

Committee III

Nationalism And World Unity: How
To Educate for the 21st Century

DRAFT--5/15/91
For Conference Distribution Only



3-2
V

**PROBLEMATIC OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM: IDEOLOGICAL
CONTENT AND RELEVANCE TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION**

by

A.M Adjangba
Professor of Law
University of Benin
Lome, TOGO

The Eighteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Seoul, Korea August 23-26, 1991

©1991, International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences

S Y N O P S I S

We begin our inquiry by attempting to gain a deep insight into the concepts of nation and nationalism.

There are a great deal of definitions in this respect, but for our purpose we find it more convenient to use Russell's. According to him, a nation is not to be defined by affinities of language or common historical origin, although these things often help to produce a nation. (...). What constitutes a nation, Russell said, is a sentiment and an instinct of belonging to the same group of herd. Such feelings, he concluded make it easy to organise a nation into a state. (1)

It is apparent here that Russell defined both negatively and positively the concept nation.

What we can ultimately derive from both aspects of the definition is that although a decisive contributory on the one hand factor, ethnic, linguistic and religious homogeneity may not invariably constitute on the other hand a bar to national identity and nationalism. The case of Switzerland may be cited as a graphic illustration. Indeed what we see here is a nation well integrated although heterogenous in its ethnic, religious and cultural composition.

In most subsaharan Africa on the contrary, we faced at the same time with heterogenous socio-cultural structures and national dis-integration.

Moreover, the concept of state seems everywhere in subsaharan Africa to have preceded in time the concept of nation in the contemporary sense of the word. Yet, from a historical perspective, this situation may not be considered peculiar to Africa, for many modern nations of today experienced the same situation. (2)

A characteristic feature of western political science, and for that matter also a source of fundamental error with respect to the analysis of African social phenomena, is the uncritical adaptation to Africa of schemes and terminologies derived from western historical experience and culture and the attempt to explain by same the present circumstances of Africa, Asia, and Latin America to some extent. (In this respect, we may for instance draw attention to the quite interesting but irrelevant theory of the stages of growth of Professor W.W. Rostow which relates in a linear model the past of the developed nations to the present of the underdeveloped nations and extrapolates the future of the latter into the present of the former ...). For short, we want to emphasise the point that such an approach does not really explain anything of the specific evolution of Africa (and other developing nations). Now, in the light of the preceding caveat, what can the concept nation and nationalism mean in the African context.

Generally speaking, nationalism may either mean patriotism or the love of one's country; it may also take the form of chauvinism, emotional aggression and opposition to everything foreign, extolling of one's own nation and denigration of others.

If nationalism appeared until the close of the XIXth century as a liberal and democratic movement, it tends nowadays to assume more and more a chauvinistic and xenophobic character. (Of late a number of groups have appeared in Western Europe with blatantly racist ideologies and resorting even to physical aggression against alien minority groups).

In sub-saharan Africa we can identify three phases of nationalism which for the sake of convenience we shall label as follows :

(i) nationalism of armed resistance prior to the European subjugation of Africa between the XV-XIX centuries.

(ii) constitutional mass ^{nationalism} resistance which coincides with the post WWII crisis of the colonial regime and which aimed at securing home rule, political self-determination and independence.

(iii) post-independence nationalism seeking to foster at the socio-psychological level common ideals and traditions, to cultivate a sense of common history, culture, myths, away from tribal nationalism with a view to overcoming religious cum ethnic divisions, and to creating one people united by patriotism and a sense of common destiny. Included in this process is the so-called "Authenticity" i.e. the fact of assuming one's own cultural heritage as it is, or if you want, "le droit à la différence" (the right to be different)..

The process under description is, by its very nature more appropriately termed nation-building .

Although Education can and does play an important role in the nationalism of the chauvinistic and xenophobic brand (3) it certainly finds a wider scope of application to the field of nation-building

Suffice it to say here that even the most serious pathologies that attend state formation in sub-saharan Africa such as embezzlement of public fund, corruption and the like can never be eradicated through penal sanctions alone, if at all, but certainly through education which can constitute in this specific instance a potent instrument capable of building into the present and future citizen such stoic virtues as abnegation, devotion to duty and public good

Dr. A.M. ADJANGBA

(1) Russell, Bertrand, Political Ideals, Allen & Unwin, p.67 London, 1963.

(2) England prior to the Civil War in the XVIIth century can be taken as an example when the Scots' national identity was quite strong.

(3) Indeed, according to Harold D. Lasswell xenophobia is a crowd phenomenon belonging to the sphere of collective behaviour where reflection is at a minimum and where the emotional processes are rampant.
(one may then use the lever of education to redirect the process by promoting the rational and suppressing the emotional)

(3) Adja

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

I. PROBLEMATIC OF AFRICAN NATIONHOOD

1. Analytical framework
2. The operational concepts : culture and education
3. The Reductionist conception
4. A brief historiography of African culture

II. THE IMPACT OF WESTERN EDUCATION AND RELIGION

1. The goal orientation of Education
2. The distortions of colonial Education

III. FROM ALIENATION TO SELF-DEFINITION

1. The concept of Negritude
2. Ecclesiastic nationalism
3. Upgrading national languages

IV. THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM

C3 Adja

NATIONALISM AND REGIONALISM IN AFRICA
IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT AND RELEVANCE TO THE
FIELD OF EDUCATION

I - PROBLEMATIQUE OF AFRICAN NATIONHOOD

1 - ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept "Nation" does not correspond to a concrete reality. It is more of an idea, a collective representation having essentially a spiritual or psychological character. As such it is founded on the memories of common feats, common tribulations or common happiness. Seen from this vantage point, the existence of the "Nation" as a construct fulfils two functions : a horizontal function of integration which enables the melting of an heterogeneous group into a monolithic whole whereby more cohesion is given to the group, and a vertical function of power which harnesses its energies towards common goals. According to the French 19th century social scientist Ernest Renan (1823-1892), the "Nation" is therefore defined as follows :

"Une nation est une âme, un principe spirituel /.../, c'est l'aboutissement d'un long passé d'efforts, de sacrifices et de dévouements ; avoir des gloires communes dans le passé, une volonté commune dans le présent, avoir fait de grandes choses ensemble, vouloir en faire encore, voilà les conditions essentielles pour être un peuple".(1)

In the same vein, Malraux thought that the idea of nation is essentially of a spiritual nature ; but its sentimental strenght lies in common dreams.(2)

Adja

Whereas some like Renan and Malraux emphasised the psychological and historical foundations of nationhood, others like Disraeli singled out relatively more materiel characteristics such as the influence of climate, soil, religions, laws, mores, historical events, and the peculiar character of extraordinary leaders. (3)

Russell cogently observed that a nation is not to be defined by affinities of language or common historical origin alone. (4) And Laski pointed out that though language is a factor of unquestionable significance it is by no means an insuperable obstacle as demonstrated in the case of Switzerland. (5).

It seems though, race played an insignificant role in the older nationalism and Laski pointed out that "the fervid nationalism of America has made it clear that race is of dubious importance, and, indeed, none of the older European nations can seriously lay claim to racial purity. (6)

On the contrary, however, consideration of race plays an important role in the African nationalism as shall be shown in this paper.

Finally, in discussing the nationalism of the new nations, Finkle and al. see it as driving force in these nations, the motivation of their formation, the key to their policies, and also an objective of their development, in the sense that the cultivation of their feelings of nationalism and of attachment to the nation is essential to the formative processes of, and a means for the integration of the nation and the differentiation of it from other nations.

ca Adja

Moreover, they showed that from a psychological point of view, the essential aspect is that nationalism is concerned with creating a distinctive national identity. (7)

From this broad conceptual framework, I shall now shift my focus to the question as to whether the heterogeneous ethnos in Africa are or may potentially be considered as nations and if so, what distinguishes the process of their national consolidation from that of the older nationalisms of Europe and North America.

In Europe, the acknowledgement by ethnic communities of their common history and cultural identities served as a basis for the creation of nation-states. In certain cases, like the Italy of Cavour or the Germany of Bismarck, unity was strenuously sought when there was sufficient conviction that a cultural nation pre-existed.

In Africa, however, this process was inverted, and essentially diachronic. First colonial states were created within artificial boundaries which hardly coincided with the limits of traditional polities. Irrespective of their historical past, social affinities or long standing feuds, various communities whose cultures, traditions and languages considerably differ were brought together for the sole purpose of facilitating colonial administration. More often, the colonial carving led to situations where boundaries divide homogeneous ethnic communities. For example, the Bakongos are divided between Angola, Zaïre and Congo, the Ewes between Ghana and Togo, the Somalis between Ethiopia and Somalia, the Senoufos between the Ivory Coast, Mali and Burkina Faso, etc..., a process commonly referred to as irredentism.

C3 Adja

Under such circumstances, the colonial state can be seen as a "proto state" within the limits of which the Africans had to forge a new sense of solidarity and belonging, on attaining political statehood.

The emergence of colonial states prior to cultural nations in Africa created a complex problem of national integration, which is to date the most serious political challenge to the survival of African nations.

Integration is defined by Coleman and Rosberg as the progressive bridging of the elite-mass gap on the vertical plane in the course of developing an integrated political process and a participant political community (political integration) or the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane in the process of creating an homogeneous territorial political community. (8) Applying these parameters to the Middle-East, Thomson & Kohn noted that the Arab nations are not "integrated nations" because they lack mobility of classes, because the country is divided into a minority of the rich growing richer and the mass of the poor growing poorer. And there are also the lack of a feeling of having a stake in the existence of the nation and the absence of readiness for creative action for the common good. (9) Even the casual observer of the African socio-political scene can realise that the most serious predicament of African nations to date is political disintegration overwhelmingly based on tribal identification at the expense of national allegiance on the one hand, and economic disintegration created by a wide divide between a tiny bureaucratic bourgeoisie on the other hand.

Adja

In spite of the complexity of the African ethnic and cultural situation, integration through the creation of a common identity is not altogether impossible. Strayer showed with reference to the great migrations in the European upper Middle-Ages that races mixed up and the soil which is the habitat of the group created among its members, whatever their remote origin, neighbourhood solidarities which condition the essential social link. What matters, henceforth, are the links of residence ; the soil takes precedence over the race.

"Les races se mêlent et la terre qui est l'habitat du groupe crée entre ses membres, quelle que soit l'origine lointaine des solidarités de voisinage qui déterminent le lien social essentiel... Ce qui compte le plus désormais (...) ce sont les liens que détermine le domicile ; le sol l'emporte sur la race". (10)

More recently, the cohabitation (although difficult at times) between the Wallons and the Flemings in Belgium and the two main components of the Canadian nation (one ought to add the Indians) transcended the ethnic and cultural differences and gave birth to a national consciousness.

Although the foundation of African nationhood seems shaky, an African nationalism does exist.

Seton-Watson rightly pointed out that African Nationalism was predominantly expressed within the confines of the colonial state. He therefore referred to it as anti-colonial nationalism. (11)

CA Adja

In essence, anti-colonial nationalism can only rest upon a feeling of frustration and humiliation and a collective reaction of an exploited race by an alien master, the colonizer. It is a **negative nationalism** in the sense that it does not conjure up or correspond with a **positive sense of common loyalty** to the nation-state, but a temporary alliance of groups with divergent interests. For instance in the Cameroons during the period 1945-1955, the French colonial administration through its policy of Divide and Rule succeeded in driving a wedge between the different ethnic groups. But at the same time it also antagonised all of them. Joseph explained the situation as follows : the Bassa, he said, were frustrated and embittered because their area was the scene of some rapid alien business growth while their own lot was economic decline and hardship. The Bamileke, a group with a dynamic sense of business, were frustrated by the rapid decline in their economic fortunes, particularly in terms of the ever-deteriorating cocoa prices between 1948-1956. The Duala lost in land speculation deals in an encounter with an expatriate bourgeoisie. There was also the indigeous fonctionnaire class (civil servants) which faced a discriminating and immobile colonial bureaucracy let by Frenchmen. (12)

However, it would be erroneous to assume that nationalism resulting from emotional aggression is a unique feature of African nationalism. The argument is that there is a general tendency for all colonial nationalism to be rooted in emotional aggression. Professor Laqueur thus noted in respect of the factors of nationalism in the Middle East :

"(...) There is yet another factor which profoundly influenced the national character of the Arab peoples - the impact of foreign rule, and later imperialism. No Arab country had been independent for many centuries ; they had been ruled".

H.A.R. Gibbs has drawn attention to the "psychological results of long centuries of misrule and oppression". (13)

Finally, another important characteristic of African nationalism from a theoretical point of view, (maybe for all anti-colonial nationalism) is its elitistic character. The obvious explanation is that discontent is likely to attend the polarisation of a colonial society along a racial line of cleavage, whether the polarisation is sanctioned by juridical norms (as in South Africa) or not. What is significant is that the challenge to the colonial order rarely stems from organised mass movements of the underdogs of the oppressed group but from its topdogs. In this respect, the elitistic nature of Pan-African Nationalist movements has been pointed out by some analysts as an agitation of a militant elite opposed to the colonial regime. For instance Markovitz wrote that "Negritude" spoke of alienation instead of exploitation, spoke to the individual instead of the mass, to the intellectual instead of the illiterate, to the modern man instead of the traditional man. (14)

Based on an explanation of social status as determinant of discontent Joseph's study on Nationalism in the Cameroons under French colonial administration showed that both the indigenous masses and the évolués (or the assimilés/civilisés) as social classes were assigned places in colonial society on the basis

of colour and not wealth and that they were both despised by the French élite and this common social rejection generated an increasing sense of solidarity among the rejected heterogeneous groups.

Therefore, Nationalism in Black Africa on this score alone must be viewed in part as the consequence of the encounter of two races whose structure of interaction was based on the bio-social criteria of colour and culture. (15)
A similar thesis was developed by Coleman with reference to Nigeria. (16)

2. THE OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS : CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Culture is an all-embracing concept. It represents the total dimension of human existence, except its biological aspects. And wherever there is a people, there is consequently a culture.

Good defined culture as the aggregate of social, ethical, intellectual, artistic, governmental and industrial attainment characteristic of a group, state or nation and by which it can be distinguished from, and compared with other groups, states and nations. It includes ideas, concepts, usages, institutions, associations and material objects. (17)

In this respect, cultural identity is the expression of the uniqueness or the specific features that differentiate a cultural community from others.

Finally, culture is transmitted by way of socialization into the values and customs of the community through Education. Culture, wrote Linton is the learned behaviour and results of behaviour the component elements of which are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society. (18) In this sense culture is seen as the total social heredity of society.

Culture is linked at once with Education and Civilisation.

A concept far wider than mere schooling, education is the transmission of culture. It is the instrument of acculturation or more precisely inculturation. The Council of the Churches meeting in Oxford (1937) rightly defined education as :

the process by which the community seeks to open its life to all the individuals within it to enable them to take part in it. It attempts to pass on them its culture including the standards by which it would like them to live. Where that culture is regarded as final, the attempt is made to impose it on the younger minds. Where it is viewed as a stage in development, younger minds are trained both to receive it and to criticise and improve upon it. (19)

For education to act as an instrument for the transmission of societal values, it should first of all be primarily inward looking or home-based. In other words it should not serve as a vehicle for the transmission of the values of other cultures. It was happened during the colonial period when the educational authorities resorted to the theory of "tabula rasa" in an effort to discourage the autonomous development of African cultures.

As a study by UNESCO pointed out, a certain degree of education among the people is one of the relevant indicia of nationhood and national consciousness. The study further noted that culture must respect and maintain national traditions, and teaching must not result in "de-nationalising" the masses. (20)

The line between Culture and Civilization is often blurred or the concepts overlap altogether.

Thus the English Anthropologist E. E. Tylor wrote that culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (21)

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defined Civilization in the following terms : an advanced state of human society, in which a high level of culture, science, industry, and government has been reached ; those people or nations that have reached such a state ; the type of culture, society of a specific place, time or group. (22)

The foundation I am trying to lay in the foregoing is that Education, Culture and Civilization are universal attributes of all peoples in space and time and by which each in its specific way brings its contribution to the humanistic values of the world.

Consequently, any action by a given group to suppress the culture of other groups (ethnocide) will inevitably arouse nationalistic sentiments (e.g. the insistence by the Kurds on the recognition by the Turkish government of the Kurdish language on the territory of Turkey).

The following section of this paper will then be devoted to the encounter of the African and Western Civilizations and the way Africans reacted to the imposition of Western values. My emphasis will be on Education, Religion and Language as determinants.

3. THE REDUCTIONIST CONCEPTION OF WESTERN APPROACH TO CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

A distinctive feature of the colonial system was the negation of African and Black civilization. On this basis, the colonial enterprise found its rationalization in the so-called "Civilizing Mission" which perforce entails the acculturation of the natives through the agency of schools, western languages and the Bible.

This orientation led in turn to the identification of world culture and history with European history so that it would seem, as far as Africa was concerned, that the continent did not have a history of its own before the European conquest. (For instance, we learned in our textbooks of history that Stanley discovered the flow of the Congo river ! As if Africans who lived there for centuries were unaware of the river).

The French social scientist Raymond Aron proposed an interpretation of history which attempted to lend credence and legitimacy to the assumed supremacy of Western culture and civilization.

Une philosophie de l'évolution suppose un ordre de succession typique, une continuité des changements, une orientation commune vers une société déterminée (...). La civilisation occidentale est supérieure aux civilisations du passé selon des normes que les ethnologues récusent, mais que les hommes qu'étudient les ethnologues n'auraient pas récusés, en droit sinon en fait... Préférer les sociétés à demi immobiles aux sociétés cumulatives, c'est en dernière analyse, ne pas préférer l'homme humanisé aux premiers exemplaires de l'homo sapiens ; c'est refuser toute valeur et toute signification au devenir par lequel se sont éveillés, épanouis les caractères que tous considèrent comme constitutifs de l'humanité en l'homme. (23)

Equating thus westernisation and civilization, Aron added that it is a good thing and a sign of progress for mankind to enable African and Asian nations to espouse the philosophies, ideologies, cultures and religions of "this supreme and modern civilization". Yet it is clear that a standardization of world culture and civilization will deprive it of the wealth inherent in diversity. One of the declared goals of UNESCO is to promote cultural Pluralism and cross fertilization not cultural uniformity.

The search for cultural uniformity which is a disguised cultural imperialism proved in the colonial past detrimental to African civilization as it led to wanton destructions of African artefacts considered as savage or fetishist.

This can be traced to a number of factors.

First of all, as the Tunisian nationalist Albert Memmi cogently remarked, "colonialism usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to its destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility". (24)

Secondly, the tendency of Westerners to make techno-science entirely coincidental with culture is also an important factor.

Finally, it can also be assumed that Europeans themselves were not aware of the cultural potential in Africa prior to their contact with the "Dark Continent".

At this juncture, a brief historiography of African cultural development seems therefore in order, so as to shed a few light on the development of African culture prior to Western cultural invasion.

→ Adja

4. A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN CULTURE

Contemporary Western scholars, like the British Historian and Journalist Basil Davidson have attempted to rediscover the history of old Africa through the descriptions of ancient travellers and Historians : al-Bakri (1067), al-Omari (1336), Ibn-Batuta (1364), ibn-Khaldun (1380), al-Maghili (1495) and Leo Africanus (1520). From the early XIVth century to the dislocation brought about by the slave trade the city of Timbuktu in the old Sudanic Empire became an outstanding intellectual centre with the University of Sankore, renowned throughout the Islamic world. Many of its scholars were given chairs in the Universities of Cairo, Fez and Tunis.

The intellectual climate in Timbuktu under the reign of King Mohammed Askia was thus depicted by Leo Africanus :

"There are numerous judges, doctors and clerics, all receiving good salaries from the king. He pays great respect to men of learning. There is a great demand for books in manuscript (...) More profit is made from the book trade than from any other line of business". (25)

Not only was Timbuktu an intellectual centre, it was also with other cities of western Sudan, a centre of religion and commerce. peace reigned over the long caravan trails, and men were free to travel and trade and prosper as they could, said Davidson. This, he concluded, was a civilization in its own right. (26)

This was an epitome of the situation that prevailed in Africa before the cultural shock of the slave trade and later the colonial domination.

↳ Adja

II - THE IMPACT OF WESTERN EDUCATION AND RELIGION

Colonization inevitably brings in its wake cultural diffusion and acculturation the most potent instruments of which were in Africa, western formal education and religion.

1. THE GOAL ORIENTATION OF EDUCATION

Ali Mazrui and Teshome Wagaw have identified four foci of all educational systems with varying emphasis in each society. These foci are defined under four headings :

- **Sociocentric** : education must respond to societal needs by being attuned to the values and norms of a given society ;
- **Theocentric** : education is overwhelmingly centred on the teaching of God and things religious. In Africa, Koranic schools are in this category ;
- **Ecocentric** : education is primarily geared towards the promotion of environmental curiosity for the scientific understanding and mastery of the universe. Modern western education is eminently ecocentric by this yardstick. (27)
- **Egocentric** : education aims at stimulating a greater fulfilment and development of the self as opposed to the community. European systems appear more egocentric and African traditional systems more sociocentric. (28)

The processes, aims and values of traditional system of education in Africa markedly differ from inherited western systems of education. For one thing, traditional (indigenous) education was informal and pupils learned to do things by applying themselves thereto under the guidance of a teacher, often parents or relatives of the extended family. This process showed a striking similarity with the account of the Younger Pliny on the Roman education under the Republic :

It was the ancient custom that we should learn from our elders, not only through the ear but also through the eye, those things that we should soon have to do, and in our turn hand them down to our successors. Each one was instructed by his own father, and to the person who had no father, the oldest and most distinguished citizens stood in place of one. (29)

On the other hand, as pointed out by Ocitti in the case of indigenous system of education in East Africa, children were brought up largely by the process of socialisation and the development of the individual was entirely subordinated to the interest of society and sympathy for fellow citizen, as opposed to the individualisation process of inherited western system of formal education which emphasises competition. (30)

As we suggested earlier, the nature of education and its process should all converge towards the promotion of desired societal values together with the socialisation in national traditions, mores and custom.

The societal values promoted by traditional education in Africa were said to be, among others, the development of a healthy attitude towards the dignity of labour, respect for elders and those in authority, the ideals of family and community life. (31)

The rationale of the western system of education in Africa was far removed from the normal imperatives of grounding education in national culture and led, therefore, to a crisis of de-personalisation, via acculturation and assimilation, in as much as assimilation is tantamount to the destruction of the personality and creativity of the subjects being assimilated. And in proportion as the colonial education tended to produce "assimilés" (terminologies varied from one colonial power to the other, the Belgians use the term évolués, the portuguese civilisado/assimilado) the latter are by the same token de-Africanised.

2. THE DISTORTIONS OF COLONIAL EDUCATION

Colonial Education, wrote an educationist of the Niger, Abdou Moumouni, corrupted the thinking and sensibilities of the African and filled him with abnormal complexes.

But in the colonial period, said Rodney, the paradox was that whoever had an opportunity to be educationally misguided could count himself lucky, because that misguidance was a means of personal advance within the structure created by European capitalist in and for Africa. (32)

Thus the inherited western system of education had an internal consistency of its own, although it was divorced from the universally rational goals of education i.e. the development of indigenous culture.

To quote again Rodney, the main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans. In effect, that meant selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole. It was not an educational system that grew out of the African environment or one that was designed to give young people confidence and pride as members of African societies, but one which sought to instil a sense of deference towards all that was European (...) and to make matters worse the racism and cultural boastfulness harboured by capitalism were also included in the package of colonial education... Colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment. (33)

Christianity is another specific form of education geared towards the attainment of sound spiritual, moral and ethical life.

The introduction of Christianity in Africa was another important factor of the dislocation of the cultural fabric of Africa.

Acting from the naive belief that they were in possession of a greater truth, the missionaries sought to eradicate most features of the traditional social

institutions of Africa such as polygamy, traditional medicine and traditional rituals which they assimilated to vulgar paganism. Balandier reported on how African art works had been committed to flames by missionaries as idolatrous, a practice which in the Congo earned bishop Augouard the nickname of the "Bishop of the Cannibals". (34)

On this score, it is noteworthy that Islam, although an imported religion too, was more cooperative with African traditions and preserved them in actual fact. The reason is probably that most aspects of the culture of the Islamic world are adaptable to African culture (polygamy for instance).

The flexibility of Islam is thus explained by Damman :

En se convertissant à l'Islam, le païen n'est obligé de retracter rien de sa religion précédente. Théologiquement, tout : magie, croyance aux esprits et aux ancêtres, est compris dans la personne, la volonté et l'action d'Allah... L'Islam n'enlève pour ainsi dire rien à l'ancien païen ; par contre, il lui donne un cadre, ce qui fait qu'en conservant ses coutumes, il est assuré pour cette vie et pour l'autre. Cette possibilité dans la théologie de l'Islam est l'une des raisons de son attrait". (35)

All forms of education traditional or formal, civic, religious and academic require a vehicle for their transmission, namely Language.

The Language issue is an important element of African nationalism. It has two aspects : an internal which relates to sub-nationalism resulting from the multitude of languages used in each nation-state, and an external aspect resulting dimension from cultural contact with the West and which corresponds to the nationalistic dimension. This paper considers only the latter.

Language is at once a medium of communication and an instrument for the transmission of culture. In this respect, European languages played an important role in the process of acculturation and assimilation at the expense of indigenous African languages. This was achieved in the colonial period mainly through the proscription of vernacular languages in the schools. This practice was more strenuously followed in the French speaking countries whereas the British were far more tolerant as far as the use of local languages was concerned, and one may assume a convergence between their colonial doctrine which was based on the principle of "home rule" and their attitude towards local languages. To date the French are trying to use the cloak of "Francophonie" defined as the creation of a common cultural space of French Speaking nations on the basis of common use of the French language, to perpetuate their cultural domination and submergence of African culture and individuality.

Some western ideologists had it that languages evolve in the same way as races. Thus, according to Bohannan & Curtin, Gobineau claimed, and most of the authorities of the eighteenth century agreed with him, that the hierarchy of races and that some languages were superior to others in a hierarchical arrangement more or less reminiscent of the great chain of being. Languages evolved very much as races had evolved. (36)

The Abbé Boilat does not concur though, in this opinion. In his book *Esquisses Sénégalaises* he wondered, how could a people devoid of education, grammarians, academy, even verbal conventions, have so much order, method, so many general rules in their languages (37). It is however unquestionable that in terms of education pupils learn more easily and express better their thoughts in their mother tongue than in foreign languages. Besides, a national language is a catalyst of national unity. A common indigenous language in the modern nation states is a powerful factor for unity. Cutting across tribal and ethnic lines, it promotes a feeling of a single community. Additionally, it makes possible the expression and development of social ideas, economic targets and cultural identity easily perceived by citizens. It is, in a word, a powerful factor for the mobilization of people and resources for nationhood, wrote the Tanzanian Daily, the "Nationalist". (38) The overall linguistic policy of the colonial powers in Africa created a psychological conditioning so that anyone who is unable to speak an European language is considered as an uncultured being in his community.

Commenting on this fact, the Nationalist further noted that (...) the colonial era made a great many Tanzanians forsake their language and look upon English as a venerable substitute. Now this mistake has got to be corrected. Swahili must be accorded its legitimate place as the language of Tanzanians in political and economic communication, in social life, in administration, in education. At the same time it must be developed so that it answers to the complex features of life in this age. (39)



Nevertheless, it should be added that what is sought is not a total suppression of western languages but a redefinition of their role and emphasis in African socio-cultural life.

The foregoing has attempted to show the policy of European nations to estrange Africans from the historical roots of their cultural heritage in order to complete their domination by submerging African culture.

III - FROM ALIENATION TO SELF-DEFINITION : THE AFRICAN CULTURAL REACTION

What then are the African reactions to the depersonalisation crisis induced by European cultural imperialism ?

These reactions are expressed in the philosophy of Negritude or Africanity and intellectual Pan-Africanism. Within this matrix, I shall explore the question from three angles : the concept of negritude, sacerdotal nationalism and linguistic nationalism which I already briefly touched upon in the foregoing section.

1. THE CONCEPT OF NEGRITUDE

The movement of Negritude had its source in the phenomenon of cultural nationalism. It is oriented towards the ending of the most pernicious form of colonial domination i.e. mental enslavement and the search for self-definition or cultural identity. It was therefore conceived as a rehabilitation of the old african cultural traditions and values, including a reawakening of interest in the folklore, arts, music and lifestyle of the local people which most distinguish them from western culture.

As an ideology, Negritude was born in the literary circles of Afro-Americans, particularly in the Harlem Renaissance movement of the 1920s. It was a conscious attempt to trace back the cultural roots of Afro-Americans to Africa and avoid a servile imitation of western culture in the arts and literature.

Thus, Langston Hughes in an Essay wrote :

"A young Negro poet said to me "I want to be a poet not a Negro poet" meaning, I believe, "I want to write like a white poet" meaning subconsciously "I would like to be a white poet" meaning behind that "I would like to be white". And I was sorry the young man said that for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself"(40)

And self-definition was still the theme of W.E.B. Dubois'book the Soul of Black Folk . According to Dubois the history of the American Negro is the history of this strife - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America, has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (41)

This cultural nationalism spread rapidly throughout the Negro world and in 1932 Aimé Césaire, the poet-politician from Martinique coined the word Negritude (Negro-ness) in his well-known poem Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal (Return to native land).

The concept was further elaborated by Leopold S. Senghor. According to the latter, Negritude is defined as the sum total of the cultural values of the Negro world. These include the cultural values of the **extended family, solidarity, empathy, and harmony between God, man and nature.**

In contrast to European societies which he identified as "an assembly of individuals", Senghor argued that "Negro-African society puts more stress on the **group** than on the **individual**, more on **solidarity** than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their **autonomy...**". (42)

The idea that African societies are traditionally communalistic in nature and are marked off from other societies by the absence of competitiveness towards life had also been expressed by the late president of Ghana Kwame N'krumah in his concept of African socialism.

Race plays an important role in the philosophy and ideology of Negritude. Thus, according to the French Philosopher J.P. Sartre, Negritude is an "anti-racist racism". Sartre namely pointed out :

...si l'oppression est une, elle se circonstancie selon l'histoire et les conditions géographiques : le Noir en est la victime, en tant que Noir, à titre d'indigène colonisé ou d'Africain déporté. Et puisqu'on l'opprime dans sa race et à cause d'elle **c'est d'abord de la race qu'il lui faut prendre conscience.**

... Il est noir. Ainsi est-il acculé à l'authenticité : insulté, asservi, il se dresse, il ramasse le mot "Nègre" qu'on lui a jeté comme une pierre, il se revendique comme Noir, en face du Blanc, dans sa fierté (43). (emphasis added).

Yet, Senghor attempted to delink Negritude from race. In his views :

Negritude is not the defense of a skin as a colour. Rather, Negritude is the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values.

It is the awareness by a particular social group of people of its own situation in the world, and the expression of it by means of its image.

In other words, Negritude is a Pan-African or even more, a Pan-Black nationalism.

2. ECCLESIASTIC NATIONALISM

By ecclesiastic nationalism, it is meant the past and present endeavours of the African clergy (in conjunction with a number of western churches) to assert the dignity of man and his culture, irrespective of race. Dignity here should be seen both in its philosophical and human rights dimensions as well.

In this context, the call to develop a truly African theology that takes into account the philosophy and spiritual experiences of Africa is significant. The Declaration on the Creation of the Eucumenical Association of African Theologians (Accra, 1977) affirmed that African theology should be a situational theology and that such a theology should reflect the living conditions of the people and efforts towards their improvement.

Besides, the African clergy took a strong stand on the issue of cultural identity. The Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) stated in its Pastoral Exhortation :

... We are all witnesses of the social fragility due to the crumbling of the foundations of traditional society.

The political and economic fragility is often due to a more or less servile imitation of foreign models without much concern for the deep and real aspirations of the people.

The cultural sphere is also affected by this fragility : is the African elite not more at ease in the cultures borrowed from outside and does education not end in the cult of the imported ? And yet, Africa really needs a committed elite which finds its roots among its own people as well as leaders and thinkers who are capable of developing original and independent thought. (44)

On the plane of the liturgy, the Churches in Africa are seeking to adapt the Christian theodicy to the ontologies of African religions in order to come up with a synthesis of rituals that is more responsive to the spiritual values and traditions of Africa. The African Churches namely contend that "Christianity imported from the West remains the model, and the local Churches can hardly stand on their feet with regard to providing their own ministries and their resources". They further complain that "this situation is especially true of theological reflection.

Doctrines developed by the missionary schools of theology have been imposed on the life of the African churches under such titles as the theology of the conversion of pagans... In spite of the explicit teaching of the Second Vatican Council, **The Church in Africa is still far from having found a better expression of faith which would correspond to the cultural and spiritual genius of their people**" (45) (emphasis added).

As the foregoing passage suggests, the Vatican has on various occasions shown sympathy with the demands of the Churches in Africa. Thus, in his **Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi**, the Holy Father Pope Paul VI directed that evangelisation should take account of man's culture as a vital element, for the man who is to be evangelised is not an abstract being, but is the subject of social and economic question, said the Pope. (46)

Finally, the role of the Church in Africa as a vehicle of nationalism is also illustrated by dissident churches and millenary sects. The emergence of such religious movements can be seen as a protest against the established Western-type Christianity which has failed in its historic mission to bring together all the sons of God irrespective of colour. The virtual split between the Churches in South Africa can serve as a living example. Most of the millenary sects and dissident churches preach what can be rightly termed a **theology of liberation** that lay emphasis on **freedom from exploitation** and racial discrimination, **justice and peace**. In other words, liberation in the **theological** as well as the **ethical and social** sense.

3. UPGRADING NATIONAL LANGUAGES

Language is an important factor of the aspiration to cultural identity. Back in the 1950s the Senegalese writer Cheikh Anta Diop suggested in his work on *Nations Nègres et Culture* the need of promoting African language to their optimal level instead of European languages which are spoken only by a minority in Africa. He believed that thanks to such upgrading, African languages can be used to express the most complex scientific and philosophical ideas.

His thesis is nowadays somewhat vindicated by the experiment with Kiswahili which is now introduced in Tanzanian schools up to the University level as a medium of teaching and research. To date, there are a number of research materials in science and literature which have been published in that language. On the social and psychological plane, the result can be that Kiswahili ends up reducing the paramount role of English as a means of political and economic participation in social life and as a means of social mobility.

There are two main reasons militating in favour of a better role for African languages. These are :

- **Socio-cultural** : the inherited European school is not adequate for it is not integrated within the African socio-cultural context. It therefore tends to "create" people who are uprooted and marginalised, not fully integrated in their african culture on the one hand, and not fully accepted in the European culture on the other hand.

Besides an authoritative source in language issues rightly noted that teaching pupils in language other than their mother tongue results in a kind of dis-economy and is unrewarding from the perspective of sound pedagogical practices. (47) Finally, there is also to be noted some anachronism in the practice of undertaking adult education in local languages while formal education of pupils and students continues in foreign languages...

- **Technological and economic** : One can hypothesise taking the Japanese experience as a model, that technology can be more easily domesticated in national languages than in foreign languages, because the former are more appropriate and more conducive to sound thinking and development of mental power and creativity whereas the latter block them. One is more able to express complex feelings and phenomena in his mother tongue than in foreign languages.

From this standpoint, linguistic nationalism is a ferment of viable nationhood and should be welcome.

IV - THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM

There are for reaching interconnections between **Culture, Ethnicity and Human Rights.**

For one thing, Human Right are not only relevant to political self-determination. They are also important in the cultural sphere with which this paper is primarily concerned. Article 1 of the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted in pursuance of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 provides :

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. (Art. 1 § 1)

In addition, under these Covenants, the states parties are pledged to undertake all the efforts necessary to ensure the equal enjoyment of the rights embodied in said Covenants.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation - UNESCO) - have over the years expended considerable efforts to promote equal access in the field of education to all individuals and groups irrespective of racial and ethnic origin. Thus, as early as 1960, its General Conference adopted a Convention against Discrimination in Education proscribing inter alia :

- . depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level ;
- . limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard ;
- . establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons ;
- . inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with the dignity of man. (48)

The relevance of the above mentioned provisions must be assessed in the light of the fact that **ethnic hegemony** and attendant concentration of political and economic power by dominant groups as in the case of white supremacy in South Africa derives basically from a perceived **cultural superiority**. Therefore, the best way to prevent economic and political imbalance in a multi-cultural setting is granting equal educational opportunity to all ethnic groups.

Where minorities exist, the issue becomes one of ensuring for minority groups adequate means for the preservation of their traditions and cultural characteristics on the one hand, and placing all such racial, religious or linguistic minorities on equal footing on the other hand.

Equality of nationalities in a multi-ethnic state is thus an important task in the achievements of Human Rights by which equal dignity is given to the different cultures and traditions. These prescriptions equally apply to countries under colonial or alien domination.

In particular, the pluriethnic character of post-colonial African nations requires such a **Human Rights approach** in the field of culture and education as a basic condition of economic and political sharing of **social power** and hence the foundation of national integration and **social peace**.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- (1) Renan, E. Qu'est qu'une Nation, Paris 1882, PP. 306-307.
 (A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle, the outcome of a long past of endeavours sacrifices and devotion ; to have achieved glorious things together in the past, to have a common will in the present and to be still willing to do more things by corporate efforts, these are the essential conditions for nationhood). (our translation)
- (2) Malraux, A. La Tentation de l'Occident, 1926.
- (3) Disraeli, B. The Spirit of Wigghism, 1836.
- (4) Russel, B. Political Ideals, Allen & Unwin London, 1963, P. 67.
- (5) Laski, H. J. A Grammar of Politics, Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, p. 67.
- (6) Laski, op. cit. p. 219.
- (7) Finkle, J.L. & Gable, R.W. (eds) Political Development & Social Change, John Wiley, New-York, 1971, pp. 102-103.
- (8) Coleman, J.S. & Rosberg, C.G. (eds), Political Parties & National Integration in Africa, Berkeley, University of California, 1964, p. 9.
- (9) Thomson, W. & Kohn H. Nationalism in the Middle-East, 1952 as quoted in Walter Z. Laqueur's Communion & Nationalism in the Middle-East, London Routledge & Kegan, 1961, p. 8.
- (10) Strayer, J. The Laicisation of French & English Society in the XIIIth century, 1940.

- (11) Seton-Watson, Nations and States (1977) p. 332 as quoted in W. Tordoff's *Gouvernement & Politics in Africa*, MacMillan, London 1985 p. 50.
- (12) Joseph, R. A., *Radical Nationalism in the Camerouns : Social Origins of the U.P.C.* Oxford U.P. 1977/cf. A Restatement by OLA O. *Présence Africaine*, N° 108, 4th Quaterly 1978, p. 53.
- (13) Laqueur, op.cit. p. 10.
- (14) Markovitz, I. L. *Leopold S. Senghor and the Politics of Negritude*, New-York, 1969, p. 45.
- (15) In *Présence Africaine*, op. cit. p. 62.
- (16) Ibid.
- (17) Good, C. V. *Dictionary of Education* Mc Graw-Hill, New-York, 1959, p.147.
- (18) Linton, R. *The Science of Man in the World Cisis*, Columbia University Press, New-York 1945 p. 78.
- (19) *The Churches Survey Their Task*, Oxford, 1937.
- (20) McEvan & Sutcliffe, *Study of Africa*, Methuen, London 1965, p. 374.
- (21) Tylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture*, 1871.
- (22) *Dictionary of English Language*, Random House, New-York, 1967.
- (23) Aron, R. *La Théorie du Développement et l'Interprétation Historique à l'Epoque Contemporaine*. Symposium de l'UNESCO sur le Développement Social, Paris, 1965, pp. 110 & 115-116.

- (24) Quoted in Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped African*, Dar-es-Salam, 1971, pp. 245-246.
- (25) Cf. Davidson Basil, *The Lost Cities of Africa*, Boston Little Brown 1959 pp. 81-103, quoted in Melvin Drimmer's *Black History*, Doubleday, New-York 1968, pp. 34-35 & 45-46.
- (26) Davidson, B. op. cit. p. 46.
- (27) African culture is probably more ecocentric than European's but its ecocentricity derives from its traditional religious outlook which creates an intimate connexion between God, man and nature. For instance trees are often considered as living partners. The Dchaggas in the Cameroons have a cult for the banana tree which is an important item of education for the youth. (cf : Dammann, E. *Les Religions de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris, 1978 p. 55).
- (28) Mazrui, A. & Wagaw, T. *The Case of Education & Culture Conflict in East Africa* (1980).
- 29) Curtis S. J. & Boulwood, M.E.A. *A Short History of Educational Ideas*, London, 1964 p. 47.
- (30) Ocitti, J.P. *African Indigenous Education as Practised by the Acholi of Uganda*. Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1973 p. 92.
- (31) Fafunwa, A. Babs *History of Education in Nigeria*, Allen & Unwin, London 1974.

- (32) Rodney, W. op. cit. p. 271
- (33) Rodney, W. p. 263-264
- (34) Balandier, G. La Vie Quotidienne au Royaume de Kongo du XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle, Paris, Hachette, 1965.
- (35) Damman, E. Die Religionen Afrikas, W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart. Translated by L. Jospin Les Religions de l'Afrique, Payot, Paris 1978, p. 232 "In embracing the Islamic faith, the pagan is not obliged to forsake anything of his previous religion. On the theological plane, everything : magic, belief in spirits of the ancestors, is included in the person, the will and action of Allah... Islam does not so to speak deprive the former pagan of anything ; on the contrary, it provides him with a framework, so that in preserving his custom, he is nonetheless assured of the life here and hereafter. This possibility is one of the reasons of the attractiveness of Islam" (our translation).
- (36) Bohannon P. & Curtin Ph. Africa and Africans, New-York, The Natural History Press, 1971, P. 53-54.
- (37) Wauthier Claude, The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa, London Heinemann, 1978, p. 41.
- (38) The Nationalist, 20 December 1968.
- (39) Ibid.

(3) Adja

- (40) Langston Hughes, in the Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain, 1926
Black Protest Thought in the XXth Century, Meier, et al. (eds)
Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1977, p. 111.
- (41) Drimmer, M. (ed) Black History, New-York, Doubleday 1968, p. 3.
- (42) Senghor L.S. On the African Socialism, 1967, p. 93.
- (43) Sarte, J.P. Situation III, Paris, Gallimard p. 236-237.
- (44) SECAM The Church & Human Promotion in Africa Today, Pastoral Exhortation of the Bishops of Africa & Madagascar, Kinshasa 1985 N° 23-25
- (45) SECAM ibid. N° 30-31.
- (46) Evangeli Nuntiandi N° 15 - 31
- (47) Houis, M. Anthropologie Linguistique de l'Afrique Noire, P.U.F. Paris 1971, p. 195.
- (48) Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Art. 1 (a)-(d), UNESCO Paris, 1960.