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African Elites and their Post-colonial Legacy: Cultural, Political and Economic Discontent – by Way of Literature

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Abstract

In this article, I propose to discuss the way in which the issues of post-colonial modernism in the context of neoliberal capitalism has impacted on the traditional cultures and economic life of Africa's new classes. These include the bureaucratic and professional classes and the materially less fortunate members of the other post-colonial classes. In this regard I choose to examine, specifically, the way in which cultural traditions and modernity exist in an uneasy symbiosis under the powerful influences of contemporary political economy. Normally, when one speaks of the economics of Africa, it is usually done at a distance, with numbers and charts reflecting GDPs, growth rates, per capita incomes, etc., all in the context of ministrations from institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Unless one were directly involved it would be difficult to grasp the impact of the structural adjustments imposed on Africa's peoples as they struggle to partake of the material life engendered by modern capitalism. The struggle is about maintaining statuses of economic materiality within a cultural context of eroding traditions. In this struggle to partake of modernity, as determined by the dictates of modern capitalism, the sociological results are a minority of economically well-off individuals, but with the masses of the people increasingly impoverished in a continent rich in natural resources and development potential. In sum, the theme of this is Africa's cultural and economic discontent in an age of an essentially unchallenged neoliberal capitalism.

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Résumé

Dans cet article, mon propos est d'analyser comment les questions relatives au modernisme post-colonial dans le contexte du capitalisme néolibéral a influencé les cultures traditionnelles et la vie économique des nouvelles classes africaines. Parmi celles-ci, il y a les classes bureaucratiques et professionnelles et les membres moins fortunés matériellement des autres classes postcoloniales. J'ai donc choisi d'examiner, en particulier, comment les traditions culturelles et la modernité coexistent dans une espèce de symbiose mal assurée sous les influences de l'économie politique contemporaine. Normalement, lorsque l'on évoque l'économie en Afrique, c'est en général avec une certaine distance, à grands renforts de chiffres et de diagrammes reflétant les taux de croissance du PIB par revenus individuels, etc. ; tout cela se déroulant dans un contexte où les institutions comme le FMI et la Banque Mondiale agissent en pompiers pour apporter l'aide et les soins nécessaires. A moins d'être directement impliqué, il est difficile d'apprécier l'impact des ajustements structurels imposés aux peuples africains alors qu'ils se battent pour partager la vie faite de confort matériel généré par le capitalisme moderne. A travers cette lutte, il s'agit de maintenir les statuts de la matérialité économique dans un contexte culturel où les traditions se perdent. Dans cette lutte pour partager la modernité, telle que définie par le diktat du capitalisme moderne, les résultats sociologiques qui en découlent sont une minorité d'individus riches économiquement mais avec des masses de populations de plus en plus pauvres sur un continent riche en ressources naturelles avec un fort potentiel de développement.

En somme, le thème qui nous occupe est celui du mécontentement culturel et économique de l'Afrique dans une ère où le capitalisme néolibéral n'a jamais vraiment été remis en question.

Introduction

The major theme of this article is a discussion of the complex relation that Africa's post-colonial classes have with the question of tradition as they struggle to keep pace with the dictates of modern neo-liberal capitalism. Capitalism produces wealth, but it is unbalanced wealth. As a result, most of Africa's populations are disillusioned with their contemporary economic life as dictated by the international institutions that hold sway over their lives within the context of changing traditions and the growing embrace of modern material culture. This article then is about the intersection between contemporary African cultural and material life and the old traditions. What is more, is that this article seeks to interpret contemporary African material life in its individual experiences, thereby adding a human face to the abstractions of economic history and economics. In order to infuse life into such abstractions, I make a number of references to the lived lives of Africans

as expressed in the literatures produced by African authors. I also include the voices of the discontented themselves.

It is often assumed that Africa is in a transitional phase, i.e., moving from a traditional or semi-traditional way of life to a modern one. The latter assertion makes sense only when we take into account the history of European colonization in Africa, which event, in turn, sheds light on the very fact that the Western brand of modernity was brought into Africa through the conduit of colonization from the 19th century onwards. Along the same lines, tradition is often equated with the past which is not necessarily – not always and not entirely – the case as I will demonstrate further in this article. Tradition clearly permeates the present and our lives are affected by it. However, I must add that tradition also encompasses a set of beliefs, customs, know-how, attitudes, psychological mindsets, etc., that have been passed down from generation to generation. Some components of the set of traditions could be *sui generis*, that is, they were generated from within the culture whereas others are adopted from elsewhere.

We are thus in the presence of a mixture of diverse elements that comprise the contemporary African world vision. In order to have a better understanding of the economic predicament of the continent, it is essential to look at the relationship that the African elites have with tradition. Better yet, my aim is to show that there is a whole cultural substratum that undergirds the subconsciousnesses of the elites, which fact, in turn, is partly conditioned by the inherited set of beliefs. It is also important to point out that the concept of tradition in the context of a strongly materialist modernity can be perceived as being at once about the individual and the collective. Needless to say that the translation of the concept of tradition may vary from individual to individual, even though each individual belongs to the collective. It is in this collective that the strands of tradition are to be found.

The reader must have noticed that the word ‘elites’ is in the plural. In so doing I want to express the idea that all elites are concerned here: intellectual, political, cultural, and those of the business world. The reason is that each particular elite group is necessarily imbued with the cultural tokens of tradition. But what creates the cultural antinomies is the fact that – for the most part – they willingly allow themselves to succumb to the temptations and blandishments of neoliberal capitalism. And in spite of the communitarian principles of their traditional cultures, the dictates of neoliberalism force them to satisfy their own individual wants and needs and not extend such privileges beyond their neo-class boundaries. A classic example is that of the socialist communitarian-minded intellectual or academic who on being appointed to an important ministerial position in government is transformed

from living the life of the mind to living the superficial life of exaggerated material wealth, openly on display with its expected posturing and pomposity.

A major theme of this article is articulated around the idea that the modern Africa bourgeois classes find themselves in a sociological and economic situation not of their own historical making. They have been placed in the positions they now hold as a result of the departure of the metropolitan servants of Empire. The metropolitan servants of Empire in Africa worked hand-in-hand with their entrepreneurial business counterparts to ensure that the exploited proceeds of empire were efficiently harvested before being shipped back to the metropolis. The metropolitan servants of Empire were merely Europeans working within the matrix of Empire, all sharing the same culture and traditions with their homologues in the European headquarters. They worked as competently as most civil servants do while watching the calendar until retirement with full pension. They just did the books for their governments and mostly stayed within the boundaries of their European cultures. They were hardly stirred by the comprador spirit. But the vast profit-making enterprise known as empire needed much help in its efforts. Thus apart from the recruited and often forced labour needed to build infrastructural systems that would facilitate transporting agricultural and mineral resources to the coast, there was also need for assistant workers for the colonial bureaucracy. First, the locals had to undergo some training, hence the introduction of the mission and colonial schools.

The result of this was the creation of a new class of individuals exposed to aspects of European culture that were super-imposed on the local ethnic cultures. In the case of Senegal, this was indeed the experience of colonial and post-colonial personalities such as Senghor, Birago Diop, and Habib Thiam. In areas that were already Islamised the coloniser simply added another cultural layer to what existed before. The product was a multi-acculturated African. The economics of all this fell under the rubric of colonial capitalism. It became the task of the new African intellectual to work out this confusingly new cultural situation. But colonial condescension and racism eventually provoked the *negritude* movement. And it was the forced labour of capitalism and its inequities that served as the impetus for the idea of socialism of the orthodox (Nkrumah) or African (Senghor) variety. But the bureaucratic class that was nurtured during the colonial era was naturally promoted as the new instrument of exploitation as the era of neocolonialism took hold. This was the genesis of Africa's comprador bourgeoisie. It was the function of the members of this new class to facilitate the continuing exploitation of Africa's resources in partnership with the already entrenched neocolonial enterprise, while partaking of the new Euro-African syncretised culture.

The new post-colonial African was African in the traditional culture but a modern bureaucrat in the service of Western capital. The pay-off was to be parasitical on state resources, thereby hindering the possibility of the state accumulation of capital, and permission to use those same state resources in pure consumption of the goods and baubles of Western capitalism. This is the major contradiction and betrayal foisted on Africa's peoples by the post-colonial African comprador classes. The result, of course, is a maximal Gini coefficient for Africa's post-colonial populations. Africa's governmental ministers and those others appendaged to the all-powerful state apparatus – bankers, military commanders, etc. – all enjoy a quality of life that rivals the wealthiest individuals in the West. This pillaging of the resources of the state by the neocolonial bourgeoisie leaves nothing for the toiling masses who are victimised by the lowest salaries in the world. Under these circumstances, whatever communitarian elements existed in traditional Africa have all fallen by the wayside in the ongoing worship of the products of neo-liberal capitalism.

All of this is captured in vivid terms by the vast literature produced by Africa's intellectuals and writers in the ongoing post-colonial era. Thus, starting in the early 1970s, a new body of creative writings began appearing with a slew of African writers publishing works that highlighted the disillusionment with the aftermath of the political independences of the late 1950s and early 1960s. This new situation was presaged by the insights of Fanon (1963) in his *Wretched of the Earth* and Rene Dumont's (1962) *L'Afrique noire est mal partie* (translated in English as: *False Start in Africa*). But it is the genre of the novel that truly heralded the wrong direction that the new independent African nations embarked upon. Thus, *Suns of Independences* (1968, French edition) by Ahmadou Kourouma, Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence* (1968, French edition) were critical in no uncertain terms, albeit in a fictional manner, the bad choices made by the new African elites and very often under the direct influence of the former colonial power. In these narratives, greed, graft, corruption, nepotism, and ethnocentrism, etc, were shown as being some of the cultural culprits responsible for destroying the people's post-colonial hopes.

Ouologuem and Kourouma, for example, each in his own way, untied the knots around life and culture in Africa. First, Kourouma paints the realities of daily life in urban and rural post-colonial Africa by showing how tradition survives in the city and also how that tradition is fading away or, at least, being slowly replaced by the culture and economics of the neo-colonial state. For most, it is a life of material penury, unemployment, and blocked aspirations mainly because of lack of modern education. As for Ouologuem, his theme

fits this paper in that it alerts the modernising African classes that there is always the risk that post-colonial Africa could be once again undergoing the cultural and sociological malaise that it experienced in pre-colonial times.

Finally, I end this paper by looking at the impact that neoliberal capitalism has had on the way the material products of this economic system have become almost like fetishes for the economic elites of Africa. One reason for this, perhaps, is that such material goods are not manufactured or produced on the African continent. Is there a psychological, historical or cultural explanation for this state of affairs? Is it just plain greed? Is it a mimetic behavioural condition? Is it, perhaps, due to the unbalancing act between the new Western/European intellectual dispensation, on the one hand, and the inherited African customs and values on the other? Or is it a combination of all of the above?

Historical Prelude to Post-Colonial Africa

It is often posited that the entry door to any culture or civilization is its imaginative and creative literature. If we pursue that line of reasoning, modern African literature, in particular the novel, provides us with crucial and insightful pointers in our attempt at understanding the dilemma posed by the conceptualisation of tradition by the African elites as well as its translation into concrete proposals for behaviour. Thus, it is fair to say that modern African literature offers the best insights into the ills which bedevil Africa. It is writers such as Armah, Ouologuem and Sembene who started warning that after all the hopes brought about by the political independence of the early 1960s, these were being dashed because of the wrong orientation that the elites had given to the new nations. These novelists did so through fiction which often mirrors reality.

What would be helpful for the analysis of the new African cultures developing synthetically out of a post-Enlightenment Europe's encounter with Africa is a statement on the historical forces that produced this encounter. The European Enlightenment is characterised by a qualitative transformation from the past in that it ushered in the age of secular reason that manifested itself in new scientific and technological expression. This eventually meant new forms of production under the rubric of the developing economic system now known as capitalism. Adam Smith became the totemic god of this new system. Under such new circumstances ethical systems were also bound to change. The pursuit of wealth and the accumulation of material goods became the new measure of a person. The Christian religion whose worldly function was to prepare souls for the afterlife now saw itself falling under the sway of science, technology and capitalism. The goal humans were to pursue was

to seek a material paradise on earth rather than a spiritual paradise in heaven. The new Europe armed with the trio of science, technology and capitalism set out to conquer the world in the 15th century and on the way encountered the African. The West Europeans had the capital and the technology. All they needed now was the labour. So they created the circumstances where the African was made to oblige them. The result was the infamous Atlantic slave trade and the development of the Americas along European lines. Capitalist accumulation with its increasingly effective technological innovations eventually led to Europe's second encounter with Africa. This time the Europeans came as colonials and settlers. The goal was access to more resources in the form of minerals, agricultural produce, and land. The Africans were inveighed against and they eventually yielded. The result was that new structures and institutions of European provenance were imposed with the result being novel hybridized cultures in the form of African tradition and European modernity. This invariably led to the schizoid personality of the African: on the one hand modernising but on the other hand culturally beholden to tradition. Is it that the two modes of the modern African personality are incompatible ?

Given the psychological assault on the African psyche by cultural Eurocentrism, the African mind in the form of its writers sought to defend itself by appealing to concepts such as Negritude and 'the African Personality'. But the lived lives of the modernising African bourgeoisie increasingly got captured and enraptured by capitalism and its products. If a genuinely modernising Africa were to follow the model of capitalism, would develop a productive capital-owning class that would in turn consume its own products and sell the rest. This is the case of countries like Japan, Korea, Taiwan, etc. Instead we have an African bourgeoisie that consumes excessively but does not produce. It serves at the pleasure of a neo-colonising Euro-America.

The results are that practically all of modernizing and culturally hybridised Africa lives a life of discontentment at being victims of modern-day capitalism. The African bourgeoisie seeks to soothe its psychic discontentment through the obsessively compulsive behaviour of accumulating the products of market capitalism. The truth is that this form of 'cargo cultism' is just an illusion. In the following section I propose to show how the lived lives of the post-colonial African bourgeoisie or economic elites are reflected effectively in literature.

The Literature of Disillusionment in Contemporary Africa

Yambo Ouologuem's *Le devoir de violence* is one of the earlier literary works that examines the African past in terms of its connection to the post-colonial present. It is a controversial literary work – there is also the cloud of plagiarism

hanging over it and it was banned in France for some thirty years – because it does not portray pre-colonial society as mainly idyllic until the advent of the colonial era with its economic exploitation and cultural dislocations. This Malian writer makes a strong – some would say hyperbolic – critique of the African past as he seeks to deromanticise it. Some argue that it was Ouloguem's intent to counter the *Negritude* idea that was propounded by Senghor and Césaire. In the novel, the roles played by the Saifs, the Bishop Henry and Raymond Kassoumi all symbolise the sclerotic economic and cultural state of post-colonial Africa. The descendants of Raymond now control the neo-colonial states of most of Africa in alliance with certain traditional (the Saifs) and newer elements (the Lebanese), etc. And most of the indigenous cultural elements are now under the sway of the culturally dominant Islam and Christianity.

In his chapter entitled, 'Images of Working People in Two African Novels: Ouloguem and Iyayi', contained in the edited book (*Marxism and African Literature*, 1985), Tunde Fatunde (1985) shows that Ouloguem's aim is to show how the following elements have greatly contributed to the regression of Africa:

- Religion (both Arab Islamic and European Christian) plays an oppressive role;
- Sexuality as, both in colonial and neo-colonial societies, patriarchy dominates and oppresses women (even though the matrilineal foundation of African societies is an established fact);
- The exploited classes constitute a structured element of African feudal society.

According to Fatunde, Ouloguem portrays the working people as passive and dormant victims who hardly protest against their living conditions. Thus, the pre-colonial African peasants, workers, serfs, etc, are presented as a passive, amorphous mass belonging to a single exploited class in society. This would seem to run counter to the image of the revolutionary colonised African as portrayed by Fanon in his *Wretched of the Earth*.

In effect, in his sharp critique of the past, Ouloguem is also implying that the same ills that afflicted the past are still affecting the Africa of today. The masses are still caught in the nets of religious fervour and obscurantism while the political elites are behaving as if their countries are their personal fiefdoms. Furthermore, there are few organised acts of rebellion that have some kind of coherent theme, notwithstanding those that recently took place in North Africa. For if it is true that Africans have resisted European colonization and have not been all decimated and debilitated by the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism, it is clear that in the post-colonial era the

spirit of resistance has waned. In sum, Ouologuem's point is to show that the problematic of Africa just did not begin with the colonial or post-colonial era but stems from a rather deep-seated psychic malaise. This approach would then seem to imply that the problematic of Africa does not fully depend on the economic, cultural and political configurations of post-colonial Africa.

Ahmadou Kourouma's novel *The Suns of Independence* describes a nominally independent Africa wrestling with the toxic brew of Western economic neoliberalism, its baubles, unemployment, and cultural anomie. With the West African Mande culture as background, Kourouma weaves together a depressing yet beautiful tapestry of post-colonial rural and urban life. The people of rural origin, like the central character of the novel, Fama, have left the village to settle in the capital, a city that grew out of the colonial project. He has no skills which would allow him to work, given his level of modern education. Fama and his wife,

Salimata, live in a the city's *bidonville* in a locale inhabited by their own ethnic group – all migrants from the same rural area. Thus we have a recreation of the home-village inside the city. Kourouma's point is to show that the post-colonial masses have been relegated to the urban reservations of the bidonville as the post-colonial bourgeoisie stakes out its claims in the new post-colonial order. They have been fitted for their role by the education and acculturations bequeathed to them by their respective metropolises. For example, the baccalaureat is the norm for the so-called Francophones while the Anglophones and the Lusaphones have their own versions. In the Muslim acculturated areas, the Koranic schools have been put on the back foot because this Arab pedagogical transplant is just not adequate for the post-colonial African to win the bureaucratic positions left vacant by the departing colonials. Thus we witness too the psychological conflict as played out by Samba Diallo in his *L'Aventure ambiguë*.

But this is the catch: though the members of new African bourgeoisie are not state functionaries of the the old colonial empire they have become its new functionaries as agents of the new neocolonial structures. Their rewards include easy access to the products of commodity capitalism, which they flamboyantly display. This is the new cultural and economic landscape that destroys the African soul.

In the case of Kourouma's novel, Fama is a social parasite. He roams the city, attends weddings, naming ceremonies, and funerals. Even though he is of royal lineage – meaning that back in his village he is much respected on account of his being a member of the royal aristocratic clan of the Doumbouya, the rulers and chiefs – in the city, that noble lineage and its attendant traditions are of no use to him. He is anonymous, does not stand

out in the crowd, and is part and parcel of the sometimes restive urban masses. *The Suns of Independence*, in addition to showing the spiritual void and material poverty of the various characters that inhabit the novel, makes apparent the many ways in which even nature and the landscape are part of the plot of betrayal toward the new Africa. Though supposedly free, 'independent', Africa is still trapped in the neocolonial net, set up by the departing colonials but maintained and serviced by Africa's new comprador bourgeoisie. With the death of Fama at the end of the novel, Kourouma seems to inform us that a traditional way of life with its institutions are slowly being eroded, creating the psychic dislocations that blanket the African continent.

Such psychic dislocations, it would seem, have also affected the minds of those who were at the vanguard of the struggle against colonialism. According to Ghanaian novelist, Ayi Kwei Armah, such was the case with the decision of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, to place the seat of his presidency at the Osu Castle, previously known as Fort Christiansborg. The Fort Christiansborg castle was erected by Danish slavers in the 17th century and represents, according to Armah, the utter humiliation and degradation of the African, given the role that these structures played in the Atlantic slave trade. This was the point made by Armah in a public lecture in which he criticised Nkrumah's decision to place the seat of his government at Fort Christiansborg. It was as if the spirit of the erstwhile colonial enterprise had entered Nkrumah given his decision on Fort Christianborg and his increasingly autocratic fashion of governance.

It is this ethos of a post-colonial Africa that Armah captures in his well-known novel *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*. The corruption of the African soul by the autocratic ethos of the colonial era together with the corrupting lure of the baubles of capitalist production are what are so masterfully captured by Armah in his novels. It was this corrupting lure of capitalism that militated against a more optimal implementation of the socialist idea as expounded by Nkrumah. The implementation of the idea of socialism requires a spirit of communitarianism which certainly militates against the individualism and accumulative spirit that pervade the economic spaces of full-blown market capitalism. It is this psychic conflict in the soul of the post-colonial African that pitted the animal spirits of capitalism against the African version of a communitarian socialism that determined the future of the socialist idea in Africa. Capitalist greed won and expressed its victory by way of the military coup that removed Nkrumah from his presidency.

The same principle is at work in the writings and films of the late Ousmane Sembene. His well known text and film, *Xala*, employs a motif and style that

has the virtue of being understood as the impotence the new national bourgeoisies experience as they seek to come to terms with their appointed post-colonial role as an inefficient bureaucratic class that has stepped into the shoes of the coloniser. The result is a place-holder comprador bourgeoisie that is parasitical on the wealth of the neocolonial state, while the industrialised ex-colonial powers, by way of their multinationals, continue to exploit the natural resources of the neocolony. The central personage of the film, El Hadj Abdou Karim Beye, is the personification of this post-colonial malady. The central theme of the film concerning Beye's taking of a third wife is to be understood as the new post-colonial 'elites' consuming more than is necessary. In this instance, needs are morphed into wants. The solution to the economic impotence of the post-colonial bourgeoisie requires modern technological solutions not the age-old superstitions as suggested by Beye's solution to his impotence.

One can understand Sembene as stating that the post-colonial African bourgeoisie is in reality a neocolonial bourgeoisie whose function is to exploit the masses while maintaining the colonial exploitative economic links with the erstwhile metropolis. This bourgeoisie is corrupt in that it appropriates the economic wealth of the nation for its own material benefits. The masses are the miners and the agriculturalists but their rewards are minimal. And yet there is little salvation in invoking the old cultures because the lived economic life of the post-colonial African remains the same. New ways have to be worked out within the old cultural contexts, or does it have to be otherwise? These were the issues that presidents such as Nkrumah and Senghor had to grapple with. These issues take the form of questions such as: how to come to terms with metropolitan neocolonialism? Does one work with it (Senghor), or does one reject it (Nkrumah and Sekou Toure)? While these are fundamental questions of politics and economics, they manifest themselves at the social and political planes as issues of culture.

Neoliberal capitalism and the Face of Africa

I mentioned above that the ongoing plight of Africa is often lost in the antiseptic language of modern economics. We are often assailed with IMF and World Bank metrics. We have heard of the 'structural adjustment' ministrations of the IMF; but unless one were the victim of such, one rarely gets any empathic sense of the lived lives of today's Africans. In other words, what is lacking is a phenomenology of the ongoing lived experiences in Africa.

Consider an African worker who works as a driver for a multinational company. His monthly salary is no more than \$100 a month in an African country where most goods – apart from local foodstuffs – are imported.

Our driver has to support a family which includes not only his children but also members of his extended family. Now think of the economic disaster that occurs when, perchance, our driver loses his employment. The ensuing misery becomes palpable. This kind of event occurs daily in Africa. In the case of 'structural adjustment' initiatives the lived experience is equally negative. The African neocolony is required to reduce state expenditures and to privatise recommended government institutions. Prices of life's necessities such as water, electricity, schooling, health and general welfare rise precipitously. These are the real-life casualties of Western neoliberal economics. When one couples this permanent crisis in the lives of contemporary Africans with massive unemployment, then Fanon's celebrated book title, *The Wretched of the Earth*, is most apt.

One solution to this desperate situation sought by Africans is migration to the ex-colonial metropolis and elsewhere in the Western world. This migration is rarely for direct political reasons and its participants are viewed as economic refugees by Western authorities. Treks across the Sahara or dangerous boat journeys along the West African coast are the normal routes as the African seeks to recapture some of the surpluses expropriated from his or her home continent.

When one lifts the masks of the antiseptic ministrations of the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the BIS (Bank of International Settlements), the Paris Club, etc, one becomes witness to the human destruction wrought. Let us put a human face on all those bare statistics so bloodlessly put out by the above-mentioned institutions to get some idea of the abuse caused by the unholy alliance between the neo-colonial bourgeoisie and the Western financial institutions that make such possible. Take the case of Cape Verde, a nation that since 2008 has been promoted by the World Bank to a second-tier developing nation, one of only five in Africa. Traditionally, this nation depended on tourism and expatriate remittances from its emigre populations in North America and Europe. Its relatively small resident population of some 500,000 people makes it easy to manage in terms of the impact of financial inputs, etc. Social anthropologist, Kesha Fikes (2010) travelled to the capital of Cape Verde, Praia, to survey the economic situation in this supposedly second-tier African developing nation. Fikes interviewed some women who make a living as vendors. But first consider the following: 'This[2008] is an important period because it is marked by the steady disappearance of women from local market scenes.... So, many just stopped selling altogether with the hope of rationing the little they had and then seeking some form of public assistance – a request that reinforces the idea of the poor as a community beyond the state's modernising agenda and hence justifies the presence of the new foreign entrepreneur' (Fikes 2010:60). One of the interviewees said: 'But today selling

is changing. It used to be that if you had the product you sold it. Now, not any more. It's as if *buying and selling have nothing to do with each other*. It doesn't make sense...' (Fikes 2010:60). Another relative interviewee said: 'I know for a fact that people aren't making money and that children aren't eating. I see them' (Fikes 2010:60). One of the interviewees claimed: 'Look! The Chinese have run us out of business ! We pay import taxes on our products, they don't. We sell in much smaller volumes so our products are more expensive. I know this because I used to buy products in Dakar. Then there was no competition and I had lots of money in the bank. Today, I don't even buy food and stuff on the street any more....All I know is that we the poor – us! We used to have more money, *even though we were poor*. I know I did...Somehow money was always coming in. It's all dried up !' (Fikes 2010:62).

On the same theme, there were more responses from the three relatives, like the following: ' And it's harder to migrate....Today those that migrate become over-modern (sarcastically stated), they're ingrates ; they neglect their families and traditions....I want to migrate, but I've been denied three times, once at the American embassy and twice at the Portugese embassy. They're stingy with visas these days...They don't refund you for the application. But I am not making any money. I love work, I love going to work, working hard. I LOVE IT. But here I am starting to feel useless, like lazy, like useless you know...It's the Chinese! They've run us out of business....I don't know....It's the government ! They say they support us but they don't....Whatever it is, it's complicated. It's like...it tries to take your *will*, to crush you, you know ? It sounds strange but it does...it takes something from you, from inside....It really does' (Fikes 2010:63).

Fikes explains this situation – which is normalised throughout the length and breadth of Africa – with the following: ' Generally, deregulation and privatisation are celebrated as guarantors of freedom, personal creativity, and the promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit. But the sentiments stressed above convey something that contradicts these ideals' (Fikes 2010:65). But who has allowed this situation to develop, if not the post-colonial Cape Verdian bourgeoisie that has gone ahead to ignore the communitarian and socialist ideas of Amilcar Cabral, the revolutionary fighter and intellectual. The post-colonial bourgeoisie prefers the following situation: ' By contrast, the finance capital supporting new European and Chinese businesses drips slowly, if not along a unidirectional path that leads to non-local sources. In the end, street and market sales become obsolete as the life course of the remittance is terminated or exchanged with "new" foreign enterprises' (Fikes 2010:65). And Cape Verde has become a 'middle-developing' nation!

Conclusion

In this article I have discussed the problematic of Africa and its governing classes whose duty was to set Africa firmly on the path towards development within the synthetic context of the appropriate economic policies, effective political structures, and optimal cultural traditions. The immediate post-colonial period was one of optimism in which the new African modernising classes had the opportunity to pick and choose the optimal modalities for development. But they failed to deliver, mesmerised as they were by the material dazzle of the products of modern market capitalism. But modern market capitalism needs and wants those products which in their raw forms serve as the basis for the production of those goods coveted by the post-colonial African bourgeoisie. The result of this class egotism is the open face of an Africa plagued by cultural collapse in key areas such as its vaunted communitarianism, only to be replaced by the false consciousness of corrosive self-interest, consumer greed, eruptive xenophobia – as in the cases of South Africa and Ivory Coast – and political corruption. My references to the post-colonial literature of Africa were meant to present a human face to the real damage done to Africa in the post-colonial era. This approach is certainly more enlightening than the lifeless statistics offered by the punitive neoliberal ministrations of the octopus-like tentacles of the IMF, the World Bank and other kindred Western institutions.

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