The Politics of History in Contemporary Africa

Michael Onyebuchi Eze

With a Preface by Frank Ankersmit

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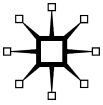

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. . . for all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are of God . . .
This work is dedicated to my greatest heroes: Mum, Dad, and Chileen.
And to Matthias and Anke Schlensak—for friendship, support, and love – without which this book would have remained a stillborn. Thank you very much.

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Contents

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Preface

This is both an angry and a brilliant book. It's an angry book since it not only eloquently and cogently exposes the horrors and crimes of the colonial regimes in Africa that were set up after the Berlin Conference in 1885, but condemns no less mercilessly the depraved and corrupt contemporary African regimes that continued Africa's dismal predicament down to the present day. What one might call "the black man's burden" (to vary Kipling's well-known phrase) did, unfortunately, not cease with the end of colonialism and imperialism, but was continued when Africa took its fate into its own hands. Next, it is a brilliant book by showing why and in what way Africa's colonial past was like a curse from which the continent has the greatest difficulty of exonerating itself. Indeed, it is too easy to assert—as President Sarkozy did in his notorious speech in Dakar in July 2007—that independence should have enabled Africa to dispel the memories of its terrible past in the turn of a hand, and to become a relaxed and self-confident player in our contemporary global society. Sometimes the past may oppress us like a nightmare from which we find it difficult, perhaps even impossible to awaken—as probably also is the case with Israel—and then all well-intentioned exhortations to be open to contemporary realities will only reveal their own futility, helplessness, and lack of understanding.

Large part of the book is devoted to the double bind in which African culture (or African intellectual history, as Onyebuchi Eze prefers to call it) permanently finds itself when trying to define itself and its identity. As Eze puts it: "[U]sually caught between vagaries of conflicting identities, the African is in a simulated process of identity negotiation" (69). Self-evidently, because of its age-old contacts with Europe, Europe will figure prominently in these "vagaries of conflicting identities." It follows that the rapport to Europe must be the main source of these workings of the double bind in all of Africa's attempts at self-definition. (By the way, the reverse is true as well. Recall Freud's archaeology of the human mind and Philip Rieff's comment on it: "[F]or the very reason that Hegel thought Africa not a proper subject for the historian, Freud would consider it most proper." Africa gave us our psychology and our minds. No small matter!)

The best-known example of the double bind is that of the mother saying to her child: "Be more spontaneous." Then the child has two options: (1) it can simply disobey its mother's exhortation and thus fail in being spontaneous or (2) it may try to do as its mother wishes—but then it will also fail, since imposed spontaneity is not spontaneity. Spontaneity can only come "spontaneously." So the child can impossibly satisfy its mother's wishes. Or think of someone saying in English (or in French): "We must not speak English (or French)." Then something similar occurs: the requirement not to speak English (or French) is contradicted by its being formulated in English or French. In all these cases there is an incompatibility between a goal and the means for achieving it. With the result that the goal can never be realized.

Eze most convincingly shows that this is the predicament in which African culture finds itself when attempting to define itself vis-à-vis Europa, and hence, the former colonizing powers. The double bind then is that each definition of Africa's identity as Europe's "other" will necessarily implicate Europe in that identity as well, thus irrevocably corrupting any such definition. What Africa is, its identity, will then always be tainted by European culture and thought. A most striking example is how Senghor defines Négritude:

> Thus, the Negro-African sympathizes, abandons his personality to become identified with the other. He does not assimilate, he is assimilated. He lives a common life with the Other, he lives in a symbiosis. (. . .) "I think, therefore I am," Descartes writes. The Negro-African could say "I feel, I dance the other, I am." (. . .) At any rate Negro-African speech does not mould the object into rigid categories and concepts without touching it; it polishes things and restores their original color, with their texture, sound and perfume; its innate humidity—it would be more accurate to speak of sub-reality. European reasoning is analytical, discursive by utilization; Negro-African reasoning is intuitive by participation. (115–116)

And now listen to Wole Soyinka when identifying the double bind in Senghor's inspired celebration of Négritude:

> The vision of Négritude should never be underestimated or belittled (. . .). In attempting to achieve this laudable goal, however, negritude proceeded along the route of oversimplification. Its re-entrenchment of black values was not preceded by any profound effort to enter into the African system of values. It extolled the apparent. Its reference points took far too much coloring from European ideas. Négritude adopted the Manichean tradition of European thought and inflicted it on a culture which is most radically un-Manichean. (150)

So Soyinka criticizes Senghor (1) of defining Africa in terms of its contrasts with Europe (and what will necessarily result in blindness to those aspects of

African culture not invoked by the contrast and (2) of doing this by making use of a typically European category—Manichaeism—which from a more formal point of view can only obfuscate our conceptions of African culture because of being alien to it. In sum, Senghor attempted to define what is peculiar and unique of African culture by relying on un-African concepts and contrasts. It is as if you were asked to depict a blue sky with red paint. The result can only be deceptive.

This is not to say that Eze should have no sympathy at all for the concept of Négritude, nor for similar notions like Nyerere's *ujamaa,* Nkrumah's *consciencism,* Kaunda's *humanism,* South Africa's *ubuntu,* or Guinea's *communaucratie.* On the contrary, he agrees that all these concepts were born from the correct insight that Africa should, above all, find access to its soul, to its identity in order to discover the source of how it relates to itself and to the rest of the world. However, at the same time, there was in his view insufficient awareness that the focus on the colonial experience and its aftermath stood in the way of this (re-)discovery of the "African self," if I may term it this way. Moreover, Eze's respect for the theorists of Négritude is also amply testified by his many quotes from the often deeply moving poetry that was inspired by Négritude and similar concepts. Indeed, there can be no doubt that these concepts reflect and express a deep truth about Africa.

Nevertheless, as Eze correctly insists, these concepts are always simplifications since they do insufficient justice to the varieties in the African historical experience and to how these varieties have determined each area of the continent to have its own rapport to its past and present. None of these concepts can un-problematically be applied to all of Africa from South Africa up to the Sahara.

This may also explain why Eze looks at the nation with a certain ambivalence. It is true that the nation and a nationalist ideology can, in principle, be more open to these varieties in the African experience of its past. And Eze even goes so far as to say that nationalism and a nationalist ideology are conditional for the constitution of the nation-state. In this context Eze lengthily discusses one of contemporary Africa's main problems, namely, the rivalry between the tribe and the nation. Where the nation disintegrates, or where it has lost all legitimacy with the population because of despotism, corruption, or misrule, people are often simply compelled to fall back on the tribal tradition. And part of the horrors of recent African history have been the spin-off of the resulting conflict between the nation and the tribe. On the other hand, Eze is well aware that the tribe is no real option; this is not where we should look for Africa's future. As Eze puts it: "[F]or the nation to live, the tribe must die" (67). So, for better or for worse, the instrument of the nation cannot be

discarded, even though the nation has until now achieved in Africa little to make itself into a beacon of hope for the continent's future.

For most of its inhabitants life in Africa is a constant nightmare—and there seems to be no way of awakening from it. Such is the message from Dr. Eze's book. Nevertheless, though Eze has no sympathy with idle dreams and is well aware of how well-intentioned naiveties have actually hurt rather than helped Africa and its inhabitants, he does have a word of hope for this tortured and maltreated continent. He finds it in the prospect of an African renaissance: "The longing for an African renaissance, in this sense becomes a prophetic symbol for a future generation of Africa. We may have challenged the historical authenticity of a genuine pristine past, but lack of such authenticity need not cloud the impact of a desired historical past on emergent generations" (189). It is a most ingenious approach to Africa's problems, for the notion of a renaissance suggests the entry into a new era in history, but one that has its roots in the past. Furthermore, the notion does not divide, but unite, while at the same time making everyone aware of his or her specific responsibilities. It is, in one word, the banner under which, in principle, all Africans can gather. And Eze then courageously ends his book by saying:

> Consequently, if we are to draw a resource from Africa's identities, we need first acknowledge that race, a shared glorious past or a metaphysical unity cannot be a source of that identity. Our identity must be derived from the vagaries of our present circumstances; "we can choose, within broad limits set by ecological, political and economic realities, what it will mean to be African in the coming years." (193)

Indeed, these are very courageous words: it is not the past, nor a utopian future, but "the vagaries of our present circumstances" in which one should look for Africa's identity and in which one may hope to find the way out of present miseries. Identity is not something like a monument we have inherited from the past; it is not like a fate sent to us from either heaven or hell, nor like a trait of character that we can impossibly alter. No, identity is something we make ourselves and that continuously varies with what we do or do not do. Our identity is in our own hands. This is the message that Eze wishes to convey to us in his magisterial and profoundly thought-provoking book. Admittedly, this does not make things easier; for it is only all too human to be afraid of one's own freedom and of the obligations and responsibilities that freedom always confronts us with. Yet we know—and this is a truth as old and as universal as humanity—that all obstacles in the world can be overcome if we have the courage to take our freedom in our own hands.

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Groningen University

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

We know what it is when you do not ask us, but we cannot very quickly explain or define it.

(Walter Bagehot 1887: 20–21)

Africa: A Mother's Lament (Sentire cum Africa)[1]

I was born a beauty, I loved without guilt.
In my glory, I was a window for many.
In my fall, I was a widow by myself.
Forty million offspring ripped from my womb
In earth's greatest holocaust!
When my children were deprived of my milk,
And were crammed into vessels of death,
They brought a prize
Never seen by my eyes,
And on those middle coasts so many became ghosts.
I stepped forth to reset my feast,
I managed to stand; I tried to build up
But Europe gave me a wooden horse
And I was made burden's beast.
My house was taken over, my stronghold invaded.
Time came when I longed to be freed,
To drum my own creed:
Proud, I was, of Azikiwes and Nyereres,
Mandelas and Kenyattas,
Garveys and Cabrals.
Nkrumahs and Lumumbas.
But my joy was not lasting,
A field, I was, twixt East and West,
Betrayed by my own in a greedy quest:
Idi Amins and Bokassas,

Mobutus and Abachas.
My fifty-three children lose no love between them.
Thus am I fertile yet barren,
My cup overflowing yet empty.
My loved ones:
Angola and Algeria—yet blinking and shrinking,
Liberia and Congo—weeping and creeping.
Nigeria sadly wending,
The Sudan itself rending.
For too many others, I dream only dreams.
Yet have I hope, silver and gold can claim:
Riches beyond telling, peoples and cultures upwelling,
Listen now: the drumming, throats thrumming,
Hear them singing, see them springing
Fresh as from birth
All red with my blood and my earth . . .

This poem offers a résumé of the sociopolitical volatility that has been the character of overall African historiography. To make sense of the sociopolitical imagination in contemporary Africa is to locate it within history. But the geopolitical world called Africa is a product of different historical imaginations, and these imaginations are products of discourses. Therefore, a study of Africa's political history enables interrogation and comprehension of the context of the body of knowledge in which contemporary African discourse is located. The politics of history in Africa would, therefore, also read as an excursion into Africa's intellectual history. Accordingly, a historical systematization of African thought systems is simultaneously an attempt to free our discourses of a certain dogmatism and polemical violence that has pervaded the overall intellectual history of Africa. The enabling method to achieve this "freedom" is to historicize and locate these discourses within context: *Who said what about us (imperial history)? Why did he say it (motive)? What did he say (logic of coloniality)? When did he say it (colonialism)? What was the consequence (exploitation)?* And from Africa, the voice of history will echo: *Who has a right to say something about us (revolt)? What should he (rather) say (independence)? How should he say it (reparation)? Why would he (or not) say it (decolonization)?* The polemics embedded in these historical pronouncements enable us to see the entrenched relationship between discourse and political praxis. The actual signification of a political imagination is interwoven with the discourse that enabled it. The sociopolitical imagination of Africa is well understood in this topography.

The "idea" of *Africa* in this work will have to be qualified according to two epochs. In antiquity, my reference is the entire continent as we have today,

from Cape to Cairo and from Zanzibar to Senegal, including Madagascar. Where references to Africa are made outside the antiquity, I will exclude the geographical zone controversially referred to as "white" Africa. These countries—Egypt, Mauritania, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, northern Sudan, and Morocco—located between the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea belong to Africa on inducement of political necessity. Socioculturally, their allegiance lies with the Arab League. In matters of international politics, the power differentials also suggest alliance with Middle Eastern countries or the Muslim world. Alliance with sub-Saharan Africa, in my view, is a matter of academic association, without any binding sociopolitical or cultural signification. Outside the antiquity, my reference to Africa is strictly to sub-Saharan Africa, that is, from Zanzibar to Senegal, and from Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, through the Somali Lands and Nubian Desert to the Cape, including Madagascar. I do not lay any claim to being the mouthpiece of sub-Saharan Africa; my intention is to articulate and understand the modes of experiences as interpolated with Africa's history and politics. I learned and gained from the teaching and inspiration of my academic mentors and elders: J. Rüsen, P. Hountondji, K. Wiredu, K. Appiah, V. Mudimbe, M. Mamdani, A. Irele, B. Davidson, A. Mbembe, and M. Ramose, among others.

The search for historical identity

The political imagination of Africa is an enduring problematic in any attempt to evolve a viable democratic polity for Africa. The contemporary notion of Africa and its nation-states is also linked to the idea of nationalism it has inherited. The challenges faced by these nation-states were heightened by the demand for a national core that was absent at the time of independence. Nationalism imbibes pre-national quintessential narratives as basic prerequisites in the formation of a national core. It embodies a utopian prefiguration that binds a nation. The political world of the nation becomes signified through such utopian address. To understand the crises of the nation-state in Africa is to articulate the underlying variance in the making of nationhood—any national imaginary. This variance facilitates the national core as the foundation of all "creative cultural energy" and the socioeconomic and political perquisite of its members (Kohn 2005: 16).

The story of each imaginary is different: the experiences are divergent, and the narratives are unique for it is within this peculiar, imaginary sociocultural milieu that an individual's subjective formation begins—his or her first intersubjective experience. It is these *differences* or *divergences* that

make them stand out from other "nations." Within the nation is a shared contemporaneity that is peculiar and particular to its members, precisely why they are a *people.* Nationalism therefore is concerned with the emergence of a national character as pressured by a people with a shared history. The features are "products of the living forces of history" and distinct territory, inculcating "the will of forming, or belonging to, a nationality." In this *becoming,* every nation is like a book—within its pages you find the story of its people, its land, its heroes and villains. But much more, every nation *tells* a story, a story of its heritage and uniqueness, for it is within such *space* that a nation's uniqueness and difference embody an elemental or a metaphysical significance. In the antiquities, we find one example in the Jewish stories of the exilic era. Israel has been in captivity in Babylon for generations. The worst of the Jewish experiences was the constant taunts and jeers from their captors to tell a Jewish story. Where story is tied to national subjectivity, the Jews are a lost people for they have no such national story. They would look back to Zion and cry out:

> By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept at the memory of Zion
> On the poplars there we had hung up our harps
> For their our gaolers had asked us to sing them a song,
> Our captors to make merry "Sing us one of the Songs of Zion"
> How could we sing a song of Yahweh on alien Soil?
> If I forget you, Jerusalem may my right hand wither!
>
> (Psalm 137)

As for the Jews, they remained defiant to the end, refusing to tell their story in a strange land lest their national subjective would be obliterated. Telling their story in a strange land was to lose a sense of who they were, for such stories would become eviscerated, dovetailing further erosion of their metaphysical subjective.

The idea of nationalism is necessarily conceptualized in relation to popular sovereignty as a janus-faced canon. On the one hand, the character of a sovereign nation is to sustain and restore the constitutive relationship of its members, that is, the nation-subject or state-citizen relationship. On the other hand, it nurtures and mediates the terms of this relationship to an external "other." That is to say, as a "sovereign," the nation-state mediates the corporate will of its citizens to other sovereign nation-states. The nation is sustained by these features of "a living and active corporate will," or what Renan (1990[1882]: 19) would call "daily plebiscite." A daily plebiscite infers the idea of the nation, nationality, or nationalism as a continuous process of active corporate engagement.

Nationalism is an abstract feeling of togetherness, of a shared homogenous empty time in which we identify with the lives, goals, and aspirations of

countless millions we shall never know, of a "territory which we shall never visit in entirety" (Kohn 2005: 9, see also Anderson 2001: 6). But, nationalism, the drive for a national core usually precedes the emergence of sovereign nation-state as in the aforementioned Jewish example. In this case, appeal is made to the past, and anticipation is made of the future, factors that motivate future drive and desire for nation-statehood and nationality. Furthermore, this drive for national core is further enhanced by identification through *otherness* and *sameness*. While *otherness* refers to the point of *difference* from an "other," from whence the "national" begins to assume an identity, identity by *sameness* is modulated by shared imaginaries.

The postcolonial "other"

In postcolonial[2] studies, the discourse of invention generally concentrates on the "fictitious-fabrication" of the "other" or on the *masking* of narratives within a broad reflective equilibrium that *springs* up as discourses (Said 1978, Bhabha 1994). In both cases, "invention" is a discourse of an imposed hegemonic truth without historical veracity or *actual* verification. This understanding will represent the conceptual usage of "invention" in my analysis. It is also a view at the core of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.[3] Said argues that the agenda of colonial discourse is to promote strategies of inventing an exotic "other," which, according to Homi Bhabha (1994: 71), "resembles a form of narrative whereby the productivity and circulation of subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth that is structurally similar to realism." The dialectical effusion of this invention is spelled by Said (1978: 72–73) as the premise of his *Orientalism*:

> Philosophically, the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality. Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of thing Oriental into manageable parts. Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge. These are a few of the results, I think of imaginative geography and of the dramatic boundaries it draws.

Said is arguing that the logic of colonialism was perpetuated out of conjectures and assumptions made of the colonized, and these assumptions

became a blueprint for colonial policies. The West "invented" knowledge about other people aimed at justifying the "truth" of their assumptions that became accepted as scientific truths and psychological legitimation for colonialism. This regime of power through colonialist representation was termed *Orientalism* by Said.

Orientalism constructs a binarism, by which Said meant an illusionary chasm between Orient (East) and Occident (West). The Orient is the Occident's *alter ego,* but a contraposition that does not yield on equal terms insofar as the Orient is defined in such negative terms that give credence to the superiority of the Occident. Orientalism attacks this "unequal dichotomy" of asymmetrical relationship (Bhabha 1994: 71). Orientalism implies self-knowledge through the other's deconstruction. The "other" is what I am not. Orientalism is a Western fantasy, a fabricated "construct" that emerges through a series of images and fantasies that assume a position of reality for the West. It is a construction that "enables Europe to advance securely and unmetaphorically upon the orient" (Bhabha 1994: 71). These representations are normally institutionalized as they are created by those in positions of power and influence, especially through the media. These representations will eventually become integrated into the public sphere, a reality that is not challenged but imposed on the Orient and becomes a living truth and not just dogma in Western imaginaries. These fantasies evolve into an institutional structure in which opinions, theses, views, and fantasies about the Orient are debated as facts, objective and absolute truth. The overall impact of this institutionalized legitimation of the Orient through a "differentiating order" is implicated in the political motivation that provided justification for the Western conquest and domination of the Orient. This was the invention of the Orient through the invention of an Oriental discourse as the logic of colonization (Said 1978: 72–73, 206, 273; Bhabha 1994: 71–74; McLeod 2000: 40–45).

But Said's project is in itself a reverse "invention." In deconstructing the Westerners' perception of the Orient, Said is now implicated in a "passive" adherence to the same logic of invention in the construction of the Orient. The term *passive* denotes a methodology, which ignores incidental differences. In his attempt to thwart the gaze of the colonizer, Said becomes essentialist as he homogenizes and does not give adequate attention to the specific histories, contexts, and historical circumstances of those he claims to represent. The different historical circumstances would include the resistance of the colonized and their reaction to the representations imposed upon them (McLeod 2000: 48). Was it a passive reception? What about the contrivance of the indigenous peoples? As John McLeod (2000: 48) observes, Said did not consider how these Western representations "might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the

colonized countries." Another criticism is the construction of the "West" as an essentialist "other," where Said ignores resistance within the West, since there were many in the West who opposed the imperial tendencies toward the Orient (ibid.). Said cannot and need not generalize about the West as a whole. Orientalism blocks any avenue for a counterhegemonic thought; it stands accused of the same hegemonic tendencies. This will be the core criticism of many such reverse discourses that thrive on inventing a displacement narrative to thwart the gaze of their *master* but remain caught up in the cycle of invention and most often become implicated in a reverse discrimination.

Following Said's discourse, the term *la bibliothèque coloniale* was inspired by Valentine Mudimbe's (1988) excellent and instructive deconstruction of the very notion of Africa as a colonial invention through the lens of anthropologists, missionaries, and colonial adventurists. The "invention" of Africa is a simulated "othering" of the colonized subject, yet neither a completed project nor a one-way traffic. The response to this "othering" intimates a new project of invention from the *subject*: citizen → subject (colonized subjectivity) ↔ subject → citizen (civilized subjectivity). This move is best encapsulated in what Bhabha (1994: 85) calls *mimicry* of the colonial subjective. In an attempt to defuse the gaze of the master, the subject becomes implicated in this very process of "invention."

African intellectual history largely emerged as a struggle for reason, a reaction to Western colonial "construction" of Africa. It simulated a reaction against Eurocentrism as the cradle of humanity. Championing this Eurocentrism among others was Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who set to propose a dualist representation of human societies in which two types of mental operations depicted two kinds of societies and cultures: (1) Western societies that evolved out of the Mediterranean civilization and its associative rationalist philosophy and positive science and (2) prelogical societies with primitive mentalities. The former can articulate ideas, concepts, and notions of causality. The latter are prelogical (or primitive), precisely because ideas, concepts, notions of causality—key features of Western epistemology—are beyond their reaches. The primitive people are naturally "indifferent to secondary causes," and on this incapacity, they depend on the "supernatural" even for the "elementary demands of the mind in its cognitive capacity" (Lévy-Bruhl 1975: 26–27). The overall life activity of these primitive societies is "borrowed from the domain of mystical experience" (ibid.: 66). The worldview of these primitive societies is devoid of rational character because of their reliance on "mystic fate" or "mythical archetypes" for basic cognitive operation:

> I have said, the primitive man mentality does not pay attention at all to the quantitative aspect of the relation of parts or of a part to the whole: on the contrary, it is a qualitative relationship which is imposed by it and which

> is felt . . . for the primitive mentality, there is no question here of intellectual operations, but of something apprehended as felt . . . .
>
> (ibid.: 155, 157ff)

Bruhl's primitive mentality is merely a foil for the supremacy of Western civilization. The white man is cast as a superior human being insofar as rationality is accessible to him alone. The most audacious in this venture was Arthur Gobineau, whose work "An Essay on the Inequality of Human Races" became the foundation of scientific racism and white supremacy. According to Gobineau (1915) race is the basic determining force of all world events; "history springs only into being at the magic touch of the white races." The Aryan race is the apex of all human development. Blacks as a matter of fact do not belong to the human race, for blacks and whites come from two different species with whites originating from Adam. His work was very influential in the early part of the twentieth century as it became very inspiring for the likes of Adolf Hitler.

The ramblings of these early adventurists fed certain mind-set of the European populace and reinforced their prejudices about Africa. They would be read as anthropological experts and their discourses would become an operative framework and master reference for colonial administrators and missionaries prior to their arrival in Africa. My concern is not about what they may have said about Africans as a savage or nonhuman species, but the impact of what they said, which reveals the intricate balance between political praxis and discourse. For indeed, colonial denigration and physical brutality owe their justification to this premeditated mind-set. For example, Winwood Read's "savage African" would be influential to Cecil Rhodes, who in 1895 had declared that Read's book made him who he was.

To avoid the pitfall of generalization that has become a character of post-colonial writing in general, I would like to point out that these authors (Lévy-Bruhl, Gobineau, and Read) only cast as representatives of a section of the European population, namely, the colonial capitalist-adventurists. These authors become significant to us because they inspired the capitalist-adventurists whom we encountered in Africa at the height of colonialism. Lévy-Bruhl's writing, for example, contradicts the overall sentiment of French consciousness during the French Enlightenment. The French of the Enlightenment were not preoccupied with the romanticism and rehabilitation of the classical antiquities which was typical of the Germans and the English. The French of the Enlightenment were fascinated by the "noble savage" whose exoticism aroused and captivated the French curiosity and imagination. The primitive man is a "noble savage" because he signifies the "good" man who has remained uncorrupted by the Churches and the courts. Primitive societies

symbolize the universalism of reason, for unadulterated by the superstition of religion, and uncorrupted by the civilization of the courts, these primitive societies were able to build a new social order based on reason. Accordingly, even the most complex and civilized nation would have to look up to the noble savage and primitive societies as providing answers for human progress (see Kohn 2005:236). Nevertheless, the motive of exculpation embedded in these historical narratives does not excuse the fact that the "primitive personality" was only cast as a mirror for the French Enlightenment "other."

It is along the line of refuting or confronting imperial histories of the likes of Lévy-Bruhl, Gobineau, and Read that African intellectual history found its space. New findings in anthropology will open novel possibilities for cultural relativism and pluralism. French anthropologists, pioneered by the likes of Claude Lévi-Strauss, were very influential in developing this tradition. It is within this context that Marcel Griaule's celebrated work, *Dieu d' eau* (records of his conversation with Ogotomelli of Dogon),[4] sought to refute drawn conclusions of the likes of Lévy-Bruhl and reconstruct the composite processes of African thought system. Complementing Griaule was Germaine Dieterlen in her very famous work, *Essai su la religion Bambara*. In fact, Griaule's publication was to complement Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy,* as Griaule tried to establish continuity between Bantu ontology and Dogon myths and traditions (see Mudimbe 1988: 141). This new development in anthropology was the primary motivation behind Tempels's now classic work, *Bantu Philosophy* (1959). Despite what his critics have described as excessive paternalism, Tempels's persuasion was to accommodate collective worldviews of other cultures as equal to Western worldviews. That *logos* is not an exclusive reserve for Europeans, Tempels ([1959]2006: 11) would press a specific challenge to Lévy-Bruhl's primitive mentality:

> Anyone who wishes to study primitive people or évolués must give up all idea of attaining valid scientific conclusions so long as he has not been able to understand their metaphysics. To declare on *a priori* grounds that primitive peoples have no ideas on the nature of beings, that they have no ontology that they are completely lacking in logic, is simply to turn one's back on reality.

On this new evidence of cultural relativism and pluralism, Tempels ([1959]2006: 16) went on to demonstrate that the Bantu does in fact have an indigenous system of thought that deserves recognition as "philosophy":

> What has been called magic, animism, ancestor-worship, or dynamism . . . all the customs of the Bantu—depend upon a single principle, knowledge of the Inmost Nature of beings, that is to say, upon their Ontological Principle. For is

> it not by means of this philosophical term that we must express their knowledge of being, of the existence of things?

In Tempels, the magico-archetype denigrated by Bruhl is elevated to the status of "being," where "being" equals the "vital force" that the Bantu sees as the heart of everything that exists, and where the interaction of these forces designates the location of the universe. Despite his other shortcomings such as his underlying motivation to facilitate his evangelical mission through a conceptual scheme that would enable him integrate Christian (Catholic) theology with Bantu worldview, Tempels's philosophy formed a conceptual framework and a referent point for later debate over what would become known and evolve as African philosophy.

Since discourse is linked to the sociopolitical imagination, Africanist intellectual historians would follow on this tradition to adopt discourse reversal. Yet, it is a move that smacks of an acceptance as "given" such racialism that the discrimination presupposed. But we need not adopt discourse reversal for that would simultaneously promote a superior *location* of knowledge, an ethno-philosophical *cul-de-sac* otherwise choreographed as antiracist racist historicism.

As a method of history, an attempt to invent an Africa of an imaginary past to offset or neutralize the colonial condition not only yields to intellectual bankruptcy, it is also an analytical disjunctive. In trying to represent Africa's imaginary by negating the colonial "other," the African intellectual is caught in the same disease he is trying to cure: the other on whose account the intellectual begets his premise is also reinventing him. This mode of historiography is history by analogy. The problematic of history by analogy is that it is captured through the conceptual lens of the *other*. History by analogy also construes as history from above for it thrives on dehistoricization of the subject. It is simultaneously a "given" analytical point of referent for it is neutral and insensitive to context. Yet, this insensitivity to context is what enabled some Africanist writers to codify African historiography as one such homogenous memory with the past as the ultimate repository of meaning. Elitist by definition; such memory will induce an epiphenomenon of benign captivation to Manichean historicism. On this bargain, African historiography will become a *commodity* for the Western "audience." It is no longer brute HISTORY but history of polemics as a catharsis for intellectual therapy of the colonized subjectivity,[5] what I have termed *subjective converters!* In my view, to understand African historiography, it is proper to pay attention to context that enables the possibility of creative historiography—this context involves locating the postcolonial within genuine historical margins. Such margins eschew any appeal to pristine unanimity and tendency to historical fixation.

These are issues that are emotive in content as they remain a polemical disambiguity. Some Africanist intellectuals such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Martin Bernal, John Mbiti, Placides Tempels, Alexis Kagame, and Theophilus Okere try to address these issues by projecting a proof and justification for the existence of African intellectual history or philosophy. These intellectuals would also include nationalist elites such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Steve Biko, Kenneth Kaunda, Leopold Senghor, Sekou Toure, Obafemi Awolowo, and Mobutu Sese Seko. For these elites, true political independence is an ideological severance from all vestiges of colonialism. A displacement ideology will serve this purpose: in French West Africa it was called *negritude,* in Tanzania it was *ujamaa,* in Ghana it was *conscienscism,* in Zambia it was *humanism,* in Guinea it was *communaucratie,* in colonial southern Africa it was called *black consciousness,* and in postapartheid South Africa it is called *ubuntu*. Other scholars motivated by the likes of Aimé Césairé, Frantz Fanon, and Basil Davidson, however, posed a demand on the motivation for such questions: who is asking the question and why? The argument is that no one ever asks whether there is a Western philosophy or history. And if such questioning does not form a locus of European philosophical discussion, it entails an *a priori* assumption that European intellectual history exists. To pose such a question when it comes to Africa is likened to asking, is there an African past? It becomes a question of identity, subjectivity, and humanity. To ask such a question is an implicit questioning of the African subjectivity and denial thereof. Such questioning, these Africanist intellectuals argue, are merely perfidious instruments of coloniality.

On the aforementioned projection, postcolonial African discourses were ultimately a Western invention. First, these discourses were made possible as a direct consequence of colonization. Second, they become possible through Western education. These discourses, their language and hermeneutic tools all inhabit Western epistemological space. Yet, it is this epistemological wavelength that has enabled Africanist elites and academics to redefine and invert the very content of colonial discourse (see also, Appiah 1992, Mudimbe 1988, 1994).

The response was to forge an ideology to challenge the very discourse of colonialism as in negritude, authenticité, et cetera. Grounded in Marxism, these ideologies were articulated as solutions to the contemporary ills of the African continent. As Samora Machel quipped, "[W]e have seen that the basis of domination . . . was to be found in the system of organization of the economic life in society: in private property of the means of production, which necessarily leads to the exploitation of man by man" (in De Braganca and Wallerstein 1982: 135).

Beyond the displacement challenge is a quest for new sociopolitical subjectivity. These "African" ideologies will feature as counterhegemonic responses

to coloniality: African history has to be invented, redefined, or retrieved to challenge this coloniality, to decolonize the African mind, a process that will involve an inversion of the subjective. But would Marxism solve all our problems? According to Pauline Hountondji (1996: 93):

> The real problem concerns the historical mode of appropriation of Marxism, the concrete role which it is made to play and, in a word, the way in which it *functions:* is it an agency of liberation or of enslavement, a catalyst of energy or an ideological opiate . . . language of the masses or mystifying discourse carried on behind their backs?

The advocacy is a need to unmask and demystify Africa from ideological fetishism, to "*impoverish* resolutely the concept of Africa, to *free* it from all connotations loaded on it by long anthropological tradition, the most evident effect of which was to close the horizon, to close history prematurely" (Hountondji 1996: xii). This is a plea for actual transformation of our cultures by living out fully their "poverty" or "splendor" instead of making apologies of our cultures for the European audience; "we thus remain unwittingly prisoners of Europe, trying, as ever; to force her to respect us and deriving naïve pleasure from declaring for her benefit what we are naïve enough to regard as our philosophical identity" (Hountondji 1996: 50).

The emergent danger is attempting to rehabilitate ourselves through a commoditization of our cultures by "offering them as topics of myth for external consumption," producing discourses that are anachronistic to present African problematic, but discourses located for a foreign audience (Hountondji 1996: 50). On this basis, African intellectual history may read as an attempt at cultural resistance, but a failed attempt for its failure to notice or recognize the ambiguity embedded in writing "off" the face of the other through a unilinear pattern of discourse that was first offered by Europe. But this move is intellectual fraud; its prophets are those to whom Okot P'Bitek (1971: 102, 107) refers to as "mercenaries in foreign battles, none of which was in the interest of the African peoples . . . intellectual smugglers." It is an intellectual debauchery, for the African historian has subjected himself to thinking for the "other" from whom he gains his identity not in his own terms but in the other's (Europe's) terms.

This work therefore is a critical reappraisal of dominant approaches to African intellectual history: it forges a criticism of such pan-African historicism that rests upon the assumption of a pristine, homogenous memory and historical unanimity.[6] It challenges the dominant method of homogenous historicism that thrives on an insidious misconception of reality in Africa. Upon this critique is a secondary thesis that projects that Africa's social

imaginary can only be validated through a paradigm of difference to the Western "other," a platform in which our history would become a political epiphany and a measure for subjectivity.

Moving beyond homogenous unanimity and history by difference is another critique of African historiography as virtually a history by analogy. My approach seeks an alternative method for writing African philosophy and history that debunks history by analogy in favor of creative historicism. Africanism does not (and need not) read as a more authentic or superior location of knowledge. African historiography is beyond a simulation of an invention or project of analogies and reverse discourses. Evidence will show that this method of historiography not only suffocates the different cultural memories in Africa, it yields to *false consciousnesses* that have become *conceptual blinders* of African historiography. Such false consciousness has had continued impact on the nation-state, where history becomes an *identity reservoir* to preserve the *illusion of continuity* with an idealized past, albeit a tacit legitimation for political domination. In summary, the analytical model of this old historicity exhibits the following character:

Inversion: challenging colonialist discourses and representations through a differentiating order of "otherness" or negation of the colonial "other" and "order."

Redemptive teleology: Africa's intellectual history would conjecture a redemption of Africa's subjectivity through this historical reenactment, an instantaneous narrative in which Africa is promoted as a superior location of knowledge, an *authentic* bastion of subjectivity through discourse reversal and historical analogy.

Paradigm of difference: a discourse reversal that mutates into a dualistic disjunctive: (1) the admiration for an idealized past and a lethargic feeling or longing for such a past, and (2) fashioned as a displacement narrative to colonial discourse that destroyed life patterns in (1).

Historical analogy: an invention of Africa through an alien epistemological paradigm that de-historicizes the subject insofar as it is a "given" historicism and by extension insensitive to context.

These were different attempts to *invent* an African history. I shall argue that while the first enactment of African history was a direct encounter with Europe through colonialism and its discourse, the attempt by African academics to salvage and recreate African history nevertheless remains a project in continuity as a given history of Africa, a history formulated in an alien format. In this formation of knowledge, identity and difference remain a given to the African "other," who assimilates these narratives within a given

paradigm of Western Episteme. I shall argue that this process of invention was a consequence of discrete crossings between Africanist discourses and colonial discourses. Indeed, many Africanist intellectuals are implicated in this project because even their attempts at decolonization were often mediated through a reverse discourse and are thus bedeviled with many problems in methodology.

The Politics of History in Contemporary Africa is an ambitious work of composite processes. It is not adduced to a chronological event of African political history, nor does it yield to analogical *biography* of what may (or may not) constitute African political history. It is not merely restricted to a history of politics in Africa, nor is it rendered toward a history of such procedures. The nature of this study demands the rigor of interdisciplinarity for a broader appreciation and inducement toward creative historiography. Accordingly, the hope is that this work is not merely a *thesis* or *discourse* in history, but of politics, sociology, literature, culture, et cetera. The title of the book, the *politics of history . . . ,* is therefore befitting, for it enables (and does not restrict) the book's thrust for a contemporaneous attempt to understand Africa's intellectual history and make meaningful statement on it.

I begin in Chapter 2, in which I shall argue that the claim of many Africanist writers on a homogenous, traditional African civilization is a disjunctive historicism that thrives on misrepresentation. We have to abandon any homogeneity and unanimous application in referring to the many civilizations that constitute the continent. The geopolitical world called Africa is not merely a residue of Europe's colonial project. Africa as we know it today is a confluence of multiple narratives. I shall trace the invention of Africa from the antiquities to the European powers who charted their fate in 1885, a project legitimized with the imposition of nation-state in the Euro-modernist sense. The "false" premise of nation-statism is very well enunciated in chapters 3 and 4. "The tribe as a civil war" (cf. Chapter 3) is a subsection in which I investigated the difficult relationship and tension that exist between the "tribe" and nation-state in Africa. Examples are drawn from the Great Lakes regions (Burundi, Rwanda, and Congo) and West Africa to highlight this embedded problem of the tribe. As a consequence of the emergent problems of the tribe, weak nation-states collapsed into anarchy while strong nation-states became dictatorship. Understanding the problem of tribalism in Africa enables one to appreciate the scale of the problem (the failure of democracy, the emergence of cult dictatorship, ethnic cleansing, and the priority of the tribe of over the nation-state, et cetera.) Implicated in this process of invention are African intellectuals and nationalists elites who in their attempt to respond to the logic of coloniality continued this process of invention by restricting African historiography as history by analogy and a counterpose for Europe's imaginary. This method of historiography is dangerous. Chapter 5

highlights the dangers of such method and proposes another method for creative historicism. Chapter 6 is anchored on the sociopolitical and historical résumé (report card) of contemporary African leadership and governance. Emphasis is on the particularistic manipulation of history, tradition, culture, and religion to induce power. It also exposes the false premise of nation building that is dependent on cult tradition. It is a false myth precisely because its ultimate credential is politics of domination and suffocation of civic rights. Chapter 7 is an appeal for an African renaissance and an advocacy for a new method of history.

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CHAPTER 2

The "Invention" of *Africa*: Contested Terrains

> Concerning the historians, we must distinguish among them to the effect that many have composed works on both Egypt and Ethiopia, of whom some have given credence to false reports and others have invented many tales out of their own minds for the delectation of their readers, and so may justly be disturbed.
>
> —Diodoros of Sicily

Introduction

Contemporary Africa is an offshoot of distilled historical forces of Western racialism and Negro[1] activism (pan-"isms"). Like its contingent antecedents—pan-Africanism and Négritude—the copious notion of "Africa" has neither a substantive nor a genuine cultural commonality instead of a given construction, as echoed in the writing of Frantz Fanon (1963: 212): "The Negro is never so much a negro as since he has been dominated by whites." V.Y. Mudimbe (1994) was right to note that the notion of "Africa" evolves out of several historical distortions. In Latin, "Africa" is corollary to *Afer,* or *aprica,* which means "sunny," or as described by Cicero as *Africanus, Africănae,* which means a native or inhabitant from the continent. *Africanus* was a term first employed by Ennius the Poet to refer to Carthage and its immediate environs (this was the only part of the continent known to the world). The Arabs called it "Ifrika" in referring to the territory of Tunisia. The Greeks, on the other hand, called it Libya (*Λιβίη*) referring to every black person as *Aithiops*. Book V. I of Pliny's Natural History goes thus:

> THE Greeks give to Africa the name of Libya, and they call the sea lying in front of it the Libyan Sea. It is bounded by Egypt. No other part of the earth has fewer bays or inlets in its coast, which stretches in a long slanting

> line from the west. The names of its peoples and towns are absolutely unpronounceable except by the natives; and for the rest, they mostly reside in fortresses.

When the term "Africa" infiltrated into the Greek vocabulary, it became known as *Ἀφρική:* "That which derives from the Semitic radical פרג. Africa being considered in this connexion [*sic*] as a Phoenician settlement 'separated' from mother county, Asiatic Phoenicia" (Babelon 1910: 359). The word "Africa" is also ascribed to come from *Friqi* or *farikia* (the country of fruit). Leo Africanus (1488–1554) suggested that it was derived from the Greek term *aphrike,* which means a land without cold or horror. The most accepted hypothesis concerning its etymology has been advanced by Charles Tissot, in which the term "Africa" is linked to "Aourigha" (pronounced *Afarika*)—a group of famous Berber tribes. These tribes, according to some accounts, have been pushed deeper into the Sahara although they were the original inhabitants of the African Carthage Empire (Babelon 1910: 359). These mappings would comprise of territories (inhabited by the Berbers and Numidians) as known to the ancients, excluding Ethiopia and Egypt. It was a mapping given credence to an understanding dating back to Herodotus (IV, 145–167) in the first century during Pompeius's defeat at Thapsus in 46 B.C. by Caesar's Legion. This imagination of Africa would be peculiarly narrated by Pliny (Book V. I):

> The list of its countries begins with the two called Mauretania, which down to the time of the emperor Caligula were kingdoms, but by his cruelty were divided into two provinces. The outermost promontory projecting into the ocean is named by the Greeks Ampelusia. Beyond the straits of Gibraltar there were once the towns of Lissa and Cotte; but at the present day there is only Tangier, which was originally founded by Antaeus . . . .

The first attempt at colonizing the geographical world called "Africa"—bounded in the east by Cyrenaica and the highlands of Aithiopiae (Ethiopia) and in the west by Mauretania—began with the Greeks, who wielded much influence near the Greek Island. With the Greek conquest of the city of Cyrene in 631 B.C., Cyrenaica became a Greek colony with no cultural influence on the rest of Africa because of desert barriers. The Greeks nevertheless penetrated Egypt, to which the city of Alexandria bears testimony (founded by Alexander the Great in 322 B.C.). Further attempt at infiltrating Africa was during the Hellenistic dynasty of the Ptolemies, during which efforts were made to penetrate the southward interior and in the process some knowledge of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) was

gained. The Greek exploits were short lived as further incursion was halted and the Greeks were expelled during the campaign of Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, who destroyed the Carthage Empire in 146 B.C. From this date, Egypt and Cyrene officially became Roman provinces (Kettle 1910: 331–352).

Africa rose to notable significance at the time of Julius Caesar and Augustus in the first century B.C., during which time Carthage was called *Colonia Julia Carthago.* With the fall of the Carthage Empire to the Roman general Scipio (146 B.C.) during the Third Punic War, Carthage was erected into a Roman province. A trench *(Fossa Regia)* was dug in the new province to demarcate the Roman provinces of Africa from territories captured by the Numidian kings in the war. The *Fossa Regia* divided the *Africa Vetus* and *Africa Nova.* The new province was entrusted to a *Propraetor,* one of whom was P. Sextilius, who according to coins of Hadrumetum, 94 B.C., was *Propraetor Africae* (Babelon 1910: 359).

The victory of the Romans in the Jugurthine Campaign (106 B.C.) enabled them to annex more territories. The victory at the battle of Thapsus in 46 B.C. made them overlord of their former allies, the Numidians. Accordingly, Numidia became a new province called *Africa Nova,* of which Sallust the historian was the proconsul. The rest of the old province became known as *Africa Vetus* or *Africa Propria*. Following the partition of Roman provinces between the senate and the emperor, Africa fell under the jurisdiction of the senate and was to become the only senatorial district or province whose proconsul or governor would be invested with military powers in command of the *Legio III,* the *Augusta,* and the auxiliary corps (Babelon 1910: 353–361). The decline of Roman influence began in 4 B.C. when Germanic vandals led by Gaiseric captured the province in 430 A.D. and erected Carthage as their capital. Although weak in numeric strength, the Germanic vandals had huge impacts such that even the recapture of Carthage in 533 (534?) A.D. by Belisarius, the Byzantine general, could not reverse the trend. In 647 A.D. an event that was to change the political landscape and leave a permanent legacy and massive influence on the rest of the continent occurred: the Muslim-Arab conquest—first in Egypt, and "Ifrikia" (Tunisia) in 647 A.D., and finally Carthage in 697 A.D. This event spelled the end of the Roman Empire as the center of politics in that part of the world.

A by-product of "Western" imagination, "Africa" emerged through invented discourses that portrayed a vision of a people at the "other side" of Western imaginary frontiers. This is what Joseph Conrad meant when he wrote of Africa as the "White man's burden," and Rudyard Kipling meant

when he adduced to Africa as "the child continent." Writing in *The Heart of Darkness,* Conrad pictures Africa and the Negro in series of symbolisms in which the Western subject would recognize his "shadow," an insight into one's darkest self:

> To western eyes he remained "different," and he could be, and was, the object of sharply contrasted attitudes. One view considered him to be the epitome of a primitive, happier mode of life, a lost Eden, a sylvan Arcadia, a golden age, a veritable Utopia . . . Another view saw him as a creature barely above the beasts, belonging to a primitive state of existence . . . solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short . . . .
>
> (Edna Steeves 1973: 103–104)

In the opinion of Mudimbe (1988, 1994: xi, 28–30), the middle ages through the romantic period constructed such vision of Africa embedded in novel scientific and ideological terms to suit these "social imaginaries ." In most of Western Europe, the Europeans endorsed new registers such as primitivism, savages of the jungle as a descriptive category for *what* is African. Described so by the "enthusiastic" explorers to mean an uncultivated continent, these representations filtered into the European consciousness and Europe would pose as a superior location of knowledge, seeking to impose European *cogito* on what Europe perceives as a radical "other". These ideological discourses and perverted representations so constructed enhanced and substantiated the logic of slave trade and colonialism. Henceforth, Africa became simultaneously a metaphor for otherness, a paradigm of difference (ibid.).

According to Mudimbe (ibid.), the reminiscences of anthropologists, diaries of missionaries, and notebooks of traveler became an epistemological wavelength through which Africa is known. A *bibliothèque coloniale* that doubles as instrumental body of knowledge in which the "other" becomes an object to be studied and understood, and at the same time, a medium in which the "other" reveals, if you like, "unveils," its wholeness to the alluring gaze of a master who guarantees his "civilization" through slavery, colonialism, apartheid, et cetera.

The anthropologist mediates the format of a first experience in this peculiar invention of Africa; he is cast as an "apologist" for his people, a European audience that laps up this exotic other. He strives to maintain "mysterious" Africa's cultural history as "exotic" in order to ensure a continuity and validate the anthropologist's peculiar constructions and representations (ibid.). This peculiar commodification of cultural history is central in the construction of otherness—an invention of the "other" that will fit into the colonial *bibliotheque.* Calling a race or a person "savage," "primitive" invokes a form of recognition within a specific scientific and anthropological order of discourse;

such order of knowledge while enunciating a negation of the "other," is nevertheless "super imposed as a question, as irony, or as a provocation to orthodox text" (Mudimbe 1994: 6). This kind of "interpellation" or "calling" is multilayered; it is also an epistemological order that informs *The Anatomy of Melancholy* of Rev. Robert Burton. Basing his insight on the diaries of those early capitalist "adventurists," Burton (1857: 214) defines Africa as a savage land of immense curiosity whose inhabitants are as wretched as American Indians:

> [The Negroes are] commonly such people, rude, silly, superstitious idiots, nasty, unclean, lousy, poor, dejected, slavishly humble: and as Leo Afer observes of the commonality of Africa, *natura viliores sunt, nec apud suos duces majore in pretio quam si canes assent* (base by nature and no more esteemed than dogs); *'miseram, laboriosam, clamitosam vitam agunt, et inopem, infaelicem, rudiores asinis, ut é brutis plané natos dicas* (no learning, no knowledge, no civility, scarce common sense, naught but barbarism amongst them) . . . a laborious, miserable, wretched, unhappy life, "like beasts and juments if not worse" (for a Spaniard sold Indian boys for a cheese, and a hundred negro slaves for a horse).

And in the early twentieth century, a renowned British historian Athol Joyce (1910: 325) would summarize Burton's claims as if it were today: "Africa as far as its native inhabitants are concerned, a continent practically without a history, and possessing no records from which such a history might be reconstructed . . . the Negro is essentially the child of the moment; and his memory, both tribal and individual, is very short." These ministrations on Africa as a dark, savage world are merely an institutionalized mind-set that has become the canon of Western historiography from the antiquities. Listen to Pliny (Book V. viii: 43–45) and his reliance on Homer for a historical location of the African subjective:

> The most reliable opinion . . . especially Homer, who tells us that the Ethiopians are divided into two sections, the eastward and the westward . . . In the middle of the desert some place the Atlas tribe, and next to them the half-animal Goat-Pans . . . The Atlas tribe have fallen below the level of human civilization, if we can believe what is said; for they do not address one another by any names, and when they behold the rising and setting sun, they utter awful curses against it as the cause of disaster to themselves and their fields, and when they are asleep they do not have dreams like the rest of mankind. The cave-dwellers hollow out caverns, which are their dwellings; they live on the flesh of snakes, and they have no voice, but only making squeaking noises, being entirely devoid of intercourse by speech.

Africa is a refused continent, a meadow of extreme absurdities of savagery and barbarism. Imagining "Africa" of the interior, Pliny (Book V. viii: 46–47) continues:

> The Garamentes do not practice marriage but live with their women promiscuously. The Augilae only worship the powers of the lower world. The gamphasantes go naked, do not engage in battle, and hold no intercourse with any foreigner. The Blemmyae are reported to have no heads, their mouth and eyes being attached to their chests. The Satyrs have nothing of ordinary humanity about them except human shape . . . Nothing more occurs to us to record about Africa.
>
> (Book V. viii: 46–47)

From antiquity through the middle ages what we have is a vision of a people caricatured in public fantasies and adapted as scientific truth to suit these "social imaginaries." The West endorsed new registers such as primitivism, savages of the jungle as a descriptive category for *what* is African. On these conjectures, Mudimbe (1988) would identify the key problem in African discourse as transference of methods and their cultural integration in Africa. Upon this problem Mudimbe (ibid.) continues rests another question, how to reconcile the burden for identity with the validity of any claim to knowledge in an incessant, or what Mudimbe terms "interrupted," historicity within discourses? Colonialist discourse attempted to silence this possibility. Postcolonial discourse therefore aims at unraveling the cultural artifacts, unmasking what Mudimbe (ibid.) calls *la chose du texte,* applying a method that gives preeminence to history. Thus understood, history became a discourse of knowledge and power, a venture for restoring man's consciousness as located within actual context and forms in which he or she emerged.

In the section that follows, I begin by highlighting the collaboration of Africans in the project of colonization and their subsequent rejection as a useless, spent force that inhibited the colonial project itself. This will be followed by an exploration of the underlying discourse that justified the logic of colonialism: I shall explore the impact of this logic on the emerging state, its decisive influence on the natives, albeit a neurotic pattern of identity formation. The trend shifts to understanding how this new native *subject* so represented became complicit in another round of invention of Africa in the struggle for *reason*.

Colonialism

If Mudimbe (1988: xi) is right, the nature of Africanist studies since its inception is to produce its own peculiar mode of episteme, construct its

own intensions, and analyze its own being. Since it produces its own knowledge, this mode of knowing has simultaneously produced African discourses and ideology of otherness of which Négritude, pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), et cetera, will become categorized as its most representative formation in the contemporary intellectual history of Africa. The purpose of this section is to underscore the logic of colonial experience in Africa as a process of inventing an African "other." Such attempt is not restricted to the metaphysical doctrine, it employs a method of discourse and political praxis in which the African "other" begins to identify and assimilate this given order, unconsciously endorsing its logic.

The role of African freed slaves

The British naval blockade between 1807 and 1860s recaptured many African slaves, who were later resettled in British colonies as free persons (hereafter as recaptives). These recaptives became ardent proponents of Christianity and saw the mission of Europeans on the continent as mandatory in the mission to civilize Africans. According to Adu Boahen (1987: 17), they were primarily "responsible for the diffusion of Christianity and Western civilization into other parts of Africa." These recaptives represent the first set of African elites, who had, as early as 1827, attended one of the most prestigious colleges like the Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and University College London. They would return to the colonies to assume important positions in the colonial administration.

These recaptives had learned men in their ranks: politicians, theologians, men of letters, medical doctors, teachers, et cetera. Notable among them would be Edward Blyden, James Johnson (described as a "militant intellectual Evangelist"), James Africanus Horton (trained as a physician in Britain between 1853 and 1859), Broughton Davies (qualified as a physician in 1859), Samuel Ajayi Crowther (the first black bishop of the Anglican Communion), Samuel Lewis (trained as a lawyer and the first black person to receive knighthood from the queen of England) (Boahen 1987: 17–18). They flourished as capable men of action, competing and doing better than some Europeans. According to M.D.D. Newitt (1981: 143) these elites "had dominated commerce and had provided military commanders and civil governors. Many of them were men of education and the birth of journalism and democratic politics owes much to their efforts. During the twentieth century, their position was continually depressed as they were displaced by white officials . . . and their wealth was displaced by white immigrant capital."

On assuming position at various level of colonial administration, these men perceived colonization as a necessary evil for civilization and were

content that the salvation of Africa lies outside of Africa. Since they themselves were saved from merchants of men, their enthusiasm for Britain especially seems justified. It was a vocation to both assimilate and disseminate the culture of their heroes. On the necessity of Africa's dependence on Europe for salvation, James Africanus Horton (1969: 44), one of the most prominent of these elites, warned of the disaster if Africans were allowed to govern themselves:

> If . . . they are to govern themselves, the base being rotten, the whole fabric will, within a very short time, tumble to the ground. Confusion, massacre and bloodshed would be the inevitable result . . . before the people be given up to govern themselves a new order of things must be established . . . under the auspices of the British government.

Africa's freedom must come from outside, for no nation can civilize itself without external help. In a letter to Mary Kingsley in 1900, Blyden (1978: 460–461) justifies this Afro-dependence on the West: "[T]hose who are instructed in the English language are taught by those from whom they have received their training that all native institutions, are in their character, darkness and depravity, and their effect only evil and evil continually."

This outlook became the urging of Alexander Crummel (1810–1898), a Christian missionary whose grandfather was sold to the Americas from the present day Sierra Leone. Crummell (1862: 220) describes the land of his ancestors:

> Darkness covers the land, and gross darkness the people. Great evils universally prevail. Confidence and security are destroyed. Licentiousness abounds everywhere. Moloch [witchcraft] rules and reigns throughout the whole continent, and by the ordeal of Sassywood, Fetishes, human sacrifices, and devil-worship, is devouring men, women, and little children.

From these statesmen we learn that Africa's civilization would be attained through a logic of alienation—Africa must become alienated from itself, from its roots in order to reap the benefits of civilization and of the modern world, as seen in the reminiscences of Carl C. Reindorf of Gold Coast:

> Rule, Supremely rule, Britannia, rule
> Thy acquired colony on the Gold Coast!
> Superstition will then flee away,
> And Christianity will rule supreme!
> (July 1968: 262)

For these men, the ultimate redemption of Africa is dependent on the colonizing mission.[2] At the same time, Basil Davidson (1992: 26) reminds us that these elites, "of the peoples of the vast interior lands behind the coast, they

knew and could know little or nothing." They would perceive themselves as agents of Christian civilization in an Africa desperate for salvation. At this time, they were certainly caught up in an ambivalent shift: as agents of civilization and as *superior* subjectives. They were not just disinterested in the vast interior lands of Africa; they perceived themselves as superior to the uneducated ones. Their association with the colonialists was a matter of keeping the status quo as July Robert (1968: 261) noted:

> Not only was the problem one of neglecting what Africa had to offer; it was also an excessive zeal to become as much like the European as possible. The women of the Gold Coast tried to live like the English women, refraining from working and mistaking the mere use of European dress for the wearing of true civilization. Educated Africans patronized their uneducated compatriots, divorcing themselves from their own people and associating only with the white man.

Of particular interest is the form of subjective conversion these recaptives assumed with their relationship to European dress. It was presumed that one who dressed like Europeans was civilized and should hate everything African. Of these men, Boahen (1987: 16) would observe that with change in the standard of living, "some were wearing European-style clothes . . . and gained access to modern medicine, were living in houses built in a modern style . . . and were contemptuous of their own traditional institutions."

The extent to which the elites participated in the civilizing mission of Africa they so much advocated for, to this length, their efforts were cast in the shadows no sooner than later. At the turn of the century, they were dumped in favor of culturally oriented cronies. In his interpretation of Eberechukwu Afigbo's historiography, R. F. Betts (1985: 316) would note that the turn of the century not only saw "a systematic removal of educated Africans who had positions of responsibility in the earlier decades: the same period also saw the systematic tightening of conditions under which Africans could become French citizens in Senegal and elsewhere. It was, indeed, this loss of fellowship between the colonialist and the educated Africans which created the artificial scarcity of administrative personnel". The civilized and educated blacks were frowned upon and ignored, among other reasons, for symbolizing and representing a threat to the colonial *presence*. They became *obnoxious* for they were equally modern in their demand for proactive participation in the colonial project ranging from "parity of treatment" to "equality of civil status" (Mamdani 1996: 92). The dumping and subsequent removal of these elites was not as a result of mediocrity on their part as opposed to symbolizing a contradiction to the logic of colonial domination at this particular point in history. The Negro was empowered with education, and the only alternative was to remove him from any position of influence to maintain the

status quo. Restricting the participation of these Negro elites in the colonial administrative structure caused a lacuna of administrative personnel. This lacuna, Mahmood Mamdani (1996: 74–75) and Afigbo argue, was artificially created and hence the subsequent introduction of indirect rule was not because of any "practical necessity" rather than an artificially induced structural change. If this view is right, then the question becomes, how could the Europeans ignore the most useful link in their attempt to civilize and exploit Africa? Were these educated Africans not the same people who advocated colonization as unavoidable? Were they not the same people who promoted Christianity as a beacon of hope? The reason is simple: the change in policy was an aftermath of a larger political problem—the "Native Question" (see also, Appiah 1992, Davidson 1992, Mamdani 1996).

According to I.M. Okonjo, "[T]he hopelessness of the communications system made the adoption of 'indirect' rule all but inevitable . . . it was practically impossible for the high commissioner or the various heads of department to visit more than a third of provincial headquarters . . . nine-tenths of the time of a journey was occupied traveling . . ." (Mamdani 1996: 73). Mamdani (1996: 76) disagrees that the argument constitutes a practical necessity for indirect rule because it ignores the role of educated African personnel; it ignores the policy shift by European colonialists as they dumped literate Africans in favor of "culturally legitimate allies." Therefore, the scarcity of administrative personnel was artificially created and not inevitable. I disagree. Since this argument is critical at this stage of analysis, I shall pause awhile to examine the burden of its implication.

The scarcity of administrative personnel is a double problematic that remains contemporaneous and not isolated. It is both inevitable and to a large extent an artificial inducement. The scarcity may seem artificially created in certain regions but genuinely true in other regions. The snub of educated African elites in favor of mostly "uneducated" chiefs is a movement toward artificial scarcity. This understanding, however, does not resolve further complexities and emerging questions: at what point did other African countries (excluding Liberia and Sierra Leone and their returned slaves) begin to have massive return of "educated" African elites? With very limited exceptions, countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, British Cameroun, Tanganyika did not have "landed educated" returnees or recaptives. It is seemingly purposeful that indirect rule at its initial stages at least was in fact motivated by a lack of personnel. I shall now examine this historical variance with the Nigerian situation.

In Nigeria, indirect rule was successfully applied because colonial administration was enhanced with the use of indigenous native institutions such as the Sultanate and the Emirs of northern Nigeria. The policy facilitated colonial exploitation and domination with few personnel. In most areas,

there was limited interaction between the natives and the Europeans. The success of the indirect rule in northern Nigeria is celebrated because of the efficiency of an already existing native administration, which owes its efficacy to the Fulani Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio in the early nineteenth century (1804–1810). With the conquest of northern Nigeria by Dan Fodio, different ethno-cultural groups were unified under the Sultan of Sokoto. The sultan was both the temporal and spiritual (Islamic) guardian of all northern Nigeria and surrounding vassal states that became tributaries. The Sokoto Caliphate, therefore, prior to the British conquest already had a system of centralized administration modeled after a quasi-Islamic civilization. The natives in the Sultanate never came into direct contact with British colonial officials (except in instances as servants, laborers, or security aides). The colonial officials merely gave directives to the sultan who then administered the province for the British. In other words, indirect rule in this instance became a colonial administration by proxy.

The policy of indirect rule was less successful in southwestern Nigeria. The British administration envisaged the same administrative efficacy of northern Nigeria without considering the different sociohistorical and cultural contexts in which the traditional institutions of northern and western Nigeria had emerged. If the Sultan of Sokoto and his counselors held absolute power over their subjects through the Sharia, the opposite was the case in southwestern Nigeria, where the power of the Alafin of Oyo (the Yoruba king) was perpetually in check by the *Oyomesi* (the king's cabinet). The Alafin of Oyo had no absolute power, and any attempt at usurpation spelled instant impeachment. The power balance in the Yoruba Kingdom would be compounded by incessant power struggles among subordinate kingdoms in the greater Yoruba Empire.[3] Indirect rule proved to be a major failure in stateless societies of southeastern Nigeria. These stateless societies were egalitarian, with no central power or a king who would wield a homogenous power over the many (hundreds) ethno-cultural groups of southeast Nigeria. The frustration made the British to invent the office of paramount or "warrant" chief in an attempt to homogenize and control the stateless societies. The chiefs acted as liaison between the British district officer and the local people. The policy was in fact termed the policy of "direct rule" by the British since they were more involved in the daily running of the native affairs in the absence of any indigenous centralized system of administration.

Returning to our discourse after this necessary digression, the educated Negros were no longer good enough where what is a *good African* means the docile obedient "Tom boy," "mine boy," "house boy," et cetera. On the basis of this commendation, the "good African," who is "pure," "innocent," and non-Europeanized, is only a metaphor for advancing those conditions that

enhance the exploitative utility of colonial discourse. On this point, I agree with Mamdani that the change in policy to snub educated African elites in favor of "culturally oriented" ones is an artificial inducement of indirect rule. *Culturally oriented* means the "docile" and "primitive" mind and a metaphor to perpetuate the logic of colonial violence through a colonization of the mind. It is a depersonalization of the colonial subject as an object of colonial enterprise: an "it," a non-"I" incapable of thinking for him or herself and hence a subject in need of a peculiar form of education—colonization. The "Europeanized Negros" were dumped because of apparent threat to the logic of colonial mentality—their education being a source of that threat to colonial control, exploitation, and domination. On the necessity of this structural isolation empowered by a divide and rule policy, Sir Donald Cameron, one of the architects of this policy had cautioned:

> If we setup merely a European form of administrating, the day will come when the people of the *Territory* will demand that the British form of administration shall pass into their hands . . . If we aim at indirect administration through the appropriate Native Authority . . . founded on the people's own traditions and preserving their own tribal organization, their own laws and customs purged of anything that is "repugnant to justice and morality" we shall be . . . capable of *standing the shock which will inevitably come when the educated native seeks to gain the possession of the machinery of Government and to run it on Western lines* . . . [my emphasis].
>
> (Iliffe 1979: 322)

The practice of favoring the "uncorrupted child of nature" (in Davidson's language) in contrast to the Europeanized Negros played itself out more in the infamous case of Dr. J.F.C. Easmon. Dr. Easmon was a world-renowned surgeon in his time and had made a significant contribution to medical science, especially in the area of black water fever. A committee reporting on his case in London in 1909 contrived the following recommendations to confirm his exclusion to practice medicine:

> The Committee are strongly of the opinion that it is generally inadvisable to employ natives of West Africa as medical officers in the Government service . . . [the committee] do not believe either that in professional capabilities West African native[4] doctors are on a par . . . with European doctors. As regards natives of India, the Committee are, for similar reasons, not in favour of their employment, although they are not in a position to advise so definitely on this point, as the experiment has scarcely yet has sufficient trail. In any case, the committee are certainly of the opinion that if natives either of West Africa or of India are employed, they should be put on a separate roster . . . and European officers should in no circumstances be placed under their orders.
>
> (Fyfe 1964: 300)

The policy of excluding European medics from serving under Africans whatsoever their degree of competence set the general tone of European imperialist culture in Africa. Education ceases to set the tone of civilization as a new sense of alienation emerges. According to Davidson (1992: 47), for the African to be civilized, he has to cease being African altogether in a new emergent paradox: in order to become civilized in that organic sense, the Negro must simultaneously cease *being* and *becoming*, that is, not African and not-yet European and not *be Europeanized* in a subjunctive sense. So who or what is he? He is left in a limbo in relation to his identity. On the Negro's projection in this liminal[5] state, the British were both honest and unambiguous in their execution of their imperial ideology. The French were more conceited. Hiding behind the empty promise of universal suffrage and the policy of "assimilation," the French, Basil Davidson (1992: 47–48) argues, "were just as systematic in their racism while camouflaging its reality behind Jacobin verbiage that promised much and meant in practice remarkably little." The rest of the players, the Belgians, the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese (excluding the Germans, who lost out after WWI), masked "behind a miasmic fog of Christian beatitude which none of them intended to honor, or even thought they should honor" (ibid.). And the details of these frontiers were not proscribed limits of natural regions or ethnic groupings. The partitions were arbitrary, shaped by "chances of conquest and of compromise." As to the fate of the literate Africans, the new dispensation brought a tide of marginalization, as Christopher Fyfe (1988: 182) recounts:

> African nation states were suddenly carved up among the nations of Europe. In the large new protectorates that were tacked on to existing small British colonies in West Africa, there was no place for literate Africans. There, whites ruled and blacks obeyed. Inexorably, the racial rule of the protectorates seeped into the colonies where, as the twentieth century advanced, Africans were squeezed out of the senior official posts they had held in Horton's day, and replaced by Europeans.

Imperialism and its African logic

For the present purposes, I shall define imperialism as an ideological concept that upholds the legitimacy of the military, political, and economic domination of one nation by another. Colonialism is not imperialism but a product of the ideology of imperialism. If colonialism is only a product of imperial ideology, then the end of colonialism in Africa does not imply the end of Western imperialism in Africa insofar as colonialism is only one of the many facets or contents of imperialism (see also, McLeod 2000: 7–8). By colonialism, I mean the settlement in territories

and the exploitation and development of the resources thereof with a concomitant attempt to govern the indigenous people of the occupied lands by the settlers. Colonialism is mediated through colonial discourses, and the objective of colonial discourse, as Homi Bhabha (1994: 70) informs us, "is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest." This objective, Bhabha argues, is characterized by mimicry and ambivalence. It is an ambivalent discourse because it concomitantly gravitates toward two directions. On the one hand, colonial discourse posits that the colonized subject is a strange creature whose peculiar and strange nature is a cause for curiosity and foreboding, the "other" who exists outside the Western parlance, that is, the inferior "other" outside Western civilization. On the other hand, colonial discourses shift focus to and emphasize the attempt to civilize and "domesticate colonized subjects and abolish their radical 'otherness' bringing them *inside* Western understanding through the orientalist project of constructing knowledge about them" (see McLeod 2000: 52–53 for detailed discussion). In this way, the representation(s) and construction of "otherness" become split by the very ambiguous location of the colonized subject—simultaneously located in and out of Western epistemology. The colonized subject is at once a social reality that is an "other" and at the same time wholly known and visible. The attempt to dilute the radical "otherness" of the colonized subject is undermined by the continual fantasies imposed upon the colonized subjects (Bhabha 1994: 70). This is what Bhabha means by ambivalence: the colonized subject is caught between the binary positions of one who is civilized, domesticated, and harmless but who at the same time is mysterious, savage, and harmful. The subject oscillates between the two positions in colonialists' representations of similarity and difference—he is like us and *he is not us*. Such stereotypes, it is argued, have been employed to arrest shifting and sliding in positions, and such stereotypes remain consistently reinforced. In the section that follows, I shall trace how the Negro intellectual is caught within these shifting binary positions in trying to respond to colonial assumptions.

Colonial representation in Africa is laced with racism, where the latter is the ancillary on which the former's logic is exploited. Exuding a Eurocentric model of humanity, the logic of imperialism demands that persons of European origin are organically, instinctively, and racially superior to Africans. This model of humanity revels in and recaptures the representation that motivated and induced the rough and inchoate bigotry of slaving centuries in a reformatted mode of racist ideology that stands in opposition to a view of humanity available in the conquered territories. According to this logic, the worldview of the conquered territories must be rejected if they are to become

"civilized" (see Mudimbe 1988, 1994, *especially*, Appiah 1992, Davidson 1992).

The entrapment within a fused binary opposition was the thrust of many black writers, of which Frantz Fanon offers a model. In the language of Bhabha (1986: xiv), Fanon echoes from the fluid interstices of historical change: (1) concerned with the ambivalence between race and sexuality, (2) concerned with the contradictory relationship between class and culture, and (3) concerned with the psychosocial representation as a manifestation of social reality. The necessity of a psychoanalytic rendition is generated by the thwarted and pervasive reflection of the "civic virtue" in which "the negro enslaved by his inferiority, and the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation." According to Bhabha (1986: x, xiii), Fanon's dialectics restores hope to history; his existentialism restores the presence of the marginalized, while his psychoanalytic framework diagnoses the perverted logic of colonialism with its racist currents. A challenge to Western historicism is a challenge to the psychic and social representation of the human subject. It is in this context that Fanon questions the formation of individual and social realities as they emerge in the social sovereignty discourse of colonialism.

Critical to understanding the invention of an other's social space would be Fanon's insight on the invention of the "other" through the logic of colonial social space. A process by which colonialism became alienating in the following facets: (1) cultural mummification—the attempt to civilize or modernize the native—and (2) the legitimacy of violence subsisting in the very notion or definition of colonial social space, as Fanon (1963: 237) noted:

> Colonialism has not simply depersonalized the individual it has colonized; this depersonalization is equally felt in the collective sphere, on the level of social structures. The colonized people find that they are reduced to a body of individuals who only find cohesion when in the presence of the colonizing nation.

On this conjecture, the native's subjectivity is codified in a context not of his own but of the other. His identity is meaningful only in the gaze of the colonialist for whom he is a product and a means to another end. This "gaze" is conditioned in a skewed process of identification through an otherness-formation or what Bhabha (1986) has called, a "differentiating order of otherness" that emerges through the following procedural phases:

Interpellation – the calling!

The term "interpellation" means to designate, tag, or label by which a person's existence is to be in relation to an otherness, an otherness-creator! This

"calling" is evident in the pattern of relationship between the native and the settler, a demand that extends to an external object, a demand to displace the other, as Fanon (1986: 154) noted:

> When the Negro makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an *actional person*. The goal of his behavior will be the other (in the guise of the white man), for the other also can give him worth.

Fanon (1963: 111–112), however, spelled this process more clearly elsewhere: the native's revulsion for the colonial authority is easily neutralized by "psychological windfalls," from the moment they promote his humanity. Since he is in dire need of any accolade of humanity, "the native is so starved for anything, anything at all that will turn him into a human being, any bone of humanity flung to him, that his hunger is incoercible, and these poor scraps of charity may, here and there, overwhelm him." He is pacified and begins to answer *yes sir even* to those many years his junior insofar as these belonged to the superior race. This is because "his consciousness is so precarious and dim that it is affected by the slightest spark of kindliness."

As we saw in Chapter 1, Edward Said's *Orientalism* was focused on the logic of colonialism that thrives out of conjectures and assumptions made by the colonizers, which became a blueprint for colonial policies. Colonialism, therefore, is an operative discourse that interpellates colonial subjects by subjecting and incorporating them in a system of representation. Interpellation as used here means "calling" (see McLeod 2000: 37). It is a concept linked to Althusser by which we are called by ideology and we turn to recognize who we are (ibid.). According to Althusser, ideology represents one's sum total of total relationships in a society; it is a synchronized system of signifying practices through which the human person is reconstituted as a social subject. It confers on the individual both subjective and subjected identity, in which "recognition" and "misrecognition" operate simultaneously and are bound up in social reality. On this peculiar view of ideology, Althusser (1996: 235) writes:

> If the whole social function of ideology could be summed up cynically as a myth fabricated and manipulated from the outside by the ruling class to fool those it is exploiting, then ideology would disappear with classes. But as we have seen that even in the case of a class society ideology is active on the ruling class itself and contributes to its moulding, to the modification of its attitudes to adapt it to its real conditions of existence—it is clear *that ideology . . . is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence* [italics in the original].

Ideology is the dominant formation of the individual in which "human subjects are ceaselessly *at stake* in it, investing in their relations to social life as a crucial part of what it is to be themselves" (Eagleton 1991: 19). Ideology constructs these lived relations through which "subjects are connected to the dominant relations of production in a society . . . [connected to] . . . all the various political modalities of such relations, *from an identification with the dominant power to an oppositional stance towards it* [my emphasis]" (Eagleton 1991: 19). Accordingly, ideology calls us, informs our identity, and invents us with a warping effect on our subjectivity. Wole Soyinka's (1962) *The Telephone Conversation* depicts to us how ideology calls us and informs our subjectivity:

> The price seemed reasonable, location
> Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
> Off premises. Nothing remained
> But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
> "I hate a wasted journey—I am African."
> Silence. Silence transmission of
> Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came . . .
> Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
> Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was foully.
> "HOW DARK?". . . I had not misheard . . ."ARE YOU LIGHT
> OR VERY DARK?" Button B, Button A, Stench
> Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak
> Red booth. Red pillar box. Red double-tiered
> Omnibus squelching tar. It *was* real! Shamed
> By ill-mannered silence, surrender
> Pushed dumbfounded to be simplification.
> Considerate She was, varying the emphasis—
> "ARE YOU DARK?" "OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.
> "You mean—like plain or milk chocolate?"
> Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
> Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,
> I chose. "West African sepia"—and as afterthought,
> "Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic
> Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
> Hard on the mouthpiece. "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding
> "DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."
> "THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?" "Not altogether.
> Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see
> The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
> Are peroxide blond. Friction, caused—
> Foolishly, madam—by sitting down, has turned
> My bottom raven black—one moment, madam!"—sensings

> Her received rearing on the thunderclap
> About my ears—"Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather
> See for yourself?"

Interpellation is what Soyinka referred to his being perceived as "How dark?" "Are you light or very dark? Are you dark or very light? From whence he began, in a veiled mockery, an imitation of a new consciousness and began to perceive his identity as "given," an identity that interpellates with the racist ideology that informs how he is perceived by the landlady in the conversation. Ideology is calling him and has "provinicialized" him to recognize himself in reference to that given ideology. This is the disorientating method of interpellation by which we become products of ideologies. Interpellation can also occur through disorientation through pleasure (see McLeod 2000: 38). In this case, the individual is coaxed to behave in certain manner through flattering. Since the individual feels a certain sense of fulfillment and worth, he acts according to the wishes of this "protector" and is happy with the script of identity given to him. O. Mannoni (1993: 45) describes this in terms of "relationship-dependency," in which the dependant looks up to his protector for reassurance and source of his identity, a process in which the dependant says, "You are now my Whiteman." Colonial discourses have been successful in this way as the indigenous people become satisfied with their newly gained status. They feel important with a new sense of worth through a perverted logic of neurotic pleasure. This is what Fanon (1986: 18) meant when he wrote that the black man's inferiority complex emerges through a social process of economic inadequacy and internalization of this inferiority. As a result of this inferiority, the Negro aspires for recognition in the white world. The more the Negro masters the white man's *social* language, the more he becomes human for "a man who has a language consequently possess the world expressed and implied by that language." Mannoni (1993: 18) refers to this perversion as the colonial situation:

> A colonial situation is created, so to speak, the very instant a white man, even if he is alone, appears in the midst of a tribe, even if it is independent, so long as he is thought to be rich or powerful or merely immune to the local forces of magic, and so long as he derives from his position, even though only in his most secret self, a feeling of his own superiority. The man-in-the-street will say instinctively and without experience that if the white man who goes among the Negros avoids being eaten, he will become King.

It is not surprising that the status and humanity of the colonized are nourished proportionately with the ability of the colonized to assimilate the sociocultural artifacts of the colonizer, his mannerisms, his way of speaking,

et cetera. The more assimilated he is, the more dignified and humane he becomes. The Negro perceives his existential value and dignity through these adaptations of European mannerisms and forms of social intercourse. Fanon (1986: 60, 81) notes, "[T]he Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behaves in accordance with a neurotic orientation." They are both alienated. The Negro is specifically alienated by his constant effort to "run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence . . . The neurotic structure of an individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the purely personal way in which that individual reacts to these influences."

Interpellation is also manifested through crises of identity. The colonial subject is invented through a binary opposition but such dialectics that remain a dead end, an empty promise. Entrapped in the dialectic tension of demand and desire, the native desires to displace and occupy the settler's position. The native is conditioned to assess his identity on the basis of the settler's invitation: "You are a doctor, a writer, et cetera; you are different; you are one of us—to be different from those that are different makes you the same" (see Bhabha 1986: xv–xvi). The crises of identity at this juncture do not lie in the colonialist "self" or in the colonized "other," rather in the "disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of the colonial otherness" (ibid.). To understand the passion with which African educated elites vent their discourse on colonialism, one needs to contextualize the psychosocial effect of imperial discourse on these writers in their search for identity. Since the white man is a supreme paradigm of value, the Negro in his struggle for identity tries to prove to the white man the richness of his (Negro) thought, the equal value of his intellect, and the wealth of his culture. On this presupposition, ideologies do emerge within the ruptures of dialectical antagonism, flourishing through domination and resistance (ibid; Fanon 1986; Appiah 1992: 115).

Identification through a "differentiating order of otherness"

Another phase in the skewed process of analytic desire is identification through a *"differentiating order of otherness"* (see Bhabha 1986). The process of identification is not an affirmation of a pre-given identity or a "self-fulfilling prophecy." Identity is rather a production, a construction of an other's image in which the subject is transformed to assume this image. "For identification, identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an 'image' of totality" (Bhabha 1986: xvi, xvii). The demand for identification is a demand to be, to exist for an "other" whose representation has cast the subject in a *differentiating order of otherness*. The

image is accessed through a representation, displacement, and differentiation of reality from where it embodies a universal reality. This image in the writing of Bhabha (1986: xvii–xviii) is "spatially split . . . [it] makes *present* something that is *absent*—and temporally deferred—it is the representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition . . . an appurtenance to authority and identity." Access to the image of identity is possible through "the negation of any sense of originality," by virtue of "displacement and differentiation," which always project it as "a liminal reality." Identity becomes at the same time, "a metaphoric substitution, an allusion of presence . . . metonym, a sign of its absence and loss" (ibid.). In this differentiation, the Negro is subjectively black, "his language is black, his soul must be black too" (Fanon 1986: 180). The black man is an epitome of evil and sin—Satan is black, shadows are black, dirt is black, et cetera. Blackness becomes a signifier of the bad side of character, that is, the "black problem, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation." These representations, Fanon (1986: 189) argues, contrast "the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light. A magnificent blonde child." Fanon asks us to imagine "how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope" when compared with the latter statement, "a magnificent black child." In the latter phrase, one perhaps sees poverty, famine, diseases, sin, evil. Identification of the Negro's image in Fanon is differentiated through lower emotions, baser inclinations, and the darker side of the soul. The Negro is an epitome of sin, evil, death, war, famine, wretchedness – *the wretched of the earth*. This differentiated order contrasts the view symbolizing "whiteness" as in the white culture in which white means justice, truth, purity, and virginity.

In this differentiating order, colonialism changed abstract certainty into reality (discourse into politics) since the aim of colonialism Jean-Paul Sartre (1963: 12, 14) reminds us, is:

> To reduce the inhabitants of the annexed country to the level of superior monkeys in order to justify the settlers' treatment of them as beasts of burden . . . Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours . . . for when you domesticate a member of your own species, you reduce his output, and however little you may give him, a farmyard man finishes by costing more than he brings in . . . Beaten, under-nourished, ill, terrified he's black . . . always the same traits of character: he's a sly-boots, a lazybones and a thief, who lives on nothing, and who understands only violence.

Upon this scenario, the poverty of the Negro, Sartre (1963: 15) continues, becomes criminalized: "We only become what we are by the radical and deep-seated refusal of that which others have made of us." A view echoed by Fanon

(1963: 32), that while there is drought of morality in the white society, the native is nevertheless declared "insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is different. He is the corrosive element . . . disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality." This difference or negation to the African "other" is not merely an *identity of difference* but of classified nothingness. It is not a dialectics, *á la* Hegelian format, for if the thesis anticipates an antithesis, it conjures an image of an "other" different from the original. In this world, there is a homogenous certainty, for the "other" simply doesn't exist (see Bhabha 1986). Accordingly, the Negro, Fanon (1986: 110) argues, is cast in two frames of reference: (1) his metaphysics and (2) his customs and its sources. Both (1) and (2) were wiped out in the process of colonization since both his metaphysics and customs conflicted with the civilization that imposed itself upon him. The following section examines the emergent procedures that enabled these processes through a discourse of political domination.

The logic of coloniality

In subsequent sections, I shall trace the developmental processes of colonialism in Africa as a key character in the invention of Africa. Evidence will be drawn from Africa's historical experiences to show how Africa became an invention of the West. *(The conscious representation of Africanist writers to withdraw from the gaze of that* "invention," *I shall argue in Chapter 4, is only a project of continuous invention).* The first part of this section focuses on colonial dispossession as logic of coloniality. I shall make a case that colonial dispossession is wholly constitutive of the colonization of the mind. It induces an epiphenomenon of benign subjugation to posses. Colonial dispossession has an internal rationality, what may be termed the logic of coloniality (see Maldonado-Torres 2004).

The race for reason

Coloniality is different from colonialism. Coloniality, or colonialist discourse, is the logic of sociocultural and economic exploitation by one group against another. Coloniality is the logic and being of colonialism, from the conquest of Africa to the conquest of India, articulated in different formats. The logic of coloniality in Africa adduces to the native as a curious work of ethnology without complexity, a simple soul, "no complicated sentence constructions; no tenses, no moods, no persons in verbs; no gender or number in nouns or adjectives; just what is required to express oneself: infinitives, nouns, adverbs, adjectives that are tracked on to one another in simple direct propositions"

(Mbembe 2001: 33). The native is *innocent*, a simple soul who is unable to distinguish between wrong and good, a child, so to speak, who needs to be educated. In his 1929 Rhodes lecture at Oxford, Field Marshal Jan Smuts (1929: 75–76) summarizes his "wonderful" African as an atavistic child of nature:

> A childlike human cannot be a bad human, for are we not in spiritual matters bidden to be like unto children? . . . the African is the only happy human I have come across. No other race is so easily satisfied . . . The African easily forgets past troubles, and does not anticipate future troubles . . . There is no inward incentive to improvement . . . and there is complete absorption in the present . . . wine, women, and song in their African forms remain the great consolations of life . . . They can stand any amount of physical hardship and suffering, but when deprived of these simply enjoyments, they droop, sicken, and die . . . These children of nature have not the inner toughness and persistence of the European, nor those social and moral incentives to progress which have built up European civilization in a comparatively short period.

The Negro is an "innocent" child of nature means he is without worries or concerns but also brutish and lazy, a natural dislike for work. He is a savage without a vista of morality; he is naturally a cheat: untrustworthy, irresponsible, and *black,* where black is a metaphorical reference to a sense of the irregular, absurd, ridiculous, illogical, bizarre—in fact, the undesirable. Since the native has no law, there would be no respect or pause on his property, personal space, or person. Violence toward his "person and property is in no way morally reprehensible." To give him freedom and independence is to force him to work. The colonial subject belongs to the world of immediacy, a "universe of immediate things" without "intentional acts" or transcendental purpose (Mbembe 2001: 180, 187). The Negro is a thing in itself, where his value, to use a Kantian term, is conditional, dependent on what he can do as a "thing," for he is neither an end in himself nor is he a noumenal self. His value or worth is conditioned and given.

As an atavistic child of nature, the native has neither moral development nor culture. In this pattern of colonial discourse, the native becomes a metaphor for otherness; his place of abode, a refused place; his hearth, one of darkness, as Conrad (2003: 107) noted:

> The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness . . . At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of tree would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air over our heads . . . Whether it meant war, peace, or

> prayer we could not tell . . . we were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first men taking possession of an accursed inheritance . . . The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying or welcoming us—who could tell? . . . We could not understand because . . . we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone . . .

Part of this colonial logic is to problematize a radical "otherness" between the "I" as source of being and all possible worlds and the "other" as my mirror, a reflection. This radical difference between the colonialist as the "I" and the native as the "non-I" is well articulated by Achille Mbembe's use of Merleau-Ponty's argument that there are primarily only two modes of being, namely, "being in itself, that of objects arranged in space, and being for itself, that of consciousness" (Mbembe 2001: 190). On such dualism, the "other" becomes an "objective thought," by which Mbembe means a difficult and impossible apprehension. On this vista, *this* "other" is merely an *in-itself* "arranged in space." But—and this is a crucial qualification—this same individual possesses a conscious autonomy for himself. This sets out the problematic of ontological dualism of the said individual, who in his own eyes possesses a self-consciousness of being "in-himself" in relation to me. This being "for himself" as an independent, self-conscious appraisal is the problematic demand of "objective thought." And, this inability to integrate the two moments into a "single economy" of subjective-perception, Mbembe (2001: 191) argues, is precisely why Merleau-Ponty would conclude that "there is no place for other persons or a plurality of consciousness in objective thought." But objective thought overcomes this problematic with a preference for a *being in-itself,* that is, the *non-I,* an "other" that is not self-constituted but constituted by relation and difference. This "other" is *what I am not;* he is the "object," a "thing" of my creation. Since the "other" has become an object, a product of my gaze, it becomes possible to "transform it, suppress it, deny it, assimilate it, destroy it, annihilate it" (Mbembe 2001: 191). This "other" has no autonomous subjectivity, and it is neither self-creating; it is simply, an *it*. Colonialism (in Africa) is characterized by this emergence of a juxtaposed frame of reference, an ideologically inundated reference junction vis-à-vis the native's lived norms and that of the dominating group. Indeed, as Mudimbe (1988: 22) would have argued, such colonial representations and discourses did accentuate a peculiar model of historicity: (1) as an ideological impetus and explanation for grafting Africans into a new historical paradigm and (2) as a reductionist discourse that aims at regenerating a primitive, disordered society. This reductionism yielded the constellation of differences into a Western historicity. Out of this dilemma is a "decolonization of the mind," where

decolonization means change of attitude, ways of thinking, worldviews, and markers of certainty.

But such peculiar model of historicity only thrives on the internal logic of a displacement. Economically, it disoriented the traditional pattern of economic setup that evolved into urbanization since the new system of economic dependence did not support the traditional pattern. New social arrangements and institutions were favored, culminating in crises as the natives sought to adjust to new patterns. These crises not only occurred within the socioeconomic parlance, in fact, they also distorted the unified cultural and psychosocial integrated religious scheme inherent in African traditional societies (see Mudimbe 1988: 4). This is how colonialism became a representation of power discourse, a manifestation of the dominant influence of Western discourses on human affairs.

Colonialism assumes a hegemonic function in which those distinct and often competing communal memories (of varied African cultures) were collated and fixed as one. In the place of these memories, colonialism substitutes its own logic, its own memory characterized as it were by—often false—promises of progressive advancement, manipulates these memories, and substitutes it with its own logic in which "traditional" memory becomes displaced with a reconstructed one, as Aimé Césaire (1972: 23) observed:

> The great historical tragedy of Africa has been not so much that it was too late in making contact with the rest of the world, as the manner in which that contact was brought about; in which Europe began to "propagate" at a time when such contacts have fallen into the hands of the most unscrupulous financiers and captains of industry; that it was our misfortune to encounter that particular Europe on our path, and that Europe is responsible before the human community for the highest heap of corpses in history.

Césaire was alluding to colonialist representations ingrained with economic and political processes for the subjugation and exploitation of Africa. Such representations *became* the colonizing structure responsible for producing cultures, *beings* at the fringes of the society. This colonial condition produces three modular formations of colonial exploitation: (1) the colonization of the native's mind, (2) the domination of physical space, (3) related to the second is the invention of economies skewed as *dumping ground* of finished products and as source of raw materials for the West. (For present purposes, however, my investigation is restricted to the first two formations for their relevance in the current discussion). I shall proceed to analyze these colonial strategies and the aftermath of this colonial condition, showing how they are interrelated with the ideological phase, acting as its *ontogenesis*.

Colonization of the mind is an ideological principle aimed at dislocating and substituting the native's culture with the culture of the dominating foreign power with its pretensions to possess a universally valid moral doctrine. It involves the internalization of this logic, the logic of cultural inferiority with a subsequent need for a cultural civilization, a mandate of the settler to "civilize" one and "give" one worth and dignity—"civilization." The colonized subject begins to perceive his race, culture, religion, and language as inferior in comparison with the worldview of the dominating power, which he sees as superior. This logic of internalization not only disempowers but also mediates a source of trauma for the local people, as Fanon (1963; 1986) has tried to show. Colonization of the mind involves the objectification of the "other," where one's identity becomes a given "other." *I am no longer a subject, and I cannot define myself as a subject; I am an "object" to be defined by the colonial paradigm. The only way to redeem my humanity is to embrace the dominating worldview, be like them in order that my humanity might be appreciated—to wear that mask of civilization.* In trying to understand himself, the Negro seeks for an objectified confrontation with the other. This "other" is not a fixed reality opposed to the self; rather, it is an "other" that is a "necessary negation of a primordial identity . . . that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the 'cultural' to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, historic reality." And just as the subject of desire is not merely myself, the "other" is also simply not an "it-*self* a front of identity, truth or misrecognition" (Bhabha 1986: xviii). Yet, what the Negro needs is a challenge to his humanity and not an imitation of the "other." Without challenge, the Negro only imitates: "[I]t is imitation . . . when the child holds newspaper like his father; it is identification when the child learns to read . . ." (Bhabha 1986: xxi).

In the writing of Mbembe (2001: 183), the domination of the physical space has three different characters: first is a manner of acquiring new sovereignty simply by positing the imperial national flag as a symbolic measure. The second character is by virtue of *occupatio bellica*, which means the gaining of new sovereignty by acts of war or military conquest, a *force de jure* that ignores treaties but by force. Territory gained through acts of raw deception (paper conquests), conscious misrepresentation, and lies. Listen to Sir Lugard, the father of British exploits in Africa, commenting on the British deception of Kabaka Mwanga of Buganda in 1892:

> No man if he understood would sign it (treaty), and to say that a savage chief has been told that he cedes all rights to the company in exchange for nothing is an obvious untruth. If he had been told that the Company will protect him against his enemies, and share in his wars as an ally, he has been told a lie, for the company had no idea of doing any such thing.
>
> (Boahen 1987: 38)

Colonial dispossession, therefore, was not only about monopolist commercial control, nor of territorial ownership to prevent other big powers from laying claim to those territories. Colonial dispossession exhibited peculiar characteristics. In 1895, for example, a British company chartered by the Crown had negotiated and acquired exclusive mining rights from King Lobengula of Ndebele with a compromise that the British would not dispossess the monarch. This company, led by Cecil Rhodes, followed the structural pattern of colonial exploitation by not keeping its part of the bargain. King Lobengula was attacked and dispossessed. A parallel example would occur in the Asante Kingdom of Ghana in 1896, where the British shunned many concessions and offer of commercial domination and pressed on with the invasion of the Asante Kingdom, greedily dispossessing the Asante people and at the same time taxing them to pay for the cost of their (British) military campaign and its sustenance. The people had to pay for the cost of their own subjugation. In fact, in the case of the Asante, King Prempeh even sent a delegation to London. The delegation was shunned by the colonial office, and the Asante Empire was preemptively invaded before the delegation was given any chance for dialogue. This is also exactly what happened in the Benin Kingdom in 1897 when the British punitive expedition sacked the kingdom and exiled the then Oba Ovonramwen despite efforts at conciliation and treaty. Similar cases occurred with King Jaja of Opobo, Sheikh Ahmadu of Tukulor, Mamadou Lamine, and Samori Ture. The third character is the reduction of the indigenes to nothingness and complete subjects of the new order by "freezing" the law of the vanquished people and introducing new measures to facilitate a new power. Indeed, these colonial politics of domination typify the Lockean thesis on the origin of private property. Locke had argued in the origin of property that mixing one's labor within an *uncultivated* part of a state of nature gives right to private ownership or property. Africa would be such state of nature in which everyone, *anyone* had a right to exploit, dominate, and access whatever resources therein. The colonialist is merely mixing his labor with a state of nature; he has a moral right to occupy, dominate, and appropriate the spoils of conquest or harvest of his labor.

From being to reason

In his introduction to *The Philosophy of History,* Hegel said the last word on Africa by his denial of rationality to Africa on the presupposition that Africa made no contribution to world history. Hegel's statement has been a major launch pad for criticisms of European discourses on Africa. I shall content myself with quoting Hegel (1944: 91, 93, 99, 103) at length:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained . . . shut up; . . . the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-consciousness history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of night . . . The negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality . . . if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character . . . At this point we leave Africa never to mention it again. For it is not historical part of the world; it has no movement of development to exhibit. Historical movement in it—that is in its northern part—belongs to the Asiatic or European World . . . What we properly understand as Africa, is the Unhistorical, undeveloped Spirit . . . The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia is the beginning . . .

According to Hegel, since abstract reason governs and has governed the world and since the African is anchored on the subjective level with no capacity to conceptualize a higher Being, the African cannot be predicated with humanity. Hume, Kant, and all heroes of modernism also cast such doubts on the rational capability of persons of non-European origin. Speaking of the black man, Kant alleges that blackness equals stupidity: "And it might be that there were something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered; but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid" (Franklin 2002: 281). In his reference to Hume's permutations on black people, Kant noted of Hume, "Mr Hume Challenges anyone to cite a simple example in which a Negro has shown talents . . . so fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color" (ibid.). Accordingly, the Negro is only naturally inferior to whites.

The logic of coloniality aims to generate a movement from barbarian to subject and from subject to citizen. The native was first a barbarian, as we learn from Conrad, Burton, and Bruhl; then he becomes a subject, as Smuts teaches, and *maybe* can become a human being (citizen) if *we can make him like us,* as we now learn from Kant and Hume. According to this thinking the native is in a permanent phallic stage of human development—fixated on childhood memories and incapable of development, for reasoning is alien to his character. Seduced by myths and mythology, his world is without variance or variation but defined only by the logic of magic. But if there is to be salvation, the native would have to be redeemed through the goodwill of the stranger, as noted by A. Sarraut, on the authority and right of colonial conquest, which "is not the right, but the *fact* of one who is stronger; the true *right* of the stronger is the generous right that he assume to help, assist and protect the weaker, to be his guide and his guardian" (Mbembe 2001: 35). But this humanity is a capitalist subjectivity; the native can raise his

bar of humanity through labor, subject to "moral education." As E. Ferry noted, "[The] Black does not yet understand the utility of labor . . . make him love it, show him the material benefit that he can derive from it is to prepare his moral progress and raise him a step in the scale of humanity" (Mbembe 2001: 60). By dint of hard work the native attains the status of a citizen.

But the native's access to citizenship is limited. It is limited by restrictions on access to rights enjoyable within the parameters of the colonial state. It is a discourse of coloniality as master of contemptuous and condescending narrative that obfuscates the subjectivity of the native, masks his humanity, and makes him invisible. To couch him in such language reduces any moral responsibility to the Negro; it puts him at a distance, reduces or tarnishes any potential of his be-ing and becoming. The guilt is also reduced because if the Negro is not-yet-human, he can be exploited and dominated. To recognize him as human, that is, not to see him as an *object of possession* is to recognize his subjectivity, a face with a *thou art, you are a being.* To recognize him as such is to invoke a moral obligation that would necessitate treating him as a human being. It is to raise the bar of guilt and perhaps move beyond anthropological conjectures and *maybe* produce a backlash or resentment from the consumer of such discourses. This domination is also psychosocial. The discourse of coloniality conveniently invents the desired subject for domination. It converts the subject into object, reduces this subject's social and physical space into objects of capital. This manner of colonial logic departs from the invention of an imaginary "other," a discourse that in turn is imposed on the desired subject-object. This is the power of the imperial hegemony of objectifying subjectification of capitalist narratives, for we cannot dominate nor exploit the colonized if we assign them equal humanity, as Montesquieu (2007[1914]: 238) seems to have found out in *The Spirit of Laws:*

> Were I to vindicate our right to make slaves of the Negroes, these would be my arguments: . . . sugar would be too dear if the plants which produce it were cultivated by any other than slaves. These creatures are all over black, and with such a flat nose that they can scarcely be pitied. It is hardly to be believed that God, who is a wise Being, should place a soul, especially a good soul in such a black ugly body . . . The Negroes prefer a glass necklace to that of gold which polite nations so highly value. Can there be a greater proof of their wanting common sense? It is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christians. Weak minds exaggerate too much the wrong done to the Africans.

By placing Africans as subjects, it was easy for the colonial government to avoid the guilt of being responsible for the natives. When he is a subject, he is nobody and hence has no rights. He could be treated in a fashion autochthonous to his position, subjected to the periphery of "humanity," and made to live at the mercy of colonial favors. Further reasons emerge. Politically, granting many "citizenship" would challenge the status quo and undermine the dominant power. Economically, it would ruin the capital base for "citizens" cannot be forced into labor or indentured labor programs like the subjects. The citizen can choose where and what kind of work to do, et cetera. In addition, granting many "citizenship" would inflate government services and responsibilities. Socially, it will inevitably demystify the myth of "omnipresence" and invisibility. The colonialist would be on the same level of humanity with the native, whereas the power of colonial sovereignty is constituted by this discourse of colonial omnipotence and invisibility.

The *évolués* in Belgian Congo, the *assimilados* in Portuguese, *assimilation* in French, and the *citizen* in English colonies strikes a familiarity of this citizen-subject logic. These policies were different attempts to raise the African to the level of "citizen" and subsequently a human being who possesses dignity similar to that of whites. As noted earlier, to civilize is to colonize, a process that turns the native into a human being: barbarians → subject → citizen (assimilado, évolué, assimilated), and therefore → a human being. But the distinction between the barbarian and the civilized is vaunted; not all Africans would attain this status of humanity but those who have proven to be worthy of citizenship through education. Besides, such education is not readily accessible even to the selected few. In Portuguese territories, those who are aspiring to be assimilados are barred from participating in African cultural practices such as dancing to African music or related activities. In French territories, the individual would have proven his perpetual devotion to France through his ability to read and write French. He would give up his personal life if he were a Muslim. Besides, citizenship became linked to military service. African-French citizens such as Senghor would be forcefully conscripted into the French Legion. In the Portuguese territory of Angola in 1960, only a handful (less than 100 individuals) achieved the status of assimilados. Mozambique at independence did not have any institution of higher learning (July 1968: 400, Davidson 1992, Russell 2000).

Correspondingly, therefore, the mode of response to colonial history in Africa raises two critical questions: is there an African rationality? But if rationality following the Western intellectual history and culture can only be equated to humanity—considering Kant, Hegel, and Hume's discourse on rationality as a basis for humanity—then rationality masked in modernity is only a *salvific-rhetoric* for civilization. This same rhetoric masks the logic of

coloniality and its character in which a new geopolitics of knowledge is sanctioned by modern epistemology to disqualify other kinds of knowledge, to affirm and impose itself on other ways of knowing. Rationality becomes a bulwark for humanity as sanctioned within the cannons of Western episteme:

1. If am I am *human*, then I am rational—Descartes: I think, therefore, I am (human)
2. Africa has no rational historical culture according to Hegel—and Fanon asks us to imagine, in response to Descartes: so I don't think, therefore, I am not (human)?
3. Therefore, the African has no humanity. He needs to be *given* humanity through the rationality of civilization (see also, Mingolo, *Private correspondence*).

In logical notation this argument can take the form of a *modus tollens*:

If p is true then q is true
Q is false.
Therefore p is false.
$P \rightarrow Q$
$\sim Q$
——
Therefore $\sim Q$

Example:

1. If Eze is the killer, then he owns a gun
2. Eze does not own a gun
3. Therefore, Eze is not the killer.

This argument has two premises. The first premise is conditional "if" (p implies q). The second premise is that Q is false, which necessarily means that p must be false. If one assumes that both premises are true, that is, if Eze was the killer, then he must have really owned a gun, and it is a fact that Eze does not own a gun. Which means? Eze was not the killer. Hence, since the premises are true, the conclusion must follow and the argument remains valid. But consider otherwise: that the killer does not necessarily own a gun; for instance, the killer could have borrowed a gun (hence Eze could be the killer even if he does not own a gun). Thus, the first premise is proved false even though the argument might remain valid.

In the meantime, challenge to this dominant mode of historicism is by way of "verification" of its "rationalization" or " intensional rationality." African

academics are preoccupied with a rebuttal of the consequence of the conclusion of colonial rationality. Efforts are not focused on falsifying the validity of the premise of imperialist ideology rather than a reproof of its consequence. In response to imperial representations in which Africans were cast as primitive and inferior to the rest of humanity, African intellectuals have embarked upon a reactionary intellectual pursuit to challenge these representations through a reverse discourse that affirms and endorses Africa's unique history. Such histories are represented in a romantic recapture of Africa's past glories, evoking and celebrating the great moment and epoch of Africa's history. If they are historians, they will reminisce the time of Imhotep (2980 B.C.), the great architect of the pyramid at Saqqara; that of Mansa Musa (D. 1337 A.D.) of the Great Mandinka (Mali Empire); and that of General Tarik (711 A.D.), the great educator and conqueror of Spain. If they are clergy (e.g., Kagamé 1956, Okere 1971, Bigo 1974, Mbiti 1975, Onyewuenyi 1982), they would celebrate the glorious moments of the great African bishops of the Byzantine era from Augustine through Tertullian to Cyprian. And if they are men of letters (e.g., Senghor 1965, Césaire 1972, Cheikh-Anta Diop 1974, Bernal 1987), they would celebrate Homer's famous praise of the godlike and "blameless Ethiopians," for whom the gods have left their dwelling place to visit[6] (see Davidson 1992: 102). The problem is that this mode of intellectual resistance is a given historicity, that is, history "from above". This mode of historicity is dictated by the "other" since its premise is presupposed and not interrogated but based on the negation of the "other." It is on this basis that while most postcolonial African discourses remain relevant for subjective reconstitution, the methodology which it adopts is nevertheless an invalid point of departure. Although the negation of imperial discourses and the celebration of Africa's past glory are worthy ventures, they need to be situated on a different epistemological foundation.

The logic of negation is germane in understanding postcolonial African response to colonial representation—a negation of the "other" to affirm a resistance of existential significance. Yet, as I shall argue in chapters 4 and 5, the problem with this type of thinking is that by recreating a vision of history through a reverse discourse, a critical question often ignored is, whose negation or discourse? A negation of the other's discourse to sieve out one's humanity would cast the subject in a vicious circle of sameness. The caveat in any of such discourse as aforementioned is that its epistemological foundations is a "given." It is a "given" historicity based on analogy for the standard for being human, the yardstick, and the measure—of being human is to have a history, to have a glorious past that would favorably compare to the image of what it means to be human in a Western context. This kind of history, history by analogy both disempowers and alienates the subject. It disempowers

because the subject is recreated and recolonized in the same circle of sameness; the subject is not free from the chain of coloniality; rather, he employs the same tools within the same colonial paradigm to create his "story" not out of time but "within" time, history, and context of colonial rationality. Consider: *only literate people are rational; therefore, I should prove my literacy to become rational!* Yet, the forgotten question is to know who determines what is rational. If I ought necessarily to use generally accepted principles of a pseudo-scientific culture to affirm my humanity, then this attempt in itself is alienating, and I am still responding to a history from "above." This method of historicism I shall argue is in contrast to history from "below," by which a cultural community in its own given time and context is able to develop a peculiar thread of historical narrative interwoven with its identity as a people. Such history from below is *not* a response to a history from above, but a history that does not rely on negation of the "other" to produce an authentic subjectivity. History from below is a history located within a contextual bearing.

The colonial state

In the section that follows, I shall attempt a brief resume of the colonial state in Africa. I have already discussed the psychosocial processes implicated in the logic of coloniality. In this section, I shall examine the historical dimension of this process. As shown earlier, a history of the colonial state in Africa is a history of (1) colonization of the mind (primary motive) and (2) domination, exploitation of the material and social space (secondary motive). I shall now argue that these motives are co-substantive and not exclusive of each other. Furthermore, while colonial policies in Africa adapted different standards, they remained constitutively the same. One may argue, therefore, that while apartheid in South Africa would be the most brutal expression and execution of colonial policy in Africa, constitutively, it remains the same with other colonial policies in Africa. The uniqueness of apartheid to South Africa may be restricted to its procedural application and substantive content. The difference of South Africa from the rest of Africa is based on this substantive measure and not on its constitutive application. Having said that, however, the substantive difference gives South Africa a peculiar place in history for apartheid was an experience with no comparison. It dovetails unique experiences that make it an epoch in the overall history of colonialism in Africa. In this short summary of Africa's colonial history, I will draw parallels to show that the logic of coloniality in most of Africa was the same, exploring the constitutive sameness with substantive differences of African responses to colonial violence. For example, among the French educated Negro, the response was

expressed through Négritude. In Central Africa, it was *authenticité;* in southern Africa, *ubuntu;* and in South Africa, specifically, it was BCM. An account of colonial adventure in Africa is even more necessary in order to draw a contradistinction of colonial malpractices in Africa. The following section reviews the bifurcated character of the colonial state on the basis of Citizens and Subjects.

A bifurcated State: Citizen versus Subject

Mbembe (2001) has identified four moments of colonial character as a bifurcated state or what may be called a structural blueprint for most colonial experiences in Africa. The first is *régime d'exception,* that is, a regime of exception in which common law is only meant for the subjects or there is selective application of those laws (where the law exempts the citizens but obliges the subjects). In r*égime d'exception*, there is delegation of rights to *super* individuals (citizens) or private profiteers, such as Henry Stanley bulldozing through the Congo jungle for King Leopold of Belgium; or the great profiteer business magnate, Cecil Rhodes and his exploits from the Cape to Lusaka on behalf of the British Empire. Such individuals and companies are in themselves sovereigns, not only above the law but law unto themselves, possessing all the legal exceptions and privileges.

The second moment, linked to the first, is the regime of *privileges and immunities.* The sovereignty granted to the colonizing companies also implies that these "chosen vehicles of colonization" are endowed with powers to act as a sovereign within the colonial state. A classical example is the British Royal Niger Company, which had powers to raise taxes, institute laws, mint currencies, maintain security personnel, and interpret, execute, and adjudicate laws and structural processes akin to an institutionalized government. It was a private state aid that owned the colonized territories. The laws were continuously adjusted if and when necessary to suit the colonial project.

The third feature is the redefinition of the intellectual motive of colonialism, that is, the discourse to "civilize," to interpret simultaneously as right to "rule" and "exploit." The inspiration of Conrad and Burton would adduce to Africa as a child continent in need of civilization to gain humanity. Where humanity is dependent on the enlightenment criterion of humanity as "rational," the Negro will gain humanity when he or she becomes civilized. This, however, is only possible through coloniality and its logic. Therefore, while the colonialists lay claim on the civilizing mission, there is no distinction between the "civilizing" mission and the very act of "ruling," with the latter being characterized as arbitrarily notorious. It is notorious because it emanates from an admixture of the "political with the social and the ethical"

and at the same time "subordinating all these to the requirements of production and output" (Mbembe 2001: 31ff.). Of this impact, Samora Machel had noted:

> Colonialism did not come to occupy our lands in order to arrest us, to whip us or beat us on the palms. It invaded us in order to exploit our riches and our labor. It has introduced the system of oppression in order to better to exploit us, to overcome our resistance and to prevent a rebellion against exploitation. Physical oppression with . . . prisons, torture, massacres. Moral oppression with its obscurantism, superstition and ignorance . . . to destroy the spirit of creative initiative . . . to reduce a person to passivity, and to the acceptance of the normality of a condition of exploitation and oppression.
>
> (De Braganca and Wallerstein 1982: 134)

This reflection leads to the fourth decisive moment of colonial strategy, which is *circular sovereignty.* Circular sovereignty means that the intuitive strategy of colonial policies is for absolute submission of the colonized and not the common good. The institutional structure of coloniality, the material and ideological incentives, the justifying logic, the internal rationality were all factors aimed at inducing total submission on which colonial sovereignty rested.

Moments such as these articulate the dominant process of colonialism in Africa as capitalist coloniality. The motivation for any genuine concern to civilize the natives is only a salutary gesture for capital and its control. It also explains why Belgium Congo became a *private property* of King Leopold with a right to treat the Congolese with brutality and savagery in the rubber plantations. In such savage regime, what matters is neither the lives nor humanity of the planters but their use as economic materials, that is, instrumentality as source of capital. These experiences only typify the very nature of colonial strategy. *Power* in the colonial logic simultaneously doubles as authority. It means the ability to control and coerce others, with an indeterminate right to do so. Power or authority acquires new meaning; to be in power is to have brutish control over the action of the "other"—both in the private and public realms of religious, social , political, cultural, and ethics. It becomes a key feature of the colonial logic of an *authoritatively* starved administration that is nourished by brute power. Where political authority is power with legitimacy—where legitimacy is acceptance and not coerced—for the colonialists, to be empowered is to be law unto oneself, a one-way street to exercise absolute control and elicit submission. In application, the bifurcated substantive reality of the colonial law implies that on the one side is the actual respect for the law itself—enforced or otherwise coerced—and on the other side is respect for the agent or enforcer of the law and lawmaker himself with

the same diligence as that for the law. E.K. Lumley (1976: 55 also in Ranger 1983: 216) gave an account of such practice exemplified by a British district commissioner in the colonial Tunduru in southern Tanganyika:

> D was in the habit of going for a walk every evening, wearing a hat. When, towards sunset, he came to the point of turning to home, he would hang his hat on a convenient tree and proceed on his way hatless. The first African who passed that way after him and saw the hat was expected to bring it to D's house and hand it over to his servants, even if he was going in the opposite direction with a long journey ahead of him. If he ignored the hat, he would be haunted by fear that D's intelligence system would catch up with him.

As Mamdani (1996: 127) informs us, direct rule in colonial Africa is Europe's immediate response to the native question vis-à-vis its administrative policies in the colonies. According to this policy, there is only a single legal order fashioned in terms of Europe's civilized laws, and native institutions were to be abrogated and supplanted by European laws. Accessibility to rights is only open to the *civilized* insofar as the civil society is simultaneously a "civilized society" from whence the *uncivilized* would be excluded. In these British colonies, the natives were denied any form of legal access to British legal procedures. The judiciary was subordinate to the executive, who through the district commissioner was invested with "powers of life and death in the provinces over natives of whatever standing without any trial by jury or the right to retain counsel" (ibid.).

In the colonial state, colonies were territories of European settlement, whereas protectorates were territories of European domination. In direct rule policy, rights, and citizenship were a privilege of the civilized minority in the colonies. The uncivilized in the protectorates, nevertheless, had access to civil rights according to their economic status but not political rights insofar as a distinction between civil and uncivilized was dependent on a propertied franchise. In direct rule uncivilized natives were necessarily excluded from any rights to citizenship in an "unmediated-centralized-despotism" (Mamdani: 1996: 17).

Direct rule in the British system is equivalent of the French and the Portuguese colonial policies of "assimilation" (Portuguese: *assimmilado*) and "association." The aim of the French *assimilation* policy was to make persons of African origin in certain territories (Rufisique, St. Louis, Goree, and Dakar) to become French and "citizens," while the people in the protectorates remained "subjects" of France. In theory (not in practice) an African-French "citizen" such as Senghor could become a French member of parliament in Paris while an African subject could only become "citizen" after a rigorous

process of education, assimilation, and propertied franchise. The African-French citizens had both civil and political rights like the white French citizens in Paris since the "colonies" were merely an extension of France. In contrast, indirect rule was a policy of domination over a "free" peasantry in which land remained a communal possession and market limited to products of labor, as "peasant communities were reproduced within the context of a spatial and institutional autonomy" (ibid.). Moral leadership was manufactured and imposed at the helm of affairs where none existed before. In this way, indirect rule "signified a mediated—decentralized—despotism" (Mamdani 1996: 17).

To recapitulate, direct and indirect rule policies were alternative modes of controlling natives during the colonial era. Direct rule was a manifestation of the urban civil power characterized by exclusion of natives from the privileges accorded to citizens in a civil society. Indirect rule, on the other hand, reflected a moral tribal authority characterized as it were by incorporation of natives into a state-enforced customary order. Both policies, as shown, are forms of despotism, where direct rule reflects a centralized and indirect rule a decentralized despotism (see ibid.).

The distinction between civil (direct rule) and native tribal (indirect rule) customary law further highlights the bifurcated character of the colonial state. The civil law in every modern state is both a custodian and guarantor of rights. Here, power, authority (right to rule) gains legitimacy through this language of rights insofar as rights of citizens (guaranteed by civil law) constitute a limit to civil power. In the colonial state, since citizenship status was a racial franchise, only "citizens" had access to privileges of civil law. Native tribal law, on the other hand, was dispensed on the basis of ethnic identity. The customary law was dispensed by native authorities according to the needs of each tribe. The laws so dispensed were not aimed at guaranteeing rights or curtailing power but to enable power. The validation of power was to enhance colonial domination, to perpetuate the myth of the "tribe" insofar as the tribe was the logical point of departure for domination and exploitation through a divide and rule hierarchy (see Mamdani 1996: 109–110).

The simulated political and cultural customs otherwise termed customary law and customary land rights were colonial codification for administrative efficacy. As I shall demonstrate later, the same tendency was applied in the creation of tribes. The term "tribe" in colonial Africa was an invention of Europe to make sense of the different ethnic identities the Europeans encountered in Africa as well as for administrative efficacy in which the local people became homogenized into one single cultural and artificial political unit (Ranger 1983: 250). In postcolonial Africa, however, a politicized ethnic group will become the tribe, and the latter will become a location of civil war!

Since the customary law was not a blanket legal code for all natives, the colonial subject becomes a bifurcated subject insofar as "native" and "tribesman" do not mean the same in the colonial context. "Native" is a blanket category, while "tribesmen" is differentiation of the native population. According to Mamdani (1996: 112), "[N]atives were disaggregated into different tribes" where each tribe had its own customary law administered by the tribal chief. An ethnic defined customary was more integrated and differentiated than the racially defined native; it embodied a "racial exclusion in a cultural inclusion." Thus, those natives with no access to civil liberties on the basis of race were consequently "sorted into different identities and incorporated into the domain of so many ethnically defined Native Authorities" in the emerging phenomenon called tribe (ibid.: 111).

In his argument in favor of an ethnically defined customary law, the well-known British anthropologist Rattray argued that in the attempt to "retain" what is best in Africa's cultural past, the major problem is that both the colonialists and their African counterparts know nothing about the African past. Those who know something about the past are illiterates who would not divulge such information unless to a "European who has spent a lifetime among them and has been able to gain their complete confidence" (Mamdani 1996: 112). It is significant, as Mamdani (1996: 115) notes, to observe that Rattray was silent as to why the natives would trust the Europeans (who have stayed longer) instead of "literate Africans" and their European counterparts. The answer is that the customary law in colonial Africa is to be understood within set boundaries of the colonial state. Where customary or traditional law remains subject to affirmation by the colonial law for legitimation, the colonial law is bound to displace the customary law if both conflict or when the latter threatens the "public ethics" (ibid.). Such was the case in Senegal in 1912, where a legislation was enacted to override those customary laws that became contradictory to the principles of French colonial policy and civilization (Mamdani 1996: 115).

Contradictions such as these spelled the overall colonial malpractice as would become explicit in Portuguese colonies, where the colonialists became both custodians and guarantors of humanity through arbitrary decrees. One such decree (# 39.666) in 1954, for example, began by a legalistic definition of the native as "any individual of Negro race or descending therefrom who has not acquired the usages and customs required for the entire application of the Portuguese public and private law" (Moreira 1956: 230). According to this decree, "[T]he natives are subordinated to custom and non-natives to the common law." The difference, however, comes with a caveat that even the customary law is obliged not to be "contrary to public order, that is, to the principles of humanity, the fundamental principles of morality or to

full exercise of sovereignty" (ibid.: 229–230). Besides, while only qualified jurists are allowed to administer the common law (for citizens), any administrator has a mandate to administer the customary law for he knows the "dominant mentality" of the natives (ibid.: 231). And when there is a conflict between a native and a citizen, the rights of the citizen as enshrined in the common law necessarily takes precedence because "it is believed that the proceedings should be easily understood by the native and should be similar to this habitual method of investigating the truth . . . in this manner the idea is promoted of the common law overcoming custom" (ibid.: 231). The decree, however, offered some promises for natives who aspired to become subject to the common law (i.e., citizens). The applicant would have to imbibe Portuguese culture and habits, be above 18 years, speak Portuguese correctly, fulfill military obligation, have a good profession, good behavior, professes Christian faith, have a certain level of education, and be totally deculturalized.

The Portuguese scenario is comparable to the British controlled areas. The British became both *signifiers* and custodians of morality and expedited procedures in which traditional and customary laws remained relevant only in instances they did not contradict nor became "repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience." According to Andre Park (1963: 68), what is "just or moral" is necessarily adduced to the given canons of the colonialist representation, in this case, the English law. In Nigeria, for example, most customary laws would be abolished and the validity of remaining ones spelled out in section 27 (1) of the High Court of Lagos Act, which allowed native laws and customs as admissible only when they were not "repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience, nor incompatible either directly or by implication with any law for the time being in force" (ibid.: 68). This modality would become ratified in section 14 (3) of the Evidence Act of the same law, which categorically stated that even consultation of the native laws was conditional "provided that in case of any custom relied upon in any judicial proceeding it shall not be enforced as law if it is contrary to public policy and is not in accordance with natural justice, equity and good conscience" (ibid.: 69). The "public policy" refers to byelaws, edicts, and decrees as may be found necessary for the administrative efficacy of colonial officials. The validity of the customary laws and customs would now depend on the intuitive interpretation of the British officials or what was adjudged as conforming to morality and "English justice."

The cutting edge of the restrictions is not only the assumed superiority of the colonial rule over the customary law. In addition to this subordination, customary laws were devolved into civil and criminal law and placed under the authority of white magistrates as indigenous chiefs became completely sidelined. In scheming this separation, it was easy for the colonial authorities

to induce absolute power and social control and give legitimacy to their colonial representations. Since social control was under the ambiance of criminal justice, it enabled them to have a wider sphere of influence. The chiefs were restricted to customary law, while the colonial white executive would exert influence over the criminal law. The difference is explained by Sir Robert Tredgold, the Rhodesian chief minister of justice:

> The government could not tolerate any attempts against its own custom, its own law, against itself . . . this is a matter in which we feel our law should prevail, because we feel that when it is a question of something which wrongs the whole community—and that roughly is the definition of the word "crime"—it should over-ride other considerations, and that is why we distinguish between criminal law and civil law. In Criminal law, the Africans have to accept our criminal law. In Civil Law, they are governed largely, until they reach a very advanced stage, by their own law. But we do try to take into account the different approach of the African in criminal matters.
>
> (Mittlebeeler 1976: 20–21)

As in all British colonies, customary law is adjudged good when it is "not repugnant to justice and morality." By taking over the criminal aspect of the customary law, the colonialists were able to exert more power and influence over their subjects than would have been possible if the local chiefs had the jurisdiction.

The subject

If the colonial legal procedure created a distinction between citizen and subject, the overall thrust of colonial policies was a manifestation of the actual process of colonial violence, a process aimed at dislocating the subject into appropriate submission. Often executed through different forms of corporal punishment, this process left the subject psychologically and morally dissipated. In this section, I will give an account of such brutal excesses that percolated significantly in a myriad of complexes affecting the colonization of the "African" mind.

In 1920 Ghana, indirect rule would "exacerbate the tensions and contradiction of the rural society." The reform introduced harsh measures, and "disobeying the lawful order of a chief, fouling the water, using or composing insulting songs or drumming, causing a nuisance, quarrelling, refusing homage to a chief, adultery, selling unwholesome food, etc" became criminal offences (Grier 1987: 38). This was not unique to the British but extended to the French and Portuguese colonies. Among the Portuguese it was a common

practice to flog the natives with a whip and *palmatoria* (a mallet like instrument) (De Gigueiredo 2003: 130). Among the French and the British a similar practice of *palmatoria* was expedited through the invention and use of a special whip made from hippotamus skin (a.k.a., Manigolo in Malinke, Koboko in Hausa, and Sjambok in South Africa) (Mamdani 1996: 126). And after the Salzaar regime had confiscated the remaining land from the Africans, the then governor of Mozambique in Circular No. 818/D-7, December 7, 1942, issued a legislative order:

> The problem of native manpower . . . is probably the most important preoccupation of European Agriculture . . . there is an insufficient number of workers for the accomplishment of the undertakings which have been planned . . . The supply of labor in Africa cannot continue to depend on the whim of the black man, who is by temperament and natural circumstances inclined to expend only that minimum of effort which correspond to his minimum necessities.
>
> (De Braganca and Wallerstein 1982: 189)

In French colonies, natives who passed a French administrator without saluting him were punished by the confiscation of their headdress. And in 1847 the French through their policy of the *Indigénat* institutionalized corporal punishment. First introduced in Algeria, the *Indigénat* was invoked in French West Africa in the 1881 and gained dubious legitimacy in November 1924 when it became a sanctioned and exclusive privilege of white officials as "applicable to the whole of tropical Africa under French domination, including mandated territories" (Suret-Canale 1971: 331). The *Indigénat* gave authoritative rights to the colonialists to inflict disciplinary punishment on subjects without the colonialists being subjected to any judicial control or authority. In instances of its application, the official uses his discretion to decide appropriate punishment for his victims. At its introduction, any white person had the authority to inflict punishment. Later, this privilege was limited "to officials representing the public powers, administrators and their clerks" (ibid.). In Guinea, a decree of October 1, 1902, allowed the *Indigénat* to become administered to individuals who attempted to appeal or otherwise appealed the decision of the white official such as "complaints or objections knowingly incorrect, repeated in front of the same authority after a proper solution has been found." In Senegal, the *Indigénat* was meted out for "[refusal] or negligence to carry out work or render aid as demanded . . . [Any] disrespectful act or offensive proposal vis-à-vis a representative or agent of authority [this would include 'failure to salute' or stand to attention at the sight of a commander] . . . [and included] . . . speech or remarks made in public intended to weaken respect for French authority or its officials through songs, folksongs, or false rumor" (ibid.: 332, see also, Mamdani 1996: 126–127, 148–151, for in-depth analysis of this section).

A Dahomean newspaper *Le Courrier du golfe de Bénin,* March 1, 1935, decried the evil of the *Indigénat:*

> Everyday men and women, even those who owe nothing to the fiscal authorities, are arrested, lashed together and beaten under the pretext of refusal to pay their taxes . . . Many of them, to comply with the payment of their taxes . . . pawn their children. Awéhanson Houcanguè, a cultivator in the village of Djégan Daho, had already paid his due. Chief Adoto was aware of this. None the less, he summoned him, had him thrashed, and made him pay two quotas, one for his brother who had died, and the other for the latter's wife who does not belong to his district . . . .
>
> (ibid.: 346)

A Senegalese journal, *Dalaba Archives* (Guinea), report of January 9, 1955, describes a notorious canton chief, Salif Fall, who was known for his ingenious and exceptional execution of the *Indigénat.* According to one account, Mr. Fall at the end of his tax inspection would tie all the natives who were unable to produce tax receipts for the current year:

> These unfortunates were then whipped in sight of the whole village till they bled, and, as a more effective reminder of the canton chief's authority, their sores were smeared with wet salt through the good offices of the Diaraff. But Salif Fall was not only a torturer. He was also a chief who loved money, who did not shrink from any means to procure it, and he had instituted a special tax in his canton which was set aside to feed his personal treasury. Each head of an extended family [known as *un carré,* a square] had to pay him an ox. He had already succeeded in forming a herd of seventeen head from the animals with which he was thus supplied. And this without counting the fines inflicted upon the unfortunate natives in the canton, which remained in the chief's pocket.
>
> (ibid.: 326–327)

According to Mamdani (1996: 148) the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade through international convention did not preclude internal slavery in colonial Africa. The abolition opened a *Pandora box* in which massive shortage of labor opened the door for forced labor comparable to the harsh realities of Slave Trade that Mark Twain would satirize the dehumanizing situation in the Congo:

> To appreciate to the full this scathing satire upon the sovereign of the Congo, there are two points which should be noted. The first is that King Leopold himself, personally, has been the real and sole Governor of the Congo territory since 1885 . . . The Second point is that King Leopold has ever posed as a philanthropist, a benefactor to the Church, a pillar of the Christian faith,

> a generous donor to Arts and Sciences [*cites from Rev. W.M. Morrision, an American Missionary in the Congo*] "I furnish herewith some of the many atrocious incidents which have come under my own personal observation; they reveal the organized system of plunder and outrage which has been perpetrated and is now carried on in that unfortunate country by King Leopold of Belgium."
>
> (Conrad 2003: 221)

The Congo was a private estate for King Leopold II of Belgium, arguably one of the most brutal colonial legacies in Africa. In his palace, King Leopold was a master of political mystification, representing to the world that his activities in the Congo were acts of charity. As the world rubber price soared, Leopold's men in the Congo perceived their workers much less than slaves and treated them so. When and if they failed to meet the daily quota, most were tortured or physically mutilated. These unfortunates would sometimes have their hands lopped off. The cruelty was stopped in 1908 when an embarrassed Belgium government took over the affairs of the Congo. Still, the Belgium government did not tamper the existing legislation of mandatory 60 days of forced labor. The legislation would be extended to other Belgian colonies in the Great Lakes region of Burundi and Rwanda.

The British experience of forced labor was more pronounced in Kenya, where absenteeism was a criminal act analogous to a deserting soldier in a war! The punishment was cruel. In French colonies, 1887 saw the creation of "freedom villages" in the Sudan. In these villages were all kinds of slaves: "[T]hose who had escaped from enemy territories, those taken from their masters either as punishment or for political reason, those paid for by the French exchequer but not yet sold, and finally those few set free by the more liberal of the planters" (Mamdani 1996: 149). In reality, these "freedom villages" were anything but *freedom villages;* they were a living hell as in the following note from the archives of the Government-General Bamako E1/27/48 of September 4, 1894:

> The Fugitive slaves preferred to choose a new master who would always give them what they needed, would not torment them with work that was beyond their strength, and left them in peace when they were tired or ill. This was not so in the freedom villages. What would one find there? Gangs of wretched men dying of hunger or on the brink of death, tired and yet, for example, forced to provide all the forced labor for the post and circle porterage.
>
> (Suret-Canale 1971: 64)

A French analyst, Denise Bouche, reminisces that the so-called freedom villages were merely forced labor camps:

> It is quite certain that the main motive behind the spread of the freedom villages was that they presented an excellent solution to the problem of porterage and manpower—far better, in any case, than the system of going out, armed, to seek men every time the need arose, and of seeing them escape at the first unguarded moment—a slow, complicated and chancy system. In view of policy demands and the scruples of public opinion, what in Africa was a question of manpower was presented in Europe as a humanitarian enterprise.
>
> (Suret-Canale 1971: 62–63)

These freedom villages were not only a source of labor for colonial and individual European projects but also of mistresses and wives to soldiers and administrators. When the villages ran short of women or labor force, the French colonial administrator imposed forced labor on the "free population" as observed by G. Deherme on one such instance in French West Africa: "[In] one district that I passed through, a custom had arisen that when a village could not or would not give the whole sum imposed [as taxes], a child would be taken and placed in a so-called freedom village until the tax was paid" (Suret-Canale 1971: 64). This institutionalized slavery became so rampant that a report issued in 1904 stipulated that in a population of 8,250,000 in French West Africa, 2,000,000 were categorized as "non-free" (ibid.: 66). As Mamdani (1996: 149–150) noted, the subsequent abolition of the "freedom villages" was not because of any universal pressure, rather because these freedom villages lost their unique significance as the policies practiced in these freedom villages became generalized in all other occupied territories. In French West Africa, all adults who could not afford taxation bought themselves out with labor and a refusal by any given population to cooperate incurred collective punishment (ibid.). To the extent of this brutality, the degree of forced labor reflected a high mortality rate especially among the "pipe heads" (têtes de pipe), who acted not only as the carriers of colonial goods but of the colonial officials as well. According to one account, "in one three-year period, of 1000 men recruited from a single division in Gabon, 182 died and a further 395 failed to return home." In the occupied Portuguese territory of Mozambique, of 25,000 employed as potters or carriers in the campaign against Germany, only 5,000 returned home (ibid.).

In view of Mamdani (ibid.: 157–158), the logic of forced labor was not only to boost the colonial crusade; it was, in fact, reasoned that just as rationality is exclusive to persons of European origin, Africans only understood the use and application of force. Since the logic of colonialism attributed to the African as one who listens only to *reason of force* as opposed to *force of reason,* it was perceived that force is traditionally an African custom and one might employ it unscrupulously. A medical practitioner may resort to force in

order to induce compliance from his patients. This logic is adjudged natural. A doctor in the Belgian Congo in the 1930s describes how it works in the medical profession: "[W]hen I felt that it was necessary to whip someone I ordered a native chief, a decorated chief, to do it because he had the right towards his subjects . . .".

The next chapter is an evaluation of these colonial procedures as an enduring legacy of contemporary African states. The postcolonial African state is a mirror and aftermath of these colonial practices that are implicated in the very attempt to forge a nation-state. The postcolonial state would find its legitimacy by inhabiting the very colonial structures that mediated a revolt for independence. These colonial structures did not disappear at independence; they merely reemerged in a different format.

CHAPTER 3

Post-colonial Displacements

> The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple
>
> (Oscar Wilde, 1854–1900)

Introduction

Colonialism left in its wake a sociopolitical system that is anachronistic to the actual postcolonial condition. New African governments inherited structures designed primarily to benefit the colonial architecture. Politically, it was anachronistic to any aspiration for a national core. Economically, it was a structural system devised to provide raw materials for the industries of the West. On this point, Walter Rodney (1997: 585) unambiguously described it as a *one-armed bandit:*

> For the first three decades of colonialism, hardly anything was done that could remotely be termed a service to the African people . . . the statistics which show that Africa today is underdeveloped are the statistics representing the state of affairs at the end of colonialism . . . It would be an act of the most brazen fraud to weigh the paltry social amenities provided during the colonial epoch against the exploitation, and to arrive at the conclusion that the good outweighed the bad.

Colonial policies did not attempt sustainable development and so, independence became an empty promise, an illusion. Upon Rodney's militant judgment of economic exploitation sits another problem at the base of Europe's invention of Africa: a historical maneuver, a reflexive construct that is best described as a stasis in which what is signified sustains the mimesis of a perception, imitating itself in what it stylizes and succumbing to the power it has thus invented—the tribe! In this section, I shall demonstrate that nationalism in Africa and its mediating ideology is both a cause and consequence of

Europe's invention of Africa. I shall focus on the "tribalization" of the natives and "ethno-cultural" loyalties (ethnicism) as primary motivation and argue that the tendencies that went into the making of colonial Africa were diverse, multiple and contradictory. Once again, while these mediating factors differ substantively they nevertheless coincide constitutively whether in British Africa, in Portuguese Angola or in French West Africa. My persuasion is that these issues have become obfuscated by African elites and statesmen in an urgent attempt to save the phenomena of the nation-state and that a reorientation of perspective, paradigm if you like, as in a scientific revolution is urgently required. I am persuaded that nationality, nationalism, nation-state embody multiple significations and are both causal and residues of Europe's invention of Africa.

Nationalism and Africa

The events (the rise and fall Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism) preceding and following WWII has always rendered discourse on nationalism somewhat unease—considering the role of the rhetoric of nationalistic sentiments expediting those events. The German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, anticipating a new consciousness for German nationalism that would echo in the corridor of history and motivate many a nation-state, wrote:

> How little worthy of respect is the man who roams about hither and tither without the anchor of natural ideal and love of fatherland; how dull is the friendship that rests merely upon personal similarities in disposition and tendencies, and not upon the feeling of a greater common unity whose sake one can offer up one's life; how the greatest source of pride is lost by the woman that cannot feel that she also bore children for her fatherland, and brought them up for it . . . .
>
> (Kedourie 1993: 67–68)

Contemporary discourse on nationalism is burdened with ambiguity. Marítegui (1971: 187–188) would speak of the nation as "an abstraction, an allegory, a myth that does not correspond to reality that can be scientifically defined." A view further developed by Anderson's (2001: 7) conception of the nation as an "imagined community":

> It is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as to willingly die for such limited imaginings.

This "imagined community" is a mosaic, for, as Ernest Gellner (1964: 168) noted, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist—but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if . . . these are purely negative." Nationalism as an "imagined community" is aptly described by Gellner (1983: 1, 48–49) elsewhere:

> Nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and national unity should be congruent . . . [The] political boundary of a given state can fail to include all the members of the appropriate nation; or it can include them all but also include some foreigners; or it can fail in both these ways at once, not incorporating all the nationals and yet also including some non-nationals . . . nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones . . . [Political] destiny, are a myth; nationalism . . . takes pre-existing cultures and turn them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality.

Hobsbawm (1990: 9–10) endorses Gellner, "I do not regard the 'nation' as a primary nor as an unchanging social entity. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the 'nation-state,' and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationalism except insofar as both relate to it." The idea of the nation as an invention, artifact, and a consequence of social engineering is, however, more spelt out in Ranger and Hobsbawm (1983: 7):

> It is clear that plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups—not least in nationalism—were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity either by semi-fiction . . . or by forgery. It is also clear that entirely new symbols and device came into existence . . . such as the national anthem . . . the national flag . . . or the personification of "the nation" in symbol or image.

The myth of the nation as an imaginary construct and invention, therefore, depends on fictional artifacts and shared symbols (intuitive, emotional, or social space) for its evolution into a communal identity. In fact, the "nation" is wielded together by these disparate shared symbols. For that reason, nations are products of nationalism and its contingent ideologies and not vice versa (Hobsbawm 1990: 10). Yet, as I shall argue later, this view of nationalism is problematic. I will criticize it on the basis of being a view from above, a view masquerading official ideology to form a nation-state without considering the

view from below. Such move alienates the dynamism of our different cultural experiences hitherto a sacrosanct redefinition of nationhood.

The trajectory of nationalism in Africa is conceptually elitist. It is elitist because national power was only a subterfuge of the nationalist elites to mask the actual demand of socioeconomic empowerment by the local population. In the years of struggle for independence, the brunt of colonial violence was borne by the fringe communities (peasants, traders, market women, etc). Actual colonial hardship excluded most of these elites who though political prisoners remained only relevant as symbolic rallying point of the struggle. Accordingly, the success of African elites in achieving national political power was largely fostered by these fringe communities as Davidson (1992: 166) noted:

> Without the mass pressure that surged into the streets of colonial cities and made its impact felt even in remote corners of the bush, the educated elite would have remained upon the sidelines of everyday life, genially teased and tolerated by colonial officials of a liberal sort, or else jeeringly ignored and pushed aside by officials of another kind.

At independence, these elites ignored the social struggle that pressured independence, and shoved to the background these fringe communities many of whom paid the supreme price for independence. These fringe "communities" were often left in misery and neglect, abandoned without any voice in the affairs of the "country" for which they have sacrificed so much. The new elites on the other hand would project a "romantic nationalism" as self-proclaimed liberators and fathers (founders) of the new nation. And when they are confronted on the merit of their policies, they would revert to the heroic days of independence struggle, reliving the past as if such romanticism would expunge the socioeconomic crises of the present (see Chapter 6). For these elites, nationalism and its rhetoric became the only way to achieve the most desired unity for the new nation-state. The nation would become a location for manipulation of power and domination by these elites. They would exploit the desires of the people to be part of the government if only by proxy. Cultural mannerisms of ceremonies, rituals of power, traditions and local practices would be recruited to generate "authentic" and genuine African identity. It is in this character that African nationalism largely became reactionary as an anti-"this" or anti- "that" and would gradually be employed for political advancement (cf. Chapter 6).

This section, therefore, is about nationalism in colonial Africa and its reconstitution after independence—and the nature of ideology it bred. It mediates the stultifying effect of national power over social power in which

the Eurocentric model of the nation-state so inherited became a mockery of the original blueprint of the inventor. In advocating for unity through a nationalistic archetype, diverse ethnic groups were unified into a common predicament in contrast to the diversity and plurality represented in these ethnic groupings. Thus understood, the new nation-state became a breeding camp for ethno-cultural loyalties, inventing another legacy: the tribe!

Fallacies of African nationalism

The demand for socioeconomic empowerment is not synonymous with a demand for a nation. As I argued in the introduction to this section, the nation-state does not predate nationalism. The nation-state emerges through social engineering as antecedent to national imaginary. In Africa, the social power of nationalism is a reaction to the imperialistic discourse and its consequent colonialist violence of which Davidson (1992: 158) describes: "in a substantive sense it was a reaction against the colonial status of second-rate citizenship or . . . of no citizenship. It was a demand not for nationhood but for elementary justice. The demand for the nation came only when justice was repeatedly denied, mocked, or trodden into the ground."

Ideally, independence in colonial Africa ought to be autochthonous to the pressures of social struggle and not vice versa. And so was the hope of the newly acquired power of the nationalist elites. The primary motivation was not a demand for a "nationalistic state" but a demand for primary justice—of recognition as humans and citizenship in opposition to the inherited bifurcated character of the colonial state. At independence, this primary motivation (for primary justice) was displaced "within the institutional 'containers' of an imported nation-statism" (Davidson 1992: 251). Nkrumah at the dawn of independence had prophesied: *seek ye first the political kingdom and everything shall be added unto thee* . . . Hence, "let freedom come and freedom would bring its own good solutions" (ibid.: 165). If this prophecy is anything to go by, the political kingdom advocated by Nkrumah and other nationalists made them *false prophets*. Social struggle, which inspired and nourished the journey to independence, was simply shoved aside.

The nationalists in accepting the model nation-state at independence neither explored other alternatives nor asked questions on the credentials or potentials of nation-statism.[1] They affirmed the colonial theme that "Africa would prosper upon [the] condition of rejecting itself. The future was not to grow out of the past, organically and developmentally, but from an entirely alien dispensation" (Davidson 1992: 199). The borrowed national robe informs the dependence theory of Fanon (1963) and Rodney (1997) in which the supine colonial legacy of nationhood was structured as source of

wealth creation that would benefit only the mother country. On this view, Fanon (1963: 81) went to the extent of proposing that Europe is a creation of the Third World: "[The] wealth which smothers her is that which was stolen from the underdeveloped peoples. The ports of Holland, the docks of Bordeaux and Liverpool were specialized in the Negro slave-trade, and owe their renown to millions of deported slaves." This colonial factor did hinder the developmental policies of many African States as they became consumer based economies without reciprocating productivity. Rodney (1997: 586) corroborates in decrying the absence of any institution of higher learning in Mozambique and other Portuguese colonies at independence:

> The Portuguese stand out because they boasted the most and did the least. Portugal boasted that Angola, Guinea, and Mozambique have been their possessions for five hundred years, during which time a "civilizing mission" has been going on. At the end of five hundred years of shouldering the white man's burden of civilizing "African natives," the Portuguese has not managed to train a single African doctor in Mozambique and the life expectance in eastern Angola was less than thirty years. As for Guinea-Bissau, some insight into the situation there is provided by the admission of the Portuguese themselves that Guinea-Bissau was more neglected than Angola and Mozambique!

"Apotheosis of independence is transformed into the curse of independence" (Fanon 1963: 77). Accepting and endorsing nation-statism was a legacy that left the new independent states only dependent on their former masters. The nationalist elites depended on the wise counsel of their former masters to steer the course of the new state; "specialists" were imported from Europe for technical advice. Dependent state, structural investments by former colonial masters were not aimed at the viability of the economy of the new state. The new state remained both a source (of raw materials) and garbage (of finished products). With independence, "Africans" Davidson (1992: 190) writes, were at the "mercy of export-import terms of trade settled on the world market without reference to African needs or potentials." This structural framework inherited at independence was a legacy characterized as it were by "a coil of problems," with malignant consequences for indigenous Amongst such consequences the famous Cambridge economic historian, David Fieldhouse (1986: 15) cites the French scenario:

> The essential feature of the post-1945 French imperial economy was that the French government . . . was using the power of the state to enable the colonies to buy a range of French consumer goods for which there would have been no alternative overseas market, and also capital goods which they could probably have bought more cheaply elsewhere.

The postcolonial nation-state would become both alienating and a source of dislocation in this manner. I shall now explore how the processes of this alienation became complicit in another legacy, the "tribe" as an *invention* in the process of the "invention of Africa." This move is certainly circular but it does provide an *a priori* guide in understanding its complexities.

The invention of the "Tribe"

The colonial was a state without history and so was the nationalist consciousness that emerged with it. As I already argued, the new nation states at independence were structured on the European model, and thus, "independence" or "liberation" was a contradiction, leading to alienation and a continual subjection to European History. This was so because nationalistic leaders in the years that preceded and followed independence embraced nation-statism as one sure way to sociopolitical paradise. Heavy emphasis was placed on transforming colonial territories into national territories. Attempting to integrate and absorb into their project of nationalism the rich divergence of many ethno-cultures was a task found to be impracticable as to motivate Samora Machel to declare that "*For the nation to live, the tribe must die*" (Sachs and Honwana 1990: 5). The difficulty, however, arises because of resistance to assimilation into national culture since "most of these precolonial political formations were communities with a venerable past rooted in popular acceptance. In the public mind they were living identities; they were identities to which people strongly held" (Davidson 1992: 100). This is the sense in which Bhabha (1994: 149, 169) argues that "[counternarratives] of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb these ideological maneuvers through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities." On this view, national memory, "is always the site of the hybridity of histories and displacement of narratives" in which nationalistic discourse remains fragile, exclusive, contradictory and splitting as opposed to the nuanced image of coherence, unity, essence and origin that is wrongly attributed to these discourses (see also, McLeod 2000 for detailed analysis). These discourses are neither inclusive nor benevolent, and neither are they able to produce a common, coherent narrative through which a nation or its people would be sufficiently understood. It is in this way that national discourse is not coherent but undermined by contradictory modes of representations that split the nation since the nation is a location of different experiences, histories, and representation of which a nationalistic discourse would have excluded.

Henceforth, I will be demonstrating the plurality, dynamism, multiplicity, and heterogeneity of pre and colonial African tradition(s) and culture(s).

I will emphasize the necessity of blanketing homogenous historicity in favor of historic dynamism in the study and understanding of culture and tradition in Africa. To speak of a homogenous "African" identity or culture is a locus of contradiction because culture is rarely compact and singular; culture is full of tensions, it is diverse and differentiated. To argue that culture is an undifferentiated whole without contradiction is to assign rigidity to culture. To argue for a homogenous historicity is to deny the subject of a social history, to dehistoricize the subject. Even though a fundamentalist attention to context may seem insensitive to difference, context nevertheless remains an active agent in restoring dynamism to history. Attention to context redeems us from historical *untruths* and dead dogmas. Thus understood, tradition is not a cultural residue mediated through historical time; rather, culture and tradition are reproduced through sociohistorical struggle, which remains differentiated, diverse, and heterogeneous (see Mamdani 1996). It is in this way that one may understand the conflating narratives of the African situation.

Scholarship on traditions in Africa has usually accentuated a rigid bent, "profoundly conservative—living within age-old rules which did not change; living within an ideology based on the absence of change; living within a framework of clearly defined hierarchical status" (Ranger 1983: 247). This presupposition is a misreading of the African situation. In fact, the presupposition is only a representation of a colonial consciousness. Although African societies thrived on custom and its continuity thereof, these nevertheless remain flexible. According to Ranger (ibid.), "custom helped to maintain a sense of identity but it also allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was often unperceived." Most significantly, the idea of a "closed corporate consensual system" assumed to characterize traditional Africa is very ambiguous insofar as recent scholarship on precolonial Africa is yet to identify a single "tribal" identity. What these studies reveal is archaeology of multiple identities as Ranger (1983: 248) notes, "most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities, defining themselves at one moment as subject to this chief, at another moment as a member of that cult, at another moment as part of this clan, and yet at another moment as an initiate in that professional guild." These networks of identities overlap, extending over a vast area.

In adapting "nation-statism" the new independent territories were anchored to assimilate and adapt European traditions as a mode of possible self-identity and self-determination. The new African leaders did not consider that the colonial state so inherited was found on traditions aimed at boosting and nourishing the ideological representations of colonialism in structure and in content. These traditions, invented or otherwise were a source of legitimacy, agency of change and a source through which Europeans sought to

transform and modernize African conduct and thought. According to Ranger (1983: 212), these Eurocentric traditions "distorted the past but became in themselves realities through which a good deal of colonial encounter was expressed." These traditions became points of entry for Africans into the colonial world. Part of this tradition was that every native belonged to a tribe just as every European comes from a nation. This mould of tradition was the pattern of colonial structure and it was a mould adapted at independence. On this representation lies the internal rationality for the justification of these traditions as they became transposed into the postcolonial national memory.

The tribe as a civil war

A proper study of tribalism in Africa begins with the study and understanding of ethnicity and its manipulation thereof in colonial era. I do not use the term "tribe" or "ethnicity" as synonymous. It is necessary to pay attention to this difference since it is the manipulation of ethnicity that led to the former. More significantly, while tribal identity evokes a pathological character, "ethnicity is more placid, part of a value-free vocabulary on the way to reconciling itself with the object it claims to describe" (Mamdani 1996: 185). Having stated the problems in these terms, I proceed to develop the thesis that in Africa, the "tribe," if this word has any meaning, is in fact a state of civil war![2]

Usually caught between vagaries of conflicting identities, the African is in a simulated process of identity negotiation. "Out of Africa" this "identity" assumes an unanimous pan-African character. "In Africa" the identity fragments and mutates into nationalistic consciousness as a Nigerian, South African, Togolese, Zimbabwean, et cetera—but a consciousness that only resurrects in the presence of an external threat to "national" pride (as in African cup of nations), projecting an illusion of a united "nation" in a homogenous empty-time. Yet, this "imaginary" locus of a binding unity need not be confused with a nationalistic consciousness (in the absolute) for the beginning of the crises is precisely located in the realm of the national subjective. In the absence of such "common threat" the tribe takes primacy over the "national" as I become a member of this tribe, of this marginalized language, of this influential or prestigious ethnic group et cetera. The state becomes a means to another end, a terrain of civil struggle for power and access to socioeconomic privilege—where such privileges are controlled by the dominating group.

The era of colonialism in Africa was a period in which primordial ethnic identities were politicized for administrative efficacy. Independence in

many sub-Saharan African states did not automatically usher in nationhood or a conscious national identity for they were states without a nation. The "state" inherited at independence was a site of competing identities. Political independence perpetuated this mandate with a disturbing polarization of interethnic chauvinism and rivalry—an initiative that straightened tribalization. "Independence" meant that the "dominant" tribe is the government. Peripheral or dominated tribes attempt to address this imbalance by secession instincts or in its failure, reverse retaliation by way of "ethnic-cleansing." This term "ethnic cleansing" is anachronistic and it is my persuasion that "tribal cleansing" captures the appropriate rendition. A "tribe" in my definition is a politicized ethnic group. The point of this politicization is that its (the tribe) emergence as a locus of "civil war" [in the state] is defined by the precedence of tribal allegiance over any national consciousness. Democracy for its part produces a janus-faced interregnum, first as a victim (of tribalization) and at the same time a guarantor of an ethnic-based regime in which the winning tribe (in elections) takes it all! Democracy means that the dominant tribe is the government. The situation in Kenya, Chad, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic, Congo (DRC) Ivory Coast, Rwanda/Burundi amongst many others offer classic example in which democracy simply designate a *tribal-dictatorship*.

As Anderson (2001) noted, local communities imagine their identities through categories within these societies. The problem with this conceptualization is that of unconscious transposition of "imaginations" that evolved in the straits of Western narratives and thereafter transposed as a universal imaginary. Many discourses on nationalism have assumed this "imaginative" framework. Nevertheless, in rehabilitating Anderson's project through a contextualization and location of this imagination within actual practices of a community, it becomes possible to generate a shared identity within a homogenous empty-time. Basil Davidson (1992: 75) for his part noted that "[the] history of pre-colonial tribalism . . . was in every objective sense a history of nationalism." But what kind of nationalism? "Tribal" nationalism or the inherited geopolitical unit? If the former, it is easier to understand the squabbles for supremacy and power amongst tribes, struggles that most often resulted in civil war in these newly independent African states. If the latter, (nationalist-nationalism) then historical evidence contradicts any "objective" criterion since most African states at independence were states without a "nation." Independence, therefore, exacerbated the already tribal tensions that existed during colonialism. As Jack Snyder noted, "[Ethnic] nationalism appears spontaneously when an institutional vacuum occurs. It predominates . . . when existing institutions are not fulfilling the people's basic needs, and when satisfactory alternative structures are not readily available"

(Campbell 1997: 60). The "ethnic" in this context represents such simulation, which in the writing of Martin (1996: 4), indicates that "while the 'centre' is looking towards the 'periphery' as a possible source for its own revitalization, its curators and cultural mongers have specific ideas of what the 'periphery' should deliver and what it should have for its own good." Continuing the same argument, P.C. LIoyd in his study of class consciousness among the Yoruba projects tribalism at the altar of illiteracy: "the establishment of universal suffrage in a society where the electorate is largely semiliterate, with loyalties to the town transcending those to the state, leads to increased ethnicity at the higher political levels and among the elite" (Campbell 1997: 60). The obvious problem in this projection is that while the "tribe" is a partial invention of colonial legacy, it is also a legacy evolving in power structures and relations among indigenous kingdoms before their conquest by Western powers, legacies subsequently nourished by colonialism but maintained by African elites at independence. The tribe, therefore, is not merely constitutive of colonial legacy but evolved through three tiers of historical context—precolonial, colonial and post-colonial. Morris Szeftel reminded us in his analysis of the conflict between the ANC and Inkatha[3] in Natal, South Africa, that "it is all too easy to assume that 'who says ethnicity, says conflict' and to forget to ask which forces and institutions politicize divisions and structure conflict and how they do it" (Campbell 1997: 73).

For our purposes, any substantive response to the question "what is a tribe" will remain incoherent if not located within historical context. This context is colonial where tribalization remained a project of colonial enterprise. At the same time, it is highly tendentious and ostensibly inaccurate to assume that "tribalization" in Africa occurred only with colonial adventure in Africa. This is not my position. My intention is to elucidate processes involved in the politicization of ethnic identities, which became more pronounced during colonialism. I shy away from any persuasion that it was a process that occurred only during colonialism and after. In fact, one has to bear in mind incidents like the politicization of Zulu identity under Shaka Zulu, Lobengula, Dingane, Cetshwayo amongst many others. For the present purposes, however, in the contemporary history of Africa, I restrict my investigation to the rumbling cleavages of colonial and post-colonial.

The process of tribalization is the colonial attempt at racial domination through an institutionalized decentralization of tribal authorities invented for that purpose. The Royal decree of 1929 in Libya empowered the governor, who at his own discretion could invent and subdivide the nomadic peoples into tribes. In a supposedly nonracialist colony like Liberia, a distinction was made between the civilized (the returning African slaves) and the uncivilized (the natives), where the former represents those who can read or

write English, the latter those who cannot (Mamdani 1996: 87). Adapting this general procedure, native control in colonial Africa was effected through two distinctive methods: race and tribe. As Mamdani (1996: 90) observes the transition from race to tribe was championed by the British in their indirect rule policy. This transition was aimed at undermining any uniform resistance to colonial domination for the "occupying powers learned that if popular resistance could not be smashed frontally, it would have to be fragmented through reform". Another fact of this transition is because the accent on race as a modal point in the definition of a colonial subject contradicts the intentionality of colonialism because it gives impression of an oppressed and racially subjugated majority and therefore became "difficult to legitimate this mode of control by anchoring it in any traditional practice" (ibid.). Racism "accentuate(s) the colonial context of rule rather than to assuage it." The appeal to racism complicates the colonial administrative effort "for its thrust was not to divide and rule, but to unite and rule" (ibid.). Tribalism on the other hand was more appealing in the colonial context for it derived its legitimacy in balkanizing and subdividing major ethnic groupings into position of minority and hence undermining any unified resistance to colonial domination. The success of this enterprise was largely through indirect rule as John Iliffe (1979: 323–324) would note:

> Since establishment of native administration was as much a historical as a political exercise, its outcome depended heavily on the historical views current among administrators . . . Much effort was devoted to "finding the chief" by recording the genealogies which African contestants invented. "Each tribe must be considered as a distinct unit . . . Each tribe must be under a chief," one provincial commissioner told his staff in 1926 . . . The notion of tribe lay at the heart of indirect rule . . . Refining the racial thinking common in German times, administrators believed that every African belonged to a tribe . . . The idea doubtless owed much . . . to post-war anthropologist who preferred "tribal" to the more pejorative word "savage" . . . Different tribes were related genealogically, so that Africa's history was a vast family tree of tribes.

At this juncture, indirect rule is defined as a constellation of tribally defined customary, homogenously imposed as a single law that transcends tribal differences and boundaries.These laws will be codified and applied to the natives within the jurisdiction of the Native Authority and without consideration of context and the multifarious ethnic and socioreligious affiliation of the natives. Tribes would be invented for administrative efficacy with a juxtaposition of different communities into a single administrative unit. If customs are protected by social sanctions in the precolonial era, in this colonial customary, they will be ". . . enforced with a whip . . . and, if necessary, with the

barrel of a gun, by the forces of the central state . . . the bearer of custom was said to be the tribe" (Mamdani 1996: 39, 41, 50–51). Since every native belongs to a tribe, the native is efficaciously contained in the tribal basket for administrative efficacy. Customs, therefore, gave legitimacy to the power of the colonialists even if by proxy through the Native authorities (or Warrant Chiefs) who acted as pseudo guardians of such customs and cultures. Shocked at the absence of indirect rule in Tanganyika, Sir Donald Cameron the governor in 1925 complained to Lugard, "[I] found each District Officer doing just as he pleased . . . there are no general instructions on any question of native policy . . . Administrative Officers are engaged in every task except political work which is neglected . . . Indirect rule is a fiction... The people are out of hand because the Chiefs can no longer punish them" (Iliffe 1979: 320). Not persuaded by the lack of this administrative procedure, Cameron continues:

> It is our duty to do everything in our power to develop the native on line which will not westernize him and turn him into a bad imitation of a European . . . We want to make him a good African . . . We must not . . . destroy the African atmosphere, the African mind, the whole foundations of his race, and we shall certainly do this if we sweep away all his tribal organizations.
>
> (Iliffe 1979: 321)

The tribalization of native population is not only a reflexive policy of divide and rule for consolidation of political prowess, it also evolves partly to control the tide of nationalism in African states. Breaking of the subject population into tribe is not only for the instrumentality of its administrative effectiveness, it became a political necessity to offset the emerging instabilities in the colonies.

The origin of the tribe in Africa need not be restricted to an "invented" or "imagined" artifact of colonial legacy; in fact, the tribe is the very form of colonial rule. This is what Fanon (1963: 74) meant when he wrote that "by its very structure, colonialism is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them." As noted earlier, if customs were the political wavelength for colonial administrative prowess, the principal indicator is that indirect rule instructs through customary law in which "the claim to legitimacy of customary law was that it was a tribal law, and of customary authorities that they were the tribal authorities administering tribal law. Tribalism then was the very form that colonial rule . . . [in which] . . . both subject and citizen derive their rights, customary or civil, through membership in a *patri:* a tribe for the subject, a nation for the citizen" (Mamdani 1996: 183, 292).

Of significant import is that in their struggle for power, African elites and chiefs were implicated for sustaining this imagination anachronistically. Iliffe (1979: 324, 327ff.) observes that the new political order, "indirect rule" as it was introduced in Tanganyika was successfully executed by the combined efforts of Europeans and Africans who sought to legitimize it through the invention of mythical histories. The Africans or the progressive chiefs were key advocates of the systems primarily because they benefited most in the overall colonial economy. These educated and progressive chiefs later developed progressive traditionalism: "Just as later nationalists sought to create a national culture, so those who built modern tribes emphasized tribal culture. In each case educated men took the lead . . . Such men sought to reconcile the old and new societies. Their solutions were often highly personal . . ." (ibid.: 334–335).

On this sequence, traditions were manipulated as an eclectic source of a "tribe"—where the "tribe" is a repository for power—interlacing different African cultures and invented European customs and traditions to capture and maintain vested interest of the players (Europeans or Africans). For the progressive African chiefs, appeal to the "tribe" as an element of tradition becomes necessary to sway their power in the social-political and cultural arena and to maintain their domination over women and ensure the exclusion of others.

It is on the aforementioned cartographies that the tribe is best understood as a politicized "ethnic" group. The markers of this politicization is indicative of the "ethnic" as being fluid, dynamic and self-determining but profoundly dogmatic and rigid when tribalized. As Rene Wadlow (1969: 336–337) pointed out, "[Some] ethnic groups are being modified today . . . some people speak of themselves as belonging to larger or more prestigious groups in their area. Certain ethnic groups suddenly discover their kinship with groups that have more power." But "how stable is this form of ethnic consciousness?" Wadlow asks. "Certainly, in times of tension, the ethnic becomes a primary line of defense, so that ethnic consciousness may be strongest in those areas where there have been overt outbreaks of violence or where a situation is continually tense." Referring to S. Comhaire-Sylvain in her *Femmes de Kinshasa, hier et aujourd'hui* (1968), a longitudinal study carried out over a period of 20 years in the Congo, Wadlow noted how marriages were *not* often restricted within ethnic groups. People who spoke Lingala in the city of Kinshasa easily readapted to their ethnic languages while in their cultural provenience. This presupposition gives credence to the thesis that ethnic consciousness is in fact not static as in "once and forever" of identification; it is fluid, always shifting and malleable (ibid.). Gerhard Maré concurs, "ethnic groups should be porous, allowing escape and entry. The tighter the definitions of membership,

the more totalitarian an ethnic group becomes . . . ethnicity should neither be privileged, nor granted a special status through prosecution or denial" (Campbell 1997: 74–75).

The "ethnic" is a location of myriad identities, undifferentiated social interactions and a a cultural mosaic. As Ranger argued above, Africans moved in and out of different ethnicities, drawing their identity *at one moment as a subject of this chief, or another, a member of this group or guild, et cetera.* The fluidity and dynamism of ethnicism so described is the process of moving "in and out of multiple identities," a process that redeems one from *identity fundamentalism* or *pathological ethnicism* (a.k.a. tribalism). On the dynamic creativity of this process Aidan Campbell (1997: 70) beautifully explains:

> Multiplying identities seemingly express creativity and make for the best possible world. From this perspective, anything which impedes the elasticity of the interchanges of minorities, which seeks to impose definition upon the undefinable, is not only wrong but dangerous. To attempt to define ethnicity any more deeply smacks of "totalitarianism" . . . or, in academia, "essentialism." By placing indigenism into rigid categories or boundaries, essentialism provides the intellectual rational for ethnic cleansing.

Furthermore, Siegfried Nadal in his study of the Nigerian Nupe ethnic group defined an ethnic group as "a group the members of which claim unity on the ground of their conception of a specific common culture . . . the political unit [tribalized ethnic], unlike culture and community, is exclusive . . . [These] cultural groups and communities have fluid boundaries; the association [Eze: in our case the political unit] is or is not rigid; but its boundaries . . . are by definition rigid" (Campbell 1997: 66). This distinction between the political and the cultural world becomes raison d'être for the transition from "ethnicity" to "tribalism" where "ethnicity" is the cultural (and moral) and "tribal" becomes the political. It is at this juncture of subjective manipulation that the tribe becomes pathologically rigid, socially homogenous, and structurally totalitarian. As a political invention, the "prize" of tribalism, Lonsdale notes, is of "high-political intrigue" and "social homogeneity." "Ethnicity" on the other hand is "moral" insofar as "civic virtue" is the core of its formation (Campbell 1997: 77). "Civic virtue" is understood as a good internal to practices of a community in which it gains any sanction of moral legitimacy. "Moral ethnicity" Lonsdale continues, "creates communities from within through domestic controversy over civic virtue." And precisely because it is "native" to the African, "it is a more trenchant critic of the abuse of power than any Western political thought." By "native" Lonsdale means that moral ethnicity as located within a culture is an internal good of the cultural community for it exudes practices through which groups express their

identity. By being "moral," ethnicity acts as a moral sentinel of civil society (Campbell 1997: 77). This understanding of ethnicity is a contrast to the "tribe," which is essentially projected and imposed from without.[4] A politicized subjective identity imagined by others or proscribed as so, the tribe is essentially "political," dependent on a motivation of a meta-political necessity. In the process of its politicization, the ethnic becomes a mosaic exclusivism, a fundamentalist reductionism. Such reductionism Crawford Young writes is "most pronounced in the perception of others . . . subjective identity itself is affected by the labels applied by others . . . through a feedback process, when a designation achieves general currency, it may be gradually internalized by the group itself" (Campbell 1997: 69).

As an imposed category, the internal (in)coherence of this politicized ethnic (the tribe) is admissible to fundamentalism. And precisely because ethnicity is fluid, it becomes vulnerable to tribalization through political maneuver by collapsing of different layers of identity into a rigid category. The rigidity will entail that group identity is now only to be defined in terms of difference to the other. As a point of subjective identification, the tribe encases, freezes the native into a neurotic subject and restricts other avenues that enable creative subjectivity or what phenomenologists would call intersubjectivity. Tribalism is thus a "deformed" moral ethnicity. Ethnicity on the other hand gains universal essence by virtue of its dynamism and multiple narrative spaces available to the individual for alternative expression of identity. Availability of "choices" neutralizes any pathological ethnocentrism which is exactly the charge against tribalism.

That the tribe is a civil war will be evident in the virulent strain of ethnic chauvinism that emerged in South Africa at the end of apartheid. All groups formerly united in the fight against apartheid began to reassert and redefine their ethnic or racial allegiance and affiliation. There was a conscious identification and splintering of racial or tribal identity in opposition to the imposed homogenized subjective memory. The attempt was reclaiming disenfranchised identities that were categorically homogenized by apartheid. Colored South Africans, for example, shared a common resentment to what Zoë Wicombs characterized as "the colored condition"—"drunk, lawless, uncivilized"—or the population Registration Act of 1950, which caricatured a colored person as one who "in appearance are obviously neither white, Indian nor member of an aboriginal race or African tribe" (Irlam 2004: 699–700). These so-called colored human beings began to view themselves in terms of preapartheid identity, splintering this uniform identity into other groups. According to Irlam (2004: 699–700), a new imagined identity emerges as these coloreds began to perceive themselves in terms such as "the Muslim 'Cape Malay' community, the reassertion of khoi and San

identities, the reclamation of a rural 'Coloured' life in such chronicles as A.H:M. Scholtz's *Vatmaar* (1995) and *Afdraai* (1998), or the wry and measure retrieval and reinvention of Griqua identity in Zoë Wicomb's rich novel *David's Story* (2000)."

A further consideration of the Nigerian situation reveals additional intricacies and complexities in the manipulation of, and politicization of the "ethnic" into "tribe." It was, therefore, on the strength of the efficacy of colonial structural policy that the notion of the "tribe" became defined as the political structural unit of indirect rule as we learn in the writing of Padmore (1949: 117) that in Nigeria, "the country has been divided into administrative units corresponding roughly to ethnic or tribal groupings." Conflating "tribe" and "ethnic," Padmore (ibid.) continues, "[In] each of these political units there is a Native Administration headed by a traditional chief in the South-Western Province, and by Sultans and Emirs in the Northern Province."

In colonial (and post-colonial) Nigeria, the "North" would usually refer to the "Hausa/Fulani." In reality, this geographical area comprises hundreds of other ethnicities like Zayam, Zarma, Yungur, Tigon, Tikar, Leme, Ayu, Barbur, among hundreds of other ethno-cultural groups. David Laitin suggests that "[the] idea that there was a single Hausa-Fulani tribe . . . was largely a political claim of the NPC [Northern People's Congress] in their battle against the South . . . [In addition] . . . Many elders intimately involved in rural Yoruba society today recall that, as late as the 1930's, 'Yoruba' was not a common form of political identification" (Appiah 1992: 288). The same projection is true of the Igbo of southern Nigeria, which before the Nigerian civil war exhibited no formal tribal unity. The Igbo of Nigeria is a conglomerate of different mother tongues—wawa, ekpoto, ugbo, agbaelu, et cetera. For example, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik), an accredited father of modern Nigeria, was an Igbo who became popular among the Yoruba dominated Lagos where he became famous as the editor of the *West African Pilot* first in Accra, Ghana and later in Lagos. This Newspaper was nationalist in orientation and only became identified as an Igbo project and Zik an Igbo leader after the civil war (ibid.). The "tribe" in the Igbo sense is thus a residue of the maneuvers of identity politicking through indirect rule system, but finding its most dynamic realization as a "tribe" in the events leading to the Nigeria-Biafra War, which gave it a rigid essence. The war gave the people of southeastern Nigera, who spoke the Igbo language, a powerful consciousness. Among the Igbo, *Ndi Igbo* still means foreigners, people of other nations. During the war, however, it would become a linguist twist converted to designate those who spoke what is now called Igbo language. It has become real and part of their identity.

The Igbo gives a pretension of homogenized group, whereas the Igbo tribe so-called remains an invented identity, a primordial residue of what Appiah (1992: 288) describes as "a produce of the rough—and tumble of the transition through colonial to post-colonial status." In the immediate years after independence, the sociopolitical imaginary of Nigeria will become dominated by pathological tribal affiliation induced by a politicized geopolitical unit. In contemporary Nigeria, when a northerner wins a national election, the victory is for the "North" and thrusts the "South" into one of convulsive constituency—a divisive polarity of northern and southern blocks.[5] This imagined polarity is usually nuanced through sensational captions in the press such as "Energy Ministry goes to the North," "Defense goes to the North" (in this case, a rather sensitive portfolio considering Nigeria's history of military dictatorship). Such lamentation would be reversal if and when a southerner is in power. But who is the "North" or the "South"? Laitin has argued that "many northern groups, especially in what are today Benue, Plateau, Gongola [Eze: Adamawa], and Kwara states, are largely Christian. When the leaders of Biafra tried to convince the world that they were oppressed by northern Muslims, ignorant foreigners (including the Pope) believed them. But the Nigerian army . . . was led by a northern Christian"[6] (Appiah 1992: 289). The "North" is as undefined as it is a mosaic. From a southerner's perspective, the "North" includes what is known as the Middle-Belt, [7]an imaginary location but a location whose inhabitants are technically neither "north" nor "south." The Middle-Belt is homogenized depending on whose perspective it is imagined. The politicization of religion in Nigeria further reveals the shifting tensions and subtleties in "tribalization" of Nigeria. The religious crises in the same "North" presuppose a "homogenous" Muslim North, an assumption that indicates another polarity. In the political arena, it was the North versus the South. When religious crises emerge, new coalition develops. Antagonisms fuelled by reason of belonging to a specific geopolitical unit evaporate as religious affiliation takes over. In such religious crises, one's religious affiliation is stronger than one's geopolitical unit. In the ensuing feud, geographical affinity collapses in favor of religious affiliation. Typical of the Nigerian case, however, the religious always masks political tensions, as the religious riots were always avenues of expressing political misgivings while subjecting other identities to the periphery.

Tribalism and the crises of nationalism

I have argued that the term "tribe" as used in colonial Africa is a fossilized embodiment of European sociopolitical imagination on Africa as it is a location of civil war. This imagination on the European side was an attempt to

make sense of the different ethnic identities they encountered within Africa's geopolitical unit and formulate a structural pattern that will enable colonial policies. Complicit in this formation were African chiefs and elites. On the African side, it was a manipulation of power through traditions—invented or real—on the basis of which tribalism smacks of a more chronic genesis. Accessing this point of reference, the famous Nigerian historian Peter Ekeh (1990: 660) argued persuasively that the reinforcement and manipulation of kinship patterns and clientelism was a dominant mode of political life during the slave trade era. When and where the "state" failed to protect and defend her citizens from the violence of slave trade, the "state" resorted to politics of settlement through clientelism—tribalism. Ekeh made a parallel between African tribalism and the rise of feudalism in medieval Europe: "If in Europe the response to the failure of the state to provide security for the individual was the introduction of feudalism, in Africa the response to the violation of the citizenry by the State, in its sponsorship of the slave trade, was the entrenchment of kinship corporations." With the state unable to defend its citizens from the ensuing violence of slave trade, "Kingship systems were strengthened and elaborated as a means of providing protection against the dangers of the violence created by the slave trade" (ibid.).

The task ahead is to substantiate this infusion of "tribe" in the national memory. An assumed presupposition is that postindependent African nationalistic movements and ideologies assume a textured legitimacy of being transmitters of the legacy of nationalistic struggle, while ethnic or tribal movements were shunned off as illegitimate for detracting from a presupposed national consciousness or memory (cf. Mamdani 1996: 187). My task will be to validate when an ethnic conscious polity becomes a tribal affair in order to problematize and understand the dynamism of tribalism (invented or imagined) in colonial Africa. Answer to these questions remain a parody as Mamdani (ibid.) asks, "could it be that the bifurcated nature of the state shaped under colonialism, and of the politics it shaped in turn, had now appeared in the theory that tried to explain it" or justify it if I may add? This parody reflecting the various point of contention may be summed thus: One position recognizes tribal oriented movements as "primordial carryover, a traditional or atavistic residue, to be cured or erased with the march of modernity" (ibid.). Other schools are persuaded that tribal and ethnic-oriented movements are in fact a consequence of "a modern conspiracy" that is either externally or internally induced. Those ascribing to external induced conspiracy would justify this position by arguing that "tribe" in colonial Africa was an "invention," an "imagination" and "arbitrary colonial creation" (ibid., also Ranger 1983). Those who saw this conspiracy as localized argue on the strength of the "tactical maneuvers by the state to divide the people or to

elite strategies to "use" popular allegiances to gain advantage for themselves" (ibid.). The late South African sociologist Archie Mafeje (1971: 258) textures this nuance in highlighting the substantial difference between a person who strives in the name of the "tribe" to conserve the tribe's traditional dynamism and another person who invokes the tribe as an ideology. The latter appeals to the tribe as an authority of tradition in order to exploit power differentials, "not in the tribal area, but in the modern capital city" with the sole purpose of exploiting those he supposedly represents.

If the conspiracy theorists view tribalism in Africa as a cankerworm that was afflicted on Africa both from within and with-out, the primordialists Mamdani (1996: 188) informs us, would view tribalism as an ontogenesis, a primordial residue, an ahistorical virus that is embedded in the very notion "Africa." Despite the different epistemological nuances, both schools agree that "tribalism" is a virus that must be eradicated. On this point, Mamdani noted that both schools (primordial and conspiracy theorists) refined their positions that contemporary tribalism was in fact "unleashed in an earlier historical period, the era of State-sponsered [*sic*] slavery, when the "kingship corporation" was the only safety net available to fleeing "citizens." Peter Ekeh, as noted earlier, concurs, while Davidson (1992: 226) confirms Ekeh's position that "the predatory nature of the postcolonial state or neocolonial state in Africa . . . has provoked self-defense by kinship ties or their bureaucratic equivalents and, with this, a corresponding subversion of the state by smuggling and related kinds of economic crime." A second nuanced version of the primordial theorists, Mamdani (1996: 189) further explicates, will distinguish between "moral ethnicity" and "political tribalism." While "political tribalism" is a fixed-rigid trans-historical constant, "moral ethnicity" invokes a fluid, amorphous and historical constant. If moral ethnicity is defined and understood as the civic virtue of a community, then "political tribalism" is a corrupt interface of political reality (ibid.; also, Wadlow 1969, Campbell 1997). Finally is a school of thought in which tribalism is conceived as a "modernity of tradition" (ibid.), a conflation of various strategies in the struggle for power by a recognition of the significance of tribe as a basic architecture of African societies as noted in the Tanganyika example. In the case, the tribe was a resource for the "progressive chiefs" to aspire to advance their positions in the colonial government.

In retrospect, my attempt following the outline of Mamdani (1996: 185, 187) is to describe the procedural formation of tribalism as both an "invention" and a "mediation" of (1) colonial policies and later, of the ruling elite to favor one tribal (ethnic grouping) over the other, (2) where tribalism functions as a yardstick of nationalistic movements and their embodied ideologies. If (1) is explained as a conscious and strategic decision of colonial architects,

(2) can neither be explained nor understood as a conscious decision of any power polity, and neither can it be explained by a view that considers social movement as an uninterrupted consequence of historical consciousness for it is a perspective that restricts, and does not confer, social history to these nationalistic movements and their specific ideologies (cf. Mamdani 1996: 185–188). My view considering all these features is that the "tribe" and "tribalism" is not only a product or invention of the interface between colonial policies and invented traditions but also a determinant of a national memory. I shall now take a hiatus to consider examples from Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya to substantiate this view as preempted by Mamdani's ground breaking insight on tribalism as a civil war among peasant communities.

In South Africa, while the ANC (African National Congress) is arguably a multiethnic political grouping, the IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) is grafted within the social history of the Zulu. In countries like Nigeria (in the first republic), the polarity became intense as each of the hundred ethnic groupings align themselves to an ethnically dominated political party. A critical question yet remains: is a movement tribalistic if its social character, base and objective local-specific? The historical emergence of the Mau Mau rebellion in colonial Kenya, gives evidence of diverging insights. Some scholars have dismissed the Mau Mau as a narrow minded tribalistic program mostly because it was dominated by the Kikuyu with the aim of reviving Kikuyu culture usually expressed through the Mau Mau liberation songs that usually expressed Kikuyu cultural values (Mamdani 1996: 189). Other scholars have gone further in recognizing the Mau Mau as an authentic voice and a representative consciousness of the colonial rural poor in Kenya where for the first time, a social mass movement acted independently of the educated elite who always led such movements. And because the social base of the Mau Mau is rooted among the poor, representing an ideology that cuts across other tribes, that is, demand for land and freedom, Mau Mau transcended any geo-particularistic tendencies and became embraced as a legitimate nationalist independent movement and enjoyed popular support at grass-root level (ibid.).

Mamdani employs the Kikuyu example as a critique of the presumptuous forecast of many scholars (African and Western alike) that the peasant (traditional) community in colonial Africa is largely a homogenous/undifferentiated whole. It is also a critique of these presumptions readily assimilated and endorsed by African leaders in their attempt to forge a national consciousness. The precolonial and colonial African condition negates this fact. Resistance to colonial rule in many parts of the subcontinent began from the different cultural communities. Resistance nourished by an already existing tensions and power struggles within the "tribe" or

ethnic group itself. Abdul Raufu Mustapha employed a Nigerian case study to demonstrate the heterogeneous motivation characterizing peasant communities and their representation in colonial era. In his study of the Rogo peasantry in Hausa land (Nigeria), Mustapha found out that the Roga "has a strong historical consciousness of being *Talakawa* and see themselves in opposition to the *Masu Sarauta* who controlled the precolonial state system, and who allied themselves to the colonizing power under Indirect Rule" (Davidson 1992: 109, Mamdani 1996: 202). Now, the *Talakawa* represents the oppressed where the *Masu Sarauta* remains the symbol of colonial domination for they were the aristocratic medium of Indirect Rule. With political independence in 1960 followed by enhanced political development in 1966, it was possible for the *Talakawa* to assert political influence overarching within the local scene in "Islamic Radical Populism" whose front was the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in the first Republic and People's Redemption Party (PRP) in the second Republic (ibid.).

If tribal movements can evolve into national movements, how do we access the emergent crises in the nation-state as a consequence of tribalism? Or was it a consequence of the ingenuous manipulation, balkanization and homogenization of different ethnic groupings into a model nation? I pause once again to interrogate the burden of such implication, noting how these possibilities drifted into the emerging crises of nationalism. I have argued that tribalism was a character of the colonial state—a bifurcated state—through a divide and rule policy in which ethnic groups were divided, balkanized, and amalgamated. And the people so amalgamated are historically separate and distinct from one another—a condition not perturbing the architects of such ethnic coagulation. In the section that follows, I will show how the emerging crisis of nationalism was both the invention and consequence of tribalism in colonial Africa. The invention of the tribe in Africa was both disempowering and alienating. It initiated the total collapse of civil society while flooding the terrain of African geopolitical landscape with tragedy never witnessed elsewhere since WWII. Beginning with the coming of the army generals championing the cause of one marginalized tribal group after another to the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi, the political elites plundering the national "cake" with a passionate greed, the institutionalization of corruption as an official government policy, et cetera, these new independent nation-states lost every bit of internal cohesion (cf. Chapter 6). The demand for socioeconomic empowerment, basic justice, issues that became the premise of social struggle for "independence" was *garbaged* through executive violence. The Great Lake region of Burundi/Rwanda and Congo presents a more telling example and deserves significant examination.

The Burundi and Rwanda genocide is a classical case of the tragedy of tribalizaiton in Africa. Burundi and Rwanda in the southern east African

rift valley inherited a postcolonial verbiage of kinship clientelism. The structural pattern of the kinship in these regions favored the minority Tutsi as dominant political actors over the Hutu. Similar to the medieval feudal system, the Tutsi have historically been the local aristocrats and the Hutus the serf. It was a model that provided a modicum of right and responsibilities between the Tutsi and Hutu. The German invasion of Burundi in the early twentieth century changed this status quo. The German colonial administrators exploited the feudal-like relationship to implement a new order based on indirect rule, in which the Tutsi effectively became "executives" of colonial dictatorship. This new order undermined the "acceptable" pattern of power relation between the two ethnic groups. With the defeat of Germany in 1918, the Belgians formerly entrenched the existing division by politicizing the two ethnic groups through issuance of tribal identity cards, which placed the Tutsi as superior to the Hutu in an engendered tribal supremacy. It became a tribal dictatorship advanced through Tutsi colonial executives. For the Hutu, this dictatorship was simply a Tutsi tyranny and nothing else. Independence in 1962 ushered a new era of social change. In Rwanda, it was easy for the majority Hutu to unseat the minority Tutsi elite vis-à-vis a paradigm of kinship network of government. This was not the case in Burundi where the ruling Tutsi elite resisted attempt for majoritarian kind of democracy as in Rwanda. This resistance prompted a series of Hutu uprisings, which were easily subdued by a Tutsi dominated army, reaching a peak in 1965 when most politically active Hutu were massacred. Thousands of peasants associated or implicated in the insurgency were slaughtered. Another attempt to unseat the Tutsi was in 1972 in a rebellion in which between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutus were massacred. The same situation in the 1980s when more Hutu peasants were once again slaughtered. The rest is history as Burundi became increasingly polarized into ethnic line and antagonism that later exploded in the genocide of 1994 while the world watched.

The genocide in Rwanda is to prove a litmus test for international politics and its relation to Africa. Juvenile Habyarimana was the Hutu president of Rwanda who had brokered a power deal with the Tutsi led Rwandan Patriotic Front in 1993. On the 6th of April 1994, the plane in which he was traveling with his Burundian counterpart was shot down in very murky circumstances. The suspicion fell on Hutu extremists who opposed the deal. These militias were already in genocide mood and the death of Habyarimana was only a pretext to stir immediate action. The advance purchase and storage of *killer machetes* and systematic identification of Tutsis and moderate Hutus for slaughter give credence to such argument. Indeed, no sooner had the plane crashed would Hutu militia men set roadblocks and embarked on a

systematic slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus that within a short period of 100 days, over a million people have been massacred.

There is a persuasive argument of Western hypocrisy to the Rwandan genocide. The plausibility of such argument is rendered upon Western indifference to the crises that pale in comparison with similar crises around the same time in Eastern Europe. In the weeks leading to the genocide, and even in the first month of the genocide, Western governments were generally indifferent to the unfolding events, which barely gained coverage in Western media. For many reasons, the unfolding events in South Africa with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela were overshadowing every other news from Africa. Some will argue, however, that this indifference will have to be considered in the background of the Bosnian War where the Western powers would muster massive economic and military powers at their disposal. Moreover, prior to the genocide, the Canadian commander of the skeletal UN peace keeping mission, Major General Romeao Dallaire had sent a memo to Washington warning of an imminent genocide. The note went missing. The U.S. state department for its part avoided the use of the term "genocide" and preferred instead "breakdown of cease fire," which some historians have argued was a political *coverage* to neutralize the urgency of the unfolding events and suffocate any pressure to intervene. Such hypocrisy became more pronounced in their reaction to similar crises in Eastern Europe. State Department in this case would use every opportunity to call it genocide (Russell 2000: 83).

As the genocide raged in Rwanda, the UN peace keeping force were directed by their bosses in New York to remain neutral since they only had a monitoring mandate. In such circumstances, the blue helmets were effectively unable to stop the machete wielding mobs that were slaughtering civilians in the city. When a patrol of ten Belgian soldiers were sent to join five Ghanaian peace keepers to secure the moderate Hutu Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana who had opposed the slaughter, they were overpowered by the presidential guards. They too were slaughtered along with the prime minister and her husband in very gruesome circumstances. To make matters worse, UN Security Council ordered the withdrawal of the UN security forces, a move that paved way for intensified mass slaughter. When the UN forces finally intervened, it was too late.

On evidence such as these, revisionist historians would argue that the cause of Western indifference is on the absence of immediate economic threat from Rwanda. Besides, there was neither political nor any strategic importance in immediate intervention; diamond, gold, or oil prices are not set to skyrocket, the world market will not be destabilized. On the basis of such analogies with the Kosovo crises, the revisionists would admit that this indifference to Rwanda is jettisoned upon a residual influence of capitalist subjectivity

that has become a lot of Africa's heritage and an undeniable framework of international politics.

Next door to Burundi and Rwanda is the "Mobutist" Paradigm (government by kinship networks) operational in the former Zaire (or DRC). The strongman: Mobutu Sese Sekou—a Western stooge, protected and promoted by the West assumed power after a CIA sponsored assassination of the nationalist independence hero, Patrice Lumumba. Mobutu institutionalized kinship politics as a political culture through a state sponsored terrorism. Opponents were executed or declared missing, others were consigned to exile. As usual in such institutionalized clientele form of government, bribery and corruption was formally endorsed. Zaire in the writing of Davidson (1992: 255) was a state that became "increasingly a myth, a mere verbal usage, an idea without an existential context." And in the writing of M.G. Schatzberg (1988: 53), Zaire has become a "bandit state." Stuck in its own verbiage of permanent stagnation, the Catholic Archbishop of Kinshasa in a pastoral letter of 1976 (when the situation was even more tolerable than in the later years) decried the situation:

> The thirst for money transforms men into assassins . . . and whoever holds a morsel of authority or means of pressure, profits from it to impose on people and exploit them . . . how many children and adults die without medical care? Because they are unable to bribe the medical personnel who are supposed to care for them? Why are there no medical supplies in the hospital, although these can be found in the market place? Why is it that in our courts justice can only be got by fat bribes to the Judge? Why are prisoners forgotten in jail? Because they have no one to pay off the judge who sits on their dossier.
>
> (Young and Turner 1985: 43, Davidson 1992: 258–259)

The situation in Ziare was once celebrated by Tshitenyi-Nzambale, a notable diplomat during the Mobutu era in a pamphlet he called *Devenez Riche Rapidement*: *Vous devez aimer l'argent et le poursuivre inlassablement. Aimez l'argent 'a la folie. Adorez-le en pensée et en acte* . . . [You should love money and power untiringly. Love money madly. Adore it in thinking and in action . . .] (Lemarchand 1979: 238, Davidson 1992: 258). Note the discontinuity between Nkrumah's earlier appeal to political kingdom and everything else will follow, and the Tshitenyi-Nzambale's appeal to material kingdom and everything will follow. This was the kind of dislocation and disorientation of political clientelism where the ruling bureaucracy is itself the *State* but a State without citizens (cf. Chapter 6).

The Great Lakes example on the destructive role of tribalism is not unique. Other examples abound elsewhere in Africa where tribalism has unleashed legendary and unprecedented scale of social disintegration. Thus emerged a

discontinuity between national struggle and social struggle, and in its place, a new trend emerged, a continuity between national struggle and clientelism. "National" will symbolize a quick path to enrichment through political settlement and clientelism as the hallmark for national unity. The consequence of all these was political and economic alienation of the citizens. Power became institutionalized in the hands of few elites or generals who employ the spoils of the plunder for the continual domination of those whom they have exploited. Evidence points to the Nigerian case where ex-military dictators who have become ridiculously rich have become political godfathers worshipped for their patronage and donations, influencing the political fallout. A scenario summarized by the famous late Nigerian social scientist, Claude Ake (1989: 8):

> Development strategies in Africa, with minor exceptions, have tended to be strategies by which a few use the many for their purposes. They are uncompromisingly top-down. There is not, and never has been, popular participation in political and economic decision-making . . . [efforts are made] . . . to prevent the expression of popular interest, and to ensure acquiescence in policies which are hostile to the public interest . . . Development has turned into concerted aggression against the common people, producing a theatre of alienation.

A "theater of alienation" became the dilemma of the new nation-state dramatized in a pattern whereby strong states evolved into dictatorship (Mugabe's Zimbabwe, Eyadema's Togo, Bongo's Gabon, Obiang's Equatorial Guinea, etc.) and weaker states collapsed into clientelism (Nigeria [first and second republics], Somalia, Tolbert and Doe's Liberia, Kenyatta and Moi's Kenya, etc.) (see Chapter 6).

This is how the utopian promise of political kingdom became displaced by "race for spoils" of the national "cake," which overshadows any national objective. The nation-state would degenerate into ethnic rivalry and elitist chauvinism. The elitist chauvinism is a racism of contempt, it is a racism that masks what it hates through a neurotic paternalism and holds in contempt those it exploits from whence "the social soon ceased to prevail over the national in the dynamics of post-colonialism" (Davidson 1992: 186). The Nigerian Poet Tanure Ojaide (1991: 8) in his famous poem *No Longer our Own Country* expresses this disillusionment in which the "national" has become a mine of plunder for the elites:

> We have lost it,
> the county we were born into
> We can now sing dirges of that commonwealth of yesterday . . . .
> Our sacred trees have been cut down
> to make armchairs for the rich and titled;

Our totem eagle, that bird of great heights,
has been shot at by thoughtless guardians . . .
We will expect in old age
To climb the mountain of prosperity
Which we blew up in adolescence
Our own country was a dream
So beautiful while it lasted,
and now we are exiles in a country that was once ours—
we were born into another country,
a world that has gone with a big boom . . .
For now we live in a country
that is no longer our own . . .

My point thus far has not been to indulge in an account of historical exploits irrelevant for Africa of today, but to emphasize that political independence as a colonial legacy was only a continued process in the invention of contemporary Africa. The structural polity adapted at independence gives credence to a structural continuity of colonial era exhibiting a bifurcated character. The appeal to a national consciousness to forge a unity subverted the quest for elementary justice which stimulated the social struggle that led to independence. The new state was faced with a contradiction between idealism and realism. The idealism that nationalistic power will usher in a political kingdom was a false promise since the sociopolitical and economic gains of the new dispensation was subverted by the elitist few in the awards of contracts, clientelism and politics of settlement (Chapter 6). Realism being that the divide between the nationalistic elite and the lower cadre, the masses grew bigger with the latter losing faith and trust in the new dispensation. One would reverberate with shock to hear some of our elders complain that life under the colonialism was more promising than the present dispensation. While such examples are rare, it nevertheless points to the fact that the promise of nationalism for national unity is not fulfilled because of the false foundation in which the promises are laid. The new rulers have lost legitimacy in the eyes of their people with hunger as constant reminder of the steady decline in the political and moral values of the elitist leaders. As an escape from this disillusion of the "national" state, people reverted to ethnic loyalty, which in turn spelt more disaster for the nation-sate as the tribal civil wars in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, have shown. In the meantime, the West organized conferences on the future of Africa: learned speeches are delivered but all remained at best academic enterprise. In one country after another, the nationalists were replaced with the coming of the generals. These issues will become the focus of Chapter 6.

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CHAPTER 4

Africanism: A History of Histories

> For those who have eaten of the tree of knowledge, paradise is lost
>
> (Popper 1950: 195)

Introduction

Contemporary African intellectuals are a product of the encounter with the West where they were educated—a situation that has generated an ambivalent complexity, producing what Appiah (1992: 86) calls a distinctive form of cultural (dis)location, a phenomenon Abiola Irele (2007: 202) enunciated in "In Praise of Alienation":

> We are conscious of the irreversible nature of the transformations the impact of Europe has effected in our midst and which are so extensive as to define the really significant frame of reference of our contemporary existence. The traditional pre-colonial culture and way of life continue to exist as a reality among us, but they constitute an order of existence that is engaged in a forced march, in a direction dictated by the requirements of a modern scientific and technological civilization. It also happens to be the case that Western civilization . . . provides the paradigm of modernity to which we aspire. Hence our mixed feelings, the troubled sense of acceptance and rejection . . . the ambivalence we demonstrate in our response to Europe and Western civilization is in fact a measure of our emotional tribute; it is expressive, in a profound way, of the cultural hold Europe has secured upon us—of the alienation it has imposed upon us as a historical fate.

The decolonized subject in writing about himself has massive political significance (Appiah, ibid.). Writing in this formation of discourse generates a new sense of meaning. Since it is a discourse primarily expressed through language, the tools we employ, Appiah (1992: 86, 89) reminds us, are given: our language may be ours, but the tools are that of the West; they are at the service

of new masters. Such discourse is a double agent, invoking complaints of abuse and defilement "by alien traditions in an alien tongue" (ibid.).

Parallel to, and sometimes constitutive to the emerging nation-state were ideological movements that largely spurred national resistance movements. These ideological movements invoked a new consciousness such that abstracts from, but consistent with an image of a global Negro fraternity. African intellectuals and elites embarked upon a new project to recapture the old image of the beloved pristine community, disavowing the truncating condition of the colonial world to which they have been subjected to. Since this subjection was mediated ideologically, the restoration of the "Subject" would be mediated through the same ideological pattern, but an ideological symbolism that would usher in the idea of a racial-cultural unity. For purposes of clarity at this juncture, it is necessary to make a statement on ideology.

"Ideology" is a contested vocabulary: oscillating from pure dogmatism (fundamentalism) to postmodern invention, from systems of beliefs to questions of power. Construed in the latter sense, ideology deals with "legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class" (Eagleton 1991: 5). In the writing of J.B Thompson (1984: 4), the study of ideology is the study of ways "in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relation of domination." The dominating power actualizes its legitimation by:

> *Promoting* belief and values congenial to it; *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself.
>
> (Eagleton 1991: 5–6)

This formation of ideology conveniently suits the understanding of imperial discourse and representations. They interact in various complex ways to "mystify" and "mask" real situation and legitimate their dominance through these interactions. The problem with this definition is that not every system of belief is linked with a dominant political power. And while it might be convenient to adapt it for present purposes, it does not guarantee conceptual clarity. For example, theorists like Kenneth Minogue (1985: 4) defined ideology in oppositional terms: "ideologies can be specified in terms of a shared hostility to modernity: to liberalism in politics, individualism in moral practice and the market in economics." This definition invokes an ambiguous contestation in which advocates of liberalism will be ideological whereas communitarian supporters are not. Restricted in this sense, ideology as mere

"dominant form of social thought" remains an exclusive mosaic of thoughts. An inclusive but neutral definition of ideology has been proposed by Martin Seliger (1976: 11) who defined ideology as "sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organized social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot, or rebuild a given social order." This formation offers a breach in which one might speak of Négritude, pan-Africanism as an ideology (and their possible rehabilitation)—concepts that would otherwise remain obfuscated if ideology is understood only in terms of its mystification, illusion, or false consciousness.

Pan-Africanism

Pan-Africanism is a sociocultural precedent to Négritude. It was already nurtured in the 1860's, starting in West Africa by few educated black elites as a revolt to European contempt for everything African. It began as an intellectual cum social revolution to challenge European prejudices and racist mindsets about Africa. The first fruit of the revolution was "Ethiopianism" which came as a typical revolt against racist Christianity. Ethiopianism is derived from the prophetic utterances in the bible (Psalm 68: 31)

> From Egypt nobles will come,
> Ethiopia will stretch out its hands to God

Africa is the new Ethiopia and new independent Africanist churches will emerge to displace the old order. The first of such independent churches was founded in 1884 by Nehemiah Tile in South Africa and in 1888 in Nigeria (Boahen 1987: 19). This was the platform in which educated African elites would stage to challenge the racists mentality and practices of European colonialists. The movement Boahen (1987: 20) writes mediated a "social revolution . . . an intellectual revolution, which, in turn, generated African racial consciousness and identity as well as the ideology of African personality and Pan-Africanism." The leading pioneers of Africanism were John Africanus Horton and Edward Blyden whose focus was to challenge and repudiate the prevalent racist theories of the day. Like later Negritude scholars, they will also engage in historical analogy and would therefore fall into the same problematic of this methodological entrapment. First was their apology for the black race, for black subjectivity as Horton apologized, "Africans are not incapable of improvement but . . . by the assistance of good and able men they are destined to figure in the course of time, and take a prominent part in the history

of the civilized world" (Boahen 1987: 20). And then moving beyond apology to analogy:

> Rome was not build in a day, the proudest kingdom in Europe was once in state of barbarism perhaps worse than now exists amongst the tribes chiefly inhabiting the West Coast of Africa; and it is an incontrovertible axiom that what has been done can again be done. If Europe therefore, has been raised to her present pitch of civilization by progressive advancement, Africa too, with a guarantee of the civilization of the north, will rise into equal importance.
>
> (Boahen 1987: 20)

Blyden for his part advocated for Islamic social ethics as opposed to Christian ethics. The former in his view accords with African personality. He championed Africa for Africans (to be echoed by Nkrumah half a century later), a pan-Africanism characterized by "African personality," which inheres both a biological and normative essence—he is of pure black blood and has racial pride. It is at this moment that pan-Africanism moves from analogy to antiracist racist movement. The "African personality" is linked to the African subjective:

> It is sad to think that there are some Africans . . . who are blind to the radical facts of humanity as to say, 'Let us do away with the sentiment of Race, let us do away with our African personality and be lost, if possible in another race . . . when you have done away with your personality, you have done away with yourselves . . . The duty of every man, of every race is to contend for its individuality—to keep and develop it . . . Therefore, honor and love your Race.
>
> (Boahen 1987: 22)

The moment of this intellectual revolution became the ideological blueprint of pan-Africanism as an attempt at a Negro cultural universal. Most symbolically, this intellectual movement would be the foundation of later anticolonial discourses that draw upon the pan-Africanist sentiments for ideological nourishment. The most notable, which became a derivative, was Négritude. As I shall show later, my disenchantment is not that they condemned or challenged colonial racist discourses but because they answered the racist in his own terms through analogy, apology, and antiracist racism. One does not need to make apology for his race for that will constitute a notional denial of subjectivity. Antiracist racism as well as historical analogy is only an extension of racist colonial discourse. These men and women were fighting against structural and European state sponsored banditry of African states. Colonialism in Africa is not a myth and I do not subscribe to a thesis of *historical amnesia* or historical fatigue in which reflections on colonialism is set aside as a finished historiography. No, the impact of colonialism is real and active in Africa. I have discussed the residues in detail as it affects contemporary

nation-state in Africa. The brutality of the system would be the background to measure the response of these Africanist scholars. The inhumanity, degradation, physical abuses [like the massacre of more than 100,000 Africans by Germans in the Maji Maji rebellion in Tanganyika, with similar uprising in South West Africa leading to the decimation of half of the population in the colony by the German forces] which are not my focus in this work, would have to be considered within a historical context. Other examples would include the annihilation of almost 20 towns in the 1918 Egba uprising in western Nigeria by the British (see Boahen 1987: 66). This was the manner of colonial domination in Africa but not restricted to the Germans or British. In fact, the French and the Portuguese would have to compete as to the winners of the most brutal physical abuse of colonial era. Portugal specifically was late in releasing her colonies precisely because the socioeconomic lifeline of Portugal was dependent on her colonies. As for the Africanist American and European collaborators, the discrimination was real. The prejudice was harsh. The racism was raw. The stereotypes they encountered were not merely a political doctrine but a cultural affair and their antagonists believed in it. Their subjective experience is best captured by Richard Wright (1940: xi):

> [. . .] there are two worlds, the white world and the black world, and they are physically separated. There are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white businesses and black businesses, white graveyards and black graveyards, and, for all I know, a white God and a black God . . .

While we cannot remain fixated on the past, this past is the context in which these men reacted to colonial brutality, inhumanity and domination. These elites were relatives of many of these victims. They belonged to the same community. The only difference is that they could express their trauma in written words.

Négritude

In this section, I shall interrogate such ideologies bursting through the straightjacket of historical change, and then introduce arguments made by Africanist scholars that are both emotive and percussive, but discourses championed in blithe disregard of some obvious methodological error. I will proceed with a historical emphasis on Négritude, and authenticité. My point of departure is that Négritude or, as one might prefer it in lieu of its multiple significations (or *leftover* representations)—[when these discourses remain unhistoricized and dogmatic]—*ubuntu* (in southern Africa) *Authenticité* (in Central Africa, DRC), black consciousness (South Africa), Kaunda's humanism (in Zambia) and Nyerere's Ujamaa (in Tanzania)—are

all ideological discourse aimed at creating a homogenized African memory. While Négritude and pan-Africanism gravitate toward a Negro fraternity, these other ideologies were locale specific or geographically restricted. For the present moment, my focus on Négritude is that if pan-Africanism is the metaphysical taproot for these discourses, Négritude is is an operative discourse that serves as the branches. It is therefore necessary to proceed on this point of departure in order to make sense of these other ideologies in their locale-specific domain. I relate to *authenticité* in this chapter because it offers a classical example of rupture and revolt through which nationalist discourses find their essence. These conjectures flourish on a homogenization of African cultural history; it lays claim on an original *otherness*. But it is a claim that would become a product of the "other" for it runs parallel to imperial discourse on Africa.

As an ambitious colonial/postcolonial African discourse, Négritude and its parallels act as signifiers of compassion and abhorrence that would thrive on the rehabilitation of the psychosocial and anthropological dignity of the Negro. And doubtful as their philosophical foundations might be, an appeal is made to African cultural histories and tradition(s) for legitimacy and as a repository of signs and meanings—where a *unique cultural history* remains an essentialist and imperative signifier of what is "African Authenticity." On ontological level, Négritude as a postcolonial Africanist discourses embodies a synchronistic criterion with an anthropological persuasion in which fact might reflect theory *mutatis mutandis* a systematic elision of reality. On this elision of reality, I proceed to contextualize the discourse on Négritude within a general framework of postcolonial (Africanist) theory with a reminder that postcolonial discourse is a kaleidoscopic history, a contested terrain! My view is strongly complemented by Triveid and Mukherjee (1996: 4):

> [Postcolonialism] makes us interrogate many aspects of the study of literature that we were made to take for granted, enabling us to read not only our text in our own terms, but also to re-interpret some of the old canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of our specific historical and geographical location. It brings severely into question the old idea of autotelic nature of literary text and the sealed anti-septic notion of "artistic" value uncontaminated.

It is on the basis of the above complexity that Said (1993: 59) encourages what he calls "contrapuntal" readings of literary texts: "[As] we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts."

"Postcolonialism" is not the same as Post-colonialism. Post-colonialism (hyphenated) refers to a time period after colonialism, or condition of life at the end of colonialism. Postcolonialism (not hyphenated) on the other hand is the theory that attempts to understand the post-colonial condition. Postcolonialism involves the challenge or the attempt to decolonize the mind from its ideological prison. Postcolonialism is a discourse on this decolonization of the mind and does not mark any historical epoch. According to McLeod (2000: 33), postcolonialism acknowledges the necessity of historical continuity and change. On the one hand, it is not naïve to the existence of material realities and modes of representations peculiar to colonialism and is still relevant to political mappings despite the effects of decolonization. On another hand, it asserts the continuity on the necessity of change while underscoring the challenges involved in the task. Continuity on this necessity of change is what Fanon (1963: 28) meant when he wrote that decolonization does not happen absentmindedly; it influences the overall well-being of the subject, it turns spectators into "privileged actors," it offers a new lease of life with emergence of a new form of humanity and discourse. Decolonization is not a supernatural event; it is a creation of free men because " 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself." If colonialism is nourished through a colonization of the mind, then decolonization would involve decolonizing the mind in terms not depredating the Subject.

If colonial discourse and language were tools and instruments of colonial domination, language plays a critical role in challenging this modality of coloniality, which often reflects the prejudices and assumptions used to justify the continual possession and occupation of a people's social and material space. Language reflects a code, an attitude of behavior and a tool for exploitation, differentiation and power discourse. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986: 14–15) describes such relationship between power, culture and language:

> Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a people's identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history . . . Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world.

Interestingly enough, Ngugi Wa Thiongo wrote in the English language and not in his kikuyu mother tongue. The point is made nevertheless as Fanon (1986: 18) reaffirms, "[A] man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed in that language."

As argued in Chapter 2, postcolonial African discourse would emerge as reactionary response to the racist discourse of imperial order. The overwhelming response is to attempt to prove the existence of African history or philosophy. Some African men of letters went as far as arguing that civilization originated in Africa. The central thesis of his now classic, *The African Origins of Civilization*, Cheikh Anta Diop (1974: xiv–xv) summarizes these claims as will be discussed later.

Diop would propose that Black civilization was the *master narrative* of all other great civilizations. On the bent of this romantic racialism, Diop attempted a[n] (anachronistic?) parallel between Ancient Egyptian philosophy and the project of pan-African nationalism. Such historical connection offers Négritude its epistemic nuance while endorsing a facile archaeology of value for contemporary racial pride on the Egyptian connection. In my critique of this historical method I shall argue that this kind of history is an invention and a history from above. It is a history from above because while the debate is structured in terms of different competing ideologies lurking behind a sanctimonious reproof for a universal legitimacy, the ideology of such universal legitimacy is not questioned but ostentatiously adapted. On this motivation, most postcolonial African discourse is a "reverse discourse." It is "reverse" because its terms of resistance are given while its representations and contestations are in the writing of Appiah (1992: 95–96), "entrapped within the Western cultural matrix we affect to dispute. The pose of repudiation actually presupposes the cultural institutions of the West and its ideologies."

A Herculean task, daunting and utopian, postcolonial African discourse became in fact a product of the West (and their African accomplices) by which what it signifies remains pertinent insofar as it succumbs to the alluring mimesis (its own) it has thus invented. As Appiah (1992: 96) had written, "our cultural nationalists do not go far enough; they are blind to the fact that their method inhabit a Western architecture". The fact that contemporary African discourse employs the tools readily associated with Western epistemology (i.e., the tools of language) and such tools available to select elite.

In the section that follows, also the theoretical anchor of this subsection, I am genuinely skeptical as I am reminded of Euthyphro's question: "Is an act pious because the gods love it or do they love it because it is pious?" In similar vein, one might ask, is Négritude a myth or reality? Answer to this question is by no means isomorphic with the determinate understanding of its social history, but further critical question does emerge, upon which one might localize and make sense of its theoretical context. If it is a myth, one would ask, is Négritude just an idealistic signifier of the African intellectual? If it is a reality, how does its history resonate with the actual signification of contemporary African discourse? My answer is both (Négritude is a myth and reality).

The beginnings

E.W. Blyden's (1832–1912) anticolonial discourse has always been cast as the ideological point of departure for Négritude and its sociopolitical precedent, pan-Africanism. According Hollis.R. Lynch (1970: 250), the contemporary understanding of Négritude is historically linked to the Blyden:

> If Blyden was the ideological father of the idea of West African unity, he also inspired nationalism in the individual territories . . . indeed for nationalists and educators of British West Africa the life and achievements of Blyden was a popular subject of public lecture. Blyden's pan-Negro ideology was undoubtedly the most important progenitor of pan-Africanism.

Blyden challenged the precolonial representations of Europeans and Americans about Africa and Africans. According to Blyden ([1888]1967: 58) the image of the "negro" as represented in the Western literature are merely fictitious constructions around the persona of the Negro to justify the Negro's enslavement and exploitation. These representations were then cast as universally valid-eternal-truth:

> The Negro of the ordinary traveler or missionary—and perhaps, of two-thirds of the Christian world—is a purely fictitious being, constructed out of the traditions of slave-traders and slave-holders, who have circulated all sorts of absurd stories, and also out of prejudices inherited from ancestors, who were taught to regard the Negro as a legitimate object of traffic.

These representations gained legitimacy because they were both a product of an ethnocentric ideology from a dominant racial group and of the ostentatious reflection of colonial discourses framed in a bizarre network of cultural history by which persons and cultures in Africa became anti-prototype, an "inversion" if you like, of Western traditional *superhuman* and *super-cultural* archetypes (see Mudimbe 1988: 118). This predicament according to Blyden justified the indictment of the Negro race as evident in the writing of Sir Samuel Baker: "His [Negro's] dwelling is of straw or waffles, his crops suffice for a support from hand to mouth; and as his forefathers worked only for themselves and not for posterity, so also does the negro of today. Thus without foreign assistance, the Negro a thousand years hence will be no better than a Negro of today, as the Negro of today is in no superior position to that of his ancestors some thousand years ago" (Blyden [1888]1967: 269). And hence Blyden's (ibid.) outcry, "the eighteenth Century stole the black man from his country; the nineteenth century steals his country from the black man."

Blyden anticipated a reconstruction of the Negro's persona and culture so constructed as "artificial" human types. Reminiscing on his experience in Africa, Blyden ([1888]1967: 115) writes of the Negro as an "ideal" human type with a unique human quality. The Negros are very hospitable and considerate in their treatment of foreigners and strangers:

> I must say, and it will not be generally be disputed, that more proofs are furnished among the natives of interior Africa of their belief in the common fatherhood of a personal God by their hospitable and considerate treatment of foreigners and strangers than are to be seen in many a civilized and Christian community.

Incidentally, Blyden's conclusion is informed by the anthropologist's ethnographic analyses of the Mandingo people coupled with Mungo Park's own experience among the Sego and that of Livingstone. Blyden ([1888] 1967: 115) continues, "Long sourjourn of Livingstone in that land . . . without money to pay his way . . . another proof of the excellent qualities of the peoples." On the basis of the above interjections, Blyden advocated for a pan-Negro conscious identity that could mediate a historical interlacing of knowledge between the real lived experience of the Negro and the image projected in the Western social imaginings. Such racial fraternity Blyden argues would offer the Negro a platform to reengage and understand his identity within the overall narrative of his consciousness and experience. The Negro will have to develop a scheme within his historical experience to evaluate measure and understand historical data as a beginning of this process.

> We have neglected to study matters at home because we were trained in books written by foreigners and for a foreign race, not for us—or for us only so far as in the general characteristics of humanity we resemble that race . . . therefore, we turned our backs upon our brethren of the interior as those from who we could learn nothing to elevate, to enlighten, or to refine . . . we have had history written for us, and we have endeavored to act up to it; whereas, the true order is, that history should be first acted, then written.
>
> (Blyden [1888] 1967: 221)

According to Mudimbe (1988: 129) Blyden's thinking was orthodox, reflecting a dialectical nuance of three phases: (1) racial binary—white versus black, (2) "A cultural confrontation"—civilized versus savage, (3) "Religious distance"—Christianity versus paganism. His discourse is informed by an assumed superiority of white, civilized Christian race over their opposites and hence it remains "axiomatic" like the racist discourse he attempts to challenge. Similarly, Blyden's political ideology emerged as a response to imperial racism

and its consequence; it mediates an emotive response to the overall logic of coloniality in Africa. Yet, to affirm its own autonomy, Blyden's political ideology Mudimbe (1988: 132) observes, "strongly asserts the thesis of pluralism in the historical development of races, ethnic groups, and nationalities."

Blyden's ideology assumes a dialectical mode in negating this experience for the transformation of Africa's ideological position in the world. Blyden was to become the ideological godfather of Négritude as a movement. Before proceeding, one must appreciate that Blyden's thinking was influenced by the political and psychosocial situation of his time of which slavery is notoriously significant. It is no wonder that "race" is a significant theme of his thinking. For the present purposes, my concern on Blyden was because of his foremost influence on the thinking of Négritude scholars. This background is necessary in order to locate Négritude within its actual historical formation.

Anchored historically, Négritude is a romantic quest for pan-Negro identity launched in the 1930's by the Matinician Poet Aimé Césaire (1983: 67, 69) in his long poetic essay *Cahier d'un retour au pays:*

> My negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day
> Of friendly light
> Oh fresh source of light
> Those who have invented neither powder nor compass
> Those who could harness neither steam nor electricity
> Those who explored neither the seas nor the sky but those
> Without whom the earth could not be the earth
> Gibbosity all the more beneficent as the bare earth even more earth
> Silo where that which is earthiest about earth ferments and ripens
> My negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth's dead eye
> My negritude is neither tower nor cathedral
> It takes root in the red flesh of the soil
> It takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
> It breaks through the opaque prostration with its upright patience

The term (Négritude) would become later adapted by other Africanist poets like Alioune Diop, Leon Gontran Damas and Leopold Senghor. Senghor describes the evolution of the term:

> How did Aimé Césaire and I launch the word "negritude" in the years 1933–35? Together with a few other black students, we were at the time in the depths of despair. The horizon was closed. There was no reform in the offing, and the colonizers were legitimizing our political and economic dependence by the tabula rasa theory. They deemed we had invented nothing, created nothing, written, sculpted, painted and sung nothing. Dancers Perhaps! . . . To institute a worthwhile revolution, *our* revolution, we first had to get rid of our

> borrowed clothing—the clothing of assimilation—and to assert our essential being, namely our negritude. Nevertheless, negritude, even when defined as "the total of black Africa's cultural values" could only offer us the beginning of a solution to our problem and not the solution itself.
>
> (Kesteloot 1991: 102)

Elsewhere, Senghor is ready to give all credit for the invention of the term "Négritude" to Césaire: "We merely studied it [Negro Civilization] and gave it the name of Négritude. I say 'we', but I must not forget to render unto Césaire that which is Césaire's. It was he who invented the word in those years 1932–1934" (Hountondji 1996: 215). Césaire (1972: 72–73) seems to concur:

> I have a feeling that it was somewhat a collective creation. I used the term first, that's true. But it's possible we talked about it in our group. It was really a resistance to the politics of assimilation. Until that time, until my generation, the French and the English—but especially the French—had followed the politics of assimilation unrestrainedly. We didn't know what Africa was. Europeans despised everything about Africa, and in France people spoke of a civilized world and a barbarian world. The barbarian world was Africa and the civilized world was Europe. Therefore the best thing one could do with an African was to assimilate him: the ideal was to turn him into a Frenchman with black skin.

Négritude thus became a psychosocial and philosophical response to the sociocultural condition of Negros, a move for a unique and new cultural consciousness for the Negro. The central thesis of Négritude accommodates a "collective consciousness" of Negros who as a result of being a minority in a white world have become dominated by a more powerful social and political order (see Irele 1963a). As an ideology, Négritude was ironically made famous by J.P. Sartre (1948, 1976) in his essay, "Orphée noir" (Black Orpheus). In this introduction to Senghor's Anthology of *New Negro and Malagasy Poetry*, Sartre gave the concept an expanded philosophical—Heideggerian/Existential—meaning. *Négritude* Sartre (Sartre 1948: xiii–xiv) noted, is a collective consciousness of the Negro for a right to (1) develop a novel subjective formation of discourse and (2) advance a collective freedom through a dialectic that would usher in a classless racial society:

> Today, these black men have fixed their gaze upon us and our gaze is thrown back in our eyes; black torches, in their turn, light the world and our white heads are only small lanterns balanced in the wind . . . the oppressed class must first take conscience of itself . . . this taking of conscience is exactly the opposite

> of a redescent into one's self; it has to do here with a recognition in and action of the objective situation of the proletariat . . . A Jew, white among white men, can deny that he is a Jew, can declare himself a man among men. The Negro cannot deny that he is Negro nor claim for himself this abstract uncolored humanity: He is Black. He is thus forced to be authentic. Insulted, enslaved, he draws himself up, picks up the word "nigger" that has been thrown at him like a stone, and proudly asserts himself as a black man facing the white man.

Sartre (1976: 17) goes further to articulate the exact significance of the Négritude movement: "The Negro who vindicates his négritude in a revolutionary movement places himself, then and there, upon the terrain of Reflection, whether he wishes to rediscover in himself certain objective traits growing out of African civilization, or hopes to find the black Essence in the wells of his soul." On this view, Négritude, Sartre (1976: 7–8) argues, is a celebration for "triumph of Narcissism and suicide of Narcissus, tension of the soul outside of its culture, words and very psychic fact, luminous night of non-knowledge." Sartre does not propose a lethargic movement, Négritude he argues is an ideology in continuity, in a continuous negation that allows its adherents to reengage, reformulate and revise the myths of histories and make them available for revolution. This new consciousness was to complement, give meaning and legitimacy to emerging anticolonial discourses. Within this epistemological configuration, Sartre (1976: 59) arguably fostered the development of Négritude revolution as dialectic between past and future Negro histories that must be redefined to accommodate the travails of the present predicament:

> The Negro creates an *anti-racist racism*. He does not at all wish to dominate the world; he wishes the abolition of racial privileges whenever they are found; he affirms his solidarity with the oppressed of all colors. At a blow, the subjective, existential, ethnic notion of *Négritude* passes as Hegel would say, into the objective, positive, exact notion of the *proletariat* [My emphasis].

As an ideological discourse, Négritude lays claim to an understanding of history, yet, it is an ideology embodied with multiple influences such as the French intellectual school (symbolism, romanticism, surrealism, etc). On this ideological terrain, Négritude movement becomes a celebration of values, historical and sociocultural experiences of the black people.

Martin Bernal[1] in his now classic *Black Athena* following the writing of Jacob Carruthers historicized these sociocultural experiences with a historical celebration of the Negro's contribution to human civilization. Carruthers categorized these achievements into three phases: The first phase is the old

"scrapers"—those scholars without training but who dedicated their talents in the course of Black History and its contribution to Western civilization:

> Without any special training, but with a sincere dedication to ferreting out the truth about the black past and destroying the big lie of black historical and cultural inferiority, took whatever data were available and squeezed enough truth from them as circumstances allowed.
>
> (Bernal 1987: 436)

The Second phase included the likes George Washington Williams, W.E.B Dubois, John Hope Franklin, Anthony Nogueira and Ali Mazrui. These scholars celebrated the participation of blacks and their contribution in the making of Egyptian civilization:

> Black had a share in building the Egyptian civilization along with other races. This strain . . . is completely enthralled to European Historiography . . . also demand a black share in Greek Antiquity which properly understood is true, but for the most part these "Negro Intellectuals" have no grasp of true meaning.
>
> (Bernal 1987: 436)

The final phase falls into the category of Cheikh (sheikh) Anta Diop, Ben Jochannan, and Chancellor William and recently would have included the likes of Theophilus Okere, Innocent Onyewuenyi, et cetera—this last group, Bernal notes, is also linked to the "old scrappers" for they "developed the multidisciplinary skills to take command of the fact of the African past which is necessary element for the foundation of an African historiography" (Bernal 1987: 436). Nonetheless, a common vision unites these phases, as Bernal (1987: 436) noted:

> Thus, at the end of the 1980's, I see continued struggle among black scholars and the question of "racial" nature of the Ancient Egyptians. On the other hand, there is no serious division among them on the question of the high quality of Egyptian civilization and of its central role in the formation of Greece.

As I argued in Chapter 2, if Hegel is right, Africa is outside historical consciousness because History is the story of European civilization. One would conceptualize history in two modal categories: history with capital "H" and history with a small "h." The former is Western and the later is African. The African is disqualified from history with capital "H" for his inability to participate in the common pursuit of the universal. Among the Négritude scholars, such Western assumptions will be recaptured with diligence and fervor as schematized by Alioune Diop: "[Nothing] in their past is of any

value. Neither their customs nor culture. Like living matter, these natives are asked to take on the customs, the logic, the language of the colonizer, from whom they even have to borrow their ancestors" (Irele 1965b). Négritude is thus an attempt to rehabilitate and restore African history and culture, a reaction against the often-cited Hegelian racist thesis that Africa is a tabula rasa, no history. Indeed Africa do have a cultural heritage of their own argues the Négritude scholars. To deny the Negro history is to deny him humanity. Négritude became a refutation and rehabilitation of this project of denial.

Championing this rehabilitation of the Negro past was Cheikh-Anta Diop. Diop attempted to resuscitate the African origins of Western civilization, a route in which the West and all its modernity and achievement owe their progress thanks to Africa! He sees the marginalization of Africa as a conspiracy within Western intellectual tradition, a move that enables the continual marginalization of blacks. On this conspiracy, I quote Cheikh-Anta Diop (1974: 233–234) at length:

> Ancient Egyptians were Negroes. The moral fruit of their civilization is to be accounted among the assets of the Black world . . . that Black world is the very initiator of the "western" civilization flaunted before our eyes today . . . From Egyptian priests, Herodotus had received information revealing the basic mathematical data on the Great Pyramid of Cheops . . . Since the Egyptian origin of civilization and the extensive borrowing of the Greeks from the Egyptians are historically evident, we may wonder . . . why, despite those facts, most people stress the role played by Greece while overlooking that of Egypt. The reason for this attitude can be detected merely by recalling the root of the question. As Egypt is a Negro country, with a civilization created by Blacks, any thesis tending to prove the contrary would have no future . . . So it is wiser and safer to strip Egypt . . . all of its creations in favor of a really White nation (Greece). This false attribution to Greece of the values of a so-called White Egypt reveals a profound contradiction . . . When we say that the ancestors of the Blacks, who today live mainly in Black Africa, were the first to invent mathematics, astronomy, the calendar, sciences in general, arts, religion, agriculture, social organization, medicine, writing, technique, architecture; . . . we are merely expressing the plain unvarnished truth that no one today can refute by arguments worthy of the name.

If the historical celebration of the Negro's achievement to human civilization is the quintessential historical facet of Négritude, the theme of "return" and "exile" remain the ontological foil. The theme of "exile" signifies the Negro's sense of alienation in his own world and of being "thrown into a social system with whose cultural values he can strike no personal relation" (Irele 1965b: 500). The Negro is a refugee in his relationship with the West which dominates him. The Negro is not only worthless, a *nothing* in the eyes of *his* white

superiors but is also made to feel inferior in his own eyes. This was the lamentation of Aimé Césaire in his description of the revolution at San Domingo reminiscent of social Darwinism: "at the top, the white man—the *being*, in the full sense of the term—at the bottom, the black man . . . the thing, as much as to say, a *nothing*" (Irele 1965a: 329). This sense of "nothingness" is presupposed by a racially skewed dialectic in which "white" and "black" acquires moral value. Césaire then proceeds to give Négritude its essentialist definition: "*Negritude is the awareness of being black, the simple acknowledgment of a fact which implies the acceptance of it, taking charge of one's destiny as a black man, of one's history and culture*" (Kesteloot 1991: 105, My emphasis). And in *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire (1972: 75–76) conceives of Négritude as a reconstitution of Africa's subjectivity from the entrapment of colonial logic, but through historical analogy:

> If someone asks me what my conception of Negritude is, I answer that above all it is a concrete rather than abstract coming to consciousness . . . We lived in an atmosphere of rejection, and we developed an inferiority complex. I have always thought that the black man was searching for his identity. And it has seemed to me that if what we want is to establish this identity, then we must have a concrete consciousness of what we are—that is, of the first fact of our lives: that we are black; that we are black and have a history, a history that contains certain cultural elements of great value; and . . . because there have been beautiful and important black civilizations . . . Therefore we affirmed that we were Negroes and that we were proud of it, and that we thought that Africa was not some sort of blank page in the history of humanity; in sum, we asserted that our Negro heritage was worthy of respect . . .

Bloke Modisane (1960: 26) comparing this moment to the South African apartheid experience surmises:

> White is *right*, and to be *black* is to be despised, dehumanized, classed among the beasts, hounded and persecuted, discriminated against, segregated and oppressed by government and by man's greed. White is the positive standard, black the negative. Symbols of wealth . . . are allotted to the whites; . . . inferiority, humiliation and servitude are the lot of the black people.

This dehumanization had a huge influence on the Negro's subjectivity—frustrations expressed through shame and self-hatred as articulated by John Dollard (1989: 184):

> The matter seems to be that recognizing one's own Negro traits is bound to be a process wounding to the basic sense of integrity of the individual who comes

> into life with no such negative views of his own characteristics. This is indeed one of the basic frustrations for Negroes which generates hostility towards the white caste.

These cumulative historical experiences of Negros in their relationship to whites became a sinecure for Négritude as a pan-Negro movement. Upon this historical experience evolved the need for resistance, a resistance to the situation that Georges Balandier describes as having plunged Africa into a state of latent crisis, a society that "appeared to possess an essentially non-authentic character" (Irele 1965a: 322–323). This non-authentic subject doubles as an object within a social category of caste and class consciousness (ibid.). The assimilated collective consciousness is reinforced by the historical servitude in which the Negro was historically subjected through economic exploitation, conquest and slavery. The Negro is nobody. He had neither *presence* nor *absence* and the future is an illusion. Without any certificate of humanity, the Negro was simply *faceless* and since *nobody knew his name,* he had no history except this universality of Negro fatalism as James Baldwin (1964: 35) recounted:

> What they held in common was their precarious, their unutterably painful reaction to the white world. What they held in common was the necessity to remake the world in their own image, to impose this image on the world, and no longer be controlled by the vision of the world, and of themselves, held by other people. What, in sum black men held in common was their ache to come into the world as men. And this ache united people who might otherwise have been divided as to what a man should be.

This social caste of cultural inferiority was painstakingly sustained through a cultural myth of the biological inferiority of the Negro. "The myth of the negro' past" Herskovits noted, governs the negro's reception and treatment elsewhere in the world "for though it has often been pointed out that the skin color of the Negro makes him an all too visible mark for prejudice, it is not so well realized that the accepted opinion of the nature of the Negro's cultural heritage is what makes him the only element . . . that has no operative past except in bondage" (Irele 1965a: 327–328). This was of course the myth that informed both Conrad and Lévy-Bruhl reminiscences on Africa. It also informed Thomas Jefferson in his notes on the State of Virginia (1901[1781]: 16) when he wrote of the white race as infinitely superior to blacks, a racial difference that emanates from an inherited racial essence:

> The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance . . . has been observed by everyone, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect

> merely of their condition in life . . . nature has been less bountiful to them in the endowment of the head. I believe that in those of the heart she will be found to have done them justice.

In the meantime, the Negro intellectual in comparison with the rest of his or her Negro brethren is arguably more conscious of the political and cultural oppression of colonial violence and feels the heat more intensely. Western education becomes a locus of absurdity for it opens the eyes of the Negro intellectual to the reality of colonial violence and at the same time a source of displacement and disorientation since it attempts to make "white men" out of "black men." It attempts a process of humanization through the Negro's self-denial and alienation from his culture to become human. Senghor (1998a: 14) describes the process in one of his earliest poems, *Totem*:

> I must hide him down in my deepest veins
> The Ancestor whose stormy skin
> Streaks with lightning and thunder
> He is the guardian animal I must hide
> Lest I burst the dam of scandal.
> He is my loyal blood demanding loyalty,
> Protecting my naked pride against myself
> And the arrogance of fortunate races . . .

On the point of sociocultural alienation Césaire (1972: 73) continues: "Our struggle was a struggle against alienation. That struggle gave birth to Negritude. Because Antilleans were ashamed of being Negroes, they searched for all sorts of euphemisms for Negro: they would say a man of color, a dark-complexioned man, and other idiocies like that." In *Notebook of a return to the native* land Césaire (1983: 79) was more combative on how the dislocation infiltrates the negro's consciousness:

> And there is the nigger pimp, the nigger askari, and all the zebras shaking themselves in various ways to get rid of their stripes in a dew of fresh milk. And in the midst of all that I say right on! My grandfather dies, I say right on! The old negritude progressively cadavers itself.
>
> No question about it: he was a good nigger. The whites say he was a good nigger, a really good nigger, massa's good ole darky. I say right on!
>
> He was a good nigger, indeed,
>
> Poverty had wounded his chest and back and they had stuffed into his poor brain that a fatality impossible to trap weighed on him: that he had no control over his own fate; that an evil Lord had for all eternity inscribed Thou Shall Not in his pelvic constitution: that he must be a good nigger: must sincerely

believe in his worthlessness, without any perverse curiosity to check out the fatidic hieroglyphs.

He was a very good nigger

And it never occurred to him that he could hoe, burrow, cut anything, anything else really than inspid cane

He was a very good nigger

And they threw stones at him, bits of scar iron . . . and the whip argued with the bombilation of the flies over the sugary dew of our sores.

I say right on! The old negritude

Progressively cadavers itself

The horizon breaks, recoils and expands

And through the shredding of clouds the flashing of a sign

The slave ship cracks everywhere . . . its belly convulses and resounds . . . the ghastly tapeworm of its cargo gnaws the fetid guts of the strange suckling of the sea!

Since the Negro's self-identity is dependent on his relation to the "other," this process of identification is alienating and disorienting, and this the Negro is protesting against. This process of disorientation was differently experienced by Caribbean and African based Academics. The former whose cultural background is Western, and "white" color a significant measure of value, were more frustrated and disoriented than their "African" counterparts who often lay claim to a pristine cultural African tradition (Irele 1965b: 503). It was among the Caribbean academics that the theme of "exile" featured most as they lamented their feeling of cultural dislocation and a plea for return as noticeable through the voice of Césaire (1983: 45, 75):

To go away. My heart was pounding with emphatic generosities. To go away . . . I would arrive sleek and young in this land of mine and I would say to this land whose loam is part of my flesh: "I have wandered for a long time and I am coming back to the deserted hideousness of your sores."

I would go to this land of mine and I would say to it: "Embrace me without fear . . . and if all I can do is speak, it is for you I shall speak . . . My mouth shall be the mouth of those calamities that have no mouth, my voice the freedom of those who break down in the solitary confinement of despair . . . . And behold here I am!". . .

Islands scars of the water

Islands evidence of wounds

Islands crumbs

Islands unformed

Islands cheap paper shredded upon the water

Islands stumps skewered side by side on the flaming sword of the Sun

Mulish reason you will not stop me from casting on the waters at the mercy of the currents of my thirst

Your form, deformed islands,

Your end, my defiance.

The theme of "exile" and "return" to the "original space" where Western culture had uprooted the Negro represents a "collective drama" and a "spiritual adventure," such pilgrimage that includes "a quest for the self, with the conquest of a lost identity as the prize" (Irele 1965b: 511). The theme of refusal and revolt is an attempt to dissolve all residues of colonialism and in its place, a quest for new values, a tool for self-affirmation and differentiation not rooted in Western ontology. Since his identity is rooted in a different ontology, the Negro's relationship with the West acquires new meaning and becomes a source of pride instead of being a source of frustration and shame (ibid.).

Négritude becomes at the same time a philosophy of resentment in its attempt to negate colonial injustice but vindictive by its appeal to racial and cultural exaltation in opposition to the "other" as we learn from Bernard (1962: 81) in his poem *Black*

An immense fire with my continuous suffering
And your sneers
And your inhumanity,
And your scorn
And your disdain
Have lighted in the depths of my heart
Will swallow you all

Moving beyond resentment to accusation and denouncement in Senghor's (1998a: 13) *Snow in Paris*:

The white hands firing the rifles that crumbled our empires,
The hands that once whipped slaves, and that whipped you,
The snowy white hands that slapped you,
The powdery white hands that slapped me,

The firm hands that led me to loneliness and to hate
The white hands that cut down the forests . . .
They cut down Africa's forests to save Civilization
. . . For diplomats who show their long canine teeth
And tomorrow trade in black flesh

And David Diop (1995) echoes a voice of optimism in time of despair, a self-assuredness, of prophetic confidence that ends with accusation in his poem *Africa:*

Africa my Africa
Africa of Proud Warriors in ancestral Savannahs
Africa of whom my grandmother sings
On the banks of the distant river
I have never known you
But your blood flows in my veins
Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields
The blood of your sweat
The sweat of your work
The work of your slavery
The slavery of your children
Africa tell me Africa
Is this you this back that is bent
This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation
This back trembling with red scars
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun
But a grave voice answers me
Impetuous son that tree young and strong
That tree there
In splendid loneliness amidst white and faded flowers
That grows again patiently obstinately
And its fruit gradually acquires
The bitter taste of liberty

This accusation in turn becomes a general indictment, an inquisition of the whole Western culture and civilization. The tempo becomes polemical, an antagonism and denunciation of colonialism as Albert Tevoedjre lamented: "I shall always regret the fact of having been obliged to learn French First; to think in French while being ignorant in my own mother tongue. I shall always deplore the fact that anyone should have wanted to make me a foreigner in my own country" (Irele 1965b: 512). Césaire (1972: 56) reechoes: "Of this: that at the very time when it most often mouths the word, the West has never been further from being able to live a true humanism—a humanism made to the measure of the world." Césaire's Négritude opens a new dimension

with his background informing his imagination. Césaire (1983: 43) measured Négritude with a breadth of suffering, alienation and rootelessness:

> At the end of the wee hours, the wind of long ago-of betrayed trust, of uncertain evasive duty and that of other dawn in Europe arises:
> To go away
> As there are hyena-men and panther-men, I would be a Jew-man
> A kaffir-man
> A Hindu-man from Calcutta
> A Harlem man who doesn't vote . . . The famine man, the insult man, the torture man you can grab anytime, beau up, kill—no joke, kill without having to account to anyone, without having to make excuses to anyone.

Césaire is now articulating Négritude in the manner in which black people become united by their shared historical experience of slavery and colonialism, a universal negrohood not signified by race but symbolized by shared suffering. Note the shift from his earlier essentialist blackness as core feature of Négritude to a universal admission of other races (Jews, Hindus) who share similar fate like blacks. Oppressed people discover their common heritage through the simultaneity of their suffering. This simultaneity would become the ideological framework upon which to challenge colonialism since Négritude evokes an emotive foundation for a common purpose: to stop the collective suffering of the African peoples. As Irele (1971: 26) observed, Négritude was not merely "a rationalization of white domination . . . but a direct and crushing attack upon his (Whiteman's) subjectivity."

As a social movement, Négritude is subjectively symbolic and "functional," symbolizing a "reverse discourse" in which the black writer "incarnating his despised and oppressed race is the mediator of a new self-awareness." Yet, the use of race or "racial exaltation" functions as a "defense" and the employment of "African myth" a "black ethnocentrism, an attempt to recreate an emotional as well as an original bond beneath the contingencies of a particularly difficult historical experience" (Irele 1965b: 511). In this way, Négritude becomes vindictive by its racial and cultural exaltation in opposition to the "other."

At literary level, Négritude remains subjective, becoming more symbolic than real, more metaphoric than actual since writings on Négritude merely represent a projection of a "violent reaction" that would not be expressed otherwise (*cf.* Fanon 1963). According to Irele (1965b: 507), the black writer is employing a surrealist technique as a means of projecting and realizing his dream of violence through poetry. Poetry is here used to express both the nihilist attitude and urge to change the opposite as in the following excerpts from Léon Damas who employs a surrealist method reminiscent of

Nietzsche's nihilism to affect dialectic of reason that would mediate a reversal of fortune and refusal of values descriptive and associative with the Negro's condition in his *Black Label*:

> The white will never be negro
> For beauty is negro;
> and negro is wisdom
> For endurance is negro
> and negro is courage
> For patience is negro
> and negro is irony
> For charm is negro
> and negro is magic
> For love is negro
> and negro is loose walking
> For the dance is negro
> and negro is rhythm
> For laughter is negro
> For joy is negro
> For peace is negro
> For life is negro
>
> (Moore 1962:xx; Ita 1988:111)

Négritude was thus an "othering" movement to counter the negative sense of blackness that was at independence, and still is, obtainable in English language, such as "black market," black magic." Négritude was an attempt to rescue blackness from its essentialist definition in negative terms. A new definition is proposed in which "blackness" embodies a positive image—a source of pride and unity for black people, a celebration of blackness. Note, however, that this reaction is within a context as attested in the first five lines of the poem that precede "the white will never be negro," which were omitted by Moore in his translation. In these omitted lines, the persona was critical of white paternalists who think they could access the Negro's subjective experience through mimicry or pretences of docility and submissiveness. This was also Senghor's critique of the shoe shine boy who paints his face with a black polish to feel like a Negro. The point is that to be a Negro in a white world is more than mimicry. On this feature, Négritude becomes an antiracist representation that attempts to salvage the sense of dignity and worth of black persons and their cultures previously dismissed as degenerate, primitive, barbaric and most backward of all races. On this view, Senghor (1965: 97) argues that the fact of difference does not imply "degenerate" nor "backwardness" because black people had a worldview different from the Europeans. This

worldview influenced their grasp and understanding of reality. The West studied reality with skepticism while Africans had an intuitive relationship with the world as he notes:

> [Négritude is an] awareness, defense and development of African cultural values. Négritude is a myth, I agree. And I agree that there are false myths, myths which breed division and hatred. Négritude as a true myth is the opposite of these. 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 the concrete image.

Senghor's claim that Négritude is a *true myth* is challenged by such binarism and divisiveness embedded in the poem above. Negroism is construed as a superior location of knowledge, an authentic bastion of subjectivity: *the white will never be Negro . . . for Negro is beautiful . . .* subjectivity is conditioned on blackness, and knowledge is structured in an eternally redemptive teleology in which Africa offers a *superior* episteme. The persona is constructing a binarism: The basic point of departure emerges as a reaction to the trauma of colonialism which has disabled his subjective formation. His subjectivity is to be redeemed through this reversal of fortunes. *Negro is black and black is beautiful,* etc . . . does not emerge from an autonomous point of departure but built upon the attempt to offset or neutralize colonial trauma. The reversal of discourse functions as a *subjective converter*. The persona is converting his subjectivity by turning the tables on the colonial "other" albeit the same pattern of discourse that was used to justify colonialism and de-subjectification of the Negro. The persona is employing a surrealistic technique to simulate this conversion of his subjectivity from a depersonalized subject to a personalized individuality. Note the intuitive dialectics. The persona only gains essence at the gaze of the *other*: *he/she has become only because the other is not*! Or *he/she has become at the expense of the other!*

It is for the aforementioned reasons that Sartre argued that Négritude as an ideology is enraptured in the dialectics between the Negro's history and future. It is an ideology in continuity progressing toward an essentialist redefinition. At the same time, as I have shown earlier, Négritude is essentially a reverse discourse. Upon this finding is a caveat in which Sartre, despite his empathy for the "cause" described Négritude as *racist* in its *antiracism*. Although Senghor (1975: 591) would not adapt this interpretation of Négritude as racist, he admits:

> To know a human fact . . . means . . . to live it: like the white man who, to understand the situation of Negro Americans, blackened his skin with a chemical product and worked as a boot cleaner. This is what phenomenological or

> existential thought reveals . . . The negro students that we were during the years 1930–1934 knew only refusal. I admit it, we were racists. We were delirious under the symbol of *Négritude*.

To Sartre's indictment of Négritude as an antiracist racism, Senghor refutes by arguing that *Négritude "is* not racism, it is a culture!" (Eze 2001: 138). Elsewhere Senghor tries to defuse the embedded essentialism:

> I have often written that emotion was Negro. I have been reproached for it. Mistakenly. I do not see how else to account for our specificity, that of this negritude which is the "whole of the black world's cultural values," including the Americas, and which Sartre defines as "a certain effective attitude toward the world."
>
> (Kesteloot 1991: 103)

The view of Négritude as a romantic celebration and glorification of a precolonial pristine African community is a salient feature rooted in nativism with its associative atavist overcompensation as apparent in the writing of Adotevi that "the Black Person who accepts his race is a good Black, but if he forgets our fall, if he forgets himself . . . loses himself or herself, loses the being black in losing perspective" (Mudimbe 1988: 37). Senghor (1998a: 8–9) continues this vision in *Black Woman*:

> Naked Woman, Black Woman
> Dressed in your color that is life, in your form that is beauty!
> I grew up in your shadow. The softness of your hands
> Shielded my eyes, and now at the height of Summer and Noon,
> From the crest of a charred hilltop I discover you, Promised Land
> And your beauty strikes my heart like an eagle's lightning flash
> Naked Woman, dark woman
> Ripe Fruit with firm flesh, dark raptures of black wine,
> Mouth that gives music to my mouth
> Savanna of clear horizon, savanna quivering to the fervent caress
> Of the East Wind, sculptured tom-tom, stretched drumskin
> Moaning under the hand of the conqueror
> Your deep contralto voice is the spiritual song of the Beloved.

Africa is a mother, a woman invoking her children to take refuge in her warmth as in Gabriel Okara's (1953) *The Call of the River Nun*:

I hear your call!
I hear it from faraway;
I hear it break the circle
Of these crouching hills . . .
I want to view your face again and feel your cold embrace;
or at your brim to set
Myself and inhale your breath;
Or like the trees,
To watch my mirrored self unfold and span my days with
song from the lips of dawn.
I hear your lapping call!
I hear it coming through;
Invoking the ghost of a child
Listening, where river birds hail your sliver-surface flow . . .
the final Call that
stills the crested Waves . . .
My inborn stars to that
Final call to Thee . . .

Then it becomes a plea to bind oneself in organic sense to mother Africa, a return to the root separated by the violence of colonialism as lamented by Christopher Okigbo (1962) in *Idoto:*

Before you, mother idoto
naked I stand,
Before your watery presence,
a prodigal,
Leaning on an oil bean;
Lost in your legend . . .
Under your power wait I on barefoot,
Watchman for the watchword at
HEAVENSGATE,
Out of the depths my cry
Give ear and hearken . . .

The imagery of such filial emotional thrust in which the continent is identified with a woman, but more as a mother gives strength to the strain of Négritude rooted in nativism. It also reveals the ambiguity of dependence: The African intellectual has become aware of his condition within Western conceptual scheme and reacts within Western epistemological space. The intellectual is dependent on psychosocial and anthropological

categories of Western epistemological order to redefine himself and reassert his subjectivity. Nevertheless, Négritude would offer a psychosocial reward for the Negro. First, is a motivation for a reconstitution and redefinition of human subjectivities. Second, underlying the challenge to white supremacy is a bourgeoning consciousness manifest as a "racial protest." (see also Irele 1965b) Finally, it is a call for "homecoming," a refuge for the Negro's loneliness in a white world. The racialist tone of Négritude is rooted on this "exclusive" role reversal, a project of reconstituting the subjectivity of the African individual and identity so denounced and obliterated within European discourses and representations.

However, to what extent can Négritude go in achieving its political objective since Césaire (1972: 75) had written of Négritude as a movement of revolt and African historiography as Négritude in action? At this juncture, it does seem that at best, the political project of Négritude remains indistinct, a political mystification as it is a theoretical obfuscation. As an ideological discourse, Négritude in a swathe of Marxism offers us a new understanding of history and therefore enjoins political and cultural responsibility. In reality, the political objective was void of any unique portent for the future of the Negro's political condition. In the remaining paragraphs of this subsection, I shall trace one such attempt by Senghor in trying to develop a political philosophy through the "warmth" of Négritude.

According to Senghor, Négritude is the apotheosis of African cultural values. Senghor would celebrate these unique African values by setting it in opposition to Western values, through rigors of Western philosophical paradigm. Senghor speaks of the "Negro soul" as primarily intuitive and nonrational. The African is essentially a feeling being in a sympathetic relation to the rest of the world. The Negro is a spontaneous being that experiences the world primarily through the senses and not the intellect: "Classical European reason is analytical and makes use of the object. African reason is intuitive and participates in the object" writes Senghor (1965: 33) [cf with Jefferson's note above]. This African mode of experience is the "law of participation" which is essentially emotive: "Emotion is African, as Reason is Hellenic" (ibid.). The Cartesian cogito, I think therefore I am, Senghor substitutes: I feel, therefore I am, and to the Western discursive reason, Senghor (1959: 72ff.) opposes with intuitive reason:

> Thus, the Negro-African sympathizes, abandons his personality to become identified with the Other. He does not assimilate; he is assimilated. He lives a common life with the Other; he lives in a symbiosis . . . "I want you to feel me," says a voter who wants you to know him well. "I think, therefore, I am," Descartes writes . . . The Negro-African could say, "I feel, I dance the other;

> I am . . ." It is not the *reasoning-eye* of Europe, it is the *reason of the touch,* better still, the reasoning embrace, the sympathetic reason, more closely related to the Greek *logos* than to the Latin *ratio.* For *logos,* before Aristotle, meant both reason and the word. At any rate Negro-African speech does not mould the object into rigid categories and concepts without touching it; it polishes things and restores their original color, with their texture, sound and perfume; its innate humidity—it would be more accurate to speak of sub-reality. European reasoning is analytical, discursive by utilization; Negro African reasoning is intuitive by participation.

Senghor would note that this emotive principle underscores the principle of Négritude "for it is their emotive attitude towards the world which explains the cultural values of Africans" (ibid.). The African mind is ennobled with "sense of the divine; his faculty perceiving the supernatural in the natural" (Irele 1965b: 519). The sense of divine writes Senghor (1998b: 631) is the Negro's capital gift since this is what connects the Negro to the material world:

> The paradox is only apparent when I say that negritude, by its ontology (that is, its philosophy of being), its moral law and its aesthetic, is a response to the modern humanism that European philosophers and scientists have been preparing since the end of the nineteenths century, and as Teilhard de Chardin and the writers and artists of the mid-twentieths century present it.

Négritude as a spiritual revolution

As I will show later, part of the influence on Négritude was the development of new ethnological research method (cultural relativism) as a standardized research procedure. Of such impact would be the argument by Négritude scholars for an independent African worldview on equal standing with other worldviews. African Traditional Religions offer ready example where ATR(s) (African Traditional Religions) were reinterpreted and compared as equal to Christianity. A celebrated case was Paul Hazoume's comparative study in which the Johanine (John the evangelist) understanding and idea of God is abstracted as similar to Dahomean (Beninese) notion of God (Irele 1965b: 515). African independent Churches will be at the forefront of such attempts. Sometimes radical in their schism against the dominant Christian religion which they see as a residue of colonialism, they embarked upon "a denial of an imposed world-order attributed to the white colonizer, and the wish for cultural 'differentiation' which gives rise to a nascent political awareness" an awareness of a "nationalist consciousness in a raw state"(Irele 1965a: 323). As Sartre (1963) argued in his preface to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*

(1963), adherents of these pseudo-Christian syncretic movements are there to escape the pressures of colonial trauma, a trauma infused with ambivalent relationship in which the Negro's world order is a "given" and imposed by the white.

On this ambivalence, I have already indicated that although assimilated intellectually, the Negro remains socially and culturally isolated. As an escape from this alienation, neither his appeal to tradition and his root is adequate and hence he advances to nativist loyalty in the religious sense of rapture, where "religion" in its Latin root "religare"—to bind may be understood as it was first used by Cicero (450–350 B.C.) to mean an obligation to *bind* oneself to something; later transliterated by Pecock in 1449: [*I*]*n oon maner religioen is . . . a binding vp or a bynding azen of a manny's fre wil with certein ordinauces . . . or with vowis or oothis* (in one manner, religion is . . . a binding up or a binding of a man's freewill with certain ordinances . . . or with vows or oaths). Senghor himself admitted in 1962: "Earlier on, we had become aware within ourselves that assimilation was a failure, we could assimilate mathematics or the French language, but we could never strip off our black skins or root out our black souls. And so we set out on a fervent quest for the Holy Grail: our collective soul" (Irele 1965a: 344). The quest for African "soul" through a spiritual revolution was already forecast by Césaire (1959: 118–120) during the black writers' conference in Rome in 1959:

> In our present situation we are propagators of *souls*, multipliers of *souls*, and almost inventors of *souls*. And I say too that is the *mission* of the man of black culture to prepare a good decolonization, not just any kind of decolonization. For even in the midst of colonial society, it is the man of culture who must shorten his people's apprenticeship in liberty. And the man of culture, whether writer, poet, or artist, achieves this for his people because, within the colonial situation itself, the creative cultural activity which precedes the concrete collective experience is already an apprenticeship.
>
> (Kesteloot 1991: 8 [my emphasis])

The spiritual revolution mediates a cultural renaissance. The following account of a Kikuyu participant in a *mau mau* oath ritual in his struggle against colonialism expresses this attempt to thwart the cultural influence of Europe through a religious maze as Kariuki Mwangi (1974: 465) informs us through his own experience:

> Afterwards in the maize (field), I felt exalted with a new spirit of power and strength. All my previous life seemed empty and meaningless. Even my education, of which I was so proud, appeared trivial beside this splendid and terrible force that had been given me. I had been born again and I sensed once more

> the feeling of opportunity and adventure that I had on the first day my mother started teaching me to read and write. The other three in the maize were all silent and were clearly undergoing the same spiritual rebirth as myself.

Here religion is integrated with tradition as a crucible for disoriented Negros to offset the "cultural incursion" of European gaze (see Irele 1965a: 324). Tradition becomes an *avant-garde* to find within themselves, something of their cultural heritage, of their past, which will offer them a unique access to a cultural value which the "other" cannot access nor have an experience of, something unique that they can be proud of.

Négritude and African nationalism

If Ideology is an outward sign of inward struggle a society, a response to real life conditions where it becomes socially functional as (1) a defense of established program of beliefs and ideas upon which a social structure gains legitimacy and justification and (2) an epistemological architecture for construction of a new order to induce social action (see introduction; cf also Irele 1965b: 521), then Négritude as an ideology has acquired multiple meanings and interpretations. It represents the ideological icon of African political nationalism which in the writing of Edna Steeves (1973: 92), aims "to signify a way of life; a style; an instrument for liberation; a quality for producing an effect, such as emotion or humour; an attitude, such as negation, rejection, or self-affirmation; a race; a skin-colour; a *summum bonum.*" Nationalistic movements go parallel with ideological movements which offer the leader of these nationalistic movements a forum to fashion a new image for the people so dominated and exploited (or reverse, for continual domination and exploitation) (see Irele 1965a: 321). Besides, as argued above, these nationalist statesmen needed ideologies as a substitute for colonial discourse and justify their hold on power and gain legitimacy. These nationalist movements were also emotive but readily influenced by the "intellectual clamor" which accompanied it through independence and which continues to resonate long thereafter as surmised in Gabriel Okara's (1979) *The Fisherman's Invocation*:

> The celebration is now ended
> But the echoes are all around
> Whirling like a harmattan . . .
> The celebration is now ended
> the drums lay quiet, silent waiting
> And the dancers disperse, walking
> with feet that have known many dances
> waiting for the next walking . . .
> . . . singing green lullabies which tingle our heads

> And we learn to sing half familiar half strange songs
> We learn to dance to half familiar half strange
> rhythms fashioned in dreams . . .

Contrary to claims by scholars like Abiola Irele (1965b: 499), Négritude is neither a cultural parallel nor equivalent to pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is real in view of its associative "mystifications" for as Appiah (1992: 284) has noted, the need for "the demands of agency seem always to entail a misrecognition of its genesis; you cannot build alliance without mystifications and mythologies." Pan-Africanism is thus a sociopolitical precedent of Négritude insofar as the latter is essentially dependent on the ideological platitude of the former. Nonetheless, one need to appreciate that both discourses highlight different aspects of similar African predicament, an unsettling sociopolitical condition. The primordial desiderata of Négritude do not attenuate the significance of pan-Africanism because this is what underlies the institutional and political condition for its reproduction and transformation as a social movement. It is for these reasons that the forerunner of Pan-Africanism W.E.B. Du Bois ([1897] 2007: 185) described pan-Africanism in terms of racial ontology:

> We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of creation has slept, but half awakening in the dark forest of its African fatherland. We are the first fruits of this new nation, the harbinger of that black to-morrow which is yet to soften the whiteness of the Teutonic to-day . . . As such, it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race, we must strive by race-organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development.

The reconstruction and rewriting of the Negro's history and identity in the realm of social, political, and cultural is to be done through a universal bond of black fraternity and solidarity dependent on common spiritual feeling and social-historical experience, argues Du Bois. It is on this racial bond that liberation movements are said to assume a character of pan-Africanism.

If the point of contact between the West and Africa was cultural on which the political and economic situation developed, then cultural nationalism will be characterized as efforts at historical, political and cultural autonomy (see Irele 1965a). Franklin Frazier (1957: 35) had noted that these nationalistic movements, although embodied with political and economic character

nevertheless raises the question of a common cultural and racial heritage. On this question emerges a distinction between cultural nationalism and liberation movements (see Irele 1965a).

Such "cultural nationalism" was more pronounced somewhere else in Africa. The year was 1973, and the place was Zaire (Congo DRC). A new ideology said to represent the national consciousness has been introduced—*authenticité*. According to President Mobutu the godfather of this project, "the recourse to authenticity does not mean that we should adopt all the practices of our ancestors. We renew our culture while rejecting that which is contradictory to the modern world" (Adelman 1975: 134). An endearing call for self awareness of ancestral values through a national ethics and consciousness, the emphasis of *authenticité* was better illustrated in its practical application evidence in the enforced change of names for all Zaireans in the Mobutu era. Beginning with the President who changed his name from Joseph to Mobutu, Congo was changed to Zaire, followed by changing the names of the national and provincial capitals. An adventurous political experiment, dress codes, reception of foreign dignitaries, elimination of all vestiges of colonial historical monuments were all codified to suit the imagery of the new ideological movement—codification illustrated and enforced not through Lingala, Kinyarwanda or Swahili but French! Of the elite advocates, Sakombi Inongo argues that the project was aimed at fostering a national unity: "from the ancestral philosophy, we have kept the concept of solidarity, not only among members of the clan or tribe but between all the citizens of the nation" (Adelman 1975: 135).

Of interest, these advocates of *authenticité* would argue that they dismissed Négritude as an authentic cultural movement because it homogenizes African cultures whereas *authenticité* respects these cultural differences. It is argued that while Négritude emphasizes color consciousness as antecedent to culture, *authenticité* emphasizes culture consciousness. Négritude it is argued remains (as an ideology) on the level of metaphysics while *authenticité* is pragmatic as a guide to conduct and a prescriptive ethic in which one can actually do things "authentically" like change of names or dress codes (Adelman 1975: 136).

The methodological problem of "authenticité" is its reliance on "ancestral philosophy" to achieve solidarity "between all the citizens of a nation" since there was in fact no notion of such solidarity in "ancestral philosophy." Indeed, "nation-state" did not in exist in precolonial times. *Authenticité* apologists short-circuited this problem through the doctrine of *animation* which is the "national consecration of our vital force and our arrival at the national spirit" (Adelman 1975: 135).

In the meantime, the invention and selective application of what was characteristically described as a cultural value for the generalized population of

Zaire, not to say the least, the political implication and reward of adapting to the philosophy of a man whose personal life, history has shown to contradict every aspect of *authenticité* raises questions on both the ambivalence and *authenticity* of authenticité' (cf. Chapter 6). Authenticité is a nuanced party objective carried out in a "borrowed" format to induce a nationalistic representation but primarily to legitimate political domination. Authenticité is self contradictory considering that the selective application of this ideology to accommodate only the political elite for whom *authenticité* became a referential point for political advancement.

Influence on négritude

Négritude did not develop in a vacuum. It was a result of the intellectual climate at the time of its inception. According to R.M. Albérès "[European] sensibility in the twentieth century is characterized by the belief that there exists a divorce between intelligence and reality, truth, or instinct," an intellectual climate similar to the one created by Henri Bergson "in which ideals that previous centuries had rendered 'non-western' could be accommodated within the European sensibility" (Irele 1965a: 339). Bergson's influence as the leading intellectual in France had massive influence on French-educated Negro academics. In his theory of *creative evolution,* Bergson argued that the original or vital impetus of life is the *élan vital*: "[An] *Original impetus* of life, passing from one generation of germs to the following generation of germs by way of the developed organism which form the uniting link between the generation of germs" (Copelston S.J 1985: 195). This original impetus Bergson argues is the root cause of differences and variations. The *élan vital* is confronted with opposition from an "inert matter." In attempting to overcome this opposition, it creates and establishes new paths, "effecting a differentiation in the process" (ibid.).

Senghor as well as Césaire were deeply influenced by Bergson. Senghor in his use of *intuition* and *élan vital* in his Négritude writings and Césaire by way of surrealist movement that expressed the "imperfections of western society" and which in turn encouraged a "critical outlook" to Western society (Irele 1965a: 339). On the paradox of the influence of Western paradigm, Senghor admits: "paradoxically, it was the French who first forced us to seek its essence, and who then showed us where it lay" (Irele 1965a: 343).

The influence of Marxism is noticeable in the writing of Sartre, Senghor, and Fanon. Marxism offered a broad spectrum of concepts to be employed by the Négritude intellectuals: "alienation," "social and class struggle" (ibid.: 340). Senghor (1975: 608) was especially seduced by the Marxist presupposition that individuals are central in any historical movement "the object of

socialism is not the economy, as too many Marxists now believe, but concrete, living man, in his totality, body and soul."

The anthropological influence on Négritude parallel the overall development of African intellectual history as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1. Of significant influence on Négritude was Malinowski's research method which opened new horizon for anthropology and social sciences. It marked a significant shift from earlier method of speculative evolutionism (arm chair theorizing) to a "scientific" method of participant observation. According to Malinowski, the barbarian's life pattern and culture can only be understood within such interaction. Malinowski's method would allow every culture to be evaluated according to its own standards, with goods internal to its practice as a community independent of any external-superior paradigm. Unlike Lévy-Bruhl before him, Malinowski rejected the imposition of external standard in the study of alien cultures. This was the core of his cultural relativism—a shift from "conjectures" and "cultural analogy" (as standard bearers of scientific truth) to participant observation.

This new disposition—"cultural relativism"—enhanced a sympathetic view on non-Western cultures by Western ethnographers. Other influential works are that of Maurice Delafosse, and Leo Frobenius. Frobenius credited the Negro race a role in the ancient Egyptian civilization that he declared of the Negro race: "Civilized to the marrow of their bones! The idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention" (Césaire 1972: 32). This new method in anthropology offered the Negro a new source of self-esteem as the Negro embarked upon projects of "recovery" (of his cultural history) and "inversion" (of the superiority of the Western culture). Other influences would be in social history where various historical experiences played significant role in fostering the development of Negritude. Some of these influences will be: First, the Christian egalitarian principle that exposed black Christians to the hypocrisy of western culture's supposedly Christian value since reality separates the so-called Christian virtues of charity and love from actual practice. This disillusion influenced the emergence of Black theology as a response to the question of identity for black Christians who advocated for a black God different from the God of their white oppressors:

> Our introduction to this Christ was not propitious . . . This Christ shamed us by his pigmentation, so obviously not our own. He condemned us for our blackness, for our flat noses, for our kinky hair . . . we are tired of that . . . if this is what your Christ taught you . . . he's no savior of ours. We affirm our homeland and its great black past, a past that was filled with wonder before your white scourge came; you can keep your Christ. We'll take our home.
>
> (Harding 1969: 96ff)

Another influence is the Haitian revolution which was influenced and modeled after the French Revolution. Haiti offered an utopian address for a prophetic black world in which blacks will overthrow their oppressors and become masters of their destiny (see also Irele 1965a: 338). In all these cases the white man is indicted with the principles evident in his culture.

Pan-Africanism and the ambiguity of nationalism

If pan-Africanism is an ideological precursor to Negritude, in what manner can one speak of a pan-African identity? Arguably, the term African "tradition" refers to the many different traditions of Africa and their complex relationships, which are often scarcely related. Africa excluding the "white" Africa is a continent inhabited by myriad cultures and races. Most Africanist scholars will endorse what they call essentially "African" philosophy emanating from African traditions. Recent scholarship in Africa will attempt to formulate a pan-African philosophy by linking it to Bantu languages where African philosophy is said to be established through *ubuntu.*[2] The argument fostered for this argument (and for others) for the existence of a common African tradition is that the reference is not only to Bantu speaking people but those groups that use such words, or equivalent and by way of specificity, the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. The reason generally advanced is because of a "family atmosphere" of language "kinship" or "affinity" that generates a pan-African unity and that highlights the fact of a common historical culture and tradition among these indigenous people. Mogobe Ramose (1999) will admit that "there will be variations within this broad philosophical 'family atmosphere.' " But the blood circulating through the 'family' members is the same in its basics." Ramose (1999: 49) writes:

> Ubuntu is the root of African philosophy. The be-ing of an African in the Universe is inseparably anchored upon Ubuntu. Similarly, the African tree of knowledge stems from Ubuntu with which it is connected indivisibly. Ubuntu then is the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology. If these latter are the bases of philosophy, then African philosophy has long been established in and through Ubuntu. Our point of departure is that Ubuntu may be seen as the basis of African philosophy . . . [and] . . . a persuasive philosophical argument can be made that there is a "family atmosphere," that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kingship among and between the indigenous people of Africa . . . In this sense Ubuntu is the basis of African philosophy.

The exact geographical specificity of this family area, according to Ramose (quoting De Tejada) is: "from the Nubian Desert to the Cape of Good Hope and from Senegal to Zanzibar" (Ramose 1999: 14). This "family atmosphere"

usually formed the primordial blueprint for a homogenous African community/tradition. While it is convenient to refer to the Negro or Bantu as the peoples inhabiting the areas from the Cape of Good Hope to the Nubian Desert and from Zanzibar to Senegal, the actual reference will be from the southern fringe of the Sahara (Nubian deserts) and the Upper Valley of the Nile to the Cape of Good Hope, with the exception of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Galla, and Somali-Lands. More specifically, the term "Bantu" presupposes a unity of languages spoken in most sub-Saharan African countries as in Cameroun, Central African Republic, Kenya, Uganda; it is predominant in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo (Brazzaville), Zaire, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Comoros, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia. Grassfield Bantu—Cameroun, partially in Nigeria (Mudimbe 1988: 145). According to Kagamé ([1956, 1968]1971: 591) the possibility of a Bantu (homogenized) philosophy is dependent on "linguist coherence" of the different Bantu languages that presents a uniformed language class structures. Kagamé (1956) argues that with the usefulness of the philosophical method borrowed from the West, one can tease out a generic philosophical nuance in the Bantu languages by comparing evidence in specific language groups which corroborates its universality:

> [My method is:] to look for the elements of Bantu philosophy first within specific language; to affirm nothing that is not based on an indisputable cultural proof, transcribed in the original language itself and translated literally into the language accessible to the foreign reader. Once in possession of these basic elements, to undertake the study on the scale of Bantu area, to verify with the results initially determined.
>
> (Mudimbe 1988: 146)

It is on such aforementioned modality that Négritude scholars invoked a pan-African identity. Pan-Africanism would be retrogressively racializing if verity of language "affinity" is a cardinal incentive. As Appiah (1992: 130) persuasively argues, African culture(s) like much of the West before renaissance were formed in ways uninfluenced by vagaries of science and technology. Pan-Africanism need not espouse any metaphysical assumption of mythical unity of the African people except in a most deterministic circumstance for there is neither a metaphysical consensus nor mythical unity in any organic sense, or of a shared social-historical situation. A common resemblance can only be generated through the compass of our shared colonial experiences and the consequence transition to modern nationhood.

With a few exceptions of Somalia, Lesotho, and Swaziland, and to a lesser degree Botswana, none of the new African independent states were

ethno-culturally homogenous. Most of these countries had neither linguistic nor religious homogeneity. The colonial African state brought together people who spoke different languages, had different religious traditions and were politically integrated to "often radically different degrees" (Appiah 1992: 261). In Nigeria, the British administrators of Nigeria would merge different cultures, traditions and more than 300 ethnic groupings and 521 languages (of which 510 are living languages, two second languages, and nine extinct languages) into one country (Gordon 2005, http://www.ethnologue.com). Athol Joyce (1910: 325–330), would admit, "among the true Negros, the greatest linguistic confusion prevails; for instance, in certain parts of Nigeria, it is possible to find half-a-dozen villages within a comparatively small area speaking, not different dialects, but different languages, a fact which adds greatly to the difficulty of political administration." The overly—ambitious—colonial experiment called Nigeria started in 1906 when Lagos colony was joined with the Southern protectorate and followed by the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorate for the administrative convenience of the British administrators. Accordingly, many languages became subdivided and merged with others. A fatal consequence of these *mergings* was the "balkanization" of the Yoruba ethnic grouping into Nigeria and Benin Republics, and Hausas into Nigeria and neighboring countries. Similar experiences abound in Burundi and Rwanda, the Akans in Ghana, Togo and Ivory Coast, Tsonga and Ndebele in South Africa and Zimbabwe, et cetera. Evidence such as these has rendered discourse on a pristine pan-African identity suspect. On this disconcert, Appiah (1992: 262) observes: "if the history of Metropolitan Europe in the last century and a half has been a struggle to establish statehood for nationalities, Europe left Africa at independence with States looking for nations." Preindependence nationalist movements were platforms for cohesion against imperialism but once the steam was over, "the symbolic register of national unity was faced with the reality of our differences" (ibid.). As the miasmic fog of mythical unity clears, the stark reality of our differences played itself as an absurd drama in the theatre of nation-state. Speaking in Liberia in 1952, Nkrumah (1965: 185) had declared, "Africa for the Africans! . . . A free Independent state in Africa. We want to be able to govern ourselves in this country of ours without outside interference." According to Appiah (1992: 262) Nkrumah spoke with vague generality in terms of which the "blacks" opposes the "Europeans." Nkrumah envisioned a homogenous vision of African identity that is generated from our similarities where "we" become an "us," black, while "they" are "white," we are "communitarian" and they are "individualistic," we are . . . they are . . . . The possibility of this homogeneity is not only completely untrue but an illusion. Apart from the cultural and language plurality characteristic of the colonial

African state, colonialism in Africa left different footprints in its wake. The legacies are different and would be categorized into different phases: (1) colonialism, type experienced in Ghana and Nigeria, and its characteristic feature of an expert-oriented agricultural economy; (2) colonialism, type experienced around the Great Lake regions characterized by the brutal exploits of the Belgian companies in the Congo with no investment in human and capital project; (3) colonialism typical of "Africa of the labor reserves"—experienced in Kenya, plantations economy of Tanganyika; (4) colonialism of permanent settlement—typical of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa (see Appiah 1992: 264). In (3) and (4), the colonial economy was dominated by forced labor and mining. The different legacies undermine any homogenous reference to African colonial experience by way of generalization and gives credence to my earlier argument that colonial experience in Africa were constitutively the same but differs substantively.

The ontological chimera of pan-Africanism is further illustrated with the crises of nationalism that enveloped many African countries at independence. At independence, these nation-states were embroiled in crises as politicized ethnic identities received more allegiance than the given national identity inherited at independence. Interethnic chauvinism reigned supreme as people identified themselves more as members of specific ethnicity or language group rather than in any terms encompassing a nationalistic consciousness like being a Nigerian, Angolan, Zimbabwean, et cetera. National identities competed with ethnic and language loyalties (such as being Igbo, Hausa, Shona, Ndebele) with the upshot being that most people perceived their identity as strongly interwoven with their ethnic persuasion. In dizzy maze of such interethnic chauvinism, many African countries collapsed into civil hostilities, threatening the assumed universalized discourse of nation-state (the civil wars in Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Burundi/Rwanda, etc.). Accordingly, the vision of Africa as a homogenous whole at best remained an invention of modernity, an illusion as geopolitics and social history indicate diversity in sociopolitical and cultural economies before being harnessed into a model nation-state by the European powers who designed their fate in the Berlin conference of 1885.

Pan-Africanism remains racialistic if race is appealed as the basis of a pan-African unity. It becomes *everything* but *nothing* in the writing of Langley (1973: 369) "what emerges is a series of a Pan-African movements assuming different characteristics, in different areas, under different leadership, but loosely united by an ideology of race and color and by a sense of injustice and inferiority." It is homogenizing if a common culture is invoked as the source of African unity. It is racialistic and homogenizing insofar as its epistemological foundation is inconsistent with reality—appealing to racial affinity

or a common African value is exclusive and does not symbolize any common consciousness nor generate any "pan-African" consciousness. Reading pan-Africanism in this way suppresses the heterogeneous identities and cultures subsisting in various traditions in Africa. Such claim to a pseudo-racial or cultural metaphysical unity will be a fictitious narrative of a nonexistent homogenous past. *We were not the same!* (see also Appiah 1992, Hountondji 1996: 160–161).

Critique of négritude

To recapitulate, the movement of negritude was a revolt, a refusal to the logic of coloniality. Similarly, in deference to the criticisms raised against Tempels (cf. Chapter 5) one would also note that his attempt to invent an African epistemology is to challenge a peculiar mode of Western episteme that had denied African subjectivity and humanity on the basis that the African had no rationality such as understood within the Western epistemological tradition. Tempels was also writing in the context of the aftermath of one of the worst colonial abuses in history where Africans were literally treated like wild animals by King Leopold II of Belgium. Such background also motivated the discourse with Ogotomelli and no doubt inspired Cheikh Anta Diop's *African Origin of Western civilization*. If scientific knowledge or original thinking can be found in Africa, it is a move that will displace the very foundation of colonial logic—*civilization of the barbarian*.

The critique of Pan Africanism sets the tone for a formal critique of Négritude. The latter is dependent on the presupposition of a homogenized sociocultural experiences and history of the African people. And if the colonial experiences differ substantively, then Négritude as a unified African voice against imperial discourse weakens. I shall proceed to outline varying degrees in which Négritude as an ideology has became an invented discourse founded on an illusive epistemological foundation. Against this background, I would reemphasize that the institutionalized discrimination and cultural racism of which they were up against was a reality. My analysis is not intent to undermine or exculpate these grounded realties, but to challenge their methodology through a humanist historicism. They could response albeit a non reactive method. For in the manner they did, they perpetuated coloniality in the same circle of sameness.

Négritude inverts the terms of colonial discourses

Négritude departs from a thesis on archetypical collective unconsciousness of Africa's sociocultural history and experience. But how "collective" is this

unconscious consciousness since the colonial experiences of the African people differ substantively? The paradox is that the apostles of Négritude were Western educated scholars in the comforts of North American and European universities. The extent to which their "quest" for "self-affirmation" becomes authentic can only be measured against the current within which they are adapted. These apostles employ conceptual schemes and philosophical analysis learned within Western philosophical tradition, the philosophical nuances, all couched within the tradition which they strive to negate—a situation that questions the authenticity and genuineness of the whole project of Négritude. Commenting on Blyden, Charles Lyons had observed that "in seeking to answer the racist in their own terms Blyden developed a theory of race which, while vindicating the black man, derived an uncomfortably large measure of inspiration from late nineteenth-century European race-thinking" (Mudimbe 1988: 129). Senghor as an illustration had argued that rationality is for the West while emotion is for Africans—where Négritude assumes a nonrational ontology. Senghor justified this claim through the rigors of Western philosophical discourse, through a Western intellectual melting pot to develop a new consciousness—but a consciousness dressed in a borrowed robe. Négritude becomes an abstract Negro philosophical essence. Wole Soyinka furthers this critique as early as 1962 in his clichéd coinage: "I don't think a tiger has to go around proclaiming his tigritude"; the Negro does not need to go around proclaiming his Négritude. The very idea of the "negro" as a category is a Western product, invented by the "whites" to perpetuate the domination of this product of their invention, that is, "Negros" (see Appiah 1992: 98).

Négritude enhances alienation

The champions of Négritude are alienated in their quest to get dis-alienated. These champions are known for the Africa and culture they have invented for themselves and for the Africa they represent to the rest of the world. In this *mission* they remain intellectually and culturally dependent. Négritude emphasizes the violence of slavery and imperialism without accommodating the complicit role of Africans in these affairs. While such complicity does not perchance outweigh pressures from Europe to cooperate and sabotage their own people, the connivance needs to be highlighted. This process of alienation according to Mudimbe (1994: 196) is all the more servile because negritude "questions its own creativity in the space of the other, and simultaneously finds its reasons in the alterity of meaning and on experience that are thinkable only in reference to the other." This was the entrapment of the fathers of Négritude movement as Markovitz (1969: 45–46) noted: "Negritude . . . spoke to alienation and not to exploitation, to the individual and not

to the mass, to the intellectual and not to the illiterate, to the modern and not to the traditional. Thus it could make sense not only to cultured administrative intellectuals, but to the alienated French intelligentsia as well." Ezekiel Mphahlele (1962: 7) the famous South African writer concurs, "Senghor feels to be a synthesis of Africa and Europe, but Negritude remains an intellectual play for the leisure-time of the ruling elite." To this criticism Senghor (1998b: 629) had sharply responded:

> During the last thirty or so years that we have been proclaiming negritude, it has become customary, especially among English-speaking critics, to accuse us of *racialism*. This is probably because the word is not of English origin. But, in the language of Shakespeare, is it not in good company with the words humanism and socialism? Mphahleles have been sent about the world saying: "Negritude is an inferiority complex"; but the same word cannot mean "racialism" and "inferiority complex" without contradiction. The most recent attack comes from Ghana, where the government has commissioned a poem entitled "I Hate Negritude"—as if one could hate oneself, hate one's being, without ceasing to be.

Négritude is based on contradictory ontology

Negritude is based on competing claims of essentialism and universalism. In reviewing the imposed homogenized universal of imperial discourse, Négritude scholars would tacitly accept and not interrogate the foundation on which these competing paradigms are located. A ready example is the emergence of new independent African churches (pointed above). These Churches were syncretism of moribund traditions and hence devoid of any *intensional* purity or chaste religious residue from Africa. Thus, the theme of "return" is neither wholly nor partially possible (see Irele 1965b).

Politically, Négritude fails as a movement of revolt and its claim to politics is ambiguous. Considering the multiple influences of Western discourse on Négritude, its claim as an authentic African discourse and a movement of revolt is all the more indistinct. In the light of these internal contradictions, Négritude remains a philosophy of "othernesses." As R. Depestre noted:

> The original sin of Négritude—and the adventures that destroyed its initial project—come from the spirit that made it possible: anthropology. This crisis that destroyed Négritude coincides with the winds that blow across the *fields* in which anthropology—be it cultural, social, applied, structural—with black or white masks, is used to carrying out its learned inquiries.
>
> (Mudimbe 1988: 87)

This *original sin* is also self-defeating for attempting a total emancipation of the black people within a single cultural vision, a homogenization of varied sociocultural and historical experiences of the African peoples and nations. An account of a homogenous culture is impossible if you consider incidents of "internal-cultural-racism" within the "race" itself. The term *makwerekwere* in southern African semantics is a derogatory term used to describe other black foreigners from other sub-Saharan Africa who do not belong to the mainstream "black family" of South Africa. This term does not apply to Arabs, Asians, or persons of European nationality. Most often, the allegiance is materialistic, determined by purchasing power of "*capitalist narrative*." By capitalist narrative I mean a theory of humanity in which a person's identity is defined by one's economic leverage and fatality of geography (place of birth). The extent that an appeal is made to a pan-African culture, to this extent, the internal structure and balance of a united black race, a shared history and a metaphysical unity rupture as an illusion and intellectual fraud. The extent to which evidence and experience prove otherwise, the more obvious that the utopia on which this ideology is constructed and dependent collapses.

Fanon's critique of pan-Africanism could be construed as a critique of Négritude. Fanon favors national culture over and above a homogenized African culture. He argued that one cannot speak in those terms because the historical circumstances and experiences of the African peoples all over the world are unique and cannot therefore be homogenized into a unified whole. A pan-Africanist culture like Négritude ignores the different experiences of the African people as located in varying sociopolitical and economic backgrounds. Fanon (1963: 174) writes:

> Negro-ism therefore finds its first limitation in the phenomenon which takes account of the formation of the historical character of men. Negro and African-Negro culture broke up into different entities because the men who wished to incarnate these cultures realized that every culture is first and foremost national, and that the problems which kept Richard Wright or Langston Hughes [in America] on the alert were fundamentally different from those which might confront Leopold Senghor [in Senegal] or Jomo Kenyatta [in Kenya].

Fanon argues for a national culture in contrast to a pan-African culture as the point of departure for anticolonial resistance or discourse. Nevertheless, as I have argued above, pan-Africanism is a "myth" that homogenizes different ethnic identities or obliterates preexisting cultures into an essentialist black universal.

Négritude is nostalgic for a mythic-pristine-organic African past

Négritude conjectures a golden age of precolonial Africa from which black people(s) have been separated by colonialism and to which they must now return to. The theme of "return" was critical here as it became a putative front in challenging colonial representations of Africa's past history. Négritude has very little to say about gender difference and its utopianism is only an ostentatious mask for nativism—a return to tradition but to which tradition? The silence on gender difference unveils the mask of tyranny embodied in Négritude as an agent of tradition. These conjectures that advocate homogenized African culture constitute a claim, a demand for an original "otherness," and we see in the writing of Appiah (1992), Hountondji (1996), these conjectures run simultaneously to primeval thesis of African barbarism and savagery. They are representations that function mainly to elicit sympathy and aversion which would promote a need for a psychosocial and anthropological dignity. Besides, despite its questionable philosophical foundations, they are discourses that exploit African traditions as metaphysical warehouse of African authenticity and impose a demand of a pristine cultural uniqueness as a *sine qua non* for that "Authenticity."

The nativist appeal of Négritude for a pan-Africanist nationalistic unity, a pseudo continental unity fails because the continent was not united in the past. Négritude so-to-speak, as an authentic pan-African ideology is not only performatively untrue, but ontologically contradictory. In his peculiar critique of Négritude and its apostles, Wiredu likens the insinuation of Négritude to what he calls a "retrogade" and "tragic" state of affairs in some parts of Ghana where people die daily as a result of their preference to traditional herbal remedies to Western remedies. While endorsing the communitarian ethos of traditional African society, Wiredu nevertheless deplores its associative authoritarianism and hence his proposition on the role of philosophy to strengthen this communitarian ethos which does not mask such authoritarianism. Wiredu would argue that the so-called African traditional thought has nothing African about it except a traditional myriad-authoritarian appeal to the ancestors. These African institutions and cultural practices are in fact superstitious in character. By "superstition" Wiredu means, "a rationally unsupported belief in entities of any sort . . . being superstitious attaches not to the content of a belief but to its relation to other beliefs . . ." Although "folk thought" might be "comprehensive and interesting," its non-discursiveness is its major shortcoming (Wiredu 1980: 41, 47; see also Appiah 1992: 167).

Proceeding in this manner of thought, Négritude eclipses the social and political crises that emerged with the new nation. As a cultural ideology it becomes an alibi for shoveling under the carpet, the recurrent sociopolitical

problems facing the new nation. In Césairé, we saw Négritude as a celebration and exaltation of pristine Negro civilization as a prodigy for political liberation. For Césairé, Négritude is a celebration of the cultural supremacy of the Negros to thwart that "white man's" gaze, a celebration mediated in isolation to the economic and political realities of his time. Granted that the political is linked to the social in which the political reality is held in bondage by the social reality yet, the economic reality need not be isolated. Part of the racism and discrimination they experienced is linked to racialist capitalism, for the economic viability of the antagonist aimed at preventing competition from Negros. This would account for the Jim Crow laws in southern United States that aimed at eliminating advanced racial progresses made by the Negros after the civil war such as land rights and electoral franchise. These laws were primarily aimed and curbing the economic power of the Negros and securing white subjectivity through economic supremacy. Senghor on the other hand uses Négritude as an alibi to subvert the pragmatic socioeconomic and political problems faced by the new nation states, an idealism with no pragmatic significance except as a mask against the significant incursion of imperialism. Senghor masks these realities by a way of metaphysical rumblings of African ontology, side-stepping the real problems and laboriously trying to distinguish the African mode of Being from that of the Western mode of being. A dogmatic appeal to cultural nationalism therefore sidesteps the political and socioeconomic issues of the moment in favor of an appeal to a pristine communal past in which the society is "arbitrarily reduced to its pre-colonial dimension, petrified, ossified and emptied of its internal tensions, discontinuities and confrontations" (Hountondji 1996: 163). On this challenge, however, Senghor made concessions.A Roman Catholic, Senghor was significantly influenced by the Jesuit Paleontologist, Fr. De Chardin whose doctrine of noogenesis advocated a convergence of all life and experiences progressing to a "superior human consciousness"—a universal civilization as the ultimate end of humanity. This influence is noticeable in Senghor's (1975: 594) advocacy of Négritude as progressing toward a "civilization of the universal": "the one 'pan-ism' that meets twentieth century requirement, we dare say, panhumanism, I mean a humanism that includes all men on the dual basis of their contributions and their comprehension." On this shift, (from Negro essentialism to universal humanism) Senghor would argue that Négritude as a cultural nationalism would appropriate the dignity of African cultural values as equal (and not superior) to that of other peoples. This unique attribute is Africa's gift to the world. At this juncture, Senghor's Négritude moves beyond the moment of "recovery" (of Africa's lost dignity) to a moment of "construction"—a gift to the world. This gift is "Négritude" as a cultural nationalism and a humanistic universal: "Our revised negritude is humanistic.

I repeat it, it welcomes the complementary values of Europe and the white man, and, indeed, of all other races and continents. But it welcomes them in order to reinvigorate its own values, which it then offers for the construction of a civilization which shall embrace all mankind" (Senghor 1975: 84).

This chapter has been an attempt to negotiate the difficult terrain of African historiography, outlining several criticisms of dominant methodologies. In the next chapters, I shall demonstrate why this peculiar method of historiography is problematic (Chapter 5) as indicative of its sociopolitical impact in the public sphere of contemporary Africa (Chapter 6), before attempting a possible rehabilitation (Chapter 7).

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CHAPTER 5

Beyond a History by Analogy

> At a time when the gap between oppressors and oppressed is widening throughout our continent and political differences are becoming more radical, the ethnophilosopher claims that we have always been, still are and always will be unanimous . . . And the official ideologue smiles, content, and declares: "Alleluia, our ancestors have thought."
>
> (Hountondji 1996: 171)

Ethnophilosophy reconsidered

As I argued in Chapter 4, what has become known as contemporary African ideology or philosophy is a product of the West as it is a product of Negro "pan-ism." On the Negro side, most of the elites who propagated these ideologies (Négritude, pan-Africanism, authenticité) have received Western education. The language, tools, concepts, and categories employed to express these ideologies are not independent of Western epistemological topography as in the philosophies of Nkrumah, Senghor, or Nyerere who in their rhetoric of African socialism were merely juxtaposing basic principles of liberalism with dialectical materialism. This according to Mudimbe (1988: 185) is because the theoretical scheme of African thought pattern and postcolonial discourse is subsequently a double narrative, emanating from the "experience of European hegemony; that is, in Gramsci's terms, 'the dominance of one social bloc over another, not simply by means of force or wealth, but by a social authority whose ultimate sanction and expression is a profound cultural supremacy.' "

Contemporary Africanist studies are subsequently faced with crises; such crises evident in the tension between the claim and appeal to "empirical" discourse whereby the objectivity and credibility of discourse are dependent on proof of eschatological narratives in which a prophetic voice mediates between the past and the future as a symbol of hope and codified as truth

in itself (Mudimbe 1994: 41). As Foucault (1973: 320–321) has argued, the interface between Marxism and phenomenology has exposed the human person as an object of knowledge, a vista of epistemological nuances in which "eschatology (as the objective truth proceeding from man's discourse) and positivism (as the truth of discourse defined on the basis of the truth of the object) are archaeologically indissociable: a discourse attempting to be both empirical and critical cannot but be positivist and eschatological; man appears within it as a truth both reduced and promised." According to Mudimbe (1994: 42) Africanist scholars and elites were caught in this tension: prominent elites and statesmen like Kaunda, Nyerere, Nkrumah, Senghor, et cetera, in their projects abandoned their own metaphysical foundations roots and thus undermined those goods internal to the practices of their community upon which their discourse and practice would have become complemented. Other African elites not oriented toward Marxism, on the other hand, in ignoring the role of history (as a paradigmatic point of departure for their discourses), and abandoning the complex "historicities" symbolized in their epistemology inadvertently became fixated and dogmatic by perceiving the past in mythical terms independent of any veritable thesis, but a past in continuity with contemporary African society. Mbiti's (1969) African *Philosophy and Religion* is caught in the second phase of this tension. Others are Cheikh Anta Diop, Basil Davidson—I will herein add the likes of Theophilus Okere, Innocent Onyewuenyi, Mogobe Ramose, et cetera. Mudimbe (1994: 41) specifically criticizes Mbiti for postulating, "a subjunctive mood accounted for by an uncritical leap out of history into a Christian eschatology." An incipient methodological problem in most of these cases is that Africa's historical past is reduced to a mythical past in which the people so represented are mere topic, voiceless in a story told about them.

The first phase of the tension ushered in the era of African socialism; a political plan through which political liberation in Africa will become conceived in terms of Marxist revolution and seduced by an appeal to a mythical egalitarian past as we saw in the discourse on Négritude and the attempt to induce a challenge to logic of coloniality and demystify its lingering residues in postcolonial Africa. In French Africa, it was called Négritude and authenticité; in Tanzania, it was called Ujamma; in Ghana, it was called "conciencism"; in Zambia, it was called "Zambian Humanism" et cetera. Brilliantly encoded, these projects Mudimbe (1994: 41) noted nevertheless deviated from the strict Marxist principles they opined to represent, and in practice, remained a phantasm of a fictional new beginning of history. Neither Nkrumah's consciencism, nor Nyerere's socialism nor Kaunda's humanism nor Mobutu's authenticité lived up to the promise and their failure is due to their epistemological incoherencies as a result of disregard of their

metaphysical foundations. Such a failure could have been avoided by locating these discourses in dialogue with the values internal to the practices of their communities, a practice within context. Moreover, the motive for these discourses was not merely for the political emancipation of the African people as it is a front to erase any lingering residue of imperial discourse.

This attempt of challenging colonial discourse in order to undermine the lingering influence of coloniality was mediated through the practice of Ethnology. Ethnology is a philosophy of otherness; it is a philosophy that is only significant in its relation to the "other"; to be recognized by the "other" who in this case is the colonial master. The ethno-philosopher perceives his her identity on the basis of a cursory glance or recognition from the "other." The "other" in turn, according to Hountondji (1996: 45):

> As a gesture or repentance, or rather, to help allay his own spiritual crises, he began to celebrate this difference, and so the mysterious primitive "mentality" was metamorphosed into primitive "philosophy"... and although the advertized primitive "philosophy" did not correspond to that which the colonized wished to see recognized, at least it made dialogue and basic solidarity possible.

This point of view is what the Cameroonian Eboussi Boulaga meant by a "doubly interpreted misinterpretation" in which " 'Africanist' particularism goes hand in glove, *objectively,* with an abstract universalism, since the African intellectual who adopts it thereby expounds it, over the heads of his own people, in a mythical dialogue with his European colleagues, for the constitution of a 'civilization of the universal' " (Hountondji 1996: 45).

The ethno-philosopher's audience is the European public, to whom he is to prove the inevitability of his own humanity. At the core of this rehabilitation is the often uncritical adaptation of Tempels' work as a basic point of departure although Tempels was arguably writing for a European audience.[1] Tempels argued that the primary motive of his project was an attempt to redeem the Negro's subjectivity so denigrated by the likes of Lévy Bruhl and his school. It was a project aimed at constructing a specific African *weltanschauung (worldview)* that will rehabilitate the Negro and his culture from the imposed denigrating image of "primitive mentality"; a new image in parallel with a modernist universal essence. According to Tempels ([1959]2006: 73):

> This "discovery" of Bantu philosophy is so disconcerting a revelation that we are tempted at first sight to believe that we are looking at a mirage. In fact, the universally accepted picture of primitive man, of the savage, of the proto-man living before the full blossoming of intelligence, vanishes beyond hope of recovery before this testimony.

As a missionary, Tempels conceives the secondary motive of his project as an attempt to facilitate the "mission" to civilize and evangelize; to provide an archaeology of knowledge through which individual Europeans and missionaries become "educated" on the psychosocial personality of the native and become better equipped for future encounters as missionaries or colonial workers. Hountondji (1996) has criticized Tempels on the basis that his work was in fact not addressed to Africans but to Europeans, especially the missionaries and their colonial collaborators as Tempels ([1959]2006: 11) himself had written:

> A better understanding of the realm of Bantu thought is just as indispensable for all who are called upon to live among native people. It therefore concerns all colonials, especially those whose duty is to hold administrative or judicial office among African people; . . . it concerns all who wish to civilize, educate and raise the Bantu. But, if it concerns all colonizers of good will, it concerns most particularly missionaries.

Perhaps I should note that Hountondji's criticism here does not seem to accommodate Tempels' "context." By context I mean the mind-set of Tempels' era, which Tempels was trying to influence. Hountondji was raising his criticism half a century later and genuine as these criticisms are today, one must grant to Tempels this innovation. Moreover, the mind-set that Tempels wanted to influence was not that of the Africans but those corrupted by Lévy-Bruhl, Gobineau, Burton, etc the same audience that these adventurists addressed. Therefore, even if Tempels was not writing for Africans, this does not necessarily make his work less legitimate. Nevertheless, this is not my concern for now.

Father Tempels describes what became known as "Bantu Ontology" as typically a theory of forces. The very understanding of being (as in ontology) in Bantu ontology according to Tempels ([1959]2006: 24–25) is force. This force is neither "adventitious" nor accidental. It is constitutive of beings. For Tempels, "Force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force." What is being in the West is force among the Bantu. Where the West sees "concrete beings" the Bantu see "concrete forces."

According to Tempels, this *being* is not static but dynamic and equals power. Since *being* equals power, the life of the Bantu is dependent on increasing the "vital power" for his being diminishes when this vital power diminishes and increases when his vital power increases. The Bantu's life is embedded in this shifting tension of increasing/decreasing power. Life increases with power increase and vice versa. Another essential feature of this Bantu notion of being is the interaction of forces in which the Bantu is located in the universe of *beings* as mediated through a necessary relationship

and dependence on its creator. This universe of *being* is hierarchical and determines the social order. At the top of this hierarchy is God, followed by ancestors, dead members of the community (who mediates or intercedes between) the living, the unborn, lower forces (animals, plants,) and inanimate things. This hierarchy enables humans to exercise influence and control over lower forces: [God → Ancestors → the Living (Human beings) → the unborn → Lower forces (Animals, Plants, inanimate things).

Ultimately, Bantu ontology writes Tempels ([1959]2006: 31) is "humanism" because "[The] created universe is centred on man: The present human generation living on earth is the centre of all humanity, including the world of the dead." In the judgment of Eboussi-Boulaga, Tempels' work is

> [An] interplay of value and counter-value . . . which characterizes the colonizer's judgments on the colonized. Bantuism is partly admirable and partly abominable. It is valuable when the colonized wish to forsake it for equality: then they are reminded that they are losing their "souls." But Bantuism becomes a vile hotchpotch of degenerate magical practices when the colonizer wishes to affirm his pre-eminence and legitimize his power.
>
> (Hountondji 1996: 196)

Fanon in his typical style does not hide his disenchantment with Tempels' project which he perceives as a distraction from the sociopolitical realism of the African people. In his view, it is noteworthy to talk about *Bantu Philosophy* but it is more cogent to speak in terms of the correlation between "human minimum" and culture, that is to say, without barest human minimum or human dignity, one cannot talk about culture or its study thereof. In other words, certain barest human condition like "dignity" must be fulfilled before advancing to other esoteric needs like philosophy. Fanon is referring to the "human condition" of the Bantu of whom Tempels was writing about. These conditions are typical of the colonial condition so specified in chapters 2 and 3. For Fanon (1986: 184), Temples cannot be talking about Bantu ontology in 1946, when at the same time one reads elsewhere (referring to the South African situation in I.R. Skine, *Apartheid en Afrique du Sud*, in Les Temps Modernes July, 1950):

> When 75,000 black miners went on strike in 1946, the state police forced them back to work by firing on them with rifles and charging with fixed bayonets. Twenty-five were killed and thousands were wounded. At the same time Smuts was the head of the government and a delegate to the Peace Conference. On farms owned by white men, the black laborers live almost like serfs. They may have their families with them, but no man is allowed to leave the farm without

> the permission of his master. If he does so, the police are notified and he is brought back by force and whipped.
>
> (Fanon 1986: 184–185)

Like Fanon, Aimé Césaire criticized Tempels project as a diversion and distraction from the real practical problems confronting the Negro of his time. For Césaire, Tempels' Bantu philosophy was merely a catharsis for the Bantu, a purgation from the ideological strain of imperial discourse. Césaire's criticism is all the more relevant considering that Tempels ([1959]2006: 31) had noted:

> The white man, a new phenomenon in the Bantu world, could be conceived only according to pre-existing categories of Bantu Thought. He was therefore incorporated into the universe of forces, in the position therein which was congruent with the logic of Bantu ontology. The technological skill of the white man impressed the Bantu. The white man seemed to be the master of great natural forces. It had, therefore to be admitted that the white man was an elder, a superior human force, surpassing the vital force of all Africans.

This premise spurred Aimé Césaire (1972: 39) in his remarkable caricature of Tempels' project:

> Since Bantu thought is ontological, the Bantu only ask for satisfaction of an ontological nature. Decent wages! Comfortable housing! Food! These Bantu are pure spirits, I tell you: What they desire first of all and above all is not the improvement of their economic or material situation, but the white man's recognition of and respect for their dignity as men, their full human value.

Césaire's criticism *mutatis mutandis* no doubt, is restricted to the sociopolitical implication of Tempels' philosophy as it affects the Bantu and not on its theoretical formation. Succeeding generation of "African" philosophers would be defining the theoretical foundation of what has become "African philosophy" on the basis of interpretation, appreciation or criticism of Tempels' project. This *Bantu Philosophy* was to become an "ontological" bedrock; a projected universal "collective" of a homogenous philosophy native to all Africans. A noticeable influence of Tempels' philosophy is evident in the work of Alexis Kagame. In his *La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'Etre,* Kagame (1956) followed the Aristotelian model of constructed ontology and through his mother tongue Kinyarwanda, he was able to articulate an alternative to the Aristotelian philosophy of being. Kagame would maintain a certain continuity and (later) discontinuity with Tempels on elementary basis, that is, on the immutability of Bantu philosophy as collective Bantu cultures and institutions (excluding other references of convergence between Tempels and

Kagame). Of significant note of mention is the understanding of man as non dualistic (soul and body) for if no Bantu word denotes the word "soul," the idea of man must be indivisible. Like Tempels, Kagame presents God as the author and source of Being and human destinies. (Note also that Tempels and Kagame were both Roman Catholic priests and inclined toward Thomism). With regard to the humanism of Bantu ontology, Kagame agrees with Tempels by locating humanity at the center of all Bantu imaginations; a model which projects the human person as a superior intelligent being. Kagame's work for all its rigors and robust philosophical nuance is nevertheless restricted to his linguistic and Kinyarwanda language. Although he departs from Tempels' homogenization and ascription of his Bantu philosophy as a "key" to all "primitive" thought, unlike Tempels, Kagamé (1956) does not plead for the supremacy nor exceptionalism of Bantu philosophy, he points to its universal import and relation to other philosophies. In his view, formal logic, for example, would be a universal category in all cultures and languages.

Thus far, the intellectual history of Africa is a history of turbulent ambiguities and ambivalence; offering or projecting different substantive content when applied to Africa. The work of Tempels as shown above is projected as a foundation to what today has become known as Bantu (African) philosophy. The adjective "Africa" on the other hand changes its substantive content when it is indexically imposed on philosophy (or history) as the late Odera Oruka pointed out:

> What may be a superstition is paraded as "African religion," and the white world is expected to endorse that it is indeed a religion but an African religion. What in all cases is a mythology is paraded as "African philosophy," and again the white culture is expected to endorse that it is indeed a philosophy but an African philosophy. What is in all cases a dictatorship is paraded as "African democracy," and the white culture is again expected to endorse it so.
>
> (Hountondji 1996: 60)

The dubiousness of the aforementioned closed afrocentrism is better captured by the now classic term "Ethnophilosophy." Ethnophilosophy is generally based on two assumptions: (1) unanimity—a metaphysical unity and central body of ideas shared by all Africans—and (2) an evaluative assumption that proposes a pertinent recovery of *that* lost tradition of the African people (see Appiah 1992: 152).

Hountondji and Ethnophilosophy

Hountondji (1996) defines Ethnophilosophy as an imaginary "intoxicating" interpretation dependent on the whims of the interpreter; without any textual

support for legitimacy. It is a method that ignores its own creative ability in translating the so-called nonexistent cultural text. In his view, African philosophy and history is projected on the basis of its sympathetic reading by Western audiences. Hountondji (1996) argues that the intellectual history of Africa or what has become known as "African philosophy" must be written to gain textual legitimacy. But this objection to ethnophilosophy is also greatly influenced by his reading of his teacher and mentor Althusser ([1968]1971: 44):[2]

> Philosophy has been observed only in places where there is also what is called science as sciences—in the strict sense of theoretical discipline, i.e., ideating and demonstrative, not an aggregate of empirical results . . . For philosophy to be born or reborn, it is necessary that sciences be.

Hountondji's criticisms have generated polemical responses from Africanist scholars who would accuse Hountondji of Eurocentrism or non-Africanness. Isolating the polemics that sometimes colors his language, Hountondji in my view, is unfairly projected as denying the role of "conceptual take-off" in the formation of any discourse. This *conceptual take* off in my view is located within the culture of a people; it is a good that concomitantly evolves within the sociocultural practices of the people for as Mudimbe (1988: 159) has argued, "language (as in culture, philosophy, etc) evolves in a social environment, developing its own history and the possibility of its own philosophy." His critics usually respond to his polemics and ignore the substance of his argument. Listen to the late erudite African philosopher (and my townsman) Chukwudi Eze (2001: 138) "When Negritude is understood as Senghor wished . . . then not even Hountondji's *notorious* attack and *veiled mockery* . . . takes away from Négritude's recognized historical significance" [my emphasis].

In fact, Hountoundji was criticizing the closed character of African historiography as an ethnophilsophy. He only challenges it embedded essentialism, "one of the main results of this critique had to be the dispelling of a widespread illusion that saw ethnophilosophy . . . as the way of philosophizing worthy of an African, the only way that could preserve the originality of the black man" (Hountondji 2002: 79). In his *African Philosophy,* Hountondji (1996: 204) argued that it is mockery for us "to try to win certificates of humanity from whites or to display the splendors of past African civilizations to them." These are virtues inherent in people and we do not have to plead for them!

Hountondji's critique against unanimity of ethnophilosophy is of utmost significance and would need further elucidation. Elitist in orientation,

ethnophilosophy is a discourse from "above." The propagandist of ethnophilosophy would have assumed the spokesperson of the people they claim to represent. They would be constructing their theories *mostly* from the ivory towers of the Western citadels of learning. Yet, the reality would remain that these discourses like colonial discourses they are trying to refute are also *given* historicity, alien to context, indifferent to the actual reality on the ground. Accordingly, to subscribe to a pristine unanimity is to deny the people that are *claimed* to be represented a history for it is a discourse that specifically thrives on rejection of history. A homogenous society exists through history without making history. History is made through the dynamics of cultural pluralism and interculturality which characterize every society. To argue for cultural unanimity is to propose an "arrested development" of African cultural values. Unanimity not only stifles creative imaginaries it closes the door for any historical investigation; it becomes authority of history without being historical; it says the last word, it becomes a dogma. Yet, the lesson from history is precisely that of a historical-subjective-continuum in which the past, the present and the future are contemporaneously implicated: the past inspires an understanding of today to articulate (or make) a (better) future. The illusory appeal to a pristine unanimity does not only suffocate our cultural memory, it closes all avenues for creative historicism. Cultural unanimity much as well dislocates the subject. The subject dissolves into a mystic halo. This Hountoundji (2002: 132) had cautioned:

> To liberate the future, the past had first to be liberated by restoring movement, contradiction, and dynamism to it. The complexity of history which is as old in Africa as anywhere else in the world had to be acknowledged, and the illusion of stasis . . . renounced once and for all.

Historical unanimity closes door for interculturality. It stifles a person's subjectivity since an individual's autonomous history is not negotiated but permanently displaced by a homogenous group history. The historical dogmatism emerging from such historical method does not give space for intersubjectivity and dynamic cultural exchange. It is no wonder that in a country like Nigeria, the complexity of national imaginary is dependent on the politicization of history. An ordinary disagreement between an Igbo man and Hausa/Fulani is adjudged a civil strife between the Igbo and Hausa/Fulani ethno-cultural groups. In this case, it becomes impossible to isolate possibilities of particular exigencies, resist the seduction of tribal fetishism and move beyond this entrapment. Interculturality teaches that it is possible to disagree with a person of another tribe without generating an interethnic (tribal) tension. This is the insight of Hountondji when he argues that we

must restore dynamism to history. Our history cannot just be a history of the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Hutu/Tutsi—histories generated to affirm the identity of a group in "difference" to an "other." To conceive an African history in this way is problematic for it yields to an essentialized "given" form of identity with devastating consequences as we saw in the civil wars in Burundi/Rwanda (1994), Angola, Nigeria, Sudan, et cetera.

Upon the dislocation of the subject is the political impact when surreptitious appeal is made to tradition to legitimate dictatorship, nepotism, corruption and abysmal irresponsible governance. This is typically what happened in the Zairean kind of cultural nationalism in which one such "cultural history" became politicized as a tool for oppression and legitimation of Mobutu's dictatorship (see Chapter 6). It is at this juncture that history becomes a political project to legitimate domination. The Zairean case replays a classical case of historical unanimity at the service of political dictatorship. This country's resource would be squandered in trying to legitimate the ideology of authenticité. The people believe in it and authenticité offered the authority of tradition to legitimate Mobutu. In the name of history, it evacuates responsive government and instituted cultural dictatorship.

Yet, within the space of "tradition as authority" lies a more devastating danger of group domination which according to Hountoundji (2002: 194) designates "a certain idea of the group imposed by a handful of intellectuals . . . the ideology that crushes the individual." In Chapter 3 we noticed the impact of tribe on the nation-state. The tribe becomes a location of civil war as a result of emerging competing identities struggling for power and domination over the national imaginary. As often the case in Africa, each tribe lays authority to a virtual tribal superiority on a particular vestige of a historical unanimity held by the tribe. On such platform, a group would politicize their cultural history to effect a domination of others. The "Sokoto Caliphate" of Nigeria gives a glimpse of group domination through the authority of historical unanimity. "Born to rule" is the slogan of these northern elites who have dominated the political landscape of Nigeria since independence. In their view, it is a predetermined birthright to rule Nigeria because of a shared pristine unanimous history traced back to the champion of the Fulani Jihad, Utham Dan Fodio in the eighteenth Century.

Thus far, the intellectual history of Africa is now charged as being a propagandist philosophy, reverberating the tone of Négritude to refute the cold stare of imperial ideology that supposedly denied subjectivity to people of non-Western origin. The history of Africa would become a process of reversing the trend of colonial ideology by confronting imperial discourse. Tempels' work would be very significant in this endeavor, its influence already

noticeable in Senghor's Negritude especially the emphasis on "vital force" which Senghor translated as distinctively "African worldview."

Ethnophilosophy or folk philosophies in Africa are not uniform—what conceptual scheme does the Zulu, the Igbo and Shona have in common? If any similarities exist, it is only on the basis of what Appiah (1992: 146) describes as mere "similarities between the economies and social structures of traditional societies or as the result of cultural exchange." Yet, such cultural sharing and exchange is no more unique than those they acquire from non "African" cultures insofar as the extent of this cultural exchange is severely limited (by absence of writing) (ibid.). Hence the question, "is there an African philosophy?" is a postcolonial question—a reaction against the so-called Western racialism as evident in Hume, Hegel, Conrad and Levy Bruhl discourses and its denigration of the colonial people's subjectivity (cf. Chapter 2). Yet this reaction as a premise to African intellectual history or philosophy ought to be rejected because it remains a product of the "other" since it emerges as an antithesis of a Western presupposition (cf. chapters 2 and 4). It embodies certain ethnocentrism which is not itself free from racism; easily construed as *antiracist* racism for it largely remains an unreflective attitude to one's culture. The role of the African historian is to restore dynamism to African history, to move beyond group essentialism and admit space for intercultural historicism. We can and may write about African history without necessarily imposing it as a dogma which excludes or guarantees who is qualified or have the right to talk about African philosophy or history. The Indian can write about African history. The German can write about African history as much as I can write and be an expert of European or Indian history.

History by analogy

As I argued in Chapter 3 a national consciousness is an embodied shared loyalty to set of belief practices, language, and cultural affinity. Fanon's (1963: 188) definition offers a most ingenious interpretation: "a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence." On the basis of this presupposition, series of questions emerge: (i) how to define the actual distinction between nation-state and historical communities? (ii) To what extent would historical analogy resonate in predicting the actual emergence of these historical communities? And if historical analogy is to be *evaluatively* predictive, what are its limitations and success? In this section, I shall argue that *history by analogy* is both uncertain and unyielding. It is uncertain because it is built on presuppositions of a given historical context—mosaic rootlessness. It is unyielding

on the possibility of cultural relativism which would undermine any "actual" historical reference. The problem of "afro-centrism" is construed around this methodological problem, the problem of transference of method.

Africanist scholars like Diop (1974), and Bigo (1974: 32, 60), Bernal (1987), Boahen (1987), Davidson (1992: 65), have charted comparative study of various historical moments of different historical communities which will be analogous to the course of African development if the latter were allowed to flourish. The Japanese (at the turn of the century) is often cited as a classic case of an internally stimulated development and growth that exceeded the pressure of imperialist outgrowth; a method of development which does not undermine or dispossess indigenous tradition and culture. Bigo would argue that Japan is developed today only because it was *not* colonized by the West! The Japanese had in 1904 scored an overwhelming naval victory over the Russians at the Battle of Tsushima—the last attempt to colonize the Empire by a Western power. In analysis like this, sociopolitical categories of one historical community are compared to the origins and development of another historical community. A thought confirmed by Boahen (1987: 99): "had African states been in control of their own destinies—as say, Japan was . . . there is no reason . . . they could not also have followed the Japanese model." Comparing the Japanese Empire to the ancient Asante Empire, Davidson (1992: 65) concurs with Bigo and Boahen that if Japan had suffered the same colonial violence as many other kingdoms of Africa, the modernization program of Japan would have failed:

> The Japanese example is once more instructive. What would have happened in and to Japan if the Western World had made Japan a target for colonial enclosure and dispossession . . . had taken from the Japanese all scope of their own initiative and enterprise . . . One may reasonably reply that in this case the modernization revolution of Japan could not have been carried through.

These Africanist scholars would challenge Western representation of Africa's historiography by reconstructing African history through historical analogy. It is argued from this point of analogy that Africans did have a capacity for meaningful and effective participation in their local affairs and politics because "the evidence, if actually examined, provides an exact parallel with the European *regna*, and in almost exactly the same historical time" (Davidson 1992: 92). The great Empires of Africa, Ancient Ghana, Kanem-Bornu Empire, Songhai, etc embody the same functional state formation similar to the *regna*, in the European medieval sense. And like Japan or other European empires of that age, the huge functional empires were "open to

developmental influence from outside its *regnum*, notably the influence of Islamic law and literacy, but none of them appears to have produced any idea of forming a national identity, much less a national consciousness". The unifying purpose of this *regna* (in Africa or Europe) comparatively speaking was not goaded by any desire for a nationalistic consciousness but rather a motivation for power, for territorial control and enrichment through taxation and tributaries (ibid.: 93).

Beyond a history by analogy

The focal point of natural history is the "sum and value of differences . . . of progressions and regressions, continuities and major breaks." Natural history does not conceive reality in terms of evolution, that is, by "the possibility of a descent the *degrees* of modification of which depend on external conditions"; nor does it depart from point of production or invention (from a to x). Natural history conceives reality primarily in terms of relationships (between a and b). Yet, even such relationships are conceived via a dualistic mode of *series* and *structure* otherwise called analogy of proportionality (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 258).

The *series* pattern departs by positing a resemblance of terms that conform in different degrees "to a single eminent term, perfection or quality as the principle behind the series." Such pattern of progression from *nominal* to *perfect* term would read like: a resembles b, b resembles c, c → d, et cetera. "A" in this context designates the *perfection* in terms, the preeminent term. In this *series* of analogy we have resemblances which are distinct from one another in a single in between continuum of series (ibid.).

The analogical differentiation on the basis of *structure*, unlike the resemblance in the *series* focuses on equivalence of relations, seeking out "independent variables that can be combined to form a structure, and on the other hand, the correlates that entail one another within each structure" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 259). On this point, instead of progressive resemblance, we would adduce a structure that would locate our terms as distinct oppositions, thus, "a" is to "b" as "c" is to "d"; "gills are to breathing under water as lungs are to breathing air; or the heart is to gills as the absence of a heart is to tracheas [in insects]" (ibid.: 258). What we have is an analogical mirror in which an assumed set of relationships "realizes after its fashion the perfection under consideration." This differentiation by structure offers differences that resemble each other within a single and between continuum of structures (ibid.). Yet, natural history does not prescribe a distinction between the structural and serial modes since they share a "stable compromise." This is so because in both cases,

> Nature is conceived as an enormous *mimesis:* either in the form of a chain of beings perpetually imitating one another, progressively and regressively, and tending toward the divine higher term they all imitate by graduated resemblance, as the model for and principle behind the series; or in the form of a mirror imitation with nothing left to imitate because it is itself the model everything else imitates, this time by ordered difference.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 259)

Yet, beyond this point of convergence, the *series* model is tendentiously problematic for "instituting a serial organization of the imaginary" as opposed to "a symbolic structural order of understanding." Levi-Strauss' discourse on totemism would help to understand the necessity of transcending "external resemblances to arrive at internal homologies" (ibid.). In place of mere graduation of resemblances (as in the series), structuralists would propose correspondence relations; analogy of proportion is substituted with analogy of proportionality; structuration of differences replaces serialization of differences; terms would be identified not by serial resemblance but by equality of relation; the imitation of a primal, perfect eminent mode is substituted with a mimesis which in itself remains primal but without a model. It is significant that it remains *primal without model;* otherwise, the dualism merely closes upon itself, extrapolating a closed, rigid, sedentary system of values fashioned through a mimicry of manichean historicism. Besides, mimicry is self-defeating for it depends on binarism as a universal technique that it imposes even on phenomenon of variable aggregates and character (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 12). Further danger of such binarism is a *downgrade of subjectivity.* We do not become creative subject by imitation, resemblance or identification. To subject ourselves within this conceptual block is to cap our possibility of becoming, creativity and dynamism. Of this *subjective entrapment* Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 262) noted:

> Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself. The block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. Becoming can and should be qualified as becoming . . . even in the absence of a term . . . becoming is involutionary, involution is creative. To regress is to move in the direction of something less differentiated.

Such embedded dangers of historical binarism was partly the preoccupation of Mahmood Mamdani in his study of African politics. According to Mamdani (1996: 9), *History* by analogy is constituted by trajectory polarities

in which one end of the polarity determines the essence of the other. The essence of this ontic interdependence is that social reality is perceived through a program of binary oppositions: modern versus. premodern (postmodern), industrial versus preindustrial, capitalist versus precapitalist, development versus underdevelopment. The lead term (development, capitalist, industrial, etc) embodies a universal valid significance and analytical essence. The residual term (underdevelopment, precapitalist, etc.) does neither generate an authentic history nor a genuine future insofar as its essence is defined and dependent on its lead twin term. History by analogy Mamdani (ibid.) argues is a unilinear social science that makes mockery of the experience depicted as residual while mythologizing the experience that is its lead term. At the same time, while the lead term is constructed as a "suprahistorical trajectory of development" that was and remains uninhibited by vagaries of circumstance, the residual term on the other hand is "rendered ahistorical." But as Mamdani would have argued, does a novice, for example, become known as not-yet a master? Considering possible intervening variable, would being a "Master" the "true" and ultimate destiny of every novice? Considering that history by analogy posits a bipolarity of double distinction where the residual term gains essence and content not in its own terms but in reference to what it was not! Hence premodern reads as "Not-yet-modern," "not-yet-capitalist," et cetera (see also, ibid.).

The chief merit of post-structuralism is its critique of structuralist induced unilinear social science of binary oppositions. Post-structuralism Mamdani (ibid.) continues sought to redeem historicity and agency to the subject from the bondage of structuralism. But, does this transcendence of epistemological oppositions redeem the subject or even create "a basis for healthy humanism" Mamdani (1996: 10) asks? These are important questions ignored by many Africanist scholars who shift from one extreme to another:

> From seeing the flow of events in Africa as exceptional to the general flow of world history to seeing it as a routine, as simply dissolving in that general flow, confirming its trend, and in the process presumably confirming the humanity of the African people. In the process, African history and reality lose any specificity, and with it, we also lose any but an invented notion of Africa.
>
> (Ibid.: 11)

Like many of its kinds, history by analogy obscures much more than it reveals. It suffocates and pressures out the variety of other variables and yields to a metaphysical indeterminacy in which cultural traditions are perceived as binaries of distinct wholes; emasculating the internal tensions characterizing these cultural traditions. Ultimately, it is a move that champions misrecognition of

emergent cultural constructions upon which our subjectivity depends. Gilles Deleuze (1994: 268) notes:

> History progresses not by negation and the negation of the negation, but by deciding problems and affirming differences. It is no less bloody and cruel as a result. Only the shadows of history live by negation: the good enter into it with all the power of a posited differential or a difference affirmed; they repel shadows into the shadows and deny only as the consequence of a primary positivity and affirmation . . . affirmation is primary; it affirms difference, while the negative is only a consequence or a reflection in which affirmation is doubled.

On the aforementioned trajectory, Wole Soyinka (1976: 126–127) in his criticism of Senghor's contraposition between "Negro emotion" and "Greek rationality" gave a damming conclusion on the futility of such analogy:

> The vision of Negritude should never be underestimated or belittled . . . This vision in itself was that of restitution and re-engineering of racial psyche, the establishment of a distinct human entity and the glorification of its long-suppressed attributes . . . In attempting to achieve this laudable goal, however, Negritude proceeded along the route of over-simplification. Its re-entrenchment of black values was not preceded by any profound effort to enter into the African system of values. It extolled the apparent. Its reference points took far too much coloring from European ideas . . . *Negritude adopted the Manichean tradition of European thought and inflicted it on a culture which is most radically un-Manichean. It not only accepted the dialectical structure of European ideological confrontations but borrowed from the very components of its racist syllogism*
>
> [My emphasis].

Conclusion: critique of history from above

In examining this section, my aim is not to dismiss the role of comparative studies rather than to examine such studies which in general context is rooted in ahistorical structuralism which in its very ontology ignores context and history and thereby alienating and de-historicizing the subject. History from above alienates and dehistoricizes the subject. To the question who am I? The subject responds: *I am what you want me to be*. The power does not lie in the subject but on the "other" who determines and stipulates the course of action and the mode of historicity. The "other" is the "lead" term and the subject is the "residual" term. The subject is disempowered and alienated insofar as any attempt to empower the subject is a given. Historically, the subject is artificially constructed while contextually he remains *acultural*. The

subject's identity is only a fossilized embodiment *cum* residue of the "other." The subject is completely and wholly entrapped because his resistance to any given identity through the other's negation would be a process subtly dictated from above, a mirror image of his inventor, "an asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that 'other' in its precarious subjectivity" (Spivak 1999: 266). And to accept the *statusquo* on the other hand is an objectification of the subject. It is certainly tendentious to proceed according to this historical determinism, and hence a need arises to liberate the African subject; a need for a method to decolonize the humanity of the African by arguing for a possibility of a history from "below," a history which allows people who have been decolonized to begin to redefine themselves within their own frame of reference, context and culture. The possibility of this process is the focus of the following paragraphs.

Michel Foucault (1972) has argued for an interface between power and control on the one hand and knowledge and discourse on the other. Discourse is sociohistorical and institutionalized set of statements, terms, categories, class, and beliefs that functions as a location of contested terrain of meanings and power relations. According to Foucault, power relations in society can only be understood and exercised when one gains power and control over knowledge and meaning through social relations, writing, disciplinary and professional institutions. It is only then that a counter hegemonic discourse would yield a mechanism to challenge dominant discourse and narratives for affective change within society. This is what Lyotard (1984: xx11–1v, 5) has described as "an incredulity toward metanarratives."

Deconstructing and dismantling of discourses unveils a method in which meaning may be constructed and used. The ability to deconstruct discourse is key to understanding the dualistic construction of knowledge in Western epistemology, where a term is understood through a trajectory of its binary opposite to gain meaning: truth/falsity, civilized/uncivilized, et cetera. On this point, Derrida (1973: 148) argues that this hierarchical coupling shape our noetic endeavors at understanding through a multiple and often unrecognized complex ways:

> We could thus take all the coupled oppositions on which philosophy is constructed, and from which our language lives, not in order to see opposition vanish but to see the emergence of a necessity such that one of the terms appears as the difference of the other, the other as "differed" within the systematic ordering of the same . . . It is out of the unfolding of this "same" as difference that the sameness of difference and of repetition is presented in the eternal return.

Following this understanding arouses a need for a critical deconstruction of both written and oral text with particular attention to the ways in which

the dualism is constructed and sustained. It is in an effort to eradicate this analytical conspiracy that Hountondji (2002: 126–127) enjoins that Africa's historical condition will become maintained when its associative mystifications inherited from the inventors of Africa and are demystified:

> It was thus necessary to start by demystifying Africanness by reducing it to a fact—the simple and, in itself, perfectly neutral fact of belonging to Africa; . . . To think through the complexity of our history . . . to bring back the theater of this history to its original simplicity; to realize the richness of African traditions.

Note, however, that on insisting on written text, Hountonji does not necessarily exclude nor undermine the validity of oral text, a key point of critical assessment for which he has been unfairly criticized: "I had not given oral texts all the attention they deserved . . . I had never ruled out *a priori,* that philosophical texts could not be found in oral tradition. I have always stayed quite clear of what one of my compatriots called 'the fetishism of writing' " (Hountondji 2002: 220). Hountondji's concern is not a problem of content but of method that often thrives on apologetic unanimity, denying us a historical presence, mummifying our historical subjectivity.

In fact, in his later work, Hountondji (2002: 214) would rehabilitate his critique of Tempels. As I argued above, Tempels was writing within a specific sociopolitical and historical context. Hountoundji relocates this motivation of Tempels by appreciating Tempels' attempt to respond to the peculiar brutal pattern of colonization in the Belian-Congo. For indeed, Tempels' work was an attempt to improve the sociopolitical condition of the Negro African. "The project that informs Bantu philosophy" writes Hountondji (2002: 214) "is simply an extension of this political position." Tempels would forge a project aimed at rehabilitating the subjectivity and humanity of the Negro so truncated by colonialism. To do this, he found resource in Luba culture for he believed that he could restore the dignity and humanity of the Africans if he could show his European contemporaries a coherent system of values not chained by impossible difference between the Negro and the Western other, for it is in this difference that the logic of colonial reason found its space. Hountondji (2002: 214) is suggesting a critical reinterpretation of African history as given from above, that is, history as invented from the "outside." This method of history is dangerous for it not only stifles the creative imaginary of the subject; it places restrictions on what constitutes historical knowledge. This limitation on knowing and subjective experience leads to misrecognition of the contingent nature of the subject as Judith Butler (1992: 391) writes: "[T]o claim that politics requires a stable subject is

to claim that there can be no *political* opposition to that claim. Indeed, that claim implies that a critique of the subject cannot be a politically informed critique but, rather, an act which puts into jeopardy politics as such."

The splendor of good history is its sensitivity to context. This context in turn "explains the concrete experiences of daily life and influences that shapes the way individuals interpret reality" (Parpart 1995: 16ff.). The self becomes not merely a reflection of experience or reality but "constituted in complex historical circumstances that must be analyzed and understood as such" (ibid.). Thus understood, the subject's ability to act is not inhibited; the subject is not repudiated but understood as "a way of interrogating its construction as a pre-given or foundationalist premise" (Butler 1992: 9).

Drawing on these key insights, the problem with *history from above* is its universalistic "simplified definitions of social phenomena" that invariably "essentialize reality and fail to reveal the complexity of life as a lived experience" (Parpart 1995: 16). This problematic mediates a need for a location of meaning within spatial and cultural context as our primary basis of departure.

Postcolonial African discourse accordingly, becomes an emergent paradox. In negotiating Africa's identity through a universalized assumption of victimhood or organic African tradition, the African intellectual charts a new history, invents a new culture as a sanctimonious reprieve to the colonial condition. Romanticizing about Africa does not preclude that the Africanist is alienated from the culture that he tries to describe. Writing philosophy and history for Africa in the relative comfort of European and American Universities demands a reexamination of representations and constructions emerging from these "Diaspora Bastion" of knowledge as representatives of reality in Africa. *History from above* alienates the subject whose individuality remains inauthentic as a result of being an identity that is a "given." In contrast, *history from below* produces an authentic subject whose identity emerges from no other context rather than his own.

History by analogy as *history from above* is structured on a false epistemology and overcompensation. In trying to ascribe a best "plausible" scenario stalled by "colonialism" pan-Africanist writers are merely maintaining continuity in the invention of Africa—A "feel well" historiography devoid of actual historical reality. Moreover, if a realistic analogy be made, then a country like Japan be compared with countries like Ethiopia, and Liberia (to a lesser extent). Ethiopia was never colonized by any Western power and in fact rose to a super power in their crushing and admirable defeat of Italy in the Battle of Adowa in 1896, a move that curbed Italian imperialist ambition in that part of the world. The confrontation between Ethiopia and Italy and the Japanese naval defeat of the Russians both occurred at the turn of the

century—a moment in history which was to become the beginning of the end of Europe as the nucleus of world politics.

More disturbingly, a brief historical excursion into the precolonial Africa is an indictment to the overall notion of pristine precolonial Africa characterized often with invented rationality of an utopian past, but a past devoid of any civic responsibility, stability nor of a homogenous sociopolitical or cultural order. Lured by the lucrative gain of the slave trade, most of these kingdoms or empires became "military regimes"; of predatory states that thrived on raiding, capturing, and sale of slaves to the highest European or Arab bidder. Most of the empires, especially, those aligned along the Atlantic Ocean became merchants of men, women and children. Counter raids would occur and most of the territories would capitulate into civil wars in which the defeated were vanquished into slavery. No doubt the Europeans and Arabs actively engaged, promoted and incited these civil wars that would effectively become harvests of human merchandise. At the sight of the ships on the Atlantic, civil wars would be ignited, *slave wars* they were called!

I do not intend to end this modest attempt to develop an "intellectual history" in Africa in such a pessimistic note. Is there an alternative? An alternative that transcends the dogmatism of this Afrocentrism but at the same time accommodates the goods internal to the practices of our people; goods and practices that evolve within our social imaginary, developing its own history independent of a given historicism? The possibility of such alternative involves the historicization of our discourses in a manner that is indignant to polemics but susceptible to creative historicism. Following Appiah (1992) I have argued that the emergence and invention of contemporary Africa was in fact, the spontaneous refinement of complex "infusion" of divergent historical residue, although once invented, they manifest amorphous strains of self-consciousness in a wide range of social terrains, fusing into ideological constellations of moribund traditions. As a moribund tradition, the invented ideology evolves into a "Manichean aesthetics" in which the world, reality becomes a travelogue of dualist representations. These representations I have argued have been inferred rather than confronted in a desperate bid to save the "African" phenomena. The aim is neither to dismiss nor polemicize such ambivalences (and contradictions) which mask African intellectual history. I am inclined to problematizing, interrogating and historicizing these contradictions in order to unmask the underlying currents which has pervaded, reproduced and transformed the nature of African intellectual history in order to enable possibilities of creative historicism.

It is my hope that this historical adventure has exposed one to a culturally differentiated condition of Africa's past, and a discontinuity with any

homogenized claim to this condition. My endeavor has not been to deliberate sociocultural or political implication of the emergent contradictions and ambivalences, rather than to reevaluate and locate their prospects and internal rationality within the emerging histories of Africa, a method that would transcend the emerging contraditions for a creative synthesis. I do not intend to leave the emergent history of Africa in such deterministic fatality and hence, in Chapter 7, I will propose that the way forward lies in critiquing and affirming the internal rationality of the methodological process in order to arrive at a historical catharsis. I say "catharsis" because Africa's history needs to be purged of the invented "mystifications," since the history of Africa need be a history in continuity. This move locates individuals as active historical agents and otherwise, restoring dynamism and humanism to history. It is a move which I hope would re-historicize and thereby reconstitute the de-historicized subject or otherwise, a humanist historicism. It has been my intention to point out the discontinuity in historical analogy by way of a more nuanced historical parallel which makes any appeal to history by analogy as yet another mask or token of invention.

History from below on the hand is "autonomous" and does not yield to historical analogy as its basic premise. The "independence" or "autonomy" of such historiography enables its dynamism, creativity and fluidity. It is poignant to emphasize that the distinction between these two historicities (history from above vs. history from below) need not constitute a pattern of binarism! The term "history from below" will have to be qualified in order not to induce a captivation to binarism: African academics have responded to traumas of colonialism by inventing "African" discourses to challenge colonial representations (and its pattern thereof) that legitimized the colonization of Africa. Within this pattern of *response* to the "logic of coloniality" (Chapter 2) is an entrapment in which the "self" becomes constituted by an "other"; in this case, the "other" refers to the colonial master or the West. The African intellectual is inventing his subjectivity as a janus-faced metaphor to the Western "other" through such discourse reversal. Note that he or she is not a lead character but a residual self. The internal contradiction of this process disempowers him—he cannot truly escape the gaze of the West which was his primary objective. In a very simplistic rendition here, this is partly what constitutes "history from above"—historiography *á la* historical analogy, reverse discourse or displacement narratives. (cf. chapters 2, 3, and 4).

The autonomy of history from below demands that the subject be empowered for he or she is not dependent on a differentiating order of "otherness" to validate or even vindicate his subjectivity. It is a self not constituted by a denunciation of the "other" or by way of any such insidious historical

determinism. In the language of Hountondji (2002: 217) "the choice is not between Eurocentric view and another that could be called African." It is a choice between two modes or approaches of dealing with question of culture: one being deductive in the sense of departing from a platform that "seeks to reduce, simplify, force into a unity" and the other from a "pluralistic" platform that takes into consideration of differences, contradictions and necessity to retain dynamism to history.

CHAPTER 6

Cult of Personalities and Politics of Domination

> Your lands would bring you nothing if we were not there to fill your granaries with produce, and your houses with gold and silver. These riches are not the fruit of the work of your arms. They are made by sweat of our brows under the blows of your whips, and that of your government.
>
> (Seton-Watson 1934: 225)

Introduction

This chapter is an analytical *report card* on the sociopolitical résumé/credentials of contemporary African leadership and governance. The attempt to arrive at any meaningful evaluation would involve negotiating between series and patterns of ambivalent structures that have been the character of African politics in general: culture/tradition versus modernity, ideology versus progress, power versus legitimacy, citizen versus subject, and history versus dogma. Accordingly, the purpose of my analysis is to make sense, understand, and create diverse meanings out of these intervening and dominant narratives often referenced as *Manichean Politics* in contemporary Africa. The reification of tradition, history, culture, et cetera to induce such political Manichaeism has emasculated the actual socioeconomic imaginings and political history of contemporary Africa. But such political contrive is not only an invented, fabricated phenomenon to induce or sustain power; it has also bred disaster and would thrive on economic banditry, flourishing in political chaos and social strife. Yet, these are not *natural* determinants of our sociopolitical and economic life; they are artificially induced by politics of domination. The situation, therefore, is seemingly redeemable, but first, we need to comprehend the problem. Understanding the problem will produce enabling conceptual frames for intervention.

I do not claim historical avidity on the overall sociopolitical background to these problematic; my case studies are severely limited. However, on the basis of what we could approximate, I would historicize their internal rationality and suggest a way of proceeding. For my part, I insist on the priority of dignity, or in the least, civic virtue with a plea for autonomy of rights and responsibilities. I concur with Pauline Hountondji (1996: 175) that "[i]deological purring . . . often does nothing except conceal the most abject and indefensible actions, a lesson which we are only now beginning to learn." *Cult of personalities* and *politics of domination* signify a two-sided coin of the same African problem. It is not my intention to invent new sets of discourse to displace old ones or to be entrapped on such "ideological purring" that will mask these problems. Historicizing the problems enables us to understand the sociopolitical conditions in which they emerged and make meaningful interventionist proposals.

On political nobility

Of the many fallacies of African nationalism is the eruption of the *cult of personalities*. This refers to those nationalist elites whose historical location in the national stage has projected them as "sovereigns" over the nation. In fact, the subjectivity of the nation is tied onto their personal charisma. The nation is reflected, carried, and embodied by the image of these grand demagogues. The cult tradition is not peculiar to Africa. One would see similar parallels in Turkey's Atatürk, in India's Gandhi political dynasty, in Boris Yeltsin's Putin-Medvedev anointing. In the United States, we have the Kennedy, Clinton, Bush political dynasties. And even so in Communist China. In Africa, these were mostly heroes of independence struggle (or offspring) as in the likes of Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Nujoma in Namibia, Kenyatta in Kenya, Nyerere, Kaunda, et cetera. An attack on the image of these demagogues is instantaneously an attack on the nation for they symbolize the core of the nation. Note that in this character, they represent the subjectivity of the nation. There is a conflation of the personality of the leader in question with the identity of the nation he leads (or has led). The country is the hero and the hero is the country. This feature is aptly synthesized by Immanuel Wallerstein (1967: 95): "[F]or in this transition to a social order in which the state will be able to rely on the loyalty of a citizenry born to it and trained in it, the party and the hero can be seen somewhat as a pair of surgical clamps which hold the state together while the bonds of affection and legitimation grow."

As I argued in chapters 2 and 3, the Berlin Conference of 1885 divided Africa according to socioeconomic and political interests of the stakeholders. No consideration was given to the sociocultural complexity of the African

situation. Different people with characteristic no cultural resemblance or a shared imaginary would suddenly become juxtaposed into a single imaginary political entity. These imaginary entities termed "states" were artificial territories offering neither cohesion nor even a shared common heritage to adduce a genuine nationalism or fuse into a coherent unity. The legacy continued in the postcolonial era, in which it has fueled cult-tribalization of democracy. The emergence of the cult leadership in Africa cannot be isolated from this political heritage at independence. Lackluster scholarship on postcolonial African studies has sometimes remained entrapped on the moment of this "heritage" to show the daintiness of imperialism as the overwhelming cause of contemporary African problematic. While such studies are said to institute an insidious determinism for Africa's political history, we need to recognize and appreciate the sociopolitical miscegenation that resulted from this moment in history. As the *wind of change* blew across the continent, only a handful of Africans had a university education. Most of the African countries did not even have a university. Besides, these countries were merely economic administrative units and not integrated political units with a national core. It is to the few educated elites that the colonial government would hand over power.

Accordingly, independence so-called would usher in a new brand of politics—"Big Men" politics. Cold War politics precipitated this sequence. At its height, Africa was a terrain in which Washington and Moscow jostled for influence. African leaders would parley on the fear of either capitalism or communism to perpetuate themselves in power. The war of influence translates to politics on the ground. Ideological affiliation became preeminent over real socioeconomic development. In this second scramble for Africa, African dictators did find legitimacy. In South Africa, the Western indifference to apartheid was precisely because it was a lesser evil than the communist-leaning ANC. Of significant mention in this Cold War chess game is Mobutu who would be used by the CIA to displace the left-leaning Patrice Lumumba, while mediating a supply route to fund UNITA's[1] struggle against the Marxist-leaning government of Angola. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah would be overthrown after nine years in power to curb his Marxist-Socialist rhetoric. But the story of such dictatorship is the same whether in the Marxist-leaning Ethiopia or capitalist-leaning Kenya.

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened a Pandora's Box in Africa. Many of these dictators that had parleyed on fears of communism or capitalism would have to invent new ideological narratives to perpetuate themselves in power. Communist mongering is no longer fashionable. Where and when possible, tribalism is invoked or they would revert to the old catchphrase—imperialism! (The West is the cause of all our problems, the new enemy!)

Imperialism is often a favorite target discourse where historical past, especially of independence is relived with candor, living in the memory and struggle of those yesteryears as a justification for continual stay in power. Independence celebrations become a ritual of purification to offset any wrongdoing on the part of the cult leader simply by invoking the colonial past. Sometimes, it would extend to the invention of an "imaginary enemy," which is then projected on the national imaginary to pursue a demand for continual stay in power or as an excuse for incompetence. Yet, this does not excuse the culpability of the West and most recently China. Precisely because their hold on power is legitimated by cult affiliation, most African leaders become amenable to Western and Chinese market forces. Africa will pay the price as a battlefield for proxy economic wars as in "blood diamond" in Sierra Leone, the Congo, Angola, Liberia, or the "oil wars" in Nigeria, Sudan et cetera. These "mineral wars" would transform our natural resources from being a blessing to a curse.

The cult status is a political inheritance. In general, cult membership in Africa is characterized by the following résumé: (1) one who participated in independence struggle, (2) someone who is related biologically to someone who participated in the struggle, (3) known someone personally (seen together in a picture) who was part of the independence struggle, (4) one who was a political prisoner of independence struggle, (5) one who has been endorsed or politically anointed by any of the above, or otherwise political anointment, (6) someone who has a character of hero worship with the aforementioned points, unraveling the tapestry of mystic halo that envelops the "club" and the canvass of its thread, (7) one who has successfully "bought" or privatized "agencies of violence" like the police, army, paramilitary where these become custodians of our "holy" independence and sovereignty, (8) one who has successfully staged a change of government through military Coup d'ètat .

Indeed, some of these leaders suffered the travails of independence struggle, such as Mugabe, Kaunda, Nkrumah, Mandela. Yet, others such as Kamuzu Banda lived comfortably in Europe and returned as part of the few educated elites to take power in opportunism. At the death of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Arap Moi was automatically anointed and he would "rule" for almost three decades. At Moi's retirement, he would be succeeded, not by an "outsider" but by the son of the late first president, Uhuru Kenyatta. In Togo, Faure Gnassingbe was automatically installed after his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema, died in 2005. The senior Eyadema ruled Togo since the 1967 coup after he murdered the then president Sylvanus Olympio who had led the country to independence. In Gabon, Ali Bongo replaced his father (Omar Bongo) who died in office and had ruled Gabon for 41 years. In

South Africa, Mandela was replaced by no other than Thabo Mbeki, the son of the veteran ANC stalwart Govan Mbeki. When Mbeki was sacked by the ANC, another cult member, Jacob Zuma, succeeded him. JZ—he also fought against apartheid. Up north in Zimbabwe, Mugabe would become the national sovereign. Manipulating a genuine land question to perpetuate the aura of cult *personalism,* he would sustain himself though trumping of the colonial card. In Malawi, the *old man* as he preferred, Dr. Banda became a paternalistic national sovereign. Malawians he believed would always be children, incapable of governing themselves and for this reason he would be life president. These are isolated few.

If we focus our argument of hero worship on the colonial persecution of these leaders, why only the educated elites? Many ordinary people endured more travails than those few who ended up as supreme embodiment of national sovereignty. Yet, at the dawn of independence these ordinary masses *disappeared* and would remain faceless for they were not part of the elite club. These *ordinaries* would fall into oblivion as elite-cult leadership assimilated the overall experiences of these unknowns in a symbolism reminiscent of a political holocaust. Accordingly, the "Big Men" would not only become the visible symbol of our struggle, in their subjectivity, they would embody the overall historical experiences. Some countries such as Zimbabwe would try to address this problem by erecting historical monuments like the "heroes' acre" where veterans of Zimbabwe's war of independence are buried. And even then, only the *elite* of the elites are buried in this heroes' acre. The rude awakening, however, is not that they are political nobles, but on the character of manipulating their political nobility to engender sociopolitical and economic domination. In the following section, I shall undertake a sociohistorical analysis of the impact of these political nobles on civil society, extrapolating the incidents from the internal rationality of such political domination that is beckoned upon a politicization of history.

The politics of history

As shown, a key character of cult dictatorship in Africa is wielded through anachronistic appeal to culture and tradition or the invention of the "enemy" to mask the lust for power and absolutism. Since *history* has now become a critical location of power struggle, to critique unwittingly is racist and/or inability of the critic to understand African mind and African culture as in the following outburst of Buthelezi during a conference: "[I]t amazes me, the mentality of the Caucasian people . . . what is necessary in their minds . . . what is necessary in our black minds" (Russell 2000: 205). In their idealization of a pristine traditional African society as a displacement narrative

of colonial impact and discourse, these elites were not necessarily promoting a reversal to these imagined, pristine societies with the romantic verbiage associated with these societies. The radical reorganization of these precolonial societies by way of socioeconomic and political differentiations that came with colonization has made such reversal impossible. And if such reversal were possible, empirical evidence in the new nation-states suggests that these African leaders were not committed to such pristine society as opposed to consolidating their power base (Sprinzak 1973: 637). These reasons suggest that invocation of ideologies is not synonymous to a return to a "primitive" culture. I need to add another reason: the fight for independence was a tacit endorsement of the imagined colonial nation-state. These elites did not fight for "independent" ethnic or pristine cultural groups as opposed to the inherited political unit. The idea, the sense of the "nation" is only a reality achieved through colonialism as tracked by the 1885 Berlin Conference of the partition of Africa. Colonialism gave these nations aspirations with a purpose, even if a quasi-common destiny. It also unified these countries physically and invented them. Robert Rotberg (1966: 46) observes:

> I maintain that the policies and practices of the colonial powers created national entities of their arbitrarily contrived and assigned territories, and that the indigenous inhabitants not only came to accept their status as nations, but that they began to think almost exclusively in terms of achieving their freedom from alien rule within the perimeters of their colonial existence. Within almost every territory the nationalist spirit found ready vessels.

Stability, continuity, and unity are prioritized over other needs of the new state (cf. Chapter 3). The demand for such unity prodigiously preserves such avidity to cult dictatorship. In many cases, the party and the state *de facto* becomes one phenomenon, a unit; to become a member of the party is to belong to the state. The process in which the distinction between the party and the state is obliterated increases homogeneity and sacrifices pluralism for such unanimity.

If colonial authority used force or bifurcated system to consolidate the colonial African state, it cannot be the same with the new African leaders who had to device a new scheme for nation building and integration. They found this resource for national core in developing Africanist ideologies (cf. chapters 4 and 5). The usual façade that belies such ideologies is to animate Africa's development through an Afrocentric sociopolitical and economic system to challenge Western imperial logic. The rationality, nevertheless, is more inclined toward a need of a cult discourse to mystify the aura of nobility of those they mirror. In Zaire, *authenticité* as symbol of colonial

purgation was in reality a tool for fostering the personality cult of Mobutu (cf. Chapter 5). Outwardly, *authenticité* gave an impression of an Africanization program, of cultural equality in which *Monsieur* and *Madame* became *citoyen* and *citoyenne*. But a*uthenticité* was not only a discourse for power grab but for resource control. Party members would capitalize on the discourse to seize or "secure" Asian owned businesses and properties *for the fatherland, for the interest of Zaire*. In reality, it was only a change of ownership through a state-sponsored banditry.

But cult survivability is not only dependent on the politicization of history. Note that this politicization *mutatis mutandis* is also ritualized through political fetishism of awe and invisibility. Mobutu's full name, for example, was "Mobutu Sese Seko Koko Ngbendu wa za Bang," which officially translates as "the all powerful warrior who because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, living fire in his wake" (Russell 2000: 27). In this ritual of power, legends are easily invented and believed as an article of faith. Such beliefs harness their mystification as their personal stories are interwoven with the story of the nation. Among the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria it is not uncommon to hear such tales about the late Nnamdi Azikiwe, the *father* of Nigerian nationalism. *Zik of Africa he was called; Zik was said to have outwitted the white man with his spoken English during the negotiation for independence. Zik's grammar and eloquence was of such high quality that he confounded the British colonial officials, forcing them to grant independence to Nigeria*. In Ghana, the story of Nkrumah's encounter and subsequent imprisonment is told colorfully to an extent of mythical apprehension. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya wouldn't be an exception. His trials and travails became a symbolism of postcolonial Kenya; he is a national sovereign for which he would die in office. In fact, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's celebrated novels, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Weep Not, Child,* offer powerful insight on the invention of the cult elite through mythical narratives, which are usually built on false narratives but narratives that gave hope to the conquered.[2] This cult is a myth, but a false myth. It becomes a fascia for a symbol of unity. Yet, it is a consciously invented myth to bind the sociopolitical imaginary of the people unto the national subjective. Most often, on their return from foreign trips, the pomp and pageantry that accompany them strengthens their deification and social power, which is simultaneously tied to political power. *The father of the nation, His most honorable Excellency* are adulations usually accompanied by such myths and legends about their special life histories usually conflated with the national narrative and struggle in colonial times. But they are usually stories of rising from *grass to grace* or of wit and bravery in dealing with the white man.

The cult status is consistently reproduced for its critical relation to power. State projects are named after the big men—boulevards, highways, universities, airports, and any project that will boost their cult subjective. And if and when such projects do not exist, colonial era projects are renamed after them. The currencies of most African countries bear the names of the incumbent printed on the notes and coins, a stark reminder that he is the national sovereign. He will be omnipresent since his name appears almost in every corner of the state. It is in these daily encounters that he is able to penetrate the private lives of the ordinary citizens for whom he has become "a familiar part of existence, in the most unexpected and most intimate areas of private life" (Mbembe 2001: 155). Besides, for these projects to gain access to state resource means that these projects are named after the sponsoring sovereign. Another character of the cult is to assume capital projects as personal achievements. Projects built with state resources would be presented as a personal gift to the country and not a civic responsibility as a president. Kamuzu Banda Academy, a.k.a. *Eton of Africa*[3], built with state resources is considered a personal gift to the people of Malawi. Similarly IBB International Gateway (in reference to a white elephant telecommunication project named after the former Nigerian dictator Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida—hereafter as IBB) became a gift to the people of Eastern Nigeria, Robert Mugabe road (as typical of Zimbabwe, all major roads are named after the president), Kenyatta rd, Diouf rd et cetera. It becomes an operative legacy in the following humorous example in the *Washington Post* of September 1991:

> Here in the land of "President for Life" H. Kamuzu Banda everybody knows exactly who's in charge. From the tiniest village to the capital city, the ubiquitous mark of "His Excellency's" authority is plain for all to see. Expecting visitors in Malawi or planning to fly to another country? You have to travel first along the Great Kamuzu Processional Road on your way to Kamuzu International Airport. Feeling sick or desire to take in a ball game? Try the Kamuzu College of Nursing or the Kamuzu Stadium and Fitness Complex. Hoping to give your child a decent education? The only good school is the Kamuzu Academy, the leading preparatory school in the nation. But prepared to spend for tuition lots of Malawi Kwatcha [*sic*], the local money imprinted with Banda's face.
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> (Mbembe 2001: 121)

Banda's case is not exceptional. In countries such as Gabon's Bongo's, Togo's Eyadema, Zaire's Mobutu, Zimbabwe's Mugabe, Cameroun's Ahidjo, Malawi's Banda, and Zambia's Kaunda many Africans have only experienced one particular sovereign entity as the dominant political character in their lives. The visibility of the *bigman* is more than a symbolism; he is not just

the image of the national imaginary, but the sovereign himself, the national subjective, the nation.

In the meantime, the political rupture generated by these neurotic rituals intoxicates the masses. The masses inspired by the mystifying accolades of the cult would in turn furnish the cavalcades with logistic encomiums. As I argued earlier, most of these states are territories of diverse cultural and ethnic identities brought together by the fate of 1885. Statehood, accordingly, was an imposed phenomenon. In such scenario, the symbol of unity is codified in the cult persona that embodied their freedom. The idea of the state as a political entity is fused through this persona as a *mediatrix* for national subjectivity—he is not only an outward sign of unity but of national subjective. It will be imaginable that he is literally worshipped, actions that further reinforce his supreme leadership. But herein is an emerging political paradox, of a new political ritual as in the following analysis.

In these political ritualization processes, the cult character becomes immutable to the point of deity. If and when such a leader visits the most impoverished part of his country, efforts are made to give a facelift, that is, a general clean up and renovation in anticipation of his visit. Party functionaries and local government officials would engage in a mass clean up: filling potholes on the roads, renovating worst-affected schools, performing miracles with perennial dried taps pouring water in an impressive show of instant development to please the leader. A bizarre extremity of such performance once occurred in Opi-Nsukka, a small farming community in Eastern Nigeria. In anticipation of the visit of the wife of a local governor who was championing a project for local women on Better Life for Rural Women, the local women would first of all tax themselves to buy gifts for the visitor. They then proceeded to neighboring communities to borrow *proof of progress, or items of development,* such as grinding machines, sewing machines and posed as owners of a local grocery store to impress the visitor. In reality, these *proofs of progress* were instruments of development that were supposed to have been delivered by the visitor. And even though the visitor was aware of this deceptive maneuvering, *it was the right thing to do,* and she would take credit for these *proofs of progress*. This is how the *postcolony* became a location of mutual deception between the government and the masses, a political neurosis. As the case in Nigeria, no sooner had the visitor and her entourage left in their 4×4 vehicles than the women would return the borrowed items to their owners. As for the schools that have been renovated, these would soon fall back to their original state. But who is deceiving whom? In such an absurd theater of deception, cult politics enables us to see that political reveries are not merely an unconscious representation of history; these representations primarily reflect their originators. He is not a *leader* to his people and neither

is he at their service; the people are at his service. Listen again to my Kamuzu Banda: "I want to be blunt . . . As far as I am here and you say I must be your president, you have to do what I want, what I like and not what you like, what you want . . . Kamuzu is in charge. That is my way" (Russell 2000: 50). And when these men do offer some services to their people, they run their countries like philanthropy, of a benevolent president.

Another inducement to such deception is flattery, and lies. The praise singers form the internal nucleus of government advisers. Usually, the genius of the council is not measured by concern for welfare of the state but by the ingenuity for retaining power, crushing rebellion, buying off dissent, and destroying opposition. Those "big fishes" like leaders of opposition who have been bought over are given ministerial positions as we saw in the case of the erudite Prof. Jonathan Moyo of Zimbabwe, a former critic of President Mugabe. In a quick turn-around, Prof. Moyo became the most vocal supporter of President Mugabe and was rewarded with the Ministry of Information. The "small fishes" will be paid off as agents of government and positions invented for them. Those who cannot be bought off will "fail" in their businesses or die in "accidents" as in the deaths of Robert Ouko of Kenya, Dele Giwa of Nigeria, among thousands of others. But the political sycophants are in for business: the legitimate government is the incumbent, that is, any government in power. Allegiance changes with new administration. It is legitimate whichever government (civil or military) that pays their bill. Allegiance is merely a matter of political economy; patriotism is a question of capital. Legitimacy will have to be invented; what matters is who pays the bill. And if and when they become sidelined by a new government, then, they will turn into vocal critics.

Cult of personalities

In this section, I shall focus on few examples of personalities that typify the cult character. These would also include politicized groups, cultural institutions, and indentured offices. Kwame Nkrumah, one of the founding fathers of pan-African nationalism and the first president of independent Ghana is a typical case of a cult personality whose influence was mediated and mystified through the modern media and fitted into everyday narratives. Kwame Appiah (1992: 260) recalls that at the height of his (Nkrumah's) popularity, the name remained a mystery to millions who lived in the coastal area. Thus, Nkrumah the "Redeemer," the great "national statesman" was simply a fiction and illusion of modernity. The crises in Zimbabwe (in the years 2002 to the time of going to the press in 2010) typify these desiderata of cult of personalities where the country's sociopolitical imaginary is rigidly fixed on the aura of the sacred "father" of the independence struggle, the demagogue who

has become an embodiment of the "nation" itself. The problem is that the *subjectivity* of the nation is inherently tied with that of the demagogue who sees himself as the savior. Thus, Mugabe says I am Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe is me: "So Tony Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe" (Mugabe 2003). And, in his 2008 presidential election, Mugabe would still appeal to independence struggle as legitimation for his continual stay in power as encapsulated in campaign rhetoric: "*vote comrade Robert Mugabe! In 1980 we did it, so let's do it again*". Where everything else has failed, history would become a metaphor for socio-economic and political progress. In this infusion of the national and the demagogue emerges two scenarios: the first is the illusion of national integration and the second is cult dictatorship. Both scenarios have disastrous consequences.

In the South African context, the celebration and reception of Mandela after his release was not that of the ANC but of a man who embodies and has become the symbolic relic of apartheid resistance. He is the image of the nation, a celebration of hope, the new Messiah—his words were sacred, his wishes divine. Listen to Mandela himself in an inaugural speech of May 10, 1994:

> I stand here before you, not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you the people . . . we enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a Rainbow Nation, at peace with itself and with the world.
>
> (Mandela 1994)

In the South African case, the symbolism of Mandela's influence and power were felt during the rugby world cup of 1995 when Mandela showed up in the captain's (Francois Pienaar) number 6 Jersey. Considering that rugby was traditionally a "white sport," this gesture, which became known as "Madiba magic,"[4] would infiltrate into the sociopolitical consciousness of all South Africans. It was a decisive moment for the national imaginary. Mandela's story, arguably, is exceptional, yet one should bear in mind the simmering racial tension in South Africa's public sphere such as the murder of South Africa's white supremacist icon, Eugene Terreblanche in April 2010. Although evidence remains unsubstantiated, many believed the murder was racially motivated. Incidents such as these unveil the false promise of national demagogue as an adhesive national narrative; in South Africa's case, the loosening of the 'Madiba magic'.

Kamuzu Banda of Malawi was notorious for consistently referring to Malawians as children incapable of alternative leadership. During his several decades of dictatorship, he despised the capability of Malawians to the

extent that he would surround himself with white expatriates. Africans in his view are ignorant, uneducated people who should not be trusted with any responsibility as he noted once to the Malawian parliament:

> African history . . . I have to admit there is not very much of that. The Africans were not an educated people . . . That is the trouble in Africa today—too many ignorant people who do not know anything about history. And if they do know anything about it they do not know how to interpret and apply it. That is why Africa is in a mess. That is the tragedy of Africa: too many ignorant people are in a position of power and responsibility.
>
> (Russell 2000: 44)

Without a doubt, a historical irony to come from a man like Banda. Banda's typical character reflects a self-indulgent low opinion some of these cult members have of their people, a self-induced deception that enables them to assume the prerogative of life president, privatize democracy and other political processes as political inheritance. Banda's disregard for black person's IQ is a spurious reflection of colonial logic, akin to the discourses of the likes of Conrad and Levy Bruhl. The only difference is that Banda is actually African. To mystify his aura of "invisibility", Banda was also known to have shunned speaking African languages, which he viewed as barbaric. He banned their teaching and use in his Kamuzu Academy. This state of affairs did generate some bizarre, yet interesting, conspiracy theories on his biography. Some Malawians I spoke to actually believe that he spoke only English precisely because he was not a Malawian![5] Mr. Banda had spent three years in Ghana before returning to Nyasaland on the eve of independence. On such evidence, it is believed he was merely an impersonation of the "son of the soil" who had taken sojourn in Ghana and was perhaps murdered by the impersonator; otherwise why would he use an interpreter and speak only English in public? From Philip Short, Banda's official biographer, however, we learn that Banda's refusal to speak the local language was not only because he found it "rusty and archaic" but also because he wanted to sustain "the persona of the supreme leader to speak through an intermediary" (Russell 2000: 49). Besides, speaking English put him on par with Europeans, enhanced his subjectivity, and placed him truly above ordinary blacks. To be fair to Banda, the attitude is typical of many independent African churches where we usually have two homilists—preacher and interpreter. The homilists who usually speak the same language as the congregation are adept at the missionary legacy of preaching in a foreign language. In this case, the African preacher preaches in English or French and the interpreter translates into the local language. In this manner, a sense of awe is maintained; the *word of God* cannot downgrade directly into the local language; it needs a medium to maintain a sense of the holy.

In apartheid South Africa, the Afrikaner Broederbond (the Afrikaner brotherhood) was an exclusively white-male-supremacist Protestant secret organization. They were the ultimate club of the Afrikaner cult politics and the force behind the rise of apartheid and the National Party's rise to prominence. In the heydays of apartheid, all cabinet members or ministers were unconditionally members of the bond. At which time, to gain any significant position in South Africa meant an allegiance to the Broederbond. Listen to H.J. Klepper in 1968 during the golden jubilee of Broederbond: "Do you realize what a powerful force is gathered here tonight between these four walls? Show me a greater power in Africa. Show me a greater power anywhere even in our so-called civilized world" (Russell 2000: 149).

It is infinitely limpid and facile for historians to represent Africa as a pristine, homogenous golden arcadia that became destabilized by colonialism. Where colonialism has had its decisive impact on the continent, the role of traditional rulers cannot be isolated from this compound crisis of modernity. A key strategy of colonial conquest was to depose African chiefs and undermine their authority in order to offset the problem of double allegiance as well as weaken any potential, coherent local opposition. Thereafter, the colonialists would invent "warrant chiefs" when it suited them. The chiefs specifically became pivotal when, through the genius of Lord Lugard, indirect rule was introduced in most British protectorates and chiefs were needed to fill the gap of inadequate personnel (see Chapter 2). The British African chiefs, however, were merely delegates and could be dethroned or sacked by the lowest of the colonial personnel. If in traditional society the authority of the chief rested on an admixture of tradition, myth, and religion, colonialism redefined the content of this authority; it would become an administratively driven authority. The example of the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria will suffice.

The Caliphate is headed by an all powerful Sarduana of Sokoto. The office of the Sarduana symbolizes a conflation of religion, tradition and politics that has had destructive influence on the Nigerian political landscape since independence. Prior to the eighteenth century, northern Nigeria consisted mostly of different autonomous ethnics and the remnants of the Banza and Hausa Bakwai.[6] These ethnicities would be unified at the conquest of northern Nigeria in the Fulani Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio (see Chapter 2). The Sokoto Caliphate as a theocracy is a fusion of political universalism and an induced religious tribalism. Islam would become a unifying sociopolitical consciousness along a vast swathe of territories extending beyond Nigeria into other neighboring countries like Chad and Niger.

The postcolonial sultanate is certainly not impervious to religion and politics. Where politics is tied to religion, the Northern elites would depend on the approval of the Sarduana for popular legitimacy. The Sarduana was a kingmaker and his words carried authority. For Muslims, obedience to his decrees

is prior to national objectives. Succeeding generation of Nigerian leaders (military and civilians) generally appeased the Sarduana in order to gain populist support. In one of such attempts to undermine the Sarduana's authority, the erstwhile Nigerian dictator IBB would influence the appointment of a pro-government Sultan in the person of Ibrahim Dasuki despite opposition from Nigerian Muslims. Through such maneuvering, IBB was able to achieve a socioreligious coup d'état. Ironically, Dasuki will be dethroned by another dictator, General Abacha and replaced with the people's choice, Muhammadu Maccido.

In South Africa, a significant chief of cult character is the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini, who is generally perceived as a political veneer of Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The relationship between the King and his uncle-mentor Buthelezi reveals all the more, the manipulation of tradition through politics. Buthelezi was the godfather of Zulu politics during apartheid since he controlled the source of income for the Zulu chiefs through the KwaZulu government coffers. Accordingly, all the local chiefs towed the pro-Zulu nationalist line. Initially viewed as a moderate in comparison with the left-leaning ANC by Western observers, he lost out during the negotiation process. With the unbanning of political parties and collapse of apartheid, Chief Buthelezi would not join the negotiations for political reform. Appealing to Zulu past glories during the time of Shaka and the Zulu's crushing defeat of Lord Chelmsford's calvary at Isandhlwana, he would advocate for a return of the old Zulu nationalism. He opposed the reform agendas of the ANC with an argument that it was a clash between tradition and modernity. He would appeal to Zulu tradition and culture for his refusal to join the first multiparty election in South Africa, which saw the ascendance of Mandela primarily because of his waning authority.

These are merely outlines to understand the basic character of our cult personalities. The limitation is severe since I cannot account or differentiate between real heroes like Mandela, Nyerere, Machel, or Nkrumah and hero-villains like Idi Amin, Abacha, Babangida, or Bokassa. Such comprehensive scholarship would demand dozens of books.

Politics of domination and privatization of the common good(s)

If the colonial African states were governed by coercion and force, how did the new national elites maintain the inherited status quo of pseudo-unity that characterized postcolonial African states? Mbembe (2001: 42) has argued that in these states the sovereign authority was not obtained through a contract of political *reciprocity* but on the "arrogated" right for command, a command that found legitimacy from composite sources. In most parts, absolute

command or "unconditional submission" is induced by material gifts, in which case, the citizens are expected to show "gratitude" by towing the party line. For an external observer, this is corruption, but for those indulging in it, it is merely "settlement" for electoral votes, or settlement to overlook incompetence of the potentate, or look the other side while the state is looted. Since the incumbent controls the socioeconomic resources and oversees its redistribution, the "political play off" becomes a culture, a tool for coercion, of gratitude and even of punishment but not of right! This is called the privatization of the good. For the current analysis, I will largely use the Nigerian case study since it offers a blueprint to approximate other experiences in Africa. Nigeria also represents a model state banditry following its tortuous history of military dictatorships and the corrupt civilian administrations that preyed upon the lack of internal cohesion and led this *Giant of Africa* to a brink of total collapse, *almost* a failed state.

Bandit statehood

In this section, I shall elucidate how state resources are used to perpetuate domination by way of coercion for unconditional submission or as a gratitude for electoral votes. In the case of Nigeria, exploitation and power constitute a janus-faced phenomenon. The richer getting richer is only a testimony of successful takeover of state resources. I shall first explore the trend of parallel agencies that colonize legitimate (constitutional) government agencies to fuel corruption. Linked to this will be the "ghost worker" *appearance.* I will also explore what has become known in populist Nigerian semantics as "jobs," otherwise known as government contracts. Since the contract-sharing policy is the bane of this political banditry, I shall explore its strategy of operation in full detail. I shall show how contracts for capital projects are the ultimate reward for gratitude in this politics *of settlement.* My analysis will also include how *white elephant* projects are invented and signed off to party acolytes as middlemen and executors.

A hallmark of Nigerian political culture is the proliferation of parallel projects that would colonize and take over the duties of legitimate but supposedly nonperforming government agencies. Such projects would come in names such as *Better life for Rural Women* (for housewives of the potentates), *Ministry of Special Duties*, (where "special duties" means running "private" errands or doing "dirty" jobs for the political leadership or party in power at the expense of the state), PTF—*Petroleum Trust Fund* (taking over the duties of the dormant ministries of finance, petroleum, and natural resources), OFN—*Operation Feed the Nation* (taking over the Ministry of Agriculture), MAMSA—Mass Mobilization for Education (taking over the Ministry of

Education), WAIC—War against Indiscipline and Corruption (Taking over the job of the police), et cetera. In reality, these parallel ministries in the Nigerian case are only avenues for embezzlement and corruption. The irony of a ministry against corruption is that in practice it is usually one of the most corrupt institutes.[7] Added to these parallel projects are the presidential commissions that serve as private fund-raising channels for the potentate. The former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha had set up such commissions on every subject, in all departments of government ministry. At his death in 1998, none of the reports were ever published. In the meantime, government agencies that have become cloned with the parallel ministries would remain redundant without necessary funding. Analogous to the parallel ministries is the phenomenon of the "ghost worker." Ghost workers are those nonexistent employees of the state with regular monthly salaries. The ghost worker phenomenon has certainly had a decisive impact on the Nigerian economy.

According to the contract-sharing policy, contracts would never reflect the real project value but were structured to accommodate the percentage *sidekick* (bribery) for contracting authorities. The motivation to win a contract does not depend on competence, excellence, or credibility of the contractor but on how much kickback one is willing to pay to *buy the contract*. The sequence of corruption has assumed a legendary status and would be parodied in public discourses as a daily humor:

> Three contractors were visiting a tourist attraction on the same day. One was from Nigeria, another from Germany, and the third from France. At the end of the tour, the guard asked them what they did for a living. When they all replied that they were contractors, the guard said, "Hey we need one of the rear fences redone. Why don't you guys take a look at it and give me a bid?" So, to the back fence they all went to check it out. First to step up was the German contractor. He took out his tape measure and pencil, did some measuring and said, "Well I figure the job will run about €900. €400 for materials, €400 for my crew, and €100 profit for me." Next was the French contractor. He also took out his tape measure and pencil, did some quick figuring and said, "Looks like I can do this job for €700. €300 for materials, €300 for my crew, and €100 profit for me." Without as much as moving, the Nigerian contractor said, "€2,700." The guard, incredulous, looked at him and said, "you didn't even measure like the other guys! How did you come up with such a high figure?" "Easy," he said. "€1,000 for you, €1000 for me and we hire the guy from France."
>
> (www.motherlandnigeria.com/humor.html—retrieved September 3, 2009)

Even if a parody, the intensity and popularity of such jokes signify a measure of reality. He who pays more wins the bid. Tenders are invited on the basis of how much you can inflate prices and accommodate the boss. But this

is merely a strategy, for winning a contract is celebrated like wining a lottery. The political culture demands that contracts are always never finished. Or, as in most cases, the barest minimum part of the job, mostly less than 5 percent of the job done. The contractor naturally disappears with the fund for the project. In other cases, the contracts are further subcontracted through different layers until the last desperate contractor who is willing to do the barest requirement for the project even if a poor quality. At the end, he is not paid since the fund allocated for the project has disappeared in ever stretching corrupt bureaucratic layers. But this is not a tragedy but good news when a new government comes to power. As usually the case with Nigeria, the contracts are not only for political play off, but of perennial self-enrichment, a permanent source of "sidekick." Such projects will be re-awarded and given to different contractors, albeit the same middlemen.[8]

In this manner of speaking, the state has now become a legitimate instrument for domination as the cycle of corruption invents a new sociopolitical and economic reality. The resources so privatized would be used to dominate the citizens. The people who owed the largest public debt to Nigerian banks, contributing to its total collapse were also the top richest people in the land with the richest among them owing the bulk of the U.S. $4.7 billion (746.19 naira). But this debt was not *borrowed;* the debt was embezzled by forgeries, overdrafts with the help of bank officials who would receive certain percentage of the loot. In Nigeria, it was not the first time. The collapse of Nigerian banking system in the second republic was also linked to top government officials and the top richest men who literally looted these banks to insolvency (cf. *Guardian,* Wednesday, August 19, 2009).

But the exploitation does not end with the collapse of these banks. In a last move, the banks would become insolvent and would be bailed out by the government. When the bailout is further embezzled, they will declare, the banks "failed banks" with a clause that it is irredeemable. For the mass victims who had deposited their life savings in these officially designated "failed banks," this is only the beginning of the nightmare. The bank officials would jump at the opportunity to exert the last bit of exploitation. He or she is advised by the same bank or government officials implicated in the embezzlement to pay some *greasing* fund so that his or her case will become expedited. He or she pays, *settles* this official, the bank teller, the security, and finally, comes the next day and the building of the bank has been vacated and sold! You cannot sue the government for the government is the judge, the accused, and the prosecutor. The domination continues unabated.

This mode of domination takes special character. And because in Nigeria identity is a social capital, the political cult throw around their money, bribing the masses, and in a short time, they are forgiven and will even run for

office and win elections. A notable case is that of the winner of June 12 election, Moshood Abiola (hereafter as MKO). Regarded as an icon of Nigerian democracy, MKO rose from being an ordinary civil servant to a billionaire. His wealth is murkily related to an embezzled fund as a contractor in the first ever attempt to install IT technology in the late 1970s. The contract was never executed but the funds disappeared. With new government, the project was forgotten. Two decades later in 1992, MKO would contest a presidential election generally believed that he won. He was detained by the military and died a folk hero in prison. Another remarkable case is that of Umaru Dikko, arguably the most corrupt politician in the Nigeria of second republic. In his heydays, Dikko's name was synonymous with corruption. Dikko went into exile when the corrective regime of Buhari/Idiagbon took power in 1983. But Dikko would be forgiven by the most corrupt of Nigerian dictators, General Sani Abacha, given a hero's welcome, and rewarded with a nomination to the defunct National Sovereign Conference. The cycle continues and when the state runs out of resources, the incumbent runs to the IMF to borrow more. If and when a dissident group emerges, international fatigue has already set in and the crises would be pushed under the shadowy coverage that it is a "political problem" to be solved politically. In such analysis, the moral responsibility is lessened and the bandit regime continues to thrive on donor aid.

Cases such as these reveal how larceny is politicized and legitimated as a glorified state dogma. The *rich getting richer* is not merely a figure of speech, but of *legitimate* pillage through government connivance and sponsorship. And where capital is tied to social power, the bandits are also superhuman beings who remain above the law, untouchables. The point of domination is precisely because these are also the ones who can afford the police, the military, and other security agencies. In such scenario, one may not even protest or complain or the accuser will become the accused. Protest is certainly seditious and unpatriotic; it spells trouble with incarceration on trumped up charges as evidence in the case of late Ken Saro Wiwa from the Ogoni Land.

That democracy is the first casualty of this kind of politics is precisely because of a sacrosanct redefinition of its normativity to guarantee political domination. In parliament, civic virtue is jettisoned in favor of laws that would legitimate procedural imperative for domination. Laws are made to grant immunity from prosecution to political office holders from crimes such as corruption, political assassination, money laundering, smuggling, intimidation of opponents, et cetera. Such bill was introduced by Nigeria's ruling party in 2004 to expand section 308 of the Nigerian Constitution. The bill included the Legislative House and Privileges Act, Cap L 12, 2005, which would exempt members of parliament from any prosecution. According to this act, the police or other security officials would first have to seek

permission from parliament before charging any of its members. In other words, these political elites are above the law and are exempt from prosecution. Democracy would thus become an instrument of domination and abuse of power. *It is democracy after all* (see Abati, Reuben, *Guardian* Editorial, October 9, 2009). In addition, even the press conciliates just in case a crumb falls from the master's table. While the Nigerian press is known to be lively, for these superhuman beings, the press language changes because everyone else is in their paycheck or else faces uncertain death.[9]

Civic response and survival politics

If power in this postcolonial adventure is tied to economic domination, the struggle for power is simultaneously a struggle for economic resources. Accordingly, the expedited risk-free path to wealth is to either join politics or the military. Power in this context becomes a façade for indeterminate resource acquisition. Would such political paralysis and uncontrolled paroxysm of violence not institute a less recognizable and insidious version of right, one in which citizenship would not mediate but be subordinated, valued only insofar and as long as it promoted the power structure that mediates it as rational or even universal? This is a process in which the state so privatized is given essence *hic et nunc* through anonymization of civic virtues jettisoned in favor of more expedient policy of larceny and banditry.

Typical of a bandit state, the residual success of the government is measured by the barest minimum responsibility since the state has now become what Mbembe (2001: 46) calls "a general regime of privileges and impunity" that yields to the "privatization of public prerogatives." The criteria or measure for good governance is not such exquisite utopian ideals like roads, schools, electricity, water, hospitals, housing. The measure of good governance is on the ability of the government to pay salaries, even if late. The masses in most cases do not anticipate such grandiose projects; their expectation is limited to payment of salaries, which is not an entitlement but a privilege (see ibid.).

And because the state has become privatized, any claim of rights on the state may only become accessible through state-sanctioned protocols typical of a private estate and only by means of nepotism, *courts of settlements,* bribery. Since the claim on the state is a privilege and not a right, any other means (strikes, boycotts, etc.) employed to lay such claims is deemed unconstitutional. As usual, these irregular actions are crushed; teachers will be dismissed, institutions will be closed down. Consider the following Cameroonian example: "[T]he nurses at the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire were given a thorough beating by soldiers as they were asking for payment of their ten

months wage arrears . . . The governor of the South-West has banned any public demonstration in the province" (Mbembe 2001: 169). As in the Nigerian case, if they are teachers, after several months, they may be paid part of the salary but the months of virtually nonacademic activity is perpetually lost. The students bear the brunt. In those places where the university is generous, they conduct *crash courses* in which two semester courses are lumped into a two-week program. But such generosities are matters of exception and not the norm. In general sequence of events, this malady affects the overall system, forcing the masses into an ambivalent response: doctors would abandon hospitals to establish private clinics or take off to the West or Middle East. Teachers will begin to charge for private lessons. Performance in exams may be paid for in cash or in kind. The case of the university teacher in the Nigerian example has reached a tragic level and requires further elucidation:

Beginning from high school, the final exam for high school matriculation (WAEC, NECO, GCE)[10] was the first casualty of the collapsed educational system. Many who never took the exams have high school certificates to show for it. The moral decay of the universities affects everything else: to gain admission into the university demands "settling" by way of bribing relevant authorities. In most instances, to get registered you will need to *grease* the palm of the university registrar. And when and if school starts, education becomes a commodity of demand and supply between lecturers and students. To pass a course is dependent on purchase of "handouts" (lecture notes)[11] without which the student fails. In most instances, to register for exams, you will need to "see" the relevant secretary. To get your results published demands being "nice" to the secretary. And then, at the final year, exploitation of the student reaches its zenith. To submit your mini-dissertation is to be accompanied with a *gift* to your supervising lecturer. For women who cannot afford it, they can also settle through what has become known in Nigerian semantics as *bottom power,* that is, sexual gratification.[12] And depending on how much money you are willing to *donate,* the supervisor may as well write the dissertation. The upshot in these *glorified high schools* a.k.a. university is churning out of illiterate graduates, some of who bribed their way through colleges without knowing the location of the lecture halls even if they have a certificates to show for it. It is all about survival. The public sphere is now a civil war, a sociocultural strife of *war of all against all*, in which everyone is striving to exert as much as possible from the national cake! *Our resources*—with focus on distribution and none on contribution!

These new graduates inherit the new political order and the deterioration in the system continues. The consequences are many and have reached a sociopolitical nadir. In Nigeria, for example, it is no longer news to hear

about buildings collapsing while still under construction under the supervision of a crop of Nigerian trained civil engineers. The same applies to bridges, flyovers, all of which follow the same pattern with the endearing structures being only colonial era projects.[13] The concern is not that the numbers of collapsed buildings outnumber successfully completed ones; in our case, it merely reveals a more endemic problem in the system typified by the glorified high schools called "universities." It also explains why a high quasi-literate society would have to import everything including toothpicks from China, a remarkable pointer of a failed state. At the same time, the power brokers would have their families resettled "abroad" in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, with their children at Oxford, Princeton, Harvard and the most expensive institutions in the West. As for building private projects of their fancy homes, they would hire foreign trained engineers and architects. In more generous examples, funding allocated for education is literally diverted to opening private and expensive universities to further this exploitation. Parents in an attempt to gain quality education for their children would spend their last bit of resource on these *new generation universities* and the exploitation continues. In the meantime, these politicians and superheroes will be donned with honorary degrees so long as they can *grease* the palm of the respective university authorities.

The collapse of the university, which traditionally in every modern society serves as a moral custodian of the state, a voice of conscience so to speak, a moral bastion, an ethical gadfly—this collapse—is an indication that social progress will forever remain elusive. On this trajectory, the hope of "political kingdom" promised by Kwame Nkrumah remained a stillbirth. Assuming a universal and rational character of statehood, the state becomes a political canvass for quick enrichment, a quick path to success.[14] Envying the politicians squander the "national cake," the military would strike in the name of corrective measure. As *corrective regimes* they often prove more disastrous, more inept and would completely ransack what is left in the national coffers. Their colleagues feeling left out will strike a counter coup as the cycle continues.

On Privatization of violence

Political domination is ultimately tied to the *ownership* and *rights* to administer violence. As typical of such dispensation as argued earlier, democracy has been redefined. Since power (a.k.a. political domination) is sustained by a continual cycle of violence, the authorities are in constant paranoia, threatened by any voice of dissent as challenge to power. However, since this power does not have acceptance but given and modulated by the same forces of

violence, they are able to contain the status quo. We saw an example of the fifth brigade in Zimbabwe that were used to unleash death during the 1983 Matabeleland Crises when the government used the specially trained North Korean unit to crush the political dissidents led by Joshua Nkomo. The military in this case were merely presidential envoys.

The issue of kidnapping[15] in Nigeria is also a product and malady of the political process that is sustained thorough institutionalized violence. The perpetrators are usually idle political thugs who have been used by politicians to intimidate, kidnap, or victimize their political opponents. Where elections generally depend on intimidation and suppression of the opponent, the political foot soldiers double their functionality. When there are no elections, these thugs would declare their independence and continue to terrorize ordinary citizens. Since there are no political opponents to kidnap, which means lack of income, they would disinvest from their political sponsors in search of greener pastures—the rest of the masses. That the citizens are defenseless without security is not figurative. It is estimated that up to 40 percent of the Nigerian police force is attached to government officials, their spouses, members of parliaments, ex-governors, ex-presidents, mayors, councilors, and anyone who can simply afford the services. According to the Nigerian *Daily Independent* of August 6, 2009, 100,000 of Nigeria's total police force of 377,000 are in such private hands. The few security agents left for the remaining 150 million Nigerians would in turn cash in on the scarcity of security to harvest from the populace through all manner of extortion.

Politicization of religion

As I agued in Chapter 3, the tribe in postcolonial Africa is a civil war. By which I meant that with the politicization of the *ethnic* into *tribe,* democracy means perpetual political domination of the largest tribalized-ethnic group. Religion is also a highly perfidious instrument in such manner of political domination. The politicization of religion in northern Nigeria exposes the vacuity of religion as a means of political coercion and legitimacy; stirring an imminent tension on the effectiveness of such mass appeal; a political void that would become intricately linked to its nemesis—disaster. Within this geopolitical and historical atmosphere, religion is an ethno-culture, which means that it is *necessarily* a matter of the public domain and not in the private sphere. In an impoverished country like Nigeria where many cling to religion and transcendental hope, it becomes easy to manipulate religious sentiments into a political success story and score political points. Since politics is emotionally tied to religion, the population becomes malleable. The

institutionalization and introduction of Sharia in northern Nigeria induces such example in which politicians have taken advantage of the socioreligious climate, and would, on the promise of Sharia, secure political positions. In reality, however, Sharia is only a salutary gesture for political opportunism since these politicians in their private lives do not espouse any strict adherence to the Sharia code. The inevitability of such open hypocrisy is an admittance of its overall motivation—a political maneuvering. These politicians would only stroke religious sentiments at the time of elections.[16] Claiming to be the political guardian of Islam, they would often incite violence against an imaginary "other," radicalizing the populace into an Islamic militia who doubles at the same time, as portent political foot soldiers. To vote for Governor Adamu or Governor Shekaru is to vote for a godly inspired religious governor. But this ostentatious gesture of inclusion is all a veneer for political power. The motive of exculpation embedded in such disembodied narratives is that the country would have to pay the price of this posturing in the many religious riots that usually preceded or anticipated every major election. As usually the case, Christians are the target (*the enemy!*).

When in such vicissitudes of history, religious compass fails as *deus ex machina* to bring about an absolute Islamic state, crisis emerges precisely because of the tension between such vacuous promises and particularity of the local politics. The politicians rarely fulfill the electoral promises of absolute Islamic State; Nigeria is after all a constitutional state. The foot soldiers, noticing the discrepancy and lies of the politicians in turn become disillusioned as we saw in the emergence of the Boko Haram[17] sect that had top government officials as sponsors. "Boko Haram" in Hausa literally means that "Western Education is evil or sin." The sect derives its inspiration from the psychosocial conditioning of a particular strand of political domination that thrives on denial of Western education to the dominated. In practical terms, while there is no official attempt to hinder Western education in northern Nigeria, half of the federally allotted budget to the northern Nigerian states that practice sharia law goes to the implementation of sharia principles. The rest of the budgetary allocation in these states is then distributed to different government ministries with education ministry receiving the least. As a result, these northern states have become the most backward and impoverished regions in Nigeria. The Boko Haram sect is a typical upshot of such political maneuvering that flourishes on blanket illiteracy and poverty. In this case, Western education and its associative privileges are considered evil. In actual sense however, the alleged leader of the sect was Western educated and chauffeured in Mercedes Benz—privileges he denied to his followers. The writing on the wall is that "knowledge is power" and "education" at least in its classical German origin of *Bildung* means competence. An educated

populace is a competent electorate that would challenge the status quo and, therefore, become a threat to political dominance. Like characters in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, for the "uneducated," ignorance is bliss and fundamentalism is a substitute for education. This is how political domination thrives on the one hand, through a fusion of religion and politics and on the other hand, through an active denial of education. In this case, religious fundamentalism masked by politics is the only "truth" or "knowledge" available to the dominated.

The frequent attack on Christians on every flimsy excuse can only be understood against the background of a frustrated populace who have been deceived, cheated and lied to by the politicians. They would seek avenues to vent off their frustration. Like Frankenstein, they will break away from their political godfathers, declaring total war on the state in a desperate attempt to forcefully bring to fulfillment those electoral promises. The politicians for their part will blame their failures to bring about the desired change on the Zionist-Christians amongst them. Propaganda smugglers would have us believe that it is a religious crises but the unanswered question remains: how did this population become so radicalized and touchy in the first place? The answer is politics.

In my view, the religious crises in Nigeria are only a mask of this very complex and intricate problem of fusing religion with politics. There is a "delicate" relationship between religion and nationalism. Where religion functions as fetishism for identity, nationalism would assume an essentialist rendered definition in which the sociopolitical imaginary become subjected to the periphery. Religion determines the place and role of citizens with devastating consequences that religious wars become national or tribal wars. As we learn in history, such religious-nationalism evacuates any possibility for a healthy humanism. The period before the European renaissance and enlightenment was characterized by such religious wars for the Holy Roman Empire. The Catholic King of Spain became the warlord for Roman Catholicism. Disobedience or heresy in Church becomes a crime against the state. To disobey the Church was to disobey the state. The success of the Western enlightenment was its ability to forge a separation between religion (Church) and state. Religion would become restricted to the private sphere, in the realm of the subjective without necessarily losing its essence and dignity. This development enabled the independence of the "nation" from the tutelage of religion; a dependence on reason as opposed to the metaphysical. Religion would no longer be a coercive force of the nation and its relationship to the political sphere was permanently severed (Kohn 2005: 23–24).

CHAPTER 7

Toward an African Renaissance

si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses
(If you had kept your silence, you would have stayed a philosopher)
Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae 2, 17

The discourse of African renaissance has become the preoccupation of Africanist elites and especially politicians. On the occasion of the adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of South Africa's Constitution on May 8, 1996, the then deputy president Mbeki began:

> I am an African . . . .
>
> I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades . . . A human presence among all these, a feature on the face of our native land thus defined, I know that none dare challenge me when I say—I am an African! I owe my being to the Khoi and San . . . I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still part of me. In my vein courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East . . . I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women whom Hintsa and Sekhukhune led . . . I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St. Helen and the Bahamas . . . Being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that—I am an African . . . I am born of the peoples of the continent of Africa. The pain of the violent conflict that the people's of Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria is a pain I also bear. The dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share.

In the wake of this rhetoric of renaissance is a proposal for an anti-essentialist or polarized understanding of Africa(n) in favor of a dynamic, inclusive, and accommodating definition. The renaissance African does not possess an essentialist identity. The "African" is an individual, a member of an "ethnic"

whose identity interfaces with that of others as a global citizen. Mbeki's projection arguably differs from previous understanding of African renaissance. In the past, this quest for an African renaissance was an endeavor to recapture this golden image of the African past, to face the faceless tradition, naked of all chauvinism and protective devices. On this trajectory, African intellectual history would be characterized as a response to this particular appeal of renaissance—a golden past of the African people that must be recaptured as a solution, a response to the present predicament of the African people. I have already criticized this model of cultural nationalism and my focus at this point is to investigate any cultural parallel between this new African renaissance so-called and Western renaissance. If there is such parallel, what will be the substantive requirements? If not, is there a way to speak of an African renaissance independent of the historical impulse and influence of Western renaissance tradition? And most significantly, independent of golden arcadia.

In a synopsis, we learn in history that the renaissance is a movement, an ideology born out of varying experiences. Western renaissance specifically emerged as a reaction to the grid rigidity of the scholastic age. Scholasticism is a view associated with some church fathers, especially Aquinas, Dun Scotus, and to a somewhat extreme level William of Ockham. In fact, the term "dunce" in the English vocabulary is reputedly traced to Dun Scotus. His followers were the prime object of vilification by the renaissance humanists who perceived them along with their scholastic philosophy as a barrier to enlightenment and intellectual progress (Lawhead 1996: 201).

The European renaissance tradition is a period of rediscovery of the classics as well as celebration of classical antiquities. It was a period that prepared the ground for the enlightenment, a break away from the rigidity of the scholasticism of the medieval era. The renaissance was an appeal to the classical antiquities of ancient Rome and Greece. The renaissance humanists saw in Plato and the classical antiquities a *resourcement*—a breath of fresh air—to free them from the shackles of dry, logic-chopping intellectualism of the scholastic fathers and their transcendental Christianity (Lawhead 1996: 218). Renaissance humanism, therefore, refers to the secular, cultural, and intellectual movement that spread throughout Europe in the wake of the rediscovery of the arts, antiquities, and philosophy of the ancient Greeks and Romans with particular emphasis on grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy. The educational and cultural program of the renaissance writers was structured in what became known as *Studia Humanitatis.* This rediscovery of Latin and Greek texts inspired the renaissance humanists tradition as conceived in the mind of Petrarch, nourished by Valla, Ficino, and Pomponazzi but reached its most dynamic and fullest expression in the works of Erasmus Desiderius and Pico Della Mirandola. Renaissance humanists

believed that the classics were the perfection of style, the most ennobling work of humanity. They idolized and worshiped the classical tradition as they tried to imitate the elegance of the classical writers.

Within our own milieu, African intellectual history largely emerged in reaction to the grid of colonial logic. According to this colonial discourse in its simplest formulation, education (and literacy) is a hallmark of humanity. The black man in his sociocultural context is not educated, he is illiterate, and he is merely a warrior or a soldier. Many Africanist writers would henceforth advance a rehabilitation of Africa's past to challenge the colonial mentality, which as Fanon noted, left the "indigenous people intellectually and morally disoriented." This was the motivation behind the call of the Négritude scholars (see chapters 2, 3, and 5). For the present purposes, Africanist advocates of African renaissance consider it in terms of repository of codified values critical for the socioeconomic and political regeneration of contemporary African State. If Western renaissance challenged the cold fissures of scholasticism, African renaissance for its part simulates a challenge to the grid of colonial and imperial representation. Like renaissance humanism, the emphasis as a movement is on education, such education that is aimed at decolonizing the mind from the psychological shackles of colonialism. The syllabus of such education program is focused on giving a new definition on the question of identity and providing justification for political action. At this juncture, we are faced with a parody: how do we form our children and professionals if we do not accept the teaching and educational syllabi inherited from the colonial era from our national imaginary? Consider that a key question of African intellectual history is perhaps best illustrated in the following scheme.

The Western world came to Africa with programs of education; the efficiency of their culture is not to be doubted, because of the technical power of these cultures, but now that they are gone (after colonization) what are we going to teach our children? If we teach our children the exact curricula left by the colonists, we not only imply an acceptance of their superiority, but we run the risk of completing their job of turning our children into Westerners; if we reject those curricula, what are we going to teach? Central in African philosophy is the question of identity and of education in opposition to a tradition that has to be criticized. This, in my view, is quite similar to the position of the European humanist after the middle ages.

Christoph Marx (2002: 65) has criticized the so-called African renaissance on the basis that it simulates exactly the opposite of what renaissance means. In his view, "[African renaissance] aims at the re-appropriation of (a purified form of) its own culture, and an exclusion of alternatives. Renaissance in this context means a restoration of pre-colonial Africa, the return

of a glorious past." To the extent that some Africanist scholars have pegged the renewal and rehabilitation of Africa on the basis of an alleged golden past, Marx's criticism is tenable. The implications of such pristine, hegemonic appeal have been discussed at length in previous chapters. And this is not the last word! Among other reasons, I do not circumscribe nor endorse this paradigmatic view of renaissance nor its appendage to the African situation: First, is my nostalgia with the concept of renaissance and its indexical appendage, "Western," "European," or "African." Second, the actual content of such renaissance remains anachronistic to the context in which Africanist writers have made their appeal. As noted earlier, renaissance humanism is an off-short of classical antiquities for it involves a renewal and rehabilitation of the arts of classical antiquities. But is there a possible transposition by way of parallel to the so-called African renaissance? If so, what constitutes African renaissance? Can it be substantially defined independent of a parallel analogy with Western renaissance? If not, what lessons can be learnt? I am persuaded that if any discourse on African renaissance is to remain feasible, it must be independent of any *pedantic* historical analogy for the attempt to make such analogy contradicts and does not substantiate the core term of my discourse. Hence, African renaissance must be understood independent of such historical analogies. The sociopolitical context in which classical antiquity became an off-short of Western renaissance underscores this impossibility. And where such analogies are mediated, it should only be a parallel lesson on intervening cultural resemblances, but parallels independent of each other.

In the writing of Cicero, Julius Caesar's Rome, to which classical antiquity owes its glory, is dependent on the celebrated marginalization of lives, a period of intense human suffering, slavery, and most deplorable human conditions—centuries of human tragedies and suffering. African renaissance, therefore, can only be legitimately compared to the European renaissance if indeed renaissance is to be understood independent of any historical verbiage to mean "rebirth." Here, renaissance is an appeal to those cultural values relevant to the present. The European humanists in restoring the classical antiquity were selective in the baggage they reclaimed and did not inherit all of "Rome" or "Greece" in their antiquity. Certain lessons were "contained" or valorized to advance the cultural lacunae of the renaissance period. The renaissance humanism was an attempt to recover and celebrate this legacy, a cultural mediation that in the time of da Vinci confronted the absurdity of its own contradiction. Therefore, an "African renaissance" need not be a sordid appeal to all the baggage in the pristine traditional African society. Appealing to a pristine cultural tradition in my view is not by itself illegitimate. The question is not the "return" or "invocation" of such pristine tradition, but what baggage or lesson does one bring or learn from such projects? Lessons

or baggage that are, in fact, endogenous and not alienated from present situation and circumstances. It is on this possibility that African renaissance becomes a possibility not an end in itself but a means to another end.

One Africanist scholar Janheinz Jahn attempted this possibility in his now classic, "Muntu: An Outline of Neo-African Culture." Jahn's (1961) defense of ethnology as a custodian of African history was influenced by Friedell's argument:

> [Every] age has a definite picture of all past events accessible to it, a picture peculiar to itself . . . legend is not one of the forms, but rather the only form, in which we can imaginatively consider and relive history. All history is saga and myth, and as such the product of the state of our intellectual powers at a particular time: of our capacity for comprehension, the vigor of our imagination, our feeling for reality.
>
> (Jahn 1961: 17)

This view would be admissible to Paul Veyne (1984: 51), who in his historical contrast between Weber and Nietzsche had argued that historical culture is a "relation to values" and expresses itself in the manner of abstract "valorization": "[O]ne does not prefer the Athenians to the Indians in the name of certain established values; it is the fact that one prefers them that makes them into values; a tragic gesture of unjustifiable selection would serve as a basis for every possible vision of history." In Kantian language, this will be the conditional value we give to material things as opposed to the value we have as noumenal selves. The implication of Jahn's thesis are twofold: in retrospect, earlier in his work, Jahn (1961: 13) was objecting to Jaspers' theory of history and its claim on the virtue of axial age:

> According to Jaspers, history has shown two great advances. The first is that after the age of myth, which includes pre-history and the history of the great early cultures, reflective thought began between 900 and 800 B.C. in Greece and Asia Minor, simultaneously but independently (what Jaspers calls the Axial period). It was this advance that really set history in motion, transformed it and determined its direction. The second advance is the age of science and technology, which now in its turn is everywhere taking the lead and transforming all mankind.

Jahn was attacking the principle of cultural transference in which peculiar cultural categories are transposed from one cultural experience to another and the claim that the era of technology and science has given the Western world a rich legacy and "unique capacity" of extended development capable of annihilating non-Western cultures and civilizations. According to Jahn (1961: 13),

"Japan, like Europe is said to have been affected by the first advance and thus to be a land of higher culture, while Africa is only just being brought into the main stream of history . . . Jaspers' thesis does not even allow these primitive peoples a chance of adaptation." Jahn (1961: 13) argues that Jaspers did not perceive any possibility of adjustment of this so-called non-Western culture as opposed to the mere annihilation of non-Western cultures on the force of a powerful Western culture: "Jaspers foresees for them no adjustment, but only their extinction or the fate of becoming mere raw material to be processed by technological civilization." The second implication of Jahn's thesis casts doubt on Malinowski's functional theory of cultural change. Malinowski, Jahn (1961: 14) writes, "sees culture not as something static but as something that is constantly changing." Yet, Malinowski, Jahn (1961: 14) argues, does not apply this possibility of "hybridity" to Africa:

> In Malinowski's view, all new objects, fact and forms of life in Africa are the results of European pressure and African resistance. Even African nationalism which invokes and revives an African culture is, according to Malinowski, nothing . . . the African, he believes, is seduced by the enticements of Western Civilization, and accepts new forms of life.

Now, because the African has been denied of subjectivity, the African, Jahn (1961: 15) writes, would have no choice than to lean on his overall cultural capital, belief systems and practices in order to liberate himself. Malinowski's thesis, Jahn argues, is merely a residue of coloniality, to secure "a stable and effective rule by a minority—a European minority—[which] sees in the revival of African traditions an unhealthy and 'sophisticated' nationalism, a product of psychological retreat before European pressure, 'modern myth-making', a drug." To this charge, Jahn asks, if indeed, this "rationalization of tradition" is not able to open new ways to transcend the categories imposed upon Africans by Jaspers and Malinowski. Perhaps, the so-called unhealthy attitude to change is not unhealthy for Africans in their quest for sociocultural emancipation as evident in the success of many African countries becoming independent:

> We ask what the Africans are thinking, what they are planning, what they believe, how they can survive the crisis, why the historical process fails to conform to other predicted pattern—but we pay no attention to the rational revival of the African tradition by African intelligence or else we dismiss it as the drug of psychological self-intoxication.
>
> (Jahn 1961: 15)

Jahn argues that while the psycho-social experience of the Negro stimulated cultural revival, it was not the core stimulant. Jahn (1961: 15) draws our attention to the fact that the champions of such revival have not experienced the raw denigration and denial of subjectivity experienced by the ordinary people. These class elites did not have any material experience of such denigration that could induce any psychosocial reaction. Most of these elites were busy in Western universities during most of the struggle. Some when they returned had very promising careers with the colonial administration.[1] Hence, their revival is not as a result of a psychosocial trauma; it is, in fact, according to Jahn, an African renaissance. He argues that if one isolates Jaspers' and Malinowski's views at this instance, and appreciates "the only point of view worthy of European culture, that every human being has and must have the right to become what he wants, then our eyes are opened" (Jahn 1961: 16). At this point, the African will move from being a subject, to a citizen with equal partnership. But note that Jahn (1961: 16) was not referring to "ordinary" Africans in the bush, but to the "enlightened" who have come to understand what course Africa must take:

> Instead of relying on the usual method of questioning the "man in the bush" or the "boy" as representative of Africa, it is certainly more advisable to run to those Africans who have their own opinion and who will determine the future of Africa: those, in other words, of whom it is said that they are trying to revive the African tradition.
>
> (Jahn 1961: 16)

These Africanist scholars, now seemingly custodians of African intelligentsia aim to revive and integrate what is valuable from the past into the modern African imaginary. While Jahn might be accused of proposing an elitist (imposed) form of renaissance, Jahn is not proposing for a blind return to this pristine past. To Jaspers' claim that "African cultures are destined to crumble" and Malinowski's thesis on economic and cultural eccentricity, Jahn (1961: 16) does offer an alternative model, a neo-cultural model that involves an eclecticism of the best European and African experience, a renaissance with a different intentionality, where renaissance means appeal to those rational traditions that accommodate both rational African and pseudo-European values in concomitance with the demands of modern times: "It is a question, therefore, of a genuine Renaissance, which does not remain a merely formal renewal and imitation of the past, but permits something new to emerge."

As to what in fact constitutes this neo-culture, Jahn (1961: 17) first attacks European ethnologists for emphasizing the diachronic aspect of African culture as opposed to its synchronic aspect. This method is erroneous for it

provides a false image of Africa's past, a legend, "a myth instead of an objective picture of history." Neo-African culture is an attempt to rehabilitate this image; it is an emphasis on the synchronic aspect of African culture with emphasis on those cultural values that find coherence in the present history of Africa:

> The Africa presented by the ethnologist is a legend in which we used to believe. The African tradition as it appears in the light of neo-African culture may also be a legend—but [Eze: an important qualification] *it is the legend in which African intelligence believes. And it is their perfect right to declare authentic,* correct and true those components of their past which they believe to be so. In the same way a Christian, asked about nature of Christianity, will point to the Gospel teaching "Love my neighbor" and not the inquisition [my emphasis].
>
> (Jahn 1961: 17)

Jahn's conclusion and proposal of a neo-African culture is admissible to the extent that he proposes a rehabilitation of those values that find coherence and significance for contemporary African situation. I do, however, disagree on its elitism in which African renaissance is dependent on the African intelligentsia. I have already discussed at length the dangers of such "given" historicism from above. Yet, Jahn's point goes beyond a question of methodology. The lesson I think is that history has thus become a legend, a myth in which exigencies of the past become *present* through a present signifier. But note that this myth or legend is only a historical address. We may, therefore, draw lessons from our past traditions, but only those that are coherent and synchronic with our present social imaginary, that accommodate the sociocultural and political contexts of our present age. Here, an appeal to our culture stipulates selective reference to that which is indeed synchronic to our present context and not opposed to it. Transcending both signifier and the signified to represent a new conscious memory, history is no longer a repertoire where we can assimilate all in the name of tradition, and in the case of Africa, this will be the African renaissance.

Furthermore, this renaissance can only be understood within the analytical framework and methodology of the renaissance in the classical European sense and context but not as an analytical referent for that will be a reverse discourse. Yet, a call for such renaissance is not isomorphic to the intervening cultural resemblances that mediate such need for renewal. It is a move that draws upon the parallel that both "traditions" become relevant on the force of their appeal for a rebirth, a renewal—seeking to enlighten a restive epoch with a residue of tradition. This parallel ought not be considered on equal terms for the cultural motivation and anticipation of what becomes a renaissance between the African and Western writers are different in context and

manner of proceeding. In a broad simplicity as noted earlier, the renaissance was an attempt to break away from the cold grips of the scholastic era, the "recall" of the heroes of the antiquities and their work through the revival of arts and humanities of classical antiquities. African intellectual history ought to emerge as a parallel (not analogical in content) by invoking a cultural tradition as a challenge to the logic of coloniality and seek for a revival of the African spirit and image through a reenactment of an assumed era of a pristine paradise and its celebration thereof. The longing for an African renaissance, in this sense becomes a prophetic symbol for a future generation of Africa. We may have challenged the historical authenticity of a genuine pristine past, but lack of such authenticity need not cloud the impact of a desired historical past on emergent generations. To this charge, one might ask if we should as well dismiss all the accumulated genealogy of literature of the classical antiquities because no one of the renaissance humanists would actually desire to live in such a historical epoch (classical antiquities) with its characterization of human suffering. Indeed, the European classical antiquity was also a context of atrocities and activities that contradicts the ideals and virtues of renaissance humanism. Yet, it was a context that enabled the ingenuity of classical antiquities to thrive in that very classical sense in arts and literature. This move does not constitute a history by analogy for despite my disenchantment with the context of the classical antiquities, I still appreciate the works of Cicero, and I have learned from Vergil's Aeneid, and especially the Caesar Gallic Wars. In history, I have learned from Tacitus, Herodotus, Polybius, and Pliny the "African." From the Greeks, I have enjoyed and appreciated the work of Hesiod, Homer, Thucydides, Sophocles, among others; from the Jews, I learned from Josephus and especially from Jesus, the Nazarene; from Islam, I have learned from Avicenna and Al-Farabi. The famous cliché do not throw away the baby and bathtub is true in our context.

Accordingly, our African renaissance has been qualified. Our renaissance is not a homogenous retrieval of every detail of our cultural history and its associated discontinuities. African renaissance is an attempt to rehabilitate the goods internal to the practices of our community, but goods that are not anachronistic to the sociopolitical condition of contemporary African states. It is a renaissance precisely because the "rebirth" includes finding resources from our past historical narratives to complement the task of nation building, restoring civic virtues, promoting civic rights and responsibilities, and enhancing democratic humanism. Renaissance is not an appeal to tradition as a mask for oppression or as an excuse for irresponsible leadership. Renaissance means that social progress within our society occurs within the "frame" of an emergent dialogue between the virtues of Western civilizations and virtues embedded in our (African) past historical and cultural narratives. None of

the virtues (Western or African) is superior to the other; they are to be held in contemporaneity. In this way, a discontinuity with past historical events (like witch hunting or killing of twins) is not a general indictment against our historical cultures and narratives as simply barbaric. At the same time, we are able to assimilate lessons from West civilization to enrich our sociopolitical culture. In this manner of proceeding, we will be able to deal with the immediate challenges to democracy in Africa such as tribalism, religious fundamentalism, and overall crises of nationalism.

Africa's intellectual history: A possible rehabilitation?

In their attempt to recapture the original image of African historiography, champions of Négritude and the likes overlooked the manner of colonial intervention in Africa. This mode of colonial penetration is nourished by the fact that the situation in Africa hinges on its difference, a difference that is characterized by "fragmentation and particularism" (see Mudimbe 1988, 1994, Appiah 1992). The fragmentation and difference would remain obscured and undermined by the common tragedy of racist coloniality/colonial racism. With the end of colonialism, a shared tragedy that was a platform for unity and national consciousness against a common foe now collapses. We now have to strive for a new meaning, a new platform to sustain the status quo. Without an immediate platform for national consciousness, the unity—hitherto held by our common resistance to colonialism—began to give way to tribalism, particularism, intra/interethnic conflict, which supplant the previously held conscious unity. While colonialism presented a common ground for the different ethnic groups to unite, in the wake of its demise, it stripped the newly independent African states of any strong central national consciousness and consensus through the diatribe of tribalism. A vacuum was created since unity or nationhood during independence was only a fiction and a product of the colonial logic.

Although the myth of the nation might invoke a sense of unity for the colonized people, it also ignores the cultural diversity and cultural experiences of those it seeks to homogenize. Fanon's critique of pan-Africanism and appraisal of a national culture falls short in this respect. Many a nation after independence has too many cultural differences and experiences within the national political unit that the term "nation" becomes meaningful if only construed and understood as a product of colonial thinking.

Négritude needs to be defined as a progressive movement away from subordination to analogy, a shift from dependence on the West for self affirmation, a departure from alienation through revolt. Henceforth, Négritude becomes a cultural and intellectual movement with possible political

ramifications that remains at best prophetic in the sense that permits one to speak of a pan-African culture in one generic sense; a sense of the common experience and encounters of the African people during colonialism. It is futuristic in the mode of generating a narrative identity. At the same time, being careful to note that even these experiences differ constitutively if one compares, for example, the apartheid experience and other colonial strategies in Africa. There is a common consciousness marked by the need for freedom, liberation, and rehabilitation of the African person, a person who has been truncated by the logic of colonialism as savage, barbaric, et cetera, and needs to be civilized to become human. But even these common experiences can only become a collective consciousness in a severely limited sense. They are not similar experiences. In this way, Négritude as a pan-African movement, simulates a limited common consciousness. Although exhibiting an essentialist character in its appeal, it will be reductive to discredit the whole project of Négritude for one must be cognizant of the role it played in stirring political awakening that led to political independence in much of Africa.

The appeal to racial ontology as a basis for African sociopolitical progress and unity as pointed out in Chapter 5 is problematic for it is racist and homogenizing. A universal black fraternity on the basis of race is a fictitious narrative, an illusion characteristic of Sartre's antiracist racism. As Appiah (1992: 285) rightly argued, "[R]ace disables us" because it offers an illusive character of a homogenous racial enemy and closes possibilities for creative dialogue.

Similarly, African identities need not to be based on any shared glories, a shared metaphysics or racial mythology. As Appiah (ibid.: 285–286) noted, African identity is in the making; Africa has no formal identity but a new identity is evolving, identity located in context and meaning. The illusion of a metaphysical unity for an African identity is on the basis that this unity is dependent on metaphysics of gods that have failed us in the travelogues of our contemporary world; it is a unity that does not withstand the constant hammering of modernity (see ibid.). Thus understood, where does our shared glory stand? Appealing to a shared glory of a nonexistent past is to root Africa's modern identity in a fictitious history. The proponents of pan-African identity expect us to construct an imaginary vision of the past as a "moment of wholeness and unity," a fixation to values and belief practices of the past, a scenario that has diverted us "from the problems of the present and the hopes of the future" (ibid.: 286). On this rehabilitation lies the merit of creative historicism. Indeed, African intellectual history need neither be a homogenous historicism, a history by analogy, nor even a Manichean historicism. African intellectual discourse (and indeed all discourses) will become enriched when

it is exposed to other system of choices in order to become revitalized as an agent of change.

African identities can only be captured within a myriad of different historical narratives. Identity is multilayered. Sociocultural and political meanings of identity are both historically and geographically relative. An authentic African identity is necessarily detracted from false assumptions of a common race, a common historical experience, and a shared, unified metaphysics. Identity discourse is an amorphous concept juxtaposed within a dialectical ambivalence of the cultural and the moral, the public and the personal, the psychological and the social sphere of human endeavors. On this dialectical ambivalence of identity discourse, C. Waterman (2002: 20) would differentiate between "the unity and stability of both the self (commonly represented as the internal face of identity—subjective, psychologically unified, essential and real) and the person (the external, socially constructed, represented and enacted identity of individuals)." It is on the basis of such ambivalence that scholars like Jacques Lacan (1985: 39) could argue that the subject is necessarily an undeveloped "collection of desires"; in fact, the original synthesis of the ego is alienated for it is an alter ago. The human subject accordingly, is "constructed around a centre, which is the 'other' insofar as he [the other] gives the subject his unity."

If Lacan is right, the upshot is that the socially constructed persona influences the subjectively experienced, interiorized selves. This is precisely because identity remains an assemblage of traits, made coherent and sustained by the attention of others from whence persons become products and agents of the society and of the other. This in my view is the marginal failure of historical analogy as a dehistoricizing historicism. The individual's subjectivity is only codified through the conceptual lens of the other. The individual does not see himself; rather he begins to perceive his identity through the *eyes* of the other. This is a key premise in the *colonization of subjectivity.* However, to "borrow" the conceptual eyes of the other to see ourselves does not by itself constitute this dehistoricization. It becomes alienating when the "borrowing" becomes adapted as a true form of our subjectivity. It means leaving ourselves permanently in the shoes of the "other." The author does not dismiss the necessity of plural perspectives; I quarrel only with the fixation/fetishism of this borrowing that valorizes our individualities for a predetermined, unanimous historicity. Our theory indeed becomes enriched through a dialogic process, through our ability to subject these theories to scrutiny, and through developing an attitude of a *theoretical empathy.* We should and ought to use and generously help ourselves with theoretical framework and conceptual scheme of the West to enrich our theories. Yet, these "schemes" and "framework" should neither stifle nor substitute the content and vision

of our theories. While these schemes offer a mirror on how others see us, we should not remain fixated on the mirror but able to step back and move in and out of *spaces* without losing our original context.

From the forgoing, Waterman (2002: 21–22) draws two conclusions to which I add a third: (1) Identity is not necessarily bounded, unitary, or determinate as often perceived or especially from the dominant discourse of fitting human subjects into boxes labeled with "standardized rubrics" of ethnicity, race, gender, class, and nationality. (2) "The distinction between 'self' and 'person' or the 'inner' world of subjective experience and the 'outer' world of social action is neither completely stable nor universal," and it is somewhat erroneous to perceive it in a universal format and then apply the same to all persons. (3) Identity is multidimensional and is not merely descriptive but integrates qualitative aspect that encompasses a holistic antecedent of social identity. As Appiah would have argued, the Yoruba identity is *real* because the Yoruba believe in it; the Kikuyu or Xhosa identity is genuine because these adherents believe in it. African identity need not be rigid; it ought constantly to be redefined to suit and accommodate the sociopolitical exigencies of contemporary African states. Consequently, if we are to draw a resource from Africa's historical identities, we need first to acknowledge that race, a shared, glorious past, or a metaphysical unity cannot be a source of that identity. Our identity must be derived from the vagaries of our present circumstances: "[W]e can choose, within broad limits set by ecological, political and economic realities, what it will mean to be African in the coming years" (Appiah 1992: 286). Indeed, race or closed historical unanimity "disables us." Pan-Africanism becomes rehabilitated when it is rid of its racial undertones, characterized as it were by a racialized Negro pan-ism.

Conclusion

The politics of history is also an investigation of possible ways of proceeding. I have argued against an uncritical and dogmatic appeal to our past as the ultimate source of our renaissance. I have also argued that lack of discontinuity between our past historical narratives and contemporary African societies is not an indictment that there is nothing we can learn from our past histories. At this juncture, emergent question includes the following: Is our African renaissance sustainable? Is there a way of transcending the residual problems of colonial history or is Africa necessarily condemned to the mappings of the colonial world and its logic? Most poignantly, what is the role of the public intellectual in drafting a new course of change? Considering that most of the "Big Men" who have ruled Africa since independence (excluding a few illiterates such as Abacha or Idi Amin) belong to the elite club of the

educated Africans at independence. How can the African historian "relocate" African historiography in a manner that would open spaces for fresh air, fresh perspectives?

Many years on, African leaders will still hijack national consciousness through a political domination in which the majority of the people remain excluded from the national imaginary. In their watch, the socioeconomic profile of Africa would stagnate, deteriorate, and vanish through state-sponsored pillaging of resources, and relocation of foreign aid *back to sender* in private Swiss accounts.[2] Privatization of national resources and treasuries, elimination of opposition, tribalization of democracy, politicization of the military are all emotive issues of most vivid concern that hinder our social progress.

Indeed, it need not be business as usual. The cult politics has failed us, and my point is to show that "cult personality" is a myth that should be debunked with a government of the people. Renaissance occurs when there is a guarantor for the human subjective through civic rights—rights to education, health, food, housing, et cetera. When and if practical steps are taken in this direction, then in Africa, we can dream of an African renaissance. The cult character we ought to reject because, as history has shown, these modular operatives have always proven to be a disaster in the sociopolitical imaginary. In most instances, when there is a vacuum at the center as a result of sudden death of the cult demagogue, the national cohesion collapses since the country's integration is dependent on the cult character as an adhesive narrative of national imaginary. This is precisely what happened in Côte d'Ivoire with the death of the life president (Félix Houphouët-Boigny—1905–1993); the most stable country in West Africa would disintegrate into chaos and civil war in its quest for a new national core, for a sociopolitical imaginary. The Ivorian case parallels the crisis in the former Zaire after decades of dictatorship by one man. At the end of Mobutu's regime, the country would be redefining its identity based on a new national imaginary. In the West, Tito would represent such demagogues. Yugoslavia disintegrated alongside Tito's death. In some instances such as Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania we have also had peaceful transition from cult nationalism to social nationalism, although in most instances, the tension in the public sphere reveals to a keen observer a precarious balance of power as these cult nationalists still influence the political life of the nation.

My advocacy is a movement from cult dictatorship to social power, democratization of equal socioeconomic and political resource, economic development dependent on transparency, a responsive government that commands authority by virtue of good governance and not by privileges and impunity. It includes an understanding that the notion of citizenship actually entails rights of the individual as enshrined in a country's Constitution.

The state is not an instrument for domination, exploitation, and oppression; the compact of the social contract of the state is for socioeconomic benefits and mutual advantages, for the well-being of all citizens. The socioeconomic well-being of Africa is dependent on such political stability. But if history has shown that one of the fundamental causes of conflicts in Africa is linked to the redistribution of resources, the two goals are to be pursued simultaneously. Where redistribution has become banditry and predatory, we have seen the devastating effects on the overall sociopolitical imaginary and fabric of the nation. Another devastating effect is the final depreciation of moral and political authority, a situation that has transformed countries such as the Congo, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra-Leone into failed states and anarchy and others such as Nigeria into a bandit state.

Where resources and their quest are tied to human subjectivity, this vision of humanity stifles social progress. Burundi and Rwanda are examples in which privilege became associated with subjectivity—an inherited legacy of colonialist capitalism; we have witnessed the devastating effects. Among the ordinary people, the motivation for survival has endeared survival strategies of crime, fraud, kidnapping et cetera—activities that unmask the degree of a society's deterioration. Most significantly, our education system needs to be revitalized as an agency of change, not merely an instrumental means of survival but an end in itself:

> When I told my uncle that I was doing a doctorate in intellectual history, he was very disapproving because he found it as a waste of resources. He wanted to know if "history" could bring bread and butter to the table. On this view, history is none of those prestigious courses or subjects like medicine or accountancy that can take one out of poverty. Medicine because in a country where there is no right to health care and health insurance is nonexistent with government hospitals in dysfunctional conditions, medical practices is necessarily privatized and accessible to only those who can afford it. Accountancy because I would work in a bank and somehow participate in distributing the "naira"; be involved in this movement of capital, to issue overdrafts, tax breaks, debt cancellation—services that do not emerge without greasing of palms.

African renaissance is an emotive attempt to transcend such vicissitudes of history that has become a chain and a crutch for Africa's progress; on which note I end with the following appeal to our ancestors:

An African Prayer of Lamentation in Confidence

(*Inspired by titles of African novels and adapted from* Orobator, A.E, S.J. *Theology Brewed in an African Pot,* pp 64–65)[3]

God of our ancestors,

Things are falling apart in Africa, and we are *no longer at ease;* the evils which torment us are like an open sore[4]

Daily we walk upon the *famished road* to patched farmlands *dying in the sun*; our hunt for food is like *striving* for *the wind*; in vain we search for *a grain of wheat* in our empty granaries[5]

At sunset we walk the *narrow path* back to *the shadows of the night;* on our bamboo beds we contemplate *fragments* of our broken dreams; we lack *the will to die*[6]

God of our ancestors,

Hear the voice of Africa; heal *the wound* and *tribal scars* which defaced the image of our continent; lead us with compassion on our *long walk to freedom*[7]

Free us from evil that keeps us bound to violence; may our children live more than *a few nights and days*[8]

When our eyes shut in death, may we never become carcass *for hounds*; bring us in safety into the house of the *ancestors*; where we may dwell in peace for *two thousand seasons*[9]

God of our ancestors,

As we sing a *song of sorrow, do* not leave us on *a narrow path;* as we *wait for the rain* to nourish the *Wretched of the Earth* may we not lose sight of the *Sunset*[10]

May we never *return to the shadows* as the *strange man taunted* us: yours is a *heart of darkness, a disgrace*[11]

Deliver us from *the house of hunger* and even as the *beautiful ones are not yet born*, may the *joys of motherhood* abide with us.[12]

That is all!

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Michael 'Buchi Eze, October 1, 1998, Jesuit Novitiate, Benin-City, Nigeria.
2. The terms *post-colonialism* and *postcolonialism* refer to different analytical conditions. The former (post-colonialism with hyphen) is a period after colonialism, whereas the later (postcolonialism/poscoloniality) is a discourse that theorizes this post-colonial condition.
3. Arguably, Edward Said is one of the pioneering architects of what has come to be known as postcolonial studies. Gaining inspiration from Antonio Gramsci, Said's 1978 *Orientalism* has induced a completely new discourse on postcolonial studies. Prior to Said, however, were the likes of Frantz Fanon, who would become very influential to Homi Bhabha. For the present commitment, my choice of Said as representative of this tradition is because his work popularized the discourse of *invention,* which, he argues, is the motivating thesis of colonial discourse.
4. The French anthropologist Marcel Griaule had in the 1940s recorded his conversations with Ogotomelli of Dogon (in Mali). Griaule is reputed to have had revealing conversations with the blind hunter. From Ogotomelli, Griaule would learn of Dogon myths and rituals and arrive at the conclusion that the teaching of this blind hunter revealed that primitive people could actually manipulate abstract intellectual symbols such as astronomical systems, calendrical tables, and complex thought patterns.
5. In postcolonial studies, the terms *subjectivity* and *individuality* have assumed an essentialist baggage; they describe everything and nothing, and it becomes necessary to codify and qualify these terminologies as a language of my discourse to avoid such essentialist rendition. This redefinition is motivated by my desire to shun away from the usage of the term "subjectivity" as a façade for what cannot be discursively described where these terms assume an escape route for an incoherent metaphysical verbiage. *Subjectivity* is a noun that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary 1989, means "a conscious being . . . The quality or condition of viewing things exclusively through the medium of one's own mind or individuality; the condition of being dominated by or absorbed in one's personal feelings, thoughts, concerns; hence, individuality, personality . . . the expression of personality or individuality." Now, this meaning must be contrasted with another term, *individuality,* also a noun, which means "the fact or condition of existing as an individual;

separate and continuous existence . . . the aggregate of properties peculiar to an individual; the sum of the attributes which distinguish an object from other of the same kind; individual character" (ibid.: Vol. VII). A facile look does not specify the difference between these terms. But a closer scrutiny reveals to us embodied differences. Where *individuality* refers to specific individual trait, character, or personality (as distinct), *subjectivity* is the ensemble of those constituents of individuality but transcends to a larger self-referential point as a distinct character of the subject. The problem is to distinguish a point in which a *self-referential* becomes tagged as "individuality" or "subjectivity." Many postcolonial writers use these terms interchangeably. In my current discussion, the usage of the terms "individuality," "subjectivity," and "identity" is specified.

6. My critique of pan-African historicism is only against the claim of cultural and historical unanimity and does not extend to the political. Construed as a reaction against imperialism and experience of colonialism, pan-Africanism as a homogenous political consciousness is a viable possibility. A critique against cultural and historical homogeneity does not undermine the possibility of a political convergence of experiences such that inspired the formation of the Organization of the African Unity in 1963.

Chapter 2

1. The word "Negro" was a derogatory term used to refer to persons of African origin in the colonial era. For the present purposes, the term does not hinge on any putative sacrality, it is used here as a "signifier" in the whole process of inventing Africa. Where applied, the term is purely for emphasis and eschews any derogatory substantive meaning considering that the writer belongs to this so-called Negro race.
2. This attitude of educated Christian elites is different from their Muslim counterparts. The former as we have seen advocated for civilization as a necessary good for Africa. The later rejected colonialism because it would entail submission and domination by an Infidel as Bishop Crowder noted, "For Muslim Societies of West Africa the imposition of white rule meant submission to the infidel, which was intolerable to any good Muslim" (Boahen 1987: 36).
3. A point of historical interest is that incidents of impeachment in the Yoruba empire were often very regular that the Alafin spends his monarchy politicking not to get impeached. Once he is accused of a serious wrong doing like usurpation of power, he would normally be presented with an egg and empty calabash signifying that the gods have rejected him, the earth has rejected him with the only available choice being abdication and suicide! A case in point is the Are-Ona Kakanfo Afonja. Afonja was a military general of the Oyo Empire. Around 1796, he initiated a revolt within the king's cabinet from his base in Ilorin and presented the then king, Alaafin Awole, with an empty calabash, symbolizing his end as a monarch and inducement to commit suicide. Retreating to commit suicide, the king was reputed to have cursed Yoruba land, a pronouncement that has become a key feature of contemporary Yoruba historiography. In a popular Yoruba legend, after

shooting four arrows into four directions, representing four corners of the earth, Alaafin Awole was reputed to have said: "My curse be on you for your disloyalty and disobedience, so let your children disobey you. If you send them on an errand, let them never return to bring you word again. To all the points I shot my arrows will you be carried as slaves. My curse will carry you to the sea and beyond the seas, slaves will rule over you, and you, their masters, will become slaves." At which point he smashed the earthenware dish and declares, "Broken calabash can be mended but not a broken dish; so let my words be irrevocable" (cited in Atmore and Oliver 2005: 74).

4. "Native Doctor" is not in the sense of traditional doctors who have been caricatured as "Witchdoctors." "Native" in this context refers to black practitioners of orthodox (Western) medicine trained and educated in Europe and America.
5. Anthropologically, The concept of liminality is attributed to the famous British Anthropologist Victor Turner during his work on initiation among the Ndembu in Zambia. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are consigned betwixt and between positions of law, custom, convention, and the ceremonial on which their identity depends (see Turner 1970). In pre vatican II Roman Catholicism, *limbo* refers to a place where unbaptized soul remained pending the Second Coming of Jesus who would then set them free. A person in limbo is neither in heaven nor in hell. Those who followed the statues and laws of their community according to Natural Law will be redeemed and those who did not will be condemned.
6. Indeed, in the Iliad, Homer had written: "For Zeus went yesterday to Okeano, unto the noble Ethiopians for a feast, and all the gods followed with him." The neglected side of the story is that Homer as already indicated would be a critical resource for Pliny's historical account of Africa. Pliny was unequivocal in his differentiation of white Ethiopians and those primitive and subhuman cave dwellers living beyond the Ethiopian horizon: "In the interior circuit of Africa towards the south and beyond the Gaetulians, after an intermediate strip of desert, the first inhabitants of all are the Egyptian Libyans, and then the people called in Greek the White Ethiopians. Beyond these are the Ethiopian clans of the Nigritae, named after the river which has been mentioned" (Pliny, Book V. viii: 43–45). From this account of Pliny's *Natural History* Homer would not be referring to Ethiopia of the Negro race. On this persuasion, one will conjecture an epistemological disjunctive in such historical analogies made by Africanist scholars and this appeal to the so-called *blameless Ethiopians*. Another contradiction is that while these scholars would dismiss (and rightly so) Pliny's account of Africa as he learned from Homer, they would then appropriate those Homeric historiography that becomes favorable to their study. If Homer is right, then he is right all the way . . .

Chapter 3

1. It is true that at independence, some of the African statesmen did forge an alliance that resulted in the formation of the OAU (Organization of African Unity, now African Union). It is necessary, however, to maintain a lucid differentiation on the primary objective of the OAU on its inception and the formation of African

states in the Euromodernist sense. The primary objective of the OAU was not a discussion on the constitutive validity of nation-statism as it affects the African peoples (or territories inherited at independence) as opposed to a system of political cooperation to challenge further intrusion of neocolonialism. In fact, the OAU one could observe was only a smokescreen for pan-Africanism and its appeal to a homogenous pristine unanimity and universal experience of colonialism to institute a common response to Western imperialism. Furthermore, at its inception, the OAU is a conglomeration of two ideological blocks: the Casablanca and the Monrovia groups. The first led by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana advocated for a United States of Africa while the latter led by Leopold Senghor of Senegal argued for a lose union that would respect inherited borders as opposed to a political federation. On this formation, the primary objective of the OAU was neither a consideration on nation-statism, its impact for Africa nor on which political system to adopt. The OAU largely adapted the charter of the Monrovia block, that is, to respect the colonial territories inherited at independence with further proclamations on eradicating all forms of colonialism in Africa and achieve political independence for the rest of Africa.

2. Mamdani (1996: 185) raised fascinating discussion on the idea of "tribalism as a civil war" in peasant communities. According to this view, the democratic viability of a peasant movement is ultimately an "expression" of civil war (185). My perspective differs since my preoccupation is on the peculiar invention of tribe or manipulation of ethnicities in colonial and post-colonial Africa—processes that have stirred civil strife.
3. Although Buthelezi projected an image of a Zulu kingdom oppressed by other ethnic groups, many members of the ANC are Zulu, including one of its most famous leaders, Albert Luthuli. Hence, Buthelezi's position can only be described as an attempt to politicize the "ethnic" and language affiliation through "political ethnicity."
4. On this point, Wyatt MacGaffey had argued that "although both 'tribes' and 'ethnic groups' are imagined communities, the difference between them may be that while an ethnic group imagines itself, a tribe has been imagined by others" (Campbell 1997: 68).
5. The "South" comprises even more diverging ethnic identities, such as Ishan, Bini, Ijaw, Igbo, Yoruba, and hundreds of other ethnicities.
6. In fact, General Yakubu Gowon who led the Nigerian army is not a northerner. Gowon hails from a Geographical zone called the Middle-Belt.
7. Comprises states such as Benue, Plateau, Kwara, etc.

Chapter 4

1. Just for curiosity, the reader might want to know that Martin Bernal is not a Negro, mulatto or African. He is the ideal "Whiteman"!
2. Michael Onyebuchi Eze. *Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Chapter 5

1. Placides Tempels was a Franciscan missionary in the Congo in the 1930s whose now classic work *Bantu Philosophy* has become the foundation, albeit provocatively, what has become collectively known in the intellectual history of Africa as "African philosophy." The generic term "African philosophy" as used in this context is a mere generalization of the debate in contemporary Africanist discourses. They include such debates ranging from the "existence" of a body of work called African philosophy, but especially the polemics surrounding such debates, nationalist appeal, et cetera.
2. This great African philosopher would admit to this extent of his influence by Althusser. On the project of relocating African philosophy from dark times to enlightenment, Hountondji would note, "My answer to this question was Althusserian, or more exactly, was inspired by a *certain* Althusser, the careful reader of Bachelard and Marx, the man fascinated by the notion of rupture . . . " (2002: 85).

Chapter 6

1. National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.
2. In *A Grain of Wheat* we encounter Mugo who became an instant hero the moment he went to jail for defending a pregnant black woman against a white colonial officer. Mugo is compared to the antagonist Karanja who actively collaborated with the British colonial administration and was accordingly perceived as a traitor to the independence struggle. Unknown to the people however, for all his hero worship, Mugo's treachery was actually more. Mugo would betray Kihika, the leader of the *Mau Mau* forest fighters for two main reasons: Kihika's speech at Rungei Market made him more popular than Mugo who thereafter became jealous. Besides, Kihika's conversation with Mugo on a night that Kihika took refuge in his house exacerbated the circumstance. In reality, Mugo was not even a hero. Mugo is a young man who did not want any trouble and therefore did not involve himself in the fight for freedom. His main policy was that "if you do not traffic evil, then evil ought not to touch you; if you leave people alone, then they ought to leave you alone" (Wa Thiongo 1984: 169). To him, that is the only way he could achieve his aim in life. That is why as a young boy he did not move with the other boys for fear of "ruining his chances for better future." He believed in keeping himself "alive, healthy and strong to wait for his mission in life"—to lead the people when the opportunity presents (ibid.: 171). The opportunity he was waiting for seems to be threatened by Kihika. Out of jealousy he betrays Kihika. In *Weep Not, Child we* learn of the legendary tales of Dedan Kimathi whose exploits attained a mythical status. Kimathi was often invisible and had supernatural powers of bilocation and transmigration. In his ingenuity of fighting colonial officials, he would often turn himself into a Whiteman or even an airplane as a disguise to prevent capture as the leader of the freedom fighters (Wa Thiongo 1964: 75).This was certainly my favorite book in primary school.

3. A fancy high school built for the children of Malawian Eites and run by expatriates since its founder Kamuzu Banda distrusted the intellectual and administrative capacity of Malawians.
4. Madiba is the African name of Nelson Mandela which is generlaly preferred to Nelson. The "magic" refers to the aura of the person of Mandela for his leadership credentials which includes amongst other things, his advocacy for forgiveness and reconciliation as a narrative strategy for the new South Africa. Indeed, that South Africa did not collapse into anarchy or civil war at the end of apartheid can be attributed to this magic of reconciliation.
5. I am grateful to Brian Banda SJ for this information.
6. The Hausa and Banza Bakwai in popular Hausa mythology represent the legitimate and illegitimate sons (respectively) of Queen Daura who would become the founders of modern Hausa states before the conquest of Dan Fodio. The Hausa Bakwai include Daura, Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Gobir, Rano and Biram. The Banza Bakwai are Zamfara, Kebbi, Yauri, Gwari, Kororafa, Nupe and Ilorin.
7. The EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) was an attempt to save international face and fight against corruption. The first chairman of the commission, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu was genuinely liked by many Nigerians for this tough stance and for not compromising on issues of corruption. He however made a mistake of stepping on sacred cows and went too far in his fight against corruption by attempting to prosecute a presidential aide who has been implicated in massive cross-border smuggling. The smuggling activity has had devastating impact on Nigerian economy such as in the collapse of the Textile Industries. Besides; the smuggling is done with political guarantees since the smuggled goods are escorted in an out of Nigeria by uniformed Nigerian soldiers and police! The following headlines abstract to a certain extent, the government's involvement in this case as in the following newspaper editorial: *Aondoakaa faults Britain, Ribadu on charges against Yar'Adua's aide, three ex-governnors"—Guardian* (September 11, 2009). Aondoakaa is Nigeria's Attorney General, and Britain refers to refers to London Metropolitian Police that worked with the ex Nigerian anti corrupt Tsar to arrest and prosecute corrupt criminals).
8. "Nyama Bridge claims another Okada rider"—*Daily Independent* (September 22, 2009). According to the editorial, the bridge in question was a project under construction which was abandoned by the engineers who disappeared with funding for the project. The Bridge literally became a death trap for unsuspecting villagers of Amechi/Agbani. The said bridge has been awarded several times under previous administrations. (This is just one amongst hundreds of case studies.).
9. "Gunmen kill *The Guardian* Editor, take his laptop"—*Nigerian Tribune* (August 21, 2009). Other high profile cases would include the assassination of Abubarkar Umar who was abducted and burned alive after a public spat with a senior politician. The most disturbing however was the assassination of Danjuma Mohammed in February 2010. Mr. Mohammed was an associate of the former Nigerian anti-corrupt Tsar and a member of the EFCC – the Nigerian agency that fights corruption. This unsung hero of Nigeria's anti corruption crusade stepped on the toes of many corrupt politicians and would become assassinated in a retribution for his vain attempt to combat the endemic corrupt system.

10. WAEC—The Western African Examination Council; NECO—National Examination Council; GCE—General Certificate of Education.
11. The handouts are lecture notes prepared by a particular lecturer and imposed on the students for purchases. Of these handouts, students are expected to buy them and are forbidden from borrowing from older students or friends or even make copies. The lecturer usually has a list of those who bought his handout and only these would have a chance of passing the said course. Some of the students I interviewed found this as the norm and not an anomaly.
12. The crisis of sexual harassment is certainly an endemic problem that occurs very frequently. Such incidents are no longer news except when some actions have been taken against offending officials by the university and it will then make news (*to show that the universities are trying to curb the incidence*). Usually, the culprits are those lecturers who have some disagreement with the university authorities who will then use them as sacrificial lamb for what has become a culture in the universities. Of one such example is the case reported in *Vanguard*, July 10, 2009, where five lecturers were sacked by a university for sexual misconduct. And even then, the case just ends here, no one will be sued and they can reapply for their jobs later. With some luck, they might even upturn the sacking. In this study I interviewed seven female students from five universities and their experiences exhibits similar pattern of exploitation. Here are some excerpts:

    Aisha (Not real name): *He called me into his office to discuss my last exams! We always called him Papa because of his age . . . in his office he offered me maltina* (cold drinks) *and began to tell me how beautiful I was. Next, he sat by my side and started touching me . . . . I was scared and shy. He told me he could give me a high grade and there is a nice hotel in town. When I refused he turned violent and swore that I would never pass his course. This is why I failed . . . .*

    Eze: *But why didn"t you report the incident to the police or the authorities?*

    Aisha: *"(frowning), report ke (a local slang for emphasis)? They are all the same, they will protect him and he will even deny it but they all know it is true". . . .*

    And here is a story of another student, a final year student of economics in one of the federal Universities:

    Chika (not real name) was a brilliant student at least according to the local standards. Her only problem I was told was because she was pretty. At the time of the interview, she had waited almost for one year to get her results released so that she could advance for her National Youth Service. She had been told by a particular lecturer that she will never graduate unless she had slept with him! At first she was willing to tell me everything that happened and had even given me a general background of her experience. Her countenance changed immediately she realized I was based "abroad" (overseas) and worse still, in the academia. At this point she would not disclose further information. Her

fear primarily was that I might intervene on her behalf which would make matters worse. Despite my pleas that I know the university chancellor and that she would be protected from the abusive lecturer, she preferred not to fight since all she wanted was the release of her results.

And one student came to me for financial assistance in order to pay a lecturer forty thousand naira (today's rate, September 2009, USD 261, 00) to submit her mini-dissertation at a state owned polytechnic where she was studying. The fees are illegal. Without the submission of the dissertation, she would certainly fail. Like other students, she would not expose the defaulting lecturer. In a country where rights have abdicated at the altar of greed and domination, to challenge such situation or even protest for your right against such excesses and abuse when you are *nobody* (by nobody I mean, your father or relation is not in the military or top government official, or a university professor in this case), will simply induce an academic suicide. You will never graduate. (Note: unfortunately, I could not assist this student on the case of her dissertation).

These cases are not unique and reflect the general character of such culture of abuse and exploitation. The students I interviewed shared similar experiences but what was common was that they have no way to exert their rights and would not want an intervention for fear of obvious recrimination. I do like to admit nonetheless the complexity of these matters. We cannot overlook the efforts of many genuine hardworking Nigerian academics. To these colleagues I owe my admiration for they are trying to give their best to develop Nigerian education under impossible circumstances, sometimes without payment for a year. These colleagues are my heroes. In 2009, the Nigerian Universities were on strike strike for eight months because of the government's refusal to honor a previous agreement on teacher's salaries.. At the same time, we have also had incidents of false sexual abuse claims from students, sometimes, orchestrated by some of those bad lecturers who wants to paint the good ones bad. It becomes a system of either you join the bandwagon (of corruption and abuse) or we force you in or paint you red as one of us. It is certainly more complicated and I do not have the privilege of baring all its complexities in these few pages. The irony in all of these issues is that the Nigerian university (like Nigeria as a country) is the most expensive in Africa and yet does not measure in recompense to quality of education (or standard of living). The collapse of the universities simply reflects the overarching character of Nigeria's sociopolitical decadence.

13. The following headlines of Nigerian Newspapers capture an imagination of the situation.

- *"Death toll in Lagos collapsed building hits 11—Landlords of collapsed buildings now to face trial"—Saturday Tribune* (March 26, 2009).
- *"Lagos Collapsed building: Experts blame old age, salinity as death toll rises"—Saturday Tribune* (June 30, 2009).
- *"Collapsed Building Kills 80 in Lagos—in 3 years"*—Saturday Tribune (July 4, 2009); (three years refers to the number of four-storey buildings that have collapsed with heavy casualty in the same location. According to the

editorial "The incident of building collapse in the state is usually blamed on greed, incompetence, corruption, substandard materials and disregard for building regulations".

- *"Four communities cut off . . . as five bridges collapse"—Daily Independent* (September 11, 2009).
- *"Building Collapses in Plateau"* (under construction)— *Guardian* (September 14, 2009).
- *"Building collapses in Ogbomosho"* (Under Construction) -*Sensor Newspaper* (September 17, 2009).
- *"Building Collapses in Zarmangada"* (Under construction)- *Daily Independent* (September 17, 2009).

To fix the situation, experts decide on a way of proceeding:

"Experts canvass for property insurance"—*Saturday Tribune* (September 1, 2009). From the paper's editorial, the experts inform us, *"The recurrent cases of collapsed buildings across the country have become a source of concern. A recent report indicated that the conservative estimate of the number of buildings that have collapsed in Lagos (one city) in the last three decades was close to 120. A greater percentage of these collapsed structures was not insured, thereby, bringing untold hardship to the victims."* According to the experts, we should invest more money so that the domination continues. I don't know anyone who has ever made an insurance claim in Nigeria! Besides, the insurance companies generally belong to the politicians.

14. The following is a tip of the sociopolitical narratives that has become a résumé of Nigeria's civic character. Nigerian major newspapers in just one day (September 18, 2009) had the following headlines:

    - *"Anambra Assembly in 63m scam"—This Day* (according to the editorial, the Anambra state legislators made laws to share the state resources amongst themselves. But this is the face of politics in Nigeria, the very process of domination. Since there are no elections in practice, those who are elected are those who paid their way into the political system. It becomes a matter of political investment. When they are in power, they will thereupon reap the fruit of their labor. Ironically, a sub-headline from the same newspaper on the same day pays a lip service warning against political investors: "*We don't need 'investor godfathers" says Moghalu—This Day.* This is typical of Nigerian politics in general and the following headlines are a sequence of civic response.
    - *"Kidnappers fed victim, 50*-year old widow . . . *with yoghurt and bread, killed her after 7 days in forest"—Daily Sun*.
    - "SSS alleges plot to kidnap Education and Labor Ministers"—*This Day, Daily Sun, Guardian*.
    - *"Police arrest kidnappers, rescue 10 year old. victim"—Vanguard*.
    - "Kidnapping: Onovo (Police Chief) deploys 16 mobile police in Anambra"—*Daily Independent*.

15. This analysis does not extend to the more prominent and high profile kidnapping cases in Niger-Delta states. My focus extends only to those areas where cases for kidnapping are a matter of lucrative business and not on ideological motivation.
16. Consider one of such example: "*2011 Guber: Saraki, son, others meet in Saudi Arabia"—This Day,* September 18, 2009. (Guber refers to the governorship elections and Saraki is the incumbent governor who according to the editorial report of *This Day* had gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca with his counselors and son where they would anoint the next governor of the Kwara State. Incidents such as these give credits to my findings that elections are only in name!).
17. Locally, known as the Talibans, the sect unleashed mayhem in some states of northern Nigeria in August 2009. The sponsors were political elites who employed them to gain political advantage over their opponents. The riot was a reaction on the failure of the Islamic state governments to fulfill their electoral promises. In the running battle with the security agents, the sect targeted mostly Christians with a price tag on Christian pastors some of who were beheaded.

Chapter 7

1. On this point, I differ with Jahn. The exculpation of these African elites from the trauma of colonial denigration while not necessarily influencing their philosophy of African renaissance is historically untrue: As I argued in Chapter 2, these African academics and elites would suffer the psychological (not material) trauma of coloniality more than the local—ordinary—people.
2. My use of Nigeria does not in any way restrict such derelict governance to Nigeria or its leaders. There were more corrupt leaders like Mobutu, but especially Omar Bongo who at this death was one of the richest men in the world and would still be succeeded by his son as the exploitation continues (see http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8238860.stm retrieved, September 5, 2009).
3. The first two verses of the "prayer" is an adaption from the Jesuit Father Orobator, A.E, "Theology Brewed in African Pot". See pp 64–65 for original and unmodified version). The third verse is an addition by the author.
4. Chinua Achebe; Wole Soyinka.
5. Ben Okri; Peter K. Palangyo; Meja Mwangi; James Ngugi.
6. Francis Selormey; Robert Serumaga; Ayi kwei Armah; Can Themba.
7. Gabriel Okara; Malick Fall; Sembene Ousmane; Nelson Mandela.
8. Yembo Oulogeme; Mbella Sonne Dipoko.
9. Meja Mwangi; Karl Maier; Ayi Kwei Armah.
10. Kofi Awooner, Francis Salormey, Charles Mungoshi, Frantz Fanon.
11. Robert Serumaga; Amu Djoleto; Joseph Conrad, J.M. Coetzee.
12. Dambudzda Marachera; Buchi Emecheta.

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