The Past as Prologue: Deconstructing South Africa’s Liberation History
GARTH LE PERE

Lorsqu’on combattait « l’axe du colonialisme Alger-le Cap » : en hommage à Nelson Mandela
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The Maghreb on the Eve of the Arab Uprising
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Challenging the Eurocentric View of History
LANSANA KEITA

Le Mouvement national au Maghreb : le temps des acteurs politiques
AMAR MOHAND-AMER

Notes for Contributors

The Africa Review of Books presents a biannual review of works on Africa in the social sciences, humanities and creative arts. It is also intended to serve as a forum for critical analyses, reflections and debates about Africa. As such, the Review solicits book reviews, reviews of articles and essays that are in line with the above objectives. Contributions that traverse disciplinary boundaries and encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and debate are particularly welcome.

Reviews and essays should be original contributions: they should not have been published elsewhere prior to their submission, nor should they be under consideration for any other publication at the same time.

The recommended length of the reviews is 2,000 words, with occasional exceptions of up to 3,000 words for review articles or commissioned essays. Notes (which should be submitted as endnotes rather than as footnotes) should be used sparingly.

Contributions should begin with the following publication details: title of the book; author; publisher; number of pages; price; and ISBN.

Contributions are best sent electronically as e-mail attachments. If sent by post as hard copy, they should be accompanied by a CD in the MS Word or RTF format. Authors should also send with their submissions their full address and institutional affiliation as well as a short bio-data (including a sample of recent publications) for inclusion in the “Notes on Contributors” section.

Authors are entitled to two copies of the issue of the Review in which their contribution is published.

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The historicity of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) will always be subject to contestation. Their moral battle for freedom and justice was, of course, arrayed against the ideologicaleshadows and noxious regime. However, in the operational milieu of struggle, they were up against an elaborate state apparatus of coercion and violence buttressed by a legally-sanctioned infrastructure of repression, intimidation, and torture which was capable of carrying out murderous acts against apartheid’s opponents or silencing them through draconian laws.

Thus, when the ANC and the SACP were forced into exile and the SACP declared its resort to armed struggle in December 1960 with the setting up of the joint armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK – The Spear of the Nation) in July 1961, they perforce had to function under a penumbra of secrecy, intrigue, paranoia, and internal power tussles as their flanks were increasingly exposed to betrayal, factionalism, intelligence failures, and infiltration. Whether the relationship between the ANC and SACP in reality was symbiotic or dialectical – or a combination of both – is a subject that continues to provoke debate and stir passions, often in a manner that is highly tendentious and partisan. It is well known that senior ANC leaders were also members of the SACP and President Mandela’s professed SACP affiliation is subject to differing interpretations. Ellis’s book thus falls into the genre of historical scholarship that seeks to unearth the exact nature of this highly controversial relationship as it took shape in the crucible of the formative exile years from 1960 to 1990.

The essential ambition of this book is to demonstrate – through careful analysis and meticulous scholarship – that the SACP was able to penetrate the ANC in exile to the point where mainly white communists were able to exercise a much more profound but undue organisational, ideological, and political influence over the ANC than is usually conceded. Ex hypothesi, it would seem then that this influence then continued to shape the ANC’s style of governance since coming to power in South Africa in 1994 and helps to explain its many pathologies as a ruling party.

The book under review is a sequel to a 2012 work, Comrades Against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile, which was published in 1992 and co-authored with an ANC and SACP member under the pseudonym of Tshepo Sechaba. This book seeks to fill the lacunae in the broader narrative for public consumption’ (p. 310). In this much more extensive and richer analytical and historical enterprise, Ellis seeks to expose the mythology of the ANC and the narrative of SACP’s struggle as he interprets it.

In a lively polemic which he stirred in the pages of South Africa’s Mail & Guardian, Ellis claimed that ‘[s]uccessive ANC governments have done everything to bury the myth of the armed struggle, which was always more theatrical than real’ (3 January 2014). In Ellis’s view, the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, where Cuban and Angolan forces purportedly defeated the might of the South African defence force, is a case in point (p. 296). Moreover, he holds that ‘[t]he ANC doesn’t just spin the latest news – it suppresses key historical facts and invents others’ (Mail & Guardian, 24 January 2014). In going about his exposé, Ellis has consulted archival sources in Botswana, Germany, Ghana, and the UK, but the most extensive material comes from South Africa, spread across six cities and one suburb and eight institutions. And some of these sources have only recently been made available. A substantial nine page bibliography of published books, chapters, articles, newspapers and magazines is complemented by unpublished manuscripts. Hence, despite its controversial and often coldly dispersive nature, this book of eight chapters must be taken seriously as it takes the reader through a chronologically arranged but often very disturbing tour of the critical years of struggle from 1960-1990.

In setting the scene in the opening chapter, entitled ‘Call to Arms’, Ellis frames the basic organisational and normative logic of the struggle. Here, we see the influence of white communists such as Arthur Goldreich and Percy ‘Jack’ Hodgson, who had military experience, but there is also the roles played by SACP Central Committee members Yusuf Dadoo, Michael Harmel, Joe Mathews, and Vella Pillay in shaping relations with Moscow and Beijing. While not totally eschewing links with China, the strategic tilt towards the Soviet Union came in the vortex of the onset of the Cold War and Moscow’s unequivocal and greater material support for Africa’s liberation movements. Moreover, Marxist-Leninist ideology retained an explanatory resonance for South Africa as a case of ‘colonialism of a special kind’ (p. 16). A critical turning point was a SACP meeting in December 1960 outside Johannesburg, which was attended by the likes of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and Govan Mbeki (the father of Thabo Mbeki). While the group discussed the state of emergency and the banning of the ANC, the real significance according to Ellis was the inauguration of the armed struggle and the birth of Umkhonto we Sizwe or MK (even though this was opposed by Moses Kotane, General Secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa, as it was then called). Remarkably, the ANC president at the time and Nobel Peace Laureate, Albert Luthuli, and other senior colleagues were unaware of the agreement to resort to armed struggle. At this point, Ellis enters the debate about Mandela’s alleged membership of the SACP. His semantic deconstruction and deductive reasoning (pp. 21-23) does nothing to discredit the widely held view that this was more of a tactical ploy than a strongly held ideological conviction on the part of Mandela. The SACP ideology and strategist, Joe Slovo, could therefore complain after Mandela’s Africa tour in January 1962: ‘We sent Nelson off to Africa a Communist and he came back an African Nationalist’ (p. 33). Mandela’s real or alleged SACP membership is really much ado about nothing by Ellis. It seems rather cynical to suggest that African nationalists in the ANC were co-opted into the SACP’s Central Committee simply so that they could serve the instrumental end of communists taking control of MK and the armed struggle.

This notion then helps to feed Ellis’s thesis of the SACP as the force and deus ex machina behind the ANC in exile and in the ensuing chapters he tends to be quite persuasive. In the next chapter, ‘External Mission’, Ellis shows that the ANC in exile was undergoing testing times. He says: ‘Not only was the ANC almost penniless, but it was struggling to set up an effective administration abroad’ (p. 45). By contrast, the SACP was increasing its influence over the ANC and in the ensuing chapters he writes that ‘insecurity and paranoia, and internal power tussles have proved increasingly capable and adept at using ANC rank-and-file as agents to extract information. Another important event of this period was the ‘Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns’ in then Rhodesia in 1967-68, which is often romanticised in ANC annals and ‘...hailed by the ANC as a success’ (p. 63). What started out as a collaborative military exercise between MK and the Rhodesian People’s Revolutionary Army, with the ultimate aim of carving an infiltration route into South Africa, ‘...was notable for its lack of planning’ (p. 62) and ‘...was a resounding military failure’ (p. 70), such that MK suffered 48 fatalities at the hands of better trained Rhodesian forces.

The disillusionment of the Rhodesian campaigns was followed by a memorandum written by one of its veterans, Chris Hani, who alleged that the ANC in exile was suffering from a ‘deep crisis’ of leadership. He pinpointed its army commander, Joe Modise, and the secretary-general, Duma Nokwe, as most culpable for the ANC’s parlous state of affairs (p. 69). A possible response led by the SACP Central Committee was to open ANC membership to all races in order to increase the leadership pool and hence the importance of the Morogoro Conference that took place in Tanzania in April 1969: Coloureds (of mixed descent) of the ANC's African Nationalist were allowed to join the ANC. It could not even formally join the ANC but could not serve on its central decision-making structures. The creation of a new body, the Revolutionary Council, to steer the armed struggle was especially salutary for the SACP since Council members would include all minority groups. The Party further triumphed with the adoption of the strategy and tactics document authored by Joe Slovo which did not advocate for a new political and military contours that would increase the involvement of the urban masses in the liberation struggle (p. 77).

The SACP’s guiding role with regard to the ANC was further augmented after Chris Hani’s assassination. His killer became ‘...the youngest-ever members of the Central Committee’ (p. 82). Ellis is careful to document ANC and SACP developments in exile in the context of political events in South Africa and internationally. At the time when apartheid was increasingly subject to international opprobrium and a growing sanctions regime, its architects were turning the state into an expansive bureaucratic system of security...
ANC camps were increasingly exposed to the growing number of security threats in Angola at a time when the South African Republican Army (p. 137-38). In exile, the ANC was able to set up major camps for new MK recruits, crucially following the massive influx of young men and women after the Soweto students’ uprising in 1976. Ellis devotes the entire chapter four to ‘New Strategies’. He pays special attention to the most important battle at Novo Categue near Angola. Not only were there ‘… frequent allegations of sexual abuse of women by bank officials’ (p. 119), but in what is now part of ANC folklore, the Black September incident in 1977 resulted in as many as 500 people being affected by food poisoning with word spreading ‘…that the incident was the work of enemy agents…’ (p. 120). Meanwhile, a study tour of Vietnam in October and November 1978 was led by Oliver Tambo and included Slovo, Modise and others. Slovo, as a stalwart of the SAPC, came away most impressed believing ‘…that political struggle should be the basis of armed struggle’ (p. 123). This led to the increasing use of ‘armed propaganda’ by way of dramatic sabotage attacks against the apartheid regime, together with violent confrontations and international isolation, as the three main pillars of struggle. Thus on 1 June 1980, MK launched a spectacular attack on Sasol’s oil facility (p. 138). Ellis goes on to show the deleterious effects of international isolation and sanctions not only in the areas of sports and culture but also as a result of the arms and oil embargos. The apartheid state, moreover, was in the throes of a fiscal crisis triggered by the OPEC oil price increases (p. 120), but in what is now part of ANC folklore, the Black September incident in 1977 resulted in as many as 500 people being affected by food poisoning with word spreading ‘…that the incident was the work of enemy agents…’ (p. 120). 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Day. 10 February 2014), Adekeye Adebajo, the Nigerian scholar who heads the think-tank Centre for Conflict Resolution in South Africa, accused Ellis of Afrophobia. Adebajo’s strident critique of Ellis is based on the latter’s controversial writings about Libyan and Sierra Leone’s civil wars as well as Ellis’s perceived patronising attitude about what needs to be done to rebuild Africa. Ellis can speak for himself; as he has done in responding to Thandika Mkandawire’s accusation that his work on Liberia was ‘poorly veiled racism’. However, for this reviewer, even though External Mission might contain many uncomfortable assertions and unpleasant claims and sometimes suffers from polemical overkill, it is a book that should be engaged with on its scholarly merits. This is because Ellis has managed to excavate and elaborate certain neglected aspects of the ANC’s exile and war experience. And as an exegetical exercise, he has elucidated the dominant and problematic dynamic of SAPC influence over the ANC, delineating its main themes and actors as well as highlighting their inconsistencies, ambiguities, and human frailties. Ellis’s book is thus certainly testimony to the philosopher Spinoza’s famous maxim: “All men certainly seek their advantage, but seldom as sound reason dictates; in most cases appetite is their only guide, and in their desires and judgements of what is beneficial they are carried away by their passions, which take no account of the future or of anything else.”

One of the interesting side effects of the uprisings across the Arab region, or more specifically of the locations and sequencing of those uprisings, has been the increased visibility of the Maghreb on the academic radar. Study of the North African countries – in the English language at least – had previously been the preserve of a relatively small contingent of scholars. This was due not least to the problem of language. To study diplomatic or political history, to engage with archives and institutional connections, and to examine economic reports and civil society documents, having close familiarity with the French language was a must. Moreover, one aspect of the colonial legacy was the deposition of significant pertinent archives in France and a certain degree of French jealousy over its intellectual sphere of influence – mirror images of Britain’s own claims over the study of the Maghreb and the Persian Gulf. The colonial carve up of territory had become a post-colonial partition of research interest. To some extent, the American academic community managed to fill the gap. The American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS) had established research centres in each country which provided visiting researchers with access to sources, archives and institutional connections, not unlike the British Academy-sponsored institutes in the eastern Mediterranean countries. But as Michael Willis explains in the introduction to this timely volume, the resulting scholarship – excellent as it often was – tended towards in-depth studies of individual countries. He is entirely right to argue that there has historically been little by way of systematic comparative study across the Maghreb countries, in terms either of their historical or of their political science. One notable exception (and interestingly absent from Willis’s admittedly select bibliography) was Clement Henry Moore’s Politics in North Africa: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, published in 1970. Much as Willis does, Moore began with an examination of pre-colonial society, and then moved on to examine how the ‘colonial dialectic’ drove the format of post-colonial political development. Moore focused his study on the processes of political modernisation and institutionalisation, with a theoretical approach that was very much of its time and which, in retrospect, presented a rather rosy view of Tunisia’s Bourguibist state as a success story. If it offered a credible first stab at a comparative study of the region, it was perhaps too much of an imposition of abstracted theories based on Western models to reflect the complexities and nuances of historically-grounded trajectories. More recent examples, such as Karim Mezran’s Negotiating National Identity: The Case of the Arab States of North Africa (Rome, Antonio Pellicani Editore, 2002) or Lise Storm’s Prospects for Democracy in North Africa: Parties and Party System Institutionalization in the Maghreb (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner, 2013) have updated the comparative effort, albeit with a focus on specific and narrow dimensions of political life – and on questions of nationalism and political parties rather than systems as a whole. Such was the setting for Michael Willis’s volume, which offers a more rounded and inclusive story. His claims for the book are even so quite modest. He presents it as ‘a fairly comprehensive picture of political dynamics’, as ‘a broad comparative text’ which will set out the region’s politics and modern history through consideration of political actors, themes and issues within a largely narrative and chronological approach. It is, he argues, ‘effectively an introductory text for the study of the Maghreb, and therefore existing scholars are unlikely to find much that is novel or unknown to them in it’ (p. 5). There is, he says, no substantive attempt to engage in theoretical discussions or to compare the Maghreb with other regions. This is simply a political history which privileges consideration of key themes of commonality and divergence between the Maghreb countries – Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. The exclusion of Libya and Mauritania is justified by the sheer scale of the job at hand (p. 5). Whilst there is a logic here in terms of the practicalities of structuring the volume, it can represent an uncomfortable omission. Can we really understand the development of Bourguiba’s African strategies, his machinations of Polisario’s struggle with Morocco, or the failures of efforts at regional Maghribi unity, if a major player such as Libya is to be considered only in passing? One cannot but help feel that, by addressing the really interesting questions regarding the determinants of the very substantive differences between the geographically peripheral Maghreb countries and their more regionally important neighbours, the volume might have had still more instructive things to say about comparative study. But we must be fair to Willis. He readily acknowledges the limits of his project and actually does himself a disservice by suggesting that specialist scholars can learn nothing from his book. The focus on three countries allows detailed treatment and gives coherence to the narrative, thereby making the work both a convincing piece of scholarship and informative reading.

The first brief chapter sets the historical and sociological context. The uniqueness of each colonial experience leaves an imprint on both collective regional identities and localised structures of both rulers and opposition. The second chapter leads us into the era of independent nation-states, with a set of countries united by nationalist rhetoric but unable to share a collective vision of what statehood should now mean, either among themselves or with their own citizens. Lacking a collective colonial enemy to bind them together, nationalist elites fragmented under the weight of ideological division and personal rivalries. Those with control over coercive forces centralised their hold on power, building increasingly authoritarian political bureaucracies. This was manifested in both republican and monarchic formats, and was more a blunt struggle for power than an ideological contest. All three countries witnessed the assertion of the primacy of an individual, although Tunisia’s Bourguiba relied on charismatic and party-based legitimacy, the Moroccan monarch on religious status and constitutional supremacy, and Algeria’s Boumedienne on a collegial leadership model which privileged the army. Thereafter, the national political systems were structured and managed through the rotation of elites, actual or effective single party rule, popular exclusion from the political realm, and a token nod to parliamentary models. The irony, as Willis points out, is that their varying supposed national missions – Tunisian modernisation, Algerian socialism and

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Moroccan conservatism – ultimately made little difference to the authoritarian outcome of politics and all three remained unprepared for the challenges which were to come.

Chapters three, four and five move from the narrative to the thematic, focusing on the discussion of key agents in the political process. When it comes to the military, it is not surprising that Morocco gets greater attention than Tunisia, and Algeria more than either of them. Whilst coercive power, and a willingness to wield it, has been common to all three regimes, at least prior to the Arab uprisings, the proliferation of security agencies and the transfer of elite reliance from the military to internal security and intelligence agencies had been of differing degrees. All three regimes have extended their military into the global War on Terror, although largely as a means of re-packaging their own internal war on political Islam and silencing the more vigorous forms of domestic opposition. In Algeria most of all, an entire decade was lost to the army’s war against militant Islam following the annulment of the outcome of the elections in 1992. A military coup d’état ensued – first Boudiaf, then Kafia, Zeroual and finally Bouteflika – to the presidency and, despite the latter’s growing personal authority over national politics, they remain les pouvoirs behind the scene.

But the Arab uprisings were not met in any of these countries by outright military engagement. Indeed, Tunisia’s Ben Ali arguably knew the battle was lost precisely because his Chief of Staff refused to send his troops against protesters. Moreover, and unlike the military in Algeria or Egypt, the Tunisian army has only marginal direct economic interests and has not played a cronyistic role in the economic reform processes of the last three decades. Thus we see that, despite the more prominent role in the political histories of individual countries or their leaders, overly simplistic assertions of common military junta-like rule in the Arab Maghreb hold little analytical water, Muamar Gaddafi notwithstanding.

The two chapters on political parties and Islamist movements are essential, even if curiously outdated. Essential because political parties – either supremely dominant or painfully neutralised – have been the primary institutional vehicles for political contestation and independence. Equally, Islamist movements have been the bêtes noires for Maghrebi regimes, to be either tamed or eradicated if the latter are to survive. But outdated in so far as the Arab uprisings were led and sustained not by parties or even Islamist groups but by civil society organisations and mass spontaneous participation. Both political parties and Islamist groups were, if not absent, then lost in the crowd in the early days of revolutionary agitation in Tunisia, and their credibility as vehicles for popular opposition and genuine substantive regime change in Algeria is today marginal. In Morocco, and not least as a result of the rapid manoeuvrings of the Monarch in response to uprisings elsewhere, constitutional reforms and somewhat more genuinely parliamentary politics mean that neither parties nor Islamists are redundant, but one does wonder whether, should Willis write an updated version of this book in ten years time, the thematic section will be structured similarly around these two actors. Civil society and associative life, which merit only a couple of pages, have in the end proved more resilient, creative and engaged than they were previously credited for, although not without their own democratic deficiencies. Moreover, they have clearly developed through informal networks and new communications formats which made them largely invisible to scholarly eyes, in the latter being predisposed to focus on formal politics and the ever-present state. Only with the uprisings in 2011 and beyond have scholars fully recognised the processes of change from below which have been re-booting Maghrebi political society and which might warrant a different emphasis from that devised by Willis in the structuring of future comparative political histories. That is not to say, however, that political parties are not resurfacing as major actors in the processes of transition or indeed that his own conclusions are ever anything other than spot on. A chapter on the Berber Question, for example, provides us with important reminders that democratically oriented discourses over identity and the state have been rumbling for decades, challenging exclusivist state structures and sustaining a momentum of protest even in the darkest days of authoritarian rule.

The chapter on political parties and economics sets out a story familiar to the developing world of post-independence etatism, unsustainable growth, international debt and ultimately economic liberalisation. The authoritarian political structures, whilst helpful in pushing through unpopular reforms in recent decades, subverted the intentions of international lenders by presenting political elites with apparently irresistible opportunities for rent-seeking andcronyism. Corruption abounded as informal economic behaviours trickled down through the middle classes, even as a widening poor underclass sought new means of survival. Growth stalled whilst the demands on economies accelerated. Nowhere were the contradictions between public policy and lived reality greater than in Tunisia, where just two families (those of the President and his wife), accumulated and exported vast amounts of the national wealth through their personal connections to key agents in the processes of privatisation, deregulation and trade liberalisation.

So was it inevitable that Tunisia should be the stage for the first Arab popular uprising? The brevity of the discussion here means that key aspects are glossed over or ignored: the food price spikes in 2007/8 and 2010 which eroded middle class living standards, the rapidly rising levels of personal debt which followed the introduction of new financial products, the collapse of phosphate export income which had sustained parts of the Tunisian interior. Relations with the international financial institutions and with the European Union also receive only passing mention, which does injustice to their importance in national economic discourses and indeed in the economies themselves. But the conclusion is fair: using liberal economic reforms simply as an opportune regime survival strategy led elites to perform in ways which ultimately not only undermined their efficacy, but have actually created more urgent and threatening political challenges.

The final two chapters consider the three countries’ regional and international relations. The dysfunctionality of domestic political structures has been reflected in the litany of failed attempts to foster meaningful regional organisation. Nowhere has this been more true than in the ongoing saga of the Moroccan and Algerian dispute over the Western Sahara. If King Hassan seized on Morocco’s claim to sovereignty as a means of bolstering his own political legitimacy during the unstable years of the early 1970s, Algeria’s Boumediene supported the population’s right to self-determination at least in part to underline his own regime’s role in securing national independence. Playing ‘politics in the sand’ allowed both leaders to promote their own roles as leaders of key regional states, enabling them to recruit weaker neighbouring states to their causes and in doing so demonstrate their own greater relevance. But this did little to foster the kind of regional relationships which could promote the collective economic or diplomatic good or rescue them from the continuing European carve-up into spheres of influence.

Willis’s concluding chapter encapsulates the underlying tension in this book. Originally setting out to explore the seemingly extraordinary resilience of the authoritarian regimes, the tsunami of social movements in North Africa half way through his endeavour changed the game plan. If Tunisia’s regime was the only one of the three to actually fall before the force of the wave, the régimes in Algeria and Morocco have had to perform some hasty footwork to avoid similar calamity, demonstrating their own vulnerabilities in the process. All the assumed continuities are now in question and the established political narratives of individual states – upon which this volume heavily draws – are proving inadequate to fully explain exactly what happened did so at the time and in the manner in which it did. This was never meant to be a project based on fieldwork and original data. But relying so heavily as it does on the very broad swath of the available literature, it inevitably falls foul of their omissions and explanatory inadequacies. Yet still, when one reads this volume, one is struck by the continuing relevance of such a comparative history. Willis’s language is fluent and accessible. He tells a good story, striking a pleasing balance between detail and overarching narrative, pulling out the threads of themes and theories as he goes. He opens the door to new chapters of that story which are unfolding before us, but never pretends to be able to explain them more fully than his own informants did.

In sum, Willis achieves the goal he set for himself. This is a solid, worthwhile, introduction to the politics of the three Maghrebi countries which should find a place on every Maghrebian scholar’s bookshelves as a point of first reference. If events have overtaken it, and scholars find new questions more intriguing than established answers, that does not detract from the importance of this contribution as a stepping stone for the further development of comparative regional studies.
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by Samir Amin

Pambazuka Press (Cape Town), 2011, 191 pp., $24.95,
ISBN: 978-1-906387-96-9

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capitalism by way of Mars and Braudel. Braudel, as per Amin, describes capitalist reality as having three sociological layers: 1) the social base, 2) the market, and 3) the anti-market where politics enters the fray and distorts the market (p. 73). Amin argues that there are limitations in Marx in his analysis of capitalist production that does not equip Marxians to fully understand the expansion into its globalist mode (p. 78). Braudel’s analysis, which offers a more comprehensive examination from the level of the anti-market, is better equipped to understand the morphing of capitalism into its globalised form.

The structural weakness of contemporary capitalism as globalisation is exposed by Amin’s analysis of the system as increasingly dependent on ‘financialisation’, according to which huge amounts of capital are traded with interest in the marketplace without being attached to any real production output. Amin writes: “...globalisation serves to dismantle the national social contracts produced through centuries of social struggle without providing any significant replacement on either a global or regional scale (on the scale of the European Union for instance) (p. 111).” I interject a simple explanation here: with globalisation comes increasing competition, diminishing returns from investments in the form of the falling rate of profits, hence the increased exploitation of labour which eventually leads to recession and depression, as was the case in 2008. According to Amin: ‘the depression is expressed by the enormous growth in the surpluses of capital which cannot find any profitable outlet in the expansion of the productive system. The major, perhaps even exclusive, preoccupation of the dominant powers is to find financial outlets for these surpluses in order to avoid the catastrophe (for the system) of their massive evaluation’ (p. 111).

The result of all this is increasing deregulation, high interest rates, privatisation, increasing income inequality, increasing third world debt, and a regressionary cycle (p. 112). All this is done to satisfy the perpetual need of capital to maximize profits. But in this instance, populations at the periphery bear the brunt of the problem with increasing unemployment. The reason is that international capital prefers operating in areas where investment in new infrastructures is minimal and the division of labour is advanced. The capitalist system is in perpetual crisis. Amin’s solution is an optimistic one: ‘the prospect of another social system, abandoning the sacrosanct institution of private property, and of another globalisation, rejecting polarization, remains the only alternative’ (p. 112).

The control of market capitalism as a prelude to the creation of a global socialism is what Amin has in mind. One must be optimistic in the face of obstacles because the capitalist ‘law of accumulation has within it its very negation (p. 118).”

But there is no strict linear path in this human struggle to eliminate the ravages of capital according to the laws of value and accumulation. History can be pure contingency, dependent often on the vagaries of geography. Amin uses this binary explanatory nexus of history and geography to explain the problematic of the transformations that took place in the former Soviet Union and China from the 1980s onward. World system theory (Braudel, Wallerstein et al.) puts some emphasis on geography as of historical contingencies. For Amin, the fact that Russia first sought to deal directly with the problems of capitalism before the more advanced capitalist countries is an instance in which geography, more than the schemas of historical Marxism, plays a key role. He argues that these two countries tried to make the break with capitalism because the system was weakest at such places even though they were not truly peripheral.

Amin’s collection of essays is useful in that they engage the reader with a critique of the orthodox Marxian Eurocentric formulates concerning the progression of human society over time. He not only rejects the five-stage developmental theory but also raises questions about the idea that Asiatic modes of production were structurally incapable of progressing to capitalism. But, as I have argued above, the world tributary systems should not be restricted to just the Middle East, China and India; these systems should also include the medieval African states of Ghana, Mali, Songhay, and arguably those of the pre-Columbian Americas.

I must also take issue with Amin’s characterisation of the qualitative difference between capitalism and its precedent, reduced mainly to the relationship between power and capital. I want to believe that what establishes the specificity of capitalism has been its capacity to introduce technological change when necessary. This is due to the competition between capitalist enterprises and the constant pressure from labour in terms of wages and productivity. This capacity for technological change easily translates into the technological tools of warfare and a pre-eminence over other cultures. The text in general is indeed a view from the South.

Power Imbalance and Unequal Benefit at UNESCO World Heritage Sites?

Shadreck Chirikure

The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali: From UNESCO to Djenné

by Charlotte Joy


management a politically charged enterprise, one with a strong alacrity to explode as contestations and manoeuvring to access part of the heritage benefit pie escalate exponentially. However, had the author looked beyond the national borders of their case study, they would have realised that at most World Heritage Sites in sub-Saharan Africa, just as in Mali, local communities are increasingly becoming activist and agitated. As experts and scientists, heritage managers take centre stage. Managers of World Heritage Sites comparatively earn a decent salary, continuously obtain training from international organisations such as International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICOMOS) and International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and in the process are rewarded financially and in terms of personal development. No detailed study has yet been done but it is possible that of the funds availed for managing World Heritage, little percolates down to either the heritage itself or the local communities. Most of the funds seem to cover operational expenses, workshops and conference-related activities aimed at building capacity. The tourism money too is controlled by powerful forces that dominate the international tourism market leaving little for local communities. It must however be pointed out that, like all other uses, tourism must also contribute to the conservation and uplifting of communities.

The main contradiction in this state of affairs is that, although local communities are non-scientists, their traditions are important in preserving the authenticity of the lives of the local people. The experts, authenticity (never mind the difficulty of achieving it) is essential because consumers of the past must have the quintessential experience of the heritage and communities as they were ‘back then’. While this fossilisation may be demeaning and is immoral, as Joy points out, the situation is unlikely to change anytime soon. This is because, with the ever escalating commodification of heritage, as economic resources, archaeological sites are gradually becoming entangled in the profit mantra.

In the business world, Adam Smith’s reminded us that ‘it is not from the benevolence of the baker that we get our bread, but through self-interest.’ Therefore, the heritage elites and other powerful stakeholders such as UNESCO are in it for the benefit too! Yes, it is important to protect heritage and UNESCO has contributed immensely to heritage protection, but the same heritage does employ the elites who are unlikely to relinquish their beneficence. But, while this fossilisation may be demeaning and is immoral, as Joy points out, the situation is unlikely to change anytime soon. This is because, with the ever escalating commodification of heritage, as economic resources, archaeological sites are gradually becoming entangled in the profit mantra.

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stages, locals only exist to validate and authenticate a heritage consumed by those from afar and benefitting those at the top of the pyramid.

Approaches to the study: methodology and sources

Joy has done an incredible amount of work, consulting and living with various stakeholders. The sources used include archival texts that have provided a very useful historical context to Djenne and its traditions beginning in the last century. The author also spent some time at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. There, she had numerous conversations with the top order heritage elites and gained an insight into how UNESCO operates. In addition to doing fieldwork at UNESCO, the author, like a very thorough and dedicated anthropologist, also lived with the Djenne communities and participated in their lives. She observed firsthand how they conduct their daily lives in relation to the World Heritage status of Djenne. This participant observation enabled her to witness firsthand the dire poverty on the ground which was in stark contrast to the narratives peddled by the offices at UNESCO in Paris, the Antiquities Department in Bamako and the heritage officials managing the site. Furthermore, she also integrated within the research field the theme of obtaining training as an artisan. This empowered her to detect some undercurrents that remain forever hidden to fly-by-night researchers. To these approaches, Joy added the relevant heritage theory creating a base beneficial to students of critical heritage studies. The net result of this rigorous approach is that we are presented with a compelling picture of how unequal the power and benefit relations in managing World Heritage sites are from a moral point of view, this requires a change of action to ensure that, if we have frozen other people’s lives and culture, then surely they must derive significant benefits and not just a status of having a World Heritage Site next door. But sadly, heritage management is now commoditised and as with all businesses, the profit motive fingers everywhere. As such, the powerless will continuously maintain their position while the powerless have no option but to endure.

World Heritage exploits local communities? The arguments

The main argument of the book, spread over seven chapters (excluding the introduction and conclusion), is that heritage management in Mali is very small. From a moral point of view, this requires a change of action to ensure that, if we have frozen other people’s lives and culture, then surely they must derive significant benefits and not just a status of having a World Heritage Site next door. But sadly, heritage management is now commoditised and as with all businesses, the profit motive fingers everywhere. As such, the powerless will continuously maintain their position while the powerless have no option but to endure. Because UNESCO generally devotes day to day management to the Malian government, it assumes an indirect role. The budget of the Cultural Mission of Mali is however very small. This means that the income-generating capacity of Djenne becomes a resource that is worth exploiting. As such, Djenne’s future is increasingly being anchored on the pivotal economic role that heritage plays by attracting both outside sponsors and tourists. Local people such as artisans are supposed to make a living by selling authentic arts and crafts. Djenne artisans spend time with artisans, Joy demonstrates that survival, not authenticity, underpins their efforts. Although architecture, embroidery and the production of jewellery in Djenne is Djenneke because it is made by local people trained in local traditions, heritage elites insist on authentic traditional forms. Rightly, Joy suggests that local communities must be given degrees of freedom to enable them and their traditions to evolve with time. Traditions are intangible heritage and they must change with time and in the process create more heritage. The production of heritage has introduced controlled entry elites and the uniform story told by tour guides silences other equally important narratives, particularly those of the minorities. Ironically, giving a one-sided view of the past can be hardly regarded as authentic. UNESCO’s work has become developmental in nature such that the organisation must also create lasting benefits to communities that host World Heritage Sites. The African World Heritage Fund, a body affiliated to UNESCO and established in 2009, strives to ensure that World Heritage benefits local communities, but the jury is still out on whether the promised benefits will be realised or not.

Final thoughts: Heritage management as a sanctuary of the privileged

Inherently, the top-down approach to heritage management – from Paris to Djenne via local heritage elites – may work given the nature of UNESCO but local communities do not feel that way. Joy (p. 205) makes the telling statement that “it is hard to come to a definitive conclusion about the feeling of the majority of Djenneneke toward their World Heritage status, because many of them have very limited information on the subject and are therefore not in sufficient position to judge the long-term economic benefits of the classification.” This point rather dilutes the impression that was given earlier, of people not struggling to earn a living around a World Heritage site but forced out of tradition to preserve authenticity. Also, after presenting a case where UNESCO is seen to be passing on little benefits to local communities, Joy in her conclusion argues that the organisation’s World Heritage programme in Africa has successfully moved attention away from a discourse that defines Africa as a continent beset by poverty and corruption. I find this incredible because very much has been presented in the preceding chapters unequivocally demonstrates that World Heritage status oppresses local people by fossilising them and plunging back little benefit. Of course UNESCO has made immense contributions to heritage management in Africa but the organisation must also improve certain aspects of its conduct. For example, it must recognise that societies move with time, and so too, must heritage. Different generations have different relationships with landscapes and heritage around them so that a religious adherence to authenticity is not that helpful. I also wondered after reading Joy whether UNESCO too should not be liable to corporate social responsibility programmes around World Heritage Sites. In the business sector, companies are required to invest in the communities in which they extract resources through initiatives such as provision of scholarships, building capacity in local schools and upgrading local infrastructure such as local road networks. For example, communities whose land hosts mineral resources are beginning to clamour for royalties from mining companies. Successful examples include the Royal Bafokeng Nation in South Africa’s North West Province. This nation managed to successfully sue platinum mining giant Impala Platinum for a share of profits. The Bafokeng use the proceeds to develop amenities such as roads, and provide basic services such as electricity, tapped water and even scholarships. As the Comoroffs have argued, the commoditization of heritage is tantamount to Heritage Inc., a new form of business that thrives on exploiting heritage. One can easily contrast this cultural heritage situation to that prevailing in wildlife conservation. In the latter case, the need to conserve and benefit local communities has long been realised through activities such as camping. There is nothing stopping UNESCO from developing a system to conserve and develop local communities around World Heritage Sites. It can also encourage those who make profit from World Heritage to invest it back to develop communities. This failure to impart visible benefits to heritage management politically charged. Of course there is increasing talk at international levels of the need to involve local communities but powerful stakeholders must walk the talk. Otherwise the grim reality is that communities are yet to benefit from their heritage, be it in Mali, South Africa, Ethiopia, or Zimbabwe. It seems that UNESCO ducks responsibility by putting forward mechanisms that work indirectly with sites via individual governments. UNESCO takes stock of management practices at regular intervals; it must also demand to see progress in the empowerment of local communities.

Finally, would the result of Joy’s work have been different had the emphasis been on ‘from Djenne to UNESCO’? I do believe so. This bottom up approach would have seen the author gathering data in Mali and, with the grim reality on the ground, take the observations to UNESCO. That would have empowered her to advise UNESCO that, although it works indirectly via state parties, there are some practices that have no place in modern society, such as child labour, which are sadly committed by the trinity of UWA-UNESCO, World Heritage and authenticity. Furthermore, she would have also impressed upon them the need for World Heritage to benefit local communities not just verbally but also meaningfully. A failure to adopt this bottom up approach placed the author in the same boat as UNESCO – ‘ducking responsibility’ when it matters. This is puzzling given that the case studies presented do indicate that major changes are required at Djenne and, by extension, at many of Africa’s World Heritage sites because communities are suffering. Any approach to World Heritage does not work given the varying contours of individual cases. That way, those who fight for heritage justice would have applauded Joy’s intervention and congratulated her for taking the fight directly to UNESCO. The worst case scenario is that UNESCO will continuously assume indirect responsibility and may not review this approach to see if it is best for all involved. All said, however, Joy’s book is a wonderful and valuable addition to the literature and the heritage studies library. The book may not have taken the Djenneneke to the promised land of heritage justice, but it certainly pointed in that direction.
This is a fascinating and intimate study of American anthropology, challenging anthropologists to include the gaze of the subaltern in their anthropological discourses on cultures, and to be prudent about applying Western concepts and categories to their theorizing about other cultures. Drawing on his ethnographic research on American anthropology as a practice, Ntarangwi makes a series of thought-provoking participant observations concerning American anthropologists’ experiences and their social interactions, both as students and as professionals. One of the aims of the book is to unsettle the postmodern critique that challenged colonial anthropology’s representation of other cultures, known as ‘the others’. While Ntarangwi regards the anthropologists’ engagements with the others as a racially defined play of unequal power relations, he invites his readers to participate in American anthropology’s ontology, where ‘whiteness’ is radically implicated with reality.

There have been rigorous intellectual debates during the last two decades on anthropology’s traditional practice of studying small-scale, ‘primitive’ societies and the construction of anthropological ‘others’. There has also been an urgency to do away with the artificial boundaries that have been created by the practitioners of colonial anthropology between the generalized Western and non-Western others, which produced ethnocentrism and racism. A significant part of these criticisms is geared towards eliminating racism and empowering the anthropologists’ others to study their own cultures and perhaps Western cultures as well. With their interventionist ideology, they furthermore wanted to take the power from the colonial anthropologists and hand it over to their subalterns.

How has anthropology been successful in its effort to do away with the artificial boundaries it created between the West and the non-Western others, racism and ethnocentrism? How has it been successful in empowering the others? Based on his experiences of being an African anthropology student in an American university, his ethnographic research in Kenya, his extensive participant observations in the American Anthropological Association’s meetings and his experiences as an African professor teaching anthropology to American students, Ntarangwi offers powerful analyses of American anthropologists’ quasi-effort to decolonize the field of anthropology from Western scholarship both through time and space.

The book reflects on the dialectical developments in the field and examines the new developments in the postmodern phase of contemporary anthropology. For his study, Ntarangwi chooses Africa, the iconic continent which provides the most celebrated small-scale societies and ‘primitive’ others to its anthropologists. Ntarangwi is able to cast his anthropological gaze on both his own society and the Western world. He centers his ethnographic gaze primarily on the postmodern American anthropologists of the 1990s who were critical of their predecessors in the creation of the artificial boundaries between the West and the others. Ntarangwi’s choices of arguments include not only the postmodern critiques, but also the behavior of the researchers, which reveals the underlying motivation of the anthropologists who level those criticisms challenging the authority of the anthropologists of colonial era in quasi-defense of anthropology’s others. Thus, Ntarangwi begins his inquiry with the very dynamic phase in the discipline of anthropology in general and American anthropology in particular.

As a graduate student at an American university, Ntarangwi observes the inconsistencies in the discipline’s reflexivity in the classroom dynamics. For him, having a self-reflexive practice does not necessarily change the colonial paradigm established in the field. The central core of anthropology’s grand narratives has not changed since the time of colonial anthropology, despite the self-reflexive assertions of the anthropologists of the postmodern era. Although postmodern reflexivity challenged the authority of ethnographic representation of social reality by earlier anthropologists, or of white feminist project’s insensitivity to the plight of women of color, the grand narrative and its logical elaboration continue both during the postmodern phase and in the contemporary era. Hence, the tenets of postmodern reflexivity are nothing more than self-serving narrative strategies and writing styles, which essentially mask the inherent power differences between observers and the observed, and it ignores the engagement between race and knowledge production.

The book is divided into six potent chapters. In each chapter, Ntarangwi positions himself between two worlds (Africa and North America) as he examines aspects of American anthropology and the behavior of its practitioners. In Chapter Two, for example, he focuses on whether anthropologists are genuinely interested in other cultures, or whether the other cultures provide them with the opportunity to develop their careers. What happens when one culture becomes the focus and is scrutinized by an outsider? Reflecting on his experiences conducting fieldwork for class projects, teaching about American culture to American students, and interacting with anthropologists in the American Anthropological Association (AAA) gatherings, he provides us with multifaceted and contradictory answers to these questions.

As an African student studying anthropology in the West, Ntarangwi’s gaze naturally straddles two worlds: the world from where he comes, and the world in which he studied anthropology in the West. Situated between these two worlds, he powerfully brings his experiences in Africa and America to his ethnographic gaze, both as a student in classrooms and as a professional anthropologist studying American anthropology, through an African cultural framework and training. For him, anthropology’s interest in studying others and the pursuit of the exotic cultures constitutes anthropologists’ distinctiveness from other related fields such as sociology, history, and philosophy. Although the pursuit of the exotic others is motivated and shaped by multiple and intersecting interests of the individual anthropologist, the main determining factor in this pursuit is the whim of the funding agencies that define, for the most part, what should be studied.

Western anthropology is dominated by the study of the exotic others but the discipline provides a powerful platform for anthropologists (both Western and non-Western) to understand themselves. Ntarangwi demonstrates this point with personal experiences of returning to his own society. During his return visits to Kenya, Ntarangwi notices how living in America for two years and the courses he had taken in anthropology changed his ‘worldview and social sensibilities’, and how he became more aware of social class, gender issues and the realities in his own society. From this perspective, anthropology can become a genuine cultural critique. Anthropologists can probably use their research experiences to engage in a deep analysis of their own cultural assumptions, theories, and concepts, as well as their own politics. Such analysis has the potential to fundamentally transform the anthropological project.
and do away with the asymmetrical relationship that exists between the West and others. Furthermore, the same technique can be used to gain an understanding of AAA, which is a cultural phenomenon in itself (p. 102).

Ntarangwi’s fascinating book is no ordinary volume, but rather an important meditation and logical elaboration on the practice of anthropology that is racially defined, which is probably what all anthropology should strive to avoid. He asserts that anthropology is, if nothing else, all about others – including the seemingly untranslatable cultural practices, although how earlier anthropologists made sense of other people’s cultures with a Eurocentric regard and understanding. Ntarangwi sees anthropology as ‘a piece of a larger Western epistemological grand plan that was grounded in Eurocentric regard and understanding of the world’ (148). He drives this point home through a powerful description of his experiences as an African anthropologist at AAA meetings where a ‘sea of Whiteness dominates’ the crowd, reminding the few racial minority anthropologists and anthropology students of their otherness. This otherness becomes exacerbated by the cliques of White students roaming in groups, hanging out with white movers and shakers in the discipline.

Reversed Gaze is a thought-provoking book on the cutting edge of the critique of anthropological practice. It utilizes a well-established participant-observation methodology, showing how anthropology continues to be a racially-dominated field, where Western anthropologists study others. Although anthropology has seen many changes during the postcolonial era, it has not done away with the divide that colonialism created between themselves and others. As a whole, Ntarangwi’s book succeeds in bringing together the important developments and theoretical concepts of imagination and experience and interaction between anthropologists and their engagements with others, in thoughtful and insightful ways. His work demonstrates how colonial mentality and practice mutually inform one another in the practice of ethnography in contemporary anthropology.

Overall, the book is an important contribution to the existing literature on the critique of anthropology. In a way, this book helps us to understand how others are reconstituted during the colonial, postcolonial, and postmodern phase of anthropology. Ntarangwi seeks to redress the continued colonial attitude during the postmodern phase of anthropology and evaluates their rather empty patronizing critiques of the colonial anthropological project. Yet, it is disappointing that he fails to ask the hard questions: What were the possible hidden underlying reasons for postmodern anthropologists in challenging colonial anthropologists, and is in turn asserting their own authority and power? How successful were the postmodern anthropologists in their assertion to empower the others in representing their own cultures? What will be left of anthropology if others are empowered and succeed in representing their own cultures? Moreover, if the others study their own cultures, will the Western anthropologists remain as anthropologists occupying tenured positions in Western universities and develop their careers?

All in all, Ntarangwi’s critical examination of American anthropology as a discipline is revealing and extraordinarily contextualized. His arguments are persuasive and indicate the overall internal politics and tensions created over power relations between older and younger generations in the discipline post-meditation. In this respect, the postmodernists’ assumptions of empowerment of others are a familiar construct no different from the interventionist strategy of colonialism. Ntarangwi has written an illuminating exposition of American anthropology’s world-view and the way in which these ideas and ideals provided motivation for the postmodern critiques. He provides arguably the best account of the postmodern movement in anthropology.

Lorsqu’on combattait « l’axe du colonialisme Alger-Le Cap » : en hommage à Nelson Mandela

Hassan Rehmane

décembre 1960 en se limitant à des actions de sabotages, mais en envisageant aussi le passage à des opérations de guérilla contre les forces sud-africaines, ce qui nécessiterait bien entendu des achats d’armes d’armement et donc des sources de financement, ainsi qu’un soutien extérieur pour la formation des combattants. C’était ce second objectif que ciblait aussi la mission de Mandela qui pour des raisons de sécurité se faisait appeler David Matサmawani accompagné de Robert Rescha (future responsable du bureau de l’ANC à Alger) et à certaines étapes du voyage d’Oliver Tambo Responsable des relations internationales et qui aura à prendre la relève du chef Albert Luthuli à la présidence de l’ANC.

L’intérêt pour la lutte armée et pour l’Algérie

En fait, cet objectif était stratégique pour celui qui sera connu sous le nom affectueux de Madiba, surtout au moment où pour sortir de l’incapacité pour le combat non violent à réduire à lui seul la politique d’Apartheid, l’ANC décidait son adhésion à la lutte armée.

La lecture de ses mémoires indique d’ailleurs que cette préoccupation est déclinée à chaîne de ses étapes à travers la collecte de fonds et ses observations sur les armées des pays qu’il visitera. Il semble de ce point de vue attentif aux forces militaires de trois pays africains :

• en Ethiopie, où il assiste lors d’une cérémonie officielle en présence de l’Empereur à une parade impeccable de 500 soldats, en notant à ce propos : « pour la première fois de ma vie je voyais des soldats noirs, commandés par des généraux noirs, applaudis par des responsables noirs qui étaient tous les invités d’un chef d’État noir » ;

• en Egypte ensuite, où après s’être dit impressionné par le patrimoine historique d’un pays africain et les réformes socialistes de Nasser, il ajoutait : « cependant, à l’époque pour nous, il était plus important que l’Egypte soit le seul Etat africain avec une armée de terre, une marine et une aviation qu’on pouvait comparer à celle de l’Afrique du sud » ;

• l’Algérie enfin, qu’il observe de la frontière marocaine et où il considère que la situation était « le modèle le plus proche » de l’Afrique du sud (le type colonisation de peuplement) et qui de plus dont le combat semblait aborder à quelques mois de la proclamation de l’indépendance (en juillet 1962). Scrutant de loin, avec des jumelles ce qui est encore une colonie, il perçoit des soldats français et note « j’avoue que j’ai pensé voir les uniformes des forces de défense sud-africaines ». En continuant sa visite avec des soldats de l’ALN, il peut assister à un défilé militaire en l’honneur de Ben Bella et de ses compagnons qui venaient de sortir des prisons françaises, ce qui lui suggère le commentaire suivant : « c’était une armée de guérilla composée de combattants qui avaient gagné leurs galons dans le feu des batailles, qui s’intéressaient plus à la guerre et à la tactique qu’aux uniformes et aux défilés... Je savais que nos propres forces ressembleraient plus aux soldats d’Oujda, et je pouvais seulement espérer qu’elles combattiraient aussi vaillamment » . Désormais, la coopération militaire et politique entre combattants algériens et sud-africains devra aller en s’approfondissant.

Sur l’interaction du politique et du militaire

En fait, Mandela savait ce qu’il était venu chercher en Algérie. C’était en 1962, un dirigeant qui militait déjà depuis une guerre d’années, qui plus est, au sein d’une organisation l’ANC créée en 1912.
Les indépendances africaines : vues de Côte d’Ivoire

Mahmoud Ariba

L’Afrique et le défi de la seconde indépendance
par J.C. Djéréke


plus pauvres que sous la colonisation. Et pourtant, le sol et le sous-sol africain détiennent des richesses colossales et variées… (p. 11).

Et s’éloigner complémentairement : « pourquoi les indépendances ont-elles débouché sur un cuisant échec ? »

Questionnements livrés, exposés de manière frontale. Sans pour autant insister comme il se doit sur les indescriptibles bouleversements provoqués par le rouleau compresseur que fut la colonisation, ni encore moins rappeler à quel point les pays colonisateurs qui ont rué l’Afrique présentaient le profil de bandes organisées au service d’un intérêt, même fugace, pour les seuls constats sans que cela ait été suivi par l’expression d’un quelconque d’engagement, même dévoué, voire pesantissime ou encore fataliste.

Toutefois, il faut bien reconnaître que si peu approfondie qu’elle soit, cette contribution donne malgré tout à réfléchir sur le devenir de l’Afrique et des enjeux liés à son devenir. Ainsi, dans une certaine mesure, permet-elle de prendre connaissance des différents angles de vue à partir desquels l’auteur a pu pouvoir inventorier les éléments ayant justifié son intérêt. Tout autant que son inscription à vouloir les considérer comme importants dans sa saisie, sélective, de quelques maux ou autres handicaps dont souffre encore aujourd’hui le continent. D’autant plus que la parution même de cet ouvrage s’inscrit dans un moment bien particulier, qui se trouve celui concordant avec la
célébration par « dix-sept pays d'Afrique francophone... en 2010 (du cinquantième de leur « indépendance »). Ce cinquantième jubilé, au fond, globalement négatif : parce que la majeure partie des Africains manque d'une part de leurs souvenirs pratiques, d'écoles, de dispensaires, d'assurance-maladie, etc. Que s'est-il passé pour aboutir à un tel résultat ? Qu'est-ce qui a empêché ces pays de « décoller » ?

2. Des pistes thématiques quelque peu disparates, hétéroclites et brouillées

De fait structuré/articulé comme il l'est en vingt-trois chapitres, l'ouvrage s'avère d'énorme importance quantitativement et qualitativement parlant ; et traitant de thématiques plus ou moins composées conformément à l'usage en matière de chroniques journalistiques. Il faut noter que sept parmi ces chapitres sont presque exclusivement consacrés au rôle de l'Eglise et à sa place singulière dans la société ivoirienne. Ce qui amène à conclure aussitôt que le principal sujet de prédilection est bien celui attenant à la définition de l'identité ivoirienne, et chemin faisant, aux hommes désignés pour la représenter dans le contexte considéré. Nous reviendrons plus loin sur ce détail qui, à vue d'œil, retient l'attention d'une manière ou d'une autre.

Sous un autre angle, peut-être pourrait-on aussi relever la touche quelque peu absente qui, parfois, semble sous-tendre le développement général assigné au livre ; et, qui va de soi, vaut d'être mise en relief de temps à autre pour qui veut en comprendre réellement les tenants et aboutissants.

Que dire encore à ce sujet, sinon que c'est aussi un livre qui, à la fois le ton rapidement adopté et les thèmes connexes soulevés, renvoie d'embâcle aux éphémérides de l'actualité sociale et politique en Afrique ; semblant en cela ressasser, à son tour, pratiquement les mêmes schémas formalisés auparavant à l'encontre de systèmes considérés, à tort ou à raison, comme profondément contaminés ou altérés par leur inconditionnel suivisme déclaré (notamment vis-à-vis des ex-pouvoirs coloniaux, considérés privés indéfiniment, comme « modèles » ou « référents »).

En revanche, le titre assigné au livre prête fortement à qui proquo dans la mesure où la « radioscope » attendue se limite finalement à faire cas d'un prétendu bilan, d'écoles, de dispensaires, d'exergue manifeste du seul crédo référé à une certaine filiation idéologique, de toutes les aventures périlleuses et incertaines. L'intention affirmée ressentie à la vue et au contact de la physionomie générale du livre ne prête pas forcément à considérer qu'il s'agit là véritablement d'un travail de réflexion sur une question sérieusement étudiée, ou au plus à plus percher pour l'idée d'un faisceau d'opinions juxtaposées ? Sans doute assemblées à une seule fin, pourrait-on dire, de pouvoir donner lieu à une question qui se vouardirait une fois d'ensemble autour d'une thématique déterminée. Et de fait, le livre proposé est bel et bien singulièrement linéaire, confiné comme il l'est à une simple compilation de textes ; certes quasiment tous directement dissociables les uns des autres mais cependant accolés à dessein pour, d'une part, leur éparger sans doute un éventuel oubli et, d'autre part, faire certainement écho avec l'intention de rendre comptable d'un certain état des lieux.

Un état des lieux en vérité, pas toujours nécessairement éloigné ; ni même prétendant en effet à un bilan plus ou moins apaisant ou réconfortant. C'est que le caractère plus ou moins dispersé, un peu éparas éminemment même, a fait que l'approfondissement escompté ne soit pas vraiment au rendez-vous. Pas d'ailleurs que l'analyse véritablement fouillée, minutieuse circonstanciée ; même si dans le même temps, il y a lieu d'admettre qu'il ne manque pas de sauter en cas de besoin, une solide documentation et des positions défendues par d'autres essayistes ou militants engagés pour la cause de l'Afrique. N'hésitant pas, en conclusion, à prétendre questionner d'affirmé d'appui de précieuses citations ou autres témoignages jugés pertinents ou tout à fait appropriés pour donner plus de corps à ses propres extrapolations ; sinon pour suggérer, le cas échéant, de nouvelles pistes méritant d'être explorées et défrichées à leur tour.

Dans le déroulement de la trame du livre, l'on peut donc relever une série de constats énoncés et mettant l'accent tant sur l'épanouissement économique et social (qui n'a pas eu lieu pour cause de la confiscation des richesses aux Africains) et de cette façon largement de sa propre filiation religieuse, à plus ou moins « réussie » (p. 99) ; semblant en même temps occulter les autres fonctions attributives relevant du cercle familial dans ses diverses connotations sociologiques.

Parfois de comparaisons inattendues : « ... les pays africains n'ont pas le monopole des mauvais pratiques. En Occident aussi... » (p. 82). Ce qui, indirectement, donne parfois aussi l'implication que ces propos soient au moins tenus de confirmer ces prétendus critères de la plupart des Africains ; consistant toujours à tenter de s'auto-évaluer par rapport aux standards ou normes en vigueur dans l'hémisphère Nord. La distanciation requise, semble-t-il, n'ayant pas encore été opérée à ce jour.

Sur un autre plan, il convient d'ajouter que la première impression ressentie à la vue et au contact de l'ouvrage n'est pas forcément à considérer qu'il s'agit là véritablement d'un travail de réflexion sur une question sérieusement étudiée. En sachant qu'aucune allusion n'est faite en ce qui concerne la présence de l'Islam, on se pose donc la question de savoir si la hiérarchie officiante dans le registre propre à l'autre religion évoquée s'est bien gardée de voir entachée son action en gardant à son profit une distance apparemment très indéfinissable par rapport aux valeurs du pouvoir dans la société considérée ?

On n'en saura plus sur les raisons du silence soigneusement observé sur la question. Comme l'auteur en raison même de sa propre filiation religieuse (étant éclesiastique lui-même comme souligné plus haut) avait choisi d'occulté certaines éventuelles ou explicites, à une telle dimension ; pourtant dûment attestée et avérée dans les méandres chronologiques du cadre géographique considéré.

Un autre versant apparaît en filigrane dans le livre : les récentes élections...
préférentielles qui ont eu lieu en Côte d’Ivoire et les nouvelles recompositions de l’échiquier politique qu’elles ont provoqué. Tout en affirmant que « la crise ivorienne a révélé une fois de plus que la France n’a pas arrêté d’intervenir dans les affaires internes des Africains comme au temps de la colonisation » (p. 215). Et c’est sans doute là aussi que se situe le deuxième point central du livre : une critique en règle du rôle occulte assumé par une France qui, selon lui, continue de tirer les ficelles ; contrôlant donc les richesses des pays « indépendants ». Décrit ainsi le sort de son pays « la Côte d’Ivoire dont les attributs de souveraineté ont été détournés par un pays qui se vante d’être la patrie des droits de l’homme » (p. 127). Mais surtout s’en prenant à vif au vainqueur des dernières élections présidentielles et en ne manquant pas du même coup de cibler un « système » ayant pour nom : la « Francafrique ». Avec tous les sous-entendus qualifiés pour lui être associés et tendant, entre autres, à démontrer que la décolonisation est loin d’être achevée.

Cependant il y a lieu d’indiquer que la posture critique, affleurant à vif presque à chaque page, reste malgré tout suffisamment éclairante sur la posture militante et anticolonialiste, telle que revendiquée et assumée par son auteur. Par conséquent, ce qui retiendra sans doute le plus l’attention, de prime abord, sera certainement ce ton de révolte difficilement contenue, qui comme souligné plus haut, transparait explicitement à travers les pages du livre en question face à un bilan de cinquante années consommées et vécues à l’ombre des indépendances ; bien entendu jugées, selon lui, des plus décevantes car passées sans qu’elles aient pu répondre comme il se doit à tous les grands espoirs nourris par les uns et les autres. Évoquant alors, pour renforcer ses propos, le sort de « l’Afrique malade de la mauvaise gouvernance de ses dirigeants, d’une mauvaise conception de la politique, du tribalisme… » (p. 51). Puis, à la faveur d’une subtile mise en comparaison entre pays francophones et anglophones, ces derniers sont considérés selon lui comme s’en sortant beaucoup mieux sur bien des plans que ceux de la sphère francophone encore en butte à bien des coups fournis signés de l’ancienne puissance coloniale : « on constate qu’il y a plus de coups d’Etat en Afrique francophone que dans les autres parties du continent, que nos frères anglophones s’en sortent beaucoup mieux que nous en termes d’accès à l’éducation, à la santé et à l’eau potable, d’alternance au pouvoir sans effusion de sang, d’organisation d’élections équitables, justes et transparentes, de respect des droits de l’homme, que l’Angleterre ne s’immisce pas, de manière impromptue et indécente, dans les affaires internes de ses ex-colonies… » (p. 43).

En guise de conclusion
Ce bref clin d’œil adressé aux candidats potentiels à l’immigration clandestine et formulé en ces termes : « si certains jeunes africains savaient qu’en Europe, la solitude et les relations froides côtoient les supermarchés achalandés, les rues nettoyées et les bas et miéros arrivant à l’heure, ils cessereraient d’idéaliser Paris, Amsterdam, Londres ou Berlin ; ils éviteraient surtout de courir (...) le risque de monter dans un train, un avion ou d’embrasser des embarcations de fortune pour réaliser leur rêve d’échapper à l’enfer africain » (p. 26).

Les réponses apportées et supposées expliquer les raisons pour lesquelles l’Afrique a fait son rendez-vous avec un développement réel et durable ne sont pas franchement convaincantes. Car laissant forcément dans l’ombre bien d’autres facettes importantes. Et en outre, ne s’attardant point à vouloir montrer par exemple pourquoi il y a eu dans bien des cas réaction de forces jusque-là endormies (atavismes…) ; qui elles aussi, de bien des manières, ont leur part dans les échos signalés ici ou là. Pas plus qu’il n’évoque aussi les invraisemblables bouleversements provoqués par la colonisation ; dont les effets ne peuvent s’effacer, du jour au lendemain, comme d’un simple coup de baguette magique. Enfin, il ne semble guère prendre suffisamment en compte les nouveaux « rêves » provoqués par l’entrée d’une technologie envahissante et les conséquences perturbatrices qu’elle engendre sur tous les éléments constitutifs des cultures locales.

Cette vision prospective, qu’assurément fait défaut, aurait certainement pu donner plus de force ou de prenant à la trame d’un livre qui, à sa manière, raconte les promesses flouées et les rendez-vous manqués dans cette Afrique post-coloniale… toujours en attente de lendemains meilleurs !

Notes
1. « Pour des raisons évidentes dans un contexte ivorien fait de perspectives permanentes de de tous ceux qui incarnent une pensée dissidente », comme souligné dans la préface.
2. « C’est-à-dire à comprendre au sens de simulacrum. Ce dernier défini dans comme « ce qui n’a que l’apparence de ce qu’il prétend être » (Cf. Larousse).
3. Cf. http://nouveaucourrier.net/lafrique-et-le-defi-de-la-seconde-independance-le-
4. « De nombreux travaux ont mis en évidence l’arbitraire institutionnalisé qui caractérisait le régime de l’indigénat, la toute puissance des « commandants de cercle (qui cumulaient tous les pouvoirs), les ponctions permanentes en caractérisait le régime de l’indigénat, la toute puissance des « commandants de cercle (qui cumulaient tous les pouvoirs), les ponctions permanentes en
5. En citant, par exemple, « Partenia (diocèse situé non loin de Sétif en Algérie et
disu paru au 4ème siècle) »,

Hommage à Mahfoud Kaddache

A ce colloque, des historiens du Maroc, d’Algérie, de Tunisie et de la France, ont échangé une importante réflexion sur la question de l’engagement, qu’il soit politique, intellectuel, culturel ou militant. C’est un engagement associé à une temporalité, celle de la période où des mouvements nationaux ont émergé, au XXe siècle, dans les trois pays du Maghreb et au cours de laquelle des générations de militants politiques et syndicaux, des acteurs sociaux, des « éveilleurs » activant dans la sphère culturelle, tout d’abord, puis politique ont concouru, par leur action, à créer les conditions objectives à la libération des pays du Maghreb. C’est dans cet esprit que les problématiques débattues, pendant les trois jours du colloque, se sont articulées autour de trois grandes idées : « approches théoriques », « positionnements et engagements » et « lieux, espaces et pratiques de l’engagement ».

Le Mouvement national au Maghreb : le temps des acteurs politiques
Amor Mohamed-Amer
Générations engagées et mouvements nationaux

Ces réflexions ont été préalablement balisées par des communications sur le parcours de M. Kaddache et son action en tant que militant politique, responsable scout et universitaire. Spécialiste du Mouvement national, M. Kaddache est l’archétype de l’universitaire-engagé. Figure du militantisme politique, il fut de tous les combats en cas réaction de force de l’Algérie en juillet 1962. Aussi, cette sentence de Fouad Soufi2 résume, à notre avis, et, à juste titre, la place qu’occupe M. Kaddache dans l’historiographie algérienne : « Mahfoud Kaddache aura fait sa partie, la plus importante, aux autres de continuer ». C’est un rappel au métier de l’historien et sa mission au sein de sa société.

Le questionnement autour de l’identification et de la qualification d’une génération a constitué une des
plus importantes problématiques de ce colloque, tout comme celui du temps historique et des espaces de socialisation. Ces approches théoriques, qui convoquent les travaux de J.-E. Hobswam", K. Mannheim, H. Balass, G. Balandier, R. Kosseleck et d'autres renomment complètement des problèmes complexes de la formation d'une élite politique et/ou intellectuelle. Elles permettent ainsi de situer les luttes du Mouvement national dans des cadres et catégories bien déterminés et cela afin de mieux restituer les modes d'action politique et d'en préciser les modalités. Sur la pertinence du recours à la périodisation, les réflexions développées dans ces actes prennent en considération des moments de rupture et de basculement majeurs au Maghreb (Guerre du Rif de 1926 au Maroc, événements de mai 1945, et 1er novembre 1954 en Algérie, indépendances nationales de 1955 et 1962...). Ces événements sont souvent étudiés dans une perspective historique globale (en relation avec la première et seconde Guerre mondiale, par exemple) ; cette approche permettant de mieux aborder les enjeux politiques et stratégiques de cette période. L'approche par le temps et la temporalité a aussi l'avantage de mettre en évidence les conditions objectives de l'émergence de nouvelles générations d'acteurs dans un contexte particulier, celui du XXe siècle. Cette période est marquée par l’avènement et la promotion de grandes idéologies et courants de pensées dans le monde (Nahda islamique, kémalisme, communisme triomphant...). Ceux-ci ont alimenté la formation de générations de militants et d'acteurs politiques. Les espaces ou les lieux de sociabilité, quant à eux, sont indissociables de toute action politique, sociale ou culturelle en cette période. Les études sur leur importance dans la promotion et la consolidation du Mouvement national au Maghreb requèrent l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et humaines, mais, faut-il le souligner, de l'intérêt des chercheurs en sciences sociales et...
Deux vies se croisent un jour, deux personnalités différentes par leur parcours biographique mais qui s’avèrent être tout aussi semblables et unis par un seul destin, celui de l’Algérie. Ils font partie des premiers nommés, résistants et combattants. Le choix de l’Algérie est un écrit écrit à deux voix, dans l’esprit émancipateur des peuples colonisés, celui de l’Algérie et de l’Afrique. Des vies pleines d’enseignements que celles des professeurs Claudein et Pierre Chaulet qui, dès leur jeunesse, avaient opté pour le combat anti-colonial.


Pierre et Claudine Chaulet : l’engagement pour une vie en Algérie

Le choix de l’Algérie. Deux voix, une mémoire

Par Pierre & Claudine Chaulet


Le choix de l’Algérie. Deux voix, une mémoire (Préface de Rédha Malek)

Le choix de l’Algérie. Deux voix, une mémoire (Préface de Rédha Malek)

Lamy Tunnel

Le choix de l’Algérie. Deux voix, une mémoire (Préface de Rédha Malek)

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enfant : le premier document fondateur de la Révolution algérienne après la Proclamation du 1er novembre 1954.

Claudine Chaulet, quant à elle, a contribué, au côté de son époux, à la construction nationale de l’Algérie, notamment après l’indépendance. Ce combat fut concrétisé notamment par son attachement indigné à la question paysanne et les terres agricoles d’Algérie, au côté de « ces gens d’en bas ». Claudine Chaulet, qui est professeure de sociologie, va à la rencontre de ces paysans et paysannes qui lui font connaître et comprendre la complexité de leur trajectoire socio-économique et historique. En faisant de la sociologie rurale son champ de bataille, elle a contribué, sans relâche, à la construction de l’émancipation d’une nouvelle génération d’étudiants et de chercheurs algériens. Dès 1962, elle redonne de l’importance à la question paysanne dans le contexte de la construction nationale. Elle collabore avec le Ministre des Affaires de la réforme agraire et travaille sur les domaines automatisés des terres agricoles. Ses travaux universitaires sur le monde de la terre sont connus et reconnus comme des références dans le champ de sociologies sociales. Outre le développement de l’économie agroalimentaire en Algérie et de la sociologie rurale, elle a développé l’idée forte de l’autonomie des acteurs sociaux considérés comme « des sujets actifs, toujours conscients de leurs droits et de leurs intérêts et capable de stratégies autonomes ».

Elle a également consacré son travail au service de la recherche sociologique au sein de plusieurs organismes de recherche : l’INA1, le CNRSES2, plus récemment le CREAD3, tout en collaborant avec le CRASS4. Grande fervente du travail de terrain, Claudine Chaulet a rencontré de nombreuses personnes d’engagement qu’elle assure à l’Université d’Alger à partir de 1970 jusqu’à sa retraite.

Perspectives pour une Algérie possible

La lecture de cet ouvrage autobiographique, très impressionnant à notre sens, a été perçue comme une sorte de voyage à travers le temps, notamment pour toute personne n’ayant pas vécu directement la Guerre de libération nationale. C’est ce qu’ils ont voulu laisser les Chaulet pour toute une jeunesse qui se cherche et se recherche dans un monde en perpétuel changement. Par leur témoignage, ils ont tenté de comprendre comment les luttes et les épreuves traversées par l’Algérie, les effervescences qui ont jalonné l’indépendance de l’Algérie, les blessures et les traumatismes laissés après des années de violence, au sens large du terme. Un pays qui essaye de se constituer malgré les incertitudes et les difficultés.

Même si Pierre Chaulet nous a quittés en 2014, son parcours de militant de la Cause nationale et celui de son épouse est un symbole de tolérance et de vivre-ensemble pour toute une catégorie d’Algériens, certes minoritaire
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Impossible, c’est autant un grand cri de survie qu’un murmure, le cri d’une femme qui se réaffirme après tant de fractures... Le roman Impossible de grandir de Fatou Diome traite de cette dualité que nous avons tous et toutes en nous, cette personne adulte que nous sommes devenue, confrontée à l’enfant qui reste toujours en nous, avec son histoire et ses stigmates qui nous façonnent. Il s’agit de Salie, adulte qui se trouve en pleine introspection, face à son enfance et ses traumatismes révélés par une invitation à dîner.

Impossible de grandir, une œuvre semble-t-elle d’inspiration autobiographique, dans laquelle l’auteure aborde la place des enfants illégitimes dans la société sénégalaise le “Domi dyité”. La quête d’une identité à soi et la famille sont au cœur de l’histoire de Salie, la narratrice du roman. Enfant, elle a pris peur des tourments de la vie. Cette dernière va la forcer à revenir sur son passé, à revisiter son enfance pour comprendre l’origine de cette peur. Salie (re)convoque alors ses souvenirs, “la vie à Niodior, la difficulté d’être une enfant illégitime, d’endurer le rejet et la maltraitance au sein même de la famille. Mais n’est-ce pas en approvisionnant ses démons qu’on s’en libère ?

Devenue adulte, “l’enfant qui était, est toujours en nous, la peur demeure, les violences physiques, la maltraitance”, confie l’auteure Fatou Diome, qui après avoir porté la voix des femmes d’émigrés vivant dans la solitude, se fait, aujourd’hui, le porte-voix des enfants illégitimes, objet d’abus et de maltraitance au sein même de la famille. “Quand tu travailles dans ta propre famille, tu n’es pas payé, c’est de l’esclavage domestique (…), tu ne fais que subir, tu grandis avec des rêvées”, dénonce l’auteure de Impossible de grandir. “Oser se retourner et faire face aux loups”. Un dialogue va se nouer entre la narratrice, qui a enfoncé ses secrets d’enfance au plus profond d’elle-même pour mener une vie qu’elle juge adulte, et la petite enfant, qui est son double, l’amène à voir clair en elle-même, à exhumer ses terres et ses souffrances premières de fillette née hors mariage et rejetée par tous dans son village natal de l’île de Niodor, hororiser ses grands-parents, aimants et protecteurs, son village natal de l’île de Niodor, hormis sa grand-mère Anna. Salie, la protagoniste de ce roman est une enfant illégitime, déshéritée de sa famille, dénuée de ses parents, aînés et protecteurs, qui lui ont appris la fierté et la force de caractère dans la vie. Salie, l’enfant-adulte, refuse de voir son passé en face et fait une sorte d’auto-analyse, autant les souvenirs de l’enfance africaine sont émouvants : le lecteur est partagé par cette dialectique de l’âge prétendu adulte et l’enfance insurmontable. La narratrice narre, à la manière d’un témoin qui nous rappelle le roman de Günter Grass Le Tambour adapté au cinéma et évoquant le dramatique monde des adultes vécu par le regard d’un enfant de trois ans. Oscar, atteint physique et un malade mental, s’il n’entend pas des voix, il se prend cependant pour Adolf et Jésus. Ce détour permet de considérer les horreurs de la guerre sans compassion ni sens moral dans un changement caricatural. Au dernier chapitre, il s’agit du trentième anniversaire du personnage Oscar ; on voudrait faire comprendre à ce dernier qu’il a atteint l’âge où il convient de s’établir, de se saisir du rôle de l’adulte. En vain, bien sûr : abrité à l’aide et protégé par l’infirmier Bruno, il a entrepris le récit de sa vie.

Nous, lecteurs, traversons la même tomatité du Tambour avec Salie de Fatou Diome. La narratrice, elle aussi, tout comme Oscar n’a pas connu l’amour de son père et de sa mère. Elle va devoir retrouver ses démons et aussi les comprendre pour grandir. La grand-mère disait “arrête de convoquer des fantômes !”, “Je veux seulement démontrer que j’aie raison des vitres par millions. Cependant, peu importe puisque les bombardements ont eu raison des vues par millions. Bien sûr, c’était la révolution vers l’Ouest des Allemands : Oscar ne reverra plus son grand-mère Anna. Salie, la protagoniste de Impossible de grandir, est plongée dans un désarroi : “Des que je pense à l’invitation, mon cœur s’embattait à m’entretenir des flancs”. Salie, qui n’aime pas aller chez les autres, va évoquer avec sensibilité des moments de son enfance qui ont construit la femme adulte qu’elle est devenue, avec ses failles, ses peurs et ses tourments. Elle délivre et relate sans détour le quotidien des enfants illégitimes du Sénégal, rejetés par leur mère, exploités par leur famille, mal considérés par la population locale, dénigrés de tous. Enfant du pêché, fille du diable (“domi-haram, fille de Sheitan”), Salie est élevée par ses...
grands-parents, mais ignorée par sa mère et harcelée par son oncle et sa tante. Une petite fille, en mal de repères, qui se construit sur le désamour et l’humiliation, devient adulte sans pouvoir se défaire de ses souffrances intimes ni du traumatisme : « Papa, maman et les enfants, en famille, je n’avais jamais su ce que cela voulait dire concrètement ». De même qu’Oscar, Salie a eu une petite fille, va progressivement lui permettre de « grandir ». Un duel constamment menacé, un enfant-roi qui oscille, se renforce puis s’atténue au fil des pages, à mesure que la narratrice se retourne sur son passé, « fait face aux loups » et accepte enfin « cette petite avec sa mémoire névralgique ». Salie, peu à peu, se (re)construit et peut alors devenir adulte et une brillante écrivaine. Par l’écriture, l’auteure passe ses plaies, exerce sa propre thérapie, l’amour de sa grand-mère fut et est sa protection. « La Petite, son monde avait un visage : celui de sa grand-mère. Son monde avait une musique rassurante, la voix de sa grand-mère. Pour résister aux vagues de la vie, elle avait un rocher auquel s’accrocher : sa grand-mère. La Petite, son cöl devenait sombre sans le sourire éclairant de sa grand-mère. La Petite n’avait qu’une boussole, le regard avisé de sa grand-mère. »

À travers la traversée

Kamel Chachoua

La Traversée
Un film d’Elisabeth Leuvrey

Notes
The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). Natural resources, especially forests, are very important since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local well-being, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.