



LUCAS

Leeds
**African
Studies
Bulletin**

**Number 65
March 2003**

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LUCAS, The Leeds University Centre for African Studies, publishes Leeds African Studies Bulletin annually.

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Introduction

By the Director of LUCAS, Dr Jane Plastow

This issue of the LUCAS Bulletin reflects the Centre's activities for a period from 2001 to early 2003. It includes reports from a number of our contributing departments at the University, information on LUCAS activities, and articles on political theatre in Kenya, food production in the Sudan and the importance of the historical perspective in African literature. The last of these – *An Idea of the Past* by AbdulRazak Gurnah - is the text of our 2002 annual lecture, a major event attended by many from within the University as well as the wider Leeds community and Africanist academic colleagues from across the country.

Our flagship event in 2002 was the biennial LUCAS conference. This took place on May 3-4 at Weetwood Hall, Leeds, and was entitled 'Peasants, Liberation and Socialism' in honour of Professor Lionel Cliffe's lifetime work in these areas. A full report and details of speakers and their papers can be found in the Bulletin. One of the papers, *Drought and the Evolution of Well-Irrigated Wadi Agriculture* by Khalid A. El-Amin, is reprinted here in an edited version. Further papers from John Saul, Henry Bernstein, Peter Lawrence, Lloyd Sechenye and Alemseged Tesfai, originally given at the LUCAS conference will be appearing in the May 2003 issue of *The Review of African Political Economy*, (No 96). Following a now established tradition of mounting original African productions at Leeds, a new Eritrean play, *Aster*, by Isias Tesfazghi, was put on to accompany the conference. The play, which looked at the plight of disabled ex-combatants from the Eritrea-Ethiopia war, was a deeply moving analysis of a seldom discussed topic applicable to many parts of the African continent.

Our next conference, *Performing Africa: Politics, Development and Practice*, will take place in May 2004 in Leeds. Those interested in offering papers or attending the event should contact Dr Jane Plastow (j.e.plastow@leeds.ac.uk). Further information concerning the event will be circulated in the coming months.

We were greatly saddened by the death in October 2002 of our founder, the internationally famous economist, Walter Newlyn; an obituary by John Loxley and Martin Banham is included in the *Bulletin*. We are intending to run an event in honour of Walter Newlyn and his lifetime's work in 2003, and are seeking permission from the University to name our research library after this outstanding Africanist.

Notes on Contributors

Khalid A. El Amin is a lecturer at the University of Khartoum who writes on food security issues in the Sudan. He holds a PhD from the Institute of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), University of Leeds.

Martin Banham is Emeritus Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies and Director of The Workshop Theatre in the School of English at the University of Leeds. He is editor of the *Cambridge Guide to Theatre* and has written extensively on African drama.

Lionel Cliffe is Emeritus Professor of Politics at the University of Leeds and now a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Geography. He was founding editor of the *Review of African Political Economy* and has written extensively on African politics.

Abdulrazak Gurnah. The work of writer and critic Abdulrazak Gurnah includes critical writings on African, Caribbean and Indian literature (particularly Wole Soyinka and Salman Rushdie), and the novels *By the Sea*, *Paradise* (shortlisted for the 1994 Booker and Whitbread Prizes), and *Admiring Silence*.

John Loxley is Professor of Economics at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. He has published widely on economic reform, finance and banking in Africa and elsewhere. He is a long time contributor to work on alternative development strategies in Africa, Canada and small island development.

Mbũgua wa-Mũnga was a lecturer in literature at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, and Saint Mary's University, Minnesota (Nairobi campus). In 2001 he began PhD studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Department of Jewish and Comparative Folklore Program. His teaching and research interest include: literary criticism, African folklore, the African novel, African American and Caribbean prose and drama, Kenyan popular culture and mothertongue literature.

Jane Plastow is the Director of LUCAS and Senior Lecturer in Drama & Theatre Studies in the School of English at the University of Leeds. She writes on African theatre and theatre for development.

Kamal Salhi was the founding director of the Leeds Centre for Francophone Studies. He is the founder and editor of the *International Journal of Francophone Studies* and his research focus is on the politics and aesthetics of the cultural production of North and Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa.

Kevin Ward is Lecturer in African Religious Studies in the School of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not of the Centre for African Studies

**LUCAS
Notes
&
News**

Diary of LUCAS Events

Seminars & Workshops 2002

30th January

Seminar: *Nigerian Literature & International Politics*
Mr Udu Yakubu (Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria)

6th February

Seminar: *Theatre & Development*
Michael Etherton (writer, theatre & development practitioner)
David Kerr (Practitioner in media & theatre for development)
Jane Plastow (University of Leeds)

13th March

Seminar: *Petro-diamond Capitalism and 'Development' in Angola: What Prospects for Peace and Prosperity?*
Marcus Power (University of Leeds)

24th April

Annual Lecture : *An Idea of the Past*
Dr Abdulrazak Gurnah
(Department of English, University of Kent)

3rd-4th May

Conference 2002
*Peasants, Liberation and Socialism:
Reflecting on the Work of Lionel Cliffe*

30th October

Seminar: *Zimbabwe: Neo-Colonial Plot or Regional Crisis?*
Steve Kibble (Catholic Institute for International Relations)

13th November

Seminar: *Population, Aging and Care of the Ederly: What are the lessons of Asia for Sub-Saharan Africa?*
Mahmood Messkoub (Leeds University Business School)

27th November

Seminar: *Conflicting Modes of Livelihood and the Imperatives of the State:
Rift Valley, Kenya*
Janet Bujra (Department of Peace Studies Bradford)

Obituary: Professor Walter Newlyn



Walter Newlyn, who has died aged 87, was an Africanist and professor of development economics at Leeds University from 1967 to 1978. An outstanding scholar, he was well known for his work on monetary theory and economic development. His *Theory of Money* (1961), still found on economics reading lists throughout the world, avoided approaches to money which required, as he put it ‘assumptions which are incapable of reconciliation with reality’.

To bring that reality home to students, at Leeds in 1949 Newlyn and the New Zealander Bill Philips built the prototype of the Philips hydraulic machine, a model of the circular flow of money later immortalised in an Emmet cartoon in *Punch*. It also formed the basis of flow charts found

in his books. Walter chuckled when I reminded him of the time that the model had proved even more realistic than intended, and had begun to spring leaks at critical junctures.

From 1965 to 1967 Walter was director of economic research at the East African Institute of Social Research in Kampala, Uganda, where he built up a solid, policy-oriented research programme. Back in Leeds he set up the African Studies Centre.

The younger of two sons, he was born in Wimbledon, southwest London. He never knew his father, who was killed on the Somme when Walter was just a year old. Educated privately in Richmond, Surrey, he left at 16 – without any qualifications – and began work as an office boy for a London-based grain-shipping firm. By the end of the 1930s, having joined the Territorial Army, he was in France as a signaller. In June 1940, he was evacuated from Dunkirk in

the same boat as his brother, and, back in England, was commissioned and posted to India.

In 1945 he persuaded the London School of Economics to admit him to read economics, and, by 1948, had been appointed as an assistant lecturer at Leeds. Although primarily based there until retirement, he also worked extensively in Africa. A research project in 1950 first took him to the continent, to investigate the colonial banking system. Between 1953 and 1954, he and his wife Doreen, whom he married in 1952, ranged across Nigeria, studying mechanisation.

While living in a hut 60 miles from Ibadan, they proofed Walter's *Money and Banking* (1954), which he co-wrote with David Rowan. This book emphasised the dependent nature of African economics, years before the dependency school of development theory became popular. While arguing for independent central banks and institutional reform, it stressed that these would do little to ease economic dependence, for which they were no monetary or financial panacea.

Between 1956 and 1959, Walter acted as an economic advisor to the colonial Ugandan government, before returning to Leeds until 1965, when he joined the East African Institute. In the 1960s, he also co-founded the Development Studies Association, published a wide variety of papers on development issues, such as foreign aid and debt, and sat on the UN expert committee on payment agreements in Africa.

One of Walter's major concerns was the extent to which new central banks could prudently advance credit to their governments for development spending. In *Money In An African Context* (1967) and *Finance and Development* (1968) he developed an approach to measuring this. More importantly, in the latter he argued that the technicalities of financing development raised larger issues of wealth ownership and its consequences for growth and equity. He expressed doubts about the feasibility of a watered down welfare state in poor countries with a small capitalist economy, but believed it possible for the major means of production to be collectively owned, while giving a limited, but guaranteed, role for private capital.

The Newlyn's African travels were so extensive that a point was reached when their children, returning from a long ride, would complain of having seen only "Mmba" – miles and miles of bloody Africa.

After his retirement from Leeds, Walter and Doreen spent two years in Malaysia on a project for the institute of development studies at Sussex University.

The couple shared a love of theatre, and a commitment that it should be accessible to all. In the late 1950s, they set up the Uganda Pilgrim Players, the country's first multi-racial theatre group. – for its first production, Doreen translated the First Shepherd's Play from Middle English, while Walter painted the scenery. Later, he donated the money from *Money In An African Context* to the national theatre of Uganda. Later they were instrumental in helping to create the Leeds Playhouse (now the West Yorkshire Playhouse), and Walter wrote a seminal paper on the economics of the theatre.

Walter was noted for his kindness and generosity towards students – and was much loved by them. He and Doreen, with their friends Arnold and Margot Kettle, did much to encourage working-class students, like myself, to pursue an academic career. Walter's career was informed throughout by a concern for greater equality of opportunity in all spheres of life.

He always relied heavily on Doreen. Even as he lay dying, he sought to persuade her to take down notes on his ideas of how a Tobin tax might be designed to aid poor countries. He is also survived by his daughters Lucy, Gill and Kate, his eldest daughter, Sally, having predeceased him.

Walter Tessier Newlyn, economist, born July 26 1915, died October 4 2002.

John Loxley

John Loxley refers to Walter Newlyn's initiative in setting up the African Studies Unit (now LUCAS) in 1964. With Margot Kettle as Administrator the ASU became a focus for Africanists from all disciplines within the University, offering African students a dedicated reading room and meeting place, creating a stimulating seminar programme, and launching the ASU Newsletter with a small but influentially international circulation. This has now grown into the LUCAS Bulletin in which this obituary appears. The 1960s were generous days in university life, allowing students and staff the luxury to share each other's enthusiasms and interests. Such an interchange, intellectual and social, based on a love, respect and enthusiasm for Africa, was important to Walter. By his vision the University was established on the world scene as a centre for research and teaching in African studies and a place where African students and visiting academics could be sure of support, friendship, and a strong professional scholarly concern for the continent's challenges and opportunities.

MB

Announcements

Dr Wanjiru Kihoro, who received her PhD and an MA in Development Studies from Leeds, was victim of an air accident in January 2003, sustaining serious injuries. At the time of publication she remains in a coma. Wanjiru has been one of the initiators of a pan-African women's NGO, Abantu for Africa, for the last few years. She was travelling in a small plane in western Kenya with some members of the newly-elected Kenya government, when it crashed, killing one of the ministers. Her family has set up a website from which her friends can get news of her progress: www.getwelldrkihor.com

Emeritus Professor Lionel Cliffe, now a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Geography, received the Distinguished Africanist Award of the African Studies Association of the UK at the ASA-UK's biannual conference on 10 September. The Awards are designed as a way of 'paying tribute to a lifetime of achievements in the study of Africa and in the dissemination of knowledge about Africa to a wider public'. 2002 was only the second year that these biannual Awards have been made.

LUCAS CONFERENCE 2002

Peasants, Liberation and Socialism in Africa

3-4 May 2002: Weetwood Hall and Conference Centre

LUCAS convened its 2002 biennial Africa Studies Conference in May on the themes of peasants, liberation and socialism in Africa, thereby honouring the work in these areas of recently retired Professor of Politics, Lionel Cliffe. One hundred participants from Europe, Africa and Canada discussed, over two days, issues on land and liberation, imperialism, economic reform and democracy, complex political emergencies, political reform and African renaissance. Participants included the erstwhile personal assistant to President Julius Nyerere, Joan Wicken and the recent Prime Minister of Namibia, the Right Honourable Hagi Geingob. There were also contributions from Henry Bernstein, John Saul, Bjorn Beckman, Mark Duffield, Donna Pankhurst, Phil White, Lloyd Sachikonye, Morris Szeftel, Alemseged Tsefai and Peter Lawrence.

The University of Leeds Workshop Theatre performed *Aster*, a short play written by Esias Tesfazghi. A selection of the presentations will soon appear in a special issue of the journal *Review of African Political Economy* that will commemorate Lionel Cliffe's contribution to African Studies.

CONFERENCE 2002: Peasants, Liberation and Socialism in Africa Programme

Land and Liberation

John Saul (University of Toronto)

Liberation

Henry Bernstein (SOAS)

*Revisiting Africa's Agrarian
Questions*

Alemseged Tesfai (Eritrea)

Liberation and the EPLF

Imperialism, Economic Reform and Democracy

Bjorn Beckman (Stockholm)

*Imperialism, National Develop-
ment and Social Democracy*

John Loxley (University of
Manitoba)

*Imperialism & Economic Reform
in Africa: What's New About the
'New Partnership for Africa's
Economic Development (NEPAD)'*?

Complex Political Emergencies

Mark Duffield (University of Leeds)

Political Complexes

Donna Pankhurst (Bradford Univ.)

*Conflict Settlement: a Gender
Approach*

Phil White (University of Leeds)

Complex Emergencies

Alfred Zack-Williams (University
of Central Lancashire)

*Sierra Leone After the End of
Armed Conflict*

Political Reform and Deliberalisation

Lloyd Sachikonye (Harare)

Turmoil in Zimbabwe

Morris Szeftel (University of Leeds)

*What is the Problem About
Corruption? Democratic Reform
And Spoils Politics*

Co-operation and Counter Revolution

Peter Lawrence (University of
Keele)

Reflections on Rural Cooperation

Ray Bush (University of Leeds)

*Counter Revolution in the
Egyptian Countryside*

Khalid El Amin (University of
Khartoum)

*Drought and Wadi Agriculture:
Implications for Sustainable Food
Security in Northern Darfur*

African Renaissance?

Adotey Bing (Africa Centre,
London)

An African Renaissance

Joan Wicken (PA to the late

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere)

Tanzania - the Nyerere years

Departmental News

School of English – Workshop Theatre

Eritrea

Our longstanding link with Eritrea has continued with more Eritrean students coming on the Theatre Studies MA. Esias Tesfazghi successfully completed his MA in 2002. He also made a major contribution to the Workshop Theatre by writing and performing in a play, *Aster*, which looked at the physical and psychological problems of fighters crippled during the Eritrean liberation struggle. The play was originally produced as part of the MA programme, but was then performed for the 2002 LUCAS conference, where many found its lyrical, poetic qualities, deeply moving.

We are pleased to welcome another Eritrean MA student for the 2002/3 course in renowned novelist and playwright, Solomon Dirar.

In December/January 2002/3 a team of Workshop Theatre staff will be travelling to Eritrea for a three-week period. The primary aim of the team, consisting of Prof Richard Boon, Dr Jane Plastow and Mr Tim Skelly, will be, at the request of the Eritrean Bureau of Cultural Affairs, to produce an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with the National Theatre Company. The play will be produced in the local language of Tigrinya and will be adapted to Eritrean history. Tim Skelly will also train local technicians in the use of lighting and sound equipment recently donated to the major Eritrean theatre, Cinema Asmara, and Jane Plastow will be discussing reviving the national community theatre project which had to be abandoned in 1997 when war broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Ethiopia

In 2001 Jane Plastow made a final evaluation visit on behalf of Comic Relief to The Adugna Community Dance Theatre where, after five years of training, eighteen street children have emerged as accomplished dancers, using both contemporary and traditional dance skills, as well as Forum Theatre techniques, to advocate on behalf of their communities, raise human rights issues, and perform in support of spreading knowledge about HIV/AIDS and reproductive

health. The company is now in a two-year transitional period, moving towards full independence as a professional dance and advocacy company.

International Seminar

In February 2002, Jane Plastow ran a week long International Seminar entitled, *Promoting Rights and Development through the Arts* in Leeds on behalf of The British Council. Amongst the participants from 14 different countries were a number of Africans. There were, from Egypt, Dr Sahar El-Mougy of Cairo University and Dr Ebtehal Rashad of the Center for Studies and Programmes of Alternative Development; from Nigeria, Yinka Ola-Williams of The Ancient Theatre Company; from Uganda, Augustine Omare-Okurut of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and from Zambia, Benne Banda of Arts Acres Afrika and Mary Manzole of Kamoto Community Arts.

Visitor

In the first semester of the 2001/2 academic year, The Workshop Theatre was delighted to host the Nigerian scholar, Udu Yakubu.

Publications

Jane Plastow, Guest Editor, *African Theatre: Women*, James Currey, Indiana University Press and Witwatersrand University Press, 2002. 178pp. ISBN 0 85255 596 2. The volume contains articles on theatre from Algeria, Egypt, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda, and looks at women playwrights, performers and the political and social contexts in which women work in African theatre.

Please note: further issues of *African Theatre* will be on Wole Soyinka (2004) and on Theatre with Young People (2005). A forthcoming issue on theatre in Southern Africa will be available in 2003. Contributions of up to 5,000 words are invited and should be sent to James Gibbs, 8 Victoria Square, Bristol BS8 4ET, UK.

Abstracts

Judy El-Bushra, MA by research, 2001

Politics and Performance: Is Popular Theatre a Development Tool or a Cultural Right?

This study aims to explore the political nature of performance arts in order to establish the potential of the latter as a catalyst for transformatory social action. It starts from the hypothesis that Theatre for Development incorporates two distinct trends. One, 'instrumentalist' trend sees development communication in

general, and TfD in particular, as a modernizing strategy, in which the outsider's role is to effect changes in attitudes and behavior. The other, 'liberationist' trend sees it as a cultural right, a means for articulating a worldview, in which the role of the outsider is as catalyst for reflection and debate. The study focuses on Africa.

A review of literature on different performance forms (indigenous performance, political theatre and theatre for development) reveals that each has strengths and weaknesses in terms of their capacity to generate social transformation. The study goes on to examine the record of several UK-based development agencies (Comic Relief, Oxfam, Save the Children, Action Aid, and SOS Sahel) in brief, and of ACORD in more detail. Theatre projects supported by ACORD in Angola and Uganda are reviewed, and it is concluded that the absence of a proactive policy relating to TfD (on, for example, skills and training, monitoring criteria, methodology and the role of TfD) has led to opportunities being missed for pursuing and enriching ACORD's participatory and transformatory approach to development.

The final chapter assesses the characteristics of a 'liberationist' approach and examines some of the institutional and methodological issues, which development agencies such as ACORD should consider when developing a 'cultural policy'. It concludes with a plea for considering cultural performance for development in the broadest terms.

2001, John Mike Muthari Kuria, PhD.

The Challenge of Feminism in Kenya: Towards an Afrocentric Worldview

This study deals with African women's literature, and specifically creative writing by Kenyan women, in the context of feminism and Afrocentricity. In the words of Obioma Nnaemeka (1995) critics of African women's literature have tended to rename, misname or silence women's voices in an attempt to make them fit into a feminist/Afrocentricity either/or mould. This thesis argues that when attention is paid to African women themselves, and the cultures from which and within which they write, it is clear that they embrace both feminism and Afrocentricity. By feminism I refer to African women's vision and activism for sexual equality and women's liberation, while by Afrocentricity I am thinking of their commitment and pride in their African cultures and traditions.

The first chapter argues that Kenyan women, in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times, have been active and voiced their stance against oppression of any kind. In the second chapter, I explore the relationship between feminism and Afrocentricity in a wider sense. I pay attention to the ways in which the two

concepts have manifested themselves in Africa and her Diaspora as well as in the western world. In Chapter Three, domestic violence, rape poverty, and a gender insensitive legal and judicial system are the dominant issues of concern to short story writers from Kenya. In the fourth chapter, Ogot is seen as a liberal Afrocentric feminist in her call for African women to create room for themselves with African systems of thought and practice. Chapter five, on Majorie Oludhe Macgoye, argues that to be Afrocentric is cultural rather than racial. In Chapter six Rebeka Njau and Margaret Ogola are seen as Afrocentric while Tsitsi Dangerembga and Alice Walker are seen as Eurocentric. The thesis concludes that feminism in practice is not necessarily an occidental phenomenon. An African woman can be both feminist and Afrocentric.

School of English – Post-Colonial Studies

Colleagues bade farewell to **Dr David Richards** who left Leeds in May 2002 to take up a new appointment as the Director of The Ferguson Centre for Africa and South Asia at The Open University. David, who joined the School in 1983, broadened and enriched the study of African literature, bringing the subject new and challenging approaches that drew upon the disciplines of Anthropology and Fine Art as well as his knowledge of other areas of Post Colonial literature. An example of the comprehensiveness and depth of his scholarship and criticism is the excellent *Masks of Difference* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). Colleagues thanked David for his generosity of spirit, the work he did for the School and for LUCAS and his robust commitment to the University.

Dr Sam Durrant has been awarded a small research grant of £5,000 to carry out research in Cape Town from February to May 2002. The project explores the impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on recent South African literature. It examines the ways in which writers have replicated and/or refused the discourses of confession and testimony engendered by the TRC and the increasingly hegemonic demands for closure, forgiveness and reconciliation. He will be based at the University of Cape Town but will also be making links with community-based groups attempting to deal with the psychological legacy of apartheid.

The School welcomes among its new colleagues Dr Brendon Nicholls, who was educated at the University of Cape Town and the University of Essex (UK) and whose research interest in African literature includes the work of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Tsitsi Dangarembga.

Professor Shirley Chew participated again this year as a panellist at The Caine Prize for African Writing Symposium organised by the Institute of English

Studies, University of London. The Prize, established in 2001 was awarded this time round to Binyavanga Wainaina of Kenya for his story, *Discovering Home*.

The 10th Arthur Ravenscroft Memorial Lecture 2001-2002, *Ned Kelly's African Antecedents* was given by the Australian **Cassandra Pybus**. The text of the Lecture is available in *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Trans-cultural Writings*, published from the School. Included also among the contents of the second issue is Landeg White on the representation of Mozambique in V.S. Naipaul's new novel, *Half A Life* and two poems by Helon Habila, last year's Caine Prize Winner.

Department of French *Africa in French Studies*

New module

Kamal Salhi has put a new course in the French Department to start in October 2003. This module, Reflecting and Performing the Francophone is designed to initiate research in the realm of devised work for theatre. It takes as its source material a selection of Francophone dramatic texts marking moments of theatrical activity in North and West African theatre history in both post-independence Africa and contemporary France. Throughout the first semester, students will be introduced to a variety of representative post-colonial texts and to standard approaches to theatre practice. In the second semester, they will prepare a theatrical production.

Research

Dr Russell Goulbourne is currently writing a paper on the representation of Africa and Africans in seventeenth-century French comedy which he has been invited to give at the seventh conference of the *Centre International de Rencontres sur le XVIIe siècle*, 'L'Afrique au XVIIe siècle: mythes et réalités', to be held in Tunis in March 2002. He is focusing on ten plays written between the 1630s and the 1670s: some are set in Africa; some depict Africans in France; some merely allude to Africa and Africans. Russell's analyses of these plays are, in part, cultural and sociological, examining the stereotypical images peddled by dramatists and setting these against the background of contemporary travel writing. But, more importantly, his analyses are dramaturgical and theatrical, examining how and why dramatists introduce black characters, played by disguised white actors, into their plays; how these roles often become part of the carnivalesque, self-consciously theatrical play-world that the dramatist conjures up; and how dramatists exploit the potential for verbal game-play by introducing

(supposedly) foreign characters. This paper forms part of Russell's broader and ongoing research into disguise and alterity in early modern French drama.

Dr Kamal Salhi has written a chapter, which is intended to complement the essays on Africa and the Caribbean included in his edited book, *New Approaches in Post-colonial Cultures* (Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming). The main thrust of this chapter is to highlight the connections between the features of post-colonial Francophone cultures. It examines what post-colonial cultures have in common, and the ways our interests as researchers, citizens and people with a general influence reflect a shared concern for the complex, post-colonial cultural diversity inherent in the African-Caribbean Francophone canon.

The traditional cultures of Francophone Africa have rarely appeared worthy of respect. So great was the degradation inflicted by colonial rule that many Africans have come to join in the denigration of their own historical achievements. There was a belief that Africans were so primitive that they practically represented a raw material that the civilising powers could mould at will as they pursued their 'civilising' project. The challenge to such thinking has been an important element in the African renaissance of recent decades, and its success has made it possible for Africans to valorise the modes of social thought, action and belief unique to the continent. The notion that Africa was completely savage and chaotic before the arrival of the French and, by extension, the other European powers, is little heard nowadays, though it still lies like a shadow in the background. Recent scholarship has done much to destroy the myths of 'primitive Africa'. Where scholars have applied themselves to factual research, they have found evidence of complex social and technological development among a wide range of peoples in almost every part of the continent. The aim of the chapter is finally to broaden the reflective landscape in order to incorporate new perspectives in addition to mainstream Francophone interpretations.

Kamal has recently contributed a chapter on Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia to Martin Banham's edited volume, *History of Theatre in Africa*, (CUP). He is also editing the section on Africa and the Maghreb for *The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies* (Oxford).

Professor David Coward has given the Department's Videotext series a francophone direction with a new title, *Assia Djébar*, based on an in-depth interview recorded in Leeds in 1997. The video programme sets Assia Djébar's achievement in its historical and literary context and allows the author to discuss her writings and the problems out of which have come fiction, theatre and film. Assia Djébar speaks frankly and engagingly and the discussion ranges widely

over the whole of her career. The cassette lasts 49 minutes and is accompanied by a substantial booklet which contains 1. *Introduction à l'Oeuvre d'Assia Djebar*; 2. *Chronologie d'Assia Djebar*; 3. *Bibliographie Critique d'Assia Djebar*. The package is designed as an introduction to her work but also contains material of use to anyone interested in North African literature in French.

Dr Nigel Armstrong has recently co-written a book chapter with Mikaël Jamin (University of Kent), to appear in *French In and Out of France: Language Policies, Intercultural Antagonisms and Dialogues*, Kamal Salhi ed. (Peter Lang), entitled *Le Français des Banlieues: Uniformity and Discontinuity in the French of the Hexagon*. The chapter looks at possible North African influences on recent developments in *banlieue* Parisian French.

Dr Jim House is working on a book project with Neil MacMaster (UEA Norwich) on the 17 October 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris (Oxford University Press). He gave a paper to the Liverpool (University) Interdisciplinary Post-graduate Seminar entitled 'Algerian and French memories of colonialism: reading across imaginary and disciplinary borders'. The paper discussed the work of the sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad in the context of recent developments in post-colonial historiography.

Susan Ylitalo has successfully completed her MA in Francophone Studies with a distinction for her dissertation on the work of the Senegalese Mariama Ba, supervised by Dr Kamal Salhi. Set out in the context of the transition from colonialism to independence wherein many African states and individuals have sought to reconcile a grounding in tradition with an adaptation of modernity, the study engages with Mariama Ba's themes of African feminism. It explores the author's emphasis on education for women and girls, her call for women's solidarity, her rejection of polygamy and promotion of monogamy, and her portrayal of the varied faces and voices of African feminism.

Theresa Hyde has successfully completed her MA in Francophone Studies with a dissertation in intergenerational studies entitled, 'Mothers and daughters: representation and change for Algerian women living in France', supervised by Dr Jim House. The study is articulated around three major themes, discourse on Algerian women, Algerian women in film and on television, migration and change for Algerian women.

Sarah Bayly has completed her first research year and passed on to a PhD programme. She is currently doing research on the works of the Algerian writer and journalist Tahar Djaout. These works are key in contemporary Algeria. Djaout represents a synthesis of his multicultural and multilingual nation (Berber, Arabic and French). By the time his literary career ended – he was

assassinated in 1993 – he was internationally acclaimed as a writer and internationally given support as a journalist for his struggle to defend the freedom of the press in Algeria. Most of Djaout’s writings are oriented towards the past, a past which revolves closely around Kabylia. This region has had a long history of resistance – to the colonial regime and to the central power in independent Algeria. Bayly’s research explores and questions history and language and Djaout’s redefinition of his position as a North African intellectual in a post-colonial society.

MA dissertations

The following students have recently, successfully completed their MA degree dissertations supervised by Kamal Salhi.

Andrew Smith: “Politics and Aesthetics of Maloya and in the Post-colonial Reunion Island”. This study looks at the phenomena of Maloya, a music endemic to Reunion Island. Through an analysis of neo-colonial and post-colonial politics in the context of the social and political history of the music on the island, the dissertation examines how the Maloya performance has developed from the music of slaves to a music of rebellion.

Ellie Mckinlay: “Love in Tahar Ben Jelloun: Reflecting Social Reality, Calling for Social Change”.

Erika Buzink: “The Representation of the Algerian in French Colonial Iconography”.

Julia Clime: “Telling Tales: (Hi)Story in the Works of Gisèle Pinau”.

Kamal Salhi

School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS)

Ray Bush contributed to the conference on ‘Governance and Economic Reform’ Convened in honour of John Loxley at the university of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 8-10 November 2002. His paper focused on ‘*Agriculture and the Politics of Adjustment in Egypt*’. His recent publications include:

2002 Ed, *Counter-Revolution in Egypt’s Countryside: Land and Farmers in the Era of Economic Reform* (Zed Books, London and New York) pp 239

- 2002 with Morris Szeftel, *Review of African Political Economy*, No.91, Vol.29, March.
- 2002 'Economic Adjustment and Agricultural Reform', in Mustapha Kamel el Sayyid, Ed, *Which way forward for Egyptian Agriculture?* [in Arabic] Centre for the Study of Developing Countries, Cairo University, pp 15-43-2
- 2002 'Land Reform and Counter Revolution' in Ray Bush, ed *Counter Revolution in Egypt's Countryside: Land and Farmers in the Era of Economic Reform* (Zed Books, London and New York) pp 3-31.
- 2002 'More Losers than Winners in Egypt's Countryside: the Impact of Changes in Land Tenure' in Ray Bush, ed *Counter-Revolution in Egypt's Countryside: Land and Farmer in the era of Economic Reform* (Zed Books, London and New York) pp 185-210.
- 2002 with Morris Szeftel, 'Sovereignty, Democracy & Zimbabwe's Tragedy' in *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 91, Vol.29, March pp 5-12.
- 2002 'Civil Society and the Un-civil State: Land Tenure Reform in Egypt and the crisis of Rural Livelihoods' UNRISD Programme: *Civil Society and Social Movements*, GENEVA, pp 46

Professor Mark Duffield

Conferences

Respondent: '*Money Makes the War go Round*' *Transforming the Economy of War in Sudan*. Brussels: European Coalition on Oil in Sudan (ECOS), Utrecht & Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) , Bonn; 2002 Jun 12-13.

Keynote presentation: '*Global Liberal Governance and Slavery*'. Workshop on Ambiguous Institutions: Conflict, Security and Citizenship at the Frontiers of the Modern State. Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research; 2002 May 21.

Publications

'Aid and Complicity: The Case of War-Displaced Southerners in the Northern Sudan'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 2002 Spring; 40 (1): 83-104.

School of Geography

Emeritus Professor Lionel Cliffe contributed to the conference ‘Governance and Economic Reform’ convened by the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. His paper was on ‘Alternative Budgeting for Africa’.

Leeds University Business School

Historically, the Leeds University Business School and its predecessors – the former Economics Department, the School of Economic and Social Studies, and Leeds Management School – have had a distinguished record of providing education to African students and conducting research on Africa. This was to a large extent due to the work of the late emeritus Professor of Economics Walter Newlyn (who died in 2002).

In recent years the masters programmes at the School has attracted a sizable number of students from sub-Saharan and North Africa, who however form a small proportion of MA students. For the three academic years beginning in 2000, about 40 out of just under one thousand Masters registrations were of African students. They come from Anglophone areas of sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the Maghreb. The most popular course for them has been Economics and Finance, followed by Human Resource Management, and various Advertising courses, and Accounting and Finance.

The undergraduate programme has had very few students from Africa in recent years. This can be partly explained by growing availability of undergraduate courses in Africa and the increased cost of education in the UK. Also, most of the grants available to students from lower income countries (that include almost all African countries) are geared, for good reasons, towards master or PhD programmes.

Mahmood Messkoub

Nuffield Institute

Master of Public Health (International) 2001/2002

Dissertation Titles:

Dr George Bhoka Didi

Uganda

Integrated Community-Based HIV/AIDS Care in Moyo District in Uganda: A Review and Recommendation of a Model of HIV/AIDS Care

Dr Daniel Paul Chacha

Tanzania

Challenges of Implementing Comprehensive Health Plans in the Reforming District Councils in Tanzania

Mrs Selina Akunna Enyioha

Nigeria

Improving the Nutritional Status of Under-fives through Community Involvement in Karu District, Abuja, Nigeria

Dr Lydia Namatovu Kalete (DISTINCTION)

Uganda

Prevention and Control of Tuberculosis in the Ugandan Armed Forces: reducing delays or missed diagnosis and non-treatment completion. A review and plan

Mr Gabriel Mando

Nigeria

A Review of the Drug Procurement System in Government Hospitals in Benue State, Nigeria

Dr George Chansa Mukupa

Zambia

Reducing Parental to Child Transmission of HIV (MTCT) in Mufulira District, Rural Zambia

Dr Taban Tongidyang Nelson Paramena

Uganda

Increasing EPI Coverage in War-Torn South Sudan: A Diocese of Tort Perspective – Review and Plan

Dr Clement Legal Peter

Uganda

Integration of Refugee Health Services in Aura District

Dr Jeptepkeny Ronoh (DISTINCTION)

Kenya

User Fees and Social Insurance in Kenya: the Equity Implications

Dr Shawula Kachara Shelemo

Ethiopia

HIV/AIDS Prevention in Sidama, Ethiopia: Review and Recommendations

Mrs Karen Edvai Sichali-Sichinga

Zambia

Scaling up HIV/AIDS Home-Based Care for People Living with HIV/AIDS in Rural Zambia: a case for Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ)

Dr Samuel Juana Smith

Sierra Leone

A Review of the Role of Maternal Child Health Aides (MCH Aides) in the Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Post-War Rural Areas of Sierra Leone: Bonthe District Perspective

**Articles
Reports
&
Reviews**

AN IDEA OF THE PAST

by

Dr Abdulrazak Gurnah

Department of English University of Kent Canterbury

Annual African Studies Lecture
University of Leeds 24th April 2002

In a 1974 essay 'The Muse of History', Derek Walcott launches a brilliant polemic about the relationship of Writing to History.¹ It is a familiar place for many of us who teach and write on postcolonial literatures, but it is place worth revisiting. The idea of history is a strong and recurrent theme in Walcott's writing, describing both an individual as well as a social dilemma for the Caribbean. In an early poem *A Far Cry from Africa*, Walcott debates the division in the poet between blood (he is 'divided to the vein') and language, between ancient ancestral obligations and individual need and hybrid realities.² The event that focuses the poem is the violence in Kenya during the Mau Mau Emergency, and Walcott partially resolves his questioning with a humanism that recalls Auden on Spain:

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,
The gorilla wrestles with the superman (p19)

The pain of the wounded or killed cannot be written off against historical need. Another early poem, 'Ruins of a Great House', looks at what is left of the prosperity of the slave plantation, and what such hard reminders mean to someone like the poet. It is a poem rich in allusion to English poetry from John Donne to William Blake, a poem which softly celebrates the way in which time and memory transforms events ('The river flows, obliterating hurt.' p20), and it is indeed Donne who offers the mollifying vision – such pain is everyone's -- that allows the poet to accept the contradictory legacy of New World Empire. We get a glimpse in these early poems of Walcott's idea of history, one which

¹ Derek Walcott, 'The Muse of History,' *What the Twilight Says*, (London: Faber & Faber) 1998. All quotations from the essay will be from this edition, and will be referred to in the text by a page number.

² Derek Walcott, *Collected Poems 1948-1984*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux) 1986, p17. All further quotations from the poems will be from this edition, and will be referred to in the text by a page number.

he develops in the essay that I will come to in a moment, and in later poems such as *Laventille* and *Another Life*, and all the way through to *Omeros* (1990) which through its parallels with Homer's *Odyssey*, constructs a mythic metaphor for Caribbean history. In *Laventille*, he mourns what he calls the 'amnesia', which allows people to forget historical oppression, and which then allows the oppression to continue in evolved forms.

We left
Somewhere a life we never found,

Customs and gods that are not born again,
Some crib, some grille of light
Clanged shut on us in bondage, and withheld

Us from the world below and beyond
And in its swaddling cerements we're still bound. (p88)

The poem is written with a mixture of love and rejection, an angry love. In *Another Life* the poet is liberated from historical and cultural paralysis by privileging the life of the imagination, which he comes to through language and poetry, through English and poetry in English. It is liberation already hinted at in 'The Muse of History', and here at last we come to the essay:

I knew, from childhood, that I wanted to become a poet, and like any colonial child I was taught English literature as my natural inheritance. Forget the snow and the daffodils. They were real, more real than the heat and the oleander, perhaps, because they lived on the page, in imagination, and therefore in memory. There is memory of imagination in literature which has nothing to do with actual experience, which is, in fact, another life, and that experience of the imagination will continue to make actual the quest of a medieval knight or the bulk of a white whale, because of the power of a shared imagination.... [O]f course, later disenchantment and alienation will come (p62).

In this championing of the imagination over the actual, it is not that Walcott is suggesting that 'the actual' is not or is less than actual, but that what he calls 'memory of imagination' is just as real. I am reminded of a moment in V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967), when the narrator has a clear memory of taking an apple to the teacher when he knows it was impossible that he could have done so, because of the scarcity and cost of apples in the Caribbean of that time. It must have been an orange, he thinks, and yet the memory that stubbornly comes to mind is of an apple. We might see this as the power of narrative over actuality, normative English childhood, insisted on by language, over Caribbean reality. Colonial English did not allow a child to take an orange to the teacher, it insisted on an apple, whatever the actual might have been. I

think this is the sense in which Naipaul means this incident. But then Naipaul's argument in that novel, and in the book which preceded it, *The Middle Passage* (1962), and in other books since, is that the Caribbean has no history or no historical agency. Its history is the history of others, the history of Europe, which it is powerless to resist or influence.

Walcott has a different sense of what he calls 'imaginative memory' which he sees as liberating because of the way it permits access to language and poetry, and allows even the colonial child in its imaginative scope, even if 'disenchantment and alienation will come' later. The protagonists of the drama enacted in 'The Muse of History' are the furious 'radicals' – this is 1974 and 'black' has only recently become a term of apparently irresistible political and intellectual power in the Caribbean – and those whose 'sense of the past is of a timeless, yet habitable moment' (p36). What these latter have understood, and obviously Walcott places himself among them, is that 'revolutionary literature is a filial impulse, and...maturity is the assimilation of the features of every ancestor' (p36). Walcott's idea of the past, then, is to admit and accept the contradictory legacy of colonialism and slavery and the 'gift' of language and poetry. It is a history which he cannot renegotiate and which gave him, forced on him, a language of which he cannot be dispossessed: 'I could no more give it back than they could claim it' (p 63).

It is necessary to be clear that Walcott is not antagonistic to an interest in history. It would be absurd to be so, and we have seen how it is a recurrent theme in his work. What he is adamant against is what he calls 'servitude to the muse of history', and I might just as well quote his words here, where he puts the matter more brutally than any paraphrase I could manage:

In the New World servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters.... The truly tough aesthetic of the New World neither explains nor forgives history. It refuses to recognise it as a creative or culpable force (p37).

The poets he sees manifesting this 'tough aesthetic of the New World' are Whitman, Neruda, Borges, and in a more nuanced sense, the Césaire of *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939). His essay has for its epigraph the line from Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916): 'History is the nightmare from which I am trying to awake'. What he is antagonistic to is what he sees as a destructive and partial obsession with history among Caribbean artists, and what he argues for, in tones that echo the tough reconciliation of 'Ruins of a Great House', the poem I mentioned earlier, is a personal sense of historical involvement. In another echo of Whitman, he declares: 'I accept this

archipelago of the Americas', seeing the Caribbean not as the end of a brutal history but as part of something new, something hybrid and West Indian. Later he gives this line to Shabine in *The Schooner Flight*:

I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
I had a sound colonial education,
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
And either I'm nobody, or I am a nation. (p346)

It is worth adding that Walcott specifically refuses Caliban as a literary metaphor for the dispossessed Caribbean subject. George Lamming had argued this so persuasively in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960), and Césaire had re-written *The Tempest* (*Une Tempête*, 1969) with Caliban as a street-wise rebel, but to Walcott these revivals of the brutishness of Caliban as a metaphor for the present seem self-defeating. Equally, he refuses the obvious reading of *Robinson Crusoe* that sees Friday as a fitting parallel for the Caribbean subject.³ He sees Crusoe as a more fitting figure for the Caribbean, shipwrecked on an island and building life again. To embrace Caliban or Friday as a proper metaphor for Caribbean creativity is to be obsessed with grievance.

Let me make one final observation here on Walcott's essay, and identify what I think is yet another echo. The essay distinguishes between 'tradition' and 'servitude to history'. It sees tradition as 'alert, alive, simultaneous' whose complexity is that it 'accepts the miracle of possibility' and whose true originality lies in its imitation and transformation of the old. What is often celebrated as 'originality', he suggests, is a strategy for disguising poor writing. In tones that may sound familiar to some of you, he argues:

Fear of imitation obsesses minor poets. But in any age a common genius almost indistinguishably will show itself, and the perpetuity of this genius is the only valid tradition, not the tradition which categorizes poetry by epochs and by schools. We know that the great poets have no wish to be different, no time to be original, that their originality emerges only when they have absorbed all the poetry which they have read, entire, that their first work appears to be the accumulation of other people's trash... (p62)

³ This is clear in *The Castaway* poems, where Crusoe is seen as a mythic progenitor. It is also clear in his play *Pantomime* (1978), in which an hotel owner on the island of Tobago, one of the proposed sites of Crusoe's island, plans to entertain his guests with a panto performance of *Robinson Crusoe*. He is to play Crusoe himself, and he asks his West Indian employee to play Friday. The latter refuses, saying that he is better suited to the part of Crusoe than the Englishman is. Walcott also discusses the Crusoe figure in an unpublished lecture at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, referred to by Kate Jones, 'Land and Sea,' in *The Art of Derek Walcott*, Edited by Stewart Brown (Bridgend: Seren Books) 1991, pp 37-48.

It is what T.S Eliot calls ‘the historical sense’ in his essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ (1919), whose argument, I think, informs important aspects of Walcott’s. Eliot it was who claimed European poetry as his heritage, indeed saw it as necessary preparation for the poetic vocation. It is in that essay that he argued that in order to write something ‘truly new’, the poet had to write with an exhaustive knowledge of the old. That is the meaning of originality as Eliot saw it. The new poem then re-arranges what we know of the old, and history rewrites itself. This sense of tradition then, is not of something known and fixed forever, but of something ‘alert, alive, simultaneous’. Slightly suppressed under that, you can hear a distinction being made between the enabling provisionality of the literary enterprise and the paralysing hand of history.

* * *

Let me move on. At about the same time as the appearance of Walcott’s essay, Wole Soyinka was giving a series of lectures at Churchill College, Cambridge. The lectures later appeared as a book, *Myth, Literature and the African World*.⁴ Soyinka at this time was living in the aftermath, even the afterglow, of his imprisonment by General Yakubu Gowon during the period of the Nigerian Civil War. From his release in 1969 to the mid-70’s, Soyinka produced some of his most passionate, and among them some of his most brilliant work. There was a collection of poems *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1969, 1972), the play *Madmen and Specialists* (1972), the prison memoir *The Man Died* (1972), a novel *Season of Anomy* (1973), another play *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975), and *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976). It is very impressive productivity, and amongst these perhaps is Soyinka’s greatest play. I refer to *Death and the King’s Horseman*. He was also editor of *Transition* during these years, which perhaps was not such good news for *Transition*, to be in the hands of such a busy man.

Soyinka announces the purpose of his essays in *Myth, Literature and the African World* in the following way:

It is engaged in what should be the simultaneous act of eliciting from history, mythology and literature...a continuing process of self-apprehension...in contemporary world reality (p xi)

The emphasis of this eliciting, as he makes clear in his preface, is on ‘self-apprehension’ whose ‘reference points are taken from within the culture itself’ rather than from ‘external’ ones. He argues that the time requires such a task, by which I presume he means the period after independence and the problems and

⁴ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1976. All quotations from the text will be from this edition, and will be referred to in the text by a page number.

the failures that followed. After what he calls ‘externally-directed and conclusive confrontation’ – by which I think he means the intrusion of European colonialism and the neo-colonial duplicity which came after – must come a ‘reinstatement of the values authentic to that society, modified only by the demands of the contemporary world’. If the phrasing here is a little bit stubborn, it is none the less incontestable that Soyinka’s work, particularly his dramatic work, has amply demonstrated this desire to reinstate ‘the values authentic to’ his society, and we can only applaud and agree when he says, also in the Preface: ‘I have long been preoccupied with the process of apprehending my own world in its full complexity, also through its contemporary progressions and distortions’ (p ix).

It is not my intention here, nor would it be possible even had I wished it, to summarise and debate the concerns of this book, but I will give a very brief account of its shape before focusing on one argument within it. The first chapter discusses Yoruba mythology and some of its contexts, and it is perhaps most useful as a source for Soyinka scholars, who see within it the uses to which he puts the myths in his own writing and the revisions he subjects them to. The second chapter attempts to propose an African dramatic archetype, quite unconvincingly, I think, although perhaps it is unfair of me to say that without going into a detailed discussion. Let me at least say that I am sceptical about any proposed dramatic archetype – sceptical about its intention as much as of its essentialising impulse – when its justification must inevitably be based on the examination of a narrow range of cultural practices. The second half of the book – Chapters 3 and 4 – deals with contemporary African fiction, reading a number of African novels through analytic frames that Soyinka calls ‘religious vision’ and ‘secular vision’ in the respective chapters. In his Preface he had described what he calls ‘the literature of a secular social vision’ as marking ‘the beginning of a prescriptive validation of an African self-apprehension’ (xii). I take that to mean that the writing he studies in the ‘secular vision’ section will offer some idea and direction, a prescription, towards ‘an African self-apprehension’.

One of the three texts he studies in this section is Yambo Oulouguem’s *Bound to Violence*, which he praises for its ‘iconoclasm’, especially in its account of Islam in native African societies.⁵ Soyinka has his own objections to Oulouguem’s novel, principally to do with the portrayal of the central figure’s emotional surrender towards the end of the narrative, but here he is interested in defending it against charges of nihilism and morbidity in its understanding of history:

⁵ Yambo Oulouguem, *Bound to Violence*, translated Ralph Manheim (London: Secker and Warburg) 1971.

Reinterpretations of history or contemporary reality for the purpose of racial self-retrieval do generate extremes of emotion, most of all among claimants to intellectual objectivity. (p105)

Notice how the ‘self-apprehension’ of the Preface has turned into ‘racial self-retrieval’, and objections to this implicitly legitimate task usually apparently take the form of claims to objectivity. Of course, any one who might object to it because they find its arguments against African Muslim societies partial and distorted, especially if that one is a Muslim, is being even less than objective. Soyinka thinks of Oulougouem’s novel as ‘a deck-clearing operation for the commencement of racial-retrieval’ because it exposes ‘Moslem incursions into black Africa to be corrupt, vicious, decadent, elitist and insensitive’ (p105). The suggestion here is that it is not so much what Oulougouem has to say that is valuable but its unsettling effect. I wonder what Soyinka expects will happen to these Africans when they get to read Oulougouem’s novel? That they will be purged and cleansed and turn to their authentic African selves? What conceptions of history does he think societies which in some cases have been Muslim for a thousand years or so have? As an idea of history, this has an authoritarian ring to it. It decrees an authentic self for others, moments after it has refused one decreed for itself.

Another text that Soyinka cites in this section which will provide ‘prescriptive validation of an African self-apprehension’ is Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*, a bombastic and misanthropic work, written with a self-righteousness so absurd and an idea of Ancient African Society so egalitarian and caring that it is embarrassing beyond ridicule.⁶ But Soyinka likes it, because it not only condemns the European colonial enterprise, but shows in lurid detail the other ‘whites’ who have colonised Africa, that is to say the Arabs. Armah knew about Arabs. He had lived in Algeria for a while, at a time when Algiers was the glamorous destination for black activists from the US. At the time of writing *Two Thousand Seasons*, he was living in Dar es Salaam, at a time when that city was the capital of the African liberation movements. It was also the capital of Tanzania, which only a few years before this, while it was still Tanganyika, had gobbled up Zanzibar, and with it its hate-driven government under Karume. That government under Karume had used the category ‘Arab’ to dispossess, expel, and murder thousands of people who had a different idea of who they were. They thought they were Zanzibaris. It is perhaps worth noting in passing that among the heroes of ‘racial retrieval’ that Soyinka mentions in his book is the same Karume.

⁶ Ayi Kwei Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House) 1973.

In any case, these are the Arabs that figure in Armah's novel. The terms in which these Arabs are described, as in Soyinka's own *Season of Anomy* (1979), derive from the Orientalist tropes of sensuality and cruelty: tortures for fun, permanent occupation of the harem, endless variations on depraved sex. And Armah lovingly details all these, or rather invents them, and Soyinka cites them in his discussion, finding that 'the humane sensibility tends to recoil a little' (p111). He then excuses all his own anxieties in this way:

In spite of this, *Two Thousand Seasons* is not a racist tract; the central theme is far too positive and dedicated and its ferocious onslaught on alien contamination soon falls into place as a preparatory exercise for the liberation of the mind. A clean receptive mind is a prerequisite for its ideological message, and there is no question that this work is designed for the particular audience of Armah's own race (p112).

It is interesting that Soyinka uses terms of disease ('contamination') and biology to define an audience for this text. Notice also that Armah's is a truth that can only be properly received by an 'audience of Armah's own race'. This then is another idea of the past, the construction of a narrative which is inhumane and false but which none the less is a valid prescription for African self-knowledge. As with Oulougum's, the purpose of this text is to purge and cleanse, regardless of its other effects, to prepare the mind for the discovery of its authentic self.

* * *

For many people in Africa, European colonialism and its aftermath are urgent contemporary events. I want to put the emphasis here not so much on colonialism but on the contemporaneity of its consequences. I do not have to detail these consequences to an audience such as this, as I am sure you are aware of them in their complex manifestations. For many African states, though not for all, colonialism is the constitutive past and its significant present. What I mean by that is that the states came into being as colonial administrative units and continued in an unchanged territorial form into independent states, often with the administrative machinery and its coercive instruments intact. Whereas it is possible, and even preferable, to administer a territory with a fragmented population, it is a nightmare to do so with the assumption that such a population constitutes a nation. The instruments of colonial rule were blunt and appropriate for keeping subject peoples politically disorganised and rivalrous, but disastrous as a method of formulating an idea of nation, especially when resources, social infrastructure and expertise were limited.

We can anticipate that ideas of the past in such a context will be even more fiercely contested than they are ordinarily, because of the way they give legitimacy to claims of priority. I have indicated one example which I will now expand on briefly. Until December 1963, and for 67 years before that, Zanzibar was administered by the British. For a hundred years before that it was an Omani colony, ruled at first from Oman and then by resident sultans of the same dynasty, the al Busaids. Before that it was briefly under the influence of the Portuguese medieval empire. And before that it was organised in small communities which ruled themselves, but which none the less were open to influence by others, both near and far. I grew up with these several narratives simultaneously. The primacy of British intervention in Zanzibar, and in Africa as a whole, and its beneficial effects was given to us in our colonial education. I remember my first History lesson in secondary school, which was taken by a Rhodesian of Danish descent, who for some reason was teaching school in Zanzibar. On the first page of our history books was a map of Africa in outline, with a dotted line separating North Africa from the rest. I can't remember the rubric that accompanied this map, but I remember the first question that the teacher asked the class. He asked us to explain why it was that Africa below this dotted line was uncivilised throughout the centuries until the arrival of the Europeans. I can't remember (again) the answer he provided for us in the end. I think it was something to do with the Sahara, and impenetrable forests and forbidding mountains. Perhaps the reason I don't remember his answer was that we did not believe we were uncivilised, and his seemed just a quarrelsome question. Islam had been the dominant religion on the coast of East Africa for centuries before then, and that and Omani rule had inserted us into another narrative, that of belonging to the great house of Islam, and its great achievements were also ours. This narrative and other popular narratives of trade and travel connected us to the great world. There was yet another narrative: the founding myth of the original inhabitants of the coast, from Lamu to Kilwa, has in it somewhere the arrival of a ship from Persia. In the way of myths, this event is always made more ancient in the telling, which is intended to add greater potency to the myth. People who describe themselves as the original indigenes of Zanzibar call themselves Shirazis, people of Shiraz. And in fact, when Karume formed the party that he intended to contest for African rights, he called it the Afro-Shirazi Party, where the Afro stood for people of migrant origin from the African mainland and Shirazi for the original inhabitants of the island.

The uprising in January 1964 was driven by a desire to remove Omani rule, and after its success it banished these competing but not contradictory narratives of the past, and inaugurated another of Omani colonialism and the primacy of African power. The latter was an idea impossible to establish without the use of extreme cruelty and oppression in such a hybrid society as Zanzibar then was

and still is. None the less, the authorities understand that their ability to govern, in whatever slap-dash fashion, depends on legitimising its rule by possession of the past, and the reiteration of a mendacious narrative of unrelieved oppression by Omani rule. It is as if British colonialism did not happen.

When I first read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as a schoolboy, it was a million miles away from my experience, but I understood that I was to read it as if it was part of my experience. It is still very often read that way, particularly by schoolchildren, as a narrative about first encounter and its consequences. Similarly, when I read Ngugi at about the same time, I was required and did not resist, to see the rural environment of those early novels as familiar and 'natural', when it was not. I remember we were encouraged to submit a short story for a regional Short story competition, and several of us wrote stories about village life and stealing chickens when our reality was as urban as could be imagined. Decolonisation had heightened our idea of solidarity with 'Africa', and we understood that the appropriate way of reading such texts was as Africans who had that sense of progressive solidarity. Of course the texts invited such a reading because of the way they figured the past that was their subject. I can't believe that there is anybody left in the world that has not read *Things Fall Apart*, but in case anybody here hasn't, the events of that novel take place in the 1890's. The present time of Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child* (1964) is the approach of the Mau Mau uprising in the early 1950's, but its mythic time, which is crucial to the legitimacy of the uprising, is the early 1900's. So both these texts occupy, in an important sense, the same period of colonial encounter and in their narrative strategies and their later exegesis offer this encounter as normative. In what ways did these texts invite a reading as archetypal African experiences? Not in the particular narrative drama, perhaps, but in the foregrounding of the encounter with Europe. There is little or no sign of African rivalries to obscure this encounter, and there is no possibility in these texts of confusing where our sympathies should lie. Ngugi's idea of the past, for example, is a celebration of oppression, and that celebration in itself is to be seen as liberation. And his texts, especially later ones, allow no room for demur or reservation. What makes *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) his most interesting novel, I think, is that it allows room for ambivalence and doubt about the meaning of resistance and freedom. At least this was so until Ngugi revised the novel in 1987 to reflect the historical triumph of the oppressed.

When I started to write - and I think probably long before then but writing made a resolution imperative - I understood that the idea of the past which had become the legitimate African narrative of our times, would require the silencing of other narratives that were necessary to my understanding of history and reality. These narratives which were familiar to me and which allowed room for negotiation, what Walcott called 'the miracle of possibilities', were not available

to me in these texts either, even though it might be said that it was not their intention to provide them for me. I understood also that history, far from being a rational discourse, is successively re-written and fought-over to support a particular argument, and that in order to write you had to find a way through this competing babble. Writing operates in terms of its own procedures, not in terms of the procedures of history and arrives at conclusions which it would be inappropriate to check by history. Writing can challenge history's idea of itself and reveal it as discourse, just at the same time as writing reveals itself as discursive. Why then argue with Armah's historical metaphor of Africa's past, and with Soyinka's championing of it as a prescription for self-knowledge? Because it deludes with an originary fantasy of order and tolerance that also requires compliance, and the only miracle it promises is an authoritarian one. And because it silences rather than give room to other voices.

Controlling the past is a pre-condition of power. Power forgets the past and constructs a new one. This was as true of the colonising project as it is of the new imperialism, which we are now being told about as a way of rescuing Africa's 'pre-modern states' from themselves. And of course those states and their polity also construct new pasts. As Walter Benjamin said in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1955), warning us to be alert: 'only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins'.⁷ Ultimately we have to be resigned to the notion that the past will always be beyond our grasp, that in reading the past we are reading back from the present, and that at best we should resist the possibility of capture and paralysis.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'These on the Philosophy of History' from *Illuminations*, trans H. Zohn (London: Fontana Collins) 1977, p257; first published in German 1955

The Big Man's Turn to Dance in Kenyan Bar-Rooms: Wahome Mutahi's Parody of Power

by

Mbũgwa wa-Mũngai¹

How does an artist contest the misdeeds of power and at the same time evade the dungeons in a heavily policed state? This is more than a theoretical issue for a theatre practitioner operating in a society like Kenya where freedom of expression is still largely a contestable legalism and the authorities view art with hostility. In this regard, Wahome Mũtahi's bar-room² theatre is striking in its attempts to circumvent the mines in a practitioner's field and still speak directly to its audience. This essay examines three of Wahome's unpublished plays with an emphasis on the interplay between their satire and simplicity of performance as an essential tool in persuading audiences to see issues from particular points of view.

This paper suggests that Wahome's theatre operates as 'tactic', a concept employed by de Certeau to explain situations in which sly means are used for the achievement of goals. Tactic also presumes that individuals insinuate themselves into places to which they are not welcome. I propose then that Wahome's is a scheming theatre where he devises trickster methods of addressing mal-government as seen in the plays: *Professa Nyoori*, *Mugathe Mubogothi* and *Makaririra Kioro*.³ Tactic here lies in the utilisation of bar-rooms, which the authorities assume not to be venues for serious audiences, to convey subversive messages. Aware of the potential risks in his practice, Wahome takes care to issue cautionary disclaimers on the 'unreality' of the action in his work. Thus, for example, the narrator in *Professa Nyoori* warns: 'Mau muona haha rĩ, matirĩ maahanĩka... no kaĩ, matiaga kũhanĩka-ĩ.' (p. 21)

¹ The following paper was submitted before the presidential election and transfer of power in Kenya at the end of 2002. The original version was presented at the Against All Odds Conference in Asmara, Eritrea, January 2000. The author wishes to thank Gicingiri Ndigirigi, Jane Plastow and Kesero Tunai for their responses.

² 'Bar-room' here means the entertainment places mostly built along the major highways in Kenya, especially around Nairobi. Many Nairobi residents attend performances there as a weekend family outing. Hooting Bay on the Thika-Nairobi freeway is a popular venue for the staging of Wahome's plays, normally from Friday through to Sunday. Since these venues are quite spacious, actors are able to make good use of space.

³ These translate as 'The Club-Wielding Professor', 'His Excellency the Babblers' and 'They Shall Weep in the Toilet' respectively. The Kenyan president, who carries a small baton, began his political career in 1952 and refers to himself as 'The Professor of Politics'. While the plays under investigation here are jointly authored, Wahome is mainly involved in staging them.

['The events you have witnessed here have never happened... but, they are probable'].⁴ Similarly, the narrator in *Mugathe Mubogothi* is quick to advance the injunction that 'Rũgano rũũrũ rũtiahaniĩkire tene na rũtirĩ rũratiga kũhaniĩka.' (p. 2) ['The events in this story did not happen a long time ago and they are still happening'].

Nevertheless, or in spite of the above disclaimers, distinctly Kenyan realities are recognisable. In this way, the playwright appeals to the audience to simultaneously indulge its fancies while remaining aware that such fantasy springs from immediate reality. This enables the interrogation of otherwise untouchable Kenyan issues. The use of a narrator, borrowed from Gikuyu storytelling as a distancing device, connects stage action to contemporary reality. Hare's trickery in Gikuyu folktales is utilized here to hoodwink the authorities.

Notable about these plays is the near-predictability of their themes. Ridiculous-sounding titles, for instance, provide audiences with a general map of issues to be addressed and characters are types that could easily be switched between plays. Professa becomes Mubogothi in exile in the second play, and the Big Man character in *Makaririra Kioro*. The abuse of power and the comical struggles for favours among the dictator's cronies are the dominant concerns of *Professa Nyoori*. *Mugathe Mubogothi* explores the former dictator's nightmarish exile, tormented by the burden of past crimes. The most recent of these plays, *Makaririra Kioro*,⁵ can be thematically situated between the others. A dream-analytical investigation of succession politics, it investigates the dictator and his cronies' anxieties about his imminent retirement and the possible reactions of the population over whom the ruling cabal has lorded with a combination of nepotism and brute force.

These plays belong predominantly to the genre of political satire, a fact that audiences seem to be well aware of. Indeed, the single most significant differences between Wahome and other bar-room practitioners is to be found here. While other bar-room performers specialise in lewd comedies and seem to have bawdiness as the *raison d'être* for their drama (Ndigirigi 1999:87), Wahome concentrates on humorous portrayal of the political. Thus, the topically

⁴ Translations into English are mine and page numbers refer to unpublished drafts. In discussions with him, Wahome attributed the lack of standard manuscripts to the improvisational nature of the plays and to the fact that, sometimes, actors improvised 'on the road'. This was especially so with *Makaririra Kioro* which, unlike the other two, had no available script. My comments on it are based on observations of performances in 2001.

⁵ The action takes place in a public toilet and closely resembles Dambuzo Marechera's play *The Toilet/Blitzkrieg* which parodies the corrupt Zimbabwe state. Public toilets in Nairobi are a veritable inconvenience due to neglect and are often criminals' safe havens. Wahome's role reversals often cause audiences, familiar with these toilets, to recoil in horror.

political has become the trademark of his practice, ensuring that audiences seeking decent theatre can attend his plays without risk of discomfiture. However, this is not to say that social themes are not tackled in his plays. Indeed, both political and social content intersects in the plots, though the accent is markedly on the political.

Arising from these plays' predictability, audiences are able to lift the thin veils draped over characters and to connect the masks to contemporary politicians, since the plots are not subtle. In fact, most of the plot action could easily be episodes lifted straight out of a regular day in Kenyan politics, and this backdrop enables quick identification of the real life actors.⁶ This is an apt method given that patrons wouldn't have much patience with subtle characterization since, as entertainment spots, bar rooms don't lend themselves to lofty theatrical experiments. Further, since audiences are normally dining, such nuances in characterization would easily be lost.

By staging his plays in bar-rooms, Wahome takes the necessary step of going out of his way to meet his audiences, more or less like politicians who go on 'meet-the-people' tours, only Wahome's trips are poetically camouflaged. This *modus operandi* was pioneered by the 1977 performance of *Ngaahika Ndeenda* at Kamirithu, which was the watershed in the struggle to liberate Kenyan theatre from the fetters placed upon it by the elite institutions to which it is affiliated. For the first time in post-independent Kenya theatre involved rural people in scripting, troupe organisation and performance. This participation enabled grassroots people to interrogate social issues directly. That Kamirithu was the pioneer of Gikuyu theatre in post-independent Kenya cannot be disputed.⁷ However, as Ndigirigi has argued, "to the extent that Kamirithu was successful, it also gave rise to conditions that made it difficult to reproduce its success"(Ndigirigi 1999:73). One of these conditions was that the authorities became hypersensitive to criticism, especially in Gikuyu language art. As an heir to this legacy, Wahome does not delude himself that he has free rein with which to indulge his artistic fancy. Rather, he deploys bar-room space to

⁶ Usually, at the plays' end, I noticed that audiences gathered in small groups to post-mortem the plays.

⁷ One of the most significant outcomes of the Kamirithu experiment was the realisation that people's theatre could be used for direct social mobilization, and it is this that led to the banning of the play and subsequent criminalisation of theatre by the government. For a discussion of the triumphs and tribulations of Kamirithu, see Ngugi's 'Women in Cultural Work: The Fate of Kamirithu People's Theatre in Kenya; in Karin Barber ed, *Readings in African Popular Culture* (1997:131-138). Further, and taking their cue from Kamirithu, theatre for development troupes in Kenya have been using theatre as a means of addressing social and environmental issues, but it is too early to assess their success.

subversive ends. By not interfering with Wahome's performances, the state seems to be operating on the assumption that since this drama is merely a part of general bar-room fun, drunken audiences cannot take its messages seriously. It is in this crack that Wahome's theatre operates.

The use of Gikuyu language in these plays is a significant factor. Even though it is just one of the scores of languages spoken in Kenya, Gikuyu is widely understood around Nairobi, where the bulk of Wahome's performances are staged. Even though non-Gikuyu patrons may not be competent in the language, they have some grasp of it that allows them to follow the proceedings, especially as the chief characterization method involves the stereotyping of prominent public figures. Politicians and business people, often one and the same, are identifiable simply by listening to actors' speech mannerisms rather than the words. This is then incorporated into the deeper thematic level at which the actual critique is aimed. This masking disarms the real life persons being lampooned since they cannot legally claim to be the persons depicted on stage and if they attend such shows, they tend to laugh along.⁸

This is significant given that Kamirithu Theatre was suppressed by the authorities not only because of the ideological issues it raised but chiefly because of how it raised them. The performers used bare-knuckled language and thus invited audiences to directly connect their poverty to the exploitative greed of multinational enterprises. Social injustices were staged in realist terms, and humorous episodes were few and not in any way central to the operational method of the play. Operating as organic intellectuals, the artists in the Kamirithu experiment were convinced that theatre should involve 'the masses' and directly mobilize audiences to change society.⁹ Wahome's position seems to be that from his parodies of power, audiences will identify society's maladies and devise suitable ways of dealing with them. Thus, the didactic element is embedded in the entertainment function. The effectiveness of either of these approaches to drama, each with its definite merits, is an arguable matter. It suffices to point out that in Kenya, artists who poke fun at the authorities seem to have a longer survival rate than those who lock horns directly with them.¹⁰

⁸ In a different but related case operating by the same method, a popular troupe in Nairobi, 'Reddykulass', parodied almost every notable social type and personality in Kenya in a private TV prime time show from 1999 to 2000. That the programme was aired at all was stunning, but even more amazing was the fact that the performers got away with their act.

⁹ I take it that Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ngugi wa Mirii and Kimani Geau were fulfilling the function of the 'organic' intellectuals as discussed in Gramsci's *The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* or the 'conscientizing' intellectuals in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In their introduction to *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* Ngugi and Mugo discuss their views on 'committed theatre', of which Kamirithu was an example.

¹⁰ Notable here is the playwright Francis Imbuga. Dwelling generally on the same issues as those raised by, say, Ngugi, Imbuga has not been persecuted by the state. Thus, for instance, the

Especially because theatre in the Gikuyu language is considered *a priori* anti-establishment, Wahome adopts the camouflage of laughter as both an artistic and self-preservation method.

At the extra-linguistic level, this theatre exploits costume as a characterization device. The personalities being parodied have distinctive dress mannerisms in real life and are thus easily transposed onto the stage. The ruling clique particularly stands out, besotted as it is with emblems and flashy attire as status symbols. Examples here are the president's ubiquitous small baton, the vice president's over-sized coats and the ruling party secretary general's trademark Scottish deer stalker caps. Aware of their sartorial idiosyncrasies, audiences recognise these gentlemen and their interests even before a word is uttered. Also, audiences identify the personalities being ridiculed by their thinly camouflaged, often-ludicrous names. Their peculiar meanings provoke laughter since audiences are generally acquainted with them. Notable for their exemplary referential quality are names such as *Professa Nyoori* (Professor Club), *Gakunia* (The Sack Hood), *Mureengani* (Saboteur), *Kibuyu* (Plastic Container), *Mugaathe Mubogothi* (His Excellency the Babbler), *Gathuku* (Parrot), *et al.* *Kinya*, a word play on Kenya, in Gikuyu means a huge gourd, but in Kenyan political parlance means prison. This mask not only establishes the theatre in the realm of the imaginary but also hints at the follies of the ruling class. *Kibuyu*, for example, is a comic reference to politicians' potbellies, so common in Kenya, that are presumed to be indicators of wealth and, consequently, evidence of theft since it is commonly believed that wealth is unattainable without recourse to corruption. Thus having overeaten, these politicians must constantly need to visit the toilet. *Gathuku* is the nickname of a former secretary general to the ruling party notorious for parroting everything the party leader said, even when it was patently ridiculous. Hence, the names' hidden (hi)stories are a key to the coding of meanings, one that audiences rely upon to decode the plays' satiric intentions. Wahome exploits this familiarity and only supplies words to shape the story.

These plays also operate with the bare minimum stage set. The best example is *Makaririra Kioro* where setting is used in a multi-purpose manner in order to avoid shifting props around. An erect board is used both to depict the inside of a toilet and a slogan-plastered street wall. Two chairs constitute the entire moveable props. Other than the Big Man, the other actors stand throughout, mostly frozen before and after their parts. An obvious problem that arises here, as Ndirigi (1999:87) correctly points out, is that by dispensing with conventional technical stage details, bar-room theatre loses out in terms of production quality. A major problem in Wahome's productions, for instance, is

president was able to watch the premiere of Imbuga's *Man of Kafira* in 1979 and even laugh at the Big Man character depicted in the play.

in the field of acoustics, since without the use of amplifiers actors are unable to project their voices to reach members of the audience seated farthest from the stage in the usually vast bar-rooms. Notwithstanding, his theatre compensates for this obstacle by using other extra-linguistic devices to communicate his works' meaning. Their force hinges on audiences' knowledge of personalities and events on the one hand and their stage caricature on the other. Besides, actors in Wahome's troupe have polished skills, and the fact that his drama still attracts large audiences speaks for the nature and durability of his project. Technically the advantage here is that by reducing the set to just a few items audiences' attention is directed away from spectacle and more towards the actors who are, in any case, the focal instruments of the parody. Dispensing with the sophistication of formal spectacle is in this case an appropriate staging method.

Further, the theatre pokes fun at the majesty of power by displaying some of its foibles, a noteworthy act in itself in a country where the lives of the mighty are shrouded in mystery. This is seen in Mubogothi whose peculiarities include heavy snoring, loud prolonged farting in his sleep and, consequently, his use of diapers. This grotesquery is amplified later in *Makaririra Kioro*. Other than being a theatrical device, the toilet is intended to reveal the Big Man in his ordinariness; the banal is not the sole preserve of common folk. Here, Wahome addresses power in transgressive terms, especially when the country's CEO is dethroned from the formal majesty of State House and dragged into the muck of a public toilet. There is significant cause for laughter in this transgression; this elevated company might just have to answer the call of nature in full view of one another, and the ever-intruding street girl. This comes very close to achieving the liberatory character of Bakhtinian laughter as the powerful become the object of ridicule. In this way, Wahome's efforts embolden Nairobi residents against being awed by power, encouraging them to hold its trivialities in contempt and symbolically propel the power barons into the public toilet. This is in stark contrast to the past when virtually any public discourse critical of the state was criminalised.¹¹

A noteworthy departure from politician-businessmen characters is the street girl in *Makaririra Kioro*. The play's action is based on a reigning Big Man's nightmare about his future once he relinquishes power. Feeling insecure, he and his four cronies decide take sanctuary in a public toilet. A street girl finds them hiding there and threatens to expose them but through negotiations they convince her to 'listen' to what 'the people' think about them. Every entry she

¹¹ Generally in the 1980s bar patrons all over Kenya avoided discussing politics due to the presence of state security agents, police informers and members of the dreaded Youth Wing. Thus, the politicisation of bar-rooms in the 1990s through theatre may be seen as a re-claiming of space that the state had dispossessed from the public.

makes into the toilet is used to mark scene transitions. Hence, even though street people are a serious social issue in Kenya, it is clear that this girl is only essential to the play as a dramatic device connecting the buzz of public opinion to the terrified dignitaries. Additionally, audiences are titillated by the absurdity of powerful politician-businessmen finding themselves desperately dependent upon a vagrant and her power highlights the vulnerability of the presumably invincible. This is the supreme *coup d'état* executed in a public convenience, to the accompaniment of ripples of laughter in place of a military band. Street people, an exacerbating social problem, might one day hold the rest of society hostage, but the play seems uninterested in pursuing this theme. If the characters and content of Wahome's theatre have social import, it is strictly contained within the political scheme of the drama. Audiences can therefore concentrate on the political content without tangential deviations towards the social.

Unlike the other two plays, song is used in *Makaririra Kioro* to very good effect and is initially deployed as a prologue. Since the audience is familiar with it, the popular Gikuyu religious song, *Mirigo*, is an appropriate device to set the mood of the play.¹²

*Mũũrũ wa maitũ, mwarĩ wa maitũ,
ũigũaga atĩa,
kuuma waiga mĩrigo thĩ?*

My brother, my sister,
how do you feel,
since shedding your burdens?

{Response}
*Njigũaga, o-kũgooca,
Kuuma ndaiga mĩrigo thĩ.*

I just feel like rejoicing,
since shedding my burdens.

Audiences join in enthusiastically, exploding into peals of laughter as familiar personalities are named and their 'sins' catalogued in turn. The song's political nuances enhance audiences' expectation of a political satire and in this way, even before the real action, they have already met the actors halfway. Towards the end of the play, the same song is re-deployed in a dream scene where the 'people' come to fetch the toilet refugees for execution. However, the song's words are now given a tone of contrition. Gloom almost envelops the action here, but it is dispelled when the Big Man stirs from his nightmare.

The sombre mood is lifted by the American pop song 'Who let the Dogs Out?' which, in stark contrast to the contrite 'Mirigo', provokes laughter, especially as the Big Man heartily mimics the dog's barks in the song. Being the most heavily guarded citizen, his nightmares are an ironic comment on his guilt, and his feelings of insecurity remind the audience that he is, deep inside, just as ordinary as everyone else. In contrast, the childhood rhymes in the ensuing play-within-a-play depict his bygone days as a happy schoolteacher. Singing blithely

¹² *Mirigo* means burdens, in this context, of a criminal nature. Shedding burdens implies making a break with the misdeeds of the political elite.

along with the audiences, he inspires laughter as he plays beanbags with his pupils. When they are jolted back into the public toilet scene, audiences are shocked at these notables who gave up their happy lives only to end up rich but degraded.

At a different but quite relevant level, Wahome is renowned for his popular *Whispers* newspaper column whose caustic ridicule spares no one, not even his alter ego, Whispers. This prior acquaintance with the playwright impacts upon the communication process in his drama since audiences are generally familiar with Whispers' pet caricature themes and characters. The journalistic satires thus condition audiences' sympathy for, and identification with, the plays' themes.¹³

Interestingly, Wahome's theatre doesn't say anything radically new. Doubtless, the plays examined here deal with what may be considered trite subjects in contemporary African writing, which have been handled in greater depth by playwrights such as Imbuga, Ruganda, Soyinka and others.¹⁴ In fact, Wahome's dictators seem to be agglomerations of the despotic characters depicted by these writers. We must then ask why Kenyans troop to these shows, sometimes repeatedly watching the same plays, despite the familiarity of content. What keeps pulling audiences to this theatre?

Part of the answer can be found in the compatibility between performance venues and patrons' recreational needs. Due to the preference for open spaces, Nairobi entertainment spots are increasingly being designed to simulate an outdoor environment; thatch-roofed wooden buildings with vast windows and few doors. This is a reaction to the dull vastness of steel and concrete that Nairobi has grown into over the years, a situation exacerbated by infrastructural decay due to neglect by the City Council. There is a general depressing suffocation and by getting away to open spaces, Nairobi residents aim to escape from this stifling environment.¹⁵ Thus, by staging his plays away from the city,

¹³ Many first attended just to see Wahome in person and, upon seeing him, would gasp, 'So this is Whispers, THE writer?' Others turned up because advertisements indicated that 'Son of the Soil', Whispers' alias in the column, would be performing. Wahome is thus conflated with Whispers, the main character in the newspaper column, and expectations related to the column are transferred to his theatre.

¹⁴ See Wauthier's summary of the gamut of such themes in post-independence African writing in the subsection 'Disillusionment' in his *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa*, (1978:318-325).

¹⁵ Nairobi has an approximate population of two million people but its infrastructure was designed for a much smaller population based on the 'current' city plan drawn up in 1948. This has led to motor congestion on the roads, inadequate services like garbage collection and the influx of slum-dwelling hawkers into the city. For many workers, it is natural to want to get away from the din, confusion and neglected refuse so characteristic of a five-day working week.

Wahome caters for patrons' desire to flee the claustrophobic clutch of the city and rather than wait for them in theatre halls, he seeks them out in their leisure spots. However, Wahome needs to develop his theatre away from its dependence on the patronage of the leisure-seeking middle class. Such a shift is particularly urgent if he intends to build upon the Kamirithu tradition, in which he partly operates, of using theatre to address the problems affecting society's economically disenfranchised who cannot even afford the entrance fees to his shows.¹⁶

At another level, this theatre constantly reminds Kenyans of their symbolic power to laugh at the emperor's nudity. Since Weru Muyoro's rendition of *Ngaahika Ndeenda* in the early 1990s, many shows in Gikuyu have been staged around the country, but those communicating serious messages have run the longest. This is seen in the enthusiastic patronage accorded Wahome's theatre since *Professa Nyoori*. Kenyans at last have the opportunity to be part of the processes of serious social critique, to find out how the mighty have stained Kenya's linen and think of ways of cleaning up the mess. The mysteries of power are finally under the glare of public scrutiny. There is also a cathartic value to this theatre for Wahome, having served a year's stint in jail for 'sedition'. It is an opportunity to deal a blow against the system, the ultimate reward being the people's last laugh. Through artistic subversion, the public is the victor when notables wallow in the stench of 'ordinary' human waste in a public toilet and given the hypersensitive nature of the state's ego, this in itself is no mean achievement.

Through improvisation, this theatre incorporates political events as they unfold, and the texts thus vary from one performance to another. These improvisational dynamics enable the plays to fruitfully tap topical affairs. This device becomes like a running commentary accompanying news events; the mask of entertainment is adopted as a smoke screen and the distinctly political is singled out and elevated for ridicule. An apt illustration is *Makaririra Kioro* which, among other things, lampoons the opposition's flirtation with Moi since it is deemed to derive from financial rather than ideological reasons. Contemporary political events shape the contours of Wahome's parodies that in turn comment on the politics. This drama utilises a vast repertoire of fresh events and perspectives as they evolve, an advantage not available to published scripts that deal with subjects similar to Wahome's.

In sum, Wahome's theatre effectively keeps audiences engaged with hitherto 'dangerous' themes. This in a sense helps to expand the political space away

¹⁶ Plastow (1994) and Kerr (1995) have made insightful discussions on why traveling theatres and troupes associated with universities in Africa have either collapsed or not made any difference in the lives of those they seek to take theatre to.

from party politics to a situation where common people assume power, however temporary, to critique the authorities over a beer. This paper suggests that Wahome integrates into his drama the seriousness of social commentary while at the same time deploying humour as a trickster tactic in the critique of power.

Conclusion

Kenyan theatre has reaped tremendous benefits from the introduction of competitive politics in Kenya as artists become bolder in their interrogation of the state. It may not be claimed that the state has suddenly discovered a loving kinship with the artist, but the state control of public discourse in the 1970s and 1980s has been disrupted.¹⁷ To be sure, the state still attempts to muzzle freedom of expression, but it has abandoned much of the crudeness with which it used to do so and open dissent now flourishes in newspapers, on private TV and FM radio stations. Even though these are foisted on an unwilling state, they are far more intelligent methods of containment than the use of brute force, as was the case during the agitation for political pluralism in 1990.

Wahome's project can be seen to fit into this relatively new scheme of controlled public protest, but this is exactly the point at which he outwits the state. Rather than merely being entertained, audiences attain a sharper awareness of the misdeeds of the authorities. In the end, the state is actually emasculated since it cannot do anything about the audiences delightfully flogging the hyena.¹⁸ Those without the largesse necessary for party politics thereby have their laugh over a beer and mountains of roast meat as, in carnivalesque fashion, the rulers suffer from the role reversals.

There is immense potential for the development of this type of theatre into a formidable forum for social conscientization. Indeed, other vernaculars can also play their part since orality is the predominant mode of communication.¹⁹ Also, seeing that vast rural populations have no access to the print and electronic media, theatre can be a useful communication tool. The government might also turn theatre to its advantage by supporting rural troupes to help, say, in

¹⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ngugi wa Mirii, Abdilatiff Abdalla, Micere Mugo, Alamin Mazrui, Maina wa Kinyatti, Kimani Geccau and Ngotho Kariuki are examples of writers and academics who have been punished, through detention or exile, for their 'crimes' against the state.

¹⁸ In Gikuyu folktales, even when Hyena temporarily outmaneuvers Hare, he always pays the heaviest price as his schemes come a cropper.

¹⁹ Obyerodhiambo's musical drama *Drumbeats of Kerinyaga* has successfully fused many Kenyan languages in retelling the Gikuyu creation myth and expresses a vision for peaceful co-existence and development despite ethnic difference in Kenya.

disseminating information about practices that facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS in order to encourage change in some harmful traditions.²⁰

Within the formal curriculum, serious attempts to engage with non-institutional theatre as a learning resource must be made. The emphasis so far has been on institutional theatre as can be seen in the annual schools, colleges and church drama festivals. These festivals are laudable in that vernacular plays are staged, but they are modelled on institutional theatre. Even when outstanding plays from the festivals are used for classroom instruction, it is to emphasize the techniques of the formal stage. Furthermore, there is a tendency in these festivals to censor 'sensitive' subjects.²¹ This must be changed if theatre is to meaningfully address the fullness of Kenyan experience, an issue that I see Wahome's theatre as helping to redress.

Creative teachers in rural Kenya can help by tapping artistic talent in the first three years of primary school since the non-cosmopolitanism of rural populations allows formal instruction of/in vernacular languages. In this way, children with a talent for the stage can be nurtured from the outset to front for mother tongue theatre.²²

University Theatre Arts curricula also need to be progressive and not just use Brecht, Shakespeare or Moliere, but also send students out to watch and study vernacular performers. Such courses should interrogate non-institutional forms of theatre as a viable learning resource. Examining non-institutional theatre alongside either non-Kenyan drama or formal theatre would open up unexamined dimensions in Kenyan literary epistemology. Thus, dry classroom knowledge could be linked to concrete experiences beyond university fences in

²⁰ Some drama groups engage in such campaigns but since they are supported by NGOs, their funding is limited and they mainly operate around urban centers. Yet, owing to the paucity of information about HIV/AIDS and the relative immobility of populations, sexual behaviour in rural areas remains generally unchanged, amplifying an already calamitous situation. In Uganda, theatre has been a key tool in addressing the HIV/AIDS problem. Kerr (1995) has ably demonstrated how the 'cash nexus' makes theatre troupes vulnerable to manipulation. While this holds for radical popular theatre, there is no reason for governments not to sponsor community-based theatre as a method of involving grassroots communities in understanding social problems.

²¹ Writing in *The Daily Nation* newspaper in 1982, Wahome himself had observed this trend where 'political' plays were disqualified. In my experiences judging for both schools and church drama festivals, things have not changed much. On the censorship phenomenon in Kenyan theatre, see Ndigirigi (1999).

²²For an engaging discussion of the disarray attending the government's cultural policies, see Ogot and Ochieng' (1995) *Decolonization & Independence in Kenya*. Ogot's 'The Politics of Populism' and 'The Construction of a National Culture' (pp.187-236) are particularly relevant to the arguments of this essay, especially the latter chapter's interrogation of how a national culture can grow from Kenya's linguistic diversity.

order to achieve a fuller appreciation of the dramas, and their value in people's lives. Wahome's theatre efforts can thus be situated within the wider processes through which new fora for public discourse are opening up in an attempt to better understand Kenyan society and redress social injustices. The academy, if bold enough, is well positioned to aid in these endeavours.

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Drought and the Evolution of Well-Irrigated Wadi Agriculture: Implications for Sustainable Food Security Systems in Northern Darfur, Sudan¹

by

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Introduction

The famine that struck the Sahel of Africa in the 1970s, and which recurred during the 1980s and the 1990s, has demonstrated more than ever before, the social and spatial marginalisation of the affected communities and the extent to which local peasant communities are vulnerable to consecutive rainfall failures. In Sudan and particularly for Darfur, Kordofan and the Red Sea regions, the consequences in terms of human loss, loss of livestock and environmental degradation have been dire. The limited success of the international relief operation, despite its high cost and military-like organisation, confirms the proposition that the aversion of famine disasters could primarily, though not solely, be achieved by enhancing the affected local communities' capacity to secure their own food. It follows from this that ways and means have to be sought to rehabilitate, stimulate and strengthen local food production structures and cash earning activities in drought-affected areas as long-term aims of famine vulnerability reduction.

This paper deals with the food security implications of structural changes resulting from responses to drought. In particular, the evolution of well-irrigated agriculture is a case of important agrarian change. In the first section, the major physical socio-economic characteristics of Northern region are examined. The second section deals with responses to famine and puts forward an attempt to draw a distinction between *contingent responses to deal with the immediate food crisis* and *responses that have long term implications for present and food future security* situation of households, local communities and the region in general. Section three is devoted to the presentation of a case study from the village of Abu

¹ I am greatly indebted to the Ford Foundation for extending the financial assistance that has made the fieldwork for this research, of which this paper is a part, possible. Also, gratitude is extended to Mr. Khalid Salih, Izz el Dein Abdel Hameid and A. Dirar for assisting with the data collection. To all those who offered information or aided in having access to it I remain particularly thankful; namely the peasant farmers of Fatta Barno, Abu Sakein, Gele and Kebkabiya who extended generosity and patience. This paper has been shortened and for publication in the *Bulletin*. Bibliographic references have been omitted for reasons of space.

Sakein² in which well-irrigated agriculture has recently evolved in response to drought. The conclusion shows the significance that small scale well-irrigated wadi agriculture has assumed.

1. North Darfur: Main Physical and Socio-Economic Characteristics

North Darfur is part of the arid African Sahel zone, in which the far northern areas form part of the great Sahara desert. The patterns, forms and spatial distribution of economic activities in Northern Darfur region are governed mainly by four physical or natural characteristics. These are: a) the level and spatial distribution of rainfall; b) the dominance of the sandy *goz* soil; c) the existence of seasonal streams (wadis) with shallow underground water aquifers and alluvial clay soil that inter-penetrates the sandy *goz* soil in the water course of seasonal streams; and d) the spatial distribution of water points³ and water yards.

Of these the most important is the rainfall pattern which is characterised by seasonality⁴ and the decrease in rainfall levels from South to North to reach the minimal level of 100mm in the Sahara desert. With the exception of camels and sheep nomads in the far Northern part of the region, rain-fed millet-dominated subsistence production on *goz* land is the major economic activity for almost all communities of North Darfur. While mainly produced for subsistence (direct production for direct consumption), millet surpluses are sold for cash during normal rainfall years. Some other crops like watermelons, groundnuts and sesame are also grown on small-scale both for consumption and for the market. The sale of these cash crops and small millet surpluses helps peasant households acquire cash to buy other family subsistence needs; i.e., purchase implements, sugar, tea, and to meet the needs of social occasions and other social obligations.

With the exception of the far Northern and Southern parts of Darfur where the practice of pure nomadism dominates, animal rearing is combined with farming in almost all parts of Darfur. Peasant farmers who cultivate millet and other cash crops on *goz* soil; on plots varying in size between seven and twelve *mukhammas*⁵, also rear sheep and goats to meet household needs and these are also sold when peasant households are in need of cash. In the far north, nomadic Meidob and Zyadyah tribes (Abala) rear the desert-adapted sheep and camels. In the much

2. The fieldwork covered four case studies including Fatta Barno, Gele and Kebkabiya as well as Abu Sakein. Information on the three case studies confirms the findings in Abu Sakein.

³ Water points include *turads*, *rahads* and *fulas*. These are natural depressions in clay soil normally formed at the bottom of rocky hills. Some others are man-made and these include hafirs, which are depressions excavated by man, or wells. Both types of water points are used as the main sources of water both for human and animal consumption.

⁴ The precipitation period is confined to July, August, September and October. This is the wet season during which peasant farmers concentrate on the cultivation of their millet subsistence crop.

⁵ A *mukhamma* is equivalent to 0.73 hectares

richer Savannah vegetation of the south, cattle are reared by the (Baggara) nomads. In addition to the consumption of animal products, pastoralists also depend on millet surpluses produced by peasant farmers for a significant part of their food, which they acquire through the sale of animals and animal products.

Although pastoralism in the far southern and far northern parts of Darfur is practised almost in pure forms, in most cases pastoralism and peasant farming are combined in differing proportions. Some pastoralists cultivate pieces of land to obtain grain for their own consumption, while some peasant households keep small numbers of light animals (goats and sheep) for milk and other household needs. Nonetheless, the *major* economic activity in the central part of Darfur is subsistence millet production. Also peasant households practised the production of okra and tomato on small plots of wadi land for home consumption even before the drought. These crops were cultivated on saturated alluvial wadi soil with rare resort to digging shallow wells for irrigation.

The northern Darfur rural economy is characterised by four major interrelated features of relevance to drought: firstly, interaction between the pastoralist economy and the peasant millet-based economy; secondly interaction and exchanges between the pastoralist and peasant economies on the one hand and the increasingly growing cash economy on the other; thirdly, the susceptibility of both peasant and pastoralist economies to the level and fluctuation of rainfall; and fourthly, the development of and the increase in importance of wadi agriculture following the 1980s and 1990s droughts. Wadi agriculture includes both *tru*- and well-irrigation. (*Trus* are earthen embankments constructed by peasants along the wadis to conserve water to saturate the soil and make it suitable for cultivation). Vegetables like cucumber, watermelons and okra are planted on the wadi soil. Well irrigation is a recent phenomenon associated with the 1980s and 1990s drought

Millet, which is a necessary component for pastoralist households food consumption, is obtained by pastoralists using cash obtained from selling livestock and/or animal products (purified butter and recently milk) in the local markets. In addition, pastoralists purchase okra and other agricultural commodities⁶ produced and offered for sale by millet peasant farmers. Peasant farmers buy animal products for consumption and live animals to rear for milk and/or keep as stored

⁶ There are variations in the types of commodities produced and exchanged by pastoralists and peasant farmers. While on the one hand and in some cases pastoralists sell peasant farmers some handicraft manufactures made of hides like goatskin buckets, leather bags and wool mats, on the other hand peasant farmers sell dried tomato, beans and okra to pastoralists. There are commodities and goods sold by settled peasant farming communities to pastoralists which are not produced within the local community. Shop owners and part-time peasant petty traders sell to pastoralists as well as to the local peasant community; sugar, soap, tea, coffee, salt, matches and other similar commodities.

value to sell in times of need. These market exchanges have contributed to enhance and ensure the food security conditions of both groups of communities. Under normal circumstances, other than in distressful drought conditions, peasant millet farming and the pastoralist economies complement each other.

The relative isolation of Northern Darfur from food surplus producing areas in central and southeastern parts of the Sudan makes the success of millet production a necessary condition for the maintenance of the local peasant and pastoralists communities' food security. Drought means not only the loss of animals but also the collapse of millet production that equally affects the food security situation of both peasants and pastoralists.

The second dynamic feature of northern Darfur's rural economy is the intensification of interaction and exchanges through the cash nexus since the colonial period. The key to these exchanges and interaction is the change in consumption patterns, the destruction of local handicraft manufacturing and the compulsion to pay state tax levies and fees in cash. Consequently peasants and pastoralists have gradually started to acquire cash to meet some of their commodity needs, e.g., sugar, coffee, tea, clothes and other requirements. The inclusion of commodities as necessary requirements for household domestic consumption created the need for cash. This need is met in the case of peasant households by the sale of grain surpluses, the production of rain-fed cash crops or migration to work as agricultural wage labourers on the cash crop producing schemes in central Sudan; particularly the Gezira.

The gradual change in the national economy towards more commoditisation and export orientation, has stimulated, facilitated and intensified Northern Darfur peasant adoption of cash crop cultivation; including water melons (for the fruit and the seeds), groundnut and the collection of gum Arabic from the *hashab* trees (*acacia senegal*) to sell for cash. As millet remained, under normal conditions, the major part of peasant households' food needs, peasant households used to maintain greater autonomy from the market as long as *goz* millet cultivation produced a harvest sufficient for subsistence needs. Although the sale of millet surpluses and other cash crops was maintained for the acquisition of cash to purchase needs other than millet, reliance on the market to meet food needs has remained for a long time, partial and marginal.

Pastoralists' incorporation into, and interaction with, the cash economy have been mediated through their interaction with the local economy by selling animals, animal products and some handicraft manufactures in rural and urban markets to buy grain, dried okra and dried tomato produced by peasant millet producers. Pastoralist households also purchase commodities brought from outside the local economy, i.e., sugar, tea, coffee, and other necessities. Like other Northern Darfur

peasant communities, pastoralists largely remained partially self-sufficient and autonomous.

The third dynamic feature that characterises the rural economy of Northern Darfur - and one that is relevant to this study - is the heavy reliance of both peasant and pastoralist economies on precarious, unpredictable rainfall levels for their food needs. Peasant millet production and the rearing of animals depend directly on rainfall. The decline, unpredictability, fluctuation and spatial variability of the distribution of rainfall, which results in changes in production and unequal spatial distribution of economic activities, all intensify interaction and interchanges between the peasant and the pastoralist economies, because the drought intensifies (non-food) commodity production, circulation and exchange.

The recent 1970s, 1980s and 1990s droughts have exposed the fragility of subsistence production and the vulnerability of food systems as a result of reliance in their operation on uncertain and unpredictable rainfall and rainfall levels. The attempt by communities near wadis to seek a more secure source of food, in response to the declining and unreliable rainfall levels, has led to the evolution of small-scale well-irrigated agriculture, which has recently become another important distinguishing dynamic feature of the Northern Darfur regional economy. This development that accompanied the 1984 drought has had implications not only for communities near wadis that adopted this form of production, but also for farming communities far way from wadis, for pastoralists and for Northern Darfur region in general.

2. Drought Impact on the Economies and Communities of North Darfur

The drought has impacted differently on various peasant and pastoralist communities in North Darfur. The survival strategies adopted by drought-affected local communities differ from one location to the next and within a particular local community combinations of survival strategies differ from one household to another, depending on a mix of complex factors, forces and variables.

The most important of these sets of strategies are those in the pursuit of which the local communities have begun to rely mainly on the acquisition of cash to buy food from the market. Many households have resorted to the collection of wild food for sale, the collection and sale of grass, firewood, and charcoal as temporary activities to acquire cash to buy food, but others migrated and abandoned subsistence millet production altogether. In the quest for cash many village communities in the proximity of Wadis in North Darfur have also resorted to digging wells to utilise shallow underground water for the production of vegetables and fruits not only for their own consumption but mainly for sale to acquire cash to buy food.

A large number of communities and households migrated from their villages to Southern Darfur, into cities and towns in Northern Darfur region, and to other parts of the Sudan and outside the country, mainly to Libya. Migrants to Southern Darfur and urban centres in the region joined the informal sector as tea sellers, street vendors, beggars, domestic labourers and waged workers to earn cash and survive. The pattern of migration, age and gender composition of migrants is beyond the scope of this paper. What is relevant and significant in the context of our topic is that these former peasant (subsistence producer-consumer) migrants have become reliant on cash to purchase and access food and send cash and commodities into Northern Darfur.

A greater involvement in the cash economy has also been marked by a change in consumption patterns from millet to other food items as a result of millet scarcity and rocketing millet prices. The massive relief operation mounted by the international community (though not sufficient and timely enough to avert the problem of food shortage) plus what migrants to Libya send back home, brought into the Northern Darfur region new food items including wheat flour, sorghum, rice and macaroni. Millet scarcity compelled individuals and households to accept the consumption of food items other than millet, which in turn has further enhanced changes in consumption patterns. Migration to Libya has led to significant inflow of resources not only in the form of cash, food items and other consumer goods but also in the form of some means of production and transport. This has been clearly manifested in the importation of water pumps for well-irrigated wadi agriculture and some trucks for transport.

The inflation of regional cities and rural towns by the drought-displaced, the intensification of cash earning activities and the movement of cash, under conditions of food scarcity, together with the change in consumption patterns have all maintained the demand for food items other than millet, including vegetables and fruits.

The development of well-irrigated agriculture, the importance of cash transactions for the acquisition of food and the acceleration of trade in food items have all led to the emergence, around wadis, of two-day rural markets in what formerly used to be small villages. These provided venues for the sale of vegetable and fruit crops brought by well-irrigated wadi peasant farmers and facilitated their purchase of light livestock, grain and other food items brought in by peasant producers and traders. They also served as sources of new ideas and innovations.

Within the context of these developments well-irrigated agriculture, mainly oriented to the market, has evolved in the Northern Darfur region in areas that

previously only cultivated vegetables on wadis for home consumption. The following is a description and analysis of the case study done in Abu Sakein. It documents and details some of the conditions under which irrigated agriculture has evolved, the socio-economic developments that have accompanied it and its implications for food security.

3. Abu Sakein Case Study⁷

The adoption of well-irrigated wadi cultivation on a significant scale is most clearly manifested in Abu Sakein, a small village that lies around 70km slightly west of north from El Fashir. Traditionally, millet cultivation on *goz* land was the major economic activity and the main source of subsistence. In addition, *karkade* (hibiscus), sesame and watermelons are also produced on *goz* land for family consumption and cash. There was small scale wadi cultivation and till the 1980s wadi land in the proximity of Abu Sakein was used for the cultivation of millet and okra to satisfy family needs on small patches of land varying in size between half and two *mukhammas*. Peasant farmers also cultivated some other crops like *tombac* (a kind of tobacco) after the inundated Wadi land dried up. Cash returns from *tombac* and other cash crops that were produced on a small scale were mostly spent on the acquisition of other family requirements. Excess cash was turned into light livestock for milk and as a means to store value to be turned into cash in times of dire need.

However, despite the production of these cash crops, the sufficiency of *goz* millet farming to meet family food needs, during the period preceding the drought, made the need for cash to purchase millet (the main staple diet), marginal. The limited need for money was reflected in the modest land size cultivated for cash crop production both on *goz* and wadi land. The production of *tombac* for money and some vegetables for family consumption remained, before the drought, a subsidiary activity. Thus *tombac* and vegetable crops cultivation was pursued on wadi land as a supplement to *goz* millet subsistence production without the need to utilise underground water or adopt modern means of water lifting for irrigation.

The continuous failure of *goz* millet cultivation, following the drought, to meet family food needs has increased the significance of wadi cultivation. Rather than just cultivating inundated wadi areas after the wadi had dried up, shallow underground water has now been widely utilised; using both traditional and modern methods of water lifting, as a reliable means of producing cash crops. The

⁷ The description and analysis in this section is mainly based on information collected from the field and relies heavily on intensive informal unstructured interviews with Sheikh Ibrahim, a peasant farmer and also Abu Sakein's Deputy Sheikh. It is based also on long group discussion with Wadi peasant farmers in May 1994, an informal interview with Abdalla Mohamed, a well-informed schoolteacher and wadi farmer, plus my own field observations.

gradual shift in importance from *goz* millet cultivation to vegetable and fruit well-irrigated wadi cultivation is accompanied by changes in the scale of wadi cultivation, the methods of production, the adoption of new crop varieties, the adoption of irrigation technology, labour use and labour allocation. As small-scale well irrigation assumed more importance with the failure of millet production, more families have started to rely *almost wholly* on the production of vegetable and fruit cash crops to indirectly satisfy their food needs.

The relatively rapid expansion of small-scale well-irrigated agriculture in Abu Sakein, and other wadi areas, concurrent with the 1980s and the 1990s droughts, has occurred over a short time span. The digging of wells and the adoption of *adad*⁸ for lining and *dalo*⁹ for water lifting have started since 1984 (the year when one of the worst famines in North Darfur history struck). The number of wells in which *dalo* - the traditional means of water lifting - is used had reached 2000 wells in 1994, each irrigating around half to one *mukhammas*. The use of pumps for water lifting started in 1990 and increased rapidly since then to reach around 500 pumps in 1994¹⁰; irrigating an estimated area of around 750 *mukhammas*¹¹. The digging of wells for poor peasant farmers using *adad* and *dalo* is carried out through *nafir*¹² and for the better off peasant farmers hired labour is used. The cost of digging a well of a depth of 6-13 metres increased rapidly between 1992 and 1994, indicating an increasing demand for well diggers and the increasing importance of cash.

Most peasant farmers in Abu Sakein are amongst the poor, who could not afford the cost of purchasing and running modern water pumps and who consequently use the traditional means of irrigation to farm small plots to earn cash for bare survival. However, there are a few who are able to invest in cement-lined wells, petrol-powered pumps and other production inputs. Capital invested in small-scale well irrigation in Abu Sakein has been accumulated from a number of sources. On the basis of information we have gathered from the field, the sources of initial capital could be categorised as: profits from cash crop productions by traditional means,

⁸ Adad is a wooden frame constructed inside the well to hold off the sand from falling into the well.

⁹ Dalo is a goat skin bucket tied to one end of a rope and used to lift water from wells.

¹⁰ The first pump was brought in by one of Abu Sakein's migrants to Iraq. When his experiment proved a success, others followed suit. The number of wells in which cement lining is used is about the same as the number of those in which diesel fuel-powered pumps are used.

¹¹ These are the researcher's own estimates based on the assumption that one pump irrigates one and half a *mukhammas*.

¹² *Nafir* is a form of free communal labour interchange. It is a reciprocal social relationship amongst members of the community and those who call for *nafir* are expected, as a social obligation, to respond in the same way when asked for help by other community members. The individual member who calls for *nafir* normally provides food and beverages for the *nafir* group.

sale of land, sale of livestock, investment by traders from El Fashir, and remittances or investment from local people who go to work in Libya.

It is important to mention here that a gradual change in social values and social attitudes has accompanied the recurrence of the drought, the collapse of *goz* millet farming, and the gradual change to well-irrigated cultivation. This has influenced migrants' expenditure patterns and the tendency of migrants to invest in small scale well- irrigated agriculture is encouraged by the now higher social value assigned to the acquisition of pumps and cement-lined wells rather than to luxury goods. Expensive clothes, carpets, cassette recorders, mats and other costly goods are now given lesser social value than used to be customary in the past.

Although there are no statistics available on the amount of land that has been put to cultivation in Abu Sakein, an estimated area of around 1500 mukhammas have been developed during the period of 1984-1994. The size of a well-irrigated farm plot in Abu Sakein ranges between 1/2 and 5 mukhammas.

Land tenure on small-scale well-irrigated wadi agriculture in Abu Sakein is not very dissimilar to other wadi areas in which well-irrigated agriculture has recently developed in North Darfur. Although all land is considered government land according to the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, permanency of occupation has, according to the local custom, given the land occupants what amounts in practice to private freehold ownership. Private individual right of control over a piece of land could be transferred to others through inheritance, sale and temporary lease for cash or kind. Small pieces of land are leased for one year to migrants coming into the village from drought and famine-affected areas which are not in the proximity of wadis. They may be leased as free gift according to the *ukul gum* tradition¹³.

Land is cultivated annually (a practice made possible by silt accumulation that renews soil fertility) and, with well irrigation, continuously. Intensive utilisation of wadi alluvial soil for cultivation has brought with it the adoption of methods of crop husbandry formerly unknown to these isolated peasant communities. Camel-driven ploughs are introduced in Abu Sakein for land preparation in addition to the already used hand tools, the *torya* and the *koreig*, together with one tractor brought in 1994.

¹³. *Ukul gum* is a term which in Arabic literally means 'eat and leave'. In this form of land tenure the land is temporarily given for free by the owner to someone in need from outside the village community who does not have the right to land use. The free lease is normally for one year or two, after which the tenant has to leave the land, either to revert to the landlord or for use by another. The arrangement ensures that the occupant does not establish permanent land occupancy claims, while providing those in need with land to cultivate to provide for some of their food requirements.

There are two types of land found in Abu Sakein. One is light clay soil found in areas close to the wadi watercourse where it is possible to use hand tools and camel-driven ploughs. The second is heavy clay soil that dominates land away from the wadi watercourse. For this type of soil, which is hard and compacted, only the tractor could be useful for land preparation. Both the camel plough and tractor are hired out by owners to peasant farmers.

New methods of land preservation and land improvement techniques have also been adopted. To enhance land fertility and boost yields, both natural organic manure and chemical fertilisers are applied. Poor farmers use animal dung, and it is only the better off who can afford to buy chemical fertilisers. The price of a 50kg chemical fertiliser sack increased rapidly between 1992 and 1994. Insects and pests which damage crops are combated by the use of insecticides for better off peasant farmers, while the majority of poor peasant farmers use smoke by burning animal dung to rid their crops of insects.

Much of the produce is sold to merchants in the village at low prices to be marketed in El Fashir, the capital of the region, and in Melleit to the north east of Abu Sakein. Taking advantage of its proximity to El Fashir and the relatively lower transport cost involved, Abu Sakein is now competing with Kutum, El Fashir's traditional fruit and vegetable supplier. Better off peasant farmers who can afford the transport cost, market their produce themselves and earn higher cash returns. Alternatively, some peasant farmers use traditional transport means – camels and donkeys – to reach the neighbouring villages of Greiban, Surfie and Majdoub and sell their produce at better prices.

Some farmers with the financial ability started to include crops that are less perishable or could be stored for some months in order to fetch higher prices during the off season. Crops like onions, potato and beans have been newly introduced and adopted by better off farmers at the expense of the perishable radish, carrots, okra and other similar crops¹⁴. Most of the poorer peasant farmers cultivate vegetables that do not take a long time to grow and mature, because of their urgent need for cash. They are unable to store crops to take advantage of higher prices in times of shortage.

Better off farmers with improved irrigation facilities have also now resorted to the planting of fruit trees including mangoes, guava, lime, grapefruit and date palm trees. The date palm tree in particular is preferred among peasant farmers; particularly the poor, because: i) dates can be consumed by family household members and thus contribute to meet family food needs in times of food

¹⁴ However, tomatoes are produced and sold by both poor and better off peasant farmers alike and when tomato prices fall drastically during the season they are dried and stored to be sold out of season at relatively higher prices.

shortage; ii) surplus dates can be dried up and stored for home consumption or for sale at higher prices in the off season; iii) date palm leaves can be used for a variety of domestic purposes, including hut construction and the handicraft manufacture of a number of useful articles for domestic use and for sale and; iv) the date palm tree has low water needs and it is minimally affected by the drop in shallow underground water level during prolonged periods of drought.

The village has now developed into an important rural centre with a two-day-a-week market (Sunday and Thursday) crowded by buyers and sellers from the surrounding villages. Not only has Abu Sakein started to change as a result of the adoption of well-irrigated fruit and vegetable farming but it has also become a centre of diffusion of innovation and change into formerly isolated surrounding villages. It provides goods, a market for commodities and crops, information and new ideas.

The above developments have halted out-migration from Abu Sakein and other wadi areas adopting well-irrigated farming during and after the recent 1984 and 1990 droughts. The dislocation of other local communities as a result of the drought has been manifested in the increasing process of migration, mainly of able-bodied males. Migration of individuals, whole families and communities seeking subsistence elsewhere has been predominant amongst most peasant communities in North Darfur. What is important in this context with regard to the rapid development of horticultural production in Abu Sakein, and other Wadi areas where well-irrigated agriculture has developed, is that *migration from well-irrigated areas to acquire subsistence elsewhere outside the local community is almost absent*. Most of the few migrants from Abu Sakein travelled to Libya to work as unskilled labourers. Migrants to Libya spend between two to three years to save some cash to marry, send cash and pumps to their families in Abu Sakein or invest in irrigated farming when they return.

Thus rather than sending migrants, Abu Sakein and other areas of well-irrigated wadi agriculture have become centres of attraction for migrants from other drought-affected communities. Migrants who work on fruit and vegetable farms for wages are mostly women whose husbands have migrated to towns in the region or other parts of the Sudan. Because of the lack of other alternative sources of cash income to purchase food, women work for very low wages to feed children and the elderly who have been left behind. The abundant availability of cheap labour provided by needy females contributes to the economic viability of the relatively larger-sized vegetable and fruit farms run by better off peasant farmers and merchants as profit-making enterprises.

Family members provide most agricultural labour on the small farms of the majority poor farmers. For some better off peasant farmers who run larger plots

family labour is not sufficient. Better off peasant farmers obtain labour from day labour or sharecropping arrangements, using the drought-displaced landless families from neighbouring areas. For day labourers, the working day, under drought conditions, normally starts at 6.00 a.m. and continues till 6.00 p.m. for an average payment of around LS 200, in 1994, which amounted only to one and a half kilos of grain. However, it provides a significant source of food to avert starvation during the famine period.

Differentiated communities with better off and very poor peasant farmers have started to emerge. Poor peasant farmers, who constitute the majority wadi peasant farmers (using *dalo* and cultivating one or half a *mukhammas*), produce vegetables for sale in order to purchase grain. The food security situation of this group of peasant farmers is subject to fluctuations in the price of the vegetables they sell as well as to the prices of grain and other food items they buy. With little or no capital investment, poor peasant farmers *are less dependent on the market for production than for consumption*. Low cost farming for this category of wadi peasant farmers, which mainly depends on their own family labour, enables peasant farmers to continue production even under adverse market conditions of low producer prices. However, low crop sale prices depress poor peasant farmers cash income and contribute to lowering their purchasing power, with the consequence of less food being bought. Poor peasant farmers thus intensify their labour input and that of their families on the farm to increase output and compensate for the loss in cash earnings resulting from the drop in producer prices, the increase in food prices or both. When the drop in vegetable prices is coupled with an increase in food prices, poor peasant farmers' purchasing power is lowered even further with their food security situation being further threatened. However, the consumption of part of the produce and the little cash earned, which are both made possible by irrigation, contribute to avert starvation and famine.

Better off peasant farmers are more exposed to the market than poor peasant wadi farmers. Unlike poor peasant farmers, better off peasant farmers are highly dependent on the market for the acquisition of production requisites and inputs (i.e., pumps, spare parts, diesel oil, seeds, pesticides, insecticides, and wage labour) the availability of which influences productivity and output. Better off peasant farmers are, moreover, subjected to the fluctuation of market prices for their crops which affect revenue and cash returns. Nonetheless better-off farmers are in a better food security position than poor ones and their food security position is not threatened even when there is a rise in production costs and/or a drop in market prices for crops. Other resources at the disposal of this category of farmers ensure access to enough food from the market. Enabled by the resources at their disposal, better off peasant farmers normally buy and store grain. However, the economic viability of their wadi farms, which are run as economic

enterprises for profit, comes under increased pressure and further investment in wadi irrigated farming is curtailed.

Moreover, and also because of their economic resources, better off peasant farmers enter the market on better terms than poor peasant wadi farmers do. Access to transport enables better off peasant farmers to avoid intermediaries and sell their produce directly in central markets at higher prices than those offered to poor peasant families. The ability to produce non-perishable crops (e.g., onions, beans and okra) which could be stored, plus fruits, also contribute to increased cash returns.

By relying on well-irrigated agriculture sharecroppers and wage labourers can also secure some food under drought conditions. However, the extent to which they can secure food depends on the degree to which better off farmers are subject to changing market conditions. Wage labourers' exposure to the market is even greater than the sharecroppers'. Sharecroppers receive cash advances from landowners, consume part of the produce and get half of the cash returns when the produce is sold. Wage labourers (mostly women) on the other hand, work on a daily basis and have no guaranteed work and earnings. In addition, under difficult market conditions better off farmers attempt to lower wages to keep farms economically viable. Uncertain low wages when coupled with high food prices create real difficulties for wage labourers to purchase enough food and survive.

4. Conclusions

The adoption of small-scale well-irrigation for the production of vegetable and fruit crops has intensified the commoditisation process and contributed to the concentration of market exchanges in rural towns and facilitated market penetration deep into the countryside. The former relative autonomy of peasant communities and peasant households (near and around wadis) enjoyed before the drought has been lost. The compulsion of the need for adaptation to the distressful survival conditions imposed by the drought has intensified the incorporation of almost all peasant households into the market economy. While this provided them with the opportunity to escape famine, it at the same time made them vulnerable to the market forces, as has been the case in the Sahel, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The most vulnerable are poor peasant households with small plots of land and lacking capital resources or those households whose members work as agricultural labourers.

Given the region's potential in alluvial soil and underground water resources, both shallow and deep underground water, small scale well-irrigated agriculture emerges as a possible reliable alternative source of food security for the famine-susceptible North Darfur peasant communities in the face of the frequent recurrence of drought. Moreover, with an improved system of storage and

marketing the development of well-irrigated farming could improve the diet of people in the western Sudan regions of Darfur and Kordofan. Ample supply of vegetables and fruits at reasonable prices could make them affordable to most sections of the population including the poor. Income from vegetables and fruits would enable peasant farmers and labourers earn to have access to food imported from outside the region.

The success of a food security strategy and the sustainability of a food security system for drought and famine susceptible North Darfur needs to build on community initiatives and community responses to food shortage. If the expansion of vegetables and fruit produce, is to be encouraged in order to provide for the western region's food needs and produce surpluses for markets in and outside Sudan, further studies have to be conducted to recommend the appropriate measures to be taken on:

- i) the socio-economic impact of further development in irrigated agriculture and its environmental impact in relation to millet production;
- ii) regional specialisation and integration, between different regions of the Sudan and Northern Darfur, on the basis of comparative advantages of specialising in commodity production possibilities and integration between the different parts of the country;
- iii) the measures to be taken to balance local food needs and the export of food surpluses and;
- iv) the possibilities of food processing and the development of agro-industry based on the production and processing of fruits and vegetables.

Book Reviews

Book Reviews

The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa by Claude Ake. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Dakar, Senegal, 2000. 206pp. (Distributed by African Books Collective, The Jam Factory, 27 Park End St., Oxford OX1 1HU).

Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa by Rita Abrahamsen. Zed Books, London, 2000. ISBN 1 85649 858 1, £45.00/\$65 (hb). ISBN 1 85649 859 X, £14.95/\$22.50 (pb).

The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja. Zed Books, London, 2002. xvi+304pp. ISBN 1 8427 052 7, £45.00/\$69.95 (hb). ISBN 1 84277 053 5, £14.95/\$25 (pb).

It is a great bonus to have this last posthumous contribution from Claude Ake, the great Nigerian political theorist and analysis, who was killed so tragically and prematurely in an air crash in 1996. Someone at CODESRIA has brought together unpublished materials in this new volume. It complements his 1995 book, *Democracy & Development*. There is some overlap; that theme is revisited as Section 2 of the book. But this new offering first roots the discussion of the prospects of democratisation in Africa in a grounding of democratic theory, going back to the ancient Greeks, through to the European liberal theorists and the US constitution's founding fathers, and what 'democracy' meant to them. He also explores the historical circumstances under which the modern state and forms of democracy emerged.

What he brings out from the early conceptions of 'democracy' is that the ancients had a fairly uncompromising view of it as direct rule by the people and not just representative government. Even the authoritarian Aristotle saw it as meaning the 'authority...of the poorer classes'. He sees the principles of equality and of participation being eroded with the emergence of the 'liberal democratic' form of the state and in the works of those who theorised it, to the point of "being trivialized...[so that] it is no longer threatening to political elites". The resulting patterns of competitive elitism and apoliticisation follow with the parallel development of capitalism, so that the core values of liberal democracy are essentially the same as those of the market: 'egotism, property, formal freedom and equality'. He argues that this form of democracy, reduced to multi-party electoral competition and interest groups, is not at all the kind that Africa requires. And the same trivialisation of democracy in their own countries makes the developed western governments and their international institutions wholly inappropriate as the means of delivering democratisation to Africa, whether by 'political conditionality' or intervention.

In particular, Ake is arguing for an emphasis on participation and accountability, and the assertion of human rights, as more relevant than merely multi-party elections. Moreover, he insists that what is required is attention to social and economic rights and not just those of citizenship and political freedom.

These imperatives he derives from his discussion of the connection between democracy and development. He notes how orthodox opinion in the West has gone full circle from the ‘modernisation’ analysis of the 1960s which assumed that African states would become more like those in the West and that economic growth would be associated with a liberal state; a view that was challenged by more conservative emphasis on ‘political order’, which would be upset if mass participation was ‘premature’. The argument for a ‘development state’ to be authoritarian was further underscored by the conclusion that if the poor had a say they would opt for consumption, including welfare services, now rather than investment. Today the aid establishment is once again asserting the need for democratisation. In particular, he stresses that whatever authoritarianism might have done for East Asia, there are so many examples of dictatorial regimes in Africa that have delivered only economic decline – thoroughly documented in Nzungola’s study. So rather than taking an essentialist position of the inevitability of ‘democracy and development’ or the reverse, he argues for an approach that seeks ‘democratising development’. He sees the advantages of the mass of the people having a voice as leading to a different kind of development path, that is not so outward-oriented, that stresses rural development. But the need is for more than people having a say in policy formulation. A fundamental reversal of attitudes and the basis of policy ‘discourse’ (as Abrahamsen would call it, see below) is needed which gets away from:

Prevailing strategies [which] tend to assume that the people and their way of life are the ‘problem’. But when people rather than development processes are problematised, development is derailed...Policy involves an assault on their culture in a misconceived battle against ‘backwardness’.

These ideas were originally spelled out in his last book, which was specifically on *Democracy & Development*.

As the title suggests, the book is not content to be prescriptive. In part it is a study of what he clearly sees as ‘the democratic movement’ in Africa, that grew up from the late 1980s. If he were writing now rather than in the mid-1990s Ake might be a little more sanguine about what that movement has achieved. In some countries the few tentative steps toward democratisation have been reversed. In many others even the partial gains of multi-Party competitive elections have not been sustained as the bases of power of the same elites, and the clientelism and corruption often associated with them, have simply been given a different institutional form in a predominant party system and manipulated elections –

what I call the ‘one-and-a-bit party state’. Nevertheless, there is a movement, of varying strengths and based on an amorphous set of bodies and processes, that is alive and must be sustained in its work.

It is in the primacy that Ake gives to these forces as the explanation of the actual democratisation process – it has been “predominantly internally generated” (p. 35) – that he is at odds with Abrahamsen’s main argument. To be sure Ake does treat the external factors seriously and devotes a lot of attention to the post-Cold War forces and the imposition and failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the international financial institutions (IFIs). But part of his argument is that after the Cold War the North could be more open to democratic pressures rather than seeing everything in terms of which side a state was on geo-strategically. There he might with hindsight have granted the West more credit than it deserves. Abrahamsen explicitly offers “a critique of conventional explanations of democratisation [that]...maintain that the main causes of political change in the early 1990s were internal to Africa [and]...challenges this relegation of external factors to secondary importance”. Her arguments are, first, the sheer number of countries that simultaneously take the same kinds of steps. A second strand is also well taken: “the interplay and interconnectedness of states and political forces in a global era” (p.1). Elsewhere she puts a similar argument this way: “the international is always present in domestic politics” (p. xi). But this latter formulation goes even further toward the position that the ‘internal’ and ‘external’ are distinctions hard to make in practice, which thus makes the whole argument about primacy of causes into a false dichotomy. I would think that a more helpful mode of analysis, especially if one is concerned to explore the prospects for the kind of democracy that Ake advocates, is to analyse the nature and strength of both dimensions and go on to examine their interconnectedness. Herein also lies a formula for granting the usefulness of two studies on this crucial theme.

Abrahamsen’s third argument is that conventional accounts underplay the power of a discourse that “donors and creditors in the North all subscribe to and advocate as the model to be followed in the South” (p. x), a discourse that in the present takes the form of the familiar SAP package wedded to ‘good governance’, and which also serves to justify the North’s intervention to impose that model, in their own eyes. The existence of such an orthodoxy cannot be denied and an exploration of the interconnection of its political and economic components is welcome. That is the whole purpose of the book. But a ‘discourse analysis’ whatever it reveals about those connections can itself only *assert* its power. So it will have to be left to historical, structural analysis to prove how powerful discourse and other international factors have been as causes.

The ‘seductiveness’ of some of the good governance arguments and their false assumptions are especially well brought out. In exploring the complementarity between good governance and SAPs, there are other revealing insights. More perhaps could be made of some of the ‘class’ assumptions of IFIs: that getting agricultural prices right was seen as a key component of SAPs, and that meant giving peasant producers a voice. It would also have been good to see more African contributors to the political economy debate, like Olokushi, Adedeji, and Ake himself, given more mention in what was in part a review of current explanations. But all in all this is a valuable addition to that literature.

Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja must be counted alongside Ake as one of the most distinguished African political scientists, and like him has had to spend much of his career in exile. Like other DRC academics he has also sought to involve himself in the ‘democratic movement’ and not just sit on the sidelines – an ‘activist scholar’ he calls himself. His involvement perhaps colours a little his conclusion that the internal initiative of the early 1990s was more inherently democratic than subsequent movements led by and against Kabila. That makes him a somewhat marginal actor in present efforts to resolve the tragic conflict today and the putting together of a single and hopefully democratic state. It is to be hoped that as that process gets further along the road, someone of his qualities and wide pan-African experience can play an increasing role. His perspective is also one that sees the recent conflicts as as much an ‘invasion’ by Rwanda and Uganda as a civil war. While he does grant that Zimbabwe, Angola, and others do develop their own interests, he sees them as ‘defenders of the state’, whose intervention is more legitimate than the neighbours to north and west.

There is not space here to do justice to this rich insider’s account of the Mobutu years, to the democracy movement in all its forms or to the ‘instant liberation struggles’ that mushroomed in the last years. He does in fact enter some of the debates dealt with in the other books reviewed, for instance when he points to the international forces as crucial through the different stages of DRC’s history. In the most recent period he characterises them as the *indifference* of the international community, while stressing the harm of the largely non-state actors, ‘the transnational networks of pillage and corruption’ – features of the global system that don’t receive their due in either of the other books.

Lionel Cliffe

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Courage and Consequence: Women Publishing in Africa eds Mary Jay and Susan Kelly. Africa Books Collective, 2002. xii+109pp. ISBN 0952126974 £11.95/\$19.95.

This short book makes for quite optimistic and, certainly at times, inspiring reading. The African Books collective (ABC), which has played a major role in promoting the dissemination of books from Africa around the world, asked a wide range of women involved in the book trade if they would be interested in contributing to a volume on the subject of women and publishing. The eleven responses they received are here printed in a book that makes no claims to be comprehensive, but which does delightfully demonstrate something of the range of publishing initiatives in which women are involved in Africa.

The contributions come from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, south Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, and deal with initiatives which range from community publishing in Zimbabwe, to initiating African language publishing in Pulaar in Senegal, to running a major university publishing organisation in Nigeria.

What is most optimistic is that most of the women do not seem to have found that their gender has been a significant obstacle to their work as publishers. This has to be qualified of course. In Namibia, Jane Katjavivi could only raise a bank loan to finance her New Namibia Books with her husband's counter-signature, as being a married woman she was legally a minor. In South Africa black women still face significant problems in entering the world of publishing, and across the continent while there are plenty of women editors and a number of women managers, certain areas such as technology, warehousing and finance are still seen as more suited to men.

The other engaging aspect of the book is the sheer enthusiasm, the passion and commitment the women concerned have brought to their careers in publishing. Kathy Bond Stewart's article about community publishing in Zimbabwe, which led her to establish Africa Community Publishing and Development with two other women, sees publishing as a major tool of empowerment, and she chronicles how community publishing led into a development process which allowed participants to start to gain control over their own lives and to become community leaders. Many other contributors talk of the burning need to promote literacy as a means of empowerment, and like the Kenyan, Serah Mwangi, see books as a means of human self-realisation. Goretti Kyomuhendo from Uganda writes about the lack of relevant books in her childhood, and many of these women see the need to promote high quality, relevant writing, as paramount.

Unsurprisingly, the major hindrance nearly all experience is financial. The book buying public across Africa remains relatively small. Publishing is seen as a risky business by financial institutions, and only major contracts for school textbooks guarantee an income. Often to keep their businesses afloat women have had to personally tout their wares around their countries, and for lack of space many seem to have shared living space at one time or another with a print run of books.

This volume represents one in a series of initiatives by ABC to promote and assist African publishing. The talent is obviously out there in the form of writers and editors. The three things these women seem to call for most clearly are sustained literacy and library programmes, easy access to training provision in all aspects of the publishing business and imaginative financial support schemes. What they all share is a burning belief in the liberating power of literacy and literature.

Jane Plastow

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African Renaissance: Roadmaps to the Challenge of Globalization by Fantu Cheru. Zed Books, London and New York, 2001. 253pp. ISBN 1 84277 086 1, £45.00/\$69.95 (hb). ISBN 1 84277 087 X, £14.95/\$25.00 (pb).

Despite its upbeat title, *African Renaissance* is a sober read. It is not that Fantu Cheru tries specially to emphasise the magnitude and range of problems facing Africa, or that he describes in detail the suffering and injustice that they continue to produce. He is more interested in looking for paths forward. The trouble is that the routes he recommends seem hard, unexciting, and nevertheless doubtful.

Cheru, of course, cannot altogether be blamed for this, unless it is a mistake even to have attempted a broad strategy for rescuing a continent. Inspirational prescriptions would have been easier to come by had he wholeheartedly embraced either the triumphalist vision of capitalism or a radical repudiation of it. What he sets out to do instead is sketch a middle way, though 'a guided embrace of globalization with a commitment to resist'. Resistance would mainly take the form of selective trade protectionism, preferably coordinated between African countries.

He does not provide clear criteria for implementing his prescriptions. What Africa needs is more commonsense approaches, he says. But common sense is most effective when used directly for undermining fantasies. It often has the drawbacks of imprecision, subjectivity and triteness. The chapter on

‘Rebuilding War-Torn Societies’, for instance, uncritically adopts the current orthodoxies and platitudes of the internationalist elite in sentences like this:

Parties to conflict have rarely developed far-reaching alternative strategies – for, example, peace-building strategies that aim to include civil society in the process, thereby ensuring ownership of outcomes and potentially better chances of sustaining peace. (p.199)

It may not come as a surprise to learn that Cheru has worked as a consultant for several UN agencies and aid donor organisations. Ethiopian by birth, he is a professor in the United States.

Easy though it is to find banalities, the book should be respected for its steady and sensible approach. It covers a fairly comprehensive range of topics – democracy, education, agriculture and rural development, regional economic integration, urbanization and war – in successive chapters. It is well-organised and clearly presented, with plenty of labelled sections that can be used as checklists. As a politically moderate conspectus addressed to Africans by an African it may usefully be adopted as a textbook or shelf reference. But this reviewer did not find that it made renaissance a more vivid prospect.

Michael Medley

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In Search of Truth and Justice: Confrontations between Church and State in Malawi 1960-1999 by Matthew Schoffeleers. Kachere Book no. 8, Christian Literature Association in Malawi, Blantyre, 1999. 383pp. ISBN 9990816190 (pb).

Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940 by John McCracken. Kachere Monograph no. 9, Christian Literature Association in Malawi, Blantyre, 2000. 376pp. ISBN 990816245 (pb).

Malawi’s Second Democratic Elections: Process, Problems and Prospects eds Martin Ott, Kings M. Phiri, Nandini Patel. Kachere Book no. 10, Zomba, Malawi, 2000. 220pp. ISBN 9990816158 (pb).

Living Dangerously: A Memoir of Political Change in Malawi by Pdraig O Maille. Kachere Book no. 11, Christian Literature Association in Malawi, Blantyre, 2000. 189pp. ISBN 9990816217 (pb).

(Note: All these books are available through the African Books Collective, The Jam Factory, 27 Park End St., Oxford OX1 1HU).

In 1992 and 1993 the Banda regime, which had ruled Malawi with increasing authoritarianism and abuse of power for 30 years, came to a sudden and ignominious end. The manner of its demise resembled the rapid collapse of the

Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, under popular pressure, at the beginning of the 1990s. In Malawi, religious communities, which had for long been tacit supporters or silent victims of the regime found the resources to articulate the frustrations felt by the Malawian people as a whole. The University, where dissent had been silenced as effectively as in the churches, also found a voice, largely through student protest and the organisation, by the academic faculty, of seminars critically examining the state of Malawian society and demanding democratisation. The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Malawi played a distinguished part in this ferment, utilising its dual role as part of the academy and its strong links with the faith communities. The inauguration by this department of the Kachere series of publications, which explore issues of faith, culture and society in contemporary Malawi, is one of the legacies of the ferment of the early 1990s.

The four books under review all examine the interface between religion and society in Malawi. Martin Schoffeleers, a Marxist priest, is a distinguished historian and anthropologist of religion in Central Africa. *In Search of Truth and Justice* is a chronicle of the stirring events of 1992 and 1993, in the larger context of the role of religious institutions in Malawi. It was the 1992 Lenten Letter of the Catholic bishops which effectively sparked off the terminal crisis of the Banda regime. As the crisis developed the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) - with its Scottish heritage probably most important Christian religious body in the country - became increasingly involved in the demand for a referendum on multi-party democracy and in negotiating a transfer of power. Presbyterians had played a crucial role in the independence struggle and both individual Christians and, for better or for worse, were inevitably deeply entangled in the direction of the post-independence Malawi Congress Party. The Catholic Church, apolitical for much of the 1950s, had attempted to form a Christian Democratic Party as independence drew near, a move which the Protestant elite of MCP regarded with suspicion as a brake on the autonomy of the African voice in Malawian politics. The re-entry of the Catholic Church into the political area in 1992 revived those suspicions and, according to Schoffeleers, explains something of the apoplectic response of the government to the Lenten letter. But, as Schoffeleers' account well illustrates, it rapidly became clear that another dose of repression and the muffling of free speech, was no longer going to work. The Catholics started the ball rolling, but Presbyterians (lay politicians and clergy) were crucial in the establishment of the Public Affairs Committee. This was to become an important forum for the negotiations for an orderly transfer of power. Intellectuals reared in the Livingstonia Presbyterian tradition of Northern Malawi had suffered grievously from the political purges and clampdown on academic freedom of the Banda regime. Eventually it was only the Central Presbytery, in the area of the country where Banda's main support was based, which remained committed to

‘Kamuzu’ and the MCP. In effect, the CCAP came to reflect the regional cleavages of Malawi politics, which both the 1994 and 1999 elections seemed to entrench. *Malawi’s Second Democratic Elections* examines the implications of the phenomenon of regionalism for Malawi’s democracy as a major factor in Malawi’s politics. It contains essays specifically on the conduct of the 1999 elections and its general political implications, on ideology, the media, the use and misuse of language during the electoral campaign. There is a useful essay by Martin Ott, reflecting on the continuing struggles of the churches on shedding their ‘ecclesiastical Kamuzuism’, and also examining the public role of the Anglican Church, previously much less significant than the Catholics and Presbyterians. In view of the fact that the incumbent President, Bakili Muluzi, is a Muslim, it would have been interesting to have more extended reflections on the place of the Muslim community in Malawi’s social and political life. (Matthew Schofeleers promises a separate book on the role of traditional religious societies in the political processes of the 1990s.) The book contains useful statistical material on the election results of 1999.

The third book *Living Dangerously* is a personal memoir by Padraig O Maille (Patrick O’Malley), an Irish Catholic Kiltegan missionary, who worked in the Department of English at the University of Malawi before his deportation in 1992. It is particularly interesting for its account of the imprisonment (and murder) of politicians from the independence struggle (such as Orton and Vera Chirwa), academics and creative writers. The author’s efforts to raise international awareness about the imprisonment of his colleague and friend, Jack Mapanje, is central to the account and was particularly memorable to this reviewer as he heard the reading of a poem by Mapanje at the 2002 Edinburgh Book Festival, in a series of readings by ‘Imprisoned Writers’ organised by Amnesty, Scottish Pen and Index on Censorship. O’Malley’s book includes at the beginning a brief resume of the importance of Livingstonia (the mission of the Free Church of Scotland) for the intellectual life of Malawi, and in this context it is good that Kachere have reprinted John McCracken’s *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission*, not least because it will make available to a new generation of students of history, religion and society in Malawi, this pioneering historiographical work.

The members of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Malawi University, not least its former member, Kenneth Ross, now working for the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh, are to be heartily congratulated for the Kachere series, a brave publishing venture of considerable importance for African studies in Malawi.

Kevin Ward
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Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Postcolonial Zimbabwe by Blair Rutherford. Zed Books, London, 2001. xx+268pp. ISBN 1 84277 000 4, £45.00/\$69.95 (hb). ISBN 1 84277 001 2, £15.95/\$25 (pb).

In all the obsessive outpourings in western media about the crisis in Zimbabwe and the take-over of land, the largest group of those who have suffered, and often suffered the most, is scarcely mentioned. Many farm-workers and their families who dwelt on the white-owned farms and who make up almost 20% of the total population, have lost their jobs, been forced from their homes and also been disenfranchised. Large numbers have also lost their citizenship, their origins two or three generations ago being held against them. Only a small proportion have benefited by gaining access to the land being distributed.

They were presumably targeted by the thugs of ZANU-PF and the veterans groups, as they were seen as prone to vote for the opposition on the grounds that they were under the influence of their white employees. I can remember that same concern being expressed during the ‘independence elections’ in 1980. Farmers did indeed provide transport for their workers to the polling station; but their actual voting pattern indicated that they had a degree of independence from the heavy-handed patronage of their bosses.

This book explores these often neglected farm dwellers, and their relationship with their employers (and landlords). Unfortunately, the most recent events are only covered in a brief ‘Afterwards’ as most of the book was based on intensive field work in the early 1990s, much of it a detailed case-study of one large farm in the Urungwe district on the northern border. Nevertheless Rutherford’s historical treatment of the subject provides a valuable background to understanding how these workers have been affected by the farm take-overs and events that are likely to follow.

Rutherford brings out how farm workers’ relationship with the white farms, although changing after Independence and again with recent developments, was always marked by ambiguity. They were very lowly paid and exploited and harshly treated, but also *dependent* - on the continuation of the employment, on a place to stay, and the provision of supplies and, hopefully, easy credit and sometimes services. They had some security but were semi-servile. Their marginalisation politically is also not new. One legacy of maintaining different local government structures after Independence for the different land units – ‘farms’ and ‘communal areas’ – was that the farm workers still did not have the vote in local elections in the 1990s.

Rutherford predicts that the result of the farm invasions from 2000 onwards will be to reinforce farm workers' fear of 'politics' (which they have always associated with a time of 'hondo' (war), and their marginalisation (certainly as regards resettlement). More generally he correctly argues that a lack of understanding of their history, complex relationship with farmers and the outlook which has shaped their view of the world they inhabit, is likely to render the efforts of the government, and those who now seek to aid them, counterproductive and in particular to reinforce the complex power relationships between owners and the state from which farm workers have suffered.

Lionel Cliffe

University of Leeds

Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana by Sandra E. Greene. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indiana, 2002. 200pp. ISBN 025321521517X, £15.00 (pb).

A professor of African History at Cornell and a past president of the African Studies Association, Sandra E. Greene has spent some twenty-five years trying to find out how the people of Anloga, in the Volta region of Ghana, understood and understand 'the physical and spiritual landscapes in which they lived'.

While her title suggests she is offering a wide-ranging study of a nation, Greene has, in fact, provided depth rather than breadth. Potential purchasers should be warned: Greene writes about a town situated between the Keta Lagoon and the sea. She makes excellent use of missionary and colonial records, of wide reading, of field notes collected over a long period, and of extended essays written by undergraduates in institutions of higher education in Ghana. The heart of her book is succinct, covering 137 pages. This is followed by evidence of serious scholarship: 34 pages of notes, a fifteen-page bibliography, and a ten-page index.

Trying to find out what people believe is very difficult, and when an historical dimension is given to this task, the detective work required is particularly complex. Difficulties increase when the written sources available are largely from colonial or missionary archives. However, by focusing on 'sites', on sacred spots, and on public demonstrations, whether at festivals or in protests, Greene has identified a means of beginning to define elusive attitudes.

Lest her approach should be oversimplified, she refers to Keith Thompson's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* and through reference to that study reminds readers of the complexity of the academic tradition and community in which she exists. In writing about the Anlo Ewe, her tone is tentative and guarded. The

following extract from her concluding chapter draws attention to the focus of her study of change in Anlo Ewe beliefs and illustrates the circumspect manner in which she presents her findings. She writes:

‘...while some older beliefs and practices have been modified or abbreviated, others have undergone more profound change. Among many in Anlo, for example, the body is still understood to be subject to external spiritual intervention through sorcery. But belief in the ability of the spiritual aspects of the body to affect the self and others has virtually disappeared. Witchcraft accusations are virtually nonexistent in contemporary Anlo. Faith in the reality of reincarnation (where the spiritual content of the living body is understood in certain instances to be that which had previously occupied the body of a deceased relative) has become so uncommon that diviners complain bitterly about the lack of interest in their services.’

The repetition of ‘virtually’ reinforces a position, already established by ‘some’ and ‘more’ in the first sentence quoted. The reference to diviners provides a useful marker: the diviners complain, but they are still in business and their complaints should be assessed along with the complaints of others in similar positions.

The concentration on ‘sites’ may explain why Greene does not respond adequately to the work of a towering Anlo Ewe intellect, a writer whose work is familiar to many and who had an impact on Anloga. Greene refers only in passing to F. K. Fiawoo whose best-known play, *The Fifth Landing Stage* (published 1943 in English), abounds with references to Anlo history, beliefs and practices past and present. The opportunity to mine Fiawoo’s text, and indeed his life work as educationist, academic, politician and lodge member, is passed up, and with it the opportunity to move from vague generalisation to precise definition. In the bibliography Fiawoo’s major play is credited to his son, who shares an initial as well as a surname, D.K. Fiawoo. This is a pity, but given her exhaustive research and the fascinating account Greene has produced, a minor blemish on a remarkable piece of work.

James Gibbs

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African Wildlife and Livelihoods: The Promise and Performance of Community Conservation eds David Hulme and Marshall Murphree. James Currey / Heinemann, 2001. 336pp, ISBN 0-85255-414-1, £12.95 (pb).

Community conservation is the ‘new’ idea in African conservation, except that it is no longer new. Having evolved gradually, from initial origins in the 1970’s to prominence in the 1990’s, community conservation as philosophy, policy and

practice first challenged and now, some would argue, has overthrown the ‘old’ idea of fortress conservation, at least in selected developing countries. Essentially the label *community conservation* reflects a spectrum of approaches that promote, to varying degrees, the role of local communities in natural resource planning and management and the need for conservation to deliver tangible benefits to these communities in return for greater support for conservation. *Fortress conservation*, on the otherhand, portrays an earlier view of conservation as exclusively a state endeavour, geared towards excluding local people, from protected areas as well as responsibility, in order to preserve wildlife and ecosystems for the benefit of the national and global communities. In this experiment on the future of conservation in developing countries, Africa has been the main testing ground.

Many potential readers may already be familiar with the set of working papers generated by the collaborative research programme on community conservation in Africa (between IDPM at the University of Manchester, UK; the African Wildlife Foundation, Kenya; CASS at the University of Zimbabwe; and the Department of Geography at the University of Cambridge, UK), which *African Wildlife & Livelihoods* brings together. Nevertheless, having all of the papers, in their final form, in one volume, creates a useful resource for conservation practitioners, academics and students alike. The impressive list of contributors emphasises the combination of both practical field experience and academic rigour that makes this work so valuable.

Referring to the notion of narratives and counter narratives, dominant discourses and the ideas that replace them without necessarily having proven their greater value, *African Wildlife & Livelihoods* offers a critical assessment of the now dominant counter narrative of community conservation. This aim of assessing the achievements of community conservation initiatives in Africa is framed by asking what has been happening, what changes have occurred in conservation processes and institutions, what lessons can be learned and what are the implications for policy and practice, and finally what are the priority areas for future research and analysis. The 19 chapters are divided into seven parts. Part One – Setting the Scene – describes the evolution of the community conservation narrative and the spectrum of approaches encompassed by community conservation. Part Two – Conservation Policies & Institutions – looks at specific and varied examples of reforms in public policy and institutions. Part Three – Parks & People Revisited: Community Conservation as Protected Area Outreach – provides detailed case studies illustrating the dominant East African approach to community conservation. Part Four – Devolving Management: Community Conservation as Community-Based Natural Resource Management – examines more devolutionary approaches through case studies from southern Africa. Part Five – Economics, Incentives &

Institutional Change – looks at the detailed economic impacts and incentives that result from community conservation approaches. Part Six – Measuring and Monitoring Conservation – examines the ecological impacts of community conservation. Finally, Part Seven – Conclusions – draws from the previous chapters to identify the implications for policy and practice.

The need for a debate on the potential and achievements of community conservation, before it becomes the new orthodoxy without ever having been rigorously tested, is unquestionable. As stated in the opening chapter, community conservation “is not simply about technical choices or changes in laws or formal organizations” its significance should be seen in the fact that it is “part of wider processes of social change and about attempts to redistribute social and political power.” Although one might argue that the work described here began five or even ten years too early, mostly carried out in the mid to late nineties, assessing an idea only just finding its feet, *African Wildlife & Livelihoods* will nevertheless prove to be a seminal publication in this field. Not only does the book come at an opportune time, when an increasingly critical analysis of community conservation in Africa is indeed taking hold, but, through its own genesis (the processes of research, working papers and agenda setting), it has undoubtedly been instrumental in pushing this debate to the fore.

One minor criticism, the geographic coverage, as acknowledged in the text, is somewhat limited. The case studies focus on East and southern Africa, covering only six countries within these regions, and almost entirely (apart from occasional references) exclude both Central and West Africa, which have also seen experiments in community conservation. As both the evolution, current practice and impacts of community conservation are extremely country specific (a point made in Chapter 2), this leaves a lot of territory and experiences uncovered.

The main problem faced by any assessment of community conservation is to separate out the overall and constituent objectives of the approach itself and therefore identify what the indicators of success should be. What is the balance between the conservation objectives, i.e. the preservation of viable populations of species or self-sustaining ecosystems for human benefit, and the community development objectives of improved livelihoods and empowerment? Whose objectives take precedence, international or national conservation agencies’ or those of the local communities? Whilst the rationale of community conservation argues that the two are interdependent, the balance can and does vary in both directions. As the review of Zimbabwe’s CAMPFIRE community conservation programme in Chapter 16 concludes, despite the theory, villagers still see development as agriculture, roads and schools and not as the sustainable utilisation of wildlife resources. Likewise, Chapter 17, which reviews the extent

to which community conservation has met the goals of the conservation agenda, confirms that there is still little empirical evidence that proves that community conservation has led to more effective conservation. Certainly, the community side of the equation, the degree to which communities can benefit from conservation, as opposed to the way in which communities can, reciprocally, contribute to conservation has received most attention, both in terms of implementation of community conservation as well as its evaluation. One of the dangers of community conservation is that it may turn out, in some cases, to be a Trojan Horse for those that seek to emphasise short-term community benefits beyond the capacity of natural resource systems to sustainably deliver, and it is, in part, this fear that has led to a mini revival of fortress conservation ideas amongst some conservationists. In any final assessment however, community conservation must be judged, at least partly, by its ability to deliver on conservation objectives, at whatever level, and as in most analyses of community conservation, which are still largely the terrain of social scientists such as Hulme and Murphree, this is where *African Wildlife & Livelihoods* unfortunately places the least emphasis.

In summarising, Hulme and Murphree's opening chapter accepts that the available evidence points to community conservation having only very partially achieved its conservation and development goals. Therefore, whilst their ultimate conclusion, that the counter narrative of community conservation's achievement is "not that it has proved that community conservation 'works'.." but that it has "created the space for a set of community conservation experiments that take many forms and are achieving very different results", is not surprising, it is still somewhat disappointing given the original aims of the work. Rather than the 'answer' we get the usual academic call for further research, but then what's new?

Will Banham.

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Cutting the Vines of the Past: Environmental Histories of the Central African Rain Forest. Tamara Giles-Vernick. University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville and London. 320 pp. Hb: ISBN 0-8139-2102-3 £38.95 \$49.50. Pb: ISBN 0-8139-2103-1 £15.50 \$19.50.

Tamara Giles-Vernick sets out to discover how a group of equatorial Africans understand the environmental change that is occurring in their region during the twentieth century. She focuses her work on the Mpiemu people who live in the Middle and Upper Sangha River Basin, having carried out fieldwork in this area

predominantly in 1993 but with additional data being drawn from 1991 and 1994.

The central theme of Giles-Vernick's work is to investigate how the Mpiemu people understand environmental change, through the language of *doli*. *Doli* is defined as a category of historical and environmental knowledge and a way of perceiving and characterising environments of the past. The text argues that both the process and body of *doli* has changed through the twentieth century mainly as a result of the indigenous people's encounters with external bodies – namely aid agencies. Giles-Vernick suggests that by the analysis and study of these changes we can see how and why interventions of external conservation projects in the area have failed.

The book begins with a description of the different actors involved in the historical dynamics of the Sangha basin. This section of the book draws mainly on secondary evidence and not on Giles-Vernick's experiences. The subsequent four chapters of the text focus on specific domesticated spaces (village, field and forest) of *doli* and how these areas have been affected by numerous external factors ranging from colonial administrations, religious missionaries, 'private' owners and more recent conservation projects.

Cutting the Vines of the Past gives an excellent account of the Mpiemu's attitude to environmental change and supplies the reader with a good knowledge of *Doli* and African ecology and language, through its appendix system. In addition the author supplies extensive page notes.

Giles-Vernick supplies the reader with an interesting narrative and a new perspective of natural and pre-empted environmental change in Central African rainforest. However, she does little to provide new analysis of the impact of external agents in this change and their relationship with indigenous people. Is it not true that most peoples' behaviour and perceptions have been shaped by their own experience and those of their forefathers, particularly in an isolated area such as the Sangha River Basin? Her concluding statement that policymakers and conservationists dismiss historical knowledge, practices and values at their peril, is hardly a new concept in this area.

Louise Ellis

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Books Received

The following books have been received and may be reviewed in future issues of the Bulletin

Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania by Dan Brockington, James Currey/Indiana U.P./Mkuki na Nyota, 2002. ISBN 0852554176, £11.95 (pb).

Art of the Lega by Elizabeth L. Cameron, University of Washington Press, 2002. ISBN 0939741889, £30.50 (pb).

Killing for Conservation: Wildlife Policy in Zimbabwe by Rosaleen Duffy, James Currey/Indiana U.P., 2000. ISBN 0852558465, £35.00 (hb). ISBN 0852558465, £11.95 (pb).

A Short History of African Philosophy by Barry Hallen. Indiana U.P., 2002. ISBN 0253215315, £11.50 (pb).

Rainbow Vice: The Drugs and Sex Industries in the New South Africa by Ted Leggett. Zed Books, 2002. ISBN 1842771353, £13.95/\$19.95 (pb).

Dark Age: The Political Odyssey of Emperor Bokassa by Brian Titley, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. ISBN 0773524185, £17.50 (pb).

Health, Power and Politics in Windhoek, Namibia, 1915-1945 by Marion Wallace, Basel Namibia Studies Series 7, P. Schlettwein Publishing, Basel, 2002. ISBN 3908193117, CHF 48/£20.

Creating Germans Abroad by Daniel Joseph Walther. Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 2002. xiv+268pp. ISBN 0 8214 1458 5, \$55.00 (hb). ISBN 0 8214 1459 3, \$26.95 (pb).

Hubertus Graf zu Castell-Rüdenhausen (1909-1995): Personal Papers and Manuscripts on Namibia by Dag Henrichsen and Albert M. Debrunner. Registratur PA. 24, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Basel, 2002. ISBN 3 905141 79 9.

The Archive of the Solidarity Group "Medic' Angola / Kampfendes Afrika" (Zurich, 1971 – 1988) by Dag Henrichsen. Registratur AA.5, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Basel, 2002. ISBN 3 905141 78 7.

Conference Announcement



The Review of African Political Economy
in association with
Centre of West African Studies,
University of Birmingham
is convening a conference on



Africa: Partnership as Imperialism

**September 5 – 7, 2003, The Manor House,
Bristol Road South, Birmingham, U.K.**

Africa is being actively encouraged to seek partnerships with international agencies, western capital and donor governments as a way of promoting economic growth and improved governance, and enhancing living standards. Yet Africa's experience with world markets, aid and trade has not enhanced the continent's growth. On the contrary, the continent's external relations have tended to exacerbate its problems. Currently, famine afflicts an increasing number of countries; debt continues to block growth and human development; HIV/AIDS infection rates are the highest in the world; and economies are unable to provide even the most rudimentary of medical care. Just what does 'partnership' represent in such a context? Is it an exchange between equals? Is it instead a new phase of imperialist control? Can we talk of partnership-as-imperialism?

The organisers invite paper and/or panel proposals on the following themes & topics:

Resistance: Neo-Liberalism; Vigilantes; 'Terrorists/Terrorism'; Eco-Resistance; Youth-and-Violence.

Security, Conflict and Domination: (Il)licit Capitalism; Gender Violence; Africa post-9/11.

Globalisation, Partnership and Imperialism: NEPAD; NGOs; Resources; Poverty Reduction Strategy; 'Instrumentalising' Imperialism.

Aid, Exploitation and Control: Corruption; Post-Conflict Reconstruction; 'Draining' Africa (brains, trade, money laundering).

Struggles of Accumulation: The Built Environment; Resources; Production/Privatisation.

Ideology and Culture: Gender Relations 'in an African pot'; Religions; Networks; Moralising Intervention; AIDS; 'Democratisation'.

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