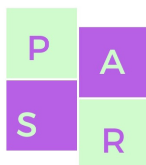
Desmond Bowles

African Social Research 5

Decoloniality and Decolonization in Africa

WINTER 2024



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Decoloniality and Decolonization in Africa

Marc Lynch, Lyn Ossome, Suren Pillay

Questions of decoloniality and the limits of decolonization have become increasingly central to African scholars. Since the 2015 #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town pushed issues of incomplete decolonization into the center of academic and political discourse, scholars have been grappling with the manifold ways in which Africa – like the rest of the postcolonial world – continues to struggle with the legacies of colonial rule. Formal political independence did not alone ensure full political independence, to say nothing of liberation of the economy, the academy, or culture. Furthermore, many postcolonial states – and even states which had never been formally colonized – adopted wholesale the institutions, prejudices, and modes of domination of their colonizers. In May 2024, the Program on African Social Research, CAS and MISR convened a workshop with emerging scholars from across the African continent to discuss these issues. While Latin American and South Asian scholars have been at the forefront of the global decoloniality debates, in this workshop African scholars such as Mahmood Mamdani, Achille Mbembe and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni were key referent points for a wide-spanning intergenerational conversation among scholars from across the continent.

We invited participation covering a broad thematic scope, from proposals framing decolonization in relation to ongoing political shifts and contestations in Africa and the global south, to issues related to social and public policies that bear implications for working people and marginalized populations. We were also keen to contextualise decolonization in the midst of a rapidly changing global political and economic architecture, as well as related cultural shifts. Questions of identity, gender, ethnicity and race are relevant here, especially in consideration of the extent to which decolonization as a methodological/conceptual lens can shed light on the nature of identitarian politics today.

Intergenerational debates on decolonization featured prominently in our discussions, as did basic epistemological questions which remain the focus of decolonial debates, such as asking where it is that knowledge comes from and the connections between identity and knowledge. Equally relevant are inquiries into the relationship between geography and knowledge, technology and knowledge, as well as the place of experience and biography in knowledge production and the relationship between knowledge and ideology. As well, contemporary politics of knowledge production and the implications of these politics for research remain dominant themes of decolonial inquiry. Our discussions also considered the developmental questions that relate to the (im) possibility of thinking of development in organic and endogenous ways where sovereignty – of states, of nature, of people – is as threatened and unstable as it is today.

The workshop encouraged wide ranging reflections on the theoretical and political possibilities and pitfalls in current debates on decolonization and decoloniality in ways that put them into dialogue with the actual histories of emancipatory anti-colonial and postcolonial endeavors. Through a range of disciplinary perspectives, specific historical conjunctures, movements, and visions of futures were considered as the grounds from which to theorize current articulations of decolonial and postcolonial futures. Revisiting these historical experiences illuminated the centrality of needing to understand the way political pasts remain indispensable to imagining political futures – especially those which seek to prioritize new imaginaries of the universal in economic, political and cultural terms, and in new forms of global solidarity.

Several key themes emerged from the contributions to the workshop which are collected in this special issue of *African Social Research*. One set of papers

focused on the pathways of decolonization itself, and the limits of political independence for genuine liberation. **Moussa Ba** argues that the way in which "Guinea-Conakry gained independence from colonial rule has shaped its nation-building process, leading to particular challenges in consolidating a cohesive national identity and effective developmental trajectory." Ba describes Ahmed Sekou Toure as "a political visionary…[who] sought to free himself from colonialism by developing an anti-imperialism sentiment aimed at ending any attempts to continue the colonial model." But his abrupt break with France proved insufficient, as his "aggressive struggle against imperialism led him into failure in enhancing national consciousness" and a descent into repressive autocratic governance. **Faniry Ranaivo Rahamefy** sees Madagascar's path as another "miscarriage of decolonization" in which "the political decolonisation achieved at the time of independence did not bring about actual independence and failed to put an end to coloniality, which can be construed as the perpetuation of colonialism beyond the end of colonisation." She interprets Madagascar's 2021 national cultural policy "as a decolonial attempt to reconstruct and reinforce Malagasy cultural identity, which had been thwarted by colonialism." **Eugenia Ama Breba Anderson** examines Kwame Nkrumah's use of radio in post-colonial Ghana, showing how he used traditional practices of Sankofa in his "dawn broadcasts" to build national identity and develop decolonial uses of a colonial technology.

A second set of contributors locate the urge to decoloniality in opposition movements against what they see as internal colonialism which replicates the modes and methods of colonial domination. **Urgessa D. Gutu** examines the decolonial discourses offered by Oroma youth movements in Ethiopia. He argues that studies of coloniality must not overlook "internal conquests and subjugations within African states such as Ethiopia that escaped direct European colonial occupation but itself was 'invented' on the logic of European colonial structure." The youth movements documented in his paper developed a language of decoloniality which generates tremendous power despite the absence of a formal colonial antagonist. **Kenechukwu Nwachukwu** similarly argues that the pro-Biafran movement in Nigeria represented a struggle against internal colonialism following the thirty month war which ended a push for seccession. She uses feminist historiography to "decolonize discourse around pro-Biafran separatism by moving it from an automatic ethno-materialist lens to an epistemological one… rais[ing] questions about state ideology through educational reforms from colonial times through independence." Again, decoloniality offers a route towards resistance against ongoing domination: "pro-Biafranism can be understood as an ideology critical of statist knowledge structures… and shift from narrow colonial lenses which entrench ethnicity as the one-size-fits-all approach to understanding political problems in Nigeria... into decolonial ones that address the place of knowledge-making in Nigeria's complex political landscape."

A third line of inquiry in the collection builds upon Nwachukwu and Rahamefy's focus on knowledge production in a broader African context to focus more directly on the academy. **Conrad John Masabo** builds upon recent critical literature on the archive associated with Derrida, Fanon, and Mbembe to examine "one source of knowledge production – the archive – by elucidating how archives acquire power and the politics that are involved in knowledge production using the archive." He uses four African thinkers of decoloniality - on four prominent African advocates of decolonization, namely Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Kwasi Wiredu, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, and Olúfémi Táíwò – to situate the debate over the archive within broader discourses on decoloniality. **Wambua Muindi** develops a close reading of the late-career autobiographies of Ngugi wa Thiong to recover narratives of colonial violence and their enduring effects in Kenya. This approach allows us to "read tableaus of decolonial thought in cultural productions and inscriptions of individuals straddling both theory and literature." Drawing on Ndhlovu-Gatsheni's notion of 'coloniality as being', Muindi reads "Ngugi's memoirs as they embody the collective colonial experience through his subjectivity." **Lyn J.-V. Kouadio** focuses the decolonial gaze on the academy, centering the

distinctive challenges of Afro-Francophone Scholars in an Anglo-American Academic World. She argues that the decoloniality debate has overly privileged the British experience, while neglecting the double challenge of scholars from the Francophone world. A related fourth line of inquiry in the collection focuses on cultural production beyond the memoirists and novelists discussed by Masabo and Muindi. **Stephanie Wanga** turns to cinema to examine the decolonial aspirations of Third Cinema filmmakers in Tanzania. What united this movement, she argued, was that "Third Cinema turned on its head all the hallmarks of the colonial condition: humiliation via aesthetics made way for an unceasing struggle for dignity via aesthetics, the elitist made way for the popular, the rigid made way for the progressive, the closed made way for the open, market practices made way for decidedly socialist ones." Finally, **Mi Medrado** uses the fashion industry to demonstrate the potentials and the challenges for postcoloniality in the African context, while relating the evolution of explicitly decolonial ezines as sites of the decolonization of knowledge and discourse around fashion.
A fifth set of essays in the collection push to expand discourses on decoloniality to new sectors and domains, reclaiming indigenous institutions against the pervasive legacies of colonialism. **Birungi Robert** argues for adopting decolonial approaches to the environment and climate change. He argues that "the environmentally marginalized Indigenous community of Bunyoro has employed the clan system of totemism to culturally resist environmental destruction over time." In his reading, a close look at these Indigenous practices allows us to "contextualize this cultural, moral and ethical response to environmental destruction within the broader framework of decoloniality." **Seun Bamidele** similarly seeks to reclaim customary law in order to decolonize Nigerian legal systems. He argues that "the dichotomy between colonial-era laws and customary legal practices has marginalized indigenous systems, perpetuating inequalities and hindering justice for many Nigerians. By reclaiming customary law, Nigeria can move towards a more inclusive legal system that accommodates diverse cultural perspectives and enhances social cohesion."

Finally, **Abdulla Moaswes** examines the burning contemporary of challenge of Palestine through the lens of postcoloniality. His provocative essay critically engages South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice through the lens of its own history and activities on the African continent. Taking up the intellectual challenge offered by postcolonial and indigenous scholars, he argues that the nation-state's origins in ethnic cleansing and colonialism renders it incapable of delivering on the promise of decolonizing Palestine or delivering justice to any national liberation struggle.

The wide ranging debates in this collection offer a window into complex, intersecting and contentious discussions unfolding across the African academy and throughout the postcolonial Global South. We look forward to continuing those conversations. ■

Sankofa as Modernity: Nkrumah's Decolonial Strategy through Radio

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All over Africa, radio has been the arena for the enforcement and contestation of both imperialist and Africanist ideas (Spitulnik, 1999; Bessire and Fisher, 2013; Chikowero 2014; Asseraf, 2019, Gadzekpo, 2021; Lekgoathi, & Mukonde, 2024). Broadcast radio was a key tool used by colonial powers, nationalists, and other social movements to transmit news, propaganda, and ideologies. Introduced in the 1920s, radio "embodied multiply articulated ideologies of power, modernity and status"; serving as a tool for "enlightenment, advanced administration, education, entertainment, propaganda, modernization, nation building, unity, development and democratization" (Chikowero 2014: 114).

Nationalist governments sought to use radio to diffuse the colonial machinery and to challenge colonial domination. Africans built resistance using radio; appropriating the means of oppression and using it to achieve the nationalists' agenda. Radio incited a political revolution among Africans as revolutionaries made constant calls to action and proclamations through radio broadcasts (Chikowero, 2014). Frantz Fanon argued that in Algeria, radio gave a voice to the nation and helped the nationalists organize Algerian national thought (Fanon, 1994). Asseraf adds, "Radio is to the Algerian War what the machine-gun was to the war of [19]14 and the tank to the war of [19]40 (2019: 183). Radio revolutionaries in Southern Africa used broadcast radio to communicate their ideas to the people, garner donor support, and outmanoeuvre their rivals. Radio Bantu and Freedom Radio became a medium to build resistance and overthrow the colonial state while in exile. Exiled revolutionaries of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) used radio to direct their liberation struggle (Zaffiro, 1984; Asseraf, 2019).

In post-colonial Ghana, nationalist and post-colonial governments sought to use radio to diffuse imperialist ideologies while firmly establishing their authority (Gadzekpo, 2021). Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah used the dawn broadcast, a form of pre-colonial verbal communication technique, to propagate his socialist and pan-African ideologies. Nkrumah established media institutions, which gave him absolute control over Ghana's media content. Radio became the key medium through which Nkrumah educated the masses on his quest to forge a national identity, disseminate information on his pan-African ideals and communicate the outcome of efforts made for the struggle for African liberty and unity. I draw out the African cultural symbolism and aesthetic configurations Nkrumah attached to his radio broadcasts, analyse Nkrumah's media strategy and offer an interpretation of Nkrumah's dawn broadcast messages. Through the lens of decolonisation, in this paper, I use the Akan parlance of sankofa, (go back and take) to interpret Nkrumah's radio broadcasting as a sacred African verbal communication. Nkrumah used radio to broadcast crucial messages to the public at dawn in ways which drew on modernised indigenous communication techniques. This paper establishes that Nkrumah's messages on Ghana's development, revolution against the West, and the need for African unity could be considered as decolonial. He exemplified through his advocacy for Sankofa, that is through the use of indigenous verbal communication of dawn broadcast.

To do this, the paper adopts a qualitative phenomenological approach. It draws on audio and textual data of Nkrumah's radio broadcasts from the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), archival data from the Public Record and Archive Administration Department (PRAAD), newspapers, Nkrumah's publications, and other

relevant primary and secondary sources. The reconstruction of Nkrumah's radio broadcast history is difficult because of the inability of the state to keep the audio or textual archive of radio. There is significant textual evidence available in print media, especially governmental newspapers such as the Evening News. A comprehensive textual analysis of the information gathered provides a meticulous evaluation through content and thematic analysis.

Colonisation as Modernity Versus *Sankofa* as Modernity: A Conceptual Note

The cornerstone of imperial justification for colonialism revolved around the three C's: Commerce, Christianity and Civilisation (Kiwanuka, 1973). In 1899, the British writer Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem entitled 'The White Man's Burden' which depicted a European burden to 'civilise and develop' the rest of the world (Kipling, 2014). Miescher et al (2014) use the notion of modernisation to refer to colonial performance, ideology, and public enactment. Radio was one of the instruments the colonial statecraft purported as modernity. It was used as a technology of domination, civilization/ modernity, and assimilation as well as 'a tool of colonial assault' which allowed the maintenance of imperial cultural hegemony over colonies even after independence (Chikowero, 2014: 114; Kerr, 1995; Spitulnik, 1999). Fanon (1965: 84) argues that radio essentially mutated the consciousness of the colonised (Davis, 2009). Further, radio was developed as the chief propaganda tool for persuading Africans to support the Second World War (Holbrook, 1985; Chikowero, 2014).

Most African revolutionaries focused on breaking of the European hegemony over Africans through an attempted diffusion of Eurocentrism, which sought to put Europe at the center of human history and modernity through the slave trade, colonialism, mercantilism, capitalism, and globalization (Amir, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020: 3) notes, "At the centre of the 'European game' is Euromodernity as a broad discursive formation enabled by the invasion of the earth through the colonization of knowledge (coloniality of knowledge), which, in turn, enabled the colonization of time, space, nature, and people." To shift this concept of Euromodernity, African statesmen (Kwame Nkrumah, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Amilcar Cabral, Steve Biko, Julius Nyerere, and Patrice Lumumba) and intellectuals (Walter Rodney, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Cheikh Anta Diop, Albert Memmi, Samir Amir, Fatima Mernissi, Obafemi Awolowo, and Anton Wilhelm Amo) advocated for a decolonised African state through advocacy against neocolonialism, underdevelopment in Africa and advocacy for negritude, black consciousness, social justice and liberty, and decolonising education and the mind. Decolonisation, therefore, advocates for indigenous liberation through an opposition of colonial elements in indigenous societies and its attending Western modernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2018). Crucial to the decolonisation argument is the demand for African-centered solutions to Africa's challenges.

This paper uses the Sankofa concept to draw a correlation between radio and decolonisation. In Akan parlance, Sankofa means 'to go back to fetch or take.' The Akan proverb "Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyiri." (it is not taboo to go back and get something after you have forgotten it) essentially highlights the relevance of the readaptation of indigenous African knowledge systems.

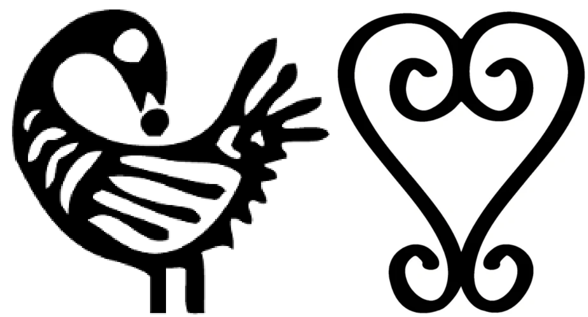

Figure 1: Adinkra Sankofa *symbols*

African verbal art (mythology, folktale/storytelling, riddles, libation and prayers, proverbs. and poetry), was an essential medium in the transmission of African culture and value systems from one generation to another (Ayiku, 1998; Nkwi, 2018). Traditional media and communication technologies

included smoke signals, open market, use of palm fronds, town criers, and talking drums. The town criers were the broadcasters of urgent messages from the traditional leadership (chief and council) to the local people. They were the bearers of community information including important meetings, ceremonies, and messages. They called for participation in communal projects like clearing roads, planting trees to prevent deforestation, or de-silting village wells; communicated war or calamity; and announced the enthroning or dethroning of chiefs (Mushengyez, 2003).

In this paper, I use the term *sankofaisation* to refer to efforts by African nationalists such as Nkrumah to use African cultural symbolism and aesthetic configurations to enhance their decolonial messages. Nkrumah's use of symbolic tokens of traditional chiefs and priests is consistent with the concept of sankofa. He is noted to have used the white handkerchief, horsetail and walking stick traditionally used by religious/traditional priests and chiefs/Queenmothers. He also introduced the state Okyeame (linguist) as well as drumming, dancing, and pouring of libation during state functions (Poe, 2003; Botwe-Asamoah, 2006). Yankah (1985:87-88) notes:

> There was always, a prelude of a well-articulated [and] inspiring appellation performances … often ending with the words: Kwame kasa, kasa, kasa (Kwame speak, speak, speak). The appellation of Nkrumah in public was consistent the traditional system within the Akan society. The appointment of Okyeame Boafo Akuffo as a state poet by Nkrumah was similar to the traditional bard in apae performance in front of the king and queen; and that his "performances were often a poetic capsule of Nkrumah's speeches that was about to follow."

Nkrumah sought to emulate indigenous African verbal technologies through his innovative use of the dawn broadcast. It was traditional for Akan kings and queens to make very important pronouncements at dawn. Nkrumah used radio dawn broadcasts to reinfuse African cultural aesthetics as opposed to as a metanarrative of European technology to diffuse African culture. Therefore, this paper illustrates how Nkrumah's use of the indigenous verbal technology of dawn broadcast through the radio contributed to the decolonisation of communication systems in post-colonial Ghana.

Nkrumah' s Radio Strategy

While radio was widely embraced by the people of the Gold Coast, sections of the African population were sceptical and not easily swayed by these emotive British propaganda materials. The colonialists often found that their appeals were met with spirited questions about post-war changes in the colony, and about how the war-related economic problems of inflation and scarcity would be solved (Ansah, 1985; Biney, 2011). The Ga Mantse (Chief), citing the disappointments following the earlier war, reacted publicly to one early call for support by informing his people that the Germans and the British were related and that the war was their fight (Ansah, 1985).

After independence, Nkrumah's media strategy was to use the media for political education, to promote his socialist ideals, ensure national unity, project Ghana's image and foreign policy abroad, and ensure the liberation and unification of Africa (Ansah, 1985). Nkrumah considered the press, television, and radio as critical instruments for political education and mobilisation. To achieve this, he closely guarded and tightly controlled the state propaganda machine. Biney (2011) notes that Nkrumah's media philosophy was an admixture of authoritarianism, paternalism, revolutionary theory, developmental media theory and as well as a variety of classical libertarian theory of the press.

He took concrete steps to ensure the realisation of this objective. The Ghana News Agency (GNA) was set up in 1957 to collect and disseminate information and project Ghana's image abroad. As a result of Ghana's illiteracy rate, Ghana's radio service introduced programs in local languages including Hausa, Ewe, Twi, and Fante (Gadzekpo, 2021). Under Nkrumah, broadcasts in Nzema were introduced for speakers of the Nzema-related languages in Ghana and Ivory Coast,

thereby enhancing Nkrumah's Pan-African ideals. Similarly, broadcasts in Hausa reached the people of northern Nigeria and other states north of Ghana to Niger. On March 4, 1959, Nkrumah presented to parliament the CPP's Second Five-Year Development Plan. Among the new industrial projects, a new broadcasting television station was established (Parliamentary Debate, 4th March 1959). In 1959, the Ghana Institute of Journalism was set up in Accra to train both Ghanaian and African journalists (Biney, 2011). This was followed by the hosting of the Second Conference of African journalists in Accra in 1963. At this conference, Nkrumah declared, "To the true African journalist, his newspaper [by extension radio] is a collective organiser, a collective instrument of mobilization and a collective educator—a weapon, first and foremost, to overthrow colonialism and imperialism and to assist total African independence and unity" (Ansah, 1985: 86-87). In July 1965, he inaugurated Ghana's television service as an ideological tool to assist in the socialist transformation of Ghana (Biney, 2011).

Nkrumah opened the External Broadcasting Service in 1961 to challenge the negative image of Africa and assist in the total liberation of the continent. In 1963, Nkrumah proposed a Pan-African News Agency to correct the distorted image of Africa projected in foreign media (Ansah, 1985; Biney, 2011). These institutions gave Nkrumah paternalistic control over the mass media in Ghana while seeking to shape its image across Africa. Ansah contends, "Nkrumah's theory of the media was characterised by a certain eclecticism, containing elements of the authoritarian, paternal, communist, developmental and revolutionary theories of the press" 1985:91). By the time of his overthrow, the ten privately owned newspapers in Ghana that had existed at independence were non-existent (Biney, 2011).

An Interpretation of Nkrumah's Broadcast Messages

Nkrumah understood the critical role the media played in educating the people on their national responsibilities and development as it served as a potential tool for national unity (Ansah, 1991). His radio addresses to the nations were broadcast at dawn, an innovative strategy which aligned modern technology with traditional African forms of communication. Though Nkrumah's messages were wide, this paper focuses on the messages on Ghana's developmental, revolution against the West, and the need for African unity.

National Responsibility and Development

Nkrumah's initial broadcasts were focused on his plans for national development and the need for a change in Ghanaian attitudes. He sought to develop citizen's consciousness of their role in the consolidation of Ghana's independence. In Nkrumah's first broadcast message on 8th April 1961, he noted, "The responsibility casts upon all Ghanaians obligation to protect the national stability we have so ably created and to guard ever jealously the solidarity of our nation" (Ghana Press Release, No. 370/61). He admonishes CPP party members and government appointees against nepotism, corruption, red-tapeism, and rumour-mongering (Ghana Press Release, No. 409/61). He notes, "This Ghana, which has wasted so much time serving colonial masters, cannot afford to be tied down to archaic snow-pace methods of work which obstruct expeditious progress." (Ghana Press Release, No. 370).

He used these broadcasts to explain his developmental plan to the nation and garner citizen support and cooperation. For example, he declared:

> We must develop Ghana economically, socially, culturally, spiritually, educationally, technologically and otherwise, and produce it as a finished product of a fully integrated life, both exemplary and inspiring. This programme, which we call a programme for "Work and Happiness" has been drawn up in regard to all our circumstances and conditions, our hopes and aspirations, our advantages and disadvantages and our opportunities or lock of them. Indeed, the programme is drawn up with an eye on reality and provides the building around for our immediate scientific, industrial and technological progress. We have embarked on an intensive socialist

> reconstruction of our country, Ghana inherited colonial economy and similar disabilities in Most other directions (*Evening News*, April 7, 1962).

He further used the broadcast messages to admonish Ghanaians to develop the right work attitude. In his 1st May 1963, Workers Day broadcast, Nkrumah lamented "how our telephone girls who are normally so friendly, polite, and well-behaved at home are rude and abrupt" in the workplace. "In the shops, the assistants ignore the customers while they chat among themselves and treat them [the customers] with nonchalance and disrespect" (PRAAD, Cape Coast, CRG4/1/363). An understanding of Nkrumah's developmental agenda and a change in Ghanaian attitude was crucial to the reconstruction of a progressive country.

Additionally, as part of the *Sankofa* conceptualization, radio was also used to broadcast national cultural programs. Between July 1 and 4, 1961, the Arts Council of Ghana organised the first Festival of Music and Drama at Prempeh Hall in Kumasi with plays in Twi and English. July 5 1961 was set aside for the national competition in Choral Music at Achimota College. The Ghana Broadcasting Service broadcasted these cultural programs to the hearing of many (NAG/RG3/7246:16).

Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism through Radio

Nkrumah's pan-African ideology advocated for the sovereignty and unity of African states (Poe, 2003; Biney, 2011). He noted in his first broadcast that "Even though our own political revolution is over, we are entering into a new political revolution with regard to the struggle for the total liberation and unity of Africa" (Ghana Press Release No. 431/61). He added that Ghana's sovereignty sets upon the nation the "responsibility not only for development and reconstruction of Ghana, but also for the faithful duty of assisting other African territories to achieve their freedom and independence." (Ghana Press Release, No. 370). During Ghana's Republic Day celebration, he noted, "We consolidated this political achievement by setting up the Republic... That day marked the real beginning of life of our nation and settled upon us, responsibility not only for the development and reconstruction of Ghana, but also for the faithful duty of assisting other African territories to achieve their freedom and independence (Evening News, April 7, 1962).

Nkrumah assembled the heads of independent African states and formed the Conference of Independent African States (CIAS) on 15 April 1957 and ended on 22 April 1957. Participating states were: Ghana (host), Libya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan and the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria at that time) (Poe, 2003). The conference was a major indicator of Ghana's support of Pan-African nationalism. Explaining the importance of the upcoming conference, Nkrumah noted:

> "For the first time, I think, in the history of this great continent, leaders of all the purely African states which can play an independent role in international affairs will meet to discuss the problems of our countries and take the first steps towards working out an African contribution to international peace and goodwill. For too long in our history, Africa has spoken through the voices of others. Now, what I have called an African Personality in international affairs will have a chance of making its proper impact and will let the world know it through the voices of Africa's own sons. (Nkrumah 1973b, 125).

Subsequently, Nkrumah took a 15-person entourage, including Padmore, on a follow-up tour to each of the seven states that attended the conference. The results of these tours were broadcast to Ghanaians. Nkrumah's radio broadcasts reached the masses more easily than his numerous publications or his academic and training institutes would have. (Poe, 2003). Nkrumah used the new Broadcasting House of Radio Ghana to propagate the proceedings and the successes of the conference and tours (Poe, 2003). The objective of these broadcasts was to keep Ghanaians abreast with ongoing international events on decolonisation and to elevate the consciousness of the masses and the solidarity for Pan-African unity.

Figure 2: Nkrumah at the at the inauguration of the Organization of African Union on May 24, 1963
Source: https://newafricanmagazine.com/3232/ (Accessed 1st July, 2024)

The dissemination of a wide range of information on Africa's struggle for liberation and unity created consciousness on anticolonial hotspots such as South Africa, Rhodesia, Ruanda-Urundi, and the Portuguese colonies. On August 8, 1960, he stated that "the greatest danger that Africa faces today is Balkanisation" and that the crisis in the Congo represented a "turning point in the history of Africa." (Biney, 2011: 141). He indicated the following solutions: an end to any impositions placed on Ghanaian soldiers' attempts to carry out their duties in the Congo; international backing of the Congolese parliament; the withdrawal of Belgian troops from the Congo and an end to Belgium's surreptitiously re-arming of the infamous Force publique; the shuttering of the "imperialist"-run private radio stations operating across the Congo river in Brazzaville; the extension of financial assistance to the duly elected Lumumba government; and the instalment and recognition of the Lumumba government's representatives in the United Nations (Biney, 2011). Similarly, on 10 October 1960, Nkrumah went on national radio to announce his six-point plan for resolving the Congolese conflict. The lack of trust and political ambitions of each of these independent African states made the pan-African initiatives of Nkrumah less effective (Biney, 2011).

This dream and efforts were killed when the National Liberation Council (NLC) overthrew Nkrumah's CPP government on 24 February 1966 and announced the military take-over through the radio at dawn (*Legon Observer*, 28th April 1967). Even after the coup, Nkrumah sought to use radio to reach the masses as a means to overthrow the NLC military government. Biney (2011) notes that he made fifteen broadcasts between March and December 1966 in which he denounced the NLC and encouraged Ghanaians to resist the military junta. In 1968, he openly called for "Positive Action" by calling on workers and peasant

farmers to stage a general strike "to overthrow the NLC and liberate Ghana from the clutches of neo-colonialism" (Nkrumah, 1973). Despite these efforts, he failed to mobilise the citizens to use force to oust the military junta because, to a large extent, the military had the support of the masses.

Conclusion

Media, particularly radio, was crucial to both colonial and nationalist agendas of disseminating ideologies across Africa. Nkrumah's decolonisation of the media is seen through his use of radio as a tool for public education, political revolution, mass mobilisation, education on his socialist ideals, dissemination of his foreign policy, and efforts to ensure African liberation and unity. Radio served as a tool to facilitate Nkrumah's socialist transformation of Ghana and to communicate his dedication to the nation. It is difficult to measure the impact of Nkrumah's media strategy in the efforts to facilitate Ghana's development, initiate a revolution against the Western modernity, and ensure the liberty and unity of African states. Nevertheless, he initiated the use of indigenous verbal communication of dawn broadcast. This paper establishes that the use of radio dawn broadcast to some extent achieved the objective of mass education and consciousness creation among Ghanaians on African need for continuous liberation from the West. The peculiarity of this initiative was its focus on African indigenous knowledge systems. Subsequent military and civilian governments adopted this African-centered verbal communication to disseminate essential information to the nation. ■

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Post-Independence Dynamics in Guinea-Conakry: Exploring the Impacts of Decolonization and the Complexities of Nation-building.

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In the aftermath of the Second World War, France initiated a number of reforms in her African colonies. Under the pressure of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Nations, African leaders in Francophone colonies, and the situation in Algeria, France was compelled to gradually grant its African colonies political freedom, paving the way to future self-determination. It is in that context that French President Charles De Gaulle in 1958 initiated a West African referendum aimed at choosing "either local autonomy within the newly created French Community or total immediate independence with all its consequences" (Kaba 1977: 25). Ahmed Sekou Toure's Guinea voted to reject of De Gaulle's self-affirmation scheme and became the first Francophone colony to achieve its independence in September 1958. This political move resulted in several outcomes propelled by the ideological war opposing socialism and capitalism and thrust Guinea's first republic into a difficult political crisis.

Sekou Toure is a central figure in any discussion about the post-independence dynamics in Guinea-Conakry due to his pivotal role in shaping the country's political, social, and economic landscape following decolonization. His leadership during decolonization and nation-building makes him an indispensable figure for understanding the post-independence dynamics in Guinea-Conakry. His policies, actions, and the resulting consequences provide a comprehensive lens through which to explore the impacts of decolonization and the complexities involved in building a new nation. Hence, this essay focuses on the Parti Démocratique de Guinée's (PDG) political power by reflecting on the following questions: (1) what were the sociopolitical consequences of Guinea-Conakry's independence from colonial rule, and how did they shape the nation-building process? (2) How did Guinea-Conakry navigate the process of decolonization following independence, and what were the key factors influencing its approach? (3) What role did France play in shaping Guinea-Conakry's post-independence trajectory, and how did their interactions impact the nation-building process?

The manner in which Guinea-Conakry gained independence from colonial rule has shaped its nation-building process, leading to particular challenges in consolidating a cohesive national identity and effective developmental trajectory. The country's break from France in 1958 was abrupt, leaving it without infrastructure or support, unlike Ghana and Nigeria, which had more gradual, negotiated transitions. Ghana, gaining independence in 1957, experienced fewer immediate hardships but faced neocolonialism and ethnic challenges. Nigeria, independent in 1960, soon faced instability due to ethnic divisions, including a civil war. Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire maintained ties with France post-independence, benefiting from economic stability but remaining susceptible to neocolonial influences. The broader lesson for decoloniality is that successful post-colonial nation-building requires not only a break from colonial powers but also the creation of inclusive national identities, economic self-sufficiency, and political stability. These factors are essential to overcoming the long-term consequences of colonialism and avoiding the pitfalls of neocolonialism. My argument rests on a theoretical framework composed of dependency theory and state-building theory. The methodological approach is based on historical analysis and causal inference, with more emphasis on causal analysis to highlight the link between independence politics and post-independence dynamics in Guinea-Conakry. The paper opens with a brief overview of dependency theory. The second section focuses on the ideological background which enabled the emergence of anticolonialism under PDG, the third section analyses the outcomes of independence and

the complexities of nation-building in the 1960s and the final section deals with the issues of nation-building and ethnicity.

Brief Contextual Overview of Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is an economic and sociopolitical approach that suggests that resources flow from a "periphery" of poor and underdeveloped states to a "core" of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. This theory, developed in the mid-20th century, primarily addresses the persistent economic disparities between developed and developing countries. It posits that the economic development of peripheral countries is constrained and shaped by their dependence on core countries, leading to a cycle of underdevelopment and exploitation.

The theory is appropriate for the analysis of post-independence dynamics in Guinea-Conakry since Sekou Toure's Marxist approach is grounded in historical materialism, which emphasizes that economic and material conditions shape societal structures and historical development. Dependency theorists collectively point to how historical exploitation and global capitalism shape unequal development and maintain systemic dependency between the Global North and the Global South. According to Samir Amin (1974), "Accumulation on a world scale depends on unequal exchange. The flow of surplus from the periphery to the center is the essential mechanism that makes possible the development of the world capitalist system." Immanuel Wallerstein's *World-Systems Theory* frames dependency as part of a broader global capitalist system that systematically disadvantages peripheral nations. He thinks that the modern world system, which has evolved over the past 500 years, is marked by an economic and political division of labor in which dominant core nations control and exploit the resources and labor of peripheral countries (1974). Theotonio Dos Santos (1970) focused on how developing countries are locked in dependent relationships, whereby their economic trajectories are shaped by the interests of dominant capitalist countries. These theorists argue that the historical exploitation and economic relationships established during colonialism continue to shape contemporary global inequalities, much like Marxists view class struggle and capitalist exploitation as central to historical development. Dependency theory mirrors Marxist concepts of exploitation, where the periphery (akin to the proletariat) is systematically exploited by the core (analogous to the bourgeoisie). The theory suggests that the wealth of core nations is built upon the exploitation and underdevelopment of peripheral nations, echoing Marxist views on the extraction of surplus value from the working class by capitalists. Dependency theory critiques the global capitalist system, and argues that global capitalism inherently produces inequality and underdevelopment in peripheral countries. Similarly, Marxism critiques capitalism for creating class divisions and perpetuating inequality through the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. Marxist theory, particularly Lenin's theory of imperialism, describes how capitalist countries extend their control over weaker nations to secure markets and resources. Dependency theory expands on this by detailing how economic and political dependencies are maintained in the post-colonial era, ensuring continued control and exploitation of peripheral nations by core nations. In short, dependency theory extends and applies Marxist concepts of exploitation, class struggle, and imperialism to the global stage, emphasizing the systemic inequalities and dependencies fostered by the global capitalist system. Therefore, this is closely linked to Sékou Toure's political rhetoric, particularly in its critique of the economic and political control exerted by former colonial powers over newly independent nations. His encounters with Marxists led him to discover that imperialism and neocolonialism share deep bonds, which dependency theory reveals as well. In fact, it argues that post-colonial nations remain economically dependent on industrialized countries, perpetuating a form of neocolonialism where the Global South continues to supply raw materials and labor to the benefit of the Global North. Sékou Toure's rejection of neocolonial ties, exemplified by his decision to break away from the French Community in 1958, reflected his belief that true independence required severing economic and political dependence on former colonizers. Toure's anti-imperialist stance aligned with the principles of dependency theory by emphasizing the need for economic autonomy, self-reliance, and the

rejection of exploitative international relationships that benefited imperial powers at the expense of African development. Dependency theory critiques the economic exploitation of peripheral nations by core countries, maintaining colonial-era inequalities. Decoloniality expands this critique to include cultural and epistemic domination, emphasizing the need to reclaim indigenous knowledge and sovereignty. Both frameworks highlight the lasting effects of colonialism and call for dismantling global structures that perpetuate subordination. Both frameworks seek to challenge and resist the lingering impacts of colonialism, advocating for greater autonomy, self-determination, and a rethinking of global power relations. Together, they advocate for self-determined development and intellectual autonomy in the Global South.

Toure's Political and Ideological Conception of Anticolonialism in Guinea-Conakry

After 1945, a new era in the relationship between colonizers and colonized began in West Africa. In Guinea, Toure organized trade union activity with the creation of the Post, telegraph and telephones workers' union on 18 March 1945. He was motivated in his initiative by the inequalities that existed between white workers and African workers and decided to fight to improve the working conditions of the Africans. During those years, he frequented communist circles through which he received an ideological formation that helped him understand the fundamental principles of communism and applied them to the analysis of the colonial situation in Guinea-Conakry, such as the defense of the interests and rights of workers and the oppressed. Thus, Toure became familiar with Marxism which proposes a framework for a critical analysis of economic exploitation under the capitalist mode of production. In the context of Guinea, recognizing the mode of production made it possible to point out the contradictions embedded with the colonial situation and, therefore, to derive from the analysis of political and social actions to improve living conditions. This led him to better conceptualize forms of collective organizations in order to coordinate the struggle against colonial exploitation in all its forms and manifestations. According to his ideological orientation, colonialism generated economic exploitation. France sought to exploit natural resources, cheap labor and Guinea as a market to enrich metropolitan capitalists. The Guinean leader realized that French domination was based on the exploitation of the people and the wealth of the colony, which transformed the people into a means of production (Toure 1967: 26). From this observation arose the need to resist to colonial exploitation and oppression by organizing the Guineans. Thus, his contact with communist circles led him to become aware of the alienation of his people through the practices of exploitation and oppression from a particularly crooked system supported by imperialism.

The creation of the pan-African African Democratic Rally (ADR) also known as RDA, in 1946 made it possible to design a framework for political action in Guinea-Conakry with the establishment of PDG, the Guinean section of the ADR known at that time as PDG-RDA. RDA was established with the purpose of fostering effective anti-colonialist efforts, supported by an efficient mass support. It emerged as a pivotal movement within African nationalism, its goals and organizational structure were set with a nationalist agenda. Framed as the leading inter-territorial movement, RDA played a central role in uniting Africans across different regions in their struggle against colonial oppression. This federal political party's endeavor in African nationalism was characterized as revolutionary since it reflected a significant departure from previous approaches to resistance and liberation. It brought a radical shift towards a more coordinated and inclusive movement that aimed to challenge colonial authority and advocated for African self-determination. Kaba (1977: 27) underscores its importance in advancing anti-colonial struggle in Africa and highlights its role as a key player in the broader movement for African nationalism. It was thence, established in French West Africa a progressive political organization among whose objectives was the independence of the French colonies in West Africa. Analyzing the progressive character of the RDA, Toure declares (1967 : 42): « R.D.A. thus created a new mentality based on the identity of the destiny of our peoples and on the desire to fight together to put an end to

exploitation and oppression. The awareness of this identity of destiny and the desire to fight together were the two progressive characteristics that the African Democratic Rally possessed, from its birth, [my translation]».[1] RDA's anti-colonial vision was similar to that of Ahmed Sekou Toure, who put the emphasis on the exploitation and oppression of the Guineans by imperialism in his study of French colonialism, as Marton, Cesaire, Rabemananjara, Price-Mars report:

> In the phase of the struggle for independence, SEKOU TOURE insists on the idea that the dominant fact is the colonial subjection. The principal contradiction is the one which opposes the whole of Guinean society to imperialism. Therefore, the principal form of class struggle is located on the international level and take concrete form in the antagonism , on one hand, the colonized and dependent Peoples, and, on the other hand, the world-wide system of imperialism which has engendered colonialism. (1978: 31)

The trade union struggle was further strengthened thanks to its junction with political action to raise Guinean's level of political consciousness, which led to an awareness of colonial alienation and made the nationalist claim more significant.

Guinean wage earners were not the only victims of colonial subjugation. The effects of colonialism were even more stifling in rural areas. Indeed, an essential aspect of the colonial system and its impact on rural populations was the extensive power held by the canton chiefs, who were essential in the colonial governance structure. Their role as collectors of taxes and transmitters of orders to the indigenous populations gave them almost absolute authority, reinforced by their possession of land. The French colonial administrators had set up an arbitrary colonial legal system, controlled by the canton chiefs. This served to perpetuate the despotic power of the chiefs, allowing the unfettered expression of their will on the indigenous populations. In his analysis of colonial oppression, Toure shed light on the oppressive and authoritarian nature of the colonial system, where these chiefs were key agents of colonial administration, exercising extensive and arbitrary power over local populations. Control of the land and manipulation of the legal system were essential tools for maintaining their authority and domination over indigenous peoples. As a consequence, Toure diagnosed how colonialism shaped power relations and social dynamics in colonized territories, highlighting the mechanisms of domination and exploitation established by the colonizers in rural areas and argued that their populations made up the vast majority of the people in their quest for freedom from colonial shackles. In this analysis, he discovered what follows:

> The second reality is foreign domination, based on the exploitation of our peoples and resources, and on oppression in all areas: political oppression, cultural oppression, administrative oppression, and more. This reality characterizes the practices of a domination that transforms our peoples into mere means of production, thereby condemning them to a generalized form of slavery, and totally alienates the existence of an entire continent for the selfish interests of a particularly odious political system [My translation].[2] (Toure, 1967: 26)

This pushed them to adhere en masse to the ideals of self-determination canvassed by PDG. In short, the colonial protest took shape through the trade union action put forth by the ideological formation received from communist circles and the creation of the PDG-RDA to expand the framework of nationalist action everywhere in Guinea-Conakry. Such an ideological stance facilitated mass mobilization which involved a combination of anti-colonial sentiment, economic exploitation, political organization, and influential leadership fueling a desire for sovereignty, economic control, and political freedom.

Implications of Independence and Nation-building in the Cold War Context

The 1958 referendum led not to true independence but rather to political interference by Paris in the internal affairs of Guinea, driven by geopolitical and ideological considerations in the context of the Cold War. The French government regarded Toure

as an obstacle to its own interests and to those of the French Community. He was perceived by France as being too independent and aligned with the Soviet Union. As a result, the French authorities thought to get rid of the Guinean regime through the FDCES (the Foreign Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service) branch of Africa, which was entrusted with the mission of monitoring the Soviet presence in Guinea and in particular the technical assistance provided by the Czechoslovakians. In 1959, Paris decided to isolate and destabilize Guinea through Maurice Robert (Turpin 2015: 204) and his men acting on behalf of the French government with the aim of setting up clandestine activities in order to create internal unrest to weaken Toure's government.

This effort at destabilization of Guinea by plots and manipulation of political opposition and certain ethnic groups was supported by some African political leaders, mainly in Senegal and Ivory Coast. Ivory Coast and France shared the same political and geostrategic interests: a post-independence ideology at the service of liberalism. This approach by France caused political turmoil often shaped by its plots to overthrow the PDG, supported to a large extent by Western secret services interested in the triumph of capitalist ideology and influence. Acknowledging the existence of genuine plots against Sekou Toure, Turtio (2023: 253) declares that not all of them were driven by the will of the people. Her analysis highlights the complexity of political dynamics and the presence of external influences in shaping opposition movements. It sheds light on the interrelation existing between these opposition movements and the broader context in which they occurred.

Still, the 1958 referendum had real consequences. The real struggle to effectively gain independence began after the overwhelming majority of Guinean rejected the French Community project. The meteoric rise of PDG and its support by the masses revealed the way in which Toure's political party spread everywhere in Guinea-Conakry. This led to the popular support enjoyed by PDG, illustrated in the electoral outcomes which *de facto* made Toure's political party the choice of Guineans seeking to get rid of colonialism perpetuating misery and dependence. In view of its pervasive features and popular support, Guinean nationalism was considered to be inclusive, that is to say it involved "heterogeneous populations that" were "ethnically and religiously diverse" (Schmidt 2005: 984). Guinea under the PDG regime, therefore, embodied the interests of the people.

With independence, the state of Guinea became internationally recognized despite France's reckless and aggressive maneuvers. This enabled the country to be legally endowed with a state apparatus as a mechanism through which the PDG exercised political authority over its territory and population (Turtio 2023: 111). Being internationally recognized endowed Guinea-Conakry with the full privileges of sovereign States in the international system. Sovereignty manifests in the state's power to freely determine its structure and functioning, particularly through its constituent power. This power cannot be granted to a fraction of the population or a simple majority, but rather resides within the organized entirety of the nation.
To function effectively, it was necessary for the sovereign State to get individuals to submit to the laws of the State, in other words, get them into conformity to the laws and decisions made by the government, even if it may sometimes entail sacrificing their own political interest (Bluntschli 1877: 432). As such, Guinea-Conakry was free under the leadership of Toure to choose without constraints and interference the political ideology with which to rule its population since it was a party chosen by the majority of the population. Hence, for the PDG, organizing and manipulating insignificant oppositions to the regime was to undermine the greatness and the dignity (Bluntschli 1877: 431) of Guinea-Conakry.

In the context of African decolonization, nation-building often came after state-building. The same was true in Guinea. The political struggle did not focus, before the attainment of independence, on building a nation out of a country composed of several ethnic groups each advocating for the sole interests of its members, which could endanger national cohesion and question the coherence of a homogenous territory made up of Guineans. The PDG's efforts attempting to ensure a sense of collective identity were seen as crafted by colonial domination and not widely accepted in Guinea,

especially among the Fulani. The latter considered itself to be fighting against traditional chieftaincy. This reaction coming from the logical conception of theoretical assumptions from in-groups and out-groups led this ethnic group to consider themselves as opposed to PDG. French neocolonialists supported them to overthrow Toure and put in place a regime amenable to Paris, in line with the neocolonial approach of the post-independent situation in Francophone Africa. That is the reason why Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p.189) is right when she opines: "Ethnic divisions and "tribalism" undermined nation building projects and rendered them vulnerable to neocolonial forces".

Majumdar (2007:192) states that decolonization was driven more by the needs of the international economy than by the essentially political struggles in the post-colonial states. Toure was one of those who understood very early that political independence was a decoy, unless it was accompanied by real economic independence which challenged the system of the world economy. Hence, the development of a nationalist rhetoric focused on the concept of revolution that ran into a counter-revolution harmful to the interests of the people. In his conception, these counter-revolutionary forces, with the major support of imperialism, must be annihilated (Toure 1969: 428) by all means in order to guarantee the mission that the people have assigned to the PDG. This constant struggle against imperialism and its followers, for the benefit of the interests of the people, enabled as well by the new State's legal character and its legal use of the means of coercion at its disposal, increased the powers of the Presidency and Toure, in order to manage national interests (Kaba 1977:177). It is in this sense that the President eventually became the supreme leader of the revolution (Camara 2007: 81).
This was a failure in the management of the post-independent situation which led to an authoritarian regime. From this stance, the chief's words were true and just as they were and no one dared to say the opposite, because criticizing the leader meant challenging "the superb idea". Therefore, fear forced citizens to consider as gospel truth all that the leader of the revolution (Camara 2007: 82). This situation of full power granted to one man led to harmful consequences in political management and led to disastrous economic choices that did not benefit the welfare of the people. Given Toure's Marxist approach to nationalism, this situation exacerbated his conception of the dialectic revolutionary forces and counter-revolutionary forces to the point of stamping his tenure with autocratic traits. Furthermore, the repressive policy undertaken by the regime in its bitter struggle against neocolonialism led the country to lose civil servants technically able to help post-independent Guinea-Conakry to overcome challenges posed by self-determination. These skilled individuals actually played a significant role in the functioning of the State. Losing such people had a detrimental impact on PDG's capacity to govern effectively, implement policies and maintain its infrastructures and the technical capabilities, in a context where bureaucracy was central to the work of the regime. This flaw reflects the interconnectedness of nations and the recognition of the importance of skilled personnel in sustaining a country's progress and stability.

Toure's Approach to National Consciousness and Ethnicity

In his conception of dialectics, Sekou Toure ended up analyzing the struggle between the revolutionary forces and counter-revolutionary forces in the self-determination process of the People of Guinea-Conakry. Much like in almost all the colonies that gained independence, ethnic exclusivism played a destabilizing role in the advent of national unity. The link between the Fulani chieftaincy and the colonizer resisted the assault of independence and was deemed to serve French neocolonialism by providing an element at their disposal to bring down Ahmed Sekou Toure's regime. In reality, he had defined the identity of the Guinean through a history of common exploitation suffered under the orders of the colonizer with the complicity of traditional chieftaincy. In his understanding of the relationship between customary chieftaincy and colonial power, Sekou Toure came to the following conclusion put forth by Imre Marton et al.:
More than 300 canton chiefs exercised omnipotent power over the country. Responsible for tax collection, they humiliated the population, overexploited their subjects, and engaged in malpractices. The struggle against the chieftaincy,

while allowing the creation of a common denominator founding the unity of action of the masses, even led to the very challenge of the colonial regime. (1978: 19)

In the context of nationalism in Guinea-Conakry, the actions of these chiefs were considered provocative and led to deep resentment among the masses, who saw them not only as local oppressors but also as representatives of the oppressive colonial regime. The struggle against this second-in-command of colonialism thus became a rallying point for various factions of society, unifying the oppressed population in rural Guinea in collective action against the injustices resulting from the colonial system they endured. Consequently, this local opposition was part of a broader framework of contesting colonialism. By targeting the canton chiefs, the resistance movements were indirectly attacking the colonial system that had established them. The struggle against the canton chiefs took on a larger political dimension, aimed at questioning and challenging the existing colonial power.

According to PDG leaders, these local abuses of power catalyzed a broader resistance against an oppressive regime, unifying different segments of the society around a common goal of justice and liberation. Sekou Toure sought to build the Guinean identity in a nationalist approach by emphasizing this history of exploitation and oppression suffered by the popular masses. However, the Fulani ethnic group did not share this vision of a common identity experienced by the entire Guinean people, and saw this nationalist drive towards the independence of Guinea-Conakry as a political movement opposed to any ideology except that of Toure's PDG. The clash between nationalism and tribalism that was to occur years later had already shown its beginnings in the September 1958 referendum when the population voted "No" while Fouta, the region of the Fulani ethnic group, voted to remain in the French Community project, contributing to maintaining French imperialism within the territorial fold. According to Toure, when France and Western imperialism sought an ally in Guinea-Conakry in their quest to destabilize the Guinean regime, they found supporters among the Fulani. Many of them were described as fifth columnists and considered agents of imperialism in Guinea Conakry, hence the unprecedented repression they faced.

This conception of the ethnic question in the nationalist approach inevitably created political-ethnic tensions in Guinea-Conakry. National consciousness was not and could not be a national reality to the point of allowing the emergence of an identification of the entire Guinean population to this colonial past. This means that reducing the gestation of a Guinean identity to colonial suffering and exploitation was rather superficial for the creation of a territorial identity reflecting the experience of the homo-guinéensis. Given the nationalist foundation of PDG, any political opposition was *de facto* considered antithetical to the vision of the People in the Guinean nationalist context. In this approach, placing the Guinean opposition within an ethnic group meant denigrating that very ethnic group as being opposed to the People, and thus conceiving them retrograde in the nationalist vision to be established. By adopting this approach, Sekou Toure lost sight of an important factor in creating national momentum: managing opposition purely on political and not on ethnic grounds. This failure in approach included an entire ethnic group in a political struggle that presented it as proxies of imperialism and consequently as figures to be eliminated. This stance exacerbated the autocratic tendencies of Toure's regime and undermined the national momentum needed to conceive inclusively the rise of the nation-state in Guinea-Conakry's struggle against imperialism.

Conclusion:

This research paper focusing on Guinea-Conakry's post-independent trajectory has ultimately revealed that the ruling regime implemented a repressive system which has resulted in the formation of an autocratic state detrimental to nation-building due to its inefficiency in governance. After independence, the country entered an era of a faltering political situation driven by a context of ideological opposition between two blocks. This antagonism brought in Guinea-Conakry the adoption of an approach led by the need to get rid of imperialism disguised in neocolonialism. This is a logical step since the negative impacts of

imperialism operate through the capitalist system in the neocolonial era, nurturing a conditioning of Guinea-Conakry's economy to the development and expansion of capitalists' economies, especially France. Therefore, Toure acted in this way to avoid placing his country's economy under the dependency of developed countries and the key factor was his ideological background which considers economic dependency "as a formal theory of underdevelopment" (Ghosh 2019: 2).

On a theoretical level, Sekou Toure was a political visionary. Before the 1960s, he sought to free himself from colonialism by developing an anti-imperialism sentiment aimed at ending any attempts to continue the colonial model. This struggle is still ongoing in some countries in West Africa (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal). However, his aggressive struggle against imperialism led him to failure in enhancing national consciousness that would put the *homo-guineensis* at the center of political endeavors whatever his ethnic affiliation. France played a pivotal role in tracing post-independence dynamics in Guinea-Conakry, her interference to overthrow Toure's regime for an amenable one led to the emergence of counter-revolutionary forces and to some extent to ethnic opposition to PDG, but also the development of political repression which impacted a lot the nation-building process and halted the provision of economic benefits of independence to Guineans. As a consequence, the conception of anticolonialism by PDG and the way they attained their independence has shaped the nation-building process in Guinea-Conakry fostering particular sociopolitical challenges among which the need to forge national consciousness. ■

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Endnotes

1 Original French: « Le R.D.A. créait ainsi une nouvelle mentalité fondée sur l'identité de destin de nos peuples et sur la volonté de lutter ensemble pour mettre fin à l'exploitation et à l'oppression. La conscience de cette identité de destin et la volonté de lutter en commun étaient les deux caractéristiques progressistes que posséda, dès sa naissance, le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, […] »

2 Original French: « La deuxième réalité, c'est la domination étrangère, fondée sur l'exploitation de nos peuples et de nos richesses, sur l'oppression exercée dans tous les domaines : oppression politique, oppression culturelle, oppression administrative et j'en passe. Cette réalité caractérise les pratiques d'une domination qui transforme nos peuples en moyens de production, les voue ainsi à une forme généralisée d'esclavage, et aliène totalement l'existence de tout un continent aux intérêts égoïstes d'un système politique particulièrement odieux. »

Reclaiming Customary Law in African Legal Systems: A Path to Decolonization

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The resurgence of discourse on decolonization within academic circles has ignited a critical reassessment of inherited colonial structures and their enduring impact on indigenous systems worldwide. This imperative is particularly poignant within African legal contexts, where nations continue to navigate the complexities of post-colonial governance and legal frameworks. Nigeria, like many of its African counterparts, grapples with a dual legal system that merges colonial legacies with traditional customary laws. This article aims to delve into the concept of decolonizing African legal systems, focusing specifically on Nigeria, with the goal of reclaiming and revitalizing customary law as a fundamental pillar of the country's legal landscape.

Customary law in Nigeria, rooted deeply in indigenous traditions and communal norms, predates the imposition of colonial rule but has frequently been marginalized or overshadowed by Western legal paradigms. The legacy of colonialism entrenched hierarchical systems, undermined local governance structures, and relegated customary practices to the periphery of the legal system. Decolonizing Nigeria's legal framework, therefore, necessitates the acknowledgment and integration of customary law principles and practices into the broader legal framework. This integration aims to ensure cultural relevance, promote community participation, and enhance access to justice for all citizens.

This study seeks to foster legal pluralism in Nigeria, thereby respecting and incorporating both indigenous knowledge systems and universal human rights principles. It addresses the enduring legacy of colonialism in Nigeria's legal framework, despite achieving political independence decades ago. The dichotomy between colonial-era laws and customary legal practices has marginalized indigenous systems, perpetuating inequalities and hindering justice for many Nigerians. By reclaiming customary law, Nigeria can move towards a more inclusive legal system that accommodates diverse cultural perspectives and enhances social cohesion. This paper argues that decolonization of African legal systems is not merely a theoretical endeavor but a practical imperative for advancing justice, equality, and societal harmony in a heterogeneous and rapidly evolving society.

In the broader global context, the resurgence of interest in decolonization underscores the necessity of reevaluating legal frameworks to better accommodate the diverse tapestry of customary laws that embody cultural heritage. This study aims to contribute by examining how Nigeria can strategically decolonize its legal framework, empowering customary law without compromising universal principles of justice and human rights. While existing scholarship provides generalized insights into African contexts, there remains a notable gap in studies specifically addressing the complexities of decolonizing legal systems within Nigeria. This study seeks to fill this gap by offering a nuanced examination of Nigerian law and governance, providing practical insights into navigating legal pluralism and integrating customary law into formal systems. While some studies acknowledge the marginalization of customary law in post-colonial African states, few offer actionable recommendations or case studies illustrating successful integration efforts. Drawing on empirical data and comparative analyses, this paper aims to provide practical insights for policymakers, legal scholars, and communities in Nigeria to navigate legal pluralism effectively and to inform policy and practice towards a more equitable and inclusive legal system in Nigeria. By advocating for the decolonization of legal frameworks, it aims to amplify the voices of

marginalized communities and underscore the value of customary law as a vital component of Nigeria's legal heritage.

Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to global debates on legal pluralism and indigenous rights by contextualizing Nigeria's experiences within the framework of post-colonial legal reforms. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, the study seeks to advance principles of justice, equality, and human rights not only in Africa but also in other regions grappling with similar challenges of cultural diversity and legal integration.

Background

Historically, Nigeria's legal system is a product of British colonial rule, which imposed Western legal norms and institutions while simultaneously marginalizing indigenous customary laws. The British administration introduced English common law and statutory regulations, often disregarding or relegating customary practices to the status of "customary law" that operated outside the formal legal system (Fagbohun, 2003). This colonial imposition disrupted traditional governance structures and legal pluralism that had long governed diverse ethnic communities in Nigeria.

The legacy of colonialism left lasting impacts on Nigeria's legal landscape, including a hierarchical system where Western legal principles took precedence over customary laws. This imposition undermined the authority and legitimacy of indigenous legal systems, perpetuating a divide between formal and customary law that persists to this day (Ogwu, 2012). In Nigeria, areas governed by customary law primarily include family law, marriage, inheritance, and land tenure. Customary law often plays a crucial role in matters such as marriage arrangements, divorce proceedings, and child custody. In addition, it influences religious practices and community disputes. However, the application of customary law can vary significantly among different ethnic groups, leading to a rich diversity within the legal framework. Critics argue that this division has contributed to legal uncertainty, cultural alienation, and systemic inequalities, particularly in rural and marginalized communities (Obilade, 2018).

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to decolonize African legal systems by reclaiming and revitalizing customary law. Customary law, rooted in communal traditions and practices, offers a framework that reflects Indigenous values, social norms, and cultural identities (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991). Scholars advocate for its integration into the formal legal system as a means to promote legal pluralism, enhance access to justice, and foster community cohesion (Ojo, 2016).

Despite the calls for integration, challenges remain in harmonizing customary law with statutory law and international human rights standards. Issues such as gender inequalities within customary practices, inconsistent application of customary law across regions, and the need for legal education and awareness persist as barriers to effective integration (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2013; Ibeanu, 2008)

Moving forward, efforts to decolonize Nigeria's legal system must prioritize inclusive legal reforms that respect cultural diversity, uphold human rights, and promote sustainable development. Policy recommendations include legislative reforms that recognize customary law as equal to statutory law in certain contexts, capacity-building initiatives for legal practitioners and traditional leaders, and community-driven approaches to legal reform (Banjoko, 2014). The decolonization of African legal systems, particularly in reclaiming customary law in Nigeria, represents a crucial step towards fostering legal pluralism, cultural integrity, and equitable access to justice. Addressing the inequalities inherent in customary law while respecting traditions requires a balanced approach. One potential solution is to promote dialogue between customary leaders and modern legal frameworks to create a more inclusive system. Education and awareness-raising can empower communities to recognize and address discriminatory practices within their customs. In cases where customary law clashes with modern norms—such as those regarding gender relations, marriage, or same-sex relations—it's essential to prioritize human rights principles as outlined in national and international law. This can involve creating legal provisions that uphold individual rights while allowing for cultural practices to be

respected, provided they do not infringe on these rights. Establishing a mechanism for mediation could help resolve conflicts between legal systems, ensuring that both perspectives are considered. Ultimately, the goal should be to foster a legal environment that upholds fundamental rights while honoring cultural identities, leading to a more equitable society.

Theoretical frameworks for decolonizing Nigerian legal systems and revitalizing customary law
Nigeria's contemporary legal system is fundamentally shaped by the legacy of British colonialism, which imposed English common law and statutory regulations upon the diverse and rich tapestry of Indigenous customary laws. During the colonial era, British authorities perceived customary law as antiquated and less sophisticated compared to English law, relegating it to a subordinate position within the hierarchical legal framework established by colonial administrators (Fagbohun, 2003). This imposition not only disrupted but systematically dismantled traditional governance structures that had thrived for centuries among Nigeria's diverse ethnic communities.

Before colonization, customary law served as the bedrock of governance, reflecting the socio-cultural norms, values, and practices of various ethnic groups across Nigeria. It provided a comprehensive system for resolving disputes, managing communal affairs, and preserving cultural heritage within each community. However, the imposition of English common law and statutory regulations disrupted this legal pluralism, creating a dichotomy between formal and customary legal systems that persists to this day.

The marginalization of customary law under colonial rule had profound implications for Nigeria's legal landscape and socio-political dynamics. It eroded the authority of traditional leaders and customary institutions, undermining their role as custodians of community governance and justice. This disruption not only alienated local populations but also contributed to social tensions and conflicts as communities grappled with the imposition of foreign legal norms that often disregarded their cultural realities.

Furthermore, the hierarchical division between English law and customary law continues to pose challenges in reconciling divergent legal principles and ensuring equitable access to justice across Nigeria's diverse regions and communities. This historical context underscores the enduring legacy of colonialism on Nigeria's legal and governance structures, highlighting the need for decolonization efforts that recognize and integrate customary law within the broader legal framework.

Theoretical Frameworks Advocating for Legal Pluralism

The theoretical frameworks advocating for legal pluralism in the decolonization of Nigerian legal systems provide a nuanced perspective on the integration of customary law alongside statutory law. Legal pluralism acknowledges and respects the coexistence of multiple legal systems within a state, recognizing the legitimacy and relevance of customary law rooted in cultural diversity and community norms (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991). This approach emphasizes that legal systems should not be uniform but should instead reflect the socio-cultural contexts of the populations they serve. By embracing legal pluralism, Nigeria can move towards a more inclusive legal framework that addresses the diverse needs of its population. Customary law, deeply embedded in local traditions and practices, offers mechanisms for resolving disputes and governing social relationships that are often more accessible and culturally relevant than formal legal processes. This recognition enhances access to justice for marginalized groups who may be alienated by statutory law systems that do not resonate with their cultural realities.

Moreover, legal pluralism promotes a participatory approach to justice, where communities are actively engaged in shaping and implementing legal norms that govern their lives. By empowering local communities and traditional leaders as custodians of customary law, Nigeria can enhance governance structures that are responsive to local needs and values. This participatory governance fosters trust in legal institutions and strengthens social cohesion by bridging the gap between formal legal systems and community-based justice mechanisms.

In conclusion, theoretical frameworks advocating for legal pluralism provide a foundation for decolonizing Nigerian legal systems by recognizing and integrating customary law alongside statutory law. This approach ensures that legal reforms are inclusive, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the diverse socio-cultural contexts of Nigerian communities. By embracing legal pluralism, Nigeria can forge a path towards a more equitable and resilient legal framework that upholds human rights, promotes community cohesion, and fosters sustainable development.

Challenges and Critiques of Colonial Legal Imposition

Critics argue that the imposition of colonial legal systems in Nigeria not only undermined but systematically dismantled indigenous governance structures that had long operated based on customary law. British colonial authorities imposed English common law and statutory regulations as the dominant legal framework, relegating customary law to a secondary status. This hierarchical division perpetuated legal uncertainty and cultural alienation among Nigerian communities, as it often failed to recognize or integrate the diverse legal traditions and practices that were deeply rooted in local cultures (Ogwu, 2012).

Moreover, the legacy of colonial legal imposition continues to pose significant challenges in contemporary Nigeria. The disparities between formal statutory law and customary law complicate legal pluralism and governance. The lack of harmonization between these systems hinders efforts to ensure equitable access to justice and consistent legal outcomes across different regions and communities. This inconsistency in legal application further exacerbates socio-cultural tensions and undermines trust in the legal system, particularly among marginalized groups who may rely more heavily on customary practices for dispute resolution and community governance. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to recognize the legitimacy of customary law within the broader legal framework. This involves not only legal reforms but also educational initiatives to promote understanding and respect for diverse legal traditions. By fostering a more inclusive approach to legal pluralism and governance, Nigeria can begin to reconcile the divergent legal principles and enhance the effectiveness of its legal system in addressing the complex socio-economic and cultural realities of its diverse population.

Benefits of Reclaiming Customary Law

Reclaiming customary law in Nigeria yields a multitude of advantages that extend beyond mere legal frameworks to encompass broader societal benefits. At its core, customary law serves as a custodian of cultural heritage, preserving indigenous traditions and values that are integral to the identity of diverse Nigerian communities. This preservation not only safeguards cultural integrity but also fosters a sense of pride and belonging among community members, reinforcing social cohesion and collective identity.
Moreover, customary law operates as a practical mechanism for resolving disputes and managing social relationships within communities. Its localized nature and familiarity to community members often make it more accessible and culturally resonant than formal legal processes governed by statutory law. By leveraging customary practices, communities can address conflicts swiftly and effectively, thereby reducing the strain on formal judicial systems and promoting grassroots empowerment and autonomy (Banjoko, 2014).
Integrating customary law into the broader legal framework enhances governance structures by incorporating community-specific norms and practices into decision-making processes. This inclusion fosters a more inclusive and participatory approach to governance, where local voices and perspectives shape policies and regulations that directly impact their lives. Such participatory governance not only strengthens democratic principles but also enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of legal institutions in serving the needs and aspirations of all segments of society.
Furthermore, the integration of customary law contributes to sustainable development by aligning legal practices with environmental and socio-economic realities unique to local contexts.

Customary practices often include mechanisms for natural resource management, land tenure systems, and environmental stewardship, promoting sustainable practices that are harmonious with local ecosystems and community livelihoods. This alignment not only supports environmental conservation efforts but also fosters economic resilience and social stability within communities.

Reclaiming customary law in Nigeria transcends legal considerations to encompass cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable development. By recognizing and integrating customary practices within the legal framework, Nigeria can harness the inherent strengths of its diverse cultural heritage to build more inclusive and resilient societies, where justice is accessible, governance is participatory, and development is sustainable.

Policy Implications and Legal Reforms

Efforts aimed at decolonizing Nigerian legal systems by revitalizing customary law necessitate a robust framework of legal reforms and policy initiatives tailored to address historical injustices and promote socio-cultural equity. Key among these initiatives are legislative reforms designed to accord customary law equal recognition to statutory law in specific contexts. This step is crucial in acknowledging the legitimacy and relevance of indigenous legal traditions, thereby fostering legal pluralism that respects Nigeria's diverse cultural tapestry (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2013).

Moreover, capacity-building programs targeted at legal practitioners and traditional leaders play a pivotal role in enhancing their understanding and application of customary law within the formal legal framework. By equipping these stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills, Nigeria can ensure more effective implementation of legal reforms that uphold human rights and promote community cohesion (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2013).

Additionally, embracing community-driven approaches to legal reform empowers local communities to actively participate in shaping legal processes that affect their lives. By soliciting input from grassroots levels, policymakers can better align legal reforms with the socio-economic realities and cultural values of diverse Nigerian communities. This participatory approach not only enhances the legitimacy of legal institutions but also strengthens governance structures by fostering inclusive decision-making processes (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2013).

Furthermore, these policy implications and legal reforms aim to cultivate an environment conducive to sustainable development and social justice. By integrating customary law into the legal system, Nigeria can harness the inherent strengths of its cultural heritage to address contemporary challenges such as environmental sustainability, resource management, and community resilience. This alignment ensures that legal frameworks are not only responsive to local needs but also contribute to broader national goals of inclusive governance and sustainable development (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2013).

Policy implications and legal reforms aimed at decolonizing Nigerian legal systems through the revitalization of customary law are essential for promoting legal pluralism, upholding human rights, and fostering inclusive governance. By implementing comprehensive reforms, Nigeria can reconcile historical injustices, empower marginalized communities, and build a more equitable and resilient legal framework aligned with its diverse cultural and legal traditions.

The theoretical underpinnings of decolonizing Nigerian legal systems through the reclamation of customary law emphasize the critical need to recognize historical injustices, celebrate cultural diversity, and improve access to justice. This essay has underscored the importance of theoretical frameworks advocating for legal pluralism, identified challenges stemming from colonial legacies, highlighted the benefits of reclaiming customary law, and explored practical policy implications for legal reform in Nigeria. By embracing indigenous legal traditions and integrating customary law into the formal legal system, Nigeria has the opportunity to chart a

course towards a more inclusive and equitable legal framework. Such a framework would not only honor the nation's diverse cultural heritage but also foster sustainable development by aligning legal norms with community values and realities. This integration can empower marginalized groups, strengthen governance structures, and enhance the effectiveness of legal institutions in addressing contemporary challenges. Ultimately, embracing customary law as a foundational component of Nigeria's legal landscape holds promise for advancing social cohesion, justice, and resilience in the face of evolving societal needs.

Reclaiming customary law in Nigeria

Reclaiming customary law in Nigeria represents a crucial step towards fostering cultural preservation, enhancing community cohesion, and ensuring equitable access to justice. Customary law, deeply rooted in indigenous traditions and practices, has historically governed social interactions, resolved disputes, and upheld communal norms across diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, with the advent of colonialism and the imposition of foreign legal systems, customary law was marginalized and relegated to a secondary status within the hierarchical legal framework.

To reclaim customary law in Nigeria today necessitates a multifaceted approach that encompasses legal reforms, community empowerment, and educational initiatives. First and foremost, legislative reforms are imperative to formally recognize and integrate customary law into the national legal system. These reforms should aim to codify customary practices, clarify their jurisdictional scope, and harmonize them with statutory law where applicable. By enacting laws that acknowledge customary law as a legitimate source of legal norms, Nigeria can restore its cultural heritage and empower local communities to govern their affairs according to their traditions.

Moreover, reclaiming customary law requires robust capacity-building programs for legal practitioners, traditional leaders, and community members. Training initiatives should focus on enhancing understanding of customary legal principles, procedural fairness, and conflict resolution mechanisms inherent in indigenous practices. This knowledge empowerment not only strengthens the effectiveness of customary law in addressing local disputes but also bolsters community trust in legal institutions.

Furthermore, educational campaigns are essential to raise awareness and promote respect for customary law among the broader population. By educating citizens about the significance of customary practices and their relevance in contemporary contexts, Nigeria can foster a societal appreciation for cultural diversity and legal pluralism. These efforts are crucial for overcoming biases and misconceptions that have historically marginalized customary law in favor of imported legal systems. In addition to legal reforms and education, community engagement plays a pivotal role in reclaiming customary law. Empowering local communities to actively participate in legal decision-making processes and governance structures strengthens their autonomy and self-determination. By involving traditional leaders and community representatives in policy discussions and lawmaking, Nigeria can ensure that legal reforms reflect the needs and aspirations of its diverse population.

Partnerships between governmental institutions, civil society organizations, and international stakeholders can facilitate the exchange of best practices and resources for advancing customary law reforms. Collaborative efforts can support research, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at promoting legal pluralism and cultural resilience.

Reclaiming customary law in Nigeria is not without its challenges. It requires navigating complex legal, socio-cultural, and political landscapes while addressing historical injustices and contemporary realities. However, the benefits are profound: a more inclusive legal system that respects cultural diversity, strengthens community bonds, and promotes sustainable development.
Reclaiming customary law in Nigeria is not just a legal or administrative task but a fundamental commitment to honoring indigenous traditions,

enhancing social cohesion, and advancing justice. Through legislative reforms, capacity-building initiatives, educational campaigns, and community engagement efforts, Nigeria can reclaim its rich cultural heritage and build a legal framework that truly reflects the aspirations and values of its diverse population. By embracing customary law, Nigeria can pave the way for a more equitable and resilient society where justice is accessible to all.

Conclusion

The decolonization of Nigeria's legal systems transcends theoretical discourse to become a pressing practical imperative essential for fostering justice, equality, and social cohesion in a dynamic and diverse society. By dismantling colonial legacies and embracing indigenous legal traditions such as customary law, Nigeria can address historical injustices and better reflect its cultural diversity within the legal framework. This transformative process is crucial for ensuring that legal institutions are responsive to the needs and values of all citizens, particularly marginalized communities whose voices and customary practices have often been marginalized or disregarded.

Moreover, decolonization promotes a more inclusive and equitable legal system that enhances access to justice for all Nigerians. By integrating customary law alongside statutory law, Nigeria can foster a legal environment that respects and incorporates community norms and values, thereby strengthening social cohesion and promoting a sense of belonging among its diverse population.

As Nigeria navigates the complexities of modern governance and development, decolonizing its legal systems represents a foundational step toward building a more just and harmonious society. This ongoing process requires sustained commitment to legislative reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and community engagement efforts aimed at recognizing and elevating Indigenous legal traditions. Ultimately, by embracing decolonization, Nigeria can lay the groundwork for a legal framework that upholds human rights, promotes cultural resilience, and supports sustainable development in the pursuit of a more equitable future for all its citizens. ■

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Decolonising Political Resistance: Theorising State Knowledge Systems as Key Triggers of Pro-Biafranism in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Introduction

In Nigeria, as in much of the formerly colonised world, political tussles be they violent or otherwise are most often characterised as ethnic identity-oriented struggles. The people of the formerly colonised world are not seen as persons or individuals, or even groups whose motivations are propelled by varied interests but as frozen ethnic subjects whose activities are underlined by ethnic needs. In many cases, ethnicity becomes a pretext for the pursuit and consolidation of political power. And this characterisation seems logical and practical, given that affiliations and rivalry in the broader national sense usually toe ethnic identity lines. What is however ignored is the knowledge-making which goes into consolidating difference among political communities as well as exaggerating those differences. For example, concrete identity-building in colonial Nigeria was preceded by theorisations around identity instituted by the structure of European occupation and colonialism.[1] Colonial rule then exacerbated these differences through its mode of governance. Pro-Biafranism is a struggle that germinated from the events of the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970 and continuing as long as the Fourth Republic has been in existence (1999 till date). This paper aims to locate pro-Biafranism in Nigeria within the epistemic discourse of the post-colonial Nigerian state, and specifically, the post-Biafran state. It attempts to decolonise discourse around pro-Biafran separatism by moving it from an automatic ethno-materialist lens to an epistemological one. It raises questions about state ideology through educational reforms from colonial times through independence, and about how a thirty-month war necessitated a policy emergency geared at orienting education in Nigeria towards national loyalty. Feminist historiography is invoked to further explore the limits of identities and characterisations created through knowledge-making and theorisation. Feminism is an ideology that sprung from the push-back of women against patriarchal societal norms which inhibit the best potentials of every member of society. Feminist historiography emerges as a critique of mainstream women's history, as it takes into consideration the structures and frameworks of historical communities which enabled them produce histories without women or with women at the margins. In the case of pro-Biafranism, what sort of knowledge systems have influenced the shape and form of resistance?

Background

The Nigeria-Biafra war[2] has been extensively written about over the years. It occurred as an offshoot of the political crisis that faced Nigeria within its first decade of independence, beginning from the marred census and elections of 1962 through 1964/5 and then the coup staged by junior military officers in January 1966 in an attempt to decapitate the corrupt political leadership and make possible the prospects of a new Nigeria.[3] After this coup failed, and the first military dictatorship established in Nigeria, a counter coup a few months later pitted the federal military government (run by a Northern cabal) against the Eastern Region government due to the massacre of Easterners in the North, as well as rank issues within the military.[4] From this prolonged, year-long confrontation came the declaration of the sovereign Republic of Biafra by the Eastern Regional Commander on May 30, 1967, following several failed attempts at a resolution and compromise.[5] On the 6th of July 1967, Nigeria fired the first shot into Biafran territory,6 marking the beginning of a thirty-month civil war which eventually ended with the defeat and surrender of Biafra on the 15th

of January 1970. Nigeria would remain a military dictatorship for most of the next thirty-two years. Knowledge Systems and the Framing of Political Identity in Colonial Nigeria

The framing of political identity in colonial Nigeria could broadly be summed to three: ethnicity,[7] class and gender. While ethnicity constituted the broader framework (divide and rule), class framed the nature of political engagement in regions. Embedded in them both was the gender dynamic that separated from and subordinated the women to the men in every social configuration. Ethnicity, class and gender were the primary factors considered in the establishment of schools and in the broader colonial administration.[8]

Anthony Kirk-Greene highlighted the caution with which colonial authorities maintained a policy of "separateness without separation"[9] in Nigeria, keeping the regions as one country but applying different laws to them. The focus of education was different in North and South, as the intent of the colonisers was not to make a nation but to maximise the productivity of each region.[10] Whereas people in the urban areas were trained to fill the urban workforce, rural dwellers were trained to farm and perform handiworks. And while men learned important theoretical subjects in preparation for the civil workforce, women learned domestic and home management techniques.[11] This need-based education system was preceded by surveys and investigations carried out by colonial officers, bringing their expertise to book in advising the colonial administration.[12] Thus, from theorisation to policy, the bifurcation of societies was concretised into rigid and indisputable realities.

Colonialism saw ethnicity as the principal underlining factor for political identity. Mahmood Mamdani[13] argued that in many places, these ethnicities were not only manufactured but also arbitrarily assigned. The Hamitic theory – which advanced the inferiority of the Black race to its white counterpart based on the Biblical curse of Ham by his father, Noah[14] – paved the way for the designation of superiority among these groups and for a hopeless subjugation in places where savagery was interpreted to be the only explanation.[15] Thus, policies were made from incorrect knowledge systems and in turn concretised into reality.

In the same vein, feminist historiographers have demonstrated that the consolidation of women's subjugation in Nigeria and the rest of the colonised world toed the same lines. First, the realities of women as political actors were ignored by Europeans, then it was denied in policies that excluded them from active participation in political and economic life, leaving them relevant only in domestic affairs. Subsequently, the histories of African societies began to be re-written and female characters given male attributes or left out of history. Oyeronke Oyewumi[16] decries that whenever women's presence is undeniably seen in political history, they became standardised as the exceptions. Ifi Amadiume[17] and Gloria Chuku[18] note of colonial Igbo societies, that interruptions instituted by colonialism enabled the loss of histories where women were active agents and that in everyday colonial policy favouring men, women had to live the reality of being passive political actors. Consequently, these forced experiences became the logical realities and stuff that history is made of. Thus, it appeared that there was never a time when women were active political subjects in African societies. This has shaped women's participation in politics as one of reclaiming and recognition rather its precolonial counterpart of active agents.

State Ideology and the Shaping of Political Identity in Post-Biafra Nigeria

Hegemonic power erases that which it does not understand. This was Trouillot's conviction in *Silencing the Past*,[19] when he examined the San Domingo slave revolution, as well as critiqued C.L.R. James' *Black Jacobins*[20] which sought to amplify that historical incident. For Trouillot, France failed to document its defeat by African slaves because it was a phenomenon which did not make sense at the time. There was thus no vocabulary to conceptualise it. And within San Domingo, prominent names associated with the slave resistance were omitted from the records, in a bid to deface that which dared to defy power. Hence, if it did not exist, it was never a threat to

power. Trouillot goes only as far as highlighting the omissive capabilities of power but not its (pro) active one. If power can silence or omit, it can also amplify and inculcate. The two go hand in hand to create a balance in achieving the ambitions of hegemonic power.

Louis Althusser in *Ideological State Apparatus* advances the Marxian argument that the state dominates its subjects ideologically. While Marx and Engels argued for the domination of economic ideology of the bourgeois through the state – "the committee for the affairs of the bourgeoisie"[21] – Althusser sees ideological subjectivity as located in the religious and the educational, but especially the educational. The goal of this educational ideological state apparatus is to incrementally inculcate state values in the subjects to the point that they do not question it and act without compulsion.[22] Althusser calls this the "always already subject." And for Foucault, this subjectivity does not only move from top to down but also horizontally, where different agents of the state have been commissioned to convey state hegemony knowingly or unknowingly.[23] Thus, in the place of what is not to be learned or imbibed, what is to be imbibed is provided by the state through specific as well as various means.

Post-Biafra Nigeria saw the implementation of policies initiated during the Nigeria-Biafra war. Like in the parent colonial structure, the state was once again plotting a remoulding of its subjects into the needs of the state. At one time it was a divide and rule and at another, it was to unify and rule. The Nigerian state adopted a positionality of silence towards the lingering war realities of its post-Biafran self. As Sam Daly aptly noted, state and war documents emanating from the defunct Biafran Republic which were submitted to the Nigerian government at the end of the war were publicly burnt.[24] Over the following months and years, slogans flattening the experiences of the war became the order of the day even as they ironically existed alongside policies termed to be aimed at reconstruction. On the one hand, the federal military government declared "no victor, no vanquished!" and "One Nigeria!" while on the other, it instituted the 3Rs (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) which were meant to address post-wartime realities. The emphasis lay more on the propaganda of oneness than on reconstruction.

Bray and Cooper[25] point out that the Nigerian state made a surprising move in the aftermath of the civil war: rather than focus on oil and material resources which caused the war, it instead turned its attention to education. Through education, it aimed to regain control of information production and dissemination, as well as effectively control citizens' opinion of the state in the former Biafran enclave. And though some scholars have argued for the timeliness of state actions with regards to education after the war,[26] it remains questionable why the former Biafran enclave constituted the major recipients of such educational reforms. These knowledge reforms made in the aftermath of the civil war have shaped not just pro-Biafran political resistance but also the identities of Nigerian citizens with regards to their sense of nationhood and belonging since the war. This has been as a result of the state indirectly outsourcing the responsibility of telling the war history to subjective groups in the country, based on how they participated in the war.

Post-Biafra Knowledge Reforms in Nigeria

The Nigerian state embarked on three key knowledge projects in the aftermath of the Nigeria-Biafra war. These projects were around educational structure and content,[27] geared at discouraging future secession and promoting national unity.[28] What they all had in common was the muting or relegation of the civil war history in school curriculum. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference, the Public Education Edict (PEE) of 1970, and the 1971 introduction of Social Studies as a compulsory subject in school curriculum all shared this same characteristic. Though not directly mentioned, their respective aims were to give the state more control and steer the narrative to non-divisive topics.

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference followed calls by some Nigerians between 1968 and 1969 advocating for an overhaul of the education system from a colonially-oriented one

to a focus on national loyalty. By September 1969, the conference was convened by the federal military government, through its education agencies and ministry, drawing experts in the field locally as well as observers from international bodies.[29] This conference deliberated on some key matters: moving away from colonial curriculum to a more indigenous one; gearing education towards responsible citizenship and away from an anticipated climax of white collar jobs; and entrusting all schools at the basic level to the state and out of the hands of non-state proprietors. Notably, the conference was taking place simultaneously with the Biafran war and can thus be understood as a pre-emptive move from the Nigerian state in anticipation of its victory in the war.[30] And even though a curriculum overhaul had been a pressing need in post-independence Nigeria, the war had put it into clearer perspective for state actors.

By 1970, as soon as the federal side received the unconditional surrender of Biafra and regained control of the East Central State,[31] the Public Education Edict of 1970 was immediately and totally enforced in the state.[32] The argument of the federal government-appointed state governor was in favour of harmonising teaching and learning experiences in a fragmented post-war community and also, that it presented the opportunity for the state to take on a parental role, making up for the differences in economic and financial capabilities of the members of the community.[33] Scholars highlighted that before the war, education in these areas was placed on both economic and religious premium, leaving out people who did not match both inclusionary/exclusionary parameters. While the missionaries attached to different denominations saw it as a battle for converts, private individuals embarked on proprietorship for its earning potential.[34] Both of these aims were hardly suited for the integration of a war-torn society and would make for more fragmentation. These scholars however expressed reservations on the terms of state take-over, with regards to trained man-power and compensation for losses for previous proprietors.[35] The PEE saw differential and gradual application in other states of the federation as against the total enforcement in the ECS.

If the 1969 conference was the blueprint and the PEE was its structural outlay; content wise, Social Studies was the integrative tool of the new Nigeria envisioned by the civil war entrepreneurs on the Nigerian side. Social Studies was to integrate civics, history and geography into a comprehensive syllabus and it was to be taught at the formative stages of education as a compulsory subject.[36] At a meeting in Mombasa in 1968, it was agreed that Nigeria, embroiled in a civil war, needed the entrenchment of the goals that social studies was created to provide, and thus, was to be followed up as a matter of urgency.[37] With funding from the Ford Foundation for the training of teachers and the production of teaching and learning materials, the subject began to hold sway in school curriculum, causing the diminution of History, a bulkier and more problematic subject. Globally, Social Studies traces a deeper history to the United States, where it was introduced after WW2 in 1945.[38] Ostensibly, it was intended for nation-building and integration: a subject of the future. In Nigeria, it taught cultural history, national values and responsible citizenship. It also taught the territory of the Nigerian state as given since it was colonially created. As Daly argued, African states hardly ever looked to the past unless it would suit their future aspirations – what he called “usable pasts.”[39]

Influence of State Knowledge Systems on Pro-Biafran Agitations in Nigeria

As soon as Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, ushering in what is now known as the Fourth Republic, agitations from a section of the old Eastern Region, now known as the South-Eastern region, arose to contest the continued stay of the Biafran people in Nigeria. The pioneer organisation was MASSOB (Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra) in 1999, followed by BZN (Biafra Zionist Movement) in 2010 and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement in 2011/12 with its media arm – Radio Biafra – based in London and the Eastern Security Network (ESN) as its military arm. These groups are traditional in the sense that they found prominence in mainstream and social media, and have also been subjects of academic research.

There have been other groups which have sprung up yet advocating for a separate state called Biafra, though they are not as widespread as the first three. Chief among these is the Biafran Republic Government in Exile (BRGIE) which came to public notice late 2022 ahead of the general elections in 2023. The group is headed by Simon Ekpa (based in Finland), its self-appointed Prime Minister, with his twitter (X) handle and the BRGIE website as his spheres of influence. Ekpa began a project drawing the map of the Biafran state which included renaming the various communities according what he perceived as their traditionally rightful nomenclature. Another group called the Igbo-Biafra Nationalists (IBN) has equally emerged without a clear history or origin. Its main subject of engagement as reported in the news is a call for a monolinguistic Biafran struggle, where the region designated as Biafra adopts the Igbo language completely in order to have one voice and a more successful struggle.[40]

For the three main groups mentioned above, as well as the newly emerging ones, the central logic is a revival of the community spirit which gave birth to the Republic of Biafra and the restoration of the country itself through engagement with the Nigerian state and re-telling of the Biafran history. While MASSOB and BZN focused more on an engagement with the Nigerian state and protests which brought them in direct contention with the police and military,[41] IPOB consolidated its reach through its radio and website. Radio Biafra became a medium for disseminating what its now arraigned leader (since June 2021) Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, calls the true history of Nigeria and Biafra. IPOB featured prominently so long in the political scene because it engaged the youths with narratives, subsequently raising them as instruments with which to combat the state.[42] BRGIE has continued with this mode of mobilisation through social media engagement, and with the continued imprisonment of Nnamdi Kanu, Ekpa and his BRGIE have dominated the political space in pro-Biafran discourse. It should be noted that some times, these various groups share membership of individuals who keep moving due to grievances and other reasons in the previous groups.[43]

While the efforts to recover Biafran narratives and history (in and of themselves) have a positive focus, there are also hate narratives against the Igbo in different quarters of the federation during every election season. These narratives are derived from the civil war events and used to foment violence targeted at individuals and communities tagged as Igbo. The narratives draw on incoherent fragments of the civil war history to portray the Igbo as greedy, untrustworthy and sabotagers of the nation. Based on this logic, they are not to be trusted with power, especially the Presidency. These two narratives – one about Igbo victimhood and another about its villainism – exist side by side in the Nigerian federation.[44]

Conclusion

Pro-Biafran political resistance has been shaped by state knowledge systems in Nigeria since after the civil war. This has greatly impacted the nature and composition of the groups as well as their modes of mobilisation. While ethnic characterisations can serve as plausible explanations for their activities, they really serve no productive end as objective blame game practised by scholars hardly solves the problem.[45] However, by seeing the vacuum which they fill in the production of Nigeria's political history, along with their counterparts who equally weaponize fragments of these histories to meet specific political agenda; understanding them as more than an ethnic faction but ideological groups in combat with the Nigerian state ideology, will assist in addressing the knowledge systems which have denied the existence of these histories for so long. If feminism can be understood as an ideology and not merely a movement intended to grant women a superior place in society; if it could be conceptualised theoretically as a critical approach to binary socio-political engagement;[46] then pro-Biafranism can be understood as an ideology critical of statist knowledge structures in Nigeria and form a basis for tackling its challenges. Consequently, we can experience a shift from narrow colonial lenses which entrench ethnicity as the one-size-fits-all approach to understanding political problems in Nigeria, and transition into decolonial ones that address the place of knowledge-making in Nigeria's complex political landscape. ■

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7 Due to the division of the two regions on religious lines, religion was a framework within which colonial administrators thought about ethnicity (religion equalled ethnic culture). For example, the North was predominantly Muslim and this was seen and understood to be part and parcel of its culture, and thus, influenced policies. As such, northern was synonymous with Muslim and vice versa.

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A Black African Francophone's Reflections on the Coloniality of Knowledge Production in an Anglo-American Academic World

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Introduction

Global higher education is currently dominated by elite Anglo-American institutions whose influence rides largely on the expansiveness and legacies of British colonialism and the marketisation of universities. Anglo-American domination has shaped what it means to be globally relevant in the academe. Moreover, academics in the so-called Global South and Global North increasingly need to reckon with neoliberal market forces commodifying knowledge production and universities. The pressures that academics increasingly face are widespread, albeit experienced differently and with varied material implications. These pressures are experienced not least, and perhaps most notably, in the context of academic publishing, where leading academic journals and publishers, more generally, are English-language outlets based at well-endowed Anglo-American institutions. Academics are all too familiar with the imperative to publish to avoid perishing. But around the world, as Sari Hanafi (2011) discusses in the context of Lebanese higher education and the wider Middle Eastern regions, the modalities of publishing or perishing vary.

More recently, the #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town (re)kindled long-standing debates about the need for and meanings of decolonising universities and knowledge production in Africa (e.g. Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Those protests spread beyond the South African borders through echoed calls to decolonise universities, curricula, academic knowledge production, publishing, and hiring practices. These largely student-led protests have helped fuel a re-engagement with the intellectual work of South American theorists of coloniality and the rise of (South) African scholarship on epistemic (in)justice and decoloniality (e.g. Grosfoguel, 2002; Mama, 2007; Mignolo, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Nyamnjoh, 2024; Quijano, 2007)\" or, as Walter Mignolo has recently proposed, the \"modern/ colonial world-system.\" It uses the world-systems approach as a point of departure. Yet, by situating or geopolitically locating knowledge production from the colonial difference of the North-South divide, I attempt to reinterpret important aspects of the capitalist world-system. I am situating my knowledge production not in representation of, but from the subaltern experiences of people in the South. Thus, a world-systems approach provides an important conceptual framework to rethink the modern/ colonial world while an epistemic perspective from the subaltern side of the colonial difference contributes to counter certain limitations of the world-systems approach. The first part is about \"coloniality of power\" and \"symbolic capital\" as two crucial concepts that force us to rethink global capitalism. The second part discusses the geopolitics of knowledge and the imaginary of the modern/colonial world-system. The third part is a call for a critical dialogue between two literatures: postcolonial critique and the world-systems approach. Finally, the last section is a brief discussion on the implications of these debates for Utopian thinking.","container-title":"Review (Fernand Braudel Center. These interventions are crucial, among other things, for a richer understanding of how academics and their scholarship are variously positioned within global higher education and vis-à-vis its structuring inequalities, power asymmetries and the dire employment conditions in academe.

Less widely recognised is that the decoloniality debate opens space for discussion about the multiplicity of European colonialisms that inform the workings of coloniality in global higher education. While Britain had the vastest empire among European powers and contemporary Anglo-

American domination rides very much on British colonial legacies, the colonial projects of other European powers have had lasting implications for knowledge production and higher education in various parts of the world. In the African region, these enduring legacies are especially palpable yet under-examined and under-discussed in critical scholarship on decolonising knowledge production, higher education and universities in the region. Under prevailing Anglo-American domination, discussions about decolonising higher education and knowledge production easily remain at the level of a focused discussion of British colonialism and colonial legacies. Focusing on colonialism and imperialism in the academe construed primarily as British and American fails to adequately appreciate the ways that while the British empire was the most expansive and while English has become the globally dominant language, other European imperialisms produced their own idiosyncratic, albeit comparable, colonial legacies. It is imperative to account for the implications of other European colonialisms and how these shape the contemporary world particularly in the African region. Furthermore, focusing on British colonialism as a proxy for all European imperialism makes it difficult to appreciate the interactions between non-British-European imperial and colonial histories and legacies in (higher education) in the African region and within the broader context of an Anglo-American-dominated world.

Failing to appreciate the unique challenges faced by scholars operating in higher education systems in parts of the world colonised by European powers other than Britain – especially France – obscures the challenges which have their roots in their countries' particular colonial histories. Examining these varied colonial legacies in a contemporary academic world under Anglo-American domination is crucial to nuance the multiple layers of inequalities faced by scholars outside of Anglo-American-dominated global higher education. Furthermore, there is a lack of engagement with the ways that Anglo-American domination in global higher education can overshadow underlying colonial higher education structures and practices and hide and buttress them. Black Francophone African scholars face a double challenge – they need to negotiate the neocolonial realities of Francophone higher education and those of an Anglo-American-dominated global higher education.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, there is also limited engagement with the ways that Anglo-American dominance can, at times, and within measure, open possibilities for resistance by some scholars operating under duress in oppressive national or regional higher education structures facing the legacies of other European non-British colonialism. This is something that French-Ivorian scholar Maboula Soumahoro, for instance, discusses through her ambivalence towards France, on the one hand, and, on the other, the tensions and contradictions through which she found an intellectual home with, and through the scholarly reckonings of Black intellectuals with the violent histories of slavery, genocidal dispossession, and imperialism in New York, the Americas, and the Black Atlantic (Soumahoro, 2020, 2022).

In the African region, the politics of these other European colonial legacies have a bearing on the rise and trajectories of universities. Examining them can help make sense of the rise of other intellectual spaces known for (often far more) radical politics. Paying attention to these other experiences of colonialism nuances what it means to reckon with colonialism(s) under Anglo-American domination in global politics and global higher education. My paper addresses this challenge through a discussion of higher education in Black African Francophone Africa and its structures, which remain largely under-discussed in critical reflections on colonialism, decolonisation, and universities in Africa. I am especially interested in shedding light on what these structures reveal about the enduring legacies of French colonialism in the region under contemporary Anglo-American domination.

Layered and Intersecting Challenges: Anglo-American Domination and European Colonialism in Global Higher Education

It is important that these varied European colonialisms and the implications of their legacies be examined closely in critical work concerned with decolonising higher education and universities in

Africa. At present, in what might be termed the post-#RhodesMustFall decolonial turn, much of the academic work that reckons with the coloniality of knowledge production in and about Africa tends to operate primarily in English and tends to focus primarily on the epistemic violence of British colonialism (in former British colonies). Even where other countries are mentioned or included, the overarching frame remains informed primarily and almost exclusively by British colonialism. Reckonings with other European colonialisms seldom go beyond acknowledging that other colonialisms had implications for higher education and what it means to deal with the (non-British European) coloniality of higher education in a contemporary world under Anglo-American domination.

Examining these is as important as paying attention to the ways that epistemicide and linguicide undermined non-Europhone intellectual traditions and non-European African languages (Kane, 2012). This is at the very least because often, the language in, and academic venues through which academics working on these colonial challenges call attention to epistemicide and linguicide of non-Europhone epistemologies often are English-language and Anglo-American academic outlets. Furthermore, paying attention to the ways that non-British other European colonialisms have shaped higher education systems on the continent is crucial to engaging with the particular colonialities undergirding knowledge production and driving epistemicides, linguicides and genocidal responsibility denied, variously experienced across the African region (e.g. Depelchin, 2005; B. B. Diop & Traoré, 2014; C. A. Diop, 1989; Mudimbe, 1989; Odile, 2007; Verschave, 2000; Verschave, 1998; Wai, 2012). To better understand the challenges that arise with an Anglo-American-dominated world of higher education, the experiences of academics navigating just that world, as well as academics navigating this and other worlds of higher education, are needed. In particular, the experience of academics working through the coloniality of other worlds of higher education, together with that of the Anglo-American hegemonic world, deserves greater attention. In terms of global higher education and the African region, the experience of Black Francophone Africans needs to be taken more seriously (see the works of Syliane Larcher, 2023 and Lionel Zevounou, 2020).

From French Coloniality in Black Francophone African Higher Education to Anglo-American Domination

Meaningful critical decolonial reckonings on the continent require a serious engagement with higher education in countries which are a part of the *Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur*[1] (CAMES). This is needed not least because the Council includes a wide array of public institutions of higher education in former French, Belgian, Portuguese, and Spanish African colonies. The CAMES is a regulatory body founded in 1968 and is headquartered in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It regulates higher education, standardises degrees and governs professional academic progress across member institutions in member states. The organisation oversees academic progression from *l'agrégation* (the equivalent of tenure) to becoming *maître de conference* (equivalent of associate professor) and then *professeur titulaire de chaire* (full professor). It infuses higher education with the very close presence of states, and it ties national universities to a francophone political and cultural world tied to the Organisation de la Francophonie and a francophone world of higher education through a network of Francophone universities globally. From the outset, CAMES' first secretary general Ki-Zerbo expressed concerns about universities in Madagascar and Black Francophone Africa crafting their own agenda and not just engaging in mere mimicry of French Higher Education (Cissé, 2018).[2]

There is surprisingly little published work on CAMES despite its significance in higher education in Francophone West and Central Africa. While the Council would be known and understood in the wider African Francophone world, CAMES does not seem to be particularly legible to academics working primarily in English and from African countries formerly colonised by Britain. Furthermore, most universities in CAMES member states are not quite legible in global university

rankings which have arisen and gained traction in the context of an Anglo-American-dominated global higher education. While the CAMES might create a regional academic context within which the prevailing academic rules might somewhat shield academics from the dire situation in global higher education resulting from the imperative to publish or perish, the organisation is marked by internal political asymmetries. Furthermore, it is under pressure to conform to the academic publishing and professional advancement standards in an Anglo-American-dominated global higher education. This pressure to conform has historically been vis-à-vis French higher education. Increasingly, academic promotion in CAMES institutions is no longer just tethered to standards in French higher education but also to an Anglo-American-dominated global higher education. The way higher education is organised and governed in African states formerly colonised by France in the regions formerly designated as Afrique Occidentale Française and Afrique Equatoriale Française (which comprise those countries that I refer to as Black Francophone African states) seems to be seldom examined closely or even legible to academics based in other (sub) regions even in Africa.

In colonial Black French Africa, the University of Dakar was the only university founded colonially. In Black Belgian African colonies, two universities were established before independence, namely the University of Kinshasa founded in 1954 and Lubumbashi established in 1955 (Nyamba, 2007). Besides these, it was after independence that the other former Black French-speaking colonies founded their first (Europhone[3]) national universities in their political or economic capitals, modelled after higher education in France and Belgium. The budding systems of higher education in these newly independent, but also very much neocolonial, countries were structurally similar to the former metropole in terms of the types of degrees awarded, curricular design and what it meant to progress through and build an academic career. In many instances across former French colonies in Africa, French academics staffed these universities for over a decade after independence.

These enduring colonial links continued to be maintained such that when higher education in France underwent reforms to be on par with the increasingly dominant Anglo-American degree system (of Bachelor's Masters' and PhDs), universities in its former colonies and part of CAMES underwent similar reforms. It was following these reforms that the LMD system was deployed across CAMES institutions (Goudiaby, 2009). The LMD system retains elements of the older French higher education pathway and hybridises it with elements from what is more common in universities operating broadly with structures more common in Anglo-American universities. In this way, the LMD system shortened what used to be a long-winded academic journey to a pathway that resembles what happens in Anglo-American universities. Thus now, in French and Black African Francophone states, the degrees awarded range from the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, *la Licence*, all the way to the PhD, *le Doctorat*[4].

The very establishment of CAMES was a significant intervention that shaped higher education in Black Francophone Africa. Significantly, its first general secretary was Burkinabé scholar Joseph Ki-Zerbo, chosen because the Ivorian president refused to appoint an Ivorian academic as general secretary for concerns about his communist leanings (Cissé, 2018). This state of affairs from the outset reveals the ways that the organisation gives governments, in particular the presidents of member states and national ministries of higher education and research, levels of power and oversight that makes it difficult for the organisation to operate as an independent academic entity. Furthermore, the context that CAMES creates in and across its member states causes significant challenges in the form of states that can interfere with its running and in the face of gerontocratic and gendered politics. These pressures are well-known among Francophone scholars, especially junior academics, who often must negotiate these politics by pacifying more established scholars to build their academic careers.

To be legible beyond these CAMES academic worlds usually means being sufficiently fluent in English and familiar enough with Anglo-American

academic institutions and practices or having globally legible academic partners in Anglo-American academic spaces. In this way then, and more so now, to have a meaningful academic career beyond Black Francophone Africa requires, in addition to French and having successfully navigated the CAMES system to a meaningful extent, English language skills and some form of legibility in well-endowed Anglo-American academic institutions. By such means, becoming globally legible in global higher education also tells of the production of social classes within (sub) regional and national academic spaces and social mobilities across these classes. Breaking into the Anglo-American academic sphere, especially into elite, well-endowed academic spheres, can enable one's relatively increased proximity to power, making it possible to be taken seriously in ways that might not be possible within Francophone circles.

To exist within an Anglo-American-dominated world as scholars hailing from African states formerly colonised by France and more broadly CAMES countries entails navigating at least two colonial layers. Some of the material implications of this include working across various systems of legibility in two different languages, with different publishing practices, standards and different experiences of gatekeeping access to published material, conceptualisations of funding in higher education (including how under-represented Black Francophone African students are represented at the level of scholarship awards[5]) and pathways for career progression. This also means different forms of academic prestige, social mobility and class production mediated by access to elite French and Francophone institutions of higher learning and elite Anglo-American ones. Access to Anglo-American elite universities can translate into social capital and significantly fast-track academic social mobility for Black Francophone scholars in Francophone academic spaces. In these ways, access to elite Anglo-American spaces can represent a classist shift.

Conclusion

The need to decolonise universities and higher education in Francophone Africa proceeds from similar challenges faced by universities in African countries colonised by Britain, and by universities based elsewhere in the world. However, higher education in Black Francophone Africa has a different history, is organised and governed differently, and has need, therefore, of a discourse around decolonisation that takes these histories and particularities into account. Furthermore, the discourse around decolonising universities in the African region, for instance, needs to be more cognisant of these particular histories for more productive and meaningful regional engagement. These things point to the importance of further study of these patterns and histories. We need to continually excavate them to continue to better understand how colonialism operated and what their legacies are, reckon with the challenging legacies that can be setbacks for various people, and let this inform what funding is deployed, where, and how.

The limited engagement with higher education in African states colonised by European states other than Britian runs the risk of a myopic view of higher education on the continent and a limited understanding of the specific ways that universities, students and academics navigate knowledge production and exist as academics under Anglo-American global domination. Indeed, paying due attention to these very different histories is critical to understanding how it is, for instance, that renewed calls to decolonise the university reverberate down the halls of primarily English-language institutions on the African continent and beyond. Further still, this engagement is critical to appreciate how it is that calls for #RhodesMustFall reverberated strongest in the streets and hallways of elite Anglo-American institutions and not as strongly in Black Francophone Africa. But in like manner, calls to decolonise in Black Francophone intellectual spaces are seldom echoed in English-language institutions. The language question is key, of course, and continues to be hotly debated, as should be the case. However, I suggest that a wider engagement with these broader structures is needed for a better grasp of higher education on the continent and what this means for decolonial work in its various academic contexts. ■

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Knowledge Production as Discourses of Power: A Critique of the Use of Archive

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Knowledge production in the Global South, and Africa in particular, constitutes an area of heated debates and contestation. The call to decolonize academia challenges existing parameters to gauge authenticity of knowledge, its producers and sources used in production which to a larger extent have pushed the Global South and Africa to the margins of knowledge production in the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Thondhlana and Garwe, 2021). This essay contributes to this unfolding debate by revisiting the knowledge-power debate (Foucault, 2000; 1980). In this it examines one source of knowledge production – the archive – by elucidating how archives acquire power and the politics that are involved in knowledge production using the archive (Derrida, 1998; Pell, 2015). The goal is to tease out the power and politics of the archive in the context of the quest for decolonisation of knowledge production and to ask whether it is possible to decolonise the archive. This is imperative since "critical work emerging from archival and cultural studies has emphasized the archive's social and political role in ordering knowledge, establishing criteria for credibility, and anchoring claims to authority and truth" (Pell 2015: 35).

That said, then the paper unfolds through four sections. The introduction provides a snapshot on the matters on the ground particularly the imperative of decolonisation of knowledge production. The second section provides a critique of the archive not only as a site of production of history but as a site of the production of power or what is frequently termed as the 'discourse of power', calling for not taking archive for granted. The third section questions whether decolonization is possible in knowledge production where use of archive is central and revisits two techniques of reading the archive: 'reading against the grain' and 'reading along the grain'; a postmodernist kind of reading archival sources which is necessary and useful in the production of knowledge. The fourth which is a conclusion, explores the implications of argument advanced.

Archive and the Discourse of Power in Knowledge Production

Archive is a laden and hard to tame concept as it connotes a number of things. Nonetheless, the definition and conceptualisation of archive as presented in Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever: Freudian Impression* is probably the most comprehensive one, which sets the discussion rolling on the power and politics entailed within archives and achieving process. He conceptualises archive as a place of "'commencement' and 'commandment'" where we keep returning to in search of origin of things (Derrida 1998: 1). From Derrida's point of view, the quest is unfulfillable, because events themselves are not in the archive, but only the inscribed traces of them, which have been fixed by writing. In a way it cements the view of the archive as "the repository of memories: individual and collective, official and unofficial, licit and illicit, legitimating and subversive" (Bradley 1999: 108). In this regard, "the archive is therefore not a piece of data, but a status… the product of a process which converts a certain number of documents into items judged to be worthy of preserving and keeping in a public place, where they can be consulted according to well-established procedures and regulations" (Mbembe 2002: 20). As such, the archive should not be taken for granted because in archives we have not only memories of what only ought to be retrieved, but also the processes and meanings codified, and the inscription of power dynamics involved in the processes. Thus, "using the archive helps us to understand the dialectical nature of the relationship between past and present and our own positing within" (Bradley 1999: 107) in an attempt to configure future prospects informed by our past. In

that regard, the nature of archive as "something that does away with doubt [in a long run it becomes the authority] exerting a debilitating power over such doubt" (Mbembe 2002: 21). But how does the archive acquire such power and under what political dispensation?

Archives as sites of knowledge production represent an element of power dominance, especially for those in charge of creating archives. In short, "archives have always been about power, whether it is the power of the state, the church, the corporation, the family, the public, or the individual" (Schwartz & Cook, 2002, p. 13). Thus, archives are not neutral sites nor represent neutral information that can aid the production of objective narratives for knowledge production. Archives are neither buildings alone, documents alone, nor only the two combined but much more than that, particularly the process involved "which culminates in a 'secular' text, with a previously different function, ending its career in the achieves-or rather becoming an archive" (Mbembe 2002: 19). In this regard, as Gilliland (2011) has observed, archives are not neutral, but rather carry within them the power ideology of the dominant class, social or community as well as the state that create the archives. Thus, "archives emerge not simply as a source, but also as sites of contested knowledge" (Hamilton et al. 2002: 15). Equally as Derrida (1998: 4) once contended, "there is no political power without control of archives", and thus archives cannot stand as apolitical since politics are inherent in knowledge production. So, there is a need to decode power discourse inherent in archives if knowledge to be produced out of it is to be of relevance since "power recognised becomes power that can be questioned, made accountable, and open to transparent dialogue and enriched understanding" (Schwartz and Cook 2002: 2).

Archive and the Discourse of Power

In the previous paragraphs, it has been argued that the archive is the central source about the past. Although it is true that the archive cannot represent all past events, still it commands power and authority as an authentic source of past memory, despite the critique of its limitations (Bhatia 2020; Daly 2017; Gutsche-Miller 2020; Mbembe 2002). An often-recurring question then is about the origin of archive power, which requires an examination of the kind of politics that play out in the process of archiving. One way to make sense of the complexity of the processes involved, probably can be best approached by revisiting and engaging with Foucault's 1976 theorization or concept of "regime of truth" (Foucault 2000: 111-133) and the related concept of "governmentality" (Foucault 2000: 201-222; 1991: 87-104). These two concepts can shed light on how archives acquire power.

The first concept, 'regime of truth', entails particular ways of thinking about the world which privilege some kind of knowledge as facts while ignoring or suppressing others, a process which is comparable to that of archiving. In this regard, it can be argued that "every archive is a product of exclusion…only particular histories are deemed to be valuable and thereby only certain vantage points are represented and preserved" (Bhatia 2020: 117). That is to say, in archiving the archive acquires the power of knowledge creation by distinguishing between facts and fiction, true and false. In this way at the core of archiving is the process of determining "what is and what is not collected, what is merely stored but not catalogued and hence made intellectually accessible), and what is thrown away" (Brown & Davis-Brown 1998: 23). Mbembe's (2002) argument on how archives acquire power can be grasped by considering what he calls "the trade with death" (Mbembe 2002: 21), which manifests or unfolds into three dimensions. These are "the struggle against the fragment of life being dispersed … a kind of interment, laying something in a coffin, if not to rest; and] then these elements removed from time and from life are [thus] assigned to be a place and a sepulchre that is perfectly recognisable because it is consecrated: the archives" (Mbembe 2002: 22). Through such processes, the archive then acquires a new status of power and thus in any case "from then on it is consulted. [And in this regard] we are no longer talking about just any document, but a particular document, which has the power, because of a legal designation, to enlighten those who engage in an 'inquiry' into time inherent in co-ownership" (Mbembe 2002: 21).

Foucault's second concept that I consider important in providing a guide to the search on how archive acquire power is the concept of 'governmentality', how the subject of government, that is the people are produced. Like the 'regime of truth', Foucault's (1980) concept of governmentality is also concerned with the linkage between knowledge and power. It is in particular with the way in which the person who is governed is produced by knowledge in ways that make it seem unquestionable that we should be governed the way we are governed. Given the role and power of archive, then it is a significant agent of the system of knowledge that makes us subjects. Each of these two concepts, although they are not the same, subscribes to knowledge as a source of power. This is at the core of the dynamics involved in the knowledge production, the politics of knowledge production that define "who control, establish and maintain the archive and how do they do so" (Brown & Davis-Brown 1998: 17), which underscores the politics involved in the production of authoritative knowledge using the archive.

In that regard, then, it is evident that archives can in no way pass the neutrality test, as they are always the site of the production of authentic knowledge, which in turn cannot be divorced from the hegemonic ideology. As Foucault's power/knowledge dictum suggests, engaging with archives entails an engagement with power discourse. Unlike the dominant view "by academic and other users, and by society generally [which views and treats archive] as passive resource; [in fact] archives are established by the powerful to protect their position in society. [In this way, they] represents enormous power over memory and identity, over the fundamental ways in which society seeks evidence of what its core values are and have been, where it has come from, and where it is going" (Schwartz & Cook 2002: 1).

Archive and the Politics of Knowledge Production

In the academic circles, the phrase 'all knowledge is political' is among the many comments made to describe the knowledge production process. As Derrida (1998: 4) famously asserts, "there is no political power without control of the archive." In this way, the archive is an active site of high politics. This then complicates the relationship between the two. Mbembe (2002: 23) articulates the paradox: "On the one hand, there is no state without archives … [And] on the other hand, the very existence of the archives constitutes a constant threat to the state" (also see Daly 2017: 315-318). Thus, knowledge from archive or the archive itself cannot claim to be excluded from politics. This is so since "an inquiry around archive(s)… demands an attempt to understand the conditions and circumstances of the preservation of materials as, and exclusion of material from, the record, as well as attention to the relation of power underpinning such inclusion and exclusions" (Schwartz & Cook 2002: 9). Politics are at the centre of any form of engaging the archive, ranging from the archiving process to accessing documents in the archive where the power politics. Or simply put, the politics of knowledge production are then abstracted in elements of the archive, the technical-rational process defining the modern archive which are by nature non-political but end up representing what Brown and Davis-Brown (1998: 22-23) call "collection development [a manifestation of the] political dimension of micro-processes of archival and curatorial work." Because of this, they treat archives as "contested sites of power," highlighting "the relationship of archives to notions of memory and truth … and, above all the power of archive and records to shape our notions of history, identity and memory" (Schwartz & Cook 2002: 7-8), all which typically represent its political dispensation in knowledge production. In this way, politics run through all processes of collection development and utilization in the archive: in collection, in cataloguing and classification, circulation and access, budgeting and financing, preservation and conservation (Brown & Davis-Brown 1998: 22-30). In that regard, politics then come-in to mediate the power/knowledge interdependence. As such, archive ought to be appreciated much more "as a process rather than … as things [and] … turning further towards a politics of knowledge that reckons with archival genres … [and ought to be approached] not as sites of knowledge retrieval but knowledge production, as monuments of states, as well as sites of state ethnography" (Stoler 2002a:83-85). Approached this way it is much easier to

appreciate the kind of politics which sits at the centre of archive as "the loci of power of the present to control what the future will know of the past" (Schwartz & Cook 2002: 13).

Archival Power in Knowledge Production: Is Decolonisation Possible?

Decolonisation is often understood "as the antithesis of colonisation [or]… an attempt to reverse the negative impacts of colonialism" (Emmanuel 2022: 304). That extends to epistemic or intellectual decolonisation in knowledge production. Intellectual decolonisation, or the call for decolonisation and its emphasis in knowledge production in the Global South seems to be recurring agenda with many advocates. Thus, although "intellectual decolonisation is a house of many mansions" as Nyamnjoh (2024: 4) puts it, the discussion in this section revolves largely on four prominent African advocates of decolonisation, namely Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Kwasi Wiredu, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, and Olúfémi Táíwò.

The first two form the first group, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls for decolonising literature or the mind (1989), and Wiredu (2002; 1998; 1996) calls for decolonising of African philosophy and democracy. What binds them together is that they emphasise the imperative of African indigenous language as a tool for decolonisation (Emmanuel 2022; Táíwò, 2022; 2019). Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Táíwò form the second group which shares the focus on the question of epistemic decolonisation. They all seem to respond to the decolonial call alluded to by Rutazibwa (2018) of moving "beyond merely adding some colour and other markers of 'diversity' to existing structures… [by undertaking] an explicit decolonial engagement with epistemic diversity". Although Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Táíwò take up this call seriously, each approach it from two different standpoints. That is to say "while Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that epistemic decolonisation is vital for Africa's political, economic and intellectual future; … for Táíwò, epistemic decolonisation (what he described in 2022 as Decolonisation_2) is condescending because it fails to take African agency seriously by trapping intellectuals in unhelpful attachments to authenticity, nativism and atavism" (Nyamnjoh 2024: 2-3). Though different in their views, what they propose adds a significant layer for anyone interested in the decolonial agenda. But a critical question that then arises is that, with such contending views on epistemic decolonisation, and to use Bastian (2019: 206) "Is it ever really possible to decolonise the archives?" This is what the rest of this section attempt to grapple with.

Differentiated views to intellectual decolonisation calls for developing intelligible ways of approaching the archive to serve as a key to unlock the unscripted past in the archive. This is very important when one understands archive as "neither the sum of all text that a culture preserves nor those institutions that allow for record's preservation ... [but] rather that 'system of statements', those 'rules of practice' that shape the specific regularities of what can and cannot be said" (Stoler 2002b: 96; also see Foucault 2002: 89-148), renders archive decolonisation as one the most intricate and complex undertakings. Engaging archives as memories of the inscribed past requires thinking beyond what can be seen immediately, and it needs extracting both the exoteric and esoteric meanings inscribed into the archive while appreciating the extent to which archives are more "fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern" (Richards 1993: 11). Thus, "whether the achieve should be treaty as a set of discursive rules, a utopian project, a depot of documents, a corpus of statements, or all above, is not really the question" (Stoler 2002b: 97). The question is rather how to be more cautious and critical of the "making of documents and how we choose to use them, on archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production, as monuments of states as well as sites of state ethnography" (Stoler 2002b: 90).

Decolonizing the archive entails thinking carefully on a number of issues, adopting "a more sustained engagement with those archives as cultural artifact of fact production, of taxonomies in the making…, [a] move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject" (Stoler 2002b: 90-93). This proposed move towards engaging archive as the object of study is in no way an easy undertaking. In a

situation of incomplete archives, or archives with deliberate and significant exclusion of important and key documents, researchers must often turn to transnational archives as well as paying greater attention to form, effect and context than is usually accorded to contemporary state records as well as private individual records (Daly 2017). With such complexity, how can one decolonise the archive?

Bastian argues that it is possible to decolonise the archive, but the kind of proposition is not appealing. To her, calls for self-decolonisation in the sense need to leave behind colonial history and concentrate on pre-colonial past (Bastian, 2019, p. 206). This proposition is not what this essay supports. Instead, it supports two ways of engaging with the archive proposed by Stoler: reading against the grain' and 'reading along the grain'. Engagement with archive has for quite long been approached as reading 'against the grain'. This has been a dominant approach adopted in the reading of the so-called 'colonial archive'. However, Stoler's *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2009), proposed an additional and more critical way of archival reading. This newly proposed way of reading the archive does not serve only as an alternative way of engaging with archive but much more as a complementary and a decolonial strategy of engaging the colonial archive, reading 'along the grain'. The basis for this proposed way of engaging with the archive is an observation that "knowing the circuit of knowledge production is important prior to reading *against* the grain, one need to first "to explore the grain with care and read along it first" (Stoler 2009: 50) which entails comprehending what it entails. As she further argues, "reading along the archival grain draws our sensibilities to the archive's granular rather than seamless texture, to the rough surface that mottles its hue and shapes its form" (Stoler 2009: 53). As such, "we need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake – *along* the archival grain" (Stoler 2002b: 100). That is to say: while reading against the grain entails to hear unexpressed voices and uncover suppressed information; the latter, reading along the grain entails to understand the nature of power and silences and omissions that shape the archive.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to contextualise and discuss how to use the archives in knowledge production and production of African history in particular. The goal was to contextualise this analysis within the decolonisation turn and the politics of knowledge production as a way to establish the power matrix embedded in the archive and hence having the likelihood of influencing the knowledge produced using the archive as a major source as it is a common practice in the production of historical knowledge. To do so, the paper has discussed three but related issues. Just after the introduction, the paper attempted an exposition of power essence and centrality of politics in knowledge production. I have argued that archive represents the discourse of power which permeated through politics dictated by the ideology of the hegemonic class. After that I then moved to question whether decolonisation of knowledge production is possible where use of archive is central and revisiting two techniques of reading the archive: 'reading against the grain' and 'reading along the grain'; a postmodernist kind of reading archival sources which is necessary and useful in the production of knowledge through the perspective of leading African figures in the decolonisation of knowledge production in the Global South. ■

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Endnotes

1 African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education
2 See Chikouna Cissé's book for a history of the CAMES
3 Ousmane Kane's coined the term Europhone intellectuals in refernce to those African academics trained in Western universities and traditions of thought and languages. He contracted this with African scholarship in Arabic and other non-European African languages (Kane, 2012).
4 Previously, upon completing one's school leaving certificate (le baccalauréat), the cycle was la licence, la maîtrise, le DEA-DESS, lee doctorat de 3ème et le doctorat d'état.
5 This begins with studentships and works its way through to grants. Second, the material implications have to do with one's academic career and job opportunities. Again, these overwhelmingly favour English-speakers. What does it mean to be up against this double coloniality in the case of Afro-francophone scholars?

Untangling Colonial Knots in the Line of the Present

Decolonial e-zines on Fashion Series as Cultural Production to further Fashion Knowledge Pluriversality

Michelle Mi Medrado[1]

The idea of engaging in decolonial fashion activism as education outreach aiming to promote *fashion knowledge pluriversality* is based on my experience of living and working between Brazil and the United States while conducting a multi-sited decolonial fashion ethnography research in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, and Luanda, Angola. During the research period, my work agenda focused on diversifying and disseminating narratives of fashion experiences, engagements, theories, concepts, and methodologies in the social sciences and fashion studies. The intention was to circulate fashion knowledges (plural) through cultural production to further fashion social justice and social change. Therefore, I edited the *decolonial e-zine on fashion series* published by the *Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion* to spell out modes of engagement and cultural practices that resist fashion universalism and homogenization. *Fashion knowledge pluriversality as an education outreach project* intends to address the urgency of raising analytical awareness and criticism on the going Western/modernity, well-known as the Euro-North American values framework that wraps the fashion higher education system, industry, and scholarship. The writing style of this decolonial essay dialogues with Amita Nijhawan's reminder to decolonize disciplines and institutions: "We must extend this project to include forms of writing and not just the content" (2024). Thus, its style weaves affects, myself, theories, and descriptive thoughts to demonstrate how fashion plays a transversal role in our everyday.

From Anthropological Fieldwork on Fashion to Decolonial Activism

As Marilyn Strathern points out, the 'ethnographic moment' (312) in ethnographic writing only works if it recreates some of the field research's effects and affects. In this sense, the writing process creates a "second field"; the relationship between these fields is "complex" as the theoretical premises and information collected from the on-site activity are reordered and repositioned. That was precisely what happened to me. In 2018, I visited Luanda, Angola, for the first time. A few months later, back in Santa Monica, California, in the United States, I felt uncomfortable if I were to apply theories and methods based on what classical social sciences had established for fashion canon. I would be analytically unethical, for example, if I had used the frame the German sociologist and philosopher George Simmel (1858–1918) understood as fashion. According to him, fashion could only correspond to societies where fashion styles change quickly and, therefore, European territories. However, what I experienced and learned about Luanda's cultural and market economy affected me (Faavreda Saada, 2005). Acknowledging that, after visiting the city of Luanda to learn more about it; I wondered which implications of not being aware of what is happening in an African urban fashion or on "the rest of the world" would impact fashion knowledge, production, and circulation. Such queries invited me to think about how gaze, perception, and visuals as well as theories, concepts, and methodologies have Western/modernity been regulating.

The multi-sited ethnography effects invited me to examine colonial knots in the lines of the present, whose stopping and breaking it free involved me in a decolonial turn to re-articulate my theoretical and methodological perspectives to bring decoloniality into praxis to denaturalize the erasure that fashion education and research have for diverse forms, silhouettes, colors, and textiles. My decolonial fashion activism went towards creating fashion knowledge through cultural production to further fashion social justice and social change while fostering praxis, dialogues, and critical

conscientization. Paulo Freire's (2019) pedagogy on social criticism bases my initiatives on fashion knowledge decentralization, and bell hooks (1994) on critical pedagogy to nurture multiculturalism and language inclusion to challenge esthetics. Along with this, Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez **juxtaposition** of "*aestheTics* as being an aspect of the colonial matrix of power, of the imperial structure of control that began to be put in place in the 16th [and] have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices" (1) **contrasting with** decolonial *aestheSis* "as critical intervention, to decolonize the regulation of sensing all the sensations to which our bodies respond, "from culture as well as from nature" (Mignolo & Vazquez: 1).

Along these lines, thinking on how to convey decolonial *aestheSis* to fashion cultural production, I created an analytical conversation with what Faye Harrison (1997) has postulated for decolonizing Anthropology on the urgency of doing, practicing, writing, and experiencing anthropology based on those who are still considered subordinate today on the scale of economic and political relations, in line with Arturo Escobar's proposition of pluriverse: "building bridges between the various forms of knowing and ways of being embedded in the multiplicity of practices of social actors worldwide" (2018:3). Then, positioning myself in such elaboration, as a thin and tall female Anthropologist from a Brazilian working-class family with social mobility throughout education and a non-white cisgender individual residing in Los Angeles, I contemplated my fieldwork experiences in Luanda via social class and racial fluidity and how, in the United States, Brazil, and Angola they differ. This affected how I interacted with and accessed people and places and how the idea of fashion in research was received and perceived. Indeed, pondering my experiences, I noticed how social sciences and fashion research and studies have neglected the diversity of fashion worldviews, which draw my attention to elaborate cultural practices to overcome fashion western as commonsensical as to be natural, to decolonizing fashion research and criticism and moving further toward fashion liberation (Medrado, 2023:212).

Fashion knowledge pluriversality as an education outreach project became a way of shifting and thinking ways, thus rethinking fashion ethnographic research to resize social sciences on fashion and their analytical premises. As Sandra Niessen (2021: 12) pointed out, the "legacy of the colonial era has been insufficiently addressed [on fashion in social sciences field] but rather obscured by layers of theory and practice." Heloísa Santos and I argue that colonialism is still present in today's fashion social sciences, which in the case of Brazil helped to erase the historical, visual and materialism of Brazilian fashion and Afro-Brazilian fashion knowledge and references (Santos and Medrado, 2023). Indeed, Tansy Hoskins (2014: 4) states that countries considered producers *in* and *for* the fashion system are "white and rich demographically located in Paris, Milan, London, New York," and the "rest of the world" does not account for that, they have dress/clothing. These perspectives are commonsensical and carried out around the fashion higher education system, industry, and scholarship. Decolonial fashion social scientists, positioned in different geopolitics of knowledge, such as Heloísa Santos, Sandra Niessen, and Angela Jansen, agree that for the colonizer's gaze, the colonized society should be evaluated as a non-fashion society, there is categorical binarism involved in this system since the ideological colonial apparatus seeks to disallow clothing production in non-whites. Non-white societies can be sacrificed zones for the good of colonizers ' lifestyles that are self-titled as modern and innovative. Thus, non-whites are understood as non-fashion societies, unable to produce fashion with a capital F; as small f societies they manifest traditional dress/clothing (Niessen, 2022).

Consequently, to address the complex and often uncomfortable realities of the global fashion industry while acknowledging the limitations of conventional social sciences approaches to research and studies in areas of African and Fashion studies, it became crucial to elaborate conditions to examine nonwhite societies, such as the "decolonial fashion ethnography: before yesterday method" (Medrado, 2023) that offered methodological conditions to raise analytically awareness and criticism on the going western/modernity and

promote decolonial aestheSis on fashion cultural production, paving the conditions to be involved or initiated coalitions with scholars in institutions and universities in Angola, Brazil, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands to produce knowledge creatively and experimented with fashion forms of criticism through podcasts, radios, e-zines, fashion films, academic article adaptations into theater performances, conference workshops, and working groups. After all, as sung by the Brazilian musician Milton Nascimento on Para Lennon e McCartney, Eu sou da América do Sul Sei, vocês não vão saber [...]

Por que vocês não sabem Do lixo ocidental? | "I'm from South America I know, you won't know […] Why don't you know From Western trash?]."

Meanwhile in Angola …

The Department of *Fashion Design Education and Research* at Luanda University was opened in 2016 as part of the College of Arts. According to their website, the faculty core comprises three teachers, and instructors are industry professionals or academics with experience in fashion and design. The fashion design curriculum aims to offer technical guidance to students to be successful in the fashion industry, nationally or internationally, and insights into fashion trends and stimulate students' creativity to create and develop collections that reflect their artistic and aesthetic vision, reflecting the identity and culture of Angola.

In August 2024, I was honored to lecture on Weaving Sensitive Propositions -- Fashion in Research on campus. *Ethnographic Processes: Creative Elaborations,* followed by a Q&A with students and a visit to campus facilities. I presented how my doctoral research is interlacing geopolitics of knowledge based on what I have been learning about the Luanda fashion system and how such correspondence had invited me to reflect, engage with Afrocentric, non-Eurocentric epistemologies and practice liberatory pedagogies to decenter fashion western knowledge, such as on the *Decoloniality e-zine on fashion*, precisely the issue number one on *Decoloniality and fashion in Brazil* | *Brasil* (2021), published by the *Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion*. After my presentation, we had a lively and analytical conversation on the challenges to engaging in fashion from a local perspective, the difficulties of accessing knowledge from local fashion and dress such as Bessangana and its references, and the urgency to Angolan fashion expression be the center of what is being taught at the university.

During the Q&A, one student, contrasting what the fashion curriculum at the university entails with what I had just presented, shared that fashion designer students had as a part of in-class activity to dress like North American 1920s flappers style. She pointed out the absence of Angola fashion history sources, and the challenges faced when searching for data; to elaborate a reference system, she went to a friend's photographic family archive to collect such aesthetic notion. She also noted how rarely Angolan families have pictures from past generations. Notably, complaints about the absence of historical, aesthetic, and social materialism in Angola's fashion data and investment also appeared during the interviews with fashion executives and designers in the first semester of 2024 in Luanda. They highlighted the lack of sourcing and infrastructure to improve the fashion industry and its system, mentioning how the only fashion higher education school in the country must strengthen its faculty, laboratories, libraries, etc. For them, who have been striving in the local fashion industry for a long time, even before the establishment of a fashion university, the only option to attend fashion school in higher education was to go to European or Brazilian universities, the *Fashion Design Education and Research course at Luanda University* still needs investments and improvements to become a reference in the country.

Interestingly, students from diverse social and racial backgrounds and geographies experience subtle biases and structural fashion narrative inequalities when attending fashion higher education. Movements to decolonize fashion curricula are seen in the global north axis by racialized scholars. Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla (2020) wrote about their experimental teaching within the MA History of Design program at the Royal College of Art, London, demonstrating how decolonizing

the curriculum involves disrupting the Eurocentric definition of fashion, exploring decolonial praxis in practice and criticism while fomenting perspectives toward more profound reflexivity and professional development. The *Fashion Design* course at the Federal University of Ceará, which replicated the Royal College of Art, London, in Brazil (Queiroz, 2011), between 2021 and 2023, carried out a curricula research project to examine racial relations and whiteness in its content and the urgent need to include marginalized groups—LGBTQIA+s and people with disabilities—in Brazilian fashion histories. (Queiroz et all, 2021)

Decolonial AestheSis in Fashion knowledge through cultural production

Fashion is visually and materially expressed by shapes, colors, textiles, and silhouettes. The logic of its production is covered by theories, methods, practices, and politics of fashion with capital F. This essay thinks with Afro-Brazilian sociologist Lélia Gonzalez on her emphasis on anti-colonial thought regarding the Eurocentrism of Social Sciences and with Sueli Carneiro on the role of science in building racial equality and the importance of acknowledging human diversity knowledges [plural]. As already mentioned above, the colonial matrix of power and its canon and normativity configuration still imply today that non-whites do not produce a form of science. This argument is extended to fashion. The fashion and knowledge production of these territories is often reduced as a primary source of research and informants of knowledge. Still, it does not recognize them as authorities or bearers of knowledge, constituting epistemic-ide (Carneiro, 2023). Epistemicides are practices that deny or expropriate subjects outside the northern axis as subjects of knowledge, producers of culture, knowledge, and science.

That was a fashionable ethnographic insightful moment where the theoretical premises and information collected from the on-site activity were reordered and repositioned. I therefore initiated, as part of research-led teaching, an educational outreach that became a decolonial academic activism to convey decolonial aestheSis to confront the western/modernity fashion gaze and contribute to a pluriversal fashion future. As Rolando Vázquez points out, if aesthetics can be read as a "domain of social life equivalent to epistemology [that] brings to the fore control of perception and representation" (2021: xxi), it is essential to strengthen decolonial aestheSis on fashion gaze "as a re-valuation of what has been made invisible or devalued by the modern-colonial order" (Achinte and Palermo Apud 2013).

Here, I draw attention to decolonial e-zines in the fashion series created in 2021. Zine is short for magazine—fashion magazines, and it dialogues with the underground style, subverting the scholarly journal editorial. It is an experimental and plurilingual publication that challenges editorial practices, writing, and narrative styles. Each issue is organized by coalition with collectives, with an invited cover designer and a graphic designer, who write their conceptual thoughts, with an invited foreword, supervised by a librarian, and published with the following ISNN 2773-0883. The project is institutionalized at the *Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion* RCDF, a not-for-profit foundation in the Netherlands that aims to critique the denial and erasure of a diversity of fashioning systems due to eurocentricity, unequal global power relations based on the modern-colonial order and the Euro-American canon of normativity materialized in modern aesthetics. (RCDF, 2024). I joined the RCDF in 2020 as a communication officer and have been involved in several projects in the organization, such as *the Decolonial Fashion Film Festival, Global Fashioning Assembly, and Introductory Decolonial Fashion course* for the sake of writing space. I share about the decolonial e-zine on fashion series production and circulation.

The RCDF decolonial e-zine on fashion series project as fashion knowledge creation and dissemination embedded on decolonial aestheSis—cultural production brings perspectives, criticism, and creative crossings through five axes to indicate fashion works as a transversal role in culture: knowledge production—material production —senses of production + coalitions and knowledge circulation, which enables to raise analytical awareness and criticism to overcome the monocultural trapping of fashion history, subjects,

theories, and methodologies, widening pedagogical and research methods to access what has been erased due to the untrustworthy Eurocentric and white-homogenized Fashion industry. It diversifies languages and voices facing or concerned with colonialism and sheds light on how decoloniality in ***F/f***ashion is being carried out.

The first bilingual (Portuguese into English) issue on "Decoloniality and Fashion in Brazil" (2021) was organized in coalition with the *Fashion and Decoloniality: Global South Crossroads* collective. The thirty-five entries were from undergraduate students to researchers and professionals at any rank. It became the first fashion publication in Brazil to gather mostly Afro-Brazilian authors. It addressed topics on Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous aestheSis through research, institutions, markets, networks, art, objects and accessories, drawings, territory and landscapes, theater, songs and lyrics, colors, and silhouettes in a fashion publication. Fashion scholarship from France has considered this first edition as a way to engage sustainable narratives on fashion media; an interview about it will be published in the forthcoming book *Remaking Fashion Media: Sustainable Narratives and Visions of Change,* Bloomsbury Academic.

The second issue was on the "Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion's 10th anniversary!" (2023). The thirty-two entries brought decolonial practices and perspectives covering topics ***from*** flax flowerings, dying textiles, sustainability, garments workers' conditions, gender and sexualities, Indigenous identity, Afro diasporas, territory and geographies, the nature of writing, and research ***to*** design. Nurturing multiculturalism and language articles were written in English plus the author's second or third language, which made it possible to circulate digitally fashion content in Arabic, Dutch, English, French, Spanish, te reo Māori, and Portuguese. The *Design History Society Annual Publishing* gathering in 2023, in Porto, Lisboa, invited me to present the project at the *Diversity, Inclusion, and Design History Publishing* workshop.

In addition to that, the *e zine as the vital project of fashion knowledge pluriversality as an education outreach* led me to, workshop *The* **|** *Hands-on***|** *The De-fashion Epistemology* act that aimed to exchange and elaborate didactic material for classroom use, at the De-Fashioning Education Conference (2023), in Berlin, Germany; to curate a podcasts series on *Decolonial Aesthetics Transit* part of the Outras Costuras: histórias do vestir no Brasil [Other Sewing: History of Dress in Brazil] with History of Dress researcher Rita Andrade, at the Federal University of Goiás, Brazil, interviewing fashion researchers from Brazilian Afro-indigenous researchers and practitioners, Belgium, The Netherlands, and United States. In Luanda, Angola, I presented the two issues at the Dina Simão fashion store school, which led me to the TV program *Sexto Sentido* on February 23, 2024, at the TV Zimbo to be interviewed by Dina Simão, to discuss on national television at *Doce Café*, decoloniality on fashion for Angola designers.

Other fashion zines inspired by the decoloniality ezine on fashion series are being produced. The Afropen fashion researcher Pierre Antoine Vetorello in Antwerp created *The Yarn*. The first issue, published in November 2023, was on colonial fashion violence in fashion schools. The Canadian/Dutch cultural anthropologist and founder activist at the *Fashion Act Now,* Sandra Niessen, is organizing an upcoming zine publication on *Defashion*. As we can see, the decoloniality and fashion series initiative has put the fashion field on the move while moving us in the field, inviting fashion scholars to address time western/modernity issues in the social sciences and fashion field. Collectively, we enable perception, visual, and auditory sensation, mobilize engagements on criticism, innovate, and improve fashion knowledge production and circulation. That is a way to challenge the coloniality of power (A. Quijano) manifested in fashion, social sciences, and African scholarship, which still dismisses the value of fashion knowledge pluriversality.

Decolonial Activism as practice of Fashion Education

I sense that my academic activism became a practice of education in terms of what Tim Ingold (2014) calls anthropology education: Luanda is transforming me, shaping the person I now am and

the anthropology I do. Informing and elucidating a *fashion knowledge pluriversality* while entangling foreign worldview, offering a way to reflect, trace, and weave, has pointed out how coloniality in fashion, as I refer to this as the coloniality of dress (Medrado 2023), hierarchized fashion practitioners, knowledges and fashions.

In Angola, fashion decolonial activism practice as educational outreach has deeply informed my research-led teachings, indicating creative entanglements in fashion scholarship and its geographies. Indeed, given the need for initiatives to decentralize Eurocentric fashion knowledge and circulation, Angola has a manifold challenge with several positions and contractions. The youth generation has noticed how Angola's fashion system faces coloniality in its cultural and market aspects. Therefore, the artists Ari AVX and Danilson Nzala asked to support them in untangling colonial knots in the line of the present, to igniting the decoloniality practices in Luanda, together with the fashion designer Dey Tchissapa and undergraduate on social development Precious Mumena,we created the Mwneno Collective Fashion and Art, which aims to strengthen Angolan cultural identity and empower artists and fashion creators once it is urgent to recognize the country's cultural, historical, and artistic diversity and value local production.

In October of 2024, Mwneno Collective participated organizing the Sanzala Fashion and Art event at the Global Fashioning Assembly organized by the Research Collective for Decoloniality and Fashion. Sanzala, as the word carries a sense of collectivity and social gathering, referred to the deepness of Angolan roots culture, particularly to the language and ethnicity of Kimbundu and Kicongo. Sanzala, as a fashion and art event, celebrated Angolan cultural heritage and identity, a moment when tradition and innovation met. Stitching the present of yesterday into the present-future, a *Cotton Route* was conceptualized to raise de colonial awareness and to highlight the importance of local fashion and art, bringing together emerging and established fashion designers and stylists, visual artists, and creatives.
Angola, as being part of the whole but outside of Western/modernity, experiencing, producing meanings, and challenging fashion with capital F, manifest their knowledge power. Sanzala showed willingness to explore possibilities to bring their perspective, coming from the margin occupying the center (bell hooks, 1984) with fashion and art experiences. That is why, to keep the conversation and challenge forms and not just content, it is necessary to further studies pose questions related to the practice of education outreach: How does it dialogue on/with academic freedom? What would be the best practices for fashion scholar activism? How should activism be defined, perceived, practiced, and considered (un)welcome in Fashion and textile sensibilities on Africa and its Diasporas? How should we think about new forms of collaboration? ■

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Can the Nation-State Liberate? Towards Post-State Solutions for Colonised Peoples in the Global Majority

Abdulla Moaswes

The Republic of South Africa was lauded by many in the Global Majority when it took Israel to the International Court of Justice in 2024, accusing it of carrying out actions amounting to the genocide of Palestinians. Supporters of the Palestinian cause rightly celebrated what they saw as a post-apartheid, postcolonial state taking a colonial apartheid state to task for its excesses. However, a week prior to the first hearing at the ICJ, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa quietly met with General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti, the commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan. Standing in sharp contrast to South Africa's principled stand against genocide in Palestine, Ramaphosa's embrace of Hemedti – a man accused of active participation in the Darfur Genocide among other crimes against humanity – indicates that, although nation-states may act in accordance with a humanistic morality with respect to some liberation struggles, such as that of the Palestinians, they remain bound to complicity in extraordinary acts and structures of violence elsewhere through the existential realpolitik that has characterised international relations in the modern era, animated by a globalising transnational capitalism and the state's quest to continue monopolising the legitimate use of violence domestically.

Among the threads that bind these three national actors to one another – South Africa, Palestine, and Sudan – is their concurrent participation in different projects of nation- and state-building to achieve liberation, with the nation-state representing the default framework for doing so. This paper argues against the assumption implicit to this default framework of national liberation struggles aimed at achieving statehood, which is that that the nation-state represents a vehicle by which colonised peoples may achieve liberation. Building on Mahmood Mamdani's argument that the concept of the nation-state was birthed by ethnic cleansing and colonialism (2020), I demonstrate that the Westphalian state configuration that has "obliged even socialist regimes to make some kind of peace with transnational capitalism" (Shohat 1992: 100) – itself also an evolution from global economic processes birthed within a similar moment – cannot manifest itself as a vehicle for liberation, especially one that considers the intersections of race, nation and class as local and planetary organising principles.

Among the three actors at the centre of this study, South Africa represents the most advanced example of an entrenched, putatively-postcolonial nation-state. The South African nation-state's limitations have already been well-explored, particularly in reference to questions of economic justice and the state's liberatory potential domestically and abroad.[1] These criticisms are compounded even further by the acknowledgement that South Africa's attempts to present itself as a leader in human rights promotion abroad are hemmed in by the twin frictions of formulating foreign policy in accordance with regional/continental consensus and with "the pursuit of fairer representation in global governance" (Fritz 2018: 112-113). While serving both dynamics, South Africa still accedes to architectures of regional, continental, and global governance that valorise the representative capabilities of the nation-state as the default mechanism for promoting human rights and achieving equality. South Africa's contrasting approaches to the questions of Palestine and Sudan thus reflects the pitfalls of regarding any nation-states, even if well-intentioned, as being able to promote liberation. Recalling the Sudanese intellectual Mansour Khalid's assertion that "unawareness of alternatives is the height of political ignorance" (1992: 3), this paper will thus

look towards Sudan and Palestine for alternatives to the idea of nation-state-building as liberatory praxis. Before doing this, however, it will first contextualise the significance of Palestine and Sudan within global politics to further underscore the importance of both cases in guiding liberatory thought for colonised peoples in the Global Majority.

Sudan and Palestine in the World

Historic Palestine and Sudan do not represent discrete geographies whose problems are limited to its own boundaries, but rather geographies whose conditions are deeply intertwined with global processes and flows that further highlight the perils of parochializing liberation to the borders of a nation-state. The 1948 settler colonisation of Palestine by Israel at the dawn of the Cold War represented the erection of an Israeli state that Maxime Rodinson described as "a beachhead of the industrialized, capitalist world in an underdeveloped world" and "an ally of the imperialist powers" (1973: 89-90). This reality has only become more pronounced in recent years. William Robinson and Hoai-An Nguyen explain that Israel continues, through its besiegement of Gaza and the West Bank, to crack "open new space for transnational accumulation" (2024). The presence of Palestinians in their historic homeland, therefore, represents an obstacle to the current phase of not just Israeli, but transnational, capitalist expansion.[2]

The Palestinian struggle against Israeli settler colonialism also represents a key node in global anticolonial struggles. John Collins writes that Palestinians "have been test subjects for, and in some cases active agents helping to catalyse, an emerging world of pervasive securitisation and violence acceleration" symbolised by the Global War on Terror while also being "important actors in and symbols of the ongoing struggle for global justice" (2011: 2-3). Olivis Harrison also describes the Palestinian struggle as "the most recognizable symbol of Arab and Muslim unity in Arab state rhetoric for the past half-century" (2016: 1). With specific reference to African anticolonialisms, Yusuf Serunkuma analogises Israel as being to Palestinians what the British, Germans, French, Belgians, and Boers represented to colonised peoples in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Algeria, the Congo and South Africa, as he exhorts African peoples to recognise that events in Palestine undress more latent processes of neocolonial control and exploitation still at play in putatively independent nation-states (2023) – a more comprehensive echo of Nelson Mandela's historic 1997 statement that the freedom of South Africans from Apartheid is "incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians" (in Fayyad 2020). It is worth mentioning here as well that Apartheid South African was a staunch Israeli ally and that the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was concurrently a crucial actor within anticolonial alliances in the Global South.

Sudan, similarly, is deeply embedded within transnational networks of actors that exploit the region's precarious political and security situation. The Investigative Journalism for Europe (IJ4EU) Project, for example, highlights that as well as working with the erstwhile Omar al-Bashir regime, the Khartoum Process has allowed Hemedti to present himself to the EU as "Mr Migration", making himself useful to its objectives by involving the RSF in "in trafficking, ransoming and mistreating migrants", stopping them from reaching Libya and eventually Europe (2023).[3] The Arab Gulf states have also built relationships resembling neocolonial patronage in Sudan, interweaving it into flows of arms and soldiers that suit their interests. Saudi Arabia, for example, has benefited from the support of RSF fighters during the war its war in Yemen (Al Jazeera 2023), a large part of which involves securing the Bab al-Mandeb Straits as a key maritime logistics choke-point. The UAE and Qatar have also supported the RSF and Abdelfattah Al-Burhan's Sudanese Armed Forces respectively in attempting to secure broader regional influence. The former provides the RSF with arms and securing logistics routes for the transfer of Russian arms by also supporting Field Marshal Khalifah Haftar's campaign to control Libya (Soufan Centre 2024).

South Africa also exists as a node within these networks through its arms sales to states who have benefited from warm relations with the

RSF.[4] Criticisms of South Africa's policies toward Sudan have often also overlapped with criticism of its policies toward Palestine, acting as a stick by which to beat those involved in anti-Apartheid activism in both places. The Israeli legal scholar Eugene Kontorovich, for example, wrote in a 2015 *Washington Post* article entitled "Sudan's Bashir is the Palestinians' and Pretoria's Favourite Genocidal Tyrant" that South Africa is among a small number of countries who "reflect the Palestinians' warped view of international law", using South Africa's non-arrest of Omar al-Bashir while "couching its criticisms [of Israel] in language of law and rights" as evidence. Kontorovich's article, rife with obfuscations of the realities of Israel's settler colonisation of Palestine, is illustrative of attempts by actors in the Global Minority to minimise the suffering of Palestinians by invoking the Darfur Genocide – a mirror of speech acts by actors in the Global Majority that co-opt the Palestinian cause to further their own ends while whitewashing the role of their Sudanese allies in Darfur.

The Nation-State's Factory Defect

I argue that these inconsistencies are not simply local instances of hypocrisy but are more deeply rooted in the essence of the nation-state. Mahmood Mamdani roots the "founding moment" of the nation-state as emerging from the ethnic cleansing of Moors and Jews to establish a Christian Spanish kingdom and the concurrent the arrival of Iberian colonists in the Americas (2020: 1), thus concluding that nationalism and colonialism were co-constituted through the creation of the nation-state. In the case of postcolonial states, Mamdani argues that efforts by postcolonial nationalists to "consolidate power by transforming society into the home of the nation as they imagined it" led to "an era of blood and terror, ethnic cleansing and civil wars, and, sometimes, genocide" (2020: 3). Therefore, ethnic cleansing and genocide are manifestations of nation-states' attempts to internally homogenise themselves and manage diversity through concepts such as the tribe, based on cultural and ethnic division. Mamdani uses the leaders of African states such as Sudan and Rwanda, who modelled "their political imagination on the modern European state […] leading to new rounds of nation-building by ethnic cleansing" (2020: 15), as key examples. He therefore offers a socio-political and demographically-rooted argument regarding the limits on a nation-state's potential to liberate.

Mamdani presents South Africa as the blueprint of a liberation model, since it included all "survivors" of apartheid, "victims, perpetrators, beneficiaries, bystanders, [and] exiles", in "an expanded political process and reformed political community" rather than "[individualising] violence as a stand-alone act" (2020: 17). His theoretical argument is powerful: stating that "political reform has to come first because the call for criminal justice within the parameters of the existing political order leaves that order intact" (2020: 17). He calls for "decolonising the political", a process of "upsetting the permanent majority and minority identities that define the contours of the nation-state" (2020: 19). Practically, however, permanent majority and minority identities persist in South Africa and they are intertwined with race and class identities. An analysis of South Africa's decolonial scope through the lens of political economy demonstrates that although post-1994 South Africa has not relied on ethnic cleansing domestically to constitute its nationhood, its lack of decolonising the economic has rendered it complicit in ethnic cleansing, genocide and civil war abroad to uphold its neoliberal statehood.

To understand how this has occurred, it is important to recall that 1492 – Mamdani's foundational moment – also saw the advent of the Transatlantic trade of enslaved peoples and settler colonialism, both foundational to the emergence of racial capitalism and tied to the birth of the nation-state (Bhandar 2018, Grosfoguel 2013, Lloyd and Wolfe 2016). As Abdelwahab El-Affendi explains, the globalisation of the Westphalian model has also ameliorated its hegemonic capacity, thus forcing all states – even reluctantly – to submit "to the logic of world governmentality" and the capitalist flows implicit within (2023: 98). Under neoliberalism, such submissions also play a role in strengthening state formation (Hanieh 2010: 86). Thus, South Africa's attempts to adhere to regional and continental consensuses with regards to foreign policy also juxtaposes the economic imperatives

of a world capitalist governmentality against those of liberation from the co-constituting structures of racial capitalism, settler colonialism, and neocolonialism both locally and transnationally. Rather than presenting a liberatory blueprint, El-Affendi explains that South Africa has mired itself within an indefinite phase of "DIY colonialism" (2023: 100). Significantly, this notion of DIY colonialism also accurately describes the Palestinian project of neoliberal state-building within the 1967 borders (ibid: 100), which assumes a linear template of liberation that entails the adoption of a key assumption drawn from South Africa's experience of liberation from constitutional apartheid. Based on the ANC's historic compromise with major South African corporate capitalists, the assumption is that powerful transnational actors will reward a liberation movement that commits itself to the principles of free-market capitalism and the notions of "social, political, and economic 'progress'" contained therein (Seidel 2014: 91).[5]

Alternative Nation and State Configurations

In terms of the way forward, Mamdani argues in favour of a twinning of the political and epistemological that he believes "necessitates decolonizing the political" by "not throwing off outside rule but excising the ideology of political modernity internalized under colonialism" (2020: 34). While excusing himself from prescribing the outcome of a process of decolonising the political – a reasonable step given that it is difficult to generalise something for which there is such little empirical basis – Mamdani provides recommendations for how to arrive at such a decolonisation:

> First, to reform the national basis of the state by granting only one kind of citizenship and doing so on the basis of residence rather than identity. Second, to denationalize states through the institution of federal structures in which local autonomy allows diversity to flourish. And third, to loosen the grip of the nationalist imagination by teaching the history of the nation-state, juxtaposing the political model against the criminal, and bolstering democracy in place of neoliberal human rights remedies (36).

These recommendations are arrived at through an engagement with the work of the Palestinian scholar Raef Zreik, who problematises the notion of equal citizenship by invoking the Palestinian and South African examples. Zreik writes that applying a uniform legal citizenship without penetrating "deeper into more meaningful layers of people's lives" means that South Africans "are equal in their potentialities not in their actualities" while imposing a uniform category of citizenship upon Palestinians and Israelis would overlook "the way the colonial past has shaped the relationship between the two communities [which] must be tackled and unpacked" (2016: 357). Mamdani's third recommendation resonates with Zreik's argument that "the formal abstractness of citizenship must thus be supplemented by a certain visibility and relevance of history; of the past" (357). Zreik adds that in the Palestinian case, the citizenship discourse, even of a one-state solution, reduces Palestinians to "mere" citizens, erasing their status "as the original owner and inheritor of the land", thus necessitating a decolonising of the economic (358).

Another Palestinian scholar, Dana El Kurd, draws out a few tensions that Mamdani's approach to liberation entails. She rejects his assumption that nationalism is a European imposition, arguing that the emergence of nationalism in Palestine and the Arab world more broadly "was not imposed from the outside, but was in fact underway in Arab societies under the Ottoman Empire almost concurrently with the rise of some national identities in Europe" (2021). She adds that Mamdani's assumption obscures the agency of colonised peoples, who have used nationalism "as a means of demanding self-determination and sovereignty in a world increasingly organized around the nation-state" (2021). She also argues that a South African-style approach to decolonisation would "only cement and reinforce systems of inequality" since the Israeli state, albeit reformed, would still exist as a set of "path-dependent institutions established by colonizers" (2021). Finally, and most significantly, she argues

that the Palestinian struggle is very much still about achieving a representative state shrouded by a national Palestinian identity and that a "de-nationalised solution would neither be viable nor just" (2021).

Sudan offers an alternative example of a liberatory thinking, in the shape of John Garang's New Sudan Vision, that Mamdani refers to as arguing "for a state without a nation—a state that was home to all its citizens, not to a national majority of Arabs or Muslims or Africans" (2020: 199). Mansour Khalid, a friend of Garang's and adherent of the New Sudan Vision, regarded Sudan as needing to reject the alien notion of racial purity by accepting Sudan's anthropological reality as "not a country of Arabs and Africans but that of Arabicized Africans or Africanized Arabs and pure Africans" (1992: 3). Garang's attempt to cast Sudan as the nation-state of a newly-configured Sudanese nation, united by the Arabic language but staunchly rejecting Arab supremacy (Khalid 1987: xviii), resembles Mamdani's notion of decolonising the political within a single state. As Garang articulated, "Arabic cannot be said to be the language of the Arabs. No, it is the language of Sudan" (1986: 133). Furthermore, Garang argued that a unified, politically decolonised state under the New Sudan Vision was essential to stop "Sudan from disintegrating into fragments, inviting new recolonisation and deepening crisis" (1986: 123). It would do this by rejecting race, culture, or tribe as being the criteria of inclusion or exclusion, in line with Mamdani's recommendations for decolonised statehood.

Although Garang could argue that the eventual division of the erstwhile territory of Sudan into a northern and southern state was the inevitable outcome of no party fully adhering to his New Sudan Vision, critics of the Vision point out that it lacked substance and largely revolved around Garang's own personality politics (Young 2005: 538-539). Furthermore, the notion of a unified Sudan was also born out of realpolitik considerations, as Kuir ë Garang points out. He writes that John Garang "knew that making separatism the rallying cry for the rights of Southern Sudanese would not win SPLM/A support, especially from Ethiopia" (2019: 102). Fundamentally, however, Garang's sidelining of transnational identification, whether Arab or African, in favour of a siloed concept of Sudanism, also foreclosed the liberatory potential of a united Sudanese polity, if not state, that did not also attempt to create a nation within its largely colonially-imposed cartography – despite Mamdani's framing of Garang's Vision as nationless. Recalling that the borders of ostensibly Arab and African states, as well as the border between the two identities themselves, are largely subject to a form of neocolonial sabotage enabled by the role of colonial powers in shaping them, a Sudanism detached from transnational identification does little to address this sabotage, and even less to enable forms of organising that enable a process of achieving justice transnationally. While offering some opportunities for imagining subjectivities that may replace more conventional notions of the nation within the state, the New Sudan Vision demonstrates the shortcomings of emphasising the statist element of the Westphalian nation state as being a liberatory vehicle.

While not prescribing the exact nature of a Palestinian future, nor one for colonised peoples more generally, I recommend thinking of futures that decouple the nation from the state as a starting point. Collective political imaginations may struggle to see beyond the state as constellation of governance or the final achievement of a nationalist struggle, but a decoupling of the normative assumption of the nation-state allows us to imagine the nation existing not as a necessarily exclusive and gatekept form of identification à la European ideas of nationalism. Nadim Rouhana, for example, drawing from the experiences of Palestinian citizens of Israel theorises Palestinian nationalism as a "homeland nationalism centred on politically reclaiming the homeland, as distinct from other minority nationalisms and legal and political claims of indigenous peoples elsewhere" (2015: 2). He roots this theory in a historical view of Palestinian nationalism as not only focused on "gaining independence from British control", but primarily in saving "the homeland from being overtaken by the Zionist project" (2015: 5). While the Palestinian National Movement during the British

Mandate did indeed seek the establishment of an independent Palestinian nation-state, the second part of Rouhana's rooting emphasises a coupling of nationhood and land, as opposed to state borders.

This association remains relevant since normative forms of (settler) colonial, neocolonial, and capitalist state-building necessarily, due to differing combinations of socio-political and economic reasons, entail a rewriting of the relationships between members of a nation and that which exists upon and within their land. Others, such as the Canadian First Nations scholar Glen Coulthard, theorise Indigenous identification around land- and place-based relations and obligations as "grounded normativity", by which he means "the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time" (2014, 13). This dovetails well with Palestinians' "translation of their psychological, cultural, and national belonging to their land into political claims to a homeland" (Rouhana 2015, 3) in opening space for post-state forms of nationalist organising and nation-building that are more strongly founded in an identification with a physical land of home as opposed to the structures and institutions of a nation-state.

To build upon this opening of space, the artist Sophia Azeb notably invites those concerned with postcolonial futures to imagine a "no-state solution" based on the refusal of "recognition of any property on the land and thus, state-sovereignty" (2014a). Recalling that statehood "as it exists in the Western imaginary is merely a structuralised form of violence, an entity that mediates life and death" enables a "radical departure from the state-based logics that govern [colonised people's] terms for liberation" (2014b). Although Azeb posits that Palestinians can achieve a no-state solution through embodying a "non-linear, placeless freedom" (ibid), Palestinian nationalism's construction through human and non-human relationships enabled by the land of Palestine suggests that liberation in Palestine involves a decolonising of the political and economic that imagines new structures and systems of exercising sovereignty that are rooted in the collective responsibility towards preserving the homeland in a literal, ecological sense rather than owning it. This is the imperative implicit, for example, in the Palestinian ecologist Vivien Sansour's equating of being "a person of freedom" and "a person of land" (2023).

Returning to this essay's titular question, it is evident that the main obstacles preventing nation-states from being vehicles for liberation are their factory defect of being produced through ethnic cleansing and homogenisation, as Mamdani argues, and also their entanglement into the concurrent construction of a world capitalist order that organises itself around the principles of race, nationality, and class. Both factors entail demands for securitisation and the perpetuation of racist neocolonialism – contained within the commodification and corruption of land relations through capitalist extractivism and regimes of private property. In recommending that contemporary anticolonial struggles prioritise transnational mobilisations and anticonsumerist relationships with land over the achievement of a state, this essay invites imaginings and models of political community and organising that are materially rooted in sustainable and world-systematic visions of justice. Although this should not be understood as an overture towards abandoning nation-states' responsibilities to act ethically in domestic and foreign policy-making, it is difficult, otherwise, to see how nation-states may liberate themselves from the compulsion towards complicity in the perils of world capitalist governmentality, much less liberate other colonised peoples outside of their borders. ■

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Endnotes

1 For examples, see Clarno 2017, 2019; McKinley 2017; and Magaziner and Jacobs 2018.

2 One example that demonstrates this well is the way logistics insurers responded to the escalation in anticolonial Palestinian violence on October 7, 2023, which has raised the cost of transporting goods and people through Israeli-controlled land, water, and airspace. See Dyson 2023 for more details.

3 The Khartoum Process is officially called the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative. It was launched at a 2014 meeting in Rome attended by the European Union and African Union, as well as some of their member states, with a stated aim of addressing “challenges posed by the mixed migratory flows of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers between countries of origin, transit and destination between the Horn of Africa and Europe” (in Chandler 2018). The Process enlisted the support of “the formerly shunned governments of Sudan and Eritrea” to assist the EU in “stopping Africans from entering Europe” (Chandler 2018).

4 For more on this, see Mazzetti and Schmitt 2012, Affi et al. 2016, Du Venage 2016, Open Secrets 2021, and Copelyn 2023.

5 For a clear articulation of how this project undermines Palestinian liberation, see Khalidi and Samour 2014. For an analysis that compares it with the historical formation of the post-1994 South African state, see Jeenah and Vally 2012.

The decolonial autobiography?: Reading Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams In a Time of War* and *In the House of the Interpreter*

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"But why does one recall some events and characters vividly and others not at all? How is the mind able to select what it buries deep in the memory and what it allows to float on the surface?" [*Dreams in a Time of War*, 41]

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is a renowned Kenyan novelist whose oeuvre is, arguably, synonymous with the history of Kenya. He was born in 1938, 18 years into the vicious British settler colonialism of Kenya, from 1920-1963. This reality has afflicted much of his authorship which has sought to complicate the history of colonialism as an individual who grew up under colonialism and was ushered into manhood at the height of the anticolonial struggle. Colonial violence, both to the body and memory, thematically punctuates his ideology and politics of interpretation of what colonialism means and how it features in his writing.

For Ngugi wa Thiong'o, colonialism and language have been the major motivating factors in his writing. These have been reflected in the serialization of the effects of colonial violence and its afterlives in his oeuvre. His corpus of work has been animated by the two and refracted in different ways in his fiction, non-fiction and memoirs. *Weep Not, Child* (1964) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) rely on the Agikuyu myth of creation to perform Agikuyu nationalism whilst embracing modernity ideas of development and progress *The River Between* (1965) contests Kenyan's historiography through historic invention, while *Petals of Blood* (1977) which supposes a counter narrative of history of the colonial subject through a postcolonial ideation of history. *Devil on the Cross* (1980) written from prison animates Fanonian pitfalls of national consciousness, *Matigari* (1986) which dramatizes violence in Kenya's history, while *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) memorializes the spirit of resistance in the liberation of Kenya as do, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and *The Perfect Nine* (2018) among others. The trilogy of *Dreams in a Time of War* (2010), *In the House of the Interpreter* (2012) and *Birth of a Dream Weaver* (2016) came quite late in Thiong'o's career, when his standing as a pioneer (East) African postcolonial writer and critic was already secure. It constructs a self that ontologically struggles with a cultural history that is premised on the idea of domination and subjugation as caused by colonial violence.

This paper takes the entry point of decolonization as manifesting itself in literary expressive thought, imaginative and epistemic works. Thus, attempting to read tableaus of decolonial thought in cultural productions and inscriptions of individuals straddling both theory and literature is instructive in apprehending decolonization. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a postcolonial writer and critic, presents himself in this project as an individual who critically tinkered with his nominal identity but also quit writing in English to write in Gikuyu. The paper takes its cue from Gatsheni's idea of 'coloniality as being' to read Ngugi's memoirs as they embody the collective colonial experience through his subjectivity.

The arguments in the paper will be problematised by concepts proposed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ngugi wa Thiong'o on decolonization. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in *Decolonizing the Mind*, argues about the situational awareness of the position of those in the Global South and defines the struggle as "between the two mutually opposed forces in Africa today: an imperialist tradition on one hand, and a resistance tradition on the other" (2). Ngugi uses this dialectic to position his decolonial critique in the postcolony and through the example of language shows how cultural products concern themselves with keeping track of injustices informed by historical consciousness. The school

becomes a metaphor for the conquest of the mind as it assumes the double role of a space and symbol of coloniality. It is this philosophical underpinning that guides this study's reading of the memoir as a revisionist memorialization of the life of a colonial subject as an allegory to the colonial reality. Hence, the idea of institutionalized domination can best be understood by looking at the question of colonial violence in Kenya taking the premise of British settler colonialism which characterized the age of Ngugi growing up in Limuru and being educated in Kikuyu through his memoirs. Similarly, Sabelo Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, in describing decolonization, concurs that in both its insurgent and resurgent form decolonization predates the colonial matrix of power yet through the decolonial turn it is imperative to 'turn a new leaf'. Ndhlovu-Gatsheni sees colonialism and coloniality as incentivizing what he characterizes as liberation from the predicament and long crisis of dependence. In fashioning the self, Ngugi in both memoirs is cognizant of this dialectic and alludes to it through the struggle for education and land as key tenets that occasion the liberation of the postcolonial subject and hence decolonization in Ndhlovu-Gatsheni's sensibility.

Thiong'o's life writing comes from a history of the settler colonialism in Kenya under which he was born and educated. As a result, the cloud of colonialism looms large on his upbringing and education. This way, *Dreams In A Times Of War* reads as a narrative of war animating the anticolonial struggle whereas, *In The House Of An Interpreter,* we see Ngugi as a child who witnesses violence at different scales and spaces as he gets an education in a colonial school. This settler history animates another of Ngugi's novels. *Matigari,* whose theme of violence is situated in the anticolonial struggle. To recollect in *Dreams in a Time of War* of his upbringing in Limuru, to desire to achieve an education at his mother's insistence is Ngugi's way of thinking about a colonial childhood that is at best troubled, and at worst disturbed and to announce the structures, processes and institutions of power in unequal measure. As Syned Mthatiwa concurs, both memoirs "give a glimpse into a troubled boyhood in colonial Kenya" (78). It is this troubled colonial childhood that transits to *In the House of an Interpreter* characterizing a colonial education in a high school that would define the immediate postcolonial direction of the just independent Kenya.

To the extent that Ngugi refashions his identity against his scholarly politics and philosophy on subjects like colonialism and language, his memoirs are of a decolonial sensibility. Titularly, both autobiographies define themselves around the idea of space. *Dreams in a Time of War* supposes a visionary experience around an atrocious environment recreating a defiled childhood by the pangs of colonialism and patriarchy alike. Senayon Olaoluwa supposes Ngugi's father's "loss of fatherhood agency as instigated by his loss of land" (35) caused 'emasculation' as the dispossession of land strains the familial relationship with a young Ngugi left to grow up with his maternal grandfathers. Similarly, *In the House of the Interpreter* reflects on Alliance High School as a space dominated by an overbearing Carey Francis, who fathers the adolescents to prepare them for subservience to the state. In Alliance, education is primed not for intellectual nourishment but rather a pipeline for civil service. This is punctuated by the fact that as an institution, Alliance was modeled after the metropole's education franchise. Education was not rooted in knowing or understanding Kenya but a promised Britain and Europe and in this way to inculcate subservience to the empire. Ironically, however, it is while at Alliance that Ngugi seems to prime himself for a life in higher education as he seeks to join Makerere. It is not a smooth sail and his profession of the same at a checkpoint earns him an arrest and an arraignment.

The spatial standpoint in the memoirs also imbues within them the cultural memory that Ngugi narrativises to interweave his life story with that of Kenya as a British settler colony. Colonialism and colonial violence punctuate both life histories and broadly allude to the colonial subjects of Kenya. Whereas both autobiographies undress colonialism, *In the House of Interpreter*, complicates this with a focus on the state of emergency. The opening scene in the memoir is that of an adolescent going home after an eventful first term only to be confronted by the sheer horror of concentration camps. To

himself, he wonders, "how could a whole village, its people, history, everything, vanish, just like that?" (3). His bewilderment is reflective of the scale of violence and disregard for societies that colonialism posed on Kenyans. At school, Ngugi is also aware of the permeation of violence within social order mechanisms as well as institutions which are extensions of the colonial state. He gives the example of the assembly ground suggesting that "but I would soon learn it was one of the most important spots in the entire school, the site of a daily performance of power" (10). In so doing, Ngugi portrays the dynamic of trying to negotiate the unequal power given that power as informed by the purveying colonial violence machine is not consistent. Its symbols of violence in this case are embodied in the assembly which alludes to colonial order and hierarchies which sustained the colonial enterprise.

In *Dreams in a Time of War*, Ngugi, not by choice, changes schools several times. This happens because the government closes some schools for not working within the curriculum. He schools at Manguo Primary School and Kinyogori Primary School, which were not government-manned and thus viewed with suspicion hence the closures. This not only impeded intellectual growth but also social mobility serving as a form of subjugation since the schools were fashioned as colonial institutions. Closures were not enough as a young Ngugi notes, "but the biggest blow to the collective psyche occurred when the settler colonial state turned the college grounds and buildings into a prison camp where proponents of resistance to colonialism were hanged" (103). Here he references the pioneer school in Githunguri that was pioneered by the community as a community-based and run institution and later turned into a prison camp. Moreover, Ngugi illustrates the colonial modalities of configuring space. These offered an alternative education from the one in the colonial schools and Ngugi here intimates on the epistemic decolonization now a dominant feature in African institutions and a reality he would live through while at the University of Nairobi. While at Alliance, Ngugi suggests, "Even African history was largely the story of Europeans in Africa. Livingstone, Stanley, Speke, and Burton were the larger-than-life bearers of light to a Dark Continent" (42). This alludes to the idea of a decolonial education speaking to what Ndhlovu terms a 'decolonial epistemology'. Ngugi is against the reduction of history to fit an imperial viewpoint.

Ngugi recounts his studentship at Alliance High School in *In the House of the Interpreter*. He describes it as, "the first secondary school for Africans in the country and the only reminder of the missions' feel-good moment of togetherness. African graduates of the elementary schools now had an alternative to vocational institutes" (5). In the school there did not exist a multicultural environment despite it being an institution supposedly 'enlightened' and to the extent to which it was possible Ngugi notes how "the presence of Africans on the staff as equals with the white teachers undermined, in our eyes at least, colonial apartheid and the depiction of the Africans as inferior" (7). This reveals the unmodulated logic of colonialism. On the one hand, it did not regard anything black yet admitted black students and had black staff members. This description helps Ngugi to refashion settler colonialism as an unstable system, a pathology of sorts, characterizing it in a manner suggesting that in and of itself, is a problematic system inundated by white supremacy logic. Alliance as a space predisposes the students to valorise whiteness. For instance, Ngugi in a moment of self-deprecation recollects that, "I don't think I noted the irony in my singing this hymn of prayer while my own brother, Good Wallace, was out in the mountains fighting with the Mau Mau guerrillas so that the queen did not reign long over Kenya" (11). A student during the last days of colonialism and at the height of the war against colonialism, Ngugi cannot help but notice the ironies of Alliance. Further, he is opposed to the education in white mannerisms humorously noting, "the pleasures of eating ugali lay in touch and taste: dipping fingers into the smoking dish and letting it cool in your mouth, rolling it around with your tongue" (13). These ironies worked to diffuse the ways of knowing which were effected by the colonial structures as it sought to maintain control.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, since his days at the University of Nairobi where he together with Henry Anyumba and Taban Lo Liyong wrote the famous memo 'On the Abolition of the English Department' has advocated for an Africanized curriculum where Africa is at the centre of the education system. Hence, in his memoir about Alliance he remarks "Our literature classes were no different: English texts were the norm, and Europe the cultural reference" (39). Whereas this could be arguably a play at Ngugi keeping with his academic polemics, he's fundamentally charging at the question of pedagogy at African institutions and the nature of a decolonial curriculum.

In the House of the Interpreter, Ngugi notes that "Life at school continued to be a series of discoveries. There was, for instance, the hierarchy and mystery of the prefect system, which was almost a mirror image of the colonial administration" (20). Ngugi juxtaposes this with the Home Guard Scheme which just as the prefect system worked against the students, worked against the people. This was largely in terms of land and the scheme was meant to dispossess people of their land denying them any form of sustenance. He observes that, "It was a mass fraud, often giving land from the already poor to the relatively rich, and from the families of guerrilla fighters to those loyal to the colonial state" (23). The lack of land meant a sense of loss to the community and also worked to ensure that the colonial state exercised surveillance on the people. He further laments that, "Henceforth I was going to live out my life in a home that reminded me of the loss of home and a school that offered shelter but not the certainty of home. Both, ironically, were colonial constructs, but I feared that even they might clash at any moment and crush my dreams" (25). In writing this way, Ngugi uses the memoir as a genre to be critical of the subtle modes of social engineering that the colonial enterprise fashioned.

Ngugi enlivens space in both memoirs, and features the diasporic inhabitants of Kenya whose history is directly linked with the settler history of the country. Ngugi wa Thiong'o revisits the Indian question to show the genealogies of power and domination in confronting the subject matter in his life story. The South Asian diaspora in Kenya appears in the way Ngugi configures both the Limuru Shopping Center and Kikuyu town in *Dreams in a Time of War* and *In the House of the Interpreter*, respectively. A playful Ngugi claims that "The only African people who had glimpses of the life of an Indian family were cleaners and sweepers, who said that Indians were of many nationalities, religions, and languages—Sikhs, Jains, Hindus, Gujaratis" (34). This reference maps the high cell community by riding on its insularity yet also locating it in the public memory for its power in commerce. *In the House of the Interpreter*, he adds "those who lived in the neighborhood went home, and the others would trek to the Indian shops at Kikuyu ...the Indians were the commercial frontiersmen, supplying the army of railroad workers and officials with food, clothes, and transport" (10). He gives this description at Alliance for when they were allowed to be out of school on weekends. Both memoirs do this to acknowledge or at least point to the contribution of the South Asian diaspora in Kenya besides the persistent trope of them only having come as Indian coolies to help build the railway.

By acknowledging this Indian question, Ngugi points to the fact of racial segregation. The urban centers were fragmented along racial lines with Africans at the bottom; first was Europeans and second Indians and Africans at the bottom. This of course worked to disadvantage the already impoverished Africans. This colonial segregation, Ngugi notes, "also created the native African worker out of the peasant who, having lost his land, had only the power of his limbs that he hired out to the white settler, when his labor was not taken by force, and to the Indian dukawallah, or shopkeeper, for a pittance" (47). The class differences emanated from the fact that the African was deprived of any means of labour and were forced to contend with meagre wages creating a class difference. But, just as he valorises the Chief Koinange, Jomo Kenyatta and Harry Thuku, which perhaps gives an inkling of Ngugi angling towards ethnonationalism (Agikuyu nationalism, a subject he fictionalized in *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*) both autobiographies acknowledge the role of Indians like Manulal Desai and Makan Singh in helping to

energize the anticolonial struggle in Kenya, and of course the role of Mahatma Gandhi who was key in cementing ideals of resistance towards colonialism.

Seen from the viewpoint of religion, the memoirs keep with what Godwin Siundu and Wegesa Busolo regard as a dominant feature in Ngugi's writing as "the way he presents Christians and Christianity" (292). Carey Francis in *In the House of Interpreter* is a Christian and professes faith yet he is part of the colonial empire. However, he seems able to withstand divided loyalties like being aware that Ngugi's brother is part of Mau Mau and allows him to be a student at a colonial school. Ngugi, who keeps attending church at Kinoo, wonders of the school chapel: "The chapel was meant to be a symbol of God's presence in the school, the motive power behind its work and service, but it would also be a continuing reminder of the unity between Alliance and the colonial state" (84). This is the confounding scale of colonialism that Ngugi endures. At Alliance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o picks issues with a teacher's claim that God spoke in English. He says "I raised my hand and said that Jesus did not speak English: the Bible was a translation" (14). This instance performs his early consciousness of the power of language. His consciousness of falsehoods passing in the name of religion despite himself being a committed Christian only served to alienate him.

Ngugi in *In the House of the Interpreter* relies on the metaphor of translation to illustrate the process of healing the colonial wound. Carey Francis translated the order of the crown, the empire and the school, with all colonial spaces and institutions just like religion meant to acclimate the students to a colonial reality where the chapel becomes emblematic of the pervasive colonial hand. Ngugi's experience in the school exposes the nature of the colonial state and the logic(s) it uses to sustain itself. Writing the memoir becomes an act of translating what the actions and practices of these colonial institutions were, thereby allowing insights into a reality that is introspection and reflects the dark inequalities in economic and political levels. Ngugi fashions his life writing in the decolonial turn to functionalize memory as it relates trauma, violence and subjugation as an act in what he termed elsewhere as 're-membering' (2014). Narrative then works to change the power relationship to the extent that memory, space, land and religion perform the healing of the colonial wound psychologically, politically, existentially and spiritually. It is this process which has both memoirs emerge as a creative project addressing itself to a colonial past that truncates individuals with their ways of being and knowing. Both memoirs appropriate decolonial cultural memory to perform anti-colonial efforts and consciousness and perform healing in what he has called 'decolonising the mind' (2011). Ngugi appropriates the form of life's writing to fashion his life as that primed by personal ambition and determination to work around social engineering meant to caricature an inferior complex. Through sites like the school the two memoirs animate the decolonial project that Ngugi's life and life's work have been a testament to through its profound decolonial dialectics.

If *Dreams in a Time of War* captures a childhood defined by a colonial ordering and a desire to move beyond this space, *In the House of the Interpreter* shows how an individual armed with sheer determination strives to understand their geography, learn and unlearn a colonial education. This way, Ngugi imports his conceptual frame of decolonising the mind to pen life narratives engaged in healing the colonial wound by re-ordering the meaning of traumatized pasts. Thus, in reading the memoirs we journey towards social renewal and reconstruction by healing the colonial wound. ■

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A decolonial reading of Madagascar's national cultural policy

Faniry Ranaivo Rahamefy

Introduction

Like many other African countries, Madagascar experienced a "miscarriage of decolonization" in which decolonization was "never taken to its logical conclusion" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022: 50). The political decolonisation achieved at the time of independence did not bring about actual independence and failed to put an end to *coloniality*, which can be construed as the perpetuation of colonialism beyond the end of colonisation. This is partly due to the priority given to political sovereignty over other aspects, including economic, epistemological, ontological, and cultural decolonisation.

This paper analyses Madagascar's cultural politics in the light of debates on decolonisation. More specifically, it will read Madagascar's 2021 national cultural policy, as well as the initiatives implemented within its framework, as a decolonial attempt to reconstruct and reinforce Malagasy cultural identity, which had been thwarted by colonialism. Using the concept of coloniality of power (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022) as an analytical tool, the paper argues that Madagascar's national cultural policy aims to drive the decolonisation project by tackling the coloniality of being.

The analysis will rely on a qualitative reading of said policy, as well as on two specific initiatives implemented within its framework: the restoration of the Queen's Palace that was burnt down in 1995 and the creation of an official arena for *Hiragasy* shows, which are traditional Malagasy performances. Consequently, the paper will be articulated in three principal moments. First, it casts a light on culture as part of the political work of decolonisation by situating Madagascar in its colonial and decolonised context. Then, Madagascar's cultural policy and the related initiatives will be read using coloniality of being as a critical tool. Finally, insights will be offered as to the reason why, despite this cultural policy marking a shift in cultural politics and reflecting a political will to free Malagasy identity from the shackles of global coloniality, such a decolonial move does not lead to actual decolonisation.

Culture and cultural policies as part of the decolonial project

In this paper, I argue that Madagascar's latest cultural policy is a decolonial project. Although it has not been clearly and officially stated as such, I am reading it as having a decolonial intent as the focus is in reinforcing Malagasy cultural identity, thus Malagasy being, in front of cultural and economic imperialism. Building on the work of the Latin American Modernity/Coloniality group (including Grosfoguel 2007; Mignolo 2007; Quijano 2007) on coloniality, and more particularly borrowing the concept of coloniality of being from Maldonado-Torres (2007), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022) asserts that coloniality of being is a component of global coloniality. It pertains to the "dehumanization and depersonalization of colonized Africans into damnés", who "were denied full humanity and reduced to non-beings who subsisted and lived within the underworld of coloniality" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022, 6). The experience of colonisation is understandably different for each former colony, and so is the experience of decolonisation. However, "dehumanization and depersonalization" are a shared experience, which explains the use of the analytical tool of coloniality of being as a prism through which to interpret attempts to reverse such dehumanization.

Through the creation of hierarchies of culture, knowledge and being, the French colonial project attacked the Malagasy psyche, making the Malagasy colonial subject believe that their traditions,

religions, language, history, dances and music, and essentially their being are inferior to those of the colonisers. Arguably, the entire colonial endeavour relied on such debasing of Malagasy people's sense of being, making it easier to introduce and justify other forms of abuse, whether they be economic, social, or political. "Dehumanization and depersonalization" run so deep that up until this day, the French language is considered as superior to Malagasy in the public subconscious, and one unspoken requirement for considering people as "successful" is their mastery of the French language.

In that sense, culture is political since colonial politics targeted cultural identity as a basis for colonial hegemony. In the same way, mobilising culture, through the institution of a cultural policy, can be seen as a political enterprise with decolonial undertones. Arguably, decolonisation is a political work, which might disqualify policies as part of decolonisation efforts as they are not necessarily of a political nature. However, in the present paper, Madagascar's cultural policy is read as containing elements the aim of which is to reverse the effects of coloniality of being, hence making it political.

Madagascar, coloniality, and decolonisation

Madagascar is an island in the southwest Indian Ocean. Its history is marked by several migration waves from East Africa and Southeast Asia, which accounts for its diversity in terms of folklore, traditions, dialects and physical characteristics of its people. Despite such diversity, the country was unified under one central kingdom in 1810 under the reign of Radama I (1810-1828) who is the first one to be recognised as King of Madagascar. The very terms of such a recognition are problematic, since such a recognition was awarded by Great Britain. Recognition from a European nation was then necessary to legitimise local power, which raises questions about the actual legitimacy of such a power and the imperial interests that underlie such an action. Not even a century after the start of the reign of Radama I, Madagascar was made a French colony, with the colonial period going from 1896 to 1960.

There is already a rich literature on the history of Madagascar[1], and a gloss of such a history is outside the scope of the present paper. This section will instead address a couple of historical facts which relate to coloniality of being and the cultural and epistemological basis of colonisation and colonialism. The first one of those is the elimination of the teaching of Malagasy history from school curricula. Indeed, one of the measures implemented during the colonial period was literally to erase Malagasy history, and replace it with French one. French history and literature were taught in schools, which can be interpreted as an act of colonising Malagasy people's mind and being. For instance, through erasure of what made up their identity, Malagasy people were taught that there was a hierarchy of being, at the top of which one could find the French, and at the bottom rung of which the Malagasy found themselves. They were essentially dehumanised, as they were denied humanity through erasure of their history and the rendering of their language and literature as primitive at best, and non-existent at worst. Such a measure is a clear example of how the French colonial project in Madagascar was predicated on linguicide, epistemicide, culturicide, and historicide. In other words, it was the being itself that was alienated by the colonisers.

The second measure is *malgachisation*, which arguably was an attempt to reverse such coloniality of being. It was a measure instituted during the Malagasy Second Republic (1975-1992), which was a socialist state. It consisted of teaching the entire school curriculum using the Malagasy language. It can be read as an attempt to re-valorise the Malagasy language and identity that were thwarted by colonialism. The First Republic (1958-1972) was then deemed to be a form of neo-colonialism as French control continued the governance style immediately adapted from colonial rule. It was thought that the First Republic did not bring about genuine independence, a perceived failure that the revolutionary socialist Government of the Second Republic sought to address. *Malgachisation* was however met with massive criticism, and is, up to this day, blamed for the downward developmental trajectory of the country. It is often invoked how the educational level of Malagasy students started

plummeting from the moment all the classes and subjects were taught in Malagasy. Instead of restoring the glory of the Malagasy language, this measure therefore had the reverse effect and crystallised even more the Malagasy inferiority complex, whereby the French language is seen as superior and conducive to personal success and national development.

Those historical moments, be it the prohibition of the teaching of Malagasy history during the colonial period or the use of Malagasy as the main language of education, speak to how the mind and sense of self are a major field on which power battles were fought, whether it is to establish colonial rule or to counteract its long-term damaging effects. However, if it is education that was mobilised to attempt to reverse coloniality of being in the past, one can nowadays note a mobilisation of culture in order to valorise Malagasy identity.

Madagascar's cultural policy: a decolonial reading

This part aims to analyse Madagascar's national cultural policy in the light of the previous debates on global coloniality. The main text on cultural policy is Act no. 2021-019 of 01 July 2021 which repeals former Act no. 2005-006 of 22 August 2005 on national cultural policy for socio-economic development. The current policy will be read using a decolonial framework. But in order to highlight decolonial intentions or lack thereof in the present policy, it is first necessary to retrace how it has shifted from the previous law which it repealed.

Act no. 2005-006, that is to say the former cultural policy, was embedded in a discourse around development. Culture was conceptualised as contributing to socio-economic development. In the explanatory statement of the law, it is asserted that "it seems increasingly necessary to use the living culture of Malagasy people, which consists of both their identity and diversity, as a source of wealth"2 (Republic of Madagascar 2005, 1). The main point of promoting culture was therefore in order to achieve economic development. Cultural identity was seen as an asset that can be commodified and capitalised on in order to boost Madagascar's economic growth. The aim of that cultural policy was to "capitalise on cultural heritage that Malagasy people inherited from their ancestors in order to build sustainable peace which is conducive to a real and genuine development"3 (Republic of Madagascar 2005, 1). The clear emphasis was therefore on the developmental and economic gains that cultural heritage could help achieve. This is a reflection of the priorities of the government that was then in place.

The current national cultural policy represents a departure from such a stance. Though developmental talk is still present, the emphasis is heavily on how it is necessary to valorise and be proud of Malagasy cultural identity and diversity. The aim is to foster a sense of pride and oneness, and instill nationalism in citizens. The explanatory statement of the policy is indicative of this will to strengthen national identity: "given the evolution of new technologies and considering globalisation which is making major strides, it is necessary to retain the distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and affective characteristics of Malagasy society"4 (Republic of Madagascar 2021, 1). It is clear here that Malagasy national identity is pitted against global culture. That statement is an acknowledgement of cultural imperialism and of how it can lead to acculturation, and even culturicides. Such a stance is interpreted as a decolonial attempt.

Indeed, coloniality is the continuation of colonial patterns of hegemony beyond the period of colonisation per se. A decolonial initiative is therefore an attempt to counter such a phenomenon. By trying to reinforce Malagasy identity, this policy is countering the aspect of global coloniality which Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022, 2020, 2018) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) have termed "coloniality of being". It is the process of creating hierarchies of humanity, so as to legitimate the use of violence on whole groups that are deemed as sub-human. The 2021 national cultural policy aim to lift Malagasy identity is arguably a decolonial strategy in that it refuses coloniality of being whereby Euromodernity is deemed as a superior cultural model. Such a decolonial

intention is apparent in the global objective of the cultural policy, which is to instill in citizens a sense of "dignity, integrity, national pride, and patriotism"5 (Republic of Madagascar 2021, 10). Colonialism has dehumanized and demeaned Malagasy people so much that in a general way, what is French is considered as superior to what is Malagasy, and France per se seems to be synonymous with the promised land. By putting the emphasis on the value of Malagasy cultural identity, this cultural policy is arguably seeking to reverse the effects of coloniality of being.

One flagship initiative within the framework of this cultural policy is the renovation of the Queen's Palace that was burnt down in 1995. The Palace was initially called *Rovan'Antananarivo*, and was an emblem of Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. *Rova* is the Malagasy word for royal domain. Once renovated, it was renamed *Rovan'i Madagasikara*, moving the emphasis from a single city and an ethnicity to the entire country and the nation. That denotes public officials and state crafters' willingness to instil in citizens a sense of belonging to one nation and to restore a sense of pride that was thwarted by decades of colonialism and continuing global coloniality. The Palace therefore serves as a symbol for the nationalist project of nation-state building. It is a resource that the state mobilizes to fuel national pride and to counter coloniality of being. The project of nationalism has consistently prioritised the presentation of a unified nation. Its ideology aims to create a shared historical memory (Mhiripiri 2009). The endeavour of nationalism consists in establishing a national narrative, iconic figures, and cultural customs. One such figure is therefore the Queen's Palace that is used to generate pride, unity, and patriotism in order to resist coloniality.

Another initiative that falls within the scope of Madagascar's national cultural policy is the creation of an official arena for the practice of *Hiragasy*, which is a traditional performance from the central highlands of Madagascar. *Hiragasy* is historically associated with lower classes and is scorned by the upper echelons of society, which are the inheritors of colonial privileges and which prefer Euromodernity (Mauro 2001; Raison-Jourde 1995; 1991). This initiative aligns with the purpose outlined in the national cultural policy, which is to "safeguard, promote and enhance the cultural heritage of Malagasy society"6 (Republic of Madagascar 2021, 5). The creation of the official arena signifies the state's recognition of the performance. This is yet another instance of the state's efforts to elevate indigenous cultural expressions and to eradicate their reputation as inferior forms which is inherited from colonial times. The public authorities are recuperating *Hiragasy* in order to build a national sense and consensus for many people and generations to come. The traditional performance that was previously marginalised is now valorised in official discourses. Public officials therefore use *Hiragasy* as an instrument of nation-building and the forging of a national consciousness, thus countering coloniality.

All in all, Madagascar's national cultural policy and the related initiatives bear witness to the state's efforts to reverse the effects of coloniality of being through nation-building and the valorisation of national identity. Those decolonial efforts however are not conducive to effective decolonization.

A "miscarriage of decolonisation"? The way forward

The above initiatives are not enough to bring about real decolonisation. Indeed, for a decolonisation project to be efficient, one needs to simultaneously tackle other elements of colonial project, especially the epistemological front. Even if elements of Madagascar's national cultural policy could be read as adopting a decolonial stance, the decoloniality project they carry is a shallow one, as it fails to take into account all elements of global coloniality. As discussed above, the policy mainly focuses on the coloniality of being. But arguably, epistemological freedom is the basis for any other type of freedom and will contribute to creating African futures. Ndlovu-Gatsheni insists on "the necessity of epistemic freedom as an essential prerequisite for launching genuine African futures capable of delivering both epistemic and economic freedom" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 249). We cannot invent African futures as Africans, and achieve economic

freedom without achieving epistemic freedom first. It is thus necessary to root any decolonial initiative into a fight for epistemic freedom. That explains the reason why the decolonial position adopted in Madagascar's cultural policy is ineffective in achieving the desired transformations, and why even today, there remains a persistent perception that Malagasy culture is inferior to the global one. For the project to succeed, it needs to be rooted in an epistemic struggle and to take into consideration the knowledge front.

Madagascar's national cultural policy needs to tackle the coloniality of knowledge, and as such, needs to be part of a larger policy initiative that is transversal and includes other stakeholders and departments. In concrete terms, the coloniality of knowledge does not only concern culture but mainly education. One place where to start the epistemic fight is by decolonising curriculum. The isolated action of the Ministry of Culture through the cultural policy and the related initiatives cannot guarantee effective decoloniality. Departments such as the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research need to be involved in the decolonisation project, and the knowledge terrain should be specifically targeted. Indeed, "since power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined, control of the domain of knowledge generation and knowledge cultivation remain very important for the maintenance of asymmetrical global power structures in place since the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity." (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 8). Control of the knowledge front has always been at the basis of Euro-North American hegemony in other domains, be it the cultural, the socio-economic, or the political arena. To bring about effective decolonisation, Madagascar's cultural policy therefore needs to be part of a larger decolonial policy apparatus that primarily targets knowledge production.

This paper analysed Madagascar's national cultural policy and related initiatives through the concept of coloniality, especially that of coloniality of being. Coloniality is the continuation of oppression beyond colonisation. Madagascar's cultural policy demonstrates the state's willingness to valorise Malagasy cultural identity and to foster patriotism and national pride. By so doing, it attempts to counter the effects of coloniality of being, as Malagasy identity is valorised and lifted in the face of global culture. However, such a decolonial position alone fails to bring about effective decolonisation. Decolonial efforts must be part of a larger multi-sectoral policy initiative targeting mainly coloniality of knowledge, as that is the historical bedrock of power asymmetries between the North and the South. ■

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Endnotes

1 See for instance Brown 1995; Heseltine 1971; Rajemisa-Raolison 1966; and Ralaimihoatra 1969.

2 *"Il semble de plus en plus nécessaire de faire de la culture vivante des Malgaches, constituée à la fois de son identité et de sa diversité, une source de richesse."*

3 *"Il s'agit de faire du patrimoine culturel que le peuple Malagasy a hérité de ses ancêtres, un capital pour la construction d'une paix durable, préalable à un développement profond et réel".*

4 *"Compte tenu de l'évolution des nouvelles technologies et de la mondialisation qui avance à grand pas, il est indispensable de conserver les traits distinctifs, spirituels et matériels, intellectuels et affectifs caractérisant la société malagasy."*

5 *"la dignité, l'intégrité, la fierté nationale, et le patriotisme".*

6 *"Sauvegarder, promouvoir, et valoriser l'héritage culturel de la société malagasy."*

‘*Fincila Diddaa Gabrumma*!’: Decolonial Discourses of Oromo *Qeerroo* (Youths) Movements in Ethiopia

Urgessa Deressa Gutu

Introduction

The scholarship on (de)coloniality has largely overlooked the legacy of internal conquests and subjugations within African states such as Ethiopia that escaped direct European colonial occupation but itself was ‘invented’ on the logic of European colonial structure (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990), treated its subjects as a “near-colonial situation” (Tarake, 1991: 21) and produced its own complex core-periphery dynamics. Though some decolonial movements adopted ‘*Ethiopianism*’ as their name (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015) inspired by Ethiopia’s successful defense against Italian colony at the battle of Adwa in 1896, Ethiopia has its own evils of internal hierarchization and asymmetrical relations of power.

Supported by the European colonial powers, Abyssinia (old Ethiopia) conquered the Oromo and other southern nations in the last quarter of the 19th century (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990; Mergessa and Kassam, 2019). Since their occupation the Oromo people employed different forms of resistance including peasant uprisings, liberation movements, and everyday forms of resistances to challenge and subvert dominating ideologies and institutions in their fight for freedom from Ethiopian coloniality (Regassa, 2023). The latest one is *qeerrroo*[1] movements (aka Oromo protests) of 2014-2018. This Oromo *qeerroo* movement widely employed decolonial discourses to mobilize and justify the protests activities against the Ethiopian government. The employment of decolonial discourses are critical in the success of the activists at mobilizing Oromos from all walks of lives to sustain street rallies for more than three years and to fource the then ruling party to transfer power to factions of Oromo elites. The discourse was framed under the theme ‘*Fincila Didda Gabrumma*’ (literally translated as ‘struggle against enslavement’). The Oromo conceptualize their colonialism as “enslavement of a free born and self-governing people whose rule of law has been replaced rule of violence” (Mergessa and Kassam, 2019: 9). The *qeerroo*s described the government they were protesting against as ‘*sirna gabromfataa*’ (enslaving system) and their protests activities as ‘*qabsoo bilisumma Oromo*’ (struggle for Oromo liberation).

The paper argues that the discourses employed by the *qeerroo* activists were decolonial in tone, and emanated from the coercive and exploitative relationship between the Ethiopian empire and the Oromo nation. Since their forceful integration into the Ethiopian empire in the last quarter of 19th century, the Oromos were denied the cultural rights to use and develop their language, practice their religion, and exercise their tradition; subjected to rules by elites from Abyssinia and the exploitation of their natural resources; and suffered from dispossession and eviction from their land (Bulcha, 2005; Hassen, 1990; Jalata, 2020). Thus, decolonial discourses were employed to call for reestablishing indigenous systems while simultaneously challenging and destroying imperial legacies, institutions, and narratives through discursive and practical means (Regassa, 2022).

This study analyzes the *qeerroo* movements giving emphasis to the discourses used during the protests and the implications of those discourses about the nature of relations between Ethiopian empire and the Oromo nation. I conducted a retrospective analysis of the discourses surrounding the *qeerroo* protests by using critical discourse analysis and placing the study within a decolonial literature. In addition to helping to understand and interpret the nature of internal colonial experience of the Oromos in Ethiopia and their resistance discourse, the essay also contributes to discussion of decolonial discourses in the context of resistance movements against coloniality beyond the immediate subjugation to direct Western occupation.

Historical Context of Oromo Oppression and Emergence of *Qeerroo* Movements

The establishment of the modern Ethiopian empire in the 1880s marked the brutal end to the Oromo people's independent existence. The Oromo people lost both their history and sovereignty as a result of the invasion and annexation of their territory by Abyssinian empire (Hassen, 1990). Emperor Menelik solidified his imperial authority and instituted a settler colonial system throughout the entirety of the acquired lands, including Oromia (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). As Markakis puts it:

> a commensurate number of people moved from the Abyssinian homeland in the northern plateau to the conquered territories in the south to control and administer them. Many more followed to take advantage of fertile land offered by the imperial state practically for free in order to expand its tax base and to exploit native labour in conditions of quasi-serfdom. Appropriately known as *neftegna* (gunmen), the northerners comprised a ruling class that was essential to the maintenance of the imperial state and its economy. It was large, armed and a pillar of the imperial state (Markakis, 2011: 6)

After conquests the Oromo people suffered multiple violence in the hands of the colonizing Abyssinians. The 'settler colony' led to the destruction of cultural, material, and political systems of the Oromos. Large-scale exploitation and deculturation had been a part of the conquest and occupation of the Oromo (Hassen, 2002). Oromo religious traditions were outlawed, the land was taken, cultural institutions were destroyed, and the Oromo indigenous system of government was abolished. From a historical standpoint, the assimilation policy of the successive Ethiopian rulers towards the Oromo people has always constituted sought to erase the Oromo language, culture, and national identity (Bulcha, 2005; Degefa, 2019). The Oromo farmers' status was diminished to that of *gabbars* (serfs), who worked as laborers for the armed settlers. The Oromo people were socio-culturally and psychologically dehumanized in addition to being exploited economically (Hassen, 2002). Even though the Oromo people make up the majority of the population in the Ethiopian Empire, they have been reduced to a political minority since their conquest.

The *qeerroo* movements which arose in 2014 were triggered by the proposed 'Addis Ababa Integrated Regional Development Masterplan' (The Masterplan, hereafter), which aimed to annex peri-urban Oromo farmlands within 40-100 kilometers radius to the city administration. The Masterplan was received with protests throughout Oromia, particularly from universities across Oromia in April 2014. After some lull in the protests, persistent protests commenced on 12 November 2015, triggered by privatization of a soccer field, and the selling and clearing of the nearby Chilimoo forest in Ginchi, a small town 65 kilometers away from Addis Ababa in the west. The protest then spread to other large and smaller cities/towns in Oromia. The Masterplan was viewed by protesting *qeerroos* as "ethnic cleansing" (Degefa, 2019), a "Master Killer" (Gutu, 2019), and as "politically motivated land grabbing" (Wayessa, 2020: 73).

In hundreds of towns and cities around Oromia, thousands of youths joined the movement by closing down businesses and blocking roadways. The response from the state was quick and violent in reaction to nonviolent protest actions. For instance, in Oromia in 2014 alone, security forces killed 500 protestors (Amnesty International, 2014). Protests at the *Irreecha* festival in October 2016 led to a stampede due to security forces firing at the crowds. This led to more violent protests in the following days, before the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency (SoE) on 09 October 2016. The SoE forced the movements to subside, but did not stop them. After the lifting of the SoE in August 2017 the qeerroos resumed with vigour and higher degree of mobilisation using events such as street rallies, market boycotting, road blockages etc. That led to declaration of a second SoE on 16 February 2018. When confronting the qeerroo resistance movements, in addition to using draconian laws and security forces, the government widely utilized colonial infrastructures to crack down including imposing large-scale network

shutdowns, as well as focused website blocking and throttling to preventing qeerroo activists from mobilising online (Murrey, 2023). It also employed colonial repression practices at its disposal from disappearing, beating, and killing activists, to surveillance and intimidation, to arrest and prosecution, to dismissing dissenters as terrorists and more.

The *qeerroo* movements, although triggered by the Masterplan, were an expression of multiple political, economic, socio-cultural questions (Wayessa, 2020; Gutu, 2019). As such, shelving of the Masterplan in 2016, did not convince them to back down but rather caused them to reframe demands for wider political and economic rights and empowerments. The Oromo *qeerroo* movement arose from historical and socioeconomic circumstances sparked by long-standing frustrations over being marginalized, suppressed, and uprooted from their lands under various pretenses by both the present and former governments. In the end, the qeerroo movement contributed to the resignation of former premier and selection of Abiy Ahmed as prime minister in 2018 (Forsén and Tronvoll, 2021). The rise of Abiy being the first Oromo to take the top leadership of the country created a feeling of shared hope and optimism for the qeerroos, but it was short-lived.

The Discourses of *Qeerroo* Movements

The *qeerroo* movement's discourses were amplified via slogans chanted by *qeerroos* on series of protest rallies across Oromia including; *"Lafti keenya lafee keenya!" (*Our land is our bone), "Oromia is not for sale!", *"Finfinnen handhuura Oromiyaati!" (*Finfine is belly button of Oromia), "Finfinneen kan Oromooti!" (Finfinne belongs to the Oromo), "Down down Woyane!", and "free all Oromo political prisoners!" among others.

The slogans "*Lafti keenya Lafee Keenya*!" literally translated as "Our land is our bone" and "Oromia is not for sale!" articulated resistance against the eviction of Oromo peasants from their farming land and the wide scale land grabbing around *Finfinne* and beyond. The Oromo people's claim to their ancestral land is part of the decolonization endeavor, which aims to free them from centuries of imperial oppression by reconfiguring the political, structural, and epistemological framework of the imperial system (Regassa, 2023). It is a general resistance against economic marginalization. New colonial networks and relationships are being solidified as a result of Ethiopian government's attempts to seize land from the Oromo people and give it to businesses from emerging economies such as China and India operating under the guise of South-South cooperation (Arora, 2019).

The motto *"Finfinnen handhuura Oromiyaati!",* which literally means "Finfine is the belly button of Oromia", ascertains Finfinne (Addis Ababa) as the center of gravity for Oromia implying the centrality of *Finfinne* question for the Oromo. During the protests, the related slogan "Finfinneen kan Oromooti" (which means "*Finfine* belongs to the Oromo") reverberated throughout Oromia. It is a claim for administrative and symbolic ownership by Oromos over the city. Examining the establishment of *Finfinne* aids in placing the Oromo people's contemporary grievances in historical context. Before it was made a capital city of the Ethiopian Empire, *Finfinne* was inhabited by different Oromo clans such as Galan, Gulale and Eka of Tulama Oromos (Getahun, 2000). It was an important place for Oromo spirituality since it was the location of the annual *Irreecha* (Oromo thanksgiving) ceremony and was the seat of *Abbaa Muudaa*, the spiritual father of the Oromo traditional religion. The making of the capital city involved the dispossession and evictions of the Oromos from their land. Land payments to northern settler soldiers frequently accompanied the southerly territorial expansion of the Abyssinians and the annexation of modern-day Ethiopia's southern territories (Markakis, 2011). This resulted in the establishment of political and military command centers known as *ketema* (garrison towns), such as Finfinne/Addis Ababa, and the consequent movement of the elites as well as ordinary persons from the northern to the southern regions. Markakis (2011: 27) notes, "The historic role of the conquered territories was to host the excess population displaced from the north by land scarcity". The Oromo clans that were indigenous occupants of the area were disappeared.

The establishment and growth of Finfine also reflects Ethiopia's contentious history of colonial expansion and state construction. A large portion of Ethiopia today bears the scars of internal subjugation with regard to the exclusion of the indigenous people's culture. Finfine is the most visible place in Oromia where the Oromo identity has been uprooted and land has been seized. Such historical injustice is the source of grievances that call for the restitution of the Oromo to their rightful place (Milkessa, 2021). It is seen as a representation of Oromo oppression and the focal point of their fight to reclaim their identity and the right to possess resources. In order to restore *Oromummaa*—a shared identity as Oromo—the *qeerroos* resurrected the idea that Finfinne belongs in Oromia's administrative domain (Gutu, 2019). At the very least, the *qeerroos* seek to see the 1995 constitutional promise of Oromia's "special interest" in the capital to be fully articulated in law and stop its spiral into Oromo land.

The "down down Woyane!" had been an anthem of Oromo protest.[2] The motto reveals the call by the *qeerroos* to end oppressive Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) dominated government of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (now defunct) and quest for political empowerment of the Oromo (Interview). It emanated from the fact that the elites from Tigray that allied with the TPLF disproportionally dominated the political, military and economic powers. The *qeerroos* demanded democratic governance in ways that reflect genuine federalism; self-rule in their region and shared rule at the federal level and equitable allocation of benefits of regional resources and growth (Ezekiel, 2019). The call for "Free all Oromo political prisoners!" is extension of the quest for liberty, freedom of expression and association for the Oromos. Many of the Oromos that spoke against the regimes, including opposition political party leaders, journalists, activists and bloggers, were incarcerated by the government. The *qeerroos* were asking for the release of those political prisoners.

The *qeerroo* movement discourses also emphasized the resistance against cultural and linguistic hegemony and supported the quest to revive and promote Oromo language, culture and identity. The resistance against the Master plan wasn't only against displacement and land grabbing but also opposition to linguistic and cultural destruction. The Master Plan proposed Amharic replacing *Afaan* Oromo as the official language of government and education, an unacceptable change for the Oromos considering the long history of linguistic marginalization (Murrey, 2023). Up until 1991, *Afaan* Oromo was not forbidden for use in government functions and educational institutions. The *qeerroos* demanded the development of Oromo language and culture, and making *Afaan Oromo* another working language of the Ethiopian government in addition to Amharic. The founding of Addis Ababa as a settler colony and the city's ongoing expansion into the neighboring Oromo lands are seen by the *qeerroo* protesters as perpetuation of coloniality. In addition to the tangible aspect of large-scale land grabbing, the Addis Ababa expansion has been framed as "cultural genocide" (Debelo and Soboka, 2023: 715) and "ethnic cleansing" (Degefa, 2019) because it has upended indigenous social networks and cultural practices of the Oromo. In general, the discourse of *qeerroo* movement evolved from single opposition to implementation of city Master plan to economic empowerment, political self-determination, human right protection, genuine federalism, promoting Oromo culture and identity, and finally to demanding profound changes in the Ethiopian political system.

Concluding Remarks

The quest for land intertwined with identity and self-determination lie at the center of Oromo *qeerroo* movements. The modernity manifested through urbanization and infrastructural expansion in Oromia has entangled with tragic consequences of land dispossession, political marginalization, and socio-cultural genocide. The Oromo *qeerroos* resistance against the expansion of Finfinne was informed by the memory of the violent structural arrangement of internal colonial settlements and administration headquartered in garrison villages, which later evolved into urban centers at the curse of the indigenous Oromos political, economic, social, cultural, and collective identities. Though numerous immediate causes might be linked to *qeerroo* movements, the core igniting quests are

grounded against the colonial legacy of Abyssinian imperialism. It has been centered on the core elements of regaining the lost political philosophy and its premises that existed in *Gadaa* rules and are concordant with modern democratic rules. The Oromo people proposed big visions of democratic political ideals and self-determination rather than change to a new regime in the name of belonging to its nation. The reference to the Gadaa system—a traditional democratic political structure of the Oromo—speaks to the postcolonial aspiration of reclaiming pre-colonial political philosophies as a means of resisting continued subjugation.

Even though the Master plan was the immediate cause there were many underlying causes of the *qeerroo* movements that are part of deep rooted Oromo questions in Ethiopian politics. As Merera (2016) argues the underlying social ferment for the *qeerroo* movement was the "historical marginalization of the Oromos as well as the continued marginalization, […] maladministration and the discrimination thereof". Thus, the *qeerroo* movement's discourses echoed "the pleas of Oromo farmers who were dispossessed of their land, disconnected from their kinship, and agonized because of settler colonial system and exploitative economies under successive regimes in Ethiopia." (Regassa, 2023: 2).

The *qeerroos* adoption of the decolonial discourse offers an alternate account to the widely held belief that Ethiopia was the only country in Africa to resist imperialism (Arora, 2019). Within the Ethiopian context, colonialism can be expressed as the perpetuation of various forms of brutality and dominance, as well as the subordination of many cultures and ethnicities into the dominant Abyssinian political, cultural, and economic systems (Murrey, 2023). By instituting colonial policies and practices and denying civil equality to the Oromo and other groups, the "modern" Ethiopian state that arose in the final decades of the 19th century established a system that has continued exploitation and oppression. By opposing the colonial policies and practices the *qeerroo* movement emerged to alter the Oromo nation's subservient status. Therefore, the fundamental decolonial turn for the *qeerroo* movement is exercising "self-determination, sovereignty, and multinational confederal or federal democracy by radically transforming the Ethiopian colonial state and its racist political structures" (Jalata, 2020: 1). It is about transforming of Ethiopian empire into a viable state by reestablishing indigenous systems while simultaneously challenging and destroying imperial legacies, institutions, and narratives through discursive and practical means.

By using both overt and covert forms of protests to challenge the force of control, the *qeerroo* movement inspired inspirations of liberty. In this regard, the *qeerroo* movement was able to influence changes in government policies and leadership as well as increased awareness and pride in Oromo identity. However, the movement faced various challenges and setbacks. The government of Abiy Ahmed that came to power on the back of *qeerroo* movements is unable and/or unwilling to meaningfully decolonize the Ethiopian empire. It instead embarked on the ambition to inherit the colonial power for personal and/or group interests, which led the *qeerroos* to shift to armed insurgency under the umbrella of the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). Future study should investigate the dynamics underlying transition from urban based *qeerroo* movements to armed insurgency by OLA and its implications for Oromo national struggle. ■

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Endnotes

1 The word '*qeerroo*' in Oromo language literally means a bachelor (female form '*qarree*'). In contemporary usage, it stands for politically conscious young person.

2 'Woyane' literally denotes TPLF the dominant party within the coalition EPRDF.

Does the Movie Matter? A Tanzanian History of Third Cinema

Stephanie Wanga

Souffles : *Quelle est ta conception de l›homme de culture en Afrique ? Quel est le rôle du créateur en Afrique ?*

Ousmane Sembene : *Pour moi, c›est un homme politique, avec tout ce que ce terme implique, c›est un homme totalement engagé dans une perpétuelle dénonciation. Son rôle, c'est d'être militant, combattant. L'art peut être une arme. D'ailleurs, toute culture est politique.1*

Introduction

In this paper, I present a snapshot of Third Cinema's rich, continuing presence and history in Tanzania. Third Cinema is, as Amil Shivji, a protagonist-of-sorts of this work, says, "a philosophy…a genre…a movement" (2024). Third Cinema, a cultural cog in the multifaceted, often fiery, tempestuous wheel of decolonisation, is a radical movement of cinema-otherwise. It is not quite counter-cinema if one considers counter-cinema to be that which "[conjures] up a prescriptive aesthetics: to do the opposite of what dominant cinema does" (Willemen 1994: 7). Counter-cinema implies a reliance on dominant cinema, in order to present itself as its opposite.[2] While Third Cinema has in common with counter-cinema its hostility to dominant cinema, their terms of engagement were not to be dictated by what dominant cinema presented. How else, then, might we define Third Cinema and its contribution to decolonisation, if we are to see it as a standalone anticolonial cinema movement?

Many words come to mind in defining Third Cinema—popular, democratic, conversational, experimental, documentary (in both a figurative and literal sense), iterative. Third Cinema began in earnest following a series of impassioned manifestos from Latin American filmmakers, and one of them, Fernando Solanas, is quoted defining it in the following way:

> Generally speaking, Third Cinema gives an account of reality and history. It is also linked with national culture…It is the way the world is conceptualised and not the genre nor the explicitly political character of a film which makes it belong to Third Cinema… Third Cinema is an open category, unfinished, incomplete. It is a research category. It is a democratic, national, popular cinema. Third Cinema is also an experimental cinema, but it is not practised in the solitude of one's home or in a laboratory because it conducts research into communication. (Quoted in Willemen 1994: 9)

In terms of singling out defining features of Third Cinema with greater degrees of specificity, these are difficult to pin down given the vast body of work definable as Third Cinema. Willemen once again provides us with something of a guide:

> two characteristics must be singled out as especially useful and of lasting value. One is the insistence on its flexibility, its status as research and experimentation, a cinema forever in need of adaptation to the shifting dynamics at work in social struggles. Because it is part of constantly changing social processes, that cinema cannot but change with them, making an all-encompassing definition impossible and even undesirable. The second useful aspect follows from this fundamental flexibility: the only stable thing about Third Cinema is its attempt to speak a socially pertinent discourse which both the mainstream and the authorial cinemas exclude from their regimes of signification. (Willemen 1994: 10)

In this sense, Third Cinema turned on its head all the hallmarks of the colonial condition: humiliation via aesthetics made way for an unceasing struggle for dignity via aesthetics, the elitist made way for the popular, the rigid made way for the progressive,

the closed made way for the open, market practices made way for decidedly socialist ones. It came to deconstruct and help reconstruct all that was left in disarray. Third Cinema was to prove vital even and especially when both the anticolonial filmmakers and everyday people became increasingly skeptical of the independent state. When the state took advantage of the Pan-Africanist movement to distract from its own failures and point to a vague outside as culprit, a Pan-African culture-as-dissent persisted and provided a critical outside vital for interrogating the terms of freedom. This cultural space was to be found in "radio airwaves, the pages of magazines, festival gatherings, and the intimate spaces of bedrooms" (Tolan-Szkilnik 2023, 3). Political ideas can be found in many places, and in fact in many places more clearly than one might find them within art and popular culture—depending on what genre of clarity one requires. However, it is the singularity of art and popular culture as a medium or a site for political expression that is especially interesting.

writes of the double sense of the term "spectacle" when thinking through the effect of art forms, within the context of Garveyism. She writes about how Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association's (UNIA) showcasing of literary talent had both the aim of showing that "artistic genius could be found among the masses" and securing "self-representation of the masses" (Getachew 2021: 3). The "performative and theatrical staging of the [UNIA] convention", where through theatrical acts, "members of the Negro race would come to see themselves as the Universal Negro, a collective, transnational, and empowered political agent", effectively "seeing through one common spectacle", was another form of self-representation (2021: 3–4). This is where the double sense of "spectacle" rises in a way that can be applied to art forms and popular culture more broadly:

> …the spectacle indicates both an instrument, a prosthetic eye, employed to aid or supplement a limited capacity for perception—and also a striking public display that generates "curiosity, or contempt, marvel or admiration". The UNIA's founding politics sought to overcome the limitations of sight that prevented the race from recognizing itself as a new political subject by enacting a spectacular performance of the Universal Negro. That is, the visual spectacle of the convention corrected and enhanced the lens through which Black people perceived themselves. The production of a common spectacle worked against the ever-present ideology of white supremacy, which justified racial and colonial domination as inevitable and natural. (Getachew 2021: 4)

There are ways in which art forms enable us to see what may otherwise not be readily seen, in a sense paradoxically because of both their loudness (allowing for spectacle or the spectacular) and silences (allowing for reflection). This is similar to what Jean-Godefroy Bidima, albeit in a different context, refers to as the *orality of silence* (Bidima 2004). Art and popular culture often speak precisely by not speaking and have an uncanny capacity for expressing the otherwise inexpressible, precisely by not overtly expressing it. Indeed, many of the key thinkers behind the movement insisted that one must not force any particular reading of a work: stating "their opposition to a sloganized cinema of emotional manipulation" (Willemen 1994: 6). They argued that "a cinema that invites belief and adherence rather than promoting a critical understanding of social dynamics is regarded as worse than useless" (Willemen 1994: 6). Via Third Cinema, unlike via many other more typical means of 'doing politics', everyday people, literate and illiterate, the educated and uneducated, were welcomed to communally consider their circumstances.

Even so, much of this literature on Third Cinema has focussed, for good reason, on the extensive productions of this genre of film coming from West and North Africa, especially in French. One knows the main characters; the Sembenes, the Getinos. However, it is important to take seriously what some have called the 'national' character of Third Cinema. As Willemen wrote: "…the national question itself has a different weight in various parts of the globe, but the forced as well as the elective internationalism of cinema—especially of a cinema with inadequately

developed industrial infrastructures—tends to bracket national-cultural issues too quickly. And yet if any cinema is determinedly 'national', even 'regional', in its address and aspirations, it is Third Cinema" (Willemen 1994, 17). I, therefore, bring the analysis of Third Cinema down to a context one does not often find in the literature: Third Cinema in Tanzania.

Third Cinema in Tanzania

What one might call a watermark of sorts in Tanzanian Third Cinema are the undertones of the rich histories of Tanzania's socioeconomic struggles, particularly the echoes of Ujamaa, the Zanzibar Revolution, and the questions of (African) socialism made East African. In this section, I take from interviews I have had with two of Tanzania's foremost filmmakers, both asserting that their work is in the tradition of Third Cinema, one a pioneer, the other a present-day trailblazer—Martin Mhando and Amil Shivji, respectively—to present a snapshot of the character of Third Cinema in Tanzania. The interviews were semi-structured, lasting about an hour and a half at a time, in a mix of Swahili and English.
Martin Mhando is perhaps one of the earliest filmmakers in Tanzania to work in the Third Cinema tradition. He worked under the aegis of the Tanzania Film Company, a state-sponsored filmmaking body in the 1970s, and was, for a long time, the director of the renowned Zanzibar International Film Festival. He stresses that at each of these points in his life, despite various regrets, he has always tried to be guided by the principles of Third Cinema. His films were critical in the exposition and critique of Ujamaa. While he worked under government sponsorship, he tried to present a lucid (Guneratne 2003)[3] engagement with Ujamaa via film. If what is at stake in Third Cinema is the "yoking together of the cognitive and the emotive aspects of the cinema" (Willemen 1994: 6), Mhando tried to present an honest, rather than "[smothering]" analysis of Ujamaa by way of reflective, relatable, even humorous storylines. To this end, guided by the changing circumstances in Tanzania, he directed *Yombayomba,* the rousing sequel to *Fimbo ya Mnyonge* (1972), which had been "the first Tanzanian-produced feature film", and which had presented Ujamaa in a broadly salutary light. While still under the constraints of what was essentially a propagandist government film apparatus, Mhando deftly negotiated changes in the plot that would make discernible bubbling disquiet regarding Ujamaa. This was how, rather surprisingly, still under the aegis of the Tanzania Film Company, Mhando made this film which he describes as "covertly critical" (2024) of Ujamaa. He invited a conversation, trusting the intelligence of his interlocutors. He laments that not many other people outside of Tanzania in the movement engaged with his film—"the subject, Ujamaa, was…a hard sell globally." Here, we begin to see what is lost in the tendencies of homogenising works in the tradition, or even the conflation between Third Cinema and Third World Cinema; in how these generalisations can obscure more than they reveal (Shohat and Stam 2014). Unless people are invested in understanding the socioeconomic and historical circumstances from which these films emerge, the cognitive processes that make Third Cinema Third Cinema may not be realised. To this day, Mhando works on bringing film especially to marginalised Tanzanian communities, even using DJs to present the films in 'vibanda umiza'—small stalls in which Tanzanians gather to watch things, including film. The name roughly translates to 'hurt-sheds'—sheds so small that people have to crowd into them; uncomfortable spaces, but necessary spaces—spaces for film. He wants to have the conversations where the people are at.

Amil Shivji, on the other hand, is a 34-year-old filmmaker whose first inspirations within Tanzanian film were Mhando's works. His *Vuta n'Kuvute,* on the Zanzibari Revolution, was Tanzania's submission to the Oscars in 2023. He is categorical about his works also being within the tradition of Third Cinema. Being part of this movement, undergirded by this philosophy, means that the work:

> …has to be community-oriented; it has to…[serve] a community and a goal of the marginalised. In and of itself it is a critique… the critique is not coming from this individual as a filmmaker; it's in conversation with the community that you're talking about…I'm making a critique of our society from the perspective of the marginalised. Now, of

> course, I'm not part of many marginalized groups in Tanzania, so then what does my role become? It's not simply just a purveyor of… the microphone…that's the NGO approach. They say: 'say what you want', but then [after that] they [repackage what you said in] their own language. But when [I'm] working with a community…and I have an idea that I like...rooted in something that I've read in a journalistic piece or something that has moved me in life, then I spend time in those communities to hone in on that idea…So the writing stage happens when I'm in those communities… [I] write with the community. When you're making the film you're working with the community…You're not working with "non-professional actors" [in the way academics may frame it]; you're working with community members….All of this…is how Third Cinema has influenced [my style]. When I started [making films], I saw other filmmakers doing similar things—not many, quite few, in the [East African] region, maybe 4 or 5 using this similar style but [they] weren't talking about Third Cinema. But it came from a very dire need…to…tell your stories, to want to be honest with the communities you're working with…to be critical of what you're seeing in mainstream media. Other filmmakers weren't necessarily using the words Third Cinema or anticolonialism or revolutionary… but they were the same aesthetics. There [was] this revival or extension of the movement that is happening and I really, really have faith in that. That's what I've seen in the last 10 years. (Shivji 2024)

To tell the story with/alongside the marginalised is, necessary for Amil, to engage the sociopolitical context from a class perspective. "Those who talked about Africa rising were often of a particular class, and so of course Africa was rising for them. 'Africa's rising,' but rising on whose backs?" He asks. It means telling that story. It is also to meaningfully involve the community, to not see them as a mere 'audience'. He speaks about how difficult it had always been for him to answer the question of who his audience was: the question implies that one is talking *to* rather than with a person:

> Why was it so difficult for me to answer this question? Immediately, you want to say it's the Tanzanian people. But wait, I don't need to *tell* the Tanzanian people [about themselves]. You don't ever need to tell an oppressed person they're being oppressed… You want to make films or tell stories about *oppression*, but you don't need to tell someone 'hey, you're being oppressed, and this is the ABCD of what you have to do'—that's very much the NGO approach. That's the kind of content creation they want—very didactic… [it's about] lecturing down. I've never taken that approach…I look at how I've been making films and how many people have been making films on the continent from the [19]60s onwards; you're making the film with the community; you're casting from the community; you're crewing from the community; you're training in that space; you're working with equipment, you're setting up this infrastructure that the community is working with; the daily conversations that you're having with people around you…very few people are brought from outside. On *Vuta n'Kuvute* we had a 150-person crew and 2 foreigners…if there's something we're unsure of in the design, or [historicity] etc…we'd just ask someone on the street, and they'd ask somebody else, and we'd get 5,6,7 opinions on…a small technical issue, but the answer is coming from the community. (Shivji 2024)

In this way, Shivji says, the community claims the film—calling it "filamu yetu"; not "filamu yako"; our film, not your film. He speaks of how everyday people in these communities would shy away from watching these films in cinemas in big malls, thinking that's not the kind of place folk "like them" go, and how he brings the films to them, via community screenings, in a radically humanising act that is both as simple and as profound as "*you, all of you, deserve film*". In such contexts, where one bears the burden of telling stories that often carry with them immeasurable pain, one must also be careful about epistemic deference (Táíwò 2021). As Willemen writes:

> Third Cinema is most emphatically not simply concerned with 'letting the oppressed speak with their own voices': that would be a one-sided and therefore an untrustworthy position. Those voices will only speak the experience of oppression, including the debilitating aspects of that condition. Third Cinema does not seek to induce guilt in or to solicit sympathy from its interlocutors. […] Because of the realisation of the social nature of discourse, the Third Cinema project summons to the place of the viewer social-historical knowledges, rather than art-historical, narrowly aesthetic ones. These latter knowledges would be relevant only in so far as they form part of the particular nexus of socio-historical processes addressed. (1994: 28)

The burden of the Tanzanian Third Cinema artist is to engage with communities to whom one owes so much, who are navigating the complexes of post-revolutionary mainland-island 'unity', Ujamaa, racial tensions, Maasaiphobia (Manji 2022; Singo 2022), socialism-turned-something-else, but to also stand apart from them where necessary, in order to engender what would be as fully "lucid" a conversation as possible (Guneratne 2003). Nonetheless, this is not to be a hagiography of either filmmaker at all, but to highlight the possibilities of decolonial praxis immanent in film-as-critical conversation. "Film is like a mirror, once you see yourself in the mirror you may try to beautify yourself a little bit more; and you may want to fill cracks, etc.," Shivji says. One needs to be careful about what one does with the ugliness one sees.

Conclusion

The history and the future of the state and decolonisation in Africa, in my opinion, *must* at least partially invoke the history of popular culture, including movements of popular cinema and their effect. When we ask what it is our people want, we must listen to all the sites from which they speak. In this paper, I have offered a snapshot of what Third Cinema has meant for Tanzania, in order to emphatically say that yes, the movie matters, and also to hopefully both highlight the sheer possibility still latent in the Third Cinema movement and encourage the revisiting and support of it wherever its fires still smoulder. Film, as a decolonial practice, and as it has regularly been practised in Tanzania, including by these filmmakers, has privileged debate on social dynamics and material realities, it has trusted the intelligence of the interlocutor, leaving no stone unturned in the search for a restorative world. It has shirked the gaze of the coloniser and privileged the community and its priorities. If we think about the kinds of coloniality thinkers like Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni are interested in, also discussed elsewhere in this volume—coloniality of knowledge, coloniality of power, and coloniality of being (2013), this mode of filmmaking confronts, albeit to varying degrees, each genre of coloniality. It has decentred the filmmaker and made the film a decidedly popular vessel—the film is not dictum but invitation—an invitation to settling the terms on which we, as the formerly colonised, can live with dignity. ■

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Endnotes

1 Having been asked by the Souffles journal what the role of the creative/artist is, Sembene answers: "for me, they're a politician, with all that term implies. They're completely engaged in perpetual denunciation. Their role is to be militant, combatant. Art can be a weapon. What's more, all culture is political." (My translation)

2 While key counter-cinema theorists may remind us that they "never argued that the strategies and characteristics of counter-cinema should be canonised and frozen into a prescriptive aesthetics" but "pointed to the importance of cinematic strategies designed to explore what dominant regimes of signification were unable to deal with", theirs was still a "politics of deconstruction, not an aesthetics of deconstruction" (Willemen 1994, 7).

3 Lucidity, to some, is a crucial characteristic of Third Cinema films. Guneratne discusses that for some, like Willemen, Third Cinema filmmakers' "insistence" on lucidity—as intelligibility—suggests that "something other than the mere rejection of Hollywood's model" (Guneratne 2003, 14)—as many have insisted, Third Cinema is not counter-cinema.

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