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## Creating African Futures in an Era of Global Transformations:

## Challenges and Prospects

## Créer l'Afrique de demain dans un contexte de transformations mondialisées :

## enjeux et perspectives

## Criar Futuros Africanos numa Era de Transformações Globais:

## Desafios e Perspetivas

## بعث أفريقيا الغد في سياق التحولات المعولمة :

## رهانات و آفاق

## The Quest for an African Ideology: Some Inklings from the States of The Western Sudan

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## Introduction

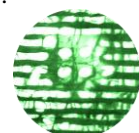
*Which way Africa ?* used to be a very topical slogan in the halcyon years of the 1980s when after the promulgation of the Lagos Plan of Action awareness was raised over the ideological implications of development. But the question mark concluding this trope may sound misleading to many as it did not imply any choice between alternatives but stressed the urgent decision to embrace capitalism as the unique ideological path to African development. Since then the wish has turned to injunction as the international donors such as the IMF and the World Bank in the late 1980s have rode roughshod over the African nation-states through their shock therapy known as structural adjustment. As is common knowledge the set of streamlining measures packaged by them succeeded in dragging the African nation-states into the Western World kicking and screaming. Incidentally, these events coincided roughly with the fall of the Berlin wall and were seen in certain political quarters as the final victory of capitalism over socialism, its irreconcilable ideological foe. Yet as far as the Africans are concerned globalization, the terminology often used to express the world domination of capital has never lived up to expectations. If anything, the living conditions of the Africans have sharply deteriorated over the past twenty years with the result that old conflicts have been revived and new ones have erupted all over the continent. It is therefore no surprise that the hope of an African *renaissance* quickly vanished leaving room to a sense of despondency as regards the fate of Africa. This change of mood corresponded with a change of strategy whereby the erstwhile development goals cherished by the African leaders of the 1960s have been quietly dropped from the agenda of the Western partners to be replaced by poverty alleviation initiatives. Of course, the prophets of doom are quick to blame the dismal outcome of globalization in Africa on the ingrained tendency of the African culture to damp all innovative projects and reverse to its habitual stagnation. It is argued in this paper that perhaps we are tackling the issue from the wrong perspective. Instead of foisting development down the throat of the African people it is perhaps more apposite to pause for a while and ask ourselves whether they want this kind of development. After taking stock of the disastrous effects of globalization on the African people in the first part of the paper, in the second part, it is demonstrated that foreign ideologies played a role in the making of this tragedy. In the third and final part of the paper, an attempt is made to turn the tables by advocating the grounding of African development in an African ideology the lineaments of which could be found in the political experience of the states of the Western Sudan between the VIIth and XVIth centuries AD.

## I Globalisation, Poverty Alleviation and African Democracy

It may look redundant to speak today of an African ideology. In the wake of globalization, capitalism seems to have conquered the world as the exclusive organizing principle of humankind<sup>1</sup>. However, beneath the veneer of this apparent consensus runs a glaring disparity between nation-states whereby free citizenship is not always available to certain categories of human beings. Thus,

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1 See Samir Amin, 2011, *The Law of Worldwide Value*, New York ; Monthly Review Press.





Africans are ranked among the peoples whose members continue to be severely quarantined and therefore are denied free movement contrary to what is postulated by the concept of globalization<sup>2</sup>. Nobody shudders again before the image of the African boat people seeking desperately to force open the gate of Europe which in their belief keeps them out of economic prosperity. The Western media have so routinely dwelt on this issue that it has taken from it all its sting of indignation<sup>3</sup>.

But, however banal may be this image, it epitomizes the plight of the African continent whose ideological outlook has been indignantly extroverted since its first encounter with Europe in the XVIth century. Like the boat people, the majority of the Africans still believe that their salvation lies in the hands of foreigners. The resignation of the Africans in the face of this historic curse explains the present-day omnipresence of foreign influence on the continent in the guise of capital. While at the beginning this capital used to be exclusively European or American it is today increasingly Chinese. But this does not matter as globalization has achieved the miracle of the unification of the capitalist world. Africans are watching helplessly foreign capital take control of all the vital sectors of the African economy including land. In the tradition of the African people, land offers to all and sundry a security valve as it could neither be privatized nor marketed<sup>4</sup>. So the boat people shown on our TV screens represent just the tip of an iceberg, a sample of the millions of Africans let loose by capital with no jobs to come by in the African megalopolises dotting the coastline.

In Europe, where did take place a process of primitive accumulation of capital, a large proportion of the expropriated peasants found their way to the emerging European cities where they could sell their labor as workers in the booming manufacturing plants. Of course, the majority remained hopeless vagabonds continuously harassed by the police and finding solace only in emigration to the New World, South Africa or Australia. On the contrary, the urbanization of the African continent was not propelled by any industrialization engine. Indeed, the few cities which, in the past, harbored a sprinkling of industries are today engaged in a process of de-industrialization on the promptings of the Western donors such as the IMF and the World Bank<sup>5</sup>.

But not only were plants ordered to shut down their doors and lay out thousands of workers, in line with a certain market economy orthodoxy, African leaders were pressed to cut down on state sponsored social services. Free education and health care on which many Africans relied in the sixties to build up their lives became all of a sudden unaffordable for many. So it is not unwarranted to state that the Western donors came into the picture only to unravel all the gains made in the

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2 See Jha, Prem Shankar, 2006, *The Twilight of the Nation State : Globalisation, Chaos and War*, New Delhi : Vistar Publications.

3 See Mamdani, Mahmood, 1996, *Citizen and Subject : Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton : Princeton University Press.

4 See Ki-Zerbo, Joseph, 2004, *A quand l'Afrique*, Editions de l'Aube, pp.116-119.

5 See Mkandawire, Thandika and Charles C.Soludo, *Our Continent, Our Future : African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment*, Dakar : CODESRIA.





sixties by the Africans in terms of social overhead which according to them works against profit<sup>6</sup>. To fill the vacuum left behind by the state they are quick to call in the international NGOs which are given free hand to dismantle the sovereignty still claimed by the African governments. They could easily achieve the goal of the withering of the state in Africa because these organizations are flushed with the funding formerly earmarked for development aid. No wonder that they are seen combing the countryside of all African countries in order to take control of whatever remains of the social service of the sixties.

There are many justifications for such an unfriendly attitude to African governments. First of all, it is argued that by channeling the flow of development aid through the NGOs it could be safely spent on the purpose for which it is designed in the first place since we have been accustomed to its embezzlement by unscrupulous government officials who swindled and stacked it in Swiss bank accounts. But it is the whole business of central administration which is on trial in Africa. The Western trained state officials were wont to concoct ill-conceived projects which resulted in the many white elephants dotting the landscape of many African countries. These projects were deemed to be nationwide. By slimming them down to the village size it is thought that they are likely to fulfill the aims for which they were planned, that is, to alleviate poverty at grass root level.

The wind of decentralization provided the theoretical justification for this historical trend. It began to blow on the continent in the early 1990s following the demand for more democracy after the bankruptcy of the one party states<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, after more than fifty years of independence, the African states continue to behave like exogenous institutions in the service of foreign interests. They have not been culturally accepted by the masses who still regard them as some kinds of Leviathan bent on sucking their blood. And this they largely succeeded in doing as the peasantry can prove by pointing at the deterioration of exchange terms which translates the fact that the peasants earn less today from their cash crop than fifty years ago<sup>8</sup>. It is therefore no surprise that they evince little commitment to the state as it stands today. All the prognostics put forward by the pundits of economic development in the sixties in terms of its increased efficiency by the expansion of the modern sector proved unrealistic. Not only the modern sector did not grow it also kept the traditional sector stunted. As a result, one does not speak any longer today of economic development but of poverty alleviation, a clear recognition that the previsions of the economists were wide off the mark<sup>9</sup>.

These inauspicious developments came to confirm the conclusions of Samir Amin about the workings of the capitalist economy. This latter, decades ago, coined the concepts of center and periphery. For him, the capitalist world is a whole with subtle links of solidarity binding all its parts

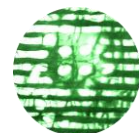
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6 See Harvey, David, 2005, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*, Oxford : Oxford University Press.

7 See Ki-Zerbo, Joseph, 2004, PP.92-93.

8 See Patnaik, Utsa and Sam Moyo, 2011, *The Agrarian Question in the Neo-liberal Era : Peasantry and Primitive Accumulation*, Oxford and Nairobi : fahamu.

9 See Omagu O. Donald, 2012, 'State, Politics and Globalisation', *JHSN*, vol.21, pp.70-98.







together. Thus, the underdevelopment of the periphery is the precondition for the development of the center. The center where are located all the industries and the banking system cannot survive if the fresh blood of accumulation is not kept flowing from the periphery<sup>10</sup>. What is being noticed at the level of each individual country is just the local replication of a worldwide phenomenon. In other words, dualism is a philosophy inscribed at the very heart of the capitalist system.

While this philosophy is concealed at the center, where prevails a more homogenous culture, elsewhere, in the capitalist world, it is the order of the day. No matter all effort at uniformity local cultures are always pitted against the cosmopolitan culture exhibited by the city-dwellers. These two different cultures epitomize two distinct kinds of capital accumulation: accumulation by appropriation and accumulation by capitalization. The first kind of accumulation concerns the looting of the wealth of the world which was set in motion since the days of the discovery of the New World and of which the transatlantic slave trade represented a major if tragic episode. However, the two kinds of accumulation are not necessarily chronological. At any time of its existence capitalism condones the co-existence of both. In Europe alone, accumulation by appropriation seems almost everywhere to be phased out to leave the stage free for accumulation by capitalization. There, workers, deprived of the means of production have no alternative but to sell their manpower as free individuals to the nascent industries. In Africa, it is only in the cities that can be seen a situation reminiscent of this process with the rise of a cosmopolitan culture there<sup>11</sup>.

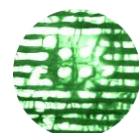
This is the cultural background to the undeclared economic warfare being waged by capitalism against the rest of the world. In recent years, it ushered in democracy which was heralded by the fall of the Berlin wall<sup>12</sup>. The qualifier 'African' affixed to the substantive 'democracy' conveys a pejorative meaning. It is a practice dating back to colonial times whereby 'African' is used to express the opinion that a universal concept has been subverted by the African practice of it. In the case in point, democracy which is a universal value underwent a perversion through its manipulation by African politicians. To quote the Nineteenth-century American President Abraham Lincoln democracy means no more than government of the people, by the people and for the people. When this definition is applied to Africa then it becomes clear that the concept has been travestied by African leaders to the point of becoming a charade of democracy.

Although, in the wake of the call for democracy, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s, most African countries have adopted all the trappings of democratic rule these institutions continue to function in a cultural void. Indeed, holding regular elections is not necessarily the manifestation of a sound democracy. More often than not, in Africa, the results of the ballot box are neither free nor fair. Due to the high percentage of analphabets in the African population election campaigns hardly try to convince voters on the basis of a program but appeal to ethnic solidarity to

1 0 See Amin, Samir, 1990, *Maldevelopment : Anatomy of a Global Failure*, London : Zed.

1 1 Idem. See also Amin, S., 1989, *Eurocentrism*, New York : Monthly Review Press.

1 2 Omagu O. Donald, 2012, pp.86-87.





win votes<sup>13</sup>. As a result, one cannot conclude that government is of the people even when the ethnic group in power happens to be the largest one in the country. Nor could we say that it is by the people since the state apparatus is simply taken over or even hijacked by a political coterie claiming victory and whose members contemplate to use it to recoup the expenses they incurred in buying votes. Finally, governments which came to power in that way cannot be said to be for the people. They are bound to labor under intractable problems of legitimacy. Apart from the fact that most African governments stand for foreign interests they owe their survival to their ability to suppress all dissenting voices represented by the excluded ethnic groups. These latter are in no position to play the role devolved in parliament to opposition since they have no faith in the fairness of the electoral process. A common saying in Africa boasts that no incumbent loses power in an election.

To ensure change of leadership at the top level some African constitutions obviously copied from the West the practice of limitation of mandates to two. But African rulers are quick to remove this bottleneck through the power of their overwhelming majority in parliament. As it becomes clear that democracy holds up no prospects for an alternative administration the frustrated politicians resort to violence to conquer power. To allay this nightmare more and more voices in international circles are calling for governments of national unity<sup>14</sup>. However, the problem with a government of national unity is that it often sacrifices individual competence on the altar of political expediency and thus postpones to the Greek calends the goal of economic development. This description may look like a caricature of the African regimes. But there is no intention to ridicule them. Except one or two countries it can be pinned down on any African government. The question to ask is: how did this subversion of democracy come about?

## **II The Role Played By Foreign Ideologies in The Making of The African Predicament**

It is not an overstatement to acknowledge that wrong ideologies are to blame for Africa's failure to develop. Since the pathetic interface with Europe in the fifteenth century AD. the continent has been subjected to the traumatic experience of cultural alienation. Perhaps, it is not unwarranted to describe in a few words this kind of mental pathology in which the patient is torn between the self and the other. The diagnosis of schizophrenia carefully described by Frantz Fanon as being the most common ailment affecting any colonized individual can be extrapolated to the whole African continent. Indeed, much as the symptoms of schizophrenia reveal, in the individual patient, a strong urge for self-destruction, often camouflaged in sporadic outbursts of hysteria, on a continental scale, Africans are geared towards cultural self annihilation<sup>15</sup>.

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1 3 Ibid.

1 4 See Shivji I.G., 2009, *Where is Uhuru ? Reflections on the Struggle for Democracy in Africa*, Nairobi and Oxford : fahamu books.

1 5 See Fanon, F., 1967, *Black Skins, White Masks*, New York : Good Press.



The story of cultural up rootedness is a tragic tale, dating back to the days of the Atlantic slave trade, which, to all intents and purposes, could not have been possible without disturbing the Africans, in the etymological sense of the world, that is, wrenching the individual slave from his people and culture. The violent image portrayed by slave auctions, in the New World, whereby family members were, violently, separated from one another, conveniently, symbolizes the cultural experience of the entire African continent. Admittedly, Europeans needed to devise an ideological justification of sorts to perform the crude and brutal job of appropriation of the natural and human resources of the continent. Needless to rehearse here all the theories and philosophical arguments invented by well-meaning European thinkers to prove the inferior status of the black man on the so-called ladder of progress<sup>16</sup>.

As regards enslavement proper the Hamitic theory resorts to biblical evidence to assume that, since time immemorial, the black man, whose ascendancy can be traced back to Cham, has been cursed by Noah to be the servant of the descendants of Sem and Jaffe<sup>17</sup>. This was the ideological atmosphere in which slavery prospered, in the Americas and later on in Africa, when this continent was brought under colonial rule. It was no surprise then that the contempt generated by such a malevolent thinking would leave in its trail some of the gross abuses and heinous crimes ever committed against humanity, in the Guinness book of records. But there is no gainsaying that the Africans did not sit idly by to watch this campaign of vilification run its course unchecked. On the contrary, they strongly objected to what they saw as a character assassination, condoned by the colonial ideology. Very soon, they found ways of resisting the cultural genocide of the African people first in Africa itself and, later on with a more articulate style of reasoning, in the Diaspora.

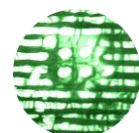
Pan Africanism is the intellectual movement which purports to debunk all the myths piled up by the Western World on the Africans over the centuries<sup>18</sup>. Its goal has been to assert the rights of the Africans as equal citizens of the world. Although one can reckon among their valuable precursors historical personages and continental intellectuals such as king Behanzin of Danxome, Almany Samory Toure, the Negus Menelik II of Aethiopia, Africanus Horton, Edward Blyden and Casely-Hayford it is with the iconic figures of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey that the pan African movement actually gathered momentum and reached the world stage<sup>19</sup>. Both encapsulated in their lives all the aspirations and fears of the African people which they devised political means to tackle. Yet in a world largely defined by the white man who still determines the rules of its control their chances of success were very slim.

1 6 See Hegel, G.W., 1902, *The Philosophy of History*, George Bell and Sons. See also Gould, S.J., 1981, *The Mismeasure of Man*, New York : W.W. Norton.

1 7 See Diop, C.A., 1973, *Nations nègres et culture*, Paris, Présence Africaine, Preface to the 1954 edition, pp.13-23.

1 8 Ibid.

1 9 See Neville Alexander, "New Meanings of Pan-Africanism in the Era of Globalisation' paper delivered at the *fourth annual Frantz Fanon Lecture*, Chicago : De Paul University, October 8, 2003. See also Esedebe P.Olisanwuche, 1994, *Pan-Africanism, the Idea and Movement 1776-1991*, second edition, Washington, D.C. : Howard University Press, pp.4-5.



Each one of them assumed the leadership of a particular brand of pan Africanism. W.E.B. Du Bois was the foremost advocate of universal pan Africanism which insists on the equal citizenship of the African-Americans within the American society. He fought, tirelessly, to prove the vacuity of all the allegations made by European thinkers such as Hegel about the black race and to ground his plea of equality on the shared abilities of all branches of our common human race in every field of human activity<sup>20</sup>. In the political context of his days which excluded Africans from all political arenas both in America and on the continent universal pan Africanism looked too radical to be embraced by many Africans and therefore was doomed to failure. For instance, for the French colonial establishment, universal pan Africanism was an anathema which they fought tooth and nail to root out from all their colonies, especially Dahomey, where intellectuals such as Marc Tovalou Houenou and Louis Hunkanrin were busy spreading its good news<sup>21</sup>.

Viewed from this perspective Marcus Garvey's brand of pan Africanism which seeks to claim a territory to the African people away from Western influence and tutelage where they could freely assert themselves as autonomous human beings sounded even more of an utopia<sup>22</sup>. Indeed, it was in this light of indignant dreamer that Garvey was seen by most of his contemporaries and by a large chunk of posterity. Even though it was territorial pan Africanism which eventually won the day at the Manchester conference in 1945 its implementation was fraught with difficulties<sup>23</sup>. Yet one would think that as the independence of the African countries was drawing near Garvey's dreams could become a feasible proposal. Thus, from the third pan African conference on the pan African movement gradually shifted focus from universalism to nationalism.

However, none of the two brands were actually African in its outlook and conception. One can even say that they were both reactionary movements which were content with proving that the African-Americans are endowed with the same intellectual abilities as their White fellow-citizens and therefore should be given due consideration by the latter. This reasoning took place in a world dominated by whites and in which the African-Americans were allegedly fighting a losing battle to secure their rightful place. Even when Marcus Garvey advocated a territory for the African-Americans in which they could organize themselves to their convenience his description of the black nation-state appeared like a replica of the white world he was doing battle with<sup>24</sup>. In other words in reaction to the denial of their humanity the pan African thinkers tended to lay too much emphasis on what they deemed to be universal in all men.

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- 2 0 See Lewis, David Levering, 2000, *W.E.B. Du Bois : The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*, New York : Henry Holt.
- 2 1 See Zinsou, Emile Derlin and Zoumênou, Luc, 2004, *Kojo Tovalou Houenou, Précurseur, 1887-1936. Pannégrisme et modernité*. Paris : Maisonneuve et Larose, pp.33-37.
- 2 2 See Esedebe, 1994, pp.57-59.
- 2 3 See Bankie, B.F. And K.Mchombu, eds. 2008, *Pan-Africanism, African Nationalism : Strengthening the Unity of Africa and its Diaspora*, Trenton, New Jersey : the Red Sea Press.
- 2 4 See Esedebe, 1994, pp.60-63.







By so doing they were bound to sacrifice on this altar of universalism the peculiarities of the African culture. Of course, a writer such as Edward Blyden has already insisted on the difference between the African culture and the Western civilization but he did not attempt to draw all the conclusions of his strictures but rather subsumed this difference under another universalism, Islam which is, according to him, a religious doctrine more suitable to the African ethos or way of life<sup>25</sup>. The same remarks apply to negritude which hankered after dissolving the African emotion into the universal French reason<sup>26</sup>. As for African personality, even though it stressed the peculiarities of the African culture, it proposed no clear political agenda to take Africans to the promised land<sup>27</sup>.

So, when, in the 1940s, the battleground of the pan Africanist ideal moved to Africa, one can assert that pretty little of the impressive work, already done by the ethnographers on the African people, infiltrated the political thinking of the day. Arguably, the preliminary conferences leading up to the foundation of OAU were only meant to resolve the contest between universal pan Africanism and territorial pan Africanism<sup>28</sup>. As is common knowledge, Nkrumah's appeal to his peers for a continental government did not prosper, leaving African countries no option but to prosecute economic development at the national level. However, nationalism is a poor version of territorial pan Africanism à la Marcus Garvey. All the African nation-states fell short of the dreams of the founding fathers and even the regional organizations which were later set up as an afterthought to cater for the ideal of continental government could not live up to expectation<sup>29</sup>. There are two sets of reasons for this.

On the international plane, nationalism which is a by-product of territorial pan Africanism could not serve as a development ideology simply because it could not have come at a worse time. The African countries gained independence during the Cold War when Soviet Union and the USA were locking horns over universal dominion<sup>30</sup>. There could be therefore no ideology other than those propagated by the two super powers, that is, capitalism and socialism. The African countries were forced to choose either of the ideological camp and any attempt at imaginative initiatives was looked askance at by one of the super power as a disguised courting of the opposite camp. Sometimes, mere premonitions were enough for them to sponsor all kinds of subversive actions against any African regime found guilty of such political misdemeanors. Even the non-aligned movement which was first viewed as an effort to keep a strict neutrality between the two super

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2 5 See Blyden, Edward W., *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, 1888.

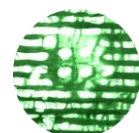
2 6 See Senghor, Sedar Léopold, 1964, *Liberté I : Négritude et humanisme*, Paris : Editions du Seuil.

2 7 On African Personality see Azikiwe, Nnamdi, *Renascent Africa*, Lagos, 1937.

2 8 See Mabior, John Garang, 2008, 'Pan-Africanism and African Nationalism : Putting the African Nation in Context – the Case of the Sudan' in Bankie and Mchombu eds., pp.66-71.

2 9 See Badat, Saleem, 2009, *Black Man : You are on your Own*, Braamfontein : Steve Biko Foundation.

3 0 See Sola Akinrinade and Amadu Sesay, eds., 1988, *Africa in the Post Cold War International System*, London : Printer, p.75.





powers could not always hold its ground and evinced strong leanings towards one of the two camps<sup>31</sup>.

Some of the African political actors who lived through this period were very well aware of the peculiar predicament of Africa whose people were yearning for development. But their call for African solutions to African problems sounded hollow in face of the obligation to implement them under the umbrella of one of the super powers. One such leader was President Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal who preached the ideology of African socialism. When his first Prime Minister, Mamadou Dia took this ideological identity seriously and moved forward to set in place all the economic institutions stemming from his program of rural development, he was forced to resign by the national bourgeoisie who saw his policies as inimical to their economic interests<sup>32</sup>. Senghor was at a loss to support his prime minister because he could hardly ignore his membership of the capitalist camp. Hence his heart-breaking decision to part company with a faithful friend and competent political collaborator<sup>33</sup>.

Other African leaders did not have to face such a harrowing political experience. They were content with conjuring up an African cultural trait discretely selected by them to be used as a kind of opium of the people strong enough to keep them dancing and praising the national leader. One can recall here the politics of the recourse to authenticity propounded by President Mobutu under the protection of the USA or Eyadema's entertainment groups called upon to grace the welcoming ceremony of visiting heads of state<sup>34</sup>. Still worse in this rubric was President François Tombalbaye's politics of Yondo. Here a hard pressed African leader was falling back on an African institution taken out of context, that is, circumcision, which was used, opportunistically, as an identity claim to fight his political opponents<sup>35</sup>.

But in the socialist camp also nobody took seriously the attempts made by certain African leaders to adapt their universal ideology to African realities. Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa* was constantly derided as a kind of collectivism the failure of which was not only expected but greeted with delight in the opposite camp<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, hardly anyone took notice of Nkrumah's *consciencism* which was seen as a poor imitation of Marx and Staline. Indeed, the presence of the renowned internationalist communist, George Padmore, in his entourage, made many raise eyebrow on his most carefully thought-out statements on African development<sup>37</sup>. Given this atmosphere of suspicion, less gifted

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3 1 Ibid.

3 2 For an eyewitness account of these events by a cabinet minister see Lô Magatte, 1985, *Sénégal, l'heure du choix*, Paris : Editions L'Harmattan, pp.45-81.

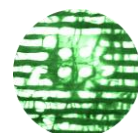
3 3 Ibid.

3 4 See Braeckman Colette, 1992, *Le dinosaure, le Zaïre de Mobutu*, Paris Fayard, pp.168-175.

3 5 François Tombalbaye used to be a friend of Mobutu after whom he also changed his first name to Ngarta. See Braeckman, p.169.

3 6 See Nyerere, J.K., 1966, 'The Dilemma of the Pan-Africanist' in J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, Oxford ; Oxford University Press, pp.207-217.

3 7 See Nkrumah, Kwame, 1974, *Consciencism, Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonisation*, London : Panaf Books Ltd.





African leaders would simply declare their allegiance to the Soviet or the Western camp and wait quietly to reap the dividends of their decision in terms of development aid to line their pockets<sup>38</sup>.

But, as one country after the other fell short of the standard of Western inspired democracy, the stage was set for military coups and one party regimes. Admittedly, these coups were directly financed by the super powers in their bid to gain ground in a particular region. The tug-of-war lasted till the end of the Cold War symbolized by the fall of the Berlin wall in 1990. This event raised the consciousness of the African elite who were clamoring already for more democracy. However, the backing they could get from the West was with strings attached. For the Western World the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the final victory of its ideology. Therefore, the democratic dispensation of the 1990s achieved little beyond securing the trappings of democratic rule such as regular elections and institutions of separation of power<sup>39</sup>.

For internal reasons, as well, nationalism could not afford an ideology of development. The founding fathers of Africa were indeed too optimistic about the African agents whom colonialism bequeathed to them. They did not heed Frantz Fanon's warnings that they were psychologically distraught and incapable of harnessing all the potentials of a country towards development<sup>40</sup>. On the contrary, they were prone to harm themselves and their country by self-inflicted injuries. As it could be expected the elite who were taught by the colonizers, notably the French, to behave like African Frenchmen were ready to damp all the initiatives likely to contradict the biddings of the former colonial masters<sup>41</sup>. This elite never took proper notice of the peculiar situation of the continent which never evolved in the past a national bourgeoisie seen elsewhere in the world as a tool of development. As a result, most African countries lacked the capital to be invested in particular fields. Hence, the recourse to state capitalism<sup>42</sup>.

Finally, with the Africans, land has never been privatized. It remained, throughout history, a collective asset freely available to everyone. The lack of importance accorded to land as a scarce resource gives a different outlook to African patriotism. In Africa, where territoriality is secondary to blood relation in the definition of commitment, patriotism can never reach the point of jingoism seen in the West. But if commitment to people matters more than commitment to land as it is daily

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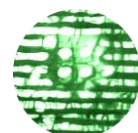
3 8 See for instance the cases of Somalia under Siad Bare, of Aethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam, benin under Kérékou, Angola under Agosthino Neto and Congo Brazzaville under Mariem Ngouabi and later Denis Sasso Nguesso etc...

3 9 See Stiglitz J., 2002, *Globalization and its Discontents*, London : Allen Lane – The Penguin Press.

4 0 See Fanon, F., 1967, op.cit.

4 1 For a criticism of the African elite see Kabou, Axelle, 1991, *Et si l'Afrique refusait le développement ?* Paris : Editions de l'Harmattan.

4 2 See Shivji, I.G., 2009, *Accumulation in an African Periphery : A Theoretical Framework*, Dar es Salaam : Mkuki na Nyota.



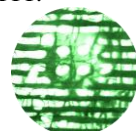


shown by the propensity of the Africans to migrate then it would be difficult to foster, as in the West, democratic institutions appealing to ideas rather than feelings<sup>43</sup>.

For the time being, the democratic ideal is fast fading, on the continent, leaving the gloomy prospect of the return to military rule because it did not take into account any of the parameters described above. In the last part of this paper I shall further probe the criteria for an authentic African ideology capable of inspiring the development of the continent.

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4 3 See Laura Wallace, ed. 'Africa : Adjusting to the Challenges of Globalization' Proceedings of a Seminar held in Paris, May, 4-5, 1988, Washington : International Monetary Fund Publication Services, 1999, p.111.







### **III Footprints to An African Ideology : Lessons From the Western Sudan**

The dualism of the African countries which, according to economists, reflects the division of third world economies into two sectors is not a recent phenomenon<sup>44</sup>. This structuration of the geographical space, to all indications, goes back to the beginning of long distance trade in certain parts of the world. Thus, as early as the fourteenth century, the North African historian, Ibn Khaldun, summarized the whole history of the Maghrib in terms of a pathetic struggle between two domains: the domain of civilization and the domain of barbarity. The first domain covers all the trading cities of the Maghrib whereas the second domain encompasses the vast desert<sup>45</sup>. Life in the cities was very unstable as no ruling dynasty was able to hold power for more than two or three generations. Within this timespan the desert would breed rough and ready men allured by the luxurious life of the cities which they dreamed to storm and control. But the same fate awaited them because, by indulging in hubris, they inevitably grew effete and could not resist the onslaught of battle ready horsemen surging from the steppes of the desert. So, in an endless circle of rise and decline, civilization was built up and later destroyed leaving no respite to the wheel of destiny which cancelled out any hope for a linear development<sup>46</sup>.

Without falling into the trap of exaggeration, one can assume that what is being stigmatized here by Ibn Khaldun obtained in many parts of the African continent where due to unequal redistribution of wealth only the city-states could boast of any enjoyment of the amenities of life. This situation prepared the ground for civil unrest, especially, in times of succession dispute. There is, however, a rider to this statement. Contrary to the situation prevailing in the Maghrib, in the Western Sudan, competition for power did not necessarily result in an unavoidable political chaos. How did the states of the Western Sudan manage to keep law and order over many centuries in the face of a glaring disparity in wealth distribution?

The Western Sudan was this part of West-Africa which, in the Middle Ages, witnessed the emergence of kingdoms and empires of exceptional dimensions and the reputation of which went far beyond the African shores<sup>47</sup>. Indeed, the largest among these states, the empire of Songhaï, was almost coterminous with West-Africa itself extending as it did from the River Senegal to lake Chad. Yet, according to the Arab visitors who travelled across the length and the breadth of this vast tract of land law and order was everywhere maintained to the point that they never expressed any forebodings neither for their own security nor for that of their property<sup>48</sup>. To go by their own testimonies, ethnicity has never been felt in the empires and kingdoms of the Western Sudan as a discriminatory factor of exclusion as it is noticeable today.

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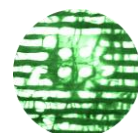
4 4 Rostow, W.W., 1960, *Les étapes de la croissance économique*, Paris.

4 5 See Lacoste, Yves, 1985, Ibn Khaldoun, p.125.

4 6 Idem, p.124.

4 7 See Cheikh Anta Diop, 1987, *L'Afrique noire pré-coloniale*, 2<sup>de</sup> édition, Paris : Présence Africaine, pp.88-96. For an insight into the importance of geographical space to state formation in precolonial Africa see Ki-Zerbo, Joseph, 2008, *Histoire critique de l'Afrique*, Dakar : Panafrika, pp.83-85.

4 8 See Cheikh Anta Diop, 1987, pp.97-101.



According to them, it would appear that, even in the most remote village of these polities, the authority of the king or emperor was always felt giving the impression that no part of West-Africa, in those days, lived as an island or was landlocked. Even though the villagers were under the authority of a land chief they were also aware that political authority pertained to the emperor. All the peoples of this region cherished this idea and seldom contemplated secession from their political overlords. Obviously then, it was in the consciousness of this double allegiance that lay the miracle of a sustained peace and tranquility reported by the Arab writers<sup>49</sup>. Double allegiance was also an apposite political device to administer a diversity of land and peoples under the conditions then prevailing in West-Africa, characterized by poor communications.

As far back as the early writings on the Soninke Empire of Ghana it was reported on this trait of West-African administration. The Soninke people from which the aristocracy of the country was derived owed a direct allegiance to the king who was regarded as both their political and religious leader. Meanwhile, the motley of conquered ethnic groups brought together in the empire and forming a large proportion of its population was allowed to continue to obey their traditional rulers<sup>50</sup>. Sometimes, these latter were assisted in discharging their duty by a representative of the emperor who exerted an eminent if distant authority. Dual administration became a necessity in West-Africa because the Africans entertained the belief that no conquest can ever sever the bonds between the people of a land and the earth deities watching over it<sup>51</sup>.

This realisation always forced the conqueror to strike a political deal with the conquered peoples, whereby they were left alone, as far as taking instructions from the original owners of the land was concerned. In more compact kingdoms, such as the Mossi confederacy, earth chiefs duplicated in every village the authority of the political rulers<sup>52</sup>. This political consensus kept peace all over West-Africa where land was always seen as a collective property to which everyone could have free access. The duty of the earth chief was to allocate, periodically, this scarce resource between the competing extended families and to perform all the customary rites necessary for its fertility. To shield him against any external influence which may disturb the performance of his religious duties the conversion of the earth chief to Islam was restricted in certain parts of the Western Sudan. This was the case in the most islamic regime of Askya Muhammed where, contrary to all expectations, the head of the traditional cult was made a dignitary of the royal court<sup>53</sup>.

The second pillar of the political stability of the Western Sudan were the extended families which never ceased to play a political role. At the village level, the heads of the extended families formed the village council whose members regarded the village chief as just a *primus inter pares*. This latter may not be allowed to meddle in the affairs of a particular family. As we move to the higher

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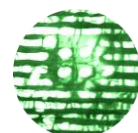
4 9 Ibid.

5 0 See Ki-Zerbo, Joseph, 2008, p.20.

5 1 Idem, pp.66-69.

5 2 Idem, p.28.

5 3 Cheikh Anta Diop, 1987, pp.107-108.



level of kingdom and empire extended families continued to play prominent roles. Preferment to certain offices depended largely on membership of an extended family to which devolve the exercise of this political right<sup>54</sup>. This administrative arrangement was closely adhered to by all the kingdoms and empires of the region except perhaps the Empire of Songhaï where appointment to office became the prerogative of the emperor. As is common knowledge, Askya Mohammed, the founder of this regime, was advancing the cause of Islam at the expense of the African tradition.

However, the attribution of political offices to a selected group of extended families did not necessarily overrule the law of merit as a criterion of selection. Admittedly, to preserve their reputation such families always endeavoured to choose the best candidate for a given office. This rule applied to the highest of all political offices competition for which was restricted to a handful of families. For instance, in Walo and Djolof, only candidates born of very noble princesses could pretend to the throne<sup>55</sup>. This nobility was determined here by the closest link to Ndyadya Ndyane, the legendary ancestor.

The legend of Ndyadya Ndyane which was an illustration of a widespread African *Wandersagen* was just a mythical rendition of the process of state formation in the Western Sudan. The founders of the states of the Western Sudan were, in their majority, foreign adventurers whose mastery of a particular skill has been instrumental in solving a political conundrum. They were the hunter-kings or smith-kings of the West-African tradition. But their communities of adoption did not easily forget their foreign extraction. Only by establishing blood relation with the people through marriage with a local woman could they legitimise their rule. From this rule stemmed the rotative system of succession to the throne prevalent in the region<sup>56</sup>.

Thus, the Arabic records on the Western Sudan are unanimous in acknowledging that in most states the rule of succession to the throne was matrilinear. In Ghana, we learn that the heir apparent was the son of the king's sister<sup>57</sup>. Even when islamic influence disrupted the smooth functioning of this rule it was never shelved as could be attested in the succession crisis which plagued the empire of Mali when it was tottering on the brink of collapse<sup>58</sup>. In this crisis, maternal uncles, sometimes, played leading roles. No matter their dedication to the sharia or Islamic law which dictates direct succession from father to son Askya Mohammed and his successors also faced tremendous challenge to their innovation. Hence the endless war of attrition tearing apart the empire on the eve of the Moroccan invasion. But the political crisis in Songhaï ran deeper than a mere succession crisis.

What was illustrated by the case of Songhaï was the relevance of an Islamic ideology of power, in the context of the Western Sudan. In the Western Sudan, the kings were not only political leaders.

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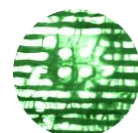
5 4 Idem, p.60 et p.77.

5 5 Idem, p.52.

5 6 See Ki-Zerbo, Joseph, 2008, pp.77-78.

5 7 Idem, p.20.

5 8 Cheikh Anta Diop, 1987, pp.54-55.





They were also religious figures and it was the combination of both powers in the same hands which inspired respect and obedience. Once Askya Mohammed divested himself of the religious duties to the profit of the ulama of his entourage he was bound to raise a great deal of suspicion among his own people whose allegiance was put to the test<sup>59</sup>. But let no one idealise the situation in the Western Sudan in the Middle Ages. There is no perfection on earth. The kingdoms and empires of the Western Sudan, like the African nation-states of today, were very vulnerable. Like their homologues of today they also depended on foreign trade for their survival the periodical shift of which may suddenly bring them to their knees.

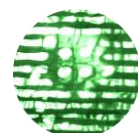
But even when kingdoms and empires came and went, at a speedy pace, the people of West-Africa who, in their majority, lived in villages, kept their cultural heritage. The reasons of this political success were no other than the political benefits springing from certain values such as devolution of power to the grass root level. These benefits could be spelt out in terms of political consensus, legitimization of power through the womenfolk, availability of land and the combination of political and religious authority in the same hands. But, above all, the African people entertained a far different idea of economic activity, that is, the business of production and redistribution of wealth. For them, economics was not motivated by the search for individual profit but by the service to the community. For instance, those who were engaged in long distance trade were mostly state officials and the gains accruing to them were meant to be redistributed in order to safeguard the established norms of society. Any deviation from this rule of redistribution of wealth caused tremendous distress.

But, we can no longer return to this lost paradise. How then to make sense today of the value system on which rested the political stability of the states of the Western Sudan? Even though earth chiefs are out and gone contemporary Africans can still draw inspiration from their experience by pledging support to the quest of consensus in their political practice. In Africa, the democratic rule dictating that winners take all cannot work. The political imagination of the African elite must be gingered up to find ways of including the so-called losers in any political dispensation. This could be easily done at the top level if devolution of power has been effective at the bottom. This is the present-day meaning of dual allegiance which in the past permitted to local people to continue to obey their hereditary chiefs while at the same time recognising the power of the king or emperor. In the Western Sudan, this emperor was all the more respected because he combined in his person religious and political powers. Today, this is no longer possible but why not require of any candidate to political leadership on the continent evidence of his commitment to the people he intends to rule? This could be a way of translating practically the value of embodiment of religious beliefs.

Another value which may prove difficult to live by nowadays is matrilinearity. But, beneath this rule of succession to the throne one can easily read society's eagerness to relinquish to women their

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5 9 Idem, p.69.



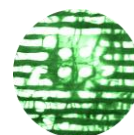




right to determine what is legitimate and what is not. This is still possible today if all African women were made to be very noble women as in Walo and Djolof. Such noble women were so politically aware as to have the last word in the choice of the heir apparent. Nowadays, education of the womenfolk which represent more than half of any African population can still realise this miracle. Finally, throughout the Western Sudan access to land was free to everyone. Unlike the situation prevailing today in many parts of the continent land was not privatised. Therefore, at any time it could afford a safety valve to the millions of people who fell victims of capital accumulation. These people were better off than their modern counterparts as they could also benefit from the redistributive activity underlining economic pursuits.

## **Conclusion**

The people of Africa have not yet reaped the promised dividends of globalization. In the borderless world which it advocates they are still regarded as second class citizens because both politically and economically they find themselves worse off now than twenty years ago. Politically, all the African countries embraced democracy and have been running political parties which regularly compete in elections organized in predetermined time to win political power. But their practice of democracy amounts to no more than a sham with all the institutions guaranteeing separation of power working like empty shells in a cultural vacuum. Economically, the African nation-states were still divided into two sectors at war with each other in the face of a glaring poverty. It is argued in this paper that no matter how gloomy this picture may look it bears out the workings of the capitalist system the objective of which has never been to develop Third World countries but to extract surplus value from them via the two kinds of accumulation: accumulation by appropriation and accumulation by capitalisation. The first kind of accumulation is the preserve of the countryside while the second characterizes the more cosmopolitan culture of the cities. However the states of the Western Sudan which were not immune to this exploitation in the Middle Ages found ways in alleviating its negative effects on their population. It is argued in this paper that this political success can be laid at the door of their ideology. To prove this point an attempt is made to probe the political ideology of the states of the Western Sudan the cornerstone of which was the principle of double allegiance. However, there is no easy transition between this glorious past and today's gloom and doom. In conclusion, it is suggested that the African elite must imaginatively translate the cultural values which sustained the states of the Western Sudan over the centuries into practical constitutional proposals.





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