



African Studies Quarterly

Volume 6, Issue 3
Fall 2002

Published by the Center for African Studies, University of Florida

ISSN: 2152-2448

African Studies Quarterly

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Jeremy Rich

King or Knave?: Felix Adende Rapontchombo and Political Survival in the Gabon Estuary¹

JEREMY RICH

Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, the town of Libreville on the Gabon Estuary went through numerous changes as it moved from a marginal French naval base to become the capital of the rapidly expanding colony of French Congo. European officials, through a combination of force and gifts, had managed to obtain control over the Gabon Estuary from Mpongwe clan chiefs in the 1840s.² The French administration did relatively little to assert their authority before 1875. However, those clan chiefs who had enriched themselves as middlemen between African interior trade networks and Europeans purchasing slaves and ivory, lost both their monopoly over trade and control over their dependents. As increasing numbers of Africans from other regions including migrating Fang clans from Northern Gabon settled in the area, the small collection of Mpongwe clans found themselves at odds with new rivals and an increasingly forceful colonial regime by the 1870s.

Felix Adende Rapontchombo (1844-1911), the leading clan chief of the coastal Mpongwe people, left a lasting impression on American and French visitors during this period, as the greatest advocate of Mpongwe urban interests. Adende descended from the Asiga clan leader Rapontchombo, who had become a major figure through careful negotiations with French naval officers and European slave traders in the early nineteenth century. But Adende struggled to retain a place in formal politics during and after the dramatic growth of French power in Gabon in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Adende faced a dilemma that many African political leaders confronted in this period. How to maintain their autonomy amidst the imposition of an enlarged colonial bureaucracy, one that slowly superseded older ad hoc arrangements between indigenous polities and foreign authorities. Emmanuel Akyeampong's assessment of the last independent Asante ruler Agyeman Prempeh applies equally to Adende: "For Prempeh the challenge was to situate himself in the discourse of modernity and appropriate the empowering aspects of modernity while appearing demure and non-threatening."³ Adende drew from multiple, often conflicting ideas of "civilization" drawn from Catholic priests, American missionaries, and French republican ideology to justify his continued importance while defending his own interests.

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a1.pdf>

Adende's story is part of a much larger series of developments that posed challenges for African political leaders and urban communities in West and Central Africa. Early efforts to classify African political leaders in terms of either collaboration or resistance during the initial moments of European occupation have now given way to less simplistic approaches. Scholars have repeatedly criticized the paradigm of resistance/ collaboration favored by nationalist and Marxist scholars of the 1960s and 1970s. This model paid scant attention to the lived worlds, multiple identities, and internal conflicts in colonized communities.⁴ In the last decade, African historians have reconsidered relationships between urban coastal leaders who acquiesced to European occupation and the multi-faceted apparatus of foreign authorities. For example, wealthy and mission educated notables in colonial Lagos claimed a role for themselves as cultural brokers, turning to diverse local and European intellectual traditions to demand a role in shaping colonial policies.⁵ Mtis and Muslim families in the French enclave of coastal Senegal employed divisions in republican ideology as well as a shifting set of identities that confounded colonial social boundaries to spread their cultural and economic influence.⁶ Older legal and political institutions in Accra continued to survive with limited interference decades after the formal occupation of the city by British forces in the 1870s.⁷ Adende, though less successful than some of his West African counterparts, also manipulated colonial hierarchies and reshaped older notions of political authority.

One of Adende's most remarkable achievements was his recognition of multiple sites of power and disparate attitudes on educated Africans among European figures in Gabon. His long campaign to prove his worth to the French colonial administration reveals a complex series of debates among Europeans over the role of educated urban Africans were to have colonial rule. Like many of his fellow Mpongwe, Adende's ability to maneuver between local, missionary, and secular idioms of power unnerved officials trying to keep a sharp distinction between European and African cultures.⁸ His experiences underline those recent studies which question generalizations regarding French colonial policy of "assimilating" Africans through European education.⁹ Adende's case, while underlining these differences, also exposes the importance of individual French officials in determining the limits of African political authority. Fluctuations in his position often resulted more from the arrival and departure of commandants rather than from shifting intellectual currents in high colonial circles.

Adende's struggles also demonstrate how Western-educated Africans detected the contradictions of colonial law as early as the late nineteenth century. Mahmood Mamdani has argued that the colonial state was a Janus-faced entity that treated colonized Africans as a racially defined citizenry bound by law and as subjects governed by a regime of administratively driven justice.¹⁰ Republican values and arbitrary forms of coercion/control coexisted in French colonial regimes in Africa. Adende, recognizing the divergence between the rhetoric of assimilation and the authoritarian nature of French administration in Gabon, pitted the notion of citizenship against the oppressive, ill-defined power practiced by colonial administrators. While efforts such as Adende's became commonplace in French colonies by the 1920s, his activities predate those of other West African political pioneers (such as Blaise Diagne in Senegal) by over thirty years.

Despite his importance to this period, Adende's career has received little attention from scholars. Gabonese historian Anges Francois Ratanga-Atoz, author of the most comprehensive description of the chief's career, has presented him as an articulate victim of French colonial officials.¹¹ Ratanga-Atoz builds his review of the Asiga leader's life as an example of resistance to colonial authority. While Ratanga-Atoz accurately depicts Adende's battle with the French colonial administration between 1876 and 1900, he tends to downplay the Mpongwe clan chief's determination to preserve control over domestic slaves and his own autonomy. Events after 1900 (left out of Ratanga-Atoz's account) highlight the incoherency of policies undertaken by individual local administrators. American Protestant and French Catholic missionary material unavailable to Ratanga-Atoz also sheds further light on Adende's negotiations with colonial authority.

This essay explores Adende's attempts to place himself within the French colonial order from his ascension to power in 1876 until his death. Rather than simply dissenting against French authority, Adende presented himself as a loyal partner to missionaries and government interests without denying his African cultural background. He carefully crafted identities from a patriotic Catholic king to the Asiga clan leader, to bargain with rival missions and government administrators in Libreville. The clan leader's strategies reveal a diverse and complex intellectual background that transcended colonial categories of difference. Nevertheless, the chief's versatility posed a threat to officials determined to place African chiefs in a fixed hierarchical system. Adende's attempts to use republican arguments proved less valuable than his personal relationships with local administrators. Instead of heeding the chief's desires for opening alternative notions of modernity that allowed for African influences, authoritarian French policymakers in Gabon allowed no place for autonomous African participants in the colonial state.

THE FIRST RISE AND FALL OF FLIX ADENDE, 1876-1884

At the death of his father Dnis Rapotnchombo (the first chief to accept French rule in the Gabon Estuary in 1839) Adende became the chief of the influential Asiga clan in 1876. His territory, located on the south bank of the Gabon Estuary, was directly across from the French colonial capital of Libreville. A former clerk for the French customs service and a product of Catholic mission schools,¹² Adende seemed well placed as an intermediary between local and foreign communities. By the late 1870s, the small Mpongwe community had lost much of its former wealth and importance due to both the decline of the Atlantic slave trade and the establishment of French rule. Adende therefore sought to reassert the political rights of the Mpongwe and restore the power of clan chiefs.

The young chief allied himself with Catholic missionaries in Libreville. The French Catholic order of the Holy Ghost Fathers (established in the region in 1844) had encountered varied opposition from Mpongwe people. Indigenous supernatural beliefs, polygyny, and domestic slavery all led to friction with missionary doctrine.¹³ Adende, married to one wife in Christian fashion, gave missionaries hope that he would provide a model for his subjects to follow. Even priests' objections to domestic slavery quickly fell by the wayside. Father Pierre-Marie Le Berre, Bishop of Libreville, wrote glowingly of the chief's faith:

Today, [Adende's 500 slaves] no longer are unfortunates who tremble before a master having over them the power of life or death. They are now the servants of a master who they love and venerate. Brought together in large numbers, they receive from his royal mouth the words of God...¹⁴

In a difficult mission field, Adende's ascension seemed to be a triumph and a indication of the Catholic Church.

Claiming that he rejected local supernatural beliefs and the temptations of European traders, Adende presented himself as a Christian monarch willing to serve the Church and the French state. In 1877, he wrote the head of the Spiritan mission in France, "Advised without doubt by the spirit of evil, the heathens who surround me do not take a liking to my position to always remain a Christian..."¹⁵ Since much of the power of clan chiefs resided in their knowledge of mystical forces,¹⁶ This stance could have put him at odds with others within his community.

Adende also aroused mixed emotions among French officers in Gabon. Administrators generally considered Adende as a "typical" Mpongwe: verbose, attracted to European clothes/language but ultimately decadent and lazy. As a result of their early acceptance of missionary education and involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, Mpongwe men and women had adopted many elements of European consumerist habits.¹⁷ They often dressed in European clothes, used literacy to obtain skilled positions with traders or the colonial government, and believed themselves to be the equals of Europeans. They refused to obey French demands for manual labor, which they believed fit only for their slaves.

European and American observers in the late nineteenth century espoused ambivalent views of the Mpongwe which often reflected in their portrayals of Adende. Officials and missionaries alike repeatedly attacked the Mpongwe community's supposedly superficial civilization, demonstrating a fear that European contact only weakened rather than improved colonized peoples.¹⁸ One administrator declared in 1873, "The Mpongwe continue placidly their bestial and indolent life. In short, the Gabonese have all the flaws of a demi-civilization without having its advantages."¹⁹ However, missionaries and officials were divided over the exact nature of this supposed decadence. Whereas officials tended to write off the Mpongwe as inherently depraved without any hope of reform, American and Catholic missionaries believed that the introduction of European traders into the region had created many moral difficulties.

European observers imposed these general positions regarding the Mpongwe on Adende. Commandant Clment (1875-77), who believed the Mpongwe were "utterly wasted," thought of the young leader as ambitious and "the most dangerous man" in Gabon.²⁰ In January 1876, he accused Adende of resisting a forced labor policy recently imposed in Libreville.²¹ The chief, who had written a complaint to the Minister of Colonies over Clment's harsh policies in 1875, appealed to Catholic missionaries. Though fond of Adende, his willingness to settle legal disputes without government approval, his claims to royal status, his use of European military dress, and his marital disputes all dismayed priests at Libreville.²² But opposed to anti-clerical administrators and defenders of the French monarchy, the Holy Ghost Fathers refused to abandon their protg.

Adende realized that his attempts to maintain authority and autonomy had created many enemies. In 1878, he wrote Bishop of Libreville Le Berre:

[Satan], who knows what a fatal blow my union with the missionaries to do good brings to his rule over [Gabon], makes many efforts to harm me. Men also have a large part in these diabolic machinations...whites and blacks are all on my back...²³

Unfortunately, written sources and oral traditions on Adende do not furnish much information on local attitudes towards the new ruler. European views on the chief dominate the historical record. Government documents describe his dealings with members of the colonial bureaucracy. Some officials, won over by the chief, tried to use him as an auxiliary. Admiral Ribourg, Commandant Clment's immediate superior, assigned Adende to care for the colony's cattle in 1877.²⁴ Henri-Clry, Commandant of Gabon in 1880-1881, assigned Adende to mediate Euro-African disputes.²⁵ In turn, Adende wrote letters to the Minister of Colonies proclaiming his loyalty to France.²⁶

Adende often presented himself as a French patriot and a stalwart Catholic.²⁷ At the same time, he acted to defend his interests as a slave owner and an independent judge. In 1877, he asked the commandant of Gabon to return runaway slaves to Mpongwe masters.²⁸ Though willing to report certain information to officials, he settled some disputes over slaves and supernatural threats without consulting state authorities. After finding Adende had allowed one man to be tortured and had imprisoned another on charges of sorcery, a naval captain demanded the chief's exile to Senegal for insubordination.²⁹ A French doctor wrote in 1877, "[Adende] is accused on occasion of playing both sides and, by flattering both sides, to join with those who appear to serve his interests best."³⁰ Many became skeptical of the Mpongwe chief.

Adende's tactics, rather than being seen as pragmatic political choices, provided ammunition for Europeans convinced of his duplicitous nature. The pervasive stereotype of the untrustworthy African servant, imperfectly educated and willing to betray Europeans, proved quite effective in discrediting Adende. In 1881, a French naval officer had the chief arrested and denounced him to his superiors as a drunkard dependent on superstitious beliefs.³¹ After Adende led a boycott against a French trader in 1882, his adversary wrote an anti-clerical French deputy in Paris to put pressure on the local administration to recover the money. The deputy mocked the chief's ties to missionaries as yet another terrible illustration of "false civilization" introduced by misguided Catholic education.³² Adende's links to the Church thus weakened his position in Paris with the increasingly anti-clerical government.

Adende's position became extremely precarious between 1882 and 1884. He tried to combat his poor reputation through letters to French senators, private citizens, and French priests. One letter, reprinted in *Le Monde*, asserted his eternal loyalty to France and castigated naval officers who claimed he depended on "fetishes" rather than the Catholic Church.³³ The Holy Ghost Fathers remained loyal to their most prominent convert.³⁴ Henri-Clry's successor Commandant Masson (1882-1883) did not concur. Much like his predecessors, Masson found Adende's penchant for monarchy intolerable. He wrote his superiors, "this 'king' has returned to the interior after saying it is due to him that there is peace in Gabon. He forgets that before being 'king' he was a clerk at the local government warehouse making 30 francs a month."³⁵

Refusing to pay his salary as fixed by the 1839 treaty, Masson had Adende's Libreville house stripped of its possessions and told an American missionary that the chief had poisoned his recently deceased wife.³⁶

Adende tried several different strategies to handle the crisis. For the first time, he curried favor with American Protestant missionaries hostile to their "Papist" Catholic rivals and the French colonial regime. Adende told American pastor William Walker that Bishop Le Berre had created problems for him and was "thoroughly disgusted with Roman Catholicism – doubtless because it works against him."³⁷ He then offered American Protestants the opportunity to build a school on the Estuary south bank, where he stayed in seclusion out of reach of the small colonial administration across the bay. Neither approach provided him much protection from the French.

Adende faced his greatest challenge in late 1884. Masson's successor, Commandant Cornut-Gentille (1884-1885), had Adende arrested in late October 1884 for supposedly enslaving fugitives who had fled Portuguese plantations on So Tom.³⁸ The charges appeared dubious to American missionaries in Libreville.³⁹ Government tolerance for dissent had ended. Cornut-Gentille imprisoned Adende on a French ship and ordered his deportation to Dahomey. Feigning a rendezvous with missionaries, the chief escaped the ship and, in a tactic worthy of his resourcefulness, changed his clothes to elude French and African guards.⁴⁰ Hidden by other Mpongwe, he immediately began waging a campaign to exonerate his reputation. He even wrote a letter to the wife of Cornut-Gentille asking her to intercede with her husband.⁴¹

BOYCOTTS AND BUREAUCRATS: ADENDE, COLONIAL AUTHORITY, AND THE POLITICS OF REHABILITATION, 1884-1905

As Adende struggled for a new trial he remained a fugitive well into the 1890s. The French administration in Gabon could not locate the concealed chief. Since many of his relatives and supporters worked for the government, the inability of the administration to capture Adende indicate that he retained the respect of Mpongwe people.⁴² For the next decade, he lobbied French senators and various missionaries for a full hearing of his case.⁴³ Despite his previous criticism of Catholic missionaries, one priest even sent him paper and pens to write his letters.⁴⁴

Adende wrote French Senator Schoelcher and to a colonial court in Senegal asking to have the charges against him dismissed.⁴⁵ After repeating his loyalty to France, he asserted, "the Commandants of Gabon and the naval officers have always had the custom of abusing their authority."⁴⁶ Noting that Senegalese rulers received many benefits from French overlords, Adende demanded his full salary from the Commandant of Gabon and a payment for libel. The Mpongwe chief thus presented himself as a victim of colonial administrators unwilling to follow their own legal code.

Members of the French colonial administration responded to Adende's demands in diverse ways. A French judge in Senegal stated the Mpongwe chief had not been convicted of any charges and that Cornut-Gentille had overstepped his authority.⁴⁷ Senator Schoelcher passed on the case to the Colonial Ministry.⁴⁸ Yet local officials disputed Adende's position. After initially trying to settle the disagreement, Commandant of Gabon Pradier (1885-1886) reported to the Minister that the chief was a pathological liar who was simply exploiting the naiveté of

Parisians unfamiliar with colonial rule.⁴⁹ The Commandant considered Adende an example of the corrupt and 'demi-civilized' Mpongwe, in his view "the most apathetic and lazy negroes in the world."⁵⁰ Pradier's views, loaded with contempt for Africans who challenged rigid distinctions between Europeans and Africans, won out over the Senegal court's legal arguments.

Adende's attempts to retain control over slaves did not aid his cause. In early October 1886, some slaves who had escaped from the central Gabonese coast arrived in Asiga territory. When Adende tried to put the fugitives into bondage, they fled across the Estuary to Libreville.⁵¹ Pointing to this episode, the new Governor of Gabon declared Adende had shown his true colors. In the Governor's opinion, this rebellious chief had duped Senator Schoelder with "long words of civilization, emancipation of the black race, suppression of slavery, loyalty to France..."⁵² The fact Adende was a product of mission education thus made him even more suspect to the governor.

Having little hope of a full pardon from French authorities, Adende refused to return to Libreville. Apparently disenchanted with the Catholic mission's lack of assistance, in the late 1880 he again promised to support American Protestant missionary efforts. One American pastor noted in 1888, "The so-called king of that country wishes to unite with us. I do not know how far he may be sincere but our elders think he really does desire to reach the Lord."⁵³ At the same time, Adende continued to lobby the Minister of Colonies and high-ranking colonial officials for exoneration.⁵⁴

The Commissaire General of French Congo, Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, who did not share the disdain for Adende prevalent in colonial circles, tried to broker an agreement in 1891. Adende rebuffed de Brazza's polite request to discuss the affair. After repeating yet again that he would do nothing to harm France, he listed off his ordeals:

Lack of respect, suspension of my customary payment, other financial torts, imprisonment (twice), an aborted exile...and [being forced] to hide myself...I will not reappear in public until I have been rehabilitated by the French representatives in Gabon.⁵⁵

Despite his skillful arguments, Adende remained a fugitive through the mid-1890s.⁵⁶

By 1896, three of Adende's daughters were mistresses of high-ranking colonial officers in Libreville.⁵⁷ Though recourse to law did not tame his critics, relationships of a more personal nature did advance Adende's standing. Missionaries often grumbled that nearly every European officer had a Mpongwe lover in Libreville in the 1890s.⁵⁸ He did not neglect the political possibilities of these liaisons. Though no evidence suggests that Adende's daughters' relationships softened the opinions of commandants towards him. These connections allowed Adende to make his presence felt in at least one major moment of strife between Mpongwe leaders and the administration.

In April 1899, the French colonial administration decided to place a high tariff on a variety of imported goods such as salt, alcohol, and tobacco. European traders tripled their prices on these goods immediately afterwards.⁵⁹ Once announced, this decision incited great dissatisfaction among the Mpongwe community. Imported alcohol played a major role in daily

social life, as well as marriage and funeral rituals. It also has become a means of exchange. Thus, the decree weakened the buying power of African residents of Libreville.

Adende and his fellow Mpongwe clan chiefs rejected the arbitrary order. On May 8th, 1899, they announced that they had placed an *omowetchi* beneath the bridge at M'Pyra which leads to the center of Libreville. This item remains shrouded in mystery. Connected with the male power associations among the small Sk (Skiani) ethnic community, fragmentary references describe it as an object, a spirit and a male power association.⁶⁰ In previous conflicts involving European traders and slaves, Mpongwe clan leaders had announced its use as a means of killing their opponents.⁶¹ Clan leaders had used power objects in other social conflicts in the nineteenth century.⁶²

Through the *omowetchi*, Adende and his cohorts asserted their authority over a variety of groups outside their nominal control. They declared that the *omowetchi* would kill anyone who entered a European store any Mpongwe woman who had sexual relations with a European.⁶³ Rural Fang food vendors refused to sell to white customers and as a result the Catholic mission had to close its schools.⁶⁴ The prohibition against Euro-African relationships reinforced the influence of male family members over women. These chiefs had also acted to protect their consumption patterns from colonial state interference.

French tourist and government accounts of the boycott offer contrasting views on the role of Adende. Baron Edouard de Mandat-Grancey, an aristocratic dandy who visited Libreville several days after the end of the boycott, mocked the event: "It was about a strike of women, as appeared in the old days in Athens, according to Aristophanes in the times of Lysistrata..."⁶⁵ Despite its supposed frivolity, the Baron also noted how the boycott caused great concern among officials. He declared the boycott had been abandoned after Adende, the most respected clan leader among the Mpongwe, was brought in chains to Libreville as the instigator.⁶⁶ However, the Commissioner General of French Congo declared Adende had negotiated a settlement with the government and neglected any mention of food in his report.⁶⁷

French missionary sources suggest still another resolution. Infuriated by Adende and Mpongwe chiefs when they no longer could feed their students, the Spiritan priests at Sainte-Marie closed the doors of their schools. On May 14, several chiefs went to the mission to discuss their boycott with Bishop Adam of Libreville.⁶⁸ Although the chiefs promptly declared that they would allow an exception for the mission to buy food, the Bishop refused to reopen the schools.⁶⁹ Two days later, the chiefs agreed to end the protest even after enduring a tongue-lashing from Bishop Adam, who attacked polygyny and the chiefs' willingness to allow female family members to become concubines.⁷⁰ The next day, missionaries at Sainte-Marie received food while government officials decided to lower the surcharge.⁷¹

The protest seems to have ended thanks to missionary intervention rather than state decree. Adende acceded to Bishop Adam's imperatives because of practical concerns as well as moral doubts. By cutting off students from school, Adam offered a threat to their social advancement. Clan chiefs, though willing to oppose state taxation policies, did not want to imperil their children's access to education and material benefits. Though Adende's exact role in this affair is obscure, the documents again denote the complexity of his approaches. Using local expressions of power and manipulating Euro-African relationships to challenge colonial authorities, Adende showed the years had not dimmed his sharp acumen in dealing with

Europeans. Through such tactics, Adende and other African leaders managed to strike both at indigenous and French vulnerabilities.

The Asiga leader's political career continued its rocky course through his final years. Individual administrators remained split over Adende. In 1900, the head of French Congo grumbled that local officials had coddled the aging chief.⁷² Still some European administrators tried to incorporate him directly into the colonial bureaucracy. Around 1903, he collected taxes for the French government on the south bank of the Estuary as a "native assistant."⁷³ Ambivalence surrounding Adende would again lead to disgrace. In 1905, officials stripped him of his title for keeping some of the tax revenue he had collected. Much to the chagrin of his former superiors, Adende continued to collect taxes and threatened to use his supernatural power against anyone who dared to punish him.⁷⁴ After the Mpongwe leader wrote to the Minister of Colonies yet again, the local administration eventually stopped harassing Adende.⁷⁵

Given his perpetual difficulties, it is ironic that a colonial inspector used this chief and his troubles as an example of colonial mismanagement. In 1910, Inspector Frzouls from the Minister of Colonies visited Libreville and scathingly condemned the Gabon administration. In the year of Adende's death, the inspector lamented the administration's denigration of a man who could have served colonial rule. Frzouls reported, "He is reduced to hiding in the forest at the news that a European is coming. This attitude is not going to build up prestige [for the government]..."⁷⁶ Whereas previous officials generally had no faith in African intermediaries, Frzouls' position emerged in official policy after World War I through attempts to buttress the declining power of African chiefs. Fearful of the supposed collapse of "traditional" society and norms, administrators came to believe that chiefs needed their support. Such policies came too late to allow Adende yet another chance for a comeback.

Conclusion

Adende's life illustrates the incoherence and changing attitudes towards the "civilizing mission" in Africa during the early period of colonial French occupation. Rather than presenting a monolithic position, officials in various branches of the colonial bureaucracy were often divided over the legal rights and status of Africans. Such ambivalence offered some literate individuals an opportunity to contrapose different parts of the French state bureaucracy against one another. In his creative responses and challenges to local authorities, Adende took advantage of religious tensions, sexual politics, and dissonance within the colonial state hierarchy to create an independent niche for himself. Although willing to obey French authorities, he also tried to protect domestic slavery and guard his own interests. Raponthcombo thus drew from European and local idioms of political action. Much like African residents of Dakar's *quatre communes* in Senegal or chiefs in the Ivory Coast, Adende's efforts demonstrate the formation of a hybrid political culture among educated Africans.⁷⁷

His approaches also show the limits of these multifaceted strategies. Many European officers ultimately feared or despised Adende and his education. Parisian deputies and senators did little to support their African subordinate. Missionaries, rarely able to influence an increasingly anti-clerical government, could not furnish their former student much tangible assistance. Despite these problems, he remained the leader of the Estuary south bank and kept

his slaves. Given the number of African states and leaders devastated by early French colonial rule, his survival itself was no small feat. However, his declining fortunes also show the inability of educated Africans to gain much support in Paris against the caprices of local colonial administrators prior to the First World War.

Adende's experience was much different than those of leaders elsewhere on the West and Central Africa coast. Compared to Asante ruler Agyeman Prempeh I or the descendants of Umar Tal in Senegal and Mali, Adende's pathways to accommodation only led to dead ends. Why did other African leaders in a similar position receive better treatment from colonial authorities than Adende? One answer might be Adende's confidence in French legal institutions. Willing to reinstate representatives of pre-colonial polities by fiat, French governors and administrators had less tolerance for chiefs that tried to deal directly with Paris using legal strategies. Another possible explanation lies in divergent European attitudes towards African political structures. No equivalent to Lord Lugard or Maurice Delafosse ever emerged in colonial Gabon to argue for the usefulness of older African political institutions.

Adende's struggles left a major impact on subsequent anti-colonial protests in Gabon. Later generations of Gabonese intellectuals and political leaders faced similar difficulties with colonial administrators. Twenty years after Adende's boycott of 1899, Libreville town protestors combined the use of power objects with lobbying of Parisian parliamentary representatives to discredit local officials.⁷⁸ Lon Mba, the first president of Gabon, established a relationship with colonial authorities similar to that of Adende. Another graduate of Catholic mission schools, Mba used indigenous supernatural practices (such as the *bwiti* movement) alongside French bureaucratic models to advance his personal career in ways that created suspicions.⁷⁹ Like his predecessor, he suffered exile but then redeemed himself by convincing French administrators he would ultimately serve their interests. Both cases illustrate how noted ties between sorcery and bureaucratic models of political action actually from the dawn to the twilight of colonial rule in Central Africa.

Notes

1. The author would like to thank the United States Information Agency and the Institute for International Education for partially funding research in France and Gabon for this project. He also shows gratitude to the following scholars and staff for their assistance: Paul Gneo and the other staff members at the Archives Nationales du Gabon, Libreville, the staff at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, the Archives Nationales Section Outre-Mer at Aix-en-Provence, the State Historical Society in Madison, Anthony Porter and the participants at the International Securities Studies conference on Imperialism at Yale University, Dr. Phyllis Martin, and the anonymous readers for comments and criticism on previous drafts on this essay.
2. For discussions of the occupation of the Gabon Estuary by French forces and African responses, see the following: Deschamps 1965, 92-126, 283-345; Patterson 1975a, 90-92; Bucher 1977, 224-231, 252-272, 297-319; M'Bokolo 1981, 29-48, 50-68.
3. Akyeampong 1999, 282.

4. Starting points for reviewing the lengthy literature criticizing the categories of “resistance” and “collaboration” are Cooper 1994 and Ortner 1995.
5. Zachernuk 2000, 21-43.
6. Diouf 1998, 671-696; Robinson 2000.
7. Parker 2000.
8. The attempt to suppress hybridity by colonial rulers has long been noted by historians. For example, see Cooper and Stoler 1997, 4-11.
9. Conklin 1997.
10. Mamdani 1996, 19.
11. Ratanga-Atoz 1973, 161-208.
12. Archives of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Chevilly Larue, France [Archives CSSP], Bote 4J1.3a, Lettres 1869-1872, Flix Adende to Dupaz, 23 September 1869.
13. The full scope of these debates lies outside the scope of this essay. See Gardinier 1978, 49-74.
14. Le Berre 1877, 439.
15. Rapontyombo 1879, 218.
16. Bucher 1977, 29-36.
17. Patterson, K. David 1975b, 217-238.
18. Attacks upon the Mpongwe for their supposed decadence in the late 19th century are far too numerous to mention in their entirety. For examples, see de Compigne 1878, 58; Briault 1930, 108; Payeur-Didelot 1899, 118-119.
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22. Delorme 1877, 137; Archives CSSP, Bote 4J1.3b, Letters 1877-1892, Lettres 1877-1880, RP Stoffel to Monseigneur Le Berre, 25 April 1877 and 23 June 1877; RP Delorme to Trs Rvrend Pre, 9 November and 10 December 1877.
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42. ANSOM 2B13, Commandant Gabon Cornut-Gentille to Ministre des Colonies, 12 and 16 December 1884.
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47. AM FM SG Gabon-Congo IV-16 Roi Flix Dossier, Tribunal de Saint-Louis, 14 August 1885.
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51. AM FM SG Gabon-Congo IV-16 Roi Flix Dossier, Commissaire de Police Octave Pan, 8 and 11 October 1886.
52. AM FM SG Gabon-Congo IV-16 Roi Flix Dossier, Lt. Gov. Gabon Ballay to Ministre des Colonies, 13 October 1886.

53. Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the USA [PCUSA Archives], Africa Letters 1837-1903, Stanford University Microfilm Reel 18, Joseph Reading to John Gillespie, 3 July 1888. Though never willing to convert, Adende provided great amounts of support to American missionary Robert Nassau throughout the 1890s such as ethnographic information on Mpongwe customs. See Archives Nationales du Gabon, Robert Nassau Papers, Robert Nassau, "Autobiography," Unpublished manuscript, 1919,1032,1316-1317.
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58. Rich 2002b.
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61. William Walker Papers, Box 3, William Walker Diary, 19 and 21 May 1869 entries; AN FM SG Gabon-Congo I-7, Commandant de la Division Navale des Ctes Occidentales d'Afrique to Ministre des Colonies, 22 July 1869.
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65. Mandat-Grancey, Au Congo, 37-38.
66. *Ibid.*, 40.
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77. Other examples are detailed in Groff 1991; Diouf 1999.
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Changes in Official Attitudes Towards Urban Agriculture in Accra

KWAKU OBOSU-MENSAH

Introduction

Urbanization is increasing in African countries. In 2000 the United Nations reported that 38% of Africans lived in urban areas. This figure is expected increase to 55% by 2030.¹ Urbanization presents both opportunities and challenges, but indications for Africa are that the challenges outweigh the opportunities. Unlike many other parts of the world, Africa's increasing urbanization has not been matched by infrastructural and economic development. As Stren has noted, across much of the continent, basic urban services and infrastructure—housing, water supply, garbage removal, road repair, public transportation, health, and educational facilities— are inadequate and in a deteriorating state.² Difficult economic conditions have shrunk job opportunities especially in urban areas. Consequently, many migrants to urban Africa face the reality of unemployment, inadequate accommodation, lack of good drinking water, etc. In the face of an increasing unemployment rate in the urban formal sector, many urban dwellers get involved in informal sector activities to sustain themselves.³

This paper is about urban agriculture, which is one of the most important informal sector activities chosen by urban dwellers in Accra. It explains why officials initially held negative attitudes toward urban agriculture. It also identifies the factors that contributed to changing official attitudes. It is noted that Ghanaian officials began supporting and even encouraging urban agriculture once they realized the importance of the practice. Certain factors beyond their control eventually compelled them to assume a more positive attitude. Understanding the attitudes of officials is vital because urban agriculture cannot be profitable if officials continually frustrate the efforts of farmers.

The cultivation of food crops on a large scale in the public and private open spaces of cities in the developing world is common but has not attracted the research attention it deserves. Therefore, it has been somewhat of an unknown or unacknowledged phenomenon to policy-makers and city planners in general.

Urban agriculture is defined as the practice of farming within the boundaries of towns or cities. Farming in this sense involves crop cultivation, animal rearing, fish farming, etc. In this definition of urban agriculture, the location of farms plays the most important role. An urban dweller who only farms or maintains farms in a rural area is not an urban farmer. There are two main types of urban cultivation, enclosed cultivation and open-space cultivation.

To understand enclosed cultivation one needs to be familiar with building patterns in Ghanaian towns and cities. Normally, a building is constructed on a plot of land that is fenced or walled. People who cultivate in the enclosed areas around their residences are called

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a2.pdf>

enclosed cultivators. Since it is expensive to own houses in urban Ghana (especially in Accra), only successful business people, high government officials, and the relatively wealthy can afford enclosed cultivation.⁴ Although some enclosed cultivation occurs in the center of Accra, most is done in the suburbs.

The term open-space cultivation is used for any cultivation away from the individual's residence. Cultivated land is not enclosed by any wall or fence. Open-space cultivators are usually of lower socio-economic status, i.e., unskilled workers and/or formally unemployed. Most open-space cultivators do not know the owners of the land they cultivate because they cultivate any land that is currently unused. Open-space cultivation occurs mostly around the center of Accra. Enclosed and open-space farmers have different reasons for farming. Most enclosed cultivators get involved in urban agriculture to cultivate vegetables for home consumption, but for open-space cultivators, urban cultivation is a source of income. While the enclosed cultivators largely consume their harvest, open-space cultivators sell most of theirs.⁵

A high percentage of Accra residents are involved in urban agriculture. An official of the Agricultural Extension Services interviewed in 1995/1996 suggested that approximately half of the residents in Accra are involved in the practice.⁶ This is similar to the rates in other towns/cities in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the UNDP, 80% of families in Libreville (Congo), 68% of urban dwellers in six Tanzanian cities, 45% in Lusaka (Zambia), 37% in Maputo (Mozambique), 36% in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), 35% in Yaounde (Cameroon) are involved in urban agriculture.⁷ In their study of Kampala (Uganda), Maxwell and Zziwa estimated that 36% of the population was involved in urban agriculture.⁸ The involvement of so many people in urban agriculture indicates its centrality amongst informal sector activities.⁹

There are many reasons why urban dwellers go into agriculture but declining purchasing power for many urban workers is an important contributing factor. Furthermore, urban agriculture is potentially lucrative.¹⁰ The risks of harassment and crop destruction by authorities, loss through theft and predation, and other drawbacks are outweighed by the perceived advantages and gains from urban cultivation.¹¹ The rural background of Accra residents is another reason why many of them choose urban farming over other informal sector activities. Many of them are migrants from rural areas who already possess agricultural skills. Consequently, they choose the informal sector activity in which they have the most experience.

REASONS FOR THE NEGATIVE OFFICIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD URBAN AGRICULTURE

The precarious food situation in Accra suggests that urban agriculture should be a potential area for encouragement and development in that city. So why is urban agriculture still largely unrecognized and unassisted if not outlawed or harassed even in years of food shortage?¹² This section of the paper discusses the main reasons why urban agriculture has not always been encouraged in Accra.

PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS

In the past, Ghanaian officials did not encourage urban agriculture because of the supposed hazards associated with it. Generally, officials agree that the use of biocides for pest/disease control can reduce food crop losses, and thus ensure food supplies for the growing

population. However, questions have been raised concerning their effects on human health and the environment.¹³ For example, the use of biocides in urban agriculture has been linked to the bioaccumulation of synthetic organic compounds in aquatic life, particularly fish.¹⁴ Similarly, the World Resources Institute notes that runoff of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides into urban rivers or streams is a significant source of water pollution. The use of chemicals in food production is also thought to contaminate soils and crops.¹⁵ Biocides like DDT have been linked to the death of birds and have been banned in many Western nations.¹⁶ In 1987 it was estimated that approximately 10,000 people died and about 400,000 suffered acutely from pesticide poisoning in developing countries.¹⁷

During this study, one of the officials of the Agricultural Extension Services expressed his fear of contamination resulting from wrongful chemical use.¹⁸ He mentioned that urban cultivators actually concoct chemicals that might be hazardous to humans. According to this official, the average urban cultivator does not know much about agricultural chemicals, so he considered these home-made pesticides to be dangerous. Therefore some officials argue against urban farming, fearing that uncontrolled chemical use will contaminate urban soils and drinking water.

Official skepticism towards urban agriculture is compounded by assertions that the practice leads to an increase in mosquitoes. It is generally believed in the Ghanaian community that rainwater accumulates in the axils of maize leaves and provides breeding places for mosquitoes. On this basis, some officials argue that, in order to control malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases, farming in towns and cities should be discouraged. Yet the belief that maize crops provide breeding places for mosquitoes was successfully refuted by Watts and Bransby-Williams in their 1978 study.¹⁹ It seems likely that all officials are not aware of this research.

According to Goodland et al, public health in the tropics, where mosquito-related diseases alone afflict millions, necessitates the use of biocides for disease vector control.²⁰ However, the widespread use of biocides often results in the emergence of resistant strains of mosquitoes and other disease vectors. For example, by 1976, forty-three species of anopheline mosquitoes (vectors of malaria) throughout the world had developed resistance to dieldrin, and twenty-four species were also resistant to DDT. Resistance to these biocides by culicine mosquitoes (vectors of yellow fever, encephalitis, filariasis, and dengue) increased from nineteen species in 1968 to forty-one species in 1975. As a result, some officials argue that if urban agriculture were discouraged, the use of biocides would decrease in urban areas. Consequently, the emergence of resistant strains of mosquitoes would be checked.

Other officials advocated the banning of urban agriculture on the grounds that the production of food in the polluted environment of cities is inherently unhealthy.²¹ Officials who harbor this concern note that since urban areas are polluted by emissions from industries and vehicles, food grown in the cities is not fit for human consumption. A study conducted by Anku et al amplifies this concern when it warns about "the potentially harmful impact on human health of growing vegetables in the urban environment... through the potential plant uptake of industrial pollutants in the soil, water, or air."²² In addition, some officials argue that uncontrolled animal husbandry within urban areas compromises public health.²³ For example, in the Accra study, the officials shared the view expressed by an official of Ghana's Department

of Parks and Gardens who said, “animals in the city [Accra] are sources of bad odors. In addition, there is always the risk of spread of diseases by animals roaming the streets.”²⁴

Due to high fees for the use of tap water, urban cultivators use other sources of water including gutter water and untreated wastewater. The use of such water may pose a threat to human health, because many African cities have no quality standards or monitoring systems to assess the purity of wastewater before it is applied to crops.²⁵ DGIP/UNDP has also noted that irrigation with untreated wastewater is a problem, and recommends the adoption of low-capital, intensive pathogen/vector elimination processes, as well as an assessment of crop susceptibility to contamination.²⁶ Data collected in Accra during this study show that 42% of the open-space cultivators use gutter water on their crops. Consequently, urban cultivators are frequently accused of applying waste and polluted water to their land. One Accra resident lamented: “Whenever you have the time I will take you to an area where a man is cultivating, and you will see for yourself the type of water he uses. Anybody who sees the water he uses will not touch his crops. No wonder, his wife sells the crops in Accra central, far away from the cultivating area. I don’t think the man himself consumes his crops.”²⁷ The use of unwholesome water by urban cultivators has prompted concern in Accra. An official of the Agricultural Extension Services cited an example from Chile to support his position. In the early 1990s there was an outbreak of cholera in Santiago after the consumption of tainted vegetables, grown in metropolitan Santiago using water polluted by raw sewage.²⁸

ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

Urban agriculture, like other informal sector activities, does not always conform to official zoning and licensing laws.²⁹ The activity is perceived as ignoring city-planning codes. In Accra, agriculture has not been considered a normal part of city life and town planners do not take it into consideration. Consequently, land may not be legally purchased for the purpose of farming. When some Accra city officials were asked whether a plot of land could be purchased for cultivation they answered no. An Extension Services official insisted that title would not be granted if a prospective buyer indicated that the land would be used for agricultural purposes.³⁰ Agriculture is not included in formal planning. As a result, unlike the construction of houses that must follow certain building codes, urban agriculture does not have any codes. Therefore, farmers cultivate anywhere they deem appropriate. This behavior has compelled some officials to point to the unstructured form of urban agriculture as a reason to discourage it.

SOCIAL CONCERNS

Another important factor in understanding why some officials reject the practice is the socio-economic background of the farmers. Earlier studies show that mainly poor, uneducated, and unemployed people in squatter areas were involved in urban agriculture.³¹ Such studies seem to infer that official resentment toward the practice was due, at least partly, to the low socio-economic status of the farmers. Sawio has argued that the increased involvement of highly educated people in urban agriculture would help legitimize it, stating “the more educated the players in the enterprise, the more likely will they be interested in protecting their investments by influencing policies and regulations in its favor.”³²

Data from Accra indicates that prior to the 1970s most urban cultivators were night watchmen, gardeners, unemployed, recent migrants, etc.³³ Only a few people from the middle/upper socio-economic status category were involved. Since 1972, many Ghanaians of middle/upper socio-economic status have become involved in urban agriculture.³⁴ During this study, cultivators were asked about the first time they got involved in urban cultivation. The response is indicated in the table below.

Urban Cultivators Survey

Initial cultivation	Frequency	%
Before 1966	20	10.0
1966-75	67	33.5
1976-85	55	27.5
1986-95	58	29.0
Total	200	100.0

Figures in the table indicate that a third of the cultivators in this study first got involved between 1966 and 1975. Although not clear from the table, most people who began urban cultivation within this period did so after the government introduced Operation Feed Yourself (OFY) in 1972.³⁵ Many people got involved in urban agriculture after the first independent Ghanaian government fell in 1966. That government had sought to maintain the so-called beauty of Ghanaian towns and cities within colonial standards. Moreover, the economic situation in Ghana was relatively good from Independence until 1966. The combination of good economy and stringent government prohibitions kept the prestige of urban agriculture quite low. This discouraged many urban dwellers, but especially the middle/upper socio-economic category, from engaging in cultivation.

Similarly, more women than men were urban cultivators, because women were consciously discouraged from actively participating in the formal work force.³⁶ For example in Ghana: "... the African men were opposed to employment of women in the Civil Service. This was based partly on the fear that, women, with fewer financial commitments, will accept lower salaries than men, who will, as a result be unable to find work."³⁷ Many urban women could not earn sufficient income in the distribution sector. Ghanaian women who were formally employed were generally working in low paying positions. This is indicated in the recommendations of the Civil Service Commission which suggested in 1951:

Apart from posts such as teaching in girls' schools, midwifery, etc., it is, generally speaking, more economical to employ women than men on jobs which involve work of a routine or manipulative and repetitive character not involving long and expensive training, and which offer only limited prospects of advancement. We therefore recommend that the Government should take such steps as are practicable to attract educated women into the Civil Service at all levels, but practically in posts such as typists, stenographers, machine operators, and clerical assistants. We consider that, other things being equal, preference should be given to women candidates for such posts.³⁸

This means women did not generally have alternative sources of income. In addition, they were concentrated in low paying formal sector positions and did not work much overtime. Consequently, many women engaged in urban agriculture to supplement their food supply, and thereby lowered the prestige of the practice.

Finally, during the Accra study some officials contended that since criminals may hide in tall crops, the cultivation of crops like cassava and plantains should not be encouraged in accra center. Actually some urban farmers had been warned not to cultivate such crops. A man who cultivates on Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) land said, "officials of GBC say we should not cultivate tree crops because they create shadow [hideouts] for criminals." ³⁹

REASONS FOR THE CHANGE IN OFFICIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD URBAN AGRICULTURE

Why are officials becoming increasingly positive towards urban agriculture? Their change in attitude is due to both economic and socio-political factors. Government officials in Accra tend to condone urban agriculture when Ghana's economic situation is bad and the cost of living is very high. During difficult times, officials see urban agriculture as one way to alleviate hardships related to food shortages and unemployment. If urban dwellers are not allowed to subsidize their food purchases or to grow food to sell, they may become more alienated from the government. Urban agriculture is seen as blunting those forces that might otherwise compel them to agitate for a change of government. Government officials are also more willing to allow urban agriculture if they perceive that many urban dwellers approve of it. Also, if the socio-economic status of urban farmers rises, officials are more willing to condone the practice. The higher the status of urban farmers, and the more prestigious the practice, the less likely it will be prohibited. Similarly, if many government officials are involved in urban agriculture, they will do little to discourage it.

Socio-political Factors

An increase in the number of elites involved with urban agriculture has helped to induce government officials to take a positive attitude toward the practice. Politicians, professionals and business people are very influential in Ghana and their growing involvement in urban agriculture has raised its prestige. Government bureaucrats do not want to antagonize people of middle/upper socio-economic status. Presently, many government officials in Accra themselves are involved in urban agriculture, and rational people do not make decisions that affect them adversely. Most of the officials interviewed stated that they are involved in urban agriculture. In addition, they stressed that if they did not view urban agriculture positively they would not have become involved. Those not involved cited constraints or lack of land around their houses for cultivation. But these officials were not against the practice and indeed had friends or colleagues who were cultivators. Some middle/upper income residents in Accra are so enthusiastic about urban agriculture that they claimed the practice beautifies the landscape, prevents land from reverting to bush, and helps drive away snakes or other undesirable creatures.

The use of universal franchise to elect political leaders has contributed to the condoning of urban agriculture by Ghanaian politicians. The "one-man one-vote" phenomenon has empowered the average Ghanaian, especially urban dwellers. Opposition to government has usually come from urban areas so various governments spend a lot of resources to maintain urban support. In order to win votes, politicians are increasingly accepting widespread but illegal activities like urban agriculture.

Public opinion has also played an important role in official acceptance of urban agriculture. Over the years, the general public has changed its attitude about urban agriculture. This study solicited the views of non-cultivators about urban cultivation. Forty non-cultivators were asked whether urban agriculture should be encouraged. All forty respondents answered in the affirmative. They were also asked whether they would have given the same answer thirty years earlier. Over half of the respondents said no. The remaining respondents did not know what their answers would have been. Yet, most of those who said they would not have encouraged agriculture in urban areas thirty years ago did not have any concrete reason. The words of an elderly woman are typical:

Thirty years ago? Let me see... At that time, I just felt cultivation in the city was bad. I cannot really tell you why I felt that way but it may be because of my experiences when I was a young lady. I grew up at Koforidua, and my mother had a nice vegetable garden in front of our house right at the center of the town.⁴⁰ One morning, Town Council officials came to slash down every crop saying it was forbidden to cultivate crops in the town. In our neighbor's front-yard was growing flowers. These were not slashed down. Thinking of it today, we were allowed to grow flowers but not vegetables. I grew up believing cultivation of crops in urban areas was bad. Today, I think otherwise. What use is it growing flowers instead of vegetables? We need food not flowers.⁴¹

Further questioning revealed that most non-cultivators had a positive attitude toward urban agriculture for the first time in 1972 after the launch of Operation Feed Yourself (OFY).

The officials interviewed confirmed that implicit public approval of urban agriculture has influenced a change in official attitudes. They asserted that if the general public was widely supportive of the practice then the government would discourage it. Signs of public approval include: Accra residents increasing their purchase of urban grown crops and an overall increase in the number of urban farmers. Urban agriculture has effectively become an established practice, further discouraging officials from opposing it. Prior to the launching of OFY, Ghanaian officials had dismissed urban agriculture as ephemeral. However, officials now realize the importance of this practice. The officials involved in this study were asked whether urban agriculture was a permanent or temporary phenomenon. All of them believed that it was a permanent practice. An Extension Services official in the Ministry of Agriculture stated, "increasingly, many people are getting involved in urban cultivation and those already in it are not abandoning it. So you can say it is a permanent practice."⁴²

Indirect state intervention also encouraged official recognition of urban agriculture in Ghana. Through OFY, the government encouraged all Ghanaians, including urban dwellers, to grow their own food.⁴³ In 1992 the personal intervention of the President of Ghana also helped to encourage a positive attitude toward urban agriculture. That year, officials of the Department

of Parks and Gardens gave "stop cultivation" orders to a group of growers at a place near the Osu Castle in Accra. One of these cultivators recounted the events:

When we received the order we came together and sent a petition to the President. We told him that we are law-abiding citizens with no source of income aside from the income we get from farming. Since we are not rich enough to buy land to cultivate, we cultivate public land near the Castle. Before we started cultivating the area, it was bushy and many people used the place as their toilet. Now the Department of Parks and Gardens say it is their land so we should quit. What shall we live on if we stopped farming? We told the President that our initiatives should be appreciated by the Department of Parks and Gardens because some people like us [had been] roaming the streets stealing and doing other illegal things, and [now] we were living a decent life.⁴⁴

Upon receiving the petition, the President met with the head of the Department of Parks and Gardens and representatives of the cultivators. They reached an agreement whereby the cultivators were permitted to farm part of the area and the Department of Parks and Gardens agreed to maintain the remainder. After news of the President's intervention became public, officials no longer asked cultivators to stop farming until an area was due for development.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Certain economic factors were instrumental in changing the negative attitudes some government officials held towards urban agriculture. For example, some officials have long held the view that the country would eventually become more industrialized, and many workers would subsequently be needed in the industrial sector. Foreign investors would be more willing to invest in the country if they were sure of recruiting labor without much difficulty. To have prospective industrial workers readily available it would be necessary for some unemployed to stay in Accra and other Ghanaian towns. Government officials therefore allowed potential workers to sustain themselves through urban agriculture and other informal sector activities. As one official stated: "If urban dwellers were banned from cultivating in the cities many would not be able to survive... and might even abandon the cities."⁴⁵

Allowing urban agriculture helps to remove the burden of maintaining a potential labor force from the government. Since, rural laborers normally do not have the necessary skills to work in urban industries, investors would have to spend a lot of money to train their workers. By condoning urban agriculture, government officials allow some low salaried and unemployed workers remain in the cities.

For Ghanaian government officials and employers, there is another advantage to workers producing some of their foodstuffs: it enhances the stability of the economy. Workers agitate for more pay they cannot easily afford basic commodities. By producing some of their food, workers may not feel the realities of their exploitation, and be less willing to agitate for an increased salary.⁴⁶ Workers are able to survive on meager salaries when they can subsidize food purchases through urban agriculture. In addition, the employer does not pay as much for the reproduction of labor. This is possible with the continued existence of non-capitalist structures which provide support for the laborer but are not maintained by the wages paid.⁴⁷ Controlling worker unrest and maintaining available surplus labor are some of the key economic reasons why government officials now condone agriculture in urban areas.

Nutritional Factors

Many sub-Saharan African countries import food and/or rely on food aid, indicating that food supplies from the countryside are inadequate. As Sawio notes, rural areas often do not produce enough food to feed both rural and urban people.⁴⁸ Some officials in the Ministry of Agriculture confirmed that rural Ghana is not able to supply enough food to urban Ghana. Two major constraints were noted: low productivity due to lack of agricultural technology and insufficient infrastructure for moving produce to urban markets.⁴⁹ There is also a shortage of foreign exchange to import food, so it has become more necessary for urban dwellers to grow some of their food. When asked about the importance of urban agriculture, all the officials interviewed mentioned, among others, that urban agriculture saves foreign exchange because it is not used on the importation of vegetables.

The increased presence of vegetables, especially salad, in the diet of Ghanaians also compelled government officials to acknowledge the existence of urban agriculture. With broader general education, and knowledge of nutrition in particular, many Ghanaians have become more conscious of the importance of vegetables in their diet.⁵⁰ In Accra, officials involved in this study were asked whether the countryside is able to supply enough vegetables to feed the urban population. They all answered no. An Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) official noted that logistical constraints, including the use of crude agricultural tools, a poor transportation network, and lack of adequate refrigeration, prevent the countryside from supplying enough vegetables to the urban areas.⁵¹ For urban dwellers to have access to fresh vegetables, it is necessary for them to engage in urban cultivation. An official of the Policy Planning Monitoring Evaluation Department (PPMED) stated:

One might say that cultivation should be limited to the countryside. But we should realize that we have to use vegetables in their fresh state. Therefore, the issue is that vegetables should be sold or bought when fresh. That means, there should be an efficient transportation system. That is not guaranteed, so the only alternative left to us is to grow vegetables close to the market. Vegetable cultivation should be close to the market because most Ghanaians don't have refrigerators. They should buy vegetables on daily basis.⁵²

An increasing expatriate investor population in Ghana encouraged the production of vegetables in urban areas where expatriates are concentrated. It has also prompted urban farmers to produce specific crops that this section of the population consumes. Products meant for this group attract higher prices than those that target the local population. The broader state goal of attracting increased foreign investment has thus indirectly led to the official accommodation of urban agriculture in Accra.

Conclusion

The population of Ghanaian towns and cities is continually increasing. Yet various factors, including the implementation of structural adjustment programs, have forced the rate of formal and public sector employment down. Therefore many urban dwellers must seek employment in the informal sector, making this an important source of income and food. Urban agriculture has become one of the most important informal sector practices for city dwellers. Colonial administrators did not recognize urban agriculture, and Ghanaian policy makers continue this

trend. This paper has demonstrated that, policy makers and other government officials initially did not tolerate urban agriculture. They recognized only the potential negative effects of urban agriculture on humans and the environment, citing the administrative, public health, and social impacts. Eventually, socio-political, economic, and nutritional factors compelled officials to accommodate urban agriculture.

Although Ghanaian public officials have become more positive toward urban agriculture, they still do not do much to promote it. For example, no laws protect urban farmers and their crops, and urban farming is still unregulated. However, as more middle/upper income people become involved with urban agriculture, Ghanaian officials will likely do more to safeguard the interests of urban farmers. Higher status urban farmers will also continue to invest more resources into urban agriculture. If this trend continues, the state will likely give formal recognition to urban agriculture and provide resources or policies that encourage the practice.

Notes

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2. Stren, Richard (1989). *Urban Local Government in Africa*, in R. Stren and R. White (ed.) *African Cities in Crisis: Managing Rapid Urban Growth*. Boulder: Westview Press.
3. This is not to suggest that the formal sector is more important job provider than the informal sector. Data from various sub-Saharan African countries show that the informal sector has always employed more people than the formal sector. However, most of the people who migrate from rural to urban areas hope to secure jobs in the formal/public sector
4. One should own a house or have secure tenure over a house in order to cultivate the space around the house
5. It is difficult, if not inappropriate, to categorize Ghanaians into classes in the western sense. This is because industrialization/capitalism is not developed well enough to accommodate such categorization. Secondly, Ghanaians categorize people by different yardsticks; notably wealth, government or official positions, educational background, and success in private business. Wealthy people, as well as the highly educated, people successful in businesses, and people occupying high government positions are termed "bigmen," (middle/upper socio-economic status in this paper). In this paper, socio-economic status is used in this sense.
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24. Interview by Monica Azinab, a research assistant to the author. Accra, Ghana 1998
25. Ibid
26. DGIP/UNDP (Division of Global and Interregional Programmes)(1992) *Urban Agriculture: Neglected Resource for Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities*. New York: UNDP
27. Interview by author. Accra, Ghana, 1996
28. Bartone, Carl (1994). "Chile: Managing Environmental Problems. Economic Analysis of Selected Issues," Report 13061 CH. Washington, D.C.: Environment and Urban Development Division, World Bank
29. House, W. (1978). "The Urban Informal Sector: It's Potential for Generating Income and Employment Opportunities in Kenya." Occasional Paper No.25. Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies
30. Interview by author, op cit.
31. Sawio, Camillus (1994). "Who are the Farmers of Dar es Salaam?" in L. Mougeot et. al. (ed) *Cities Feeding People*. Ottawa: IDRC
32. Sawio, Camillus (1993). "Breaking New Ground in Dar es Salaam," in *Farming in the City: The Rise of Urban Agriculture*. Reports Vol.21, No.3
33. Officials, cultivators, and non-cultivators all confirmed this assertion
34. Since there are no data on this, I rely on people's perception of changes in the socio-economic status of urban farmers.

35. Operation Feed Yourself is a program launched by the Ghanaian government in 1972 to encourage the population to grow their own food.
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40. This woman grew up in the later part of the colonial period
41. Interview by author, op cit.
42. Interview by author, op cit.
43. The heat of Operation Feed Yourself died after two or so years so whatever official encouragement urban agriculture received was short-lived.
44. Interview by author. Tape recording. Accra, Ghana 1996
45. Interview by author, op. cit.
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51. Interview by author, op. cit.
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Reference Style: The following is the suggested format for referencing this article: Obosu-Mensah, Kwaku. "Changes in official Attitudes Towards Urban Agriculture in Accra." *African Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 3: [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a2.htm>

Domestic, Regional, and International Protection of Nigerian Women against Discrimination: Constraints and Possibilities

MOJBOL OLFNK OKOME

Introduction

Discrimination against women is defined by Article 1 of the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* of 1979 (heretofore referred to as the 1979 Convention or CEDAW) as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." By May 2001, 168 countries had ratified CEDAW. Forty-six of them are African. Nigeria signed the convention on 23 April 1984 and ratified it without any reservations on 13 June 1985, and it ratified the optional protocol to CEDAW on 8 September 2001.¹ It made its first report to the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1986, and submitted its second report in 1998.²

As defined by the CEDAW, discrimination is symptomatic of a situation where patterns of structural inequality are maintained by rules, norms and procedures that dictate a subordinate role for women in all spheres of society. This call for an end to all forms of discrimination against women emphasizes the need for a radical re-definition of the process and content of economic, social and political development. It stresses the need for a holistic orientation which acknowledges the vital role of women in development and engineers their integration into development processes as equal partners with men. For this purpose, it is argued that legal and substantive protection at the domestic, regional and international levels must be coordinated for more meaningful enhancement of both the status and situation of women.

This paper approaches questions concerning human rights and discrimination against women from a perspective that differs the dominant view within the human rights literature. This scholarship has an intrinsic pro-Western bias and operates on the implicit assumption that international human rights have their origins in Western liberal thought.³ Contrary to this dominant perspective, I argue that all human societies have a conception of human rights, even though there are cultural differences. The existence and defense of national, regional and international rights of Nigerian women against discrimination then must necessarily be located within Nigeria's particular historical experience from the pre-colonial era to contemporary times. The promotion and defense of such rights would be meaningless otherwise. Moreover, I argue for the combination of efforts that tend to be separated in scholarly activities to date. The identification of instances of discrimination and the struggle to defend and extend women's rights has to be critically examined in light of the power relations that structure the regime of

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a3.pdf>

human rights worldwide. This paper argues that in this regime, both western thought and western feminist groups are privileged.

Within the international human rights literature, the problem of discrimination has been conceptualized as involving the denial of self-determination to women. This paper considers discrimination as resulting from the creation, maintenance and perpetuation of structures of inequality against women as opposed to men. It also argues that the Nigerian government and human rights activists, by being more responsive to the international regime of human rights, do not pay sufficient attention to indigenous philosophies and traditions about respecting human rights, perpetuating the notion that the only way to guarantee human rights in Nigeria is to blame all contemporary human rights abuses on the persistence of traditional mores. In so doing, they often consider the embrace of international protections of human rights as the only avenue to progress.

Individuals play an instrumental role in the creation of structures, their maintenance and their transformation. The development of alternative rules, norms and procedures provide the avenue through which structural transformation may be engineered. The process of engineering transformation involves both the manipulation of rules, norms and procedures as well as organization for political action by women to protect what rights they have, enhance the quality of protection and increase the comprehensiveness of the rights to which they are entitled. In this view, the agent-structure concept is useful for understanding the centrality of structures in constraining as well as enabling human agency. A structure can limit or foster change, but structures also allow for the transformative intervention of human agents. The exercise of agency to foster change, whether in the area expanding existing rights, or of demanding new rights, should not be seen as limited to the contemporary period. There are historical examples of women exercising rights, pushing for their extension, and actively defending these rights.

The focus of this paper is on the constraints and possibilities that shape the environment of Nigerian women and either enable them to surmount the problems arising from discrimination or limit their ability to do so. The central thesis is that discrimination against women takes different forms in different societies and historical epochs, thus requiring differential strategies in each place and time.

The evaluation of discrimination against women in Nigeria shall focus on the quality and content of domestic constitutional, regional, and international protection and guarantees and the extent to which these *de jure* guarantees may or may not necessarily reflect the *de facto* condition of women in Nigerian society. In addition, the following questions will be addressed: First, in what ways have structures of inequality been created in the society and how do these structures affect the role of women in contemporary Nigeria? Second, how can concrete problems that have a direct bearing on the role of women in society be conceptualized and contextualized?

Third, how is compliance with existing law to be enhanced in order to generate practical results? The paper is divided into three parts, each focusing on one of the questions posed above.

STRUCTURES OF INEQUALITY: THEIR CREATION AND IMPACT ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

It has been argued that pre-colonial Nigeria had a gendered division of labor. However, the nature and implication of such a division of labor is often misinterpreted. While male dominance was built into the social system of some Nigerian ethnic groups, women played a significant and vital role in all aspects of the lives of their community.⁴ For some scholars, this is due to the complementarity of male and female roles and functions.⁵ Complementarity gave women a great deal of autonomy in their own affairs.⁶ Although some women became leaders in politics, religion, and the economy, discrimination was on the basis of both class and gender. Women who, by virtue of their acquired or ascribed status became decision makers were by no means treated in the same way as other women in terms of their rights.⁷ Elements of structural inequality could be observed in unequal access to the means of production and control thereof as well as inequality in the ability to control reproduction.

Scholars such as Olufemi, Pittin and VerEecke, as well as activist groups such as Women's International Network (WIN) and the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) contend that ideological reinforcement for structural inequality is provided by customs, practices and norms.⁸ Drawing on the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices For 1991 that was submitted to the United States Congress House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, WIN acknowledges the long-standing nature and ubiquity of women's economic power in Nigerian society, concluding "[W]omen have always had some economic power and have exerted influence in Nigerian society through women's councils, family connections, and to a much lesser extent, mainstream social, economic or political organizations."⁹ The report recognizes that in Nigeria there are regional religious and ethnic variations in the pattern of discrimination against women, but indicates that men are legally able to prevent their wives from working, from obtaining passports, and rural men routinely beat their wives without any legal intervention. Access to land and right to inheritance of spousal property are also denied women, as is access to jobs for single women. Given the record of government non-performance, it is also questionable whether Nigerian women's rights organizations would believe in the veracity of its promise to investigate. The protection and expansion of women's rights then is clearly another instance where the exercise of power by affluent countries is taken for granted, and the readiness of poor countries to submit themselves to scrutiny while never examining the affluent country's behavior is also taken as a marker of responsible international behavior. The report also presents its assessment in language that is unreflecting and relatively ignorant. Again, a quote is instructive. It indicates a biased portrayal of the common practice of exchange of money upon marriage, bride-wealth, provided by a husband's family in some ethnic groups, including the Yorub, or dowry, which is provided by the woman's family in other ethnic groups, including the Hausa-Fulani. According to WIN,

The Government publicly opposes female circumcision, which reportedly affects close to 50 percent of the female population, The most dangerous form, infibulation, is still practiced in some areas. However, because of the deep cultural roots of this practice, the Government has relied primarily on education

through women's and public health organizations to help induce change in attitudes rather than trying to criminalize the practice. Public education has had some effect, but change has been slow. The Government also opposes the *selling of young girls for marriage by poor rural families*, again primarily through educational means. There are no estimates of the extent to which this practice is carried out. (my italics)¹⁰

Pittin and VerEecke contend that colonialism also contributed to the diminution of women's rights.¹¹ VerEecke argues that the women in Yola were extensively involved in agricultural production before the Fulani Jihad of the 18th century. Loathe to be identified as slaves in an economy that subsequently depended on slave labor for agricultural production, women were influenced by Islamic injunctions and embraced *purdah*. Pittin attributes discrimination against women in education to the influence of colonialism. In response to the debate over pre-colonial Muslim women's access of to education, Pittin says:

The extent to which less high-born Muslim women in the pre-colonial period had access to any education, much less the opportunity to pursue it, is still shrouded in the mists of history. It is likely that most women were given only the most limited of Muslim education, if at all. Indeed, the issue of access to education or of opportunity for continued education probably rarely arose, given the responsibilities accorded women and girls in the domestic sphere, particularly where slaves and servants were not available (or where the women were themselves slaves or servants!), the early movement of women into marriage and child-bearing and their involvement in farming, processing, and petty commodity production. Thus, historically, gender and class were prime determinants in limiting women's educational opportunities, with ideology concurrently providing bases both to support such education and to limit it.¹²

It is hard to argue with Pittin's contention that gender and class were the prime limiting factors to women's opportunities for education, but if the problem is that Muslim women's education is "shrouded by the mists of history", then, scholars must look for evidence of what happened in the past without equating a lack of information with a lack of opportunity.

The Civil Liberties Organisation of Nigeria stated:

The discriminatory burdens placed on women include those of chastity, of making marriage work at all cost, of fertility and fertility control, and the burden of being "clean and desirable" as symbolised by female circumcision. Others include the burden to prove rape both in the community and in a court of law, to raise 'good' children, and to mourn their husband to the taste and dictate of his relatives. Compared to men, Nigerian society treats women as little better than beasts of burden....¹³

In comparison, Olufemi's earlier contention is even more problematic. In traditional Nigerian societies, the woman's role was taken for granted. She was expected to nurture the children and take care of the home. Such traditional views had consequences which did not

augur well for social and economic development. Women were given fewer educational opportunities than men. They were also denied jobs in such male dominated occupations as engineering, architecture and town planning.¹⁴

This illustrates a bias that automatically assumes that traditional (read pre-colonial) societies were bastion of reactionary and unprogressive practices that marginalized women. Temisanren refines the argument about pre-colonial sources of discrimination against women, contending that some practices may have been relevant at the time they emerged but have become questionable given the changes in society over time. Temisanren documents Yorub women's attempts at guaranteeing abortion rights but claims that these women are manipulated, thus undermining their autonomy.¹⁵ Ade Aderinola also gives documentary evidence of how historical changes in land tenure have affected food production and women farmers' productivity and social status.¹⁶ Ogede, focusing on orature, uses the case of Igede women's songs to demonstrate that the assumed ubiquity of male dominance and women's *ad nauseum* submissiveness can be challenged if we look beyond the written word. ^{[17} Even in contemporary society, there are living examples of alternative responses to male dominance.¹⁸

Other scholars, including Yoloye, Ogunlade and Erinoshio, while specifically considering the low participation of women in science and technology, argue that the socio-economic backgrounds of women can constrain or enable women's access to rights and entitlements in society.¹⁹ These studies show a correlation between socio-economic class and a career in science and technology. Ehindero links a woman's self-concept with whether she will select a career in science and technology.²⁰ This argument is related to those that emphasize socio-economic background, yet it is distinct from them that an individual's socio-economic background contributes to an individual's socialization and thus, his or her self-conception.

Based on the reports provided by *Women's International News*, one could well believe that discrimination continues because the government allows the perpetuation of customary and religious practices.²¹ However, one must be wary of these arguments. They assume that the customs, practices and norms in question arise from pre-colonial practices. This is erroneous. Examining the historical origin of contemporary practices reveals a more nuanced picture, as does analysis of orature, arts and aesthetics. Temisanren documents the contemporary experience of Yorub women, while Aderinola's work attempts to do this for the Ondo Yorub.²² Works such as these make it clear that there are distinctions among Nigerian societies as to the customary treatment of men and women. In some cases, women were disadvantaged more by the imposition of colonial rule and its code of law.

More studies that take sub-sections of large ethnic groups and trace the history of contemporary conditions are necessary. Ogede raises a significant point: women who are not Western-educated have multiple tools and strategies at their disposal that may be lost to their Western educated counterparts, particularly due to the dearth of written literature by women on traditions of autonomy and protest against the abuse of social, economic and political power.²³ Ehindero, Yoloye, Ogunlade and Erinoshio's analyses of the low participation of women in science and technology indicate that money and class matter, as does an individual's socialization process.

Still, much of the literature on women's rights tends to lay the blame for continued discrimination against women at the feet of amorphously defined "traditions" understood as

rigid artefacts of a distant and brutal past. Alele-Williams in considering the discrimination against women in science and technology careers, argues that cultural standards, values, and practices structure beliefs about gender roles and the production of knowledge.²⁴ This argument would only be tenable if colonialism is accepted as a determinant factor in structuring surviving traditions. Yet colonialism is widely considered to have introduced modernity and African cultural practices are considered the bastion of tradition. There is association of modernity with fluidity and progress, while tradition is basis for conservative, reactionary instincts. Temisanren, Aderinola and Ogede show that such definitions are limited and problematic.

Chief Bisi Ogunleye founder and National Coordinator of the Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) and the Vice-President of the Forum of Africa Voluntary Development Organization (FADO) West Africa, also considers entrenched discrimination against women farmers but frames this as a problem that is general among the poor. Ogunleye blames African governments, multilateral agencies and institutions for bringing about this problem while calling for the restoration of the rights of women. Ogunleye frames women's entitlements and rights in terms of restoring equitable access to resources. She contends that the rights once existed but were eliminated over time. State responsibility and culpability in the denial of women's rights is clear. The contemporary African state did not spring *de novo* from its environment. It has its roots in the imposition of draconian forms of colonial rule on African peoples. The tragedy of the contemporary state is that it still fails to rise above the colonial detritus of wanton disregard for people's rights. Ogunleye contends that individuals and groups representing the state and international institutions make claims for these rights. Thus, her critique is directed at securing rights and making claims against powerful institutions on behalf of relatively powerless actors. She does not exclude men, but claims higher priority for women.

Ogunleye's analysis could be improved if she considered the origin of international institutions and of African states, as well as the origin of the philosophy and perspectives that inform the international development regime. In Africa, the contemporary state has a colonial origin. The international system privileges powerful industrial and post-industrial states in policymaking and policy articulation. The recipients of policy output are poor states that have been compelled to more fully integrate their economies into the international capitalist system.

Another source of problems that militate against women's rights is that most of the administrative practices which prevent equal treatment of Nigerian men and women are products of colonial laws and government. A case in point is the legal assumption that only males are the heads of families. Another is the assumption that a woman must prove that she was not responsible for bringing discriminatory practices upon herself. A third problem arises from the lack of resources to pursue the legal remedies that may be available. While there are admirable and significant efforts being made by some lawyers' and women's groups to provide free legal assistance, these efforts remain inadequate.

In feminist literature, discrimination against women is taken to manifest itself in the forms of gender, class and personal discrimination.²⁵ In some perspectives, discrimination is attributed to structural factors. Some scholars contend that the most important structural sources of discrimination are social formations such as the family, which conditions its

members to conform to socially acceptable gender roles. Although the pre-colonial division of labor in Nigeria was based on gendered distinctions, social definitions of men's and women's work varied by community/society. Maleness did not necessarily determine status within the family. Seniority mattered to a greater extent than at present. Thus, in the ideal Yorub family, a senior daughter outranked a junior brother when important decisions were made within the family. Today, there are many concrete examples of men that act "patriarchally" in the sense that male privilege is entrenched in social, economic and political relations. Such examples are a reflection of present circumstances, however, their existence must be interrogated rather than taken as representative of past conditions.

The process of asserting authority and creating norms is one that involves groups in society mobilizing to take advantage of shifts in ideology as new hegemonic forces overcome old centers of power. Men as a group were able to benefit from the Victorian sensibilities of the colonialists and their understanding of social relations. The Victorian mind-set situated men and women differently in social, political and economic relations. Men were expected to be in the public sphere, and women in the private. Men could hold positions of power, and women were expected to support them by taking care of the household. The fact that women had been active in producing, decision-making, trading and food processing, as well as in child-rearing, was not recognized.²⁶ In addition, elders were privileged more than the young, and husbands more privileged than wives. The significance of social differences between Victorian and African societies is illustrated by the Yorub and Ibo. In these societies, not only men were husbands. All the members of the patrilineage into which a woman married, male and female, stood as husbands in relationship to her. Relationships such as these are, however, not sexual.²⁷

In addition, the relationships should not always be conceptualized in terms of gender.²⁸ There is ample evidence of women's activism politically, socially and economically which challenges the Victorian assumption of automatic male superiority.²⁹

The ideological dimension of discrimination becomes evident when one considers the extent to which the discourse on rights is shaped by the language, ethics and moral judgements adopted from the West. The meanings, ideals, and practices of non-Western peoples tend to be viewed through the lens of the West and assessed through theories derived from Western historical experience. Paradoxically, activist groups and scholars that support the expansion and promotion of women's rights are thus subject to the pitfalls that come with drawing on such a tradition. Negative stereotypes of the role of women in pre-colonial society are stressed, even by scholars and activists who claim to be pro-feminist. In an attempt to promote and defend women's rights, *Women's International News Reports* spotlight the problems without sufficiently highlighting the achievements of women or the rights that they enjoy already.³⁰

Since Western interpretations are privileged, Western scholars and activists set the agenda of important issues. Women's rights groups, in Nigeria, that are sponsored by Western feminist groups often pursue this agenda. The terrain of rights and their defense then tends to look highly homogenous. Dissenting voices and alternative strategies are shut out not only when it comes to fighting against institutionalized abusive practices, but even when it comes to interrogating reality and setting priorities. As there are not many studies available, the few that have the prominence and wide reach that Western grants buy, shape the sensibilities of the world on the current struggles and situation of women. We do not get a nuanced view of

women in Nigeria or Africa in comparison to the situation of women in the West whose experience is analyzed with more historical accuracy. In short, the above cited examples are so general in their critiques that they create an inaccurate image of Although Nigerian women are portrayed as excluded from most decision-making roles in society, evidence exists of opportunities for women to participate in decision-making leaders roles that parallel those of men.³¹ Other opportunities to participate existed through the representatives chosen by women's indigenous organizations.³² Women within the family had to combine productive work with reproductive labor but were able to take advantage of help from the extended family, including the polygynous family unit, which reduced the burden of a double workload.³³

The polygynous system, which is often condemned as disadvantageous to women, was a social arrangement that ideally enabled women to make concrete contributions to society. For example, although women may not receive the benefits of monogamy, freedom from being the sole nurturer of husband and children freed them up for trade, politics, and religious leadership. The imposition of colonialism, like the earlier influx of Islam, caused the contraction of the opportunities available for women to play leadership roles.³⁴ However, women drew upon their pre-colonial forms of organization to organize the mode and content of their political participation within the colonial system.³⁵ Provisions were also made in pre-colonial Nigerian societies for conflict resolution in which all members of society could participate. Moreover, polygynous relationships were not unregulated. Even in contemporary times, some women voluntarily choose to be part of these structures and argue that the benefits outweigh the costs. Stereotyped portrayals of women deny the significance of women's contributions to Nigerian development. This is illustrated in *The Report of the Federal Government of Nigeria to the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination* which states in the introduction that the "traditional" conception of the role of women in society is one of domestic drudges, wives and mothers.³⁶ This report only reinforces erroneous perceptions women's role in society. On the contrary, according to traditional ideals and mores, women are valued as powerful by virtue of their being the bearers of fertility. The Yorub song, "y ni wr" (Mother is gold) underscores the importance of women in Yorub society. The song goes:

Yorub	English Translation:
y ni wr iyebye,	Mother is valuable gold
Ti a k l f'ow r.	That we cannot purchase with money.
l'yn mi f's msan, mwa,	She carried me in her womb for nine, ten months,
pn m f'dn mta.	She carried me on her back for three years.
y o se o k is mi,	Mother, thank you for laboring for me,
mi k l b 'y mi.	I cannot abuse my mother (verbally)

Meanwhile, a Yorub proverb says: *y ni wr, baba ni jg* (Mother is gold, father is a mirror). This underscores the value of a mother to her children and also something about the role of women in Yorub society. Compared to a fragile, breakable relationship with the father, the relationship of mother to child is durable. Similar reverence of the mother is found among other Nigerian ethnic groups.

Opportunities existed for women in pre-colonial Nigerian society to take leadership roles in politics, religion, social and economic life.³⁷ Blnl Aw's *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective* gives examples of women leaders of the past: Nana Asmau of Zauzzau, Idia of Benin, and Mrem of If.³⁸ Numerous legends and oral traditions also point to the power of women in pre-colonial Nigerian society. For example, the Yorub pantheon is composed of both male and many female deities. The female deities include Oya, sun, Yemoja. In the worship of these deities, many opportunities exist for women to lead. *y* had many powerful female public officials.³⁹

Pre-colonial Nigerian societies were structured around kinship which determined the productive and reproductive role of the individual in society. Childbearing was central to the worth of a woman. Since children were regarded as economic assets, polygyny was encouraged and generally more children meant more power within society. There were however opportunities for women to surmount problems arising from childlessness. Amadiume points to the phenomenon of gender-flexibility among the Ibo of Nnobi as a tool for women both to increase their material base by acquiring "wives," and to gain stature in society by bearing children through these wives. The institutions of female husbands and male daughters among the Ibo of Nnobi allowed women not to have sexual relations with women whom they marry but to claim the children borne by these women; in effect gaining power and control over resources, including children. This enabled them to surmount the social stigma attached to childlessness as well as enhance their productive capabilities.⁴⁰ Fostering children with women who were childless also enabled women to adjust their position within society. Among the Yorub and Hausa-Fulani, fostering of the children of relatives provides opportunities for childless women to play mothering roles.

During the colonial period, most elements of the kinship support system changed. Customary law was not necessarily the expression of the mores, values and standards of a community. Customary law was heavily informed by colonial (mis)conceptions. Customary law was always in flux, enabling it to respond to changes in society. Formalizing it introduced the unintended consequence that customary law became unable to effectively respond to changes in the wider world. This is now seen in divorce cases involving childless women. A man may claim the return of full bride wealth paid for a childless woman while deductions are made if a woman has had children. The childless woman is measured against women that have children. The stigma attached to the childless woman is extended to her family by association. As previously mentioned, in pre-colonial societies childless women could avail themselves of several opportunities to become mothers.

Access to the means of production is an important indicator of the rights of women in society. Many claims are made by contemporary analysts, activists and scholars about the pre-colonial roots of institutionalized denial to means of production in Nigerian society. In pre-colonial times, women generally had access to land which they could cultivate. However, the right to dispose of that land was vested in the head of the family. According to Amadiume, this

was true for the Ibo of Nnobi. However, it was more possible for women to take advantage of customary loopholes such as the aforementioned flexible gender system (among the Ibo) in order to gain power within a social system, which conferred more power on males than females.⁴¹ In some instances women's access to land did not derive from their dependence on male kin. Among the Ibo of Onitsha, women did not have to depend on the institution conceptualized by Amadiume as "male daughters and female husbands" to hold and exercise power over land and other resources.⁴² Among the Yorub, some women became wealthy and participated in government, and disposed of property on an equal footing with men.⁴³ Pre-colonial Nigerian societies were not entirely organized around structures within which women were automatically more disadvantaged in their access to both positions of authority and the means of production.

Under colonial rule, women lost a great deal of authority and the opportunity to participate in decision making due to their exclusion from all levels of administration. They also lost maneuverability because the male-dominated elements of society were stressed above all others and applied in social, economic and political life. Education, although generally considered to emancipate women from traditional oppression, did not always have this result, as colonial education emphasized preparing women for domestic rather than leadership roles within society. There is also evidence that in pre-colonial Nigerian society, many women (of economic and political prominence) gained positions either through achievement or as rewards. Under colonial rule, the opportunity for such upward mobility was considerably diminished. According to Mba, some women were able to become more involved in trade.⁴⁴ However, many areas of the economy that were previously reserved for women were taken over by men and the imposition of a cash economy as well as new European firms, caused a reversal of their fortunes.⁴⁵ The spread of Christianity also undercut the higher status that women had previously in pre-colonial religion. In a struggle to re-assert their former prominence in religion, Christian women converts in indigenous churches used the churches to regain some of their pre-colonial status.⁴⁶ Under British colonial rule, *de jure* property rights replaced *de facto* rights, but the extent to which *de jure* rights made practical improvements in women's lives is however questionable. Since the realization of *de jure* rights required familiarity with the new codes of law and the new legal system as well as considerable financial expenditure.⁴⁷

The origins of structures of inequality that lead to discrimination against women are therefore found in pre-colonial societies with predominantly male-dominant social systems. However, they were institutionalized as a new legal structure—"Native Law and Customs"—during colonial rule. Customs such as child marriage, betrothal and widowhood rites have their origins in the pre-colonial era, as did genital operations. These customs arose within a given social context that may never be understood today because of the ideological shift that occurred with colonization and the passage of time. The imposition of colonialism involved the construction of a system where women had less opportunity to participate in administration. In addition, an economic system was instituted where men had more opportunities than women for meaningful participation, a legal system was introduced wherein women lost some of the benefits open to them in pre-colonial societies, and a religious system was imposed which deprived women of their pre-colonial power and authority. More males than females had access to the educational system, and the dominant form of Islam in the North was protected despite

its discrimination against women. These elements of institutionalized male dominance were in no small measure due to Victorians' ideology, in which women were generally restricted from full participation in the public sphere.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN NIGERIA: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW

While women in Nigeria have always been active economically, the extent and significance of their activism has not always been rewarded by commensurate degrees of political power vis-a-vis men. Although women willingly exercise the rights that they have, structural constraints from the pre-colonial, colonial and decolonization eras continue to prevent the elimination of discrimination against them. It is possible to distinguish between two major positions by organized women's groups within Nigeria. One stresses more visibility in prominent positions for women as part of the decision making apparatus and the other calling for radical changes and structural transformation in order that the rights of all women will have as much *de facto* as *de jure* relevance. The first position constitutes the top-down approach held by the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) and the second, the more comprehensive and broadly-based approach of Women In Nigeria (WIN). Both organizations have made attempts to generate academic and other interest in the elimination of discrimination against women as they define it. Thus far, the NCWS position has received more support by the successive Nigerian governments. The NCWS, working on the premise that with more women in positions of authority, women's issues would be taken more seriously, and women's rights enhanced, advocates that there be more women appointees and that these women have more prominent positions. In response, the approach usually taken by Nigerian governments to correct discrimination is to appoint a few token women into positions where they have high visibility. However, this in no way helps the majority of women.⁴⁸

Discrimination affects women's political and civil rights. The enfranchisement of women in the North was one of the political demands made by women's organizations in both the East and West after their own enfranchisement but the right to vote was only granted to women in Northern Nigeria in 1976.⁴⁹ In the East, it had been granted in 1954 and in the West in 1958. Some have argued that the exercise of this right may be problematic even where it is guaranteed because of social constraints on the movement of women in *purdah*. For instance, Akande suggests that women who are secluded in *purdah* may be unable to vote as a result of the electoral rules which end the voting day at 6 pm because women in *purdah* cannot go out until after sundown. However, Oruene claims that women in *purdah* turned out in such large numbers to vote in the 1976 local government elections (which was the first in which they could participate on an equal footing with men) that the voting day was extended by two hours.⁵⁰ Thus, it is clear that women will exercise their rights with adequate and institutionalized protections. Women have also always exercised their rights as well as organized collective action within political interest and pressure groups for the enhancement of women's rights in society.⁵¹ Oruene's work demonstrates that *purdah* in and of itself ought not to prevent women from voting, and there is no evidence that it has. Akande presumes that women who are not living under conditions of *purdah* would be better able to exercise their right to vote. This presumption is stated rather than demonstrated.

There are still fewer women running for office than men, a situation that is also observed in the United States, and in most democracies. Good citizenship necessitates the ability to free up some time to participate in civic activities. More affluent or kin-rich women who have supportive extended family are better able to participate in modern democracies than impoverished, kin-poor women who cannot depend on assistance from extended family.

An additional problem that relates to women's ability to exercise their citizenship rights is that before Nigeria's 1992 constitution only men could pass on their Nigerian citizenship to their spouses. The 1992 constitution corrected this discrepancy. Nonetheless, some rights may still be outside the grasp of women due to continuing social and administrative mores. Today, a woman who resides and works outside her state of origin is still discriminated against in employment, promotions, and benefits. This is a form of discrimination that affects men, women, and children because it affects access to resources that indigenes of the state take for granted.

The Nigerian constitution of 1979 prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, as do the constitutions of 1992 and 1999. All women have a right to suffrage once they are above the age of 18 and can contest in political elections once above the age of 21. No customary prohibitions prevent women's participation in politics, but women have not contested for political positions on a level matching men. Women's hesitancy to be involved in politics dates to the period of decolonization period when politics was characterized by gross abuse and physical violence.

Akande contends that Nigerian women do not have full legal capacity insofar as they are unable to "independently enter into contracts, ... acquire and own property ... enter into other legal transactions, sue or be sued."⁵² The extent of women's practical freedom also varies with class, level of education and type of marriage. Within polygynous marriages, women may have more freedom than within monogamous ones because they are not subjected to the presumption of legal unity in monogamous marriage, which gives the man the advantage. In terms of the capacity to marry, the right of consent and the requirements of bride wealth-payment, women's right to independent decision-making may be curtailed. In general, Nigerian law limits the rights of a woman in marriage under all legal systems (statutory law, Shari'a, and customary law).

Nigeria is presently undergoing the implementation of a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), a program which combines policies of economic austerity with the devaluation of the country's currency, drastic cutbacks in government spending and significant economic contraction due to the privatization of government owned businesses. This affects the rights of all Nigerians but women are particularly impacted. Women's economic rights are affected most directly since there are fewer employment opportunities and more competition for those that exist. In rural areas, where development schemes have historically hindered women, technology and training benefits men more than women. The situation becomes more grueling under conditions of structural adjustment due to a contraction of social spending and less money being available from international sources for development projects.⁵³

Provisions for maintaining basic infrastructure while inadequate in the past, have become even more so after SAP. Health care, education, training, access to appropriate technology, and to resources such as potable water have become even more inaccessible, both to rural and to

urban women. This is the background against which the existing discrimination against women in Nigerian society should be viewed.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN--INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND DOMESTIC PROTECTIONS

Discrimination against women persists despite the existence of international, regional and domestic protections. This persistence is due to structural and ideological factors. The United Nations Covenants of 1966 provide protection against discrimination on the grounds of gender (Art. 2,1 Civil & Political Covenant; Art. 2,2 Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). The 1956 Supplementary Convention on the abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Practices Similar to Slavery emphasized the importance of woman's consent to marriage and advocated the elimination of customs such as bride wealth and funeral rites in which women are objects of inheritance after the death of their spouse (Art 1). The 1962 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages considers some customs and traditions relating to marriage and the family "inconsistent with...the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." Nigeria is a signatory to The International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, (signed 29 July 1993), The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), (signed 29 July 1993), The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, (signed 16 October 1967), the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman Treatment, and Punishment, (signed 28 June 2001), The Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC), (signed 19 April 1991), The Optional Protocol on the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, (signed 8 September 2001), The Optional Protocol on the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, (signed 8 September 2001).⁵⁴

Rights of production and reproduction encompass women's rights in the family, economic, social and political spheres. Rights of production concern recruitment, promotion and training as well as benefits and entitlements. They also include equal opportunity for decision making in all organizations. The rights of reproduction relate to the capacity for a woman to make independent decisions about her own body. This includes the ability to control the size of her family, exercise control over the discipline of children, free access to family planning (including abortion) and the right to legal and practical equality in the control of family resources and children after divorce. This is enhanced by a woman's access to information concerning her rights as well as legal and other measures that can be taken to gain these rights.

The rights of women within their families are important because they affect their ability to define themselves relative to society. Relations within the family structure the extent, to which women are granted reproductive and productive rights, defining the content of such rights. Article 5 (a) of CEDAW recommends that States Parties "modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women."

I have argued that the male dominant elements of Nigerian society remain strong. Many of these elements are located within the family, where a woman is required to take care of her husband and home. Since most women also work outside the home, this creates, a double

burden and may limit the ability of women to devote an equal amount of attention and concentration to their careers or trade. In Nigerian law and administrative practice, the predominant attitude is that men are the household heads and have primary authority. This attitude persists in spite of past and contemporary examples of cross-gender cooperation in many households and also despite the existence of many female headed family units.⁵⁵ Women thus continue to be defined just in terms of their reproductive and associated roles. Under statutory law in Nigeria, the woman must cook and care for the home and health of her husband and children.

Problems reside in prevailing social mores, which prevent women from taking legal action even where fundamental rights are not granted. However, a more critical approach is necessary to discern the origins of these mores and to fashion workable solutions to the problems that they cause. There is also a gross lack of awareness among women about the extent and content of their rights. There are also legal and administrative measures, which perpetuate the inequality of men and women within the family. For example, adultery is considered sufficient grounds for divorce only where women are concerned.⁵⁶

The CEDAW guarantees full equality of men and women in the family. However, prevailing practice in Nigeria is to overlook customary and pre-colonial practices which prevent the achievement of full equality. While the government acknowledges the "need for public enlightenment in the area of marriage and family law," by the time its first report to CEDAW was handed in, very little of substance had been done beyond the institution of a Pilot Legal Project on Family Law.⁵⁷ Today, there is a Women's Bureau, which is attached to the Office of the Presidency, and a more aggressive stance is taken about improving women's status in society. Although the program is only a beginning, The Better Life for Rural Women program is directed at correcting some of the deficiencies noted in the first report to CEDAW. Since 1979, more women have formally competed for political office.⁵⁸

There is not at present any legal recourse for women who suffer abuse within the family, although these were present during pre-colonial times. Now women's childbearing obligations are expected to outweigh their career goals.⁵⁹ In pre-colonial social systems, women did not necessarily have to bear the brunt of childrearing alone. There were social institutions, which provided support and enabling a woman to pursue her trade undisturbed. In contemporary times, women suffer legal discrimination in the administration of custody law. The Covenant provides in Article 16, 1, d, that parents shall have equality of rights and responsibility with regard to their children, and that the interests of children should be given primary responsibility. Under customary law, the equality of the spouses is precluded sometimes as a result of great disparities in the ages of the spouses, which gives the man more control over the wife. This also occurs in the case of divorce where women are only entitled to custody prior to weaning, or in some cases, after the child is 7 years old (under Islamic law until the age of puberty or marriage). On a positive note, the woman has a right to claim maintenance from the father of her child even if she is not married to the man.⁶⁰ In some cases, divorce is only possible after the bride wealth is refunded, although among some groups, deductions are made based on the number of children borne by the woman during the marriage.⁶¹

In Nigeria where there is no guaranteed access to social security in old age, unequal access to and control over children in divorce imposes multiple discrimination on women since they

are expected to be primarily responsible for childcare. The CEDAW guarantees women equal rights and responsibilities in marriage and at its dissolution, but some women are still affected by inequitable access to divorce.⁶² In Nigerian Muslim communities, divorce by repudiation is still acceptable. Under customary law, women have a right to support and housing, but not to the husband's property or incomes.⁶³ Likewise, men have no right to their spouse's property or income. However, pre-colonial marriage laws allowed for conciliation and negotiation in the event of marriage breakdowns, which may have resulted in better treatment of the woman. In addition, a divorced woman could return to her lineage where the head of the lineage could grant her access to property. Under statutory law, a woman technically has equal rights with her husband to the custody and guardianship of children upon divorce, but the application of the law is often such that work within the marriage is not considered an economic contribution. Hence, there is no enforcement of maintenance payments.⁶⁴

The crucial issue regarding the rights of women in marriage and the family is that these rights are central to their rights as individuals. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights in Article 2 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, but makes no other specific references to the protection of women's rights. Howard, however, argues that some other articles may be taken as applicable to women, particularly Article 4's specification that "Human beings are inviolable (each is)...entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person" and Article 16's guarantee of every individual's right "to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health."⁶⁵ For Howard, both of these may be used for defending women against physically harmful practices.

Women's lives also tend to be affected more profoundly than men's by their reproductive roles. When reproductive rights are lacking, rights in other areas are affected. In this sense, reproductive rights are not limited to the right to abortion. They also include a woman's right to employment and the means of production which allow her to financially support her children. There is an observed conflict between community and individual rights since the preservation of the family is considered the fundamental duty of society. Can the law be used as a means of transformation in this case? Howard considers this near impossible but sees the role of law as enabling individuals who wish to escape from "traditional" family controls to do so.⁶⁶ The law in this sense would then be a building block toward the future realization of cultural change.

Problems arise from provisions that may potentially pit the need to maintain community values against the rights of women. These may be observed in Article 18's specifications that "the family shall be the natural unit and basis of society...the State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women." Article 17, 3 considers the State instrumental in "The promotion and protection of morals and traditional values recognized by the community."⁶⁷ There is evidence of such a conflict in the Nigerian government's first report to CEDAW. It argues that the constraints eradicating discrimination against women arise mainly from the lack of enforceable laws when women suffer discrimination from customs, administrative directives and religious practices.⁶⁸ The government also laments the absence of a favorable attitude toward litigation in Nigeria, which prevents the elimination of discrimination. What is left out in this part of the report, however, is the salience of a person's total environment in shaping that individual's perception of her or his possibilities and constraints in the wider society. It is

doubtful that even litigation that results in positive acknowledgment of a woman's rights would amount to much without far-reaching social and structural changes.

Altogether, there is inadequate acknowledgment on the part of government about the significance of structural constraints. The government has made insufficient provisions for the realization of Articles 3 and 4 of the CEDAW recommendations. Article 3 calls for legal and extra-legal measures for guaranteeing the full exercise of women's rights. While it acknowledges the need for extra-legal perspectives, there is no concrete attempt to address imbalances arising from the conflict between individual and group rights.⁶⁹ The government identifies an absence of litigious attitudes among Nigerians which contributes to the appearance of a paucity of protections. This, however, is not borne out by historical evidence. For example, Mba shows that women in the southern Nigeria used new family laws under colonial rule to support their claims in the legal system.⁷⁰ Thus, it is more relevant to consider poverty as the crucial factor, that prevents women from using litigation as remedies.

Article 4 of the CEDAW calls for "temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women" in order to achieve equality of opportunity and treatment. Toward this end, Nigeria appointed the first woman Vice Chancellor of a university and the first woman member of the Federal Civil Service Commission. Other nominal appointments of women were made mandatory at both state and federal government levels.⁷¹ Notwithstanding these appointments, there is still evidence that women lack access to high levels of decision-making. There seems instead to be more evidence of "tokenism" which does not recognize the extent of educational and professional achievement among Nigerian women. The government has also made some institutional modifications at federal and state levels, and women can now take on bail individuals in police custody subsequent to a directive by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.⁷² However, the statement that women should "bear any unpleasant consequence that may flow from that action" indicates that there is still some perception among policy-makers that women are not always entitled to protective legislation.⁷³

Most legislative improvements concentrate on giving more access to urban, elite women. Rural women are meant to benefit from the introduction of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), the government's new master-plan for agricultural and infrastructural development to encourage higher rural productivity. Since the government realizes that many rural women are farmers, they were targeted as primary beneficiaries of the plan. However, this effort is largely believed to be failing.⁷⁴

Chapter IV of the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria contains provisions for the defense of the fundamental human rights of all Nigerians. Provisions for the protection of individuals from discrimination are to be found in subsection 39, which provides that:

(a) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community or ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person.

(b) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria and other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions, or political opinion are not made subject; or

(c) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not

accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinion.

This section in effect, provides for equal treatment of men and women under the law. According to the Nigerian government's report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, there is no need to create enforcement mechanisms for the Convention because its provisions could be used as the basis for any argument against derogations in any court of law within Nigeria. The same report states that while protections exist, there may be no progress toward the elimination of discrimination if women do not actively pursue the realization of this goal. However, the argument that it is up to women to seek legal redress may be a "straw man" because without the right tools and considerable governmental support, such active pursuit of women's rights may be impossible.

Discrimination in property ownership still exists under customary law. While everywhere women are entitled to property acquired by trading, ante-nuptial property belongs to both parties in the north and east but only to the husband among the Yorub. Once divorced, the woman is not entitled to her husband's estate.⁷⁵ The CEDAW, Article 16 (1, h) considers both spouses as having the same rights "in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property." The report of the Nigerian government states that the same standards apply to both married and unmarried women in the allocation of government owned land and housing. It identifies customary law as the main avenue of discrimination in property ownership. This is not only inaccurate, it constitutes a refusal to acknowledge that the majority of women who apply for government-owned property are often educated, wealthy, well connected or based in urban areas. Also, these women are most likely to invoke CEDAW and take legal action against discriminatory practices. The government's report also fails to acknowledge the vital role that family negotiation plays customary law to militate against abuses. Consequently, poor women living in urban areas suffer because kinship ties become more tenuous under conditions of urbanization.⁷⁶

Women in Nigeria also suffer legal discrimination in the control of contraception. Couples should be entitled to the fundamental human rights of freely and responsibly determining the number and spacing of their children. According to Article 12, 1 of the CEDAW, "[S]tates Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure equality of men and women in access to health care services, including those related to family planning." However, the contemporary practice in Nigeria is to deny women access to contraception by the Planned Parenthood Foundation of Nigeria if they do not have the signed consent of their spouses.⁷⁷ At the same time, contraceptives can be acquired over the counter and without any medical advice or monitoring. This is a double standard which denies that women are competent to make independent and responsible decisions. The control of reproduction in this manner is indicative of society's conception of the locus of power within the family. This can be linked to accepted indigenous methods of contraception where women are expected to periodically abstain from sexual intercourse while the polygynous man has no such obligation.⁷⁸

Abortion is also legally and socially controlled. There are strict prohibitions against abortions in Nigeria, which date from the English Offences against the Person Act of 1861. This was the source of colonial regulation of abortion and remains in force under Nigerian statutory

law. The only condition under which abortion is permitted by the Act is if it is performed in good faith and for the preservation of the mother's life.⁷⁹ Under Sections 228-230 of the Southern Criminal Code and Sections 232-236 of the Northern Penal Code, abortion is considered a crime punishable by varying terms of imprisonment.⁸⁰ The 1975 UN Report on the Status of Women & Family planning suggests that abortion should be legalized since "unjustified state interference (with regard to abortion) is likely to be not only socially repressive and discriminatory but personally traumatizing in its effects. This is especially true as it affects women's attempts to gain autonomy over their bodies."⁸¹

The key issues surrounding abortion are whether a woman is considered competent and whether she is considered to have the capacity to make independent decisions about her body.⁸² The 1976 recommendation of the Nigerian Medical Association and the Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians of Nigeria that the government allow abortions on request for health and welfare reasons was not approved by the federal government because of considerable opposition from some religious authorities.⁸³ The Nigerian government is wrong in assuming that the main road-blocks to the elimination of discrimination are extra-legal. Legal and extra-legal constraints coexist in both the letter of the law and in its administration. It is generally acknowledged that customs and traditions still persist which prevent the elimination of discrimination against women, and also that positive action must be taken by women to attain the full enjoyment of their rights.⁸⁴ What is usually not addressed is the provision of practical measures through which women can, if denied their rights, gain support toward the granting of these rights through legal and organized political action.

Another source of discrimination is to be found within the practice of religion. In both Christianity and Islam, there is a presumption of the inequality between women and men that did not necessarily exist in pre-colonial religion.⁸⁵ In spite of Islamic provisions for the equality of all believers, *pardah* and polygyny are considered obligatory. Since peasants cannot afford to seclude their wives, these phenomena are linked to class.⁸⁶ In Christianity, the orthodox position is that women should be submissive to men. Women's restricted access to information in Islam, likewise encouraged them to accept a submissive role. Even in the case of Christianity, education and a re-conceptualization of the role of women is necessary if significant progress is to be made. Any prescriptions or conditions that may be found in the definition of the role of women in the Bible remain inadequate as the sole harbingers of change. Both religions contribute to the continuation of discrimination against women.

Under colonial rule, education was not widely extended to women, and where it was women were prepared for predominantly domestic roles. This is reflected in the lower percentage of women in all professions and academic subject-areas. Article 10, Sections a-h of the CEDAW makes detailed provisions for the guarantee of equal rights for men and women in education. However, in 1975, female enrollment in elementary schools was 32 percent for students 6-11 years old and 14 percent for students 12 - 17 years old. From 1975-76, female student enrollment in Universities was 15.9 percent and in 1981-82, 27.96 percent.⁸⁷ The Nigerian National Policy on Education, according to the Report, makes only the following reference to women's education:

With a view to correcting the imbalance between ...the number of boys and girls in formal education and with particular regard to women's education, special effort will be made by

Ministries and Local government authorities in conjunction with Ministries of Community Welfare and of Information, to encourage parents to send their daughters to school.⁸⁸

The particular form that such encouragement will take is not specified. The government considers this adequate because the 1979 Constitution provides in Section 18, paragraphs 1 and 3 that equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels will be ensured, and that free education at all levels will be provided when practicable in order to eradicate illiteracy.⁸⁹ While in the 1970's and early 1980's education was free at all levels, the cutbacks in government spending following structural adjustment negatively affected education as well as other policies.

Equal employment opportunity and associated rights are provided for in Article 11 of the CEDAW. The Nigerian Constitution of 1979 also provides that the government endeavor to ensure "equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex or on any ground whatsoever." Nigerian women have a high level of participation in economic activity, but men still largely control the commanding heights of both politics and the economy. Thus, while women are represented in all the professions as well as in farming and trading, there is a concentration of men in the high levels of government as well as in the private sector. The problem in terms of equal employment opportunity therefore concerns under-representation in decision-making rather than non-representation. All women in the work-force face a double burden of work which tends to restrict their chances of upward mobility vis a vis men. Some employers who consider men more stable for employment also discriminate against women, as does the government in the administration of laws on taxation, and employment benefits.⁹⁰

It is clear that the primary responsibility for domestic labor falls on women despite the provision that parents "share the same rights and responsibilities" by Article 16, 1, d, of the 1979 Covenant. Until men and women bear equal responsibility for household labor, women will have limited access to employment opportunities and upward mobility. Also, there are very few women in positions of authority to make meaningful decisions regarding the rights of women. An additional problem is class. Women do not always share common interests, since human rights have different implications for poor and affluent people. Class and sectional differences therefore may prevent cooperative collective efforts by all women to gain the rights due to them. Another problem is that people have deep psychological ties to their culture and customs and "many women may prefer to live under those customs with which they are most familiar, even though the customs deny them personal freedom."⁹¹ When these women choose to take concrete steps toward gaining their rights, they also face some degree of social alienation. Education must therefore be directed at women as well as the whole society to foster the elimination of discrimination against women.

The personal rights of women to exercise control over their bodies is limited also by female genital operations, which in some cases create medical problems, including maternal and infant mortality, especially when combined with pregnancy at too early an age.⁹² These practices violate both Organization of African Unity (OAU) and United Nations (UN) principles on basic human rights. The Economic Commission for Africa also condemns them but rightly pinpoints the complexity of the situation.⁹³ Considering the aforementioned role of culture in the lives of people, these and other abuses are only eradicable over the long-term. When women themselves find no use or rationale for these practices in their lives, they will disappear.

Without such a commitment, efforts that are directed at eradication could prove to be fruitless. Another facet of the inability of women to exercise independent control over their bodies relates to the role of culture in the exercise of social control over individuals. Insofar as women as a group are in a subordinate position to men, one could agree with Howard that such control is directly beneficial to men economically, culturally and politically, with a caveat that women themselves share the thinking that these practices have some validity to their lives.⁹⁴

Conclusion

In terms of domestic protections, of the problems militating against the elimination of discrimination against women, most important is the fact that *de jure* guarantees do not necessarily imply *de facto* recognition. Imam argues that the Nigerian social structure favors men over women, resulting in exploitation which effectively subordinates women in all spheres of life. For this exploitation to be eliminated, structural change must occur. The most desirable form of change must be multi-dimensional in nature, incorporating changes in state legal policy as well as in social policy. In addition, power relations in the family must change.⁹⁵ However, it is refreshing that more recent scholarship is subjecting the argument of generalized male dominance in Nigerian society to closer scrutiny. The consensus emerging is that more study has to be done to highlight examples that contradict generalizations of male dominance in Nigerian society.⁹⁶

Concrete steps to change the social structure must include mass organization among women, directed at surmounting the class divisions among them. This is necessary for purposes of consciousness-raising, as well as for developing a common front to emphasize and promote in political debate. Since most discrimination is justified by references to culture, evidence about the positive role of women in pre-colonial Nigeria should be presented and widely promoted to counter negative stereotypes.

Despite Nigeria's grueling economic crisis, the education of women must be given utmost priority to enhance their ability to exercise self-determination in the control over their bodies and to participate as equals in the labor force. Education must also be extended to the rest of society on the importance of promoting and protecting women's rights. The involvement of more women in policymaking within the government at local, regional and federal levels must be further instituted and entrenched. Some steps have been taken in this direction by the Federal Government of Nigeria which, beginning under the Mohammed/Obasanjo administration, made the appointment of one woman in every decision making and consultative body mandatory. However, there must also be legal reforms which enhance the protection of the rights of women in Nigeria and remove present abuses by calling for the equal application of administrative procedures.

Constraints limiting the elimination of discrimination against women also arise from the nature of the international system which seeks to formalize these protections. Some of these problems can be attributed to the relative newness of this body of rights and the institutionalized procedures for promoting and protecting them. The Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women is the body vested with the authority to investigate, review and evaluate the performance of states which are parties to the Convention (Articles 17-20, CEDAW). Unfortunately, the Committee lacks adequate resources

for enforcing legal guarantees within the CEDAW and receives inadequate cooperation from members, which are in large part slow in submitting reports. Moreover, several countries including the United States have thus far not ratified the CEDAW, or have introduced many reservations which makes CEDAW meaningless. In cases where the CEDAW has been ratified, mechanisms for self-enforcement are unavailable. International protections currently are basically exhortatory in nature and do not carry the force of law. An additional problem arises from the need for the Committee to coordinate and integrate its work with other UN organs dealing with women.

A problem with international guarantees is that signatories to the CEDAW are expected to introduce constitutional and legislative changes, which give effect to its protections. Governments are then expected to make periodic reports on the progress made (Art.2). Such self-policing leaves room for abuses.⁹⁷ Due to these and other problems, the Committee has been somewhat limited in its ability to live up to its potential.⁹⁸ The same problems apply to regional protections.

There is no doubt that the elimination of discrimination against women involves much more than legal protections and social engineering. It is obvious that activism among women, which has always been an important part of Nigerian life, must continue. In addition, there must be more cooperative action among women of all classes and in all areas of Nigeria. Their guiding principle must be the one found already in some groups in the country--as long as some women still live under discriminatory conditions, all women are affected.⁹⁹

There must also be the fine-tuning of national, regional and international protections in order to remove elements of vagueness, combat inaccurate portrayals of women as well as provide more concrete enforcement mechanisms to guarantee more effectively the rights of women. These protections must be seen as building blocks in a constantly evolving process.

Notes

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2. See *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Nineteenth session 22 June-10 July 1998 Draft report *Rapporteur*: Ms. Aurora Javate de Dios (Philippines) Addendum IV. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention B. Consideration of reports 2. Second and third periodic reports Nigeria CEDAW/C/1998/II/L.1/Add.6 7 July 1998 <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord1998/documentation/tbodies/cedaw-c-1998-ii-11-add6.htm>
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11. Catherine VerEecke "Muslim Women Traders of Northern Nigeria: Perspectives from the City of Yola" *Ethnology*, Summer 1993, Vol. 32:3, p. 217-336
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13. Akumadu, op cit. Back cover.
14. Olufemi, op cit.
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32. *Ibid.*
33. Amadiume, op cit; Awe, 1989 op cit.
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35. Mba, op cit., pp. 290-299.

36. See *Nigeria's First Report to the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW)*, p.6.
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Reference Style: The following is the suggested format for referencing this article: Okome, Mojbol Olnk. "Domestic, Regional, And International Protection of Nigerian Women Against Discrimination: Constraints And Possibilities." *African Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 3: [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a2.htm>

Globalisation, *Nepad* and the Governance Question in Africa

'KUNLE AMUWO

Introduction and *Problematique*

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is yet another initiative by Africa's Heads of State and Governments intended to reverse, for good, the beggarly and highly embarrassing image of the continent through a 'sustained engagement' with the developed world. Among its many objectives, *NEPAD* seeks to halt the growing and deepening poverty of Africans by working towards altering the basis of the relationship between the rich North and the poor South. The initiative seeks a new global partnership based on shared responsibility and mutual interest through the instrumentality of political democracy and economic development on the continent. It is also concerned to institute people-centered development via market-oriented economies capable of holding their own ground in the global village. Furthermore, *NEPAD* is in search of building blocks to lay the foundation for a new politico-economic order, one able to permanently reverse the old cliché that 'Africa is rich but Africans are poor'. The politico-economic blueprint of action is also meant to strengthen the capacity of the state with a view to making it an effective engineer, formulator and implementer of people-friendly programs and policies. Finally, where various Lome EU-ACP agreements have virtually condemned Africa to the unenviable role of producing no more than primary commodities for Western industrial consumption, *NEPAD* proposes a frontal attack on the negative fall-outs of the continent's integration into the global system as an extremely weak partner and a peripheral player.

What the authors of *NEPAD* are saying, in brief, is that whilst it is imperative for Africa to clean up its act and begin to take its rightful place in the comity of continents, it cannot and should not be expected to go it alone. Yet, little or nothing in the document suggests that the Western paradigm of development that has done everything except develop the continent is being challenged or contested.

My principal argument here, at once implicit and explicit, is that since Africa's history of unequal relations with the developed world in the last three centuries or so is such that it has largely become a non-autonomous actor without the capacity to decide its own fate and future, *NEPAD*—by being essentially a-historical does not constitute an adequate response to the continent's underdevelopment. It needs to be replaced by a more African-centered economic action plan that takes the continent's history into account. That is to say a history that is two-sided. First, one needs to consider Africa's relations with the West in terms of the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. In the latter's contemporary rendition as "globalization," the continent encounters the diffusion of Western capitalism and cultural values and a network of socio-economic and political institutions and relations that have made Africa's political

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a4.pdf>

economy the most vulnerable to both positive and negative external influences. The second side of that history is the bad politics and venal leadership in much of the continent that were either ignored or supported by the West during the Cold War period—depending on their strategic or nuisance value—but which have become costly in both political and economic terms after the formal end of the Cold War. As Zack-Williams, have argued, “Africa’s crisis is not natural or inevitable but a product of human history; a history forged in the complex interaction between locals and foreigners, states and societies, and domestic and imperial pressures.”¹

A major lacuna in *NEPAD*, I argue, is its inability or unwillingness, or both, to boldly account for Africa’s underdevelopment as a function of both the epochal consequences of colonialism/structural imperialism and bad politics of many of the continent’s political leaders. It may be true that “democracy in the form of multiparty elections was generally seen by African rulers as the price to pay for continued financial assistance rather than as the political modality that will make development more likely.”² But it is also true that structural adjustment programs (SAPs) had greatly undermined the capacity of African states economically and strengthened their hands politically to deal with political discontent. To make sense of this methodological impasse, Alex de Waal’s notion of *NEPAD* as a ‘big idea’ that buys into “the promise of bold international action to resolve Africa’s crisis” is useful.³ Taken along with his argument that one of *NEPAD*’s strengths is that there is nothing essentially new about it, that what Africa needs is not so much new development models as “a proper application of lessons already learned,” we get the moral that the success of this African initiative seems to be hinged on a correct reading of Africa’s history as well as on adequate responses to that history.⁴ In *NEPAD*’s attempt to grapple with that history, it seems to have treated the ‘international community’ with kid gloves. And, what is more, this has been done in a rather simplistic manner, in an *A then B* explicatory schema: If Africa puts its house in order, the continent’s ‘traditional’ trading partners will fund its development. It is as if authors of *NEPAD* have turned the history of Africa’s relations with the West on its head. It is as if contemporary globalization—particularly in the trade practices of the North in relation to the South—has no abiding hard lessons to teach Africa’s political leaders.

The remainder of this paper is divided into four sections. The first examines the nature of globalization and its effects on Africa and the new development initiative. The second critically interrogates the competing approaches to the governance question and how *NEPAD* addresses it. The third section analyses the challenges that governance poses to Africa’s political leaders. The last section, which also concludes the essay, is concerned to identify to what extent the document’s provisions are capable of aiding the process of constructing a developmental state on the continent. In all of this I argue that by appropriating, almost hook, line and sinker, a paradigm of Western hegemony that, in various changing forms and guises, has *mainly* been responsible for the continent’s underdevelopment, *NEPAD* does not, and cannot, be *the* Plan of Action to save Africa both from the outside world and from itself and this notwithstanding the good intentions of its proponents. In its place, I make a case for a *developmental state* that will give *locus* and *focus* to the governance project, first domestically by the gradual insertion of consensual politics between governments, unions (civil society organizations) and business, and secondly internationally, through sustained political pressure to render global governance humane.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

Globalization is a complex process and phenomenon of antinomies and dialectics: integrating and fragmenting world; uniformity and localization; increased material prosperity and deepening misery; homogenization and hegemonization. Globalization is nothing but a mixed grill. On the one hand, it has the potentiality of eroding national sovereignty of the weakest and poorest states, whilst widening the technological divide amongst states; on the other, it tends to provide an enabling environment for greater respects for human rights and gender equality. It is an economic orthodoxy that is failing the people, but enriching investors and big corporations. When Africa's political leaders rein into it, it is problematic; and when nation-states propose or seek to implement alternatives, they are puniitd. They are reminded by the rich and powerful nations, *la* Reagan and Thatcher, that there is no alternative to the only way—the market path—of running the 'global economy.'

Cooper conceptualizes globalization in three ways: the 'Banker's Boast,' according to which globalization is no longer a work in progress, but rather a concrete reality capable of emptying governments of their sovereignty; 'Social Democrats' lamentation about that 'reality' that gnaws away at the fabric of social welfarism; and finally what he calls 'the 'Dance of the Flows and Fragments,' that is to say, globalization as an uneven process. For him, what is wrong with the triple explication is their "totalizing pretensions and their presentist periodization." ⁵ He would rather buy into the notion of globalization as a process in becoming, whose coherence, reach and specificity are still in a state of flux. Nevertheless, in Cooper's historical analysis of capitalism, the import of globalization to developing economies comes into bold relief. Africa's structural context of choice is mired in a dialectical relationship between a putative openness of global market and a real lack of state autonomy. He invites us to examine capitalism in an Atlantic spatial system and by so doing "write about large-scale, long-term processes, without overlooking specificity, contingency and contestation." ⁶ More germane to our discussions is his observation that the contemporary form of globalization is as deglobalizing of Africa as colonialism. He argues that only small states with scant strategic value for Western powers are doing well; others with strategic interests and oil economies "are in permanent economic crisis." Furthermore, the macro-economic, neo-liberal, market-friendly economic policies of IFIs are such that "Africa's contribution to world trade and its intake of investment funds were larger in the days of national economic policy than in the days of economic openness." Finally, for Cooper, contemporary globalization is no more than an "age of globalizing deglobalization in Africa or of distorted globalization." ⁷

The theme of Africa's massive marginalization under globalization finds a resonant echo in Mazrui. He argues that whilst "the continent helped to develop Europe through labor, territory and extractive 'imperatives' of the colonial era, every stage of Africa's contribution to globalization was also a stage in its own marginalization." ⁸ The view that globalization is not a universal phenomenon and that only economies already competitive profit most from it has virtually become a dominant school of thought. ⁹ Africa is, perhaps, the worst affected. With the concentration of the benefits of globalization in the triad (US, EU and Japan), the inability of globalization to meet the most basic needs of people in the poorest countries has only worsened the structural crisis of international political economy. Similarly, the autonomy and degree of

maneuverability of African states are severely constrained. Not only do most of them lack the ability to develop their own market capital, they have “increasingly lost the authority to determine both the direction of social development or the context of social policy.”¹⁰ Globalization has worked more for the corporate world both in the developed and developing worlds and less for the hapless people in the developing world.¹¹ The phenomenon has been anything but a positive sum game; poor countries not only routinely lose out to the rich, but also transfer huge export earnings to foreign institutional creditors in the name of debt servicing—four times more money than they spend on basic health and care and education.

Perhaps nowhere is globalization more pernicious and debilitating to the interest of Africa than the hugely unfair trade practices institutionalized under the aegis of the World Trade Organization (WTO). By favoring the worst form of unregulated capitalism in modern history—with rigged rules and unfair agricultural standards for Africa—globalization imperils both democracy and development on the continent. Bello, has detailed how this is done. One, a powerful and wide-ranging WTO has been better able to protect the interest of the US more than the GATT it replaced. This was realized by getting African states to sign the Marrakesh Accord of 1994. The latter gave teeth to the Uruguay Round whilst effectively robbing these states of “their right to employ a variety of critical trade measures for development purposes.”¹² A major measure is the ‘local content’ rules used by several newly industrializing countries to achieve a judicious balance between foreign investment and national industrialization. Two, the use of Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) and Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), are not only inimical to the industrialization and development of developing countries, but also deepen their technological dependence on firms of the developed world. Three, WTO does not recognize the ‘special and differential’ status Third World countries enjoyed under both the UNCTAD and GATT. On the contrary, it decrees that the only route to development “is one that involves radical trade (and investment) liberalization.” Four, the WTO’s Special Measures on Developing Countries have been honored more in their breach than in their observance. A notable example is the one on agriculture that was intended to give assistance to ‘Net Food Importing Countries’ with a view to offsetting the reduction of subsidies that would make food imports more expensive. Five, whilst virtually insisting that developing countries should withdraw subsidies from their farmers, OECD countries have regularly increased theirs. Jean Chretien, the Canadian Prime Minister, declared during a special session in the UN General Assembly devoted to *NEPAD* in September 2002 that one way rich countries can help African economies is to end subsidies worth \$350 billion for domestic agricultural products. In the process, the playing field that multilateral trading system seeks to put in place is further endangered. Finally, Bello concludes that “the WTO systematically protects the trade and economic advantages of the rich countries, particularly the United States. It is based on a paradigm or philosophy that denigrates the right to take activist measures to achieve development on the part of the less developed countries, thus leading to a radical dilution of their right to ‘special and differential treatment.’ The WTO raises inequality into a principle of decision-making.”¹³

To all appearances, Africa’s political leaders and their sundry economic and political advisers do not read the nature and character of the global system they are dealing with in the way have articulated above. They seem to believe that genuine partnership is possible between

them and their Western counterparts based on the existing rules of the contemporary global system. Thus, the *NEPAD* document at paragraph 188 talks, in relation to Africa, about the “responsibilities and obligations of the developed countries and multilateral institutions, ranging from debt relief to market access and governance reform of the multilateral institutions.” Authors of the document in question seem to understand neither the system nor the structures with which they are confronted. They have not come to terms with the logic of a system that, vis-a-vis poor countries, often say what it will not do and does what it does not say. By so doing, they make inordinately unrealistic assumptions and prognosis. As Maxwell and Christiansen have argued, “the conditions in aid relationship tend to apply more to the recipient country than to the donor; this has been described as ‘asymmetrical accountability’ and is rather closer in practice to traditional conditionality than to genuine partnership.”¹⁴ Understood this way, Ake’s contention that development “is not for a people who do not know who they are and where they are coming from, for such people are unlikely to know where they are going” makes eminent sense.¹⁵

This misreading of the global system is not new. Africa’s political leaders at juridical independence in the 1960s—and the state formations they inherited—were introduced to what they thought was a neutral, almost altruistic, international economic and financial system that was interested in the continent’s ‘accelerated development’ with a view to ‘catching up with the West’ (two of the buzzwords of that era). Once the euphoria of independence withered away, the leaders would discover a world ‘order’ that was, almost in all material particular, disorderly and anarchical. They found a global system where ethics and morality were—and still are—routinely neglected in favor of *real-politik* and an aggressive pursuit of national interests. They found a globe dominated by highly industrialized, rich and powerful nations that jealously protect their markets, industries and privileges whilst states that do little more than produce raw materials and sell primary goods, by virtue of an amoral ‘international division of labor,’ have to play second fiddle.

Naturally, Africa’s political leaders have been frustrated by this reality more so that over four decades after, few, if any, of the promises of development have been fulfilled on the continent. On the contrary, almost by all accounts, Africans are, in general terms, worse off today materially than they were at nominal independence. Today, the majority of those 1.2 billion people the World Bank says live on less than one US dollar per day are found on the continent. Whilst foreign aid and foreign direct investments (FDIs) are drying up, much of what remains continues to be tied to buying goods and services from donor nations. African states feature prominently among the lowest FDI in the world—less than 0.5% of the value of their GNP.¹⁶ Collier expatiates: “Africa is currently attracting only those investments which cannot be located elsewhere, such as mineral extraction or production for the (tiny) domestic market. The major internationally footloose investments are simply bypassing Africa as a location.”¹⁷ A major reason for this, according to Cooper is that the continent “is filled with areas where international investors do not go.”¹⁸ It is curious that notwithstanding this empirical reality, the authors of *NEPAD* place their faith on a substantial external funding of the continent’s development.

Under globalization, the continent’s marginalization could not have been worse. According to one analyst, “not only has the international leverage of African leaders been drastically

diminished in the globalizing post-cold war world, they now sail in the largely uncharted waters of eroding norms of sovereignty, dwindling Western concern with Africa's poverty, a vacuum of ideological visions and the growing power of external non-state actors such as multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, crime syndicates and CNN".¹⁹ Thus, unlike Europe or North America seeking to redefine its sovereignty, in much of Africa the question is not so much a question of reinvention of sovereignty as the crisis of collapsing or disintegrating states that have to be rescued.²⁰ But for several reasons (including the global system's profound lack of democracy; IFIs not being development institutions; the nefarious activities of business lobbies, however formally legal, that constitute a graver threat to democracy and accountability in developing countries than domestic corruption, etc.), dependence on market economy will only postpone Africa's development to the mythical *calendes greces*.²¹ As Germain has put it, "the belief in globalization as an unfettered collective good has received a knock" since the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98.²² A major argument here is that it is difficult to preach democracy, however understood, to countries at the mercy of a global financial system whose decision-making mechanisms are insulated from the general processes of democratic accountability. Expressed provocatively, we can, in a fundamental sense, trace the lack of crucial resources for nation-building and economic development as well as a proliferation of intra and inter-state conflicts that this often engenders to crucial decisions taken in the inner recesses of IFIs.

A globalization accelerates; notwithstanding the stagnation in the volume of global trade in 2001 after an exceptional 12% growth in 2000-Africa is caught between *autonomy* and *openness*. This has serious politico-economic and social repercussions domestically and globally. As expatiated below, on account of weak internal governance mechanisms these states find it difficult to maximize openness whilst also experiencing considerable problems in effectively choosing autonomy. The seemingly rising profile in the donor community of the four principal drivers of NEPAD (South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria) is, within this context, a double-edged sword: to implement NEPAD, they are likely to be more sensitive to Western interests because of the high hopes placed on the donor community for funding the Initiative. In the process, they are likely to end up paying only a nodding attention to critical African interests and perspectives.

Yet, these leaders know that to enjoy domestic legitimacy and credibility, they have to create the impression in the minds of the people that they are busy working for them. There is, in consequence, some element of enlightened self-interest in the current initiative by Africa's Heads of State and Governments. They have placed the onus on themselves to engage African peoples and the continent's 'development partners' in a seemingly frank dialogue with a view to making the 21st Century Africa's.

The opening paragraph of NEPAD appears unambiguous about the authors' commitment to lead the new struggle and offensive. It read thus: "This *New Partnership for Africa's Development* is a pledge by African leaders based on a common vision and a firm conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic."²³ To successfully undertake this resolution, the document rejects a 'beggar-thy-neighbor' approach to

development. On the contrary, it unequivocally advocates for the reversal of Africa's abnormal situation by changing the relationship that underpins it. It adds: "Africans are appealing neither for the further entrenchment of dependency through aid, nor for marginal concessions."²⁴ What the leaders are demanding is that a people-friendly balance should be struck between the wealth-creating energies of international private capital and enterprise and the public obligations of good governance. Whilst pledging a firm commitment to the latter, the leaders want to engage the rich nations to make the former available to Africa anchored on a new global partnership characterized by shared responsibility and mutual interest. In other words, the plea is that both sides of the equation should begin to act more responsibly and more humanely for the sake of humanity. But how far can *exhortatory politics* go?

THE GOVERNANCE QUESTION

In the last decade or so, the notion of 'good governance' has increasingly been used as part of the conditionality for continued 'aid' to developing countries. It has become a cherished concept within the donor community, the chancelleries of diplomatic capitals and among aid recipient countries. The concept, nevertheless remains slippery, highly contentious, and one whose province is also a contested terrain. Mercifully, it is possible to tease out a few contending perspectives before attempting to show how governance issues are addressed within the *NEPAD* framework.

The first perspective is the technocratic/economic approach, the domain of IFIs and the donor community. Aid recipients are required to balance their financial books well, to avoid balance of payments deficits. To do this, all that is required is to follow both the letter and spirit of orthodox economic reforms stipulated by these institutions and the donor community: trade liberalization, currency devaluation, subsidy withdrawal from agriculture, privatization of commanding heights of the economy, the private sector as the engine of development. The problem is that people, the real beneficiaries of these reforms, are hardly factored in. It seems as if the administration of things (healthy GDP and GNP per capita, etc) are prioritized above the greatest welfare for the greatest number of the people. Ends appear to justify the means. The whether of economic development is deemed more important than how and for whom it is realized. Some dosages of authoritarianism not excluded from the equation. For Manji and O'Coill, this perspective on good governance is no more than repackaged structural adjustment programs that were highly contested in many parts of Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s.²⁵ They have been retouched and supposedly given a 'human face'.

The second perspective is essentially political. Here, good governance means legitimate government, one that is properly put in place by the electorate themselves and that stays in close touch with the people. Good governance therefore requires a functional state that is institutionally strong, efficient and effective anchored on publicly determined, predictable and increasingly routinized 'rules of the game'. The objective would be to guarantee "public security and the rule of law, necessary conditions for both economic development and democratization" (Carlos, 2001:163). But this has to be a state in the process of becoming. Thus, Carlos adds that good governance is a call for "the emergence of a reformed state, governed by the rules of legitimacy, transparency, accountability and responsibility."²⁶ Good governance in

this sense would mean the pursuit of two mutually reinforcing agendas: democracy and governance. A third and final perspective on good governance sees the latter as 'ownership' by the people of reform and development programs enunciated by the state/government. This entails participatory democracy, decentralization of decision-making centers of power in both political and economic senses.

In this respect, the literature raises two important issues. One, domestic ownership of reforms as a necessary condition for the successful implementation of reform and development programs.²⁷ Two, the notion of 'beneficiary ownership, or the increased citizen participation in the design and implementation of programs.²⁸ Furthermore, Killick et.al argue that ownership indicates a conflict of interest between the objectives sought by donors and national governments.²⁹ Apparently with Africa in mind, Killock, et.al., warn that "there is unlikely to be convergence between the objectives and interests of donors and recipients."³⁰ This is because, among other reasons, the two parties are informed by different historical and institutional backgrounds. They also report to different constituencies.

CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE TO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Nothing defines governance more than its social or public purpose. This is what ties the foregoing three perspectives together. But as Sachs has argued, countries may be well governed (in any of the senses outlined above) but that will not remove structural impediments to development.³¹ Thus, whilst not ignoring the market and the discipline it sometimes imposes on key political actors, a technocratic interpretation of good governance does not appear as socially relevant as the political legitimacy and ownership perspectives. As rules for organizing public affairs, managing the interaction the market, the state and civil society, as well as the relationship between a state's power structure and the civil society, governance can be either 'good' or 'bad' to the extent that certain key criteria are met (e.g., consensual political goals, political participation and political accountability).³² Governance is also a regime of rules concerning not only *whether* the state delivers social goods and values, but also, *how* this is being done. In other words, whilst the notion of governance necessarily has, both technocratic and political elements these two elements should be more preponderant lest we are confronted with states that are fairly efficient, but hardly effective.

Herein lies important challenges for Africa's political leaders as they grapple with *NEPAD*. They have to make the double political dimension of governance dominant. By so doing, the unregulated and undemocratic space of technocracy can gradually be brought under control, lest powerful groups and individuals continue to exploit the people in the name of state efficiency that lacks ennobling social ingredients. In essence, 'good' governance will consist of political rationality among policy makers, reforming state and democratic institutions deepening democracy, and facilitating the expansion of the public space for more non-state actors to find unmitigated expression.³³ Furthermore, good governance will also entail reversing what globalization stands for: It now seeks the latter seeks to "make the population fit for global capital" without any plans whatsoever "to make capital adapt to the needs of the population".³⁴ The process of reversal would mean more responsible and responsive governments, weak enough to do what the people want, but strong enough to get them to work

and to progressively make African states productive economies. Weiss puts this in clear relief by suggesting that:

Processes or rules of decision-making that are more likely to result in actions that are truly in the public interest, rather than favoring the private exploitation of the public interest. The central challenge is not to halt the expansion of the market but to establish proper rules and institutions so that the benefits of growth are more widely beneficial.³⁵

Similarly, Africa's political leaders have to commit themselves to a more social definition of good governance by legitimizing "alternative definitions that prioritize public welfare or governmental accountability to citizens instead of to foreign creditors."³⁶ This would involve a more critical reading and understanding of the nature and character of contemporary global system.

According to the *Declaration on Africa's Development Challenges*, [adopted at the end of a conference jointly hosted in Accra, Ghana in April 2002 by the Council for Development and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Third World Network (TWN)-Africa on "Africa's Development Challenges in the Millenium"] the development vision and economic measures proposed by NEPAD are unrealistic and flawed because they do not challenge the *status quo*. More specifically, the *Declaration* argues that the vision will do little more than "reinforce the hostile external environment and the internal weaknesses that constitute the major obstacles to Africa's development."³⁷ African scholars have been largely skeptical of what the donor community means by good governance. According to Mukandala, the liberal democracy of the third wave is a hijacking of the people's political struggle "for something that is formally democratic and progressive but substantively empty. Liberal democracy of the third wave cloaks itself in legality than legitimacy. It promotes 'good governance' that is managerial and *status quo* oriented and that can only allow for growth, rather than leadership that must pursue structural transformation."³⁸ The continent's political leaders have to identify and work within paradigms that facilitate rather than retard continental development.

To be sure, this challenge would require some form of radicalization of the continent's political leaders. At this critical juncture of Africa's history, they may have little choice to facilitating "a politics of resistance" among their people.³⁹ Interestingly, there are some snippets of evidence in NEPAD that its authors recognize the need for this brand of politics, though these are largely left undeveloped for reasons that are perhaps understandable. Paragraph 54 of the blueprint speaks to the fact that the "struggle [Africans would be waging will be successful only if our peoples are the masters of their own destiny."⁴⁰ And paragraph 56 calls on African peoples "to take up the challenge of mobilizing in support of the implementation of this initiative by setting up, at all levels, structures for organization, mobilization and action."⁴¹

NEPAD authors seem to have given some attention to this important issue in terms of ownership of the program as well as the accountability of leaders to the people. Yes, ownership appears to have been smuggled in only as an after-thought. It is one of the major gaps in the document. If the initiative is to succeed, African states and governments need as much support from the people as they can get. As a "dynamic and endogenous concept" in which "good economic outcomes...tend to support greater ownership," mass support for initial success is very important.⁴² In any event, it will not be enough for Africa's political leaders to be in the good books of the donor community. They will enjoy genuine legitimacy both at home and

abroad only as they work assiduously to close the gap between themselves and their people in terms of broad, long-term social objectives and the means to achieve them. There is a further important consideration. With relatively weak state capacity and less than strong policy decision-making processes, how meaningful is program ownership by the people? ⁴³

The notion of accountability of leaders is a welcome development. At the very heart of good governance, accountability facilitates other areas of social commitment by the state. Having committed themselves to strengthening national, sub-regional and continental structures that support good governance.” ⁴⁴ Africa’s political leaders also propose, that “the Heads of State Forum... will serve as a mechanism through which the leadership of *NEPAD* will periodically monitor and assess the progress made by African countries in meeting their commitment towards achieving good governance and social reforms.” ⁴⁵ They add that the “Forum will also provide a platform for countries to share experiences with a view to fostering good governance and democratic practices.” ⁴⁶ Known as the African Peer Review Mechanism, a consensus is yet to emerge on its exact, practical role. Yet, the provision suffers from no apparent semantic ambiguity. At the Abuja Summit in October 2002, only a dozen heads of state formally ratified the Peer Review Mechanism on behalf of their countries. Others pleaded for more time. Similarly, there has been an addition to the mechanism in question. After President Thabo Mbeki led a group that questioned the propriety of peer review, South Africa’s deputy Foreign Affairs Minister issued a statement that a second leg of the mechanism, composed of a small group of eminent persons would be charged with peer review, and only on economic matters. Peer review of political matters will instead be handled by institutions of the African Union, such as the new African Parliament and the African Commission on Human Rights. Regardless of its format, the importance of self-monitoring by Africa’s political leaders can hardly be over-emphasized.

The notions of ownership of *NEPAD* by the people and the accountability of political leaders through peer review have a direct bearing on the practice of citizenship. Citizenship, for Eriksen “entails not only to be ruled but also to rule in turn.” ⁴⁷ Citizenship is a two-way phenomenon which emphasizes both the people’s civic obligations as well as the state’s moral responsibility to furnish all citizens with basic needs and protect their rights. By the same token, citizenship is a transactional exchange between governors and governed. It has the capability of making the public realm less acrimonious as well as legitimizing the state both domestically and internationally. Expressed this way, governance becomes “a way of engaging politics, including the need for changes in power relations.” ⁴⁸

A further challenge for the continent’s political leaders is to create meaningful, intelligible and sustained dialogue with the citizenry such that the latter can, also govern their governors. Leaders cannot run distant, alien and expect the people to understand what they are doing, let alone carry them along. The people will not give even elected leaders genuine allegiance if their relations with the state does little more than produce habitual obedience. Worse, “an exclusive and alien state cannot produce a comprehensive development project.” ⁴⁹

In consequence, Africa’s political leaders would have to exhibit a new political will make the claim of *NEPAD*’s ownership and proprietorship by the people a genuine one. That is to say, the people must be given a life of their own. As Allan and Dawood have argued, the blueprint’s conception of accountability must be redefined, through a transformation into an “internal

relationship of accountability between African governments and their own citizens" and not just an external relation between African leaders and donor countries.⁵⁰ Trust has to be created and nurtured between the two parties through democratic consolidation, the deepening of democratic gains, the broadening of democratic reach, the constitution of more inclusive governments, and the enforcement of political and institutional democracy. Similarly, the leaders would have to deepen their understanding of democracy and legitimacy to include a strict observance of fundamental human rights and popular participation.

This political work is a social desideratum. Its major goal must be to support the many electoral democracies existing Africa with a view to decisively addressing the near-catastrophic material situation of millions of Africans. To be sure, this is often understood as a political work for the long term. Even so, democratically elected leaders would still have to show results, lest the people become wearied by an endless wait for the proverbial dividends of democracy.

Another major challenge elicited by the governance question is how to mobilize internal funds for implementing *NEPAD*. The logic of political accountability should consist foremost of working towards downsizing plethoric, over-bloated and highly centralized bureaucracies that have proved economically and politically ruinous. By so doing, Africa could free up funds for financing *NEPAD*. This is an important issue for it poses the question of how the continent's financial resources are managed and what proportion are mobilized to finance development. The strong dependence on external funding of 'development' is held to be a function of lack of resources in Africa. But is this true? Slimmer, stronger states capable of creating a conducive environment for both the public and private sectors to generate wealth, redistribute prosperity, create employment and reduce poverty, would benefit immensely from a vigorously-pursued anti-corruption campaign. Ake discusses the urgent need to reduce the cost of politics and corruption.⁵¹ In November 2002, the resident representative of the World Bank in Nigeria declared that that country spent no less than 80% of her annual revenues on running government!

Whilst *NEPAD* proposes, respectively, in paragraphs 83 and 188 (m) to adopt "effective measures to combat corruption and embezzlement" and put structures in place that would at once "combat corruption effectively" as well as ensure a repatriation of Africa's stolen monies lodged in Euro-American banking vaults, experience shows that there is always a gap between precept and practice.⁵² Corruption may be the affliction of humanity and not the exclusive preserve of any region, but it is little consolation that in many African countries anti-corruption laws are often treated with contempt and levity.⁵³ This is one area where parliamentary and civil society oversight of the state, as well as specialized, independent monitoring institutions can help Africa retrieve huge stolen monies to aid the capitalization of the continent's development.⁵⁴ Further domestic resources can also come from those domestic business people and corporate groups who often evade tax with the connivance of corrupt state officials. But there is more political work required to move Africa close to the desired goal of self-reliance, where external funding will merely complement domestic resources. Now is the time to lay the first building blocks.

There is no alternative, for whilst the continent's leaders expect more and better funding from the West as a reward for 'good governance,' the reality on the ground is that both external private and public capital flows are drying up. This is a no-win situation. What happens to the

Western notion of 'good governance' if it conflicts with vital and strategic interests of the Great Powers? "Despite its wealth," writes Helleiner, "the United States has the weakest aid performance record in the OECD (0.1% of GNP of which 30% goes to the Middle East); remains in serious arrears in its financial obligations to the UN; is so jealous of its sovereignty that it fails to ratify even some of the most obvious of international conventions relating to the world's most vulnerable..." He adds, perhaps for effect, that "there is little reason to expect more leadership from the US government over the next four years."⁵⁵ The latter is an obvious reference to the hawkish Bush administration. To be sure, the West is not reducible to the US but it is now so hegemonic as the sole superpower. It is inconceivable that the future of Africa will be left at the mercy of a US-dominated global hamlet.

In view of the foregoing, the debt peonage of the continent has to be confronted and addressed by African leaders in Africa's interest, much in the same way that domestic and international civil society organizations have made considerable progress in attempts to find a people-friendly solution. *NEPAD* is timid on this issue, speaking only about the need to "accelerate debt reduction for heavily indebted African countries" as well as the improvement of "debt relief strategies for middle-income countries." Why not simply call for debt cancellation since debt repayment is simply unsustainable insofar as it is wholly antithetical to development?⁵⁶ The debt question is a time-bomb ticking away, ready to explode. To all appearances, good governance and economic development will eventually be jeopardized if this issue is not resolved in a manner that will permit African countries to begin to function as veritable emerging democracies. If debts are written off, billions of dollars would be released into the coffers of various governments to build hope and a future for Africans. The money is needed to fill an estimated annual resource gap of 12% of the continent's GDP. This should be complemented by living wages and the long-term benefit of a savings/ investment culture. Then the continent will accumulate appreciable capital outlays that should eventually make African businesses the drivers for the attraction of foreign capital, a point forcefully made by the Rt. Honorable Earl Cairns, Chair of the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) during the Commonwealth-African Investment Forum in Abuja in April 2002.

TOWARDS A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE?

I have argued that globalization has essentially sliced up the world into two unequal and uneven parts in which, "only the strong are represented and the only the weak are punished."⁵⁷ Whilst Africa's internal politics have, undoubtedly contributed to this frightening economic backwardness, it has only compounded an essentially structural crisis engendered, *ab initio*, by a more debilitating external ecology. Expressed differently, there is too much of the West in Africa to allow Africa to design its future on its own terms. There is no alternative to making global economic governance humane. However, according to Austin, "there is no easy bridge between those who want to reform the world in their own image and those who question both the motive and remedy."⁵⁸

How does *NEPAD* address this issue? Not as rigorously and as robustly as one would have expected from a supposedly 'new' initiative. It appears too timid in terms of confronting the most nefarious manifestations of contemporary globalization. As mentioned earlier, the

document does not critically interrogate received Western paradigms of development. Not unlike the 'civilizing' mission of colonialism, the hegemonic discourse of development in relation to Africa "was framed not in the language of emancipation or justice but with the vocabulary of charity, technical expertise, neutrality and a deep paternalism...that was its syntax".⁵⁹ Rather than seek an alternative paradigm of development that would anchor the foundations of its actions on its own history and culture, *NEPAD* authors simply bought into the 'final triumph of bourgeois rationality' and 'the end of history'.⁶⁰ Yet these are paradigms of development that have zero tolerance for "alternative pathways to social development."⁶¹ An alternative development paradigm would necessarily have to take into consideration that "the debt burden, not economic development, has become the legacy of 40 years of foreign aid."⁶² The issue therefore, is not about more aid. In the words of the World Bank's President, James D. Wolfensohn, "aid must be effective for reform to take hold."⁶³ It is not too late for *NEPAD* to retrace its steps at the risk of a probable indifferent response from the continent's development partners.

To say that *NEPAD* should be reworked to reflect Africa's culture and history is not to suggest that the continent should completely turn its back on the global system. On the contrary, the call is for a developmental state that has the capacity to make and implement policies in relative autonomy, with a view to engendering socially beneficial goods and values to the greatest number of the people. It is a state that will adapt, appropriate and harness the power of markets in the social interest. A state that, in the words of Olukoshi, will play a central role "in defining a framework, setting targets and formulating policy options for their realization, including the possible role which could be played by the local and foreign private sector."⁶⁴ In other words, such a state would seek a judicious balance between the market and grand political acts. As Mkandawire and Soludo have argued "African economies are market economies...Development policies will...have to be keenly responsive to the capacities and weaknesses of both states and markets in Africa and seek to mobilize the former while correcting the latter. Dogmatic faith in either planning or markets will not do."⁶⁵ A developmental state is also a caring and democratic state capable of enlisting the support of the majority of the people in the arduous task of carrying out development.

But a developmental state will have to be preceded by a mix of several factors and variables: a return to the people in their various civic and communal societies with a view to creating bold, far-reaching and indigenous development plans the people will truly own; a humanist critique of globalization; a rethinking of practices of governance, both locally and externally; and the development of consensual politics by progressively freeing the state from the stranglehold of private interests of 'state classes'. Helleiner evokes the need for a blend, at the global level, of 'political statesmanship from above' and a 'supportive political pressure from below' to render the global village humane.⁶⁶ The blend is also much needed at the domestic African level. Helleiner adds, as if he had *NEPAD* authors in mind, that "middle powers, non-G7 members and groupings of developing countries can play a critical role in promoting and initiating appropriate change."⁶⁷ The authors and their countries seem to fit the bill. But do they have the necessary political will to play this role?

Notes

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3. Alex de Waal's 2002, 464.
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5. Cooper 2001, 192-3.
6. Ibid, 2001, 200ff.
7. Ibid 2002, 206.
8. Mazrui 1999.
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13. Ibid.
14. Maxwell and Christiansen 2002, 480.
15. Ake 2001, 6.
16. Lester et.al. 2000, 280.
17. Collier 2000. In Lester et.al. 2000.
18. Cooper 2001, 207.
19. Gerhart 2001, 195.
20. Fischer 2001, 40; Amuwo 2001.
21. Helleiner 2001, 248, 257.
22. Germain 2001, 420-421.
23. NEPAD 2001, v1.
24. Ibid, 1.
25. Manji and O'Coill 2002, 579.
26. Carlos 2000, 164; See also Tsikata 2001, 16.
27. Herbst and Soludo 2001, 666.
28. Tsikata 2001, 3-4.
29. Killick et.al., cited in Tsikata, 2001, 4.
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31. Sachs 2002, 20.
32. Bryld 2000, 701; Elsenhans 2002, 35; Hyden 2001, 16; Perkins 2000, 879; Rakodi, 2001, 344.
33. Weiss 2000, 803.
34. Scanlon 2001, 497.
35. Weiss 2000, 804.
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(http://www.codesria.org/Archives/Past%20events/declaration_on__africa.htm).

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39. Mark 2001, 93.
40. NEPAD 2001, 9.
41. Ibid, 9.
42. Tsikata, 2001, 4.
43. Ibid.
44. NEPAD 2001, paragraph 84.1, p 21.
45. Ibid, 21.
46. Ibid 21.
47. Ericksen 2002. Cited in Horeth 2002, 12.
48. Hyden 2001, 18.
49. Lumumba-Kasongo 2002, 103.
50. Allan and Dawood 2002, 24-25.
51. Ake 2000, 8.
52. NEPAD 2001, 22; 59.
53. Amuwo 1997/98.
54. Allan and Dawood 2002, 25.
55. Helleiner 2001, 250.
56. Poku 2002, 541.
57. Edwards 2001, 26.
58. Austin 2001, 502.
59. Manji and O'Coill 2002, 574.
60. Lumumba-Kasongo 2002, 85.
61. Rugumamu 2002, 54.
62. Rugumamu 2001, 32.
63. Cited in Deverajan et.al. 2001, xii.
64. Olukoshi 2002, 82.
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Reference Style: The following is the suggested format for referencing this article: Amuwo, 'Kunle. "Globalisation, NEPAD, and the Governance Question in Africa." *African Studies Quarterly* 6, no. 3: [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3a4.htm>

BOOK REVIEWS

In the Company of Diamonds: De Beers, Kleinzee, and the Control of a Town. Peter Carstens. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001. Pp. 257.

Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy. John L. Hirsch. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2001. Pp. 175.

These two books act as reverse images of each other. The cleverly titled *In the Company of Diamonds* goes into great detail about the "closedness" of a diamond mining town in southwestern Africa from the early 20th century until the recent past, but offers scant insight into the politics of the area. Conversely, *Sierra Leone* covers much political territory but, despite its title, barely touches upon the diamond trade, both the legal and illicit, occurring in that country.

Carstens' book illuminates the conditions of the workers who have worked for De Beers in Kleinzee, a company town that is, for most intents and purposes, cut off from the outside world. While Carstens shows the disparity in the wages paid to whites, Coloureds, and blacks working in the diamonds mines, but fails to follow through on the data by showing the impact on purchasing power among the groups involved. Ironically, Carstens' study of the De Beers operation in Kleinzee is as hermetically sealed as the town itself. Although he gives the reader a sense of the claustrophobic conditions in the company town, he pays little attention to the world outside the compound.

Carstens successfully reveals to the reader the minutiae of workers' lives, but he does not step back far enough to provide substantive analysis, and the reader is left to ponder many details without the benefit of a consistent, thought-provoking framework. Carstens shows how the workers in southwest Africa have been under constant and close scrutiny to prevent the smuggling of diamonds and how the lack of privacy and the provision of only the bare necessities (clothes, shelter, food) by the company seem harsh when compared to the amenities of life outside the town.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *In the Company of Diamonds* is the author's notion of "obligated loyalty" to the company from the workers. "At Kleinzee," Carstens writes, "the company establishes a hegemonic grip over the workforce by sending out to employees (via management) various signals and messages. The thrust of these messages... is that De Beers is the most moral, most respectable, most generous, most accident-free, and cleanest of companies. Thus the hegemonic process complicates class, status, and ethnic differentiation; it gives rise to a complex cognitive system in which employees express obligation to the employer, communicating a vague sense of loyalty that they seem seriously to believe they owe to the company."

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v6/v6i3reviews.pdf>

What Carstens shows strongly is that the pragmatic altruism of De Beers has gone a long way towards keeping its workforce moderately comfortable. Workers have a sense of community, they have free housing, good schools, etc. So it seems the desire on the part of workers to live in a clean and safe community dovetails nicely with De Beers' desire to have an orderly and relatively happy workforce.

A vastly different picture is presented in *Sierra Leone*. Hirsch, a former United States ambassador to Sierra Leone, has written a lively account of the conflict in this small country, which has fallen from the heights of being considered the "Athens of West Africa" at the time of its independence in 1961 to its current status as a nation ravaged by conflict much like Somalia and Rwanda. Hirsch points out that the diamond-rich areas in that country are controlled by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and that villagers and those in rural areas are terrorized. Many people have had limbs amputated with machetes wielded by RUF members.

While the title of the book is misleading (Hirsch only mentions diamonds a few times in the entire book), it reads well and brings the reader close to the conflict which has torn Sierra Leone apart for more than a decade. For example, in his postscript, the author mentions that the United Nations Security Council has adopted an embargo on so-called "conflict diamonds" (also known as "blood diamonds"), the sale of which helps the RUF and Liberian President Charles Taylor fund their military campaigns. A book devoted solely to Sierra Leone's and Liberia's diamond trade would work well with Hirsch's study, which focuses on the politics and players in the Sierra Leonean conflict.

After reviewing the occurrences of the past decade in Sierra Leone, Hirsch recommends three strategies for the immediate future: (1) strengthening of UNAMSIL's (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) command structure and resource base, (2) military and political pressure to deny the RUF and its external supporters continued access to the diamond fields, and (3) an effective disarmament process as the precondition for the next elections.

"The political and economic processes in the country are in the midst of a long-term transition," Hirsch writes, "The ultimate outcome of which remains to be seen. In the short term, there is a strong regional and international commitment to support the peace process. On the other hand, those who derive profit from conflict remain in place."

But, Hirsch argues, all is not lost if there is a resolute international force committed to united regional diplomacy, reconciliation with those in the RUF who truly desire peace. As the author writes, "the international community--and especially the major powers--must move to a higher level of early preventive action and sustained engagement in intrastate and regional conflicts." Rebuilding Sierra Leone promises to be a long and arduous prospect, Hirsch maintains, in part because of the RUF's "continuing support from Liberia, Burkina Faso, and perhaps Libya."

These two books, taken together, shed light on the realities in Africa today. *In the Company of Diamonds* follows the evolution of diamond mining in colonial and postcolonial southwestern Africa while *Sierra Leone* paints a picture of corruption and power-mongering by local and regional elites.

Sean Murphy

Regionalization and Security in Southern Africa. Nana Poku. London: Palgrave, 2001. 164 Pp.

Security and Development in Southern Africa. Nana Poku. Westport: Praeger, 2001. 166 Pp.

As southern Africa enters the new millennium, its prospects for peace and development (however defined) reflect an intriguing mix of pessimism and hope. Angola (as I write) seems to be tentatively groping towards a cessation of military hostilities, while the peace talks between Congolese protagonists lurches from one conference to another. But at least some of the combatants are *talking*. On the other hand, Zimbabwe continues its downward political and economic spiral while nearly four million people in the region are in desperate need of food aid. In May 2002, the Food and Agriculture Organization warned that harvests in southern Africa had fallen by up to 25 percent in 2001 and that people in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe were at particular risk as stocks of maize were extremely low and market prices were rising way beyond the reach of many people. Meanwhile, the regional hegemon, South Africa, continues to advance market-based solutions as the panacea for the region while at the same time advancing its own neo-liberal economic program at home (Taylor, 2001). The region is in a mess, contrary to what many analysts, politicians, activists, etc. had hoped for in a post-apartheid dispensation. The two books under review seek to answer why this is so.

The two books are most interesting primarily because they critically interrogate exactly what is meant by “security” in the context of southern Africa. Questions surrounding what is meant by “security” have been omnipresent in International Relations (IR): during the Cold War it was invariably connected to the defense of the state, usually through military means. In the post-Cold War era, there has been an awakening of interest in what constitutes “security.” The importance of rhetoric and dominant discourse surrounding security has been investigated, as has the stripping away of common sense notions that have appealed to science and claimed a spurious objectivist epistemology. In a recent article, two theorists made this quite explicit when they asserted that ‘the definition of the primary security referent...is not a value-free, objective matter of “describing the world as it is” — as it has been falsely characterised in traditional realist theory. It is...a profoundly political act. Whatever definition emerges has enormous implications for the theory and practice of regional security, and not least in terms of identifying threats’ (Booth and Vale, 1997: 335).

However, dominant approaches to security in IR have on the main ratified the position of the state as the primary unit of analysis, posturing this as objective truth. This in itself reflects the dominant school of thought within IR—neo-realism—that privileges the state and the supposed anarchic international system in which states must compete and battle for survival—to secure their security—in a Hobbesian environment. This choice of the state as ontologically privileged—and it *is* a choice—serves to concretise existing insecurity. In such accounts, the state’s security is deemed a priority, even if this is over and above the well-being of its citizens. This fetishisation of the state not only acts as an act of disempowerment *vis-à-vis* the ordinary person, it also neatly serves the interests of the powerful and privileged. This at times may be in direct conflict with the wishes and aspirations of the majority of the state’s citizens. As Ken

Booth asserts, 'in such circumstances state security is hostile to human security; it becomes a code-word for the privileging of the security of the country's political regime and social elite' (Booth, 1994:4). This understanding calls for a movement away from traditional approaches to security and towards non-orthodox positions that are capable of a more inclusive theoretical complexity. Poku's books move us toward a more theoretically nuanced position, focussing on issues such as globalization, education, HIV/AIDS, poverty, population etc.

The advantage of the analyses crafted in the two books is the position that there is a need to reconfigure our basic assumptions regarding security. Non-traditional approaches to security reject the type of notions that separates "us" from "them" and which erects boundaries between citizen and non-citizen, friend and foe *etc.* (cf. Walker, 1988). The question of identity 'what makes *us* believe we are the same and *them* different—is inseparable from security', an important point to make in a region that exhibits hideous levels of xenophobia and racism (Booth, 1997:6). The broadening of traditional notions of security allows the two works to cast security as an open-ended process that cannot be enclosed within any one event, such as "the end of apartheid." Rather, security is something that must be continually strived for and can, as we witness every day in southern Africa, be imperilled by a host of threats and agendas.

Thus far, it has been regional elites, with their own particular understanding of what globalisation is, that have largely set the agenda regarding security, often in response to perceived outside pressures. In Africa, the debate has been advanced by specific African leaders who have sought to craft a relationship with the North and promote a developmental agenda, which is based largely along neo-liberal lines. The leaders of Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa have been at the forefront of this and their agenda was crystallized in Abuja, Nigeria, on October 23, 2001, when the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was launched. It is unfortunate that the two books were published after this seminal event in contemporary African politics. The message communicated by the NEPAD fits within the orthodox neo-liberal discourse and avoids blaming particular policies or global trade structures on Africa's marginalization but rather, if pushed, simply passes off the blame on "globalization". But even here, the document sees globalization as providing glowing opportunities, with a statement arguing that: The world has entered a new millennium in the midst of an economic revolution. This revolution could provide the context and means for Africa's rejuvenation. While globalization has increased the cost of Africa's ability to compete, we hold that the advantages of an effectively managed integration present the best prospects for future economic prosperity and poverty reduction. (*ibid.*, p. 8).

The NEPAD itself fits snugly with the policy aims of South African president Thabo Mbeki's "African Renaissance", which has underpinned post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy, particularly since Mandela stepped down (Taylor and Williams, 2001). Yet this Renaissance has been seen as being under undue influence from the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy (Vale and Maseko, 1998: 279). The implications of such a stance for security in southern Africa, particularly in the light of a concretised NEPAD which has been critiqued as being largely of South African origin, is profound (Keet, 2002). Indeed, the policy options currently being pursued, as crystallised in the NEPAD, seeks to press for increased access to the global market. Far from critically engaging with globalisation or even remotely interrogating it, the regional leaders promoting the NEPAD are actually pushing for greater integration into the

global capitalist order, but on re-negotiated terms that favour externally oriented elites. The actual neo-liberal underpinnings of the global market are presumed to be sacrosanct.

The common sense approach to globalisation is reflected in the way in which regionalisation is assumed to be of major importance. Yet the form of regionalisation being currently promoted in southern Africa is premised on an unquestioning belief that integration of their territories into the global economy is absolutely crucial and inevitable. The structural limitations of this are never probed as, it is apparent, “there is no alternative”. The desire amongst regional elites to locate a regional connectivity and regional identity appears of profound significance in siting tactical responses to globalisation. But, regionalization should not be seen as a counter-reaction in the direction of regional autarkies. Instead, it stakes out a consolidation of politico-economic spaces contesting with one another within the capitalist global economy. It is clear that there are no “natural” regions, and that regions have to be constructed. That existing regionalist projects reflect the impulses of a neo-liberal world order is of a consequence of the environment within which regional elites find themselves *and perceive themselves to be in*. In this regard, the two books have largely neglected inserting the region and the beliefs of the regional elites within the broader global political economy and the hegemony of neo-liberalism. This is rather crucial as the new forms of regionalisms currently invigorating southern Africa are very much connected to processes associated both with globalization, whose discourse and advocates ceaselessly push for a reconfiguration along the lines of its own ideal type of socioeconomic governance. Local and global processes are inter-linked, ‘since any particular process of regionalisation in any part of the world has systemic repercussions on other regions, thus shaping the way in which the new world order is being organized’ (Hettne, 1996).

The use of the work of Hettne and the New Regionalism approach however is appreciated. “Regionalism” refers to the general phenomenon as well as the ideology of regionalism, that is, the urge for a regionalist order, either in a particular geographical area or as a type of world order. There may thus be many regionalisms. The broad New Regionalism approach seeks to understand why and how pluralistic and multidimensional regionalization processes unfold (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998; Hettne, 1999; Schulz et al, 2001). The New Regionalism literature, which both books under review utilize more or less, essentially locates the new wave of regionalization processes within the ongoing transformation of the global political economy. In contrast to older regionalization projects, which were often imposed from outside either directly or indirectly, in correspondence with the Cold War milieu, the new forms of regionalisms are more often emerging from within the regions themselves and are extroverted rather than introverted (Schulz et al, 2001: 4). At the same time, such processes cannot be understood only from the perspective of the discrete region, but only from within a globalized viewpoint.

Ongoing processes imply a qualitative change of a region from comparative heterogeneity to expanded homogeneity. This takes place across a number of dimensions, most notable of which are culture, economic policies and indeed, political management. Confluence that brings these dimensions together may, it is possible, be “natural” but more often than not are politically directed and involve a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998). In a situation whereby the hegemony of neo-liberalism underpins the logic of formal contemporary regionalisation processes, the complex mixes and contradictions

that this engenders is of the utmost importance, particularly if we are to speak of non-traditional security issues. Because of their scale, macro-regions are most likely to generate the greatest tensions and contradictions, and are least susceptible to the construction of any coherent form of regionness, which is, broadly, a sort of qualitative measurement of the cohesiveness and distinctiveness of what stage the regionalization process is in. In this sense, regionness can both increase or decrease toward greater regional cohesiveness and identity. 'Regionness thus implies that a region can be a region "more or less"' (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000: 461). The importance of the two books under review is that the regionness of southern Africa, in contrast to the aspirations that the region embarked upon with the formation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been largely frustrated. Indeed, any reconfiguration of the region along the lines promoted by the regional elites is, at present, essentially an agenda grounded on neo-liberalism. It is this actuality that at once enjoys the enthusiastic support of capital on the one hand, while posing severe problems for notions of security as defined by the two books. Unraveling the implications of this is obviously vital and these two works are valuable contributions to the effort.

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Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States. John A. Arthur. Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger. 2000. 200 Pp.

Diaspora studies is inspiring very exciting research on peoples of African decent in the Atlantic World. In this study of the African immigrant diaspora in the United States, John Arthur provides insight into the evolution and development of the African Diaspora. While people have migrated for centuries for obvious economic and ideological reasons, this book explains the economic and political roots of African migration in the 20th century. The book provides demographic and statistical evidence that Africans are the most important visible immigrant group in America in the last three decades. The book also exposes the geographical and intellectual components of the new immigrants. The phenomenal increase in the rate of immigration since the 1970s is attributed to a variety of reasons including geo-political and economic factors.

The main thesis of the book is that the dynamics and social constitution of African immigrants' identity are inexplicably linked with macro-historical forces that transcend the

shared experiences of the African Diaspora. The book probes into the immigrants' experiences, the continuity of their African background in their new homes. It also explores the continuity of their African identity and kin-ship link with African relatives. The diverse and heterogeneous nature of their African ethnicity and culture remains a trait that marks the African Diaspora in the United States. Chapter 2 addresses the causes of African migration to the United State. Arthur identifies the complex and varied nature of this process and the distinction between African, Asian, and Latin America immigrants. The author shows that the dynamics of African immigrants are processes that can be traced within Africa itself. The author links the rate of migration in Africa to the deteriorating economic condition in Africa especially the effects of structural adjustment programs on African economies since the 1980s. But unlike Asian and Latin American immigrants, the process is very complicated for African immigrants who must deal with unfavorable Western immigration and procedures.

Chapter three traces the impact of political independence, the cold war and the disillusionment that emerged in the post-independence era. These factors, the author argues, have figured prominently in the decision of many African professionals to migrate. Drawing on INS data, this chapter presents a comparative statistics of African immigrants to the United States as well as their demographic characteristics. The empirical data is particularly useful in identifying country of origin, occupational category and level of educational attainment. Chapter four is a case study of African refugees from the Horn of Africa. Arthur focuses on the cultural, psychological and economic problems faced by African refugee immigrants. The experiences of war, poverty, and low educational attainment and linguistic barriers make adjustments in the United State particularly problematic. Race and social relations are central to the next few chapters. In chapter 5 in particular, he traces the racial prejudice that African immigrants face. Racial profiling by the police and the negotiation of the contours of race and ethnicity are issues which African migrants deal with. Arthur also shows that family structure, educational attainment, entrepreneurial undertakings and African kinship ideology shape the relationships between immigrants and the host society. Drawing on empirical data, Arthur shows that "strong kinship bonds sustained by and anchored in traditional African values have been pivotal in the immigrants' adjustment to life in America." The author also introduces a gender analysis to the African immigrant experience in chapter seven and concludes that African women have undergone cultural transformations. These transformations have challenged traditional African gender ideologies as a result of their presence in the United States. Chapter eight discusses the path to naturalization and repatriation and the future goals of African immigration in the United States. Despite the naturalization of African immigrants, they have maintained the link with their homeland and continue to act as role models for the African youth.

In the concluding chapter, the author maintains that Africans who come to America are resourceful, assiduous, and industrious. However, the continued preservation of their African identity has limited their assimilation into their home. The panacea to stem continued African immigration, the author argues, rests on improving the economic and political situation in Africa. Overall, this is a good overview of the African immigrant experience, how they construct membership in the American society and the future of African immigration. The focus

on the unique nature of contemporary African immigration is a plus, however, the book took on a lot of issues that could not be given detailed analysis in a short book as this.

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Constitutionalism in Africa: Creating Opportunities, Facing Challenges. J. Oloka-Onyango, ed. Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 2001. Pp. 345.

This extraordinary edited book of words, style, illustrations and arguments provides a relevant insight into African constitutionalism from the past until the present time, with projections into the future. Oloka-Onyango combines creative authors who use law, gender, literature, pan-africanism, language, politics, religion and ethnicity as disciplinary arenas of examination. The book is about re-writing African constitutions and constitutionalism in ways that reflect African people power. Whether by reverting to oral constitutionalism of African traditional societies as contributor Antonia Kalu suggests, or introducing positive discrimination quota systems for affirmative action (Sylvia Tamale), all the authors seem to agree that the phenomenon of executive prerogatives and excess cannot continue unchecked by law and principle.

What is constitutionalism? Kalu sees constitutionalism as the carefully crafted relationship between recognizable national ideas and the day-to-day practice of citizenship. She cautions against neo-colonial constitutionalism in Africa by continual use of “Western classrooms” models introduced in the colonial era. Likewise, several chapters acknowledge that many African governments and the drafters of various constitutions have manipulated the instruments in order to deny people their rights and freedoms. Analyses in all the chapters of the book reveal beyond doubt that the human rights schemes in various constitutions examined discriminate against both men and women and put undesirable restrictions on rights granted to people in international human rights documents. Particularly beyond that, there is a fair amount of agreement that in the formulation of African constitutions, women face the plight of the larger half; they face limitations on their sexual orientation (Mazrui, chapter 1), ethnicity (Gahamanyi-Mbaye, chapter 5), indigenous citizenship (Tajudeen, chapter 4), religious freedoms (Ola Aboa Zeid, chapter 10), and they are socially and economically under-privileged (Tamale, chapter 12).

Another observation is that neutrality in human rights is not guaranteed in African constitution formulation. In some cases, reservations have been made to various articles and principles of international law and human rights principles in the belief that the articles violate *inter alia*, (traditional cultural rights), the teachings of Sharia, human dignity, and established supposedly “moral,” sexual behavior and African custom. For example, Article 1(a) of the Cairo Declaration recognizes that all human beings are equal, albeit in human dignity not ‘rights’ (Zeid).

Most of the contributors acknowledge the advancements of the women's movement, but note that constitutional provisions in many parts of Africa are still essentially *masculine*. Tamale (chapter 12), expounds on the affirmative action strategy introduced in Uganda to boost women's political, social and educational achievements. Due to masculinist meritocracy, social privilege, and notions of African communitarianism, affirmative action has not translated well into female empowerment. She argues for positive discrimination such as affording education for all girls at primary and secondary education as a model affirmative action. Additionally, since most marriages are patriarchal (Tajudeen, chapter 4), patrilocal (Pereira, chapter 9), or patri-ligious (Zeid, chapter 10), many women run the high risk of losing citizenship in Africa. Pereira recounts a situation where in Nigeria married women who move to their marital states lose indigenous citizenship in both their father's indigenous states and their marital states. As Pereira concludes, successful implementation of basic rights for women and men will depend on processes and relations that are largely extra-constitutional.

In Chapter 1, Mazrui tables the issue of sexual orientation, which is indeed controversial to Muslim Africa and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. He argues that African constitutions have not been well formulated to serve the interests of the people, instead political leaders and cultural institutions have engineered notions of "acceptable sexual behavior". Mazrui states that in many African states, such as President Moi's Kenya, President Museveni's Uganda, and President Mugabe's Zimbabwe, individual offenses against economic and political order are tolerated more than individual sexual offenses. Homosexuals for example, are denied a place in some African constitutions. Conclusively, people-centered constitutions should limit state power in the African individual private life.

Negotiating religious differences in constitutional making is also discussed. In Chapter 10, Oba Zeid challenges the state-inspired interpretation of human rights principles using grassroots public opinion and action. Using the example of Muslim Africa, activities of liberal Muslims and public opinion should be encouraged to negotiate existing schemes to protect people of other religious beliefs and women from state-inspired interpretations of international law through separation of church and state.

A couple of the arguments made by some of the contributors are discomfoting. For example, Kalu argues that ancestral constitutionalism is only unique to Africa and not in the United States and Eastern Europe. However, Native Americans had ancestral constitutions before colonialism, which have been maintained through meticulous oral history guaranteeing them rights of self-government, freedom of choice and expression within their own territories. Peter Walubiri's argument that constitutionalism is a process of state empowering the people, contradicts the reality that people empower the state. Ola Zeid (chapter 10) supposes that restrictions in Sharia laws are unique in comparison to other laws in Africa. Yet, in "Christian Africa", such restrictions occur in *inter alia* laws, relating to terrorism, the media, political association, gender and asylum. Zeid also dwells on married Muslim women but fails to demonstrate what Sharia law provides for single Muslim women and female youths.

This book is written entirely by African scholars working on the continent and Africa Diaspora and is not your typical scholarly piece. It is therefore good forage for activists, researchers, civil society, judiciary, legislators and all pan-africanists. *Constitutionalism in Africa*

is a simple orientation for anyone and captures so eloquently the ongoing constitutional debate in Africa.

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Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory. Kevin C. Dunn & Timothy M. Shaw, eds. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Pp. 242.

Africa's Challenges to International Relations Theory is a fine collection of essays on the relevance of some African issues to International Relations theories. Africa is a neglected area in mainstream IR theory, but as Kevin Dunn argues in the introductory chapter, there is nevertheless no theoretical or empirical justification for the negligence. Craig Murphy, a noted scholar of International Relations, also notes in the foreword to the book that "more than one out of ten people are African. More than one out of four nations are African. Yet, I would warrant that fewer than one in a hundred university lectures on International Relations (IR) given in Europe or North America even mention the continent." The book has thirteen chapters clustered into conceptual, theoretical and policy-oriented issues. The volume raises important questions and offers counter-arguments to the 'great power' theories of IR after bringing to focus the relevance of certain themes in Africa's inter-state and intrastate politics.

The first chapter, Assis Malaquias's "Reformulating International Relations Theory; African Insights and Challenges" disputes the propriety of using state as a unit of analysis for explaining Africa's international relations and, with the help of an illustrative case study of UNITA, suggests that nations and armed nationalist movements should instead be considered more important in this regard. The international relations of UNITA are certainly inexplicable if we were to rely solely on state-centric theories; even so, a question remains. Is analysis based on UNITA typical enough to warrant a call for a more inclusive conceptualization of Africa's international relations anchored in nations and other sub-state actors? Such an approach might succeed 'in dethroning the hegemony of the Westphalian framework imposed on Africa through colonialism'. But it is far from clear if that would necessarily enhance our understanding of Africa's international relations. The rapprochement between UNITA and the Angolan government following the death of Jonas Savimbi also seems to further undermine Malaquias's model.

Siba Grovogui's "Sovereignty in Africa: Quasi-Statehood and Other Myths in International Theory" is a well informed and rigorously argued critique of the predominant discourse especially in regard to the usage of the concept of sovereignty in African context. Taking the case of Belgium and Switzerland on the one hand, and the Congo on the other, Grovogui's lucid analysis of aspects of the discourse on sovereignty concentrates on revealing in comparative terms "the analytical errors, ideological confusions, and historical omissions".

Kevin C. Dunn's "MadLib # 32 The (Blank) African State: Rethinking the Sovereign State in International Relations Theory" demonstrates "the ways in which the state-centric approach (of mainstream IR theories) misses important elements of African international relations". He then illustrates his argument with the help of four examples of non-state actors in Africa's international relations, namely international financial institutions, regional strongmen, extractive corporations and non-state military corporations. Dunn also elaborates on why the state in Africa should be viewed as a discursive construction that exists side by side with other forms of thoughts, actions and practices. The chapter concludes with a suggestion of a line along which state could be further reconceptualized.

Janis van der Westhuizen's "Marketing the 'Rainbow Nation': The Power of the South African Music, Film and Sport Industry" introduces the concept of 'marketing power', an extension of the concept of 'soft power' originally advanced by Joseph S. Nye, as a useful tool for understanding IR. In sum, the author argues that power should be viewed as emanating not only from tangible resources, as the major theories of international relations have tended to do, but also from visibility or attraction. The author then analyzes the cases of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa to exemplify the issues involved in the cultural 'marketing power' of the country.

The theoretical section which begins with John F. Clark's "Realism, Neorealism and Africa's International Relations in the Post-Cold War era" is the most ambitious part of the book. Clark claims that it is 'traditional' realism (and not its modern neorealist version, nor globalism, nor liberalism) that has more power and relevance for explaining the international relations of Africa. Except for a few paragraphs of passing references to Africa or specific African countries, however, the first part of the chapter reads for the most part like a modern critique of traditional realism rather than a statement of Africa's challenge to realism or of the relevance of the theory to Africa.

The thrust of Frank's analysis, articulated in the second portion of the chapter, is that "the concept of regime security appears to be particularly useful in understanding the behavior of African rulers." The concept is centered on the notion that "...[a] ruler needs the good will or tolerance of those who are in a position to directly threaten the control of her regime over the state apparatus." However, the excessive elasticity of the concept of regime security critically undermines not only its predictive power, as the author himself admits, but also its explanatory power rendering it less useful for understanding the subject matter since in some sense or another virtually all aspects of Africa's international relations fit such an interpretation. And yet Frank insists that "[the concept of regime security, the coordinate threats to regime security, and the indirect causes of such threats do much to help us understand the cycles of intervention and counter-intervention in Africa's intra-continental relations." Again, Frank argues, one of the best guarantees of regime security is the mutual assurance which rulers grant each other in respect to the inviolability of colonial borders. If this is indeed the case, it can be argued then that regime security can be best explained in terms of the neoliberal concept of "specific reciprocity" rather than the "realist appreciation for the axiomatic importance of power in politics of all kinds."

Tandeka C. Nkiwane's essay, "The End of History? African Challenges to Liberalism in International Relations" is a brief but a coherent attempt to situate liberalism in African political

thought and Africa in liberal thought. Nikiwe specially concentrates on Africa's challenges to the democratic peace theory, which, the author (wrongly) asserts, is the outgrowth of Francis Fukuyama's the end of history thesis. Nikiwe concludes by adapting to Africa what the critics of 'democratic peace' have suggested all along: "Democracy...is not necessarily the primary factor that prevents war in African international relations; indeed it can actively promote war." On the whole, Nikiwe's analysis does also fit well into the major theme of the book: Africa's Challenge's to International Relation.

Chapter 8 is Randolp B. Persaud's "Re-envisioning Sovereignty: Marcus Garvey and the Making of a Transitional Identity". Persaud argues that Garveyism, or the "transnationalist movement aimed at the production of a global imagined community" is relevant to contemporary international relations especially in regard to the concept of sovereignty by introducing a new principle of legitimacy which "advanced the idea of the protection of human dignity, even if that implied challenging the assumption of absolute control of a state's internal affairs", and by delineating clearly "the dual character of sovereignty-namely, the sovereignty of the state and the sovereignty of the people."

Sandra J. MacLean's "Challenging Westphalia: Issues of Sovereignty and Identity in Southern Africa" is, in fact, less about Southern Africa than it is about challenging Westphalia. MacLean's essay overlaps to a significant degree with some of the preceding essays dealing with the concept of sovereignty. However, MacLean also introduces a useful dimension to the discussion in her contention that "national identities and state sovereignty are challenged, or at least complicated, by new regionalisms". Such a challenge, MacLean argues, "...threatens the acceptance of the immanence of statehood and the ontological assumptions upon which the Realist IR perspective rests". The essay interweaves quite brilliantly a variety of internal and external challenges with which the Westphalian state has come to be confronted.

Part III of the book is titled "Implications and Policy Ramifications" and begins with James Jude Hentz's chapter, "Reconceptualizing U.S. Foreign Policy: Regionalism, Economic Development and Instability in Southern Africa." His central argument is that "regionalism should replace bilateralism as the basic architectural principle of US-African relations, [because] bilateralism can be effective only if the African partner is a modern functioning state." Hentz also makes important distinctions between *market integration*, "where economic integration focuses on trade and monetary matters and typically progresses along a linear path from a [Free Trade Areas], to a customs union, a common market, and ultimately (in theory) to an economic union" and *developmental integration* "in which under-developed production structures and infrastructure problems must be addressed before free trade can create new efficiencies." Then Hentz assesses the two approaches in light of the experience of Southern Africa and concludes his useful discussion by making specific policy recommendations as to how "the old edifice of US foreign policy for Africa must be torn down."

All in all, except for a few obvious defects, the volume is a significant contribution to IR theory and African studies. With the exception of Janis van der Westhuizen's piece, almost all of the essays in the volume seem to assume that IR theory is monolithic and state-centric, a wrong assumption which seems in turn to have inevitably led the analysts to dispense with the discussion of the relevance (or irrelevance) of IR theories that are not so state-centric. In other

words, some schools of IR are omitted. These schools may deserve the omission or exclusion, but the volume would have been more useful if the authors explained why that is the case.

Africa's Challenges to International Relations Theory is likely to serve as a stepping stone for further investigation and research on the relevance of African issues to International Relations theories in light of some unique features in Africa's international relations. Even as it stands, the volume is beneficial reading both for African studies and IR scholars.

Seifudein Adem

Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Colonial Zanzibar, 1890-1945. Laura Fair. Eastern African Series. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001. Pp. 370.

This book is a masterpiece. Historian Laura Fair has woven a multifaceted series of studies on music, housing, sport, and dress into a single narrative that explores the fluid and multifaceted communities of ordinary townspeople in Zanzibar from the abolition of slavery in 1890 through the end of the Second World War. Creatively using an array of sources drawn from interviews, archives, and popular culture, the author demonstrates the strengths of contemporary research on gender, identity, and colonial authority in deft prose that rivals some of the finest stylists in the field. It holds insights for regional specialists as well as those unfamiliar with Zanzibar. If ever a work was tailor-made for graduate seminars to introduce recent trends in African cultural and colonial history, this is it.

Fair sets up her study by exploring the career and lyrics of singer Siti binti Saad. Saad, a descendant of slaves brought to work in clove plantations, performed with a popular taarab band in the 1920s and 1930s. Her songs express hopes and anxieties of poor townspeople. In *Pastimes and Politics*, leisure and culture activities became arenas of community building and "sites" of struggle over status and rights between British administrators, wealthy landowners of Omani descent, and urban people who were disenfranchised and marginalized from formal political power. Fair rightly notes that pastimes and politics "were intimately connected" rather than separate categories of experience (9). The book builds upon and contributes to earlier scholarship, for example by Frederick Cooper and Jonathon Glassman (Cooper 1979; Glassman 1995) which discuss contests over "Arab," "Swahili," and urban identities during the initial European occupation of the East African coast. When British officials tried to bolster the fading importance of Arab-identified leaders through rigid ethnic classifications and laws favoring their continued control over land, working-class people contested European labels of local identities and made claims to be as "authentically free" and "Zanzibari" as the members of established and wealthy families.

Music, dress, dance, and football all were cherished in Zanzibar as expressions of popular ideals and because they were fun. To her credit, the author never loses sight of the entertainment value of her topics as she explores their ties to political action. After discussing the economic and political changes in island life that posed obstacles to the aspirations of

ordinary people, particularly the numerous attempts to fix rigid demarcations between “African” and “Arab” groups, the author moves into a rich discussion of dress.

In the late nineteenth century, masters and slaves were easily distinguished by the quality and style of their clothing. Poor people wore simple and unadorned cloth while the wealthy wore elaborate outfits heavily influenced by consumption patterns popular on the Arabian Peninsula. With the collapse of legal slavery, townspeople began to appropriate and reshape European and Omani dress styles for their own. Men looked to London and Paris, but women embroidered new forms of expression by adopting the veils and garments worn previously by wives of slave-owners. Veils are often presented in Western media as the marker of Islamic religious oppression, but some Zanzibari women of African descent used this seemingly confining dress to claim respectable social status and to mask their heritage of servitude. However, women were not afraid to voice their opinions in public forums. Dance competitions and collective initiation ceremonies open to poor and well-off townswomen were ways women gained respect and recognition.

Poetry and singing also allowed women to express their views and gain fame in town. Siti binti Saad, a contemporary of American blues legends Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, became the most famous member of the Zanzibari music community before World War II. Her band, made up of both relatively poor and affluent families, shows the diversity of urban experiences in the town. Saad began her career reciting Qu’ranic verses in nineteenth-century fashion before forming her own group and writing her own songs. Her performances reflected concerns of women and men about romance, mistreatment by the rich, sexual harassment, and daily troubles with colonial police and judges.

Fair also considers formal legal protests and the politics of football. Land rights became a central feature of popular protests. British commissioners rewrote older Islamic legal and taxation practices to deny former slaves land rights. Former slaves and their descendents, however, refused to meekly accept the favoritism the British bestowed on the landlords. Townspeople risked jail and fines to make their demands for land known by formal petitions, marches, and rent strikes. In a less openly oppositional manner, men challenged English attempts to control football games by setting up boards and using sports as a medium to create and enforce ethnic identities. Membership in a football club also created social connections that lasted a lifetime and marked borders of political groups.

Perhaps Zanzibari specialists might find minor flaws with this work. They certainly escaped this reviewer, although one wishes more background were provided on formal politics on the island for those unfamiliar with the area and time period. Other than this point, this book is excellent. Dazzling and joyful writing conveys the author’s love and enthusiasm for her subjects. Many photographs and maps illustrate the academic discussion. This accessible work exposes the complications and the creativity of urban Africans and deserves a wide readership among Africanists. You can show this book to those unfamiliar with colonial Africa and they will be captivated rather than daunted.

Jeremy Rich