and evidence of the utterances that pre-exist it. It is difficult to comprehend this desire which seems to stimulate the African intellectual, to evoke African singularity through a discourse and from a place that, today as yesterday, forces itself on us.

To answer this question, we should analyse the concrete situations of the African intellectual who is struggling with the peculiar experience of all intelligentsia who, more than anyone else, suffer and live the suffering of being torn between two cultures, two different worlds, through the contradictions of the relationships that link them to each other. Our question, with its distance from ourselves and others, seems an adequate "ideological" expression of our own situation as a colonised person. Torn between two contradictory worlds, the colonised person is in both one and

the other. It is a separation itself, and, to borrow the titles of Mudimbe's novels, "between the waters" and living their "gap".

Hence the uneasiness that such a situation creates up to the point of the search for a change of scenery in a utopian world – pertinent or not – that is, another. Western malaise has engendered an intellectual disorientation and violent practices in a relevant world. The malaise of colonised African intellectuals reflects the difficulty of living and of seeing and often moves into a revolt which is expressed by the project of renewal: "We must start from scratch", "decolonise established knowledge", we say. We must start all over again and remake the man, wrote Aimé Césaire in *La tragédie du roi Christophe* [*The Tragedy of King Christophe*] and *Une saison au Congo* [*A Season in the Congo*]. It is in this sense that we should read the proposal and indignation of Frantz Fanon, who wrote in *Peau noire, masques blancs* [*Black Skin, White Masks*]: "In a period when sceptical doubt has taken root in the world, where, according to a band of bastards, it is no longer possible to discern sense from nonsense, it becomes arduous to descend to a level where the categories of sense and nonsense are not yet used" (p. 6).

Clearly, this malaise expresses the existential situation and determines, under the influence of an ideological tension, a particular and well-defined place on which the "scientific" gaze of the subject rests. It is enough to meditate notably on the position (and function) that Lacan and Foucault, Freud and Marx occupy within the Western intellectual field. Foucault himself claimed to be under the patronage of Borges, the man of paradox and absurdity, and confessed that Borges was at the origin of *The Order of Things* by the Chinese taxonomy that he had presented in one of his books. By his archaeology, which is neither a history of ideas nor a structuralist method despite its apparent similarities, we know that Foucault is at variance with his contemporaries, but also with himself. He wants to accelerate the end of philosophy while at the same time devoting himself wholeheartedly to the discipline. He is the champion of anti-dogmatism; he forgets it for himself and dares say to others: "Do not ask me who I am and do not tell me to always stay the same. It is a morality of personal information; it governs our IDs. Let it leave us free when it comes to writing" (quoted by Julia Kristeva, 1979: 219).

However, beyond these readings and choices that predetermine them, it is important to account for the reality of the intellectual position that produced them, namely capacity and possibility because of these readings and the belief that it is in them and only in them that the better future lies. It is not the discomfort of being African that explains this intellectual attitude, but the fact of belonging to a field outside traditional reality. This

position is given as the place of the colonised subject and engenders multiple ideologies, especially scientism in all its forms.

The ideological tension resulting from this intellectual position is at the root of the difficulty of living, and especially of this privilege (to avoid saying, this evil) of seeing. This tension reflects an awareness that reminds us, "He is your father; sons do not kill fathers ... Should sons begin to kill fathers?" To further this ideological tension, this intellectual position imposes the requirement of scientificity to make it possible to read texts, to make texts transparent with respect to the subject.

The African subject, who is reading to free himself, encounters the precedence of this intellectual position on his ideological tension. The position is part of the critical tradition, whose legacy is the constant questioning of evidence. In the face of the prehistory that made it possible, this tension can only be relegated to its real position and its function as pretext. It is explained by the awareness of an imperfection; its violence will be expressed through the requirement and demand for perfection, in a theoretical struggle which is very often expressed in terms of challenging – challenging metaphysics, this philosophy which comes from elsewhere, challenging the human and social sciences with their colonialist prejudices, challenging missionary discourse and ideology, challenging Western philosophy.

It is easy to understand that these discourses of challenging lead to surrendering to the domain of utopia, as they are the expression of a desire for perfection in the face of the corruption and imperfection they criticise. Thus, while waiting for that perfection which is always to come, the subject, as if to find an equilibrium, clings to the scatological dimension and the hope that contests it. Despite the current influence of Western intellectual positions even on these "pleas for difference", it is possible to escape the impasse and gilded prison where the West, through the mirages of its colonisation, continues to imprison Africa. Against Domenach, who exclaimed: "Of all the tricks of history, there is probably none more extraordinary than that peoples who have rejected the colonisation of the West are now intellectually colonised by thought that comes from Europe" ("Marxism, ideology factory"), namely Marxism. This revival of Marxism is justified, since it reflects a particular and determined choice (also overdetermined) concerning a multiplicity of objects constituting a system which resolutely imposes itself on the former colonies and their intellectuals.

In *L'Odeur du Père* [The Smell of the Father], VY Mudimbe maliciously took up Foucault's reflection on Hegel, and replaced Hegel by the West: "But to really escape from the West assumes that one has exactly assessed what it costs to break away from it. This presupposes knowing how far the

West, insidiously perhaps, has approached us. This assumes knowing what is still western in what enables us to think against the West, and to measure in what way our recourse against it is still perhaps a ruse against which it pits us, and at the end of which it awaits us, motionless and elsewhere".

It seems to me that the African must consider his own situation and the contradiction of his own structures if he wants to free himself. One might wonder, however, if the analytical criticism of the discourses of others about the African can enable him to take the floor and affirm his singularities "in a mode other than that of alibis" (Mudimbe). In fact, such a liberation had already been demanded in its form and content by some representatives of this western field, a constantly shifting critical archaeological field, in the writings of Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TRANSLATIONS, EXHIBITIONS, DIASPORAS: NEGOTIATING ACROSS VISUALITIES

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This paper will primarily touch on one question posed by the conference organisers: in what conditions can translation be practiced without incorporating dominant ideologies? To put it simply, in what ways can translation be a balanced, a just practice and process? I am not sure that such conditions exist, but translation happens nonetheless. What I *do* believe is that translation can, at times, make gestures towards breaking some of those dominant ideologies, even while being embedded within them.

I define translation in a very broad sense, along the lines of the approach espoused by the call for papers, that is, translation not only as linguistic transference or transformation, but as a process of movement of knowledge between one social and cultural context to another. In this paper, I will offer two vignettes—two examples of spaces—which have been theorised about as practices of translation by two thinkers, before turning to my own work and the role of translation in it.

One of those two spaces is an institutional space—the space of museum exhibitions. The second is a geographic-temporal space of diaspora. My questions, and the questions of the researchers with whom I open my presentation, are: what can looking at these two spaces as *practices of translation* offer to the production of knowledge in and on Africa? Can thinking about these spaces as practices of translation work to train the imagination, to lay a fertile terrain for alternative epistemological performances?

By epistemological performances I mean the actions, practices, desires, that emerge from a particular way of understanding the world. I hesitate to use the word alternative for fear of relegating the concept to a position of

marginality. ‘Alternative’ assumes a kind of resistant force, and an inherent political deployment. As alternatives can work to reinforce the structures that they diverge from, they are not inherently revolutionary. I argue that there can, however, exist an *oppositional* gesture in the kinds of performances I will describe—oppositional along the lines of what Michel de Certeau defines in *The Invention of the Everyday* as a tactic that works through rather than against dominant structure to turn a disadvantageous situation into an advantageous one.¹ What I attempt to emphasise by deploying the language of alternative epistemological performance is that there can exist a moment of transformation, that moment when the formats for understanding that subjects use to negotiate the world around them become more visible, and less ingrained. A moment in which, in other words, the modes of operation that govern the relationship of self and world are loosened.

With that background in mind, we will look at two examples from the first space we might think of as a space of translation: museum exhibition spaces. Mary Nooter Roberts makes some excellent observations about the way exhibitions function as processes of translation. She examines, in particular, African objects in museums exhibition spaces in the North—the United States, notably. Her concerns centre on the political and ethical implications of translating or re-contextualising the frameworks of knowledge within which African objects were created into the exhibition formats particular to a museum. This act of translation is fraught, given that exhibition formats are themselves coming out of a particular framework of knowledge or epistemological structure that can diverge sharply from the object’s originary framework.

Is such a translation possible without co-opting the objects into the dominant ideology of a museum space? Perhaps not fully, but I will show

¹ De Certeau proposes that *strategies* are actions dependent on the space of power—enacted by dominant structures—to attain and assure mastery of a totalising discourse or system. *Tactics*, on the other hand, are actions that manipulate time to intervene in those totalising discourses and systems of power. Translation, like all double-edged swords, can be read as either a tactic or a strategy, depending on the specific context of its interventions. One could say, for example, in the exhibitions of African art that I will discuss later, that the art objects invite translation as a tactic, as they disrupt the process of going from non-museum space of utility to museum space of display, causing roadblocks, provoking the dominant space to reorganise itself. At the same time, the museums engage in translation as a strategy, using it to reinforce their authority to bring those objects into the museum space of display and reinforcing the discourse of museums as caretakers of universal culture. See De Certeau, *The Invention of the Everyday*.

two of the examples from Roberts' study that illuminate instances in which translation can at least work against the invisible privilege of dominant epistemological structures while still embedded within them.

The first instance is the exhibition *Secrecy: African Art that Reveals and Conceals*, in 1993, at the Museum for African Art in New York. It was an exhibit that focused on the way Luba, Bambara, Dogon, and other African objects use visual devices such as coding, containment, and obscurity to simultaneously signal and withhold esoteric knowledge. Thus, the paradox that these objects embody—constructing, containing and announcing the presence of secret knowledge without revealing that secret—was the same paradox in which the museum exhibition found itself. Modern museums are charged with making knowledge fully and publicly available. Museum practices, after all, emerged out of frameworks for constructing knowledge that came to fruition during the Enlightenment. As Barbara Kirshener-Gimlett—a scholar who works extensively on the relationship between museum visual practices and enlightenment—points out, “enlightenment values place a premium on illumination, on full disclosure, and on open access to knowledge and truth” (253).

Objects in museum collections are placed under intense scrutiny, assigned a place in an inventory, their material components are analysed at microscopic levels, they are categorised, and assigned keywords. In exhibitions, they are lit up, decoded for the visitor, assigned to themes, and used for pedagogical purposes with a broad audience intended. The visuality of the epistemology that dominates in museums exhibition spaces, in other words, stands in polar opposition to the visuality practiced by the objects that the *Secrecy* exhibit wanted to display. To “translate”, so to speak, the esoteric knowledge that the creators of these objects had taken great pains to hide into something immediately visible to a wide audience seemed not only ethically dubious, but an aggressive dismantling of the epistemological framework that created these objects.

Moreover, the ethnographic research, writing, and representation were constructed along the norms of discovery of the secret. As the curator Roberts herself points out, “the entire Western project of understanding *other* cultures is implicated in the secret”, as early accounts ignored the sophisticated role that the secret played in African life, painting instead sensationalist accounts of a dark and inscrutable continent (18). Things pushed underground with colonial rule and conversion, “No discussion of knowledge and power in the Africa of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can neglect these historical exchanges, in which secrecy played a key role” (18-19; 1993).

In this particular example, the museum negotiated these contradictory regimes of visibility by adopting some of the mechanisms of coding, containment, and obscurity that the objects incorporate into their own exhibition practice. Like the objects, the exhibition *announced* the presence of secret knowledge, without revealing the content of that knowledge. It chose to illuminate the form—the epistemological process—rather than exposing the content. It signalled to the visitor some of the techniques for, as the title of the exhibition announced, revealing and concealing knowledge, while resisting full disclosure. It is an elegant example of an oppositional rhetorical strategy, what Ross Chambers might say falls into “a range of discursive skills that include verbal acuteness but extend also to the ‘practical intelligence’ of an oppositional kind that Michel de Certeau memorably describes as the opportunistic art of turning to tactical advantage—through bricolage or making do—a set of circumstances on which one does not have strategic purchase” (20). The exhibition designers demonstrated both a discursive and a practical intelligence by enacting an intentionally partial translation, one that insisted on the very incompleteness of the translation.

In addition, what was revealed implicitly if not explicitly through the “Secrecy” Exhibition was the epistemological performances of museums themselves. In approaching the exhibition as a process of translation, the museum had to rethink and modify its formats for disseminating knowledge—particularly its relationship to visibility—and bring its visual practices closer to the context that the objects it was “translating” were created in. For example, displaying objects but shrouding them, could be read as a visual practice that served to *détourner*—in part, not completely, through compromise and complicity—dominant epistemologies by modifying visual practices to resemble ones from the “original” context.

The second example that Roberts mentions which is particularly interesting for my work is *A Saint in The City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal*. This exhibition was curated in 2001 at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History before traveling to other museums. I mention this exhibition because of how it linked translation and diaspora, which my own presentation will next examine.

The exhibition displayed arts related to the Mouride Sufi movement. Mourides, followers of the mystic and poet Amadou Baba, express their devotion to their founding saint by reproducing his person, words, and teaching into a variety of media—murals on urban walls, stained-glass plates sold on the street as well as in galleries, contemporary painting, calligraphy, architectural forms. Nomadism is an important part of this practice as well, since Amadou Baba was himself exiled during French

colonial rule in Senegal. His followers are now found practicing in major urban centres throughout the world, seeing it as part of their duty to travel for work.

The artistic reproductions of Amadou Bamba's person, in the immense variety of media, thus create a transnational network of devotion through a visual practice. These diverse representations of the Saint make a collective, visual body that stretches far beyond the borders of Senegal, and no single image can exist isolated from the rest. The *Saint in the City* exhibition argued furthermore that, to quote Roberts, "Each artist brings his own vision and interpretation to every rendering of the Saint, and each of these is as valid as the next. [...] translation is all one can ever know. It is the original of every previous translation, and the promise of every future transformation. According to a Sufi way of knowing, new knowledge is always hidden behind the next translation that has yet to be made" (183). Thus, it is the translated object that is at the heart of a system of knowledge and a web of sacred relations.

This is embodied by the fact that only one image of the founding saint Amadou Bamba exists—a photograph, and not even an "original" since the negative has long been lost, as have the initial prints from the negative. Moreover, the photograph was taken in 1913, when Bamba was being held under house arrest by the French colonial authorities. Thus, the biographical "authenticity" of the scene—in the sense of how much Bamba could control in the staging, his dress, posture, or even the very taking of the photograph—poses problems to the way museums tend to display documentary photography as evidence of "the real". This could be read as an instance of translation working as *détournement*. As Chambers explains: "*Détourner* can be used in the sense of turning someone away from an established or predetermined path; but it also means to appropriate or misappropriate something for purposes other than its conventional use" (21). The Saint's followers *détournent* the original photo in its context of colonial power and captivity into a way to foster the Saint's teaching long after his death. At the same time, the Mourides' reproductions of the original image also turn around the museum's value system through an elegant tactic: by infinitely prolonging the time that separates the original and the artworks that are reproductions but are now being valued as works of their own merit.

Again, this creates a paradox for museums which are charged with safeguarding so-called "original" artefacts. One of their roles is to give visitors access to originals, to allow them to bathe in their aura. In the case of the *Saint in the City* exhibition, the museum had to demonstrate a system of knowledge that diverged radically from its own—a Sufi system

that does not think of the relationship between original and copy or original and translation in the same way. The museum made gestures towards a visual language to place as much value on the copy as the original. For example, it recreated the home altar of one particular devotee, and in another section of the exhibit recreated a typical Dakarois street with wall murals of the Saint.

It is arguably not a huge divergence from the standard visual language of exhibition formats. Certainly copies, reproductions, and enlargements have been used for pedagogical purposes in museums before. Nevertheless, these objects tend to be used as supports to help visitors understand the value, significance, and purpose of the original object that they reference. The *Saint in the City* exhibition, on the other hand, attempted to communicate an alternative way of envisioning the relationship between original and translation. Once more, we see a partial gesture towards equitable translation, and the promise of something that could go much further.

Again, what is most pertinent for my own work is the relationship between translation and the diasporic community that the exhibition attempted to communicate, in which it is the subject's relationship to the "translated" representation rather than to the "original" representation that forges the linkages across time and geographic space. This rendering of the relationship between translation and diaspora has echoes in Brent Hayes Edwards' book *The Practice of Diaspora*. Diaspora, as mentioned above, is the second conceptual space that can be structured around translation.

In his cultural history of Francophone and American Black internationalism, Edwards suggests that the practice of diaspora can be imagined as an always-imperfect translation: "a process of linking or connection across gaps—a practice we might term articulation [...] a strange and ambivalent gesture, because finally, in the body it is only difference—the separation between bones or members—that allows movement" (*The Practice of Diaspora* 11; 15). Without examining the details of the cases that Edwards studies, I would point to certain conclusions about the relationship between practices of translation and practices of diaspora that he draws from his primary sources.

One particular insight is the concept-metaphor of *décalage* as key to understanding diaspora. Edwards argues that discourses of diaspora articulate difference, but that this difference can be thought of as a *residual unevenness*, the resistant element that escapes translation. For Edwards, this residual unevenness creates a constitutive *décalage* in the cultural fabric of any particular diaspora. To explain the meaning of the

concept-metaphor of *décalage* in this particular context, Edwards points to a passage by Léopold Sédar Senghor, which states that:

Le différent entre Négro-Américains et Négro-Africains est plus léger malgré les apparences. Il s'agit, en réalité, d'un simple *décalage*—dans le temps et dans l'espace.

Despite appearance, the difference between Negro-Americans and Negro-Africans is more slight. In reality it involves a simple *décalage* in time and in space. (Senghor quoted in Hayes; 27)

Décalage, as Edwards notes, is one of those French words that resists translation into English, as it holds a constellation of meanings that corresponding words in English cannot fully capture. *Décalage* can be a discrepancy, a gap, an interval, a time-lag, jet-lag, a difference in time zone. It means, more precisely, a difference—usually a jarring difference—or a gap in either time or space. Senghor calls the difference between African-Americans and Africans a light or slight *décalage* in *both* time and space. However, more importantly, Edwards points out that *caler*, the verb from which *décalage* is derived, means to prop up or wedge. *Caler* means to fix a space (such as when a chair wobbles), or more idiomatically, to fix a point in time when one can meet (*caler un rendez-vous*). Thus, *décalage*, in its etymological sense, means the *undoing* of those efforts to join together gaps in time or space; *décaler* means to remove such props and to restore an original gap or difference that had been masked.

I am struck by the metaphor of translation as the removal of props and am interested in what can be done with the idea that it is the *removal* of props, the *restoring of difference*, that makes linkages across time and space possible. Through this metaphor, a relationship to the concept of the original is reconfigured, as it is not the translation that needs to match the original, but rather the original that requires the distance and discrepancy of the translation precisely to make leaps in time and space. This is similar to the exhibitions discussed earlier, where the resistance to transfer is acknowledged, and a decentring of the role of the “original” occurs.

After this schematic overview, I would now to turn to my own work and how it relates to the kinds of translations explored by Roberts and Edwards. My interest in this concept-metaphor of *décalage* that links translation and diaspora stems from my work on the unmournability of certain human bodies and lives. Part of this work includes researching the aesthetics of mourning that emerge at slave memorial sites in West Africa—particularly the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, in Ghana, though

many others exist, including the Maison des Esclaves on the Île de Gorée, in Senegal—and how these aesthetics attempt to re-territorialise what were previously unmournable—that is to say, unnamed, unnarrated, invisible—bodies into mournable ones.

I argue that these memorial sites call upon visual, material, and narrative elements to negotiate precisely a *décalage* in time and place. The aesthetics they espouse aim to close the distance—to fix the gap—between the visitors and people that were enslaved and shipped off from these sites. An important element of the memorial site is the narrative presented to the visitors. The entrance fee includes a guided group tour which is quasi-obligatory, though visitors are permitted to wander freely before or after the guided visit. Through the mediation of the visitor experience, the sites attempt to close the distance in time and space between the visitor and the men and women that were captive there 400 years ago, through what I call an *aesthetics of mimesis*. What would be possible if they adopted, instead, an *aesthetics of translation* that highlighted rather than masked this distance? I will first cite a few brief examples, primarily from my investigations at the Cape Coast Castle and Museum to demonstrate what I mean by aesthetics of mimesis.

The site at Cape Coast was initially a commercial fort built in the 16th century by the Swedish Africa Company to support trading activities along the coast, notably the gold trade. It changed hands various times, ending up as a British possession in the 17th century and was increasingly used as a holding centre in the transatlantic slave trade (Figure 1). The British reconstructed and expanded it in the late 18th century in part to expand the cells where captive could be held. Though it came under the auspices of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board in 1957, at Ghana's independence, and was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979, it was not until the early 1990s that the site was extensively restored and a museum exhibition on the history of the region and the slave trade was added in one section of the castle (Figure 2). The guided tours mentioned above take place in the rest of the memorial site, which has been restored to its late-18th-century condition, without museum panels or explanations, the idea being that the visitors will see it as did the captive men and women of the time.

With few explanatory texts or signage, the visitor experience is thus heavily mediated by the verbal interventions of the tour guides. These oral presentations are one of the structures that insist on the aesthetic of mimesis through various rhetorical moves. First, the material elements of the site are highlighted to provoke sensory reactions that would be analogous to some of what the captive men and women would have

experienced. Most noticeable in the Cape Coast Castle is the use of the floor in the male dungeons to provoke this mimetic experience. The tour begins in an underground dungeon, with only the light from small cut-out windows on the top of the high walls (Figure 3). The guides repeatedly draw the visitors' attention to the floor, which at first glance looks like matted dirt, a glossy brown. They particularly indicate a section of the dungeon where a brick floor is visible, and point out how the brick part is a few centimetres lower than the brown dirt floor we are standing on (Figure 4). The guides proceed to explain that the brick is the original floor, which was excavated by a team of researchers, and that we, the visitors, are standing on the residue of the hundreds of bodies that were kept in the small space, the residue of men trapped there, often so tightly packed that there was barely room to sit, for months at a time. These men had to perform all the normal human bodily functions in that room. They ate, defecated, got sick and vomited, bled, cried, and perhaps bodies were left to decompose there... all of these bodily and organic excrements collected on the floor, got trampled and packed down to become the layer that we are standing on today.² The guides point out the lack of air circulation, which has retained hints of a foul smell in the dungeons—some visitors will be covering their noses and mouths during this presentation. The guides tell us that what we smell is that human residue.

Any sensory reaction that this presentation provokes is, of course, microscopic and temporary in relation to what would have been lived by people who were held captive there. Nevertheless, it functions on the principle of mimesis, transposing the present-day visitor to the position of the past captives through a sensory intervention. By provoking these sensations through the material residue that persists in the space, the

² After the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the site continued to be used as a trading point, and later became a British army training facility. There is understandably skepticism about the material and historical accuracy of claiming that the biological matter in the cells can be primarily attributed to human residue of the men held captive there. However, what interests me is the tour guides' insistence on reading the space in this way, regardless of the exact composition and origin of the biological traces in the room. Indeed, it is the rhetorical interpretation of the space that is the object of my analysis and arguments, and the concept of *postmemory* as theorised by Marianne Hirsh can be useful in this respect. Postmemory is a belated, often collective, remembering that links people to the traumatic events lived by previous generations. I am particularly interested in the creative processes of postmemory, in its intersection with imaginative impulses: "Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment, and creation" (Hirsh 8).

guides' presentation attempts to transport the visitor to a material space experienced by those who were enslaved.

Another example, more related to negotiating *décalages* in time, is the very sequence of the guided visit. The tour begins at the male dungeon, which was the principal holding space, continues through the corridor to the room where the captive men would have been weighed and measured, and then takes us through another corridor to the door which would have led the men to the slave ship—the Door of No Return (Figure 5).

Again, the principle of mimesis is at work—in this case I am thinking in particular of Erich Auerbach's theorisation of *figura* as one mimetic rhetorical device, in which a horizontal relationship links events separated by time. *Figura* is a device of prefiguration, wherein the first event attains full significance only after the second event takes place. By asking visitors to follow the same route through the site that the captives would have undertaken, and by insisting on that sameness—the end of the tour is the space that would have been the end of the captives' time there, too—the guided presentation attempts to close the gap, to reduce the difference between the visitors' experience now and the slaves' experience in the past.

However, they do so while introducing one important difference: the visitors are allowed to walk back into the fort—to return—once they have exited through the door of supposedly no return. The guides say that this action of returning is important to show that the door has now become a door of return; that the descendants of slaves throughout the world are now welcome and free to come back (Figure 6). Again, we see an aesthetic of mimesis operating, as the visitors are asked to make a physical gesture—stepping back through the door—in the place of the captives that were unable to do so. When the captive slaves first walked through the door, that threshold was not yet labelled the door of no return. The visitors pick up in the moment in time and space where the slaves left off, completing the action and reconfiguring the narrative.

These are just two examples of many elements of the site and tour that incorporate the aesthetic of mimesis, which operates under a principle of transposition. In an aesthetic of mimesis, in other words, the visitors are invited to share the subject position of the men and women who were held captive in that space. This sharing of the subject position is also seen in a memorial plaque (Figure 7) which reads:

In Everlasting Memory

Of the anguish of our ancestors. May those who died rest in peace. May those who return find their roots. May humanity never again perpetuate such injustice against humanity. We, the living, vow to uphold this.

I emphasise the use of the first-person plural. This rhetorical choice performs a gesture of mimesis as well, with the visitors being asked to think of “our” ancestors. It places the visitors as part of the “we” that vow to prevent a repetition of such oppression. In the visitor comment books, we see that many visitors have adopted the language of mimesis, such as in this a comment: “I felt a sense of pain, suffering and death in the premises, particularly the dungeons. The statement on the plaque that ends with the prayer that ‘May humanity never perpetuate such in-humanity against humanity’ is ours. I also pray” (Opeyemi A. A.; Dec 19, 2010). This particular visitor projected himself precisely in the way that the presentation of the guides invited him to, and he is not alone in doing so.

Here, we see a rhetoric of unity through sameness in another comment that reads: “À la vue et après la visite du ELMINA CASTLE, je mourn la cruauté et la bestialité des hommes qui ont rendu leurs *semblables* esclaves” [“After seeing and visiting Elmina Castle, I mourn the cruelty and bestiality of men who enslaved their fellow men.”] (Jean Baptiste M.; March 12, 1998). This man speaks about the horror of enslaving someone’s equal, those who resemble each other. The visitor is likely trying to point to the shared human condition that was erased through and for the slave trade, not just those who physically resemble each other. I am, however, unsettled by the use of equality and sameness as the rhetorical basis for eliciting empathy.

In addition, the rhetoric of unity through sameness effaces the differences in racial, social, economic, linguistic, and other backgrounds of the visitors that make the journey to the site—and all of the other members of “we the living” that are unable, unaware, or unwilling to visit these memorial sites. There is also the problem of the effacing of previous memorialising practices. For example, in the room at Cape Coast where the guides explain to the visitors that the slaves were measured and weighed and priced, there is also an altar used by local priests and priestesses. The guides explain that before the fort was constructed, this was a sacred site for indigenous religious practitioners. When the fort became a UNESCO world heritage site and then a museum, this use was allowed to continue, but it has become peripheral, relegated to the margins of the story of slavery.³ Some visitors, particularly those of African

³ For a detailed discussion of the various local and international constituents that were involved in the 1990s restoration and museum development—USAID, the Smithsonian, the African-American community as well as the Cape Coast businesses, the Ghana Natural Resource Conservation and Historic Preservation project—and the way these parties had to negotiate the way the site and museum

descent who visit the site as part of a roots pilgrimage, do leave flowers and other tokens to memorialise the men and women who died there, but they are a minority. I wonder what might have happened if, in planning the museum, one had looked to existing models of mourning and memorialisation and constructed the visitor experience around the practices that were in place, instead of introducing an aesthetic of mimesis as the proper and dominant mode of memorialisation.

I understand the desire and rationale for an aesthetic of mimesis that seeks to produce a unity through sameness, and why it is used in the hopes of eliciting empathy for the lives that were once dehumanised through and for enslavement, to the point of becoming unmournable. Yet, I worry that this aesthetic dissimulates certain key differences. I also wonder what might an aesthetic, not of *mimesis* but of *translation*, particularly a translation that insists on *décalage*, allow? Might it allow a more expansive affective reaction, one not solely oriented towards the past but towards the present?

Glimmers of this more expansive affective structure do emerge in the visitor comment books. Some comments insist on inequalities that persist; reacting to the differences in entrance fees for Ghanaian versus non-Ghanaian visitors, Cynthia Dixon writes, “Why do I have to pay the WHITE MAN’s rate, when I was originally stolen from here by him? This is a travesty” (Cape Coast Visitor Comment Books, April 10, 2012). Other comments speak of neo-colonialism and modern forms of slavery: “And now onward in the struggle against neo-slavery through global economic exploitation” (Terisa E. T. & Howard C.L.R. J. T.; August 25, 1999). Others, usually African or African-American, express anger at seeing “white people” or Europeans in the memorial sites, claiming that the descendants of the victims should not have to share their mourning with the descendants of the perpetrators. Some visitors of white European descent express feelings of guilt and shame for the role that their ancestors would have played in the past. Interestingly, other visitors from various racial backgrounds occasionally react to these comments with statements such as “We must forgive” or “One love”, either in their own message, or by writing in the margins next to the comment, even though the person who left the first comment is presumably gone and will not see the response left by the visitor who responded days, weeks, or even months later (Figures 7 & 8). Very occasionally, a comment will point to the

was developed and presented to the public, see Christine Mullen Kreamer, “Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain”.

silence around the fact that there also would have been local peoples who aided the British and other Europeans in the slave trade.

Taken together, comments like these suggest the prosthetic nature of the collective identity that the memorial sites espouse though their aesthetic of mimesis.⁴ I suggest that an aesthetics of mourning that might more effectively produce collective values, identities, and actions that engender a balanced world is not one that is based on mimesis—that is, not based on the closing of the temporal and spatial gaps between past and present subjects. Rather, it is one of translation with that insistent kernel of *décalage*. It would be an aesthetics that acknowledges that subjects who appear to share the same temporal and spatial reality may be nonetheless disjointed in their lived experience. The intent is not to create disunity, rather, it is to demonstrate an awareness that unity, without an acknowledgement of difference—and particularly of material differences—is a prosthetic and ultimately inadequate unity.

What would an aesthetics of memorialisation based on translation rather than mimesis look like? I cannot say. Much work remains to be done to evaluate the potential that the deployment of the concept-metaphors for translation and *décalage*, as they relate to the aesthetics of unmournable bodies, may hold. I do not know what mourning practice modelled on translation would look like in a memorial space such as Cape Coast Castle. This is unfinished work; yet another gesture at an incomplete translation. However, translation, particularly translation as a restorative *décalage*, has something to offer to the visual, narrative, and other aesthetic practices of memorial spaces.

I will close with Edwards: “such props, of rhetoric, strategy, or organization, are always articulation of unity or globalism, ones that can be ‘mobilized’ for a variety of purposes but can never be definitive: they are always prosthetic. In this sense, *décalage* is proper to the structure of a diasporic ‘racial’ formation, and its return in the form of *disarticulation*—the points of misunderstanding, bad faith, unhappy translation—must be considered a necessary haunting” (14). This is not to paint a hopeless case, nor to suggest that the regions and peoples touched by the transatlantic slave trade should shoulder the burden of mourning solely, perpetually,

⁴ Though comments such as these are in a minority, they are surprisingly consistent, recurring over time and across different memorial sites. I take them to point to the aspect of *décalage* that Edwards describes as: “the kernel of precisely that which cannot be transferred or exchanged, the received biases that refuse to pass over when one crosses the water. It is a changing core of difference; it is the work of ‘differences within unity,’ an unidentifiable point that is incessantly touched and fingered and pressed” (14).

and exclusively—especially as the history of slavery has structured economies, cultural practices, and public policies across the globe. Rather, ongoing negotiation, dialogue—*translation*, really— are needed in those sites and moments that are designated to do the work of mourning so that it may be shared in a meaningful way.



Figure 1: Cape Coast Castle and Museum



Figure 2: Map at Cape Coast Castle



Figure 3: Male Dungeon Entrance

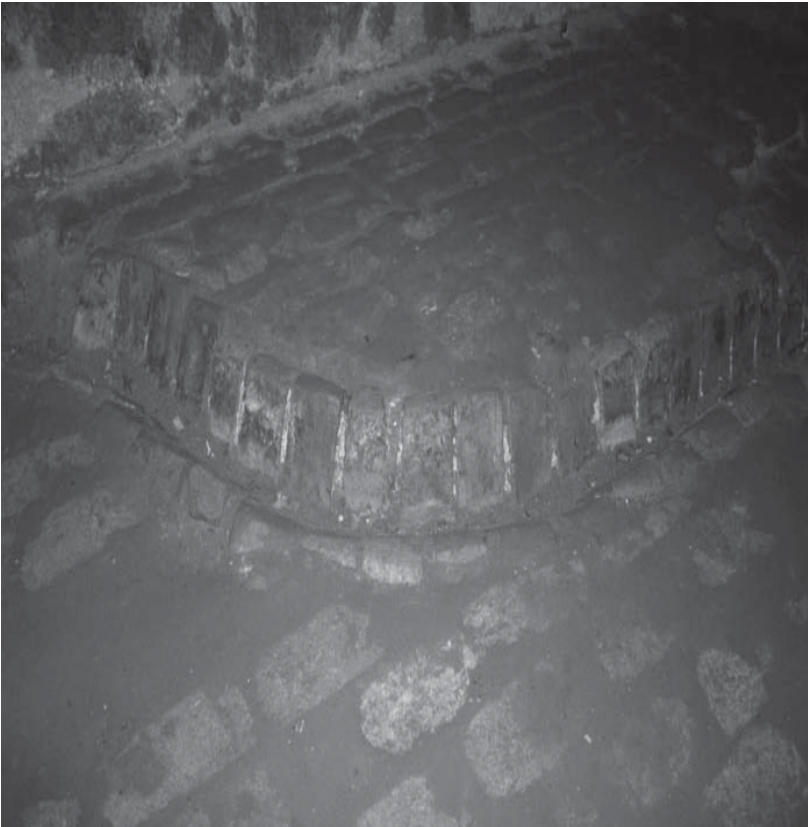


Figure 4: Excavated section of floor in Male Dungeons, Cape Coast Castle



Figure 5: Door of No Return, Cape Coast Castle



Figure 6: Visitors crossing through Door of No Return, Cape Coast Castle

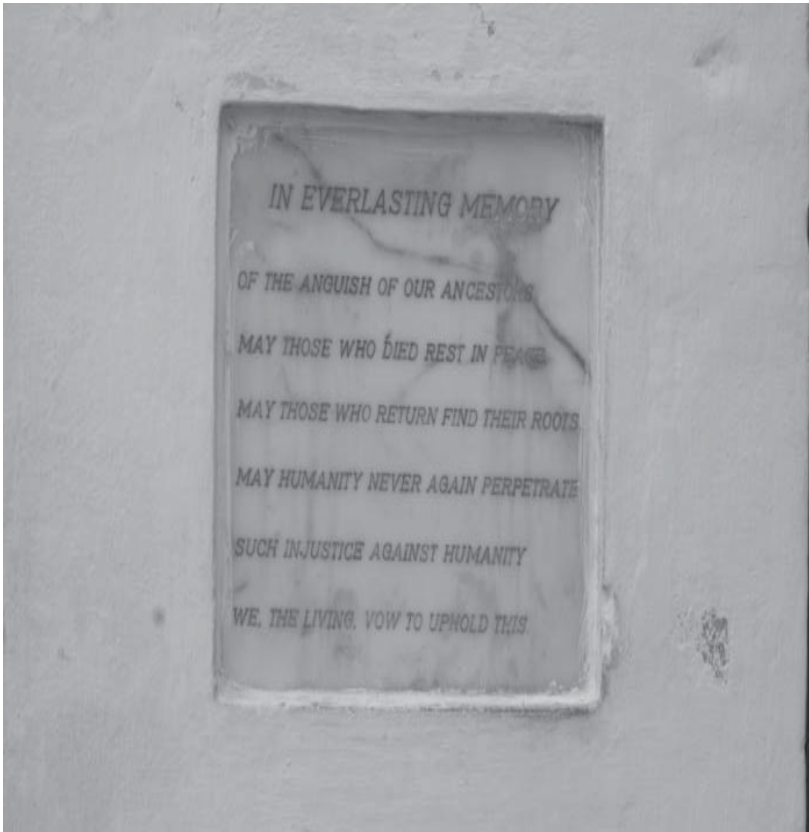


Figure 7: Memorial Plaque at Cape Coast

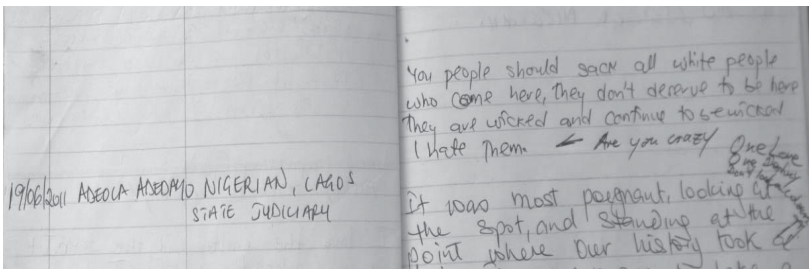


Figure 8: Cape Coast Visitor Book, 10/02/10-8/17/11

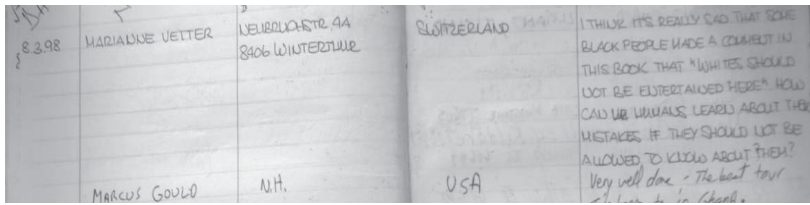


Figure 9: Elmina Castle Visitor Book, 1/9/95-11/11/98

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

REFLECTIONS ON THE TRANSLATION
AND ADAPTATION OF *ALICE'S ADVENTURES*
IN WONDERLAND INTO NDEBELE:
CAN ALICE REALLY BECOME AFRICAN?

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A large body of scholarship exists on Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (hereafter *Wonderland*) and its translation into numerous languages across the globe. Two such works which are arguably the most significant inspire this contribution. First is Warren Weaver's book entitled *Alice in Many Tongues*, a pioneering work in the study of *Wonderland* translations a century after its publication in 1865. In the chapter entitled 'The Universal Child', the author suggests that Alice in 'many tongues' indicates the work's universal appeal in general and children's love for Alice the world over (Weaver 1964). Goodacre (2015: 106) articulates this with more conviction when he asserts that it is "an important children's book, and is fully worthy of the massive attention paid to it the world over".

The other work is a three-volume book co-edited by Jon Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum entitled *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: The Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece*. This masterpiece was produced for the occasion of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the publication of *Wonderland*. Its editors acknowledge the inspiration of Weaver's pioneering work. However, they clearly indicate the differences in terms of context, methodological approaches and even theoretical perspectives on translation which inform their analysis of *Wonderland* translations (Lindseth and Tannenbaum 2015). Furthermore, the scope of the latter book is broader as it is also based on an updated catalogue of languages in which *Wonderland* can now be found.

Wonderland is among the most translated English novels, thanks to the translations that are covered in Lindseth (2015). This seemingly affirms Weaver's (1964) universal-child hypothesis. However, the present contribution challenges this hypothesis, taking cue from O'Sullivan (2015) and drawing from the personal experience of the author as one of the *Wonderland* translators. This experience is not only limited to the actual translation process but also includes prior processes through which mass translations were produced in what may be called newcomer languages in *Wonderland*. In translation studies, such an approach brings to the fore issues of power and agency which precede and influence, to a certain degree, the outcome of the actual translation process. However, the approach(es) and strategies adopted by the translator in dealing with specific issues in the actual translation process, starting with the interpretation of the source text, have definite implications on the nature of the translated text. In short, the contribution adopts some tenets of the polysystem theory of translation (Aixelá 1996; Heilbron 2010) to reflect on the Ndebele translation, *Insumansumane Zika-Alice*.

Nkomo (2015) reflects on the translation of a part of Chapter VII, 'A Mad Tea-party'. Besides contextualising the Ndebele *Wonderland*, the essay comments on specific aspects of language use and culture in the tea-party scene. This paper is a broader reflection, not limited to that scene. Although it deals with basically the same practical and theoretical issues of translation, it relates them to the universal-child hypothesis which it strongly refutes. Ultimately, the argument of the paper is a general reflection that provides some insights on the original text and its features that are challenging for translators, and the processes that have culminated in translations such as the Ndebele version. This reflection is accomplished within a contextual framework that brings to the fore a brief outline of the text focusing on its background, a brief history of the translation of *Wonderland* during Carroll's life and the recent translations, of which Ndebele is part, as well as modern theoretical perspectives that give prominence to issues of agency and power in literary translation. It is within such a framework that, in conclusion, a multi-layered answer to the question of whether Alice can really become African is addressed summarily.

The Tales of *Wonderland*: A Brief Outline

It is unnecessary to retell Alice's adventures in detail here, nor is it helpful for the central issues of concern in this discussion. Instead, I shall focus on the genre and its stylistic features, which have appealed to both

children and adult readers across generations of English readers, as well as the story behind the story, which is collectively hoped to provide a contextual framework for this discussion. Such issues are intriguing and yet challenging for translators of *Wonderland*. Accordingly, the account will be very brief when it comes to the actual adventures of the wonderland.

Wonderland is a collection of tales written by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson under the pen name Lewis Carroll, which is popularly used to identify the author and his literary works. Carroll compiled the collection for Alice Liddell, a little girl from whom the title of the collection is derived. Alice is both the main character in the text and the primary audience, which also included her other sisters. Carroll's love for children and his relationship with the little sisters is detailed by Cohen (2015a). The friendship blossomed thanks to, among other things, Carroll's treating the girls to story-telling which included the *Wonderland* tales. Alice eventually pestered her entertainer to write down the tales for her (Cohen 2015b: 67) to enable her to read and even learn them on her own in the absence of their storyteller. This has indeed helped preserve and transmit the tales across space and time. Parallels may be drawn between Carroll's production of *Wonderland* as a text and the literary recording of folktales following the introduction of print in African communities such as Ndebele. Classic Ndebele folktale collections such as Mnkandla's *Abaseguswini leZothamilo* and Mhlabi's *Sizwe ElikaNtulo* had been transmitted by word of mouth across generations before they were recorded in print. This is the case in many other societies and may be regarded as another level of translation, i.e. the oral word being translated into a written word.

The plot of *Wonderland* develops around Alice through the dream motif. Alice's adventures unfold within a long and eventful dream when she falls asleep next to her older sister. In that world of wonders, she interacts with different creatures and human beings who become her friends and foes. Everything is surreal and mythical in that world; nothing makes sense. Alice herself undergoes confusing transformations, while the same happens to other creatures such as the Duchess's baby, which turns into a pig, and the Cheshire Cat, which smiles and disappears leaving its face and smile behind. The wonderland is ruthlessly presided over by a Queen and a King who are nothing more than playing cards! The Cat sums it all when it says to Alice, "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 2015: 53). Alice becomes part of such events throughout her dream, and the book ends with her narrating these adventures to her sister, who goes on to experience Alice's adventures when she also falls asleep.

Wonderland has undoubtedly achieved the status of a literary classic. One of its major features is its dual audience or readership. While Vid (2008: 220) considers it “a children’s classic”, Heath (1974: 3) posits that “of all those who read [Carroll’s books], it is especially children who have the smallest chance of understanding what they are about”. Carroll’s complex aesthetics, language and style that is characterised by “nonsense, wordplay, jokes, puns, parodies, homophones, twists of meaning, game rules, logic, and illogic” (Lindseth 2015: 22) draws fascination from children and adults in different ways. It provides “the enjoyment of play ... but ... of a highly intelligent and not at all childish kind” (Heath 1974: 3). A century and half since its maiden appearance, *Wonderland* lives on thanks to the ever-growing worldwide interest and dissemination through film, translation, exhibitions, scholarship and other activities of organisations such as the Lewis Carroll Society of North America, among many others. The next section of this contribution will deal with the translation of *Wonderland* generally, but with specific focus on the recent translations that saw the book being translated into, among many others, the Ndebele language of Zimbabwe.

***Wonderland* and its translations@150**

The history of the translation of *Wonderland* is as old as the work itself. It started with Lewis Carroll’s own dream to have his book read by children beyond his own English-speaking world. It was as early as 1866, a year after its publication, that he approached his publisher, Alexander Macmillan, about the idea of French and German translations (Wakeling 2015). Macmillan would throw the responsibility of recruiting translators back at Carroll, who would later deal with the discouraging idea that his book was untranslatable. Wakeling (2015: 80) quotes a letter from Carroll to Macmillan saying:

Friends here seem to think that the book is untranslatable into either French or German: the puns and the songs being the chief culprit.

This obstacle opened Carroll’s mind to at least two important issues regarding the envisaged translation of his work and literary translation in general. In another letter to Macmillan in 1867, he intimated:

One would wish of course to find some one (*sic*) who had written something of the sort, so as to have some sort of sympathy with the style: if possible some one (*sic*) who wrote verses. The verses would be the great difficulty, as I fear, if the originals are not known in France, the parodies

would be unintelligible: in that case they had better perhaps be omitted (Wakeling 2015: 80).

Literary translation, as is the case with *Wonderland*, sometimes requires creative adaptation. Translating work such as *Wonderland* would be nightmarish without creativity that takes into account the target readers and their context. Crystal (2015) discusses the linguistic and cultural obstacles for the translator, and Lindseth (2015: 22) acknowledges that the story is “complicated enough written in English”. Fortunately, Lewis Carroll’s great determination led to the publication of French, German, Italian and possibly Russian translations during his lifetime, while Swedish, Dutch and Danish translations were also completed out of independent ventures (Wakeling 2015: 98).

The efforts to translate *Wonderland* continued to be restricted to Europe until the early 20th century. Goodacre (2015: 103), who offers a summary of the *Wonderland* translation activities after Carroll’s death in 1898, indicates that the first Japanese translation appeared in 1908. Since the transcendence of translation activities beyond Europe, *Wonderland* had traceable translations in a total of eighteen languages by 1920 (Goodacre 2015: 103), fifty years after the maiden translations in 1869. These languages included Kiswahili and Afrikaans. A Kiswahili translation of Chapter I was published in Zanzibar in 1911, before a complete translation appeared in 1940 as a result of missionary efforts (Goodacre 2015; Hadjivayanis 2015). The Afrikaans translation under the pseudonym ‘Tannie’ (Auntie) appeared in 1934, before an Afrikaans translator, André Brink, who was also a famous author, published his translation in 1965 (De Roubaix and Feinauer 2015: 127). In South Africa, a *Wonderland* translation in isiXhosa was published in 1951. For this contribution, it is vital to note that the early translations of *Wonderland* were linked to efforts of standardising African languages and making literature available in them. This is clear in the case of Kiswahili in which the translation was “part of the literary works of the British colonial endeavour to standardise Swahili” (Hadjivayanis 2015: 567). It could have been a slightly different case with Afrikaans in which, while the endeavour to enrich the language might have been similar, the initiatives came from the Afrikaans community rather than external members.

The Ndebele translation is one of the many that were produced on or just before the 150th anniversary celebrations of the publication of Carroll’s original text in 1864. The celebrations were hosted by the Lewis Carroll Society of North America in October 2015, in New York. A more comprehensive treatise of the commemorative activities is offered by Lindseth (2015). Here it suffices to focus on the production of translations

that would be part of the exhibitions. Lindseth (2015: 23) states that he initially began with an idea of producing a catalogue of *Wonderland* translations and editions from his collection for exhibition. This would be in line with what Weaver did for the 100th anniversary (Weaver 1964; O'Sullivan 2015). However, Lindseth decided to expand on this work, first by updating Weaver's (1964) catalogue of languages before recruiting translators for new languages that would be added.

The recruitment of translators makes Weaver (1964) and Lindseth (2015) different in that the earlier analysis was based on existing translations, while the latter is augmented by solicited translations. Agency becomes an important factor when the impact of the translations is considered. Accordingly, Nkomo (2015) characterises the Ndebele translation as externally-motivated, in that neither the translator nor any other representative of the target linguistic community has taken the initiative of translating *Wonderland* into Ndebele. Although the translators were not paid, their translations are as good as commissioned work. This includes, as indicated above, earlier translations into African languages such as Kiswahili and isiXhosa.

Once translators agreed to be part of Lindseth's project, they were given a brief which did not prescribe how they approached their tasks besides time-frames, the back-translation process and the reflective essays. In addition to translating the whole text, translators were supposed to back-translate the second part of Chapter VII entitled "A Mad Tea Party" in a literal way that would indicate how translators dealt with certain issues in that excerpt. Footnotes had to be used to highlight and explain such issues, including the decisions of translators on such issues. The essay would then discuss these issues in detail, sometimes covering previous translations in languages where they already existed. This approach was also inspired by Weaver (1964). The difference is that the back-translations were not produced or commented on by the translators in Weaver's case (O'Sullivan 2015). Nor were essays contributed to Weaver's book. However, the back-translations, their footnotes and essays would be helpful for Lindseth and the contributors of the preliminary essays in Lindseth (2015). Given the freedom with which the translators worked, they dealt with similar problems in different ways, with Lindseth (2015) noting that while some translators tried to stick as closely as possible to the original text, others actually adapted *Wonderland* according to their linguistic, literary and cultural traditions, a claim that is made for the Ndebele translation. This brings to the fore the debate around issues of agency and power in literary translation. When such issues are examined in the case of *Wonderland*, the universal-child hypothesis becomes

unsustainable insofar as it suggests the global popularity of Carroll's text. In the case of the 1940 Kiswahili translation, for instance, O'Sullivan (2015: 38) remarks:

Rather than being a translation undertaken by public child demand, therefore, we find different agencies with a vested interest in having *Alice* translated into and published in Swahili.

This applies even more to the latest translation of *Wonderland* into new languages that include Ndebele. However, the universal-child hypothesis extends beyond the assumed universal appeal of the text to children, resulting in mass translation. It can also be tested in terms of how translators themselves view Alice and construct her identity in both the source and target languages. It is dependent on how the translators assume agency and power once they are given the task. The discussion in the next session provides a framework of possibilities and informs the choices for the Ndebele translation.

Literary translation, agency and power

Literary translation is traceable to the translation of Latin and Greek classics. The motivation has always been to provide access to aesthetic, cultural and intellectual productions for those who would otherwise be excluded by linguistic barriers. Indeed, translation has become integral to the functions of modern society, including those of institutional, governmental, intergovernmental and global corporate organisations. Translation scholarship has outgrown the confines of linguistic theorising of the Catford (1965) school to examine extra-linguistic factors and their implications on translation practice and translation products. Notwithstanding the relevance and validity of debates regarding the disciplinary status of translation (Meschonnic 2011), either as part of linguistics or a fully-fledged discipline, various concepts have been affected. The notion of *equivalence* which remains central in translation had to be problematised, leading to distinctions such as *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence*, *equivalent meaning* and *equivalent effect*, etc. (Nida 1964; Nida and Taber 1969). Concepts of *loss* and *gain* emerged while some scholars were still grappling with the notion of *translatability* vis-à-vis *untranslatability* (Catford 1965). Also entering the fray would be the issue of *visibility* or *invisibility* (Venuti 2008) of the translator. Given the enduring need for translation, further exacerbated by forces of globalisation, translation has come to an age where its interrogation comes from different disciplines with diverse interests. All this implies not only

asking new questions, but also reconsidering some answers to old ones, including redefining translation.

Alvarez and Vidal (1996) regard translation as a political act. The question of power is now among the most prominent and pertinent in translation discourse. Sometimes translators do not only need to explain how they have translated certain works but also why they did it in the first place. The motivations for translating a particular work may inform the approaches that the translator adopts. As a critic of the way the Bible has been translated across ages, for instance, Meschonnic (2011: 100-101) explains that his own involvement in Bible translation was the motivation to detheologise the Bible which became more sacralised through translation. In his view, translation gained as much as it lost in translation. Translation may thus be construed as a site for power struggles. Such is its power in the production, transmission and reproduction of knowledge that its practice and scholarship may offer an understanding of the world not only in its current state but also retrospectively and prospectively. It is thus no longer a question of establishing equivalent forms across languages, but a process in which different players with varied interests are involved in the knowledge (re)production cycle. Besides the translator, who must shoulder the responsibility of the actual translation work, the author of the original text, the text itself, some institution with vested interest in the original text and the readers of the target text may be considered as agents of translation. Normally, the responsibility of the translator is taken for granted, with cases of contentious translation being the most likely sources of his/her publicity. Coupled with the generally poor remuneration for translators, translation is sometimes regarded as a thankless service.

The context outlined above indicates that the translator is usually expected to serve at the pleasure of the author of the original text or particular institutions with vested interests in the original text in cases of what is termed institutional translation (Koskinen 2011). The original text is sacralised such that, unless advised otherwise, the default brief of the translator is to religiously echo the original text no matter how complicated or even undesirable the effects of such an approach might be. The translator may have linguistic signs of the target language that are equivalent to those of the source language, but his/her voice will remain inaudible, an ideal that is now called the translator's invisibility (Venuti 2008). When the translator's traces on the translation become visible, ethical and moral questions are raised (Meschonnic 2011), while the translation becomes a product of adultery and a great betrayal of its author. Unless the translator leaves the original author and his/her text in peace,

translation tends to be regarded as violence in symbolic terms. Good translation, if any, should submit to the original by capturing its reality.

Unfortunately, submitting to the original implies a translation that is fallaciously presented as a true copy or one that the target reader must accept knowing well that it is just a (poor) copy. The power relations between the original text and its translations are biased towards the former. In postcolonial discourse, these textual relations are captured as follows:

Translation can therefore be seen as reflecting the colonial experience; the source/original holds the power, the colony/copy is disempowered but placated through the myth of transparency and objectivity of translation. The colony, in short, is perceived as translation, never as an original, but this is concealed by a promise of equitable textual relations (Bassnett 1996: 21)

The imperialist school of thought may be content with the imposition of the original even in forms that do not suit the target community of readers of translated works. It becomes more complicated when the original text deals with reality that is itself fluid, depending on various contextual factors that relate to culture and ideology where objectivity is also subjective. A good example would be large masses of historical, cultural, religious, literary and theoretical works on Africa produced in colonial institutions before and after the independence of African countries. Translation that strives for neutrality would merely reproduce such texts in a manner that would continue to subject readers to the dominant imperialistic ideas and suppress alternative knowledge forms and ways of knowing that reconfigure reality. Although the fundamental motivation of translation is positive, what would be translated, and the approach used would be counterproductive in the struggle for the intellectual independence of the continent. It may be seen as the perpetration of cultural and symbolic violence in a neo-colonial state. At the very extreme, such translation may be rejected as a 'copy', a 'substitute', a poor version of the exalted original (Bassnett 1996: 12). For Meschonnic (2011), this would be a case where being faithful or unfaithful will be just more of the same as being faithful to the infidel, since the 'sorcerer' (source text) and 'targeteer' (target text) are the same in terms of misrepresenting reality or experience. Thus, not only the translation but also the original texts are subjected to rigorous scrutiny.

One critical question in the translation of literature is the very issue of what is being translated. Some insights are offered by Delabastita (2011: 69) who uses the term *literary translation* to refer to:

... translations made of “literary” originals whereby the translators are expected to preserve or recreate somehow the aesthetic intentions or effects that may be perceived in the source text.

The definition suggests that it is the literary intentions or effects of a literary work that should be translated, not necessarily the literary and even literal expressions, be they prose, drama or poetry. This argument is advanced by Meschonnic (2011) regarding poetry, which is arguably the most difficult genre for the translator (Jones 2011). He argues:

If to translate a poem we translate form, we are not translating a poem, but a representation of poetry, linguistically and poetically false: ... because only units of *langue* are being translated ... because a poem is more than just form and content (Meschonnic 2011: 52).

One crucial element of poetry, and literature in general, that would be missing is interpretation by the translator as well as further interpretation by the reader of the translation. Accordingly, literary translation “may be looked on as an aspect of the reception of a literary text” (Delabastita 2011: 69), which will vary from one translator to another. Translators and translation appraisers are advised against translating a poem “into an enunciation by the terms and means of the sign (linguistic expression)” as this would “reduce the infinite to a totality” (Meschonnic 2011: 55). No room would be left for alternative interpretations by readers of translation, let alone the production of other translations for the same work. Absoluteness is unfortunately assumed in a particular translation. Yet Delabastita’s (2011) definition of translation quoted above challenges such normative approaches and alludes to the freedom of the literary translator to somehow recreate literary works. Thus, literary translation may be regarded as “a rewriting of an original text” (Basnett and Lefevere 1990: vii). Lefevere (1992: 8) explains that translators adapt and “manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time”. Although Meschonnic (2011) justifies such an approach, he uses the negative term ‘unwriting’ to describe translation.

The polysystem theory of translation is used to justify adaptation and manipulation of text in literary translation. Aixelá (1996: 52) motivates that literary translation is “a product of a complex procedure which involves two languages and two literary traditions”. A literary text that is central in its own culture may never occupy a similar position of power and influence in another culture (Lefevere 1992: 86). Determining the position of a text in the target culture provides a point of reference for the translator in translation approaches and other choices that will be adopted.

Well considered choices by the translator may result in the translator simultaneously ‘unwriting’ and ‘rewriting’ the literary text for a new readership in a new language. This is a case of an exercise of power by the translator over the otherwise disempowered original author.

However, the translator’s freedom should be abused to an extent of obliterating the original text. Bassnett (1996: 11) argues that the role of the translator is to improve on the source text. This is not meant to denigrate the source text as being inherently poor. Instead, some great original texts live and die within the linguistic communities in which they have been produced. Translation thus resurrects and injects “new life blood into a text by bringing it to the attention of a new world of readers in a different language”. Translator visibility may be inevitable in the born-again text which may have to live a slightly different life within a new literary and linguistic tradition. It also has to do with the translator taking responsibility, not only for the original text and its author, but also for the readers of the target text.

Towards a Ndebele girl in *Insumsumane zika-Alice*

The question of whether Alice can really become African rests on at least two presuppositions. First is the assumption that Alice holds a particular identity that may be considered un-African and to a certain extent an access barrier to the target readers of particular translations into African languages such as Ndebele. Even without the knowledge that the character Alice was named after a real person, the daughter of Henry George Liddell who became the Dean of the Christ Church in Oxford in 1855 (Cohen 2015: 65), *Wonderland* offers a sufficient hint that her character was built around an English girl from England. That an inquisitive Alice does not probe further when informed of the origins of the strangely grinning Cat by the Caterpillar suggests that while she is not in Cheshire, she may have heard of it and be from the same country. Hadjivayanis (2015: 570) alludes to her as “little blonde girl from Oxford”, and indeed, *Wonderland* is set in 19th-century England.

The second presupposition is a conviction that Alice’s identity should be transformed and an intention to transform it. In the foreword of the Ndebele translation, the translator’s intention of making Alice Ndebele is explicitly indicated. This is a considered decision which shares the motivation of a Kiswahili translator who made Alice a “little Swahili girl so as to make her accessible to Swahili children, who would have very little knowledge of English children” (Hadjivayanis 2015: 569). The decision is far from being uncontroversial. For example, Hadjivayanis

(2015: 569) quotes Harries (1970) criticising the Swahili translator for doing “more than a translator has to do”. He argues that the translator’s desire to “appeal to his African audience has taken him much too far”, making it “impossible for him to remain objective and consequently faithful to his text” (Hadjivayanis 2015: 569). The review of the literature dealing with issues of agency and power in translation in the previous section effectively enables us not to go back to that argument which Harries found compelling when he wrote in 1970. As indicated in the preceding section, translation scholarship has since advanced, with domestication coming to be regarded as a legitimate approach depending on the text type and other contextual factors.

Furthermore, translating *Wonderland* into Ndebele in the 21st century does not necessarily localise a foreign art-form, a point that is clearly demonstrated by Nyota and Nyoni (2015) in their comparison of *Wonderland* adventures and Shona *rungano* (folktales). The Ndebele translation may be integrated into an existing corpus of folktale collections, differing from them only in terms of the language of original composition, cultural set-up and milieu, although it must be admitted that such an endeavour will have limited success, which should interest translation scholars. Treating *Wonderland* as a foreign text and presenting it as such even in translation would be illogical because it would occupy a lesser status in the target language than in the source language. Some adaptations are necessary to give it new life in the Ndebele context and, as will be seen shortly, this has implications for Alice’s identit(y)ies as the main character.

Finally, although *Wonderland* assumes a dual audience, the primary audience of the Ndebele translation is young readers. Books are mainly read as part of formal education in Zimbabwe and other African communities where reading culture is regrettably low. This means that the bulk of translation decisions that were adopted had Ndebele children and young adults of school-going age as the target readers. Altogether, the foregoing highlights conditions that made it necessary to adopt a domestication approach towards the translation of *Wonderland* into Ndebele, with one major implication being the tampering with the identity of Alice, other characters and their environment for local appeal.

The domestication of proper nouns towards a Ndebele girl

In a work of fiction, personal names constitute a crucial aspect of characterisation and consequently an element of the plot. Alice’s name and those of other characters are integral in terms of character development

and particularly how Alice may be viewed, either as a universal child or one socialised in a particular cultural setting. The same would apply to place names in which the wonderland adventures unfold. Accordingly, *Wonderland* translation scholars such as Nord (2003) and Vid (2008) concur that what translators do with proper names has far-reaching implications for the coherence of translated texts and their cultural context adaptation (Alvstad 2010: 22-23). From a different perspective, Mtuze (2003) also had to deal with proper names in the translation of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* into isiXhosa.

The name *Alice* has no implications for the Ndebele readers' access to the Ndebele translation. However, it remains important for the historical background of the work, the fact that it was written for a specific person, Alice Liddell. Therefore, her name could not be entirely obliterated from the Ndebele translation, but it was necessary to adapt it structurally into the language. This was done by prefixing *Alice* with *u-*, the Class 1a prefix in the noun classification system of Ndebele and other Nguni or even Bantu languages. The hyphen in *u-Alice* is used in line with the orthographic rule that does not permit vowel-sequencing in Nguni languages. Therefore, *u-Alice* in the Ndebele translation is an English adoptive and Alice may as well be a Ndebele girl with an English name. English names are now very common among Ndebele people.

It is important to note that the noun class prefix *u-* is used for most characters' names in the Ndebele translation with a few exceptions such as *iNkosi* (the King) and *iNdllovukazi* (the Queen), which are titles rather than personal names. The noun-class prefixes for names of animal creatures would be different, e.g. *uMpuku* (Dormouse) would be *impuku* and *uSilwanekhozi* (Gryphon) would be *isilwanekhozi*. The noun-class prefix would be non-human, Class 9 and Class 7 respectively. The prefix *u-*, together with the capitalisation of the subsequent letter, personify these characters as per the established Ndebele story-telling practice whereby all creatures are at par with humans with which they interact. This is aptly captured by the title of Mnkandla's (1974) *Abaseguswini Lezothamlilo* (The people of the forest and those who sit around the fire). Accordingly, personal pronouns *he* and *she* are used in the place of *it* in reference to all the other characters that interact with Alice in *Wonderland*. The same applies to possessive forms *his/her* which are used instead of *its*.

Some other interestingly challenging personal names in the *Wonderland* appear in references to Shakespeare and Father William in Chapter III (The Caucus-race and a Long Tale) and Chapter V (The Advice from the Caterpillar). The way they were handled is consistent

with the overall domestication approach in translating *Wonderland* into Ndebele.

When the racers wanted to know who had won after ending the caucus-race which the Dodo had ended abruptly, Carroll describes the Dodo's thoughts on the question as follows:

This question the Dodo could not answer without a great deal of thought, and it stood for a long time with one finger pressed upon its forehead (the position in which you usually see Shakespeare, in the pictures of him), while the rest waited in silence.

For the primary readers of *Wonderland* in English, the effects of this portrayal seem to be vividly capturing the image of the Dodo through Shakespeare's popular pictures and perhaps even paying tribute to Shakespeare as arguably the greatest English writer. The first one could not be achieved in the case of young Ndebele readers in the 21st century since Shakespeare's pictures will not usually be seen in Zimbabwe. The second aim can only be achieved with further additions, e.g. a footnote, in the Ndebele translation, although the worth of preserving it for the Ndebele readers would not justify such an extra mile. Accordingly, Shakespeare had to be replaced with a popular figure who may grace Zimbabwe's history curriculum for a long time. One such face is that of former Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, that can be found virtually everywhere in Zimbabwe because of his political activism in post-independent Zimbabwe. It should be noted that the Shakespeare scene follows what the Dodo proposed as one of the "more energetic remedies" (Carroll 2015a: 24) to dry and warm the wet fellows who were swimming, with William the Conqueror's narrative told by the Mouse continuously subjecting Alice and the other creatures to melancholy. While an effort was made to literally translate William the Conqueror's narrative together with its difficult names, this was deliberately done to transfer an equivalent effect of frustration before the complaints by Alice and other creatures, paving way for more accessible dialogues involving more familiar names, of which Shakespeare's would not fare well.

Father William features with his youthful son in the poem 'You are old, Father William' in Chapter V (The Advice from the Caterpillar). The son sarcastically mocks the father for living in and reliving his past heroics despite his evidently ageing body, advising him to take it slowly, lest he harm himself and spoil his glorious legacy. When struggling with a poem in which Father William features, Alice feels that her good knowledge of history has been compromised. Similarly, the Ndebele Alice and modern readers of the Ndebele translation should not be abused with such foreign

history. Replacing Father William with *uMalume Mangilazi* (Uncle Spectacles) was considered in this light. Not only the personal name but also the relationship portrayed in the poem has changed. Firstly, the uncle-nephew relationship was preferred since it provides room for the kind of debate and spirit that prevails in the scene, which would be tantamount to extreme disrespect in the father-son relationship in the Ndebele society. Secondly, the translator opted against picking any other Ndebele name without any form of significance or relevance to the context of the tale. Thus, *Mangilazi* was used to indicate that the man is so old that he now relies on spectacles to see, among other symptoms of ageing, as reiterated in the poem. Finally, the name change from the translation of the poem into Ndebele had to be accompanied by other forms of context-adaptation which allow Ndebele or Zimbabwean readers in general to apply the poem to their own social and even political context of conflicts between the elderly and the youth. Although the Ndebele reader may never link the context of the original from the translation, an opportunity has been created that allows the plot of 'The Advice from the Caterpillar' to develop coherently.

Finally, one proper name that needs to be reflected upon in pondering Alice's identity in the context of the translation is the place name *Cheshire*. Cheshire is mentioned in Chapter VI (Pig and Pepper) to explain the wide smile of the Cat, i.e. it is a Cheshire-Cat. It is critical to consider why Cheshire is the only place that is explicitly mentioned throughout the *Wonderland* before a decision is made regarding its handling in the translation. One reasonable explanation is that since Alice did not know that cats could grin, the grinning Cat had to be a stranger, i.e. coming from elsewhere where Alice has not been. This was important for the *make-believe* effect, which is an important aspect of fiction. This is even more important in Ndebele story-telling where folktales are contextualised in a mythical world of the past, i.e. *amatshe esancwebeka* (when stones could be pinched) or *amabhiza esaselempondo* (when horses had horns). This seems to be similar to the English context where folktale adventures are 'Once upon a time' recollections. However, since Alice was staring at the Cat, it could not be of an ancient history but an alien one from elsewhere. Having considered that, the Cat is distanced from the typical Ndebele reader home, Bulawayo or some rural areas in Matabeleland, to be *uMangoye waseHarare* (the Cat from Harare). Just like Alice who could probably have little or distant knowledge of Cheshire, Ndebele young readers would know Harare, but they may accept that cats from that part of their world smile so long as they have not spent time there with many cats. The use of Harare, inspired by the use of Cheshire, does not only make

Alice a Ndebele girl but also a modern one, as do contemporary folktale collections in Ndebele.

The language of the Ndebele girl

Lindseth (2015: 21) states that *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: The Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece* is a book about language, “as is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* itself”. This view seems to be shared by Crystal (2015) whose preface to the book deals mainly with language issues in *Wonderland*, with word-play being at the core. This makes it important to reflect on Alice's language, the language used in her interactions with other characters, and how these play out in the translation and adaptation of the text.

Carroll makes it clear in *Wonderland* that Alice is an English speaker. When she cried “CURIOUSER and curiouser” in Chapter II (The Pool of Tears), “for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English” (Carroll 2015a: 15). When the Mouse simply stares at her without saying anything in the same tale, Alice suspects that “it doesn't understand English” (Carroll 2015a: 20). At the tea-party in Chapter VII, Alice struggles to understand the Mad Hatter although she remains certain that the Hatter's language is English. In the Ndebele translation, it is the Ndebele language that Alice struggles with and this enables the achievement of the equivalent effect on the Ndebele readers. For example, if Alice were to speak English and say “CURIOUSER and curiouser” as a sign of her struggling with English, Ndebele readers who do not know English would not appreciate her predicament. Thus, Alice must say her nonsense in Ndebele, hence “Izhimanga rezhimangarisho” (Carroll 2015b: 16) which contains speech sounds typically used by Shona or some migrant people trying to speak Ndebele. Likewise, Alice would herself try to speak to the Mouse and other creatures using this language, with the Hatter confusing Alice with puns and tongue twisters in Ndebele, although their prevalence is different across the source and target languages. This results in loss and gain in the Ndebele translation. A typical example is when the three sisters were drawing “things whose names begin with m-” in the tale told by the Dormouse in Chapter VII. In the Ndebele translation, the sisters draw ‘izinto ezinengi ezitshieyeneyo ezilamagama alandelayo -’ (things with the following names) (Carroll 2015b: 80) instead of ‘things whose names begin with M-’, for the Ndebele equivalents for *mouse-traps*, the *moon* and *muchness* will not begin with letter M. While those words are lost with their significance of playfulness, i.e. rhyme, it is important to note that there are instances in which Ndebele

word-play could be introduced without sacrificing meaning where it does not exist in the English translation. This was facilitated by the creative use of the Ndebele idiom, as will be shown shortly.

Changing Alice's language from English to Ndebele makes it reasonable to change other languages that she also uses. When she is convinced that the Mouse does not speak English and could be French, Alice says "Où est ma chatte?" (Carroll 2015a: 20), it makes sense for Alice to switch to English because she tells the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon in Chapter VI (The Mock Turtle's Story) that she learnt French at her school. In fact, what she said to the Mouse "was the first sentence in her French lesson-book" (Carroll 2015a: 20). Learning French in Zimbabwean primary schools is rare, with the opportunity being available at private schools and particularly at secondary school level. A Ndebele-speaking Alice therefore learns English at school, just like most Zimbabwean learners. Thus, her question addressed to the Mouse was even translated from French to English, with the Mouse also having been transformed to an English one.

These transformations resulting from the domestication process of *Wonderland* draw the Ndebele language to the heart of language games. This compelled the translator to draw significantly from the richness of the Ndebele language to either retain the imagery in the source text or to create imagery effects in the target text even in instances where none were apparent in the source text. Linguistic devices that had to be exploited in such instances include Ndebele ideophones, proverbs and idioms.

Ndebele makes extensive use of ideophones, especially in narratives where English would use adverbs to explain manner of action. The Ndebele *Wonderland* is thus enriched with many ideophones. In the Chapter VII (A Mad Tea-Party), the ideophone 'phazi, phazi' (Carroll 2015b: 77) is used as an equivalent for *Twinkle, twinkle* to vividly capture the speed of the bat. Such a speed is likened to flashing of light or lightning which, while debatable, can create an equivalent effect as in the English original. Another ideophone is used to demonstrate how an extremely frustrated Alice hastily leaves the tea-party, *wathi lothu* (she stood up quickly)! If someone rises that way before leaving, the urgency or frustration is vivid. That Alice vows never to go back to be with the three mad fellows is consistent with the way she left, which has been captured with more emotion in the translation than in the original. The Ndebele text would be dry without such creative use of ideophones throughout the translation, but now the readers must read it with more naturalness of their language.

Besides ideophones, Ndebele idioms are used extensively in the Ndebele translation. For example, when the Queen reportedly ordered to have the Hatter killed for ‘killing Time’, the Ndebele translation reports that the queen said ‘Makasuselwe amange’ (Unleash the ferrets on him). This order is derived from the Ndebele idiom *ukususela amange*, which means to kill in a euphemistic manner, for death or killing is discussed in euphemistic ways in Ndebele and other African cultures. It would even reflect badly for those of royalty, the custodians of law, to openly sanction murder, particularly with the zeal of the Queen. Another example of euphemism is *ukumbamba umlomo* (to hold one’s mouth) for interrupting someone in Ndebele. This idiom is quite polite since one may ask to interrupt someone. However, it has a rude version that is used in the Ndebele translation to expose the rudeness of the Hatter, i.e. *ukumquma umlomo* (to cut one’s mouth). This is directed to Alice when the Hatter tells her to shut up.

Finally, ‘selokhe ngathwetshulwa yingwe’ (literally saying ‘since I was scratched/marked by the leopard) for ‘since I was born’, uttered by Alice as she leaves the mad tea-party (Carroll 2015b: 81), is a typical example of the employment of Ndebele proverbs in the translation of *Wonderland*. Such language use is meant to domesticate the text so that the audience can enjoy the tales being told in a rich Ndebele language. Besides entertaining, folklore generally has a pedagogic value which includes socialising the language speakers into skilled language users. It is important that young readers continue to be exposed to this language, especially considering English dominance which has put the development, teaching and survival of African languages in jeopardy. The translation of *Wonderland* into the language could not turn a blind eye to this important issue.

Conclusion

The question of whether Alice can really become African is yet to be answered, but a framework has been established for such a task. First, the contribution offered a brief description and background of *Wonderland* as a fascinating text not only because of its fantastic adventures but also because of the author’s ability to play with language. Second, similarities were drawn between *Wonderland* and Ndebele folktales that have been published in written form, which means that the Ndebele translation should be conceived in cognisance of the Ndebele story-telling tradition. Third, the nightmare of dealing with such language in translation was highlighted in the account of the history of Alice translation, including the

frustrating declaration that *Wonderland* was untranslatable as Lewis Carroll endeavoured to circulate his work beyond the confines of his English-speaking audience. That the adventures of *Wonderland* could be read in eighteen languages by 1920 would be a good sign, at surface value, of the growing popularity of the text. This gave birth to the universal-child hypothesis when Weaver (1964) saw the number of *Wonderland* translations as an indicator of how children the world over appreciated the text, assuming that the tales spoke to their own fantasies. Fourth, and also related to the flood of translations of *Wonderland*, the issues of agency and power within the sociology of translation were explored, highlighting that translation was no longer a matter of establishing equivalence between source and target languages in a neutral manner, but an interplay of power dynamics between languages, cultures and translation agents. This indicates that in the case of *Wonderland* translations, it is simplistic to use the number of translations to gauge the popularity of the text, given that institutions such as the Lewis Carroll societies have played a big part in promoting such translations, as is the case with the Ndebele translation. For example, there seems to be gratification in Lindseth and Lovett's (2015: 752) exposé that *Wonderland* is the second-most translated English novel, only behind *The Pilgrim's Progress* and ahead of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. One may be forgiven for interpreting the promotion of some translations as socio-cultural projects, more of empire building rather than empowering the target readers. Hadjivayanis (2015: 572) refers to the idea of the *Wonderland*, and most probably its translation into numerous languages, as "a form of colonial exploitation". Translation is at the core of knowledge (re)production. In the context of Africa's transformation agenda which seeks to promote African indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, including African literature, translators and translation scholars are compelled to think critically, lest they produce and promote texts that turn out to be good copies of colonial texts in their quest to translate faithfully rather than creatively. The Ndebele translation, inspired by the domestication approach, highlights an example of a translation in which Alice never appealed as a universal child in the original text, rendering the construction of her identity in the target text crucial.

For the Ndebele translation, children and school-going youth were identified as the potential primary readers. To a large extent, this had a definite influence on the decisions that were adopted by the translator. Certain aspects had to be unwritten and rewritten in terms of Meschonnic (2011) or Lefevere (1992) in the translation process to adapt the text according to the context of the target readers. This process is not neutral, as noted by Basnett (1996), since it empowers the translator to make

judgements on certain aspects of the source text and avoid imposing those that are somehow incongruent with the context of the target audience.

In the light of the foregoing, some proper names were changed because their value depreciates as *Wonderland* is transferred from English to Ndebele, necessitating their replacement with better alternatives. Shakespeare and Father William are some examples that were discussed in the preceding section. Alice's name was only changed structurally to ensure that it conforms to the morphological and orthographic rules of Ndebele, given that English names are now common among Ndebele speakers. However, Alice's language changed, and her speeches had to draw from the Ndebele idiom not only for her to be understood but also to teach this idiom to young readers. Consequently, the Ndebele translation is rich in Ndebele ideophones, idioms and proverbs, which is a case of translation gain, while some of Carroll's English word-play is lost or replaced with that which make use of the creativity of the target language.

It should be pointed out, though not discussed in this contribution, that the translation of *Wonderland* has not resulted in the replacement of everything English and not traditionally Ndebele. For example, some modern foodstuffs such as wine and tea, not found in many folktales, are retained. This is consistent with the dynamism of oral art, which continuously transforms to capture the changing society. Therefore, Ndebele readers may learn some aspects of modern or English culture from the translation. That way, the endeavour of learning across cultures through translation is maintained or achieved within the domestication approach.

At this point, it could be argued that Alice may really become Ndebele without completely obliterating the text that was created by Lewis Carroll. That at some point Carroll was resigned to the loss of puns and songs because of their challenges in the translation of *Wonderland* to other languages confirms that the approach to the Ndebele translation was justified. However, this does not imply that the translation is perfect and beyond scrutiny. It remains a copy in which translation scholars will definitely find room for improvement. It is a copy that even the original translator may improve on given another chance, since the translation was done under extreme time constraints to have it ready before the 150th anniversary celebrations of *Wonderland*. Alice could have been still more African had the project masters made further concessions on the classic John Tenniel illustrations, whose preference meant that no matter how much translators adapted the text, Alice would still look like a 19th-century English girl.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

AUTHOR, TEXT, AND OBJECT: LITERARY READING OF WAR MONUMENTS IN NORTHERN UGANDA

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Brief Background

From 1986, the year that marked Yoweri Museveni's ascendancy to power, northern Uganda was in a state of war until 2006, when millions of people who had been internally displaced during the conflict began to return home. The principal belligerents were the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF). The violence led to immense civilian casualties in which more than two million people were subjected to forced displacement in internment camps, leading to a tragic escalation of infant, child, and maternal mortalities, total collapse of educational and agricultural sectors, moral degeneration, etc. The LRA targeted the more than two hundred internally displaced people's camps (IDPCs) in the northern Uganda districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Lira, and Oyam, and killed civilians at will. Government soldiers stationed to defend civilians did very little to protect the population. Mass massacres occurred in IDPCs like Attiak, Odek, Barlonyo, Abia, Lukodi, and Mucwini. In this paper, I have chosen to discuss two of these sites, Attiak in Amuru (formerly Gulu district), and Barlonyo in Lira district. At these sites of mass violence, war monuments have been erected by the Ugandan government in partnership with non-governmental organisations like the Justice and Reconciliation Project, Northern Uganda Transitional Initiative (NUTI), and Caritas, amongst several others. These monuments have attracted new influence with development projects, NGOs and community-based organisations, new schools, etc. They have also reorganised post-war

communities in terms of social values and economic initiatives intended to fast track the communities' recovery.

Introduction

In this paper, I therefore examine the agency of war monuments in northern Uganda, located at the Barlonyo and Attiak memorial sites, from the perspective of the motivations of their creators. I also analyse the multiple ways in which these monuments can be read and deciphered as objects, text, and art, and how the agency of the author plays out in determining the different possibilities of meaning in the reading of war monuments. These monuments are created by agents, which I conceptualise as “authors”. My supposition is that the monuments were created to mobilise memories that suit the motivations of their authors. I then discuss who these authors are, and explain the links between their objectives, and the narratives produced when we read the monuments outside authorial context. I also show the extent to which these monuments create particular voices while silencing others, in attempts to remember the history of mass violence in northern Uganda. While looking at these monuments as objects representing events of mass violence, I show alternative ways of translating and reading their existential relevance, metaphorical configurations, and historical significances. In the context of this paper the “agency” of these monuments is configured by creators conceptualised as “authors”. They include central and local governments, NGOs, and local communities.

‘Author’ is an integral factor in the study of creative works, yet its application in the study of monuments triggers ineluctable tensions between form and content. As object, a monument has formal elements that conjunctively and disjunctively translate memories of mass violence. Its internal form includes design, size, shape, epitaph, site, etc. Its external form includes sign texts, access roads, neighbouring buildings, and lawns. By external form, I refer to objects that are not part of the physical materiality of the monument, yet their existential relevance is linked to their proximity with the monument. In this chapter, I engage literary modes of interpretation to determine what types of memory are produced in a discursive study of war monuments. Its theoretical thrust is the critical tensions between New Historicism and New Criticism theories, whose scholars contest the agency of the author in the reading and interpreting of a literary text. Contextually, this is also an act of translating experiences from the conventional ways monuments are read to multidisciplinary approaches that democratise meanings.

New Criticism argues that in analysing a literary text, the author is *persona non grata* (Eagleton 1983, 47-9). In other words, readers should not preoccupy themselves with the author's life or experiences to understand his or her work, but look at a given work as self-referential, self-contained text. They advocate for a close reading of text, because structures and elements in a given work independently coalesce to generate un-circumscribed meaning. On the other hand, New Historicisms contend that the author's life, experiences, and history offer enriching tools for understanding a work. Other than the author's background, historical conditions at the time of writing a work should be engaged in all critical inquiries about a given text. In the same context, a study of author as an analytical lens illuminates how memorial sites are interpreted, in addition to how they are created, owned, and managed. The author of a literary work determines its plot, language, setting, characters, and other forms of style. The author of material art – in this context, war monument – also determines its material, texture, size, placement, iconography, and other artistic add-ons. These imaginations constitute formal elements that an author determines through his or her creative ingenuity. Whereas this has often given impressions that creative work is the sole product of an author's craft, this paper argues that there are formal issues that can be read outside authorial context. Although such formal elements are created by an author, it is nevertheless possible to read and interpret them without reference to him or her. There are ways in which a monument produces other physical and material objects that can be studied as its secondary form. In other words, objects that emerge through the agency of monument constitute its external or secondary form. The combination of all of these in shaping phenomenological relations is what I refer to as the textuality of a monument.

In that sense, this work first explores the extent to which the notion of authorship translates into the study of material objects like monuments. As argued by Foucault (2002), this calls for a critical inquiry into whether 'author' should constitute source of meaning in the reading of material arts like monuments (in Irwin 2002, 11). New Historicists would argue that an author is only a related part that interfaces with other formal parts and historical conditions at the time of creating a work to create intertextual production of meaning. Since a monument is an object, whose textual qualities are a product of authorial imaginations, the source of its meaning would be 'tyrannically centred' on the agencies that created it (Barthes 2002, 4). Readers often seek to explain a work of art by consulting the histories and experiences of the person who wrote it (2002, 4).

New Criticism urges readers to ‘stay away’ from the author, so as not to get carried away by ideological and personality biases authorially produced (Eagleton 1983, 46-8). However, writing is not only about ‘interiority’; it is also about ‘exteriority’ of the subject (Foucault in Irwin 2002, 10). Put differently, knowledge as something that is internally and externally produced is obtained both from the object and outside of the object. This implies that integrating internalities and externalities obtains more ideas than excluding and omitting them. The second question is the extent to which literary concepts such as setting, voice, and form apply or translate into the reading and interpretation of war monuments. While monument is generally classified as object, in many ways it also qualifies as artistic text. Monuments diffuse disciplinary boundaries between literary arts and material arts in a sense, particularly considering how their materiality, size, shape, texture, and location can be engaged as analytical frames. The third, and very important focus is how a close and intertextual reading of monuments explains the ‘crisis of memory’ in post-war northern Uganda when we look at these artefacts as “signs” representing “signified” meanings rather than orthodox facts imposed by their authors (De Saussure 1968; Abousnnooga et al 2011, 178). Ferdinand de Saussure argued that an arbitrary relationship exists between sign (word) and the objects it stands for. Although monuments are objects that stand for specific events, they should also be considered as ‘signs’ with both denotative and metaphorical meanings (De Saussure 1968, 15-40). Contention between ‘object’ and ‘sign’ suggests ways of interpreting war monuments, as having arbitrary relations with the meanings that their authors prescribe. As a result, their materiality incorporates qualities of text and art, their meanings extend beyond the objectives of their creators.

Lastly, as ‘objects’, monuments are proof that a certain event or ‘mementos’ of things happened in the past (Vansina 1985, 44). They are clues and proof of memory, figurative and iconographic materials that help society to remember, that is, things that societal members can ‘read’ using their own ‘signifying’ systems (1985, 44). If the reading of an object does not generate homogenous interpretation, we argue that the object has textual qualities because it does not tie readers to a single referent. In this case, monuments are qualified as textual objects because they have no single referents, and meanings exist both inside and outside their material form. There can never be one way of reading a text, and so is a monument. By categorising monuments as text, we generically situate them as artistic objects, because their creation is a product of craftsmanship, creativity, and innovations that shape their formal properties (Ray & Murfin 1997, 49). Things that constitute a monument’s art include texture, shape,

architecture, size, inscription, and metaphors. Anything which is of art must have a moral and mental effect. Thus, when we consider monuments as art, we look at their formal properties to examine their contribution to intention, meaning, and social wellbeing. That means that a reader's focus would be apparent and intended, or direct and indirect meanings arising from a monument (Vansina 1969, 83).

Critically considered, a text has no absolute or close meaning, but "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of meanings blend and clash" (Barthes 1964, 6). To give a text an author is to give boundaries of meaning on that text (1964,6). There can be no orthodox or systemically prescribed mode of reading monuments. Approaches that centralise the author in the search for meaning, and other approaches that emphasise close reading of texts, what in other critical fields has been called 'intrinsic commentary', are all relevant. The latter refers to a study and interpretation of integral devices of a text to understand it (Hirsch 1988, 202-4; Wendell 1988, 65). It deploys what the author has internally provided in the text, from which the reader can draw several meanings. In the case of a war memorial, it would be those integral textual features—material, size, architecture, location, inscription, etc. On the other hand, there is 'extrinsic commentary', an approach that relates a text to external schema of explanation or evaluation (Hirsch 1988, 203; Harris 1988, 65). By using this approach to interpret war memorials, we engage elements like catalogues, sign texts, visitors' books, neighbouring buildings, and roads. This category has a secondary relationship with the physical monument because while they are physically detached from its materiality, they are nevertheless existentially connected.

Authorial Motives: Barlonyo War Memorial

On April 21st, 2004, the LRA, commanded by Okot Odhiambo, attacked the Barlonyo IDPC camp, and killed more than 300 people. The victims were sprayed with bullets, butchered with machetes, while babies were hurled into roaring flames. A day later, the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) buried the victims in a mass grave which is today one of the greatest war memorials in northern Uganda. The monument, which covers approximately 70 square metres, is a huge oval mass grave where more than 300 victims were interred. In the middle is a cenotaph constructed by the government of Uganda, and commissioned by President Yoweri Museveni in 2004. Its architecture is characterised by two peculiar designs, the base and the rising surface that give the monument its looming sense of height. The base is a rectangular concrete, which

provides a foundation, built strongly in three solid levels that rise one on top of the other. The first layer has a thin screed of tile, while the two other rising levels are a mixer of cement and concrete. In front, a tall column, which measures about three metres, gives the cenotaph its tomblike semblance. The base surface radiates grey-black emulsion, while the rising surface is a grey *sadoline* wash. Small, rectangular shapes of equal sizes cover the entire cenotaph. The shapes appear to be the designer's imagination to beautify the structure, but also resemble small graves representing the 121 people buried in the mass grave. Midway on the wall of the column is an epitaph that reads:

R.I.P.

'Here lie the remains of 121 innocent Ugandans who were massacred by LRA terrorists on 21. 02. 2004. The burial ceremony was presided by H.E Yoweri Museveni Kaguta, President of the Republic of Uganda, on Saturday 27. 03. 2004. May their souls rest in peace'.

Surrounding the cenotaph is the vast sprawling mass grave, near the entrance of which a large sign of the cross is engraved. In 2013, the Uganda National Museum (UNM) embarked on an elaborate program of renovating the mass grave, which had begun to show serious signs of deterioration and neglect. The large cracks on the grave were repaired, and the site made more attractive by planting flowers. Local managers, remunerated by the UNM, observe daily maintenance of the site. Inside the mass grave quadrangle is a neatly-trimmed grass. Villagers hold meetings, cultural groups perform songs, dance and drama in this space, and children in the neighbourhood use it as a playground. Occasionally, it is also used as venue for public prayers.

In spite of the strong political and social arguments that the monuments generate, a keen study of their formal structures highlights views contrary to authorial claims. Guides at Barlonyo claim that the use of concrete, terrazzo, and cement on the monument symbolises the immortality of the memory of war victims. However, this aspect of immortality is not clear. Unlike the Lukodi and Abia memorial sites, names of the dead are not inscribed on this cenotaph. Writing names of victims on cenotaph would perhaps have imbued it with sense of local ownership (Minkley & Phindezwa 2015, 51-3). What is immortalised is mass massacre, not individual identities of the dead. The other detail immortalised is the personhood of Yoweri Museveni, remembered as having presided over the burial of victims. This creates multiple memorialisations, in that as you remember the victims of Barlonyo, you also by default remember Museveni's condolence gestures. The irony,

though, is that he presided over the burial of victims, whose relatives accuse his government of having failed to protect them. Some survivors have seen that as a mockery of their woes (Interviews with Barlonyo drama group, November 2014). No attempt is made to immortalise any of the local heroes of Barlonyo, including Ayugi Silbina, the 55-year-old woman on whose land the massacre victims were buried (Interviews with Barlonyo drama group, July 2015).

There is a further sense in which some formal parts of the mass grave monument contradict each other, that is, the conspicuous disjuncture between the sprawling mass grave and the figure 121. The grave is so massive that it is an understatement to claim that only 121 people are buried there. Names of the dead are not indicated. Guides often help visitors to solve this riddle when they say that bodies were exhumed, recounted and found to be 301 instead of 121. They also claim to have in their “private” records the names of every dead person. Survivors insist that the UPDF, who “supervised” the burial of victims a day after the massacres, doctored the number of deaths. Brigadier Otema Awany oversaw the burials which were done so swiftly that relatives of the dead were not given time to perform burial rites, let alone view the bodies of their loved ones. One survivor says, “one day people will wake up to find that we have demolished this structure. We want this plate removed and replaced with correct figures. We also want the names of the dead written here just like it is in Lukodi and other places”. Thus, using how formal parts relate with each other to constitute meaning, the reader is not bound to consult the author, or rely on information given by the author to determine the truth embedded in the number 121. The reader simply examines how particular formal structures corroborate or cancel each other, in terms of the logical sense they produce. Number 121, and the sprawling mass grave, shows how ‘figure’ and ‘size’ on this tablet are unbalanced coordinates. The ambivalence such contradiction produces confirms the unofficial claim that 302 people were buried in that mass grave. Peter Adupa, the grave administrator, claims that a few days later, the graves were exhumed, and bodies recounted were 302.

Other metatexts that have external relations with the monument include landscapes, commercial buildings, business projects, and road infrastructure in its neighbourhood. Three new schools have emerged in Barlonyo, namely Barlonyo Vocational Institute, Barlonyo Early Childhood Development Centre, and Fountain Nursery and Primary Schools. All these developments have a secondary relationship with the war, and the monument. Their proprietors are the government of Uganda, and faith-based organisations like Children of Hope and Victory Outreach

Ministries, respectively. Lira district local government has constructed a well-paved feeder road, with financing from the World Bank Peace, Recovery, and Development Project (PRDP). This road provides easy access to Barlonyo for the large number of scholars, pilgrims, and tourists who visit the site on a regular basis. Records in visitors' books show at least 500 national and international visitors annually. Flourishing brick-walled commercial buildings have transformed Barlonyo from a remote peasant village into a commercial township. From only one commercial building before the war, Barlonyo now boasts of thirty-two commercial units. In these premises, local people and immigrants trade in grocery and agricultural produce. Unfortunately, the UNM, which considers Barlonyo a heritage site, has never identified the lone commercial house that existed before the war for preservation. As Barlonyo expands and progresses, such a building would remain an important reference point to explain the social and economic processes that have taken place in the transitional period.

The critical question, though, is the structural relations between the flourishing business symbolised by new buildings, projects, and schools. Significant is what these relations mean in the context of war and life beyond war. At face value, the official interpretation of mushrooming new buildings, a produce warehouse, and grain-milling factory would indicate that Barlonyo is rapidly recovering in the aftermath of war, given the thriving business and new infrastructures. For safe storage of seeds and farm produce, ActionAid Uganda coordinated with Barlonyo Community Concern for Development (BCCD) to construct a large store to help farmers as they wait for buyers and the next planting season. Yet, a structural disjuncture remains between these physical infrastructures, and improved livelihoods of survivors. None of the Barlonyo children study in any of the three existing schools because they cannot afford the high fees (Interviews with Barlonyo residents: Lestina Alele, Silvina Ayugi, Peter Adupa, Loagoro Silvanos, July 2015). The thirty-two commercial buildings were put up by immigrants who have taken advantage of business opportunities created by increased numbers of visitors in Barlonyo. Driven by poverty after the war, residents of Barlonyo, massively sold land around the massacre site to business people from Lira and the surrounding townships. Carolyn Nordstrom has argued, "the people, goods, and services that move along shadow lines are often closely and visibly linked to the most fundamental politics of power and survival" (Nordstrom 2001, 2016). In Barlonyo and many parts of northern Uganda, it is also politics of usurpation, opportunism, and exploitation of surviving communities. The new landlords and predatory entrepreneurs are the ones benefitting from commercial opportunities in the area. This means that although

Barlonyo has developed into a new market economy, its major beneficiaries are not the survivors of war. It is by studying the buildings, looking at how the children of Barlonyo benefit from the existing infrastructures, that we get an understanding of the real post-war conditions, and what they mean for victimhood and survivability.

Finally, the UNM has created a large ‘child-friendly’ playing centre, with a well-tamed lawn. By creating such a site, the museum was making an effort to translate the former site of tragedy into a place of safety and hope. Despite such developmental impression, the child-friendly referent remains a significant irony, a biting satire with which the state institution pokes a rude joke at itself. It was at this very site that hundreds of children were either defencelessly butchered, or suffered many adverse encounters under the ‘care’ of the government. Child-friendly spaces, new buildings, and new projects at the memorial site relate to the war, only insofar as the agency of the monument that created them. They do not, however, foreground the everyday narratives of survivors and victims, or narratives of children who had horrible experiences in unsanitary learning centres and congested IDPCs. They are new images, remotely related to war, and calculably crafted to achieve forced-forgetting of northern Uganda’s dark history using humanitarian guises of healing and recovery. It is in this context that elements external to the text may often perpetuate historical amnesia, manifesting as ‘forced’ or ‘selective remembering’ (Connerton 1989). A close reading of war memorials without attention to things external to the war would help us omit the propagandist author and depoliticise an ideological state and its agents from interpolating the narratives of violence by clogging our memories with post-war modernity, projects, and interventions that do not directly reflect the tragic memories of war. While we probably cannot dismiss symbols of transformation and rehabilitation from taking centre stage in post-war societies, we should note that accurate memories of how events of war unfolded are important in raising questions about the genesis, process, and ending of the war. Objects of memory need not shy away from depicting history in its realistic form. It is the kind of question memory raises about war that is important, not the kind of detail it excludes in the name of healing and recovery.

Social Infrastructure, Ideology, and Memory

Barlonyo Vocational Institute, located three hundred metres away from the memorial site, was “offered” by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in 2011. Three miles away is Kaguta Bridge, another such gift from the

President.¹ These infrastructures illustrate one of the ways in which government has responded to the war in northern Uganda. The survivors I interviewed insisted that the school and the bridge were “offers” from the President. The bridge will be able to connect Barlonyo to the sub counties of Okwang, Adwari, Kalongo, and Pader district. It will enhance movement of people, goods and services, and hence improve the productive capacities of the area. It is highly possible that such narratives of presidential “offers” are opportunistically mobilised as post-war propaganda and political campaign strategies. Their circularity constitutes the populist politics of tokenism and patronage that instrumentalises electoral advantage for the government. What is an “offer”? It is something given to another person or a group, as a gesture of compassion or goodwill by the giver. It is an undeserved gift that portrays the giver as a benefactor and the recipient as needy. It defines how politicians and bureaucrats appropriate gifts and tokens to subjectivise vulnerable people through manipulative power relations. Kaguta *memorial* Bridge – technically, that is what it is – and the vocational school, refashion or translate Museveni’s image from the known political nemesis of northern Uganda to that of a popular nationalist and philanthropist, diffusing perceptions that he plays tribal politics against the north (Branch 2010).

As a site of propaganda, this memorial space induces many people to read the vocational school as a sign of the President’s commitment to revitalise education in the war-torn region. To get a better picture of this discourse, we must reflect on the horrible conditions of makeshift schools called learning centres established in internment camps. Most children in displaced communities took lessons under trees, without basic school facilities. The presidential philanthropic gesture is also intended to mobilise support for government’s advocacy for science and technology, as a gateway to industrial development, job creation, and poverty alleviation. Little wonder that Barlonyo and Attiak have become sites for propagating the government manifesto of vocationalisation of education. Attiak Vocational Institute and Barlonyo Technical Institute are only a few such political campaign apparatuses established at memorial sites. By creating these schools, the government of Uganda hopes to debunk claims raised in different media that the north has been marginalised. The vocational schools, and other projects initiated by NGOs became reference points for government officials to emphasise the NRM’s policy of equal distribution of national resources. As one government official is quoted to have said, there is no non-governmental organisation. All NGOs are

¹ *Daily Monitor*, July 29, 2014, 19.

governmental organisations because they are licensed and accredited by government. These schools, bridges, and health centres are used politically to vindicate the government of sectarian politics in the north.

Needless to emphasise, war memorials have no doubt attracted NGOs in northern Uganda. NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are licensed by central and local governments respectively. War memorials ease the process by which NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs lobby for funding from their donors. Government, in turn, exploits this as an opportunity to control these organisations, particularly rights'-based ones. A case in point has been Facilitation of Peace and Development (FAPAD), working in Lira and other parts of northern Uganda. One of FAPAD's directors, Jonathan Odur (now M.P for Erute County North) was a well-known activist for Black Monday and Walk to Work Protests in Kampala. On multiple occasions, the Resident District Commissioner of Lira threatened not to recommend renewal of FAPAD's license to operate in Lira. By threatening often to cancel, withdraw, or refuse to re-issue licenses, government regulates the activities of NGOs that are supposed to check and balance its political excesses.

Given that war memorials have organic relationships with social organisations like schools, health centres, factories and companies in their vicinity, such institutions can be read as government's policy to liberalise economic spaces in which NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs participate in the collective work of rebuilding northern Uganda. These schools include Fountain Primary and Nursery Schools at Barlonyo, Barlonyo Vocational Institute, Attiak Technical Institute, and Lwana Memorial School in Attiak. Organisations such as these, and their affiliate projects, are mobilised to reassure Ugandans that the war is over, and that rebuilding post-war communities cannot be left to survivors alone. In Attiak, the government has established a community Internet kiosk, very close to the monument. These Internet facilities are found at every sub county headquarters in northern Uganda. Why an Internet Kiosk? One of the major infrastructural weaknesses that escalated LRA atrocities was poor communication. Most testimonies about LRA attacks attributed the rebels' successes to poor communication with local leaders and security organs. I refer to this type of facility as post-mortem mnemonics, because they have been created to experiment on how learnt lessons from failed experiences can create a better future in a life devoid of war. Most survivors have taken this opportunity to learn the use of Internet and computers. The Attiak survivors' Association has benefitted immensely from the use of the Internet to write proposals, receive correspondence, and make links that help them individually or as groups. In this way, the Government of

Uganda is also conducting a pilot study on sectors where its grand project of modernising the countryside can be concentrated.

Ownership, Location, and Design—Attiak Monument

On 20th April 1995, the LRA rebels besieged Attiak Trading Centre and rounded up hundreds of civilians in the wee hours of the night. Vincent Otti, the man who led the attack, was also a native of Attiak. The rebels set ablaze houses after overpowering the small military unit manned by home guards. A huge number of civilians were captured and led to Dog Ayugi, (the mouth of the Ayugi river), nine kilometres away from the trading centre. There, pregnant mothers, and women with children under ten years of age were separated from the rest. The rebels then sprayed bullets on men, youth, and other able persons.² Those spared were forced to clap their hands in celebration of what the rebels had done. Some of those clapping had just seen their fathers and dear ones being shot. The rebels left, and a few miles away, some sixty-five people were killed in a similar manner. In all, 209 people were massacred. From Attiak Technical School, forty-five students, four teaching staff, one school bursar, and one cook were also killed. The LRA explained their motive as punishing the locals for neglecting them (the rebels) and fraternising with the government army (Branch 2010, 77). A day later, some survivors collected the bodies of their loved ones for burial, while several others remained unburied. After the massacre, community members thought of erecting a monument in memory of their loved ones. According to George William Odong, the Attiak Community Development Officer, and John Bosco Ochan, the Chairman LCIII of Attiak Sub County, local people were guided by their community leaders to collect materials like bricks, sand, and labour as their input. The monument constructed by the community was not good enough, particularly in its shape and architecture. Other NGOs and aid agencies later provided resources for a facelift for the monument. SPRING and USAID provided tiles, cement, fence, and iron sheets. Through Memorial Day celebrations (*Nino me Nipoo*), the Attiak community was also able to lobby for a community secondary school, Lwani Memorial College. UPDF Brigadier Oketta provided iron sheets and timber. The Office of the President (OP) provided cement. Brigadier Oketta lobbied engineering students from South Africa to help with the construction, and the local community was mobilised for one week to contribute their labour.

² *Sunday Vision*, April 30, 1995.

The monument is a small cenotaph covering an area of about eight square metres. Its external view resembles a mausoleum. Renovated using cement and concrete, the cenotaph is about ten meters tall. It is double-fenced; the inner layer, which is local craftwork of wood and reed stalks, reflects native creativity. The outer fence is chain link, which keeps trespassers from approaching the interior perimeter of the monument. The immediate surrounding is mowed and relatively well beautified with flowers. Four solid steps lead the way into the cenotaph. The structure enclosing the cenotaph is roofed with corrugated iron sheets, painted blue. At the entrance, is an iron door, with a double shutter, painted grey. The monument is kept under lock and key, usually without an attendant at the entrance. Visitors enter the monument on request, or permission sought from the Sub County offices. Local people at Attiak refer to the monument as 'Kidi me Nippo', literally meaning, 'memorial stone'. Near the monument is an open space, an ill-kempt grass lawn measuring approximately fifty by one hundred metres. In this space, activities like community meetings, public rallies, and cultural performances are conducted. It is also a playground for children. Several footpaths cross into, or away from the open space. About fifty metres away is the sub county headquarters, which oversees the affairs of the monument.

The entire cenotaph has no epitaph, but one can guess that there was once some inscription, long worn away and faded beyond recognition. George William Odong, the CDO of Attiak, recalls the epitaph as reading, "In Loving Memory of our Dear Brothers and Sisters massacred by the LRA on 20th May 1995. May their souls rest in eternal peace". Odong memorised the words on the tablet, but these endearing words of affectionate memory have not been rewritten. The blankness of the space is a telling example of neglect by the authorities. The tablet is painted black, perhaps to symbolise the doomsday and suffering it unleashed emotionally, socially, and economically on the community. The grass on the compound threatens to grow wild. Signs of maintenance are discernible only in the neatly maintained grass lawn around the cenotaph. There would seem to be lack of community involvement in the maintenance of the place; the weedy surrounding underscores a paucity of value that the locals attach to the monument. They might have been mobilised to offer their labour and building materials, but that passion has significantly cooled down, giving an ominous impression of the community's indifference.

The grey painting on the cenotaph suggests that recovery and healing is far from being achieved. Many people, particularly victims and survivors, avoid the memorial site because of the painful memories that it triggers (Interviews with John Bosco Ochan, October 2014). During one of

my field visits, which coincided with memorial celebrations, I noticed that there were no wreaths placed on the cenotaph. Throughout the day, the monument remained locked. My own perception was that this indicated the cultural disconnect between the monument and the memorial traditions of memorialising death among the Acholi. The fences and shutters, blocking free access to the interior of the cenotaph have metaphorical significances with the sense of detachment that this historical object has with the massacre. The fences and shutters may be read as having relations with the lack of human visitation to the cenotaph, even in the week of commemoration. The commemoration itself did not take place in the large open place near the monument, but at Attiak Primary School, half a kilometre away.

The atmosphere of grief and desolation at Dog Ayugi, the site of massacres, also has parallel relations with the greyness and poor maintenance of the memorial's compound. Exclusionary or inhibitive metaphors like fences, doors, and locks connote a locality curved out, but the neat flowers, blue paintings, iron sheeting, and signs of sweeping at the cenotaph represents the invisible presence of political authorities who own the place. Members of the Attiak survivors' association have never participated in the maintenance of the memorial site, although every year they participate by performing drama, providing chairs, and contributing foodstuff to organise the Prayer Day (Interviews with ASA, October 2014). Their agency is outside the locus of the memorial site. In spite of these, it is the war memorial that attracts most of the projects in Attiak Sub County. The monument may be neglected because local people do not understand its cultural relevance, but they know that it is the most powerful object that attracts local, national, and international interest in post-war interventions.

The paradox of Intrinsic Formal Unity

It is important to interrogate the claim that monumental parts such as site, material, size, epitaph, and engravings have internal relations among themselves. From an authorial perspective, this claim is sometimes illusory. Internal formal elements of a monument might, in some instances be external to each other. I use the cenotaph at Attiak Sub County to illustrate such formal contradictions. First, is the question of site, its spatial significances, and authorial implications. The cenotaph is located at the sub county headquarters, nine miles away from the site of massacre. There arises a problem of double identification and recognition. Is it Dog Ayugi, the site of massacre, or the current memorial site at the Sub County

that should be recognised as the authentic site? Politicians and survivors have different opinions. As mentioned earlier, the current location was politically determined by Amuru District Local Government. Survivors did not have a say in deciding that location. This, perhaps, justifies the assertion that monuments are political objects, much less cultural. The site signifies where resources to organise commemorations will come from. Situating the monument at the site of massacre would not only have given victims and survivors greater authority in its ownership and management, but also bigger challenges of looking for resources to organise memorials. Using site of death, as site of memorial, would have also generated challenges of trauma, healing, management (Kosseleck 1993, 321).

Despite some strong argument for locating the site at the Sub County, strong evidence suggests that the site of death Dog Ayugi bears no cognate link with the current site of memory. The practice of transplanting, or dislocating objects of memory from their spatial antecedence creates discordance of meaning in the reading of monuments. Survivors and many local residents of Attiak Sub County rarely visit the cenotaph, simply because the place does not command the type of sacredness that death mobilises in the Luo tradition. In other words, it is not considered a hallowed spot that should be revered as a sacred site for commemorating death. No dead body is buried anywhere near the cenotaph, not forgetting that this site was not determined by survivors. Although there is a large public space at the memorial site, annual anniversaries are always held at Attiak Primary School, half a kilometre away. The ceremonial neglect of the Attiak memorial site by survivors should be analysed against the heightened reverence accorded to Dog Ayugi, the site of massacre. Since 1995, Dog Ayugi has become a huge uninhabited bush, which the villagers believe is unreachable. George William Odong, the Community Development Officer, says the place is not easily 'accessible' as it is far from the main road. The community has been lobbying for the construction of an access road to the place, which still remains mysterious and deserted. Vincent, a motorcyclist, who was helping me commute between my guesthouse to the field, refused to take me to Dog Ayugi. He emphatically stated that no one could dare reach that place. The community claims that one can hear wailing voices of the dead at the site, lamenting to the living that they have been left unburied. Any movement to that place is extremely 'dangerous'. There was an alleged case of a driver whose mind went blank and lost control of the vehicle when he was ferrying dead bodies from the place. In actual sense, the site is feared and revered, potentially making it an ideal site for a memorial, currently orphaned at Attiak Sub County. However, the wailing voices also

contradict the cenotaph's condolence words that pray for the souls of victims to rest in peace. The villagers of Attiak have often advocated that the government should construct an access road to Dog Ayugi, to make the place more accessible. In a way, the ruins at Dog Ayugi has made it more monumental than the cenotaph that was uprooted, transplanted, and isolated at the Sub County headquarters. It is perhaps the biggest embodiment of war ruins in northern Uganda.

That said, I conclude this argument by observing that the choice of the Sub County was for strategic reasons. Being in an isolated sparsely populated part of Attiak, politicians and NGOs interested in the war project would not have advantage of access to the population that they need if the memorial was located at Dog Ayugi. Removing the memory of the massacre from its historical location would also make it easier for gradual forgetting of memories of the captives' movements as they marched to face death on that fateful day. Dog Ayugi provides eternal physiognomy and spatial architecture such as trees, valleys, and other topographical objects that keep and retrieve memory. Had the monument been kept at the site of the massacre, there would have been a danger of piecing such details together to explicate the processes through which the victims were paraded to meet their death. This would not benefit the government or those entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the people. Traveling to Dog Ayugi, one wonders how rebels could march for such a long time, with hundreds of captives, nine miles into a thicket without being pursued. Every year as pilgrims, visitors, relatives, scholars and researchers moved for anniversaries, they would link distance to the time the rebels took before finally shooting the victims and realise that security forces did not make a swift response. This analysis shows the sense in which the location of the Attiak monument enhances effacement of important historical detail of the massacre that could implicate the government of crime of omission and irresponsibility.

Materiality, Iconography, and Metaphors

It was engineering students from South Africa who redesigned the monument at Attiak (Interview with George William Odong, April 2015). As architects, they determined choices of materials and also prepared the bills of quantity. The fine and smooth finesse illustrate their architectural expertise. These details might have particularisable meanings, depending on their interpreter, but they are authorial signatures that may not offer appropriate significances to the type of memorialisation they represent. The cenotaph represents the dead, brutally murdered on a day when they

were poorly protected by security agencies. It is this same cenotaph that is now tightly enclosed and fenced. Thinking retrospectively, and metaphorically, this contradicts the historical event of abduction of villagers on a day when they were irresponsibly protected. It exposes the tragic irony of disembodied voices at Dog Ayugi, lamenting that their remains have been left unburied, when the cenotaph symbolising their memorial is decently maintained. Reading the Attiak cenotaph side by side with the ruins of Dog Ayugi illuminates the senselessness of beautifying a cenotaph, where nobody is buried, when the victims it represents remain unburied in a desolate bush until this day.

It is clear that whatever appears as engraving, designing, and artistic impressions on public monuments in northern Uganda were created by designers, architects, or engineers commissioned by financiers of those memorial projects. They had worldviews and mindsets that informed their various imaginations. Those artists, designers, or architects constitute some unrecognised category of authors of monuments. The meanings that their art produces are essentially contained in the metaphors, signs, or iconographies that they imagine. For example, we observe the iconography of the reed stalk fence in the Attiak cenotaph. It is also important to note that most Acholi chiefs built their fences using wood and reed stalks (Interviews with Attiak Kal Chiefs, April 2015). This type of fence would therefore demonstrate the traditional connection between the cenotaph and tradition and nativity. Being traditional and local, it signifies nativity and the cultural significance of honouring the dead using local imagery. The wood and reed stalk fence may also explain the weak security that made the victims vulnerable to rebel attacks. These are possible meanings that could only have been in the minds of the architects who made the monument.

The Christian iconography of the cross at Barlonyo and Lukodi is perhaps the most disturbing as it represents a religious identity. Were the designers saying that the victims at Barlonyo and Lukodi were all Christians, such that their collective memory should be represented by the Christian sign of the cross? Such assumption is illogical for camps whose occupants numbered in the several thousands. Barlonyo had 480 households, 11,468 occupants in total. Lukodi had between 5,000 and 6,000 people. It would be unrealistic to engage a universalistic iconography that assumes that all victims were Christians. Such exclusionary memory does not take into account Muslims, animists, and atheists, who might have perished in the tragedy. The crisis is complicated by the lack of reliable records that spell the exact identities of the dead. Whence, then, does the designer artist generate this assumption? These

arguments imply that, whereas it is important to study formal elements of a monument to arrive at independent meanings, at times those elements fail to provide a unified narrative. In fact, many formal elements of these monuments have nothing to do with the war.

Realistically, items like terrazzo and concrete may be used as grave markers, but in northern Uganda, such materials are symbols of affluence that subsistence farmers of Barlonyo and Attiak cannot afford to mobilise as markers of funerary memory. These materials simply serve to keep signs of mass death but not memory of war. They make very little sense in memorialising everyday experiences of war, or the way the poor of Barlonyo and Attiak would remember their loved-ones. Even in the massacres, one fails to see the appropriateness of the beautiful finesse of terrazzo. They cannot memorialise the war, because there is nothing like violence in terrazzo and concrete. The objects do not have any particular relation with violence and bloodshed, either in the causing of it, or in its mitigation. The beautiful lawns now gracing Barlonyo memorial site have no narrative in relation to memories of malnutrition, dysentery and diarrhoea that killed children, the machetes that wreaked havoc, and the violence that maimed the residents of those places. They do nothing but translate the history of tragedy into a kind of forced forgetting, something that most war monuments have tended to do. The landscapes, the material object called monument, the mass graves, pictures, engravings, epitaphs, site, buildings and access roads all have authors whose different signatures and impressions are value-laden and therefore interpolate or compromise the actual meanings of war in northern Uganda.

The only texts that would be internal to itself, are the replicas of war, the surviving relics of war such as the maimed, widows, and orphans. These are the true 'war memorials' that have plausible internal relations among themselves and with the war itself. They are living memorials whose stories may not be perfect, but are reliable by a fair degree. On the bodies of survivors, we find marks of violence. On their lips are stories of torture, deprivation, and bereavement.³ On their compounds are graves and symbols of war, death, and resilience. One of the most ideal sites is the family monument at Oryang Ojuma Ward in Kitgum Town Council. The

³ Interviews with Attiak survivors: Lajara Margaret abducted in 1989 came back in 2002. She was 19 at the time, now she is 45, produced three children in the bush, two of them died; Alal Concy 30, abducted in 1997 when she was 15. She saw bad things like killings, faced starvation several times, etc.; Adul Salima ran into the UPDF ambush and was injured, produced three children in the bush, lost the whole of their land. Other interviews with Aber Florence, Amigo Salie, Oyila Florence, all from Attiak, reveal gory tales of abduction, bereavement, and suffering.

monument commemorates thirteen members of one family killed by the LRA in 1986. Their memorial is located at the home of Okeny Atwoma, the male elder of their extended family. The monument, made of stone and cement, rises two and half metres in height, with the victim's names handwritten on it. When President Museveni visited Kitgum in 2004, he was told what the LRA did to this family and he had to apologise. Other than this type of memorial, victims and survivors tell gory stories of suffering and pain. Akullu Celina of Barlonyo narrates how she saw babies being hurled into the roaring flames.⁴ She had to breastfeed an infant whose mother was killed in the massacre. Aber Florence of Kalward in Attiak, says she was forced to have three husbands during her stay in the bush.⁵ Survivors like these are reliable war memorials because their stories create spatial and temporary connectivity that public memorials may not. Aber can tell us what happened in the bush because she was practically there. Their stories help us to understand the present from a past location. The only challenge with this memorial type is the perishability of their mortal forms. The well-marked graves may not easily perish, but human memorials die away. It is in this context, the need to immortalise memory, that 'extrinsic commentaries' are vital.

The agency of proximity: Sign-texts and Monuments

This section explores the nexus between sign-texts and monuments. It offers a careful study of the surroundings of monuments as an important method of determining the social, economic, and sometimes political impacts that monuments create in their surroundings. It interrogates whether things produced by the agency of monuments have organic relationship with the war that the monument represents. Despite their durability, objects like buildings, improved landscapes, and roads, are to some extent alien to the event of mass massacres. They are authorial products externally produced; knowledge about their authors only partially constitutes a reliable context of interpretation. They constitute information that could not have been part of the shared contexts of mass violence. A simple illustration will highlight this.

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) in northern Uganda initiated collaborations that have led to the creation of the Barlonyo and Attiak memorials. Arising from these collaborations, government agencies like the UNM and faith-based institutions like Child Voice International

⁴ Interview, 7th July 2015.

⁵ Interview, 24th April 2015.

(CVI), Children of Hope (CoH), Victory Outreach Ministries (VOM), and Save the Children in Uganda (SCU) have initiated schools and social empowerment programs in these locations. Their memorial spaces are crowded with emblems, mottos, vision and mission statements of these NGOs, and those of their sponsors. These are inscribed and engraved in sign-texts that sing praises of religious philanthropists, aid agencies and international partners, and much less the memories of survivors.

Attiak Technical Institute is one example. This school is itself a memorial, given that, in the Attiak massacres, the LRA killed forty-five students, four members of the teaching staff, a bursar, and a cook. Its signpost shows a prominent picture of an elephant, a cultural symbol that dates back to the advent of colonial rule in Acholi. It was the British colonialists that gave this symbol to the Acholi people, an identity marker, which they have retained to date. An elephant stands for strength and dominion over territorial space. Despite the horrors of war, the gigantic metaphor of the elephant projects great sense of invincibility, recalcitrance, and resilience. The signpost uses the emblematic sign of a square drawing with the figure 'O' inside it, to represent Uganda's economic and social cooperation with Japan, through its company, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Another logo indicates Ayaro International Construction Co., beneath JICA. The signpost of Attiak Technical School does not reflect its core business, but comprehensively highlights funding, sponsorships, and international cooperation between Uganda and her partner agencies. The school's curriculum is carpentry and joinery, motor vehicle mechanics, building and concrete practice. None of these courses are anywhere in the sign-text.

Near the monument is a signpost for 'Help Age International', with logo, emblem, and mission statement. This logo, the map of Uganda, with six arches, or semi-circular shapes at the right top of the map, is also replete with a business message, which reads 'Health Alert', Caring for children today to secure tomorrow'. A supplementary text reads:

'Let's support older persons who are caregivers for the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) so that the children access better education'.

Midway down the sign plate we see another logo for Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO), and that of Caritas. TPO is a rights'-based NGO that supports and works with local communities, civil society organisations, and government to meet social protection, psychosocial, and mental health needs of vulnerable persons. Caritas is a faith-based organisation with similar interventions. Below is the electronic and postal address of Acholi Religious Leaders Initiative (ARLI), a religious organisation

that mediates peace, human rights, and transitional processes in northern Uganda. The sign-text therefore shows relations that the war has created, with local, trans-local, national, and international agencies.⁶ Of key significance is how the sign-text reflects its important subject of intervention, stated as the need to protect orphans, and other vulnerable categories, and to revitalise the education sector, which was very badly affected by the war. In that sense, there is a logical connection between this sign-text and that of Attiak Technical School. We can argue that this sign-text mobilises intervention for rebuilding northern Uganda. Yet, a critical analysis indicates that orphans and vulnerable persons are actually subordinated categories in the text. The primary appeal is to support older persons, given that they are caregivers to orphans and vulnerable persons. The beneficiary target group is not orphans, the maimed, widows, or any such categories badly affected by the war. This category is simply mobilised rhetorically to experiment on a new project—the care of elderly persons. The question, though, is whether the care of such category is the most important area of need in northern Uganda at this time. I would argue the contrary. In Acholi, in particular, and northern Uganda as a whole, strong kinship networks take care of the communities' senior citizens. Whereas compassion for older people sounds noble, it is also odd that the rhetoric of orphanhood and vulnerability of war victims is conscripted to achieve it. Three powerful NGOs are behind this single project, namely TPO, Caritas, and Help Age International. Their identities, logos, and mission statements stand out prominently in the sign-texts. How three NGOs duplicate roles of caring for the aged, which in any case, has local mechanisms to handle, is quite disturbing. In my numerous conversations with LCs and clan leaders in both Lango and Acholi, I learnt that traditional mechanisms of caring for the aged is handled through kinship networks. Clan chiefs or elders task children and relatives to take care of the elderly, with prescribed punishments for their neglect, including caning, fines, social stigmatisation, etc. Also true is that community vigilantes mobilised by local council leaders have programs that mobilise the youth and other able-bodied persons to help disabled and aging persons.

Cultural Evangelism vs. Memory

War in northern Uganda created opportunities for NGOs from different parts of the world to test how the cultural landscapes and social mindsets

⁶ See examples of these relations in chapter five.

of northern Uganda can be remodelled along standards imported from alien cultural geographies. This section shows how NGOs translate or contextualise local memories of war into their business agenda, or as cultural laboratories in which social policies can be experimented.

Near the monument, we find a large NGO billboard with texts written in Acholi language, such as: *'Wege kikome kelo Gen ikin Gangi wa'*, 'Real husbands create hope in our communities'. Beneath this text is a picture of a man washing clothes with his wife or, more accurately, helping his wife wash clothes. A child stands by, smiling. The text leaves a large space for those who consider themselves 'real husbands' to append their signatures. Below, is the emblem for United States Agency for International Development (USAID). A step lower, is the picture of a police officer carrying a child with his wife standing by. There is another picture of a playground showing adults playing with children. Underneath are logos for the Institute of Reproductive Health, and Save the Children in Uganda.

The billboard is laden with written texts, pictorials, and emblems suggesting appeals for behavioural change. Its genre, one would say, is advocacy, showing a consortium of NGOs in some kind of a civilising mission. The main text is written in bullet points, in a tone that is bantering, prescriptive, instructive, and challenging—particularly, if any one dared call himself a 'real' husband. Bullet one: *'Wego kikome kwanyo cawa me bedo kacel ki min-ot ki lutino'*, 'A real husband takes time to stay together with his wife and children'. Bullet two: *'Wego kikome nywako tam dok winyo lok pa dako ne ki pa lutino ne'*, 'A real husband shares thoughts and listens to his wife and children'. Bullet three: *'Wego kikome pwonyo lutino labongo gero'*, 'A real husband teaches his children without being aggressive'. The instruction continues up to ten bullet points, with messages that barely conceal derogatory commentaries on patriarchal practices in Acholi culture. This billboard's proximity to the monument is not accidental. The location is near a sub county headquarters, police post, mosque, community Internet kiosk, grocery shops, and about half a dozen restaurants. Being a relatively well-populated area, the site is strategic enough for a billboard. The intellectual forces behind these messages are the two NGOs mentioned earlier, in collaboration with their funders, USAID. These strongly instructive and prescriptive messages are clearly coming from outside the mainstream Acholi cultural locus. The billboard associates the monument with an image of a cultural modernity that has come to shake the foundations of patriarchy and male dominance in domestic spaces. The empty space inviting signatures had none. From the time I first visited the place in November 2013, up until April 2015, no signatures had been appended. Ironically, in this area, 'Save the Children

in Uganda' conducts community outreach programs, an 'aggressive' cultural evangelism, in which they comb through villages to transform what they deem negative gender mindsets among the Acholi. There is, of course, a frame of thought which argues that heritage text preoccupies itself with reclaiming, remodelling, and regenerating (Peterson 2015, 15, 18). While that is true, what concerns survivor communities today is not the memory of how their ancestors erred in domestic relations, but rather how they can escape the economic, social, and psychological aftermath of war and mass violence.

I would like to link these billboards and signposts with their advertising and marketing contents to an event I witnessed on 22nd April 2015, at the burial of an old woman, *Imat* Esterina Aling, in Kal Ward, Attiak Trading centre.⁷ I was in Attiak for my fieldwork but, because I wanted to negotiate better working relationships with my informants, I would attend funerals and other social functions in their villages whenever it was convenient for me. Kal Ward, where *Imat* Esterina was being buried, is located at Attiak Trading Centre, 300 metres away from Attiak memorial site. At the burial, local council officials gave stern warnings against burying dead bodies in the town council. They informed mourners that the government had already issued a road enlargement plan for the area, which automatically barred residents from burying dead bodies, or putting up unauthorised buildings in the area. The LCs (I and III) also declared that politicking had been banned from funeral functions.⁸ More interesting was a man who stood up to give a eulogy for the deceased, and veered off, to advertise the sale of his three sheep. His behaviour attracted strong condemnation from the LC officials, who said that such behaviour showed total insensitivity to the bereaved family. This mourner, doubling as salesman, exploited the burial of *Imat* Esterina as an opportunity to advertise the sale of his animals. There is no difference between what this man did, and what 'Save the Children', 'Institute of Reproductive Health', and USAID are doing in Attiak and other memorial spaces in northern Uganda. The signposts, billboards, logos, emblems, and mission statements show how situations of war have created business opportunities that have given visibility to the initially invisible NGOs. Many of them use the platform of war to proclaim missions that only have semblances of post-war reconstruction.

⁷ 'Imat' is a worthy title of respect for an old woman, or any woman that the community deems respectable, even if she is not of old age.

⁸ Local Council is a structure of local government in Uganda. It is hierarchised from level I-V. Level I is in charge of a village, II is in charge of a parish, III (Sub County), IV municipality, and LCV is the political president of a district.

Thus, signposts leading to memorial sites are often like an art gallery of organisations from different parts of the world, using war memorial spaces to advertise their identities and business interests in the guise of humanitarianism. Signposts are texts and metatexts with specific authors. They are metatexts because they comment on other texts, in this case, the narrative of war memorial, and humanitarian interventions. Behind signposts, are artists (sign-writers), who are also commissioned to execute their art by corporate bodies interested in war history and its transitional affairs. In a sense, these sign-writers are also authors involved in a corporate project of creating a monument, and its external parts. At Barlonyo, for instance, the signpost reads:

‘Welcome to Barlonyo Memorial Ground:
Prayer Day 21st February Every Year
Designated and Manufactured by Standard Signs (U) Ltd.
Donated by Hon. Omara Geoffrey Adigi,
Member of Parliament for Erute County North’.

While the signpost alerts readers to the prayer day, it also advertises Standard Signs, a company owned by the area Member of Parliament, Geoffrey Omara Adigi. Hon. Adigi is himself a professional sign-writer. This signpost advertises his political candidacy in the area. Such multiple functions illustrate the sense in which sign-texts exalt memories that may not necessarily be of war or mass violence. On signposts, are sign-texts inscribed in colours of artworks, which may be from traditions alien to the cultural geographies of war memorial sites. This vast array of externalities, flooding textual spaces of war memorials, definitely impacts ‘understanding’ and ‘meaning’ (Harris 1988, 63).

Barlonyo’s signpost is also an evangelistic text in a religious context. “Welcome to Barlonyo”, the sign-text reads, “Prayer Day, 21st February Every Year”. The idea of Prayer Day connects the memorial to religious institutions, which from the very beginning developed a deep interest in the social politics of memorials. This is probably linked to the central role played by Acholi Religious Leaders Initiative (ARPI) in advocating for a peaceful end of conflict in northern Uganda (Latigo 2008, 97). The ARLI participated in the Juba Peace talks, fought for the passing of the Amnesty Act in 1999, and was long a fearless critic of the UPDF’s mistreatment of civilians (2008, 97). Since most of these memorials are seen as peace memorials, it is only logical that the religious organisations take centre stage. Commemorations are often dominated by prayer activities. The 2015 memorial prayer in Attiak was presided over by Archbishop John Baptist Odama of the Gulu Archdiocese. That of Barlonyo was celebrated

by Bishop John Charles Odurkami of the Lango Diocese, and Bishop Tom Ibrahim Okello of Elim Pentecostal Ministries. Little wonder that most of the memorials also bear the Christian identity of the cross. The work of healing and providing psychosocial support was conducted by the church and faith-based NGOs like Children of Hope, World Vision, Hope Again. The space occupied by faith-based organisations at memorial sites is enormous, justifying the central role that they played in managing and ending the war, up to the return period. It is also true that as the war ravaged on, with civilians suffering brutality from both the rebel and government armies, many victims became so helpless that their only source of solace was God. Thus, faith-based organisations like Victory Outreach Ministries have constructed two powerful schools in Barlonyo. It is very easy for churches to appeal to their overseas funders to contribute money if it is requested in the name of helping poor victims of war.

In the meantime, memorial sites become spaces of advertisement for national and international organisations, singing and reciting litanies of rehabilitation, settlement, healing and the like. To be tight on memory of war and nothing else, monuments would rather be read as close texts. Things known about the author may become inhibitors to the exact memories that we want to keep. This is not to prescribe a unilateral mode of reading material objects, because war itself mobilises resources through monuments to offset its own detriments. On that note, we then study the significances that exist between monuments and their external relations. We also study internal relations among direct objects of war, such as the organic relations between ex-combatants, the maimed, former child soldiers, widows, and orphans. Critical is the post-war relations that they have created amongst themselves. Interesting is the relations that exist between former villains like Dominic Ongwen, Kenneth Banya, Kwoyelo, and the ex-protagonists of war.

In 1999, the Ugandan government issued amnesty, which allowed former combatants, child soldiers and abductees to return home (Latigo 2008, 95-6). Most returned communities resisted former child soldiers and children born of LRA fathers. Such children were demonised, and in most cases, ostracised from their immediate and extended families. Between 2006 and 2007, United Troupers Theatre Group, funded by Sponsoring Children Uganda, staged thirty shows throughout returned communities in Lira district, to sensitise communities about the need for peaceful reintegration and reconciliation. United Troupers mirrored relationships that existed between former LRA combatants and 'ruins of war', which encompass physical ruins, the stigmatised, landmine victims, and demented persons. When, for instance, former LRA Commander Brigadier

Kenneth Banya came out of the bush, most children and orphans who had been kept out of school by the war demanded that he should be killed. Recently, survivors and victims of Barlonyo demanded that Dominic Ongwen, now in The Hague for trial, should be returned to face survivors' justice.⁹ Physical remains and ruins of war, like ruined homes, mutilated persons, graves of victims, lost land, are intrinsic details whose analysis helps us to examine the complex relationships between ex-combatants and returned communities. That is the sense in which 'intrinsic commentary' analyses structural relationships that exist within objects and texts.

Conclusion

I conclude that war monuments create alternative agencies outside what is determined by their creators (authors). In this sense, there are multiple rather than prescribed memories of war, or those determined and circulated through official narratives. This type of translation and reading of the history of mass violence can only be realised when the reading of war memorials is approached from a multidisciplinary perspective that does not only focus on the materiality of monuments, but also their surroundings. War is thus also read as opportunity, gain, and progress, rather than merely as tragedy, pain, and loss.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TRANSLATING BLACK-BOXES: THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND AFRICA

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Introduction

In this contribution, I offer some thoughts on the relationship between the social sciences and Africa, focusing on the challenge of rendering Africa intelligible through the use of concepts developed in Europe under very specific historical and political circumstances. I raise questions about the translatability of these concepts, by which I mean social scientists' ability to make these concepts useful in rendering social phenomena intelligible in Africa.

I make use of two crucial insights. One draws from the work of the Ghanaian philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, on conceptual translation. I explore his idea of “untranslatability” and, in particular, how it can be used to find pathways out of the problems posed by the deployment of the social scientific conceptual apparatus to Africa. The second insight comes from the work of the French sociologist, Bruno Latour, and relates to his black-box metaphor which he uses in his study of science and technology to describe how science conceals the processes through which it produces technology. I apply this metaphor of black-boxing to social science concepts to draw attention to the problem raised by their deployment in the study of Africa. This problem, as I argue, arises out of the reliance of the social sciences on empirical generalisations exacerbated by the politics of knowledge shaping the relationship between Europe and Africa. I illustrate my point with a discussion of the concept of “democracy”.

Research as translation

Our knowledge of social phenomena in Africa today comes to us mainly from the social sciences. What we know is a function of how the social sciences produce knowledge. This is not to say that there are no other sources of knowledge of Africa. Indeed, indigenous forms of knowledge, everyday knowledge of all types, including prejudice and idealisation, also contribute to our fund of what we know about Africa. However, to claim that the social sciences provide us with the bulk of our knowledge is to say that authoritative knowledge of Africa is based on the contribution of the social sciences. This raises a number of problems worth discussing in the context of a reflection on translation in research.

First, I will define translation as the simple action of rendering something articulated in one language intelligible in another language. The key word here is “language”. It does not refer only to what is generally known as language, i.e. a system of words used by a human community to communicate, but also more broadly to any form of conveying meaning with reference to a conceptual apparatus. In this sense, science generally, and the social sciences in particular, are languages to the extent that they draw from a conceptual apparatus to provide meaningful descriptions and accounts of phenomena. They have a vocabulary on the basis of which they seek to render the world and the particular object addressed by their discipline visible and real. Translation in this connection consists in making use of the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences to render phenomena understood as socially intelligible. In other words, translation is a fundamental activity in the production of social scientific knowledge. In fact, one could argue that all forms of knowledge production function in a similar way. In short, social science knowledge stands and falls with the validity of the choices researchers make concerning how concepts articulate with phenomena.

Specific problems arise in the relationship between the social sciences and knowledge of Africa. These problems are related to the genealogy of the social scientific conceptual apparatus, and also the very nature of social scientific knowledge. With respect to the genealogical side, the problem pertains to the context-bound nature of social science language. The social sciences are part and parcel not only of an intellectual agenda born out of the Enlightenment project, but also commentaries on very specific social, political and economic circumstances obtaining in a very particular place at a very specific time, namely nineteenth-century Europe. As for the nature of social scientific knowledge, the issue here pertains to the difficulty of gathering the amount of observational data necessary to

produce sufficiently sharp conceptual tools. I discuss these briefly, starting with the genealogy of the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences.

The genealogy of the social scientific conceptual apparatus raises three problems. First, to say that the social sciences are an expression of the Enlightenment Project is to suggest that they speak a very specific language bearing the basic cultural assumptions underlying the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment. One crucial assumption therein consists in the idea that whatever can be said about local conditions can yield claims which may be generalised on a universal scale. This, in itself, is not necessarily controversial. It is in the nature of knowledge production to assume under specifiable conditions that the particular entails the general, and the general the particular. The problem arises when it comes to specifying the conditions under which such inferences can be legitimately made.

Second, and in response to the problem of specifying the conditions under which the particular may imply the general, is the fact that in the very specific context of Enlightenment claims about human reason and progress, the assumption was taken to mean that European experience provided a template for the right interpretation of universal experience. The European appropriation of the world through colonial rule and the fashioning of human life in the image of European culture ensured that this assumption gained the status of certainty. Most critiques of knowledge of the Other (for example, Said 1978, Mudimbe 1988, Mignolo 2005) can be understood as rejections of this assumption. They make the point that other parts of the world can only be rendered intelligible by inscribing their histories into a European grand history, a claim which they reject.

Third, under such discursive conditions, applying the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences became an exercise in commenting on the world from a particular perspective. This perspective happens to be European, given the role Europe played – and continues to play – in the development and refinement of scientific tools. This is what Samir Amin (2009) described as “Eurocentrism”, and Jack Goody (2006) as “The Theft of History”. In other words, the concepts deployed to account for social phenomena in Africa were rendered intelligible by a world vision that spoke to a particular place and moment in the history of mankind.

These problems do not undermine the potential truthfulness of the claims entailed by those assumptions. They do, however, emphasise the particular circumstances under which applying the vocabulary of the social sciences to realities other than nineteenth-century Europe takes place. The charge of ethnocentrism levelled by non-European scholars against knowledge produced within this context captures the discomfort created

by these problems. It has fuelled several criticisms, most of them attacking a strawman by the name of “Western epistemology” and conjuring up visions of science positing the incommensurability of ways of knowing as well as ways of validating knowledge (Mignolo 2005, Santos 2007).

Paradoxically, the intelligibility of these criticisms, even from a “Western” perspective, has done much to cast doubts over their intellectual viability. One may find Voltaire particularly objectionable with his uncompromising defence of the Enlightenment (see Gray 2011), but one should not forget that thinkers like Montaigne and Montesquieu already foreshadowed some of the criticism that critics of the Enlightenment have been voicing. Montaigne’s “Of Cannibals” is a powerful critique of the myopia of local ways of seeing making claims to universal validity. By the same token, Montesquieu’s uncovering in *The Persian Letters* of the possibility of turning the gaze back upon Europe bears testimony to the problematic nature of a blanket term like “Western epistemology” to criticise forms of knowledge production that we object to. Peter Gay (1995) was not completely wrong when he described the Enlightenment Project as a cluster of ideas having at its core the idea of criticism. This key insight is central to any critical engagement with the Project, for in some ways it also explains why a critical attitude towards the Enlightenment is possible.

Perhaps what the criticism of the Enlightenment Project coming from the rest of the world may have underestimated is the need to make some useful distinctions in how to think about the categories making up the vocabulary of the social sciences.

Categories and Translation

First, we should make a distinction between concepts and categories. The vocabulary of the social sciences consists of categories in the Aristotelian sense, i.e. statements about the social world without which it would be impossible to think or speak meaningfully about it. In a sense they are concepts. However, it seems appropriate to reserve the notion “concept” to the more restricted context of operationalisation, as once suggested by Paul Lazarsfeld when he introduced the language of variables into the methods of social science research.

Three types of categories in the vocabulary of the social sciences are worth considering in a discussion of the role of translation in the appropriation of ways of meaning making. These are (a) conceptual, (b) descriptive, and (c) analytical. All refer to how researchers retrieve meaning by constituting objects as entities which can be rendered intelligible in discursive ways. In other words, and as I have argued

elsewhere (Macamo 2016), the categories which are constitutive of the vocabulary of the social sciences are premised on the assumption that that to which they refer is knowable in the first place. Secondly, what is knowable is knowable from within a framework of intelligibility that constitutes those objects in the first place. I have elaborated on this point in an earlier publication (Macamo 2016) by claiming that there is no such thing as knowledge of Africa. What we describe as knowledge of Africa refers to the process through which we constitute Africa as an object, such that what we can describe as knowledge of Africa would refer to what we can legitimately claim to know.

Let us start with conceptual categories. Categories are conceptual when they meet two basic criteria. First, they should enable us to identify some essential feature of the world. This is important as it justifies the use of the term “category” to label them. Second, categories are conceptual when they help us to see the world in a new light, to ask relevant questions pertaining to the new perspective and to act (or make sense of action) in novel ways. I understand a conceptual category in the sense developed by Peter Winch ([1958] 1990) in the most fruitful manner in his discussion of what he called the “internality of social relations”.¹ He gives the example of the discovery of a new germ which causes a certain disease and the discovery of the germ theory of disease (see Winch 1990, p. 121). According to Winch, the latter is more consequential than the former. Discovering a new germ that causes a disease takes place within the framework of a theory, the germ theory of disease, whereas the discovery of the germ theory of disease represents a whole new way of thinking about (and acting in relation to) disease and general social relations.

Next, categories can be descriptive. In fact, any category can be descriptive, and most are used in this way in social science research. Descriptive categories refer to purported properties of natural or social phenomena that are discursively identified through operational definitions. In other words, we assume that the category which we have in mind can be found in the social world. However, since the category is an abstraction formed in our mind to make sense of reality, we have no direct access to the things in the world to which the category refers. To grasp them, we need to define the category in terms of its intensional and extensional properties.² This is the realm of what we might call correspondence

¹ Peter Winch argues that a new way of talking that can count as a new idea entails new social relationships. In other words, social relations are internal to the extent that they exist through ideas (Winch 1990, p. 123).

² Concepts are said to consist of extension (i.e. what exists in the real world) and intension (i.e. the attributes of something). The extensional dimension of “cats”

theory, drawing from the methodology of the social sciences. According to this theory, conducting research is identifying the things in the real world that are thought to be the empirical reference of the terms used to describe them. This approach to empirical research has also, rather pejoratively, been known as “operationalism”, i.e. the belief that whatever concepts measure is the thing itself.³

Finally, there are also analytical categories which are notions through which we can disassemble the world into its constituent parts in order to reassemble it in theoretically meaningful ways. The metaphor comes from qualitative research (Yin 2011; Dey 1993), and hinges upon a very specific meaning of the word “analysis”. It translates into identifying the constituent parts or elements of an object, such as water from the point of view of chemistry. Chemically speaking, water consists of a certain number of hydrogen and oxygen molecules. Analysing water, in this sense, means establishing whether beyond these two elements there might be more. This is how chemists go about establishing whether water has been contaminated, for instance. Suspicious arise if they find more than the molecules of oxygen and hydrogen.

On the surface, analytical categories may appear similar to descriptive categories, yet they are not. Descriptive categories are about how we organise our observations of the social world; they give us instructions on how and what data to collect. Analytical categories, in contrast, are about how we make sense of the data making up our observations. In this sense, they give us instructions on how to interpret our data. While descriptive categories break down into themselves by way of operational definitions of key terms, analytical categories are elements of a whole. They are taken apart and put together again. In some important respects, descriptive categories call for deductive procedures, while analytical categories are retrieved through inductive procedures.

In the debate over the ethnocentrism of the social sciences, these distinctions are important, as we risk placing too much emphasis on politically motivated concerns to the detriment of scholarly issues. To what extent is the discomfort caused by the vocabulary of the social sciences an expression of misgivings towards how categories are used? Could it not be the case that non-European scholars take exception to how conceptual categories are used as if they were descriptive or analytical?

refers to all the cats that exist in the world. The intensional dimension of “cats”, however, refers to cats’ attributes, i.e. that they have fur, whiskers, are supple, etc. Usually, operational definitions focus on the attributes of a concept.

³ The classic example of operationalism is the belief that intelligence is whatever is measured by an IQ test.

To illustrate this problem, let us take the concept of “primitive” that was often used to lend force to the criticisms. Although infrequently used today, it was a legitimate concept up until the period of African independence, especially within the context of social and cultural anthropology. Its use informed much of the hostility shown against this discipline, and the suspicion that it had been put in the service of colonialism.

The anthropologist Adam Kuper (2005) has shown the shortcomings of the concept of primitive society without relying too heavily on accusations of racism or ethnocentrism. Kuper documented the limitations of the concept by pointing out how the theoretical claims made on its behalf failed to live up to the purported descriptive and analytical import. He explains the persistence of the idea of primitive society within European and American intellectual circles:

None of this would be particularly remarkable if the notion of primitive society was substantially accurate. But it is not. The whole conception is fundamentally unsound. There is not even a sensible way in which one can specify what a ‘primitive society’ is. The term implies some historical point of reference. It presumably defines a type of society ancestral to more advanced forms, on the analogy of an evolutionary history of natural species. However, human societies cannot be traced back to a single point of origin. Nor is there any way of reconstituting prehistoric social forms, classifying them, and aligning them in a time series. There are no fossils of social organisation (Kuper, 2005, p. 6).

There is no denying that the persistence of the concept owed to the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment which led scholars to consider the concept theoretically and empirically viable. However, the shortcomings of the concept as such could be better accounted for otherwise. It was not the ethnocentrism of its purveyors that was to blame, but rather the failure of the concept to do the job which it was expected to do. As a conceptual category, it gave substance to a perspective on the world that supported a coherent account of human evolution. It set the terms under which new objects could be discovered and made visible. However, as a descriptive category it failed the empirical test of equipping researchers with useful operational definitions. Grasping “primitive society” relied heavily on definitional contrivance speaking more to the researcher’s subjective sensibilities than to objective criteria. Against this background, it became next to impossible to produce data on “primitive society” likely to yield workable analytical insights.

We have been discussing problems bearing on genealogical issues. Other problems pertain to the nature of the social sciences. These refer to

one basic challenge, namely the challenge of generalising from particular observations.⁴ This has been particularly developed by the French sociologist, Raymond Boudon (1980, pp. 143-46) in his thought-provoking and ever-pertinent discussion of the philosophical challenges faced by the social sciences. His claim is the following:

One explanation which is often put forward appeals to the specificity of social phenomena: human phenomena and social phenomena in particular do not lend themselves to analysis so well as physical phenomena; in principle, sociological analysis cannot be as rigorous as physical observation. However, a closer inspection reveals that the characteristic predominance in sociology of empirical generalisations over theories in the strict sense is largely attributable to material constraints (Boudon, 1980, p.143)

He makes the point that significant data is necessary to produce a sufficiently substantive proposition in the social sciences. Using the example of social mobility, he notes that a study aimed at establishing the influence of certain factors on social mobility might require several years of study with the same cohort. Moreover, for each individual in the cohort, thousands of observations might be necessary, rendering the whole study unwieldy. It is no wonder that the best that social scientists can do is to produce empirical generalisations as opposed to theories, for these require testable propositions which, in turn, rely on a solid relationship between concepts and the reality described.

The broader question raised by this insight is the following: What is Africa a case of? To the extent that translation consists in deploying a conceptual apparatus to render an object visible, Africa could be understood as a case of whatever is assumed by the conceptual apparatus. In some ways, even, it would be fair to suggest that the process through which Africa is made a case of whatever is assumed by the conceptual apparatus is actually constituted as real by the social sciences. This is in some ways the sense in which Mudimbe claimed that Africa was an invention (Mudimbe 1988). The order of the discourse producing a specific representation of the continent relied heavily on a conceptual apparatus that constructed the object.

Translation is possible because researchers rely on the particular vocabulary of their respective disciplines to render things visible. The crucial issue in this contribution is whether this process of translation at

⁴ This issue is being addressed in the social sciences, especially by Charles Ragin and Howard S. Becker (1992) in their discussion of the notion of a “case” in research.

the centre of social science knowledge production poses an additional problem to researchers of Africa. In other words, what additional translational challenges are posed to the social sciences when their conceptual apparatus is summoned up to render other realities intelligible? My claim is that additional challenges are indeed to be found in the idiosyncratic nature of the social sciences as discussed above. This nature fosters a very specific way of using concepts that appears to be hostile to an appropriate description and analysis of phenomena. I describe the conceptual apparatus deployed by the social sciences in rendering Africa intelligible as a black-box.

Conceptual apparatus as a black-box

Bruno Latour defines the process of black-boxing as “[T]he way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one needs only focus on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become” (Latour 1999). Latour made this statement in the context of his work on science and technology, more particularly his research on the production of scientific facts. He wanted to draw attention to the complex and controversial history that produced scientific theories.

In other words, behind the façade of very neat and straightforward theories lies a history of academic controversies, hostilities and competition, a complex network of economic, ideological and perhaps even cultural givens that bring researchers together to produce artefacts and scientific certainties. This applies also to technological artefacts. Those who use them do not need to know their history, nor must they know how a given technology works to make use of it. Latour and fellow science and technology studies researchers used these insights to add to their research programme the need to open up the black boxes in order to understand the emergence of scientific facts.

It is this aspect of black-boxing that I find useful in considering translation in the production of knowledge on Africa. In very important respects, the difficulty of rendering Africa intelligible through the use of the vocabulary of the social sciences is intimately linked to the process of black-boxing which the social scientific conceptual apparatus undergoes when it is uncritically applied to Africa. This process consists of several moments. The first occurs at the intersection between the claims of the Enlightenment and Europe’s historical relationship with Africa. As suggested above, this point of intersection is marked by the assumption

that scientific knowledge is by definition universally valid and that what we know about Europe is consistent with what we can know about the world. Within the context of disciplines relying on empirical generalisations (as discussed above) it is easy to assume that the conceptual apparatus developed at this very crucial moment in Europe's history provides an adequate framework to render other parts of the world intelligible.

The second moment consists in positing the current condition of European society as the purposeful outcome of socially engineered processes of change. In so doing, we lose sight of the contingent nature of some of these outcomes and fall hostage to a teleological view of human history. We reproduce this teleology in concepts that are more determinate than the historical processes which produced them in the first place.

The third moment conflates procedural knowledge with propositional knowledge. The conceptual apparatus of the social sciences becomes a normative vocabulary setting out how the social world should be by assuming that we know everything to be known about it. To put it differently, knowledge production is not guided by the need to discover new facts (propositional knowledge). Rather, it is an exercise in determining how reality can be aligned with our concepts.

Using vocabularies produced in these ways places constraints on our ability to render Africa intelligible. This is not because Africa is different in any essential way, or because the concepts which we use are fundamentally "European". Rather, the constraints emerge because the processes of black-boxing that produced the vocabularies on the basis of which we seek to render Africa intelligible reduce knowledge production to the level of a mere exercise in procedural ability. To use Noam Chomsky's helpful terminology, we are confronted with the tension between competence and performance. Procedural ability tests the researcher's and the object's ability to apply or conform to the normative content of concepts. This is in opposition to what is actually happening, i.e. how individuals perform. While we can expect individuals to do the right thing, what actually happens is a completely different story subject to all sorts of influences and factors that render social outcomes (and knowledge for that matter) in principle contingent.

The problem, therefore, is not so much that Europe has stolen history (Goody 2006) than that it has forced upon the world ways of describing it. These ways take Europe's own history for granted and imbue the conceptual apparatus of the social sciences with the normative legitimacy to conflate European contingent outcomes with historical truth. The Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu has made some useful comments on these issues in connection with his concern with cultural universals

(Wiredu 2003). His most basic claim is that the existence of cultural universals is the basic premise upon which the possibility of intercultural communication and understanding rests.

As he perceptively argues, “In truth, the ability to perceive the untranslatability of an expression from one language into another is a mark of linguistic understanding more profound than the ability to do routine translation. The second ability involves merely moving from the one language into the other, whereas the first involves stepping above both on to a meta-platform, so to speak, an ability that has not seemed to come easily to some students of ‘other cultures’. Untranslatability, then, can be a problem, but it does not necessarily argue unintelligibility” (Wiredu, p. 34). Wiredu’s faith in intelligibility rests on his belief that the claim to understand something is equivalent to the ability to grasp “the conditions under which it is true to say that [a] concept holds”.

This is precisely what is at issue in the translation of the vocabulary of the social sciences. To what extent can it be claimed that the conditions under which the concepts hold are true? The process of black-boxing erases these conditions from the semantic fields covered by the concepts to the extent that it turns them into idealised summaries of complex histories. I will illustrate this briefly, drawing from the concept of “democracy”.

How democratic is democracy?

It has become a truism to claim that democracy is a quintessentially European concept. Underlying this claim is the equally trivial assertion that European democracy is an heir to Greek and Roman political cultures (see Raaflaub 2007, Lloyd 1988), both of which draw their ethical coherence from a so-called Judeo-Christian ethical tradition. The most remarkable aspect of the claim, however, concerns two central beliefs. One belief holds that the liberal democratic order prevailing in many successful West and Central European states amounts to the logical fulfilment of the development of democracy that was envisaged and practised by the ancient Greeks and Romans. For this reason, many aspects of democratic practice and theory can easily be referred back to Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire with a strong sense of continuity. The other belief maintains that European democracy is not only a unique European achievement owing to its Greco-Roman traditions, but also a template for the rest of the world.

European countries happen to be among the most prosperous in the world, and this prosperity has often been associated with their democratic political arrangements. A considerable body of literature thrives on

making just this point. This is, in turn, picked up by the international development apparatus to suggest and promote the view that democracy is a pre-condition for economic prosperity. In other words, developing countries remain undeveloped because of their weak democratic traditions and institutions. This means that the word democracy does not necessarily describe a political system, but instead celebrates the exploits of one culture over the failings of others.

Two things are remarkable about this understanding of democracy. One is the manner in which it conceals the messy history that constituted it. The other is its ability to present democracy as a necessary historical outcome, i.e. one which is not subject to contingencies of any sort. History, however, tells us a different story, unless, of course, only the post-World War II period counts. It is easy to forget that up until just before the First World War only three countries in Europe were republics (France, Switzerland and Portugal, the latter only from 1911 onwards; see Hoppe 2001, ix). Democracy in the modern sense of the term, i.e. as universal suffrage and citizenship rights and legal protection of social rights is, historically, a very recent phenomenon (Chang 2007).

The main problem with this account is that it extols the virtues of an accomplishment, i.e. successful democracy without doing the more relevant thing, i.e. looking into the process which led to the outcome. If one looks at democracy as a process, and not as an outcome, one is less likely to be impatient with Africa. The continent's experience as it strives to consolidate democracy mirrors the European path towards democracy. Seen in this way, it makes little sense to blame Africans for failing to be democratic, for the experience of those who are now successfully democratic tells us their struggles were similar. There is nothing intrinsically "African" about the failure of democracy, nor is there anything intrinsically "Greek" about the success of democracy in Europe.

Perhaps it is not democracy that leads to development, but rather development which eases the way for democracy. This insight is not new. The experience of countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Indonesia, and indeed Western Europe itself, seems to suggest a stronger correlation between economic growth and subsequent demands for democracy. Charles Tilly (2004) has convincingly shown that democracy in Europe was a contingent outcome of protest and contention which did not necessarily aim at democracy. The difficulties experienced by African countries in securing the approval of colonial powers for their demands for independence underline this point. The arguments used to delay independence to Africans were similar to those deployed by European political elites to delay universal suffrage, including female suffrage.

Representative democracy was, in fact, a compromise solution that sought to accommodate popular demands for more participation and the elites' fear that the people might not be mature enough to govern itself (Hoppe 2001).

To be sure, democracy has an intrinsic value and that alone gives us enough reasons to strive for it. What is at issue in this discussion, however, is whether democracy has the instrumental value which it is ascribed in its relationship to African development. My claim is that the pride of place given to the instrumental value of democracy has undermined social scientists' ability to account for social, political and economic phenomena in Africa for two main reasons. First, by stressing this instrumental value, researchers have tended to look at democracy as an explanation, rather than as a concept in need of explanation. It is easy to claim that countries do not develop—because they are not democratic enough, but what that exactly means is a mystery because clearly failure to democratise is what needs to be accounted for. Most attempts at explaining the failure of democracy are tautological in the sense of merely describing the problem. A country or people do not become democratic simply by virtue of wishing to be democratic. It is not automatic, and, for this reason, it is analytically unhelpful to say democracy failed because politicians conduct fraudulent elections, do not accept good governance, and violate human rights.

Secondly, the instrumental value of democracy blunts interest in the political and social processes unleashed by democratisation and how they may, in turn, undermine democracy itself. Freedom of expression, to take just one example, enhances the potential of public scrutiny. This may be good for governance and accountability. However, what freedom of expression does first and foremost is not to enable society to reap its benefits. It poses a problem to be tackled. This right must be protected, also against the reaction of those who may feel to be above it.⁵ This right might be misused to insult, slander or simply gain political advantage. The problem here is to think that democracy is only democracy when it is successful. Such an understanding of the concept makes it analytically useless. Democracy can only be useful as a concept if it not only describes what is positive about it, but also everything else that becomes possible when democracy becomes the only game in town. The analytically interesting problem in this connection is that some, if not most, of the

⁵ There is nothing specifically “African” about intolerance towards such freedoms. Richard Nixon’s impeachment in the United States should serve as a useful reminder, if any were required, in times when “fake news” and “alternative facts” have entered our political vocabulary.

problems confronting African states are the result of the presence of democracy. Our understanding of this notion, therefore, must be sensitive to both sides of the coin.

To put it differently, democracy did not come to these societies as a smooth enactment of a cultural script. It came to them through processes that could have yielded different outcomes. This point bears on the second embarrassment. The struggles that produced democracy in some European countries produced fascism, communism, and civil wars in others. Why fascism in Germany and Italy, communism in Russia, and the civil war in Spain are any less offshoots of European cultural traditions than British parliamentary monarchy, US federal arrangements, and Swiss direct democracy is hard to understand. What is more, reference to such ethical standards constitutive of democracy as liberty, human dignity and equality has not prevented European countries, even those who have been most successful in entrenching democracy, from violating them in the name of democracy. The late extension of the vote to considerable sectors of society (women, the working classes, etc.), or even withholding certain rights to certain groups for a long time (the non-extension of toleration to atheists, for instance) seem to undermine the claim of an elective affinity between European values and democracy.

The other remarkable element in the prevailing understanding of democracy bears on how it is seen as a necessary historical outcome. As the discussion of its messy history already indicates, the problem with this assumption is that any attempt at accounting for deviant cases (fascism, communism, civil strife, to name just these three) ends up being circular. In fact, the attempt at explaining deviant cases undermines the basic assumption according to which there is an elective affinity between democracy and Europe. Luebbert (1991), for example, explains the emergence of liberalism, fascism and social democracy in the interwar years in Europe. He does so with reference to the emergence of a working class and how it fought for the accommodation of its interests under the very specific conditions of the countries within which the struggles took place. Much earlier than Luebbert, Barrington Moore, Jr. (1974) had searched for the origins of dictatorship and democracy in the relationship between lords and peasants prior to industrialisation. These are just two examples of the limits of accounts of democracy which do not appear to contemplate the possibility that, far from being a fulfilment of a historical script, democracy may have been, as rightly noted by Tilly (2004), a contingent outcome of processes of contention not necessarily committed to the idea of democracy.

If we open the black-box of democracy, i.e. the history which constituted it in the first place, what we see is a serious conflict between the genealogy within which democracy is inscribed and the empirical generalisations that are made on its behalf. On the one hand, genealogy posits democracy as an Enlightenment virtue while also remaining silent on everything that went wrong. On the other hand, the proclamation of democracy as an empirical generalisation is achieved at the expense of glossing over its potentially contingent nature. This conflict is at the heart of what I claim to be the untranslatability of the concept of democracy. When attempts are made to apply the concept of democracy to the study of Africa, the problem that arises is neither the much criticised ethnocentric nature of the concept, nor the extent to which it is an empty signifier. The issue is rather ensuring that its potential untranslatability does not undermine intelligibility.

The trouble with black-boxes, however, is that, by concealing the history that constituted them and presenting them as empirical generalisations, they are made to impose a normative research agenda that takes what potentially constitutes it for an obstacle to democracy. To give a very broad example, the late Kenyan political scientist, Ali Mazrui, once argued that Nigeria had had a 50% regicide rate in the first twenty years of independence. Four of its eight heads of state had been killed in a violent coup d'état (Mazrui 1990). Given that democracy is understood as a political system based on the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of societal conflicts, Nigeria's high regicide rate is difficult to account for other than as some kind of deviation from a (democratic) norm. In other words, what matters in the description and analysis of Nigeria is not an explanation of the factors that are constitutive of its politics, but the country's failure to live up to the normative expectations invested upon the black-box of democracy that is brought to bear on the country.

The sense in which democracy might be the problem in Africa is, therefore, an analytical one. The African(ist) social scientific community must free itself from the normative content of concepts brought to Africa on the back of what Mahmood Mamdani once described as "history by analogy" (Mamdani 1996). The crucial question we need to work on is neither whether Africa needs democracy to develop, nor which kind of democracy. Rather, we must accept that democracy's positive attributes in themselves are not sufficient to ensure its success.

For this reason, the crucial question must concern the conditions under which democracy yields development gains or fails to do so. These conditions are the pieces of the puzzle still missing in social scientific accounts of political processes in our continent to enable us to develop a

truly vernacular conceptual vocabulary to achieve a better understanding of our own reality. The assumption that democracy has an instrumental value forces us to take for granted an idealised account of Europe's own development. Positing the possibility that democracy might be the problem frees us from that idealised account. Moreover, it holds out the promise of a more fruitful engagement with Africa's problems.

Time and again, the study of democracy in Africa flounders precisely on the opacity of the concept. This opacity is almost like the reverse of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticum. What goes on inside the prison is dissolved into the invisibility of a large empirical generalisation that places a premium on the description of the incompetence of Africans in making democracy work. The empirical generalisation ignores the performance of Africans and the importance of explicating social phenomena from within their component practices. No wonder then that some scholars have questioned democracy's compatibility with African culture. Even as the question intimates a subversive attitude towards an order of discourse that is experienced as oppressive, it can hardly be taken seriously as an act of epistemological resistance. To be sure, the nexus which makes such a question possible is the same one that imposes conceptual black-boxes as analytical grids. The incompatibility of democracy with African culture is not a finding informed by the nature of things. It manifests analytical constraints resulting from democracy as a black-box. It is because democracy translates into procedural knowledge what should in fact be the search for propositional knowledge that researchers fall prey to forms of reaction that have been described by Samir Amin (2009) as instances of provincialism, albeit in a slightly different sense.

Conclusion

The challenge of translating black-boxes, then, is the challenge of resisting approaches to research and knowledge production which take normative outcomes for granted. Research and the knowledge production accompanying it is best conducted when the tools that it deploys are used as heuristic devices. Concepts are at their best when they can be deployed such that they do not foreclose what they are likely to render visible. In some ways, then, translating black-boxes seems to require an ethnographic approach, that is, a methodological procedure grounded in the concern for a comprehensive description and documentation of a phenomenon. As far as democracy is concerned, this ethnographic procedure would be informed by the need to gather data which can be used to check on the validity of the operations that produced the empirical generalisations upon

which the notion of democracy is based. It would be geared towards identifying the crucial moments of contingency that may be construed as decisive for different kinds of outcomes without thereby assuming the normative superiority of one outcome over another.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TRANSLATING AFRICA ELSEWHERE: THE ‘TASK’ OF SHAILJA PATEL

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To the “Doors” of Abbas Kiarostami; to the Activism of Mahasweta Devi

Every translator is committed.
(J. Derrida)

In what follows, I will propose a ‘reading as translation’ that proves intimate to the textuality it reads (Spivak, 1993). My proposal is intimate to what I learn of translation in my research in the writing – theatre, performativity and visual art – of female diasporic authors. In *The Language of Cleopatra. Deconstructive Translations and Survivals* (Carotenuto, 2008), I read the Queen of the tragedy by William Shakespeare, the African woman, in her role of ‘translator’ – between Egypt and Rome, the colony and the Empire, the scene of the ‘other’ on the Renaissance stage. This role is envisioned in the dialogue, the theoretical textile woven by Deconstruction, Postcolonial Theory and Historical Materialism, around the seminal essay by Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator” (Benjamin, 1996). Provoked by the solicitations of the conference “Africa N’Ko II”, my ‘reading as translation’ chooses, in its intimacy, the life and art of another African woman, less fictional but similarly complex, who, like Cleopatra, exposed to the diaspora between the Orient and the Occident, brings to global attention the task of the female translator. Her creative commitment resounds – in music, as I will try to show – with what the German philosopher writes on the ‘problem’ of translation, rewritten – “à ma manière” – by Jacques Derrida (1985; 219), Paul de Man (1986), Gayatri C. Spivak (1993; 2000) and Teaswini Niranjana (1992).

Shailja Patel, third-generation East African Asian, born in Nairobi, migrated to America, and a founding member of Kenyans for Peace, was

named one of Fifty Inspirational African Feminists for the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. She is known for her creative activism: *Migritude*, the piece of spoken-word theatre staged in 2006. The written text in 2010¹ materialised her poetic performances, reproduced on the internet, presented at media events, and followed by a global public. Among these, I will read the poem "Drum Rider" devoted to the Zanzibar musician Bi Kidude who, after her death in 2013, has been internationally celebrated by the music documentary "As Old as my Tongue", directed by Andy Jones (2009). In his tribute to the African 'drummer', he finds inspiration in Patel's hymn.

Migritude and "Drum Rider", the encounter of performance and writing, poetry and music, signs Patel's assumption of the role of female translator of Africa 'elsewhere' – in Great Britain, America, in her returns to Kenya,² in the globalised world that loves her publications and public apparitions. *Migritude* is the *oeuvre* that narrates her 'apprentistato' of the task of 'translatoress' – herself, a woman, a female artist, as opposed to the critical debate that refers, only, and always, to the 'translator' called by the original to 'his' task of translation³ – in relation to a 'trousseaux of saris' received by her mother as a 'gift of creativity'. Benjamin says that "the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds" (1996: 258). Black thinking theorises it as the writing of "material animation, invaginated grammar, transferential graph" (Lippit, 2003: 1340). In Patel, the soft textiles reflect and expose her life and the life of Kenya, remembered and experienced – 'translated', if, as Derrida insists, "Experience is translation" (1985; 234). This translation is on the stage and in writing, through her personal exile, and in African history,

¹ On the book that 'translates' the theatre performance on the page, Patel explains, "The publication of 'Migritude' was driven by others who really wanted to see it on the page, and pushed the project forward to make it a book. And now that it's published, it's wonderful because it's being translated more and more and it just crosses borders without me, which is fabulous" (Reed, 2014).

² Remembering her return to Kenya, to the expectation that she, as all migrants, should bring something back, Patel replies: "I brought *Migritude*. A tapestry of history, politics, poetry into a suitcase, embedded in my body, rolled out into theatre. An accounting of Empire enacted on the bodies of women" (96).

³ It will be a question of 'gender'; in his essay, J. Derrida (1985, 181) notices (in parenthesis) that Benjamin never considers the task of the 'female translator': "... from the very title... Benjamin situates the *problem* ... as the problem of the translator and not that of translation (nor, be it said in passing, and the question is not negligible, that of the translatoress)". 'Female agency' is one of the main contributions offered by G. Spivak to the debate on translation (1993; 2000; see, also, Spivak 2008, which deals with the question of 'African translation').

starting with her birth in Nairobi in the 1980s, and developing in the present of the Asian diaspora in the world. Due to this legacy, Patel is twice forced to migrate, carrying the set of saris and her determination to create. To 'translate' – in *MigrITUDE* she 'animaterialises' (Moten, 2003: 18) her maternal textiles with the 'touches' of translation evoked by Benjamin; the 'caress', the 'contact' and the 'contract' with alterity as remarked by Derrida; the rhetorical alienation 'misread' by Paul de Man; the ethical and materialist praxis of 'living-in-translation' urged by Spivak and Niranjana in postcolonial times. In Patel's artistic rendering of these traits, it is the representation – of "Born to a Law", as the last poem in *MigrITUDE* titles: the 'intention', the 'declaration' and the 'execution' of her role as the female translator called by Africa to its transability, survival, afterlife.

"Drum Rider" is the poem that, in a similar way, is called into existence by the historical time of the life of Bi Kidude, after decades of musical experience in the African tradition of 'taraab'.⁴ The legacy urges the gesture of her worldly recognition: a further flight of its veils, and Patel's poetry brings on the creative scene the most radical and utopian 'promise' – "already an event" (Derrida, 1995: 191) – of the debate on translation. The task of the translator, Benjamin affirms, is to remind or to prophesise for humanity, the realm of the reconciliation, the commonality and affinity of languages, the translation bringing the language of the original to its sacred enlargement, extension and maturation, evolution and growth.⁵ In a similar way, Patel's voice, intimately translating the sound of Kidude, reaches the limitless element of air, where it unfolds the

⁴ "'Taraab' is a slow, gentle, and nostalgic music, that mixes Kiswahili, Arabic and old Indian Bollywood music from the 1940s-50s. In "It's Just Not Fun Anymore", Laura Fair traces the journey of Taarab through the Zanzibar Revolution: in the early '60s, Taarab clubs in Zanzibar were controlled by women, who decided the audiences, bands, and content of what was sung and produced. In 1964, the year of the Zanzibar Revolution, under the Afro-Shirazi Party, the state took control of the clubs, appointing men to decide what women would perform.

⁵ The flight of Patel's saris is meant "to enlarge... the audience's concepts of what is desirable. To make rage beautiful and grief compelling. To keep expanding the definition of beauty" (81). In another context (Byrd, 2014), she uses the term 'amplification': "Nobody on the planet is really silent. There is nobody on the planet who is unable to speak for themselves. The difference in power and the severe inequality comes in who has a platform which allows them to be heard... my job as a poet is never to claim to speak for anyone else and certainly never to insult anyone else by telling them they're voiceless. It is to use the spaces that I am privileged to occupy and the platforms that I am offered to *amplify* the voices of those who need to be heard" (my emphasis).

reminder and the prophecy of the – utopian and earthly, certainly African – messianic affinity of the languages of poetry and music. “Drum Rider” ends with the desire that, ‘if’ we experienced god with Bi Kidude’s puissance, ‘if’ god owned her expressive strength, the world would join the poem’s final ‘call to prayer’:

I would call the faithful to prayer:
 Bomba Kidude! Kidude Saafi!
 And they would holler back: Saafi!
 They would holler back: Saafi!
 They would holler back: SAAFI!
 And we would all be
 god.

Migritude and “Drum Rider” – the pride of the migrant, the beat of music. A set of saris, the ‘khanga’ worn round the hips: Patel’s ‘royal robe/precious sari’ of translation is ready to touch its original, inscribe its fleeting movements in the world, write the ‘law’ of translation in the souls and the bodies of her audiences, in loving commitment.

The ‘Royal Robe’/ ‘Precious Sari’ of *Migritude*

Translation is poetic transposition.
 (J. Derrida)

“The Task of the Translator” signs Walter Benjamin’s “Preface” to his translation of Baudelaire’s *Passages*; *Migritude* starts with “Prelude” (it will then be “Migrant Song”, and, often, “Mother’s Voice”, as if music always already informed poetic destiny/ation) that defines the translation at stake: “How Ambi become Paisley”, recites the subtitle. If, according to Benjamin, “Translation is a form” (1993; 40), in Patel’s ‘launch of an investigation’, the form par excellence is Ambi or *Boteh*, a teardrop, a peacock feather, half a heart, an s-shaped curve, the outline of the mango dear to all migrants from the Global South. Tracing its origin, Patel imagines being taken to India, but Ambi returns her back to Babel. In reference to the ‘confusion of languages’, Derrida thinks of the legendary Babel as “a proper name ... the need for figuration, for myth, for tropes, for twists and turns... the translation of translation” (1985; 165).⁶ In

⁶ For biblical Babel, Derrida says, “This story recounts, among other things, the origin of the confusion of tongues, the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the

Patel's search, what matters is that, in Babel, Ambi identifies with the tree of life, the myth of fertility blessed by Astarte, the goddess appearing in caves (as painted in a poster hanging in Patel's home, in Nairobi).⁷ According to the legend, in Kashmir, the shape is associated with the footprint of the goddess Parvati when she walks through the mountains of the Himalayas ("drumming the world into being" (76), the goddess' footwork opens Patel's performance).⁸

Divine origins cross the stage of history and offer the form to the weavers of 'mousleen', from Mosul, the town in Iraq where the craft originated. The trade travels to Egypt, to Rome, to Masulipatnam in South India and to Dhaka in Bengal. The incredible 'glory' – which, in Benjamin, signs the original's survival (1993; 41) – of the two cities proves provocative to the British colonisers, who decide to chop off the weavers' "index fingers and thumbs" (5) and, when Kashmir is annexed in 1846, let the 'bandits' of East India Company abduct the trade to Paisley, the village in Scotland. "Kashmir become cashmere. Mosuleen become muslin. Ambi become paisley" (7). Colonial translation proves its force of law, which is not to be undone. Inscribed on the embroidered materials, Ambi cannot be restored to any mythical or legendary origin. The task of the translator, the launch of Patel's investigation, knows the inevitability of enforced history. No transparency, or univocity, but rather the commitment lies in questioning. "The question mark ought to be the

necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity as impossibility." (1993: 171).

⁷ The Nairobi painting is important in that it refers to the question of the 'name' or 'signature' of the translator: "*Astarte, shameless goddess of the fecund feminine...* my mother always told me it was 'my picture'... my name: the carvings and paintings of the goddess in the mountain caves are called *shailaja* or of the mountains. The Sankrit word *shail* – mountain stone – is the root of the English *shale*" (75).

⁸ *Migritude* is "a complex weaving, a work of genius... an illuminated manuscript with each letter crafted with intent and purpose" (Ikonya, 2012) – that presents a singular design. It consists of drawings that accompany the writing; 17 chapters or 'poetic vignettes' (Piccolo, 2008), with notes; 'WHAT CAME OUT FROM THE SUITCASE' (the troupe's 'observations' of the saris); *Shadow Book* (the "behind-the-scenes and after-the fact vignettes, memories, and associations", "the underside and the offshoots" that illuminate the performance, 74); *The Making and Other Poems* ('the groundwork' left out from the performance because of stage cutting, yet essential part "of the wider tapestry that *Migritude* grew out of", 100); *The Journey* (the timeline of the historical "migrations between the Asian and African Continents" (128) and two interviews).

biggest part of the alphabet in history” (Ikonya, 2012) – the colonial legacy with touches of translation that forge their ‘acts of word’:

How many ways can you slice a history? Price a country? Dice a people? Slice a heart? Entice what’s been erased back into story? My-gritude.

Have you ever taken a word in your hand, dared to shape your palm to the hollow where the fullness falls away? Have you ever pointed it back to its beginning? Felt it leap and shudder in your fingers like a dowsing rod? Jerk like a severed thumb? Flare with the forbidden name of a goddess returning? My-gritude.

Have you ever set out to search for a missing half? The piece that isn’t shapely, elegant, simple. The half that’s ugly, heavy, abrasive. Awkward to the hand. Gritty on the tongue.

Migritude (7)⁹

I wanted a word that would capture the idea of migrant attitudes, migrant with attitude. I was playing and riffing off the idea of negritude and migrants. Negritude was the movement in the 1960s that reclaimed and celebrated Black African culture as something powerful in its own right, something that didn’t need to be measured or assessed according to the standards of European culture. So, I was asserting the same thing for migrants and migrant movements, saying there is a voice, a world view, a space that migrants inhabit that is unique and powerful and defined by itself, not by how close they’ve come to assimilation, not even by where they came from, but the state of being a migrant. (Reed, 2014)

“At the beginning was the word” (Benjamin, 1993: 49). ‘Migritude’ is the ‘rough to the tongue’ word – the philosopher calls it ‘the arcade’ (ibidem)¹⁰ – that allows for the appearance of Patel’s task of translation on the stage of critical thinking. ‘Migritude’ refers to Aimé Césaire’s and Leopold Sédar Senghor’s concept of ‘Negritude’ translated into the ‘love

⁹ Patel’s exile plays an essential role in her forging the word ‘migritude’: “Well, I am a migrant. I have migrated continents twice in my lifetime, and speaking from the voice and the politics of a migrant, inhabiting the space of understanding the global forces that drive migration has always been central to my work, getting people to understand the politics and the economics of migration and breaking down the barriers in their heads of “us” and “them,” that migration is something out there, outside me.” (Reed, 2014)

¹⁰ Benjamin (1993; 26) underlines that it is “the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade”.

poems' of Arundhati Roy,¹¹ the condition of exile experienced with the dignity of a generation of migrants "who speak unapologetically, fiercely, lyrically, for themselves" (Reddy, 2010: 13). 'Migritude' names the 'pride' – "so fierce it threatens to incinerate us" (41) – of those who have been kept outside history, the dissonance of their tongues, the haunting presence of their remains, the ethical condision of their destinies, the vindication of their experiences for the future of humanity.¹² In intimacy with the soft and light touches of the saris, what Patel chooses as her task (*Aufgabe*) of translation is the 'law' that will change everything in her life and art.

Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, establishing, with this touch rather than with the point, the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity – a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux...

(W. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator")

... to touch "that" which one calls "veil" is to touch everything. You'll leave nothing intact, safe and sound, neither in your culture, nor in your memory, nor in your language, as soon as you take on the word "veil." As soon as you let yourself be caught up in it, in the word ... nothing will remain, nothing will remain anymore.

(J. Derrida, "A Silkworm of One's Own. Points of View Stitched on the Other Veil")

Turning history inside out, smelling it out, touching it...you can touch her dedication. You can touch her thread of life in the arts. Her golden thread around her wrist. This poetry is written in her blood and with her blood.

(P. Ikonya, "Shailja Patel: Dressed in scarlet she strides danger zone")

¹¹ Roy is particularly appreciated for her style of writing: "Everything Arundhati Roy writes, reads like a love poem to me. She does not separate her heart from her politics. Her humanity from her brilliance and piercing analysis" (145).

¹² According to Ikonya (2012), the appeal to 'humanity' is central to Patel's work: "The writer takes us from Babylon to Uganda, to Kenya, to America and India, East, south, north and west without losing her compass. Her direction is *humanity* and she fails not." (my emphasis). The critic has just mentioned the question of 'In-humanity' as what marks difference in 'un-ethical' behaviours: "Idi Amin is not the only person who rejected East African Asians. Some intellectuals, citizens and politicians in Kenya still bear a grudge against them. And everywhere most of them have gone, they have only flourished. In England, they rate among the most successful people in all that they strove to engage in after Amin Dada. Uganda beckons them back. *Humanity* and inhumanity. Where is the learning?" (my emphasis).

Some day I'll start a museum/ Where all Works of Art/ Are for touching...
(S. Patel, "Please do not touch")

At the crossing of her personal story with African history, inscribed on the saris unfolding in light and shadow, "this movement of love, the gesture of this loving one that is at work in the translation" (Derrida, 1987; 190) starts at 'home', in the formative years of 'the subject of translation' (Ibid; 179). "Part I: Nairobi, Kenya (1972-1989)" sets Patel's birth in the Asian diaspora in Kenya, exposed to colonial violence – and to her 'indebtedness' as a translator – when she is still a child. In 1972, on the threshold of national borders, in Uganda, the military coup led by the dictator Idi Amin, and supported by Britain, Israel and the United States (in the theatre, Patel shakes the folds of her sari with a snap), expelled the whole Asian population, stripping them of all possessions.¹³ Violence crosses borders: in Nairobi, people help, with water, bread and clothing, the mute and dumb creatures travelling on the trains that traverse Kenya. On one side, there is 'no respect'; on the other side – which is the same side – there is no claiming of 'roots'. On the same side, there is the need to 'reinvent oneself in order to survive'; on that side, the cry of a man breaks "the foundations of the world" (78).

James Baldwin says, "When a black man does not stay in his place, the sky and the earth are shaken to the foundations". In Patel, the anguished 'cry' – "Image that haunted my childhood" (11)¹⁴ – indelibly 'echoes' (Benjamin 1993: 47) with the 'call of alterity' of/in the original, its 'translatability' presiding over her surrendering. It is what Spivak demands from the post-colonial feminist translator (1993: 183) – to the contract of translation: "I knew from childhood that one of the epics I would write when I grew up and became an author was the tale of Asians being thrown out of Uganda" (78).¹⁵ To respect her signature, she positions her

¹³ Ikonya (2012) notes that "She is a poet bringing out all those voices we strangled and put into suitcases in Idi Amin's times in Uganda. The disappeared. She is a poet opening the wounds that we want to superficially heal. She is the cutting edge of a sharp knife which we need to cut the lies out of our fabric and make sense of history. She promised you no less. "Have you ever sliced a heart on a curve? Which piece would you keep?"

¹⁴ Patel remembers, "Idi Amin was the villain of my childhood", adding that the image of the 'crying man' "seared itself on my imagination. Crying while he held a child... can Daddies really cry? Wouldn't that split the foundations of the world?" (78).

¹⁵ Derrida reads the exceptionality of the 'contract' of translation: "The topos of this contract is exceptional, unique, and practically impossible to think under the ordinary category of contract: in a classical code it would have been called

performative writing in the space she knows best: the story of her family. The mo(ve)ments of her relation – duty, commitment, debt, responsibility, task – to the maternal saris reveals a confrontation experienced in aporetic responsibility; or, as she fears, in “the terrors of telling a story” (79). Commitment is to translate the valuables ‘elsewhere’: will she share the decision of her family to keep them safe? Should she rather ex-pose them to her task of translation? With Derrida reckoning that translation’s “openness allows receiving and giving” (1985: 190), Patel opens the trousseaux of her sari.

The story goes that, because of what happens in Uganda and crosses Kenya, Patel’s father and mother decide to bring – to translate – their valuables into safety. Crossing confines, immigrations and controls, they reach Midland Bank in England. Here, a case, the list of objects inside the box, the signature on the receipt; the possessions are safe forever, safely alienated, taken away, only to be remembered: “*First and foremost, make sure your uncle has paid the yearly fee...*” (14). Announced by the commitment of art, Patel’s responsibility works in a different way: *MigrITUDE* opens “History Lesson” unveiling what has been kept untranslated, for instance (here, exemplarity is at stake) in ‘pacified’ Independence of Kenya.¹⁶ What ‘History Lesson’ hides and unfolds, at the same time, the same stroke, the same line, is the resistance of the Kenyan people, reclaiming the land dispossessed by the British, fighting the

transcendental, since in truth it renders possible every contract in general, starting with what is called the language contract within the limits of a single idiom. Another name, perhaps, for the origin of tongues. Not the origin of language, but of languages – before language, languages” (1985; 186-187).

¹⁶ Patel explains, “the history I was taught in school was all lies. We learned in school that we attained independence peacefully, without bloodshed. We were the model the rest of Africa was supposed to look to, a happy, multiracial nation where Whites, Asians and Africans all lived in harmony. In Kenya’s war of independence, fewer than 100 Whites and over 25,000 Africans died. Half of the Africans who died were children under 10. Sixty thousand White settlers lived in Kenya at independence in 1963. The new Kenyan government was required to take loans of 12.5 million pounds from its ex-colonial master, the British government, to buy back stolen land from settlers who wished to leave” (Reed, 2014). For Ikonya, (2012), ‘History Lesson’ marks Patel’s countersignature to the colonial strategy: “She wants history open with its intestines, blood and oxygen.... The choice to teach ignorance in the name of history is painful, a strategy. So that Kenya is Gikuyu and Mumbi. So that Mau is not a struggle of Kenyans but of the biggest tribe. So that tribalism is comfortable. So that the so-called “Other” is always on the run. It has not only started now. It is not done alone by some strange dictator suddenly coming out of nowhere”.

soldiers who killed 25,000 people, built camps, imposed torture, abused women and children: “*They would be tied in bundles of six bodies*” (18). In the theatre, Patel dresses the crimson sari: “Each knot a dead child... a glowing rope of knots, a testament to children killed by Empire” (80).

‘History Lesson’ changes the meaning of the saris, too, which now unveil a different texture of sense.¹⁷ Nobody has ever told Patel that women would work, go into battle, and labour in their saris. As a child, she heard her mother associate the sari with protection, safety and beauty: “... combining virginality with hip-swinging sex appeal” (22). If ‘seduction’ constitutes “a simple miming of the responsibility of the trace of the other in the self” (Spivak 1993: 179), the sari can unfold the translator’s responsibility. In *Migritude*, if, on the one hand, historical erasure leaves a mark on Patel who, as a girl, swears never to wear a sari that might impede her movements, on the other hand, “Mother’s Voice” announces that her daughter’s choice will be to translate her life ‘beyond the beyond’ of safety, into “the hardest, worst, most dangerous things” (24).¹⁸ “Tracking commonality through responsible translation can lead us into areas of difference and different differentiations” (1993; 193). The thinkers involved in the critical debate on translation know that the only safety enjoyed in ‘danger zones’ is love, a ‘different’ kind of love.¹⁹ ‘Shilling Love I’ is devoted to the affection that Patel’s father, the enduring stoic, and her mother, the general, feel for their daughters, never embellished by words but practiced, only and always, through ‘acts of accountability’. “Count and save” to make their girls attend the best schools; “count and save” to teach them to fight as women-to-come (27).²⁰

¹⁷ ‘Opening’ is devoted to Patel’s “willingness to be a flute/hollow open at both ends” (101); *The Guiana Quartet* by Wilson Harris uses a similar image: “When the music of the bone flute opens the doors, absence flow in, and the native imagination puts together the ingredients for quantum immediacy out of unpredictable resources” (quoted in Spivak, 1993: 196, note 314).

¹⁸ In “Shadow Book” (85-86), Patel narrates the story of how, as a child, she was ‘saved’ by a family of Christian missionaries.

¹⁹ ‘Praxis’, as the outcome of theory in the discourse on translation, is given by the fact that Benjamin ‘prefaces’ his own translation of *Passages* by Baudelaire; that Derrida is determined to translate Deconstruction in sensitive knots of Western thought; de Man carries Deconstruction in America, tasking his ‘misreadings’ with the translation of European romanticism; Spivak’s English translations host Jacques Derrida and Mahaswheta Devi; Naranjana calls for a ‘historical materialism’ that translates the destinies of humanity into future forms of justice.

²⁰ “Shilling Love” signs the origin of “Migritude”: after a performance of the poem in San Francisco, Patel is approached by the theatre director Kim Cook, who

‘Accountability’ is the question in postcolonial praxis of translations; in Patel’s life, its urgency comes with the experience of exile, the encounter in herself, and outside in the alien world, of dispossession, poverty, and solitude. “Part I: United Kingdom and United States 1990-2004” starts with political turbulence in Nairobi, and a plane ticket for Patel and her sister to “icy/alien England” (28). It is the chance, decision, and assumption of her task: ‘The Making (Migrant Song)’ is the work made out of “the sari/that wraps you in tender celebration” (32), tainted with rage, representing an excavation of swallowed and regained words, created in the longing for her mother, out of the scars and calluses on her father’s hands, that have suffered, and still suffer, from the brutality of colonial history:

*This is for the hands
hacked off the Arawaks by Columbus and his men
lopped off Ohlone children by Spanish priests
baskets of severed hands presented at days’ en
to Belgian plantation masters in the Congo
thumbs chopped off Indian weavers by the British*

*I make this work
because I still have hands (35)*

Hands that are signed, hands that sign: the “light and easy touch” of translation (Spivak, 1993; 191) is ‘making’ its work. Patel leaves Britain, carrying with her, once again, the set of saris and her desire to create. To ‘poetize’: in California, at the post office – if she cannot provide a

proposes that she work on the story of her trousseaux of maternal saris. ‘Shy’ Patel contacts her one year later, marking the beginning of ‘Migritude’: “I trained for two years with two different dance coaches and choreographers and a director to develop the movement vocabulary, to find a conversation that we could have on stage that would make the saris a part of the story rather than simply props. So, from the beginning, I worked with a brilliant director, Kim Cook, who was very committed to creating good art and to excellent stage craft and to making an integrated piece of theater that was not just political, that was not just driven by a political agenda, but that was good theater and good art and good storytelling... The final show, *Migritude*, was 70 minutes long. Originally, we had over four hours of material, of text and different pieces and different performance segments, and we had to cut, cut, cut, cut and some of that was heartbreaking and brutal because some of my favorite pieces ended up on the floor, but it was a process of constant editing and rearranging and splicing and experimenting to find what was the final form and the best possible final show” (Reed, 2014).

permanent address – arrives the green card, and, unexpectedly, a cheque for her first published work. The arrival marks the poetic ‘connection’:

To me, poetry is one of the most powerful ways of distilling the truth and then communicating it ... Poetry cuts through our mental defences. It enters us through the gut and through the heart. It creates a space where we’re allowed to feel, really feel, even if it’s just for a moment what it’s like to be human, what it’s like to be larger than our contracted space of just the daily struggle for survival, and in that moment, we connect with what it is to be alive and to be human and feeling on the planet and that alters us (Reed, 2014).

Benjamin thinks of a ‘vital’ connection:

“Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original – not so much for its life as from its afterlife” (1993: 254). Translation originates in ‘survival’, in the ‘afterlife’ of the original; for him, this marks “a transformation and a renewal of something living” (ibid; 256). In Derrida’s philosophy, it marks a deconstructive legacy; in Patel’s poetry, it is the advent of lucid awareness: “I know what I carry in my suitcases, I carry my history, I carry my family, over my sari I wear my sisters” (41).

I knew I wanted to tell the stories of Empire and the stories of women’s bodies. To me, the stories of the saris were the stories of women’s bodies, and what isn’t known about women under colonialism. ... I really think of the saris as my collaborators. There was one in particular which was a scarlet chiffon sari, which was the one used for the Mau Mau piece, and to me it spoke of war and it spoke of blood, and it just naturally connected with liberation struggles and the very bloody battles that were fought for independence (Reed, 2014).

“The ‘literary’... is the means by which one can constantly try to reach collectivity” (Spivak, 2012: 153); from now on, Patel’s hands will be good at ‘literalizing’ the ‘afterlife’ or ‘gendered agency’ of her original, taking care of what it desires, requires, mandates, commands (at this point, in the theatre, she enters the stage lying flat on her back, pulling a black cloth and unfolding it into a long line). A case in point: example – a documented fact in the history of Kenya, negated until 2002 when it filtered through the media, was the testimony of the *survivance* of the women and the boys brutalised by British soldiers since 1965, two years after Independence, up to 2001: “*Survivor 1*”/ “*Survivor 58*”/ “*Survivor 613*” (45-47).²¹ ‘Blood

²¹ Patel’s research inhabits colonial archives: “She knows about sealed documents.

and rape': writing inscribes revenge on the page (on the stage, the river sari is pulled around the artist's elbow and shoulder, binding the curve into its vortex), in-between the riots of Maasai women outside the British High Commission, and, as "Mother's Voice" laments, the state re-enforcement of "gates, askaris and fences" (49).

Translation has had its 'Prelude'; it has found its form, hosted by a committed translator who makes her aporetic, that is, more responsible choice, signing the contract with the alterity of women, with the resistance of women fighters. From now on it follows the dream, the energy, the gift, and the law of translation. The dream belongs to the 'mother tongue'. If its idealisation – 'mother country', 'belonging', 'soil and blood' – provokes, with different intensity and in increased timelessness, the forces of racism in history, "Dreaming in Gujarati" knows *matrubhasha* – for Spivak, *matririn* or 'maternal debt' (2000)²² – is an oneiric creation that can weave the whole experience of her life *à nouveau*. If Benjamin thinks of the 'pains of gestation of the foreign word', the changes affecting the translator's mother tongue in contact with the language of the original that is on transformation itself, in *Migritude*, Patel goes back in memory, when, as a girl, she used to be mocked by white and brown children alike,

The many the British have hidden away. She quotes Caroline Elkins in 'Imperial Reckoning: The Untold story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya'. Blood and rape. The shameless murders and extirpation of a humanity hidden away from the eyes of the world. And how it continues in the politics of the day in Afrika. ...Rape is rape is rape is rape". (Ikonya, 2012)

²² Spivak wonders how *matririn* might be translated: by a word, or in an ethics of responsibility to the world and to its epistemic violence? Invested with the maternal gift, the female translator feels to be betraying her mother tongue, because in her practice she renders it as one among the many. Her desire to repay the maternal debt (what does not and cannot enter any economy of exchange) is necessarily experienced in aporetic responsibility: the female translator will translate her experience of life ('childbearing' is, the postcolonial critic another untranslatable word) into the encounter ('reading-as-translating') with the reality of the lives and the stories (writing) of other women, hosted in herself, and translated with/in love. The question of the 'unplayable debt' resounds in Patel's relation to her maternal saris: "I had this suitcase full of these exquisite heirloom saris that I felt tremendously guilty about because I wasn't wearing them; I wasn't using them in my daily life as an artist and an activist. So, I began to think about how I could integrate them into my life, how I could bring out their stories and use them for performance. And as I began to research their histories, as I began to take each sari an unfurl it and trace the motifs and the design and the weaving, they began to tell me stories about Empire, about colonialism, about migrations going back thousands of years, and the histories we don't know of how Empire was enacted on the bodies of women." (Reed, 2014)

for her blackness and her uncertain use of Gujarati. Growing up, her acceptance of western values proved despicable to ‘grannies in white saris’; in her actual exile, the assumption of the American language necessarily resounds with words instrumental of the death of two million Iraqis.²³ Painful is the question: “Their tongue – or mine? Have I become the enemy?” (52). The question touches the migration of languages itself: “What becomes of a tongue of/milky-heavy cows, earthen/pots, jingling anklets, /temple bells, /when its children grow up/in Silicon Valley? To be programmers?” (53). Historical and rhetorical ‘migritude’ allows no purity, only the force of reality (the five languages spoken by her father sound subaltern when confronted in English) in contrast with the dream – of the children who ask Patel, in *Gurayati*, to nurture and take care of them. Tasking herself with the chance of a reply, her responsibility dreams, inside the dream, of taking back the ‘words’ of her mother tongue, intimately, as a supreme ‘act of love’:

The children in my dream
 Speak
 In Gujarati. Bright as butter, succulent
 Cherries sounds I can paint on the air
 With my breath, dance
 Though like a Sufi mystic.
 Words I can weep and howl
 And devour, words I can kiss
 And taste
 This tongue
 I take
 Back (54).

At the wake, Patel feels the burst of an increased energy. Her parents arrive in the United States going through interminable borders control; waiting outside the gate, in sensing the smell of the humiliation, offense and indignation of their exhausted bodies, she understands the un/reason of her task:

Something is
 bursting the wall

²³ “Eater of Death” (109-113) is written in honour of Bibi Sardar, whose husbands and children were killed in Kabul in 2001 by US military action, pp. 109-113. In this respect, Patel explains: “Since the U.S. invaded Iraq, thousands of Iraqi women and girls have been abducted, vanished, a phenomenon unknown under Saddam Hussein. When societies are blown apart, women become prey” (20).

of my arteries
 Something is
 pounding its way
 up my throat
 volcano rising
 finally I understand
 why I'm a poet (58).

It is an act of pure energy, the perceptive opening of volcanic *puissance*, the beating of the heart. Understanding is blessed by the gift: Patel's mother sends 'Mangral Sutra', which should be given by the husband to the bride, but that, in a revolution of tradition and rule, is passed on by the mother to the daughter. A letter accompanies the gift, to explain it as the blueprint for creative life, a celebration of youth, a dream of happiness, the miracle of life, the 'thread of good will' woven with three knots of commitment: 'intention', 'declaration' and 'execution'. At the giving, the mother still expects an economy of safety for her daughter, hoping that, after so much independence, she might want the norm/ality of marriage. Once again, Patel chooses a different task of the 'hymen': beyond safety, her intention inhabits the 'danger zones' of translation; her declaration shouts hidden stories to other 'fugitives' – herself, and all migrants of the planet.²⁴ Her execution forges glittering songs with words, traits and traces, voices and gestures, that celebrate the beauty of "saris that speak" (62). It is the difficult but necessary 'law', the injunction of the ultimate task of translation; in the last address/redress to her mother, Patel acknowledges the inevitability of 'living-in-translation' for 'us all':

²⁴ It is interesting to note that, as Derrida (1987; 189; Appendix: 233) remarks, for the point of contact between the original and its translation, Benjamin uses the word 'fugitive' – *fluchtig* (translated in English as 'fleeting'). In Patel, 'fugitive' also resounds with the political reasonings of S. Harney–F. Moten (2013).

Because Mammy
 You of all people
 Know
 How we were born to a law
 That states

Before we claim a word
 We steep it
 In terror and shit,
 In hope and joy and grief,
 In labour, endurance,
 Vision coasted out
 In decades of our lives.

We have to sweat and cruse it,
 Pray and keen it,
 Crawl and bleed it.

With the very marrow
 Of our bodies
 We have to earn its meaning (68-69)

‘A soft worn khanga round her hips’: “Drum Rider”

*Our story was
 the concreteness*

*of this becoming
 shared*

by air
 (F. Moten, *The Service Porch*)



Bi Kidude, from “As Old as my Tongue” by A. Jones. (Courtesy of the Author)

In Patel’s understating of the law in which we are all born, a special moment is incised, evoked, and sung in “Drum Rider”, the poem devoted to the life and the music of Bi Kidude, translated into Patel’s life, and in the lives of those who reply to its poetic appeal. Patel discovers the figure of the extraordinary singer from Zanzibar in the time of her ‘translability’, ‘afterlife’, or ‘survival’: her work, the rhythm of her drumming, the absolute singularity of the woman at ninety-five, her life-long experience of disseminating the tongue of African music. In Patel’s poem, it is now Kidude to assume the role of the female translator organically bound to the task of her rhythmic and instrumental beating. The khanga around her hips, the drum welded in indissoluble supplementarity to her body, the drummer and the drum, ‘one, and yet many’ (Lippit: 2003; 1337), in erect position, are ready for ‘work’. ‘Planet Kidude’ is à l’oeuvre, in a lineage

ancient of decades of performances in Africa, the persistent struggle against the refusal of her ‘unusual’ style, her journeys into the profundity of rhythm, her heart beating with “the lives of the powerless/ stories unfurled in language of street and market/ poetry buried in the bodies of women”.

It is an extraordinary and unique spectacle: the goddess riding a tiger, in cosmic creation. In this universe, other planets orbit around the sun. Following Kidude’s teaching, khangas around their bodies, a group of women start dancing, their muscles tensed to sign the contract with the original: women ‘with’ women, women ‘for’ women. Tuned to the beat of Kidude’s drumming, the dancers caress, contact and contract with ‘all of us’: the waitresses who work in hotels, always and only servants, never to be ‘seen’; the tourists obsessed with the western standards of beauty; the circumcised girls; the women suffering from AIDs. The bind/bond of translation carries “the bounty of women’s bodies/ back to the center of the world”. In celebration of life – “yes... yes... yes... yes,” chants the poem – it surges the beauty and the power of a knowledge that refuses to hide but opens itself to the pleasure of those bodies that, in human mortality, claim and dress freedom.

Critical thinking says, “Knowledge of freedom is (in) the invention of escape, stealing away in the confines, in the form, of a break. This is held close in the open song of the ones who are supposed to be silent” (Harvey–Moten, 2013: 51). Bi Kidude, the woman who should be silent but who, in fact, keeps drumming and singing beyond life and death, teaches Patel never to fear ‘aging’, for example, if she feels the drummer’s generation of power, if she, with and for Bi Kidude, inhabits “the center of fertile creation, where sound begins”. Sound claims a larger resonance, perhaps, the largest echo of all: the end of “Drum Rider” marks an act of belief, a profession of faith which, in listening to the African drummer surrounded by her women dancers, in truth, thinks of god. In fugitive flight, the messianic promise evoked by Benjamin touches Patel’s poetics of translation. If the realm of reconciliation and integration of languages is, for the philosopher, the promise always destined and never realised, yet resounding in all ‘just’ translations, for her part, Patel concludes her hymn with the chance of ‘if’: if god were Bi Kidude, if god resembled her ‘riding puissance’, his name might express the genius of ‘all of us’, appealing to our common divinity:

I believe in Bi Kidude
 the way I don’t believe in god.
 But if god were a ninety-five-year old, ebony black
 Swahili woman,

who claims to be one hundred and twenty,
 with a mouth full of broken and missing teeth
 hands veined like banyan trees
 a drum between her legs
 a kijiti at her defiant, all-knowing lips
 a shilingi-mia-kumi note flapping out of her neckline;
 if god chanted wickedly satirical shairi
 about the dangers of the very deathstick
 she sucks on;
 if god embraced irony, lust, contradiction
 heartbreak, imperfection;
 if god flaunted her struggles like a velvet cape,
 rearranged the atoms of the world
 with the rhythm of her gut
 then maybe I would believe
 in that god.
 That god who is only a name
 for the genius in all of us
 that makes us our own imam and prophet
 our own divinity.

I would call the faithful to prayer:
 Bomba Kidude! Kidude Saafi!
 And they would holler back: Saafi!
 They would holler back: Saafi!
 They would holler back: SAAFI!
 And we would all be
 god.²⁵

The divine prayer, the echo of 'call-and-response', the ensemble of 'harmony' and 'accord', is Patel's celebration of Bi Kidude and of the African women dancing around her, the alliance of her task of translation to the promise of a future, planetary and cosmic, human communication.

²⁵ In his interpretation of Benjamin's essay, Derrida underlines that "Translation, the desire for translation, is not thinkable without this *correspondence* with the thought of God" (1985: 182). 'Elsewhere', the philosopher proposes the *correspondence* with his thought of 'messianism without the messiah'.

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PART FOUR:

**POLITICS IN TRANSLATION, THE VIRTUAL
WORLDS AND LAW IN SITUATION**

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ON THE QUESTION OF METHOD: MUDIMBE, AFRICANISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSLATION

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Can thought transcend places of origin? Or do places leave their imprint on thought in such a way as to call into question the idea of purely abstract categories?

—Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*

Introduction

In an otherwise fascinating essay on V.Y. Mudimbe's anthropological enterprise, Bennetta Jules-Rosette (1991) makes the following observation about the Congolese philosopher's best-known work: "*The Invention of Africa* offers little in the way of a methodological program for anthropology". While the text "adroitly introduces the reader to weighty epistemological and ideological tasks", Jules-Rosette contends, it fails to fashion a methodological programme, leaving "the reader, fascinated by the evolution of Mudimbe's anthropology, in search of a method" (953). Apart from the problem of trying to understand a complex philosophical preoccupation from an instrumentalist perspective, that is, on account of presenting methodological strategies for transgressing the boundaries of a discipline that Mudimbe (1988) has consistently characterised as the most compromised of the social disciplines in relation to Africanism and colonial library, this characterisation of Mudimbe's enterprise in *The Invention of Africa* (henceforth cited as *Invention*) may not be entirely accurate. Among the many preoccupations of the text is not only accounting for the possibility of anthropological knowledge as the foundation of Africanist knowledge, but also determining ways of

proposing methodological grids for transcending the structuring violence and differing axes of the 'colonial library'. As such, the text speaks to and offers concrete methodological strategies for Africanism and anthropology. Specifically, Mudimbe directs us to Michel "Foucault's thesis on the last archaeological rupture in Western epistemology" (*Invention*), and Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist perspective which he believes offers "the most stimulating ways of understanding human cultures" (1991). These approaches, while differentially inscribed, share a common interest in uncovering the hidden harmonies that undergird human cultures and their unconscious foundations and, as such, unite Foucault and Lévi-Strauss, even if the former vehemently rejected the structuralist label, because "I have used none of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterize structural analysis" (Foucault 1970: xv).

This chapter attempts a critical engagement with Mudimbe's account of the conditions of Africanist knowledge and the methodological grids he has proposed for transcending the structuring violence of the colonial library. It suggests that the methodological questions for Mudimbe are, in fact, also questions about translation, which emerges as an intellectual challenge in his work. His widely regarded *The Invention of Africa*, for example, not only grapples with the ways Africa has been, and continues to be translated into the language, conceptual categories, and epistemic systems of Africanism and the human disciplines, but also highlights the methodological and conceptual difficulty of Africanist and gnostic attempts at translating indigenous African life-worlds, cultural signs and symbols, and knowledge systems into the social and human disciplines within the frames of Africanism. *Parables and Fables* (1991; henceforth cited as *P&F*), perhaps the most transgressive text in Mudimbe's *oeuvre*, is in its very inscription and enunciation, a methodological lesson on the practice and performance of translation. Although not usually seen as such, this text is directly linked to Mudimbe's preoccupation in *The Invention of Africa*. It may be read as a concrete response to some of the exigent epistemological and methodological concerns Mudimbe attempts to deal with in the former text, and thus illustrates how his methodological prescriptions may be inscribed, and what they would look like in their inscriptions in concrete and practical terms.

Bringing his intellectual filiations into focus with regards to inscriptions in systems of knowing, these texts also accent Mudimbe's uneasy relationship with Africanism and anthropology, the discipline he has described not only as the epistemological locus of Africa's invention, but also the most compromised of the social disciplines in its complicity in the politics of Africa's invention. Yet he has remained inscribed within its

disciplinary space which, as the issues that emerge out of his attempts to transcend the limits of this discipline show, is also perhaps the most indispensable with regards to Africanism. This contradiction, a predicament of seeking to move beyond Africanism while remaining dependent on its epistemological regions, is partially the locus of the scandal in Mudimbe's own work. What follows is an attempt to map out Mudimbe's complex methodological preoccupations. I do this by mediating his thought through a number of his interlocutors—those explicitly acknowledged, Michel Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean-Paul Sartre, among others—to decipher the world of meanings he creates on and about Africa and Africanist knowledge, the methodological lessons he offers for transcending structuring violence of the colonial library, and the challenge that his work presents for both Africanism and gnostic practices of coming to terms with African life-worlds and cultural systems.

Foucault and the Archaeology of the Human Sciences

In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault refers to a major epistemic rupture in the West at the end of the eighteenth century by which, he tells us, 'Man' emerged both as an object of knowledge and as the subject that knows. Foucault classifies the history of European modernity into three distinct periods—Renaissance, the Classical Age, and post-enlightenment modernity—each of which is marked by radically different epistemic systems and orders of knowledge. The order of Renaissance knowledge, according to Foucault's archaeology, was similitude, which as an epistemic system, "organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them". Codifying knowledge in a way that involved reading from the book of nature and its "prose of the world" means conveying the idea that the world is an open book forming an unbroken chain where connections can be made. Resemblances or similarities established between places, things and beings, similitude constituted the world in such a way that it could duplicate and gaze upon itself through things made to "resemble one another" and reflect "their own images back to one another." Organizing the play of symbols, making possible the knowledge of things, and controlling the art of representing them, it was this order of knowledge that "largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts" (Foucault 1970: 19, 29, 30).

In the seventeenth century, Foucault tells us, similitude completely disappeared and a new episteme, based on the principle of Order imposed itself (237). No longer the dominating form of knowledge, similitude

became “the occasion of error, the danger to which one exposes oneself when one does not examine the obscure region of confusion” as the focus now came to be on the analysis of ‘identity and difference’ and the positing of measurement and comparison as the ‘function of order’ (57, 60). In this epistemic system, knowing came to be about discriminating between things, establishing their identities, and imposing comparisons on them as the “primary and fundamental investigation of difference” (p. 61). This episteme appeared in three major empirical fields—general grammar, natural history and the analysis of wealth—and actualised itself in the order of the discourse, the table, and the exchange: “the project of a general science of order; a theory of signs analysing representation; the arrangement of identities and differences into ordered tables: these constituted an area of empiricity in the Classical age that had not existed until the end of the Renaissance and that was destined to disappear early in the nineteenth century” (79). General grammar concerned itself with “*the study of verbal order in its relation to the simultaneity that it is its task to represent*; it had as its nature and virtue, the ‘discourse’ whose fundamental task “is to ascribe a name to things and in that name their being”. Natural history studied living beings, and had as its realm, the table on which it classified and tabulated things, establishing as it were “a general and complete table of species, genera and classes” (Foucault 1970: 91, 132, 174, italics in original). The theory of wealth concerned itself with analysing value, either “in terms of the exchange of objects of need—of *useful objects*,” or “in terms of the formation and origin of objects whose exchange will later define their value—in terms of nature’s prolixity” (Foucault 1970: 208; cited in *Invention*: 24). Only this episteme defined “the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in practice”.

In the last years of the eighteenth century, this epistemic order was “broken by a discontinuity similar to that which destroyed Renaissance thought at the beginning of the seventeenth century” (235). The evolution of the human sciences—psychology, sociology, the study of literature and myths—is traced to this epistemic mutation in which the theme of History replaced the principle of Order, and man, defined around life, labour and language, also “appears in his ambiguous position as both as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows” (340). Actualising themselves around the new empiricities of labour, life and language, they would constitute man as “a living, speaking and labouring being” and make him the sovereign subject around whom knowledge revolved (385). Writes Foucault: “Before the end of the eighteenth-century *man* did not exist—any more than the potency of life, the fecundity of labour, or the historical

density of language. He is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago” (336).

Not inheriting an already outlined scientific domain in which to inscribe themselves, these disciplines had to outline and elaborate their respective fields as positive sciences by inscribing themselves on the “methods and concepts that had at least become scientific”, by borrowing from the models of the three already constituted sciences—biology, economics and philology, which had respectively supplanted natural history, the analysis of wealth, and general grammar as the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth. As the three general arenas of the representational forms that knowledge in the human sciences take, these fields of biology, economics and philology, also fashioned three constituent models—*function* and *norm*; *conflict* and *rule*; *signification* and *system*—which, borrowing from their domains, respectively correspond to and reflect their epistemological regions, and account for knowledge about human societies and tell us all that could be known about man.

Furthermore, these constituent models provide original analytical models for the human sciences seeking to outline and elaborate their respective fields as positive sciences. Foucault explains:

It is upon the projected surface of biology that man appears as a being possessing *functions*—receiving stimuli (physiological ones, but also social, interhuman, and cultural ones), reacting to them, adapting himself, evolving, submitting to the demands of an environment, coming to terms with the modifications it imposes, seeking to erase imbalances, acting in accordance with regularities, having, in short, conditions of existence and the possibility of finding average *norms* of adjustment which permit him to perform his functions. On the projected surface of economics, man appears as having needs and desires, as seeking to satisfy them, and therefore as having interests, desiring profits, entering into opposition with other men; in short, he appears in an irreducible situation of *conflict*; he evades these conflicts, he escapes from them or succeeds in dominating them, in finding a solution that will ... appease their contradictions; he establishes a body of *rules* which are both a limitation of the conflict and a result of it. Lastly, on the projected surface of language, man’s behaviour appears as an attempt to say something; his slightest gestures, even their involuntary mechanisms and their failures, have a *meaning*; and everything he arranges around him by way of objects, rites, customs, discourse, all traces he leaves behind him, constitute a coherent whole and a *system* of signs. (Foucault 1970: 389-390)

Constituting what he calls the “*positive unconscious* of knowledge”, that is, the hidden order that structures knowledge yet which “eludes the consciousness of the scientist” (Foucault 1970: xi), “these three pairs of *function* and *norm*, *conflict* and *rule*, *signification* and *system* completely cover the entire domain of what can be known about man” (Foucault 1970: 390). Moreover, these models cover the entire history, and therefore could be used to trace the evolution and transformation of the human sciences from the nineteenth century to the present. First was the reign of the biological model, which allowed for beings, societies, languages, and cultures to be understood as living organisms and analysed in terms of function; then followed the reign of the economic model, when man and his entire activity came to be understood as the locus of conflict; and lastly, the reign of the philological and linguistic model that allowed for the interpretations, and the concern with giving structure to classifying the signifying system: “Thus a vast shift has led the human sciences from a form more dense in living models to another more saturated with models borrowed from language. However, this shift was parallel by another: that which caused the first term in each of the constituent pairs (*function*, *conflict*, *signification*) to recede, and the second term (*norm*, *rule*, *system*) to emerge with a correspondingly greater intensity and importance” (Foucault 1970: 392).

There is of course a rigidity in Foucault’s formulation and periodisation whereby these different epistemes rigidly defined the different periods with which he associates them with no apparent overlaps, as if the epistemic orders do not inherit the trace of their predecessors. It is partially this realisation that would lead him to abandon the archaeological method for genealogical analysis. Putting aside this rigidity for a moment, the methodological point of this formulation and its implications for ways of knowing, among other things, concerns lines of inscriptions: depending on the point of entry adopted, these models, as methodological and classificatory models or paradigms, could lead to two radically different outcomes in the discourses on human societies. Let us quote Foucault:

as long as the functional point of view continued to carry more weight than the normative point of view ... it was of course necessary, *de facto*, to share the normal functions with the non-normal; thus a pathological psychology was accepted side by side with normal psychology, but forming as it were an inverted image of it ... in the same way, a pathology of societies (Durkheim), of irrational and quasi-morbid forms of belief (Levy-Bruhl, Blondel) was also accepted; similarly, as long as the point of view of conflict carried more weight than that of the rule, it was supposed that certain conflicts could not be overcome, that individuals and societies

ran the risk of destroying themselves by them; finally, as long as the point of view of signification carried more weight than that of system, a division was made between significant and non-significant: it was accepted that there was meaning in certain domains of human behaviour or certain regions of the social area, but not in others.

When, on the other hand, the analysis was conducted from the point of view of the norm, the rule, and the system, each area provided its own coherence and its own validity; it was no longer possible to speak of ‘morbid consciousness’ (even referring to the sick), of ‘primitive mentalities’ (even with reference to societies left behind by history), or of ‘insignificant discourse’ (even when referring to absurd stories, or to apparently incoherent legends). Everything may be thought within the order of the system, the rule, and the norm. By pluralizing itself—since systems are isolated, since rules form closed wholes), since norms are posited in their autonomy—the field of the human sciences found itself unified: suddenly, it was no longer fissured along its former dichotomy of values (Foucault 1970: 392-393; cited in *Invention*).

It is this methodological lesson, and the historiographical grounding that underpins it, that the Mudimbe of *The Invention of Africa* directs us to in Foucault’s archaeology in *The Order of Things*. Developing a similar historiographical grid in relation to the development of Africanism and the colonial library, Mudimbe suggests that in a general historical frame, the colonial library is indexed in three complementary systems of knowledge and types of texts: (a) ‘the exotic texts’, that is, ‘the collection of curiosities, customs and traditions’ on ‘savages’ represented in travellers’ texts, and explorers’ reports (see also Hodgen 1964); (b) the Enlightenment classification of difference and philosophical constructions of hierarchies among civilisations, societies, cultures and beings; and (c) the anthropological search for primitiveness, which served as the intellectual grounds for the justification of nineteenth-century colonialism. The convergence with Foucault is obvious.

The ‘exotic texts’ emerged with the age of European expansion, and are defined epistemically by similitude. To illustrate this point, Mudimbe uses Hans Burgkmair’s *Exotic Tribes* (a series of paintings that were commissioned to illustrate Bartholomäus Springer’s account of his overseas travel). Assimilating black bodies into the norms of whiteness, these paintings, Mudimbe tells us, reduce and naturalise “all differences into the sameness signified by the white norm” in line with the ideals of the epistemic order of the Renaissance that dominated up to the seventeenth century (*Invention*: 8). By the eighteenth century, these norms of similitude had disappeared in the representation of blackness, as seen, for example, in Rubens’s *Study of Four Blacks’ Head* (1620), Rembrandt’s

Two Negroes (1697), and Rigaud's *Young Black* (1697). The texts produced during this period and the discourses they made possible, following Mudimbe further, were a function of a new epistemological system based on the principles of hierarchy and difference authorised by the classificatory episteme of the classical age. As illustrated by Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* (1735) as a paradigmatic example, the "theories of diversification of beings, as well as classificatory tables, explain the origins of constructing taxonomies and their objective". They underscored the virtues of a new episteme, the hierarchisation of the chain of being. Thus, writes Mudimbe citing Foucault: "What is there, given in detailed description, might be considered as a naming and an analysis of an alterity and refers to a new epistemological ordering: a theory of understanding and looking at signs in terms of 'the arrangement of identities and differences into ordered tables'" (*Invention*: 9).

With the epistemic rupture of the late-eighteenth, and early-nineteenth centuries that produced the human sciences, Mudimbe tells us, anthropology emerged as a human discipline, and in the context of nineteenth-century imperialism, inscribed itself on and embodied the spirits of Enlightenment discourses of difference, philosophical hierarchisation and classifications of peoples, cultures and societies, to produce a science of alterity, serving as the intellectual front for the justification of colonialism. Initially borrowing from the biological model, and from the paradigms of *function*, *conflict* and *signification*, anthropology aided the temporalisation of the chain of being and the construction of temporal hierarchies through the evolutionary classification of societies, cultures and beings. The 'invention' of Africa, the constitution of Africanism as a scientific field of study, and the emergence of the African as an object of study, like Foucault's Man and the human sciences, are all located in this epistemic mutation. Mudimbe thus situates the epistemological locus of Africanism, and Africa's 'invention' in anthropological sciences, the discipline whose mission it was to invent the Other and propose interpretive and explanatory models about his/her difference.

However, a major difference lies between Foucault, who posits complete ruptures and discontinues, and Mudimbe who believes in mutations that carry traces of the previous epistemic genes. The grounds that this anthropology inscribed itself on was not a blank slate, as Margaret Hodgen (1964) shows in *Early Anthropology*, but one long prepared during the classical age when similitude morphed into an episteme based on the principles of order, and hierarchy and difference became the standard for classifying things and beings, and with it, their difference. It was also this period that produced the strategic articulation of savagery

and its strong association with Africa, so that the signs and symbols of corruption and depravity previously associated with the Other in Renaissance discourse, now came to be rearticulated and projected onto Africans in elaborate theories about savagery and primitiveness (Mudimbe 1994; see also Hammand and Jablow 1977). It is precisely this historical trace that Mudimbe has in mind when he writes of the 'long nineteenth century', for though a product of the epistemic mutation of the end of the eighteenth century, it inherits discursive genes from Renaissance and classical epistemes, and links forward to the epistemological filiations of the human disciplines in their variations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see especially *The Idea of Africa*).

Moreover, Mudimbe contends, further agreeing with Foucault, since the nineteenth century, the knowledge capital of the human sciences has been defined by the three constituent models of *function* and *norm*, *conflict* and *rule*, *signification* and *system*. The main difference between the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, and the second half of the twentieth century onward, Mudimbe tells us, is in terms of permutation and lines of inscription: that is, (a) a shift in forms borrowed from biological models to linguistic models, and (b) a shift from the functionalist perspective with a stress on the first term in each of the constituent pairs (*function*, *conflict*, *signification*) to the normative model which privileges the second (*norm*, *rule*, *system*). He suggests that for methodological purposes, these could be used to account for and classify the body of discourses on and about non-Western societies into two main groups: "during the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, discourses were generally characterised by a functional perspective and a self-righteous intolerance founded on the philosophical implications of the paradigms of conflict and signification. Thus, the analysis, through a temporalisation of the chain of being and of civilisations, could simultaneously account for the normality, creative dynamism, and achievement of the 'civilised world' against the abnormality, deviance, and primitiveness of 'non-literate societies'" (*Invention*: 27). However, from the second half of the twentieth century onward, this functional perspective was increasingly challenged and superseded by a normative perspective that insists it understands these societies as systems in their own right, with their own internal contingencies and possible norms of explanation.

With specific reference to Africanism and African gnosis, Mudimbe has deployed these models to propose hypotheses about the epistemological conditions of Africanism, as well as account for transformations in its discursive frames, tracing a shift from a *functional* to

a *normative* perspective. In *The Invention of Africa*, he suggests “two periods, and therefore, two overlapping types of knowledge about Africa: before and after the 1920s” (*Invention*: 72). In *The Idea of Africa*, he locates this date more specifically in the 1950s from which onwards “knowledge about Africa now orders itself in accordance with a new model, so that despite the resilience of primitivist and evolutionist myths, a new discourse—more exactly, a new type of relation to the African object—has been established. Anthropology, the most compromised of disciplines during the exploitation of Africa, rejuvenated itself first through functionalism (during the colonial period), and, toward the end of the colonial era, in France, transmuted itself into Structuralism” (Mudimbe 1994: 38).

Placide Tempels’ *La philosophie bantoue* (1945) an anthropological attempt at reconstructing the philosophical thought of the Bantu, is perhaps the beginning of this normative moment in Africanism representing the beginning of a new type of relation with Africa as an object of knowledge. From this moment onward, and gathering pace in the period of decolonisation and after, Mudimbe tells us, Africans themselves began to very explicitly challenge, interrogate and correct Western discourses on the continent, and assert their right to a parole and self-representation within the social and human disciplines. The birth of African philosophy and theology are linked to these attempts at translating indigenous African systems of thought into the rigorous scholastic traditions of Western theology and philosophy. However, and I will return to this point presently, Mudimbe contends that such attempts were also formulated within the epistemic frames of Africanism and the colonial library that they aim to transcend.

Levi-Strauss and the Mind of the ‘Savage’

It is in the structuralist transmutation referred to above that Mudimbe partially locates the communion between Michel Foucault and Claude Lévi-Strauss; a union that he tells us is predicated on an interest in the “search for a discrete but essential order” that structures the order of things (*Invention*: 23; Lévi-Strauss 1963). In fact, Foucault’s *The Order of Things* is said to have been partially influenced by Lévi-Strauss’s *Structural Anthropology*, even though he vehemently rejected the structuralist label. As Hayden White (1973) suggests, while Foucault accepts the “assumption that the distinction between language on the one side and human thought and action on the other must be dissolved if human phenomena are to be understood as what they truly are”, he turns

the interpretative strategy of structuralism on structuralism itself, insisting “that such disciplines as ethnology and psychoanalysis, even in their structuralist forms, remain captive of the linguistic protocols in which their interpretations of their characteristic objects of study are cast” (White 1973: 24). Structuralism, for Foucault, is an actualisation of the shift from the functional model to normative model mapped out in *The Order of Things*, and though it overturns certain interpretive domains of the human sciences imprisoned in analytical models borrowed from biology and economics, it is also a particular approach to social life, its truth claims being one among several competing agonistics in the search for truth. By regarding every human culture as a complex and structured system made up of rules and logical organisation, structuralism may have rejected the underlying functionalist pathologisation of non-Western cultures, seen, for example, in the opposition between savage and civilised, and mythical thought and science. However, it still remains, in Foucault’s reading, a particular way of coming to terms with the world, hence constituting its own structural ambits of power.

A methodological lesson from Lévi-Strauss to which Mudimbe has often directed attention is the need to dissolve the tensions between anthropology and history. In *Structural Anthropology I*, Lévi-Strauss posits a complementary relationship between the two disciplines, suggesting that rather than constituting two separate projects, history and anthropology are variations of the same scientific enterprise. Their similarities, he contends, are more important than their differences, for both disciplines witness to an alterity, in that they “are concerned with societies other than the one in which” the historian or anthropologist lives: “Whether this otherness is due to remoteness in time (however slight), or to remoteness in space, or even to cultural heterogeneity, is of secondary importance compared to the basic similarity of perspective” (1963: 18). While anthropology concerns itself with remoteness in space, history deals with remoteness in time. Insofar as they seek a “reconstruction of what happened, or is happening, in the society under study”, both disciplines share the same goal—that is, a better understanding of societies and cultures that are spatially or temporally ‘Other’ than the ones the historian or anthropologist lives in. In this sense then, anthropology for Lévi-Strauss can always be about ‘other’ societies, and not one’s own culture or society. The principal difference between these disciplines relates mainly to the choice of complementary perspectives:

the fundamental difference between the two disciplines is not one of subject, of goal, or of method. They share the same subject, which is social life; the same goal, which is a better understanding of man; and, in fact,

the same method, in which only the proportion of research techniques varies. They differ, principally, in their choice of complementary perspectives: History organizes its data in relation to conscious expressions of social life, while anthropology proceeds by examining its unconscious foundations. (18)

As such, it is not useful to oppose the methods of the two disciplines because both the historian and the anthropologist travel on the road to the understanding of man—the historian transitions from the explicit to the implicit, and the anthropologist, from the particular to the universal. What is different is their respective orientation: “The anthropologist goes forward, seeking to attain, through the conscious, of which he is always aware, more and more of the unconscious; whereas the historian advances, so to speak, backwards, keeping his eyes fixed on concrete and specific activities from which he withdraws only to consider them from a more complete and richer perspective” (24).

This invocation of the image of a Janus to convey what Lévi-Strauss calls ‘the solidarity’ between the two disciplines seems to function as a strategy for a reconstitution of anthropology and broadening its disciplinary reach as a social discipline offering a universal perspective on human societies and cultures (*Invention*; Johnson 2003). Christopher Johnson has suggested that Lévi-Strauss’s very designation of the discipline as anthropology was a bold move: “The more common term in France was *ethnologie* and his preference for *anthropologie* therefore marks a conscious decision to widen the normal definitional boundaries of the discipline” (2003: 12). The goal of this anthropology Lévi-Strauss stresses, “is to grasp, beyond the conscious and always shifting images which men hold, the complete range of unconscious possibilities” (1963: 23). Mudimbe (2013) recently interpreted the implication of this methodological move as a mechanism for ‘dialogic invention,’ a means of “promoting a healthy pedagogy on how ... to converse about systems of knowledge, the circulation of regional values and the diversity of perceptions by combining ethnographic and historical perspectives in the study of any phenomenon within and from all cultures. In bypassing the old specialisation implied by the opposition of history versus anthropology, we nullify also the absurd tension between historical and ahistorical societies” (2013: 10).

In fidelity to this position, a transdisciplinary vision stands revealed in Mudimbe’s philosophical preoccupation, in which, as Kai Kresse (2005) rightly points out, “African studies just cannot happen in splendid isolation from other disciplines” (Kresse 2005: 3). Indeed, Mudimbe occupies multiple disciplinary positions as a philosopher, philologist, anthropologist

(even though he denies this label), novelist, and poet, among others. This is to be expected. Trained in the French intellectual tradition, Mudimbe was for years ensconced in the Parisian intellectual environment of the 1960s and 1970s, that Edith Kurzweil (1996) reminds us, eschewed narrow disciplinary preoccupation for the cultivation of intellectual production that cuts across diverse disciplinary fields. As such, for Mudimbe, as for many of his French intellectual interlocutors—Sartre was a philosopher, dramatist and novelist; Lévi-Strauss combined philosophy and anthropology, and was also a gifted musician; Foucault, history and philosophy; Michel de Certeau philosophy, history and psychoanalysis; Paul Ricoeur, philosophy, theology, and history—transdisciplinarity is a self-conscious intellectual praxis: a demand to transcend narrow disciplinary provincialism and cultivate universal perspectives on human cultures and societies.

Lévi-Strauss' reconstitution of anthropology and the broadening of its disciplinary reach and focus, Mudimbe insists, allows for the rejection of the antinomy between the savage and the civilised, and the nullification of the absurd boundaries between historical and ahistorical societies. As well it “signifies both a disengagement of anthropology from self-explanatory paradigms of primitiveness and a different look at ‘primitive societies’ and at the ‘savage mind’”. *Ex hypothesi*, its momentum resides in the rejection of the antinomy between the logical and the pre-logical. For according to Lévi-Strauss, the savage mind is ‘logical’ (*Invention*: 29). What exactly is this ‘savage mind’, which according to Lévi-Strauss is not subordinate to the so-called civilised mind, and how do we understand it? The savage mind, Lévi-Strauss tells us, is neither assigned “to a period of history—to the ages of fetishism and polytheism” in August Comte’s characterisation; nor is it “the mind of savages nor that of primitive or archaic humanity”. Rather, it is “mind in its *untamed state* as distinct from mind cultivated or domesticated for the purpose of yielding a return” (1966: 219, my emphasis).

It is interesting that the language used to describe this so-called savage mind is very similar to Hegel’s description of the African: “man in his complete wild and untamed state” (1956: 93). If this logic is pursued further, cannot we say that only such a man could have a ‘mind in its untamed state’? The staggering similarity of the language between Hegel’s characterisation of the African, and Lévi-Strauss’s description of the savage mind may not be mere coincidence: Lévi-Strauss, Derrida (1978) tells us, must “preserve as an instrument something whose truth-value he criticises”, and as such, studies in terms of concepts, even while “denouncing their limits, treating them as tools which can still be used” but whose truth value is evacuated, and “employed to destroy the old

machinery to which they belong and of which they themselves are pieces” (284). The problem though is that a concept such as savage, Johannes Fabian (1983) deciphers, still carries with it the logic of its epistemological genesis: it is a category of European thought made possible by the temporal vectors of evolutionist epistemology, which structuralism side-steps and never really transcends. An analysis that uses this concept therefore must also study in terms of the savage—I will return to this point presently.

Understanding this undomesticated mind, Lévi-Strauss tells us, partially resides in examining the unconscious foundations of its mental structures. The methodological lessons for such a preoccupation are primarily drawn both from Marcel “Mauss’s precept that all social phenomena may be assimilated into language”, hence “the conscious expression of semantic formulation”; as well as from structural linguistics and semiotics: the study of linguistic structures, specifically Nikolai Troubetzkoy’s “study of the configuration of phonemes in the production of meaning”, and “Ferdinand de Saussure’s description of the structure of the sign itself” (Spivak 1974: lvi; Lévi-Strauss 1963). Scaffolding his methodological interventions on these precepts, he develops an original approach to the study of cultures, kinship structures, mythical thought, culinary traditions, and totemic systems, focusing on the unconscious foundations and underlying patterns of human thought, which as structured systems made up of rules and logical organisations, constitute the universal productive infrastructure of human cultures and societies. In emphasising the structural relationships between the elements of a system as a whole, rather than focusing on its individual constituent part as independent entities, Lévi-Strauss is thus able to posit an unconscious mental superstructure in all cultures, and suggests the similarity of the structure of human thought processes across all cultures.

Thus, it is through these vectors that he is able to subvert the traditional opposition between the so-called savage and the civilised minds, which he compares, analogically, to magic and science, positing them not as “two stages or phases in the evolution of knowledge” from the former (primitive, backward) to the latter (civilised, advanced), but as two parallel and equally valid knowledge systems, and distinct ways of knowing (1966: 22). ‘Magical thought,’ Lévi-Strauss maintains, is not a rudimentary beginning of a system that would eventually mature into science. Rather, it is, ‘a well-articulated system’ in its own right, “independent of that other system which constitutes science”. Thus, instead of contrasting it with science, or thinking of them as steps in a teleological development, it is better to regard them “as two parallel modes

of acquiring knowledge” (13). Magic “postulates a complete and all-embracing determinism”, the rigorous precision of which should be thought of as “an expression of the unconscious apprehension of the *truth of determinism*, the mode in which scientific phenomena exists”. “Science, on the other hand, is based on a distinction between levels: only some of these admit forms of determinism; on others the same forms of determinism are held not to apply” (11). Magic, therefore, is neither primitive science, nor an unstructured or unscientific thought, but ‘science of the concrete’ based on “speculative organisation and exploitation of the sensible world in sensible terms”. Like the ‘science of the abstract’ to which it is opposed or paralleled, “it is no less scientific and its results no less genuine” (16).

Lévi-Strauss uses the analogy of ‘bricolage’ and engineering, to further explicate this point, suggesting that mythical thought should be thought of as “a kind of intellectual bricolage”. The English translator of *The Savage Mind* explains: “The ‘bricoleur,’ has no precise equivalent in English. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a jack of all trades or a kind of professional do-it-yourself man, but ... he is of a different standing from, for instance, the English ‘odd job man’ or handyman”. He is skilled and multi-talented, and “adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks”. However, “his universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with and use ‘whatever is at hand’ to perform his tasks”. The engineer, on the other hand, is “specifically adapted to a specific technical need”, subordinating each task “to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project” (17). These tools, unlike those of the bricoleur, are “specially adapted to a specific technical need”. His ‘open’ universe allows him to create the world, cross-examining his resources and exceeding imposed boundaries, and “the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilisation. The bricoleur, on the other hand, by inclination or necessity always remains within them” (19).

Hence, the difference between the engineer and the bricoleur: “the engineer questions [or creates] the universe, while the ‘bricoleur’ addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours, that is, only a sub-set of the culture” (19). It is by these inverse functions that they are distinguished: “The scientist creating events (changing the world) by means of structures and the ‘bricoleur’ creating structures by means of events” (22). Moreover, while the engineer engages in concepts which “have an unlimited capacity and do open up unlimited possibilities, the ‘bricoleur’ works by means of signs, which are pre-constrained and restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense which sets a limit on their

freedom of manoeuvre” (18, 19). Both approaches are however, ‘equally valid,’ and do not constitute “two stages or phases in the evolution of knowledge” (20, 22). As a result, therein partially lies the problem: Lévi-Strauss could not help but reproduce within his own formulations the hierarchical structures of that of which he is critical. Though aimed at dissolving the implied hierarchies between the so-called savage mind and civilised mind, mythical thought and science, and bricolage and engineering, what is ultimately reproduced in this characterisation is, in effect, an implicit hierarchy by which bricolage becomes a pre-scientific method of investigation, and engineering the superior form to which it ultimately passes, bringing us back to an evolutionary preconception whereby bricolage and engineering, the savage mind and civilised mind, are placed on a temporal scale implying a teleological chain of development that determines the distance between the two as well as the implied trajectory of evolution. In other words, even Lévi-Strauss could not avoid the thraldoms of evolutionism and its problematic temporal hierarchies (Spivak 1974: xx).

This idea that magic “is no less scientific and its results no less genuine” than science is at the heart of Lévi-Strauss’s promotion of mythical thought, and his attempt to relativise what Mudimbe calls “the truth of the Same”. It is this relativisation that, among other things, appeals to Mudimbe, who celebrates Lévi-Strauss, as well as Foucault, for the “radical project of providing a body of knowledge that simultaneously could undermine a totalitarian order of knowledge and push knowledge into territories traditionally rejected as supposedly nonsensical” (*Invention*: 33). What is most transgressive about this strategy is that it mythologises the anthropological project itself, subverting its categories and, as Étienne Balibar (2003) notes in his overview of structuralism, making the non-philosophical and its limits, the very “condition of philosophy, and of managing, by means not only of a specific turn of expression but also of an invention of categories, to bring about its recognition as something new in and for philosophy” (Balibar (2003: 5). Although as Derrida observes in his stimulating critique of structuralism, “structural discourse on myths ... must itself be *mythomorphic*”, that is “it must have the form of that of which it speaks”, and it is this ‘mythomorphic’ criticism of myth that for Derrida makes the structuralist project at once necessary and inadequate (Derrida 1978: 286; Spivak 1974: lx).

Mudimbe echoes, but celebrates, this point, noting that “Lévi-Strauss has chosen to pursue the analysis of ‘mythological systems’ in order to write his own myth about them using intellectual ‘categories’ as tools for revealing an abstract and universal order of rationality” (*Invention*: 34). As

we shall see presently, these have at least two important implications for Mudimbe's own project. First, the recognition that the structuralist project is necessary, even if inadequate, is partially what would lead Mudimbe to attempt to reconcile structuralism, "whose method grounds, at least for me, the most stimulating ways of understanding human cultures", with existentialism, whose perspectives ground a compelling 'philosophy of subjectivity'. By insisting on "the importance of the subject that structuralism too easily pretended to have killed", Mudimbe sought to go beyond the limitations of structuralism by way of phenomenology (P&F: xi; *Invention*: 23). Second, the idea that anthropological knowledge is in its very essence myths about the Other is what partially guides Mudimbe's questioning of the mythical character of Africanist knowledge, as well as his own attempts at reconstructing Luba cosmologies in *Parables and Fables* as mythological systems. In this sense, Pierre-Phillipe Fraiture (2013) is right in suggesting that the titles of Mudimbe's major philosophical work—*The Invention of Africa*, *The Idea of Africa*, *Parables and Fables*, *Tales of Faith*—are very significant and strategic in that regard, in that they constitute part of his strategy of highlighting the ideological underpinnings of truth claims about Africa, as well as their mythical character or foundations.

For Mudimbe, Lévi-Strauss's opposition to the tyranny of history and its totalitarian grip on the interpretation of social and cultural realities, also functions as a mechanism for teaching, as it were, an arrogant civilisation 'a lesson in humility' (*Invention*: 33). One may, however, question the sincerity of Lévi-Strauss for the simple fact that the savage serves an instrumental purpose for his anthropological project. Supposed to be radically different, this savage, much like Rousseau's noble savage, serves as a mirror to reflect the failings of Western civilisation, allowing Lévi-Strauss to discover ethical systems in confronting alterity and cultural difference. This savage, he writes, "helps us to build a theoretical model of human society", which even if it "does not correspond to any observable reality", might enable 'us' to "detach ourselves from our own societies", and discover "principles of social life that we can apply in reforming our own customs". As well, it may enable the West to remove from "our own customs that air of inherent rightness which they so easily have for anyone unacquainted with other customs, or whose knowledge is partial and biased" (Lévi-Strauss 1976: 515, 509).

Thus, Lévi-Strauss not only accepts the category of the savage, but in fact studies in terms of the savage. Although he questions the evolutionist devaluation of savagery, he still believes in and studies in terms of the savage. Going to Brazil was not an accident, as he believed that such a

pure and uncorrupted humanity could be found in the Amazonian forests. As well, his interest in 'primitive' societies or 'the savage mind' is 'self-interested,' 'ethnocentric,' and instrumentalist (Li 2006; Wai 2012). He is not interested in so-called primitive societies or 'savage mind' for their own sakes, as values in their own right, but because they enable critical self-knowledge about his own society. This move is appropriative of Rousseau's obsession with the so-called noble savage, as we shall see in the next section. Lévi-Strauss explicitly bases his anthropological project on the foundations of Rousseau's philosophical anthropology which indicates a narcissistic obsession with the European self. As 'primitive' societies allow the West "to gain self-knowledge as the ground for self-criticism", such primitive societies or savage people would, even if they never really existed, "have to be invented in order to provide us with an original model against which our present society can be compared and judged" (Li 2006: 10-15). The 'savage' is thus nothing but a means for entering an alternative universe to interrogate the modern and its perceived pathologies, as well as its end or ideal state (Kurasawa 2002; Wai 2012). Ultimately, it becomes about a stalwart West struggling with itself, as it attempts to free itself from itself (Li 2006).

The younger Mudimbe of *L'Autre face du royaume* (1973) formulated his critique of structuralism around some of these concerns. However, from *The Invention of Africa* onwards, he has been far more conciliatory in his evaluation of structuralism, suggesting that notwithstanding these limitations, "the positions of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault signify new critical symbols as well as invitations to redefine and rework or transform the history of the Same" (*Invention*: 34). They demystify the myths of their own civilisation through critical interpretations of its history, which they variously define as produced, mythical, ideological and so forth, hence a particular type of violence in the passion of the Same and its will to truth and power. Foucault, for example, asks us to "conceive of discourse as that violence we do to things or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them" (Foucault 1982: 229). Lévi-Strauss and Foucault offer methodological lessons that open up spaces and possibilities for actualising a politics of knowledge beyond the totalitarian order and ideological presuppositions of Western modernist discourses on itself and about Others, precisely why Mudimbe celebrates them for bringing "to African consciousness new reasons for developing original strategies within the social sciences" to question and challenge Western hegemonic discourses and ideological interpretations about Africa, as well as affirm the African voice in the social and human sciences (*Invention*: 36).

Mudimbe, however, does not heed these methodological lessons uncritically for the simple reason that, when examined from the position of, and “with the passion of the Other, of that being which has been so far a mere object of the discourses of social and human sciences”, the Foucauldian and Lévi-Straussian projects become inadequate and need to be stretched beyond the contexts of their own locations and the anti-subjective inclinations of their formulations, and reformulated from the perspective of the ‘other’ as a subject (*Invention*: 34). He is aware of the problems that these interventions pose for the ‘other’ attempting to appropriate the language of the ‘same’: since Lévi-Strauss and Foucault “are engulfed in the history of the Same and its contradictions”, the passion of their work “only uncovers and seeks strictly to define this complex history of an identity”, that is, Western conception of itself, as it projects its cogito towards those its constructs as radically other. This brings us back to the earlier point about the ethnocentrism and self-interestedness of the Lévi-Straussian and Foucauldian projects, and their own complicity in what Spivak has characterised, specifically in relation to Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, but also Western intellectual production in general, as the ideological project for conserving the sovereign subjecthood of the West and the centrality of the Western subject as the human norm. While claiming to undermine the West as a subject, Spivak tells us, most of what passes as critical interventions is actually a cover for recentering the ‘subjective sovereignty’ of the West. Precisely why she insists that Western intellectual production is complicit in Western international economic and political interests (Spivak 1988: 271).

For Mudimbe, Foucault and Lévi-Strauss also represent the symbols of that very sovereign subjecthood of which Spivak speaks, precisely why many Africans, including even the younger Mudimbe, “tend to doubt the ethical value of these estimations” and the implications of their interventions for an African *Weltanschauungen*, which he contends, continue to metaphorically labour under the suffocating ‘odour’ of an omnipresent father-figure: Western colonising and epistemic gazes (Fraiture 2013: 92; *Invention*: 43, Mudimbe 1982). However, the older Mudimbe from *The Invention of Africa* onwards, would jettison this critical position and embrace structuralism, in part because of the realisation of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of breaking completely free from these complicated relationships. What is more important for this Mudimbe is the question of the subject, especially of the ‘other,’ that structuralism “too easily pretended to have killed.” The issues that impose themselves for Mudimbe then are, (a) holding on to the methodological advances of structuralism without conceding to what Paul Ricoeur calls its

“anti-reflective, anti-idealist, and anti-phenomenological” inclinations (Ricoeur 1974: 33); (b) second, resurrecting the subject and accounting for its agency without ceding insights about the unconscious foundations of structures within which the actions of that subject are mediated. For this Mudimbe then, the problem, ultimately, comes down to the issue of the lack of a theory of the subject capable of reconciling structuralism with a philosophy of subjectivity. He writes:

The masterful demonstrations by Lévi-Strauss and Foucault do not convince me that the subject in the discourse on the Same or on the Other should be a mere illusion or a simple shadow of an episteme. What they teach me is different; namely, that we lack a theory that could solve the dialectic tension between creative discourses and the epistemological field which makes them possible, on the one hand, and Lévi-Strauss’s unconscious that sustains discourses and accounts for their organization, on the other. In fact, there is an obvious way out of this problem by means of the subject, who directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, participates in the modification or the constitution of an epistemological order. (Invention: 35).

Sartre and the Subjectivity of Existence

To account for this theory of the subject, Mudimbe turns to Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential philosophy, which he suggests, can be reconciled with Lévi-Straussian structuralism around the question of the Cartesian cogito. Specifically, Mudimbe refers to Sartre’s rejection of the conventional interpretation of the Cartesian cogito in *Being and Nothingness*. The ‘I am’ of the famous expression ‘*Cogito ergo sum*’ (I think therefore I am), according to Sartre’s interpretation, is not and cannot be the consciousness of a pre-reflective subject, that is, of a consciousness which actually thinks, but that of a subject reflecting upon its own thinking. Since a pre-reflective cogito is a non-positional and non-thetic consciousness, as opposed to thetic or positional consciousness, that is, a consciousness that reflects upon its own act, what we have in the cogito is a secondary activity in which a reflective subject thinks upon its own thinking. The ‘I’ that appears on the horizon of the ‘I think’ cannot be the producer of conscious spontaneity: “its object cannot be itself but rather is the original consciousness of doubting which has made it possible” (P&F: xii). Put differently, it is a doubting Descartes reflecting upon his own thinking/doubting and as such states an awareness: consequently, ‘I think; therefore, I am’ should be reformulated as ‘I am aware that I am thinking, therefore I am’ (P&F: xii; Barnes 1966: xi).

This position is important for it allows Sartre to posit the idea of consciousness as originary activity emergent from the tension that exists between different conceptions of being: *l'en soi* (being in-itself), *le pour soi* (being for-itself) and *le pour autrui* (being-for-others). The first designates being in the absolute contingency of existence; it is superfluous (*de trop*) and non-thetic; the second is its negation and transcendence: this being is thetic and positional, and capable of transcending itself and reflecting upon its being, actions and thought. The third, *le pour autrui*, is one of the three modes of being or ekstasis through which the for-itself constitutes its complexity as a scissiparous entity or through scissiparous processes; the others being temporality and reflection. *Le pour autrui* is the object of the consciousness emergent from the gaze of the other that the for-itself has no access to or control over. An object transcending itself as a consciousness of being as well as that capable of perceiving itself as a being of consciousness, the for-itself becomes aware of itself through an ekstasis, that is, as an object becoming conscious of itself through the look of the other, a situation that makes one experience one's own body as an object for that other. With the gaze of the other, Sartre suggests, one's existence as a sovereign subject, conscious of and in control of one's own being is transformed into a being-for-others. It is with the other's look that one realises one's own vulnerability and as an object becoming conscious of itself.

This encounter with the Other is not only a source of alienation—for it is with the gaze of the Other that one realises one's own objecthood, which is also an alienating experience—but also a source of conflict. The terrifying awareness of being looked at produces an experience of shame or guilt that Sartre equates with the fall or original sin:

It is before the Other that I am guilty. I am guilty first when beneath the Other's look I experience my alienation and my nakedness as a fall from grace which I must assume. This is the meaning of the famous line from Scripture: 'They knew that they were naked.' Again I am guilty when in turn I look at the Other, because by the very fact of my own self-assertion I constitute him as an object and as an instrument, and I cause him to experience that same alienation which he must now assume. Thus the original sin is my upsurge in a world where there are others; and whatever may be my further relations with others, these relations will be only variations on the original theme of guilt (Sartre 1956: 531).

In other words, the origin of consciousness is always outside and transcendent, in relation to something or someone else. Put differently, the consciousness of one's being is derived, not from an immanent reflective condition, *à la* Descartes, but is a secondary activity derived from an

ekstasis made possible by an external process, that is, the look of the other: “it is always before an other, outside of the self, that one is intelligent or stupid, ashamed or innocent. The other is the occasion by which one unveils previously unknown possibilities of one’s own being and apprehends oneself as subject and object” (P&F: xii). It is thus in the existence of the other that one comes to the full realisation of one’s own being, hence the originary condition of an intimate and co-constitutive relationship between the self and the other, the for-itself and the for-others. Mudimbe explains:

The integration of the other in my existential experience is dramatic. It always signifies an opening up of what I am and reduces me to the status of a sign-object, to be reflected or commented upon. ... Thus, outside the structure of my for-itself, there is a field which is mine and, at the same time, in a fundamental manner, is not mine. I could possibly pass judgement about its constructions, since it claims to reveal me, yet I know that its judgement about its modes, as well as its very being, depend upon and express the other’s power of representation and his or her capacity for objectifying me. An existential necessity—the other in his or her interaction with me—actualizes new structures which, simultaneously, involve me, mark my own perception of my being-for-others, and definitely objectify me (P&F: xiii).

The implication of this formulation for Mudimbe’s own preoccupation lies in part in the idea that both the African and European exist in a dialectic tension of co-production by same processes of objectification. Furthermore, that European self-consciousness could not be occasioned by an internal and independent condition of self-reflection, but by an external condition, the historical conditions of contact and the politics that flows from it. In other words, Europe did not ‘discover’ reason, nor constitute itself as the self-actualising being with transcendental self-consciousness without the constitutive registers of coloniality and the objectification emergent from contact with non-European societies that they constructed as radically different. It constructed and projected its cogito in relation to others with whom it had come in contact.

Thus, when Mudimbe talks, for example, about the ‘invention’ of Africa or the ‘idea’ of Africa, it is partially this idea that Africa is never given, but one which has been constituted through the ideological and epistemic gazes of Europe that he partially has in mind. The African, as a subject thus exists, in part, as an ideological construction of a West falsely projecting its cogito onto a co-constructed Africa as its intimate but rejected other, and his/her attempt at self-representation or speaking with his/her own voice has also been conditioned by the ideological trappings

of the historical forces that has made his/her being possible, a reality he/she has not been able to completely escape. In fact, such attempts have also been structured by a dialectic tension, and actualised themselves within structures of those very ideological registers within which the African has been constructed in the first place. Thus, for Mudimbe, the idea of the colonial library partially highlights the ways in which Africa as an 'idea' or a 'concept' has, for centuries, been fashioned within the European 'archive' and the political, ideological, material, epistemic and existential implications that this has had, not only for the continent and its peoples, but for European self-conception and identity as well. By making the colonial library a central organising concept in his intellectual preoccupation, Mudimbe has been able to tease out the ideological foundations of Africa's invention and the processes through which the continent and its people were, and continue to be, constituted, as objects of the European colonial gaze. Moreover, by showing how this library constrains or impedes the emergence of an 'authentic' African subject uncontaminated by its violence and conceptual registers, a subject capable of speech and self-representation, he has been able to also highlight the difficulty in transcending the European gaze.

Hence the paradox: the African has been constituted through ideological vectors of the colonial library, but it has also been from within the foundations of these ideological registers and their power/knowledge regimes that Africans themselves have sought to interrogate and escape these colonialisng and epistemic gazes, as well as produce their own notions of self-identity, counter discourses of Otherness and ideologies of alterity. In *Parables and Fables*, Mudimbe puts it this way: "It is a paradox to note that African discourses which correct, critically reread, reinterpret, or challenge the colonial library or missionary performance are possible and thinkable only insofar as they actualise themselves within those same intellectual fields which nowadays permit political, anthropological, or theological exchange with or refusal of earlier statements" (P&F: 8). As a result of this paradox, the African subject is almost always already constrained and constantly threatened with the risk of reproducing in his/her own *parole*, the speech and conceptual registers and violent signs and symbols of the colonial library. In other words, the ghost of the European gaze is always lurking in the shadows of attempts at looking or speaking back. As we have seen, Mudimbe can himself be seen as an embodiment of this contradiction. It is partially the need to chart a way of transgressing the vectors of the colonial library, and specify the condition for bringing forth an African subject capable of speaking with

his/her own voice that animates the passion of Mudimbe in *Parables and Fables* (see next section).

This idea of the African as an object of the European colonial gaze can also be deduced from Fanon's exploration of the dialectic tensions constitutive of the relationship between black and white, colonised and coloniser. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon uses his own subjective experience to illustrate how, among other things, the black or colonised body is made to experience his/her being through the objectifying gaze of the coloniser. Exploring the psycho-existential complexes of colonial racism, Fanon suggests, contrary to Sartre, that objectification in a colonial context is non-reciprocal. Writes Fanon:

In the Weltanschauung of a colonized people there is an impurity, a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation. Someone may object that this is the case with every individual, but such an objection merely conceals a basic problem. Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. (Fanon 1967: 109-110)

In other words, there is, in the colonial context, an impossibility of reciprocal objectification, for the power differentials are such that only the colonised is made to come into conscious of his/her body through the gaze of the coloniser. This consciousness, 'a third-person consciousness' initiating a scissiparous ekstasis— "In the train, it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. In the train, I was given not one but two, three places" (112)—is a negating experience whereby the black colonised body is made to experience a dialectic tension between his/her being and the world so that even a mundane activity such as reaching for a pack of cigarettes lying across a table, walking on the street, or riding a train, becomes an alienating experience that brings the full power of the European gaze and its ideological trappings to bear on the colonised body.

Reduced to a 'thing', an object of the white gaze, the black or colonised being is fixed in a 'crushing objecthood' and confronted "by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty", so that he/she "encounters difficulties

in the development of his/her bodily schema” and made to live through the alienating experience as an object coming into consciousness of itself through the gaze of the other (110-111). This objectification is violent and non-reciprocal: both black and white, colonised and coloniser, may be locked in a dialectic tension of co-constitution, however, the structural ambits of hegemonic racism constitutes, through institutionalised patterns and interpersonal relations that are internalised in the colonising and colonised populations, the existence of a ‘psycho-existential complex’ that produces, enforces, and sustains racial hierarchies that place the coloniser at the apex, and the colonised at the bottom of a structure of being. This forecloses the possibility of ethical or reciprocal relations. It is in part out of the need to break the chains of this ‘unmerciful imprisonment’ that the racialised/colonised being engages in anti-colonial revolutionary praxis which Fanon posits in *The Wretched of the Earth* as the perfect medium for leaving the colonial hell, and overturning its racist and objectifying violence.

Given how close his context is to Fanon’s, as well as the similarities between their positions in relation to the ideological and psycho-existential complexes of colonial domination, it is curious that in his attempt to reconcile structuralism with a theory of subjectivity, Mudimbe would go to Sartre and not Fanon, especially since he recognises the seeming difficulty, if not impossibility, of dialogic engagement between Sartre and Lévi-Strauss. Part of this may be that Sartre and Lévi-Strauss were part of his intellectual influences, and that they explicitly take up and comment on the Cartesian cogito, which Mudimbe takes as a tool around which to unite them in dialogue. Mudimbe believes that Sartre’s interpretation of the cogito can, in fact, be reconciled with Lévi-Strauss’s which, he tells us, is informed by “Rousseau’s principle, the I as the other”, on which Lévi-Strauss grounds his anthropological project as a founding paradigm (P&F: xiv). Mudimbe argues that both Rousseau’s formulation, and its interpretation by Lévi-Strauss, function as a total negation of the Cartesian cogito.

In the essay “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man” (*Structural Anthropology II*, 1976), Lévi-Strauss locates the discovery of the ethnographic spirit in Rousseau’s principle of “an obstinate refusal to identify with the self” (35). “To attain acceptance of oneself in others”, Lévi-Strauss says of Rousseau’s principle, “one must first deny the self in oneself and identify with the other” (36). This principle, which according to Lévi-Strauss, is the ethnological goal, and the only one upon which the human sciences can and should be based, had hitherto been inaccessible because of the reign of a philosophy which by taking the cogito as the

point of departure, legislated a preoccupation with the self. A major problem with the cogito, Lévi-Strauss asserts, is the mistake of Descartes in believing that one could proceed “directly from a man’s interiority to the exteriority of the world, without seeing that societies, civilizations ... place themselves between these two extremes” (36). Referring to Rousseau speaking of himself in the third person, Lévi-Strauss suggests that there is for Rousseau, the existence of a ‘he’ who ‘thinks’ through the ‘I’ and who first causes the ‘I’ to doubt whether it is the ‘I’ that is thinking. He writes:

To Montaigne’s ‘what do I know?’ (from which everything stems), Descartes believed it possible to answer that ‘I know that I am, since I think.’ To this Rousseau retorts with a ‘What am I’ without a definite solution, since the question presupposes the completion of another, more essential one: ‘Am I?’ Intimate experience provides only the ‘he’ which Rousseau discovered and which he lucidly undertook to explore. (Lévi-Strauss 1976: 37, cited in Mudimbe, P&F: xiv)

This, Mudimbe notes, is for Lévi-Strauss, the end of the Cartesian cogito, for it posits the foundation of ‘doubt’ outside the interiority of an ‘I’ who must contend with a thinking ‘he’ or ‘she’ through which it (the ‘I’) comes into consciousness of itself.

Thus, the double principle: refusal to identify with oneself, and identifying with the other (P&F: xiv). Grounded in Rousseau’s *Confessions*, this lesson anticipates the famous formula “I is another” or “the other is an”, and provides a way out of the Cartesian conundrum that in positing an unmediated proceeding from the interiority of one’s mind to the exteriority of the world, by-passes society and disregards inferences as the way of acquiring personal identity and self-consciousness. Mudimbe explains this Lévi-Straussian interpretation of Rousseau’s principle thus: “What unveils the most intimate and profound experience is not an I but a thinking he or she in me, who is so clear and explicit that I should doubt whether or not it is me who is thinking”. This means that, “my existence can be defined only as an inference from and a reference to an other”. It is for this reason that Lévi-Strauss credits Rousseau with founding the ethnological spirit, upon which he bases his own anthropological project. This is exemplified, for example, by his preoccupation in *Triste Tropiques*, a text that Mudimbe tells us, can be read both “as an anthropologist saga and spiritual journey” (P&F: xv).

The intellectual complexity of the text and its achievement, following Mudimbe further, only makes sense when considered against the background of its postulating a confession and a meditation on the life of “a lost soul in an absurd world”, as Lévi-Strauss describes himself,

reflecting not necessarily on the Indian communities with which he has come in contact deep in the Amazonian forests, but “primarily about himself and his own culture”. Indeed, as Lévi-Strauss writes in *Triste Tropiques*, this whole saga was in fact “an exploration of the deserts of my mind, rather than those of my surroundings” (1977: 378). As we have seen, this is part of the problem that many critics have with Lévi-Strauss’ ethnological vocation, which is not necessarily about the other, but the instrumental role that other plays for the self-conception of the identity of the same. Although his other projects, such as the *Mythologiques* might not seem to be related to this meditation on oneself, Mudimbe continues, they are precisely that, a practical actualisation of the paradigm of the ‘I as an other’, which comes as a revelation that finds, existing in language, a double articulation and complementary systems: “one of units of signification and a second of units of distinctions” (P&F: xvi).

This ‘discovery’, Mudimbe explains, has important methodological implications for Lévi-Strauss who designates Marxism, geology, and (Freudian) psychoanalysis as his ‘three mistresses’, or ‘sources of inspiration’ for all three systems, he insists, proceed from the premise that reality is not what it seems, and that truth is not self-evident but one that always lies concealed beneath what is visible. Thus, they all “demonstrate that understanding consists in reducing one type of reality to another; that the true reality is never the most obvious; and that the nature of truth is already indicated by the care it takes to remain elusive” (Lévi-Strauss 1977: 57; cited in P&F: xvi). The methodological implication of these postulates, Mudimbe explains, is the ‘essential truths’ that they symbolise: “First that meaning is always discreet, invisible, beyond the apparent rationality and logical constructs of what is visible at the surface. Second, the passage from the visible to the invisible is discontinuous and represents a rupture. Third, despite its connections with the visible and despite its determining impact on it, the invisible is an autonomous system whose activity has its own reason” (P&F: xvi).

As we have already seen, it is this invisible, and its discreet order that becomes for Lévi-Strauss, the unconscious, which differs from “the Freudian unconscious of instinctual erotic drives and its power of symbolization” (Ricoeur 1974: 33). Rather, it is, following Mudimbe further, ‘a self-intelligent structure’, designating ‘a form or an aggregate of forms’ revealing the functioning, in general, of the human mind beyond the idiosyncrasies of the I apprehending the other, or vice versa (P&F: xvi). Thus, when Lévi-Strauss writes in *The Raw and the Cooked*, for example, that “I am not concerned with the classification of what is in myth but with the system of axioms and postulates defining a code, giving

on unconscious formulations which are the work of minds, societies and civilizations” (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 12, cited in P&F: xvi), Mudimbe continues, it is precisely this unconscious, and its system of discreet and essential order that he has in mind. The search for this order animates his anthropological vocation and which, he tells us, the social and human sciences should also task themselves with uncovering, since the reality that they study is not limited to what is visible or apparent at the surface, but extends to the fact that such realities and their appearances “are underlaid by other appearances of no greater value, and so on, layer by layer, as we look for the ultimate essence of nature which at each level escapes us, and will probably remain forever unattainable” (Lévi-Strauss 1977: 638, cited in P&F: xvii).

It is precisely this centrality of the unconscious and its primacy in his ethnological vocation that puts Lévi-Strauss at loggerheads with Sartre for whom, as we have seen, existence is about a subjective consciousness expressing a will to absolute freedom (P&F: xvii). Sartre proclaims the subject as a being fully responsible for its actions as a universal lawmaker, and posits existence as absolute freedom and its anguish, so that all we can really do is “confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will” (Sartre 1965: 45, cited in Mudimbe, P&F: xvii). Thus, for Sartre, Mudimbe explains, “there is no reality outside of human action” nor any existence that is not a conscious expression of the will to freedom. While sharing with Freud the idea that the search for meaning in human behaviour is to be located in the reconstruction of the human as a ‘situational being’, actively producing and responding to its environment, Mudimbe explains further, Sartre rejects the primacy Freud accords to the libido and the unconscious psyche as a whole, for existence as Sartre understands it, is the expression of human praxis and choice reflecting a consciousness and its will to freedom. Sartre stresses that “Human action and ways of appropriating the in-itself and the other express in a particular situation an already concrete choice of being. Each action is the entire human being existing in a way” (Sartre 1956: 716, cited in P&F: xvii). The implications of this philosophical injunction, Mudimbe explains, is that Sartre would not only posit a Cartesian logic that privileges European society as the true subject of historical consciousness and dialectical reason, hence the prescriptive model and true motor of history, but more crucially also focus on “the ‘prereflective choice’ of being”, in accounting for “the truth of its being-in-the-world”, rather than on ‘a mythical subconscious’ that it rejects as non-existent. Sartre not only challenges the Freudian unconscious, but also the Lévi-Straussian unconscious, for as

Mudimbe points out, “if the unconscious does not exist, then by analogy, unconscious mental structures become unthinkable” (P&F: xvii).

Formulating these arguments in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976), in which he mounts a philosophical defence of Marxism and the dialectic, as he attempts to reconcile his existentialist philosophy and historical perspective with Marxian conceptions of history, Sartre posits the dialectic, which he understands as “the law of totalization which creates *several* collectivities, *several* societies, and *one* history” (Sartre 1976: 36), as the motor of history, which itself works according to the structural laws of the dialectic. Both the meaning and truth of history, according to Sartre, are dialectical. However, he substitutes the historical dialectic with another, privileging “the primacy of consciousness as absolutely intentional and dialectical, and individual praxis as the ‘only ontological reality’ and basic and unique source of all dialectic” (P&F: xvii). Existence thus becomes about making history, which is posited as the outcome of a critical dialogue between human praxis and what Sartre calls, the practico-inert—i.e. the inherited actions and material structures that have been created by previous actions that constitute the condition of possibility for new actions or their limitations and nullifications. In other words, between the for-itself and the in-itself, as Mudimbe puts it referring analogically to the founding concepts of *Being and Nothingness*.

In “History and Dialectic”, the last chapter of *The Savage Mind* (1966), Lévi-Strauss, formulates a response to Sartre, calling into question the very idea of the dialectic upon which Sartre predicates his entire enterprise in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. According to Lévi-Strauss, Sartre’s vacillates between two conceptions of dialectical reason, and does not seem to make up his mind about the relationship between them. In some instances, he opposes dialectical reason to analytical reason as truth to error; in others, he treats them as complementary, constituting different routes to the same truths. However, continues Lévi-Strauss, “It is difficult to see how analytical reason could be applied to dialectical reason and claim to establish it, if the two are defined by mutually exclusive characteristics” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 246). Moreover, asks Lévi-Strauss, if the two ultimately achieve the same result and arrive at the same truth, then in what exact ways are they opposed to each other and, on what grounds can one be said to be superior to the other? Lévi-Strauss concludes that “Sartre’s endeavours seems contradictory in the one case and superfluous in the other” (246). He thus seems to disqualify his own project which partially establishes the truth of dialectical reason through analytical reason that he rejects.

The significance of this critique is that it calls into question Sartre's entire enterprise in the *Critique*, specifically his conceptions of 'Man' and 'History', and their relationship with the dialectic. In defining "man in terms of dialectic and dialectic in terms of history", Lévi-Strauss points out, Sartre appears to set apart the ego's society as the prescriptive model and true motor of history, while excluding from the dialectic, and hence from history, those typically defined as peoples "without history" (248). Writes Lévi-Strauss, "Sometimes, Sartre seems tempted to distinguish two dialectics: the 'true' one which is supposed to be that of historical societies, and a repetitive, short-term dialectic, which he grants so-called primitive societies" (248). The Cartesian undercurrents of such egocentric formulation, Lévi-Strauss maintains, means that Sartre "begins by steeping himself in the allegedly self-evident truths of introspection" from which he is never able to emerge or recover. This is precisely why he "becomes the prisoner of his own Cogito"; for if "Descartes made it possible to attain universality, but conditionally on remaining psychological and individual", Sartre, Lévi-Strauss explains, sociologises the Cogito, and by so doing "merely exchanges one prison for another". For in Sartre's world, "Each subject's group and period now take the place of timeless consciousness" (249). In following Descartes who 'separated Man from Society', Lévi-Strauss contends further, Sartre "separates his own society from others" and as such, projects a Cogito that ultimately "retreats into individualism and empiricism and is lost in the blind alleys of social psychology" (250). Only "a good deal of egocentricity and naivety," continues Lévi-Strauss, can lead one to the belief "that man has taken refuge in a single one of the historical or geographical modes of his existence, when the truth about man resides in the system of their differences and common properties" (249).

Strictly speaking, Mudimbe contends, the conversation between Sartre and Lévi-Strauss seems impossible: on the one hand, Sartre's existentialist philosophy foregrounds a historical perspective and celebrates the subjective consciousness and agency of the subject as universal lawmaker; Lévi-Strauss's structuralist perspective on the other hand, is ahistorical, and privileges the unconscious structures that underpin the discreet orders of societies and cultures. One is the product of a philosophical system potentiated by the Cartesian Cogito, the other begins by explicitly defining its project against it. However, the differences between them might not be absolute, and can in fact be reconciled around three postulates. First, is the objective of Lévi-Strauss's project, which in proclaiming the power of the unconscious in uncovering 'hidden forms,' directs to the possibility or understanding that "in a given context, being relates to itself and not, as

Sartre proposed, in relation to oneself” (P&F: xviii). Thus, in essence, no being or consciousness can exist in a vacuum or in isolation of the larger social context, space, or environment that conditions its existence. The hidden forms that the unconscious unveil, speak to actual human cultural milieus. Thus, what the unconscious does for Lévi-Strauss is perform ‘a demonstrative function’ in the sense of signifying the creative dynamism of a human society and its unconscious foundations.

Second, and related to this, is the meaning of myths themselves and their relationship to the unconscious foundations of human cultures. While mythologies reveal the discreet and unconscious structures, and teach “the apparent arbitrariness of the mind”, Mudimbe contends, they also do reveal “the dynamics of a particular history”, and speak to complex interactions between physical environment and human milieus, as well as symbolise practical human activities in a specific local environment, and thus account “for regional manners of treating and manipulating basic contradictions of human life”. Furthermore, and we shall see this with Mudimbe’s own fascinating discussion of Luba founding myths in the next section, they do speak to local memories, functioning as ideological systems witnessing to a past, actualising genealogical projects as reality, and thus unveiling “beyond the surface of their textuality ways and techniques of dealing with ‘unwelcome contradictions’” (P&F: xviii). As such, they are the record or outcome of human praxes and not a nebulous system without human agency emerging from nowhere. In this sense, and to put it in less technical language, structures exist because of the dynamism of human actions and agency, which in turn are shaped and constrained by those very structures.

The third and final postulate relates to Lévi-Strauss himself as a conscious subject engaging in purposeful action through his philosophical interventions and anthropological vocation. His critical enterprise, like any such intellectual vocation, can only really make sense in the name of ‘the intentionality of its inventor’ and the conscious choices he makes, and thus “expresses the power of a consciousness and its liberty” (P&F: xviii). In other words, “it is Levi-Strauss’ praxis expressing itself within a cultural and human environment, which is an obvious practico-inert as illustrated by the confessions in *Tristes Tropiques*” (P&F: xix). As a subject operating within constraints, Lévi-Strauss’ anthropological praxis is grounded in his subjectivity and in the locality of his experience; it is these: his location and positionality, the place he chooses to inhabit and the conscious political and theoretical choices he makes that allows him to make the interventions that would ultimately transform anthropology and the human disciplines. His structuralist method is thus “an intellectual tool

whose condition of possibility resides in an epistemological field in which the relative strength of the cogito has led to the right of an absolute human freedom and, consequently, to systematic meditation on the comparative virtues of the same and the other” (P&F: xix).

Staging this dialogue, Mudimbe reminds us, is not to integrate Lévi-Strauss into a phenomenological or existentialist perspective, but to clarify his project vis-à-vis the cogito, which in turn allows for interpreting him from the viewpoint of a philosophy of the subject as indexed in the preceding discussion. Despite his sharp denunciation of phenomenology and existentialism, Mudimbe insists, there is “an explicit linkage between Lévi-Strauss’ subjectivity and the imperative necessity for postulating against the Cartesian cogito, an I as an other” as exemplified by *Tristes Tropiques*, the two volumes of *Structural Anthropology*, as well as “the ethical presuppositions of the Mythologiques” (P&F: xx). Indeed, it is the way his subjective consciousness meets and engages with the rules and constraints of the human scientific space and its secret codes that defines his philosophical enterprise and ethnological vocation, so that “the very choice of such a philosophical norm presupposes in a manifest way a prereflective choice of the for-itself in the most specific Sartrean sense”. As such, “both Sartre and Lévi-Strauss witness to the grandeur of the I thinking about itself vis-à-vis the other” (P&F: xx).

Ultimately, it is from Simone de Beauvoir, whom Mudimbe describes as “the least phenomenological” as well as “the most tolerant of existentialists”, that he draws the frame within which to fit the irreconcilable differences and complementary ambiguities of Sartre and Lévi-Strauss concerning the Cartesian cogito. Mudimbe explains:

In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1980), de Beauvoir demonstrates that one’s being should be grounded within freedom of choice as the means of constructing one’s own existence vis-à-vis the other who is always a mirror of one’s significance. Her perspective seems close to Sartre’s. But there is a major difference, for de Beauvoir emphasizes liberty as that which is objectified by the other, rather than the complex and contradictory self-perception of the for-itself. (P&F: xx).

It is at this level, continues Mudimbe, that Sartre meets Lévi-Strauss, and it is here that they can at least co-exist without tension. It is in this double transformation of Sartre’s existentialist philosophy and Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist perspective that Mudimbe’s complex and magnificent project, at least from *The Invention of Africa* onwards, is located. As he explains in *Parables and Fables*, this reinterpretation of structuralism from the viewpoint of a philosophy of the subject is necessary for the formulation of a radically new project aimed at

dissolving the tensions between structure and agency, subjective consciousness and its unconscious foundations, and the human will to freedom and its structural constraints. Such a project is attentive to the ways the creative dynamism of a subjective consciousness and its agency meet and negotiate the strictures of social structures and the unconscious foundations of a culture, which themselves witness to the dynamism of human agency that they shape. It is in the dissolution of these tensions that the authority of Mudimbe's preoccupation defines itself, and to which we will now turn.

Coda

Such are the philosophical ideas that index Mudimbe's conceptual and methodological lessons for Africanist knowledge and the world of meanings it creates about Africa. These conceptual systems have not only allowed him to account for the possibility of anthropological discourses as the epistemological foundation of Africanist knowledge, but to also tease out the contours of the colonial library, and posit ways of transgressing the registers within which its conceptualities are indexed. Space would not, however, allow me to draw out the implications of these methodological lessons and how they are concretely indexed in his work, as seen, for example, in *Parables and Fables*. Such a task will be the subject of another exercise. For this chapter, however, I have tried to highlight Mudimbe's methodological and conceptual lessons for Africanism and the registers within which they are indexed. I have also examined what these lessons mean for the possibility of Africanist knowledge and the African practice of the discipline that is not codified by the matrices of the colonial library. Thus, from the very beginning, I have been dealing with the demands of the transdisciplinary idioms that index Mudimbe's work, while mediating his thought through his interlocutors, to decipher the world of meanings he creates on and about Africa, as well as the methodological and conceptual lessons he offers for the possibility of Africanist knowledge, free from the violence of the colonial library. Since every act of interpretation is by necessity also always a decided act of translation, in the sense of converting an idiom, a place/space, a text, a culture from one context to another, I have also been translating Mudimbe, in the sense of rearranging his ideas and rendering them intelligible from his own context to mine and those of my audience. In other words, I have been engaging in a double act of translation and interpretation: on the one hand, translating and interpreting Mudimbe by coming to terms with the multiple ways he navigates the differing axes and transit points between

multiple, and sometimes, difficult and irreconcilable idioms; and on the other, deciphering how he himself translates Africa, as well as translates other translations of Africa, into the language, conceptual categories and epistemic systems of Africanism and the social and human disciplines.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

“HASH-TAG OTHERING”: TRANSLATING CULTURE ON MICRO- BLOGGING SPACES IN AFRICA?

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Introduction

In her thesis, Mose (2012) locates Achille Mbembe’s analysis of the colonial city in analysing Nairobi as having first been established as *mimicry* of a European city, imagining itself to be an English town, a “pale reflection of forms born elsewhere [...] a European city in a European country in Africa” (Mbembe 2004: 375-376). Spatially divided into two distinct areas – the centre, which is inhabited by those with economic and political power (the colonial government offices and residence), and the peripheral, native quarters which house the native labour supply of the centre – , the colonial city endeavours to perpetuate the discriminative order of its original form. However, Mbembe also argues that this city gradually evolves through *mimesis*, or what he defines as a “capacity to identify oneself or establish similarities with something else while at the same time inventing something original”, finally gaining its own ‘aura’ or a unique identity, as a modern city (2004: 373-377). I begin this paper by utilising these arguments in my analysis of social media sites as part of what scholars now refer to as ‘online communities’, located within the loci of what is referred to as ‘social media’ in Africa. I am interested in the formations of online communities within nationally identified spaces, and how these communities, carrying the tags of their national identities, interact with other national online communities within cybersphere.¹

¹ Here, I use the term cybersphere, cognizant of Kenway and Nixon’s (1999) analysis of the possibilities of ‘cyberspheres’. I confine myself, to the sphere

Specifically, I zero in on Kenyan and Nigerian online communities on the micro-blogging site Twitter, and their nationally-located interactions and discourses. In these interactions, I am interested in how these communities (inadvertently or not) make reference to, and usage of, the colonial library in a bid to at once understand and discomfit the ‘other’, using a variety and multi-texts that social media spaces offer. I argue that the use of scatology and sounding (Toop 2000; Githinji 2007) within these interactions become the cultural sites of production of ‘othered narratives’. Underpinning these arguments is the fact that the growth of cyberspheres in Africa, and usage of the internet on the continent has grown by leaps and bounds, going far beyond the narratives and lenses of under-development that have been used to pigeon-hole Africa as existing at the poverty threshold, lagging far behind other regions. Based on Mbembe’s ideas of mimesis, this paper will ultimately suggest that online communities in Africa have adequately acquired the capacity to identify themselves or establish similarities with other communities, while at the same time inventing something original. Just what this “something” is not for this paper to define but remains the subject of deeper analysis as these communities continue to undergo processes of mimesis.

The Internet and Africa: An updated view

It is no secret that Africa has lagged behind on infrastructure development compared to the West, as Aker and Mbiti (2010) argue. This would support an earlier proposition by Chinn and Fairlie (2004), who, writing about the growth (or non-growth) of the technology sector on the continent, present the different variables which they used to measure the sector’s development, including,

economic variables (income per capita, years of schooling, illiteracy, trade openness), demographic variables (youth and aged dependency ratios, urbanisation rate), infrastructure indicators (telephone density, electricity consumption), telecommunications pricing measures, and regulatory quality...(p. 1).

Other scholars have been more blunt. For instance, Mbarika et al. (2002) have viewed Africa as a ‘technological desert’ (Mbarika et al. 2002) in much the same way, perhaps, as Taban Lo Liyong called East

within which social media and microblogging would exist in current usage, even though the circles of social media would keep expanding and continue to be in flux.

Africa a ‘literary desert’. This analysis has traditionally been framed in under-developmental terms of the “urgency of the problem of the global digital divide in Africa” (Fuchs & Horak: 2008). At the time of this writing (before 2010), only 2.6% of all internet users worldwide lived in Africa, home to 15% of the world’s population. According to Van Dijk and Hacker (2003), this low penetration was mainly driven by four barriers to access, that is, mental, material, skill and usage (Van Dijk & Hacker 2003). In short, Africa and her peoples lacked the knowledge, skill, and equipment with which to close the gap in the digital continuum. Conflated with the variables presented above by Chinn and Fairlie, it is clear that historically, the lack of, or slow growth in development in other sectors on the continent has obviously affected the adoption of digital and tech.

However, the use of the language of (socio-cultural and political) deprivation, as well as narratives of development, have meant that these arguments have remain mired in their then-current realities without taking into account the fluidities of growth on the continent. For example, existing within an increasingly digital age means that ‘tech and digital’ have come to exist even in, or alongside, spaces where infrastructural and political developments have lagged. One can argue that digital advancements, unlike other sectors of development, do not necessarily need to exist within optimum or ideal spatial or infrastructural development conditions. We continue to see this being the case in countries such as Kenya, where internet penetration and tech innovations rank first regionally despite large-scale corruption; or in Rwanda, where the case is similar despite the country coming under fire for its supposed undemocratic and dictatorial political regime.² This is an inaccurate summation.

The reality is that on a global scale, digital worlds and cyberspheres continue to offer high business returns and revenues, signifying a high interaction between people within these worlds. For instance, in July 2016, Facebook Inc. announced 6.24-billion-dollar revenues in advertising sales. Facebook Inc. itself has 1.7 billion users worldwide, 1.5 billion on mobile. Together with its three other platforms (Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram), Facebook Inc. carries a total of 4.2 billion active users. Twitter has an active user-base of 320 million, 79% of whom are outside the United States. By the end of June 2016, Twitter revenue was reported

² Rwanda presents a case study in this context as a paradox of sorts. While Rwanda’s president has invariably been described as a tyrant, tech innovations in the country continue to thrive, debunking the notion that tech and digital cannot fully develop in States where ‘democracy’ or the idea of democracy, is stifled. China is another case in point.

at the \$602 million mark.³ Snapchat, another social media site, claims over 100 million active users in the developing world (ibid).

Closer to home, and to give context to African cyberspheres, the numbers appear grim at a glance. Internet World Stats reports that by April 2016, internet usage was at between 9% on the lower side and 20% on the upper in Africa, compared to Europe’s collective 77%.⁴ The African continent accounts for 16% of the world’s population, less than 20% of whom are internet users. However, at the individual level, the picture is more nuanced. Internet penetration stands at 69.6% in Kenya , 51.1% in Nigeria, 47.5% in Zimbabwe, 37% in Egypt and 49% in South Africa . Countries with low penetration include Niger at 17%, the DRC at 3.8%, and Eritrea at 1%.⁵ Although, Africa’s overall percentage drops because of these latter percentages, in specific countries around the continent, penetration and usage are high and steadily growing. Further, a Pew Research report places smartphone usage in Kenya at 26%, Nigeria at 28%, Ghana at 21%, and South Africa at 37%.⁶ A 2015 Ericsson Study is more optimistic, placing smartphone usage in Nigeria at about 70%, over 60% for Kenya, and about 78% in South Africa, above the global average of 76%.⁷ In the next five years, smart-gadget penetration in Africa is

³ See Justin Kerby’s analysis on social media populations from April 2016 article at www.adweek.com/socialtimes/heres-how-many-people-are-on-facebook-instagram-twitter-other-big-social-networks/637205 , accessed 29 August 2016.

⁴ See for example Internet World Stats official reports <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm> with full breakdown of usage per country.

⁵ See GSMA Report “The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa 2015 at <https://www.gsmainelligence.com/research/?file=721eb3d4b80a36451202d0473b3c4a63&download>, accessed 29 August 2016. The GSMA and Pew Research studies have been slightly critiqued for low smartphone scores across the continent for omitting Chinese brands which have driven smartphone penetration overall, meaning even higher penetration rates on the ground.

⁶ See Pew Research Report at www.pewresearch.org. For instance, recent studies on smartphone usage on the continent have failed to give a true picture of smartphone penetration because the phone brands listed failed to include MSP-branded phones, or the non-traditional brands of Apple, Samsung, HTC, Microsoft/Nokia, and Huawei. The broad spectrum of Chinese phones, for instance, were not included, whereas this is the space where a bulk of middle- to lower-middle-class smartphone owners and users play. Consumers are using these affordable gadgets to make their mark online, and their impact cannot be ignored.

⁷ See Ericsson Report “Sub-Saharan Mobility Report”, November 2015, at <https://www.ericsson.com/res/docs/2015/mobility-report/emr-nov-2015-regional-report-sub-saharan-africa.pdf>, accessed 28 August 2016

collectively forecasted at 40%, and will obviously be higher in specific countries. Overall, digital growth, cemented in mobile phone penetration, is currently bridging the digital exclusion lacuna in Africa, leading in financial inclusion to unbanked populations, leading innovation in new services and apps, and contributing a collective \$3.1 trillion in GDP by the end of 2015. This is projected to increase to \$3.7 trillion by 2020. The above is evident in several African countries, including Kenya, which can claim to be at the forefront of these very innovations: mobile innovations such as the M-platforms, M-Pesa, M-Kopa, etc., and apps such as *Kisafi*, which has ushered laundry service into the digital, and is operational in Nairobi, Kampala and Lagos.⁸

These developments have given rise to online communities that may be directly associated with their geographic and geo-spatial origins, but in terms of idea and ideal, rather than physical or infrastructural development as demonstrated. Despite what Wilson and Peterson (2002) term as “often elusive and ambiguous constructions of individual and collective identities” on cyber-sphere users, it is clear that online communities embody the constructions of identities of their locales of origin. Indeed, online communities take on certain physical identities. For instance, the Kenyan community on Twitter calls itself #KOT (Kenyans on Twitter). The utilisation of the construct of being ‘Kenyan’, as fraught, fluid, contested the idea that ‘Kenanness’ might present. Although other identities may come to play with the many Kenyan users in the digital space, this paper will focus more on I what I refer to as ‘national Twitter’, for each respective national community, and their interactions with other nationally, self-identifying communities on social media. Specifically, this paper will examine cross-border discourses of scatology and toasting.

I have zeroed in on the microblogging site Twitter based on two metrics as presented above. First, it is the only social media site to have the bulk of its users outside its original home of the United States. Its usage has been more robust on the continent of Africa. For instance, Ndlela (2016:466) outlines the usage of Twitter in Kenya, specifically by politicians, including the president, as an important tool for political communication. Twitter has also been invariably used to marshal financial support for very ill patients, to pay fees for people across borders, to ‘out’ political mischief, and to communicate with service providers such as power companies and government offices, hitherto difficult to achieve face-to-face.

⁸ See Kisafi App new on <http://nairobi.news.nation.co.ke/jobs/how-digital-mama-nguos-have-taken-laundry-services-by-storm/>

Second, the multiplicity of text, to use Barber (2007:1), who calls text “a tissue of words...with the quality of being joined together and given a recognizable existence as a form”, includes oral texts as well as the visual, audio and the audio-visual, all of which have both explicit and implicit meanings. For Twitter, the use of words, video, audio, meme and live-videos means an interplay of texts that both complement and contradict one another to form rich layers that beg analysis. The use of the hash-tag (#) also becomes another layer of text that calls attention to itself, giving other texts used in conjunction visibility and even longevity, as is the use of the *emoji*, emoticons that give emphasis to the feelings of users. Found in most social media platforms, and on smart phones and computers, *emojis* become part of the multi-layered texts for analysis.

Hashtag scatology: one vs ‘the other’

Kenyan and Nigerian Twitter communities have invariably participated in “beefs”, episodes of exchanged *disses* between two verbally warring parties, with origins in hip-hop music and culture. The word *dis* is derived from the English word ‘disrespect’, meaning ‘to put down or show disrespect’ (Safire 1995:41), and is used in hip-hop to communicate displeasure with a real or perceived rival. More robustly, the *dis* is a clear example of ‘hip-hop supremacy’, where artists use arrogant tones to declare themselves superior to other artists using scatological language. This ‘hip-hop supremacy’ is similar to what Toop (2000: 29-34) and Githinji (2007: 89) call ‘toasting’, ‘sounding’ or *mchongoano* in Sheng, a popular Kenyan peer language (Githiora 2002). These arguments point to the ‘*dis*’ as a practice of hip-hop culture and as a tool of self-identity, competition, socialisation and comic relief. Ntarangwi (2000: 63) argues that the use of abusive language, or what he terms ‘*matukano*’, is a reference to masculine and social power displayed over competitors. For Nigerian and Kenyan beef or disses, these become evident, as several key areas of competition emerge. These beefs have their origins in the perceived national superiority of both countries – Nigeria in West Africa, and Kenya in East Africa. Billed as continent “powerhouses” in the press, both countries participate in these disses to perform power and superiority, competing to find a winner, albeit in cybersphere. It is the discourses of these ‘*malumbano*’, Swahili for verbal duels, that are of interest. Using the hash-tags #NigeriavsKenya, or #KenyavsNigeria, these verbal duels take on new meanings and themes.

First, the **politics and translations of power** as enshrined in the state and national economies come into play, with both Kenyan and Nigerian Twitter posting memes, photographs and texts that demean the other and position the self as superior. For instance, one Nigerian user posits that

*@IlsaAida: Nigeria's Twitter is stronger than Kenya's currency ☐☐☐
#Nigeriavskeny*

The use of the laughter emoji gives volume to the derision that Kenya's currency is far inferior to the force that Nigeria's Twitter community has unleashed on their Kenyan rivals. The user's Nigerian identity is compounded by placing Nigeria before Kenya in the hashtag. To offer context, Kenya's shilling is twice as strong as the Nigeria Naira, but by positioning the number of Nigerian Twitter users as stronger, the user is making reference to the actual population of Nigerians, at about 190 million in total, to Kenya's approximately 45 million. Obviously, the larger number is perceived as the winner, despite the actual reality of the currency exchanges. Another Nigerian user reiterates

"@zaza6580: The Kenyans have gone so quiet on this #Nigeriavskeny matter..I think the data in Kenya has finished"

The superiority of the Nigerian economy over that of Kenya is displayed here, when the user says that the data in Kenya has finished. The reference is made to disparage Kenyan users, who have gone silent because they are poorer, and cannot afford to top up their phones with mobile data to access the internet. When a Kenyan user attempts to clap back by referencing the 'Kenyan in the White House',⁹ therefore positioning Kenya as superior to Nigeria by virtue of the American connection, another Nigerian user responds with a table of African economies. In the table, Nigeria is first on the continent, and twentieth worldwide, while Kenya is sixth and seventy-seventh respectively. With this photo is the caption "*just in case the country in sixth starts feeling too important coz of Obama*". The superiority of Nigeria's economy seems to 'win the round' of scatology. Nigerian users post further photographs of starving children raising their arms in wonder when they are given relief food, mocking Kenyans by suggesting that this is how they look when they enter the supermarket chain Shoprite for the first time. The suggestion

⁹ This is a reference to then-President Barack Obama, whose birth-father was Kenyan. During the Obama presidency, many Kenyans fondly referred to him as the 'Kenyan in the White House', claiming a certain American cachet of power, wealth and even entitlement.

is that Kenyans are so poor as to lack food and be amazed by the sight of the Shoprite food aisles. This post serves to counter the Kenyan position of a superiority connected to President Obama, as the Shoprite chain has not entered the Kenyan market

However, a fed-up Kenyan community fights back by drawing on the Nollywood motif of ‘the village’, questioning how such a wealthy country can produce laughable films. In the Nollywood motif, the village motif, standing in for backwardness and a provincial outlook on life is used to scandalise Nigerian Twitter, and position Kenya as a more sophisticated city. For instance, a scene from a movie where a Nigerian actress has been transformed into a mermaid, the famed ‘*mami-watta*’, using improvised costuming that appears to be polythene material and rope, surfaces with a caption

A mermaid in Nollywood, I swear, Nigeria will kill us! □□□□

Mocking Nollywood movies for this outrageous display seems to counter the economic power position of Nigeria as contradictory. Further, a photograph of a man using a urinal in the presence of other men, but with his trousers all the way down to his ankles, appears with the caption

the kenyan Aristotle @grabber #KenyavsNigeria when a Nigerian gets to Nairobi

Placing Kenya before Nigeria on the hashtag attempts to restore Kenya’s superiority in this exchange, while positioning the ‘Nigerian’ at the urinal as provincial, backward and ‘village’. Here is the positioning of the ‘village’ as a site of backwardness in comparison to the city. ‘Villagers’ in Kenyan parlance become unschooled people who lack sophistication. In that sense, Nigeria becomes the village, while Kenya becomes the city space, being visited out of necessity by the ‘villager’ for schooling and upgrading. When a Nigerian user responds, he attempts to salvage the reputation of Nollywood by suggesting that Kenyan actors are equal to the wildlife that Kenya is (in)famous for:

*@iamlarenz your actors in kenya are the best. They have a channel too.
NatGeoWild #kenyavsNigeria*

However, another Kenyan user responds by referencing the witchcraft portrayed in Nigerian movies by saying

Yvon Day @yvonneday145

I guess some pple in this war #KenyavsNigeria are already figuring out how to turn Twitter into a white hen

The reference to turning Twitter into a white hen is a pejorative reference to the perceived ‘villager’ behaviour of Nollywood stories which portray seemingly outlandish wizardry of turning animate object into animals. For the Kenyan user, this witchcraft has no power in a sophisticated space such as Nairobi, or Twitter, where the two sites are equated.

These displays are not just confined to those taking part in the beef, or in the toasting. They also encompass the leaders of both countries. For the Kenyans, ‘village’ behaviour, now epitomised by the Nigerians, is also evident in the presidential campaign of Azikiwe in the 1960s, where he is displayed in a posted photograph campaigning from a low, rickety table, held upright by two men. To the Kenyan user, subjected to lavish displays of wealth and largesse during electioneering periods, a president who cannot ‘afford’ a lavish campaign is nothing to write home about. For the Nigerians, the myth of Nnamdi Azikiwe is reduced to having, or not having, with the Kenyan users suggesting that the myth is inconsequential to them. It further subverts the idea of a wealthy Nigerian nation, when one of their previous presidents is displayed campaigning using very humble means. Time and space are forgotten, and the immediacy of claims made online are the only considerations here. The economic status of Nigeria in the 1960s is erased by current claims of wealth and superiority.

Not to be outdone, Nigerian users post an unflattering photograph of a red-eyed President Uhuru Kenyatta with the caption

faizal @grandmastergray When u realise that they (sic) Kenyan president has smoked all the weed in Africa #kenyavsigeria

This is a slap in the face of the Kenyan users, who have positioned themselves as sophisticated, despite being economically less endowed. Having argued that money cannot buy sophistication, Kenyans are forced to confront the possibility that they do not have the sophistication they earlier imagined. This becomes even more forceful when they are confronted by the fact that the president is arguably the wealthiest Kenyan.

Village tropes are exchanged back and forth. For instance, a pot-bellied man wearing a chieftain’s crown and beads is posted next to a photograph of a naked, pot-bellied man being arrested and hauled off in what looks like a police van. The Chieftain is billed as a ‘King in Kenya’, while the other naked man is billed as a ‘King in Nigeria’. In essence, both men are naked and pot-bellied, but the Chieftain gains new respect and is

acclaimed by the Kenyan users, despite being dressed like the ‘villager’ they have been disparaging all along.

Second, the **politics and translations of gendered identities** is displayed in these beefs. Use of gendered language is not new in beefs, and has a long history of scholarship in hip-hop, and specifically rap music, from which I draw comparisons for this paper. The use of gendered, derisive metaphors in rap does little to advance the cause of a feminist ideal of equality and equity between the sexes. These gendered metaphors are abusive at best and serve to cement anti-feminist sentiments in subjugating and reducing the female to a form. Feminism is derided within hip-hop language, both implicitly and explicitly, and used to build a form of potent, male identity.

For these Twitter beefs, we see the same instances, with few counter-narratives, perhaps partly due to the limitation of Twitter posts to only a hundred and forty characters.

The female body becomes a site of contestation and national abuse. For instance some Nigerian users post

Tony tom olufemi @Tommykay: My ex ws admitted due to shock guess wat hapened.. afr givin a kenyan guy bj d monkey spill a dark colored sperm on her face #nigeriavkenya-

Another posts that

Oh gosh,seriously,you guyz??"@El_swaGz: According to research, Kenyan women emit crude oil during menstruation. #Nigeriavkenya"-

The first post is particularly gendered and abusive, needing a deeper analysis. The user is suggesting that his ex-girlfriend, one concludes, a Nigerian, was admitted in hospital after performing fellatio on a Kenyan, only for the Kenyan, billed as a ‘monkey’, to emit ‘dark-coloured sperm’ on the ex-girlfriend’s face. The layers of verbal, gendered violence must be seen within context. First, the ex-girlfriend, being an “ex” becomes fodder for abuse and disposal, having parted with the user ‘@Tommykay’. @Tommykay is suggesting that his girlfriend left him for a Kenyan man, and is therefore symbolically disposable. The contestations around sexuality and virility between Nigerian and Kenyan men is a matter of public debate between the two countries. For @Tommykay, this conversation is extended to this tweet, where he attempts to dehumanise the Kenyan man as lesser than him by calling him a monkey, and suggesting his sperm is impure or abnormal. A parallel can be drawn with the second user’s tweet suggesting that Kenyan women emit crude oil

when they menstruate, which also dehumanises them and portrays them as inhuman, abnormal and disgusting. The language changes from mere scatological banter, to more dehumanising and violent, gendered language. Even where the subject is male, it is the female body that is used to emphasise its ugliness, such as the woman performing fellatio, even when she is Nigerian. This serves to portray her as abnormal and disgusting for performing the act on a ‘monkey’. The short-hand, almost sounding like pidgin/peer language, becomes intimate, insider dialectal. Abuse hurled using intimate/insider language is significant, where exclusion also becomes a device to further afflict insult and maximum offense among peers who understand that insider language. Further, the usage of the word ‘monkey’ comes with deep, racist baggage of which the user seems aware in this attempt to subjugate the other with a dehumanising discourse.

The Kenyan’s response is equally offensive and highly gendered. A Kenyan user posts lurid pictorials of what appears to be a woman inserting an object into her privates with the caption

*William Waweru. @truany What naijas should do with their opinions..
#kenyavsnigeria*

The idea of ‘shoving’ one’s opinion up one’s privates is common parlance in scatological toasting and sounding. The problematic here becomes the use of the female body in delivering this insult.

Other gendered posts include that of a rhino mounting another, with the top beast billed as Kenya mounting, and therefore subjugating the Nigerian ‘opponent’. This serves to portray the sex act as one of subjugation and humiliation, an exercise of the display of masculine power and might. These portrayals are highly problematic in their gendered renderings, and their popular usage of the female body to drive home their scatological point.

Third is the **translation of beauty and blackness**. The contested space of skin colour has been theorised by many, including Maddox and Gray (2002) as well as Maddox and Chase (2004), who have analysed skin tone amongst black people. Lighter skin is directly correlated to beauty, while darker skin is shunned as ugly and undesirable. Further, a European normative is adopted with regards to beauty, including appearance. For the beef between Nigerians and Kenyans on Twitter (called a Twitter Beef, or “tweef”), this plays out prominently, with Nigerians adopting light skin, and shading their Kenyan counterparts with darkness, deemed undesirable and even obscenely comical, echoing monkey tropes. For instance, a Nigerian user posts,

@Sir_Yommy Nov 11"@Dan_churkh: Ayaf just died. "@Herliemah: Even Albinos in Kenya are the color of choco-milo" #Nigeriavskenyaa""Lmfao

The meaning is obvious here, that even Albinos are dark- (choco-milo) skinned. The accompanying emoji of a black face, as well as the shorthand ‘*lmfao*’, which stands for ‘laughing my fucking ass off’, is meant to elicit a form of obscene laughter of derision against the subject, that is, the black-faced Kenyan/Albino. In fact, use of the word ‘albino’ is itself pejorative and reductive, epitomising Kenyans as a whole, as suffering some form of disability and skin ailment. This is another latent use of the colonial archive, where the imaginings of beauty are decidedly European, or aspire towards this standard. The chaotic self-response to beauty remains schismatic, where to appreciate oneself, one is forced in essence to draw from racist and colonial tropes to demonise the ‘other’ in order to feel some sense of subjugative catharsis. In response, the Kenyans post photos of women with visibly hairy chests and faces, accompanied by laughter *emojis*. For them, this is the motif of a beautiful woman in Nigeria. In their eyes, a hairy woman is not a woman.

The Nigerians further responding by reverting to the black, thin, hungry-Kenyan motif, by posting photos of Kenyan long-distance runners and suggesting that they are animalistic by calling them ‘black leopards’, and suggesting strippers in Kenya all look like that. Again, the gendered language in defining a ‘stripper’ as a woman with curves and whose sole purpose is to satisfy the male gaze further serves to suggest that the Kenyan woman does not pass muster for failing to satiate this gaze. To retaliate, Kenyan users post a photograph of a ‘Nigerian’ man with pink lipstick, with the caption

Meanwhile, Nigerian men! I give up! #KenyavsNigeria

This suggestion that the Nigerian man is effeminate via the use of pink lipstick above all attempts to erase the perceived masculinity of Nigerian men. It feeds into masculine anxieties present in the fight for male superiority in which men from both sides seem embroiled. The final *mea culpa* seems to serve to give both sides pause. The Twitter beefing sessions, sometimes lasting between a day or two of intense exchanges, dissipate, and both sides retreat to pick up the fight another day.

Conclusion

We must continue to interrogate the virtual and colonial archives from which Africans continue to draw in (re)creating stereotypes and narratives

with racial and polarizing roots. Use of terms such as ‘monkey’ in relation to a fellow African questions the extent and effect of decoloniality, not just in public institutions, or within physical public spaces, but within online spaces which are now emergent sites of cultural meaning and discourse-making.

It also brings into question post-independence discourse if Africans continue to aspire to whiteness as the standard of being, where tradition and culture are used as both a prop of subversion as well as a shaming narrative.

The question also arises of linkages between online space and physical space. Both seem fraught with various levels of schismatic beliefs and thoughts, both inward and national. There is need to interrogate these, far beyond the (simplistic?) last word of the moderates on the Kenya vs Nigeria ‘*tweefs*’ when they posit

Odede Emmanuel B. @tvibez49 *Who so ever started this #KenyavsNigeria stuff has a big problem, at least we (are) all Africans and one love should keep us 2geda, #GodblessAfrica.*

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CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

SATIRICAL CYBER-PICTORIALITY AND TRANSCRIPTION OF THE WESTERN IMAGINATION ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: COLONIAL PERSISTENCE IN THE POST- INDEPENDENCE ERA

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Introduction

This paper¹ focuses on the valorisation of satirical cyber-pictoriality as a visual method for the transfer and popularisation of imperialist discourse of the West in the ways of speaking of and thinking about Africa. The idea defended here is to show that a set of vocabularies and construction of stereotyped discourses used by the West to describe sub-Saharan Africa is modeled on the deforming prism of satirical images. The approach of this work is in keeping with the movement of *visual studies* which use works of pictorial art, or simply images, as a *sui generis* object to reflect upon alterity. It similarly falls within the frame of reflections by Renée Green (Green, 2014, 2001, 1996, 1993), Phillipe Delisle (Delisle, 2013, 2011, 2008), Nathalie N. Bruneau and Michael Rinn (Bruneau & Rinn, 2015) and Pascal Blanchard (Blanchard, 2008, 1995, 1993, 1988). These scholars consider the image as a medium for discourse on others. Overall, these

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works analyse images in light of relationships resulting from colonisation. They place more emphasis on colonial thought guiding the exo-perception of Africans. Moreover, these analyses marginally mention the view of Africans (actors represented) on these images. Following the viewpoint of these authors, the debate generated by this work will help to reflect on the relationship between pictorial art and power. Emphasis will be placed on the paradigms of domination and power that underlie the production and circulation of satirical pictography on Africans. The analysis of cartoons considers issues of postcolonial power and domination. The study then shows cartoon drawing as both pictorial rhetoric of marginalisation and an instrument of power that structures forms of domination in knowledge production and circulation on the African continent. As a result, the work of objectifying satirical pictography aims to develop this art as an element of the discourse of denigration through which the West² succeeds in legitimising stereotypes about Africa. It should be noted, however, that the use of images to portray Africa is not an innovation, but rather a practice that dates back to the colonial period. We are thus currently witnessing only a kind of reactivation of what can be called the iconographic codes of domination. Several decades after independence, Western discourse on Africa continues to portray the continent as being in economic and socio-cultural turmoil (Dumont, 1986, 1962), (Dumont & Mottin, 1980), (Kabou, 2010, 1991), (Smith, 2010, 2003, 1994), (Vakunta, 2006), (Ayittey, 1992), (Lemarchand, 1994), (Konaté, 2010).

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the West deployed new crisis lexicologies to describe the difficulties that sub-Saharan Africa is facing. To legitimise the relevance of this lexicology, authors have resorted to caricatures which are easily circulated and popularised in cyberspace.

For the most part, these images can be thought of as discursive practices that support intellectual productions as well as schemes for thinking about Africa during the post-independence period. The knowledge thus derived from this pictorial corpus constitutes a kind of epistemological violence in the Foucauldian sense of the concept. Understood in this light, the episteme based on satirical imagology is a structure by which the West views anything that is foreign to it as marginal. By reinventing Africa's decline, the West reproduces the cleavages of colonisation. Consequently, these pictographic practices are part of the idea of reproduction as perceived by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (Bourdieu &

² In this work, the West is a form of metaphor used to refer to all those who, through their ways of thinking and acting, reproduce discourse, arguments and images corresponding to colonial practices established by Europeans.

Passeron, 1974). In other words, the development of satirical imagery to dominate Africa is a translation of colonialist practices which aim to maintain the imperialist order in a new context. The end of colonisation does not in fact mean the abrogation of western domination but the emergence of new forms of colonisation. Hence, the reintroduction of disparaging visual discourse that aims to maintain the superiority of the West over Africa.

It should be mentioned, however, that this reproduction depends on societal changes. It is transformed and adapted to technological developments (new information and communication technologies), global relations (globalisation) and new (third-world) discourse. The reproduction of colonial practices in Africa takes place in virtual space, on digital pictographic media and with a rhetoric directed to crises. The use of web-based circulation makes instant images available with ease of access throughout the world, thereby succeeding in influencing, more or less directly, the ways of perceiving and representing Africa throughout the world. To echo Y. V. Mudimbe, it appears clear that there is an "invention of Africa" through western 'cartoonish' grammar.

To better understand the pictorial invention of Africa, we might take our cue from the theoretical position developed by Edward W. Said (1980) on Orientalism as a concept used for the Western style of domination, restructuring and authority over the East (E. Said, 1980: 15). Thus, part of the knowledge produced and circulated on the East is a Western construct (Said, 1980: 17), and perception of the East is the result of an ideological edifice of the West. In the African context, reality is closer to the itinerary of Orientalism in so far as the clichés on Africa are the offspring of Western fictions supported and disseminated through iconography. Although Said's orientalism makes it possible to understand the ideological and cultural aspects of the creation of alterity by the West, it is not exact enough to pinpoint the epistemological dimension of an "invention of Africa" (Mudimbe, 1988) by the image. Hence the need to exploit colonial Africanism as understood by the philologist Mudimbe who argues that the term refers to all discourses, reflections on African societies and cultures that are the offspring of "colonial imperialism". In other words, the type of discourse produced on Africa is tinged with "mythography of colonial africanism" (Mudimbe, 1988: 4-5) in that the colonial situation (Balandier, 1951) is part of the historical and epistemological conditions of Western modernity. This means that any discourse on Africa, however scientific it may be, is perceived as a fiction that does not show the same thing or experience as it is lived (Mudimbe, 1980: 186). This is the case with respect to the image of Africa during the

post-independence period. The West's production of visual grammars to recount Africa remains dependent on colonial motives. Hence the dual necessity of questioning and rewriting the subjectivation in this pictorial rhetoric since the visual vocabulary on Africa circulating on the Internet is more a western fiction than the transcription with the backdrop of images of socio-political reality. These theoretical anchors, inspired by orientalism and based on Mudimbe's western africanism, clearly show the methods of construction of the image of Africa as a territory of alterity and the mirror space of the West (A. Mbembe, 1993: 136).

Thus, based on the socio-political environment in sub-Saharan Africa between 1992 and 2015, the study focuses on cartoons collected exclusively on the Internet. The choice was made especially for the works of Western cartoonists and the recurrence of these images as an illustration in the blogs of cartoonists, websites specialising in caricature³, online articles and web databases of the association Cartoonists for Peace. Written in pictorial analysis framework, in conjunction with techniques of history, art and anthropology, cyber-cartoons will be decoded as a pictorial substratum of transcription of the western discourse of denigration of Africa. This approach makes it possible to structure the study around three key aspects. First, a taxonomy of privileged themes should be formulated in the pictorial translation of socio-African realities. Next, we will identify the issues of "colonialist" pictorial art on the configuration and construction of knowledge on sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, a cross-analysis grid from the postmodernist and postcolonialist views will be useful in debating the conditions for the re-decolonisation of Western artistic knowledge established about Africa.

Taxonomy of special themes in the western pictorial translation of socio-African realities

Western public discourse on Africa circulating on the Internet is modeled on the crises that this continent is experiencing. Thus, we see an appropriation of the "topography of African evil" (Konaté, 2010), (Rinn & Narvez (eds), 2015: 7) as a medium for discussion to create stereotyped visual grammars. For the most part, these visual discourses are produced in the form of standardised stereotypes considered to be ready-made images and imposed on all as true (Rinn & Narvez (eds), 2015: 8). They are characterised by the discrepancy between pictorial representation and social reality. In other words, these stereotyped images are inspired by real

³ (<http://www.caricaturesetcaricature.com/>)

facts in their production, but they tend to exaggerate this reality to impose it as an established truth. Hence the use of cartoons, which are based on the caricature, deformation or exaggeration of characteristics and reality (Thillier, 2005: 10) (Kaenel, 2010: 82).

For Ernest Kris, caricature can be divided into three characteristics. First, caricature drawing is an art that seeks to discover similarity through deformity and in so doing approaches the truth (Kris, 1934). Secondly, just like a dream or allegory, caricature is like a rebus (Kris, 1934). Finally, this art enjoys an "almost magical efficiency: aggressive by nature, it unmasks and degrades the beings it deforms" (Kris, 1934). Aside from these artistic characteristics, Ernest Kris understands caricature as a pamphlet. The author emphasises the parameters of diffusion and communication of this pictorial work (Kris, 1934). In the same vein as this specialist on caricature, Francis Nyamnjoh sees this art as a visual form of journalistic communication (Nyamnjoh, 2005). From this perspective, caricatural pictography is used as a visual medium for the transmission of information (Thivillon, 2003). However, it should be pointed out that in this analysis, the use of caricature should be seen as a pretext for spreading Western fiction about Africa. Moreover, it is not only the translation and dissemination of caricatural drawings that should be considered, but also their capacity to produce fictions through their circulation on the internet (Doizy, 2010). The emancipation of the internet as a means of communication has contributed to the visual re-updating (Doizy, 2010) of the already-stated and already-thought (Rinn & Narvez (eds), 2015: 9) on drought, famine, disease, war, mortality, dehumanisation and migration in Africa.

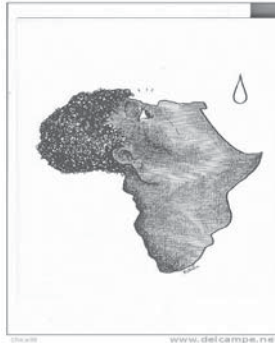
Drought and famine

The construction of the image of Africa as a "continent of drought and hunger" dates to the early years of the post-independence era with the work of René Dumont (Dumont, 1969). Beginning in the 1970s, the wave of drought and famine experienced by some African countries, such as the Sahelian countries⁴ (like Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Niger and

⁴ Term invented by John Cadwell in the early 1970s to refer to all the countries in the Sahel affected by drought and famine. J. Cadwell, 1975, "Drought in the Sahel and its demographic consequences", Seminar of the African Program of the School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa, p. 6. For Vincent Bonnacase, the Sahel, which until then "was a bioclimatic term designating the transitional zone between the Sahara and the Sudanese zone, is becoming a geopolitical term

Senegal), Ethiopia and Sudan fueled the "skeletal" literature of the African continent. Alarmist speeches and institutional representations of hunger in Africa have influenced how knowledge on this part of the world is produced (Bonnecase, 2010: 24). Researchers such as Dumont, Marie France Mottin and Amartya Kuma Sen are studying agri-food issues as a subject of research and using Africa for their field work. For Sen (Sen, 1982), the causes of famine in Africa are not only lack of food but also unequal distribution in the mechanisms of redistribution of food resources. For this reason, governments must ensure the democratisation of their resources. Dumont and Mottin (Dumont, 1986, Dumont & Mottin, 1980) argue that the governments of African states are responsible for famine in their countries in that they have failed in the realisation of agri-food policies. Yet, beyond this aspect, the geographical predispositions of Africa because of its location in the tropics expose this part of the world to agri-food under-production (Dumont & Mottin, 1980). Recurring waves of drought in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa make famine inevitable on the continent (Dumont, 1986). Following the assertions of these authors, the famine and drought crises observed in Ethiopia and Sudan from 1983 to 1985 (Berg, Raven Berg & Hassenzahl, 2009: 462), then 2011-2012, and those in Somalia from 1991 to 1992 and 2011 (Binet, 2013: 59) are leitmotifs that support these points of view. These "alarmist speeches on hunger in Africa" (Binet, 2013) then develop a "geography of hunger" relayed by the media (Bonnecase, 2010: 23). Press article production echoes the starvation in Africa. This is how caricatural drawing is used to describe the situation of drought and hunger in Africa.

designating a group of African countries, one of the common denominators of which is hunger" (Bonnecase, 2010: 23).



Cartoon 1 : Plantu, 1992

<http://www.delcampe.be/itemslanguage=F&catLists%5B0%5D=8051&page=1&useAsDefault=N&layoutForm%5Blistitemperpage%5D=500>



Cartoon 2: Lasserpe, [Drought in the Horn of Africa "That's for sure; it's not the horn of plenty"] in <http://www.caricaturesetcaricature.com/article-famine-en-somalie-82755401.html>



Cartoon 3: Na! [So there!] [12 million Africans hit by drought and famine "You think they'll be able to save the euro and Greece?"]

2011,
<http://cgtunionlocaledreux.over-blog.com/article-revue-de-presse-rentree-2011-84073077.html>



Cartoon 4: Nico, 2012, [At least in the summer, I don't have to diet to fit in my swim suit... And in the winter, I don't have to pay for heat...]

<http://pmister-schu.over-blog.com/article-always-look-on-the-bright-side-of-life-102721863.html>

The Africa of Diseases and Death

Outside the pictorial discourse on hunger and drought, Afro-pessimistic imagery paints a bleak picture of sub-Saharan Africa based on pandemic and epidemic diseases. AIDS is often mentioned when referring to pandemics. According to World Health Organization (WHO) figures, 70% of the world's HIV infections are recorded in sub-Saharan Africa (Eboko, 2002). Based on this statistic, WHO has declared Africa the continent most affected by the global disease (Eboko, 2002). AIDS is becoming a health tragedy for the African continent as it is the world's first victim, with 67% of those living with HIV and 72% of AIDS-related deaths in 2007 (Perez & Jouan, 2009). The pandemic is accurately classified as a cause of mortality. There is a perception of AIDS as a fatality just like the epidemic of infection with the Ebola virus.⁵ As a result, an alarmist iconography has been established based on the chronicle of early death.

In 2013, the Ebola epidemic re-emerged in Africa⁶ in southern Guinea before spreading to Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali and Sierra Leone (Leroy, 2015), and to a lesser extent, to the United States, Spain and England. In August 2014, the scale of the spread of the epidemic forced WHO to declare a "global health emergency" (Leroy, 2015). As of May 20, 2015, WHO had recorded at least 27,015 cases of infection by the virus and 11,140 deaths (Leroy, 2015). These figures presented by WHO lay the foundations for stereotypes about the health of Africans. The dominant health discourse on Africa enters in the wake of the negativistic lexicology of Africa as a continent of human movements and violence.

⁵ Named for the Ebola River in the former Zaire.

⁶ The first epidemics of hemorrhagic fever appeared simultaneously in Zaire and Sudan in 1976 with more than 550 cases and nearly 430 deaths. During this year, the mortality rate was estimated at 88% in Zaire and 53% in Sudan. After a period of disappearance, cases of the disease were detected in Zaire in 1977 and 1995, in Sudan in 1979, and in Gabon in 1996. A. Mammette, 2002, *Medical Virology*, Lyon, University Press of Lyon.



Cartoon 5: Plantu, SD, ["Will the vaccine be French or American?"That's the whole question!"]

http://www.weblettres.net/blogs/article.php?w=Revuedepresse&e_id=38181



Cartoon 6: Tignous, SD, [Africa is dying of AIDS. "At least we have that in common with the rich countries".]

<http://www.iconovox.com/base/dessin-tignous-0005-0163.html>



Cartoon 7: Tignous in Charlie Hebdo [Ebola: The Africans are wasting away... "and they weren't very fat to start with!"]– 10.08.11, <http://www.caricaturesetcaricature.com/article-famine-en-somalie-82755401.html>



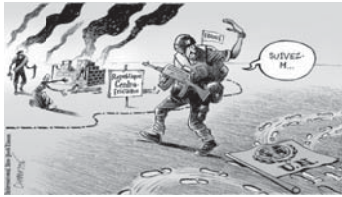
Cartoon 8: Bill Schorr, 2014, http://toursdelaliberte.blogspot.com/2014_11_01_archive.html



Cartoon 9: Plantu, 2011, <http://poussiere-virtuelle.comquand-je-vous-vois-poeme-de-yves-emmanuel-dogbe>

Conflict and Migration in Africa

The mobility of Africans is becoming increasingly important in the Western media (Mattelart (ed.), 2007). News reports echo the tragedies caused by forced or voluntary migration, internally displaced persons in countries at war or refugees crossing borders (Mattelart (ed.), 2007). The handling and reporting of this type of news on migration in Africa reflects the image of human bleeding (Arrous, 2001: 13). This idea then predisposes the cataloging of this part of the world as a continent of human movement, violence and war (Arrous, 2001). According to Patrice Emery Bakong, sub-Saharan Africa has been weakened by the deployment of forms of violence with intra-state inclination to conflict since 1990 (Bakong, 2015: 10). For instance, a 2007 SIPRI report inventoried 77 conflicts in Africa, representing 33% of the world total (Bakong, 2015: 12). Overall, it is no longer states that are waging war against other states in these forms of organised violence, but rather the people who are waging war on themselves (Bakong, 2015: 13). Clearly, armed struggles are no longer conducted by one state against another, but it is principally authorities, rebel groups or communities of the same political entity that are pitted against each other (Bakong, 2015: 13). Considerations of political instability and human mobility are giving rise to a redeployment of the sub-Saharan as a sub-man according to a "western-centric" approach.



Cartoon 10: Chappatte, 2013, [Central African Republic] ["Follow m... "]
<http://www.politicalcartoons.com/cartoon/ac48fedc-2d22-4f6c-ab8e-31e87cf14c98.html>



Cartoon 11 : Plantu, 2013, [Central African Republic]
<http://atelier.rfi.fr/membersAFFAGNONQEMAL/contenttype=BlogEntry&context=all>

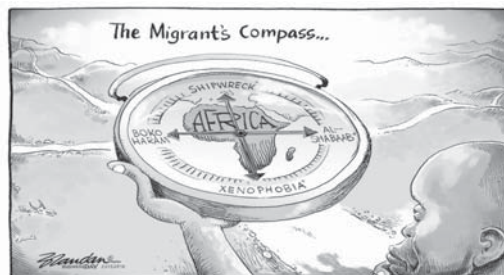


Cartoon 12: Kap, 2011, <http://www.caricaturesetcaricature.com/article-famine-en-somalie-82755401.html>



Cartoon 13: Mix et Remix, SD, [African Migrants, The New Slave Traders "I hope to arrive in Italy alive" ... "and to find a job as a slave in England!"

<http://www.cartooningforpeace.org/cartoonotheque/migrations-et-frontieres/>



Cartoon 14: Brandan, SD,

<http://www.cartooningforpeace.org/cartoonotheque/migrations-et-frontieres/>

The African as a sub-man

For Jean-Marc Ela, the sub-humanisation of the African black man is an invention dating back to the period of slavery in the 15th century (Ela, 2003: 68). The argument supporting this devaluation is drawn from the Biblical story of the "malediction of Cham"⁷ (Ela, 2003: 68). Thus, the

⁷ Second, Louis, 1910, The Holy Bible, Genesis, Chap. 9: verses 18-27. Cham, one of Noah's three sons, saw his father's nakedness while the latter was drunk. He reported it to his three brothers. When he awoke, Noah heard of his son's behaviour. He condemned Cham (also called Canaan) to be the slave of his brothers Shem and Japheth, who were blessed.

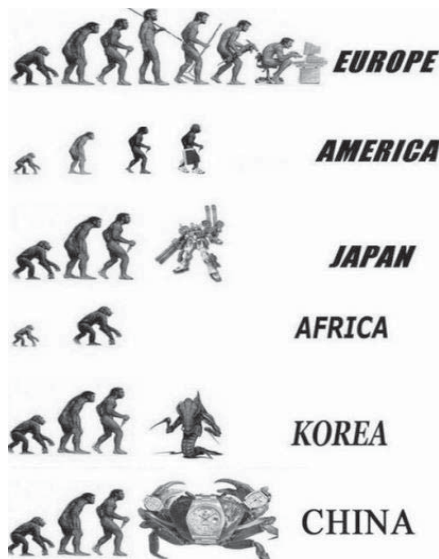
"Negro", considered as a descendant of Cham, is a being oppressed by divine malediction (Ela, 2003: 68). The author continues that dedication to life manifests itself in submission and servitude for these members of the human race (Ela, 2003: 68). This argument comes at such a good time that Westerners will make long and abundant use of it. Thus, the "Negro" will become the "only one whose flesh was made a commodity" (Mbembe, 2013), "an animal for domestic use", as mentioned by Ela (Ela, 2003: 69). Until the 19th century, the myth of the black man, the accursed son of Cham, was integrated into the colonial vision of the African continent (Ela, 2003: 69). Since these periods, the "time of misfortunes of Africa" (Ki-Zerbo, 1972), the Western idea of the black person equates him with an enslaved and subjugated subject (Babou Ngom, 2015), a being whose hominisation has remained static and who is reduced to bestiality (Amadou, 2008, Mbembe, 2002: 28). These discourses are transmitted by caricatured images the following selection of which is illustrative.



Cartoon 15: Nico, 2011 [Go look for my fearless Milou (whitened evil), <http://mister-schu.over-blog.com/article-famine-en-afrique-70914089.html>]



Cartoon 16: [The African Chippendale]
<http://renelehonzecbandesdessinees.com/dessindepresse21/index.html>



Cartoon 17: SN, SD, <http://observers.france24.com/fr/20090330-chine-est-elle-raciste-caricature-afrique>



Cartoon 18:

<http://renelehonzecbandesdessinees.com/dessindepresse21/index.html>

By and large, the violent manner in which the pictorial representation of African questions occurs raises well-known epistemological issues based mainly on relations of domination and power conveyed by knowledge

Issues of "colonialist" pictorial art on the configuration and construction of knowledge about sub-Saharan Africa

The reflection on alterity through caricature is a significant way in which to understand the socio-political but especially cultural issues that present "the circumstances of the colonised" among Africans. As part of the perspective of the colonial situation theorised by Georges Balandier (Balandier, 1951), this analysis understands visual discourse as one of the artistic instruments of Western imperial power. Visual writings are certainly materials used to understand colonised societies, but they are *ipso facto* factors by which the mechanisms of violence of Western domination are identified (S. P. Huntington, 2007: 50). Thus, the

systematic study of pictographic perceptions of Africa by the West presents challenges that revolve around three postulates: cyberspace as a site of reproduction of the "colonial library"; the emphasis on visual writing translates the functioning of the technology of the "Global System"; and the problematic of an "invention of Africa" through satirical cyber-pictoriality.

First, in cyber-media space, we see a reproduction of the visual codes that are positioned as "mirror images" of the "colonial library" which is understood from Mudimbe's viewpoint (see Mudimbe, 1994, 1988) as the set of knowledge and understanding produced about Africa to justify colonialisation. Following on Mudimbe's work, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch refers to "Western Africanism" to describe "all the currents of thought stemming from colonial science, with its evil sides certainly, and even high-quality scholarship, but with overtones of its time, in the context of pseudo-scientific racist theories of the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries" (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2001: 34). This discourse and knowledge which, according to Roland Pourtier, have only a flawed knowledge of African realities (Pourtier, 2005: 215), have "filled and continue to fill minds, both those of Westerners and of the Africans they have continued to educate" (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 2001: 34). Thus, to present African news, some cartoon artists are revisiting the writings of the colonial library to fuel their creativity. Colonial knowledge distilled from Africa is then retransmitted through outrageous images (Blanchard (ed), 1993). Their contents confuse polemics and analysis; their authors give into passion more than paying homage to reason through their art (Pourtier, 2005: 215). For Achille Mbembe, these stereotypical visual writings "form an episode in the history of madness in the West" (Mbembe, 1993: 284). In other words, for this postcolonial thinker, "what we are seeing in these pictorial forms is a form of non-understanding, non-knowledge" about Africa (Mbembe, 1993: 282). Beyond this aspect of the falsification of knowledge by the reflection of stereotypes on African realities, Mbembe sees the illustrated narratives as processes by which "the west is bringing the narrative back to itself through the mediation of a fiction and a fantasy, the fiction of the other" (Mbembe, 1993: 282). Colonial visual writings are explicitly self-reflective mirrors through which "the West is unfurled on itself and on its own identity" (Mbembe, 1993: 284). By the production of caricatural pictography denigrating Africa, westerners then reflect the racist thoughts that structure their behaviour. Thus, the images presented here are the offspring of a society whose opinions and actions are still influenced by the spectre of racial theories based on the postulate of Western superiority (Honour 1989: 11). This *aggiornamento* shows the

ideological function of domination through pictorial grammars in a context of globalisation.

The second postulate of this section stresses the emphasis of visual writings showing the functioning of the technology of the "Global System" (Ferguson, 2006), the objective of which is to maintain western imperialism. This is accomplished by the presentation of a charged iconography whose scenography justifies the "humanitarian mission" of the West in Africa. We then note a reintroduction of the discourse on the "civilising mission" as stated at the beginning of the colonial period. In fact, the persistence in the fiction of a rudderless African continent that is synonymous with hunger, disease, war, failure, poverty and unable to cope with globalisation (Cogneau, 2008: 72) has helped to redefine its presence in the world. By presence in the world, James Ferguson not only refers to geographical representativeness, but to a category on which the global system is built (Ferguson, 2006). For this reason, it would be simplistic if not reductive to think that the West's interest in Africa is built on humanitarian ideas. For alongside the topography of African evil is a picture of Africa as an Eldorado, seen as a vast market full of economic and commercial opportunities. Nor should we forget the resources of the soil and subsoil which are the envy of westerners. To better situate Africa in the neo-liberal system, this dichotomy would lead us to place it in the perspective of the dual movement of repulsion/attraction enunciated by J.-P. Dozon (Dozon, 1991). In this line of thought, Ferguson accurately points out that the analysis of the place of Africa in the world should be considered both from the perspective of the deteriorated sociopolitical situation and its wider pernicious implications related to its rank in an 'illustrated' and very real world (Ferguson, 2006: 14). In other words, "African evil" is the argument that serves as a leitmotiv for the West to assert its dominance on the African continent. This makes it possible to understand the profusion on the Internet of pictographs which generate prejudices. Moreover, the use of caricature in the technology of maintaining Western imperialism makes it possible to question the role of visual art as an instrument of domination. Pictorial works must be considered as constituent parts of a culture of domination in that the representation of Africans constructs a degradation of their credibility and humanity. Images of the black person are very representative of this philosophy and necessarily involve submissiveness. These types of images emblematic of the Western superiority complex are the catalyst for ideas of submission and inferiority among blacks. According to this reasoning, we agree with Hugh Honour that the role assigned to visual art is inevitably that of maintaining established Western power (Honour 1989: 14). Through this artistic

mechanism, the West allows itself to return to Africans an image of them which it has produced (Mbembe, 1993: 282). Above all, the West wants to convince them that they are in the image of what it has constructed (Mbembe, 1993: 282).

The third postulate of this reflexive work reveals the problematic of an "invention of Africa" (Mudimbe, 1988) through satirical cyber-pictoriality. Simply put, the perception of Africa is the fruit of a Western ideological edifice in so far as the clichés on the continent are the offspring of Western fictions supported and diffused through digital iconography. All the images presented here reflect Gobineau's views (Gobineau, 1855) of the black world that have fueled, and continue to fuel, colonial motivation. According to an approach formulated by Anthony Mangeon (Mangeon 2010), from the colonial perspective the black world embodied a form of life inferior to "white civilization". A primitive or mystical mentality replaced thought, and its main contribution to human culture lay in an emotional temperament. Through these charged graphics, caricaturists succeed, more or less consciously, in reinventing an Africa whose characteristics are an instrument of collective definition of identity. This invention of Africa through image is structured around dehumanisation and demonisation. These iconic arguments of denial of humanity among black people make it possible to justify the general characteristics of these caricatures of Africa, the chromatics of which emphasise the colour black. The physical representation of African characters takes the form of skeletal, scruffy, sad, farcical and naked beings. The setting is funereal, fanciful, wild and very sunny. There is a pre-eminence of pictorial rhetoric on death and hunger.

Symbolically, the addition of the black chromatic aspect thus suggests the idea of mourning, obscurity or the darkness of pain (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 671). In the Bible, black is the counter-colour of white, associated with primordial darkness. It relates to the idea of evil, that is, everything that contradicts or delays the plan of evolution desired by God (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 775-779). Islamic symbolism conceives of black through the prism of a malediction because of the negative oracles which it is supposed to engender (Chebel, 2001: 125). Black refers metaphorically to that which arouses feelings of sadness, mourning, fear, horror, and despair in the visual arts (Souriau, 2010: 1130). In plastic symbolism, this colour is close to the dark and tragic, as it is based on terrible, impossible situations, an inescapable march toward the worst (Souriau, 2010: 1130). In this context, the insistence on black testifies to an artistic will aimed at painting a gloomy picture of the continent. The so-called idea of darkening African realities is part of the work of Y.M.

Laulan who prophesies "the slide of Black Africa into chaos and non-existence" (Laulan, 2005: 50).

The skeletal shapes of black characters in a funereal setting refers to the symbolism of death. The role of the mortiferous skeleton appeared in the plastic arts as early as the 15th century in the West (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982, p. 429). The skeleton, inspired by biological imagery, is the set of bones that make up the framework of vertebrates (Ferré, 2003: 150). Its symbolic use in the arts refers to a personification of death (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 1050). Alchemists perceive the skeleton as the symbol of black, putrefaction and decomposition (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 1050). It does not represent a static death, a definitive state, but rather a dynamic death (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 1050).

Death has several meanings. Very early on in human societies, it is perceived as the disappearance of the body envelope, with the soul or the spirit continuing to live in a hereafter (Ferre, 2003: 109). Death also expresses mourning, the change in things (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 752). In the esoteric domain of initiatory rites, death is considered as the transition to a new form of life (Ferre, 2003: 109). It opens access to the reign of the spirit, to true life (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 753). However, in the satirical perspective of these images, death is used according to its negative meaning, referring to inescapable fatality, discouragement and pessimism, the end of all life (Chevalier & Gheerdrant, 1982: 752). Thus, the fact that artists choose to personify death reflects western afro-pessimism towards Africa. These iconographic ways of recounting Africa are part of Stephen Smith's discourse on "Negrology". For Smith, Black Africa is doomed to die because it is undermined by the human fatalities of war, disease and famine (Smith, 2003). Moreover, if Africa is destined to die, it is because the evolution of black people has remained at the primary stage.

The satirical pictography of the denial of the humanity of black people becomes obvious with representations of men either naked or with farcical forms and situations in an exotic landscape. To trivialise African cultures, caricaturists have stripped them of their clothing. According to Christian tradition (based on the principle of original sin), nudity refers to concupiscence and carnal desire (Ferré, 2003: 116). It is synonymous with shame, for the unveiling of the body implies a loss of the sacred nature of the individual (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 786-787). Therefore, by exposing the nudity of black people, the presumed intention of the caricaturist is to demystify the human being, barbarism and bestiality. The farcical illustrations of black people in this study are to be seen through the prism of racist aesthetics. The farce that forms the link between the

tragic and the grotesque is distorted as an ontological component of black people. The situation of jester is communicated in the ridicule, the lack of dignity that excites guffaws (Souriau, 2010: 280-281).

These visual codifications on Black Africa are generally governed based on the principle of "the aesthetics of vulgarity", according to Gobineau's idea of discourse (Gobineau, 1855). The mechanisms of invention of Africa occur based on a necrophilous pictography of savagery and bestialisation. This Africa, invented by means of Western cyber-caricature, is a sort of *repoussoir* that legitimises the construction of the image of Africa as a territorial space of alterity and as a mirror space of the West. In this game of mirrors where imagination has free reign, we must think of the epistemological artefacts of the re-decolonisation of falsified artistic knowledge.

Conditions for the re-decolonisation of Western artistic knowledge established about Africa

The caricatures presented and discussed in this work are not mere historical documents. They are the fruit of a Western thought whose ideologies are helping to shape a universal image of Africa. The knowledge resulting from these images should be questioned from an epistemological standpoint because the fabrication mechanisms (dependent on the colonial library), the media by which it is conveyed (electronic press, Internet), and the context (global system) of the creation of these caricatures, are subject to western motives. In other words, despite differences in race, class or fortune, to make a living from their work, artists throw (more or less voluntarily) their support behind ideologies to which, through education or indoctrination, they are subjected, as are the sponsors of their works (Honour, 1989: 14). Based on this principle, it is easy to determine the conditions under which the colonisation of visual knowledge on Africa is occurring and being perpetuated. This artistic knowledge established on the continent needs to be scientifically re-examined. We will present here a set of heuristic and epistemological tools which will make the trajectory of knowledge derived from colonial cyber-pictography serious. We will suggest three approaches structured around: the deconstructivist approach of Jacques Derrida, thought on Africa based on the plurality of Mamadou Diouf's experiences, and Achille Mbembe's reflexive approach based on African writings on themselves.

The ideological dimension, which is the main characteristic of caricatures on Africa, requires that we question the relevance of the knowledge they produce. This reasoning involves the articulation of arguments on

deconstruction, in the Derridean sense, that is, an exercise in vigilance in reading and analysis, since nothing is innocent in knowledge production (Derrida, 1987: 389). According to Derrida, western knowledge has always presented itself as "logocentrist" (Derrida, 1967: 67). This idea is associated with the concept of *Logos*, with its dual meaning of "reason and language". Logocentrism is understood as the imperialism of the *logos* in knowledge production (Derrida, 1967: 67). For the purposes of this study, we refer to the imperialism of the *Logos* in the visual arts. From this perspective, the caricatures used here as materials from which the signs of the "Negro's" alienation are read must be the subject of careful questioning, as the set of knowledge disseminated through this art appears to be dominated by the ethnocentric ideology fixed in advance. African iconographic identity is therefore a social construct underlying "logocentrism". These satirical pictographs describe stereotypes about Africa that are made universal and accepted as such. Yet, they are far from providing information about true African social realities. We must therefore go beyond this preschematicised iconic knowledge by overriding the alienated knowledge of the other through the analysis of identifiable sedimentary layers (Derrida, 1967: 68) in traditional visual discourse. We free the image from the ideological shackles in which it is embedded (Derrida, 1967: 68). To this end, the deconstructivist approach inspired by Derrida seems adequate to escape from the logocentrism of images. It will allow us to create an analysis that can go beyond artistic knowledge determined in advance: the enterprise of deconstruction of western ethnocentrism to propose "an emancipatory horizon, with the prospect of an epistemological revolution that can redefine africanism from an autonomous African subject" (Monaville, 2010: 61). In other words, we advocate the empowerment of knowledge about Africa by Africans first, to avoid replicating the invisibility and marginality of African rationalities as they have occurred since the colonial period. The main foundation is to place the recipients, and not the producers of images, at the center of the discovery of their true meaning. That is, we need to render the cultural and factual paradigms of satirical pictographs intelligible through understanding (Derrida, 1996: 45), which means an openness to the other, his or her motives and culture (Derrida, 1996: 69). Through understanding, an appropriation of the other is revealed based on discoveries of the previously unseen (Derrida, 1996: 69). Although deconstructivist thought allows us to detect the margins of ideology in images, the fact remains that it is not sufficient to accomplish the decolonisation of the visual arts. Hence the need to understand and present African realities in their

pluralities while considering the "external and internal determinants" (Taguem Fah, 2014) of African realities.

To avoid reproducing knowledge based on generalised and universalised facts, Mamadou Diouf calls for the construction of targeted knowledge structured around plural and autonomous categories not imposed from the outside (Diouf, 1992). The writing of Africa based on its pluralities represents a response to "colonial universalism and its eradication of difference" (Monaville, 2010: 64). A case in point is the murals produced in the context of the *Set/Setal*⁸ movement in Senegal; the historian highlights the imaginative originality of African pictorial plastic art in the process of producing a new historicity (Diouf, 1992: 41) which is described by the author as "urban" "because of its representations that shape the local historical memory" (Diouf, 1992:42). The reason is that the iconographic corpus of Senegal's *Set/Setal* movement transmits local realities whose interpretation, "sanctioned by the neighborhood, and very often housed in the memory of the district, centers on a historical figure (marabout, soccer player, politician) and expresses itself in song (*Set/Setal*, Xaley, Medina by Youssou N'Dour) and festivals (*Fourel*) organised by young people (Diouf, 1992: 42)." In other words, these images are sprinkled with cultural references and political discourse specific to Senegal.

The main idea of the pluralistic approach advocated by Diouf is that pictorial art inspired by the cultural substratum in which it emerges is capable of transcribing local realities in more or less rational ways. Thus, for example, the visual codes used to represent realities in Senegal cannot be understood outside the cultural framework of this territorial space. Likewise, these visual codes cannot be used to illustrate Cameroonian realities, for example. This pluralistic approach avoids falling into the trap of the aporia born of colonialist universalism which assumes that the pictorial codes used in art to designate a reality experienced in a specific geographical space apply to all other countries of the continent. This concept proves to be utopian when we understand that one of the characteristics of the African continent is its plurality, the mosaic of its culture and the complexity of its realities. In this context, art is a marker of these plural identities. Yet, we must still qualify these remarks to note that the vernacularisation of artistic knowledge must not ostracise pictorial codes resulting from contact with the outside. We should avoid acting as if there is a "cultural virginity" in a world-space imposed by cybernetics and the immediacy of contacts. This means that Africa's contact with the

⁸ A movement for young people to clean up social and political practice in Senegal, based on the artistic production of murals.

world through the Internet has helped to recompose its cultures through borrowing or exchanges with other cultures. This idea of external influence does not, however, exclude a local appropriation of satirical iconography. From this point of view, each artist who produces a work first tells his own story before telling the story of others.

The postulate of a writing of Africa by itself in the visual artistic field takes on an unprecedented importance. Caricatured figurality allows access to different ways of representing oneself and the other from which the ideas and systems of action specific to each society are illustrated. The caricaturist is an artist who first writes about himself, all the while transcribing in pictorial form the socio-political realities of his time. Thus, historical discourse based on caricatures entails a "reflexive posture"⁹ for African researchers. That is, the construction of the past based on the pictography of the caricature makes it possible to report on oneself, by oneself and for oneself (Mbembe, 2000: 16). To apply a "reflexive posture" in the field of visual arts, artists must question their artistic practices of representations as well as the history and traditions of others. A stylistic commitment that goes beyond the western codes and symbols should be required. The objective is not only to restore African specificities of art (Mveng, 1974), but to establish an authority over knowledge by art. This authority is the foundation of the control of artistic parameters of visual representations. Furthermore, this approach of Africanisation of the visual codes of representations of oneself does not mean turning inward and a break with the West. The development of caricatural sources as an epicenter of reflection allows us to identify – quasi-holistically and non-asymmetrically – the local social dynamic. Thus, the intelligibility of the past is not based solely on facts, but takes into account the diversity of actors and the complexity of the phenomenon to be analysed. Of greatest importance is thus that rewriting oneself artistically on the fringes of the world is not only an idea of rehabilitation, but a rehabilitation of African civilisation.

Conclusion

Through this discussion of pictorial scriptural rationalisation, we see that the universal perception of Africa is based on stereotypes which are the result of crises peculiar to the territorial entities that the West established as a global reality for Africa. The consequence is the

⁹ This concept was borrowed from our mentor G. L. Taguem Fah during our scientific discussion on his book proposal on Cameroonian historiography.

construction of a stereotyped imagological library on Africa. The aim of these images is to keep this part of the world in an inferior position compared to the West; hence the need to re-decolonise this knowledge on Africa. The idea of re-decolonisation of knowledge about Africa in Mudimbe's work is based on the premise that Africa is an "object of knowledge invented by the West" (Mudimbe, 1988) – an invention that is emancipating itself in the aftermath of European imperialism, which was not only an enterprise of political domination but also a colonisation of the mind (Monaville, 2010: 61). In this regard, all discourse on Africa is marked with the seal of ethnocentrism characterised by sub-humanisation and primitivism. This African primitivism is not only the prerogative of Europeans but also of Africans themselves (Monaville, 2010: 61).

The topography of Africa as a place in the midst of the darkness of violence and death raises the question of the relationship between inherited culture and culture that is shaped in web space. It appears that the colonial legacy is still influencing the iconographic dynamics of representations of black Africa. The preponderance and redundancy of these images in media space contributes to a psychological interiorisation by Africans to the point where they perpetuate these images in their self-representations. This approach contributes to building an image of Africa in a fixed category. The African is thus confined to a primitive role and status. This situation contributes to making the black person an inferior being destined to servitude in the context of globalisation. As a result of this observation, we see the urgent need to decolonise African images, both in Africa and in the West. This scientific venture runs the risk, however, of meeting with African resistance, given that the internalisation of these visual paradigms is deeply rooted among Africans who, for reasons of capitalisation, have succeeded in using images of African evil for economic, political and humanitarian purposes. Furthermore, for antagonistic reasons, it is not uncommon for Africans to refer to these iconographic lexicons to make fun of themselves.

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CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

TRANSLATION: LOST IN TRANSITION? THE ART OF THE WEAK MEANING OF THE “SUBJECT-OBJECT”. PROVISIONAL NOTE ON THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROJECT

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Dans l'écrin du récit, la parole sauvage fait figure de bijou absent
[In the narrative setting, primitive speech is an absent jewel]
—Michel De Certeau

Le bruit des « codes » et de la « grammaire » couvre par trop la voix de ceux
qui parlent pour qu'on y prête aucunement attention
[The noise of "codes" and "grammar" covers the voices of those who speak too
much so that no attention is paid to them]
—J-L Siran, *L'Illusion mythique*

Since ancient times, travellers from the political centres of Europe have crossed through distant lands while describing the traditions of exotic peoples. Some of these explorers armed with their knowledge of distant and/or rival peoples were later important "councilors to princes" or scholars whose erudition is still praised today. Scholarly anthropology was developed in the wake of European expansion with the objective or even explicit mission of studying the hitherto little-known peoples, who were now the object of special attention by the new conquerors. It is well known that the "textual corpus" that defines scholarly anthropology today was built on the accumulation of descriptive notes, pieces of lives and cultural practices collected by ethnographers in the field and used as sources for the construction of anthropological theories. With these "inquiries" in the

field and accounts of "native" social life, it is questionable whether the term 'inquiry' accurately expresses these risky methods of collecting facts, which are always based on operations of "translation", of interpretation, in that they convert the smallest piece of barbaric expression into an intelligible sign useful to the conquerors. This equivalence between ethnographic discourse and the real social life of the natives is now contested, and debatable.

Besides the fact that this act of translation, the "scientific utterances", are interpretations based on the semantic field of the anthropologist and his ethnicity, this reveals a negation of the discursivity and the irreducible complexity of the lived experience of the natives by imposing a "universal grammar". The anthropologist is often a peaceful ethnographer who projects himself on the "object" by dissolving the "subject" despite himself. In a sense, we see the hypothesis of an authoritarian projection of a veridiction flanked by a multitude of codes, of classificatory categories expressing a political intention. This oft-concealed purpose is always in search of circumscribed formal and practical "correspondences" that limit the comprehension of native social realities otherwise broader than anthropological science can unveil and comprehend. Is anthropological *translation*, that is, the importation into the anthropological symbolic space of parts of native social life, void of social coherence, of autochthonous historicity? If so, what is the epistemological status of these elements gathered according to reasoning inconsistent with the dynamics of indigenous lives? Such a reductionist enunciation decisively marks the construction of anthropological knowledge and inscribes the native necessarily in an unbalanced relationship of significance, in a negative valence with respect to the Western civilisational outline. The examination of this "totalitarian signifier" challenges the anthropological project itself, insofar as it seeks to be a science of Man in general. This constitutive historical relation of anthropological knowledge imposes the question of the genesis of the founding principles of this regime of truth of which the science of man is only one form of expression. Ideally, the answer to this question should consider the correspondences of categories existing between all known forms of scholarly classifications of "elements of nature", including man himself. Of more importance here is to decide on the profound intention which organises and uses such knowledge constructed from the still obscure flaw of an alterity consecrated by the Western concept and use of the universal. Thus, "translation" means weighing not only words but values incarnated by humans and things that do not seek equilibrium, *equal valence*, but, because of the historical political gravitation that organises it, seeks to impose an advantageous

imbalance on all the "subalterns" (privileged term of disengaged thought). In the following text, we shall attempt to establish a relation between the imposition of a body of knowledge – in this case on men in society – and the political order that underlies it. Before examining the way in which the human sciences deal factually with their "object", we must examine the genesis and strength of the norms to which they conform.

The Other, bellicose alterity and domination

Issues of translations, of the conversion of the Other, thoroughly dealt with by the various schools of thought in colonial studies, might lead one to believe that this is a new phenomenon. Many contemporary works have rightly placed great importance on the "colonial question", but they have often abandoned the phenomenon of the domestication of the Other, rational domination, including colonisation, the direct administration of conquered peoples, which is only one of the more concrete phases. Although this attention to colonisation is indisputable, it is important to return to the semantic genesis of modes of constructing the Other, the establishment of distinctive hierarchies between men, which give their foundations to subsequent, more "rational", cultural, political and economic forms. Anthropology is in fact only one of the methods (we might add religion, philosophy, economy) of identification, interpretation and manipulation of this Other, increasingly caught up in the whirlwind of historical dynamic of the modern West. This "authority of the ethnographer" (Geertz, 1986) is always based on a "regime of truth" installed at the "boundaries of the inhabited world", at the boundaries of the coveted unknown. Francis Hartog (Hartog 1980: 19) emphasises that "in the course of some of the *logoi* (narratives) devoted to others, Herodotus's text is treated as a travel narrative, that is, as a narrative concerned with translating the other into terms of Greek shared knowledge and which, to believe in the other that it constructs, develops a whole rhetoric of alterity". The issue of the narrative of the Other, the imaginary creation of the Other, although ancient and probably manifest in all human societies, takes on a new dimension in the recent phase of a West preparing to construct a "new world", to enter into an unprecedented modernity without having eliminated medieval cosmology, yet forced to accept into its system of representation exotic human entities. The appearance of the figure of the "savage", the native, was to profoundly mark the foundations of anthropology in its infancy. The Cocchiara formula (cited by Gliozzi 2000: 11) establishes itself during this scholarly trajectory: "the so-called savage before being discovered was invented".

Very early on in Greek thought, the figure of the "savage" emerged, and was soon projected on rival populations such as the Scythians. In the Greek imagination, the savage represents the antithesis of civilisation and will serve as a narrative solution to the construction of Hellenic identity. The Greek universe also conceived of the existence of mythical "savages" associated with Greek heroes in the formation of a proper symbolic universe. Medieval thinkers, who inherited the Greek philosophical traditions transmitted to them by the Romans, continued to think of the world as a space populated by monstrous beings and extraordinary territories. The appearance of other peoples intervened in a context in which the Western intellectual configuration maintained the existence of monsters, savages and imaginary beings mixed with the world of humans.

At the crucial moment of the opening of the West to the vast world, ancient medieval cosmology was still active and structured the representational universe of those times. This "new" hirsute humanity needed to be made intelligible, coherent with the available conceptual tools, which were therefore not very sensitive, in these times of wars, to a nuanced appreciation of alterity. Despite their thirst for knowledge, Westerners of the 16th century took a long time to throw off the heavy burden of legends and prejudices that they had received from classical antiquity and the Middle Ages. The West "from the outset transferred to America the character of a country fabulously rich and populated by monsters which was attributed to Cathay [northern China] throughout the Middle Ages" (Chinard, 1978: 8). The imaginary world of the strange, kingdom of monsters, encompassed in a single piece distant and foreign lands, from Asia to America. We should note, however, that even if the supernatural continued to find its place for some time, it seems that "great navigations begin by confirming the old legends, before ruining them gradually" (Lestringant 2008: 104). Of course, the exit from this era of "unbounded credulity" (Gusdorf 1967: 318), from this retreat of monstrosity and the advance towards realism, did not immediately establish a "dialogical resonance", a tolerance, a new relationship based on understanding and recognition of identities encountered.

Disengaged from the cosmic totality in which it was encompassed, freed from the ritual structures of Providential Creation, the human being presents himself in new forms to curiosity. The Renaissance defined the moment when a science of man becomes a human science. Of course, this new ambition does not have instruments up to its standards. The very idea of rigorous science did not exist and since the means, techniques and epistemologies essential to the construction of a knowledge worthy of the name are lacking, they must be invented along the way (Gusdorf 1967: 307).

The aim of this text is to examine the aporias of this constitutive itinerary of imperial epistemology in the field of the human sciences.

In this global scene that is opening up, the European man establishes himself as the Subject of knowledge, freed from the learned authority of the Church, and simultaneously becomes the object of knowledge. In the parallel historical wake, modern sociology takes shape with the task of the study of the effects of social differentiation within European societies. However, this "man" is multiple, and comes from varied historical contexts and the experience of concrete encounters which tends to blur his classical figure shaped by centuries of Biblical genealogy. "The strange humanity" which collides with common sense disturbs the equilibrium of the categories of representation of the universal. Emerging anthropology is forced to integrate this new fact all the more so as it becomes crucial to domesticate those contradictions that hinder the realisation of the Western project of dominating a world of which it claims to be the owner. The institution of this new regime of truth on earth and in the heavens puts Man at the centre of this theatre where the secularised humanism of scientists and the prior hegemony of theological knowledge confront each other. The battle was hard, given the strong ideological domination of Christendom at the end of late antiquity. The dawn of this new world is marked paradoxically by a "narrowing of the horizons of a world that is increasingly engaged in theological violence" (see Athanassiadi 2010). In this atmosphere of "unique thought", some individuals, "strangers" in their day, philosophers and theologians take a clinical and sometimes disapproving glance at their societies in the process of reconstruction. The rise of capitalism was to violently transform social orders.

The broadening of the intellectual horizon, through the progress of science, social changes, the emergence of dissenting ideals and maritime adventures, welcomed a great diversity of "facts" which are unified by the gradual imposition of comparison as a rule of thought. For Jean Copans (Copans 2011: 3-4), "this discipline (anthropology) is more than ever the social science of full-scale comparisons". Certainly "comparison" is not reason, but this process quickly becomes a paragon (in Spanish, *parangón* means comparison) of qualification. Indeed, the irruption of alterity into an epistemological framework (nascent "science" and medieval theology), incapable of explaining the incoherence of elements brought into play by the enlargement of the world, prescribes a linkage, an effective symbolic unification thanks to this procedure of comparison which will be a structuring element of the anthropological discipline at its apogee in the 19th century. An assembly which is not a simple juxtaposition but a scheduling, an equivalence based on the attribution of classificatory

"qualities" and "values" backed by the authority of a "regime of truth" whose central point is a controversy over the unity of the human race. As Henrika Kuklick points out, "observers' judgments have depended on their knowledge of the course of human history" (Kuklick 1991: 01). Anthropology contributes greatly to the development of this universal history which solidifies a social hierarchy that places the West at the very top of the scale of qualities, and functions as a "metaconcept" that has no objective, as Gilles-Gaston Granger puts it, to deal directly with the "objects of a science, but rather with the significance of the position of these objects and the operations which are correlative to them" (Granger 1995: 12).

The "scientific revolution", the technical and social progress that occurred in the West starting in 1500, transformed the social order and established a hierarchy among Westerners themselves. The elites undertook the establishment of a program of universal explanation of the functioning of the natural order and that of man. This revolution led to the decline of the authority of the ancients and the triumph of a new cosmology, which established a confidence in the appropriation of nature – Nature in the broadest sense. Despite vicissitudes, the exemplarity of the educated elites and their natural philosophy established them as the basis for the cosmogony which developed to govern, even if by deceit and mystification, the rest of the society, the people. Considering that henceforth "God and Satan did not intervene in the functioning of the natural world" and abandoning the political principle of equity in rational deliberation, the literate bourgeois elites assumed the right to put men of poor conditions "on the same level" with men with "vulgar matter". William Petty (quoted in Brian Easlea 1986: 283) thus asserted:

The people, therefore, are the raw material, the most essential and the most precious, from which all kinds of productions can be derived – maritime trade, wealth, conquests and a colonial empire. This essential crude and coarse material is entrusted to the hands of the supreme authority, whose attention has the duty of improving it, directing it, shaping it, for a greater or lesser profit.

Science brought men the secrets of Nature and enabled them to understand and master it. This new universe imposes a new social (see Easlea 1986) and sexual stratification which was to play an important role in the hierarchical integration of all the inhabitants of the earth. David Hume (Easlea 1986: 297) came to this conclusion in 1748: "There was never a civilised nature with a complexion other than white, nor even a single eminent individual, whether in the realm of action or in the field of

speculation". At the top of this pyramid is the white elite ("the upper limit of human perfection") followed by white women associated with carnal instincts that morally threaten the social order, as working-class men shake it politically. At the bottom of this menacing gradation we find the Negro of Guinea who himself slightly precedes the orangutan.

Next came the task of organising the new world which unified the former European world with the new countries which the Europeans are about to appropriate. From now on, the structure of the world formatted according to the principles of European universalism, the relations of "things" to each other, should be determined, as Max Scheler notes (Easlea 1986: 7), according to "the new will of the rising bourgeoisie to dominate nature and to exercise its influence over it". It is not surprising that this "general anthropology defines its "savage" and was to develop rules of understanding and action very early on against all kinds of threats that would come from the "people", including the natives, these newcomers into this world which was inventing itself. To realise this program of universal domination, the European elites attempted to embrace the whole world in its universalist principles. Observing the long birth process of the world system, Immanuel Wallerstein (Wallerstein 2006: 54) emphasises that "domination, unlike simple intercultural contact, does not tolerate any idea of parity between cultures. Those who dominate have a constant need to feel morally and historically justified in their position of collective domination and their status as privileged recipients of economic surplus generated by the system". Thus, an asymmetrical relationship of power, a "colonial ideology", is established and imposed on the rest of the world that was to irrigate all the links which would be created between Europe and the rest of the world, destined to live under its natural subordination. Anthropology is part of this political rationality that has gradually been transformed into a scholarly disciplinary order.

In studying the case of the discovery of the "savage" of America, and the repercussion of such an event on European thought, Giuliano Gliozzi stresses the importance of the controversy over the question (and the answer) concerning their origin with which the problem of the colour of the Negroes must be associated. A long controversy ensued in which each stakeholder in the colonial project tried to impose an ideological order in accordance with his own interests. Some defended the feudal system, others supported the "demands of emancipation and material interests of the rising bourgeoisie" (Gliozzi 2000: 513). This was a line of tension which was to generalise, covering all levels of colonial life and colonial societies emerging in the colonies, to the point of influencing the relations of the great powers of the time. In such a historical context, what we will

call "anthropology", the science of man in general, is a disciplinary hypothesis under construction that attempts to overcome the shock caused by the irruption of "exotic humanity" into the former European notion of the world dominated by revelation, by Biblical cosmology. Gliozzi notes that bourgeois intervention in the colonial system minimised the deforming action on the image of the "savage", of sacred right, Biblical genealogy and prophetic curses. He nonetheless observes that this "rationalisation" of the image of the savage does not humanise him, however, for "it is precisely in this negativity that we must see the revolutionary function – including ideologically – of this bloody machine that was the colonial system". It was the "foreign god who was placed on the altar beside the old idols of Europe, and who, one fine day, with a sudden burst, made them all tumble down and proclaimed that realising value-added was the sole and ultimate goal of humanity (Marx)" (Gliozzi 2000: 515). It is hardly surprising that the *conquistadores* were named the "knights of primitive accumulation". Consequently, in such a program of global conquest, there was often no question of "comprehension", of simple difficulty in linguistic translation, to such an extent did the conquerors impose by the force of intellectual negation and physical destruction, by war, the inexistence of the Other. This episode of the adventures of Conquistador Cortes provides an example:

Then Cortes walked a few steps in front of the crowd, crossed his arms, and exclaimed, in a thundering way: 'Lords of Cholula, we have come to you as friends and now you are preparing weapons and ropes for our perdition!... The laws of our emperor order that such betrayals be punished. Your punishment will be death.' The words of Cortes, translated by Dona Marina, threw the Cholteca into consternation. They attempted to justify themselves in vain by attributing the responsibility for the affair to Montezuma. The captain-general would not listen. He fired a gunshot, a signal agreed to with his artillery, and immediately the cannon began to thunder (Descola, 1954: 239).

The institution of this historical balance of power leaves room only for the negotiation of the terms of linguistic translation.

Philosophers, travel literature and the action of administrators laid down the lineaments of what was to become a "scientific" discipline in the 19th century, recognised and designated by the Swiss Chavannes in 1788 by the terms "Anthropology or general science of man". In this debate, as Michèle Duchet points out, "primitive peoples are cited as witnesses; their real being mattered little, since together they formed one and the same mythical figure, in which the dreams of a primitive Eden or of a golden age situated at the origins of humanity take on flesh and life by

approaching new lands" (Duchet 1971: 12). It would be a serious mistake to place this permanent devaluation of the natives in the field of the history of ideas, for the main purpose of this new body of knowledge was to exercise power on the "field", that is, the ability of European stakeholders to act positively on indigenous peoples, Native Americans, and blacks, on the things that belong to them, and this power was to gradually encompass all future colonies. The most characteristic example is the triangular trade in which one side of the triangle organises the other two and takes advantage of this imposed sense of compulsory circulation of values. Voltaire, who, according to Victor Hugo, embodies the French spirit in the famous chapter 19, *The Negro of Surinam*, gives us a striking case of the concrete effects of this process of development:

Upon approaching the city, they encountered a Negro lying on the ground, having only half his clothes, that is, a pair of blue canvas pants. This poor man was missing his left leg and right hand. 'Oh! My God! said Candide in Dutch, "what are you doing there, my friend, in the horrible state in which I see you?" "I am waiting for my master, Mr. Vanderdendur, the famous merchant," replied the Negro. "Is it Mr. Vanderdendur," said Candide, "who treated you like that?" "Yes, sir," said the Negro, "it is customary. We are given canvas pants as our only clothes twice a year. When we work on the sugar plantations, and the millstone catches our fingers, they cut off our hand. When we want to escape, they cut off our leg. I was in both situations. This is the price you pay to eat sugar in Europe. However, when my mother sold me for ten crowns on the coast of Guinea, she told me: 'My dear child, bless our fetishes, adore them always, they will make you live happily. You have the honor of being a slave to our white lords, and thus you make the fortune of your father and mother.' Alas! I do not know if I made their fortune, but they did not make mine. Dogs, monkeys, and parrots are a thousand times less unhappy than we; the Dutch fetishes who converted me tell me every Sunday that we are all *Adam's* children, white and black. I am not a genealogist, but if these preachers are telling the truth, we are all first cousins. Now you will admit to me that one cannot treat one's relatives in a more horrible way.

The negative house arrest of the Negro clearly shows the asymmetry that governs the ordering of this world annexed to the space of Western meaning. The life of the slave, punctuated by various mutilations in this world, indicates that the only utilitarian dimension of this aspect is enlightened, draws attention: he who is impoverished physically, culturally and humanly is reduced to being only a producer of goods exploitable for economic gain. Moreover, Voltaire expresses here a return of the European system of thought towards realism, towards the concrete consideration of the indigenous element that was once largely mythical

abstract. Clearly, the entry into the space of Western significance reduces the young African, denies the complexity of the social and cultural context that made him a social man. What is the basis of the moral rules, the conventions that govern our lives? Are these differences in status based on natural inequality? However, this "impoverishment" must be put into perspective, insofar as the trophies extracted from the indigenous world by crossing the borders of hegemonic veridiction can be attributed to economic, moral and intellectual "great values". It remains to be seen how these amputations can represent the fullness of the "native totality" – distant, denied, ignored.

The magic at work in this accumulation of wealth is the devaluation and pacification of the societies where these extractions of value are carried out. This significant moment in the history of the world is based on the plundering of populations and the accumulation of wealth. The amassed fortunes are spread across a long scale of exploitation which includes among the exploited, workers of the emerging industrial society, sailors and natives mobilised on several continents and, on the beneficiaries' side, the chain of wealth and power distribution goes from local traffickers to shipowners, to the cities and states involved. This is why the study of the colonial process of development and translation follows successive, unequal levels, and draws a succession of various social aggregations. The famous formula "lost in translation" only works on one side – the native, and on the other – European, "gain in translation" would be a more appropriate formula.

This "anthropology" participates in the construction of a colonial ideology which imposes a philosophy of history, a single scale of human progress, a linear evolutionary pathway for all varieties of men. Anthropology is thus a general theory of the progress of human societies. It was to long remain under the influence of evolutionism. This "colonial ideology" is a dialectical product of the confrontation of worldviews and practical experiences of "encounters", especially commercial, whose apparently "free" forms – and forced in reality – lead to the reaffirmation of the superiority of the 'engager', the intruder, the European. This is an unequivocal vision in the sense that the negation of the Other, of the native, is so powerful that his point of view, feelings, interpretations and ultimately proposals for "translation" of the newcomer are rarely considered. In the case of the Kali'na of the Guianas (see Collomb and van den Bel 2014), work has shown the existence of a coherent taxonomic system integrating the "White" as an unprecedented interpretative category. Yet, as Duchet points out, "within the colonial system there is no reconciliation possible: there are only masters and slaves" (Duchet 1971:

175). Although we should recognise at this stage the existence of several often-competing anthropologies, the fact remains that "at the end of the 18th century, Eurocentrism, linked to the process of colonisation and the ideology of Civilisation, controls all anthropological discourse, an integral part of the discourse on history. It orders the diversity of races and peoples, and assigns them a rank, that is, a role in human history" (Duchet 1971: 409). The excessive interest of settlers annulled, impoverished, simplified to the extreme the anthropological and moral density of indigenous social life. The order of values which accompanies the rise of capitalism, of "market society" and the intensification of market circuits, lead to a simplification of new facts, varied forms of expression of human existence, "problem facts" if any. The conquering West has since endeavoured to create a world in its image, a world reconstituted in light of its interests. At the centre of its model of "rational domination" (Max Weber), it establishes a principle of evaluation of all the passages between the two worlds, based on two old categories: the *imperium*, the right to command, and the *dominium*, power based on property. This old western political tropism was to have a lasting influence on anthropology and probably on other disciplines in the human sciences.

1) Translation, anthropology and the indigenous element: "epistechnesis" of command

We might rightly reproach ourselves for a simplifying vision of the history of anthropology and for forcing our hypotheses towards hasty conclusions. This criticism is easily understood. We should note that in French philology, the verb *traduire* "to translate" only recently replaced the verb *translater* "to translate" and that, consequently, the voluntary confusion of the two axes of the internal translatology (linguistic process) and the external (political, historical, sociological, economic factors) allows us to better understand the motivations of a complex phenomenon – the domination of one people by another. We propose that anthropology, the science of the systematic and ordered description of non-European societies, is, according to an ancient word, an *epistechnesis* (Boëldieu-Trevet 2007: 152), a means of action of capitalism encompassing the world which has been unfolding for centuries in a line of thought informing the concepts and methods of the social sciences up to the present day. Kuklick (1991: 2), in opening her famous book, concurs on this point when she asserts that "for our purposes, interpretation must be the principal focus, since this is the feature of ethnographic accounts that gives them practical implications. This is the heart of the matter. Data

make sense only when they are interpreted with theories, and theories are always, as the philosopher's maxim has it, 'underdetermined by facts'. We seek here to establish the facts of thought and the logics of interest of this "historical determinism" which influenced the advent of this science which, from the beginning, undertook to segment, distinguish and evaluate all that carries the dynamic of human societies.

The colonial situation, since popularised in France by Georges Balandier, does not seem to correspond to the real "colonial situation". Contrary to Balandier's assertion, we have not "transformed every political problem into a technical problem of administrative competence", but it is every problem that comes under the central power, which adjusts the imbalance necessary for colonisation, for the application of a conquering legitimacy. A stakeholder in colonisation (Doctor Warnier 1846: 6) observes that "Colonisation without domination is impossible. Domination without colonisation is not only onerous, it is aimless. Domination and colonisation must follow each other step by step". The consequence of the association of domination and colonisation is a broader definition of their object: the indigenous element. "The indigenous element is the set of men and things, the soil and he who inhabits it: cities, villages, houses, gardens, cultivated land, etc." (Warnier 1846: 9).

We understand then that the "colonial situation" is "totalising", that it redefines everything according to the ordering of these values and of its valuation system. Translation must then be understood as the main cog in the colonial machinery, allowing it to exercise domination over a foreign social group, to domesticate it, to transform it into value, to interpret it in its favour, not only in market value, but in setting a general norm of valuation depending on the hierarchy imposed on all of the primitive world now appropriated and tamed. Such a "machinist work" (De Certeau) is not exclusively linguistic because it involves, among other operations, the transcription which transforms the oral into writing, humans and foods into goods, objects of sacred rites into Art, and even the times of the seasons, rites in work time. As Robinson Douglas observes (Robinson 1998: 79), "Translation in its multifarious social, cultural, economic and political contexts *is* impossibly more complex a field of study than abstract linguistic equivalence (which is already complex enough); but the chance of perhaps coming to understand how translation works in those contexts, how translation shapes cultures both at and within their boundaries, offers a powerful motivation to push on despite the difficulty of the undertaking." It remains clear that whatever the scope of translation considered, the centrality exercised by the Western power institutes a historical – but not yet unique – model of transfer of value. As noted by

Susan Bassnet and Harish Trivedi (Bassnet and Trivedi 1999: 4), the model of inequality in linguistic translation can be applied to other aspects of the colonial relationship:

For Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or 'translations' of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate. Moreover, being copies, translations were evaluated as less than originals, and the myth of the translation as something that diminished the greater original established itself. It is important also to remember that the language of 'loss' has featured so strongly in many comments on translation. Robert Frost, for example, claimed that 'poetry is what gets lost in translation'. Students of translation almost all start out with the assumption that something will be lost in translation, that the text will be diminished and rendered inferior. They rarely consider that there might also be a process of gain. The notion of the colony as a copy or translation of the great European Original inevitably involves a value judgement that ranks the translation in a lesser position in the literary hierarchy. The colony, by this definition, is therefore less than its colonizer, its original.

Translation in a colonial and imperial context is constituted by a series of operations of power instituting an unequal system of equivalence in the foreign "social body" that is tied to the West's value system. For this reason, it seemed appropriate to deal with this transformation of dominated worlds from the point of view of a "generalised translation", no singular element of which can be understood without a prior intelligence of the global system. Economic and ideological exploitation depends on domination which is itself based on the generalisation of the fact that many of the subjected men become aware of the material and moral superiority of the conquerors. The ultimate goal of this domestication is to accompany military disarmament by a moral disarmament, a devaluation of the regimes of truth, justice and beauty that underlie the indigenous social order. It is important to carry out a conversion of local cosmogonies, to attain representational foundations that locally organise the meaning to be given to people, practices, forms of thought and objects: "the country of the Kabyles is closed to us, but the soul of the Kabyles is open to us, and it is not impossible for us to penetrate it" analyses Tocqueville (cited by Ageron 1976: 336). Henceforth, in this historical relationship which links the indigenous element to the Western world, dissymmetry is the rule, devaluation of the natives the supreme norm.

This intellectual negation does not prevent the appearance of violent resistance to colonial policy. These indolent behaviours require intellectual treatment, a theoretical mastery for a control of the procedures of efficient

"qualification" on the general social system, on the soul of the peoples. To this end, anthropologists, historians and other linguists make their appearance and observe the modes of organisation of colonised societies to conceal their weaknesses and give the administration an argument to ensure a successful "development" of the colonies. This operation of control came up against the military and political forces of the populations to subject, but also aims to reduce or even destroy the hotbeds of intellectual dispute capable of constructing a counter-discourse, a resistance to colonial hegemony. This destruction of the competing indigenous intellectual centres has unfortunately been little explored by the social sciences even though it is nonetheless one of the stakes of hegemonic expansion. The term "indigenous" and its equivalents are used to delegitimise this knowledge in the eyes of the people themselves who are forced to accept the superiority of Western knowledge and the great value of its system of representation. The device of domination posits autochthonous, "indigenous" knowledge as based on the informal, the intuitive, and differentiated by the fact that they are declared to belong to a particular culture struck by an irreducible alterity. No scientific dialogue was actually established in the colonial context between indigenous and Western scholars so great was the supposed disequilibrium of the two terms.

This political device for controlling the production of local knowledge disqualifies all local modes of knowledge production, reducing them to the denigrated position of "prelogical mentality", "limited tradition", "wisdom", "non-thought", or an enclosed or circular, exclusively empirical intellectual system incapable of an increase in theoretical generality. From its imposed magisterium, the colonial system looks down from above on all other societies, and the orders of knowledge stemming from them, which it places in a negative and radical alterity. This political operation is indeed an operation of forensic science which allows for the organisation of these social spaces, to mark the "technological" distance of the world called "West" from the natives. A trench is dug and placed under the supervision of "customs officers" alone authorised to establish the legitimate meaning to give to all the objects inscribed in this itinerary of development. The question remains as to how selection takes place, how the criteria for allocation of ratings of validation and devaluation are defined. This process of validation and valuation must necessarily accommodate the indigenous individual since he is the essential Other, the guest enthroned by all the colonial authorities of legitimisation (the church, science, administration in particular), without which value cannot be created. This vertical history (it is in fact horizontal) deliberately

refrains from considering the porous reality of the successive strata which have made human history and, consequently, the methods of circulation of knowledge and techniques beyond the short life of political institutions. Through the processes of veridictions imposed on the native system of thought, it is assigned to a closed and sterilised symbolic space, far removed from the fertile environment of the dynamisms which have always supported it.

This radical objectification of the native is probably one of the reasons for the weak expression of an autochthonous anthropology, of a human science examining the dominator in turn. Walter Mignolo's arguments (see Mignolo 1996) on translation as a means of absorbing difference and thus as an effective instrument of the pacified expansion of the "Western same", a device of substitution of the Same for the Other, enables us to understand the practical stakes of the metaphor of the *blank (white) page* in its relations between anthropology and indigenous societies. Indigenous societies have no history, no sciences, no sophisticated languages; they are always revealed by the discourse of others; they have meaning only in light of the Western semantic system. The work of translation, as we understand it here, goes hand in hand with a dispossession and isolation of the natives in relation to the new global elite. We can say that the "colonial enterprise of conversion" consists of re-writing, re-translating, imitating, interpreting and transforming all of the elements inscribed in the indigenous condition into a European context. The "profit" is minimised in the first case and increased in the second. The consequence of the imposition of this order of values is therefore a compression of the natural diversity of the dimensions of the subject-object, of the indigenous individual. It is not, therefore, the incantatory repetition of the proclaimed world order which "the efficacy of conventions" expresses, but as Sigaut notes, "on the contrary, we are building our beliefs and conventions on our model of physically effective action. If they have some solidity, it is because we offer them an efficacy on the model of the one we experience at each moment in our relations with the '*network of necessity*' which surrounds us" (Sigaut, 2012: 68). Thus, colonial ideology adjusts according to the constraints of the "networks of necessity" of exploitation against which the indigenous "counter-order" pits it. In the perspective that we are developing here, translation and transfer of values are closely linked to a certain concept of "human nature", the idea of qualities to be cultivated or cancelled to establish a legitimate social order. The social structures and symbolic representations created to support colonial relations are then produced to translate this notion of humanity. Claude Levi-Strauss observes that:

Anthropology is not a passionless science, as astronomy which arises from the contemplation of distant objects. It is the result of a historical process that has made the greater part of humanity enslaved to the other party, and during which the resources of millions of innocent beings have been plundered, their institutions and beliefs destroyed, while they themselves were killed mercilessly, enslaved and contaminated by diseases they were unable to resist. Anthropology is the offspring of this era of violence. Its ability to consider more objectively the facts relating to the human condition reflects, at the epistemological level, a state of fact in which one part of humanity treats the other as an object (cited in Copans 1975: 64).

2) Grasping or understanding by human sciences: under the watch of "natural patrons"

One of the essential characteristics of anthropology, as a political science, is to be a *science of command*, which as such aims to see the ultimate knowledge of its object as an operation of grasping, manipulating and mastering. Since ancient times, as Boëldieu-Trevet notes, "the semantic field of command is often close to that of political authority, power and sovereignty" (2007: 22). We will agree that this science was born of a political context of discovery of unknown people, their domination, which leaves an indelible mark on knowledge constituted on this occasion. Although we differ on her historical reference point, we agree with Raewy Connell (2007:9), when she says that "sociology was formed within the culture of imperialism and embodied an intellectual response to the colonized world. This fact is crucial in understanding the content and method of sociology, as well as the discipline's wider culture of significance". Analysing the role of the social sciences in the British Empire, Kuklick asserts that "furthermore, anthropologists seeking to promote their discipline saw imperialists as their natural patrons" (Kuklick 1991: 184-185).

Criticism of this historical context has previously focused on complicity with colonial policies, abandoning the analysis of the overarching influence of the social use of knowledge in the creation of methods, theories and hypotheses of this science. Helen Tilley¹ correctly points out in this regard that "there is no doubt that colonial officials and scientific experts have shared in the empirical foundations of their research

¹ Helen Tilley "Ambiguities of Racial Science in Colonial Africa: The African Research Survey and the Fields of Eugenics, Social Anthropology, and Biomedicine, 1020-1940", in Benedikt Stuchtey, *Science across the European Empires, 1800-1950*, Oxford University Press.

and used this faith to impose new ways of knowing the world on African societies". Yet today, this political denunciation of the collusion between human science and colonial powers is clearly insufficient. The examination of this intellectual history must focus on the epistemological roots of the social intentions expressed in it. Analysing classification, a utilitarian method par excellence, which has long characterised the natural sciences, which in turn inspired the social sciences, François Dagognet observes "that we have collected and divided, but we have not entered into the interior of beings (the units) or the processes they generate. We remain outside, concerned with organizing or ordering, of submitting the sets to a unitary, homogenized cartography" (Dagognet 2001: 51). In the case of anthropology, we can hypothesise that political and social domination requires a cartographic organisation of knowledge; the conquest and control of individuals requires the production of a kind of knowledge on which the command, the government of men, is based.

In the 19th century, establishing a state of knowledge, Auguste Comte, clearly emphasised the "positive" function of sociology, representing an advanced stage of the Human Sciences: "The invariant hierarchy, at once historical, dogmatic, scientific, and logical, of the six fundamental sciences, mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology, of which the first constitutes the sole of departure and the last the sole essential goal of all positive philosophy" (Comte 1963: 133).

Bernard Delfendahl calls such an anthropology a "savoir-saisie" [know-how to grasp]. In formulating a severe criticism of this "mathematisation of the human sciences", he asserts that such an approach "acquires a major interest when knowledge is conceived as a seizure, control, domination of the field, and research as an access road to manipulative power. However, it has little power when knowledge is conceived as a means of participation, communion, enjoyment of being" (Delfendahl 1973: 51). Depending on whether the objective of knowledge is seizure, a formal, theoretical encompassment; manipulation, understood as a higher degree of objectivation; or, on the contrary, understanding, knowledge and recognition of the autonomy of the senses, the definition and the relation to the subject-object cannot be the same. Depending on the orientation adopted, the researcher does not select, qualify or treat the characteristics of the object based on similar criteria. The political economy of knowledge on which the anthropological project is based, always backed by the intention of organising society, is not conducive to the integration of the variety of human systems or to the detailed and shared understanding of social phenomena.

We can then advance the hypothesis that the study of "indigenous" societies, from afar as well as up close, is always a process of production of an order of knowledge intended for the control of minds and bodies and which, for this reason, insists on the identification of elementary *essential elements*, individuals and groups. Such a science is not intended to explore complex paths, with the possibility of openness towards *interconnaissance* [inter-knowledge] of a possible understanding or empowerment of the natives so long as they do not correspond to the symbolic imperatives of action. It is fundamentally external, on the lookout for the most coarse, "structural" changes, which are often superficial but sufficient for action. This type of knowledge based on prehension remains incapable of discerning the private, internal, subtle processes that silently animate the social body, impelled and controlled. We should note that the practical, original goal of this body of knowledge does not enclose this symbolic order in a concrete obligation, in the command of real societies, but tends to arrange "things" in such a way as to make them available, especially symbolically, for understanding. Let us repeat that the ultimate aim of this translation is the control of the processes of development of the colonial individual. The intention of action organises the cognitive order of anthropological knowledge into a particular arrangement, but the problem of the unveiling of the concrete internal and external epistemological methods of this operation remains to be solved. The transition from this symbolic order to the concrete space of political control of real societies is a central part of my argument. This chain of accumulation of value through the intervention of translations does not recognise that the indigenous individual has any plenary property rights over extracted values. He must be persuaded by violence that these goods are inaccessible to his technology and understanding.

We have established that the ideal aim of science is the understanding of reality in its fullness. My objective here is to show both the political intentions and the epistemological consequences of this *reductionism* in force in contemporary anthropology. We should recognise that this phenomenon is not peculiar to anthropology or to the social sciences in general. Stephen Hawking notes that in modern physics, faced with the difficulties of integrating the "infinite number of degrees of freedom", scientists in the late 1940s undertook a "renormalisation" which "consisted of subtracting, quite arbitrarily, certain infinite magnitudes, so that only finite magnitudes remain" (Hawking 1992: 61). This operation of reduction, although blatant in the social sciences, remains a largely neglected phenomenon. A negative influence of this methodical simplification is also denounced in modern anatomical medicine by Henri

Péquignot (Péquignot 1986: 107) who compares "anatomists to agents, who are seen in large cities and who know the names of the streets and house numbers, but do not know what is happening inside". In the fields of anthropology, reductionism is accompanied by another no less negative consequence: *essentialism*. Thus, Lucie Cousturier, after a stay in Africa, remarked that "colonial ethnographers show us the rites of circumcision, all the rites of Negro society, telling us: here are Negroes, see and touch..." (Cousturier 1923: 15). By engaging in an epistemological critique similar to our own – which he considers useful – of what he calls "conclusive and fruitless reductions", Karl Popper also affirms "that there seems to be no valid argument in favour of a philosophical reductionism, whereas, conversely, there are good arguments against essentialism, with which philosophical reductionism seems closely related" (Popper 1997: 52). Indeed, "essentialism" and "reductionism" advance together in the treatment of scientific subjects-objects but must be distinguished in a historical criticism. We should emphasise this separation to note that essentialism does not exist, even secretly, without reductionism.

Many anthropological categories are based on a distant and fixed vision of the "indigenous world" abusively decreed to be outside of all historical processes and resistant to change. The truth is that these entities are revealed in the historical permanence of their definitions and functions in the relationship of domination whose anthropological view is one of the methods. The social entities with which anthropology is concerned seem to have only definitive properties and fixed, immutable characters, that have only to be recognised, transcribed and interpreted according to the prescriptions of the dominant external social order from which the researchers themselves usually emerge. If the objective is to understand the "rational core" of the human sciences beyond the immediate manifestations of its political uses, we must then take a critical look at the cognitive issues, the mode of manufacture of the operatory categories that arise around the definition, processing and interpretation of their "objects". It is important to strongly stress these largely implicit influences which inform the theoretical and empirical practice of modern anthropology and which drastically limit the knowledge we have today of men in the diversity of collective forms that they invent for themselves. The powerful course of history does not yet allow a distancing, a step aside towards strategy that would enable us to observe the powerful frames of rationality that knit our thoughts, register our scientific objects and structure the order of our discourse and interpretations. We should keep in mind that knowledge production on Nature and man does not escape the prescriptions of social history which leaves its mark on it. The dominant

episteme is the result of the dominant political rationality. Just as the political order now seems to be struggling in the face of the broadening of the dynamics of the world, so human science, hitherto supported by a certain social history, proves incapable of widening its interpretive sphere to the new emerging objects, to the still indefinite contours of societies that are inventing themselves through a world in turmoil. We can venture to affirm that the progress of the human sciences is in fact only the history of these successive adjustments of acquired and soon overcome knowledge on new realities which limit their performance and force them to a challenge, an exceedance. This dynamic has real political foundations because the deployment of knowledge is never accomplished outside social struggles for the imposition of a social order.

The desire to control and dominate the Other and its epistemological consequences in the human sciences requires us to go beyond the usual political criticism and question not the observer and his investigative tools but to attempt an exit from the current paradigmatic framework, which naturally includes its critical scope, evaluating the points of prehension it leaves as an imprint of its intention on its object of study and, in so doing, locating the other forgotten dimensions of this object to engage in the full (re)understanding of this new-found "object". The question of the limitation of scope, the heuristic function of this demiurge intention and the identity of the object then becomes central. To further my perspective, it seems appropriate to repeat Merleau-Ponty's question and to submit it to anthropology: "We do not place these appearances on the object, they are an accident of our relations with it, they do not concern it itself. What do we mean by this and on what basis do we consider that a form or a magnitude is the form and the size of the *object*?" (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 352). By this distancing from the "incommensurable finitude" practiced by anthropology, we need to go back to hypothetical infinity and the undeniable autonomy of the "subject-object" by applying the "tools of tolerance" (see Descombes 2007) and "respect for the Other" to discover, beyond all prejudices, in each human entity a series of legitimate "historical singularities". The essentialist prescriptions attached to the figures of the "objects" defined by the will to control, through a "scientific objectivity", are then minimised and the equal autonomy of functions developed *a priori*.

The logical consequences of this recognition make it possible to associate the project of a knowledge of human societies with the "recognition of the Other" in the development of another way of practicing anthropology. I would, however, acknowledge that this epistemological position is far from easy to maintain. Jean Bazin considers that "the

difficulty arises from the fact that every human action is carried out based on a multitude of considerations and requirements which are not normally required to be stated, without our being able to consider them either indescribable or unconscious, and which do not form a system in so far as no thought thinks them"(Bazin 2008: 59). The examination of all these presuppositions that obstruct our horizon of social relations, understood as simple "specific complexes of events, is part of the novel process of "scientification" described by Norbert Elias, which means that "mental tools used by men gradually lose their character of concept of action to take on that of functional concept" (Elias 1991: 64).

3) The incompleteness of a human science?

"Anthropological translation" is a secular operation of transferring values in keeping with the particular interests of a centre, the West, but this hegemonic centrality is now criticised, strongly contested, and even rejected by many scholars. This challenge weakens the "colonial government" in office; as Foch said "commanding is nothing. The right thing to do is to understand those we are dealing with and to make them understand us. Being successfully understood is the whole secret of life" (Courtois 2009: 127). It is time to answer the question posed in the title: has translation been lost in transition? The dynamics of the human sciences have enabled us to see that the *Eurocentric* perspective has only been concerned each time with a reduced aspect of the objects studied. A body of incomplete knowledge was then developed to understand these new societies. This is not inconsequential. This type of knowledge subjected to an order of utility and based on prehension remains incapable of discerning the private, inner, subtle and complex processes that silently and completely animate the social body, impelled and controlled on a reduced part of its real social existence. The epistemological consequences of such a situation do not only question the direct complicity of science with the powerful. They require us to evaluate the heuristic function of the objects of study, methodologies used and theories considered relevant in the dominant scientific field. For this purpose, it is important to identify the dimensions overlooked by the study of these restricted "objects" for rational imperial intelligibility by the force of history, to commit ourselves to their enlarged (re)understanding, and ultimately to explore the heuristic consequences of this rediscovery of the scale and pluri-dimensionality of the practices and representations that make up indigenous societies. Indeed, the hypothesis of the restriction of "objects" leads both to an internalist approach, to the analysis of the political intention which builds

the relation to the object and its theoretical interpretation, and – this time based on a complementary externalist aim – towards the restitution, the rediscovery of the totality of the object "completed" now by these missing dimensions, formerly amputated. Such a repatriation of forgotten dimensions is logically accompanied by a recognition of the clearly exponential nature of the fabric of social relations hitherto limited by ontological homogenisation, utilitarian isolation, and the reductionism of the science of command. This "structural completeness" operation, which took place after the epistemological removal of the partitions imposed by the science of command, requires that new problems, even new paradigms and methodologies, be defined which truly consider the amputated and disintegrated dimensions of these objects handled by Western social science.

This hypothetical extension of the project of knowledge with unknown, or even ignored, dimensions of the object necessarily involves a reassessment of the epistemological foundations, theoretical inferences and even an institutional reorganisation of knowledge. The possibility of a discovery of the complete object, of its *completion*, requires that we recognise the autonomy of local historical dynamics, meanings and strategies, heretofore ignored, of the meaning of indigenous practices, as they are given meaning locally. At the same time, it requires us to re-examine the solidity of the general theoretical framework that underpins our current knowledge of these human societies. This is a radical criticism which invites us to go beyond the contradiction established between the real history of the social sciences, slowed in their heuristic development by reductionism, and the scientific utopia of an understanding of the functioning of social relations in accordance with the ethical requirements of a new humanism to be invented. Such an epistemological criticism, which would lead us to widen the factual, political and philosophical bases of the social science project, is opposed to the ontological, unilateral and hegemonic vision of the dominant science limited by the horizon of "European universalism". It also invites us all to go beyond the simply reactive assertion of ethnic, national and religious divisions which, too, would prescribe a narrow understanding of the dynamics of societies. Clearly, these proclamations of identity, such as the recurring appeals to the superficial contestation of the explanatory capacity of the dominant social sciences, as spirited as they are, do not go beyond the immediate ideological comfort afforded to their authors, while leaving intact the reproductive framework of hegemonic science.

Conclusion

Sois attentif, ô Marqueur-me disais-je- à l'emmêlée des âges mais conserve ceci à l'esprit: le champ de bataille n'est vraiment ouvert que sous l'âge d'à-présent. Malheur à ceux qui écrivent contre la domination de l'âge dernier: ces balles ont un passé grandiose mais peu de lendemain.

[Be careful, O Marker, I said to myself in the tangle of the ages, but keep this in mind: the battlefield is really open only under the age of now. Woe to those who write against the domination of the last age: these bullets have a grandiose past but little tomorrow.]
—Patrick Chamoiseau

This examination of the constant, meticulous and silent work of translation, of "colonial conversion", of the cultural invention of a world declared finished by the human sciences, leads to the identification of the aporias of this scholarly hegemony and to envisage the hypothesis of their exceedance. A criticism then follows on the reality of this *uniform-universal*, this one-dimensional process of qualification, of hierarchisation that always postulates the irrevocable subalternity of the Others. The essential re-evaluation of the contemporary anthropological corpus, which Mafeje invites us to do (see Mafeje 1998: 37), while seeking to disclose the "hidden significance" of indigenous societies, must avoid indigenising this "ghost of colonialism" through a superficial criticism. The aim of this provisional note on the epistemological itinerary of anthropology consists both in welcoming, in the concrete exercise of research, a heuristic enlargement of the dimensions of our "subjects-objects" studied, and imposing the diversity of ways of approaching, analysing, interpreting, understanding and using them in a new concept of science, which is not hegemonic, *multi-versalist*, using the interpretative principle of the *historical multivalence* of social facts. This approach considers the theatre of social action freed from the associative *a priori*, from the immediacy of social structuring, considering the relative independence of the historical affiliations of the elements, the logic of interdependencies and their influences in the sequence of autonomous processes. Thus, the researcher, as the object of his research, will be freed from the political confiscation of the interpretation of social life, freed from the power of colonial doxa. The conditions for achieving such an objective are, while remaining faithful to the general translation, the goal of a scientific understanding of human existence, to keep in mind Derrida's proposals:

Languages (*i.e. societies*) are not foreign to one another. Apart from their historical relations, they are all, *a priori*, related. There is an intimate,

concealed relation between them which no translation can reveal completely, but which the translatability of the texts shows (*i.e. existences*). In this relationship lies true or *pure language*. It is impossible to create it, but it is possible to represent its seeds. A translation must, as accurately as possible, attest to the relationship between languages (*i.e. human societies*) (...) From generation to generation, words (*i.e. values*) change meaning, subjectivities evolve. In translating the work, we consider this historical and fruitful process (Derrida 1987).

The main condition for the success of the project of a new epistemology is the concomitant invention of a thorough, enriched, reinvented humanism.

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CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAW AND LANGUAGE IN GABON AND CAMEROON: AN ILLUSTRATION FROM LABOUR LAW

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In *L'autre Bible de l'Occident* [*The Other Bible of the West*], Pierre Legendre presents the law as a montage of discourses.¹ The objective of our approach is not, however, to question the content of these discourses,² but rather to look at their formulation. As Jacques Vanderlinden points out, "law cannot be expressed without language".³ Thus, an inevitable question arises: which language is it? As Campanna observes, this question has always "preoccupied both jurists and modern and less modern linguists".⁴ However, it can only be considered in an abstract and general way.

¹ P. Legendre, *Leçons IX, L'autre Bible de l'Occident: le monument romano-canonique* [*Lesson IX, The Other Bible of the West: The Roman-Canonical Monument*], Paris, Fayard, 2009, p. 117.

² As the English philosopher Hart reminded us: "There are few questions about human society that have been posed so persistently and which have been the subject of reputed theorists, of answers as diverse, strange and even paradoxical as the question 'What is the law?'" in *Le concept de Droit* [*The Concept of Law*], Presses des facultés universitaires Saint Louis, Brussels, 1976, p. 13.

³ J. Vanderlinden in Snow et Vanderlinden, *Français juridique et science du droit* [*Legal French and the Science of Law*], 25.

⁴ J. Campanna, "Vers un langage juridique commun en Europe [Towards a common legal language in Europe]", in (under the direction) R. Sacco, L.

We have therefore chosen an approach based on concrete situations, drawing on the two neighbouring countries of Cameroon and Gabon, which present both similarities and differences. Among the commonalities, these two countries are both populated by multiple linguistic groups: over three hundred in Cameroon,⁵ and nearly forty in Gabon.⁶ Furthermore, a distinction is made between national and official languages. This is also a point of divergence between the two countries. Article 1 of Cameroon's Constitution provides that: "The Republic of Cameroon shall adopt English and French as official languages of equal value". Article 2 of the Gabonese Constitution provides that: "The Gabonese Republic shall adopt French as the official working language". French and English enjoy a status which is not the same as that of other languages which are called "national". The cases of Cameroon and Gabon will allow us to illustrate not only the links found between languages, but also the hierarchies and power relations noted between them.⁷

According to the German jurist and historian Gustave Hugo, "the positive law of a people is an integral part of its language and, like its language is born and develops organically".⁸ In the case of Cameroon and Gabon, it is difficult to agree with this reflection. The positive law of these two countries, as is the case in most African countries, is the result of a transfer that took place during the colonial period and which sometimes continues to this day. Far from being, in the words of Hugo, Savigny and Grimm, "the fruit of popular consciousness and of the jurisprudence specific to each people,"⁹ here the law is considered universal and it suffices to transfer to a country for the graft to occur. This law is expressed in a language introduced by the former coloniser. For it to be understood by the greatest number, everyone must adopt this language. From this point of view, considering the relationship between law and language, all the languages spoken in the country are not considered, but only the official languages inherited from the former colonisers.

Castellani, *Les multiples langues du droit européen uniforme [The Multiple languages of uniform European law]*, L'Harmattan Italia, 1999, p. 7.

⁵ Binam Bikoi, 2012; Barreteau, Ngantchui, Scruggs, 1993.

⁶ Hubert, Mavoungou, 2010.

⁷ L.-J. Calvet, "La mondialisation au filtre des traductions [Globalisation through the filter of translations]", *Hermès, La Revue* 2007/3 (n° 49), pp. 45-57.

⁸ J. Campagna, op. cit., p. 7.

⁹ A. Dufour, "Droit et langage dans l'École historique droit [Law and Language in the Historical Law School]", *Archives de philosophie du droit [Archives of the Philosophy of Law]*, 1974, n° 19, Le langage du droit [The Language of Law], pp. 151-180.

In this context, the relationship between language and law would not lead to particular debates since the issue of translation would not arise. For Jean-Claude G mar, "The words of the law express in a few signs the often complex and tortuous history of a concept, an institution. Their translation into another language, if it is possible, does not do justice to the complexity of the concept which each of these terms carries".¹⁰ In Cameroon and Gabon, since the law is formulated in the official languages which are intended to be understood by the population, the difficulties which Gear notes are groundless. Nevertheless, this approach appears to be very simplistic and proves to be ineffective in the face of the facts for several reasons.

Although it is true that the law is expressed in a language, it is also a language. For Probert, "(...) Law tends to develop a certain language which is expressed in terms different from those used in everyday speech".¹¹ Like the law historian and philosopher Michel Villey, we consider that the law is not a separate language,¹² or even if is, to use the expression of the Dutch theologian Visser't Hooft, "a specialised use of ordinary language",¹³ and recognise that it has its own lexicon. Legal vocabulary includes a series of terms used exclusively in the legal context, with no meaning other than the legal and are not used in common language.¹⁴ As they have no equivalent in common language, they are difficult to translate and thus for the layman to understand. Lazar Focsaneanu emphasises the singularity of legal language which "has forged its own specific terminology and phraseology".¹⁵ He also believes that the "difficulties of translation are thus all the greater".

While the law seems to evolve in an autonomous universe through its vocabulary, the fact remains that there are porosities both in legal language and in common language, and a transition from legal terms to common language and vice versa. Thus, we frequently observe the passage of legal

¹⁰ Jean-Claude G mar, "Traduire le droit ou le double langage de Th mis [Translating the law or the double language of Themis]", *Herm s, La Revue* 2007/3 (n  49), pp. 149-155.

¹¹ W. Probert, "Torts and Language", *Florida Law Review* 48, 1996, pp. 841 and following.

¹² M. Villey, in Preface, *Archives de philosophie du droit [Archives of the Philosophy of Law]*, Vol. XIX, Le langage du droit, 1974, p. 2.

¹³ Sited by M. Villey, *ibid.*

¹⁴ We might site, for instance: abrogative, absolutory, acquests, cassation, commodate, party appearing in court, escheat, fraud.

¹⁵ L. Focsaneanu, "Les langues comme moyen d'expression du droit international [Languages as means of expression of international law]", *Annuaire fran ais de droit international [French Directory of International Law]*, Paris. 1971, p.16.

terms into common language with a derived meaning, and also the opposite phenomenon, which is even more frequent. In this case, not only are these terms of common language absorbed by legal language, but they end up acquiring a special, specific meaning different from the common language, which is undoubtedly a source of confusion and a danger of legal translation.¹⁶

However, these questions go far beyond the two countries of interest to us here. Legal language also often appears esoteric and needs to be explained or translated as if it were a foreign idiom. The lawmakers' production provides an excellent illustration of this. For Vanderlinden, "he often tends to over-refine his language",¹⁷ which justifies the use of many auxiliaries, each of whom has his own specific language.¹⁸

To overcome possible difficulties, thanks to the fiction of the subject of abstract law that is *bonus pater familias*, we end up legitimising the idea of a language comprehensible by this subject. The famous saying, *Nemo censetur ignorare legem* provides an excellent illustration. Hence, as Roland and Boyer show, "every citizen, *volens nolens*, is deemed a lawyer in spite of himself, not only because he often makes law without knowing it but also that he is supposed to be familiar with it while he does not know it".¹⁹ A reference person capable of understanding it would correspond to the unique language, and it is in this language that the law would be expressed in the general sense of the term. Yet such an approach is contradicted by reality.

As Cornu pointed out in his day: "Every rule of law is in itself the answer to a question".²⁰ The Senegalese lawyer Abdoullah Cissé also stresses this point when he writes that "the law is, by definition, plural when we agree to see the realities of law as such with no ideological preconception".²¹ Yet, while this pluralism exists in fact in Cameroon and

¹⁶ The term 'possession' does not have the same meaning in common language and in law.

¹⁷ J. Vanderlinden, "Le futur des langues du droit ou le dilemme du dernier orateur [The future of languages of the law or the dilemma of the last orator]", in R. Saco, op. cit., spec. p. 203 and following.

¹⁸ M. Villey, op. cit., p. 2: "We also have our syntax, our modes, our specific functors, our style: furthermore, it will not be identical for a notary, a bailiff, a treatise on doctrine, a collection of laws".

¹⁹ H. Roland, L. Boyer, *Adages du droit français [Adages of French Law]*, Litec, 4th ed., 1999, p. 579.

²⁰ G. Cornu, *Linguistique juridique [Legal Linguistics]*, Paris, Montchrestien, 3rd ed., 2005, n° 71.

²¹ A. Cissé, "Introduction générale pour une approche plurale du droit africain [General Introduction for a Plural Approach to African Law]", in *De l'esprit du droit africain, Mélanges en l'honneur de Paul-Gerard Pougoue [The Spirit of*

Gabon, it is far from being affirmed by positive law for reasons which may be found in the history of these two countries. To analyse this phenomenon, we focus on a reflection based on a matter of law, so as not to fall into the trap of a global analysis that would be too abstract and therefore of little interest. We have chosen labour law²² because of its specific characteristics, which make it possible, paradoxically, to perfectly justify the idea of a single language corresponding to a single law.

For Alain Supiot, Jean Pélissier and Armand Jeanmaud, "Labour law essentially governs only that of the person working for and under the authority of another".²³ In Cameroon and Gabon, it was introduced by the coloniser, which is why Cameroonian jurist Paul-Gerard Pougoue notes that "labour law is as indispensable to contemporary life as it is foreign to the African mentality".²⁴ It is important, however, not to misunderstand this by engaging in endless passionate discussions about legal phenomena in Africa and their corollary, which is the absolute necessity of demonstrating their existence.²⁵ Professor Pougoue wishes to show that labour law is outside the recurrent debates about the difficult reception of modern law in African countries because of the resistance of customary

African Law, Miscellanies in Honor of Paul-Gerard Pougoue], Wolters Kluwer, 2014, p. 2.

²² The expression 'labour law' appeared in Germany (*Arbeitsrecht*) in 1912, supported particularly by Potthoff and Sinzheimer, whereas until that time the term industrial legislation had been used. In France, Paul Durand used the term at the end of the 1930s. See particularly P. Durand, *Droit du travail [Labor Law]*, Dalloz, 1947, n° 2; S. Pinto Martins, *Direito do trabalho [Labor Law]*, Ed. Atlas, Sao Paulo, 2013, p. 17.

²³ J. Pélissier, A. Supiot, A. Jeanmaud, *Droit du travail [Labor Law]*, Dalloz, 24th ed., 2008, n° 2. See also: P. Lotmar, *Der Arbeitsvertrag nach dem Privatrecht des Deutschen Reiches [The Employment Contract according to the Private Law of the German Reich]*, 2 vol., Leipzig, 1902-1908 ; A. Mascaro Nascimento, S. Mascaro Nascimento, *Curso de Direito do trabalho [Labor Law Course]*, 29th ed., Ed. Saraiva, Sao Paulo, 2014, p. 35 and following. ; S. Riva, *Compendio di Diritto del lavoro [Compendium of Labor Law]*, 16th ed., Edizioni Giuridiche Simone, Napoli, 2012, p. 5; A. Supiot, *Le droit du travail [Labor Law]*, PUF, coll. Que sais-je?; 2016.

²⁴ P. G. Pougoue, "Idéaux de la révolution française et Droit du travail en Afrique noire francophone [Ideals of the French Revolution and Labor Law in Francophone Black Africa]", in *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité, Actualités en Droit Social [Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, News on Social Law]*, ed. Lycofac, Bordeaux, 1990, pp. 228-229.

²⁵ J. D. Boukougou, "L'esprit des droits africains [The Spirit of African Laws]", in *De l'esprit du droit africain [The Spirit of African Law]*, op. cit., p. 165 and following.

rights.²⁶ It constitutes a real exception, since invoking the law in Africa is inevitably "to approach the subject of legal pluralism".²⁷ However, in the case of subordinate wage labour, this diversity is not appropriate for a reason which is not at all in dispute: labour law is a recent invention. It emerged in Europe with the Industrial Revolution, hence it was designated by the term "industrial legislation" until the 20th century. Moreover, it would only be introduced to the colonies much later. In the case of Gabon, for example, it was only after 1910 that the first embryonic labour regulations were introduced.²⁸

To justify the introduction of this law, the coloniser posits the following assumption: Before the arrival of the Europeans, Africans were living in barbarism.²⁹ Many consequences would be drawn, including the denial of the legal phenomenon in pre-colonial Africa.³⁰ Moreover, because of a dominant view that the law must be written,³¹ it can only appear within the framework of a State, a structure which did not exist in pre-colonial Africa.³² This approach is similar to that developed by the formalist school, in the works of Hegel in particular.³³ The law is

²⁶ M. Alliot, "Les résistances traditionnelles au droit moderne dans les Etats d'Afrique francophone et malgache [Traditional resistance to modern law in the Francophone and Malagasy African States]", in J. Poirier, *Etudes de droit africain et de droit malgache [Studies of African Law and Malagasy Law]*, Ed. Cujas, Paris, 1965, pp. 235-256. Customary rights are often presented as the norms prevailing in pre-colonial Africa and which prevent the effectiveness of modern law.

²⁷ A. Emame, "Les limites du poncif de la tradition dans l'application du droit en Afrique: l'exemple des relations de travail au Gabon [The Limits of the Cliché of Tradition in the Application of Law in Africa: The Example of Labor Relations in Gabon]", in *De l'esprit du droit africain*, op. cit., p. 267.

²⁸ Cameroon was occupied by Germany until 1916.

²⁹ J. Baldwin, *Meurtres à Atlanta [Murders in Atlanta]*, Stock, Paris, 1985, p. 114.

³⁰ W. Menski, *Comparative Law in a Global Context, The Legal Systems of Asia and Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 380: "For many reasons, African laws and African jurisprudence have always faced a barely hidden undercurrent of denial of African laws and their potentiel contributions to jurisprudence".

³¹ L. Liard: "Le droit c'est la loi écrite [Law is written law]", in *L'enseignement supérieur en France de 1789 à 1893 [Higher Education in France from 1780 to 1893]*, vol. II, Hachette, 1894, p. 397.

³² I. Nguema, "Divinités gabonaises, droit et développement [Gabonese divinities, law and development]", *Revue juridique et politique Indépendance et Coopération [Legal and Political Review Independence and Cooperation]*, n° 2, April-June 1984, p. 109 and following.

³³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts [Basic Lines of the Philosophy of Law]*, Hamburg, Meiner, 1955, § 75 Ann.

considered a creation of the State, and if such does not exist, anarchy reigns. With the Normativist School and Kelsen,³⁴ we come to a similar conclusion since, here again, the law is identified with the State. As a result, imported standards such as labour legislation occupied only virgin areas that must be civilised. From this point of view, it is not surprising that the idea of a uniform labour law has been imposed.³⁵ More than half a century after independence, what is the situation today?

Many factors must be considered to answer this question. First, there is the content of both Cameroonian and Gabonese legislation, which differs only marginally from labour law in force during the colonial period. Consequently, they merely repeat what was observed before to consider the relationship between law and languages. Nevertheless, the situations are not necessarily similar in the two countries. The hegemony of the French in Gabon contrasted with an official bilingualism seen in Cameroon – a rare exception in Africa from this point of view. The country is also an excellent laboratory to see how the coexistence of two official languages is organised in a single legal system.

Yet, in view of the changes taking place in the workplace, and which are seen on a global scale, Cameroon and Gabon cannot escape from a reflection on the concepts and categories of labour law, except by proclaiming the universality of law in a globalised world. To this end, we must re-examine not only the structure of these countries' laws by integrating endogenous norms, but also the relations maintained not only with the official languages but also with all other languages heretofore overlooked by lawmakers. This is the only way to achieve what should be the stated aim of labour law in these two countries, namely to allow the law to be more effective.

I. Legal Uniqueness and overshadowing of national languages

In Cameroon and Gabon, as in the colonial period, subordinate labour relations were governed by labour law.³⁶ The choice was legal uniqueness, which may seem curious in countries where there is constant reference to

³⁴ H. Kelsen, *Théorie pure du droit [Pure Theory of Law]*, 2nd ed., translated by C. Eisenmann, Dalloz, 1962, Paris.

³⁵ Of course, there will be customary work, but it is clearly outside the area of labour law.

³⁶ The only exclusions noted are the self-employed (traders, craftsmen, professionals) and civil servants.

the survival of so-called traditional laws. However, because of its exclusive attachment to the Industrial Revolution, labour law, contrary to what is observed in other branches, has no equivalent in pre-colonial societies that can justify any kind of pluralism. If we look at the common language in Cameroon and Gabon, we indeed note a dichotomy among the different speakers between the work of blacks and whites. The latter corresponds to the mode of work introduced by the coloniser, which connects the employer and an employee. The logical consequence of this is that, in any employment relationship, a presumption of wage-earning will easily develop. The reading of labour legislation is rich in lessons learned in this regard.

A. Construction of a unique law

In Gabon as in Cameroon, the norms governing labour relations are produced by lawmakers, and are found in the Labour Code. For example, the Cameroon Labour Code, a result of Act No. 92-007 of 14 August 1992, provides in Article 1st-1 that "This law governs employment relationships between workers and employers, and between employers and apprentices placed under their authority". The Gabonese Code resulting from Law No. 3/94 of 21 November 1994 differs little from this wording, except for the substitution of the expression "this law" for "this code". This similarity, both in the drafting of these articles and in the choice of legal uniqueness, perfectly illustrates the hegemonic function of labour law. Above all, these choices are the fruit of an almost common history shared by Cameroon and Gabon.

As a French colony since 1839, Gabon subsequently joined French Equatorial Africa at its creation. This entity came into being following the Decree of 15 January 1910.³⁷ It also included the Congo, Oubangui-Chari and Chad³⁸ until 1958 when these countries entered the ephemeral French Community created by General De Gaulle. Two years later, on 17 August 1960, Gabon gained its independence. Cameroon had a very different status. After first being a German colony until 1916, it became a mandated territory entrusted by the Treaty of London partly to France and partly to Great Britain in 1922. Subsequently, Cameroon would become a

³⁷ Journal Officiel de la République Française [Official Journal of the French Republic], 16 January 1910, pp. 447-450.

³⁸ Present-day Central African Republic.

trusteeship of the United Nations³⁹ until its independence on 1 January 1960.

In Gabon, the law in force was initially built based on a distinction and discrimination established between citizens and indigenous people.⁴⁰ As a result, legal equality was unknown, and language was a non-issue. As the rules relating to work concerned only citizens, French was the language of the corresponding law. Cameroon is not in a very different situation with a regulation that is poorly respected.⁴¹ It was not until 1946 that the two territories underwent an evolution, with the law of 7 May of that year, which gave citizenship to all overseas nationals. The question then arose of whether this unique status also implies an identical labour law for all.

The answer came six years later with the promulgation of the law of 15 December 1952 on the Labour Code of the Overseas Territories (CTTOM). During the discussions that preceded, many parliamentarians from the colonies were in favour of having a single legislation for the whole of the French Union,⁴² whereas the "European" members advocated more respect for local particularities.⁴³ In the end, this code is presented as

³⁹ D. Oyono, *Colonie ou mandat international? La politique française au Cameroun de 1919 à 1946 [Colony or international mandate? French Policy in Cameroon from 1919 to 1946]*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1992, 221 p.

⁴⁰ A third status existed: foreigner.

⁴¹ A Decree of 22 May 1924 made the Equatorial French Africa legislation applicable. See also Decrees of 4 August 1922 and 9 July 1925, *Bulletin officiel du ministère des Colonies [Official Bulletin of the Ministry of Colonies]*, 1925, p. 225.

⁴² During the discussion on the CTTOM during the 6 November 1952 session, MP Abbas Gueye said: "In the eyes of the workers of the overseas territories, proclaimed citizens as their metropolitan comrades, nothing can excuse for whatever reason, the prolongation of the arbitrariness under which they groan with respect to labour from the beginning of the colonial period to the present. The colonial period, with all due respect to its supporters, is well and truly over. It has given way to the French Union, all of whose members, constitutionally speaking, are equal." cf. *Official Journal, National Assembly (J.O.A.N.)*, 7 November 1952, p. 4800.

⁴³ M. Paul Devinat: "While aimed at being unique and universal, the labor code denies the diversities, which are nevertheless clear, in mores, habits and needs. To this uniformity contrary to realities, the bill adds minute details which will make the application laborious and will multiply conflicts of interpretation. We would have preferred the solution, which was unsuccessfully proposed at the beginning of the discussions in the National Assembly and in the Council of the Republic, which would have consisted of laying down the essential lines, general directives, broad obligations, while leaving the details of application and control to local

a federal law that applies uniformly in all overseas territories⁴⁴ with only the French language chosen. Gabon and the part of Cameroon administered by France therefore had the same labour legislation until their independence.

Today, this situation has changed little. Of course, each of these states has its own labour legislation which was, however, strongly inspired by the 1952 Code. The fidelity par excellence that we note concerns legal uniqueness. Yet, it might have been thought that, under the influence of discourse responding to the recurrent discussion of Africanism, the Cameroonian and Gabonese lawmakers had planned to establish legal pluralism to revive pre-colonial norms. Yet this is not the case. The reasons stem from many factors, the first of which we have already shown, namely the foreign-ness that stems from labour law. As a result, the easiest solution is to use imported law as is. This is what Cameroonian and Gabonese lawmakers have done to this day.

What may seem curious is rather the confusion that continues to be maintained in debates. In most labour law work in Cameroon and Gabon, labour law is said to cover only a marginal population within the so-called "formal sector". Most workers would not be affected by this law as they are in the informal sector. This presentation is repeated in all African countries and in studies on labour relations in Africa. However, if we look at the legislative provisions mentioned above, discussion is meaningless. No dichotomy exists between the formal and informal sectors in the Labour Code. It merely establishes a uniqueness of law which, moreover, seems to be increasingly shared by most countries because of the protective nature of this law.

Legislation applying to a whole population is not a new situation. This is common in most countries, and especially in France which is still the dominant model for Cameroon and Gabon. A recurrent question will be added to the French legal model in circulation, namely the language of the

authorities, assisted and advised by their assemblies " cf. J.O.A.N. 7 November 1952, p. 4800, 2nd session of 6 November 1952.

The ethnologist Maurice Griaule, then deputy and quoted abundantly by Paul Devinat, also supports this position: "Let us fear that in wishing to over-legislate according to our spirit, to extend our ways of seeing, to embrace too much, we stifle the deep aspirations of humanity to freedom, to work in freedom. In short, let us fear that the workers, after having shaken off the dictatorship of men, finally come back, with an irresistible start, to shake the dictatorship of Western civilisations. Ibid.

⁴⁴ R. Lemesle, *Le droit du travail en Afrique francophone [Labor Law in Francophone Africa]*, EDICEF/AUPELF, 1989, p. 19.

law.⁴⁵ We might have thought that in countries where multilingualism is a reality, the law would be in tune with it. This is not the case.

B. Establishment of a single language

In Cameroon and Gabon, a single law for labour relations enshrined in the texts corresponds to monolingualism in the expression of labour law. A priori, the question of language is not very present in the legislation of these two countries. An examination of the various codes is enough to convince us of this. The Labour Code is an exception from this point of view, even if the reference to language is very limited.

If the issue of language is not central to labour legislation, it is primarily because of the scheduling of labour relations which have two components, one individual and the other collective. Individual relationships are dominated by the emblematic figure of the employment contract. However, whether in the 1952 legislation or in subsequent legislation in Gabon and Cameroon, we will note that these contracts have passed freely. This provision may mean that the employer and the employee may a priori enter into a contract in the language of their choice. Better still, the principle that dominates the employment contract is consensualism. Contrary to what is often believed, the validity of the contract depends on the agreement of the parties' wishes and not on the existence of a written document. In this approach, the employment contract is valid when the employer and the employee have agreed on the work to be performed and the remuneration which will be paid in return. They can do so in the language of their choice without any difficulty. It is only when the contract is executed that the issue of language can arise and, in a case that is never mentioned, namely when an employee misunderstands an order or recommendation. We can indeed imagine that an employee might not perfectly execute an order if he had not fully understood it because of his insufficient command of the language. The solution will then be to give priority to the official language.

The hypothesis whereby language really intervenes in individual labour relations is that of fixed-term contracts. Whether in the Labour Code of the Overseas Territories or in the Cameroonian and Gabonese codes, these contracts must be written. Hence the question does not arise

⁴⁵ N. Kasirer, "Le real estate existe-t-il en droit civil? Un regard sur le lexique juridique de droit civil de langue anglais [Does real estate exist in labor law? A look at the legal lexicon of English-language civil law]", in (under the direction of) R. Sacco, L. Castellani, *Les multiples langues du droit européen uniforme [The Multiple Languages of Uniform European Law]*, L'Harmattan Italia, 1999, p. 89.

as to which languages will be involved. In the case of Gabon where there is only one official language, it will be French, whereas in Cameroon the parties will have the choice between French and English. National languages are not excluded by law. The requirement is a written language and not just a particular language. However, since the national languages in both Cameroon and Gabon are oral languages, the debate over their use in the drafting of contracts is irrelevant. For a long time, Gabonese lawmakers were perfectly clear on this point before the last code in 1994. In the Labour Code promulgated in 1978, Article 14 refers to "apprenticeship and professional training which are the subject of a contract written in the official language of the Republic". It is curious to note that Cameroonian and Gabonese lawmakers did not, contrary to their habit, follow what was provided for in the 1952 Code, which did not totally rule out the use of local languages, as can be verified in article 52, paragraph 2: "The contract shall be established in writing, liable to nullity. It is written in French and, if possible, in the language of the apprentice". What was the language of the apprentice if not a local language? This legislation was, of course, intended for all overseas territories, and one might assume that some territories were more concerned than others with this drafting. Nevertheless, we should also recall that the action of missionaries in Cameroon and Gabon had led to writing the local languages by using the French alphabet.

This suspicion of openness found in individual relations is not reflected in provisions with respect to collective labour relations. Although there are few language-related provisions, the history of collective relations in Cameroon and even more so in Gabon is in line with the pre-eminence of the official language to the detriment of all others. The best illustration of this is provided by the Decree of 7 August 1944, extending the institution of trade unions in Black Africa. Article 5 stipulates that all members responsible for the administration or management of a trade union must be able to speak, read and write French. They must also have at least a primary school certificate. We note that such requirements are not provided for in metropolitan law.⁴⁶

Subsequently, first the 1952 Code and national legislation would only confirm this approach. With respect to collective agreements, Article 71 (1) of the Labour Code of the Overseas Territories provides that: "The

⁴⁶ As Lamine Guèye points out in the discussion of the Labour Code of the Overseas Territories on 27 November 1950: "It was asking of the overseas territories more than in the metropolis. Many trade unionists without a certificate of primary education have gained a worldwide reputation". cf. J.O.A.N. of 28 November 1950, p. 8183.

collective agreement must be written in French liable to nullity". The 1962 Gabonese Labour Code reproduces this language *in extenso* in its article 69. In the 1978 and 1994 versions, however, this reference disappears. In Gabon, in the 1962 Code, the reference to language appears only in Article 69 relating to the drafting of the collective agreement.⁴⁷ For their part, Cameroonian lawmakers have not moved away from the original model if we disregard the place given to English in the Anglophone part. We might even note that in some respects they went further than the lawmakers in 1952. On several occasions, the code stresses the requirement to know how to express oneself in French. This is the case of several provisions of the Labour Code which illustrate this requirement. This is particularly the case in article 15-f, which prohibits the election of a president, secretary or treasurer of a trade union who cannot read or write French or English.⁴⁸ Article 12362 provides that only voters who are fluent in French or English may be eligible as union representatives. The same conditions must be met to sit as an assessor on a labour tribunal under section 135-1 of the Labour Code.

What about the choice made in Cameroon as in Gabon?

We might be surprised at the obscuring of national languages in the regulation of labour relations. Yet this situation is not surprising, strictly speaking. Labour law has mostly developed in an urbanised environment with literacy levels of employees well above national averages. As a result, the pre-eminence of official languages poses no particular difficulties. In a country like Gabon, where French is ultimately the language of communication between speakers of different national languages, it is even a solution that is unanimous among workers. In "white man's work",⁴⁹ as salaried work is called, it is normal that it is the white man's language which is also the reference. But what happens when we find ourselves in a country with two languages of the white man? This is the situation in Cameroon.

⁴⁷The collective agreement must be written in French, liable to nullity.

⁴⁸ We see here that the candidate for a term as deputy is not subject to such requirements.

⁴⁹ G. Rossatanga-Rignault, *Le travail du blanc ne finit jamais, L'Africain, le temps et le travail moderne [The work of the white man is never finished, The African, time, and modern work]*, Editions Raponda – Walker (Libreville) - Dianoïa, (Chennevières-sur-Marne), 2007.

II. Complicated links within official languages: Issues related to official bilingualism

The English and French presences were to mark Cameroon in its language and its law. This would lead to the adoption of English and French as official languages of equal value and a legal system straddling the Anglo-Saxon and Romano-Germanic systems. It is true that since the referendum of 20 May 1972, which ended the federal state and marked the advent of a unitary state, the issue of bilingualism should be less acute. Yet, this is not the case. The Cameroonian situation highlights two particularly interesting points related to the coexistence of two official languages. The first refers to switching from one language to another, which places us at the very centre of the problematic of translation when we are concerned with the etymology of this term. How do we go from English to French in Cameroonian labour law, knowing that each language carries different legal traditions within it? Beyond this first point is the question of the effectiveness of this bilingualism. In this respect, we should note that despite proclamations of use in practice, French eventually imposed itself on English and thus marked the domination of French-inspired law.

A. The Complexity related to bilingualism and bilingualism

Official bilingualism or multilingualism is a fairly widespread situation throughout the world. On the African continent, South Africa provides an excellent illustration with a dozen national languages.⁵⁰ In the case of Cameroon, we are not only faced with a bilingualism, but also with a bilingualism which has not left its mark, especially since 1972 and reunification. The English and French presence has indeed marked Cameroon in its language and law. This double dominance led to the adoption of English and French as official languages of equal value, and a legal system straddling the Anglo-Saxon and Romano-Germanic models. The construction of labour law appears very original in this context. While Cameroonian lawmakers have relied heavily on solutions inherited from France in terms of individual labour relations, the same is not true for collective relations. In the 1967 Labour Code, for example, solutions relating to the organisation of trade unions and to the duties of labour inspectors are English in origin. However, how will the effectiveness and

⁵⁰ E. Jayme, “Rapport général : Langue et droit [General Report : Language and Law]”, in E. Jayme, *Langue et droit [Language and Law]*, XVth Congress on Comparative Law, Bruylant, Brussels, 1999, p. 13.

efficiency of a standard be guaranteed in the same country in switching from one language to another? For a standard to be effective⁵¹ and efficient, the litigant must first appropriate it.

Although the principle of translation of legal texts written in French and English has long been established, the difficulties of translating legal texts remain. Indeed, legal translation is a "perilous" undertaking, the difficulty of which is all the greater because it involves not only switching from one language to the other, but also the transposition of the message of one system to another. Legal language conveys concepts, notions that are marked by the socio-cultural and sociolinguistic realities of the environment that presided over their emergence. The concepts are then attached to a tradition, a culture or even a system which very often has no equivalent in other languages. The Italian comparative jurist Rodolfo Sacco puts it well in these terms: "The real difficulties of translation are due [...] to the fact that the relationship between word and concept is not the same in all legal languages."⁵² The Canadian judge Pierre Viau expresses the same idea when he writes: "Two languages first mean two styles, in terms of writing at least [...] The same ideas are not concealed in the same way behind words whose meaning and scope are sometimes difficult to pinpoint."⁵³

This difficulty is apparent in the work of comparatists. When they present a system of foreign law, some are reluctant to propose an equivalent for the concept analysed for the sake of precision. As Sacco once again points out, "The concepts created, developed, defined by the lawmakers or the jurists of a given system do not necessarily correspond to the concepts developed for another system. It is thus difficult to find the

⁵¹ J. Carbonnier, "Effectivité et ineffectivité de la règle de droit [Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness in the Rule of Law]", *L'année sociologique*, 1958, p. 3 and following. ; (under the direction of) G. Cornu, *Vocabulaire juridique [Legal Vocabulary]*, Association Henri Capitant, PUF (Coll. Quadrige), 7th ed., 2005, p. 335 ; A. Jeammaud, "Le concept d'effectivité du droit [The Concept of effectiveness of law]", in (under the direction of) P. Auvergnon, *L'effectivité du droit du travail : à quelles conditions [The Effectiveness of labor law : on what conditions] ?*, Actes du séminaire international de droit comparé du travail, des relations professionnelles et de la sécurité sociale [Proceedings of the international seminar on comparative labor law, professional relations and social security], COMPRATSEC, Bordeaux, 2006, p. 33 and following.

⁵² R. Sacco, "La traduction juridique. Un point de vue italien [Legal Translation: An Italian perspective]", *Cahiers de droit*, Québec, 1987, p. 850.

⁵³ P. Viau, "Quelques considérations sur la langue, le droit, le bilinguisme et le bijuridisme au Canada [Some considerations on language, law, bilingualism and bilinguism in Canada]", in E. Jayme, *op. cit.* p. 143.

French word to express agent, estoppel, executor, etc."⁵⁴ The translator must take account of this particularity of the legal text. Just as he must know that each subset of the vast body of legal disciplines possesses its code, its norms, and that every type of text it produces corresponds to particular linguistic imperatives or "constraints"⁵⁵: a criminal law text is not a labour law text!

Therefore, the task of the translator does not concern the semantic content of the text, but goes beyond that, since it cannot be limited to a literal translation.⁵⁶ For a standard to be effective and efficient, not only must the consistency of the text be ensured but the standard must be intelligible in a foreign language. Should we then agree with Michel Moreau, that "[legal] translation is in fact impossible, so long as conceptual, functional and sociological divisions appear irreducible."⁵⁷ In a bilingual environment, another question arises which Yannick Serge Nkoulou also raises, that is, interpretation. For this Cameroonian jurist,

two operations are necessary to ensure the uniform application of the law. The first of these operations is interpretation which depends necessarily on the judge, while the second, which is translation, must be performed by the lawmaker. That said, there is a fundamental difference between the two mechanisms, although they both allow us to rediscover the meaning of a text. While translation is a technical operation, interpretation is a purely legal operation.⁵⁸

The methods of interpretation are not the same depending on the language chosen. Thus, for Pigeon, "The English legislative style

⁵⁴ R. Sacco, "Langue et droit [Language and Law]", in (under the direction of) R. Sacco, L. Castellani, "Les multiples langues du droit européen uniforme", L'Harmattan Italia, 1999.

⁵⁵ J.-C. Gemar, "Les enjeux de la traduction juridique. Principes et nuances [Issues of Legal Translation. Principles and nuances]" Professor Ecole de traduction et d'interprétation, Université de Genève.

⁵⁶ F. Terré, "Brèves notes sur les problèmes de la traduction juridique [Brief notes on problems of legal translation]", *RIDC* n° 2-1986, p. 347 and following.

⁵⁷ Excerpt from "L'avenir de la traduction juridique [The Future of Legal Translation]" in Gérard Snow and J.Vanderlinden [ed.]: *Français juridique et science du droit [Legal French and the Science of Law]*, Brussels, Bruylant, 1995, p. 270.

⁵⁸ Y.-S. Nkoulou, "Langue et Droit au Cameroun. Linéaments de la problématique de l'unification du droit dans un contexte bilingue [Language and Law in Cameroon. Lineaments of the problem of the unification of law in a bilingual context]", *Revue Internationale de droit comparé [International Review of Comparative Law]*, n° 3, p. 715.

subordinates all other considerations to the quest for precision. We try to say everything, to define everything, to presuppose nothing, never to presume the intelligence of the reader."⁵⁹ Conversely, for the same author: "In the French style, which is unfortunately tending to disappear in France because legislation is much more by decree than by law, the search for conciliation is of paramount importance. We try to find the precise word, to formulate a general rule instead of stating multiples applications."⁶⁰

In the end, legal bilingualism can be a source of hybridisation of the law and it is often what we think about when it is mentioned. However, it may also be a factor of bifurcation of the law, which is not necessarily the objective pursued by public authorities. Thus, in Cameroon, bilingualism leads in fact to the construction of hermetic groups. Decisions handed down in a jurisdiction are almost never translated, which raises the risk of the persistence of rights attached to regions, whereas unification is the final objective. In addition, legal bilingualism is integral and often difficult to maintain, with one language taking precedence over another. This is what we will observe in Cameroon with cohabitation between English and French which in fact ends in the domination of one language over the other.

B. De facto primacy of civil law over Common Law

Although Cameroon was characterised by the coexistence of a civil law system inspired by France and an Anglo-Saxon Common Law system at the time of independence, it is no longer the case today – far from it. The 1972 referendum, with its unifying discourse, had the effect of altering both the relationship between the English-inspired and French-inspired law, and between the country's two official languages. More than forty years later, English is clearly in constant retreat in the face of French. Thus, Cameroon is not Canada with its bilingualism that Emmanuel Didier describes,⁶¹ but rather we are seeing a hierarchy between French and English.

Since reunification, illustrations of the loss of influence of Common Law are numerous. In observing the Cameroonian legal order, we note that Common Law governs only the educational and judicial systems in the

⁵⁹ L.-P. Pigeon, *Rédaction et interprétation des lois [Drafting and Interpretation of Laws]*, Government of Quebec, 1965, 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ E. Didier, "La traduction juridique en Europe. État et perspectives de la Common Law en Europe et du droit civil en anglais. [Legal Translation in Europe. State and perspectives of Common Law in Europe and of civil law in English]".

English-speaking provinces. Throughout the country, administrative law or labour law of concern to us here comes from civil law. In addition, all laws are designed and developed in French and inspired by the corresponding law. This supremacy of the French language and of civil law will even more profoundly affect legal translation.

In labour law, this movement is even older. Since independence in 1960, Cameroon has embarked on a vast movement of legislative unification which has led to the loss of common law rules. As one author observes, it has proved "irrelevant in some areas to use the rule of precedent in use in the former West Cameroon (Anglo-Saxon system)"⁶² in some matters such as land and labour law. Moreover, the labour codes successively adopted in Cameroon⁶³ have essentially maintained the framework constructed around the contract largely covered by contract law as organised by the Overseas Labour Code of 1952. A very negligible place has been granted to law inspired by Common Law in effect in the former West Cameroon.

Sometimes laws are promulgated only in French, such as the 2007 Finance Act, the English translation of which was not available until two weeks after its promulgation. Moreover, there are many errors: the draft law of 14 December 2011 establishing the Special Criminal Court was submitted to Parliament in two different versions before being withdrawn by the Presidency for rectification, as the French version did not have the same content as the English text. However, these issues of divergence between concepts related to the linguistic diversity of texts are not often the focus of public debate, contrary to what is observed, for example, before the European Union Court of Justice. This is what led Nkoulou to evoke a linguistic apartheid.⁶⁴ He argues that there is clearly an inferiority of the English texts. This situation is legitimised by the Constitution of Cameroon itself: "Not only did the Constitution not expressly proclaim this equipollence between the two official languages, but it contained

⁶² The Anglo-Saxon system is fundamentally characterised by the fact that the law is built on decisions made to resolve particular cases submitted to the judge. To avoid the legal uncertainty which such a system may generate, the solution of the so-called precedent rule was adopted. This imposes on the judge the obligation to abide by the rules laid down by his predecessors, with regard to analogous cases. See J.M. Tchakoua, *Introduction générale au droit camerounais [General Introduction to Cameroonian Law]*, Presses de l'UCAC, 2008, pp. 16-17.

⁶³ Reforms during the years of independence with the 1967 codes (Law n°67/NF/06 of 12 June 1967) and 1974 (Law n°74/14 of 27 November 1974), and the code of 1992 (law n° 92/007 of 14 August 1992).

⁶⁴ Y.S. Nkoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 710.

within itself a provision that raised French to the rank of dominant language. In case of divergence between the two versions of the text, Article 59 of the Federal Constitution provided that the French version should prevail."⁶⁵ In practice, provisions that promote bilingualism are rarely respected, as can be seen in practice in the courts. While bilingualism should be the rule in Cameroonian jurisprudence, this is not the case in practice. Yet texts do exist. This is the case in particular with Circular No. 001 / CAB / PM of 16 August 1991 on the practice of bilingualism in public and parapublic administration, which provides in Article 6: "Judgments handed down by the courts and, in particular, Supreme Court decisions, must be made available to the public as soon as possible in both official languages, especially where the point of law raised is of obvious importance or interest to users." As Nkoulou's notes explain once again, failure to comply with this provision is primarily since decisions of the Cameroonian courts are rarely published.

It is therefore not surprising that in this context, litigants – especially Anglophones – complain about discriminatory practices. In 2003, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights had to rule on this in the case of Kevin Ngwang Gumne v. the State of Cameroon, where the plaintiff accused the Cameroonian government of developing discriminatory practices against the people of the Northwest in the legal and judicial field with membership in the OHADA [Organisation of the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa] whose working language is French.⁶⁶ Generally, all international conventions should be translated into both languages, but the strong tendency is to keep the French versions. If by chance a translation is attempted in English, it is sometimes completed, according to corroborating accounts, by translators with little experience in the profession and who do not consider situations of institutional bilingualism and bilingalism.

III. Is the negation of national languages tenable?

As we have already shown, the question of the relationship between modern law and endogenous norms is not expressed in the same terms in labour law as in branches such as civil law, for example. Nevertheless, despite the specific nature of labour law, the issue of the place of national languages cannot be radically excluded. Indeed, it is important to consider

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 704.

⁶⁶ *African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights*, 26th Activity report, pp. 100-189.

it if we are concerned with the ultimate purpose of a standard, namely its application.

From this perspective, the question that must be asked is not the place occupied by languages introduced by the colonisers, and which have become official languages in labour law in Cameroon and Gabon, but rather understanding and acceptance of standards issued in these languages in these two countries. This problem is not specific to Cameroon and Gabon for reasons related in large part to the particularism of legal language.

A. Consideration of the situation of the audience

The relationship between language and law should not only be viewed in terms of the untranslatability of the law. This question is often overstated and ends up obscuring the fact that when man comes into contact with his fellow man, there is always the question of translatability and comprehension even among speakers of the same idiom. However, two pitfalls are to be avoided in this situation. The first is to declare total untranslatability, which makes communication impossible. The second is the temptation of the universal and any equivalent. Based on this double difficulty, we must start to consider the relationship between language and law from the viewpoint of the audience who are the users of the law.

We should remember that legal discourse is produced by an elite with its practices and references and having a perfect command of official languages. The issue of translation does not arise for this elite. But what about the overwhelming majority of the population who in fact navigate in an "in between" two languages using skilfully thought-out strategies? The first step is the adoption of the discourse of the dominant elite. Thus, in Gabon, few workers will admit that they do not understand French. However, the social context in which these people live makes them unable to fully think of the law as the elites. Then the often-hidden issue of legal pluralism arises. For example, when considering penalties in labour law or the exercise of certain rights, employees will in fact depart from the models contained in legislation. It is in this context that we see the need for work on languages. There is no question of calling for any translation of labour codes, which would not be of much use. What should be encouraged is work on dissemination or popularisation as seen in other sectors. In the case of Gabon, for example, the major decisions or awareness-raising campaigns are disseminated in the public media in the various national languages. Of course, it is difficult to measure the audience for this communication and especially its effectiveness.

However, it is nevertheless true that they are seeing a desire to make comprehensible what is enacted in French is not always within the reach of the average citizen.

In the context of labour relations, and despite what is asserted by most workers, we should never discount the linguistic risk. For Jayme, "This question concerns the situation where one of the parties does not understand the language used during negotiations or the language in which the contract document is drafted."⁶⁷ Here, we need to distinguish the main obligations of the labour contract contained in Articles 18 of the Gabonese Code⁶⁸ and 23-1 of the Cameroonian Code,⁶⁹ which are generally well understood by the overwhelming majority of workers, and secondary obligations or derivatives that are constantly multiplying. It is then that we find ourselves in a situation where the employee is completely in agreement with the employment contract, but with references that are not those of labour law. Let's take the example of excused absences.

Collective agreements exist on personal leave of variable duration when events related to the employee's private life occur. This is in the case of marriage, or the death of a father, mother, spouse or child. However, these terms are subject to multiple interpretations. With respect to marriage, is it only civil marriage that is the only form recognised by Cameroonian and Gabonese laws? The same applies to members of the family. Should the term spouse be considered exclusively in its legal sense? What about the domestic partner or companion? Children raise even more difficulties. While social security law does not distinguish between illegitimate, legitimate or adopted children, labour law seems to have a more restrictive view of the employee's child, which does not correspond at all to Gabonese or Cameroonian cultural references.

The linguistic risk also arises in the application of provisions of the Labour Code relating to workplace health and safety. This situation is not the prerogative of Cameroon and Gabon. We also find the problem in a country like France that often serves as a model and where there is only one language. It is made even more complex in the context of globalisation with the multiplication of standards and the use of a

⁶⁷ E. Jayme, "Rapport général: Langue et droit [General Report: Language and Law]", op. cit. p. 22.

⁶⁸ "The individual employment contract is an agreement whereby a person agrees to place his professional activity under the direction and authority of another person who is required to pay him remunerate in return".

⁶⁹ "The employment contract is an agreement whereby a worker agrees to place his professional activity under the direction and authority of an employer in exchange for remuneration".

multiplicity of languages. Safety standards are already part of a technical and sophisticated language that is not within the reach of all.

Given the existence of this linguistic risk, should measures not be considered to ensure the weakest part of the employment contract? This is being done, for example, with consumer law with this specific protection for the consumer. In labour law, we might very well imagine that for the most complex questions, an effort at translation, if not explanation, should be undertaken for the workers' benefit. However, it is not enough for national languages to become official languages to improve the situation. Real reflection towards a true appropriation of labour law by stakeholders is necessary in both Cameroon and Gabon.

B. Redefining labour law

Although there is no dispute over the fact that labour law was introduced by the coloniser, more than a century later this law is part of the realities of Cameroon and Gabon. It is therefore important for lawmakers in these countries, and lawyers in those same environments, to think of their own law, departing when necessary from the original matrix. This approach requires both a thorough knowledge of the law as such, but also the national languages and the concepts in use outside the modern framework.

Knowledge of law and the history of law is a way of avoiding the temptation of legal mimetism. At present, and regardless of the country in the world, there is a re-examination of labour law. Some fight for its limitation for lack of its disappearance. This is clearly illustrated by the debates we have been seeing for over more than a quarter of a century on the flexibilization or deregulation of labour law. How have these debates been received in Gabon or Cameroon? Without being directly at the centre of the relationship between law and language, the fact remains that these controversies carry worldviews that originate in the countries of the North. Is the solution for the Cameroonian and Gabonese lawyers to yield once again to the ease of mimetism, or, on the contrary, to participate actively in these discussions? But to be able to do so, one must rely on one's own society, the reality of which is not the same as in France, for example, despite the language that we may have in common.

It is then that the demand for the use of national languages is felt. By always relying on the example of labour law, discussion should focus both on Gabon and Cameroon on the subject of labour. Even in a language like English, we see for example that the word *work* can designate either *work* or *labour*. These two terms however, do not necessarily refer to the same

reality and have different dynamics. This goes for the law itself which can refer to a *law* or *right*.

What is true for labour will also be true for the different elements of this relationship. Should we continue to proclaim the uniqueness of labour law in a world where the modes of execution of the employment contract are changing at an impressive rate? In the social realities of Cameroon and Gabon, this diversity has long existed. However, they have often been drowned in categories with fuzzy outlines. During the colonial period, the concept of customary work was largely used without actually knowing what it meant.⁷⁰ It was simply a matter of excluding the dominant model which was subordinate wage labour. Subsequently, it was the same with informal work which is also defined as being anything that is not formal.

In this process of redefining labour law, Cameroonian and Gabonese lawyers could draw inspiration from what has been done by the ILO. This important international organisation, established in 1919, which focuses primarily on wage labour, eventually expanded its area of influence to deal with the issue of employment. Starting from the national languages of Gabon and Cameroon, there would certainly be a way to expand the discussion on labour law in these countries. Moreover, such an initiative would have the virtue of allowing stakeholders in labour relations to better identify with standards that consider their realities and cultural references.

The issue of the relationship between language and law inevitably brings us back to the question of the construction of norms that take root in African environments. This process is not always easy because of the influence of mimetism in the past. Yet, daily, the influence of national languages is not denied, even going so far as to influence the French or the English that is spoken. In the end, should we not also consider a law that would be based in part on this new language that is integral to society and which especially makes sense for it?

⁷⁰ Jean-Claude Pauvert, “La notion africaine du travail (en A.E.F) [The African concept of labor (in French Equatorial Africa)]”, *Présence Africaine*, n° 13, 1952.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

ILLUSTRATING THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSLATION AND THE QUESTION OF EPISTEMIC JUSTICE THROUGH THE TRANSLATION PROJECT ON THADDEUS METZ INTO THE IGBO LANGUAGE OF NIGERIA

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I. Justification for the Study

A number of scholars have provided important positions on ideas, language and worldview which are relevant justification for this chapter. Apart from the relevance of their arguments on the need to defend the concept of epistemic justice, their views also illustrate why it should be done in relation to the translation project. According to W. V. O. Quine, language and concepts place the human mind on a particular platform where words can be seen to be but a prism. According to Quine (cited in Ozumba 1996:57):

Our capacity to refer to what we believe the world to contain, and our capacity to state that we believe to be true is both necessarily mediated by the concepts, in language we employ. It is this, which sustains the powerful image of our language as a conceptual prism.

The implication of Quine's position is that language is the route to meaning and that one item can achieve various meanings in different linguistic contexts and thus lead to varied worldviews. For instance, words such as justice, truth, love, even as they may seem to convey similar normative desires in different cultures, may indeed have complex implications, such that they harbour certain micro-principles that add to

establish their meanings. It is often these ultra- or micro-principles, applied to intuit meanings in one direction or the other, which to a large extent explains why these concepts vary in emphasis in different cultures in different ways. For instance, while one idea of justice may emphasise justice as fairness, as is the case with John Rawls (1992), another may stress justice as harmony as was the case with Plato, while yet another may emphasise equity as is the case with Amartya Sen (2010). The implication is that reality itself would depend on the dominant meaning a concept attains in a given culture. Thus, it may be right to argue with Chinweizu (2004) that, “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 presenting it”.

The view of the Cameroonian philosopher Bernard Fonlon will perhaps provide a much stronger thesis to illustrate the intricate relationship among language, concepts and worldview. According to Fonlon (1975:81):

Theoretically, the human mind is supposed to think ideas. But as a matter of practical fact, we think in words, and this is to the extent that if we reflect as we are thinking, we can actually hear ourselves thinking in a definite language. This language substitutes itself for ideas in our minds so much so that it becomes the warp and woof of our mental life. Thus, the union that exists between people who share the same language must be very intimate indeed because it creates in them a oneness in that which is the highest and most essential thing in man, namely, the mind.

As with Quine, Fonlon provides the basis for the psychology of sameness that leads to linguistic naturalism and by extension cultural and ethnic nationalism. Given that language is a form of conceptual prism (Quine), that reality is often a package dependent on concepts, and that we think in words (Fonlon), the need to interrogate these and how they play a role in relation to translation becomes urgent and relevant. Translation involves transfer of meaning and thus has the capacity to multiply or subtract meanings, depending on the interest of the translator and the desired impact of the translation. Translation often involves procedures—the translator, the material and the medium, which problematises the idea. As a result, crucial questions often arise from translation, including: What exactly should be known as the outcome of translation? Who constitutes the target audience of translation? For what reason is the translation project carried out? In answering these questions, translation would often lead to choices which amount to politics of knowledge, as Rolando Vazquez (2015) has termed “a process of selection, classification and appropriation” in the knowledge enterprise. Translation would often assume the posture of transformation or, even if not, harbour some wide

meanings and forms which amount to imitation, adaptation, trans-creation, retelling, and rewriting. This, perhaps, explains why Itamar Even-Zohar holds that: "... even the question of what is a translated work cannot be answered a priori in terms of an a-historical out-of-context idealized state..." ("The Position of Translated Literature within the Polysystem," 1990: 51 [available online]).

Having offered a justification for the focus on translation, I will attempt to locate the relevance of such a project within the context of African philosophy. To this end, I will examine the extent to which African philosophical enquiry has applied translation as a method of philosophy and a way of deepening the culture of philosophical enquiry in modern Africa.

II. Meaning/Translation in African Philosophy

The subject of translation has not received adequate emphasis in African philosophy, which we will understand as the distinct enquiry that seeks to provide a philosophical understanding of the worldview harboured by people of African descent as revealed in the norms, values and principles that define and direct their world. Broadly captured, African philosophy can be described as the African understanding of philosophy; that is, the understanding of other people's philosophy made possible through concepts available in the African worldview. How would African concepts and worldview locate the wisdom of non-Africans, either that of the Western tradition—European, American, etc.—or that of the Eastern tradition—Chinese, Indian, Arabian, Japanese, etc.? What are the implications of foreign thoughts and philosophies when rendered through the lens of the African worldview? Studies in African philosophy have often been conducted in English, French, or Portuguese—the colonial languages of Africa—and translation of the works, many of which have passed through several languages other than that of the author and have perhaps been distorted or ignored along the way. The writings of a philosopher such as Aristotle or Plato in Greek, which have been rendered in English after passing through other languages, have often been considered valid enough for African philosophical enquiry, whether they accurately represent the actual positions of these philosophers or not. The work of Immanuel Kant or Martin Heidegger in German, which has been translated into English, has been accepted by African philosophers for their study, research and documentation without an effort to consider the source language.

Moreover, little effort has been made to write works in indigenous African languages or to translate ideas and views that are held by African philosophy but documented in English or French into the African languages whence these ideas and concepts originate. With the exception of the translation of Pauline Hountondji's publication entitled *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1974) from French into English, and a number of other academic articles that have been translated into other international languages, translation has not been seen to be a significant aspect of the African philosophical enquiry. Indeed, the question of engaging the indigenous African as an agent for the documentation of African philosophy has been ignored.

This approach to the discipline is deficient because of the conceptual purity desired and demanded from philosophy. It should be recalled that the German philosopher Heidegger had to learn Greek to interpret the ideas of Greek philosophers properly and apply them to his writings. It is doubtful that many philosophers, especially Africans, have taken such steps to gain access to the world of other thinkers. Indeed, the idea of thinking through the language of the author has not been incorporated into African philosophy as a culture of scholarship. Similarly, the concept of translation that obtains in African philosophy has largely been the idea of interpretation; that is, abstracting the meaning of ideas included in the African worldview to provide an explanation. This effort was pioneered by such scholars as Placid Temples, whose work *Bantu Philosophy* (1956) was an attempt to interpret the worldview of the Baluba people of Congo.

A second idea of interpretation that has obtained in African philosophy has been to identify those considered sages with distinct wisdom in the African setting and to engage them with questions to provide their own interpretations of aspects of the African worldview. These questions would often reflect their answers to such central problems of philosophy as "The Problem of the Ultimate of Reality"; "The Problem of One and Many"; "The Problem of Appearance and Reality"; and "The Issue of Good and Evil" (Oyeshile and Ugwuanyi, 2006). A vivid illustration can be found in *Conversation with Ogotomeli*, which is an attempt to transcribe the interpretation of the worldview of the Dogon people of Mali and Odera Oruka's *Sage Philosophy Project*, an effort to distil sagacious reasoning in Africa by identifying sages in their community and engaging them in discussion of such abstract themes as outlined above.

A third variant of the project of interpretation is held by the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu in what he calls conceptual decolonisation. According to Wiredu (1995:22), conceptual decolonisation means:

Avoiding or reversing through critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought (that is, in the thought of contemporary African philosopher) of the conceptual framework embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had impact on African life.

or:

Exploiting as much as it is judicious the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditation on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy.

Conceptual decolonisation is a form of mental detachment by way of limiting the impact of alien concepts on African life and thought, a way of recognising that although certain items of the African world have been captured through an alien worldview, a basic challenge and duty of African philosophy would be to locate and demarcate the limits of these concepts and to abstract or absorb those that are relevant to the growth of the African mind along the lines of rational independence. According to Wiredu, the superimposition of alien categories on the African thought system has distorted “indigenous thought structure out of all recognitions and that the current cultural crisis in Africa derives from a certain intellectual anomaly in contemporary African experience”.

Given the conceptual distortion of the African mindset, the options remain either to examine these concepts, shading off the “specific culture, environment” in an attempt to arrive at conceptual purity, or to attempt to determine what these concepts stand for in or by themselves prior to their linguistic or cultural absorption. Both of these are implied by conceptual decolonisation. This is why Wiredu suggests that the African philosopher who hopes to achieve conceptual decolonisation should try to reason out whatever philosophical problem he is considering on independent grounds. He implies that one should argue in a manner fathomable in both the African and the foreign languages concerned. His summary thesis is that:

When we learn a new language we also, to a certain extent learn a new philosophy. For the most part, this goes on unconsciously. But it is part of the functions of philosophers to elicit the general conceptions buried under the form and turning of a given language for critical examination. For this, a certain degree of linguistic detachment is obviously needful though not easily attained. (Wiredu 1980:34)

It is this effort at linguistic detachment with the larger aim of achieving conceptual clarity that Wiredu designates as conceptual decolonisation.

Given the nature of the existing concern that translation in African philosophy amounts to mere interpretation, it becomes urgent to introduce the subject of translation in a new way through direct translation of work in African philosophy into an indigenous African language and vice versa in what can be called counter-penetration (Mazrui). This effort of translating a piece of work written in English on the African philosophical worldview into the Igbo language of Nigeria, is a major attempt to render philosophical thought into an indigenous African language. The effort is aimed at fashioning a way for the African world to locate this work and any promises it might have towards epistemic justice; that is, the proper rendering of the ideas in line with the ideals of a worldview.

But what is epistemic justice and why should it serve as a paradigm for evaluating a translation project in African philosophy?

III. The Idea of Epistemic Justice

Epistemic justice implies justice in knowledge delivery—the view that knowledge should be rendered in a manner favourable to the integrity of the intellect and in relation to the worldview that provides the basis for knowledge, which should be independent of any form of external imposition. Epistemic justice demands that concepts and ideas should be faithful to the meaning implied in a given worldview and that ideas should relate adequately to the worldview that gave birth to them.

Knowledge should thus avoid “epistemic violence” (Santos 2006) and seek to achieve cognitive justice both for the knower and the known by avoiding epistemicide (the form of knowledge that kills ideas). Epistemic justice, therefore, seeks to balance three demands of knowledge—the knower, the known and the medium through which knowledge is obtained—and ensures that the relationship between the three is adequately maintained in the knowledge process such that none should be propped up to the detriment of the others.

The need for epistemic justice is based in the politics of knowledge and knowledge consumption, by which we understand that while knowledge serves the primary goal of disclosing truth and providing the basis for social growth and advancement, it can also serve as a commodity or material to advance the imperial ambition of a group. This politics is such that while knowledge is first viewed as a cogent response to the demands of human nature, it is also seen to be a response to human nature as expressed in a particular geo-cultural world. A form of advancement and resistance is thus implied by knowledge acquisition and consumption. Politics of knowledge and knowledge consumption relates to the choices

available to man when intellectual faculties are applied in favour of one type of knowledge as against the other. The politics is such that, since man cannot know everything and is by nature limited, there is a kind of selectivity in how he applies his intellect in his choice for knowledge.

While all forms of knowledge (religious, scientific, spiritual, etc.) are responses to the desires of human nature, knowledge is often designed by a society or social group to respond to the idea of man that has the strongest expression in that social group. Michel Foucault has drawn attention to this in a number of his writings (1972, 2002) where he asserts that subjects are politically constituted through a regime of truth or, a regime of knowledge. According to Foucault, “Truth” is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. “Truth” is linked in a circular relation with the system of power which produces and sustains it, and to the effects of power which it induces, and which extends it. The essence of Foucault’s position is that truth is not a given as much as it is a construction within the structures of power and dominance available to human nature. Thus, while one truth may attain a strong emphasis in one culture, it may remain a suppressed truth in another and be adulterated in yet another, depending on the role it is expected to play in the culture concerned. Thus, part of the reason that one form of knowledge is available in one society while absent in another is not because the society or social system concerned is incapable of attaining such knowledge but because it has not been found valuable within what Foucault has called the “regime of truth” that defines the intellectual universe of the people concerned.

An illustration of the politics of knowledge can be found in the treatise *Bantu Philosophy*, which set out to interpret the worldview of the Baluba people of Congo. This work was published as a philosophical justification of the differences between the worldview of the Baluba and that of the Western world, and as an effort to account for these differences within the realm of philosophy. Tempels’ work opposed the ideals of the colonial administration’s policy in Congo which portrayed the African as “an empty vessel, requiring education in the spheres of religion and civilization in order to be rendered truly human” (Moya Deacon 2002: 103). The provocative and revolutionary nature of his work did not go down well with the colonial authorities in Congo; hence “his banishment from Congo by the Colonial administration and the Catholic-church due to their notions of Tempels as posing a threat to their policies and practices” (Moya Deacon 2002: 110). The intellectual offence, or so it was conceived of Tempels, was that:

If the African was recognized as having a “philosophy”, the African could, by implication, be said to have civilization. This notion presented a threat to the superiority of the European, as justified by Enlightenment philosophy, as well as to the economics of the colonial mission. (Moya Deacon 2002: 110)

Although Tempels wrote primarily to guide the Europeans on how to accomplish their mission in Congo, the fact that he designated the Bantu as a philosophical people, people who had reason and justification for the way they thought and lived, did not endear him to the authorities. Thus, we have a clear case of how and where politics defines the choice for knowledge—the epistemological view of the Bantu as a non-rational people was found necessary because it was deemed crucial to the colonial project. In illustrating the politics of knowledge, we can see that the quest for epistemic justice—that is, the need to ensure that items that make for knowledge, such as facts, concepts, theories, laws and principles, are properly rendered in a manner that defends the integrity of the intellect—is urgent and relevant with a strong reference to translation.

A translation is expected to come from a translator (sender) to the audience (receiver), with the most measurable outcome being the item (message). The sender and receiver are united by the message and both should endeavour to allow the message to direct their relationship. A translation would usually be from a source language to a target language—the target language being the desired language through which the translated idea would be consumed. It is within the context of this target language and the worldview it carries that the desire for epistemic justice is found most valid and would be most validated. Ideas are able to find space in another worldview through translation.

After an illustration of the idea of epistemic justice and how it should be found relevant within the project of translation, we will now evaluate such effort in relation to a particular work in African philosophy— essays on African philosophy by Thaddeus Metz.

IV. Synopsis of Translation and Evaluation within the Demand of Epistemic Justice

In this part of the work, I will provide a brief bio-date of the philosopher in question and justification for the translation project. Professor Thaddeus Metz, an American philosopher, is a research professor of philosophy at the University of Johannesburg where he has published dozens of essays on African philosophy. In 2007, his essay entitled *Toward an African Moral Theory* provoked unusual interest

among the South African philosophy community. The *South African Journal of Philosophy* organised a symposium to discuss and critique the paper. A number of critical reviews have been done on the work, prominent among which is the view that Metz, being American-born and educated and not being competent in any African language in which concepts of the African worldview are deposited, cannot be held to be competent enough to write on African philosophy.

This among other reasons motivated my interest to coordinate a translation of the essays with the approval of the author in 2011. My aim here is to study the translation project to determine whether the philosopher has been able to do justice to the African worldview through which he philosophizes by applying the instance of the Igbo language to discuss the work. To do this, I will provide a synopsis of the translation and attempt to evaluate it within the demands of epistemic justice. I will map out the translations (the English to Igbo translation) and the reverse translation (from Igbo back to English), and then attempt to determine the extent to which it would fit into the Igbo worldview; that is, how or whether it tallies with the Igbo scheme of thought. I will take excerpts from two of the translated essays, namely “Toward an African Moral Theory” (2007). I have applied this article from among eight other articles translated into the Igbo language because it represents a fair insight into articles and summary of other articles which were written to illustrate the author’s notion of African morality. Each of the excerpts will be identified by the letters I, B, and O (I stands for Igbo translation, B stands for Backward translation into English and O stands for the original English version. I shall highlight and apply some shading and asterisks to spot concepts I will analyse to establish my position.

Excerpt 1 (Taken from Article One, Paragraph One)

I (1) *MKPALITE MMUỌ MAKÀ “NNWETA ATỤTỤ AGWA ỌMA N’ECHICHE NDI AFRIKA”*

Ụmị

N’ebe a, ana m akpólite isi okwu ọgbako mmụta nke South African Journal of Philosophy nke gbadobere ụkwụ n’ìtùcha atìkùl nchọcha m bụ “Nnweta Atụtụ Agwa ọma N’echiche Ndi Afrika. N’atìkùl nchọcha ahụ**, agbasoro m usoro nkọwami filọsọfì agwa ọma iji kpokọta ma kwado atụtụ agwa ọma na nghọta nke ndị Afrika bi na Ndiida-Sahara ma diwapụ iche n’atụtụ filọsọfì nwere agba na nkwenye nke ndị ọdịda Anyanwụ.*

B (1) Chapter One: Awakening the Spirit on Morality (Good Behaviour) in African Thought
The Heart

Here I raise the issue concerning the *South African Journal of Philosophy's* forum in my article on “Articulating Properly the Pattern of Moral Philosophy to Explain the Moral Thinking of Africans”. I followed the pattern of moral philosophy to explain the moral thinking of sub-Saharan Africans and its divergences with that of the Western world.

O (1) Article One: The Motivation for “Toward an African Moral Theory”
Abstract

Here, I introduce the symposium issue of the *South African Journal of Philosophy* devoted to critically analysing my article “Toward an African Moral Theory” in which I use the techniques of analytic moral philosophy to articulate and defend a moral theory that is grounded both on the values of peoples living in sub-Saharan Africa and differs from what is influential in contemporary Western ethics. I not only present a *précis* of the article, but I also provide a sketch of why I have undertaken the project, what I hope it will help achieve, and how the contributors to the symposium principally question it.

Excerpt II (Taken from Article One, Paragraph Two)

I (2) *Ana m ekele nnoḡ ndi ohazi South African Journal of Philosophy maka ituputa aro maka inwe ogbakḡ mmuta nke isi okwu ya gbadobere ukwu na “Nnweta Atutu Agwa oma n'Echemeche Ndi Afrika.” nke (2007) Ma gbaa mbḡ hu na nke a mezuru. Iji malite, ḡ bughḡ naani na m chikotara ya bu atikul, akḡwakwara m mkpatara m ji wee bagide uḡi nchocha m mere ebe ahḡ, ihe m turu anya na a ga-erita na ajuju ndi okacha mara n'ogbakḡ a ga-aju gbasara ya.*

B (2) I thank the board of the *South African Journal of Philosophy* for thinking out the need for a forum based on my article “Articulating Properly the Moral Thinking of Africans.” (2007). To begin with, I did not merely write the piece, I explained my source of inspiration and what I think will be gained through a scholarly gathering on this piece.

O (2) I am deeply grateful to the editors of the *South African Journal of Philosophy* for suggesting the idea of a symposium devoted to “Toward an African Moral Theory” (2007) and for making it happen. To start things off, I present not only a *précis* of this article, as is customary, but also a sketch of why I have undertaken the sort of project begun, what I hope it will help to achieve, and how the contributors to this symposium principally question it.

Excerpt III (Taken from Article One, Paragraph Six)

I (3) *llu a na-ekwu, “M bu n'ih na anyi bu”***, bu ilu ozo na-akḡwa obubu mmadu nke na-adikwaghḡ aka ḡ na-enye ikapi echiche ya onu. ozo kwa, isi na mmadu putara obubu mmadu ma ḡ bu ikpa ezi agwa enyeghi aka n'ih na m chorḡ ima ihe bu ibu mmadu ma ḡ bu agwa oma n'onodu a.*

ozo kwa, o dighi aka o na-enye isi m na mmadu bu anyi kariya onwe n'ihi na o nwere otutu ebe mmadu nwere ike ime ihe di ajaa maka anyi nke ufodu n'ime ha gunyere ikagbu ikpe onwu a mara mmadu ma o bu inye mmadu opipija tara akpu. N'ikpe-azu, o gaghi enyekwara m aka n'uju iguputara m njirimara mmadu, d.k. mgbasa aka, oma iko, obi mgbaghara, mwere onodu onyeozo, inye ugwu na nsopuru, idi ogo, nhamha, obi nwa nne, idi mbarasa, inye onye orubere ya, inwe mmuo njiko na ndinotu. Njirimara ndi a, di ka ha si wee kwuru, edoghi anya; ma n'aka nkeozo, ha nwere ike inwe mgbagha echiche. omuma atu, Ekwesiri m imere onye mmegbu ka o bu onye e megburu emegbu ebere? Olee oke m nwere ike imeru ebere ebe a si na m kwesiri inye mmadu nsopuru, ihu na mmekorjita mmadu na ibe ya abughi n'onu, nakwa ikwalite mmuo anyi anyi?

B (3) The maxim, “I am because we are”, is another maxim that claims to have meaning by itself, but which can raise confusion. Another is the saying that a human being is now a person or recommending good conduct – this is not much relevant because I want to know precisely what these statements mean or imply. Again, it does not say that being communal is better than being individual. There are times someone may perform such acts such as committing death sentences or giving someone some terrible punishment for the sake of the community. In the same vein it will be difficult to itemize the dos and don'ts of people such as kindness, generosity, forgiveness, respect, brotherliness, equality, compassion, etc. These examples in a peculiar way demand further thinking. Should I be kind to the oppressed or to the oppressor? How do I express kindness to others since this is a rational demand and is relevant for the practical expression of communal spirit? How would I carry out such a duty to protect the ethics of brotherhood and communalism?

O (3) The phrase “I am because we are”, another maxim that is often presented as capturing ubuntu, is equally unhelpful. Neither would it be of much use to be told that the word “ubuntu” means humanness or morality, for I want to know exactly how to be human or moral in this instance. It would also not be particularly helpful to be told that ubuntu is communitarian as opposed to individualistic, for there are many different respects in which I could act for the sake of community, some of which involve suspending a sentence and some of which involve imposing a harsh penalty. Finally, it also would not sufficiently assist me to be given a list of the particular values often associated with ubuntu, e.g., generosity, compassion, forgiveness, empathy, respect, dignity, equality, brotherhood, humanism, equal consideration, spirit of oneness, and unity. These values, as they stand, are vague and, furthermore, can appear contradictory. For instance, am I to be compassionate with regard to the victim or the offender? To what degree am I to be compassionate in the light of additional prescriptions to be respectful, to treat people as equals and to promote a sense of community?

I (4) *N'akwukwo agumagu ezi ihe na nsirihu Afrika****, a na-enweta naani ntakiri nchocha n'ihe gbasara atutu toro ato*****, nchikota na*

nkwado iwu zuru ezuru nke nzube ya bu ikowa ihe jikoro agwa oma onu nke mere ka ha di iche site n'agwa ojof. "Ezi ihe n'echere ndi Afrika" putara ihe bu omume oma ndi e jiri mara ndi isi ojii na na ndi na-asu asusu Bantu ndi bi na ndida ozara Sahara nke Ala Afrika; nke a gupuru d.k. ndi Alakuba Arab ndi Mgbago Ugwu Afrika na ndi isi ocha na-asu Afrikaan na n'obodo South Africa. Ngalaba omumu a enweghi ntu nke na-akowa udi omume a nke e nwere ike iji tunyere atutu nke ala Bekee di ka atutu mpako onwe nke Hobbes, atutu nke na-akowa na ezi omume bu nke na-ewetakari anuli n'oha obodo nke Benthamine ma o bu atutu nsopuru mmadu nke Kant. Inye aka weta udi atutu a bu eburnuche m na nchocha a.

B (4) In the literature of morality in Africa, there is but a scanty work that explains properly what unites morality and makes them differ from actions that are considered otherwise. What is considered to be good is found to be common in black Africa and the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa, excluding North Africans and the white South Africans. The world of learning (research) does not have explanations for these comparable to the provisions of Hobbesian ethics, those of Jeremy Bentham or Kant. My ambition in this work is to provide something of this nature.

O (4) In the literature on African ethics, one finds relatively little that consists of normative theory, the articulation and justification of a comprehensive, basic norm that is intended to account for what all morally right actions have in common as distinct from wrong actions. By "African ethics", I mean values associated with the largely black and Bantu-speaking people residing in the sub-Saharan part of the continent, thereby excluding, e.g., Islamic Arabs in North Africa and white Afrikaners in South Africa. The field lacks particular duties and is informed by such values and that could be compared to dominant Western theories such as Hobbesian egoism, Benthamite utilitarianism or Kantian respect for persons. Helping to develop such a principle is what I aim to do in this article.

In evaluating this excerpt to illustrate the extent to which it respects the ethics of epistemic justice, I apply an understanding of the nature of the Igbo worldview and language, both of which I consider myself competent in, Igbo being my mother tongue and having obtained a college certificate in the language. The Igbos would normally garnish their thoughts intermittently with proverbs as a result of which they have a popular saying that proverbs are the palm kernel with which words are eaten. Secondly, the level of rigorous abstraction that is encouraged by Western thought is not characteristic of traditional Igbo thought because truth is not a deliberate construction, as this would imply only that which is visible to the eye. To a large extent, it could be held to be the case because "truth among the Igbo is not construed in a cognitive sense only" (Opatá 1998:84) but has a strong moral imperative for which the Igbos have the

proverb that “truth is life” (*Eziokwu bu du*). Thus, how to make the quest for truth which is the essence of philosophy a moral event beyond a cognitive one may well be one of the virtues that can be abstracted from the Igbo worldview.

Applying these principles, it would be seen that whereas the author did well to articulate the moral grounding of African morality, the Igbo rendition of the work reveals that the work has a strong Western feature of philosophy—rigorous and abstract, and to this extent would only appeal to a Westernised audience rather than to an Igbo audience. Someone who has done his entire learning in Igbo language and wanted to engage the work at a philosophical level would likely need some form of orientation and attitude to be able to do so.

For some illustrations, the concept *atukul nnchocha* I [1] which is applied to capture the word article would appear to be alien to an Igbo audience. If the word were coming from the Igbo word it would just have meant or applied as *nnchocha* (which could mean “to examine”, “to look at”...). Perhaps concepts like *nghota ya* or *nkowaya ya* which translates to “the understanding of” and links or relates theory to mind might have best been applied and would have best fitted. Similarly, the phrase “*M bu n’ihi na anyi bu*” I (3) translated “I am because we are” can neither be held to be Igbo nor philosophical. It is a clear invention of the translation to attempt to accommodate a concept that seems to have been inducted from an alien worldview and is seeking to gain a place in Igbo thought, where concepts like “*anyi*” would rather serve the meaning or provide the equivalent. On another note, the concept *Nsirihu* I (4) applied to stand for the Igbo equivalent of theory is considerably weak and odd. It literally means “the way I see it” and would require an advanced growth in Igbo philology to admit the term. Assuming that the work was done originally in Igbo, the word *ncheputa* (the thought) would be more valued and applied. This is because the word links theory to thought rather than to sight. Another example is the application of the concept of *atutu toro ato* for normative theory—*atutu* means suggestion or view, suggesting more speech or thought. In the ordinary Igbo use of the term, norm has to do with action or behaviour, and the word *usoro* (literally translating to pattern or way of doing things) would have been preferred.

In light of the above, I submit that there are still more demands for epistemic justice in this translation, especially for the reading Igbo community. I do not want to simply dump this challenge on the translator since he has to be faithful to the work or the author who wrote in a manner favourable to his mother tongue which is the English language. I rather wish to apply this to illustrate the challenge of epistemic justice in

translation as it relates to African philosophical thought. Indeed, I apply the example to illustrate that the translation draws us to the need to begin to think of how to advance a culture of philosophizing in African indigenous languages, whereby and through which there would be conceptual growth and advancement which are crucial to the advancement of the African imagination. It is by such effort that overall growth in quality of the mind can be realised. Reading and writing in alien languages may be nothing less than alienating the African worldview since thinking in foreign languages amounts to thinking foreign about the item, to paraphrase the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

However, there are enormous gains in the work of the author who has provoked this effort and led to this experiment. The translation motivates and demands an Igbo critique of the work through the provisions of the Igbo worldview and calls for more critiques of the work. These critiques can then be published in Igbo and perhaps translated back into English to generate the basis for more dialogue around the work. This very culture of criticism and debate would then infuse a culture of debate and dialogue, an important item that African philosophical inquiry sorely needs to grow into African thought. Even more, it can provide motivation for another translation of a major philosophical work into another African language, and lead to a comparison of the meaning in another African language. The gain is that it should lead to what I prefer to call the need for conceptual Africanisation.

By conceptual Africanisation, I mean the need to attempt to provide a different reading of the works in as many indigenous languages of Africa as possible and for a conceptual dialogue on these works to provide more valuable insights for what can lead to conceptual evolution in Africa for more conceptual autonomy. As L. O. Ugwuanyi (2010) puts it:

Conceptual Africanization implies building concepts from indigenous African worldview to promote greater cohesion and understanding in Africa by applying African concepts to engage ideas that are found relevant or otherwise within the context of African modernity. It is a conceptual dialogue that comes about when two or more cultural units of Africa contrast their ideas and concepts, by highlighting their similarities and differences with the view to providing the basis for self-understanding in Africa and exploring the basis for a better alternative in the construction of epistemological modernity in Africa, itself the basis for the evolution of modernity that would be more secure for Africans. (See "A Dilemma of African Modernity and a Theoretical Response" e-published <http://cea.iscte.pt/ciea7/>)

Let there be an Igbo interpretation of Descartes, a Wolof interpretation of Descartes, and Shona interpretation of Descartes, and let these interpretations dialogue among themselves and provide a basis for the evolution of more works that would direct African philosophy. By critiquing these readings and translations, a literature can emerge which will direct the African mind and lead to a higher quality of self-understanding that will be characterised as contemporary African philosophy. Among other benefits, this will minimise Africa's dependence on alien concepts to interpret their worlds, provide the basis for a more mutual appreciation of their humanity, and perhaps resolve many challenges of Africa since "what happens to a people happens to them in their minds" (B. O. Eboh, 1993). Africa's problem may first be resolved at this level.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the challenges of epistemic justice in translation by applying the instance of a translation project on essays on African philosophy by Thaddeus Metz (2011). These essays of over 100,000 words were translated into the Igbo language of Nigeria. To do this, this chapter has provided a justification for the study and tried to situate the work within translation as demanded in African philosophy. The work then provided a synopsis of the translations (e.g. the English to Igbo translation) and the reverse translation (from Igbo back to English) of the work in question and evaluated these within the demand of epistemic justice. By itemising and discussing concepts applied in the Igbo translation, the work has pointed out the need for more effort at epistemic justice in translation projects in African philosophy. Finally, this work has situated itself within the larger demand for the growth of rational and conceptual autonomy in Africa in what is called conceptual Africanisation. It is hoped that this effort will provide motivation for more scholarship in this direction.

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CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

TRUTH IN TRANSLATION:
A READING OF THE FILM *SISTERS IN LAW*

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I was born in Cameroon, a country in West Africa that was first “discovered” by the Portuguese. The Germans took over in the late 1800s and remained in power until after the First World War, when the country was divided between the British and French colonial empires. Cameroon gained its independence in the early 1960s, but the division along Anglophone/Francophone lines continued until 1972, when the two parts were united into one country with two official languages, English and French.

The linguistic traces of the colonial legacy are still with us: When Cameroonians meet abroad, they ask each other, “Are you Anglophone or Francophone?” As a minority, Anglophones must speak French to hold posts in universities or public offices. On the other hand, few Francophones are bilingual in French and English. This has created ongoing tension between Anglophones and Francophones. In addition, Cameroon has 286 individual, indigenous languages, including 278 local languages, most of which are not written (Katzner).

Given this historical and social context, the question of translation in Cameroon is a complicated and interesting one. We must consider the relationship of French and English vocabulary to the lived experiences of individuals, who often conceptualise their worlds in their local languages. We might also consider how these different languages work within the collective imaginary of Cameroonians. The documentary film *Sisters in Law* (Kim Longinotto and Florence Ayisi 2005) illustrates just such a context, and I will examine it here for its insights into how language and translation can be used in the construction of truth, power and agency for subalterns within a postcolonial legal context.

In the documentary, filmmakers Kim Longinotto and Florence Ayisi follow Vera Ngassa, a prosecutor, and Beatrice Ntuba, a judge, in their grassroots feminism. In so doing, the film portrays how language shapes questions of truth and gender politics in court, as well as the men who are stupid, cruel, or negligent enough to wind up in the courthouse, where they swiftly find their idiot assumptions exposed by the light of constitutional justice: Sorry, guys, your wife doesn't have to ask permission to leave the house. The men's patriarchal, arrogant smirks are quickly knocked off their hapless faces as their pathetic alibis crumble before the judge's and prosecutor's sisterly smack downs.

Indeed, even though the film presents disturbing cases, individuals within the documentary appear to understand or experience these stories with a kind of serenity seldom seen in other social spaces. For example, a pre-pubescent girl has been raped and left bleeding; a 6-year-old is beaten with a coat hanger, her body scarred with welts; and the wife of a callous, vengeful jerk seeks help to divorce him. However, the movie does not present the lives of these people as bleak; rather it suggests how, when the law takes hold of these cases through "punishment", individuals feel that justice has been done and, in this sense, the cases become uplifting for the community. In the end, *Sisters in Law* positively soars for the audience.

Feminist and post-colonial scholarship have considered the importance of this kind of grassroots-level work. I will thus forgo these modes of analysis and turn rather to what Foucault calls "regimes of truth" to understand the social and historical contexts of the many different languages the film presents. I will then read the film in terms of de Man's and Spivak's notions of the excess of meaning in language, particularly its rhetoricity, and how this allows truth, in a Foucauldian sense, to be articulated in translation.

In "Truth and Power", Foucault explains "Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power, which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power, which it induces and which extends it: a 'regime' of truth" (43). For Foucault, the question of how to deal with and determine truth is at the root of political and social conflict. Therefore, as we consider this question, we must engage with how truth is articulated in different languages.

Sisters in Law takes place in Kumba, a small town in West Cameroon, part of the area that was under British rule. English is still solemnly spoken as the official language here, and British common law is the legal system in practice, although legal practitioners have modified it to accord

with the local context. For example, the prosecutor and the judge work with the language of legal storytelling, which subverts and changes the dominant social discourse. Yet, as they shift the victims' stories into their legal, narrative modes, we find that the women's attempts to "explore the 'Other's' point of view" are clearly different from the victims' own articulation of their struggles. In the case of the judge and the prosecutor, they know that they must first master the language of the legal system before attempting to articulate the subaltern's language.

Derrida discusses the question of using multiple languages in *Racism's Last Word*, by pointing out that we must master how to "speak the other's language without renouncing [our] own". In this context, the judge and prosecutor recognise that they must create a space in which the victims can speak "truth" in a legal sense, although this may be different from the "truth" expressed outside the courtroom. As legal practitioners, they are aware that the victims are facing "a wall", and for them to speak or learn how to speak with power within the courtroom means to find a hole that will make the wall tumble. Indeed, what becomes interesting is that the legal work the judge and prosecutor do is largely to instruct these women and children on how to speak, on how to find a hole in which to announce "truth" as it can be understood in the legal context.

This instruction is, in fact, on how to translate, or code switch, between different discourses of truth: 1) from the local language to English, and 2) from English into the legal system, its own translation of British common law. The judge and prosecutor instruct the victims on how to translate between indigenous legal traditions, local law, and Anglophone common law, and we see the prosecutor constantly clarifying how discourses of truth within the court are different from those in local legal systems. Traditional law does not apply in the official, legal court. If the plaintiff or victim wishes to be heard, he or she must translate the complaint into the appropriate discourse.

For Foucault, truth is accountable to its particular social web, and the documentary suggests that individuals would do well to recognise this. As the victims' stories move between traditional and legal mode, we see this fact illustrated: there is no universal truth; not even the prosecutor and judge can convey such a thing, they can only produce translations of what they "understand" to be the truth.

We can expand this idea of truth with a particular social web to consider how it impacts the ways people perceive and relate to reality. This is precisely Foucault's prime object of inquiry in "Truth and Juridical Forms". For him, all categories and truth claims are to be considered with scepticism, since any constitution of reality implies a specific relationship

between knowledge and power. In other words, for Foucault, objective or instinctive knowledge is not possible; knowledge is always produced in an arbitrary manner that has no privileged correlation to truth (8-14). As Foucault puts it:

Knowledge is always the historical and circumstantial result of conditions outside the domain of knowledge. In reality, knowledge is an event that falls under the category of activity [...] This means that knowledge is always a certain strategic relation in which man is placed [...] Knowledge simplifies, passes over differences, lumps things together, without any justification in regard to truth. (13-14)

We must also recall that knowledge is an “effect” of power that bears no resemblance to truth, and that power, rather than truth, is the very ground on which the subject is formed (15). Thus, knowledge, that ontological unity of Western thought, exists for Foucault only insofar as various truth claims compete to constitute it. To put it differently, no other essence lies beneath the linguistic layers (discourses) that make up the self.

But how does this relate to translation? I read translation of the truth in the same way as Édouard Glissant in his discussion of the translation of a text. Glissant bases his definition of the term on its etymology in French, thus he reads it to be a process of “understanding”. He draws attention to the French verb’s Latin antecedent, *comprehendere*, “to seize”, “to claim”. Thus, the process of “understanding” a text actually involves controlling it by inserting it into one’s own system of norms. I would assert that in *Sisters in Law*, the judge and prosecutor use translation, as understood by Glissant, to avoid conflicting truth(s) in court. They are well aware that no single entity “knowledge” exists, but only shifting truth claims that are articulated within different contexts.

Yet this need not be disempowering. For example, as she concludes a case, the prosecutor asks the victim what would happen if she had told a lie. The answer given is: God would punish her; therefore, she must speak the truth. In other words, the victim must have the courage to tell the truth, as it is understood within this legal context. The drama of this statement lies in the fact that, as Foucault writes, “the very moment of enunciation can affect the being of the enunciator”. The victim has found the courage—indeed the *power*—to speak this truth to herself and others.

This is important because the young girl is visibly disturbed; signs of damage can be read all over her being. Yet, the judge creates a space in which she can translate the damage done to her into an articulation of truth, an articulation of power. From this, the judge can then validate this power by translating it into her decision. This young girl has experienced

damage most directly; therefore, power must be returned to her by inserting her claims of truth into this powerful social web.

Indeed, like a flying fish, the prosecutor—who is equipping the victim with the power of translation—breaks above the surface of damage and confusion, showing the victim how she, too, can fly above it. They can use translation to create truth and power within a language where they had not existed before.

We could turn to Paul de Man and Gayatri Spivak to better understand the rhetoricity of language and how this might be engaged in translation. In *The Resistance to Theory* (1986), de Man discusses the title of Keats' epic "The Fall of Hyperion," to demonstrate how all texts have elements whose meaning can neither be determined by grammatical means nor gleaned via context (16). For him, the rhetorical dimension of language refers to the fact that language is composed of "factors and functions that cannot be reduced to intuition" (13). This "undecidability" is "a matter of figuration" (16), and a consequence of the impossibility to fully fathom the rhetorical dimension of language.

In a manner similar to de Man, Spivak understands such rhetorical dimensions of language to suggest the "possibility of randomness, of contingency, [...] the falling apart of language, the possibility that things might not always be semiotically organized" (187). By acknowledging this possibility that elements of a text might not be semiotically organized but instead depend on randomness and contingency, Spivak points at the same "residue of indetermination" as de Man; the parts of language that cannot be accounted for semiotically (de Man 15).

In turn, in her famous essay "The Politics of Translation" (1993), Spivak argues that for the translator to attend to the specificity of the language she translates, she must "surrender herself to the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text" (189). In other words, to do justice to the uniqueness of the original text, the translator must be able to articulate the "disruptive rhetoricity" of language. Most importantly for Spivak, it is by attending to the rhetorical interferences of the original that agency, and especially gendered agency, can be articulated:

[R]hetoric may be disrupting logic in the matter of the production of an agent, and indicating the founding violence of the silence at work within rhetoric. Logic allows us to jump from word to word by means of clearly indicated connections. Rhetoric must work in the silence between and around words in order to see what works and how much. The jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing, is a relationship by which a world is made for the agent. (181)

The challenge, then, for a translator in this mode, is to attend to the “space outside language”, the “silence between and around words” in which agency is generated and located (181). For instance, when an individual chooses to make use of language in a way that disrupts logical systematicity, a space is created for her agency to arise because she *acts* upon this language in a specific manner. As Spivak indicates in “The Politics of Translation”, choices in the practice of translation can be motivated by many factors and criteria such as direct accuracy, cultural context, intimacy, etc. In Spivak’s case, this choice is motivated by her commitment to emphasize agency, and especially non-European, female agency, in the original text and “its shadow” (181).

While this leads Spivak to suggest that the translator must constantly juggle with the “disruptive rhetoricity” of language, as she approximates the uncontrollable dissemination of language, she also suggests how a translator can attend to the meaning that is not articulated directly in language. Indeed, as *Sisters in Law* demonstrates, translation *as praxis* must operate and function beyond the linguistic limits of interpretation. What the prosecutor and judge choose to translate into legal language is the aspects from the original stories that will bring agency to the victims. This includes certain elements that may not have been articulated in language. Their choices, however, do not suggest “mistranslation”, but rather that translation is being used to create truth claims from the women’s stories that can be understood in the legal context. They can thereby give power to the victims in a place where they did not have it before.

The fact remains that theoretical indeterminacy is inherent to language. Furthermore, translation, which highlights pluralities of meaning, often points to these limits. Yet, in so doing, translation is not merely suggesting “what is lost in translation”, rather it is demonstrating how truth claims are inherent within language itself.

Sisters in Law draws from Cameroon’s complex linguistic and cultural codes, brought about by its unique history and multiple colonialist invasions, in order to show how these limitations—of translation and language—need not be harmful. Rather, the film shows how translation can be used consciously to teach individuals to choose between multiple meanings in the creation of agency. Translation is thus revealed as a tool of power, rather than as a limitation.

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